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**British Radio Propaganda against Nazi Germany
during the Second World War**

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M.Phil. in European Studies
by

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Table of Contents

Preface	4
List of Abbreviations	5
Introduction.....	7
Part One: International Propaganda before World War II.....	12
<i>1. British propaganda against Germany during the First World War and the discussion about the effectiveness of psychological warfare thereafter</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>2. International politics and the rise of radio propaganda during the interwar period</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>3. The British Government and international propaganda, 1919-1939.....</i>	<i>18</i>
3.1. British reluctance to use international propaganda	18
3.2. The Munich crisis and the beginnings of British German-language radio propaganda.....	21
Part Two: The War-time Organisation of British Radio Propaganda.....	23
<i>1. The organisation of enemy propaganda until August 1941</i>	<i>23</i>
1.1. The Department of Propaganda in Enemy Countries under Campbell Stuart, summer of 1938 - summer of 1940.....	23
1.2. The organisation of enemy propaganda by SO1, July 1940 - August 1941	28
1.3. The formation of the BBC's German Service and its relations with Department EH and SO1	31
1.4. The beginnings of 'black' broadcasting, May 1940 - May 1941.....	35
<i>2. The formation and structure of the Political Warfare Executive, August 1941 - May 1945</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>3. British radio propaganda under the guidance of PWE.....</i>	<i>45</i>
3.1. The re-organisation of the BBC's German Service in 1941/42 and its relations with PWE.....	45
3.2. The 'black propaganda empire' of Sefton Delmer	49

Part Three: Objectives and Strategies of British Radio Propaganda	55
<i>1. Aims, propaganda policy and programme structure of the BBC's 'white' propaganda.....</i>	<i>55</i>
1.1. The BBC as the official voice of the British Government: target audiences, objectives and propaganda policy.....	55
1.2. Programme structure and propaganda techniques	64
<i>2. Objectives and technique of Delmer's 'black' radio propaganda</i>	<i>71</i>
2.1. Aims, target audiences and techniques of 'black' propaganda.....	71
2.2. The objectives and programme structure of Gustav Siegfried Eins	73
2.3. The aims and programme structure of Deutscher Kurzwellensender Atlantik and Soldatensender Calais	80
Conclusion: How Effective was British Radio Propaganda?	85
Bibliography.....	94
<i>1. Unpublished Sources</i>	<i>94</i>
<i>2. Printed Secondary Works</i>	<i>96</i>

Preface

This thesis has been written in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of M.Phil. in European Studies. The ideas and work are exclusively my own, and reference is made in footnotes and in the bibliography to all primary and secondary sources, which have been used for writing the thesis. No part of this paper has been or is currently being submitted for any other degree at any university or similar institution.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Christopher M. Clark (St. Catharine's College, Cambridge), for his patient help and stimulating advice while I was writing on my thesis. I would also like to express my thanks to Dr. Malcolm Lambert, who drew my attention on this most fascinating topic and helped me so much in coming to Cambridge.

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Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to my parents who enabled and encouraged me to study in München and in Cambridge. I would like to dedicate this work to them.

Trinity Hall, Cambridge, August 1995.

List of Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBC SA	BBC Sound Archives, London
CHQ	‘Country Headquarters’, code name for the Department of Propaganda in Enemy Countries
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
DNB	<i>Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro</i> (official German news agency)
G.3	Code name for the secret radio station <i>Gustav Siegfried Eins</i>
G.9	Code name for the secret radio stations <i>Deutscher Kurzwellensender Atlantik</i> and <i>Soldatensender Calais</i>
GS1	<i>Gustav Siegfried Eins</i>
IWM	Imperial War Museum, Department of Sound Records
MB	Milton Bryant, seat of the recording studios for secret radio stations
MEW	Ministry of Economic Warfare
MoI	Ministry of Information
NID	Naval Intelligence Division
NSA	National Sound Archive, London
PID	Political Intelligence Department
PRO	Public Record Office, London (Kew)
PWE	Political Warfare Executive
RAF	Royal Air Force
RU	‘Research Unit’ (code name for secret radio stations)
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
SOE	Special Operations Executive

Own omissions in and supplements of quotations from sources and literature have been indicated by square brackets [...].

The Very Proper Gander¹

Not so very long ago there was a very fine gander. He was strong and smooth and beautiful and he spent most of his time singing to his wife and children. One day somebody who saw him strutting up and down in his yard and singing remarked, 'There is a very proper gander.' An old hen overheard this and told her husband about it that night in the roost. 'They said something about propaganda', she said. 'I have always suspected that,' said the rooster, and he went around the barnyard next day telling everybody that the very fine gander was a dangerous bird, more than likely a hawk in gander's clothing. A small brown hen remembered a time when at a great distance she had seen the gander talking with some hawks in the forest. 'They were up to no good,' she said. A duck remembered that the gander had once told him he did not believe in anything. 'He said to hell with the flag, too,' said the duck. A guinea hen recalled that she had once seen somebody who looked very much like the gander throw something that looked a great deal like a bomb. Finally everybody snatched up sticks and stones and descended on the gander's house. He was strutting in his front yard, singing to his children and his wife. 'There he is!' everybody cried. 'Hawk-lover! Unbeliever! Flag-hater! Bomb-thrower!' So they set upon him and drove him out of the country [...].

¹ Thurber, James, *Fables for Our Time* [1940]. London, 1951 (Reprint 1993), p. 13.

Introduction

‘Propaganda’ is a word which inflames passions. Public opinion often associates it with lies, distortion, deceit, manipulation, political control and psychological warfare. Yet this view is biased. The technical term ‘propaganda’ as such is neutral and means to promote certain ideas (*propaganda* is the gerund nominative neuter plural of the Latin verb *propagare* and means ‘things to be spread’). It had its origins in 1622, when Pope Gregory XV founded the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, which was charged with promoting the faith in the Catholic Church and countering the Protestant revolution.² But usage has imposed a negative meaning on the term. The association of propaganda with warfare is a consequence of the First World War, when highly sophisticated propaganda was employed systematically for the first time. Although spreading propaganda is not a specifically belligerent activity, it has been used most intensively in times of political and military conflict by the opposing parties.³

But before examining the use of propaganda in war it is important to define its general meaning and the way it works. In social science propaganda is understood as ‘the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.’⁴

In considering how propaganda works we have to bear in mind that propaganda in its fundamental structure is a special form of communication. Its purpose is to make an audience believe or do certain things. Communication, in turn, is one of the basic elements of any society. When we communicate we try to find ‘common ground’ with someone, that is, to share information, an idea, or an attitude. Communication may take place between

² Jowett/O’Donnell 1986, pp. 15, 48; Hundhausen 1975, p. 92; Thomson 1977, p. 3.

³ Jowett/O’Donnell 1986, pp. 118-20.

individuals, groups or social systems; as face-to-face interaction, or indirectly through a medium.⁵ Among modern communication theories Wilbur Schramm's model is particularly useful for understanding how propaganda works. On the basis of this model, propaganda is seen as a process of communication between the propagandist acting as the source of information and the target audience acting as the destination which decodes the information. Propaganda itself is the message which is sent from the source to the destination through a special medium (such as radio, for example). The destination can only decode the message of the source if both are in tune, i.e. if both share some common experiences. The source, therefore, must try to encode the message in such a way as to make it easy for the destination to decode it. In order to give his message the greatest effect the propagandist must try to find out as much as possible about his target audience. Only then can he choose the right timing for the message, the right kind of language, and the attitudes and values which will appeal to his target audience. There are four basic requirements for the success of any communication. Firstly, the message must be so designed as to gain the attention of the recipient. Secondly, it must employ signs which refer to previous experiences of the audience. Thirdly, the message must arouse personal needs in the audience which lead it towards taking action; and finally, it must suggest a way to meet those needs. A message is always more likely to succeed if it fits the patterns of understandings, attitudes, values and goals of the receiver, or if at least it starts with this pattern and tries to reshape it slightly during the process. There remains, however, one factor of uncertainty: how will the target audience react? This is beyond the influence of the sender who can only shape the content of the message.⁶

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15; Fraser 1957, pp. 4-5.

⁶ Schramm 1972, pp. 20-2, 26-37.

Propaganda operates to a great extent on the basis of emotions, and all human emotions can serve as potential channels for influencing a target. The success of propaganda thus depends on the strength of emotions already existing in the minds of the target and on the psychological condition of the audience. But rational arguments are likewise important, since a logical presentation is also likely to succeed (although in a different way than to an emotional appeal).⁷ Propaganda has the greatest effect where it is in line with existing opinions or emotions of the receiver. Most propaganda messages are therefore more supportive of, than discrepant from, existing views, and they tend to reinforce rather than change established attitudes. If radical changes of behaviour occur they are generally not caused by propaganda alone, but in combination with other factors such as social conditions, group interaction and the like. Values and behaviour patterns that are deeply rooted in a society are not likely to be affected by propaganda.⁸ Propaganda may be extremely sophisticated but nevertheless unsuccessful. We have to remember that the process of propaganda is not a purely technical one, but that it involves the feelings and thoughts of human beings. The power of propaganda over opinion can therefore never be absolute.⁹

There are many ways for the propagandist to manipulate the thinking and behaviour of his target audience. He will try to control the flow of information and to shape the opinion of his target through the use of certain strategies of informative communication. The flow of information can be controlled by withholding information, by releasing information at a predetermined time and/or in combination with other information, or by distorting information.¹⁰ Often the propagandist will try to conceal his true identity. Propaganda can therefore appear in different forms according to the forthrightness with which its source is

⁷ Fraser 1957, pp.10-11, Jowett/O'Donnell 1986, pp. 66, 139; Hale 1975, p. xvi; Thomson 1975, pp. 16-17.

⁸ Jowett/O'Donnell 1986, pp. 116-17.

⁹ Carr 1939, p. 27; Hale 1975, p. xvii.

¹⁰ Jowett/O'Donnell 1986, pp. 15, 34-7.

identified. 'White' propaganda is when the propagandist reveals his identity. In times of war official government propaganda would be of this type. The source of 'grey' propaganda cannot be identified correctly and it is left to the audience to decide who is behind it. 'Black' propaganda gives a false source and purports to be something which it is not.¹¹

The propagandist's message must be credible even if the information contained in it is distorted. Credibility and truth need not necessarily be the same, as will be shown in the case of British 'black' radio stations which seemed very credible to the German audience although their transmissions largely consisted of lies.¹²

Propaganda is associated with the control of information, therefore the media which allow this control and provide a means of reaching the audience are an essential precondition for its success. Propaganda has changed its form during the centuries with the development of the media. As a rule it can work through all sorts of media such as the visual arts, music, the written and the spoken word, but the development of the mass media like newspapers, radio, cinema and television from the late nineteenth century onwards has greatly enhanced its sophistication and effectiveness. Each medium has contributed to the development of the techniques of propaganda, and in particular radio has opened the door to the feasibility of international propaganda.¹³

The aim of this study is to offer a unified synthesis of British radio propaganda against Nazi Germany during the Second World War both in regard to the organisation of the British propaganda apparatus and to its output. There does of course exist a vast literature on British propaganda, but the authors of most of it are either ex-propagandists who write about their own work (e.g. Balfour, Delmer, Howe, Lerner, Fraser, Brinitzer), or

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-20, 36-7; Hundhausen 1975, p. 26.

¹² Roetter 1974, pp. 13-24; Jowett/O'Donnell 1986, pp. 17-20, write that the information in the message of 'white' propaganda is accurate and that it aims at building credibility with the audience, whereas 'black' propaganda disseminates lies and misinformation. This definition, however, is too simple, for 'white' propaganda can also disseminate false information and 'black' propaganda often uses accurate information!

they deal only with small parts of British propaganda (Briggs and Mansell with the BBC, and Howe and Cruickshank with 'black' propaganda). These works have all the advantages and disadvantages of insider histories. They are based on a rich knowledge of the personalities and milieu of propaganda production, but are often focused on specific areas of propaganda activity. None of the writers devotes himself to a thorough examination of the organisational background and its implications for the propaganda output, or to a comparative analysis of both 'white' and 'black' propaganda output. Even Balfour in his monumental study of British and German propaganda reveals very little of the organisational background or the content of broadcasts. Pütter offers a valuable compendium on both 'white' and 'black' radio propaganda, but his statements about the work and aims of the radio stations are often quite general and imprecise regarding the location of sources. The present study cannot, of course, replace a thorough history of British radio propaganda against Germany during the Second World War - such a study is still waiting to be written - but it is intended to supplement more detailed studies with a synthetic account of the organisation, content and impact of British propaganda as a whole.

Before British propaganda institutions and their 'products' are examined, we shall look briefly at the historical development of international radio propaganda between the two World Wars and at the evolution of attitudes which helped to determine the organisation of British political warfare during the wartime years.

¹³ Jowett/O'Donnell 1986, pp. 16, 38, 50, 63, 154, 160-2.

Part One: International Propaganda before World War II

1. British propaganda against Germany during the First World War and the discussion about the effectiveness of psychological warfare thereafter

From ancient times military actions have been accompanied by verbal attacks like diatribes or defamatory statements against the enemy. The aim has always been to weaken the enemy's will to resist with a minimum deployment of their own fighting capacity. But it was for the first time during the First World War that sophisticated techniques of propaganda were utilised systematically, that enemy propaganda was organised on a large scale and that theories of psychological warfare were developed.¹⁴

The prominent role which propaganda played during the First World War must be seen in close relation to the changed character of warfare. Whereas in earlier centuries war had been a conflict between professional armies, it developed more and more into a conflict between populations. The concept of 'total war' - a form of warfare in which all sections of a nation are engaged - originated in the French revolutionary wars, but it reached a new climax during the First World War. This meant that governments had to take more and more into consideration the psychological climate and public opinion of their own as well as of the enemy populations.¹⁵ Propaganda was increasingly regarded as a new weapon, or 'the fifth arm', of modern warfare, since it was a means for influencing the masses whose attitude was perceived as vital for the conduct of war.¹⁶ At home it was used to justify the need for war and personal sacrifices; the propaganda to enemy countries, however, should

¹⁴ Fraser 1957, p. 32; Jowett/O'Donnell 1986, p. 119.

¹⁵ Roetter 1974, pp. viii, 68; Jowett/O'Donnell 1986, p. 97.

¹⁶ Taylor 1983, p. 26, defines the other arms of defence as army, navy, air force and blockade (economic weapon). See also Taylor 1981b, p. 30.

convince the soldiers and civilians that their sacrifices were unjust and unnecessary and should induce them to surrender or to revolt against the government.¹⁷

During the First World War the British took the lead in propaganda activities because they were forced to think seriously about it earlier than any other country. Britain did not have universal conscription and had much more difficulty recruiting volunteers. For this reason German atrocity stories coming out of Belgium were circulated in Britain in order to raise public sympathies for going to war against Germany.¹⁸

In 1914 Britain possessed nothing like an official propaganda department. The propaganda campaigns were run by the Foreign Office, the War Office and the Admiralty as branches of other activities. From 1916 propaganda was conducted by the Directorate of Military Intelligence at the War Office. Since this decentralised situation did not make for efficiency it was decided in summer 1918 to establish a *Department for Enemy Propaganda (Crewe House)*. It continued the propaganda activities on a more centralised, systematic and consistent basis.¹⁹

British propaganda against Germany consisted of leaflets and pamphlets dropped from balloons or aeroplanes which contained news, facts and figures about the Allied war effort, reports about the situation on the fronts which were not published by the German press and statements of Allied war aims. During the first years of the war propaganda was directed exclusively to German front line troops, who were promised good treatment if they surrendered, but in 1918 attempts were also made to reach the civilian populations in Germany itself.²⁰

¹⁷ Taylor 1983, pp. 20-1, 23; Jowett/O'Donnell 1986, p. 97; Fraser 1957, p. 33.

¹⁸ Fraser 1957, pp. 33-4; Jowett/O'Donnell 1986, pp. 123-4.

¹⁹ Memorandum by Tallents, *Information in Enemy Countries*, 7/11/1938, PRO, FO 898/1, p. 2. Jowett/O'Donnell 1986, pp. 124-5; Fraser 1957, pp. 41-2; Taylor 1983, p. 21

²⁰ Fraser 1957, pp. 41-2; Wittek 1962, p. 19; A.J.P. Taylor 1965, p. 107.

It is very doubtful whether British propaganda helped to bring about the defeat of Germany. Although it was skilfully carried out it did not cause any change in the course of military events. It was only when the military and economic situation deteriorated that the German population became receptive for British propaganda messages, which told them that their situation was hopeless.²¹ But even if British propaganda must be denied any success in defeating Germany, it had far-reaching consequences. Immediately after the end of the war a fierce controversy broke out about the question whether and how much British propaganda had contributed to Germany's defeat. British propaganda was considered to have been very effective in destroying German war morale. This view originated in Germany itself and became part of the *Dolchstoßlegende* which was used by German politicians of the right after the war to stress that Germany had not been defeated in the battle field, but that the home front had collapsed inter alia under the influence of British propaganda.²²

After the First World War social scientists began to investigate the phenomenon of propaganda and public opinion. During the 1920s and 1930s countless books on propaganda appeared in Germany as well as in Britain and the United States. The tenor of these writings was that Britain had discovered an effective new weapon against which the best troops and military equipment were useless.²³ They greatly enhanced the myth of the unlimited powers of propaganda. In 1927 Harold Lasswell wrote that propaganda was 'one of the most powerful instrumentalities in the modern world' which was able 'to weld thousands and even millions of human beings into one amalgamated mass of hate and will and hope.'²⁴

All in all this perception of propaganda was to have far-reaching consequences for the international climate during the interwar period and for the Second World War.

²¹ Fraser 1957, pp. 47-9; Roetter 1974, pp. 80-81, 88; Carr 1939, pp. 11.

²² Fraser 1957, pp. 44-8; Roetter 1974, pp. 86-88; Seth 1969, pp. 15-17.

²³ Roetter 1974, p. 87; Jowett/O'Donnell 1986, pp. 96, 99, 121-2.

²⁴ Lasswell, Harold, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*. New York, 1927, cited in Jowett/O'Donnell 1986, p. 99.

2. International politics and the rise of radio propaganda during the inter-war period

After its allegedly successful use in the First World War, propaganda also conquered the fields of national and international politics.

Prior to 1914, any systematic use of propaganda by governments was regarded as undignified and disreputable.²⁵ That this changed fundamentally after the First World War was due to the deterioration of international relations, the rise of totalitarian states, the development of new means of communication and an increased popular interest in politics.

The political climate in Europe between the two World Wars was more that of a 'civil war between the forces of oligarchy, aristocracy, authoritarianism, Fascism and those of popular democracy, socialism, revolution' than that of diplomatic relations.²⁶ The outbreak of the First World War saw the breakdown of the European states system with its political conventions which had prevailed for many decades. The League of Nations, founded in 1919 to maintain peace and order, was no substitute for the self-imposed diplomatic rules of the concert of nations in the pre-war period. In order to achieve its aims it depended on the good will and consensus of all member states, which was lost with the rise of the totalitarian states and their anarchic attitudes towards international politics in the 1930s. So the international peace system laid down by the League of Nations ceased to be effective.²⁷

During the 1930s Hitler and Mussolini made massive use of propaganda for influencing both the home audiences and populations abroad. For the first time they employed the new mass medium radio extensively to achieve their political ends.²⁸ The behaviour of the totalitarian states caused great concern in the democratic world, and the need to counter the propagandistic attacks was felt more and more urgently.

²⁵ Carr 1939, p. 9-10.

²⁶ Watt 1975, p. 13.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-18; Taylor 1983, pp. 36-38.

An important factor for the increased use of propaganda, even by democratic governments, was the growing number of people whose opinion was politically significant. Politicians became increasingly dependent on the opinion of large masses of more or less politically conscious people and had to find new means of influencing them to their favour.²⁹ Public interest in foreign affairs was largely due to the experiences of the First World War and to the development of new weapons of mass destruction in the 1930s (whose effects were demonstrated in the Spanish civil war), which made the public more sensitive to changes on the international scene. Another factor was the higher level of education which increased the politicisation of the masses.³⁰ Social disruption caused by unemployment, inflation and the fear of another war made people sensitive to international politics and created an ideal climate for radical political propaganda to flourish.³¹

A central role in the rise of international propaganda was played by the new mass medium radio which revolutionised the potential for influencing large audiences at home and abroad. Several features make radio an effective instrument of national and international propaganda: it can address many people at the same time regardless of their place of residence, literacy, political and ideological affiliations or their social status. Radio is not limited geographically, it can cross borders without control and it is difficult to stop (although this is, to some extent, technically possible by 'jamming'). Another psychological advantage of radio is that it works on the basis of the spoken word. This makes it direct and personal in approach and appealing to the emotions of the audience. The ability of radio to transcend political and geographical boundaries gave international propaganda a new

²⁸ Thomson 1977, pp. 111-19.

²⁹ Carr 1939, pp. 3-5.

³⁰ Taylor 1994, p. 325.

