

## **‘Close and Continuous Liaison’: British Anti-Communist Propaganda and Cooperation with the United States, 1950–51**

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*In January 1948 the British government launched a new anti-Communist propaganda policy, and established a new Foreign Office Information Research Department (IRD) to coordinate that policy. This article examines the extent to which anti-Communist propaganda was coordinated with Britain’s principal Cold War ally the United States, following the launch of America’s own anti-Communist propaganda offensive, the ‘Campaign of Truth’ in 1950. It traces the policy and organizational machinery for cooperation which was established in 1950 and examines the implementation of the policy for ‘close and continuous liaison’ in London, Washington and in the field.*

In the Cold War battle for hearts and minds Britain was the first country to formulate a coordinated global response to communist propaganda. In January 1948, the British government launched a new propaganda policy designed to ‘oppose the inroads of communism by taking the offensive against it’. A small section was established in the Foreign Office, the innocuously titled Information Research Department (IRD), to collate information on communist policy, tactics and propaganda, and coordinate the discreet dissemination of unattributable anti-Communist material to opinion formers at home and abroad.

Two years later the American government launched its own response to communist propaganda under the banner the ‘Campaign of Truth’. America’s new propaganda offensive sprang from a review of national security objectives which began in mid-1949 and culminated in 1950 with a new policy for global containment, outlined in National Security Council Directive No.68 (NSC-68). Under NSC-68 American psychological warfare expanded dramatically. In addition to the expansion of existing overt and covert propaganda activities, funds were provided for new ventures including Radio Free Europe, and an ambitious plan to ring the Soviet

Union with powerful medium-wave transmitters designed to force the Voice of America through the Iron Curtain.<sup>1</sup>

Since the IRD's dissolution in 1977 and more particularly since 1995, when the department's files began to appear in the Public Record Office, a growing number of scholars have sought to examine British Cold War propaganda.<sup>2</sup> It is surprising however, that in this emerging literature, Anglo-American cooperation in the field of anti-Communist propaganda has received little attention. Although most of the work on British Cold War propaganda has highlighted some degree of cooperation between British and American propagandists, indeed early work on the IRD relied heavily on documents culled from US archives,<sup>3</sup> the extent of British and American cooperation has been largely neglected.

Although it is generally accepted that Britain led the field in 1948 by providing a coordinated global response to communist propaganda, it is widely assumed that Britain's modest propaganda activities were soon swamped by the superior resources of the United States. The release of the IRD papers has done little to change the accepted wisdom about the occlusion of British influence.

In 1995, Scott Lucas asserted that by the 1950s, the IRD was a pale shadow of the CIA propaganda machine, 'it would be the US with its own propaganda means and ends, that would define the image of the Free World'. Similarly, Hugh Wilford who detected in the IRD files, 'a growing tendency' towards Anglo-American cooperation, fell back on the easy assumption made in much of the literature that the British campaign was soon eclipsed, 'as leadership of the anti-Communist crusade passed to the Americans'. The Foreign Office's most powerful motive for cooperation, Wilford suggested, was to take advantage of the 'superb resources' of the United States. Richard Aldrich has followed this orthodox analysis, writing of British 'resentment' at the sheer scale of American activities, the 'erosion' of British influence and the emergence of the Americans as the 'dominant players' on the psywar scene in key areas like Italy.<sup>4</sup>

This article seeks to challenge these assumptions and to demonstrate that the extent of cooperation between Britain and America in the field of anti-Communist propaganda was far greater than has previously been appreciated. Drawing upon archival sources in Britain and the United States, including recently declassified files of the IRD, it will suggest that cooperation between the two powers expanded considerably following the launch of the Campaign of Truth. Britain did not merely hand the baton to the United States in the 1950s but that Britain and America developed complementary approaches to anti-Communist propaganda, and as their propaganda activities expanded, cooperation deepened.

More importantly, this cooperation was by no means a one-way street. Although the Americans were prepared to devote vast resources to anti-Communist propaganda, they were keen to take advantage of British experience in this field and sought to involve Britain in some of their more ambitious projects. This can be seen from the policy and organizational machinery for cooperation in anti-Communist propaganda which was established at a series of meetings between senior British and American officials in early 1950. The implementation of this policy through liaison in London and Washington, and in the field will be assessed, with particular attention to arrangements for cooperation in the strategically important region of South-East Asia. Finally, even-handed British and American cooperation in all aspects of anti-Communist propaganda policy will be illustrated through an examination of the increasingly important role of the British Information Liaison Officer in Washington.

The Foreign Office and the State Department had begun to exchange anti-Communist propaganda material shortly after the launch of Britain's new propaganda policy in 1948.<sup>5</sup> In late 1949, as part of a wide-ranging review of America's overseas propaganda program the State Department began to examine the possibility of 'expanded US-British cooperation in the foreign information field'.<sup>6</sup> The State Department had found the exchange of propaganda material to be of the 'greatest value', and in 1949 suggested it could be extended to include an exchange of papers on current and prospective information policy.<sup>7</sup>

The Foreign Office, however, had been somewhat disappointed with the results of cooperation. In December 1949, Christopher Warner, Permanent Under-Secretary with responsibility for information activities, informed the Washington Embassy that, 'we have not been particularly impressed with the results of the State Department's Research Section, nor with the activities of US Information Officers in the field'. Nevertheless, it was considered worthwhile to send someone to Washington with a view to finding out 'what their resources are and also to get a better idea than we have at present of how they are using them'.<sup>8</sup>

In January 1950, the IRD's Adam Watson was dispatched to Washington. His remit was, however, strictly limited. IRD was not keen on any division of labour and Watson was merely to report back on US suggestions. He was informed that the Foreign Office was not contemplating any closer coordination in the policy of anti-Communist propaganda, and he was instructed that he 'should not discuss this at all'.<sup>9</sup> Closer coordination of activities 'would be too hampering and prevent our operations being as speedy as is essential'. Watson was also asked to raise, tactfully, the quality of America's anti-Communist propaganda. Reports from some British missions suggested that 'the general desire of the United

States Information Officers put into the field is to be able to report large quantitative results, regardless of whether they have done any good or not'.

