In this article, I will analyse a body of documents that shed new light on the activity of the BBC Latin American Service (LAS) during the Second World War. These documents have the potential to reveal how entertainment programmes commissioned by the Corporation to be broadcast to Latin America were used as part of propaganda campaigns, designed to counter Nazi-Fascist influence in the region. These documents consist of: the minutes of BBC LAS Propaganda Policy Committee meetings, held in the presence of the Ministry of Information (MOI) staff members; correspondence exchanged between the BBC and the MOI; as well as original radio drama scripts written in Portuguese by Brazilian journalist, novelist and playwright Antônio Callado, which were broadcast to Brazil by BBC LAS in 1943. Callado’s scripts function as a case study to discuss the impact of propaganda policies in LAS entertainment programmes.

**KEYWORDS**  
BBC; Second World War; propaganda; radio; Latin America; Antônio Callado

Callado was a leading voice in the Brazilian section of LAS between 1941 and 1947, and his dramas are representative of the best productions transmitted by LAS in Portuguese during
the war. The Brazilian section received very special attention from the BBC and MOI during WW2, particularly after Brazil declared war against the Axis powers in August 1942. In fact, Brazil was the only Latin American country to send troops to the European front (in 1944). Consequently, due to the Brazilian section’s strategic importance, Callado’s dramas provide a key insight into the BBC LAS’ activities. The two dramas analysed in this article illustrate Callado’s themes, strategies and ‘radiogenic aesthetics’. In addition, these two dramas, like many of his scripts, respond to elements of the LAS Propaganda Policy guidelines, as will be shown.

Antônio Callado arrived in London in 1941 and worked for the BBC LAS until 1947, when he returned to Brazil with Jean Maxine Watson, a British citizen and BBC LAS staff member who he married in 1943. In Brazil, Callado enjoyed a prominent position as a cosmopolitan intellectual and journalist. In the 1950s he became an award-winning theatre playwright and well-known novelist, and in the 60s and 70s he was arrested several times by the Brazilian Military Dictatorship (1964–1985) for his political and cultural activism. He published nine novels, but it was Quarup (1967) that became a best seller and his most acclaimed work of fiction. Several of his novels were translated into English, Italian, French and German. Critics such as Raymond L. Williams consider Callado one of the major Latin American novelists of the twentieth century.

The discovery of sealed files under Antônio Callado’s name at the BBC Written Archives Centre (WAC) in Reading, UK, in May 2014, brought about an opportunity to reassess his work and formative experiences in Britain in the 1940s. In these files I found BBC internal memos, and copyright receipts, through which I was able to track down a series of original radio drama scripts written by Callado to be broadcast by the LAS to Brazilian audiences during and immediately after the Second World War. These dramas were unknown to those who have studied Callado and the Brazilian Section of LAS previously. To my surprise, there was also a considerable gap in the literature about the BBC World Service concerning the Latin American Service, and the material analysed here demands further exploration by media historians.

The BBC Latin American Service was created in March 1938 as part of the new external services in foreign languages, which were designed to counter Nazi and Fascist propaganda at a global level, and to capture audiences’ sympathies and support for Britain. During the Second World War, Latin America was a region of strategic economic and military interest, and a source of concern due to its large German and Italian migrant communities. Italian and German Radio stations had been broadcasting content in Portuguese and Spanish to Latin American audiences since the mid-1930s, which led the British authorities to decide that action should be taken in defence of their geopolitical influence in the region.

The programmes broadcast by the BBC LAS varied in duration, from only thirty minutes in 1938 to four hours of content in Portuguese and in Spanish every evening by 1943, usually from 8:00pm. The expansion of the LAS also involved the separation of transmissions in Spanish and in Portuguese. In 1938, the same 15-minute news bulletins were transmitted in Spanish and Portuguese, which was described as tedious or ‘irksome’ in some reports. In 1939, two additional transmitters were installed in Daventry, where the Overseas Service was operating, meaning that it became possible to separate transmissions in Portuguese and Spanish. This development, and the perception that news-bulletins were ‘ineffective’ if not accompanied by ‘suitable entertainment’, increased the length of transmissions and led to demand for entertainment programmes. In 1943, the duration of transmissions was doubled both as a result of technological improvements

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in Daventry and to the fact that Brazil joined the war on the Allied side in 1942, which drew more attention to the Brazilian section and allowed it to develop more programmes. In addition to reports on the war—fifteen-minute-long bulletins broadcast every evening—musical interludes, book reviews and radio dramas became part of the transmissions. In order to write, produce and broadcast these entertainment programmes in Portuguese and in Spanish, a plethora of Latin American and Iberian intellectuals were hired by the BBC, making them key elements in Britain’s war propaganda and cultural diplomacy. LAS functioned as a cultural ‘contact zone’ where peripheral intellectuals would creatively interact and exchange references in an environment marked by diversity but also by power asymmetries based on geopolitical and colonial imbalances, which was characteristic of the BBC’s ‘corporate cosmopolitanism’.

