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# *The Representation of the Holocaust in the British Propaganda Campaign directed at the German Public, 1938–1945\**

BY STEPHANIE SEUL

## INTRODUCTION

“Davon haben wir nichts gewußt!”— “We didn’t know anything about that!” After the war this was a standard answer given by Germans when questioned about what they had known concerning the persecution and extermination of the Jews. What the German public knew, or could have known, about the Holocaust is a question that has aroused the interest of historians for the last two decades.<sup>1</sup>

For many Germans, in particular for opponents of the Nazi regime, the BBC’s German-language broadcasts were an important source of information. Listening to enemy radio stations and reading enemy leaflets was, however, severely forbidden; those who did listen to British propaganda<sup>2</sup> therefore often risked their lives and those of their families. To what extent did British propaganda contain information about the persecution and extermination of the Jews by the Nazi regime?

\*This essay is based in part on the author’s doctoral thesis which reconstructs the propaganda campaign directed by the Chamberlain government at the German public between the Munich Conference of September 1938 and the disastrous Allied campaign in Norway in the spring of 1940: Stephanie Seul, *Appeasement und Propaganda 1938–1940. Chamberlains Außenpolitik zwischen NS-Regierung und deutschem Volk* (Appeasement and Propaganda 1938–1940: Chamberlain’s Foreign Policy in Relation to the National Socialist Government and the German People), Ph.D. thesis, European University Institute Florence 2005. German quotations were translated by Marion Koebner. The editors wish to thank Dr. Klaus Kirchner for his expert advice regarding propaganda leaflets.

<sup>1</sup>The latest publication, with an overview of current research on the subject and an extensive bibliography, is Peter Longerich, *“Davon haben wir nichts gewußt”: Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung 1933–1945*, Munich 2006. This book has received considerable publicity in the German press and television. See also David Bankier, ‘The Germans and the Holocaust: What Did They Know?’ in *Yad Vashem Studies* 20 (1990), pp. 69–98; *idem*, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism*, Oxford 1992.

<sup>2</sup>I use the word “propaganda” in its contemporary meaning. During the 1930s and early 1940s “propaganda” was not yet commonly regarded as a synonym for lies and ideological indoctrination—in short, for the manipulation of public opinion –, but rather as a term for the government’s information policy at home and abroad. This did, of course, not exclude the omission of unwelcome facts and the subtle twisting of the truth for the purposes of government policy.

From a different perspective, scholars studying British policy towards the Jews have stressed that London knew from an early stage about their persecution and extermination.<sup>3</sup> It has further been pointed out that the British press and the BBC did report about the Holocaust at the time, in particular during the winter of 1942–1943, but that this coverage could have been much more intensive, given the vast amount of information at the disposal of the government and the media. Obviously there had been a number of political and other factors inhibiting a more vigorous publicity campaign.<sup>4</sup>

The questions of how the persecution and extermination was represented in the British propaganda campaign directed at the German public, and how the image of the Holocaust involved here was influenced by political and other factors, have so far remained largely unanswered. One might assume that the mass murder would have played a crucial role in British propaganda, given the development of Nazi anti-Jewish policy and the role of antisemitism in Nazi domestic propaganda during the Second World War.<sup>5</sup> But the few general studies about the subject in fact say very little about the Holocaust. Two authors mention the coverage of the Holocaust in the BBC German Service, but only in passing, and above all they focus on the period from 1942 onwards, when the news of the mass murder of Russian and Polish Jews had filtered through to Allied governments and the BBC launched a massive campaign on the subject.<sup>6</sup>

As the historical literature shows,<sup>7</sup> the British government and media were well informed about the persecution and mass murder. Why then was so little use made of this knowledge in the propaganda campaign? Before the outbreak of war the German Service was even ordered by the Foreign Office to refrain from mentioning Jews altogether—mainly for diplomatic reasons. It was only during December 1942

<sup>3</sup>See Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939–1945*, Oxford 1979; Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's Final Solution*, London 1980; Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies: How the Allies responded to the news of Hitler's Final Solution*, London 1981; Priscilla Dale Jones, 'British Policy Towards German Crimes Against German Jews, 1939–1945' in *LBI Year Book* 36 (1991), pp. 339–366; David Silberklang, 'The Allies and the Holocaust: A Reappraisal', in *Yad Vashem Studies* 24 (1994), pp. 147–176; Nicholas Terry, 'Conflicting Signals: British Intelligence on the "Final Solution" Through Radio Intercepts and Other Sources, 1941–1942', in *Yad Vashem Studies* 32 (2004), pp. 351–396.

<sup>4</sup>The contemporary coverage of the Holocaust in the BBC's propaganda broadcasts directed to British and foreign audiences was studied by Jean Seaton, 'Reporting atrocities: the BBC and the holocaust', in Jean Seaton and Ben Pimlott (eds.), *The Media in British Politics*, Aldershot 1987, pp. 154–182; Jeremy D. Harris, 'Broadcasting the Massacres: An Analysis of the BBC's Contemporary Coverage of the Holocaust', in *Yad Vashem Studies* 25 (1996), pp. 65–98, and in part also by Wasserstein and Laqueur. The press publicity is analysed in Andrew Sharf, 'The British Press and the Holocaust', in *Yad Vashem Studies* 5 (1963), pp. 169–191; *idem*, *The British Press and Jews under Nazi Rule*, London 1964. Mainly for reasons of lack of film material British newsreels did not take up stories about the persecution of the Jews in the Third Reich. See J.A.S. Grenville, 'British Propaganda, the Newsreels and Germany 1933 to 1939', in Lothar Kettenacker, Manfred Schlenke and Helmut Seier (eds.), *Studien zur Geschichte Englands und der deutsch-britischen Beziehungen: Festschrift für Paul Kluge*, Munich 1981, pp. 290–291.

<sup>5</sup>For the latter see now the excellent book by Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust*, Cambridge, MA–London 2006. See also *idem*, 'The "Jewish War": Goebbels and the Antisemitic Campaigns of the Nazi Propaganda Ministry', in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 19/1 (2005), pp. 51–80.

<sup>6</sup>Seaton; Harris.

<sup>7</sup>See notes 3 and 4.

that the Holocaust assumed the status of a major theme in British propaganda. The arguments brought forward in the literature relate, however, mainly to the BBC Home and European Services in general and do not explain the special case of British propaganda directed towards the German public.

The British government started its propaganda campaign in the crucial days before the Munich Conference, when war and peace hung in the balance. Prime Minister Chamberlain himself decided on 27 September 1938 to address the German people in a broadcast and to appeal to them to help him save peace in Europe.<sup>8</sup> From that day onwards, the BBC regularly broadcast a German-language news programme and political commentaries to inform the German public about the British efforts to appease Hitler and save the peace. After war broke out the government intensified the propaganda campaign; in addition to the German-language broadcasts the Royal Air Force (RAF) dropped millions of leaflets over the Reich. All these measures were not only aimed at informing the German people about the war's course from the British perspective, but above all at causing cracks in the German fighting morale and stirring up popular resistance against the Nazi regime.<sup>9</sup>

Although in public the BBC and British government feverishly denied that the German-language broadcasts were influenced, let alone controlled, by the state, in reality the German Service had been closely supervised by the Foreign Office from the first day of its existence. Indeed, the service only came into existence at the Prime Minister's instruction—he felt that both direct appeals to the German people and public pressure on Hitler might induce the dictator to modify his aggressive foreign policy. In the first weeks the service had to submit every single broadcast manuscript to the Foreign Office for scrutiny; after a few weeks control was slightly relaxed and the proposed content of the broadcasts only had to be telephoned through to FO officials. But the Foreign Office always retained—and exercised—the right to reject or ask for modification of a broadcast if it was not in line with the government's foreign policy aims. Often the Foreign Office also made suggestions regarding specific themes

<sup>8</sup>The origins of the BBC's German-language broadcasts are described in Stephanie Seul, *Appeasement und Propaganda 1938–1940: Chamberlains Außenpolitik zwischen NS-Regierung und deutschem Volk*, Ph.D. thesis, European University Institute Florence 2005, pp. 109–174. Apart from the BBC, Chamberlain also made use of the private broadcasting station Radio Luxembourg to convey his message to the German people. See Grenville, pp. 287f.; Nicholas Pronay and Philip M. Taylor, "'An Improper Use of Broadcasting...'" The British Government and Clandestine Radio Propaganda Operations against Germany during the Munich Crisis and After', in *Journal of Contemporary History* 19,3 (1984), pp. 357–383; Seul, *Appeasement und Propaganda*, pp. 175–177.

<sup>9</sup>There is still no satisfactory history of the British propaganda campaign towards the German public. Useful information can be gathered from Bernhard Wittek, *Der britische Ätherkrieg gegen das Dritte Reich: Die deutschsprachigen Kriegsendungen der British Broadcasting Corporation*, Münster 1962; Karl Brintzer, *Hier spricht London: Von einem, der dabei war*, Hamburg 1969; Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, vol. 3: *The War of Words*, London 1970; Charles Cruickshank, *The fourth arm: Psychological warfare 1938–1945*, London 1977; Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in War, 1939–1945: Organisations, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany*, London 1979; Clas Oliver Richter, *Political Warfare Executive: Aufbau, Organisation und Integration der britischen Feindpropagandaorganisation 1941–1945*, Münster 1998; David Garnett, *The Secret History of PWE: The Political Warfare Executive 1939–1945*, with an introduction and notes by Andrew Roberts, London 2002; Seul, *Appeasement und Propaganda*. Garnett worked for PWE and wrote his secret "official history"—which was only released to the general public in 1995—between 1945 and 1947, using many documents which were subsequently lost or destroyed.

to be taken up in the German-language broadcasts or insisted, as in January 1939, on additional news broadcasts and political commentaries termed “special reports” (*Sonderberichte*; the original German term will be used throughout) being introduced to counter the impact of Nazi propaganda on the German public.<sup>10</sup>

With the British declaration of war against Germany on 3 September 1939, the organisation of propaganda—now enlarged to take in leaflets dropped by the RAF over German territory and various types of secret propaganda—passed to a body called the Department of Propaganda in Enemy Countries or simply Department EH. Its main purpose was the gathering of information about conditions and public opinion in Nazi Germany and German-occupied countries and the drafting of leaflets and directives for the BBC’s German and other foreign-language broadcasts. Political control was first exercised by the Ministry of Information and from October 1939 onwards by the Foreign Office. After considerable inter-departmental warfare about the political control of British propaganda and various re-organisations during 1940–1941, the Churchill administration created a new propaganda department in August 1941: the Political Warfare Executive (PWE). This body was responsible for propaganda aimed at enemy and enemy-occupied countries and put under the control of a joint ministerial committee comprising the Minister of Information, the Minister of Economic Warfare and the Foreign Secretary.<sup>11</sup>

In considering the representation of the Holocaust in the BBC German Service—the main medium of British propaganda—we therefore have to bear in mind that it was not the corporation that decided which piece of information was to be broadcast, but the British government represented by the Foreign Office, Department EH, and later the PWE. For that reason, in our context an analysis of the political decision making level is as relevant as a reconstruction of the Holocaust’s contemporary coverage. Even though British propaganda differed fundamentally in organisation, methods, ideology and truthfulness from its Nazi counterpart, there can be no doubt that what the British government intended with its German-language broadcasts and leaflets was the subtle influencing of German public opinion for the purposes of British foreign policy and warfare.

What, then, could the German public learn from British propaganda about the persecution and extermination of the Jews, and to what extent was the contemporary coverage of the Jewish tragedy influenced by political and other considerations?

<sup>10</sup>The origins, organisation and content of British German-language propaganda, and in particular the relationship between the BBC German Service and the British government, are analysed in detail in Seul, *Appeasement und Propaganda 1938–1940*, Parts I and II.

<sup>11</sup>The history of the various bodies involved in British propaganda towards Nazi Germany is very confusing. For further information see Cruickshank; Balfour; Richter; Garnett; and Seul, *Appeasement und Propaganda 1938–1940*.

AUTUMN 1938 TO AUGUST 1939:  
 “WE ARE WARNING THE BBC TO KEEP OFF JEWS”

During the first months of British German-language broadcasting very little was reported about the persecution of the Jews.<sup>12</sup> The period from the autumn of 1938 until the outbreak of war not only coincided with an intensification in the anti-Jewish terror of the Nazi regime, but also with Chamberlain’s appeasement policy towards the Third Reich. On 9–10 November 1938 the Nazi regime staged anti-Jewish pogroms all over the Reich, and the so-called “*Reichskristallnacht*” was heavily criticised in the British press;<sup>13</sup> there was, however, no critical coverage of these events in British German-language propaganda. Likewise, in the weeks following the pogroms the BBC avoided mentioning the persecution of the Jews or even criticising the German government for its anti-Jewish policy.<sup>14</sup> The British government took the view that the treatment of the Jews was an internal German affair in which Great Britain had no right to interfere. Furthermore, Chamberlain did not wish to endanger his appeasement policies, in the interest of avoiding war with Nazi Germany. Hence nothing was to be broadcast that might arouse the resentment of the Nazi regime.

How the Nazis reacted to reports about the persecution of Jews was demonstrated at the beginning of February 1939, when the Home Service told its listeners that since the previous September 6,000 German refugees and 2,400 German refugee children had arrived in Great Britain. The service, it was explained, would offer an electrical recording of the landing of a party of German refugee children and of their first impressions of England.<sup>15</sup> Although the broadcast was worded in the most inoffensive language avoiding any mention that the children were Jewish and fleeing from Nazi persecution, the Berlin government protested sharply. In addition, the German propaganda ministry launched an aggressive anti-British campaign attacking British Imperial history in general and British policy in the Mandated Territory of Palestine in particular.<sup>16</sup>

The British Embassy in Berlin reported to the Foreign Office that in their view it had been unwise of the BBC “on their own initiative to give a propagandist value to the news”, that is, to broadcast a Jewish item, as this was “liable to destroy to a large extent its effect on the public of this country and to alienate the sympathies of

<sup>12</sup>I have analysed the coverage of the Jewish persecution by the Nazis in British propaganda during 1938–1939 in more detail in a separate article: Stephanie Seul, “‘Any Reference to Jews on the Wireless might Prove a Double-edged Weapon’: Jewish Images in the British Propaganda Campaign towards the German Public, 1938–1939”, in Martin Liepach, Gabriele Melischek and Josef Seethaler (eds.), *Jewish Images in the Media* (Relation: Communication Research in Comparative Perspective, new series, vol. 2), Vienna 2007, pp. 203–232.

<sup>13</sup>Sharf, ‘The British Press and the Holocaust’, pp. 176–178; *idem*, *The British Press and Jews under Nazi Rule*, pp. 58ff.; Franklin Reid Gannon, *The British Press and Germany, 1936–1939*, Oxford 1971, pp. 41, 205, 226–228; Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History*, Oxford 1994, p. 35.

<sup>14</sup>On the government’s failure to criticise the pogroms see Kushner, p. 50; Seul, “‘Any reference’”, pp. 204–208.

<sup>15</sup>From *BBC German Broadcast of February 3rd* [1939], The National Archives (formerly Public Record Office), Kew, London (subsequently cited as TNA:PRO), FO 395/625, P 377/6/150.

<sup>16</sup>No. 56 telegraphic, Ogilvie-Forbes to Foreign Office, 6 Feb. 1939, TNA:PRO, FO 395/625, P 377/6/150; No. 185, Ogilvie-Forbes to Halifax, 9 Feb. 1939, TNA:PRO, FO 395/626, P 440/6/150.

