



OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Author(s): AMY FLANDERS

Source: *The English Historical Review*, AUGUST 2010, Vol. 125, No. 515 (AUGUST 2010), pp. 875-911

Published by: Oxford University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40784372>

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'Our Ambassadors': British Books, American Competition and the Great Book Export Drive, 1940–60

IN July 1940, not long after the evacuation from Dunkirk, a group of prominent British authors, educators and politicians sent a letter to *The Times* urging the government to increase its support for book exports. 'Our country', they wrote, 'cannot afford to endanger the export of British books, which depends upon their production and circulation at home, and thereby stop the flow of ideas from this country to the rest of the world. Least of all can it afford to hurt the tradition of freedom at its root'.¹ Book selling, particularly book exporting, was essential to the war effort. British books sold the British cause abroad at a time when sympathy and support for that cause was desperately needed. As the publisher Stanley Unwin wrote, 'There never was a time when British books were more needed or had a more important role to play in world affairs'.² By 1944, book exports were praised not only for communicating British ideas to readers abroad but also for persuading them to buy other British goods. *A Report on the Current State of the Book Publishing Trade* stated confidently, 'Books are ambassadors of British culture . . . Books are salesmen of British goods'.³ This theme was even taken up by the House of Lords in March 1945 in a debate that also pointed to the importance of exports to the post-war world. Lord Elton, in a plea for more paper for books, warned, 'Unless the book world is soon more generously treated we shall find ourselves in real danger of being unable to play our due part in the world after the war or of reaping the full fruits of victory, for mere lack of the means of communicating our ideas to the world'.⁴ Lack of paper, however, was not the only cause of dwindling overseas sales, as the earl of Huntingdon pointed out: 'If we do not do something to encourage it we shall lose both our colonial export of books and our [other] exports to America, and once these export markets have been lost it is extremely difficult to

1. The letter was signed by Cosmo Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury; Robert Bond; Arthur Eddington; Geoffrey Faber, President of the Publishers' Association; Lord Hambleden, Director of W.H. Smith; A.P. Herbert, MP, University of Oxford; A.V. Hill, MP, University of Cambridge, and Secretary of the Royal Society; John Lawson, MP; Hugh Lyon, Headmaster of Rugby; Albert Mansbridge, President of the World Association for Adult Education; R.H. Tawney, Professor of Economic History in the University of London; and Stanley Unwin, Chairman of the Books and Periodicals Committee of the British Council. 'Taxing of Books', *The Times*, 2 July 1940, 5.

2. S. Unwin, 'Export Problems, Carrying Our Mind Abroad', *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 Sept. 1940, 442.

3. R.J.L. Kingsford, 'As It Is at the Moment', *The Bookseller*, 11 Jan. 1945, 24.

4. Godfrey, Lord Elton, as quoted in 'Lords Ask for More Paper for Books, Government Reply: Wait Till Baltic Is Free', *The Bookseller*, 15 Mar. 1945, 353.

get them back'.⁵ Government and the book trade expected that supply shortages and transportation difficulties, however acute in 1945, would come to an end after the war. They could not be so confident about the competition posed by American exports.

Competition is really rather a polite word for the rivalry between British and American book exporters in the middle of the twentieth century. During the Second World War, while the two countries remained allies and their various publishers maintained working relationships, sometimes close ones, interactions between the British and American book trades became steadily more antagonistic, at least as far as overseas sales were concerned. After the war the competition between exporters intensified as post-war economies recovered, as the lines of the British Empire were redrawn and as the world population of English speakers, or rather English readers, proliferated. From 1945, discussions of book exports were increasingly coloured by resentment and anxiety—resentment on the part of the Americans for the unwillingness of the British book trade to share even part of their vast Anglophone markets, and anxiety among the British over the rapid expansion of the American export trade in books and periodicals. This article traces the growth of this British anxiety during the Second World War and notes its expression in a massive push for book exports at the end of the war and into the 1950s.

Books could be exported in a number of ways; in Britain the process involved both publishers and booksellers. A customer located overseas—either a bookseller or an individual reader—might submit a request for a copy of a title to its publisher or to a British bookseller who then sent the order direct. These parcel post exports, though each represented a small transaction, accounted for a significant proportion of total book exports; they made up, for example, some 25 per cent of the total in 1946.⁶ More commonly, however, bound books were sold in larger consignments to foreign distributors and booksellers or through local publishers. This category of sales comprised the great majority of official export statistics.

It was also possible, given the nature of books as both texts and commodities, to export titles without exporting books, and British publishers certainly did this too. For titles with the potential for a particularly good sale in an overseas market, British houses approached foreign firms to buy the rights to publish the title locally. Only the larger markets—the United States, Canada and Australia—made this course practicable or worthwhile. Some British firms opened branches

5. Francis Hastings, earl of Huntingdon, as quoted in 'Lords Ask for More Paper for Books', 353.

6. Official statistics of book exports sometimes counted parcel post exports separately from regular, larger shipments of books. Wherever possible, this paper's statistics include parcel post exports; where impossible, the author has indicated their absence. Board of Trade, export rates for British materials and manufactured goods, 24 Feb. 1947, T[he] N[ational] A[rchives], P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], BT 64/2914.

to serve these local markets and imported their own and other titles through these outlets. Again, this was only cost effective in markets with large English-reading populations because of the capital outlay involved. Copyright issues, especially in the United States, which was not a signatory to the Berne Convention on international copyright, also influenced the method of book export chosen.⁷

Books could be distributed by any one or by all of these methods. To take one example, Graham Greene published most of his novels with William Heinemann, a London firm with branches in Melbourne and Toronto. Heinemann distributed Greene's novels directly to bookshops in the United Kingdom and supplied them through its overseas branches to Australia and Canada. Booksellers or readers in the rest of the world (with the exception of the United States) acquired Greene's books singly or in larger shipments from Heinemann's London headquarters, or perhaps from a wholesale distributor in the United Kingdom or from one of the two branch offices. In order to reach American readers (and to protect Greene's copyright there), Heinemann sold the American rights to Greene's novels to American publishers, first Doubleday, Doran and later the Viking Press, both located in New York. These firms produced separate American editions for distribution in their home market.⁸ On occasion, Heinemann's Melbourne or Toronto branch might issue a local edition of a London title, but neither these editions nor the American ones counted as official British book exports because, of course, they were produced overseas. Thus for the purposes of this article, I shall focus on the exports of material books rather than texts, although overseas sales of all kinds remained a concern to the book trade and to government throughout the war and after.

In many ways, it was the Second World War that highlighted the potential of book exports: they might contribute both to the economy and to foreign relations. The war years were for British industry a time of increased government regulation, of material and personnel shortage, of disruption and relocation and, for some, of injury and loss. The book trade, in this respect, was no different from many other industries. Publishers faced severe restrictions in the supply of materials—of paper, famously, due to the quota system, but also of binding cloth, boards for book covers and even glue.

The paper quota certainly received the most publicity, and the loudest complaints. The Ministry of Supply inaugurated an official rationing system for paper in March 1940. This system allowed publishers a fixed percentage of the paper they had used during the last pre-war year, that

7. Only books manufactured in the United States received copyright protection in that country.

8. See, for example, Graham Greene, *Journey Without Maps* (London: William Heinemann, 1936); Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair* (London, Melbourne, Toronto: William Heinemann, 1951); Graham Greene, *Journey Without Maps* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, 1936); Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1951).

is, during the twelve months ended in August 1939, incidentally a notoriously poor year for the book trade. The first quota was set at 60 per cent of pre-war consumption and then reassessed every three months. As the war progressed, shortages worsened until, in January of 1942, publishers operated on a 37.5 per cent quota; at the same time, Paper Control introduced the Book Production War Economy Agreement to ensure that publishers made the most efficient use of their limited paper. The agreement required a minimum number of words per page, placed limits on the quality of materials used in production and discouraged all unnecessary frills in book design. Towards the end of the war, restrictions on paper gradually eased and in 1946 publishers were back up to 60 per cent of their pre-war consumption; it was not until 1949, however, that the paper quota was abolished altogether.⁹

During the latter years of the war and just after, as paper quotas and utility book design became familiar thorns in publishers' sides, the other shortages—of labour, of fuel, of machinery and of shipping space—began to attract more attention. Many firms had been damaged during the Blitz and hundreds of thousands of books had been destroyed. Costs were rising. Distribution systems had been severely disrupted. All these things combined to cut the supply of books to a mere trickle of the pre-war flood.

Despite the many and obvious problems for publishers, the book trade preserved a remarkable optimism throughout the war. There was a kind of excitement about wartime publishing. For one thing, bookmen noted, as did newspaper articles, government statistics, Mass Observation reports and many other sources, that the war had introduced a 'reading boom'.¹⁰ The public was reading more books, reading, in fact, just about anything they could get their hands on—what could be manufactured would be sold. This escalation in sales did not arise simply as a consequence of the restricted supply of new books, for libraries also recorded increased borrowing and publishers crowded over the successful sales of their old, previously unmoving stock. As one public librarian at the Central Library of Leeds commented, 'The nation to-day is reading as it has never troubled to read before, and, let it be known, with very much more discrimination'. He added, 'as evidence of the expansion of reading done in this city (and paralleled in many other places), where

9. Ministry of Supply, 'Paper Control in Time of National Emergency, Part I: General Policy', U[niversity] of R[eading] L[ibrary], C[hatto] & W[indus] Collection, CW 85/15 War Problems; R.J.L. Kingsford, *The Publishers' Association: 1896-1946* (Cambridge, 1970), 167-72.