**LAS Propaganda Policy**

In internal discussions, the MOI and the Foreign Office made no secret that they considered the BBC, and in particular its foreign language broadcasts, the ‘propaganda arm of the state’; yet this had to be kept secret from the public eye so as not to ‘jeopardize the credibility of the Corporation’. The BBC’s carefully constructed ‘independence’ during the war was not only projected to its ‘home’ audiences in Britain: the MOI’s discrete process of intervention in the Corporation produced a long-term impression, even on some of its Latin American staff members. Particularly when compared with the kind of heavy-handed interventionism experienced in dictatorial regimes, such as Brazil’s New State (1937–1945), the influence of the MOI was probably almost imperceptible to some, like William Tate, an Anglo-Brazilian LAS staff member, who declared in an interview:

> The government asks the BBC to broadcast in certain languages to certain countries. However, the BBC is absolutely independent regarding the content and form of its programmes. It does not receive instructions from the government.

Ironically, Tate was the person who signed the front page of all of Callado’s radio dramas as the Brazilian section censor, the ‘delegate censor’ in W.J. West’s terms. Tate was, indeed, the delegate censor for most productions by the Brazilian section during the war. The MOI’s intervention was so subtle and sophisticated that it might have been perceived occasionally as BBC internal censorship.

However, the presence of MOI agents in meetings expressly intended to inform the Latin American Service on matters of propaganda policy is clear and undeniable, as we will see, with vast evidence provided by documentation. The intervention existed but was made in a discrete and polite way, occasionally presented euphemistically as ‘guidance’, to which a letter by the MOI sent to the Latin American Service on 27 August 1942 attests. It was addressed to Mr. J.B. Clark, BBC Latin American staff, from Mr. Kenneth Grubb, a MOI executive who regularly corresponded with the BBC:

> Dear Clark,

> It has occurred to me that you may be in two minds as to what general attitude to adopt to the BBC Brazilian programme under the present circumstances. I think you know me
well enough to believe that I am unwilling to interfere with internal BBC affairs, but I do feel it to be important that at this juncture we should, in our broadcasts to Brazil, frankly treat the Brazilians as belligerents. I am aware that the objection may be made that other republics such as Argentina and Chile are regular eavesdroppers on the Brazilian Service, and may possibly be offended by certain things we might say to Brazil, arising out of this. I feel, however, we ought not to take this into too serious account. It seems to me that the right, frank and honest course is henceforward to handle our broadcasts to Brazil on the basis that they are in with us in the same conflict. I mention this because if I had not brought this matter up at this crisis you might very well say that the Ministry have left you without guidance. Yours ever, Kenneth Grubb.  

The response from the BBC Latin American Service came three days later, on 30 August, with a letter signed by Mr. Clark and addressed to Mr. Grubb:

Dear Grubb,

Many thanks for your letter of August 27th about the policy and propaganda consequences of the Brazilian declaration of war. Our action in the Brazilian and other relevant broadcasts has been, and will continue to be, entirely in accordance with the guidance implied by your letter. Yours sincerely, J.B. Clark.

The author of the letter, despite the claim that he is ‘unwilling to interfere’, ultimately sets out clear ‘guidance’ regarding how the BBC programmes should tackle the Brazilian entry into the war in August 1942. The rhetorical unwillingness to interfere seems merely to be a formula to make the practical interference, euphemistically called ‘guidance’, operate smoothly. The response seems to confirm that this is the case, given its affirmative tone, stating positively that the action taken by the Latin American Service ‘has been, and will continue to be, entirely in accordance with the guidance implied’. As stated by Michael Stenton, occasional interference by the MOI was virtually accepted by the BBC as a way to avoid worse, more heavy-handed, direct government intervention: ‘the BBC understood that only the MOI could save them from controls that would never apply to the [non-publically regulated] press’.  

A very early report on the Latin American Service, from December 1938, describes how a whole system of analyses and feedback on broadcasts was established with the help of intelligence agencies:

Side by side with the programme service for Latin America, an organization was set up in the Overseas Intelligence Department for the purpose of initiating and maintaining publicity and of studying and interpreting the reaction of the audience and the effects of the broadcasts. With this end in view, contact was established with the Foreign Office and with His Majesty’s missions overseas, by whom special Officers were designated in each country for the purpose of corresponding with the Corporation.  

What the report describes is an elaborate system of monitoring in locus the impact of the broadcasts on local audiences, which included an orchestrated network of agents who checked and reported on the efficiency of the transmissions. It was a system in which it was not sufficient to establish control of the message—through ‘guidance’ on
propaganda policies and occasional censorship—it was also considered crucial to calibrate transmissions and their effects by drawing on the information provided by an apparatus capable of reporting on their reception, which produced constructive feedback on how to refine the quality and effectiveness of the transmissions. Considering that the Corporation did not include advertisements in their broadcasts to Latin America, the term ‘publicity’ in the above excerpt likely refers to the promotion of BBC programmes in the region, which reveals the close cooperation between the BBC LAS and Intelligence services with the objective of cultivating their Latin American audience.