³¹ Taylor 1983, pp. 19-20.

significance because it enabled governments to project their own cause to foreign audiences directly.³²

The interest in radio grew rapidly during the 1920s, and the technical improvements of radio led to its extensive use in international disputes.³³ The 1930s then saw an explosion in the use of international radio. Hitler and Mussolini were deeply convinced of its value as a means of propaganda and soon began to establish foreign-language programmes.³⁴

On the whole, the alleged power of propaganda, its seemingly unlimited destructive success in defeating Germany during the First World War, and the rise of the first truly mass media such as radio suggested that propaganda was likely to prove of great importance in the waging of any future war. Although this assumption tended to be exaggerated by contemporaries, the peacetime exploitation of propaganda by the totalitarian regimes served to reinforce it.³⁵

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 29-31; Short 1983, p. 3; Taylor 1994, p. 325; Hale 1975, pp. x-xiii; Jowett/O'Donnell 1986, p. 82.

³³ Such disputes were: in 1923 the German radio campaign against the French invasion of the Ruhr; in 1926 the Russian radio offensive against Romania during the dispute over Bessarabia; in 1936 the Nazi radio campaign during the Saar Plebiscite. Bumpus/Skelt 1984, pp. 10-12; Jowett/O'Donnell 1986, p. 140; Browne 1982, pp. 48-50.

³⁴ Bumpus/Skelt 1984, pp. 17-21; Fraser 1957, pp. 73-4; Browne 1982, pp. 1-2.

³⁵ Taylor 1981a, pp. 261, 263.

3. The British Government and international propaganda, 1919-1939

3.1. British reluctance to use international propaganda

Whereas political propaganda mushroomed in the totalitarian states during the interwar period Britain abstained largely from this development. The wartime machinery for propaganda (*Crewe House* and the *Ministry of Information*) was dissolved immediately after the end of the war in the course of demobilisation and on the assumption of a lasting peace. Although propaganda was recognised as having been successful in defeating Germany, the British Government and a large section of the public regarded it as suspect, politically dangerous, financially unjustifiable and therefore unacceptable in peacetime. The British rejected the idea of deliberate perversion of truth as a policy to be adopted by the government in the pursuit of national ends. The use of propaganda was regarded as contrary to the traditional rules of international relations in existence before 1914.³⁶

However, the Foreign Office decided in 1919 to retain its News Department as an agency for conducting publicity abroad and for issuing information about overseas events to the British and the foreign press. It had been recognised in Whitehall that ‘the era when it was possible either to lead opinion in foreign politics by mere authority or tradition, or to ignore it from Olympian heights, has long since vanished [...]. It has become, and must be, practically a never ceasing intercourse with the publicity world.’³⁷

The rise of totalitarian regimes in Italy and Germany and their extensive use of international propaganda undermined British ideals of peace and forced the nation to organise some sort of defence against their attacks. It slowly became clear that another war might be possible and that propaganda would play an even greater role in the next, than in

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 261; Carr 1939, p. 12; Mansell 1982, p. 55; Cruickshank 1977, p. 9; Taylor 1983, pp. 24-5.

³⁷ Memorandum by J.D. Gregory, *Reconstruction of Press and News Department*, 21/2/1925, PRO, FO 366/783, cited in Taylor 1994, p. 324.

the previous war.³⁸ Britain was nonetheless slow to respond to the threat which totalitarian propaganda activities posed for the democracies. The foundation of the British Council in 1934 was Britain's first institutional response to the increasing importance of propaganda as a factor in peace-time international politics. This strictly cultural body, with the task to sell British culture and the British way of life, remained for several years the only form of external propaganda tolerated by British authorities and public opinion.³⁹ But it became more and more recognised that Britain could not abstain from a more open use of propaganda to defend its political interests. In 1937 Chamberlain stated: 'His Majesty's Government fully realise that [...] the old stand-upon-your-own-dignity methods are no longer applicable to modern conditions and that, in the rough-and-tumble of international relations which we see today, it is absolutely necessary that we should take measures to protect ourselves from constant misrepresentation.'⁴⁰

Anti-British Italian broadcasts were the cause of Britain's engagement in international radio propaganda. Italian broadcasts to the Middle East, which started around 1934, were at first intended to increase Italian influence in this area, but when Italy invaded Abyssinia in September 1935 their tone became violently anti-British, and in Britain the call for counter-measures became louder. At the same time the Foreign Office was also concerned about German and Italian propaganda directed to Latin America and considered introducing foreign-language programmes to these countries. Rex Leeper, head of the Foreign Office News Department, urged for greater official commitment to the conduct of propaganda abroad in order to strengthen British influence in those areas which were vulnerable to German and Italian political and economic penetration.⁴¹

³⁸ Short 1983, pp. 2-3; Taylor 1983, pp. 24-5; Taylor 1981a, p. 261; Carr 1939, p. 21.

³⁹ Taylor 1981a, pp. 181, 212; Cruickshank 1977, p. 9; Fraser 1957, p. 87.

⁴⁰ Hansard, 5th series, vol. 330, 21/12/1937, col. 1803, cited in Taylor 1981a, p. 204.

⁴¹ Bumpus/Skelt 1984, pp. 25-7; Taylor 1981a, pp. 182, 191; Balfour 1979, pp. 88-9.

Sir John Reith, Director-General of the BBC, had long been aware of the potential value of overseas broadcasting, but the BBC was unable to start its Empire Service until 1932. Although the original idea of the Empire Service was to link the Empire with the mother country by means of radio, Reith tried to make it a means for the dissemination of British views and values not just within the Empire but to a wider public, since the Empire Service could be received all over the world. The alarming growth of German and Italian external broadcasting led Reith to urge for the widening of British programmes and for the introduction of foreign-language broadcasts to make the voice of Britain heard effectively throughout the world.⁴²

The report of the Ullswater Committee, an independent official review body set up in 1935 to investigate British broadcasting, stated that ‘in the interests of British prestige and influence in world affairs, we think that the appropriate use of languages other than English should be encouraged’.⁴³ But the BBC took no immediate steps to implement this recommendation. Although Reith and other influential people advocated taking over foreign-language broadcasting on behalf of the government there were still too many critics inside the BBC, who thought it inappropriate and damaging for the reputation of the corporation to engage in propaganda activities. The BBC finally agreed to start a foreign-language programme, but it was decided that it must be kept separate from the Empire Service.⁴⁴ The new service would be financed largely by the government, which also retained the right to refuse material desired by the BBC. The BBC, on the other hand, would

⁴² Mansell 1982, pp. 23-35, 40; Taylor 1981a, p. 191; Fraser 1957, p. 88.

⁴³ Report of the Broadcasting Committee, 1935. Cmd. 5091 (1936), paras. 115-24, cited in Taylor 1981a, p. 192. See also Mansell 1982, pp. 34, 41-2.

⁴⁴ *War Cabinet. Broadcasting Committee. Broadcasting to Foreign Countries. Memorandum by the Minister of State*, 19/4/1945, PRO, FO 898/41, p. 2; Mansell 1982, pp. 40-9; Taylor 1981a, pp. 193-4.

be responsible for the programmes and remain independent from government interference, but seek Foreign Office guidance on all complex issues.⁴⁵

Broadcasting in Arabic to the Middle East began on 3 January 1938, and it was followed in March 1938 by broadcasts in Spanish and Portuguese directed to Latin America. The main aim of the new services was the dissemination of news, not of propaganda in the way that it was understood by the totalitarian states. The BBC was far from trying to win over people in foreign countries to the British way of thinking.⁴⁶

3.2. The Munich crisis and the beginnings of British German-language radio propaganda

The rejection by the British of the use of propaganda against the totalitarian states was caused partly by the government's policy of appeasement. The Abyssinian crisis, Germany's reoccupation of the Rhineland and, above all, the Munich crisis shattered Britain's post-war dream of security and peace. Chamberlain, who was a strong opponent to rearmament, thought that Mussolini and Hitler must be treated like statesmen and could be appeased by rational discussion. He believed that appeasement would be the best way to bring Germany back to civilised behaviour.⁴⁷ For the British, propaganda meant war. The reluctance of the government to answer totalitarian propaganda reflected the reluctance of the whole nation to go to another war for which it was not yet prepared. But the illusion of peace was shattered by the events of September 1938.⁴⁸

During the Munich crisis the British government finally realised the urgent need for propaganda against Germany. As the crisis threatened to develop into war, the government

⁴⁵ Taylor 1981a, p. 204; Balfour 1979, p. 88.

⁴⁶ Briggs 1995, p. 6.

⁴⁷ A.J.P. Taylor 1965, pp. 408-20; Cruickshank 1977, p. 10.

⁴⁸ Mansell 1982, pp. 57-8; Taylor 1981b, p. 38.

charged the BBC on 27 September with broadcasting a German translation of Chamberlain's speech on the crisis. Although Chamberlain could appease Hitler once more, the Foreign Office asked the BBC to continue the German broadcasts as a permanent commitment to explain the British point of view during a time of political crisis.⁴⁹

Until the outbreak of war, the BBC's German broadcasts were supervised by the Foreign Office. Control was at first close, but from November 1938 onwards the BBC was left to get on with it. The BBC prepared the broadcasts in daily consultation with the Foreign Office, but the editorial policy of the BBC remained nonetheless firmly committed to the principle of truth. Although the beginnings of the German Service were very improvised, the new service flourished rapidly. After negotiations with the Foreign Office in December 1938 the BBC extended the German broadcasts from ten to fifteen minutes, and by the end of January 1939 they were lengthened to a half-hour programme including *Sonderberichte* (commentaries). After the German invasion of Prague in March 1939 the daily broadcasts to Germany were increased to 45 minutes, and after the outbreak of war to one hour.⁵⁰

On the whole, Britain's entry into the field of international propaganda during the 1930s was somewhat tardy, but once the need for countering totalitarian propaganda had been recognised by the government in 1937/38, active steps were taken to set up an apparatus for conducting propaganda against potential enemy nations. In the beginning, this was rather improvised, and in fact it took more than two years until the final shape for the British propaganda department had been worked out.

⁴⁹ Memorandum by Tallents, *Information in Enemy Countries*, 7/11/1938, PRO, FO 898/1, p. 8; Taylor 1981a, p. 210-11; Mansell 1982, p. 57-8; A.J.P. Taylor 1965, pp. 420-31.

⁵⁰ Rex Leeper to C.N. Ryan, 7/12/1938, PRO, FO 898/1; Note by C.N. Ryan, 9/12/1938, PRO, FO 898/1; Mansell 1982, pp. 58, 97-8; Taylor 1981a, p. 211; Brinitzer 1969, p. 27.

Part Two: The War-time Organisation of British Radio Propaganda

1. The organisation of enemy propaganda until August 1941

1.1. The Department of Propaganda in Enemy Countries under Campbell Stuart, summer of 1938 - summer of 1940

Although the British government hesitated several years before they began to openly conduct foreign propaganda in 1938 with the establishment of the BBC's foreign-language services, the need for a propaganda department in the event of another war had been realised as early as 1935. In this year, which saw the beginnings of the Abyssinian crisis, the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) charged a special sub-committee with drafting plans for a wartime Ministry of Information (MoI) in complete secrecy. It was felt in government circles that propaganda would play a vital role in the next war both at home and abroad. One lesson drawn from the experiences of the First World War was that inter-departmental rivalries and overlapping of competencies had to be avoided in any future conflict and that it would be desirable to centralise the conduct of all propaganda (both on the home front and against the enemy) under a sole roof.⁵¹

Yet planning was largely concentrated on home propaganda, and little attention was paid to the question of propaganda to enemy countries until 1938. This changed when Hitler annexed Austria in March 1938. Preparations for a wartime propaganda department became more urgent, for the government now realised how little prepared it was to conduct enemy propaganda. It was felt that a specialist department for the conduct of propaganda to the enemy outside the MoI but responsible to the Minister of Information would be needed. Until this point all preparations for wartime propaganda had been based on the concept of 'white' propaganda, i.e. accurate news and information disseminated by official government

agencies, but in the wake of the *Anschluss* the British also began to think about clandestine warfare and methods of subversion.⁵²

In the spring of 1938 two organisations were thus founded for the conduct of enemy propaganda. The first of these was *Section D*, an operational branch of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), whose purpose was to handle espionage, subversion and sabotage against the enemy.⁵³ The other organisation was the *Department of Propaganda in Enemy Countries*, called *Department EH* after the initials of its headquarters at the Imperial Communications Committee in Electra House on the Victoria Embankment. Sir Campbell Stuart, chairman of this committee, was invited by Chamberlain to consider and report informally on the steps necessary for the creation of a new department for enemy propaganda. He had been Secretary to Northcliffe at *Crewe House* in 1918. Stuart began to work on plans for Department EH in complete secrecy, but at the time of the Munich crisis only a vague plan existed on paper.⁵⁴

The Munich crisis provided a valuable dress rehearsal for the British propaganda institutions in that it revealed the hopeless inadequacy of the preparations for the MoI. The shadow MoI was partly mobilised on 26 September 1938 amidst chaos and confusion. Sir Stephen Tallents, the General-Director Designate of the MoI, wrote after the crisis: ‘The outstanding lesson, however, taught by the September rehearsal in the Ministry’s sphere, was the lack of machinery for securing the prompt, wide and efficient conveyance of British news and views to potential enemy countries.’⁵⁵

⁵¹ Taylor 1981a, pp. 260-7; Taylor 1981b, pp. 32-3.

⁵² Taylor 1981a, pp. 269-70; Taylor 1981b, pp. 39-40.

⁵³ Howe 1982, pp. 29-33; Taylor 1981a, p. 270; Taylor 1981b, p. 40.

⁵⁴ Taylor 1981a, p. 270; Taylor 1981b, p. 40; Balfour 1979, p. 89, Howe 1982, pp. 21-2.

⁵⁵ Memorandum by Tallents, *Information in Enemy Countries*, 7/11/1938, PRO, FO 898/1, pp. 1-2. See also a note by Tallents to Sir Donald Banks, 4/10/1938, PRO, FO 898/1. See for further reference Taylor 1981a, pp. 271-2; Taylor 1981b, p. 41.

But the planners of the MoI had also done some valuable work. In spring and summer of 1938 they had worked on an analysis of German public opinion and the most effective methods which should be employed in the case of an emergency. They had found out that German public opinion was starved of uncensored news by the Nazi regime and would prove susceptible to propaganda with facts. This was partly the motivating factor behind the BBC's decision to broadcast a German translation of Chamberlain's speech on 27 September.⁵⁶

During the Munich crisis the Cabinet asked Stuart to organise the secret department. Stuart now began to collect together a small nucleus of staff for each potential enemy country. But his preparations came too late to prove effective. When the immediate danger of war was over, preparations for the mobilisation of the department were interrupted. However, Stuart was appointed chairman of a new sub-committee of the CID to consider possible methods to conduct propaganda to the enemy.⁵⁷ When Hitler invaded Prague in March 1939 and it became clear that Germany was determined to go to war, Stuart was asked to resume preparations for Department EH. It was arranged to move most of the staff from Electra House to Woburn Abbey, the seat of the Duke of Bedford, on the outbreak of war, for it was feared that London would be bombed immediately.⁵⁸

It was in the aftermath of the Munich crisis that the inter-departmental struggle for the control of propaganda developed which was to prevail until the autumn of 1941 and which was the source of much of the inefficiencies of the British propaganda effort during the first years of the war. Although the sub-committee charged with the planning of the MoI had stated in 1936 that the MoI was to assume responsibility for all propaganda at home and

⁵⁶ Taylor 1981a, pp. 271-2; 274.

⁵⁷ Draft Memorandum by Sir Campbell Stuart, *Propaganda in Enemy Countries*, 26/5/1940, PRO, FO 898/3, p. 1; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 16-17; Taylor 1981a, pp. 271-2, 281-2; Howe 1982, pp. 36-8.

⁵⁸ *Instructions for Staff of Department EH*, undated, PRO, FO 898/2; Taylor 1981a, p. 282; Taylor 1981b, p. 45; Howe 1982, pp. 38-9.

abroad at the outbreak of war, the foundation of Department EH and Section D had undermined this decision. Now there were three bodies for the conduct of propaganda: the MoI for 'white' government propaganda, Department EH for enemy propaganda, and Section D for subversive activities. Rex Leeper was keen not to lose control of the official foreign propaganda to the MoI and demanded that until the outbreak of war the organisation of foreign propaganda remained under Foreign Office control. The initiative to charge Stuart with the preparation of Department EH had come from the Foreign Office and was intended to prevent Tallents from gaining control over foreign propaganda. The Foreign Office even insisted on the revival of its Political Intelligence Department (PID) for the collection of information about foreign countries for use by the propagandists and the government. Finally, it was agreed in January 1939 that on the outbreak of war Department EH would take over responsibility for enemy propaganda from the Foreign Office.⁵⁹

On 3 September Department EH became responsible to the Minister of Information (Lord MacMillan), but it remained distinct from the rest of the MoI. It was a secret department and financed from the secret vote. The main reason for this was the belief that propaganda could not be effectively conducted if its officials were continuously forced to justify their actions in public. During the first year of its existence Department EH changed its affiliation between the MoI and the Foreign Office several times. In October 1939 its control was transferred from the Ministry of Information to the Foreign Office. At the beginning of June 1940, before Stuart went to Canada, control went partly back to the Minister of Information (since May 1940 Duff Cooper).⁶⁰

The staff of Department EH received mobilisation instructions on 19 August, even before the news of the Hitler-Stalin-Pact was published. Mobilisation was ordered on 1

⁵⁹ Taylor 1981a, pp. 276-7, 282, 286; Taylor 1981b, pp. 42-3; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 177-8; Howe 1982, p. 42. For the interest of the Foreign Office in foreign propaganda see Leeper to C.N. Ryan, 7/12/1938, PRO, FO 898/1.

⁶⁰ Balfour 1979, p. 89; Cruickshank, p. 17; Howe 1982, p. 49.

September and Department EH was evacuated to the Riding School building at Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire, as had been agreed earlier in the year. It became known from then as 'Country Headquarters' (CHQ) or 'The Country', and its location was kept a military secret. The staff were housed in Woburn or in the surrounding villages and given strict instructions on security.⁶¹

For ten months, from September 1939 until June 1940, Department EH had primary responsibility for propaganda against the enemy. Propaganda policy was discussed at the Planning Committee under the chairmanship of the Deputy Director. The department had an expert intelligence department at its disposal which studied the German press and the output of the BBC Monitoring Service. Yet it was more or less a reincarnation of *Crewe House*. Campbell Stuart, who was head of Department EH, orientated his propaganda policy largely on the principles of the 1918 campaigns. The role of radio was examined, but its potential was not yet fully appreciated. Much emphasis was put on leaflet propaganda. The work of the staff consisted mainly of preparing leaflets to be dropped over Germany and of issuing policy directives for the BBC's German Service, which were in any case never welcomed.⁶²

⁶¹ Mansell 1982, p. 70; Cruickshank 1977, p. 17; Howe, 39-41. The staff of EH consisted of the following personalities: Director - Sir Campbell Stuart; Deputy Director - R.J.H Shaw; Private Secretary to Director - A. Gishford; Intelligence Officer - Vernon Bartlett; Broadcasting Officer - A.P. Ryan; German Editor - Valentine Williams, Dr. T. Csato; PID Chief - C.F.A. Warner, Deputy - J.E.M. Carvell. See *Office Plan for Electra House*, undated, PRO, FO 898/2; Howe 1982, p. 44.

⁶² Draft Memorandum by Sir Campbell Stuart, *Propaganda in Enemy Countries*, 26/5/1940, PRO, FO 898/3, pp. 4-5; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 17, 28-9; Howe 1982, p. 43.

