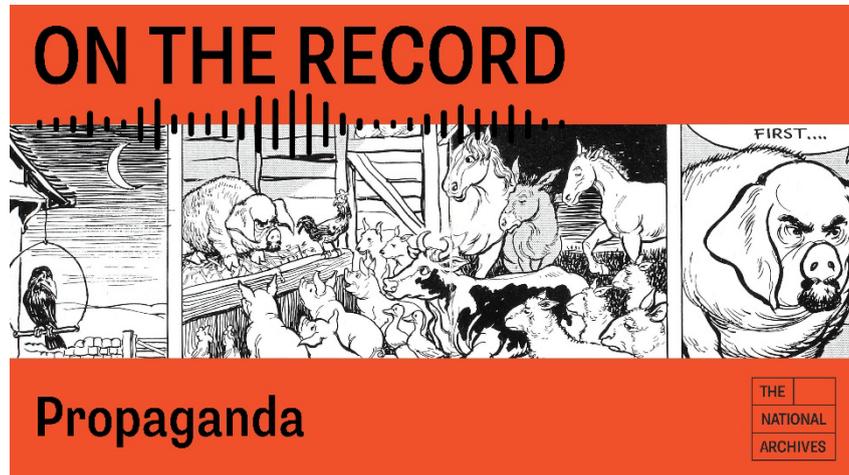


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Propaganda

Take a closer look at records of propaganda in our collections.

In this episode, we have four stories of deliberate attempts by governments to influence the beliefs of leaders and laypeople. Hear about British and Sinn Féin propaganda in the Irish War for Independence; a Jamaican artist rediscovered thanks to his commissioned propaganda work; a Nazi radio broadcast with a dubious account of the famous St. Nazaire raid; and how the UK used novels during the Cold War.

Documents from The National Archives used in this episode: [CO 904/168](#), [INF 3/615](#), [DEFE 2/128](#), [DEFE 2/126](#)

If you're interested in finding out more about the stories featured in this episode, read our blogs on [Searching for Cliff Tyrell](#) and [The Irish War of Independence, 1919-21](#).

For more information about the records covered in this episode, take a look at our research guide to [Propaganda](#). For help navigating our catalogue, you can watch our [top level tips on using Discovery](#).

Listeners, we need your help to make this podcast better! We need to know a bit more about you and what themes you're interested in. You can share this information with us by visiting smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ontherecord/.

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Transcription

[Teaser clips from interviews]

Dan Gosling: This is On the Record at The National Archives: uncovering the past through stories of everyday people. I'm Dan Gosling.

Katherine Howells: And I'm Katherine Howells.

Dan and I are both records specialists here at The National Archives in Kew, West London, where we research, look after, and help our audiences better understand the Archives' collections of historical government and public records.

Dan: In this episode, we're looking at propaganda in our collections. We have four stories of deliberate attempts by governments to influence the beliefs of leaders and laypeople through newspapers, art, radio, and novels.

Katherine: Coming up, we'll hear about a failed attempt by the British to stop Sinn Féin propaganda in the Irish War for Independence. Then, a piece of commissioned propaganda artwork is the first clue in uncovering the life of a Jamaican artist whose story was almost lost to history. After that, we'll take a closer look at a Nazi radio broadcast with a dubious account of the famous St. Nazaire raid. Finally, we'll explore how the Foreign Office deployed novels during the Cold War to fight the spread of communism and promote British values.

Dan: Our first guest is Michael Mahoney, Learning and Outreach Officer in our education department.

Katherine: So, Michael, you've been looking into propaganda from the Irish War of Independence. Before we get into the records themselves, could you give us a refresher on that conflict?

Michael Mahoney: Certainly, yeah. In the aftermath of the failed 1916 Easter Rising, public opinion in Ireland underwent an extraordinary shift away from the union with Britain and towards the notion of an Irish republic. Irish people were outraged by the report of executions of rebel leaders

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and the imprisonments of hundreds of nationalists. The British government's threat to introduce conscription in 1918 further inflamed opinion and loyalty to the Empire was soon to become a thing of the past. So, the election of 73 Sinn Féin MPs representing Republicanism to the Westminster Parliament meant democratic legitimacy for some form of self-rule. And soon after in January 1919, an Irish Parliament or 'Dáil' was established, and members of the Irish Republican Army began attacking representatives of the crown in Ireland, the Royal Irish Constabulary.

In British colonies like Egypt and India, there was also pressure mounting for self-government or independence. Our records show that the British were extremely concerned about the effect that a rebellion in Ireland could have globally and its potential to undermine the whole British Empire.

The British response, in an increasingly violent situation, was to increase military presence and activity in Ireland. In early 1920 Churchill called for the formation of an "emergency gendarmerie" to control the situation. This was a paramilitary police force enacted as the Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary. The Auxiliaries committed most outrages on the British side.

Katherine: One tool the Irish used to win their independence was an effective communication strategy—or you might call it propaganda. This included the Irish Bulletin, a newsletter distributed to journalists in Britain, Europe, and America. It reported on atrocities committed by the British, and—thanks to its accuracy—had a lot of influence abroad and in Parliament. Can you tell me a bit more about the Bulletin and its role in the war?

