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The BBC Polish Service during World War II

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of PhD

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Department of Journalism

April 2016

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p.95 Fig 4.1

p.111 Fig 5.1

p.122 Figs 5.3 & 5.4

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Abstract

Despite considerable interest in the BBC European Service and the role of transnational broadcasting during the Second World War, surprisingly little attention has hitherto been paid to the BBC Polish language broadcasts. As the first full length academic study of the wartime BBC Polish Service, this thesis aims to provide an in-depth examination of previously unanalysed primary sources, both Polish and British, in order to establish the extent to which Polish Service broadcasts during World War II were considered as a significant and reliable source of information.

The study is primarily based on the BBC Written Archives records, in particular, the scripts of the BBC Polish language bulletins, the European News Directives and Minutes of Meetings as well as the Political Warfare Executive (PWE) directives for the Polish Service from the National Archives at Kew. These directives are central in answering the principal research question, namely the extent to which the Polish Service was required to follow official British government policy. To this end, the analysis is supported by Polish government-in-exile documents and the Polish Underground reports stored at the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum and the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust in London. These archives represent a valuable resource for studies of wartime broadcasting, censorship and propaganda. Together the various archives (in conjunction with other privately held documents) offer historians a rich source of material from which the organisation and functioning of the BBC Polish Service over this period can be constructed.

Given the volume of material related to World War II, the scope of the study is concentrated upon Whitehall and BBC policy with regards to the Polish Service coverage of the Polish-Soviet affairs from the period when diplomatic relations between Poland and the USSR were re-established in 1941 to the withdrawal of recognition of the Polish government-in-exile by the Allies in 1945. The analysis demonstrates that, although the Polish Service attempted to be objective, impartial and neutral, this was achieved by selectiveness rather than by presenting both Polish and Soviet sides of the argument in territorial and political disputes. In particular, after the secret agreement between the Big Three was signed at Tehran in 1943, attempts were made by British officials to use the Polish Service as a platform to convince the Polish Underground and, by extension, the Polish population, to agree to Stalin's demands. In general, any subjects which could be perceived by Stalin as offensive were labelled as 'sensitive' and expunged from the broadcasts. The evidence in this thesis therefore suggests that the overall output of the Polish service was at times subject to wider constraints determined by allied foreign policy goals and in particular the relationship between Britain and the Soviet Union in the defeat of Nazi Germany.

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Preface

During the Second World War the BBC Polish Service broadcasts became an important source of information in Poland. Despite the fact that listening to or possession of a radio set was punishable by death under the German occupation, Poles were willing to risk their lives in order to access news. Although listening to radio was not forbidden under Soviet occupation, harsh action was taken against those who accessed non-Soviet station. For many, the BBC remained the only contact with the outside world, whilst listening itself became a symbol of resistance. The broadcasts from London had an enormous impact on listeners in Poland. After the fall of France in June 1940, the Polish government took refuge in England, and its representatives often spoke on the air, thus playing an important role in maintaining public morale. BBC Polish Service broadcasts were seen as an essential source of information, given the fact that Britain was considered Poland's most important ally and that the BBC had established itself as the *'Voice of Britain'*.

A close examination of the current state of knowledge demonstrates the limited nature of the work to date on the Polish Service during the Second World War. The importance of the Polish Service broadcasts in this period has in fact been neglected by both British and Polish scholars: the Polish Service is mentioned in the context of the history of broadcasting but not from the specific perspective of its importance as a source of information for occupied Poland.

This doctoral thesis builds on my BA dissertation which, based on the BBC records, brings into question the BBC claim that it reported objectively about the wartime political situation. My undergraduate research allowed me to observe that large amount of primary sources on the Polish Service remained to be unanalysed and, more importantly, that these documents had the potential not only to contribute significantly to the history of the BBC, but also to our understanding of the complexity of wartime diplomatic relations between the allies and of the origins of the communist era in Poland, as well as to studies of wartime transnational broadcasting, censorship and propaganda.

Aims

The main aim of this thesis is to provide in-depth comprehensive analysis of primary sources, both Polish and British, in order to establish to which extent the Polish Service broadcasts were considered as an important and reliable source of information. Paying special attention to the

Polish audience's response and feedback, it will be equally important to investigate BBC awareness of and reaction to these issues. Given the limited discussion to date on the work of the Polish Service in general, an additional aim is to provide a far more panoramic picture of the work of the Polish Service and its employees.

Research questions

This study seeks to answer a number of questions. The BBC European Service was recognised by the British government as a tool of propaganda. The main question which this thesis aims to answer, then, is the relevance of this stance for the Polish Service: to what extent was the coverage of the Polish Service objective and unbiased? There are good reasons to pose this question. The BBC claimed after the war that it had sustained a considerable degree of independence from the government and, in particular, from the Political Warfare Executive (PWE). Britain's main goal was maintenance of the unity of the allied coalition. This principle remained uninterrupted even in the face of evidence of crimes committed against Polish citizens by the Soviets and Stalin's political manoeuvring. The British Foreign Office policy favouring the USSR's claims to the Curzon line and avoidance of news which in anyway could undermine the Soviet Union's position as an important and reliable ally, was reflected in the BBC broadcasts. This approach, however, was questioned and criticised by the Polish authorities in London, the Polish Underground and, by extension, the Polish listeners, thus leading to another question, notably, what was the impact of the Polish Service broadcasts on the Polish audience, considering its information and propaganda roles.

Organisation of the thesis

Chapter one discusses the present state of knowledge about the BBC Polish Service during WWII, other scholars' contributions to this topic, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments. Starting with an overview of transnational broadcasting and the recognition of radio as a new medium of diplomacy and propaganda, the chapter draws on important issues such as the theory of propaganda and wartime propaganda and censorship. Prominence is given to the relationship between the government and the BBC and, in particular, between the Political Warfare Executive (PWE) and the BBC European Service, and also to an analysis of the extent to which the latter followed the official line of the British government. The main emphasis, however, is on the Polish Service, its relations with the BBC, the British and Polish governments and the broadcasting arm of the latter, namely, Radio Polskie. In this context, the chapter also discusses listenership in occupied Poland, the way in which the Polish broadcasts were syndicated and an appraisal of their news value.

Chapter two provides an explanation and justification of methodological approaches employed in the study and its limitations; it also details the data accessed from the archives.

Given, the complexity of issues covered in this thesis, it was felt that a separate chapter providing the reader with historical background on the Second World War was necessary. Rather than scrutinising the role of the BBC in this period, Chapter 3 provides a contextual account of relevant wartime military and diplomatic developments in chronological order. (A timeline of Second World War in Annexe III outlines developments concerning Poland in World War II and key Soviet-Polish relations, allowing for quick reference).

Chapter 4 examines the listening conditions under German and Soviet occupation, focusing on the importance of the Polish Underground's role as a main monitor and distributor of the Polish Service broadcasts; thus the Polish clandestine press is also an object of an examination. Additionally, it draws on information on audience access to broadcasts and estimates of numbers of radio sets under the German and Soviet occupations.

Chapter 5 discusses the origins, structure and organisation of the Polish Service, exploring its relations with the BBC, the Polish government-in-exile and Radio Polskie. Particular attention is paid to the role of the key figures involved in policy making, including the Director of the European Service, Noel Newsome, the European Service Controller, Ivone Kirkpatrick, the PWE Polish Region Editor, Moray Maclaren, and the Polish Service Editors, Michael Winch and his successor, Gregory Macdonald.

Chapters 6–9 discuss wartime propaganda and censorship, particularly in relation to the conformity of Polish Service bulletins with British foreign policy. Each chapter covers a different period. Chapter 6 deals with the time from the Polish-Soviet reconciliation in June 1941 to the breaking off of diplomatic relations after the discovery of the graves of the Polish officers at Katyń in April 1943. Chapter 7 covers the period from April 1943 to July 1944. Chapter 8 analyses the coverage of the Warsaw rising by both the BBC Polish and Home Services, and chapter 9 the period after the collapse of the uprising in October 1944 to the German surrender and the allies' withdrawal of the recognition of the Polish government in London in July 1945.

Chapter 10, the conclusion, summarises the main findings of the thesis. In addition, three annexes can be found at the end of the thesis, namely, biographical notes on the Polish Service employees (annex I), a glossary of key Polish, British and Soviet personas mentioned in this work (annex II); and the Second World War time line of World War II and key events in Soviet-Polish relations already mentioned (annex III).

Propaganda through the airwaves

Introduction

In order to provide a context for the present study, it is essential to present an overview of two complementary areas of study. The first concerns the role of the transnational broadcasting and, in particular, scholarly contributions to the study of the BBC European Service during World War II, in general, and, more specifically, the current state of knowledge of the BBC Polish Service during World War II. A central issue for these transnational broadcasts is the part which they played in serving the interests of the British government. The second area of interest is thus the role of British wartime propaganda, the government relationship with the BBC and the extent to which the Corporation was influenced by the censorship policy. Here, special attention is given to the power struggle between the Political Warfare Executive and the European Service. The chapter draws also on important issues such as the theory of propaganda and wartime propaganda, providing an important background for further analysis. The main emphasis, however, is on the Polish Service, its relations with the BBC, the British and Polish governments and Radio Polskie. In this context, the chapter also discusses listenership in occupied Poland, in particular, the role of the Polish Underground as the main monitor and syndicator of the BBC Polish language broadcasts.

The role of transnational broadcasting

In many respects, the Second World War differed from previous international conflicts, primarily because the agenda of the Nazis and Communists was not only based on the need for territorial expansion but, more importantly, on the supremacy of their respective ideologies over western democracy.¹ The social and geopolitical changes in the interwar years saw the evolution of mass media – a development recognised by totalitarian leaders seeking to influence public opinion at home as well as gaining international support for their ideologies. With the expansion of telegraphy in the late 19th century, the technological infrastructure for global communication had already been established, making immediate and direct communication possible with the masses, irrespective of their social status, political views, literacy and, most importantly, nationality and citizenship.² Arguably, the realisation of the potential of this new medium to reach an international audience can be seen as the most important development of the 1920s and 1930s; it was not an accident that this new medium became the main instrument of propaganda

¹ Ferguson, N., *The War of the World: History's Age of Hatred* (London: Penguin, 2012).

² Wasburn, P.C., *Broadcasting Propaganda: International Radio Broadcasting and the Construction of Political Reality* (New York: Praeger, 1992); Welch, D., *Propaganda: Power and Persuasion* (London: The British Library, 2013).

for Stalin and Hitler. This was, however, two-ways process – the interwar period saw the arrival of newly politicised audiences, interested not only in domestic but also in foreign affairs.

Whilst totalitarian leaders recognised the wireless as an essential instrument in shaping public opinion, the British government remained reluctant to use this new medium as means of furthering national interest until 1938, the main reason being that the BBC was developed as a public service, focused on education and a high standard of entertainment programmes, whilst the British press, which saw this new medium as its main competitor, successfully lobbied against the Corporation's attempts to introduce its own news service.³ It was only in 1934 that the BBC established its own regular news service.

Although the BBC Empire Service had already been inaugurated in 1932, the importance of broadcasting in foreign languages did not crystallise until 1938. The fact that the memory of the First World War and the techniques used were still alive helps to explain the reluctance of the BBC to engage in any forms of propaganda. There was also another reason: it was the conviction of the first BBC Director-General, John Reith, that the Corporation should not become a mouthpiece of the government.⁴

Yet, transnational broadcasting was to play a key role in wartime diplomacy. The British government, although initially hesitant to use the airwaves for propaganda, changed course after hostilities broke out. By the end of 1940 the BBC was already broadcasting in thirty-four languages, of which twenty-five had been added since September 1939.⁵ As Seul and Riberio point out, '*the BBC was employed to further the British government's diplomatic, strategic and economic interests*'.⁶ Cruickshank goes even further, arguing that the BBC European Service was both recognised as '*The Fourth Arm*' and served as such during World War II.⁷

Poland, too, acknowledged the necessity for transnational broadcasting. Polskie Radio, founded in 1925, was operating by the beginning of World War II one national and nine regional channels, transmitting in six foreign languages (German, Czech, Hungarian, French, English and Italian) targeted at Europe, North and South America.⁸ According to the British Embassy in

³ Webb, A., 'Auntie Goes to War Again: the BBC External Services, the Foreign Office and the Early Cold War', *Media History*, 12 (2), 2006, pp. 117-32; Williams, K., *Get me a murder a day!: A history of media and communication in Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), pp. 90-2.

⁴ Curran, J., & Seaton, J., *Power without Responsibility: Press, Broadcasting and the Internet in Britain* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2010), p. 107.

⁵ Mansell, G., *Let Truth Be Told: 50 Years of BBC External Broadcasting* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1982), p. 104.

⁶ Seul, S. & Riberio, N., 'Revising Transnational Broadcasting: The BBC foreign-language services during the Second World War', *Media History*, Special Issue 21 (4), 2015, pp. 365-377.

⁷ Cruickshank, C., *The Fourth Arm: Psychological Warfare: 1938-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

⁸ Pszenicki, K., *Tu Mówi Londyn: Historia Sekcji Polskiej BBC* (Warsaw: Rosner & Wspolnicy, 2009), p. 33.

Warsaw, Polskie Radio offered an '*efficient and unbiased news service*', so much so that the inauguration of the BBC Polish Service was only considered after the war broke out.⁹

With the German and Soviet occupation of Poland, the Polish stations were overtaken by the invaders and consequently used for their own propaganda.¹⁰ Subsequently, the BBC Polish Service, inaugurated on 7 September 1939, was a significant source of information from the beginning. It is therefore the aim of this thesis to investigate and establish the role played by the broadcasts of the Polish Service during the years 1939-1945.

Scholarly contributions to the study of the BBC European Service during World War II

In comparison with the BBC Home Service, the BBC foreign services have received relatively little attention from scholars. The wartime Director of the BBC External Services, Edward Tangye Lean, an early contributor to discussions of this topic, acknowledges the limitations of his 1943 account:

*'This is not a guidebook, handbook or Official History of the War. I have been too much involved in it to be impartial. I wanted as far as possible to write only of what I had heard with my own ears, choosing Germany's offensive against France instead of her attack on Yugoslavia, reporting speakers on whom I had my own notes, and where my languages gave out and my ignorance of different audiences set in, it did not worry me that the treatment became sketchy'.*¹¹

The BBC Year Books and Handbooks published during the war provide a great account of work of the BBC in this period, it is, however, Asa Briggs, the former official BBC historian, who offers by far the most exhaustive account to date of the work of the BBC European Service during World War II in the third volume of his *History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom – the War of Words*, which provides an in-depth analysis of its structure, organisation and internal relations as well as its position on warfare.¹² Nonetheless his discussion of individual foreign language services, with the exception of the German and French Services, is limited. The need for a more analytical approach to the subject was recognised in 1980's by the former Managing Director of the BBC External Services, Gerard Mansell.¹³ His study, based, primarily on analysis of BBC and official records and, more importantly, interviews with

⁹ Undated note by J.B. Clark in Briggs, A., *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: The War of Words*, Vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 75.

¹⁰ Morriss, A., *Cross Border Broadcasting in an Occupied Country: The Case of Poland*, in Arnold, K., Preston, P., Kinnebroch, S., (eds.), *The Handbook of European Communication History* (New Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, in press 2016).

¹¹ Tangye Lean, E., *Voices in the Darkness: The story of European Radio War* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1943), p. 3.

¹² Briggs, op. cit.

¹³ Mansell, op. cit.

former BBC staff involved not only in news production but also policy making, makes a significant contribution to the field of transnational wartime broadcasting. Mansell, also makes use of memoirs, in particular those of Ivone Kirkpatrick, the wartime Foreign Advisor to the BBC and later the BBC European Controller and the Political Warfare Executive (PWE) official, as well Bruce Lockhart, the PWE Director-General.¹⁴ While Andrew Walker also acknowledges the importance of the BBC European Service during the war, he concentrates on the post-war era, what is understandable, given that his expertise comes from his experience as the former BBC World Service Defence and Commonwealth correspondent.¹⁵ The main contributions of both writers in relation to the present study lies in providing contextual background for the historical analysis of primary sources.

Yet the history of the European Service attracted not only scholars interested in communication studies. In particular, the release of Foreign Office and Cabinet papers in the 1970's was the catalyst for a debate on the British broadcaster involvement in political warfare. Primarily, those who were able to combine personal experience in this field with an analysis of archival documents and, in particular, Michael Balfour, the Ministry of Information and, later, the PWE official, Charles Cruickshank, employee of the Ministry of Supply and David Garnett, the PWE Director of Training, contributed greatly, providing new perspectives on Foreign Office involvement in transnational broadcasting.¹⁶ Given the vast material on the topic, these first attempts to synthesise the role of the BBC broadcasting for propaganda purposes underlined the challenges of delivering a thorough analysis of European Services as a whole. Consequently, scholars focused on the German Service and propaganda to enemy countries in general; the narrative of these studies is driven by the attempt to understand the extent to which propaganda through the airwaves influenced German public opinion and had an impact on ending the war. Scholars working in this area faced other obstacles, too. In particular, Garnett's official history of the PWE waited over 50 years for clearance to be published. As Andrew Roberts explains in an introduction to this volume, the author's account was viewed as judgmental and prejudiced, a '*chronique scandaleuse*' found offensive by many former PWE officials, who in the 1950s were still actively involved in politics.¹⁷ However, with the value of hindsight, while they fail to provide a comprehensive overview, these publications are notable for the fact that they initiated a dispute over the British government using the BBC as the instrument of propaganda. Philip

¹⁴ Kirkpatrick, I., *The Inner Circle* (London: Macmillan, 1959); Lockhart, R. H. B., *Comes the Reckoning* (London: Arno Press, 1972); Lockhart, R.H.B., *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, 1939-1965* (ed.) Kenneth Young (London: Macmillan, 1980).

¹⁵ Walker, A., *A Skyful of Freedom: 60 Years of the BBC World Service* (London: Broadside Books Limited, 1992).

¹⁶ Balfour, M., *Propaganda in War, 1939-1945: Organisations, Policies, and Publics, in Britain and Germany* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979); Cruickshank, op. cit., Garnett, D. *The Secret History of PWE: The Political Warfare Executive, 1939-1945* (London: St. Ermin's Press, 2002).

¹⁷ Andrew Roberts Introduction to the Secret History of PWE, Garnett, op. cit.

M. Taylor's more recent work, in particular, throws new light on this subject.¹⁸ This topic is also discussed at some length by the BBC official historian, Jean Seaton, in her book *Power without Responsibility*.¹⁹

In the new millennium came publications offering a new approach. Michael Stenton's examination of the impact of the BBC broadcasts on resistance movements in France, Denmark, Poland and Yugoslavia, for instance, provides new perspective on the Corporation's role in wartime diplomacy and maintaining public morale in occupied Europe.²⁰ What makes this study distinctive, however, is the author's emphasis on the attempts of the allied governments-in-exile to influence the BBC programmes. Despite the fact that it has been over 60 years since the war ended, the work of the European Service clearly still interests historians, and is substantially referenced in studies on communication, propaganda, psychological warfare and wartime diplomacy.²¹

In recent years, too, a shift can be observed from the more general treatment of the European Service to an examination of the role and impact of the different foreign services, recognised by Briggs as each having '*its own identity and its own ethos*'.²² Although the BBC attempted to speak with one voice and consistency was considered as a guiding principle for wartime broadcasting, it was evident that this was difficult to achieve and, by the middle of the war it had become apparent that the initial distinction of broadcasting to enemy, enemy-occupied and neutral countries was unworkable. The ever changing military situation as well as diplomatic turbulence between the allies required constant revaluation of policy and, despite the fact that the main objective of the European Service was to act as the '*Voice of Britain*', adjusting to the needs of listeners was also crucial. In this respect, the study of individual sections of the European Service offers new opportunities for in-depth examination, allowing for cross-

¹⁸ Taylor, P.M.: *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda, 1919–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); *Global Communications, International Affairs and the Media since 1945* (London: Routledge, 1997); *British Propaganda in the 20th Century: Selling Democracy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

¹⁹ Curran & Seaton. First published in 1981.

²⁰ Stenton, M., *Radio London and Resistance in Occupied Europe: British Political Warfare 1939–1943* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²¹ See for instance Connelly, M., & Welch, D. *War and the Media: Reportage and Propaganda, 1900–2003* (London: IB Tauris & Co Ltd, 2005); Franks, S., *The BBC and Trust- lessons from history in: Beyond Trust: Hype and Hope in the British Media*, ed. by Mair, J., & Keeble, R. L., (Suffolk: Arima Publishing, 2008); Carruthers, S. L., *The Media at War: Communication and conflict in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Somerville, K., *Radio Propaganda and the Broadcasting of Hatred: Historical Development and Definitions* (London: Macmillan, 2012); Gillespie, M., & Webb, A. *Diasporas and Diplomacy: Cosmopolitan contact zones at the BBC World Service :1932–2012* (London: Routledge, 2013).

²² Briggs, op. cit., p. 381.

reference of the BBC and other foreign archival material and throwing new light on our understanding of importance and impact of BBC broadcasting beyond borders.

With the exception of Jeremy Bennett's study of the Danish Service conducted in the mid-1960's, the BBC foreign services have attracted scholarly examination only recently.²³ The work of the BBC French Service is particularly well documented. A leading scholar in this field, Kay Chadwick, has examined the impact of BBC broadcasts on listeners in both 'Free France' and under the Vichy administration.²⁴ The subject has also attracted other historians, namely Aureline Luneau and Claire Launchbury, with the former investigating the impact of BBC French programmes on collective national memory and the latter focusing on cultural aspects of wartime broadcasting, paying special attention to sound, poetry and propaganda.²⁵ Stephanie Seul and Hans-Ulrich Wagner make important contributions to our understanding of the BBC German Service, as does Nelson Ribeiro in relation to the Portuguese Service.²⁶

The aims of German and Portuguese Service broadcasts differ in important respects: the first addressed the audience in an enemy country while the latter targeted a neutral state.

Nonetheless, these scholars share the same objective, notably, to demonstrate the extent to which the British government used the BBC foreign programmes as the instrument of propaganda. In contrast, Gloria García González has a narrower focus, investigating the BBC

²³ Bennett, J., *British Broadcasting and the Danish Resistance Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

²⁴ Chadwick, K.: 'Our enemy's enemy: selling Britain to wartime France on the BBC French Service', *Media History*, 21 (4), 2015, pp. 426-44; 'Radio Propaganda and Public Opinion under Endgame Vichy: The Impact of Philippe Henriot', *French History*, 25, 2011, pp. 232-52; 'The Battle of the Airwaves: Philippe Henriot and the Free French in 1944', *BBC History Magazine*, 11 (7), 2010, pp. 50-54.

²⁵ Luneau, A., *Radio Londres: Les voix de la Liberté: 1940-45* (Paris: Perrin, 2005); Launchbury, C., *Music, Poetry, Propaganda: Constructing French Cultural Soundscapes at the BBC during the Second World War* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012).

²⁶ Seul, S., 'The BBC German Service and Chamberlain's propaganda campaign directed at Nazi Germany, 1938-1940', *Media History*, op. cit., pp. 378-96; 'Appeasement and Propaganda, 1938-1940: Chamberlain's Foreign Policy in Relation to the National Socialist Government and the German People'. PhD thesis., European University Institute, 2005; available on: https://www.academia.edu/373329/Appeasement_und_Propaganda_1938-1940._Chamberlains_Au%C3%9Fenpolitik_zwischen_NSRegierung_und_deutschem_Volk_Appeasement_und_Propaganda_19381940_Chamberlain_s_Foreign_Policy_in_Relation_to_the_National_Socialist_Government_and_the_German_People; 'Transnational communication in times of diplomatic crises and war: the British propaganda campaign directed at the German public, 1938-1940'; Paper presented at the Workshop The History of Mass Media in Europe: Towards Post National Perspectives and Stories, organised by the ECREA Communication History Section, Dublin City University, School of Communications, 7-9 September 2011. Wagner, H., 'Beyond All Obstacles. Repatriated Germans from London in West German Broadcasting History', in 'Stimme der Wahrheit'. *German-Language Broadcasting by the BBC*, (ed.) Brinson, C., & Dove, R., (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003); Ribeiro, N., *BBC Broadcasts to Portugal in World War II: How Radio Was Used as a Weapon of War* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011); BBC Portuguese Service during World War II Praising Salazar while defending the Allies', *Media History*, op. cit., pp. 397-411; Ribeiro, N., Wagner, H., Morris, A., 'International Radio Broadcasting during World War II: Propaganda and Public Diplomacy through the Airwaves', in Arnold et al., op. cit.

Spanish programmers' role in supporting the allied cause.²⁷ Given the importance attached by the British government to the Balkans during the war, Ioannis Stefanidis' study of BBC broadcasts to Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Yugoslavia further enhances our knowledge of the importance of the European Service, as does Ester Lo Biundo's publication on the Italian Service.²⁸ The importance of the Czech Service has been recognised by Erica Harrison in spite of the significant barriers posed by the fact that the Czech Service bulletins did not survive the war. For this reason, her PhD thesis focuses instead on the Czech government-in-exile's broadcasts from London.²⁹

The investigation of individual European services greatly benefits our understanding of the service as a whole, as demonstrated by a recent Special Issue of *Media History* project which brings together analyses of the various BBC foreign services in the wartime period mentioned above, also to be published in book form. However, as noted by Seul and Riberio, the editors of the *Media History* Special Issue, this collection is by no means the last word on the European Service but rather an important step forward in the synthesis of the BBC transnational broadcasting. The present study, for instance, highlights an important gap in our current understanding: the importance of the BBC Polish broadcasts has in fact been largely neglected by both English and Polish scholars.

Current state of knowledge of the BBC Polish Service during World War II

Both Asa Briggs and Gerard Mansell have considered the BBC Polish Service within the historical framework of the BBC European Service.³⁰ Briggs' account, however, is limited – the main focus is on Radio Polskie, the broadcasting arm of the Polish government-in-exile, transmitting on BBC wavelengths. The author also discusses the listening conditions in Poland under German occupation and the role of the Polish Underground in monitoring the BBC broadcasts as well as in distributing their content through the clandestine press. Moreover, he highlights the importance of the BBC Polish Service in sabotaging German actions in Poland. In contrast, Mansell presents a more comprehensive account of the BBC Polish Service, drawing on interviews with former employees, including its Editor, Gregory Macdonald. The book also

²⁷ Garcia González, G., 'Pawns in a Chess Game: The BBC Spanish Service during the Second World War', *Media History*, op. cit., pp. 412-25.

²⁸ Stefanidis, I., *Substitute for Power: Wartime British Propaganda to the Balkans, 1939-44* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012); Lo Biundo, E., *London Calling Italy: The Propaganda of Radio London during 1943* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2014). La Biundo's PhD thesis on the Italian Service during World War II at University of Reading is currently in the final stage of editing.

²⁹ Harrison, E., *Radio and the Performance of Government: Broadcasting by the Czechoslovaks in Exile in London, 1939-45*, University of Bristol, School of Modern Languages, March 2015, unpublished. See also Harrison, E., 'Broadcasting by the Czechoslovak Exile Government in London, 1939-1945', *Media History*, op. cit., pp. 464-67.

³⁰ Briggs, op. cit.; Mansell, op. cit.

offers insight into the origins of the Service, its relations with the PWE and the Polish government-in-exile in London, and its internal affairs. Nevertheless, as is the case with Briggs, the Polish Service is only mentioned in the context of the overall structure and work of the BBC European Service; the analysis does not explore the actual content of the BBC Polish broadcasts. With the exception of these two studies, the work of the Polish Service during World War II has been neglected by other British scholars interested in wartime BBC foreign language broadcasts.

Three publications, published in London by the former Polish Service employees, namely, Czesław Halski, Antoni Pospieszalski and Zbigniew Grabowski, have greatly contributed to state of knowledge in this field. Yet it is only the latter who worked for the Polish Service during the war.³¹ His short article, takes a rather narrow approach to the subject, as does Pospieszalski's. In contrast, while Halski devotes only few paragraphs to the Polish Service during the war, primary because he worked for Radio Polskie in this period, he includes a list, albeit incomplete and without dates of employment, of Polish Service staff.

In Poland, too, coverage of this field is rather limited. The earliest study on this subject was conducted by Piotr Chróściel in 1995.³² His MA dissertation *'Zarys dziejów Sekcji Polskiej radia BBC: 1939-1995'* [*History of the Polish Section BBC: 1939-1995*] devotes only a chapter to the wartime period and his main focus is on the communist era in Poland. It is evident that Chróściel considered the Service's work during the World War II as a background context, as he draws only on secondary sources, primarily Briggs, Mansell, Grabowski, Halski and Pospieszalski.

Pszenicki's *Tu Mówi Londyn: Historia Sekcji Polskiej BBC* [*London Calling: A History of the Polish Section of the BBC*] provides a more detailed and therefore more valuable synthesis of the above mentioned works.³³ His focus too, however, is on the communist period, dedicating only a chapter to the wartime period and origins of the Polish Service. Pszenicki, who worked in the BBC World Service from 1973 and, later, from 1988, as Director of the Polish Service, gives a wide-ranging account of internal affairs and provides the reader with interesting anecdotes. The book, although non-academic, is an excellent source of information about those who worked in the Polish Service who, in many cases, the author was privileged to meet in person. He does not, however, introduce new material in the chapter on the wartime period or reference sources, despite the fact that he clearly relies heavily on the works of Briggs and

³¹ Halski, C., *6 Lat: Perypetie Wojenne, 1939-1945*, (London: Caldra House, 1991); Pospieszalski, A., 'Wojna na Słowa' *Wiadomości*, London, 25 April 1971; Grabowski, Z., 'Polska Sekcja BBC', *Na Antenie*, nr. 19, London, February 1973.

³² Chróściel, P., *'Zarys dziejów sekcji polskiej radia BBC: 1939-1995'*, University of Warsaw, Journalism and Political Studies Department, 1995, unpublished.

³³ Pszenicki, op. cit.

Mansell. It is also evident that the author makes use of but does not reference a booklet on work of the Polish Service written after the war by Wolferstan and Earley.³⁴ This booklet is held at the BBC Written Archives and has not been published.

Other publications which significantly contribute to the state of knowledge on the work of the Polish Service include Jan Nowak's *Kurier z Warszawy* [*Courier from Warsaw*], a wartime account of Polish courier and a member of the Polish Underground who visited London in 1943 and 1944.³⁵ His well-documented diary providing information about listening conditions in Poland and responses to BBC Polish broadcasts is an indispensable source for scholars. More importantly, Nowak himself, had the opportunity to meet many of the BBC staff during his stay in the UK as well other Polish and British officials involved in the policy making. His comments on BBC programmes as well as policies and the extent to which listeners considered them a mouthpiece of the British government are particularly interesting.

This topic is also a focus for Michael Stenton, who examines Radio London's impact on the Polish Underground. Concentrating on 1943, the author discusses the role of the British police in difficult Polish-Soviet diplomatic turbulence.³⁶ Although he does not analyse the Polish Service bulletins, he makes extensive use of the BBC and PWE directives, which the Service was required to follow. These directives are also the object of examination by P.M.H. Bell.³⁷ Though his main research question is to which extent public opinion influenced British foreign policy towards the USSR, this issue is analysed through the prism of two case studies, namely government censorship and propaganda regarding the discovery of the graves of the Polish officers at Katyń in 1943, and the Warsaw rising of 1944. Bell, too, makes no use of the BBC Polish bulletins, focusing instead on an in-depth examination of the BBC and PWE directives for the Polish Service, as well as analysis of the British press and the BBC Home Service programmes, to explain the BBC and British government policy towards the Polish audience.

Finally, scholars examining Radio Polskie's role during the war, such as Tadeusz Wyrwa, Zbigniew Grabowski, Wojciech Włodarkiewicz and, more importantly, wartime Radio Polskie Director, Janusz Meissner add to the breadth of coverage.³⁸ Cooperation between the Polish

³⁴ BBC WAC, E1/1147, Countries: Poland; Polish booklet, English text of unpublished material on the work of the Polish Service, file 1, completed after 1946. Details of the authors not found. Briggs also does not refer to them in the name index in the IV- V volumes of *the History of the Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*.

³⁵ Nowak, J., *Kurier z Warszawy* (Warsaw: Znak, 2009). First printed in 1997.

³⁶ Stenton, op. cit.

³⁷ Bell, P.M.H., *John Bull and the Bear: British Public Opinion, Foreign Policy and the Soviet Union, 1941-1945* (London: Hodder Arnold, 1990).

³⁸ Wyrwa, T., Audycje Radiowe nadawane z Londynu, *Zeszyty Historyczne*, nr. 116 Paris, 1996; Grabowski, Z., Radio Polskie w Londynie; Włodarkiewicz, W., Programy radiowe dla słuchaczy polskich nadawane z Europy i Stanów Zjednoczonych; Both in *Polskie Radio w Czasie Drugiej Wojny Światowej* (ed.) Budzyński, A., & Jasiewicz, K., (Warsaw: Polskie Radio SA, 2015); Meissner, J., *Pióro ze Skrzydeł* (Warsaw: Iskra, 1976).

Service and Radio Polskie as well as the extent to which the Polish government-in-exile exercised influence on the BBC broadcasts is an important element in understanding the work of the Polish Service. The focus of scholars is on Radio Polskie and its difficult relationship with the BBC attributable to a censorship policy which was interpreted as pro-Soviet. However, the Polish Service programmes and in particular, the Polish Service editors are the subject of in-depth examination of these publications. Also worth mentioning is Michael Fleming's *Auschwitz, the Allies and Censorship of the Holocaust*, which includes an analysis of the papers and bulletins of the BBC Polish Service. However, the main focus of this study is on the BBC coverage and censorship of German atrocities committed in Auschwitz.³⁹

Theory of Propaganda

*'The greatest triumphs of propaganda have been accomplished, not by doing something, but by refraining from doing (...) by simply not mentioning certain subjects'.*⁴⁰

Any examination of wartime propaganda requires an understanding of its theoretical underpinnings. Defining '*propaganda*' is a difficult task. Over the centuries there has been a marked change from the view of propaganda as neither '*good*' nor '*bad*' to '*the attempt of the converted to persuade the uncovered*', to being synonymous with '*lies, distortion, deceit, manipulation, mind control, psychological warfare, brainwashing and palaver*'.⁴¹ The term did not originally have negative connotations but instead was used in a neutral way in relation to the mobilisation of citizens to participate in public spheres such as social, health or electoral reforms and its redefinition came as the result of the two World Wars.⁴² The word itself originated from modern Latin '*to propagate*', which means to disseminate or promote particular ideas; it was used for the first time in 1622 by the Catholic Church with the establishment of the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (the sacred congregation for propagating the faith).⁴³ As O'Donnell and Jowett suggest, it was at that point that the word '*propaganda*' lost its neutrality, since the purpose of the Congregation was to spread Catholicism and to oppose Protestantism; they argue that the Pope's plan '*laid the foundations for modern propaganda techniques in that it stressed the control of opinions and, through them, the actions for the people in the mass*'.⁴⁴ This interpretation, however, is challenged by Diggs-Brown who argues

³⁹ Fleming, M., *Auschwitz, the Allies and Censorship of the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁴⁰ Huxley, A., *Brave New World* (London: Vintage Books: 2007), p. xlviii.

⁴¹ Jowett, G., *What Is Propaganda, and How Does It Differ from Persuasion* (London: Sage, 2005), pp. 2-3.

⁴² Taylor, op. cit., 2003; Thorne, S., *The Language of War* (London: Routledge, 2006); Somerville, op. cit., 2012.

⁴³ Jowett, G. S., & O'Donnell, V., *Propaganda & Persuasion*, 6th ed. (London: Sage, 2015), pp. 2-3.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.73.

that the term first took on pejorative connotations in the mid-19th century with the emergence of mass society and its influence in the political sphere.⁴⁵ While Taylor claims that the standards in modern propaganda were set up during the First World War, suggesting Britain as the precursor of the '*negative model to follow*', Thore, on the contrary, observes that propaganda until the Second World War meant nothing more than '*harmless exaggeration*'.⁴⁶ Despite this scholarly disagreement, there is a broad consensus on the influence of the communication revolution and emergence of a mass audience.⁴⁷ More importantly, since the Second World War, propaganda has developed as a systematic peacetime instrument of the national and foreign policy of most states.⁴⁸

During the 20th century, the term was associated with deliberate persuasion, serving political actions or ideologies. However, the term propaganda in our modern understanding did not come into use until the end of the First World War.⁴⁹ It was between 1914 and 1918 that propaganda emerged as a significant tool in controlling the public and influencing wider perceptions of national self-image.⁵⁰ As Welch points out, the propaganda was directed '*towards the home population to support the war, towards neutral countries as a means of influence, and towards the enemy as a weapon*'.⁵¹ In Britain, in order to justify the war and to gain public support, the government used the press to disseminate atrocity stories in which Germans were presented as barbarians and murderers. Under the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA), a system of censorship was introduced, requiring editors to submit all material before printing. As Knightley concluded:

'to enable the war to go on, the people had to be steeled for further sacrifices, and this could not be done if the full story of what was happening on the Western Front was known. And so began a great conspiracy. More deliberate lies were told than in any other period of history, and the whole apparatus of the state went into action to suppress the truth'.⁵²

⁴⁵ Diggs-Brown, B., *Strategic Public Relations: Audience Focused Practice* (International edition: Wadsworth Publishing Co Inc., 2011).

⁴⁶ Taylor, op. cit., pp. 2-3 & Thorne, op. cit., p. 42.

⁴⁷ Ellul, J., *Propaganda: The formation of men's attitudes* (New York: Knopf, 1965); Taylor, op. cit., 1999; Welch, D., & Fox, J., *Justifying War: Propaganda, Politics and the Modern Age* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁴⁸ Black, J. B., *Organising the Propaganda Instrument: The British Experience* (Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), p. ix.

⁴⁹ Walton, D., 'What is Propaganda, and what exactly is wrong with it?', *Public Affairs Quarterly*, Vol.11, no. 4 (1997).

⁵⁰ Welch, op. cit., p. 81.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Knightley, P., *The First Casualty: The War correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 84.

After the war, when people learnt the truth, propaganda became associated with the actions of a government which sought to lie and distort information in order to achieve its ends. In consequence, the First World War created the feeling of mistrust not only between nations but, more importantly, between the government and the public. It had such a profound effect that, when information about the Nazi extermination camps was broadcast during World War II, the public dismissed it as an atrocity story created by the Allies.⁵³

In the interwar years many scholars, including Lippmann, Dewey and Ponsonby examined the patterns and techniques used in the wartime propaganda, leading them to similar conclusions, namely, that propaganda is used for manipulation of the masses and maintaining control.⁵⁴ According to Ponsonby, propaganda in war time becomes '*the enemy of independent thought and an intrusive and unwanted manipulator of the free flow of information and ideas in humanity's quest for peace and truth*'.⁵⁵ He emphasises that, when passions and emotions are high, people are easier to manipulate while democracies are '*reluctantly forced to accept that they might need to fight back*'.⁵⁶ It was important, then, to understand the extent to which people were driven by '*crowd psychology*' rather than rationally crafted political persuasion, particularly because it was claimed that the latter was responsible for shortening the war.⁵⁷ Both Ponsonby and Lippmann, however, agreed that propaganda describes actions of the enemy in terms which emphasise that '*we*' tell the truth and stand by the principles of morality and justice.⁵⁸ In short, politicians, in recognising the '*power*' of mass persuasion, used traducing and lying as the means of vindicating the war and mobilising public opinion. Lasswell had already observed in 1927 that propaganda has become an epithet of contempt and hate, and the propagandists have sought protective coloration in such names as 'public relations council', 'specialist in public education,' 'public relations adviser'.⁵⁹

These interwar analyses apply equally to the Second World War. Both Hitler and Stalin mastered methods of propaganda in order to implement their totalitarian ideologies, seen as offensive to democratic western societies. Interestingly, Goebbels modelled his ministry on British First World War propaganda apparatus which he considered a perfect prototype.⁶⁰ In the interwar years, however, British propaganda was based on appeasement whilst the Germans and Soviets, on the other hand, focused on racism and communism respectively. Although there are

⁵³ Welch, op. cit., p. 93.

⁵⁴ Lippmann, W., *Public Opinion* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1922); Dewey, J., *The Public and its Problems* (New York: H. Holt & Company, 1927); Ponsonby, A., *Falsehood in Wartime: Propaganda Lies of the First World War* (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1928).

⁵⁵ Cited in: Taylor, op. cit., 1997, p.1.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Curran & Seaton, op. cit., p. 121.

⁵⁸ Ponsonby, op. cit.; Lippmann, op. cit.

⁵⁹ Lasswell, H. D. *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), pp. 260-1.

⁶⁰ Knightley, op. cit., p. 86.

many similarities between Soviet and German propaganda aims, such as state control and indoctrination, the main difference laid in the distinction between propaganda and agitation in Bolshevik terminology.⁶¹ Whilst Goebbels did not distinguish between the two, the Soviet interpretation the aim of propaganda was to spread Marxist-Leninism ideology among the party members while the aim of agitation was to influence the masses through ideas and slogans.⁶²

According to Thorne and Somerville, however, it was Allied propaganda which associated the term with totalitarian regimes.⁶³ As was the case for First World War propaganda, it is 'we' who tell the truth contra the enemy. Jackall challenges this notion claiming that it was Nazi propaganda which gave the term a bad name.⁶⁴ An examination of the Second World War propaganda led Taylor to offer a more moderate interpretation; in his view, it was '*an instrument to be used by those who want to secure or retain power just as much as it is by those wanting to displace it*'.⁶⁵

In analysing propaganda, it is important to distinguish between its different forms. Based on the source of the information and motivation of the person or organisation, we can distinguish between black, grey and white propaganda. Although the goal is the same – namely to gain public support in order to justify the war and undermine the enemy – they differ in very important respects. The term black propaganda is associated with covert psychological operations. It can only work if the recipient is unaware of the deception; the author must therefore have sufficient understanding of the capacity of the intended recipient to be deceived in order to avoid misunderstanding, suspicion or failure.⁶⁶ Black propaganda is used by governments as overt communication, where the recipient understands that the information they have been given originates from an opposing source and also for diplomatic purposes where a government does not want to be seen as actively disseminating information which could be detrimental to its foreign policies.⁶⁷ White propaganda differs in that there is no attempt to deceive the recipient as to where the information originates and propagandists are open about their intentions and aims. Typically, a government will engage in both white and black propaganda, the former being used to obfuscate the latter. Grey propaganda on the other hand,

⁶¹ Welch, op. cit., p. 94.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Thorne, op. cit.; Somerville, op. cit.

⁶⁴ Jackall, R., *Propaganda* (London: Macmillan, 1995).

⁶⁵ Taylor, op. cit., 2003, p. 5.

⁶⁶ Jowett & O'Donnell, op. cit.

⁶⁷ Shulsky, A. N., & Schmitt, G. J., *Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Intelligence* (Washington: Potomac Book, 2002).

describes a situation where the recipient is unaware of where the information originates and does not know whether is an example of white or black propaganda.⁶⁸

In all forms of propaganda, manipulation of what O' Donnell calls the '*symbolic environment*' and suppression of information play a very important role.⁶⁹ As Huxley points out, '*the greatest triumphs of propaganda have been accomplished, not by doing something, but by refraining from doing (...) by simply not mentioning certain subjects*'.⁷⁰ The association of propaganda only with lies and falsehood, then, is a serious misconception. As Welch observes, '*it operates with many different levels of truth – from the outright lie, to the half-truth, to the truth out of context*'.⁷¹

More recently there has been a move to a more neutral position. Jowett and O'Donnell, for instance, come to the conclusion that '*propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist*'.⁷² Nelson presents more comprehensive description:

'propaganda is neutrally defined as a systematic form of purposeful persuasion that attempts to influence the emotions, attitudes, opinions, and actions of specified target audiences for ideological, political or commercial purposes through the controlled transmission of one-sided messages (which may or may not be factual) via mass and direct media channels. A propaganda organization employs propagandists who engage in propagandism – the applied creation and distribution of such forms of persuasion'.⁷³

These definitions, then, focus on the communicative process or, more precisely, on the purpose of the process, and allow propaganda to be interpreted as positive or negative, depending on the perspective of the viewer or listener. This approach is also shared by Taylor who emphasises that we should take propaganda as a '*value-neutral concept, as a process rather than as negative label*'.⁷⁴ The most recent studies concentrate on examination of the impact of mass media on shaping and influencing public opinion and behaviour and on the maintenance of public order. Herman and Chomsky see the mass media as the main vehicle of disseminating propaganda arguing that it '*manufactures consent*' by '*filters*' such as ownership, advertising and news makers that protect the interest of those in control, limit debate on important social

⁶⁸ Newcourt- Nowogrodzki, S., *Black Propaganda* (London: Sutton Publishing, 2005); Cull, N. J. & Culbert, D. H & Welch, D., *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopaedia, 1500 to the Present* (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2003).

⁶⁹ Jowett & O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 157.

⁷⁰ Huxley, op. cit., p. xlviii.

⁷¹ Welch, op. cit., 2013, pp. 28-9.

⁷² Jowett & O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 7.

⁷³ Nelson, R. A., *A Chronology and Glossary of Propaganda in the United States* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), pp. 232-33.

⁷⁴ Taylor, op. cit., 1997, pp. 16-17.

and political issues and shape collective memory.⁷⁵ In this respect, scholars also investigate the role of the media as a '*soft power*', a concept introduced by Joseph Nye in attempting to establish its part in securing national interests and influencing international diplomacy without using military force.⁷⁶

British Propaganda during the Second World War

*'The war holds a unique position as the benchmark against which the heroism, brutality and futility of modern industrialised warfare had come to be measured.'*⁷⁷

The outbreak of the war caught Britain unprepared. Whereas the Nazis had developed a well organised propaganda apparatus, British propaganda seems to depend on improvisation.⁷⁸ To a large extent this was the result of the British interwar foreign policy of appeasement, based on an assumption that compromise and acceding to Hitler's demands could preserve peace in Europe. It was also a reflection of pacifist tendencies in Britain and the nationalist movement in Europe, influenced by fresh memories of the First World War and the global economic crisis. In contrast, the German long term strategy had already been articulated by Hitler in the interwar years, namely to '*destroy the enemy from within, to conquer him through himself*' and '*mental confusion, contradiction of feelings, indecision, panic*'.⁷⁹ Yet, the lack of a strategic approach to propaganda was also the outcome of government actions taken after 1918. Propaganda was considered unimportant and '*unsuitable*' in peacetime foreign policy, therefore the Ministry of Information (MoI) and the Crewe House (the organisation responsible for propaganda against Germany in the First World War) were disbanded.⁸⁰ The association of propaganda with lies and distortion employed during World War I had such a profound effect that the British government even attempted to ban the word '*propaganda*' from diplomatic vocabulary.⁸¹ Consequently, until the mid-1930s, the British government did not engage in overseas propaganda other than the '*official service*' provided by the News Department of the Foreign Office transmitting news abroad and the British Council, established in 1934 with the task of spreading British culture throughout the world.⁸² The BBC Arabic Service was inaugurated in January 1938 in order to counter anti-British German radio propaganda to the Middle East. Yet

⁷⁵ Herman. E. S & Chomsky N., *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (London: Vintage, 1994).

