

**SOME FAINT HOPE AND COURAGE:
THE BBC AND THE FINAL SOLUTION, 1942-45**

**THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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BY

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This work has been dedicated from the beginning to my Jewish-Welsh-African-English-Irish nephews Jacob and Tobias; to those of my great-grandparents who had the luck and courage to seek a better life in Britain; to my grandfathers, Max Mendalovitch and Charles Carlton MC. To Clare.

ABSTRACT

This study is of the coverage provided by the BBC Home and European Services of the Final Solution from the beginning of 1942 until VE-Day. In other words, from the beginning of industrialised murder of Jews in western, central and eastern Europe to the German surrender. It does not cover, except in the introductory chapter, the earlier stages of what became known as the Holocaust. Neither does it examine what happened once the war and the Final Solution had ended. Issues related to the impact of Final Solution and the ability of the BBC to react to it, such as antisemitism and the level of third-party influence over the BBC, are also examined. This is a history of both the British response to the Final Solution and the way in which one of the most important institutions of twentieth century Britain, the BBC, coped with the single most important story it has ever covered.

It is found that there was a large amount of coverage by both the Home and European services. Taking the Home Service first, coverage was heavy at times when the British and Polish governments found themselves able to confirm the information coming out of Europe. The Home Service insisted throughout that it limit its coverage to news bulletins, for fear of increasing antisemitism within Britain. This, and much of the general reluctance to emphasis news of the specifically anti-Jewish nature of the Final Solution, grew out the belief that it was both wrong and counter-productive to assign any special significance to the plight of the Jews. The European Service was more flexible and broadcast a great deal of coverage. However its main overseers, the Political Warfare Executive, had a substantial say in what emerged. The political context of information about the Final Solution often made them reluctant to sanction broadcasting about it. Not all that could have been broadcast was.

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'In the news business it isn't involvement but indifference that makes for bad practice. Good journalism is the journalism of *attachment*. It is not only knowing, but also caring.'

The BBC's Martin Bell on being a reporter in Bosnia in the 1990s.

INTRODUCTION

This study is of the coverage provided by the BBC Home and European Services of the Final Solution from the beginning of 1942 until VE-Day. In other words, from the beginning of industrialised murder of Jews in western, central and eastern Europe to the German surrender. It does not cover, except in the introductory chapter, the earlier stages of what became known as the Holocaust. Neither does it examine what happened once the war and the Final Solution had ended. Issues related to the impact of Final Solution and the ability of the BBC to react to it, such as antisemitism and the level of third-party influence over the BBC, are also examined. This is a history of both the British response to the Final Solution and the way in which one of the most important institutions of twentieth century Britain, the BBC, coped with the single most important story it has ever covered.

The attitude and actions of the Allies in regard to the Holocaust have been the focus of many studies over the past few decades. One can gauge the tone of much of the work from the titles of two books published in the early 1980s - Monty Penkower's *The Jews Were Expendable* and David Wyman's *The Abandonment of the Jews*.¹ Both of these studies are histories of failure; the failure to heed information, to make difficult decisions, of a lack of humanity. Other work has taken a less accusatory stance, including Bernard Wasserstein's *Britain and the Jews of Europe*, and Walter Laqueur's *The Terrible Secret*.² Laqueur places the gap between knowledge and belief at centre stage, seeing this as the fundamental reason why the Allied response was as limited as it now seems. Wasserstein's work, as is Martin Gilbert's, is largely focused in linking British attitudes to the Final Solution with British concerns over the future of the Middle East.³ Wasserstein posits the Jews and their status as a non-national minority as being problematic in regard to Palestine, rather than within the Diaspora. Although Wasserstein's meticulous and thorough research makes his book an invaluable reference, this study does not recognise Palestine as being at all central in shaping the British Government's reaction to the Final Solution.

¹ Monty Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable : Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust* (New York, 1983); David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews* (New York, 1984).

² Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 1988); Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: An Investigation into the Suppression of Information about Hitler's 'Final Solution'* (London, 1980).

³ Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies* (London, 1991).

Tony Kushner has provided a refinement of the knowledge/belief paradigm.⁴ Kushner places the British contemporary confrontation with the Holocaust within the matrix of a dominant liberal ideology that was ill-equipped to understand either the reality of Nazi antisemitism or its consequences. It is this positioning of ideological and sociocultural factors in informing responses to the Final Solution, rather than geopolitics or psychology, that has proved most important in my own view of the process. Perhaps the most important historiographical technique Kushner deploys is to take the view that the rhetoric deployed by what, for want of a better term, might be called the British liberal elite should be taken seriously. This rhetoric, he argues, should not be seen merely as a smoke-screen masking real interests and a Government acting in line with *raison d'état*. In other words, when the Jewish ethnicity of victims of the Final Solution was played down by the BBC in broadcasts to Europe, it had much to do with liberal thought sitting uneasily with questions of difference, and should not be seen simply as a conspiracy aimed at restricting Zionism by denying any acceptance of a separate Jewish nationality. A recent addition to a debate that is growing in maturity is William D. Rubenstein's recent book, *The Myth of Rescue*.⁵ He rejects the notion, common in virtually all previous work on the subject, that antisemitism, ignorance or anti-Zionism determined Allied responses. Instead Rubenstein argues for an approach that concentrates on the practicalities.

Considering the BBC's undoubted importance during the Second World War, there has been astonishingly little written about it - a particularly glaring omission when it comes to news. There is only one piece of work which shows what any of the BBC's various news organisations reported on a particular subject; Jeremy Bennett's study of the BBC Danish Service.⁶ There is, of course, Asa Briggs's institutional history of the BBC,⁷ plus Siân Nicholas's recent and very welcome history of domestic morale and the BBC, *Echoes of*

⁴ Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford, 1994).

⁵ William D. Rubenstein, *The Myth of Rescue: Why the democracies could not have saved more Jews from the Nazis* (London, 1997).

⁶ Jeremy Bennett, *British Broadcasting and the Danish Resistance Movement 1940-1945: A Study of the Wartime Broadcasts of the BBC Danish Service* (Cambridge, 1966).

⁷ Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Vol. III: The War of Words*. (London, 1970; 2nd edn. 1995)

SPECIAL NOTE

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America'.¹⁷ Julian Scott has completed a thesis that looks at the British press.¹⁸ All of these have come to the same basic conclusions; news about the Holocaust was widely available but those producing the news rarely gave it much prominence, presented it in anything like a cogent manner, or as being truthful and confirmed. There have even been two pieces of work that have sought to come to grips with the BBC's reporting of the Holocaust to its domestic audience, and one that deals with the BBC's coverage of pre-war Nazi antisemitism.¹⁹ One must also mention the BBC radio programme *Document* and accompanying newspaper publicity.²⁰ The most important of the two scholarly works is that by Jean Seaton. Her most vital findings have to do with how she shows how the BBC *managed* news of the Holocaust. What all these works have in common is that they point out that occupied Europe was not hermetically sealed. Information about the nature and progress of the Holocaust filtered out in a variety of ways.

What none of the previous work on the media and the Holocaust has been able to do is to integrate the actual output of any particular medium with the machinations behind the scenes. While Sharf and Scott have produced surveys of what was actually published, newspapers have rarely been much good at preserving or making available their archives. An opposite tendency has been at work at the BBC. Seaton's article on the BBC understandably concentrates on the bureaucratic and ideological debates rather than analysing output. Harris uses a very limited range of sources and seems unaware of most of the secondary literature. He also fails to cite any Home Service broadcasts. I have sought to assess the amount of information that the BBC had available, the pressures on the treatment of that material and then compare this with what eventually emerged over the airwaves.

¹⁷ Holly Shulman, 'The Voice of America, US Propaganda and the Holocaust: "I would have remembered"', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 17 (1997), pp. 91-105.

¹⁸ Julian Scott, 'The British Press and the Holocaust, 1942-1943' (Leicester University, PhD, 1994).

¹⁹ Jeremy D Harris, 'Broadcasting the Massacres: An Analysis of the BBC's Contemporary Coverage of the Holocaust', *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 25 (1996), pp. 65-99; Jean Seaton, 'Reporting Atrocities: The BBC and the Holocaust', in J Seaton & B Pimlott (eds.), *The Media and British Politics* (Aldershot, 1987); Guy Raz, *The BBC and Appeasement: Broadcast Coverage of Nazi Persecution of the Jews, 1933-1938* (University of Cambridge, M.Phil., 1997).

²⁰ 'Document: The Unspeakable Tragedy', BBC Radio programme transmitted 26 Aug. 1993; Stephen Ward, 'Why the BBC ignored the Holocaust', *The Independent on Sunday*, 22 August 1993.

War.⁸ Much of what else has been written, especially in regard to the European Service, has often been by former BBC staff. The title of Gerald Mansell's *Let Truth be Told* indicates the tone of much of this type of work.⁹ Lindley Fraser's section dealing with the German Service in his book on propaganda is an honourable exception.¹⁰

As Asa Briggs writes, no history of the BBC during the war would be complete without 'persistent references' to the various Government agencies with which it was connected.¹¹ Studies touching on this theme include Ian McLaine's history of the Ministry of Information. However this deals, as does Nicholas' work, with the relationship between the BBC and the Ministry of Information.¹² Historians have investigated the domestic side of broadcasting to a certain extent, but there has been virtually no work on the most important body responsible overseeing the BBC European Service; the Political Warfare Executive (hereafter PWE). No official history has been written of PWE, and many of its files are only now becoming available. The PRO opened their file on PWE's relationship with the BBC in 1995.¹³ The two substantial pieces of work dealing with it are Michael Balfour on propaganda during the Second World War and Charles Cruickshank's study of British psychological warfare operations.¹⁴

A significant amount of work has emerged on the press and the Holocaust. The trailblazer in this field was Anton Sharf's *The British Press and Jews Under Nazi Rule*, published in 1964.¹⁵ More recently, Deborah Lipstadt has published *Beyond Belief*, which deals with the response of the American press to Nazism.¹⁶ Holly Shulman has published work on the Final Solution and the US Government's external broadcasting station, 'Voice of

⁸ Siân Nicholas, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939-45* (Manchester, 1996).

⁹ Gerald Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told: 50 Years of BBC External Broadcasting* (London, 1982).

¹⁰ Lindley Fraser, *Propaganda* (London, 1957).

¹¹ Briggs, *The War of Words* (1995), pp. 28-29.

¹² Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale* (London, 1979); P.M.H. Bell, *John Bull and the Bear: British Public Opinion, Foreign Policy and the Soviet Union, 1941-1945*. (London, 1990).

¹³ Public Records Office, Foreign Office papers (hereafter FO) 898/41.

¹⁴ Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in War 1939-1945: Organisation, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany* (London, 1979); Charles Cruickshank, *The Fourth Arm: Psychological Warfare 1938-1945* (Oxford, 1977).

¹⁵ Anton Sharf, *The British Press and Jews Under Nazi Rule* (London, 1964).

¹⁶ Deborah Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust* (New York, 1986).

Where this study differs from the most important study of the Allied media and the Holocaust, Deborah Lipstadt's, is in its conception of what the Allies *might* have achieved. Lipstadt, quoting de Tocqueville, writes that in a free society the role of the press is to act as a beacon to public opinion. In relation to the Holocaust, this means that what has been identified as the reluctance of the American Government to pursue more vigorous schemes of rescue was at least partially encouraged by the absence of any press campaign - and concomitant mass of popular opinion - in support of such measures.²¹ In fact the potential success of rescue plans, certainly after 1941, was far less certain than Lipstadt suggests. The implication of this is that logistic and strategic barriers to successful intervention were at least as important as indifference or antisemitism.²² This does not mean the question of whether the Government prevented the BBC acting freely or not is no longer important. Instead it shifts the focus, partially at least, towards factors other than antisemitism. It does not remove antisemitism from the picture, but rather forces to ask whether, in relation to these new imperatives, the BBC did what it was told or not.

This study does not aim to establish that the BBC bore any share of responsibility for failing to act in a situation where action might have been successful. Rather, I examine the Final Solution as an example of how information was managed. This was done to avoid a situation where the Government would have been, and indeed occasionally was, *under pressure* to act. In other words I have not sought to show how the BBC was hindered from making a full contribution to any successful pro-rescue campaign, but instead the structural, political and ideological limitations on the Corporation's ability to broadcast on a vast range of controversial questions which reports of the Final Solution provoked. In this sense, the study is about the BBC as much as the *Shoah*. It represents a conscious departure from counter-factualism and mystification, and a movement towards historicising the *Shoah* - locating it within the rest of the history of the twentieth and other centuries. If we are to understand what really happened, then surely that is what is needed.

²¹ Lipstadt, op. cit., pp. 277-278.

²² This view has been most recently expounded by Bill Rubinstein, op. cit.

Chapter Structure

To comprehend how the BBC attempted to come to grips with the Final Solution, first we must look at how the BBC broadcast news before 1942, how it was run, who influenced it and who listened to it. Those are the themes which dominate Chapter I. The chronological study begins in Chapter Two. The BBC Home and European services are dealt with in adjacent sections of each chapter so as to more easily allow comparison. Chapter II demonstrates how BBC coverage of the Final Solution developed from disconnected snippets at the beginning of 1942 to the relatively coherent descriptions of the Final Solution contained in the Bund report at the end of June 1942. Chapter III examines the build-up to the Allied Declaration of 17 December 1942 and the political debates that developed from questions of how it was to be publicised. It also deals with the campaign led by people such as the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, to persuade the Government to intervene. Chapter IV deals with the Allied Declaration itself and its immediate aftermath, showing how the BBC's attention switched away from persecutions against Jews and towards the sufferings and threats other groups faced. Chapter V concerns itself firstly with how this continued into the early months of 1943. It then concentrates on BBC coverage of the Bermuda Conference of April 1943 and the Warsaw ghetto uprising of the same month and introduces the issue of how the BBC tried to come to terms with British domestic antisemitism. Chapter VI covers the longest chronological period of any chapter; from June 1943 to the occupation of Hungary by German forces in March 1944. It includes material from the first substantial run of transcripts from any of the BBC foreign language services; the Polish Service. The other central theme of this chapter is how the BBC hierarchy opposed attempts to increase public knowledge of the Final Solution in Britain via the Home Service. Chapter VII is the longest chapter. This concentrates on the extension of the Final Solution to Hungary after March 1944. It shows how, despite information being available, the Home Service told the British public little, and what it did tell them, it told them late. Regarding the European Service, and especially the Hungarian Service, coverage was superior but still problematic. This chapter also seeks to answer the question of whether the radio had the direct potential of saving lives. The final

chapter, Chapter VIII, deals with the liberation of the camps in the west and of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Methodology and Sources

One great hurdle has presented itself in the course of producing a survey of what the BBC broadcast about the Final Solution; the absence of surviving transcripts for much of the output of the European Service. What has survived is often fragmentary. Hence much of what follows regarding the European Service is based on directives and correspondence from both within and outside the European Service, detailing what they had and had not broadcast. Documents such as daily directives by the Director of European Broadcasts, central and regional directives from the Political Warfare Executives and Output Reports have been used to reconstruct as well as possible what was broadcast. This is not to say that nothing from the European Service has survived. There are substantial holdings from the Hungarian, Polish, French and German Services at Caversham. The central news desk produced the bulk of most bulletins. Hence it is possible, particularly in the later years of the war, to judge what the European Service as a whole was saying from the surviving records of one particular languages service. Nothing of the core English-language service has survived.

In many ways the sections dealing with the BBC Home Service are an inverted image of those dealing with the European Service. Very little has *not* survived from its output, while there is much less information dealing with what went on behind the scenes.

As the BBC Written Archives Centre limits the amount of time one is able to spend there, my first survey of BBC news was made at the British Library of Political and Economic Science which holds micro-fiche copies of all BBC 9 p.m. news bulletins during the war.²³ I read all of these from January 1942 to May 1945. Aside from providing a great deal of material, this also provided valuable insights into the structure of news at this

²³ *The Home Service Nine O'clock News, 1939-1945* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healy, 1978). Hereafter C-W.

time, the context in which Final Solution-related material was broadcast and any related stories which might not have been noticed otherwise. At the BBC I used the subject index of news bulletins to locate items specific to the Final Solution. A comparison with the items I noted during the read-through of the 9 p.m. bulletins and the index showed that the index was complete.

The degree of prominence a particular story was given has been given less emphasis in this study than has been common in previous studies of the media and the Final Solution. This is due to the fact that for most of the period, the BBC constructed its bulletins in a fairly rigid format. As much as half of any bulletin contained news of actual fighting. The second and third categories, political news and domestic news, were generally where editors placed news of the Final Solution. The implications of this are dealt with in Section C of Chapter I.

Aside from actual news transcripts I have also worked with various bodies detailing the background to the actual broadcasting of news about the Final Solution. The sources for this part of my work have included the Public Records Office, the BBC Written Archives Centre, the files of the Polish Government-in-exile held at the Sikorski Institute and the archive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews held at the Greater London Record Office. A full list of files consulted is given in the bibliography.

CHAPTER I

WHY, HOW AND TO WHOM? THE BBC AND THE GOVERNMENT, THE DEVELOPMENT OF BBC NEWS AND WHO LISTENED TO IT

SECTION A: THE BBC AND THE STATE

i Beginnings: The BBC, the State and Jews Before the War

The state gave birth to the BBC, and like an over-protective parent, endeavoured to exercise control well into the Corporation's early adulthood. From its beginnings, the Government banned the BBC from engaging in what was termed 'controversy', a prohibition later formalised in the BBC's charter. Controversy, in this sense, meant anything relating to political, industrial or religious matters. Apart from actual programme policy, the BBC was also dependent on the Government for funding. Although the license fee already existed, its collection was in the hands of the Post Office, as was the decision over the proportion which it retained for administrative expenses. The Government, unwilling to go against the wishes of such powerful press barons as Rothermere and Beaverbrook, hamstrung the BBC throughout the 1920s so as not to allow it to compete with the press, especially in the field of news.

The first real test of the BBC's independence came during the General Strike of 1926. The BBC was able to resist pressure from within the cabinet, especially from the then Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, to take it over and turn it into a weapon of propaganda.¹ That this did not happen was due in large part to the dominant figure in the BBC between the wars, its first Director-General and effective founder, Lord Reith. His conception of a unified national interest, which the strike threatened, meant that, in the words of Asa Briggs, the BBC 'reinforced authority' in 1926.² He persuaded Baldwin and others that the role of the BBC should be that of promoting an atmosphere of normality and cohesion. Seaton and Curran point out that this differed greatly from the tone of the *British Gazette*, the official Government newspaper, controlled by Churchill, which used the crude propaganda techniques of the First World War. This, they argue importantly, was the birth of modern propaganda, with the success, in the view of the establishment, of the policy during the

¹ Churchill never quite forgave the BBC for this. During the war he memorably described the BBC as being one of the 'major neutrals', alongside Turkey and Argentina.

² Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Vol. I: The Birth of Broadcasting* (London, 1995), p. 351.

General Strike determining to a large extent how to reconcile propaganda imperatives and the 'independence' of the BBC during the Second World War.³

Although the Government lifted the formal ban on controversy in 1928, this was at the cost of stressing the BBC's 'responsibility', as evinced during the General Strike and the early days of the charter.⁴ The charter ban on any kind of editorial comment remained firmly in force. Discussion of foreign affairs was particularly circumscribed. Regular monthly meetings between Reith and senior Foreign Office (hereafter FO) figures such as Rex Leeper⁵ began as early as 1933.⁶ The FO's perception was that anything the BBC said had the potential to be interpreted abroad as the considered view of His Majesty's Government, and thus it should not run counter to official thinking. Reporting of events overseas also had the potential to be unsettling at home as well. Scannell and Cardiff write that although many people in the BBC wanted to broadcast on the Spanish Civil War, the BBC ignored it

because it was the most explosive and divisive issue of the decade, because it split government and opposition, because it polarized right- and left-wing opinion, because it brought bitterness and class consciousness into foreign policy and so into domestic politics - for all these reasons it was an untouchable subject for all areas of programming other than news.⁷

It is easy to draw parallels between these arguments and those BBC and other officials deployed later against broadcasting on Nazi antisemitism and, later still, the Final Solution.

The attitude of the BBC in relation to pre-war Nazi persecution of the Jews has been the subject of a fine study by Guy Raz.⁸ He shows very fully that the desire to avoid needless controversy at home and the direct involvement of the FO in broadcasting both to and about Germany meant that coverage of anything connected with Jews was deliberately

³ James Curran & Jean Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility: The Press and Broadcasting in Britain* (London, 1991), p. 141.

⁴ Paddy Scannell & David Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting* (Oxford, 1991), p. 42.

⁵ Later Lockhart's effective deputy at PWE. Rex Leeper had been at the forefront of the Foreign Office's move into propaganda operations during the 1930s. See Philip Taylor, *The Projection of Britain - British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda* (Cambridge, 1981).

⁶ Scannell & Cardiff, op. cit., p. 72-73.

⁷ Ibid., p. 78.

⁸ Raz, op. cit.

limited. The BBC did not dedicate a single programme to the subject between 1933 and 1938.⁹ Raz makes it clear that although the BBC did not directly censor news of Jewish persecution in Germany after 1933, 'its dissemination was an indirect victim of the Corporation's policy relating to German news [in general]'.¹⁰ Raz shows that when the BBC did mention persecution during this time, in news reports or when it was touched on in other programmes dealing with Germany, it adopted two principal approaches. The first of these was that it portrayed Jews as constituting a 'political' minority.¹¹ Secondly, there was a tendency to seek to rationalise Nazi antisemitism by seeking to comprehend it in reference to Jewish behaviour. Such reporting made the distinction between disliking Jews as a 'race' and actively persecuting them. The former was not always depicted as irrational.¹²

ii The State and the Home Service in Wartime

There had been extensive discussion on how to run domestic broadcasting during the coming war in the late 1930s. The overall approach was set in the last few months of peace when the Government decided for certain that the BBC would retain its formal independence. However this was qualified, in ways both implicit and explicit, in a fashion that would have an enormous impact on how the BBC would inform the public about the Final Solution.

Sir Samuel Hoare, at that time responsible planning at the Ministry of Information (hereafter MOI), stated how things would work in July 1939. The Government, he told the House of Commons, would 'treat broadcasting as we treat the press and films and leave the BBC to carry on with a very close liaison with the Ministry of Information and with definite regulations as to how the work should be carried on'.¹³ The BBC replied to this by acknowledging 'the direction of the Government in all matters pertaining to the war effort'.¹⁴ All this was very vague and remained so, despite adjustments and refinements

⁹ Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 58.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 76.

¹² Ibid., p. 77.

¹³ *Hansard*, 28 Jul. 1939.

¹⁴ Briggs, *The War of Words* (1995), p. 81.

throughout the war. Censorship was to be left to the Director-General, with the vital exception of news and political censorship, which was to be indirect, informal, and voluntary; based on liaison with the Press Division of the MOI.¹⁵ As Asa Briggs writes, the arrangements depended on the fact that the key people in the BBC, especially the Home Advisor from 1941 and subsequent Controller of News, A.P. Ryan, knew what the Government's aims were, sympathised with them in principle and therefore could be trusted to see that the Corporation furthered them.¹⁶ A Government which feared being drawn into the minutiae of broadcasting was content to exercise remote control of the Home Service, confident its placemen would serve its interests. This was a very British sort of censorship, relying on the quiet word and the shared assumption. The effect of all this in relation to the Final Solution becomes plain when controversial questions such as accepting Jewish refugees arose later. By and large, the state could trust the Home Service not to rock the boat.

iii The State and the European Service in Wartime

The initial Government agency responsible for disseminating propaganda to belligerents was known as EH (an abbreviation of the name of its headquarters, Electra House), and was theoretically under the control of the MOI. In 1940 control of EH passed to the new Ministry of Economic Warfare, while the various BBC foreign-language services which had mushroomed since Munich remained subject to discreet FO 'guidance' and stayed under the MOI's wing. In late 1940 the Minister of Economic Warfare, Hugh Dalton, made a lunge for control of BBC broadcasting with the goal of incorporating potentially the most powerful tool for sowing disunity inside occupied Europe into a unitary propaganda organisation.¹⁷ He was rebuffed, but the situation obviously made little sense. Reform came during the Summer of 1941, and by September responsibility for EH¹⁸ and the BBC European Service¹⁹ to a newly-established department, to be known from then on as the Political

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 602.

¹⁶ Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), p. 34.

¹⁷ Balfour, op. cit., p. 91.

¹⁸ By this time known as section SO1 of MEW.

¹⁹ The various language services had been grouped under this heading in July 1940. See Briggs, *The War of Words* (1995), p. 237.

Warfare Executive (hereafter PWE), led by a Director-General, the former journalist and diplomat Robert Bruce Lockhart. Lockhart had been Eden's representative when PWE had been run by three ministries, and his supremacy was confirmation that PWE would look to the FO as its principal guide. PWE was run by an executive committee consisting of Rex Leeper of the FO, Major-General Dallas Brooks (military liaison), and Ivone Kirkpatrick. In early 1941, at the same time as A.P. Ryan became Home Advisor to the BBC, Kirkpatrick became Foreign Adviser. Kirkpatrick, later a Permanent Under-Secretary at the FO, had been First Secretary at the British Embassy in Berlin before the war.²⁰ When the European Service detached itself from the Overseas Service in October 1941, he was the obvious choice as Controller. In the new post of Director of European Broadcasts came Noel Newsome, who had joined the BBC from the *Daily Telegraph* in 1939 and had had editorial responsibility for news broadcasting to Europe since then.²¹

By February 1942 the structure of the relationship between the European Service and PWE was in place that would persist for the rest of the war. Both had homes in the same building - Bush House, a large, modern office block at the rear of the Aldwych, some mile-and-a-half from the Home Service, which remained in Broadcasting House.²² At a central level, the relationship had its crux in the figures of Kirkpatrick and Newsome. At a lower level, where the broadcasting was actually done, it was the relationship between Regional Director (for PWE) and the Regional Editor (for the BBC) for each particular language service that was crucial.

PWE issued both regional and, after August 1942, central directives that gave both information and instructions. These were issued weekly, the central directives coming from the small Directorate of Plans, run by Ritchie Calder. Newsome issued directives daily, originating from his morning news conference of Regional Editors and which he sometimes supplemented at the evening conference.²³ These would often conflict with the directives issued by PWE.

²⁰ Balfour, op. cit., p. 95.

²¹ Briggs, *The War of Words* (1995), p. 163.

²² This, perhaps symbolically, was roughly equidistant from Fleet Street, Whitehall and Broadcasting House.

²³ Briggs, *The War of Words* (1995), p. 382.

Another area of conflict was over intelligence. When PWE had been established, Eden had asked a committee to examine the degree to which operations within the different organisations concerned with propaganda were now duplicated.²⁴ It decided that all intelligence operations, including the BBC's own, should be placed under the control of PWE. The BBC European Intelligence section survived, but at the price of losing, in late 1941, its political wing, the Research Unit, which had produced such valuable material as the *Daily Synopsis* and the *Weekly Report*.²⁵ It had to confine itself to gathering technical information. In other words, it was not allowed to ask what the audience *wanted*; instead it was limited to asking how large that audience was and whether they could hear clearly. This would have important repercussions later.

Throughout late 1941 and 1942 staff of PWE were outraged at the level to which BBC staff, in particular Newsome, ignored their policies.²⁶ Newsome believed wholeheartedly in the idea of political warfare and that the BBC had a full part to play in it, but he was adamant that journalists - himself for example - rather than civil service propagandists were the ones best able to decide strategy and tactics.²⁷ In the face of continued opposition from PWE, he sought to strengthen the concept of a unified European Service, when what PWE wanted was a more diffuse organisation, better suited to, for example, saying one thing to Hungary and another to Romania, and more easily controlled by PWE.²⁸ Newsome had a powerful ally much of the time in the shape of Kirkpatrick, who many in PWE regarded as having 'gone native' by the end of 1941, seduced, as one PWE staffer put it, by 'the thrills of life in a newsroom as portrayed by Hollywood - telephones ringing, urgent conferences, dead lines, "scoops"'.²⁹ The Bushmen of the European Service had infected Kirkpatrick with the idea that the BBC was first and foremost a news organisation. This appalled PWE:

²⁴ Ibid., p. 384.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See PRO FO 898/41.

²⁷ Ibid. f253, 'Britain's Right to Speak', May 1942.

²⁸ Ibid. f262, memo by Barman, 17 Dec. 1941.

²⁹ Ibid.

What then of propaganda? Is the B.B.C. a charitable organisation with no other function than to provide a free news service to occupied Europe? Is our success to be measured by the frequency of our scoops? Or is the B.B.C. a powerful propaganda weapon? Is its primary aim in occupied Europe to keep morale high so that conquered peoples may be ready to strike at the enemy on the Day? If these are our aims then news - or, as Mr Kirkpatrick would say, hard news - becomes the handmaiden, not the mistress of broadcasting policy.³⁰

Those who worked for the European Service during the war have often maintained in their memoirs, that, as Briggs concurs, in 'the selection and presentation of news [...] PWE had no part to play'.³¹ This depended, according to these accounts, a great deal on the fact that, physically, it was difficult for even the most dedicated PWE Regional Director to exercise supervision over a service that sought to broadcast news as quickly as possible, often at odd hours in the night. This may well have been true, but this study will seek to show in the following chapters that PWE, and behind them the FO, played a crucial role in shaping the European Service's coverage of the Final Solution. PWE may have played no role in the process at its final stage, but this is to overlook their part in shaping the news agenda. In many ways, their role was similar to that played by an interfering proprietor.

SECTION B: THE DEVELOPMENT OF BBC NEWS AND NEWS-GATHERING

How well then was the BBC equipped to deal with broadcasting about the Final Solution? BBC news grew out of an explicitly modern tradition - that of the news agencies. At first BBC news was actually produced by Reuters. Restrictions heavily governed the amount the BBC could broadcast and the earliest time at which this could be done.³² Only in 1927 did the BBC start to produce its own bulletins. Even then, this was limited to sub-editors employed by the BBC checking agency copy. It took until 1929 for the BBC to get

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Briggs, *The War of Words* (1995), p. 382. See also A.J.P Taylor, *A Personal History* (London, 1983); Mansell, op. cit..

³² A product of successful lobbying by the newspaper industry who were concerned with the possible effect on sales of evening papers.

unrestricted access to the wires, and thus decisive control over selection and presentation.³³ By 1930 the BBC was employing four people in its news service, giving it the news-gathering capacity of a large local weekly newspaper.³⁴ The reliance on agencies arguably left a substantial impression on the BBC. As Philip Schlesinger writes, agency values developed from a specific conception of objective reporting which was grounded in commercial motives: the need of mass newspapers to serve a politically heterogeneous readership without alienating any significant section of it. Schlesinger adds that this strategy 'was subtly raised into a canon of professional competence and an ideology of professional responsibility'.³⁵ This is seen in the 1935 *BBC Annual* which stated:

Broadcasting has an opportunity and responsibility which no newspaper can ever have. It is impossible to exaggerate the value to the nation and the world of an unbiased, accurate, and balanced presentation, day by day, of the significant news. That is the ideal which the BBC has before it.³⁶

Guy Raz writes that one of the results of this ideal was an absolute belief that there were always 'two sides' to every story, leading the BBC to seek to understand Nazi antisemitism in the pre-war years rather than condemn it.³⁷

BBC foreign-language news broadcasting began in 1938. The first service was in Arabic and was a direct result of FO worries about Italian propaganda in the Middle East.³⁸ Broadcasts in Spanish and Portuguese soon followed, aimed at South America. Broadcasting to Europe began at the time of Munich, using Home Service transmitters. By January 1939, the BBC was broadcasting to Germany for thirty minutes a day. Just as the Home Service vastly increased its news output once the war began, so did what would become known as the European Service. By the end of 1940, the BBC was broadcasting in thirty-four languages. The German Service alone aired eight news bulletins a day and the

³³ Scannell & Cardiff, op. cit., p. 41.

³⁴ Phillip Schlesinger, *Putting 'Reality' Together: BBC News* (London, 1987), p. 20.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

³⁶ *BBC Annual 1935* (London, 1935), p. 61.

³⁷ Raz, op. cit., p. 15.

³⁸ Taylor, *The Projection of Britain*, pp. 193-203.

BBC was broadcasting in Albanian.³⁹ The amount of airtime and the number of frequencies would continue to expand.

The stress on objectivity continued into the war - leading to Churchill's possibly apocryphal remark that the BBC was 'one of the major neutrals'. Similarly, the relative lack of news-gathering resources persisted. Although the number of BBC news department staff grew enormously during the war, there was no concomitant growth in the number of news sources available to it. BBC news continued to be largely dependant on the wires. There were no permanent BBC correspondents stationed overseas until the middle of 1943 - although press correspondents in Moscow occasionally filed for the BBC.⁴⁰ The role of correspondent, and the air of *machismo* that still accompanies it, was initiated with the first BBC war correspondents. They included such notable figures as Frank Gillard, Wynford Vaughan Thomas and Richard Dimbleby. However, they limited themselves to war reporting in its narrowest sense. It was not until 1944 that the BBC sent its own correspondent to Stockholm.⁴¹ With its paucity of correspondents and the deliberate limiting of the intelligence department described above, the BBC was reliant for foreign news on the wire services and the press bureaux of the governments in exile based in London.

All news agencies during the war were infested with spies and heavily censored by the authorities wherever they filed or were read.⁴² Home Service journalists commonly interpreted the dateline 'Zurich' on an agency report as meaning the views of MI6 in Switzerland, as interpreted by the FO in London.⁴³ Censorship was extremely tight in the other great listening post for occupied Europe, Sweden. Swedish correspondents in Berlin were seen as in thrall to the German Foreign Office. Swedish law regarded as espionage any Swede who had been in Germany, or who had been in touch with Germans in Sweden,

³⁹ Mansell, op. cit., p. 104.

⁴⁰ These included Paul Winterton of the *News Chronicle* and Alexander Werth of *The Times*.

⁴¹ Briggs, *The War of Words*. (1970), p. 546. The first foreign correspondent, Michael Barkway, was not dispatched until December 1942.

⁴² Graham Storey, *Reuters' Century 1851-1951* (London, 1951).

⁴³ BBC Written Archives Centre (hereafter BBC WAC), R28/71/1, Analysis of Foreign News Sources, 29 Sep. 1942.

conversing on the subject with a foreigner. It treated exporting German newspapers or sending cuttings to the British Legation in Stockholm the same way.⁴⁴

Broadcasting House regarded the output provided by the press bureaux of the governments-in-exile as 'frankly propaganda', with a 'tendency to atrocity-monger, and a certain pain that we do not find a constant repetition of horrors sufficiently interesting'.⁴⁵ This last comment seems directed at the Poles. Apart from BBC Monitoring, the only other source for foreign news was what agencies like PWE told the BBC. This was never plentiful, and the Home Service received only a fraction of what they gave the European Service. A Home Service report in late 1942 described it as 'dribblets'.⁴⁶

The BBC Monitoring Service represented another potential source for information about events in occupied Europe. But almost by its very nature information gathered from Axis radio stations or the heavily-controlled neutral stations was problematic. Hence all sources for foreign news were, in some way, compromised. None of material gathered on *Einsatzgruppen* operations by *Ultra* decryption operations would ever have reached the BBC.⁴⁷

BBC broadcasts during the war emphasised, more than anything else, trustfulness. This in itself was a vital part of the BBC's range of tools for its primary purpose; its engagement in political warfare. When one takes this into consideration it is not surprising that it was only when confirmation was given by the British Government that news of the Final Solution could be guaranteed a place in news bulletins.

SECTION C: THE BBC AND ITS AUDIENCE

So what of the BBC's audience, both in occupied Europe and in Britain itself? Although it stated in the introduction that this is not a 'what if' study, it is still vital to know whether

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Digests of these reports were headed: 'This document is secret. If further circulation is necessary it must be paraphrased in so that neither the source of the information nor the means by which it has been obtained is apparent'. See PRO HW 16.

anyone actually listened to BBC broadcasts. The section below describes firstly, the BBC's domestic audience for the sort of programmes which carried information about the Final Solution. To gauge the amount of prominence a particular item relating to the Final Solution was given, it is first necessary to understand which news programmes were listened to most, as well as how people actually listened to news and, vitally, whether they generally believed what they heard. The second part of this section deals with the European Service's audience. The exhaustive research which the Corporation did into its home audience was much more difficult when it came to occupied Europe. The European Service produced figures, but their trustworthiness was limited. Together with anecdotal intelligence evidence they provided a somewhat sketchy, but nevertheless revealing picture of the European audience.

i The Domestic Audience

From the low base of the pre-Munich years, BBC news rapidly built itself into the most important and ubiquitous news provider in the country during the Second World War. Much of this was due to the fact that the BBC, while maintaining a Reithian certainty about what was best for its listeners, devoted a substantial amount of resources towards gauging what they thought about its programmes and who actually listened.⁴⁸ Enormous amounts of qualitative and quantitative research was done - producing figures for virtually every single BBC programme.

This research showed the regard in which the public held the information contained in BBC news stayed at tremendously high levels during the war. An audience research survey at the end of 1940 asked listeners whether they found BBC News bulletins '100% reliable'; 'fairly, but not completely reliable'; or 'completely unreliable'. Nearly two thirds of responses stated that listeners regarded news bulletins as 100 per cent reliable. Just over a third answered 'fairly, but not completely reliable', and only one respondent out of the whole

⁴⁸ For a full account of the development of BBC Audience Research, see Robert Silvey, *Who's Listening? The Story of BBC Audience Research* (London, 1974).

1,200 who had compiled the survey, using informal interviews, reported bulletins to be regarded as 'completely unreliable'. The author of the report added:

In supplementary comment some Correspondents remarked that 'I heard it on the wireless' is held to be the last word in any dispute on questions of fact, others that BBC News Bulletins are considered more reliable than the press, and a few that the BBC News Bulletins are referred to for confirmation of news heard from other sources. People say 'It has not been on the wireless so it is probably newspaper talk'.⁴⁹

The range and depth of public penetration by the BBC's news broadcasts continued throughout the war, with the news unsurprisingly becoming more popular when the BBC reported major victories. But the gap between peaks and troughs in news listening did not vary greatly and remained at an extremely high level overall. A 1944 report, stated that nearly 80 per cent of the whole adult civilian population heard some news every day. If people without access to a radio set were ignored, the proportion who heard some news each day rose to 83 per cent. This was before the D-Day landings and the slicker innovations of *War Report*.⁵⁰ The news was by far the most popular programme on the radio, with 97 per cent of people with sets listening occasionally to at least some news, outranking the most popular variety shows such as *ITMA*.⁵¹ Looking at both the numbers of people listening and the reliability that they attached to what they heard, it is obvious that the BBC was without doubt the most important method by which news of the Final Solution could be brought to the attention of the British public.

How people listened to the news is as important as the numbers that did so. Here the picture is more complicated, and in ways that have direct implications in assessing just how much news about the Final Solution the British public actually heard. The first point to emphasise is that there was a substantial degree of variation in the audience for the six daily bulletins, as is shown in the graph below; the figures for which are from an average taken over three days in February 1944 and show the percentage of the adult population who heard at least part of each bulletin.

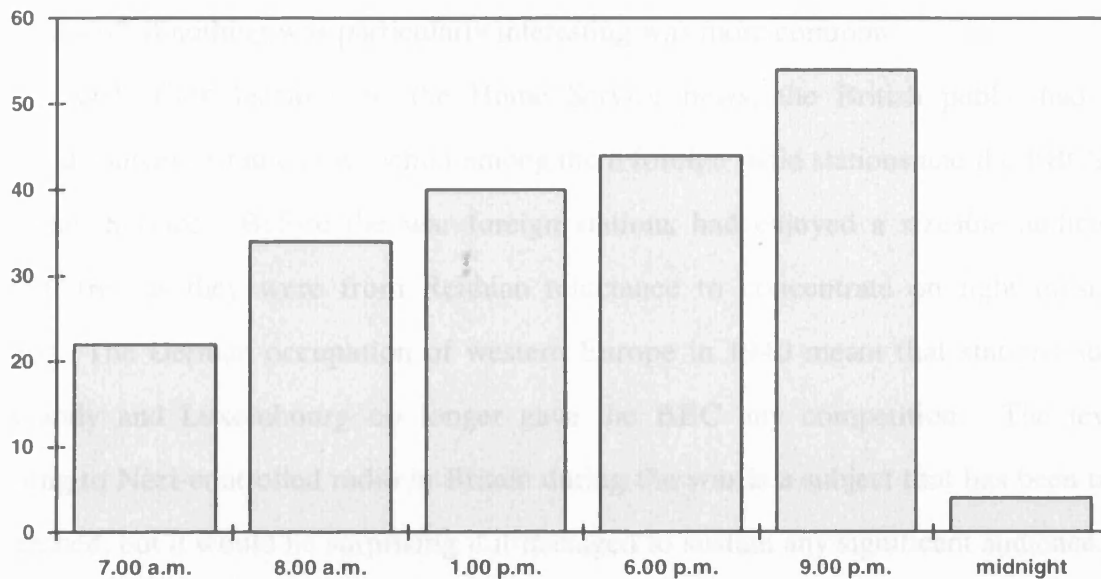
⁴⁹ BBC WAC, R9/9/5 LR 217, Jan. 1941.

⁵⁰ Ibid. LR 2440, 3 Mar. 1944.

⁵¹ Ibid., R9/58/1, General Listing Barometer, Report No. 6, 18 Jan. 1940.

Graph showing percentage of adult population listening to each bulletin.

Source: BBC WAC, R9/9/5 LR 2440, 3 Mar. 1944



As is clear, the numbers listening to a particular bulletin grew throughout the day before shrinking drastically after 9 p.m., so the audience for the 7 a.m. bulletin was barely half of that at 6 p.m., while the figure for the midnight bulletin was less than a tenth of that for the most widely listened-to bulletin at 9 p.m. An item mentioned only in an early or the final bulletin therefore reached a far smaller audience than one covered in the 6 or 9 p.m. bulletins.

A second factor in assessing the real penetration of a particular item relates to its placing in the bulletin, and, in particular, whether it appeared in the headlines. Research at the beginning of the war found that in answer to the question 'Do you switch off if there is nothing in the summary at the beginning which interests you?', 14 per cent of respondents said that they always did so and 28 per cent said that they did this 'sometimes'.⁵² In other words, well over 40 per cent of people at times decided whether or not to listen to a bulletin on the strength of the contents of the headlines. Partial listening was also the result of distractions, as well as actively switching off. This phenomenon was particularly important in earlier bulletins, when listeners were most likely to have the radio on in the background

⁵² Ibid., R9/58/1, 10 Apr. 1940.

while they got on with other activities, in particular while they worked. It was particularly notorious for the 1 p.m. bulletin, which, a 1943 estimate stated, only one in four listeners actually heard all.⁵³ In the evening the radio became the centre of entertainment, although switching off if nothing was particularly interesting was more common.

Aside from listening to the Home Service news, the British public had other potential sources of radio news, chief among them foreign radio stations and the BBC's own European Service. Before the war foreign stations had enjoyed a sizeable audience in Britain, free as they were from Reithian reluctance to concentrate on light music and variety. The German occupation of western Europe in 1940 meant that stations such as Normandy and Luxembourg no longer gave the BBC any competition. The level of listening to Nazi-controlled radio in Britain during the war is a subject that has been under-researched, but it would be surprising if it managed to sustain any significant audience. The fact that William Joyce, also known as Lord Haw-Haw, managed to attract such mythic stature would tend to suggest that few, rather than many, people actually listened to him.⁵⁴ At the end of 1942, 85 per cent of the BBC's local research correspondents stated that they believed listening to German broadcasts was 'fairly or very small'.⁵⁵ In contrast to the British political warfare strategy, which stressed winning trust and using that to introduce subversive material, German English-language broadcasting concentrated on a diet of unrelenting and blatant propaganda, with a very large proportion of antisemitic broadcasting, the relentlessness of which Julius Streicher would soon have found boring.⁵⁶ This strategy came directly from Hitler, who, along with Goebbels, believed that 'the antisemitic bacilli naturally exist everywhere; we must merely make them virulent'.⁵⁷

⁵³ Ibid., R9/9/5 LR 1644.

⁵⁴ For the best account of Joyce's radio career, see J. A. Cole, *Lord Haw-Haw: The Full Story of William Joyce* (London, 1964).

⁵⁵ Balfour, op. cit., p. 142.

⁵⁶ This was common to German domestic broadcasting as well. David Bankier asserts that, albeit at a time of heightened antisemitic propaganda in the Spring of 1943, 70 to 80% of all German broadcasting contained such material. see David Bankier, 'German public awareness of the Final Solution', in David Cesarani (ed.), *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation* (London, 1994), pp. 215-228, p. 220.

⁵⁷ Goebbels' diary, 10 May, 1943, Quoted in Ernest K. Bramsted, *Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda, 1925-1945* (London, 1965), p. 399.

Although, with hindsight, such broadcasts alluded to it, there were very few direct mentions of the Final Solution.⁵⁸ Only hobbyists could pick up American and neutral stations.

The main alternative to the Home Service was the BBC European Service. The psychology of 'eaves-dropping' as it came to be known is easy to understand. Those listening in Britain imagined they could avoid what some believed to be propaganda. As one of the leading figures in the BBC German Service wrote after the war, 'people are always more impressed by broadcasts which are not ostensibly and openly intended for them'.⁵⁹

ii The Audience in Europe

As was seen in the previous section, the BBC had very extensive knowledge of the extent and manner of listening to its output in Great Britain. This was not the case in Europe, where, as we have seen, the BBC's European Intelligence Section was the victim of FO suspicions of any competing agencies. There does not seem to have been any willingness on the part of other powers' intelligence agencies to share information with the BBC.⁶⁰ However there were some ways in which direct 'feed-back' on what the audience thought about the BBC could reach London. The most surprising of these was the humble postcard, which listeners sent from occupied France or while on a visit to a neutral country.⁶¹

The most important point to make is that the BBC was audible across most of Europe, broadcasting on long, medium and short waves. Jamming had no major effect, as long as the presenters spoke clearly and slowly.⁶² Radio had been a hobby for many in

⁵⁸ The following description of Warsaw broadcast by Radio Calais is an example of this approach: 'The population was well dressed and well nourished. Only the Jews had disappeared. They live in the Ghetto, a fact that was welcomed by all the Poles with whom I spoke. A certain Count Starzhinski told me that the whole economic life of Warsaw was in danger of getting into a whirlpool of inflation through the speculations of the Jews. Then the German measures were put into operation, prices were stabilised and the whole economic system was saved. see Imperial War Museum (hereafter IWM) BBC Daily Monitoring Report, 4 May 1943.

⁵⁹ Fraser, op. cit., p. 93.

⁶⁰ Martyn Cornick, 'The BBC and the Propaganda War Against Occupied France: The Work of Emile Delavenay and the European Intelligence Department', *French History*, Vol. 8 (1994), pp. 316-355.

⁶¹ There is a particularly interesting account of one such set of messages in J.F. Slattery, 'Oskar Zuversichtlich: A German's response to British radio propaganda during WW II', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 12 (1992), pp. 69-85.

⁶² Briggs, *The War of Words* (1995), p. 393.

Europe before the war. The frequencies of foreign stations were marked on dials and listening to them was an important part of the medium's image as modern and sophisticated. Throughout Europe magazines had catered to this market, as well as publishing the schedules of foreign stations.⁶³ Listening to foreign radio was nothing new.

Neither were technical factors a bar to listening. Taking Germany first, although the *Volksempfänger*, the cheap set mass-produced before the war, was supposedly unable to pick up foreign stations, BBC engineers who tested it found nothing, apart from its simplicity, deliberately preventing it from doing so. They estimated that one could audibly receive the BBC as far east as Berlin. This set's replacement, the 'Midget Super', was reckoned to be able to pick it up on long and medium waves anywhere in Europe during the hours of darkness, and at anytime, anywhere in Europe on short wave.⁶⁴ BBC Intelligence estimated that a third of sets in private ownership had short-wave, mainly in the hands of wealthier people as owning one had been 'a sign of social status in Germany before the war, and everybody strove to have one if his circumstances permitted it'.⁶⁵ Access to a radio was at its widest in Germany, with even poor, rural areas such as East Prussia recording levels of one set per two households, while a rich area like Kiel enjoyed levels of 80 per 100 households.⁶⁶ The ability of the BBC to get inside German homes was an unexpected dividend of Goebbels' keenness to use radio for his own propaganda ends.⁶⁷

Poland was at the opposite extreme. A low base in 1939, ranging from 92 sets per 1000 population in Warsaw to only 14 in Volhynia, of which 37 per cent were crystal sets suitable only for local transmissions, had been further reduced by the Germans' confiscation of all sets in 1940.⁶⁸ There were numerous exceptions to the this, including ethnic and 'proper' Germans, foreigners, Ukrainians, and even some Poles. However, individual listening was relatively unimportant. Where the BBC counted in Poland was in the news service it provided to the clandestine press, with regular bulletins read at dictation speed.

⁶³ These were published in the French magazine *Radio National* until the German take-over of the unoccupied zone. see BBC WAC, E2/193/5, 18 Dec. 1942.

⁶⁴ Radio reception varies according to the electrical conditions in the atmosphere.

⁶⁵ BBC WAC, E2/201/2, Report on Germany, Jan. 1944.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Z.A.B. Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda* (London, 1973). pp. 49, 53.

⁶⁸ BBC WAC, E2/184, European Audience Estimates, Aug. 1943.

The Polish Government-in-exile estimated that there were at any time 350-500 such listening posts, equipped with powerful short-wave radios.⁶⁹ The Polish diaspora within occupied Europe often had easier access to radio sets. Adam Rayski remembers that his circle of *resistants* in Paris much preferred the BBC Polish service over others.⁷⁰ There were even numerous radios in Jewish ghettos, often improvised.⁷¹

Other countries in Europe were somewhere between these two extremes. In Hungary radio ownership was almost universal in middle class households, and reports in the Hungarian press estimated that up to 40 per cent of people with access to a radio listened to foreign broadcasts. The BBC had an audience of one million. Listening was not illegal until 1944, although some Jews in country districts had their sets removed, with others jailed for 'rumour-mongering'.⁷² In Norway, although there was a mass confiscation of sets at the end of 1941, the BBC estimated that over 8,000 sets had slipped through the net and had been informed by Norwegian Government sources that an informal network made sure that everyone got to hear what the BBC was saying.⁷³ Although one could receive the BBC across Europe, a major problem, growing worse as the war went on, was the supply of spare parts. Valves had finite lives and in many parts of Europe they became increasingly scarce as the war went on. The shortage of these and other spare parts would suggest that the BBC's audience had declined by 1945.

This study has chosen not to deal with the period before 1942, and so the next chapter takes up the narrative at the beginning of that year. But it is clear that the pattern for broadcasting about the Final Solution had been set well before then. The key structural factors were, firstly, a BBC that was inextricably intertwined with the state, and grew even more so after 1939. It was also weak in regard to its news-gathering capacity. The state,

⁶⁹ Ibid., E2/201/2, Report on Poland, Feb. 1944.

⁷⁰ Adam Rayski, 'The Impact of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on Jewish Resistance in France', *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 19 (1988), 389-402, p. 390.

⁷¹ See, for example, Chaim A. Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (London, 1966); Avraham Tory, *Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno Ghetto Diary* (Cambridge Mass., 1990).

⁷² BBC WAC, E2/184, European Audience Estimates, Sep. 1943.

⁷³ Ibid., E2/201/1, 10 Dec. 1943.

represented principally by the FO, was extremely interested in broadcasting and its capacity to influence the audience - and as a result sought to, and succeeded in, influencing the broadcasters. Enveloping these structural factors were psychological and ideological factors within the BBC; the most important of which were the 'liberal imagination' identified by Kushner and the fact that what became apparent over the next few years was so far outside the realm of comprehension and belief of anyone not involved, i.e. the huge numbers of people in Britain and Europe who were listening to the BBC in 1942.

CHAPTER II

'DOES THE WORLD KNOW OUR SUFFERING?': JANUARY TO JULY 1942

This chapter examines the first six months of 1942. It shows how neither the BBC Home or European service broadcast much information about the Final Solution in the early months of 1942. This changed when the Bund report became available in late June.¹ Despite the fact that the BBC gave a relatively large amount of publicity to it, the way in which the Bund report emerged showed clearly how difficult it would be for news of the Final Solution to find a path to the airwaves.

SECTION A: THE HOME SERVICE FROM JANUARY TO MAY

Although this study begins in January 1942, the BBC Home Service made no direct mention of the persecution of Jews until early March. It then announced that 'twenty Communists and Jews' were to be shot in reprisal for the shooting of a German soldier in Paris.² There was a follow-up story up in the next day's bulletin, which reported that the German military governor of Paris had ordered a special day of mourning in the city. The bulletin noted that he had been responsible for 'executing scores of Frenchmen in Paris', significantly omitting that Jews were among the two groups targeted for reprisals.³ There was another account of such shootings, this time in Warsaw, the next day. The 9 p.m. news announced that 'a hundred Poles have been shot in Warsaw as a reprisal for an attack on two German policemen'.⁴

Shortly after this flurry of stories, the Home Service reported the sinking of the *Struma* in a circuitous fashion.⁵ This was by way of questions that Lord Davies and Lord Wedgwood had raised in the House of Lords earlier that day. They noted the death of the 750 Jews had board. The bulletin reported that 'both speakers were extremely critical that these refugees had not been allowed into Palestine'. The former made the point that the Government's Palestine policy was being determined by 'Arab recalcitrants', while Lord Wedgwood alleged that the colonial administration was 'definitely anti-Semitic'. The

¹ The Bund was the Polish Jewish Socialist Party.

² C-W BBC 9 p.m. News, 3 Mar. 1942.

³ Ibid., 4 Mar. 1942.

⁴ Ibid., 5 Mar. 1942.

⁵ The *Struma* had left the Romanian port of Constanza on 12 Dec. 1941, with a cargo of 769 Romanian Jews.

Colonial Secretary, Lord Cranborne, expressed shock and regrets at the sinking of the ship, the cause of which was 'unknown'. He denied that the Government was deliberately frustrating attempts to allow the escape of Jewish children from Europe and went on to comment:

We were as anxious as anyone that such a tragedy shouldn't recur, but we couldn't take measures which would undermine the policy of halting illegal immigration ... [Lord Cranborne noted] that in these critical times, when the whole of the Middle East was under threat of attack, we might have need of every friend we'd got - both Arab and Jew; so it was more than ever necessary to show discretion and self-restraint when speaking on these matters.⁶

The *Struma* had sunk a month previously, and had been moored off Istanbul for almost two months prior to that. Despite this, and coverage in the press, The BBC had not previously mentioned it. However, with the House of Lords discussing it, the BBC could now do so. This introduces a crucial point. The right of news organisations to report proceedings at Westminster was long-established. As yet, no government had tried to interfere with it.⁷ When atrocities against Jews were mentioned later in either House, the BBC usually reported it - but often not until then.

There was no mention in the report of what Jews were fleeing. The BBC were not inviting the public to have any thoughts that the position of Jews in Europe was at all different from that of other groups. This is not to say that it ignored Nazi rhetoric. On 26 April the lead item on the 9 p.m. news was a speech by Hitler in which, the BBC reported, 'the war guilt of the Jews was by no means left out, and Hitler put special emphasis on their influence on Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt'.⁸

As to news even indirectly related to the fate of the Jews, as in the case of the *Struma*, there was nothing more until 1 May when the following appeared.

⁶ Ibid., 30 Mar. 1942.

⁷ At the end of the war there was a short-lived attempt to restrict the BBC in discussing questions which were due to be debated in Parliament.

⁸ C-W BBC 9 p.m. News, 26 Apr. 1942.

In a Radio Oranje⁹ broadcast from London tonight the Dutch people were told how they could fight against the persecution of the Jews in Holland. Jews there may be ordered by the Nazis to wear the Star of David Badge [sic], just as they were in Belgium. The Belgian people retaliated by wearing the Star of David generally and the Dutch people are called upon to do the same.¹⁰

There are several points worth making about this piece, not the least of which is that it ranked fifteenth out of seventeen in the order of that evening's bulletin. Firstly, it appears that no previous Home Service news bulletin or talk had featured news of the compulsory wearing of the Star of David in Belgium. Secondly there was an attempt to link the suffering of the Jews with the passive resistance of the gentile community in such a way that may be seen to diminish in horror the position of the Jews. This is to say that the persecution of the Jews appeared to be validated only in the context of the response of the local community, not in itself, and as an adjunct of the wider resistance campaign. Thirdly, the protests by Belgian and Dutch gentiles were far less prevalent than the tone of the piece suggests. The rest of May saw no further specific information about the treatment of Jews broadcast on the Home Service.

The official policy at this time was that news of Jewish persecution should be balanced by news of 'notable achievements by Jews, particularly in connection with the war effort'.¹¹ These were extremely rare. In fact, items in Home Service news broadcasts quite probably promoted domestic antisemitism, the reverse of what the stated policy attempted to achieve. They reflected the kinds of prejudices, often associated with the supposed Jewish dominance of the black market, recorded by the various bodies engaged in monitoring public opinion. As Tony Kushner writes, Jews were seen as being 'powerful, money-minded, selfish, disloyal, and foreign'.¹² On 30 March the 9 p.m. news carried a report of a sentence of five years for black market offences for someone identified only as 'Flash Izzy'.¹³ On 19 June news of a case at Denbigh Magistrate's Court of a 'Jewish

⁹ Radio Oranje was the London broadcasting station operated by the Dutch Government-in-exile, using BBC facilities.

¹⁰ C-W BBC 9 p.m. News, 1 May 1942.

¹¹ BBC WAC, R34/615/3, Statement of policy by Board, 18 Nov. 1943.

¹² Tony Kushner, 'The Paradox of Prejudice: The Impact of organised antisemitism in Britain during an anti-Nazi war', pp. 72-90; in Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn (eds.), *Traditions of Intolerance* (Manchester, 1989), p. 95.

¹³ C-W BBC 9 p.m. News, 23 May 1942.

refugee' who had breached price maintenance regulations on a cigarette lighter was in the 6 p.m. news. On 19 November the 9 p.m. news included the following:

A fine of a hundred-thousand pounds imposed on Ellis Kahn at Bow Street last month for currency offences, was reduced to fifty-thousand pounds when he appealed at the London Sessions today. He was given three months to pay; his sentence of a month's imprisonment still stands. Kahn was described by the Prosecuting Counsel at Bow Street as a naturalised British subject of Russian birth who came to this country in 1890 as a pedlar and made his fortune in furniture.¹⁴

This managed to convey 'powerful, money-minded, selfish, disloyal, and foreign' in only a few seconds of radio time. Mentions of Jews in a 'positive light' were notable by their absence. Worries over this within British Jewry had reached the Board of Deputies of British Jews, its representative body. On 28 April a delegation had been to see A.P. Ryan's deputy, A.E. Barker.

What seems to have been the impetus for this meeting was a report from the Ministry of Information suggesting that there had been a recent increase in domestic antisemitism. The Board's contact at the Ministry had suggested they see if the BBC felt willing to do anything to halt this. Barker's record of the meeting was as follows:

They began by saying that they were opposed to any direct campaign against anti-Semitism for the obvious reason that it would produce the least wished for effort. But, they suggested, broadcasting by indirect methods could help to make it better known that not all Jews were dirty dogs, most of them in fact being good-law-abiding citizens, proud of their democratic citizenship and anxious to play their full part in the war effort ...

We had a good deal of discussion about black market rackets and the effect on public opinion of the very large Jewish participation in them. They told me that they were being pressed by some very well-known non-Jewish figures to get the Chief Rabbi to issue a public denunciation of racketeers, but they felt this would have just the wrong effect on public sentiment. They explained that they had set up a Jewish Trades Advisory Council some considerable time ago. It not only fought commercial malpractices internally but also, as they said, went to the unprecedented length of keeping the Government informed about crooked Jews. They promised to send me documentary evidence about all this.

The delegation then spoke appreciatively of our occasional reflections of their religious life and services. They said they would welcome more talk about

¹⁴ C-W BBC 9 p.m. News, 19 Nov. 1942.

Jewish ethics, which could show that the Jews had the same fundamental moral code as the Christians.¹⁵

The Board's suggestion that a 'direct campaign' might have proved counter-productive may well have been partly based on the advice of their contacts in the Ministry of Information, where doctrine now stated that 'exhortative' propaganda had little effect.¹⁶ The ideological inclinations of Anglo-Jewry also precluded too obvious an attempt to win public affection, or draw attention to antisemitism. There was also what Richard Bolchover describes as Anglo-Jewry's view of the civil service as being an overtly political entity, where moral arguments would have no force, and which 'was one of the few remaining vested interests which Anglo-Jewry thought of as corrupting the liberal state.'¹⁷ Expectations would thus have been low.

Nevertheless this was a meeting of the highest importance in regard to the way that the BBC Home Service would report the Final Solution. This is rather peculiar, as the position of European Jews was not mentioned at all. However, the *principle* that was established at this meeting - that the BBC do nothing to counter domestic antisemitism, save for occasional mentions of meritorious Jews - in the future stretched to include news of the Final Solution.

In response to the question of identifying Jewish involvement in the black market Ryan set down a policy that names should be included in *all* cases the BBC reported so that it was not open to accusations of discrimination.¹⁸ The case above, where a bulletin identified a defendant at Reading as a 'Jewish refugee', but had not given any name, showed the inadequacy of this policy. It also provoked the radical Labour MP, D.N. Pritt, to write to Bernard Bracken, Minister of Information. Ryan thought that too much fuss was being made out of what seemed to him a very trivial matter. In response to Pritt's request to Bracken that the individual responsible 'be kicked really good and hard', Ryan asked: 'Why stop at that? Why not shove him in a concentration camp?'¹⁹

¹⁵ BBC WAC, R28/20, memo by A E Barker, 1 May 1942.

¹⁶ see McLaine, op. cit.

¹⁷ quoted in Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 1993). p. 97.

¹⁸ BBC WAC, R28/20, memo by A.P. Ryan, 4 May 1942.

¹⁹ Ibid., A.P. Ryan to Hodge [MoI], 4 Jul. 1942.

SECTION B: THE EUROPEAN SERVICE, JANUARY TO JULY 1942.

Was the total absence of information about the Final Solution that we have seen for the Home Service for the first five months of 1942 replicated at the European Service? Noel Newsome, Director of European Broadcasts, issued a daily directive to the whole of the European Service in which he both highlighted material that he wished to be at the forefront of that day's bulletins and communicated items of information that he saw as novel or interesting. These directives came from his morning conference, at which the heads of the various regional services, their shadows from PWE, and his own staff were present. Although they do not wholly compensate for the paucity of surviving news transcripts from this time, they do show the amount of interest that Newsome attached to any information about the Final Solution that became available.

