

**THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND BRITISH CULTURAL PROPAGANDA DURING THE
INTERWAR PERIOD**

by

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**A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of M(phil) in 20th
Century British History**

**School of History
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June 2013**

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List of Abbreviations

AEU	Anglo-Egyptian Union
AGF	Anglo-German Fellowship
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
DOT	Department of Overseas Trade
FACBC	Fine Arts Committee of the British Council
MOI	Ministry of Information
PWE	Political Warfare Executive
PRO	Public Records Office
SCBENE	Sub-Committee on British Education in the Near East
TIDA	Travel and Industrial Development Agency

Introduction

British foreign policy during the interwar years has been the subject of extensive historical study both in Britain and abroad. A variety of schools of thought have emerged concerning the foreign policy strategy of the British government, typically referred to as appeasement. While the great depth of study directed to this specific area has contributed significantly to the understanding of cause, motive, and effect of British foreign policy in this period, it cannot be interpreted as offering a complete view of British foreign policy. It is my contention that propaganda produced and disseminated by Britain during the interwar period can also be seen to be a key factor in British foreign policy strategy. Not only can propaganda be considered as having contributed to the overall framework of British foreign policy, it can also offer a significant and unique viewing glass into British foreign policy aims, with both short term and long term foreign policy aims portrayed in various mediums of propaganda in numerous locations and unique situations.

There have been many studies either focusing on or incorporating propaganda in the interwar period, concerning the propaganda methods of not only Britain, but also those used by both Mussolini and the Fascist party in Italy and the Nazi party in Germany. Concerning the propaganda of Germany, Stanley Payne contends that Nazi propaganda, when coupled with art and culture, would be utilised to build the 'new man' and that the focus of Nazi artistic policy stemmed from Hitler's personal belief that 'art is the only truly enduring investment of human labour'¹. The significance of

¹ S G Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, p.197

the utilisation of art as propaganda adds a cultural aspect to the propaganda of Nazi Germany, as highlighted by David Welch, with acceptable art seen as transcending traditional class allegiances and presenting a visual representation of the national community or *völksgemeinschaft*².

Italian propaganda produced during the Mussolini dictatorship can also be seen to contain a significant cultural aspect, with the intention of remodelling Italy to create a 'new' man to inhabit a new Rome, during a period of greatness to rival that reached at the height of the Roman Empire. For example, the extravagant architectural undertakings such as the building of aqueducts, and sports stadiums should not simply be seen as methods intended to strengthen the Italian economy while attempting to lessen the North/South divide, but also as a means of reshaping Italian culture, with a focus on modernisation, unification and the importance of physical strength.

The study of British propaganda focuses largely upon that produced during both the First and Second World Wars. This can be forgiven due to the fact that while both Italy and Germany underwent major transformations with propaganda playing a pivotal role in helping the dictatorships both gain and then remain in power, the British experience of the interwar years was far less chaotic and the need for a fully functioning and highly funded propaganda was by no means a pressing issue. Historians including Messinger and Sanders study the role of propaganda in the First World War, focusing upon roles of key individuals involved in the creation of the first official propaganda bureau at Wellington House³, and the creation and development of propaganda designed to be used as a weapon⁴. Nicholas and Senton on the other hand focus upon British propaganda during the Second World War. Nicholas studies

² Ed. A McElligott & T Kirk, *Working Towards the Fuhrer*, pp.97-98

³ G S Messinger *British Propaganda and the State in the First World War*

⁴ M L Sanders, *British Propaganda During The First World War 1914-1918*

the relationship between home front propaganda and the BBC, citing the useful nature of programmes giving advice on how to cope with rationing as well as contributions to public health campaigns, concluding that if the BBC had not broadcast ‘the civilian population’s understanding of what it should do and what it might expect would have been seriously undermined, and while that it is impossible to gauge the effect of radio on British morale it provided information and entertainment with integrity despite⁵. Senton also studies the role of the BBC, and how it was used to speak to resistance groups within Europe and the role of general ‘psychological warfare’ produced by the PWE⁶.

Compared to the periods of the First and Second World Wars, the study of British interwar propaganda is negligible, with Philip Taylor providing the largest and most in depth study dedicated to British propaganda between 1919 and 1939. Taylor traces the history of the British propaganda apparatus from its post-world war one decay through to the preparation of propaganda to be utilised during wartime, focusing upon key individuals and their roles within the formulation of British propaganda while also attempting to explain the reasons behind the various organisations created to project Britain overseas⁷. With regard to cultural propaganda, Taylor defines this as ‘the promotion and dissemination of national aims and achievements in a general rather than specifically economic or political form, although it is ultimately designed to promote economic and political interests’⁸. However Taylor’s study of the British Council for Relations with Other Countries^{*}, the main apparatus for the creation and dissemination of cultural propaganda, is broad

⁵ S Nicholas, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939-45*, pp.271-274

⁶ M Senton, *Radio London and Resistance in Occupied Europe*

⁷ P M Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919-1939*, p.vii

⁸ Ibid. pp.125-126

* Henceforth referred to as the British Council

and relatively chronologic. While highlighting several key contributing factors concerning its creation; the utilisation of ‘cultural diplomacy’ by foreign governments most successfully those of France and Germany, and that Britain’s chief concern was the consolidation and defence of existing interests and thus the ‘the atmosphere in which concepts of cultural or intellectual expansion overseas were conceived was generally absent’⁹, Taylor focuses upon general areas of British Council activity such as improving propaganda directed towards South America and the British Council’s close cooperation with the British Travel Association concerning the production and distribution of films portraying British life, culture, and achievements.

Various in depth studies of specific areas of British propaganda during the interwar period do exist however. Both Callum MacDonald and Anthony Adamthwaite have provided studies of very specific areas of interwar propaganda. MacDonald offers a detailed analysis of the Italian propaganda emerging from Radio Bari and the various countermeasures employed by Britain between 1934 and 1937¹⁰. MacDonald highlights the importance of radio as a medium of propaganda in an area of high illiteracy such as the Middle East, and estimates that 60% of radio license holders were regular listeners to the Bari broadcasts. MacDonald concludes that the hostile nature of the Bari broadcasts led to Britain changing policy in the creation of the BBC’s Arabic broadcasts, and restricted the influence of Radio Bari to Palestine, an area in which Britain had long accepted the inevitability of challenges to their influence¹¹.

⁹ P M Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919-1939*, pp.126-127

¹⁰ C A MacDonald, *Radio Bari: Italian Wireless Propaganda in the Middle East and British Countermeasures 1934-38*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.201-204

Adamthwaite differs in both subject matter and approach that MacDonald, focusing not upon methods of propaganda in development and practice, but the relationship between the British government and various forms of media, specifically newspaper and Radio¹². Adamthwaite highlights the problem of news management, particularly those created by often contrasting statements released by the Foreign Office and Downing Street, while also pointing out that despite there was great importance in representing the British position with regard to foreign policy, ‘official attempts to silence unwelcome opinion’ were present in not only the mediums of newspaper and radio. Official intervention also appeared concerning production of literature that was deemed to inflammatory in nature during times of international crises, such as Wiskemann’s history of Czechoslovakians and Germans, and the suppression of newsreels that voiced an opinion which contrasted the official policy of Whitehall¹³.

Despite these smaller, more tightly focused studies the general lack of detailed and specific study of the activities of the British Council and the methods employed in the promotion of cultural propaganda leads to the focus of this paper. It is my intention to focus upon specific areas of cultural propaganda produced by the British Council, and by studying methods of British cultural propaganda in both the Near and Middle East, and Central Europe attempt to provide an in depth study of the practice of ‘cultural diplomacy’. With regard to the study of cultural propaganda in the Near and Middle East, the main focus point will be that of Egypt. This was in part due to key logistical role of the Suez Canal which greatly simplified movements to the rest of the British Empire in the East such as India, Singapore, New Zealand and

¹² A Adamthwaite, *The British Government and the Media, 1937-1938*

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.287-290

Australia, Secondly, Egypt was not technically a colony, and although Britain had enough power to impose occupation, it was far easier to have a degree of pro-British sentiment amongst key figures in the country. Finally, Egypt was also the site of propaganda based warfare between Italy and Britain, the extent of which is apparent when viewing the importance placed upon the cessation of propaganda during the negotiations leading to the eventual 'Gentleman's Agreement' between the two nations. Concerning cultural propaganda in Europe, British activities in Italy will form the subject of a case study, due to the importance of Anglo-Italian relations to British foreign policy during the 1930s. A study of British propaganda in this period will allow not only for the methods adopted to be discussed, but also will enable one to judge the effects of the increasing tension in Anglo-Italian relations upon cultural propaganda, and indeed to some extent if any cultural propaganda succeeded in alleviating these tensions. The scope of 'cultural propaganda' in this paper includes not only the use of newsreel, cinema and wireless broadcasting, but focuses heavily upon the role of education. The significance of the role of education as a means of improving cultural relations was recognised by many British officials, and it is my contention that cultural propaganda was not intended to solely influence the parent generation of the 1930s, rather the use of education would enable a positive opinion of Britain to permeate the youth for generations to come.

The definition used to determine what can be classified as cultural propaganda will be similar to that used by Taylor, however rather than simply defining cultural propaganda as the promotion of national aims and achievements with an ultimately political goal in general terms, I would suggest that the definition should encompass the ultimate aim of influencing the normal behaviour or thought of a foreign culture. Thus cultural propaganda, in this paper, will be defined as 'the promotion of national

aims and achievements in a general form, intending to influence the normal social conventions of a foreign culture with the ultimate aim of promoting economic and political interests'. Although the addition may appear minor, it is significant in allowing not just displays of British achievement in the cultural sphere to fall into the category of cultural propaganda, but also allows various programmes of education and private networks of relations to be categorised in such way.

Cultural Propaganda and Education in the Near and Middle East

The British Council played a significant role in organising and disseminating cultural propaganda in the traditional sense as defined by Taylor. However the organisation was also heavily involved with incorporating educational institutes into the machinery of British cultural propaganda, as well as the various forms of ‘traditional’ cultural propaganda which showcased British achievements, aims, and values. Formed in 1934, the roots of the British Council’s interest in utilising education as a means of cultural propaganda in the Middle East can be seen as developing as early as March 1935, triggered by a report on British cultural propaganda in Egypt. The report consists of extracts of a despatch dated November 1933 from Sir Percy Loraine, High Commissioner of Egypt, to Sir John Simon in which concerns were raised on the questions of both maintaining and developing English Education and culture, which was distributed to members of the British Council in the newly created Sub-Committee on Education in the Near East to aid the task of improving British educational influence in Egypt. Loraine felt that if British political and commercial interests were not to be irredeemably damaged the entire issue of cultural propaganda must be re-examined by the government¹⁴. Loraine stated that British ‘cultural effort’ was private and sporadic, poorly financed and staffed, and lacking in organisation and effectiveness when compared to efforts made by Latin Governments which dominated the field. Loraine further suggested that this gulf in cultural influence stemmed from the failure of Britain to create a strong cultural position for herself between 1882 and 1922, and that following the

¹⁴ PRO, BW 29/3, *British Report on Cultural Propaganda in Egypt*, p.1

Declaration of Egyptian Independence it was found the France was predominant in the cultural field. Loraine quoted the pamphlet *The Conflict of French and English Educational Philosophies in Egypt*, composed by the American Professor Russell Galt, which offered a neutral opinion which supported Loraine's claims concerning British cultural influence stating –

‘In Egypt, England had an army – France an idea. England had educational control – France a clear educational philosophy. Because the French did have such an organised philosophy and the English did not, the French pen has proved mightier than the English sword.’

Loraine concluded this negative assessment of British cultural influence by highlighting the increase in expenditure on cultural propaganda by the French government, stating that between 1928 and 1931 the amount had doubled, while the grant at the French School of Archaeology in Cairo had increased six fold. The reality of the lack of British influence concerning education is confirmed by the fact that in 1930-31, for every Egyptian attending a British school, 9 received a French education, and that the number of Egyptians at British Schools diminished 10%, while those attending French schools increased by 10%, and those attending Italian schools in Egypt increased by 20% during the same period¹⁵.

Loraine outlined an 11 point plan to improve educational and cultural influence in the Near and Middle East, including the development of the Boy Scout movement, the formation of a girls school at Cairo and the encouragement of English Catholic missions to embark upon educational work in the area, and the foundation of a British University of the Near East to compete with the French University at Beirut. Other than the creation of a girl's school, Loraine's suggestions do not feature in the British Council's July report concerning development of British education and culture in Egypt. However, Loraine's despatch can be considered as the first serious attempt

¹⁵ PRO, BW 29/3, *British Report on Cultural Propaganda in Egypt*, p.2

to assert British cultural influence in the area. Further encouragement for British cultural aspirations appeared when an article in the Cairo based newspaper *Balagh*, translated in the *Egyptian Gazette*, approaching the subject of teaching English in Egypt. Despite the anti-British nature of *Balagh*, the article suggests that while Egyptians may be politically bound to say they hate everything British significant numbers wish to learn the English language and have their children brought up with British ideas¹⁶. While the report focuses upon educational aspects, including the provision of lectures on English art and literature and ensuring the availability of these successful talks, the report also notes the importance of developing cultural ties through other mediums. The report states that residents of the Near East have excelled in the performance of sports and games introduced by Britain, and suggests that were British regiments in Cairo seen to be superior at such games it would also suggest superiority in other areas, and British prestige would be enhanced by displays of sporting success on a local scale¹⁷.

