

Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, a leading figure in the Wehrmacht High Command during the Second World War, was the defendant in the final British war crimes trial of the immediate postwar era. This politically sensitive case was heard in the final months of 1949 and, unlike most other instances of legal redress for Nazi atrocities, inspired an exceptionally clamorous public reaction in Britain. Lord Hankey, exemplifying one facet of this debate, condemned Manstein's prosecution as a wrong comparable to the execution of King Charles I, a mistake reminiscent of the burning of Joan of Arc, and a marring of justice that undermined Britain's renowned standards of chivalry, honour, and common sense.<sup>1</sup> However, as will become clear, there were also those who applauded the trial and its verdict with a similar vehemence. One newspaper editorial proclaimed that 'Von Manstein has got no more than he deserved', stressing that 'there is no need...for anyone on this side of the Channel to wax sentimental because retribution has at last caught up with a man who plied his grim trade of death and destruction with such ruthlessness'.<sup>2</sup> The hearing transpired at a vital moment in the evolution of Britain's postwar foreign policy, with the nascent Cold War inspiring the rapid rehabilitation of Germany from pariah state to important ally. Manstein's trial was a key juncture in Britain's postwar experience vis-a-vis Germany and offers acute insight into the character of popular relations in the context of Anglo-German political reconciliation.

Scholars have, until now, typically engaged with the Manstein trial as a touchstone of Britain's postwar international relations outlook regarding Germany and the balance of power in Europe.<sup>3</sup> In this reading we see how the *realpolitik* surrounding the hearing led to months of governmental deliberations over its political desirability, before in 1953 eventually securing the release of Manstein after he had served less than one-fifth of his

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<sup>1</sup> Lord M. Hankey, 'Foreword', in R. T. Paget, *Manstein, His Campaigns and His Trial* (London 1951), xi.

<sup>2</sup> 'Editorial', *Hull Daily Mail* (20 December 1949)

<sup>3</sup> See K. von Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle: War Crimes Trials and Cold War Politics, 1945-1960* (Lawrence, KS 2009); J. H. Hoffman, 'German Field Marshals as War Criminals? A British Embarrassment', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23, no. 1 (1988): 17–35. Scholars have also considered on the legal basis of the Royal Warrant Trials, see A. P. V. Rogers, 'War Crimes Trials under the Royal Warrant: British Practice 1945–1949', *International & Comparative Law Quarterly*, 39, 04 (October 1990): 780–800. Otherwise the trial has been broached in biographical studies of Manstein or other interested parties, see M. Melvin, *Manstein: Hitler's Greatest General* (London 2010); A. Searle, 'A Very Special Relationship: Basil Liddell Hart, Wehrmacht Generals and the Debate on West German Rearmament, 1945-1953', *War in History* 5, 3 (July 1998): 327–57; G. Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black: Sir Oswald Mosley and the Resurrection of British Fascism after 1945* (London and New York 2007); A. Chandler, *The Church and Humanity: The Life and Work of George Bell, 1883-1958* (Farnham and Burlington, VT 2012); D. M. McKale, *Nazis after Hitler: How Perpetrators of the Holocaust Cheated Justice and Truth* (Lanham, Md 2012).

original sentence. In other words, this trial, from its inception to the eventual reversal of its verdict, illuminates the oscillations and complexities of Britain's German policy, as it shifted from the unipolar outlook of wartime to the multipolar pressures of the Cold War.

Beyond the sphere of international politics, research on the post-Nuremberg war crimes trials, including that of Manstein, has also acknowledged that they were integral to contemporaneous and subsequent popular perceptions of Germany and, in particular, the memory of wartime atrocities.<sup>4</sup> Donald Bloxham, for instance, has convincingly argued that the practical exigency and political expediency of British policy towards war crimes resulted in uncertainties and contradictions that undermined their popular comprehension. As such, the official elision of Manstein's crimes, he contends, aided the relativisation and revisionism of Wehrmacht criminality and contributed to British forgetfulness of the Holocaust.<sup>5</sup>

As part of this analysis, British domestic opposition to Manstein's trial has been highlighted as a vindication and prime example of an apparent public consensus in support of Cold War realpolitik. We are shown how the Manstein case inspired prominent political figures, including Winston Churchill, to make parliamentary speeches denouncing the prospect of a trial. In addition, Labour MP Reginald Paget worked *pro bono* to defend Manstein in court, an emissary for those who rejected the prosecution as an injustice.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, critical letter-writing campaigns condemning the trial regularly featured in the national press. Bloxham characterises reaction to the trial as an 'unprecedented hail of criticism', even if acknowledging that orchestrated opposition 'never achieved anything like mass proportions'.<sup>7</sup> Kerstin von Lingen similarly suggests that this 'extremely unpopular' trial 'was held against a background of unremitting criticism' illustrative of 'a united front of British opposition to the war crimes trials more broadly'.<sup>8</sup> Lingen contends that this hostility was actually something of a popular phenomenon, representative of a 'shift in British public

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<sup>4</sup> D. Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (Oxford 2001); D. Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War: The Case of Erich von Manstein', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 33, 4 (October 1999): 25–45.; D. Cesarani, 'Lacking in Convictions: British War Crimes Policy and National Memory of the Second World War' in M. Evans and K. Lunn (eds.), *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford and New York, 1997), pp.27–42.

<sup>5</sup> Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War', 45.

<sup>6</sup> Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War', 32; W. Wette, *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, Mass 2006), 224.

<sup>7</sup> Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War', 31; Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*, 156.

<sup>8</sup> Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 211, 140.

opinion in favor of the German generals'.<sup>9</sup> David Cesarani has also argued that the British public were generally hostile to the trial, stating that 'by the time of the trial of senior German generals, including von Manstein, in 1948-9, there was actually a popular reaction against 'dragging out' the process of retribution'.<sup>10</sup>

We are led to believe that the emergence of public opposition to war crimes proceedings in Britain was a reflection of the changed political context of the Cold War.<sup>11</sup> It is noted, in particular, that hostility to Manstein's prosecution was symptomatic of the evolving character of postwar Anglo-German popular relations, in which British wartime hostility towards Germany rapidly, if only temporarily, diminished in the face of the escalating conflict with the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup> An alternative, albeit complementary, interpretation builds upon scholarship regarding British comprehension of the Holocaust.<sup>13</sup> It has been established that the limits of 'the liberal imagination' and the glorification of the Second World War restricted and eventually supplanted British remembrance of the Holocaust. Cesarani suggests that public opposition to the Manstein prosecution illuminates the onset of this culture of forgetting, a development itself inherently linked to the emergence of the Cold War.

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<sup>9</sup> Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 142.

<sup>10</sup> D. Cesarani, 'Lacking in Convictions: British War Crimes Policy and National Memory of the Second World War', 30. Cesarani, however, cites only the opinion of Winston Churchill, Lord Hankey, and a number of publications criticising the trials as 'victor's justice' as evidence of this apparently popular reaction.

<sup>11</sup> This is the principal point made in Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 2; and Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War', 27.

<sup>12</sup> The vast majority of scholarship on post-1945 Anglo-German relations focus on issues of European economic and political integration, not the immediate postwar period. There is a clear consensus that British perceptions of Germany have been marked by enduring antagonism, see R. Wittlinger, 'Perceptions of Germany and the Germans in Post-War Britain', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 25, 5–6 (September 2004): 453–65; R. Wittlinger, 'British-German Relations and Collective Memory', *German Politics & Society* 25, 3 (September 2007): 42–69; S. Lee, *Victory in Europe: Britain and Germany since 1945* (Harlow 2001); K. Larres and E. M. Meehan, *Uneasy Allies: British-German Relations and European Integration since 1945* (Oxford 2000); A. S. Markovits and S. Reich, *The German Predicament: Memory and Power in the New Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y. and London 1997). However, most suggest that later economic and political tensions were the primary cause and that, contrastingly, the immediate postwar period witnessed a rapid, if temporary, turnaround in British public attitudes to Germany. Scholars have argued that popular antagonism was redirected toward the Soviet Union and the Germans were soon regarded with ambivalence or even outright sympathy, see D. C. Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany; British Opinion and Policy towards Germany since 1945*, (London 1965); L. Kettenacker, 'Introduction: Britons and Germans' in R. Breitenstein (ed.), *Total War to Total Trust: Personal Accounts of 30 Years of Anglo-German Relations: The Vital Role of Non-Governmental Organisations* (London 1976), 1-9, who states 'from [the Berlin Airlift] onward the British attitude towards Germany changed – the old enmity had gone'; J. Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War: The British and Germans since 1890* (London 2006), 225, 364–5; and E. Michail, 'After the War and after the Wall: British Perceptions of Germany Following 1945 and 1989', *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History* September, 3 (2001). Bloxham notes that 'the excess of Anglo-American Germanophobia was arguably unloaded in 1945' and uses Mass-Observation surveys to demonstrate diminishing levels of popular antagonism towards Germany, see Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*, 134, 154. A similar argument is made in McKale, *Nazis After Hitler*, 259-60.

<sup>13</sup> For example, T. Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford 1994), 20, 277; Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*, 25; S. Bardgett and D. Cesarani, *Belsen 1945: New Historical Perspectives* (Edgware 2006).

In short, then, orthodox interpretations of the Manstein trial see it as an illustration of Britain's evolving political outlook regarding Germany after 1945, with the transition towards Anglo-German reconciliation apparently aided by the compliant and adaptable character of British public opinion and collective memory. By 1949, it is suggested, a popular desire to 'move on' from the past, engendered by Cold War-inspired realpolitik or a societal culture fundamentally unable or unwilling to comprehend the crimes of the Holocaust, encouraged outspoken public opposition to this belated trial of German criminality.<sup>14</sup> In hindsight, the prosecution and its subsequently invalidated verdict, characterised as 'a British embarrassment', is believed to have reinforced Britain's collective amnesia regarding the German past.<sup>15</sup>

These existing studies have recognised that media discourses, which simultaneously represent and inform public opinion, are the most comprehensive means of assessing British domestic reactions to the trial. As shown, the oppositional voices identified within media coverage have been implicitly (and, at times, explicitly) awarded the status as *the* popular reaction to the trial. Yet scholars, owing perhaps to their principal focus being on the trial's political significance, have only consulted a small subset of the pertinent source material, looking exclusively at the 'quality' broadsheets: *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and *The Guardian*.