10. See, for example, S. Unwin, *Publishing in Peace and War* (London, 1944), 24; 'Strongholds of the Mind, Reading in Critical Days', *The Times*, 1 Sept. 1939, 15; 'Reading Aloud', *The Times*, 27 Oct. 1939, 9; 'Reading in Bed', *The Times*, 27 Dec. 1939, 7; 'More light in Bus and Train, Reading in Comfort', *The Times*, 20 Jan. 1943, 2; 'Books as a Means of Escape, Archbishop of York on War-time Reading', *The Times*, 11 July 1945, 2; see also R. Hewison, *Under Siege: Literary Life in London 1939-45* (London, 1977), 76; J. McAleer, *Popular Reading and Publishing in Britain 1914-50* (Oxford, 1992), 45-9.

much that is necessary for the war effort is being produced', that some 350,000 more books had been issued in 1941 than in the previous year, an increase of 21.6 per cent.¹¹ Readers themselves noted that they read more books and more kinds of books than before. No doubt there were many reasons for this. Some read to assuage their curiosity about the causes, progress and technologies of the war, or to learn how to do a new skill that the war required of them—cultivating chickens or growing beetroot, cooking bizarre off-cuts of meat, fixing a radio or aircraft engine, or standing guard on the home front. Others read to escape from worrying about the dangers of war; still others read to while away the extra time spent travelling to work, watching for enemy aircraft or waiting in air raid shelters. One reader noted that sometimes a book offered 'the only light in the black-out'.¹²

While the domestic book trade flourished in adversity, there was also an increasing awareness of the importance of book exports. Individual publishers had always known that their exports accounted for a significant portion of total turnover and were essential to the bottom line. Stanley Unwin estimated that at his firm, George Allen & Unwin, a mid-sized general publisher specialising in non-fiction and politics, exports accounted for upwards of 35 per cent of total sales.¹³ There was at the same time a general acknowledgement that Britain was a net exporter of books and that its products were valued around the world.¹⁴ But it was during the first years of the Second World War, when book production was under the combined threats of paper quota, labour shortage and a proposed wartime purchase tax, that the extent of the book export trade became clear and its potential publicly exploited.

Book exports, publishers suspected, contributed significantly and favourably to the balance of trade—an issue of serious concern to the wartime government. Exports in general, and especially to dollar countries, were seen as invaluable to the economy and hence the war effort. The need to identify and encourage successful export commodities was even more important in light of the fact that the British share of the international manufactures trade had been gradually declining since the turn of the century, from 32.5 per cent in 1899 to 22.4 per cent in 1937.¹⁵

11. R.J. Gordon, 'Paper for Books, The Nation Reading More', *The Times*, 10 Oct. 1941, 5.

12. 'Wider Appreciation of Reading', *The Times*, 12 July 1940, 6.

13. Stanley Unwin to Harold Laski, 7 Sept. 1943, URL, [George] A[llen] & U[nwin] C[ollection], AUC 169/10.

14. Average figures for 1936–8 certainly suggest that this was the case, with only £177,000 worth of books imported from the United States, £3,000 from Canada, £4,700 from Australia and £56,000 from Eire. G. Parker, 26 Dec. 1947, TNA, PRO, BT 11/3755.

15. These figures indicate the British share of the total manufactures trade. The US share of the trade increased over the same period from 11.2 to 19.6 per cent. H. Tyszynski, 'World Trade in Manufactured Commodities, 1899–1950', *Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies*, xix (Sept. 1951), 286, cited by S.J. Wells in *British Export Performance, a Comparative Study* (Cambridge, 1964), 15.

Publishers eventually decided that the best approach to winning some much needed concessions from government involved proving their own role in maintaining the balance of trade and publicising the continuing success of British books as export commodities. A survey—the first extensive trade enquiry of its kind—was duly conducted by the Publishers' Association. It determined 'that scarcely any publishing house derived less than 15 per cent of its sales from exports, that the large firms with extensive and long-established connections overseas exported between 50 and 60 per cent, and that the average might be 33 1/3 per cent'.¹⁶ Based largely on these findings, and the related argument that a viable domestic trade was essential advertisement for foreign book sales, the Publishers' Association was able to win the exemption of books from the dreaded purchase tax.¹⁷ Co-operation among these notoriously individualist businessmen had paid off and the industry-wide statistics had done their job: books really *were* essential export commodities.

Another powerful argument lent force to the publishers' campaign against the purchase tax or any other measure that might restrict exports. In addition to the monetary value of the export trade, British books were ambassadors of the British cause. They carried British intellectual and cultural achievements across the seas, attracting customers and winning over allies at the same time. In the words of Cecil Palmer, writing in May 1940:¹⁸

The grim life and death struggle in which we are engaged is in a very real sense a conflict of ideas. It is therefore highly important that the British point of view should be freely circulated abroad and especially in those countries which have been compelled to endure the full blast of Nazi propaganda. In such circumstances, books are indispensable weapons in the moral armoury of our Cause.

Of course, not every book lauded Britain's war aims, but even books critical of the war or of the national government were not unwelcome as exports; the very existence of such books was thought to demonstrate the freedom of thought and press in Britain and to highlight the violent repression of these under Nazi and Fascist regimes.¹⁹ Geoffrey Faber,

16. Kingsford, *Publishers' Association*, 162.

17. 'Purchase Tax Exemptions', *The Times*, 14 Aug. 1940, 2.

18. C. Palmer, 'British Books Abroad', *The Publishers' Circular and Booksellers' Record*, 25 May 1940, 379. The British were not the only nation to recognise the potential of books to the war effort. Unwin wrote a letter to *The Times* quoting a speech by the American President Franklin Roosevelt to the American Booksellers' Association delivered in April 1942; Roosevelt declared, 'In this war, we know, books are weapons. And it is a part of your dedication always to make them weapons for man's freedom'. See S. Unwin, 'Books are Weapons', Letters to the Editor, *The Times*, 27 June 1942, 5.

19. S. Unwin, *The Truth About a Publisher, an Autobiographical Record* (London, 1960), 260–61.

president of the Publishers' Association and director of Faber & Faber, made explicit the twofold value of British book exports in an editorial in the *Times Literary Supplement* in September 1940. He quoted the total annual overseas sales just before the war at the impressive figure of £4,000,000 and titled his editorial, 'Britain's Ambassadors'.²⁰

Eventually government grasped what publishers had been trying to tell them. Following the concession on the purchase tax, publishers' continual campaigning won other supports for the export trade. Books intended solely for export were declared exempt from Book Production War Economy Agreement standards in the hopes of making their appearance more attractive to foreign customers not familiar with utility book design.²¹ Unfortunately, this concession had little positive impact; it was very rare that separate editions could be prepared for home and foreign markets. Later, publishers were granted extra paper to spend on books for export. In mid-1947, for example, the quota was set at 60 per cent of pre-war consumption to be used as before, with a further 20 per cent reserved solely for educational or export books.²² This stipulation may also have been less than effective, for the 'extra allocation of paper to publishers for export purposes only guarantees, in fact, that this . . . percent will be exported'.²³ The Board was concerned that if publishers were granted 20 per cent more paper with which to print books for export, they might only export that 20 per cent; British firms routinely exported an average of 33 per cent of their publications before the war. The 'extra allocation' seems not to have been used in this way, although the structure of the quota for this period underlines the difficulty the Board faced in supporting the export book trade without also bolstering the domestic trade.

The Publishers' Association continued to gather information on the value and percentage of exports—indeed, the co-operative effort to record the statistical history of the book trade was a remarkable development of the war years. These surveys measured book exports for 1939 at £3,154,599, representing 30.6 per cent of total trade turnover; the following year an even more remarkable 35 per cent of books were exported. The discrepancy between these figures and Faber's may have arisen because of differing definitions of what constituted a book export rather than to poetic licence on Faber's part, though it is possible that the publisher was exaggerating exports in order to win support for his anti-purchase tax campaign. In the end, little exaggeration proved necessary, for, as table 1 demonstrates, export turnover averaged just under £3.2 million from 1937 to 1939 and rose to £3.5 million in the first year of the war.

20. G. Faber, 'Britain's Ambassadors', *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 Sept. 1940, 2.

21. *Book Production War Economy Agreement*, TNA, PRO, STAT 14/1210, 4.

22. M. Sharp, 28 Oct. 1947, TNA, PRO, BT 64/2914.

23. Major E. Maxwell Arnot to President, Board of Trade, 21 Apr. 1947, TNA, PRO, BT 64/2914.

Table 1: British Domestic and Export Turnover Statistics, 1937–46.

Year	Total, in £	Export Total, in £	%
1937	10,507,204	3,146,175	29.9
1938	10,706,018	3,171,018	29.6
1939	10,321,658	3,154,599	30.6
1940	9,953,196	3,517,335	35.3
1941	13,986,700	3,983,900	28.5
1942	16,735,900	3,608,700	21.6
1943	19,290,800	4,469,600	23.2
1944	20,500,516	4,895,349	23.9
1945	21,979,554	5,139,222	23.4
1946	26,961,622	6,715,212	24.6

F.D. Sanders, Secretary of Publishers' Association, to Raw Materials Department, Board of Trade, 27 Nov. 1947, TNA, PRO, BT 64/2914.

Excepting 1942, the worst year of the paper shortage, the export market continued to grow in total value throughout the war, despite supply limitations and the loss of many foreign markets. The increased sales were explained in large part by a general wartime rise in book prices; the actual number of units sold in 1943 may not have been dramatically higher than in 1942 but each individual item cost more. Nevertheless, overseas markets demonstrated a remarkable elasticity: they seemed capable of absorbing as many books as British exporters could send them. The more statistics the Publishers' Association gathered, the more obvious the potential of book exports became. With the war on, British publishers still faced considerable difficulties in accessing these promising markets. Thus the chart also reveals a decline in the percentage of books exported. Everywhere books were in great demand, but the very war that caused this global 'reading boom' prevented British exporters from taking full advantage of it. This left a sizeable gap in the export market for other enterprising publishers to supply.

Before the Second World War, the most important foreign markets for British books were the United States, continental Europe, Ireland and, of the Dominions, Australia, Canada and India. Smaller but still significant markets included New Zealand, South Africa, the Middle East, the British African colonies and the Caribbean. The advent of war obviously affected many of these long-established trade routes. In addition to the loss of markets rendered inaccessible for the duration, British wartime exports necessarily declined because of reduced shipping space, the severe rationing of paper and the restrictions of foreign governments. Britain itself placed limits during the war on the

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importation of books, especially children's books and fiction, and many other countries followed suit. Nevertheless, all these represented temporary strains on the trade. Rather than any specifically war-related problem, the greatest threat to British pre-eminence in the global book trade proved to be the growth of competition from American publishers. It was largely concern over this threat that prompted the great export drive of the immediate post-war years.