⁷⁶ Nye, J., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

⁷⁷ Welch, op. cit., 2013, p. 81.

⁷⁸ Mansell, op. cit., p. 56.

⁷⁹ Rauschnig, H., *Germany's Revolution of Destruction*, cited in Mansell, ibid, p. 55.

⁸⁰ Black, op. cit., p. 1.

⁸¹ Welch, op. cit., 2013, p. 33.

⁸² Black, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

the importance of the BBC transnational broadcasting was not truly recognised until the Munich Crisis in September 1938.

An assumption was, however, made that German people were not united in supporting Hitler and his party. Thus Britain positioned itself as an acquaintance of the German common people subjected to totalitarianism, in an attempt to attack and weaken the Nazi organisation from within.⁸³ Although on his return from Munich, Neville Chamberlain, officially stood by his policy of appeasement, he secretly ordered Sir Campbell Stuart, the director of *The Times* to form a new propaganda department. It was not until spring 1939, however, that the value of propaganda against Germany was recognised. The department of which Stuart was a chairman was first based at Electra House (EH) and, after the war broke out, was moved to Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire, changing its name to the Department of Propaganda in Enemy Countries, also known as '*the country*'.⁸⁴ The Foreign Office also had its own Political Intelligence Department, led by Rex Leeper, which was later attached to EH.

Equally problematic was the government's approach to propaganda at home – the MoI was not reconstructed until a day after Britain declared war on Germany. But it was clear that mistakes made during the First World War could not be repeated. In order to distance itself from fascism and communism, the MoI outlined its policy as '*to tell the truth, nothing but the truth and, as near as possible, the whole truth*' as '*distrust breeds fear much more than knowledge of the reverse*'.⁸⁵ The principles driving home propaganda laid in convincing the public that it was the '*People's War*' and, for the first time, the average worker was addressed in BBC broadcasts.⁸⁶ Confidence in the government was to be achieved by its assurance of honesty. Scholars, however, seem to disagree to which extent the '*strategy of truth*' was applied in reality. While Balfour, Mansell and Briggs argue that the government was averse to the deliberate perversion of the truth, McLaine questions this view, recalling MoI directives from March 1940 which proposed that a pragmatic approach should be taken, because

'truth (...) is what is believed to be the truth. A lie that is put across becomes the truth and may, therefore, be justified. The difficulty is to keep up lying ... it is simpler to tell one big, thumping lie that will then we believed'.⁸⁷

⁸³ Cruickshank, op. cit., p. 11.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 17.

⁸⁵ Cited in McLaine, I., *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979), p. 28.

⁸⁶ Taylor, op. cit., 1995.

⁸⁷ INF, 1/856, MoI directive, March 1940, cited in McLaine, op. cit., p. 28. See also Balfour, op. cit., & Briggs, op. cit.

It can also be argued that Balfour, Mansell and Briggs' assessment of British wartime propaganda is based on comparison with German propaganda because, as Carruthers observes,

'freedom of speech was, after all, one of the 'Four Freedoms' for which the war was being fought, as FDR (Franklin D. Roosevelt) and Churchill framed the Allied purpose in 1941's Atlantic Charter'.⁸⁸

She goes further by asserting that:

'British and American wartime-managers self-consciously set themselves apart from their German foe and Soviet ally by cultivating a 'strategy of truth', but 'truthfulness was a strategic choice as much as an ideological imperative. A degree of candour would encourage citizens to feel that their leaders trusted them to accept even bad news with unruffled equanimity'.⁸⁹

This notion, however, is challenged by Welch who demonstrates that the government recognised the limited capacity of the public to absorb bad news and therefore excluded material from dissemination.⁹⁰ As in the previous war, selectiveness of information became an important element of propaganda, both at home and overseas. This practice was not limited to bad news; censorship was applied to all information which could undermine the unity of the allies' coalition, weaken public morale or, in general, did not follow the official line of the government. Not by lying, but by the selection of news, the government was able in Welch's words *'to distort reality'*. As he explains: *'silence – even when the facts are known – becoming a means of preventing the proper understanding of those facts by modifying the context.'*⁹¹ This questions the BBC policy of *'bad news first'* as it indicates that not all defeats of the allies were reported. Seaton, however, argues that, although the government limited the amount of news, *'the public knew more than might have been expected'*.⁹²

Despite the government commitment to truth, in the first months of the war *'official policy toward the media remained so shambolic that reporters feared a return to the "Dark Ages" of 1914–15'*.⁹³ As Carruthers points out, *'in an echo of August 1914, the military imposed a total news blackout on the British Expeditionary Force's dispatch to France'*.⁹⁴ It was only after the fall of France in June 1940 that the necessity of coordinating and expanding all agencies involved in both overt and covert propaganda was recognised. It was on the initiative of

⁸⁸ Carruthers, op. cit., p. 77.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Welch, op. cit., 2013, p. 34.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Curran & Seaton, op. cit., p. 140.

⁹³ Carruthers, op. cit., p. 77.

⁹⁴ Ibid, pp. 77-8.

Winston Churchill, who succeeded Chamberlain as Prime Minister in May 1940, that Special Operations Warfare (SOE) was established with the task '*to co-ordinate all action by way of subversion and sabotage against the enemy overseas*'.⁹⁵ The Minister of Economic Warfare, Hugh Dalton, who was put in charge, divided the SOE into SO₁, which took over secret propaganda from EH, and SO₂, responsible for sabotage. Further attempts to co-ordinate, also following Churchill's intervention, took place in August 1941 with the creation of the PWE, with the Ministerial Committee of three in charge: Bruce Lockhart representing the FO, Rex Leeper the MoI, and Major General Brooks the Ministry of Economic Warfare (MEW), shortly replaced by Hugh Dalton.⁹⁶ As the BBC European Service became recognised as an important instrument of propaganda, Ivone Kirkpatrick, who acted as Adviser of Foreign Policy to the BBC from February 1941, was invited to join the Committee. This link proved to be particularly important as it was the PWE which became responsible for issuing directives to the BBC European Service. By the beginning of 1942 it was acknowledged, however, that the work of the PWE Ministerial Committee was not effective, resulting in its disbandment and a reshuffle of responsibilities: Lockhart was appointed the PWE Director-General; the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, took overall charge of propaganda policy; and the newly appointed Minister of Information, Brendan Bracken, was responsible for administration.⁹⁷

The main challenge to British propaganda came with Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union in 1941. The British government took the initiative to convince the public that the Soviet Union was no longer an enemy whilst Churchill, who had previously attacked the USSR and warned the public about the danger of the communism, addressed Stalin as an ally and called for Anglo-Russian co-operation.⁹⁸ As Briggs points out, '*the USSR entry into the war transformed the war in real terms as well as in terms of propaganda*'.⁹⁹ As the main thrust of Britain's policy was to maintain the unity of the allies' coalition, uncomfortable facts about Stalin's regime or his political manoeuvring in Eastern and Northern Europe became taboo. The BBC played a key part in projecting Stalin as an '*architect of enduring peace and the Red Army as liberator*'.¹⁰⁰ References to communism were omitted to the extent that the BBC was required to use 'Russia' instead of the Soviet Union in their broadcasts.¹⁰¹ Political aspects of the Anglo-Soviet alliance are discussed in chapter 3.

⁹⁵ Cruickshank, op. cit., p. 17.

⁹⁶ Tangye Lean, op. cit., p. 97.

⁹⁷ Cruickshank, op. cit., p. 34.

⁹⁸ Stenton, op. cit., pp. 61-2.

⁹⁹ Briggs, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁰⁰ Nicholas, S., *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 175.

¹⁰¹ Briggs, op. cit., p. 357.

It was, however, the Atlantic Charter which became the backbone of British propaganda. Freedom and the right of nations to self-determination provided an alternative to communism, attacking Nazi dogma at its core.¹⁰² Less successful was the use of ‘*unconditional surrender*’ towards Germany sprung by Roosevelt at Casablanca in January 1943, as it encouraged the Germans to fight to the end and disheartened resistance in Germany. Churchill did not welcome this propaganda line; aware of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe, he hoped that, together with Germany, Britain would be able to stop the fall of the iron curtain, but officially, in the name of allied unity, he supported it, as did the BBC.¹⁰³ After the end of the war, many scholars, including Newcourt, expressed the view that the Casablanca Declaration had a negative effect; not only did it give ammunition to the propaganda of Goebbels and strengthen the military and civilian morale of the Germans but it empowered Stalin. In fact, he argues, that the war could have ended two years sooner.¹⁰⁴

The BBC relationship with the Government

*‘States take uncommonly invasive measures to shape what can be said and shown of war, armed with a battery of justifications. Sensitive information must be kept from enemy hands; bereaved relatives must be protected from the sight of their loved (...), ‘morale’ must be maintained – on the home front as at the front line. ‘The ‘fog of war’ hints at more than the atmospheric and perceptual murk that envelops battlefields. It also alludes to the haze of deception that commonly masks why war is waged and how is fought’.*¹⁰⁵

Both the independence and the monopoly of the BBC were established before the war by Royal Charter in 1927. However, in 1935 the Committee of Imperial Defence decided that, in case of war, the government would take over the control of the BBC and all broadcasting.¹⁰⁶ A year later the same conclusion was drawn by the Ullswater Committee. It was also decided that the MoI would be responsible for censorship of all BBC broadcasts. In addition, Reith and an official of the Post Office, Thomas Gardiner, had reached an agreement that, if war broke out, the BBC Board of Governors would be ‘*out of commission*’ and the BBC Director-General and his Deputy would represent the board whilst the MoI would issue censorship guidelines.¹⁰⁷ As

¹⁰² Davies, N., *Europe: A History* (London: Pimlico, 1997), p. 1027.

¹⁰³ Schmidt, D., *The Folly of War: American Foreign Policy: 1898-2005* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2005), pp. 189-91; Briggs, op. cit., p. 580.

¹⁰⁴ Newcourt, op. cit., p. 236.

¹⁰⁵ Carruthers, op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ Briggs, op. cit., p. 77.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Seaton points out, it is surprising that the BBC, which echoed the government appeasement policy, was secretly preparing for the war.¹⁰⁸

Reith considered the agreement a notable achievement because, although Director-General was going to be responsible to MoI, he would not be subordinate to it. However, the removal of the Governors was met with criticism; it was understood that special measures had to be applied in time of war, but it was felt that it was equally important to maintain the perception of the BBC as an independent institution. As Briggs points out, given that no specific arrangements were outlined, the extent of the control over broadcasting was open to government interpretation and, in consequence, both the BBC and the government had gone to war without knowing what their relationship would be and, more importantly, what role the BBC was going to play.¹⁰⁹

A few months before the outbreak of the war, the BBC job was defined as to:

*'mediate information and to convince the educated minority through 'subtle and indirect' propaganda and for the less educated masses having simple and direct messages focused on a defined object and appealing to instinct rather than reason'.*¹¹⁰

Despite the many voices inside Whitehall advocating for the control of Broadcasting House, the BBC continued to argue for its independence and recognition of its prominence in supporting the war effort. According to Briggs, in the initial stage of war, authority and responsibility remained in hands of the BBC, while censorship was defined as *'indirect, informal and voluntary'*.¹¹¹ Yet, as Carruthers observes, during the Phoney War, under the blanket of security and military secrecy, the BBC was prevented from broadcasting important information and, whilst regular programming was suspended, the BBC *'crank[ed] out hours of organ music and unedifying diet'*.¹¹² Whilst the BBC was formally independent, it had clearly *'entered into gentlemen's agreement'* with the government to accept official guidelines in their treatment of public affairs, requiring it to conform to official policy.¹¹³

In fact, the first two years of the war were not the BBC's *'finest hour'*, primarily because the state did not recognise its potential.¹¹⁴ The relationship between the Corporation and the government was not defined until Brendan Bracken became MoI in July 1941. Bracken recognised the importance of the BBC and saw its independence as a vital factor in winning

¹⁰⁸ Curran & Seaton, op. cit., p. 118.

¹⁰⁹ Briggs, op. cit., p. 83.

¹¹⁰ Cited in Somerville, 2012, p. 47.

¹¹¹ Briggs, A., *The Golden Age, of Wireless* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 650-1.

¹¹² Carruthers, op. cit. p. 69.

¹¹³ Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p. 156.

¹¹⁴ Mansell, op. cit., p. 56.

public trust.¹¹⁵ Rather than control, he sought to establish cooperation with the BBC and therefore restored the number of Governors and appointed Home and Foreign Advisers to the BBC, Ryan and Kirkpatrick, with the task to carry out official policy. The power struggle between the BBC and the MoI, however, continued until the end of the war.

The extent to which the BBC could exercise its independence remains a subject of debate among scholars. While Briggs claims that that censorship was based on the principle of voluntarism, Lockhart, argues that *'there were times (...) when there was more political warfare on the home front than against the enemy'*.¹¹⁶ In particular, the Admiralty pressed for a complete silence regarding war issues and its relationship with the BBC remained very tense throughout the war. Yet, according to Lord Normanbrook, the BBC did not always follow the MoI directives.¹¹⁷ Whilst Briggs, Mansell and Walker argue that the BBC managed to maintain a very substantial measure of independence, Seaton points out that:

*"Bias" and opinion are fundamental conditions of the production of news, not accidental pathologies. Hence the work of the BBC during the war has been viewed with greater scepticism. A belief in its independence is little more than a self-adulatory part of the British myth'*¹¹⁸

It is understandable that security measures had to be applied during the war. Yet, by the same token, the government used its *'emergency powers'* to censor broadcasts. Therefore, Seaton's conclusion that the BBC was as independent as the war circumstances allowed is arguably more persuasive.¹¹⁹ On the other hand, the BBC knew that it was bound by *'silken cords'* which sometimes felt like *'chains of iron'*.¹²⁰ Yet, not many people knew that incoming cables from the Press Association and Reuters were routed directly into the MoI at their Bloomsbury headquarters, allowing MoI censors to excise *'damaging'* material before wire service subscribers received the cables on which many radio broadcasts were based'.¹²¹ Moreover, broadcasts in foreign languages had to be approved in advance by the security and policy censor, whilst the so-called switch censor present during transmission had permission to stop the broadcast if variation from the script occurred.¹²² As Taylor points out, this pre-censorship not only allowed the BBC to be seen as a truth telling station but it was *'so efficient that many British and overseas observers were not aware of what was taking place; instead everyone*

¹¹⁵ Briggs, op. cit., 1995, pp. 31-32.

¹¹⁶ Lockhart, op. cit., 1972, p. 96.

¹¹⁷ Lord Normanbrook, INF, 1/869, 9 July 1941, cited in McLaine, op. cit.

¹¹⁸ Curran & Seaton, op. cit., p. 139.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Expression used by Sir Allan Powell, 8 December 1943; cited in Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 31.

¹²¹ Pronay, N., & Spring, D. W., *Propaganda, Politics and Film, 1918-45* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Carruthers, op. cit.

¹²² Meissner, op. cit.

believed that the BBC was telling the truth'.¹²³ On the other hand, editors and reporters became their own censors because of their '*patriotic consciousness*'; it was not necessary for officials to develop policies in this area as colleagues checked each other '*for any infractions of the officials' rules with hawk-like vigilance*'.¹²⁴

The principles of wartime broadcasting

*'The BBC emerged from the war as both a symbol and an agent of the victory. More than at any other time, the BBC was part of, and seen to be part of, the history of the nation.'*¹²⁵

Although the relationship between the BBC and the MoI remained complex throughout the war, they shared the same goal notably:

'to explain the significance of events as they occur; to keep the essential issues before the nation; to inspire determination to see the war through; to reflect the personal experience of the men and women in the front line; and to tell the ordinary citizen what he must do, and how and why, to cope with the practical problems that confront him in the new conditions of total war'.¹²⁶

However, this policy, Burns observes, presented the BBC with a '*perpetual and unresolvable dilemma*' because

'it has come to be regarded as occupying a position of political power, while it sees itself as a politically neutral custodian of the nation's interests in the uses to which broadcasting, as an instrument for the exercise of the political power, may be put'.¹²⁷

Thus Burns argues that the position of the BBC during the war was '*one of responsibility without the power*'.¹²⁸

Broadcasters, however, understood that they could win public trust only by telling the truth. Therefore, honesty, credibility, accuracy, comprehensiveness, consistency and objectiveness were identified as the main principles of wartime broadcasting.¹²⁹ It was a tribute to the BBC policy of '*bad news first*', reporting on the allied defeats that the audience were persuaded of

¹²³ Taylor, op. cit., 2003, p. 161.

¹²⁴ Carruthers, op. cit., p. 78.

¹²⁵ Curran & Seaton, op. cit., p. 120.

¹²⁶ Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 29.

¹²⁷ Burns, T., *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 13.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Mansell, op. cit., pp. 90-2.

their credibility.¹³⁰ As Walker notes, if the news had not made reference to defeats, listeners would not believe later in the victories, as was indeed the case for Germany.¹³¹ With the expansion of the BBC Overseas Service, consistency became particularly important because listeners had tuned not only to programmes in their own language, but also to other foreign broadcasts. Many people in Europe understood more than one language and suspicions of propaganda resulted in cross-listening.¹³² Yet, abroad, the BBC was considered as a '*Voice of Britain*' and, after 1940 when Hitler occupied most of Europe, familiarisation with the official line of the British government continuing fight against the Axis, was seen as crucial. Unlike newspapers, radio reached a wider audience and the BBC broadcasts were considered as '*an authoritative reflection of official policy and opinion*'.¹³³ This argument demonstrates that, in fact, listeners abroad did not care about the constitutional status of the Corporation but, as Cruickshank observes:

*'to both friend and foe – it was the British government and not the BBC that spoke to them; and the reason that what was said on British radio had a great impact was not that it came from a body known to be independent, but that years of wartime listening persuaded listeners that what they heard was the truth'.*¹³⁴

Foreign listeners also tuned to the BBC Home Service, partly because it was considered free from propaganda, partly because the European Service in English was badly jammed.¹³⁵ British broadcasts were listened to in Poland, France, Belgium and as far as North Africa and the Middle East.¹³⁶

As O' Donnell points out:

*'the truthfulness of the BBC was a very powerful weapon; by the end of the war German civilians, too, were listening to the BBC in order to find out about conditions in their own country'.*¹³⁷

It was thus truthfulness rather than technological advances, O'Donnell concludes, that helped to ensure that the BBC came out of the war as a winner.¹³⁸ Recent studies, however, question the objectivity of the BBC during the war. As Welch observes, selectiveness of information is one

¹³⁰ Franks, op. cit., pp. 22-3.

¹³¹ Walker, op. cit.

¹³² Mansell, op. cit., p. 91.

¹³³ Curran & Seaton, op. cit.

¹³⁴ Cruickshank, op. cit., pp. 180-1.

¹³⁵ Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 445.

¹³⁶ Ibid, pp. 444-5; Walker, op. cit.; Mazur G., *Biuro Informacji i Propagandy: SZP-ZWZ-AK, 1939-45* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1987).

¹³⁷ Jowett & O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 198.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

of the techniques of propaganda.¹³⁹ An analysis of the BBC broadcasts, both in English and in foreign languages, demonstrates that news had to comply with the Foreign Office guidelines, meaning that information which conflicted with the allies' objectives were censored. Very importantly, too, Webb points out that objective does not necessarily mean neutral.¹⁴⁰ As Cruickshank argues:

'although open broadcasting was confined to the truth, on the grounds that honesty is the best policy, it did not necessarily have to be the whole truth. While the white broadcasters were required to promote the current approved propaganda themes no less than were their black brethren, some truths would support them better than others, and some were best left untold'.¹⁴¹

On the other hand, Seaton demonstrates that the *'BBC's claim to accuracy and objectivity was, in itself, a propaganda weapon – a demonstration of the superiority of democracy over totalitarianism'*.¹⁴²

The BBC European Service as a weapon of war

'The BBC itself did more than any other comparable agency both to pull together different elements of resistance in each separate European country – by giving news, the most important of all its tasks, by providing ideas and inspiration, and at certain stages by passing on operational orders – and to spread relevant information between the countries. The feeling of generalised 'resistance' in Europe, a movement with some kind of 'solidarity', owed much to BBC reports of what was happening, often spontaneously, in scattered countries'.¹⁴³

Ten years after the establishment of the British Broadcasting Corporation, the BBC Empire Service was launched. In January 1938, programmes in Arabic were introduced as the 'counterattack' to German broadcasts to the Middle East and, two months later, in Spanish and Portuguese for Latin America for the same reason. As a result of the Munich crisis, broadcasts in French, German and Italian were inaugurated on 27 September 1938. Yet, after the crisis had passed, the importance of maintaining broadcasting to Germany, France and Italy was not immediately recognised, and a decision to continue these foreign language programmes was made on daily basis.¹⁴⁴ In May 1939, the Afrikaans Service was inaugurated, but it was not until the war broke out that the government considered broadcasting to other important countries.

¹³⁹ Welch, op. cit., 2013.

¹⁴⁰ Gillespie, & Webb, op. cit.

¹⁴¹ Cruickshank, op. cit., p. 69.

¹⁴² Curran & Seaton, op. cit., p. 133.

¹⁴³ Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 11.

¹⁴⁴ Mansell, op. cit., p. 122.

The Hungarian Service started on 5 September, the Polish on 7 September and a day later the Czechoslovakian. High demand for reliable news – especially regarding the allies’ military progress since, in the countries under German occupation, all radio stations were controlled by the Nazis and listening to other broadcasts was forbidden – resulted in rapid expansion of the Overseas Service from 10 foreign services in 1939 to 45 by 1945.¹⁴⁵ The growing importance of addressing people living under the occupation, as well as the increase in output, personnel and number of transmitters, led to a reorganisation in October 1941 which detached the European from the Overseas Service. In addition, a special English Service ‘London Calling’, based on important items ‘*likely to be of appeal to continental listeners*’ was introduced. In the beginning of 1941 the European Service took the initiative to stimulate resistance activities in occupied countries with broadcasts in Morse, bringing the latest news to editors of the underground press. In July 1943 their needs were further addressed with a special series of broadcasts in French, German, Dutch and English that were read slowly.

Sponsored by a Treasury Grant, the European Service became the main instrument of British propaganda. As Kirkpatrick points out, it was the only contact with people living under German occupation and the only possible tool of propaganda.¹⁴⁶ Thus, Nicholas concludes that propaganda to occupied countries was not only considered as necessary but ‘*desirable*’.¹⁴⁷ According to Garnett, the European Service

*‘remained a separate organisation with its own hierarchy and outlook throughout the war and for long periods pursued its own policy little influenced by the various departments which nominally controlled it’.*¹⁴⁸

In the beginning of the war, the importance of foreign language broadcasts was not recognised, nor was their effect on people living in occupied countries. As Franks observes, the European Service:

*‘was viewed by the propaganda effort as a means of stimulating potential insurgency – but those who did rise up in the early months and years were doomed because the prospects were so hopeless’.*¹⁴⁹

Garnett sees the lack of the British Government long-term propaganda policy for occupied countries as the main cause of this state of affairs.¹⁵⁰ However, the need for centralisation was

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 123.

¹⁴⁶ Kirkpatrick, op. cit.

¹⁴⁷ Nicholas, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ Garnett, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁴⁹ Franks, op. cit., p. 22.

¹⁵⁰ Garnett, op. cit.

quickly acknowledged. In June 1940, Noel Newsome, the European News Editor and, from December 1941, the Director of the European Service, stated that:

'The principle has been accepted in the highest quarters that the Europe Service shall act as entity, as an army attacking clearly defined object, and using a strategy laid down broadly by the Commanding Officer, and not as a series of guerrilla bands or groups of partisans, with no cohesion and entirely self-ordinated plans and aims'.¹⁵¹

Although Mansell argues that until 1942 there was no overall plan for the broadcasts to Europe, this position can be challenged: from January 1941 the European Service was engaged in the 'V' Campaign aimed at sabotaging Germans actions, while the establishment of PWE in August of 1941 laid the foundations for political warfare on occupied countries to be achieved through the BBC.¹⁵² Its policies informed both the European Service and the black stations, namely:

'To prevent the economic exploitation of the countries by Germany and in particular to prevent the recruiting and deportation of labour to Germany.

To build up resistance movements and to service the clandestine press.

To educate the population in sabotage.

To organise attacks on the moral(e) of the German occupying forces.

To discredit and terrorise quislings and collaborators.

To maintain control of opinion in moments of crisis and to educate the various sections of the population on the parts they should play during the liberation'.¹⁵³

Mansell's argument is based on the grievances expressed by the Minister of Information at that time, Duff Cooper, at the failure of Churchill and the War Cabinet to recognise broadcasting as a 'weapon of war'.¹⁵⁴ Cruickshank, however, disagrees, pointing out that Churchill took a great interest in the BBC foreign programmes, particularly when related to military operations.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, if Cooper was right, why did the government attempt to control it?

¹⁵¹ Hale, J. *Radio Power: Propaganda and International Broadcasting* (London: Elek, 1975), p. 55.

¹⁵² Garnett, op. cit., p. 79.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 169.

¹⁵⁴ BBC WAC, Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Governors, 17 July 1941, in Mansell, op. cit., p. 122.

¹⁵⁵ Cruickshank, op. cit., p. 48.

As Briggs asserts, *'the staple diet in broadcasting to Europe was straightforward news – good or bad, told simply but with a punch'*.¹⁵⁶ Yet those broadcasts had to be comply with the political situation and resistance activities in each country, and more importantly, with the grand alliance policies towards them. Therefore, different directives applied towards Germany, neutral and occupied countries.¹⁵⁷

Each Service had *'its own identity and its own ethos'* and much depended on the experience and personality of the editor and his crew.¹⁵⁸ In the beginning of the war, however, before the regional structure of the European Service was established, this ethos owed its existence to groups of translators. Mansell explains:

'Foreign announcers/translators (...) were grouped together in a pool and operated under the eye of a team of language supervisors and switch censors – linguists of British nationality and known dependability whose job was to ensure both accuracy of translation and a faithful reading of the text at the microphone'.¹⁵⁹

All the European Service bulletins were compiled by the Bush House Central Desk. It had full access to all available news sources, including: material from news agencies such as Reuter, Associated Press, British United Press and Exchange Telegraph, digests of enemy, neutral and Soviet Union broadcasts prepared by the BBC Monitoring Service and the official and clandestine foreign press. The wires, as it has been noted above, had been pre-censored. Digests from the German press and the clandestine press in occupied countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Holland, Belgium and Norway came through the Stockholm news agency in form of cabled extracts in English.¹⁶⁰ The material from wires was first checked by the copytaster for accuracy and only second for its news and propaganda values.¹⁶¹ When ready, stories were distributed to regional editors who added local details and gave *'policy "slants" according to other instructions'*.¹⁶² Although regional newsrooms exercised a considerable degree of independence in the arrangement and wording of the bulletins, as Mansell points out,

¹⁵⁶ Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 381.

¹⁵⁷ For in- depth analysis of each of the European Service see: Bennett, op. cit.; for German, French, Italian, Polish, Czech, Portuguese, Yugoslavian see Ribeiro, N., and Seul, S. (ed.) *Revisiting Transnational Broadcasting: The BBC foreign-language services during the Second World War*, *Media History*, Special Issue 21 (4), 2015.

¹⁵⁸ Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 381.

¹⁵⁹ Mansell, op. cit., p. 81.

¹⁶⁰ Garnett, op. cit. p. 226.

¹⁶¹ Tangye Lean, op. cit., p. 99.

¹⁶² Ibid.

'no bulletin could be broadcast without first being checked and stamped by the Policy Editor of the day – one of the Centre Desk seniors – so that whatever variations of treatment might arise from regional rewriting; consistency of approach was always safeguarded in the end'.¹⁶³

The power struggle between the European Service and the Political Warfare Executive

The European Service received policy instructions from PWE through the BBC Controller, Ivone Kirkpatrick, with the former being responsible to the MoI and MEW. As a member of PWE, Kirkpatrick acted as an important link between the BBC and PWE, yet his appointment as Controller was met with reservations because it came from Whitehall and was seen by some as a government attempt to take control.¹⁶⁴ They were, however, proved wrong: from his first day in the office, Kirkpatrick argued for European Service autonomy.¹⁶⁵ The Director of the European Service, Noel Newsome, who also held the title of Director of Propaganda, was in charge of conveying policy to the staff.¹⁶⁶ In early 1942, it became evident that the overlapping of the BBC and PWE intelligence departments had resulted in confusion. Therefore, in line with the recommendation of the Browett Committee, 'regionalisation' was implemented, bringing research, analysis and policy under the management of one person, dealing with one country.¹⁶⁷ Consequently, the BBC European Intelligence Section, including its Record Unit which prepared Surveys of the European Audience and a Monthly Intelligence Report, and the BBC Overseas Research Unit, responsible for analysing foreign propaganda, were disbanded and its staff transferred to PWE. Moreover, in order to establish closer cooperation, PWE was moved to Bush House in February 1942. This process was fraught with many obstacles, particularly in relation to finding suitable staff; for example, separate directors for Poland and Czechoslovakia were not appointed until September 1943.¹⁶⁸ The regional directives had to be in line with PWE central directives, and during weekly meetings at which all PWE Regional Directors were present, the general direction of propaganda in broadcasting was discussed. Before reaching each of the foreign-language newsrooms, decisions also had to be approved by Kirkpatrick or his deputy Harman Grisewood.¹⁶⁹

Nevertheless, as Kirkpatrick notes, the new arrangement did not work in practice because the Regional Directors were giving directives directly to the editors without consulting him.¹⁷⁰ Newsome, who produced his own propaganda directives and Propaganda Background Notes

¹⁶³ Mansell, op. cit., p. 92.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 84.

¹⁶⁵ Briggs, op. cit., 1995.

¹⁶⁶ Note on the Organisation of the European Service, 21 October 1941, ibid, p. 313.

¹⁶⁷ Cruickshank, op. cit., p. 64; Garnett, op. cit., p.81.

¹⁶⁸ Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 426.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 384.

¹⁷⁰ Kirkpatrick to PWE Executive Committee, 4 December 1941; in: Garnett, op. cit., pp. 88-9.

which, in many cases, contradicted official guidelines, was also unhappy about regionalisation and threatened to resign. Garnett, however, criticises Kirkpatrick for his complaint, pointing out that the regional structure was put in place because the work of the European Service up to that point was deemed unsatisfactory.¹⁷¹ Besides, it was the aim of the reorganisation to establish closer cooperation between the Regional Directors and the editors.

The extent to which the BBC was bound to follow PWE directives remains a subject of dispute among scholars. Whilst, according to Lockhart and Garnett, PWE gained control over policy and output after it moved to Bush House, Briggs argues that the European Service maintained ‘*a substantial degree of independence*’ from PWE and, in fact, its directives were ‘*never universally obeyed*’ allowing for individual judgment.¹⁷² He also asserts that the regional editors could challenge the directives, which were only circulated after being accepted by the BBC.¹⁷³ Yet, what Briggs saw as an advantage, Newsome considered a handicap: he advocated for centralisation and for all European Services to act as one entity.¹⁷⁴ Briggs also questions Bennett’s statement that the PWE had total control of the European output ‘*which was its by right*’, pointing out that his conclusion was based exclusively on analysis of the Danish Service and one should not generalise about the European Service where much depended on the relationship between individual editors and PWE Regional Directors.¹⁷⁵ For example, the Polish Editor, Gregory Macdonald, had a considerable share in the preparation of the PWE directives.¹⁷⁶ Whilst Mansell follows Briggs’ argument, Walker seems to disagree, demonstrating that throughout the war the relationship between the two remained ‘*fuzzy round the edges*’.¹⁷⁷ Cruickshank too, notes that PWE had the last word regarding the content of the broadcasts and how they should be ‘*tailored*’.¹⁷⁸ However, irrespective of the extent of BBC independence from PWE, the FO always had the last word regarding policy; it is indisputable that BBC broadcasts had to be consistent with the official line of the government, as did the PWE directives. As Lockhart points out, ‘*PWE did not make policy, it executed it*’ and Kirkpatrick was perfectly aware of this.¹⁷⁹

The Polish Section of the BBC

The outbreak of the war had a major influence on the inauguration of the BBC Polish Service. Not only was Polskie Radio well established in Poland, operating one national and nine regional

¹⁷¹ Garnett, op. cit., p. 89.

¹⁷² Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 380 & p. 313; Mansell follows this argument; op. cit., p. 85 & p. 91.

¹⁷³ Briggs, *ibid*, p. 437.

¹⁷⁴ Stenton, op. cit., p. 37.

¹⁷⁵ Bennett, op. cit., p. 20. & Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 381.

¹⁷⁶ Briggs, *ibid*, p. 381.

¹⁷⁷ Walker, op. cit., p. 41.

¹⁷⁸ Cruickshank, op. cit., p. 101.

¹⁷⁹ Lockhart, op. cit., 1972, p. 185. Also see: Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p. 151; Stenton, op. cit., p. 40.

channels, but it also broadcast in six foreign languages.¹⁸⁰ Therefore when the Foreign Office approached its embassy in Warsaw a few weeks before the outbreak of the war regarding the possibility of setting up Polish-language broadcasts from London, the answer was that it would *'not have a very useful purpose'* and it might be *'thought impertinent by the Polish authorities who now, in fact, have an efficient and unbiased news service of their own'*.¹⁸¹ Yet, the effectiveness of Polskie Radio was not the only reason why the BBC was reluctant to introduce broadcasts in Polish; it was understood that such programmes would have political implications and could result in the BBC being accused by Germans of propaganda.¹⁸²

The first Polish programme was aired on 7 September 1939 with an opening speech by the Polish Ambassador in London, Count Edward Raczyński, followed by the news read by Zbigniew Grabowski.¹⁸³ It should be noted that Polskie Radio continued to broadcast after the German invasion, but as the Luftwaffe destroyed major power stations and transmitters, it was impossible to maintain regular transmissions. In this period the Polish Service played an important role informing people about the situation in the country as well the international response to the German attack on Poland. On 21 September, the Polish Service aired a memorable speech delivered by the Lord Mayor of London expressing his gratitude to the fighters of Warsaw. The next day, the Mayor of Warsaw, Stefan Starzyński, responded on Polskie Radio. The last broadcast from Warsaw was heard on 30 September; two days after capitulation.¹⁸⁴

In the beginning, the Polish Service was allowed only three 15-minute announcements per day, but the time was constantly expanded, transmitting six broadcasts daily by 1944.¹⁸⁵ The increase of output was reflected in the growing number of the Polish Service personnel. Whilst in 1939, the BBC had been employing only three Polish translators/announcers, namely Konrad Syrop, Tadeusz Lutosławski and Zbigniew Grabowski, by 1944 over 16 people worked in the Polish newsroom.¹⁸⁶ The Polish Service worked closely with Radio Polskie, the broadcasting arm of the Polish government-in-exile, even when it was still in France and the programmes were sent to be re-broadcast in London. Further cooperation was established when, on the invitation of the BBC, the Director of Radio Polskie, Krzysztof Eydziatowicz, visited London in March 1940.¹⁸⁷ As a result, a decision was made to include Polish officials' material in the Polish Service

¹⁸⁰ Pszenicki, op. cit., p. 33. Regional stations were situated at: Kraków, Poznań, Katowice, Wilno, Łwów, Łódź, Toruń, Warsaw (called Warszawa 2).

¹⁸¹ Undated note by J.B. Clark in Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 75.

¹⁸² Mansell, op. cit., pp. 97-8.

¹⁸³ Pszenicki, op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁸⁴ Kunert, A. K., *Cztery pożegnania Polskiego Radia: 1939-1945*, in *Polskie Radio w Czasie Drugiej Wojny Światowej*, op. cit., pp. 22-3.

¹⁸⁵ Pszenicki, op. cit., p. 46.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, pp. 43-4.

¹⁸⁷ Włodarkiewicz, op. cit., p. 229.

Wednesday and Saturday broadcasts. It should be noted that the Polish Minister of Information, Stanisław Stroński, changed the name 'Polskie Radio' to 'Radio Polskie' in order to disassociate it with pre-war Polish 'Sanacja' regime which nominally controlled it.¹⁸⁸ After the fall of France the Polish government took refuge in London, but failed to secure a 'free time' - the air time allocated to allied governments' in London, assumed to be 'free' from the BBC control. Despite this, Radio Polskie continued to prepare material which was, in its view, important to Polish listeners, to be used in the Polish Service programmes as well as the Home Service. It was only in January 1942 that Radio Polskie was allowed to broadcast on the BBC wavelengths. Radio Polskie and the Polish Service maintained close cooperation throughout the war as it was in the interest of both that all Polish transmissions were of high quality. Thus, for example, Radio Polskie loaned the Polish Service its announcer, the pre-war famous anchor, Józef Opieński, whose voice was widely recognised in Poland.¹⁸⁹

Despite the introduction by the German occupiers of the death penalty for listening to or possession of radio sets, Poles did not hesitate to tune to the BBC. However, as most of the transmitters had been confiscated or destroyed, it was the Polish Underground which monitored the BBC bulletins and distributed them in the form of clandestine newspapers and leaflets.¹⁹⁰ Consequently, the BBC 'V' Campaign followed by the 'go slow campaign' aimed at interrupting the work in German factories were widely known and acted upon.¹⁹¹ In addition, a special musical code system administered by the Sixth Bureau of the Polish General Staff in London was included in some of the Polish Service broadcasts in order to pass classified military information or to notify the Underground about the time and place of ammunition dropping etc.¹⁹²

The work of the Polish Service, however, was overshadowed by Polish-Soviet diplomatic turbulences, particularly after the USSR joined the allies' coalition and demanded annexation of territory east of the Curzon line (see chapters 6-9). As Walker points out, the Polish Service was 'the most fraught of all'.¹⁹³ The BBC did not want to be accused of partiality and, more importantly, of anti-Soviet propaganda. Issues such as disputes over the eastern border, imprisonment of the Polish people in the gulags or the discovery of the Polish officers' graves in Katyń were labelled as 'sensitive', thus not reported in detail and forbidden to be commented on.¹⁹⁴ The Warsaw Uprising of 1944 remained the most controversial issue; Nicholas goes as far

¹⁸⁸ Kwiatkowski, M., *Polskie Radio w Konspiracji: 1939-1944* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1989), p. 34.

¹⁸⁹ Włodarkiewicz, op. cit., p. 228.

¹⁹⁰ Kwiatkowski, op. cit.

¹⁹¹ Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 345.

¹⁹² Halski, op. cit., p. 118-19.

¹⁹³ Walker, op. cit., p. 55.

¹⁹⁴ Morris, A, 'The BBC Polish Service during the Second World War', *Media History*, op. cit., pp. 59-63.

as to argue that '*the British government deliberately misled the BBC about the Uprising*' while, *at the same time, threatening Russia to reveal the truth*'.¹⁹⁵ In contrast, Briggs claims that the rising was fully reported by the BBC.¹⁹⁶ Macdonald, however, admitted that the rising was played down by the BBC Home Service and that the British press had intervened in Whitehall regarding this issue (see chapter 8).¹⁹⁷ The same observation was made by the Director of Radio Polskie, Janusz Meissner, confirming that the BBC refused to include reports from Warsaw in their broadcasts.¹⁹⁸ As Pszenicki points out, after 1941 the BBC became very sensitive about Poland's eastern border, and to any reference to the Soviets. Anything considered anti-Soviet was expunged; what fell under this category, however, was fluid and depended on the current state of relations between London and Moscow.¹⁹⁹ Nonetheless he also maintains that the Polish Service was not used as an instrument of British propaganda and reported impartially regardless of the political situation. Nowak, however, speaking as someone who personally knew Polish Service employees during the war, argues that objectivity was understood by BBC employees as merely appearing '*objective*' to the listeners.²⁰⁰

In spite of the many competing factions in relation to propaganda policy on Poland, including the Foreign Office, the BBC and the Polish government-in-exile, the importance of the broadcasts to Poland should not be underestimated. They became a major source of information not only for occupied Poland but also for other Poles who, after the German and Soviet invasion, took refuge in other countries, as well as for the Polish Army fighting in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. By the middle of the war, London Radio, as it was called by Poles, was widely listened to among Polish slave workers in Germany, Polish miners in France and Belgium, by the Polish community in London, and Polish refugees in Kenya, where large settlements were established, and even in the concentration camp in Auschwitz and by Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto.²⁰¹ A very important role was played by the so-called 'agony column' which helped to reunite the families of those who managed to escape from Poland after the German invasion.²⁰² The Service also connected Poland with the rest of the world and enabled different parts of Poland to understand what was happening elsewhere in the country.

¹⁹⁵ Nicholas, op. cit., p. 171.

¹⁹⁶ Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 425.

¹⁹⁷ Nowak, op. cit., p. 335.

¹⁹⁸ Meissner, op. cit., p. 182.

¹⁹⁹ Pszenicki, op. cit., p. 57.

²⁰⁰ Nowak, J., *Wojna W Eterze* (Cracow: Znak, 2006), p. 16.

²⁰¹ Mansell, op. cit.; Kwiatkowski, op. cit.; Garliński, J., *Fighting Auschwitz-The Resistance Movement in the Concentration Camp* (London: Julian Friedmann Publishers Ltd. 1975); Ferenc Piotrowska, M., & Zakrzewski, F., *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Warszawy*, vol. 22: *Nasłuch radiowe w getcie warszawskim* (Warsaw, in press). Also Ferenc, M., '*The Ringelblum historians use of radio as a source on the progress of the war*', paper presented at the BBC Monitoring Service and the Second World War workshop, Imperial War Museum, London, January 1916.

²⁰² Briggs, op. cit., 1995.

The broadcasts from London had enormous impact in connecting listeners with the Polish government which in 1940 took refuge in Britain as Sikorski became a symbol of independent Poland. More importantly, the United Kingdom was seen as Poland's most important ally and, after the collapse of France, the only hope that the fight against the Nazis would continue. Britain was not only trusted but also glorified. The fact that the news came from London created a *'false geographic egocentrism'* and the delusion that Poland was the centre of world attention.²⁰³ Poles were convinced that the British government knew about German and Soviet crimes against Polish citizens and would act to protect them. As Nowak asserts, Poles were unaware of their country's weak diplomatic position whilst the Polish Service encouraged the unrealistic belief that Poland was an important ally and confidence that Churchill supported Polish side in the Polish-Soviet territorial dispute.²⁰⁴ The Polish Underground, and by extension the Polish nation, were convinced that the contribution of the Polish Army fighting in many different countries and the fact they had not collaborated with Germans would earn them the title of significant ally.

Polish Service Editors

Robin Campbell was the first person in charge of the Polish Service. His position, however, was reduced to language supervisor, because in the beginning of the war the foreign language services had no separate identity and operated rather as a group of translators.²⁰⁵ He had not held the position for long before volunteering for military service in 1940.²⁰⁶ He was succeeded by pre-war Reuters correspondent in Warsaw and naturalised Russian, Michael Winch, who was in charge of both Polish and Czech Services; his relationship with staff and the Polish government-in-exile, however, was particularly difficult, leading to his relocation to the Portuguese Section.²⁰⁷ His successor, Gregory Macdonald, a graduate of the School of Slavonic Studies and devoted Catholic, established a very good relationship with the personnel as well as with the Polish government-in-exile, and remained in this post to the end of the war.²⁰⁸ A visit to Poland in 1927 and his comprehensive knowledge of Polish history and culture allowed him to see the Polish-Soviet conflict from different perspective than his colleagues and he refused:

*'to seek to bombard Poland either with the kind of anti-Russian broadcasts which black stations might have initiated or with optimistic Allied propaganda which assumed that there were no political differences between Great Britain and Russia'.*²⁰⁹

²⁰³ Nowak, op. cit., 2009, p. 430.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Mansell, op. cit., p. 81.

²⁰⁶ Pszenicki, op. cit., p. 41.

²⁰⁷ Briggs, op. cit., 1995 p. 435.; Wyrwa, op. cit., p. 343.

²⁰⁸ Mansell, op. cit., p. 110.

²⁰⁹ Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 424.

As Briggs points out, Macdonald believed that the most important duty of the Polish Service was *'to report truly and faithfully both news and comment about the war, whatever the political situation'*.²¹⁰ Kirkpatrick considered Macdonald as a *'pre-eminently well qualified and able man'* allowing him to exercise a considerable degree of independence in the preparation of the bulletins; his views were also taken into consideration by the PWE Polish Region Director, Moray Maclaren.²¹¹ His commitment and personal attachment to the Polish case were probably best expressed in his refusal to carry out an official directive, recommending Poles to accept the settlement reached between the Big Three at Yalta Conference in February 1945.²¹²

The BBC and the Polish Government in Exile

The relationship between the BBC and the Polish government in exile was threatened at first due to repeated attempts by the latter to guide the Polish Service editorial policy, and in November 1940, even to gain complete control over output by exerting pressure via contacts in the Foreign Office.²¹³ Within the Polish Government some understood the futility of such attempts and thought a moderate influence would suffice. The Polish authorities suggested co-ordination as a means of having its voice heard but even this was dismissed. Finally, a request that the BBC allow Polish officials to familiarise itself with content before broadcast was also denied.²¹⁴ Moreover, all items, even official communications from the Polish government, had to be first vetted and stamped by a security censor and then by a Morning Editor to check compliance with current guidelines. The Polish government was under great pressure as it was assumed by Polish listeners that it took part in the preparation of the programmes, therefore all complaints were addressed not to the BBC but to the former.²¹⁵ Whilst in the beginning the BBC Polish broadcasts were criticised for having poor news value, after the breaking off diplomatic relations between Poland and the USSR, the focus of concern was on pro-Soviet propaganda.²¹⁶ Nevertheless, accommodation to the Underground's needs was discussed at the highest level, particularly before 1942, when the only broadcasts in Polish from London available to Polish listeners were those of the Polish Service.²¹⁷

The tension between the BBC and the Polish government was also personal in nature. Both Winch and Newsome saw the Polish government as *'feudal reactionaries'* and were openly

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Mansell, op. cit., p. 85.