This article, in seeking to re-evaluate domestic responses to the Manstein trial, draws upon a greatly expanded body of sources, including coverage of the prosecution in middle- and mass-market newspapers including *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Mail*, and *The Daily Express*; an assortment of regional publications found in The British Newspaper Archive; and newsreels from *British Pathé*.<sup>16</sup> This wider array of material (see Table 1), supplemented by evidence from opinion polls and contemporary book publications, provides a more representative, if still imperfect, picture of the British public reaction to the Manstein trial. After all, 'quality' broadsheets reached a mere seven percent of readers in 1950,

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<sup>14</sup> Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 128, 131–2, 135–6, 140, 298; Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*, 154.

<sup>15</sup> Hoffman, "German Field Marshals as War Criminals? A British Embarrassment"

<sup>16</sup> These titles have been selected primarily on the basis of their popularity, see below, while also taking into account their accessibility and, in particular, whether they have been digitised.

representing a narrow and exclusive strand of society when compared to the much more socially diverse readership of middle- and mass-market titles (see Table 2).<sup>17</sup>

This broader scope of enquiry reveals a more complex picture of public reactions to the Manstein trial, demonstrating that indignation was by no means the only popular response. The first part of this study, considering the pre-trial period, demarcates a hitherto overlooked divergence amongst critics of the prosecution: a loose grouping of those who considered the trial to be a humanitarian or political mistake are clearly distinguishable from an alliance of political and societal elites that sought to challenge the legitimacy of all war crimes trials on ideological grounds. Furthermore, as the second section elaborates, negative attitudes to Germany were far more persistent in reaction to the Manstein trial, and public support for a *realpolitik* of amnesty and ‘moving on’ was seemingly far less unanimous and widespread, than the existing historiography seems to suggest.

In fact, the period of the trial and its immediate aftermath witnessed a groundswell of public approval for the prosecution and its guilty verdict, including the widespread acknowledgement of the trial’s didactic significance in proving Wehrmacht complicity in Nazi atrocities, evidence absent from previous studies. A majority of middle- and mass-market newspapers, local publications, and newsreels were predominantly favourable towards the prosecution and its verdict, often building upon a long-standing culture of Germanophobia. In short, the picture that emerges of the trial’s reception by the media and wider public is much more diverse than previously acknowledged and illuminates the variety of British postwar perceptions of Germany.

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<sup>17</sup> At the time of the trial the written press was experiencing a boom in popularity, with total circulation of national newspapers calculated at over 15,000,000 it is estimated that 87% of the adult population read a daily newspaper by 1950, see M. Moore, *The Origins of Modern Spin: Democratic Government and the Media in Britain, 1945-51* (Basingstoke 2006), 4. Middle-market (The Daily Mail – 2,076,000) and mass-market titles (The Daily Mirror (3,702,000); The Daily Express (3,855,000)) represented the bulk of this circulation, whereas the ‘quality’ press had a much more limited output (The Guardian (126,000); The Times (268,000); The Financial Times (71,000)). In addition, it is estimated that the circulation of the regional press was over 6,500,000. These figures, which are for the end of 1947, were compiled by the Royal Commission on the Press 1947-49 and are found in C. Seymour-Ure, *The Press, Politics and the Public: An Essay on the Role of the National Press in the British Political System*. (London 1968), 29 and C. Seymour-Ure, *The British Press and Broadcasting since 1945*, (2nd edn, Oxford 1996), 29, 28, 144. An assessment of the readership profiles of national newspapers (see Table 2) demonstrates that the mass-market and middle-market press attracted a markedly more diverse readership, inclusive of what we may broadly term the middle- and working-class sections of society. In addition, it is worth noting that newsreels attracted as many as 26,000,000 viewers per week in the late 1940s, see N. Pronay, ‘Defeated Germany in British Newsreels: 1944-45’ in K. R. M. Short and S. Dolezel (ed.), *Hitler’s Fall: The Newsreel Witness* (London 1988), 28-49.

These findings, in turn, challenge us to reinterpret the significance awarded by the existing historiography to the trial's opponents. This broad grouping, much more heterogeneous than previously recognised, was not actually representative of public opinion, but rather simply a vociferous facet of a diverse public debate. In the final section of this article, it will be argued that evidence of public support for the prosecution has, until now, not been included in studies of the Manstein trial partly due to the skewing and truncating of the historical record by Manstein's most fervent supporters. In concurrence with the direction of official policy towards Anglo-German reconciliation from the late 1940s onwards, Lord Hankey, Basil Liddell Hart, and others manipulated the memory of Manstein, his prosecution, the Second World War, and the Holocaust.

The palpable gradations and conflicts within the public discourse on the Manstein trial, largely overlooked by the existing historiography, serve as an enlightening case study for British cultural memory<sup>18</sup> of the German past, the Second World War, and the Holocaust in the face of an increasingly potent politics of memory.<sup>19</sup> This research, which recovers the diversity of public reactions to the trial, gets to the heart of the interactions between popular perceptions, collective memory, and political relations so essential to understanding British relations with Germany in the postwar era.

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<sup>18</sup> I employ the term as outlined by Astrid Erll, 'the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts', see A. Erll, 'Cultural Memory Studies: an introduction', in A. Erll, A. Nünning, and S. B. Young, eds., *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin and New York 2008), 2, 5. These 'socio-cultural contexts' are the media, institutions and practices which 'construct a shared past' that can 'trigger' individual memories, see J. Assmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory', in Erll, Nünning, and Young (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies*, 109-18; J. Assmann and J. Czaplicka, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique*, 65 (April 1995): 125-33. The particular significance of the mass media in the construction of cultural memory is widely recognised, see Erll, Nünning, and Young (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies*; J. K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi, and D. Levy (eds.), *The Collective Memory Reader* (New York 2011); J. K. Olick, *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility* (New York 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Duncan Bell offers a useful definition of the 'politics of memory', stating that 'communal memories act as subtle yet powerful mechanisms for generating and sustaining social solidarity. While such memories can act as a social adhesive they are always contestable, and it is in this realm of conflict, and the complex power relations that underpin and structure it, that the politics of memory is enacted', see D. Bell, 'Introduction – memory, trauma and world politics' in D. Bell, *Memory, Trauma and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship between Past and Present* (Basingstoke 2006), 5. For theoretical discussion see J. M. Winter and E. Sivan, 'Setting the Framework' in J. M. Winter and E. Sivan, *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge 1999), 8, 30; Olick, *The Politics of Regret*, 8, 94; L. Noakes and J. Pattinson, 'Introduction: 'keep calm and carry on'' in L. Noakes and J. Pattinson (eds.), *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War*, (London and New York, 2014), 5, 15; and Erll, Nünning, and Young, (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies*. There is a growing literature regarding the 'politics of memory' witnessed across Europe in the aftermath the Second World War, see T. Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London 2010); I. Deák, J. T. Gross, and T. Judt, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton, N.J. 2000); J. Müller, *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge 2002).

In the summer of 1947 American war crimes prosecutors presented the British government with ‘overwhelming’ evidence that four German officers held in British custody, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, Field Marshal von Rundstedt, Colonel General Strauss, and Field Marshal von Manstein, were complicit in war crimes.<sup>20</sup> The shifting geopolitical pressures associated with the evolution of a perceived Soviet threat, the cost of staging war crimes trials, and government sensitivity to political and public reaction all contributed to a prolonged period of indecision over whether to indict these four officers.<sup>21</sup> Tensions were mounting between the War Office and Foreign Office over the morality and political desirability of British war crimes trials when, in the spring of 1948, the Soviet Military Administration in Germany requested the extradition of Manstein and Rundstedt.<sup>22</sup> This led, in early July, to Cabinet agreement on bringing these officers to trial; the reticence felt by some is evident in the simultaneous decision to call a halt to all other outstanding British war crimes proceedings by 1 September 1948.<sup>23</sup>

The results of this political wrangling, which had been hidden from public attention, were now exposed. Historians have characterised the tone of initial public reaction to the announcement of a proposed trial as aggressively and unceasingly oppositional, beginning with a number of letters published in the ‘quality press’ in August 1948.<sup>24</sup> Basil Liddell Hart was the instigator of this critical correspondence, defending these officers and lambasting the alleged ‘cat and mouse treatment’ and poor conditions these elderly and purportedly honourable men faced.<sup>25</sup> In the following months, numerous editorials and correspondents followed suit and invoked the trial’s repercussions for national identity, alleging that this

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<sup>20</sup> Bloxham, ‘Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War’, 29; Hoffman, ‘German Field Marshals as War Criminals?’, 18; McKale, *Nazis after Hitler*, 259; Wette, *The Wehrmacht*, 225–6. In the case against Manstein, a number of speeches, orders, and signed documents presented incontrovertible proof that he had, at the very least, known about the murderous activities of Ohlendorf’s *Einsatzgruppe D* in his area of command, as well as the assistance of the Wehrmacht in these crimes.

<sup>21</sup> Melvin, *Manstein*, 459.

<sup>22</sup> Deepening this imbroglio, the American Chief Counsel for War Crimes sought these two men, alongside Brauchitsch, to appear as witnesses in their own ‘High Command Trial’, see Hoffman, ‘German Field Marshals as War Criminals?’, 22–3.

<sup>23</sup> The decision to proceed was in part due to the personal determination of Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, see *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>24</sup> Bloxham, ‘Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War’, 32; Lingen, *Kesselring’s Last Battle*, 139–40; McKale, *Nazis after Hitler*, 260.