The first occasion in 1942 on which Newsome indicated that he wished the European Service to highlight this was 3 March. Under the heading: 'Stories of interest which might (but should not) be overlooked', Newsome included a report of '90,000 Jews of Bohemia and Moravia to be sent to mediaeval dungeons'.²⁰ It is unclear where this information came from, but both at and after this time the Slovak home service and other Nazi-controlled radio stations were making great play of the 'progress' in making former Czechoslovakia *judenfrei*.²¹ There was no further mention until 20 May, when, under the heading of 'Auxiliary Themes' was listed 'Jews shot in Paris'.²² On 29 May Newsome decreed that a *New Statesman* feature on 'Anti-Semitism and Treachery' should be included throughout the various services.²³ In June, as happened in the Home Service, there was an outpouring of information on the Lidice and Lezaky massacres, but no further mention of atrocities

²⁰ BBC WAC, E 2/131/4, 3 Mar. 1942.

²¹ e.g. from 2 Apr: 'Co-operating with the Hlinka Guard, the Security Police have taken almost 3,000 Jews and Jewesses from the Sarissko-Zemplin district to labour centres. Thus Presov and Michalovce, which had been flooded with Jews, have now been rid of them and will regain their Slovak character.' IWM, BBC Monitoring Report, 2 Apr. 1942.

²² BBC WAC, E 2/131/5, 20 May 1942.

²³ Ibid., 29 May 1942.

committed against Jews was included until the end of June, when Shmuel Zygielbojm, the Bund representative on the Polish National Council in London, publicly circulated the Bund report.²⁴ Although, as is shown later, there were some indications of it in broadcasts such as Thomas Mann's, it is clear that information about the Final Solution had little impact during early 1942. This changed drastically by the end of June, due to the Bund report.

The *Daily Telegraph* was the first British news outlet to openly print information from the Bund report. The report contained information on the progress across Poland of the Final Solution. It included an estimate that 700,000 Polish Jews had been murdered since 1939.²⁵ What followed demonstrated that by the time the Bund report emerged in late June, Newsome had gone a long way to grasping what the Nazis were doing to European Jewry and the exceptional position that they found themselves in relation to the wider terror enveloping occupied Europe. Not only did Newsome appreciate all this, but it is obvious that he saw it as a fit subject on which to broadcast and a possible source of great propaganda advantage for the Allies. It was not an interest he had recently developed either. When A.G. Brotman, Secretary of the Board of Deputies, and S. Salomon, press officer, visited Parker on 28 April they mentioned that they 'were particularly appreciative of broadcasts over the previous year by the 'Man in the Street' - Newsome's *nom de guerre*.²⁶

There is some dispute over the first use of information from the Bund report by the European Service. Martin Gilbert states that as soon as the Jewish members of the Polish National Committee received the report at the end of May they passed it on to the BBC.²⁷ Walter Laqueur cites an unidentified BBC report of 2 June as quoting figures of 700,000 Jewish deaths in Poland since 1939, a figure identical to that in the Bund report.²⁸ However it was not until 26 June that one of the BBC's most fastidious monitors, the chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto Emmanuel Ringelblum, recorded hearing this figure broadcast on the radio,

²⁴ The destruction of two villages in the protectorate, carried out in retaliation for the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich by British-trained members of the Czech resistance.

²⁵ Scott, op. cit. p. 55.

²⁶ BBC WAC, R28/20, memo by A E Barker, 1 May 1942.

²⁷ Gilbert, *Auschwitz*, p. 42.

²⁸ Laqueur, op. cit., p. 73.

although he mentioned that there had been 'regular broadcasts over the English radio for the last few weeks'.²⁹

Further complicating matters are remarks made by Douglas Ritchie, the Assistant Director of European Broadcasting, i.e. Newsome's deputy, at the weekly BBC-Polish Government-in-exile liaison meeting on 3 July.³⁰ Ritchie told the meeting that it was felt that 'the best news value of the Massacre story had been lost owing to its having been given to the Daily Telegraph first'. The meeting agreed 'that in future BBC should have priority for any such stories'.³¹ It was possible that senior figures such as Newsome and Ritchie had not noticed earlier broadcasts using information contained in the Bund report, or that information passed to the BBC in late May/early June had not actually reached them. But from the evidence that the BBC had been using information contained in the Bund report this is unlikely. Much more probable was that Ritchie was dissembling, to cover up the fact that a member of the Polish National Committee had leaked the report to the BBC, shortly after they themselves had received it.

Despite allusions to the Bund report in other broadcasts, it had not been used in one of the most significant broadcasts of this time, that which President Sikorski made to Poland in the BBC Polish Service on 9 June. David Engel suggests that Sikorski's decision to make the speech at this point was prompted by increased reports of Nazi brutality, rather than the fact that the information contained in the Bund report was gaining acceptance.³² He adds that in this context it was not surprising that Sikorski would mention something of what he had learnt in the Bund report, in order to underscore his contention that enormous numbers of lives were at stake - as long as this did not diminish the suffering of

²⁹ Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes From the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York, 1974), p. 295. Ringelblum was a leading member of *Oneg Shabbat*, a group of intellectuals who monitored and documented events within Poland at this time. They were based in the Warsaw ghetto.

³⁰ These meetings were attended by either Newsome or Ritchie, as well other BBC representatives from the BBC Polish Service, including its head, Gregory Macdonald. Complementing the journalists and BBC staffers were those whose interests stemmed more directly from political matters. These included Moray McLaren, the head of the PWE section that dealt with Poland and Czechoslovakia; Frank Savery, Councillor to the British Embassy to the Polish Government. The key Polish representative was [Count] Balinski, of the Polish Ministry of Information, the *de facto* liaison officer between the BBC and the Poles.

³¹ Sikorski Institute, London [hereafter SI], minutes of BBC/Polish liaison meetings, KOL. 434/43, 3 Jul. 1942.

³² David Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz* (Chapel Hill, 1987), pp. 180-81.

the Polish population. Although it listed the actions of the Nazis against Poles in depth, this was the only fragment dealing with the situation faced by Jews:

The Jewish population in Poland is doomed to die out in accordance with [the] slogan 'all Jews shall have their throats cut no matter what the outcome of this war may be'. Real massacres of tens of thousands of Jews in Lublin, Wilno, Lwow, Stanislawow, Rzeszow and Miechow have been carried out this year. People are being starved to death in the ghettos. Mass executions are held: even those suffering from Typhus are shot.³³

This astonishing piece of information was placed in the last half of the speech. Before it were a list of crimes committed against the Catholic church and other groups. There was no mention of gas, or use of the Bund report's casualty figure of 700,000 murdered Jews since 1939, or indeed any other mention of the likely number of deaths. Clearly at this stage, in early June, the Government-in-exile did not wish to give too much prominence to atrocities against Jews.³⁴

The publishing of Bund report material by the *Daily Telegraph* meant the BBC European Service could openly use it. The BBC regularly used newspaper comment, from British but also especially from neutral sources, to buttress their own presentation of events. What happened was that the publicity in the *Daily Telegraph* acted as the green light for Newsome to make as much as he could of the Bund report, now that it was formally in the public domain and the London Poles had approved it. Their powerful role in influencing the contents of BBC broadcasts dealing with Poland was underscored in mid-July when Newsome assured Balinski that 'a note had been circulated requesting editors not to use items unless they were authorised by the Polish authorities'.³⁵

So how can one reconcile the fact that knowledge of the Bund report was present within the BBC before 25 June with the BBC not openly reporting until then? The most

³³ Public Records Office, Foreign Office Papers (hereafter FO), 371/31097, f66, Broadcast by Sikorski, 9 Jun. 1942.

³⁴ This is not to say that such matters were given no publicity at all. The Polish Ministry of Information had twice highlighted Jewish persecution during March 1942 in its *Polish National Bulletin*. These reports had been on the expulsion of Jews from Bochnia, a small town near Cracow, taken from the *Krakauer Zeitung* and on the execution of a Jew in Belzec for the 'crime' of performing ritual slaughter. This last piece of information was published in London on 27 March, having been taken from a *Lemberger Zeitung* report of 15 January. See FO 371/31092 f83; f85.

³⁵ SI, KOL. 434/43, 17 Jul. 1942.

recent writer on this subject fails to explain the gap at all.³⁶ The answer has to be that the Government-in-exile was refusing to release it properly until a moment of their own choosing, as Ringelblum suspected.³⁷ This was what Newsome meant when he wrote on 26 June that the Jewish massacre story 'is *now* out'.³⁸ Newsome had known about the Bund report, having seen a leaked copy, and had approved its use in broadcasts - but only in such a way as would not make it clear he flouting the Poles' embargo. Why did the Poles not push the Bund report's contents before the end of June, over a month after they received the report? There are two possible explanations. Dariusz Stola lays greatest stress on the disbelief that the report met, particularly the Bund's figure of 700,000 deaths.³⁹ Engel, on the other hand, ascribes much of the Polish reluctance to publicise the information about the Final Solution, at this and other times, to a general unwillingness to let the plight of Jews obscure that of Poles.⁴⁰

Once the Poles gave the green light, Newsome lost no time in putting the Bund report at the top of the news agenda. His alacrity is further evidence that this was not new information to him. In his directive comment on 25 June, the day on which the *Daily Telegraph* broke news of the report, Newsome wrote:

The ghastly story of the massacre of Jews in Poland, as told by Zygielboim in THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, should be given the fullest possible publicity in all languages. It should be made the subject of commentaries, not least to Catholic countries. This is one of the great crimes of history. If the Germans can treat the Jews in this way, what security from extermination have the other 'inferior' races, the Poles, the Serbs, the French?⁴¹

It is possible to view Newsome's final comment here as an implication that other, better-liked peoples would soon become the target of genocides, and that therefore the genocide of Polish Jews was relevant only as a precursor to these. However, this would do him a gross disservice. This reading of events was far more likely to be part of his view on how

³⁶ Dariusz Stola, 'Early news of the Holocaust from Poland', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 11 (1997), pp. 1-27, p. 6.

³⁷ Ringelblum, *Notes*, p. 295.

³⁸ BBC WAC, E 2/131/5, 26 Jun. 1942. Emphasis my own.

³⁹ Stola, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁰ Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz*, pp. 177-178.

⁴¹ BBC WAC, E 2/131/5, 25 Jun. 1942.

the information could be used as weapon in his own personal and idiosyncratic political warfare campaign.

On 26 June Newsome wrote:

We hope to get Zygielboim [sic] and a Rabbi, and also a Catholic dignitary to speak on this early next week, if not sooner. In the meantime we should not only give full publicity to the appalling facts but should also comment without mincing our words.

For occupied countries don't treat the Jews as a race apart, but as fellow citizens of Europe standing solid with the rest of us against the Nazis.

The Jew is indeed the enemy of the Third Reich, just like the rest of us.

His special suffering entitles him to special honour

Note reports from France, as well as Belgium and elsewhere, that Gentiles are being arrested for wearing the Star of David as a gesture of solidarity. Suggest that it is a good idea for as many people in Europe as possible to wear the Star as symbol of their utter loathing of the Germans' crimes

Note call to Palestinian Jews by their leader for voluntary service against the Axis.

Recall Pius XI's encyclical on the Jews.⁴²

Note there are millions of Jews in the United States Army, as well as the British, who are going to help liberate Europe and exact retribution from the murders of their fellows.

Note that Jews whether as fellow worker, peasants, doctors, lawyers etc., etc., or as holders of a religious faith stand 100 per cent with all enemies of Nazi tyranny and paganism.⁴³

Newsome presumably was referring to Hinsley as the 'Catholic dignitary', and indeed he recorded a talk that was broadcast on 8 July. Zygielbojm broadcast the main points of the Bund report in Yiddish on June 26.⁴⁴ Newsome himself took to the airwaves on 26 June. His broadcast showed powerfully not only that he comprehended the nature of the Final Solution and its specifically Jewish dimension, but that he also was willing to use it as a weapon in political warfare. Unlike others, he managed not to lose sight of Jews' objective position while still presenting them as subjects for local people to display, in demonstrating solidarity, their hostility to the Nazis. In the section of the broadcast below he worked in some of the ideas contained in his directive issued the same day. Newsome began by stating

⁴² A reference to, and misunderstanding of, *Mit Brennender Sorge*.

⁴³ BBC WAC, E 2/131/5, 26 Jun. 1942.

⁴⁴ Gilbert, *Auschwitz*, p. 96.

that never in Europe had there been massacres so 'cold-blooded, deliberate and systematic'.

He continued:

Those Jews so foully done to death were our brothers and sisters, comrades in the struggle against Hitler and for a happier life for humanity. If I single them out it is because their special suffering earns for them a special honour. For ten long years they have endured the humiliation and tortures to which all the Nazis' victims have been more recently subjected, and still their cup of suffering is filled with more overflowing measure than that of any other section of martyred humanity.

Peasants and workers, doctors and priests, those Jewish citizens of Europe have marked down for extermination by Hitler because he believes that the peoples of Europe share his despicable hatred and envy of Jewish culture, that grand heritage of the centuries from which our Western civilisation has borrowed much and which so utterly opposed to the nihilistic brutishness for which Hitler stands.

Let the people of Europe to-day show that they stand in perfect solidarity with their Jewish brethren. Let them demonstrate their abhorrence of these beastly crimes. I say this: Let no one in Europe who condones or accepts them passively expect the sympathy or help of any decent man in this country.⁴⁵

The next day, Newsome wrote: 'Naturally we shall not cease to inform Europe of the massacre of the Jews.'⁴⁶ In Warsaw, four weeks before the beginning of the great deportation, Ringelblum recorded that day that the news was carried on every frequency and in every language service that he and his comrades in *Oneg Shabbat* were able to pick up.⁴⁷

28 June was a Sunday and so there was no directive, but Newsome carried on the thread on the following Monday and Tuesday. On 29 June he wrote 'Brief quotations from the broadcast by the Chief Rabbi ought to be carried in other languages. A recording of a sentence or two in Yiddish will be available shortly.'. The Chief Rabbi, J.H. Hertz, had broadcast on the European Service a day previously. Hertz's talk had stated that all Europe's Jews were the target of Nazi extermination, with a 'sentence of death upon an

⁴⁵ Greater London Records Office, Board of Deputies Papers (hereafter BDP), ACC 3121/C11/12/87, 'The Man in the Street - Polish Massacres', 26 Jun. 1942.

⁴⁶ BBC WAC, E 2/131/5, 27 Jun. 1942.

⁴⁷ Ringelblum, *Notes*, p. 297. Leaflets testing against the deportation notices in the Netherlands, printed in July 1942, quoted the Polish Government and the BBC to the effect that deportation meant certain extermination. See Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization During the Holocaust* (New York, 1979), p. 274.

entire people being carried out' already. However, Nazi ambitions did not end with the Jews, Hertz added. He continued: 'There is little doubt that many other people will be similarly doomed to extermination by these dehumanized criminals.'⁴⁸ Whether Hertz believed this or not is not clear. He quite probably did. But by linking the extermination of the Jews with the threat to other peoples Hertz could be said to have aided the merging of his primary concern with other, putative exterminations that occurred over the next six months. In other words, his appeal to universalist sentiment would prove to be a double-edged sword.

On 30 June Newsome added this:

The massacre of Jews is still very much in the news. As a point of presentation, pick on some ghastly but not numerically astronomical incident as the headline and bring in the total casualties incidentally.

Preysing's courageous statement should be kept running. Popularise the phrase 'Hitler-Chamber' for lethal chambers. June 30th, 1934 needs a good mention. Note mass deportation from Alsace-Lorraine.⁴⁹

In comparison, the *Daily Telegraph* after its initial report on 25 June did not mention atrocities against Jews again until 30 June. The BBC French Service carried its first report on the new information on 1 July. Interestingly, it utilised the phrase 'Hitler Chambers' showing that Newsome's instructions were at least sometimes closely followed. There was also an attempt to link what was known about the situation in Poland to that faced in France. The speaker accepted that many would not believe that such acts could occur in France, but that the situation for Jews was the same as it had been in Germany immediately before the war. He added that 'Doriot's PPF imitates Nazism' and that it was only a few short steps between the 'new persecutions' and the sacrifice of France's Jewish population.⁵⁰

Other parts of the BBC European Service also actively reported the Final Solution at this time. The scripts and news bulletins of the Czech Service still survive from the second half of May 1942. They show that even without Newsome's prodding it broadcast

⁴⁸ BDP, ACC 3121/C111/12/87, Broadcast by the Chief Rabbi, 28 Jun. 1942.

⁴⁹ BBC WAC, E 2/131/5, 29 & 30 Jun. 1942

⁵⁰ BBC WAC, French Scripts, 'Les Francais Parlent aux Francais', 30 Jun. 1942.

material. A 'newstalk'⁵¹ broadcast on 21 May, citing a Stockholm newspaper, reported that 'Fascists' had hunted down 10,000 Jewish women and children in Slovakia.⁵² Two days later it carried a report of conditions in the Warsaw ghetto. This originated, according to the script, from a Polish underground newspaper:

A wall cuts the street in half. A military policeman stands beside the ordinary policeman. On the kerb lies the dead body of a woman with arms outstretched. The funerals of those who die on the streets have to be paid for by the Jewish community. The streets are uncared for; there is litter and rubbish everywhere. On the door of every house the long list of the people who live there gives one an idea of the appalling conditions. There are, on average, eleven people in one room.⁵³

Another report followed on the Warsaw ghetto followed this up on 29 May, using information apparently taken from the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*. This was extremely grisly, with news of open graves and corpses buried so badly as to 'often leave heads or limbs of corpses sticking out of the grave'.⁵⁴

The presence of three stories relating to the progress of the Final Solution in such a short period, and at the same time as this area was the focus of such an exhaustively commented on story as the assassination of Heydrich, indicates that the Czech Service was far from inhibited about putting out the above kind of information. When it comes to the German Service the picture is less clear. What survives by way of news especially from the biggest, and supposedly, the best, of the various different language services is very limited.⁵⁵ The German Service was an extremely controversial organisation, a 'ministry of all the talents'. It was run in tandem by Hugh Carleton Greene, formerly *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in Berlin, and the abrasive and arrogant Richard Crossman, who the Controller of the European Service, Ivone Kirkpatrick, described as 'undergraduate and

⁵¹ The term 'newstalk' generally meant a short 'editorial' that was added on to the news. It often contained comment, and often was specific to the particular region to which it was being broadcast. 'Talks' themselves were more usually produced at a European, rather than Regional level.

⁵² BBC WAC, Czech Service Bulletins, 21 May 1942.

⁵³ Ibid., 23 May 1942. Later assessments of living conditions in the Warsaw ghetto coincidentally contained miscalculations which produced similar figures.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 29 May 1942.

⁵⁵ There are virtually no surviving news bulletins for the German service. Whether this was a result of deliberate destruction by former employees, or whether they met the same end as the files of the many other services that are also missing is not at all clear.

under-developed'.⁵⁶ Other eminent members of staff included Patrick Gordon Walker, a future Foreign Secretary; Lindley Fraser; a former Professor of Politics at Aberdeen University; and the actor and writer Marius Goring. Its primary task was that of opening fissures between the German people and the Nazi Party. Greene, who later became a highly controversial Director-General of the BBC, served as the Regional Editor, i.e. was a member of staff of the BBC and theoretically only in sole charge of the mechanics of broadcasting. Crossman, a future highly successful Labour politician, was the Regional Director, i.e. PWE's man and in charge of policy. Unlike similar couplings between 'hacks' and 'spooks' that operated in other regional services, Crossman and Greene got on and worked successfully together.⁵⁷ Both were extremely able but prickly men who managed to transfer any rivalry they might have developed into a loathing of and contempt for, their boss, Noel Newsome. The rivalry between Newsome and his subordinates in the German Service grew out of their different approaches to 'political warfare' and the attitude to be taken to the German people. However, this served mainly as the terrain on which the intellectually arrogant Crossman and the equally combative Newsome, who won a boxing blue at Oxford, could fight out their personality differences as much as anything else. The acerbic Crossman did not mix well with the flamboyant and mercurial Newsome, whose view of Europe, according to Kirkpatrick's deputy, was that of a 'nineteenth century radical'.⁵⁸

The means by which the policy of opening up differences between the Party and the German people was to be achieved was by a 'hope clause' in British propaganda. This had very direct implications for how the BBC could broadcast news about the Final Solution to Germany. The policy was, by extension, important for Europe as a whole. Everyone knew that many people preferred to listen to services not specifically targeted at them. People believed they were more likely to hear the truth that way. This phenomenon, 'eavesdropping', meant that the German Service could not contradict what, for example, the English-language services said. Lindley Fraser, who became a senior commentator on the

⁵⁶ Harman Grisewood, *One Thing at a Time: An Autobiography* (London, 1968), p. 139.

⁵⁷ See Michael Tracey, *A Variety of Lives: A Biography of Sir Hugh Greene*. (London, 1983).

⁵⁸ Grisewood, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

German Service, put the 'hope clause' position very clearly in a speech he gave in the middle of 1942. It was a grave dilemma, he said, how to convince the German people that Britain did not regard them all as Nazis, but on the other hand that they also bore a definite responsibility. He continued:

The only thing we can say is first that we intend to punish the guilty, and we do not intend to punish the innocent. Secondly, the question of who are guilty and who are innocent depends on the Germans themselves. If they go on backing the Nazis until the very end, then obviously they will find it very difficult to prove their innocence. They must dissociate themselves from the Nazis.⁵⁹

This was a controversial approach and only established itself as orthodoxy after PWE had been given overall control of propaganda in late 1941. The former Permanent Secretary to the FO, Lord Vansittart, had given a series of talks previously entitled 'The Black Record' that many had interpreted as potentially making the German population more united rather than less.⁶⁰ This study will return to discussing the degree to which the hope clause influenced the German Service's coverage of the Final Solution several times.

As we have seen, the Bund report enabled the BBC European Service to feature a large amount of material on the Final Solution for the first time. Although, as the Czech Service showed, there had been items broadcast before June, it was only when the report became available that the dimensions of the Final Solution began to be appreciated.

SECTION C: THE HOME SERVICE AND THE BUND REPORT

The comparison with the coverage the BBC Home Service offered in this period, during which such a coherent and restrained summary of evidence as the Bund report was available, shows how much difference the independent spirit of Newsome made. The BBC Home Service did not mention the Bund report until 29 June, when the 6 p.m., 9 p.m. and

⁵⁹ BBC WAC, miscellaneous German Service documents, speech by Lindley Fraser to Chatham House, 1 Jun. 1942.

⁶⁰ Briggs, *The War of Words* (1970), pp. 171-2, 382-3.

midnight bulletins all carried news of it. The manner in which the news presented information was very revealing. All of the three bulletins were different, with the fullest picture being given at 6 p.m.:

The terrible sufferings of the Jews under Nazi rule were spoken of today by Mr S.S. Silverman, M.P. presiding at a World Jewish Congress in London. Over a million Jews, he said, have died since the beginning of the war, in countries occupied by Germany. Of these seven-hundred-thousand have lost their lives in Poland and Lithuania, and two-hundred-thousand in occupied Russia. 'Everything in our power must be done to prevent the population of Poland from annihilation', said Mr Schwarzbart, member of the National Council of Poland. 'Only immediate reprisals can deter Hitler from carrying on his criminal action - that is the only language he understands.'⁶¹

In effect, this was little more than that which Newsome had been so keen to publicise four days earlier. In striking contrast, the 9 p.m. bulletin had a far less urgent tone. Gone was the immensely controversial and persistent Polish demand for retribution in the last sentence of the above excerpt, as well as the total casualty figures. Instead there was a concentration on the removal of civil rights and the news that the Germans were forcing Jews into ghettos - hardly new information. Nevertheless, the report of conditions for Jewish workers in Croatian salt mine's did suggest the Europe-wide dimensions of the Final Solution were becoming clearer. The midnight edition repeated this formula more briefly:

Some of the terrible sufferings of the Jews under the horror of Nazi misrule were put on record in London today at the World Jewish Congress. For instance -- seven million Jews -- nearly half of the whole Jewish population are being deprived of their political rights, stripped of their possessions and hounded into ghettos and slave compounds. Eastern Europe is now the slaughterhouse of the Jews, in central Poland they are being shot at the rate of a thousand a day, and four thousand children between twelve and fifteen years old have been taken for slave labour.⁶²

The prominence given to these stories was not great. Considering the comparative scale of what they revealed to the British public, it is curious that news of the imminent slaughter of European Jewry, which the above report depicted, found a place in bulletins below that of

⁶¹ BBC WAC, 6 p.m. News, 29 Jun. 1942.

⁶² Ibid., 12 a.m. News, 29 Jun. 1942.

reprisals for Heydrich's assassination of - a story that had been run for some time and which there was little new to say about. Additionally it is important and pertinent to note that, then, as now, the 9 p.m. news was the flagship of the service. It aimed to be the most comprehensive bulletin. It is interesting that, although the *New York Times* cited the BBC's reporting of the press conference, it also placed the story behind the Heydrich story.⁶³

The BBC broadcast its next substantial item of news about the Final Solution on 8 and 9 July. On 8 July Cardinal Hinsley, the Archbishop of Westminster and the Roman Catholic Primate of England and Wales, gave a talk in the BBC Home Service after the 6 p.m. news. This was also broadcast in various languages on the European Service. Hinsley's talk was important in several respects. What is most obvious about it is the way in which the persecution of the Jews was still linked so firmly with that of Poles. As Hinsley stated:

Here and now I am going to tell some items of the truth about the murderous work of the Nazis in Poland; I tell the truth without fear or favour. I am going to set down things which cannot be gainsaid concerning the barbarities of these tyrannous invaders in their treatment of Jews and Christians in Poland.

In Poland alone the Nazis have massacred 700,000 Jews since the outbreak of the war. Must we not appeal to reason? A Jew is a man, and among rational civilised people no man can be condemned for a crime unless he is tried and found guilty. But the Nazis have done to death without the semblance of justice countless innocent peoples both of Aryan and non-Aryan races.

I have before me documents which prove beyond question the utter bestiality of German methods in the conquered but unvanquished land of Poland. Everything religious, whether Jewish, Catholic or Orthodox, is the target of pagan hatred of the Nazi agents in Poland.

Hinsley only mentioned the word 'Jew' twice in the entire talk. This is understandable on two fronts. Firstly, the BBC was still firmly adhering to the policy that atrocities on Jews should be dealt with strictly by coverage in news bulletins. Secondly it was not surprising that so much of the talk dealt with the situation facing Catholic Poles. Hinsley was, after all, a Catholic. To speak for anything other than the Roman Catholic conscience would have been presumptuous. But such concern from a Catholic is nevertheless noteworthy.

⁶³ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, p. 170.

Conservative elements in British Catholicism were still describing the news from Poland as a 'Communist plot' months later.⁶⁴

The next day's news bulletins broadcast the most important report. It took the form of an extended report of a press conference, which Bracken and members of the Polish National Council had attended. Out of a total of twenty stories in that night's bulletin it was tenth, with a placing of six out of eight in the 'banner' of headlines. This had the effect that 'political' news such as that Nazis were massacring hundreds of thousands of Jews ended up, in this case, below the occupation of Mayotte, an island off the coast of Madagascar. The newsreader's copy, from which the transcript below is taken, is complete with sections that have been cut, indicated below by being struck through. Practically always this would have been editing on grounds of space and presentation, rather than any kind of policy censorship, generally undertaken further back in the process of constructing the bulletin. This item was an extremely rare contradiction of the standard practice. The editor has removed Polish demands for retaliation, as has a graphic reference to torture methods, presumably struck out on grounds of 'taste', as well as not wanting to rekindle memories of the atrocity stories of the First World War. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile noting that the BBC gave reports of atrocities specifically against Jews greater prominence in the bulletin than the speakers at the press conference had. Engel comments that they had spent only a fifth of the time dealing with news of the Final Solution.⁶⁵ Lastly, virtually at the end, a reference to the perpetrators being 'brought to justice' was cut. Here Bracken was speaking out of turn on an issue that would increasingly worry the British Government.

The Minister of Information stood before a gathering of Press representatives in London today and told them that they were about to hear a tale as grisly as any ever known to history. It was the story (or as much of what is so far known) of the German reign of terror in Poland. It was told by members of the Polish National Council; (including the Minister for Home Affairs) ~~said his people, thinking that the reaction to their torment too weak, demand an equivalent code for Germans in the United States. They felt that at least some tens of thousands of them should be put into Concentration Camps and regarded as hostages, because threats of future reprisals did not help at all.~~

⁶⁴ Laqueur, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

⁶⁵ Engel, *Shadow of Auschwitz*, p. 182.

~~The Polish Minister for Home Affairs began his indictment by saying that what's happening in his country is part and parcel of Hitler's plans to wipe out all Poland's life and culture to make living room for Germans. He and other speakers went on to catalogue some of the crimes which have been and are being committed in Poland;~~

and here are a few of the facts they gave the conference: facts which go beyond dispute. The number of Poles executed, murdered and tortured to death during the three years of German military occupation already amounts to nearly a quarter-of-a-million. At least two hundred thousand Jews have been massacred,⁶⁶ besides; and assuming that the Germans are using starvation as one way of exterminating the Jews, the figure of seven-hundred-thousand dead (mentioned in one report from Poland) is regarded as probable. In some towns not a Jew has been left alive. One-and-a-half-million Poles have been deported to forced labour in Germany; one-hundred-and-seventy-thousand have been compelled to serve in the German Army. Hunger and disease stalk the ghettos; in the Warsaw ghetto alone, fifty-thousand people died of starvation last year.⁶⁷ The death rate there at present is six-thousand a month. The Gestapo regularly kill masses of their victims by machine-gun fire and hand grenades - and even poison them in mobile gas chambers. In one single night two-thousand-five-hundred Jews were driven out of their homes and put to death. Ten times that number were sent to one or other of the twenty-three known concentration camps. Third Degree methods, and the most ingenious sadistic tortures ~~such as hanging by the feet and the tearing out of nails~~ are being used more and more against the Poles. There are gallows in eighteen Silesian towns; and when victims go to their death the rest of the people - even their young children - have to go to watch. There is an instance of one-hundred-and-eight children - none older than nine - being taken from a Jewish orphanage with their nurses and, to a place outside the town and murdered. Seven-thousand people had to see a hundred men and women hostages executed because two Germans had been killed by a Pole. University Professors have been taken away by the Gestapo and never heard of again. Bishops and Priests have been arrested in great numbers; many have been executed; and at this moment twelve-hundred are in concentration camps. In one place, there used to be thirty churches and forty-seven chapels. Today two churches remain open. The Polish intellectual class is threatened with complete annihilation.

So ran the tale of Poland's suffering through what Mr Bracken called 'a bestiality unknown in any previous records of history'.⁶⁸ The Germans, he said, have excelled themselves as the most brutal nation which has ever defiled the annals of the human race. 'What gives me some small satisfaction,' the Minister for Information went on, 'is that I, as a member of the Government, can reassure our Polish friends that the people responsible for these murders and outrages in Poland will be brought to justice. They will be⁶⁹ treated as common

⁶⁶ This figure is massively reduced from the 700,000 reported earlier. The Poles may well have been exercising self-censorship here, deliberately understating the numbers so as not to appear to be exaggerating.

⁶⁷ This figure was extremely close to that given by Gutman for 1941; 41,176. see Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw* (Bloomington, Ind., 1982), p. 64.

⁶⁸ The title of a pamphlet issued by the Government-in-exile.

⁶⁹ This excision, though possibly done on grounds of space, might also be seen as ruling out special war crimes trials and emphasising that normal, territorial proceedings were adequate. Such a formulation

murderers, which they are, and those gangsters will be punished with the utmost rigidity of the law - and is a matter of the utmost importance. I can assure you that the Government of the United States and the Government of Great Britain and all the Governments of the United Nations are in complete agreement on this question: and that every care should be taken to secure the names of the persons responsible for these crimes; that they should be brought speedily to justice at the conclusion of the war; and that their punishment will fit their crimes. And, believe me', Mr Bracken declared, 'in view of the crimes committed by the Germans, the punishment will be in many cases the most severe known to any law. I hope that fact will be rubbed steadily into the minds of the beasts responsible for the terrible happenings in Poland'.⁷⁰

What the BBC actually broadcast was important and shocking despite the cuts. It was heard by an audience of 42.9 per cent of the adult population of the United Kingdom - some 14.2 million people.⁷¹ This was the first mention of gas in a Home Service news broadcast, as well as the first use in the most important bulletin of the Bund's over-cautious figure of 700,000 Jewish deaths since 1939 in Poland. It compounded the fate of Jews and Poles in a way that most subsequent reports followed - repression against both was conflated in such a way that only the most careful listener would have been able to understand that there were different situations facing the two communities. Engel regards this as being evidence of the success of the Government-in-exile's project to ensure that the sufferings of Poles would merge with the potentially more startling news of what was happening to Polish Jews. A senior British politician had also explicitly recognised their desire for retribution.⁷² However it also fits in with the 'liberal universalism' identified by Tony Kushner. From this perspective, the lack of differentiation between Jewish and Polish suffering was natural and automatic.

The most crucial point is that both this report and the earlier one at the end of June had a common provenance. Both originated from press conferences. The first had implicit Ministry of Information and Polish Government approval. The only speakers the reports quoted were a British MP and a member of the Polish National Committee, and took place *four days* after the Bund report had first been published in the *Daily Telegraph*. The

would have fitted better with Government policy. see John P. Fox, 'The Jewish Factor in British War Crimes Policy in 1942', *English Historical Review*, Vol. 92 (1977), pp. 82-106.

⁷⁰ C-W BBC 9 p.m. News, 9 Jul. 1942.

⁷¹ BBC WAC, R9/11/7.

⁷² Engel, *Shadow of Auschwitz*, p. 185.

second featured a Minister. It was clear that the Home Service was only going to report news of the Final Solution when official bodies chose to give it their stamp of approval. The exception to this was when representatives of the 'great and the good', such as Hinsley, were prepared to broadcast on the subject.

SECTION D: PWE AND THE 'JEWISH QUESTION'

Newsome had few reservations about making news of the Final Solution a presence across the BBC European Service's disparate output. Could this also be said for those non-journalists involved in assembling the same? PWE, after a period of immense turmoil following its firm establishment in the autumn of 1941, was in early 1942 issuing weekly regional, but not yet central, directives. Those that have survived, alongside FO files, show a great variety in attitudes inside both PWE and the FO itself.⁷³ The regional structure of PWE manifested itself in the way in which the different sections responded to news about Final Solution.

PWE was not primarily concerned with building the BBC European Service into the best and most accurate news provider for occupied Europe. If the BBC became so, then that was a useful means to the end of securing what *were* its primary concerns - ensuring that the peoples of occupied Europe performed useful acts of sabotage and bided their time until were of value to Britain; and as a means of sapping German morale and creating chasms in the relationship between the German people and the Nazi Party. Different regional sections of PWE, and the personnel within them, interpreted this mission in different ways at different times.

In the section that dealt with the Low Countries there was a good deal of interest in the information available about persecution of the Jews, and a belief that such information could play a useful part in the political warfare campaign. The weekly directives issued for the BBC Belgian Service noted increasing action against Jews from May 1942 onwards.

⁷³ PWE had been originally run by a Ministerial Committee composed of the Foreign Secretary and the Ministers of Information and Economic Warfare.

True to PWE goals, however, this was seen as important in regard to other issues, rather than in itself. The directive for the week beginning 16 May noted the removal of citizenship from German Jews in the area covering Belgium and Northern France. It added, by way of a propaganda pointer: 'This is a step towards confiscation of Belgian national property for the benefit of the Reich. For the possessions of individual inhabitants, whether Jews or gentiles, nationals or foreigners, are part of the national wealth'.⁷⁴ Three weeks later the directive noted the imminent compulsory wearing of the Star of David in Belgium and the banning of Jews from medicine and pharmacy. PWE told the BBC to treat this as showing German exasperation at failing to win popular support in Belgium and as a way of corrupting the Belgian people morally. The banning of Jews from the medical profession was a 'clear sign as to just how much they care for the welfare of the Belgian people'.⁷⁵ The directives for the Dutch Service contained a good deal more hard information, little of it new, but including on 6 June the relatively recent news of restrictions on the amount of money Dutch Jews could have at their monthly disposal.⁷⁶ More significant than the heaping of further restrictions on Dutch Jews was what PWE reported to the BBC in early July:

As usual, intensified German exploitation is accompanied by fresh anti-Semitic measures. Point out the close connection between financial exploitation and appeals to racial hatred. Evidence is piling up that the Germans are planning a mass deportation of 60,000 Dutch Jews to the East. We should already this week expose the German plan in advance.⁷⁷

note ii

General Schmidt at a meeting at Breda on 28.6.42 said 'Jews will return to the place whence they came just as poor as when they left covered with lice. Those who sympathise with them will be treated in the same way. Everywhere we Germans go, the question will be solved in this manner'. Former steps taken in preparation for the measures hinted at in this speech are (i) Concentration of all Jews in Amsterdam; (ii) the confiscation of all bicycles; (iii) the compulsory wearing of the David star; (iv) the general prohibition on travel; (v) the decree against entering non-Jewish houses; (vi) the recently imposed curfew.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ FO 371/30780, f49, 16 May 1942.

⁷⁵ Ibid., f56, 6 Jun. 1942.

⁷⁶ Knowledge of this innovation can be traced to a report on the Italian Home Service, broadcast on 27 May. IWM, BBC Monitoring Report, 28 May 1942.

⁷⁷ Deportations had actually already started.

⁷⁸ FO 371/31021 f109-10, 11 July 1942.

This mention of deportations is unique in the material that survives. On no other occasion does it seem that PWE was able to alert the broadcasters that this had taken place. Due to the lack of surviving news transcripts from this time, other than in the Home Service which did *not* report this, it is impossible to assess whether the European Service broadcast this. However, it shows that even the beginning of deportations could be couched in terms designed to persuade the gentile population that what was really going on was merely an extension of German looting. Nevertheless, the final sentence in the introductory passage is interesting. If the Germans were going to deport 60,000 Jews to the East, what was PWE's reason for wanting the BBC Dutch Service to report it? The answer must lie in the fact that the Dutch population was seen as viewing its Jewish neighbours positively, as being concerned about their fate. After all, the Dutch had come out on to the streets in 1940 to protest against German antisemitism. Monitoring of the German-controlled Dutch Home Service seemed to bear this out and underline the efficiency of *Radio Oranje* and BBC broadcasts. The Daily Monitoring Report for 26 May noted:

In his 'Weekly Political Talk' Max Blokzijl allowed himself more than his usual share of admissions and implications. The fact that the Dutch people religiously carry out the instructions they receive from the BBC European Service and from 'Radio Oranje' appeared for instance from his complaint about the sympathy given to Dutch Jews since they were compelled to wear the star of David.⁷⁹

In June PWE had reported:

The reaction of the Dutch people towards the latest anti-Semitic measures is what we expected it would be. The recent appeal of Radio Oranje has met with a splendid response and has strengthened the bonds between the Dutch on either side of the North Sea. Point out therefore that the Germans have once more defeated their own ends by playing the anti-Semitic card. They have merely served the Dutch people with an excellent opportunity for displaying their unity all over the world.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ IWM BBC Monitoring Report, 26 May 1942.

⁸⁰ FO 371/31021 f84, 6 Jun. 1942.

An interesting point in this directive is the obvious failure to understand that antisemitism was more than a tactic, and was an inherent part of Nazi ideology. National Socialism existed in order to advance antisemitism - not the other way around. In a broader sense this reflected what Tony Kushner refers to as the inability of the liberal imagination to come to terms with, at first Nazism, and then the Final Solution itself. That the leaders of Germany actually *believed* in radical antisemitism rather than using it as a ploy to inveigle the masses was beyond many. Another inference from these directives is the way in which it showed that deportations of Jews could be used to offer an opportunity for the London-based Dutch Government, via *Radio Oranje*, to appear to be leading a humanitarian campaign in Holland. Tragedy could thus become good public relations. The Czech service referred to the Dutch 'example' 23 May.⁸¹ As far away as Greece there was a similar pattern. Accompanying its passing of information that German propagandists were demanding the deportation of the Jews of Salonica, the PWE Greek Section told their BBC colleagues that the 'new anti-Jewish policy in Greece might be [shown] as an ironic illustration of the benefits of the New Order [and that the] Germans bring to Greece not literature, not humanity, but universal barbarism'.⁸²

If PWE envisioned the Dutch as sympathetic to their Jews, this was not the case in other parts of Europe. Neither were all those who advised the FO on the reception broadcasts might get in their target areas wholly sympathetic to Jews. A report prepared by the Oxford historian and anti-Trianon revisionist C.A. Macartney, in his role as a member of the Balliol-based FO Research Service, in early 1942 set out the approach that the PWE section dealing with Hungary should take in determining propaganda policy. In it he stated that among 'the things we must not identify ourselves with were legitimism, democracy and Jews in general'. The author stated the need to appeal to the broadest section of Hungarian society. This meant pandering to the supposed antisemitic instincts of the Hungarian people. Macartney's concluding remark - at the end of a seven-page paper - was that the BBC 'should not mention the Jews at all'.⁸³ This was not an isolated example. Dr

⁸¹ BBC WAC, Czech Service Bulletins, 23 May 1942.

⁸² FO 371/33157 f153, 1 Aug. 1942.

⁸³ FO 371/30965 (C1989/116/21), 17 Feb 1942.

Vambery, a member of staff of the BBC Hungarian Service and former visiting lecturer at Budapest University, prepared a plan for broadcasting to Hungary for PWE in April 1942. He blamed the previous editor of the service for the fact that 'our bulletins to Hungary passed under strong Jewish influence [therefore] scant attention was paid to the problem of our Hungarian listeners and his reactions'. He summed up how Hungarians perceived Jews as follows:

The flair which all Hungarians possess for detecting a Jewish face extends to Jewish ways of thought and suggestions. The concept of a 'Jewish' book or a 'Jewish' epigram stands for a real phenomenon in Hungarian life, and few natives would ever fall into an error on this score. We cannot hope to put our Hungarian propaganda virtually under Jewish control [...] and not have this fact noted by our enemies with unconcealed jubilation.⁸⁴

A senior PWE officer commented that Vambery's report was 'very sensible'.⁸⁵ Not only in regard to Hungary did PWE take advice from those who saw antisemitism as deeply ingrained in particular societies. The report from which the following excerpt is taken was produced by the Czech assistant, Dr Vojacek, of PWE's Regional Director for Poland and Czechoslovakia, Moray McLaren, in the late summer of 1942. McLaren commented that it was 'of such a comprehensive nature that I cannot resist circulating it to all who may be interested'.

The Jews in Slovakia have a bad past record - they were the pillars of magyarization, and especially in Eastern Slovakia a real economic scourge - they ruined whole districts by ruthless exploitation of the natural weakness of poor undernourished and uneducated mountain peasants for drink. Though forming only about 8% of the population, they had the entire commerce and most of the industry and banks in their hands. Under the Republic, the Jews in Slovakia have largely become Zionists. Though Slovak peasants are very kind-hearted and tolerant, there is a good deal of anti-Jewish feeling mainly on economic and nationalist lines. The present cruel persecution of the Jews is detested by the vast majority of Slovaks and there is a good deal of spontaneous help extended to the victims: but apart from the cruel method, the fact that the Jewish preponderance has been eliminated is probably welcome by all, hence it is necessary to avoid too strong a Jewish note in broadcasts.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ FO 898/217.

⁸⁵ Ibid., Murray to Balfour, 21 Jul. 1942.

⁸⁶ FO 898/220, McLaren to Leeper, 19 Sep. 1942.

There can be no doubt that antisemitism, or at least a deep unwillingness to challenge it, was present at many levels in PWE. This expectation of inherent antisemitism among the peoples of Eastern Europe stretched as far the BBC. In the autumn of 1942 Gregory Macdonald, the head of the BBC Polish Service, reported to the weekly Anglo-Polish liaison meeting on broadcasting 'that one of the language typists had resigned and that it might be necessary to replace her by a Jewish typist'. He wondered if there was any objection to this on the Polish side. Count Balinski, the Polish Ministry of Information official who served on the committee, answered that there was none.⁸⁷

If the very mention of Jews caused 'old Hungary hands' nervousness, the question of atrocities as a whole was not a reassuring one in the higher reaches of the FO. It was also the case, as it had been since 1939 and would invariably remain until 1945, that anything connected with Poland raised the question of Soviet-Polish rivalry and suspicion. This was understandably a matter that the British Government wished to have as little to do with as possible. A letter in January 1942 from Alec Cadogan, the Permanent Secretary of the FO, to Cyril Radcliffe, the Director of the Ministry of Information, summed up the FO attitude to the pitfalls associated with Soviet-Polish relations and the question of what he then regarded as 'atrocities stories'. This letter was in response to a Parliamentary question on the willingness of the Ministry of Information to publish Molotov's recent memorandum on German atrocities in the Soviet Union. The answer from a junior minister had been positive, so creating a whole new set of problems.

You will of course be aware that the Poles have raised objections to the issue of the Molotov note under the auspices of HMG on the grounds that it refers to Lwow as a Soviet city. We have already put this point to your Department and I understand that the Polish Ministry of Information have also made representations to you in the same sense. If the Molotov note appeared as a stationery office publication it would be very difficult to omit the reference to Lwow. In this case we would certainly have to expect considerable trouble from the Poles, more especially if as I understand might be the case. Moreover it would be difficult to reconcile the republication of the Molotov note as a Stationary Office document with HMG's policy of avoiding associating themselves too closely with Allied atrocity propaganda. It was for this reason

⁸⁷ SI, KOL. 434/43, 9 Oct. 1942.

that, at the recent St James's Place meeting, the Secretary of State was only present as an observer.⁸⁸

Radcliffe replied that he quite appreciated the reluctance of the Government to associate themselves directly with 'Allied atrocities propaganda' and that therefore it was the 'regular policy' of his Ministry 'to try ensure that such material is put out on the responsibility of the Government which represent the people actually concerned, and we are very chary about making such material a part of own propaganda'.⁸⁹ This policy held firm until Bracken's press conference in early July.

Not only did senior FO personnel see good policy reasons for not going out of their way to press PWE to in turn press the BBC European Service to feature material about the Final Solution, but there was also a certain amount of personal squeamishness and reluctance to become involved with the highly disparaged and discredited use of 'atrocities propaganda'. Most important, however, about this period was the way general attitudes towards Jews and Jewish suffering within PWE were set. Two models were set out. The first of these - the Dutch model - saw the local population as being sympathetic to Jewish suffering, which could thus be a useful subject for political warfare. But the position allotted to Jews was thus precisely this - subjective. In other words, the suffering of Jews was useful but not in itself important. The second model - the Slovak model - saw the local population as being irredeemably hostile to Jews. In order to secure a local audience, it was thus vital that the BBC should avoid being seen as 'Jewish'. Neither model promised that news of the Final Solution would become a top priority for PWE.

What this period showed was that the content of news bulletins underwent a radical shift between the beginning of the year and the official support given to publicising the Bund report from the end of June onwards. Why was this so? Obviously there was now a vast difference in the quality of information available. The continental scope of the Nazis'

⁸⁸ FO 371/31097 f8, Cadogan to Radcliffe 26 Jan. 1942.

⁸⁹ Ibid. f11, Radcliffe to Cadogan, 28 Jan. 1942.

actions were becoming plain. But, as the problems which surfaced for Newsome and the European Service in broadcasting the Bund report showed, the ability of outside agencies to influence output to their own ends had, if anything, intensified. What impact did the coverage have in providing any amelioration for Jews in occupied Europe? The answer we now know is probably none. At the time many believed the opposite. PWE's *Monthly Report on Propaganda* for July stated: 'It has been proved that large scale publicity given in Great Britain to exceptional German atrocities has had a curbing effect. It is hoped that the light thrown by our propaganda on the massacre of Jews will have some result.'⁹⁰ In Warsaw, Ringelblum rejoiced, believing that *Oneg Shabbat* had succeeded in its historical duty. But he did not agree with the general mood in the Warsaw ghetto that now the world knew, the massacres and deportations would cease.⁹¹ The German Propaganda Ministry swatted away the BBC's reports, leaving it to the obscure Finnish Swedish-language service to ridicule the assertions made by Hinsley in his talk.⁹² In the meantime the Final Solution intensified. The next few weeks saw the beginnings of both mass deportations from western Europe and the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto. There was precious little 'curbing effect'. Ringelblum was right. The question now is whether, as more information became available, the BBC would repeat the coverage it gave the Bund report?

⁹⁰ Public Records Office, Ministry of Information papers (hereafter INF), 1/899, PWE Monthly Report on propaganda for Jul. 1942, p. 12.

⁹¹ Ringelblum, *Notes*, p. 299.

⁹² IWM, BBC Monitoring Report, 13 Jul. 1942. Nordic-based radio stations were favoured by the propaganda Ministry for this kind of task - presumably because there was a limited danger of their broadcasts being overheard in more politically sensitive parts of occupied Europe.

CHAPTER III

**'WE SHOULD BE GUIDED BY NEWS VALUES OF PARTICULAR
OUTSTANDING INCIDENTS': AUGUST TO DECEMBER 1942**

The BBC had broadcast the fact that all Jews living under German occupation were under the threat of extermination by the end of July 1942. The news may not have been accurate, timely or even particularly prominent but it had transmitted it nevertheless. The decision by the Polish Government-in-exile to support such action in June 1942 was as important in forcing news of the Final Solution onto the airwaves as any event during this period, including the Allied Declaration of 17 December 1942. But the impetus was not maintained. The BBC would broadcast little more news about the Final Solution broadcast until December. Why was this so?

SECTION A: THE HOME SERVICE

The Home Service broadcast little news of the Final Solution in the late summer and early autumn of 1942. The only exceptions were reports of protests in France and abroad at Vichy plans to hand over Jews to the Nazis, and one solitary mention of the fining of 20 Bulgarian Jews under antisemitic laws.¹ The French report did not mention what was likely to happen to these Jews at all, jarring with the coverage that newspapers like *The Times* and the BBC's own French Service were providing of deportations from France. However, BBC staff made an aborted attempt to draw the British public's attention to the fate of French Jewry. A producer in the Talks Department wrote to the Director of Talks, George Barnes, at the end of September suggesting a 'series of authoritative talks' on the treatment of French Jewry, 'as these barbarities are the first of their sort to be perpetuated in Western Europe and the tolerant social relationship between the French Jews and the rest of the people makes them peculiarly horrible'.² However, this idea did not meet with the approval of the BBC hierarchy, as Siân Nicholas makes clear:

Controller (Home) Sir Richard Maconachie contended that the BBC was in danger of saturating its audience with the subject, and advised that only indirect references should be made to the subject in broadcasts. Director-General Foot

¹ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 15 Oct. 1942

² BBC WAC, R34/686, Pringle to Barnes, 25 Sep. 42.

argued that the corporation should not court controversy by seeking to 'correct the undoubted anti-semitic feeling which is held throughout the country', and although he suggested that something might be broadcast on the Nazi mistreatment of children, he recommended that 'in the case of Jewish children it would be better not to refer to their race'.³

Two separate, but inter-linked forces, can be seen at work here. The first was the perception that antisemitism was strong, but that talking about it would only make things worse - a line that the Board of Deputies had agreed with earlier in the year. Second was the universalistic proposition that the putative broadcast should not refer to the 'race' of its subjects. The role of antisemitism as the handmaiden to universalism is very clearly demonstrated by the way in which Maconachie's unwillingness to mention Jewishness grew out of his perception that the listeners would have more sympathy with non-Jews. But what was most vital about this episode was the way in which the BBC was extending the principle that nothing be done to counter domestic antisemitism, established at the April meeting with the Board of Deputies, to cover programming about the position of Jews in Europe.

Mention of Jews in news bulletins continued to be sparse. The 9 p.m. news on 31 August hinted at the enormously complex process of trying to get Jews out of Europe. It stated that 280 women and children who were 'British-protected subjects from Palestine' were to be exchanged in Turkey for a similar number of German civilians.⁴

In news coverage of the third anniversary of the invasion of Poland there was no mention of the position of Polish Jewry. A talk on the same day by Lord Vansittart hardly mentioned Jews at all. In a fifteen minute talk broadcast after the 9 p.m. bulletin that described what Poland had become in those three years, this was all that referred to the Jews:

The fate of Polish Jews is unspeakably tragic. They are murdered by thousands daily, even children - and poison gas is used to do the dreadful work. Hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews have already perished.

³ Nicholas, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-160. The file which Nicholas bases her findings on has been 'misaid' by the BBC archive.

⁴ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 31 Aug. 1942.

Hitler has no use for the Jews: He does not even consider them as potential slaves like the Poles.⁵

What is most important here is the light that this sheds on the idea that information about the Final Solution was not widely accepted until much later in the war. Although Vansittart was hardly one to refrain from thinking the worst of the Nazis, his comments were free of doubt: The Nazis have murdered hundreds of thousands of Jews, they were using gas, they plan the utter extermination of the Jewish people in Poland. The briefness of his remarks had everything to do with a conviction within the highest reaches of the BBC that talks were not the right place to deal with atrocities against Jews and nothing to do with doubts as to the veracity of the information. Nor were the Poles at all unhappy to see the Final Solution mentioned in this way. Raczynski, the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, actually sent Vansittart a letter congratulating him on this broadcast and 'his treatment of the "German Question" in general'.⁶

Material broadcast around *Yom Kippur* also indicated that many believed the Nazis' attempt to wipe Jews from the face of Europe was beyond a plan. A report on the 6 p.m. news of 16 September summarised a talk that the Chief Rabbi, J.H. Hertz, had given on the Overseas Service.⁷ This reported Hertz stating that 'the appalling suffering of the Jews was beyond compare; a million Jewish men, women and children had been murdered'.⁸ Selig Brodetsky, the President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, spoke after the news the same evening. He started the talk by asserting that the war against the Jews was a war against the whole of western society as religion was 'a Jewish invention, democracy is a Jewish conception of society'. It was a matter of humanity that the world should join forces to free itself from the tyranny and terror which Nazism represented. In other words, Brodetsky showed how important the de-emphasis of Jewish particularism was. He spoke of the actual process of the Final Solution thus:

⁵ BBC WAC, talks scripts, 1 Sep. 1942.

⁶ Edward Raczynski, *In Allied London* (London, 1962). p. 121.

⁷ This item was not broadcast in the 9 p.m. bulletin, nor does the transcript of Hertz's broadcast seem to have survived. It was placed 12 out of 15 in the run of stories in the 6 p.m. news.

⁸ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 16 Sep. 1942.

In the Nazi sights in Europe are eight million Jews, half of the Jewish people. No language can recount their sufferings. Hundreds of thousands have been murdered, whole communities of men, women and children are herded together and machine-gunned, and those that still survive are buried alive. Perhaps these are the least unfortunate. One and a half million Jews have been crowded into Ghettos; against these and all other Jews, starvation, disease, torture and murder are let loose every day. Not only in Poland, Russia and other occupied lands, are the Nazis destroying the German people, but even in unoccupied France the Vichy Government has heaped ruin and humiliation, driven hundreds to suicide, and handed many thousands over into the Germans' hands for a fate that nobody can wish to imagine.⁹

This excerpt represents only about a sixth of the whole talk. The rest concentrated on the contribution that Jews were making to the Allied war effort. This was unsurprising, as portraying British Jews in a favourable light was the primary reason why the BBC had arranged the talk.¹⁰ What one might identify as novel here was, firstly, Brodetsky's point that the war against the Jews was Europe-wide. As we have seen, although the BBC had and was mentioning the increasingly difficult position faced by Jews of France and the rest of Western Europe, there had been nothing other than allusions as to what their fate was. Secondly, Brodetsky was obviously aware of the reports of the work of the *Einsatzgruppen*. But what was most important was that this talk directly contradicted the policy the Board of Governors had established that atrocities against Jews should feature only in news bulletins.

Despite the fact that the Home Service was broadcasting little new information about the progress of the Final Solution, there was regular coverage of protest meetings in the United Kingdom, although these reports did not mention Jews as facing any particular special treatment. The Home Service reported the founding meeting of the Council of Christians and Jews. Although this report spoke of 'the persistent efforts of the German government to undermine and destroy the traditional and spiritual values of mankind', there was no mention of atrocities or extermination.¹¹ An exception to this was a report on 29 October of the great meeting at the Albert Hall:

⁹ BBC WAC, talks scripts, 16 Sep. 1942.

¹⁰ BBC WAC, R28/20, memo by A.E. Barker, 26 Aug. 1942.

¹¹ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 30 Sep. 1942.

A meeting of protest against the Nazi treatment of Jews was held in the Albert Hall this evening. The Archbishop of Canterbury was in the chair. What was happening to the Jews in Europe, he said, was so horrible that the imagination refused to picture it; the purpose of the meeting was to face the fact of a monstrous evil and voice the moral judgement of civilised men upon it.

Dr Temple said that perhaps Jews were being taken to Germany for work; but there was every reason to fear that a great many of them were destined for the ghastly ghetto in Eastern Galicia, where thousands of them had already perished.

Among other speakers, General Sikorski, Prime Minister of Poland, said that the German leaders, knowing their doom was approaching were trying to break the will of the conquered countries and intimidate the world into silence. As head of the Polish Government he assured Polish Jews full benefits from our victory on equal terms with all Polish citizens, and as a soldier he warned the Germans that they would not escape retribution for their crime.¹²

The BBC did not report the presence of the Chief Rabbi, his having spoken, or his comments, which he directed at the press, that the 'plain man rarely saw, down in black and white, any attention-compelling information on these massacres [...] the British public could not show its inborn undying hatred of all bestiality. if so much of that bestiality was carelessly screened from public knowledge.'¹³

November passed without the BBC Home Service broadcasting any more direct news of the Final Solution. A report on the 9 p.m. news on 1 November of a meeting to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Balfour declaration contained pro-Zionist remarks made by General Smuts and Arthur Greenwood.¹⁴ It did not mention the then present-day situation amid pledges that Jewish aspirations and rights 'including the right to continue their life as a people in their own way would be respected after the war'.

Only in the period immediately before the Allied Declaration was there a marked build-up in the coverage. On 6 December in the 1 p.m. and then 6 p.m. news included the following, ninth out of nine stories:

The Chief Rabbi, Dr J. R. Hertz, has ordained that next Sunday, December the thirteenth, shall be observed by Anglo-Jewry as Day of Fasting and Mourning, in view of the catastrophic situation facing Jews in Europe.

¹² Ibid., 29 Oct. 1942.

¹³ Bolchover, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

¹⁴ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 1 Nov. 1942.

Services, for which the Chief Rabbi has prepared a special prayer will be heard at most synagogues and there will be no entertainment or other meetings of any kind on that day.¹⁵

Two days later Cardinal Hinsley mentioned the Jews in the course of an address from Westminster Cathedral, broadcast after the 6 p.m. news. It predominantly featured the apparent threat of extermination the Polish nation faced. Although his comments were limited, his statement that Poland appeared 'fiendishly planned to be turned into a vast cemetery of the Jewish population in Europe' was hardly ambiguous.¹⁶ The next news was in the 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. bulletins on 9 December, ninth out of ten in order of items:

The early stages of the Nazi campaign against the Jews are now being copied in Vichy France. Laval's Commissioner for Jewish Affairs has broadcast about what he called the 'struggle' against the Jews in defence of the French race; and has announced four new decrees against them. Under these decrees, all Jews must carry identity cards marked 'Jew'; foreign or stateless Jews must not leave the district where they live; Jewish Youth organisations are done away with; and all people helping Jews to evade laws which apply to them or their property are to be punished. Further measures on the same lines are threatened.¹⁷

This was hardly news. Any journalist or listener reading *The Times*, let alone the daily monitoring reports, which clearly formed the basis of this story, would have been aware that the campaign against Jews in Vichy had been going on for a long time and was scarcely in its 'early stages'. Similar to Hinsley's comments the previous day were those in that evening's 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. bulletins by the Archbishop of York. An account of exchanges in the House of Lords contained his wish that the Government would ensure that 'when the hour of deliverance came, retribution would be dealt out not only on those who had ordered the deliberate and cold-blooded massacre of all Jews in Poland, but also on the thousands of underlings who seemed to be gladly carrying out those cruelties.'¹⁸

On 10 December came news of the official Polish communication to the British Government. Eighteenth out of twenty-three stories, below news of reforms within the

¹⁵ BBC WAC, 1 p.m. news, 6 Dec. 1942.

¹⁶ Ibid., talks scripts, Cardinal Hinsley, 8 Dec. 1942.

¹⁷ BBC WAC, 7 a.m. news, 9 Dec. 1942

¹⁸ Ibid., 6 p.m. news, 9 Dec. 1942.

Ministry of Production and a new engine for the Spitfire fighter aircraft, only the 9 p.m. and midnight bulletins included it.

The Polish Government in London has sent a note to the Allied Governments calling attention to the methods of mass slaughter used by the Germans against the Jews in Poland during the last few months. It outlines reports which give a horrifying picture, showing that the German authorities aim at deliberately exterminating Poland's Jewish population and the many thousands of Jews they've deported from that country. It says that all reports agree that the total number of killed runs into many hundreds of thousands and that of more than three-million Jews in Poland before the war, over one third have perished during the last three years.¹⁹

This figure, of roughly a million, was obviously much smaller than the figure of two million for *Europe as a whole* that a bulletin from the World Jewish Congress (hereafter WJC) on 1 December had suggested. This had clearly reached the BBC.²⁰ There is no doubt that there was pressure in the first week of December on the BBC to hold back from reporting everything that was becoming known about the extermination of the Jews. The result of this was that the BBC Home Service broadcast a fraction of the material that the press reported. An example of pressure was the rumour, emanating originally from the World Jewish Congress, that there had been a single order, issued in July of 1942, for the killing of all Jews in Eastern Europe. This was a garbled version of the news of the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto that Easterman had passed on to the Government-in-exile on 30 November. Automatically, BBC staff tried to check the story with the FO. A day after the WJC issued the bulletin mentioned above, W. Harrison of the FO wrote the following memorandum:

Mr Cummings, BBC²¹ [...] rung me up this morning about a story to the effect that an order was issued last July by the German Government for the extermination of Jews in Eastern Europe. I told Mr Cummings that Messrs Silvermann [sic] and Eastermann [sic] had come to see Mr Law at the end of last week and had told him that they were satisfied of the truth of their reports. They therefore wished HM Government to consider what action or statement they could make, alone or in conjunction with other powers, on the subject. I said that we were considering the question and that meanwhile it seemed

¹⁹ Ibid., 9 p.m. news, 10 Dec. 1942.

²⁰ Gilbert, *Auschwitz*, p. 96.

²¹ Cummings, in his post of Deputy Foreign Adviser to the Home Service, liaised between the BBC and the FO.

desirable to soft-pedal the whole thing as much as possible for the moment. We would not, however, wish the impression to be given that we were deliberately trying to kill the story. We would be sure to let Mr Cummings know as soon as a decision had been reached.²²

The powers controlling the official Government attitude towards news of the Final Solution still wanted to make sure that the issuing of the Allied Declaration would make a sufficient impact. On 15 December, at one of the daily meetings Radcliffe, the Director-General of the Ministry of Information, representatives of the fighting services and the FO attended, an unknown figure told A.P. Ryan that the Government would issue the Declaration two days later. He was also informed that 'a plan to evacuate four or five thousand Jewish children from Bulgaria and send them to Palestine is being considered'.²³

Nevertheless, inside the BBC there were other barriers to a full and frank disclosure of the evidence that was becoming available. A meeting of the programme policy board on 11 December decided the following:

Pending FO statement: BBC to confine itself to reporting of News items without comment. Directive to be obtained on measure of follow-up required after issue of statement.