Watson was asked to pass on the Foreign Office's concern that the large volume of American propaganda, particularly in South-East Asia, could spoil the market for Britain's more targeted anti-Communist material. While in the US, Watson was given a wide remit to explore other potential sources or recipients of the IRD's anti-Communist material, most notably the newly established National Committee for a Free Europe, about which the Foreign Office apparently knew little. He also planned to visit various research institutes at Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Columbia universities, which according to Warner, generated a volume of research material on a scale not practicable for the Foreign Office, and 'much of which may be of considerable value as raw material for publicity'.<sup>10</sup>

Despite Foreign Office expectations Watson's visit to the United States in January 1950 was a success. He spent some time working in the State Department and was able to impress upon senior officials the need for greater subtlety in US anti-Communist propaganda. Watson explained at length the IRD's methods for distributing propaganda material unattributably. Citing the example of South-East Asia, he discussed the 'de-Europeanizing' treatment required in the production of propaganda material, he stressed the value of material written by natives, signed feature articles by prominent individuals, and interviews with refugees by prominent local journalists. Where material was sent from home, Watson emphasized the need for accurate translations, and in all output, the importance of propaganda based on facts. Dissemination, Watson said, was best undertaken through, 'native, if necessary obscure and small publishing houses, unsuspected of foreign contacts'. The IRD, he added, had already begun to develop such outlets.<sup>11</sup>

Watson clearly had some success in explaining the value of a more subtle approach to anti-Communist propaganda. According to the British embassy, US officials were particularly interested in Watson's explanation of IRD's tactics:

They have freely admitted that, in many ways, they consider our publicity techniques in this field superior to their own. For example, I gather that people like Tommy Thompson [Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs] and John Davies [of the Policy Planning Staff] have been concerned for some time at the relative lack of sophistication and of selectivity in the State Department's anti-Communist publicity. They therefore particularly welcomed Watson's visit, since it enabled them to point out their own deficiencies to their own people.<sup>12</sup>

Observing his terms of reference Watson was deliberately vague about any division of labour in the production of propaganda material, suggesting that informal exchanges of information in London and Washington and in the field should be based upon personal relationships. He stuck to the existing Foreign Office line, which allowed a pooling of resource material, designed to enable 'the two services to aim at the same target from different angles'.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, Thompson felt that Watson's 'penetrating and substantial conclusions based on British experimentation and practice' would serve to increase cooperation around the world and make 'our parallel efforts more effective'.<sup>14</sup>

Although there was no real change in policy on cooperation, the visit was considered a success on both sides of the Atlantic. In his attempts to influence the Americans, Warner noted that Watson had 'evidently done well'.<sup>15</sup> In Washington, Thompson declared that Watson's visit, 'has brought this initial stage of cooperation to a new and promising level'.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, both powers considered such an exchange of views worth repeating. The British Embassy in Washington thought the cross-fertilization of ideas resulting from such visits was valuable and recommended 'continuing to concert our anti-Communist publicity fairly closely with the Americans'.<sup>17</sup> Thompson also considered the visit to be 'eminently worthwhile' and hoped that 'this type of cooperation may be continued and increased in the future'.<sup>18</sup>

The American launch of the Campaign of Truth in April 1950 reinforced the British Foreign Office's growing confidence in the American anti-Communist propaganda effort. The British were now also keen to expand cooperation. In May 1950, a Foreign Office memorandum regarding priorities in the field of anti-Communist propaganda, observed that, 'the State Department and the Foreign Office have now arrived at much the same ideas about the general need for publicity, both overt and covert and for kindred activities, in order to counteract the spread of communism'.<sup>19</sup> Although the Foreign Office appreciated that differences of resources and policy might lead to certain variations of approach, it was felt that 'a frank exchange of opinion about projects, and about the effects of these projects, cannot fail to be beneficial'.

It may therefore prove valuable in future to extend the collaboration between the State Department and the Foreign Office beyond the existing exchange of material and programme of action, so as to include comment by each Department, on the general strategy of the other, and the results which appear to be obtained, as well as observations on individual projects while these are still at the planning stage.<sup>20</sup>

The Foreign Office was given an early opportunity to discuss these proposals at a series of meetings between British and American officials

which followed the Foreign Ministers' Conferences held in London in April 1950. Between 20 and 22 May 1950, the most senior officials responsible for the propaganda activities of the Foreign Office and the State Department, met at the Foreign Office to discuss the increased coordination of propaganda policies. The British delegation comprised: Christopher Warner, the head of IRD Ralph Murray and Adam Watson, representatives of the Information Policy Department, and J. B. Clarke of the BBC External Services. The US delegation comprised: Edward W. Barrett the newly appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, Bill Stone, Chairman of the Interdepartmental Foreign Information Staff, and Mallory Browne, Public Affairs Officer at the US Embassy.<sup>21</sup>

Barrett began the meetings by outlining his hopes for extending cooperation in five broad areas: the coordination of policy and ideas; the exchange of propaganda material; cooperation in techniques of distribution; the Voice of America and the BBC; and the consequences in the information field of the North Atlantic Treaty.<sup>22</sup> Barrett described the changing attitude in the United States towards the use of propaganda as a weapon in the Cold War. He emphasized the increase in Congressional support for propaganda activities generated by the Campaign of Truth. Although American plans, Barrett stated, were still in the 'preliminary stage', the US was devoting considerable resources to the propaganda effort. Barrett informed the meeting in the strictest confidence that estimates were for 78 million dollars for the first year, and 120 million for the second.<sup>23</sup>

As Watson had done in January, Warner and Murray sought to impress upon the Americans the importance of concentrating less on the quantity of propaganda and focus on the need for a more subtle, carefully targeted and indirect campaign. Warner said that the Foreign Office had found that saturation point for directly distributed material was very quickly reached and British information officers devoted much time and effort to developing local contacts who would print British material, or reflect British views in their own writing. In particular, he suggested, there was little value in saturating areas such as South-East Asia and the Middle East with Western-issued anti-Communist material which would be automatically distrusted. American officials once again expressed great interest in British methods. Barrett replied that although much could be done through public statements which stressed the 'unity of purpose of the nations of the free world', he was also interested in developing similar techniques to the British for the use of 'gray' propaganda, particularly in South-East Asia.<sup>24</sup>

One area in which the United States was keen to expand cooperation was broadcasting. The centerpiece to the psychological operations provided for under NSC-68 was the expansion of broadcasting over the Iron Curtain as part of what became known as the radio 'Ring Plan'. One of the problems

in the development of the 'Ring Plan' was the fact that with the exception of Alaska, where new transmitters were planned, the United States had no territory near the Soviet bloc. The British, of course, had territory and influence in various strategic locations in which the Americans hoped to site new transmitters, most notably in the Middle East and South-East Asia. Although full details of the 'Ring Plan' were not revealed to the British at this stage, Barrett described American efforts to overcome Soviet jamming. He also gave a brief account of American plans for broadcasting through Radio Free Europe, which, he said, would 'take a tougher line than the BBC or even VOA'.

Barrett suggested further technical cooperation to circumvent Soviet jamming. He proposed the construction of new transmitters in Ceylon, Singapore and Bahrain to relay BBC and VOA programs. The State Department also wished to take advantage of the high-powered transmitter at Crowborough in Sussex, which under the codename 'Aspidistra', had broadcast BBC and black radio transmissions during the war.<sup>25</sup> In early 1950, an American technical team had visited the facility at Crowborough, which was now used by the Diplomatic Wireless Service (DWS), and found that it was not being used to full advantage.