Michael: The *Irish Bulletin* was a newsletter published by Sinn Féin, the Dáil Éireann, which was the Irish Parliament. It began publication on the 11th of November 1919 and continued until the Truce of 11th July 1921, more or less two years. Now under the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA), ordinary Irish Newspapers were forbidden to publish news about Sinn Féin actions or Proclamations, so the *Bulletin* became an important tool for the Sinn Féin/ Dáil Government. It was usually four or five pages long and was distributed to British and foreign journalists who used it as a verifiable source in their newspaper reports.

Now, each issue had a headline, and it's a really convoluted and long headlined: 'Acts of Aggression committed in Ireland by the Armed Military and Constabulary of the Usurping English Government, as Reported in the Daily Press'. So, the *Bulletin* would list that week's raids, arrests,

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courts martials, and murders. It began with a distribution list of about 30 copies but by the end of the war it was sending copies to about 1200 journalists, MPs, and prominent public figures. These newspapers would then publish stories usually more sympathetic to the nationalists.

A good example of a *Bulletin* headline came after the ‘Bloody Sunday’ attack on a football crowd by the Auxiliaries (commonly known as ADRIC); so these were British members of the RIC, the police force. And this took place at Croke Park in Dublin in November 1920, killing innocent civilians. The *Bulletin* called it the ‘Irish Amritsar’ referring to the attack in India on innocent civilians by Imperial troops in April 1919. Towards the end of the war, the *Bulletin* also carried headlines such as ‘Outrages on Irishwomen,’ publishing reports of sexual assault by members of the Crown forces.

Katherine: You mentioned the *Bulletin* being sent to MPs. Can you say a bit more about how it was used in Parliament?

Michael: On several occasions, opposition MPs—Labour and Liberal—would utilise the content of the *Bulletin* to embarrass Government ministers like Hamar Greenwood, the Irish Secretary, or Lloyd George, the Prime Minister. MPs would expose the unofficial reprisal policy of the RIC and government by asking awkward questions about incidents that happened in Ireland. Examples of this include the ‘sacking of Balbriggan’ in September 1920, or ‘the burning of Cork City’ in December 1920 when auxiliaries deliberately burnt commercial property and killed civilians. And this was usually in retaliation for attacks on the policemen or army themselves. The shooting dead of Sinn Féin Lord Mayor of Cork, Tomás Mac Curtain, by RIC policemen with English accents provoked damaging questions to the government in Parliament also.

Katherine: So how did the British try to counteract the *Bulletin* and its Republican narrative?

Michael: Well, a year or more into the War the British set up a dedicated propaganda regime called the Public Information Branch or PIB, and this was located at Dublin Castle, the headquarters of the British administration. It had an experienced journalist, Basil Clarke, at its head. He was what you might call a ‘spin doctor’ for the British. The idea was to control the flow of news—pumping out deliberately misleading news stories—and he termed this as ‘propaganda by news’, with every news story containing an air of truth. And his goal was to establish the Castle as a source of

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credible information and then attempt to manipulate public opinion through the selection of facts the PIB distributed to journalists.

Unfortunately for Clarke, he did not have full control of all the divisions of the PIB, which included an RIC or police publicity unit and a unit that distributed press releases for the Army. Now, these units produced their own propaganda which did not always meet with the approval of Basil Clark, and it was notably the RIC unit which produced its own examples of propaganda. Both the RIC and Army were continually trying to find the headquarters of the *Irish Bulletin* in Dublin by raiding premises or ‘hide-outs’. The staff of the *Bulletin* moved premises about 15 times during the course of the War. Eventually, in late March 1921, the RIC successfully raided a house, capturing the equipment, including typewriters, and distribution lists of the *Bulletin*.

Katherine: So, the staff of the Bulletin have escaped capture, but the British have all the printing equipment. As far as they can tell, they’ve halted the publishing operation. What do the RIC do next?

Michael: The RIC publicity unit, without Clarke’s permission, then decided to produce a fake *Bulletin* news sheet, which we have at The National Archives. Using the original typewriter and copying machines the RIC staff, led by Englishmen Hugh Pollard and William Darling, craft their fake version of the Bulletin. The RIC officers composed the counterfeit bulletins in Dublin Castle and forwarded them to the usual subscribers on the mailing list. Now, in normal circumstances, this might have convinced most readers, but the British efforts were crude. Firstly, the forgers put the wrong issue number on the fake edition. Fortunately for the Dáil Department of Propaganda, the raid occurred on a Saturday, and Monday’s genuine edition had already been posted. Publication of the real *Irish Bulletin* continued, and it was successfully issued on the following Tuesday. The first edition of the fake news bulletin appeared on the following day and had the previous day’s issue number. This mistake went unnoticed, and they continued to issue the editions of the *Bulletin* with incorrect numbers.

But it wasn’t just this mistake that the British made. There were aesthetic differences as well. The first edition of the fake *Bulletin* was badly written; it contained long quotes from the RIC *Weekly Summary*, which was a police newsletter designed to boost the morale of the boycotted police force. Now each quote was followed by a short and unconvincing Sinn Féin reply. There was also

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an exaggeration of facts in the fake, grossly inflating the figures of aggressive actions, speaking of ‘thousands of murdered men, women and children’ and the ‘millions of ruined homes’. The fakes were soon spotted by the real *Bulletin* staff as they recognized the errors produced by an old typewriter mistyping letter ‘e’ for ‘o’. The real editor of the Bulletin, Erskine Childers, moved quickly to counteract the forgeries, issuing a detailed response soon after in April 1921.