²¹² Ibid, p. 180.

²¹³ Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 248.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Grabowski, op. cit., 166.

²¹⁶ Tangye Lean, op. cit., p. 200.

²¹⁷ Sikorski to Churchill, Memorandum, PRO, PREM 3/351/3, 24 September 1940 in Hułas, M., *Goście czy Intruzi: Rząd Polski na uchodźctwie: September 1939- July 1943* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii Pan, 1996).

expressing their dislike of efforts to interfere in broadcasting.²¹⁸ Grisewood, who personally knew Newsome, notes that he '*tended to look on foreigners as lesser people*' and did not hesitate to remind them that Britain was the guarantee of freedom in Europe; '*it mattered little to him that such attitudes might be out of place in addressing audiences with their own attitudes and sensitivities*'.²¹⁹ Yet, whilst he attacked PWE for being pro-Polish, Stanton's analysis of PWE documents led him to conclude that PWE was pro-Soviet.²²⁰ Newsome, was also convinced that both the Polish resistance movement and the Polish Home Army '*were fictions created by the Polish government*' and in fact '*did not exist*'.²²¹ Not only had Newsome argued that Poles supported Polish communists and sought to compromise with Stalin on the issue of frontiers – in contrast with the Polish Underground and Polish authorities in London who he saw as anti-Soviet – but he also blamed the latter for the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact and starting the war.²²² As Mansell observes, the Director of the European Service looked at the Soviet Union '*through rose-tinted spectacles*' and believed in the rightness of Soviet claims to the Polish eastern territories; it took the Warsaw rising when Stalin's political manoeuvring came into the open, to change his view.²²³

After Macdonald became Editor of the Polish Service, the relationship with the Polish government-in-exile improved and, whilst they continued to express their dissatisfaction regarding Polish programmes, they also showed appreciation.²²⁴ Macdonald invited Count Jundziłł-Baliński, the Polish MoI Liaison Officer with the BBC, to sit in at weekly meetings as he understood that maintaining close cooperation with the Polish authorities was essential, given that the Polish Underground was the main receiver and syndicator of the Polish Service broadcasts. More importantly, it was thanks to the communication between the Polish government in London and the Polish Underground that the BBC was able to learn both about the situation and listening conditions under German and Soviet occupation in Poland and to receive feedback.²²⁵ Additionally, a network of traveling couriers was established between London and Poland, usually traveling through neutral Sweden; these were able to give direct reports on the situation in Poland and, while in London, were also questioned by the BBC.²²⁶

Nevertheless, the relationship between the BBC and the Polish government remained tense to the end of the war, primarily because whilst the former took a pro-Soviet outlook, the latter remained reluctant to compromise on issues central to the Polish case. The Polish MoI regularly

²¹⁸ Stenton, op. cit., p. 55.

²¹⁹ Grisewood, H., *One thing at a Time* (London: Hutchinson, 1968), pp. 143-4.

²²⁰ Stenton, op. cit.

²²¹ Mansell, op. cit., p. 110.

²²² Stenton, op. cit., pp. 292-94.

²²³ Mansell, op. cit., p. 110.

²²⁴ Undated memo by Macdonald, in Briggs, op. cit., 1995, p. 424.

²²⁵ Nowak, op. cit., 2009.

²²⁶ Ibid.

attacked the BBC arguing that censorship was too extensive, especially when the Polish Service failed to report on Soviet government political manoeuvres or crimes committed against Polish citizens. Protests were also made after Polish officials were banned from addressing the population east of the Curzon line and, after January 1943, from talking about the Polish-Soviet border or mentioning that Poland was the only country without quislings.²²⁷ Whilst Stalin's speeches and the Soviet newspapers open attacks on the Polish government and questioning its position as a representative body of the nation were constantly quoted in the British press and by the BBC, the Polish government was left without the right of response. By the beginning of 1944, Poland was seen as a '*the inconvenient ally*' and, as the conflict between Poland and the USSR deepened, pro-Soviet equalled anti-Polish publicity.²²⁸ According to the British ambassador to the Polish government-in-exile, Owen O'Malley, this sentiment was:

*'stimulated by all Government departments, nearly all newspapers, the BBC, the Army Bureau of Current Affairs, the Army Education Department, the Political Warfare Executive, and every other organ of publicity susceptible to official influence'.*²²⁹

Any comments from Polish officials were seen as a threat to the Polish-Soviet relationship which, in consequence, could affect allied relations. Nicholas notes that the BBC at that time was preoccupied with picturing the Soviet Union as an important ally.²³⁰ The '*Russian commentary*', broadcast by the BBC from the same year and dispatched by the *Sunday Times* correspondent, Alexander Werth played a significant role in this process. Werth held the view that the USSR was friendly towards Poland and that their main interest was in peace.²³¹ He argued that Polish demands with regard to the eastern territories and accusations that Stalin had committed atrocities were unreasonable. According to the British Institute of Public Opinion, by mid-1942 Russia had become the most popular ally.²³² The references to public opinion are important with respect to the Polish Service broadcasts. Both Nicholas and Bell demonstrate that public opinion had a direct influence on the British government's foreign policy which, in consequence, had a significant impact on BBC programmes.²³³ Anxiety over upsetting Stalin worked as a censorship policy in itself. In this respect, the BBC Czech Service was able to maintain more freedom and the Czech government-in-exile was subject to less censorship than Polish, due to its cooperation with the USSR. The fact, however, that the Czech Service Editor,

²²⁷ Hulaś, op. cit., pp. 280-300.

²²⁸ Kochanski, H., *The Eagle Unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War* (London: Penguin Books, 2012).

²²⁹ O'Malley, O., *Phantom Caravan* (London: J. Murray, 1954), p. 231; Kochanski, ibid. p. 461.

²³⁰ Nicholas, op. cit., p. 170.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² The Listeners, 25 June 1942, in Nicholas, op. cit., p. 168. According to BIPO by mid-1942 Russia was the most popular Ally; 62% to 24% for USA.

²³³ Ibid and Bell, op. cit.

Sheila Grant Duff was married to the Director of the European Service Director, Noel Newsome, should also be taken into consideration.²³⁴

It can be argued that the internal affairs of the Polish MoI had as much negative impact on its relations with the Polish Service as its attempt to interfere in the BBC broadcasts. Both directors of Radio Polskie, Józef Kisielewski and his successor, Janusz Meissner, describe their relationship with the Polish Minister of Information, Stanisław Stroński, as '*difficult*'.²³⁵ Things improved during the time of Stanisław Kot and Adam Pragier, the two people that succeeded him, who allowed for more freedom in the preparation of bulletins and personal judgment. The last Director of Radio Polskie, Karol Wagner, in particular, enjoyed more conducive liaison with Polish officials.

Listening Conditions in Occupied Poland

In the part of Poland occupied by the Germans, listening to, or possession of, a radio set was punishable by death and the only legal access to news was provided in German via street megaphones.²³⁶ Poles were ordered to return their sets. However, this policy was so ineffective that the same order continued to be published in the local German newspaper until March 1940. The Volksdeutsche, namely Poles of German ethnicity, and the German administration were allowed to listen to radio, but accessing non-German stations was forbidden. Kwiatkowski points out that during the war, '*the possession of the radio sets next to weapons was seen by Germans as a direct attack on the Third Reich*'.²³⁷ People were very reluctant to return their radio sets and many of them remained well hidden throughout the war, while others were purposely destroyed before they could be found by the authorities.²³⁸ The hunger for information and the feeling of being cut off from the outside world meant that many Poles disobeyed the orders and were willing to risk their lives in order to listen to the BBC. With growing terror and evidence of crimes committed against Polish citizens, listening to the radio became a symbol of resistance. Moreover, after the German attack on the USSR, sets were also offered as a bribe to those who voluntarily signed the Volksliste, with the aim of spreading anti-Soviet propaganda rather than providing reliable information. The death penalty for tuning to non-German stations remained in place to the end of the war.

For all these reasons, the majority of the population did not have access to the radio; it was the Polish Underground which monitored the BBC stations and clandestinely distributed news in

²³⁴ Mansell, op. cit., p. 182.

²³⁵ Wyrwa, op. cit.; Grabowski, op. cit.; Włodarkiewicz, op. cit.

²³⁶ Kwiatkowski, op. cit., p. 12.

²³⁷ Ibid, p. 12.

²³⁸ Korboński, S., *W Imieniu Rzeczy-Pospolitej* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 1991).

various forms, from professional papers and leaflets to the little so-called '*strips*'.²³⁹ The Underground monitored not only broadcasts in Polish but also in German, French and English. The hunger for reliable information on the progress of the war pushed people to take extreme action. For example, Witold Pilecki organised the monitoring of the BBC Polish broadcasts in Auschwitz and shared the content with his camp mates, whilst recently published research demonstrates that, even in the Warsaw Ghetto, Jews were listening to the BBC and disseminated information in form of clandestine papers.²⁴⁰

The control of broadcasting was also important for the Soviets, but for different reasons. Listening to or possession of wireless sets was not forbidden under Soviet occupation. However, in this largely rural area, radio density was never significant. Already on the first day after entering Polish territory, Russians occupied Polish stations in Barnowice, Wilno and Lwów.²⁴¹ Broadcasts in Polish, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Lithuanian, Russian and Yiddish were used purely for communist propaganda. Therefore, not only were Poles allowed to listen to the radio, but, as Jasiewicz points out, they were encouraged to do so.²⁴² In addition, as the Germans had done in the west of Poland, the Soviet authorities distributed radio sets to those regarded as future collaborators and supporters of the regime. But in contrast with the Germans, the Soviet regime considered indoctrination as their main objective. Consequently, shops selling and repairing radio sets were opened. Although there was no law in place forbidding listening to foreign stations, those caught were usually arrested and detained.²⁴³ The same measures were applied to those who spread information. Poles were also required to register their sets but they disregarded the order.²⁴⁴ Given communist indoctrination and the fact that Stalin claimed that the Polish State had ceased to exist, spreading news about the Polish Army and the Polish government-in-exile was seen as criminal and '*counter-revolutionary activity*'.²⁴⁵ There has, however, been very limited research to date regarding listening conditions and audiences in the Eastern part of Poland.

Coverage of the Holocaust

The coverage of the persecution and extermination of the Jews remains one of the most controversial issues of the Second World War and, although scholars disagree with regard to when the allied governments learnt about it, there is consensus that the Holocaust was not given

²³⁹ Kwiatkowski, op. cit.

²⁴⁰ Garliński, op. cit.; Ferenc Piotrowska, op. cit.; Kwiatkowski, op. cit.

²⁴¹ Jasiewicz, K., Polskojęzyczne radiostacje sowieckie w okresie II Wojny Światowej, in *Polskie Radio w Czasie II Wojny Światowej*, op. cit., p. 254.

²⁴² Ibid, p. 263.

²⁴³ Jasiewicz, op. cit.

²⁴⁴ Żurawski, J.A., Polskie Radio w służbie konspiracji 1939-1944, in, op. cit., p.136.

²⁴⁵ Herling-Grudziński, G., *A World Apart: Imprisonment in a Soviet Labour Camp during World War II* (London: Penguin Publisher, 1996), p. 284.

prominence by the BBC.²⁴⁶ Seul, whose work concentrates on an analysis of the BBC German Service, points out that, although the British government was already aware of the persecution of Jews in Germany in 1938, it considered this '*an internal German affair*' which, given Chamberlain's policy of appeasement, it was not willing to challenge.²⁴⁷ In fact, it was not until the allied declaration on the fate of Jewry in December 1942 that the Holocaust was addressed in BBC German broadcasts, primarily because Germans were considered anti-Semitic and '*propaganda sympathising with the Jews or appearing to be under Jewish influence was doomed to be ineffective*'.²⁴⁸ In October 1939 the British White Paper on concentration camps in Germany was presented to Parliament by Lord Halifax, but remained classified, not because the sources of this report were considered unreliable, but because it was feared that the British government would be accused of atrocity propaganda, as was the case after World War I, consequently giving ammunition to Goebbels.²⁴⁹ In contrast, both in 1939 and in the years following the war, special attention was given to assurances that the Jews were not the only oppressed ethnic group.²⁵⁰ In order to attack the German propaganda at its core it was essential not to imply that the war was fought to save the Jews; the acknowledgment of the Holocaust meant that the Allies would be forced to act, something they were not prepared to do.²⁵¹

The main intelligence reports came from Poland as this was the place which the Nazis chose for their death camps and genocide of Jews from all over Europe. Despite the fact that Hitler's plan for ethnic cleansing had been outlined in *Mein Kampf*, this was not a matter of debate in 1939, a time when more non-Jewish than Jewish Poles were subject to persecution.²⁵² Initially the Auschwitz camp had been for Polish POW's and it was only thanks to Witold Pilecki, who volunteered to go to the camp, that German plans were exposed.²⁵³ Although his reports were passed to the Polish government in London, their reliability was questioned. In early 1942 allied

²⁴⁶ See Wasserstein, B., *Britain and the Jews of Europe: 1939-1945* (London: Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1979); Laqueur, W., *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's Final Solution*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1980); Gilbert, M., *Auschwitz and the Allies: How the Allies responded to the news of Hitler's Final Solution* (London: Michael Joseph, 1981); Silberklang, D., 'The Allies and the Holocaust: A Reappraisal', in *Yad Vashem Studies* 24, 1994, pp. 147-176; Terry, N., 'Conflicting Signals: British Intelligence on the Final Solution through Radio Intercepts and Other Sources', 1941-1942', in *Yad Vashem Studies* 32, 2004, pp. 351-396. Seaton, J., 'Reporting atrocities: the BBC and the Holocaust', in Seaton, J., and Pimlott, B., (eds.), *The Media in British Politics* (Aldershot: Gower, 1987), Seaton, J., 'The BBC and the Holocaust', *European Journal of Communication*, 2 (1), London, 1987, pp. 53-80; Harris, J. D., 'Broadcasting the Massacres: An Analysis of the BBC's Contemporary Coverage of the Holocaust', in *Yad Vashem Studies* 25, 1996, pp. 65-98; Seul, S., *The Representation of the Holocaust in the British Propaganda Campaign directed at the German Public, 1938-1945*, Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 52 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Fleming, op. cit.

²⁴⁷ Seul, op. cit. p. 271.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 273.

²⁴⁹ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, pp. 41, in Seul, op. cit., p. 277.

²⁵⁰ Wasserstein, op. cit.

²⁵¹ Seul, op. cit. p. 280.

²⁵² Snyder, T., *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (London: Basic Books, 2012).

²⁵³ Cyra, A., *Ochotnik do Auschwitz – Witold Pilecki 1901-1948* (Oświęcim: Rytm, 2000).

intelligence, however, learnt about the Nazis plans for the final solution and it was eventually decided that the issue should be made public. In July 1942, the British Minister of Information, Brendan Bracken, organised the press conference at which the extermination of the Jewish population in Poland was addressed by the media. Stenton, however, argues that it was done in response to the atrocities committed on Poles by the Soviets in order to *'fill minds with Nazi horror as to leave no room for the dread of other oppressions'*.²⁵⁴

The most influential report was delivered to the West by the Polish courier, Jan Karski, in November 1942. It was followed by an official statement delivered in London by the Polish Foreign Ministry entitled *The Mass Extermination of Jews in German Occupied Poland*. Based on authentic documents, it provided evidence of the scale of the extermination of Jewish Poles already carried out by the Germans; although acknowledged by the allied governments, little action was actually taken. As Lagueur and Seaton point out, the extent of Nazi atrocities against the Jews went beyond human imagination; the post-war claim that the allies were not in possession of reliable data, demonstrates that this was an issue of belief.²⁵⁵ Seaton concludes: *'the BBC and the Foreign Office refused to accept that extermination of Jews was part of an intended program'*, but also, there was no will to act.²⁵⁶ Only with the final defeat of Germany, Churchill and Roosevelt argued, could help be given to European Jewry.²⁵⁷

The lack of action from the Allied powers during the Warsaw Ghetto rising in 1943 drove Shmuel Zygielbojm, the representative of the Jewish Bund in London to the Polish exile government, to take drastic measures. In order to show his support, he burnt himself in his apartment, thus identifying himself with *'the fate of his fellow Jews in Warsaw'*.²⁵⁸ As Seaton and Seul point out, after December 1942 the genocide of Jews was not given prominence in the BBC broadcasts.²⁵⁹ This was a reflection of British government policy; apart from the allies above mentioned declaration in December 1942, no other official protest to Hitler was issued nor was the Holocaust considered a propaganda theme.²⁶⁰ Yet, as demonstrated above, the BBC was in the possession of material documenting the Holocaust.

The liberation of the concentration camps in 1944 initiated a discussion among scholars, journalists and politicians, endeavouring to explain why the Allies had failed to respond to the Final Solution and why the media offered such limited coverage of the Holocaust. From the 1960s onwards, scholars attempted to answer these questions, suggesting as the main reasons:

²⁵⁴ Annexe I, The Anti-Bolshevist Campaign, FO 371/34381, 17 February 1943, in: Stenton, p. 93.

²⁵⁵ Seaton, op. cit., 1987; Lagueur, op. cit.

²⁵⁶ Seaton & Pimlott, op. cit., p. 65.

²⁵⁷ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 323.

²⁵⁸ Snyder, op. cit., p. 292.

²⁵⁹ Seul, op. cit., p. 295.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 306.

lack of understanding; anti-Semitism; and in particular, the fact that saving the Jews was not one of the allies' war aims.²⁶¹ Seaton also demonstrated that anti-Semitism among the BBC staff as well as the British public was a big factor.²⁶² A recently published book by Fleming throws a new light on our knowledge and understanding of this subject, by providing an analysis of previously undiscovered documents and, demonstrating that wartime censorship was the main obstacle to the dissemination of news.²⁶³

Conclusion

Issues of censorship and propaganda during the Second World War, and the role of the BBC in this process, have received widespread attention in the literature. In particular, Briggs provides a comprehensive analysis and, as demonstrated in this literature review, other scholars built up their arguments based on his primary research. Nonetheless, the BBC European Service has not been subjected to the same in-depth examination as the Home Service. Furthermore, there has been very limited discussion of the Polish Service, which is surprising given the importance attached to the Polish broadcasts by listeners in Poland and the Polish government-in-exile. Nor has the role of the PWE impact on broadcasting been examined in depth: Garnett's book on the history of the PWE waited over 50 years for clearance to be published. Most importantly, this literature review demonstrates that the BBC claim to objectivity and neutrality is questionable; the European Service was designed as an instrument of British propaganda and therefore was demonstrably not neutral. Broadcasting to Europe was selective in nature and all information was censored before it could be transmitted. This was particularly evident in coverage of the Soviet political manoeuvring, the Warsaw rising and the Holocaust.

²⁶¹ See reference 246.

²⁶² Seaton & Pimlott, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

²⁶³ *Fleming*, *op. cit.*

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides an explanation and justification of methodological approaches employed in the present study. Documentary analysis within a qualitative research framework is used to demonstrate the extent of the conformity of Polish Service broadcasts with British government foreign policy during World War II. This analysis, approached from two main angles – the history of the BBC and the history of wartime Grand Alliance diplomacy – and is based mainly on primary sources, the most important of which are the BBC papers and, in particular, the scripts of the Polish Service bulletins and Political Warfare Executive (PWE) directives for the Polish Service. These sources, however, are supplemented by other archival materials, both Polish and British, such as minutes of meetings, private correspondence, official memoranda, surveys of Polish audiences, and general guidelines and directives of relevance to the main research question. Given the limitations of collective and individual memory, which as recent studies demonstrate, can fundamentally contradict long established historical accounts, memoirs and dairies are used only for purposes of support and cross-reference.¹ Difficulties related to accessibility and trustworthiness of these various sources will be discussed.

Historical research

Historical research involves examination and analysis of primary sources, with a view to minimizing the bias introduced by retrospection and reconstruction associated with both individual and collective memory. As Nora points out, individual memory is:

*‘in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived’.*²

There is also a close correlation between individual and collective memory; both, in an attempt to reconstruct the past, offer relatively limited and subjective accounts of historical events. This can be observed, for instance, in the memoirs of Churchill and Eden which, although written in the form of a diary, omit certain political developments, concentrating instead on the vindication of their decisions. A similar observation can be made in relation to the wartime history of the

¹ Lebow, R.N., Kansteiner, W., Fogu, C., *The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe* (London: Duke University Press, 2006.); Kenny, M., A Place for Memory: The Interface between Individual and Collective History, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41, no. 3, July, 1999.

² Nora, P., ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire’. *Representations*, University of California Press, no. 26, 1989, pp. 7–24.

BBC and the PWE. Lockhart, as the head of the PWE, argues that the BBC had to follow the PWE directives, while Kirkpatrick, acting as the Controller of the BBC European Service, maintains that these directives were open to interpretation and that the last word belonged to the BBC. It can be argued that an awareness of '*writing history*' shapes recollection of the past. This argument is also relevant to the recollection of the war events by the Polish politicians and the members of the Polish Underground. Therefore, in this study, both Polish and British sources will be used in order to present as neutral and impartial account as possible.

Sources

BBC Written Archives, Caversham

The thesis primary draws on records from the BBC Written Archives in Caversham, such as bulletins of the Polish Service, news directives for the European Service and the minutes of meetings of the Polish Service as well as papers dealing with organisation and work of the European Service in general. In addition, attention will be paid to intelligence documents on audience and listening conditions in occupied Poland, details of the personnel working for the Polish Service and information on the BBC Monitoring Papers, all of which potentially provide valuable supportive evidence for the analysis of the BBC sources. In all cases, the limitations of these sources will be considered.

Bulletins of the Polish Service

The thesis is based on the written scripts of the Polish Service bulletins. This collection is, however, incomplete. The most probable explanation is that, given the difficult war circumstances, storage of the bulletins was not a BBC priority. The BBC History Manager, John Escolme, points to another possible explanation: '*as the Polish Service would have operated with limited funds and budgets for archiving were not covered centrally, this may have resulted in documentation being lost*'.³ There are no bulletins from 1939–1940; the first available bulletin dates from 8 April 1941. Other extensive gaps, namely, December 1941–December 1942, August 1943–April 1944 and November 1944–February 1945, have served as obstacles to analysis, as well as smaller gaps sometimes extending over weeks or months. However, the content of the bulletins was often also discussed during the meetings or in the news directives as well as private correspondence, making it possible to establish what was broadcast.

Table 2.1 below provides detailed data of surviving and missing bulletins where bulletins that survived the war are indicated in blue.

³ Private conversation, November, 2013.



Table 2.1: Bulletins which survived the war

The Polish Service bulletins available at Caversham are not written in in English but in Polish. This is due to strict wartime censorship which required that all bulletins had to be checked for security and compliance with official policy and vetting and could be done only by British nationals. As the European Service was recognised as the ‘*Voice of Britain*’, charged to provide news from the British point of view, the ‘main story’ of the day in all European broadcasts came from the Central Desk whilst the regional editors added material addressed to the audience of the country they were broadcasting to. In order to safeguard consistency and accuracy, all bulletins had to be stamped by policy and security censors. However, the BBC was also well aware that not all European Service programmes could broadcast the same information. In the case of the Polish Service, information dealing with the Soviet Union was seen as particularly sensitive; thus it was important that censors followed the PWE directives. Yet the general subject of the Soviet Union was problematic, given that, before the war broke out, Churchill openly attacked Stalin’s regime. After the German attack on the USSR in 1941 when the Anglo-Soviet alliance was signed, the BBC responded to the government’s foreign policy by omitting communist titles and using Russia instead of the Soviet Union in the broadcasts, in order to avoid the connotations associated with the communist political system and illegal annexation of the eastern territories to Russia.⁴

Each of the bulletins contains a stamp with either ‘pass for security’ and the initials of the person who checked it in blue, or ‘pass for policy’ with initials in regular grey pencil.

⁴ Briggs, A., *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: The War of Words*, Vol. III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 357.

According to a Kirkpatrick memorandum, the policy vetting could be done only by: The Director of the European Service or his Assistant, the Chief Sub-Editor of the day or night, the Dawn Editor or his Assistant and the European News Editor or his Assistant.⁵ Only then were the bulletins sent to the language supervisor whose job was to assure that there was no variation from the English text in the translated copy. However, according to the BBC Staff list from 1942, rather than require the European Service Director or other editors to vet bulletins for policy, the BBC appointed separate Policy Editors namely, J.S. Dean, C. Hulme and A.R. Birley, whilst the latter's initials appear also on the security stamp of the Polish Service bulletins.⁶ With regards to the security editors, among other initials such as JWF, F, GA, GP, AC it was possible to identify only the one which belongs to the European Productions Supervisor, Gibson Parker.

The colours correspond to marking on the scripts, but regular pencil is also used for editing. However, it is evident that grey pencil was also used for erasing terms and sentences which could be found offensive to Polish listeners or which expressed views contrary to British government political principles. In addition to the BBC Polish bulletins, the BBC Home Service news bulletins were used (see chapter 8) in order to compare the coverage of the Warsaw rising of 1944. It should be clarified that the present study uses wartime terminology. Therefore, what today is known as the BBC Domestic Service is referred to as the Home Service. Its wartime bulletins are available only on microfilm.

BBC News Directives and Minutes of Meetings for the Polish Service

Given the main issues discussed in this study, notably wartime propaganda and censorship, the European News Directives are a particularly important source of information. Issued until October 1944 by the Director of the European Service, Noel Newsome, and later by his successor, Douglas Ritchie and, occasionally, by his assistant, Donald Edwards, they provide an essential framework for the analysis of Polish Service output. Nonetheless, they need to be approached with caution, since even important political developments such as the breaking off diplomatic relations between Poland and the USSR, the discovery of the graves of the Polish officers at Katyń, the Warsaw Ghetto rising and the Warsaw rising, receive minimal attention in these documents, possibly because of their extreme sensitivity or the fact that the fate of Poland was not main concern of the British government. However, Newsome's personal political views may also have played a role. The Propaganda Background Notes written by Newsome and other papers criticising the Polish government-in-exile and the Polish Underground clearly demonstrate his pro-Soviet and anti-Polish outlook (see chapters 5-6). It should, however, be

⁵ PISM, 434/52, BBC: Korespondencja, Kirkpatrick to all regional editors, 25 March 1942.

⁶ BBC WAC, BBC Staff List 1942.

clarified that the contemporary understanding of the term ‘propaganda’ did not have the same negative connotations as it has today. It was a term used at the time in government foreign policy documents, and by extension, the BBC (see chapter 1).

Equally important were the minutes of the meetings dealing with the Polish Service broadcasts. Although Pszenicki mentioned these minutes (without referencing), it has been impossible to locate them in the BBC Written Archives or other archives. The only minutes of meetings available in Caversham refer to the Committee which was established in 1940 to deal with coverage of all affairs related to Poland by all BBC Services and, in particular, the Polish Service, Radio Polskie and the BBC Home Service. During these weekly meetings, all issues related to politics, output and staffing were discussed. Chaired by the Director of the European Service, they were attended by the Editor of the Polish Service and Radio Polskie, PWE the Regional Editor, the Language Supervisor, the Liaison Officer between the BBC and the Polish Ministry of Information and the BBC Intelligence Officer for Poland. The first meeting took place in November 1940, indicating that, although the BBC would seem to have considered feedback from the Polish authorities as interference, there was political pressure to take broadcasting to Poland seriously by addressing the needs of the Polish Underground and the views of the Polish government in London. As is case of the Polish Service bulletins, however, not all the minutes of these meetings survived the war. For example, there are notable gaps in April and May, the exact time when the graves of the Polish officers at Katyń were discovered and when the rising in the Warsaw Ghetto was taking place, causing real difficulties for analysis of BBC policy regarding the coverage of these events. Other files at Caversham discussing the work of Radio Polskie and correspondence between the Polish Ministry of Information and the BBC are also pivotal in understanding the relationship between the two and how they impacted the Polish Service.

Audience and listening conditions in occupied Poland

Issues of audience and the accessibility of the Polish Service broadcasts in Poland need separate explanation. It was essential for the purpose of this thesis to establish who listened to the Polish Service broadcasts. Given the wartime circumstances, and the fact that listening to the BBC was punishable by death under the German occupation, it was the Polish Underground which monitored and disseminated the content of the Polish broadcasts in form of the clandestine press and leaflets. In particular, *Radio Journal [Dziennik Radiowy]*, edited by the Radio Department of the Polish Bureau of Intelligence and Propaganda (BIP), is an invaluable source of information, some copies of which can be found in the Central Archive of Modern Records in Warsaw. However, the Underground monitored not only the BBC Polish programmes but also French, German and English broadcasts, as well as Radio Polskie. Everything was written in Polish and, in most cases, there was no indication of which broadcast the content was based on

and thus it was impossible to establish the source of the information. For this reason, *the Radio Journals* were not used as cross-reference material.

Listening to foreign stations was not forbidden by law under the Soviet occupation, but given the low density of listeners before the war and the fact that, after the entry of the Red Army, Polish homes were exposed to looting, not many radio sets survived. It is true that the Soviet occupants distributed sets and there is no shortage of evidence that Poles were listening to Radio Moscow. But very limited research to date has focused on the listening habits and number of radio sets in the part of Poland annexed by the USSR. Equally, not much was known about it by the Polish Underground during the war. Whilst the Germans kept detailed reports, the Soviet documents are preoccupied with radio indoctrination rather than foreign broadcasts. However, this conclusion is based on Polish and British sources. Further research, requiring knowledge of the languages spoken in countries which formed part of Poland before the war, would be necessary to support this thesis.

I have also tried unsuccessfully to locate surviving listeners. Even the placing of announcements in the Worldwide Association of the Polish Home Army Soldiers' newsletter failed to bring results. For the reasons listed above and the fact that over 65 years had passed since the war, it became evident that this quest would be impossible.

Detailed analysis of listening conditions, audience estimates, the number of radio sets and feedback on BBC Polish broadcasts can be found at Caversham. Reports prepared by the Polish Underground and made available to the BBC through the Polish government-in-exile, and which also include accounts of witnesses who escaped from Poland, provide great scope for researchers. However, given that communication between Soviet and German zones was extremely difficult, the exact number of listeners and wireless sets was impossible to establish. It should also be noted that an unknown number of sets had been destroyed and hidden. A further obstacle is that estimates of radio sets remaining in Polish hands under German occupied territory are based on German reports of sets which had either been confiscated and distributed to Volksdeutsche (Poles of German ethnicity) and, while it is acknowledged that there were more sets in USSR occupied Poland, there is no data available on exact numbers. In addition, many reports do not distinguish between crystal and valve sets and, as foreign broadcasts could be accessed only on valve sets with a shortwave band, it is impossible to establish how many people actually listened to the BBC Polish Service, how many were Polish nationals and, how many had become German subjects.

Personnel of the Polish Service

Establishing who worked in the Polish Service and when was a very difficult task since only the staff lists from 1939, 1940 and 1942 survived the war. Of these, only the staff lists from 1940 and 1942 include a detailed list of employees. The first, located at the BBC Written Archives, was created in August 1940 after the French surrender, at which point the German attack on Britain became inevitable and Broadcasting House was preparing for evacuation. It mentions all BBC employees at that time, from cleaners, page boys and catering personnel to BBC directors. The introduction states that the list should be updated each week; in a time of all-out war, changes among staff were very common with many volunteering for military service; this resulted, in some cases, in less experienced colleagues taking their places. The other staff lists (1939 and 1942) show only the name of the editor and his secretaries; the 1942 list, which, includes only staff of the Polish Service, surprisingly, is to be found at the Churchill Archives Centre in Cambridge and not at Caversham.⁷

Therefore, the staff lists used in this study are based on examination and cross-reference of: names of the announcers provided on the written copy of the bulletins, memoirs, BBC internal documents and secondary literature. None of these sources give full lists. Thus the discussion of staffing in chapter five is based on an attempt to reconstruct the information from multiple sources. The year 1944-45, in particular, is incomplete and does not account for everyone working in the Polish Service at that time.

Other complications arise from the fact that, at the time this research was undertaken, all employees of the Polish Service had died and none had left a memoir. However, I have interviewed two post-war Polish Service employees, namely Teresa Myskow and Waleria Sawicka. Mrs. Myskow, who currently lives in Luxemburg, worked as the Polish Service Programme Assistant Producer in the 1960s, when some of the Polish wartime broadcasters were still working for the BBC. Mrs. Sawicka, worked as the Polish Service Programme Secretary in the 1970s and still lives in London. Their accounts were particularly helpful in providing important biographical details of the Polish Service wartime employees.

In addition, the BBC Human Resources files stored at Caversham provide valuable biographical information, as well as discussion of Polish Service internal affairs. The biographical index of the Polish Service employees in Annex 1 is based, to a large extent, on information from these files. It is complemented by data from Pszenicki's *History of the Polish Section BBC* as well as observations from the memoirs of Radio Polskie staff, in particular, Halski, Meissner and Budny, cross referenced with primary sources. However, the BBC does not hold the files of all

⁷ Other materials at the Churchill Archives Centre are duplicates of documents from the BBC WAC and the National Archives.

the Polish Service employees and other sources also provide limited data on Polish Service wartime personnel. Therefore, the biographical index does not include all the people who worked for the Polish Service during the war.

The personal collection of Gregory Macdonald

It was, however, the personal collection of the Polish Service Editor, Gregory Macdonald, which offered greatest insight on the work of the Polish Service, its relations with the BBC management, the Polish government-in-exile and Radio Polskie.

It was thanks to the kindness of Macdonald's son, who I contacted via the magazine for BBC pensioners, *Prospero*, that I was able to access previously unpublished documents, letters and hand written notes which Macdonald had preserved since the war. Since Macdonald's death in 1987, all his writing is in possession of his son who lives in France. Gregory Macdonald, a great friend of Poland, dedicated his life after the war to exposing the political manoeuvres of the communist regime. His personal library includes books of major wartime figures, such as Warsaw rising Commander Bór-Komorowski, General Anders, head of the Polish Forces in the USSR in 1941 and later in Italy, and Jan Karski, a Polish courier who brought the information about the Holocaust to London. All these books include a personal note in which the authors acknowledge his support for Polish interests whilst addressing him as a close friend. Of particular interest were his comments on Jan Nowak's book, counter-arguing the author's claim that the Polish Service was not objective or impartial, and also his review of Brigg's third volume of *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, which is also available at Caversham in the collection of Macdonald's essays and articles.

BBC Monitoring Papers

This study also draws on the BBC Monitoring Service transcripts stored by the Imperial War Museum at Duxford and the Monitoring Digests kept in the BBC Written Archives at Caversham. There were no Polish broadcasts from Poland after September 1939 until the period of the Warsaw rising (August-October 1944) when insurgents were able to set up a broadcasting station in Warsaw. Therefore, only transcripts and digests from the periods mentioned above have been analysed, as German broadcasts from Polish stations under the occupation are not the focus of this study. Both Duxford and WAC collections have great historical value, in particular, the transcripts of the insurgents' broadcasts, as this was the first time that the Underground was able to directly address on air its country men and, more importantly, western leaders and the Polish government-in-exile. The transcripts' significance also lies in demonstrating what was known in Britain about the Soviet atrocities and what information had been expunged, in comparison with the BBC Polish and Home Service broadcasts.

Additionally, while the Imperial War Museum holds a huge body of material on the Second World War, none of these sources are related to listening conditions or the Polish Service. However, there are also two files on the monitoring of the insurgents' radio station Błyskawica during the Warsaw rising which are still not open for external researcher. These files, currently held at the BBC Written Archives in Caversham, need special vetting from the Monitoring Service. Unfortunately, a request to open these files for my research was denied.

The National Archives

Another focus of research was the National Archives based at Kew. The thesis draws primarily on the PWE directives for the BBC Polish Service as well as the PWE Central directives since the PWE regional directives were only complementary to the former. Given that that they express the official line of the government, they were used in order to demonstrate Polish Service compliance with the former. The PWE papers, inherited after the war by the Foreign Office, were opened for research in 1976. Yet, as Taylor rightly observes '*even the more experienced scholars struggled with their largely chaotic and patchy nature with the result that, even today, there is no definitive volume chronicling PWE's story*'.⁸ This made analysing the PWE papers particularly difficult as well as lack of the secondary literature on the subject. The most comprehensive history of the PWE, written after the war by David Garnett, had to wait over 50 years to be printed, the main reason being that the author was critical of many personalities working for the PWE who lived until the late 1990s. Moreover, as Sefton Delmer explains in his autobiography, given the organisation's secret status, large number of files were burnt after the war.⁹ This helps to explain why so many directives are missing, in particular no directives for the Polish Service after November 1944 were found.

Polish Sources

The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum at South Kensington and the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust at Ealing Common, all based in London, hold documents pertaining to the Polish government-in-exile and the Polish Underground. This thesis draws primarily on papers from the Polish Institute discussing the work of the Polish Ministry of Information and Radio Polskie, and, in particular, memoranda and reports written by Baliński reporting back to the Polish Minister of Information on his work as the Liaison Officer with the BBC. There are, however, substantial gaps in the records, the main reason being that, after the British government had withdrawn recognition of the Polish government in London, a considerable

⁸ Taylor, P. M., *Allied propaganda in World War II: the complete record of the Political Warfare Executive (FO 898): from the Public Records Office London*, Microfilm (London: National Archives, 2003-2005).

⁹ Delmer, S., *Black Boomerang: An Autobiography* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1962).

number of files were burnt by Polish officials, in case British government was going to pass them to the newly established Communist government in Poland.¹⁰ In addition, many documents were given to the Polish Institute by family members of the representatives of the Polish government-in-exile and it is believed that some of the papers are still in their possession.¹¹

Created in 1947 by the Polish Home Army soldiers who stayed in Britain after the war, the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust also offers a wide range of material. The reports sent from Poland by the Polish Underground dealing with the political situation and occupant policies are considered an important source of information in this study. Other documents which can be found in the archive are the memoranda and reports of Radio Polskie employee, Stanisław Kmiecik, who also worked for the BBC Polish Service. Yet, here again access to the records was difficult. Some of the documents have been digitalized and can be accessed on line, but the cataloging is still in progress. Substantial elements of the thesis were however, drawn from six volumes of documents organised and published between 1970 and 1989 by Polish historians in London. The collection consists of original documents and reports sent from Poland, communication between the Polish government in London and the Polish Underground, and letters from British authorities as well as official statements issued by Polish officials.

Abbreviations

In this thesis, the names of the archives are abbreviated in the references as follows:

- The BBC Written Archives BBC WAC
- Churchill Archives Centre - CAC
- Imperial War Museum - IWM
- Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum- PISM
- Polish Underground Movement Study Trust PUMST
- Macdonald Private Collection MPC

Conclusion

This thesis is based on a very wide range of both Polish and British archival material from various archives, primarily based in the UK. The main British sources are BBC Written Archives, the National Archives, the Churchill Archives Centre. The Polish sources included the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum and the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust.

¹⁰ Suchcitz, A., & Ciechanowski, J., *Losy archiwum polskiego wywiadu po 1945*, in Dubicki, T., Nałęcz, D., Stirling, T., *Polsko-Brytyjska Współpraca Wywiadowcza podczas II Wojny Światowej* (Warsaw: Naczelna Dyrekcja Archiwów Państwowych, 2004), pp. 33-45.

¹¹ Ibid.

Additionally, dairies are used for purposes of support and cross-reference. There were, however, various obstacles. The main reason why the study does not cover the years 1939–1940 is the unavailability of Polish Service bulletins prior to April 1941. The analysis of important war events, for example, the Warsaw Ghetto rising, as well as the persecution of Jews in Poland, was hindered by the gaps in Polish Service bulletins, in the minutes of meetings dealing with BBC broadcasting to and about Poland, and in the PWE directives for the Polish Service throughout the war. Finally, the fact that all Polish Service employees had died by the time the research was undertaken was a further disadvantage.

Historical Background

Introduction

This chapter provides a historical context for the discussion of censorship and propaganda during the Second World War, concentrating on the diplomatic relations between the allies and, in particular, between Poland, Britain and the Soviet Union. Special attention is paid to the role of the Polish government-in-exile and the Polish Underground whose activities in the years 1939-1945 had expanded far beyond the resistance and sabotage witnessed in other countries under German occupation to the creation of a Secret State with a quasi-parliament and administrative, educational and judicial apparatus. Taking into account that in wartime the strength of the negotiation position was measured according to the contribution to the war efforts, this chapter also discusses the importance of the Polish Forces. Finally, with the imposition of a communist government subordinated to the USSR at the end of the war, the role of the Polish communists in this process is given prominence.

German and Soviet invasion of Poland

In 1918, after over 140 years of partition from Russia, Austria-Hungary and Prussia, the Polish Republic was restored. Stalin and Hitler saw Poland as a '*bastard of the Treaty of Versailles*' which should be never reborn.¹ Consequently, regaining territory lost during World War I became both leaders' main objective. On 23 August 1939 Germany and the Soviet Union signed a Treaty of non-aggression – the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. Its secret protocol outlined plans for occupation and attack on Poland, subsequently followed by the German invasion of Poland on 1 September and the Soviet Union invasion on 17 September 1939.²

Despite Poland's treaties with France and Britain assuring military assistance in the case of German aggression, these resulted in nothing more, as Stachura observes, than '*moral and semantic assistance*'.³ Although both countries declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939, no military action was undertaken to assist Poland and during the secret meeting of the Anglo-French Supreme War Council in Abbeville on 12 September, a decision was made to not to

¹ An expression used by the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Molotov, in his speech to the Supreme Soviet on 31 September 1939, in Davies, N., *The God's Playground: A History of Poland*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 291.

² Ibid.

³ Stachura, P., *Poland: 1918-45: An Interpretive and Documentary History of the Second Republic* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p. 117.

launch an offensive against the Wehrmacht; the Polish authorities, however, were not informed.⁴

The USSR aggression on Poland on 17 September was an important factor in the quick defeat of Poland which, after five weeks of fighting, surrendered. Unaware of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, the Poles were not prepared for the defence of the east: Polish Commander-in-chief, General Rydz-Śmigły assuming that the Red Army had arrived to assist, ordered Polish units not to resist.⁵ Although, the Soviet invasion of Poland was a violation of international law, Stalin justified this action by claiming that the Polish government had abandoned the country and effectively had ceased to exist, and that the USSR had therefore been forced to act as a protector of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian minorities inhabiting eastern Poland.⁶ The attempt of the Polish ambassador in London, Edward Raczynski, to pressure the British government to take action failed after he had been reminded that the Anglo-Polish agreement of military assistance signed in August 1939 specifically stated that it applied only to Germany.⁷ As Prazmowska points out, in Britain, *'from the very beginning, the war was not seen as a struggle to liberate Poland but as one to defeat Germany'*.⁸

Already in October 1939, Stalin conducted show plebiscites and elections in the territory east of the Ribbentrop-Molotov line, in which, allegedly, the Ukrainians and Byelorussians voted for incorporation in the Soviet Union. In accordance with the phoney plebiscites, this territory was annexed to the USSR as West Ukraine and West Byelorussia in the beginning of 1940, whilst the Polish city of Wilno, previously part of Poland, was given to Lithuania until it, too, became part of the USSR in June 1940. The Soviet occupation of eastern Poland became a problematic issue. Whilst the British Prime Minister at that time, Neville Chamberlain, criticised Stalin's action, he also noted that it was not unexpected.⁹ Chamberlain was not alone in this view; there was a widespread consensus among British politicians such as Halifax, Beaverbrook and Lloyd George that the Polish-Soviet border ratified in the Riga Treaty in 1921 went far beyond that proposed in 1919 by the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon who gave his name to the Curzon line, the term employed during the war in disputes over the Polish-Soviet border.¹⁰ Not many, though, were aware that in fact the territory demarcated by the Curzon line did not differ much from that agreed between Ribbentrop and Molotov in August 1939. However, the Polish-Soviet frontier was not the only issue stopping British government involvement in armed

⁴ Karski, J., *Story of a Secret State: My Report to the World* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 427.

⁵ Kadell, F., *Katyn w Oczach Zachodu* (Warsaw: PWN, 2012), p. 13.

⁶ Kochanski, H., *Eagle Unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 77.

⁷ Ibid, p.78.

⁸ Prazmowska, A. J., *Britain and Poland, 1939-1943, The Betrayed Ally* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 33.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Dennis P., *Conflict and Chaos in Eastern Europe*. (London: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p. 210.

conflict or political dispute with Stalin. In fact, Chamberlain sought to improve diplomatic relations with the USSR and refused any kind of confrontation which could negatively affect rapprochement. More importantly,

*'as long as there was the slightest hope of persuading Stalin to join the anti-German block Britain could not commit itself to view the Soviet Union as German's ally, and Britain's enemy'.*¹¹

Faced with defeat, in mid-September, the Polish government attempted to escape to France where it hoped to mobilise the army and continue the fight against the aggressors. Although an arrangement for safe passage had been made with the Romanians, the Polish government and the President, Ignacy Mościcki, were interned in Romania and not allowed to proceed to France.¹² Maintaining continuity was a particularly important matter since both Stalin and Hitler argued that the Polish government had been disbanded. At this point, Mościcki passed his power to General Bolesław Wieniawa-Długoszowski who had managed to escape to Paris. When his candidacy was opposed by the French, a compromise was reached after long deliberations whereby Władysław Raczkiewicz became president and Władysław Sikorski Prime Minister as well as Supreme Commander of the Polish Armed Forces. In contrast with the pre-war so-called Sanacja government, which opposed parliamentary democracy, the Polish government-in-exile included from the beginning representatives of the four major Polish parties namely: the Peasant Party (PSL), the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), the National Party (SN), and the Working Party (SP). A quasi-parliament-in-exile was also formed – the National Council [Rada Narodowa] which included representatives of each party. However, its power was limited, as Sikorski had a decisive voice in all political and military matters.¹³ Although Sikorski's aim was to purge the new government of Sanacja supporters, he was not completely successful, particularly in relation to army circles where high ranking officers still supported the old regime. Determined to remove those who opposed his authority, he ordered their detention first in France and later on Isle of Bute.¹⁴ Yet, the opposition to this strong position also came from the members of the National Council, with President Raczkiewicz disagreeing with Sikorski's foreign policy and attempting to limit his authority. Although it was understood that in time of total war political differences should be put aside, the Polish government in France had already, as Prażmowska points out, become *'a hive of intrigue and a permanent*

¹¹ Prażmowska, op. cit., p. 47.