The incursion of American editions into foreign markets was still a relatively new concern for British publishers. Although American exports of manufactured goods had steadily increased through the 1920s and by 1938 had recovered most of the ground lost during the Depression of the 1930s, the US share of global manufactures had just reached 20.0 per cent in 1938, still less than the British share of the international manufactures trade (22.1 per cent in 1938).²⁴ Within the book trade sector, British publishers retained a much higher share of the world trade. This was due in part to an internal focus on the part of American publishers: 'With a large and expanding home market American publishers had not been seriously export-conscious until the great depression at home made them look abroad'.²⁵ Thus while the United States had certainly exported books before the war and even before the Depression, particularly to Canada and Central America, the American share of the international market had remained relatively minor. In attempting to increase their share of this overseas market during the 1940s, American exporters operated at a disadvantage: most of the English-speaking world belonged to the British Commonwealth and favoured British imports. This was a great boon to British publishers, for 'with a smaller home market, the retention of [these] foreign markets which they had cultivated was vital'.²⁶

Vital though they were, without sufficient shipping space or supplies of paper, British publishers could not continue to supply foreign markets at pre-war levels. Although some countries restricted their imports of books, there was still more than enough demand to offer a profitable opportunity for other English-language publishers. American firms also faced wartime paper rationing and disruptions to shipping, but their access to foreign markets, like their paper supply, was never as limited as that of their English counterparts. Consequently, American publishers began to play a larger and larger role in the international book trade, taking over more and more of the sales in shared territories. This was understandably concerning to British publishers, but an even more serious problem arose when American firms began to supply territories that had, by tradition and by contract, belonged exclusively to the British.

24. Tyszynski, 'World Trade in Manufactured Commodities', 286; Wells, *British Export Performance*, 15.

25. Kingsford, *Publishers' Association*, 118.

26. *Ibid.*

In a shared territory, or open market, both British and American editions of a given title competed for sales. Access to exclusive territory was limited to one producer or the other.²⁷ When negotiating contracts for reprint rights, British publishers sought to retain sole access to the United Kingdom, Ireland, Palestine, the Dominions and sometimes parts of Europe, but agreed to share the markets in Canada, Central and South America and much of Asia with American editions of the same title. (In point of fact, British publishers generally did not like acknowledging Canada as a shared territory, but given its proximity to the United States they had more or less given it up as a lost cause.) Contracts varied in detail of course, but this arrangement had become standard practice by 1939. The rules governing direct overseas sales of unique titles (rather than competing editions) differed somewhat. American books for which there existed no British editions could be imported into the various commonwealth countries, though each individual nation could, and many did, restrict American imports by value or by subject. During the war, with British books so scarce and shipping them overseas so slow and fraught with dangers, American books began to displace British ones in shared territories and to appear in greater numbers as direct imports. American publishers simultaneously worked to expand access to exclusive British markets for their editions of books also published by UK firms.

By 1944, the issue of American expansion into British sales territories had been brewing for some time, but it was, ironically, over an American that the real storm of controversy broke. Dan Brennan was a young American volunteer who left the United States in 1940 to join the Royal Air Force in Britain, so strong was his commitment to the Allied cause. Three years later he transferred to the US Army Eighth Air Force and wrote a novel about his harrowing experiences 'as a veteran of more than 80 missions over Europe, first as a tail gunner in the RAF . . . and later as a ball turret gunner'.²⁸ *Never So Young Again*, which is largely autobiographical, follows the young American Mack Norton, a volunteer with the Canadian Air Force, as he is posted to Britain and falls in love with a young English girl named Diana.²⁹

The novel, filled with battle scenes of intense realism, made quite an impression on Philip Unwin, an editor with the London firm George

27. To return to the Graham Greene example: the Viking Press were free to circulate their American edition of *The End of the Affair* in the United States without competition from the British Heinemann edition. They could compete with the British publisher for sales in open markets such as Central America and Canada, but could not sell their edition in New Zealand or India, which as part the Commonwealth, Heinemann was certain to have defined as exclusive markets. Sales outside one's own exclusive and shared territories constituted breach of contract and in some cases infringement of copyright law.

28. D. Brennan, 'Memphis Belle Gets Flak From WWII Gunner', *Los Angeles Times*, 12 Nov. 1990, 3.

29. D. Brennan, *Never So Young Again* (London, 1944); see also, L. Wendt, 'Novel Based on Experience of War Flyer', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 10 Mar. 1946, B4.

Allen & Unwin, which had been founded by his uncle Stanley Unwin on the first day of the First World War in 1914.³⁰ Because the Royal Air Force was a popular wartime subject and Brennan wrote in a brisk and engaging style, the firm predicted popular success for *Never So Young Again*. Given that the author was an American, and a war hero at that, Philip Unwin thought *Never So Young Again* also had a good chance of a large sale in the United States. Thus he offered the American rights to the Macmillan Company in New York in January 1944, describing the novel as ‘the inside story of how the youth of Bomber Command become “old young men” under the constant strain of facing death night after night over Germany. It is an extraordinarily vivid piece of work by a young writer of whom we believe much will be heard in the future’.³¹ Unwin added that the English firm had already received so many advance orders as ‘to make it quite clear that our one problem will be to find sufficient paper for it’.

The editors at Macmillan took a couple of months to consider the book but eventually cabled their acceptance on 24 March 1944. Harold Latham, the chief literary editor at the New York house, took pains at this juncture and in a subsequent letter to point out that the standard Macmillan contract had changed during the war to include certain new clauses, which he explained in detail to the British firm. They included ‘Paragraph 4: This paragraph gives us the right to sell this book in South America, Central America, Mexico, and the West Indies; not the exclusive market, but these territories are to be considered open markets for both American and British publishers’.³²

This clause drew some heated objection from Allen & Unwin. Mexico and Central and South America were traditional open markets, but British firms had always considered the West Indies their exclusive territory, in which only their own editions could be sold. The West Indies, after all, were part of the British Empire, a fact that Philip Unwin noted angrily in the margin of this letter. For Macmillan to demand open access to the West Indian market was, according to Unwin, to fly in the face of publishing tradition, to ignore political geography. Anticipating that the Unwins would balk at this ‘extended rights’ clause, Latham wrote rather bluntly:³³

We know that you have taken exception to the inclusion of this provision in other contracts. Frankly, we are not in sympathy with that position, and we think it only fair to the author and to the American publisher that we should

30. Unwin, *Truth About a Publisher*, 131.

31. Philip Unwin to the Macmillan Company, 25 Jan. 1944, URL, AUC 198/3/1.

32. Other alterations to previous standard contracts included a less favourable (to Allen & Unwin) division of profits on the sales of secondary and serial rights in America and the so-called war clause. This stipulation allowed either party to postpone without penalty the publication of the book if the conditions of the war or the intervention of government made publication impracticable or impossible. H.S. Latham to Philip Unwin, 18 Apr. 1944, URL, AUC 198/3/1.

33. H.S. Latham to Philip Unwin, 18 Apr. 1944, URL, AUC 198/3/1.

have the right to sell this book in these countries as we have opportunity to do so Certainly it is to the author's interest too to see that these sales fields are not neglected.

Latham implied that the British publisher, hindered by wartime transportation problems and an extreme shortage of paper, could not adequately supply the West Indian market. He was very likely correct.

An incredulous Philip Unwin wrote suggesting that Macmillan might like to reconsider their position and make a more favourable offer for such a promising book. He received the following dismissal by way of response:³⁴

We cannot agree to any alterations in that contract, and it must be accepted or rejected as it stands. We do not like to seem to take an arbitrary position, but as the buyers of a property, you will agree, I am sure, that we have a right to stipulate the terms which we are willing to make, and you, on the other hand, have a perfect right as the seller to say no if you find them unacceptable. Naturally, we hope that you will not find them unacceptable.

Stanley Unwin, the British book trade's feistiest advocate, was furious. Apart from anything else, the tone of these letters provoked the British publisher; his firm had a long history of amicable relations with the Macmillan Company.

Taking over negotiations from his nephew, Stanley Unwin wrote a long, bitter letter in reply to the American firm's ultimatum. He addressed each alteration to the traditional contract, but saved his most acerbic criticism for the 'extended rights' clause. He began by stating the importance of the export trade to British publishers, whose domestic trade was so much smaller than American publishers':³⁵

You have such a huge home market that a comparatively insignificant market like the British West Indies is of no real importance to you. But our market consists as to 35% of our turnover in a collection of [foreign] markets, every one of which, however small, contributes its quota to that vital and essential 35%, without which we should be sunk. We had in fact just sent a representative down to the British West Indies from Canada. But there is much more to it than that. The British West Indies are as much a part of that strange amalgam, the British Commonwealth, as either California or Texas is part of the U.S.A.

Unwin was overstating the role of the West Indies, which was neither economically nor politically as valuable to the British Commonwealth as California or Texas was to the United States. Perhaps Unwin was

34. H.S. Latham to Philip Unwin, 12 May 1944, URL, AUC 198/3/1.

35. Stanley Unwin to H.S. Latham, 29 July 1944, URL, AUC 198/3/2.

unlucky in his simile, for while the West Indies accounted for 1.4 per cent of publishers' overseas sales,³⁶ Texas and California were then the two largest states in the union, both populous and rich in natural resources. Nevertheless, for Unwin, the idea of the cohesive Commonwealth was the important point.

He then went on to accuse the American firm of being opportunistic and grossly inconsiderate for attempting to pressure the hard-pressed London publisher into an unequal and unprecedented contract during an international crisis.³⁷

You are of course fully entitled to take advantage of our wartime difficulties to try to secure even the smallest portion of our bread and butter. You may even do so in the name of high sounding principles such as 'open markets' (N.B. it is never any part of the territory of the United States and its dependencies which is to be 'open') but you will be sadly mistaken if you assume any readiness on our part to sell our heritage for a mess of pottage

But about the British West Indian Market, we feel, rightly or wrongly, as you would do if a man who claimed to sympathise with you attempted to pick your pocket at the moment you were being set upon by gangsters. Would you let him get away with it if you could prevent him?

He pointed out that the disingenuous Americans only added insult to injury by feigning friendship while engaging in sharp practice: 'If Mr. Brett had not cabled "together we stand" we might have taken your action with greater equanimity'.³⁸

Unwin understandably felt that it was terribly unsportsmanlike of the American firm to exploit the 'wartime difficulties' of British publishers by expanding into their markets. He did not hesitate to remind the Americans of the destruction his country had suffered during the 1940–41 Blitz and the renewed attacks by V1 and V2 rocket bombs in that summer of 1944. He closed his letter by withdrawing the offer for *Never So Young Again* and threatening to organise further boycotts if some compromise could not be reached. Coming from Stanley Unwin, who served as a director at Methuen, John Lane the Bodley Head and Chapman & Hall, and held influential positions in the Publishers' Association, the British Council and the International Publishers Association, this threat suggested potentially serious consequences.