The Americans wanted to use the 'Aspidistra's' 650-watt medium-wave transmitter after midnight for broadcasts to Ukraine. Barrett also offered to provide two additional transmitters for DWS Morse code use, releasing two larger short-wave transmitters for further VOA relays. Although the Foreign Office deferred a decision on the use of 'Aspidistra', they supported the proposals for the BBC and VOA to share facilities, and agreed to approach the governments of Ceylon, Bahrain and Singapore regarding the construction of new transmitters. It was also agreed that technicians from the BBC and VOA would undertake a joint study of the problems of overcoming jamming.<sup>26</sup>

There were, however, signs that the Foreign Office was somewhat uneasy at the Americans' ambitious broadcasting plans. Warner noted that, BBC contracts with Malaya, Singapore and Ceylon included clauses reserving the power of veto over anything carried from transmitters in their territories, and he warned that broadcasts criticizing the Chinese communist government might lead to protests.<sup>27</sup> Barrett reassured the Foreign Office that the VOA would 'avoid anything in their relays which might be embarrassing to His Majesty's Government or to the local authorities on whose territory relay transmitters were situated'.<sup>28</sup>

The British were also skeptical about RFE. British experience during the war had, Warner said, 'shown that exiles were apt to get out of touch with their own countries surprisingly quickly and to be moved by personal and internal political considerations rather than strictly patriotic

considerations'. He made it clear that Britain would not be returning to 'black' broadcasting. Wartime experience had shown such work had to be 'exceptionally brilliantly done', and it would now be 'prohibitively difficult and expensive'.<sup>29</sup>

The British were also concerned that the expansion of American broadcasting in Europe might be provocative and lead to interference in domestic broadcasting. The allocation of long and medium wavelengths in Europe had been agreed by 33 nations, including those from the Soviet bloc, at a conference in Copenhagen in June 1948. Warner stressed that the British government would be 'averse to anything which might lead to a breakdown in the Copenhagen Plan and broadcasting 'war', particularly on medium waves'.<sup>30</sup> The American minutes recorded, 'that the British Government is apprehensive about the European broadcasting situation and will be careful not to take any action which might affect British home services'.<sup>31</sup>

The meetings also revealed significant differences in the target area priorities for British and American anti-Communist propaganda. The British gave a higher priority to countries outside the Iron Curtain, particularly those parts of the free world in danger of communist penetration, and in which 'public opinion could still exercise a considerable effect on policy, especially in times of crisis'. First priority was given to France, Italy, Germany and South-East Asia.

Secondary priority was given to India, Pakistan and the Middle East. American propaganda, Barrett replied, was principally directed over the Iron Curtain, and most strongly at the Soviet Union itself. British efforts to penetrate the Iron Curtain with propaganda were limited to the overseas services of the BBC. Moreover, the Foreign Office focused greater attention on the satellite states than the Soviet Union. They considered these countries to be 'less firmly controlled, more recently Sovietised, and more used to listening to foreign broadcasts'.<sup>32</sup>

Despite such differences the talks concluded with a wide-ranging discussion, in which various degrees of cooperation in certain 'critical areas' were agreed. In South-East Asia, Barrett recommended closer liaison at Singapore, including an exchange of propaganda material, translations and analysis of the Chinese press. Warner invited the Americans to send a top man or team to work at the British Regional Information Office in Singapore. It was also proposed that Chinese press reading could be divided between the British service in Peking and USIS in Hong Kong.

There was a general agreement on cooperation in the Middle East, where Britain and America would occasionally pursue joint policies to offset communist charges of disagreement and rivalry. In Europe, it was agreed to 'exchange ideas on all possible common lines of action and give more



attention to developing effective slogans' to counter the trend towards neutrality, particularly in France, and promote the North Atlantic Treaty. It was noted that cooperation between British and American information officers in Paris was already very close. The British information officer, it was reported, even passed on, 'insulting remarks about the Americans made to him by Frenchmen'. It was hoped that the Americans would pass on any similar remarks made about the British! Finally, there was an agreement to exchange ideas on all output to the satellite states.<sup>33</sup>

In a significant indication of British and American cooperation in covert propaganda activities, it was agreed that 'further study should be given to exploiting the propaganda possibilities in Albania'. In late 1948, the British government had formulated a policy of subversion aimed at 'detaching' one of the satellites from the Soviet bloc. The proposed target was Albania, and a covert operation was launched in cooperation with the American CIA to infiltrate Albanian resistance fighters into the country to foment unrest. The first team of men had gone ashore at the beginning of October 1949.<sup>34</sup>

In planning, it had been assumed that special operations in Albania would be accompanied by a propaganda offensive.<sup>35</sup> However, a restriction on the Foreign Office conducting subversive propaganda in communist countries was not lifted until December 1949, after the operation had begun.<sup>36</sup> Even then, Britain and America had few resources for propaganda in Albania. Neither Britain or America had embassies in Tirana, and therefore had no direct contact with the Albanian people, or local channels for the dissemination of subversive propaganda. The IRD conducted little direct anti-Communist propaganda in Eastern Europe, and relied upon the overseas services of the BBC. However, the BBC's daily 15-minute Albanian language program was broadcast 90 minutes before the electricity was switched on in Albanian towns.<sup>37</sup> US broadcasts to Albania via Radio Free Europe and Voice of America did not begin until July 1950 and May 1951 respectively.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, the BBC remained the principal means of directing propaganda at the Albanian people. Albanian resistance leaders were given time on the BBC's Albanian service, and shortly after the first landings the Foreign Office agreed to fund an additional 15-minute Albanian language slot, later in the evening.<sup>39</sup> However, with no representation in Albania, it was difficult to assess the impact of the operation, or acquire new material for broadcasts.

At the meetings in May 1950, Warner agreed to ask the French, who had an embassy in Tirana, to provide information on events in Albania which could be broadcast by the BBC and VOA.<sup>40</sup> Barrett said the State Department was also considering 'various suggestions in the 'H. G. Wells' category' for penetrating the Iron Curtain, such as the use of balloons.<sup>41</sup> A

balloon leaflet drop over Albania was later aborted when the wind changed.<sup>42</sup> The whole Albanian operation eventually collapsed when it was realized that the country was not ripe for revolt. Those émigrés dropped into Albania were betrayed by Kim Philby, the MI6 liaison officer in Washington, and arrested by the Albanian security services.<sup>43</sup>

Although the operation in Albania marked the nadir of Anglo-American covert operations in Eastern Europe, the meetings in London in May 1950 resulted in the expansion of British and American cooperation in the use of propaganda as a weapon in the Cold War. The meetings cemented the close personal ties between those senior British and American officials responsible for anti-Communist propaganda, and revealed the extent of common thinking in the Foreign Office and the State Department regarding the use of propaganda. Barrett recorded in his own notes on the trip, that Britain and America now agreed 'that informational activity, indeed psychological warfare, is becoming vitally important'.<sup>44</sup> As a result Britain and America agreed to maintain 'close and continuous liaison' on all aspects of information policy.<sup>45</sup>

The most immediate result of the London talks was an increase in cooperation in the field. The State Department and the Foreign Office sent instructions to field missions regarding the talks and the desirability of extended cooperation.<sup>46</sup> Both expressed the importance of maintaining 'freedom of action' in propaganda work, but as the State Department's circular indicated, there was a new policy for the closest possible cooperation short of joint operations:

While each government will retain complete freedom of action in conducting overseas information, there should be close cooperation wherever possible in support of common objectives. To this end there should be continuous exchange of ideas between the Department and the Foreign Office and between our missions abroad with a view to developing common lines of information policy, planning and conduct of activities. It was agreed, however, that such cooperation should normally stop short of joint information operations.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the restriction on joint operations, it is apparent that in many countries the extent of cooperation in the planning and implementation of propaganda activities was such that joint activity was often undertaken. Indeed it is difficult to see how information staff could seek to develop common lines in information policy, and the planning, and conduct of operations without becoming involved in joint activity. In practice, rather than avoiding joint operations, British and American information staff in the field took great care to maintain the outward appearance of acting independently. A US review of field comments on cooperation with the

British information services in August 1950 found that most posts agreed that, 'no appearance should be given publicly of joint action either in policy formulation or programming'.<sup>48</sup>

Information officers were happy to exchange material and consult in private, but there was no question that they would seek to combine the output of their propaganda activities. In each case the State Department found information officers in the field were careful to maintain 'individuality of output'.<sup>49</sup> The one notable exception to this rule was the Middle East. In response to Soviet propaganda which sought to highlight Anglo-American rivalry, it was agreed, 'to lay on from time to time demonstrations of solidarity between the USA and UK in the Middle East'.<sup>50</sup>

The degree to which British and American information staff worked together varied from post to post. In several cases cooperation involved a division of labor designed to avoid duplication of effort in, for example, press reading or the translation of propaganda material into local languages.<sup>51</sup> In other cases British staff provided the benefit of their experience regarding possible channels for the distribution of propaganda material. For example, the US Embassy in Bombay reported that British information officers regularly commented on local editors and 'the editorial policies of Bombay papers'.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, in Hong Kong, British information staff provided information 'relative to subversive activity among local trade unions so that appropriate pamphlets and posters can be more strategically distributed'.<sup>53</sup> In posts where cooperation was even closer, British and American information staff agreed to distribute each others propaganda material through their own established channels. In Baghdad, the US Embassy reported, 'we have used certain anti-Communist squibs from the British in our Kurdish bulletin, they in turn have translated some of our Soviet Affairs Notes material, notably the one on the treatment of moslems [*sic*] in the USSR'.<sup>54</sup>

One notable example which serves to illustrate several aspects of liaison was Venezuela. British and American information officers in Caracas inaugurated weekly meetings in 1950. As a result, the US Embassy discovered, 'British press channels are somewhat more effective than ours', and it was agreed that anti-Communist material would be translated by the US Embassy and given to the British for distribution. Similar arrangements were made for the distribution of material on religious persecution behind the Iron Curtain, which the British passed to Venezuelan parish priests, with whom they had long established contacts. As a result, the US Embassy reported, this material often appeared in their weekly sermons!<sup>55</sup>

One area in which particularly close cooperation developed was South-East Asia. By 1950 British officials concluded that since communism had

been held in check in France and Italy, Western Europe was not the weak spot it had been, and South-East Asia was now 'the softest spot in the world picture'.<sup>56</sup> The decline of the Communist threat in Western Europe was, British officials believed, due in no small part to the anti-Communist propaganda effort. On 1 August 1950, the Foreign Office Russia Committee paid tribute to the 'revolution that has been achieved in the field of publicity'.

Partly by the compulsion of events, but also as a result of a deliberate counter-propaganda campaign, a majority of people, certainly in the English-speaking world and Western Europe and a growing number elsewhere have come to recognise communist aims and methods for what they are... Much remained to be done in the areas more vulnerable to communism, such as South-East Asia.<sup>57</sup>

By 1950, the British already had a well-established organization for countering communism in South-East Asia. The British government had become concerned about the spread of communism in the region following the outbreak of the Malayan Emergency in 1948. Malcolm MacDonald, the British Commissioner-General in South-East Asia, was a powerful proponent of what later became known as the domino theory of Communist expansion. The region, he insisted, should be viewed as a whole, the Communists planned their actions on a theatre-wide basis and Britain should respond in a similarly coordinated manner.

In late 1948, MacDonald recommended the creation of a regional center to coordinate anti-Communist propaganda activities throughout South-East Asia.<sup>58</sup> In May 1949, the IRD established a Regional Information Office (RIO) at the Commissioner General's headquarters at Phoenix Park in Singapore. Singapore was the centre for British defence forces east of Suez, and the Commissioner General's crowded headquarters at Phoenix Park already hosted local centres for the British intelligence and security services.<sup>59</sup>

The RIO served as a central planning and production hub for propaganda, both anti-Communist and positive, for South-East Asia. It produced propaganda material 'suitably prepared for Asiatic audiences' and where necessary in local languages which was passed to 'local publicists for them to pass on to their own public in their own manner'. It used local contacts in the media, trade unions and youth organizations. It also passed background information on Communism and Soviet policy 'not of a secret nature but not normally available through public channels' to governments in the region.<sup>60</sup>

In February 1950, as Britain's involvement in Malaya intensified, further regional coordination was provided by a Joint Information and

Propaganda Committee (JIPC) which was established in Singapore. Its role was to coordinate the propaganda activities of all agencies involved in the campaign in Malaya to ensure they all 'speak with one voice', and organize an effective counter to Communist inspired propaganda throughout the region.<sup>61</sup>

In August 1950, following the outbreak of the Korean War, MacDonald also established a high level committee of British regional governors which held monthly meetings at Bukit Serene to consider 'the Cold War as it affects us here'.<sup>62</sup> The committee devoted considerable time to the discussion of propaganda. One of its first meetings, in December 1950, was attended by Ralph Murray and Angus Malcolm, respectively heads of the Foreign Office's IRD and IPD. The committee informed Murray and Malcolm that they regarded 'all British propaganda here as being anti-Communist in effect' and 'of great importance in helping maintain stability' in South-East.<sup>63</sup>

The Americans were informed about the plans for the creation of the RIO as early as January 1949.<sup>64</sup> Shortly after the RIO's creation, the IRD's Adam Watson wrote to its director John Rayner instructing him to take the Americans on the spot 'fairly fully into your confidence' regarding the functions of the RIO.<sup>65</sup> Cooperation between British and American information staff in South-East Asia expanded considerably following the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950.