¹² Zamojski, J. E., Social History of Polish exile: 1939-1945, in: *Europe in Exile: European Exile Communities in Britain: 1940-45*, (ed.) Conway, M., & Gotovitch, J., (Oxford: Berghahn, 2001), p. 186.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

battleground between various coteries and factions’, having negative impact on its relations with other allies.¹⁵

German invasion of Europe and the Battle of Britain

Although France and Britain were officially in a state of war with Germany, in reality no military action was undertaken and the so-called Phoney War lasted until May 1940. In April 1940 Hitler invaded Denmark and Norway and, in May the same year, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg. In the meantime, Stalin attacked Finland in March 1940 and in April annexed Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In June 1940, France surrendered and the country was divided into two zones, notably the North, occupied by Germany and Italy (Italy had attacked France on 10 June 1940) and the South, the Vichy zone, an officially neutral state led by Philippe Pétain. The Polish Army played a significant role in France’s defence, mobilising 83,000 men of which 34,000 came from Poland whilst others came from the well-established Polish community in France.¹⁶ In July 1940, after Hitler’s peace settlement was rejected by the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, who succeeded Chamberlain in May 1940, Germany waged war against Britain.

After the fall of France, the Polish government, together with the Polish troops, was evacuated to Britain, but due to lack of coordination only 23.5 % (27,614) of the army men arrived.¹⁷ 16,092 men were taken prisoner and 54,647 remained in France or made their way to Switzerland or Spain. Direct military contribution to the allied effort was fundamental to Sikorski’s political and military strategy which, after the fall of France and reduction in size of the army, suffered a major setback.¹⁸ Yet, by mid-1940, Poland remained Britain’s only fighting ally and its participation in the Battle of Britain was appreciated, particularly that of the Polish pilots who had shot down 20% of all Luftwaffe aircraft. On 5 August 1940, an addendum was signed between two countries specifying further military cooperation. It was agreed that all Polish land, navy and air forces would be organised and subordinated to the British High Command but remain as the Polish Forces.¹⁹ It followed the formation of the Polish units in Scotland and from September 1940, in collaboration with the Special Operational Executive (SOE), a special paratroop unit was created. Parachuted to occupied Poland, the *‘Silent Unseen’* [Cichociemni] played a significant role in passing secret information and delivering weapons and money to the

¹⁵ Prażmowska, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 13-4.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 26.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Duraczyński, E, *Rząd Polski na Uchodźstwie: 1939-1945* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1993), p. 79.

Polish Underground. Established air bridges were also used for transporting Polish couriers to and from Poland.²⁰

The Barbarossa offensive and restoration of Polish-Soviet relations

On 22 June 1941 Germany attacked the USSR. This changed the situation not only in military terms but, more importantly, in terms of diplomacy. Churchill, who had previously attacked the USSR and warned the public about the danger of communism, acknowledged that ideological differences must be put aside in times of total war. Restoration of diplomatic relations with the USSR became central to the allies' political and military strategy, resulting in the signing of a treaty between Britain and the Soviet Union on 12 July 1941. One of the most important points of the agreement was the guarantee that the USSR would not sign a separate peace treaty with Germany.²¹

Unlike Britain, Poland was in state of war with the Soviet Union and the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries became a controversial issue, dividing the Polish government and community-in-exile into those who supported Sikorski's policy of rapprochement with Stalin and those who opposed it.²² The main obstacle lay in the Soviet refusal to acknowledge the pre-war Polish-Soviet border, as established by the Riga Treaty in 1921. Agreement between Poland and the USSR was only reached when British Foreign Minister, Antony Eden, persuaded Sikorski that territorial issues would be discussed after the war and guaranteed that Britain would not recognise any changes which had already occurred or would occur during the war.²³ Therefore the Polish-Soviet Treaty, also known as the Sikorski-Maisky Treaty, signed on 30 July 1941, invalidated the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact without reaffirming borders. As a result, three Polish officials resigned in protest, namely a member of the Polish Cabinet, Marian Seyda, the Minister of the Foreign Affairs, August Zalewski, and Kazimierz Sosnowski, then responsible for liaison with the Polish Underground.²⁴ In diplomatic terms, the Treaty was a big success as Stalin, who had previously argued that the Polish government had ceased to exist, was now officially recognising its legitimacy. However, the Polish-Soviet alliance did not lead to the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Poland.

Determined to gain international recognition of the annexation of the provinces east of Curzon line, Maisky argued only a day after the Treaty was signed that a new Europe would be built on

²⁰ Walker, J., *Poland Alone: Britain, SOE and the Collapse of the Polish Resistance, 1944* (Brimscombe Port: Spellmount, 2010); Foot, M.R.D., *SOE: Special Operations Executive 1940-1946* (London: Pimlico, 1999).

²¹ Rzeshevsky, O. A., *War and Diplomacy: The Making of Grand Alliance* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 5.

²² Raczyński, E., *In Allied London* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962), pp. 94-5.

²³ Umiastowski, R., *Poland, Russia and Great Britain: 1941-45* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1946), p. 16.

²⁴ Raczyński, op. cit., p. 95.

the basis of '*self-determination of the people*'.²⁵ Referring to the minorities inhabiting eastern Poland who allegedly had opted for incorporation into the USSR in the show plebiscites, this criterion became central to future Soviet territorial demands. Yet, self-determination of the people also became a slogan employed by the British Foreign Office. Despite previous assurances that territorial changes during the war would not be recognised, when announcing the agreement in the House of Commons, Eden clarified that Her Majesty's Government (HMG) would not adhere to this position '*unless they took place with the free consent and good-will of the parties concerned*'.²⁶ In his view, that held well with territorial changes effecting Poland since 1939.²⁷ He concluded by stressing that HMG was not guaranteeing frontiers in Eastern Europe. Kochanski argues that Stalin interpreted this statement as British consent to settle the Soviet-Polish border on his terms.²⁸ Nevertheless, the British government continued to assure the Polish government that the changes which occurred after September 1939 were invalid. Drafted in August 1941 by Churchill and Roosevelt, the Atlantic Charter bound its signatories, including Stalin, not to seek territorial aggrandisement and to allow nations to choose their own government, thus, in principle, guaranteeing Poland's pre-war status quo.²⁹ Yet, the self-determination of people put at the core of the Charter became a threat to the integrity of the Polish State and the backbone to Stalin's demands (see chapter 6).

The Sikorski-Maisky Treaty also guaranteed the formation of the Polish army in the USSR under Polish command but subordinated to the Soviets and an '*amnesty*' to all Polish citizens detained on Soviet territory.³⁰ The process of discharging people from gulags and prisons was hectic; many people died as a result. In fact, on the eve of signing the Treaty, half of them were already dead. Those who reached the army headquarters were in such poor condition that they were unfit to fight. The plan to form the Polish army was also based on the assumption that over 8,000 Polish officers who had been taken prisoner by the Red Army in 1939 would be released.³¹ While the Polish intelligence service was unable to trace their whereabouts, Stalin informed Sikorski during his visit to Moscow in January 1942 that they must have escaped to Manchuria ignoring the fact that he had signed the order for their execution in 1940.³² It was only in spring 1943 that the Germans discovered their graves at Katyn'.³³

By the beginning of 1942 it became evident that the Soviet authorities were not fulfilling the terms of the Treaty as not all Polish citizens had been released from the gulags. In addition, in

²⁵ Maisky's speech, 31 July 1941 in Umiastowski, op. cit., p.19.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Kochanski, op. cit., pp. 328-33.

²⁹ Davies, N., *Europe: A History* (London: Pimlico, 1997), p. 1027.

³⁰ Umiastowski, op. cit., p. 17.

³¹ Kadell, op. cit., pp. 44-47.

³² Kochanski, op. cit., p. 181.

³³ Mackiewicz, J., *Katyn', Zbrodnia bez sądu i kary* (Warsaw: Antyk, 1997), pp. 81-5.

March 1942 Stalin informed the Commander of the Polish Army in the Soviet Union, General Władysław Anders, that he was not able to feed all the Polish soldiers.³⁴ Despite Poland being included in an American Lend-Lease aid program, the Polish Army in the USSR did not receive supplies directly but through the Soviet command, whose priority lay in providing for its own soldiers.³⁵ Yet, it was Lord Beaverbrook, who after becoming the Chairman of the Allied Supplies Executive in October 1941, decided not to aid the Polish Army.³⁶ This move, in Stalin's view, demonstrated that in fact the allies did not attach much importance to the Polish Army in the USSR.³⁷ In response to this situation, and without Sikorski's authorisation, Anders evacuated 77,000 Polish soldiers and over 37,000 Polish refugees, including women and children, to the Middle East where the British Army was stationed.³⁸ As a result, the Polish government's plan for using the Polish Army to liberate Poland collapsed whilst power to bargain with Stalin decreased, if not vanished.

The Polish Underground State

Over 100 years of partition from Prussia, Austria-Hungary and Russia had resulted in the creation of an '*underground state*' with an army and, administrative, judicial and educational apparatus which, after Poland's downfall in 1939, was resurrected.³⁹ During the September Campaign in 1939, the structure of resistance was already organised. On the orders of Commander-in-chief, Marszałek Rydz-Śmigły, a military organisation, the Service for Poland's Victory [Służba Zwycięstwu Polski] (SZP) was formed. From the beginning, the Polish Underground was subordinated to the Polish authorities-in-exile. By the end of 1939, the SZP had been transformed into the Union of Armed Struggle [Związek Walki Zbrojnej] (ZWZ). General Kazimierz Sosnowski became the Commander-in-chief of this organisation whilst Colonel Stefan Rowecki and General Michał Tokarzewski were in charge of ZWZ under the German and the Soviet occupation respectively. In 1940, however, Tokarzewski was arrested by the NKVD and sent to Siberia.⁴⁰ After the fall of France, Rowecki was appointed the Commander-in-chief of the ZWZ and became responsible for military matters in both occupied zones. It was also at that time that it became apparent that the war would not finish soon and more than military resistance was necessary. As a result, ZWZ established the underground administration of occupied Poland. Communication between the Polish government-in-exile and the Polish Underground had been established from the beginning and the so-called Government Delegation for Poland, also known as Delegatura, was created, acting as the equivalent of the

³⁴ Kadell, op. cit., p. 53.

³⁵ Prażmowska, op. cit., pp. 104-6.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Kadell, op. cit., p. 54.

³⁹ Korboński, S., *W Imieniu Rzeczy -Pospolitej* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 1991).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Polish government under the occupation and responsible to the Polish government-in-exile. Henceforth, the first Government Delegate for Poland, Cyryl Ratajski, was responsible for political and administrative issues in the country, and at the same time acted as Deputy Prime Minister.⁴¹

In 1942 ZWZ was transformed into the Polish Home Army [Polska Armia Krajowa] (AK) under the command of Stefan Rowecki who remained in the post until he was arrested by the Gestapo in June 1943.⁴² He was succeeded by Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski. In October 1944, Leopold Okulicki took charge of the AK, after Bór-Komorowski was taken into captivity. From the beginning, there was separation between the political and military wings of the Underground, but the Delegate had powers of veto with regards to the Home Army's budget.⁴³ After 1941, the relationship between the Polish government-in-exile and Delegatura became edgier, particularly because the latter, exposed to Soviet torments and political manoeuvring, saw giving up the eastern territories of Poland as treason.⁴⁴ Moreover, it established its own quasi-parliament in which representatives of the four major parties were included, as well as minorities such as the Jews, though the communists were excluded. Yet, as the war progressed, there seems to be disparity between what the Polish underground tried to achieve and the understanding of these aims on the part of the Polish authorities in London. At the same time, as Zamojski observed, there was a progressive move on the part of the Polish Underground towards autonomy from the Polish government-in-exile, '*a shift from subordination to partnership, culminating in the success of the principle that it was the country that had the final say*'.⁴⁵

Sikorski's foreign policy

Sikorski's foreign policy was built on the assumption that Great Britain and, in particular, the USA which entered the war in December 1941, would have a casting vote regarding the post-war shape of Europe; he thus believed that, as long as he had the support of Roosevelt and Churchill, restoration of Polish pre-war frontiers was secured.⁴⁶ Yet, whilst Poland's military contributions to the war effort were welcomed and appreciated, it was understood that the Soviet Union was a more important ally.⁴⁷ In addition, as Britain and the USA failed to open a second front on the insistence of Stalin, their position in negotiations weakened. An analysis of the private correspondence between Churchill and Roosevelt demonstrates that they shared the

⁴¹ Garliński, J., *The Polish Underground State 1939–1945*, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 10 (2), Sage Publications, 1975, pp. 219–59.

⁴² Korboński, op. cit., pp. 246–55.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 226.

⁴⁴ Garliński, op. cit.

⁴⁵ Zamojski, op. cit., p. 188.

⁴⁶ Kochanski, op. cit., pp. 335–60.

⁴⁷ Prażmowska, op. cit., pp. 162–63.

same view, notably, that Poland should be left in the Soviet sphere of influence and Stalin's demands to the Curzon line recognised.⁴⁸ However, their stance was not made public or disclosed to Poles until 1944.⁴⁹ Instead, the Polish government was pressured throughout 1942-1944 to reach compromise with Stalin which in fact meant accepting his ultimatums.

Sikorski seemed to misinterpret the direction of British and American foreign policy and continued to stand by appeasement towards the USSR in the name of allied unity.⁵⁰ Soldiers and civilians rescued from the USSR were forbidden to discuss their experience whilst the Polish press in Britain and in the US was banned from publishing anything on this topic because, as Umiastowski points out, the Polish Prime Minister '*hoped that this one-sided allegiance to the Soviet partner would be repaired and an honest settlement of the relations would follow*'; for this reason he publicly emphasised good relations and cooperation with Stalin.⁵¹ There was also another reason why Sikorski suppressed this information: as long as diplomatic channels with the USSR were open, there was hope for rescuing Polish citizens from the Soviet Union. His plan, however, proved to be fruitless. Stalin, annoyed by the Polish Prime Minister's persistence at British involvement in the territorial negotiations and seeking support for his case in Washington in December 1942, was not willing to compromise on any issues.⁵² Ironically, all future decisions regarding the Polish-Soviet frontier were made between the Big Three without the presence or consent of the Polish authorities. Understanding that the strength of the nation's diplomatic position was measured according to military success, after the Red Army had defeated the Wehrmacht troops at Stalingrad in February 1943, the Soviet leader became unreceptive to requests for dialogue and firm in his demands.⁵³ Nine days after the German surrender, Moscow announced that the Baltic States and Bessarabia were part of the USSR and on 1 March 1943 Polish eastern territories were added to the list.⁵⁴

However, in anticipation of victory, Stalin had already launched an open attack on the Polish government in London in January 1943, stating that

⁴⁸ Woodward, L. *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1962), pp. 194-203.

⁴⁹ Mikołajczyk, S., *The Rape of Poland: Pattern of Soviet Aggression* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1948).

⁵⁰ Duraczyński, op. cit., pp. 214-18.

⁵¹ Umiastowski, op. cit., p. 91.

⁵² Kochanski, op. cit., p. 336.

⁵³ Prażmowska, op. cit., p. 120.

⁵⁴ Stenton, *Radio London and Resistance in Occupied Europe: British Political Warfare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 290.

'in spite of the goodwill shown by the Soviet Government, the Polish government had adopted a negative attitude to the agreement of 1941 by putting forward claims to eastern Poland, claims which conflicted with the Soviets' sovereign right'.⁵⁵

These claims, he further argued, were *'contrary to the Atlantic Charter and unworthy of Lord Curzon'*.⁵⁶ In attacking the Polish government for being unrepresentative and denying people's right to self-determination, Stalin contended that the Polish-Soviet Treaty did not take into account the plebiscites and election conducted in eastern Poland in 1939 in which Ukrainians and Byelorussians voted for incorporation into the USSR. In allegations, handed to Tadeusz Romer, the Polish ambassador to the USSR in Kuibyshev, it was also claimed that the term *'amnesty'* used in the Treaty *'was a proof of the Polish government's recognition of the Soviet's sovereign rights to this country, since no government can bestow amnesty to the citizens of another Power'*.⁵⁷ In addition, Polish citizenship would be withdrawn from Poles left in the Soviet Union, meaning that they automatically became Soviet subjects. Every means was also taken to minimise the Polish contributions to the allied war efforts. The accusations were predominantly directed against Anders, for unwillingness to fight, and against the AK for allegedly collaborating with the Germans.⁵⁸ Whilst the Polish government's refutation to the Soviet accusations achieved nothing, it exposed Stalin's hitherto concealed war aims. The Soviet propaganda directed against the Polish government and the Underground was now in full swing (see chapter 7).

The Katyń Massacre

In this climate, in early 1943, the Germans discovered the graves of the 8,000 missing Polish officers at Katyń. Further investigation revealed that executions carried out by the NKVD, the Soviet law enforcement agency, in spring 1940 also included police officers, representatives of the intelligentsia, white collar workers and landowners, in short, anyone classified by Stalin as an *'enemy of the people'*. In total, 25,000 people were murdered.⁵⁹ Finding missing Polish officers was central to the Polish government's plan to form an army in the USSR and from 1941 they unsuccessfully made enquiries to the Kremlin regarding their whereabouts.⁶⁰ The Soviet government denied committing the murders and assigned the blame to the German army which in spring 1941 occupied the region. Although Churchill acknowledged that the German allegations were *'nearly certain'*, the Foreign Office fostered the Soviet version of events.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Note of Narkomindel, 16 January 1943, in Umiastowski op. cit., p. 109.

⁵⁶ Stenton, op. cit., p. 290.

⁵⁷ Umiastowski, op. cit. p. 109.

⁵⁸ Kochanski, op. cit. p. 337.

⁵⁹ Kadell, op. cit., p. 25.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Davies, 1997, op. cit., p. 1004.

Special care was taken to play this down and prevent contradictory accounts from circulation ⁶² (see chapter 6). It was understood that the unity of the allied coalition was a priority but, more importantly, Britain could not be seen as an ally of the country which was perpetrating the same crimes as the Nazis.⁶³ In order to save the Grand Alliance from falling apart, Eden attempted to persuade Sikorski from publically responding to the German announcement and instead to accuse Goebbels of fabrication.⁶⁴ The Polish government, however, felt that it was necessary to find the truth and appealed to the International Red Cross for investigation. Yet, the International Red Cross could not proceed without approval of all parties involved and the Soviet government did not give its consent.⁶⁵ The Germans conducted their own investigation and also appealed to the Red Cross. Moreover, they invited forensic experts and press from other countries including Poland to the scene. The evidence pointing to Soviet guilt was overwhelming.⁶⁶ Not only did the Soviet government continued to deny carrying out the executions but, after recapturing the Katyń area in September 1943, a series of cover-ups took place. The most significant was undertaken by the Soviet Commission of Inquiry into the Katyń Massacre (the Burdenko Commission) in January 1944, which concluded that Wehrmacht guilt was definitive.⁶⁷ In fact, the Soviet government did not accept responsibility until 1990.⁶⁸

In propaganda terms, the discovery at Katyń was a gift to Goebbels. Not only had he achieved his goal, namely breaking the allies' coalition, but he also used the evidence pointing to Soviet guilt in order to convince Poles that, in fact, communists were worse than Nazis.⁶⁹ It was also not a coincidence that Goebbels, who had already learnt about the discovery at Katyń in March 1943, waited to release the information until April, the exact time when the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto for Jews was taking place. It is evident that he had done so in order to divert world attention from the mass murder of the Jews.⁷⁰ Aware of German plans, the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto rose against the oppressor on 19 April 1943. This desperate act resulted in the death of 7,000 Jews whilst those who survived were transported to the death camp at Treblinka.⁷¹

The Polish government appeal to the Red Cross for an inquiry into the discovery at Katyń aggravated the already tense relationship with the Kremlin. On 25 April 1943 Molotov handed a

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 1005.

⁶⁴ Kadell, op. cit., p. 62.

⁶⁵ Szonert, M. B., *Katyń: State-Sponsored Extermination* (London: Libra Institute, 2012), p. 43.

⁶⁶ Cienciala, A. M., at al., *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2007), p. 1.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 2.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 226.

⁶⁹ Kadell, op. cit., p. 58.

⁷⁰ Kwatkowski, M. J., *Polskie Radio w Konspiracji: 1939-1944* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1989), pp. 189-90.

⁷¹ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 312.

note to the Polish ambassador to Moscow, Tadeusz Romer, with information that the USSR was breaking off diplomatic relations with Poland on the grounds that the Poles had collaborated with the Nazis and endeavoured to use the Katyń massacre to pressure the Soviet government to obtain territorial concessions.⁷² In Stalin's view, the Polish government's request to the Red Cross was offensive and violated '*all regulations and standards of relations between two Allied States*'.⁷³ In response, the Polish government issued a statement affirming that their policy was '*a friendly understanding between Poland and the Soviet Union on the basis of the integrity and full sovereignty of the Polish Republic*'; it denied the charges whilst emphasising that it had continuously asked for the whereabouts of the Polish officers before and after the graves were discovered.⁷⁴

The attempts to fix relations with the USSR were ill-fated. Stalin now argued not only that the Poles must accept the Soviet ultimatum with regards to the Curzon line, but also the dismissal of the members of the Polish government-in-exile who, in his opinion, were hostile to the Soviet Union, namely, President Raczkiewicz, Stanisław Kot, the previous ambassador to Moscow and from 1943 Minister of Information, and Marian Kukiel, the Minister of War responsible for Polish prisoners of war.⁷⁵ From this point to the end of the war, accusations that the Polish government was pro-Nazi and anti-Soviet became a mantra used by Stalin in all negotiations in order to demonstrate the unrepresentative character of the Polish government in London, and to convince the other allies that, in fact, it was the USSR which was anxious about its sovereignty and unfriendly neighbours after the hostilities ended. Yet Sikorski understood that renewal of diplomatic relations between Poland and the USSR was essential. The evidence suggests that he was going to respond to Stalin's demand to '*improve the composition*' of the Polish government, as he put it.⁷⁶ However, he informed his National Council that he would not agree to changes on the eastern border and that his stance had the full support of Britain.⁷⁷ He was going to do so after visiting the Polish troops in the Middle East. Unfortunately, he died in a plane crash in Gibraltar on 4 July 1943 on his way back to London.

Yet the fact that Stalin himself signed the death warrant for the Polish officers leads Davies to assert that he knew exactly what he was doing. In fact, '*he was testing the political waters of the Grand Alliance to see how far he could go*'.⁷⁸ The evidence pointing to the conclusion that

⁷² Woodward, op. cit., p. 204.

⁷³ Molotov to Romer: Breaking off diplomatic relations with Poland by the USSR, 25 April 1943, in Czarnocka, H. et al., *Armia Krajowa w Dokumentach*: Vol. 3 (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1990), nr. 428, p. 505.

⁷⁴ Ibid, Response of the Polish government regarding breaking off diplomatic relations by the USSR, 28 April 1943, nr. 431, p. 508.

⁷⁵ Raczyński, op. cit., pp. 146-53.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Duraczyński, op. cit., pp. 235 -237.

⁷⁸ Davies, N., *Rising'44: The Battle for Warsaw* (London: Macmillan, 2003), p. 48.

Stalin used the controversy surrounding the discovery at Katyń forest as a pretext rather than cause for breaking off diplomatic relations with the Polish government is overwhelming. After the Polish-Soviet Treaty was signed, he parachuted prominent Polish communists to Poland in order to restore the Polish Communist party whilst continuing support for Soviet partisan activities aimed at destroying the Polish Underground.⁷⁹ He also attempted to create a Polish governmental body on Soviet soil which, he argued, could be transferred to Poland after the Wehrmacht was defeated.⁸⁰ This proposal suffered a setback in 1941 because both the British and the Polish governments discounted the idea, but, by the beginning of 1943, his plan for establishing a Polish puppet government was already in full swing.

Polish Communists

In March 1943, on the initiative of Polish communists in the USSR (Wanda Wasilewska, Hilary Minc and Wiktor Grosz), the Union of the Polish Patriots [Unia Polskich Patriotów] (UPP) was created, despite the fact that non-Russian organisations were not allowed on Soviet territory.⁸¹ Recognised by Stalin, the UPP adopted a programme in line with Soviet foreign policy, notably, alliance between Poland and the USSR, the Curzon line, and the discrediting of the London government as a legitimate governmental body. Yet in many respects their manifesto was similar to that of the Polish government; there was no reference to communist ideology, and instead equal rights irrespective of nationality or religion and patriotism were at core of their programme. The main difference, however, lay in the promise of the incorporation of the German north and east territories after the war, something that the Polish government in London could not do. In their propaganda, special care was taken to convince the public that they expressed the views and aspirations of the Polish nation, emphasising that the UPP was made up only of Polish citizens. Positioning themselves as the guarantors of the freedom and independence of Poland, the UPP endeavoured to manipulate the Poles' emotions by placing patriotism and pro-Soviet attitudes on the same level.⁸² This was evident in the names chosen for their organisation (Polish Patriots), its newspaper (*Free Poland*), and the radio station Kościuszko broadcasting in Polish, named ironically after a national hero who led an uprising against Russia in the eighteenth century.

Kościuszko was also the name given to the Polish division formed under Soviet auspices and political control of the UPP in May 1943 in the USSR, with the aim of joining the Red Army in the liberation of Poland. In March 1944 it expanded to become the First Polish Army, also known as the Berling Army, after its commander, Zygmunt Berling.⁸³ It played a significant

⁷⁹ Ibid, pp. 151-2.

⁸⁰ Duraczyński, op. cit., p. 260.

⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 225-32

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Kochanski, op. cit., p.257.

role in assisting Polish communists in establishing their administration on the liberation from German Polish territory and in purging the AK.⁸⁴

The Soviet Union also supported activities of the Polish communists in Poland. Before the outbreak of the war, the Communist International Organisation, Comintern, had ordered the suspension of the Polish Communist Party and execution of its leaders.⁸⁵ After the Wehrmacht launched the Barbarossa operation in June 1941, however, Stalin decided to reconstruct it.⁸⁶ In December 1941, Marcel Nowotko, Paweł Finder and Bolesław Mołojec were parachuted into Poland from the USSR. In order to disassociate itself with Communism, the newly established party was named the Polish Worker's Party [Polska Partia Robotnicza] (PPR). Yet, while their manifesto in March 1943 included the same postulates as the UPP, it also argued for the nationalisation of industry and state control of all aspects of the public domain.⁸⁷ The PPR's military wing, the People's Guard [Gwardia Ludowa] (GL), served as competition for the Polish Home Army and claimed to be the true resistance force in Poland.⁸⁸ Despite the fact that GL numbers were never high, its activities caused a great deal of trouble, resulting in the exposure of the organisation of the Polish Underground and the persecution of civilians.⁸⁹ In December 1943, the PPR transformed itself into the Homeland National Council [Polski Komitet Narodowy] (PKN) with Bolesław Bierut as chairman. Established as a competitor to the Polish government-in-exile, it claimed to be:

*'the actual political representation of the Polish nation, empowered to act on behalf of the nation and manage its affairs until the time of Poland's liberation from the occupation'.*⁹⁰

It foreshadowed the creation of a provisional government of Poland and the taking of control over all Polish armed forces. It also transformed the GL into the People's Army [Armia Ludowa] (AL). The formation of the KRN, however, met with Stalin's disapproval, first because he was not informed about it and, secondly, because given the UPP presence in the USSR, he was opposed to factions within the Polish communist camp.⁹¹

⁸⁴ Ibid, pp. 430-35.

⁸⁵ Davies, 2003, op. cit., pp. 151-152.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Werblan, A., *Władysław Gomułka. Sekretarz Generalny PPR* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1988), pp. 158-9.

⁸⁸ Stenton, p. 285.

⁸⁹ Korboński, op. cit., pp. 234-35.

⁹⁰ Duraczyński, E., *Między Londynem a Warszawą: Lipiec 1943 – lipiec 1944* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1986) p. 101.

⁹¹ Ibid.

In August 1943, Stanisław Mikołajczyk became the second Prime Minister of the Polish government-in-exile. However, in contrast to his predecessor, he did not hold the posts of both Premier and Commander-in-chief; the second position was given to Kazimierz Sosnowski. Given that diplomatic relations between Poland and the USSR had broken down, both Britain and the USA acted as mediators between the two neighbours.⁹² Consequently, Mikołajczyk's foreign policy was based on the assumption that Churchill and Roosevelt supported restoration of Poland's pre-war borders, and their mediation with the Kremlin was not only welcomed but also insisted upon.⁹³ Yet, given the Red Army victories and the inability of Britain and the USA to open the second front, it became apparent that east Europe would be left in the Soviet sphere of influence.⁹⁴ This also meant that the USSR was considered a more important ally than Poland and, in order to maintain good relations with Moscow, Stalin's demands had to be addressed.

In August 1943, the Foreign Office suggested offering confidential Anglo-American assurance to Stalin to support his claims to the Curzon line and to compensate Poland with Danzig, East Prussia and part of Upper Silesia.⁹⁵ It was acknowledged that Britain was acting contrary to the Atlantic Charter, *'but there was no other way of securing or getting Anglo-Soviet collaboration after the war or getting an improvement in Polish-Soviet relations'*.⁹⁶ The American government opted for settling territorial matters after the war, yet Eden highlighted that the reconciliation between Poland and the USSR was of high importance: the Polish government was asking Britain to supply arms to the AK, something that would be interpreted as an act against the USSR, given that Stalin supported communist organisations and the Berling Army, hostile to both the Polish government and the Polish Underground.⁹⁷ This issue became particularly problematic as the Red Army was approaching the Polish border and it was uncertain if it was going to act as liberator or occupant. The Polish authorities in London were also following the line of Delegatura, which opposed any territorial concession whilst holding that future negotiations with Moscow could only take place if the latter safeguarded the authority of the Polish government and the Underground's administration of land liberated from the Germans.⁹⁸ As a result, no agreement had been reached between the allies with regard to the future Polish-Soviet border.

In November 1943, the first conference between the Big Three took place in Tehran, at which the Polish-Soviet frontier was the main subject under discussion. Both Churchill and Roosevelt

⁹² Kochanski, op. cit., pp. 351-2.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Prażmowska, op. cit., p. 170.

⁹⁵ Woodward, op. cit., p. 250.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 251.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 252.

agreed to Stalin's territorial demands and to extend Poland westwards as far as the river Oder.⁹⁹ This decision was made without the knowledge or authorisation of the Polish government and remained undisclosed until October 1944.¹⁰⁰

In January 1944, the Red Army crossed the pre-war Polish-Soviet border. At this point, conduct towards the Red Army became highly problematic, given that diplomatic relations between Poland and the USSR had not been re-established and that the Curzon line was not officially recognised as the Polish-Soviet frontier and, more importantly, that the Soviet government had shown nothing but hostility to the Polish authorities in London and to the Polish Underground. In October 1943 the Polish Underground had already outlined plan '*Tempest*' which envisaged cooperation with the Soviet army in an assault on the retreating German armies in the eastern Poland and setting up of a civilian administration on liberated territory.¹⁰¹ This, however, was only achievable if the AK revealed itself to the Soviet command. In 1944, '*Tempest*' was put in action, but proved to have fatal consequences: the AK soldiers were subject to arrests, deportations and killings by the Soviets.¹⁰² After being informed about Soviet misconduct, the British Foreign Office responded by stating that they believed this information to be true but nothing could be done other than to emphasise the Polish Underground resistance activities and their willingness to cooperate with the Soviet Union.¹⁰³

On the eve of the Red Army crossing of the Polish-Soviet border, Mikołajczyk made an official statement in which he acknowledged that the Red Army had entered Poland and expressed willingness for reconciliation with the USSR.¹⁰⁴ Yet, according to Stalin, the Polish-Soviet border lay on the Curzon line and he therefore argued that the Red Army had not entered Poland. Nevertheless, he responded to Mikołajczyk's statement that he was open to renewing diplomatic relations with Poland, but on condition that the Curzon line would be accepted by the Polish government.¹⁰⁵

Both Churchill and Eden tried to reason unsuccessfully with the Polish Premier to accept Stalin's terms. The prospect of compromise between Poland and the USSR was further complicated by the fact that Stalin argued for removing anti-Soviet officials and replacing them

⁹⁹ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 357.

¹⁰⁰ Davies, 2003, pp. 190-1.

¹⁰¹ Siemaszko, Z., *Dziewięć Spojrzeń na Powstanie Warszawskie w latach 1969-2014* (London: Siemaszko, 2014), p. 94.

¹⁰² Walker, op. cit., pp. 73-80.

¹⁰³ Woodward, op. cit., p. 354.

¹⁰⁴ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 384.

¹⁰⁵ Duraczyński, op. cit., 1993, pp. 295-6.

with communists.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the Polish government was asked to make an official statement acknowledging German responsibility for the Katyń massacre.¹⁰⁷

In response to this situation, as well as to the growing importance of the Polish communists, the Delegatura established the Council of National Unity [Rada Jedności Narodowej] (RJN) in Poland with Kazimierz Pużak as its chairman.¹⁰⁸ Among other points, their manifesto argued for the pre-war Polish-Soviet border. In February, while Churchill officially supported the Soviet claims to the Curzon line, however, the final decision regarding the border was to be left until the post-war peace conference. With Soviet troops on Polish territory, it was understood that Poland's sovereignty was at stake. As Prażmowska points out, both Churchill and Roosevelt permitted

*'the establishment of Soviet supremacy over decisions concerning the future of Central and South-eastern Europe (...) (it) was the deliberate British and American decision to concentrate on conciliating their own still slender victories. In effect the western Allies had established no avenues for influencing Soviet policies in liberated territories, irrespective of public statements to the contrary and official messages to the Soviet authorities that they should not think of retaining territories acquired in September 1939 and subsequently'.*¹⁰⁹

As a result, the south-east part of Europe was left in the Soviet sphere of influence and political changes applied by the Soviets on liberated territory remained unchallenged. The status of Poland was reduced to an *'inconvenient ally'* and all means had to be applied to persuade Mikołajczyk to accept Stalin's terms.¹¹⁰ Yet, this stance was not clearly explained to the Polish Prime Minister who, reporting back to the Polish Underground government on his visit to the USA in June 1944, stated that Roosevelt had assured him that he supported Poland's claims to the pre-war territory and had made his stance clear to Stalin at the Tehran conference.¹¹¹

In June 1944, Polish communists in Poland and in the USSR, namely the KRN and the UPP, joined forces and established the Polish Committee of National Liberation [Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego] (PCNL), also known as the Lublin Committee, recognised by Stalin as the only legal administrative apparatus in all Polish liberated territory.¹¹² At the same time the

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 301.

¹⁰⁸ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 384.

¹⁰⁹ Prażmowska, op. cit., p. 170.

¹¹⁰ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 435.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 445.

¹¹² Ibid.

AK operation '*Tempest*' in the east proved to be a fiasco: the AK units which liberated east provinces had been taken to captivity by the Soviets.¹¹³

Yet Poles still believed that, with the backing of Britain and the USA, Poland could retain its independence. It was assumed that Poland's contribution to the allied war effort was recognised, particularly the Polish pilots' in the Battle of Britain, the Polish Army successes in the battle of Monte Casino during the Italian campaign and the part played by the Polish Air Forces and navy in the D-Day landings in June 1944.

The Warsaw rising and establishment of the communists' rule in Poland

The gradual defeat of Wehrmacht troops in Western Europe and the approach of the Red Army towards the gates of Warsaw in last days of July 1944 resulted in the evacuation of the German administration from the capital. In addition, whilst the assassination attempt on Hitler in July 1944 had weakened German morale, it had boosted resistance activities across Europe. The developments were major considerations in the decision by the leaders of the AK to launch the uprising in Warsaw (see chapter 8). Given the establishment of the communist administration on 'liberated' Polish territory, the Underground felt that it was their last chance to demonstrate their commitment to fight the German foe and to maintain control in the capital after it was liberated.¹¹⁴

The rising which lasted 63 days, had catastrophic consequences. It has been estimated that between 150,000 and 200,000 civilians were killed whilst those who survived were expelled from the city.¹¹⁵ On Hitler's orders, the capital was literally burnt to the ground. Using flamethrowers and explosives, the Nazi demolition squads methodically wiped out house after house, including monuments, museums and archives.¹¹⁶ Over 15,000 AK soldiers were killed in action, 5,000 wounded and approximately the same number were taken into the Germans captivity.¹¹⁷ Although the reasons for the downfall of the Warsaw uprising remain a point of disagreement between historians, the lack of Soviet help and their refusal to allow allied aircraft to land on Soviet bases were the main reasons why the insurgents could not succeed.¹¹⁸ More importantly, the evidence that Stalin called off the advance of the Soviet troops on the Polish

¹¹³ Commandant of the district of Wilno to the Central Command of AK, 15 July 1944, Czarnocka, et al, vol. 3, 1990, op. cit., nr. 666, p. 560.

¹¹⁴ Walker, op. cit., pp. 195-198.

¹¹⁵ Borowiec, A., *Destroy Warsaw! Hitler's punishment, Stalin's revenge* (Connecticut: Praeger Publisher, 2001), p. 179.

¹¹⁶ Davies, op. cit., 2003, p. 437.

¹¹⁷ Kirchmayer, J., *Powstanie Warszawskie* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1978). p. 576.

¹¹⁸ See for instance Davies, op. cit., 2003; Siemaszko, op. cit.; Kochanski, op. cit.; Bell, P.M.H., *John Bull & the Bear: British public opinion, foreign policy and the Soviet Union, 1941-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1990).

capital is overwhelming.¹¹⁹ Given that operation *'Tempest'* had failed in eastern Poland whilst Stalin supported the Lublin Committee, the idea that the Soviets would cooperate with the AK and recognise their authority was, as Siemaszko points out, totally irrational.¹²⁰ As he observes, this decision

*'was based on the idea, that regardless of consequences, the Polish nation could not remain passive in a time when the German occupation was going to be replaced with the Soviet, and on the assumption that military defence in these circumstances was a historical necessity'.*¹²¹

Moreover, Mikołajczyk's visit to Moscow in August 1944 did nothing to resolve the Polish-Soviet disputes. In Stalin's view, it was the Lublin Committee which was the political representative force in Poland and the Polish communists, with the backing of the USSR, were not willing to compromise on the future structure of the Polish government.¹²² The Lublin Committee offered the Polish government-in-exile four of the eighteen seats in the future government. Yet, during a second meeting in October 1944, at which Eden and Churchill were also present, Mikołajczyk was proposed as the leader of the future Polish government but 75% of its composition was to be in communists' hands.¹²³ It was also at point that Mikołajczyk learnt about the decision reached at Tehran, notably Churchill and Roosevelt's concession to the Curzon line.¹²⁴ Despite his rejection of the PCNL offer and in contrast with the Polish Council of Ministers, Mikołajczyk was willing to accept the Curzon Line. The crisis within the Polish Cabinet caused by this difference of opinion led to his resignation on 24 November 1944.¹²⁵ He was succeeded by a member of the Socialist Party, Tomasz Arciszewski, evacuated from Poland just before the outbreak of the Warsaw rising.

This change met with Churchill and Roosevelt's disapproval, primary because Mikołajczyk, in contrast to Arciszewski, was willing to reach a compromise with Stalin and the Lublin Committee.¹²⁶ On 31 December 1944, Stalin recognised the Lublin Committee as the provisional government of Poland. Both Churchill and Roosevelt still considered the Polish government-in-exile as the only legitimate government of Poland but it became apparent that, as

¹¹⁹ Borodziej, W., *The Warsaw Uprising of 1944* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 88-89.

¹²⁰ Siemaszko, Z.S., *Łączność i Polityka* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2011), pp. 218-219.

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 219.

¹²² Nowak, J., *Kurier z Warszawy* (Warsaw: Znak, 2009), p. 311.

¹²³ Churchill's letter to Roosevelt, 22 Oct 1944, in Churchill, W., *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy* Vol. 6 (London: Cassell, 1954) p. 209.

¹²⁴ Bell, op. cit., pp. 99-100.

¹²⁵ Duraczyński, op. cit., 1993., p. 415.

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp. 415-20.

the communists were taking charge of administration in the liberated territory, the return of the Polish government from London to Poland was highly unlikely.

By mid-January 1945, the Red Army and the Polish First Army liberated all major Polish cities including Warsaw and Cracow and were marching towards Berlin. From this point on, the majority of the country was in the hands of communists who were persecuting members of the AK. As a result, on 19 January, the AK commander, General Leopold Okulicki, who succeeded General Bór-Komorowski after the collapse of the Warsaw rising, ordered its disbanding. The Delegatura remained in place until June 1945, hoping to be invited to join the future government.¹²⁷

Yalta Conference and the end of the war

During the conference at Yalta in February 1945, among other issues, such as the final defeat of Germany and USSR support in the war against Japan, the main topic on the agenda was the future of the Polish state. Representatives of the Polish government-in-exile were not invited. The decisions concerning the future of Poland were made without their knowledge or consent.¹²⁸ Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt recognised Soviet rights to the Curzon line and outlined a plan for the creation of the Polish Provisional Government which was to be based on the existing Provisional Government in Poland but should also include representatives of the Polish government in London.¹²⁹ The ambassadors of the USSR, USA and Great Britain, namely Molotov, Harriman and Clark Kerr respectively, were put in charge of supervising the meeting of all parties involved and the 'reorganisation' of the Polish government. The newly established Polish Provisional Government would then be pledged to hold free and 'unfettered' elections as soon as possible on the basis of universal suffrage and secret ballot.¹³⁰ It was also stressed that all democratic and anti-Nazi Parties had the right to take part and put forward their candidates. The Yalta declaration concluded that only then would the British, American and Soviet governments establish diplomatic relations with the newly formed Polish government.¹³¹ In spite of an official protest issued by the Polish government-in-exile regarding the Yalta declaration, which it compared to the fifth partition of Poland, the agreement was imposed on the Polish nation.¹³²

¹²⁷ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 524.

¹²⁸ Protests of the Polish government against Yalta agreement, 13 February 1945, in Czarnocka, et al., vol. 5 (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1991) nr. 1423, pp. 275-276.

¹²⁹ Raczynski, op. cit., pp. 267-9.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Protests of the Polish government against Yalta agreement, 13 February 1945, in Czarnocka, et al., op. cit., 1991, nr. 1423, pp. 275-276.

Only a few weeks after the Yalta conference it became apparent that Soviet interpretation of the agreement differed from that of other signatories: Molotov asserted that the Provisional Government already established in Poland should be given the right to veto other Polish candidates before they were invited to Moscow.¹³³ As the Polish communists rejected most of the names put forward by the British and American governments, including Mikołajczyk, the talks reached an impasse.¹³⁴ Yet, both Churchill and Roosevelt insisted on a fast resolution because of the upcoming conference of the United Nations in San Francisco planned for April 1945 at which post-war security and peace were to be discussed, and it was expected that Poland would join other signatories. It was not, however, in Stalin's interest to speed up negotiations; Soviet troops were in Poland and the Lublin Poles were purging Poland and liquidating any signs of nationalism; contrary to what Stalin had claimed earlier, the process of collectivisation and nationalisation was already in progress, whilst most Polish industry was moved to the USSR.¹³⁵ Stalin further argued that only Poles who publicly accepted the Crimean declaration would be considered as candidates for joining the Moscow talks; none of them did. In addition, as the Kremlin did not recognise the Polish government-in-exile while the USA and Britain did not consider the Provisional Government as legitimate, Poland was not represented at the United Nations conference in San Francisco (see chapter 9).

Despite the agreement reached at Yalta, all Polish armies continued fighting until the capitulation of Germany. On 7 May 1945 the war in Europe was officially over, but Polish soldiers remained reluctant to return home because with the communists in power; they were anxious that they would be subjected to persecution. Their angst was not without foundation; in March 1945, 16 leaders of the Polish Underground who, after being invited to Moscow to take part in negotiations with regard to the composition of the future Polish government, were arrested by the NKVD and put in prison on charges of diversionary activities against the Red Army, collaboration with the Germans and maintaining illegal radio transmitters in the Soviet area.¹³⁶ 13 of 16 defendants who were put on trial in Moscow received a prison sentence. As Davies observed, the trial at which the AK was labelled as illegal organisation was:

*'An archetypal show trial, replete with absurd accusations, brainwashed defendants, and suborned witnesses, it had nothing to do with real offences. It was staged to show that the Soviets were all-powerful, that 'Soviet justice' could prepare the most blatant injustices with impunity, and that the Western powers were impotent to prevent it'.*¹³⁷

¹³³ Kochanski, p. 509.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 510.

¹³⁵ General Okulicki to President of the Polish Republic: military and political situation in the country, 9 December 1945, in Czarnocka, op. cit., 1991, nr.1344, p. 170.

¹³⁶ Kochanski, op. cit., pp. 529–31.

¹³⁷ Davies, op. cit., 2003, p. 465.

It demonstrated that the Soviets were prepared to act above the law in order to establish communist rule in Poland and that those who opposed it, would be treated as criminals. According to the British ambassador to Moscow, Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr, the main aim of the trial was to discredit the Polish government-in-exile on the international and national scene as well as destroying opposition to communist authority in Poland, in which, in his view, Stalin succeeded.¹³⁸

It was also not a coincidence that the meeting between the Polish communists and the Polish politicians approved by Stalin was taking place at the same time as the trial. It resulted in an agreement on the composition of the Polish Government of National Unity on 21 June 1945 whereby the Polish communists took 17 seats out of 21 with Osóbka-Morawski as the Prime Minister, whilst Mikołajczyk was offered the post of the Minister of Agriculture.¹³⁹ As a consequence, on 6 July 1945, the British and American governments withdrew recognition of the Polish government-in-exile.