Throughout the remainder of 1935 and early 1936, the development of cultural propaganda in the Near and Middle East was ponderous with much debate concerning the ideal strategy to adopt. At the second meeting of the Sub-Committee for Education in the Near East it was decided that the education of children of English birth should be the priority of educational policy in Egypt, however the foundation of a British Institute at Cairo was considered to be a high priority aim¹⁸, but due to mainly financial based issues the project did not become a reality¹⁹. The lack of

¹⁶ PRO, BW 29/3, *Egypt's Second Language*, in the *Egyptian Gazette*, July 10th 1935

¹⁷ PRO, BW 29/3, *Suggestions for Development of British Education, Culture, etc. in Egypt*, pp.2-7, July 4th 1935

¹⁸ PRO, BW 29/3, *Sub-Committee on British Education in the Near East Minutes*, February 14th 1936

¹⁹ PRO, CO 732/82/9, *Proposals for Expenditure of the British Council in the Near East for the Financial Year 1937-38*, p.19

investment in cultural propaganda in the Near and Middle East was not unique however, and is highlighted by a 1937 memorandum providing estimates of expenditure of the 'Great Powers' directed towards propaganda. The memorandum focuses largely upon expenditure specifically in the field of cultural propaganda between 1934 and late 1936. The report states that in 1934, the American budget for cultural propaganda was £140,355,253 of which £1,844,065 was solely directed towards educational programmes outside America including scholarships for foreign students. Figures relating to Italian expenditure in the field of 'Propaganda and Prestige' amount to £1,139,154, however Italian cultural institutes were common across Europe and South America, and 3% of Italian propaganda expenditure focused upon language and culture, with the agencies of the Dante Alighieri Society and Instituto del Libro being fully utilised as propaganda organisations²⁰.

The expenditure granted to the British Council for cultural propaganda in Egypt did increase due to the desire to fortify and extend their work in Egypt against the 'increasing force of Italian and French Propaganda'²¹, however in early 1938 various schemes were proposed including estimated costs but were ultimately rejected. These included the creation of a 'new' English school at Victoria College with running costs of £10,000, and a proposal for an English school to be created under Egyptian control at the cost of £250,000. It would not be until post 1938 that the budget of the British Council would increase to be competitive with rival nation's cultural propaganda expenditure in the Middle East. A number of new grants for Egypt were allocated following Lord Lloyd's visit in 1939, including a number of non-recurrent grants for the Evening Institute lectures of £2,100, the purchase of the

²⁰ PRO, BW 2/84 *Memorandum on Propaganda by the Great Powers*, British Council, pp.1-8

²¹ PRO, BW 29/3, Summary of proposed Expenditure in Egypt produced by Reginald Leeper

new site for the British school at Suez at £2,060, and a further £1,500 granted for the purchase of new land to expand the English Mission College²².

Despite the economic setbacks regarding the increase of educational and cultural influence in Egypt, the matter of education was still being taken seriously with it being recognised that ‘one of the most important channels yet remaining by which the flow of British ideas into Egyptian minds can be maintained would seem to be the British personnel employed by the Ministry of Education’. A report on education in Egypt produced in November 1937, forwarded to Lord Lloyd, highlights the desire for the very best British teachers and lecturers to be used in Egypt, and the need to address the fact that taking a seat at a university in Egypt leads to reduced prestige for academics, and that the limited range of salaries available for overseas educational staff should be improved²³ in order to ensure a higher standard of teaching and a greater success of cultural influence. This report shows not only the commitment and comparative successes of early British attempts and increasing educational and cultural influence when viewed against the dominance of French institutes in the early 1930s, but also serves to highlight the difficulties of maintaining an effective education system with high quality teaching whilst also conveying British values to the Egyptian youth. A letter from Colonel Bridge to White describes the educational system as encountered with Lord Lloyd on a tour of educational facilities including the British Boys School, St Andrews College and Victoria College²⁴. Despite the generally positive tone concerning developments including the immanent completion of a new hall at the British Boys School and the development of evening classes with the intention of providing the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English, annexe A of the letter highlights educational problems in Egypt. The annex

²² PRO, BW 29/5, British Council Grants for Education in Egypt, September 11th 1939, pp.1-3

²³ PRO, BW 29/3, *Report on Education in Egypt*, pp.1-2,6-7, November 1st 1937

²⁴ PRO, BW 29/4, *Letter From Col. Bridge to White*, March 3rd 1938

highlights the educational load on British run schools regarding English pupils and that there is also an educational demand from many sections of the population who are not British for English education²⁵. Despite the inability of British schools to provide education for all non-British youth in Egypt, most families felt it desirable for their children to learn English as it was seen as a valuable qualification for gaining employment, with more intelligent students also expressing their desires to take the London Matriculation class, and that when compared to these qualifications there was a growing consciousness developing that similar or equivalent Egyptian qualifications were valueless in comparison. Bridge highlights this decline in the public's opinion of the value of Egyptian qualifications as a positive for British educational expansion, with a corresponding opportunity opening for the increase of English university teaching in Egypt²⁶. However, despite the popularity of British run courses, it was the priority of SCBENA to focus upon the education of British children abroad, and as such many Egyptians were refused entry to the institutes.

This provides a mixed assessment of British Education in Egypt, showing that while the courses offered at British institutes were high in popularity with both British and Egyptian students alike, demand for these popular courses could not be met, and highlights the fact that despite the progress made since the late 1920s and early 1930s where France was dominant in the educational sphere within Egypt, the apparatus of British education in Egypt was far from complete and able to meet demand. This ultimately reflects the inability of Britain to achieve the goal of implanting British ideals and cultural values in the Egyptian youth via the medium of official educational institutes.

²⁵ PRO, BW 29/4, *Letter From Col. Bridge to White*, March 3rd 1938, Annexe A, p.1

²⁶ PRO, BW 29/4, *Letter From Col. Bridge to White*, March 3rd 1938, Annexe A, p2

During early 1939, the British Council began to tackle the issue of the education of Maltese and Cypriot children in the Middle East. Maltese and Cypriot pupils at this time either attended Greek run schools, or simply did not have access to education in the area, with figures showing that of 700 Maltese under the age of 15 only 196 received education at a handful of British schools, while of 661 Cypriots of the same age, only 22 received British education in Egypt²⁷. To combat this, a programme of increased subsidisation of Maltese pupils began at St. George's in Shoubra and St. Austin's at Heliopolis, as well as the provision of a free school at Bab-el-Karasta in Alexandria. This shows a marked effort to increase British educational influence in Egypt, and despite the outbreak of war on September 1st 1939 the Near and Middle East remained a priority area for the spread and growth of cultural influence. This point is highlighted, particularly the educational aspect of British policy, by the opposition by members of the British Council to the proposed take over of Victoria College by the British Naval Authorities. In a memorandum drafted by C A F Dundas, Victoria College is described as holding a unique position in that it is the only British public school in the Near East with no distinction of race or religion, and as having built up an excellent reputation from Iraq to the Sudan in its thirty years of existence, with leading men from nearly every county in the Near East whose 'sons are past or present members of the school, reflective of the high level of influence the college held in the areas during the period²⁸. Dundas states that were Victoria College forced to continue work at a temporary location, the last thirty years of development would be wasted and connections with neighbouring countries would be broken, while speculating that unless there was no other alternative the abandonment of Victoria College and other educational institutions would 'only have

²⁷ PRO, BW 29/5, *Maltese and Cypriot Education*, p1

²⁸ PRO, BW 29/5, *Memorandum by C A F Dundas on the future of Victoria College*, September 5th 1939

in the long run a disastrous effect upon the position of Great Britain both during the war and in the following years'. However, Dundas also recognised that the Victoria College situation was *fait accompli*, but still strongly defended the importance of the education system in Egypt and the importance of its role in building a new generation for the following peace.

The programme of investing in education as a means of cultural propaganda designed to improve cultural relations by the British Council can be described as being largely successful. During the late 1920s and early 1930s it was clear that British education in the Middle East, in particular Egypt, trailed significantly behind the programmes of Italy and France. However, the continued development of an education network, both for pupils and adults alike helped address the situation and create a situation in which Britain could compete against the highly organised and effective education philosophies adopted by the French institutes in the region. The success of the British programme to educate not only children of British descent but also those of other nationalities is highlighted in a report on English schools in Cairo produced in December 1937. The report shows the returns of British and foreign teachers and pupils at thirteen British run schools in the years 1936 and 1937, and illustrates the increase in foreign pupils, and also that of British trained teachers. The total number of pupils in these school rose from 2,086 in 1936 to 2,336 in 1937, with the total number of teachers increasing from 163 to 171 during the same period, while the total of foreign pupils receiving British education rose from 1227 to 1384 and the total of foreign teachers at British schools increasing from 54 to 70²⁹. An earlier report dated July 1935 concerning the development of cultural propaganda via the use of education states that the English Mission College at Koubbeh had achieved the

²⁹ PRO, BW 29/3, *British Schools in Cairo: Returns of Teachers and Pupils 1936-37*, December 1937

target of 400 pupils, mostly of foreign nationality³⁰. When compared to the figures of pupils attending the college stated in the report of December 1937, the total of pupils attending the English Mission College had increased by 20%, which suggests that there was a high demand for a British based education, while the total number of pupils at British schools in Cairo increased by slightly over 10% between 1936 and 1937, which again suggests a continued demand for British education. This also suggests that the methods of the British Council had indeed been successful in transforming the prospects of British education, particularly in Egypt, and the numbers of young Egyptians receiving British education and values had increased dramatically. This points towards the conclusion that British educational schemes in the Middle East can be described as a successful method of cultural propaganda, with a large target audience, particularly amongst the Egyptian youth, serving not only as a means of instilling British values amongst the youth but also in improving the prestige of Britain, a point highlighted by the desire to obtain British qualifications rather than the local equivalents.

Despite the mixed success of British educational programmes in Egypt, there were numerous smaller, more exclusive institutes formed with the intention of improving cultural relations between Britain and Egypt, the largest of which was the Anglo-Egyptian Union³¹, created in 1936 following the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. A report focusing on the AEU by a special sub-committee created to consider the extension of cultural activities sought to develop ways in which the AEU could increase activity building upon methods that were deemed feasible and implemented successfully during its first year of its existence. The methods used by the AEU to

³⁰ PRO, BW 29/3, *Suggestions for the Possible Development of British Education, Culture etc. in Egypt*, July 4th 1935, pp.1-2

³¹ Referred to henceforth as AEU

spread British culture consisted mainly of the organisation of lectures delivered to members and their guests, taking place both fortnightly and weekly when available and demand necessitated the extra lectures. The recommendations of the report were divided into two sections; direct educational work, and more ‘definitively cultural’ work³², both of which were considered at great length by the sub-committee. Of the recommendations discussed in the report, those relating directly to education were deemed to be unnecessary, and outside the sphere of the AEU. However, the committee did agree to assist the AEU with the broader cultural activities recommended in the report, and agreed that a cultural director should be appointed to aid the AEU effectively undertake work of a cultural nature. Accompanying the recommendations is a list of AEU arranged lectures taking place both at the Union itself and the lecture hall of the Royal Geographical Society. The programme of lectures ran from November 1937 to April 1938, covering such topics as Egyptian Drama and Film, the place of Parliament in British history, the idea of Commonwealth in the British Empire, and English literature on the Near East. The lectures took place on the evening, and while the addresses themselves ranged from 30 to 60 minutes, guests arrived early and remained after the lecture itself to socialise. Despite the continuing attendances of members and guests, the success of the AEU in promoting British cultural values was limited, as membership of the group was restricted largely to intellectuals, which lead Colonel Bridge to conclude that the group was not successful in the field of education due to this limited appeal³³.

The outbreak of war in Europe can be seen as a crucial point in changing British propaganda policy as a whole; however the work of the British Council in Egypt remained relatively unaffected by events in Europe. A reorganisation of staff

³² PRO, BW 29/4, *Extract of Minutes from 24th Meeting of the Ambassador’s Advisory Committee on Education*, January 14th 1938

³³ PRO, BW 29/4, *Letter From Col. Bridge to White*, March 13th 1938, Annexe A, p.4

and Offices of the Evening Institute was drafted, and it was arranged that the institute would only disseminate 'news and views as is consistent with the British Council's policy of refraining from any form of political propaganda or interference'³⁴. The British Council's work to improve cultural influence in Egypt was also more widely unaffected by the war in Europe, and the scheme of creating a teacher training college in Cairo was put into place in November 1939, with courses due to start in December, three years after it was originally suggested. This shows the importance of education as a means of improving cultural relations to the British Council, and the outbreak of war can be seen as a catalyst for improving the quality of teaching staff at British schools in Egypt, which had been an unrealised aim until this point.