Katherine: So, the fake newsletter didn’t work. It failed to have any impact and actually damaged the credibility of the Crown Forces. But believe it or not, this was not Hugh Pollard’s first bad attempt at Irish propaganda. As flawed as the fake Irish Bulletin project was, his earlier try was even less believable. Tell us about the fake letter Kevin Barry supposedly dictated from beyond the grave.

Michael: Kevin Barry was an eighteen-year-old medical student and member of the IRA, who was arrested in September 1920 at the scene of a fatal IRA ambush. He was convicted and executed on 1st November 1920. And many newspapers referred to Barry as the ‘Boy Martyr’ and called unsuccessfully for a repeal of his death sentence.

In the aftermath of the execution, Pollard of the RIC wrote up the apparent sworn testimony of a spirit medium—a Mrs. J. A. Holloway—who had been contacted by Barry.

The letter began ‘Now I Kevin Barry who was executed...and suffered the penalty of death for taking part in the crimes which Ireland is indulging in, wish to say...that I have reached my heavenly father’s home.’ Barry told the medium that heaven had ‘melted his wicked heart’ and implored her to send ‘a message to the people and friends of mine in Ireland to stop their wicked deeds’.

Katherine: This story of a ‘medium’ invented by Pollard is somewhat laughable, but what does it tell us about his attitude towards the Irish?

Michael: Well, Pollard had a low opinion of the Irish, seeing them as gullible. So, he employed the ‘guilty man in heaven’ scenario in the hope it would persuade IRA gunmen to surrender. Pollard later wrote prejudicial texts in a book published a few years later that the ‘typical’ Irish person had two ‘fundamental abnormalities, namely, moral insensibility and want of foresight’. These two

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factors, he assured readers, were the ‘basic characteristic of criminal psychology’. He basically believed Irish people were inherently criminal.

Pollard also attempted to produce fake Sinn Féin oaths and seals, making them out to be sectarian against the English and Scots. Such nonsense was condemned by the Sinn Féin Party and the Dáil. The *Irish Bulletin* would later devote a whole issue to exposing forgeries, including the use of captured Dáil Eireann notepaper to make forged Dáil proclamations.

You might wonder how he was able to get away with these clumsy plans. Central government did not have a lot of control or knowledge about small propaganda teams like Pollard’s. He would have been able to make these decisions without running them past his superiors.

When it comes to Pollard, British propaganda was clearly not in the best hands. And his ineffective and unscrupulous plans ended up costing the British Government a good deal of credibility.

Katherine: Thanks for sharing your research Michael. These records really are a unique window into the Irish War of Independence.

Dan: If you want to learn more about the Irish War of Independence and the RIC’s role, you can read blogs that Michael has written on our website and use our research guide titled “Royal Irish Constabulary Records.”

Now, let’s move on to our next story, which begins with African ABC, a booklet from the Second World War containing beautiful illustrations of imagined African lives at the time. It’s held in a large bound volume with the title ‘general publicity material for the colonies.’ This booklet was likely designed to cultivate a sense of unity through an imperial identity, something that could encompass ‘Africanness’ and Britishness and withstand Axis propaganda. A search for the life story of the artist behind these images took one of our colleagues on a fascinating research journey:

Rachael Minott: I’m Rachael Minott. I’m one of the Joint Heads of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at The National Archives. That involves working across the organisation with lots of different members of teams to try and make our practices more inclusive and more accessible, and to really

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understand the value of diversity and how, to achieve diversity, we need to make our practices and our environment more inclusive.

So today I'll be talking about the 'African ABC' collection which are a collection of drawings within our collection that show different scenes from wartime, the Second World War of different activities, so some of people who were soldiers and active participants in the kind of war elements but also domestic environments— schools, homes—but kind of from this African perspective. These are sort of black and red and beige and they've got really strong visual element to them. And they're painted.

What caught my attention about these was actually that a colleague brought them to me because we have a series of these sorts of images from the Second World War that say 'signed by' and an artist's name so signed by doesn't mean that there is an actual artist's signature because we don't see that on the piece. But it means that the artist's name was recorded and in this case it said 'Cliff Tyrell'. And the only information that we could find about him was that he was a Jamaican artist. So myself, I'm also from Jamaica and I started my career as an artist. So a colleague thought it would be something that would be of interest to me and it really was. So I was captivated by not only the visuals of it but to understand a little bit more about who the artist might be.

Katherine: What kind of ideas and messages do you see in these images? And what can you say about the story they are trying to tell?

Rachael: So in general, it's a depiction of positivity. That's the main thing you get. You can understand that this is a wartime setting especially because you can see military personnel. But it is about joy and conviviality and a lot of smiling faces. You can see a lot of structures of like these schools or these courts and we see there's pictures of the royal family coming to visit. And you can really see this sort of positivity. They really remind me of Ladybird books that we might have gotten where you get those illustrations that might be aimed at a younger audience that try to talk about the rest of the world in a way that feels accessible and really positive and has the overall desire to create more positivity attitude about the rest of the world. So a lot of these things you get around this period of colonial history, so the end of the war during the war and then towards the end of Empire. There's a lot of positive depictions of the different colonial territories in a way

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to try and strengthen the value of the empire, the value from both perspectives to England and to those who were in the colonies.