Conclusion

The foreign policy of the Polish government-in-exile was based on the assumption that, as long as Poland was contributing to the war effort, Poland's position within the allies' camp was strong. They seemed to misinterpret Stalin's strategy, as his ultimatums remained the same throughout the war. Not at any point did the Soviet leader show willingness to reach a compromise. Instead other demands were added to the list, such as replacing anti-Soviet Polish politicians with communists. The Polish authorities also failed to recognise that the USSR was a more important ally than Poland and, that for both Churchill and Roosevelt, the priority laid in safeguarding the interests of their own countries. This situation was further complicated by the fact that both leaders were not upfront with the Polish government about agreements reached with Stalin which consequently weakened Poland's position in negotiations with the Polish communists. The fact that the Curzon line accepted at Yalta as the Polish-Soviet border was approximately the same as the Ribbentrop-Molotov line agreed between Germany and the Soviet Union on the eve of their invasion of Poland became a sticking point. Moreover, the Polish Underground was seen as anti-Soviet and their accounts of Soviet crimes and political manoeuvring were therefore questioned. Recognition of the Polish Government of National Unity by the allies was considered as betrayal. Yet, the question as to what else could have been done is still an issue of a debate among historians. Not without reason, the final chapter of Churchill's memoirs is titled '*Triumph and Tragedy*'. Already in summer 1945, Churchill foresaw that Stalin's alleged commitment to democratic elections in Poland was not going to

¹³⁸ Duraczyński, op. cit., 1993, p. 474.

¹³⁹ Kochanski, op. cit., 534.

materialise.¹⁴⁰ While he started planning an attack on the USSR, he did not, however, gain support to put this plan into action.¹⁴¹ Britain offered citizenship to the Polish soldiers and politicians who feared Soviet persecution and, after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1946 the exiled government was reconstructed.

¹⁴⁰ Walker, J., *Operation Unthinkable: British plans to attack the Soviet Empire: 1945* (Brimscombe: The History Press, 2013), pp.11-19.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Listening conditions and audiences under German and Soviet occupation

Introduction

*'Polish broadcasts are regarded as a most reliable source of information. In addition to this, they have enormous prestige in so far as they are connected in Polish minds with the Polish Government in London, whose existence is universally held as a symbol of the continuity of the Polish State, even by those Poles who may disapprove of its composition or policies.'*¹

After the German and Soviet attacks on Poland in September 1939, the Polish Service of the BBC became the main source of information, particularly after the fall of France in June 1940 when Radio Polskie stopped broadcasting from France and the Polish government took refuge in London. Taking as a starting point the policies of both German and Soviet occupiers towards Polish citizens, this chapter discusses listening conditions under the occupation and their impact on the accessibility of the Polish Service broadcasts. It concentrates on the character of the audience in Poland, paying particular attention to the role of the Polish Underground as the main receiver and distributor of the Polish Service broadcasts. By 1941 after the German authorities had introduced the death penalty for listening or possession of radios and extensive numbers of sets had been destroyed after the German and Soviet armies entered Polish territory in September 1939, it was necessary to repurpose the Polish Service to provide news for professional listeners disseminating Polish broadcasts rather than a mass audience. Therefore, the discussion also concentrates on the establishment and influence of the clandestine press. In addition, Soviet policy with regard to broadcasting in Poland is examined, as is the impact of the German attack on the Soviet Union, resulting in the recognition of the radio as a weapon of anti-Soviet propaganda in Poland.

Listening condition under the German occupation

Following the invasion in September 1939, Germany directly annexed the western and northern parts of Poland to the Third Reich whilst, in the remaining Polish territory west of the Curzon line, Hitler created a separate state, the General Government [Generalne Gubernatorstwo], administrated by Hans Frank.² It was inhabited by 11.5 million people and comprised 95,500 km², expanding eastwards after the Wehrmacht attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 to

¹ BBC WAC, E2/184, European Intelligence Papers, European Audience Estimates, report from 4 August 1943.

² Bór-Komorowski, T, *The Secret Army* (Barnsley: Frontline, 2011) p. 21.

encompass an area of 141,000 km².³ Controlled by the SS and Gestapo, the General Government become 'a lawless state of Nazi racial ideology' and 'reservoir of force free labour'.⁴ It was in this part of Poland that major German concentration camps and Jewish ghettos were located and where Jews and Poles unsuitable for Germanisation were 'resettled'. Hitler's main goal was the complete destruction of the Polish State and creation of 'Lebensraum' – a living space for Germans in which the status of Poles was reduced to serfdom in the form of economic exploitation and forced labour in support of Germany's war effort. Hitler's final goal, however, was the extermination of Polish nation, to be achieved after the hostility had ended, with the exception of small percentage of Poles who were to be used as slaves. Germans targeted all aspects of Polish identity. German was introduced as an official language, schools and universities were closed down and education restricted to a few years of elementary school. Ethnic cleansing, terror and mass execution became an everyday occurrence. In particular, Jews, the Polish intelligentsia, army men, members of the Underground and political leaders were targets for extermination. German occupation resulted in the death of approximately 6 million Poles, half of whom were Polish Jews.⁵

In accordance with Nazis policies, every means was to be employed to disconnect Poland from the rest of the world. In order to help achieve this goal, the Germans introduced the death penalty for listening to or possession of a radio, and to those who distributed information.⁶ As Kwiatkowski points out, the possession of radio sets, next to sabotage activities, was seen by Germans as a direct attack on the Third Reich.⁷ Consequently, by 5 October 1939 Poles were ordered to return all radio sets.⁸

In the General Government Germans introduced the so-called *Volkliste* or German people list, with the aim to classify people according to their heritage. The main division was between those of Aryan origin – ethnic Germans and Germans from the Reich and non-Aryans, also referred to as subhumans.⁹ Despite the fact that in the beginning all non-Germans were in the second category, in 1940 the occupants extended the first category to Poles, who in their view were suitable for Germanisation.¹⁰

³ Eberhardt, P., *Migracje polityczne na ziemiach polskich: 1939-1950* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2011), p. 25.

⁴ Davies, N., *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw* (London: Macmillan, 2003), p. 86.

⁵ Piotrowski, T., *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide* (New York: McFarland, 1997), p. 295.

⁶ Mansell, G., *Let Truth Be Told: 50 Years of BBC External Broadcasting* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1982), p. 181.

⁷ Kwiatkowski, M. J., *Polskie Radio w Konspiracji: 1939-1944* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1989), p.12.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Davies, op. cit., p. 90.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Volkdeutsche, namely Poles of German ethnicity or of German descent, and Reichsdeutsche, the German settlers, could keep the sets but were not allowed to listen to foreign stations, including the broadcasts of Germany's allies.¹¹ The process of returning radios, however, was so inadequate that the same order continued to be published in German newspapers until March 1940.¹² According to the diary of Hans Frank, in a detailed account of his work as the Governor-General, by 2 March only 60% of the 140,000 radios registered before the war in Warsaw were returned.¹³ The hunger for information and the feeling of being cut off from the outside world meant that many Poles disobeyed the orders and continued to listen to the BBC. In fact, many sets remained well hidden throughout the war and used for listening, while some were purposely destroyed before they could be found by the authorities. Given the importance of propaganda and indoctrination, wireless sets were also offered as a bribe to Poles who signed the Volkliste and in 1941, 28,000 sets were released specifically for these purposes.¹⁴ However, there were also other reasons; those enrolled on the list were subject to military service and Germans expected collaboration from people who took the wireless sets.

It was also common to offer sets to Volkdeutsche and German settlers in the Polish territory directly annexed to the Third Reich, likely to have been obtained from Poles in the General Government, although German newspapers in Poland reported that they came from Goebbels' fund.¹⁵ However, listening to the foreign stations on those sets was not possible as they did not have a shortwave band and listening to the BBC was only possible on valve sets. Aware of this, the Germans distributed only crystal sets which allowed listeners to tune to German sponsored broadcasts.

In most cases, however, signing the Volkliste was not voluntary and many people were put in a position where they had to choose between accepting German citizenship or to being sent to a concentration camp. Despite this, Poles remained reluctant to abandon their nationality, leading to Frank's complaint in January 1943 that there were only 30,000 Volkdeutsche licence holders in the General Government.¹⁶

Although the Germans had failed to find collaborators in Poland, from the beginning of the occupation it was hoped that, after the Wehrmacht attack on the Soviet Union, Poles would be willing to cooperate in the struggle against the common enemy. Therefore, it was felt that more direct propaganda had to be employed, given the alarming reports of the Polish population still

¹¹ Diller, A., *Rundfunkpolitik im Dritten Reich* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1980), p. 403.

¹² Kwiatkowski, op. cit. 13.

¹³ Hans Frank's Diary, p. 132 in ibid.

¹⁴ BBC WAC, E2/201/1, European Intelligence Papers; wireless receiving sets in Europe, January 1941.

¹⁵ BBC WAC, E2/201/2, European Intelligence Papers; wireless receiving sets in Europe, February 1944.

¹⁶ Hans Frank's Diary in Kwiatkowski, op. cit., p. 95.

listening to the foreign broadcasts.¹⁷ Disputing the Red Army victories became a priority, particularly after the defeat of German troops at Stalingrad in February 1943. But Frank also attempted to influence Polish public opinion by allowing for the use of the previously forbidden Polish language in announcements and Polish music, delivered in the streets by megaphones.¹⁸ This gesture of a good will, Frank argued, would stop people from listening to the BBC programmes.¹⁹ Attitude of Poles to the occupier, however, remained unchanged, as did their willingness to risk their lives in order to listen to the BBC broadcasts. In fact, Frank acknowledged that the change of policy did not have any impact and that Poles continued to listen to the BBC.²⁰

Monitoring of the BBC Polish Service broadcasts

Taking into account the death penalty for listening to or possession of a radio and the fact that an extensive number of sets had been confiscated, it was the Underground which became the major audience for the BBC Polish Service broadcasts. After the collapse of the September Campaign in 1939 when all Polish stations were taken over for German propaganda, the monitoring of foreign stations became the Underground's priority.²¹ The Polish Underground differed considerably from other resistance movements in Europe. Over 100 years of partition from Prussia, Austria-Hungary and Russia had resulted in the creation of an Underground State with army, administrative, juridical and educational apparatus which, after Poland's downfall in 1939, was resurrected (see chapter 3). Consequently, the framework for conspiracy and sabotage against the occupant was already in place.

The first monitoring post was organised by Radio Polskie staff under the supervision of Professor Waław Borowy when the fighting in Warsaw was still in progress. The material distributed to the press and to civil and military administrative units became well-known and valued.²² Within the civilian unit of the Underground, the Bureau of Information and Propaganda [Biuro Informacji i Propagandy] (BIP) was created with headquarters in Warsaw and branches all over Poland, including territory occupied by the Soviet Union.²³ BIP, directed by Jan Rzepecki, saw its main task as providing reliable and unbiased information regarding the political situation and exposing German crimes, but it was also involved in sabotage and anti-German propaganda. Knowing that the news distributed by the Germans was false, the

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 95-6.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Hans Frank' Diary in Diller, op. cit., pp. 408 -9.

²¹ Kunert, A. K., *Cztery pożegnania Polskiego Radia: 1939-1945*, in *Polskie Radio w Czasie Drugiej Wojny Światowej*, (ed.) Budzyński, A., & Jasiewicz, K., (Warsaw: Polskie Radio SA, 2015), pp. 21-30.

²² Ponikowska, M., *Historia Polskiego Radia*, p. 9, in Kwiatkowski, op. cit., p. 17.

²³ Mazur, G., *Biuro Informacji i Propagandy: SZP-ZWZ-AK: 1939-1945* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax 1987), pp. 47-8.

monitoring of foreign stations and news agencies became an important part of its activities. For this purpose BIP created the Radio Department which concentrated on monitoring the BBC programmes in English and Polish and Reuters' communiqués in Morse.²⁴ The Polish Underground monitored the BBC Home Service, partly because it considered it '*more sober and sincere*' but also because breaking news appeared faster on the Home Service than on the Polish Service.²⁵ It was thanks to the installation of the high-power short-wave transmitter at Start Point in Britain that, from 20 January 1940, the BBC Home Service broadcasts could be heard as far as Poland.²⁶

Monitoring BBC programmes in French and German was also very popular, as knowledge of these languages was more common among Poles. Yet the Polish courier, Jan Karski, recalls that when he was assigned to monitor foreign stations in 1941, he was instructed to listen to Turkish and Russian broadcasts not to the BBC Polish programmes from London '*nor to English propaganda*' on the BBC Home Service.²⁷ Of course the most importance was attached to Radio Polskie broadcasts. However, whilst the Polish authorities were given air time after escaping to France in 1939, it was only in January 1942 that they were able to transmit from London on the BBC wavelengths (see chapter 1).

In addition to the monitors of the Radio Department situated in the capital, there were other monitoring posts all over the country; some were well organised and staffed, others were operated by one person. According to data provided by the Underground, there were 350-500 monitoring posts all over Poland by March 1943, equipped with powerful shortwave receiving sets operated by circa 1,500 people.²⁸

The individuals who usually undertook the monitoring jobs were former Polskie Radio employees, professional technicians and in many cases people who knew other foreign languages because, as previously mentioned, BBC broadcasts in French, German, English and Italian were also monitored. It was very a dangerous and difficult job as Germans, aware of the Underground activities, introduced van detectors able to locate a radio signal.²⁹ In consequence, the monitoring posts, hidden in private flats, deserted houses and ruins, had to be constantly relocated. As the work of the Underground became more efficient and more people were willing to participate, alarm posts were created, trained to spot approaching Gestapo.³⁰ Thus,

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ BBC WAC, E2/188/2, European Intelligence Papers, October 1942-April 1944, April 1944.

²⁶ Pawley, E., *BBC Engineering 1922-1972* (London: BBC, 1972), p. 239.

²⁷ Karski, J., *Story of a Secret State: My Report to the World* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 251.

²⁸ BBC WAC, E1/1147, Polish Booklet: English text of unpublished material on the work of the Polish Service, File 1a.

²⁹ BBC WAC, E2/192/4 File 2b, European Intelligence papers, Surreys od European Audiences: enemy occupied countries other than France, May-July 1942, report May 1942.

³⁰ Bór-Komorowski, op. cit., pp. 161-63.

monitoring was not a one-man job: it involved a number of people, constantly working under enormous stress, because if caught, not only one's own life was at stake, but the Gestapo usually killed also all the neighbours.

The Underground work, however, was considered as a patriotic duty, a form of resistance and sabotage, and people were willing to risk their lives in order to keep the nation informed. Monitoring was further complicated by jamming and German broadcasting in Polish on the Polish Service wavelengths, disguised as Polish Service broadcasts. In towns and cities additional obstacles included heavy traffic during the day as well as curtailment of the hours during which electricity was available.³¹ In general, there were more monitoring posts in the urban than in the rural areas.³² One of the 'monitors' (name not given) described his daily routine as follows:

'Our bulletin is taken down fairly fully in shorthand, to be edited and printed later; half an hour is left for producing stencils which are then taken to another place and rolled off, each of several members of the small organisation taking home one sheet which on the following day is united with the remaining sheets of the bulletins ready for circulation. News is provided daily chiefly by means of these stencilled bulletins; the weekly printed newspapers being largely based upon a collection of seven daily sheets.

³³

While the Underground also produced its own sets and transmitters, some equipment was also delivered from the west by parachute.³⁴ Yet, the construction of sets, in particular from parts stolen from German factories, was also very common. This issue will be discussed at further length below.

Figure 4.1 below shows the BBC Services which the Polish Underground monitored:

³¹ CAC, Neri 3/8, BBC Monthly Intelligence Report, December 1940.

³² BBC WAC, E2/13/1 Allied Governments Broadcasts: Poland, file 1a, 1940-2.

³³ BBC WAC, E2/192, file 2b May-July 1942 – letter from Poland, May 1942.

³⁴ BBC WAC, E1/1150/1, Polskie Radio: 1939-1949, Handbook of European Radio Information: Poland.



Figure 4:1 BBC Services monitored by the Polish Underground ³⁵

Obtaining information from occupied Poland

It was the Polish government-in-exile which supplied the reports received from Poland to the BBC.³⁶ As the Polish Home Army Commander during the Warsaw rising of 1944, Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, recalls, the Underground intelligence reports were regularly dispatched by radio to London and in years 1942-1944, 300 reports per month were transmitted.³⁷ It was thanks to the long-distance radio-telegraphic station situated at Barnes Lodge near Kings Langley in England and made available by the British government to be used by the allied governments, which served as both listening and receiving stations, that the Polish authorities in London were able directly to communicate with the Polish Underground.³⁸ More importantly, as all telephone and telegraphic lines were destroyed during the sustained bombing of Poland by the Luftwaffe

³⁵ BBC WAC, E2/188/2, October 1942-April 1944, April 1944.

³⁶ E2/192/6, Surreys od European Audiences: enemy occupied countries other than France, file 3b, November 1942-May 1943, 10 March, 1943.

³⁷ Bór-Komorowski, pp. 150-60.

³⁸ Siemaszko, Z., *Łączność i Polityka* (Norbertinum: Lubin, 2011), pp. 413-14. On work at Barnes Lodge see Davies, op. cit., pp. 1-13.

in September 1939, the station at Barnes Lodge acted also as a communication switchboard between the Home Army Central Command and its branches all over the country.³⁹ Yet, whilst the Polish government-in-exile was able to provide a few full-time telegraphists, setting up and maintaining listening and receiving posts in Poland was very difficult since destroying the Underground's communication network, and more importantly, communication with London, was one of the main priorities of the Germans. This meant that the location of the apparatuses very often had to be changed, consequently resulting in delays in responding to important messages. For instance, Siemaszko, one of the wartime Polish telegraphists working at Barnes Lodge, who analysed correspondence between the Polish authorities in London and the Polish Underground during the Warsaw rising in 1944, demonstrates that some of the messages sent by insurgents were only received and decrypted two months after the collapse of the uprising.⁴⁰

Reports and important documents were also delivered to London by Polish couriers in the form of micro-films, which were easily concealed during the journey. Whilst in Britain, Polish couriers were interviewed by the BBC and other intelligence departments, both of which considered witness accounts as a very important source of information. For the BBC, it was also an opportunity to obtain audience feedback regarding their programmes as well as to learn about listening habits and the main obstacles to access radio and reception. Jan Nowak and Jan Karski are the two most famous Polish couriers, with the latter bringing reports on German extermination of Jews in Poland to the west.⁴¹

It was also due to effectiveness of communication between Poland and London that the Germans failed to discover that the black radio station Dawn [Świt], disguised as a Polish station transmitting from Poland, in fact operated from Bletchley near London.⁴² Stefan Korboński, the Head of the Home Army Directorate of Non-military Combat unit and also responsible for civilian communication, used a private cipher to supply Dawn with information, making it possible to create the impression that the station was broadcasting from Poland.⁴³ The station, created by the British Political Warfare Executive (PWE) in cooperation with the Polish government-in-exile, was allowed to criticise Radio Kosciuszko, a station operated by the Polish communists in the USSR that from February 1943 became a platform for the propaganda of the Union of the Polish Patriots, an embryo of the Polish puppet government created by Stalin. Newcourt, however, argues that in fact it was used by the British government '*to weaken the Polish resolve not to give in to Soviet demands, whether territorial or political*'.⁴⁴ His argument is not without justification as, despite Dawn's popularity, it was eventually closed

³⁹ Siemaszko, op. cit., p. 414.

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 411-17.

⁴¹ Karski, op. cit. For Nowak's account see Nowak, J., *Kurier z Warszawy* (Warsaw: Znak, 2009).

⁴² Newcourt- Nowogrodzki, S., *Black Propaganda* (London: Sutton Publishing, 2005), pp. 196-8.

⁴³ Korboński, S., *W Imieniu Rzeczy-Pospolitej* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 1991).

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 197.

down in November 1944 after the collapse of the Warsaw rising when convincing the Polish public to accept Stalin's territorial and political ultimatums became the British government priority. More importantly, the Foreign Office, saw the main obstacle to resolving the territorial dispute between Poland and the Soviet Union as the Polish Underground leaders' unwillingness to accept Stalin's ultimate and therefore attempted to censor and control all communication between Poland and the Polish government-in-exile in the post-rising period (see chapter 9).

Audience under the German occupation

Listening to the Polish Service was also popular among civilians, particularly in workshops where German radio sets were left for repair. According to a witness (name not given) who left Poland at the end of 1943, Germans had to wait very long time for their sets to be fixed, sometimes as long as six months, as priority was given to Polish owners who covertly used the service.⁴⁵ As Germans took over all Polish business and enterprise, all the factories were run by a German national who was allowed to own a radio set. Therefore, when the management was away, Poles used this as an opportunity to listen to the Polish broadcasts.⁴⁶ It was also common to access German residents' wireless sets when they were at work. The evidence demonstrates that Germans including the representatives of the German police SS listened to the BBC Polish Service too. According to the witness (name not given), SS officers who lived above his flat were listening to the Polish broadcasts every day.⁴⁷ Moreover, booklets on how to construct wireless sets were distributed all over the country and, since obtaining parts on the black market was easy, many people were able to build their own sets.⁴⁸ The Underground also organised courses where one could learn how to make a radio.⁴⁹ In addition, pocket size radios with headphones were developed, which gained in popularity because one could listen to the broadcasts without being noticed.

The evidence also demonstrates that Poles were able to access Polish broadcasts in German labour camps and camps for prisoners of war (POW). Detailed reports on listening conditions and reception were supplied by the Underground. In addition, Poles who managed to escape from German captivity and make their way to Britain were subject to MI19 interrogation where, as well as queries regarding occupant policies, question were posed about the accessibility of

⁴⁵ BBC WAC, E2/201/2, Wireless receiving sets in Europe; file 2, January-July 1944; Report from February 1944; witness account from Bydgoszcz from October/November 1943.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ BBC WAC, E2/186/1, European Intelligence Papers, Intelligence Reports: Europe, file 1a, February-May 1940.

⁴⁸ BBC WAC, E2/13/1.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

the BBC broadcasts and general feedback.⁵⁰ These reports were widely circulated among the BBC and the British and American intelligence and propaganda departments.⁵¹

According to Mr. C. Radsyński, who was held in the Stalag camp for POWs in Torun in 1942, prisoners managed to hide a high-power Philips transmitter and listen to the Polish broadcasts daily.⁵² Radsyński recollects that German guards were easily bribed and after receiving a payoff, often left the power on overnight, allowing prisoners to listen to the radio. Even in the concentration camp in Auschwitz, a member of the Polish Underground, Witold Pilecki, who allowed himself to be arrested in hope of reporting back on the situation in the camp, built a transmitter which permitted him to communicate with the Underground and to listen to Polish broadcasts.⁵³ According to Garliński, Pilecki monitored only Radio Polskie broadcasts from London. It is evident, however, that he listened to the Polish Service too, as air time was allocated to Radio Polskie by the BBC only in January 1942 and, there is evidence that, until May 1941, Pilecki was able to access Polish Service broadcasts on concealed in the hospital radio transmitter.⁵⁴ In addition Polish electricians in the camp listened to the Polish broadcasts whilst repairing SS-men's wireless sets.⁵⁵

Nor did the harsh conditions in the Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw prevented people from listening to foreign stations. Recent research based on an analysis of surviving typed and hand written scrips shows that, as was the case outside the Ghetto walls, the BBC Polish Service broadcasts were monitored and the content of the bulletins disseminated in a form of underground papers and leaflets.⁵⁶ Both monitoring and distribution were organised by a secular Jewish youth group called the Ha Shomer Ha Tzair [The Young Guard]. Yet, not only were the Polish broadcasts objects of interest. but Radio Moscow, the American Foreign Information Service and Reuters were also considered important sources of information.⁵⁷

It should be emphasised that the efficiency of the Underground network would not have been possible without the involvement of civilians. Although untrained in covert operations, people were willing to risk their lives in order to support the resistance movement. In particular, the theft of parts from factories manufacturing wireless sets, which reopened in Poland after the German attack on the USSR in June 1941, played a significant role in the construction of the

⁵⁰ Fleming, M., *Auschwitz, the Allies and Censorship of the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 319.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² BBC WAC, E40/236/1; European Service Papers World Service Registry, Poland, 1942-1957, interview with Mr. Radsyński, 6 March 1944.

⁵³ Garliński, J., *Fighting Auschwitz* (London: Julian Friedmann Publishers Ltd, 1975), p. 59.

⁵⁴ Garliński, op. cit., pp. 59-69.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 57.

⁵⁶ Ferenc Piotrowska, M. & Zakrzewski, F., *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Warszawy*, vol. 22: *Nasłuchy radiowe w getcie warszawskim*, Warsaw, in press.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

monitoring stations and wireless sets. Not only did the Underground ever experience a shortage of parts, but the radio station Błyskawica, broadcasting from Warsaw during the Warsaw rising, was to a large extent built from stolen parts.⁵⁸ Although all factories were under strict military control, the German newspaper *Litzmannstaedter Zeitung* reported in January 1942 that equipment worth 5000 RM (Reich marks) was lost in Warsaw every month because of theft.⁵⁹ Germans not only reopened pre-war Polish factories namely Telefunken, Philips, State Tele-Radio Technical Works and Kosmos, but also set up new German factories, such as Tungsram and Deutsche Empfänger Fabrik, primarily for military purposes but also to produce crystal sets in order to spread anti-Soviet propaganda on Polish territory previously occupied by the Soviet Union.⁶⁰

Syndication of the BBC Polish Service bulletins

Given limited accessibility, the BBC Polish Service bulletins were distributed through the clandestine press rather than being directly heard on radio. The news was circulated in all forms, from professional papers and leaflets to little 'strips'. Over 150 clandestine newspapers were published every week in Poland, 87 of which in Warsaw itself.⁶¹ The Radio Department of BIP not only monitored foreign broadcasts but also played a leading role in dissemination of news. Its Radio Journal [*Dziennik Radiowy*], was mainly based on the Polish Service bulletins and Reuters.⁶² It was printed in Warsaw from December 1939 and, after the Warsaw rising, in Cracow. It consisted of 3-4 pages of verbatim news without any comments.⁶³ The monitored material was stencilled in the same studio and 200 copies were printed every day.⁶⁴ The *Radio Journal* was circulated among members of the Underground, particularly those involved in propaganda, and clandestine press editors who reprinted news in other papers.⁶⁵ There were also regional radio bulletins in the Soviet occupied zone, based on local monitoring. From October 1941, the Radio Department also produced *Bulletin Sztabowy*, later known as the *Bulletin*, comprising speeches of eminent British politicians and the Allied Forces chief commanders.⁶⁶ In the beginning it appeared weekly for 50 issues but, from 1942, the print run was irregular. As Britain became Poland's only fighting ally after the fall of France, BIP was considered essential source of information on British foreign policy and military strategy as well as economic and social problems.⁶⁷ The *Bulletin* was distributed strictly among high ranking members of BIP and

⁵⁸ Kwiatkowski, op. cit., p.217.

⁵⁹ BBC WAC, E2/201/2, file 2, January-July 1944. Report from 29 Feb 1944.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ BBC WAC, E2/128/2, Foreign General, Central Directives PWE/PID, File 2, August 1943.

⁶² Mazur, op. cit., 46-8.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 47.

⁶⁴ CAC, Neri 6/8, Information papers on Poland during the War: 1939-1945, Jan Nowak's report, 18 January 1944.

⁶⁵ Mazur, op. cit. 48.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

the Home Army (AK). It was forbidden to copy the Bulletin which had to be returned after being read for safety reasons. The death penalty applied not only for accessing foreign stations but also for the distribution of news and conspiracy work in general.⁶⁸

'Strips' have a special place in the history of the Polish clandestine press. Type written, through carbon paper, without any spaces or margins and turned into small rolls so they could be easily hidden in match boxes, cigarettes tips or gloves, they were the most popular form of spreading the news.⁶⁹ Halina Seydowa was one of the first people who organised their distribution. Strips, which later appeared under the title *Bulletin Agencji Radiowej*, were based on BBC Polish Service broadcasts. Seydowa continued her work until she was shot by the Gestapo in February 1944.⁷⁰ In fact, all Polish clandestine papers included news broadcasts by the BBC.⁷¹

Not only had the Polish Service established itself as a reliable source of information, but Britain was seen as Poland's most important ally. Thus the BBC broadcasts were recognised as a significant vehicle for the British government's foreign policy. More importantly, after the Polish government took refuge in London, Polish listeners assumed that the Polish authorities were actively involved in the preparation of the Polish Service programmes; the fact that they could hear Polish officials' speeches resulted in the popularity of the BBC Polish Service broadcasts, particularly between June 1940 and January 1942 when Radio Polskie was not broadcasting to Poland (see chapter 5). The Germans were aware of impact the broadcasts from London on the Polish population, as reflected in the severe penalties for listening to foreign stations and the distribution of news from other than German sources. A special unit was created by the German authorities to investigate the political purposes of the broadcasts from London and orders were sent to governors requiring them to take more direct steps to stop the spread of allied propaganda.⁷²

According to an Underground report, between 350,000 and 500,000 people on average were receiving news sheets every day; however, the number of people who were able to familiarise themselves with the content was much greater.⁷³ Because of the limited access to printed copies and the death penalty for possession of or distribution of the clandestine press, special copies were marked S.R.A., which stands in Polish for '*I heard English Radio*' [Słyszałem Radio Angielskie] with the instruction '*read it and pass it on*'.⁷⁴ The Germans tried unsuccessfully to sabotage these publications by circulating their own bulletins also marked S.R.A with false

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Kwiatkowski, op. cit., p. 17.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ BBC WAC, E40/236/1, Interview with Stanisław Izbecki, April 1943.

⁷² BBC WAC, E1/1149/1, Polish Service, file 1a, 1940-1942.

⁷³ BBC WAC, E2/201/2, file 2, January-July 1944. Report from 29 February 1944.

⁷⁴ BBC WAC, E2/186/1, file 1a, February-May 1940. Report from 14 May 1940.

information. Word of mouth, however, was the most efficient and the fastest way of spreading information. According to a witness who escaped from Poland in 1944, everyone was well informed about the political situation.⁷⁵ People were sharing information everywhere; doctors and nurses in hospitals were spreading the news as well as people in the shopping queues, while in the countryside, peasants memorised the content of the broadcasts and shared it with others.⁷⁶ Mr Junosza, writing in the *New Republic* on 31 March 1941 on listening conditions in Poland, reported that news from the Polish Service broadcasts was spreading very rapidly; only four hours after the RAF raid on Gdansk in December 1940, all Poland knew the details of the fight.⁷⁷ The same observation was made by Polish courier, Jan Nowak, in 1944. Interviewed by BBC officials, Nowak confirmed that Polish Service broadcasts were circulated within 5-6 hours in Warsaw, adding that, if the information was of particular significance, it became well known within 3 hours.⁷⁸ Of course, in towns with small populations and villages the process was much slower. Nowak observed that, in general, Poles were better informed than Germans.⁷⁹

Penalties for illegal listening

Although listening to foreign stations was forbidden for both Poles and Germans, the sanctions for Germans were much lighter, usually 6 to 12 months' imprisonment.⁸⁰ For propaganda purposes, Poles were put on trial for listening to the radio and the outcomes were widely publicised; if proved to have connections with the Underground Movement, the accused was shot on the spot without trial, as were their neighbours.⁸¹ Money rewards were offered for denouncing not only those who illegally possessed or listened to the radio, but also those distributing news sheets and or indeed anyone reading them.⁸² The highest reward, 10,000 złoty, however, was given for information resulting in the closure of a secret transmitter.⁸³ According to an Underground report, on average 30 victims per month lost their lives in 1941. In January and April 1941, 48 and 36 people were killed respectively.⁸⁴ In October 1941, 46 people were arrested for listening to the radio: 5 were released, 14 sentenced to death, 15 to three to six years' imprisonment, and the rest remained in custody.⁸⁵ In May 1942, 500 people were arrested in Rzeszow and Krosno for listening and distribution.⁸⁶ With the exception of the last report, the place of arrest is not mentioned. However, the information with regard to those found

⁷⁵ BBC WAC, E40/236/1, Interview with Stanisław Izbecki, April 1943.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ BBC WAC, E2/192/1, file 1a, April-July 1941, Monthly survey, 11 April 1941.

⁷⁸ CAC, Neri, 6/8, Jan Nowak's report, 18 January 1944.

⁷⁹ CAC, Neri, 3/8, BBC Surveys of European Audience, Monthly survey, 2 August 1941.

⁸⁰ BBC WAC, E2/192/3, January 1942.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² BBC WAC, E2/192/1, May 10 1941.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ BBC WAC, E2/192/2, October 1941.

⁸⁵ BBC WAC, E2/192/3, January 1942.

⁸⁶ BBC WAC, E2/192/5, May 1942

guilty is contradictory. On the one hand, it is reported that, rather than putting the accused on trial, the Gestapo shot people on spot in order to save time, but, on the other hand, the results of the trials were publicised to forewarn people and to demonstrate that the German authorities executed the law. It is evident that the German occupant struggled with Poles' disobedience of the law.

German officials also attacked the BBC Polish Service for spreading British propaganda, stressing that all programmes were edited by British nationals whilst the news was presented from the British point of view which, in their opinion, worked against Polish national interests. Therefore, they argued, it was foolish to risk one's life by listening to the broadcasts from London.⁸⁷ As the German prosecutor stated in the trial of "Mr. S" in Lublin (full name not given) who was sentenced to death:

*'Listening in to London wireless is not only a crime but it is also an utter stupidity. Polish broadcasts from London are not done by the Poles but by the English who will never let anybody use their transmitters. The language used to present the news is stiff and ungraceful and does not carry conviction. Besides, every Pole who listens in can feel for himself the utter ignorance of Polish mentality on the part of those who produce these broadcasts'.*⁸⁸

In some respects, however, this statement was accurate. First of all, it was BBC policy that only British nationals could serve as editor of any of the BBC European Services, and consequently, all the wartime Polish Service editors were British (see chapter 5). Secondly, the Polish Service broadcasts were the subject of widespread criticism concerning not only the language of the broadcasts but, more importantly, their content. The Polish Underground complained to the BBC in 1941 that the Polish programmes were not only unsatisfactory, but scandalous, '*doing more harm than good*'.⁸⁹ The BBC was charged with using '*unsatisfactory language, ignorance of the Polish mentality, sickeningly sweet tone of bulletins and fooling listeners with undue optimism instead of telling the truth*'.⁹⁰ The report concluded that the fact that the BBC did not take into account that Poles were risking their lives in order to access the BBC was offensive. The broadcasts were called '*trivial*' (see chapter 5).⁹¹

Moreover, Germans who monitored the BBC Polish Service were quite aware that no reference was made in the broadcasts to the part of Poland occupied by the Soviets. It became one of their main propaganda themes, even before the Wehrmacht attacked the USSR. Poles living under the

⁸⁷ BBC WAC, E2/192/2, November 1941.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ BBC WAC, E2/192/3, file 2A, Report from Polish Underground organisation, 27 September 1941.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid. Report dated 14 August 1941.

German occupation were told that the Polish Prime Minister in exile, Władysław Sikorski, had already sold the eastern part of their country to Stalin and that therefore he neither addressed Poles living in this part of the country nor criticised the Soviets leader for atrocities committed against the Polish nation in his speeches.⁹² In fact, the Polish Service was forbidden to mention the Soviet occupation in their broadcasts.⁹³ Subjects such as living conditions, deportations, arrests and murder of the Polish intelligentsia and army men were outlawed, as was reference to the population inhabiting territory occupied by the USSR. Although the Polish government protested, the Foreign Office argued that even information indirectly related to Soviet foreign policy could not be mentioned in the Polish broadcasts (see chapter 6).⁹⁴ Yet, the lack of reference to the eastern part of Poland was not the only subject of criticism by the Polish audience. A listener in France, for instance, complained that, whilst Poles tuned to the BBC Polish Service to hear news about the achievements of the Polish Army, the programmes were dedicated almost exclusively to the glorification of the Red Army.⁹⁵

Listening conditions in the Eastern part of Poland

The part of Poland incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1939 comprised 201,000 m², which represented 52% of Poland's overall territory.⁹⁶ Poles were the largest single ethnic group in this area but the region was also inhabited by Ukrainians (33%), Jews (8, 3%), Byelorussians (7, 6%), and small percentage of Russians (0, 6%), and Germans (0, 6%).⁹⁷ Stalin used forged plebiscites and elections as a springboard for the incorporation of West Ukraine and West Byelorussia into the Soviet Union; the Polish city Wilno previously part of Poland, was given first to Lithuania and then in 1940 the whole country was annexed to the USSR (see chapter 3). Consequently, Poles living east of the Curzon line became Soviet citizens. As Kochanski points out, there were three categories of people under the Soviet occupation: *'those who were in prison, those who are in prison, and those who will be in prison'*.⁹⁸ Poles were subject to mass deportations, executions and terror. As in other Soviet republics, communist ideological and economic policies were applied. History, religion and geography were removed from the school curriculum and instead Marxist-Leninist doctrine was taught. Further sovietisation was to be achieved by collectivisation and suppression of Polish identity, history and culture. In particular, the intelligentsia, Polish Army officers, government officials, political leaders and clergy were

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ PISM, Kol. 434/ 50, Korespondencja: BBC, Baliński to Stroński, 18 December 1940.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Wyrwa, T., Audycje Radiowe nadawane z Londynu, *Zeszyty Historyczne*, nr. 116, Paris, 1996, p. 201.

⁹⁶ Jasiewicz, K., *Polskojęzyczne radiostacje sowieckie w okresie II wojny światowej*, in: *Polskie Radio w czasie II Wojny Światowej*, op. cit., p. 245.

⁹⁷ Wnuk, R., *Za pierwszego Sowietu. Polska konspiracja na Kresach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej, wrzesień 1939 – czerwiec 1941* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2007), s. 13

⁹⁸ Kochanski, op. cit., p.128.

seen as '*the enemy of people*' and subsequently exterminated or deported to gulags.⁹⁹ Moreover, Stalin used the national aspirations of Ukrainians and Byelorussians to purge the Polish population in the area. Although diplomatic relations were restored between Poland and the USSR in 1941, Soviet policies towards the Poles did not change, and in fact worsened (see chapter 3 & 6).

Listening to or possession of wireless sets was not forbidden under the Soviet occupation. However, in this largely rural area, radio density was never significant.¹⁰⁰ Among other items, radio transmitters were also regarded as valuable, and were looted by the Red Army.¹⁰¹ The Soviet authorities also took a great interest in Polish broadcasting stations and firms manufacturing transmitters. According to a witness who left Poland in March 1943, all the personnel and all the plant of the Polish Electrit factory producing wireless sets in Wilno was taken to Leningrad in 1939.¹⁰² Moreover, while some stations were stripped and taken away to the Soviet Union, others remained in place for propaganda reasons. Already on the first day after entering Polish territory, the Russians occupied Polish stations in Barnowice, Wilno and Lwów.¹⁰³ Broadcasts in Polish, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Lithuanian, Russian and Jadish were used purely for communist propaganda and used extensively to increase agitation prior to plebiscites. Therefore, not only were Poles allowed to listen to the radio, but, as Jasiewicz points out, they were encouraged to do so.¹⁰⁴ In addition, as Germans had done in the west of Poland, Soviet authorities distributed radio sets to those regarded as future collaborators and supporters of the regime. But in contrast with the Germans, the Soviet regime considered indoctrination as their main objective. Consequently, shops selling and repairing radio sets were opened.¹⁰⁵

Although there was no law in place forbidding listening to foreign stations, those caught were usually arrested and detained.¹⁰⁶ Poles were also required to register their sets but they disregarded the order.¹⁰⁷ The same measures were applied to those who spread information. Given communist indoctrination and the fact that Stalin claimed that the Polish State had ceased to exist, spreading news about the Polish Army and the Polish government-in-exile were seen as criminal and '*counter-revolutionary activity*'.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, the evidence demonstrates that listening to the BBC Polish Service broadcasts was popular in big cities, especially in Wilno

⁹⁹ Wnuk, op. cit.

¹⁰⁰ Jasiewicz, op. cit., pp. 245-60.

¹⁰¹ BBC WAC, E1/1150/1.

¹⁰² BBC WAC, E2/201/2, report from February 1944.

¹⁰³ Jasiewicz, op. cit., p. 254.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 263.

¹⁰⁵ Jasiewicz, op. cit., pp. 262-5.

¹⁰⁶ Żurawski, J.A., *Polskie Radio w służbie konspiracji 1939-1944*, in: *Polskie Radio w czasie II Wojny Światowej*, op. cit., p. 136.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Herling-Grudziński, G., *A World Apart: Imprisonment in a Soviet Labour Camp during World War II* (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 284.

and Lwów where the density of Poles was over 50%.¹⁰⁹ The reception of BBC Polish broadcasts, however, was much worse than in the western part of Poland, to a large extent because of jamming by Germans. Nonetheless, the Polish Underground managed to set up monitoring posts in the region and, as under the German occupation, the news was distributed via the clandestine press. Radio bulletins based on BBC broadcasts were produced in Brześć and Łomża and further colportaged.¹¹⁰ Students in Wilno produced wireless sets which were later sent to territory occupied by the Germans.¹¹¹ In addition, the Polish Service was receiving letters from eastern parts of the country and there was even a case of a letter being sent by a Polish officer from a labour camp in the Caucasus, who stated that Polish broadcasts were very popular in the camp.¹¹²

However, the situation changed after Germany launched the Barbarossa offensive in June 1941, as the Nazis also introduced the death penalty for listening or possession of a radio in the territory east of the Curzon line also. Nonetheless, according to two Poles (names not given) who managed to escape from Poland in November 1943, the confiscation of sets was carried out rather negligently.¹¹³ Thus many Poles were able to save their sets while crystal sets were not confiscated at all. According to witnesses, this was due to staff shortages.¹¹⁴ In addition, between 1941 and 1943, the Germans distributed previously confiscated sets to the administration in areas taken over from the Soviets.

Stalin also recognised the propaganda value of broadcasting in Polish and from 22 June 1941 Radio Moscow inaugurated programmes in Polish.¹¹⁵ A month later, on the initiative of the Polish communists in the Soviet Union, Radio Kosciuszko started broadcasting from Moscow in Polish, disguised as a Polish station transmitting from Poland. From 1943 it became a platform for the propaganda of the Union of the Polish Patriots (UPP), an embryonic version of the Polish puppet government in-waiting, created by Stalin (see chapter 7). Yet, neither the UPP political programme nor their broadcasts included communist propaganda; instead they appealed to patriotism and nationalism.¹¹⁶ After the Red Army liberated the Polish city of Lublin in 1944, the Polish communists also inaugurated broadcasts in Polish from this city. Yet, after the collapse of the Warsaw rising, the Lublin Committee, a joint body of Polish communists in Poland and the USSR, introduced the death penalty for listening to foreign stations (see chapter 9).¹¹⁷ According to Underground reports, people caught listening or in

¹⁰⁹ Kępiński, A., *Ukraina – po obu stronach Dniestru* (Poznań: Zys i S-ka, 2013), p. 111.

¹¹⁰ Mazur, op. cit., p. 239 & 242.

¹¹¹ BBC WAC, E2/192/2, file 1b, August-November 1941, monthly survey, November 1941.

¹¹² BBC WAC, E2/186/1, file 1a, February-May 1940, report from April 1940.

¹¹³ BBC WAC, E2/201/2, file 2, January-July 1944. Report from 29 February 1944.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, witness report from November 1943.

¹¹⁵ Jasiewicz, op. cit., p. 250.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 252-3.

¹¹⁷ Sword Keith, *Deportation and Exile: Poles in the Soviet Union* (Basingstoke, 1996) pp. 159-60.

possession of a private radio were '*shot in the head on the spot*' but, listening to official announcements in public or work places was allowed and encouraged.¹¹⁸

Number of radio sets under German and Soviet occupation

The reports regarding listening conditions and audience estimates were supplied by the Polish Underground, however, because communication between Soviet and German zones was extremely difficult, the exact number of listeners and wireless sets was impossible to establish. It should also be taken into consideration that an unknown number of sets had been destroyed and hidden. Estimates of radio sets remaining in the hands of Poles were based on German reports regarding the confiscation and distribution of sets and, although acknowledged that there were more radio sets in the part of Poland occupied by the USSR, there is no data available on exact numbers.¹¹⁹ In addition, many reports do not distinguish between crystal and valve sets and, given that foreign broadcasts could be accessed only on valve sets with a shortwave band it is difficult to establish how many people actually listened to the BBC Polish Service. Moreover; as indicated in analysis below, it is not clear how many sets were in the possession of Poles and how many in the possession of those who signed Volkliste (see chapter 2).

At the outbreak of war there were 1,100,000 licence holders in Poland and approximately 100,000 unregistered owners.¹²⁰ According to reports provided by the Polish Underground, in December 1940, 80,000 sets were still in Polish hands under German occupation, discounting crystal sets unable to receive broadcasts from London. It had been estimated that, including crystal sets, 120,000 remained in Polish ownership. In addition, it was acknowledged that the overall number in the whole of Poland was probably much higher, given that possession of radios was not forbidden under the Soviet occupation.¹²¹ The BBC European audience estimates, however, suggest that after July 1941, there were 1.8 sets per 100 population.¹²² As a result of the German attack on the USSR in June 1941 followed by the relaxation of law which allowed people to sign the Volkliste and the distribution of sets among those who did so, the number of radios owners increased.¹²³ By January 1943, there were 100,000 sets in Poland. Yet here is no indication of how many were found under German or Soviet occupation and, more importantly, how many could tune to broadcasts from London.¹²⁴ A report from April 1942,

¹¹⁸ Commandant of the Białystok region to the central command of the AK regarding the NKVD terror, 13 March 1945, in Czarnocka, H., et al., *Armia Krajowa w Dokumentach: October 1944-July 1945*, vol. 5 (London: Ossolineum, 1981), nr.1460, p. 329.

¹¹⁹ CAC, Neri 3/8, BBC monthly survey, December 1940.

¹²⁰ BBC WAC, E1/1150/1.

¹²¹ CAC, Neri 3/8, BBC Monthly Survey of European Audience, December 1940.

¹²² *Ibid*, 4 August 1943.

¹²³ BBC WAC, E2/188/2, European intelligence papers, BBC studies of European audience, October 1942 –April 1944, report dated 24 April 1944.