<sup>25</sup> For more on Liddell Hart’s personal motivations see Searle, ‘A Very Special Relationship’. B. Liddell Hart, ‘Letters to the Editor: Imprisoned Generals’, *The Times* (16 August 1948); B. Liddell Hart, ‘Letters to the Editor: Imprisoned German Generals’, *The Guardian* (21 August 1948); Liddell Hart even quoted correspondence from Manstein himself, who made particular complaint that having ‘a negro at one’s bedside seems to me a perverseness of taste’.

apparent unseemliness threatened ‘British values’, had ‘a Nazi rather than a British flavour’, and was repugnant to a distinctively British sense of justice.<sup>26</sup>

The implication of an all-embracing patriotic humanitarianism encouraged the momentary censure of politicians and public figures from wide range of political outlooks. Avowedly liberal or left-wing voices such as Bishop of Chichester George Bell, Michael Foot, and J. B. Priestley aligned with right-wing political and military establishment figures, including Lord Hankey and the British Military Government in Germany.<sup>27</sup> Their opposition to the trials, ostensibly grounded in ethical concerns that included the untimeliness of a prosecution taking place four years after the end of the war, was voiced in both Houses of Parliament and in the correspondence pages of the upmarket press. These protests were exacerbated with the death of von Brauchitsch in October 1948 and a series of official medical reviews that declared von Rundstedt and Strauss unfit to face prosecution, leaving Manstein to be tried alone.<sup>28</sup> Some called for this remaining trial to be abandoned, while others merely sought to guarantee scrupulous procedural fairness and the upholding of ‘British fair play’ through the provision of a British counsel.<sup>29</sup> To this end, and in lieu of official assistance, General Lord Bridgeman and Lord De L’Isle and Dudley set up a public subscription to cover Manstein’s legal costs. Luminaries including Winston Churchill and T. S. Eliot contributed to the fund and Labour MP Reginald Paget agreed to lead the defence *pro bono*.<sup>30</sup>

In addition, an improbable inaccuracy had exacerbated public concern for the fair treatment of these prisoners, who were routinely referred to as ‘old and sick’ or variants thereof.<sup>31</sup> *The Times*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Mirror*, and a number of local newspapers all mistakenly

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<sup>26</sup> ‘Three Field Marshals’, *The Manchester Guardian* (21 August 1948); Lord Parmoor, ‘Letters to the Editor: Imprisoned Generals’, *The Times* (24 August 1948); P. C. Loftus; C. K. Allen; T. S. Eliot; Osbert Sitwell; Kenneth Pick Thorn; Tweedsmuir; Collin Brooks; Douglas Jerrold; F. A. Voigt, ‘Letters to the Editor: Imprisoned Generals’, *The Times* (25 August 1948).

<sup>27</sup> The opposition of the British military is highlighted in Melvin, *Manstein*, 459. This includes reference to an ostentatious party held in von Rundstedt’s honour by soldiers of the British War Crimes Group in Germany as the Field Marshal travelled from Nuremberg to Hamburg, prior to their en-masse resignation in protest at his prosecution. For an example of the disparate outlooks involved see H. N. Brailsford, Michael Foot, Victor Gollancz, J. H. Hudson, R. T. Paget, J. B. Priestley, Russell, T. C. Skeffington-Lodge, R. R. Stokes, Leonard Woolf, ‘Letters to the Editor: The German Generals’, *The Times* (1 September 1948). This unusual assemblage led to disquieting associations between supposedly liberal humanitarians and far-right extremists, see Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*, 126–33; Chandler, *The Church and Humanity*.

<sup>28</sup> The best overview of these medical reviews is in Bloxham, ‘Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War’, 33.

<sup>29</sup> ‘The Manstein Case’, *The Guardian* (20 May 1949); this was backed up by the appeals of Manstein’s German legal team Paul Leverkuehn and Hans Laternser during a trip to England in July 1949, see P. Leverkuehn, ‘Von Manstein’s Trial’, *The Times* (11 July 1949); the notion of ‘fair play’ was repeatedly invoked such as in Lord Simon, ‘Von Manstein’s Trial’, *The Times* (20 July 1949) and C. Falls, ‘A Window on the World’, *Illustrated London News* (13 August 1949).

<sup>30</sup> The fund eventually reached £1,620, see ‘Von Manstein’s Trial’, *The Times* (August 10 1949)

<sup>31</sup> For example B. Liddell Hart, ‘Letters to the Editor: Imprisoned German Generals’, *The Manchester Guardian* (10 September 1948).

declared Manstein to be the oldest of the four men at the advanced age of 76 in August 1948, yet at this time Manstein was in fact only 61 years old.<sup>32</sup> Quite how this error came to be made, and subsequently repeated numerous times over the next year, is unclear, although its initial concurrence with the War Office's statement and ubiquity suggests it may have been a case of official misinformation. In any case, adding 15 years to Manstein's age unquestionably intensified discontent at his treatment.

However, opponents of the trial were only superficially united behind such humanitarian concerns, with this façade of principled opposition cloaking an otherwise diverse array of motivations.<sup>33</sup> Many moderate opponents of the prosecution did earnestly strive to ensure respectable conditions of imprisonment and a fair hearing, yet they were joined by increasingly unruly bedfellows. Winston Churchill and numerous associates from within the political establishment were, for instance, actively seeking the timely cessation of the war crimes programme that they had themselves helped set in motion. It was argued that reconciliation rather than recrimination, to 'draw the sponge across the crimes and horrors of the past' as Churchill termed it, was integral for a peaceable Europe.<sup>34</sup> This pragmatic outlook looked to the future, while stressing the achievements of the Nuremberg Trials and the ongoing occupation, including the procedures of de-nazification, in successfully extirpating Nazism and militarism. Put simply, their Cold War realpolitik was founded upon a historical narrative that attributed the Third Reich's crimes to a malign, and now extinct, elite. George Bell and much of the Anglican community took an even more reconciliatory position by recognising the Wehrmacht as a victim of Nazism and part of an 'other

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<sup>32</sup> Erroneous references to Manstein's age include 'German Field Marshals', *The Times* (28 August 1948); 'Four German Generals War Crimes Charges Before British Tribunal', *The Manchester Guardian* (28 August 1949); H. N. Brailsford, Michael Foot, Victor Gollancz. J. H. Hudson, R. T. Paget, J. B. Priestley, Russell, T. C. Skeffington-Lodge, R. R. Stokes, Leonard Woolf, 'Letters to the Editor: The German Generals', *The Times* (1 September 1948); 'Three German Marshals to Face War Trial', *The Daily Mail* (28 August 1948); 'Brauchitsch Moved', *The Daily Mail* (25 September 1948); 'German Lawyers Can Defend Them', *The Daily Mirror* (28 August 1949); *Western Morning News* (28 August 1948). Numerous newspapers persisted with this error as late as July 1949, see 'Ginger Boyle, R.N. Backs U-Killers', *The Daily Express* (6 May 1949); *Torbay Express and South Devon Echo*, (3 May 1949); and 'And Then There Was One', *The Manchester Guardian* (6 May 1949) which sarcastically referred to him as 'a youngster of seventy-seven'; 'Churchill Sends £25 to Manstein Fun', *The Sunday Pictorial* (17 July 1949). Inaccurate references to Manstein's age have even appeared in recent historical scholarship, for example McKale, *Nazis after Hitler*, 259.

<sup>33</sup> Hoffman, 'German Field Marshals as War Criminals?', 31; Searle, 'A Very Special Relationship'; Chandler, *The Church and Humanity*; Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 139.

Germany', opponents of Hitler terrorised into submission who were now deemed integral to the nation's democratic rebirth and Christian Europe's ecumenical future.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, much of the British military establishment condemned this trial of a fellow soldier as a troubling instance of victor's justice and an affront to their notion of military honour.<sup>36</sup> In fact, a number of prominent military figures soon aligned themselves with Lord Hankey and Basil Liddell Hart, leaders of a radical faction of those who (for the time being, privately) opposed the entirety of the war crimes process.<sup>37</sup> Hankey and his followers favoured a more laissez-faire approach to postwar Germany, anticipating the direction of official policy by prioritising the perceived Soviet threat over that of German recidivism. Their opposition to the trial stemmed from a condemnation of war crimes prosecutions as an unnecessary and unwelcome remnant of what they deemed as the increasingly irrelevant Nazi past. They rejected the punishment of the Third Reich's soldiers as anathema to their fundamental beliefs and strategically imprudent in the face of an impending war with the Soviet Union, a position which gained currency in mainstream discourses. However, the most fanatical right-wing followers of Hankey, such as Major General J. F. C. Fuller, seemingly had more sinister, even sympathetic views towards Nazism and its crimes, founded upon extreme anti-communist or antisemitic beliefs.<sup>38</sup>

Evidently the trial's opponents, rather than presenting a unanimous response, held sharply divergent opinions regarding the legitimacy and desirability of prosecuting Nazi war crimes.<sup>39</sup> This variety of hostile voices emanated, above all, from competing approaches to

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<sup>35</sup> For Bell and Church of England, see T. Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust: Christianity, Memory and Nazism* (Cambridge 2013); T. Lawson, 'Bishop Bell and the Trial of German War Criminals: A Moral History', *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 21, 2 (January 2008): 324–48.; Lawson in Chandler, *The Church and Humanity*, pp. 134, 138.; Churchill speech, 28 October 1948, House of Commons, quoted in Paget, *Manstein, His Campaigns and His Trial*, xiv. For other examples of perceived importance of this trial for the future of Germany, see 'Three Field Marshals', *The Manchester Guardian* (21 August 1948); T. C. Skeffington-Lodge speech in House of Commons, May 1949, quoted in 'Trial of F.M. Von Manstein: 'Will Not Be Abandoned'', *The Manchester Guardian* (18 May 1949); Lord De L'Isle and Dudley and Lord Bridgeman, 'Von Manstein', *The Manchester Guardian* (18 July 1949).

<sup>36</sup> These arguments were summed up by W. Douglas-Home, 'Obedience in the Army', *The Times* (22 December 1949)

<sup>37</sup> Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 162.

<sup>38</sup> Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 161. F. J. P. Veale, J. F. C. Fuller, and R. Grenfell represented a more radical critique of the entire war crimes process. Their associations with the far-right of British politics, including the British Union of Fascists, is itself suggestive of an apologist attitude towards Nazi Germany. This is particularly clear in the case of Fuller, who, alongside an open admiration for Adolf Hitler, became an outspoken proponent of the idea that the western Allies, through seeking an alliance with the Soviet Union rather than Nazi Germany, had made a grave political error and that their policy of unconditional surrender (as well as that of war crimes trials) had ultimately led to 'defeat through victory', see J. F. C. Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789-1961: A Study of the Impact of the French, Industrial, and Russian Revolutions on War and Its Conduct* (New Brunswick, NJ 1961), 266–79.