At talks in Washington in July, British and American information officials agreed on the importance of coordinating propaganda on Korea to avoid divergences of presentation.<sup>66</sup> Later that month, the State Department dispatched special instructions to information officers in South-East Asia on cooperation with the British RIO. These indicated a 'wide area in which cooperation could contribute greatly to the achievement of common objectives'. It inaugurated a regular exchange of all propaganda material, particularly 'special Chinese-language material' and information on groups which could receive locally prepared unattributable material. There was also some division of labour, with the Americans providing the product of their press monitoring service in Hong Kong, in exchange for British translation facilities in those posts maintaining such a service.<sup>67</sup>

The Americans also began to build up their propaganda organization in the region along similar lines to the British RIO. In November 1950, the US Consul General in Singapore recommended that he be kept informed of all USIS activities in the region so that he might be 'in a position to supply RIO with information duplicating on the American side what RIO is receiving on the British side'.<sup>68</sup> On a visit to Washington in July 1951, Rayner pressed the Americans to establish their own regional information office. Shortly afterwards a Far East Regional Production Centre with a similar remit to the

British RIO was established in the US Embassy in Manila.<sup>69</sup> A Regional Liaison Officer, the highly respected Si Nadler, was appointed to keep Rayner informed of American propaganda activities in the region.<sup>70</sup> Early in 1951, British and American information staff also began to hold monthly meetings at Phoenix Park to consider proposals for joint activity.<sup>71</sup> A further level of liaison was established when the CIA opened a small station in Singapore in the early 1950s.<sup>72</sup>

Cooperation in anti-Communist propaganda did not, however, extend as far as Korea itself. On the outbreak of war the US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, activated an interdepartmental information committee chaired by Edward Barrett who immediately turned over all the United States Information Service personnel in Korea to General Douglas MacArthur.<sup>73</sup> The hand-over of the State Department's information work to the US Army rather cut the British out of psychological warfare in Korea.

Although there was a proposal to attach a British representative to the US psychological warfare organization in Korea, the military intelligence section (G-2) of the US 8th Army in Korea, jealously guarded its control of this activity. In June 1951, the IRD's Peter Wilkinson observed that, 'as long as General Willoughby was in charge of G-2 there was little chance of any agreement being reached to British participation in the psychological warfare run by the American military authorities'. Wilkinson added that Willoughby would not even allow the CIA's covert action arm, the OPC, to operate in this theatre.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, the US military did provide the British with extensive details of their psychological warfare activities in Korea.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, a Foreign Office review of information work in Korea concluded that Britain had no interests in Korea which were not identical with those of the Americans, and any service Britain could offer would be 'hardly better than a poor duplication of the American effort'.<sup>76</sup>

While propaganda in Korea was largely controlled by the American military, the British played an important supporting role in South-East Asia. Through the RIO in Singapore the British monitored the effect of events in Korea on audiences throughout South-East Asia and disseminated replies to communist propaganda through local channels.<sup>77</sup> From 1950, the British RIO and the US Information Service cooperated closely in the dissemination of anti-Communist material in South-East Asia.

In 1950, the IRD began production of a South-East Asian version of its unattributable weekly digest consisting of quotations of news and comment from the South-East Asian press and radio.<sup>78</sup> The RIO also distributed a large volume of pamphlets most of which appeared 'without any publishers imprints and constitute our "discreet" publications'.<sup>79</sup> One pamphlet, produced by USIS, and distributed by the British RIO was entitled *When the Communists Came* and targeted the overseas Chinese, with stories of

extortion and suicide among their families in China.<sup>80</sup> Articles for which second rights had been obtained were dispatched from London for distribution to the local English and vernacular press in Singapore. These included, in December 1950, 12 articles on China from the *Manchester Guardian*, which the RIO turned into a pamphlet in English and Chinese.<sup>81</sup> USIS and the RIO also distributed cheap imprints of prominent anti-Communist literature in local languages.

In June 1951, USIS informed British information staff that their new book translation program intended to produce two Malay and 12 to 14 Chinese volumes in the year. Notable subjects were Richard Crossman's edited volume of revelatory essays *The God that Failed* (1950), and Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945).<sup>82</sup> The American information officer in Djakarta reported that the editor of the national newspaper *Keng Po* had received a copy of *The God that Failed* from the British Information Services and had subsequently written two front page editorials on the book which 'pointedly commended it to the Chinese of Djakarta as worthwhile reading for those toying with communism'.<sup>83</sup>

Most of this propaganda material was directed at the educated classes. MacDonald admitted in 1951, that the Commission-General had no contact with Chinese working classes in South-East Asia, and more innovative thinking was required to target the less educated.<sup>84</sup> Broadcasting clearly had a key role to play. In the early 1950s, the VOA had only a modest medium wave service in the region, but the BBC Overseas Service was considered an important branch of overseas propaganda and was kept fully informed by the Foreign Office of the government propaganda line.<sup>85</sup>

The British also had important contacts with local broadcasting services. A Director of Broadcasting jointly responsible to the Governments of Malaya and Singapore sat on the JIPC. In July 1951, he was provided with the first scripts of interviews with captured Communist soldiers.<sup>86</sup> There was also regular consultation regarding propaganda themes between the RIO and government controlled Radio Malaya. RIO advice was given in particular in connection with weekly series of broadcasts entitled 'World Affairs' and 'This is Communism' broadcast in English and various Chinese dialects.<sup>87</sup>

Various visual formats were also used. The British government had employed film and newsreel to good effect in Malaya since 1948, and British newsreel coverage of Korea was intensive in the first six months of the conflict.<sup>88</sup> In July 1951, USIS asked Rayner for documentary newsreels showing, through the mouth of a Chinese ex-Communist soldier, how the Korean war had been planned in Moscow, and separate documentaries on each Asian contingent in Korea. USIS also ran a 'photo review' poster campaign for which they requested photographs of Chinese and Korean POWs.<sup>89</sup>

The use of strip cartoons to illustrate the points made in the printed matter was one of the more innovative developments in targeting mass opinion in South-East Asia. A film and strip cartoon based on the booklet *When the Communists Came* was produced at the US Regional Production Center in Manila.<sup>90</sup> The RIO produced a weekly booklet, *Inside Soviet China*, which included cartoons depicting the effects of Communism in China, together with 'two strip cartoons of our popular Chinese victim of communism, Mr. Wang'.<sup>91</sup> Plans which were already underway to produce a strip cartoon version of *Animal Farm* were halted when Mrs Orwell's agent refused rights on the grounds that a commercial cartoon was already planned. The RIO's haste in undertaking this project before securing the rights caused some embarrassment in the Foreign Office, because Orwell's agent had been 'most cooperative in granting us rights in this and other books'.<sup>92</sup>

Alongside this considerable propaganda effort British and American authorities also worked together to censor opinion about China and the war in Korea. In December 1950, MacArthur's headquarters introduced direct censorship of military news. A Press Advisory Commission was established in Tokyo with the full support of the British authorities. In London, the IRD worked with the Foreign Office News Department to brief journalists on the conflict and when *The Daily Worker* ran a piece attacking Rhee's tyranny and implicitly criticising American policy, the Cabinet toyed with the idea of introducing draconian press laws banning journalism which brought 'aid and comfort to the enemy'.<sup>93</sup>

In South-East Asia, British authorities were less chary about wielding their administrative power. In August 1950, the British High Commissioner and the Governor of Singapore claimed to have enough information to bring a case against two pro-Communist newspapers in the territory. 'The suppression of both newspapers' they concluded, 'was highly desirable and if possible the timing should be coordinated'.<sup>94</sup> In Singapore the JIPC considered the control of films, gramophone records and songs from Chinese sources and agreed that films which 'focused the loyalty of the Chinese audience on China', were 'undesirable and should be banned'.<sup>95</sup>

British and American cooperation in the production and dissemination of propaganda in South-East Asia was the primary example of the kind of 'close and continuous liaison' agreed by Barrett and Warner in London in May 1950. Cooperation in South-East Asia was aided by the existence of a large British propaganda organization in Singapore, and British experience and contacts across the region. It is also apparent that America's propaganda organization and methods in South-East Asia were in some degree modeled on the British effort.

