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Britain's African Colonies as Subject and Object of British Propaganda during World War II

by

Rosaleen Smyth

In the twentieth century propaganda has become an indispensable part of modern government; it is particularly obtrusive in the heightened emotional atmosphere of war. Propaganda is here used in the sense of a deliberate attempt by a government through the mass media - print, radio and film - to influence, mould, control and sometimes to change attitudes and behaviour. Britain emerged from World War I with a reputation for being particularly adept at war propaganda; propaganda campaigns conducted by several ad hoc government agencies[1] were reputed to have helped bring the United States into the war on the British side[2] and to have contributed to the demoralisation of the German army.[3] These agencies were disbanded when peace came but government propaganda activities continued and proliferated though they were more diffusely organised, less intense and dramatic, and of a different nature. By World War II most social service departments in Britain had acquired public relations staff; the public relations official who acted as apologist and publicist for government policy was providing, noted The Times, a new 'Link Between Government and the Governed'.[4]

Between the wars some politicians, officials and media men became convinced that in an increasingly media-conscious age there was a need to project Britain on the world stage. This conviction was strongly influenced by the way in which agressive totalitarian governments in Germany and Italy were using broadcasting as an international political instrument and by American domination of the world cinema market.[5] In contrast to the propaganda of the totalitarian governments British propaganda tended to be low-key and somewhat genteel with a concentration on the cultural rather than the political. The major vehicles for the Projection of England between the wars were the short-lived Empire Marketing Board, the Empire Service of the BBC and the British Council.

In 1935, with clouds of war again gathering, a Sub-Committee of Imperial Defence was formed to produce a plan for a war-time ministry of information; Britain's African colonies were to be both a subject and an object of war-time propaganda. At the start of the war the Ministry of Information (MOI) was established and responsibility for propaganda concerning the African colonies was divided between the MOI and the new Public Relations Branch of the Colonial Office established in 1940. Propaganda for the colonies was required to ensure the co-operation of the African people in the war effort; propaganda about the colonies was required to defend Britain's colonial record against critics of imperialism both at home and abroad.

Propaganda about the Colonies

Before the war the Colonial Office had been publicity-shy. But on the eve of the war a series of expert reports highly critical of Britain's colonial stewardship had appeared. This made the Colonial Office give serious consideration to the idea of setting up a public relations section; the outbreak of war converted the thought to deed. Noel Sabine, who had seen service in Kenya, was appointed Public Relations Officer and he announced that a prime objective would be:

> to arouse the interest of the public in this country in the Colonies and Colonial people so that the public in this country might be in a better position to fulfill their political responsibilities towards these territories and people. 6

The role of the Public Relations Branch at the Colonial Office was policy-making; the MOI was the production unit. One of the chief empire propagandists at the MOI was the historian Vincent Harlow. Harlow had been Rhodes Professor of Imperial History at London University since 1938 and from 1930 to 1935 had been Beit Lecturer in Colonial History at Oxford. (Harlow proceeded to interpret the past to suit present needs in the same way as members of the Oxford Faculty of Modern History had done in World War I.) 7

Harlow considered that special measures were necessary to make the British public more favourably disposed towards the empire as the popular mood was one of 'apathy and distaste'. In the minds of many the empire was associated with economic exploitation which he attributed to the vigorous campaigns to sell empire products that had been conducted before the war. Only a small minority, he thought, looked upon imperialism as 'the final and most vicious stage in the evolution of monopoly capitalism'. 8 Favourable publicity about the colonies was also necessary for the American market; the United States had a congenital dislike of British imperialism and were very wary of being dragged into a war to fight for the survival of the British empire. The Germans capitalised on the publication of the West Indies report and made much of 'the alleged horrors of our colonial administration'; Britain was 'living in luxury on the wealth collected from 66,000,000 poverty-stricken native serfs'. 9 German allegations provoked retaliatory action. The Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald, met the Foreign Secretary and as a result a propaganda directive was forwarded to John Reith, then the Minister of Information. 10 In 1940 an Empire Publicity

campaign was mounted.

The British public (and the rest of the world) were told that Britain had a colonial record of which it could be proud. Britain in its role of trustee was training colonial peoples to stand on their own feet. The old dual mandate had been abandoned for the more progressive principle of trusteeship which stressed 'social and economic development'.[11] Political progress in the colonies was likened to an evolutionary spiral. Each territory had 'the kind and degree of self-governing institutions that suit its own particular circumstances'. These varied 'from native chieftaincies to advanced forms of parliamentary autonomy' with Ceylon at the top of the spiral.[12] Proof of the satisfaction of colonial peoples with British rule was their spontaneous declarations of loyalty and offers of help at the outbreak of war.