Jewish atrocities; decided that for Home and Overseas services subject should continue to be treated by way of news and not by provision of talks or feature programmes.²⁴

The result was that news bulletins continued to be bland and uninformative, right up to the Declaration on 17 December. This last excerpt is extremely significant as it reinforced the extension of the policy of silence that had been extended by stealth at the end of September.

The last items prior to the Allied Declaration were broadcast on 12 and 13 December. These related to the two days of mourning British Jews had observed, and those the Catholic and established churches had held over the previous week. The item on 12 December did not mention any details, but it included a report of a broadcast by the Chief Rabbi to Poland that afternoon, quoting his words that the Nazis would 'go down to

²² FO 371/30923 (C11923/61/88) f723, memo by W. Harrison, 2 Dec. 1942.

²³ BBC WAC, R28/19/1, 15 Dec. 1942.

²⁴ Ibid., R34/615/1, 11 Dec. 1942.

everlasting loathing and contempt; Poland will rise again to new peace, power and glory'.²⁵ The item broadcast the next day was more detailed, quoting a sermon by Hertz in London that afternoon. It reported Hertz as describing the deliberate killing of millions of 'defenceless men, women and children'. Poland 'had become a vast slaughterhouse' and the Chief Rabbi called on the United Nations to open their doors to refugees; 'to save the children at least from Hitler and his hellhounds'.²⁶ The next bulletin that would mention the Final Solution would be that which reported the Allied Declaration, four days later, following which there was a period when all sections of the BBC strained to broadcast as much as they could about the Holocaust.

SECTION B: THE EUROPEAN SERVICE

How then did the European Service cover the Final Solution in the second half of 1942, and what were the forces shaping this? Noel Newsome continued to highlight reports of atrocities and killings. In mid-August he noted a *Völkischer Beobachter* report of the deportation of 500,000 Jews from Romania to 'captured territory'.²⁷ His directive for 17 August included the following:

The Jews

Give the Zurich report of the suicide of the Mayor of the Warsaw ghetto. Those who have not used the Riga revelations should do so.

Commentators might ask listeners to imagine themselves in the places of those wretched mothers and fathers who have had to endure the ghastly experiences of seeing their little children prepared for the massacre.²⁸

News of Czerniakow's suicide was being prepared for broadcasting some three weeks after it had happened. Given that Warsaw would have probably relayed such an important event almost immediately to London by telegram, why the delay? Both Stefan Korbonski, head of

²⁵ BBC WAC, 6 p.m. news, 12 Dec. 1942.

²⁶ Ibid., 6 p.m. news, 13 Dec. 1942.

²⁷ Ibid., E2/131/6, 11 Aug. 1942.

²⁸ Ibid., E2/131/6, 17 Aug. 1942.

the Civilian Struggle Directorate, and Bor-Komorowski, then Deputy Commander of the Home Army (hereafter AK), wrote after the war that they had sent such signals daily at this time about conditions in the ghetto.²⁹ Dariusz Stola argues persuasively that the arrests of couriers bringing information out of Poland at the same time as the liquidation started was crucial. This provoked a general ban on publicity for any news from Poland that Berlin could not identify as originating from enemy or neutral sources.³⁰ Although Reuters, the JTA and even the *Manchester Guardian* published information based on telegrams from inside Poland in late July, this seems not to have made it into European Service broadcasting. What happened was that the London Poles' ability to veto any story about Poland which they did not want meant the BBC could use it. In other words the Poles were doing as best they could to support the idea that the Germans had broken their entire network. This policy was only relaxed in the middle of August, when *Dziennik Polski* published the story in London, following its release by Reuters in Switzerland. This by-line was, incidentally, regarded within the BBC as equivalent to an official pronouncement by the British FO, suggests possible British connivance in helping the Poles get the story out now that it suited them to do so.³¹

Returning to Newsome's directive of 17 August, the 'Riga revelations' were the reports of shootings of Jews in the Latvian capital. Newsome was remarking on these two points two days before *The Times* published the same information. He also went along with PWE's analysis that there was a wave of popular sympathy for the Jews in France in September. His comments refer frequently to opposition coming from the French churches. Nevertheless, Newsome pointedly refers to comments by Laval, which Nazi-controlled Belgian radio had reported, that 'nothing will stop him from eliminating the Jews from France'.³² This was not surprising in that the press was making this public at the same time news of deportations from France.

The first broadcasts aimed specifically at Jews by the European Service accompanied Newsome's willingness to highlight Jewish suffering in early September .

²⁹ Stola, op. cit., p. 8.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

³¹ BBC WAC, R28/71/1, Analysis of Foreign News Sources, 29 Sep. 1942.

³² Ibid., E2/131/7, 12 Sep. 1942.

These marked *Rosh Hashana*. There seems to have been at least three broadcasts; two of them in the BBC Polish and Czech services. The speakers were, respectively, a 'Polish Rabbi' on 11 September and a 'Representative of Czech Jewry' on 10 September. Both alluded to the Final Solution - without mentioning any details - and concentrated on the aid gentiles were extending to Jews in the two countries. Arnold Goodman made an additional broadcast in English. His official status as adviser on Jewish affairs to the Ministry of Information suggests official endorsement. Like the other two, Goodman's talk was mainly religious, as one would expect during the most important days of observance in the Jewish calendar. Nevertheless, Goodman also spoke directly of the Final Solution, telling of the 'eight millions of men, women and children [who] have suffered torture and persecution, cruelty and humiliation'. He added that 'to-day millions are threatened with deliberate extermination.'³³ Goodman's involvement, and the very fact that the broadcasts were made at all suggests, in the very least, confusion at this time about what precisely were the guidelines regarding broadcasts targeted specifically at Jews. It would be not until 1944 that anything similar was repeated.

A new development in the process by which PWE attempted to control the output of the European Service came in September 1942. These were the weekly 'Central Directives', issued by PWE's directorate of plans, led by Ritchie Calder. Part guidance and part instruction, they also contained 'Annexes'. The annexes were large amounts of information, reflecting current knowledge of a particular matter. As such, they are important documents that reveal not just what was known by PWE, but also what those controlling propaganda and the flow of information wanted people to know and were willing to confirm.

From a reading of these for the last four months of 1942, it is apparent that PWE were passing on little information. This was crucial. There were few other channels by which information from intelligence sources might have filtered into the BBC. While this may be seen as contributing to the argument that the BBC maintained its 'arm's-length'

³³ BDP, ACC 3121/E2/35, 'Messages to the Jews of the Continent on the Occasion of Rosh Hashana Broadcast by the BBC', published by *Agudas Israel*, 1942.

relationship with the Government during the war, it had an obvious impact on the quality of the BBC's news output.

The exception to this seems to have been the situation in France which PWE gave some coverage to in September:

Guidance Notes

In unoccupied France the Catholic clergy have openly sided with the laity who are protecting Jewish children against Laval's police, who are trying to carry out the orders of the Gestapo.

CARDINAL GERLIER, the Archbishop of Lyon, has led the Bishops in giving full approval by pastoral letters read from the pulpits to the refusal of French families who are sheltering Jewish children to hand these children over to the police.

Many arrests have been made amongst all classes of the community for their open resistance to the application of Gestapo rules to the Jews in unoccupied France. Arrests have been particularly numerous amongst the Catholics. Priests who read pastoral letters from the pulpit are reported to be amongst those arrested. Between five thousand and eight thousand Jewish children whose parents have been deported are homeless in unoccupied France. It is about their fate that the immediate struggle between the Laval Government and the masses in unoccupied France is now going forward.³⁴

This demonstrated that, leaving aside the question of accuracy, there was continuing pressure coming from PWE to treat the onset of the Final Solution as an opportunity to highlight the success and viability of the kind of resistance activity which the British government wanted to see; orderly, broadly-based, and under the control of established hierarchies. In other words, PWE saw the Jews as subjects in the theatre of political warfare. There is no doubt they could supplied better information, dealing more closely with the question of what was happening to the those being deported. To take France as an example, throughout 1942, the FO-run Foreign Research and Press Service gathered 'public domain' information about the treatment of Jews in France from sources as varied as the *Jewish Chronicle* and the British and Axis press. A report they issued in October included precise information on deportations. There was also eyewitness material from postal censorship and a report of a razzia in Marseilles in early August.³⁵ That large numbers of

³⁴ FO 371/30862 (C8660/248/63) f22, Central Directive (hereafter CD) week beginning (hereafter WB) 10 Sep. 1942.

³⁵ FO 371/32056 (Z746/1716/17), 10 Oct. 1942.

Jews were disappearing from France was hardly a secret. German controlled *Radio Paris* had reported in August that '4,000 foreign Jews arrested in the Unoccupied Zone [had been] deported to regions where they will be of use to the European community'.³⁶ There were many other similar broadcasts on French radio.³⁷

Nevertheless, PWE's Central Directive stayed mute until 10 December.³⁸ Clearly, as earlier in 1942, the regional sections of PWE were also not particularly interested in what was happening to European Jewry. The weekly directives for the Polish Service show that PWE was not applying any large amount of pressure to the BBC Polish Service. Coverage in *The Times* initiated the only direct mention of atrocities against Jews. This prompted Moray McLaren to write: 'It is becoming increasingly evident that the Lithuanians in the Wilno and Dublin [sic] districts are being used as overseers and executioners (vide recent article in the Times), and are helping to carry out the German terror policy both against Poles and Jews.'³⁹ This information seems to have spurred the Poles into one of their sporadic attempts to focus attention on the plight of Jews, but with greater attention to that of Poles, in the *Generalbezirk Litauen*. The Government-in-exile demanded that the BBC German and Polish services broadcast a warning to Lithuanian collaborators. This raised the problem that the Soviets regarded all Lithuanians as their subjects. Hence the BBC was banned from broadcasting in Lithuanian, as indeed in any Soviet language. Broadcasting the same warning in Polish was also problematic in that it implied a territorial claim by the Poles on Wilno, which the Soviets saw as part of Lithuanian, and therefore Soviet, land.⁴⁰ The text having previously been agreed to at a more junior level and under pressure from the Poles, Sir Orme Sargent, Deputy Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, agreed that the BBC could broadcast it as long as the text had been modified by the FO, despite grave reservations from officials responsible for dealing with the Soviet Foreign Ministry.⁴¹ Hence the FO decided not to approach the Soviets as it was unlikely to be forthcoming. The eventual purged broadcast contained none of the usual Polish statements about

³⁶ IWM, BBC Monitoring Report, 16 Aug. 1942.

³⁷ Ibid., e.g. 29 Aug. 1942.

³⁸ FO 898/289 f56, CD WB 10 Dec. 1942.

³⁹ FO 371/31092, f148, PWE Polish Weekly Directive, WB 3 Oct. 1942.

⁴⁰ FO 371/31093 (C10328/520/55) f151, memo by Roberts, 22 Oct. 1942.

⁴¹ Ibid., f148, memo by Roberts, Sargent, 29 Oct. 1942

immediate retribution and replaced the term Lithuanian *nation* with *people*. The sole mention of Jews did not differentiate between what was happening to them and to other minorities in territory the Lithuanians controlled.⁴² It must have occurred to BBC staff that any future reporting of events in contested territory would result in similar involvement by the higher echelons of the FO and the Government-in-exile.

What this reveals is that for PWE, and hence the BBC, political and logistical forces were supreme in determining what shape coverage of events within Poland would take. This becomes clearer in the period immediately before the Allied Declaration. The Polish Regional Directives for early December included the following curious passage:

The news about the conditions of Polish Jewry continues to grow worse. It is of course obvious that our highly trained and specialised listeners are aware of what is happening to the Jews in their country and we should not plug too obviously as news something which is almost certainly known to our listeners in advance. However we should seize hold of every opportunity given to us of publicising any British expression of anger at this treatment and of plans for justice in the long run..⁴³

This reflected, firstly, that the BBC's audience in Poland was an unusual one. As the Germans had confiscated most radio sets at the beginning of the occupation, there was little of the sort of individual clandestine listening common in Western Europe and in Germany itself. Instead, the BBC played a role of being a major supplier of news to the underground press in Poland. This explains the reference to 'highly trained listeners'. On the surface what is very difficult to understand is the inference that instead of seeking to make sense of the various sources of information about Poland, what the BBC should instead do was to hold to a policy of merely informing the resistance organisations that the information they were sending out was being noted in London. Lastly, PWE was making it plain that they would not make any extra information available. The sources at the BBC's disposal would remain only those in the public domain. As was regularly the case, this was a result of the policy of the Polish Government-in-exile. Frank Savery, Counsellor to the British Embassy to the Government-in-exile, had written on 3 December, when passing a translation of Jan Karski's

⁴² Ibid. f154.

⁴³ FO 371/31093 (C11536/520/55) f182, *PWE Polish Weekly Directive*, 3 Dec. 1942.

report on to Frank Roberts, then acting head of the FO Central Department: 'It is clear [...] that the Polish Government regard the report I have translated for you as the last word in the question for the time being'.⁴⁴

The subsequent directive on 10 December did not enlarge on the first point, stating: 'As last week news about conditions of Jews in Poland continues to grow worse. We should continue to seize hold of every opportunity of publicising expression of British anger.'⁴⁵ The directive on the day of the Allied Declaration returned to the theme another had outlined two weeks previously in seeking to deny detail being broadcast.

The immense publicity given by the British press over the weekend to the final breaking of the news about the Jewish persecution has, of course, been made full use of in all languages. It is particularly important, however to continue telling the Poles that we know about the sufferings of the Jews. We do not need to inform them of the details of those sufferings. What we wish to impress on them is our knowledge.

To this end, the names of personalities as well as public articles, are useful. Look out for broadcasts in English on either the European or Home Service at the end of this week on this subject. Use could be made of publicising the news to Poland.⁴⁶

Given PWE's lack of interest, how much material did the various language services broadcast? The French Service was the most prestigious and important of all the foreign-language services after the German Service. Only the transcripts for the last week in October survive out of the entire news output for 1942. Nevertheless, a glance at this one week indicates it broadcast a large amount of material about the Final Solution. The French Service's output seems largely in keeping with the BBC's domestic output, and the line set by PWE and discussed above; gentile protest rather than hard information. An example of this was the item broadcast on 23 October, relating how the part-Jewish Bishop of Beauvais, in northern France, had gone in full procession, with acolytes, when Jews in the

⁴⁴ FO 371/30924 (C12221/61/18) f4, Savery to Roberts, 3 Dec. 1942.

⁴⁵ FO 371/31093 (C11536/520/55) f183, PWE Polish Weekly Directive, 10 Dec. 1942.

⁴⁶ Ibid., f184, PWE Polish Weekly Directive, 17 Dec. 1942.

town had been forced to register.⁴⁷ More sinister was the news on 28 October. This was as follows:

It has been learnt in London that the number of Jews deported from France is far greater than had been earlier supposed and is no longer excluded to Jews arrived in France since Hitler gained power

The Swiss newspaper NEUE ZÜRCHER ZEITUNG confirms that even Jews who have fought for France are marked for deportation.

'Until now', writes the Swiss newspaper, 'nobody has been able to discover what happened eventually to the unfortunate Jews'. From the moment the deported Jews, locked in cattle wagons, were dispatched east under strong German military escort, no organisation has been find out their fate.⁴⁸

This may have been somewhat vague, but a piece in the next day's bulletin was far more detailed; at least regarding what has happening to Jews deported from Belgium.

Deportations of Jews from occupied Belgium are still being carried out on a huge scale. 600 Jews were sent by train from Liège to an unknown destination Among them were women aged between 16 and 50. German armed guards prevented relatives from seeing them off at the station. Several days later 181 Jews were sent to Malines en route for Upper Silesia and the Ukraine. In the Jewish quarter of Antwerp 5,000 Jews have been arrested and deported.⁴⁹

This report was particularly interesting in that it actually roughly identifies the destination that Belgian Jews were being sent to - in reality Auschwitz. The BBC French Service feature series *Les Français Parlent aux Français* also broadcast news of deportations, as for instance in this piece from early August:

Is France becoming the land of pogroms, the land of hate? As we speak, in France, Jews are being martyred, their families destroyed, arrested, deported, the innocent punished. Laval delivers the Jews to the Germans, dead or alive. The traitor gives up each day his cargo of martyrs who he has rounded up in France.⁵⁰

This series of informal addresses to the French public also broadcast information to the French public about the Final Solution's Europe-wide dimensions. Among such pieces was

⁴⁷ BBC WAC, French Service news bulletins, 23 Oct. 1942.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 28 Oct. 1942.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 29 Oct. 1942

⁵⁰ J. Cremieux-Brilhac (ed.), *Ici Londres*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1975), p. 185.

the following dramatic presentation of the suicide of Adam Czerniakow, broadcast on 23 August:

1st Voice: In the Warsaw ghetto, half a million Jews live - if it can be called living - stacked one on top of each other. In the Warsaw ghetto they are dying of hunger and illness. Life is a nightmare. All the time men and women collapse and die in the streets. Others perish from that formidable disease - typhus

2nd Voice: The Germans have deliberately built a ghetto that will kill its inhabitants. There is no need to waste machine gun bullets; hunger and typhus will do their work. Each consignment of corpses is replaced by another of new inhabitants that the Germans take from the towns and villages of Poland.

1st Voice: No one knew this misery better than the ghetto's Mayor, Mr. Czerniakow [sic]. By all means at his disposal he tried to help those who he was responsible for. He had to negotiate with the Germans and suffer their insults. Sometimes it seemed if his task was in vain.

Music

2nd Voice: The Germans eventually realised that they were playing with fire - that it was dangerous to have a den of infection in such a big city. They decided suddenly that there were 100,000 too many Jews in the ghetto. They called in the Mayor and told him to prepare a list of 100,000 Jews to be deported 'towards an unknown destination in the east', at the rate of 7,000 a day.

1st Voice: 'Towards an unknown destination in the east', repeated the Mayor to himself as he returned home, 'towards an unknown destination in the east'. This unknown destination in the east was death and massacres... The Mayor reached his office, and reflected on this for a long time. No! He would not take the responsibility to himself designate 100,000 Nazi victims. Up until now, he had done what he could. He had humiliated himself to save men and women, but now all that was worthless. He had always thought a day would come when the Germans would ask for the impossible. That day had come.

Music

1st Voice: So, very calmly, the Mayor put two fingers in the pocket of his waistcoat. He took out a small box. He opened it. It contained a small pill. In a short while, he fell unconscious. He had taken poison.

Music.⁵¹

There was no mention of the specific fate awaiting those deported from Warsaw, nor that Czerniakow's action was, inevitably and tragically, futile. Also interesting was the figure of

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 196-7.

100,000 as the number to be deported and the implication that the deportations had not started. This indicates that the raw material for the broadcast was the Reuters report of 15 August, published in London four days later by *Dziennik Polski*, rather than the more accurate Jewish Telegraphic Agency report also available at the time.⁵² Despite this, it was skilled and affecting broadcasting. Such dramatic and poetic imagery may have made much more of an impact than cold, factual news treatment of the sort common to BBC news bulletins. In featuring Czerniakow's suicide, the producers of the French Service were following Newsome's directive of 17 August, five days beforehand, to use this story, which Reuters had made available from Zurich. Hence it had been approved by the FO and was available to the Home Service - but it was not used by them.⁵³

The bulk of broadcasts dealing with the Final Solution in *Les Français Parlent aux Français* featured the situation of French Jews. Although they contained a good deal of information, the focus was still largely on gentile efforts to rescue and hide Jews, with the implication that the whole of France - with the exception of the Vichy regime - was united in a campaign of resistance: 'The French people are revolted by the persecutions ordered against Jews, the French people who, with all their might, impede the criminal operations of the Reich and its allies, it is them who have not for an instance, accepted the law of the victor.'⁵⁴ Understandably, there was no mention at all of collaboration as a wider phenomenon that included not just Laval. The broadcasts presented the French population as being united, appalled and affronted. In other words, the guidelines laid down by PWE were being followed. There was also no accurate references to the whereabouts of, and what happened at, the final destination, which one broadcast stated as Germany.⁵⁵

The BBC archive's holdings for the German Service are confined to general talks and features, rather than news bulletins. Importantly, these include Lindley Fraser's own *Sonderbericht* ('special broadcast') scripts, as well as copies of Thomas Mann's regular 'Message from America' talks. Among Mann's talks are one the German Service broadcast on 31 January 1942. It talked of 400 Dutch Jews being deported to Germany to be

⁵²Stola, op. cit., p. 11.

⁵³ See chapter one for reference to MI6 control over Reuters in Switzerland.

⁵⁴ Cremieux-Brilhac, op. cit., p. 209.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

experimented on with poison gas.⁵⁶ This is the earliest mention of the use of gas in murdering Jews that I have seen. Mann's talk was also the occasion for the first press mention of the use of gas, in the *Jewish Chronicle* of 9 January.⁵⁷ The story was in any wide sense inaccurate. The Dutch Jews had been deported to Mauthausen, where there were no gas chambers - in early 1942 they existed only in Chelmno, which present evidence suggests the Allies were unaware of at the time. Moreover, these broadcasts did not portray this deportation as being part of any concerted campaign of extermination against Jews. In another broadcast in early March, Mann spoke of the 'corpses of Polish children, swollen with starvation, the bodies of the thousands and thousands of Jews who have died from cholera, typhoid and consumption, heaped together in mass graves'.⁵⁸

Mann returned to the subject of gas six months later, in July. He corrected his earlier assertion that 400 had been sent for gassing; the figure had been too low. From new figures published by the Dutch Government, he had learnt that 800 had been sent. He continued:

It shows that Nazi barbarism surpasses everything that is said and written about it. There is no danger of exaggerating it. However dark you paint it, the truth is twice as black. For is not the bestial massacre of Mauthausen merely one inconspicuous detail in this panorama of barbarism?⁵⁹

Lindley Fraser was not only a senior commentator for the German Service, he was also one of its main strategists. In this role he was an originator of the 'hope clause' position. He saw this as the best way of securing an audience and dividing the German people from the Nazi Party. German Service broadcasts worked the plight of the Jews into this over-riding theme, a good example of which was an edition of 'Looking Forward' broadcast on 16 August 1942:

We in England realise entirely, that it is not easy for the ordinary German to take action against his present rulers, however much he may in his heart detest them and reject their doctrines. We recognise in that the German people cannot

⁵⁶ BBC WAC, German Service scripts, 'Message from America', Thomas Mann, 31 Jan. 1942.

⁵⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 Jan. 1942, p. 1.

⁵⁸ BBC WAC, German Service scripts, 'Message from America', Thomas Mann, 3 Mar. 1942.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 16 Jul. 1942.

be expected - not yet - to rise up against the Nazi regime. The destruction of the war machine - that is our job and that we shall accomplish sooner or later - with your help so far as you can give it to us, otherwise without it.

The German people should not place *themselves* in danger, however. There was another way in which they could show their humanity. Part of this related to the Jews:

But for the time being, and from that great mass of Germans, we ask something less spectacular. We ask that they disassociate themselves from the theories and practices of National Socialism. It's not enough to reject these in your hearts, let your rejection express itself in practice - by kindness to the persecuted Jews in your midst, by acts of friendship towards foreign workers, by counter-acting the effects of Nazi education on your children etc.⁶⁰

What this persecution represented had been shown in another edition of 'Looking Forward' broadcast two weeks previously. In this, Fraser read a letter purporting to come from a Jewish refugee in Britain.⁶¹ The letter stated that this man had been forced to leave his mother in Germany when he fled. It described the deportation to Poland which the letter speaks as occurring 'a month or two' previously. It continued:

Seven weeks before her 92nd birthday She was taken from her house by the Nazis to be deported to Poland. What was her crime? She was a Jewess. She and thousands of others - men, women, and children, without consideration of their age, have been driven out their homes in which they were born and where their ancestors had lived for many generations [...] Nothing could shake [the Nazis] - neither her age, nor the testimony of the Doctor that she was not fit for travel, nor the requests and pleadings of the people round her. She had to go. For hours and days she travelled in miserable, unheated railway carriage, sitting on a hard wooden seat. But I know that my dear, good, clever, strong-hearted mother, gave courage to the weak and despairing people around her and was an example to them.

Fraser immediately then sought to draw this story into the wider propaganda realm by attaching two themes to it. The first of these was that the atrocities, news of which were spread in Germany by the BBC and word of mouth, could not be explained by being

⁶⁰ Ibid., 'Looking Forward', Lindley Fraser, 16 Aug. 1942.

⁶¹ There is no way of telling whether this letter was genuine, but it seems doubtful.

regarded as 'necessary and unavoidable in a war in which Germany is fighting for her life'.

The second was the question of retribution:

The men [responsible for atrocities] will be brought to account. These men now assert that the whole German people will share their fate. They try to use the fear of future indiscriminate retribution to bind every German man and every German woman to themselves. They are lying. The guilty will be punished - but not the innocent. The perpetrators of these deeds will have to pay - but not the German man and German woman who hates and rejects such cruelty. Let me repeat the message of Lord Cranborne. 'Justice is one of the things for which we are fighting the war.'

No, those who are innocent need have no fear that after the war they will be sentenced along with the guilty.⁶²

Undoubtedly, informing Jew and gentile in Europe about the Final Solution was not at the forefront of the BBC German Service's agenda. It was often the case that atrocities against Jews were not clearly differentiated in intent from atrocities on other communities. A Fraser script from 21 September showed this clearly:

The German papers and wireless are full of an alleged British plan to sever all Germán children from their mothers as soon as the war is over and bring them up in educational homes in other countries.

We note that German propaganda now calls it 'devilish' and 'criminal' to separate children and their mothers. We agree - and we do not forget that is exactly what the Nazis themselves are doing with thousands of Jewish families. It is what they have done in Czechoslovakia to the inhabitants of Lidice and other towns.⁶³

Rather than alerting the peoples of Europe, it was the fear that Allied knowledge of the Final Solution and other matters would be used by the Nazis to bind the German people more closely to them that most concerned the German Service. A way of weakening this possibility was to assert that not only would the bad Germans be the only ones to be punished, but that the good ones could - by their actions - actually claim some moral credit.

⁶² BBC WAC, Misc. German Service scripts, 'Looking Forward', Lindley Fraser, 2 Aug. 1942.

⁶³ Ibid., 'Sonderbericht - Dutch Brick', Lindley Fraser, 21 Sep. 1942.

This was the purpose of the later broadcast discussed above. But this special offer on salvation was, as is usually the case, to be available for a limited period only.⁶⁴

In a broadcast on 9 September, Fraser outlined two positions which, he said, were widely held in Britain. These attitudes were in response to the question of whether the German people were to be held responsible for the 'crimes committed in its name in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Russia and throughout Europe'. The first of these, quoting Wolstonecroft, the President of the TUC, was as follows: 'The vast majority of the German people is behind the Nazi Gangsters. It against the whole German people that we are fighting - the German people is responsible'. Others, according to Fraser, were more understanding, believing that 'once the German people wakes up from its insane dreams of European conquest and racial superiority, and helps to destroy the evil-doers, there will be no reason why Germany should not join with us in the work of peaceful international reconstruction.' However, there was one point on which all in Britain were agreed. This, echoing Churchill's recent statement on atrocities in the House of Commons, was that 'those who are guilty of the Nazi crimes will have to stand before tribunals in every land where their atrocities have been committed'. Punishment would be meted out regardless of the nationality of the guilty, whether Germans or Quislings. Concluding, Fraser stated: 'The guilty will be punished, the innocent will go free'.⁶⁵

In the immediate run-up to the Allied Declaration PWE and the FO became increasingly concerned about the propaganda aspect of any possible statement. However, at one stage staff actually mooted a sustained campaign of propaganda as a substitute for any declaration at all. Pointing out the difficulties of co-ordinating a declaration between Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union and China, Denis Allen, Roberts' junior in the FO Central Department,⁶⁶ raised it as an alternative, remarking that 'broadcast propaganda seems to me to offer a far more fruitful line'. He suggested passing the information the Polish

⁶⁴ Use of this sort of language may seem facetious, but it reflects an important aspect of the mindset of PWE and the BBC European Service. After all, they had been charged with 'using the techniques and methods of modern advertising to sow discord and defeatism'.

⁶⁵ BBC WAC, Misc. German Service scripts, 'Sonderbericht - Black Pool and Black Record', Lindley Fraser, 9 Sep. 1942.

⁶⁶ The section of the Foreign Office that dealt with Germany and eastern Europe.

Government had recently received to PWE, where 'they could make good use of it'. An ironic factor militating against this was pressure from the Jewish community to keep quiet.

Allen commented:

But here we come up against the qualms of the Jews themselves. Rabbi Perlzweig has pronounced against publicity or reprisals. That was on October 1st. He may have changed his views since. But I suggest Mr Law should first confirm from Mr Silverman that the American Jews now see no objection to broadcast propaganda.⁶⁷

Law, a politician rather than a civil servant and Eden's deputy at the FO, had already had his answer from Silverman, the Jewish Labour MP. In a meeting the previous day, he suggested 'that broadcasting, not to threaten the Germans, but to encourage the Jews and to encourage those non-Jews who might be willing to give the Jews their protection' should take second priority only to the actual issuing of a four-power declaration. Silverman, who obviously believed what he heard on the BBC, had also told Law that broadcasts to France had had a positive effect on French resistance to deportations and that 'apart from anything else, such a broadcast of encouragement might be an important weapon of political warfare'.⁶⁸ However, once the issuing of the Declaration had become inevitable, Frank Roberts wrote that he thought that it would be 'dangerous to embark upon a propaganda campaign lacking a foundation of quotable and proved facts'.⁶⁹ Eden minuted two days later 'I agree'.

A meeting between Roberts, Bruce Lockhart and Kirkpatrick took place on 2 December to discuss how the issue of publicity around the possible issuing of a declaration would be dealt with by PWE and the European Service. The BBC had already been broadcasting the names of some war criminals, on the basis of information supplied by the Allied Governments. Roberts' record of the meeting implies that his primary concern was with the impact any such broadcasts might have on British war crimes policy, which had still not been properly formulated. For this reason it was agreed that, 'at any rate until the

⁶⁷ FO 371/30923 (C11923/61/88) f64, minute by D. Allen, 27 Nov. 1942.

⁶⁸ Ibid., memorandum by R. Law, 26 Nov. 1942.

⁶⁹ Ibid., f66, minute by F. Roberts, 27 Nov. 1942.

commission was actually working, to go slow with broadcasting names of criminals to Europe, and that, in including in their broadcasts items relating to war crimes, they should be guided by the news values of particular outstanding incidents.' This created a large problem in that details of particular incidents were far more difficult to verify than reports of general responsibility or involvement in a particular set of activities. It also ignored the fact that immediacy was second only to reliability in assessing the weight a particular story might be given by the European news services. News of the sort of occurrence that Roberts meant by 'outstanding incident', presumably something like Lidice which, exceptionally, was publicised by the Nazis themselves,⁷⁰ would, take a long time, if ever, to filter out of Europe. Its reliability and topicality, and hence news value, would thus be diminished. Roberts continued:

It was generally agreed that broadcasts about individual incidents were likely to have less effect upon the German authorities than upon the Quislings in most of the occupied territories. It was also agreed that the necessity for instituting special broadcasts designed to encourage the peoples in the occupied territories to collect information regarding war crimes in the occupied territories was unlikely to arise, since no doubt everything was already being done on these lines in the occupied countries themselves.⁷¹

Roberts laid himself open to a charge of complacency here, but the main thrust of this document was still that where war crimes policy was an issue, the British Government acted with enormous trepidation for fear of both creating a future rod for its own back and annoying its most important European ally - the Soviet Union.

It was also still the case that the FO was not sure of the attitudes among the Jewish community. On 5 December Roberts raised this issue again:

In earlier minutes it was suggested that we should make sure that Jews as a whole desired publicity on these lines. No doubt the Secretary of State, in his conversation with Mr Silverman, has satisfied himself that this is so. In any event publicity is now taking place and I think we must proceed irrespective of possible objections from some Jewish quarters.⁷²

⁷⁰ see IWM, BBC Monitoring Reports, Jun./Jul. 1942.

⁷¹ FO 371/30923 (C12096/61/88) f140, memorandum by F. Roberts, 2 Dec. 1942.

⁷² Ibid. f189, minute by Roberts, 5 Dec. 1942.

Eden had scribbled next to the reference to his meeting with Silverman 'No, I only heard his view'. The publicity that Roberts was referring to was that which had appeared in *The Times* based, originally, on Karski. What was happening was that those who sought to control the BBC's output were finding not for the first or last time that events were moving too quickly for them.

Nevertheless, Roberts carried on trying to ensure that the BBC treated what was about to happen in the way in which the FO wanted them to. The main goal, apart from this general sense of control, was that they should broadcast nothing until after the Allied Declaration. The reason for this may have been that the actual text of the Declaration was unsure right up to the time of issue, but there was also the fact that the Government did not want to look stampeded into issuing it by publicity, particularly publicity broadcast through its 'own' channels. In response to a letter to Kirkpatrick from Arthur Greenwood, deputy leader of the Labour Party, suggesting that he broadcast a postscript on the question of atrocities, Roberts minuted:

I explained the background to Mr Kirkpatrick and told him that I would have to submit this proposal. In any case, it would be better for such a postscript to be delayed until we were in a position to make a Government declaration. Provided Mr Greenwood's talk comes after our declaration, I can see no objection to it.⁷³

Eden agreed, and heavily underlined the last sentence.

The FO was particularly concerned that its own personnel should not get involved in any controversy that might erupt. This explains the curious tale of Frank Savery's attempts to get a talk broadcast on the BBC. A FO minute from Roberts was circulated stating that:

The idea that Mr Savery should make this broadcast originated with the Polish section of PWE, who have taken up the matter with the BBC. I reminded Mr Savery that he would need FO authority to broadcast. Hence his present letter. Mr Savery is an outstanding authority on Jewish problems in Poland, and is well

⁷³ Ibid. (C12201/61/88) f194, memorandum by F. Roberts, 5 Dec. 1942.

known to be sympathetic to Jews and Poles.⁷⁴ It would, I think be very suitable that he should broadcast whilst public interest is concentrated on German treatment of Jews in Poland. PWE would also find the talk very valuable for reproduction in Poland where Mr Savery is very well known. I submit therefore that authority should be given for this broadcast proposed it does not take place until the proposed government declaration is issued.⁷⁵

The minute was accompanied by Savery's unrevised text for the broadcast. This began with the words; 'The Warsaw ghetto is being liquidated'. He went on to ask his listeners to imagine Whitechapel, a task presumably rather difficult for someone living in Norwich or Aberdeen.

You know how full of life it is, but can you imagine what it would be like if it were surrounded by a high wall and all the Jews from the rest of the British Isles driven pell mell to live inside after first having been robbed of their property?

He then described Jewish life in Warsaw before the war in sentimental and picturesque tones. Favourable comparison was also made between Jewish shrines and Polish Catholicism's own most revered site, Czestochowa. The script concluded that there had been 250,000 deportations by October 1941.⁷⁶ In the second version Savery stated that the actual figure was 350,000.

The passage referring to Whitechapel was struck out by Roberts, the reason being that it was unhelpful to link the persecution of Jews in Europe with the problematic status of Jews in Britain. The mention of Czestochowa was excised for fear of causing offence to the Poles. Additionally the figures for deportations were queried. In response Savery wrote to Roberts on 16 December that his 'own impression [was] that the Germans themselves probably have no accurate statistics of the deportations from Warsaw and the massacres of the last few months'.⁷⁷ The final version omitted precise figures. Its conclusion was:

Nominally the Jews are being deported from Warsaw at the rate of several thousands a day but let no one think that only the few hundred old people,

⁷⁴ It is interesting to note the fact that Savery's apparent sympathy to *both* Poles and Jews was felt to be worthy of comment.

⁷⁵ FO 371/31097, f211, minute, 11 Dec. 1942.

⁷⁶ Ibid., f213, 8 Dec. 1942.

⁷⁷ Ibid., f226. 16 Dec. 1942

cripples and children who were daily shot out of hand in Warsaw during those months lost their lives thorough the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto. Densely packed into cattle trucks, the floors of which had been strewn with unslaked lime,⁷⁸ very many of the victims were certainly dead before the train reached one of the three camps in Eastern Poland [Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka] to which all the deportees were sent. Evidence of what happens there is difficult to obtain, but there is only too much reason to fear that for most who reach them alive they are places of execution. If the hundreds of thousands of Jews who have disappeared from Warsaw and other Polish towns are still alive, let the German authorities prove the fact.⁷⁹

In the end, pride of place after the 9 p.m. news on 17 December was given to the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Raczynski. Nevertheless, it was not for another month that Savery gave up his attempts to get himself heard over the airwaves. At the weekly meetings of the committee that mediated between the BBC and the Polish Government-in-exile, he reported that another script of his had been turned down by the Home Service.⁸⁰

As with those constructing the PWE directives, Newsome did not find much of relevance to highlight in his daily directives between the end of September and the actual Declaration. They are void of instructions to make news of any information that might have been available between the end of September and the week preceding 17 December. On 10 December, however, the topic reappeared with Newsome remarking on the Archbishop of York's speech in the House of Lords the previous day. This was to be treated 'as an obligatory item'.⁸¹ Two days later he commended a leader in *The Times*.⁸² Only on 14 December did Newsome devote much space to the subject:

The Germans [...] may be fairly susceptible to warnings that, with defeat inevitable, some indication that they disapprove of Hitler's massacres is desirable. Even if they cannot do anything it is good that they should feel uneasy and ashamed.

In any case it is our duty to do what we can to stop the massacres even if our efforts involve the weakening of our distinction between Nazis and Germans.

⁷⁸ A reference to Karski who believed asphyxiation by chlorine was a major killing method.

⁷⁹ FO 371/31097, f227. 16 Dec. 1942.

⁸⁰ SI, KOL. 434/44, 8 Jan. 1943.

⁸¹ BBC WAC, E2/131/8, 10 Dec. 1942.

⁸² Ibid., 12 Dec. 1942.

We can certainly take the massacres as evidence that Hitler knows that the game is up and is either attempting to carry out at least one of his war aims before his defeat or is attempting to blackmail the world into a compromise peace through mass murder of hostages. It is at least possible that Hitler, convinced by his own propaganda that his enemies are under Jewish control, hopes to blackmail the controllers into calling off the conflict.

The only consequence of this craziness is to render a compromise even more unthinkable, if possible, than ever before and to darken the prospects of the German people after their defeat.

We must make it quite 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 while not in any way affecting the course of the war, affects solely the fate of Jewry and the fate of the German people.⁸³

The potential for acrimony that was present in all of Newsome's relationships, especially with Crossman, is shown here by Newsome's willingness to weaken the policy of holding the Nazis rather than the German people responsible for what was occurring. Newsome emphasised his personal view of this again only two days later, when his 'Man in the Street' commentary, broadcast across the European Service 'warned the German people to take steps to stop the extermination of the Jews if they wish to avert the consequences of the rising indignation and disgust in Britain'.⁸⁴

What conclusions can be drawn from this analysis of the period leading up to the Allied Declaration? The most important is that the BBC clearly did not exhibit independent editorial judgement. To take the Home Service first, the only occasion in 1942 before 17 December upon which they covered the Holocaust with any vigour was the period around the time of the publication of the Bund report. Other material was available at other times, but the Home Service did not use it. The key factor propelling the Home Service's use of the Bund report was that it had been approved by the Polish Government-in-exile and the British Government. When news was not been officially confirmed, such as in September when reports of the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto were being published in newspapers, there were no broadcasts.

⁸³ Ibid., 14 Dec. 1942.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 16 Dec. 1942.

The European Service was more flexible, more innovative and had a mission that meant news of the Final Solution could be regarded as strategically useful. Often, from the limited evidence available, it took what it could from sources such as newspapers and the wire services and broadcast the information back to Europe. But the ties it had with PWE, and above and beyond them to the FO, imposed constraints that meant that political questions often came to the fore when news of the Final Solution gained any prominence. In other words, the BBC European Service enjoyed a substantial, but heavily circumscribed, degree of autonomy.

CHAPTER IV

'SOME FAINT HOPE AND COURAGE': THE BBC AND THE ALLIED DECLARATION OF 17 DECEMBER 1942

One might have expected that once Anthony Eden had sat down after issuing the Declaration in the House of Commons on 17 December, all barriers to the broadcasting of news about the Final Solution would disappear. This was simply not to be the case, as this chapter shows. Neither did the Declaration itself produce large amounts of BBC coverage of the Final Solution. As soon as it was read in the House of Commons, the same forces that had encouraged its creation conspired to either dull its impact or shift attention in ways more desirable to them.

SECTION A: THE HOME SERVICE AND THE ALLIED DECLARATION

The Home Service broke news of the Declaration in the 1 p.m. bulletin on 17 December, the day of its issue. It featured the story prominently throughout the rest of the day. The report at 1 p.m. trailed the news in third place in the 'banner' of headlines at the top of the bulletin:

Mr Eden has just announced in Parliament the terms of an Allied Declaration on Germany's cold-blooded extermination of the Jews in Europe; the Allies reaffirm their solemn resolution that those responsible shall be punished. The Commons stood in silence as a demonstration of united support for the Declaration.

In the actual body of the bulletin, the treatment the Declaration received was very straightforward. It was introduced thus:

Mr Eden, the Foreign Secretary, said in the House this morning that the Government had received reliable reports, in particular a Note from the Polish Government, regarding the barbarous and inhuman treatment to which Jews are being subjected in German-occupied Europe. Mr Eden said: 'I should like to take this opportunity of communicating to the House the text of the following declaration, which is being made public at this hour in London, Moscow and Washington.'¹

¹ BBC WAC, 1 p.m. news, 17 Dec. 1942.

It then summarised the actual text of the Declaration. This stated that in all territories Germany then controlled the removal of civil rights from Jews had been followed by the 'carrying into effect [of] Hitler's oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe'. Throughout Europe, the Germans were deporting Jews to the 'principal slaughterhouse' of Poland. Previously established ghettos were being liquidated with the murder, bar a few highly skilled workers, of their inhabitants. There was no description of the mechanics of the process. Neither was there any attempt to give firm casualty figures. Instead the Declaration stated they were 'reckoned [to be] in many hundreds of thousands of entirely innocent men, women and children'.²

Coverage in the 6 p.m. news provided was slightly different. The position of the story in the 'banner' was fourth out of six. Unusually for a story unconnected with actual fighting, it was placed above news from Stalingrad and the Solomon Islands. The introduction was cut and instead of the report and Declaration being read by the same announcer who gave the rest of the news, in this case Robert Robinson, it was read by Frank Phillips. This unusual form of presentation was probably designed to give greater emphasis to the content of the report.

Enough time had now elapsed to include the reaction of the House of Commons. The trail in the 'banner' at 6 p.m. reported that 'Members stood in silence as a demonstration of support for the declaration'. The main body of the report also mentioned this, stating that the 'closing passages of the Declaration - those promising retribution - were cheered'. It also reported contributions from MPs. The first of these came from one of the most eminent Jewish members, James de Rothschild, described 'as speaking for the Jewish community'. He highlighted the potential impact of the BBC:

'They will be grateful, I am sure, to the Foreign Secretary, and to the United Nations. I trust that this news - this Proclamation - will, through the BBC, percolate throughout the German-infested countries, and that it might give some faint hope and courage to the unfortunate victims of torment, insult and degradation. They have shown in their misery and in their unhappiness great fortitude and courage and I hope that when this news comes to them, they will feel that they are supported and strengthened by the British Government and by

² Ibid.

the United Nations, and that they will be able to continue to show that they are still able to uphold the dignity of man.'

Other MPs also made contributions after Eden had sat down. One MP had demanded whether 'if this protest is broadcast to the German people, it will be made clear to them that this is not war but murder and that they must be held in some measure responsible, if they allow the German Government to carry out their horrible intentions?'. The report mentioned neither this question, nor Eden's reply that this was 'precisely what was in the minds of His Majesty's Government when we took steps to set this Declaration in motion'.³ Instead it closed with the news that the House of Commons had stood in silence.⁴

The 9 p.m. and midnight reports were virtually identical to that broadcast at 6 p.m. The space that Savery had wanted, after the 9 p.m. news, was taken by Raczynski. His talk underlined the fear of the Government-in-exile that the fate of the Jews might have come to obscure that supposedly faced by the wider Polish nation.

Raczynski started by emphasising the need for listeners to realise fully what was taking place. He continued:

For more than three years the Germans have consistently done everything they could to hide from the eyes of the world the martyrdom of the Polish nation, the like of which has never been known in the history of humanity. But 'when we would keep silence the very stones will cry out'.

After receiving from Poland reports of a further intensification of the German terror, the Polish Government considered it their duty to send a note to all interested Governments drawing their attention to the horror of this situation and reminding them that what Germany is aiming at is: to reduce the population to virtual slavery and in the end to exterminate the Polish nation.

He then switched to focus squarely on the position of the Jews. He stated that the latest information that his government had passed to the Allies had included 'authentic information on the mass slaughter not only of those Jews whom the Germans overwhelmed in Poland, but also of the hundreds of thousands of those, whom they have transplanted from other countries and imprisoned in the Ghettos, which they have established in our country'. This,

³ *Hansard*, 17 Dec. 1942.

⁴ BBC WAC, 6 p.m. news, 17 Dec. 1942.

then, was the novel part of the Allied Declaration. Unlike the information contained in the Bund report, the Europe-wide nature of the Final Solution was being made clear. It was the first time that a direct connection had been made between the deportations from Western Europe and the onslaught on Polish Jewry. Raczynski continued:

The note states that according to the reports in possession of the Polish Government, of a total of three million one hundred and thirty thousand Polish Jews, more than one third has already been exterminated and ends with the appeal for 'condemning the crimes, punishing the criminals and devising means offering the hope that Germany might be effectively restrained from continuing to apply her methods of mass extermination'.

The first part of this section of the talk revealed the lack of reliable casualty figures. Despite it being known that the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto had started the previous Summer, and the effect that starvation, ill-treatment and disease was having, the figure of approximately one million Jewish deaths was little changed from that which had been issued by the Bund and regularly quoted since the end of June. The second part of this section was an obvious attempt by the Government-in-exile to get around British reluctance for them to present their demands for retribution, retaliatory bombing being their means of choice for restraining the Germans. Whether or not this would have had any effect on how the occupying authorities behaved in territory they controlled was open to question. However, what was without doubt was that this would have improved drastically the Government-in-exile's ability to present itself to the Polish population as effective protectors of their lives and interests. In seeking this, it was necessary to criminalise large parts of the German nation. Hence the last third of the talk concentrated on presenting the German population as 'willing accomplices' to the slaughter of the Jews:

It is tragic to contemplate that this policy of extermination applied to the Jews by the German Government is being carried out with the active help or, at least, support of a considerable section of the German people, while the remaining part of that people allow it to pass in silence.

I know that in a totalitarian regime it is not easy to protest, but the occupied nations, nevertheless, find the means to manifest their will and their opposition to the barbarous methods of Germany.

It was also necessary to present the Polish people as being whole-heartedly committed to resisting the Nazi onslaught. Whereas the German people 'were cowardly accepting the extermination of an entire race', the Poles were 'capable of such acts of defiance and compassion as the demolition by Polish workers of a part of the wall which surrounds the Ghetto of Warsaw'.⁵

For the day of the Declaration, the Government-in-exile was letting the plight of the Jews take centre stage. However this was in the context of ensuring that their main concerns would eventually come to the forefront.⁶ If news of the persecution of the Jews would help in this, then all was well and good. But how long this would remain the case?

What is crucial in understanding the way in which both the European and Home services subsequently reported news of the Final Solution after the Allied Declaration is an appreciation that little new information was becoming available. Hence this was not a story that was particularly easy to follow up. The timing of the Allied Declaration had been decided on political grounds. The fact that a large amount of reliable information had become available in November did not necessarily mean that the flow would continue. The result of this was that the Home Service's subsequent coverage, in striving to reflect the enormity of what had been announced - while adhering to orthodox news values of relevance and immediacy - was confused and spasmodic.

With the continuing strictures on mentioning Jews outside the context of news bulletins, and without new information, the only way in which the BBC could carry over the impact of the Allied Declaration into the next few days was by reporting reaction to the Declaration itself. It seems that enough of this had not been gathered until two days after the Declaration to warrant inclusion in a news bulletin. Therefore the BBC Home Service news bulletins did not mention anything connected with the Final Solution on 18 December, the day following the Declaration.

⁵ Ibid., talks scripts, 17 Dec. 1942.

⁶ This view is in concurrence with David Engel, who writes: '[...] the tacit insistence of Polish leaders that Government references to the Jewish plight might be surrounded as much as possible by discussion of the Polish people's distress strongly suggests that in passing on Jewish calls for rescue to the Allied governments Polish policy makers hoped primarily to heighten Allied sensitivity to the predicament of the Poles in the homeland and eventually to win Allied assent to their own demands for anti-German reprisals.' Engel, *Facing a Holocaust*, p. 33.

The need for immediacy and topicality, bedrocks of BBC journalism, meant that the BBC's conception of what 'news' was, coupled with the undoubted willingness of journalists to report what no one could have doubted at that time was a matter of some public concern, resulted in Monitoring being the only potential source. Whereas for much of the year the Home Service had ignored the awful news that enemy-controlled radio stations had broadcast, including occasional damning and horrific details, there was now an obvious hunger for such information. As a result, the following was broadcast in the 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. bulletins on 19 December.

There's news this evening of more German acts of persecution against the Jews and also of the horror felt by neutral and the Allied countries against the German policy of extermination.

In France, the German controlled Paris radio said today that a wide programme of new laws against Jews and Jewish organisations was being drafted by the Vichy General Commission for Jewish Affairs. The head of this body, Pellepoix, says it won't be long before the programme is put into force. A million-and-a-half French Jews will be affected by it, and the new measures include:-

Cancellation of French naturalisation and deprivation of all civil rights; Jews to be dismissed from public and local Government office; construction of Ghettos; easier divorce between Jews and Aryans and special schools for young Jewesses; and, the dissolution of the French Jewish Union. Paris Radio said also that an 'Institute for the Study of Races' had been opened in Paris.

In Greece, German-controlled radio stations stated that Jews between the ages of eighteen and forty-five are to register with the German military authorities.⁷

The 9 p.m. news contained a version omitting the reference to Greece. There was a shorter version at midnight. The positionings of these items were well down the running-order. At 9 p.m. the reference to the accompanying story in the banner was fourth out of six items, with the main report placed sixteenth out of twenty-two in the order of separate news stories.⁸ What was most striking about the presentation of this information was that there was no indication as to what these measures were precursors to, let alone that the deportation of French Jews had started the previous summer. What this reflected can be explained in two ways. Firstly, the stultifying guidelines preventing journalists from engaging in

⁷ BBC WAC, 6 p.m. news, 19 Dec. 1942.

⁸ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 19 Dec. 1942.

'speculation'. This meant attempting to guess what was going on based on surrounding evidence or predicting the enemy's subsequent course of action. As a result, if the monitoring reports did not mention deportation - which, with the exception of the Slovakian home service, was generally the rule - there was no justification for including it in the news report. Secondly, there is the more metaphysical hypothesis, *pace* Laqueur, that although the Allied Declaration and much other material had been consumed by those preparing news broadcasts, it had not been digested. Of the two it seems much more likely that the first, more mundane explanation carries greater weight. The news items featuring reaction to the Allied Declaration accompanying the meagre amount of 'new' information broadcast on 19 December encourage such a supposition:

In Russia, newspapers throughout the country have been giving great prominence to a new statement by the Soviet Foreign Office setting out additional evidence of the German massacre of Jews in all European countries, including facts about burning alive and cyanide poisoning.

Such an unambiguous statement as this, reporting evidence of what was happening in *all* European countries, sits ill at ease with explanations that focus on the psychologically-rooted inability of bystanders to comprehend the Holocaust. To employ such a conceptual framework might be seen as implying chronic schizophrenia in the mind of the BBC editor in charge of the bulletin as a whole. What is meant by this is that acknowledging that the BBC accepted that the Russian reports were genuine, which seems to be the case here, yet still insisting that the innate horror of the Holocaust made it impossible for it to be properly comprehended, is an inadequate contextual framework in which to understand the BBC's coverage.

The rest of the report continued thus:

The National Executive of the Independent Labour Party, at a meeting in Carlisle today, passed a Resolution about the possibility of exchanging German civilian internees in Allied hands for Jews in German-occupied territory. The Executive also urged that neutral countries be asked to shelter Jewish refugees and that an international fund be raised for this purpose.

A Swedish newspaper today urged all neutral countries to regard continued indifference to the tragedy of the Jews as unforgivable sin. 'To

believe that nothing can be done to stop it.' says the paper, 'is merely to encourage brutality.'

In Berlin tonight, at a press conference, a neutral journalist asked for a comment on the allied Declaration. Stumm, Deputy Press Chief of the German Foreign Office, after once more arguing that the war had been caused by Jewish wirepullers, said: 'This wave of atrocity propaganda is intended to enliven the Christmas trade of the Jewish department stores in London and New York'.⁹

The airing of controversial viewpoints is what is novel here. The demands of the ILP and the comment from Sweden could represent encouragement to the public to press the Government into taking actions that it did not wish to. What are extremely curious, and rather insensitive, are the inclusion of the comments from Berlin.

One more item the Home Service broadcast during the week after the Declaration was also published in *The Listener*, the weekly magazine published by the BBC that dealt with general broadcasting and cultural subjects. It reproduced in written form some items that had been broadcast on the BBC's various services over the preceding week. The issue of 24 December included a talk that had been broadcast on the BBC Home Service by Wickham Steed. This was perhaps the most fluent, compassionate item that was broadcast on the Home Service until the liberation of the camps in 1945.

Steed proclaimed that the official pronouncement did not relieve ordinary individuals of responsibility. News of what was happening put everybody to the test. He continued:

[Hitler] has herded the Jews together in Poland, and is torturing and slaughtering them in batches of thousands daily, both because they are the most defenceless people and because he has always traded on the international dislike of the Jews. We may like or dislike the Jews as individuals or as a people. If we like them, and therefore think it horrible to persecute them, we may not pass our individual moral test; for then we might close our eyes to the persecution of other peoples whom we dislike. If we dislike the Jews, and mutter that they are only getting what they have asked for, we have no right to cast a stone at Hitler. We have to answer this question of what is human and what is inhuman and where we draw the line.

Hitler and the Nazis, Steed continued, were operating outside any of the boundaries of civilisation, morality or decency. The British population had a duty to be appalled:

⁹ Ibid., 19 Dec. 1942.

The instinctive revolt is the bedrock of our civilisation. We don't revolt solely because the victims are Jews. If we did, there might be a pretext for disciples or sneaking admirers of Hitler to pretend, after the war, that retribution for Nazi villainy was a form of Jewish vengeance. We ought to think of Jews as human beings whose suffering cause us anguish as human beings, and whom we should like to help in the awful trial that has befallen them, as it has befallen hundreds of thousands of non-Jews at the hands of Hitler, and would befall us too if Hitler had his way. What we see in Poland and elsewhere is a huge, perhaps an unprecedented and certainly unimaginable human tragedy. If we don't feel it to be a human tragedy we may be little better than barbarians ourselves. It is good that the declaration should have been made and that the supplementary statement issued. There can be no going back on them, no forgiveness or forgetfulness for Nazi criminality, if we would win the peace after having won the war. If justice demands retribution, righteousness - which, in English at any rate, I think a finer word than justice - demands atonement. And if we cannot now save Hitler's victims we can at least make up our minds that in so far as any effort of ours can prevent it, no section of mankind shall ever again endure such martyrdom of body and soul.¹⁰

Steed's piece used the universalistic language which was the vocabulary of the time, and especially of the sort of people the BBC employed. However, it did deal specifically with the Jews. The final passage is redolent of Steed avoiding controversy. Although he demands that the listeners and readers look within themselves and reassert their morality in reaction to news of the Holocaust, there is no call to action. He presented what was happening to the Jews of Europe as, instead, a *fait accompli*. In the face of cries that 'something should be done', Steed, and by extension, the BBC, refused to offer any suggestions as to what that might be.

The final components of the Home Service's coverage of the Allied Declaration were the Liberal MP Megan Lloyd George's comments, in her review of 'The Week in Westminster' on 19 December. The section dealing with the Allied Declaration formed the final part of the programme, following on from a discussion of venereal disease. She summarised the Declaration and then commented on the scene in the House of Commons.

Never have I seen the house more deeply stirred. But the scene was not yet at an end. Mr Cluse, from the Labour benches, rose to ask the Speaker whether there was not some way by which we might record our protest against this

¹⁰ Wickham Steed, 'An Unimaginable Human Tragedy', *The Listener*, 24 Dec. 1942, p. 818.

disgusting barbarism, perhaps by rising in our places [...] Members rose in a body and stood in silence. Never within the memory or record of living man has such an event taken place before in the House of Commons.¹¹

The Home Service broadcast little more until the 9 p.m. news of 23 December. This contained a report that a 'deputation representing British Jewry', led by Selig Brodetsky, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, and including the Chief Rabbi, Dr Hertz, and Viscount Samuel; had thanked the Foreign Secretary for the Allied Declaration. The report stated that the 'deputation laid before Mr Eden certain immediate considerations arising from the general Jewish situation in Europe'.¹² It did not mention what these 'considerations' were, and the story, untraced in the headlines, was fifteenth out of nineteen stories in the running order. That any considerations were unlikely to be forthcoming was implicit in a news item broadcast a week later on 30 December:

The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council have asked for special intercessions next Sunday for the Jews in Germany and the occupied countries. They have issued a message saying it is a bitter grief that our nation can do so little to help while the massacre goes on day by day. But short of victory in the war there's no way in which we can effect anything comparable to the need.¹³

By the middle of January, the switch that the European Service had already made to concentrating on the supposed genocide against Poles was apparent in the Home Service. The 9 p.m. news of 16 January contained a report that must have led many listeners to believe that the situation they faced was at least as bad as that facing Jews:

Over a thousand people were arrested in Warsaw alone in the last two days. The arrests began on Friday at eight o'clock in the morning. About a hundred and fifty Gestapo men armed with machine-guns and hand grenades closed the streets in many districts, and forced their way into houses, breaking down doors and windows with rifle butts. People were driven into one room while their houses were searched, and kept there until six o'clock in the evening without food. The arrested ones were then taken away - to Gestapo headquarters, or concentration camps, or to slave labour in Germany. Last Sunday the Germans

¹¹ BBC WAC, 'The Week in Westminster', 19 Dec. 1942, pp. 9-11.

¹² C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 23 Dec. 1942.

¹³ Ibid., 30 Dec. 1942.

put up posters saying that these arrests were reprisals for the killing of Germans in Warsaw.

In Silesia, too, mass arrests were made in many places. In one town, ten people were hanged in public.

In Lublin, the Germans have started methodically to clear out the whole population. Thousands of families have taken away - again to concentration camps or to forced labour in the Reich.

For Polish children under sixteen, the Germans have a special treatment. They take them to Germany to try to turn them into Germans.

Reporting these atrocities to occupied countries tonight, our European Service says it is clear that Hitler is trying to murder a whole nation.¹⁴

The most direct evidence that there was to be no differentiation between the current conditions, and eventual fates, of both the Jewish and other occupied peoples of Europe were facing and that it was the Poles who were to be given the greatest attention, is contained in the last paragraph. There it stated that it was 'clear that Hitler is trying to murder a whole nation'; i.e. the Polish nation, of which the listener may or not have regarded Jews as a part. The bulletin repeated information - 'facts' - that the Polish Deputy Prime Minister had publicised earlier in the day at a press conference, indicating yet again the reluctance of the Home Service to take information from any but the most official sources.

News of the Final Solution was left to trail off a matter of days after the issuing of the Declaration. Partly this was as result of an absence of new information, but there was another important reason why this was the case. In the Director-General's file dealing with antisemitism, there is a clipping of the *Home Intelligence Weekly Report*¹⁵ for 7 January 1943. This stated that the impact of the recent news of the Holocaust on public perceptions of Jews had been that:

these 'continue to be regarded with horror', but there are further indications that 'as a result of the publicity, people are more conscious of the Jews that they do not like here'. Two reports mention a strong feeling that, 'although we wish to help the unfortunate Jews in occupied zones, we don't want any more over here'. A minority however, feel that 'we cannot do too much for them'. Unfavourable comment on the 'number of young Jews who appear to have evaded military service' is mentioned in two reports.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid., 16 Jan. 1943.

¹⁵ A summary of the state of popular morale prepared for the Ministry of Information. It was inspired by, and used similar methods to, Mass Observation.

¹⁶ BBC WAC, R34/277, 7 Jan. 1943.

This was 'proof' that talking about antisemitism only made things worse. This reinforced the policy which the Board of Deputies' meeting with Ryan in April 1942 had initiated.

It was this last point - that reporting antisemitism was counter-productive - that would be most important in shaping the output of the Home Service over the coming months and years.

SECTION B: THE EUROPEAN SERVICE AND THE ALLIED DECLARATION

In the weeks after 17 December PWE shaped how the BBC European Service would react to the issuing of the Allied Declaration. In one of the standard works on propaganda, Michael Balfour writes: 'The PWE Central Directive repeatedly called for attention to be given to the whole subject [of German atrocities, specifically those committed against Jews].'¹⁷ Balfour worked in the Ministry of Information from March 1939 to March 1942 and then served as Assistant Director of Intelligence for PWE.¹⁸ He quotes the Directive of 10 December 1942, and the special annexe to the Directive of 24 December, which featured information on the extermination of the Jews, with supporting evidence, mainly from Polish sources, and specific references to Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibor as extermination camps.¹⁹ Balfour states confidently, in his concluding remarks, that the 'inhabitants of Europe had no grounds for not knowing about what was going on or supposing that the British were ignorant or indifferent to it'.²⁰ As both a participant in the events and a professional historian, Balfour writes from an awkward standpoint. Below, I show that he was being highly selective with his use of the evidence, and that, in reality, the war against the Jews attracted only a fleeting focus of interest on the part of PWE before other, more congenial, interests subsumed it.

PWE's Central Directive for 17 December was as follows:

¹⁷ Balfour, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

¹⁸ Thereafter he served in the closely-linked Psychological Warfare Division of SHAEF.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 299-300. See below for a full discussion of these directives.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 300.

- 1 The joint United Nations pronouncement provides the basis for our treatment of the Jewish persecution.
- 2 In giving the facts soberly, stress:
 - i The deliberate plan of Jewish extermination. The one war aim Hitler still hopes to achieve in the few months remaining to him.
 - ii The civilised world will judge Germans and the vassal peoples by their attitude to Hitler's plan in the coming months.
 - iii Main languages should include this week at least one message of encouragement to the Jews.²¹

It seems thus that in the period immediately surrounding the Allied Declaration PWE were extremely keen to ensure that news of the Final Solution was a priority across the BBC's output. Here it quite unequivocally stated that there was a deliberate plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe and that it was imperative that all the peoples of Europe do what they could to prevent this. All the various broadcasting operations were to participate.