<sup>39</sup> Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 140 asserts that the opposition represented a 'united front'.

comprehending and remembering the German past, which, in turn, determined conflicting visions of the future for Germany, Britain, and Europe. In September 1948 new letters from Liddell Hart were published in *The Times* and *The Guardian* acknowledging newly improved conditions of imprisonment and including thanks from Manstein himself.<sup>40</sup> Over the next year, prior to the commencement of the trial in August 1949, such disclosures ensured that the moderate and principled strands of humanitarian and political opposition largely dissipated. This would, in turn, gradually expose the radical and ideologically motivated character of the alliance, led by Lord Hankey, that remained steadfastly committed to overturning the government's decision to prosecute Manstein.

These fluctuations in the character of public opposition to the trial coincided with the growing prevalence of outspoken support for the prosecution of Manstein. In general, the mass-market press had showed little resentment towards the prospect of a trial and, in fact, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Express*, and *The Daily Mail* all barely made mention of the decision to prosecute beyond brief factual reporting. There were, however, occasional indications that the attitude of their readership was unsympathetic to Manstein. For example, a letter published in *The Daily Mirror* from an anonymous 'disabled ex-WAAF' sardonically asked whether, in light of a subscription set up to support Manstein, someone might care to start a fund for her upcoming Pensions Appeals Tribunal.<sup>41</sup> The apparent persistence of public hostility towards Germany was also acknowledged by the British government, whose earlier indecision over bringing the German officers to trial had been predicated partly on sensitivity to potential domestic criticism of 'letting them go free'.<sup>42</sup>

By the summer of 1949 a number of these mass-market publications, with predominantly lower middle and working class readerships, began actively advocating for the necessity of Manstein's prosecution. For example, the *Mirror's* renowned columnist William Connor,

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<sup>40</sup> B. Liddell Hart, 'Letters to the Editor: The German Marshals', *The Manchester Guardian* (10 September 1948); B. Liddell Hart, 'Letters to the Editor: The German Generals', *The Times* (21 September 1948). The commencement of the hearing would curtail the cogency of disapproval at its belatedness, while the appointment of an outspoken British counsel, the improvement of conditions of imprisonment, and later the establishment of Manstein's actual age pacified other sources of apprehension.

<sup>41</sup> 'Viewpoint (Letters to the Editor): Appeal', *The Daily Mirror* (15 August 1949). Other examples of outspoken criticism include 'Ginger Boyle, R.N. Backs U-Killers', *The Daily Express* (6 May 1949) in which the Earl of Cork and Orrery, an outspoken opponent of the trial, was lambasted for siding with German sailors who had allegedly murdered captive British sailors.

<sup>42</sup> See Shinwell Memorandum, Cabinet 17 June 1948, cab/29/28 C.P. (48) 151 – 17 June 1948 – War Crimes: Case of German Generals in British Custody. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War.

writing under his pseudonym Cassandra, was unequivocal in his backing for the government's decision to prosecute, primarily out of duty to Nazism's millions of victims.<sup>43</sup> Such forthright support was also evident in several local publications, such as Milton Shulman's *Nottingham Evening Post* article challenging the notion that the trial was 'un-British'.<sup>44</sup> This argument, he suggested, was simply a convenient cover for those who had imprudently rejected the whole concept of war crimes trials from their outset.

There are even indications that the upmarket press was far from wholly supportive of the critical opinions that had intermittently appeared in its correspondence pages. A *Times* editorial in August 1948 argued that if these men had 'committed acts against the recognised laws of war they should be punished'.<sup>45</sup> In addition, the paper also published two full-length opinion pieces, alongside a sympathetic editorial, on the topic of 'The German Officers' Corps' which emphatically reinforced the perceived legitimacy of the government's decision.<sup>46</sup> Their author, Brigadier-General John Hartman Morgan, was a veteran of the post-1918 occupation and warned that Germany once again faced the dangers of 'infantile paralysis' thanks to the 'overwhelming traditional prestige' of the anti-democratic officers' corps. He claimed that these soldiers were fashioning a 'new stab-in-the-back myth', blaming Hitler for the defeat of an otherwise victorious Wehrmacht and simultaneously depicting the regular army as chivalrous and opposed to the outrages of the Holocaust. This, it was argued, endangered the future peace and security of Europe by encouraging a 'legend of guiltlessness' in Germany. Consequently, the trial of Manstein offered the chance to present didactic proof to potentially recidivist Germans that this 'ruthless military caste' had participated in 'crimes on a scale larger and more shocking than the world has ever had the misfortune to know'.

As these examples demonstrate, the decision to prosecute Manstein stimulated a variety of both critical and supportive opinions, many of which have been overlooked in previous

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<sup>43</sup> Cassandra, 'The Simple Soldier', *The Daily Mirror* (3 June 1949). This column even implied that Manstein was altogether fortunate, as the 'rather battered old chap' had 'no doubt heard that some of his closest colleagues died rather horribly at midnight in a Nuremberg gymnasium'.

<sup>44</sup> M. Shulman, 'Should Von Manstein Stand His Trial?', *Nottingham Evening Post* (25 August 1949). Shulman went as far as claiming that the subscription fund set up by the trial's opponents could be regarded as an affront to the fairness of the IMT proceedings.

<sup>45</sup> 'The German Field-Marschals', *The Times* (28 August 1948).

<sup>46</sup> J. H. Morgan, 'The German Officers' Corps', *The Times* (2 November 1948); J. H. Morgan, 'The German Officers' Corps', *The Times* (3 November 1948); 'Hitler's Commanders', *The Times* (3 November 1948).

scholarship. The diverse character of opposition to the trial, which was only superficially and momentarily unified under the banner of humanitarianism, has been understated. In addition, the evidence of public support for the trial, inspired by persistent anxieties over German recidivism, the memory of Nazism as a popular and deep-rooted phenomenon, and a concern to uphold 'British justice' on behalf of the Third Reich's victims, has gone largely unnoticed. This reassessment of the public reaction to the prospect of a trial contests the notion of a future-oriented Cold War metanarrative guiding public opinion regarding Germany and the Holocaust in the late 1940s. Rather, the perceived urgency or necessity of trying a Wehrmacht commander for war crimes was primarily dependent upon contrasting comprehensions and recollections of the German past and, in particular, the Holocaust. The impassioned and varied public reaction to the British government's contentious decision to proceed with the prosecution of Manstein, exhibited above all in the mass media, is suggestive of the complexities inherent in British perceptions of Germany in the immediate postwar period.

Manstein's trial opened on 23 August 1949, with the court deliberating 17 charges alleging the authorisation of mass atrocities against tens of thousands of prisoners and civilians during military campaigns in Poland and the Soviet Union. The prosecution, headed by Arthur Comyns Carr, argued that 'the accused gave himself unsparingly for almost five years of Hitler's campaigns to the service of [a] barbarous policy and was one of its principal executants'.<sup>47</sup> The case involved allegations of the direct and indirect participation of Wehrmacht troops and High Command in Nazi atrocities, including the mass murder and maltreatment of civilians and, in particular, Jews. 'These are,' summarised Comyns Carr, 'samples of a continuous record of crimes of every kind, probably without parallel in history'.<sup>48</sup> The court was convinced, finding Manstein guilty on nine of the charges, principally for his negligence in protecting civilians and POWs, and sentencing him to an 18-year prison term.

Manstein's defence team, led by Reginald Paget, had sought to delegitimise the trial as a flagrant misapplication of the law: a hypocritical episode of victor's justice that sullied the name of an honourable soldier. Paget referenced the British sinking of the French fleet at Oran and the Allied bombing of German civilians so as to emphasise British hypocrisy.<sup>49</sup> He summed up by asserting that an acquittal would 'honour England' and avoid the risk of turning Manstein into a new Joan of Arc.<sup>50</sup> Manstein was portrayed as a soldier acting under the orders of a malign dictatorship, himself incognizant of atrocities, tried by a court that had neither the adequate expertise nor legal right to make this a fair hearing. Paget labelled war crimes trials as 'fundamentally totalitarian' and disparaged the Nuremberg Principles as the work of 'prairie judges'.<sup>51</sup> These arguments reflected the outlook of the most hostile faction of political and military opponents to the trial, challenging the validity of the entirety of the Nuremberg Trials process. The belligerence of this argumentation provoked the official Polish observer to walk out, criticising the 'poisonous fascist, pro-Nazi, anti-Soviet,

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Melvin, *Manstein*, 469. A full compendium of trial documentation is held at the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 474.

<sup>49</sup> C. Wighton, 'General Shuts Manstein Court', *The Daily Express* (23 November 1949); K. Ames, 'Manstein KC Quotes Montgomery', *The Daily Mail* (6 October 1949); 'Manstein: It was Necessary', *The Daily Mail* (8 October 1949)

<sup>50</sup> 'Manstein as Hector of The German Troy: Acquittal 'Would Honour England'', *The Manchester Guardian* (25 November 1949); 'Birthday Gift For Manstein', *The Daily Express* (25 November 1949).

<sup>51</sup> K. Ames, 'Manstein, German Joan of Arc', *The Daily Mail* (25 November 1949); J. Cameron, 'Manstein – Do We Care?', *The Daily Express* (6 October 1949); 'Manstein's Trial', *The Times* (8 October 1949); 'War-Time Killing of Hostages', *The Times* (16 December 1949).

anti-democratic defence'. Paget also earned the repeated rebuke of the Judge Advocate Charles Arthur Collingwood for seeking to make the trial a political event.<sup>52</sup>

The hearing certainly became a media spectacle, with almost all national newspapers, alongside major newsreels, offering daily coverage of the trial. This, as custom mandated, remained largely neutral and fixated on the arguments presented in the courtroom; the weight of incriminatory evidence put forth by the prosecution was therefore well publicised, undoubtedly helping to reinforce the legitimacy of the trial. However, on occasion, editors and columnists provided a more partisan interpretation of proceedings. It is therefore remarkable, considering the controversies evident in the pre-trial period, that hostile voices were almost entirely absent from this discourse. In their place, mass-market newspapers such as *The Daily Express* were consistently sympathetic to the prosecution, augmenting their reportage with dramatic and unmistakably damning headlines such as 'Manstein: We Shot Wives' and 'Beat The Women Up With Truncheons'.<sup>53</sup> The support given by the popular press to the prosecution was even more explicit in the numerous accompanying editorials and columns, as in a *Daily Mail* opinion piece from 29 November. This article, in reviewing the legal and political issues surrounding the Manstein case, reflected the emergent approval for the indictment: '...as at Nuremberg, you cannot listen long without becoming convinced that this is, after all, a serious search for truth. It is an attempt to extend the prevailing principles of justice to cover a new type of crime'.<sup>54</sup> Paget himself, recognising this shift in the tone of discussion regarding the trial and its verdict, would later reprimand the conduct of news reportage as quite simply 'not good'.<sup>55</sup>

Following the court's guilty verdict, much of the mass media concluded that, as the Field Marshal's guilt was now apparent to all, justice had been done.<sup>56</sup> This case, as the final British war crimes trial, commonly provoked reflections on the entirety of a legal process which had set out in 1945 to comprehensively punish those responsible for the crimes of

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<sup>52</sup> 'Protests at Manstein Trial: Polish Observer Walks Out: British Counsel Attacks Defence', *The Manchester Guardian* (11 November 1949); 'Polish Protest at Manstein Trial', *The Times* (11 November 49); 'Manstein Judge Rebukes Paget', *The Daily Express* (13 December 1949).

