

The Soft Power of *Anglia*: British Cold War Cultural Diplomacy in the USSR

*The article contributes to the growing literature on the cultural Cold War through an exploration of the British national projection magazine *Anglia*, produced by the Foreign Office for distribution in the USSR from 1962 to 1992. As well as drawing attention to the significance of national magazines in general, the article sheds light on Britain's distinctive approach to propaganda and cultural diplomacy during the Cold War. It considers why the magazine was set up and endured for so long, despite considerable reservations about its value. It examines how Britain was projected in a manner that accorded with British understandings about the need for 'subtle' propaganda. Finally, it addresses the question of the magazine's impact in the USSR.*

Key words: Britain, Soviet Union, Cold War, Propaganda, Cultural Diplomacy, Soft Power

In the 'struggle for men's minds' that was the Cold War, the deployment of soft power – the power of a state to attract and persuade through its values, culture, way of life – assumed unprecedented importance.¹ Both East and West relied on various forms of propaganda and cultural diplomacy in their efforts to communicate the merits of their respective systems to foreign publics.² One vital tool for both camps was print, and the role of books and

¹ 'Soft power' is the helpful, if somewhat over-used term, coined by Joseph Nye. See his *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: World Affairs, 2004). The cliché 'the struggle for men's minds' paraphrases Truman's 1950 declaration to that effect: Walter Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p. 14.

² 'Propaganda' is understood here as 'the deliberate attempt to influence the opinions of an audience through the transmission of ideas and values for the specific purpose, consciously designed to serve the interests of the propagandists and their political masters, either directly or indirectly.' Nicholas Cull, David Culbert and David Welch (eds.), *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003), p. 322. 'Cultural diplomacy' refers to the practice whereby a government harnesses its culture (in the widest sense) to support its foreign policy objectives. It involves the projection of a nation's image or 'brand' abroad. Cultural diplomacy is frequently regarded as part of, or closely associated with, 'public diplomacy', the more general process of

government-subsidised book programs in the cultural Cold War has deservedly attracted much scrutiny.³ Magazines were no less important, however. Boosted by a communications revolution originating in the late nineteenth century, mass circulation periodicals were enormously popular by the middle decades of the twentieth, with illustrated magazines such as *Life*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Paris-Match* enjoying a particular boom.⁴ Increasingly viewed as a means of exerting global political influence, magazines of various types were part of the arsenal of all the major powers during the Cold War. They included not only periodicals of the covertly-funded *Encounter* and *Der Monat* variety,⁵ but also national projection magazines produced by governments as an explicit means of promoting their country's image or 'brand'. Considerable sums were spent on this form of national self-advertisement by the US, the USSR, and Britain, among others. However, apart from a few discussions of *Amerika* - the US periodical aimed at the Soviet Union - there has not been any sustained analysis of this important Cold War phenomenon.⁶

We examine the question of national projection magazines through the lens of the British publication, *Anglia*, produced with significant input from the Foreign Office's clandestine

government engagement with foreign publics as a means of advancing national interests. As Cull observes, the term 'public diplomacy' originated in the US in 1965 as a more palatable alternative to 'propaganda'. In practice, the distinctions between 'propaganda', 'cultural diplomacy' and 'public diplomacy' are often blurred. Jessica Gienow-Hecht and Mark Donfried (eds.), *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), pp. 13-14; Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 259-60.

³ Greg Barnhisel and Catherine Turner (eds.), *Pressing the Fight: Print, Propaganda, and the Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010); Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006), pp. 294-304; Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999); Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2003); Louise Robbins, 'Publishing American Values: The Franklin Book Programs as Cold War Cultural Diplomacy', *Library Trends*, 55/3, 2007; John P. Matthews, 'The West's Secret Marshall Plan for the Mind', *Journal of Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence*, 16/3, 2003; Mary Niles Maack, 'Books and Libraries as Instruments of Cultural Diplomacy in Francophone Africa during the Cold War', *Libraries and Culture*, 36/1, 2001

⁴ Osgood, *Total Cold War*, p. 15; Barnhisel and Turner, *Pressing the Fight*, p. 12.

⁵ Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?*

⁶ Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, pp. 118-9; Richmond *Cultural Exchange*, pp. 148-51; Andrew Yarrow, 'Selling a New Vision of America to the World: Changing Messages in Early U.S. Cold War Print Propaganda', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 11/4, 2009.

Information Research Department (IRD), and distributed in the USSR from 1962 to 1992. As well as drawing attention to the significance of national projection magazines in general, by focusing closely on the case of *Anglia*, we aim to shed light on Britain's distinctive approach to propaganda and cultural diplomacy behind the Iron Curtain. While American efforts to influence Eastern bloc opinion have been the object of detailed investigation,⁷ only recently has attention turned to parallel initiatives undertaken by Western European states, including those of Britain.⁸ Notwithstanding ambiguous feelings in Britain about the whole concept of 'overseas propaganda', with its connotations of totalitarian media manipulation, the British government, in contrast to that of the US, had the advantage of extensive and diverse experience in the business of national projection which it was in a strong position to build upon. Despite, or perhaps because of, its waning global power, Britain was determined to offer an alternative, British contribution to a sphere which would otherwise have been dominated by the US. This contribution was presented as complementing, rather than undermining, the activities of Britain's closest partner in the 'information' field.⁹

⁷ See, for example, Osgood, *Total Cold War*; Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*; Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*; Scott Lucas, *Freedom's War: The American Crusade Against the Soviet Union* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?*; Jessica Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible: American Journalism as Cultural Diplomacy in Postwar Germany, 1945-1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999); Laura Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: US Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

⁸ On some Western European initiatives, see Giles Scott-Smith 'Interdoc and Western European Psychological Warfare: The American Connection' 1958' *Intelligence and National Security* 26/2-3, 2011; Giles Scott-Smith *Western Anti-Communism and the Interdoc Network: Cold War Internationale* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012); Aniko Macher 'Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy, 1957-1963: Echoes of Western Cultural Activity in a Communist Country' in Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*. There is a growing body of literature on British activities: Gary Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda: The BBC and Voice of America in International Politics, 1956-1964* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (London: Brassey's, 1997); FCO Historians, *IRD: Origins and Establishment of the Foreign Office Information Research Department 1946-48* (London: FCO/LRD, 1995); Paul Lashmar and James Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998); Richard Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London: John Murray, 2001); Andrew Defty, *Britain, America, and Anti-Communist Propaganda 1945-1953: The Information Research Department* (London: Routledge, 2004); Lowell Schwartz, *Political Warfare Against the Kremlin: US and British Propaganda Policy at the Beginning of the Cold War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009); Mark B. Smith 'Peaceful coexistence at all costs: Cold War exchanges between Britain and the Soviet Union in 1956' *Cold War History* 12/3, 2012.

⁹ Philip Taylor, *The Projection of Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Philip Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), especially pp. 227-29; Defty, *Britain*; Schwartz, *Political Warfare*, p. 3; Linda Risso 'A Difficult Compromise: British and

Whereas studies of the cultural Cold War tend to concentrate on the early stages of the conflict, our account begins at the point where many conclude: in the late 1950s. It starts by considering how and why the British project to create a Russian magazine finally took off, despite facing some formidable obstacles along the way. It then addresses the crucial question of the magazine's contents: what kind of story did *Anglia* tell about Britain in the 1960s, the formative years of the publication? Various strategies were adopted to ensure the projection of an attractive yet credible image of a modern, progressive Britain and minimise charges that the magazine was simply a vehicle for crude propaganda. It is worth noting that the process of explaining British identity to a Soviet audience often required that those involved first explain this identity to themselves. The article concludes with a discussion of the elusive subject of *Anglia*'s reception in the USSR. Although ascertaining the nature and extent of its influence was always going to be problematic, the perception that the magazine was having a positive effect was one of the reasons it endured for so long despite constant questioning of the benefits of such intangible forms of soft power.

The origins of *Anglia*

Following the post-war deepfreeze, the thaw in Soviet relations with the West which occurred after Stalin's death opened up new opportunities for various forms of cultural diplomacy and exchange. Assuming that exposure to Western values and ways of life would, in the long run, contribute to a process of evolutionary change within the Soviet bloc, governments in the 'free world' began to take East-West cultural relations seriously.¹⁰ It was in this context that Britain's initial proposals for a 'Russian Magazine' emerged. The Soviet authorities had always gone to great lengths to obstruct the circulation of what it considered to be 'capitalist

American Plans for a Common Anti-Communist Propaganda Response in Western Europe, 1948-1958' *Intelligence and National Security* 26/2-3, 2011.