Both powers, however, maintained an independent propaganda program. There were geographical divisions. The British were satisfied to take a



back-seat in Korea and America limited its propaganda activities in Malaya. Britain also pursued an independent line in its policy and propaganda with regard to the Soviet role in the war in Korea, at least until mid-1951. Most importantly, Britain and America were careful to maintain an independent output. 'Though collaborating closely in private', wrote Rayner in June 1951, 'we continue our propaganda separately, in this way getting the benefit of approaching our target with two separate weapons.'<sup>96</sup>

The coordination of propaganda activities in the field was mirrored by close consultation in the development of anti-Communist propaganda policies between London and Washington. The most important development was the appointment of information liaison officers (ILO) to the British Embassy in Washington and the American Embassy in London. The IRD's Adam Watson was appointed British ILO in Washington in August 1950. According to Watson, his role was, 'to explore every part of the field as best I could, and to see what could be done to bring American and British operations and long term planning as much into harmony as possible'.<sup>97</sup>

In addition to liaison with the State Department, the post involved a certain amount of work at the United Nations and liaison with the Voice of America in New York. Watson's counterpart at the US Embassy in London, W. F. Frye, was instructed to liaise with the British government on 'all aspects of current information activities, including broadcasting and certain special activities'. Both ILOs were also expected to make occasional field trips to attend regional meetings of information officers and maintain a personal knowledge of the operational problems of information work.<sup>98</sup>

Watson, was a particularly successful liaison officer, and established many influential contacts. He had, of course, visited Washington in January 1950, and had met Barrett and Stone in London in May. Shortly after arriving in Washington, Watson began regular meetings at the State Department.<sup>99</sup> He also established contact with 'certain sections of the CIA', most notably Frank Wisner of the OPC. Through his contacts with the CIA, Watson met C. D. Jackson, a well-connected psychological warfare veteran, who was a guiding hand behind Radio Free Europe. Jackson went on to become Eisenhower's Special Assistant for psychological operations. He was, Watson wrote, 'warmly anglophile' and the two 'worked very closely together' under both Truman and Eisenhower.<sup>100</sup>

In 1951, Watson also established liaison with America's new Psychological Strategy Board (PSB). The PSB had been established by President Truman in April 1951 in an effort to provide greater coordination in the planning and conduct of psychological operations. By late 1950, US propaganda operations were divided uneasily between several government agencies. The PSB was composed of senior officials of the three principal

agencies, State, Defense and CIA with an independent director appointed by the President.<sup>101</sup>

On a visit to the US in May 1951, the head of IRD, John Peck, astutely recognized that the ongoing struggle in Washington for control of psychological operations had implications for cooperation with Britain and instructed Watson to establish contact with the new PSB. Hitherto, Foreign Office cooperation in this field had, for the most part, been with the State Department, whose amenability was, according to Peck, 'probably greater than that of the other governmental agencies concerned with psychological warfare'.<sup>102</sup>

Peck observed, and events in Korea supported his view, that if the international situation deteriorated and war became probable, 'the controlling emphasis will shift from the State Department towards the Service Departments', and Britain's influence would diminish. He was, therefore, keen to seize the initiative and establish close ties with the PSB and accustom them 'to a policy of cooperation with the UK'.<sup>103</sup> In August 1951, Watson met with Gordon Gray, the newly appointed Director of the PSB, to request arrangements for liaison.<sup>104</sup> US officials were in favour of extending cooperation to include the PSB as long as it did not bring similar requests from other governments, and Watson was informed that he should liaise directly with Gray.<sup>105</sup>

In mid-1951, Watson's role became even more important when his counterpart at the American embassy in London was relieved of his responsibilities. Frye, had failed to establish an effective role in London, and Watson proceeded to handle liaison in both directions. He informed the Foreign Office:

This means I have been playing the part of a broker: exploring the advantages which cooperation in various fields might bring, and trying to arrange it where desirable. I have been a strictly British broker, of course; but the Americans have not minded this.<sup>106</sup>

From his position in Washington, Watson was well placed to witness the elevation of propaganda in America's Cold War strategy. Throughout 1950 and 1951, Watson's reports from are littered with references to 'the new concept of influencing public opinion' which was developing in the State Department.<sup>107</sup> In June 1951, shortly after the creation of the PSB, he provided a detailed overview of American thinking on political warfare. 'The Americans', he began, 'have accepted 'the struggle for men's minds' as a major feature of their general struggle with the Kremlin'. Psychological strategy, he stated, had now been given its due place alongside more traditional means of waging war. Watson revealed that the US administration had begun to develop various plans for 'promoting and exploiting disorder inside the Soviet Union'.

These plans fitted into a broader American strategic concept on how war against Russia might be waged. The Americans he said were strongly opposed 'to slogging the issue out on the plains of Northern Europe: what they call "rolling our troops down the old European bowling alley"'. They were looking at other ways of weakening the Soviet drive in Europe:

A large proportion of the population of Central Asia and Western Siberia is made up of racial minorities, political exiles, discontented draft labor and forced labor. In war, the Americans seem to think these men could be supplied with arms and built up by radio into a serious though disconnected threat to Soviet power and especially communications with the Far East.<sup>108</sup>

The Americans, Watson said, had told him many of the details of these schemes, and were 'anxious for our cooperation not only in the event of war but also now during the preparatory period'.<sup>109</sup>

American officials were particularly keen to encourage British participation in Radio Free Europe. In London in September 1950, Frank Wisner and Robert Joyce of the OPC met with Christopher Warner, the IRD head Ralph Murray, and Patrick Reilly of the Permanent Under-Secretary's Department. The Americans wanted the Foreign Office to join with them in organizing Radio Free Europe, and pressed them to organize the large Russian and Eastern European exile groups in London along similar lines to the National Committee for a Free Europe (NCFE).