More than two years after the above-mentioned report, a meeting took place on 30 January 1941 at 3pm, in an unknown venue, to establish the Latin American Propaganda Policy Committee, with the attendance of: Mr. Grubb, as chairman, Mr. Bonham Carter, Mr. Wiltshire and Major Machell, all four of whom came from the Ministry of Information (indicated by the acronym MOI after their names). Mr. Perowne and Mr. Carvell, members of the Foreign Office, and Mr. Cliffe, a BBC executive, were also present, among others.25 Their meetings became regular and were crucial for creating a propaganda policy directed by the MOI and implemented by the LAS. Some elements of this policy can inform our perspective on the scripts produced by the Brazilian section. At the inaugural meeting, for example, some important guidelines on how to approach the war were set out, as we can see from the minutes of the meeting:

Mr. Grubb stated that during his tour of Latin America he gained the impression that British propaganda there was too vague and did not sufficiently cope with the task of turning Latin Americans from strict neutrality to a more benevolent attitude of non-belligerency, the reason being that so much material lacked appeal to self-interest and fear. Although an appeal to fear was sometimes considered servile, he felt that Hitler’s ‘New Order’ could have no possible interest to Latin Americans unless they were made aware of how nearly it might one day concern them. Major Machell pointed out that, for example, fear was largely responsible for the change of attitude of the United States, and Mr. Bonham Carter added that he did not see how our propaganda could be effective unless we did appeal to fear and self-interest.26

The ‘appeal to fear and self-interest’ is a very pragmatic propaganda approach to convincing Latin American citizens and governments that the war that started in Europe was having, and would continue to have, a great impact on their future. The strategy used in the case of the US served as an example to be followed in Latin America. It is possible to see how this guidance influenced the BBC Latin American Service’s output, especially the radio dramas produced by the Brazilian section. During the same meeting, other important issues were considered, for instance, the criticism that Mr. Grubb had heard about BBC transmissions to Latin America:

He [Mr. Grubb] said the criticism he had received fell into two classes: the first, from the propaganda angle, saying that the treatment of the themes was too dry and intellectual, and not sufficiently emotional; (...) and finally that the themes were not sufficiently clearly related to the main message of arousing self-interest and fear. The second class of criticism was from a policy angle: that the blockade was not sufficiently dealt with;
that clear directions as to the position we want Latin American Republics to adopt were not given; (...).  

The belief that effective propaganda had to have an affective impact and appeal to the audience’s emotions seems clear to Mr. Grubb and the MOI personnel and this view clearly influenced the BBC Latin American Service. After its expansion in 1943, when the Brazilian section was separated from the Spanish-speaking section within LAS, there was an increasing demand for radio dramas in Portuguese. Callado’s radio drama scripts appeared in this context. They not only adhered to the guidance provided by the MOI, but also specifically addressed the issues discussed in the Latin American Propaganda Policy meetings, presenting the British perspective on historical facts and events in an overtly ‘emotional’ way.

The affective dimension of propaganda is consistently reaffirmed by the literature on the subject since at least the aftermath of the First World War. Its importance was further theorised by Jacque Ellul (1962), and ‘affect’ became a key concept in more contemporary works on the topic. Propaganda operates on people’s fundamental beliefs, termed ‘myths’ by Ellul, because these beliefs are by definition unquestioned, and permeated by strong emotions. In other words, propaganda operates by mobilising emotions and deeply-held beliefs that are usually capable of informing our actions as much as our rational thinking. Current scholarship tends to agree that propaganda ‘confirms rather than converts’, as it is more effective when the content works in line with existing opinions and beliefs. Auerbach and Castronovo acknowledge their debt to Žižek (2012) and his conceptualisation of ideology as a set of fundamental beliefs supported by affects, which fulfil a comforting function by protecting us from the overwhelming chaos of undifferentiated signification: ‘We want and need to be told what things mean’. In a world marked by conflicts and uncertainties, Laurence R. Samuel asserts: ‘If there was any common thread that tied the many strands of mass propaganda together, and I believe there was, it was the shared goal of creating some kind of order out of some kind of chaos’. This, of course, brings us to the role and the potential of radio dramas in shaping popular culture and public opinion. Through characters and plots that reach the audience in the comfort of their homes, radio dramas are a form of cultural expression with great potential to mobilise people’s affects and belief systems in order to produce ‘order out of chaos’.

In another meeting between representatives from the BBC and the MOI on 10 November 1941, further critical propaganda policies were established:

Meeting discussed and agreed matter of great importance in view of: (i) Latin American pro-British sympathy, which should be exploited from every angle, (ii) great propaganda flattery value and desirability of creating Latin American interest in BBC by showing British interest in and up-to-date information about Latin American local affairs, (iii) future radio competition with other countries, (iv) future economic and commercial importance to Britain of Latin America, (v) importance of arousing British interest in Latin American news through Press and BBC.

In the aforementioned Propaganda Policy meeting of 30 January 1941, the ‘French question’—meaning the Nazi invasion of France—was also discussed: ‘It was, in conclusion,
agreed that the first matter to receive attention must be the subject of the Free French Movement’. The issue was certainly addressed by news bulletins and other features in the Latin American Service, though it was suggested by a participant in the meeting that ‘care must be used to avoid arousing excessive sympathy for the French’ , which demonstrates that strategic British suspicions were, by then, stronger than war alliances. Another participant proposed:

(1) that the Latin Americans must be convinced that we [the British] were at least as efficient as the Germans. (2) In treating the Free French movement, French culture must not be boosted at the expense of our [British] own, which should be more strongly emphasized. (3) In referring to Latin America as leaders of Latin culture, great care must be taken to avoid making flattery too obvious.