<sup>53</sup> C. Wighton, 'Manstein: We Shot Wives', *The Daily Express* (29 October 1949); 'Beat the Women Up With Truncheons', *The Daily Express* (1 November 49).

<sup>54</sup> A. Clifford, 'This Manstein Trial Muddle', *The Daily Mail* (29 November 1949).

<sup>55</sup> Paget, *Manstein, His Campaigns and His Trial*, 81–2.

<sup>56</sup> Examples include 'Manstein Verdict', *Yorkshire Post* (20 December 1949); 'Manstein Guilty', *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* (19 December 1949).

the Third Reich.<sup>57</sup> Numerous articles extolled the virtues of prosecuting those from lower ranks who had committed atrocities and thereby, as a *Yorkshire Post* editorial remarked, avoiding the purportedly intolerable situation where Hitler's suicide would have left 'all the brutes guilty of outrages scot free'.<sup>58</sup> An editorial in *The Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, for instance, commended all 938 British trials for making considerable strides in proving the complicity of Wehrmacht soldiers and commanders in Nazi atrocities, as well as the specificity of Jewish suffering. It concluded that the didactic significance of the Manstein trial was particularly palpable, before imploring that not only must the Germans be mindful of these lessons but also 'nor should we ever permit ourselves to forget [them]'. Such responses attest to a widespread and well-informed appreciation of the genocidal antisemitism of the Holocaust, facilitating a greater public awareness of its victims and perpetrators. They also reveal a discernible sense of urgency that the atrocities revealed by war crimes trials, including Manstein's, must be memorialised. These findings sharply contrast with the orthodox view of Britain's Holocaust remembrance, or rather its absence, in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Alongside this moderate advocacy for the trial there were more radical demonstrations of support for the arraignment of 'another Hitler warlord', inspired by anxiety-laden memories of long-standing Anglo-German antagonism.<sup>59</sup> These were commonly expressed through cautionary stereotypes referencing the intrinsic militarism of 'a place where they have never had much sense of fun'.<sup>60</sup> We even see suggestions that the Third Reich had been a popular dictatorship, with *The Hull Daily Mail* arguing that the sentence was a symbolic example for the millions of Germans who 'willingly, even gladly, followed Hitler on his hideous path', concluding that 'our sympathy is better reserved for their countless victims'.<sup>61</sup> Charles

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<sup>57</sup> See, 'Hitler's Commanders', *The Times* (3 November 1948), which argued that the evidence of Wehrmacht complicity in atrocities was convincing, 'but it will need reiteration if the Germans as a whole are to be made to understand what it means', and T. R. M. Creighton, 'Letters to the Editor: The German Soldier', *The Times* (26 September 1951), who suggested that the didactic value of the trial was at risk of being undermined by dark forces in Germany.

<sup>58</sup> 'Manstein Verdict', *Yorkshire Post* (20 December 1949); 'Manstein Guilty', *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* (19 December 1949); 'Editorial', *Hull Daily Mail* (20 December 1949); 'Review of the News', *Dundee Evening Telegraph* (20 December 1949) quoting from *The Daily Dispatch*; 'Another Hitler War Lord Found Guilty', *British Pathé* (Newsreel) (22 December 1949).

<sup>59</sup> 'Another Hitler War Lord Found Guilty', *British Pathé* (Newsreel) (22 December 1949).

<sup>60</sup> This quote comes from Cassandra, 'A Sense of Injustice', *The Daily Mirror* (19 January 1950), but this sentiment was reflected elsewhere, see 'Review of the News', *Dundee Evening Telegraph* (20 December 1949) quoting from *The Daily Dispatch*; 'Another Hitler War Lord Found Guilty', *British Pathé* (Newsreel) (22 December 1949); K. Ames, 'Stalingrad My Victory', *The Daily Mail* (26 October 1949); C. Wighton, 'I Could Beat the Russians' Manstein: Hitler Stopped Me', *The Daily Express* (26 October 1949); K. Ames, 'Manstein Lectures the Red-Tabs', *The Daily Mail* (22 October 1949).

<sup>61</sup> 'Editorial', *Hull Daily Mail* (20 December 1949)

Wighton, foreign correspondent for *The Daily Express*, described Manstein as ‘an ordinary murderer whose crimes would make the Old Bailey quake’ and a duplicitous ‘thin-lipped Prussian disciplinarian’ who inspired the loyalty of on-looking ‘jack-booted and duel-scarred German ex-officers’.<sup>62</sup> Striking a similar tone, Cassandra asserted that the harmless-looking civilian spectators were the same ‘master race, roaring and raging behind their Mansteins...only five years ago’; ‘had they reformed?’, wondered the columnist, ‘I’M NOT SO SURE’ was his fretful response.<sup>63</sup>

The striking inconsistency in the tenor of support for the trial is again indicative of competing interpretations of the German past and the Third Reich. We see, as a result, supporters of the prosecution disagreeing over whether the Wehrmacht was a willing tool of oppression in a uniquely abhorrent totalitarian system or, alternatively, incriminated as part of the wholesale complicity of all Germans in Nazi wrongdoing. Others, mimicking the wartime diatribes of Lord Vansittart, characterised their crimes as merely the latest chapter in a long history of German delinquency.

In turn, the trial inspired a number of passionately apprehensive responses regarding the future of Germany, often wholly opposed to the ongoing process of political and economic reconstruction in the western zones. As part of its trial coverage, *The Daily Express* had quoted an unnamed British politician who wagered that, if acquitted, Manstein would be German president in ten years, illustrating the enduring vibrancy of fears over the resurgence of German militarism and dictatorship.<sup>64</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the verdict, *The Hull Daily Mail* derided opponents of the prosecution for fashioning ‘misplaced sentiment’ that had encouraged the ‘present tender handling’ of the newly sovereign Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>65</sup> A *Pathé* newsreel reviewing the events of 1949 perhaps best exemplifies these anxieties, placing the Manstein trial within a broader narrative of Europe’s supposed cautious ambivalence regarding the rebirth of Germany.<sup>66</sup> Its narration suggested that the prosecution had stood as a ‘symbol of a Germany still under suspicion, a nation living on trust’, having roused popular uncertainties as to whether the newly-empowered

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<sup>62</sup> C. Wighton, ‘Germans Rush To Read ‘Guilty Britain’ Charges’, *The Daily Express* (17 January 1950); C. Wighton, ‘4-Hr Lecture By Manstein’, *The Daily Express* (22 October 1949)

<sup>63</sup> Cassandra, ‘The Last of the Iron Men’, *The Daily Mirror* (24 August 1949)

<sup>64</sup> C. Wighton, ‘He Gambles on Proving That He Is ‘A Gentleman’’, *The Daily Express* (4 October 1949).

<sup>65</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Hull Daily Mail* (20 December 1949)

<sup>66</sup> Summing Up No. 13 (Summer to Autumn 1949), *British Pathé* (newsreel) (1949).

Germans would head down ‘the road of the liberal-minded or that of the fervent nationalist’.

In the first days and weeks following the end of the trial some of its most ardent opponents did reappear as to condemn the sentence and its apparent implications for British justice.<sup>67</sup> William Douglas-Home, C. D. Barnett, Montgomery Belmont, and Basil Liddell Hart wrote to *The Times* as to express their ‘revulsion’ at this supposed injustice and to uphold the legitimacy of the plea of superior orders.<sup>68</sup> Liddell Hart even sought to ‘clarify’ that the trial had effectively cleared Manstein of wrongdoing and proven only his principled clemency, brazenly requesting that the British government follow suit. Such incendiary responses, publicly challenging the validity of the court’s decision, were a far cry from the moderate tone of opposition in the months preceding the hearing. This abrupt deviation from a humanitarian stand to one of outright disavowal is indicative of the gradual radicalisation of remaining public hostility to the trial. However, perhaps signifying that the tide of opinion had now turned, these criticisms met with immediate rebuke. Peter Calvocoressi, a former member of the British prosecution team at Nuremberg, was amongst those who defended the validity of Manstein’s sentence.<sup>69</sup>

The trial of Manstein, far from a political and legal failure, was profoundly successful.<sup>70</sup> In spite of its contentious beginnings, the prosecution presented an overwhelmingly convincing case against Manstein which brought the complicity of the Wehrmacht and the characteristics of Nazi criminality into the popular consciousness. Media coverage of the trial, rather than channelling the supposed ‘unremitting criticism’ of the British public, was

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<sup>67</sup> The Guardian and Observer remained at the forefront of media opposition, labelling the trial as inadequate to comprehend the legal issues at stake and a type of victor’s justice reminiscent of the Russian legal system, see ‘Guilty’, *The Manchester Guardian* (20 December 1949); ‘Comment: The Manstein Trial’, *The Observer* (25 December 1949). The Economist offered a more balanced critique, commending the trial as evidence of a disinterested passion for justice but ruing its limited application to the ‘vanquished’ Germans alone ‘The Manstein Trial’, *The Economist* (24 December 1949)

<sup>68</sup> W. Douglas-Home, ‘Letters to the Editor: Obedience in the Army’, *The Times* (22 December 1949); C. D. Barnett, ‘Letters to the Editor: Von Manstein’s Sentence’, *The Times* (31 December 1949); B. Liddell Hart, ‘Letters to the Editor: Von Manstein’s Trial’, *The Times* (11 January 1950); M. Belmont, ‘Letters to the Editor: Von Manstein’s Trial’, *The Times* (6 January 1950)

<sup>69</sup> P. Calvocoressi, ‘Letters to the Editor: Von Manstein’s Trial’, *The Times* (4 January 1950); P. Calvocoressi, ‘Letters to the Editor: Von Manstein’s Trial’, *The Times* (10 January 1950); Ablege, ‘Letters to the Editor: Von Manstein’s Trial’, *The Times* (12 December 1950). Elsewhere it was remarked that the trial had been far from the mockery some had anticipated, see ‘Germans and the Manstein Trial’, *The Times* (21 December 1949). In addition, opponents were undermined through explicit links to their supposed German counterparts in the extremist ‘near-Nazi’ Deutsche Rechtspartei, see C. Wighton, ‘Germans Protest Over Manstein’, *The Daily Express* (20 December 1949); K. Ames, ‘Nazis Cash in on ‘Pity Manstein’, *The Daily Mail* (20 December 1949).