Economic exploitation, the charge most commonly levied against the empire, was adamantly denied. Britain was not obtaining taxes from the colonies.[13] On the contrary the British taxpayer had to contribute to their support. The trump card, the Colonial Development and Welfare Act (1940) was then played. Under this act the generous British taxpayer would contribute up to £5,000,000 a year by grant or loan and one half million for research (£55,000,000 over the next ten years) for colonial development schemes. Sabine made his propaganda debut directing the publicity campaign to launch the C.D.& W. Act. Mention of the Act was always followed by a bouquet for Britain: beleagured Britain in its darkest hour had still the magnanimity to spare time and money on plans for colonial development.[14] New developments in British colonial policy were, as a matter of strategy, presented as being evolutionary stages rather than as abrupt changes of direction. In commending this technique to ith in January 1940 Malcolm MacDonald directed that the new C.D.& W. Act:

> should be the subject of careful elaboration, not as a new departure which might betoken an attack of conscience on our part, but as the logical and normal development of our whole policy towards dependent peoples. 15

The Empire Publicity Campaign of 1940 was pronounced a success by the Colonial Office; its themes with a few minor variations, continued to be the stock-in-trade of propaganda about the colonies until 1942 when once again Britain's colonial complacency was dealt a shattering blow: this time by the fall of Singapore. Up until then it was widely believed, according to Sabine:

> that the Colonies were loyal and happy under our rule and helping us to the limit of their resources and that our policy was enlightened, humane and reasonably progressive.

Occasionally this comfortable state of affairs was disturbed by the activities of critics like the Fabians. The Fabian Colonial Bureau had been established in October 1940 to see that public, press and Parliament were all kept aware of colonial problems. The Bureau were critical of the colour bar and thought the financial provisions of the C.D. and W. Act were inadequate. Strikes on Northern Rhodesia's Copperbelt also brought the colonies into the headlines but on the whole these were 'merely ripples in the pool'. Meanwhile the public displayed little interest in the colonies.[16]

The fall of Singapore was a rude awakening. The Colonial Office was forced to take a fresh look at the realities of the colonial scene. Particular attention was paid to a post-mortem conducted on the disaster in the pages of The Times. An article of the 18th February 1942 had an enormous impact both in Britain and abroad. Its central theme was that the Malays had not fought for the British because the government of Malaya had 'no roots in the life of the people'. Sabine thought this diagnosis 'damning', and recorded that the Colonial Office and British public opinion accepted the criticism as valid. Margery Perham's two letters to The Times of 13 and 14 March respectively were also carefully heeded and her remarks about the colour bar, in particular, found their mark. She had postulated that the reason for the rootlessness of the government in the colonial empire was that European officials lived apart from the local people, like a ruling caste. The rationale was that official and racial prestige depended on this distancing but she felt that the barrier had to be broken down and replaced by a 'working partnership which the coming age demands'.[17]

Britain's colonial reputation was now badly tarnished. There was a call from both sides of the Atlantic for a restatement of her colonial policy. Walter Lippman in Washington, hoped that the British would 'put away "the white man's burden" ... purging themselves of the taint of an obsolete and obviously unworkable white man's imperialism'.[18]

The British government had no such intention. Churchill had not become the King's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire. Propagandists now saw their task as being to present the empire in a more attractive light. Harlow wrote 'it is necessary to present the British Commonwealth from an entirely fresh angle'.[19] (It was about this time that the term commonwealth began to replace or be used in conjunction with the somewhat discredited term - empire.) The new empire propaganda had to ensure that the British people did not lose their faith in the empire so that they:

> shall vigorously support Britain's retention of her Colonial responsibilities after the war, and shall feel it worthwhile to make efforts in manpower and money in the cause of Colonial development. [20]

Harlow was director of publicity about the empire and he worked together on this campaign with the director of the Empire Division at the MOI, Gervas Huxley. Huxley had served his propaganda apprenticeship under Sir Stephen Tallents at the Empire Marketing Board. Harlow, the academic, supplied the theories and facts, Huxley devised ways of presenting the material which would capture the imagination of the British public.

The theme chosen to project the new image of empire was partnership; trusteeship was abandoned because it was thought to be not sufficiently dynamic. Partnership, a formula originally propounded by Lord Hailey, author of the monumental African Survey (1938), was not in common propaganda usage until after the fall of Singapore when it became the new credo of empire. Huxley, the image merchant, wrote of:

> the dynamic partnership between Great Britain and the Colonial peoples in progress towards the development of self-governing institutions in the political sphere and towards a better and fuller life in the social sphere. [21]

Except for the addition of 'dynamic' the exegis was remarkably similar to that for trusteeship.

Though mention was made of the efforts that were being made to fit Africans and other colonial peoples for self-government (there were fleeting references to the training of Africans in local government by means of Indirect Rule, for example,) this aspect of pertnership was deliberately played down. Emphasis was placed on the economic, social and technical uplift of the 'backward and primitive peoples' of the colonies. Huxley pointed out that one advantage was the avoidance of 'controversial constitutional and political angles';[22] (the problem of plural societies like Kenya and Northern Rhodesia, for example;) but the primary reason was that the Colonial Office believed that political development had to be based on solid economic, social and technical foundations. The Colonial

Secretary, Oliver Stanley, was fond of comparing colonial development to the three legs of a tripod 'if you pull one leg of that tripod out too far, or leave one leg without pulling it out at all, the whole thing will collapse'.[23]

It was a senior junior partnership. Britain was the benevolent senior partner assisting the backward junior partner. Hailey's African Survey was used as a supportive authority; the Survey had made it:

> abundantly clear that the African peoples in general are held down ... by a dead weight of poverty, ignorance and tropical pestilence which is beyond their own capacity to alleviate. [24]