Despite the vitriol it contained, or perhaps because of it, Latham left this letter unanswered. Unwin turned in frustration to Horatio Lovat Dickson, an editor with the Macmillan house in London. Although the English company had no official authority over the American house,

36. Publishers' Association, 'Where Our Books Go', c. Jan. 1948, TNA, PRO, BT 64/2914.

37. Stanley Unwin to H.S. Latham, 29 July 1944, URL, AUC 198/3/2.

38. Ibid. George Brett was the director of the Macmillan Company.

Unwin hoped that Lovat Dickson might be able to exert a favourable influence through their closer relationship. The Macmillan editor replied that the clause was not really new, having been introduced into some contracts as early as 1940; he also acknowledged that 'one or two English publishers have questioned it, but none has made it a point of issue, as you have done. I don't blame you for doing that. You are perfectly within your rights in guarding territory which is yours by contract'.³⁹ He then introduced an argument that neither Unwin nor Latham had mentioned but that really provided the best justification for the American publisher's entry into the West Indian market. According to Lovat Dickson, the Macmillan Company acted as much from a sense of duty as from opportunism:⁴⁰

However, let it be said that there was an interval when it was impossible for English publishers to ship their goods to the West Indies, and it was at that time, I think, that The Macmillan Company commenced introducing the 'open market' clause into their contracts. With their comparatively high rate of exchange they could not supply this market at a profit, and their main intention was to secure for the author as large a distribution of his book as possible; a secondary intention was to secure for English books (I mean books in our tongue) full and unrestricted entry into territories which, for the time being at any rate, were difficult of access.

In other words, the war, which made it impossible for British publishers to maintain a steady supply of books across the Atlantic, also made it imperative that the West Indies receive a steady supply of books about Britain and her Allies. Having used exactly this argument in his own campaigns for more paper and purchase tax exemption, Unwin could hardly disagree with the motives Lovat Dickson ascribed to the American publisher.

After another tense month of negotiation, with Lovat Dickson as mediator, the Macmillan Company in New York agreed to drop the West Indies from its list of open markets, but only in dealings with Stanley Unwin and only for the duration of the war. Unwin agreed to the compromise for the next book to be offered to the American company, *Science and the Planned State* by John R. Baker. Unwin never did find an American house for *Never So Young Again*, but Dan Brennan, who returned to the United States after the war, offered the book himself to the New York firm of Farrar & Reinhart.⁴¹ It appeared in 1946.

The extended rights issue did not die with this compromise but rather grew more contentious as the war drew to a close and British book

39. H. Lovat Dickson to Stanley Unwin, 27 Oct. 1944, URL, AUC 198/2.

40. Ibid.

41. 'People Who Read and Write', *New York Times*, 9 Sept. 1945, p.126.

production began to return to its pre-war levels. In 1947, British and American publishers reached a tentative settlement, sometimes referred to as the 'Traditional Markets Agreement'.⁴² During negotiations, Stanley Unwin managed to persuade the Publishers' Association to pass a ruling that required contracts with American publishers and authors to include an exclusive territory clause that defined the British Empire and Commonwealth in perpetuity by its boundaries of 1947. Cass Canfield, then head of the New York publishing house Harper Brothers, 'admired [Unwin's] shrewdness and enterprise' but 'protested this arbitrary rule to the president of the Association'. Canfield's protest did not carry much weight with this British publisher, R.H.C. Holland of Pitmans, who suggested 'with a twinkle in his eye' that Canfield and his fellow Americans were lucky the British Empire had not been defined with the boundaries of 1776.⁴³ Not surprisingly, the agreement never received much support from American publishers. The sale of rights remained a contentious issue: the Traditional Markets Agreement proved unenforceable and was later overturned.⁴⁴ At the same time, both Britain and the United States began to emphasise the trade in direct exports of competing titles and in this arena, too, the British feared intensifying American competition ... with some reason.

In 1945–6, reports reached London of several new export ventures initiated by American publishers. The *Publishers' Circular* and other trade journals reported these developments with some anxiety. For example, on 10 February 1945:⁴⁵

we learn that a proposal to form a Book Export Organisation was adopted at the recent annual meeting of the American Book Publishers' Bureau. This appears to be the outcome mainly of reports of British activities in the export markets of the world and to the fact that for some considerable time after the war Germany will not be in a condition or able to make an effort to regain her once considerable book export trade.

American publishers planned to fill the gap in the market left by the scarcity of British and German exports and were busily developing the means to do so.

The establishment of an American Book Export Organisation was not in itself a serious worry, for there had been other organisations to promote American books, notably the US Office of War Information (OWI)

42. This informal arrangement introduced guidelines for international rights contracts. E. de Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing as a Business Since the 1960s* (London, 2004), 4.

43. Cass Canfield, *Up and Down and Around, a Publisher Recollects the Time of His Life* (New York, 1971), 74.

44. de Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing*, 4.

45. 'Formation of an American Book Export Organisation', *Publishers' Circular*, 10 Feb. 1945, 105–6.

during the war and the US Information Service after.⁴⁶ From 1945 the number of these groups increased dramatically, as did their funding and their ambitions. The United States International Book Association (USIBA) was a good example of these new energised export organisations. The Joint Foreign Trade Committee proposed the new association in November 1944 to the Book Publishers Bureau and the American Textbook Publishers Institute and both parent bodies unanimously approved the plans. Supported by a large number of influential American publishers, work began in January 1945.⁴⁷ The United States International Book Association's inaugural campaign was on the grand scale: 'As the first step in its plans to promote the display and sale of American books, USIBA proposes to set up offices in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Paris, Stockholm, and possibly Rome'.⁴⁸ Through these and other centres, the United States International Book Association would promote new American titles, circulate publicity, accept collective orders and deal with payments in local currencies on behalf of publishers. The organisation planned to facilitate translations, to maintain a library service and to advertise extensively. The United States International Book Association also sent delegations to various foreign countries to establish contacts and research the markets.

More than sixty firms had joined the United States International Book Association by September 1945 and the Board included directors or leading editors from all the most important houses: Harpers, Macmillan, Doubleday Doran, McGraw-Hill, Reynal & Hitchcock, G.P. Putnam's, D. van Nostrand, Grosset & Dunlap, W.B. Saunders, Simon & Schuster, Harcourt Brace, John Wiley, Charles Scribner's Sons and Silver Burdett. The association was independent of the US government, but maintained close links with government agencies at home and embassies abroad. Indeed, several of the staff of the new organisation boasted experience in the US Office of War Information, among them the former chief of the Books Division, who took on the management of the Library Service and Translation Departments.⁴⁹ The United States International Book Association was shaping up to be a formidable enterprise. A.S. Frere, of the London firm William Heinemann, reported that the United States International Book Association was 'an example of the thoroughness with which the Americans are tackling things with the active assistance of their Government'.⁵⁰

The United States International Book Association, as but the boldest of a number of similar ventures, indicated a new vigour in the country's

46. The OWI had a number of direct ties to the American publishing industry. To pick but one example, Cass Canfield, director of Harpers, took charge of the OWI office serving France and North Africa directly after the liberation of Paris. Canfield, *Up and Down*, 165.

47. 'U.S. Book Publishers Form an Export Organisation', *The Bookseller*, 8 Mar. 1945, 171.

48. 'The United States International Book Association', 24 Sept. 1945, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

49. *Ibid.*

50. A.S. Frere to G.F. Bolton, 25 Oct. 1945, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

approach to the book export trade. The Americans, for their part, did not deny their ambitious plans, but conceded, ‘The British are our friends. Moreover, we share with them an interest in making English the second language—the *lingua franca*—of the world. But close and friendly as our relations are and must continue to be, we cannot close our eyes to the competition that must ensue between us’.⁵¹ For the British book trade, this was a gauntlet thrown.

Clearly British bookmen needed to get to work if they were to keep up with their transatlantic rivals. The first step was to survey overseas markets, both new and familiar, to understand their requirements, which may have changed during the war, and to determine the extent of the American invasion. This same idea seems to have occurred simultaneously to the Publishers’ Association and the Dominions Office, who both heard of a 1945 report undertaken by two Americans on the publishing and bookselling of New Zealand and Australia.⁵² This fact-finding mission on behalf of the Book Publishers’ Bureau in New York prompted the Board of Trade to launch its own investigation of overseas book markets. Working in close co-operation with the Publishers’ Association, the Export Promotions Department (EPD) of the Board of Trade developed a questionnaire about the book trade to be sent to Trade Commissions around the world. In March 1946, commissioners in twenty-three countries received the questionnaire, along with a covering letter from the comptroller-general of the Export Promotions Department; twenty-one of them had replied by December (table 2).

The methodologies of the twenty-one respondents varied considerably. In Baghdad, the trade commissioner at the embassy looked up some

Table 2: Recipients of the Questionnaire on the Trade in Books, 1946.

China	Sierra Leone	Colombia
South Africa	Cameroons	Brazil
Southern Rhodesia	New Zealand	Chile
Northern Rhodesia	Australia	Uruguay
Kenya (no reply)	Mexico	Egypt (no reply)
Gambia	Paraguay	Palestine
Gold Coast	Peru	Iraq
Nigeria	Argentina	

‘Questionnaire on Books,’ Feb. 1947, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

51. As quoted from *Publishers’ Weekly* of 2 Dec. 1944, ‘Formation of an American Book Export Organisation’, *Publishers’ Circular*, 10 Feb. 1945, 105–6.

52. See minute of 31 Jan. 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

official numbers and information and then recruited the British Council's local books officer to undertake a tour of the city's bookshops and to question local booksellers and readers. In South Africa, the Trade Commission invited a number of figures from the book trade to a meeting at which they discussed the questionnaire and compiled a summary report.⁵³ The counsellor of the Commercial Secretariat in Rio spent months mining local government reports and interviewing booksellers before submitting an extensive report full of statistics on the book trade in Brazil. The market for books in the Gold Coast was minuscule, but the comptroller of customs there faithfully forwarded the questionnaire to the only two booksellers he knew: the Methodist Book Depot in the Cape Coast and the Scottish Mission Book Depot in Accra. The reports from New Zealand and Australia were the most professional and comprehensive, perhaps not surprisingly, but there were also two particularly diligent officials at the embassies in Argentina and Mexico, who put together impressive collections of details and impressions on the English- and Spanish-language trades in those countries.

The reports from Bathurst in Gambia and Buea in the Cameroons were least extensive, the former consisting mostly of one-word answers. The comptroller of customs in Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia, pointed out that nearly all of that area's books came from South Africa and referred the Board of Trade to those results. The trade commissioner in Southern Rhodesia said much the same thing, adding 'It seems unlikely, therefore, that I can spend part of my time usefully investigating the book trade, especially as I am still without any staff other than a stenographer and am unable to leave Salisbury to renew my contacts throughout my fairly extensive territory'.⁵⁴ There were also some countries that did not reply or were not included in the original list. Canada, for example, was not surveyed, possibly because its market was felt to be already familiar to British exporters; neither did the Board of Trade send its questionnaire to any country in Europe, most of which were still slowly recovering from six years of occupation. For the most part, however, the questionnaire elicited interesting and useful accounts of the status and potential expansion of British export markets.