¹²⁴ BBC WAC, E2/192/3, file 2a, Report from January 1942.

however, stated that between 10,000 and 15,000 could access the Polish Service broadcasts.¹²⁵ In June 1942, there were 26,964 sets owners in the General Government, in September 28,880, and in December 29,895.¹²⁶ This increase can be explained by two factors, notably the growth of people on the Volkliste and the territorial expansion of the General Government. Yet, according to different reports, in July 1942 there were still 100,000 sets in German occupied Poland, of which 15,000 could receive the BBC.¹²⁷ In March 1943 the Polish Underground estimated that 100,000 remained in whole Poland and in 1944 the German authorities continued to supply radio sets to Volksdeutsche.¹²⁸ Although no data regarding radio sets from 1944 and 1945 had been found, it was estimated after the war that, as a consequence of the German and Soviet attacks on Poland and six years of occupation, Radio Polskie had lost equipment worth £10,400,000.¹²⁹

Conclusion

Britain was regarded as Poland's most important ally, particularly after the fall of France when the Polish government took refuge in London when it was assumed that Polish officials were actively involved in preparation of the Polish Service programmes. As was observed by the BBC:

*'Polish broadcasts are regarded as a most reliable source of information. In addition to this, they have enormous prestige in so far as they are connected in Polish minds with the Polish Government in London, whose existence is universally held as a symbol of the continuity of the Polish State, even by those Poles who may disapprove of its composition or policies.'*¹³⁰

The Polish Service broadcasts not only played a significant role in transmitting news about the situation at the front and political developments, but also informed Poles about what was happening elsewhere in their own country. In addition, Polish government-in-exile representatives often spoke on the air, playing a vital role in maintaining public morale. The fact that the news came from London created the illusion that Poland was the centre of the world's attention and that German crimes committed against Poles as well as Polish population resistance to the Nazi regime had been acknowledged. Therefore, regardless of the introduction of death penalty by the German authorities for listening or possession of a radio, Poles continued to listen to the Polish Service broadcasts. In fact, as Germany aimed at complete

¹²⁵ Ibid, April 1942.

¹²⁶ BBC WAC, E2/201/2.

¹²⁷ BBC WAC, E2/460/5, Overseas Programme Development, file 2a January-June 1942, Compendium of planning information, 7 April 1942.

¹²⁸ BBC WAC, E1/201/2, March 1943.

¹²⁹ BBC WAC, E1/1150/1.

¹³⁰ BBC WAC, E2/184, European Audience Estimates, 1943-44, report from 4 August 1943.

destruction of the Polish state, listening to the BBC became a form of resistance and sabotage. The Polish Underground played a major part as a monitor and syndicator of the Polish Service broadcasts. It was so efficient that breaking news spread within hours in Warsaw. Yet Poles never gave up an idea of setting up their own radio station. Germans who used radio as their main tool of propaganda employed all means to stop the Underground from broadcasting. Nonetheless, the pre-war Radio Polskie, in particular, continued secretly preparing radio programmes, awaiting the circumstances which would allow them to broadcast not only in Poland but also to the wider world.

The situation under the Soviet occupation was more complex. Although it was not forbidden to listen to or possess a radio, Polish citizens inhabiting territory east of the Curzon line were subject to collectivisation, nationalisation and anyone considered an '*enemy of the people*' was killed or deported to Siberia – included in this category were those spreading information which in anyway could undermine communist ideology or USSR foreign policy. However, even prior to the outbreak of the war, possession of a radio was uncommon in this region and the majority of those who owned sets came from the '*privileged class*'. Acting on Stalin's instructions, those who fell in this category were stripped of all their possessions by the Red Army soldiers after they crossed the Polish-Soviet frontier in September 1939.¹³¹

¹³¹ Kochanski, op. cit., pp. 120-30.

The Polish service

Introduction

'The European Service tries to be:

Accurate but graced with the qualities of imagination.

Reliable without being dull.

Honest and truthful without qualification.

Sober without being lifeless or timid.

Interesting without being superficial.

Profound without being obscure.

On the offensive but not arrogant.

British without being narrow or insular'.¹

This chapter examines the role of the Polish Service as a part of the European Service, its organisation, output and structure as well as the cooperation with the Polish government-in-exile, and its broadcasting arm- Radio Polskie. Taking as the starting point the origin of the Polish Service and importance of its broadcasts during the September Campaign in 1939, it provides detailed data on Polish Service personnel and analysis of sources and framework of its programmes. Special attention is given to Polish Service relations with the Political Warfare Executive (PWE) established in 1941 and people who throughout the war attempted to influence the BBC Polish language transmissions.

Origin of the Polish Service

The outbreak of the Second World War had a major influence on the creation of the BBC Polish Service. Not only was Polskie Radio well established in Poland, operating one national and nine regional channels, but it also broadcast in six foreign languages, namely: German, Czech,

¹ BB WAC, E2/206/6, European Service, file 3b, 1943. Memo by Noel Newsome, 1 Jan 1943.

Hungarian, French, English and Italian and in Polish to Europe, as well as to North and South America, where there were large Polish communities.² In June 1939, at the invitation of the BBC, the representatives of Polskie Radio visited Britain and closer cooperation between the two was established.³ Therefore when the Foreign Office approached its embassy in Warsaw a few weeks before the outbreak of the war regarding the possibility of setting up Polish-language broadcasts from London the answer was that it would '*not have a very useful purpose*' and it might be '*thought impertinent by the Polish authorities who now, in fact, have an efficient and unbiased news service of their own*'.⁴ Yet, the effectiveness of Polskie Radio was not the only reason why the BBC was reluctant to introduce broadcasts in Polish; it was understood that such programmes would have political implications and could result in the BBC being accused by the Germans of propaganda (see chapter 1).⁵

The first Polish programme from the studio in Broadcasting House went on air on 7 September 1939 with an opening speech by the Polish Ambassador in London, Edward Raczyński, followed by the news read by Zbigniew Grabowski (see figure 5.1 below).⁶ Polskie Radio continued to broadcast after the German invasion, but as the Luftwaffe destroyed major power stations and transmitters, it was impossible to maintain regular transmissions. In this period the Polish Service played an important role informing people about the situation nationally as well as the international response to the German attack on Poland. On 21 September, the Polish Service aired a memorable speech delivered by the Lord Mayor of London expressing his gratitude to the fighters of Warsaw. The next day, the Mayor of Warsaw, Stefan Starzyński, responded on Polskie Radio.⁷ The last broadcast from Warsaw was heard on 30 September; two days after the capitulation of the capital.⁸

² Pszenicki, K., *Tu Mówi Londyn: Historia Sekcji Polskiej BBC* (Warsaw: Rosen & Wspólnicy, 2009), p. 33.

³ BBC WAC, E2/557/1, Tour of Foreign Broadcast, 1938-39. Letter from Foreign Liaison officer R.D. Marritt to P. Gorecki, 21 June 1939.

⁴ Undated note by J.B. Clark, in Briggs, A., *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: The War of Words*, Vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 75.

⁵ Mansell, G., *Let Truth Be Told: 50 Years of BBC External Broadcasting* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1982), pp. 97-98.

⁶ Pszenicki, op. cit., p. 40.

⁷ BBC WAC, E1/1147, Work of the Polish Service, p. 1.

⁸ Kunert, A. K., *Cztery pożegnania Polskiego Radia: 1939-1945*, in *Polskie Radio w Czasie Drugiej Wojny Światowej*, (ed.) Budzyński, A., & Jasiewicz, K., (Warsaw: Polskie Radio SA, 2015), pp. 22-3.

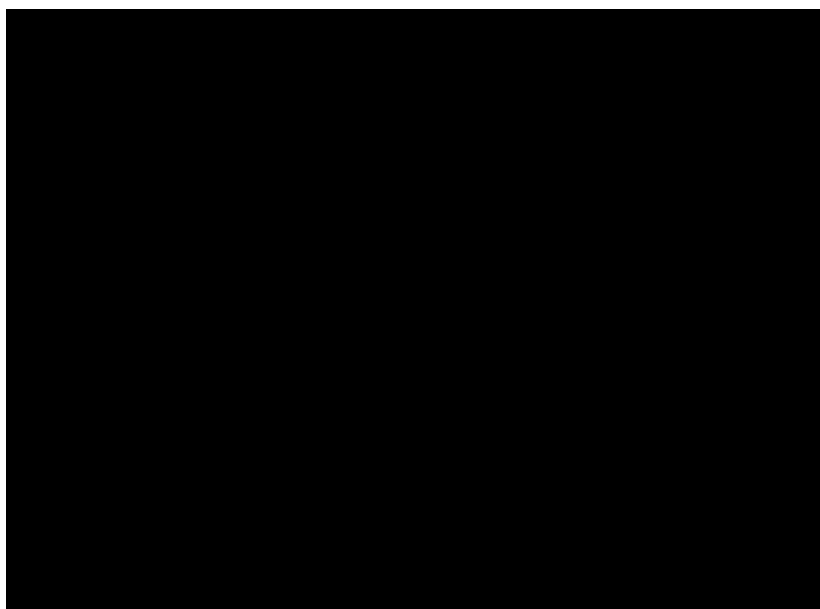


Figure 5.1: Inauguration of the Polish Service by Polish Ambassador, Count Edward Raczyński, 7 September 1939. Source: BBC Website.

As noted earlier, the first broadcast of the Polish Service was transmitted on 7 September. However, according to the Polish Service employees Zbigniew Grabowski, Konrad Syrop and Tadeusz Lutosławski, the BBC had already taken the initiative to inaugurate a BBC Polish Service in the last week of August 1939. Zbigniew Grabowski, from 1937 the London correspondent of the *Cracow Illustrated Daily Courier* and *Polskie Radio*, recalls that he accidentally ran into the Polish Embassy Press Attaché Franciszek Bauer-Czarnomski, shortly before the outbreak of the war and was advised to speak with Mr. E. F. Ambler, the Assistant General Establishment Officer of the BBC staff Administration Department as the Corporation was planning to start broadcasting to Poland.⁹ The preliminary talks between the two took place on 25 August and Grabowski was then asked to come back to the studio on 27 August where, on the same day, he met his future co-workers: Konrad Syrop a correspondent for the Polish liberal newspaper, the *Polish Courier*, in London and Tadeusz Lutosławski, a former *Polskie Radio* broadcaster and press attaché at the Polish embassy in London.¹⁰ Grabowski recollects that Arthur Barker, then Foreign Language News Editor who for several years before the war had worked as a correspondent for *The Times* in Warsaw, was the main figure supervising the rapid expansion of the European Service in 1939, consequently playing an important role in the creation of the Polish Service.

Syrop, too, recalls having run into Czarnomski in Portland Place a few days before the German invasion of Poland when he was informed of the BBC intention to start broadcasting to Poland.¹¹ He was then invited for a voice test on 3 September at eleven o'clock in the morning;

⁹ Grabowski, Z., *Sekcja Polska BBC, 'Na Antenie'*, nr. 119, February 1973, London, pp. 24-26.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Interview with Syrop in Mansell, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

however, this was postponed as it was the day that Britain declared war on Germany and everyone was pre-occupied with listening to Chamberlain's speech. The transmission was further suspended because of the first air raid which, *de facto*, failed to materialise. Syrop later recollects being invited to a BBC studio on 6 September with Grabowski and Lutosławski. Although Grabowski's and Syrop's accounts differ, they agree on one fact – that the first broadcast was aired on 7 September.

Organisation and structure

The European Service was financed by Parliamentary grant-in-aid and the government retained the right to decide the languages in which the BBC should broadcast and the duration of the programmes.¹² Until October 1941 it was a part of the Overseas Service, and it was only on the initiative of Ivone Kirkpatrick, Foreign Advisor to the BBC and a PWE official, that the European Service was separated from the former.¹³ From the beginning of the war, the output of broadcasts to Europe progressively increased, yet it was only in January 1941 that the BBC put forward a proposal for further expansion in order to transform itself into a '*weapon of war*' which aimed to:

*'convey to all parts of the world truthful news and to prompt, clear and insistent exposition of British policy; to counter and discredit the enemy cause within the enemy countries and among populations subject to enemy occupation; to encourage the Allies (...) and serve better than it can at present (...) Allied Governments now seated in London'.*¹⁴

While the government supported the idea, little was done to put it into action. The BBC was also faced with another problem. After the bombing of Broadcasting House in December 1940, the European Service was relocated first to an abandoned glass roofed skating ring in Maida Vale and in March to Bush House. Yet on the eve of moving in, the building was far from ready to be used as a broadcasting centre. Some of the staff members had to work from hotel rooms; the studios '*were so overcrowded as to be insalubrious*'.¹⁵ The Director-General of the PWE, Bruce Lockhart, who inspected the building in July 1941 found the working environment '*terrible*'.¹⁶ The conditions eventually improved when the issue was addressed by Philip Noel Baker in a House of Commons debate, arguing that the appalling working conditions in Bush House '*were just one more proof that the Government was failing to take propaganda,*

¹² European Service of the BBC: Two Decades of Broadcasting to Europe, 1938-58 (London: BBC, 1958).

¹³ Mansell, op. cit., p. 85.

¹⁴ Note on the Extension of the BBC Overseas Service, 14 January 1941. Cited in: Briggs, op. cit., p. 317.

¹⁵ Mansell, op. cit., p. 116.

¹⁶ Lockhart, R.H.B., *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, 1939-1965* (ed.) Kenneth Young (London: Macmillan, 1980), 24 July 1941, p. 111.

*“especially through wireless”, sufficiently seriously’.*¹⁷ Mansell, however, argues that the situation only changed after Brendan Bracken intervened when the PWE was moving to Bush House itself.¹⁸

The European Service had three departments: Propaganda, making sure that the directives were written in accordance with British foreign policy; Intelligence, accountable for collecting the most up to date data regarding the war situation and conditions in the occupied countries and Germany; and Organisation, responsible for presentation. The latter was working in liaison with: the engineering department, language staff, microphone technicians, publicity and planning in order to *‘ensure that the right steps (were) taken at the right time to avoid growing pains’*.¹⁹

Whilst the European News Editor and from December 1941, the Director of the European Service, Noel Newsome, was also responsible for Propaganda; the Intelligence Department was headed by Jonathan Griffin, with G. Purves and W. Theimer as Intelligence officers for Poland with E.T. Kamińska as a Junior Assistant.²⁰ In November 1944 R.G Pearson became the Intelligence Officer for Poland.²¹ As Roberts points out, the work of the Intelligence Department was very important as the BBC *‘was concerned not only with producing ‘output’ but with assessing its impact’*.²² The Department produced also *‘Studies of European Audience’* based on letters from listeners and interviews with refugees and in case of Poland, the reports prepared by the Polish Underground. The European Service was also organised according to the region it was broadcasting to. Poland together with Belgium, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Holland, were in the North European group, under the supervision of C.H. Loveday.²³ The main development in this period was the establishment of four different coloured networks –Red, Blue, Green and Yellow – with each group sharing studios, switch-gear lines and transmitters.²⁴ Poland, together with France, Germany, Italy, Belgium and Czechoslovakia belonged to the Blue network, broadcasting on short, long and medium wavelengths.²⁵

¹⁷ Mansell, op. cit., p. 116.

¹⁸ Cited in ibid.

¹⁹ Briggs, op. cit., pp. 313-14.

²⁰ WAC BBC, Staff Book, 1942, Poland was in Intelligence group with Germany and Scandinavia.

²¹ WAC BBC, Staff Book, 1944. Except Poland he was also responsible for Scandinavia, Switzerland, lower countries and Germany.

²² Roberts, A. D., *Michael Roberts and the BBC*, paper presented at the British studies seminar, University of Texas, February 2012, unpublished. See Britannica on work of Michael Roberts.

²³ WAC BBC Staff books from 1942, 1944, 1945.

²⁴ BBC Year Book, 1942. Survey of the year’s work in broadcasting, p. 9.

²⁵ In 1942 Brown network was added for Near East and Latin America, and Yellow was reorganised to provide extra channels for additional European Service in Spain, Portugal, Balkans and Scandinavia. BBC Year Book, 1943, p. 22.

Output

All the Polish Service bulletins were based on a 15-minute cyclical pattern increasing from one 15 minute programme in September 1939 to seven by 1945 (see Table 5.1 below).²⁶ By mid-1940, 60 minutes were allocated to the Polish Service (30 minutes in the morning, 15 minutes in the afternoon and 15 in the evening), but in July the same year its time was decreased to 35 minutes per day. This resulted in a protest from the Polish government which, pointed out that the Czechs had 30 minutes more per day than the Polish Service, thus refuting the BBC argument that the reduction was caused by the expansion of the European Service and, in particular, the need to make time for foreign governments' broadcast.²⁷ Eventually in September 1940, the Polish Service regained the lost air time.

Date	Sep 1939	Sep 1940	Sep 1941	Sep 1942	Sep 1943	Sep 1944	Sep 1945
Output	15 min	60 min	60 min	1:15min	1:45min	2:25min	2:40min
No. of bulletins	1	4	4	5	5	7	7

Table 5:1 Daily Output 1939-1945 ²⁸

From 1942, other Polish programmes from London were inaugurated, notably, Radio Polskie, acting as a broadcasting arm of the Polish government-in-exile, and America Calling Europe in Polish which was rebroadcast by the BBC (see Table 5:2 below).

²⁶ BBC WAC, E2/350/1, Guide to the Overseas Service, April 1941; BBC Year Books: 1939- 1945.

²⁷ BBC WAC, E1/1148/1 Polish broadcasts: Minutes of meetings, file 1a, November 1940- December 1941. Memo by Jan Jundziłł, - Baliński, undated.

²⁸ BBC Year Books, 1939-1945.

Polish Service	1:15-1:30
Polish Service	5:20-5:30
Polish Service	6:20-6:30
Radio Polskie	7:20-7:30
Polish Service	8:20-8:30
Radio Polskie	10:15-10:30
America Calling Europe	11:15-11:30
Radio Polskie	12:45-13:00
Polish Service	16:45-17:00
Polish Service	18:45-19:00
America Calling Europe	00.15-00.30

Table 5:2 Example of the daily schedule of broadcast in Polish, September 1943 ²⁹

It was not only people in Poland who listened to the Polish Service broadcasts. Many Poles managed to escape after the German and Soviet invasions in 1939 and took refuge in other countries.³⁰ The BBC Polish programmes were also popular among the Polish Army soldiers fighting in Europe, North Africa and Middle East. By the middle of the war, London Radio, as it was called by Poles, was widely listened to by Polish slave workers in Germany, Polish miners in France and Belgium, by the Polish community in London, Polish refugees in Kenya, where large settlements were established, and even in concentration camps in Auschwitz and the Warsaw Ghetto for Jews (see chapter 4).³¹ As explained in the previous chapter, Poles, and in particular the Polish Underground, also listened to programmes in languages other than Polish, primarily German and French, as knowledge of these languages was very common among the Polish population (see chapter 4). Figure 5:2 below illustrates the audibility and reception of the BBC European Service.

²⁹ BBC Year Book, 1943.

³⁰ Mansell, op. cit. 177.

³¹ Ibid. On listening in Auschwitz see Garliński, J., *Fighting Auschwitz-The Resistance Movement in the Concentration Camp* (London: Julian Friedmann Publishers Ltd.1975); on listening in the Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw see Ferenc Piotrowska, M., & Zakrzewski, F., *Archiwum Ringelbluma. Konspiracyjne Archiwum Warszawy, Nasłuchy radiowe w getcie warszawskim*, vol. 22, Warszawa, in press. Also Ferenc, M., 'The Ringelblum historians use of radio as a source on the progress of the war', paper presented at the BBC Monitoring Service and the Second World War workshop, Imperial War Museum, London, January 1916.

was only 1941 when the regional structure was in place that each section had its own editor (see chapter 1). Winch's relations with the Polish staff and the Polish government in London were particularly difficult, leading to his relocation to the Portuguese Section in February 1942.³⁶ Already dissatisfied with Winch in January 1941, the Polish authorities in London had unsuccessfully attempted to replace him with Gregory Macdonald, who was well known and liked among the Polish community in London, particularly for his work at the Polish Research Centre.³⁷ As a graduate of the School of Slavonic Studies, Macdonald knew Polish history, culture and language well. Before the outbreak of war, he had been secretary of the Anglo-Polish Society and later the Polish Relief Fund. In addition, Macdonald worked as a consultant to the Polish Embassy in London.³⁸ From June 1941, he took a job as scriptwriter at the BBC European News Department. A month later, however, he was called up for a military service and it was only the intervention of the Polish Embassy that allowed him to escape conscription.³⁹ It was recognised at this point that Macdonald was a perfect candidate to take charge of the Polish Service. However, in the view of the European Programme Editor, Tudor Jones, he needed more experience in order to take up this post.⁴⁰ He was appointed Sub-editor of the Spanish/Portuguese Service and it was not until February 1942 that he became Editor of the Polish Service, remaining in this post until the end of the war.

Macdonald established a very good relationship with the staff who often described him as a partner rather than a boss.⁴¹ Throughout the war he also maintained good relations with the Polish government and, in particular with Count Jundziłł-Baliński, the Polish Ministry of Information-in-exile liaison officer to the BBC (appointed in November 1940), who was allowed to sit in on meetings of the Polish Service and with Radio Polskie staff, broadcasting from January 1942 on BBC wavelengths.⁴² Yet, in the view of Douglas Ritchie, Assistant Director of the European Service and from 1944 the Director, his success lay in keeping Poles in line, especially the Polish government.⁴³ According to Macdonald, however, his relationship with the Polish authorities and Radio Polskie was harmonious, though he noted that Poles did not hesitate to express both, their '*complaints and appreciations*'.⁴⁴

³⁶ Winch later joined the army. He lost both legs in an attack on Rommel's headquarters in North Africa, in Pszenicki, op. cit., p. 41.

³⁷ BBC WAC, L1/1, 183/1, Gregory Macdonald personal file, application for appointments and transfers of staff, 18 February 1943.

³⁸ MPC, Gregory Macdonald's notes, undated.

³⁹ BBC WAC L1/1, 183/1, Application for appointments and transfers of staff, 18 February 1943.

⁴⁰ Ibid, BBC Internal memo by the European Programme Director, John Tudor Jones, 1941.

⁴¹ Pospieszalski, A., 'Wojna na Słowa', *Wiadomości*, London, 25 April 1971.

⁴² Pszenicki, op. cit., p. 41.

⁴³ BBC WAC, L1/1, 183/1, Annual confidential report, 13 August 194, 3 also signed by Newsome.

⁴⁴ BBC WAC, E2/13/2, Allied governments broadcasts: Poland, file 1 b, 1943-45, dated April/ May 1943, Macdonald to Assistant Controller, undated.

As the conflict between Poland and the USSR deepened, Macdonald became an outspoken advocate for the Polish case believing that the most important duty of the Polish Service was *'to report truly and faithfully both news and comment about the war, whatever the political situation'*.⁴⁵ He constantly intervened in the preparation of the BBC Home and European Service bulletins, assuring that the Polish national and political interests were not played down, especially when Polish-Soviet disagreement regarding the Polish eastern territory became an issue. The European Service Controller, Ivone Kirkpatrick recognised that it was best to give Macdonald leeway as he was a *'pre-eminently well qualified and able man'*.⁴⁶ His views and personal attachment to the Polish case were probably best demonstrated during the Warsaw rising when he openly attacked the Soviets for not giving assistance to the insurgents and, in 1945, in his refusal to carry out an official directive mandating that Poles should accept the Yalta settlement.⁴⁷

Macdonald's hard work and commitment were also recognised by important wartime Polish figures. His personal library books include inscriptions from authors such as Warsaw rising Commander Bór-Komorowski, General Anders, who was in charge of the Polish Forces in USSR in 1941 and later in Italy, and Jan Karski, a Polish courier who brought the information about the Holocaust to London, all acknowledging his support for the Polish interests whilst addressing him as a close friend.⁴⁸

Personnel

In September 1939, when the European Service was still a part of the Overseas Service, the organisation of the foreign services lacked cohesion and suffered staff shortages. The first Polish Service employees, namely Syrop, Grabowski and Lutosławski, were required to work as both announcers and translators.⁴⁹ They were shortly joined by Bolesław Leitgeber, previously correspondent for the *Courier Poznański*, first in Berlin and later in London. However, he did not stay in the Polish Service long before moving to the Polish Embassy in London where he became First Secretary.⁵⁰ On 20 September, Hanna Duszyńska was employed as the first Polish Service secretary; regrettably, she died in 1940 during the Blitz.⁵¹ Further staff appointments were mediated by the Polish Embassy in London. As the Service expanded, however, the BBC attempted to employ people without consulting Polish officials, resulting in a disagreement

⁴⁵ Briggs, op. cit., p. 467.

⁴⁶ BBC WAC, Kirkpatrick to Bruce Lockhart, 22 Nov 1941, cited in: in Mansell, p. 85.

⁴⁷ Mansell, op. cit., p. 180.

⁴⁸ Gregory Macdonald's private library. In the possession of his son, France, Angers. For his biography and post-war work see Annex I.

⁴⁹ BBC WAC, L1/ 1,552/1, Zbigniew Grabowski's personal file.

⁵⁰ Leitgeber, B., *Bez Przesądów i Lęku: z Albumu Poznańskiego Dyplomaty, Malarza i Podróżnika* (Poznań: Media Rodzina of Poznań, 1979), p.165.

⁵¹ BBC WAC, L1/ 1,552/1.

between the two.⁵² It was then decided that Poles would provide the BBC with a list of candidates whilst the BBC agreed not to employ applicants disapproved by the Polish government.⁵³ By January 1940 the Polish Service was employing seven announcers/translators and three typists/secretaries (see Table 5:3 below).

Position	Name
Editor	Michael Winch
Announcer/translator	Tadeusz Lutosławski, Zbigniew Grabowski, Konrad Syrop, Wacław Alfred Zbyszewski, Antoni Sobański, Marek Żuławski, Michał Budny
Typist/secretary	M. Malinowska, Hanna Duszyńska and M. Machota.

Table 5:3 The Polish Service staff (January 1940) ⁵⁴

In November 1940 Budny left after being offered the position of Second Secretary position the Polish Embassy whilst Zbigniew Grabowski joined the Radio Department of the Polish MoI in 1941.⁵⁵ In the same year, Antoni Sobański died.⁵⁶ Faced with the increased output and shortage of staff, Polish Service employees submitted an official staff protest in April 1941 as they felt overworked and, more importantly, were not included on the BBC pension scheme.⁵⁷ Shortly afterwards four new announcers/ translators were recruited: Karol Wagner, Bolesław Zieliński, Mr. Litawski (given name not found), Leopold Koziębrodzki and Florian Sokolow, who in October 1942, after a complaint from Newsome, was replaced by Ludwik Gottlieb.⁵⁸ Sokolow, however, remained working in the Polish Service, writing the political weekly reviews.

In addition, in November 1941 on Winch's recommendation, Syrop was promoted to the Programme Assistant position. Winch regarded Syrop's work as outstanding, especially his articles and news commentaries.⁵⁹ Unlike the others, Syrop had good relationship with Winch, but when his application was considered for the position of liaison officer with the Polish MoI, Winch opposed it on the grounds that it would look as if the recommendation had come from the Polish authorities.⁶⁰ However, not everyone shared Winch's sympathy for Syrop. Macdonald

⁵² BBC WAC, E2/182, Divisional Meeting, 19 January 1943.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ BBC WAC Staff List, 1940.

⁵⁵ BBC WAC Staff List, issued: 17 August 1940. Budny, M., *Wspomnienia Nefrasobliwie* (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturowa, 1985), p. 198.

⁵⁶ Pszenicki, op. cit., p. 3.

⁵⁷ BBC WAC, E2/182, Memo, 11 April 1941.

⁵⁸ PISM, Kol. 434/52, BBC: Korespondencja, 1942, Baliński to Stroński, 2 October 1942.

⁵⁹ BBC WAC, L1/2,054/1, Konrad Syrop's personal file, Memo by Michael Winch, undated.

⁶⁰ BBC WAC, L1/2, 054/1.

regarded him as '*politically timid*' and difficult to deal with.⁶¹ Teresa Myskov who worked with Syrop after the war, agrees with his observation adding that he disowned his Polish origins.⁶²

With the expansion and reorganisation of the European Service in late 1941 the Polish Service personnel had also grown (see table 5:4 below).

Position	Name
Editor	Gregory Macdonald
Editor's secretary	Miss G.C.T. Burnham
Editorial assistants	Miss A.B.V Drew; Lt. Kamil Dziewanowski, Lt. Edward Kmiecik, Stanisław Faecher, Stanley Simpson
Programme assistant	Konrad Syrop
Language supervisor	G. Adams, G. Flowers, J. Lavrin
Announcer/ translator	Ludwik Gottlieb, Leopold Koziębrodzki, Oskar Staboszewicz, Karol Wagner, Bolesław Zieliński, Róża Zuckerberg, Marek Żulawski
Language typists	Mrs. M. Kapuścińska, Miss. E. Kukuk, Mrs. M. Griffel, A.H Zamoyska
News Typists	Miss C.W.J. King (later Macdonald's secretary), Mrs. J.H.A. Fergusson

Table 5:4 Polish Service staff, December 1942 ⁶³

Only the detailed staff list from 1940 and 1942 survived the war, but as the name of announcer was printed on the script of the bulletins, it was also possible to establish who held this post in 1943 (see chapter 2). Although increase in number of broadcasters can be observed, some appeared only sporadically, for example Opieński or Laciński, whilst on one of the bulletins the name Van Dee is printed; this is not a Polish name and does not appear in any other documents.

⁶¹ MPC, personal notes, undated.

⁶² Interview with Teresa Myskov. Conducted in April 2013.

⁶³ CAC, Neri 3/2, Staff list, December 1942.

Position	Name
Editor	Gregory Macdonald
Sub-editor	Reginald Wileński, Evelyn Zazio, Stanley Simpson
Announcer	Oskar Słaboszewicz, Marek Żulawski (RP), Bolesław Zieliński, Witold Leitgeber Henryk Mund, Józef Jungrow (RP), Leopold Koziembrodzki (RP), Bocheński (RP), Ludwik Gottlieb (RP), Józef Opieński (RP), Józef Łaciński, Mr. Godlewski, Janusz Meissner (RP) <i>[RP: Radio Polskie, appears after the name when the announcer worked also for Radio Polskie]</i>
Dawn editors	Edward Kmiecik, Marian Kamil Dziewanowski, Stanisław Feacher

Table 5:5: Polish Service Staff, July 1943

As closer cooperation with Radio Polskie was established many of the presenters worked for both Radio Polskie and the Polish Service, as illustrated in Table 5:5 above. Radio Polskie was happy to lend its announcers and, in particular, Józef Opieński, whose voice was widely recognisable in Poland.⁶⁴ To establish who worked for the Polish Service in 1944 and 1945, however, is more difficult because, after 1943, instead of announcers, the sub-editors' name were printed on the bulletins. Nonetheless, it is possible to confirm that Simson and Zazio remained in their posts until the end of the war whilst Wileński was replaced with Mr. Oliver in February 1945. Based on analysis of other sources, such as private correspondence, memoirs and minutes of meetings, it can be concluded that in 1944 Słoboszewicz, Opieński, Łaciński, Mund, Żulawski and Bocheński still worked as announcers and were joined by Maksymilian Szyprowski and Mr. Hrehorowicz (given name not found). In addition, in 1945, Leitgeber and Sokolow were sent to Germany as war correspondents. In his memoir, Czesław Halski, who worked in Radio Polskie from March 1944 and in the Polish Service from July 1945, also refers to people who worked for the Polish Service, but he does not specify in which year their employment started or finished and his list is incomplete.⁶⁵ In addition to those already mentioned, Halski refers to Bauer-Czarnomski and Jan Zarzeski, and secretaries: Rene Gellesow, Maryla Griffel, Olive Gregg, Aldona Lubieszko, Halina Niedźwiedzka, Zofia Perelman, Melita Thorneloe, Marjorie Hillier and Bobbie Ormonde.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Halski, C., *6 Lat: Perypetie Wojenne, 1939-1945*, (London: Caldrea House, 1991), p. 92.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 91.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

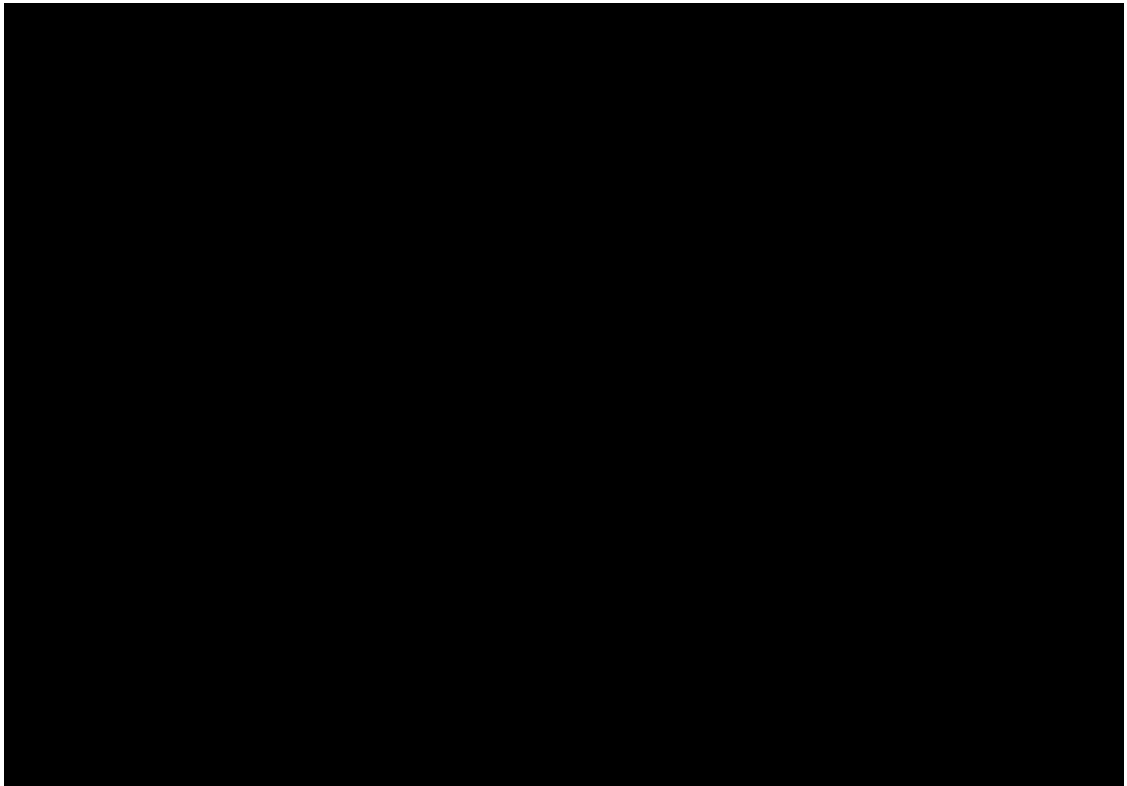


Figure 5.3: Polish Service Newsroom (undated)
From left to right: Zbigniew Grabowski, Antoni Pospieszalski, Czesław Halski, Ewa Fengler, Marek Żuławski. Source: BBC Website, Date unknown.

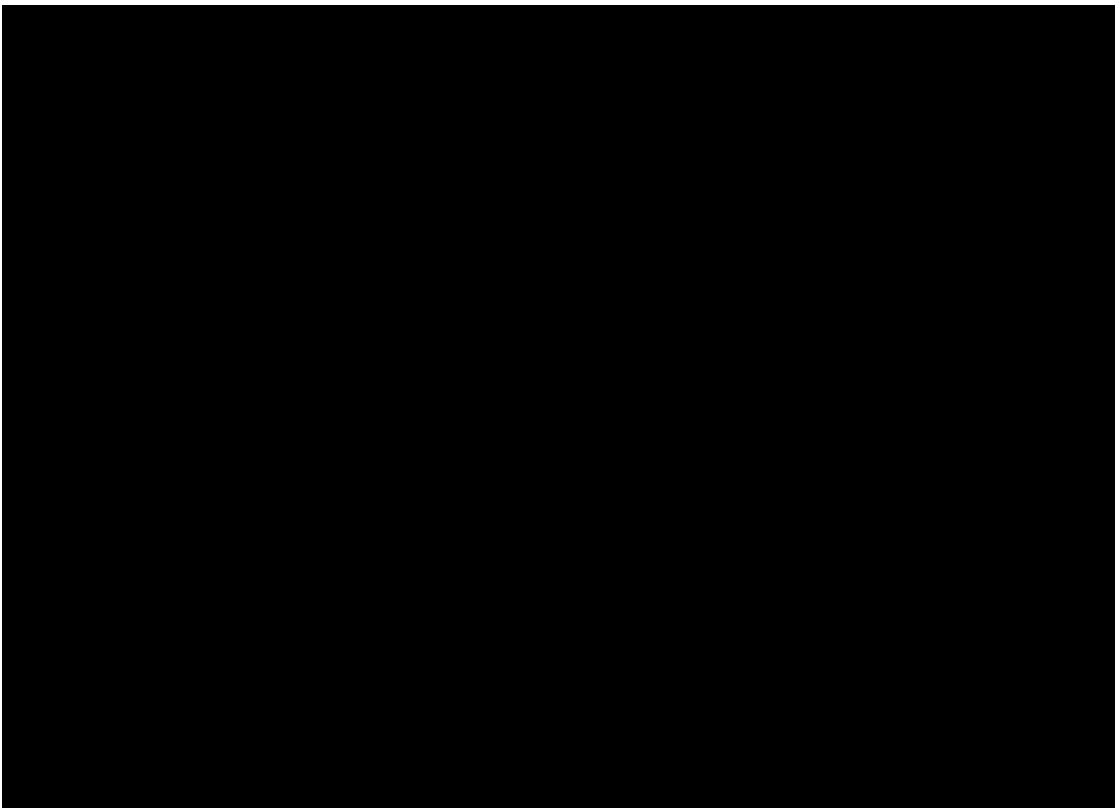


Figure 5.4: Studio of the Polish Section in the Bush House (December 1943).
From left to right: Reginald Wileński, Stanley Simpson, Ms Ford (on the phone), Evelyn Zazio and Gregory Macdonald. Source: BBC Website.

Presenting the news from the British point of view, accuracy and consistency were the main principles of the BBC wartime broadcasting, particularly important because of the cross-listening of its worldwide audience (see chapter 1).⁶⁷ The news, however, was selected in accordance with the foreign policy of the British government, which meant that the coverage to each country differed, but could not be contradictory. Therefore the main news concerned with military development came from the Bush House Central Desk which had full access to all available news sources including Reuters, Associated Press, British United Press and the Soviet news Agency TASS, press digests from German, occupied and neutral countries, information supplied by the MoI and the Foreign Office, as well as the digests of broadcasts from all over the world prepared by the BBC Monitoring Service.⁶⁸ In addition, working together with Central Desk were military, naval and air correspondents, General S.R Wason, Brian Tunstall and Air Commodore J.A Chamier respectively, ensuring the accuracy and consistency of news.⁶⁹ The tapes from the news agencies machines and digests from monitoring were brought to one desk where they were sorted by the copytaster, combined with news from the press and connected with the latest news – this was known as a story.⁷⁰ As Tangye Lean recollects, the copytaster not only checked the material from news agencies for accuracy, but also for its propaganda values.⁷¹ Only then, he concludes, did the news *‘flow on in the form of finished stories to the regional editors, who add(ed) local detail and gave policy “slants” according to other instructions’*.⁷²

According to Ritchie, however, in the beginning of the war the Empire Service had priority in using news agencies tapes, and the European Service was able to obtain the tapes only when the former had finished with them.⁷³ Typed and duplicated story was circulated in English to each of the European Service editors whose job was to make a bulletin from these *‘stories’*. The editor then sent his selection to the translator who within the hour translated the material and five minutes before the broadcast handed the script to the announcer.⁷⁴ This description written after the war relates only to the main story; each of the foreign services also included news only relevant to the country they were broadcasting to; more importantly, it does not mention that each bulletin needed to be stamped by the policy and security editor before airing.

⁶⁷ Mansell, op. cit., p. 91.

⁶⁸ Garnett, D. *The Secret History of PWE: The Political Warfare Executive, 1939-1945* (London: St. Ermin's Press, 2002), pp. 226-7.

⁶⁹ Briggs, op. cit., p. 383.

⁷⁰ CAC, Neri 3/10, History of the European service during the War by Douglas Ritchie, 1945.

⁷¹ Tangye Lean, E., *Voices in the Darkness: The story of European Radio War* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1943), p. 99.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ CAC, Neri 3/10.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

In addition to the sources available from the Central Desk, the Polish Service used material provided by the Polish Telegraphic Agency (PAT), the Polish Underground and couriers, ready scripts prepared by the Radio Department of the Polish MoI in London, extracts from the English and Polish press printed in London and Scotland and newsletters and dispatches supplied by Polish correspondents spread all over the world (India, China, USA, Canada, Switzerland, Persia, Australia) which were received by telegram and cable.⁷⁵ These dispatches were used as a source of information by all BBC Services, including the Home Service as they were recognised as outstandingly well written and highly valuable.⁷⁶ As well as the main news, the bulletins included: press review, political and news talks, military talks announced by Colonel Bogusławski and every second week by an English military expert, religious talks on Sundays prepared by Father Staniszewski and, from December 1940, by Stanisław Kaczyński.⁷⁷ Thursday programmes included literary talks by Polish writers and readings of Polish classical and modern poetry. Friday was reserved for political speeches, mainly for representatives of the Polish government-in-exile but statesmen of other allied governments also appeared in the programmes.⁷⁸ Even after Radio Polskie was granted free time, the Polish authorities insisted on broadcasting their speeches during the Polish Service bulletins because the time allocated to Radio Polskie was less suitable for the Polish Underground monitors (see chapter 4).⁷⁹

In 1942, the Polish Service in order to address the needs of the Polish Underground, introduced a 24 news cycle, from midnight to dawn.⁸⁰ The first dawn bulletin gave the main news of the new day; the second, extracts from London press with editorial comment; the third, Polish news from all over the world; whilst the fourth served as stop press in case there was any sectional development for inclusion in Underground papers.⁸¹ These programmes, edited by Kmiecik, Dziwanowski and Faecher and supervised by Hodson, became the main source of the Polish clandestine press.⁸²

In the beginning of the war a very important role was played by the so-called '*agony column*'. After the German invasion many people who had escaped from Poland tried to find their relatives and thousands of letters reached the BBC asking for help. On 7 September 1939, at the request of the Polish Embassy in London, the BBC started broadcasting the names of Polish refugees looking to be reunited with their families.⁸³ In the beginning the '*agony column*' was

⁷⁵ PISM, Kol. 15/5 Działalność Ministerstwa Informacji i Dokumentacji, report Stefan Ropp, 25 January 1941.

⁷⁶ BBC WAC, E2/482, Polish Newsletters, 1942.

⁷⁷ BBC WAC, E1/1148/1, Memo, 6 December 1940.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Meissner. J., *Pióro ze Skrzydeł* (Warsaw: Iskra, 1976), pp. 100-110.

⁸⁰ BBC WAC, E1/1147 Countries: Poland; Polish booklet (English text of unpublished material on the work of the Polish Service, file 1, completed after 1946.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Interview with Teresa Myskov. The Agony Column was initiated by Syrop.

put at the end of the first morning Polish Service programme, then twice a day and, from May 1940, a full 15 minutes were allocated in the morning for this alone.⁸⁴ During this period over 9,000 letters were received from all over the world including Russian occupied Poland. Over 400 agony column broadcasts were made in which over 34,000 names were mentioned. The average number of names broadcast was the highest in June 1940: 10,620.⁸⁵ The letters were handed to the Polish Liaison and Assistant for the War Victims whose job was to complete a card index. The service became very efficient thanks to close cooperation with the Red Cross, the relief organisations and a decision to attach a Polish translator to the Overseas Intelligence Department of the BBC. The '*agony column*' or as it was called by Poles, '*letter box*' helped to reconnect many families. It was so successful that other countries tried to introduce one for their own purposes. However, for security reasons the Ministry of Information decided on 9 July 1940 to stop the service because, as the war progressed and communication between countries became more difficult, big delays were experienced between sending and receiving messages, causing confusion rather than helping to find missing relatives.⁸⁶

The Polish Service also took part in the BBC '*Go slow campaign*' aimed at interrupting work in the German factories. The programmes consisted of communiqués addressing directly workers '*to work slow*', emphasising that the '*slowing down*' of the German production of arms was the most efficient form of sabotage.⁸⁷ In 1944, these programmes also included the song '*Trojan horse*', announced as '*the signal of cooperation and solidarity with fellow slaves of the Reich*'.⁸⁸ Moreover, the Polish Service also took part in the BBC V Campaign with the purpose not only of sabotaging German actions, but also of uniting people in the fight against the occupier.

The BBC V Campaign was well known in Poland and the symbol was painted on walls, streets and park benches.⁸⁹ Speaking under pseudonym of Colonel Britton, Douglas Ritchie's programmes were broadcast by the Polish Service and his appeals for sabotage were widely known in Poland.⁹⁰ Garnett and Briggs claim that Colonel Britton's broadcasts were features of BBC London Calling Europe, however, a written copy of a Polish bulletin from June 1941 consists of Colonel Britton's programme, which was also translated into Polish.⁹¹ In contrast, the Polish Editor, Gregory Macdonald, argued after the war that the Polish Service did not take part in the V Campaign at all.⁹² His argument was based on two facts: firstly, Poles '*had to be*

⁸⁴ BBC WAC, E2/499, Radio Agony Column.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ BBC WAC, E1/1147.

⁸⁸ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 1 August 1944.

⁸⁹ Kwiatkowski, M., *Polskie Radio w Konspiracji: 1939-1944* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1989), pp.69 -71.

⁹⁰ BBC WAC, BBC Polish Service Bulletins, 14 June 8:45am, 1941 –Colonel Britton broadcast.

⁹¹ Garnett, op. cit., p 100; Briggs, op. cit., p. 338; BBC WAC, Polish Service bulletins, June 1941.