One image of partnership suggested by Huxley was 'the white technician in association with the Colonial peoples as trainer, instructor or inspirer of their work'.[25] He thought that this image would be particularly likely to appeal to the British public as colonial development would create job opportunities for all classes including returned soldiers. A major criticism of the pre-war empire had been that it was the exclusive preserve of the Old School Tie and the younger sons of the gentry.[26] Another attempt to provide the British empire with a more contemporary and acceptable image was to present it in social science garb as an exercise in problem solving. A MOI pamphlet confided:

> 'What is sometimes known as the British Colonial Empire is in one sense a vast laboratory where the most varied experiments are being conducted in the science of community-building'. [27]

In emphasising the technical aspects of partnership Huxley suggested that, in keeping with the temper of the times, the propaganda itself should be presented in battle-dress; the imagination of the British people would be captured by such slogans as 'war in the Colonies against locusts - a story of man's fight for life against the aggression of the Nazis of the insect world'.[28] In order that the junior partners could perform the role expected of them in development campaigns they would need more education. Mass Education was the subject of an enquiry by the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies who produced the report Mass Education in African Society in 1944.[29] The report like the White Paper on the C.D. and W. Act was presented as an evolutionary stage in the development of Colonial Office education policy and not as a sudden departure occasioned by an attack of conscience.

The campaign incorporated several techniques of salesmanship recommended by the Colonial Office, such as relating colonial problems to problems in Britain, or pointing out to the British people that it was they who were responsible for colonial policy. What was to be omitted was the 'confession of failure' strategy.[30] Harlow provided a theory of political evolution to set

partnership in historical perspective. The changes that were taking place in the colonies were mirroring what was happening in England itself and were, in fact, part of the same evolutionary process whereby government was enlarging its repertoire of functions. The state was now 'a constructive agency' responsible not only for law and order but for the welfare of its citizens. The responsibility for this qualitative leap was attributed to the the British people:

> The notion that a Superintending State is under a moral obligation to train and fructify a dependent state in order that it may eventually be able to stand on its own feet as regards economic, cultural and political life is an epoch-making conception and it emanates from the British people. 31

The MOI campaign to popularise the colonial empire in England was conducted from 1943 by a special Empire Publicity Service under the direction of Harlow. Newspapers were provided with feature articles; and pamphlets, books, leaflets, maps, photographs, pictures, speakers' notes and so on were distributed to schools, voluntary societies, youth groups, factories and evening institutes, and to the Army Bureau of Current Affairs. A travelling exhibition was mounted and conferences organised to explain partnership to selected groups - for example: school teachers, church leaders and missionaries. The BBC gave publicity to colonial issues in the Home and Overseas Services and in schools' programmes though Sabine felt that the BBC was 'just a little inclined to want to be controversial in not quite the right way'. 32

The MOI and the Colonial Office were particularly keen to support the commercial publication of works on the colonies. It was one of the first principles of British war propaganda that propaganda was more likely to be successful if it did not bear an official stamp but emanated from a private source. The MOI placed a number of works with publishers making an agreement to supply paper; on some occasions the MOI and the Colonial Office chose a theme and then asked a particular author to develop it. Some of the works published about the colonies during the war which were officially inspired were: The British Colonies by Vincent Harlow which appeared as No. 68 in the O.U.P. series of Oxford Pamphlets in World Affairs, in 1944, The British Colonial Empire by Noel Sabine (William Collins, 1943), Welfare in the British Colonies by L.P. Mair (Royal Institute for International Affairs, 1944), Diary of a District Officer by Kenneth Bradley (Harrap, 1943) and W.K. Hancock's Argument of Empire which

appeared as a Penguin Special in 1943 and was expressly written to attempt to overcome American hostility to the British empire.[33] Partnership was even the subject of a feature film, Man of Two Worlds, which was commissioned by the Colonial Office and went into production in Tanganyika in 1943.[34]

Towards the end of 1944 Sabine reviewed the empire propaganda campaign. He noted with satisfaction that not only was there a great increase in the amount of space devoted to colonial affairs in British newspapers but that the colonies were receiving a much more favourable press than they had before the war when 'criticism of our Colonial policy was the general rule'. He was not so happy about the partnership theme; he had come to the conclusion that partnership was not capable of evoking an enthusiastic response because 'it is not sufficiently realistic, or sufficiently related ... to national and world questions ...' (It is the first principle of all propaganda work that in order to succeed propaganda must correspond to some basic desires or needs of those you wish to influence.) What was of significance as the war drew to a close, wrote Sabine, was that the colonies were vital to Britain's survival as a world power. (The wheel had turned full circle!) Colonial propaganda would have more success in Britain if it were put in the context of national self-interest:

> the future of Great Britain depends on its future as an Empire and Commonwealth and not as a small island in the North Sea with a population of 46,000,000 ... 35

Neither Hancock's Argument of Empire nor the propaganda activities of the British Information Service in New York managed to convince influential American opinion of the bona fides of British imperialism; the new terms - partnership and commonwealth - signified a change of name only. Roosevelt interpreted the self-determination clause of the Atlantic Charter so that it applied to subject peoples everywhere; Churchill, on the contrary, limited the application of the clause to Europe. On the initiative of officers from the Phelps-Stokes fund a group of Americans set up the Committee on Africa, the War and Peace Aims and published in 1942 the pamphlet, The Atlantic Charter and Africa.[36] The Committee felt that as the United States 'had no territorial interests in Africa' an American committee was peculiarly fitted to act as a watch-dog on behalf of the African interest.[37] The Atlantic Charter and Africa contributed to the extensive publicity given the Atlantic Charter in the African colonies and the Charter itself had a profound influence on the growth of political consciousness amongst emergent African leadership. The MOI might organise its propaganda in tidy compartments: propaganda for the empire, propaganda about the empire, propaganda for America, propaganda for Europe etc., but the conveyer of that propaganda, the media, is international; it knows no boundaries.