Despite the large amount of effort on the part of the British Council developing a better organised and more effective British based education within the Middle East, particularly within Egypt, this was not the only significant approach to cultural propaganda adopted by Britain in the region. A more overt form of cultural propaganda adopted by Britain directed at influencing the Middle and Near east can appear in the form of BBC broadcasts in Arabic. The nature of the BBC Arabic broadcast service differed from the work of the British Council in the region in one major respect; that it was not an improvement on an existing set of apparatus as the British Council attempted concerning education, but rather a direct response to the propaganda emanating from a foreign power, in this case Italy.

The possibility of the BBC broadcasting programmes in foreign language was raised as early as June 1936, in a memorandum entitled 'The Possible Use of Languages Other Than English in the Empire Broadcasting Service'. It was argued

³⁴ PRO, BW 29/5, *Reorganisation of the Staff and Offices of the Evening Institute in Egypt in the Event of War* by C A F Dundas, September 30th 1939

that the creation of a foreign language service would have a positive effect on the projection of Britain and its values, stating that such a programme should be encouraged as British prestige and influence in world affairs would be increased abroad³⁵. However, foreign language broadcasting did not become a reality until 1938, after 3 years of overtly anti-British propaganda had emerged from the Italian Radio Bari. The broadcasts of Radio Bari were aimed at audiences in the Italian colony of Libya as well as Morocco, Palestine, Egypt, and the Red Sea region and did not begin as being hostile towards Britain. The station broadcast Eastern news and music with the intention of acting as cultural propaganda designed to increase Italian influence in the Middle East by praising Italy and the Fascist system³⁶. Rome stated that the service was intended to ‘strengthen ties between Italy and the Arab peoples’, with MacDonald stating two clear aims for the original purpose of Bari. Firstly, Italy wished to restore its prestige in the Arab world which had been damaged by the Senussi massacres during the re-conquest of Cyrenaica. The second was to register Italian interest in the area, as Italy felt she had been unfairly excluded from by Britain and France. MacDonald also highlights the point that radio was the ideal medium for propaganda in the region where many were illiterate with 10,000 individuals being license holders in Palestine alone by 1935, a figure which continued to rise with Italy producing cheap radio sets for Arab customers³⁷. However following the Abyssinian crisis of September 1935 Radio Bari ‘abandoned cultural propaganda for an outright attack on British policy’³⁸. A Foreign Office report dated September 24th 1936 stated that Italian efforts targeted mainly Moslems within Palestine and Egypt as these areas

³⁵ PRO, CO 323/1390/14, *Memorandum on the Possible Use of Languages Other than English in The Empire Broadcasting Service*

³⁶ C A MacDonald, *Radio Bari: Italian Wireless Propaganda in the Middle East and British Countermeasures 1934-1938*, Middle Eastern Studies, vol.13, no.2, p.195

³⁷ *Ibid.* pp.195-196

³⁸ *Ibid.* p.196

housed nationalist groups who were strongly opposed to British rule. The report also notes that the Bari broadcasts had supported the both the September and December uprisings of 1935 in Egypt, and harboured the intention of inciting rebellion against British rule by claiming British support for a Jewish war against Arabs, citing poor treatment of Moslems under British rule as its precedent³⁹.

Despite the immediate threat to British interests caused by the Bari broadcasts, progress was slow in developing a service that would counter the high output of anti-British propaganda. This was partly due to the reluctance of the BBC, priding itself as being an independent company not under government control, as it was feared that in addressing part of its programming to foreign countries it would be seen to openly participate in propaganda and have a negative impact upon the organisations credibility⁴⁰. With these concerns in mind a compromise was eventually reached in 1938, with Sir John Reith acting as the only direct contact between the BBC and the Foreign Office, thus ensuring the independence of the BBC from Foreign Office. The BBC Arabic broadcasts began transmitting on January 3rd 1938 and can be judged as an almost immediate success with numerous reports stating that Italy had began constructing wireless disturber stations on Sardinia, suggesting that Mussolini feared the possibility of hostile broadcasts directed towards areas on Italian influence in a similar fashion to those emanating from Radio Bari.

Finally in the region, the use of film as a means of cultural propaganda was utilised in the classic sense as defined by Taylor; a means of showcasing British achievements and aims. A report on film work produced by the Travel and Industrial Development Committee highlights three key areas for film distribution; British

³⁹ PRO, FO 371/20027, *Report on Palestine*, September 24th 1936

⁴⁰ P M Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919-1939*, pp.193-194

Newsreels abroad, the production and distribution of British documentary films abroad, and British fiction films. Regarding British Documentary films, the British Council agreed to expand upon the arrangements for the distribution of films in foreign theatres by distributing films for free, in areas such as the Near East with the British Council donating £400 and £1,200 in the financial years 1936/37 and 1937/38 respectively for the necessary copies of these 'free' films across 22 countries⁴¹. There was however a demarcation between the British Council and the Travel Association concerning the focus of the types of film to be distributed, with the Council seeking to utilise films of a cultural or education character, while the Travel Association sought to focus upon those containing a tourist or industrialist theme.

The minutes of the Joint Committee on Films meeting held in October 1937 outline the plans for the distribution of suitable films in various world regions. Concerning the Middle and Near East, Primrose stated that he had guaranteed the distribution of six British films in Egypt, but faced difficulties finalising distribution in Palestine and Iraq which was delayed until May 1938. Despite this mixed success, the six films despatched to Egypt were aired in December 1937, and 2 reels of a prestige film of the Royal Navy was produced and distributed for Cinema release in early May 1938. Six films were also released in Iraq and ran for two weeks at cinemas in Basra and Baghdad; however reports stated that the films were of little interest to the local cinema audience as only a minority were able to understand them⁴². In Palestine, the same six films were considered 'extremely suitable and likely to be popular not only with British policemen and their families, but with the Jewish and

⁴¹ PRO, BW 4/26, *Report on Film Work*, pp.2-3, March 1938

⁴² PRO, BW 2/35, *Report on Distribution of Films by the Joint Committee on Films*, May 1938

European communities generally', and were set to be released one per month over six months, each showing for a period of 4 weeks⁴³.

The continued distribution of British produced films throughout late 1937 and Early 1938 in the region would suggest that the use of film as a medium of cultural propaganda can be considered a success, due to the continued development and continued investment the Joint Committee on Films continued to receive from the British Council. The wide release of these films in cinemas across the Near and Middle East would also suggest that these films reached a large audience, with the release of films to schools within Egypt showing that the educational aspirations behind the British Council's use of film had again been achieved on a limited scale. However, it is difficult to judge the success of the films as a medium of cultural propaganda in particular whether films showcasing British achievements, for example the film *Precision* which dealt with the accuracy of British manufacturing processes⁴⁴, would have a wide appeal to foreign audiences and in turn cast Britain in a more favourable light. Reports from Palestine stating the films would be deemed a success are contradicted by those received from Iraq suggesting such films garnered little interest from local audiences, which suggests that the reception of British Films in the region varied greatly upon local lines, making it impossible to judge the effectiveness of British film as a medium of cultural propaganda in the Near and Middle East during the interwar period.

⁴³ PRO, BW 2/35, *Views of the District Commissioner of Jerusalem and the Chairmen of the Palestine Censorship Board conveyed to E H Samuel in Report on Distribution on Films by the Joint Committee on Films, Annexe A, part V*, March 1938

⁴⁴ PRO, BW 2/35, *Report on Showing of Films at GPO Film Unit by Croom-Johnson*, November 12th 1937

British Cultural Propaganda in Europe

The work of the British Council in Europe draws many parallels with that undertaken in the Near and Middle East during the mid to late 1930s. The use of education as a means of increasing cultural influence played a large role in British cultural propaganda in both regions, with other media such as the use of film both documentary as well as newsreel playing a supporting role in showcasing British achievements as well as portraying British life and culture in a positive light.

However, the role of education as a method of cultural propaganda in Europe differed from that in the Middle East, in particular Egypt, as British educational facilities had to compete against pre-existing national organisations where it none had been present in the Middle Eastern region. In place of the variety of pre, primary, and secondary schools established in the Middle East catering for both children of British and foreign descent, the main focus of British education in Europe lay with various 'British Institutions', thus so did the potential avenues for improving cultural influence within Europe.

Education and Cultural Propaganda within Italy

Perhaps the most renowned institute was located at Pallaza Antinori in Florence. The institute was founded in 1918 at the cessation of the First World War under the aegis of a Committee of English residents and Italian professors with the support of the British Ministry of propaganda⁴⁵, following advice to the British government from those involved with ‘the struggle against enemy propaganda’ to subsidise a centre for the serious study of English in what was considered the intellectual capital of Italy. The centre received government funding until 1921 despite a recommendation by the Foreign Office appointed to enquire into British activities abroad. However, the prestige of the Institute, and in turn Britain, was not damaged as funding arrived from other sources; originally from Sir Walter Becker, a British shipping magnate, between 1921 and 1924 and an annual grant received from the Serena Foundation⁴⁶. From 1925 onwards, the Institute survived on the final one million lire donation by Sir Becker and two grants from Sir Daniel Stevenson and Miss S R Courtauld, each amounting to £10,000. Despite these sources of private funding, the 1935 brochure suggests that the economic survival of the institute was becoming threatened due to the depreciation in value of Sterling, and the conversion operations in Britain and Italy which reduce interest on investments from 5% to 3.5%. Lord Rennell highlights the importance placed upon the French institutes located at London, Rome and Florence, and duly notes that the high level of investment reflects the important of education means of cultural influence, and further states that

⁴⁵ BW 40/2, *Report on the British Institute at Florence*, December 7th 1934

⁴⁶ PRO, BW 40/2, *British Institute of Florence Appeal of Behalf on Lord Rennell*, January 1935, pp.1-2

‘in an age of democracy the friendships of nations depends upon public opinion, and it should therefore be our constant endeavour to attach and inform that opinion, especially among the young’⁴⁷

The view of Rennell concerning the important role of educational facilities in strengthening national ties as well as improving cultural relations echo the thoughts of many within the British Council related to the programme of educational development in the Middle East. The importance of the Institute was recognised by the British Council as early as December 1934, with a report stating that there can be no doubt as to the Institutes success citing the award of 26 Teachers’ Diplomas in English to students, with thousands of Italians in turn being taught by ex-students in Government secondary schools across Italy⁴⁸. Despite the noted success of the Institute, the report concludes by highlighting the need to increase British influence in Italian higher education, as at the close of 1934 there was only one Chair of English in all Italian Universities compared to seven French and Eight German Chairs.

In a memorandum on the history and present position of the Institute supplied to the British Council by Captain Harold E Goad, Director of the British Institute at Florence between 1922 and 1939, it is noted that the interest of the above mentioned donations, together with student fees, annual subscriptions from British Universities, and fees of British and Italian visitors in Florence who subscribe to gain usage of the library and reading rooms are the main source of funding, but also that donations of books were received from the Foreign Office, as well as up to date popular British newspapers. The memorandum concludes with an assessment of the value and future possibilities of the Institute⁴⁹, stating that the success of its work is difficult to gauge, noting that while between 100-150 ex-students have entered Italian secondary schools

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.3

⁴⁸ PRO, BW 40/2, *Report on the British Institute at Florence*, December 7th 1934

⁴⁹ PRO, BW 40/2, *Memorandum on the History and Present Position of the British Institute at Florence*, February 1935, pp.3-4

and have greatly improved the teaching of English, the language still falls behind the teaching of French and German within Italy, highlighted by the greater number of university chairs held by students of French and German. The memorandum also notes that the Institute was 'heavily handicapped by need of the strictest economy', with increasing student fees and restrictions on printing being of 'doubtful advantage to its work'. The desiderata of the Institute were listed as the reduction of fees for students, the ability to grant scholarships to benefit poorer students, to invite students of Italian from British universities with the possibility of an exchange scheme, and to invite well known British lecturers to speak at the institute on a regular basis. The memorandum concludes that 'if these aims are attained, it is confidently predicted that its work could be greatly extended'⁵⁰.