The questionnaire itself addressed a number of aspects of the book trade, including the demand for different types and prices of books; the best outlets for promotion, reviews and sales; the impact of local taxes or import restrictions on books and the capacity of the local book

53. These invited experts seemed to have been local representatives or agents of London firms.

54. H.M. Trade Commissioner, Salisbury, S. Rhodesia, to Comptroller-General, EPD, Board of Trade, 16 May 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

production industry, if any. There were also, of course, questions about American competition:⁵⁵

6. Have American books made their appearance in anything like substantial numbers?

7. Does there appear to be a preference, and if so why, for American books?

Many of the answers to question 2, regarding the value of book imports by country, and to question 8, about possible criticisms of British books, also mentioned the Anglo-American competition for book sales. In fact, most of the respondents seem to have understood this one issue as the primary reason for the questionnaire and to have covered American imports to their country in great detail. The Australian report even commented, 'The questionnaire betrays some anxiety regarding American books . . .'.⁵⁶

American books gained market share in almost every major Anglophone market during the war, as well as in parts of Central and South America, where they were already selling in higher numbers than British books. The returns for New Zealand were a good example. British books held steady with a slight gain of £8,423 in sales there in 1945 compared to 1938. H.F. Stevens, the trade commissioner in Wellington, cautioned against reading too much into this improvement, pointing out that the price of books had risen sharply over the period. The increase in revenue in 1945 most likely reflected the sale of fewer books but at higher prices than in 1938. American books, which were less affected by material shortages or dramatic price increases, by contrast made considerable inroads into the New Zealand market during the

Table 3: Imports to New Zealand of Printed Books, Papers and Music (in GBP).

Country of Origin	1938, in £	1945, in £
United Kingdom	473,828	482,251
Canada	2,877	1,261
Australia	138,745	172,086
Belgium	1,058	—
Germany	1,576	—
United States	89,874	130,822
Total	710,788	786,895

Report from New Zealand, June 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

55. A full transcription is available in the appendix. EPD, Board of Trade, A Questionnaire 'Regarding the Trade in Books', Mar. 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

56. Report from Australia, 29 May 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

war years. US sales there were £40,948 higher in 1945 than in 1938. It was American books which accounted for more than half the total increase in imports of books to New Zealand.⁵⁷ Sierra Leone imported only £1,280 of books from Britain in 1945, but this was still less than half the 1938 figure (£2,879). American sales there rose from £62 to £388.⁵⁸ Imports from other countries also increased in some places, especially in the areas with dominant or significant non-English-language markets. In Mexico between 1937 and 1945, British sales fell in all three categories of book imports, while American sales rose, either gradually or dramatically, over the same period. Imports from Argentina increased significantly in all three categories, and several other countries posted gains in at least one type of import, as table 4 demonstrates.

Even where UK sales had improved, the British rate of growth often lagged behind the American. For example, between 1938 and 1944, British book sales in Brazil doubled in value; American sales tripled. With American periodical sales gaining even more ground, the US share in Brazil's combined book and periodical market rose from 26 to 47 per cent between 1937 and 1944.⁵⁹ Similarly, in Palestine, sales of British books increased sevenfold between 1939 and 1944, while American sales multiplied more than nineteen and a half times over the same period.⁶⁰ The report from Australia reminded the Board of Trade that the growing American export trade was not a specifically war-related phenomenon. Recorded in table 5, the five years before the war showed a steady rise in sales of American books in Australia (with one hiccup in 1936), amounting to an overall increase of just over £80,000 between 1934 and 1939.

The American trend was not universal, as the figures from Argentina demonstrated (see table 6). Both British and American exports to that country fell precipitously during the war, and the sizeable market share enjoyed by the United States in 1938 was turned over to Spain in 1943.⁶¹ (It is worth noting here that the paper shortage in both the United States and United Kingdom was particularly acute in 1943, and that Spain was itself at war in 1938, undoubtedly the reason for the small export trade to her major market in that year.) In Nigeria, there were a few more American books for sale in 1945 than in 1938, but the comptroller of customs in Lagos pointed out that 'import licensing

57. Imports from Australia rose by £33,341 during the period and it is possible that some of these were re-exports of British books via Australian branches. Report from New Zealand, June 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

58. Report from Sierra Leone, Apr. 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

59. In 1938, Brazil imported £33,400 worth of books from the United States and £8,900 worth from Britain. In 1944, the last year with complete data, Brazil imported £110,500 from the United States and £19,300 from the United Kingdom. Report from Brazil, Appendix A, Aug. 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

60. Book imports from the United Kingdom amounted to £P 11,600 in 1939 and £P 83,000 in 1944; from the United States the figures were £P 1,600 in 1939 and £P 31,350 in 1944. Report from Palestine, June 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

61. Report from Argentina, June 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

Table 4: Imports to Mexico of Printed Books (in kilograms and dollars).

Classification and Country of Origin	1937, in kg	1937, in \$	1945, in kg	1945, in \$
Printed books for primary education				
Argentina	—	—	947	19,774
Chile	—	—	8	20
Great Britain	293	1,299	0	0
Spain	189	970	0	0
United States	5,605	20,998	5,874	32,328
Printed books, unbound, unspecified				
Argentina	18,976	37,966	464,601	2,425,638
Canada	—	—	2,921	25,465
Chile	23,236	3,995	4,962	36,724
Great Britain	2,156	5,720	393	5,495
Spain	50,565	98,686	19,409	93,925
United States	41,752	61,839	58,089	282,058
Printed books, bound with cardboard, muslin or leather				
Argentina	3,776	14,072	346,732	2,417,178
Canada	—	—	1,263	18,816
Chile	74	329	2,612	30,122
Great Britain	13,379	51,252	1,101	18,787
Spain	115,491	381,957	116,508	775,281
United States	130,823	575,167	206,954	1,564,929

Enclosure to Report from Mexico, c. Sept. 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

[restricted] the importation of books from the U.S'.⁶² He added that nearly all of the American books in Nigeria 'have been imported either by the Church of the Brethren Mission or the local Jehovah's Witness. The latter publications for some time past have been, and still are banned'. Still, all in all, the reports seemed to justify the British book trade's concern over American competition.

The questionnaire respondents offered a number of reasons for the growth of the American export trade, few of which suggested a real

62. Report from Nigeria, May 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

Table 5: Imports to Australia of Printed Books, Periodicals and Music (in GBP).

Year	Total Imports (£)	From the United Kingdom (£)	%	From the United States (£)	%
1934-5	938,008	838,366	90	77,536	8
1935-6	1,038,129	904,917	87	93,803	9
1936-7	994,399	836,031	84	124,672	3
1937-8	1,072,615	888,419	83	150,891	14
1938-9	1,073,753	876,344	82	157,667	15

Report from Australia, May 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

Table 6: Imports to Argentina of Printed Books (in kilograms).

Country of Origin	1938, in kg	1943, in kg
United Kingdom	59,640	21,176
United States	126,582	29,177
Spain	15,408	139,814
Germany	30,304	271
France	89,257	530
Italy	44,771	71
Total	412,705	200,997

Report from Argentina, June 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

preference for American scholarship or culture. The most commonly reported reason for increased American imports was the general shortage of British books and the difficulties and delays involved with shipping from the United Kingdom during wartime. One respondent in Brazil quipped that the book situation was like an English restaurant, 'British books are off the menu, and the public takes what it is offered'.⁶³ In most cases, it was offered American imports. The South African report summed up the general feeling:⁶⁴

All parties agree that the availability of more and better quality paper in the United States of America during the war, as compared with the available supplies in the United Kingdom, has given the Americans their chance of getting a good footing in the market . . . The Americans have taken advantage of the supply situation to swamp the market with children's books and cheap reprints, very few of which came from that quarter before the war.

63. Report from Brazil, Aug. 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

64. Report from South Africa, Nov. 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

Canadian imports to South Africa had increased for the same reason. The report also suggested that the larger stocks of US publishers allowed them to fill orders quickly and reliably, whereas British book manufacturing was subject to severe backlogs leading to long delays in filling orders from overseas customers. British publishers would certainly have recognised this complaint, for they received it from every quarter. The demand for books was so great and the supply so small and so slow that publishers took to rationing books to their customers, a fact that the report from Iraq considered a limiting factor for British sales: 'There appears to be no quota system in America. If a shop orders twenty copies of a book from Britain, he may receive one; from America, if it is available at all, he receives twenty'.⁶⁵

Reports differed over whether the supply situation had allowed the Americans (or other competitors) to achieve a permanent footing in the local market. The commercial secretary in Montevideo recognised that importing books to Uruguay presented significant challenges to British publishers in wartime and acknowledged that the supply crisis had allowed the Americans to press an advantage. But he suggested that the British situation would soon improve as supplies returned to pre-war levels.⁶⁶ The reports from the Middle Eastern countries tended to agree. The responses from New Zealand and South Africa were more mixed. One Wellington bookseller replied, 'It is recognised that during the war UK publishers, with rare exceptions, have treated their New Zealand clients very generously. They have thereby built up a valuable goodwill in New Zealand'. Another was less positive—'Not enough copies, not enough titles, not attractive enough or sturdy enough paper or large enough type'.⁶⁷ He thought the Americans were there to stay, even operating under import restrictions.

Few responses acknowledged any real preference on the part of readers for American books per se, though they freely admitted that wartime economy standards made for more unattractive British books than usual. Here again, with better paper quality and book design standards, American publishers were at an advantage. Argentina reported:⁶⁸

There was formerly a marked preference for English books. The deterioration in the quality of English editions, caused by war-time difficulties, has however led to a falling off in demand for these compared with American editions. Approximately 80% of the demand for English-language publications is at present covered by American books and magazines which continue to be excellently produced.

65. Report from Iraq, Dec. 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

66. Report from Uruguay, July 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

67. Report from New Zealand, June 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

68. Report from Argentina, June 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

A New Zealand bookseller agreed, 'Yes, it is high time that the wartime austerity typographical regulations were removed as they are the cause of the loss of many sales of British books'.⁶⁹ The reports from New Zealand, South Africa and Australia all implied that American children's books were well written and handsomely illustrated. American 'pocket books' and glossy covers were admired in a number of countries for their attractive covers and general saleability.