Propaganda to the Colonies

In Britain's African colonies information officers, drawn from the ranks of colonial civil servants, were appointed as soon as the war started. They received from the MOI printed propaganda, mobile cinema vans, wireless receiving sets, public address equipment, and films made to explain the war to the colonies by the new Colonial Film Unit established by the Films Division of the MOI in 1939; further film propaganda was contained in the newsreels sent to the colonial information offices by the British Council. In 1941 regional propaganda units were established in east and west Africa under Principal Information Officers who advised the War Council in west Africa and the Governors' Conference in east Africa on publicity and co-ordinated the work of the various information officers in matters extending beyond one territory. Local information officers also prepared propaganda material themselves, many ran government newspapers for Africans; they were guided in the conduct of their local propaganda campaigns by policy guide-lines from the MOI.

The first guide lines from the MOI on the subject of war propaganda for the colonies were contained in Memo 230 of the Publicity Division: Planning Section. At the beginning several fundamental principles were enunciated to guide government propagandists throughout the empire. The first was that 'information should be truthful and straightforward', for 'Peace-time methods of propaganda by foreign countries have aroused suspicions all over the world'. The Memo warned that Indians were particularly wary of propaganda and went on to speculate that 'Perhaps the native peoples of the colonies are more gullible, but the strength of British rule and the respect with which it is regarded are based upon a faith in its honesty and disinterestedness'. False propaganda would destroy that image.

There was nothing 'straightforward' about the second principle: 'information ... should be expressly adapted to the country or group of countries for which it is intended'.[38] A 1940 gloss was that while facts must be the same for everyone they needed to be presented in different ways. 'This would be particularly true of matters concerning race, colour or religion'. The exploits of coloured troops, for example, would not be welcome propaganda in South Africa and 'such statements as that we are fighting for European order, or for European civilization, or even for Christianity, may be of doubtful value in some parts of the oversea empire'.[39] Another principle also less than straightforward stressed that it was desirable that the source of propaganda should, wherever possible, be disguised, 'existing commercial and private channels should be used as far as possible'.[40] Missions and private companies are examples of such indirect channels.[41] One aim of the MOI's Religious Division was 'to secure the co-operation of the missionary

in tranquillising the native mind'.[42] Similarly the Commercial Relations Division fed propaganda to private companies working in the African colonies.

With the guiding principles determined the propagandists then got down to the business of producing the material. A 'War Publicity Handbook' for colonial service officers produced in 1939 by Harlow, came in for some severe criticism at the Colonial Office. Whitehall objected to the directive that German colonial rule in Africa should be contrasted unfavourably with that of the British. J.L. Keith minuted to A. Dawe, Assistant Under Secretary of State for Colonies, 'All this stuff about the slave trade cuts no ice and talk about German atrocities is stale and can be easily counteracted by stuff about British misdoings'.[43] But what most perturbed the Colonial Office was the generous usage of the 'conventional cliches of Anglo-Saxon democracy',[44] as words and phrases like 'freedom' and 'wars of liberation' might prove an 'inconvenient boomerang'.[45] Colonial subjects too might 'be tempted to say they have not much freedom to defend'.[46]

Dawe also raised objections to the use of these 'cliches' on the grounds of 'intellectual honesty'.[47] Their use exposed the British government to the charge of insincerity and 'humbug':[48]

> Anglo-Saxon people have an innate desire to find moral justification for every action which they take in the pursuit of their own interests ... It is ... often a mistake to put too high a moral polish on everything we do. Backward races may be ignorant but they are often very shrewd. They can see where our high moral principles are only a cloak to our material interests'.[49]

Harlow had made an inauspicious debut as a government apologist. Dawe dubbed him a 'misfit ... high-minded, bookish and inexperienced'.[50] The handbook was not distributed. 'The Ministry of Information is after all part of His Majesty's Government and we do not want to expose it to ridicule in the Colonies from the start', minuted Dawe stiffly.[51]

After this initial fiasco the Colonial Office and the MOI got together to thrash out a basic propaganda formula which would be acceptable to Whitehall. The ultimate aim was to build up a calm, confident and loyal public opinion in the colonies which would provide the backbone of the war effort. The core message had three interrelated elements: 1) to promote loyalty to Britain in particular and the empire in general; 2) to encourage firm confidence in the inevitability of an allied victory under the leadership of Great Britain; and 3) to convince the colonies that only through such a victory could they realise their moral and material aspirations.[52]

The crown, imperial symbol of unity, was, naturally, to be the cornerstone of loyalty propaganda: 'it is of the utmost importance that His Majesty should be kept on the highest pedestal and in no circumstances should pride of place be shared with other personages' said one propaganda directive.[53] Pictures of the King, Queen and Princess Elizabeth in full regalia were highly recommended as likely to be especially effective.[54] More utilitarian motives were also appealed to since the majority of people in the colonies 'if they have got to have white masters, want to back the winning side';[55] therefore the democratic display of self-criticism would not be an appropriate technique.