Taylor also recognises the somewhat strange relationship between the treasury and the funding available for propaganda, stating that although there was an argument that qualitative rather than quantitative propaganda was more effective, it was still in essence a financially expedient argument. Taylor does highlight the rapid increase in funding available to the British Council, from £500 in 1935 to £330,000 by 1939⁵¹ however it must also be noted that this budget was not solely for cultural propaganda, let alone the educational aspects of this work. Thus, the relatively low official funding available for quasi-official organisations such as the British Institute at Florence cannot be considered as an aberration, but simply as an unavoidable consequence of the nature of British propaganda when compared to the fully state organised and heavily funded apparatus of the totalitarian regimes. This relatively low level of

⁵⁰ PRO, BW 40/2, *Memorandum on the History and Present Position of the British Institute at Florence*, February 1935, p.4

⁵¹ P M Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919-1939*, p.294

funding available to the Institute at Florence and other aspects of British propaganda work can be seen to stem from the historical reluctance of the treasury to invest in peacetime propaganda. Following the First World War, the Treasury proved reluctant to accept proposals for peacetime propaganda. While conceding propaganda activities could not be terminated immediately, it was expected that the Foreign Office would discontinue any type of propaganda once it began failing to produce positive results⁵². Cultural propaganda was outlawed entirely and only work of a commercial nature rather than political should be performed during peacetime. On one hand, it can be argued that the Treasury distrusted the propaganda apparatus, in particular the Ministry of Information, due to its accountability to the Prime Minister rather than the Treasury or Parliament. Conversely, the reluctance to fund British propaganda can be considered to have developed from the political ideal that any propaganda, to a lesser extent economic or commercial propaganda, was considered 'un-British'. Thus, the Treasury was more likely to favour propaganda which would promote British trade and commercial interest rather than an 'uncharacteristic form of self-glorification'⁵³.

Despite the inconsistent and often haphazard approach of the Treasury regarding the funding of propaganda, the continued success of the Institute as a cultural tool was again highlighted in correspondence between Goad and Col. Bridge, which focused upon the activities of the Institute regarding British music. Goad offers a brief description of a small concert performed by Italian musicians, set up by a student named Floris, who incorporated musicians from the Florentine Youth Orchestra, and the intentions of Floris to perform another concert focusing upon contemporary British music, which Goad notes was as unknown as the classic British

⁵² P M Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century: Selling Democracy*, p.71

⁵³ P M Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century: Selling Democracy*, pp.71-72

works. Goad further states that British printed music was a rare commodity and as such, many concerts featuring the work of composers of various nationalities performed little or no British music due to this. Goad also comments on the popularity of British books, citing the example of the Board of Trade's participation at the triennial International Book Fair held in Florence in 1928 with sales exceeding those of any other nation represented, and states that the inability of the Institute to fund such endeavours is common across all areas of cultural expansion, and requests 'a few hundred pounds' to provide funding for similar events⁵⁴ and improve the effectiveness of the Institute in expanding the projection of Britain. This letter again highlights both success and difficulties concerning British cultural expansion in Italy, as while it is suggest that there were numerous opportunities available for exploitation of cultural gains, lack of funding prevented any serious attempt to promote British cultural achievements in music or to distribute British literature or books with Britain as the subject as the DOT had in 1928. As stated in the first chapter, the funding available for propaganda purposes was limited during the early to mid 1930s, however Goad succeeded in acquiring a £200 grant in October 1935 the aid the Institutes involvement in expanding its cultural activities in Florence other than the teaching of English at a university standard⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ PRO, BW 40/2, *Letter from Harold Goad to Col. White Bridge*, March 28th 1935

⁵⁵ PRO, BW 40/2, *Letter to Goad confirming grant of £200*, October 10th 1935

The Abyssinian Crisis and Cultural Propaganda in Italy

The influence of the Institute within Italy was greatly affected by the deepening Abyssinian Crisis. Throughout 1935 Italy had sought to expand its influence in Africa by conquering Abyssinia, and despite the Franco-Italian agreement of January 1935 granting Italy parts of French Somaliland Italian aggression continued towards Ethiopia. Despite claims of Italian Military build up, the League of Nations was slow to react, and in late September Abyssinia mobilised its ineffective army in an attempt to halt hostilities quickly. The League of Nations deemed Italy as the aggressor, and began the process of imposing economic sanctions against Italy; leading to strained relations between Italy and countries within the League, including Britain.

This had a marked effect upon British propaganda, as noted above concerning the Radio Bari situation in the Middle East, as well as serving to highlight the importance with which the leading powers now viewed propaganda in regard to international relations. The issue of propaganda had become a significant one with bearing upon international relations; the best example being the thorny issue of Italian propaganda and British countermeasures both in direct response to anti-British propaganda and representations of Italy becoming a significant factor in negotiating Anglo-Italian rapprochement between 1937 and 1938⁵⁶, with Britain stating ‘The cessation of propaganda was not a pre-condition of the opening of conversations, but

⁵⁶ See PRO, PREM 1/276

that it was necessary in order to create an atmosphere in which such conversations could be successful⁵⁷.

Reports sent from Goad concerning Italian public opinion towards the Institute at Florence, and in turn Britain and her policy towards Italy suggest that despite his best efforts to maintain good relations via private networks of friends, the Italian attitude was one of 'aggrieved defiance' against the economic sanctions imposed by the League, with Britain bearing the brunt of hostility⁵⁸. Goad also stated that the number of students for the academic year 1935-36 fell from 250 to 100, attributed to a distinct boycott of the English language and culture in all secondary schools meaning that there was no need for prospective teachers to learn English at the time. By March 1936 every Anglo-Italian organisation had collapsed with the exception of the British Institute, and due to the lack of trade between Britain and Italy, the English language had lost all commercial value, placing the Institute in a precarious position.

The negative effects of the Abyssinian crisis were apparent not only in relation to the British Institute, but with all British related activities viewed with hostility by the Italian public. In a letter from Goad to Dr J W Mackail, Goad states that all things British are despised, and that the British public had no idea of how strong the 'revulsion of feeling' was within Italy. However, more disturbingly on a cultural level, Goad stated

'the Germans are everywhere triumphant. They are not only ousting our trade products from Italian markets with long-term contracts....but they are re-establishing their political and social position with the deliberate design of undoing our work⁵⁹.'

This suggests that despite the success of the Institute through the 1920s and early 1930s in providing a base for cultural propaganda in Italy, the Abyssinian crisis had

⁵⁷ PRO, PREM 1/276, *De Jure Recognition as a Bargaining Counter*, December 29th 1937

⁵⁸ PRO, BW 40/2, *Letter From Goad to Col. Bridge*, November 18th 1935

⁵⁹ PRO, BW 40/2, *Extract from a letter from Goad to Dr Mackail*, March 24th 1936

not only lowered British prestige but had also allowed the cultural propaganda of foreign countries, in particular Germany, to dominate and undermine British efforts to maintain friendly relations with Italy via strong cultural ties. The gains made by Germany in the cultural sphere were further highlighted by Goad in November 1936, summarising developments regarding German influence in education. Goad states that Germany was now taught at all Italian universities with full Professorial Chairs permanently established at Padua, Milan, Turin, Genoa, Florence, Bologna, Rome, Pisa, Naples and Palermo, with the creation of prizes for Italian students of German as well as catering for travelling students for Italy to Germany in exchange programmes between the Goethe Haus of Rome and the Petrarca House of Cologne. It was also noted that in Rome alone there were four Italo-German institutes including the German Academy for Artists and the German Archaeological Institution⁶⁰, compared to the sole British asset, the British Institute.

The fortunes of the British cultural programme in Italy again changed in accordance with general relations between Britain and Italy, however despite the signing of the Mediterranean Pact there were many reservations with regard to rebuilding Anglo-Italian friendship⁶¹. The Italian press was described as ‘satisfied’ with the agreement, and that Italian public opinion was no longer anti-British, with an overwhelming feeling of sincere relief that the period of tension between the two nations over the Abyssinian Crisis had passed. In terms of rebuilding the friendship and once again increasing British cultural influence Goad proposed several measures to expand the activities of the Institute; increasing the number of summer schools in London and providing free tickets for top students, and expanding the current English bulletin to include a wider subject variety and articles by scholars based outside

⁶⁰ PRO, BW 40/2, *Letter from Goad to Bridge*, November 18th 1936

⁶¹ PRO, BW 40/2, *Letter from Goad to Leeper*, January 7th 1937

Florence, as well as extending a branch of the Institute outside Florence. The recovery of the Institute following the completion of the Gentleman's Agreement is charted in the 1937 Annual Report of the Board of Governors. The total number of students attending the British Institute for the academic year 1936-37 was 203 excluding external students, compared to 156 for the 1935-36 year, while an extension of the Institute based in Milan received 20 regular students of which three out of four fifth year students won the Teacher's Diploma⁶². The increase in the number of students at the Institute compared to the previous academic year not only suggests a positive correlation between perceptions of Britain and international politics, but also shows that the continued work of the Institute had begun to regain ground lost to German cultural programmes in the 12 months following the Abyssinian crisis.

Following the success of the British Institute branch at Milan, it was agreed that a grant of £350 would be made available to continue the expansion to Urbino, which proved fruitful with the branch achieving attendance of 40 students participating in three courses on English Literature⁶³. The academic year 1937-38 was also the first in which the Institute received a larger subsidy from the British Council, including the guarantee of a pension of £100 per year to staff at the Institute and the creation of scholarships offered to Italian students for the London Holiday Course. The Council also offered a further £600 per annum to provide for an additional Professor of English who would also act as Assistant Director of the Institute, with the appointment confirmed in December 1937 of Ronald Bottrall of Pembroke College. This increased investment from the British Council shows that the British government not only valued the long standing contribution by the Institute to fostering cultural relations between Britain and Italy, but also recognised that maintaining good

⁶² PRO, BW 40/2, *The British Institute of Florence Annual Report*, November 1937

⁶³ PRO, BW 40/3, *Letter from Goad to Bridge*, February 14th 1938

relations with Italy were of the utmost importance concerning the worsening European situation. This increased investment also indicated that cultural propaganda had become a significant part of international relations, and was now recognised as a key area of foreign policy crucial to achieving the aim of maintaining a European peace.

The fact that the success of Institute at Florence can be seen to vary greatly between 1935 and 1938 serves to highlight the vulnerability of cultural propaganda to changing international relations. It may seem an obvious statement that when the policy of the British government stood in opposition against that of Mussolini the popularity of Britain, and in turn its foreign institutes will suffer. Yet one of the purposes of cultural propaganda is to act as a cushion against the negative effects of such events, in attempting to maintain good relations and creating an arena other than that of the political where the British view can be aired with the opportunity to be understood. The presence of such cultural institutes also serves the purpose of allowing 'Britishness' to be viewed as separate from government policy, and that the concept of 'British' is not negative despite hostility towards British policy.

The success of the British Institute at Florence was judged officially by the British Council on two criteria. The first was 'its popular success with the local British Colony in attracting subscribers, and a few prominent foreigners, to popular lectures and to the use of the library of well known modern books'. The second criteria for judging the success of a British Institute was 'its success in creating a number of scholars capable of teaching out language in the schools of their own country and imbued with a knowledge and appreciation of the higher values of our

thought and literature'⁶⁴. By using these criteria, it is possible to chart the development of the Institute from 1935, when the British Council became the controlling organisation for the production and promotion of British cultural propaganda. The figures of both the attendance of pupils studying English at this higher level and the number of subscribers to the Institute appear in the annual reports, along with a brief description of the activities undertaken over the previous 12 months, and a summary of the summer course for Italian students held in London.

The number of subscriptions for the academic period correlates with the number of students attending each academic year, with 250 students for the year 1934-35, falling 103 students and subscribers for the academic year 1935-36⁶⁵, rising to a number of 256 for the year 1936-37, with 300 for 1937-38, and finally 289 students for the academic year 1938-39⁶⁶. These figures show that the total number of students had rose progressively as the Institute expanded to provide branches of learning in Milan and Urbino. The anomalous figure in this respect is that of the academic session 1935-36. However this was not due to a failing on the part of the Institute, rather a reflection of increased international tension following the League of Nations economic sanctions placed upon Italy following the Abyssinian crisis, and due to the prominent role of Britain within the League, this manifested in a hostility towards Britain and its institutions representing her in Italy.

With regard to the second official criteria of judging the success of the Institute, the number of Diploma's granted in the academic year 1938-39 was 22, with 39 students granted the *Certificati di Licenza*, compared to the award of 4 Higher and

⁶⁴ PRO, BW 40/2, *The British Institute of Florence* extract, May 13th 1935

⁶⁵ PRO, BW 40/2, *Letter From Goad to Col. Bridge*, November 18th 1935

⁶⁶ PRO, BW 40/2, *British Institute of Florence Annual Report 1935-36*, BW 40/4, *British Institute of Florence Annual Report 1937-38* and *British Institute Interim Report 1939*

20 Teacher's Diploma's awarded in 1936-37, and 26 Diploma's granted in 1934⁶⁷.

This suggests an average of 25 scholars capable of teaching both the English language and positive values of Britain at a higher standard emerging per year, and taking teaching positions within the existing Italian education system. Thus, using official markers to gauge the success of the Institute at Florence, the work conducted in the educational and cultural sphere can be deemed as a success, with high student attendance and subscription to the institute, as well as providing a consistent stream of highly educated scholars imbued with greater knowledge and appreciation of the higher values of British thought and Literature. This also serves to highlight the long term strategy of British education policy in relation to cultural propaganda, in that it was deemed essential to educate a generation of teachers with a good understanding of Britain who would in turn educate the primary and secondary schools imparting a similarly positive view of Britain and her culture.