At the end of the meeting, other directives were agreed, establishing, among other things, that ‘Latin America would like to know about the activities of the average Englishmen’ and also that it was convenient that activities contain ‘tactful reference to the benefits conferred by Britain on Latin America’.

Another meeting took place on 18 March 1942, with the presence of Mr. Clark, Mr. Camacho, Mr. Baker, Mr. Breething and Mr. J. Green, from the BBC; and Mr. Bonham-Carter, Mr. C.R. Bock, and Mr. R. Hope, from the MOI. On this occasion, an important reference was made to the well-known Catholic background common to all Latin American countries, suggesting that it could and should be used for propaganda purposes:

Roman Catholic Propaganda in the L/A Service:

Mr. Clark outlined past policy based on use of Roman Catholic material whenever possible in an appropriate setting of news bulletins or programmes, but restrained use of direct religious propaganda. This policy confirmed, but agreed that greater stress could be laid on the theme of the affinity of fundamental Christian principles with British ideals and their incompatibility with the Nazi regime. Mr. Hope undertook to pass material for news and programme treatment to Mr. Baker. Ministry of Information publications to be passed to Mr. Breething.

In this minute, we can see the BBC’s careful approach to religious issues, which required sensitivity in the case of a country with a Protestant majority addressing predominantly Catholic Latin American countries. In this case, the ‘restrained use of direct religious propaganda’ seemed a sensible decision. Nevertheless, the opportunity to make a ‘sufficiently emotional’ use of propaganda (as suggested during the meeting of 30th January 1941), which stressed the ‘affinity of Christian principles with British ideals’ and associated Nazism with satanic, perverse or evil attributes (the opposite of ‘Christian principles’) appears commensurate with the objective of spreading fear and appealing to self-interest. The meeting suggests that it was considered as important to provoke sympathy for the Allies’ cause, as it was to persuade the audience that Nazism was a synonym for damnation, drawing on all the fear and impulses towards self-preservation that the prospect of Hell could evoke in the minds of good Christians. In fact, the Second World War was a moment that saw a resurgence of religious beliefs, and particularly of Catholicism in Britain, as faith operated as ‘a response to war and as an assertion of continuity with
Although the politicisation of religion became more prevalent in Cold War anti-communist narratives, it is possible to see how exploring religious themes would have been an effective form of propaganda during the war. As a ‘combination of principles, creeds, and ideals’, faith operates with precisely the same fundamental beliefs theorised by Ellul.40

The principles discussed in the Latin American Propaganda Policy Meetings enable us to understand the institutional context in which Antônio Callado’s radio dramas were produced. It is possible to see many of the above-suggested policies operating directly and indirectly in his scripts. However, the scripts are not reducible to these policies. As this analysis will show, Callado was managing the principles suggested by the MOI creatively.

**Propaganda and Radio Dramas in the Brazilian Section**

*Jean e Marie*, a script written by Callado and broadcast by the BBC Latin American Service on 14 July 1943, is illustrative of the combination of propagandistic elements and Callado’s own creative interests. It is a good example of how the emphasis on the Free French Movement, which was suggested at the Propaganda Policy Meeting, was reflected in his radio dramas. It also responds to the objective of appealing to fear and self-interest, using the occupation of France by the Nazis as a showcase of Nazi expansionism and belligerence. Moreover, the script reveals that many themes and issues addressed in Callado’s future literary production were already present in his scripts of the 1940s, underlining my contention, in previous analysis, that Callado’s experiences at the BBC during the war were very influential in his later work.41

In *Jean e Marie*, the eponymous protagonists are a French couple living in a village in occupied France. Jean is at first presented as a poet who does not want to engage in politics and who does not mind interacting with the Nazis, occasionally receiving a Gestapo officer as a guest in his house. His relationship with Herr Schwartz leads the whole village to believe that Jean is a collaborator. Jean’s poetic musings are perceived by Marie as futile escapism, and the question of the political engagement of artists arises many times throughout the script. Marie cannot bear the idea that her husband is, if not a real collaborator, at least someone whose political apathy betrays the memory of the revolution of 1789, particularly since the action takes place on 14 July of 1943—the anniversary of the French Revolution. The tension in the plot increases to the point that the villagers, with the support of Marie, attack Jean, accusing him of treason. In the face of his apathy, Marie realises that the refusal to resist Nazi invasion is morally unbearable. She has now resolved to abandon Jean and, at the climax of the play, Jean decides to leave the house. However, before he has left, Marie discovers a bomb hidden in a volume of poems by Arthur Rimbaud. Jean then reveals his secret, saying that he acted like a collaborator in order to better conspire against the Nazis, by winning the trust of Herr Schwartz. The bomb is intended to blow up a Nazi factory and he pleads with Marie not to reveal his disguise to the village. It is clear now that Jean had bravely endured the humiliation of being treated as a traitor by the village and by his own wife in the name of the resistance movement. Jean’s last words are a direct quotation from a Mallarmé poem about Verlaine’s death, ‘Un peu profond ruisseau calomnié la mort’ [A stream not very deep, and slandered...
death] suggesting—to a well-informed audience—that Jean’s destiny is death. He is now seen by Marie as a revolutionary martyr, someone who has abdicated his own life and honour for the sake of France, and Marie’s last words in the script are: ‘Jean. Jean d’Arc!’ thereby making an analogy between Jean, the protagonist, and Joan of Arc, the French Catholic saint-martyr who played a prominent political role in the Hundred Years’ War (1337–1453).