⁹² MPC, Note by Macdonald, undated.

restrained rather than encouraged’; and secondly, the ‘V’ sign which stands for ‘*Victory*’ translates into Polish as ‘Zwycięstwo’, hence in Poland it was the letter ‘Z’ which became a symbol of protest against German oppression. However, the Polish literature mentions the use of both ‘Z’ and ‘V’; it should be noted that Latin was taught in Polish schools and everyone understood the word ‘*Victoria*’. It is likely that by the time Macdonald became the editor, Colonel Britton’s broadcasts had stopped; this, however, cannot be confirmed as the Polish Service bulletins from September 1941 to March 1943 are incomplete (see chapter 2). Nevertheless, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the Polish Underground monitored not only Polish broadcasts but also others in German, French and English which points to the conclusion that, regardless of whether Colonel Britton’s programmes were aired after August 1941, they were definitely well known in Poland. Two facts support this argument: ‘V’ as a symbol of victory appears in the Polish clandestine press as well as in German-controlled newspapers in Poland, as the Nazis, too, adopted the sign as ‘*the old German victory cry*’.⁹³

From autumn 1941, a musical code system administered by the Polish government’s Sixth Bureau in London was included in songs played at the end of some of the Polish Service broadcasts in order to pass secret military information to Poland, such as details of supplies drops by the RAF or to confuse the enemy.⁹⁴ The gramophone records were delivered to Bush House from the Polish government’s HQ at the Rubens Hotel in London by Lieutenant ‘Peterkin’, real name George Zubrzycki. The codes which could only be changed by Radio Polskie employee, Halski, were incorporated in circa 50 Polish popular songs with melodies easily recognisable to Poles, and the Underground was informed in which songs special messages were included.⁹⁵ Yet, as Macdonald recalls, there were embarrassing episodes related to these songs.⁹⁶ After reporting on the death of Cardinal Arthur Hinsley, the Archbishop of Westminster and old friend of Poland, the Polish Service played the tune ‘*Hurray, hurray, Maciek is dead*’ [hura, hurra, umrał Maciek umarł]. Another example concerns the choice of ‘*With the smoke of fires*’ [‘Z dymem pożarów’], evoking failure of Warsaw revolt against Russians in 1831 to inform the Polish Home Army about air drops during the Warsaw rising in 1944.⁹⁷ In addition, so-called ‘ducks’ [kaczki] – three numbers introduced by the announcer during his reading of the bulletin included secret information.⁹⁸

⁹³ Briggs, op. cit., p. 340.

⁹⁴ Halski, op. cit., p. 118.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 119.

⁹⁶ Macdonald, Ariel, 22 August 1984.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Halski, op. cit. p. 119.

Although the Polish Service bulletins were prepared at top speed and by 1941 the Polish Service had the reputation of being the most proficient when compared with other European Services, the content of the broadcast was widely criticised by Polish listeners.⁹⁹ In particular, in the first years of war, there was little reliance on BBC news as the Service was accused of presenting only the British point of view and pro-Soviet propaganda. A report from the Polish Underground supplied to the BBC in 1941 by the Polish Ministry of Interior stated that the programmes were not only unsatisfactory, but scandalous, *'doing more harm than good'*.¹⁰⁰ The BBC was charged with using *'unsatisfactory language, ignorance of the Polish mentality, sickeningly sweet tone of bulletins and fooling listeners with undue optimism instead of telling the truth'*.¹⁰¹ Listeners were aware that elements of propaganda within the broadcasts were unavoidable but were frustrated that the content was not improved, given the huge risks posed by listening to it.¹⁰² They wanted *'fighting radio'* and were prepared to hear even bad news instead of being fed with *'conventional and affected optimism'*.¹⁰³ Further criticism came in the form of accusations of broadcasting trivial news to people listening in life threatening conditions where, on average, 30 people were losing their lives every month. In particular, religious talks, sermons and long talks were objects of criticism. One of listeners in Lisbon complained that the Polish broadcasts consisted of *'only rubbish, simply to fill up the 15 minutes'*.¹⁰⁴ However, it was not only the news value of the BBC Polish programmes that was under the attack. As emphasised in the Underground report, *'unsatisfactory language'* was also criticised. This issue was also raised by the Polish authorities in London, complaining that the people responsible for translation did not know the Polish language well and constantly made mistakes.¹⁰⁵ Another issue of concern was that the Polish Service broadcasts were *'damaged by Jewish accent'*.¹⁰⁶ Although the name of the announcer is not given in the document, it can be assumed that they were referring to Konrad Syrop, who was a Jew. In response to the Polish government complaint, the Polish Service appointed an *'assessor'* *'primarily for the purpose of detecting traces of the Jewish accent and manner'*.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁹ BBC WAC, R13/192 External Service, Polish Section, 1939-47.

¹⁰⁰ BBC WAC, E2/192/3, European Intelligence Papers: Surveys of European Audiences, Enemy Occupied Countries other than France, file 2A, November 1941 –April 1942. Report from the Polish Underground, 27 September 1941.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² BBC WAC, E40/236/1; European Service Papers World Service Registry, Poland, 1942-1957. Interview with Stanisław Izbecki, April 1943.

¹⁰³ BBC WAC, E1/1149/1, Polish Service, file 1a, 1940-1942. Note by Józef Kisielewski, 2 December 41.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Report 14 August 1941.

¹⁰⁵ PISM, Kol. 15/5, report Stefan Ropp, 25 January 1941.

¹⁰⁶ Seaton, J., 'The BBC and the Holocaust'. *European Journal of Communication*, 2 (1), London, 1987, p. 66.

¹⁰⁷ BBC WAC, R13/192, Polish Service, 11 April 1941, in *ibid.*

It was understood that victory over the Axis would not come easily, but in order to maintain public morale news confirming that the fight against Nazis would continue was essential. The broadcasts of the Polish Service improved after Macdonald became the Editor and the introduction of the dawn bulletins. Yet as those bulletins focused on the needs of the Underground press, the Polish Service continued to receive complains from regular listeners, who found these programmes 'dry' and substandard as the same information were repeated over and over again. The Underground, too, was not content with the dawn bulletins because, when compared with the Home Service which they also monitored, the news was not up to date (see chapter 4). After the USSR joined the allies' coalition in 1941, it was felt that Polish military contributions to the war efforts were minimised while the Red Army victories were glorified. The complaints were even more stringent after 1943 when British foreign policy became more favourable to the USSR than to Poland and Polish officials were banned from addressing the population living east of the Curzon line, or mentioning the Polish-Soviet border or that Poland was the only country without quislings, thus questioning the trust and reliance of BBC broadcasts.¹⁰⁸ However, since the Underground considered the BBC a mouthpiece of the British government, it can be argued that, to a large extent, it was the Foreign Office pro-Soviet policy rather than the BBC which was the object of criticism (see chapters 6-9).

Cooperation with the Polish government in-exile

The cooperation between the Polish Service and the Polish government had already been established in September 1939 when the latter took refuge in France. After 30 September 1939, when Polskie Radio aired its last programme from Poland, the broadcasts of the Polish government from Paris and the Polish Service from London became the main source of information for people living under the occupation. Despite the fact that listening to or possession of radio set was punishable by death under the German occupation, Poles disobeyed the orders and continued to listen (see chapter 4). In order to ensure that the Polish broadcasts from France were not associated with Polskie Radio, the Polish Minister of Information in exile, Stanisław Stroński, changed its name to Radio Polskie; in his view, the former was '*the most hated institution in the country*' sponsored by the Sanacja regime responsible for Poland's downfall.¹⁰⁹

The relationship with the BBC began when the Polish Embassy in London arranged for the Polish Prime Minister, Władysław Sikorski, to speak on the Polish Service. Bolesław Leitgeber became the liaison officer between Radio Polskie and the BBC and closer cooperation was established between the two in March 1940 after the director of Radio Polskie, Krzysztof

¹⁰⁸ Hulaś, M., *Goście czy Intruzi: Rząd Polski na Uchodźstwie: September 1939- July 1943* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii Pan, 1996). pp. 280-300.

¹⁰⁹ Kwiatkowski, op. cit., p. 34.

Eydziatowicz, had visited London.¹¹⁰ It was agreed that 8-10-minute-long programmes would be broadcast on Wednesdays and Saturdays at 8:30pm on the Polish Service wavelengths, based on material supplied by the Polish MoI and announced as Radio Polskie bulletins.¹¹¹

When the Polish government took refuge in London in 1940, the cooperation between the BBC and the Polish authorities was tense; whilst the latter desired to be involved and consulted on coverage of Polish affairs by all BBC services and, more importantly, that the news was based on sources provided by the Polish MoI, the BBC and, in particular, the Polish Service editor at that time, Michael Winch, saw this as '*intervention*' and an attempt to control all Polish broadcasts. Consequently, the Poles request to see the Polish Service bulletins before they were transmitted was declined.¹¹² Nevertheless, the cooperation between the Polish authorities and the BBC ensured that the Polish Service played a pivotal role in informing the Polish Army in France about the evacuation to Britain.¹¹³

In the beginning the main objective of the Polish authorities was to improve the Polish Service broadcasts rather than continue its own programmes, as suggested by Briggs, Mansell and Pszenicki.¹¹⁴ Although the Polish government wanted to inaugurate its own broadcasts from London, the main obstacle laid in the fact that not many people in London were suitable for preparing and announcing such programmes as, after the fall of France, not many of those who worked for Radio Polskie in France came to Britain. Instead some escaped to Spain or Portugal whilst others joined the Army.¹¹⁵ Moreover, the Polish Minister of Information-in-exile, Stanisław Stroński, held the view that his weekly speeches on the Polish Service provided sufficient information and propaganda.¹¹⁶

The Polish MoI continued insisting on improving existing Polish broadcasts and being considered the main source of information about the situation in Poland and the Polish Army. It established its own Radio Department which, in addition to supplying the Polish Service, provided material for the BBC Home, Overseas and other European Services. Yet broadcasts to Poland were of the greatest importance. The so called '*bulletins du jour*' and other political talks were supplied daily whilst Stroński spoke twice a week on air, updating his countrymen about the military and political situation.¹¹⁷ As was the case for any other items coming from the Polish MoI, the talks were subject to censorship and had to be delivered in English and Polish

¹¹⁰ PISM, A.10.8/1 - Polskie Radio, Sprawy organizacyjne, Memorandum by Krzysztof Eydziatowicz: 'Cooperation and exchange of material -London -Paris', 2 April 1940.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² BBC WAC E2/13/1, Allied Governments Broadcast: Poland, file 1a 1940-2, Sgd. A.E. Barker report form the meeting with Radio Polskie representatives, 27 March 1940.

¹¹³ BBC WAC, E1/1147, Work of the Polish Service.

¹¹⁴ Briggs, op. cit.; Mansell, op. cit.; Pszenicki, op. cit.

¹¹⁵ PISM, 15/5, Zagadnienie Polskiej Radiofonii, Krzysztof Eydziatowicz, April 1941.

¹¹⁶ Meissner, op. cit. p. 101.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

12 hours before they were due for transmission.¹¹⁸ However, Polish officials' speeches were subject to Foreign Office censorship whilst other items to BBC. The Radio Department also cooperated closely with the BBC London Transcription Service; some of the programmes prepared and recorded by Poles were sent by the BBC to various stations abroad, from where they were rebroadcast in many other languages.¹¹⁹

In November 1940, a special Committee was established by the BBC in agreement with the Foreign Office to deal with the Polish broadcasts as well as all information related to Poland and its armed forces in other BBC Services. In the beginning its weekly meetings were chaired by V.D. Barker, the European language supervisor and, later, by Newsome or Ritchie. It was also attended by the Polish Service Editor (Winch, Macdonald), the liaison between the Polish Service and the Polish MoI, Baliński, the Radio Polskie Director, (Kisielewski, Meissner, Wagner), representatives of the BBC Intelligence Department for Poland, G. Purves and W. Theimer, the Assistant to the Director of the European Organisation, S. Stevens, and Frank Savery, the Foreign Office's counsellor to the Polish Embassy in London, who was appointed as an East European language supervisor in 1941. Savery also acted as the main liaison between the British and Polish governments on the issue of BBC broadcasting to Poland. After the Polish Region of the PWE was established in 1942, Moray Maclaren was also invited to the meetings. Those meetings were dominated by Polish government complaints regarding BBC treatment of Polish affairs and consequently the discussion of British foreign policy.¹²⁰

Deepening divisions

According to a BBC memorandum discussing cooperation with allied governments in London, the most satisfactory arrangements were made with the Polish and Czech authorities.¹²¹ Although no details are provided of which grounds this conclusion was based on, the analysis of other documents—in particular, the minutes of meetings, Baliński's reports from that meetings, and the private correspondence of BBC and Polish officials – demonstrates that this statement was far from the truth. First, the BBC did not have the same relationship with the Polish as with the Czech government. The latter was subject to less censorship, the main reason being its pro-Soviet policy.¹²² Secondly, Newsome, the Director of European Broadcasts also responsible for the European Service Propaganda Directives, openly expressed his dislike for the Polish government which, in his view, was made up of '*feudal reactionaries*' spreading anti-Soviet propaganda and directly responsible for the outbreak of the war.¹²³ Not only did he interpret the

¹¹⁸ E2/13/1, file 1a 1940-2, Memo by Baliński, 17 September 1941.

¹¹⁹ BBC WAC, E1/1147, Work of the Polish Service.

¹²⁰ BBC WAC, E1/1148/1-3, Polish Broadcasts: Minutes of Meetings.

¹²¹ PISM KoI. 434/51, BBC: Korespondencja, 1941; Memorandum on the cooperation between the BBC and Allied Governments in Great Britain, 29 May 1941.

¹²² Briggs, op. cit., pp. 426-7.

¹²³ Mansell, op. cit., p. 180.

Nazi-Soviet pact as *'the inexorable product of the Polish defiance of power and logic'* but he also held the view that:

*'Poland's attitude towards the Soviet Union in 1939 and the British Government's support of that attitude had brought about this war and its suffering by rupturing Anglo-Soviet relations and thus destroying the one combination capable of deterring the Reich from embarking upon the conflict'.*¹²⁴¹²⁵

Moreover, he sympathised with communist ideology and admired Stalin, who he compared to Cromwell, whilst defending the Great Purge campaign of political repression in the Soviet Union from 1936 to 1938, which in his view, *'strengthened Russia and tamed Revolution'*.¹²⁶ He also held that the Communist party was widely supported in Poland, and both the Polish resistance movement and the Polish Home Army were fictions created by the Polish government-in-exile.¹²⁷ The fact that in July 1942 Newsome married the Czech Service editor, Sheila Grant Duff, who according to Briggs was given free hand in the preparation of bulletins, further supports the conclusion that the Polish and Czech governments were not treated equally.¹²⁸ The analysis of the relationship between the allied governments and the BBC led Harrison to conclude that

*'the Poles were frequently, and unfavourably, compared to Czechoslovaks in discussions of exile government broadcasting at the BBC, often being cited as an example of the dangers of allowing foreign politicians to influence programming'.*¹²⁹

In comparison with other governments, Poles were *'closely supervised'* while the switch censor was advised to maintain a *'special alert'* during Radio Polskie transmissions.¹³⁰

In fact, the relationship between the Polish Service and the Polish government-in-exile remained tense throughout the war. Whilst Poles insisted on cooperation and sought to be consulted regarding broadcasts to Poland or about Polish affairs on other BBC services, the BBC representatives, especially Winch, were hostile to any interference from the Polish MoI. In a

¹²⁴ Stenton, M., *Radio London and Resistance in Occupied Europe: British Political Warfare 1939–1943* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 293.

¹²⁵ NA, FO 898/ 225, PWE Policy and Planning, Newsome, memorandum: 'the Soviet Union, Poland and Great Britain', 28 Feb 1943. The memorandum was written in response to the Polish government's paper circulated in the Foreign Office on conditions in the eastern part of Poland which specifically described NKVD atrocities in that region.

¹²⁶ Stenton, op. cit., p. 86.

¹²⁷ Mansell, op. cit., p. 180-1.

¹²⁸ Briggs, op. cit., p. 426.

¹²⁹ Harrison, E., *Radio and the Performance of Government: Broadcasting by the Czechoslovaks in Exile in London, 1939-45*, University of Bristol, School of Modern Languages, March 2015, p. 35, unpublished.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

letter to Kirkpatrick, Winch, expressed the view that free time should be granted to Radio Polskie in order to free themselves of Stroński's intrusion, saying '*shall we ever be able to produce a more lovely Polish Service*'.¹³¹ But even when Winch was replaced by Macdonald, Meissner argued that the relationship of the Polish MoI with the BBC was more problematic than with all other allied governments.¹³²

The reason behind this tension lay in the fact that, throughout the war, the relationship between the Polish Service and the Polish government was chiefly shaped by British government diplomacy, and its pursuit of pro-Soviet policy. The Polish MoI attempted to publicise Soviet political manoeuvring and crimes committed against the Polish people in order to gain international support for the repossession of the territory east of the Curzon line. However, Britain's main objective was the unity of the allied coalition, resulting in acceptance of Stalin's demands and its pro-Soviet stance and this was reflected in the BBC broadcasts (see chapter 6-9). The political implications of these differences were not the only source of tension between the Polish Service and the Polish government. Broadcasts to Poland were of great importance to the Polish authorities; therefore, they felt offended when the BBC did not use the material supplied by the Radio Department or chose other than Polish sources for broadcast. According to Sobański, who monitored Polish broadcasts, even when the items were accepted, they were not broadcast.¹³³ Yet, in response to Polish accusations, Winch argued that the news received from the Radio Department was out dated or, in some cases, had been used in previous programmes.¹³⁴ This observation was shared by the Dawn Editor, Mr. Hodson.¹³⁵ Winch also accused Poles of unprofessionalism, pointing out that in some material the date or source was not given.¹³⁶ As an example, he referred to a report covering the two-month period, November–December 1941, when only 25 out of 73 items were deemed suitable for broadcast.¹³⁷ In addition, before free time was granted to Radio Polskie, the Polish government attempted to use the Polish Service programmes for its own propaganda. This stance met with strong opposition and not only for political reasons; lengthy Polish officials' speeches, in the view of the BBC, were not what Poles wanted to hear and ruined their bulletins.¹³⁸

The scripts of the Radio Department did not survive the war and therefore it is difficult to judge the extent to which they were unsuitable for broadcast. The Polish government was, however,

¹³¹ BBC WAC E2/13/1, Winch to Kirkpatrick, 17 September 1941.

¹³² PISM, Kol. 434/52, Report by Meissner: 'Referat w sprawie objęcia kierownictwa Działu Radiowego', 30 October 1942.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ BBC WAC, E1/1148/1 Polish Service, 20 December 1940.

¹³⁵ PUMST, 2.3.11.1, Plan organizacji polskich audycji świątecznych' przedłożony Kisielewskiemu dnia 27 November 1942. Kmiecik to kpt. Meissner 'Uwagi w sprawie polskich audycji świątecznych: BBC i Radio Polskie, 10 January 1943.

¹³⁶ BBC WAC, E1/1148/1 Polish broadcasts: Minutes of Meetings, 20 December 1940.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ BBC WAC, E2/13/1, undated memo, author not given.

faced with a more complex issue: Polish listeners heavily criticised the Polish Service broadcasts, and, assuming that the Polish government had a part in their preparation, as already mentioned, blamed the latter for the '*trivial content and exaggerated optimism*'.¹³⁹ Given the huge risk posed by accessing radio, listeners expected that their grievances would be addressed. The assertion of the head of the Radio Department, Józef Kisielewski, that in fact they did not exercise substantial influence over the BBC Polish broadcasts, was met with condemnation. The Polish Underground argued that, if people were willing to jeopardise their lives in order to listen to the Polish broadcasts, the Polish authorities' '*excesses*' were not justified.¹⁴⁰ Sikorski himself had already complained to the British MoI in February 1941 regarding the unsatisfactory Polish programmes.¹⁴¹ Broadcasts to Poland were of great importance not only to the Polish government. The fact that Churchill was also present during the meeting between Sikorski and Duff Cooper, the Minister of MoI at that time, indicates that the British government regarded the issue seriously.¹⁴² Cooper promised improvement, acknowledging that nothing had been done in that direction for a long time. Winch, however, disregarded complaints and any advice on how to improve the programmes. In his view, he knew better what Poles wanted to hear. The improvement in both the programmes and the relationship with the Polish authorities occurred only after Macdonald became the Editor, but even then Kisielewski continued to complain that the material prepared by the Radio Department had not been used.

The internal affairs of the Polish MoI had as much negative impact on its relations with the Polish Service as its attempt to interfere in the BBC broadcasts. Stroński was widely criticised for lack of organisation and his relations with staff were tense, in particular, with the director of the Radio Department, angered because he had acted '*behind his back*' and contradicted him.¹⁴³ Although Kisielewski was not always consulted and did not have influence over the Polish Service programmes, he was held personally responsible when inaccurate news was broadcast, resulting in his resignation in June 1942.¹⁴⁴ Macdonald shared Kisielewski's view of the situation, adding that the Polish Minister of Information's interference with the British MoI and the Foreign Office was disruptive and led to confusion and delays.¹⁴⁵ When Kisielewski disagreed with BBC censorship, however, BBC officials maintained that the censorship was

¹³⁹ WAC BBC, E1/1149/1, Note by Kisielewski, 2 December 1941.

¹⁴⁰ PISM, Kol. 434/52, Kisielewski to Newsome, 18 March 1942.

¹⁴¹ NA, FO, 19b/479, Poland, Eden to Dormer, 22 January 1943.

¹⁴² PISM, Skrzynka Stroński, Kol. 183/39, Note from Sikorski's meeting with Duff Cooper, 16 February, 1941.

¹⁴³ Kwiatkowski, op. cit., p. 35.

¹⁴⁴ PISM, Skrzynka Stroński, Kol. 183/40, Memo by Stroński, 20 June 1942.

¹⁴⁵ MPC, Macdonald's note, undated.

done in accordance with MoI and the FO guidelines.¹⁴⁶ Therefore it is not surprising that the Polish MoI, attempting to reverse the censorship policy, questioned the body responsible.

In December 1942 Kisielewski was succeeded by the former Polish pilot and war correspondent, Janusz Meissner. His relations with Stroński were also far from perfect. Meissner sought to establish the Radio Department as autonomous and free from Stroński's interference. The main obstacle in achieving this goal was the dysfunctional communication between the Polish MoI and its Radio Department. Baliński, as liaison officer between the BBC, Polish and British MoI, updated only Stroński about his work whilst Meissner was kept uninformed.¹⁴⁷ Baliński was also criticised for his lack of authority in BBC circles and ineffectiveness in securing Polish interests.

Meissner, however, was determined to improve both relations with the Polish Service and the programmes of Radio Polskie. Major changes occurred under his management: Zbigniew Grabowski, former senior announcer of the Polish Service, Mieczysław Paczosa and Jerzy Szyszko-Bohusz were put in charge of preparation of the material in Polish for the Polish Service, whilst Karol Wagner, also an ex-Polish Service employee, was appointed Director of the Foreign Section of the Radio Department of the Polish MoI, responsible for editing news in English about Poland, the Polish Army and the Polish government for the BBC, including the Polish Service.¹⁴⁸ As other European Services were reluctant to include information about Poland and the Polish navy and air forces in their programmes, Wagner came up with the idea, according to Meissner borrowed from the advertising industry, to print news on conspicuous green paper, a colour not used in the BBC.¹⁴⁹ The copies with most recent information about Poland and the Polish forces were delivered to each department every day before they were published in the Polish press in London. In addition, Edward Domachowski, Editor and translator of English bulletins, cooperated closely with Macdonald and, in many cases, they worked together in Bush House on their preparation.¹⁵⁰ Although the Foreign Section of the Polish Radio Department always suffered from a shortage of staff, their work was highly efficient. According to data provided by Wagner in 1943, in a three-month period, the Section supplied the BBC with 12920 lines of text with news, some 170 lines every day.¹⁵¹ In July 1943 Meissner resigned and Karol Wagner was appointed Director of Radio Department and held this post to the end of the War. Other important changes also occurred in this period, which saw

¹⁴⁶ PISM, Kol. 434/53, BBC Korespondencja, 1943. Baliński to Stroński quoting Macdonald's statement that the Polish Service acted on the Foreign Office's instructions, 29 January 1943.

¹⁴⁷ PISM, Kol. 434/52, Report by Meissner: 'Referat w sprawie objęcia kierownictwa Działu Radiowego', 30 November 1942.

¹⁴⁸ PISM, Kol. 25/36, Report by Wagner: 'Work of the Foreign Section of the Radio Department of MoI: 1 January-31 March 1943'.

¹⁴⁹ Meissner, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

¹⁵⁰ PISM, Kol. 25/36, Report by Wagner, 1 January-31 March 1943.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Stanisław Kot taking office as a Minister of Information. Although his relationship with the Radio Department was good, he was very ill-favoured in BBC circles. Not much information has been found about Adam Pragier, the Minister of Information from 1944 to 1949.

Policy and Censorship

All bulletins had to be written in accordance with BBC general directives and it was the job of one of the Bush House Central Desk senior staff to assure that this was followed.¹⁵² Yet, during the war special safety measures had to be taken and all the European Service bulletins and talks had to be approved by security and policy officials. All ‘vetting’ had been done on scripts already translated into English. First, all items had to be stamped for security in order to check the accuracy of information from the frontline and that military secrecy had not been breached. Mr. Lovejoy was the head of the security department which by 1942 had seven full-time censors. Secondly, all scripts had to ‘*pass for policy*’. In fact, this was political censorship assuring that all bulletins were written in accordance with British foreign policy and policy censors were responsible to the FO.¹⁵³ In order to assure consistency, Kirkpatrick argued in March 1942 that each script should be stamped and initialled by one of: the Director of the European Service or his Assistant, the chief Sub-Editor of the day or night, the Dawn Editor or his Assistant and the European News Editor or his Assistant.¹⁵⁴ Only then could the bulletins be sent to the language supervisor whose job was to assure that there was no variation from the English text in the translated copy. It was required that all officials responsible for policy, security and translation were British nationals. Additional security measures were applied, notably, a switch censor was required to be present during the transmission assuring a faithful reading of the text by the announcer.

Between 1942 and 1945, Donald Edwards was appointed the European News Editor, F.G. Russell took the post of the day policy Editor and D.M. Hodson as the night policy Editor while J.M. Spey became Policy Editor of the dawn bulletins in 1944. He was succeeded in autumn the same year by J.A.P. Thewes, who held this position until the end of the war. In addition, all talks had to be approved by the European Talks Editor, Allan Bullock. However, according to the BBC Staff list from 1942, rather than require the European Service Director or other editors to vet bulletins for policy, the BBC appointed separate Policy Editors, namely, J.S. Dean, C. Hulme and A.R. Birley, whilst the latter’s initials appear also on the security stamp of the Polish Service bulletins.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, in 1943 Kirkpatrick informed Baliński that the Policy Editors were in fact responsible to the Foreign Office, not to the BBC.¹⁵⁶ With regards to the security

¹⁵² Briggs, op. cit., p. 383.

¹⁵³ Meissner, op. cit., p. 115

¹⁵⁴ PISM, 434/52, Kirkpatrick to all regional editors, 25 March 1942.

¹⁵⁵ WAC, BBC Staff List 1942.

¹⁵⁶ BBC WAC, E1/1148/3, 22 January 1943.

editors, among initials such as JWF, F, GA, GP and AC, it was possible to identify only GP as belonging to the European Productions Supervisor, Gibson Parker.

Although broadcasters understood that special measures had to be taken in wartime, the attempt of the MoI to interfere in the BBC policies was not welcome. The BBC agreed to follow the official policy but reserved the right to execute it in their own way. Yet, according to Kirkpatrick, this '*gentlemen's agreement*' did not work.¹⁵⁷ The voices inside the Corporation argued for cooperation with, rather than the control of, the European Service, resulting in the appointment of H.R Cummings in 1939 as Foreign Office liaison-officer and A.F. Haig as BBC liaison officer with the FO dealing exclusively with the foreign broadcasts, excluding German.¹⁵⁸ According to Ritchie, however, there was not much intervention from the Foreign Office or other governmental agencies until autumn 1940 when the directives '*multiplied like leaves*'; during the move from Broadcasting House to the ice rink in Maida Vale the chaos was such that the Service relied on improvisation.¹⁵⁹

The improvement of both cooperation and communication between the BBC and the government occurred only after Brendan Bracken succeeded Duff Cooper as the Minister of Information in July 1941. He appointed Ivone Kirkpatrick as the Controller of the European Service October 1941. Both Bracken and Kirkpatrick, however, argued for European Service independence from the control of the government.¹⁶⁰

The PWE and government foreign policy in BBC Polish broadcasts

In the beginning of the war, the MoI issued the guidelines for the European Service. Things changed in September 1941 when the PWE was established. It consisted of representatives of different ministerial departments and the BBC, namely Bruce Lockhart (FO), Brigadier Dallas Brooks (MoI), Rex Leeper (MEW) and the personal assistant of Churchill, Major Morton.¹⁶¹ The BBC was represented by Kirkpatrick. The PWE was responsible to the Foreign Secretary for policy, to the MoI for administration and to MEW for liaison with the underground activities. In March 1942 the PWE underwent reorganisation resulting in Lockhart becoming the Director-General, and Leeper the Deputy Chairman, whilst Brooks took responsibility for the military wing and Kirkpatrick for administration (see chapter 1). As Lockhart was often away, Ritchie Calder was appointed as Director of Plans and Campaigns, in charge of issuing the Central Directives and coordination with the PWE Regional Directors. In February 1942, Moray

¹⁵⁷ Kirkpatrick, I., *The Inner Circle* (London: Macmillan, 1959); Lockhart, R. H. B., *Comes the Reckoning* (London: Arno Press, 1972), p. 156.

¹⁵⁸ BBC WAC, E2/140, Director of External Broadcasting: papers 1939-1940, MoI Memorandum 1939. In mid-1944 Miss C.G.H Reeves took the position of the liaison officer.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Mansell, op. cit., pp. 77-8.

¹⁶¹ Garnett, op. cit., 77.

Maclaren became the Head of the PWE Polish Region, responsible for issuing weekly directives for the Polish Service. These directives, however, had to be written in accordance with the PWE Central Directives.¹⁶²

The Central Directives were circulated every Tuesday, and by Thursday the regional directives had to be completed for each Service, approved by the Foreign Office at 12pm on the same day and sent to the BBC at 3:30pm.¹⁶³ Therefore, as Maclaren complained, by the end of the working week many strategic and political guidelines were invalid.¹⁶⁴ Appliance of the PWE directives was, however, more problematic. As Kirkpatrick observed '*the chain of responsibility*' and co-ordination had been broken because the PWE Regional Directors issued guidelines to the European Service Regional Editors without notifying him or Newsome.¹⁶⁵ This was, however, far from the truth. In fact, it was the opposite; the BBC Regional Editors, when disagreeing with the Director of the European Broadcasts, sought support from the PWE Regional Director. Newsome often ignored the MoI and the PWE directives and pursued his own policy, although he claimed that there was no difference between his directives and those of the PWE.¹⁶⁶ He argued that they were based on the PWE policy in agreement with Kirkpatrick and only then circulated to the PWE regional director as guidelines by the Central Planning Committee of the PWE of which he was a member. In Newsome's view, his directives were consistent with the policy of HMG.¹⁶⁷

It was eventually agreed that the BBC Regional Editors would be responsible for selection and presentation of news as each of them had been appointed to this post because of their special knowledge of the country they were dealing with.¹⁶⁸ It was Newsome's job to provide the editors with more recent general news from the Bush House Central Desk together with the Daily Directives, previously approved by the PWE Executive Committee. Daily conferences were held at 5pm and 11am between Newsome, all Regional Editors and Bush House Central Desk staff at which all the important news of the day was discussed. The PWE Regional Directives were composed in consultation with the BBC Regional Editors before being submitted to Kirkpatrick and the PWE Exceptive Committee. This meant that Macdonald had a share in the preparation of the PWE directives and exercised influence on their direction. In order to assure cooperation between the PWE and the BBC, daily meetings were also scheduled between Kirkpatrick, Newsome and the PWE Regional Directors. In addition, the Propaganda

¹⁶² Ibid, p. 183.

¹⁶³ NA, FO 898/228, Director-General's Files, Maclaren to Ritchie, 15 Jan 1943.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Garnett, op. cit., pp. 88-90.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, pp. 95-6.

¹⁶⁷ CAC, Neri 1/5, Newsome's memo to all Regional Editors, 5 November, 1941.

¹⁶⁸ Garnett, op. cit., p. 93.

Policy Committee held meetings with the PWE Regional Directors, at which they received political guidelines from Lockhart and strategic guidelines from Brooks.¹⁶⁹

In 1944, it was agreed that the directives could only be distributed if formally accepted by the BBC. Editors were entitled to challenge any directive if they disagreed and the circulation of the directives was only possible when '*the disagreement was thrashed out*'.¹⁷⁰

Kirkpatrick became the key person responsible for coordination between the BBC and the PWE and, although his main job was to assure that the BBC followed the FO policy, he became a prominent advocate for the independence of the European Service. Briggs argues that his appointment to the PWE did not change his view and he continued to insist that the PWE directives should never be universally obeyed.¹⁷¹ It is, however, difficult to find support for this argument in primary sources. After all, the PWE was created in order to assure that the European Service broadcasts were consistent with British government foreign policy. As Lockhart asserted, '*the PWE did not make policy, it executed it*' and the last word always belonged to the FO.¹⁷² Precisely for this purpose, the PWE was moved to Bush House and, for the same reason, Eden took charge of the '*PWE foreign policy aspects of propaganda*' whilst Bracken was made responsible for administration in February 1942.¹⁷³ In fact, the opposite argument is more persuasive, notably that it was Kirkpatrick's job to assure that the PWE directives were universally obeyed.

According to Newsome, however, the success of the European Service had been '*due not to the creation of the PWE but either to PWE's restraint or its ineffectiveness*'.¹⁷⁴ In Macdonald's opinion, the relationship between the FO, PWE and Polish Service was harmonious.¹⁷⁵ However, the extent to which the Polish Service Editor was able to disobey the PWE directives is questionable. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, the PWE directives could be treated flexibly as long they did not differ from the official line of HMG (chapter 6-9). On the other hand, as he was able to participate in their preparation, the question of disobedience is irrelevant; more pertinently, to what extent were his opinions taken into consideration?

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 95.

¹⁷⁰ BBC WAC, E1/1148/4; Minutes of Meetings; file d; January 1944-June 1945, 30 May 1944.

¹⁷¹ Briggs, op. cit., p. 345.

¹⁷² Lockhart, op. cit., 1972, p. 185.

¹⁷³ Cruickshank, C., *The Fourth Arm: Psychological Warfare: 1938-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 34.

¹⁷⁴ BBC WAC, E2/206/6, European Service, file 3b, 1943. Memo by N. Newsome, 20 September 1943.

¹⁷⁵ BBC WAC, Collection of Macdonald's articles. Review of Briggs, A., '*War of Worlds*'. 1970.

Conclusion

In the wartime period the Polish Service was recognised for its efficiency and professionalism. Its personnel not only had an impressive background in journalism, both in broadcasting and programme preparation, but were also deeply committed to the BBC aims, namely to support the resistance activities and to keep the listeners in occupied countries informed about the actual war situation. For many people living under German occupation, broadcasts from London remained the only source of information and were valued for their impartiality and accuracy. The competence and proficiency of the Polish couriers and correspondents network was well known in BBC circles and their reports were circulated across all BBC channels.

The extent to which the PWE tried to control the output to Poland, as well as the degree to which Macdonald was able to challenge those directives is questionable. As the war progressed, especially after 1943, it became evident that the objectives of the British government and Poland were different. Whilst Churchill tried to convince his fellow countrymen about the Red Army's importance in winning the war, the Polish government argued for disclosure of Soviet crimes committed against Polish citizens. The relationship between the Polish government and the BBC was tense throughout the war. Any interference in BBC broadcasts was met with hostility whilst intervention by Polish officials in the Foreign Office or in the Ministry of Information, endeavouring to secure their interests, only worsened the situation.

The Polish Ministry of Information desired the Polish Service to use the material prepared by their Radio Department, which in their opinion, was what the listeners wanted to hear and to be consulted regarding all other bulletins concerning Polish affairs, particularly political broadcasts. However, as much as the BBC was not content with the Polish Ministry of Information's intrusion, it was also in their interest to maintain a friendly relationship with them, as the Polish Underground was the major receiver and syndicator of the Polish Service broadcasts, loyal only to the Polish government-in-exile. It was also thanks to this cooperation that the Polish Service was able to improve and adjust their programmes to the Underground's need.

Censorship and Propaganda June 1941-April 1943

Introduction

'To tell bad news honestly and boldly is the surest sign of strength. To tell good news quietly but with justifiable punch and pleasure is the best form of propaganda'.¹

This chapter covers the period from German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 to the breaking off of diplomatic relations between Poland and the USSR in April 1943. The accession of the Soviet Union to the coalition of the allies changed the situation not only in military terms but also in terms of propaganda. It was acknowledged that ideological differences must be put aside in times of total war and restoration of diplomatic relations with the USSR became central to the Allies' political and military strategy. Great Britain, unlike Poland, was not at war with the Soviet Union and did not perceive it as an enemy or ally of Germany.² The British government did not desire any confrontation with Stalin; instead, from the outbreak of the war, attempts were made to persuade Stalin to join the anti-Axis coalition.³ Although no one believed that the Red Army could defeat Germany, Churchill, Roosevelt and the Polish Prime Minister, Władysław Sikorski, were anxious that Stalin might sign a separate treaty with Hitler, and therefore all means were employed to convince Stalin about the pro-Soviet attitude of the West.⁴ Churchill, who had previously been critical of the USSR and warned the public about the danger of communism, after the Wehrmacht attack on the Soviet Union, addressed Stalin as an ally and called for Anglo-Russian co-operation.⁵ The situation for Poland, however, was different; the USSR had been considered as a foe since the invasion of Poland in September 1939, followed by the annexation of territory east of the Curzon line. The population of this region had been exposed to terror, mass murders and imprisonment which could not be easily forgotten (see chapter 4). Nevertheless, as Poland and the USSR were now fighting a common enemy, it was hoped that, with the backing of the British and American government, Poland would be able to regain lost land.

As a result, in the period 1941-1943 the BBC Polish Service was faced with a serious challenge, notably, it had to convince its listeners that the previous two years of Soviet occupation should be forgotten and that Stalin's main interest was to seek a free and independent Poland, an

¹ BBC WAC, E2/135, Special Directives, Noel Newsome, 1940-1943, Propaganda Background notes, Newsome, 9 December 1941.

² Prażmowska, A., *Britain and Poland: 1939-1943, The Betrayed Ally* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) p. 47.

³ Ibid. p. 31.

⁴ Rzeshevsky, O. A., *War and Diplomacy: The Making of Grand Alliance* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 5.

⁵ Briggs, A., *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: The War of Words*, Vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 353-5.

approach which could jeopardise the credibility of the BBC position. Nonetheless, it was understood that in the name of the unity of the coalition ‘*uncomfortable*’ subjects had to be avoided. Issues such as the dispute regarding the Polish eastern border, the release of Polish citizens from gulags, the disappearance of over 8,000 Polish officers in the USSR and the formation of the Polish Army in the USSR were labelled as ‘*sensitive*’, and a policy of ‘*avoidance*’ was recommended. As the conflict between Poland and the Soviet Union deepened, not only were speeches of Polish officials subjected to severe censorship but also the Polish Press in London was banned from discussing Polish-Soviet relations. The BBC understood that in times of total war, following the governments’ official policy was essential.

BBC European Service as a weapon of war and pro-Soviet propaganda

The BBC European Service was the main instrument of British propaganda and throughout the war its broadcasts presented the official line of the government.⁶ This meant that the BBC Polish Service could not contradict the government’s foreign policy which, from June 1941, took a pro-Soviet position. The Soviet Union was recognised as a more important ally than Poland, therefore news which could undermine the USSR position was withheld from broadcast. The BBC Polish Service, as other European Services, was sponsored by a Treasury grant and required to follow the Political Warfare Executive (PWE) directives, written in accordance with Foreign Office policy. Issued weekly, the PWE directives ‘*steered*’ the European Service ‘*in the right direction*’ and outlined how the broadcasts should be ‘*tailored*’.⁷ As Cruickshank points out:

*‘Although open broadcasting was confined to the truth, on the ground that honesty is the best policy, it did not necessarily have to be the whole truth. While the white broadcasters were required to promote the current approved propaganda themes no less than were their black brethren, some truths would support them better than others, and some were best left untold’.*⁸

The aim of BBC European Service was not only to provide reliable and up to date information but, more importantly, to support war effort. As outlined by Noel Newsome, the European News Editor and, from December 1941, the Director of the European Service, propaganda to Europe was based on psychological warfare, namely ‘*strengthening or preserving the right frame of mind in our audience*’ and ‘*operational- – exploiting that frame of mind in a practical*

⁶ Garnett, D. *The Secret History of PWE: The Political Warfare Executive, 1939-1945* (London: St. Ermin's Press, 2002), p. 9.

⁷ Cruickshank, C., *The Fourth Arm: Psychological Warfare: 1938-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

⁸ Ibid, p. 68.

direction'.⁹ As the Director of the European Service, Newsome defined the principles and purpose of the European Service as follow:

*'We report nothing that we don't believe in, we suppress nothing of importance which we believe to be true. We give bad news promptly and prominently. We express no views which we do not believe to be justified by the facts. We decide upon our 'line' according to our own estimate of the facts and only to a very minor degree as a 'counter' to the enemy's version. We seek to explain our views to the listener: we do not trim that view merely because of his susceptibilities (...) We always take an offensive line: we attack all the time. (Even when things looked blackest we were aggressive (...) we do not subject our broadcasts either to the enemy's propaganda line or to the prejudices and tastes of our listeners, enemy, neutral or friends (although in methods of presentation we take account of the audience mentality (...)) We use as our ammunition not mere words but ideas, expressed in words'.*¹⁰

Yet, in recognising radio as a weapon of war, Newsome also believed that it was a broadcaster's job to make listeners *'swallow the maximum dosage of propaganda'* without *'doctoring'* though only to the extent that the interest and desire to continue listening was not minimised.¹¹ In order to achieve this goal Newsome argued:

*'All output must bear the stamp of authenticity and authority and must not be in danger of being exposed as otherwise (whether in fact it is or is not authentic and authoritative. (...) In short, if we depart from accuracy and the truth we must do so not accidentally and carelessly but deliberately and systematically either because we know we shall not be found out or because it is considered essential to risk being found out for very special reason'.*¹²

Newsome's approach to broadcasting was very influential and throughout the war his weekly directives had a significant impact on the content of foreign broadcasts. The Director of the European Service, however, often ignored the Ministry of Information (MoI) and PWE directives and pursued his own policy, although he argued that there was no difference between his and the PWE directives.¹³ Yet, this claim is questionable as he himself argued in December 1943 that the success of the European Service *'has been due not to the creation of the PWE but*

⁹ BBC WAC, E2/135, Paper 'Political Warfare: Ingredients of Propaganda, N. Newsome, 23 September 1941.

¹⁰ BBC WAC E2/206/6, file b, European Service, 1943, 'The European Service. Principles and purposes, problems and policy points, Noel Newsome, 1 January 1943.

¹¹ BBC WAC, E2/135, Newsome: Political Warfare: Ingredients of Propaganda, N. Newsome, 23 September 1941.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Garnett, op. cit., pp. 95-8.

either to PWE's restraint or its ineffectiveness'.¹⁴ In his view, however, the directives which he prepared expressed HMG policy.¹⁵

Even prior to his nomination to the Director of the European Service post, Newsome produced his own Propaganda Background Notes, which were distributed to all European Service editors. Garnett, who worked for the PWE, maintains that those directives, written in *'forcible language'*, deviated from the political and strategic guidelines and that Newsome continuously made *'howlers'*.¹⁶ The Propaganda Background Notes, however, were valued by his subordinates, interested in their director's views.¹⁷ In particular, Notes on Polish-Soviet affairs had a big impact on how Stalin's territorial demands were interpreted, since knowledge of pre-war Poland-Soviet relations was very limited in the BBC circles and many broadcasters relied on information and comments provided by the Director of the European Service. He did not hesitate to openly express his left wing political views and admiration for the Red Army:

'Russians (were) not only a great fighting nation and a mighty ally in war but also people who have set us, and the world, an example in many respects of how to pursue an ideal with wholehearted sacrifice'.¹⁸

In fact, he went much further than supporting pro-Soviet foreign policy asserting that:

'without accepting Communism, we must convince Europe that Russia has remained civilized, and that the Anglo-Russian alliance holds out a fine promise of progress for European civilisation towards a system combining the best futures of socialism and liberal democracy'.¹⁹

The issue of political warfare and the extent of governmental control over the BBC foreign broadcasts became a major point of disagreement between the BBC European Service and the PWE (see chapter 1). Both, however, acknowledged that broadcasting should *'further the ends of HMG in political warfare'*.²⁰ Ivone Kirkpatrick who, by autumn 1941, had held three positions, namely Controller of European Broadcasts, PWE official and BBC liaison with the Foreign Office, complained that the BBC was not a *'charitable organisation'* providing a free

¹⁴ BBC WAC, E2/206/6, Paper 'Propaganda', Newsome, 20 September 1943.

¹⁵ CAC, Neri 1/1, Memo by Newsome to all regional editors and sub-editors, 5 November 1941.

¹⁶ Garnett, op. cit., p. 98.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 95.

¹⁸ BBC WAC, E2/138/2, Weekly General Directives/ Weekly Propaganda Weekly Notes, N. Newsome, 15-18 February 1942.

¹⁹ BBC WAC, E2/ 138/1, Weekly General Directives Weekly Propaganda Weekly Notes, N. Newsome, 1-8 September 1941.