Aside from educational methods of cultural propaganda, private connections were also utilised. Harold Goad, in the midst of the Abyssinian crisis and the imposition of sanctions placed upon Italy by the League of Nations, attempted to not only improve the public opinion regarding the Institute at Florence, but also improve general opinion of Britain. Due to the hostile public opinion towards Britain following the sanction imposition, Goad attempted to use private connections with influential individuals to maintain good relations with Italians, and in turn help ensure the British Institute at Florence retained its good reputation. Goad states that his personal efforts to maintain friendly relations were 'received with sympathy, and even with a certain kindly emphasis'⁶⁸. Goad placed a wreath at the memorial to Italian soldiers on

⁶⁷ PRO, BW 40/2, *British Institute of Florence Annual Report 1935-36* and *Letter From Goad to Col. Bridge*, November 18th 1935, BW 40/4, *British Institute of Florence Annual Report 1937-38* and *British Institute Interim Report 1939*,

⁶⁸ PRO, BW 40/2, *Letter from Goad to Bridge*, November 18th 1935

Armistice Day which was 'sympathetically reported' in the Italian press, and also held a reception with over 100 guests held on the afternoon of the same day. Despite many Italians politely declining Goad's invitation apart from former students and institute staff, suggesting that many were unwilling to attend an Anglo-Italian gathering. Goad also stated that he continued to frequent Rotary Club meetings, including a planned visit to the Paris branch on November 27th to meet a large gathering of British and Italian Rotarians and discuss the present situation. The efforts of Goad to utilise private relations to ease Anglo-Italian relations, in particular the attitude towards the British Institute, were little more successful than the attempts of the Anglo-German Fellowship. The Institute at Florence did once more see an increase in students from the academic year 1936/37 onwards, however this can be attributed more to the improvement in political relations between the two nations and the negotiations for Anglo-Italian rapprochement which ultimately led to British recognition of Italy's position in Abyssinia rather than the effect of maintaining friendly personal relationships with individual Italians.

Educational Investments in France

Regarding central Europe, the British Council also held a vested interest in utilising education as a means of cultural propaganda. The British Institute of Paris, formed in 1894 by Edith Williams, began life as the Anglo-French Guild, before developing into the British Institute in 1926, which became affiliated to the University of Paris in 1928⁶⁹. The Institute at Paris had a similar role to that based in Florence, mainly educating students to a high level of English offering teaching diplomas as a means to educate young French pupils in English as well as improving cultural understanding between the two nations. The Institute catered for both British and French students, with numbers increasing dramatically following its rebranding from the 'Anglo-French Guild' to the British Institute of Paris. For the academic year 1929-30, the institute catered for 164 French and 74 British students, with 20 and 23 hours of lectures respectively. This number had increased to 553 French and 222 British students for the academic year 1936-37, with a further increase in students for the following year, with 613 French and 256 British students at the school, amounting to 54 hours of lecture time for French students, and 60 allocated to British students⁷⁰.

The methods of education implemented by the Institute at Paris were similar in nature to those used at Florence, such as the use of summer schools and exchange programmes, the maintenance of a fully stocked library of British literature, and the use of guest lecturers. The lectures at the Institute were of a similar nature to those presented at the Institute in Florence and those presented to the Anglo-Egyptian Union, for example guest lectures for the year 1934-1935 presented subjects such as

⁶⁹ PRO, BW 31/4, *British Institute in Paris: Report by Director*, October 7th 1939

⁷⁰ PRO, BW 31/2, *Memorandum on the Need for a New Building*, May 1938

*The Place of the Civil Service in Britain, English Women in Politics, and What National Government Means*⁷¹. The success of these lectures held both at the British Institute and at the University of Paris attracted audiences of up to 800 people, and their success was recognised by the British Council who in turn funded a scheme whereby lecturers would proceed to other French Universities and provincial centres after delivering two to three lectures in Paris itself.

Due to the relative proximity of the Institute of Paris to Britain when compared to the Institute of Florence, the organisation of summer courses and guest speakers was much more common, partly due to easier logistics and significantly cheaper travel costs. For example, in contrast to the single summer school held in London on behalf of the Institute at Florence, there were six courses available to French students, designed specifically to combine a stay in the United Kingdom with the study of a particular aspect of British culture. Four of the courses took place in London, three of which covered the subjects of English language and literature with the remaining course teaching practical dramatic production, with the final two courses taking place in Cardiff and St Albans, encompassing a commercial course in focusing upon English banking and commerce and educational and recreational gymnastics respectively⁷². However, despite the appointment of a director at the Institute, the ultimate control of policy lay with the executive committee in London, of which Lord Crewe was chairman. This allowed the focus upon higher education to take a more overtly political role, as the Institute also cooperated with the War office during 1939 by providing for British officers wishing to take the Interpreter's exam, with candidates taking the course in the Autumn months as well as spending time

⁷¹ PRO, BW 31/2, *List of Lectures Delivered at the British Institute in Paris 1934-35*

⁷² PRO, BW 31/2, *Holiday Courses in the British Isles Suitable for Foreign Students, 1938*

serving with French military units⁷³. Despite this obvious preparation for the outbreak of war, the report of the Director of the Institute of October 1939 focuses largely upon the successes of the Institute in teaching both French and English to British and French students respectively, and the number of former students working within the French education system as a means of quantifying the work of the Institute. The report states that using the French Census of 1938 showed that of amongst teachers of English in French Schools, more than 600 were former students of the Institute at Paris, and that highlighted the extent to which the Institute was able to influence the French education system as well as stating that Interpreter courses for both French and British Officers alike, and various ‘correspondence courses’ highlighted that the Institute was ‘an instrument of the first importance in strengthening and extending cultural relations between England and France, not only in Paris, but also in the Provinces in a wide and varied way’⁷⁴. Despite the admitted focus upon higher education, the report notes that the Institute had increasingly developed its activities as a centre of cultural propaganda in France, and that these should be further increased by increasing the opportunities for social contacts between English and French people within the Institute, encouraging more popular British lecturers to visit France, and by increasing the amount of elementary English instruction already provided by the Institute. However, the report notes the negative effects of war upon the Institute, highlighting the difficulties in enrolling British students during war time and the economic impact a lack of students would create, estimating a potential loss of up to £3,031. The headquarters of the British Institute at Paris were moved to Reading University in October 1939, and continued its educational work, granting four scholarships to British Students, one of whom hailed from Australia, however the

⁷³ PRO, BW 31/4, *British Institute in Paris: Report by the Director*, October 7th 1939

⁷⁴ PRO, BW31/4, *British Institute in Paris: Report by the Director*, October 7th 1939

main focus of the Institute during war time was in appealing to British students with an interest in France, and providing English lessons to French nationals within Britain, including members of the Free French Forces.

The Institute continued its educational work throughout war time, and in abiding by the British Council charter attempted to concern itself with the spread of ideas about Britain to foreign nationals, with Honorary Secretary Townroe stating that as late as March 1941 the Institute was approached by Lord Cromer, Captain Bullock and Oliver Harvey concerning ‘a plan of action to disseminate information about the British point of view’ concerning the war to French residents within Britain as well as the Free French Colonies⁷⁵.

The work of the British Institute at Paris can be seen as a highly successful endeavour due to the importance placed upon the employment of former students in the French education system. This illustrates an approach to cultural propaganda by Britain that not only sought to influence and educate those with intelligence but desired to influence the views and opinions of former students so that when embarking upon a career in education, a career which over 600 students did indeed pursue, future generations would be influenced by the Institute via its former students.

As well as the British Institute in Paris, another key educational facility in the region was the Paris British School. The school was founded in 1832, was independently funded and free from control of the British Embassy in France, and provided a British education for the children of former British soldiers who married French wives following the cessation of the First World War. The aim of the school during the 1930s was to educate the British children who would be second generation

⁷⁵ PRO, BW 31/4, *Letter from Townroe to Ifor Evans*, March 20th 1941

French nationals, in particularly the ‘lower class’ of British residents in Paris who spoke only French at home and provided most of the pupils attending the school⁷⁶. In December 1936 F B Stead compiled a report on the school stating that roughly half of the 60 pupils present, ranging from the ages of 6-17, had studied previously in French education, with five attending schools in England, one in Scotland, five more in other countries and fourteen having never attended school before. In terms of the success of pupils at the school, the report states that between nineteen students had taken the British chamber of Commerce exam, with only one failure between 1933 and 1936, while in the subject of Shorthand, thirty-four of thirty-nine students successfully completed examinations during the same period⁷⁷. Stead also asserts that there was a steady demand for a school of this type in the area, which further suggests that the school can be seen as a successful means of cultural propaganda, due to the high number of students able to secure clerical and civil service jobs both in France and Britain due to a combination of qualifications gained and bilingual abilities. The reports of Stead and Noble Hall served to nullify the schools’ minor standing in comparison to the Institute at Paris, leading to the British Council providing a recurring grant of £1000 in order to maintain operations⁷⁸ following a memorandum based on these reports produced by Henry Pelham, as well an additional grant of £408 in February 1940⁷⁹. The increased funding of the school again highlights the importance of education as a means of cultural propaganda, as large numbers of students attained jobs in the civil service positions of both France and Britain, many of whom had received an education that also offered positive views on Anglo-French

⁷⁶ PRO, BW 31/15, *M Noble Hall: Notes on Paris British School*, December 14th 1938

⁷⁷ PRO, BW 31/15, *Report by F B Stead on Visit to Paris British School*, December 1936

⁷⁸ PRO, BW 31/15, *British Council summary of Grants 1939-40*, March 29th 1940

⁷⁹ PRO, BW 31/15, *Letter to Sellon*, February 3rd 1940

relations and had reached a position in which it was possible to assert their personal beliefs upon others within wider social and political structures.

Cultural Efforts in Germany

The focus of the British Council upon education as a means of cultural propaganda can be seen as a key feature within the overall policy of British propaganda during the 1930s; that of projecting a positive image of Britain and the promotion of mutual understanding between Britain and other nations. However, there were also alternative methods of improving cultural relations with European countries with the intention of having a more immediate effect upon relations than the long-term strategy of investing British values via educational facilities. For example, an attempt to form greater bonds between Britain and German academics can be found regarding Heidelberg University. The head of the English Department at the University contacted the British Council stating that although Britain had the available institutes to develop a greater cultural understanding of foreign countries, the view of Britain in this manner was completely unsupported in Germany⁸⁰. A lecture programme was designed to combat this; however there were substantial fears amongst both the British Council and Foreign Office that a reciprocal course of German lectures would need to be held in Britain. This would mean letting German propaganda, widely recognised as being a state affair, penetrate Britain where it could develop freely as there was ‘no such censorship to exercise a curbing effect’ as there would be facing British educational and cultural work within Germany⁸¹. Despite the difficulties in promoting Britain in Germany, lectures held at German Universities, distribution of pro-British literature and the creation of essay writing competitions on the subject of Britain, British influence in the educational sphere can be seen as

⁸⁰ PRO, BW 32/1, *Letter from Head of English at Heidelberg University to Bridge*, 1937

⁸¹ PRO, BW 32/1, *Letter from Phipps to Eden*, February 7th 1936

negligible, and as such a near total failure in comparison to similar efforts in France, Italy and the Middle East.

One such alternative strategy was to utilise private networks and independent groups to maintain friendly relations with foreign individuals holding influential positions. In Germany for instance, the long term strategy of influencing younger generations would have been completely ineffective, as the Nazi party had a firm grasp upon educational institutes, and exerted the utmost control over all aspects of education ranging from control of the syllabus to the appointment of appropriate teaching staff. Considering this, the prospect of improving relations and mutual understanding between Britain and Germany stood a greater chance of success by simply attempting to improve and maintain relationships between influential figures of both nations. One such organisation dedicated to this task was the Anglo-German Fellowship, founded in 1935 by the wealthy British merchant banker Ernest Tennant. The Fellowship was a non-political organisation, declaring no official link with British policies, and declared its aim as ‘promoting better understanding between England and Germany in the hope of maintaining peace and prosperity in Europe’⁸². The Fellowship was based upon an existing organisation in Germany, the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft, whose members included many high ranking Nazi Party Members such as General Ritter von Epp, Staatssekretär Walther Funk, and Joachim von Ribbentrop as well as numerous Germany ministers and industrialists. British members of the fellowship included Lord Mount Temple as Chairman and Sir Raymond Beasley of the Foreign Office, and held an estimated total membership of 600 individuals and business ventures by October 1937, many of which were leading

⁸²PRO, FO 511/3, Anglo-German Fellowship Information Sheet

British manufacturers including British Steel Ltd and Dunlop Rubber Company Ltd⁸³. Despite the claims of the AGF to be a non-political organisation with a number of high ranking figures involved, both British and German, the AGF proved to be ultimately unsuccessful in its aims. This was partly due to British concerns over German domestic and foreign politics, particularly the anti-Jewish activities that culminated in the increased pogroms of 1938 culminating in *Krystallnacht* of November 9th and 10th. As a result of these events Lord Mount Temple resigned from his post as Chairman, stating in the times - 'I think it most desirable that there should be good feeling between the two nations, but I think all activities should wait [for a better time]'⁸⁴. By February of 1939 the AGF had run its course, with Herr Schallies stating that it had been 'a great disappointment to the Nazis as it was hoped that it could exert great influence during periods of crisis', however as it had failed to do that in September 1938, an indirect reference to the Czech crisis and subsequent Munich Agreement, it would receive no more official assistance or funding within Germany and was shunned by Hitler.