Katherine: So tell me about your research journey into Cliff Tyrell. How did you go about it and what did you find?

Rachael: I went about it in the way that a lot of modern research happens at the moment which was through search engines to type in his name to see if I would find other pieces of his work in other collections. So I tried different museums around the area. I was really interested to find out if he was Jamaican by birth or if he had been a British person who lived in Jamaica at some point or if he was of mixed heritage because the first kind of records I got or returns I got was Cornwall and it said Cliff Tyrell, artist in Cornwall.

It's always really confusing because a lot of territories in Jamaica have British names. So there is a Cornwall in Jamaica as well as a Cornwall in England obviously. And so that didn't provide a lot of clarity but it made me question where he was actually based and where his heritage and history was. It wasn't necessarily important to me that he was a Black Jamaican artist but I would be interested in the fact that he was depicting Black figures, African figures, not Caribbean figures. And I wanted to know what school of practice he would be based in primarily. And I was really interested to know how entangled he was in that colonial complexity of the kind of British Jamaican places and people and where people lived. So I did follow up on that Cornwall lead and it was Cornwall in England. It turns out that's where his family had been based.

And I found that his daughter had written a biographical reflection on him but it had been in a journal and the journal wasn't digitised so I had to order it and wait to see that it could come. So I ended up finding her on Instagram—his daughter—and connecting with her that way. And we ended up having a conversation where she revealed a lot more of the details of his life because the other records I was finding, and I did find quite a lot—in the *Jamaican Gleaner*, there was references to him winning national awards. There was talk that he had been a cartoonist in Jamaica for sure. So there was images of his cartoons on the *Gleaner* archive that is digitised and there was lots of references to him, but there was slightly tantalising messages of like, 'I want to talk about Cliff Tyrell but I don't have time but he's amazing' or 'He won this award because he's

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doing great things,' but no more information about what the great things were or what the award was.

And then I found some images in the V&A collection of drawings that he'd done which felt a lot more familiar to me in terms of depictions of countryside Jamaica and rural Jamaica. So there was a banana cart and a woman washing clothes and some of these things that there are motifs that you've seen in a lot of Jamaican art, especially around that time. And that was sort of it. So then I got to talk to Theresa, his daughter, and I got her article - It came in the mail and what I had felt where he was almost on my periphery, I could almost see him at so many different points in the archival research, was sort of indicative of his life.

He had been a part of a lot of this kind of cosmopolitan art scene in London post-war and just before the war, that he had been kind of connected to some of the big names that we know in the art world. But he himself didn't necessarily have a career that had been carved through for him on his own. So he had been involved in Epstein's studio and she had been in that space as a child and there was records of him being discussed by other artists or of in the printmaking studios around that Central Saint Martin's School of Practice. Apparently, he modelled the torso for Epstein's *Lucifer* which sits in the Round Room of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and is something that has been seen by millions of people by this point.

And it was just beautiful and a bit sad that he was there but not in focus. And she talked about how it had been like his journey, he wanted to stay in London. The family had relocated to Cornwall and he's chosen to kind of live between the two spaces because he was trying to make it as an artist but he never really did. And then later in his life he suffered from dementia so she was trying to get the stories from him whilst she could. The article she made was in memorial after he had passed but also a part of her research journey to connect through. And then because we were connected on Instagram, she could show me other things that weren't in collections, other drawings that he'd done, other pictures.

So I got a better sense of his artistic practice, and she was really passionate about his story getting it more known and for herself, she just wanted to know more too. So it was lovely that she could

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put those pieces together. And obviously, a lot of family historians are the key to some of these narratives because they have not just the public records, they have their personal records, they have their memories, they're able to create that narrative connection. And without her, I really wouldn't have been able to find the shape of him that—even if it's a little bit of an outline and a bit of an absence—she gave the shape of his story which was really important.

Katherine: I think there's a throughline here with so many of the stories we tell on the podcast, where you have someone who could eventually have been lost to history if not for a single record in the archive.

I wonder if you could say something about the value of searching in the archives for individuals like Cliff Tyrell and why it's important to re-discover these people who may not have been famous or famous enough to leave a significant paper trail.

Rachael: Yeah, it's really interesting because archives and the people that held in all of our archives are kind of held because of this idea of significance. So it's not necessarily fame, it's not necessarily notoriety, but it could be significance. And obviously, in our lives and our families and our sphere of personal relationships, most people are significant. So it's a really difficult understanding of that word when you scale things up to a collection or a nation's collection. But a lot of the people, a lot of the stories that we have, have been deemed significant or deemed significant by a select few people in our society - a narrower version of significance. And so what we do have is a disproportionate amount of stories of very wealthy men and the decisions they made and the purchasing power of their wealth and how that affected our streets and even the shape of nations and how they made history, these history makers.

And we have some women in there, it's less recorded than men, and we'll have some people from different countries and different positions in society but it tends to be much smaller. And so when we open up the idea of who can decide what's significant and engage more people in these conversations about who we should remember and how we should find them and the stories that we know within our communities, we'll get a richer picture. We'll also get more complexity added into this story. We'll understand a little bit more about what it felt like to be alive at this time.

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And these are stories that I think a lot of people want to hear or would feel a lot more connected with if they did hear and would allow us to understand that even if we're not the first or the most or the best or the greatest in our current lives, that we are all still making history and that our narratives are significant and that we might want to record a little bit more about what we do and what we see and think about our archival imprint.