¹⁰ Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, p. 101; Defty, *Britain*, pp. 239-41; Schwartz, *Political Warfare*, p. 181.

propaganda' - in the 1950s, for example, the only British newspaper in general circulation in the Soviet Union was the communist *Daily Worker*, while the BBC's Russian Service was routinely, if ineffectively, jammed. Gradually, small and not entirely symbolic steps were undertaken to ease the barriers to communication. The meeting between Bulganin, Khrushchev and Eden in Britain in April 1956 represented something of a breakthrough, with the two sides issuing a joint declaration on the desirability of furthering cultural exchange and taking 'practical steps directed towards ensuring a freer exchange of information by the spoken and the written word.'¹¹

A magazine seemed an obvious medium through which Britain could disseminate information by the written word. FO-sponsored 'general projection' magazines such as *Commonwealth Today* and the Arabic-language *Al Aalam* played a prominent role in British cultural diplomacy from the early 1950s, and were endorsed by the Drogheda committee's review of the Overseas Information Services (1952-53) which made a strong case for what it called British 'overseas propaganda' in the Cold War 'struggle for men's minds'. The committee observed that although normally existing organs of the press should be used for the purposes of such propaganda, there were special circumstances which warranted the creation of Government-produced illustrated magazines.¹² The 1957 review of the Overseas Information Services conducted by Dr Charles Hill in the wake of the Suez crisis went even further. As part of a general call for greater investment in information work, it recommended improvements to the existing periodicals targeted at the Commonwealth and Middle East, as well as the introduction of new magazines - a proposal clearly designed with the Soviet bloc in mind.¹³

¹¹ Cmd. 9753, appendix; Smith, 'Peaceful coexistence at all costs'.

¹² Cmd. 9138, pp. 8, 19-20; on *Al Aalam*, see James Vaughan "'A Certain Idea of Britain": British Cultural Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1945-57' *Contemporary British History*, 19/2, 2005.

¹³ Cmnd. 225, p. 4; TNA FO 953/1833 Hill to Harvey, 28 February 1957.

The magazine format was deemed eminently suitable for the USSR with its highly-developed culture of reading.¹⁴ Periodicals were particularly popular with Soviet readers, and their circulation increased hugely in this period, reaching 2.6 billion by 1970, 14 times the 1950 level.¹⁵ The serious ‘thick journal’, such as *Novyi mir* - a blend of literature and broader socio-political articles – enjoyed phenomenal success amongst the burgeoning intelligentsia, particularly during the Khrushchev-era ‘Thaw’.¹⁶ The Foreign Office was evidently well-aware of this tendency, with one official commenting that ‘the Russians wanted a good read.’¹⁷

A previous British government periodical, the weekly illustrated newspaper *British Ally* (*Britanskii soiuznik*), set up during the period of Anglo-Soviet wartime cooperation, had been well received in the USSR, although it suffered when relations soured in the late 1940s, and was terminated in 1950.¹⁸ As early as 1954, there were suggestions that it be revived in a new form. At this stage, the proposals never got off the ground because of continuing scepticism about Soviet government attitudes. However support for such a publication gathered momentum from 1955, particularly after the re-launch of the US illustrated magazine *Amerika*.¹⁹ *Amerika*, published from 1945 until 1952, was resurrected in 1956 following a US-Soviet agreement concerning the reciprocal distribution of national projection magazines; its Soviet counterpart in the US was *USSR*, later renamed *Soviet Life*. The USSR distributed a similar periodical in Britain, *Soviet Weekly* (available in ‘every common room in the country’

¹⁴ Stephen Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).

¹⁵ Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire that Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 12.

¹⁶ Edith Frankel, *Novyi Mir: A Case Study in the Politics of Literature, 1952-1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

¹⁷ TNA INF 12/1094 minutes, 27 January 1965.

¹⁸ Vladimir Pechatnov, ‘The Rise and Fall of *Britanskyy Soyuznik*: A Case Study in Soviet Response to British Propaganda of the Mid-1940s’, *The Historical Journal*, 41/1, 1998.

¹⁹ TNA FO 371/111774.

according to the IRD's Hugh Lunghi).²⁰ Although the British were evidently concerned not to be left out of this accelerating periodical diplomacy, the FO remained unconvinced of Soviet willingness to tolerate Western magazines, particularly when it transpired that the authorities were doing their best to control and limit the circulation of *Amerika* by restricting sales at 'open' kiosks and returning large numbers of allegedly 'unsold' copies to the Embassy.²¹

The Soviet invasion of Hungary in November 1956 created additional dilemmas. On the one hand, it caused temporary setbacks in cultural relations, as public revulsion created considerable pressure to ostracise the USSR, while on the other, it persuaded some of the urgency of extending cultural contacts in the interests of fomenting change, particularly amongst the Soviet intelligentsia and youth, who were perceived to be potentially rebellious and receptive to Western values. Cecil Parrott, formerly of the IRD and now Minister at the British Embassy in Moscow, pressed for a policy of what he called 'injecting...western ideas' to encourage these groups.²² Another Embassy official, R. D. C. McAlpine, was convinced that a British magazine would be particularly useful, however limited its circulation, arguing that 'In view of the present thirst for Western ideas among certain sections of the Soviet public, we consider that if only about 4,000 copies of our magazine were sold, their effect would justify the expenditure involved in producing several times as many copies.' He was of the view that the post-Hungary deterioration in East-West relations was not a reason for abandoning the project; rather it was a reason to step up efforts to transmit Western ideas.²³

²⁰ Lashmar and Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War*, p. 50.

²¹ TNA BW 2/532 Hayter to Gallagher, 29 November 1956; Richmond, *Cultural Exchange*, p. 150.

²² TNA FO 371/129124 Parrott to Brimelow, 11 January 1957.

²³ TNA FO 953/1833 McAlpine to Simpson, 25 February 1957.

While the British government had accepted the case for a magazine by the end of 1957, because of the vicissitudes of East-West relations and the intractable nature of British-Soviet negotiations, as well as financial considerations, it would be over four years before the publication of the first issue. A secret preliminary agreement at the Anglo-Soviet cultural talks in November 1959 was followed by a series of negotiations during 1960; these advanced slowly and erratically, despite the efforts of a facilitator in the form of Wright Miller, a former editor of *British Ally* with long-standing interest in the USSR and sympathy for the 'Russians as People' (the title of his well-known book of 1961.)²⁴ At one stage, the whole project was nearly torpedoed by Ralph Murray, the IRD's first head and at that point Assistant Under-Secretary responsible for Information, who started to express doubts about a venture projected to cost in the region of £25,000 net p.a. (the price was to be heavily subsidised to make it affordable to Soviet readers). In the autumn of 1960, Murray argued that in the light of budgetary pressures on information work, this money might be better spent on urgent initiatives in the newly independent states of Africa. In comparison with these pressing needs, as well as the expanding programme of cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union, the magazine only possessed what he claimed was 'rather doubtful and very long-term value.'²⁵

In response, officials attached to the Northern Department, the Embassy, the Cultural Exchange Department and the IRD all mounted a strong defence of the project. The IRD's current head, Donald Hopson, cited the conclusions of the recent Ten-Year Planning study that 'The best, perhaps the only, hope for a peaceful end to the East-West conflict is that the East should mellow into a bourgeois prosperity where it will lose its urge to win the world for communism', a process which Britain could assist by developing its links with the USSR. On

²⁴ TNA INF 12/1095 'Notes on the Agreement Concerning an English Magazine', 27 February 1960; Wright Miller, *Russians as People* (New York: Dutton, 1961).

²⁵ TNA FO 953/1991 Murray minute, 23 September 1960.

the question of the magazine, he argued that it would be a mistake to leave this to Americans ‘when we have an important contribution to make’, concluding that ‘The policy objective itself is surely so important that we should not waste any drops of water which could help in the process of erosion.’ Sir Frank Roberts, a veteran observer of Soviet affairs who had recently taken up the post of Ambassador to Moscow, also favoured spending relatively small sums of money ‘on long-term bread-and-butter projects such as magazines and (in other countries) the teaching of English, rather than on prestige cake, such as theatres and ballets.’ He believed that *Amerika* was effective - ‘It is the only drop in a very large ocean but at the present time there is no other’ - and that a British magazine would complement the American effort.²⁶

These arguments prevailed, and the magazine was formally established by an Exchange of Notes of 12 January 1961. The wording of the agreement largely followed the model of the 1955 US-Soviet agreement on *Amerika*. An important, and later contentious, clause specified that the magazine should be ‘non-political in character’ and ‘devoted to an objective presentation of various aspects of British life, particularly in the sphere of culture, science and technology.’ This was the price to be paid for a further clause maintaining that it would not be subject to censorship by the Soviet authorities. The Soviet agency, *Soiuzpechat*, was to distribute 50,000 copies of the quarterly magazine, with 10% of these on subscription, while a further 2000 complimentary copies were to be distributed by the British Embassy to Soviet institutions and individuals. If any copies remained unsold for three months, *Soiuzpechat* had the right to return them to the Embassy for a refund – an opportunity for the authorities to restrict the distribution of ideologically suspect editions. In return for all this,

²⁶ TNA FO 953/1991, Hopson minute, 25 November 1960; FO 953/1991 Roberts to Murray, 1 November 1960.

the British government agreed to facilitate the distribution of *Soviet Weekly* in the event of any difficulties.²⁷

Following this hard-won agreement, various practical arrangements were put in place. Responsibility for the production of the magazine was assigned to the Central Office of Information, a service department established in 1946 to produce publicity material for government departments.²⁸ The magazine's editor - initially Wright Miller himself - was officially attached to the COI. Ralph Murray decided that the IRD should take charge of the magazine's editorial policy because of its expertise in the Soviet Union and understanding of 'Russian sensibilities, pretensions etc.' Formed in 1948 with the explicit remit of countering communist propaganda, this clandestine FO department had originally concentrated on anti-communist propaganda in Britain and areas of British influence, but from the mid-1950s it turned its attention to the Soviet bloc. The IRD was expected to consult the FO's Northern Department and the British Embassy in Moscow on policy-related matters, while the Information Executive Department was given responsibility for the technical aspects of the magazine's production. The IRD official placed in charge of the magazine was Mavis King of the department's Soviet Desk. Since King had worked with Miller on *British Ally*, it was felt that the two would cooperate well.²⁹ As would later become clear, a good working relationship between the COI's editor and the IRD official handling the magazine was crucial as there was always the potential for tension to develop between them.