Of course, as the pragmatist trade commissioner in Sydney pointed out, readers did not generally stop to consider a book's origin when purchasing: 'I would say, therefore, that there seems, in Australia, to be no preference for American or for British books. Books sell on their contents'. Once a choice of topic was made, he contended that price was the biggest factor and offered, by way of encouragement, 'the British have the advantage in price because of the exchange premium on the dollar'. He also allowed that the American publishers knew their markets: 'Where the U.S.A. has had an advantage during the war was in the ability to publish one dollar editions of works of popular science and the like; apart from war conditions this success would seem to be merely the reward of good judgement of popular demand'.⁷⁰ The cost issue appeared, to Britain's disadvantage, in the report from Colombia, which noted a distinct preference for the price of American exports, which were 'very considerably cheaper and the conditions of payment [for booksellers] are much easier'.⁷¹

In terms of content, few reported any significant preference for American books; and indeed, nearly all defended their readers' partiality for British texts. The proprietor of the Methodist Book Depot in the Gold Coast passionately denied any interest in American books: 'No! and we do not encourage the United States and their endeavours to obtain a market here!'⁷² Other reports offered a more balanced picture. The British commercial agent in Jerusalem stated, for example, that 'while there is a certain preference amongst the general reader for American technical and scientific books, the more serious readers and university students prefer the British equivalents as they are more straightforward and have less padding or "blurb"'.⁷³ The Mexican report acknowledged that the close links between that country and the United States created a 'natural tendency' towards American publications because the two peoples shared so many common interests.⁷⁴ Periodicals from the United States, especially the illustrated *Life*, *Time* and *Newsweek*, all received a number of compliments and seemed to attract many disparate overseas readers. Of English publications, Penguin

69. Report from New Zealand, June 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

70. Report from Australia, May 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

71. Report from Colombia, May 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

72. Report from the Gold Coast, July 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

73. Report from Palestine, June 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

74. Report from Mexico, Sept. 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

books were admired both for their content and their accessible price point; favourable mention was also made of the Everyman's series and the World's Classics. The Brazilian respondent noted that 'Penguins and Pelicans, marketed through the firm of Penguins Distribuidora Ltda, turn over 10,000 per month'.⁷⁵ Further success was predicted for Penguin in Colombia, which Alan Lane visited personally in 1945, 'and the arrangements made by him at the time for the sale of his editions in Colombia are likely to bear considerable fruit'.⁷⁶

On the whole, so few respondents allowed for any prejudice in favour of American imports that it is tempting to think they were offering the British book trade only what it most wanted to hear: American books were selling not because they were better, cheaper or more desired but because British books were unavailable. Whether such optimistic reports were accurate or not, they were certainly motivational, for they suggested a vast audience around the world waiting in eager anticipation for the reappearance of British books after the war.

Determined to capitalise on the reported demand for British books, and armed with solid information on much of the global market, British bookmen set to work expanding the export trade. In this, the book trade joined the great causes of the day: to reestablish Britain as a leading industrial nation, to remind the world that Britain manufactured a wide range of valued commodities and to make Britain again a net exporter by marketing British goods around the world. This proved an uphill battle, for the British share of the international market in manufactured commodities declined during the post-war era. By 1953, British exports accounted for 21.3 per cent of the global market and American exports for 25.9 per cent.⁷⁷ Exports had become a national campaign and, for a handful of years after the war, the book trade was in the vanguard. Between 1945 and 1952, a remarkable number of initiatives emerged to encourage British book exporters, some from within the book trade, some from government sources and others from national or international cultural organisations.

This grand export drive involved a remarkable amount of co-operation between different elements of the book trade, as well as between government and industry. It was fuelled from within Britain by an understandable desire to retake export markets unavoidably neglected during the war and by the stated need to raise foreign currency reserves depleted by war spending. It was also motivated from without, spurred on by continuing concern over the advancement of American industry.

Initiatives from within the trade included projects sponsored by the Publishers' and Booksellers' Associations as well as private schemes

75. Report from Brazil, Aug. 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1

76. Report from Colombia, May 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

77. Other countries were also increasing their market share in manufactured goods, particularly West Germany and Japan, but neither of these produced large numbers of English-language books. Wells, *British Export Performance*, 14–15.

organised by groups of publishing houses. One early trade initiative was the establishment of an Export Group of the Publishers' Association, set up at the suggestion of the government Export Council in April 1940.⁷⁸ The group principally functioned as a liaison between government and the trade, passing along advice on dealing with customs and other regulations. Later, the group also helped organise official visits—sort of combined research trips and good will missions—to the United States and Canada and to welcome delegates from the book trades in those countries. By November 1945, with the government export campaign in full swing, the Export Group recognised the need to expand considerably the role of the Publishers' Association in encouraging and assisting exporters.

To that end, it created a new Export Research and Development Scheme to investigate overseas markets and inform publishers of new developments. The scheme provided a less extensive service than the United States International Book Association, concentrating on gathering and disseminating information rather than on collective advertising or selling. The plan proposed that an Export Research Committee of some three or four Publishers' Association members, supported by an 'Export Secretary', establish contacts with 'as many overseas book trade organisations as possible', maintain a library of foreign journals and newspapers suitable for reviewing British books and supervise the collection of statistics on turnover and export sales.⁷⁹ It was the Export Research and Development Scheme, for example, that collated export sales in all British markets, allowing a comparison across geographic regions (table 7).⁸⁰ These statistics also allowed publishers to compare their own results with the rest of the industry and to identify other potentially viable markets for their books.

The Export Research Service issued a number of newsletters for publishers, highlighting matters of interest in particular markets. Perhaps the most important task of the service involved the investigation of foreign booksellers and the regular circulation of lists of these customers. The Publishers' Association had done this from time to time, as in the case of Swiss, Spanish, Portuguese and Indian booksellers, but the new committee undertook to compile more lists, to update them regularly and to keep 'confidential blacklists of those with whom it is undesirable to do business'.⁸¹ Larger publishers, with their own contacts in foreign markets, might not have needed these services as often as smaller firms, but they were still welcomed, for the scheme located in one place data that had previously to be gathered from a number of

78. 'Export Group for the Publishing Trade', *Publishers' Circular*, 27 Apr. 1940, 318.

79. Publishers' Association, 'Export Research and Development Scheme', TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

80. 'Where Our Books Go', c. Jan. 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 64/2914.

81. Publishers' Association, 'Export Research and Development Scheme', TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

Table 7: 'Where Our Books Go', January-December 1947.

Foreign Market	% for Publishers	% for Export Booksellers
Asia	0.372	1.196
India	6.872	12.186
Malaya	0.935	2.622
Dutch East Indies	0.110	0.018
Australia	22.471	5.058
New Zealand	8.025	2.051
Middle East	3.210	4.430
South Africa	8.586	31.643
Africa (British)	2.328	16.983
Africa (non-British)	0.071	0.112
Balkans	0.407	0.863
Central Europe	1.598	4.928
Scandinavia	4.506	2.424
Iceland	0.006	0.074
South America	0.812	1.318
Central America	0.014	0.028
British West Indies	1.373	0.373
United States	16.258	1.284
Canada	6.605	0.735
Eire	4.669	1.443
Belgium	0.588	0.657
France	1.308	0.656
Germany	0.018	0.050
Holland	3.739	1.360
Italy	0.414	1.183
Portugal	0.097	0.266
Spain	0.044	1.375
Switzerland	1.162	1.197
Other parts	3.339	2.762
Total	99.937	99.275

Publishers' Association Export Research Services, Jan. 1948, TNA, PRO, BT 64/2914.

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sources. In 1949 the service also published *How to Obtain British Books*, containing advice for both British booksellers and overseas customers; a new edition, extensively revised, appeared in 1952.⁸² Confronted on all sides by the exhortation to 'export more—considerably more',⁸³ the Export Research and Development Scheme provided services that made that a much easier task.

The original Export Group of the Publishers' Association also kept busy during this period by adopting an issue near and dear to Stanley Unwin's heart. In the early 1950s, it launched yet another campaign encouraging British publishers to refuse all contracts that ceded 'any part of the traditional market'. The crusaders declared 'whatever was at any time a British possession, colony or Dominion, we regard as our exclusive market, and . . . that the publisher has the sole right of selling the book wherever the British flag has flown'.⁸⁴ More generally, the group aimed to keep exports constantly in the spotlight. So successful were their efforts that scarcely an issue of the *Publishers' Circular* or *The Bookseller* appeared between 1945 and 1952 that did not mention a new export proposal, describe an international book exhibition or contain a report from a British bookseller or publisher on his (or her) impressions of a foreign market. Indeed, the sheer quantity of these articles constitute an important export initiative, for taken together they represent a protracted and persuasive propaganda campaign.

Publishers and booksellers were told over and over, and in many different ways, to sell more books overseas. 'Export or starve, culturally', declared Cecil Palmer, while Stanley Unwin, by then Sir Stanley, made 'Books, the most important export', the theme of a broadcast for the BBC's General News Talk on 20 May 1947.⁸⁵ Book exporters, the trade learned, were patriots: 'The country needs dollars more desperately than at any time during the war and we are among the shock troops in the first line of action to secure them'; this from a staid antiquarian bookseller.⁸⁶ As late as 1958, Oliver Lyttelton, Viscount Chandos, urged British publishers and the Treasury to remember the importance of books in the export trade, for their own sake but also because British books promoted other British exports. He reminded the Publishers' Circle once again that books acted as British ambassadors, sent forth 'to irrigate the great deserts of ignorance and prejudice which we can see all around us'.⁸⁷

82. 'How to Obtain British Books', *Publishers' Circular*, 2 Aug. 1952, 1134.

83. Percy H. Muir, 'Export More—Considerably More', *Publishers' Circular*, 22 Nov. 1947, 1129.

84. This grandiose statement neglected the fact that most of North America once flew the British flag. 'Taking Notes', *Publishers' Circular*, 12 Mar. 1955, 305.

85. Cecil Palmer, 'Export or Starve—Culturally', *Publishers' Circular*, 31 May 1947, 459; Stanley Unwin, 'The Most Important Export', 20 May 1947, TNA, PRO, BT 64/2914.

86. Muir, 'Export More—Considerably More', 1130.

87. 'Books Are Our Ambassadors', *Publishers' Circular*, 4 Oct. 1958, 1283.