On a more traditionally cultural level, the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham performed a tour of Germany, performing in Munich in December 1936. The report of this small tour states that 'no effort was spared by the Party or the government in Bavaria to ensure the success of the visit – from a political rather than from a musical point of view'. Beecham and his orchestra not only performed on the evening of the 17th, but were also invited to attend a dinner held by the Lord of Munich on the 16th and a luncheon held by the Prime Minister of Bavaria in the afternoon of the 17th. The concert itself seems to have been negatively affected by the overtly political way in which the German authorities treated the visit,

⁸³ PRO, FO 511/3, *Anglo-German Fellowship: Self History*

⁸⁴ PRO, KV 5/3, Lord Mount Temple in *The Times*, November 19th 1938

with the report describing the atmosphere as ‘colder than usual at a Munich concert...due to the fact that genuine music lovers were rather displaced by the official guests who were there to further Anglo-German relations rather than listen to the music’⁸⁵. Beecham himself noted this ulterior motive, and in annex of the report it is stated he felt ‘disgusted by the tour’ and wished himself and the orchestra to be regarded from a musical point of view rather than that in which it seemed they ‘appeared that they were no more than objects of political propaganda and living instances of “Anglo-German Relations”’⁸⁶. This again suggests a failure to succeed in dissemination cultural propaganda within Germany, as despite the visit being organised by the British Council it was managed and orchestrated entirely by German authorities in such a manner as to serve a beneficial political purpose for their own political ends.

Thus, British efforts in penetrating Germany with cultural propaganda can be viewed overall as an unsuccessful enterprise when considering both the ineffective nature of British attempts to utilise education as a means of cultural influence, and the manipulation of British efforts by Germany to serve the needs of the state, as was the case with the Philharmonic tour of Munich in 1936. However, a memorandum assessing advantages and disadvantages of using propaganda to ‘weaken the fighting power of the German people’ in the event of war highlighted the importance of producing ‘truthful’ propaganda in order to achieve success⁸⁷. The adoption of this strategy following the Munich Crisis appeared to show signs of having a positive effect in the German population. H D Tasker, a British businessman with factories

⁸⁵ PRO, BW 63/1, *Report on the London Philharmonic Orchestra in Munich*, December 18th 1936

⁸⁶ PRO, BW 63/1, *Report on the London Philharmonic Orchestra in Munich*, Annex, December 18th 1936

⁸⁷ PRO, CAB 104/89, *Memorandum on the Dissemination of Ideas Among the German People to Weaken Their Fighting Power in War*, September 19th, 1938

located in Berlin, contacted the British Council stating that his employees had ‘little faith’ in the German press, and that British news was desired by many despite the anti-British stance forwarded in the state-ran press⁸⁸. Although this cannot be interpreted as a means of cultural propaganda, the utilisation of the reputation of Britain in honesty regarding news can be seen to represent a small success in the overall strategy of propaganda in Germany. A cultural approach to Germany arguably failed; however the use of ‘honest’ news shows not only that the German public were susceptible to British propaganda, but that British propaganda policy was flexible when needed and could succeed in achieving penetration, albeit limited, in even the most totalitarian of states.

⁸⁸ PRO, FO 371/21791, *Letter from H D Tasker to British Council, forwarded to Foreign Office*

Fine Art, Film and the New York World Fair of 1939

As discussed in the previous two chapters, a large portion of British efforts in the field of cultural propaganda involved utilising educational institutes to improve cultural understanding of Britain abroad. The long term strategy was to create an educated generation who would appreciate British culture and values, which would then in pass this knowledge as positive view of Britain on to future generations via teaching in the education systems of various countries. However, there were more specific areas of focus placed upon projecting Britain abroad in a positive light by celebrating achievements in culture and other aspects such as manufacturing and engineering. The use of film can be seen as one such example of promoting British achievements, while the promotion of British art was utilised to specifically represent British cultural achievements on a global scale.

The possibilities of using film as a means of gaining publicity and promoting Britain abroad were used throughout the 1920s, with discussions to form a Foreign Office Film Unit taking place in 1920 with the intention of producing propaganda films. Although the proposal did not become a reality, the DOT and the Foreign Office recognised the importance of utilising film to promote British trade abroad, despite having to rely on individual films produced by private companies to promote British achievements in manufacturing and trade abroad⁸⁹. In the 1930s prior to the formation of the British Council in 1934 the task of projecting Britain abroad fell to the Travel Association and the DOT. By 1932, the Travel Association had created its

⁸⁹ P M Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919-1939*, p.88

own film unit, producing a number of films for non-theatrical distribution to foreign schools and societies as well as producing short documentary films concerning various areas of Britain. In April 1936 the Joint Film Committee of the British Council and the Travel Association was formed, chaired by Phillip Guedalla with other members including the general manager of the British Film Institute Oliver Bell, E L Mercier representing the DOT, Colonel Charles Bridge representing the British Council, and John Grierson in joint capacity as Post Office Film Officer and Film Advisor to the Travel Association⁹⁰.

At the fifth meeting of the Joint Committee, a report on film distribution was discussed noting both funding from the British Council of £300 for the Mediterranean, £500 for South America, and for Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland and the Baltic States £400 to aid the task. Also the various successes and difficulties faced in certain regions concerning the distribution of British films were extensively listed. The report stated difficulties concerning distribution of films with Palestine, however cited success in other ongoing negotiations to obtain theatrical release of British films in Egypt and in South America. With regard to the distribution of film in Europe, the meeting noted particularly the success met in Hungary where the Ministry of Education took films for display in schools, and the positive reception of the coronation film sent to the British Mission at Warsaw. The Committee agreed to use the newly available funds not only to aid distribution in the afore mentioned areas, but to make films available to special requests world wide, citing the positive reception of the coronation film in Tokyo as precedent for this strategy⁹¹.

However, the internal relationship between the DOT, Travel Association and British Council was often turbulent, with each department favouring the production

⁹⁰ P Swann, *The British Documentary Film Movement 1926-1946*, p.131

⁹¹ PRO, BW 2/35, *Joint Committee on Films Minutes of Fifth Meeting*, October 1st 1937

and release of films that reflected their own interests making it difficult for the Committee to agree on suitable content of films. A report produced by Croom-Johnson to the Secretary of the British Council highlights these difficulties as they arose at a showing of films at the GPO Film Unit in November 1937. Croom-Johnson states that most members of the Committee seemed ‘engineering minded’, and likes to see ‘an impressive piece of machinery at the end of a film and did not seem to take account of other forms of British culture’. Croom-Johnson concluded by highlighting two major criticisms of the Committee. Firstly, the attitude of the DOT carried too much weight, citing their insistence to include the sentence ‘all machines shown in this film were manufactured in Great Britain’ at the end of the film *British Steel*; raising the possibility the Committee would simply appear a smoke screen for British trade penetration. Secondly, he gloomily concluded that the Committee was ‘apt to underestimate the mentality of foreign film audiences’, and that in ‘playing down’ to lower class film audiences the sympathy and interest of the intelligent anglophile students and newspaper readers that should also form the target audience would be lost, as well as failing to gain the interest of the unintelligent and unimportant viewer⁹².

Despite these internal disputes the Committee distributed films to 23 countries in Europe, the Middle East, Far East and South America at a cost of £1178 between April 1st and November 30th 1937⁹³, and received further funding from the British Council of £1200 for the year 1937/38. The continued investment in the Committee suggests that the importance of film was recognised as been a highly important method of nation projection, while the high number of films distributed between April

⁹² PRO, BW 2/35, *Report on Showing of Films at GPO Film Unit by Croom-Johnson*, November 15th 1937

⁹³ PRO, BW 2/35, *Joint Committee on Films Distribution and Expenditure April 1st-November 30th*, December 1937

and November 1930 leads one to the conclusion that the Joint Committee was succeeding in utilising film as a means of cultural propaganda far better than it had been under the control of the Travel Association between 1932 and the formation of the Committee in April 1936.

The work of the Joint Committee in distributing films abroad continued along the same successful lines well into 1938, with a detailed report of film distribution produced in May 1938 highlighting the global reach of film as a means of publicising Britain abroad. In Europe alone the cinematic release of British films provided by the Travel Association was achieved in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. Films distributed under the auspice of the Joint Committee achieved cinematic release in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia and Yugoslavia, while both the Joint Committee and the Travel Association provided film for non-theatrical shows in the above mentioned countries as well as in Poland, Germany, Holland, and Italy. In the Mediterranean and Middle East cinematic release of British films was achieved in Albania, Cyprus, Egypt, Iraq, Malta, Palestine, the Sudan and Syria, and Turkey while non theatrical showings also took place in Morocco and Gibraltar. Regarding South America, Mexico and Cuba, the report states that four films adapted for theatrical distribution with Portuguese and Spanish subtitles were significantly more popular than those with English commentaries and localised subtitles. With this in mind it was decided that these films would be distributed direct from London to Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Columbia, Mexico and Cuba. The final section of the report focused upon the distribution and release of films in the Far East and foreign Possessions. Japan, Siam, and the Dutch East Indies saw the cinematic release of British films, while the Institute for Research in English Teaching at Tokyo also received films, while the Chinese University at Shantung

received a copy of *So This is Lancashire* which was aired to an audience of 250 students of the University⁹⁴.

The scale of the Joint Committee on Films' production and distribution between its formation in 1936 and mid-1938 can be judged as success in terms of projecting British life, culture, and achievements to a global audience both in cinemas across the world and also in private settings, such as clubs and associations such as the Anglo-Danish Society and the English Club based at Gablonz in Czechoslovakia, and educational facilities of all ranges. However, the success can only be viewed as limited due to the inability of British films to penetrate into the markets within the dictator countries; Germany, Italy and to a lesser degree Franco's Spain. The possibilities of airing British films in Italy was hindered by the hostile nature of Anglo-Italian relations following the Abyssinian Crisis, while negotiations in Spain only entailed the possibility of viewing in Nationalist held areas. However, the only stumbling block concerning the display of these films in Germany was a dispute over patent rights, however this was rectified in part by the release of a film made by Doring Film-Werke of Berlin with the cooperation of the TIDA film Unit in 1935, which was edited into a series of smaller films that remained broadcast throughout 1937 and early 1938⁹⁵.

1939 presented an ideal opportunity to utilise film for the purposes of cultural propaganda on an international level in the form of the New York Worlds Fair. The theme of the fair was 'Building the World of Tomorrow', and allowed for Britain to launch a policy of projecting Britain in the United States for the first time⁹⁶. The

⁹⁴ PRO, BW 2/35, *Joint Committee Report on Film Distribution*, May 1938

⁹⁵ PRO, BW 2/35, *Joint Committee Report on Film Distribution*, May 1938

⁹⁶ P M Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919-1939*, p.117

decision of the British government to participate in the fair was made in May 1937, with the entry designed to

Foster friendship and goodwill between the United Kingdom and the USA by showing as much as we can of these Islands and the Empire; our adaptability to a changing world and the non-rigid character of our Empire-Commonwealth partnership; in short, to present the greatness of our life and country with dignity and charm, and thus to enable to millions of Americans who will visit the fair to know and appreciate us and in due course to visit us'⁹⁷.