German listeners".<sup>17</sup> Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes, the Chargé d'Affaires at the Berlin embassy, wrote:

The German Government undoubtedly view our broadcasting with distaste but up to the present have probably found it difficult to take exception thereto or to explain to their public that the contents of the bulletins constitute anti-National-Socialist propaganda. The recent broadcast has however furnished the German Government with a heaven- sent opportunity to protest and retaliate against our broadcasting activities which we have up to the present endeavoured to preserve as clean and completely free from suspicion and propaganda. I think it is regrettable that there should have been inserted in the programme an item of this nature which has in this country [i.e. Germany] a double- edged propaganda value and is not a subject which should have been selected. In times of crisis it would of course be necessary to deviate from completely straight news.<sup>18</sup>

Ogilvie-Forbes' views were shared by other professional diplomats in the Foreign Office. Rex Leeper, the former head of the News Department, commented: "I think the BBC were not wise in doing this & we are warning them to keep off Jews."<sup>19</sup> Indeed, in the spring of 1939 the Foreign Office again told the BBC not to mention Jews in British propaganda directed towards Germany, because "any reference to Jews on the wireless might prove a double-edged weapon".<sup>20</sup>

Whereas British propaganda refrained from reporting about the persecution and maltreatment of German Jews, or about the protest of the British public and press against "*Reichskristallnacht*", the BBC German Service frequently reported about the persecution of *non-Jewish* victims of the Nazi regime such as the Protestant pastor Martin Niemöller, who had been imprisoned in a concentration camp.<sup>21</sup> The Foreign Office felt that if Nazi atrocities were publicly denounced at all, then prominence should be given to less "sensational" cases of "perfectly good Aryans such as Niemöller", as one official put it, and not to Jews.<sup>22</sup>

Likewise, the German Service reported more frequently about the conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine than about the Jewish persecution in the Third Reich itself. This conflict indirectly touched on the persecution of the Jews, because the British government, since 1920 responsible for the military and civil administration of Palestine, had decided in spring 1939 to close the frontiers almost completely to Jewish refugees. The reason for this measure was the increasing Arab hostility towards Jewish immigration. In 1936 open revolt had broken out in Palestine, which was not only directed towards the Jews, but also against the British troops controlling the Mandated Territory. For the British, Arab hostility not only created a security problem, but had also severe strategic implications, since Palestine and the Middle

<sup>17</sup>No. 170, Ogilvie-Forbes to Halifax, 8 Feb. 1939, TNA:PRO, FO 395/625, P 439/6/150, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>Minute Leeper, 7 Feb. 1939, TNA:PRO, FO 395/625, P 377/6/150.

<sup>20</sup>Holman to Strang, 14 Apr. 1939, TNA:PRO, FO 395/627, P 1524/6/150.

<sup>21</sup>See for instance a broadcast of 1 July 1939, in *Die deutschsprachigen Sendungen des englischen Rundfunks*, memorandum by OKW/WNV Chiffrierstelle, Nr. 2995/39g., 15.8.1939, p. 5, copy Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv Frankfurt/M. (subsequently cited as DRA), no archival reference.

<sup>22</sup>Minute Roberts, 16 Oct. 1939, TNA:PRO, FO 371/ 23105, C 16788, cited in Tony Kushner, *The persistence of prejudice: Antisemitism in British society during the Second World War*, Manchester 1989, p. 157.



East were of great importance for the defence of the British Empire in case of war. The British government was therefore concerned with resolving the Jewish-Arab conflict in favour of the Arabs, which in fact meant a rigorous restriction on Jewish immigration into Palestine. The new British policy was officially laid down in the White Paper on Palestine published in May 1939 and came as a devastating blow not only to Jewish refugees from Germany but to Zionists worldwide.<sup>23</sup>

Another reason British propaganda reported so frequently on the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine was Nazi propaganda that feverishly attacked British policy in the Holy Land; the British government considered this a serious threat to its political and strategic interests. This propaganda was aimed on the one hand at undermining British prestige and authority in Palestine and the Middle East, and on the other hand at convincing the German public of British military and political weakness. It is therefore not surprising that in the aftermath of “*Reichskristallnacht*” Whitehall opposed any talk about the “Jewish problem” in the newly created German-language broadcasts. The British government feared that appeals for sympathy for the persecuted Jews were likely to undermine the enforcement of the new British policy towards Palestine and would furthermore play into the hands of Nazi propaganda.<sup>24</sup> In order to repair the damage done by the propaganda and inform the German public about British policy in Palestine, the BBC German Service instead broadcast four *Sonderberichte*<sup>25</sup> on Palestine in the first half of February 1939, and two more in mid-May.<sup>26</sup>

Apart from the necessities of foreign and military policy—as indicated, appeasing Hitler and securing Arab support for Great Britain in the event of war with Germany—there was another factor limiting the coverage of the Jewish persecution. This was the widespread belief in British government circles and in the BBC that the majority of the German people was antisemitic, and propaganda sympathising with the Jews or appearing to be under Jewish influence was doomed to be ineffective. This view is illustrated by a memorandum from H. H. Stewart, director of the BBC Overseas Intelligence Department, about his visit in August 1939 to Berlin, where he spoke to many “middle-class” Germans about the BBC’s German-language broadcasts. He reported one German’s opinion back to the corporation, to the effect “that it was extremely damaging to mention or use talks by or about Jews and what

<sup>23</sup>Wasserstein, pp. 1–23; Martin Gilbert, ‘British Government Policy towards Jewish Refugees (November 1938–September 1939)’, in *Yad Vashem Studies* 13 (1979), pp. 127–67; Gabriel Sheffer, ‘Appeasement and the Problem of Palestine’ in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 11 (1980), pp. 377–399; Michael J. Cohen, ‘Appeasement in the Middle East: The British White Paper on Palestine, May 1939’, in *idem* (ed.), *Palestine to Israel: From Mandate to Independence*, London 1988, pp. 101–128.

<sup>24</sup>Wasserstein, pp. 1–17, 163; David Cesarini, ‘Great Britain’, in David S. Wyman and Charles H. Rosenzweig (eds.), *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, Baltimore and London 1996, p. 605.

<sup>25</sup>These *Sonderberichte* consisted of talks, political commentaries or press reviews on current political events or on subjects of general interest to the German public and were broadcast at 22.30h after the late evening news in the BBC German-language programme. They were introduced at the end of January 1939 at the request of the Foreign Office as an answer to news of Hitler’s aggressive designs. See Seul, *Appeasement und Propaganda 1938–1940*, pp. 297f., 341.

<sup>26</sup>The BBC’s *German News Talks*, memorandum A.E. Barker, 21 July 1939, TNA:PRO, FO 395/631, P 3336/6/150. The talks on Palestine were broadcast on 3, 9, 14 and 16 Febr., and 16 and 19 May 1939. The memorandum only lists the titles of the *Sonderberichte*, but not their content.



they were doing in England. People were still inclined to prefer anti-Jewish propaganda.”<sup>27</sup> This position even led the BBC to decide that German-Jewish refugees should not be employed as speakers on the German Service,<sup>28</sup> as it was thought that Germans were able to recognise Jews by the way they spoke.<sup>29</sup>

SEPTEMBER 1939 TO JUNE 1941: “FOR A GERMAN AUDIENCE  
WE DO NOT USE APPEALS FOR SYMPATHY ON BEHALF  
OF JEWS AS A PROPAGANDA LINE.”

As is well known, after the outbreak of war the Nazi regime not only intensified the persecution and murder of Jews inside the Reich but extended it to the Jewish communities in occupied countries. Each new step in Nazi anti-Jewish policy became speedily known to the British government and was even reported, often in great detail, in the daily press in Allied and neutral countries.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the BBC Home Service reported from time to time about the campaign against the Jews in Germany and Poland. For instance, it was reported in January and February 1940 that large numbers of Jews were dying as a consequence of hunger, cold, and generally brutal treatment.<sup>31</sup> The BBC German Service, which was under much closer government control than the Home Service,<sup>32</sup> paid much less attention to the fate of the Jews. Although the historical documentation is fragmentary, the available sources suggest that whereas

<sup>27</sup>*German News*, BBC memorandum H.H. Stewart, 25 Aug. 1939, BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, Reading (subsequently cited as BBC WAC), E 9/12/5.

<sup>28</sup>*Bulletins in Foreign Languages*, internal BBC memorandum, undated, unsigned, BBC WAC, R 34/325, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup>It is true that until the turn of twentieth century some Jews were distinguishable by their language, but this was certainly no longer the case after the First World War. The allusion to “Jewish accents” rather belongs to the standard repertoire of antisemites eager to show that Jews are different from the society they live in. For a historical study of German-Jewish accents see Jacob Toury, ‘Die Sprache als Problem der jüdischen Einordnung im deutschen Kulturraum’, in Walter Grab (ed.), *Gegenseitige Einflüsse deutscher und jüdischer Kultur: Von der Epoche der Aufklärung bis zur Weimarer Republik* (Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte, Beiheft 4.), Tel Aviv 1982, pp. 75–96. I would like to thank my colleague at Bremen University, Prof. Dr. Michael Nagel, for drawing my attention to this article.

<sup>30</sup>Laqueur, pp. 67, 197 and chapter 3; Sharf, ‘The British Press and the Holocaust’, pp. 180f.; Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, pp. 127–129.

<sup>31</sup>On 11 January 1940 it was reported on the Home Service: “A new regulation has been passed in Berlin. According to this regulation every Polish Jew will be forced to undertake a two-year labour service [*Arbeitsdienst*]. He will not receive payment for this but must live with his family instead who will maintain him.” *Davenport, Rundfunksendung, englisch, 11. Januar 1940, 20.30 Uhr*, RSHA, Amt VI, B-Dienst, No. 15, 11 Jan. 1940, Institut für Zeitgeschichte München (subsequently cited as IfZ), Dc 15.24. One month later it was again stated in the Home Service: “In those parts of Poland occupied by the Germans at least 40,000 Jews have died from hunger, cold and various other afflictions.” *Davenport, Rundfunksendung, englisch, 8. Februar 1940., 17 Uhr*, RSHA, Amt VI, B-Dienst, No. 60, 9 Febr. 1940, IfZ, Dc 15.2; emphasis in original. Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution* (p. 113, fn. 72) wrongly identifies this item as being broadcast by the BBC German Service.

<sup>32</sup>Whereas after the outbreak of war the BBC German Service came under the control of Department EH, the Home Service was supervised by the Ministry of Information. Control was much less close than that of the German Service. While all German-language output of the BBC was strictly watched over by officials of Department EH, the Ministry of Information never succeeded in establishing effective control over the Home Service. See Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II*, London 1979, pp. 230–231.

during 1939–1941 British propaganda directed at the German public paid considerable attention to the Nazi maltreatment of the civil population in the occupied countries, persecution of the Jews was treated as a subject of secondary importance. This is demonstrated by the monitoring reports on BBC broadcasts compiled by the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* during January and February 1940<sup>33</sup> and by British leaflets dropped over Germany during 1939–1941:<sup>34</sup> while German crimes against the civil population of the occupied countries were regularly described in the leaflets, the systematic murder campaign against the Jews was not acknowledged even once; it was referred to only sparingly in the broadcasts of the BBC German Service. During the winter of 1939–1940 British propaganda widely publicised, through a series of news broadcasts, talks and leaflets, the Gestapo’s humiliation and persecution of the Polish populace, and in particular of the Polish intellectual élite and clergy, together with the deliberate destruction of Polish churches and monasteries. The aim of this campaign was to drive a wedge between the Nazis and the German public by stirring up fear that one day the Nazis would treat Germans in the same brutal way as they treated the Poles. The anti-Polish terror by the Nazis was described in emotional language and illustrated by statistics regarding those expelled from their homes or killed, and by eye-witness accounts. Opinion expressed in the press of Britain and that of other democratic countries was frequently cited, for the sake of impressing the widespread condemnation of these brutal acts upon the Germans.<sup>35</sup> A German Service news broadcast of 29 January 1940 was typical:

The Polish Government in Exile in Paris today published a White Book in which new claims are made about *the number of Polish victims of Nazi terror*. According to the White Book, 18,000 Poles, all leading personalities and from all social classes, have been murdered in cold blood in the course of the barbaric campaign of terror waged by the Nazis in German-occupied Poland.

The White Book views these mass murders as part of the Nazi plan to exterminate those Poles living under German hegemony, a plan dreamed up by the gentlemen in the Wilhelmstrasse and which the Gestapo is now eagerly putting into effect. The latest revelations by the Vatican City radio station have turned the spotlight on the reign of terror being

<sup>33</sup>Monitoring reports of Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA), Amt VI, B-Dienst, Nos. 1–62, Jan. and Febr. 1940, IfZ, Dc 15.24.

<sup>34</sup>Klaus Kirchner (ed.), *Flugblattpropaganda im 2. Weltkrieg: Europa*, vol. 1, *Flugblätter aus England 1939/40/41: Bibliographie, Katalog*, Erlangen 1978.

<sup>35</sup>Seul, *Appeasement und Propaganda 1938–1940*, pp. 1058–1062. See for instance *Daventry, 20.30 Uhr, deutsch*, 2 Nov. 1939, Sonderdienst “Landhaus”, (Abendmeldung), Bundesarchiv Berlin (subsequently cited as BA Berlin), R 74/343, p. 92; *London, Rundfunksendung deutsch, 18. Januar 1940, 20.30 Uhr*, RSHA, Amt VI, B-Dienst, No. 28, 19 Jan. 1940, IfZ, Dc 15.24; *Daventry, Rundfunksendung deutsch, 23. Januar 1940, 13.30 Uhr*, RSHA, Amt VI, B-Dienst, No. 34, 24 Jan. 1940, IfZ, Dc 15.24; *Daventry, 20.30 Uhr, deutsch*, 25 Jan. 1940, Sonderdienst “Landhaus”, (Abendmeldung), BA Arch Berlin, R 74/431, pp. 67–72; *Daventry, Rundfunksendung, deutsch, 29. Januar 1940, 13.30 Uhr*, RSHA, Amt VI, B-Dienst, No. 43, 30 Jan. 1940, IfZ, Dc 15.24; *London, Rundfunksendung deutsch, 31. Januar 1940, 20.30 Uhr*, RSHA, Amt VI, B-Dienst, No. 47, 1 Febr. 1940, IfZ, Dc 15.24; *London, Rundfunksendung deutsch, 4. Februar 1940, 20.30 Uhr*, RSHA, Amt VI, B-Dienst, No. 52, 5 Febr. 1940, IfZ, Dc 15.24; *Gestapolen*, leaflet no. 331 (distributed 21 March to 24 Apr. 1940), in Kirchner (ed.), vol. 1, pp. 101f.

constructed by the Nazis behind Poland's hermetically sealed borders. *That the Gestapo is executing Polish priests is today officially conceded in Berlin.*<sup>36</sup>

British propaganda was based on giving credence to intelligence reports reaching the government and the BBC that there were enough Germans who cherished humanitarian values and detested Nazi crimes, and that others feared the revenge of those who had been oppressed if Germany lost the war.<sup>37</sup> That the British were on the right track in their approach is confirmed by the reaction of the Nazi propaganda ministry to the reports on the terror in Poland. After first ignoring the reports, Goebbels soon felt the need for a counter-attack stamped by angry denial.<sup>38</sup> This direct British approach contrasted sharply, as mentioned, with treatment of the persecution of the Jews in Germany and Poland which was given much less prominence in British propaganda and only occasionally mentioned in passing. During the "phoney war", British propaganda did not make it clear to the German public that the Nazis were expelling all Polish Jews from their homes and forcing them into the *Generalgouvernement's* ghettos. While the BBC Home Service informed British listeners from time to time about the anti-Jewish pogroms in Poland and the sufferings of the Polish Jews, and while the British press also reported regularly about these matters, the German Service mentioned the persecution of Polish Jewry only indirectly, or in the context of propaganda campaigns on other themes. For example, on 12 January 1940 the German Service praised the behaviour of a Jewish US naval officer who had rescued more than five hundred men from the German steamer *Columbus*:

Those of our listeners who are not ashamed of what their Führer has done, and is still doing, to the Jews—for example what is currently going on in Lublin—would do well to take the following announcement to heart. It comes from the influential American Journal "Washington Times and Herald". Under the headline "Note to Hitler" in the 11 January issue it states: *The man who saved the lives of 577 of the crew of the Nazi passenger steamship Columbus when they followed the order to sink the ship, is a Jew. His name is Harry A. Batt. He was in command of the American warship Patcalusa [sic]. ... Would the Columbus people have rescued Captain Batt if the situation had been reversed? In reply to this question, we in London would say: the citizens of the former free, mentally sound Germany would certainly have done so. But the citizens of Hitler's Germany would not dare to.*<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup>Davenport, *Rundfunksendung, deutsch, 29. Januar 1940, 20.30 Uhr*, RSHA, Amt VI, B-Dienst, No. 43, 30 Jan. 1940, IfZ, Dc 15.24; emphasis in original.