Some of the most beautiful things are like diaries from everyday people and a lot of us keep those. There are some interesting questions around digital archives and how our Instagram or social media might be the imprint we leave behind. But from like a research perspective, I'd love to delve back in and see maybe a little bit more about some of those people that we just know one or two things.

A name is really great because there's a lot of information you can find from a name. You can find a birth certificate if you've got a name, you can find a nationalization record if you've got a name. You can find references to somebody in many ways if you've got a name.

I feel like there's something really beautiful in that search for that counter-narrative and our intervention in this idea of significance and valuing ourselves and the people in our lives and the significance of the stories that we hold and what we make and create. So Cliff Tyrell made many things and only one of it came so far—maybe we'll find more—only one set of his art pieces came into the national archives, but we were able through that recording of his name and the clues within the things he made, we were able to kind of collect his story better and understand some of the pieces and connect him to the network of knowledge we already have. I think that the archive has that untapped potential to find so many more of these.

Katherine: Thanks Rachael for that insight and for sharing the life of Cliff Tyrell with us. I really hope we can find out more about him and the African ABCs booklet in the future.

Dan: There's still more research to be done on the purpose, planning, and distribution of this booklet, but if you want to dig a bit further into this story and see images of Tyrell's work, check out Rachael's blog, 'Searching for Cliff Tyrell', on our website.

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Katherine: Now, let's leave print propaganda and move on to radio. During the Second World War, radio was a favoured medium of Joseph Goebbels, the Nazis' chief propagandist. Recently, Principle Records Specialist Mark Dunton came across a rather intriguing radio transcript in our collection. This Nazi broadcast appears to be recorded live from the aftermath of the famous Saint-Nazaire raid. But, when it comes to propaganda, appearances can be deceiving.

Dan: Mark, before we get into this broadcast and its questionable version of events, can you tell us what really happened during this raid?

Mark Dunton: To set the scene, it was early 1942 and Britain was highly dependent on Atlantic convoys for supplies. There was one major threat to these convoys – the huge German battleship 'the Tirpitz', and one of the few ports where it could be repaired if it was damaged was St. Nazaire, in western France, which had a massive dry dock. A force would have to be landed to destroy it with explosives, and this was the task given to Combined Operations.

In this raid, 'Operation Chariot', a force of commandos was to progress six miles up the Loire estuary to St. Nazaire on board an old destroyer, HMS Campbeltown, which was packed full of high explosives and made to look like a German destroyer. So, two escort destroyers accompanied HMS Campbeltown on its outward voyage from Falmouth, on the 26th of March, and 16 small motor launches were assigned to the force to carry commandos and demolition parties into St. Nazaire. A diversionary bombing raid on St. Nazaire was carried out by the RAF, but with limited success.

To cut a long story short, around 1 am on the 28th of March, the German defenders suddenly realized that the Campbeltown was not a German vessel and opened fire with huge force. On the Campbeltown, the German ensign was lowered, and the British Ensign raised, and the ship went full steam ahead. And at 01.34 hours - HMS Campbeltown was successfully driven at speed into the dock gates, where it became wedged. The commandos went ashore and went about their various demolition tasks. There was fierce fighting, and the commandos fought on until they ran out of ammunition and were taken prisoner. Virtually all of the motor launches were set on fire or sunk by enemy fire. Some survivors made it to shore, in some cases they were rescued by the enemy.

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Meanwhile, HMS Campbeltown was lodged in position, with the bow on top of the gate. Delayed action fuses detonated the high explosives in the Campbeltown's hold at noon on the 28th of March. The massive explosion killed many German officers—I think there were quite a few on board—and destroyed much of the dock, putting it out of action for the rest of the year.

Dan: Thanks for telling us the details of that amazing operation, Mark. Now, the bit of propaganda we're discussing today is a German radio broadcast that was picked up by a BBC monitoring station soon after the attack. What do we know about this broadcast and how do we know about it?

Mark: Good question, Dan. On the first page of this transcript of the radio broadcast, it is stated: 'Zeesen in English for North America', '00.15' of basically 31st of March, 1942. I do not know if an audio recording of this broadcast exists anywhere. But the transcript looks complete.

Now Radio Zeesen broadcast from the southeaster outskirts of Berlin. It was one of the most powerful shortwave radio stations of the time. At the outbreak of the war, realising that broadcasting would be an important factor in the propaganda war, the British Government asked the BBC to monitor and transcribe radio broadcasts from around the world, and to keep the government informed about these broadcasts. This explains why we have the transcript in our files.

The broadcast is essentially painting a picture of the St Nazaire Raid as a total failure. It was broadcast, in English, soon after midnight had passed, on 31st March 1942, two and a half days after the Campbeltown had exploded.

Dan: So who was this broadcast aimed at? And what do you think it was supposed to accomplish?

Mark: This broadcast was targeted, specifically, at North America. It was March 1942 and the USA had only been involved in the war for about four months. This was a very difficult time for the allies. The Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda under Joseph Goebbels, the organization responsible for this radio broadcast, obviously thought that, at this stage of the war, North America might still be influenced about the futility of the war. They hoped that, given the

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factor of US isolationism in the 1930s, that was the United States reluctance to get involved in European entanglements after the First World War—and they hoped, the Germans, that the US public might still need to be convinced as to where the US should place itself in the great worldwide struggle. This was the angle they were trying to exploit. They were trying to control the news agenda, and get their version of events out first, before the British media could get clearance from the censors to report the details of the raid, which had in fact been very successful, albeit costly in terms of loss of life. But this strategy amounted to a misjudgement on the part of the Nazi propaganda machine—the isolationist movement in the United States soon declined after the United States' entry into the war. It was pushed to the margins after that.