In order to make sure that enough information was available to achieve these tasks, PWE circulated a special annexe on 17 December.²² Such annexes were designed to provide background information. They were not meant to form the raw material of news bulletins, but were rather intelligence summaries that allowed those preparing news broadcasts to gain an appreciation of the state of knowledge at higher levels on a particular subject. The first section of this dense, five-page document was headed 'Policy'. It began:

The pre-war phase of the anti-semitic policy blatantly pursued by the Nazis from 1933 onwards culminated in the organised progroms [sic] of November 1933. Since the outbreak of war it has developed into a plan having for its avowed object the complete extermination of European Jewry.

The vast bulk of the information following this came from the Polish Government's memorandum of 1 December, which, however, was not itself being made available to programme makers by Ritchie Calder. In content, apart from some of the background detail, it was little different from the report *The Times* had printed on 18 December, based on material the Inter-Allied Information Committee (hereafter IAIC) had issued.

²¹ FO 898/289 f44, CD WB 17 Dec. 42.

²² Ibid., f39-41, Annexe to CD WB 17 Dec. 1942.

Significantly, there was no mention of the actual 'ingenious and highly technical' methods used in the process of extermination. This underlines again the lack of impact that emphatically Jewish sources such as the World Jewish Congress, were having on the British information machine as well as the standard BBC practice of acting exclusively for information on Poland on material which the London Poles provided. Although this was particularly true regarding the Home Service, PWE's role as a channeller of information to the European Service meant it was also substantially the case at Bush House.

The concentration on Jewish persecution did not last. The Central Directive for the following week read as follows:

- 1 The sufferings of the Jews should now be merged in the wider picture of Nazi persecution.
- 2 Some surveys in Christmas week should review German persecutions in 1942.
- 3 We should bear in mind that (i) the Jewish persecution has in all countries occupied by the Nazis been the prelude to the persecution of other sections of the population; (ii) that apart from its physical brutality, it is 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 where persecution of Jews is set on foot.²³

Only a week after the issuing of the Allied Declaration, PWE's focus was shifting away from Jewish suffering. The idea that the situation faced by the Jews was different only in timing to that faced by rest of Polish, and indeed European, society was to set the tone for future PWE directives. An annexe on 'The Master Race Theory', also issued on 24 December, substantiated this, stating

persecutions throughout Europe can be linked together as parts of one and the same calculated plan to destroy or reduce to serfdom all 'non-German humanity', whether Jewish or gentile, in every part of the world to which the Master Race may think fit to assert its paramount title as the predestined Lord of Creation'.²⁴

²³ Ibid., f19, CD WB 24 Dec. 1942.

²⁴ Ibid., f15, Annexe..

The directive for the subsequent week stated: 'There is fresh evidence from Poland of persecution of non-Jews. This is likely to increase. Link with Jewish persecution on last week's lines.'²⁵ By the time another annexe, this time on 'The German Terror in Poland', was issued on 6 January, the transition was complete. This commented that there had been three stages in the persecution of Poland by the Germans. The third, 'the extermination of the Polish people themselves in various carefully chosen districts', had only just begun. The directive continued:

It was prophesied (by those who are following the fortunes of the Polish nation) that this second stage [the extermination of the Jews] would now be succeed by the persecution of the ordinary Polish people themselves. This has now occurred.

The first manifestation of the systematic extermination of the Polish people has occurred in the neighbourhood of Lublin, the north and south and behind the line of the River Bug. In other words, well within Polish ethnographical frontiers, but in the eastern part.²⁶

The actual methods used for extermination, apart from shooting and starvation were left vague.

The next Central Directive confined itself to encouraging the broadcasting of remarks by the Archbishop of Canterbury condemning 'Jewish and Polish' persecutions.²⁷ This was then followed a week later by the request that all 'main languages, particularly German, should help to relieve Polish sense of isolation by carrying full news, particularly of Warsaw atrocities'.²⁸ No new information on the fate of the Jews received the PWE seal of approval.

The switch to focusing on atrocities against gentiles seen in the Central Directives was also took place at regional level. The French Section of PWE stated on 3 January that there was 'recent evidence from Poland to show how the German persecution of the Jews is only the introduction to the treatment of Aryans with the same wholesale brutality'.²⁹

²⁵ Ibid., f9, CD WB 31 Dec. 1942.

²⁶ FO 898/290, f39-41, Annexe to CD WB 6 Jan. 1943.

²⁷ Ibid., f256, CD WB 13 Jan. 1943.

²⁸ Ibid. f242, CD WB 13 Jan. 1943.

²⁹ FO 371/36044, f10, Fortnightly directive for BBC French Service, 3 Jan. 1943.

Similarly, the Czech directive stated on 31 December that, although it had 'no direct bearing on a Czech audience, attention is drawn to the persecution of the Poles, which has now extended from the Jews to the Poles themselves'.³⁰ A week later it read: 'According to reports reaching the Polish Government in London the Germans have started wholesale deportations of the Polish population around Lublin and along the line of the River Bug, which is connected of course as usual with executions and other cruelties.'³¹ The directives for the German Service mentioned neither atrocities committed against Jews nor Poles. An exception to the campaign to shift attention away from Jews was the Greek directive issued on 8 January. Although this concentrated on the treatment being meted out to ethnic Greeks in Bulgarian-occupied Macedonia, it also reported that there was evidence from Salonika of labour conscription of Jews in that district. Greeks had also been forcibly enlisted, as well as for overseeing Jewish conscript labour. The oppression of the Jewish community in Salonika was to be linked with the Nazi atrocities throughout the whole of Europe, and the BBC Greek Service should 'stress and praise the absence among the Greeks of anti-Semitism'.³²

In the Polish section the situation was very different. The following extract from a speech broadcast on the European Service on 29 December by Mikołajczyk, the Polish Deputy Prime Minister, set the tone:

The reports from the Lublin district show that the Germans by their fresh crimes have entered upon a further stage towards the accomplishment of their avowed objective i.e. the complete destruction of the Polish nation. This determination of our enemies to destroy an entire nation, a determination made for the first time in the history of mankind, and in the 20th century, which is the century of progress and civilisation, is something so abominable that the civilised world could not be brought to believe it for a long time. Today no one is any longer in any doubt about its truth.

And now a new means of destruction has been added to their old arsenal of terrorism and murder, of mass deportation and forced labour, of criminal exploitation of our manpower and economic resources, of undermining the nation's health, and plunder of our cultural acquisitions, all those things being scientifically organised and systematically planned. The first stage was a

³⁰ FO 371/34333, C194/194/12, Weekly Directive (hereafter WD) for BBC Czech Service WB 31 Dec. 1942.

³¹ Ibid., WD WB 7 Jan. 1943.

³² FO 371/37211, R113/13/19, f29, WD for BBC Greek Service WB 8 Jan. 1943.

merciless destruction of the intelligentsia and of the political, spiritual, scientific and social leaders. Next came the mass-extermination of the Jews. And now they have begun a mass extermination of the Polish peasants.³³

The Weekly Directive for the Polish Service for the week beginning 31 December, which would have been prepared by the PWE Polish section staff at the same time that Mikolajczyk was making his speech, recommended its content and echoed the line that had first been taken by PWE on 24 December. This stated: 'As anticipated, the Jewish persecution has already been followed by persecution of the Poles in Eastern Poland'.³⁴ It also suggested either a certain naïveté by Moray McLaren, the head of the Polish and Czech section, or perhaps, an expectation of it within the BBC Polish Service, on his part. It was *too* convenient for information to be pushed by the Government-in-exile concerning atrocities against Poles so soon after so much attention had been focused on those committed against Jews. Nevertheless, it may have been the case that McLaren's and PWE's ability to understand the Nazi *Weltanschauung* and so predict German policy was indeed that remarkable. The Polish Directive for the following week mentioned Jews only in passing, comparing what had been done to them to what was 'now being practised on the Poles themselves'.³⁵ On 14 January the Directive was extremely interesting. Firstly, it stated that PWE believed that the persecution going on within Poland had undoubtedly impaired information from that country.

There is not so much to go on in the way of news about what is happening in Eastern Poland. It is clear however that the persecutions continued. In these circumstances, the policy should be continued of:-

- (a) Using every scrap of news about what is happening in Poland and let the Poles know of our knowledge of their suffering
- (b) To counsel them against premature action.

At the risk of repeating ourselves on this point we should constantly keep these main objects at this time before our minds. With impaired information we are bound to rely upon intelligent speculation on our part and on the part of the Polish authorities in London. We should avoid any trivialities, and should suppress unnecessary talks and radio features.³⁶

³³ FO 371/34555, f10, ENB, 29 Dec. 1942.

³⁴ Ibid., f14, WD for BBC Polish Service WB 31 Dec. 42.

³⁵ Ibid., f23, 7 Jan. 43.

³⁶ Ibid., f25, 14 Jan. 43.

The point about advising against premature action is again worth emphasising. As with the Central Directive of 6 January, it showed how PWE was wary of precisely the kind of action that the Warsaw ghetto uprising would come to be seen as. Also interesting was the injunction to use 'every scrap of news', despite the shortage of information. However caution was to be exercised, and (b) was to mean that in effect coverage should be limited. The impact of these statements becomes clearer in the directive for the following week. McLaren insisted that notwithstanding the news of 'savage increase of persecution, massacring and deportations [of Poles] which has recently taken place in Warsaw', and which the recent Central Directive had mentioned, 'we should continue in the face of this news our two main objectives: as outlined in last week's directive'.³⁷ Not for the last time, the feeling was that more publicity might actually mean increased persecution. This doctrine originated at the highest levels. Eden had been asked by the Prime Minister to consider ordering PWE to initiate dropping leaflets during bombing raids over German towns and using broadcasts to connect the raids with German atrocities against Poles and Jews. Eden replied to Churchill on 2 January that there was 'always the danger that the reaction of the Germans would merely be to massacre a whole lot more Poles or Jews'. He added that there was also the possibility that should the massacres be stopped, 'the Germans might thereafter claim that if they refrained from murdering Poles and Jews, we were morally bound to give up bombing German cities'.³⁸ The winning of the wider war would always be uppermost in the consciousness of British officials and leaders, and it is easy to understand why.

If those in charge of policy were conspiring to ensure prominence was not to be given to news of the Final Solution, what was the attitude of those with the responsibility of carrying this policy into action? Newsome did not waste any time in asking that the various BBC foreign language services under his direction feature news of the Holocaust. By the late afternoon of 17 December he was urging that all news bulletins should lead with a description of the issuing of the Declaration and the effect it had produced in the House.

³⁷ Ibid., f29, 21 Jan. 1943.

³⁸ FO 954/23, Eden to Churchill, 2 Jan. 1943.

This, he wrote, 'was a story of historic importance'. Unsurprisingly, he added that it was 'also of enormous importance for Political Warfare'.³⁹ The European Service maintained coverage of the Final Solution, unlike the Home Service, the next day. Newsome instructed his staff to use any material they could their hands on. This included everything from the coverage in that day's *Daily Express* to the script by Savery. The annihilation of the Jews, Newsome wrote, was to be treated 'simply as a policy personally dictated by Hitler'.⁴⁰ But what was missing, and what would continue to frustrate Newsome, was any real *news*. It was not a problem of scepticism, or lack of credence, but of the availability of the right kind of information at the right time.

This is shown by the *Output Report* for the European Service for the week beginning 13 December. Newsome's deputy wrote:

The wave of indignation caused by the latest German atrocities was reflected in the amount of space devoted to this subject in our news bulletins, in many of which it took the lead. Full details were given of the debate in the House of Commons, of the Joint declaration by the United Nations and of Eden's pledge that those responsible would not escape retribution [...] Commentaries in all languages gave details of the crimes and stressed in general terms Allied determination to punish the criminals.⁴¹

There was no new information here. On 21 December Newsome was reduced to including as one of the 'highlights of today's news and topics for best up-to-the-minute commentaries and features' a rumour which had been voiced in the House of Commons that what remained of the entire Jewish population of Europe was about to exterminated in one fell swoop.⁴² This was yet another rehash of a garbled version of the news of the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto that the Government-in-exile had passed on to Easterman on 30 November. The next day there was something more substantial to direct the journalists' attentions towards. This was a Russian report from the previous day's *Soviet War News*. Newsome stated that it contained 'a lot of new material and should be given a good show'.⁴³

³⁹ BBC WAC, E2/131/8, 17 Dec. 1942.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 18 Dec. 1942.

⁴¹ BBC WAC, E2/209/1, *BBC European Service Output Report*, wb. 13 Dec. 1942.

⁴² BBC WAC, E2/131/8, 21 Dec. 1942.

⁴³ Ibid., 22 Dec. 1942.

The fruits of the joint PWE and Government-in-exile switch in emphasis from Jewish to gentile suffering was reflected on 29 December when Newsome noted: 'Fresh horrors are reported from Poland. Give them prominence but be careful to point out that they are a sign of fear and that the terror machine is weakening.'⁴⁴

The shortage of information continued into January. On 7 January there was the chance to repeat information from Monitoring that 'seventy-seven per cent of the Jews in Slovakia have now been deported'. Alongside, this Newsome insisted that his editors and journalists should continue to strive to find any information on the war against the Jews that they could possibly use. He wrote: 'We must not drop the Jewish extermination theme as if it had been a temporary propaganda stunt'.⁴⁵ Newsome's instinct as a journalist to proclaim news about a subject that he obviously cared a great deal about was coupled with his parallel role as a practitioner of political warfare. PWE had stated that the time was ready to use antisemitism against the Nazis, and had then ignored it.⁴⁶ Newsome not only believed that this could actually be done and would achieve useful results, but also that by letting the initiative slip, the BBC would make what *had* been reported look unreliable. This tension between Newsome's two roles, as a journalist and a propagandist, would continue for the rest of his tenure.

No matter how much Newsome wanted to report the Final Solution, the supply of raw information was simply not there. All that seems to have got through was news of an antisemitic campaign in Tunisia on 8 January,⁴⁷ and on 14 January a Reuters report from Stockholm that 'a letter sent by a Stockholm resident to a Jewish friend in Poland was returned with an official stamp stating: 'Died in the course of the liquidation of the Jewish problem''.⁴⁸

Coverage of European Service news bulletins and features in the BBC archives for this period is particularly thin, so it is impossible to assess with much precision how all this activity behind the scenes affected what was actually aired. There are a few documents that

⁴⁴ Ibid., 29 Dec. 1942.

⁴⁵ BBC WAC, E2/131/9, 7 Jan. 1942.

⁴⁶ FO 898/289 f56, CD WB 10 Dec. 1942.

⁴⁷ BBC WAC, E2/131/9, 8 Jan. 1942.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 14 Jan. 1942.

allow some reconstruction however. Among these are the *Output Reports* for the European Service. That for the period immediately around the Allied Declaration was as follows:

[O]ur German broadcasts developed the retribution theme more fully. Firstly, we made it clear that as the instrument employed by Hitler to carry out his policy of extermination was the SS and the Gestapo, most members of these organisations must expect a fitting punishment. We quoted an article in 'World Review' which advocated the elimination of the SS and the Gestapo and declared that 'in all probability it amounts to the killing of 500,000 men', or at least their incorporation into forced labour divisions - 'not much more than a living death'. Goebbels had denounced this 'devilish plan for the extermination of the SS' but in so doing he had for the first time recognised the distinction made in England between the innocent and the guilty. Our attitude to the German people as a whole was made clear by Crossman, who pointed out that no German voice had been raised in protest against these crimes even by those still able to raise their voice in the Third Reich - 'That is why I say to you solemnly: before it is too late, let there be German witnesses prepared to risk their lives for humanity and justice and, not least for Germany'. For it was Hitler's plan to make them share 'the punishment which awaits the SS and the Gestapo'.

Retribution would have been a particularly powerful tool to use at precisely this time. With Von Paulus surrounded at Stalingrad, Germany was facing defeat for the first time. It is also possible to see from this that the 'hope clause' was being stretched almost to breaking point in the interests of persuading the German people to disassociate themselves specifically from the Nazis' annihilation of the Jews. The *World Review* article suggesting draconian revenge by the Allies on Nazi cadres would have been raised without suggesting that it was official Allied policy. Nevertheless, the implicit threat that if the German people did not resist Hitler they would share the same fate was not meant to provide any real assistance to the Jews of Europe, but rather to weaken the bonds between leader and people. In these circumstances, the BBC's coverage of the Final Solution was at its most highly politicised.

The importance of this propaganda objective is underlined in another *Output Report*, prepared by Crossman in mid-January 1943 for PWE and the FO itself, covering the political warfare content of the German Service over the previous six months. According to the report, during the summer of 1942 PWE, via the BBC, had called for open revolt by the German people. By August, however, this attitude had changed. Instead, the call was now

for 'disassociation expressed in practice'. This could mean acts of kindness towards foreign workers, for example. The campaign had then been left to die down:

During the autumn we devoted our attention to the question of retribution for war crimes. The uncertainty, noted at the time, as to whether punishment for these crimes would be inflicted on Germany as a whole or only on the Nazis and the actual criminals arose out of conflicting tendencies between different [BBC] services; the German Service made it clear throughout that while it was Hitler's object to implicate the German people in his criminal actions, we ourselves would still be prepared to accept evidence that these crimes had been rejected by 'the German conscience'. During recent months these matters again came into prominence with our vigorous reaction to the anti-semitic atrocities. Besides giving full reports of these abominations, we suggested that the world's aversion and hate might be extended to the ordinary German worker. The oppressed peoples were showing courage in resistance - the Germans had given no sign of disapproval. 'Do the German workers really want to be counted among the guilty?'⁴⁹

In such circumstances, it was not news about the Final Solution that was valuable, but rather how that news was having an impact on German society and attitudes towards the Nazi Party.

A surviving document shows how this policy translated into actual programming, using the annihilation of the Jews as part of a far broader campaign of political warfare. This is a script for an episode of the comedy show, *Kurt und Willi*, the BBC German Service broadcast on 29 December. The conversations between these two characters, which supposedly took place in their favourite cafe near the Potsdamer Platz, were performed by German exiles and delivered in Berlin dialect. They were designed to expose the line of the German Propaganda Ministry at any particular time to doubt and ridicule. To this end, Willi Schimanski was portrayed as an employee of the Ministry whose cynicism and candidness regularly served to appall his rather prim friend, Kurt Krüger, a schoolteacher.

This particular sketch starts with Kurt arriving at the cafe looking very ill. Willi asks what the matter is and presses a glass of schnapps on him. Kurt recovers and tells his friend what has happened. A middle-aged Jewish woman living in the apartment above him has

⁴⁹ FO 371/34444 (C2385/89/18), Output Report.

committed suicide by gassing herself. Kurt himself had found her an hour later. She had been terrified that she would be 'sent to the east'. Kurt's wife is distraught. Willi commiserates with him, but Kurt, who is naive and antisemitic, but designed to be seen as fundamentally decent, tells Willi that it is the dead woman he should be feeling sorry for. Willi, ever the heartless cynic, says Kurt should be happy as her early rising used to annoy him a great deal. The script then continues:

Kurt: She was some kind of scientist and did some kind of war work for Siemens and Halske. The firm had got her some kind of exemption, she was irreplaceable. But the filth got her in the end . . .

Willi: How did it happen?

Kurt: The Gestapo came to her laboratory. She gave them her certificate, but they laughed and tore it up in front of her eyes. She told us yesterday morning. Everyone's gone mad, totally mad!

Willi: You mustn't forget. . .

Kurt: Yeah, I know, war's war - the same old story. But this is something else, something I never expected. This woman, okay, she was a Jew, but she was from our neighbourhood and essential for our war effort. Hell! With all our best workers on the eastern front, we need all the help we can get. Aryan or Jewish!

Willi: She didn't have an inkling? That something like this was going to happen?

Kurt: She said this morning that something crazy was going to happen. We told her things couldn't be that bad in the east.

The first message here was that, over a year after most German Jews had gone east, it was the *neighbourhood* Jews who were being deported; the Jews that ordinary Germans had often lived next door to or worked alongside; those who were decent people. It was not just the money-Jew or Asiatic parasite - the material of Nazi propaganda. Second is the inference that by doing so Germany was cutting off its nose to spite its face. With awful news arriving at just that time from Stalingrad, was it not ridiculous for the Nazis to demand that a skilled engineer be removed from her post? Later on in the sketch, which were approximately 10 minutes long, these themes are added to:

Kurt: Willi, you know me, I'm hardly a Jew-lover. But I don't believe it, that a respectable German can approve of that.

Willi: We cannot allow liberal thoughts to stop us reaching our goal. That is the party line!

Kurt: Ach, the party line. I can't believe that the Führer really believes that.

Willi: It is the express instruction of the Führer, Kurt. Have you forgotten how close the Führer was to his friend Julius Streicher?

Kurt: That arsehole!

Willi: A very important arsehole during the time the Führer was making his plans, including the extermination of the Jews. That is Hitler's own personal political line.⁵⁰

The reaction of Kurt was meant to show that other *respectable* Germans should not be able to approve the extermination of the Jews, even passively antisemitic ones like him. But Willi is firm. The Party says that the Jews must go, and human feeling must be avoided. The awful truth is then introduced that it is Hitler's personal goal to achieve the complete destruction of the Jews. After all, did he not surround himself with men like the pathological antisemite Streicher?

This piece indicates how consistent the German Service was in its fundamental task of loosening the ties between the German people and the Nazi Party, including Hitler. It treated the persecution and extermination of the Jews as grist for this particular mill. Although the policy would stretch it always held firm.

What happened in the month after the issuing of the Allied Declaration was that after the initial burst of information, the impetus was lost. What Noel Newsome warned his journalists about, the danger that if news of the Holocaust was allowed to fade away, then it would look like the whole thing had been an attempt at First World War atrocity propaganda, in the end did occur. There were varied reasons for this. The FO and PWE feared that too great a concentration on Jewish suffering would make the Allies look too 'Jewish'. To this end it was convenient for them to tacitly agree to the Government-in-exile's strategy which was to use the supposedly Jewish-dominated global media industry to focus attention on Poland,⁵¹ so highlighting the suffering of Poles. The BBC was not able to counter the manoeuvring of these powers. This was because the hold of the 'spooks',

⁵⁰ BBC WAC, miscellaneous German Service Scripts, *Kurt und Willi*, 29 Dec. 1942.

⁵¹ 'The Jews', wrote a high-ranking Polish military intelligence officer, 'are the best newspaper men in the world'. Engel, *Facing a Holocaust*, p. 27.

over the flow of information but also and particularly their ability to confirm or throw doubt on events in occupied Europe, was too strong. At home there were worries over the effect news was having on the domestic audience in terms of promoting antisemitism. But most important was the stultifying reliance of the Home Service on official sources of information, making them even less independent of the Government than the European Service. When there was little interest in providing information, little of it could be broadcast. Enough programme transcripts do not survive for anyone to fully assess the BBC's output of news about the Final Solution in the month following the Allied Declaration. However, it is extremely doubtful that there existed what Bernard Wasserstein refers to as a 'concerted campaign' at this time.⁵² If there was such a thing, then it was certainly not the desired goal of the British and Polish governments.

⁵² Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

CHAPTER V

'THE TIME IS MOST INOPPORTUNE': JANUARY 1943 TO JUNE 1943

If the initial impetus provided by the Allied Declaration had drained away over the subsequent month, what happened in the period leading up to the Bermuda conference? Bermuda represented the clearest example in this study of the way in which the government, concerned that public opinion would force it to take action that it saw as pointless, managed to ensure that discontent was not fostered by BBC reporting. What these months showed was that the BBC reported both the build-up to the conference and the proceedings in a way that fitted extremely closely with how the Corporation's overseers in Whitehall wished it to. A similar pattern is evinced in the European Service by the BBC's treatment of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, discussed later in this chapter.

SECTION A: THE DISAPPEARING HOLOCAUST, JANUARY TO APRIL 1943.

As was seen in the previous chapter, coverage of the Final Solution had decreased markedly in the weeks following the Allied Declaration. A few items relating to the Final Solution did continue to appear in the BBC Home Service bulletins in late January. The 9 p.m. news on 20 January reported that '[t]hirty thousand Jewish children massacred by Hitler will have a memorial of trees in Palestine; the first thousand will be planted on January the 24th'. The same bulletin reported that a captured German officer had been carrying orders for the precise methods to be used in mass killings in Serbia. These included how to construct mass graves and shoot large numbers of victims.¹ The next day there was a report of mass reprisal hangings of Poles in Radom.²

This was the only report from Poland at the time, suggesting the Government-in-exile's campaign to bring the situation in Poland to the forefront not having the desired effect. A letter on 22 January from the Assistant Controller of News for the Home Service, J.C.S. MacGregor, to Kirkpatrick confirms this impression. Kirkpatrick had been quizzed by the Polish Ambassador as to why Home Service news had devoted so little time to atrocities in Poland. He had asked Kirkpatrick to bring what pressure he could on Broadcasting

¹ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 20 Jan. 1943.

² Ibid., 21 Jan. 1943.

House to change this. Kirkpatrick, it seems, actually did ask the Home Service to broadcast more information about atrocities in Poland, but they had turned him down 'point-blank'.³ MacGregor, to back up his negative response, sent a list of bulletins since the previous August mentioning atrocities in Poland and which, significantly, did not discriminate between Jews and Poles. He added a note to the list: 'We do feel that our record on this subject is one of which we need not be ashamed, and I hope that you may be able to convince His Excellency of our good intentions and performance.'⁴

The FO itself refused to intervene on the Poles' behalf. A note from Raczynski to Eden on 23 January demanding increased coverage on the Home Service provided Denis Allen with a chance to set down current FO thinking.⁵ Although he only mentioned Poles, what he wrote could have applied only more strongly to Jews. Allen saw the Government's conscience as clear. It had been the prime mover behind the Allied Declaration, which had led to a great deal of publicity and in which Poland had been the only country actually named. The BBC, with Government encouragement, had given Raczynski prime broadcasting time in the period following the Allied Declaration. He continued:

The Polish Government complained that the publicity given to these statements in this country is inadequate. This may be so, but the Poles in their anxiety that public opinion in this country should be fully awakened to the magnitude of the sufferings of the Polish people are apt to forget the very real limitation imposed but considerations of space in the newspapers and of time in radio broadcasts, and the fact that from the point of view of news value saturation point is soon reached and the constant repetition of horror stories is apt to produce mere boredom rather than active sympathy. From the point of view of policy there is also a real danger that an active publicity campaign might, as happened with in the case of the Jewish Declaration, stir up an active demand that something shall be done. This might be unfortunate and embarrassing, since in actual fact there is little we can do to help the Poles short of winning the war.⁶

This clearly demonstrated the attitude of the Government and the importance it attached to managing information. They were not going to go out of their way to provoke a public reaction hostile to their own objectives. In fact they wanted to do the opposite; to limit the

³ FO 371/34549 (C856/34/55), minute by F. Roberts, 26 Jan. 1943.

⁴ BBC WAC, R28/88/3, AC(N) to C(Eur. S), 22 Jan. 1943.

⁵ FO 371/34549 (C856/34/55), Raczynski to Eden, 23 Jan. 1943.

⁶ Ibid., memo by D. Allen, 26 Jan. 1943.

amount of information available to the public in the hope that this would damp down calls for action. The use of the idea that 'constant repetition of horror stories is apt to produce mere boredom rather than active sympathy' was merely an inelegant way of backing up the decision to support silence. After all, could not boredom have been useful in limiting public interest and so bolstering the Government's own position?

On 24 January, the 7, 8 and 9 a.m. bulletins gave full details of the first public appeals for action to save the Jews of Europe since the Allied Declaration. This was a statement issued by the Archbishops of Canterbury, York and Wales. It contained the following:

The statement *says that*⁷ already hundreds of thousands of entirely innocent men, women and children have been killed in cold blood. If Hitler carries out his oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jews in Europe, it will mean the murder of some six million people. The Bishops believe it is the duty of civilised nations, whether neutral or Allied, to do their utmost to provide sanctuary for these victims. And they urge the Government of the United Kingdom to give a lead to the world by declaring their readiness, in consultation with the Dominion Governments to co-operate with the United and neutral nations in finding an immediate refuge in the British Empire and elsewhere, for everybody threatened with death who can escape from Axis-occupied Europe.⁸

Comparing what was broadcast with the whole of the text, as published in *The Times* the next day, is rather revealing. Gone was the call for the Allies to 'exert themselves to the utmost possible extent to provide a sanctuary'. Also missing was the Archbishops' demand that shelter be found not only for those who were already refugees but also for 'all persons threatened with massacre who can escape from Axis lands'.⁹ The BBC was reporting criticism of Government policy, but it was wary of broadcasting alternative suggestions, such as these, that conflicted so directly with how the Government wished policy to develop. Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out that of the newspapers studied by Scott, only *The Times* and the left-wing *Daily Herald* actually took any notice of the Archbishops at all.¹⁰ More came four days later in the 6 and 9 p.m. bulletins, which briefly disclosed that

⁷ Emphasis mine. Note the use of uncertain language; *says that* in place of, for example, *notes that*.

⁸ BBC WAC, 7 a.m. news, 24 Jan. 1943.

⁹ *The Times*, 25 Jan. 1943.

¹⁰ Scott, op. cit., p. 206.

a deputation from both Houses of Parliament had been received by Eden, Home Secretary Herbert Morrison, and Colonel Stanley, Secretary for the Colonies. It had discussed with them what fresh measures Britain could take to help Jewish victims of German persecution.¹¹

The pressures that were being brought to bear by the great and the good to try and force the Government into taking action were reflected again on 3 February. The 9 p.m. news reported that negotiations had been successfully completed to allow 4,000 Jewish children and 500 adults passage from Bulgaria to Palestine. However, the BBC report made it clear that this was not the start of a flood of refugees from Eastern Europe:

When the Colonial Secretary, Colonel Oliver Stanley, made this announcement in Parliament today he said that the practical difficulties were likely to be considerable. Arrangements were previously made to admit into Palestine some two-hundred-and-seventy Jewish children from Roumania and Hungary and some were now on their way. It's now been decided to admit more children from these countries up to a total of five hundred. Provided transport is available the Government will continue to admit into Palestine Jewish children (with a percentage of adults) up to the limits of the five year immigration period which ends on 31st March 1944. The numbers involved are approximately twenty-nine thousand. Colonel Stanley said the difficulties of transport and accommodation of such large parties of refugees might limit the number.¹²

That this was, at best, a half-hearted response was alluded to in the next evening's 9 p.m. bulletin. A report on the first Annual General Meeting of the Council of Christians and Jews, placed twenty-first out of twenty-one items, included mention of a resolution signed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and Westminster expressing 'appreciation of yesterday's Government announcement about child refugees being allowed into Palestine'. But the report also highlighted the perceived inadequacy of the Government's response, the announcer adding that the resolution also contained a repeat of the request 'that more refugees should be given temporary asylum in this country, and in countries under British control, including Palestine'.¹³

¹¹ BBC WAC, 6 p.m.. news, 28 Jan. 1943.

¹² C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 3 Feb. 1943.

¹³ Ibid., 4 Feb. 1943.

SPECIAL NOTE

**ITEM SCANNED AS SUPPLIED
PAGINATION IS AS SEEN**

In the middle of February, two items were broadcast which actually contained new information about the plight of the Jews - the first such accounts to be broadcast for over two months. The first of these was a description of the liberation of large numbers of Jews in a concentration camp in North Africa. This was given some prominence. The 6, 9 p.m. and midnight bulletins all trailed it the headlines. It marked the first account of the liberation of Jewish prisoners to be broadcast during the war.¹⁴ Recorded by BBC war correspondent Frank Gillard, it told the story of two thousand Jews who had been removed from their homes 'by the Fascists and interned in a concentration camp in this remote village in the Jebel mountains.' The report continued:

Their homes and all their property were taken from them and they could bring away nothing except the clothes in which they stood up in. During their imprisonment, they'd been very cruelly treated, and many of them had died from hunger in recent weeks. The British troops found them very cowed and broken in spirit, and it took them a long time to realise they were free. At last they produced a document which they put into the hands of an English officer.

'Honourable British Government, dear friends our protectors', it said, 'you are welcome and you are blessed with all our hearts, you have delivered us from the camp where the Italians have concentrated us for nine months. We have lost all our wealth and riches, but we offer ourselves to obey and work and observe all the British Government needs for a British victory. Long live the British and the Americans.'

One of the Sappers who helped to liberate the Jews looked at their pinched faces and said "It needs a few bowls of Lancashire Stew to put these people on their feet". But their faces, if starved of food, were no longer starved of hope.¹⁵

The FO would have no doubt welcomed the fact that this report showed Jews being rescued by military conquest rather than negotiation or other political mechanisms. However there is no evidence to suggest any deliberate effort on their part to promote such a line. The portrayal of the Jews as cowed victims and the patronising tone are noteworthy, but it is the *content* that was important. It confirmed that as far away as Libya, Jews were being singled out for special treatment. What it did not report was that this treatment often amounted to

¹⁴ The first known Soviet broadcasts were not made for at least another eighteen months. See IWM BBC Monitoring Reports.

¹⁵ BBC WAC, 6 p.m. news, recording by Frank Gillard, 13 Feb. 1943.

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murder. Another broadcast, the next day, did emphasise this - even if it got some of its facts very badly wrong.

The fourth item out of five in the 9 p.m. news headlines of 14 February, stated: 'New horrifying facts have reached London about the German persecution of the Jews.' The first paragraph in the report itself, tenth out of sixteen stories, was as follows:

A decree has just been published in the Czech provinces of Bohemia and Moravia which has had the effect of sentencing all the Jews there to death - by starvation. Their ration cards are to be taken from them, and they are forbidden to buy unrationed food. The Nazis have ordered that all Jews must be cleared out of Bohemia and Moravia by the end of next month, and by the same date there must be none left in Berlin. The deportation of Jews from Germany is going on at an increasing rate - most of them die in concentration camps and ghettos. These reports have just reached the British section of the World Jewish Congress.

The next item related to Poland:

The terrible mass execution of Jews in Poland goes on without pause. In one district alone six thousand are being killed daily. Before they die, they are stripped of their clothes which are sent back to Germany. Not a single Jew is left in the ghetto at Warsaw, where before the mass murders began there were more than 430 thousand [sic].¹⁶

The figure of 6000 here, alongside the mention of the Polish capital, suggests that this was a garbled report of the daily figures for deportations from the Warsaw ghetto during the summer. What is most striking is the statement that there were no Jews left in Warsaw.¹⁷ This gross inaccuracy, based on the information from the WJC, is puzzling. There is no evidence that the Government-in-exile, by means of correspondence or the weekly meetings it held with the BBC and PWE at which a representative of the Home Service was usually present, attempted to correct it. Nevertheless, what is revolutionary about these excerpts are their source. For the first time, the Home Service was using material taken from Jewish sources. Why was this? The answer is unclear. However there is no reason to suppose

¹⁶ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 14 Feb. 1943.

¹⁷ The numbers in the Warsaw ghetto at this time were at least 60,000.

that there was any kind of official edict that such information was now suitable for use in bulletins. A likely explanation was that over a month after the Allied Declaration, the attitude within the BBC was becoming more relaxed in regard to news items and other material dealing with the Final Solution. This was the exception that proves the rule that information from Jewish sources was rarely, if ever, used.

That the attitude in regard to Jewish matters had perhaps loosened slightly was also shown by the interest those involved in the Home Service's religious output were beginning to take in the subject. On 1 February, G.R. Barnes, Director of Talks for the Home Service, wrote to his assistant, Alford, asking him to check the credentials of G.A.F. Knight, a clergyman and author, who had offered to give a series of talks on antisemitism. In the file next to this request, Barnes placed the extract from the Ministry of Information's *Home Intelligence Weekly Report* of 7 January stating that antisemitism had increased due to the publicity the Final Solution had received in the previous fortnight.¹⁸ This report obviously worried Barnes. Apart from asking Alford to use his contact on Jewish matters, the clergyman and pioneer of Judeo-Christian dialogue James Parkes, to check Knight's qualifications for making any such broadcasts, Barnes also asked him to quiz Parkes as to the 'opportuneness of such a series now'.¹⁹ Barnes's own view was 'that the time is most inopportune and if this is confirmed we can compose a reply to Mr Knight which can act as a standard for other proposals on this subject'.²⁰

Alford wrote to Parkes the following day and an appointment for the two to meet was fixed for three days later. His record of the meeting was as follows:

[Parkes] advised that it was now opportune for a variety of reasons to begin publicity for factual treatment of Anti-Semitism. He felt that so propitious a time would not be likely to recur. The reports of the massacres in Poland and elsewhere would predispose people of goodwill to listen and he was apprehensive lest the case for Jewry should go by default and adduced evidence that crypto-fascist groups were springing up and would increase so long as the issue was not frankly faced by the government.²¹

¹⁸ For a full version of this see previous chapter.

¹⁹ Parkes had given a series of talks on antisemitism before the war.*

²⁰ BBC WAC, R34/277, D(T) to AC(H), 1 Feb. 1943.

²¹ Ibid., record of interview of J. Parkes by Alford, 8 Feb. 1943.

Parkes was viewed with a great deal of suspicion by the BBC. Firstly, his involvement with the Common Wealth Party, which at that time was putting up candidates in by-elections against the wartime coalition, was seen as making him politically risky.²² Secondly, his theology was also seen as being dangerously unorthodox. As a result Alford decided to check with the person he regarded as most important regarding Jewish questions, Dr William Paton of the International Missionary Council - a body charged with the conversion of the Jews.

The religious questions were difficult enough, but it was the perceived danger of encouraging antisemitism by broadcasting about it that worried Barnes most. On reading Alford's record of his interview with Parkes, Barnes wrote to the Assistant Controller of the Home Service that Parkes' attitude had greatly worried him. The point that 'this is the moment to talk about anti-semitism because of the danger of crypto-fascism' was especially concerning. He added: 'Personally I don't want to touch the subject except by implication in talks on other subjects.'²³ That discussion of the issue of talks dealing firmly with antisemitism continued after such a statement by the head of the department was undoubtedly due to pressure being brought in Parliament for the BBC to do so, again led by Commander Locker-Lampson

In a letter a month later to the Controller of the Home Service, Maconachie, Barnes stated that his department was still not agreed at all on the question, so allowing him to save face if pressure forced the talks department to retract its earlier vehement opposition. Barnes suggested that the *Sunday Postscript* script which had by now been submitted by talks producer Trevor Blewitt dealing with antisemitism might produce two different reactions. These were:

- 1 that it would draw attention to the difference between Jews and Gentiles and would cause people to notice and even look for that difference.
- 2 it might be as [the author] suggests, so move people that it would overcome what prejudice they have and enlist sympathy for the sufferings of Jews.

²² The Common Wealth Party was an independent wartime political party with a broadly left-wing agenda.

²³ BBC WAC, R34/277, D(T) to AC(H), 9 Feb. 1943.

What is so striking here is the way in which antisemitism, which both contemporary and more recent studies have shown to be on the increase at this time, was perceived as being inherent and immutable.²⁴ Barnes believed the very mention of Jews was likely to put listeners off. Reviewing the draft script, he suggested that a 'script of this kind should not start with the phrase "I am a Jew and not ashamed of it" but should only introduce that motive halfway through the script, the attention of the audience being first seized and held by other means.'²⁵

Maconachie shared Barnes' beliefs. In his reply he wrote:

The question is, of course, a very difficult one, on which opinions are bound to be divided. The general one has of course been discussed from time to time in Home Board and Programme Policy Meeting, and one of those occasions, I remember the decision was taken that any direct action to counter anti-Semitism would do more harm than good, as likely to provoke retorts and claims to put the other side of the case.

Maconachie concluded by adding that he thought 'the most useful comment on the subject was Barker's note on Brodetsky's delegation of 28th April 1942', showing again just how important the weakness of the Board of Deputies' position had been in setting the orientation of future policy.²⁶

Such was the reasoning of the BBC elite. While they would have been appalled if accused of being antisemitic, they saw the masses as being irredeemably so. As Tony Kushner writes, those campaigning on behalf of the persecuted Jews had to face a state that lacked faith in the British public and which refused to accept a genuinely pluralistic vision of society.²⁷ In the absence of this, the BBC was unable to place the starkness of the Nazis' fixation on Jews at centre stage. By the end of April the Talks Department had given up the idea of presenting any broadcasts specifically on this subject, as it would have been rather difficult to make any programmes about antisemitism without mentioning Jews. Barnes' deputy wrote to Maconachie that they 'would still like to submit the proposal for a talk on

²⁴ see particularly Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in British society during the Second World War* (Manchester, 1989).

²⁵ BBC WAC, R34/277, D(T) to C(H), 9 Mar. 1943.

²⁶ Ibid., C(H) to D(T), 15 Mar. 1943.

²⁷ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p. 140.

race hatreds of which the German attitude to the Jews might be an example, to be taken from a fairly lofty standpoint'.²⁸ Even this was too much for the highest reaches of the BBC. A meeting of the Home Board on 27 April reached the final decision. Faced with Maconachie's dubious advocacy for the proposed talk, the Director-General, Foot, after discussion with the Chairman of the Board of Governors, decided that 'the present time was not opportune for dealing with the Jewish problem in other programmes'.²⁹ Information about the Final Solution was thus still to be confined to news bulletins.

Little public effort on the part of the great and the good was made to get the BBC to become an active agent in the campaign to save Jews - apart from Locker-Lampson. Appeals on the BBC European Service to the peoples of occupied Europe to give aid to Jews threatened with extermination formed point nine of the 'Twelve-Point Programme for Rescue Measures' published by the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror (hereafter NCRNT) in April 1943. However, this was accompanied by a note stating that it was 'known that the BBC European Service has already done much on this question'.³⁰ The Board of Deputies had attempted to get the European Service to start broadcasts in Yiddish in late 1942.³¹ Generally, however, they were pleased with the amount of broadcasting provided by the European Service, especially by Newsome as 'The Man in the Street', with transcripts being distributed approvingly.³² It was only later in the year that people such as Eleanor Rathbone would actively seek to persuade the BBC to do more to combat antisemitism and promote knowledge of the Final Solution in its domestic broadcasting.

The rest of the period leading up to the Bermuda conference, Katyn, and the Warsaw ghetto uprising saw a substantial amount of broadcasting time continue to be devoted to the campaign to somehow frustrate the Final Solution, most of which stemmed from reporting of speeches in the House of Commons. The midnight news of 24 February included a

²⁸ BBC WAC, R34/277, AD(T) to C(H), 21 Apr. 1943.

²⁹ Ibid., C(H) to D(T), 27 Apr. 1943. 'Other programmes' refers to programmes other than the news.

³⁰ Parkes Papers 15/57, Southampton University Library Archives and Manuscripts Department. Quoted in Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-135.

³¹ BDP, ACC 3121/E2/35, memo by Salomon, 20 Oct. 1942. This episode is dealt with in greater detail in the following chapter.

³² Ibid. Frustratingly, these transcripts are not dated - hence I have chosen not to include them.

report of Eden being told by an MP that 'there was a growing uneasiness at the comparative inaction of the United Nations' and the Foreign Secretary answering that an Allied victory was the only 'effective way of helping'. It also added that Eden had indicated that 'there were certain negotiations going on which he couldn't make public'.³³ With the absence of any announcement of what these negotiations were with and what they might have brought about, the campaign by the great and the good continued - and was reported by the BBC. On 1 March, a message sent by Cardinal Hinsley from his deathbed, alongside one from the Archbishop of Canterbury, to the WJC in New York was featured in the headlines, albeit ninth out of ten stories. The headline included their pledge of 'Christian support against the campaign to annihilate the Jews'. Hinsley's message included implicit criticism of the Government: 'Words are weak and cold; deeds and speedy deeds are needed to put a stop to this brutal campaign for the extermination of a whole race'. The Archbishop of Canterbury called for all possible aid and refuge to be offered 'for the Jews now threatened with massacre' in order to avert the 'most appalling horror in recorded history'. Other messages included one by the man of the hour, Sir William Beveridge.³⁴ The BBC reported that this meeting seemed to have had an effect. On 3 March the 9 p.m. news reported Sumner Wells, the acting US Secretary of State, as proclaiming that 'immediate consideration would be given to an appeal made at a recent mass meeting in New York that something should be done to save the Jews in Europe.' It also quoted a statement from Eden that the British Government would act only in concert with the United Nations but that negotiations were going on which he couldn't make public. It continued: 'In the meantime (he said) facilities were being arranged for getting more Jews into Palestine; and a considerable number of refugees continued to arrive in the country.'³⁵ There were no details of these phantom refugees. If the desired implications of this statement were that Jews were finding a refuge from Nazi terror in Britain, then Eden's statement was deliberately misleading - and the BBC had broadcast disinformation at the Government's behest.

³³ BBC WAC, 12.00 a.m. news, 24 Feb. 1943.

³⁴ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 1 Mar. 1943.

³⁵ Ibid., 3 Mar. 1943.

There is no doubt that a Government that feared being forced into an unacceptable refugee policy by the public and by the great and the good was trying to influence the BBC. Evidence of this is the passing of refugee figures to Ryan during one of his 'off-the-record' briefings from the MOI. It no doubt hoped that the BBC would use the figures to support the view that as much as possible had already been done.³⁶ This seems not to have happened. The BBC were willing enough instead to report whatever coalition politicians said, as for example in the following instance, which marked the beginning of the build-up to Bermuda.

The 9 p.m. news on 4 March quoted a note by Clement Attlee, Deputy Prime Minister, to the US Government stating that should a conference be held to discuss the 'problem of refugees' the 'British Government and Colonies would be glad to examine the situation to find out whether there was still a possibility, in spite of all other demands on shipping space, of taking *even more* refugees into British territory'.³⁷ Other bulletins carried regular stories at this time about the lifting of antisemitic laws in the newly-conquered areas of North Africa. A cynic would say that these merely bolstered the suggestion that final victory was the only realistic method of rescuing Jews.³⁸

Even if the BBC was, by mouthing the Government's words, suggesting that action was and had been being taken, dissenting voices continued to be heard. The 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. bulletins of 23 March contained the following:

The forthcoming Anglo-American conference on Nazi massacres in Europe is referred to in a cable sent to Mr Anthony Eden. The message is signed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and other religious leaders: by peers and members of Parliament: by Lord Mayors and trade union leaders and by scientists, writers, musicians, actors and teachers. It assures Mr Eden of the fullest support of public opinion in this country for treating the problem as one calling for immediate and boldest measures of rescue: and says that the British conscience is so deeply stirred that the country is prepared for any sacrifice which will not delay victory.³⁹

³⁶ BBC WAC, R28/19/1, note by A.P. Ryan, 13 Jan. 1943.

³⁷ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 4 Mar. 1943. Italics are my own.

³⁸ e.g. 9 a.m. bulletin, 3 Mar. 1943; 7 a.m. & 8 a.m. bulletins, 8 Mar. 1943; all BBC WAC.

³⁹ BBC WAC, 7 a.m. & 8 a.m. news, 23 Mar. 1943

Later that evening in the 9 p.m. news a report of the debate on refugees in the House of Commons included both attacks on, and defences of, the Government over refugee policy. Significance should be attached to the language in which both Government speakers, and the BBC in future, described the issue. Cranborne reminded the House that the discussion with Washington had been proceeding on 'the basis first that the refugee problem is not confined to any particular race or faith'. He then went on to add that during the discussions 'particular reference was made to persecuted people in Eastern Europe'.⁴⁰ The Jews were a people whose name was not to be spoken. The BBC echoed this approach four days later when it broadcast news of the Bermuda conference in the 9 p.m. bulletin, trailed in the headlines sixth out of six items. The report itself stated only that the 'British and American Governments have agreed to make Bermuda the scene of their forthcoming conference on the refugee problem'.⁴¹

Brief mentions of the Final Solution continued to appear sporadically. On 20 March, only in the 6 p.m. bulletin, news from Poland, based on an IAIC report was broadcast. This stated: 'In five more Polish towns all the Jews who were left in the ghettos have been murdered. Half of one town of forty-thousand were Jews'.⁴² On 31 March the following was broadcast on the 9 p.m. bulletin, which that night had an audience of 60.5 per cent of the adult population - or just over 19 million people.⁴³ It was twenty-first out of twenty-six stories in the bulletin. Prompted by the IAIC report, use was made for only the second time of information from Jewish sources:

The latest news of the Nazi anti-Jewish terror comes from France. A report which has just reached the British section of the Jewish World Congress [sic] shows that many thousands of Jewish men, women and children have been seized and deported. The last 'convoy' is known to have left France about a month ago, when three-thousand Jews were taken off eastwards to an unknown destination.

Many children who have been sheltered by non-Jewish families since earlier round-ups are now being searched out. As well as seizing elderly men and women in the streets of Paris, the Germans have extended their drive to the former non-occupied zone, and people from Lyons and Marseilles, among other

⁴⁰ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 23 Mar. 1943.

⁴¹ Ibid., 27 Mar. 1943.

⁴² BBC WAC, 6 p.m. news, 20 Mar. 1943.

⁴³ Ibid., R9/11/9.

cities, have been transferred to a concentration camp near Paris; from there they are transported to the East.

The situation in the Italian-occupied zone is somewhat better; and although anti-Jewish laws are in force, they are applied without brutality.⁴⁴

This was the first broadcast of news about French Jewry since December 1942, and the first item on the Home Service that dealt specifically with the extension of the Final Solution to Western Europe.

Some dissenting voices continued to be heard. The 9 p.m. news on 4 April contained a report of a conference of Jewish organisations that day in London that while it 'appreciated what has already been done, including the decision to hold an Anglo-American Conference at Bermuda', it also 'felt it wasn't enough'. The BBC reported the alternatives that had been suggested as including:

[T]he possibility of asking the Germans, and other Axis Governments to allow Jews, (particularly children), to leave enemy-occupied areas; the provision of visas for use at the discretion of Consuls in neutral countries; the utmost use of Palestine for the reception of Jewish refugees; more transport facilities; the possibility of exchanging United Nations refugees in enemy hands for Axis nationals in allied hands; and the setting up of camps for refugees in colonial territories.⁴⁵

There was also a willingness to mention, if not discuss antisemitism at home. This was, however, only in news bulletins and there was no attempt at seriously discussing it. The 9 p.m. news of 14 April included a statement the Archbishop of Canterbury had issued under the auspices of the British Council of Churches. It read, in addition to demanding a positive outcome in Bermuda: 'The Council affirms that anti-Semitism of any kind is contrary to natural justice. Malicious gossip and irresponsible charges against Jews, no less than active persecution, are incompatible with Christian standards of behaviour.'⁴⁶ This last sentence was a reference to the widespread recent rumours that the Bethnal Green tube disaster on 3 March - where 178 people had been trampled to death after local AA fire sparked a stampede - had been caused by Jews panicking unnecessarily. These rumours had persisted

⁴⁴ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 31 Mar. 1943.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 4 Apr. 1943.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 14 Apr. 1943.

despite an official inquiry.⁴⁷ The results of this were made known by the BBC when it mentioned, on 8 April, the Home Secretary's report which stated explicitly 'as without foundation rumours that the accident was caused by Jewish panic'. But when the BBC refused to mention Jews and antisemitism in anything other than news reports, the malicious gossip and irresponsible charges mentioned by Lang would continue to go unchallenged. The same bulletin included Bracken's answer to a parliamentary question as to why the Jews were not being allowed to 'reply to the accusations of the German wireless'. Bracken replied that he was reluctant to use his powers where the Home Service was concerned, but had requested the European Service to do so.⁴⁸ The next section of this chapter will discuss whether Bracken's wish had actually been carried out.

SECTION B: THE EUROPEAN SERVICE, JANUARY TO APRIL 1943.

Once again there is a paucity of surviving transcripts for BBC European Service broadcasts from this time. Piecing together the fragments that remain, together with directives and other documents, some patterns do emerge. They show that outside organisations had a decisive role in shaping what the European Service broadcast, as was the case with the Home Service,

Raczynski's memo to Eden on 23 January had also demanded an increase in coverage on the European Service, including propaganda aimed at scaring Germans into not participating in atrocities against Poles.⁴⁹ Raczynski stated that the lack of broadcasts, let alone reprisals of the sort desired by the Government-in-exile, had caused great dismay in Poland. Denis Allen commented on this in a way that showed both the inability of senior figures to differentiate between the situation faced by Jews and Poles, as well as the apparently limitless talent of the Government-in-exile for being their own worst enemies:

⁴⁷ Philip Ziegler, *London at War, 1939-1945* (London, 1995), p. 238.

⁴⁸ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 8 Apr 1943.

⁴⁹ FO 371/34549 (C856/34/55), Raczynski to Eden, 23 Jan. 1943.

As regards publicity to occupied Europe, PWE have consistently made the most of most recent information and statements about events in Poland in their broadcasts. Leaflets about the murder of Jews have been dropped over Germany on at least one occasion. We have also agreed to a Polish suggestion that a special warning should be broadcast to Germans in Poland of the consequences of collaborating in the German Government's policy towards the Polish people. The Polish Government are, however, being very difficult about the text of this broadcast and have so far tried to insist that we include wholesale threats of retribution which are clearly unacceptable.⁵⁰

Allen's superior, Frank Roberts, wholeheartedly agreed. For the sake of good relations with the Government-in-exile, the FO had been willing to take risks. These included broadcasting to Lithuania, territory regarded by the Soviets as their own and so off-limits to the BBC. But the Home Service was not as simple to manipulate for the FO as the European Service. Eden's eventual reply to Raczynski - drafted by Roberts - although couched in diplomatic language, seemed exasperated at the continual demands that the Poles were placing on the British Government.⁵¹

Newsome did not directly mention the extermination of the Jews between 14 January and 4 March. However, one of his discursive briefings between these two dates above may have had some important implications. This was entitled 'The Terror' and attempted to set European Service policy in regard to atrocities in terms of the contemporary political warfare climate. Newsome believed that the Nazis, their propaganda having failed to convince the occupied peoples that Bolshevism presented a worse prospect, were falling back on outright terrorism to achieve acquiescence. The answer, Newsome wrote, was as follows:

We must do all we can to show that, while terroristic measures will increase in ferocity in the present crisis, the terror machine is in fact a great deal weaker than it has ever been, is weakening and will weaken.

Emphasis should always be on successful resistance and when executions and massacres are reported it should always be to show that they are powerless to break down opposition.

Terror should be shown as measure of opposition and resistance as a triumph over terror.⁵²

⁵⁰ Ibid., memo by D. Allen, 26 Jan. 1943.

⁵¹ Ibid., Eden to Raczynski, 28 Jan. 1943.

⁵² BBC WAC, E2/131/9, 27 Feb. 1943. Underlining is author's original.

The problem here was that terror in relation to Jews could rarely be portrayed in such heroic colours. Protests, in the eyes of listeners in occupied Europe, would have often seemed futile. The deportation and killing of Jews would continue. Although the subject of the Warsaw ghetto uprising is dealt with below, the problems that such an approach would lead to in relation to that particular episode are a useful illustration of the limitations of this approach to portraying resistance in propaganda.

In March, Newsome returned to mentioning items connected with the Final Solution. These included: the Auxiliary Bishop of Kovno anathematising those taking part in the extermination of the Jews;⁵³ a Monitoring report of a razzia in Bulgaria, on which the 'Bulgarian section should comment forcibly';⁵⁴ and a report, to be mentioned in all languages, of a new round-up of all Jews remaining in Berlin.⁵⁵ This was based on information supplied directly by the WJC to Silverman, via the FO. Gerhart Riegner, the Geneva representative of the World Jewish Congress, had passed the original report to British diplomats in Berne on 11 March, but it was only passed to Silverman on 17 March. It stated that Jews had been deported from Berlin between 26 February and 2 March, and that 17,000 Jews had been deported from the Netherlands in the previous January. Aside from information, it also contained demands for measures such as civilian exchanges and the granting of bloc visas and included a specific request that 'BBC Overseas and other Allied radio stations should repeat daily in German language warnings against collaborating in extermination campaign'.⁵⁶ FO officials commented that Riegner's demands regarding visas etc. were 'undesirable and impracticable'. However, there was no comment on the question of the BBC making repeated statements. This is more evidence that, following the Allied declaration, the British Government were happy to have the BBC focus rather more closely on the Final Solution. Indeed they may even have backed such a radio campaign as a way of suggesting that real action was being undertaken. Such a hypothesis is supported by Bracken's willingness, in the House of Commons on 27 February, to affirm that the BBC

⁵³ Ibid., 4 Mar. 1943.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1943.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 21 Mar. 1943.

⁵⁶ FO 371/34362 (C28411/8/62), WJC Geneva to Silverman, via FO Berne, 11 Mar. 1943.

European Service was willing to attack antisemitism and had done so under his encouragement. Even if powerful civil servants such as Denis Allen doubted the efficacy of such a sustained campaign and refused to give it his support, it still served to promote the belief that Britain was prepared to somehow intervene.

On the issue of resistance, PWE and Newsome had a rare meeting of minds. The Central Directive of 1 April stated plainly that the European Service should continue to 'report instances of successful resistance'.⁵⁷ It added that 'care should be taken to verify items and to ensure that they do not constitute incitement to revolt'.⁵⁸ The reasons for this were different, however, from those lying behind Newsome's proclamation just over a month previously. Whereas Newsome was concerned with morale, PWE were more concerned with preserving the strength of resistance organisations until they were of strategic and tactical service to the Allies. A directive relating to propaganda treatment of atrocities against Poles issued in January had articulated this. With a heading that stated it was intended 'for information only and no reference, expressed or implied, should be made to it', was the following:

[It may be thought] that by these acts of terrorism the Germans are provoking the Poles to an uprising which will allow them to be completely and absolutely exterminated. This is to say, put mildly, extremely doubtful, though the reasons for the Polish propaganda on this score are fully understandable. It is essential that there should be no unorganised uprising as a result of these persecutions and every form of propaganda holding back the Poles until the great momentum is naturally being used.⁵⁹

Confirmation of the progress of the Final Solution was as sparse in the Central Directives as it had been in Newsome's between January and April. A rare exception came towards the end of this period. On 7 April the Central Directive included the following: '1000 Jews from Krakow have been evacuated to the notorious camp Oswiecim in the past week. Here the Germans have constructed with Jewish labour a crematorium said to be capable of burning 3000 corpses a day. The liquidation of the Jews at Lodz is beginning.'⁶⁰ It is

⁵⁷ Original underlining.

⁵⁸ FO 898/290 f104, CD WB 1 Apr. 1943. Underlining is author's original.

⁵⁹ Ibid., f274, Annexe to CD WB 6 Jan. 1943.

⁶⁰ Ibid., f95, Annexe to CD WB 7 Apr. 1943.

unclear where this information came from, but from its timeliness the source was probably the Polish Government-in-exile. The first sentence is fascinating. Although it was not a totally unambiguous description of the extermination of Jews at Auschwitz it as close as any that had yet emerged.

March 1943 is the first period for which a substantial run of European Service news transcripts have survived - and for a vital section of its operations; the Polish Service. These show that, relative to the Home Service, it broadcast a vast amount of information. As items that were for use by the Polish Service only were always clearly marked, these scripts indicate the content of the other language services, as well as the core English language section of the European Service. Some of these items were mere snippets, such as a piece on 4 April reporting Cardinal Maglione, Secretary of State to the Pope, stating 'that the Holy See continues its work for the protection of Jews in occupied countries'.⁶¹ There were also major items such as reports of the actual processes included in the Final Solution, accompanied by names of the perpetrators. One of these was a report of atrocities in Rzhev, Vyasma and Zhatsk issued by a Soviet committee of investigation and passed to the BBC via a Soviet news agency. This named those involved as senior officers such as General Henrici of the 4th Army, Field Marshal Model, and Schiemann of the *Gendarmerie*. As might be expected from a Soviet source, the report concentrated on the 'attempted genocide of the Soviet people', rather than specifically the actual genocide of Soviet Jewry. Nevertheless it featured atrocities specifically against Jews in the following manner: 'In Sychevka 100 Jews - women, old people and children, - were beaten and then shot.' At the top of this item, under the heading of 'German Crimes', was an instruction from Newsome that all the language services should give the Soviet report 'prominence in programmes'.⁶² On 10 and 11 April the Polish Service broadcast news of ghetto liquidations:

Here is more news from Poland about the barbaric German persecutions designed to exterminate the Jews. On the 13th, 14th and 15th of March the Germans took action to liquidate the Cracow ghetto. This action was similar to that which took place during the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto last year. The inhabitants were sent to concentration camps - so called 'camps of death' -

⁶¹ BBC WAC, Polish Service, 4 Apr. 1943.

⁶² Ibid., 7 Apr. 1943.

where they were murdered. To the already well-known German camps of death another one must be added, that of Ozorkow, near Lodz. According to information received the Germans deport Jews from Lodz and then murder them there.⁶³

The Central Directive issued for the week beginning 7 April featuring news of the deportations from Cracow and Lodz would thus seem to have had a direct impact.

More hard information became available on 20 April, with a great deal of coverage being given to the publication in London of the IAIC survey of conditions for Jews in occupied Europe. This was reported as follows:

The Inter-Allied Information Committee in London has issued in pamphlet form, a survey of the German massacres of Jews in occupied Europe. After recalling the figures issued by the American State Department last December, which revealed that two million Jews had been massacred or deported to slave labour camps, the pamphlet quotes the statement of Ley, the German Labour Minister, who said on December 4th 1942: 'It is the Nazi intention to go on waging war until the Jews have wiped off the face of the earth'.

The pamphlet gives details of Nazi persecutions of Jews in each country:⁶⁴

This section, which did indeed give a detailed account of the Final Solution throughout Europe, was cut. It included a reference to 'Young Jews' being 'sent to the salt mine at Oswiecim to be worked literally to death'. The reason for this was more likely to be lack of space rather than policy. An abbreviated version of the details were broadcast in a later bulletin the same day and in bulletins the next day, 21 April, which stated that 'gas and electric chambers are used in Poland', an echo of the Polish memorandum of November 1942. The report continued:

In Belgium by November 1942, 25,000 Jews had been sent to the death camps in Poland.

In Czechoslovakia since June 1942 trainloads of Jewish men, women and children have been sent east.

In France, 38,000 Jews have been deported.

In Yugoslavia 95 per cent of the Jews are now dead. 85,000 have been murdered.⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid., 10 Apr. 1943.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 20 Apr. 1943.

This edited version omitted much of the specific material, for example naming Mauthausen, Auschwitz and methods of extermination, that was included in the original version and the IAIC report. Nevertheless, it amounted to what was almost certainly the first substantial report on the progress of the Final Solution broadcast by the European Service since the Allied Declaration four months previously, and one that highlighted its pan-European scope. For this kind of information to be broadcast, it was important that it had the backing of an official body like the IAIC.

There also continued to be smaller, more specific items of news. On the same day, 21 April, the Polish Service reported that a Jewish boy in Warsaw had been caught by 'some Nazi street prowlers outside the ghetto', where he had been looking for food. The Nazis threw him down a sewer where he died.⁶⁶ On 29 April, only in the BBC Polish Service, the following was broadcast:

The Swedish newspaper 'Svenska Dagbladet' reports the complete liquidation of the Jewish ghetto in the city of Wilno.

In 1941, states the paper, there were 50,000 Jews in the ghetto. The lot of the Jewish population of Wilno is unknown. Those Jews in Lithuania and Latvia who avoided massacre were forcibly mobilised for war work.

The same newspaper states that Norwegian Jews, who had been deported to the Katowice region, are now working in coal mines.