The story is a romantic tribute to French resistance against Nazi occupation. It shows, nonetheless, some moments of remarkable sophistication. For example, the tension between poetry and revolution, or between aesthetics and politics, is posed in a very sagacious way, with the quotations from Verlaine and Mallarmé (and the reference to Rimbaud) functioning as disguised clues in the plot. For example, the story begins with Jean quoting Verlaine’s ‘Il Pleure dans mon coeur’ [The tears are falling in my heart], a poem in which some verses are revealing of the very denouement of the story: ‘Quoi? Nulle trahison? Ce deuil est sans raison’ [What? No treason? It is pain without reason]. It is as if Callado was hiding a clue to the plot’s ending in the first line of the script (in fact, Jean is not a traitor —‘nulle trahison’). It is the same with Jean’s last words, quoting the last verse of Mallarmé’s poem ‘Le tombeau’ [The Tomb], indicating that the poet of the story (Jean) is going to die. This is reinforced by the words of Marie (‘Jean D’Arc!’), linking an engagement against Nazism to Christian mysticism.

The admiration for French culture that Callado brought from Brazil, so evident in the references to Rimbaud, Verlaine and Mallarmé, was certainly combined with the propagandistic demands of the BBC Latin American Service policy in order to create the plot of Jean e Marie. Other elements also adhere closely to the guidance offered by the MOI. For example, the name of the Nazi captain, Herr Schwartz, literally means Mr. Black, and his sinister lines create the impression that Nazi expansionism not only threatened other European countries, but that the Germans were also planning to conquer the whole world: ‘The Arian race praised in all languages of the world!’ This appeal to the fear and self-interest of Latin American audiences can also be perceived in the arbitrary violence of Nazi occupation, as in the words of Herr Schwartz: ‘I need to dole out a lot of detentions today, some are preventative, others … definitive.’ Hitler’s ‘New Order’ was, thus, presented in its most horrifying aspect, and fear was evoked in audiences in a more effective way, by producing antipathy towards the Axis.

The stress on the association of the French resistance to Nazi occupation with Catholic mysticism, in Jean’s heroic martyrdom, also corresponds both to Callado’s Catholic background and to the MOI propaganda policy with regards to Latin America. Callado was raised in a devout Catholic family, and the relationship between mysticism and political engagement recurs throughout his fictional oeuvre. It represents a creative solution to a dilemma faced by many Brazilian intellectuals of his generation, who had been brought up in a society strongly influenced by Catholicism, but who were also engaged with the complexity of Brazilian social issues and politics. The articulation (and, sometimes, the tension) between politics and spirituality is present in all Callado’s novels, from A Assunção de Salviano [The Ascension of Salviano] (1954) to Memórias de Aldenham House [Memories of Aldenham House] (1989). The MOI was well aware of its importance and determined to use it in its propaganda policy. In this sense, Callado was not simply applying the MOI’s policy cynically, he was combining the demands of
anti-Nazi propaganda with his own deeply-held beliefs, which are reflected in the struct-
turing of his plots.

**Correio Braziliense**

Another illustration of how Callado applied MOI’s propaganda policy to his own ideas, creative interests and personal drives can be found in the script *Correio Braziliense*, broadcast by the LAS on 2 September 1943. The title makes reference to what is considered to be Brazil’s first newspaper, published in London from 1808 to 1822 by the journalist Hipólito da Costa and shipped to Brazil to circulate in a clandestine way. The newspaper’s liberal tone and criticism of the Portuguese monarchy were the reasons for the paper being published in London, as a way to escape Portuguese censorship in Brazil. The paper was of crucial importance in spreading liberal ideas in Brazil and clearly supported liberal-inspired uprisings, such as the Pernambucan Revolt of 1817 and the political events that culminated in the Independence of Brazil from Portugal in 1822.

The script is structured by a narrator who coordinates the dramatisation through dialogues set at two different moments in the first half of the nineteenth century. First, the audience is taken to London where Hipólito da Costa is visited by the English poet and historian Robert Southey (1774–1843). The meeting is absolutely fictional and allegorical. Southey, a friend of Coleridge and Poet Laureate from 1813 to 1843, wrote a history of Brazil (published in 1810) that became very influential among Brazilian intellectuals. Hipólito da Costa was an intellectual imprisoned by the Portuguese Inquisition for three years, between 1802 and 1805, after being accused of spreading masonic and liberal ideas in Portugal. In the dialogue between Southey and Hipólito da Costa, the latter displays his political engagement and profound desire to help to free Brazil from its subaltern condition, ‘its long colonial lethargy’. Hipólito is depicted by Callado as a politically-engaged intellectual exile in London; and the theme of the engaged artist/intel-
lectual persecuted by brutal and authoritarian regimes will be recurrent in Callado’s future novels, and even in his private life: he was arrested several times by the Brazilian military dictatorship in the 1960s and 1970s. The references to Hipólito’s persecution by the Por-
tuguese Inquisition and his exile also function as clear allusions to what was going on in Brazil at the time the script was broadcast (1943): the Brazilian New State, a dictatorship ruled by Getúlio Vargas between 1937 and 1945.