<sup>37</sup>See for example *BBC Services for Europe. Monthly Intelligence Report*, 19 Febr. 1940, TNA:PRO, CAB 21/1073, pp. 4–5, 6; Note George Pinney to Intelligence Division, Department EH, 13 June 1940, TNA:PRO, FO 898/180. See also Seul, *Appeasement und Propaganda 1938–1940*, pp. 1059–60.

<sup>38</sup>Seul, *Appeasement und Propaganda 1938–1940*, p. 1062.

<sup>39</sup>*London, Rundfunksendung, deutsch, 12. Januar 1940, 20.30 Uhr*, RSHA, Amt VI, B-Dienst, No. 18, 13 Jan. 1940, IfZ, Dc 15.24; emphasis in original. On 19 December 1939 the German passenger liner *Columbus* (the third largest ship in Germany's merchant marine) was spotted by the British destroyer *HMS Hyperion* about 400 miles off the American East Coast near Virginia. In order to prevent capture by the British navy, the liner was scuttled by her crew. The *Columbus's* survivors—579 crew members—were rescued by the US heavy cruiser *Tuscaloosa* and brought to New York. See Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 'SS Columbus (1924)', [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS\\_Columbus\\_\(1924\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Columbus_(1924)) (as of 1 February 2007).

Jews were also mentioned in a *Sonderbericht* on the occasion of the publication of the British White Paper on German concentration camps. The thirty-six-page booklet was presented to Parliament by Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, on 31 October 1939 and constituted, in his words, “the most damning indictment of German methods”.<sup>40</sup> During 1938 and 1939 British diplomats in Germany had collected a vast amount of material about the conditions in the camps. The Foreign Office did not publish the material at the time; but two months after war broke out, the government no longer felt obliged to take account of German susceptibilities.<sup>41</sup> Even then, however, there was strong criticism in government circles of the presentation of this material in a White Paper: many officials feared that the revelations about the camps would be regarded as atrocity propaganda on the model of British propaganda during the Great War, to be exploited by the Nazis for their own propaganda purposes.<sup>42</sup>

Although there were, of course, a great many Jews among the camp inmates, the Foreign Office was careful not to single them out as special victims of the Nazis. The title of the White Paper—“Papers Concerning the Treatment of German Nationals in Germany 1938–1939”—reflected a deliberate effort to disguise the fact that Jews, together with other groups deemed racially inferior, were the particular focus of Nazi persecution, thereby arguably meriting special attention—and a special policy by the British authorities, which is to say granting asylum to victims of such persecution in Great Britain or Palestine.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, it is the case that the paper signified the first official British recognition and condemnation of German crimes against the Jews. But the document’s deeper purpose was to refute Nazi propaganda concerning British atrocities in Palestine and South Africa during the Boer War.<sup>44</sup>

After the document was published, its disclosures were widely publicised in British propaganda. On 30 October the BBC German Service broadcast comments on the White Paper in the form of questions and answers, followed by a review of press reactions a day later.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, regarding the persecution of the Jews, the *Sonderbericht* only stated that in 1938–1939 out of the eight thousand inmates of the Buchenwald concentration camp about two thousand had been Jews—and that whereas non-Jews were habitually punished with twenty-five strokes, Jews received sixty.<sup>46</sup>

Occasionally, references to Jewish persecution were made in the context of appeals to the moral conscience of the German people and calls to Germans to dissociate themselves from the Nazi regime and its criminal behaviour. In

<sup>40</sup>War Cabinet 40(39)7, 7 Oct. 1939, TNA:PRO, CAB 65/1.

<sup>41</sup>*Germany, No. 2 (1939). Papers concerning the Treatment of German Nationals in Germany 1938–1939. Presented by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Parliament by Command of His Majesty.* Cmd. 6120. London, HMSO 1939. See also Sharf, ‘The British Press and the Holocaust’, pp. 178f.

<sup>42</sup>Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, pp. 41, 123–125.

<sup>43</sup>Wasserstein, p. 163.

<sup>44</sup>Sharf, ‘The British Press and the Holocaust’, pp. 178f.; Wasserstein, pp. 163f.; Dale Jones, pp. 344f.;

Kushner, *The persistence of prejudice*, p. 157.

<sup>45</sup>Planning and Broadcasting Committee, 36th meeting, 25 Oct. 1939, minute 8; 40th meeting, 30 Oct. 1939, minute 1; 41st meeting, 31 Oct. 1939, minute 11, all in TNA:PRO, FO 898/7.

<sup>46</sup>*Daventry, 22.30 Uhr, deutsch*, 30 Oct. 1939, Sonderdienst “Landhaus”, (Abendmeldung), BArch Berlin, R 74/341, pp. 96–100.

remembrance of the German pogrom night, the German Service broadcast a *Sonderbericht* which concluded with an appeal to the German armed forces as follows:

German soldiers: I know that a soldier has to obey orders. But if you lend your support to the Nazi regime, then you are asking for these pogroms and concentration camps, and you shift the responsibility for these deeds from a gang of ruthless scoundrels [*rücksichtslose Halunken*] to the whole of Germany. Sixteen years ago German soldiers in Munich demonstrated how to deal with the Nazis. There is still time to save the honour of the German soldier!<sup>47</sup>

Another indirect reference to Jews—one also appealing to the moral conscience of Germans—can be found in a *Sonderbericht* on the meaning of the text of the German folk song “*Üb immer Treu und Redlichkeit*” (“Be Always Loyal and Sincere”). Composed by Mozart, the song is based on a poem by Ludwig Höltz; it began with the lines “*Üb immer Treu und Redlichkeit / bis an dein kühles Grab / und weiche keinen Finger breit / von Gottes Wegen ab*” (“Be always loyal and sincere / until you’re in your cool grave / and do not stray a finger’s breadth / from the ways of God”). The authors of the *Sonderbericht* commented as follows:

*And now ask yourselves ... was it fair—to take just one example—to subject people to inhuman suffering in concentration camps, people like you who were guilty of nothing more than belonging to another race, another political party, or of having a different concept of truth and justice? And is it acceptable to look on with equanimity? I know it is extremely difficult to maintain your sense of decency when you can’t even tell your neighbour or friend how you’re feeling, and yet you have to. Not to stray a finger’s breadth, that is what your great poet demands of you.*<sup>48</sup>

Such admonitions notwithstanding, in this period the British propagandists generally seem to have taken care not to appear to openly take sides in the “Jewish Question”—certainly not to condemn the Nazi regime for persecuting Jews. On 4 October 1939, the Planning and Broadcasting Committee of Department EH discussed the BBC German broadcast to be made that same evening. Committee members voiced criticisms of a *Sonderbericht* by Ralph Murray entitled “The New Socialism”, which had been intended to counter Nazi propaganda. The report, it was felt, contained a number of references to Jews that were “too offensive”. The text was then modified to meet this criticism.<sup>49</sup> Another example of this sort involves a newspaper article by the well-known American journalist Dorothy Thompson, who had written at the end of October 1939 that “the persecution of the Jews was not a crisis of Jewry. It was a crisis of Christianity, a declaration of war against the Christian ethic. The first to see its profound threat to one of the three pillars of Western civilisation (defined by Thompson as the Christian ethic, the scientific spirit, and the rule of law) were

<sup>47</sup>*Daventry deutsch, 22.30 Uhr, Sonderdienst “Landhaus”, 10 Nov. 1939 (Abendmeldung), BArch Berlin, R 74/347, pp. 108f.*

<sup>48</sup>*London-Daventry, 22.30 Uhr, deutsch, Sonderdienst “Landhaus”, 10 Dec. 1939 (Abendmeldung), BArch Berlin, R 74/362, pp. 86–88; emphasis in original.*

<sup>49</sup>Planning and Broadcasting Committee, 19th meeting, 4 Oct. 1939, TNA:PRO, FO 898/7, minute 5. The text of the broadcast seems to be lost.

German pastors and priests”.<sup>50</sup> Thompson’s article was reproduced almost in its entirety in a *Sonderbericht* at the beginning of December 1939, but with one important omission: the paragraph cited above.<sup>51</sup> The responsible authorities were probably concerned to avoid any impression that the Western democracies also bore some responsibility for the German persecution of the Jews.

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After the outbreak of war, the constraints of the appeasement policy no longer applied. The British propagandists were therefore much more open in their criticism of the Nazi regime. They made ample use of their new freedom of expression in areas such as Nazi foreign policy, methods of warfare, economic policy, the rule of the Gestapo inside Germany, and the treatment of the Polish people.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the argument employed by successive British governments during the 1930s to the effect that the maltreatment of German nationals inside Germany for whatever reasons (race, political convictions etc.), though deplorable, was an internal German affair and that British criticism of or interference in such matters was banned under international law, was no longer applicable after the outbreak of war. For through the Nazi’s extension of their domestic antisemitic policies to occupied Poland and throughout the conquered countries of Europe, those policies no longer constituted a purely “German” problem but one that was European in nature; and Britain, as the ally of an increasing number of these conquered countries, could no longer neglect what was transpiring. But crucially, the unfolding Nazi crimes against the Jews were not prominently featured in British propaganda directed at both home and foreign audiences until 1942.

Various reasons have been put forward to explain why this was so. The most frequently cited reasons have been (1) lack of authentic information and disbelief at the information available; (2) a low priority given to the Jews on the British political agenda; (3) latent antisemitism in British government circles and in the BBC and fear of stirring up antisemitism in the British and continental European publics; (4) a reluctance to single out the Jews as special victims of Nazi terror.

After the outbreak of the war, lack of authentic information regarding the Holocaust was certainly not the decisive factor preventing a more extensive coverage of the German anti-Jewish campaign.<sup>53</sup> Almost every act of terror and murder directed at the Jews became speedily known to the British government and was also reported in the British press. Nor can Whitehall’s and the BBC’s reluctance in this regard be really explained by the confused nature of the evidence and a general

<sup>50</sup>Dorothy Thompson, ‘War to Save Germany for Western Civilization Against her own Leadership’, *New York Herald Tribune*, 31 Oct. 1939, in Rainer A. Blasius (ed.), *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*. Series I, vol. 1: *Britische Deutschlandpolitik, 3. September 1939 bis 31. Dezember 1941*, Frankfurt/M. 1984, pp. 48–50, fn. 9. <sup>51</sup>*London-Daventry, 22.30 Uhr, deutsch*, Sonderdienst “Landhaus”, 1 Dec. 1939 (Abendmeldung), BArch Berlin, R 74/358, pp. 116f. For a full discussion of this broadcast see Seul, *Appeasement und Propaganda 1938–1940*, pp. 789f.

<sup>52</sup>Seul, *Appeasement und Propaganda 1938–1940*, Part IV.

<sup>53</sup>Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, pp. VIII, 339; Harris, pp. 68, 89, 96.



scepticism and disbelief with regard to reports about German atrocities.<sup>54</sup> It has frequently been pointed out that the German persecutions simply had a low priority on the British government's political agenda.<sup>55</sup> Between 1939 and 1941 and indeed well into 1943, the Allied countries were militarily on the defensive and thus preoccupied with their own survival. Furthermore, too much publicity for the plight of the Jews would have led to public calls for their rescue, an undesirable development from the political and military perspective. It is in any event interesting that the same considerations were apparently not decisive in coverage of the persecution of non-Jewish Poles, which was very extensive. But the Poles were Britain's allies and had at least to be supported morally, even if Britain was in no position to provide military assistance. In general, the non-Jewish Poles themselves had no interest in magnifying the persecution of Jews, rather wishing the focus on Poland's suffering to be maintained.<sup>56</sup> Broadly speaking, a more intensive coverage of the Jewish suffering thus ran counter to British diplomatic and military interests. The presence of latent and open antisemitism in British government circles and the BBC, together with a fear of increasing public antisemitic feelings, are certainly additional significant factors in the neglect of the ongoing Holocaust.<sup>57</sup> There is ample evidence in the Foreign Office archives of openly antisemitic views and language vis-à-vis the persecution of Jews in the 1939–1941 period. On many occasions, the Foreign Office raised direct doubts about the accuracy of reports on the persecution, accusing Jews of deliberately exaggerating their suffering in order to induce Allied rescue. A common approach to such reports was that they were by their very nature unreliable and had to be treated with caution. Sir Alexander Cadogan, for instance, Permanent Undersecretary in the Foreign Office, observed in September 1939 that the British consuls in Germany had derived most of their information “from persecuted Jews, who are not, perhaps, entirely reliable witnesses”,<sup>58</sup> and Rex Leeper, head of the Foreign Office Political Intelligence Department, remarked in May 1940 that “as a general rule the Jews are inclined to magnify their persecutions”.<sup>59</sup>

Another, related, factor was a general reluctance within the British government to single out the Jews as special victims. “We do not recognise the German theory of a Jewish nation and we maintain that Jews are citizens of the country to which they belong”, a BBC document thus stated.<sup>60</sup> As the quote indicates, this reluctance was partly based on the principle that singling out the Jews would in a sense be surrendering to Nazism's racial theories; at the same time, it was also to some extent based on the political calculation that excessive emphasis on the persecution might

<sup>54</sup>Laqueur, pp. 198f. and chapter 3; Seaton, pp. 155, 157–161.

<sup>55</sup>Wasserstein, pp. 299, 352–355; Laqueur, pp. 10, 202–204, 208 and chapter 3; Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, pp. VIII, 27, 339; Silberklang.

<sup>56</sup>Laqueur, p. 200; Silberklang, p. 172; Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p. 170.

<sup>57</sup>Seaton, pp. 155, 168–173; Laqueur, pp. 91f.; Silberklang, pp. 174f.; Harris, p. 69.

<sup>58</sup>Minute Cadogan, 16 Sept. 1939, TNA:PRO, FO 371/23105, C 16788/16776(18), cited in Wasserstein, p. 164.

<sup>59</sup>Minute Leeper, 21 May 1940, TNA:PRO, FO 371/24472, C 5471/116/55, cited in Dale Jones, p. 340 and Wasserstein, pp. 166f.

<sup>60</sup>*Yiddish Programmes*, Controller Europe, 3 July 1943, BBC WAC, R 34/952, cited in Seaton, p. 170.

give Nazi propaganda an opening to stress the theme of the “Jewish war”. Furthermore, stressing the “special treatment” of the Jews by the Nazis might, again, raise public demands for a “special solution” of the Jewish problem, which is to say opening the British Empire, and in particular Palestine, to Jewish refugees.<sup>61</sup>

One last source of the British government’s reluctance to publicise the horrific process unfolding on the continent involves a sense of the goals of its anti-German propaganda effort: not only to inform the German public of the course of the war from the British perspective; but beyond that, to shatter German war morale and stir up a popular revolution that, it was hoped, would bring Hitler down and speed up Germany’s military defeat. In that framework, a focus on the persecution of the Jews was considered ineffective—hence damaging to British foreign policy and war objectives—for three reasons. Firstly, there was an awareness of widespread hostility in Germany towards the Jews; this awareness was partly based on the above-mentioned information received between 1938 and 1939; likewise, in November 1939 Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, had presented the cabinet with a report by Nahum Goldmann, then the representative of the Jewish Agency at the League of Nations in Geneva, on general conditions in Germany and prevalent German public opinion. According to Goldmann, “anti-Jewish feeling is [...] firmly anchored, even in those circles which are opposed to Hitlerism itself”.<sup>62</sup> Second, there was a sense that accounts of the persecution would be dismissed there as “atrocities propaganda”. And third, connected with both these considerations was a concern that too-frequent references to Jews and their suffering would play into the hands of Nazi propaganda, serving to unite Germans behind the regime. Indeed, there was a fear that even an appearance that the BBC employed German-Jewish announcers could render the whole British propaganda campaign ineffective.