Dan: And do you think you could give us a sense of what's happening in this broadcast...what would it have sounded like? Maybe you could read out a few lines?

Mark: Certainly, Dan. So this broadcast is supposed to sound like it's being delivered live. I mean, it's actually very cleverly constructed. I'll just read you one or two extracts from this fascinating transcript. I mean, it begins with a little introductory commentary, which comes from the BBC and, you know, so they're introducing it by saying, 'Presumably,' notice that word, 'presumably an eyewitness commentary from the quayside at St. Nazaire. Sounds of heavy footsteps and shouting voices are heard in the background.' And then a commentator comes on and he's saying 'It has been a hectic night. The British have attempted a raid on the French Coast at St. Nazaire. But the attempt was a failure and all the efforts were nipped in the bud. Now we are here down below in the harbour, and we should expect a patrol boat back, which has been out at sea during this night and bringing back some prisoners of war who have been taken off the sunken motor torpedo boat.'

And the commentator then sort of continues, 'We see a tremendous amount of dead British soldiers lying about, and the damage they have done is quite insignificant. And now we go down to watch the arrival of a motor patrol vessel. It comes back with some survivors of a motor torpedo boat. British soldiers are covered with blankets. They look quite downcast. They have gone through a tremendous strain.' Yes, there's quite a lot of this apparent sympathy or mock sympathy from the commentator.

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He goes on to say, 'Now we have them all lined up on the shore, and the police will be taking them to the Gestapo where they will furnish them with new clothes and will take care of their injuries.' Yes. The caring side of the Gestapo, they were hardly renowned for this, but anyway. And then the commentator then apparently starts to talk with the prisoners, asking them questions about their experiences and the commentator says things like, 'You must feel quite cold and shivery, eh?' It does all seem perhaps a little contrived.

Then further on in the transcript, the prisoners, the individual prisoners, they start giving these messages and they're really messages intended for their folks at home in Britain. The thing about these, these reported comments, they sound amazingly cheery, saying things like— In fact, in quoting these, I've decided not to really use the actual full names or the actual addresses because I don't think it's fair to broadcast them. But essentially, they are saying things like 'Hello, Mrs Smith of 42 Acacia Avenue, Weatherfield. It's John speaking. I'm quite well. I'm quite well and happy.' Or there are other messages, you know, from, let's say, Harry, who says 'Hello, mum and dad, I'm quite well. No need to worry, cheerio.' And another one says, 'I'm all right, mother.'

So you get all these comments, you know, and I must admit, I can remember the first time I ever looked at this transcript. When I looked at it, I think my jaw must have dropped. You know because there's just something rather amazing about it and it is almost comic.

But what was also going through my head was, you know, they're being amazingly cooperative. I thought the legend was, you know, if you were taken prisoner, it was just a matter of giving your name, rank, a number, nothing else. And nothing else was expected in a way. So, this, when I first saw it, this fact, you know, this did mystify me.

The commentator then makes further comments or you know, saying, 'Most of the participants in this suicide attempt haven't the slightest idea what they were to do and what was ahead of them or for that matter that they were near the French Coast. You can imagine that they feel rather bitter about it,' he says. And then he also says, German soldiers have again shown themselves superior to their no doubt brave foes. So this is typical of Nazi propaganda in this sort of situation where they're acknowledging the bravery of the soldiers, but making it quite clear that, you know, the German soldiers are far superior so the mission was doomed to failure. So I would just say, you know, it is largely a fabricated, kind of contrived version of events.

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Dan: So these British soldiers have been interviewed by the Germans. But after they got back home, one of them was asked about this broadcast. How does his account line up with everything we've heard so far?

Mark: Yes, you're right, Dan. In another file a repatriated prisoner of war, Lieutenant Chant, who heard his own voice on a recording of the broadcast, gave his version of events: and I quote: 'after our capture those of us who were wounded were taken to a German Naval Hospital...after a few days a party arrived in plain clothes...stating they were Red Cross officials...we were invited to give our names and addresses of our next of kin, with any short messages that we might like forwarded...it was not until some time later when we had official visits from real Red Cross officials that we realised that the original party...must have been completely bogus... I can only assume that our voices were picked up by microphones hidden in the hospital and recorded for broadcast later'.

According to this version, these messages that were recorded with subterfuge were then ingeniously woven into the radio report, designed to sound like a live broadcast from the Quayside at St Nazaire. However, when you look at the transcript of the radio broadcast, it is clear that the interviewees are aware they are being recorded, so this does not correspond with Lieutenant Chant's version of events. Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in between – that there was a party of visitors to the hospital pretending to be Red Cross officials – and the men knew they were being recorded, but genuinely thought it was a humanitarian gesture to allow them to send messages back home.

Dan: Yeah that sounds plausible to me. Listeners who want to know more about our Second World War collections should head over to our website where we have a lot of guides and blogs about these records.

Katherine: Now, on to our final story and our subtlest form of propaganda so far: novels and book diplomacy in the Cold War.