1.2. The organisation of enemy propaganda by SO1, July 1940 - August 1941

Neither the organisation, nor the work of Department EH proved a great success and it therefore disappeared with the Chamberlain government. After Churchill had become Prime Minister in May 1940, a drastic reorganisation of the propaganda department took place. In June 1940 Sir Campbell Stuart left for Canada on urgent business on behalf of the Imperial Communications Advisory Board. While he was abroad, Department EH was dissolved and its propaganda functions were transferred to a new body. When Churchill formed his coalition government, he appointed Dr. Hugh Dalton (Labour) Minister of Economic Warfare and invited him, on 16 July, to take charge of a new and secret organisation with responsibility to co-ordinate all action by way of subversion and sabotage against the enemy. Dalton set up this *Special Operations Executive* (SOE) with two branches: SO1 took over the propaganda functions of Department EH, SO2 the sabotage functions of Section D. The responsibility for the BBC's 'white' propaganda was left with the Ministry of Information. Rex Leeper became head of SO1. He formally worked for Dalton, but it was the Foreign Office which retained the last word on propaganda policy.⁶³

This arrangement lasted until the autumn of 1941 and gave rise to a sort of civil war between Foreign Office, Ministry of Information and Ministry of Economic Warfare (MEW).⁶⁴ The fierce rivalry between the various ministries was caused by the question of whether 'white' propaganda should belong to the MoI (because it was official government propaganda) or to the MEW (since all measures aimed at undermining enemy morale were the responsibility of SO1, and the BBC's German broadcasts pursued the same goal). Dalton advocated putting all propaganda to enemy countries under the control of one department. He argued that both 'white' and 'black' propaganda were a single subject because they had the same aim: the subversion of enemy morale. For that reason they had to be closely co-

⁶³ Balfour 1979, p. 89 footnote 155, p. 90; Mansell, p. 71; Cruickshank 1977, p. 17; Howe 1982, p. 48.

ordinated. Others argued that this would damage the BBC's reputation for credibility and make it impossible for Dalton to justify his policies for 'white' propaganda in Parliament, since SOE was a secret organisation. Duff Cooper, a powerful politician, was most strongly opposed to Dalton's plans to take over overt propaganda. Finally, a compromise was reached and it was agreed to leave the BBC under the Minister of Information. But since the MoI had no German staff to handle the work, it was arranged for SO1 staff to work for the MoI on a part-time basis.⁶⁵

Dalton was not satisfied at all with the separation of competencies: 'I have been told to arrange subversion against the enemy. In this task one of my most powerful instruments of propaganda is the BBC broadcasts. These, however, are not at my disposal, but remain in the control of another Ministry.'⁶⁶ It was therefore not surprising that this arrangement did not work and that the rivalries between Duff Cooper and Dalton went on. Dalton tried to gain control over the BBC, whereas Duff Cooper demanded that control over SO1's operations be returned to him.⁶⁷

Churchill, who was not himself interested in propaganda and wanted to end the quarrel, ordered Lord President Sir John Anderson to settle the differences between the two warring ministers. Since both overt and covert propaganda should have a common policy, but neither the Minister of Information nor the Minister of Economic Warfare could control both of them, Anderson met on 16 May 1941 with the two ministers and with the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, to work out a solution. Anderson proposed to set up a 'triumvirate', consisting of Duff Cooper, Dalton and Eden. Dalton was made responsible for covert, Duff Cooper for overt propaganda. Together with Eden, who would decide on the foreign policy aspects of propaganda, they would form a Joint Ministerial Committee. Each

⁶⁴ Briggs 1995, pp. 32-3, Cruickshank 1977, p. 30.

⁶⁵ Balfour 1979, p. 91; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 17-18.

⁶⁶ PRO, INF 1/893, 15/12/1940, cited in Cruickshank 1977, p. 19.

of the three ministers would appoint a senior official to provide co-operation at the operational level.⁶⁸

Duff Cooper disliked the ‘Anderson Award’ as this arrangement was called, from the beginning. It had not settled the dispute over the control of external propaganda and its result was to perpetuate much of the inefficiency and frustration, from which British propaganda had suffered since the outbreak of war. Things only became better when Duff Cooper left in July 1941 and was replaced as Minister of Information by Brendan Bracken, who was a protégé of Churchill. By the end of July Robert Bruce Lockhart, the Foreign Office representative on the committee of officials, and his two colleagues Rex Leeper and Brigadier Dallas Brooks produced proposals for a new structure of the enemy propaganda department.⁶⁹

This paper proposes the creation of a Department for Political Warfare: that is, the placing of a number of different bodies, at present carrying out separate activities in political warfare, under the control of one Executive Committee who can jointly direct and control them. [...]

What is lacking in this set-up is day-to-day executive control of the different activities under one hand. This can only be supplied by the creation of a general staff for political warfare, controlling the bodies concerned and responsible to the Ministerial Committee on matters of major policy.⁷⁰

The report proposed the formation of an Executive Committee which should be supplied with offices and a secretariat independent of any Ministry. It would be responsible to the Ministerial Committee and be charged with issuing policy guidelines for any government body concerned with political warfare, the most important being SO1 and the BBC’s European services.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Balfour 1979, p. 91.

⁶⁸ *Draft Cabinet Paper*, 31/7/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, p. 1; Balfour 1979, p. 91; Mansell 1982, p. 72; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 20-1.

⁶⁹ Balfour 1979, p. 91; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 20-1; Howe 1982, pp. 49-50.

⁷⁰ *Draft Cabinet Paper*, 31/7/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, p. 1.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

After two years of ministerial quarrelling the British government had finally found a solution for the establishment of a department with sole responsibility for enemy propaganda. The inter-departmental rivalries had absorbed much energy and made it very difficult for the staff of the propaganda department to get on with their day-to-day work.⁷²

1.3. The formation of the BBC's German Service and its relations with Department EH and SO1

During the first two years of the war the BBC's German Service was the main agency for conducting radio propaganda against Germany. Nevertheless, making propaganda was a very difficult task not only because of the constant military defeats of Britain, but owing to two organisational defects. The first was that the German Service did not exist at the outbreak of war and still had to be established in its basic structure. The other was the relations between the BBC and Department EH and SO1 which had not been defined before the outbreak of war and were an organisational disaster.

At the outbreak of war the German Service did not exist as a separate unit. It consisted of a few German announcers, translators and British editors and commentators who were preparing news and talks in shifts in the 'German Room' at Broadcasting House. The German staff operated under the eye of language supervisors and switch-censors who were themselves under the control of Duckworth Barker, the Foreign Language Supervisor. The responsibility for the first news bulletins had been with the Director of the Empire Service, J.B. Clark. The broadcast output consisted largely of news bulletins and from early 1939 onwards also of news talks. Organisational difficulties between news and news talks

⁷² 'It is the plain truth which will be denied by no honest person inside our various propaganda organisations that most of the energy which should have been directed against the enemy has been dissipated in inter-departmental strife and jealousies.' Minute by Bruce Lockhart, 22/8/1941, PRO, FO 898/10.

on the one hand and the rest of the programme output only appeared with the increase in programme variety.⁷³

In November 1940 the first regular feature *Vormarsch der Freiheit* was introduced at the suggestion of SO1, and a German Features Unit at Bedford College was founded and put under the direction of the German émigré film star Walter Rilla. It was separated from the rest of the service not only by geography but also by administration, for it came under the control of the European Service Director J.S.A. Salt and had no contact with either News or News Talks.⁷⁴ This proved a severe handicap for the efficiency and quality of the output of the German Service, for no unified control was established until late 1941.

The European Service as a sub-division of the Overseas Service was created in the summer of 1940, but the organisational structure was not changed. It was divided into several independent language divisions (one of them being the German Service). News and programme directives were distributed centrally by the Central News Desk under Noel Newsome, the European News Editor, to the News Editors, who were in charge of a language service (Hugh Carleton Greene became German Editor). The staff dealing with features were under the direction of the European Productions Manager, Gibson Parker, who himself was a sub-ordinate of J.S.A. Salt. Talks and features staff could therefore produce anything they wanted without regard to the policy or output of the News Editors, for co-ordination between the news and the features departments was non-existent.⁷⁵

Although J.S.A. Salt as Director of European Broadcasts had overall responsibility for planning, intelligence, scheduling, programme operations and presentation as well as control over foreign announcers and programme staffs, he did not control the most important part of the output, namely news and commentaries, which counted for over 80 per cent of the

⁷³ Mansell 1982, pp. 81, 153-4; Brinitzer 1969, pp. 37, 49.

⁷⁴ Mansell 1982, pp. 152, 155-6; Brinitzer 1969, pp. 107-8; Briggs 1995, pp. 237-8, 251.

⁷⁵ Mansell 1982, pp. 81, 156; Pütter 1986, p. 85; Brinitzer 1969, p. 85.

output. News talks were the responsibility of Leonard Miall and later of Alan Bullock as European News Talks Editor working to Newsome. The geographical separation made the co-ordination problem even worse. The German news and news talks staff moved to Maida Vale in December 1940 after a German bomb had hit Broadcasting House (and in March 1941 they moved into Bush House, which became the permanent seat of the European Service), whereas the German Features Department under Walter Rilla remained at Bedford College in Regents Park.⁷⁶

It had been proposed during the Munich crisis to bring as many famous German exile intellectuals and writers before the microphone as possible, who should 'explain quite simply and without hatred why they no longer live in Germany.'⁷⁷ The choice of material should be left largely to the emigrants themselves. These plans, however, were given up at the outbreak of war when it was decided that German staff could not appear at the microphone except for reading news. Political commentaries were written and broadcast exclusively by British staff such as Lindley Fraser, Richard Crossman, Patrick Gordon Walker and Charles Richardson (pseudonym of Marius Goring). The purpose behind this decision was to protect the BBC against charges that it was a mere emigrant station run by Jews and to convince German listeners that the views they heard were the expression of the opinion of the British government. Although the role of the emigrants was restricted to that of a speaker or translator, some were also working as writers and speakers of satirical features. But in such a case their true identity was never revealed. The only exception was made with Thomas Mann, who broadcast from 1940 to 1945 his monthly appeals to the German people under his own name.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ *Rough Scheme of BBC Co-ordination under PWE*, 22/8/1941, PRO, FO 898/41; Howe 1982, p. 82; Mansell 1982, pp. 82, 113-14, 116.

⁷⁷ Memorandum by Vernon Bartlett, 27/9/1938, PRO, FO 898/1, pp. 5-6.

⁷⁸ Mansell 1982, p. 155; Pütter 1986, p. 85; Brinitzer 1969, pp. 59, 95-6; Balfour 1979, p. 95; Briggs 1995, pp. 165-6.

Although Sir John Reith had raised the issue of the position of the BBC in wartime as early as in 1934, relations between the BBC and the government had not been settled before the outbreak of war. When the first news were broadcast during and after the Munich crisis, a system of informal liaisons on policy matters developed between the BBC and the relevant Foreign Office desks. On 3 September 1939 Department EH took over from the Foreign Office the guidance of BBC broadcasts to enemy countries, but few inside the BBC knew of its existence. The staff were told that from now on they were dealing no longer with the Foreign Office desk but would receive their directives from this secret body. The BBC German Service did not even deal directly with Department EH, but its instructions were relayed by A.P. Ryan, who had been appointed BBC Liaison Officer with Department EH. He was a on the staff of the BBC and considered his duty to prevent it from having any effect on BBC output. 'Recommendations' were the only form of orders accepted by the BBC. A major problem was that many suggestions by Department EH were very amateurish because of a lack of experience, and the BBC had therefore every reason to reject them.⁷⁹

Relations between the BBC and the government were therefore tense. The German Service was often criticised for the way it disseminated news unfavourable for Britain, so that the MoI even suggested in 1940 that the government should take over the BBC. After lengthy discussions a committee under Sir Kingsley Wood was set up to examine the case. It proposed that the government appoint Ivone Kirkpatrick Foreign Adviser to the BBC. He would be on the staff of the MoI, and his task would be to make the directives of Department EH known to the European News Editor and to ensure that it was carried out.

⁷⁹ Draft Memorandum by Sir Campbell Stuart, *Propaganda in Enemy Countries*, 26/5/1940, PRO, FO 898/3, pp. 2, 5; Mansell 1982, pp. 65, 60-2, 70; Howe 1982, pp. 44-5; Briggs 1995, pp. 14-15, 80, 155 footnote 46; Balfour 1979, p. 94.

The European News Editor was in turn responsible to him for the work of the Regional Editors.⁸⁰

The BBC was not pleased about the appointment of Kirkpatrick in February 1941, for it feared that he would lead to interference in its normal editorial processes and channels of control. But the BBC was given the right to appeal to the Minister of Information against advice it disagreed with. After Bracken had become Minister of Information in July 1941 the Foreign Adviser was also given a rank in the BBC, for Bracken recognised that it was unsatisfactory for the BBC that the official Advisers were not on its staff.⁸¹

Between 1939 and 1941 the BBC was thus in a weak position in its dealings with Department EH because of the lack of a senior BBC editor in charge of all German output. But despite this deficiency the propaganda department was never able to get complete hold of the BBC. One reason for this was geographical: Department EH's location in Woburn did not help to impose its will on the German Service in London.⁸² The other reason was the determination of the BBC to resist as far as possible all instructions from the propaganda department. The disastrous relations between Department EH/SO1 and the BBC were inter alia one reason for the decision of Department EH that alternative radio stations be established for the conveyance of propaganda to Germany.

1.4. The beginnings of 'black' broadcasting, May 1940 - May 1941

Hardly any documentary evidence is available to reveal the motives behind the decision of Department EH in 1940 to establish 'freedom stations', as the first clandestine radio stations were called. It coincided with Germany's occupation of Western Europe,

⁸⁰ Memorandum by Kirkpatrick, 4/12/1941, PRO, FO 898/41, p. 1; Mansell 1982, pp. 74-5, 151; Briggs 1995, pp. 23, 303-5.

⁸¹ Mansell 1982, pp. 75-7.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 151; Balfour 1979, pp. 89-90.

when the mood in Britain was rather desperate. It seems therefore reasonable to suppose that Department EH introduced the 'freedom stations' more by a sense of despair than by the hope that they would do any good, for the RAF had not dropped any leaflets since late April 1940 and relations with the BBC were disastrous. Department EH may have found it convenient to develop an independent apparatus for conveying propaganda to Germany which had no connection with either the RAF or the BBC.⁸³

The first 'black' station, *Hier spricht Deutschland*, was set up in May 1940 under the guidance of F.A. Voigt, a British right-wing journalist working for Department EH. It was directed towards the conservative and patriotic Germans, but it does not seem to have reached a large audience because of its unrealistic political programme, and it was therefore given up in the spring of 1941.⁸⁴ The second 'black' station, founded in October 1940 and aimed at German workers, was the *Sender der Europäischen Revolution*. It was run by German socialists and had been set up on the initiative of Richard Crossman, a left-wing Labour politician who had been made head of the German department at Woburn by Dalton after the foundation of SO1.⁸⁵

The aim of these stations was not so much to weaken the enemy's morale - as was the objective of the later stations - but to convince their audiences of the rightness of their respective political programmes and to encourage resistance movements by means of appealing to the reason of their listeners and by explaining to them the dangers of National Socialism.⁸⁶ The emigrants working for the early 'black' stations enjoyed a relative freedom in making their programmes. This changed, however, after the foundation of PWE in August

⁸³ Howe 1982, pp. 74-5, 80-3; Pütter 1983, pp. 106-7.

⁸⁴ Pütter 1983, pp. 110-12.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-14; Howe 1982, pp. 55-6, 84-5.

⁸⁶ Pütter 1983, p. 122. Howe, p. 84, writes that the purpose of the first 'black' stations in 1940 had also been to weaken enemy morale, but this does not seem very plausible.

1941, for from then on the propaganda department issued daily directives which laid down in detail for both 'white' and 'black' stations the propaganda themes to be adopted.⁸⁷

Whereas Department EH had paid little attention to the idea of clandestine broadcasting, Dalton was very interested in adding it to the activities of his newly founded SOE. The secret broadcasting stations expanded rapidly during 1940/41.⁸⁸ But the establishment of the first two radio stations did not only serve psychological warfare purposes but was also the result of political fights between Crossman and Voigt within the British propaganda department.⁸⁹

Crossman had many opponents who criticised his left-wing *Sender der Europäischen Revolution*. Leonard Ingrams from the MEW was able to persuade Leeper in the spring of 1941 that what was required for the Germans was something more than the political idealism of Crossman's 'revolutionary socialists', who addressed their remarks to a vague audience of 'good Germans'. What was needed was a new right-wing station (to counter Crossman's socialists), whose aim would no longer be to convince its audience of any political programme or to address critics of the regime, but to spread dissatisfaction and to subvert the morale of the enemy.⁹⁰

The man chosen for this task was Sefton Delmer, a *Daily Express* journalist who had been 'star speaker' on the BBC's German Service for some time. He arrived at Woburn in May 1941 and immediately began with preparations for *Gustav Siegfried Eins*, as the station was called. It was based on a completely new concept of 'black' radio propaganda which

⁸⁷ Pütter 1983, pp. 115, 117; Delmer 1962, p. 37.

⁸⁸ Howe 1982, pp. 80-3.

⁸⁹ Pütter 1983, pp. 114-15.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-3; Howe 1982, pp. 101-2; Delmer 1962, p. 38; Seth 1969, pp. 58-9.

was to open a new chapter in the history of psychological warfare.⁹¹ Although Delmer should have been technically a sub-ordinate of Crossman, it was decided at his arrival that

Mr Crossman and Mr Delmer should in future be jointly in charge of the German Department, which should remain a unity, serving both the BBC and SO1; so that Mr Delmer should be responsible to the Director [Leeper] for all the S(pecial) O(perations) work carried out by the Department, while Mr Crossman should be responsible to the Ministry of Information for the BBC work [...].⁹²

Delmer and Crossman were now co-equal chiefs of the German section, but this remained unknown to most people outside a very small circle. The new arrangement, however, relieved Delmer of the necessity of having to report to Crossman, which certainly was a wise decision in regard to their opposing political views and their strong characters.

The year 1941 was therefore not only significant in that the government finally found a solution for the organisation of the British propaganda apparatus, but also in that it saw the emergence of a new concept of psychological warfare in the form of Delmer's station *Gustav Siegfried Eins*. Since at the same time Hitler attacked Russia and consequently opened a new phase of war (which finally lead to Germany's destruction), Britain was much better armed for the 'war of words' which was playing an increasingly important role.

2. The formation and structure of the *Political Warfare Executive*, August 1941 - May 1945

The 'Anderson Award' of 16 May 1941 had not solved the problem of the control of enemy propaganda, but it cleared at last the way for the establishment of a more durable and efficient propaganda organisation. On 8 August Eden, Bracken and Dalton produced a paper on the new organisation, which was given the title *Political Warfare Executive* (PWE). Its purpose was to provide unified control of propaganda by regional direction through all

⁹¹ Howe 1982, pp. 8, 19, 44, 97, 101.

⁹² PRO, FO 898/4 document, cited in Howe 1982, p. 105. See also *ibid.*, p. 97.

media, to eliminate competition and overlapping, to co-ordinate news with propaganda, and to co-ordinate propaganda policy with other departments.⁹³

The Ministers laid down in this paper that they would act as a Standing Ministerial Committee to deal with major questions of propaganda policy. The day-to-day work would be entrusted to a Executive Committee consisting of Bruce Lockhart, Rex Leeper and Major General Dallas Brooks. It was to act as a General Staff for the conduct of political warfare and its function was 'to co-ordinate and direct, in accordance with the policy of H.M.G., as laid down by the Foreign Secretary, all propaganda to Enemy and Enemy-Occupied Territories'.⁹⁴ The Executive Committee would conduct political warfare through an organisation formed by an amalgamation of the Foreign Publicity Division of the MoI, of the relevant sections of the BBC, and of SO1. It was charged with working out proposals for the merger of these institutions.⁹⁵

On 11 September 1941 Churchill announced the foundation of a special executive for the conduct of political warfare, but its composition and the nature of its activities were kept a secret. PWE was a secret department and communicated with the outside world on the notepaper of the PID, which was a non-secret section of the Foreign Office located at 2 Fitzmaurice Place, Berkeley Square, W.1 (this became the seat of the Secretariat of PWE and of its Military Liaison Department). When the PID was dissolved in 1943 PWE continued to

⁹³ *Political Warfare Executive. Recommendations by the Executive Committee*, 1/9/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, p. 1.

⁹⁴ *The Executive Committee's Proposals for the Organisation and Conduct of Political Warfare*, undated [August 1941], PRO, FO 898/10.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 21-6; Howe 1982, p. 50; Briggs 1995, pp. 32-3.

use its title as cover.⁹⁶ PWE was, since it was a secret organisation, financed on the Secret Service Vote.⁹⁷

When PWE was founded great confusion still prevailed about which responsibilities should belong to whom. In particular the position of the BBC and of the various intelligence bodies was unclear. A sub-committee under the chairmanship of Sir Leonard Browett was therefore charged with making recommendations for the reduction of staffs and with investigating overlapping and duplication in the respective Intelligence Services of the BBC and 'The Country'. The so-called 'Browett Report' was submitted on 7 November 1941 and led to the re-organisation of PWE and the BBC during the winter and spring of 1941/42.⁹⁸ It therefore took a few months until the final structure of PWE had been crystallised.

PWE was divided into seven regions (Germany, Italy, France, Low Countries, Scandinavia, Central Europe and the Balkans) which were each headed by a Regional Director. The German Region, which was the largest and most important one, was under the direction of Richard Crossman. When he left for North Africa in 1943 he was succeeded by Sir Duncan Wilson.⁹⁹ The Regional Directors had full responsibility for the staff of their region which produced both 'white' and 'black' propaganda. The staff for 'white' propaganda were transferred back to London in February 1942 and accommodated at Bush House, the seat of the European Services of the BBC. The staff for 'black' remained at 'The Country'. The Regional Directors were directly responsible to the Executive Committee for policy. When working either at Bush House or at CHQ they were responsible to the official

⁹⁶ Memorandum *Political Warfare Executive*, 23/12/1941, PRO, FO 898/10; Balfour 1979, p. 92; Howe 1982, pp. 1, 42, 50.

⁹⁷ *Political Warfare Executive. Recommendations by the Executive Committee*, 1/9/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, p. 3; *The Executive Committee's Proposals for the Organisation and Conduct of Political Warfare*, undated [August 1941], PRO, FO 898/10.

⁹⁸ *Political Warfare Executive. Recommendations by the Executive Committee*, 1/9/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, p. 2; Howe 1982, pp. 50-1.