<sup>70</sup> The idea that the trial was a failure is put forward in Lingen, *Kesselring’s Last Battle*, 139.

increasingly supportive of its moral and legal validity, illustrating an intriguing about-face in the dominant narrative in public discourse.<sup>71</sup> Many moderate voices lauded the trial as a significant milestone in the investigation and punishment of Nazi criminals, aiding the reconstruction of a democratic and peaceful Germany. The perseverance of anxieties regarding the German past inspired, in some quarters, an inclination to censure Manstein through drawing allusions to Prussian militarism. This range of support, entirely overlooked in previous studies of the trial, is indicative of the multifaceted and dynamic character of British comprehension of the German past, the Holocaust, and the Second World War. In the course of their reporting on the trial, the mass media recollected in detail the history of Nazi atrocities, Wehrmacht criminality, and long-standing Anglo-German antagonisms. These memories were clearly distinct from, and in many instances entirely contradictory to, the leanings of British realpolitik regarding Germany. Most contemporary observers certainly did not perceive the Manstein trial within the narrative of the Cold War, nor as a 'British embarrassment' or a relic of a nearly 'forgotten era of history'.<sup>72</sup> Rather, the impassioned and predominantly supportive discourse that accompanied the trial and its verdict signals the immediacy of the German past in postwar Britain.

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<sup>71</sup> Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 140.

<sup>72</sup> Hoffman, 'German Field Marshals as War Criminals?'; 'Manstein Pleads Right to Court Martial: Defence Objection Overruled', *The Manchester Guardian* (24 August 1949).

Manstein's prosecution coincided with the rapid evolution of Britain's German policy, culminating in the categorical prioritisation of reconciliation with Germany and thereby impeding further political or judicial reckoning with the Nazi past.<sup>73</sup> Allied policymakers came to regard the Soviet Union as their most pressing security concern and now emphasised democratisation, rather than de-nazification, in the western zones of occupied Germany. This pragmatic yearning for rapprochement led to the establishment of the West German state in May 1949 and eventually to discussions over its rearmament and possible participation in the European Defence Community.<sup>74</sup> Manstein's trial and imprisonment thus became an increasingly politicised issue and a bargaining chip in Anglo-American negotiations with the newly sovereign Federal Republic of Germany. The potency of these extrajudicial pressures would eventually ensure his release in May 1953, after serving only three-and-a-half years of his original 18-year sentence. However, the use of legally dubious procedures to avoid the need for an act of outright clemency illustrates official awareness of enduring public support for Manstein's detention.<sup>75</sup> The tug of war over parole for Manstein and the legacy of his prosecution provides a glimpse into the interplay between state and society in postwar Anglo-German relations.

Hankey, Liddell Hart and other political and societal elites who had consistently opposed this trial and sentence were buoyed by the ongoing transformation of official policy, which occurred simultaneous to, and at times symbiotically with, their own renewed campaign of public hostility directed towards Manstein's continued imprisonment. This faction now sought to publicly revise the legacy of a verdict that had, above all, stood for the complicity of the Wehrmacht in Nazi atrocities. As outlined above, their efforts, deploying a specific memorialisation of the German past, were inspired foremost by a fervent anti-communism but also indistinctly associated with far-right political extremism. In the years prior to and

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<sup>73</sup> Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*, 117–8; Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*.

<sup>74</sup> Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War', 36; Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 173–82, 203. The growing pressure for a European defence initiative, which required the cooperation of the German government, obviously had major implications for the imprisoned Wehrmacht personnel. The acquiescence of the Bundestag to rearmament plans was far from secure and many felt policy changes including amnesties for war criminals may be necessary, see 'German Defence Contribution', *The Times* (23 December 1950); 'Rearming Germany: What the Ex-Generals Think', *The Manchester Guardian* (19 September 1950). However, the prospect of yielding to West German demands was also liable to criticism, see 'Germans Vote Help If, if, if, if, if, if', *The Daily Express* (09 February 1952).

<sup>75</sup> Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War', 35, 38; Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 197. This came alongside an apparent public relations campaign that introduced the idea of Manstein's release through media osmosis, see Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*, 180; Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 248. The issue of Manstein's imprisonment was also relevant in the 1951 general election campaign, see 'The Shadow of Germany on Your Voting Paper', *The Daily Express* (25 September 1951).

following Manstein's discharge without formal exoneration these elites contributed to a politics of memory which contested prevailing public support for the trial. They resolutely defended Manstein and the Wehrmacht, while, in the process, obscuring or downplaying the crimes of the Holocaust. It would be misleading to propose that all of their efforts were conscious manipulations of the historical record, yet there is an unmistakably conspiratorial air to their frequent meetings at Hankey's Westminster home, exchange of regular personal correspondence, and the orchestrated character of letter-writing campaigns and book publications.<sup>76</sup>

Basil Liddell Hart, already shown to be a key campaigner in opposition to the trial, was an integral figure in the construction of historical memories relating to Manstein and his colleagues. Alaric Searle has identified the 'very special relationship' between Liddell Hart and the senior Wehrmacht officers held in British custody, establishing that this was a significant influence upon the Anglophone memorialisation of the Wehrmacht as a 'clean' force.<sup>77</sup> These regular personal interactions culminated in Liddell Hart's 1948 publication *The Other Side of the Hill* (which was subsequently revised and expanded in 1951) and aided the publication of other revisionist works, including Desmond Young's hagiographic biography of Field Marshal Rommel released in 1950.<sup>78</sup> These early histories were hugely influential in Britain, encouraging popular perceptions of the German army as having been an honourable and law-abiding fighting force. Liddell Hart and other cold warriors deemed this rehabilitation of Wehrmacht officers, including Manstein, an essential first step in the facilitation of German rearmament.<sup>79</sup>

Lord Hankey, ringmaster of the campaign to oppose Manstein's trial and sentencing, joined right-wing radicals including Montgomery Belgion and F. J. P. Veale in publicly disputing the validity of the entire war crimes process.<sup>80</sup> In *Politics, Trials and Errors*, the publication of

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<sup>76</sup> Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*, 126; Tom Bower, *Blind Eye to Murder: Britain, America and the Purging of Nazi Germany: A Pledge Betrayed* (London 1981), 283

<sup>77</sup> Searle, 'A Very Special Relationship', 349; Lingen, *Kesselring's Last Battle*, 168. R. M. Smelser and E. J. Davies, *The Myth of the Eastern Front: The Nazi-Soviet War in American Popular Culture* (Cambridge 2008), 92, 102.

<sup>78</sup> B. Liddell Hart, *The Other Side of the Hill: Germany's Generals, Their Rise and Fall, with Their Own Account of Military Events, 1939-1945* (London 1948); D. Young, *Rommel* (London, 1950).

<sup>79</sup> Searle, 'A Very Special Relationship', 346. There is an extensive historiography on the mythology surrounding the Wehrmacht, including Wette, *The Wehrmacht*.

<sup>80</sup> Hankey, *Politics, Trials and Errors*, 69. Lord Hankey, a mainstream political figure, not only held the most gravitas amongst the trial's remaining opponents, but was also integral in the orchestration of this campaign. His work built upon the even more extreme diatribes of F. J. P. Veale, *Advance to Barbarism* (London 1948). and M. Belgion, *Epitath on*

which coincided with the verdict of the Manstein case, Hankey deemed the prosecutions ‘a cardinal error’ taking place ‘before history’ and called for a general amnesty. In challenging the legitimacy of the war crimes trials, Hankey and others pointed to the Manstein case as an exemplar of their supposed illegality and injustice. These publications acted as a prism through which the strident anti-communism of mainstream political figures could be refracted, fostering a politically opportune amnesia regarding Nazi atrocities that dovetailed with the revised military histories outlined above.<sup>81</sup>

The most important contribution to the contestation of the verdict and legacy of the Manstein trial was *Manstein: his campaigns and his trial* by Reginald Paget, the Field Marshal’s indignant defence lawyer.<sup>82</sup> This partisan history was published in 1951 and reiterated Liddell Hart’s distorted version of the war on the Eastern Front, while reciting arguments used during the hearing in order to defend the innocence of Manstein and allege the illegality and impropriety of the court.<sup>83</sup> It demanded an immediate sentence review and included a foreword from Lord Hankey which condemned the supposed injustice of the war crimes proceedings and rejoiced that ‘common sense’ and ‘decency’ were supposedly winning the day.<sup>84</sup> Paget’s book is also significant for offering revisionist assessments of the genocidal crimes of the Third Reich that bear a remarkable rhetorical resemblance to later Holocaust denial tracts, symbolic of the troubling links between these campaigners and far-right extremism.<sup>85</sup> The work became a bestseller after being serialised in *The Daily Express* and received numerous positive reviews, unquestionably aiding the growth of an Anglophone cult of Manstein’s military virtuosity while simultaneously undermining popular recollection of his proven complicity in war crimes.<sup>86</sup>

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*Nuremberg* (London 1946), criticising the alleged political nature of the trials, their vengefulness, and illegality as victor’s justice; see Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*, 129.

<sup>81</sup> Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*, 133; Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History* (London 1995), 120–47. Of particular interest are those who sought to refute the specificity of Nazi crimes by comparing them with Soviet wrongdoing, anticipating the Historikerstreit of the 1980s, see Lawson in Chandler, *The Church and Humanity*, 143–4.

<sup>82</sup> Paget, *Manstein, His Campaigns and His Trial*.