To learn more about how the Foreign Office used books to fight communism—including two very famous British novels—we spoke to a journalist who's used our collections while researching this topic, and to one of our own records specialists.

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Elizabeth Haines: My name's Elizabeth Haines, and I'm a principal record specialist in international history at The National Archives.

Musa Igrek: My name is Musa Igrek. I'm a researcher and journalist.

Dan: So Liz and Musa, how did books fit into the British Cold War strategy?

Elizabeth: I think probably I need to explain first of all something about the Information Research Department. The Information Research Department began in 1948 and it was a branch of the Foreign Office that was specifically dedicated to understanding culture abroad and particularly the spread of communism or the influence of communism or communism abroad.

Musa: The IRD was responsible for producing, distributing, and finding material including books, newspapers, articles, magazine films, or even exhibition and radio scripts. So, they were the main tool to promote, protect, and project the British way of life and fight against communism.

Elizabeth: Overall it published about a hundred books. Only a very small number of those are novels, but I think the history of those is still quite intriguing.

Dan: Musa, you've spent a lot of time here at The National Archives piecing together this story. Can you say more about how you found your way to these records and what you find intriguing about them?

Musa: Okay, I first encountered with the Information Research Department years ago, because my background is journalism and I'm very interested in how governments use books in their foreign policy, because they are very tiny little interesting objects, but they have the power to travel very quickly, sometimes secretly, and sometimes even without our knowledge, you know? They can go from pocket to pocket very easily. I was mainly interested in the Cold War era because it's a very murky and very interesting era to discover because the Cold War wasn't an actual fight, it was an ideological war. And different nations like the UK and America and Russia were competing about their way of life and how they're going to do this competition and who's going to win this

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competition. And by using books, they really told their own stories, and they want to transfer something about their nation: who they are and how they want to be seen from outside.

Dan: So, beyond the IRD’s commissioned propaganda and nonfiction publications, there are the novels. We’re talking about a few British novels which were published in the usual way without any government involvement. At some point after publication, they were selected for promotion and distribution by the IRD. So which titles were selected and why?

Elizabeth: So there are three novels that we know were strongly promoted by the Information Research department. The verse of these is *Darkness of Noon*, which is a fictional representation of Stalinist political repression, which was written by the Hungarian author, Arthur Koestler. And you can see why the Foreign Office would be interested in promoting a book that portrayed this political repression. But they also promoted George Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm*.

I think that these books are probably even better known and they explore life within authoritarian regimes. I guess we sometimes might think of these books as being anti-government, but George Orwell thought of them as very specifically anti-totalitarian novels. And so they were part of a kind of goal of the Foreign Office to appeal to educated middle classes. So educated middle classes who lived in what became known during the Cold War as the ‘third world.’ So educated middle classes who were not living in Soviet black countries and were not living in America or Britain but were living around the world in countries that were considered open to communist influence. And in order to appeal to these educated middle classes, the Foreign Office considered it need more than sort of basic propaganda or crude forms of propaganda. It wanted something that creatively offered insight into British culture and ideals of freedom and liberalism that the British and Americans were espousing.

Musa: So IRD not only went after these big names like George Orwell or Bertrand Russell, they also went after very intellectual names and people who IRD called ‘opinion makers.’ These opinion makers were very important for IRD. These people can be a very famous journalist, they can be a lecturer, they can be basically a scholar. Andrew Boyd, for example, he wrote *What is NATO*. And Guy Wint, he wrote “What is the Colombo Plan.” And Edward Atiyah, he wrote “What is Imperialism.” These names were the intellectuals of the time. Despite they weren't as popular as George Orwell, they were the names, they were the intellectuals, and they were the writers of the

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times and they produced some books. But for IRD to reach very famous writers like George Orwell was very crucial because they were the opinion makers. And once the IRD managed to get books out of these writers, they will be able to distribute it quickly.

Dan: That brings us back to the specific case of Orwell and the IRD. Can you say a bit more about why his books were useful to the government?

Elizabeth: So I think George Orwell's books were useful to the Foreign Office partly because they're fantastic pieces of fiction. I think that's definitely something we need to take into account. But also because they are very much exploring the constraints and the difficulties of life under totalitarian regimes, but neither of them references communism directly. So in that sense, they were useful because they were sort of exploring or criticizing communism without mentioning it directly. And in that way, the Foreign Office imagined they would appeal to these educated audiences who wanted something else, who didn't want just to be told that communism was bad.

Musa: *Animal Farm* with its anti-totalitarian message was a very good tool for the states who want to fight against communism. Because what they wanted to say, you know, 'Look, if we go that way, this is what's going to happen.'

Elizabeth: so those of you who aren't familiar with *Animal Farm*, it's the story of a farm in which the animals get rid of the farmer and then go on to develop their own communitarian way of managing the farm and the pigs effectively, spoiler alert, take this over. And in the name of acting on behalf of the animals, in fact, end up profiting on everyone else's labour.

Dan: I'm assuming Orwell knew about the Foreign Office promoting his books, but do we know how he felt about that and how involved he was in the process, if at all?