Hipólito and Southey are intellectuals of different nationalities who seem to appreciate and respect each other; their characters serve as an allegorical representation of Brazil and Britain, which functions as an attempt to obliterate any hierarchies and geopolitical power imbalances. While Great Britain was an extremely powerful Empire, Brazil was a large and culturally-rich but underdeveloped nation, originally a product of Portuguese colonization, and later an area under Britain’s economic and political influence for a con-
siderable part of the nineteenth century, until this was overpowered by US dominance. These two extremely different nations are represented as two equal men, with no differ-
ences and no imbalances, just mutual admiration and respectful friendship. Following the dialogue between Hipólito and Southey, there is a brief conversation between Hipólito and a British boy sent to deliver the proofs of Hipólito’s newspaper from the printer:
BOY: In which language is your magazine written? In Brazilian?
HIPÓLITO: (amused) Your question is very kind, but it is not exactly that. The magazine is Brazilian, but written in Portuguese, which is the language spoken in Brazil. How did you know it was about Brazil?

BOY: Because of its name, and because I have a book of maritime tales which mentions Brazil. I would like to go there.

HIPÓLITO: (sighing) So would I, my boy.

BOY: But aren’t you Brazilian? Why don’t you go?

HIPÓLITO: Political issues, the situation is complicated

BOY: Is it a question of money? That is why I am going to enlist. I am going to be a sailor. Why don’t you enlist, too?

HIPÓLITO: That is a good question.

BOY: Look … The Royal Navy travels the entire world. And they are always fighting for freedom. I want to fight for freedom. (Sadly) But perhaps by the time I have enlisted, there won’t be the opportunity to fight against Napoleon.

HIPÓLITO: There is always a battle for those who love freedom, my son. Who knows, perhaps one day when you are a sailor, you will fight for Brazil. Brazil still has many battles ahead.51

Indeed, the British Royal Navy had sailed the entire world, though Britain’s colonial enterprises in Asia, Africa and the Americas would certainly not be referred to as an eternal struggle for freedom in contexts other than pro-British propaganda. The boy’s lines seem to imply that just as the British defeated Napoleon they will also defeat Hitler and carry on ‘fighting for freedom’. The reference to Hipólito’s exile, and the impossibility of his return to Brazil as a result of the political situation, could also be interpreted as a reference to Vargas’ dictatorship, and to the political persecution and the brutal treatment to which political dissidents were subjected. Fighting for freedom is represented not only as a British attribute, but also as a necessity in Brazil, under the oppression of tyranny, as the script seems to suggest.

In the second part of Correio Brasiliense, the narrator transports the audience to the province of Pernambuco, in the Northeast of Brazil, in 1817. The dialogue now takes place between a young man and his mother, who tries to stop him from going to a rebel meeting at the house of Domingos José Martins, the leader of the Pernambucan Revolt of 1817. This rebellion was basically a liberal and emancipatory uprising that paved the way for Brazilian Independence in 1822. The son argues that it is his duty to fight for freedom and stresses two basic facts in his dialogue with his mother: first, he relies on the leadership of Domingos Martins, who according to him, has lived in Britain and there discovered how a free people live; and, secondly, he refers to what he learned about the burden of colonialism and the lack of freedom in Brazil, after having his eyes opened by Hipólito da Costas’ Correio Brasiliense.52 The script ends in 1822 with Brazilian independence being declared in São Paulo. In the last line of the script the author mentions England again, stressing the importance of Hipólito, an intellectual working for
Brazilian independence from London: ‘To achieve that moment of glory [the independence of Brazil], Brazilians had fought even here, in London’.53