The loyalty of the colonies and hence their willingness to make the sacrifices necessary for victory was also to be fostered by a demonstration of how they had benefited morally and materially from British rule in the past and would continue to do so in the future. In contrast to the benefits of British rule were the evils that would befall Africans under German dominion; anti-German propaganda was filed under the heading 'Evil Things'.[56] Mein Kampf was one of the reference texts sent to colonial information officers. Africans were told that Hitler referred to blacks as 'semi-civilised apes' and had protested against blacks being permitted to become lawyers:

> It is a sin against reason itself, an act of criminal insanity to train a being who is only an anthrapoid by birth until the pretence can be made that he had been turned into a lawyer. 57

In 1941 there was much heart-searching about whether or not to concentrate on showing 'the evil and brutality of the German spirit'. Colonial governors were circularised for their opinions on a sample of Evil Things propaganda. An accompanying Colonial Office memo expressed the fear that:

> When the excuse for hating the Germans has been removed the sentiment may be transferred to what is uppermost in the minds of all Africans as they attain political and social consciousness, namely the colour question ... Having been encouraged to hate one branch of the white race, they may extend that feeling to others. 58

The Information Officer in Nairobi concurred; he had found that whilst most Africans 'have a real appreciation of the difference in their attitude to the African of the Germans and ourselves', there were some 'who argue that all Europeans are alike and that anyhow German rule cannot be worse than the British'.[59] The Information Officer in the Gold Coast found other reasons for objecting to Evil Things propaganda:

> In the Gold Coast, when certain cartoons portraying Hitler as a beast of prey were shown to Africans the reaction was not one of disgust but of fear because it was supposed that Hitler was able to change himself into a savage beast at will. This links up with the fear known to be caused amongst West Africans by the secret leopard societies. 60

He complained about the bankruptcy of German brutality as a propaganda topic and advised that the best type of propaganda would be that which was not directly concerned with the war at all but with what constructive benefits a British victory would bring. He had found the White Paper on the C.D. and W. Act very beneficial in this connection.

Colonial propagandists could not extract too much propaganda mileage out of the Nazi belief in the superiority of the Aryan race - given the mounting antagonism in Africa to the colour bar. Whichever way the propagandists turned they were in danger of being hoist by their own petard. If they claimed a German victory would result in African enslavement Africans might retort, as some did in Northern Rhodesia, that they already were in a servile condition.[61] In July 1941 the Colonial Office raised objections to the contents of some MOI pamphlets destined for West Africa. It would not be politic, advised the Colonial Office, to use phrases like 'subject races' and 'forced labour' which immediately call up a picture of the alleged exploitation of their people by the British'.[62] Similarly in August of the following year Sabine, pointed out to a former colonial governor Sir Donald Cameron (then employed as a propagandist at the MOI) that it would be injudicious to announce that under the 'Nazi New Order' African cocoa farmers would lose their free cocoa markets and have to accept German goods in return, for the United Africa Company were then unpopular in the area for policies claimed not to be dissimilar.[63]

Despite Colonial Office criticisms and vetoes this type of crude anti-German propaganda did continue to find its way to Africa. One example is the series of Victory is Vital leaflets that were sent to West Africa in 1942. One leaflet, Germans Would Make West Africans Into Slaves, has an illustration on the cover of Africans in loin cloths being marched off in a chain gang by guards with bayonets: the last in line is a small boy; a solitary woman stands by a deserted hut - weeping. Other leaflets in the series had such graphic titles as, Germans Would Treat West Africans Brutally and Germans Would Rob West Africans Of Their Produce.[64] In Northern Rhodesia in 1941 the Secretary for Native Affairs placed heavy emphasis on atrocity propaganda because he felt Africans were not showing sufficient alarm at the prospect of German rule.[65]

War propaganda then was proving a mine field of potentially explosive issues which could miss their target and rebound against the British raj. 'It may win the war', minuted E.R. Edmetts of the Colonial Office in 1941, 'but it will not win the peace'.[66] Sabine thought the MOI's war propaganda opportunistic and negative, divorced as it was from all moral, cultural and educational values. But as the MOI stressed it was war propaganda which the Treasury was providing the money for:

> The object of the propagandist in his sphere like that of the soldier, the diplomat and the industrialist in theirs is to help win the war as quickly as possible ... The educational and social value which may, and in many cases should, attach to the scheme must be regarded as subsidiary. 67

By contrast the Colonial Office looking beyond the war were reaching towards a more holistic view of what propaganda to the colonies should be all about. In 1941Sabine produced a definition which amounted to a program for political socialization:

> I would define propaganda as a fusion of social information, adult education, and cultural expression the sum total of these factors creating a national morale and self awareness, without which no group of peoples can attain that sense of responsibility necessary for self-government. 68

In 1942, perhaps under the influence of the fall of Singapore and the new partnership theme, the MOI began to take more interest in a more comprehensive style of propaganda for the colonies. An MOI paper theorised that war propaganda for colonial peoples differed from that for other cou tries because of the parent-child relationship:

> the analogy between the Colonial Empire and a youth whose guardians we are, receives further point when we consider the backwardness of the Colonial peoples. It becomes apparent that the job of propaganda is in a sense mainly one of adult education. 69

The guardian was responsible for the colonial subject's entire view of life including his attitude to his own domestic affairs' - echoes of the senior/junior partnership rhetoric here. The MOI like the Colonial Office was now talking in terms of political socialization.