Elizabeth: Orwell was very much aware that his books were being used for this purpose. Interestingly both the novelist I mentioned, Arthur Koestler and Orwell, were friends with each other and both of them had personal connections to the Foreign Office via Celia Kirwan who worked there. And George Orwell and Celia Kirwan were friends, so he was well aware that the Foreign Office were interested in promoting his fiction to the end of working against communism. After he died in 1950, his translations and publications continued to be promoted by the Foreign

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Office. And after his death, that was done through his estate and by his literary agent but it was very much part of his legacy. It was something that he was directly involved in.

Beyond the novels, I mean, George Orwell's involvement with the Foreign Office went even further. In a meeting in 1949 with Celia Kirwan, with his friend's sister-in-law, he actually wrote to the Foreign Office or delivered the Foreign Office a list of writers that he thought that the Foreign Office should avoid working with because those individuals, George Orwell speculated that those individuals sympathies were too strongly with communist ideas. So not only did he accept to be promoted by the Foreign Office against communism, he was also perhaps somewhat confusingly involved in—what would be a good way to it—say snitching on fellow writers to the government. So yeah, it's an interesting story. And in fact, it's George Orwell who's considered to have invented the term Cold War.

Dan: Can you give us some examples of how Orwell's books were deployed in different countries? How did their role change from one region to another?

Elizabeth: One of the things that we need to take into account is, again, we're not dealing with propaganda in its crude form and slogans or whatever. These are complex works of art and the Foreign Office recognized that. So when it was considering translation, it was also very deeply considering the context it was going to be translated for. So the Foreign Office had around the world various information officers who were feeding back I guess reports on cultural life and political life in those places. So when the Foreign Office was working on delivering a publication in a new language, it would do that in consultation with these officers around the world.

So they would be giving advice on how they imagined that book would be received. What kinds of words might need a particular nuance in different languages and so on. And I think possibly one very vivid example of that is the support that there was for the translation of *Animal Farm* into Arabic. So the pigs effectively are the equivalent of communist leaders. And so the regional officers who were responsible for kind of imagining how *Animal Farm* would be received in Arabic noted that because pigs were considered dirty creatures under Islam, it would even more strongly reinforce the idea that communism was bad just through the metaphor itself.

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Dan: In films and television, spies are often depicted as having to assume very mundane roles during their missions. And that sort of applies in this case because the Foreign Office ends up doing some typical book agent duties. Can you tell us more about how that came to be?

Elizabeth: So for example, the Foreign Office were rather tangentially involved in the distribution of *Animal Farm* in Russian. It had actually already been translated by Ukrainian expatriates and they'd already made this kind of attempt to send the novel back in behind the Iron Curtain because they wanted it to disrupt the Soviet regime and they saw the potential of *Animal Farm* to do it. So in that sense, the Foreign Office were riding on and supporting the work of these Ukrainian anti-Soviet groups.

But in other cases, for example, different individuals would solicit the opportunity to translate George Orwell's novels into their own languages. And it was the Foreign Office in collaboration with George Orwell's literary agent potential publishers in those countries who would basically sort that out. And they'd often participate financially in those arrangements. Sometimes they would provide financial backing in the promise of buying up books effectively that weren't sold. So for example in 1960, we've got records of an individual, Kwaku Atubra Buatsi of Togoland Ghana, who wanted to translate both *Animal Farm* and *1984* into Ewe which is a Ghanaian language from the Volta Valley region. In 1972, again there's an individual who was interested in translating *Animal Farm* into Sinhalese in Sri Lanka. Again in this case, George Orwell's agents got in touch with the Foreign Office and yeah, they negotiated the agreement between the Sri Lankan publishers, the translator, and the literary agents, and the rates and the numbers of books that were going to be produced. So they're very thoroughly enmeshed in the publishing market in that way.

Dan: It's such an interesting piece of cold war history. And hopefully, Musa and Liz, your work will make this story more accessible to the general public. Now to wrap up, Musa, can you talk about how your research is being shared and if there are any discoveries you still hope to make in the archives?

Musa: In the context of the Information Research Department, I don't think the research has finished yet because The National Archives keep releasing new material every so often. And it's amazing to go to The National Archives and find something completely new; it's part of that

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curiosity. And there are still some secret documents that are not available for us, but again just by going to The National Archives, it just gave me an opportunity to put the piece of puzzles together because the story of IRD is an unfinished story.

The National Archives even gave me the opportunity to create a little collection of books that I find out from their own archives, because the Information Research Department from time to time publish what kind of books they did publish, what kind of books they did distribute all around the world. So now I managed to collect around 100 books of the Information Research Department that I collected from all around the world. And there are still more books that needs to be discovered and listed. So for me, this is an unfinished journey because I will be going to The National Archives from time to time again. And I believe that my research also will become a book soon.

Dan: Well thank you both, this has been really fascinating.

Katherine: If you'd like to do your own research into the history of propaganda, start with our 'Propaganda' research guide, which covers records from 1914 to 1980. You can find it from our home page by selecting 'Help with your research' at the top of the screen and then using the research guide search bar. Typing in 'propaganda' on our website will also give you some information on this subject in earlier periods of history.

If you're looking for a specific record, start by searching our catalogue. If you can't find what you're after, you can get personalised help from one of our records specialists in person at our building in Kew or online via our chat service.

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and on our website. You can also share your feedback or suggestions for future series by emailing us at OnTheRecord@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Dan: Finally, thank you to all the experts who contributed to this episode. This episode was written, edited, and produced by Hannah Hethmon for Better Lemon Creative Audio.

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