Strikingly, there was a widespread belief throughout the British government and BBC that German non-Jews could recognise Jews by the way they spoke. Supported by countless reports emanating from Germany, this belief had emerged in the very first days of the BBC German Service.<sup>63</sup> Employing Jewish emigrants as speakers in the German-language programme was thus itself deemed undesirable in that it would have lessened the effectiveness of the entire British propaganda output. This perspective is succinctly summed up in one passage from a memorandum, widely circulating in the Foreign Office and other government departments, written by a British correspondent for the *Daily Express* in Copenhagen after conversing with a Danish journalist working in Berlin:

My informant’s criticism of the BBC German broadcasts is that most of the announcers appear to be German Jews. Germans, he says, claim to recognise their Jewish accents, and, as a result, not only regard the news they read with suspicion, but see in this proof

<sup>61</sup>Wasserstein, pp. 163–166; Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, p. 339. For the theme of the “Jewish war” in Nazi propaganda see Victor Klemperer, *LTI: Notizbuch eines Philologen*, Leipzig 1996 (first edition Halle 1957), pp. 183–193; Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*; *idem*, “The ‘Jewish War’”.

<sup>62</sup>*Conditions in Germany*, memorandum Halifax, 23 Nov. 1939, WP(G)(39)115, TNA:PRO, CAB 67/3, p. 4.

<sup>63</sup>Seul, “‘Any reference’”, pp. 215f.

that Britain is “run” by Jews and that the Reich is fighting a war forced upon it by World Jewry. If this is true, we are unconsciously aiding Goebbels’ propaganda.<sup>64</sup>

Throughout the war the BBC continued to receive complaints from German listeners about the alleged use of “Jewish voices” on the German Service.<sup>65</sup> A belief in the reality of such voices was apparently shared by an American journalist for the NBC who had left Berlin at the beginning of December 1941: no German-Jewish announcers should ever be used, he declared, as their accent was immediately detected and disliked by all Germans.<sup>66</sup> Reflecting such a perspective, the British propaganda institutions sought to avoid employing “Jews or émigrés” as news readers or in similar capacities on the German Service, especially during the early years of the war.<sup>67</sup> At the same time—and this needs to be acknowledged—the service did employ a considerable number of German-Jewish refugees in the writing and translating of broadcast scripts.<sup>68</sup>

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All in all, despite the emphasis in some British intelligence reports on a purported desire by most Germans to preserve civilised values we can find frequent indications of a sharply different sense of reality that was very widespread. A telling example is a memorandum dated December 1939 from Department EH:

It is no good our expressing horror at German disregard of the rights of small nations and German treatment of Poles, Czechs and Jews: the Nazis and most other Germans of the elements now running the Reich *like* oppressing minorities, and Goebbels has found an answer in his talk of Palestine and Ireland and India, as proofs of the hypocrisy which inspires our attitude.<sup>69</sup>

British propaganda, the memorandum went on, should of course report the crimes that were being committed, but in the face of Goebbels and the Gestapo it could not

<sup>64</sup>Memorandum Selkirk Panton, enclosure to no. 23, Howard Smith (Copenhagen) to Halifax, 24 Jan. 1940, TNA:PRO, FO 408/70, Part 89, No. 43, pp. 80f. For a similar view, namely, that German ears were very sensitive and recognised Jewish accents, see *Remarks on the BBC German Transmission* by an Austrian Art Historian, undated [ca. Oct., 1939], TNA:PRO, FO 898/182. Nazi propaganda regarding the influence of “World Jewry” on the governments of the Western democracies is discussed in Klemperer, pp. 183–193, and, more generally, in Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*.

<sup>65</sup>See for instance *BBC Surveys of European Audiences: Germany*, 12 July 1943, BBC WAC, E 2/194, p. 2; *Evidence of listening to BBC Broadcasts*, information received from PWE, 29 March, 1945, BBC WAC, E 1/766/2.

<sup>66</sup>*BBC Bi-Monthly Surveys of European Audiences. Enemy Countries [Germany and Italy]*, 12 March, 1942, BBC WAC, E 2/191/2, p. 10.

<sup>67</sup>Planning and Broadcasting Committee, 68th meeting, 9 Dec. 1939, TNA:PRO, FO 898/7, p. 3. See also J.F. Slattery, ‘Thomas Mann and the BBC: Die Bedingungen ihrer Zusammenarbeit’, *Thomas-Mann- Jahrbuch* 5 (1992), pp. 147f.

<sup>68</sup>Brinitzer; Wittek, pp. 58–60, 142f.

<sup>69</sup>*Memorandum* by Ralph Murray (Department EH), 6 Dec. 1939, TNA:PRO, FO 898/3, p. 3; emphasis in original.

be expected to make an impact on the mass of the German people. Only a small, anti-Nazi minority, one intelligent enough to see through German propaganda, would be impressed by what the British were saying—and this minority was not the main target of the British effort. Such views were put forward in a memorandum written by Frederick A. Voigt, a former Berlin correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*:

German listeners will dismiss everything we tell them about atrocities as *Greuelmärchen*. Besides, even if accounts of atrocities were to be believed, they would make little impression. The *saeva indignatia* which atrocities have aroused in England, does not exist in Germany and never did. ... The genuine humanitarian impulse is much weaker in Germany than it is in England, France, and the United States. ... The German atrocities in Poland are amongst the most frightful ever perpetrated. Many Germans must know about them—and there can be little doubt that most of them who know also approve. Most supposedly “decent” Germans either approved of the atrocious anti-semitic excesses committed by the Brown Shirts or dismissed them as “the kind of thing that happens in revolutions” or as “natural, considering how the Jews behaved.”<sup>70</sup>

Such ideas, though probably not representative of all those working in Department EH and in the BBC, were certainly widespread in the Foreign Office, which was the last arbiter on all matters of propaganda policy.<sup>71</sup> The BBC had no choice but to accede to the political decision not to use moral appeals to the German people centred on the persecution of the Jews. In February 1941 the BBC European Services thus duly explained in a letter to a listener that “for a German audience we do not use, rightly or wrongly, appeals for sympathy on behalf of Jews, as a propaganda line”.<sup>72</sup> This decision was motivated by a sense that appeals for sympathy on behalf of the Jews would not limit but rather reinforce antisemitic feelings in the targeted audience.<sup>73</sup>

Voigt’s allusion to “atrocious stories” is closely connected with a widespread fear of playing into the hands of Nazi propagandists. As is well known, during the First World War the Allies had deliberately spread bogus reports about German atrocities to mobilise world opinion against the German and Austrian empires. When these stories turned out to be false, Britain’s propaganda acquired a reputation of being exaggerated and untrustworthy. During the Second World War, the German propaganda ministry took full advantage of this fact, suggesting that the same tricks were being played again;<sup>74</sup> for their part, the British took this situation fully into account. Hence when after the outbreak of war Ivone Kirkpatrick—a Foreign Office official who, during 1938–1939, had served as Head of Chancery at the British

<sup>70</sup>Memorandum Voigt, undated [March 1941], TNA:PRO, FO 371/26532, C 5874/154/18, no page numbers [p. 26]. Voigt wrote this long memorandum on the occasion of his resignation as head of the Intelligence Section of Department EH in the spring of 1941.

<sup>71</sup>Voigt’s memorandum was received with much sympathy in the FO. Many officials of the Central Department (the department responsible for policy towards Germany) were themselves critical of the propaganda line pursued by Department EH. See minutes Roberts (7 May 1941), Makins (26 May 1941) and Strang (29 May 1941), *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup>Letter, BBC European Services, Feb. 1941, BBC WAC, R 34/702/3, cited in Harris, p. 82.

<sup>73</sup>Seaton, p. 170.

<sup>74</sup>Balfour, p. 300; Laqueur, pp. 8–10, 90f.; Seaton, pp. 157–161.

Embassy in Berlin—suggested that the government publish the above-mentioned White Paper on the German concentration camps, he had great difficulty in obtaining the assent of Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, who “felt it would flavour of atrocity propaganda and so miss the mark”.<sup>75</sup>

Predictably, Goebbels denied all British reports concerning German crimes in the conquered territories by suggesting they were simply bogus, like the earlier accounts. British propaganda, he reminded his German public, was run by the Jews, the Allies waging a war on behalf of international Jewry.<sup>76</sup> In mid-September 1941, the BBC received a letter from a German listener from Berlin who urged that “steps should be taken to counter the effective German lie that this war was being waged on behalf of Jewish cliques in Allied countries; the Germans should be told that the Allied Democracies would not subject themselves to Hitler’s gangsters even if there were no Jews at all in the world”. Almost two years earlier, a Danish journalist had expressed similar views to a British colleague who then sent a lengthy report via the British Legation in Copenhagen to the Foreign Office.<sup>77</sup>

But in fact, the fear of playing into the hands of Nazi propaganda was not limited to “atrocity stories” or the charge that Britain was waging a war on behalf of “international Jewry”. The British government was equally concerned that reports about Nazi mass crimes committed in occupied Europe would unite the German people behind the regime out of fear of Allied revenge. As early as January 1940 a Foreign Office official described the British dilemma with regard to German crimes. On the one hand, he wrote, British propaganda should not frighten the Germans too much, because if they feared they were to suffer the same fate as the Poles, they would presumably fight to the death. On the other hand, they ought to be made to feel very uneasy regarding their treatment after the war should they continue to tolerate the Nazis committing crimes in their name.<sup>78</sup> In November 1941 the PWE noted with concern that the Nazis were increasingly using fear of revenge to maintain public loyalty. In this light, what German listeners needed, the weekly PWE directive for the BBC German Service explained, was comfort as well as disillusionment. Above all, they needed information, not mere appeals to conscience.<sup>79</sup>

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During 1940–1941, while the Nazis were conquering one European country after another, British propaganda began to report more frequently about the persecution and mass murder of Jews throughout the continent. However, as during the “phoney

<sup>75</sup>Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*, London 1959, p. 147. See also Wasserstein, pp. 164, 295.

<sup>76</sup>Wasserstein, p. 164; Seaton, pp. 169f.; Harris, p. 93; Longerich, pp. 150f. On the latter charge see esp. Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*. See also Klemperer, pp. 183–193.

<sup>77</sup>Memorandum Panton, enclosure to no. 23, Smith to Halifax, 24 Jan. 1940, TNA:PRO, FO 408/70, Part 89, No. 43, pp. 80f.

<sup>78</sup>Norton to Kirkpatrick and Jebb, 5 Jan. 1940, Imperial War Museum, London, Stuart Papers, P. 335.

<sup>79</sup>PWE weekly directive for the BBC German Service, 16–22 Nov. 1941, TNA:PRO, FO 371/26533, C 11508/154/18, pp. 1f.

war” none of the leaflets dropped by the Royal Air Force over German towns mentioned the Jews, whereas considerable attention was paid to terror against civilians.<sup>80</sup> For its part, the German Service itself devoted a considerable number of its news broadcasts, talks, and dramatised features to Nazi crimes in Europe; the directives issued by the British propaganda organisation (first Department EH, later the PWE) to the service contain many references to these crimes. In contrast to the leaflet campaign, the service’s reports did acknowledge the persecution of Jews, although sparingly. Nazi anti-Jewish policies were usually dealt with as a sub-theme within the campaign against Hitler’s “New Order” in Europe: the plans, announced after the defeat of France in June 1940, for Europe’s economic and political reconstruction under German control, bringing—so the Nazi promise—peace and prosperity to all. In this framework, the Germans attacked Great Britain as the backward defender of an obsolete economic and political system. The British government was anxious to expose the reality behind “German propaganda phrases about the war of liberation and German Socialism”.<sup>81</sup> Hitler’s “New Order” was thus defined as a *Raubordnung*, meant to facilitate the pillaging of Europe. At the same time British broadcasts and leaflets were busily advertising Britain’s own plans for the reconstruction of a “better Europe” after the war.<sup>82</sup> During the spring and early summer of 1941, after the German invasion of the Balkans, the *Raubordnung* became a major topic in Britain’s propaganda efforts. For example it was explained that Yugoslavia had been brutalised by the Germans because it had refused to accept their “New Order”. There was continued emphasis on the Nazi crimes in Poland.<sup>83</sup> In autumn 1941 the “New Order” theme was slightly modified into that of “Europe ruled by the SS, but united in opposition to the Third Reich”. In this context, there was frequent British focus on the shooting of hostages by the SS in the Nazi-occupied countries.<sup>84</sup>

The German mass murder of the Jews was here addressed as a characteristic aspect of the “New Order”. Listing major propaganda themes for the coming week, a May 1941 directive of Department EH for the German Service stated—under the heading *Raubordnung*—that “from now on we can include straight news items on the systematic destruction of the Jews in limited quantities and without humanitarian comment”.<sup>85</sup> This statement is remarkable in so far as it calls for a coverage of the Holocaust “in limited quantities” and “without humanitarian comment” while at the

<sup>80</sup>See the leaflets reprinted in Kirchner (ed.), vol. 1.

<sup>81</sup>*Directive for the week Sunday 30th March–Saturday 5th, April 1941*, BBC WAC, R 34/655, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup>See Stephanie Seul, ‘Europa im Wettstreit der Propagandisten: Entwürfe für ein besseres Nachkriegseuropa in der britischen Deutschlandpropaganda als Antwort auf Hitlers “Neuordnung Europas” 1940–1941’, in *Jahrbuch für Kommunikationsgeschichte* 8 (2006), pp. 108–161.

<sup>83</sup>*Directive for the week Sunday 30th March–Saturday 5th, April 1941*, BBC WAC, R 34/655, pp. 2, 4; *Directive for the week Sunday April 13th [1941]–Saturday 19th*, BBC WAC, R 34/655, pp. 1, 2. As early as July 1940 Department EH had raised the question “of the necessity for more material concerning the German behaviour in Poland and Czechoslovakia. This was important from the point of view of the German

‘New Order’.” Pinney to Barman, 5 July 1940, TNA:PRO, FO 898/180.

<sup>84</sup>See the PWE weekly directives for the BBC German Service for the period October and November 1941, in TNA:PRO, FO 371/26533, C 11508/154/18.

<sup>85</sup>*Directive for the week Sunday May 25–Saturday May 31st [1941]*, BBC WAC, R 34/655, p. 2.



same time spelling out what the Nazis were really aiming at. It should be noted that the statement was made considerably before the news reached London of the mass killings of Jews in Russia by the *Einsatzgruppen* in the late summer of 1941.<sup>86</sup> It is unclear what, precisely, led the British to issue such a statement. We do know that in a March 1941 memorandum, Frederick Voigt had recommended that although doubtless they would be dismissed as atrocity stories,

German atrocities should not be passed over in silence by ourselves. They should be indicated with extreme moderation and absolute accuracy and as an organic part of the system established by the Germans wherever they have the power. It should also be conveyed to German listeners, very quietly but firmly, and not too often, that there will, one day, be retribution for the crimes committed by the Germans (and not merely by the “Nazis”).<sup>87</sup>

One further reason why British propaganda reported so sparingly about the persecution of Jews during 1939–1941 is revealed by an internal BBC memorandum of November 1941 analysing the potential German audience. It suggested that British propaganda concerning Hitler’s *Raubordnung* would only bear fruit in Germany when the Germans were on the defensive, convinced at last that their bid for what they viewed as the most desirable system had failed. As long as there was a prospect of receiving food and luxury goods from the conquered countries, the German public would regard British denunciations of the German *Raubordnung* as sour grapes.<sup>88</sup>

Whereas relatively little was said about the ongoing persecution of Jews throughout Europe, the German Service did broadcast several talks and features in remembrance of Germany’s nationwide anti-Jewish pogrom of November 1938, which it denounced as “the biggest pogrom against Jews of all times”.<sup>89</sup> On the pogrom’s first anniversary, the BBC broadcast a *Sonderbericht* in which a British officer, who had been in Vienna when it broke out, gave an account of his impressions. Offering a detailed description of the synagogue burning he witnessed, he flatly declared that the fires had not been the acts of an angry populace but had been deliberately arranged by the Nazis. He explained the German people had in reality not sunk so low—he had observed many Germans who were dismayed by the events.<sup>90</sup> “*Die Ungehängten*”: *Himmler*, a feature broadcast by the German Service in mid-July 1941, described how under Himmler and Heydrich political murder and the murder of the insane and mortally ill had become daily practice in Germany.