Owing to inadequate food rations there are frequent cases of death among the Jewish families.⁶⁷

Instead of coming via PWE's Press Reading Bureau in Stockholm, which might show the level of PWE's interest, this information had been reported by an unidentified news agency. Despite the material itself being interesting - and reasonably accurate - extermination as a process was not referred to.

At the same time as such relatively politically-neutral information was being broadcast, the Polish Service was also inflating the role of non-Jewish communities in

⁶⁵ Ibid., 21 Apr. 1943.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 21 Apr. 1943.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 29 Apr. 1943.

coming to the aid of the Jews. A 'General News Inscript'⁶⁸ issued on the same day as the IAIC report spoke of all the various Christian denominations in Europe condemning the Nazis' war against the Jews. It reported that their members had 'striven, at no matter what sacrifice, to succour the Jewish victims'.⁶⁹ The Polish Service broadcast an elaboration of the original script a week later, this time giving specific information. In Belgium, so it said, priests had hidden children and a collection at one mass had raised 60,000 Belgian francs. It also reported protests at Antwerp, 'when thousands of Belgians collected at the Central Station, bringing parcels of food and other comforts for 300 Jews who were being deported [and] lorry loads of Gestapo had to be called in to disperse the crowd'. Reports of similar activities in other countries were cut for the Polish Service, including a claim that threats of general uprising by the Greek population issued by the Orthodox priesthood had forced the abandonment of plan to deport Greek Jewry.⁷⁰ The section for Poland stated:

As for Poland, the Germans have transformed the country into one vast centre for murdering Jews. The Christian population of Poland, though cut off officially from any sort of contact with the Jewish population tries to give every possible help. The Polish Underground movements not only condemn the crimes most bitterly, but also supply all information and forward appeals to public opinion, through the Polish Government in London.⁷¹

This stress on the efficacy and ubiquity of such gentile responses was not accidental. The Bermuda conference on refugees had opened on 19 April. Was it not convenient for the British Government to play up the possibility that such actions were European Jewry's best hope?

SECTION C: WARSAW AND BERMUDA

The British and American Governments approached the Bermuda conference determined that they would not be forced into taking any action. Despite being certain that no territory

⁶⁸ A talk produced centrally and then circulated to the various language services.

⁶⁹ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 'Report on the Jews', by Tudor Jones, 20 Apr. 1943

⁷⁰ They were however broadcast in a later 'boil' of this script which was placed into ordinary news bulletins.

⁷¹ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 'Europe Helps the Jews', by Tudor Jones, 27 Apr. 1943.

under the control of the UK or US, or indeed its Allies, was suitable for accommodating Jewish refugees and thus the likelihood of anything being achieved minimal, the British Government felt that it was 'impossible to make a merely negative response to a growing international problem, disturbing the public conscience'.⁷² The problem, and one that resolved itself successfully partly thanks to the BBC, was presenting the proceedings at Bermuda as a serious attempt at preventing the extermination of Europe's Jews.

As was seen in the preceding section, the 'disturbed public conscience' was being heard over the BBC. This was due to voices being raised by the kind of people who were virtually guaranteed access to the airwaves, such as the Archbishops of Canterbury and Westminster, as well as the BBC's whiggish determination to report events in Parliament. It was important that the moral credibility of the Government should not be damaged by Bermuda being presented as being conducted in anything but an earnest manner. In what was primarily a public relations matter, the BBC had a vital role to play.

The BBC Home Service mentioned the impending Bermuda conference on 12 April. The 9 p.m. news stated that delegates 'from Britain and America are going to Bermuda this week for the opening of the Anglo-American conference on bringing relief to refugees'. The report then went on to list the British delegates, and repeated Eden's statement that the conference 'would be able to decide on immediate steps by the two Governments for rescuing the victims of Nazi terror', echoing precisely the line the FO would have wished it to take.⁷³ It did not specifically identify Jews.

The conference was welcomed two days later in a report of comments by the Archbishop of Canterbury at a meeting of the British Council of Churches. This report also included the Council's affirmation 'that anti-Semitism of any kind is contrary to natural justice [...] malicious gossip and irresponsible charges against Jews, no less than active

⁷² British Embassy, Washington, to State Dept. 2 Jan. 1943, *FRUS 1943* vol. I, pp. 134-7. Quoted in Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-5.

⁷³ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 12 Apr. 1943.

persecution, are incompatible with Christian standards of behaviour'.⁷⁴ In addition to this reference to antisemitism in general, implicitly to Bethnal Green, the statement of the Council included its belief that 'that both Christian and Jewish people in this country would support a Government offer of sanctuary to many additional refugees in Great Britain, and would be ready to make sacrifices to provide hospitality for them during the war', a rare inference by the BBC that the plight of the Jews was at the heart of the conference. Further remarks by the Archbishop, this time at a meeting of the National Council for Civil Liberties on antisemitism, were reported five days later. Again, he was quoted as stating that 'anti-Semitism was quite plainly contrary to the spirit of the Gospel' and Christians 'should unite in resisting it to the utmost of their power'. However, there was, he added, 'a real Jewish problem, and we didn't help matters by ignoring it [and] the problem would only be solved on a foundation service and goodwill'. There was nothing identifying what this 'Jewish question' actually was. Presumably, he had meant the problem of antisemitism, but this quote could have been taken to mean anything - usury, the white-slave trade, communism. The bulletin also reported a motion had been passed at the conference 'urging the Government to take prompt and adequate action to rescue those Jews who can still be saved from extermination in Europe'. Bermuda and the Final Solution were being linked, as was the possibility that action was possible to save Jewish lives, but only for those prepared to listen 'between the lines'. The report closed with the meeting's demand that the Home Secretary make antisemitic propaganda an offence. Incidentally, the next item was a report of a trial of four individuals for black market offences. It named three of them as Vernon Benabo, Morris Pinkus, and David Gold. In case anyone missed the point, the middle name of a fourth was also given; David *Heber* Reynolds.⁷⁵

The 9 p.m. news reported the opening of the Bermuda conference 19 April, trailing it in the headlines - albeit sixth out of six stories. The process of damping down expectations had begun immediately. The report was as follows:

⁷⁴ Ibid., 14 Apr. 1943.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 17 Apr. 1943. My italics.

The Bermuda Refugee Conference, which is being attended by delegates of Britain and the United States, began at Hamilton today. The aim is to find out how best to deal with the problem of helping victims of the Axis. Mr Harold W. Dodds, (head of the American delegation), said, in his address, that the difficulties seemed to have been under-estimated. There could be no doubt of the goodwill of Britain and America: what could be done would be done. But the thing was too big for the British and American Governments alone; others would have to co-operate. and it would be the Conference's task to point the way and to offer such proposals as might be possible under war conditions.

The first point is that this did not mention the word Jew. Dodds' comments practically spoke for themselves; it was a difficult task, the responsibility was not just that of Britain and America; winning the war was the only way anything could be done. The comments by Richard Law, head of the British delegation, echoed this:

He agreed with Mr Dodds about the difficulties which faced them, and with his view that the only real solution was victory for the United Nations. Only when we won would persecution, and those who organised it, be punished. The Allies must be careful not to be betrayed, by compassion, into actions which would postpone victory. 'But', said Mr Law, 'I'm confident that, in our talks here, we shall increase our understanding of what each of us is doing. We shall also benefit in seeking, by a common effort of the United Nations, to carry further the work that's already been done.'⁷⁶

The Home Service continued to broadcast news about the Final Solution while the conference was in progress. The morning after it opened, it broadcast a report in the 7 and 8 a.m. bulletins. This recounted how the Germans had rounded up 9,000 Jews in Salonica, and planned to send them to a ghetto. The Greek Orthodox Church had threatened a general uprising of the population and the Germans had thus abandoned the plan. This information, scarcely grounded in fact, had been contained in an official Stationery Office report, i.e. the IAIC report, published that day and announced as being 'on sale everywhere':

The Report shows how far the Germans have carried out their policy - voiced by the German Labour Minister last December - of 'waging this war until the Jews have been wiped off the face of the earth': it deals with every European country under German control, telling the same tale of concentration camps deportation and death.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 19 Apr. 1943

The version broadcast at 7 a.m. included details such as that only a thousand Yugoslavian Jews remained alive, from a pre-war population of eighty-six thousand, and that the vast majority of Czechoslovakia's Jews had been deported, 'in sealed railway trucks - with only the clothes they were wearing - to Poland' or East Prussia for forced labour'. It did not give the fate of this last group as death. The report concluded thus: 'The Allied Governments have made a solemn protest against these crimes, and warned the criminals that punishment will be inevitable and severe. The report gives some of the facts on which that protest was based'.⁷⁷ It made no connection with proceedings in Bermuda. Threats of punishment, rather than intervention, was the response of the British Government. Echoing the FO line, punishment would have to wait until the end of the war. An account of protests by students of the Sorbonne at the teaching of racism within the University was broadcast on 24 April in the 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. bulletins.⁷⁸

It is significant that none of this material was broadcast in the most important bulletin, at 9 p.m., while the Bermuda conference was in progress. News of its end was broadcast at 9 p.m. on 29 April. The report consisted simply of the joint British and American communiqué. This stated that the delegations had examined the problem 'in all its aspects', agreeing 'on a number of concrete recommendations which they are jointly submitting to their Governments and which it is felt will lead to the relief of a substantial number of *refugees of all races and nationalities*'.⁷⁹ It did not mention Jews or the Final Solution.

The Home Service's coverage fitted virtually perfectly with the manner in which the FO wished press coverage to proceed. Bernard Wasserstein has written that 'even before the conference opened the FO view was clear as to the limited scope of possible action' and that some senior figures in the FO, including the head of the Refugee Department, A.W.G. Randall, had determined that it was 'time that the idea of "measures of rescue" was shown up as illusory'.⁸⁰ The choice of Bermuda, an island fortress, was not fortuitous. It was part

⁷⁷ BBC WAC, 7 a.m. news, 20 Apr. 1943.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 1 p.m. & 6 p.m. news, 24 Apr. 1943.

⁷⁹ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 29 Apr. 1943. Italics mine.

⁸⁰ FO 371/36658, Randall minute, 16 Apr. 1943, quoted in Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

of a deliberate attempt to keep the press away. The British Government wished to put on a show to convince people that they were doing something, and they did not want the press asking difficult questions. The US State Department were only too happy to go along with this.

The theme of what Bermuda had achieved, or otherwise, was returned to on 19 May. A report on that night's 9 p.m. news summarised the statement made by the junior FO Minister, Osbert Peake, earlier in the day in the House of Commons, and the subsequent debate:

Mr Peake gave a number of figures to show how substantial had been the efforts of Great Britain, India, the Dominions and the Colonies to accommodate refugees. But, he said, there were about a hundred-and-twenty-million victims of aggression in enemy occupied territories and the total number who'd escaped was infinitesimal in proportion.

The purpose of the Bermuda Conference had been to examine the problems, and not to take any executive decisions. The delegates had rejected any proposal for negotiations with the German Government to release potential refugees. They had decided that it would be a grave disadvantage to divert shipping from essential war needs to the carriage of refugees. Precise recommendations about efficient machinery for international collaboration were agreed to, but both the British and American delegations had decided it would be creating a cruel illusion to hold out any hope of an adequate solution, other than speedy victory.

footnote

The report of the debate also included coverage of opposing points of view, including Eleanor Rathbone's demand to know if there had been any guarantee that funds would be available for the refugee problem, and her urging for a special Ministry to deal with it as those in charge at present could give only 'the scraps and leavings of their already overburdened minds'. In general, the reporting was relatively balanced, with the report stating that 'speakers were divided about the results of the Bermuda Conference: some thought it had been satisfactory, others that very little had been achieved'. Most controversial were the 'several suggestions that North Africa and Palestine should be opened up to Jewish victims of the Nazis'. The last word, as in the debate, was from the Foreign Secretary:

[He] said it wasn't fair to suggest that the Government were [sic] preoccupied to do anything. But until Hitler's overthrow they could deal with no more than the fringe of the problem.

The War Cabinet had approved of the Bermuda Conference's report. The Government wanted to share the burden, caused by the refugees, with some of the smaller neutrals. As for money, they were prepared to make, and had in fact been making, very considerable contributions. They believed that the Inter-Governmental Committee would be the right basis for dealing with the refugee difficulties, both now and after the war. Mr Eden finished by saying: 'We shall do what we can, but I should be false to my trust if I raised great hopes. I do not believe the rescue of more than a few people here and there is possible until we've won.'⁸¹

In all of its reporting about Bermuda, the Home Service played down the Final Solution and its specifically anti-Jewish focus, in favour of emphasising the universal intentions of Allied policy. The only exceptions to this was the reporting speeches by figures such as Rathbone and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

A similar pattern was seen within the European Service. The BBC Polish Service did report the end of the Bermuda conference on 30 April, stating plainly that:

The Anglo-American refugee conference in Bermuda has ended. A joint statement issued by the British and American delegations says that agreement has been reached on a number of concrete recommendations which will lead to the relief of a substantial number of refugees of all races and nationalities.⁸²

Bearing in mind that the central news-room circulated items like this to all the various language services, it seems that this way of presenting Bermuda was followed by the rest of the European Service as well.⁸³ In other words, the situation of European Jewry, the essential impetus behind the conference, was not mentioned with, instead, an emphasis on 'refugees of all races and nationalities'. As the European Service invariably portrayed wartime British politics as being implacably united, there was no way it could have mentioned domestic criticism of the lack of meaningful decisions at Warsaw. The same was the case, only more so, when it came to neutral comment.

⁸¹ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 19 May 1943

⁸² BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 30 Apr. 1943.

⁸³ Items destined for one particular service were generally labelled 'Poles Only' etc.

The statements of the officials attending the conference defined the BBC's reporting of Bermuda. In other words, it reported the conference as being about what the participants stated it was about. Their motives, and the context, were not interrogated. This is, of course, hardly surprising given any understanding at all of the culture and practices prevalent within the Home Service at this time. What it indicates is the way in which a kind of ideological osmosis transmitted the priorities of the state to the BBC.

When it came to the possible measures the Allies might have taken, a similar pattern was repeated. The BBC gave a far greater degree of prominence to official explanations of why the Jews of Europe could not be rescued, than to those urging general and particular measures. The BBC's coverage gave the overwhelming impression that little could be done save for winning the war as quickly as possible. Even if this was, in retrospect, quite possibly the correct view, it is still important that such a view of the proceedings was exactly what the Government wanted the public to believe.

By early May news of the Warsaw ghetto uprising was becoming available in the London press, firstly in the *Jewish Chronicle* on 7 May. It took until 13 May for the news to spread to the mass press, when the *News Chronicle* reported a speech made the previous evening by Eleanor Rathbone to the NCRNT, on its back page. Other papers, including *The Times* and the *Observer* subsequently give the story a lesser or greater amount of prominence later in May and in early June.⁸⁴ There was certainly no automatic and large time-lag in information from Poland becoming available. On 9 May the 9 p.m. news reported that Krueger, identified as the Gestapo chief in Poland, had been shot the previous Sunday, some three days earlier. In theory, information could reach London as little as 24 hours after a particular event had taken place.⁸⁵ Neither was there any policy of limiting news of the Final Solution in general in the BBC Home Service. A report on 10 May repeated comments made by Halifax, the British Ambassador in Washington, to an audience in Chicago, that 'a million-and-a-half Polish Jews have died by execution or maltreatment'.⁸⁶ But there was no mention of the tragedy of the Warsaw ghetto. As is shown below, the

⁸⁴ Scott, op. cit., p. 253-58.

⁸⁵ FO 898/57 f311, 'Report on the Activities of RUs during April 1943'.

⁸⁶ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 10 May 1943.

European Service did broadcast a limited amount of information on the ghetto uprising. However the Home Service totally ignored it.

The lack of reporting about the Warsaw Ghetto while it was in progress is even more glaring than the official tone marking that of the Bermuda conference. This is especially the case given that we know 'newspapers reported it. The reasons for this undoubtedly lay in two main causes. The first of these impacted on the European Service, namely PWE's desire to forestall premature resistance. The second was the influence of Katyn, news of which broke at the same time, and thus reluctance to use 'atrocities stories' while the Nazis were thought to be peddling their own. P.M.H. Bell writes how the recent public discussion of Nazi war crimes, which had drawn heavily on evidence from Poland, and accusations of similar crimes against the Soviets, caused tremendous difficulties for the British. The result was 'an acute problem in the management of news and opinion'.⁸⁷ One more complicating factor was the dissolution of the Comintern, which occurred while the uprising was going on.

The greater amount of evidence regarding policy when one looks at the European Service shows clearly how this worked. On 19 April Newsome's directive stated under 'DO NOT USE': 'Polish Officers' Hecatombs' and 'Bermuda Talks on Refugees'. His instruction regarding Bermuda was that journalists should 'wait for results before reporting'.⁸⁸ PWE's response to Katyn was to issue a special 'black-out' directive⁸⁹ - three days earlier than Newsome - and then follow this up with another at the end of the month specifying that there should be no 'atrocities counter-campaign'.⁹⁰ This had obvious ramifications.

The impact of these factors in terms of coverage is not immediately obvious, especially as the supply of transcripts in the BBC archive runs out, temporarily, at the end of April. The first indication that a major event was taking place in the Warsaw ghetto issued by London-based radio was by *Swit* on 21 April:

⁸⁷ Bell, op. cit., p. 110.

⁸⁸ BBC WAC, E2/131/9, 19 Apr. 1943.

⁸⁹ FO 898/290, f54, special directive on Katyn, 16 Apr. 1943.

⁹⁰ Ibid., f28, CD WB 29 Apr. 1943.

On 21 April a Reuters message from Stockholm reported that a secret radio station in Poland, the name of which was given as *Swit*, was heard saying that the last 35000 Jews in the Warsaw ghetto had been sentenced to death and were then being murdered.⁹¹

Swit was a 'black' station, i.e. one of the large number of radio stations controlled by PWE that purported to be something else. These were run by Sefton Delmer from PWE's 'country' headquarters at Woburn and used powerful medium-wave transmitters. This technology enabled black stations' to appear to originate locally as far away as in eastern Poland.

It is important to understand that the true identities of these stations were kept utterly secret. *Swit*, started in December 1942, identified itself as the voice of Polish resistance.⁹² Black stations enabled PWE to propagandise without identifying the source as London and so engage in disinformation without compromising the BBC's reputation for reliability. Whereas there was little to be gained by 'white' propagandists in making anything of what was known of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, the same was not the case for *Swit*. Those behind it faced direct competition with the Soviet 'freedom station' *Kosciuszko*, which, according to Delmer, incited 'the populace of Poland to immediate armed action [which] is, of course, completely at variance with the policy of the Polish Government, HMG, and the purpose of our RU'.⁹³ In addition to the fear that *Kosciuszko* would foment action prompted by sympathies directed to Jews, those behind *Swit* would have known that to maintain the fiction of it being based somewhere near Warsaw it could hardly ignore what was going on across a sizeable portion of the city.

Swit broadcast at least two reports. The first of these was on the evening of 21 April, and, monitored by Reuters, made the front page of the *New York Times*.⁹⁴ It did not, according to Scott, make it into the British press.⁹⁵ The transcript for *Swit*'s next report on the uprising is not available. However, Polish officials, who operated a monitoring service

⁹¹ FO 898/57, f307, Sutton to Osborne, 22 Apr. 1943.

⁹² Ibid., f311.

⁹³ FO 898/57 f338, Delmer to Bruce Lockhart, 31 March 1943. 'RU' was the codeword within PWE for black stations.

⁹⁴ Lipstadt, op. cit., pp. 216-17.

⁹⁵ Scott, op. cit. p. 251.

at Mill Hill in north London, heard the second *Swit* report and passed its contents on to the BBC on 1 May:

The Warsaw Ghetto where the Germans have now launched a new wave of terror has been inhabited by 600,000 Jews since the beginning of the German occupation. 35,000 of them were people from Warsaw, the others have brought there from other towns. Last year the Germans have begun the extermination of the ghetto inhabitants, and gas chambers have been used for the purpose. In place of murdered Polish Jews transports of Jews from all parts of Europe have been brought. During the last 15 months about half a million Jews have gone through the Warsaw ghetto. This week a new wave of horrible terror against the 35,000 Jews left in the ghetto has begun. The Jews are desperately defending themselves.

The radio station '*Swit*' also calls to Polish workers in its broadcast, warning them not to listen to unfriendly elements which are trying to induce them to street manifestations on May First. Such manifestations could be met with cruel reprisals.

The '*Swit*' appeals to the workers to honour the memory of the heroes of independence fights and the liberation of the working classes by staying at home, for the Poles ought to keep their strength for the decisive moment.⁹⁶

The first paragraph contained a fairly straightforward account of what had been happening. The last two, however, showed what PWE's real agenda was. According to the file, this report formed the basis of this BBC Polish Service broadcast the next day:

A broadcast from a secret Polish wireless station has revealed a German wave of terror against the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto.

After three years of deportation and execution only about 35,000 Jews are left there. These are mostly young men reserved by the Germans for Forced Labour. The secret radio declares that they are resisting the German attacks, that there is fierce shooting in the Ghetto, and even that the Germans have employed light tanks.⁹⁷

A day earlier, late in the evening, the English-language service of the European Service had reported the existence of *Swit*, identifying it as the 'secret Polish radio', but the Editor had cut the news of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.⁹⁸ There could be no clearer evidence of censorship, based on the policy objections outlined above. Interestingly, this file sheds

⁹⁶ FO 898/57 f319.

⁹⁷ Ibid..

⁹⁸ Ibid.

some light on the absence of the Reuter/*Swit* reports, which had made their way into the American press, from British newspapers. A memo from Moray McLaren, head of PWE's Czech and Polish section, suggested that the fact that PWE controlled *Swit*'s output without anyone realising meant PWE could use it to plant stories in the British press. The reverse of this was also true, according to McLaren. He stated that this

raise[d] the question as to how much one is expected to, supposed or allowed to exercise our undoubted influence on the Home Press, i.e. in our relationship to the MoI, etc. This matter may not arise so much in other regions, but I happen to be unusually well placed vis-à-vis Fleet Street and could undoubtedly use in a extremely innocent way my influence along these lines.⁹⁹

Again, the quiet word in Bush House or one of Fleet Street's many bars, rather than the D-Notice, was the British way of keeping inconvenient matters out of the press.

What all of the above shows is that the European Service broadcast very little during the first two weeks of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. However this sits uneasily with Adam Rayski's recollection. Rayski, a historian and active member of the French Resistance, states:

News of the revolt of the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto against the Wehrmacht reached us in the beginning of May 1943 through Radio London, to whose broadcasts we listened constantly. It was transmitted by the Polish Service of the BBC; the reception of Polish broadcasts was better because of fewer disruptions.

During the month of May the BBC broadcasts about the Warsaw ghetto uprising became more frequent and detailed. Increasing numbers of reports about the Jewish resistance were published.¹⁰⁰

Alas, the Polish Service reports from May onwards have not survived. Transcripts of other language services that do suggest coverage was minimal even in early May. It was not mentioned in the BBC French Service until early June, when an eight minute feature within *Les Français Parlent aux Français* was devoted to the story.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Ibid., f298.

¹⁰⁰ Rayski, op. cit., p. 390. Rayski's comments underline the importance of eavesdropping.

¹⁰¹ BBC WAC, BBC French Service Scripts, 4 Jun. 1943.

SPECIAL NOTE

**ITEM SCANNED AS SUPPLIED
PAGINATION IS AS SEEN**

One might have expected that once Anthony Eden had sat down after issuing the Declaration in the House of Commons on 17 December, all barriers to the broadcasting of news about the Final Solution would disappear. This was simply not to be the case, as this chapter shows. Neither did the Declaration itself produce large amounts of BBC coverage of the Final Solution. As soon as it was read in the House of Commons, the same forces that had encouraged its creation conspired to either dull its impact or shift attention in ways more desirable to them.

SECTION A: THE HOME SERVICE AND THE ALLIED DECLARATION

The Home Service broke news of the Declaration in the 1 p.m. bulletin on 17 December, the day of its issue. It featured the story prominently throughout the rest of the day. The report at 1 p.m. trailed the news in third place in the 'banner' of headlines at the top of the bulletin:

Mr Eden has just announced in Parliament the terms of an Allied Declaration on Germany's cold-blooded extermination of the Jews in Europe; the Allies reaffirm their solemn resolution that those responsible shall be punished. The Commons stood in silence as a demonstration of united support for the Declaration.

In the actual body of the bulletin, the treatment the Declaration received was very straightforward. It was introduced thus:

Mr Eden, the Foreign Secretary, said in the House this morning that the Government had received reliable reports, in particular a Note from the Polish Government, regarding the barbarous and inhuman treatment to which Jews are being subjected in German-occupied Europe. Mr Eden said: 'I should like to take this opportunity of communicating to the House the text of the following declaration, which is being made public at this hour in London, Moscow and Washington.'¹

¹ BBC WAC, 1 p.m. news, 17 Dec. 1942.

The PWE directive for Poland did not mention the Warsaw Ghetto until 13 May, when it included the following:

As the Central Directive points out the Comintern announcement throws a new light on resistance to the Germans, insofar as the Soviet-sponsored Partisans ought now, juridically speaking, to come into the framework of national resistance activity and instead of conducting secondary feuds and polemics with national groups, serve a different strategic policy laid down by ourselves. It has been emphasised in previous directives that we should do all we can to encourage Polish underground organisations in their efforts to check irresponsible action and to further more carefully planned operations. We can now do so with less fear of political repercussions.

To this end we should continue by our reports on successful resistance implicitly to approve the Polish Government's Directorate in Poland. Good examples are:-

- (i) The assistance given to the Jews in their heroic struggle in the Ghetto.

This threw the effect of the dissolution of the Comintern starkly into relief. The Jewish fighters, whose loyalty to the Government-in-exile might have been open to question, could *now* be treated as firm allies. Their revolt, which to London eyes typified the worst kind of resistance activity, could now be linked into the wider pattern of resistance in Poland - which political warfare strategy demanded the BBC present as unified, disciplined and potentially successful.

The BBC broadcast little about the Bermuda conference because it was not in the interest of the Government. Similarly, the Warsaw ghetto uprising, inspiring as it may seem now, presented all the wrong lessons for other peoples in occupied Europe; though the dissolution of the Comintern shortly afterwards changed this a little. What both these episodes demonstrated was that in the Spring of 1943 it was in *nobody's* interest that news of the Final Solution should have any kind of prominence. In such a situation the BBC stayed quiet.

CHAPTER VI

'ONLY LIKELY TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE': JUNE 1943 TO MARCH 1944

The period from June 1943 until the occupation of Hungary in March 1944 contained the two most detailed descriptions of the Final Solution that the BBC broadcast during the war. It also saw the failure of attempts, again for both services, to increase the amount of coverage intended for and about the Jews of Europe. How to explain this contradiction is one of the main questions of this chapter.

SECTION A: THE HOME SERVICE IN LATE 1943.

The repercussions of Bermuda rolled on into June. The 9 p.m. news on 11 June reported the founding of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, the report stating that the draft agreement had been 'issued by the United States after discussion with the Soviet Government, as well as the Chinese and our own, and one of the most important things about it is that it represents a joint effort of all nations.' This was surely an example of the public being invited to 'forget the quality, feel the width'. The relentlessly upbeat tone managed to obfuscate completely the potential effectiveness of UNRRA, despite the assurance that if 'military circumstances allow it, it'll bring help while the war's still going on'.¹

Despite the BBC's positive coverage of the Allies' limited efforts to ameliorate the position of European Jewry, there was now even less news of their actual fate. The same day as the above report on refugees, there was a rare exception to this in the 9 p.m. news. It is worth noting that the tendency to feature positive gentile responses was still prevalent.

The leaders of all the Churches in Holland have signed a protest against one of the Germans' most appalling campaigns to uphold Hitler's doctrine of racial purity - the sterilisation of Jewish husbands in Dutch mixed marriages

The protest, drawn up by the heads of all denominations has been sent to the Nazi Commissioner in Holland, Seyss-Inquart, calling on him to stop these acts. The Dutch Church leaders warn him that God will hold him to account for this violation of all human rights. They say: 'Sterilisation means physical and spiritual mutilation, a violation of the Divine law, an attitude of mind that undermines Christian human life.'

¹ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 11 Jun. 1943.

'Though we can hardly expect you to heed the voice of the Church, the Voice of God, the Divine Commandments apply to you, in high office, as to all men; it is your duty to stop this shameful practice.'²

The next instance of the Home Service featuring news of persecutions against Jews took the same line. This was an item in the midnight news of 21 June. It reported a pastoral letter dated 8 March by the Catholic bishops of Slovakia that Radio Vatican had broadcast earlier in the day. The report, which, as aired, omitted any direct reference to extermination, spoke only of 'harm' being done to Jews.³ A very similar item was broadcast in the beginning of July. This was another report of an item carried in German by Vatican Radio, originating this time from the Archbishop of Zagreb who had protested against the banning of mixed marriages. Amongst the reiteration of Catholic universalist dogma, there were again no references to extermination.⁴

Occasional pieces mentioning concern on the part of organisations such as the League of Nations Union 'at the apparent lack of progress in rescuing Jewish and other victims threatened by Nazi persecution' were broadcast during the early Summer of 1943.⁵ But there was little new information on what was happening specifically to Jews. Nevertheless, the Home Service made its first mention of Majdanek at this time. Rather than any connection with Jews, it described Majdanek as being a place of extermination for over a million Polish peasants. The report, in the 9 p.m. and midnight news on 26 July, stated: 'Many of the victims are killed on the spot, but most of them are taken away to a place called Maydanek [sic], where they are mass murdered in gas chambers. Men between fourteen and fifty aren't killed: they are sent in sealed trucks to an unknown destination.'⁶

The BBC Home Service was still under enormous pressure from the Polish Government-in-exile to broadcast programmes on atrocities in Poland. They also demanded the right of prior approval over any broadcast dealing with Poland, such as the Majdanek story.⁷ G.W. Harrison, in Frank Roberts' absence, replied to BBC concern over

² Ibid., midnight news, 11 Jun. 1943.

³ Ibid., midnight news, 21 Jun. 1943.

⁴ Ibid., midnight & 7 & 8 a.m. news, 21 Jun. 1943.

⁵ Ibid., 6 p.m. news, 25 Jun. 1943.

⁶ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 26 Jul. 1943.

⁷ PRO FO 371/34556, f29, Cummings to Roberts, 1 Jul. 1943.

this by confirming to the BBC official charged with liaison between Broadcasting House and the FO that 'in deciding what is and what is not suitable for putting out on the Home Service the BBC's view should in general prevail over that of any Allied Government'.⁸ The Poles continued to attempt to shape Home Service broadcasting.

In August matters changed dramatically. The Chief Rabbi had traditionally had the privilege of using the BBC to transmit a religious message on major Jewish days of observance. He chose the Day of Mourning to make the first mention of the Warsaw ghetto uprising on the BBC Home Service. After speaking about the traditions of the day and the historical agonies of destruction and exile, he switched to the 'unparalleled agony of rightlessness and woe' that had befallen European Jewry in the last decade. With enormous understatement he spoke of the planned slaughter of 'at least two million' Jews and then about the Warsaw ghetto:

Our infinite pity is only deepened by shining deeds of supreme bravery in this dreadful night of Nazi bestiality. I have particularly in mind the men who fought the battle of Warsaw in May and June of this year. You have no doubt heard of the 500,000 Jews whom the Germans crowded into the Warsaw ghetto, thousands were daily deported to the slaughterhouses which the ghouls of Berlin had erected in the interior of Poland. By April this year the 500,000 had been reduced to 40,000. But these survivors, starved and enfeebled by ghastly suffering, resolved to make a stand against their murderers. Polish underground forces supplied them with arms; and they barricaded themselves in factories, houses and streets. They killed one thousand of the enemy in the course of the conflict, and held their own for six weeks, till the middle of June. The Nazis resorted to mining operations and artillery bombardment; and later attacked the Jewish quarter from the air; showering down incendiaries in order to set the whole of it on fire. But the defenders, with the desperation of doomed men, contested every inch of ground, and fought and died to the last man.

The Battle of Warsaw is unsurpassed in the whole history of heroism. It is an epic struggle that recall the glories of the Maccabees, and the sublime self-slaughter at Masada.⁹

⁸ Ibid., f31, Harrison to Cummings, 10 Jul. 1943.

⁹ BBC WAC, newstalk by J.H. Hertz, 9 Aug. 1943.

If Hertz was a little unsure of when the uprising was finally crushed, he was right in most other aspects. This talk represented the first breaching of the 'news only' rule regarding Jews since the Allied Declaration. Why the BBC relented is unclear.

Two days later came an even starker illustration of this lapse in the policy. This was a talk based on a dispatch by the Soviet war correspondent Alexei Tolstoy, broadcast after the 9 p.m. news on 11 August. It featured a general account of Nazi slaughter of Jews in southern Russia and an eye-witness account of a massacre, all based on an official Soviet investigation.

The 9 p.m. news achieved an audience share of 51.9 per cent of the adult population that night - over 16,000,000 listeners.¹⁰ The announcer introduced it by stating that 'stories of the sufferings of people under Nazi rule are sometimes smuggled out of Europe; but it isn't often that the full and horrifying details can be checked and brought into the light of day'. The BBC were telling the public, assumed to be sceptical of atrocity stories, that what followed was utterly true. On no other topic that I am aware of, until the opening of the camps in 1945, did the BBC ever broadcast expecting to be other than totally believed. That the announcer had to appeal against listeners' incredulity showed just how challenging what followed would be. Speaking in the person of Tolstoy, the announcer first described a ditch at Mineralniye Vody in southern Russia, giving precise dimensions and an estimate of the number of Jews buried there - a figure that closely matched the number of Jews taken away from the local villages of Kislovodsk, Essentuki and Pyatigorsk. Heavy rain had revealed other mass graves in the area. Again, the report gave precise figures. In the Northern Caucasus, he read, the Germans had murdered the entire Jewish population, mainly evacuees from Leningrad, Odessa, the Ukraine and the Crimea.

The account then moved on the precise measures the Germans had used to prepare for the massacre at Mineralniye Vody. During the early days of the occupation this included the formation of 'Jewish Committees' and the creation of ghettos. The impression was definitely given that the Nazi policy since 1941 had been one of extermination. For the Jews, eventual news of their supposed deportation into the interior of Ukraine had come as

¹⁰ BBC WAC, R9/11/9.

a relief, especially as they were allowed to take 25 kilos of baggage with them. The train on which they eventually left had stopped just outside the city, and then moved to a glass factory where it stopped for good.

'At one o'clock the train, containing about 2,000 people, passed through the station of Mineralniye Vody and stopped in a field. The German officers examined the lie of the land through field-glasses. Apparently the examination did not satisfy them, for the train backed to Mineralniye Vody, was switched over to a reserve track, and stopped at a glass factory.

'Get out! Jump down!' shouted the German guards. The people began to feel alarmed. The members of the Jewish Committee, among whom were four well-known doctors and a middle-aged writer, Bergman, tried to reassure them: 'The Germans are our enemies. The Germans are strict. But they are cultured people. We must believe the promise of their Command [...]

Then followed an order to give up all valuables. Ear rings and watches were hastily taken off and thrown into the guards' caps. About ten minutes passed. A staff car with Gestapo Chief Welben and Commandant Pohl drove up. An order followed: 'Everybody strip naked.'

All this was related to me by the only survivor, an old man named Fingerut. He hid in the grass growing on the railway line, crouched between the wheels of a truck.

When the order was given to undress, the people realised that this was the end - that they were to be executed. The guards drove a crowd of these people past an airfield to an anti-tank ditch half-a-mile from the glass factory. Fingerut saw a German soldier, who was dragging two children by the hand, take a revolver and shoot them. Several automobiles drove around the field in circles. Germans in them shot those who tried to run away.

It is not easy to kill nearly two thousand people: the shooting lasted from one p.m. until nightfall. At night closed cars from the town of Essentuki began to drive up to this ditch. Jews from Essentuki had been fooled in exactly the same manner, by means of a so-called Jewish Committee. On the order of Commandant Beck, 507 able-bodied Jews and about 1,500 children and old people gathered in the school-building on the outskirts of Essentuki with their baggage and provisions, ready to emigrate. The whole day they waited to be sent off. After eight o'clock the guards began to rob their baggage and to load the people into vans in groups. By the next morning all of them had been murdered and flung into the anti-tank ditch in Mineralniye Vody.

In the same way in Pyatigorsk, 2,800 Jews, adults and children, were summoned by deceit, 'for emigration', driven to Mineralniye Vody in trucks, murdered, and dumped into the same anti-tank ditch.

What is all this? Who are the Germans?

With what penance and what deeds will the Germans be able to wash away the stains of this disgrace? The stain is Nazism. The German people followed Hitler to murder and plunder. Woe to the those Germans who do not come out of their brown stupor, now, before it is too late.¹¹

¹¹ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 11 Aug. 1943.

This was shocking material and, taken with Hertz's talk two days previously, represented the greatest concentration of news of the Final Solution between the Allied Declaration and the opening of the camps. But the momentum was not sustained.

Violet Bonham-Carter, a Governor of the BBC, mentioned Tolstoy's report two months later in a letter to the Controller of the Home Service, Maconachie. In passing on a request from Mrs Corbett Ashby, a member of the Executive of the National Council for Civil Liberties, for programmes on racism in general, she reported to him that she had told Mrs Ashby that 'we had had one or two talks (like Alexei Tolstoy's on the Jewish persecution in Russia, for instance) and that we were obliged to space these things out rather carefully'.¹²

There had been continuing efforts by the BBC hierarchy to block talks programmes on antisemitism, the Final Solution and Jews in general throughout 1943. One of the most tenacious of those seeking to persuade the BBC to change their minds was Commander Locker-Lampson MP. He finally secured a meeting with Maconachie in early June. The MP told Maconachie that there was a massive increase of antisemitism in this country, which he blamed on the 'constant propaganda of Haw-Haw' and which the BBC was doing nothing to counter. Maconachie replied that this was most unfair: His own record of the interview, passed to Director-General Foot, stated:

I said that the point had already been considered here and discussion with Professor Brodetzky's delegation on 1 May, 1942 i.e. over a year ago that a pro-Jewish broadcast such as Cmdr. Locker-Lampson had in mind would be only likely to make matters worse, since the anti-Semites would demand the right to reply, which would be difficult to refuse, and Professor Brodetzky's delegation was not in favour of any direct campaign of this kind. They presumably knew their own minds.¹³

In other words, the BBC was using the timidity of the Board of Deputies to buttress its position. Two days later, Barnes, the Director of Talks, received a letter from the Conservative politician Quintin Hogg in his position of a member of the National

¹² BBC WAC, R34/277, Violet Bonham-Carter to C(H), 26 Oct. 1943.

¹³ Ibid., record of interview with Locker-Lampson by C(H), 7 Jun. 1943.

Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror. He stated that the NCRNT believed it 'quite possible that the right talk, purely factual, by the right Jew, on behalf of his people, describing what is actually going on might be accepted by the Home Service'. Hogg's choice of the 'right Jew' was Victor Gollancz.¹⁴ The Assistant Controller (Home), R.N. Armfelt told Barnes to give a similar answer to those he had given to Locker-Lampson.¹⁵ Another proposal two weeks later for a talk on a similar theme was turned down on the grounds that the talks schedule was completely full for the next three weeks.¹⁶ Other excuses could be found if needed. When the Poles tried to get a BBC programme in support of a 'Day of Protest' to be held in the late summer against the execution and gassing of Polish and Jewish children, Maconachie met their request with the following:

While agreeing that the British public should be kept fully aware of the crimes committed by the Germans during their occupation of Poland and other countries, we have in fact no reason to think that our audience are under any misapprehension on the subject, and regret that we do not consider the present time altogether appropriate for a broadcast on this subject.¹⁷

Letters between the BBC and the Polish Ministry of Information flew back and forth over the next few weeks, before the BBC finally settled on the barren excuse that the suffering of people in Poland had already been the subject of a 'This Week's Good Cause' programme.

Some BBC officials exhibited clear and blatant antisemitism, but this was extremely rare. May Jenkins of the Schools Broadcasting section recorded a visit from the 'official apparently in charge of Jewish subjects' at the MOI, Goodman, who wanted her to broadcast some five minute programmes 'designed chiefly to interest Jewish children, and to disarm anti-Semitism.' She told the Controller of Programmes that she could find space 'if necessary for us to do so, but from experience we have found that if you give Jewish broadcasters an inch they come clamouring for an ell [sic] soon afterwards'.¹⁸ No programmes were made.

¹⁴ Ibid., Hogg to D(T), 9 Jun. 1943.

¹⁵ Ibid., AC(H) to D(T), 11 Jun. 1943.

¹⁶ Ibid., C(H) to C(N), 26 Jun. 1943.

¹⁷ Ibid., C(H) to Drohojowski [PMOI], 21 Jul. 1943.

¹⁸ Ibid., May E. Jenkins to C(P), 11 Aug. 1943.

As when Hertz chose to use his religious affairs slot to tell the story of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, religious speakers who wanted to speak about antisemitism were harder to silence than BBC employees. As a result, a script by the Reverend W.W. Simpson for the regular Sunday religious talk on 22 August created problems. A memo by Armfelt to the Assistant Controller of Programmes reminded him of Board policy, and wondered how far he could apply this policy to religious talks.¹⁹ The matter was then passed on to the Director-General. The Assistant Controller of Programmes commented that as the 'address was to be given in a service conducted by the Organising Secretary of the Council of Christians and Jews, its theme is, therefore, almost unavoidable'.²⁰

Armfelt felt that certain passages were particularly problematic. The first was one that suggested that Jews were often their own worst enemies. He allowed, however, that in decrying Jewish 'misconduct' one must 'try to understand something of the conditions which have given rise to it'. The second was a passage that stated that this was particularly the case in days when Jews are 'the subject of so much malicious talk and the victims of such brutal treatment'.²¹ Simpson agreed to cut them from his script, but only after much complaining. He then tried to secure an answer as to why he had had to make the cuts. Some six weeks later Armfelt wrote to the Assistant Controller of Programmes with the line that Eric Fenn, the Assistant Director of Religious Broadcasting, should take when replying to Simpson, marking his letter 'confidential' and reminding him 'we do not want it quoted in the press'. Armfelt brought out the same argument that had been used by BBC management since 1942; that any mention of antisemitism would lead to an increase of it rather than a reduction. He added: 'This reaction would admittedly have been unreasonable, but I am sure you will agree that anti-semitism is usually a matter of prejudice rather than of reason'.²² Fenn echoed all this in his eventual letter to Simpson on 1 October.²³

After the substantial reports contained in the broadcasts by Tolstoy and Hertz, the BBC broadcast only brief mentions of the Final Solution from late summer onwards. On 31

¹⁹ Ibid., AC(H) to AC(P), 20 Aug. 1943.

²⁰ Ibid., AC(P) to DG, 20 Aug. 1943.

²¹ Ibid., AC(H) to AC(P), 20 Aug. 1943.

²² Ibid., AC(H) to AC(P), 28 Sep. 1943.

²³ Ibid., ADRB to Simpson, 1 Oct. 1943.

August, only in the 6 p.m. bulletin, there was a report of the Red Army retaking Taganrog on the Sea of Azov. They had found 'that the Germans had destroyed the whole of Taganrog's Jewish population; there was not a single survivor'.²⁴ The next flurry of stories stemmed from the position of Danish Jewry. The first mention of this was on 2 October, with reports on the 6 p.m., 9 p.m. and midnight bulletins. All of these were trailed in the headlines, ranked fourth out of six items. The actual report was as follows:

The Germans have announced more savage measures against the Jews in Denmark. The Jews are to be 'eliminated from public life' because, the Germans say, they've gone in for sabotage and helped make things worse for the Germans in Denmark. Arrests started on Thursday, the Jewish New Year Day.

There's been an immediate reaction in Sweden. The Swedish Government has made an official protest to Germany, pointing out that this persecution will have serious repercussions in Sweden. In addition, Sweden has offered to receive all Danish Jews.²⁵

This information was, in the usual context of reports from Europe, accurate and extremely timely. Arrests had actually started under 48 hours previously. But what is important to point out here is that there was nothing to indicate what was likely to happen to Danish Jews who were arrested. If there was no evidence that they were to be transported and then murdered, the Home Service would not broadcast that as fact. The result of this was to force the BBC into using the Nazis' own words, i.e. *Sprachreglung*²⁶: the Jews were to be 'eliminated from public life'. The following day, both the 9 p.m. and midnight bulletins included more news from Denmark. This stated that hundreds 'of Danish Jews have reached Sweden in the last twenty-four hours, escaping from the new German persecution.' This had been achieved 'despite the Gestapo'.²⁷ Interestingly, Ryan was briefed a few days later with intelligence information that stated that the Jews were crossing 'more or less unimpeded', and that the rumour in Stockholm was this was under the direct instructions of Himmler, 'so as to curry favour with the Allies as against Ribbentrop'.²⁸ The BBC did not

²⁴ BBC WAC, 6 p.m. news, 31 Aug. 1943.

²⁵ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 2 Oct. 1943.

²⁶ *Sprachreglung*: ordered speech. This was an important component in masking Nazi intentions throughout the period of the Holocaust.

²⁷ Ibid., 3 Oct. 1943.

²⁸ BBC WAC R28/19/1. memo by A.P. Ryan, 8 Oct. 1943.

report this. The Jews' role in political warfare could not include such a high degree of ambiguity.²⁹

The Home Service mentioned the position of Jews in two other countries during October 1943. The first time was on 21 October. This was a report of a speech by Dr Gerbrandy, the Prime Minister of the Dutch Government-in-exile, given on *Radio Oranje* the same evening:

He said at the end of last month a final batch of five thousand [Jews] was sent from Amsterdam to the concentration camp at Westerbork. Now hardly any Jew on Dutch soil remained free. He said it was known, too, that the German slave-drivers were planning to carry off a large number of Netherlands state officials.³⁰

This conflation of Jewish deportations with others was not new, of course. But as in the Danish reports, the fate of the deportees - which could not have been unknown to anyone remotely familiar with events inside occupied Europe - was not mentioned. The same pattern was repeated yet again three days later with the following report in that night's 9 p.m. and midnight bulletins: 'The Germans in Greece have ordered the compulsory registration of Jews in the areas which used to be occupied by the Italians. In the past this has always been a first step to deportation, which has already been ruthlessly carried out in some parts of Greece.'³¹ In all of these pieces it is the reluctance to extrapolate, to project, to *investigate* that is most striking.

The Home Service returned to Poland on 22 November, with a report of a press conference in London given by the Polish National Council. The 9 p.m. news trailed it thus: 'The Polish National Council estimate that German atrocities have left only a few hundred thousand Jews still alive in Poland.' The actual report in the bulletin was very brief. It read:

A member of the Polish National Council stated in London today that only a few hundred thousand Jews were believed to be still alive in Poland. He gave the names of ten Germans who were mainly responsible for this wholesale

²⁹ The escape of Jews from Denmark was facilitated by senior Nazis.

³⁰ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 21 Oct. 1943.

³¹ Ibid., 24 Oct. 1943.

slaughter, and said that if the remaining Jewish population is to survive this war all possible help must be given at once.³²

A week later came another report from territory the Red Army had liberated, this time Kiev. The report, broadcast to the traditionally high Sunday lunchtime audience at 1 p.m. was a composite of dispatches by British and American correspondents who had flown to Kiev shortly after its recapture. The first part of the report gave a general description of the scene approaching Kiev and inside the city. It then featured a full description of what the Germans had done to the city's Jewish population. This bulletin received an audience of over 13,000,000 people.³³

And just as the Germans have failed to destroy Kiev entirely, so they have failed to hide the traces of a vast crime against the Jews. It is estimated that they shot over eighty thousand Jews, men women and children. At first they just buried them in pits in a ravine above the north-western outskirts of the city. But when they saw that the Russians were coming, they wanted to destroy the evidence. They made great funeral pyres with gravestones and railings ripped from a neighbouring cemetery. Some hundreds of Russians they had taken prisoner in Kiev were forced to do this work. The fires burned from six weeks, and at the end of this time these three hundred prisoners were told to make one last tower for burning, and they knew it meant for themselves. That night they broke out of the place in which they were imprisoned and made a break through the machine-gun fire of the German guards. Some of them did escape, and three were introduced to the correspondents and told the story of what they had seen. The correspondents were taken to the spot and had no difficulty in believing this story from the evidence which they found for themselves there.³⁴

Despite what would seem initially to be a plain, factual account of Babi Yar, this report was, of course, not entirely free of the Soviets' own brand of universalism - one that similarly played down the Jewishness of what had happened. Instead of emphasising the slaughter of a large section of Ukrainian Jewry, the overwhelming image was of heroic resistance against Fascism on the part of the Soviet prisoners.

The BBC commemorated the anniversary of the Allied Declaration on 5 December. Unfortunately this broadcast has not survived. However, from the introduction we can get

³² Ibid., 22 Nov. 1943.

³³ BBC WAC, R9/11/9.

³⁴ BBC WAC, 1 p.m. news, 29 Nov. 1943.

a sense of what it must have been like. Lasting four minutes and broadcast on Saturday lunchtime, it was read by Frederick Allen - the same announcer who had read the transcript of the Declaration a year previously.³⁵ The newsreader announced that what followed had 'been compiled with every care, to tell listeners some of the things that Germans have done to the Jews since that declaration was made': It concluded with the newsreaders stating that the 'American Institute for Jewish Questions estimates that well over three million of the Jews in Europe have been killed since the beginning of the war'.³⁶

The manner in which the content of this talk came to be established was typical of the fraught negotiations that ensued over about Jews. Eleanor Rathbone, in her capacity as a Vice-President of the NCRNT, wrote to Violet Bonham-Carter in November suggesting that the BBC mark the anniversary of the Allied Declaration with a Sunday postscript.

The idea would be, without going into too many ghastly details, to remind the public of the continuing massacres and deportations; to give a sort of warning to the Nazis and the satellites that these things will not be forgotten and that it would be better for them to stop them; to say something of the overwhelming testimony of the British desire for generous measures of rescue, but of how little in fact we have been able to do (this part of course without indiscreet criticism of the Government); finally and perhaps most important, to pay a tribute to the Jewish people now suffering because of their race, mentioning some of facts about their war service in the armed forces and otherwise.

She added how dismayed she was that the BBC's reports of the recent Moscow conference had been so phrased that 'the word Jew does not once occur, though the scale of Jewish massacres outnumbers all the others put together'. Concluding, Rathbone stated that it seemed from this and much and else as though 'the Government preferred to let the Jewish persecutions be forgotten, perhaps because they have a bad conscience about the little they have done for rescue'.³⁷ Bonham-Carter was stung into action by this, and took it to the next meeting of the Board of Governors. Before the meeting had even discussed it, Maconachie had drafted a reply to Rathbone, setting out the tried and trusted BBC

³⁵ It is interesting to note that this was a time when observant Jews would not have been listening to the radio.

³⁶ Ibid., 5 Dec. 1943.

³⁷ BBC WAC R34/277, Rathbone to Bonham-Carter, 2 Nov. 1943.

response that 'as opinion on all questions affecting Jews is so largely coloured by emotion it would be ill-advised to broadcast any direct expression of opinion or appeal for sympathy'. Much better to simply report the facts, and highlight the achievements of Jews in the United Kingdom. This, after all, he wrote, was what the Board of Deputies had agreed in 1942.³⁸

It was also what the Board of Governors agreed on 18 November. The Director-General, Foot, and the Home Service Editor-in-Chief, William Haley, his soon-to-be-successor, stated that they had reviewed the policy and still agreed that it was not the BBC's responsibility in any way to 'correct the undoubted anti-semitic feeling which exists in this country'. This was in 'the interests of the Jews themselves [...] as any other policy would increase rather than decrease the anti-Jewish feeling in this country'. On these grounds, Rathbone's proposal had to be turned down. There was, however, no objection 'to a factual talk - probably of five minutes in a news bulletin' reminding listeners of the Declaration and updating it with facts which had since emerged and had 'been established as authentic'.³⁹ This recommendation was then passed to the talks editor.⁴⁰ Haley replied to Rathbone on Bonham-Carter's behalf.⁴¹

In the middle of December the Kharkov war crimes trial received a large amount of coverage. The evidence during the show trial which the Home Service reported gave a full picture of how the Nazis had treated the Soviet people. It included an account of the operation of 'specially built mobile-gas-chambers' that were 'big lorries, equipped so that the exhaust can be run straight into hermetically-sealed chambers, which hold several dozen people at once'.⁴² There was additional testimony to the operations of the *Einsatzgruppen*, with accounts of mass shootings of men, women and children. The coverage was spread out over four days. The news of the sentences and their public execution was broadcast on 20 December. None of the reports mentioned the word *Jew* at anytime. Rathbone's intervention a month previously had had no impact.

³⁸ Ibid., draft letter from C(H) to Rathbone, 8 Nov. 1943.

³⁹ Ibid., statement of BBC policy by DG, 18 Nov. 1943.

⁴⁰ Ibid., minute by Clerk to Board of Governors, 19 Nov. 1943

⁴¹ Ibid., Haley to Rathbone, 26 Nov. 1943.

⁴² C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 16 Dec. 1943.

The Home Service marked the New Year of 1944 with a report, broadcast only in the 6 p.m. bulletin, of mass round-ups of Jews in southern France, 'carried out under Gauleiter Brunner, who's come to France to bring the policy of persecution into line with the new savagery of extermination'.⁴³ This was a new policy for former Italian-occupied France, but hardly for the rest of Europe. Another fragment of news was broadcast five days later with the news that the head of Finnish State Police had resigned. It identified him as an admirer of Himmler who last year 'was narrowly prevented from handing over Jewish refugees from Finland to the Gestapo'.⁴⁴

The Board of Deputies made another attempt to shape BBC coverage in January 1944. Brodetsky wrote to Bracken, asking whether it might be possible for the BBC to cover a lunch to mark a memorial fund for Britain's most eminent Jewish soldier, Brigadier Kisch.⁴⁵ He hoped it would be possible to report such philosemitic remarks that Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery planned to make.⁴⁶ Bracken passed the request to Haley, with the recommendation that 'if Montgomery makes a speech stressing his service and those of other Jews in this war it may help to counter the very nasty growth of anti-semitism in this country'.⁴⁷ Haley replied that he would do his best.⁴⁸ The Home Service duly broadcast them on 2 February, and so one should count this as an example, if an extremely minor one, of the Board of Deputies choosing to use its influence - and having some success.⁴⁹ However, this was possible only when a figure such as deployed Bracken his clout on their behalf. Others who sought at this time to persuade the FO to push for propaganda on atrocities against Jews were less successful. Harold Nicolson, the National Labour MP, recorded in his diaries how he had been part of a deputation seeing Eden on this matter and left 'thinking how reasonable, how agreeable, and how helpful he had been, and then one discovers that in fact he has promised nothing at all'.⁵⁰

⁴³ BBC WAC, 6 p.m. news, 1 Jan. 1944.

⁴⁴ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 5 Jan. 1944.

⁴⁵ Kisch had been Chief Engineer Officer to the Eighth Army until his death in action in 1943.

⁴⁶ BBC WAC R34/277, Brodetsky to Bracken, 17 Jan. 1944.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Bracken to Haley, 20 Jan. 1944.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Haley to Bracken, 21 Jan. 1944.

⁴⁹ BBC WAC, index to Home News bulletins.

⁵⁰ Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters 1939-1945*, ed. Nigel Nicolson, London 1967, p. 344; Wasserstein, op. cit., p. 299.

Early morning bulletins reported Roosevelt's formation of the War Refugee Board on 23 January. The reports stated that its aim was 'to save victims of Nazi oppression who are in danger of death'. The President had 'stressed the urgent need to forestall the German plan to exterminate the Jews and other persecuted minorities in Europe'.⁵¹ The support of the WJC for the WRB was reported two days later, with a leading member recommending a more vigorous policy, especially when, he stated, 'wherever the Germans fell back, the line of retreat was marked by the massacre of the Jewish population'.⁵² There was nothing more until the German occupation of Hungary.

The existence of the WRB had prompted some re-evaluation of policy within the FO. Part of this policy review touched on questions fundamental to whether news of the Final Solution would figure at all prominently for the BBC during the rest of the war. In a Cabinet Paper the head of the Refugee Department presented in early March, he commented:

Our own view is that hope that Allied Declaration of December 1942 would have restraining influence on Germans has not been realised. Subsequent German persecution of Jews has intensified and we have been inclined to think that by seeing us attach such intense public importance to the Jewish question German may have felt that they could hit Allied nations by tormenting or killing large numbers of Allied Jewish nationals.⁵³

The restatement of this policy was an extremely important event. Over the next twelve months it would regularly be put forward by officials discussing whether to issue new declarations, or allot time to broadcasting specifically aimed at Jews. This was vital because, as we have seen, without firm Government backing, the Home Service was reluctant to feature news of the Final Solution at all.

SECTION B: THE EUROPEAN SERVICE IN LATE 1943.

⁵¹ BBC WAC, 8 a.m. news, 23 Jan. 1944.

⁵² C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 28 Jan. 1944.

⁵³ PRO FO 371/42728 (W3420/16/48), Cabinet Refugee Committee paper, 10 March, 1944.

How did the record of the European Service compare with that of the Home Service over the latter part of 1943? Again, only fragmentary evidence is available - but much of what does remain is highly illuminating. Transcripts of the BBC Polish Service, and its Government-in-exile run companion, *Radio Polskie*, have survived for the periods 20-30 June and the whole of July. Neither broadcast anything relating to the Final Solution between 20 and 30 June, but this was definitely not the case in July.

Newsome's directives provide more clues. Throughout this period he continued to highlight stories concerning the Final Solution. These included an injunction to use a *Times* report on 1 June, protests by Slovak clergy on 8 June and how rapid advances by British troops in Tunisia had 'saved the lives of a thousand Jews due to be shot' on 10 June.⁵⁴ He also noted the news of forced sterilisations in Holland that the Home Service had broadcast.⁵⁵ However, Newsome, as ever, also picked up on stories that the Home Service ignored. An example was the following:

The announcement by the German-controlled Dutch press that all 180,000 Jews in Holland before the war are either in the death camps in Poland or in concentration camps in Holland should be reported. Here is quite a promising subject for comment. There is more and evidence that anti-Semitism has been over-played by the Nazis.⁵⁶

Newsome echoed the message in the last two sentences above a few days later in one of his occasional rambling and discursive directives, where he meditated on issues of propaganda and political warfare. He argued that Nazi propaganda was now portraying the Third Reich as a defender of European Culture and the 'Old Order' against barbarianism. He noted that 'the mockery of this claim can and should be brought out by presenting [...] the latest confirmation from German sources of the cold-blooded extermination of the Jews'.⁵⁷

Again this underlines the point that it was not just journalistic or moral imperatives determining Newsome's commitment to making news of the Final Solution, good enough reasons for him though these were. It was also rooted in his belief that Nazi treatment of

⁵⁴ BBC WAC, E2/131/11, 1; 8; 10 Jun. 1943.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 12 Jun. 1943.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 23 Jun. 1943.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 28 Jun. 1943.

the Jews was a subject on which they were open to attack. This was in strong contrast to the views of those responsible for propaganda policy within PWE, who not only saw no moral dimension to the role of the BBC but also believed that the inherent antisemitism of the occupied peoples, especially in Eastern Europe, rendered any appeal to common humanity counter-productive. Newsome's contradiction of this view had palpable results, as is shown below.

On 2 July Alan Bullock, Talks Editor for the European Service, circulated a memo to all the editors of the various regional services. He stated that the script which accompanied it had been secured for the European Service by Arthur Koestler and that Newsome regarded 'this as a MUST for all languages'.⁵⁸ Bullock added that the details 'had been checked with the Polish Government' and that all names were not to be given. The script was a talk by Jan Karski and was introduced as 'an eye-witness account of by a member of the Polish Underground movement who has reached England'. These were not Karski's own words. Koestler had met Karski at a party the Polish artist Feliks Topolski had held in his honour, attended by figures such as Allen Lane, Victor Gollancz, and Eleanor Rathbone. Karski's biographer states that this meeting formed the basis not only for the subsequent talk but also for Koestler's novel *Arrival and Departure*.⁵⁹ However, a BBC representative told the regular meeting between the Polish Government-in-exile's representatives and the BBC and PWE that the Polish Home Army (hereafter AK) had submitted it.⁶⁰ This was quite probably a form of words which maintained the idea that all information from inside Poland had come via the Government-in-exile, and thus their dignity. Karski, after all, was still a member of the AK - even though Koestler had actually written the script. A problem arose when some of the various language services actually named Karski in their version of the talk. Irrate Polish intelligence officials made Karski, in the United States at this time, aware of this. He wrote an angry letter to Koestler.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Emphasis original. Alan Bullock later became an esteemed historian.

⁵⁹ E. Thomas Wood, *Karski: How One Man Tried to Stop the Holocaust* (New York, 1994). p. 179.

⁶⁰ SI KOL. 434/44, , 30 Jun. 1943.

⁶¹ Correspondence with E. Thomas Wood.

The talk began by stating that the author had 'collected matter on the Jewish mass exterminations carried out by the occupying Power'. It then launched into the most detailed account of the specifically Jewish nature of the atrocities in Poland that the BBC had yet broadcast:

At present, the extermination of the Jews has a special significance. The sufferings of my own Polish compatriots are terrible; but the methods employed by the enemy against Poles and against Jews are different. Us, the Poles, they try to reduce to a medieval race of serfs. They want to deprive us of our cultural standards, of our traditions, of our education, and reduce us to a nation of robots. But the policy towards the Jews is different. It is a policy of cold and systematic extermination. It is the first example in modern history that a whole nation, not 10, 20 or 30, but 100 per cent of them are meant to disappear from this earth.

Although this was qualified, with these statements being prefixed with 'At present', the implication being that the Germans might extend such an onslaught to Poles in the future, the thrust of this was clear; the Jews alone faced utter destruction. The script then described the process by which this was to be achieved:

The Jews are collected from all over Europe and despatched to the Ghettos of Warsaw, Lwow, etc., where they stay for a certain time. From the Ghettos they are 'taken East' as the official term goes, that is, to the extermination camps of Belzec, Treblinka and Sobibor. In these camps, they are killed in batches of 1,000 to 6,000, by various methods, including gas, burning by steam, mass electrocution and, finally, by the method of the so called death train.

The point that this excerpt underlines is the absence of new information. The script reproduced both the accuracies and inaccuracies of the Bund report and the Polish memorandum of November 1942, as would be expected given that Karski's own information formed the basis of the latter. It was, nonetheless, the first recorded mention by the BBC of the names of these three *Reinhard* camps. But the real importance of this script was that such information was being broadcast at all. We know that it was available, what is important is to show is that the BBC were at this point using it. This is particularly the case with the following excerpt, in which the speaker describes witnessing a mass execution at Belzec, to which he had gained access disguised as a Latvian special policeman,

participating as one of the executioners. He had arrived at the camp in July, 1942 when it contained roughly 6,000 Jews who had arrived a few days previously:

They had been told, like all detachments sent away from the Ghetto, that they were to be employed on field work and to dig trenches. On arrival at the camp, they had been encouraged to write letters to their friends left behind in the Warsaw Ghetto - letters stating that they were being treated correctly and that deportation was not at all as bad as they had feared. This is to reassure the victims that they were being treated correctly and that deportation was not at all as bad as they had feared. This is part of the German technique to reassure the victims and keep them in doubt until the last possible moment, thus avoiding unnecessary fuss. Altogether I counted 51 trucks, which absorbed the whole 6,000 people in the camp, with the exception of about 20 or 30, who had been shot dead during the rush.