Individual publishers, or groups of them, also initiated new projects. A first such enterprise, Star Editions, Ltd, formed in early 1945 as the co-operative venture of five British firms: Jonathan Cape, Cassell, Chatto & Windus, Hamish Hamilton and William Heinemann. This new company allowed these small firms to pool their resources—their copyrights, their finances, their paper reserves and their knowledge of foreign sales—and engage in paperback production for the home and export markets in a significant way. Without a separate paper ration, the venture had to begin humbly, with a list of ten titles, but A.S. Frere of Heinemann confidently reported bright prospects in October 1945.⁸⁸

The export drive did not omit the United States from its list of potential markets to be exploited. Indeed, the dollar shortage made sales in America even more valuable. US copyright legislation had long impeded book imports from Britain—American copyright protection had always been predicated on domestic manufacture—but a change in the law in June 1949 allowed, among other things, for small editions of under 1,500 copies to be imported with full copyright protection.⁸⁹ The British Book Centre in New York, launched by the London firm Batsfords in May 1949, was well placed to take advantage of this development. The original proposal for the centre, submitted to the Export Research Committee of the Publishers' Association in March 1949, called for a 'British organisation, solely designed to market British books, . . . able to enter this tricky market with far more enthusiasm and initiative and far greater chance of success'.⁹⁰ The committee approved and several publishers promptly joined the Book Centre, pledging up to £500 a year to support operational costs. The committee also suggested applying for a government grant. The Board of Trade happily endorsed the scheme and organised a Bank of England grant of £12,600 over the first two years.⁹¹ A grand launch party on 5 May 1949 at the National Book Centre in London introduced the scheme to the public and raised its profile within the trade. At the event Harold Wilson, president of the Board of Trade, welcomed the British Book Centre as a much needed support for British trade. He quipped that it would soon be exports of Sir Walter Scott rather than Scotch whisky at 'the head of the dollar-earning list'.⁹²

In reality, book sales to the United States took quite a while to catch up with the Scotch, but after only three full months of trading, Brian Batsford was able to report that the centre's sales were showing a

88. A.S. Frere to G.F. Bolton, 25 Oct. 1945, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.

89. See, for example, *The Bookseller*, 30 July 1949.

90. B.T. Batsford to Exchange Control, 21 Mar. 1949, TNA, PRO, BT 11/4126. The initial publishers were Hodder & Stoughton (including the University of London and English Universities Presses), Chatto & Windus, Collins, Cassell, Rupert Hart-Davis, Robert Hale, Methuen, Putnam, Avalon Press and the Folio Society.

91. M. Sharp to Mr Gray, 17 Mar. 1949, TNA, PRO, BT 11/4126.

92. 'Scott Scotched?', *Daily Mail*, 6 May 1949.

'progressive increase' with a turnover of more than \$20,000 a month.⁹³ The centre's staff of seventeen, plus four travellers, handled the joint sales, promotion, advertising, warehousing, ordering, invoicing and packing for all of the member firms—some fifty-five by March 1950. The British Book Centre also operated a bookshop and display library at its offices on East 55th Street in Manhattan; it even maintained a bookmobile, a travelling library of specimen books, which set out for the West Coast in January 1950. The itinerary took the bookmobile through Colorado and southern California then north, with stops in San Francisco and Seattle, and eventually east again, through Salt Lake City and the northern states before winding down to Chicago. The tour proved a great promotional success and, although the bookmobile did not undertake direct sales, the resulting orders were 'very encouraging'. Back in Britain, some members voiced concern that the bookmobile was a Chevrolet and not a British make, but the centre pleaded the importance of easy local maintenance in case of accident; Brian Batsford promised that the issue was 'being reconsidered for next year'.⁹⁴ Incidentally, Batsfords sold the majority share in the British Book Centre in 1951 to a holding company, the Dunstead Trust, though the organisation remained structurally the same.

Alongside these group projects, various individuals took up the banner of British book exports. Leading authors, publishers and booksellers donated their expertise, their vacation plans, their books and their profits to improve the prospects of book exports. They lectured at home and abroad; they travelled extensively, sending back reports of the book worlds they visited; and they volunteered to sponsor agents and exhibitions of books around the globe. In January of 1947, for example, Christina Foyle, director of Foyle's bookshop in London, embarked on a three-week lecture tour in Sweden, and gave talks on such subjects as 'What British People Are Reading Today' and 'British Writers of Yesterday and Today' in Malmo, Lund, Kristianstad, Uppsala, Stockholm, etc.⁹⁵ A few years later, in October 1952, Stanley Unwin set off on a three-month journey to Japan, visiting booksellers in 'innumerable places' along the way, including Karachi, where he planned to meet with the Associated British Publishers of Pakistan. In 1958, he toured Brazil.⁹⁶ By 1958, the *Publishers' Circular* had organised a system of regular newsletters from 'special correspondents' who reported from a great number of countries, including Canada, Japan, Denmark, Nigeria and Pakistan. The last wrote in 1958 of continuing American competition in the Pakistani market: 'Anxiety on this subject is more

93. Sgt. H.J. Golton, 20 Dec. 1949, TNA, PRO, BT 11/4126.

94. British Book Centre, U.S.A., Report on Progress and Development in 1949, Mar. 1950, TNA, PRO, BT 11/4126.

95. 'Miss Christina Foyle Visits Sweden', *Publishers' Circular*, 31 Jan. 1948, 63.

96. 'Allen & Unwin', *Publishers' Circular*, 13 Sept. 1952, 1273; 'Mission to Brazil', *Publishers' Circular*, 26 July 1958, 1020.

than mere avarice on the part of British publishers and the book trade. Pakistan is a traditionally British market, and even with the recent changes the people here would prefer our books, especially where higher education is concerned'.⁹⁷

In addition to their own travels, publishers sent a great number of agents overseas and even opened a number of new branches. For example, 'with a view to playing their own particular part in the export drive', Hodder & Stoughton between 1947 and 1949, 'appointed . . . additional representatives in the Far East, Middle East, India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon, as well as the United States and the South American countries; and special journeys have been undertaken to East and West Africa, and the West Indies'. These agents aimed to reestablish 'the Yellow Jackets once again as the premier "cheap" series in every bookseller's shop', and to promote the sales of the University of London textbooks and the Teach Yourself series of the English Universities Press.⁹⁸ In an even more remarkable expansion, the Oxford University Press opened entire new offices in Wellington in 1947; Lagos in 1949; Karachi and Dacca (now Dhaka) in 1952; Nairobi and Ibadan in 1954; Accra in 1955; Kuala Lumpur, Johannesburg and Tokyo in 1957; Salisbury (now Harare) in 1959; Lahore in 1960; and Hong Kong in 1961.⁹⁹ These direct investments overseas resulted in an enormous expansion of the circulation of Oxford publications, particularly the press' educational books, and eventually allowed considerable local publishing as well.

Post-war governments took equal note of the value of British book exports, both as saleable commodities and as promotions for other British goods and tourism. 'Trade follows the book', it was said, and the country needed trade.¹⁰⁰ Government ministries encouraged book exports in several ways: they occasionally provided direct financial support, they offered incentives and set export targets, and they facilitated the actual business of international trade. The aforementioned British Book Centre, USA, for example, received a direct grant of government funds to help cover start-up costs; various book-promoting cultural organisations like the National Book League also received government money.

Incentives came in a variety of forms. During the war, extra paper allowances and exemption from the Economy Standards were granted to help the export trade. A Book Trade Advisory Panel, comprising figures from the book trade as well as Board of Trade and Ministry of

97. 'Newsletter From Pakistan', *Publishers' Circular*, 29 Mar. 1958, 437.

98. 'Hodder and Stoughton Exports', *Publishers' Circular*, 3 Sept. 1949, 987.

99. See 'New Zealand', 'Pakistan', 'Singapore', 'Nigeria', 'East Africa' and 'The Gold Coast', *The Record, The News Bulletin of the Oxford University Press*, No. 1 (Dec. 1956), 4–6; 'The Far East' and 'South Africa', *The Record*, No. 2 (Dec. 1957), 7; 'South Africa', *The Record*, No. 4 (Dec. 1959), 7; 'East Asia', *The Record*, No. 6 (Dec. 1961), 7; 'East Asia', *The Record*, No. 7 (Dec. 1962), 7; 'East Asia', *The Record*, No. 8 (Dec. 1963), 11.

100. 'Books Are Our Ambassadors', *Publishers' Circular*, 4 Oct. 1958, 1283.

Supply officials, negotiated some of these concessions. Later on, the Board of Trade introduced a series of export targets intended to motivate all kinds of British exporters. The Board set the first book trade target, for 1947, at £8,000,000, or about £667,000 per month; the industry just missed this, possibly due to the coal shortage that winter, but exported upwards of £7,400,000 during the year.¹⁰¹ Other industries also received targets for export; the monthly rate for the toy industry, for example, was set at £300,000 in 1947, for jewellery makers at £400,000 and for pottery manufacturers at £680,000.¹⁰² The success of book exports encouraged the Board to raise publishers' target to £12 million the following year, a level the book trade could not achieve until 1951, well after the end of the paper shortage.

Government, perhaps recognising that the book trade could not reach these heights without some assistance, introduced several ventures to facilitate the work of book exporters. The Cultural Relations Department of the Foreign Office participated in and distributed promotional material. The Export Promotions Department and the Commonwealth Relations Office also helped distribute information on British books and assisted in the gathering of statistics, as in the case of the questionnaire discussed earlier. The Central Office of Information operated the British Book Export Scheme, which set up offices in developing markets, accepted orders for British books, sought out references for local booksellers and provided currency exchange services.¹⁰³ There was also a coordinating body, the British Book Export Promotion Committee (sometimes just the Book Export Group) to oversee and coordinate these various efforts.

The Book Export Group also formed a working committee to investigate tariffs and import restrictions impeding the free flow of British books around the world. Britain itself placed restrictions on imports during the war and afterwards imposed a 50 per cent re-export requirement on the imports of fiction and children's books. The loan agreement of 1946 prevented the United Kingdom from discriminating against American imports in favour of Commonwealth products, but the re-export requirement aimed to circumvent this stipulation. The 50 per cent re-export requirement applied to the total value of imports, rather than by country. Thus it was hoped that Commonwealth goods could be retained in Britain, while American goods might be imported and then re-exported to Commonwealth nations or elsewhere, thereby limiting the dollar debt and simultaneously encouraging book exports.¹⁰⁴

101. 'Book Export Turnover Statistics', *Publishers' Circular*, 1 Oct. 1949, 1061.

102. 'Export Rates for British Materials and Manufactured Goods', 24 Feb. 1947, TNA, PRO, BT 64/2914.

103. See, for example, 'New Arrangements to Facilitate the Export of Books to France', *Publishers' Circular*, 15 Feb. 1947, 97–8.

104. R.M. Nowell, Board of Trade, to R.W.B. Clarke, Treasury Chambers, 10 Nov. 1947, TNA, PRO, BT 11/3755; 'Import of Books From Commonwealth Countries', *Publishers' Circular*, 3 May 1947, 381.