⁹⁹ Richard Crossman would have liked to run British propaganda to Germany on his own, but in the field of white propaganda he was limited by Kirkpatrick and Hugh Carleton Greene, whereas in the

representatives of the Executive Committee to ‘The Country’ (Leeper) and to the BBC (Kirkpatrick).¹⁰⁰

Ivone Kirkpatrick fulfilled a central role in PWE’s structure. He was appointed as PWE’s manager for political warfare inside the BBC and should be responsible for the application of PWE’s general directives. As Manager of the BBC he became a member of the Propaganda Policy Committee (consisting of himself, Leeper and Brigadier Brooks), which advised Lockhart on policy matters, and was responsible to Lockhart for the output of those BBC European Services, which were directed to PWE’s operational area.¹⁰¹

The Regional Directors were advised by a Central Planning Committee (headed by Ritchie Calder) at Woburn, which had the function of working out plans for propaganda operations on the instruction of the Executive Committee, and of analysing and supervising the quality of the output of all regions. Its task was also to make suggestions on policy to the Executive Committee.¹⁰²

Intelligence played a central role in political warfare, since the propagandists had to know intimately their target country and its population and therefore needed the latest, fullest, and most accurate information. The ‘Browett Report’ proposed that Intelligence should also be organised on a regional basis, since ‘propaganda analysis and target research are of little use unless in the closest touch with propaganda policy and its execution’. It

field of black propaganda Sefton Delmer had the say. Balfour 1979, p. 95; Howe 1982, pp. 54-7, 103 footnote 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Report of Sub-Committee* [Browett Report], 7/11/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, p. 5; *Proposed Action on Sub-Committee Report*, 21/11/1941, PRO, FO 898/10; Undated agenda, PRO, FO 898/10; Draft plan by Rex Leeper for the Political Warfare Executive, 28/8/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, p. 1; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 32-3; Howe, p. 51.

¹⁰¹ *The Executive Committee’s Proposals for the Organisation and Conduct of Political Warfare*, undated [August 1941], PRO, FO 898/10; *Functions of Mr. I. Kirkpatrick*, 28/2/1942, PRO, FO 898/10.

¹⁰² Draft plan by Rex Leeper for the Political Warfare Executive, 28/8/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, p. 1; *Report of Sub-Committee*, 7/11/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, p. 6; *Political Warfare Executive. Recommendations by the Executive Committee*, 1/9/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, p. 1; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 32-3.

further demanded that the BBC and CHQ Intelligence sections be fused.¹⁰³ The bulk of Intelligence material came from open sources such as the German Press, the *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro* (DNB) and the Daily Digest of German Broadcasts supplied by the BBC Monitoring Service. Other information was derived from the interrogation of prisoners of war or from secret sources such as intercepted letters from the war zone, information from the Fighting Services and from SIS. Secret Intelligence material was used especially by the ‘black’ broadcasters.¹⁰⁴

Bruce Lockhart, chairman of the Executive Committee, was responsible for the whole work of PWE and for keeping in touch with the Foreign Office, which remained the final arbiter on all matters affecting the relation of propaganda policy to the foreign policy of the government.¹⁰⁵ Rex Leeper was in charge of ‘The Country’ and its secret activities. Since propaganda must be linked with strategy, close liaison with the Fighting Services was required. Dallas Brooks therefore commanded the Military Wing and was responsible for liaison with the Chiefs of Staff, the Joint Intelligence Committee, and the Fighting Services in general.¹⁰⁶ The Liaison Sections of PWE were responsible for liaison with the MoI, the MEW, MI5 (counter-espionage) and the Secret Service.¹⁰⁷

In February and March 1942 a major re-organisation of PWE took place. The Ministerial Committee itself had not been a success, for even after the foundation of PWE rivalries between Dalton and Bracken continued. Bruce Lockhart therefore urged for the abolition of the Ministerial Committee since it would never work without difficulties ‘even if composed of angels’. And this it was certainly not. He proposed a committee of two ministers as a

¹⁰³ *Report of Sub-Committee*, 7/11/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, p. 8.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8; *Proposed Action on Sub-Committee Report*, 21/11/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, pp. 2-3; Balfour 1979, p. 100; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 59-67; Mansell 1982, pp. 159-60.

¹⁰⁵ *Political Warfare Executive. Recommendations by the Executive Committee*, 1/9/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 31; 57-8.

compromise, since a single minister was politically impossible. In his eyes it would have been the best solution to transfer all control to the Foreign Office.¹⁰⁸ Since Dalton could not be dismissed, Churchill promoted him to the Board of Trade. Dalton reluctantly left the MEW in February 1942. His successor, Viscount Wolmer (later Earl of Selborne) did only inherit the responsibilities for subversion (SOE), not those for propaganda. The responsibilities of political warfare were assumed, as to policy by the Foreign Secretary, and as to administration, by the Minister of Information.¹⁰⁹

The Executive Committee was also abolished and single executive power vested in Bruce Lockhart, who, as Director General of Political Warfare, became solely responsible to the Ministerial Committee of two on all aspects of PWE work. He thus became ‘the nearest thing to a propaganda chief that Britain ever achieved in the Second World War’.¹¹⁰ Bruce Lockhart was assisted by a Propaganda Policy Committee consisting of himself as chairman, Rex Leeper, Brigadier Dallas Brooks, and Kirkpatrick. The function of this committee was advisory only. Leeper was responsible to the Director General for the work and administration of ‘The Country’ and also advised on propaganda policy. Brigadier Brooks became adviser on strategy and responsible to Lockhart for relations with the Fighting Services and for the administration and establishment of Headquarters Staff. As PWE Director in the BBC, Kirkpatrick was responsible to Bruce Lockhart for the output of the BBC’s European Services. The Regional Directors were responsible for their general

¹⁰⁷ *Political Warfare Executive. Recommendations by the Executive Committee*, 1/9/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, p. 2; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 32-3.

¹⁰⁸ Aide-Memoir by Bruce Lockhart, 4/3/1942, PRO, FO 898/10.

¹⁰⁹ *Political Warfare Executive. Re-organisation*, 23/3/1942, PRO, FO 898/10; Balfour 1979, pp. 92-3; Mansell 1982, pp. 73-4; Cruickshank 1977, p. 34; Briggs 1995, p. 379.

¹¹⁰ Mansell 1982, p. 72.

functions to Lockhart, for their work at CHQ to Leeper, and for their work in the BBC to Kirkpatrick.¹¹¹

These new arrangements were retained until the end of the Second World War, when PWE was dismantled immediately in the course of demobilisation. Although even the foundation of PWE had not been able to eliminate all rivalries and inefficiencies prevailing in the British propaganda apparatus, it was an important achievement which greatly enhanced the power and sophistication of British propaganda. Yet British propaganda never became as centralised as its German counterpart. Bruce Lockhart was anything but a dynamic leader in shaping propaganda policies of PWE, and it was therefore possible for sub-ordinate propagandists to seize the initiative.¹¹²

There was one important reason why Duff Cooper, Dalton, Eden and Bracken were jockeying for the control of propaganda. It was largely political: they hoped that the war-time command of the propaganda machine would secure them personal influence and a strong position in post-war Britain. Propaganda at that time still enjoyed the mystique which had surrounded it during the First World War, and the control of it seemed still very much worth fighting for.¹¹³ There was yet another reason: the control of propaganda became the subject of rivalries between Labour and Conservative politicians. This is well documented in a letter by Bruce Lockhart to Eden:

[...] The Labour Party have a strong interest and a strong belief in political warfare and have a claim to be represented on PWE. They are determined that Mr Bracken, whom they describe as 'the Tory thug', shall not have control.

They would be content if you were to assume full responsibility with a Parliamentary Under-Secretary to run PWE for you.

They do not want a Committee of Three. If you do not wish to accept this task, they would like a separate Ministry with a separate Minister.

¹¹¹ *Political Warfare Executive. Re-organisation*, 23/3/1942, PRO, FO 898/10; *Re-Organisation of PWE*, 28/2/1942, PRO, FO 898/10; Mansell 1982, pp. 72-4; Howe, pp. 51-2; Cruickshank 1977, p. 51.

¹¹² For the criticism of Bruce Lockhart see Cruickshank 1977, pp. 183-4.

¹¹³ Howe 1982, pp. 52-3.

These views, I imagine, are sponsored by Dr. Dalton. [...] But I am told that opposition to Mr. Bracken is strong, and that Major Attlee, who has been shown copies of Mr. Bracken's letters to Dr. Dalton, will represent this opposition to Mr. Churchill. [...]¹¹⁴

In the end it was the 'Tory thugs' at the Foreign Office and Ministry of Information that won the battle. Dalton was promoted to the Board of Trade. 'He could not be kicked out but he could be kicked upstairs.'¹¹⁵ From then on Eden and Bracken, both Conservatives, divided their tasks regarding PWE.

3. British radio propaganda under the guidance of PWE

3.1. The re-organisation of the BBC's German Service in 1941/42 and its relations with PWE

Shortly after the foundation of PWE the BBC's European Services underwent a fundamental re-organisation during the autumn and winter of 1941/42. Department EH/SO1, and in particular Crossman, had long been critical of the German Service, and a good many critics also came from outside. Most criticism referred to the lack of co-ordination between news and talks on the one hand and features on the other, but also to the low quality of the German programmes, which, resulted from bad organisation.¹¹⁶ Even before the foundation of PWE an internal SO1 report described the appalling working conditions of the BBC's German Service and demanded complete re-organisation.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Bruce Lockhart to Eden, 6/3/1942, PRO, FO 898/10; The Foreign Office also had a strong interest in the control of propaganda. Bruce Lockhart wrote to Eden: 'As the war progresses the importance of broadcasting into Europe, which the Foreign Office now controls, will become more evident, and control once abandoned is not easily regained.' Bruce Lockhart to Eden, 4/3/1942, PRO, FO 898/10.

¹¹⁵ Balfour 1979, p. 92.

¹¹⁶ Mansell 1982, p. 156.

¹¹⁷ *Existing Conditions of German Broadcasting*, 6/6/1941, PRO, FO 898/182.

Kirkpatrick, the Foreign Adviser of the BBC, was appointed Controller (European Services) after the foundation of PWE. He argued that the key to improving the effectiveness of the European Services was to create a central command for policy which would be more willing to follow PWE's instructions than in the past. What was needed was a regional pattern of organisation which would roughly coincide with that of PWE. The European Services should also be detached from the rest of the Overseas Services, since they had to fulfil special tasks during the war. On 9 October 1941 a new European division was announced by the Director-General and Kirkpatrick was made its Controller. The European Service came under policy control of PWE, while the Overseas Service continued, with greater freedom, to broadcast to the rest of the world.¹¹⁸

Kirkpatrick began to dismantle the complicated functional structure of the European Services and to replace it by a regional organisation. Noel Newsome, the European News Editor, was made Director of European Broadcasts and became responsible for conveying PWE instructions to the staff by means of internal BBC directives. The Regional Editors, who headed the individual language sections, were responsible to him for the output of their respective sections. At a weekly meeting between the BBC's Regional Editors and the Regional Directors of PWE the directives drawn up by the PWE Regional Directors were discussed.¹¹⁹

The German Features Unit under Walter Rilla, which had conducted an independent existence, was also re-organised. In September 1941 Rilla was replaced by Marius Goring, who was put in charge of all German programme production. The German News Editor,

¹¹⁸ Mansell 1982, p. 83; Balfour 1979, p. 94; Briggs 1995, p. 312; *War Cabinet. Broadcasting Committee. Broadcasting to Foreign Countries. Memorandum by the Minister of State*, 19/4/1945, PRO, FO 898/41, p. 3.

¹¹⁹ *Rough Scheme of BBC Co-ordination under PWE*, 22/8/1941, PRO, FO 898/41; Mansell 1982, pp. 84-5, 155-6; Balfour 1979, p. 94; Briggs 1995, p. 380.

Hugh Carleton Greene, became German Regional Editor and was put in charge for the whole of the German output, including news.¹²⁰

Kirkpatrick played a key role in the relations between PWE and the BBC. As PWE Controller in the BBC he was responsible to the Executive Committee for the sections of the BBC concerned with propaganda to PWE's operational area. Newsome was responsible to Kirkpatrick for the co-ordination of the output of the Regions, but the Regional Editors were free to select and present items for news bulletins within the general framework laid down by him. The Regional Directors of PWE, on the other hand, had to obtain Kirkpatrick's approval before sending their weekly directives to the Executive Committee and the BBC Regional Editors. Any differences between the European News Editor or the Regional Editors of the BBC, and the Regional Directors of PWE had to be resolved by the Controller and in the last resort by the Executive Committee.¹²¹

Although the Regional Directors were responsible for ensuring that the BBC output conformed with PWE policy, they had no authority to give orders to the corresponding BBC Regional Editor, but had to put them through the Controller or his deputy. Newsome was often accused by PWE of disregarding their directives in the daily ones which he issued to his staff. Kirkpatrick had also to prevent Newsome from imposing his own ideas on the German Service.¹²²

During the first months Kirkpatrick bitterly complained that the Regional Directors of PWE ignored him and passed on instructions to the Regional Editors of the BBC without consulting him. 'The Regional Directors appear to think that they are dictators in charge of the BBC staff of the regions. They may be right on this count, but it makes orderly staff

¹²⁰ Mansell 1982, pp. 81, 84-5, 155-6; Balfour 1979, p. 94; Pütter 1986, p. 85.

¹²¹ *Mr. Kirkpatrick's Functions*, 23/9/1941, PRO, FO 898/10; *Functions of the Regional Heads in Relation to their BBC Work*, 23/9/1941, PRO, FO 898/10; *Mr. Kirkpatrick's Functions*, 14/9/1941, PRO, FO 898/41; *Political Warfare Executive. Recommendations by the Executive Committee*, 1/9/1941, PRO, FO 898/10, p. 3; Cruickshank 1977, p. 33; Mansell 1982, p. 74; Balfour 1979, p. 94.

administration out of question.¹²³ Much of the tensions between the BBC and PWE also resulted from the antagonism between Kirkpatrick and Leeper. Kirkpatrick refused to carry out PWE policies and Leeper's staff did not recognise Kirkpatrick's authority in the BBC:

What ought to have been a marriage has, in fact, been an attempted rape, and Mr. Kirkpatrick, so far from being a willing victim, has put a barbed-wire entanglement around his defences. Policy has suffered from an internecine warfare which might well be entitled 'No time for Hitler'.¹²⁴

Despite the re-organisation of the BBC initiated by him, Kirkpatrick was never able to achieve the degree of centralised control which he had aimed for. The strong personality of Hugh Carleton Greene prevented the German Service from being taken over by PWE. Kirkpatrick himself, although a Foreign Office official, also became a defender of the BBC's independence. The position of the European Service was further strengthened when Bruce Lockhart invited Kirkpatrick to become a member of the Propaganda Policy Committee of PWE in 1942 where he became directly involved in the formulation of propaganda policy at the highest level. The German Service was far from simply carrying out PWE directives, for the editorial staff insisted on their right to argue about the content of particular PWE directives. The European news editors enjoyed a relative freedom in writing their news, as long as they followed the policy laid down by Newsome's daily directives. They wrote to produce an impact on the audience and were only subject to a general policy control, whereas all the Home News had to be approved by the War Office which had a negative impact on their quality. The degree of freedom and initiative in the European Service

¹²² Balfour 1979, p. 95.

¹²³ Memorandum by Kirkpatrick on the position of Regional Directors, 4/12/1941, PRO, FO 898/41, p. 3.

¹²⁴ Bruce Lockhart to Eden, 16/2/1942, PRO, FO 898/10; see also letter from Bruce Lockhart to Eden, 20/2/1942, PRO, FO 898/10.

generated energy and stimulated imagination which had a positive effect on the quality of the programmes.¹²⁵

Although PWE directives were in theory binding on the BBC, in practice the BBC was often forced to depart from what had been agreed because daily news rarely respected weekly directives. Since the BBC broadcast directly on a large scale it had to handle the news immediately as it came through and could not wait until it received instructions from PWE. It was also a matter of pride to all BBC staff to get the news on the air in the briefest possible time after it had been collected at the Central Desk from Newsome. It was impossible for PWE to control Newsome's directives and daily news conferences, and PWE therefore had no part to play in the selection and presentation of news.¹²⁶ But since PWE staff concerned with 'white' propaganda were moved from Woburn to the European broadcasters in Bush House in February 1942, it was also possible to discuss urgent changes to central directives informally.¹²⁷

3.2. The 'black propaganda empire' of Sefton Delmer

Under Sefton Delmer, who arrived in Woburn shortly before the foundation of PWE, the work of the clandestine radio stations was completely re-organised. He not only introduced a new concept of black propaganda, he also managed to operate quite independently from PWE. 'Black' propagandists were much less restricted than their 'white' colleagues because their output did not bear the signature of the British government. Delmer created his private 'black' propaganda kingdom at Woburn, where he became very much his

¹²⁵ Kirkpatrick to Bruce Lockhart, 22/11/1941, PRO, FO 898/10; Mansell 1982, pp. 85-7, 91-2; Briggs 1995, pp. 14, 383-4; Kirkpatrick to Bruce Lockhart, 22/11/1941, PRO, FO 898/10.

¹²⁶ Briggs 1995, pp. 34, 381-2; Mansell 1982, p. 89; Balfour 1994, p. 140.

¹²⁷ Mansell 1982, pp. 79-80, 89, 116; Balfour 1979, p. 94; Balfour 1994, p. 141.

own ruler. He emerged as a major personality in the secret department, and PWE never intended to put anyone in charge to control him.¹²⁸

The success of the ‘black’ radio stations depended largely on Delmer’s inspiration. ‘Delmer was the nearest thing to a genius which PWE produced. In fact, in his particular line he *was* a genius.’¹²⁹ His own intimate experience of Germany and the Germans was a very important factor. He had been brought up in Berlin, the son of Australian parents, and after the family had returned to Britain in 1917 he continued to spend most of his school holidays in Germany. Later he worked as a foreign correspondent for the *Daily Express* in Berlin and personally met many of the leading Nazi personalities including Hitler.¹³⁰

At Woburn, Delmer had several small teams consisting of native German script-writers and broadcasters. They were accommodated in requisitioned private houses in the surrounding area. These houses were known by letters such as ‘LF’ (Larchfield), or ‘RAG’ (The Rookery, Aspley Guise), and their inhabitants were put under the control of a British ‘Housemaster’ who supervised their life and work. He ensured that his charges obeyed the rules, supplied his team with intelligence material needed for their scripts, edited the scripts and ensured that when the recordings were made they followed the authorised version.¹³¹

For security reasons the secret stations were referred to in writing or speech only as ‘Research Units’ (RUs) or by the initials of their houses. In addition, each station was identified by a letter denoting the language in which it worked and a number to distinguish it from other similar language RUs. G.3 thus stood for *Gustav Siegfried Eins*, G.9 for *Deutscher Kurzwellsensender Atlantik* and *Soldatensender Calais*, which were Delmer’s largest and

¹²⁸ Cruickshank 1977, p. 102; Howe 1982, p. 181.

¹²⁹ Robert Walmsley, a former PWE member, in a letter to Ellic Howe, 15/8/1973, cited in Howe, p. 95.

¹³⁰ Delmer 1962, p. 14; Howe 1982, pp. 98-9; Seth 1969, p. 56.

¹³¹ Edward Halliday, *Note on the Operation of PID Research Units*, 4/10/1945, PRO, FO 898/51, p. 1; Cruickshank 1977, p. 103-4; Howe 1982, pp. 81, 98, 112; Pütter 1983, pp. 120-1.

most important stations.¹³² Only a small number of people were allowed to know of their existence and the nature of their activities. Even members of the RUs were not informed about the existence of other RUs. The RUs worked independently from each other and their personnel were housed under conditions of great security. Visits were restricted to people with whom they discussed their work, and their names had to be on an approved list. RU staffs were not allowed to answer the telephone and the door or to talk to local people.¹³³

The purpose for this was on the one hand to give each RU the impression that it was unique and was alone enjoying the facilities afforded by the British government to state its case to its countrymen. On the other hand, it was realised that segregation would prevent conscious or unconscious copying of technique and ideas which might have enabled listeners to spot that the stations were under the same management. The times at which the RUs visited the recording studios were therefore carefully chosen and regulated in order to prevent the teams from seeing each other.¹³⁴

The recording centre for black broadcasts was known as ‘Simpson’s’. This was Wavendon Tower, a large house in the rural village of Wavendon, which was equipped with four recording studios. The speakers with their scripts were taken there by car under strict security precautions. At first the RUs used two short-wave transmitters near Woburn, but they were supplemented in 1943 by a high power medium-wave transmitter.¹³⁵

¹³² *Gustav Siegfried Eins, Deutscher Kurzwellensender Atlantik and Soldatensender Calais* were not Delmer’s only ‘black’ stations, it is, however, impossible to describe all of them in the framework of this thesis. The stations dealt with have been chosen because each of them marked a new development in the history of ‘black’ broadcasting and because they were the most widely known stations.