The Foreign Office were cautious about the American proposal and deferred their decision pending a closer investigation of the organization and broadcasts of RFE.<sup>110</sup> In Washington, Watson was asked to provide details of the station's programs and policy but warned to discourage further developments of the idea of cooperation. According to Murray, they had to consider, among other factors, 'the damage we might be doing to ourselves by boosting Radio Free Europe at the expense of the services of the BBC'.<sup>111</sup>

As a result of wartime experience, officials in London also remained cautious about getting involved with exile groups. In February 1951, Murray informed Watson that they had 'only just got some way in obtaining authorization' to organize exiles and establish liaison with them, 'the arrangements envisaged do not go beyond appointing a liaison official and providing some finance'.<sup>112</sup> In a chilling reply, Watson wrote:

Kim Philby, George Jellicoe and I were all most interested... that you had obtained authorization to proceed to organize the Eastern European exiles in the United Kingdom and to establish some liaison with them... in spite of a search we do not know anything about this development. Could you therefore please arrange for us to be informed?<sup>113</sup>

While the Americans went ahead with RFE alone, the Foreign Office undertook a detailed review of the service. BBC monitoring reports and a sample of RFE scripts provided by Watson were scrutinized by the Information Policy Department, who found that 'their quality is quite good – most of it has been reasonably sound, dignified and unsensational stuff'.<sup>114</sup> From his contacts in the CIA, Watson also provided information on the general policy of RFE, and the extent of guidance exercised by the US government. This was, according to Watson 'of a very general kind'. The exiles were allowed to write their own scripts, 'subject to occasional warnings and requests', but, he reassured the Foreign Office, 'the squabbles and feuds between the various groups of exiles here' did not get on the air.<sup>115</sup>

C. D. Jackson impressed upon Watson the importance of RFE, and in March 1951, following discussions with Paul Gore-Booth, head of the British Information Services in America, Watson urged the Foreign Office not to 'rebuff overtures from an organisation of this calibre to help with cooperation and advice'.<sup>116</sup> Such cooperation, he added, need not be publicly known. There was also, he argued, no reason why RFE should damage the BBC.

If it is recognised that the BBC and the Voice of America can shoot into the same target from different angles, there must also be a place for a broadcast which is not that of a free western power but of exiles from the country itself who have found refuge abroad. Since the approach is so different, I do not see that we should lose anything in effecting an improvement in the quality of Radio Free Europe broadcasts.<sup>117</sup>

The following month C. D. Jackson called on Warner in London. He described current and planned RFE services, and agreed a programme for cooperation with the British. British missions would be asked for comments on the effectiveness of RFE transmissions, and this information would be passed, through Watson, to Jackson. In return Jackson would provide the Foreign Office with RFE policy directives, and details of any Eastern Europeans resident in the UK whom RFE proposed to employ. The British government's comments on these individuals, Jackson added, would be welcome.

It was agreed that a representative of the RFE's editorial organization in Munich would visit IRD in London to discuss 'material requirements', and that an IRD official might visit Munich.<sup>118</sup> At a meeting with Wisner and Jackson in Washington in July 1951, British officials agreed that the Foreign Office would supply news and 'discreet advice' to a RFE correspondent who was about to be appointed to London. Jackson also asked the Foreign Office help him to hand-pick people for the new Hungarian and Polish services, as some of 'the best Poles for the purpose' were in London.<sup>119</sup>

British cooperation was, however, to remain strictly confidential. Warner made it clear that any official British connection with RFE, 'must be kept secret and also the British official origin of any material we supply'.<sup>120</sup> Although the offer for the Foreign Office to participate in RFE remained open, the possibility of putting British representation inside RFE was problematic as long as there was no émigré organization in London to act as a front for Foreign Office involvement. Bernard Burrows, the British Information Officer in Washington, observed in July 1951, that although the CIA assisted RFE and even had men in the organization, the NCFE had an independent existence and its own funds. Consequently, the US government could claim it was an unofficial organization for which they were not responsible.

If, however, we put someone into Radio Free Europe he would in present circumstances have to be either directly dependent on the Foreign Office or some other government organisation, and if H. M. Government were asked questions in Parliament about it they could probably not say they had nothing to do with it. This would in the American view, gravely prejudice the whole operation.<sup>121</sup>

The Americans, Burrows said, found the NCFE an 'indispensable buffer' between themselves and RFE, and pressed the British Government to establish a similar buffer. Although the IRD were keen on the idea, Bevin turned down a proposal from the IRD that they should enter into an 'informal relationship' with the East European section of the European Movement, which was headed by Harold Macmillan. IRD put the suggestion up again to Bevin's successor Herbert Morrison, who was similarly cautious of involvement with exile politics.<sup>122</sup>

It was not until late 1952, under Churchill's leadership, that the Foreign Office was given permission to provide financial support for a new Central-Eastern European Committee of the European Movement, with Richard Law MP as President and the former Ambassador to the USSR, Sir David Kelly as Secretary-General. This Committee, the Americans hoped, 'would try to coordinate long-range activities... with that of its American opposite number'.<sup>123</sup>

Although there was no official Foreign Office involvement in RFE, informal contact was maintained. Sir Ian Jacob of the BBC Overseas Services, met C. D. Jackson in April 1951 and agreed to keep Warner informed of the BBC's contacts with RFE.<sup>124</sup> IRD representatives visited RFE in September 1951, and in February 1952, the veteran British propaganda expert, Robert Bruce-Lockhart provided IRD with a detailed account of his own independent tour of RFE.<sup>125</sup> Some degree of institutional contact was provided in August 1951, when Mr Ramsey of IRD was offered

a post as a RFE correspondent in Germany. Following discussions with the intelligence section of RFE, it was agreed that Ramsey might also 'serve as an unofficial link between RFE and IRD'. Ramsey, IRD observed, was keen to accept the position, not least because the pay was over five times what he was earning at the Foreign Office!<sup>126</sup>

In addition to support for exile broadcasting, the US government continued to press for British assistance in the development of the radio Ring Plan. When Peck visited Washington in May 1951, he met with representatives of the State Department, the CIA, the PSB and VOA. In the course of these discussions Peck was given a detailed overview of American offensive psychological operations and the objectives of the Ring Plan. The aim of these operations, he was told, was to 'make things as difficult as possible for the Soviet government in their relations with their satellites and with their own people'.<sup>127</sup>

The objectives of the Ring Plan, Peck discovered went beyond planning for psychological operations in peacetime. It was, he observed, 'an essential part of military preparedness' for war. In addition to fostering discontent in the Soviet bloc, the Ring Plan had three further objectives: to divert Soviet electronic research into seeking means of countering the American operations; and in the event of war, to create a secure wireless link around the world for use by American and allied armed forces; and provide a means of establishing contact with the Russian people for psychological warfare purposes. Peck was also told of a plan, 'still in the discussion stage', to use the ring of transmitters as part of a combined military and psychological warfare operation directed at the 'soft under-belly' of the Soviet Union, those regions east and north-east of the Caspian sea, 'with the aim of detaching the subject peoples of the region from the Soviet Union and virtually cutting it in half'.<sup>128</sup>

The Americans, Peck reported were quite clear regarding the assistance Britain could provide in developing the Ring Plan.

They frankly look to us for help in negotiating the necessary permission to build radio stations in those parts of the world where we have influence, e.g. India, Pakistan and the Persian Gulf.<sup>129</sup>

Peck, however, was a little taken aback at the wholly offensive nature of American plans for psychological operations. He was surprised that although it was clear the Americans 'intended to go ahead vigorously' with offensive psychological warfare, their approach to defensive operations in the free world was, 'tentative and uncertain'. Moreover, the operations described to Peck, including the Ring Plan, revealed a general blurring in American plans between peacetime psychological operations and preparations for war. Although the Americans were anxious to stress that

they aimed to avoid any incitement to premature revolt, Peck was concerned that it was not always clear whether American psychological operations were intended to be part of a plan leading up to open warfare, or whether it was hoped they would make war less likely.