The title of the magazine was the subject of some discussion. Since Britain was (and is) generally known as *Англия* (*Anglia* - England) in Russia and the Soviet Union, *Anglia*

²⁷ Cmnd. 1287.

²⁸ M. Grant, 'Towards a Central Office of Information: Continuity and Change in British Government Information Policy 1939-51' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34/1, 1999.

²⁹ Defty, *Britain*, p. 239; TNA FCO 95/1232 Murray to Hopson, 8 February 1961; Hopson to Murray, 10 February 1961.

seemed a natural choice by analogy with the two other national projection magazines then circulating in the USSR, *Amerika* and *Jugoslaviia*.³⁰ However, it was acknowledged that this might provoke a vociferous reaction from the ‘Scottish lobby’ in particular: the latter had already had cause to take offence in 1957 when it was proposed to Parliament that the USSR should have a magazine like *Amerika* to show the ‘English way of life’, provoking some MPs to ask ‘what about the Scots and Welsh?’ and to request that a ‘little Celtic flavour’ be added to the publication.³¹ Yet it proved difficult to find a suitably inclusive alternative, with one suggestion, *British Life*, vetoed in the USSR on the grounds that the word ‘life’ had acquired a hint of ‘foreign propaganda penetration’: ‘It begins to smell in fact, though not so badly as “peace” and “democracy” do to us when Communists use them’, wrote Miller.

Velikobritaniia (Great Britain) was also rejected by FO officials who argued that it sounded too pompous and carried colonialist overtones in the USSR. A compromise suggestion, *Britannia*, was deemed to be poor Russian. Finally, it was agreed that the title *Anglia* should be accompanied by a sub-title: ‘*a magazine about life in Great Britain today*’.³²

Subtle propaganda: The projection of Britain in *Anglia*

This protracted discussion about the name of the magazine exemplifies the problems inherent in any attempt to establish a suitable narrative about contemporary Britain - it was one thing to propose a magazine about Britain, but quite another to agree on precisely how to project the amorphous and contested subject of ‘life in Great Britain today’. The approach of the IRD, which bore ultimate responsibility for the magazine’s editorial line, was informed by the department’s interpretation of *Anglia*’s objectives:

³⁰ I transliterate Англия as ‘*Anglia*’ throughout this article, as this was the form used by the FO.

³¹ TNA INF 12/1095 Draft FO Brief, August 1958; FO 953/1990 FO to Moscow, 25 January 1960; Hansard HC Debates, 10 April 1957, Series 5, vol. 568, cc. 1133-34.

³² TNA FO 953/1990 Mason minute, 22 March 1960, Morgan minute, 23 March 1960; FO 953/1991 Moscow to FO, 12 May 1960; FO to Moscow, 13 May 1960.

The magazine aims at presenting an attractive, truthful and convincing picture of all aspects of Britain to serious Soviet readers. Although “Anglia” cannot deal directly with political subjects, this presentation of an honest and accurate picture of Britain can both counteract the misleading account given in the Soviet press, and reveal how unfavourably many aspects of life in the Soviet Union compare with Britain.

In the understanding of the IRD, therefore, the magazine was first and foremost a propaganda weapon designed to ‘achieve the maximum educative effect’ by projecting Britain in a way that would serve national interests and further the cause of anti-communism.³³ *Anglia*’s propaganda mission was required to be discreet, however, not only to minimise the risk of offending the Soviet authorities and alienating readers, but also because of the traditional British distaste for the blatant manipulation and distortion associated with ‘totalitarian’ propaganda. The more subtle British approach was supposed to be based on the dissemination of truthful information to a rational, educated public. Although *Anglia* was expected to project a predominantly favourable image of Britain, this image had to be founded on accurate facts and targeted at ‘serious’ readers capable of drawing their own conclusions when presented with these facts.³⁴

A concern that *Anglia*’s propaganda mission should remain as unobtrusive as possible was evident from the outset. As early as 1956, Britain’s ambassador in Moscow, Sir William Hayter, argued that the putative magazine ‘would not be in any way a medium of straight propaganda but rather more designed to let in a breath of fresh air where it might be effective’, while in 1957 the Embassy stressed that they would have to be ‘careful not to risk

³³ TNA FCO 95/348 Bayne to Clive, 9 April 1968, memorandum on *Anglia*.

³⁴ Taylor, *British Propaganda*, p. 80

accusations of propaganda (and to avoid this we shall have to be very subtle indeed!)³⁵ The British approach was distinguished from that of the US in this respect, with the COI's Director of Publications, J. H. McMillan, proposing a 'rather subtler approach' than the 'blatantly lavish efforts of the Americans.' It was always envisaged that Britain's magazine would be more modest than *Amerika*, partly for financial reasons and so as not to duplicate American efforts, but also because of differing ideas about the whole matter of 'publicity'. While Britain and the US cooperated closely in this field, there was a prevailing assumption in the Foreign Office that American practices were inferior; for example one FO official observed very little difference between British and American policies towards Eastern Europe, apart from in the area of 'publicity' where 'the Americans are more adventurous than we are.' This strategy had 'not always proven more effective than our quieter methods.'³⁶

'Quiet' *Amerika* certainly was not. A large-format, sixty-page monthly magazine with a print-run of 50,000 copies, it was full of glossy colour photographs and designed for a mass readership. It promoted the American way of life in a quite unashamed fashion: the first issue included a five-page spread on American cars, accompanied by a glaringly obvious price chart.³⁷ By contrast, it was proposed in 1957 that Britain's magazine should appear quarterly, initially in a run of about 10,000 copies, and that it would have an unusual pocket-sized format (similar to that of the *Readers' Digest*), which was considered to be more subtle than that of *Amerika*. The small size would allow the reader to hide it in their pocket, and mean that it was likely to be longer-lasting, passed around and kept on bookshelves. While it was intended that the magazine should be illustrated, the main emphasis was to be upon text oriented towards a particular readership 'the intelligent, non-technical, layman, particularly of

³⁵ TNA INF 12/1347 Simpson to Slater, 15 January 1957; INF 12/1095 Embassy to Simpson, 16 October 1957.

³⁶ Schwartz, *Political Warfare*, pp. 150, 169. For another example, see Defty, *Britain*, p. 104.

³⁷ Richmond, *Cultural Exchange*, p. 149; Schwartz, *Political Warfare*, p. 198.

the emergent middle class and the administrative class.’³⁸ This was in line with the elite-oriented tradition of British overseas propaganda, which was reinforced by the Drogheda report recommendations that the Information Services should target the ‘influential few and through them at the many.’³⁹

All these proposals were ultimately adopted, thereby ensuring that *Anglia*’s identity remained quite distinct from that *Amerika*.⁴⁰ Once the magazine was up and running, a variety of strategies were employed to render its propaganda content, in the words of the Assistant Under-Secretary responsible for Information, John Peck, ‘minimal and virtually undetectable’. For example, as Peck explained, if the Soviet press included a discussion about an unsatisfactory aspect of Soviet life, such as housing conditions, *Anglia* might then respond with an article on housing developments in Britain.⁴¹ As this suggests, *Anglia* avoided any overt criticism of the USSR or communism, concentrating instead on promoting Britain’s achievements. Abstaining from negative propaganda had long been an important part of the British tradition in overseas publicity, and the magazine’s terms of reference made this all the more imperative.⁴² Far from being anti-Soviet, *Anglia* aimed to project an attitude of friendship and mutual respect between the two countries, for example, articles about science often mentioned the connections between British and Soviet scientists, and the magazine regularly reported on visits between the two countries, the activities of the GB-USSR Association and so on. More controversially, an article on ‘Lenin in London’ was even published in 1967 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, despite the initial reservations of some FO officials, who agreed that it should go ahead only if it was used as an opportunity to include photographs showing how the parts of London Lenin had

³⁸ TNA INF 12/1095 McMillan to Lovell, 27 August 1957; Draft FO brief, August 1958.