¹³³ *Special Standing Orders at CHQ*, 26/7/1941, PRO, FO 898/51; Edward Halliday, *Note on the Operation of PID Research Units*, 4/10/1945, PRO, FO 898/51, p. 1; *Interview with Peter W.*, IWM, disk no. 7278/5/4; Cruickshank 1977, p. 103-4; Howe 1982, p. 82; Pütter 1983, p. 121.

¹³⁴ Edward Halliday, *Note on the Operation of PID Research Units*, 4/10/1945, PRO, FO 898/51, p. 1; *Special Security Precautions for Research Units*, 26/7/1941, PRO, FO 898/51; Cruickshank 1977, p. 103.

¹³⁵ Howe 1982, p. 78-82; Cruickshank 1977, p. 103.

As a rule transmissions were recorded, but when urgent news demanded an immediate broadcast, special permission to transmit live had to be obtained by the security officer and the Director of the region in question. The Director, or his deputy, also had to be present during a live transmission.¹³⁶ Security and censorship reasons led to the decision to broadcast only pre-recorded material. Live transmissions would have required ‘switch-censors’ (which were later employed for G.9), whereby a censor controls a switch between the speaker and the transmitter, and cuts off broadcasts when objectionable material is being spoken. But this method was rather ineffective because it could be too late when the censor realised a deviation from a script.¹³⁷

In the spring of 1941 SO1 worked out a scheme for broadcasting on enemy and enemy-controlled wave-lengths. The scheme involved the purchase of an existing 500-kW transmitter, called ‘Aspidistra’, in America and was approved by Churchill on 17 May 1941. Although it had not been intended in 1941 to use the transmitter for black transmissions it was Delmer who eventually ‘acquired’ the transmitter for his purposes. The transmitter, which was one of the most powerful broadcasting instruments in the world, was not put under the control of the BBC but of the secret department in Woburn. At that time Department EH had no control over the BBC’s European Services and was hardly represented inside the BBC. The purchase of ‘Aspidistra’ led to many inter-departmental squabbles between the BBC, the MoI, the Air Ministry, and the Wireless Telegraphy Board, which finally decided in favour of PWE.¹³⁸ ‘Aspidistra’ was located in the Ashdown Forest near Crowborough in Sussex, but no broadcasts were made there. Instead, direct lines connected the transmitter with the BBC (which was supposed to use the transmitter to

¹³⁶ Note by Bowes-Lyon, 22/1/1942, PRO, FO 898/51; Edward Halliday, *Note on the Operation of PID Research Units*, 4/10/1945, PRO, FO 898/51, pp. 1-2; *Report on the Operation of RU’s*, 11/10/1943, PRO, FO 898/51, Part III, pp. 2-3.

¹³⁷ Edward Halliday, *Note on the Operation of PID Research Units*, 4/10/1945, PRO, FO 898/51, p. 2; Cruickshank 1977, p. 104.

¹³⁸ Howe 1982, pp. 156-9; Cruickshank 1977, p. 104.

reinforce its external services when it was not required for PWE's special purposes) and with PWE's new studios at Milton Bryant (which were called 'MB' for cover purposes).¹³⁹

Deutscher Kurzwellensender Atlantik, Delmer's most ambitious project which was started in the spring of 1943, was to broadcast exclusively live owing to the character of the station, and therefore needed more space, time and facilities than were available at 'Simpson's'. For this reason Delmer's team was moved in February 1943 into the newly-built recording studios at MB.¹⁴⁰

When Delmer launched *Gustav Siegfried Eins* in the spring of 1941, his small team had plenty of imagination but insufficient first-class intelligence material upon which to base their inventions. This improved when Max Braun, a German refugee, was recruited, whose task became to read even most obscure local German newspapers with great care. He initiated a huge card index which contained the names and other particulars of thousands of Nazi Party functionaries and ordinary Germans. Delmer now began to set up his own intelligence section. Because of his high consciousness of security and discretion he was able to gain the respect of the Director of Naval Intelligence and other senior personalities of the intelligence sector and was able to ignore PWE's Directorate of Intelligence because he had his own alternative - and more effective - lines of communication. The Naval Intelligence Directorate (NID) at the Admiralty was the first of the major intelligence directorates to realise the usefulness of Delmer's in the war against the German U-boats, and from 1943 onwards his organisation could be described as one of the NID's operational outposts. The RAF Intelligence Directorate began to employ him a little later.¹⁴¹ From 1943 Delmer had at MB his own aerial photographic interpretation section (for the evaluation of pictures of bombed areas in German towns), a radio monitoring service, a direct telephone

¹³⁹ Delmer 1962, pp. 79-80; Briggs 1995, p. 387; Howe 1982, p. 161.

¹⁴⁰ *Report on the Operation of RU's*, 11/10/1943, PRO, FO 898/51, Part III, p. 3; Howe 1982, pp. 178-9; Delmer 1962, pp. 79-80.

line to the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre and a *Hellschreiber* (a wireless teleprinter receiving set) to receive the DNB press releases and routine Propaganda Ministry directives at the same time as they were received by German newspapers. Delmer's intelligence section was so highly efficient and staffed with such able individuals, that Delmer was sometimes accused of having had unauthorised access to top secret material.¹⁴²

Delmer's staff increased tremendously for the operation of G.9. Apart from his old staff from *Gustav Siegfried Eins* he received additional staff and, above all, a large number of German prisoners of war who had been carefully selected by PWE. Captured officers from German U-boats were of particular value since they knew the latest U-boat jargon and could provide detailed descriptions of the local topographies of the U-boat bases and other minor details. Individuals from the *Luftwaffe* and *Wehrmacht* were also recruited for Delmer. The campaign against the U-boats could thus be based on an intimate knowledge of every aspect of life at sea which was derived from an increasingly skilled interrogation of captured U-boat men.¹⁴³

It was this professionalism of the organisation and programmes of Delmer's 'black' radio stations, which made them so successful in gaining a large audience, for they obviously hit exactly upon the taste of the German soldiers and population.

¹⁴¹ Howe 1982, pp. 113-14; Delmer 1962, pp. 50, 66-70; Seth 1969, pp. 66-8.

¹⁴² Delmer 1962, pp. 90-1, 96; Howe 1982, pp. 178-80.

¹⁴³ Howe 1982, pp. 179-80.

Part Three:

Objectives and Strategies of British Radio Propaganda

1. Aims, propaganda policy and programme structure of the BBC's 'white' propaganda

1.1. The BBC as the official voice of the British Government: target audiences, objectives and propaganda policy

The BBC's broadcasting to Germany was probably the most difficult and unrewarding of all its activities during the war. Nazi Germany presented a special problem to the propagandists: the problem of the totalitarian state. During the years preceding the war the Nazis had monopolised all channels of communication with the intention of eliminating information undesirable to their regime. Nazi control of the media (press, books, films, newsreels) was almost complete. The only medium of which the Nazis did not possess absolute control was radio, since jamming generally proved ineffective against incoming broadcasts; yet the sale of the cheap *Volksempfänger* (People's Radio Set) was aimed at restricting the reception of foreign stations. Physical communication with the Germans was therefore difficult, but psychological communication presented an even more complex problem. The Third Reich was a police state in which all aspects of life were supervised by state agents (*Gestapo*, *Sicherheitsdienst* and others). The Nazi policy of *Gleichschaltung* had eliminated open opposition against the regime which could have been an effective target of the propagandists.¹⁴⁴

As a consequence a large majority of Germans had become politically disinterested. The excessive use of propaganda by the Nazis had made them immune to any attempts to influence them politically, which meant that British propaganda had to be very different from Nazi propaganda in order to make any impression at all. Those who did listen

obviously distrusted the Nazi propaganda, but at the same time many remained sceptical of the voice of the enemy.¹⁴⁵

All these factors made it very difficult for the BBC to convey its message to the German people. The BBC's primary task was to present the policies of the British government and the British point of view on the war. Especially during the first two years of the war, when Britain was suffering one defeat after another, this was very unrewarding. The only way to get an audience in Germany was therefore to provide the Germans with accurate information which was being withheld from them by their own news service. But at the same time the supply of news could be used for propaganda purposes:

Our propaganda is not meant to entertain, enlighten or amuse the Germans. It exists not for their benefit, but for our own. It must, of course, be attractive ('mit Speck fängt man Mäuse'). [...] It must depress as well as impress. It must promote despair, and yet leave room for hope. [...] We must tell them that we and our Allies are, of course, fighting for ourselves, but that we are also fighting for a new European order.¹⁴⁶

Two overriding principles - truth and consistency - formed the basis of all BBC propaganda: 'Do not say anything which you do not believe to correspond with the facts as known to you; and secondly, do not say anything to one country, or audience, which is or looks inconsistent with what you are saying to any other country or audience.'¹⁴⁷ The BBC realised that many people were listening to programmes which were not explicitly intended for them because they were likely to be suspicious of propaganda. A good deal of cross-listening went on, therefore, in Europe, so that listeners would check what was said on the BBC Home Service and compare it with what was said on the German Service and on other

¹⁴⁴ Lerner 1971, pp. 131-3.

¹⁴⁵ Memorandum by F.A. Voigt, 31/5/1940, PRO, FO 898/3, pp. 10-11; Mr. Turner, *Reflections on British Propaganda in Germany*, 3/4/1940, PRO, FO 898/3, p. 1; Lerner 1971, pp. 134-5; Fraser 1957, p. 96.

¹⁴⁶ Memorandum by F.A. Voigt, 31/5/1940, PRO, FO 898/3, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ Fraser 1957, p. 89.

foreign language services. Inconsistencies had to be avoided as they were likely to reduce the credibility of both services.¹⁴⁸

The BBC's objective during the first years of the war, when the Allies were on the defensive, was to build the greatest possible audience in Europe. It was hoped that the early catastrophes could be survived and that the tide of the war would eventually turn in favour of Britain. No attempt was therefore made to deny or minimise early disasters. They were openly admitted as if they were derived from the enemy Headquarters itself. But it was always stressed that the present German successes could make no difference to the ultimate end: the victory of the Allies. In reporting truthfully Britain's defeats as well as her successes, the BBC gained considerable credibility, which indicates the reason for its popularity during the later stages of the war.¹⁴⁹

However, the BBC was often criticised by the government for broadcasting news disadvantageous to Britain. The BBC always held that once a foreign news agency had published a piece of information it would endanger the credibility of the BBC if it did not refer to it in its own news bulletins. Accuracy and comprehensiveness therefore were the characteristics of the BBC wartime news. When it happened that wrong information was broadcast, it was corrected with apologies as soon as it was discovered.¹⁵⁰

Throughout the war, the BBC and the British government disagreed about two major issues: firstly, whether to draw a distinction between Nazis and Germans, and secondly, the refusal of the government to make a clear statement of war aims. Since the BBC was the official voice of the British government, it was vital for the propagandists to be well-informed about the government's policy towards Germany. A memorandum stated in 1939: 'Propaganda is an instrument of policy; policy is an expression of purpose. There can be no

¹⁴⁸ Balfour 1979, p. 96; Briggs 1995, p. 163; Fraser 1957, pp. 92-4; Mansell 1982, p. 91.

¹⁴⁹ Fraser 1957, pp. 90-1; Mansell 1982, p. 147; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 49, 71, 101; Balfour 1979, p. 286.

useful propaganda without a clear policy, no clear policy without defined purpose.’¹⁵¹ Although there was no doubt of Britain’s determination to defeat Germany, the government refused to make definite statements of its post-war policy towards Germany. The BBC therefore felt deprived of valuable propaganda material which was regarded as vital for the conduct of political warfare.¹⁵² One observer stated in 1940:

British propaganda as an instrument of British war policy, suffers from the fact that it is not, or only to a very small degree, able to conceal its destructive character behind constructive and forward-looking aims. [...] It has few weapons for making moral conquests in enemy territory.[...] The enemy expects no good advice from his enemy; such advice only makes him suspicious. What he does expect is knowledge of his opponents will and power. [...]¹⁵³

During the first two years there were two reasons - an external and an internal one - why the British government was reluctant to state any definite war aims. The first reason was the uncertainty of Britain’s ability to win. Richard Crossman wrote on 3 November 1941:

Direct appeals, either to hope or fear, are futile in a phase of the war when Germany is winning military victories. In such a phase we must limit ourselves to the humbler task of building and maintaining an audience (i.e. saying things which interest them) and at the same time depressing and dismaying them by indirect means. [...]

Some of our critics want us to adopt the direct appeal to fear. But you cannot threaten a man successfully unless you can back your threats with action at least as great. We are not able to do this.¹⁵⁴

The government was also cautious not to make any statements concerning the treatment of Germany because after the First World War Britain had been accused of having made promises for a new post-war world which had not been kept by the Allies. To define

¹⁵⁰ Mansell 1982, p. 90; Fraser 1957, p. 95.

¹⁵¹ Memorandum *Propaganda, Policy and Purpose*, 13/12/1939, PRO, FO 898/4, p. 1; Briggs 1995, pp. 13, 156-7.

¹⁵² Memorandum by Mr. Monahan, *War Aims in Propaganda*, 10/2/1940, PRO, FO 898/3, pp. 1-2.

¹⁵³ *Reflections on British Propaganda in Germany* by Mr. Turner, 3/4/1940, PRO, FO 898/3, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ Memorandum by Crossman, 3/11/1941, PRO, FO 898/182.

British policy towards Germany during the war would have made it easy for the Nazis to condemn British post-war plans as just another case of trickery.¹⁵⁵

The other reason was that the British government and public were divided over the question of whether or not the German people should be identified with its Nazi leadership. In 1938 it was widely expressed that the war should be presented as a war of ideas, ‘in every sense of the phrase a battle between democracy and totalitarianism, free thought and controlled thought’, and that it would be essential to make a clear distinction between the Nazi government and the German people and to stress that Germany would receive full justice after the overthrow of the regime.¹⁵⁶ Yet this view did not go unchallenged. The differences of opinion were not restricted to any political or social group but went through all strata of society. On the one side were those who were chary of not condemning the German people as a whole, on the other side were the advocates of ‘Vansittartism’, who saw National Socialism as a deeper problem of the German character and as a consequence of Prussian militarism. Their aim was to eliminate the German character as a whole.¹⁵⁷

The German Service never supported ‘Vansittartism’, and the tenor of its broadcasts during the first years of the war was that Britain was not fighting a war against the German people, but against the Nazi regime. Crossman and Greene were in broad agreement that, in contrast to government policy, it was important to encourage opposition against Hitler in Germany and to exploit every sign of disunity between the regime and the population.¹⁵⁸ A news talk by Hugh Carleton Greene in October 1941 demonstrated this attitude:

Friede mit dem deutschen Volk: jawohl! Friede mit Hitler: niemals! Friede mit irgendeinem Vertreter des Hitler-Systems: niemals! Friede mit dem Herrenklub: niemals! Friede mit den Großindustriellen: niemals! Friede mit den

¹⁵⁵ Blasius 1990, pp. 177-8; Mansell 1982, pp. 147-8; Crossman 1971, p. 331.

¹⁵⁶ Memorandum by Stephen King-Hall, *Information for Germany*, 28/9/1938, PRO, FO 898/1; Taylor 1981a, p. 273.

¹⁵⁷ Balfour 1979, pp. 312-3; Briggs 1995, pp. 348-9; Blasius 1990, p. 181.

¹⁵⁸ Balfour 1979, pp. 167-8; Briggs 1995, p. 156; Fraser 1957, pp. 95-6; Mansell 1982, pp. 88, 152; Brinitzer 1969, pp. 256-7.

Reichsmarschällen, General-Feldmarschällen, Generalen: niemals! Selbst wenn es zwanzig Jahre dauern sollte, um Hitler und seine Kriegsmaschine zu Staub zu zermalmen!¹⁵⁹

In the course of 1942, the British government, which in itself had been divided as to the attitude to be adopted towards Germany, could agree on some characteristics which a settlement with Germany must include. These were the destruction of Nazi tyranny, disarmament and the punishment of war criminals. There was, however, no intention to discriminate against Germany economically. The British policy thus did not depart considerably from the doctrine of ‘unconditional surrender’, which was announced at the Casablanca Conference on 24 January 1943. Although the Allies agreed that Germany must surrender unconditionally, this did not mean the destruction of the German people as a whole, but the aim was to eliminate Germany’s potential war power and the philosophy of hate and subjugation.¹⁶⁰

The advantage of the Casablanca formula was that it relieved the British government from the necessity of defining its war aims. But at the same time it limited the scope of political warfare, for no encouragement for the overthrow of the regime could be given, because the Casablanca doctrine included the decision not to make concessions to any alternative political group inside Germany. Crossman, Newsome and Greene were unhappy about this policy, because it made it impossible to offer any assurance about the way Germany would be treated after the overthrow of the Nazi regime. Furthermore, ‘unconditional surrender’ demanded not only the overthrow of ‘Nazism’ but also of ‘militarism’, yet the only people in a position to overthrow Nazism were themselves ‘militarists’.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ News talk by Hugh Carleton Greene, BBC German Service, 22/10/1941, NSA, disk no. 1LP0197062.

¹⁶⁰ Balfour 1979, pp. 313-6; Cruickshank 1977, p. 76; Blasius 1990, pp. 194-5.

¹⁶¹ Balfour 1979, pp. 317-20; Briggs 1995, pp. 579-80; Crossman 1971, p. 330.

During the last two years of the war the BBC was left without any positive propaganda policy. In particular it was forbidden to make any specific promises about the treatment of Germany after the war, and therefore the German Service had to resort to two themes: the inevitability of Allied victory, and the integrity and humanity of the democratic world in contrast to the corruption and cruelty of the Nazi regime. Yet this implied the just and decent treatment of Germany after surrender and was thus a positive aspect. The Germans were presented with the alternatives of unconditional surrender to Anglo-American mercy and justice, or to continued resistance.¹⁶²

Throughout the war the BBC had three main objectives. Firstly, to depress the German people and to convince them that it was hopeless to continue the war against the superior power of the Allies. Secondly, to drive a wedge between the German population and the Nazi Party and to stir up a revolt against Hitler and his associates. The third aim, however, tried to compensate for the negative implications of the first two and aimed at giving hope to the German population by pointing out the advantages of an Allied victory and stressing that Germany would receive fair treatment.¹⁶³

The first aim was to be largely achieved by broadcasting straight news items which showed up the superiority of the Allied war machine, and by stressing that Germany could not possibly win because of the inferiority of its own war machine. A basic policy was to play on the fears of the Germans and to stimulate the desire for Allied victory, which would be preferable to a prolongation of war.¹⁶⁴

The second aim essentially needed a clear distinction between 'good' and 'bad' Germans, a definition of war-guilt and a declaration of Allied war aims. It was not enough to claim that all Germans were equally responsible for what was being done by the Nazis, be-

¹⁶² Balfour 1979, pp. 411-13; Crossman 1971, p. 332.

¹⁶³ Slattery 1992, pp. 77-8.

cause then the only thing for them would be to fight to the end. It was important to give them some hope, which would make it worth while to overthrow the regime. But it was exactly this point which the government did not want to specify.¹⁶⁵ Until 1943 the BBC constantly called the German people to do something against the regime in order to prove their innocence. It would not be enough to be hostile to the regime inwardly, but the individual had to take some active steps.¹⁶⁶ In the talks series *Frage und Antwort* the German people was repeatedly called to overthrow the Nazi regime:

Kein Deutscher soll einmal sagen können, er habe nicht gewußt, worum es gehe. Hören Sie *Frage und Antwort*. [...]

Frage: Wie kann das deutsche Volk beweisen, daß es das national-sozialistische Regime nicht mehr unterstützt? *Antwort:* Das kann nur durch Taten geschehen. Und diese Taten müssen vor dem Sturz Hitlers geschehen. Ja, nachher wird es zu spät sein. Sie müssen darauf abzielen, den Sturz Hitlers herbeizuführen. Churchill hat am 10. Mai erklärt: Die Deutschen werden vielleicht daran denken, daß das schurkische Hitler-Regime die Verantwortung dafür trägt, daß Deutschland durch Elend und Mord hindurch seinem endgültigen Untergang entgegengetrieben wird. Und sie werden vielleicht auch daran denken, daß der Sturz des Tyrannen der erste Schritt zur Befreiung der Welt ist.¹⁶⁷

After the Casablanca Conference the BBC talked less about what might be done for ‘good’ Germans, but concentrated on more practical questions such as the punishment of war criminals after the war. A precise definition of a war criminal was not given, but the mass of the Germans was not identified generally with war criminals. The aim of this was to make the individual uncertain about how he would be treated after the war. The BBC’s main theme from now on was that the German people must avoid *Blutschuld* by supporting the regime further. It was stressed that the Allies would punish all war criminals, but that they would not take collective revenge: ‘Und für alle Deutschen, die keine Schuld auf sich

¹⁶⁴ Memorandum by Newsome, *Propaganda to Europe during January, February and March*, 11/1/1942, PRO, FO 898/41, pp. 1, 4; Cruickshank 1977, p. 73.

¹⁶⁵ Slattery 1992, p. 77.

¹⁶⁶ Brinitzer 1969, pp. 257-8.