The excerpts from Correio Braziliense reveal the script’s evident propagandistic inspiration, with important passages of Brazilian national history permeated by the presence of Great Britain, always ‘fighting for freedom’ and being a positive model of democracy for Brazil. Britain is portrayed as a constant historical ally to whom Brazilian people should feel indebted, just as one should feel about an old friend who is now in danger and whose friendship one is compelled to honour with diligent help. However, the most striking aspect of the script is the way Callado manages his position as a propagandist, by using his role as a scriptwriter to attack the Vargas’ regime indirectly. Praising democracy and freedom was a strategy commonly employed by Brazilian opposition journalists to criticise Vargas’ dictatorship indirectly, especially in order to circumvent the Brazilian Department for Press and Propaganda’s (DIP) censorship and political persecution.54 As a progressive intellectual himself, Callado seems to believe that he might be able to influence the Brazilian public against the New State, just as Hipólito did a century before him in relation to the Portuguese Monarchy.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the guidance provided by the MOI can be considered a critical element informing the content of these dramas. Callado’s scripts illustrate the impact of LAS Propaganda Policy Committee guidelines on dramas commissioned and produced by LAS and open avenues for future investigations into a range of other entertainment programmes aired by LAS during WW2. The relationship between entertainment programmes and propaganda policies made the orchestrated activities of the MOI, the Foreign Office and the BBC in Latin America even more effective, since, as aesthetic forms, radio dramas were not only capable of incorporating ideas and rational notions, but also of appealing to the audience’s emotions. However, although the propaganda policy ‘guidance’ provided by the BBC and the MOI was crucial in shaping Callado’s plots, this analysis has also shown that other elements were critical to their development. Callado’s case further complicates the notion that the diasporic intellectuals hired by the BBC were the ‘puppet of a ventriloquist’, translating or simply reproducing in local language the unilineal ‘discourse of the master’.55 As a writer of original content in Portuguese for LAS, Callado was negotiating between his own ambitions and interests and those of other staff and audiences, as well as ‘British discourses on national projection’, as has already been argued in the case of other BBC cosmopolitan authors.56 Callado’s radio dramas cannot be reduced to mere propaganda pieces; they were narratives produced with a certain level of autonomy and literary ambition. He seemed genuinely to believe in the propaganda he was producing, which probably added considerably to its effectiveness. Ultimately, he managed his role as a propagandist to advance a personal agenda that was completely independent of the BBC’s: undermining Getúlio Vargas’s New State.

The relationship between aesthetics and politics that characterises most of Callado’s 1940s radio scripts became a recognisable characteristic in his later literary output, most of it deeply critical of authoritarianism in Brazil. This led critics to refer to Callado repeatedly
as an ‘engaged writer’, particularly when reading his novels and plays from the 1960s and 1970s, many of which dramatise political violence in Brazil in the context of the Brazilian Military Dictatorship (1964–1985) and the Cold War in Latin America.  

After his return to Brazil in 1947, Callado’s links with the BBC, and with Britain, were maintained. In fact, Callado became a focal point for the BBC in Latin America, a regular informant and correspondent on Brazilian and Latin American current affairs in the region, and also the father of an Anglo-Brazilian family built with his first wife Jean Maxine Watson, the British BBC staff member he married in 1943. Between 1951 and 1958, Callado delivered a series of talks for the Corporation. In a LAS internal memo from September 1954, Callado is referred to by producer W.A Tate as ‘a highly intelligent and cultured man’ who was ‘a member of our staff during the war’ and who had done ‘Brazilian commentary for the Home Service’: ‘He is a very busy man, he would probably not be able to do anything at a very short notice. (...) he is the editor of Correio da Manhã [The Morning Mail], one of the best newspapers in Brazil’. Callado became the editor-in-chief of Correio da Manhã in 1954, the same year that he published his first novel Assunção de Salviano, and his second theatre play, A Cidade Assassinada [The Murdered City]. The latter was staged by the Companhia Dramática Nacional [The National Drama Company] in São Paulo in 1954 and, one year later, was also broadcast by the BBC LAS. The fact that the play, which makes clear reference to Brazil’s turbulent political context, was broadcast by the BBC in 1955 reinforces not only the long lasting connections between Callado and the Corporation, but also his consistent strategy of using the BBC as a platform for his aesthetic experimentation and political agenda.

Callado was an important and influential connection between British and Latin American mid-century cultures. His case illustrates how intellectuals commissioned by the BBC Overseas Services to deliver war propaganda developed strategies to enhance their agency forming a complex network of relationships between broadcasting, politics and culture on both sides of the Atlantic.

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Notes

1. For example, in a piece of LAS correspondence about the Latin American staff (received on 11/03/1944), Callado is characterised as a particularly talented and prolific drama writer. See File E2/381: Correspondence, BBC WAC.
2. See File E2/380, BBC WAC.
3. Bloom, The Wireless Past, 4.
4. Williams, The Columbia Guide to the Latin American Novel, 72.
5. The discovery of these documents was reported in an article published in 2015; see Mandur Thomaz, “Stepping onto an Unknown Island,” 293–321. Among the files that were sealed and have not been looked at until very recently are: RCONT 1: A. C. Copyright, 1943–1962; RCONT 1: A.C. Talks, 1942–1962; E17/96/8: Transcriptions; R20/89/1: Finance – Latin American Programmes, 1938–1943.

6. I edited a volume with nineteen radio drama scripts that Callado authored for the BBC LAS, it was published in Brazil in 2018; see Callado, *Roteiros de Radioteatro*. All the quotations from Callado’s radio drama scripts in this article were taken from this volume. The translation into English from the original Portuguese is mine.

7. See Leite, “Quando a Patria Viaja”; Martinelli, *Antonio Callado*; Ridenti, “Artistas e Intelectuais no Brasil Pós-1960”; Esquenazi, *O Rádio na Segunda Guerra*; Leal Filho, *Vozes de Londres*; and Guerrini Jr, “Brazilian Section.”