A link between propaganda and education policy was being forged during the war. This was demonstrated in the report of the Colonial Office's Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, Mass Education in African Society (1944). The inspiration for the mass education report came from Arthur Creech Jones, Labour MP, a founder member of the Fabian Colonial Bureau (and a post-war Secretary of State for Colonies). Creech Jones' ideas were a response to the political, social and economic upheaval in colonial societies caused by the imposition of a western industrial superstructure on pre-industrial societies; the pre-war disturbances in the West Indies and Northern Rhodesia's Copperbelt are two examples of this.

Creech Jones had a background in the British adult education movement and thought that despite the vastly different circumstances something of the same approach could be utilised in the colonies and recommended that a committee of the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies should study the question. He submitted that adult education was 'an essential factor for securing the health of these states where a wider participation in the social, economic and

political life of the colonies is necessary'.[70] He seized the opportunity of a strike on Northern Rhodesia's Copperbelt in 1940 to press the urgency of the situation. In May 1940 the Advisory Committee accepted Creech Jones' proposal:

> that a Sub-Committee should be set up to survey the adult education field in the Colonies and the types of agency available, including films, gramophones and community centres, and to make recommendations which could go forward to Governors on the further development of the work. [71]

After some delay caused by the serious state of the war the Report was finally published in 1944. As it emerged in the Report mass education was concerned with the education of the whole man: it had technical, social, cultural and economic aspects, and closely conformed to Sabine's definition of what colonial propaganda should be all about - political socialization: the giving to colonial man of a whole new world view.

In 1942 with the fall of Singapore fresh in the official mind the Colonial Office succeeded in extending the scope of the MOI's propaganda beyond the narrow confines of the war. Much was made of Britain's plans for African development as evidenced by the Mass Education report and the C.D. and W. Act. It was pointed out that Britain was encouraging trade unions in the colonies by appointing British trade unionists to colonial posts. A highly publicised theme was Britain's gratitude for colonial support in the war effort. Films like the Colonial Film Unit's Katsina Tank and Comforts from Uganda were made to demonstrate to Africans how their financial contributions were being used.[72] (A warning came from the United States that this type of propaganda should not be used in the United States as it only confirmed the American belief that Britain was exploiting the colonies.)[73] One purpose of this gratitude propaganda was to create the feeling of the inter-dependence of empire; to show Africans that they were part of a much larger whole. An MOI pamphlet dedicated to this theme was Sixty Million Of Us.

As the end of the war approached war propaganda was naturally faded out and more emphasis began to be placed on what was to be a major theme of post war colonial propaganda: the Projection of England. This was aimed at showing the world leadership of Great Britain 'in the fields of spiritual idealism, social advancement, industrial relations and scientific and engineering skill'. Projection of England propaganda aimed to prevent African and other colonial peoples from being seduced by the appeal of 'Soviet ideology and/or American material prosperity'.[74] However, there was another caveat here. A propaganda directive for east Africa in 1943 warned:

> In projecting a favourable picture of Britain, we should be careful not to lay too much emphasis on the extensiveness of our social services or other material advantages that the Africans do not share. [75]

War propaganda seems to have met with some success in Africa in the short term. African loyalty was, of course, not put to the ultimate test of an enemy invasion. Africans did, on the whole, co-operate with the allies in the war effort: they fought in the Burma and East African campaigns and contributed to war charity drives. But not everybody was reached by propaganda; its penetration was limited by literacy and accessability. Most Africans were illiterate so they could only be reached directly - visually or by radio. It is probable that some illiterate and semi-educated Africans were influenced in their opinions by the more educated who were emerging in many parts of Africa as the new opinion leaders. (Northern Rhodesia's Copperbelt provides evidence of this phenomenon.)[76] People in the towns were more likely to have access to the media; the further you went into the bush the more out of reach of propaganda you were. A district officer in remote Barotseland on the borders of the Kalahari reported that discussing the war with Africans there was like talking to deaf mutes about conditions in Mars.[77]

There were mobile cinema vans going into the rural areas to show the war propaganda films of the Colonial Film Unit, newsreels and Charlie Chaplin comedies, but the van would not turn up in a district more than once or twice a year. Radio could not have much impact in Africa in the days before the cheap transistor turned broadcasting into the most important means of mass communication in Africa. Most Africans could not afford wireless sets. A few had the opportunity to listen to the BBC or the local station (if it existed) on a communal set at missions, farms, schools and welfare halls - not ideal listening conditions. Gold Coast, Nigeria, Kenya and Northern Rhodesia had local stations broadcasting mainly war news and in these and other colonies such as Uganda, Malawi and Tanganyika, public address equipment was sometimes used to relay war news. African soldiers were probably more exposed to propaganda than any other group; the army provided literacy, English and adult education classes as well as regular current affairs sessions. One observer in east Africa described the army as 'an extra-mural university'.[78]

In the long run World War II hastened the end of colonialism in Africa; it caused an information explosion. In order to successfully propagandise people, as Jacques Ellul points out, they must have a certain level of information.[79] The circumstances of war made it necessary for the British government to pour information into Africa on an unprecedented scale. Those who were touched by the war through direct experience or propaganda or both were suddenly exposed to a host of extraneous influences, experiences, images and ideas (as exemplified by the Atlantic Charter) which could only accelerate the flowering of political consciousness. British colonial propaganda did not win the peace.