<sup>86</sup>For this see Laqueur, pp. 67f.; Terry.

<sup>87</sup>Memorandum Voigt, undated [March, 1941], TNA:PRO, FO 371/26532, C 5874/154/18, no page numbers [p. 26].

<sup>88</sup>*BBC Monthly Surveys of European Audiences. Enemy Countries*, 8 Nov. 1941, BBC WAC, E 2/191/1, p. 10.

<sup>89</sup>“*Die Ungehängten*”: *Himmler*, manuscript of feature broadcast on the BBC German Service, 15 July 1941, BBC WAC, ES 22: German Service Scripts-Features, Apr.–Sept. 1941, p. 8.

<sup>90</sup>*Davenport deutsch*, 22.30 Uhr, Sonderdienst “Landhaus”, 10 Nov. 1939 (Abendmeldung), BArch Berlin, R 74/347, pp. 105–110. On 26 October 1939 the Planning Committee of Department EH discussed at length the vom Rath murder case “with a view to broadcasting the events which led to pogrom” on the occasion of the first anniversary of “*Reichskristallnacht*”. See Planning and Broadcasting Committee, 37th meeting, 26 Oct. 1939, TNA:PRO, FO 898/7, minute 14.

Importantly, it also described Himmler's directive regarding the pogrom, his instructions that the wealthy and influential male Jews were to be arrested—about three thousand in every larger city—and Jewish property destroyed; that the police and fire brigades were not to aid the Jews but rather see to it that deliberately-set fires did not damage non-Jewish houses.<sup>91</sup> A few months later a PWE directive for the German Service stated as follows: “The anniversary of vom Rath”—the reference was to the November 1938 assassination in Paris of the German diplomat Ernst vom Rath by the Jewish youth Herschel Grynszpan, an event that served as an excuse for the November Pogrom—“will enable us to stress the barbarism of reprisals on a whole people for an individual action and the conclusion that those who act on this policy unite everyone against them in hatred.”<sup>92</sup>

One explanation for the curious focus on November 1938 rather than on the horrendous crimes the Nazis were committing between 1939 and 1941 might be that “*Reichskristallnacht*” involved large numbers of German civilians witnessing what was happening to the German Jews: in the 1939–1941 period, Jews were not being murdered and assaulted en masse on German streets, and the German public was not being directly confronted with all the details of what was happening “in the east”.

#### JULY 1941 TO MAY 1945: “LAY THE MORAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THESE CRIMES WHOLLY AND SOLELY ON THE GERMAN NATION”

The principle of not singling out the persecuted Jews for any particular attention in British propaganda and official statements was only modified in the course of 1942, when the news of Hitler's plan to exterminate European Jewry was received and finally understood in London.<sup>93</sup> The first systematic mass shootings and gassings of Jews had taken place in Russia and Poland in the summer and autumn of 1941, following the German invasion of Russia. During the winter of 1941–1942, and more specifically during the spring and summer of 1942, the notorious extermination camps in the so-called *Generalgouvernement* went into operation.<sup>94</sup> The British government received information about these developments during the autumn and winter of 1941, although their full meaning was not immediately grasped. Information was mainly derived from Polish sources, but also from intercepted German telegraph messages. Then, in June 1942, the British received an authoritative report from the *Bund* (the Polish-Jewish Socialist Party), explaining—for the first time—that on Polish soil the Nazis were systematically exterminating the entire Jewish people, and listing the methods being applied to this end in special “killing factories”.

<sup>91</sup> “*Die Ungehängten*”, p. 8 (see note 89). A recording of this broadcast (dated 18 July 1941) is kept at the DRA, Band Nr. 79 U 3702/2. This recording is also included in the published edition of wartime broadcasts by Hans Sarkowicz and Michael Crone (eds.), *Der Kampf um die Ätherwellen: Feindpropaganda in Zweitem Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt am Main 1990.

<sup>92</sup> PWE weekly directive for the BBC German Service, 9–15 Nov. 1941, TNA:PRO, FO 371/26533, C 11508/154/18, p. 2.

<sup>93</sup> Wasserstein, pp. 163–166, 296f.

<sup>94</sup> Laqueur, pp. 5f., 11–13; Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, pp. 13–20.

Seven hundred thousand to one million Jews, British officials learned, had already been killed. In this way, by late summer 1942 Nazi aims were crystal clear.<sup>95</sup>

It was, however, only during December 1942 that this shocking reality became the subject of a concerted propaganda campaign. Even as late as August 1942 Denis Allen, an official of the Foreign Office Central Department, could still express incomprehension regarding “why it shall be necessary to send broadcasts to the Germans about persecution of the Jews, on the ground that they know very little of what is happening. The movement is surely tolerated and even encouraged by many, and is certainly known to all Germans—since they are forced to participate”.<sup>96</sup> By this time, however, such a perspective carried less weight than it once did. From the early summer of 1942 onwards, detailed reports and statistics regarding the deportations and murders were broadcast regularly on the BBC German Service and distributed as leaflets. The timing of this development was certainly no coincidence—the Allies were now about to take the military initiative, and the reports went hand in hand with expressions of determination to punish all those directly and indirectly involved in the mass murder campaign. Hence on 25 October 1943 Lindley Fraser reminded listeners on the German Service that exactly a year earlier Churchill and Roosevelt had announced that German crimes in the occupied countries would lead to terrible reprisals—and, precisely, that after victory the Allies would see to it that the responsible parties would be punished. Fraser added that the Germans had ignored the warnings from a belief that they would win the war, but that now the situation had drastically changed.<sup>97</sup>

Despite the shift of fortune in the Allied’s favour, propaganda would lose nothing of its importance in the British warfare against the Third Reich. A BBC memorandum in January 1943, summarising the propaganda strategy towards Germany during the previous year, stated that the aim of the German-language broadcasts over the previous year had been “to break down the will to fight of the German people by convincing them that defeat is certain, but that defeat at the hands of the Allies would not have intolerable consequences for the ordinary citizen. In short, we have sought to provide a judicious blend of ‘despair’ and ‘hope’ propaganda.”<sup>98</sup> Whereas the “despair” aim of the propaganda campaign was to create fear of Allied punishment and revenge for the crimes committed in the occupied countries and against the Jews, the “hope” aim of British propaganda was “to stimulate certain emotional reactions” by appealing “to the moral conscience of our listeners by reporting the killing of the unfit, the encouragement of illegitimacy, and above all the persecution of the Jews”.<sup>99</sup> What, then, could the German public

<sup>95</sup>Laqueur, pp. 73–80; Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, pp. 39–87; Silberklang, pp. 161–164; Terry, *passim*.

<sup>96</sup>Minute Allen, 7 Aug. 1942, TNA:PRO, FO 371/30900, C 7610/29/18. Also cited in Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, p. 53.

<sup>97</sup>*Warning to War Losers, Sonderbericht* by Fraser, 25 Oct. 1943, BBC WAC, ES 22 (German Service—Sonderbericht Scripts, Jan. 1943–Apr. 1945).

<sup>98</sup>Survey of the activities of the BBC German Service during 1942, in *Output Report. BBC European Services. January 10th–16th [1943]*, TNA:PRO, FO 371/34444, C 2385/89/18, p. 1.

<sup>99</sup>*ibid.*, p. 2.

learn about the extermination of the Jews from British broadcasts and leaflets between the German invasion of Russia and the end of the war?

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Few sources are available to answer this question for the first twelve months of the Russian campaign. In November 1941 the Postal and Telegraph Censorship intercepted a letter dated 22 October and presumably written by Dr. W. A. Visser't Hooft, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches in Geneva. The letter's author confirmed that the measures had reached a new peak, with fifteen thousand Jews deported to Poland from Berlin in October, and ten thousand from other places. On the other hand, he indicated, the reaction of Germans to the law stating that all Jews had to wear the yellow star was apparently a remarkable sympathy with those affected.<sup>100</sup> At the same time the PWE noted an intensification in Nazi antisemitic propaganda.<sup>101</sup> Curiously, in contrast to the prevalent view until then that most Germans were antisemitic and not interested in the fate of the Jews, the British interpreted this propaganda campaign as evidence of a dislike of the Nazis' anti-Jewish measures by the German public.<sup>102</sup> In any event, whereas in the autumn and winter of 1941 the Nazi terror against Europe's general civilian population continued to be regularly discussed in the German Service's weekly directives,<sup>103</sup> it seems that the time was still not considered right to launch a campaign specifically centred on the German crimes against the Jews; the theme, in fact, was brought up only once, in the directive for the week of 23–30 November. The BBC was instructed to broadcast "one more talk on Goebbels' Jew-baiting campaign along last week's line".<sup>104</sup> How this instruction was put into practice by the BBC German Service is unclear. In any event, the directive's wording suggests a focus on Goebbels, not on the persecution of Jews.

The period's most straightforward confrontation with the reality of the ongoing genocide of the Jews was offered in Thomas Mann's radio talks. Since October 1940 the 1929 winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature had addressed the German people

<sup>100</sup>*Notes on the Situation in Europe*, photostat copy of unsigned report sent from Geneva to The Rev. William Paton in London on 22 October 1941, intercepted by Postal and Telegraph Censorship, 10 Nov. 1941, TNA:PRO, FO 371/26528, C 12998/61/18, p. 4. The view expressed in this letter is confirmed by Longerich, pp. 171–181.

<sup>101</sup>PWE weekly directive for the BBC German Service, 23–30 Nov. 1941, TNA:PRO, FO 371/26533, C 11508/154/18, p. 1. This new antisemitic propaganda campaign is described in Longerich, pp. 167–171.

<sup>102</sup>PWE weekly directive for the BBC German Service, 23–30 Nov., 1941, TNA:PRO, FO 371/26533, C 11508/154/18, p. 1.

<sup>103</sup>See the PWE weekly directives for the BBC German Service for the period October and November 1941, in TNA:PRO, FO 371/26533, C 11508/154/18, and for December 1941 in TNA:PRO, FO 371/26533, C 13600/154/18.

<sup>104</sup>PWE weekly directive for the BBC German Service, 23–30 Nov. 1941, TNA:PRO, FO 371/26533, C 11508/154/18, p. 2.

via the BBC from his American exile.<sup>105</sup> Mann's radio addresses were outspoken in their attack on the Nazis for their mass crimes against Jews, Poles, and others. In September 1941 he warned the Germans that it would not be pleasant for them after the war because of what was transpiring.<sup>106</sup> In November he took up the theme again:

You are aware of the unspeakable things which have happened and are happening now in Russia, to the Poles and the Jews, but would prefer not to know from justifiable dread of the equally unspeakable hatred, now becoming enormous, which will one day come down on your heads, when your manpower and power of technology [*Volks- und Maschinenkraft*] fail. Indeed dread of that day is fitting and your leaders are exploiting it. They who have seduced you into committing these vile deeds tell you: having committed them, you are indissolubly chained to us; now you must endure to the end or hell will engulf you.<sup>107</sup>

In January 1942 Thomas Mann told his listeners that he had learned the “unbelievable” but true story of the gassing of four hundred Dutch Jews by the Nazis:

German listeners!

The news sound incredible but my source is good. Countless Dutch-Jewish families ... are in deep mourning for their sons who have died an horrific death. Four hundred young Dutch Jews were brought to Germany to be used as objects for poison-gas experiments.  
... They are dead—they died in the cause of the “New Order” and the ingenuity of the master race in waging war. They were good enough for that; after all they were [only] Jews.<sup>108</sup>

Mann added that many people wished to reject such accounts as “horror stories” (*Greuelmärchen*), but that the gassings were not to be regarded as an isolated event. Rather, “the experimental gassing of the four hundred young Jews is a conscious and demonstrative act of history, a didactic and exemplary expression of the spirit [*Geist und Gesinnung*] of the National Socialist revolution, only understandable if one sees the moral willingness to commit such deeds as a revolutionary achievement”.<sup>109</sup>

In February 1942 Mann again mentioned the suffering and extermination of the Jews, albeit in the larger context of Nazi atrocities committed in the occupied countries and without providing detailed information on specific killings.<sup>110</sup> Four months later, he came back to the fate of the Dutch Jews. In June he apologised for having misled his listeners—the true number of Dutch Jews gassed by the Nazis in

<sup>105</sup>Thomas Mann, *Deutsche Hörer! Radiosendungen nach Deutschland aus den Jahren 1940–1945*, Frankfurt am Main 1995. See also Slattery; Heike Weidenhaupt, *Gegenpropaganda aus dem Exil: Thomas Manns Radioansprachen für deutsche Hörer 1940 bis 1945*, Konstanz 2001; Martina Hoffschulte, “Deutsche Hörer!” *Thomas Manns Rundfunkreden (1940 bis 1945) im Werkkontext. Mit einem Anhang: Quellen und Materialien*, Münster 2003.

<sup>106</sup>Mann, p. 40 (broadcast of September 1941).

<sup>107</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 45f. (broadcast of November 1941).

<sup>108</sup>*ibid.*, p. 49 (broadcast of January 1942).

<sup>109</sup>*ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>110</sup>*ibid.*, p. 53 (broadcast of February 1942).

the Mauthausen concentration camp had not been four hundred but eight hundred. “Nazi barbarity”, he observed, “exceeds [everything] said about or attributed to it; there is never any danger of exaggerating it. Imagine the worst and you still only have half the truth.”<sup>111</sup>

We should note that as was the general case with British propaganda aimed at Germany, Mann did not single out the Nazi atrocities against the Jews as unique in nature or particularly disgraceful. In alluding to Heydrich’s killing by Czech patriots on 4 June 1942 and the subsequent terror unleashed by the Nazis in Czechoslovakia (including the destruction of the village of Lidice and the murder of its male inhabitants), he posed the following question: “And isn’t the bestial mass murder perpetrated in Mauthausen only one insignificant detail on the full canvas of this barbarity? Does it not disappear into the sea of monstrosity extending across the whole tortured area of power subjected to Hitler’s infamy?”<sup>112</sup> (Mann then turned to the horror of Lidice.)

Although between the German invasion of the Soviet Union and the early summer of 1942 there was a considerable increase in reports about the persecution and mass murder of the Jews, the German Service’s coverage appears to have still fallen short in the view of some Germans opposed to Hitler. One of these, at least, is cited, in a BBC memorandum analysing the service’s audience, as maintaining

that our silence about many atrocities which Germans get to know from the Moscow radio gives the impression that “Chamberlainism still rules in London”—“the respectable German wishes to hear that throughout the world there is the same horror as he feels at the Nazis against crime and sadism and he is infuriated at the embarrassed silence of the people in London on the question of the persecution of the Jews”.<sup>113</sup>

Notwithstanding such comments it was the case that from the summer of 1942 onwards there was a noticeable increase in the coverage of the campaign against the Jews in both the German Service and British leaflets. In the last week of June, the service appears to have devoted considerable attention to the German atrocities in Eastern Europe, and in particular to the anti-Jewish terror in Poland. An internal output report of the BBC European Services stated that “full details were given of the crimes now being perpetrated in the name of those listening to our broadcasts, and ... we warned the German nation that it would be useless to attempt to mitigate its fate by pleading ignorance of these crimes”.<sup>114</sup> Starting in June, the above-mentioned report from the *Bund* was given wide publicity in the British press and in British propaganda directed to Europe. The PWE Central Directive of 24 June summarised the reports and called on the European Services of the BBC (including the German Service) to give full prominence to these crimes, which would have to be paid for after the war.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>111</sup>*ibid.*, p. 66 (broadcast of June 1942).