8. Clear evidence of this gap is the absence of studies on the Latin American Service in recent volumes discussing the BBC World Service; see, for example, Ribeiro and Seul, “Revisiting Transnational Broadcasting”; and Gillespie and Webb, *Diasporas and Diplomacy*. References to the BBC LAS are scarce and studies that mention LAS usually focus on Spanish Civil War exiles. See, for example, Gillespie and Nieto McAvoy, “The BBC’s Corporate Cosmopolitanism,” 203–4; and Nieto McAvoy, “A Spaniard Discovers England,” 8–10. References to the Brazilian Section are also scarce; they tend to focus on secondary sources, testimonies of former Brazilian LAS staff members and material available in Brazilian archives. See Esquenazi, *O Rádio na Segunda Guerra*; Leal Filho, *Vozes de Londres*; and Guerrini Jr, “Brazilian Section.”

9. See Seul and Ribeiro, “Revisiting Transnational Broadcasting,” 367; and Mansell, Gerard. *Let Truth Be Told*, 197.

10. See Bratzel and Leonard, *Latin America during World War II*, 9; and Foote and Goebel, *Immigration and National Identities in Latin America*.

11. For a comprehensive discussion of the bibliography about propaganda and the BBC external services see Seul and Ribeiro, “Revisiting Transnational Broadcasting,” 369.

12. Leal Filho, *Vozes de Londres*, 28.

13. File R20/89/1, BBCWAC.

14. Ibid.

15. File E17/96/8, BBC WAC.

16. Regarding the BBC’s contact zones and the role of diasporic intellectuals in propaganda and cultural diplomacy, see Gillespie and Webb, *Corporate Cosmopolitanism*, 11; and Gillespie and Nieto McAvoy, “The BBC’s Corporate Cosmopolitanism,” 192. Callado problematised many aspects of the BBC’s internal tensions and power asymmetries in his last novel, the autobiographical *Memórias de Aldenham House* [Memories of Aldenham House] (1989), set at the BBC LAS during WW2. See Mandur Thomaz, “A Brazilian on the BBC War Front.”

17. Seul and Ribeiro, “Revisiting Transnational Broadcasting,” 368–9.

18. Quoted by Leal, *Vozes de Londres*, 20. All translations into English in this article are my own, unless indicated otherwise.

19. See West’s “Introduction” in Orwell, *The War Broadcasts*, 13–68.

20. The myth of the BBC’s independence was so effective that it was naturalised even by Brazilian scholars who wrote about the Brazilian Section. See, for example, Guerrini Jr, 34; and Leal Filho, 20.
21. File R34/453/1, BBC WAC.
22. Ibid.
23. Stenton, *Radio London and Resistance in Occupied Europe*, 11.
24. File E2/379, BBC WAC.
25. File E2/380, BBC WAC.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid (my emphasis).
28. See Ellul, *Propaganda*, 162; Auerbach and Castronovo, *The Oxford Handbook of Propaganda*, 10; and Welch, *Propaganda, Power and Persuasion*, 11.
29. Ellul, *Propaganda*, 40.
30. Welsh *Propaganda, Power and Persuasion*, 11.
31. Auerbach and Castronovo, *The Oxford Handbook of Propaganda*, 10.
32. Samuel, “Order Out of Chaos,” 275.
33. File E2/382, BBC WAC.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid (my emphasis).
39. Hepburn, Allan, *A Grain of Faith*, 14.
40. See Hepburn, *A Grain of Faith*, 12; and Ellul, *Propaganda*, 40.
41. See Mandur Thomaz, “A Brazilian on the BBC war Front.”
42. Mallarmé, *Poems*, 92.
43. Callado, *Roteiros de Radioteatro*, 47. Joan of Arc, who was canonised by Pope Benedict XVI in 1920, was by the Second World War a highly-charged religious and political symbol. See Kilgore, “Joan of Arc as Propaganda,” 279–96.
44. Translated by Damion Searl; see Searl, “That Old Goat!”
45. Verlaine, *Fêtes Galantes*, 181 (my translation).
46. Mallarmé, *Poems*, 92.
47. Callado, *Roteiros de Radioteatro*, 40.
48. Ibid, 39.
49. See, for example, Côndido, *Romantismo no Brasil*.
50. Callado, *Roteiros de Radioteatro*, 68.
51. Ibid, 66–7.
52. Ibid, 72.
53. Ibid, 75.
54. About censorship during Getúlio Vargas’ New State, see Goulart, *Sob a Verdade Oficial*; Calabre, *O rádio na sintonia do tempo*; and Capelato, *Multidões Em Cena*.
55. On the Lacanian notion of the ‘discourse of the master’ see Gillespie and Nieto McAvoy, “The BBC’s Corporate Cosmopolitanism,” 180–97; and Hill, “The BBC Empire Service,” 25–38.
56. Gillespie and Nieto McAvoy, “The BBC’s Corporate Cosmopolitanism,” 206.
57. See Leite, “Quando a Patria Viaja”; Martinelli, *Antonio Callado*; and Ridenti, “A Guerrilha de Antônio Callado.”
58. File RCONT 1: A.C. Talks, 1942–1962, BBC WAC.
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