<sup>83</sup> Anthony Glees remarks that Paget’s book ‘contains several distortions (or worse) and would today be unsustainable as a serious account of German military policy in the German occupied parts of the Soviet Union’, see A. Glees, ‘The Making of British Policy on War Crimes: History as Politics in the UK’, *Contemporary European History* 1, 2 (July 1992), p. 187.

<sup>84</sup> Lord M. Hankey, ‘Foreword’, in *Ibid.*, xiv. This was also the first attempt to link the iniquity of alleged victor’s justice with a possible German contribution to European defence, see Lingen, *Kesselring’s Last Battle*, 142.

<sup>85</sup> In particular, Paget’s attempt to disprove the number of those killed by Ohlendorf’s *Einsatzgruppe D* are remarkably similar to methods employed in the 1974 Holocaust denial publication *Did Six Million Really Die?*, as shown by Bower, *Blind Eye to Murder*, 262.

<sup>86</sup> C. B. Falls, ‘Book Review: Judging the Vanquished. Manstein: His Campaigns and his Trial by Paget, R. T. (author), *The Times Literary Supplement* (9 November 1951); Wette, *The Wehrmacht*, 226.

These various attempts to revise British cultural memory of the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the war crimes trials, including that of Manstein, gradually gained ground. However, the past was not swiftly vanquished, with strong indications that a substantial body of support for the trial and verdict did indeed remain intact. Foremost, a Gallup Poll of 1951 reveals that five out of every six Britons surveyed opposed the release of leading German war criminals.<sup>87</sup> In May of the same year, Elizabeth Jenkins wrote a review of *The Great Escape*, the novel describing the prison breakout from Stalag Luft III which led to the execution of fifty Allied servicemen, that described it as ‘an historical document which should be studied by all who make martyrs of von Manstein and the condemned criminals of Landsberg gaol’.<sup>88</sup>

The heated debate that ensued after the publication of a *Times* editorial on German rearmament in September 1951 offers a further illustration of the fractures that still characterised public discourse regarding the Manstein case.<sup>89</sup> Its allegation that ‘the German army earned a terrible reputation which cannot be wiped out by a simple declaration or by releasing persons justly condemned’ inspired incensed replies from Paget, Liddell Hart, and Douglas-Home. They refuted its allusions to enduring German militarism and condemned the Manstein case as an unfair instance of hypocritical victor’s justice that any neutral court would have thrown out. Supporters of the war crimes procedure and the sentence handed to Manstein were quick to respond, with T.R.M. Creighton, A.K. Hudson, D.P. Whaley, Louis Levy, and C.J. Hamson all writing letters in support of the original *Times* editorial. Hudson, for instance, argued that the trials were important in the fight against the ‘constant and political threat’ of German militarism and the ‘hypnotizing’ and ‘dangerous’ concept of military honour.

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<sup>87</sup> Quoted in Bloxham, ‘Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War’, 37.

<sup>88</sup> E. Jenkins, ‘New Fiction’, *The Manchester Guardian* (4 May 1951).

<sup>89</sup> ‘German Opinion’, *The Times* (19 September 1951); R. T. Paget, ‘Letters to the Editor: The German Soldier’, *The Times* (21 September 1951); B. Liddell Hart, ‘Letters to the Editor: The German Soldier’, *The Times* (22 September 1951); T. R. M. Creighton, ‘Letters to the Editor: The German Soldier’, *The Times* (26 September 1951); A. K. Hudson, ‘Letters to the Editor: The German Soldier’, *The Times* (26 September 1951); D. P. Whaley, ‘The German Soldier’, ‘Letters to the Editor: The German Soldier’, *The Times* (27 September 1951); L. Levy, ‘The German Soldier’, ‘Letters to the Editor: The German Soldier’, *The Times* (27 September 1951); C. J. Hamson, ‘The German Soldier’, ‘Letters to the Editor: The German Soldier’, *The Times* (27 September 1951); R. T. Paget, ‘The German Soldier’, ‘Letters to the Editor: The German Soldier’, *The Times* (28 September 1951); W. Douglas-Home, ‘The German Soldier’, ‘Letters to the Editor: The German Soldier’, *The Times* (28 September 1951); Cassandra, ‘The German Army’, *The Daily Mirror* (28 September 1951). At the same time, *The Guardian* remained staunchly critical of Manstein’s imprisonment, see ‘Ex-Generals in British Gaol: Only One Complaint Sentences for War Crimes Disputed’, *The Manchester Guardian* (23 April 1951).

At around the same time there is further evidence of both residual support for the prosecution and antagonism towards Germany in the mass-market press. In *The Daily Mirror*, Cassandra described Wehrmacht officers such as Manstein as ‘willing agents for one of the worst sets of criminals the world has ever seen’. In addition, Selkirk Panton’s *Express* columns continued to exhibit forthright Germanophobia, proclaiming his unequivocal disbelief in the apparent transition of Germans from ‘the most aggressive militarists in Europe’ to ‘flute-playing pastoralists’ in only five years.<sup>90</sup> He vehemently rejected Manstein’s release into ‘the warmth of a future Wehrmacht sun, where once again [the imprisoned generals] will have the heel-clicking, the saluting, and the honours they love’.

It is, nevertheless, conspicuous that newspaper coverage of the issue did gradually dissipate after the conclusion of the trial, while those contesting its validity gradually gained an ascendancy in the public discourse. The continuation of intermittent declarations of support for the sentence of Manstein and the war crimes process, opinion polls, and the lack of any obvious turning-point all suggest that this was not the result of a rapid transformation of public opinion. Rather, we must acknowledge the inherent malleability of cultural memory and, accordingly, consider the ways in which, and reasons why, public images of the past change or remain the same. Jeffrey Olick has identified three dynamics of memory - inertial, instrumental, and cultural - which are helpful in this regard.<sup>91</sup>

Inertial refers to the extent to which particular images of the past are rehearsed and sustained by their cultural mediators. In the case of the Manstein trial, we have seen that its coverage, and the specific cultural memories therein, was almost exclusively in the mass media.<sup>92</sup> In its aftermath, without the obvious ‘news hook’ of a court case or a burning sense of injustice, there was no inherent compulsion for the mass media to reiterate and rehearse the cultural memory of Wehrmacht atrocities, Nazi criminality, and German malignity they had established during the trial. The passage of time and the practicalities of

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<sup>90</sup> S. Panton, ‘How Quickly Could Germany Raise an Army?’, *The Daily Express* (20 September 1950). Sefton Delmer visited the Field Marshals in Werl Prison, remarking upon the comfortable conditions of detention faced by these ‘representatives of a system which has twice in my lifetime plunged the world into war’ while also recognising calls for a sentence review, see S. Delmer, ‘Sefton Delmer Talks with Hitler’s Generals in Jail’, *The Daily Express* (12 June 1950)

<sup>91</sup> Olick, *The Politics of Regret*, 8

<sup>92</sup> B. Zelizer, ‘Journalism’s Memory Work’, 359.

news media production, then, helps to explain in part why public support for the verdict diminished after 1951.<sup>93</sup>

Instrumental memory, or alternatively the politics of memory, concerns the actions of groups or individuals that maintain or transform images of the past. We must here acknowledge what Jan-Werner Müller has termed the 'memory-power nexus', whereby those with influence and power in society are able to manipulate cultural memory.<sup>94</sup> In this instance, as highlighted above, those political and social elites who remained committed to ensuring the Field Marshal's release, including Hankey, Liddell Hart, and Paget, were increasingly empowered to contest and amend the legacy and public memorialisation of his prosecution. These individuals, now finding themselves largely unchallenged in the public discourse relating to the case, utilised their own personal power to revise its legacy. In particular, Paget's book represented the only substantial English-language publication focusing on Manstein's trial and, as such, was able to redefine its popular comprehension and historicization.<sup>95</sup>

These persistent challenges to the legitimacy of the prosecution and its verdict propagated an image of Manstein as an honourable and admirable military commander wronged by an illegitimate court. They helped to reconstruct the cultural memory of the German army as a 'clean' and honourable fighting force by refuting its complicity in atrocities and validating the defence of following orders, framing perceptions for a generation or more.<sup>96</sup> Alongside this was the gradual advance of a cult of Manstein's military genius, obfuscating his involvement in any criminality and augmenting the notion of the Second World War as a hard-fought but honourable conflict. The relativisation and revisionism of the crimes of the Holocaust evident in such publications was also vital in facilitating a more general amnesia

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<sup>93</sup> Olick, *The Politics of Regret*, 8, talks of the 'sands of time'

<sup>94</sup> Müller, *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe*, 2, 21

<sup>95</sup> Significantly, no transcript of the trial was ever published, see Bloxham, *Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War*, 44.

<sup>96</sup> Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*, 133; Searle, 'A Very Special Relationship', 356. Also see Paget, *Manstein, His Campaigns and His Trial*, 190 quoting his own closing statement: 'The political purpose of this trial has been to condemn the reputation of the German Army and of its greatest commander. It has failed utterly. When we met the Wehrmacht in Africa, Italy and France we found that they were decent soldiers. We believed, because we had absorbed much Russian propaganda, that the Germans had fought like savages in the East. That has not been the evidence in this case. On the contrary in circumstances of appalling savagery the German soldier, upon the evidence, showed considerable restraint and great discipline. For my part I am glad. If Western Europe is to be defensible these decent soldiers must be our comrades'.

regarding Nazi criminality.<sup>97</sup> Simultaneously, proto-historians such as Lord Hankey and Basil Liddell Hart misleadingly fashioned their own image as principled representatives of a unanimous public hostility to the Field Marshal's prosecution and imprisonment, a constructed historical memory has remained largely intact ever since.<sup>98</sup>

These manipulations of public memory of the trial, representing a concerted politics of memory, were in part manifestations of the third of Olick's categories, namely cultural. Here our attention is drawn to the bigger shifts across societies, in this instance the radical transformation of Europe's, and specifically Britain's, political culture as a result of the Cold War.<sup>99</sup> The exertions of Manstein's supporters were broadly in line with British realpolitik, which now called for a rapid reconciliation with a newly-sovereign West German state. Their orchestrated politics of memory undoubtedly eased the introduction of such a profound change to official policy. In turn, the exigencies of British policy towards Germany and war criminals, the latter augmented by Churchill's return to power in 1951, ultimately led to Manstein's release in May 1953. This decision would, of course, give a huge boost to the perceived legitimacy of revisionist arguments regarding the trial.