¹⁶⁷ *Frage und Antwort*, BBC German Service, 16/6/1942, BBC SA, disk no. T38216; extracts of this broadcast are also in the IWM, disk no. 15025/G/G.

geladen haben, wiederholen wir die Versicherung, die der britische Lordkanzler im Namen der britischen Regierung abgegeben hat: Niemals werden wir Engländer Rache nehmen durch Massenvergeltung am ganzen deutschen Volk.’¹⁶⁸

The second and the third aims of the BBC were thus closely related. From the beginning of the war it was felt that simply to depress the Germans was not enough, but that they had to be given some kind of hope and incentive to overthrow the Nazi regime:

There is clearly a danger that our propaganda will be made to look negative and that we shall lose potential supporters among anti-Nazi Germans, the apathetic, faint-hearted and the many who according to our reports are merely praying for the quick end to the war, unless we can give a new impetus to our picture of ourselves as crusaders in the cause of European freedom.¹⁶⁹

Such a hope could be the promise of a fair post-war settlement and an ‘escape clause’ for ordinary Germans who had not committed war crimes. Propaganda should not only contribute to winning the war, but also towards solving the problems of peace thereafter.¹⁷⁰

The scope of the BBC’s propaganda was severely limited by the reluctance of the British government to state any definite war aims, and later by the Allied policy of ‘unconditional surrender’. Nevertheless, the German Service found enough ways to point out the Allied determination to win and to punish those responsible for the war. Despite the Casablanca formula the Germans were called to do something in order to remain innocent, and they were presented with a picture of the positive aspects of the democratic and humanitarian world.

¹⁶⁸ Talk, BBC German Service, 20/7/1944, IWM, disk no. 15057/F; Cruickshank 1977, p. 83; Brinitzer 1969, pp. 258-9; Blasius 1990, pp. 191, 196.

¹⁶⁹ Memorandum by Valentine Williams, 3/7/1940, PRO, FO 898/3, p. 1.

¹⁷⁰ *Political Warfare Executive. Plan of Political Warfare against Germany*, 8/1/1942, PRO, FO 898/182, p. 3; Slattery 1992, p. 78; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 83-4; Mansell 1982, p. 150.

1.2. Programme structure and propaganda techniques

One striking characteristic of the BBC's German Service was the great variety of its programmes and their extremely high quality. This was not the case from the beginning, but developed only during the course of the war, when programme techniques became increasingly elaborated and professional. The main programme types were news bulletins, news talks and commentaries, and features.

The German Service consisted of many different programmes addressed to particular groups of listeners. It started at five o'clock in the morning with the Workers' Programme presented by Patrick Gordon Walker. This programme dealt with general news and news of interest for workers, and devoted itself to reporting on the life of the independent working class in democratic countries. An important role was played by the Beveridge Plan of December 1942, which proposed a new social order for Britain. It won great popularity among British workers, although the government was not pleased about its wide publicity. A main topic of the Workers' Programme was the criticism of National Socialism and its claim to have brought a better life to the workers. The workers were called to help shorten the war by go-slow methods, although no direct appeals were made. The aim was 'to ensure that the defeatism of the German workers will be active rather than passive'.¹⁷¹ In talks the workers were called to decide against Nazism and for peace: 'Hitler will weiterkämpfen bis zum letzten Deutschen. Deutsche Arbeiter müssen wählen: für Hitler sterben oder für Deutschland leben.'¹⁷²

Other specialised programmes were directed to women, intellectuals, Civil Servants and farmers, to the German armed forces, and to Catholics and Protestants. Although the basic propaganda content was the same in all programmes, in these special campaigns the

¹⁷¹ *Political Warfare Executive, Working Plan for BBC German Broadcasts*, 18/2/1942, PRO, FO 898/182, p. 4; Lean 1943, pp. 84-6; Brinitzer 1969, pp. 201-6.

¹⁷² German Workers' Programme, BBC German Service, 4/9/1944, NSA, disk no. 1CE0000036.

themes were selected and presented so as to make the greatest impact on that particular target audience. The programmes brought information of special interest to these social groups, although it was also realised that not only the intended groups were listening.¹⁷³

By far the largest and most important part of the German Service during the war consisted of news bulletins and political commentaries. The view was taken that people who were listening through jamming and at the risk of heavy sentences did not want entertainment or speculation.¹⁷⁴ The BBC thought that straight news was the most effective propaganda weapon in a war against a totalitarian state, in which the population was starved of uncensored news and wanted to hear what had really happened. The basic principle was to give the 'truth as we see it, not from some bogus propaganda angle'.¹⁷⁵ Yet this poses the question whether objectivity exists at all. A memorandum of 1941 denied this:

The question at issue is of course not one of doctoring but of selecting news. The selection is determined by a 'professional estimate of news values', that is presumably by news editors in their capacity as connoisseurs of a political criterion and of news values. [...]

It seems moreover very doubtful whether any such thing as absolute news can be provided for any audience, even if those presenting the news are actuated only by the love of truth, and have no desire to influence the audience one way or another. Even the impersonal tape message has been produced by an individual reporter's choice of subject and of words and of emphasis. [...]

In brief, personal factors and the limits of time or space make any such thing as absolute or 'straight' news a chimera. It is obviously in the common interest to see that the presentation and necessary modification of news which cannot be 'straight' is designed to further the end of H.M.G. in the field of Political Warfare.¹⁷⁶

Great care was devoted to the news output. The BBC was most anxious that the effect of jamming was investigated and measures taken to improve the audibility of news bulletins.

¹⁷³ *Political Warfare Executive, Working Plan for BBC German Broadcasts*, 18/2/1942, PRO, FO 898/182, pp. 1, 5-6; *Memorandum, Criticism of BBC German Broadcasts*, 18/9/1941, PRO, FO 898/182, p. 2; Lean 1943, pp. 69-84; Brinitzer 1969, pp. 161-3, 172-3, 206-7; Mansell 1982, p. 160; Pütter 1986, p. 93; Briggs 1995, pp. 391-2; Slattery 1992, p. 69.

¹⁷⁴ Balfour 1979, p. 95; Pütter 1986, p. 93; Balfour 1994, p. 141.

¹⁷⁵ *Draft Reply to Mr. Newsome's Memorandum of 9th December*, 10/12/1941, PRO, FO 898/41, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

It was discovered that even intensive jamming could not render BBC transmissions inaudible if the speakers were clear and the presentation simple and straightforward. News and talks were therefore simplified in style and the pace of reading reduced. Readers with deep voices were preferred and two announcers were employed alternately in the reading of news bulletins to maintain the listener's attention.¹⁷⁷ In contrast to Goebbel's propaganda, the news bulletins of the German Service always tried to present the news as objective and impartial as possible and to 'seek to achieve in our presentation of all output a tone of calm and sober confidence which will convince any listener that we are 100 per cent certain of winning'.¹⁷⁸ As a rule, the BBC started its news bulletins with bad news, since this gave an impression of frankness and 'a bulletin that started with bad and went on with good news left a better taste in the mouth than one which did the reverse'.¹⁷⁹

Throughout the whole war, the news bulletins (from 1941 every hour) were followed by commentaries given by British personalities (Lindley Fraser, Hugh Carleton Greene, Richard Crossman, Charles Richardson and others). The peak listening hours in the evening were kept clear for general news and commentaries. A basic principle of the BBC was the strict separation between news and commentaries. Whereas the news had to be as objective as possible, the commentaries should represent the personal view of the commentator, who himself represented the views of the government. The commentaries were the real propaganda instruments, in which the British war aims (as far as they had been defined) were explained.¹⁸⁰ F.A. Voigt wrote in 1940:

The polemical effect of propaganda proper (as distinct from the news), that is to say, of the 'Sonderberichte', will be heightened if the Bulletins are always

¹⁷⁷ Brinitzer 1969, p. 145; Briggs 1995, pp. 391-3.

¹⁷⁸ Memorandum by Newsome, *Propaganda to Europe during January, February and March*, 11/1/1942, PRO, FO 898/41, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ *Political Warfare Executive. Minute of the first meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee held at the Foreign Office*, 9/4/1942, PRO, FO 898/10.

¹⁸⁰ Brinitzer 1969, pp. 59, 142; Lean 1943, pp. 87-8.

severely objective. The German listener will be more likely to feel that even if there is hatred in our propaganda, we are scrupulously careful of our facts. [...]

The Bulletins should, so to speak, be the concrete emplacements for our propaganda artillery. It should be hard concrete and of high quality. [...]¹⁸¹

All programme types were intended to appeal to the emotions of the listener, and every theme should be presented in such a way as to affect the *personal* interests of the respective target audiences (e.g. women, workers or soldiers).¹⁸² In all programmes allusions were made to fears of defeat, to the consequences of a prolonged war, to shortages of food and other essentials, to air attacks, to heavy casualties, and to the disintegration of family life.¹⁸³

The most eminent speaker on the German Service was Thomas Mann who broadcast from October 1940 until the end of the war his monthly talks *Deutsche Hörer!* (at the beginning five, later eight minutes long). They were recorded first in New York and later in Los Angeles and sent to London. These talks were intensely polemic and denounced Hitler and his regime and the disasters they brought on the German people and German culture.¹⁸⁴ Mann warned the Germans: '[...] With Hitler, peace is impossible because he is from the depths of his being incapable of peace, and because this word in his mouth is a soiled, diseased lie like every other word ever spoken by him. As long as Hitler and his regime of fire-raisers exist, you Germans will have no peace. Never! [...].'¹⁸⁵

Whereas the commentaries were obviously 'propagandistic', the features, which made up less than 10 per cent of the German output, used more subtle methods of conveying the British propaganda message, namely humour and satire. The first features, introduced in the autumn of 1940, were rather dry and boring and took the form of dramatic presentations of

¹⁸¹ Memorandum by F.A. Voigt, 3/5/1940, PRO, FO 898/3, p. 12.

¹⁸² Memorandum by Crossman, 24/9/1941, PRO, FO 898/182, p. 3.

¹⁸³ Mansell 1982, p. 150.

¹⁸⁴ Lean 1943, pp. 69-74; Brinitzer 1969, pp. 96-8; Mansell 1982, pp. 161-2. See *Deutsche Hörer!*, BBC German Service, 26/1/1943, IWM, disk no. 15034/D.

¹⁸⁵ Cited in Lean 1943, p. 72.

events of the day. From the winter of 1940/41 a new type of programme was created which was a cross between soap opera and political cabaret - satirical programmes which chronicled week by week the war experiences of typical Germans and pilloried the Nazi leaders for their exaggerations and broken promises. This was a type of programme unknown to the German listener and attracted many sympathies. It not only amused listeners, but it also showed that the BBC was well informed about everyday life in Germany.¹⁸⁶ The three most famous satirical features, which were created in the winter of 1940/41 and ran until the end of the war, were *Kurt und Willi*, *Frau Wernicke* and *Die Briefe des Gefreiten Hirnschal*.

Kurt und Willi became one of the most popular features. It was a dialogue, written in Berlin dialect, between Kurt Krüger, a naive secondary school teacher, and Willi Schimanski, his cynical friend from the Propaganda Ministry. They met once a week in a Berlin café and talked about recent political events and everyday life. Kurt believed everything that Nazi propaganda was telling the Germans, whereas Willi, who possessed an intimate knowledge of the Propaganda Ministry, deprived him of his illusions. Willi was very accurate as a figure of the Propaganda Ministry, as Goebbels himself admitted, for the feature was based on secret intelligence material. The ideas came from Norman Cameron, a Scottish poet working for PWE, and the feature was written by Bruno Adler, a well-known German writer. Both characters were played by German actors, Willi by Peter Ihle (Pseudonym: Peter Illing) and Kurt by Kurt Wendhausen.¹⁸⁷ Here is an extract of *Kurt und Willi*, which was actually broadcast before D-Day:

Kurt: Nun sag' doch mal Willi, natürlich ganz unter uns, was ist denn nun eigentlich los mit der Invasion? *Willi:* Mit welcher Kurt, mit der in der Luft oder der in Italien? *Kurt:* Ach was, ich meine natürlich mit der im Westen. *Willi:* Ach so, du kannst sie wohl gar nicht erwarten, was. *Kurt:* Offengestanden, die Spannung dauert schon so lange, daß es nachgerade eine

¹⁸⁶ Balfour 1979, pp. 95-6; Brinitzer 1969, pp. 107-12; Mansell 1982, p. 150; Briggs 1995, p. 251; Pütter 1986, p. 93; Fraser 1957, p. 97; Wittek 1962, pp. 104-8.

¹⁸⁷ Mansell 1982, pp. 152-3; Briggs 1995, p. 392; Brinitzer 1969, pp. 115-16; Wittek 1962, pp. 151-3.

Wohltat wäre, wenn endlich etwas geschähe. *Willi*: Ach nee, Kurtchen, Invasionsfieber! Auch du, mein Brutuschen!¹⁸⁸

Frau Wernicke was also written by Bruno Adler. This weekly feature was part of the Women's Programme and took the form of a monologue by a typical Berlin housewife who gossiped in rich Berlin dialect about the difficulties of daily life, of food and other shortages, the endless RAF bombing raids and other less pleasing aspects of a housewife. Her part was played by the emigrée actress Annemarie Haase. In a naive way she made fun of the Nazi propaganda and developed National Socialist arguments to absurdity. None of her stories was without propaganda implication or lacked a subversive aim:¹⁸⁹

Erst konnten sie [die Nazis] nicht genug kriegen, und nun heißt es, wir müssen uns einschränken. Na, mit dem Einschränken haben wir ja schon angefangen. In der Luft haben wir uns schon eingeschränkt. Da haben wir nicht mehr viel zu bestellen. Und auf dem Meer? Da ist auch nichts mehr zu holen. Aber wegen der Scharnhorst, da kippen wir nicht aus den Holzpantinen. Die anderen Schiffe sind sowieso schon alle futsch. Was hätte uns denn da das eine genützt! Ich frage Sie: wozu braucht der deutsche Mensch Schiffe? Was der deutsche Mensch braucht, das ist eine Festung. Und zum Glück haben wir den ganzen Kontinent, in den wir eingesperrt sind. Das ist richtig, Frau Kulicke, die Festung hat ein paar deftige Löcher abgekriegt. Zieht mächtig rein von Osten und von Süden. Und von Westen da weht so 'ne unangenehme kühle Brise 'rüber. Und wenn die von da auch noch ihre Invasion machen, dann müssen wir uns auch auf dem Land einschränken. Aber was schadet denn das, Frau Kulicke, alles dürfen wir verlieren, das Land, und das Meer und die Luft, wenn und nur unser Führer erhalten bleibt! [...]¹⁹⁰

The feature *Die Briefe des Gefreiten Hirnschal* was brilliantly scripted by Robert Lucas (Ehrenzweig) and modelled on Jaroslav Hasek's famous *Good Soldier Schweik*. The series took the form of letters which *Adolf Hirnschal* wrote from the fronts to his beloved wife Amalia in Zwieseldorf and which he read aloud to his friend Jaschke. Hirnschal (played by the Viennese actor Fritz Schrecker) was portrayed as a robust and naive character coping with the hardships and dangers of the war in Russia, which offered a sharp contrast to the bombastic claims of the official Nazi propaganda. With irony and using rich army

¹⁸⁸ *Kurt und Willi*, BBC German Service, 30/5/1944, IWM, disk no. 15056/E.

¹⁸⁹ Mansell 1982, p. 152; Brinitzer 1969, pp. 113-15; Lean 1943, p. 77.

slang he made fun of the *Etappenschweine* (base pigs) and *Parteibonzen* (Party parasites) who led a privileged and safe life while the ordinary soldiers had to risk their own lives; or he was portrayed as an all-believing and naive man who did not have any doubts of the Nazi propaganda although the events obviously proved it to be wrong.¹⁹¹

These three satirical series were not the only features broadcast on the German Service. The opportunities for undermining popular confidence in the claims of the Nazi leaders increased as the war progressed and the potential Allied military victory became clear, and the BBC fully exploited the exaggerated claims and inconsistencies of German propaganda. The weekly programme *Sefton Delmer antwortet Hans Fritzsche* was one way to show the contradictions between the Nazi propaganda and reality. Delmer regularly broadcast one or two hours after the star commentator Fritzsche had spoken on the German home radio and countered him point by point with irony and sarcasm.¹⁹²

But no programme could have been more effective in revealing the failure of the Nazi regime than the regular series *Hitler versus Hitler*. Even before the war the BBC had begun to collect recordings of Hitler's and other Nazi leader's speeches. As early as 1939 a programme was run whose technique was to signal Hitler's broken undertakings and promises by using conflicting extracts from his speeches. Hitler could thus be made to contradict himself through his own words. This was particularly effective during 1941, because Hitler had promised that the year 1941 would bring the completion of the greatest victory in history. The technique of contrasting promise and performance was used to increasing effect as the war progressed to show up the contrasts between 'then' and 'now'.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ *Frau Wernicke*, BBC German Service, 1/1/1944, IWM, disk no. 15051/F/F.

¹⁹¹ Mansell 1982, p. 159; Brinitzer 1969, pp. 117-20; Lean 1943, p. 88. See also *Hirnschal*-Letter No. 76, BBC German Service, 21/2/1944, NSA, disk no. 1CL0068802.

¹⁹² Mansell 1982, pp. 153, 157-8; Brinitzer 1969, p. 190. See the recording of *Sefton Delmer antwortet Hans Fritzsche*, BBC German Service, 14/10/1941, IWM, disk no. 15014/G/C.

¹⁹³ Briggs 1995, p. 390; Mansell 1982, p. 158; Brinitzer 1969, pp. 183-7. There is one recording in the BBC SA: *Hitler versus Hitler*, BBC German Service, 19/2/1942, disk no. LP 26375.

Despite their variety and difference in approach, all programmes had the same objective: to show the Germans that the Allies were determined to win and that the German war machine was about to collapse. Whereas news bulletins made the greatest impact on German morale by simply reporting about German losses and Allied victories (from late 1942 onwards), the commentaries pointed out why Germany was going to lose the war and called the Germans to take active steps against the criminal Nazi regime. The features, however, used humour and irony as their weapon of attack and made fun of Nazi 'values' and claims.

2. Objectives and technique of Delmer's 'black' radio propaganda

2.1. Aims, target audiences and techniques of 'black' propaganda

The purpose and strategy of 'black' propaganda was totally different from that of its 'white' counterpart. Whereas the BBC tried to convince its audience with facts and arguments of the necessity to rise against the Nazi regime, 'black' propaganda was purely subversive. It was increasingly felt that 'white' propaganda alone would not be able to weaken the German will to fight. A PWE directive of 1942 stated that

It is doubtful if any rational approach will be effective in disintegrating this unity for self-preservation [of the German people]. For even a harsh and barely tolerable statement of war aims (if one were practical) would be dismissed as only another trap like Wilson's Fourteen Points.

It is believed that the only practicable solution of this problem lies in using against the Germans the same purely psychological weapon which they employed so effectively against France.¹⁹⁴

'Black' propaganda had a few advantages compared with open propaganda which made it particularly useful for use in political warfare. A PWE memorandum stated in 1943:

'Black' propaganda is propaganda put out from a source disguised so as to cause the news and views disseminated to be readily believed by the public addressed.

¹⁹⁴ *Political Warfare Executive, Plan of Political Warfare against Germany*, 8/1/1942, PRO, FO 898/182, p. 4.

Under the cover of speaking from within the enemy countries and in the name of the enemy people or a section thereof, 'black' propaganda is able to put out news and views which, coming from the United Nations, would be suspect, but which coming from within the people among whom this news and these views gain currency to think and act in a way contrary to the interests of the German war effort. [...]

'Black' radio can put out news which H.M.G. does not want for various reasons to put out over official channels. It can put out news of such doubtful accuracy that H.M.G., speaking through the B.B.C., cannot sponsor it, but which is sufficiently plausible to be believed in the countries addressed and which will cause reactions among the public of those countries useful to the Allied war effort.¹⁹⁵

Delmer's view was that attempts to convert the Germans to rebellion against the Nazis by argument and appeal was a waste of time. He thought that it would be much more efficient to appeal to their patriotic feelings than to their reason. His propaganda was meant to be 'operational' and to influence the thinking of the Germans to make them behave contrary to the Nazi war effort.¹⁹⁶

The success or failure of 'black' propaganda depended upon how much the operator was able to identify himself completely with his target and to make it seem plausible to his audience that the station originated from within the target country. Delmer had a phenomenal capacity for penetrating the German mind and mental processes - and he had as official adviser on psychology Dr. John F. MacCurdy, Lecturer in Psychopathology at Cambridge University.¹⁹⁷ But he possessed yet another characteristic which was essential for the conduct of 'black' propaganda: he had a great sense of humour. Peter W., who worked for Delmer, later said: 'Unless you have a sense of humour, I don't think you are really useful in black propaganda, because all goes with imagination and invention.'¹⁹⁸

Owing to the nature of clandestine propaganda, the 'black' propagandists were much more autonomous than their 'white' colleagues because the British government was not offi-

¹⁹⁵ *The contribution of 'black' radio and leaflets to the Anti-U-Boat Campaign*, 16/6/1943, PRO, FO 898/67.

¹⁹⁶ Delmer 1962, pp. 40-1, 65; Howe 1982, p. 110.