1. Wellington House (1914-1917), Department of Information (1917), Ministry of Information (1918), Crew House, the Press Bureau, the National War Aims Committee.
2. Roetter, Charles, Psychological Warfare(London, 1974), 89.
3. Thomas, Ivor, Warfare By Words (London, 1942), 53.
4. The Times, 11 April 1944.
5. See Smyth, Rosaleen, The Development of British Colonial Film Policy, 1927-1939, with special reference to East and Central Africa', Journal of African History,20,3 (1979), 437-438.
6. Colonial Office (CO)875/14/9100/50, 'Note on the perpetuation, on a peace-time basis, of some of the publicity services at present supplied to the Colonies in collaboration with the Ministry of Information', Sabine, 17 Feb. 1942.
7. e.g. Why We Are At War: Great Britain's Case written by six member of the Oxford Faculty of Modern History and published by the Central Committee for National Patriotic Organizations. This was followed by the 'Oxford Pamphlets' which numbered over a hundred. Charles Roetter noted that many of them 'were remarkable for their patriotic fervour rather than for their academic integrity'. See Roetter, Psychological Warfare,32.
8. CO 875/14/9100/51, 'Memorandum on Publicity about the British Empire', Harlow, enclosure in letter to Sir George Gater, 3 Sept. 1942. See also CO 875/11/7358/37, Margaret Read to Lord Hailey, 11 Oct. 1941, which pointed out the prevalence of this attitude re economic exploitation in the schools.
9. MacDonald, Malcolm, 'Colonial Development: A Broadcast Talk', Colonial Review, June 1940, 141.
10. CO 323/1740/6281, MacDonald to Reith, 17 Jan. 1940.
11. CO 875/12/7538/90, 'The Colonial Empire and the War', prepared by the Public Relations section at the Colonial Office for the Army Bureau of Current Affairs, Sabine, 5 Dec. 1941.
12. INF 1/3/A32/3, MOI Progress Report, Jan. and Feb. 1940, 'Campaign for Publicity about the Empire'.
13. This statement conveniently ignores the case of the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt. The royalties of the British South Africa Co. and the profits of the mining companies were all taxable in Britain as all these companies had their head-offices there.
14. CO 875/14/9100/50, Sabine, memo on colonial publicity policy,18 March 1942.
15. CO 323/1740/6281, MacDonald to Reith, 17 Jan. 1940.
16. CO 875/14/9100/50, Sabine, memo, 18 March 1942.
17. Ibid.
18. Lippman, 'The Post-Singapore War In The East', Washington Post, 21 Feb. 1942.
19. CO 875/14/9100/51, Harlow, 'Memorandum on Publicity about the British Empire', sent by Harlow to Sir George Gater, 3 Sept. 1942.
20. CO 875/14/9100/51, Huxley, 'Colonial Publicity in the United Kingdom', 1942; an interpretation of Harlow's, memorandum on the objectives of empire publicity 'in the more specific terms that are needed as a basis for the conduct of publicity...'
21. INF 1/356, Huxley, draft directive, 24 May 1943.
22. CO 875/14/9100/51, Huxley, 'Colonial Publicity in the United Kingdom', 1942.
23. CO 875/20/96595,Stanley, 'Colonial Commentary', address at the Central Court, Art Gallery, Leeds, 15 January 1944.
24. CO 875/15/9102/17, 'The British Colonial Empire and the British Public', Harlow. Sent by Harlow to Sabine,30 April, 1943. This was later published as a pamphlet in 1945.

25. INF 1/356, Huxley, draft directive, 24 May 1943.
26. See Stanley, Oliver,'The British Colonies: Some Illusions Dispelled', London Calling, 5 April 1945; and CO 875/14/9100/51, Huxley,'Colonial Publicity in the United Kingdom', 1942.
27. INF 10, Kamm, Josephine, Progress towards Self-Government in the Colonies, With a Foreward by Vincent Harlow, (n.d.), p.7.; and CO 875/14/9100/50, Sabine, memo 17 Feb. 1942,'...we are primarily not concerned with present or past achievements or with romanticising the Imperial idea so much as with presenting to the public of this country an unsolved problem and asking for their co-operation in settling it'.
28. CO 875/14/9100/51, Huxley, 'Colonial Publicity in the United Kingdom', 1942.
29. Colonial No. 186.
30. CO 875/14/9100/51, Sabine, memo, 7 Sept. 1942.
31. CO 875/15/9102/17, Harlow, 'The British Empire and the British Public', 1943.
32. CO 875/14/9100/51, Sabine, 'Co-operation with the Ministry of Information on Home Propaganda', 1 Oct. 1942.
33. CO 875/14/9100/51, Huxley, 'Memorandum on Activities undertaken in the United Kingdom by the Ministry of Information to stimulate Knowledge and Interest in the British Colonial Empire', 18 May 1943; and see Louis Wm., Imperialism at Bay; The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire (New York, 1978),112.
34. The Secretary General of the West African Students' Union in England, Ladipo Solanke, complained in a letter to the Under Secretary of State for Colonies that the film was 'in no way suggestive of real co-operation between white and black', 27 July 1943, CO 875/17/9105/4. The film was not released till 1946.
35. CO 875/20/96599, Sabine, note on the future of colonial policy, 4 Oct. 1944.
36. (New York,1942). The Committee aimed at 'focussing ...public attention on the wise, just and adequate treatment of Africa and Africans by the Peace Conference and the Colonial Powers'; it was composed of missionaries, educators, sociologists and others with an interest in Africa plus members of international foundations and committees.
37. 'Prefatory Note' to The Atlantic Charter and Africa, vii-xi.
38. CO 323/1663/6281/1B, MOI Publicity Division: Planning Section, Memo 230, 'Publicity in the British Empire'.
39. INF 1/165/B/35/14, H.V. Hodson,'Propaganda Policy in the British Empire', March 1940.
40. Ibid.
41. INF 1/413, MOI Publicity Division: Planning Section, Memo No. 294, (Missions); and CO 875/5/6281, minutes of meeting on colonial publicity held at Colonial Office, 8 Dec. 1941, (Commerce).
42. INF 1/413, Memo No. 294.
43. CO 323/1660/6281, Keith to Dawe, 16 Sept. 1939.
44. CO 323/1660/6281, Dawe, memo, 22 Sept. 1939.
45. Ibid.
46. CO 323/1663/6281, Dawe, memo, 13 Dec. 1939.
47. CO 323/1660/6281, Dawe, memo, 22 Sept. 1939.
48. CO 323/1663/6281, Dawe, memo, 13 Dec. 1939.
49. CO 323/1660/6281, Dawe, memo, 22 Sept. 1939.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. INF 1/555, 'Plan of Propaganda for the Colonies', prep. by H.V. Usill; sent by K. Grubb to Sabine, 13 May 1942.