The train moves on for about 25 miles and then halts in an open field. It remains standing there hermetically sealed for six to seven days. When finally, its doors are opened by the grave-diggers' squad, the people inside are all dead, and their bodies in an advanced state of decomposition. They die by suffocation. The people jammed into the trucks have naturally to relieve themselves, and this, instantaneously, produces a chemical reaction. While being slowly suffocated by the chlorine gas, their feet are actually burnt to the bone by the chemically active chlorine.⁶²

I do not want to add any comments to what I have seen and described. I, myself, have not witnessed the other methods of mass killing, such as electrocution, steaming, etc. but I have heard first-hand eye-witness accounts, which describe them as equally horrible. The latest estimate of the number of Jews executed by these methods, in the systematic carrying out of Himmler's orders, is in the region of two million.⁶³

This was the first, and the only, eye-witness account of the extermination process that the BBC European Service broadcast during the war that I have been able to locate. From Newsome's instructions and subsequent meetings between the Poles and the BBC, it is clear it was very widely used throughout the European Service - though the Home Service ignored it.⁶⁴ The French Service broadcast a version, containing all the information above, in *Les Français Parlent aux Français* on 8 July 1943.⁶⁵

⁶² Karski believed that the use of lime in the wagons was a method of executions, rather than a sanitary precaution.

⁶³ BBC WAC, BBC Polish Service news, 2 Jul. 1942. The version of the script included here is that edited by Alan Bullock.

⁶⁴ SI KOL. 434/44, , 7 Jul. 1943.

⁶⁵ Cremieux-Brilhac (ed.), op. cit., pp. 207-209.

In many ways it ran against the grain of much of what the European Service broadcast in its concentration on the specific extermination of the Jews, the absence of any encouraging lesson to be drawn, the broadcasting of information which was utterly accurate regarding the killing methods. This, quite apart from the shocking nature of its content, is what makes it stand out. Also important is the fact that the Poles had obviously supported it being broadcast. Quite apart from Bullock's comments on the accompanying memo, *Radio Polskie* gave it heavy coverage for the next two days.⁶⁶

The BBC's own radio service for Poland broadcast nothing else on the Final Solution for the rest of the month, save for an item on the Archbishop of Zagreb's attack on Nazi racial theories on 7 July.⁶⁷ The middle part of the month was dominated by Sikorski's death. However stories about Nazi terror began to reappear towards the end of July. The pattern of 1942 was being repeated. Shocking news of the fate of the Jews was followed by with stories that highlighted the plight of the Poles. On 19 July the BBC Polish Service reported that Lublin had been sealed off, and 21,000 Poles had been deported from the regions of Byelgorod, Zamosc and Hrabieszow. All the inhabitants of Krasnobrody and Zalikow, without exception, had been deported to Lublin, where they were 'sent to the notorious concentration camp in Majdanek. In the camp mass massacres are being carried out. In the gas chambers the Poles are being killed in the same way as the Jews.'⁶⁸ A week later a similar report repeated the claim that the Germans were murdering those deported from Eastern Poland in the Majdanek gas chambers.⁶⁹ The BBC French Service also broadcast this early the next day, naming Majdanek and stating that the Germans had started a deliberate effort to kill every Pole in a belt of territory a hundred kilometres wide in Eastern Poland. They had 'already exterminated the people in eight districts of the county of Lublin, using the massed murder methods they have practised on the Jewish population of Poland.'⁷⁰ The source for all of these reports was the same; the Government-in-exile's Ministry of Information.

⁶⁶ BBC WAC, *Radio Polskie*, 2 & 3 Jul. 1943.

⁶⁷ BBC WAC, BBC Polish Service news, 7 Jul. 1943.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 19 Jul. 1943.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 26 Jul. 1943.

⁷⁰ BBC WAC, French Service news, 27 Jul. 1943.

The Poles continued to pressure the FO to take these reports seriously and demanded that they use the BBC to issue warnings of reprisals if such atrocities were not immediately stopped.⁷¹ Formulating the response to this, Denis Allen wrote that, avoiding the perennially unpleasant question of reprisals, 'a good deal had already been done on these lines'. Obviously annoyed by the matter coming up yet again, he added that he doubted the BBC could give much more time. Nevertheless, he was not hostile to using news of atrocities. There was, he concluded, 'a good case, particularly in our propaganda to Germany, for making the maximum use of this material'. He even suggested that 'PWE would doubtless be considerably helped in this connection if it were possible for us to issue a new sort of declaration, which might suggest that the entire German nation may be made to pay'.⁷²

Such a declaration was indeed drafted later in the month. It stated that trustworthy information had reached the UK 'regarding the crimes committed by the German invaders against the population of Poland'. Since the autumn of 1942 the Germans had systematically emptied a belt of territory extending from the province of Bialystock southwards along the line of the River Bug of its inhabitants. In July 1943, it continued, they extended these measures to practically the whole of the province of Lublin, where 'hundreds of thousands of persons have been deported from their homes or exterminated in gas chambers'. The text concluded with the usual vague statement about post-war justice.⁷³ This draft, presumably written to placate the London Poles, was not popular within the FO. The senior civil servant Richard Allen, in a memo to Eden, reminded him that the only source for this information was the Government-in-exile. He added that reports of the use of gas chambers 'have usually, if not always, been equally vague, and since they have concerned the extermination of Jews, have usually emanated from Jewish sources.' Personally, he found the whole thing rather baffling:

I have never really understood the advantages of the gas chamber over the simpler machine gun, or the equally simple starvation method. These stories

⁷¹FO 371/34550 (C8965/34/55) f120, letter from Mikolaczyk to Eden, Aug. 1943.

⁷²Ibid., f153, memo by D. Allen, 8 Aug. 1943.

⁷³FO 371/34551 (C9705/34/55), draft text of Allied Declaration on German Atrocities in Poland.

may or may not be true, but in any event I submit we are putting out a statement on evidence which is far from conclusive. and which we have no means of assessing.⁷⁴

Seeking clarification, the matter was passed to William Cavendish-Bentinck, Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee of the Chiefs of Staff since 1940 and thus at the very apex of British intelligence. He agreed that the Polish information was not trustworthy. 'The Poles', he wrote, 'and to a far greater extent the Jews, tend to exaggerate German atrocities in order to stoke us up'.⁷⁵

This comment might seem to be conclusive evidence of the reluctance of British officials to believe information coming out of Europe about the Final Solution, particularly when it came from Jewish sources. It is reproduced by Martin Gilbert and Bernard Wasserstein as such.⁷⁶ But this is far from being the whole story. Cavendish-Bentinck then went on to state that he believed the story that Poles were being gassed as being without foundation, despite having supported it being played up in PWE directives knowing this to be the case.⁷⁷ However, for the Jews it was different: 'On the other hand we do know that the Germans are out to destroy Jews of any age unless they are fit for manual labour'. This comment perhaps reflected Ultra decrypts, to which Cavendish-Bentinck would have had access.⁷⁸

What this episode showed was that British officials were unlikely to believe information when it came from Jewish, or even Polish, sources. But that does not mean they doubted the existence of the Final Solution, particularly when information relating to it came from 'reliable' sources. Passing to Cadogan a report MI19⁷⁹ in Stockholm had compiled which have an extremely accurate account of the condition of Polish Jewry at the

⁷⁴ Ibid., minute by R Allen.

⁷⁵ Mention of gas chambers was omitted from the final version of the declaration, which, signed by the 'Big Three', was eventually published on 1 November 1943.

⁷⁶ Gilbert, *Auschwitz*, p. 150; Wasserstein, op. cit., p.296.

⁷⁷ Indeed, the Central Directives for 29 July and 5 August both spoke of the 'annihilation' of Poles in the Lublin and Radom areas. See FO 898/291, f180 & f44. The PWE Intelligence Report for the week ending 18 August spoke of the Polish population of the south and south-east of the General-Government being 'exterminated'. See FO 898/39 f908, w/e 18 Aug. 1943.

⁷⁸ FO 371/34551 (C9705/34/55) f1-2, minute by W. Cavendish-Bentinck, 27 Aug. 1943.

⁷⁹ The section of the intelligence services that dealt with intelligence gathered from escaped prisoners-of-war etc.

end of 1943, Cavendish-Bentinck noted that the source, a Polish clerk who had escaped through Gdynia, was 'not a Jew'.⁸⁰

Once again this switches the whole argument regarding the British Government's attitude towards the Final Solution away from the blanket suggestion that information was not believed. Rather, what I am advancing is the view that, though this may have been the case for many people, it does not tell the whole story - as Wasserstein is ready to admit.⁸¹ What is needed is a more nuanced view of perceptions. In propaganda and broadcasting terms this necessitates an understanding of the priorities and attitudes of the multifarious agencies and individuals involved in their preparation. Particularly, it demands an understanding of the essentially *political* context of information during wartime. All too often, it was this that got in the way of broadcasting information about the Final Solution.

Ideology operated alongside *raison d'état*. The way in which the politics of broadcasting were mediated by ideology was graphically illustrated in late 1943 when the Poles sought again to amplify coverage of the Final Solution. At the liaison meeting on 24 November, Count Balinski reported that the Government-in-exile had asked that *Radio Polskie*, which depended on the BBC for all its facilities, be given an extra five minutes of broadcasting time at least once a fortnight 'for a bulletin of news and information addressed to Jews in Poland in Polish'.⁸²

The Board of Deputies had first raised the question of broadcasts aimed specifically at Jews in 1941. The Board's press officer, Sidney Salomon, wrote to the then Director of Foreign Broadcasting, J.B. Clark, suggesting that broadcasting in Yiddish to North America might be useful in developing pro-British feeling among American Jews.⁸³ Clark put this to Stephen Tallents at the MOI who commented that other minorities were more needy of British propaganda. They could take the Jews' support for granted.⁸⁴ This statement ran contrary to the activities of the activities of the MOI's operation in the United, the British Information Service, which had been assiduously cultivating the American Jewish

⁸⁰ FO 371/39449 (C898/131/55), Cavendish-Bentinck to Cadogan, 6 Jan. 1944. underlining original.

⁸¹ Wasserstein, op. cit., pp. 297-303.

⁸² SI KOL. 434/44, 24 Nov. 1943.

⁸³ BBC WAC, R34/952, BDBJ to D(FB), 7 Aug. 1941.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 14 Aug. 1941.

community.⁸⁵ Another BBC official added that all who spoke Yiddish were already 'converted' and no propaganda was necessary.⁸⁶ The MOI's actual reply to the Board stated that the numbers speaking Yiddish were too small to justify doing so and that all wavelengths were occupied.⁸⁷ A year later there were two similar proposals. The first of these concerned broadcasting on the Overseas Service and came from Goodman. It was turned down on the grounds that such broadcasts ran contrary to 'American ideas of assimilation'.⁸⁸ A parallel attempt was made to get the European Service to broadcast in Yiddish. Salomon managed to arrange a meeting with Grisewood where he suggested, having read newspaper reports stating this to be the case, that as an increased number of frequencies were now available to the European Service, he might like to reconsider the BBC's earlier decision. Grisewood, in reply, produced a set of charts showing this to be untrue, told Salomon that the Overseas Service were the people they really ought to be speaking to, and to go away and prepare a detailed memorandum on the likely audience in occupied Europe. Nevertheless, Salomon was not disheartened - he felt Grisewood had been 'sympathetic and interested throughout'.⁸⁹

A third attempt, this time to start regular broadcasting in Hebrew from London was launched in 1943. The head of the BBC section in Cairo wrote to Clark, by then Controller (Overseas Service), passing on a suggestion from the Palestine Postmaster-General, for propaganda broadcasts 'aimed at the 16 million Jews in the world'.⁹⁰ Clark took this seriously enough to pass it to Kirkpatrick, who commented thus:

When Jewish interests urged us to broadcast in Hebrew in the European Service the matter was put up to the Foreign Secretary, who ruled against it. The two principal grounds on which he did so were - (1) We do not recognise the German theory of Jewish 'nationality' and we maintain that Jews are citizens of the countries to which they belong. Broadcasts in Hebrew on the European Service would emphasise the Jewish nationality of Europeans. (2) The

⁸⁵ Nicholas Cull, *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign Against American 'Neutrality in World War II* (New York, 1995), pp. 129-30, 163.

⁸⁶ BBC WAC, R34/485, comments by Hawgood D(RB), 14 Aug. 1941.

⁸⁷ BDP, ACC 3121/E2/35, memo by Brotman, 30 Dec. 1941.

⁸⁸ BBC WAC, R34/952, Welch to Goodman, 26 Sep. 1942.

⁸⁹ BDP, ACC 3121/E2/35, memo by Salomon, 20 Oct. 1942.

⁹⁰ BBC WAC, R34/952, Livesing to C(ES), 25 June 1943.

Secretary of State was not anxious to embark on differences of opinion with the Jewish community as to what should be said in the broadcasts.

I think that if the Overseas Service wished to start Hebrew broadcasts it would be wise to take the views of the Government. There is a certain difference between broadcasting in Hebrew on the European Service and the Overseas Service.⁹¹

These Jewish interests were not defined, and may have been private approaches, rather than from a body such as the Board of Deputies. However, the formulation of this dogma was of crucial importance. On the face of it, it presents a good example of Kushner's description of a prevalent and powerful liberal worldview. But it also reveals the very real political agenda underlying this ideological construct. Eden's comment that it was unwise to emphasise the Jewish *nationality* of the target audience can be read as a reference to Britain's fear of post-war Zionism challenging its extremely fragile hold on Palestine. The question thus might be asked to what extent those expounding a liberal position were merely disguising a conscious desire to restrict Jewish nationalism. This question presupposes one of two simplistic definitions of ideology that see it as unconnected with either power or culture. In reality, of course, ideology lies at the intersection of these two bases and can be used to reinforce both of them. The fact that there were tangible foreign policy dividends to be gained from the deployment of this kind of argument does not necessarily mean that those subsequently expounding arguments stemming from this position did not sincerely believe them.

Balinski's explicit demand for increased radio time for broadcasts to Jews in Poland in November 1943 faced the difficulty that as *Radio Polskie* was already short of time, it would have to come from other BBC European Service programmes using the same frequencies and transmitters. As well as demanding extra time through the formal channels, Balinski also tried writing directly to Kirkpatrick, stating that the reason why this 'special kind of broadcasting' was now needed was that German propaganda in Poland had supposedly taken an increasingly antisemitic line, as well as becoming more hostile to 'capitalists and landlords'.⁹² The response of the BBC was extremely hostile. At the next

⁹¹ Ibid., from C(ES) to C(OS), 3 Aug. 43.

⁹² SI KOL. 434/53, Balinski to C(ES), 26 Nov. 1943.

liaison meeting the Polish Service Editor, Macdonald, told the Poles that extra time for the broadcasting of specifically Jewish news was impossible. In explaining the policy behind this decision Ritchie, the Assistant Director of European Broadcasting, explained that 'the BBC was anxious not to support Nazi racial discrimination'. 'A broadcast of the kind', he suggested, 'would in itself imply a different standpoint from that always taken up by the British Government.'⁹³ Balinski refused to give up. The next day he sent another letter to Kirkpatrick in which he tried to bolster his case by stating that as the war moved nearer to Poland there would be an increasing amount of news to be given in Polish bulletins.⁹⁴ Ritchie replied for Kirkpatrick, in a letter whose content echoed Eden's comments earlier in the year and which showed just how ill-equipped the British establishment were for dealing with Nazism and the Final Solution:

It is a cardinal point in the policy of the European Service of the BBC as the organ of a democracy to use influence for unity rather than disunity. Thus we are on principle against addressing people differently because of difference in race, religion or occupation, unless there is a very good reason for doing so and no danger that we shall be causing an unnecessary disunity.

Ritchie allowed that there were dedicated programmes for peasants, workers and certain religious denominations, but only where there was a very good case for doing so and 'no danger of causing unnecessary disunity'. If this was done for the Jews however, it was felt 'that we should be in grave danger of assisting the anti-Semitism, so assiduously promoted by the Nazis if we supported the idea that Jews must be treated separately.' He continued:

In this country, as you know, the law respects no difference of creed. it recognises differences of nationality; but it does not recognise differences of race or colour nor has it any method by which any difference could be tested. The same is true, I believe, of Polish law and there is no recognised difference between one Polish citizen and another except that distinction now imposed in Poland by the Nazis as one of their most infamous weapons, and that by doing so we should be doing the Jews themselves a grave disservice.

On the other hand we are always ready to broadcast material about Jews or Jewish organisations or of particular interest to Jews in the ordinary context of our news bulletins.

⁹³ Ibid. 434/44, 1 Dec. 1943.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 434/53, Balinski to C(ES), 2 Dec. 1943.

If the Polish Ministry of Information wished to include a programme of the kind you have suggested in the transmissions of *Radio Polskie*, the BBC would raise no objection, but you will see from the arguments I have put forward that the BBC would not consider that the idea was a good one.⁹⁵

This is a clear illustration of Tony Kushner's dictum that 'many government officials', which in terms of ideology and allegiance would include many members of staff of the BBC at this time, '*genuinely* believed that to stress Jewish suffering was against liberal, universalist principles'.⁹⁶

Nevertheless, the BBC could prevent the Poles from broadcasting specifically Jewish news bulletins within *Radio Polskie* only with extreme difficulty - even if they refused to give them extra time. At the first liaison meeting in 1944, the representative of the Polish Ministry of Information reported that *Radio Polskie* would now devote five minutes per fortnight 'not for broadcasts addressed specifically to Jews in Poland but for broadcasts on Jewish affairs', thus keeping to the letter, if not the spirit, of the policy Ritchie had set out in his letter to Balinski a month previously.⁹⁷ The records of these broadcasts do not survive for early 1944, but those that do for later in the year shed a great deal of light on what the Government-in-exile hoped they would achieve.

What is certain is that there was plenty of information available in the second half of 1943. PWE's intelligence reports, which, although they contained information from intelligence debriefs and postal censorship, mainly featured information trawled from open sources such as the Axis and neutral press, were full of stories about the Final Solution at this time. These reports were circulated to the BBC Polish Service staff and they were free to use material which came from open sources such as *Dziennik Polski*.

Newsome's directives were void of mentions of Jews until the Danish crisis, which he encouraged his journalists to report on.⁹⁸ PWE, likewise, were silent on the Final Solution from June until the end of September when the background notes to the Central Directive reported the liquidation of 'ghettos in the Bialystock area'. Sensationally, the

⁹⁵ Ibid., AD (Eur.B) to Balinski, 6 Dec. 1943.

⁹⁶ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p. 127.

⁹⁷ SI KOL. 434/45, 5 Jan. 1944.

⁹⁸ BBC WAC, E2/131/11, early Oct. 1943.

same paragraph reported that in mid-August, 'when mass murders were being carried out' Jewish prisoners in the camp at Treblinka had revolted: 'They fired the barracks and the gas chamber and then broke out of the camp'.⁹⁹

A substantial number of talks scripts for the German Service of the BBC have survived for this period, including one by Lindley Fraser on the Nazis' attack on Danish Jewry. This concentrated on the 'serious repercussions' the situation in Denmark was having on Swedish opinion, with a large number of condemnatory statements from the Swedish Government and Press. Fraser then went on to state that sixteen-hundred Danish Jews had been arrested and placed on boats ready for deportation 'to labour and concentration camps in the East'. He reported that at least a thousand others had been able to cross the Øresund. There had been vigorous resistance to arrest 'by the Gestapo men and casualties on both sides'. Fraser 'spun' the story to point out that this operation had achieved nothing except to strengthen resistance in Denmark and outrage opinion in Sweden. He then articulated the tougher shape which the hope clause had assumed by this time. The perpetrators, he said, were 'not merely adding to the hatred - yes, and the contempt - which the free world may feel for Germany after this war is over; you will also yourselves be called to account for the crimes which you have personally ordered or carried out'.¹⁰⁰

Fraser also broadcast the revelations from Kiev at the same time as the Home Service did. There were some differences. Where the Home Service spoke of 80,000 Jews being shot, Fraser stated that the number was 70,000, 'mostly, but not entirely Jews'. He also stated that what followed was an account of 'what the German soldier has been doing in one particular place'. The use of German *soldier* in place of 'Gestapo' or 'SS' reflected the degree to which Fraser was now implicating broader sections of German society in what had happened, a trend that increased as the war went on with the scope of the hope clause being narrowed. The uprising of the Russian prisoners-of-war was ignored - let alone made the focus of the entire piece. Fraser also added that when the outside world learnt of

⁹⁹ PRO FO 898/292, CD WB, 30 Sep. 1943.

¹⁰⁰ BBC WAC, misc. German Service scripts, *Sonderbericht*, 'A Danegerous [sic] Policy', Lindley Fraser, 4 Oct. 1943.

material like this, it was 'very unimpressed' with Goebbels' protestations that German civilians were losing their lives due to Allied bombing. His statement that this was 'an eloquent comment on Hitler's claim to be the standard bearer of culture and human civilisation' showed an echo of the propaganda line that Newsome had articulated in the summer regarding Nazi posturing as defenders of the West.¹⁰¹

The approach and shape of BBC coverage of the Final Solution were fully exposed in this period. For the Home Service, the dogma that talking about antisemitism abroad would only make it worse at home was fully established. For the European Service, the decision not to allow specific broadcasting to Jews in Europe was likewise buttressed. Both of these phenomena reveal the prevalence of a view that just as it was wrong to single out Jews for extermination, it was wrong to treat them as in any way different. There is one seemingly great contradiction during this time. This is that reports such as Tolstoy's description of *Einsatzgruppen* massacres on the Home Service and Karski's of the killing process within Belzec on the European Service co-existed with what was otherwise a sparse number of other reports. To suggest that the BBC did not use other information available at this time confirming what these reports implied - that the Jews of Europe were being exterminated - because they did not believe it is not unsustainable. Rather, what it affirms is that each opportunity to use information about the Final Solution was assessed on its own merits and in its own particular context. All too often that was not favourable.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., *Sonderbericht*, 'The German Army in Kiev', Lindley Fraser, 29 Nov. 1943.

CHAPTER VII

'CONDEMNATION SHOULD NOT BE OVERDONE'

JANUARY 1944 TO JANUARY 1945

The Final Solution in Hungary had many special characteristics. It was, of course, the last concentration of Jews in Europe the Nazis attacked. It also took place with the full and relatively precise knowledge of the Allies and the rest of the world.¹ Whether this applied to the people, as well as the governments, is an important question that this chapter will seek to address. The importance of the relative publicity surrounding the Final Solution in Hungary in regard to the BBC is twofold. Firstly, for the European Service, and especially the Hungarian Service, it meant that their potential for using propaganda to shape events in the areas they broadcast to grew enormously. This demands an assessment of the degree to which the BBC attempted to make the implementation of the Final Solution in Hungary more difficult for the Nazis and their Hungarian allies and whether any such attempts were successful. Secondly, for the Home Service, there is an opportunity to assess the level of coverage that was given to an episode within the Final Solution that was carried out with the, relatively, full knowledge of the outside world. What is meant by this is that factors commonly assumed to be behind much of the lack of response in the West to earlier reports of extermination, such as a reluctance to believe what was happening, could be imagined not to have had as much importance as in, for example, 1942. Another manifestation of the particularity of the Final Solution in Hungary was that not only had Roosevelt recently created the War Refugee Board, but the Allies also had the opportunity to engage in ransom negotiations with senior Nazis.

While the Nazis were destroying the last important Jewish community in occupied Europe, ripples of information from the destruction of others, particularly its largest in pre-war Poland, continued to wash up on British shores. This period also saw the over-running by the Soviets of some extermination camp sites, as well as first-hand evidence of how the Jews of western Europe had suffered.

The first topic in this chapter is what the Home Service broadcast to Britain about the progress of the Final Solution in Hungary and elsewhere from March 1944 through to the first revelations that Jews were being deported. Then there comes a comparison with and account of the Hungarian and other language services broadcast and an examination of the

¹ R. Braham, 'The Uniqueness of the Holocaust in Hungary', in R. Braham and B. Vago (eds.), *The Holocaust in Hungary Forty Years Later* (New York, 1985), p. 187.

attitudes of the political warfare establishment towards events as they unfolded in Hungary. This is followed by an account of what other sections of the BBC European Service broadcast about the progress of the Final Solution elsewhere. The remainder of this chapter covers Home Service broadcasting for the rest of 1944.

SECTION A: THE HOME SERVICE IN EARLY 1944

The BBC Home Service broadcast no news from Hungary at all in the period immediately following the German occupation on 19 March 1944. The 9 p.m. news on 23 March mentioned the first cabinet meeting held by the new Government, and added that 'there have been all sorts of reports from neutral sources, none of them, of course, confirmed'.² There was no mention of the position which Hungarian Jewry was likely to soon find itself in. This was despite the fact that the BBC monitors were picking up plenty of information from Hungarian radio. The *Monitoring Report* of 24 March reported vastly increased amounts of antisemitic propaganda. Referring to the previous day's broadcasts, it stated: 'In the earlier part of the day, the Budapest radio revealed a bitter anti-Semitic sentiment [...] Activities of the new Ministries were reported, and one of them was said to have averred that "the solution of the Jewish problem is absolutely necessary".'³ This continued in the weeks to come, with the *Monitoring Report* every day bringing news of new restrictions on Jews in Hungary, including the implementation of the Nuremburg laws - an essential precursor to genocide.⁴

The BBC Home Service mentioned none of this. The 9 p.m. and midnight news of 24 March included a plea by Roosevelt for the peoples of Europe 'even the Germans themselves, to show the world that they took no part in Hitler's crimes against humanity.' Instead they should 'hide refugees and help them to escape, and keep watch on and record evidence that could one day be used to convict the guilty'. The first words of the report

² C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 23 Mar. 1944.

³ IWM, BBC Monitoring Report, 24 Mar. 1944.

⁴ Ibid.

were a direct quote from Roosevelt that 'none who participates in savagery shall go unpunished'.⁵

Senior FO figures, including Halifax, British Ambassador in Washington, were extremely keen that this statement, with its stress on retribution and justice, should be toned down.⁶ In response, PWE issued a directive seeking to put the correct 'spin' on what Roosevelt had said, removing all references to post-war justice.⁷ To the Home Service's credit, any attempt that might have been made to make its report fit with the desired FO line was unsuccessful. However nothing which the Home Service broadcast on 24 March connected the statement with the urgency of the situation in Hungary. The reason for this was that the President's statement had undergone a lengthy gestation period. The occupation of Hungary occurred in the middle of this, and so there was no specific reference to it. Once again, this showed how the BBC would only report what was explicit. It refused to interpret or extrapolate.

A report of questions to the Foreign Secretary in the House of Commons on 30 March included Eden's statement that 'who indirectly joined in persecution - like satellite Governments who expelled citizens to destinations named by Berlin - they also would not be forgotten'.⁸ Although he was obviously speaking of Hungary, the connection remained implicit rather than explicit. The Home Service, it seems, did not wish to revive any popular groundswell of support for action that might, in the view of those proposing it, save Jews threatened by the Nazis. It featured a statement by the Archbishop of Canterbury, broadcast to Hungary by the European Service, on 11 April. However this said only that he had asked the people of Hungary 'to do their best to save anybody in their country who may be persecuted by the Germans'. The victims 'should be helped to hide from their tormentors and if possible helped to escape, and so be saved from extermination'.⁹ It did not mention the word *Jew*.

⁵ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 24 Mar. 1944.

⁶ FO 371/42728 (W4519/16/48), Halifax to London, 22 March, 1944.

⁷ Ibid., special guidance on President's statement on persecutions, London to Washington, 24 March, 1944.

⁸ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 30 Mar. 1944.

⁹ Ibid., 11 Apr. 1944.

While ignoring Hungary throughout this time, the Home Service actually broadcast a talk on the anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising on 19 April, albeit only in the early morning bulletins¹⁰. This ran as follows:

Today is the first anniversary of the battle of the Warsaw ghetto, when the Jews revolted against their German masters, forcing them to bring in S.S. and Wehrmacht formations and to use artillery, flame-throwers and aeroplanes. But the reports coming out of Poland today no longer tell only of cruelty to helpless Jews. Now the Jews are hitting back. The underground movement works in the few remaining ghettos and it has even penetrated beyond the barbed-wire of the labour and concentration camps. Acts of armed resistance and a general strike are among the latest news from the Jewish community in Poland. The strike was in Lodz, where the Nazis where the Nazis began mass executions of the workers in the ghetto. It succeeded so well that the Germans were compelled to hold up their slaughter.¹¹

Other items, disjointed and failing to add up to anything like a coherent picture, continued to appear. On 9 May the 9 p.m. news reported a statement by Lord Selborne, Minister for Economic Warfare, in the House of Commons, giving details of a supposed Nazi scheme to extort money from relatives of Jews in occupied countries living in the United States by threatening that their relatives would be sent to a camp.¹²

From the beginning of April, the issue of Polish Jews who had deserted from the Polish Army due to antisemitism had received a lot of coverage.¹³ The soldiers had attempted subsequently to join the British Army. The Polish military police had then arrested them.¹⁴ This became something of a crusade for certain MPs in the House of Commons, among them Tom Driberg and Eleanor Rathbone. Antisemitism within their armed forces was obviously a damaging theme for the Government-in-exile, who were attempting to portray themselves at the time as spokesmen for a Poland that was liberal and democratic - in the face of an imminent challenge from the Soviet-supported 'Committee of

¹⁰ Another talk on the Warsaw ghetto uprising, supposedly written by a member of the Polish Underground who had witnessed it, was broadcast on 16 May at 1 p.m. The script for this has not survived. The identity of the author suggests the Government-in-exile were very much prepared to make such material available.

¹¹ BBC WAC, 8 a.m. news, 19 Apr. 1944.

¹² C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 9 May 1944.

¹³ see Ibid. for April.

¹⁴ Ibid., 22 Apr. 1944.

National Liberation'. The BBC's coverage of these events outraged the Poles.¹⁵ Raczynski wrote in his diary that at lunch with Churchill on 23 April he had 'pressed him on the subject of discrimination by the BBC over the Jewish question'.¹⁶

Most appalling to them was the fact that the BBC Polish Service had broadcast news of this. Balinski reminded Macdonald, the Polish Service editor, that many thousands of Jews were being sheltered by Poles, at the risk of their own lives, and that this episode would have a disastrous impact on Polish-Jewish relations.¹⁷ PWE followed this line in a directive to the Polish Service they issued at the end of April. 'Any indignation', it stated, 'aroused therefore at the action of Polish Jewish soldiers in this country might have repercussions on the fate of those Jews in Poland'.¹⁸ Another reason for minimising coverage of this to Europe was that although this otherwise admirable display of supposed antisemitism on the part of the Polish army placed Nazi propagandists in something of a quandary, they were also making much of the apparent unwillingness of Jews to fight.¹⁹ Newsome ordered that the European Service should not stress the Jewish identity of the deserters. His directive for 24 April instructed journalists to report a recent statement by the Board of Deputies 'without comment', and reminded them that Ukrainian soldiers had also deserted.²⁰ Subsequent directives asked journalists to report on the parliamentary questions of 26 April,²¹ and later chided them for not giving the amnesty awarded by the Polish Government 'all the coverage it deserves'.²² The Polish Government were particularly concerned that a forthcoming public meeting on the matter not be reported. The Home Service acceded to this request.²³ It also went one better by reporting the following, extremely positive account of Polish-Jewish relations, on 11 May:

The Polish Government states that a Council has been set up in London which will do everything possible to save the Jews who are still living in Poland, and

¹⁵ SI KOL. 434/54, letter from Balinski to Barker [(FNE)HS], 25 Apr. 1944.

¹⁶ Raczynski, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-6.

¹⁷ SI KOL. 434/54, letter from Balinski to Macdonald, 2 May 1944.

¹⁸ FO 371/39425 (C5385/61/55), Polish WD WB 27 Apr. 1944.

¹⁹ FO 371/39451 (C8970/131/55), PWE Stockholm report on German propaganda for May 1944.

²⁰ BBC WAC, E2/131/16, 14 Apr. 1944.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 26 Apr. 1944.

²² BBC WAC, E2/131/17, 13 May 1944.

²³ SI KOL. 434/45, 3 May 1944.

help those who are abroad.²⁴ There will be a Jewish representative on the Council, and the Government has provided a considerable sum of money for the work. The Council has developed out of lengthy talks between representatives of the Poles and Jews.²⁵

Engel states that the deserters episode 'provided the matrix for what on the surface appeared to be a significant change in the government's approach to Jewish matters'.²⁶ With their backs to the wall, they perceived that they had one more chance to get the powerful phantom of Jewish world opinion behind their most important goal of a return to an independent Poland within its pre-war boundaries. This phantom was present not only in the minds of the Poles. Frank Roberts wrote at the time that in regard to the 'recent important operations of the Polish Underground Movement, the London Press played them down because they were sceptical and also because of the present anti-Polish wave of feeling fanned by the Jews'.²⁷ Engel outlines how this episode also led to the foundation of the Council for Matters Relating to the Rescue of the Jewish Population in Poland (hereafter CRJPP). To this must also be added the increasing amount of Jewish news on *Radio Polskie*, and the BBC Polish Service - dealt with later in this chapter. However, the news item above was the only thing they had to show in terms of propaganda directed at the domestic British audience by the BBC.

The first explicit connection made by the Home Service between the change of regime in Hungary and its likely impact on the Jewish community was not made until 22 May. This was only broadcast in the midnight bulletin, untrailed in the headlines and as part of a series of shorter items half-way through the bulletin. The form it took was a report of a memorial service for the '40,000 victims of the Warsaw ghetto', held earlier at the day at Bevis Marks Synagogue and addressed by the Chief Rabbi. Hertz was quoted as saying that:

with the Nazification of Hungary, nearly a million more Jews were now on the brink of annihilation. He suggested that the surviving Jews of Europe might be

²⁴ This was a reference to the 'Council for Matters Relating to the Rescue of the Jewish Population in Poland', established on 20 Apr. 1944.

²⁵ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 11 May 1944.

²⁶ Engel, *Facing a Holocaust*, p. 137.

²⁷ FO 371/39425 (C6480/61/55), minute by Frank Roberts, 10 May 1944.

given the status of prisoners-of-war, with exchange facilities and perhaps the chance of sanctuary in Palestine or elsewhere.²⁸

This was hardly the kind of accurate, timely material the Home Service could have broadcast, as any examination of the European Service shows. What is also significant about this item was the suggestion of possible rescue actions. This were now a rarity. The Home Service did not mention the Final Solution for another month.

With the Normandy landings taking place in early June, the news was understandably dominated by this for much of June. On 26 June, the 6 p.m. news broke the deafening silence that had surrounded the danger facing Hungarian Jewry.

The Polish Government in London has received news from its representatives in Poland that one-hundred-thousand Jews, recently deported from Hungary, have been murdered by mass gassing in the lethal chambers of the notorious German camp in Polish Galicia.

There have been many indications recently that, since the Allied landings in Normandy, the Germans have intensified their propaganda against the Jews and have begun mass deportations from Czechoslovakia as well as Hungary.²⁹

In the 9 p.m. bulletin the second paragraph had been edited out.³⁰ The bald, yet at the same time vague, statement in the first paragraph was significant. However, the most interesting parts of this report were in the second paragraph. First was the continued placing of the Final Solution and the Jews in a context emphasising their subjective role in political warfare, rather than as the objective victims of mass slaughter. Presented with a choice when reading monitoring reports, those constructing the news chose to see the antisemitic bile spouted by Nazi-controlled news outlets as being more significant than the news of ghettoization and pillage accompanying it.³¹

Second was a more concrete failure on the part of the BBC Home Service. The clue to this was the mention of Czechoslovakia. This reflected that it was now almost two weeks since the information brought out of Auschwitz by Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler,

²⁸ BBC WAC, midnight news, 22 May 1944.

²⁹ Ibid., 6 p.m. news, 26 Jun. 1944.

³⁰ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 26 Jun. 1944.

³¹ See IWM, BBC Monitoring Reports for May & June 1944.

which included details of the imminent fate of those deported at the end of 1943 from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz, had reached London - and had been broadcast by the BBC European Service.³² The last point to make about this broadcast is that it represented, finally, a second small victory for the London Poles, who believed that a propaganda advantage could be gained by being the first to openly condemn the extermination of Hungarian Jews. Engel states that the Poles were determined to use information they had about Auschwitz to give their own entreaties greater moral weight. This was not only to make them 'bigger players' but also because of concern over non-Jewish Poles in Hungary.³³

The Home Service had missed an opportunity to use the information about the Final Solution that was available to them, but this changed rapidly. The reason for this was the same as it had been two years previously when the Bund report had emerged; officials and ministers were now prepared to comment publicly. Buried within reports of Parliament in the 6 p.m. news on 5 July was the following:

³² This episode is discussed fully in the section below dealing with the European Service at this time.

³³ Engel, *Facing a Holocaust*, pp. 157-161.

Mr Eden was asked in the House today about the mass deportations of Jews from Hungary to Poland - there, it's said to be massacred. He said that although he had no definite information there were strong indications that the German and Hungarian authorities had begun these barbarous deportations, and that many people had been killed in the course of them. Mr Silverman mentioned a report that the number deported already amounts to four-hundred-thousand of whom one-hundred-thousand have been killed. Mr Eden said he would rather not give figures, unless one was absolutely sure, but the position was bad enough. The BBC was being used to bring home to the Hungarian Government the feelings of this country, and also to make direct appeals to the Hungarian people themselves to help the Jews.³⁴

Even though the Home Service was now mentioning Hungary, it was only doing it on the Government's terms.

A flurry of relatively rich reporting of the Final Solution followed in early July. The day after the reality of the Nazis' genocidal intent in Hungary was acknowledged by Eden, another report was broadcast. This was an account of an address given by Bracken earlier in the day to the memorial committee for Brigadier Kisch. It included his condemnation of Nazis and their 'setting up abattoirs in Europe into which were shepherded thousands of Jews, who were dispatched with the sort of brutal efficiency in which the Prussians delighted'. Bracken was also reported as stating that the German people bore the responsibility for the 'biggest scandal in the history of human crime'.³⁵ His comments were given no great prominence, being tacked on to the end of the 6 p.m. bulletin and dropped from the crucial 9 p.m. news.

The most comprehensive description of the Final Solution at this time followed the next day, 7 July. This was the first time since the Allied Declaration over eighteen months previously that the Home Service had featured the Final Solution in such a concentrated manner. Although it was thirteenth out of thirteen stories in that night's 9 p.m. bulletin, this position was not the Siberia that it had once been, as *War Report* now followed the main evening bulletin. This attracted an extremely large audience, particularly in its early days.³⁶ The report ran as follows:

³⁴ BBC WAC, 6 p.m. news, 5 Jul. 1944.

³⁵ Ibid., 6 p.m. news, 6 Jul. 1944

³⁶ It attracted a similar audience to *ITMA*. see Nicholas, op. cit., p. 217.

Since Mr Eden spoke in the House on Wednesday about the mass deportation of Jews from Hungary to Poland - and of 'strong indications' that many of them are being murdered - more information has reached the Polish authorities in London about the fate of more than four-hundred-thousand Hungarian Jews sent to the concentration camp at Oswiecim in Poland - most of them to be put to death in gas chambers. On May 15th, it's stated, sixty-two railway carriages filled with Jewish children between the ages of two and eight set off for Poland, and every day since, six trains loaded with adult Jews have passed through a station near Cracow on the same the same journey. According to the Polish Council for the Rescue of Jews, these people were told that they would be exchanged for prisoners-of-war.

Oswiecim is the biggest concentration camp in Poland. In 1942 the Germans installed gas chambers there enabling them to kill six-thousand people a day and when these were found not to be enough with the number of victims, two more similar camps were opened near Lvov.³⁷

This was the first direct reference to Auschwitz as a place of extermination by the Home Service. What the Home Service's record during this time shows is that, despite eyewitness reports, statements by governments-in-exile and the massive amount of material available from monitoring, there were still huge barriers. Partly this was a result of the diminishing influence of the Polish Government-in-exile, shown by their inability to fully control how the BBC reported the deserters episode. Whereas in 1942 the Home Service reported their statements and speeches, this had ceased to be the case by 1944. Although the Poles' had hardly been disinterested, their drive to highlight the situation in Poland had previously had the effect of bringing the Final Solution to the fore. Aside from particular factors such as this, there were still the structural and ideological barriers to concentrating on Jewish themes mentioned regularly above; lack of official confirmation, reluctance to make out the 'big picture', the unsuitability of information to fit into the contemporary definition of news. The list goes on. Still, however, the most important factor concerning whether *news*, rather than programming, about the Final Solution made it onto the Home Service news was the attitude of the FO.

As a result of all this the Home Service ignored events possessing, in hindsight, extreme importance. Ryan had been aware of the Brand negotiations since 3 June when his

³⁷ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 7 Jul. 1944.

intelligence contacts had briefed him in case of the eventual or accidental release of information.³⁸ After news of the negotiations was indeed leaked, he was briefed on 19 July that Brand had returned empty-handed. He noted that the FO were 'rather worried that enemy propaganda may seek to make use of this extraordinary story'. Anything that broke was to be referred to him or the Foreign News Editor.³⁹ While the FO were happy to kill the negotiations off by leaking the story to the press, they presumably did not want *too* much attention to be devoted to it.⁴⁰

SECTION B: THE EUROPEAN SERVICE AND GENOCIDE IN HUNGARY

How then did the European Service - and particularly the Hungarian Service - deal with the extension of the Final Solution to Hungary? Survival for this section of the BBC's output is far from complete. However large numbers of news bulletins and talks transcripts do remain. This provides enough evidence to come to several firm conclusions about the way the BBC covered Hungary at this time.

There is no doubt that the FO saw Britain as being in a difficult position when it came to broadcasting to Hungary. The official FO Research Department analysis of Hungarian society, prepared in early 1942, took antisemitism as immutable. Influential figures such as Macartney believed that the BBC should avoid being in any way connected with sympathy for Jews. The PWE directive for Hungary at the time of the Allied Declaration showed the pressure this kind of thinking could lead to when it stated: 'Although Hungarian anti-Jewish measures should be condemned, this condemnation should not be overdone'.⁴¹

³⁸ BBC WAC, R28/19/1, 3 Jun. 1944.

³⁹ Ibid., 19 Jul. 1944.

⁴⁰ Yehuda Bauer, *Jews For Sale: Nazi-Jewish Negotiations, 1933-1945* (New Haven, 1994), p. 192. The only possible Home Service broadcast was one identified by Bauer as by Wickham Steed on 21 July. This reported the arrival of 'a rich industrialist, a Hungarian Jew, accompanied by two officials, to Turkey to negotiate with the British ... It is needless to say that this humanitarian blackmail was not accepted.' Bauer does not make clear whether this was a Home or European Service broadcast. Steed's status as such a regular contributor to the Home makes it more likely it was this.

⁴¹ FO 371/39965 (C9735/116/21), WB 19 Dec. 1942.

Early January 1944 showed how reluctant the FO still was to 'overdo' condemnation, as much for the rest of Europe as for Hungary. A member of the PWE team in Stockholm had received a list of Hungarian Jews who been sent to the Eastern Front and had then disappeared. His supplier had asked that the list be broadcast as a way of discrediting the Hungarian regime. One of Frank Roberts' subordinates commented, with Roberts' endorsement, thus:

I don't much like the idea of this broadcast. It would be difficult to make it without raising the question whether we had passed on this list to the British Red Cross and, if not, why not. Moreover the fate of persons 'missing on the Eastern Front' is apt to be a delicate subject. Remember Katyn! Subject to PWE's views I think the matter should be dropped.⁴²

PWE subsequently agreed. Whether this policy of ignoring Jews in broadcasts to Hungary held firm, or whether it was ignored, is unclear but there is no record in the PWE files of it being discussed between 1942 and the German occupation.⁴³

The BBC first broadcast news that Hungarian Jewry was under threat on 24 March, five days after the Nazi occupation. This was a quote, from the previous day's *Monitoring Report*, by the new Minister of Agriculture, Jurcsek, who had told his staff that whoever 'dares to get in the way of Hungary's goals must be brushed aside. A solution to the Jewish problem is absolutely essential.' The item mentioned that some Jews had tried to escape to Slovakia; but Slovak frontier guards had turned them back.⁴⁴ A Hungarian Service talk the same day contained the following message:

We warn all Hungarians that they should not debase themselves to become instruments of Nazi barbarism.

We call to all Hungarians to assist those who are persecuted by the Germans. Deny all help to the Germans. Prove your national consciousness, your human feelings, by assisting all those who are persecuted for their political attitude or their race. In the past, there were many people in Hungary who displayed their decency, their human feeling by assisting Poles, Jews and other victims of the Germans who have fled to Hungary from neighbouring countries. Today every Hungarian who helps the victims of persecution not only acts

⁴² FO 371/39271 (C254/116/21), 7 Jan. 1944.

⁴³ see FO 371.

⁴⁴ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service Bulletins, 24 Mar. 1944.

humanely, but he also serves his nation, because his deeds may be credited to his country by the United Nations at the final reckoning.⁴⁵

The prominence given to Jews in this talk flouted the two-year old strictures against the Hungarian Service identifying itself in any way with Jews. Later bulletins, and early ones the following day, also carried Roosevelt's statement on war crimes. He was quoted as mentioning 'in particular the case of the hundreds of thousands of Jews who had found a safe haven from death in Hungary and the Balkans, and who were now threatened with annihilation'. This was a late updating of the statement and one the Home Service ignored.

The first weekly directives issued by PWE to the Hungarian Service following the German occupation on 19 March told of large scale arrests of 'left-wing politicians and Jews' but, significantly, did not suggest a specific propaganda line to be taken.⁴⁶ This changed in the next directive, indicating that there had been a substantial degree of confusion as to how to proceed. Issued for the week beginning 24 March, it stated that it seemed 'inevitable that the Germans will vent this resentment in large scale arrests of Jews'.⁴⁷ Anyone with access to what was being broadcast by Nazi-controlled radio stations and news agencies would have appreciated this to have been the case.

On 26 March a Hungarian Service news broadcast contained a list of six ways that the Hungarian people could resist the Nazis. The last of these was the first, albeit indirect, reference to the prospects Jews faced; an instruction that 'All Hungarians can do their utmost to help all those Hungarians or others who are persecuted by the Germans and their Hungarian agents.'⁴⁸

The overall propaganda thrust was contained in 'Hungarian Slogan no. 11'; a quote from US Secretary of State Cordell Hull: 'Only by firm resistance to the invader can Hungary hope to retain the respect and friendship of free nations, and demonstrate its right to independence'.⁴⁹ A quote from the famous American journalist Dorothy Thompson was also much used: 'It is recognised that although Hungary is a member of the Axis and is

⁴⁵ Ibid., Hungarian Service Talks, 24 Mar. 1944.

⁴⁶ FO 371/39271 (C401/254/21), WD WB 24 Mar. 1944.

⁴⁷ Ibid., WB 24 Mar. 1944.

⁴⁸ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service Bulletins, 26 Mar. 1944.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 26 Mar. 1944.

traditionally an anti-Semitic society, she has behaved in this unparalleled crisis of Jewish persecution and martyrdom far better than any part of the Axis in Europe.'⁵⁰ A talk by one of the Hungarian Service's most regular commentators who broadcast under the *nom de guerre* of *Notarius*, put the point more explicitly on 31 March. He delivered 'a special warning to Hungarians': The defeat of Nazi Germany was only a matter of time. Germany's fate had been sealed. When the day of reckoning came the victorious Allies would not accept any excuse to the effect that crimes committed by Hungarians had been committed under Nazi pressure. He continued:

Every single Hungarian, therefore, who shares the Nazi and SS and Gestapo cruelties and the shedding of blood of innocent people - men, women, or children, young or old - will be ruthlessly punished.

These innocent and defenceless peoples who are threatened by the Nazis in Hungary, and perhaps by their Hungarian helpers, now know that a just but ruthless retribution will be meted out to all those who are found guilty of crimes committed against them.

Hungarians are warned. Not a single criminal will escape.⁵¹

Another talk 'the same day enjoined more specific action. In an 'Appeal to Hungarian Railwaymen and Danubian Boatmen' the commentator, *Candidus* in this case, told listeners to do everything to frustrate Nazi communications, especially the rail network. For this was bringing 'Gestapo or SS murderers' into Hungary, or taking workers to Germany or to concentration camps. This rare reference to deportations came before they had actually started. *Candidus* continued, in a manner owing more to passion than accuracy:

It does not make any difference whether they are Jews or Christians. They are Hungarians, victims of the German oppressors. Maybe there are some deadly gas wagons attached to the train you see moving on the tracks or standing on a siding. Gas wagons to murder innocent victims. You know what you have to do, don't you? Destroy or derail the trains, and sink the ships if you can. Damage the tracks, loosen the screws, put nails or iron powder in the engines. If this is not possible, slow down the trains and ships. Misdirect the wagons, hold up and delay the traffic wherever you can. The armies of liberation are on the march. Every delay can save many lives. RAILWAY MEN AND

⁵⁰ Ibid., 26 Mar. 1944.

⁵¹ Ibid., Hungarian Service Talks, 31 Mar. 1944.

BOATMEN!⁵² You are soldiers now. Soldiers of the sacred fight for Hungarian freedom.⁵³

The weekly directive from PWE for the Hungarian Service for the week beginning 31 March requested that Roosevelt's statement be run several times, updated with 'specific warnings to the present Hungarian government and administration that racial persecution will be regarded as a war crime, and specific appeals to the Hungarian people to prevent persecution and to help the persecuted'.⁵⁴ In this, PWE displayed a far more imaginative grasp of events in relating Roosevelt's statement to the situation in Hungary than the Home Service had done.

However PWE also displayed a large degree of reticence when it came to grappling with the position of Jews in Hungary, particularly as it related to questions of possible post-war justice. On the latter point, officials at a higher level in the FO had significant reservations about Roosevelt's statement. The stress on retribution and justice especially worried them.⁵⁵ PWE's version of the statement issued eschewed all mention of this. Regarding the threat to Hungarian Jews, directives issued at the time stated that although an appeal by British churchmen might be broadcast, 'it would be dangerous to overplay unofficial appeals on the Jewish question: these may only do harm to the Jews'.⁵⁶ As the plight of the Jews was only to be dealt with 'briefly', PWE warned the BBC: 'Too warm an advocacy by us of the Jews' case is liable, in the present temper of Hungary, only to aggravate their lot'.⁵⁷

However, little notice seems to have been taken by those doing the broadcasting. A talk on 1 April stated that after the stripping of liberties from non-Jews, the Nazis were now turning to the Jews. It recounted how in the Netherlands the non-Jewish population had taken to wearing the yellow star, and in France, 'the Catholic Church used all her authority in favour of those who were stigmatised'. The Danish example, where the King had

⁵² Original emphasis.

⁵³ Ibid., 31 Mar. 1944.

⁵⁴ FO 371/39271 (C4351/254/21), WB 31 Mar. 1944.

⁵⁵ FO 371/42728 (W4519/16/48), Halifax to London, 22 March, 1944.

⁵⁶ Ibid., WD WB 7 Apr. 1944.

⁵⁷ Ibid., WD WB 28 Apr. 1944.

declared he would be first to wear a star, was also used - with a pointed connection between the Danish monarch and the Hungarian Regent, Miklos Horthy. Individual Hungarians who followed these mythical examples would not only be demonstrating 'national consciousness', plain honesty and decency, they would also be crediting their country when the 'final reckoning came'.⁵⁸

The idea that Hungary could recover its national honour by aiding its Jews was continually emphasised, as in this talk broadcast on 5 April:

In its historical implications, the Yellow Patch is less the affair of the Hungarian Jews than of the Hungarian nation as a whole. What is at stake for Hungary is the reputation of its people, the question whether or not - long after the Yellow Patch has disappeared from the streets of Hungary - in a community of free nations, the name of the country will be besmirched with Yellow Patch of cowardice and pusillanimity.⁵⁹

Encouragement to frustrate Nazi plans was not only directed to workers. On 7 April, *Notarius*, in a broadcast that began 'Attention: Police Radio!' told the Royal Hungarian State Police that their duties now included losing files, forgetting faces, applying loopholes and generally being unco-operative whenever the Nazis demanded action against Jews.⁶⁰ Alongside appeals emphasising national honour and common humanity, the Hungarian Service attacked Nazi antisemitism on other fronts. Christianity was one of these. On Good Friday, 8 April, the BBC broadcast a statement by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who talked of the need for Hungarians to do all in their power to save from extermination 'whole groups of persons [defined by] race'. The listeners' 'Christian discipleship' demanded this of them.⁶¹ Although he did not give the specific identity of these groups, another address the same day was more direct. Attacking the swearing-in of the local Nazi youth organisation on one of the most holy days of Catholicism, *Notarius* told his audience that they should remember this when Nazi propaganda referred to the 'fight for Christianity':

⁵⁸ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service Talks, 1 Apr. 1944.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 5 Apr. 1944.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 7 Apr. 1944.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 8 Apr. 1944.

The lesson you have had should teach you that when it comes to dealing with what to the Germans are 'inferior races' the difference is the treatment of Jews and Christians is but a difference of degree. In decreasing degree, mind you; for in Poland by now there is hardly any difference. Take the warning from Easter. For the Jews in Hungary, it has brought the yellow star. For the Christians it has gay military marches and Pagan Chorus on Good Friday.⁶²

By 15 April yet another front to attack Nazi measures had been introduced. This was a reaction to news that Jewish 'brain workers' would be eliminated by 1 October. *Notarius* argued that this would not free jobs for 'Magyar intellectual youth', but rather would lead to existing staff having to do the extra work - without extra payment.⁶³ The Hungarian Service was ignoring PWE instructions.

The BBC was also countering domestic antisemitic propaganda in Hungary. A report on 26 April re-broadcast a statement from 'United Nations Radio in Algiers' that accusations the Jews were responsible for the bombing of Hungary were wrong.⁶⁴ There then followed a statement which could have been read in many ways: 'From the fact that it is your factories and railways which are the targets for Allied bombers, you can judge how insanely brutal is the Nazi announcement that Hungary's Jews should be made to suffer.' The Algiers report then stated that the Allies were aware that many Hungarians were continuing to engage in social intercourse with Jews, and that such activities would reflect credit on Hungary after the war.⁶⁵ This rather vague set of messages, so unlike the generally crisp and direct statement of commentators like *Notarius* and *Candidus*, may have been intended to lodge in the mind of Hungarians the idea that the bombing was indeed linked to persecution of the Jews. It could well have been designed to suggest that the bombing might be extended from industrial targets to whole cities if the Hungarian people and Government did not do enough to protect the Jews.

The Hungarian Service returned to bombing and its relationship with the Jews in early May. *Notarius* denounced those who spread the belief that the siting of Jewish ghettos in industrial areas such as Kispest and Ujpest would keep the bombers away from

⁶² Ibid., 8 Apr. 1944.

⁶³ Ibid., 15 Apr. 1944.

⁶⁴ The identity of this station is unclear.

⁶⁵ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service Talks, 26 Apr. 1944.

these districts was a 'common criminal'. Those who believed these 'fairy tales' were 'out of their minds'. Military targets would continue to remain just that. The conflation of anti-Jewish measures and bombing by the regime in its propaganda was an attempt to divert Hungarians' attention from their own treason and thus culpability for exposing Hungary to the bombers. Putting ghettos in the industrial areas as supposed human shields was 'plain murder' and would not save the life of a single Magyar. Finally he re-emphasised the most consistent message of the BBC; that Hungary's status in the post-war world would reflect the actions of the Hungarian people at the time of 'this crime that has no equal in history'.⁶⁶ A talk referred to this topic again two weeks later. This piece directly challenged Sztojay-regime propaganda that Allied air-raids aimed at terrorising and butchering the civilian population. In that case, the speaker argued, did it not invalidate utterly the expensive efforts of the regime in terms of money, work and transport to place Jews in the vicinity of arms factories?⁶⁷ The aim here seems to have been to assure Hungarians that the Allies intended striking only at war industry, an impossible task today let alone in 1944. It also exposed the general ineptitude of the regime and the flimsiness of its propaganda. These two talks should be interpreted as stepping back from the inferences of the first mentioning bombing; that it may have been some kind of retribution for Hungarian persecution of Jews.

The BBC gave more detailed descriptions of anti-Jewish measures on 1 May. This took the form of a statement of denunciations by the Czech Government in London concerning the concentration of Jews in Hungarian-occupied Slovakia, including the cities of Kosice and Mukachevo. The statement noted that such concentration had always been the precursor to extermination. It also repeated the standard threat that those responsible would be brought to justice after the war. The mechanism that would achieve this went unstated.⁶⁸

At this point - early May - another set of material becomes available. This comes from the BBC Polish Service and *Radio Polskie*. Polish-language broadcasting contained the first mention by the BBC of deportations to camps, on the same day as the Hungarian

⁶⁶ Ibid., 10 May 1944.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 22 May 1944.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 1 May 1944.

Service broadcast the Czech protest: 'The German press reports that the Hungarian Government is removing Jews from the Hungarian-occupied parts of Czechoslovakia and is sending them to concentration camps. The Hungarian Government is hereby warned.'⁶⁹

This was unclear in its meaning, even less so than the report the same day on the Hungarian Service that noted the collecting of Jews in concentration camps had always been the first step to extermination. It might have meant that Jews were being deported from the countryside to ghettos, or that they were being deported to Poland. That extermination was the fate of many Hungarian Jews was for the certain message of a broadcast on *Radio Polskie* the next day: 'It is reported from Poland that in February of this year disarmed Hungarian Jewish soldiers have been brought to the concentration camp Majdanek. All those soldiers were liquidated.'⁷⁰ But the date of these murders, before even the start of the German occupation, let alone the start of deportations, meant that there was no automatic connection to be made with the Jews who were at that moment being deported from Hungary.

The Polish Service also broadcast the first detailed description of deportations of Jews from Hungary on 6 May at 23.15 GMT. That this originated in the central newsroom suggests that other, if not all, parts of the BBC European Service used it as well - though there is no evidence the Hungarian Service did so. It ran as follows:

The persecution of Jews has reached a new pitch. Our Stockholm correspondent cables tonight: More mass arrests have been made. The victims have already been transported and thrown into the notorious concentration camp at Oswiecim. Their possessions have been confiscated by the Hungarian state.

Hungarian citizens are giving so much help to the Jews that the authorities have threatened them with the concentration camp.⁷¹

There was a lot of information included in this small report, culled from Swedish diplomatic sources.⁷² Apart from the fact that it did not state that Jews were being sent from Hungary to Poland *to be murdered*, the important points were; the identification of Auschwitz as the

⁶⁹ BBC WAC, Polish Service news, 1 May 1944.

⁷⁰ BBC WAC, *Radio Polskie*, 2 May 1944.

⁷¹ Ibid., 6 May 1944.

⁷² Not Raoul Wallenberg, who did not arrive in Warsaw until July 1944.

destination of those deported, if not the place they would be murdered; and, yet again, news of Jewish torment being accompanied by gentile active concern and aid. Little over two weeks after deportations had started, the BBC was reporting them. It had still not, however, specifically identified Auschwitz as a place of extermination.

What makes broadcasts at this time particularly significant is that they came so soon after the first deportations had begun from Kistarsca. The leaders of Hungarian Jewry were told that they had been sent to a fictional labour camp at 'Waldsee'. Deportees sent postcards from Birkenau to this effect. In this sense, it becomes less important whether reports of deportations from Hungarian-occupied Slovakia were correct. Information broadcast by the BBC had the potential, at least, to break what Holocaust survivor Moshe Sandberg refers to as the sleeping drug of the postcards, which had removed 'any thoughts of revolt or escape'.⁷³

Bearing in mind that the Polish Service had already broadcast the fact that Jews were being transported from Hungary-occupied territory to Poland on 6 May, Newsome's comments exactly a month later on 4 June were somewhat surprising. He demanded that attention 'should be given to the revelation that the Hungarian Government is allowing the deportation of large numbers of Jews to Poland. Recall the stern Allied warnings'.⁷⁴ If Newsome was some way behind what the BBC had already broadcast, PWE were even further so. It was not until 9 June that they confirmed to the BBC that 'the first batches of Hungarian Jews have now been sent to Poland, where they are put in "death camps"'. Even then, this news was placed a long way down the order; behind the D-Day landings, the bombing, Hungaro-Russian relations and internal Hungarian politics. The 'Special Themes' section of this directives stated: 'Every Hungarian should, for the sake of Hungary's reputation, do all he can to succour the Jews and prevent their dispatch to Poland.'⁷⁵

The following week's directives commented that there some signs of gentiles aiding Jews. There was also a suggestion that it 'might be pointed out, by a responsible commentator' that it was the special duty of the Church and the schools to 'counter anti-

⁷³ quoted in Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London, 1989). p. 671.

⁷⁴ BBC WAC, E2/131/17, 4 Jun. 1944.

⁷⁵ FO 371/39271 (C7543/254/2), WD WB 9 Jun. 1944.

Semitic propaganda and to prevent this poison from spreading in Hungary'.⁷⁶ All of this had of course, been dealt with in earlier broadcasts. The next two directives continued to acknowledge the process of deportation but stipulated that BBC comment be kept 'to the bare minimum, suggesting only that the fact that Hungary has allowed many thousands of Jews to be deported, to almost certain death is, in the public opinion of the United Nations, one of the greatest sins of Hungary's war record'.⁷⁷

The Hungarian Service again made the connection with religion on 4 June. *Notarius* informed the Hungarian public that 'the Nazi regime would mean a "Via Dolorosa" not only for the Jews but also for the Christians'. He gave the example of Poland where, he stated, 3000 priests had been killed within the first 15 months of the occupation. In every occupied country 'it was the clergy and especially the catholic clergy - side by side with the Jews - the Nazi terror turned into its primary target of persecution'.⁷⁸

A talk on 9 June reported the process of ghettoization. It stated that Jewish vineyards, were being auctioned in the Hegyalja area. Elsewhere the Germans, and their Hungarian accomplices were forcing Jews from their flats. The Jews were to leave all their belongings, save for no more than 30 kilograms of luggage. The talk reminded applicants for the vineyards and flats that the procedure through which they received them was illegal and would have no validity after the war:

Anyone paying any amount for the acquisition of these vineyards will lose all his money, as it is evident that no Hungarian government after the war will recognise their ill-gotten new properties, robbed from innocent Jewish victims. Occupants of the Jewish flats will act in their own interests if they consider themselves as keepers of the belongings left behind by the Jews since after the war they will be responsible for all losses, financial responsibility as well as responsible before the criminal courts.

It seems therefore to be advisable if the new occupants with the help of the local authority draw up an inventory of all belongings found in the flats and see to it that everything is restored to the lawful proprietors after the war when law and order will be reinstated.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Ibid., WD WB 16 Jun. 1944.

⁷⁷ Ibid., WD WB 7 Jul. 1944

⁷⁸ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service Talks, 5 Jun. 1944.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 9 Jun. 1944.