The cumbersome policy met with much disfavour within Britain and especially from the Commonwealth and was eventually abandoned.

Needless to say, it was the policies of other nations that became the target of the working committee's investigations. Discussions included representatives from England, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Eire, India, Southern Rhodesia, Newfoundland, Burma and Ceylon. Their findings informed the policy of the British delegation to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment, held in Geneva in April of 1947. The delegation concerned itself with all kinds of barriers to trade, including tariffs, needlessly elaborate customs procedures, lack of sterling (or other hard currency) for exchange, import quotas and licences, and even piracy. They pushed for the removal of the 8 per cent sales tax and 10 per cent duty on books shipped to Canada and the reduction of the 'primage duty' on Australian book imports. They also objected to the Portuguese taxing imported books by weight 'as if they are potatoes', and the duty on imports of atlases and picture books to Iceland, 'a strange one because they cannot produce these things themselves'. The priority, however, was the elimination or reduction of the American import taxes levied on 'books in English', which ranged from 7.5 to 30 per cent.¹⁰⁵ In this last task the British delegation proved successful: as a result of the United Nations Conference, the United States reduced its tariffs on most books to 5 per cent and halved the tariffs on the remaining categories.¹⁰⁶ Other barriers to the international book trade also fell, or at least were lowered, making the conference something of a victory for the British delegation and, of course, for the British export trade.

Book exports garnered support from cultural organisations too. The British Council worked tirelessly throughout the 1940s and 1950s and much of its activity directly and indirectly promoted British book sales. The council published and distributed pamphlets advertising British books on various subjects, often selecting new technical and scientific topics but not neglecting literature and art. They sent countless British speakers on lecture tours around the world, including Christina Foyle to Sweden. As many of these lecturers were authors, they could be relied upon to tout their own books and drum up sales. The British Council also organised book exhibitions, seemingly hundreds of book exhibitions, which toured in nearly every country on the map. Japan, China, Persia, Iraq, Australia, Brazil, Argentina, Denmark, Germany, Croatia, Poland . . . the list went on and on. While some of the books for these exhibitions were loaned from private collections or purchased at discounted rates, publishers generally donated any titles requested from their lists; they reaped the rewards in increased orders from wherever the exhibitions

105. 'Tariffs, etc. on Books', c. March 1947, TNA, PRO, BT 64/2914.

106. Mr Bottomley, Nov. 1947, TNA, PRO, BT 64/2914.

alighted. The exhibition in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, in May 1947, welcomed some 15,000 visitors, many of whom were heard to comment 'We have been hungry for these books for so many years . . .'.¹⁰⁷

In 1958 the British Council again directed the attention of publishers and government to the issue of American competition, conducting 'an extensive survey of the inroads America, Russia, etc., are making in our markets'.¹⁰⁸ The council prepared a report aimed at convincing government 'to give publishers more help' in exporting their books and circulated the report to a few prominent London firms for comment. John Brown, Publisher of the London business of Oxford University Press, suggested that more attention ought to be paid to those countries in which British publishers faced official trade restrictions or other systemic problems, rather than simple competition. He listed 'Pakistan, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Israel, Burma, Indonesia, Austria, France, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and Yugoslavia'. He also noted several handicaps in these and other countries, including interference from other international agencies, 'a lack of sterling and import restrictions', 'piracy (some are not signatories to the copyright conventions) and uneconomic competition such as presentations to libraries or subsidized publication'.¹⁰⁹ The report eventually circulated among the Export Group of the Publishers' Association, although nothing concrete seems to have resulted. The British Council made further attempts in the following two years to organise government sponsorship and subsidies explicitly for exports to India and Pakistan—significant battlegrounds 'in the running fight between American and English publishers over market areas'.¹¹⁰ These plans received more serious consideration both among publishers and within government; in 1960 a 'Commonwealth and International Book Trust' was proposed to carry out the publication and distribution of 'Government subsidized cheap books', to supervise a 'proposed English Language Book Society' and to undertake other 'activities aimed at publicizing and distributing British books overseas, initially in India and Pakistan'.¹¹¹

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, also made books a priority. Although this international institution did not expressly promote British exports, because the UK produced great numbers of educational, scientific and culturally valuable books, in a language rapidly becoming universal, many of the UNESCO

107. 'Exhibition of British Books at Zagreb, Yugoslavia', *Publishers' Circular* 26 July 1947, 701.

108. John Brown to E.C. Parnwell, 6 Aug. 1958, O[xford] U[niversity] P[ress] Archive, DUP/PUB/5/55, fo. 638.

109. *Ibid.*

110. John Brown to R.E. Hawkins, 20 Oct. 1959, OUP Archive, DUP/PUB/5/58, fo. 718.

111. John Brown to C.H. Roberts, Secretary to the Delegates, 25 July 1960, OUP Archive, DUP/PUB/5/60, fo. 299–300.

book exchange and other schemes aided the sales of British books. For example, in 1948, UNESCO introduced book tokens, which could be purchased in soft currency but spent on books in hard currencies. This system, which complemented the currency services offered by some national organisations like the British Book Export Scheme, allowed recovering economies and developing nations to share in the great exchange of book ambassadors.¹¹² UNESCO also published a bulletin for libraries, which suggested new publications for their collections and advised on the ordering and payment process.¹¹³

Even the National Book League, formed in 1925 to encourage ‘the advancement of literature by the cooperation of the various branches of the book trade’¹¹⁴ in Britain, went global in the 1950s. In 1957 its director, Jack Morpurgo, at the behest of UNESCO, travelled ‘to India, Pakistan, Ceylon (as Sri Lanka then was) and Burma to make a feasibility study of the need for, and future of, books in those territories’.¹¹⁵ Morpurgo must surely have considered the need for all kinds of books in the markets he visited, but as the head of the British National Book League, his loyalties were clearly stated.

The great export drive proved a remarkable success, whether measured by the publicity given to the cause of book exports, the quality and quantity of new export initiatives or the enthusiasm with which new ventures were implemented. More importantly, these endeavours also resulted in increased exports, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of total turnover. By 1950, British book exports were back up to 30 per cent of total turnover, the 1939 figure; by 1957, they had passed 37 per cent and amounted to more than £22,500,000 (see table 8). The intense focus on exporting books lasted into the late 1950s. From then on the trade, while still exporting books in their thousands, spent less energy on export promotion and turned its attention to other issues. This change in priority derived in large part from the great success of the export campaign. There was no more need to cry out for publishers to export—they were very ably doing so.

Prompted by the desire to reclaim markets neglected during the war, drawn by the lure of new markets emerging after and constantly motivated by the threat of competing exports from America, the British book trade successfully waged its campaign to ‘export more—considerably more’. To achieve this success, publishers found it necessary to co-operate considerably more with one another, even to the extent of entering extended business partnerships, with their trade associations

112. J. Zuckerman, ‘Unesco Book Coupon Scheme’, *Publishers’ Circular*, 16 Oct. 1948, 1177.

113. ‘Unesco Bulletin for Libraries’, *Publishers’ Circular*, 24 May 1947, 449–51.

114. I. Norrie, *Sixty Precarious Years: A Short History of the National Book League, 1925–1985* (London, 1985), 16.

115. *Ibid.*, 57.

Table 8: British Domestic and Export Turnover Statistics, 1945–57.

Year	Total, in £	Export Total, in £	%
1945	21,979,554	5,139,222	23.4
1946	26,961,622	6,715,212	24.6
1947	30,203,763	7,412,905	24.5
1948	33,241,431	8,739,236	26.3
1949	34,297,252	9,798,838	28.6
1950	37,158,652	11,394,220	30.7
1951	41,553,760	13,740,322	33.1
1952	42,790,387	14,482,036	33.8
1953	44,892,291	15,566,874	34.7
1954	46,270,953	16,527,054	35.7
1955	49,439,087	18,156,084	36.8
1956	56,659,484	20,870,597	37.0
1957	60,456,095	22,505,440	37.4

Compiled from the annual results published in the *Publishers' Circular*, 1947–58.

and with any number of government and international agencies. The formation of these co-operative ventures perhaps hinted at the amalgamations that were such a feature of the British book trade from the 1960s.¹¹⁶ Book publishing had become an expensive business, and the development of global markets demanded good cash flow and increased capital investment. They did not realise it, but the book export campaigners of the 1940s and 1950s accelerated the eclipse of the small independent (often undercapitalised) publishing house by the international conglomerate. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1950s, the great export campaign had accomplished its goal to re-establish Britain as a leader in the profitable and rapidly expanding global book market.

Institute of English Studies, University of London AMY FLANDERS

116. See, for example, de Bellaigue, *British Book Publishing*, 1–4.

Appendix

A Questionnaire ‘Regarding the Trade in Books’¹¹⁷

1. Type of books in demand, e.g. fiction, educational, technical.
2. Volume of that demand with comparative values of imports by country for the years 1938 and 1944.
3. Import figures will presumably relate to bulk shipments only. In addition, there will no doubt be certain postal imports . . .
4. Price ranges favoured.
5. A list of reputable booksellers mentioning those who have already dealt in UK books and still do so and other reliable potential customers.
6. Have American books made their appearance in anything like substantial numbers?
7. Does there appear to be a preference, and if so why, for American books?
8. Are there any criticisms of UK books in regard to:
 - a) Appearance
 - b) Durability
 - c) Supply
 - d) Suitability
 - e) Accuracy of contents, i.e. are facts and descriptions of life appearing in books about the countries concerned correct? What is the capacity of the local publishing trade, i.e. what are the facilities for printing and binding books?
9. What is the capacity of the local publishing trade, i.e. what are the facilities for printing and binding books?
10. Is local production of books by UK publishers desirable? Where they exist what arrangements have either UK or US publishers made for printing or publishing their literature locally?
11. Should publishing rights be sold by UK publishers to local firms? Can lists of suitable local publishers be supplied?
12. Lists of local newspapers, magazines, periodicals of specialised interest that might review UK books would be welcomed.
13. What are the best local newspapers and periodicals in which to advertise UK books?
14. Are there any local taxes, duties or import restrictions affecting UK books?
15. What is the opinion of the overseas officer on the advisability of appointing a correspondent who would be able to keep the Publishers’ Association fully informed on the above subjects, to enable the association to keep its members supplied with up-to-date information, and, if possible, suggestions as to suitable persons to act in this manner?

117. EPD, Board of Trade, A Questionnaire ‘Regarding the Trade in Books’, Mar. 1946, TNA, PRO, BT 60/81/1.