Those that I talked to appeared genuinely anxious to avert another world war, but they certainly do not consider the present situation, in which tens of thousands of Americans have been killed in Korea and a vast effort is being made to defend America and Western Europe, as peace. They have no hesitation in seeking to deploy against Russia in peacetime a psychological warfare effort as vigorous as that being deployed by Russia against the free world. They do not think this effort makes world war any more likely; but they hope that, if war comes, their current PW efforts will have contributed substantially to weakening the Russian war effort and strengthening that of the free world.<sup>130</sup>

Reaction to the Ring Plan in London was decidedly mixed. There was a good deal of skepticism as to whether it would be effective in overcoming Soviet jamming, and opinions differed as to whether the plan was provocative. The Permanent Under-Secretary's Department (PUSD) doubted that the plan would be successful, but worried that if it was, the Soviets 'might feel compelled to take counter-action'. The PUSD brief on the Ring Plan placed it alongside such clearly provocative measures as the establishment of US bases in Norway.<sup>131</sup> Foreign Office regional departments also identified local political difficulties regarding the location of broadcasting facilities. The output of stations in the Middle East needed to be carefully monitored to avoid reference to controversial political issues such as Palestine, and Bahrain was felt to be a poor choice because of the need to avoid provoking Persian sovereignty claims over the state.<sup>132</sup>

The Foreign Office Eastern Department also rejected the option of Kuwait on the grounds that the regime there was already unstable, and Anglo-American broadcasting would merely serve to 'focus upon Kuwait the attentions of all those subversive and communist-inspired elements in the Middle East'. This would not only 'imperil the stability of the present regime but would be likely to put in jeopardy both the oil operations and the station itself'.<sup>133</sup>

The IRD disagreed with the PUSD, and did not believe the plan to be provocative. Notwithstanding local political concerns, the IRD supported the Ring Plan in principal, and pursued a policy of 'cautious cooperation'. Although they accepted that broadcasts that could not be jammed easily might be seen as 'a good deal more provocative than broadcasts which could be jammed', IRD officials dismissed the idea that the erection of a ring of transmitters was in itself provocative.<sup>134</sup>

The IRD's policy of cooperation was, however, undermined by the Foreign Secretary, Herbert Morrison. In September 1951, Morrison visited Washington and took with him the PUSD brief on the Ring Plan. As a result, Morrison informed Acheson that Britain 'would regard as provocative any scheme for ringing the Soviet Union with broadcasting transmitters'. Acheson and the State Department were somewhat taken aback by Morrison's assertion. The US Embassy in London reported that the Secretary of State had been 'shocked' by Morrison's statement, not least because the Foreign Office, 'had been kept fully informed of the project for a considerable time and had not raised any objections in principle'.<sup>135</sup>

The IRD were similarly alarmed. They had not been consulted prior to the Foreign Secretary's visit to Washington, and the PUSD brief had not been cleared in draft form by either the IPD or the IRD. The issue was only resolved, to the obvious relief of Acheson and the IRD, by the election of the Conservatives in October 1951. On 5 November, the IRD's J. W. Nicholls recommended that the State Department be informed that Morrison's remark 'should not be taken as meaning that we were against the project in principle':

[T]he doubts that we had expressed on previous occasions about particular aspects of the scheme (e.g. the proposal for a transmitter in the Persian Gulf) were based solely on practical considerations and were certainly not mere pretexts to conceal any fundamental objection to the scheme; and that, so far as provocation was concerned, it was in our opinion the uses to which the transmitters were put rather than their mere existence which would have to be handled with caution.<sup>136</sup>

Acheson's reaction to Britain's apparent opposition to the Ring Plan illustrates the extent to which American plans for psychological operations were dependent on British support. Although the United States had launched a formidable propaganda offensive in 1950, the US administration was concerned that this should not result in any reduction in Britain's anti-Communist propaganda operations. In early 1951 news that Britain was planning to make cuts in spending on overseas propaganda aroused considerable concern in Washington. Barrett suggested that the State Department 'exert a little pressure' to keep the British from cutting their budgets and asked the OPC 'to indicate through your channels, the deep concern with which the US Government has heard this news'.

Most significantly Acheson urgently sought to impress upon the Foreign Office that, 'all our plans count heavily on British psychological warfare as important part joint defense effort'.<sup>137</sup> Britain, however, had no intention of abandoning the field to the United States. Acheson was informed that although some economies would be made in Britain's positive propaganda



work no cuts were planned in direct anti-Communist activities and 'there may even be some expansion in this field'. Far from abandoning the field to the US, by mid-1951 British policy was based on the premise that Britain and America should provide a coordinated response to communist propaganda. As 'the only two governments conducting anti-Communist operations on a worldwide scale',

The Americans and ourselves are generally recognised as the leaders in this operation. It is, therefore, possible to achieve a coordinated anti-Communist operation.<sup>138</sup>

Cooperation between Britain and the United States in the field of anti-Communist propaganda expanded dramatically in the period between January 1950 and Churchill's return to office in October 1951. In 1950, the willingness of US officials to seek British advice and experience regarding the most effective methods of conducting anti-Communist propaganda, coupled with the launch of the Campaign of Truth, restored British faith in American anti-Communist propaganda.

Cooperation expanded considerably following the talks in London in May 1950 which instituted regular contact between officials in London and Washington and in the field. By far the most important development was the appointment of Adam Watson as Information Liaison Officer at the British Embassy in Washington. Watson was the linchpin of British and American cooperation in anti-Communist propaganda. He assiduously cultivated contacts with the most senior officials in Washington by the end of 1951 had established close and regular liaison with all the principal agencies responsible for American psychological operations, both overt and covert. It is not surprising that after only eight months in Washington, Watson claimed to know more about American anti-Communist propaganda than he did about British policy.<sup>139</sup>

To be sure, American hospitality was not entirely disinterested. It is clear that the US Government was keen to elicit British support for many of their psychological operations. Particularly, in the development of Radio Free Europe, and the use of British facilities to expand VOA broadcasting through the Ring Plan. Britain did not however, merely hand the anti-Communist propaganda baton to the United States in the 1950s.

Britain retained and expanded its anti-Communist propaganda policy and machinery and cooperation with the United States expanded. In many respects British and American approaches to anti-Communist propaganda were complementary. By working together Britain and America provided a comprehensive and formidable response to the communist propaganda machine. Although the anti-Communist propaganda policies of both nations was global in scale, Britain's principal target was Communism in the free

world, while the United States concentrated its fire on the Soviet Union and the Iron Curtain countries.

Furthermore, although Britain and America adopted different methods, they were often combined to good effect. It has been suggested that the IRD's discreet propaganda could not compete with the din of the CIA's 'mighty Wurlitzer'.<sup>140</sup> However, the scale of the US output did not guarantee its impact, and there were benefits in both approaches. Britain's discreet approach was more appropriate for countering Communism in the free world. America's bold propaganda offensive was more suited to bolstering resistance behind the Iron Curtain. Although British officials were not always complimentary about American efforts, officials on both sides of the Atlantic were clearly aware of the benefits of 'close and continuous liaison' in the field of anti-Communist propaganda.

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