The European Service used material from the British press to augment monitoring, which otherwise was the most important source. Use of press comment, as before, had the additional benefit of inferring that the wider British public were aware of the situation inside Hungary and that the actions of the Hungarian Government were meeting fierce condemnation. A typical example of this was a talk on 17 June. Quoting the *Manchester Guardian*, it repeated the litany of the Nazis' role in the 'decline of civilisation in Hungary'. This included the burning of books by Jewish authors; the imprisonment of Jews within ghettos; the confiscation of their property; exclusion from the professions.⁸⁰

As June wore on, the picture these news talks painted became even grimmer. Warnings were constantly repeated, such as that issued by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US House of Representatives that persecutors of Hungarian Jewry would be punished and that the United States was 'firmly determined to deliver the criminals responsible for this inhuman behaviour into the hands of justice'. It was for the Hungarian people to 'restrain the flow of inhumanity directed against the lives of nearly one million Jews'.⁸¹

However, none of these reports mentioned killings. The Hungarian Service did not directly report these, from the evidence available, until 1 July - some six days after the Home Service had done so. The significance of the timing of the report on 1 July was that it followed extremely quickly the first definite confirmation from PWE that Hungarian Jews were being massacred in Poland. This came in the Hungarian directive for the week beginning 30 June.⁸² It was the official approval for which the Hungarian Service had been waiting. There is no other explanation for the delay of almost a week in publishing the version of the Polish Government report, which the Home Service had broadcast on 26 June - the day of its publication. That official approval for the reporting of deportation *and* killing from Hungary had to be given strongly suggests that the Hungarian Service had received instructions not to proceed without it. This was the report as it appeared, and it is worth noting the phrasing indicating that the information it gave had only recently been released:

⁸⁰ Ibid., 17 Jun. 1944.

⁸¹ Ibid., 23 Jun. 1944.

⁸² FO 371/39272 (C7543/254/21), WD WB 30 Jun. 1944.

The Polish government in London has received new information about the situation of Hungarian Jewry. According to one of the messages one-hundred-thousand Jews deported from Hungary have been murdered by gas.

McCrea Calvert, clergyman, secretary general of the Association of Christian Churches, appealed to the Hungarian Christian Churches to do their best to help Hungarian Jewry. McCrea Calvert said, 'The news about the cruel persecution of the Jews, which was executed on the instigation of the Hungarian government, would be unbelievable if we did not know so much about the maltreatment that the Jews receive in other countries under Nazi authority.

According to the information received from Geneva there is proof that the deportation of the East Hungarian Jews has been nearly completed and that of the Jews in the western part of Hungary is under way at the moment. With regard to these circumstances I adjure the American Christians to pray for the Hungarian Jews who are suffering from such inhuman treatment. We must raise a protest, and through our sympathy we must identify ourselves with the victims of racism, which contradicts Christian values.⁸³

The format of the report, stressing the American clergyman's remarks, followed the PWE line of stressing non-Jewish protests. The point behind this was that such appeals would be harder to dismiss as being Jewish-inspired, and thus closer to McCartney's injunction that 'we should avoid associating ourselves with Jews'.⁸⁴

PWE's motives in delaying broadcasting of the Polish report are extremely murky. But the story was now out. Jews sent from Hungary were being murdered on an industrial scale. The next Hungarian Service news talk in the archive that mentioned deportations was not until 5 July. This was a report of the appeal issued by the King of Sweden to Horthy for him 'to use his influence on the Hungarian political leaders to prevent further persecutions of Hungarian Jews'. The same script also carried the recent Papal statement. Another one of the passages was rather opaque in its inferences:

The German Government and its Hungarian accomplices give no evidence of being moved by the successive declarations of the British and Allied governments, who have promised to punish the planners and executors of these crimes, and have called on them to free at least a group of their victims, or ease their persecution. The only hope for the ceasing of this tragic situation is henceforward the victory of the Allies in the near future.⁸⁵

⁸³ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service Talks, 1 Jul. 1944.

⁸⁴ see Chapter 2.

⁸⁵ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service Talks, 5 Jul. 1944.

This quite possibly could have been read as warning to the Hungarian Government that, whatever happened in the torturous round of warnings and covert negotiations taking place, they would bear primary responsibility. The restatement of the orthodox Allied policy that had governed before and after Bermuda - that only victory could offer rescue - was clearly articulated. The only possible means of rescue was if Hungarians themselves took matters into their own hands. An appeal broadcast on 6 July by the Vice-President of the Internal Association of Transport Workers, John Marchbank, was an illustration of this. He repeated the formula that Hungary's future and reputation was at stake in how it reacted to the deportation of its Jews:

The Germans transport the Jews from Hungary to Poland by rail. According to Polish authoritative information, between 15th and 22nd May six trains left Hungary a day, packed with Jews. According to Polish estimates more than a hundred thousand of them have already been murdered. The present government of Hungary is assisting in this horrible job. The resolute strategy of the United Nations is to bring into the hands of justice everyone who is guilty of participation in this terrible act.

Until then I turn with confidence to my fellow railway workers in Hungary, and ask them to obstruct, delay and hinder the railway transportation of these poor victims to the utmost of their power and to help them flee from the scene of their agony. I ask for this in the name of workers' solidarity, of Hungary's future and its national honour, which will otherwise have been stained forever in the final phase of a lost war.⁸⁶

On 7 July Horthy called a halt to the deportations. Randolph Braham, in his assessment of Horthy's motives, lays a considerable degree of stress on the role of appeals from the neutral powers to halt them in changing his mind.⁸⁷ These do not seem to have been reported in any detail, or connected to deportations, until after the Crown Council Meeting of 26 June which first discussed calling a halt. However, by the time the Council of Ministers again discussed the question on 5 July, when it reviewed the evidence of Allied and neutral reactions, and agreed a halt, the BBC Hungarian Service had forcibly

⁸⁶ Ibid., 6 Jul. 1944.

⁸⁷ Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, Vol. II (New York, 1981). p. 714-15.

commented on it. It did so several times again over the next two days, up to 7 July when Horthy took the decision to suspend deportations. Braham, the acknowledged expert on the Final Solution in Hungary, states categorically that had the neutral countries engaged in a vigorous radio campaign as soon as they first received confirmation of mass murders of Jews deported from Hungarian territory in April Horthy might have acted earlier.⁸⁸

As no one in the west yet knew Horthy's decision, the BBC continued to broadcast appeals, often quoting religious figures. A speech by Cardinal Spellman, Catholic Primate of the United States, was aired on 8 July. Spellman stated that 'Americans, regardless of religious conviction are horrified [at the news of the deportation and murder of Hungarian Jews] and condemn such opposition to Christian doctrines of honesty, humanity and fraternal love'. The Cardinal quoted the words of Pius XI that 'we cannot participate in the persecution of Jews; we consider Abraham our ancestor and we are Semitic in spirit'. He found it incomprehensible that a country where Christianity was so embedded in the national character should deny its history.⁸⁹ The same day, the Archbishop of Canterbury again had a message read out to the 'Christian people of Hungary'. He wished to do this because he had 'news from a totally reliable church authority of a neutral country'.

According to this information, large numbers of Jews are captured in Hungary by command of the German Government, with little hope of surviving what then happens to them: they are deported daily to Auschwitz. The Jewish population have already been cleared from the eastern counties of Hungary, and the same is happening in the western part of the country, as well as in Budapest. The Jews are deported in such circumstances that by the time the train arrives at its destination, many of the passengers are already dead. The others are murdered and burnt in Auschwitz.

The Archbishop added that he hoped 'from the bottom of his heart' that if Hungarians knew this was happening, they would 'do their utmost' to help Jews hide or assist in their escape. They should do this 'even at the cost of taking the greatest personal risk'. He concluded

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 715.

⁸⁹ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service Talks, 8 Jul. 1944.

that he had been speaking 'as a Christian, to Christians' and that his pleas should be heeded in the name of 'our mutual Christian religion'.⁹⁰

Hungarian listeners were left under no illusions as to how the world perceived the actions of their Government. A talk by *Candidus* on 10 July stated that 'the loathing with which - in Mr Eden's words - the actions of the Hungarian Government have filled the country has become a constant topic of the editorial columns of the leading British newspapers'.⁹¹ The denunciations of the Hungarian Government by the Hungarian-language press in the United States were also quoted.⁹²

Other sections of the BBC European Service also informed their listeners about the situation in Hungary. Lindley Fraser, in his *Sonderbericht* broadcasts in the German Service, broadcast a detailed report on 11 July. He stated that during the last month the persecution of the Jews, 'that most loathsome outcrop of national socialist ideology', had entered upon a new phase. This time the scene was Hungary: 'A country in which until shortly before the war Jews were able to live in peace and harmony with their Christian neighbours - Hungarian citizens with almost full and equal rights.' He then told how the position of Hungarian Jews had swiftly and progressively become worse. This had led to vigorous protests, 'not least by the head of the Catholic Church in Hungary, Cardinal Seredi'. Following the German occupation, 'one of their first acts [of the new regime] was to convert the policy of repressing Jews into a policy of exterminating them'. Fraser then told those listening to the BBC German Service how this policy had been successful:

Between the middle of May and the end of June it is reported that no less than 400,000 Jews, men, women, old people and young children were deported to a concentration camp in Poland. There they were subjected to treatment by one of those technical inventions of which Hitler was so proud - the gas chamber.

With this the Jewish population in Hungary was reduced by more than half. There are still some 350,000 Jews left in Hungary. The present German and Hungarian rulers of Hungary have now decided that they to are to be deported to Poland, for death by gassing.

⁹⁰ Ibid. *Auschwitz* was used in place of *Oswiecim*.

⁹¹ Ibid., 10 Jul. 1944. Similar reports, including comments by the *Daily Telegraph* and other newspapers, had been broadcast in proceeding days.

⁹² Ibid., 13 Jul. 1944.

Fraser continued by reporting how this had 'aroused the disgust and execration of the whole outside world' and had provoked protests by Roosevelt and Eden: 'King Gustav of Sweden has appealed directly to the Hungarian Regent. International Christian bodies have added their voice to the storm of condemnation.' He also reminded listeners that what 'the National Socialists are today preparing to do in Hungary is of course only the continuation of what they have already done, on an even larger scale, in Poland itself'. In closing, he issued a reminder:

Everybody who takes part in these murders will be called to account and made to suffer the full penalty for his crimes, And let him also ask himself whether the last stage of a war is the right time in which to brand himself a war criminal and a murderer. I issue this warning to all concerned - whether soldier or civilian, initiator or executant, German or Hungarian. Let them take heed. Those who carry out the National Socialist policy of exterminating the Jews will have no place in the world of the future.⁹³

On 3 August the BBC Polish Service broadcast the following:

In London today, a young Polish courier who left Poland only a few days ago, described at a Press Conference [...] how the German are trying to kill every Jew still left alive in Poland, including the thousands who are still being brought in from Hungary, for fear lest one eye-witness of their infamy should be left alive. In the great camp of death at Oswiecim Jews are being killed as fast as the gas chambers can work. Owing to the shortage of gas, the victims are now only given half a dose, so that their agony is prolonged. To save gas children are thrown alive into the fire which are lit to consume the bodies of their parents.⁹⁴

The BBC continually emphasised Allied awareness of events in Hungary. On 15 July Hull was quoted as stating that the whole of Hungarian Jewry was in fatal danger. Interestingly, he added that the 'American Government will spare no effort to save as many of these people as possible from persecution and death'.⁹⁵ Hull's speech was also the subject of an edition of *Les Français Parlent aux Français*.⁹⁶

⁹³ BBC WAC, Misc. German Service scripts, 'Sonderbericht', Lindley Fraser, 11 Jul. 1944.

⁹⁴ BBC WAC, Polish Service news, 3 Aug. 1944. Oswiecim is the Polish version of Auschwitz.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 15 Jul. 1944.

⁹⁶ Cremieux-Brilhac, op. cit., pp. 113-115.

Neutral indignation was also featured. The BBC Hungarian Service, quoting Swiss radio reports of deportations, told of how Swiss Catholic clergy and hierarchy had issued condemnations and hoped to evoke 'the Christian conscience everywhere'.⁹⁷ It broadcast another appeal by a trade unionist on 18 July. This time it was John Benstead, Secretary-General of the British National Union of Railwaymen. The tone and content were virtually identical to Marchbank's earlier appeal: 'Hungarian railway workers! Do your utmost to prevent the realisation of this diabolic transportation. Delay the "death-trains"! Help the Jews in their escape.'⁹⁸ The Hungarian Service broadcast four separate talks on Allied and neutral reaction to the deportations and murder of Hungarian Jews on 15 July alone. The BBC Hungarian Service was frantically instructing Hungarians to bolt the door, but, alas, the horse had bolted.

A news item, broadcast on 20 July, was the first direct indication that the Allies had been negotiating a possible evacuation of Hungarian Jews. This simply stated: 'We are going to reveal the barbaric attempt to exchange Hungarian Jews for war supplies'.⁹⁹ The Home Service had first been alerted to the Brand proposals on 3 June, when A.P. Ryan was told that there was a proposal 'to send a million Jews to Spain and Portugal in return for lorries etc.; if not agreed by Allies then mass murder'.¹⁰⁰ That this was one of the very few occasions where his regular 'off-the-record' briefings included matters relating to the Final Solution, showed the disruptive potential that this information contained. By 18 July the negotiations had run their course, and were killed off deliberately by news being leaked to the press.¹⁰¹ Newsome instructed the European Service to report the news as follows:

Give fullest publicity to the enormity of the crime perpetrated by the Nazis and their Magyar stooges in trying to trade 400,000 human lives for Anglo-American war equipment to be used against our Russian allies. This is at the same time a further revelation of the absolutely inhuman nature of these beasts, a revelation of their stupidity in thinking that we should fall for so obvious a trick designed to cause inter-Allied dissension and a proof of their dire shortage

⁹⁷ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service Talks, 15 Jul. 1944.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18 Jul. 1944.

⁹⁹ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service scripts, 20 Jul. 1944. Both Braham *op. cit.* and Bauer *op. cit.* give the date of the first BBC report on the Brand proposals as being 19 July.

¹⁰⁰ BBC WAC, R28/19/1, 3 Jun. 1944.

¹⁰¹ Bauer, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

of munitions of war. It shows them as evil, silly and incompetent. What more could we want.¹⁰²

Newsome's concern with the propaganda dimensions of the Final Solution is evident, rather than the corollary impact of the revelation of the failure of negotiations - that these 400,000 Jews were now likely to be slaughtered.' None of the PWE directives mentioned the end of the negotiations, suggesting that they were happy for the information contained in the FO leak of 17/18 July to filter into the news process by itself.

The British press did not mention the halt of deportations to Poland until 19 July. By 21 July PWE were informing the BBC that continued pressure 'by the Allies' was creating pressure on the regime. It was impossible to tell whether the reported halt was in fact true, so PWE asked the BBC to suspend warnings to Hungary about deportations until it could be verified.¹⁰³ The next directive was still not certain whether the reports were true. It took the view, however, that they probably were. Therefore the directive ordered the suspension of 'attacks on the persecution of Jews' for the next two weeks.¹⁰⁴ This policy held firm until the October coup, when the pro-armistice Lakatos government was deposed by a German-inspired coup led by Szálasi's Nazi-style Arrow Cross movement. There was also a large degree of confusion about the position of the Hungarian Government. Directives in late August and early September contained remarks such as 'It is obvious that Horthy feels that the time has come, in view of Germany's defeats, to take a more humanitarian attitude on the Jewish question',¹⁰⁵ followed two weeks later by 'further evidence is required before it can be determined whether or not the Government has genuinely decided to take a "humanitarian" attitude on the Jewish question'.¹⁰⁶ This 'wait and see' policy lasted until 6 October, when a terse announcement stated that 'until further notice, keep off reports of renewed deportations of Jews from Hungary'.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² BBC WAC, E2/131/18, 20 Jul. 1944.

¹⁰³ FO 371/39272 (C7543/254/21), WD WB 21 Jul. 1944.

¹⁰⁴ FO 371/39273 (C100115/254/21), WD WB 28 Jul. 1944.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 18 Aug. 1944.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 1 Sep. 1944.

¹⁰⁷ FO 371/39273 (C13261/254/21), WD WB 6 Oct. 1944.

After publication of the news of the halt to deportations the BBC Hungarian Service obeyed their instructions from PWE and broadcast no further appeals to Hungarians to come to the Jews' aid. The last of these was that made by Benstead of the NUR on 18 July, the day before news of the halt was published in the London press. An attack by *Notarius*, ridiculing a claim by Imredy that no Hungarian hands were stained with Jewish blood, mentioned how everyone in the west knew that the Jews had been sent for gassing rather than labour, but spoke of deportations in the past tense.¹⁰⁸

Silence on the position of Jews in Hungary was maintained until 5 August, when a news bulletin broadcast the following:

According to official reports, the Hungarian Foreign Ministry has informed the Swiss Embassy in Budapest that they have improved the treatment given to Hungarian Jews in several respects.

According to the announcement, they have temporarily suspended the deportation abroad of the Hungarian Jews. The Swiss Embassy in Budapest has been authorised to help with resettlement of a few thousand Jews in Palestine, and the International Red Cross has received permission to give material support to Jews, specifically including the sending of food to those in concentration camps.¹⁰⁹

This was the first acknowledgement that deportations had ended. This delay, in retrospect, was wise in light of Eichmann's two 'illegal' deportations of 19 and 24 July. It was also the first acknowledgement by the BBC Hungarian Service of what would come to be known as the 'Horthy offer'. Bernard Wasserstein demonstrates the panic that this offer created at the highest levels of the British Government. Whereas the Brand proposals were never likely to be taken seriously, in this case there were no strings attached and no demand that negotiations with the enemy be publicly acknowledged. All the Allies had to do was take the unknown number of Jews with entry permits for other countries that Horthy was proposing to allow to leave. The problem for Britain was that many of these held permits for Palestine.¹¹⁰ It was in this context that the BBC Hungarian Service broadcast the following on 15 August:

¹⁰⁸ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service Talks, 20 Jul. 1944.

¹⁰⁹ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service news, 5 Aug. 1944.

¹¹⁰ Wasserstein, op. cit., p.263.

The British Government has asked the American Government to co-operate in the prevention of illegal immigration into Palestine [and in curbing] the provision of American Zionist financial support for illegal Jewish immigration from Europe.

The British High Commissioner for Palestine has announced that the immigrant quota for next month is 1600 for Jews.¹¹¹

There is no evidence, from PWE or elsewhere, that anyone specifically encouraged broadcasts of this kind in order to lower expectations of the number of Jews that would be allowed into Palestine. The timing was extremely convenient however. British unwillingness to shoulder an unfair portion of the burden, in other words to allow large numbers of Jews to enter Palestine, was underlined the following day when the BBC Hungarian Service broadcast an account of the meeting in London called to discuss the Horthy offer, which stated that the British chairman of the committee discussing it had called on all member states of the United Nations 'to give financial support and assist with finding temporary shelter for Hungarian Jews'.¹¹² The Hungarian Service broadcast formal acceptance of the offer on the night of 16/17 August and repeated it over the following days.¹¹³

The actual plight of those Jews left in Hungary received no coverage. A Hungarian who had written to British intelligence in Stockholm in early August commented on this. He stated that he found it 'remarkable that the foreign broadcasting stations say so little about the atrocities against the Jews in Hungary'.¹¹⁴

The period up to the coup on 15 October was virtually bereft of mention of Jews. The defection from the Axis of Romania provoked a brief comment, with an inscript from Newsome stating that the Romanian example in rebelling against those who had slaughtered Jews in that country pointed the way for Hungary to recover at least some of its national honour. Much greater stress was laid, however, on the fact that Romanian food supplies would no longer be shipped back to the Reich.¹¹⁵ A Hungarian directive from PWE on 8

¹¹¹ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service news, 15 Aug. 1944.

¹¹² Ibid., 16 Aug. 1944.

¹¹³ Wasserstein, op. cit., BBC WAC, Hungarian Service news, 18 Aug. 1944.

¹¹⁴ PRO FO 371/39286 (C11387/8704/21), Press Reading Bureau, Stockholm to PID, 23 Aug. 1944.

¹¹⁵ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service Talks, 15 Sep. 1944.

October announced 'until further notice keep off reports of renewed deportations of Jews'.¹¹⁶ The confusion indicated by this directive was mirrored by those issued by Newsome's successor, Ritchie. His comments on 17 October indicated that little in the way of reliable information was emerging out of Hungary.¹¹⁷ Two days later he noted this was still the case, and that there was 'no need to strain to build-up a story'.¹¹⁸ Hungarian radio stations, however, were broadcasting new and re-imposed measures against Jews in Budapest, but Ritchie chose not to highlight it.¹¹⁹ This was still the case by the end of the month, and Hungary - in at least in the sense of the ramifications of the new regime for Jews - then faded totally from his view. This was despite reports, carried by German radio stations and news agencies, continuing throughout the rest of 1944 detailing the increasing vicious rhetoric of the Szálasi regime, the re-introduction of 'labour service', and the execution of individual Jews.¹²⁰ These did not result in protests of the sort seen during the Spring and Summer on the BBC Hungarian Service. The sole reference I have come across was in a talk delivered by *Notarius* on 7 December which mentioned that Arrow Cross units were rounding up Jews and others.¹²¹

Could the BBC have saved lives in Hungary? The answer is almost certainly not. There is an argument to be made, best left to students of the obtuse mind of Miklos Horthy, that broadcast appeals from the neutrals to stop the deportations of Jews to be gassed in Poland had a real impact on his decision to halt them. If the appeals had been made earlier, and had the BBC then broadcast them, lives might have been saved. But this is speculation. The most important effect, or not, of the BBC was that which it had on Hungarian Jewry, particularly its leadership, and on the Jews' gentile neighbours.

Jewish leaders in Hungary have often been charged with deliberately withholding what they knew about the Final Solution from the community. In this situation, did the BBC have the power to break the spell that descended on Hungarian Jewry? It was

¹¹⁶ FO 371/39273 (C13261/254/21), WD WB 6 Oct. 1944.

¹¹⁷ BBC WAC, E2/131/19, 17 Oct. 1944.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19 Oct. 1944.

¹¹⁹ IWM, BBC Monitoring Report, 17 Oct. 1944.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, Oct., Nov., Dec. 1944.

¹²¹ BBC WAC, Hungarian Service Talks, 7 Dec. 1944.

certainly the case that the BBC broadcast unequivocal eye-witness descriptions of the killing process elsewhere in Europe long before March 1944.¹²² This was at a time when Braham describes the Jewish leadership as abjectly failing to inform the masses what they themselves knew.¹²³ But, as is encountered so many times when one examines the attitude of bystanders and prospective victims, there was a large difference between hearing information and believing it. Despite all the information that was available, the belief persisted in Hungary that 'it couldn't happen here'.¹²⁴

After deportations started, the BBC might have been expected to ignore the fact that they had no definite confirmation that deportees were being gassed and surmise as to their fate on the basis of what was known had happened to almost every other Jewish community. But this would have run counter to BBC policy of only broadcasting was known to be absolutely true and confirmed - a crucial part of the BBC's strategy. The reluctance of PWE to have the BBC tainted by 'Jewishness' was, of course, also not helpful. In any case what could the Jewish masses have done? With the possible exception of the Netherlands, Hungary was the country least suited to evasion and resistance in Europe. Once Germany occupied Hungary, they were the Nazis' prisoners. In this context it is not surprising that both the potential and actual impact of the BBC on Hungarian Jewry was limited.

As we have seen, the BBC Hungarian Service did broadcast a very large number of appeals to gentile Hungarians to come forward and help Jews. The BBC had a large audience in Hungary, though we might assume that it was skewed away from the railwaymen, police and others that many of appeals were designed to reach - but large nevertheless. The appeals were not acted upon. Undoubtedly there were instances of compassion and humanity, but whether the BBC provoked these is impossible to say. It seems improbable. In any case, by the time Germany occupied Hungary it was a little late for the BBC to abandon its policy of silence on Jews and proclaim the joys of Judeo-

¹²² See, for example, BBC WAC, BBC Polish Service news, 2 Jul. 1943.

¹²³ Randolph Braham, 'The Official Jewish Leadership of Wartime Hungary', in *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Wartime Europe, 1933-1945*, Proceedings of the Third Yad Vashem International Historical Conference (Jerusalem, 1979), p. 272.

¹²⁴ Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York, 1982), pp. 313-314.

Magyar brotherhood. Writing of organised resistance - which was, in any case, weak in Hungary - Braham comments that no collective armed attempt was ever made to free Jews from the ghettos, or to sabotage the loading facilities or rail lines leading to Poland.¹²⁵ Many of the British appeals were in any case made after the deportations had stopped.¹²⁶ It is doubtful that broadcasting could have had any effect in the inner circle of Hell to which Budapest descended between the Arrow Cross coup in October and the Soviet occupation in late January.

SECTION C: THE EUROPEAN SERVICE AND THE FINAL SOLUTION OUTSIDE HUNGARY IN 1944

While the Hungarian and other language services had been understandably preoccupied with the situation facing Hungarian Jewry, there had been other news. Both the BBC Polish Service and *Radio Polskie* broadcast a great deal of information on Jewish questions at this time. A centrally-produced item broadcast by the Polish Service on 2 May reported that over 'one thousand one hundred and four Poles were executed in the Cracow area alone between October 1943 and February 1944 for illegally sheltering Jews'.¹²⁷ The same station, on 4 May, reported that the Polish Government was setting up a commission to examine the plight of Jews within the Polish army. This was taken directly from a press release from the Polish Ministry of Information (hereafter PMOI).¹²⁸

It would seem that the propaganda offensive recently launched by the Polish Government was having some effect at least on the European Service. Further examples of this were a 'Poles Only' BBC report on 6 May, quoting the Polish Minister of Labour, Jan Stanczyk, at a meeting of Polish Jews in New York. It reported him stating that 'liberated Poland will be a country of freedom, justice and tolerance for all', and the Government

¹²⁵ Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, p. 988.

¹²⁶ Eichmann managed to arrange two 'illegal' deportations between 7 July and his leaving Hungary, temporarily as it turned out, on 28 August.

¹²⁷ BBC WAC, Polish Service news, 2 May 1944.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 4 May 1944. It was for the source of the information to be marked on individual news items.

would be convening a conference of all Polish Jewish organisations in the United States 'to inform them of about the action of the Polish Government aimed at the saving of all those Jews who can still be saved'.¹²⁹ By this time *Radio Polskie* had started to broadcast its fortnightly edition of 'Jewish News'. The edition on 9 May was given over to a report of a commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in London. Pride of place was given to a message read at the meeting from the Polish Interior Minister, Wladyslaw Banaczuk, expressing doubtless sincere sympathy as well as admiration for the dead fighters. The message, unsurprisingly given the renewed attempts of the London Poles to court Jewish opinion, was of Polish-Jewish brotherhood.¹³⁰ The pattern continued. On 11 May a talk was broadcast on *Radio Polskie* commemorating Zygielbojm's suicide a year earlier. This featured a brief biography, as well as a pointed excerpt from his suicide note which stated that by his death he registered 'the strongest protest against the criminal inactivity which the world had adopted in the face of the extermination of the Jewish people'.¹³¹ The next day a talk supplied by the Polish Telegraphic Agency was broadcast as 'must' by all sections of the European Service, and was repeated the next day by *Radio Polskie*.¹³² This was basically a lengthy *apologia* for antisemitism within the Polish army and explanation of what had led up to the amnesty recently granted to the Jewish deserters. Much was made of 'common fight of Jews and Poles in opposing a deadly foe'.¹³³ *Radio Polskie* announced the formation of the CRJPP on 20 April in its broadcasts on 23 May.¹³⁴ The BBC broadcast a fuller description of its activities, taken from a PMOI press release, under 'Poles Only' on 25 May:

At the first meeting in London today of the Council for the Rescue of the Jewish Population in Poland it was announced that a Welfare Committee for the Jewish Population has been in existence in Poland for the past two years co-operating with the Polish Underground Administration.

This Welfare Committee was strongly supported by all prominent and Jewish elements in Poland.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 6 May 1944

¹³⁰ BBC WAC, *Radio Polskie*, 'Jewish News', 9 May 1944.

¹³¹ Ibid., 11 May 1944.

¹³² The Polish Telegraphic Agency was the official Polish state news agency.

¹³³ BBC WAC, Polish Service newstalk, 12 May 1944.

¹³⁴ BBC WAC, *Radio Polskie*, 23 May 1944.

M. Banaczyk, Minister of the Interior, opening the meeting read a declaration from the Polish Government in which he told how the Poles had organised effective help for the Jews in Poland and in occupied Europe in spite of the fiendish vigilance of the Gestapo.¹³⁵

A more strident version of proceedings accompanied the same report on *Radio Polskie* the next day. This included Banaczyk's comments that *Zegota*¹³⁶ had brought effective relief to Jews throughout Europe and that those 'circles which are endeavouring to throw suspicion on the good name of Poland accusing us of intolerance - should be told: Look at the reality in the Home Country'.¹³⁷

The overwhelming majority of both BBC Polish Service and *Radio Polskie* reports mentioning Jews during May 1944 developed out of the London Poles' efforts to rebuild their image in the democracies as being liberal, tolerant types in the aftermath of the Jewish deserters affair. While one can hardly blame them for trying this, and the parallel effort of trying for yet another one last time to gain the support of 'world Jewry', the manner in which the BBC Polish Service and PWE allowed them to do so - they exercised firm control over policy even for *Radio Polskie* - was surprising. The PWE directives indicate that their stated motive was out of consideration for the fate of Jews being hidden by Poles within Poland. There were also less honourable motives; ones that might be grouped under the heading of a broad desire not to see the Government-in-exile totally shorn of influence within Poland and the wider world.

Nevertheless, there were examples of plain information being broadcast by the Polish Service at this time. Extremely disturbing was a European News Bulletin (hereafter ENB) item on 5 May.¹³⁸ This was a report that 'in the concentration camp for women at Ravensbruck the Germans are carrying out vivisection experiments, Polish women as well as women of many other nationalities are being operated on like rabbits.'¹³⁹ It did not mention Jews.

¹³⁵ BBC WAC, Polish Service news, 25 May 1944.

¹³⁶ The body under the control of the *Delegatura* charged with giving aid to Polish Jews inside occupied territory.

¹³⁷ BBC WAC, *Radio Polskie*, 26 May 1944.

¹³⁸ ENBs were produced in the central newsroom.

¹³⁹ BBC WAC, Polish Service news, 5 May 1944.

An example of the BBC Polish Service broadcasting hard news about the Final Solution during May 1944 was the denunciation of SS officers Klemm and Koch, identified as responsible for atrocities committed against Jews in northern Italy. The same bulletin also named SS Captain Burger as responsible for the persecution of Greek Jews. The names mentioned in this report came from the PMOI.¹⁴⁰ Generally though, there was little material like this.

On 16 June, the BBC German Service reported the following in its 'News for Women' series:

Here is an important announcement. News has reached London that the German authorities in Czechoslovakia have ordered the massacre of 3,000 Czechoslovak Jews in gas chambers at Birkenau on or about June 20th. These Jews were transported to Birkenau from the concentration camp at Theresienstadt on the Elbe last December.

4,000 Czechoslovak Jews who were taken from Theresienstadt to Birkenau in September 1943 were massacred in the gas chambers on March 7th.

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.¹⁴¹

This was the first mention, in BBC reports contained in the BBC archives, of any information originating from the reports that Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler had compiled before and after their escape from Auschwitz. The fact that the German Service aired it in the 'News for Women' strand suggests it was also featured in the general news broadcasts to Germany. Newsome's injunction, the same day, to report 'again our warning to the Germans about the massacres of Czech Jews' confirms this and also strongly suggests that it was made use of in other language services.¹⁴² It is also clear that Newsome's use of the word *again* indicates that the subject had been mentioned previously.¹⁴³ This is backed up by Danuta Czech, who reproduces an SS monitoring transcript, dated 15 June, stating that the *Sonderdienst* section of the RHSA¹⁴⁴ in Berlin had passed the details of a BBC report,

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 13 May 1944.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., Misc. German Service transcripts, 'News for Women', 16 Jun. 1944.

¹⁴² The information contained many references to the plight of Czech Jews.

¹⁴³ BBC WAC, E2/131/17, 16 Jun. 1944.

¹⁴⁴ The RHSA co-ordinated different aspects of the SS's work.

almost identical in content, though slightly garbled, to that broadcast on 16 June, to staff at the camp. This included a warning that 'All those responsible for these mass murders, from those in authority to those who carry out the orders, will be made accountable'.¹⁴⁵ Although the date of this broadcast is at least two days earlier than has been previously thought, a substantial period of time had nevertheless elapsed since the FO had first received the information on 13 June, via the British Embassy in Berne having telegraphed it on behalf of the Czechoslovak representative there to his Government in London.¹⁴⁶ All in Berne who saw the report, including Riegner, immediately realised that swift broadcasting of the information had the potential to save lives.¹⁴⁷

The question of timing was crucial. As stated in the report on 16 June, those who had made up the second deportation from Theresienstadt, which had taken place in December 1943, were due to be murdered in Birkenau on 20 June, after six months 'quarantine'. According to Czech, the BBC's reporting extended the lives of these people. She writes that it was possible that the public exposure of the intentions of the SS to liquidate these particular Jews on 20 June delayed their destruction. It eventually however did take place, on 11 and 12 July.¹⁴⁸ In the wider scheme of the Final Solution this may seem to have been a relatively trivial reprieve, but reprieve, though temporary, it certainly was. In this sense it opens up a set of questions about the position of the perpetrators had this kind of timely information been more widely available. The most likely answer is that, although a cumulative effect might have taken place, enough was known about the Final Solution by the German public during 1942 and 1943, when its impact would have been greatest, for the process not to have been stymied by public awareness.¹⁴⁹ There is also the additional factor that the report of the planned gassing of the Theresienstadt deportees was broadcast at the very end of the period during which Himmler hoped he might prolong the Brand discussions. It is doubtful that he would have thought Allied knowledge of the

¹⁴⁵ Danuta Czech, *The Auschwitz Chronicle 1939-1945* (London, 1990). p. 647

¹⁴⁶ FO 371/38925 (C7965/64/15), Telegram for Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from Kopecky, Berne to London, 12 Jun. 1944, Revd. 13th Jun. 1944.

¹⁴⁷ Gilbert, *Auschwitz*, p. 232.

¹⁴⁸ Czech, *op. cit.*

¹⁴⁹ David Bankier, 'German public awareness of the Final Solution', in Cesarani (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 220.

continued extermination of Jewish communities other than that of Hungary helpful in persuading them his intentions were serious.

There is a virtually complete run of transcripts for the BBC Polish Service and *Radio Polskie* for 1 August 1944 onwards. *Radio Polskie*'s 'Jewish News' for 1 August reported Horthy's declaration that deportations would cease and that children under ten years of age with Palestine certificates would be permitted to leave. It presented all of this as being the result of appeals by the Allies, the Vatican and the King of Sweden. Information more directly linked to the propaganda objectives of the Polish Government included news that the steps taken by the CRJPP had resulted in a number of unspecified 'serious results'; the appointment of the Bundist Emanuel Scherer to a state committee and the honouring of a Jewish soldier in the Poles' 1st Armoured Brigade.¹⁵⁰

The next week and a half were, understandably, dominated by reports of the doomed Warsaw rising. The next broadcast to mention the Final Solution, albeit indirectly, was on 12 August. This was an ENB report: 'Tense scenes were reported in Lublin today as German captives, with hostile Poles watching, were made to dig up bodies from Hitler's European slaughterhouse.' Further passages, detailing the reaction of Polish onlookers as the corpse of a child was removed from an open ditch and the intervention of troops to protect those Germans performing the exhumation from them, were cut. This was presumably for fear of being seen to condone 'popular justice'. Similarly, the following was also cut: 'Dispatches said that Russian and Polish troops escorting the 800 German prisoners outside Lublin had march them away from the wrathful Polish people'.¹⁵¹ The reason for this cut was that it referred to Soviet-backed Polish troops, a subject that the Government-in-exile had established the BBC would avoid when these forces arrived in Poland.¹⁵² Despite the cuts, and despite the important absence of any identification of the victims, this was an important occasion in the history of the BBC's coverage of the Final Solution; it was the first broadcast of a description of the scene at a liberated death camp. In his memoirs, the BBC correspondent Alexander Werth wrote how the BBC ignored

¹⁵⁰ BBC WAC, *Radio Polskie*, 'Jewish News', 1 Aug. 1944.

¹⁵¹ BBC WAC, Polish Service news, 12 Aug. 1944.

¹⁵² FO 371/39426 (C7397/61/55), 31 May 1944

detailed reports he filed at this time, after visiting Majdanek.¹⁵³ He put the blame for this on the fact that until the Allies overran the western camps they refused to believe that the stories of Majdanek and Auschwitz were genuine. This was quite possibly the case regarding the Home Service, but the existence of this item, taken from an Associated Press agency report, shows clearly that for the European Service, as so often, things were different. What it suggests is that, again, the format of information - provenance, immediacy, political context - was at least as important in deciding whether information became news as was the reluctance of many in the west to believe what they were being told. The fact that the story of Majdanek was not followed up in any way until the end of the month reinforces this. This was despite Monitoring making available vast amounts of information on Lublin, including the fact that hundreds of thousands of Jews had been killed.¹⁵⁴ The problem was that the station broadcasting this belonged to the 'Union of Polish Patriots', Stalin's Polish franchisees, and so mentioning it was completely out of the question. The BBC were reminded of this two weeks later when Balinski formally requested 'that there should be no broadcast of material from Lublin'.¹⁵⁵

The bombing of Auschwitz was reported in an ENB on 21 August, although it was not identified as a death camp.¹⁵⁶ *Radio Polskie* announced on 31 August that the following day would be honoured as a day 'of prayer and remembrance for the remainder of Polish Jewry'.¹⁵⁷ Majdanek was referred to again, on *Radio Polskie*, on 31 August. Part of the station's daily 'Polish Press Review' was devoted to a *News Chronicle* leader. It ran as follows:

It is hard to imagine any crime which outstrips that of Majdanek - either in its scope and scale or in the depth of degradation to which those who planned it, have descended. Here we have, systematically carried out over a long period, the murder of innocent people for no better reason than that their continued existence was regarded as superfluous by the mad men who engineered their destruction. Words cannot be found which in such a circumstance are adequate. We have been taught by experience to be extremely wary of these

¹⁵³ Alexander Werth, *Russia at War 1941-45* (London, 1964), p. 390.

¹⁵⁴ IWM, BBC Monitoring Report, 9, 10, 12, 16 Aug. 1944.

¹⁵⁵ SI KOL. 434/45, 6 Sep. 1944.

¹⁵⁶ BBC WAC, Polish Service news, 21 Aug. 1944. It is unclear whether *Oswiecim* was used in language services other than Polish.

¹⁵⁷ BBC WAC, *Radio Polskie* news, 30 Aug. 1944.

atrocities stories. But these things in Majdanek have happened: the evidence seems irrefutable [...] In suppressing the Jews [Hitler] was therefore 'striving to preserve the world of God'. Those, who many years ago were shocked by wickedness of Hitler's views, would never have believed that he would carry this blasphemous doctrine to the length of attempting in cold blood to wipe out the Jewish race from Europe. Not only in Poland, but in France and Russia this inhuman policy has been systematically pursued.¹⁵⁸

The BBC Polish Service also broadcast a substantial amount of information at this time. On 4 September it broadcast a talk, in Polish, by the Bund's Emanuel Scherer. This was addressed to 'The Jews in Warsaw':

You, who have gone through the hell of anti-Jewish tortures by the German occupation - and you who have gone through the Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto - and you working till now in hiding - and all you who fight with arms in your hands at the side of your co-citizens on the barricades of Warsaw - our homage and respect.

You defend, in a terribly unequal battle, the honour of the Jewish race and its working class, fighting in the first ranks of the armed, rising in the Warsaw ghetto, being its promoter and its soul ...

And now for the third time in this war, you are fighting in the streets of Warsaw, under the same unconquered standards of the freedom of our land, nation, and all mankind. Not many of your comrades are able to take part in today's battle. Tens and hundreds of thousands of Jews, who would undoubtedly have fought had they lived till now, rest in the mass graves at Tremblinka, Majdanka, Belcz, Sobibora, Oswiecim, [all sic] and so many other places of torture and death. But however few of you comrades are in the ranks of the Home Army - you ARE FIGHTING FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR THOSE WHO HAVE GONE...

The common interest and allegiance of Poles and Jews thus proclaimed, Scherer moved to placate the Soviets:

A tragic fate has decided that just before the victories of the Allies, a victory for which for five years our homeland has made such terrific fighting expenditure, we stand before a difficult test. Soon the Soviet army will enter Warsaw, the whole of Poland will shortly be freed from the blood shedding German occupation. A new record begins in our history. The Polish-Jewish Workers' Movement desire that it will begin with a Polish-Soviet understanding, friendly, sincere, true based on the respect of both sides, and a guarantee that our land

¹⁵⁸ BBC WAC, *Radio Polskie*, 'Polish Press Review', 31 Aug. 1944.

will be truly free and independent - the foundation and hope of a democratic organisation and socialistic rebuilding of free Poland.¹⁵⁹

This was decidedly more friendly language towards the Soviets than they had any right to respect from a member of the Government-in-exile, and underlined the way that what power and influence it had wielded was slipping away, as well as the reluctance of the Bund to offend the Soviets, a phenomenon first witnessed after the murders of Ehrlich and Alter.¹⁶⁰ Scherer, however, had made only a passing reference to Majdanek, and did not mention the Soviet occupation of Lublin that had led to its discovery. More followed from the BBC Polish Service. The liberation of Pruszków had earlier been featured on *Radio Polskie*.¹⁶¹ By 6 September the BBC were reporting that food parcels were being dispatched there, and a day later, that they were beginning to arrive.¹⁶² An ENB report was used to issue a denial that Buchenwald had been bombed on 16 September. The report, which was broadcast widely throughout the European Service,¹⁶³ mentioned only that the camp held political prisoners.¹⁶⁴ The same day, in time under Polish editorial control, it broadcast a long talk by Schwarzbart. This day was also the eve of *Rosh Hashana*. Schwarzbart, in the introduction, deliberately made clear that the talk was aimed at all Polish Jews. Nevertheless, much of it was aimed at Jews in Poland - or their ghosts.

The tone was verging on the apologetic; setting out how Jews in the Allied capitals and in Palestine had been active on behalf of Jews in Poland. However:

We know that despite relentless efforts we have not been able to do much to save you. But we await the wakening of the world's conscience and that on the Day of Judgement over the enemy and at the building of the bases for a new life, neither your bloody fighting, nor your wholesome sacrifice will not be forgotten.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ BBC WAC, Polish Service newstalk, 31 Aug. 1944.

¹⁶⁰ These were two Bundists executed in the Soviet Union. See Shimon Redlich, *Propaganda and Nationalism in Wartime Russia: The Jewish Antifascist Committee in the USSR, 1941-1948* (East European Monographs, No. CVIII, 1982), p. 39.

¹⁶¹ BBC WAC, *Radio Polskie*, 26 Aug. 1944.

¹⁶² BBC WAC, Polish Service news, 6, 7 Sep. 1944.

¹⁶³ SI KOL. 434/45, 27 Sep. 1944.

¹⁶⁴ BBC WAC, Polish Service news, 16 Sep. 1944.

¹⁶⁵ BBC WAC, Polish Service, Polish free time, 16 Sep. 1944.

The next tranche of Polish free time the same day was occupied by a similar talk. This time it was by Chairman of the Federation of Polish Jews in Great Britain, Margulies, who spoke to what might remain of Polish Jewry thus:

Your tragedy, our tragedy, my dear brothers and sisters, is ending. You will not be left to your fate. Great tasks are facing us. First of all, the rehabilitation of the once thriving Polish Jewry and of the Jewish community in Poland. In this task we shall be united all, and give everything we can, happy families will be re-united and sorrow will give room to joy.¹⁶⁶

On *Rosh Hashana* itself it was the turn of Rabbi Babad, of *Aguda Israel*, to speak on behalf of Orthodoxy. Again he addressed himself to Jews within Poland, with a tone that was more self-justificatory than apologetic:

I am speaking to you as the representative of the organisation Agudas Israel. You may wonder perhaps that you hear so little from us and about us. It is in vain to assure you that Jewish orthodoxy has not forgotten you, that the Aguda remembers you.¹⁶⁷

Rabbi Babaḥ then gave a list of the various organisation *Aguda* was affiliated to, and its offices in various world capitals. The European Service as a whole broadcast the comments of Harry Goodman, addressed to the 'Jews of Europe'. The only hard fact in this broadcast, that according to him 3 million Jews had been murdered, was cut.¹⁶⁸ The pattern was repeated throughout the European Service, it would seem. Newsome told Balinski that 'the facts had been covered in all languages'.¹⁶⁹

Radio Polskie broadcast another item was on 24 September. This was a statement prepared on behalf of the Polish Government for the United Nations War Crimes Commission. It stated that they had received, on 15 September, a message from Poland, in actual fact from the AK in Cracow, giving details of the situation in 'concentration camp Oswiciem'.¹⁷⁰ In the camp there were:

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ BBC WAC, Polish Service, Polish free time, 17 Sep. 1944.

¹⁶⁸ BBC WAC, Polish Service news, 17 Sep. 1944

¹⁶⁹ SI KOL. 434/45, 20 Sep. 1944.

¹⁷⁰ FO 371/39453 (C13346/131/55), Halifax to Hull, 20 Sep. 1944.

40,000 persons of all nationalities: Poles, Belgians, Dutch, Czech and others. 95 per cent of the prisoners are accused of political crimes, and only 5 per cent of criminal ones. All of them are being tortured in an unbelievable way.

This description of Auschwitz omitted Jews, and represented only a small part of the complex as being representative of the whole. Further on in the announcement, the real objective of the Polish Government clearly lurked under the surface, as might have been expected in a talk that was actually provided by the PMOI. This was a demand that their representatives be immediately allowed to travel to Poland in order to assess the situation on the ground for themselves, and thus gain access to 'liberated' Poland for the first time.¹⁷¹

The supposed German intention to clear the camps of inmates as soon as possible was featured again twice by *Radio Polskie* the same day. This was the first report not only to mention Birkenau by name, but also the names of Hoess and Moll. It was as follows:

First of all the camps in Buchenwalt (sic), Oswiecim and Rajsko, which is called by the Germans Birkenau, are to be liquidated. As it is known the Germans have already started to murder the prisoners of Buchenwalt and in order to conceal their crime, they published a mendacious communiqué to the effect that the camp in Buchenwalt was bombed by Allied planes.

The plan of liquidation of the mentioned concentration camps was being prepared for a long time. Commander of Oswiecim, Hoss [sic], Himmler's confidant, summoned the commanders of various concentration camps, asking them to put forward their plans for liquidations of camps. As a result of this detailed enquiry a plan put forward by the commander of the concentration camp in Birkenau, Moll, was accepted in principle. This plan demands for action the use of mobile units of the SS artillery, for shelling the blocks, sixteen bombers, and labourers for clearing off the ground on which the camp stands.

At the present moment only the order from Berlin is awaited.

At the concentration camp of Rajsko only, about 17000 men and 40000 women are being kept. The number of prisoners in other camps is considerably higher.¹⁷²

Both *Radio Polskie* and the BBC Polish Service repeated this over the next two days.

The subject was then ignored for two weeks until 10 October when the BBC European Service broadcast the Anglo-American statement throughout the day. One

¹⁷¹ BBC WAC, *Radio Polskie*, 24 Sep. 1944.

¹⁷² Ibid., 24 Sep. 1944.

historian has persuasively commented that the unfavourable British policy towards the issuing of any new statement during this time was as a result of a typing error in the transcription of a minute by Churchill, with his use of the word 'have' wrongly recorded as 'ban'. The result of this was that he was understood as saying that 'any publicity might *ban* a chance of saving the multitudes concerned'. As soon as this error was discovered, the British made immediate efforts to agree a suitable form of words with Washington.¹⁷³ Churchill's position as it was originally understood, however, fitted most conveniently with that of important figures in the FO. Halifax had told Hull on 20 September that

Her Majesty's Government feel, however, that the issue of a warning declaration to the German Government would not have the desired effect, as their experience, which is doubtless shared by the United States Government, in issuing warning declarations on such topics is that the warnings are not only unheeded by the Germans but that they are liable to result in the victimisation of the persons whom they are designed to protect.¹⁷⁴

This view had spread throughout the FO, originating from a Cabinet paper presented following the formation of the War Refugee Board in early 1944. With public protests increasing however, a declaration seemed a sensible option by October. Frank Roberts, as ever, was influential in shifting the policy, writing on 6 October that his 'fear [was] that if these threats are carried out and HMG had, despite warnings, taken no action whatever, they will be criticised not only by the Poles but also by Jewish organisations and the great mass of humanitarian opinion in this country.'¹⁷⁵ The eventual statement on 10 October, as the BBC European Service broadcast it, named both Auschwitz and Birkenau, where 'thousands of people from many European countries' were imprisoned. If the planned execution was carried out, then the Allies would 'hold responsible all those who are in any way involved, from the highest to the lowest, and in full co-operation and agreement [would] spare no effort to bring them to justice'.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Gilbert, *Auschwitz*, p. 325.

¹⁷⁴ FO 371/39453 (C13346/131/55), Halifax to Hull, 20 Sep. 1944.

¹⁷⁵ FO 371/39454 (C13824/131/55), minute by Roberts, 6 Oct. 1944.

¹⁷⁶ BBC WAC, Polish Service, 10 Oct. 1944.

It was not until 14 October, in an ENB marked 'Poles Only', that Jews were identified as forming any section of the intended liquidation. This report was based on a press release by the PMOI containing a statement by the CRJPP. It claimed that, from Poland, an appeal had been issued to the Allies to 'do everything in their power' to stop the Germans murdering 'internees in Oswiecim and other camps'. Among those 'threatened with extinction are the Jewish population in Poland'. The report continued: 'Tens of thousands of human creatures are falling victim to the murderers in a most brutal way and the world is looking on. Nobody comes to their rescue.'¹⁷⁷ This last passage was a shocking departure from BBC European Service norms and demonstrated how loose control could on occasion be. What it also represented was a return to the Polish policy of playing the Jewish card when it seemed their efforts were not producing the desired amount of publicity.

Auschwitz was again mentioned four days later, this time on *Radio Polskie*. The report told how, by 14 October, over 12,000 of those expelled from Warsaw had been sent there. Since 7 October the murder plan had been put into operation, with Poles being gassed in both bunkers and lorries. It reported that lorries were transporting prisoners to Maczki, 40 km north of Auschwitz, in order to keep the operation a secret after German denials of any liquidation plan. Those in charge of the operation were named as follows: Obergruppenführer Pohle; Obersturmführer Raskow, Hauptsturmführer Krammer, Obersturmführer Schwitzer, Political Chief of Auschwitz Hosler, Untersturmführer Scharze and Sturmführer Schwartz. This was supplemented by further details:

The new mass slaughters of political internees in Oswiecim began on October 7th-8th. The massacres take place in gas chambers built near the camp in the locality Brzezinka [German: Birkenau] near Oswiecim.

On the day of beginning of massacres the Polish internees, who represent the overwhelming majority of the camp attacked the German hangmen. During the unequal fight the Poles destroyed six German hangmen. As a result of this fighting, during which the Germans shot at the camp barracks with machine guns, 200 Polish internees were killed.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 14 Oct. 1944.

¹⁷⁸ BBC WAC, *Radio Polskie*, 18 Oct. 1944.

All of this information was taken almost directly from two coded telegrams which had been sent from the *Delegat* in Cracow a few days previously.¹⁷⁹ This report was repeated the next day, and featured in the BBC Polish Service and other languages as well. The Poles were informed that Fraser had issued a 'special comment' in the German Service, where he had stated that the liquidation of Polish prisoners had begun on 7 October, 'in Auschwitz, perhaps the most horrible in reputation of all the concentration camps ever set up by the Nazis'.¹⁸⁰

Fraser also named the same seven members of the camp staff mentioned by *Radio Polskie*.¹⁸¹ The source for the names was the same as that of the other information in the report; the telegrams from Cracow. However, these contained not seven names, but rather the names of 49 SS men and women of varying ranks, based in Auschwitz-Birkenau and identifying which part of the complex they worked in. The Poles were upset that only a small number of the 49 names they had supplied the BBC with had been broadcast. The Polish Ambassador called on Cadogan on 19 October, the day after the names had been broadcast, and demanded that the full list should be given out. Cadogan was wary of this. According to his record of the conversation:

The names as given in the telegram dated October 14th appeared to be very corrupt and it would probably be very undesirable to issue an incorrect list. He said that he would try to get the names cleared up but meanwhile he begged that we should consider the advisability of announcing the fact that we possessed a list of names.¹⁸²

Discussion thus centred on whether it was advisable to broadcast these additional names as given in the Cracow telegrams, simply to broadcast the fact that the Allies had a list of names without actually broadcasting the names themselves, or to do nothing. The Refugee Department of the FO believed that simply to broadcast the existence of the list was sufficient, hoping that combined with the Allied statement of 10 October, it would be that 'such an announcement might just turn the scales and make this declaration we already

¹⁷⁹ *Delegat*: the underground representative of the Government-in-exile.

¹⁸⁰ SI KOL. 434/54, Ritchie to Balinski, 20 Oct. 1944.

¹⁸¹ BBC WAC, Lindley Fraser: Talks and Features, 1944, *Sonderbericht*, 18 Oct. 1944.

¹⁸² FO 371/39454 (C14352/131/55), memo by A. Cadogan, 19 Oct. 1944.

issued effective'. Naming the wrong people, an official added, 'would be another excuse for reprisals'.¹⁸³ PWE, on the other hand, believed that such a course of action would be pointless, and that greater effort should be made to get the Poles to have the list satisfactorily checked so that the names could indeed be broadcast.¹⁸⁴ Roberts made up his mind at the end of the month, giving his decision in a letter to Wladyslaw Kulski of the Polish Embassy:

We have considered the possibility of making a further declaration to the effect that we have these names in our possession, but our feeling is that this would be ineffective unless we could publish the actual names. We should be prepared to consider doing this, with reference to the declarations issued by His Majesty's Government on the 10th October, provided your Government can confirm the accuracy of the list handed to me by Budny and see no objection to its publication.¹⁸⁵

This was not forthcoming, and so the list was not broadcast. Whether there would have been any diminution of suffering within Auschwitz-Birkenau had the list been broadcast is impossible to say. Unlike the stay of execution granted to the Theresienstadt deportees in June, the naming of the seven had no discernible impact on the rate of killing in Birkenau.¹⁸⁶ This is despite suggestions by Jozef Garlinski that the broadcasting of names of Auschwitz personnel may have caused the behaviour of several SS-men to change, with some even volunteering for the Eastern Front.¹⁸⁷ What this episode does magnify, however, is the role that the question of whether information was totally verified played deciding what news made it into BBC reporting of the Final Solution. Although in the final analysis this must be given a lower priority to that of the political context of the information, it was nevertheless extremely important. Lipstadt identifies a kind of affected scepticism amongst American journalists that limited what they published.¹⁸⁸ A similar process operated at the BBC,

¹⁸³ Ibid., memo by [unidentifiable], 23 Oct. 1944.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., memo by member of PWE staff, 27 Oct. 1944.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., Roberts to Kulski, 1 Nov. 1944.

¹⁸⁶ Gilbert, *Auschwitz*, p. 325.

¹⁸⁷ Jozef Garlinski, *Fighting Auschwitz: The Resistance Movement in the Concentration Camp* (London, 1978), p. 221. Garlinski does not know the date of the broadcast which caused had this effect.

¹⁸⁸ Lipstadt, op. cit.

except that for the BBC it was grounded in political warfare concerns - the need for the BBC to be believed - rather than the American fetish for accuracy.

Although the Auschwitz names episode grew out of concern for the fate of Poles deported from Warsaw after the rebellion, *Radio Polskie* was not totally ignoring Jews. In the same bulletin which broadcast the list of the seven, there was a letter reprinted from the Palestine-based newspaper, *Dawar*. This had been posted in the 'Soviet-occupied part of Poland' on 8 August.

In the Wilno ghetto a part of the Jews, I among them, worked in a factory. I worked in a factory which was managed by a Pole, a Christian. He helped me a great deal. Often he hid me from my persecutors and he even prepared a hiding place for my sister and her husband. I'm living now in the home of a Christian Pole and the Poles are looking after me. I have no clothing and no shoes. Previously I wore dresses belonging to a Polish woman, but after the capture of Wilno by the Soviet Army, the Poles' house was totally destroyed by a bomb. It is a pity that I can't repay the Poles for all that they did for me.¹⁸⁹

Although there were well-documented cases of this kind, the motivation behind this piece was that Polish propaganda was seeking to present the message that Poles had been at the forefront of efforts to bring aid and succour to Jews during the Holocaust. Still they had the perception that 'World Jewry' would be able to swing public opinion behind them.

The next 'Jewish News' programme was broadcast on 24 October. The first item broadcast was this:

The following warning was announced by the British Government in reply to the appeal made by the Council for Rescue of the Jewish Population in Poland's appeal for all possible efforts to be made in order to rescue from mass extermination those Jews who are imprisoned in German concentration camps in Poland.

Again, this was overtly propagandistic. It presented the recent Allied declaration as being a direct response to the appeal of the CRJPP, an organisation founded and ostensibly supported by the Government-in-exile. It is worth noting that it was two weeks since the

¹⁸⁹ BBC WAC, *Radio Polskie*, 18 Oct. 1944.

Allied warning had been broadcast by the BBC Polish Service and *Radio Polskie*, at which time it had not been thought necessary to include any specific reference to Jews.

The rest of 'Jewish News' was similarly 'spun', featuring messages of support and unity from various Polish figures. The only hard piece of information was that the Swedish Government had expressed its consent to being in charge of 9000 Jews in Hungary, and 5,000 Swedish passports had been given to Hungarian Jews with a further 4,000 to be issued in the nearest future.¹⁹⁰ It was left to the BBC Polish Service to broadcast matters such as the estimate by Averill Harriman, US Ambassador to Moscow, that 1.5 million people had been murdered in Lublin.¹⁹¹

SECTION D: THE HOME SERVICE AND THE FINAL SOLUTION IN LATE 1944

The BBC Home Service returned to news about Hungary's Jews a week after it had reported the Polish Government-in-exile's statement on Hungarian Jewry for the second time. This report took the form of a broadcast in the 9 p.m. news on 14 July:

The American Secretary of State said today that he'd received reliable reports from Hungary, confirming the appalling news of the mass killings of Jews by the Nazis and their Hungarian Quislings. The entire Jewish community in Hungary, numbering about a million people were threatened with extermination. Mr Cordell Hull said the horror and indignation felt in America at these cold-blooded tortures and massacres, were being voiced by the President, and the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 'Jewish News', 24 Oct. 1944.

¹⁹¹ BBC WAC, Polish Service, 28 Oct. 1944.

United Nations would see to it that full punishment was meted out to those responsible.¹⁹²

Although this was, unusually, broadcast ahead of actual war news, it was still eighth out of sixteen stories in the bulletin. The fact that it was actually broadcast probably had a lot to do with its official provenance. The midnight bulletin carried news of what had happened to another Jewish community. This was an eyewitness report by James Fleming of CBS, who had recently arrived in newly-liberated Vilnius.¹⁹³ His report formed part of a general report of proceedings that day on the Eastern Front. The Home Service regularly devoted a large amount of coverage of the daily Russian communiqué. This was sometimes late in arriving, which possibly explains why this item did not feature in the main bulletin at 9 p.m.. The passage referring to Jews was brief, containing only Fleming's remark that 'the real tragedy of the city is the human one. I was told that an old man who was followed by a woman and a seriously ill child were all that remained of the sizeable Jewish population of Vilna'.¹⁹⁴ It did not mention what had happened to them and the story did not feature in early bulletins the next day. A similar story, in terms of its provenance, was broadcast in the 1 p.m. bulletin the next day. This referred briefly to the total absence of Jews when Soviet forces re-entered Pinsk.¹⁹⁵

There was nothing for the rest of July. The Home Service did not mention Hungary again until 4 August, when the midnight news carried the following:

The treatment of Hungarian Jews has become milder, according to information sent by the Hungarian Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the Swiss Legation in Budapest. It appears from the Hungarian statement that the deportation of Jews for work abroad has been temporarily suspended, that the Swiss Legation in Budapest will be allowed to help several thousand Hungarian Jews to emigrate to Palestine, and that the International Red Cross has been authorised to send food to the concentration camps and help the Jews in other ways.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 14 Jul. 1944.

¹⁹³ The BBC used the Russian name, *Vilna*, rather than Lithuanian *Vilnius* or Polish *Wilno*.

¹⁹⁴ BBC WAC, midnight news, 14 Jul. 1944.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1 p.m. news, 15 Jul. 1944.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, midnight news, 4 Aug. 1944.

The source for this broadcast was given as a report by the Swiss Home Service that night. This was a little strange, seeing as the BBC Hungarian Service had broadcast a similar report 24 hours previously.

The report of the supposed bombing of Buchenwald, broadcast by the European Service, was included in the 9 p.m. bulletin on 24 September, but was cut at a late stage. Whether this was on grounds of space, or as a result of policy is unclear. Accompanying it was the information from the Polish Government-in-exile that the Nazis were planning to use mobile artillery and aircraft to destroy 'three concentration camps in Poland with all the thousands of victims in them, so as to leave no traces of their crimes'.¹⁹⁷ The Home Service ignored all of the material which the European Service was broadcasting on Lublin and Auschwitz.

A report by Robert Reid, in *War Report*, at what he stated was the first Jewish service to be held on liberated German soil was broadcast on 30 September. The description of the Jewish American troops as they celebrated Yom Kippur stressed their full participation in the war but did not mention the Final Solution in any way. Reid's question to the 'Chaplain' on how it 'felt to be able to hold such a service - in a land where those of his faith have so long been oppressed' was the only indication of any special significance.¹⁹⁸ Another story to mention Jews on this day was the news that the Jewish area of Jerusalem had been put under curfew after the murder of a British soldier.¹⁹⁹

Only on 10 October were death camps again mentioned, when the Anglo-American declaration on the supposed German plan to exterminate the population of several camps was broadcast:

The Polish Government has notified the British Government of reliable information they've received that the German authorities are planning the mass execution of the people in the concentration camps at Oswiecim and Brzezinky. At these camps in Poland, thousands of people from many European countries are imprisoned. The British Government want to give a clear warning that if this plan, or any similar plan elsewhere, is carried out, they will hold responsible all those who are in any way, from the highest to the lowest. In full co-

¹⁹⁷ C-W BBC 9 p.m. News, 24 Sep. 1944.

¹⁹⁸ BBC WAC, *War Report*, 30 Sep. 1944.