¹⁹⁷ Howe 1982, p. 19.

cially responsible for their output. Nonetheless, in 1942 Delmer was heavily criticised by Stafford Cripps for the pornographic content of *Gustav Siegfried Eins*, but PWE defended him:

There is a sadism in the German nature which is quite alien to the British nature and German listeners are very far from being revolted by the sadistic content of some of these broadcasts. The official in charge of this station [Delmer] has an intimate understanding of German psychology and has only introduced coarse realism into the broadcasts in so far as it is likely to assist the subversive purpose of the station. [...] No secret, subversive organisation can operate successfully if its operations are to be limited to what the moral standards of our country would require for the work undertaken openly and in the name of H.M.G.¹⁹⁹

But on the whole, Delmer was not restricted by any British ‘moral standards’ and broadcast over the ether whatever he wanted - which was indeed sometimes aesthetically offensive.

2.2. *The objectives and programme structure of Gustav Siegfried Eins*

Gustav Siegfried Eins (GS1), Delmer’s first secret station which began broadcasting on 23 May 1941, was a genuine ‘black’ station pretending to be of German origin. It masqueraded as a station run by a dissident officer inside Germany.²⁰⁰ Delmer described the purpose of GS1 as following:

The objective of LF is subversive. We want to spread disruptive and disturbing news among the Germans which will induce them to distrust their government and disobey it, not so much from high-minded political motives as from ordinary human weakness [...].

We are making no attempt to build up a political following in Germany. We are not catering for idealists. Our politics are stunt. We pretend we have an active following to whom we send news and instructions. The purpose of this is to provide ourselves with a platform from which to put over our stuff. We

¹⁹⁸ *Interview with Peter W.*, IWM, disk no. 7278/5/4.

¹⁹⁹ *Gustav Siegfried*, [Report], 16/6/1942, PRO, FO 898/60.

²⁰⁰ Balfour 1979, p. 98; Pütter 1986, p. 112.

therefore make no attempt to provide our listeners with a political programme.²⁰¹

The broadcasts of GS1 were exclusively negative, their aim being to destroy faith in the Nazi regime by spreading rumours and to awaken a critical sense by providing the necessary material - scandal, corruption, tyranny of the Party bigwigs and crying injustices.²⁰² The broadcasts were intended equally for the armed forces and for the home front, and in particular for the traditionally conservative and nationalistic Germans. The station purported to be motivated by purely nationalistic and anti-Bolshevist sentiments and aimed at purging Germany from the enemy within. The object was to stimulate distrust of the Nazi bosses, the SS and the administration in general, and to cause friction between the Party and the Army.²⁰³

Gustav Siegfried Eins went on the air on two frequencies every hour at twelve minutes before the hour, broadcasting for twelve minutes, from 6.48 p.m. to 3.48 a.m. (prior to 1943 it broadcast every 7 minutes before the hour from 5.53 p.m. to 1.53 a.m.). The transmissions varied from one new broadcast per day to two or three per week, depending on the subversive value of the material and the degree of enemy interference. As a rule, all transmissions were from recorded material and the same broadcast was repeated every hour, so that listeners could chose the time that suited them best. This was also the most efficient method for overcoming heavy jamming. The place from which the transmissions were made

²⁰¹ Memorandum by Delmer, 8/6/1941, PRO, FO 898/60.

²⁰² *The Sender 'Gustav Siegfried I'. Report from Stockholm*, 18/6/1942, PRO, FO 898/60, p. 1; *Report on the Operation of RU's*, 11/10/1943, PRO, FO 898/51, p. 19.

²⁰³ *Report on the Operation of RU's*, 11/10/1943, PRO, FO 898/51, p. 19-20; *Gustav Siegfried*, [Report], 16/6/1942, PRO, FO 898/60.

was never stated, but GS1 consistently pretended to be a German station.²⁰⁴ In 1943 it broadcast 36.25 hours per week, which was more than the German Service of the BBC.²⁰⁵

Every broadcast began with a musical signal which was the second bar of a German folk song. The first bar ‘*Üb immer Treu und Redlichkeit...*’ (Be Always True and Righteous) was used by the German home radio; the second bar went ‘*...bis an dein kühles Grab*’ (‘...until you reach your cool grave’). Two voices were used on the station. The broadcasts were given by *Der Chef*, who was always announced by his adjutant. GS1 did not broadcast news in the traditional sense, but its broadcasts took the form of talks, each being devoted to an attack on one target only. *Der Chef* stated mysteriously at the beginning ‘49 transmits simultaneously, if possible’ and evoked the impression that he addressed his speeches to key-men of a secret organisation of military character.²⁰⁶ By this and other devices the station tried to give the impression that *Der Chef* spoke to a large organisation from which he received inside information on military and party affairs inside Germany.²⁰⁷ The listeners were intended to feel they were eavesdropping on the private wireless service of a secret organisation whose members presumably knew what the programme of the organisation was. The name *Gustav Siegfried Eins* was deliberately chosen by Delmer in order to confuse the audience. Its exact meaning remained unclear (*Geheimsender I*, *Generalstab I*, or *Gurkensalat I*?).²⁰⁸ Delmer called the speaker *Der Chef* because he had learned while

²⁰⁴ *Report on the Operation of RU's*, 11/10/1943, PRO, FO 898/51, p. 19; *The Sender 'Gustav Siegfried I'. Report from Stockholm*, 18/6/1942, PRO, FO 898/60, p. 1; Pütter 1986, p. 112.

²⁰⁵ *Report on the Operation of RU's*, 11/10/1943, PRO, FO 898/51. The BBC broadcast in 1943 between 31 and 33 hours per week, see Pütter 1986, p. 92.

²⁰⁶ In one of his regular reports on the operations of GS1 Delmer wrote cynically: ‘In addition [...] our usual cypher messages were put out to give the Decyphering Department of the Gestapo something to do and also to make them follow up the clues.’ Report on GS1, 12/12/1941, PRO, FO 898/60.

²⁰⁷ US Federal Communications Commission. Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service. Secret Special Report No. 58. 22/3/1943, National Archives, Washington D.C., cited in Howe, pp. 144-5; *Report on the Operation of RU's*, 11/10/1943, PRO, FO 898/51, p. 19; *The Sender 'Gustav Siegfried I'. Report from Stockholm*, 18/6/1942, PRO, FO 898/60, p. 1; Delmer 1962, p. 48; Pütter 1983, p. 124.

²⁰⁸ Memorandum by Delmer, 8/6/1941, PRO, FO 898/60; Howe 1982, p. 101.

travelling through Germany before the war that Hitler's inner circle spoke of him as *der Chef*. On GS1 *Der Chef* was formally announced by his adjutant, for in those days every high-ranking Nazi was invariably accompanied by an adjutant acting as his personal assistant.²⁰⁹

Der Chef appeared as a hard-hitting and judicious spokesman for national affairs. He purported to be a tough Prussian, patriotic and disgusted by the corruption and depravity prevailing in his country under the Nazi regime. In both manner of speaking and his phraseology he leaned towards the language used and appreciated by the front-line soldiers. The broadcasts did not contain a running commentary on the war. Instead they offered 'sensational' inside information. *Der Chef* seemed well-informed and his arguments were hard to refute.²¹⁰

An American Intelligence report (which indeed believed GS1 to be a German station) described in 1943 the characteristics of *Der Chef*:

The Chief is an enemy of the Nazi party, the Nazi bureaucracy from top to bottom, but above all, the SS. Interestingly, the word 'Nazi' and 'National Socialism' are never used. Instead the Chief speaks of the 'commune' which, more specifically, stands for all those 'blunderers', 'war profiteers' and 'pompous asses' of the Party who sit in decisive and responsible administrative and executive offices and by their selfishness torpedo the efforts of the homeland and the sacrificial courage of the front [...].²¹¹

Der Chef was anti-Communist and strongly supported the war against Russia but was critical of its conduct. He denounced the dark influence of the Party in the operations of the German Navy and Air Force. He had once been a supporter of Hitler but was now appalled at the corruption, godlessness, profiteering, selfishness, clique rivalries and Party-above-all

²⁰⁹ Howe 1982, p. 108.

²¹⁰ *Report on the Operation of RU's*, 11/10/1943, PRO, FO 898/51, p. 19; *The Sender 'Gustav Siegfried I'. Report from Stockholm*, 18/6/1942, PRO, FO 898/60, p. 1; US Federal Communications Commission. Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service. Secret Special Report No. 58. 22/3/1943, National Archives, Washington D.C., cited in Howe, p. 147; *Gustav Siegfried*, [Report] 16/6/1942, PRO, FO 898/60; Pütter 1986, p. 112; Pütter 1983, pp. 124-6.

²¹¹ US Federal Communications Commission. Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service. Secret Special Report No. 58. 22/3/1943, National Archives, Washington D.C., cited in Howe, p. 145.

system which the Party had established.²¹² The *Parteikommune* was GS1's blanket expression for the Nazi Party *Apparat*, meaning the vast number of individuals who were apparently exempt from military service and lived at the cost of the ordinary and patriotic Germans. *Der Chef* bitterly complained about the *Parteikommune* and all others who were leading Germany in the direction of inevitable defeat.²¹³

The party officials were described as greedy, immoral, ruthless parasitic individuals who exploited their power for selfish ends and behaved as incompetent cowards at the front - if they ever showed up. Himmler, Zeitzler, Rommel, Goebbels, Ribbentrop and SS-leader Sepp Dietrich were frequently attacked. *Der Chef* concentrated his attacks especially on the lesser-known local leaders. Hitler himself, as well as Göring, were at first exempted from any attack because many Germans identified themselves with the *Führer*. From the summer of 1942 onwards he was also attacked. GS1 seemed to be extremely well informed about inside events and major personnel changes and often released news of them weeks before the Germans themselves.²¹⁴

Delmer hoped that GS1's intriguing stories would soon be circulating among the German soldiers and the civilian population. He knew from his *Daily Express* days that the public denunciation of vices was particularly attractive to audiences. Delmer therefore used deliberately pornographic elements in these broadcasts in order to attract listeners and gain their attention for the main objects of the station (i.e. undermining confidence in the regime). In the early days of the station this element was quite strong, but later, when evidence grew that GS1 was widely listened to, it was reduced and replaced by barrack-room slang. For Delmer's recipe proved to be an immediate success. A report from Sweden

²¹² *Progress Report for the week ending 4th July, 1941*, PRO, FO 898/67; Memorandum by Delmer, 8/6/1941, PRO, FO 898/60. See also Delmer 1962, pp. 63-7.

²¹³ Howe 1982, pp. 118, 122.

²¹⁴ US Federal Communications Commission. Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service. Secret Special Report No. 58. 22/3/1943, National Archives, Washington D.C., cited in Howe, p. 145; Memorandum by Delmer, 8/6/1941, PRO, FO 898/60; Pütter 1983, p. 125.

stated that the station had become more serious in 1942 and had collected a huge audience which faithfully followed its broadcasts. Delmer always took great care not to let it seem that *Der Chef* enjoyed the details of what he revealed about the sexual excesses of Party elites. He always left the end to the imagination of the listener.²¹⁵ Here is an account of such an 'erotic' broadcast:

On the 7th a rather old-fashioned piece about the SS being put on the job of race preservation at home, helping wives and widows and sweethearts of fallen soldiers, prisoners and even soldiers unable to come on leave to have the children which their own men would have provided them with normally. A detailed account of a meeting at the Neuer Welt in Berlin when the wives and sweethearts of soldiers and prisoners from the Berlin gas works were introduced to SS men and what the SS men had to say about their adventures. The Neuer Welt entertainment did actually take place and we have the account of the Lokal-Anzeiger to give us the necessary background.²¹⁶

GS1 launched varying campaigns to spread dissatisfaction among different social groups. General corruption and Black Market Trading was to be encouraged by showing examples of high profit; desertion was to be encouraged by descriptions of the inefficiency of Gestapo and SS and of successful cases of desertion. Other campaigns were aimed at factory workers, peasants, the Air Force, the *Wehrmacht* or U-boat crews. Attacks on the morale of soldiers were usually based on reports of SS and Party officials who were having a good time far from the dangers of the front and were profiteering at the cost of the ordinary soldiers.²¹⁷

A report on GS1's output of January and February 1942 may give an impression of what was broadcast on this station in general:

²¹⁵ *Evidence that G.S.1 is thought to be in Germany*, undated [June 1942], PRO, FO 898/60; Leeper to Bruce Lockhart, 19/6/1942, PRO, FO 898/60; Report on *Gustav Siegfried*, 16/6/1942, PRO, FO 898/60; *The Sender 'Gustav Siegfried I'. Report from Stockholm*, 18/6/1942, PRO, FO 898/60, p. 1; Howe 1982, pp. 109, 116-17.

²¹⁶ Weekly Report, 12/8/1941, PRO, FO 898/60.

²¹⁷ Report on the operations of GS1, 12/12/1941, PRO, FO 898/60. There is one recorded broadcast of GS1 from July 1943 in the IWM, disk no. 15085/G/C, which deals with the battle of Catania in Sicily. *Der Chef* complains that General-Major Paul Konradt is in Berlin instead of staying with his division in Catania.

We continued our campaigns: 1) to undermine the morale of troops resting from or about to be sent back to the Eastern front; 2) to encourage desertion; 3) to undermine airforce morale; 4) to undermine naval morale; 5) to undermine factory workers' morale; 6) to cause friction between the Army and Party; 7) to cause friction between Germans and the foreign soldiers and workers collaborating with them. [...] A feature of all broadcasts was the very considerable amount of accurate or nearly-accurate factual material used.

Campaign 1 was supported with protests against i) the poor equipment of troops sent to Finland (Jan. 25th); ii) malingerers who escaped front-line service, giving full details of the methods by which they tricked the doctors (Jan. 28th); iii) troops from the Eastern Front being treated as though they were demoralised and being put into concentration camp-like training centres under SS guards (Jan. 29th); iv) wounded soldiers from the East being arrested for not saluting stay-at-home SS officers (Jan. 30th).

Campaign 2 had a special broadcast on the 7th showing that 8,493 men have successfully deserted and that the Army and Party are powerless to prevent desertion.

Campaign 3: Air Force grouses about lack of transport, fuel and planes, favouritism and difficult flying conditions were voiced on February 1st to provide pretexts for bad performance. On 4th there was a special talk on Koch, who was said to be using transport planes to carry food and loot while the army and airforce were in need of supplies. Deutschlandsender provided most satisfactory confirmation of our report that Koch had looted the Kieff godless museum by reporting on that relics had disappeared from this museum.

Campaign 4: The German passage of the channel was used to demand better training for U-boat crews to help Campaign 5 by again putting out our rumour that factory technicians who distinguished themselves by their performance were being drafted as specialists for U-boat crews.

Campaign 6 had a special broadcast on the 7th, in which we protested against the punitive transfer of Oberstleutnant von Harbou, Falkenhausen's Chief of Staff, because he had refused to promote Party functionaries. On the 17th there was a mock recruiting appeal for the SS.

Campaign 7: The anti-foreigners campaign was carried on by broadcasts on the 5th, 6th and 19th February. Directed chiefly against the Italians but also the other countries helping Germany on the military side. On the 22nd foreign workers were attacked for bringing disease into the country and eating up the food which was needed for the Germans to keep up their vital resistance to disease.²¹⁸

GS1 continued to broadcast until 18 November 1943, when Delmer decided that *Der Chef* had to die because he needed all resources and personnel for his new ambitious project, *Deutscher Kurzwellensender Atlantik*.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ *Gustav Siegfried Eins: 25th January - 22nd February 1942*, PRO, FO 898/60.

²¹⁹ Howe 1982, pp. 125-6.

2.3. *The aims and programme structure of Deutscher Kurzwellensender Atlantik and Soldatensender Calais*

On 22 March 1943 Delmer launched his second big station, *Deutscher Kurzwellensender Atlantik* which marked a new departure since it was aimed specifically at German submarine crews and worked in close conjunction with the Admiralty as a psychological weapon in the Battle of the Atlantic. The station was not a brainchild of PWE, but the result of the active intervention of the Admiralty's NID.²²⁰ Like GS1, *Atlantik* did not seek to encourage any opposition groups or to provide its audience with a political programme, but launched a series of short-term subversive attacks on the enemy.²²¹ A PWE report stated the aims of the new station in 1943 as following:

To undermine the morale of the German forces in Western Europe - particularly of the U-boat crew operating in the Atlantic - by creating alarm in their minds regarding conditions at home, by unsettling their faith in their arms and equipment and in their leaders, by rationalising bad discipline and performance of military duty, and wherever possible by encouraging actual desertion.²²²

Atlantik was followed on 14 November by *Soldatensender Calais* (renamed *Soldatensender West* after the fall of Calais to the Allies in 1944), which broadcast for the first time on the 500-kW medium-wave transmitter 'Aspidistra'. It was more or less based on *Atlantik's* formula and catered for all three military services, not only for the German Navy. Both stations broadcast a large part of their programmes together and were internally referred to as 'G.9'. G.9 was a 'grey' station in so far as it did not pretend to be operating inside the borders of the Reich, but it was left to the listener's judgement to decide whether it was an enemy station or not. A 'grey' station depended above all upon the attractiveness of its programme to obtain an audience.²²³ The name, the programme structure and the straight news items were merely used as a cover to make the audience believe that it was

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-7; Delmer 1962, pp. 70-8; Pütter 1986, p. 123; Balfour 1979, p. 98; Seth 1969, p. 68.

²²¹ Delmer 1962, p. 121.

²²² *Report on the Operation of RU's*, 11/10/1943, PRO, FO 898/51, p. 22.

listening to a genuine German Forces station or at least to make the listener feel safer and to give him an excuse in case he was caught listening. But if people listened often enough they must have picked up on the subversive themes and realised that the station was not an official Reich station.²²⁴

When Delmer set up the medium-wave station *Calais* his plan was also to reach the German civilian population which, for the most part, was unable to receive short-wave *Atlantik* broadcasts. In the struggle against the BBC over the use of 'Aspidistra' he argued that it was time to incite the Germans to take action. The BBC's task was to give straight news and represent the view of the British government, not to cause revolutionary agitation, which in any case would have been ineffective coming from the enemy's voice. The task of causing revolutionary action would thus fall to 'black' propaganda which purported to speak from inside Germany to the Germans from a German point of view.²²⁵

Deutscher Kurzwellessender Atlantik and *Soldatensender Calais* were the first black stations which offered their listeners a non-stop programme from 18.30 (later 17.30) p.m. to 8 a.m. G.9 played recorded dance music continuously, with short interruptions for 'features' and news flashes and longer news bulletins of about 15 to 20 minutes. The news bulletins, which were a novelty in 'black' broadcasting, were broadcast live, even during the night, which enabled the station to offer its listeners an up-to-the-minute news service.²²⁶ In 1943 *Atlantik* was broadcasting 94.5 hours per week, *Calais* 28 hours.²²⁷

The station tried to win the confidence and the interest of the German Services listeners by providing informative news of current events and pleasant entertainment in the form of good dance music - such as was no longer played by the German home radio. In

²²³ Howe 1982, p. 174.

²²⁴ *Interview with Peter W.*, IWM, disk no. 7278/5/2; Delmer 1962, pp. 91-2, 118.

²²⁵ Howe 1982, pp. 235-6.

²²⁶ *Report on the Operation of RU's*, 11/10/1943, PRO, FO 898/51, p. 22; Pütter 1986, pp. 121-2; Howe 1982, p. 237; Delmer 1962, p. 78.

fact, the dance music proved to be one of the main attractions of the station and secured a large audience who listened also with interest to the 'news' which was presented so differently from that of Goebbels. No other station catered so successfully for the musical taste of the average German soldier, and particular attention was therefore paid to music. It played American jazz music sung in German as well as pure German songs. G.9 exploited the fact that the younger German soldiers were starved of jazz music which was forbidden in Germany. All the music was light, and records were brought in from various countries (Germany, France, America, England).²²⁸

The news bulletins consisted of reports from the fronts, from inside Germany and from Germany's allies together with items of special interest to servicemen. A large share of 'news' was drawn from the *Hellschreiber* which delivered news straight from the official German news agencies and thus provided the station with the necessary authenticity. Other material was slightly 'doctored' for the station's subversive purposes, and some 'news' was completely invented. In addition to news a number of human interest stories and sports bulletins were included for the purpose of maintaining cover. All news was given without commentary, except the special service talks in which the attitude of the speaker was that of a man defending the interests of the ordinary serviceman. Regular 'features' included talks warning U-boat crews against incompetent and reckless commanders, naval greetings and reports of air raid damage street by street in German towns.²²⁹ The station used the current Nazi jargon when talking about the 'enemy' (the allies) and interrupted its programme when

²²⁷ *List of RU's*, undated, PRO, FO 898/51.

²²⁸ *Report on the Operation of RU's*, 11/10/1943, PRO, FO 898/51, p. 22; *Interview with Peter W.*, IWM, disk no. 7278/5/3; Howe 1982, pp. 175, 179, 186; Delmer 1962, p. 84.