³⁹ Taylor, *Projection*, p. 3; Cmd. 9138, p. 6.

⁴⁰ Although, as already noted, in the end *Anglia* was permitted a larger print-run of 50,000 copies.

⁴¹ TNA FCO 95/345 Peck to Allen, 16 February 1967.

⁴² Taylor, *British Propaganda*, p. 83.

visited had changed for the better: ‘anything which brings home the point that Lenin’s ideas are totally unrelated to the world of today, without of course ever saying that!’⁴³

Rather than engaging in overtly negative propaganda, the *Anglia* team relied on telling a positive story about Britain. The Britain shown in *Anglia* was invariably economically advanced, socially progressive, culturally vibrant, and genuinely democratic. This ‘branding’ of Britain as modern and progressive was considered crucial given that Soviet propaganda constantly painted a picture of the country as backward-looking and in steady decline. At a time when the USSR seemed to many in the world to represent the future, *Anglia* needed to show that a modern Britain offered a viable alternative to the Soviet socialist model of modernity (and, to some extent, the American version of capitalist modernity too.) In 1961, as the first editions of the magazine were being planned, Mavis King maintained that while *Anglia* was barred from including overtly political material, it could not be entirely ‘non-political’ and should offset the inevitable Soviet claims at the forthcoming Communist Party congress about the ‘decline of the west’. The IRD’s Mark Russell agreed they ‘must try to get across the impression of a progressive society which is moving forward all the time as against the picture of capitalist stagnation with which the Soviet public have been fed.’⁴⁴ While the primary focus of *Anglia* was always expected to be upon ‘the vitality and diversity of contemporary Britain’, it was agreed that the magazine could include occasional articles about British cultural heritage to satisfy readers’ interest in Britain’s past. Articles about the Magna Carta, Bill of Rights and so on were deemed acceptable as long as their contemporary relevance was clearly established.⁴⁵

⁴³ TNA FCO 95/343 Morgan to King, 18 January 1967; Fretwell minute, 31 January 1967.

⁴⁴ TNA FO 1110/1459 King minute 5 May 1961; Russell minute 15 May 1961.

⁴⁵ TNA INF 12/1095 Brooke Turner to King, 12 December 1962; FO 1110/ 1845 minutes, 7 October 1964.

This vision of an unequivocally modern and progressive Britain was necessarily based on a deliberately selective approach to the 'truth'. As Lord Christopher Mayhew - one of the prime movers behind the creation of the IRD and an *Anglia* supporter - subsequently observed, the key to effective propaganda was the selection of facts: 'The policy of IRD was not to lie or distort facts, but to select the facts that proved our case'.⁴⁶ Written in a dispassionate rather than an opinionated style, *Anglia*'s articles incorporated a dazzling array of facts and figures; for example, detailed statistics were inserted into many of the articles, and the editor went to considerable lengths to ensure that these were up-to-date, accurate, and in line with those used by the BBC Russian service.⁴⁷ To enhance credibility, the personal testimonies of concrete individuals were often incorporated, and, where possible, their direct speech was used since this was thought to be more convincing than indirect reporting. Visual images were also employed as evidence to substantiate the claims of the magazine, as well as to make it more interesting - while *Anglia* was never intended to be as lavishly illustrated as *Amerika*, it was still important that Soviet citizens could see aspects of British life for themselves. Appealing photographs accompanied many articles, particularly those devoted to fashion, furniture and so on.

This attractive vision of Britain would have seemed unbalanced and unconvincing without some acknowledgement of the problems besetting the country. Right at the outset, Miller insisted that they should be 'frank sometimes about our deficiencies.'⁴⁸ However, the nature and extent of this frankness were never entirely clear. In 1961 Mavis King asked 'are we allowed to include criticism, i.e. x houses have no indoor sanitation, 40 children in the class?' Her opinion was that 'some negative facts must be included, otherwise the Russians are going

⁴⁶ Lashmar and Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War*, p. 36; Christopher Mayhew, *A War of Words* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998).

⁴⁷ TNA FCO 95/343 King to Miller, 23 June 1967.

⁴⁸ TNA INF 12/1347 Miller to Bewg, 16 May 1960.

to classify everything we say as propaganda.’ Mark Russell agreed that problems should not be hidden, but suggested that the magazine should always indicate what was being done to tackle issues such as slums. Bryan Cartledge also argued for a cautious approach since ‘the Soviet press pounces joyfully on admissions of defects in Western society and one gets no credit for “good sportsmanship” in showing both sides of the picture’; *Pravda* would delight in beginning an article ‘“According to the official British magazine *Anglia* 15% of British homes have no inside sanitation...”’ Cartledge recommended focusing on ‘past shortcomings which have been or are being remedied.’ Presenting as full a picture of Britain as possible, with the emphasis not on ‘hiding shortcomings’ but on showing how problems were being tackled was thus the approach which was said to inform editorial policy.⁴⁹ *Anglia* was regarded by some as being in a somewhat different category from the BBC in this respect. In 1971 one FO official noted that the BBC’s reputation for objectivity in the USSR was due in part to its willingness to show ‘some of the warts of British life’, and although it was not *Anglia*’s job to criticise life in the UK, there were some advantages to mentioning shortcomings. While concurring with the general principle, both Mavis King and the IRD’s Noel Marshall drew a distinction between the magazine and the BBC, arguing that the former could not afford to be quite so critical, since, as Marshall put it ‘The written word, legally available, is more vulnerable than the spoken word to be used against us.’ According to Marshall, the distorted picture of Britain that Soviet citizens received required ‘a bias in *Anglia* towards a more favourable image than complete objectivity would provide.’⁵⁰

A closer look at the actual contents of *Anglia*, as well as the constant dialogue between the COI and the Foreign Office concerning these, sheds light on how the principles of ‘subtle

⁴⁹ TNA FO 1110/1459 King minute, 5 May 1961; Russell minute, 15 May 1961; Cartledge minute, 15 May 1961; FO 1110/1586 Hopson to Marett, 1 March 1962.

⁵⁰ TNA FCO 95/1230 King to Marshall, 29 October 1971; minutes of Willis, 3 November 1971, King, 8 November 1971 and Marshall, 10 November 1971.

propaganda' were put into practice during the 1960s, the formative years of the magazine. From the beginning, there was discussion about what kind of material *Anglia* should contain. The COI suggested it focus on 'the common experiences of people in relatively similar circumstances, so that the reader may readily identify himself with the subject of the article.'⁵¹ *Anglia* followed this recommendation to an extent, for many of its articles covered subjects of common interest and experience, particularly science and technology, industry and agriculture, the arts, sport and leisure. However, the view from the Embassy in Moscow was that British political objectives would be better served by dwelling on areas in which Britain *differed* substantially from the Soviet Union, such as government, the law, education, trade unions and so on.⁵² While this was precluded to an extent by the 'non-political' terms of the *Anglia* agreement, later issues did begin to incorporate more explicitly socio-political content designed to underline differences, rather than similarities, between the two societies. In addition, the magazine regularly featured extracts from contemporary British literature, crosswords, material on the regions of Britain, examples of humour and items in English. In order to avoid a 'rag-bag' appearance and to engage the serious reader with complex subjects, *Anglia* was frequently centred on one major theme, such as chemistry or travel, although most issues also contained some material unrelated to the theme. A representative example from the mid-sixties, *Anglia* no. 11, included articles connected to the main theme of British design, as well as material on parliamentary elections, cricket, books published in 1963, East Anglia, fashion, the nervous system, stamps and English sporting terminology, plus some caricatures, a short story and a crossword.⁵³

British achievements in industry, science and technology always featured prominently in *Anglia*, since these were thought most likely to reinforce an impression of modernity and

⁵¹ TNA INF 12/1095 McMillan to Lovell, 27 August 1957.

⁵² TNA INF 12/1095 Embassy to Simpson, 16 October 1957.

⁵³ *Anglia* 11 (1964).

progress. Science in particular was accorded a high profile since it was taken very seriously in the USSR, and Soviet scientific successes, such as the Sputnik launch of 1957, represented a powerful challenge to the West. Moreover, the fundamentally international character of science made it a potentially fruitful way of transcending borders and of engaging the educated, scientifically-literate reader. In 1961, the Embassy's Kenneth James urged that the magazine deal seriously with science and technology since 'It will show that we are advanced technologically which, for the Russians, is the hallmark of a progressive, forward-looking and positive approach to life.'⁵⁴ The very first issue of *Anglia* featured several articles about the world-famous Jodrell Bank radio-telescope which had been involved in tracking Soviet Sputniks, while the theme of the second issue was chemistry in Britain. The FO insisted that the accent should always be on contemporary science, rather than past achievements: Mavis King was particularly vexed by one article on British research in chemistry which she considered excessively focused on great British scientists of the C17-C19. She also objected to the line 'young scientists work in the same laboratories and even among some of the very equipment used by these great men a hundred and fifty years ago', claiming that this simply reinforced Soviet propaganda about the antiquated nature of Britain. The article was subsequently amended to give greater prominence to contemporary achievements.⁵⁵ Material which contradicted the picture of Britain at the cutting edge of science and technology was rejected, such as a proposed article about Cambridge which allegedly played into Soviet stereotypes about British education as 'tradition-dogged, untechnical and privilege-based.' It was made clear that material on this theme should focus on 'equality of opportunity and technical achievement.'⁵⁶

⁵⁴ TNA INF 12/923 James to Morgan, 3 January 1961.