The Joint Films Committee cooperated with the DOT to produce film material for the World Fair, with the Post Office also producing several documentary films including *Spare Parts* and *British Made*, as well as the five British run newsreel companies producing a series of special editions ran on a five week rotation in alphabetical order. The newsreels were a popular exhibition during the first season of the World Fair, and increased further in popularity when the second season opened in 1940 due to the fact that the British newsreels were often more up to date concerning events unfolding in Europe than those produced in America⁹⁸. *British Made* focused specifically on the work of the skilled craftsman within Britain, taking the viewer on a historical journey from the Chippendale woodcraft of the mid-eighteenth century, through the development of an industrial boom to the great depression following the Wall Street crash of 1929, finally arriving at the present with the imminent threat of war⁹⁹. The emphasis throughout the film was the importance of traditional craft being practiced along side the growth of modern industry, and the strength of which both old and new techniques would give the rising British generation¹⁰⁰. The total investment regarding *British Made* had reached £944 upon completion in August 1939, significantly greater than the estimates of June which amounted to £192 in addition to the £500 already

⁹⁷ P M Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919-1939*, p.117

⁹⁸ P Swann, *The British Documentary Film Movement 1926-1946*, p.141

⁹⁹ PRO, INF 5/62, *Draft Commentary for the film British Made*

¹⁰⁰ PRO, INF 5/62, *British Made Commentary Extract*

invested in filming and editing to this point. The film *Spare Parts* also received a great deal of investment, with the total for filming and production arriving at £866¹⁰¹. This combined expenditure of £1810 serves to show just how significant an opportunity the World Fair was in the British policy of national projection on a global scale. The investment placed upon the entries for British film at the Fair proved a worthwhile one, with Taylor describing the official British entry as a ‘triumph for the projection of England’, stating that within two weeks of the formal opening, almost eight million people had visited the site with over half of those entering the British pavilion. A film of the coronation was one of the most popular British exhibits, and following a royal visit in June 1939 popularity increased to an even greater level with an estimated two thousand people passing through the cinema within the British pavilion per day¹⁰².

Film was not the only means of cultural propaganda utilised by Britain at the New York World Fair. Both fine art and orchestral music performances were also presented alongside films and historical exhibitions such as the Magna Carta in an attempt to showcase British cultural history and achievement. This was not the first instance of Britain exhibiting art at an international exhibition as a method of showcasing cultural achievements. Prior to the creation of the Board of Trade Exhibitions branch in 1912, British involvement in overseas exhibitions was the responsibility of various Royal Commissions appointed specifically to handle an individual exhibition. The DOT assumed control of British representation at foreign exhibitions in 1918; however participation was limited due to the lack of regular sums to fund such activities in national projection. Despite this, participation at the 1922

¹⁰¹ PRO, INF 5/62, *Letter to Primrose*, February 26th 1940

¹⁰² P M Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919-1939*, p.119

Brazilian Centenary Exhibition and the Paris Decorative Arts Exhibition of 1925 were deemed as highly successful ventures¹⁰³.

The precedent for art exhibitions in the era of the British Council was set in 1937 at the Exposition Internationale de Paris 1937 – Arts et techniques dans la vie Moderne, which ran between April and October. The DOT, in cooperation with the Council of Art and Industry and the Board of Trade, erected and filled a pavilion with objects of Industrial Art connected with British life such as art in dress such as sport and games, art connected with travel, and art depicting individual rooms within a house¹⁰⁴. The Fine Arts Committee of the British Council was represented by six artists hastily assembled following a plea to Lady Chamberlain from monsieur Dézarrois, who had contacted the Bureau of British Women Workers but had received no reply, meaning as such Britain would have been the only country invited to not be represented in the field of Fine Arts. As the works of only six artists were required, Lady Chamberlain contacted Longden who made the necessary arrangements instantly via telephone and secured the work of Ethel Walker, Vanessa Bell, Beatrice Bland, Dame Laura Knight, Anna Zinkeisen and Mrs Campbell Dodgson for loan and display at the exhibition¹⁰⁵.

Fortunately, there was no repeat of the Paris debacle concerning preparations to include an array of Fine Arts for exhibition at the New York World Fair. As early as February 1938 preparations began to include Fine Arts at New York, in particular the contingency that should the British pavilion prove too small to locate an Art exhibition, Britain should be represented at either New York or the Golden Gate

¹⁰³ P M Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919-1939*, pp.91-92

¹⁰⁴ PRO, BW 31/20, *Letter from A Longden to Major J L Wickham*, April 22nd 1936

¹⁰⁵ PRO, BW 31/20, *Letter from the Fine Arts Committee to DOT Secretary General*

Exposition in San Francisco¹⁰⁶. The pavilion did indeed house a moderate gallery, including a collection of classic and modern plate, while also providing British works in sculpture such as *Recumbent Figure* by Henry Moore and *Pax* by Frank Dobson, as well as an exhibit of modern British architecture donated by the Royal Institute of British Architects. A letter from Louis Beale to Major Wickham noted that the British pavilion opened with every exhibit completed with an ‘enormous crowd’ estimated at nearly 200,000 stating everyone appeared to be ‘extremely pleased with what we have shown’ on the opening day¹⁰⁷. Of the artistic exhibits present in the British pavilion, one of the largest was the Exhibition of Contemporary British Art which consisted of thirteen pieces by seven artists including watercolours by Vivian Pitchforth, John Nash, Augustus John, Edward Burra and Edward Ardizzone. John’s work in chalk drawing and pen-and-wash drawing were also present, as well as sketches by Sir Muirhead Bone and Henry Moore¹⁰⁸. Despite the number of artists represented at the exhibit within the pavilion, the FACBC was inundated with applications from British artists who desired their work to be exhibited at the World Fair. Throughout February and March of 1939 the FACBC replied to letters from artists and owners volunteering works for exhibit. Amongst those rejected for exhibition at the World Fair were the piece *Highland Cattle* by J D Adams as it was not eligible for display as only contemporary British art was being represented, with as a series of 85 miniatures of Royals created in 1911 by Charles Turrell on the same grounds. Pieces by the artists Frances Drummond and Vera Temple were also turned down due to the fact that the exhibition was already complete, as well as the sculpture *Serenitas in Rebus* by A

¹⁰⁶ PRO, BW 63/21, *Draft Letter from Hudson to Lloyd*, February 8th 1938

¹⁰⁷ PRO, BW 63/21, *Letter From L Beale to Major J L Wickham*, May 2nd 1939

¹⁰⁸ PRO, BW 63/21, *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Contemporary British Art Organised by the British Council, British Pavilion, New York World Fair, 1939*

Bertram Pegram¹⁰⁹. The representation of Fine Art at the British pavilion at the World Fair indicates that the projection of contemporary British cultural achievements was recognised as a future avenue for the direction of cultural propaganda, and one which could be used along side historical British achievements to represent the continuation of British values. The interest within Britain sparked by the inclusion of an artistic exhibit within the British pavilion suggests that the World Fair offered not only an opportunity to project Britain abroad, but also allowed the possibility that the positive impact of the World Fair within Britain would encourage and inspire a future generation to become involved in art, and continue to produce work representative of Britain's strong cultural heritage.

Finally, British cultural achievements in the field of music were highlighted at the New York World Fair in a series of concerts featuring the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra. The two concerts performed by the orchestra were arranged by the British Council to take place during 'British Week' of the World Fair with Sir Adrian Boult, Musical Director of the BBC, conducting. The premiere at Carnegie Hall featured Arnold Bax's *Seventh Symphony*, a piece commissioned by the British Council especially for the event of the concerts at the World Fair. Despite the obvious aim of showcasing British musical achievements, the only other all-British work of the evening was an oboe concerto composed by Eugene Goossen, which performed as a duet for oboe and piano, played by his Brother Leon as somewhat of a novelty for the audience¹¹⁰.

The British concerts in New York received a great deal of coverage in the press, with *Musical America* stating that the concerts at the Carnegie hall brought a

¹⁰⁹ PRO, BW 63/21, *Various Letters from the Fine Arts Committee to Artists between February 7th and March 7th 1939*

¹¹⁰ PRO, BW 63/10, *New York Herald Clipping*, June 10th 1939

‘thrilling climax’ to the musical festival in connection with the World Fair. The article also states that the function of the British Council was to ‘make the life and thought of the British peoples more widely known abroad, and to promote an interchange of knowledge and ideas with other peoples’, and proclaims that the newly composed symphony by Sir Arnold Bax is an admirable means to that end. The final two pieces commissioned for the worlds fair by Bliss and Williams premiered at the second concert, and were equally as well received at the work of Bax, with the article declaring that the concerto composed by Bliss was ‘one of the most important works composed since the turn of the century’, stating the concert was played with ‘life and fire and lusciousness of tone’ under Boult that all elements converged to create a performance of absorbing interest¹¹¹. The *New York World-Telegram* also highly praised the music performed bearing the headline ‘Last British Concert Acclaimed’. The article particularly praised the inclusion of music from nations other than Britain, and reported that upon the final performance of final concert on June 10th the large audience ‘rendered the composer and soloist with a thunderous ovation’¹¹². The *New York Times* also noted the inclusion of American music, while the *New York Sun* also noted the enthusiasm of applause given by the audience and its large size¹¹³, as did the *New York Journal* stating Carnegie Hall had filled to capacity for the show¹¹⁴. Despite the attitude of the press suggesting the concerts were a total success, the *Brooklyn Eagle* noted that the ‘sultry atmosphere inside the hall did not make for the best instrumental efficiency, while the audience sweltered’, and criticised the performance

¹¹¹ PRO, BW 63/10, *Musical America*, pp.1,2-4, June 1939

¹¹² PRO, BW 63/10, *New York World-Telegram*, June 12th 1939

¹¹³ PRO, BW 63/10, *New York Sun*, June 10th 1939

¹¹⁴ PRO, BW 63/10, *New York Journal*, June 10th 1939

of Debussy's *Afternoon of a Faun* for lacking quality, despite judging the concert as a whole to be 'good'¹¹⁵.

In terms of bringing British cultural achievements to an international audience, the World Fair of 1939 can be deemed as a successful venture on behalf of the British Council and its affiliated organisations. The British entry also showed that cooperation between rival organisations vying to represent Britain abroad could be achieved, with the Travel Association, DOT and British Council working successfully together to produce a variety of films representing British life as well as documentary films showcasing British industrial methods and achievements. Taylor also concludes that in terms of sheer numbers of people reached the British contribution to the World Fair was a triumph, but also notes that it was an 'uncharacteristic performance' as British propaganda was not as coordinated or politically important as it was in the totalitarian nations¹¹⁶. However the British entry was well organised and coordinated with all exhibits present serving to present Britain in a similar manner, somewhat of a rarity in the 1930s considering the variety of associations involved with the projection of Britain and the lack of an overarching department coordinating all efforts in propaganda towards the same ends. The World Fair can also be seen to have stirred interest within Britain. This indicates that British cultural propaganda not only served to projection Britain in a positive light abroad, but also had succeeded in securing 'as firm a hold as possible on the minds and interests of the population'¹¹⁷, an important political role of cultural propaganda both home and abroad. Finally, although the amount of pro-British sentiment created by British involvement in the World Fair is impossible to measure, the effect may have been a strong consideration in the

¹¹⁵ PRO, BW 63/10, *Brooklyn Eagle*, June 10th 1939

¹¹⁶ P M Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919-1939*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp.123-124

development of American sympathies towards Britain at a time when the spectre of a European conflict loomed large. As such, this pro-British sentiment cannot be ruled out as a major factor in the decision of America to participate in the European conflict rather than simply focusing war efforts on the threat of Japan.

Conclusion

The methods of cultural propaganda discussed in this paper are not representative of the entire British policy regarding propaganda. However cultural propaganda was without doubt a key component of the overall system producing propaganda, and intrinsically linked commercial propaganda with that of fostering a positive national image when faced with the prospect of a European conflict involving the dictator nations. Cultural propaganda, and indeed all British propaganda, can also be considered a key aspect of British foreign policy during the period despite the limitations caused by the sceptical attitude of the government. Propaganda served to reinforce a hold on an empire which had been considered by some to be a paper tiger since the 1910s, an indeed this image was used to support aggressive German policies under Bismark before the end of the nineteenth century¹¹⁸.

However, it can be difficult to judge the success of propaganda in altering perceptions and improving international relations. Official reports composed by Foreign Office and British Council officials stationed in areas where cultural propaganda was focused can provide a rough assessment of influence gained or lost due to certain activities. Equally, correspondence from foreign nationals and civilians living in countries can provide an idea of how Britain was perceived abroad by drawing upon their own personal encounters. Effectively judging the extent of influence created by certain types of propaganda has been an issue encountered by previous scholars within the field. In her study of the BBC and home front propaganda, Nichols concludes that were it not for the BBC's wartime broadcasts 'the

¹¹⁸ J L Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*, p.77

civilian populations understanding of what it should do and what it might expect would have been seriously undermined'. But beyond that it would be hard to state with any certainty how influential wartime propaganda actually was. Nichols also notes that it is also impossible to quantify the effects of the broadcasts on the morale of the population, and that even with the benefit of the Morale Charts produced by the MOI, it is only possible to conclude that morale rose and fell with the perception of military success or failure¹¹⁹. Similarly, regarding the New York World Fair in 1939, Taylor notes that while British propaganda utilised this event to reach out to millions of Americans to promote British values and culture, it is impossible to estimate just how much pro-British sentiment was created by this¹²⁰, and in turn how great a factor propaganda was in gaining American support in the European conflict of World War Two. Finally, the success of cultural propaganda can also be hard to judge in relation to wider international events and political relations. For example, the imposition of sanctions upon Italy by the LON following the Abyssinian Crisis had a negative impact upon the work of the British Institute at Florence as discussed in chapter two. However, does the resulting decrease in popularity reflect a failure on behalf of British efforts in Italy, or can it be argued that a reduction in students for the academic year 1936-1937 was merely a reaction to the removal of English as a subject taught in Italian schools? The latter would suggest that a decline in students was a pragmatic response to the immediate situation; mainly that students would study German or French as this subject provided a greater chance of gaining employment as a teacher when the future of English subjects in Italian schools appeared hopeless. As such, it would be unwise to state that British efforts in the field of cultural propaganda in Italy

¹¹⁹ S Nichols, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939-1945*, p.271

¹²⁰ P M Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919-1939*, p.119

were unsuccessful without considering the wider context of Anglo-Italian relations in the immediate post-Abyssinian period.