As a result of this constellation of forces, Manstein's premature freeing from the confines of Werl prison barely even registered with the media, provoking none of the outrage or apprehension that may have been expected given the Germanophobic tenor of media responses only a few years earlier.<sup>100</sup> In subsequent years, Manstein's work for the Federal Republic aiding the redevelopment of the Bundeswehr went similarly unnoticed, excepting a few isolated notes of concern at the prospect of him heading a potential 'shadow general staff' or having access to NATO secrets.<sup>101</sup> In 1958 Manstein's war memoir, *Lost Victories*, was serialised in the Sunday Dispatch and received chiefly positive reviews that tended to

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<sup>97</sup> Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War', 44; Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial*, 178–9; Bower, *Blind Eye to Murder*, 261.

<sup>98</sup> F J P Veale, for instance, characterised public reaction to Manstein's trial as unanimously critical, claiming 'the controversy in the columns of the press and the debates in Parliament were entirely one-sided', see Veale, *Advance to Barbarism*, 218.

<sup>99</sup> See the aforementioned historiography on European memory after 1945, in particular the pioneering scholarship of Tony Judt.

<sup>100</sup> The few short newspaper articles reporting his release were predominantly neutral, see 'Von Manstein Released by British: in Custody Since May, 1945', *The Manchester Guardian* (8 May 1953); 'Von Manstein Free', *The Times* (8 May 1953). However, some did report the news with more critical associations, see 'The Tiger of Belsen is Freed with Manstein', *The Daily Mail* (8 May 1953).

<sup>101</sup> Melvin, *Manstein*, 499; 'Advice Sought from Hitler's Generals', *The Times* (14 May 1956); 'Unsolved Issues on New Germany Army', *The Times* (15 May 1956); 'House of Commons', *The Times* (21 June 1956).

applaud his military achievements while neglecting the trial and its charges. This response symbolises the transformation in British popular perceptions of Manstein and many of his colleagues, while the book itself further aided the ongoing mythologisation of its author and the Wehrmacht.<sup>102</sup> Manstein's 1973 obituary in *The Times* reveals the culmination of this collective amnesia, stressing his supposedly consistent vocal opposition to Hitler, doubting the legality and justice of his prosecution, and emphasising his acquittal on the 'most serious' charges.<sup>103</sup>

The Manstein trial was a tense crucible of history, memory, past and the present where public understandings of the Second World War and the Holocaust could be forged. In the years following the trial, explicit support for this increasingly distant hearing and the implications of its verdict diminished, revealing the limitations of the mass media as a source of long-term cultural memory. This opening up of the public discourse enabled the trial's most committed opponents, an influential faction of right-wing politicians and intellectuals, to redefine its historical legacy and public memorialisation. Although their own subjective political predilections, which included troublesome associations with the far right, were significant, they were also working in tandem with changes to official policy regarding Germany and Europe. Their revisions to the prevailing cultural memory of Manstein's trial neglected his proven complicity in genocidal crimes, altering his public image for many decades. This revisionism also obscured the complicity of the Wehrmacht in the Holocaust and other atrocities, contributing to a deceptive history of these events which would only be exposed in the 1990s.<sup>104</sup> The multifaceted public reaction to the Manstein trial, which included detailed understandings of the Holocaust and negative conceptions of the German past, was soon hidden from view. In its place, policymakers and elites had constructed a more serviceable interpretation of the German past in line with Cold War realpolitik, obscuring both the challenges inherent in remembering these crimes and the complexities associated with enacting justice against their perpetrators.

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<sup>102</sup> E. von Manstein, *Lost Victories* (London 1958). For positive reviews, see Melvin, *Manstein*, 496; C. B. Falls, 'Battles Fought Again', *The Times Literary Supplement* (6 June 1958); Smelser and Davies, *The Myth of the Eastern Front*, 102. As Donald Bloxham points out, the elision of Manstein's crimes was 'made easy for lay-people and military historians alike, as well as, most obviously, the far right of the present day', Bloxham, 'Punishing German Soldiers during the Cold War', 45.

<sup>103</sup> 'Obituary – Field Marshal von Manstein', *The Times* (13 June 1973).

<sup>104</sup> This deceptive version of the past was not exposed until the ground-breaking academic scholarship of, amongst others, Omer Bartov, see O. Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York and Oxford 1992); O. Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941-45: German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare*, (2nd edn, Basingstoke and Oxford 2001), and the public history of the Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung's *Wehrmachtsausstellung* in the 1990s.

This article has tried to suggest that the British public response to Manstein's prosecution, trial, and imprisonment was not one of unremitting criticism. The Manstein affair, in actual fact, was a hotly disputed issue and, from the beginning of the trial process, newspapers and newsreels reflected the broad and fluctuating variety of opinions on the controversy (see Table 3).

This Anglo-German trial, as the final war crimes prosecution, encouraged deliberations over the German past, present, and future. We have seen how, in the course of the case, different interpretations of German history informed contrasting expectations and appraisals of the judicial response to the crimes of the Third Reich. While, for instance, the majority on both sides of the debate saw the Third Reich as a totalitarian terror state, they differed on whether the Wehrmacht was a tool of oppression and perpetrator of war crimes, therefore warranting punishment, or itself a victim of the dictatorship. These challenging issues were entangled with competing notions of Britishness, with differences over the interpretation of British 'fair play' and its applicability to the victims of Nazi crimes or commanders such as Manstein deemed victims of circumstance. Moreover, disputes over the memory of the Third Reich struck at the heart of the broader issue over the future of Germany: how complicit were *all* Germans in Nazism's crimes and, ultimately, was West Germany sufficiently de-nazified as to be trusted as an ally?

The most widely-read organs of the press, with predominantly lower middle and working class readerships, sought to ensure that 'justice was done' in the punishment of war criminals such as Manstein. There was, in short, seemingly much public support for his prosecution and imprisonment. Here, the Third Reich's genocidal criminality, and the Wehrmacht's involvement in such atrocities, took a prominent role in the cultural memory of the German past and the Second World War. Moreover, vitriolic and stereotypical images of an apparently instinctive militarism or Prussianism, dovetailing with compelling anxieties about Germany's resurgence, regularly appeared in mass-market media. It seems, then, that for many in Britain responses to the trial were likely built upon a long-standing and anxious Germanophobia, augmented by memories of interwar appeasement and Lord Vansittart's virulent anti-Germanism.

These findings indicate that substantial sections of the British public may have been distinctly frosty to the prospect of Anglo-German reconciliation. It is apparent that concerns regarding the likelihood of German recidivism, which coalesced with growing insecurities about Britain's place in the world and perceived inferiority in the face of an old adversary, were commonplace. This conclusion contests existing histories of postwar Anglo-German relations in which British popular perceptions of Germany are said to have rapidly improved in the 1940s as a result of the Cold War. There can be no doubt that the evolution of the Cold War vis-à-vis the German past was instrumental, with many of those hostile to this trial prioritising the perceived Soviet threat over the potential dangers of German recidivism. Yet this was no ubiquitous Cold War metanarrative prevailing over existing nationalist or Anglo-German concerns, but rather a single facet of a multi-layered debate. In fact, negative historical reflections and popular nationalism remained central to perceptions of Germany, defying the pressures of international realpolitik until at least the early 1950s.

Moreover, there is little evidence of any organic transformation of public opinion in line with Cold War realpolitik. Rather, a systematic politics of memory, enacted by social and political elites and aided by the evolution of Britain's German policy, dictated from the early 1950s onwards the pretence of a unanimously sympathetic public perception of Manstein and the Wehrmacht. In light of this deliberate alteration of British cultural memory, Manstein's subsequent release and rehabilitation seemingly quashed the justice that much of the mass-market media had once acknowledged and respected. This can be said to correspond to a pattern of quasi-disenfranchisement of their lower middle and working class readership vis-a-vis elites. The systematic manipulation of the legacy of this trial was, of course, only one manifestation of a broader pattern of elites manipulating Europe's cultural memory of the German past and the Second World War in the face of the Cold War. In the case of the Anglo-German relationship, one might consider whether this apparent discord between state and society actually incubated long-standing Anglo-German ghosts of the past. In other words, did the exigencies of British realpolitik help to entrench latent popular distrust towards Germany that would again reappear in later decades when, as the Cold War came to an end, Europe experienced a thawing of these frozen memories?

The memorialisation of the German past witnessed in reporting on the trial included acknowledgment and condemnation of Wehrmacht criminality, appreciation of Manstein's

personal guilt, and a more complete understanding of the Holocaust that unreservedly recognised its antisemitic character. As we have seen, this moment of pervasive comprehension was subsequently obscured, primarily by the persistent and malign influence of those who sought to distance the German army from the crimes of Nazism and, in the process, diminished understandings of the atrocities committed. This obfuscation demands two amendments to the prevailing scholarship on British perceptions and memories of the Holocaust. First, evidence of well-informed cultural memorialisation of the Holocaust stretching to the early 1950s implies that popular remembrance was perhaps more comprehensive and enduring than previously acknowledged. Second, it suggests the need to qualify prevailing theories explaining the eventual public forgetfulness of the Holocaust as the result of the supposed incomprehensibility of Nazism's genocidal crimes, the glorification of the Second World War, or the shortcomings of the war crimes trials. We must, in addition, also recognise the disruptive role of powerful political and societal elites.

The trial of Field Marshal Erich von Manstein offers a glimpse into a critical and dynamic moment in the history of Anglo-German mutual understanding. The prosecution of one of the Wehrmacht's leading commanders for his complicity in the Holocaust became entangled with some of the most contested and controversial issues of postwar Europe. In recovering the true diversity of British public responses to the trial, the character of Britain's postwar cultural memory of the German past has come to light, with long-standing Anglo-German antagonism, the crimes of the Third Reich, and the Holocaust all remaining prominent. We have seen how influential elites actualised a state-endorsed politics of memory, ultimately obscuring public recollection of Manstein's guilt, the Wehrmacht's involvement in Nazism's crimes, and the Holocaust in general. These efforts were in line with the major political transformations of the early Cold War, which occurred simultaneous to the prosecution. The Manstein trial, then, exposes with exceptional clarity the complex and, at times, contentious interactions between state and society which have helped shape the course of postwar Anglo-German relations.

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