⁵⁵ TNA INF 12/1095 King to Miller, 30 August 1961.

⁵⁶ TNA FO 1110/1459 Morgan minute, 19 October 1960.

As these comments about Cambridge indicate, *Anglia* was also expected to project an image of British society as modern, progressive and classless in order to counteract the Soviet picture of an old-fashioned country, riven with inequality and class conflict. Although items related to gender, generation, ethnicity and race did increasingly start to feature in the magazine, given the Soviet preoccupation with class, it was this issue which predominated and occupied the attention of those responsible for *Anglia*. Britain was presented as a land of contented workers and consumers reaping the benefits of a buoyant economy and thriving welfare state. Class divides and socio-economic problems were not completely ignored, but were presented as in the process of being rapidly transcended.

British workers were invariably shown employed in productive, fulfilling and well-remunerated labour. For example, a special issue of *Anglia* devoted to British youth featured a series of profiles of 14 'representative' young people, all of whom had satisfying jobs in factories, farming, architecture, nursing, the entertainment industry, and so on. The accompanying photographs depicted uniformly attractive and happy-looking young men and women, a quite deliberate strategy which earned the approval of Wright Miller, who commented 'I am glad to say there are one or two excellent types and good-looking girls among them.'⁵⁷ One photograph of a young miner from Morpeth would not have looked out of place in a Soviet propaganda magazine. Mavis King had insisted that the articles about these young Britons incorporate plenty of direct speech, and their testimonies painted a glowing picture of working conditions and opportunities for social mobility in Britain.⁵⁸ All the young people appeared to face a bright future, even a Welsh factory-worker, who was fundamentally optimistic, despite hoping for greater equality in Britain: 'I do not fear

⁵⁷ *Anglia* 9 (1964); TNA INF 12/936 Miller to King, 7 June 1963.

⁵⁸ TNA INF 12/936, King to Miller, 27 June 1963.

unemployment, and I think that in South Wales none of us fears it.⁵⁹ The controversial question of unemployment was always a sensitive matter for *Anglia* - its existence was not concealed, but it did require careful handling. In 1963, Wright Miller suggested that a feature about the Midlands could include regional unemployment figures since these were not too high at the time, and because the Soviet magazine, *Ogonek*, had recently mentioned unemployment in Liverpool. The cultural attaché at the Embassy in Moscow, Alan Brooke Turner, agreed, but only on condition that the figures were broken down to indicate those who were unfit, recent school-leavers etc., and that the figures for unfulfilled vacancies were supplied.⁶⁰

Care was also taken to ensure that workers' wages and living standards appeared to be high. Wright Miller determined that the figure given for the average wage in an article 'Great Britain in Figures' should be that for males over 21 in the manufacturing industries, since the wages of juveniles and women would otherwise have pulled it down.⁶¹ Workers were portrayed as in a position to afford the dazzling selection of consumer goods, especially fashion, which were a staple feature of the magazine - for example an article on Marks and Spencer's retail practices made a point of mentioning that the clothes were within the means of the store's salespeople.⁶² Likewise, leisure opportunities were portrayed as affordable to all, regardless of class background. Travel was considered a desirable theme from a political perspective, since it underlined the existence of unrestricted movement in the West, but articles on the subject were expected to accentuate the diversity of classes spending holidays abroad, as well as the freedom to travel itself.⁶³ Even such an innocuous subject as gardening warranted careful treatment, with one article on the theme raising concern because of 'the

⁵⁹ *Anglia* 9 (1964), p. 2.

⁶⁰ TNA INF 12/936 Miller to King, 22 May 1963; Brooke Turner to King, 6 June 1963.

⁶¹ TNA FCO 95/343 Miller to King, 4 August 1967.

⁶² *Anglia* 2 (1962), pp. 98-107.

⁶³ TNA INF 12/1095 minutes, 7 December 1961.

rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate' implications. Brooke Turner suggested it be amended to show how gardening, like football, was a lingua franca which linked all classes, claiming that this 'would help to offset the 'class struggle' implications of the article.' Wright Miller duly added some appropriate phrases: 'One might say that in the main we have all become gardeners now. As a subject of discussion in clubs, pubs and trains, gardening may be compared with football. It is a nationwide interest, shared by people of all professions and people of every grade and income...' Miller was worried, however, that 'protestations about the classes sharing things only draw attention to the existence of classes', so he made sure to follow this statement with precise examples of how what he called 'our "classless" gardeners' actually cooperated.⁶⁴

Although it was obviously essential from a political perspective to depict Britain as socio-economically progressive, it was no less important to portray the country as home to a diverse, innovative and widely-accessible modern culture. This served to accentuate the existence of freedom of expression and counter the barrage of Soviet propaganda denigrating the shallow materialism of the capitalist West, while also appealing to the interests of the target readership, the culturally-voracious Soviet intelligentsia. It was doubtless also useful to demonstrate that Britain boasted a culture that was distinct from that of the US in both its high and popular variants.

British cultural heritage was a huge asset which was perennially popular with Soviet readers, so from time to time *Anglia* did include articles on the work of great British figures from the past. Charles Dickens was the subject of a piece by Raymond Williams in the third issue (Wright Miller insisted this made it clear that Britain had changed since Dickens' time), one

⁶⁴ TNA INF 12/936, Brooke Turner to Miller, 13 December 1962; Miller to Brooke Turner, 19 December 1962; Miller to King 19 December 1962.

issue took Shakespeare as its theme, while another included an article on English classical painters.⁶⁵ However, the predominant emphasis was always upon the vitality of contemporary British culture. Readers were offered a regular diet of material on modern artists, writers and composers, including Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Stanley Spencer, T. S. Eliot, Michael Tippett and Benjamin Britten.⁶⁶ Whereas art and music tended not to pose obvious political dilemmas, literature was more problematic: concerns were expressed that some modern literature was too controversial for discussion in *Anglia*, such as the plays of the ‘Angry Young Man’, Arnold Wesker. Examples of contemporary British literature, such as short stories or poems, were included in most issues, although it proved quite difficult to find suitably accessible and politically acceptable work. In 1964 it was decided that short stories which examined less favourable aspects of British life could be considered for publication, however in 1967 Mavis King noted that much modern literature had to be rejected because it portrayed Britain in such a negative light.⁶⁷

More ‘popular’ forms of modern British culture also featured in *Anglia* in the form of articles on British jazz, contemporary cinema, and eventually even the ultra-modern ‘pop’ music, an area in which Britain was undisputedly setting the pace. George Melly’s 1966 article, designed to explain this new phenomenon to Soviet readers, was illustrated with photos of a glittering array of British stars from the Beatles to Cliff Richard.⁶⁸ The quintessentially modern cultural media of TV and radio were examined in a special issue of *Anglia* devoted to broadcasting (the latter also provided an opportunity to highlight the widespread ownership of TV sets in Britain.)⁶⁹

⁶⁵ *Anglia* 3 (1962), 10 (1964), 13 (1965); TNA INF 12/1095 minutes, 7 December 1961.

⁶⁶ *Anglia* 1 (1961), 15 (1965), 16 (1965), 19 (1966), 29 (1969), 32 (1969).

⁶⁷ TNA FO 1110/1845 minutes, 7 October 1964; FO 1110/2130 King to Ure, 6 January 1967.

⁶⁸ *Anglia* 2 (1962), 7 (1963), 20 (1966).

⁶⁹ *Anglia* 5 (1963).

While the terms of the Anglo-Soviet agreement implied that explicitly political content was, in theory, strictly off limits, the IRD was nevertheless eager for *Anglia* to convey some information about the merits of British democracy. In October 1963, when the magazine's position in the USSR appeared reasonably secure, Mark Russell argued that they had been non-controversial for long enough; while initially they had been concerned to avoid offending the Soviet authorities, now the time had come to address topics such as the police, the legal system, and elections. Although they should not seek to 'provoke criticism', he believed it would not matter too much if they were attacked in the Soviet press, since this could in itself serve as useful publicity.⁷⁰ From then on, *Anglia* started to feature articles on subjects such as parliamentary elections, local government, and 'A day in the life of the Prime Minister'. Debates were also introduced to illustrate the significance of divergent views, such as one for and against specialisation in post-16 education. While the importance of tradition in the British political system was acknowledged, considerable emphasis was placed on more modern elements, such as the use of the mass media in election campaigns, and the role of opinion polls in a democracy.⁷¹

Although there was always some discussion about how best to portray the nation, in the early years there was remarkably little dissent from the view that *Anglia* should project a deliberately selective image of Britain and that the FO should play the major role in shaping the contents of the magazine. However, serious friction did emerge when Wright Miller was replaced with a new editor upon his retirement in 1967. Ned Thomas, most recently a British Council English lecturer in Moscow, had considerable journalistic experience under his belt. Mavis King warned that he would 'need a fair amount of training and guidance.'⁷² When Wright Miller suggested he consider the position, Thomas asked to what extent the editor had

⁷⁰ TNA FO 1110/1715 minutes, 17 October 1963.