²²⁹ *Report on the Operation of RU's*, 11/10/1943, PRO, FO 898/51, p. 22; Pütter 1986, pp. 123-7; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 111, 170.

Hitler or Goebbels spoke on the German home radio. G.9 picked the speeches up from the German network and relayed it on its own service.²³⁰

In item after item the station gave examples of the inequality of sacrifice between the common man and the privileged Party functionaries. Its aim was also to make the soldiers worry about what was happening to their families at home. One main theme of the station during the war was desertion. It never gave instructions on how to desert, but it did cite the cases of people who had deserted successfully explained in detail how they had managed to escape.²³¹

The station did not demand an end of the war until after 20 July 1944, when the 'peace generals' had given a 'green light' with their attack on Hitler. From then on G.9 called the listeners to avoid any useless fighting and to surrender at the earliest possible moment. The following is an extract of a naval talk from 29 April 1945:

Kameraden, wir haben eben noch mal durchgegeben, wie U-Bootsbesatzungen aus dem Schwindel herauskommen können. Wir können nur hoffen, daß möglichst viele noch von diesen Anweisungen Gebrauch machen, damit nicht noch Kameraden ums Leben kommen sechs Minuten nach zwölf, denn so weit sind wir doch. Ob jetzt ein paar Stunden früher oder später offiziell das ganze haltgeblasen wird, das macht ja keinen Unterschied. Der Krieg ist vorbei. Rund 610 U-Boote haben wir verloren bei dem Schwindel. Jetzt wollen wir wenigstens dafür sorgen, daß sich die Zahl jetzt nicht unnötig erhöht. Wir wollen aller der Kameraden gedenken, die mit diesen über 600 U-Booten von Feindfahrt nicht zurückgekehrt sind, und aller Kameraden der U-Bootswaffe, die durch Bomben umgekommen sind im Stützpunkt, und auch vor allem derer, die jetzt noch in letzter Minute sinn- und zwecklos gefallen sind in Marineeinheiten an Land. [...] Wer auch nur etwas Verstand und Verantwortungsgefühl hat, vor allem Verantwortungsgefühl, der wird nicht diesen Ehrgeiz [der letzte Gefallene dieses Krieges zu sein] haben. Der Krieg ist vorbei. Wir haben uns bei der KM mit einigem Recht immer eingebildet, wir sind besonders tüchtige Leute. Tüchtige Leute werden jetzt gebraucht. Und zwar für bessere Beschäftigungen wie U-Bootsfahren. Nämlich für den

²³⁰ Delmer 1962, pp. 91-2; Seth 1969, p. 70.

²³¹ *Interview with Peter W.*, IWM, disk no. 7278/5/2; Delmer 1962, pp. 92-5, 97. See the *Atlantik* broadcast of 21 July 1943 which reported on the battle of Sicily and said that the fighting morale of Sicilian Soldiers had suffered because the enemy offered to free all prisoners of war from conquered territory. IWM, disk no. 15087/G/E.

Wiederaufbau. Den friedlichen Wiederaufbau aus den Trümmern, die uns die Führung hinterlassen hat!²³²

In the weeks before D-Day the main objective had been to concentrate the attention of the German soldier on the enemy within (i.e. the Party) rather than on the enemy outside. After D-Day the themes were switched to the hopelessness of continuing the war, the folly of useless sacrifice, and the incompetence of Germany's leaders. The soldiers were reminded constantly of the disasters of the Eastern front, the decline of the German war production, the impotence of the Luftwaffe, the corruption of the Nazi clique and the breakdown of the authorities.²³³ Even a few days before the end of the war G.9 still tried to stir up the hatred of Party officials:

Jeder Trick ist den Parteiflüchtlingen recht, um nur über die Grenze ins Ausland zu gelangen. In der Uniform eines DRK-Helfers versuchte der Reichshandwerksmeister, SA-Obergruppenführer Ferdinand Schramm, vergeblich, an den Schweizer Grenzbeamten vorbeizuschlüpfen. Schramm saß am Steuer eines LKWs, der ähnlich hergerichtet war wie die Lastwagen des Internationalen Roten Kreuzes, die in letzter Zeit Lebensmittel für die Kriegsgefangenen im Reich hereingebracht hatten. In der Nähe von Rheineck erschien der deutsche bevollmächtigte Minister in Kroatien, SA-Obergruppenführer Siegfried Kasche, an der Schweizer Grenze komplett mit kroatischen Ausweispapieren und einem Wagen mit ovalem Schild und roten Buschstaben 'CD' des Diplomatischen Korps. Aber auch das half nichts.²³⁴

Of course, this was pure invention.²³⁵ But it sounded - and still sounds - so realistic and convincing that it is easy to imagine, even fifty years after the war, how difficult it must have been to distinguish between 'hard facts' and fabrications.

G.9 broadcast until 1 May 1945, one week before VE-Day. Then it was stopped for there was no sense in maintaining a powerful medium-wave station calling itself *Soldatensender West* at a time when the German war machine was falling to pieces.²³⁶

²³² *Naval talk*, Soldatensender West, 29/4/1945, IWM, disk no. 5203/12/3; see *G.9 Report*, 30/4/1945 (26/4/1945), PRO, FO 898/72 for the share of truth in this talk!

²³³ Cruickshank 1977, p. 169; Howe 1982, pp. 244-6.

²³⁴ Soldatensender West, 29/4/1945, IWM, disk no. 5203/12/2.

²³⁵ *G.9 Report*, 30/4/1945, PRO, FO 898/72. The file contains lists of rumours broadcast on G.9.

²³⁶ *Interview with Peter W.*, IWM, disk no. 7278/5/3.

Conclusion: How Effective was British Radio Propaganda?

At first, like any other message sent out within a communication process, propaganda may be regarded as efficient if its content is *consciously* adopted by the target audience; if, in other words, the message has been able to convince the audience with arguments (this was certainly the case with the BBC's 'white' propaganda, which was the voice of the enemy). But beyond this rational approach one has to take into account that - according to its intrinsic nature - propaganda is considered to be most perfect when it influences *unconsciously* and when the target swallows it without realising that it is propaganda. As soon as the target talks about the 'influence' of propaganda on himself it has failed in its intended purpose ('black' propaganda was intended to work in this way and to appeal to the emotions of the Germans).²³⁷ This twofold, and somewhat contradictory, way in which propaganda can influence its target makes it very difficult to assess its effectiveness.

Before examining the impact of propaganda on Germany let us consider the effects which the organisational arrangements had on its output. As has been shown, the British propaganda apparatus was in a chaotic state throughout the whole war and was characterised by rivalries among ministers and officials. It was never thoroughly organised, but an element of improvisation prevailed throughout the war. The British government never managed to establish a department with sole authority for the conduct of political warfare, although this was energetically advocated by various ministers and officials. The reasons for this were largely political. The organisation and the management of political warfare was therefore

²³⁷ Cruickshank 1977, p. 159.

less efficient than it might have been. Cruickshank saw this as a great disadvantage for the effectiveness of British propaganda.²³⁸

But this improvisational and polycratic structure may in some ways have had a positive effect on British propaganda output. Although the BBC had to follow PWE's instructions, its broadcasts to Germany were not subject to a centralised and inflexible decision-making process, but were solely the responsibility of the Regional Editors. This left the propagandists with much greater freedom to make 'good' propaganda. The same applied to 'black' propaganda. Delmer was able to establish his own more or less independent propaganda empire at Woburn, although this development had not been foreseen by those responsible for organising propaganda at the outbreak of war. Thanks to his personal contacts with the Secret Intelligence world, he was able to launch one of the most sophisticated propaganda operations of the Second World War.

An objective evaluation of the impact of British propaganda on the German audience is almost impossible, although there is a large amount of evidence from various sources. But the documented reaction has to be treated with great care, since most of it does not constitute an objective testimony but is subjective, exaggerated or not representative of the whole German population.

First of all we do not possess any reliable numbers of the German listeners during the war, neither for the BBC nor for the 'black' stations. It is known that the number was small at the beginning and increased as the war turned to the disadvantage of the Germans. From late 1942 and early 1943 onwards, after the disastrous defeats in North Africa and at Stalingrad, more and more Germans began to listen to the BBC. The number of those who listened to the BBC and to black stations increased further after the Allied invasion of France. A Gestapo report of 1941, which reached the BBC in 1943, estimated the BBC's audience at about 1 million. By the autumn of 1944 it was estimated to be between 10 and

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-85.

15 millions. Further evidence that British propaganda was listened to are the sentences imposed on Germans for *Feindhören* (listening to enemy stations), which were regularly published in the German press as a warning to the population. But they do not provide evidence for the actual numbers of listeners.²³⁹

What motivated so many Germans to listen to British radio stations though it was forbidden, and to risk their freedom and lives? On the one hand there were those who were opposed to the regime from the beginning and seized every opportunity to get uncensored information. Others were motivated by curiosity because they were increasingly feeling that the whole truth was being withheld by their own radio and press. This was openly admitted in reports of the *Sicherheitsdienst* which stated that many Germans listened to foreign stations because they reported events that were not reported on the German news services. Hess' flight to Britain, the Allied landing in Crete and the German invasion in Russia were such events which made many Germans feel uninformed about the actual facts.²⁴⁰

Technical circumstances have also to be borne in mind when assessing the number of listeners. It is unknown how many Germans were in fact able to receive short or medium wave transmissions on their radios. The 'black' stations broadcast exclusively on short wave and used medium waves only from 1943 for the *Soldatensender Calais*, whereas the BBC used both short and medium waves from the beginning. But most of the German households were equipped with the so-called *Volksempfänger*, a simple radio unable to receive short and medium waves, which was deliberately sold cheaply by the Nazis to make listening to foreign stations impossible.²⁴¹

It is tempting to measure the extent to which British propaganda was actually capable of influencing the German audience by the reactions of the German authorities. But these of-

²³⁹ Balfour 1979, p. 96; Mansell 1982, pp. 162-3; Clark 1993, p. 170; Briggs 1995, pp. 625-6; Brinitzer 1969, pp. 179-81; Slattery 1992, p. 76; Wittek 1962, p. 188.

²⁴⁰ Dröge 1970, p. 160; Clark 1993, p. 172; Briggs 1995, p. 626.

ficial responses have to be treated with great caution, since they do not prove a considerable effect of British propaganda on the German population. For one must not necessarily conclude that the more the authorities reacted the more successful the propaganda was. Although official reactions seem to be the most obvious form of evidence, they are also the most controversial, since propagandists tend to exaggerate the influence of propaganda on the ordinary human being.²⁴²

Despite these deficiencies PWE took great care to evaluate the responses of the Nazis. It derived its information about the attitudes of the Nazi government towards British propaganda from the German press and radio and from smuggled or captured documents. That the Nazis feared the influence of foreign propaganda is shown by the intensity with which the authorities devoted themselves to monitoring and analysing British broadcasts and by the measures taken against those who listened to them. As early as on 1 September 1939 a law was passed which made listening to foreign stations a crime, and heavy sentences were imposed on those who broke the law. The dissemination of information was even more severely punished.²⁴³ Heavy jamming of 'enemy' broadcasts, often at the expense of the audibility of German home radio, also indicated as how dangerous the Nazis regarded the content of British broadcasts on the morale of the German masses.²⁴⁴ The Nazis also devoted a great extent of their home propaganda to denying and answering 'the lies from London', often without revealing the source. The BBC thus managed at least to break the Propaganda Ministry's monopoly over German ears and to force it into a continuous 'dialogue'. German propaganda went more and more on to the defensive and tried to deny point by point the news items broadcast on the BBC and on 'black' stations'. The most famous example is

²⁴¹ Pütter 1986, p. 11; Hale 1975, p. 128; Clark 1993, p. 170; Slattery 1992, p. 84.

²⁴² Clark 1993, pp. 169-70; Slattery 1992, p. 76.

²⁴³ Cruickshank 1977, p. 161; Pütter 1986, pp. 24-5; Fraser 1957, p. 97; Briggs 1995, p. 166.

²⁴⁴ Memorandum by Crossman, 3/11/1941, PRO, FO 898/182; Fraser 1957, p. 98.

Sefton Delmer on the BBC and Hans Fritzsche on the *Reichsrundfunkgesellschaft*, who fought a regular battle on the ether.²⁴⁵

However, when PWE evaluated the impact of propaganda on the Germans, it did not restrict itself to these official reactions, but tried to explore all other available sources. From the beginning of the war Germans imprisoned by the British were systematically interrogated about their attitude towards British propaganda. But these testimonies often do not give a true picture of the impact of propaganda either, because many answers were given in order to please the captors. Furthermore, the men chosen for examination were not necessarily typical of the mass of the German armed forces.²⁴⁶ But despite these deficiencies the minutes of the interrogations give some idea of the extent to which British broadcasts were listened to. At the end of the war more than half of the prisoners, particularly those serving in the *Luftwaffe* and on U-boats, admitted to having listened to *Atlantik/Calais*, and many had also listened to *Gustav Siegfried Eins*.²⁴⁷

The most difficult task is to measure the influence of British propaganda on the German civilian population. Between May and December 1945 the BBC Listener Research Unit received and analysed more than 10,000 letters from individual German listeners which came from all strata of society. According to these letters the principal motive for listening was the wish to learn the truth and the real situation of the war, which were hidden by German propaganda.²⁴⁸ Of course, these letters do not represent an objective evaluation of the BBC's impact on the German population either, and many letters were exaggerated 'fan-mail' for particular BBC speakers. But yet they give an impression of what the BBC meant

²⁴⁵ Balfour 1979, p. 96; Mansell 1982, p. 163; Crossman 1971, p. 329. These 'battles' were fought in the BBC series *Sefton Delmer antwortet Hans Fritzsche*.

²⁴⁶ Cruickshank 1977, pp. 67-8, 159. The PRO file FO 898/320 contains numerous reports on interrogations of German prisoners of 1940-42.

²⁴⁷ *Report on the Operation of RU's*, 11/10/1943, PRO, FO 898/51, pp. 20, 23; Cruickshank 1977, pp. 170-1; Clark 1993, p. 169.

to a certain number of households in Germany.²⁴⁹ One has to bear in mind, however, that these letters were sent by a small minority of Germans who were mostly critical of the regime from the beginning. They do not say anything about the millions of other Germans who did not write and express their opinion of the BBC.

It is no easier a task to evaluate the specific impact of the 'black' stations. Numerous campaigns of *Gustav Siegfried Eins* and *Atlantik/Calais* had their effects on the German soldiers and civilians and often caused the authorities to deny rumours which had been spread by these stations without revealing the source.²⁵⁰ A Bavarian *Sicherheitsdienst* report of 1944, which reached PWE, stated that since October 1943 frequent references were made by the population to the *Soldatensender*. According to the report the station caused great unrest and confusion by news concerning the situation at the fronts and at home. The station enjoyed great popularity because of its news service, and was widely trusted because its reports turned out to be more or less correct.²⁵¹

Ultimately, bare listener numbers, official reactions, letters or interrogations of prisoners of war do not reveal much about the actual impact that propaganda had on its audience. What they show, in the first instance, is that British stations enjoyed a great popularity during the war. There is very little evidence to show what effect propaganda was having on those who did listen. Yet it is very unlikely that anybody who firmly supported the regime would have tuned in to the BBC. The case might be somewhat different with the 'black' stations, which pretended to be German (and thus provided a good excuse for those who listened) and which were popular among soldiers because they provided entertainment. Listening to British propaganda was one thing; however, acting upon it another. From the

²⁴⁸ BBC Listener Research Unit, *Measuring - and holding - the BBC Audience in Germany and Austria*, 6/12/1945, PRO, FO 898/41, p. 1.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁵⁰ Cruickshank 1977, p. 170.

evidence available it seems that both 'white' and 'black' propaganda failed in their intended purpose of demoralising the German people, of driving a wedge between the Nazi clique and the population and of making it act or rise against its Nazi leadership. There is no proof that anyone was induced to join resistance groups because of having listened to the BBC or that German morale was seriously damaged.²⁵²

There are two possible causes for this failure. On the one hand, we have always to bear in mind the special circumstances which prevailed in totalitarian Germany. Even if some people were inclined to do something, it was nearly impossible to translate this inclination to action without risking their lives and those of their relatives and friends. Society was regulated from top to bottom and spies were everywhere. Even if one had wanted to, there would have been little scope for the individual to act. On the other hand, we have to take into account that the ultimate goal of British propaganda - to induce the German people to free itself from Nazi terror - was counteracted by the Allied decision at the Casablanca Conference in 1943 to beat Germany militarily until her unconditional surrender. British propaganda could offer no guaranteed reward for a successful overthrow of the Nazi government. This rendered the propagandists' call for German resistance to the Nazi regime implausible and in the end useless.²⁵³

If one tries to summarise what has been said so far about the impact of propaganda, it must be admitted that propaganda, whether 'white' or 'black', did not win the war and it was powerless against military defeat. This was clearly demonstrated by German domestic propaganda. The British propaganda effort would have counted for little if the war had not turned in favour of the Allies. The proposition that British propaganda contributed to the de-

²⁵¹ Security Service, Directing Sector Munich, *Reception and effect of the transmissions of the Soldatensender Calais among the population*, 19/3/1944, PRO, FO 898/420.

²⁵² Pütter 1986, pp. 11, 26-7, 95.

²⁵³ On the policy of 'unconditional surrender' see Crossman 1971, pp. 329-32.

feat of Germany must therefore be denied.²⁵⁴ Thus the fears so widely expressed after the First World War that propaganda was a powerful weapon and capable of defeating the enemy on the home front did not come true.

The view which was prevailing in Britain at the beginning of the war proved to be incorrect. Neither did political warfare play a major part in an Allied victory nor could it be taken 'for granted [...] that Germany could be defeated on the Home Front even while the armies were still winning victories [...]', as Vernon Bartlett wrote in 1938 on the basis of an enquiry into public opinion in Germany.²⁵⁵ This over-optimistic tone gave way to a more realistic estimation of the potential of propaganda as the war progressed. In 1944 a PWE memorandum stated more humbly that 'our hope was to produce decisive political results by propaganda. [...] To hope for such a movement [by the people against the Nazis] as a result of our political warfare is unrealistic.'²⁵⁶ The experiences of World War II thus destroyed much of the myth of propaganda that had arisen after the First World War.

But the realisation of the limits of propaganda and the Allied demand for 'unconditional surrender' did not render it useless, for its purpose clearly went beyond short-term war aims. Britain did not only seek a military victory over Germany, but also sought to lay the foundations for a stable post-war order in which she was going to play a major role. Propaganda, therefore, contributed to the creation this new political order and to the re-education of the German population. Those who listened to the BBC had already started with this process of rethinking.²⁵⁷

On the principle that publicity, if it is to be effective, must support the policy-makers and not try to force their hands, the logical implication of the Casablanca decision for the propagandists was that, instead of trying to

²⁵⁴ Briggs 1995, p. 628; Cruickshank 1977, p. 167; Mansell 1982, p. 147.

²⁵⁵ Memorandum by Vernon Bartlett, 27/9/1938, PRO, FO 898/1, p. 2.

²⁵⁶ Memorandum, February 1944, PRO, FO 898/101, cited in Cruickshank 1977, p. 185.

²⁵⁷ Balfour 1979, pp. 438-9; Crossman 1971, p. 332; Slattery 1992, p. 78.

accelerate surrender, they should concentrate on influencing the post-surrender situation.²⁵⁸

Finally, British propaganda did not only exploit the potential for a description of the post-war treatment of Germany, it also played a vital role in giving hope and comfort to many Germans during the war. Even though the aim of British propaganda to separate the German population from its authorities and to destroy the will to fight on was not achieved, the BBC could provide many Germans with what they were desperately longing for: with truthful news and the ardent hope that the Nazi regime would fall, which was a comfort to those opposed to Hitler. The success of the BBC lay in the fact that it always tried to do something more than demoralise its audience: to give hope for a better post-war world.²⁵⁹

What the BBC meant to many Germans from various backgrounds during the war was expressed in many letters addressed to the BBC after the war: ‘That you also brought us humour [...] - all that made the unbearable bearable for us.’ ‘You on the other side of the Channel spoke a language which some of us could understand, a language filled with hope and warm humanity. The BBC was - and is today - a real source of light for us.’ ‘Your broadcasts meant more to me than simply news. They were the only window into that world in which people can speak, act and think freely.’ ‘Again and again I have admired the high level of your “propaganda“ and the quiet objectivity of your talks. If it had not been for Lindlay Fraser, Hugh Carlton Green, Charles Richardson, Peter Petersen and all the other ambassadors of truth, we should have been suffocated by Hitler’s propaganda of lies. [...] If I had to decide on the award of the Nobel peace prize I should give it to those responsible for the German programmes of the BBC.’²⁶⁰

For this achievement, at least, the vast effort of British propaganda was worth while.

²⁵⁸ Balfour 1979, p. 439.

²⁵⁹ Briggs 1995, pp. 15-16, 390; Slattery 1992, pp. 80-1.

²⁶⁰ BBC Listener Research Unit, *Measuring - and holding - the BBC Audience in Germany and Austria*, 6/12/1945, PRO, FO 898/41, letters nos. 2, 8, 14, 20, pp. 2-6.

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