Bearing in mind the difficulties in assessing the success of propaganda, in particular the methods of cultural propaganda discussed above, the question of how effective British efforts were and what, if any, methods proved more fruitful than others, is a complicated one. With regard to cultural efforts in the Near and Middle East, the main subject of this paper focuses upon the role of education as a medium of propaganda. There are two main criteria available to the historian attempting to gauge the success of this approach to improving cultural relations. The first would be to consider the number of students attending British-run institutes in the region at this time and the increase in numbers throughout the period. The second approach to judging the success of propaganda in the region would be to consider the range of British influence in terms of numbers of schools in various countries, utilising figures relating to the distribution of education aids such as films, and the allocation funding to institutes across the region. With regard to the first point, the number of students who received a British education in Egypt suggests that the expansion of institutes' in the region after 1936 led to a drastic rise in local students with the total number of students increasing by 10% between 1936 and 1937. The number of native teachers who had received a British education also rose during the same period, suggesting that the long term strategy of educating future generations via those with pro-British values had begun to prove fruitful within the decade.

While this suggests that the use of education as a means of cultural propaganda was successful in Egypt, the same cannot be said for the entirety of the Middle East. On April 1st 1941 a nationalist coup took place in Iraq. Known as the

Golden Square coup, the uprising against the pro-British government of Abd al-Ilah and Prime Minister Nuri as-Said was led by pro-German members of the army and cabinet. The revolt was supported and partly funded by the Nazi regime¹²¹, and replaced Nuri as Prime Minister with Rashid Ali with the intention of gaining full Iraqi independence. The Golden Square Coup can be seen to highlight both the success and failings of British propaganda in the area. On the one hand, Britain had ensured good relations with Iraq throughout the interwar years, and had an ally in the Middle East in the pro-British government of Suri. Conversely, the opportunity for revolution was seized during the war, and suggests that propaganda had been unsuccessful in creating an overall pro-British opinion. This can be seen in particular with regard to the military hierarchy of Iraq, with many high-ranking figures participating in the uprising, which was eventually quelled by British forces leading to occupation which continued until 1947.

Similarly, the use of education as a means of cultural propaganda in central Europe can be classified as a generally successful undertaking. Rather than attempting to set up British-run schools, education policy in Europe focused on the use of the British Institutes to increase the understanding of British literature and the cultural values that it represented. The study above focuses upon the Institutes located at Florence and Paris, and both can be seen to have been successful in terms of having educated a generation of scholars and educators with sympathetic views to Britain. The Institute at Florence regularly received over 200 full time students per year, while the number of full time French students of English at the Paris centre increased from 164 in 1929-30 to 613 for the year 1937-38. The methods used to increase an

¹²¹ D Patterson, *A Genealogy of Evil: Anti-Semitism from Nazism to Islamic Jihad*, p.114

understanding not only included English education for students, but also a variety of guest lecturers on a variety of subjects based on British society and history as well as the organisation of numerous summer schools and visits to Britain for both Italian and French students.

While the Institutes can be seen to have reached many students within France and Italy, the extent to which we can attribute any signs of success of this type of propaganda can again be questioned in relation to international events. The negative reaction within Italy to the Abyssinian crisis and the resultant imposition of economic sanctions highlights the futility of British efforts when in direct contest against the will of Mussolini and the Fascist party. Despite the popularity of the Institute amongst students, English was removed from the curriculum due to Britain's involvement with the League of Nations, and as such the number of students fell enormously in the following academic year. The institute was to recover its prestige following the completion of the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1938, however the fortune of the Institute and its relation to wider international politics cannot be ignored. In short, it can be argued that the Institute at Florence flourished when Anglo-Italian relations were amicable, while also suffering when relations were hostile with Britain and Italy in direct disagreement over major issues such as acceptable behaviours in pursuing an expansionist foreign policy. During wartime, the cultural propaganda conducted in Italy pre-1939 can be seen to have had greater success than that in the Middle East, particularly that in Iraq. Italian conduct during the Second World War would suggest that the majority of Italians did not 'dislike' Britain, a point supported by the relatively gentlemanly conduct of Italian actions in North Africa. Although it is impossible to state that this was a direct product of British propaganda activities, it does suggest that cultural propaganda may well have been successful in instilling to

some degree a pro-British mindset within the Italian public, one which transcended international events. This is highlighted in the case of the Italian resistance movement immediately following Italian surrender to allied forces, as well as the example of the instant response of the co-belligerent army and air force in combat against German forces.

With regard to the use of film to reach a global audience, and art as a means of showcasing the cultural achievements of Britain, British work in this area can be seen as a relatively successful undertaking. The development of film as a means of cultural propaganda accelerated drastically throughout the late 1930s, and can be considered a successful venture in projecting a positive image of Britain across the world.

Distribution of British film in every continent expanded greatly upon the work of the Travel Association undertaken in the 1920s and early 1930s designed to increase tourism by increasing levels of commercial propaganda, and those produced by the DOT intended to boost British manufacturing in foreign countries. The culmination of the work of the British Council, Travel Association and DOT regarding film can be seen as the World Fair of 1939. The significance of British participation in the event was twofold; firstly it offered the British Council the opportunity to operate in America, and secondly it also enabled Britain to showcase cultural achievements and aims for the future to a mass audience consisting of not only the American public, but also representatives from all countries present at the Fair.

Foreign Exhibits of British arts were handled by specially appointed Royal Commissions prior to 1918, and then subsequently by the DOT between 1918 and 1936, where upon its creation the British Council assumed a leading role in participation in foreign exhibitions. The 1937 Exposition Internationale de Paris was

the first attempt by the British Council to arrange participation in an international exhibition, and was rushed in preparation with works chosen hastily at very short notice. However, the participation of Britain at the New York World Fair can be seen as a significant improvement in the preparation and planning for the event, as well as showcasing a wider variety of British cultural works.

British cultural propaganda under the direction of the British Council can be considered a success in several areas. Regarding educational strategies as a method of improving foreign opinions of Britain, the work in Italy, France and Egypt can be seen as successful due to the number of students participating in British run courses. This adapted into a long term key strategy of ensuring teachers and scholars with pro-British sentiments emerged that would, in turn, educate future generations with these values. Thus, the importance of foreign youth to the future of British prestige abroad was recognised, and tackled on a large scale met with an overall success, as was the increase in production and distribution of British films designed to educate on the subject of Britain and improve understanding of its history and culture.

However to consider the cultural propaganda methods utilised by Britain in the period to be an overwhelming success would be ignoring several key areas in which British efforts can be seen to have made little or no impact. The most obvious example of the failure of British cultural propaganda to influence a foreign society can be seen in Germany. This was not due to lack of effort on the part of Britain, but rather due to the totalitarian nature of the Nazi state which held full control over educational and cultural institutes as well as having a single, dedicated propaganda ministry. In comparison to the well-oiled machinery of the Nazi state, attempts to disseminate propaganda within Germany were met with failure, despite ventures such as the AGF. The only success evident within Germany in terms of propaganda during

this period was the popularity of British news, as many within Germany were acutely aware of the propagandist nature of the German press and as such the manipulation of news which continued to be so into the Second World War. The BBC was popular amongst many nationalities both within the Axis and occupied countries of Europe. This trust in the BBC can be interpreted as a result of peoples desire to find an escape from occupying influences, however it can also be seen as a subtle reflection of British cultural propaganda efforts throughout the 1930s. The trust in British news can clearly be seen to reflect positively upon British desires to provide truthful, fact-based propaganda, and thus highlights the success in propaganda policy developed throughout the interwar years. It could also be concluded that the success of the BBC was not due to creating a positive image of Britain within Germany, but rather in influencing opinion and highlighting the undesirable aspects of Nazi rule, such as the obvious censure of the news and press. This can be seen as the foundations of radio as a means of wartime propaganda with the intentions of both offering a boost for morale and gaining civilian support in occupied Europe, but also to undermine the authority and influence of the Axis.

Overall it is difficult to gauge the success of British cultural propaganda during this period. There can be strong arguments made to highlight both successes and failures in various areas, and also that certain approaches to improving cultural relations were better received than others. However, the work of the British Council in the field of cultural propaganda can clearly be defined as groundbreaking and ahead of its time, while the continuation of the organisations activity to the present day would further suggest the importance of cultural relations in the modern era. Despite the closure of many of its European and Middle Eastern offices during the

Second World War, the Council continued its work based from within Britain offering educational services to refugees and servicemen alike. Following the Second World War, the Council continued its work on a much smaller scale, partly due to a decline in funding by the Foreign Office as well as a series of reports which concluded post-war intelligence needs would be organised and conducted solely by the Secret Intelligence Service¹²². Despite losing its prominent role at the head of cultural relations, and the resultant funding cuts, the British Council has continued to serve as an independent organisation focusing upon international teaching and ‘cultural opportunities’. In comparison to existing works focusing upon British inter-war propaganda as a whole, this paper can be seen as providing a focus upon the less explored means of ‘cultural’ propaganda by highlighting the comparatively subtle and everyday forms of influence such as education, film, and art as opposed to the more overt and popular perception of propaganda such as posters and other highly patriotic forms. In doing so, this paper can be seen to aid the study of British inter-war propaganda by providing a concise and in depth study into the role of one of the key players of inter-war propaganda in the British Council, and the various mediums utilised which, under many circumstances, would not be termed propaganda in the modern sense.

As of 2007 the Council operated 70 centres in 53 countries, offering examinations in English to over one million candidates per annum, with the Middle Eastern region participating in 53 collaborative projects with British schools¹²³. With offices in Afghanistan, Israel and Iraq, the British Council can be seen to remain a fixture in British cultural relations in troubled areas. During a period in which Britain

¹²² www.britishcouncil.org/about/timeline, 2012

¹²³ Ibid.

is again perceived negatively in many regions, the importance of the Council in building and maintaining cultural relations can be directly compared to that attributed to the organisation from its creation in 1934 to the outbreak of war in 1939. A comparison between the two periods could be made in terms of the number of institutes ran by the British Council, as well as the number of foreign nationals attending British Council courses.

But despite these successes, a major diplomatic controversy surrounded British Council operations in Russia during 2007, leading to closure in 2008 amidst accusations of illegal operation and tax evasion. Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov defended the closure of two offices outside Moscow, stating it was not an anti-British action but one completely justified by Russian law while also admitting it was retaliation for the expulsion of Russian diplomats from London in July allegedly involved in the poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko¹²⁴. British Council activities have also been further limited by the closure of branches in Europe designed to allow for a 'huge increase in activities based in the Middle East and Muslim world'. Cathy Stephens, the acting director of the Council during this period, stated 'the new strategy will not only prove beneficial to Britain's long-term security and prosperity but perfectly upholds the council's mission of 'increasing appreciation of the UK's ideas and achievements overseas'. However criticism arose from many, including Charles Arnold-Baker, author of *The Companion to British History*, who feels that the concept is misguided and will simply alienate British friends in Europe¹²⁵.

It would be unwise to directly compare the current role of the institute to that of the 1930s, as its role can be seen to have changed from that of a vessel of cultural

¹²⁴ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/dec/13/russia.lukeharding>,

¹²⁵ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/aug/05/helenasmith.theobserver>

propaganda to one dedicated to learning and education. Despite the difference in core purpose of the Council, its continued existence and operation serves to highlight the relationship between culture, politics and economics on an international scale, as well as ensuring the value of cultural understanding is not neglected in modern society. While the future of Council activities in Europe may seem uncertain, expansion in the Middle East ensures that the activities of the British Council will continue for the foreseeable future. In an age where extremism and terrorism prove a real threat to British security, cultural propaganda can be seen as a realistic defence mechanism. In hoping to create a generation with pro-British sympathies via education and the promotion of cultural understanding, the British Council will again play a large role in British foreign policy similar to that of its heyday in the 1930s.

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