⁷¹ *Anglia* 11 (1964), 12 (1964), 20 (1966), 21 (1967).

⁷² TNA FCO 95/346 King to Bayne, 31 August 1967.

‘a free hand in the shaping of *Anglia*.’⁷³ It is unclear what the response was to this enquiry, but evidently once in post he found the amount of ‘guidance’ he was required to receive from the FO intolerable and he ended up tendering his resignation after less than a year.

In a letter to the IRD’s Nicholas Bayne, Thomas explained why he considered the FO’s ‘detailed day-to-day control of the contents, down to pictures and turns of phrase’ to be unnecessary and even harmful: ‘Not only as a journalist but as a British citizen I draw a line between a system under which a Government Department employs people to “put Britain across” and a system under which that department itself insists on the deletion of words, sentences and paragraphs in what is not a policy document or a political journal but a magazine of British life.’ He argued that the editor should have real, rather than nominal, responsibility for *Anglia*, and that the magazine would benefit from the input of an editorial advisory board consisting of distinguished figures from a variety of walks of life to allow for a more balanced presentation of Britain. Thomas’ letter to the COI’s Director of Publications contained similar criticisms of FO scrutiny. He drew unfavourable comparisons between *Anglia* and the BBC Russian service, claiming that the latter enjoyed greater editorial independence. He recalled hearing Wright Miller answer questions in Moscow about how far *Anglia* was ‘propaganda.’ Miller had stated that of course the magazine would not include an article on slums in Britain, but that an article on housing would not conceal the existence of slums. Thomas said that he could not honestly give the same talk because he knew that ‘many small references of a negative nature’ were removed.⁷⁴

Much to the consternation of the FO, the Cardiff-based newspaper, the *Western Mail*, picked up on the story of Thomas’ resignation, and used it to imply that the Government was

⁷³ TNA INF 12/1094 Thomas to Miller, 22 March 1967.

⁷⁴ TNA INF 12/1095 Thomas to Bayne, 7 October 1968. Ned Thomas was kind enough to discuss his experiences with me and to supply an English translation of his autobiography.

engaged in media censorship, quoting Thomas to the effect that the FO was exercising excessive control primarily in order to ensure a favourable depiction of Britain. The *Mail* suggested that if the Government was trying to conceal things ‘the conduct of the Foreign Office would cast a regrettable shadow over the high and justified reputation of British news media for their objectivity and determination always to present a balanced view.’⁷⁵ The deliberately distorted image of Britain in *Anglia* and the level of Foreign Office interference thus raised some uncomfortable questions. In the eyes of some, Britain had come to mirror its adversary, the Soviet Union, in its attempts to manipulate a magazine for political ends.⁷⁶ Reviewing the first issue of *Anglia*, the *Glasgow Herald* questioned whether the contents were ‘really representative of Britain? Where are the pop stars?’ and ‘the slums of Salford?’ while the literary magazine *John O’London’s Weekly* observed little difference between *Anglia* and Soviet official hand-outs:

So *Anglia* may not be the best magazine we could produce but it does look as if it’s the best we shall be allowed to offer. But when are the power blocs going to stop hiding from the truth about the other side? Is truth really so dangerous? Or are both Russians and the Western powers afraid that their respective ways of life are so much less perfect than they would have their opponents believe?’⁷⁷

The FO response to such allegations was always to maintain that it was the nature of the Soviet Union and its policies which warranted the exceptional measures. Following the Ned Thomas episode, Bayne argued to the head of the IRD that the department’s oversight of the magazine was justified for several reasons: to ensure that the Soviets were not provoked, to

⁷⁵ *Western Mail*, 10 January 1969.

⁷⁶ East-West ‘mirroring’ is discussed in Rana Mitter and Patrick Major (eds.), *Across the Blocs: Cold War Cultural and Social History* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), pp. 7-8.

⁷⁷ TNA FO 1110/1586 ‘*Anglia* No. 1’, 1 March 1962.

verify that *Anglia* was providing a ‘truthful and accurate account of British life as a positive antidote to the version in the Soviet press’ and was in line with government policy, and to check that the magazine was comprehensible to readers. An unusual level of control was necessary because of *Anglia*’s unique status as the only freely-circulating British publication in the USSR.⁷⁸ Bolstered by arguments such as these, the IRD continued to supervise of the work of Thomas’ rather more compliant successor.

Evaluating the Soviet reception of *Anglia*

More significant, perhaps, than the public response to *Anglia* in Britain, where its resonance was necessarily limited, was the reception of the magazine in the USSR itself. How was Britain’s ‘quiet propaganda’ received by its intended readership? If the impact of such ventures is notoriously hard to gauge in the best of circumstances, it was infinitely more difficult to assess the influence of Western initiatives in the USSR, given all the barriers to unfettered communication. Determined to gain some sense of the effectiveness of their efforts, governments and broadcasters had to rely on all manner of available sources, including Soviet visitors to the West, and even defectors.⁷⁹ The FO, its attempts to evaluate the reception of *Anglia*, resorted to what it could glean from limited evidence ranging from data about distribution, to informal conversations and rare but precious readers’ letters.

The magazine’s distribution was the object of constant British scrutiny because of fears that the Soviet authorities might be obstructing its circulation. Encouragingly, no copies of *Anglia* were ever returned as ‘unsold’ by Soizuzpechat’, apart from the few that had been damaged. This was in stark contrast to the position with *Amerika*, several thousand copies of which

⁷⁸ TNA INF 12/1095 Bayne to Clive, 10 January 1969.

⁷⁹ G. Mytton ‘Audience Research at the BBC External Services during the Cold War’, *Cold War History*, 11/1, 20011; E. Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2007); S. Mikkonen, ‘Stealing the Monopoly of Knowledge?: Soviet Reactions to U.S. Cold War Broadcasting’ *Kritika*, 11/4, 2010.

were returned every month, partly in retaliation for poor sales of its Soviet counterpart in the US. It was evident that demand for *Anglia* was high, since there were constant reports that Soviet citizens could not obtain a copy: even the wife of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Gromyko, reported that the Ministry had received many letters complaining that the print run was so small.⁸⁰ There was some evidence that *Anglia* had a 'black market' value and it was known that copies did pass from hand to hand, as well as being made available in public libraries.⁸¹ In this way, the magazine did reach many more readers than its print run of 50,000 would suggest. From 1966, Britain began to press the Soviet authorities to double the circulation quota from 50,000 to 100,000 per quarter. The Soviet side was not enthusiastic, partly because of the question of reciprocity with *Soviet Weekly*. However after much negotiation, an agreement was reached in 1968, and it seems that the extra 50,000 copies were not difficult to distribute.

Evidence suggested that the magazine was reaching and being read by actual and potential opinion leaders, i.e. the young (especially students), intellectuals, professionals and the political elite. It was known that Alexei Kosygin, Dmitrii Ustinov and other members of the government were readers. Regular subscribers included the administrator of the Komsomol Theatre, a leading actor at the Young People's Theatre in Leningrad, and a key *Izvestiia* commentator. It was also read by residents of the non-Russian republics, including academics in Georgia and Armenia.⁸² The FO seemed confident that this high-level readership, as well as the unobstructed distribution of the magazine, signified that *Anglia* was accepted, if not wholeheartedly embraced, by the Soviet authorities. During his visits to the USSR, Wright Miller received reassuring messages of support from official Soviet bodies, such as the

⁸⁰ TNA FO 1110/1586, Miller, report on visit to the Soviet Union, 1962.

⁸¹ TNA FO 1110/1715 Barclay minute, 21 November 1963; FO 1110/2130 Miller report of a visit to the Soviet Union, 1966; INF 12/1094 Russell to Hoddinott, 28 June 1963.

⁸² TNA INF 12/936 Brooke Turner to King, 23 May 1963; FO 1110/1977 Miller report of a visit to the Soviet Union, 1965.

USSR-GB Association, Soiuzpechat' and the State Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.⁸³ The Soviet press rarely attacked the magazine, and when it did so, the criticism tended to be confined to less important publications such as the Komsomol's magazine *Rovesnik*, which on one occasion berated the special issue of *Anglia* devoted to youth for its failure to address the on-going class conflicts in Britain.⁸⁴

While the FO was clearly concerned to monitor official Soviet responses to *Anglia*, it was no less interested in gaining more informal feedback on the magazine. The British Embassy staff, other Moscow-based diplomats and the foreign correspondents of Western newspapers and news agencies all provided useful intelligence. Perhaps even more valuable were the trips to the Soviet Union made by the editor and assistant editor of the magazine, who made a point of talking to members of the Soviet public, from students to taxi drivers, mainly in Moscow and Leningrad, but also in other cities, including Kiev, Tashkent, Minsk and Tallinn. Finally, letters sent to the magazine by Soviet readers served as a crucial source of informal feedback, despite their necessarily limited numbers and typically innocuous content.