<sup>112</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>113</sup>*BBC Bi-Monthly Surveys of European Audiences. Enemy Countries. Germany*, 11 May 1942, TNA:PRO, FO 371/30928, C 5057/118/18, pp. 7f.

<sup>114</sup>*Output Report. BBC European Services. June 21st-27th, 1942*, BBC WAC, E 2/209/1, p. 3.

<sup>115</sup>Laqueur, pp. 73–75; Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, pp. 39–44; Silberklang, pp. 162f.



In the autumn of 1942 the PWE again increased the coverage of the Holocaust. On 27 September Thomas Mann spoke about the Nazi plan to completely exterminate European Jewry, about the inhuman living conditions in the Warsaw Ghetto, where sixty-five thousand people had died of hunger and diseases within one year, about the gassing of thousands of Jews near Warsaw, and about the deportation to certain death in Poland of tens of thousands of French Jews.<sup>116</sup> Mann declared that according to Polish reports seven hundred thousand Jews had already been murdered, concluding his broadcast by referring to a “detailed report”

about the murder by poison gas of no fewer than eleven thousand Polish Jews. They were taken to a special execution area near Konin in the Warsaw district, herded into airtight locked trucks, and reduced to corpses, in a quarter of an hour. We are offered a detailed description of the whole procedure, the victims’ screams and prayers and the good-natured laughter of the SS Hottentots who made the whole thing happen.<sup>117</sup>

In October, the RAF dropped the first British leaflet containing information about the Holocaust, together with supporting photographs.<sup>118</sup> One photograph showed the body of a starved baby, accompanied by the following text: “Death by starvation. Jewish child in the Warsaw Ghetto. A similar fate awaits 4000 Jewish children in France who, having been torn from their parents and, after the destruction of their identity papers, have been transported to the East by the Gestapo.”<sup>119</sup> The other photograph showed several laughing SS men tearing off the beard of a male Jew. The accompanying text: “SS Entertainment. A Jew’s beard is pulled out. The number of Jews in Eastern Europe murdered and starved to death runs into hundreds of thousands.” The leaflet also contained the following important statement: “The Hitler regime has always insisted that what went on in German concentration camps, from which so many Germans averted their eyes, was an internal German affair. But after more than three years of criminality throughout Europe, it can no longer rely on such prevarication. These are crimes against Europe and the world.”<sup>120</sup>

In the same month Lindley Fraser cited from a letter he had received from a German Jew who had emigrated to London shortly before the outbreak of war:

What was her crime? She was Jewish! My mother grew up in our homeland. It was here that she spent her childhood, here that she married. And now this 92-year-old was being expelled from her apartment, from her homeland. She was forced to travel in a wretched, unheated freight-wagon with only a wooden bench to sit on. And she soon died. To subject a 92-year-old to such physical and mental hardship—that’s murder. Germans murdered my mother, Germans whose language she shared and in whose world she lived.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>116</sup>Mann, pp. 75–77 (broadcast of September 1942).

<sup>117</sup>*ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>118</sup>See Kirchner (ed.), vol. 5; Longerich, p. 240.

<sup>119</sup>*Was der Deutsche wissen muß*, no. G.60, 15/16 Oct. 1942–26/27 March 1943, in Kirchner (ed.), vol. 4, p. 149. The same photograph, with a slightly modified text, was printed in *Die Andere Seite. Drittes Heft*, no. G.27, 23 May 1943–23 March 1944, in Kirchner (ed.), vol. 5, p. 84.

<sup>120</sup>*ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>121</sup>Manuscript of talk by Fraser in BBC German Service, Oct. 1942, in Brinitzer, p. 263.

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In December 1942, the PWE and BBC finally launched a massive propaganda campaign focused on the annihilation of European Jewry.<sup>122</sup> The reason for this belatedness was that the PWE had believed it still had not received absolutely reliable information. At the beginning of January 1943, a PWE Central Directive explained that the extermination of Polish Jewry had reached full force in early 1942. In the middle of that the year, the British had received reports about the deportation of Jews from various parts of Europe into the Lublin, Warsaw and Wilno ghettos. The fact that despite the high death toll in these places the numbers within the ghettos remained constant proved that a stream of Jews was being imported for eventual slaughter by various means. The directive continued: “Wisely the Polish authorities did not reveal the full extent of these acts until they had their facts fully verified. The full revelation of this Jewish extermination occurred three or four weeks ago.”<sup>123</sup>

In almost all its broadcasts the German Service now reported the horror unfolding in the ghettos, trains and concentration camps, referring to these events as worse than medieval pogroms or the Inquisition’s terrors. On the one hand, most of these broadcasts merely reported on the atrocities, not indicating how the Germans could stop them nor threatening the perpetrators with punishment. One broadcast was an exception:

Polish workers, French workers, Belgian workers have, despite German machine guns, resisted against the deportation of their Jewish fellow comrades. The free and decent people of the world, including the workers of all countries, have sworn that the guilty ones shall be punished after without pity. Do the German workers really want to be counted among the guilty?<sup>124</sup>

A week later the German Service further increased its coverage of the Holocaust. In practically all the service’s news bulletins, the wave of indignation in Britain caused by the ongoing revelations took the lead. Full details were given of the numbers of Jews already killed, of the joint Declaration issued by Great Britain, the Soviet Union

<sup>122</sup>Wasserstein, p. 174; Harris, pp. 78f.; Longerich, pp. 240f.; Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p. 124.

<sup>123</sup>*Political Warfare Executive. Central Directive (Week beginning Thursday, 7th Jan., 1943), Annexe III: The German Terror in Poland. An Illustration of the Growth of Persecution*, PWD/CD/43/1/1, TNA:PRO, FO 371/34381, C 124/50/62, p. 1. As stated before, the Foreign Office was as a general rule very sceptical in regard to reports about German atrocities, in particular if they emanated from Jewish sources. A typical comment revealing the prejudiced attitude of the professional diplomats is the following. “Considering the fact that the statements are taken from German-Jewish refugees, the picture is surprisingly undistorted.” (Minute Harrison, 23 May, 1942, TNA:PRO, FO 371/30899, C 5167/29/18). Harrison commented on statements on conditions in Germany made by German-Jewish refugees who had arrived in Ecuador in January 1942. See also Wasserstein, p. 168; Laqueur, pp. 82f.; Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p. 136.

<sup>124</sup>*Output Report. BBC European Services. December 6th-12th, 1942*, BBC WAC, E 2/209/1, p. 3. The PWE Central Directive to the European Services of 14 December 1942 stated: “Even if the German people cannot do anything about the massacres, it is good that they should feel uneasy and ashamed.” BBC WAC, E 2/131/8, cited in Harris, p. 79.

and the United States at the United Nations on 17 December,<sup>125</sup> read out by Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden in the course of a House of Commons debate that same day on the extermination of the Jews,<sup>126</sup> and of Eden's pledge during this debate that those responsible would not escape retribution. In the talks and commentaries more details were given of the German crimes; along with the stress on certain retribution it was also stressed that the Allies would not exact mass reprisals.<sup>127</sup> Notably, the humorous feature *Frau Wernicke*, broadcast on the German Service's women's programme, also alluded to the murder of the Jews.<sup>128</sup>

The BBC's campaign reached its climax around Christmas, when the German Service broadcast a long feature about the extermination of the Jews. This broadcast is the only one concerning the Holocaust of which a recording (albeit incomplete) has survived in the *Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv*.<sup>129</sup> Luckily, the original script of this broadcast is also preserved in the BBC Written Archives Centre.<sup>130</sup> As recording and script are dated differently (24 and 27 December 1942), it is not entirely clear when the feature was transmitted. The broadcast, which was read by a "narrator" and five other voices and also contained an extract from an original recording of a speech by Goebbels, was a mix of a summary of the latest news regarding the extermination of the Jews, a chronology of Nazi antisemitic policy from 1933 onwards, and a moral appeal to the German people to stop the massacres. It opened with a review of the debate in the House of Commons on 17 December 1942, in the course of which the MPs had risen in silence to honour the Jews murdered by the Nazis throughout Europe, and of the UN joint declaration:

Standing in silence the deputies paid homage to the victims. Never before in the history of parliament had there been such a demonstration; but then never before in the history of mankind had there been a crime of such enormity. This Jewish tragedy—which is at the same time a German tragedy—is the most abominable spectacle of all time.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>125</sup>“Joint Declaration Announced Simultaneously on December 17th, 1942, in London, Moscow and Washington”, in Rainer A. Blasius (ed.), *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*. Series I, vol. 3: *Britische Deutschlandpolitik, 1. Januar bis 31. Dezember 1942*. Frankfurt am Main 1989, pp. 1162f.

The UN Declaration was the first and last official condemnation of the Jewish Holocaust by the Allies (Silberklang, p. 150). The initiative came from the Polish government; the British showed great reluctance to embark upon such a declaration. In particular the Foreign Office was opposed to placing emphasis on the particularity of the Jewish fate and to a Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews. See Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, pp. 136, 169f.

<sup>126</sup>*HoC Debates*, 17 Dec. 1942, Hansard, vol. 385, cols. 2082ff., in part reprinted in Blasius, *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, Series I, vol. 3, pp. 1163–1165. During at the end of this debate all Members of Parliament rose in silence in honour of the victims murdered by the Nazis. See Brintzer, p. 264; Silberklang, pp. 150, 175.

<sup>127</sup>*Output Report. BBC European Services. December 13th–19th, 1942*, BBC WAC, E 2/209/1, p. 4.

<sup>128</sup>Bruno Adler, *Frau Wernicke: Kommentare einer „Volksjenossin“*, ed. by Uwe Naumann, Mannheim 1990, p. 92 (broadcast of 26 December 1942: *Frau Wernicke über Weihnachtsgeschenke*).

<sup>129</sup>BBC German Service, recording of a broadcast about the extermination of the Jews, 24 Dec. 1942, DRA, Band-Nr. 78 U 3631/10. The recording, of which about one half is missing, is also contained in the collection of war-time broadcasts published by Sarkowicz and Crone.

<sup>130</sup>*The War Against the Jews*, German Service feature script, 27 Dec. 1942, BBC WAC, ES 22 (German Service Scripts-Features, Apr.–Dec. 1942).

<sup>131</sup>*ibid.*, p. 1.

The broadcast then reviewed the beginnings of Nazi antisemitic propaganda and policy, explaining that until the November Pogrom, both had been widely belittled as extremist manifestations not worth being taken seriously. But, listeners were informed, the step from the pogrom to systematic deportation was a small one. After offering a figure for the number of European Jews murdered so far, the broadcast commented as follows: “These bare figures contain the most horrific tragedy: the extermination of millions of people. And why? ... How do the Nazis justify their unparalleled crime?” Although the Nazis, the feature explained, were justifying their deeds as a holy war against “international Jewry”,<sup>132</sup> in reality it involved nothing more than robbery. In this respect,

when there was nothing more to be gathered up, the crusade was converted from a plundering raid to a political chess game. Each domestic crisis, each crisis on the fronts resulted in new terror against the Jews. When Hitler had to go on the defensive in the outside world, he went on the offensive against the Jews; here he could not be defeated. Whenever there were political or military difficulties, the old war cry went up: the Jew is to blame!<sup>133</sup>

British propaganda was thus now working to refute the German justification of the mass crimes in terms of “international Jewry” and “Jewish Bolshevism” having started the war.<sup>134</sup> A PWE Central Directive of 14 December stated: “We must make it clear, if only by inference, that the massacre of the Jews is nothing to do with the war, is no atrocity story exploited for the purposes of propaganda, but in fact something which, while not affecting the course of the war, affects solely the fate of Jewry, and the fate of the German people.”<sup>135</sup> As revealed in a secret conference, the response chosen by Goebbels and his propaganda ministry to these broadcasts was to simply ignore them—to make no public statement and thus not draw attention to British propaganda.<sup>136</sup>

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From the end of December 1942 onwards, the genocide being perpetrated on the Jews again lost its prominence in British broadcasts. Once again, the mass murders were absorbed into the larger context of Nazi crimes committed in the occupied countries. A PWE Central Directive of 24 December, first stating that “the sufferings of the Poles should now be merged in the wider picture of Nazi persecutions”, then indicated that BBC European Services was to stress that in all countries the persecution of Jews had been the prelude to the persecution of other populations—

<sup>132</sup>*ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>133</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>134</sup>Harris, pp. 79, 80f.

<sup>135</sup>PWE Central Directive, 14 Dec. 1942, BBC WAC, E 2/131/8, cited in Harris, p. 79.

<sup>136</sup>Longerich, p. 259; Balfour, p. 303; Willi A. Boelcke (ed.), *Wollt Ihr den Totalen Krieg? Die geheimen Goebbels-Konferenzen 1939–43*, Stuttgart 1967, pp. 312f. See also Goebbels' diary entries of 13, 15, 17, 18 and 19 December 1942, in Elke Fröhlich (ed.), *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, part 2: *Diktate 1941–1945*, vol. 6: *Oktober–Dezember 1942*, Munich 1996, pp. 438f., 449, 461, 467, 472.

and that it was “a subtle form of political warfare aimed at breaking human ties between different groups and individuals in all countries and destroying any feeling of common citizenship”.<sup>137</sup> Two weeks later, the PWE called on the BBC European Services to “show deliberate development in Poland of a third stage of German persecution. ... Link with Master-Race theory”.<sup>138</sup> The annexe to the Central Directive of 7 January 1943, containing additional material for the use of the broadcasters, defined the three stages of German terror in Poland as follows: (1) The extermination of the intelligentsia, which began immediately after the capitulation of Poland in 1939 and had continued ever since; (2) the extermination of the Polish Jews, and the employment of Poland as a slaughterhouse for Jews from other parts of Europe; (3) the persecution and extermination of ordinary Polish people in certain districts, which had begun immediately after the second stage had been reached.<sup>139</sup>

It is thus clear that those formulating the British propaganda were again seeking to *not* over-emphasise the special character of the Jewish extermination. This reluctance resulted partly from a determination not to submit to Nazi racial theory, in other words to the idea that Jews were different, and partly, now as before, from a political concern not to stir up public demands for the rescue of the Jews. The latter argument was again brought forward by Anthony Eden in March 1944 when he informed the Cabinet Committee on Refugees that the most apparent effect of the UN declaration of 17 December 1942 had been to stimulate complaints that the government’s efforts to save the Jews were inadequate.<sup>140</sup> In addition, the British continued to regard the fate of the Jews as having low priority. In March 1943, Richard Law, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, thus explained to a MP that “as a matter of policy we cannot afford to give this question such prominence that it would overshadow or exclude other themes which it is important for our propaganda to put across at the present stage of the war”.<sup>141</sup> In the war’s closing months, Robert Bruce Lockhart, the Director-General of the PWE, commented on the suggestion to launch a massive propaganda campaign aimed at saving Jewish lives that “it should be realised that paper, planes, and broadcasting hours are limited, and that our other commitments are heavy”.<sup>142</sup>

Nevertheless, during 1943–1944 the British continued to inform the German public regularly of what was transpiring, though no longer in the form of a systematic campaign.<sup>143</sup> Broadcasts and leaflets contained statistics of the numbers

<sup>137</sup>PWE Central Directive, 24 Dec., TNA:PRO, FO 898/289, cited in Wasserstein, p. 174.

<sup>138</sup>*Political Warfare Executive. Central Directive (Week beginning Thursday, 7th Jan., 1943)*, PWD/CD/43/1/1, TNA:PRO, FO 371/34381, C 124/50/62, p. 3.