¹⁹⁹ C-W BBC 9 p.m. News, 30 Sep. 1944.

operation and agreement with the Allies, they will spare no effort to bring the guilty to justice.²⁰⁰

The same report was also broadcast at 6 p.m., and in the same untrailed, unprominent part of the bulletin. The format of this broadcast was due to direct interference by the FO News Department, which *instructed* the Home Service to report the British, rather than American, version of the declaration. The difference between them was that the British version stressed the participation of the particular country where war crimes had been committed in the process of applying justice, thus not mentioning special war crimes trials.²⁰¹

This was two weeks after the supposed existence of the plan had first been broadcast on the European Service. The timing of its eventual dissemination by the Home Service was not accidental. As was seen above, its emergence and Allied unwillingness to proclaim their intention to do something about it had allowed protests to be broadcast even by *Radio Polskie*, as well as appearing in the British press. Roberts' comments 'that if these threats are carried out and HMG had, despite warnings, taken no action whatever, they will be criticised not only by the Poles but also by Jewish organisations and the great mass of humanitarian opinion in this country' indicated that people such as Rathbone could still wield some influence.²⁰² There seems little doubt that only when the Allied declaration, which had been resisted strongly by the FO, had been prepared was the Home Service comfortable using the news. Even then, Jewish inmates were not identified as forming a substantial proportion of the camps. Whereas the European Service did this on 14 October, the Home Service continued to refrain from doing so. In contrast, it strongly linked the activities of the *Irgun* in Palestine with Jews. A report of a statement by the Colonial Secretary in the House of Commons contained the comments of the senior British officer in the Middle East that Irgun's membership and its active and passive supporters were 'indirectly hindering the British war effort and so helping Nazi Germany'.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 10 Oct. 1944.

²⁰¹ FO 371/39454 (C13943/131/55), Harrison to Ridsdale, 10 Oct. 1944.

²⁰² Ibid., minute by Roberts, 6 Oct. 1944.

²⁰³ C-W BBC 9 p.m. News, 11 Oct. 1944.

On 13 October *War Report* included the memories of a British citizen who had spent the war in Paris. She began by stating that at the beginning of the occupation she had heard stories which she was 'inclined to take with a pinch of salt'. This impression had changed after coming into contact 'many victims of the Nazi regime. One of these was a Jewish friend who, along with his family, had evaded arrest and hid in a small village in the south of France:

One day the Father-in-law who was bedridden heard a car draw up [...] an argument [...] several shots [...] and silence. When the frightened neighbours came in they found my friend and his 17 year old son dead on the floor. The Germans had shot him then and taken away the other two children and their grandmother - in spite of all our efforts to trace them, we were never able to do so. These women were just another three who will never come back.²⁰⁴

The first news of the implications of the Arrow Cross coup in Hungary was in the 1 p.m. bulletin on 16 October. This took the form of a brief announcement, amid general news of events in Hungary, that the level of antisemitic propaganda had been stepped up, including radio announcements that morning of unspecified 'stricter anti-Jewish measures'.²⁰⁵ Again, antisemitic propaganda was seen as being symptomatic of factors unrelated to Jews, rather than directly connected with their fate. The 6 p.m. news announced the imposition of the Yellow Star,²⁰⁶ whereas the 9 p.m. bulletin reverted to announcing 'stricter measures'.²⁰⁷ There was nothing at midnight, but early bulletins the next day announced a 24 hour curfew for Jews in Budapest.²⁰⁸ On 18 October there was nothing, save an announcement that 'no news is coming out of Hungary, except from the Nazi-controlled Radio stations'.²⁰⁹

The Home Service reported nothing more on the position of Hungarian Jews for the rest of 1944. Despite the fact that some significant pieces of information had been taken from Monitoring in the period immediately following the coup, information from the same

²⁰⁴ BBC WAC, *War Report*, 13 Oct. 1944.

²⁰⁵ BBC WAC, 1 p.m. news, 16 Oct. 1944.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 16 Oct. 1944.

²⁰⁷ C-W BBC 9 p.m. News, 16 Oct. 1944.

²⁰⁸ BBC WAC, 7, 8 a.m. news, 17 Oct. 1944.

²⁰⁹ C-W BBC 9 p.m. News, 18 Oct. 1944.

source was not used again. For example, on 20 October Monitoring intercepted a German Home Service report quoting Vajna, the new Hungarian Minister of the Interior, as stating: 'Hungary will solve the Jewish problem in the radical way that the Jews deserve because of their previous and present attitude'.²¹⁰ On 3 November the *Daily Monitoring Report* included a DNB²¹¹ statement that all Jewish property was being confiscated and that 'Jews will only be allowed to keep such articles of furniture and other things as are directly needed to for everyday use and stocks of food and fuel enough for a fortnight'.²¹² During the period up to the Soviet occupation, Nazi-controlled radio stations across Europe broadcast regular descriptions, stopping short however of mentioning mass killings, of the desperate plight of Jews in Budapest. This information was ignored.

Neither was there any news from Poland at this time on the Home Service. Regular reports from Alexander Werth, in Kiev and other places, did not mention Jews. Between mid-October and 20 December 1944, the Home Service made no mention at all of the Final Solution. In contrast, there was plenty of reporting of the assassination of Lord Moyne.²¹³ Churchill's comments in the House of Commons, which implicated the entire Jewish population of Palestine in the Stern Gang's terrorism, were fully quoted.²¹⁴ The last few months of 1944 had hardly prepared the British people well for the horrors that would be presented to them in 1945.

²¹⁰ IWM BBC Daily Monitoring Report, 21 Oct. 1944.

²¹¹ One of the leading German news agencies.

²¹² IWM BBC Daily Monitoring Report, 2 Nov. 1944.

²¹³ British Minister in Cairo, murdered by members of the Stern Gang. The BBC's full coverage of this episode may well have encouraged the 'widespread horror and indignation' that Wasserstein identifies in Britain at this time. see Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

²¹⁴ C-W BBC 9 p.m. News, 17 Nov. 1944.

CHAPTER VIII

LIBERATION: JANUARY 1945 TO MAY 1945

This chapter deals the period leading up to the liberation of the western camps in April and the end of the war in May. It will be seen that this period saw the climax of the BBC's inability to reflect the true nature of the Final Solution - both in regard to its scope and specific targeting of Jews for unique treatment and eventual extermination.

SECTION A: THE BBC HOME SERVICE IN 1945

The New Year of 1945 began with the Home Service quoting Hitler to the effect that the Jews were trying to destroy Germany.¹ This was the only mention of Jews until an edition of *War Report* a week later which containing an interview by the BBC correspondent Matthew Walton of 'prisoners from an elite [German] formation' in Belgium.² One of the prisoners had said that the Allied intentions for Germany were 'hideous'.

'Why so hideous?' He was asked. 'You Germans have been doing things like that, not only removing whole population, but murdering whole populations.'
He said: 'Whom have we killed except a few Poles and Jews?'
And there you have the German problem. 'Whom have we killed, except a few Poles and Jews?' And Frenchmen, Danes, Greeks, Russians and others [...] one German was asked if he were conscious that Germany had committed crimes against humanity. 'What crimes?' he asked. 'We have simply fought for our lives.' That's the German problem - to teach an entire nation the meaning of decency and law.³

The inference here was that the fate of Jews was anything but unique. The latter part of the month saw an increase in the number of eye-witness reports from the east, including newly Soviet-occupied Silesia. However, few mentioned camps and none mentioned Jews. The results of the inquiry into the Bethnal Green tube disaster, which had happened almost two years previously, were broadcast on 19 January. This included the comments of the police officer in charge of the inquiry:

¹ BBC WAC, 7 & 9 a.m. news, 1 Jan. 1945.

² This was how they were described. They were quite probably SS men, but could just as well have been elite Wehrmacht troops. That the interview was conducted in Belgium at this time suggests they had been taken during the current German offensive in the Ardennes, in which the SS figured prominently.

³ BBC WAC, *War Report*, 7 Jan. 1945.

[He] denied the story that this was evidence of Jewish panic. Not only was that story without foundation, but it was also demonstrably false. The Jewish attendance at this shelter was, and is, so small as to constitute a hardly calculable percentage.⁴

News of the liberation of Auschwitz, referred to by the Home Service as Oswiecim, was broadcast by the Home Service on 28 January. The first mention was in the early bulletins, mixed up with general news of fighting in Poland: 'Further to the south, Soviet troops have captured the Polish town of Oswiecim, where the Germans have one of their most horrible extermination camps.'⁵ This was added to with the following at 1 p.m.:

When the British Government learned last autumn that the Nazis were planning another mass execution of the thousands of European people there, they issued a stern warning that the Allies would spare no effort to bring to justice all those involved from the highest to the lowest levels.⁶

Again, Jews were not mentioned. Whether this was because their presence was not included in the Soviet communiqué on which this report this was based is quite possible. The way the information was contained in the general report on fighting in the east meant that its position in the bulletin was more prominent than it might otherwise have been. What was, on the surface, strange was that after 1 p.m. the report was dropped. The reason behind this was that, having formed part of the previous night's communiqué which had been late in arriving, it was 'old news' by the evening. However the use of the term 'extermination' in place of 'concentration' in identifying the nature of the camp did mark a departure.⁷ The next mention of Auschwitz was not until 8 February, although a dispatch from Alexander Werth on 31 January contained an aside referring to the 'horrors of Tremblinka [sic] and Maidanek [sic]'.⁸

⁴ Ibid., 1 & 6 p.m. news, 19 Jan. 1945.

⁵ Ibid., 8 & 9 a.m. news, 28 Jan. 1945.

⁶ Ibid., 1 p.m. news, 28 Jan. 1945.

⁷ The term 'extermination camp' was first used by the Home Service in a passage that was cut from *War Report* on 13 October.

⁸ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 31 Jan. 1945.

The report on 8 February was again from Werth, describing the scenes in Reich territory overrun by the Soviets. He stated that what Germany was 'experiencing now is still mild compared with the crimes she cheerfully committed throughout Europe'. He compared it with

the Maidanek [sic] extermination camp, with its 800,000 men's, women's, and children's shoes, and its department store of clothes and toys taken off the hundreds of thousands gassed, or otherwise murdered. Or compared with the even more horrible camp of Oswiecim near Cracow, where hundreds of thousands of corpses were disposed of, ~~and the remains utilised on a conveyor belt system.~~⁹

The cut made here may have simply have been on grounds of space, removing extraneous detail. However it may also have been due to unwillingness on the part of those constructing the news to bring back memories of the 'corpse factory' story of the First World War, and to which this detail bore an uncanny resemblance. Again there was no mention of Jews. This could hardly have been due to Werth's being unaware of what had happened to Jews brought from all over Europe in Poland. Neither could Soviet censorship be blamed. Soviet-controlled radio stations, especially *Radio Polskie Lublin*, the organ of the National Committee of Liberation, were broadcasting a great deal of information about what had happened to Polish Jewry.¹⁰ This was particularly the case in mid-February. However, much of what was broadcast, especially in *Radio Polskie Lublin's* Yiddish service, was highly propagandistic, calculated to portray the AK in particular, and Poles in general, as viciously antisemitic.¹¹ The Soviets had first established this as the propaganda line regarding Polish Jewry in 1943. As Shimon Redlich notes: 'The main aim of Soviet propaganda in this case was to point out anti-Jewish prejudices and anti-Semitic behaviour on the part of the Polish Government in Exile.'¹² It could hardly be described as a reliable

⁹ Ibid., 8 Feb. 1945.

¹⁰ see IWM BBC Monitoring Reports.

¹¹ e.g. from Radio Polskie Lublin in Yiddish: 'In the Pruszkow camp Jews from Warsaw lived in barracks next to Bor's men. The Home Army gangsters ill-treated the Jews. During the rising in the Ghetto of Warsaw Jewish children were taken care of by Christian families. Now some of the children do not recognise their parents and refuse to return to them because they are Jews.' IWM BBC Daily Monitoring Reports, 2 Feb. 1945.

¹² Redlich, op. cit., p. 49.

source. The BBC were not alone in largely ignoring accounts that were emerging of the unique horror of the extermination camps. An FO official, quoted by Tony Kushner, noted 'that information on the camps liberated by the Russians had received "only the scantiest indications in the Press"'.¹³

Brief references to the Final Solution continued to be all that was used by the Home Service in the period leading up to the liberation of the western camps. On 23 February the 9 p.m. news reported that German civilians in Brandenburg were jealous of those still wearing the Star of David, as it meant they had no chance of being mistaken for a German by Red Army troops.¹⁴ Both the 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. news of 27 February reported Churchill's comments, in a parliamentary debate on Poland's frontiers that

Three and a half million Polish Jews were said to have been slaughtered. It was certain that enormous numbers had died in what was probably the most horrifying act of cruelty that had ever darkened the passage of man.¹⁵

Churchill's figures may not have been accurate, but their presence is a timely reminder of two things. Firstly that the BBC were prepared to broadcast anything said in Parliament, and, secondly, that the question of where information came from was one of the most important variables in deciding whether it became part of the news.¹⁶ Nothing at all referring to Jews was broadcast in March, except for a piece describing how the Jewish Brigade was fighting in Italy.¹⁷ Thus the stage was set for liberation of the western camps. The BBC had demonstrably not prepared the British people for what they were about to learn.

Before this, the Home Service broadcast an astonishing talk in a religious affairs programmes series, later reprinted in *The Listener*. This was by Rev. Nathaniel Micklem. He began by stating that at 'least two million Jews in Europe have been robbed, insulted, beaten, tortured, butchered.' The evidence for this was clear, they were not 'atrocities stories'

¹³ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p. 208.

¹⁴ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 23 Feb. 1945.

¹⁵ Ibid., 28 Feb. 1945.

¹⁶ With the possible exception of serious criticism of the government, and, even then, this was limited to the European Service.

¹⁷ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 25 Mar. 1945.

and 'the Christians and others in the various countries who have protested, and often done much more than protested, provide all the necessary evidence.' He rejected that religion had been the cause of the onslaught on European Jewry, as 'any person of Jewish birth, be he Jew or Christian or nothing by religion, is regarded by the Nazis as a Jew and persecuted as such.' Micklem then asked what the Christian response had been. Although he did not want to 'paint too glowing a picture', Christianity's conscience was clean. He gave a list of expressions of solidarity by individual Christians and the churches across Europe, including Germany and Hungary, 'where more than in most countries there really is a "Jewish problem" '. Micklem then talked about what he called the 'Jewish problem in our own country'. He spoke of how it had grown during the war, blaming the increase on 'the publicity given to Jewish black marketeers'.

There were two types of Jews in this country according to him; the established and the new communities. The former were 'now really British'. However:

a vast mass of destitute Jews came to this country from eastern Europe; they have lived in large Jewish communities very much by themselves. . . they have never really assimilated our national ways and they still seem foreigners to us, in manners, in appearance, in *business methods*.¹⁸ That, I think, is a large part of the difficulty. Well, what can we do about it? We are not the least tempted to the bestial brutality of the Germans, but it is silly not to recognise that there is a Jewish problem (though not a very serious one) in Great Britain, as there is in the United States [...] The Jews epitomise the problem that besets the world at this time - the problem of minorities, unwelcome to the majority.¹⁹

There is no documentation in the BBC archive relating to this talk, but bearing in mind the immense difficulties that had arisen in getting broadcasts relating to Jewish issues made in earlier years, that this piece of polite antisemitism actually made it onto the airwaves is astounding. Likewise was the lack of reaction from the Board of Deputies or anyone else. After all, this was surely what they meant when they agreed with the BBC in 1942 that discussing such matters would likely make them worse. Especially when people like Micklem were used.

¹⁸ Emphasis mine.

¹⁹ Reverend Nathaniel Micklem, 'Jews and their enemies', *The Listener*, Vol. XXXIII no. 848, pp. 408-09, 12 Apr. 1945.

The first mention on the Home Service of the camps that the Allies were about to liberate, in this case Belsen, was on 13 April. :

Units of the division across the Aller beyond Celle have reached the neighbourhood of a big concentration camp containing over sixty-thousand prisoners, where there are more than two-thousand cases of typhus and typhoid. A cordon has been drawn up around the camp area with the agreement of the German commandant to avoid contact with the prisoners who might carry infection. The situation will soon grow difficult as reports say the camp has food for only three days more.²⁰

The next morning's early bulletins dropped Belsen, and replaced it with a shorter announcement that the 'American advance has over-run Buchenwalde [sic], one of the largest and most notorious of the German concentration camps'.²¹ There was no further news broadcast until the 9 p.m. news of Sunday 15 April, the next day, when the last item in the headlines announced that, at the end of the news, 'Edward Murrow of CBS will report what he saw and heard at the infamous concentration camp of Buchenwald'.

During the ten-minute recorded talk, Murrow gave a moving description of what he had found: He introduced the listeners to five inmates; all of them were identified as political prisoners. In his description of Buchenwald, Murrow concentrated on the plight of the living - as would all the other reports from the liberated camps. Amid the description of the kitchens, the rations and the tattoos on the arms of the prisoners, what follows was the only description of the dead:

There were two rows of bodies stacked up like cordwood. They were thin and very white. Some had been shot through the head, but they bled but little. All except two were naked. I tried to count them as best as I could, and arrived at the conclusion that all that was mortal of more than 500 men and boys lay there in two neat piles.

One of the difficulties that reporters would have in describing such sights was indicated by this section of the report: 'As we walked into the courtyard, a man fell dead. Two others, they must have been over sixty, were crawling towards the latrine. I saw it, but will not

²⁰ BBC WAC, midnight news, 13 Apr. 1945.

²¹ Ibid., 7 & 8 a.m. news, 14 Apr. 1945.

describe it.'²² He was censoring himself, in other words. On what grounds Murrow made this choice is not clear.

This dispatch certainly represented skilled and effective broadcasting. Perhaps this vindicated the BBC decision to use Murrow instead of its own correspondent, also present at Buchenwald. An additional factor behind this substitution was the feeling that the cult of Murrow's personality within Britain, established at the time of the Blitz, would lend greater credence to what he had to say.²³ The next report mentioning Buchenwald, the midnight news the same evening, took a similar line to that taken by Murrow. It reported, among the general round-up of fighting on the western front, the news that the latest advance by British troops had carried them 'past a huge concentration camp where sixty-thousand political prisoners are interned'. It added that there were 'some 2500 cases of typhus and typhoid here, and it was agreed in a parley on Thursday to treat this camp as a neutral zone'.²⁴

There was no further news from the camps until 17 April. In *War Report* that evening there were two more eye-witness accounts. The first of these was by the American war reporter, Jack Anson, at Buchenwald. He interviewed inmates in much the same fashion that Murrow had, again identifying his subjects as political prisoners. However, Anson also stated that the guards had been hanging up to 300 Russians a day - suggesting that death was more than just a by-product of poor conditions and brutality. Robert Reid, the BBC correspondent also present at Buchenwald, described how German civilians were being dragged into the camp to witness what had been done there. The rest of his report concentrated on what the American army was doing to care for inmates, including children. He also described how they were taking action on their own behalf, and had organised themselves in their 'national groups'. What these national groups were was not mentioned, nor were the criteria leading to their incarceration and the death of so many.²⁵ The audience for that evening's *War Report* was fractional under 10 million, or almost exactly a

²² Ibid., 9 p.m. news, 15 Apr. 1945.

²³ A.M. Sperber, *Murrow: His Life and Times* (London, 1986).

²⁴ BBC WAC, midnight news, 15 Apr. 1945.

²⁵ Ibid., *War Report*, 17 Apr. 1945.

third of the entire adult civilian population.²⁶ Perhaps the most important way in which Reid's report was treated was what his editors cut. Instead of a recording being played, an announcer read the text. Where Reid had described German civilians being led 'past the mound of skeletons covered with a bright parchment of purplish skin', this was changed to led 'past the mound of the dead'.²⁷ The listener was to be shielded from too graphic a description of the sort of scenes that Reid had witnessed. This would have important ramifications when BBC editors considered what section of Dimbleby's broadcast from Belsen the listeners should hear.

There was nothing on the liberation of the camps on 18 April. The next mention was on 19 April. This was the announcement that ten members of Parliament were going to Germany immediately to see for themselves 'the horrors of Nazi concentration camps'. The report continued:

Mr Churchill told the Commons today that he'd had a message from General Eisenhower this morning saying that the new discoveries, particularly at Weimar²⁸, far surpassed anything that had been so far disclosed, and he invited the Prime Minister to send a body of MPs at once to headquarters so they could get first-hand evidence of these atrocities.

Then it was the turn of other MPs to make their contributions. The most notable comment, but understandable perhaps if one was a regular listener to the BBC, was that of Aneurin Bevan. The radical socialist MP 'suggested it should be made clear that these camps were not for prisoners of war, but for enemies of the Nazis and that the chief victims were German communists, socialists and trade unionists.'²⁹ That evening there was another report from Robert Reid in Buchenwald who interviewed a British PoW, Captain Burney from Hay-on-Wye. He described life inside the camp:

Reid: And how would you like to sum up your whole experience here?
Burney: Well I couldn't politely say it over the microphone.
Reid: But it's been shocking?

²⁶ Ibid., R9/11.

²⁷ BBC WAC, *War Report*, 17 Apr. 1945.

²⁸ i.e. Buchenwald.

²⁹ BBC WAC, 1 p.m., 9 p.m. and midnight news, 19 Apr. 1945.

- Burney:** It's been shocking but on the other hand it's so stunning it's almost unreal and I think probably when one has been among civilised people for a while one just forgets it.
- Reid:** You feel as though you've been really out of civilisation do you?
- Burney:** Oh yes, absolutely out of the world. Everything which happened here was without relation to anything which had ever happened before and therefore one had a special year of life which just was somewhere else, in another world. It might have been on Mars.³⁰

This was extremely moving material, recorded and broadcast with the highest intentions. But there was still no mention of Jews. Captain Burney's remark that he could not find a 'decent' way to describe his experiences again reveals how difficult it was for anyone to find the language in which to relate what they had seen.³¹ Even Murrow had stated that for most of what he has seen he had 'no words'.³² For BBC journalists, who learned to abjure sensationalism above anything else, the problem was, perhaps, particularly acute. Indeed, a member of one of the delegations that visited the camps over the next few weeks commented that 'they should have sent poets'.

Richard Dimbleby's report from Belsen on 19 April has since achieved mythic status, almost as a kind of touchstone moral defence of the BBC's coverage of the Holocaust. One can hear it on a tape loop in the small corner devoted to the Holocaust in the Imperial War Museum. It is perhaps one the main elements that led to the British looking on Belsen as 'our camp'.

Dimbleby's was the fifth and final item in that night's *War Report* and took the form of a recording made by him the previous day. The announcer introduced it as follows: 'British forces - the 11th Armoured Division - have liberated another terrible camp, at Belsen, near Bremen. Richard Dimbleby recently visited this camp, and saw for himself the suffering and starvation among the 60,000 inhabitants. Here's a passage from his report. Dimbleby describes what he saw inside one of Belsen's wooden huts.'³³ There are many interesting things to note about this introduction. The first is that Dimbleby himself, in the

³⁰ Ibid., *War Report*, 19 Apr. 1945.

³¹ Richard Dimbleby told Wynford Vaughan-Thomas shortly after leaving Belsen that what he had seen was 'an outrage . . . an outrage'.

³² BBC WAC, 9 p.m. news, 15 Apr. 1945.

³³ Ibid., *War Report*, 19 Apr. 1945.

version of the dispatch sent to London gave the number of inmates as being 40,000, not 60,000.³⁴ Belsen was referred to as *another* camp, showing just how numerous reports were at this time. The introduction also refers to 'suffering and starvation among the 60,000 inhabitants', rather than the huge number of murder victims. This reveals the most important theme concerning the BBC's editorial treatment of Dimbleby at Belsen; the concentration on the living to the exclusion of the dead.

The most important point to make about the broadcast is that it was but a *passage* from the whole dispatch. What the BBC broadcast on 19 April was less than a third of what Dimbleby had actually filed. His original copy contained a great deal more information and quite a different vision of Belsen. Most pertinently, Dimbleby's original introduction included a description of the nationalities of the inmates as 'German, and about a half a dozen other nationalities - thousands of them Jews.' One of the very few references to Jews amid the huge amount of reportage from the recently liberated camps had been cut.

The rest of the 600 or so words of the first section of edited-out copy included a description of 'a smell, sickly and thick - the smell of death and decay, and corruption and filth'. Dimbleby recounted how he had found himself 'in the world of a nightmare' where 'dead bodies - some of them in decay - lay stretched along the road and round the rutted track'. He then described the scene inside a hut. His introduction to this was as follows: 'I have seen many terrible sights in the last five years, but nothing, nothing approaching the dreadful interior of this hut at Belsen. The dead and the dying lay close together'.³⁵ The broadcast version picked up his narrative at this point:

In the gloom, until I heard one voice that rose above the undulating moaning. I found a girl - she was a living skeleton - impossible to gauge her age, for she had practically no hair left on her head and her face was only a yellow parchment sheet with two holes in it for eyes. She was stretching out her stick of an arm and gasping something. It was 'Englisch - Englisch - medicine - medicine' and she was trying to cry, but she had not enough strength. And beyond her, down the passage and in the hut, there were the convulsive movements of people too weak to raise themselves from the floor.

In the shade of some trees lay a great collection of bodies. I walked around them, trying to count - there were perhaps 150, flung down on each other. All

³⁴ Ibid., WRU C7726, 18 Apr. 1945.

³⁵ Ibid.

naked, all so thin that their yellow skins glistened like stretched rubber on their bones. Some of the poor, starved creatures whose bodies were there looked so utterly unreal and inhuman that I could have imagined that they had never lived. They were like polished skeletons - the skeletons that medical students like to play practical jokes with. At one end of the pile a cluster of men and women were gathered round a fire. They were using rags and old shoes taken from the bodies to keep it alight and were heating soup on it. Close by was the enclosure where five hundred children between the ages of five and twelve had been kept. They were not so hungry as the rest, for the women had sacrificed themselves to keep them alive.

Babies were born at Belsen - some of them shrunken wizened little things that could not live because their mothers could not feed them. One woman, distraught to the point of madness, flung herself at a British soldier who was on guard in the camp on the night it was reached by the 11th Armoured Division. She begged him to give her some milk for the tiny baby she held in her arms. She laid the mite on the ground, threw herself at the sentry's feet and kissed his boots. When in his distress he asked her to get up, she put the baby in his arms and ran off crying that she would find milk for it because there was no milk in her breast. When the soldier opened the bundle of rags to look at the child she found it had been dead for days.

There had been no privacy of any kind. Women stood naked at the side of the track, washing in a cup of water taken from British army water trucks. Others squatted while they searched themselves for lice, and examined each other's hair. Sufferers from dysentery leaned against the huts, straining helplessly, and all around and about them was this awful drifting tide of exhausted people, nether caring nor watching. Just a few held out their withered hands to us as we passed by, and blessed the doctor, whom they knew had become the camp commander in place of the brutal Kramer.

I have never seen British soldiers so moved to cold fury as the men who opened the Belsen camp this week, and those of the police and the RAMC,³⁶ who are now on duty there, trying to save the prisoners who are not too far gone in starvation.³⁷

The next 600 words of copy were cut.

The main difference between the content of what was broadcast and what was cut was that the broadcast version contained only one mention of large numbers of corpses. It concentrated much more on the condition of the living. Tony Kushner is mistaken when he says that description of the dead dominated the broadcast.³⁸ This topic *did* dominate what

³⁶ Royal Army Medical Corps.

³⁷ *War Report: D-Day to VE-Day* (Oxford, 1946), pp. 401-403.

³⁸ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p. 215. Kushner uses Jonathan Dimpleby's biography of his father as his textual source for the broadcast. Dimpleby Jr. quite correctly states that the text that he reproduces is what was *sent back* to London, not what the BBC actually aired. This can only be correctly assessed by examining the actual transcript of Dimpleby Sr.'s despatch, held in the BBC WAC, and comparing it with the transcript of *War Report* for 19 April. The cuts then become clear.

he sent back - but not what the BBC actually broadcast. Within the broadcast version there had also been two additional cuts. The first was a description of those within the huts as 'crawling with lice and smeared with filth'. The second was a description of how those still alive were surrounded by bodies of the dead.³⁹ The passages following on from the broadcast section included descriptions of how 'civilisation had totally broken down', the scene at the crematorium and how there the Germans 'had burned alive thousands of men and women in a single fire'. The single most shocking thing he had to report he introduced thus: 'Every fact I have so far given you has been verified, but there is one more awful that all the others, that I have kept to the end.' Dimbleby described how British doctors had examined some of the bodies that had piled into a pit the size of a tennis court and about fifteen foot deep. They had found some of these bodies had been dissected and the liver and kidneys removed. These had then been eaten.⁴⁰

At the time, Dimbleby told a BBC colleague that 'I must tell the exact truth, every detail of it, even if people don't believe me, even if they feel these things should not be told'. This was in marked contrast to Murrow's refusal or inability to describe a scene he regarded as particularly shocking.⁴¹ In assessing the editors' reasons for making the cuts they did, which of these two motivations - disbelief or distaste - were most important? In his biography of his father, Jonathan Dimbleby writes that the News Room at Broadcasting House, disbelieving, resisted broadcasting Dimbleby's dispatch until it had been 'verified' by newspaper reports. Much more likely, however, London's reluctance to broadcast the dispatch was much more a reflection of the shocking nature of its content. They did not consider cannibalism as suitable for the BBC. This explains why when Dimbleby threatened to resign, as he did, if his report was not broadcast immediately his editors relented.⁴² What was broadcast was no less horrific, but was certainly much less graphic in its depiction of death and degradation. It was the need to tone this aspect down that caused the delay. This episode also underlines Kushner's point that the most important part of the interpretative framework that both the media and the public used to deal with Belsen and

³⁹ BBC WAC, WRU C7726, 18 Apr. 1945.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 9 p.m. news, 15 Apr. 1945.

⁴² Jonathan Dimbleby, *Richard Dimbleby: A Biography* (London, 1975), pp. 193-94.

other camps was the connection that was made to knowledge of the concentration camps of the 1930s.⁴³ The BBC's handling of Dimbleby's dispatch from Belsen was both a reflection and a cause of this.

The Home Service next reported news from the camps at midnight on 20 April, and in early bulletins the following day, introduced as 'ever more sickening news'. It reported that members of the SS had been detailed by Allied officers to bury the dead in common graves and gave a figure of three to four hundred deaths. These included deaths from typhus and tuberculosis, although most were dying of starvation. The 9 a.m. news on 21 April added that a special film was being made to show the German population.⁴⁴ At midnight the Home Service reported that the British delegation had arrived at Buchenwald.⁴⁵ This was repeated the following morning. The 6 p.m. news that evening reported that they had returned to London.⁴⁶ The 9 p.m. and midnight news reported that a camp had been discovered between Bremen and Hamburg, where there was a sick list of 1,500, and 8,000 political prisoners had been packed into the camp in the last few days.⁴⁷ A report on the liberation of Flossenbug on 25 April noted the Americans had found 1600 'political prisoners'.⁴⁸ A week after the first mention of camps, the BBC had not uttered the word 'Jew'.

This finally happened when the parliamentary delegation to Buchenwald published their report on 27 April. The Home Service reported that they had observed:

the Nazi doctors' laboratory, with its jars containing human organs; and they saw the results of certain 'scientific experiments' on the Jews. They were told that the wife of the German commandant collected articles made out of human skin. They obtained pieces of hide which Sir Bernard Spilsbury has identified as being human skin; one of these pieces clearly formed part of a lampshade.⁴⁹

⁴³ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p. 209.

⁴⁴ BBC WAC, 9 a.m. news, 21 Apr. 1945.

⁴⁵ Ibid., midnight news, 21 Apr. 1945.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 6 p.m. news, 22 Apr. 1945.

⁴⁷ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 22 Apr. 1945.

⁴⁸ BBC WAC, 7 a.m. & 8 a.m. news, 25 Apr. 1945.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 6 p.m. 9 p.m. news, 27 Apr. 1945.

Three days later came news of the liberation of Dachau. The first report was at 9 a.m. The 9 p.m. news, heard by 40.7 per cent of the adult civilian population,⁵⁰ reported that the 'SS Guards were quickly overcome and about thirty-three thousand prisoners - mostly there for political and religious convictions - were liberated.' Correspondents had 'found the same horrifying signs as elsewhere'.⁵¹ The story was placed eighth out seventeen stories in the bulletin. The midnight bulletin reported that 'American soldiers who first reached it were so enraged at what they saw, that there was short shrift for those in charge'.⁵² Earlier bulletins did not mention this allusion to summary executions.

The next day, 1 May, *War Report*, carried an eye witness report from the BBC journalist Ian Wilson in Dachau:

I have just left Dachau, with a mind confused between the joyous scenes of the liberation of thirty-two-thousand prisoners and the scenes of horror that remains, for Dachau is like the world's worst nightmare come true.

Here briefly and baldly is what I saw today, Monday April 30th 1945. A hundred yards from the gates of Dachau Concentration Camp is a railway siding and on that siding I saw fifty wagons filled with emaciated bodies. They were the bodies of prisoners who had been brought alive from Buchenwald and had been on that train in that siding for three days without food or water. Those who tried to get out were shot down. Their bodies lay along the track.

That was outside the camp - inside, is a moat-like river which runs alongside the barbed and electrical fence, I saw the bodies of two thousand prisoners who had been murdered by machine-gun fire, a few hours before the Seventh Army Americans reached Dachau. Further inside the enclosure, I saw a long hut full of skeleton-like human beings, all dying and too weak to talk.

Worst of all was the crematorium - a long brick building, with a reception room where the bodies, dead or alive, were taken in and stripped of clothing. Then came a shower-room, with jets in the ceiling and gratings in the floor, where the bodies were washed before being burned. Then a charnel house in which I saw a pile of poor wasted bodies stacked in neat orderliness, waiting to be burnt and then the furnace room itself. On the walls of the crematorium was the notice in German 'Cleanliness is a duty here, so don't forget to wipe your hands' and beside the furnaces was an extraordinary mural painting of two headless S.S. officers astride bloated pigs.

So much about the dead - what, then, of the living? As I said at the beginning, there are thirty-two-thousand of them in the camp. The majority of them will survive. As I went through the camp, gaunt, ragged men pressed forward to touch my hand. They were of all ages, young, middle-aged and old men; some had only been in Dachau for a few weeks, others for eleven years,

⁵⁰ Ibid., R9/11.

⁵¹ C-W BBC 9 p.m. news, 30 Apr. 1945.

⁵² BBC WAC, midnight news, 30 Apr. 1945.

and they ranged from slave-workers of all nationalities to intellectuals and opponents of Nazism from all the countries overrun by the Germans. In my brief visit I met and talked to one Englishman among all the thousands of Germans, Poles, Czechs, Russians, French, Belgians and Dutch.

When the American troops stormed up to the camp and forced the Nazi Commandant and his SS Guards to surrender, the enthusiasm when they went through the main gates, was wild and hysterical and a battalion of infantry was required to restrain the liberated prisoners. They swarmed around the US soldiers, hugging and kissing them and the countryside resounded to wild cheer after wild cheer which rose even above the crashing of gunfire.⁵³

The contrast between Dimbleby's report from Belsen and Wilson's from Dachau is striking. Whereas Dimbleby's sections dealing with the dead were cut, Wilson's descriptions of the same were broadcast. The difference was that in his description of the dead, Dimbleby had emphasised the chaos, the sheer hellishness of what he had seen. He had, to a tangible extent, sacrificed his objectivity and detachment. Wilson, on the other hand, was much more restrained. As he himself stated, he would be telling the listeners what he had seen 'baldly and briefly'. This suggests that it was not only what Dimbleby had to say that created problems, but also the way he said it.

The absence of mention of Jews in reports of the liberation of the camps has received a great deal of comment. Part of this was the inevitable result of the fact that Jews were a small minority in many camps. Jon Bridgman gives figures that suggest Belsen had the highest proportion of Jewish inmates, at 40 per cent.⁵⁴ In other camps the figures were much smaller: For Dachau, there were 2,700 Jews out of 27,400 at the main camp and about 8,000 out of 70,000 in the whole Dachau system.⁵⁵ For Buchenwald, 'it was estimated' there were about 8,000 Jews among 81,450 prisoners at the final *Appell* on 5 April, though there is no figure for the population at the moment of liberation when only 21,100 inmates remained after the rest had left on death marches.⁵⁶

The other main cause was that the ideological framework within which these reports were created inevitably led to the negation of the victims' Jewishness. This is easily understood in the context of the times. Taking Dimbleby as an example, what he wanted to

⁵³ Ibid., *War Report*, 1 May 1945.

⁵⁴ Jon Bridgman, *The End of the Holocaust: The Liberation of the Camps* (London, 1990).

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 66.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 81.

give vent to was his outrage at the treatment meted to human beings by other human beings. An idea of common humanity - in the person of a shaken, angry and potentially vengeful British soldier that he describes in a passage of his report that was not broadcast - demanded that Belsen not be addressed by the listener in terms of category or race. To do would have been to surrender what many in the West had believed they were fighting for.

Still, however the fact that at the time of the liberation of the western camps the most important news source for the British people did not present this as in any way a *Jewish* event is important. If it is true, as Wasserstein writes, that the British public consciousness was 'fully awakened' to the Final Solution when British soldiers, officials, and correspondents sent home eye-witness accounts of what they had seen in the liberated camps, then the BBC played little part in this.⁵⁷ This fact may well have important implications in understanding the subsequent developments of attitudes towards the Shoah in Britain, underlining the view that its comprehension was, has been, and is, dynamic and unfinished.

SECTION B: THE EUROPEAN SERVICE IN 1945

There is coverage in the BBC archives for the BBC Polish Service and *Radio Polskie* during February 1945. This shows that the Government-in-exile was still predominantly interested in trying to ingratiate itself with those it considered important, rather than simply distribute information. Of course, it has been a central theme of this work that politicised broadcasting during the Second World War was the norm rather than the exception. But when the Polish Government-in-exile had any influence over content, any aspirations to achieving influence through more subtle means - the British way - was jettisoned. *Radio Polskie's* news on 1 February announced that the CRJPP had received a letter from *Aguda* thanking them for the help the Government's offices in Switzerland had given. Without their help, the letter stated, 'our task in helping many Polish Jews could not be fulfilled'.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Wasserstein, op. cit., pp. 343-44.

⁵⁸ BBC WAC, *Radio Polskie*, 1 Feb. 1945.

An edition of 'Jewish News', broadcast the same day, included news that the American Joint Distribution Committee had allocated a large sum of money for food parcels for Jews in Theresienstadt and Belsen, and other Jewish organisations - with the name of the pro-Government Federation of Polish Jews being given prominence - were collecting relief supplies elsewhere. There was also news of the repeal of antisemitic laws in Hungary.⁵⁹

The next day, 1 February, the BBC Polish Service broadcast an ENB eyewitness account of Auschwitz. The source was an agency report:

Moscow correspondents report that several thousand people have been rescued from the German extermination camp at Oswiecim, in territory captured by the Russians in Upper Silesia. One correspondent says: 'All the survivors were ghost-like apparitions, almost ageless and sexless.'

~~Hundreds of thousands of victims from Poland, France, Yugoslavia and other European Countries were massacred at Oswiecim. On arrival they were forced to work 18 hours a day; they were subjected to hunger and exposure and torture until too weak to work any more, then they were shot, hanged, electrocuted or poisoned and cremated.~~

Describing the camp, in terms which confirm all previous accounts, the correspondents say: 'It occupied 30 square km., the whole ground saturated with blood and literally blanketed with human ashes. There are offices for sorting the victims, according to age and strength and capacity to work before execution. There are offices for old men, women, children and invalids condemned to immediate execution. In another department semi-invalids were forced to sort the clothes of those already murdered. The main department was the furnace for cremating the bodies of the victims.'⁶⁰

The section that was cut was presumably done so on grounds of difficulty in authenticating the precise information which it contained - an accurate appraisal in hindsight. The significance of the piece is that in regard to the Home Service it shows eyewitness accounts were available from agency sources, indicating Home Service editors made chose to ignore them. Meanwhile, the political crisis enveloping the Government-in-exile continued to be shape *Radio Polskie's* broadcasts . In response to continuing accusations of antisemitism broadcast by the National Committee of Liberation, *Radio Polskie* reported that a delegation of Polish Jews in Jerusalem had delivered a declaration to the Polish Consul in Jerusalem stating that 'all information of such a kind is shameful calumniaion, since the Jew

⁵⁹ Ibid., *Jewish News*, 1 Feb. 1945

⁶⁰ Ibid., Polish Service, 2 Feb. 1945.

have never suffered any harm from the Polish underground movement or the Polish Home Army'.⁶¹ The Poles also attempted to start their own broadcasts in Yiddish, calculated to counter those coming from Lublin. On 7 January, Balinski stated the impetus for this had been an AK request, and that it would 'greatly hearten Jews in Poland who had escaped annihilation by the Germans'. He suggested that such broadcasts could be incorporated in present *Radio Polskie* programmes, or become part of the BBC's European Service, addressed to European Jews in general.⁶² Balinski got his answer from Kirkpatrick two weeks later. He wrote:

Yiddish broadcasts were stated to be undesirable as they tended to increase rather than diminish the sufferings of the Jews. Mr Ritchie pointed out that the decision did not rest with the BBC but was a political decision, dictated by experience. He suggested that this aspect should be pointed out when the answer was communicated to the Jewish organisations.⁶³

There were doubtless many other reasons why Yiddish broadcasting was rejected - among them a wish not to offend the Soviets and unwillingness to broaden the influence of the Government-in-exile - but this now somewhat pat formulation remained the one of choice. Another exchange of correspondence underlined this. In the hope of playing the Overseas Service off against the European Service, Balinski had written to its head, J.B. Clark, suggesting they provide a vehicle for Yiddish broadcasting, 'perhaps twice a week [with] speakers, translation into Yiddish etc., arranged by us'.⁶⁴ Clark went straight to the top of PWE, asking for advice from Lockhart. He conferred with the British Ambassador to the Government-in-exile, Sir Orme Sargent, and wrote the following note to Clark: 'I think that your best course is to try to 'kill' this project tactfully on the grounds that our policy, based on experience, is that broadcasting etc. in Yiddish unfortunately increases persecution rather than reducing it.'⁶⁵ Using this motive to explain the project, which after all had been FO dogma for the previous two years, was a *tactful* way of obscuring reluctance to increase

⁶¹ BBC WAC, Radio Polskie, 5 Feb. 1945.

⁶² SI KOL. 434/46, 7 Jan. 1945.

⁶³ Ibid., no. 139, 24 Jan. 1945.

⁶⁴ BBC WAC, R34/952, Balinski to C(OS), 11 Jan. 1945.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Lockhart to C(OS), 14 Jan. 1945.

Polish prestige and influence so close to the moment the Government-in-exile would have to be unceremoniously ditched. Nevertheless, there is still no reason to believe that people such as Lockhart and Kirkpatrick were lying when they said they thought broadcasts aimed directly at Jews would tend to increase Jewish suffering rather than diminish it.

In September 1944 Newsome had been replaced by his deputy, Ritchie, in the new post of Director of European News Department. His absence marked a far greater lack of interest in Jewish affairs. Ritchie's directives were silent until 16 April, when the notes from his daily conference, held in the morning, which established news policy for the rest of the day, mentioned Ed Murrow's dispatch from Buchenwald. He stated that it 'should receive wide coverage in either news or programme periods'.⁶⁶

Three days later, the Assistant Director of the European News Department, Donald Edwards, stated that the European Service should give 'the fullest possible attention today to the concentration camps'. He added that a full report, compiled by Alan Bullock, would be circulated which 'should be run at some length':

At last we are able to see what has been happening in Germany since 1933. Main points:- pictures in the British press and on cinema news reels, details of Belsen, dispatches from correspondents, German civilians made to bury the dead, French university professors in Buchenwald return to Paris.⁶⁷

This was supplemented by a memo from Ritchie himself:

There has never been a greater opportunity than there is now to reveal to the world the essential truth about Nazism - Buchenwald and Belsen. Nobody can comfortably deny it any longer as an 'atrocious story', the whole frightful business has been uncovered by the advance of the of the Americans and the British, the pictures are seen and the Germans themselves are being made to look at this monstrous cruelty which they have permitted. It is vitally important that the European Service gives the facts and gives them in such a way as their meaning is understood [...]

All this is not political warfare aimed against Germany; it is something which has to be understood by everybody and which the European Service must talk about in every language that it uses. Now that these appalling things have been uncovered we have to make sure everyone goes through these concentration camps, as the German people are going through them and as we who look at

⁶⁶ Ibid., E2/131/21, 16 Apr. 1945.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 19 Apr. 1945.

the newspaper photographs and the newsreels are going through them, and that everyone understands the significance of these things.⁶⁸

There was a large degree of unwillingness within sections of the European Service to follow this policy. Ritchie was making a moral case for broadcasting, not, as he explicitly stated, a political warfare case. This had been Newsome's approach, seeing the role of the European Service as being the harbinger of a new moral order on the continent and not just simply as a propaganda outfit. Others, as we have seen, were not sympathetic to this, and the revelations of the past few days had done little to change their minds. Ritchie was forced to issue another memo the next day:

There seems to be some inhibitions in certain quarters about policy in regard to the German concentration camps. First, it is not true that people already knew about these things. They do not. The only people who know about them were the people in Buchenwald and Belsen and the other camps in Germany and the occupied countries, the human beings who suffered these appalling degradations or the brutes who inflicted them. Most people, it is true, were aware of the character of the Nazi regime and realised that monstrous acts of cruelty were a commonplace in Hitler's world. But it requires an act of imagination to turn such a generalisation into realisation of the terror and pain which scores of thousands of innocent men, women and children suffered; and most people either shrink from such unpleasant realisations and reject it or are quite incapable of the necessary act of imagination.

Ritchie rejected, as well, the charge that by reporting the news from the camps, unnecessary distress would be caused to listeners, underlining that this was a vital issue. It was essential, he wrote, that everyone *was* caused distress, 'because unless everybody knows that these have been among the most significant facts of life in the twentieth century we stand little chance of eradicating them'. Ritchie also dealt with the view that publicity might stimulate hatred of Germany as nation. Anticipating certain recent scholarship, he admitted

that there are people who at once identify these crimes with the entire German nation; it is necessary that our commentators set out not to prove that there is a good Germany as well as a bad one but to show that Buchenwald and Belsen are the true expression of Nazism and, by implication, that there were men in every country who were prepared to support its extension and very many men

⁶⁸ Ibid., memo by D. Eur. N.D., 19 Apr. 1945.

in every country who wanted to plead neutrality and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries until very were actually attacked [...] it is not only the German people who need to walk through these prison camps.

Ritchie had strong views on how his journalists should present the news. He felt that not all the reports were of the same quality. Without the pictures available to the newsreels and newspapers, words were doubly important, and it was important to avoid clichés that might have the opposite effect to the one intended.⁶⁹ Excused from this was Dimbleby's dispatch.⁷⁰ Unfortunately, there is nothing in the archive that tells us how much of this the European Service broadcast.

Over the next few days Ritchie highlighted the return of the parliamentary delegation from Buchenwald, and that Baldur von Schirach's parents had been among those Germans forced to visit the camp.⁷¹ He also reminded journalists that while they gave the details as they learnt them about the concentration camps in Germany, 'it should not be forgotten that the extermination camps in Poland were even more frightful and that there millions of people were slaughtered'.⁷² Ritchie continued to highlight news from Belsen and Buchenwald, and from other camps right up to VE Day.⁷³ Nevertheless, it is still vital to note that the Jewish identity of many camp inmates was not commented on - suggesting that the European Service coverage was effected in a similar way to the Home Service by reluctance to differentiate Jews from other sufferers.

Since the beginning of the year PWE, like Ritchie, had been quiet on the question of atrocities. Neither the Central nor the various local directives mentioned the Final Solution until the liberation of the western camps. By this time political warfare had become far more closely linked with military strategic objectives, for example the relationship between Allied troops, German civilians and prospective or actual prisoners of war, than with the type of political warfare activity which had been fought on the terrain of the Final Solution.

⁶⁹ Ibid., memo by D. Eur. N.D., 20 Apr. 1945.

⁷⁰ Ibid., morning notes, 20 Apr. 1945.

⁷¹ Ibid., morning notes, 23 Apr. 1945.

⁷² Ibid., morning notes, 26 Apr. 1945.

⁷³ Ibid., morning notes, Apr./May 1945.

That Soviet reports from Poland were not trusted was shown when Eden intervened to have the former head of PWE's Polish and Czech section sent to Poland as an official representative of the British press, rather than a member of the Moscow press corps, who were seen as having 'gone native'.⁷⁴ In any case, the Government were far more interested in having someone observe what was happening in Poland at that precise time, rather than in the years previously.⁷⁵ The Soviets had refused to allow either Werth or MacDonald of *The Times* into Poland.⁷⁶

The first Central Directive to give the European Service any guidance about how to treat the revelations was not until 26 April. It urged the European Service to 'continue to report factually and in good volume'. Whereas Ritchie had insisted that Germans had not been alone in perpetrating the Final Solution, PWE took a far harsher line. The directive stated that 'the moral responsibility for these crimes should be laid wholly and solely on the German nation'. The German Directive, issued a day earlier, took an identical line, having also not mentioned atrocities of any sort up to this point.⁷⁷ The Central Directive continued:

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; but the Germans as they have always been prone to do, let go of their human birthright of freewill against a mirage of national glorification through military force and contentedly substituted the State (representing in this instance by a gang of notoriously bad and doubtful characters) as the arbiter of Right and Wrong in the place of their consciences. They have been caught red-handed.⁷⁸

There was, as we might expect, no mention of Jews. Also absent was the determination of Richard Crossman, now working at SHAEF headquarters, to refrain from regarding the German people as Hitler's willing executioners.

⁷⁴ FO 371/47726 (N1718/436/55), memo by Ridsdale (FO news dept.), 23 Feb. 1945.

⁷⁵ Ibid. (N3051/436/55), draft instructions for British press in Poland, Mar. 1945.

⁷⁶ FO 371/47727 (N3760/436/55), Kerr to FO, 7 Apr. 1945.

⁷⁷ FO 371/446727 (C857/23/18), 25 Apr. 1945.

⁷⁸ FO 898/296 f42, CD WB 26 Apr. 1945.

A reflection of this new view of German popular culpability was shown in the field censorship of a dispatch by Frank Gillard. Field censorship was conducted at SHAEF level to ensure that journalists' copy did not breach security - and fitted in with political warfare objectives. The following section of a *War Report*, an interview with the recently-captured Nazi Dittmar that Gillard filed on 2 May was censored, i.e. was not allowed to be sent back to London. Although the mention of Jews may, on the surface, seem significant it is clear that Dittmar only mentions them as a 'for instance':

When the conversation turned on the awful atrocities which were being committed in the concentration camps all over Germany, his jaw sagged. He looked a grim, old man. The Officer Corps, he said, and the Armed Forces, were not fully aware and were not fully informed of what was going on. For himself he claimed he had only learned the full details since he had been taken prisoner. In the Polish campaign the Wehrmacht had stopped the atrocities. Since then, the concentration camps had been located in parts of Germany over which the Army had no jurisdiction, and the people responsible had been to great pains to obscure the true situation; for instance, he said, Jews about to be imprisoned, were taken far from their home towns so they weren't known to the people living in the neighbourhood of the concentration camps. It was only when Himmler called a meeting of the high-ranking Generals, in order almost to apologise for what was going on, that the Officer Corps got some inkling of the true situation. Himmler said that it was the most difficult order he had ever been called on to give, that this policy should be carried out, but that he's been ordered himself to go ahead with it, and the Generals interpreted this as meaning that the policy came from Hitler himself.⁷⁹

The motive behind this censorship was doubtless an unwillingness to provide any support - yet - to the idea that the Final Solution was the deed of a minimal number of fanatical Nazis and their deranged followers. Both to a domestic British audience and the German people, the Final Solution was to be seen as implicating the widest section of the German people.

One person who did appreciate the specifically Jewish nature of part of the tragedy that was unfolding was Commander Locker-Lampson MP, that perennial crusader for radio to be used in the fight against antisemitism.. During questions to Richard Law on 2 May, he asked whether 'since the Jews were the only people singled out daily for anti-racial propaganda in Germany, he will consider affording them facilities to use the radio in

⁷⁹ PRO 898/41 f159.

Germany for counter-propaganda'. Law's view was that he had little doubt that captured German radio stations would give the matter 'full publicity'.⁸⁰ In the briefings for possible supplementary questions his civil servants had prepared, there was a ready additional answer that the Minister 'doubted whether counter-propaganda conducted over German stations exclusively by the Jewish community would serve their own best interests.'⁸¹

The German Service broadcast a great many reports from the camps. The first of these was Murrow's report from Buchenwald, which was broadcast first on 16 April, a day after it had been featured by the Home Service.⁸² Mavis Tate MP, who had been part of the Parliamentary delegation to Buchenwald, spoke on the German Service on her return. She described the inmates of the camps as falling into three groups:

The first were Jews and opponents of the Hitler regime. The second were Jews, intellectual and others in countries over-run. The third class were slave labour conscripted in conquered countries for work in the Reich.

[These] people can never enjoy life again, because you allowed yourselves to be ruled by Hitler and his Nazi gangs - because you are willing to say 'Heil' and have your thoughts dictated to you.

Your cities are ruined, your name is blackened, there is sorrow over all your countryside, because of what you have permitted. It is for you now to realise these horrors and put them right.⁸³

Other reports included summaries of dispatches by press and radio correspondents. The tone was far more in keeping with the policy laid down by PWE, rather than Ritchie; that the German people as a whole were guilty for the crimes that had been discovered.

Crossman maintained ties still with the German Service. In late April, he came into contact with four former internees, who he described as having spent time at 'one of the worst Silesian "gas-chamber" camps'. All had Jewish names, though they were described in terms of their nationality. All spoke German and were willing to appear on the radio, and Crossman attempted to arrange their travel to London.⁸⁴ PWE's security officers agreed to this on the basis that they be returned to Europe two or three days later, and that one of

⁸⁰ *Hansard*, 2 May 1945.

⁸¹ FO 371/446727 (C2114/23/18), 1 May 1945.

⁸² BBC WAC, German Service scripts.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ PRO FO 898/41 f159.

them was vouched for by his personal friend, the film director Alexander Korda. Alas, MI5's unwillingness to approve their entry to the United Kingdom meant the broadcasts were never made.⁸⁵

The way the BBC reported the end of the Holocaust was as complicated and as hedged with qualifications and obfuscations as its reporting had been throughout the period. The key point in to remember in Home Service broadcasting was that, in all the reporting of the liberation of the western camps in April and early May, what was in the process of being revealed was not portrayed as being an essentially Jewish event. Partly this was because a large proportion of prisoners in those camp were not Jewish. Partly it was again a result of unwillingness to see the ethnic identity of victims as being relevant to their fate. This is important not simply because of itself, but because it is further evidence that British understanding of the Final Solution has developed since 1945. It did not spring, fully-formed, into existence some time around VE-Day. Much the same applied to the European Service. However, there was substantially more coverage devoted to events such as the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Also more evident in European Service broadcasting was a general wish to tell the German people what the free world really thought of them, as if after the hope clause ceased to be relevant personal feelings could be given a freer rein.

⁸⁵ MI5 was the body under the control of the Home Office which dealt with domestic intelligence and counter-subversion.

CONCLUSION

The BBC would continue to play a large role in determining how the Holocaust was to be perceived after VE-Day. Even in Europe its influence continued as the BBC's external services retained a large audience into the cold war and beyond. In Germany, BBC personnel such as Hugh Greene went on to set up the post-Nazi broadcasting system. In Britain it retained its role as the paramount broadcaster. Over the next five decades BBC journalists would cover massacres and attempted genocides in Biafra, Cambodia, former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

Just as in the cases mentioned above, the impact of the BBC's reporting of the Final Solution on the British public was marginal. Mass Observation conducted research on the public reaction to the news coming from the western camps on 18 April, 1945. The majority of those polled stated that although they had been aware of conditions in concentration camps before their liberation they had 'not able been able to assimilate or believe them'.¹ It was only when they saw photographs that they actually *believed* what many had *heard* before. This is perhaps evidence of the limited power of radio as a medium - in leaving so much to the imagination it cannot hope to fully impart a message that the imagination finds so difficult to deal with.

But it was not only public reluctance to believe what they heard that explains why BBC's coverage of the Final Solution had such little impact between 1942 and 1945. If the Home Service of the BBC had broadcast more, the British public would have had a much better idea what Dimbleby and others were likely to find. This study has shown that although a certain amount of material was broadcast, the BBC did not broadcast all that it could have done. Neither did the BBC give a high degree of prominence to what they did air, or did it deal with the specifically anti-Jewish intentions of Nazism in any meaningful fashion. The limiting of anything connected to Jews to news bulletins resulted in a lack of contextualisation. The factors behind this deliberate minimisation of information about the Final Solution by the Home Service can be split into two main groups.

I propose to label the first of these groups as 'internal'. Under this heading it is possible place a range of factors which developed out of the BBC's own culture and

¹ 'German Atrocities' 5/5/45, FR 2248, Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex, Scott, op. cit., p. 10.

practices. In relation to the news practices of the BBC, news possessed a definition that stressed immediacy and topicality. This was neither novel, nor has it has in any way declined in importance for any news organisation in the half-century since 1945. Information about the Final Solution rarely had the virtue of being topical. When it did arrive it usually referred to events that had taken place months, if not years, previously. Any disincentive to use such information was compounded by the BBC's fondness for telling the big story within a microcosm. Stories of this sort, featuring the impact of the Final Solution on a single individual, family or community were extremely rare. Tolstoy's report from southern Russia was one of a very few. Topical information was available from BBC Monitoring. However, any suggestion of using this particular source raised what was undoubtedly the most crucial factor within the process of how *information* became news; reliability. The ambition of the BBC was to be the news organ of record, for 'I heard it on the wireless' to be 'the last word in any dispute on questions of fact'.² In this context it was not surprising that information from Monitoring - which almost by its very nature was unverifiable - was generally ignored. This is not to suggest that all news of the Final Solution was disbelieved within the BBC, but rather to put forward the view that whereas its totality was rarely questioned after December 1942, there was difficulty in finding reliable information about its constituent parts. In this context it is not surprising that it was only when official bodies gave such news their endorsement that the BBC Home Service was prepared to report it.

The second category of internal factors come under the heading of 'cultural'. These included a mistrust for 'atrocities stories' that developed from both the discredited propaganda of the Great War and a concern for the effect of descriptions of horror on listeners' sensibilities. However, the most important factor was undoubtedly a reluctance within the BBC to differentiate between Jews and non-Jews, based on a perception that to do was not only counter-productive but also morally wrong. Enough has been written on this in the main body of this study for it to need no great elaboration. However its effects were felt in many ways, ranging from the decision not to mention antisemitism outside of

² BBC WAC, R9/9/5 LR 217, Jan. 1941.

news bulletins right up to the absence of any mention of Jews in the reports from the liberated camps. Although it was sometimes formalised into policy, such as in the former case, it also operated invisibly.

The second major group of factors originated from outside the Home Service. External agencies undoubtedly influenced its coverage of the Final Solution. They brought pressure to bear in a variety of ways. As we have seen, the reluctance of the BBC to feature news of the Final Solution unless it originated in official statements meant that control of coverage of this particular topic was largely in the hands of not only the British Government, but also in those of the Polish Government-in-exile as well. Indirect intervention was rare, but it could and did happen - as at the time of the Allied Declaration in December 1942. Other, more subtle approaches were more common. These might be classed as 'a very British kind of censorship'; diffuse, often invisible, based on a set of shared assumptions and values, and reinforced by the placing of such reliable types as A.P. Ryan in powerful positions within the BBC. Censorship by the quiet word took the place of the D-Notice.³

The European Service undoubtedly had more autonomy than the Home Service. Numerous factors resulted in day-to-day control by external forces being looser than at the Home Service; the fierce independence of its staff was combined with the fact that few who might have taken exception actually listened to its broadcasts - transmitted in foreign languages, at odd hours of the day and on unfamiliar frequencies. But this was not the whole story. The Hungarian Service showed in 1944 that once a particular story achieved wider importance, the autonomy characterising its earlier coverage was replaced by instructions from PWE to keep quiet. The Hungarian Service obeyed these. In a similar way, following the Allied Declaration of December 1942, PWE were able to switch coverage away from the onslaught against Jews and towards atrocities being committed against Poles. This establishment of PWE's ability to determine the form that BBC coverage took demands a

³ D-Notice: An edict issued to media outlets forbidding them from mentioning a specific item. During the Second World War, virtually all D-Notices received by the BBC referred to operational and technical matters, rather than political ones.

radical re-assessment of the view of the European Service that has prevailed since Briggs. We need more studies of particular themes within European Service broadcasting, and there is room for a revisionist history of the Service as a whole.

The reasons why PWE, and their overseers in the Foreign Office, wished - on occasion - to limit the BBC European Service's coverage were varied. Very often they were connected with the desire to avoid a Jewish 'taint', especially in broadcasts to territories such as Slovakia and Hungary where antisemitism was imagined as being immutable. There were also particular, tactical and strategic impulses that caused news of the Final Solution to be limited. An example of this was the desire to limit coverage of the 'wrong' sort of resistance that militated against reporting of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Much more powerful was the feeling expressed on numerous occasions, especially by Foreign Office officials, that in any way differentiating Jews from other peoples in occupied Europe might actually increase the level of persecution they faced. However, PWE's major reluctance to see the BBC broadcast news of the Final Solution was based on the high value they placed on the BBC's reputation for accuracy - itself an important weapon in the theatre of political warfare. The difficulty of verification that attached itself to so much news of the Final Solution meant PWE was hostile to its use. This is *not* to suggest, again, that within PWE the actual reality of the Final Solution was doubted to an important degree. Those who doubt this should see the special annexe published on 17 December 1942.⁴ Rather it was the existence and detail of particular events that proved difficult.

Within the BBC European Service itself, figures as important as Noel Newsome were determined that news of the Final Solution should be broadcast. More junior members of staff, such as those in the Czech Service, were similarly determined to use any suitable information they could get their hands on. But similar internal factors to those identified within the Home Service played an important part. The question of whether information was reliable was as crucial a factor as it was for the Home Service. Unlike PWE however, this was based on a journalistic, rather than political, conception of the purpose of the BBC

⁴ FO 898/289, f39-41, Annexe to CD WB 17 Dec. 1942.

European Service. There was no reluctance on the part of people like Noel Newsome to broadcast news about the Final Solution, but he could not make bricks without straw.

As regards the BBC the most valuable thing this study has done is to provide concrete evidence for a radical re-assessment of the wartime character of BBC news. This has only been possible by examining content, moving away from the previous focus of writing on the BBC - what people *said* - and looking at what it actually *did* as well. For the study of the Holocaust, I have shown that people throughout Europe were able to learn a significant amount about the progress of the Final Solution from an organisation that its listeners generally trusted and believed.

In Chapter VII I asked the question of whether the BBC could have saved lives during the genocide in Hungary. We will never know, but it seems that it is most unlikely. No matter what the public pressure for rescue that the BBC *might* have been able to help foment, none of the proposals put forward had much basis in strategic or political reality. But we do know from the diaries of people like Emmanuel Ringelblum what those Jews in ghettos and in hiding thought when they heard the crackling transmissions from London. The BBC may not have saved many lives, but perhaps - just occasionally- it brought to the persecuted Jews of Europe some faint hope and courage.

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