Censorship of mail continued to be routine in the post-Stalin USSR and corresponding with foreigners was still regarded as a risky activity: Mavis King observed that the 30 letters they had received in 1962 might not seem many, but were 'more than I dared to hope for' (by way of comparison, it is worth noting that the much more widely available BBC Russian Service only received 41 letters in 1956, and somewhat over a hundred in 1963).⁸⁵ Between 1962 and 1969, 240 letters reached the offices of *Anglia* from as far afield as Magadan, Perm,

⁸³ TNA FO 1110/1586 minutes of meeting with USSR-Great Britain Association, 31 October 1962; FO 1110/1977 Miller report of a visit to the Soviet Union, 1965; FO 1110/2130 Miller report of a visit to the Soviet Union, 1966.

⁸⁴ TNA INF 12/1095 Sewell to Speaight, 17 July 1964.

⁸⁵ TNA FO 1110/1586 King minute, 16 January 1963; Schwartz, *Political Warfare*, pp. 90-92. See also Mytton 'Audience Research', p. 55.

Vladivostok and Yalta.⁸⁶ Most emanated from the desired target groups, i.e. the young and professionals, and while the majority wrote in Russian, some correspondents enjoyed practising their English. They generally supplied their names and addresses, and the editors of *Anglia* often went to some trouble to correspond with them.

Sources such as these were far from representative, but in the absence of superior alternatives, the FO drew on them in an attempt to establish the extent to which *Anglia* was achieving its aims. Of course, this kind of evidence was unlikely to yield clear-cut answers to the question of whether the magazine was altering perceptions of Britain (or the Soviet system, for that matter), but it could at least shed some light on whether *Anglia* was regarded as ‘capitalist propaganda’ or as a reasonably objective source of information, and, more generally, what readers liked and disliked about the magazine. Inevitably, officials who interpreted this evidence could not entirely avoid their own prejudices, and were no doubt inclined to privilege the more positive feedback. However their analyses, when read in conjunction along with the letters themselves, succeed in conveying an impression of the diversity of Soviet response to *Anglia*.

Some of the responses - allegedly a minority - were unfavourable: the assistant editor Jennifer Price encountered a few citizens who expressed complete indifference to the magazine – she described these as ‘comfortably off’, ‘depressingly, complacently insular.’ A medical student whom she met in Leningrad dismissed both *Anglia* and *Amerika* as ‘propaganda’ and claimed to prefer Soviet-produced English-language magazines, although when pressed, could not name any.⁸⁷ The *Times* correspondent reported a conversation in the train with two men of different generations. When the younger man mentioned that British TV was highly

⁸⁶ TNA FO 95/677 Hall ‘FCO-Sponsored COI/HMSO Services - A Survey’, 12 June 1969.

⁸⁷ TNA FO 1110/1845 Price report on a visit to the USSR, 1964.

developed, citing *Anglia* and *Amerika* as his source of information, the older man responded ‘Well if you read those things, there is no point discussing the matter further.’⁸⁸ This type of language echoed the official xenophobia of the late Stalin years, and was more extreme than the rather more flexible stance of the current Soviet authorities.

However, generally reactions seemed positive. According to various British reports, some people liked *Anglia* precisely because it did not come across as particularly propagandistic, especially when compared with *Amerika*. Gromyko’s wife was said to approve of the fact that there was ‘no attempt to belittle Soviet things’ while Kosygin allegedly rated it as better than anything produced by Americans.⁸⁹ Wright Miller recorded various flattering comparisons from members of the intelligentsia: Kudriavtsev of *Izvestiia* said ‘You don’t hammer in every nail, like *Amerika*’, while an actor commented that ‘You are always so clever and tactful, not *loud* like *Amerika*.’ Some even dared to draw comparisons with Soviet propaganda: Professor Anikst, the leading Soviet authority on Shakespeare, remarked at a private party: ‘“*Anglia* doesn’t make the same mistakes as *Amerika*”...’or us!’’ (he added behind his hand).’

Professor Akhmanova, an expert on the English language, said: ‘“You are the equal of the BBC which is the world’s best broadcasting service. You are so perfectly tactful; it is the *only* way to do things. As for *Amerika* -”’ (she turned to her neighbour and said “if you promise not to denounce me to the Party Committee!”) “as for *Amerika*, I sometimes think its propaganda is even worse than our own.”’ While in certain cases, as Mavis King suggested, these judgements about *Anglia* and *Amerika* may simply have been an example of people deliberately playing off the British and US against each other – such wedge-driving was a common Soviet Cold War tactic - it does seem that the more subtle approach of *Anglia* was favoured by some, although by no means all, readers: both Price and Miller heard the

⁸⁸ *The Times*, 18 April 1963.

⁸⁹ TNA FO 1110/1586 ‘*Anglia* no. 1’, 1 March 1962; INF 12/1095 King to Miller, 18 November 1965.

opposite point of view, that *Amerika*, with its glossy photos and images of material abundance, was preferred.⁹⁰

The strict rationing of information within the USSR created a tremendous ‘thirst for knowledge’ and many readers appeared to value *Anglia* as a source of useful and credible information.⁹¹ Wright Miller observed an avid interest in all things foreign in the mid-sixties, a demand to which *Anglia* catered very well. Three students in Moscow, whom Price described as ‘desperately conscious of lack of outside contacts’, bracketed it with the BBC as ‘like a window on the world’ and asked that the magazine provide more information about everyday matters such as what people ate.⁹² While readers naturally avoided discussion of issues which might be construed as ‘political’, many appeared to find articles related to their professional and leisure interests particularly useful, and requested further information about these. For example, following the publication in the ‘youth’ issue of a profile of Diana Barnes, a postgraduate medical researcher, a professor at a Moscow children’s hospital wrote to find out whether Barnes could supply some specific information about breast cancer treatment, while a professor of Biological Sciences from Ul’ianovsk, who had read articles in the agriculture-themed issue, asked for further material on wheat selection in Britain. Many suggested to the editors that the magazine cover subjects related to their own interests, from fireworks to philosophy and sociology. There was much demand for material focused on British art, literature and cinema, while several expressed an enthusiasm for items about British jazz and pop music.⁹³ Not surprisingly, *Anglia* was particularly appreciated by teachers and students of English; in 1966 Wright Miller met a large number of English teachers who were ‘almost embarrassingly unanimous’ in their praise for the magazine; they,

⁹⁰ TNA FO 1110/1845 Price report on a visit to the USSR, 1964; FO 1110/1977 Miller report of a visit to the Soviet Union, 1965; FO 1110/2130 King to Ure, 6 January 1967.

⁹¹ Mikkonen ‘Stealing’, p. 790.

⁹² TNA FO 1110/1845 Price report on a visit to the USSR, 1964.

⁹³ TNA FO 1110/1845 letters from Soviet readers; FO 1110/1977 letters from Soviet readers.

and many others, asked for more of it to be printed in English.⁹⁴ Often the editors responded very directly to readers' requests by commissioning articles on the suggested themes or putting correspondents in touch with British specialists, a dialogue which no doubt helped to enhance the appeal of *Anglia*. While it was the serious information content which attracted the most comment, lighter material, such as crosswords and cartoons, was also singled out for praise, and there were many requests for more British humour - the FO agreed to this on condition that they 'avoid whimsy like the plague.'⁹⁵

Despite the necessarily limited evidence base, the FO seemed quite satisfied with the Soviet response to *Anglia*, both on the official and unofficial level. Although 50,000 or even a 100,000 copies every quarter might have seemed insignificant relative to the size of the Soviet population, as Wright Miller commented, the limited circulation belied the fact that the magazine had a ripple effect: it may have been slower than a weekly publication, but it spread just as far in the end.⁹⁶ Although it was difficult to establish whether *Anglia* was actually changing attitudes, there was certainly a *perception* that it may have been.

Christopher Mayhew declared to Parliament in 1963 that the image of Britain in the Soviet Union had improved recently in part due to the influence of the 'excellent magazine' *Anglia*, and proposed setting up similar periodicals for other Soviet bloc states.⁹⁷ Financial constraints made this difficult, but a Polish magazine, *Brytania*, was eventually launched in 1968. However, despite the perceived success of these initiatives, by the end of 1960s, the future of both *Anglia* and *Brytania* was increasingly being called into question.

Defending *Anglia*

⁹⁴ TNA FO 1110/2130 Miller report of a visit to the Soviet Union, 1966.

⁹⁵ TNA FO 1110/1586 minutes of meeting with USSR-Great Britain Association, 31 October 1962; INF 12/1095 King to Miller, 24 May 1962.