<sup>139</sup>*Political Warfare Executive. Central Directive (Week beginning Thursday, 7th Jan., 1943), Annexe III: The German Terror in Poland. An Illustration of the Growth of Persecution*, PWD/CD/43/1/1, TNA:PRO, FO 371/34381, C 124/50/62, p. 1.

<sup>140</sup>Wasserstein, pp. 181–188.

<sup>141</sup>Law to David Robertson M.P., 22 March 1943, TNA:PRO, FO 34365, C 2957/31/62, cited in Wasserstein, p. 299.

<sup>142</sup>Minute Bruce Lockhart, 1 Dec. 1944, TNA:PRO, FO 371/42897, WR 1732/1554/48, cited in *ibid.*

<sup>143</sup>Laqueur’s claim (p. 204) that comparatively little was said in the BBC and in British leaflets about the Holocaust during 1943 does not apply to British German-language propaganda. Longerich (pp. 242–247, 300–304) describes some of the leaflets and broadcasts of the BBC German Service dealing with the Holocaust during 1942–1945.

of persons killed and shocking details of the deportation and murder of the Jews.<sup>144</sup> Attention was paid to such details and reporting specific dates, locations and numbers killed. This made the reports sound very authentic.<sup>145</sup> For instance, on 16 June 1944 the German Service reported in its women's programme that the German authorities had ordered the killing of three thousand Czech Jews at Birkenau for 20 June and that Jews deported from Theresienstadt to Birkenau in September 1943 had been murdered in the gas chambers on 7 March 1944.<sup>146</sup> However, the BBC's broadcasts and leaflets were not limited to bare statistics of persons deported and killed or to Nazi techniques for murdering the Jews. Rather, they contained many eyewitness accounts conveying in emotional language the terrible suffering of individual Jews. On 18 July 1943 the women's programme of the German Service broadcast an eyewitness account of the gassing of Jews near the Belzec camp. The eye witness, a former member of the Polish resistance who had managed to escape to London, described in detail how the Jews were deported to the extermination camps of Belzec, Treblinka and Sobibor to be killed by various methods such as gas, hot steam, and electric shock. He ended by stating that according to the latest estimates two million Jews had already been killed.<sup>147</sup> Likewise, the propaganda booklet *Die Andere Seite Nr. 4*, disseminated between December 1943 and March 1944, contained an eyewitness account by two women of the persecution and extermination of the Jews in Poland and the Ukraine.<sup>148</sup>

The largest number of British leaflets concerning the Holocaust was, in fact, dropped during 1943. For instance, a leaflet entitled *Massenmord*, disseminated during January and February 1943, documented the numbers of Jews of different nationalities arrested, deported and killed by the Nazis. It stated that up to one million European Jews had already been exterminated. The Allied joint declaration was also reprinted (see image below).<sup>149</sup> Remarkably, another leaflet contained the names and portraits of leading Nazis guilty of mass murder and listed the number of Jews each had personally killed or ordered to be killed.<sup>150</sup> A leaflet of September 1944 reported the methods employed for the gassing of Jews in the Lublin

<sup>144</sup>The extensive knowledge by the British propaganda institutions about the persecution and extermination of the Jews is well documented in two PWE central directives from spring 1944: *Political Warfare Executive. Central Directive. Special Directive on the President's Statement on Persecutions*, PWD/AH/44/2/19, 24 March 1944, BBC WAC, E 2/128/4; *PID Annexe to Weekly Guidance. The Liquidation of the Jews in Poland*, PWD/CD/44/1/15, 13 Apr. 1944, *ibid*.

<sup>145</sup>Harris, p. 76.

<sup>146</sup>*Sonderbericht German Women's Programme-News for Women*, 16 June 1944, BBC WAC, ES 22 (German Service-Sonderbericht Scripts, Jan. 1943–Apr. 1945). The latter broadcast was monitored by the Sonderdienst "Seehaus", *Funk-Abhör-Bericht*, 16 June 1944, BA Berlin, R 58/795, fol. 28 (reprinted in Harris, p. 75).

<sup>147</sup>8 a.m. *German Women's Programme*, German Service script, 18 July 1943, BBC WAC, E 22 (German Service-German Women's Programmes: Transmission Layouts, including some scripts, Jan. 1942–Jan. 1945). See also *Warning to War Losers, Sonderbericht* by Fraser, 25 Oct. 1943, BBC WAC, ES 22 (German Service-Sonderbericht Scripts, Jan. 1943–Apr. 1945).

<sup>148</sup>*Die Andere Seite. Viertes Heft*, no. G.94, 3 Dec. 1943–16 March 1944, in Kirchner (ed.), vol 5, pp. 265f.

<sup>149</sup>*Massenmord*, no. G.68, 13/14 Jan.–11/12 Febr. 1943, in Kirchner (ed.), vol. 4, pp. 166f.

<sup>150</sup>*Es wird Buch geführt*, no. G.70, 22 Sept.–19 Oct. 1943, in Kirchner (ed.), vol. 5, pp. 194f.



# MASSENMORD

## DAS VERBRECHEN

**IN DEUTSCHLAND** gab es bis 1939 etwa 200 000 Juden. Von ihnen sind bis auf 40 000 alle zugrundegegangen oder deportiert.

**IN ÖSTERREICH** leben von 75 000 Juden höchstens noch 15 000.

**IN DER TSCHECHOSLOWAKEI** wurden 137 000 Juden festgenommen.

**IN POLEN** sind mehr als 600 000 Juden eines unnatürlichen Todes gestorben.

**IN HOLLAND UND BELGIEN** blieb von 180 000 nur ein Drittel übrig.

**IN FRANKREICH** wurden nahezu 50 000 nach dem Osten verschleppt und unzählige ermordet.

**IN JUGOSLAWIEN** wurden von rund 85 000 nicht weniger als 84 000 getötet, verschleppt oder eingekerkert.

**IN RUMÄNIEN** gab es 900 000 Juden. Jetzt leben dort kaum mehr 250 000.

**IN GRIECHENLAND** müssen alle Juden zwischen 18 und 45 Sklavenarbeit verrichten. Viele wurden ermordet.

**IN LETTLAND** ist ein Viertel der jüdischen Bevölkerung getötet worden. Die übrigen sind Zwangsarbeiter oder verhungern in den Ghettos.

**IN NORWEGEN** wurden sämtliche Juden, soweit das norwegische Volk sie nicht verborgen hat, verhaftet und verschleppt.

Man muss annehmen, dass weit mehr als eine Million europäischer Juden bereits ausgerottet worden ist.

## DAS URTEIL DER WELT

*Die Vereinten Nationen haben am 17. Dezember 1942 eine gemeinsame Erklärung veröffentlicht, die u.a. von den Vertretern Grossbritanniens, Amerikas und der Sowjet-Union unterzeichnet ist. In ihr heisst es:*

Aus allen von den Deutschen besetzten Ländern werden die Juden unter den brutalsten und grauenhaftesten Bedingungen nach Osteuropa verschleppt. In Polen, das die Nazis zu ihrem grössten Schlachthaus gemacht haben, werden die Juden aus den von den Eindringlingen errichteten Ghettos herausgeholt, ausgenommen die wenigen Facharbeiter, die für die Rüstungsindustrie verwendbar sind. Von keinem der Verschleppten hat man je wieder etwas gehört. Die Arbeitsfähigen werden in Zwangsarbeitslagern langsam zu Tode geschunden, die Alten und Gebrechlichen dem Hungertod ausgesetzt oder in Massen hingerichtet. Den mit kaltem Blut begangenen Grausamkeiten sind Hunderttausende völlig unschuldiger Männer, Frauen und Kinder zum Opfer gefallen.

Diese bestialische Methode planmässig betriebener Ausrottung bestärkt nur alle freiheitsliebenden Völker in ihrer Entschlossenheit, mit der Hitlerbarbarei endgültig aufzuräumen. Die unterzeichneten Regierungen bekräftigen noch einmal aufs Feierlichste: Keiner, der für diese Verbrechen verantwortlich ist, wird der Strafe entgehen.

**„Vernichtung fremden Volkstums widerspricht den Lebensgesetzen nicht, wenn sie vollständig geschieht.“**

SS-BRIGADEFÜHRER DR. K. W. BEST, „ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR POLITIK“, JUNI 1942

British leaflet entitled *Massenmord* containing the Allied joint declaration and statistics about the number of Jews killed in various European countries. Reproduced from Klaus Kirchener, *Flugblatt-Propaganda im 2. Weltkrieg*, vol. 4, p 166 (Flugblatt G.68).

concentration camp. The Red Army had received the story from a British war correspondent who had visited the camp shortly after its liberation.<sup>151</sup>

During the last months and weeks of the war, when the concentration and extermination camps were liberated and the whole extent of German crimes came to light, British broadcasts gave full details of these monstrous revelations. In January 1945 Thomas Mann spoke on the German Service about the liberation of Maidanek and sought to describe the indescribable: the death factory where hundreds of thousands of Jews had been gassed, 1,400 daily; the crematorium where they had been burnt; the piles of clothes and shoes stripped from the Jews before they were led into the gas chambers; the bones which were used for the production of agricultural fertilizer.<sup>152</sup> After the liberation of Bergen-Belsen and Buchenwald by British soldiers in mid-April 1945 the service broadcast a large number of eyewitness accounts and reports by former prisoners.<sup>153</sup> At the beginning of May the head of the German Service, Hugh Carleton Greene, began to broadcast a series of reports in which he not only reported on the camp horrors factually and in great detail but also issued a warning which was summarized as follows: “[Hugh Carleton Greene] said that his own experience in pre-war Germany had convinced him that from 1934 onwards all Germans knew about the camps, making this knowledge an excuse for their failure to act, or even protest, against the crimes of the regime [from fear of being persecuted themselves].”<sup>154</sup>

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Between 1942 and 1945 the media coverage of the Holocaust was extensive and reflected the horror and human sympathy felt by the British government and public in view of the unprecedented Nazi crimes. On the other hand, British reporting on and commentary about the events directed towards the Germans was influenced by a number of political and military considerations.

As suggested, the purpose of the British propaganda effort was to help win the war by weakening German morale and detaching the German public from the Nazi regime. Reports about Nazi atrocities, and particularly about the extermination of the Jews, served to demonstrate the criminal character of that regime; they could be used to warn the Germans that the Allies would punish all those responsible for these crimes. This effort was counteracted by Goebbels’ successful propaganda campaign, *Kraft durch Furcht* (“strength through fear”), which aimed to convince the mass of Germans that in case of their defeat the Allies planned to take revenge for German

<sup>151</sup>*Luftpost Nr. 46, 11 September 1944*, no. G.30, 15–24 Sept. 1944, in *ibid.*, p. 389.

<sup>152</sup>Mann, pp. 133f. (broadcast of 14 January 1945).

<sup>153</sup>Brintzer, pp. 277–281. A recording of the broadcast of Anita Lasker of 16 April 1945 about her time in Bergen-Belsen is held at the DRA, Archivnummer 5500876. See also *Output Report. BBC European Services*, 19–22 Apr., 1945, BBC WAC, E 2/209/4, p. 4. For the treatment of the liberation of the camps see also the PWE directive for week beginning 26 Apr. 1945, sent in cypher telegramme no. 4140, FO to Washington, 25 Apr. 1945, TNA:PRO, FO 371/46727, C 857/23/18, p. 2.

<sup>154</sup>*Output Report. BBC European Services. May 9<sup>th</sup>- 16<sup>th</sup>, 1945*, BBC WAC, E 2/209/4, p. 2.

War atrocities. The German *Volk*, Nazi propaganda claimed, was now in the same boat as the Nazi leaders and therefore had to fight to the bitter end.<sup>155</sup> *Kraft durch Furcht* was launched in the winter of 1942–1943, when the tide of the war had turned in favour of the Allies and German military weakness was becoming more and more apparent. The chief focus of Goebbels' propaganda was, as indicated, on "international Jewry", defined as pulling the wires behind the scenes in Allied countries and aiming at the total destruction of Germany.<sup>156</sup>

The British propaganda effort thus has to be seen in the light of Goebbels' effort to unite the German *Volk*. An internal BBC memorandum of January 1943 stated: "There is also a great handicap to our propaganda in the consideration that all attempts to discourage the Germans by convincing them of the hatred their armies and officials have aroused abroad can be used by Dr. Goebbels as the finishing touch for his successful campaign of 'strength through fear'."<sup>157</sup> The British concerns in this respect were strongly confirmed in March 1943 by a report of the Press Reading Bureau in Stockholm.<sup>158</sup> The source, a German journalist who had left Berlin on 11 February, claimed that it was clear-cut Nazi policy to commit atrocities in order to make the entire German populace guilty and exculpation impossible, so that it would be forced to throw all its energy into the war effort. With a general sense that all bridges had been burnt and all Germans were in the same boat, there was great fear of both the British and Americans, largely based on a belief they would take revenge for what had happened to the Jews.<sup>159</sup>

In several pamphlets, the British sought to counter Goebbels' *Kraft durch Furcht* campaign with the following line of argument:

The Nazis know the war is lost; they know that the end of the war spells the end for them. So they prolong the war in order to postpone the day of reckoning. Prolonging the war requires rallying as many Germans as possible in solidarity. The only way to create and maintain this unity is through fear of reprisals after defeat. That's why it is in the interests of the Nazis that as many Germans as possible have as much to fear from defeat as they do.

<sup>155</sup>For further information on *Kraft durch Furcht* see Brinitzer, pp. 259–262; Longerich, pp. 241, 302; see esp. the discussion about a suitable British propaganda strategy in reply to German "strength through fear propaganda" in the Foreign Office in late 1942, reprinted in Blasius, *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, series 1, vol. 3, pp. 949–957.

<sup>156</sup>Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*, p. 230.

<sup>157</sup>*BBC Surveys of European Audiences. Enemy Countries [Germany and Italy]*, 20 Jan. 1943, BBC WAC, E 2/191/2, p. 13. A memorandum of the PWE Propaganda Research Section indicated that "towards the end of 1941 it was reported on good authority, that the hatred of the conquered peoples was actually used in official propaganda to the troops on the lines: 'Wir müssen siegen, 300en sonst wird es uns schlimm ergehen, 300en wir haben zu viel Hass auf uns geladen ['we have to win, since otherwise things will go very badly for us, as we have built up too much hatred against us']"<sup>158</sup> *German Peace Hopes and Fears*, 15 July 1942, TNA:PRO, FO 371/30900, C 7114/29/18, p. 11.

<sup>158</sup>The Press Reading Bureau (PRB) at the British Legation in Stockholm (another was attached to The British Legation in Berne) was not concerned with reading the neutral press, as might be deduced from its name, but rather with gathering political intelligence (i.e. information about political and social conditions in Germany, German morale, etc.) for PWE. This information was then used in British propaganda. See Montagu-Pollock (Stockholm) to Loxley (FO), 11 Dec. 1942, TNA:PRO, HS 2/258. <sup>159</sup>No. 29, PRB Stockholm to Political Intelligence Department [i.e. PWE], 27 March 1943, TNA:PRO, FO 371/34429, C 3769/55/18.

And so they attempt to drag as many Germans as possible into their increasingly monstrous and desperate crimes purely to ensure that the German people don't give up the fight.<sup>160</sup>

Another leaflet, dropped in January and February 1943, sought to explain the rationale behind the Nazi extermination programme:

### **Strength through Fear**

Having plundered and decimated them, why does Adolf Hitler want to exterminate the Jews through hunger, gas, fire and sword?

These unprecedented mass murders are meant to load such blood guilt on the German name, to extend the circle of those responsible so widely, that the victors will be unable to distinguish between the guilty and guiltless. [Hitler and the SS] deliberately wish to inflame the hatred of the whole world against the German people so that they can then say to the German people: "The world will punish you like for like. If you do not wish to be exterminated as we exterminate others, you must fight for Hitler." ...