53. INF 1/555, Survey by Usill, 'Plan of Propaganda to the Colonies' 13 May 1942.
54. CO 875/9/6281, Overseas Planning Committee, Plan of Propaganda to the Colonies', 13 May 1942.
55. CO 323/1660/6281, Dawe, 22 Sept. 1939.
56. CO 323/1660/6281, quoted in minute to G.F. Seel, 18 Sept. 1939.
57. CO 875/12/7358/90, Mein Kampf, 479; quoted in 'The Colonial Empire and the War' prep. by the Public Relations section of the Colonial Office, 5 Dec. 1941.
58. CO 875/9/6281/75A, Colonial Office Memorandum, Aug. 1941.
59. CO 875/9/6281/75A, E.R.St. A. Davies to Chief Sec. Nairobi, 15 Oct. 1941.
60. CO. 875/9/6281/75A, J. Wilson, memo, 19 June 1941.
61. See Mutende (government newspaper for Africans in Northern Rhodesia) No. 64, June 1940 - letter from Generalat Banda; Mutende No. 164 April 1944 - letter from D.L. Yamba; and Mutende No. 150 Oct. 1943, 'Ncito ya ma-Africa Ophunzira' (The role of the educated African).
62. CO 875/5/6281/14C, Edmetts to Usill, 25 July 1941.
63. CO 875/6/6281/14C, Sabine to Cameron, 6 Aug. 1942.
64. INF 2/9
65. National Archives of Zambia (NAZ)/ SEC 1/1758, H.F. Cartmel-Robinson, Monthly Public Opinion Report for Western Province, 2 Jan. 1941; and New Year Message of Secretary for Native Affairs,T.F. Sandford, published in Mutende, Jan. 1941.
66. CO 875/11/7358/A, Edmetts, memo, 6 Aug. 1941.
67. INF 1/165/B/35/4, 'Empire Transcription Scheme', sent by J. C. Macgregor to Harlow, 12 April 1940.
68. CO 875/5/6281, Sabine, 'Imperial Propaganda', 1941.
69. INF 1/555, Paper No. 200, 'Planning of Propaganda to Colonial Empire', 3 Aug. 1942.
70. CO 859/22/12015/1,'Adult Education in the Colonies', A. Creech Jones, 28 May 1940.
71. CO 859/44/12014,Cox, minute for Parkin, Dawe and Hall, 19 May 1941.
72. See Smyth,Rosaleen, 'Movies and Mandarins', in Porter,Vincent and Curran,James (eds.), A British Cinema History (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983).
73. CO 875/16/9102/26, F.O. Darvell, Deputy Director,American Division,MOI, to Sabine, 13 Aug. 1943.
74. INF 1/945,'The Ministry of Information and its Work in Relation to the British Colonial Empire', Mansergh to Grubb, 26 June 1944.
75. CO 875/6281/89G, Overseas Planning Committee, Plan of Propaganda to British East Africa, Paper No. 392 A. 2 July 1943.
76. Smyth Rosaleen, 'The Development of Government Propaganda in Northern Rhodesia', PhD thesis, University of London, 1983,63.
77. NAZ/SEC 1/1758, Barotse Province Public Opinion Report, March 1941.
78. Little, W.C., 'An African Library "In Action" ', Books For Africa, 18,1 (1947), 8.
79. Ellul, Jacques, Propaganda (New York, 1968),113.

ABROAD

1920's 1930's Empire Exhibitions

Empire Society (Royal Commonwealth Society)

NIGERIA

1930's → Nigerian Teacher / Nigeria Mag.

Gaskiya Publishing (Pest?)

MOI → ~~largely for~~
Mentally geared to Response to critics in Br. & Am.

Less successful re Africa + colonies.

MAN OF TWO WORLD