⁹⁶ TNA FO 1110/1586 Miller report on visit to the Soviet Union, November 1962.

⁹⁷ Hansard HC Debates, 25 November 1963, Series 5, vol. 685, c. 5.

In part because of the difficulty of measuring the influence of the magazine, *Anglia* was often in the firing line when spending cuts were required. Such forms of ‘soft power’ are always easy targets, usually regarded as secondary to more tangible ‘hard’ military and economic needs. As the Soviet response to the Prague Spring in 1968 seemed to demonstrate that the Russian leopard would never change its spots, some concluded that British investment in cultural diplomacy was a waste of taxpayers’ money. With the Duncan report calling for cuts in the budget of overseas information work, *Anglia*’s future seemed to hang in the balance.

At the end of the 1960s, the Duncan Committee on Overseas Representation recommended significant changes to British overseas information work in the light of new geopolitical and economic realities. Its report acknowledged the importance of what it called British ‘propaganda’: ‘the propaganda arena is just as competitive as the political and commercial arenas in which this nation has to fight for survival’; to be effective, however, propaganda had to be commensurate with the country’s real status, and given that Britain was no longer ‘a world power of the first order’, it was appropriate that it be projected primarily as ‘a trading nation with a great culture and democratic traditions’. It was argued that the main focus of information work should henceforth be commercial and cultural, rather than political and military. Most significantly as far as *Anglia* was concerned, the report suggested that money and effort could be saved by substantially reducing the projection of Britain via FO ‘political and non-commercial hand-outs’ which were often regarded simply as pro-government propaganda, and by relying rather on the British press, the British Council and the BBC. Official publicity and hand-outs should in future be directly linked to the needs of export promotion.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Cmnd. 4107, pp. 96-114.

The Duncan report thus called into question the very existence of *Anglia*. A subsequent Foreign Office review of FO-sponsored COI publications noted that *Anglia* and *Brytania* were the only remaining general projection magazines for overseas consumption since *Al Aalam* and *Commonwealth Today* had been axed. The review concluded that it was unlikely that the government would ever again publish such non-specialist magazines as part of its overseas information work. *Anglia* itself was costly (then about £60,000 net p.a.), its political content was not immediately evident, and the impact of the magazine hard to establish. While subscribers and the recipients of complimentary copies were probably the all-important ‘multipliers’, those who bought it from kiosks might well be the ‘elderly, the nostalgic and the Anglophil.’ If the periodical were to continue, the proportion of industrial, scientific and technological content would have to be reviewed for ‘It cannot be right – behind the Iron Curtain, but nowhere else in the world - for so much emphasis in British propaganda to be placed on children’s books, rural scenery and yeoman warders of the Tower’.⁹⁹

Anglia now faced considerable pressure to adapt and survive by becoming more politically hard-hitting and/or more commercially-minded. However, this pressure encountered strong resistance from various quarters in the FO. Mavis King’s firm view was that the nature of the *Anglia* agreement precluded any further sharpening of the political contents. She maintained that the magazine did already fulfil a clear political function, since its ‘honest and accurate’ depiction of Britain both counteracted Soviet anti-British propaganda, and provided an obvious contrast with life in the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁰ Sir Duncan Wilson, the ambassador to the USSR, agreed that a more obvious political slant was likely to be counter-productive, emphasising that *Anglia* was accepted precisely because of its seeming objectivity: ‘To allow the magazine to start pointing the moral would be to encourage the readers to cease doing so.’

⁹⁹ TNA FCO 95/677 Hall ‘FCO-Sponsored COI/HMSO Services - A Survey’, 12 June 1969.

¹⁰⁰ TNA FCO 95/677 King ‘*Anglia* and *Brytania*: Comments by Information Research Department’, 30 May 1969.

Wilson also claimed that *Anglia* did in fact serve the needs of trade and commerce by projecting an image of Britain deemed desirable in the Duncan report, i.e. that of ‘a trading partner with a great culture and democratic tradition’. The magazine already contained commercially-oriented articles, and there was no need to increase the number of these, since *Anglia* was ‘a case “sui generis” which does not need extra justification in terms of commercial publicity.’¹⁰¹ King also opposed to any increase in the technological, scientific and industrial content, in part because Soviet citizens already had access to such material from other sources: ‘we consider it important to inject ideas’, she emphasised.¹⁰² In general, it was felt that many of the Duncan report recommendations were simply not applicable to work in a closed society where the BBC, British press and British Council could not function.¹⁰³ David Beattie from the East European and Soviet Department stressed *Anglia*’s unique role as the only uncensored non-communist British publication generally available to the Soviet public. He pointed out that the Duncan report had endorsed the BBC’s broadcasts to Eastern Europe, and that *Anglia* made a similarly important contribution to keeping open lines of communication.¹⁰⁴

These arguments proved to be persuasive, and *Anglia* was permitted to survive without substantial modification: the one condition imposed by the Treasury was that its commercial content should increase from 24% to 35%. Nevertheless, despite this reprieve, *Anglia* remained vulnerable, and throughout the 1970s, the political and economic value of the magazine continued to be questioned, particularly in the context of accelerating détente. Ultimately, however, it was recognised that *Anglia* was a necessary undertaking, which could be justified by the exceptional circumstances of the Cold War. As the IRD’s Noel Marshall

¹⁰¹ TNA FCO 95/934 Wilson to Peck, 29 October 1969.

¹⁰² TNA FCO 95/677 King ‘*Anglia* and *Brytania*: Comments by Information Research Department’, 30 May 1969.

¹⁰³ TNA FCO 95/934 Wilson to Peck, 29 October 1969.

¹⁰⁴ TNA FCO 95/678 Beattie to Cambridge, 22 September 1969.

put it in 1971, '*Anglia* is a unique British Government activity which should be compared in value for money, not with some information activity which happens to cost a similar sum, but with the cost of the cold war to HM Government.'¹⁰⁵

The Cold War was above all a war of ideologies and cultures, and national projection magazines were one, not insignificant, means by which this war was waged. Periodicals were perceived to have a remarkably high degree of international influence at this time: the *Reader's Digest* was once bracketed with the Catholic Church and the Communist Party as one of the 'three great international institutions'. Rather more soberly, a COI report of 1962 claimed that 'publicity by means of periodicals is perhaps the second most important information activity of the Iron Curtain countries – in some parts of the world, indeed, the most important.... our principal European information competitors, Western Germany, Italy and France, increasingly use the medium.'¹⁰⁶

National projection magazines took off against the backdrop of this periodical equivalent of an arms race. Although periodicals designed to 'brand' a nation had existed before – *British Ally* being a notable example – it was the Cold War which encouraged serious proliferation of the phenomenon. Such magazines provided a way for individual countries to circumvent the prevailing rhetoric of two monolithic blocs - 'the East' and 'the West' - and to present their own faces to the world. Britain felt compelled to play its distinctive part in this emerging magazine diplomacy, and *Anglia* was the result.

¹⁰⁵ TNA FCO 95/1232 Marshall to Paterson, 23 August 1971.

¹⁰⁶ Barnhisel and Turner, *Pressing the Fight*, p.12; TNA INF 12/948 'Review of Overseas Magazines. Note by Central Office of Information' (Draft), 1962.

As Cold War historians begin to gravitate away from ‘phenomena of the great’ to the ‘phenomena of the small’, attention has turned to the ostensibly minor actors, processes and initiatives that were important despite or even because of their size.¹⁰⁷ *Anglia* satisfied this criterion of a ‘small’ undertaking on many counts: produced by one of the smaller ‘great powers’, it cost relatively little and was designed to have a modest reach. In terms of physical appearance it was, quite literally, small. Yet, in part because of its small and non-threatening character, it represented a valuable instrument of soft power. It explained Britain to Soviet readers who were hungry for information about the West and who often had only the haziest and most distorted understanding of the country. While it offered a deliberately selective, rosy vision of modern Britain, it was far from being crude and manipulative propaganda. In its avoidance of the hard-sell, in its attempt to engage in a serious dialogue with its readers and respond to their interests, and in its commitment to fostering understanding over the long term, it exemplified a more subtle mode of influencing Soviet opinion (a mode which eventually came to characterise aspects of US ‘public diplomacy’ too.¹⁰⁸)

Surviving a succession of political crises and financial challenges, *Anglia* represented a small but continuous channel of communication between Britain and the Soviet public for thirty years. By 1992, when the last issues of the magazine appeared, the Cold War was over. We should, of course, resist the temptation to overstate the importance of what was, after all, just one ‘drop of water’ among many. However, would it not be legitimate to conclude that, in its own small way, *Anglia* may have made some contribution to the process which brought the conflict to an end?

¹⁰⁷ S. Autio-Sarasmo and B. Humphreys (eds.), *Winter Kept Us Warm: Cold War Interactions Reconsidered* (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, 2010), p. 14.

¹⁰⁸ Cull charts this evolution very fully in *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*.