Because the German people are beginning to doubt the promised final victory, they should "unite", unite in fear of the consequences of the most dreadful crimes.<sup>161</sup>

The British propagandists thus tried to steer a middle course. Their strategy for creating distance between the German populace and the Nazi regime and its mass crimes involved a mixture of three elements, the first of which involved threats of Allied punishment for the guilty. Again and again, information was released to the effect that the Allies were compiling "black lists" of those engaged in the mass murder of the Jews. For instance, a British leaflet entitled *Es wird Buch geführt* (A record is being kept), dropped in the autumn of 1943, stated that the names of the perpetrators of the Jewish massacres were all known to London and that measures had already been taken for their trial after the war. The leaflet's reverse side had portraits of leading Nazis such as Hans Frank, governor of the *Generalgouvernement*, together with a list of their individual crimes.<sup>162</sup> The humorous weekly feature *Frau Wernicke* devoted an entire broadcast to the "black lists", declaring that all persons engaged in mass murder in Poland and Russia were known to the Allies ("It's obvious mate—they're already collecting everyone's name, so if you're on the list then not even God or Wotan can help you.") Frau Wernicke then gently urged her listeners to be kind to Jews and others in conquered Europe, as witnesses would testify after the war whether or not individual Germans had taken part in crimes.<sup>163</sup> In a news broadcast directed to German women in June 1944, the German Service reported that the German authorities had ordered

<sup>160</sup>*Lufipost*. London, 6. November 1943, no. G.93, 22 Nov.–30 Dec. 1943, in Kirchner (ed.), vol. 5, p. 257. A similar message is contained in *Was der Deutsche wissen muß*, no. G.60, 15/16 Oct. 1942–26/27 March 1943, in Kirchner (ed.), vol. 4, p. 148; *The War Against the Jews*, German Service feature script, 27 Dec. 1942, BBC WAC, ES 22 (German Service Scripts-Features, Apr.–Dec. 1942), pp. 3f. See also Longerich, pp. 241f.

<sup>161</sup>*Massenmord*, no. G.68, 13/14 Jan.–11/12 Febr. 1942, in Kirchner (ed.), vol. 4, p. 167; emphasis in original.

<sup>162</sup>*Es wird Buch geführt*, no. G.70, 22 Sept.–19 Oct. 1943, in Kirchner (ed.), vol. 5, pp. 194f. See also Longerich, p. 245.

<sup>163</sup>*Frau Wernicke über Schwarze Listen*, 27 March 1943, in Adler, pp. 99–102. A similar message is contained in Fraser's talk *Warning to War Losers*, 25 Oct. 1943, BBC WAC, ES 22 (German Service-Sonderbericht Scripts, Jan. 1943–Apr. 1945). In part reprinted in Harris, p. 84.

the killing of 3,300 Czech Jews in the Auschwitz gas chambers and issued the following warning: “The German authorities in Czechoslovakia and their subordinates should know that full information is received in London about the massacres in Birkenau. All those responsible for such massacres from the top downwards will be called to account.”<sup>164</sup> Similarly, following the revelations of December 1942 Lindley Fraser broadcast a talk in which he warned “all the members of the SS and all those involved in the planning and execution of the extermination of Jews” that there would be no place for them in the postwar world.<sup>165</sup> The Foreign Office, however, had serious doubts such threats and warnings would have any deterrence effect—indeed there was a suspicion they would actually increase the persecution since doing so would obviously shake those so seriously concerned with the matter.<sup>166</sup>

In order to counteract the fear aroused by the general threat of punishment and by Goebbels’ *Kraft durch Furcht* campaign, the British began to emphasise Allied determination to punish only those directly or indirectly guilty of specific crimes—the second of the three elements informing the British approach. In his above-cited broadcast of October 1942, Fraser thus emphasised that “everyone who has committed these crimes will be punished, but not the German man and woman who is appalled by such atrocities and reject them. ... No! The innocent need not fear that they will be condemned together with the guilty after the war”.<sup>167</sup> And a British leaflet dropped in early 1943 included the following passage:

Unlike the Nazis the United Nations is not waging a war of extinction of one people against another, one race against another. ... But have no illusions on that account. Whoever subscribes to the theory and practice of the SS ... makes himself subject to the same law and will be judged by the same standards. ...

**Therefore: Hands off! Now is the time for each German to decide whether to share the fate of the Nazi criminals. We are keeping a record.**<sup>168</sup>

The third element was a repeated appeal to the Germans to finally stand against the Nazis and give the world a sign they were against the mass murders. In calling for such a development in August 1942, Fraser, for instance, emphasised that it was not enough to reject the Nazi crimes inwardly, but that the Germans should disassociate themselves from Nazi crimes in their daily lives, for example by acts of “kindness to the persecuted Jews in your midst”.<sup>169</sup> During autumn 1942 attention remained focussed on the question of retribution for war crimes. British leaflets and broadcasts

<sup>164</sup>*Sonderbericht German Women’s Programme-News for Women*, 16 June 1944, BBC WAC, ES 22 (German Service- Sonderbericht Scripts, Jan. 1943–Apr. 1945). Also cited in Harris, p. 75. The broadcast was monitored by the Sonderdienst “Seehaus”, *Funk-Abhör-Bericht*, 16 June, 1944, BA Berlin, R 58/795, fol. 28.

<sup>165</sup>Cited in Brinitzer, p. 265.

<sup>166</sup>Wasserstein, pp. 296f., 299, 301f.

<sup>167</sup>Manuscript of German Service talk by Fraser, Oct. 1942, in Brinitzer, pp. 263f.

<sup>168</sup>*Massenmord*, no. G.68, 13/14 Jan.–11/12 Febr. 1943, in Kirchner (ed.), vol. 4, p. 167; emphasis in original.

<sup>169</sup>*Looking Forward No. 14, Sonderbericht* by Fraser, 16 Aug. 1942, BBC WAC, ES 22; Lindley Fraser-News Analysis, 1942. Misc. Scripts (Sonderberichte, including Thomas Mann and Erica Mann), 1941–42. See also *Output Report. BBC European Services. January 10th–16th [1943]*, TNA:PRO, FO 371/34444, C 2385/89/18, p. 1f. (survey of German Service output during 1942).



laid frequent emphasis on Hitler's intention to implicate the entire German people in his criminal actions; Britain, however, remained prepared to accept evidence that these crimes had been rejected by Germans with a conscience. But while those in the occupied countries had already showed their courage through acts of resistance, thus far the Germans had offered no signs of such a rejection.<sup>170</sup>

These arguments were sharpened in December 1942. In one broadcast Richard Crossman urged the Germans to raise their voices before it was too late and "risk their lives for humanity and justice and, not least, for Germany".<sup>171</sup> The feature *The War Against the Jews* of 27 December 1942 made a similar appeal. After being informed that many people in German-occupied countries were helping the Jews and condemning the Nazi crimes, listeners were told:

The current anti-Jewish measures represent a disregard for human dignity, a breach of the most sacred rights of individual and family. I raise my voice to an indignant protest of Christian conscience: all men, whether Aryan or otherwise, have been created by the same God and regardless of race or religion and have a claim to respect from both individual and state.

The world waits, waits for the moment when out of 80 million Germans someone stands up and has the courage to shout: Stop! when the most fearful crime in history is being committed in the name of his nation. Someone who puts the honour of his people before his own private safety. If this doesn't happen then the German people will bear witness to itself in the most pitiful way a people has ever done. ... He who dares this will have accomplished a deed removing the most terrible stain from the German people, a deed which will restore resonance to the German name. It was a German who ushered in a new era when he rose and cried out to the world: Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise— God help me. Amen.<sup>172</sup>

In March 1944 the American President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an official statement on the persecutions and war crimes in which he explicitly called on the Germans to give a visible sign of their disapproval and to gather evidence of Nazi crimes. A British leaflet reprinted the warning he gave in this context:

I call on everyone living in any country under German domination to show the world by deed that he has nothing to do with this insane crime.

I call on you to hide the persecuted victims of the Nazi terror, to help them flee over the borders and do everything to save them from a tormented death at the hands of the National Socialist executioners.

I call on you to be vigilant and collect evidence of these crimes so that on the day of liberation the criminals can be delivered to justice.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>170</sup>Survey of the activities of the BBC German Service during 1942, in *Output Report. BBC European Services. January 10th–16th [1943]*, TNA:PRO, FO 371/34444, C 2385/89/18, p. 2

<sup>171</sup>*Output Report. BBC European Services. December 13th–19th, 1942*, BBC WAC, E 2/209/1, p. 4.

<sup>172</sup>*The War Against the Jews*, German Service feature script, 27 Dec. 1942, BBC WAC, ES 22 (German Service Scripts-Features, Apr.–Dec. 1942), pp. 4f. The words "Here I stand..." are from Luther's speech at the *Reichstag* in Worms in 1521 ("*Hier stehe ich, ich kann nicht anders.*")

<sup>173</sup>*Lufipost*, 18. April 1944, no. G.19, 26–27 April 1944, in Kirchner (ed.), vol. 5, p. 367; emphasis in original. For the treatment of Roosevelt's statement by the British see *Political Warfare Executive. Central Directive. Special Directive on The President's Statement on Persecutions*, PWD/AH/44/2/19, 24 March 1944, BBC WAC, E 2/128/4.



Despite the effort at balance revealed in this eloquent appeal, it is the case that as the war continued, the entire German people (except the few who had actively resisted) was increasingly being held morally responsible, at the least through passivity, for the Nazi mass murders. In an official statement on British postwar policy given in the House of Lords on 10 March 1943, Lord Chancellor Viscount Simon declared that together with the crimes in the occupied countries the systematic extermination of the Jews had dishonoured the name of Germany forever; he called for reprisals— although, to be sure, not of a collective nature. Still, he indicated, the Germans had to remember that the longer the war and their regime lasted, the more they would be held responsible for its crimes because they had done nothing to bring down Hitler.<sup>174</sup> In a *Sonderbericht* issued at the end of October 1943, Fraser reiterated that “No one will be punished for a deed for which he isn’t personally responsible. *But even bystanders are involved*: for it depends on every German whether or not in the future the German name will be free of disgrace and shame.”<sup>175</sup>

On 14 January 1943, William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, delivered a sermon sharpening this implicit critique in a Christian context; the sermon was reprinted in a leaflet dropped in February and March. It included the following passage:

[The German bishops] did not raise objections to a crime such as the project to exterminate the Polish people; nor against the horrific slaughter of the Jews. They protested more for their own protection than from love for their fellow men, more against the wrongs perpetrated upon them than against the desecration of justice. In Holland and France Christians fearlessly criticised the mistreatment of the Jews. We have not heard that Christians in Germany acted the same way.

We know how difficult it is. ... But ... we have to express our sadness at the failure of Germany’s Christians in this matter. For what is at stake is by no means merely the survival of an ecclesiastical institution but rather the inner strength of the Christian community fearlessly to bear witness for Christian truth.<sup>176</sup>

In October 1942 Lindley Fraser had already implied, in the course of his broadcast focused on the deportation of an aged German Jewish woman to Poland, that most Germans knew about the fate of the Jews but sought to suppress this knowledge (“This case is no exception. Every German knows from his own experience, from his own circle, of many such cruel acts”).<sup>177</sup> Another broadcast on 11 May 1944 criticised that even those Germans who regarded themselves as decent considered

<sup>174</sup>*Deutschland nach dem Krieg*, no. G.29, 23 May–20 Nov. 1943, in Kirchner (ed.), vol. 5, pp. 96f.

<sup>175</sup>*Warning to War Losers, Sonderbericht* by Fraser, 25 Oct. 1943, BBC WAC, ES 22 (German Service-Sonderbericht Scripts, Jan. 1943–Apr. 1945); emphasis in original.

<sup>176</sup>*Christen Deutschlands!*, no. G.3, 11 Febr.–9 March 1943, in Kirchner (ed.), vol. 5, pp. 15f.; emphasis in original. Temple’s sermon was reprinted in *Die Andere Seite. Drittes Heft*, no. G.27, 23 May 1943–23 March 1944, in *ibid.*, pp. 86–87. The English version quoted here is a retranslation from the German text of the sermon.

<sup>177</sup>Manuscript of German Service talk by Fraser, Oct. 1942, in Brinitzer, p. 263.

the persecution, deportation and killing of the Jews simply as something about which one did not speak.<sup>178</sup>

In the first few months of 1945 when German military defeat became ever more likely, the British no longer felt obliged to respect German sensibilities or take care not to stiffen German resistance by increasing fears of defeat; the Holocaust could now be approached by way of the theme of German guilt. The German nation as a whole, not just a limited group of criminals, was now directly accused of being morally responsible for the extermination of the Jews. Part of a PWE directive of late April 1945 dealing with coverage of the liberation of Buchenwald concentration camp, clearly lays out the rationale behind the new approach:

Concentration Camps. Continue to report factually in good volume. There has been abundant evidence in this connexion of acts by Germans criminal in the law of any civilised State in the world; in the sense that these are offences against our common humanity they are offences against us, which, apart from bringing to common justice the persons directly concerned, we are treating as such. Lay the moral responsibility for these crimes wholly and solely on the German nation. They cannot be excused in terms of the Nazi regime, which was accepted whether actively or passively by the vast majority of the Germans. Had any considerable number of protesting voices been heard or even if passive supporters of the regime had been passive opponents these bestial practices would not have been possible.<sup>179</sup>

On 14 January 1945 Thomas Mann cautiously indicated how the German people could start a new life once the war and Nazi regime had ended:

But *one* thing is needed for the new beginning. There is *one* precondition for reconciliation with the world, a process necessary for any moral understanding with other peoples and without which you Germans will never comprehend what is happening to you. This involves a clear understanding of the inexpiable nature of what a Germany schooled in bestiality by infamous teachers perpetrated against humanity; it involves the complete and unreserved acknowledgement of appalling crimes of which even today you know only very little. ... But for you to comprehend it has to penetrate your conscience, and a huge work of enlightenment will be needed to make you knowledgeable—work you must not look down on as propaganda.<sup>180</sup>

Mann then described what the liberators of the Maidanek extermination camp had found on their arrival. He concluded his radio address with these words: “One cannot even begin to list in a few minutes [*Nicht einmal aufzählen kann man es in ein paar Minuten*] all the things Nazi Germany perpetrated against human beings, against mankind. Germans, you must be aware of them. Horror, shame and remorse are the first thing

<sup>178</sup>*Funk-Abhör-Bericht*, Sonderdienst “Seehaus”, 11 May 1944, BA Berlin, R 58/795, fol. 96.

<sup>179</sup>PWE directive for week beginning 26 Apr. 1945, sent in cypher telegramme no. 4140, FO to Washington, 25 Apr. 1945, TNA:PRO, FO 371/46727, C 857/23/18, p. 2. See also *Output Report. BBC European Services*. 19–22 Apr., 1945, BBC WAC, E 2/209/4, p. 4; May 9th–16th, 1945, BBC WAC, E 2/209/4, p. 2.

<sup>180</sup>Mann, pp. 132f. (broadcast of 14 January 1945); emphasis in original.

that is needed. And there is only *one* necessary hatred: that of the scoundrels who before God and the whole world made the German name a horror.<sup>181</sup>

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As we have seen, during 1938–1945 British broadcasts and leaflets supplied regular reports, albeit in varying degrees of intensity, about the Nazi regime’s persecution and extermination of the Jews. In retrospect, it is clear that the reporting on the Holocaust was too infrequent and failed to do justice to the scope of the Jewish tragedy. Apart from December 1942, the British government did not address any official protest to the German government regarding its treatment of the Jews; nor did it make the Holocaust a major propaganda theme.

Despite these shortcomings, the British propaganda effort nevertheless succeeded in overcoming the Nazi information monopoly. Thanks to that effort, Germans and others throughout the world were able to learn, in shocking detail, about the Holocaust as it was transpiring. Consequently, after the war was over, the substantial number of Germans who had listened to the BBC or read the British leaflets had an especially weak argument when they offered their version of “we didn’t know about that”—the widespread claim to ignorance about “those terrible events in the East”.

<sup>181</sup>*ibid.*, p. 134; emphasis in original.