²⁰ Garnett, op. cit., p. 96.

news service to occupied Europe and its success should not be measured by its scope.²¹ He questioned the principles of the European Service:

*'Is the BBC a powerful propaganda weapon? Is it a primary aim to keep morale high so that conquered peoples may be ready to strike at the enemy on the day? If this is accepted then news becomes the handmaiden, not the mistress of broadcasting policy.'*²²

Although it was commonly understood that every means should be taken to support the war effort, it was not entirely clear what role the BBC European Service should play. This lack of clarity was especially evident in case of Polish Service and Kirkpatrick himself admitted that there was a lack of an overall plan for broadcasting to Poland.²³ His view was shared by the PWE Polish Regional Director of the PWE, Moray Maclaren complained as late as 1943 that this was the case.²⁴

This situation left room for 'broadcasting warriors' such as Newsome to impose their political views, directly influencing the content of the bulletins. He was present at the weekly meetings where issues relating to broadcasts to Poland of both the Polish Service and Radio Polskie were discussed, and when Polish-Soviet affairs were on agenda, he openly attacked the Polish government for their unwillingness to compromise.²⁵ In fact, until the Warsaw rising of 1944, when it became evident that Stalin had attempted to manipulate international public opinion in order to establish communist rule in Poland, he supported Soviet territorial claims to eastern Poland and was openly challenging the position of the Polish Underground and the Polish authorities in London, fostering the belief that the main obstacle to friendly relationships between Poland the USSR rested in Poles' anti-Soviet feelings (see chapter 7-8).

Newsome's political views were, however, only circulated in the BBC and the Foreign Office and criticism of Polish government was never openly expressed in the Polish Service bulletins; it was essential that the Polish broadcasts followed the official British government line which maintained that Poland was a valued ally. It was equally important that Britain was not accused of taking sides and was seen rather as a mediator in the Polish-Soviet disputes. More importantly, as Maclaren observed, those who disliked London Poles could not let their views be exposed because propaganda to Poland depended on good relations with the Polish government, which had the unquestionable support of the Polish Underground, and it was the

²¹ Ibid. p. 91.

²² Ibid.

²³ Unsigned note, 28 Jan 1942 in Briggs, op. cit., p. 424.

²⁴ Stenton, Michael. *Radio London and Resistance in Occupied Europe: British Political Warfare 1939–1943* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 288–91.

²⁵ BBC WAC, E1/1148/1-4, Polish broadcasts: Minutes of meetings.

latter which disseminated the BBC broadcasts.²⁶ As he emphasised in his directives for the Polish Service, '*Polish listeners believed in anything said in line with the Polish government policy*'.²⁷ Yet, after the USSR joined the allies' coalition, it was equally important that the BBC used the announcements of TASS, the official news agency, in their broadcasts. This, however, became particularly problematic, since from 1943 onwards these broadcasts focused on challenging the Polish government-in-exile and the Polish Underground's position.

Reconciliation of Poland's diplomatic relations with the USSR

The secret agreement between Stalin and Hitler, followed by the invasion of Poland in September 1939 and the Soviet annexation of territory east of the Curzon line, resulted in reluctance on the part of the Polish government to re-establish diplomatic relations with the USSR. Although Stalin was willing to annul the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, he was not prepared to recognise Polish-Soviet pre-war border. Sikorski, persuaded by Eden, eventually agreed to sign the Treaty on Soviet terms after receiving guarantees that the British government considered all territorial changes which occurred during the war as invalid.²⁸ The Polish-Soviet Treaty signed on 30 July 1941, also known as the Sikorski-Maisky agreement, not only restored diplomatic relations between the two neighbours but also authorised the release of prisoners captured by the Red Army during the September campaign and of Polish citizens from the Soviet gulags, as well as the creation of the Polish army in the USSR. Yet, instead of talking in terms of '*release*', the document stated that the Soviet government agreed to an '*amnesty*' for Polish prisoners of war and, although the Polish government protested as this term implied wrongdoing and was usually applied to criminals, it remained unchanged.²⁹

The signing of the Polish-Soviet Treaty was reported by all BBC channels, as well as in Sikorski's speech, emphasising that the agreement with Russia had been reached '*on honourable terms*'.³⁰ The Polish Service quoted the British press reports highlighting its importance as '*a mile stone in the Allies' diplomacy*' with *The Times* calling the Treaty a '*triumph of diplomatic good sense*' whilst *the New York Times* saw the restoration of the diplomatic relations between Poland and the USSR as '*a miracle of conciliation*'.³¹ According to the Soviet newspaper, *Izvestia*, also cited in the Polish bulletin, the Treaty had been signed '*for the sake of the common goal*', whilst at the same time it stated that it was in accordance

²⁶ NA, FO/ 898/226, PWE and Foreign Office Papers, Germany and Occupied Countries, Poland, 1942-1944, Maclaren to Department of Political Warfare, 31 March 1942.

²⁷ NA, FO 371/31092, Poland, Subversive activities- BBC broadcasts to Poland, PWE Directives for Polish Service, 30 May- 5 June 1942.

²⁸ Kochanski, H., *Eagle Unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 167.

²⁹ Umiastowski, R., *Poland, Russia and Great Britain: 1941-45* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1946), pp. 18-20.

³⁰ BBC WAC Polish Service Bulletins, 8:30pm, 29 July 1941.

³¹ *Ibid*, 6:45am.

with Soviet Union recognition of Poland as the independent state.³² The positive aspect of the agreement was further acknowledged in congratulations to the Polish Prime Minister from Churchill, Roosevelt, Commander of the First Polish Army Corps, Marian Kukiel and Polish soldiers. At the same time, Eden confirmed that HMG did not recognise any territorial changes which had taken place since August 1939.³³

Polish newspapers, however, were not mentioned except the London *Polish Daily* which supported the Polish-Soviet Agreement and was cited in Polish Service broadcasts.³⁴ The British government had forbidden the Polish press to publish anything during the Polish-Russian negotiations, but there was no ban after the Treaty was signed.³⁵ Polish politicians and Underground leaders accused Sikorski of appeasement towards the USSR, in particular, because the Treaty did not guarantee the return of the eastern territory or the withdrawal of the Soviet troops. Not only did the Polish President, Władysław Raczkiewicz, openly criticise the agreement, but Marian Seyda, a member of the Polish Cabinet, August Zalewski, the Minister of the Foreign Affairs and Kazimierz Sosnowski, the Polish government-in-exile's liaison officer with the Polish Underground, resigned in protest.³⁶ Information about their resignation was reported by the Polish Service on 4 August 1941.³⁷

On 3 August, the Polish Service reported Sikorski's visit to Scotland, where the Polish Army stationed. Although it had been announced a few days earlier that the soldiers and the Commander of the First Polish Army Corps, Marian Kukiel, had welcomed the Treaty, in fact it was met with suspicion. Sikorski, in addressing the rumours that Polish interests were compromised, assured the soldiers that it was not a peace treaty but just '*a temporary understanding dictated by the necessities of the moment*'.³⁸ The Polish Prime Minister further issued a statement denying accusations of ceding the Polish cities of Wilno and Lwów to the USSR.³⁹

The Atlantic Charter, signed in August 1941 in which all signatories, including Stalin, pledged that their countries sought no expansion or territorial changes, at first sight seemed to work in favour of Poland. The arguments, however, continued. Just a day after the Treaty was signed, Maisky declared that, although the issue of frontiers should be settled after the hostilities ended, the new order should be based on the '*self-determination of the people*'.⁴⁰ It is clear that he was

³² Ibid, 8:30pm, 1 August 1941.

³³ Ibid, 8:45am, 31 July 1941.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ NA, FO 371/26755, Polish-Soviet Relations, 16 July 1941.

³⁶ Raczyński, E., *In Allied London* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962), p. 24.

³⁷ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 8:30pm, 4 August 1941.

³⁸ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 8:30pm, 3 August 1941.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Maisky's speech, 31 July 1941, in Umiastowski, op. cit., p.19.

referring here to the forged plebiscites in eastern Poland conducted by the Soviet authorities, in which the minority population of this region had allegedly voted for the incorporation to the USSR (see chapter 3). Self-determination and free-will of the people became the prime criterion employed by Stalin in his demands on the territory east of the Curzon line, arguing that Ukrainians and Byelorussians had opted for incorporation to the USSR (see chapter 3).⁴¹ A similar approach had been taken by Eden who, when announcing the Treaty in the House of Commons, confirmed that HMG would not recognise any territorial changes which took place during the war *'unless they took place with the free consent and good-will of the parties concerned'*.⁴² This, he added *'(held) well with territorial changes which have been effected in Poland since August 1939'*.⁴³ Citing Churchill's speech from September 1940, Eden reminded Members of Parliament that, in fact, the British government was not opposed to changes in the territorial structure of other countries and therefore could not guarantee frontiers in Eastern Europe,⁴⁴ demonstrating that the sphere of political influence was already established in 1941. According to Kadell, Stalin interpreted this statement as Britain's consent to settle the Soviet-Polish border on his terms.⁴⁵ Yet, at the same time, the British government continued to assure the Polish government that it did not recognise the Soviet occupation of Polish and was committed to re-establishing Poland in its pre-war borders.

Polish politicians played an important part in this process by convincing the nation of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin's pledges of restoration of independent Polish State, as observed in the coverage of Sikorski's visit to Moscow in December 1941 when the Polish Prime Minister informed listeners that there was great understanding and cooperation with Stalin whom he addressed as a friend.⁴⁶ In fact, neither the details of the military cooperation nor the outstanding question of the frontier were settled during the meeting.

By March 1942 the topic of the Polish-Russian frontier had become taboo. The PWE, aware that the Soviets monitored Polish broadcasts from London, stressed in directives to Poland that special attention was to be taken when addressing *'any issues which could upset our ally'*;⁴⁷ Polish bulletins should concentrate on the gallant fight of the Polish troops in the west and the Soviet's in the east.⁴⁸

Interestingly, however, even prior to the Soviet Union joining the coalition, the Polish Service was forbidden to report on any matters which could offend Stalin. In fact, acting on the Foreign

⁴¹ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 329.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Kadell, F., *Katyn w Oczach Zachodu* (Warsaw: PWN, 2012), p. 46.

⁴⁶ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 10:30pm, 18 December 1941.

⁴⁷ NA, FO 371/31092, PWE Weekly Directives for the Polish Service, week 28 March-3 April 1942.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Office directives, all BBC Services were prohibited to mention the Soviet attack or occupation of Poland.⁴⁹ Subjects such as living conditions, deportations and the arrests and murder of Polish citizens were outlawed, as was reference to the population inhabiting occupied by the USSR. Although the Polish government protested, the Foreign Office argued that even information indirectly related to Soviet foreign policy could not be mentioned in the Polish broadcasts.⁵⁰ As discussed in the previous chapter, listening to foreign stations was allowed under the Soviet occupation leading to complaints from listeners living in eastern Poland about the absence of information in the Polish broadcasts from that region and, more importantly, that Polish officials did not address this population in their speeches and talks (see chapter 4).⁵¹ Moreover, Germans, who monitored the Polish Service broadcasts, used the lack of information about the Soviet occupation for their own propaganda purposes, stating that Sikorski had sold out eastern Poland to Stalin (see chapter 4). Polish listeners, unaware that the ban was placed by the Foreign Office, blamed the Polish government-in-exile for not referring to eastern Poland.

However, when in February 1941 Roger Stevens from the British Ministry of Information raised the issue of the prohibition on Polish officials on addressing the population of eastern Poland, he was told by Frank Roberts, the Head of the Central Department of the Foreign Office that the ban was *'self-imposed'* by the BBC.⁵² According to Roberts it was done *'not as might be supposed from fear of the effect on Anglo-Soviet relations but upon internal left wing opinion in this country'*.⁵³ Roberts further added that, although the Foreign Office did not forbid reporting about eastern Poland, the BBC should avoid the subject as *'it irritates a certain section of the public in Great Britain and the USA'*.⁵⁴ However, it is evident that the ban was written in accordance with the official line of British government foreign policy which, from the outbreak of the war, had attempted to persuade Stalin to join the anti-Axis coalition, and thus made no official protest when the USSR attacked Poland in September 1939 nor publicised Polish reports of Soviet crimes. In fact, the ban to address Polish citizens as well as minorities living in the eastern part of Poland was not lifted after the diplomatic relations between Poland and the Soviet Union were restored, and continued to be in place until the end of the war.⁵⁵ Even the Polish government request to include a communiqué in Ukrainian in the Polish Service broadcast in October 1942 in order to warn the population in this area about approaching German army was denied.⁵⁶ A month later, when Poles put forward another request, this time to

⁴⁹ PISM Kol, 434/50, BBC, Korespondencja, Baliński to Stroński, 18 December 1940.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ PISM, Kol, 434/ 50, BBC, Korespondencja, Memo by Baliński, 13 Dec 1940.

⁵² NA, FO 371/26718, Broadcasts to Poland, Roberts to Stevens 6 February 1941.

⁵³ Ibid, Stevens to Roberts, 28 January 1941.

⁵⁴ Ibid, Roberts to Stevens, 16 March 1941.

⁵⁵ NA, FO 371/31092, Roberts to Kirkpatrick, 24 June 1942. See also Hułas, M., *Goście czy intruzy?: Rzqd polski na uchodźctwie, wrzesień 1939-lipiec 1943* (Warsaw: PAN, 1996).

⁵⁶ BBC WAC, E1/1148/2, Polish Broadcasts: Minutes of meetings, 9 October 1942.

address Lithuanians, they were told that such a proposal had to be first approved by the Soviet government.⁵⁷

Formation of the Polish army in the USSR

The Sikorski-Maisky Treaty had also guaranteed the formation of the Polish army in the USSR and an 'amnesty' to all Polish citizens on Soviet territory.⁵⁸ Yet, the release of the Polish citizens was very problematic. As Kochanski points out

'what the Soviets had offered (...) and what the Poles were demanding in the practical application of those terms was unprecedented'. (...) The Soviets were notoriously suspicious of foreigners and yet they agreed to the formation of the foreign army on their soil whose loyalty rested with a foreign government based in London'.⁵⁹

The process of discharging people from gulags and prisoners was extremely hectic; many people died as the result. Those who reached the army were in such poor condition that they were not fit to fight. In addition, Sikorski's plan for the formation of the Polish Army on Soviet soil was based on the assumption that 8,000 missing Polish officers would be released. The Polish Prime Minister discussed the issue with the Soviet leader during his visit to Moscow in December 1941. Stalin, who had already signed the order for their execution in 1940, responded that they must have escaped to Manchuria.⁶⁰

By the beginning of 1942 it became evident that the military cooperation between the Polish and Red Armies was impossible as Stalin sought complete subordination of Polish soldiers to the Red Army command. Moreover, in March 1942, Stalin informed the Commander of the Polish Army in the Soviet Union, General Władysław Anders, that the Soviet government was able to feed only 44,000 of the 96,000 Polish soldiers stationed in the USSR.⁶¹ In consequence Anders, disobeying Sikorski's orders, evacuated over 77,000 Polish soldiers and over 37,000 Polish refugees including women and children to the Middle East where the British Army was based.⁶² The information about the evacuation of the Polish Army and civilians was not to be broadcast until the War Cabinet made a public announcement on the matter. When it was eventually allowed on 25 April, the PWE stressed that the Polish broadcasts should highlight the shortage of food as the reason for the Polish troops' evacuation, but at the same time it should be acknowledged that Britain sent adequate aid supplies to the USSR.⁶³ Given tension

⁵⁷ Ibid, 13 November 1942.

⁵⁸ Umiastowski, op. cit., p. 18.

⁵⁹ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 173.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 180.

⁶¹ Kadell, op. cit., p. 53.

⁶² Ibid, p. 54.

⁶³ NA FO, 371/31092, PWE Directives for Polish Service, week 25 April-1 May 1942.

between Poland and the USSR, the PWE instructed the Polish Service to avoid referring to Polish-Soviet affairs in the broadcasts. It was understood that the recent developments, particularly the movement of the Polish Army to the Middle East, might result in anxiety among listeners, therefore the PWE advised to quote Churchill's proclamations of the British assurance that Poland would regain its independence.⁶⁴

In April and May 1942 during the Anglo-Soviet negotiations regarding future military and political alliance, the Polish Region PWE directives were occupied with addressing the Poles' suspicion and rumours that Great Britain was prepared to sell Eastern Europe to Stalin at Poland's expense.⁶⁵ The Anglo-Russian Treaty signed in May 1942 left Poles concerned that political and economic influence over Eastern Europe would be left to the USSR and that Poland had been abandoned by Britain.⁶⁶ In response, the Polish broadcasts were to assure listeners of Britain's commitment to the reconstruction of both West and Eastern Europe whilst the Polish-Russian disagreement would be resolved after the hostilities ended. In addition, the Polish Service was to stress that a strong and independent Poland was also in the interest of the USSR.⁶⁷ As before, any Polish fears with regard to its sovereignty were silenced by recalling the Atlantic Charter, emphasising that no territorial aggrandizement would take place during the war. Yet, the second and third point of the Charter referring to the '*free will of people*' who had a right to self-determination were to be omitted because they were central to Stalin's argument for the incorporation of the territory east of the Curzon line into the USSR. Selective in nature, the Polish Service bulletins consisted of information which echoed the official line of the British government and, consequently, issues which could be interpreted by the Soviet ally as offensive were withheld. The PWE Polish Region directives continued to stress that the Polish-Soviet affairs should not be discussed in the Polish broadcasts, and instead attention should be given to Churchill's admiration of the Polish Arm Forces and support of the Polish government.⁶⁸ At the same time anti-German propaganda should be given greater prominence and a list of German officials involved in committing crimes in Poland should be published.⁶⁹

The Polish-Soviet crisis

From January 1943 onwards the USSR launched an open attack on the Polish government and General Anders, accusing the Polish Army of unwillingness to fight and claiming at the same time that there were quislings in Poland.⁷⁰ The question of the Polish-Soviet frontier remained

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid, week, 13-19 June 1942.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid, week 25 April-1 May 1942.

⁷⁰ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 337.

unresolved, but the situation became more problematic as Stalin had withdrawn Polish citizenship from Poles left in the Soviet Union, who were now considered as Soviet citizens.⁷¹

In addressing Polish-Russian disagreements, Newsome argued that the best solution was frankness, therefore:

*'We should do what we can to further amicable Soviet-Polish relations without outraging Polish susceptibilities and without damaging our relationship with Russia. (...) On Polish expansionism and territorial questions, we tacitly recognise unspecified Polish claims but we are not allowed to commit ourselves. Apart from that our attitude towards Poles is admiration and unreserved friendship'.*⁷²

The same line was maintained by the PWE directives for the Polish Service whilst prominence was to be given to the gallant fight of the Russian army and the importance of the Allied coalition.⁷³

On 16 January 1943, Narkomindel, the Soviet Minister of External Relations, sent a note to the Polish government stating that:

*'in spite of the goodwill shown by the Soviet Government, the Polish Government had adopted a negative attitude to the agreement of 1941 by putting forward claims to eastern Poland, claims which conflicted with the Soviets' sovereign right'.*⁷⁴

Although the British government did not make an official statement on this matter, a memorandum from the Foreign Office was circulated in the PWE where there was general concern about what should be broadcast to Europe regarding the Soviet declaration. It was stressed that:

*'We made it clear (when the Polish-Russian Treaty was signed in 1941) that we did not guarantee Poland's eastern border. (...) The Russians are entitled to say that they have different ideas about the future frontier between the USSR and Poland'.*⁷⁵

In this situation, the Polish broadcasts became the subject of extensive censorship, especially the speeches of representatives of the Polish government, including those of the Minister of the Foreign Affairs, Władysław Raczyński and Sikorski. The Polish Prime Minister himself

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² BBC WAC, E2/206/6, Paper, 'The European service. Principles and purposes, problems and policy points', Newsome, 1 January, 1943.

⁷³ FO 371/34555, Political Warfare Executive: Propaganda Directives for Poland, week 7-13 January 1943.

⁷⁴ Note of Narkomindel, 16 January 1943, in Umiastowski, op. cit., p. 109.

⁷⁵ NA, FO 371/34555, 20 February 1943, name unclear.

complained to the Foreign Office that censorship was too extensive.⁷⁶ While the Polish Government was accused by the Soviets for being unrepresentative, they were unable to comment on Russian claims to the eastern territories or address minorities inhabiting this region.⁷⁷ Eden insisted that the British government had to take '*Soviet susceptibilities into account in anything*' that was put out in broadcasts.⁷⁸

By the beginning of February, the PWE had adopted a policy of a complete avoidance of the subject. Nothing was to be said in the Polish broadcasts that could offend Russians or provoke despair among members of the Polish Cabinet, the Polish Army, Polish refugees in Britain and – foremost – people in Poland.⁷⁹ The Polish-Russian relationship became such a sensitive matter that when the Anglo-Turkish Treaty was signed in February 1943, it was prohibited to make reference to the Polish-Turkish Treaty signed two centuries before uniting the countries against Russia in the Polish broadcasts.⁸⁰ The same censorship measures were taken when information about the Czech Units fighting with the Red Army was broadcast across BBC channels. Maclaren stressed that any explanations why did the Polish Army formed in the USSR was now in the Middle East should be avoided.⁸¹ In general, it was highlighted in all directives that '*every precaution should be taken to not to upset Russian*'.⁸² However, Maclaren argued that whilst the Soviet claims to the eastern part of Poland should be broadcast across all channels, it was important that Polish listeners, and more importantly, the main audience for the Polish Service, the Polish Underground, heard the Polish government-in-exile's statements on Poland's rights to this region.⁸³

According to the BBC Polish Service Dawn Editor, Edward Kmiecik, on 26 January 1943 a meeting took place in the British Foreign Office where the political censorship of the Polish Service broadcasts was the main item on the agenda and it was decided that the pre-war Polish-Soviet border could not be mentioned in Polish broadcasts.⁸⁴ It is unclear from his report if he was present at this meeting or was just briefed about its outcome. Reporting back to the Radio Polskie Director, Janusz Meissner, Kmiecik stressed that not only the pre-war Polish-Soviet border but reference to the eastern part of Poland were to be cut from Polish Service broadcasts by the censor. He concluded by stating that '*we are not allowed to speak about East Poland at*

⁷⁶ NA, FO 954/19B/479, Private Office Papers of Sir Anthony Eden, Eden to Sir. C. Dormer, 22 January 1943.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ NA, FO 371/34555, week 4-10 February 1943.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid, week 11-17 February 1943.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid, 'Output Report', 19-25 February 1943.

⁸⁴ PUMST, 2.3.11.1; Notatka dla kpt. Meissner, Uwagi i obserwacje dotyczące lini politycznej BBC, Edward Kmiecik, 11 April 1943.

all'.⁸⁵ As Kmiecik explained, even the names of the Polish cities in this region were to be expunged from the bulletins. Furthermore, he argued that the BBC followed the view expressed by *The Times*, which asserted that the Soviet Union was right in its territorial demands and that Poland should accept this situation. Yet, in another report entitled '*The unofficial mood in the BBC*' from 5 February 1943, Kmiecik observed that in fact the majority of the BBC staff held the view that Poland was unlikely to regain its east territory and that even the Polish Army military achievements were minimised.⁸⁶

Their views were not without justification. Mindful that military success had a direct influence on the political bargaining position, after defeating the Wehrmacht at Stalingrad on 2 February 1943, Stalin was not prepared to compromise in his territorial demands. Nine days after the German surrender, Moscow announced that the Baltic States and Bessarabia were under their control and on 1 March 1943 the territory east of the Curzon line were added to the list.⁸⁷ Both the Ministry of Information and the PWE ordered complete avoidance of the matter in all BBC programmes.⁸⁸ The PWE Polish Region Director, Moray Maclaren, argued that, in broadcasting to Poland, the best policy was to '*avoid*' the topic and '*wait and see*' in hope that the issue would '*resolve itself*'.⁸⁹ Despite the fact that he was aware that the subject could be valuable ammunition for German propaganda, he concluded that any support for the Polish territorial claims could not be expressed in Polish Service broadcasts as Polish listeners would have accused the BBC of hypocrisy.⁹⁰

On 2 March, however, the Polish Service broadcast a Soviet attack on the Polish government, accusing it for being pro-Fascist and acting against the unity of Slavic nations, whilst also stressing its right to the eastern part of Poland on the grounds that Ukrainians and Byelorussians were in the majority in this region.⁹¹ The bulletins from 3 to 14 March did not survive the war, therefore it is impossible to establish how Sikorski's response to the accusations was broadcast by the Polish Service (see chapter 2).

In the same period the British government prohibited editors of both Polish and English newspapers from publishing anything about Polish-Russian relations.⁹² However, British editors broke the ban and both *The Times* and *the Daily Worker* published anti-Polish articles.⁹³ When the ban was lifted in April 1943, the editors were asked to be cautious. Yet, as Hulas points out

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ PISM, Kol. 15/10, Nastroje nieoficjalne w BBC, Edward Kmiecik, 5 February 1943.

⁸⁷ Stenton, op. cit., p. 290.

⁸⁸ NA, FO 371/34383, PWE Central Directives, 4 March 1943; INF 1/73, Executive Board Minutes, 2 March 1943.

⁸⁹ NA, FO 371/34555, week 25 February -3 March 1943.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ BBC WAC, Polish Bulletins, 4:00pm, 2 March 1943.

⁹² Hulas, op. cit., p. 282.

⁹³ Ibid.

the ban on the Polish press was imposed because it was critical of Sikorski's diplomacy rather than to prevent the publication of anti-Soviet articles.⁹⁴ It was understood that such publicity could have result in a collapse of the Sikorski government with a negative effect on the coalition.⁹⁵

The PWE directives advised a complete silence on Polish-Russian relations in the BBC Polish broadcasts, in the belief that the conflict could still be resolved.⁹⁶ However, by the beginning of April, *'discussion in any form of the eastern question (was) for obvious reason ruled out'*.⁹⁷ The Polish Service was to concentrate on the Polish Army's gallant fight and quotations from Sikorski's speech maintaining that *'the war will not be decided on the eastern front alone but all battlefields in Europe'*.⁹⁸

Yet, Newsome was of opinion that Maclaren and some unnamed officials in the Foreign Office were pro-Polish and unwisely trusted the Polish Underground and the Polish government-in-exile.⁹⁹ In order to challenge Poles' authority, in February 1943 he approached the BBC European Service Controller, Ivone Kirkpatrick, however, no action was taken.¹⁰⁰ A month later he complained again to Kirkpatrick that the PWE and allied governments interference in the European Service policies was excessive and should be stopped.¹⁰¹ It was, however, the Polish Region PWE and the Polish government which he had in mind. He argued: *'we are not prepared to sacrifice our reputation for truth, honesty and sincerity, to forage the opportunity of establishing in Europe a genuine understanding of ourselves'*.¹⁰² Newsome's remark is interesting taking into account that whilst he argued that the PWE and the Foreign Office were pro-Polish, the Polish government-in-exile argued exactly opposite.

Newsome's position was greatly influenced by a Polish Underground memorandum circulated by the PWE Polish Region entitled *'The Soviets in Poland'* which described Soviet partisans as *'band of escaped Russians prisoners, Jews, and a few Poles, who distributed Soviet propaganda and terrorised the Polish population'*.¹⁰³ Moreover, the Poles argued that partisans sponsored by Stalin did more harm than good. Not only did their sabotage have no significant impact but their actions led to German reprisals on civilians and the disclosure of members of the Polish

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ NA, FO 371/34555, week 4-10 March.

⁹⁷ Ibid, week 1-7 April.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Stenton, op. cit., p.293.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 291-4.

¹⁰² CAC, Neri 3/1, Broadcasting Policy During the War -1939-45, Newsome to Kirkpatrick, 14 March 1943.

¹⁰³ Stenton, op. cit., p. 291.

Underground.¹⁰⁴ Newsome saw the Polish government and Underground as anti-Soviet and, at the same time, believed in Stalin's intention to seek a free and independent Poland, arguing that

*'there was no room in the BBC for the suggestion that Polish-anti-communism was legitimate, equally there should be no intrinsic British objection to the attempt of Polish communists to take the resistance imitative away from the AK'.*¹⁰⁵

In his view, the memorandum was a lie, an attempt to spread anti-Soviet propaganda in Britain. It convinced him that the anti-Soviet stance of the Polish government and the Polish Underground acted against Polish communists in Poland who were engaged in anti-German sabotage. Yet, what angered Newsome most was that the Polish Underground appealed to Britain for help against Soviet partisans' activities and the fact that Poles *'dared to state that Polish resentment and distrust of Russia (were) not without justification'*.¹⁰⁶

Against this background, the issue also arose as to whether the Soviet partisans' activities should be reported by the Polish Service. Maclaren decided that it *'should be soft-pedalled'* as it was a point of disagreement between Poles and Russians.¹⁰⁷ Thus one could argue that Newsome was right in his assertions. But the reasoning behind this directive was extremely complex.

As Stenton points out, in response to the German anti-Bolshevik campaign following their defeat in Stalingrad, the policy of the British government from February 1943 was to *'present Germany worse than Russia'* in order *'to fill minds with Nazi horror as to leave no room for dread of other oppressions'*.¹⁰⁸ Already in May 1942 the Polish Service broadcast had listed German officials involved in crimes against the Polish people and made calls to resist the occupant.¹⁰⁹ However, by December 1942 Polish broadcasts were appealing to its listeners to restrain from resistance, because the increase in sabotage was resulting in reprisals on civilians.¹¹⁰ However, at the same time the Polish government was discouraging this course of action, the Soviets intensified their campaign for active sabotage in Poland. Not only had Stalin supported Soviet partisans' activities in Poland but, in December 1941 on his instructions, the Polish communist party, called the Polish Worker's Party (PPR) in order to disassociate itself with communism, was reconstructed (see chapter 3). Its military wing, the People's Guard [Gwardia Ludowa] (GL), was in competition with the Polish Home Army and claimed to be the

¹⁰⁴ NA, FO 898/227, Russo-Polish Relations: The Katyn Wood Murders, Paper by the Polish Underground, 'The Soviet in Poland', 5 February 1943.

¹⁰⁵ Stenton, op. cit., p. 292.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 293.

¹⁰⁷ NA, FO 371/34555, week 25 February -3 March.

¹⁰⁸ Stenton, op. cit., p. 93.

¹⁰⁹ BBC WAC, E1/1147, Work of the Polish Service.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

true resistance force in Poland.¹¹¹ Despite the fact that GL numbers were never high, its activities caused a great deal of trouble, resulting in the exposure of the organisation of the Polish Underground and the persecution of civilians.¹¹²

Henceforth, the PWE found itself in a difficult situation; whilst they were aware that the Russians were listening to Polish broadcasts, '*nothing should be said to upset them*'.¹¹³ In January 1943, however, it was decided that encouraging sabotage was against BBC general policy and '*all means of propaganda at our disposal should be used to prevent unorganised and premature revolt*'.¹¹⁴ The issue remained problematic: although Poles did not want to the details of their sabotage to be broadcast, it was important for national morale to make the nation aware that resistance activities against the Germans were taking place. For this reason, the request of the Polish government-in-exile in March 1943 to report in BBC Polish broadcasts acts of resistance and German crimes against the Polish population was accepted.¹¹⁵ The Polish government was aware that this would result in the growth of terror. However, it was felt that steps had to be taken to challenge Soviet accusations that the Polish Underground was collaborating with the Nazis.

The Katyń Massacre

It was in this climate that the graves of Polish officers and soldiers were discovered by the Germans at Katyń in April 1943. Further investigation revealed that executions carried out by the NKVD in spring 1940 also included police officers, representatives of the intelligentsia and white collar workers and landowners – in general, anyone classified by Stalin as an '*enemy of the people*' (see chapter 3). In total 25,000 people were murdered.¹¹⁶ As mentioned earlier, the location of missing Polish officers was central to the Polish government's plan to form the Polish army in the USSR and from 1941 they had been unsuccessfully enquiring at the Kremlin regarding their whereabouts. The Soviet government, however, denied committing the murders and assigned the blame to the German army, which in spring 1941 was occupying the region.

On 12 April, the German news agency Transocean broadcast an official statement stating that the massacre was carried out by the Red Army and a day later the same announcement was repeated by Berlin radio and all German controlled stations.¹¹⁷ The Soviet Agency TASS responded to the accusations on 15 April with evidence pointing to Germany's guilt and

¹¹¹ Stenton, p. 285.

¹¹² Korboński, S., *W Imieniu Rzeczy -Pospolitej* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 1991), pp. 234-35.

¹¹³ NA, FO 371/34555, week 7- 13 January 1943.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ BBC WAC, E1/1148/3, 26 March 1943.

¹¹⁶ Kadell, op. cit., p. 25.

¹¹⁷ Bell, P.M.H., *John Bull and the Bear: British Public Opinion, Foreign Policy and the Soviet Union, 1941-1945* (London: Hodder Arnold, 1990), p. 110.

stressing that the purpose of this communiqué lay in destroying the coalition.¹¹⁸ The Soviet official announcement was broadcast across all the BBC Services, including the Polish and Home Service, yet it was not given prominence or reported in headlines in any of the broadcasts. Interestingly, instead of reporting that those killed were Polish prisoners of war used by the Soviets for road construction who the Soviets had not be able to evacuate before the Germans entered this region in the summer of 1941, the BBC reported the TASS assertion that the Polish officers had been employed by the Germans not by the Russians.¹¹⁹ It is debatable whether this was simply a mistake or, as Mackiewicz argues, a BBC attempt to make the Soviet version appear '*more reliable*'.¹²⁰ Yet, with the exception of broadcasts throughout the day on 15 April, there was no follow up of the story in the Polish Service. Nor did the Polish Service press review quote British, American or Polish press discussions of the issue.

The PWE guidelines were unambiguous: '*it is our job to help to ensure that history will record the Katyn Forest incident as a futile attempt by Germany to postpone defeat by political methods*'.¹²¹ Yet, what became a point of public criticism was that the Polish government, rather than accuse Germans of fabrication, appealed as did the Germans, to the Red Cross to investigate the matter. Newsome openly expressed his view on this subject in the news directives for the European Service stating that the Katyn controversy did not in any respect change the view of the British government, which still considered the USSR as an important ally and stressing that '*the attitude towards the Polish government will be regulated by the official policy but we should not gratuitously emphasise of warm feeling towards it*'.¹²²

As for Polish broadcasts, the PWE emphasised that '*silence*' was the '*golden rule*' and that the appeal of the Polish government to the Red Cross to investigate the matter should only be broadcast on Radio Polskie.¹²³ The Polish Service followed the guidelines and the official statement of the Polish government on discovery at Katyn was only broadcast by Radio Polskie.¹²⁴ On 23 April, however, the Polish Service aired a brief Red Cross' response to the Polish government, stating that they could only examine the graves if all '*parties concerned*' agreed.¹²⁵ However, since the Soviet Union did not agree, the Red Cross could not proceed. The Polish Service press review cited only papers such as *The Times*, which presented the discovery at Katyn as an attempt by Goebbels to break allied solidarity.¹²⁶ In fact, any questioning of the

¹¹⁸ Kadell, op. cit., p. 62.

¹¹⁹ BBC WAC Polish Service Bulletins, 11:15pm, 15 April 1943. See also, Kadell, ibid.

¹²⁰ Mackiewicz, J., *Katyn, Zbrodnia bez sądu i kary* (Warsaw: Antyk, 1997), p. 81.

¹²¹ NA, FO 371/34555, PWE Central Directive, 28 April 1943.

¹²² BBC WAC, E2/131/10, European News Directives, file x, March-April 1943, 27 April 1943.

¹²³ FO 371/34555, week 22 -28 April 1943.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 6:15pm, 23 April 1943.

¹²⁶ Ibid. 6:15pm, 28 April 1943.

Soviet version of events was forbidden in the media, and the BBC European Service was instructed to emphasise inconsistencies in the story in its broadcasts.¹²⁷

The documents published after the war demonstrate that the British government was in a possession of evidence which pointed to the Soviets' responsibility for the crimes.¹²⁸ Yet, as Mackiewicz observes, in 1943 the Soviet Union was considered a more important ally than Poland and maintaining the unity of the coalition was Britain's main priority.¹²⁹ Balfour presents a similar line, stating that there was nothing that could be done for the Poles at that stage of the war, but a lot could be lost if Britain took the Polish side.¹³⁰ The British government not only fostered a belief in the Soviet version of events but also prevented any contrary accounts from reaching the press because, as Davies concludes, '*Britain could not be seen as an ally of a country committing the same crimes as the Nazis*'.¹³¹

Care was not only taken to suppress the controversy in the British press and radio but, more importantly, the cablegrams of the government-in-exile, containing information related to the massacre were not allowed to be sent to Poland.¹³² However, the NKVD documents, which only became available in 1990, not only pointed to the guilt of the USSR but, more importantly, demonstrated that the order to kill over 21,000 Poles was signed by Stalin.¹³³ This, Davies argues, shows that Stalin, in denying the crimes, knew exactly what he was doing. In fact, he '*was testing the political waters of the Grand Alliance to see how far he could go*'.¹³⁴

In propaganda terms, however, the discovery at Katyń was a gift to Goebbels. Not only had he achieved his goal, namely breaking the allies' coalition, but he also used the evidence pointing to Soviet guilt in order to convince the Poles that, in fact, communists were worse than Nazis.¹³⁵ It was also not a coincidence that Goebbels, who had already learnt about the discovery at the Katyń woods in March 1943, waited to release the information until April, the exact time when the liquidation of the Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw was taking place. It is evident that he had done so in order to divert world attention from the mass murder of the Jews.¹³⁶

¹²⁷ BBC WAC, E2/131/10, 27 April 1943.

¹²⁸ British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Katyn: British Reactions to the Katyn Massacre, 1943-2003 (London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2003).

¹²⁹ Mackiewicz, S., Cenzura Angielska a Katyń, *Dziennik Związków*, nr 292, 1952, p. 4.

¹³⁰ Balfour, M., *Propaganda in War, 1939-1945: Organisations, Policies, and Publics, in Britain and Germany* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 333.

¹³¹ Davies, N., *Europe: A History* (London: Pimlico, 1997), p. 1004.

¹³² Mackiewicz, op. cit., p. 10.

¹³³ Fisher, B. B (2007, April) *The Katyn Controversy: Stalin's Killing Field*. Retrieved from Central Intelligence Agency Web site: < <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/winter99-00/art6.html>>

¹³⁴ Davies, *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw* (London: Macmillan, 2003), p. 48.

¹³⁵ Kadell, op. cit., p. 58.

¹³⁶ Kwatkowski, M. J., *Polskie Radio w Konspiracji: 1939-1944* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy 1989), pp. 189-90.

In April, the Polish Service did not report on the rising in the Warsaw Ghetto. However, broadcast on 19 April included information about the German death camps in Poland, namely Treblinka and Majdanek, and the next day a very brief official statement on Jewish persecution in Europe issued by the Inter-Allied Information Committee, stating that the Germans had already killed two million Jews.¹³⁷

The Polish Service bulletins from May 1943 did not survive the war, thus is impossible to establish how the rising was reported on (see chapter 2). However, Kochanski refers to Sikorski's radio broadcast from London on 4 May 1943 in which the Polish Prime Minister thanked the population of Warsaw for assisting Jews during the uprising.¹³⁸ Yet, she does not mention if that announcement was made on Radio Polskie or the Polish Service. It can be, however, assumed that the rising was given prominence in the BBC Polish broadcasts. The PWE Polish Region directives for week 13-19 May stated that the rising in the Warsaw Ghetto *'should be given as much publicity as possible'*; it should be emphasise *'that Hitler's attempt to whip up anti-Semitic hatred and persecution in Cristian countries has been a failure'*.¹³⁹ Moreover, in the PWE directives for the Polish Service for the week 27 May -2 June, Maclaren argued that Poles assistance to Jews during the rising should be used as a main theme, refuting Stalin's claims that the Polish Underground was passive and collaborated with Germans.¹⁴⁰

Breaking off diplomatic relations between Poland the Soviet Union

The discovery of the graves only aggravated an already tense situation. Sikorski's attempt to fix the situation was ill-fated. There is a consensus among historians that Stalin used the Katyn controversy as a pretext to break relations with Poland.¹⁴¹ While emphasising that the accusations were insulting, Stalin stressed that diplomatic relations could only be re-established if the Polish government recognised Soviet rights to the eastern territories. He also added new demands to the list, namely the dismissal of key figures who, in his view, were anti-Soviet,¹⁴² namely President Raczkiewicz; Stanisław Kot, the former ambassador to Moscow and, from 1943, Minister of Information; and Marian Kukiel, Minister of War responsible for Polish prisoners of war. On 26 April Polish listeners were informed that the Soviet Union had broken off relations with Poland based on the *'attitude adopted by the Polish government' towards the German allegations*.¹⁴³ The communiqué stated that the USSR spoke on behalf of *'all freedom loving people'*, including Poles, emphasising that their grievances had been addressed only to

¹³⁷ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 15:45pm, 19 and 20 April 1943.

¹³⁸ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 313.

¹³⁹ NA, FO 371/34555, week 13-19 May 1943.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 27 May- June 1943

¹⁴¹ Duraczyński, E, *Rząd Polski na Uchodźstwie: 1939-1945* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1993); Kochanski, op. cit., Davies, op. cit.; Stenton, op. cit.

¹⁴² Raczyński, op. cit., pp. 146-53.

¹⁴³ BBC WAC Polish Service Bulletins, 6:15pm, 26 April 1943.

the Polish government in London who were collaborating with the Germans.¹⁴⁴ The announcement was very brief and did not appear in the headlines. The press review included cuttings appealing to the Polish government, in the name of the common good and unity of the United Nations, *'to forget'* about the disagreement over the discovery at Katyn.¹⁴⁵ In response, the Polish government issued a statement affirming that their policy was *'a friendly understanding between Poland and the Soviet Union on the basis of the integrity and full sovereignty of the Polish Republic'*.¹⁴⁶ Sikorski hoped that the break would be only temporary but, as Kochanski demonstrates, Stalin had been preparing for this for a long time.¹⁴⁷ Already in 1941, after the Polish-Soviet Treaty was signed, he had parachuted prominent Polish communists into Poland in order to restore the Polish communist party whilst continuing support for Soviet partisan activities aimed at destroying the Polish Underground.¹⁴⁸ His plan to create a Polish governmental body on Soviet soil which, he argued, could be transferred to Poland after the Wehrmacht was defeated suffered a setback in 1941 because of British and the Polish governments opposition to the idea. However, by the beginning of 1943, his plan for establishing a Polish puppet government was already in full swing.¹⁴⁹ Not only had he parachuted more partisans to Poland and continued to support Polish communists in Poland but, under his patronage, the Union of Polish Patriots (UPP), an embryo of the Polish pro-Soviet puppet government -in-waiting, was created in the Soviet Union in February 1943.¹⁵⁰ The challenges faced by the Polish Service, notably how to report on this new political development, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

The analysis of the Polish Region PWE directives and Polish bulletins from the period July 1941- April 1943 demonstrates that the Polish Service undeniably followed the official line of the British government. As the PWE General-Director, Bruce Lockhart, points out the *'PWE did not make policy, it executed it.'*¹⁵¹ Macdonald, himself, claimed after the war that it was the Foreign Office which controlled the policy of the BBC. Yet, in his experience the cooperation between the Polish Service, the PWE and the Foreign Office was *'harmonious'*.¹⁵² Brigg's assentation that *'the BBC maintained a considerable degree of independence from the PWE'*, is

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Response of the Polish government regarding breaking off diplopic relations by the USSR, 28, in Czarnocka, H. et al., *Armia Krajowa w Dokumentach*: Vol. 3 (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1990), nr. 431, p. 508.

¹⁴⁷ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 344.

¹⁴⁸ Davies, op. cit., 2003., pp. 150-55.

¹⁴⁹ Duraczyński, op. cit., p. 260.

¹⁵⁰ Davies, op. cit., 2003, pp. 152-55.

¹⁵¹ Lockhart, R. H. B., *Comes the Reckoning* (London: Arno Press, 1972), p. 185.

¹⁵² BBC WAC, Collection of Macdonald's papers and articles, Book review of Asa Briggs III volume, *the History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: The War of Wards*, 30 October 1970.

also questionable as, first, the BBC broadcasts had to be written in accordance with the government's foreign policy and secondly, the censors of the European Service broadcasts were responsible to the Foreign Office, not the BBC.¹⁵³ However, because of the complex Polish-Soviet relationship and sensitivity of Polish listeners on this matter, Polish broadcasts did not explore to the same extent as other BBC channels pro-Soviet propaganda. Aware of the political views of the Polish audience, the PWE directives advised avoidance of subjects which could result in losing the trust of the Polish government in London and the Polish Underground and, by extension, of the Polish population. In addition, the situation of the Polish Service was particularly difficult because the British government did not officially declare until 1943 its position with regard to the Polish-Russian disagreement over the Polish eastern territory. At the same time, aware that the Russians were monitoring Polish broadcasts, special measures were also to be taken to avoid all subjects which could in any way upset '*our ally*'. After the break of diplomatic relations between Poland and the USSR, the broadcasts continued to omit uncomfortable topics and special attention was given to maintaining Polish morale. Yet, the main receiver as well as disseminator of the Polish Service broadcasts was the Polish Underground which was allied to the Polish government-in-exile. Therefore special caution had to be taken that the pro-Soviet policy of the British government was not interpreted by the Poles as anti-Polish.

¹⁵³ Briggs, op. cit., p. 85; BBC WAC, E1/1148/3, 22 January 1943.

Censorship and Propaganda April 1943- July 1944

Introduction

*'Our programmes would acquire an increasingly emotional anti-German tone, going beyond factual reporting. The political questions should fall into the background but we should not give an impression that we are concealing anything.'*¹

This chapter covers the period from the breaking off of diplomatic relations between Poland and the Soviet Union in April 1943 to end of July 1944, when the Soviets started establishing their own administration on Polish territory. After the cessation of diplomatic relations between Poland and the USSR, the British government continued to persuade the Polish government-in-exile to reach a compromise with the USSR. Caught in disagreement between two of her allies, Britain tried to act as a mediator but had found itself in a very difficult situation as neither Poland nor the USSR were willing to compromise. By mid-1943, it became evident that Stalin was not prepared to negotiate with regard to the Polish-Soviet border. In fact, his policy was based on ultimata rather than willingness to compromise. Both Eden and Churchill attempted to pressure the Polish government to accept Stalin's terms. However, after Sikorski's death in July 1943, his successor Stanislaw Mikołajczyk, had the support of neither his Cabinet nor the Polish Army or indeed the leaders of the Polish Underground to make concessions towards the USSR.

Compromise with the USSR was seen as treason and it was generally questioned why Poland should sacrifice her territory. Political and territorial disputes between Poland the USSR remained a taboo subject, but with the Red Army crossing the pre-war Polish frontier in January 1944, it became evident that more important matters were at stake, notably Poland's independence and sovereignty. By mid-1943, propaganda directed against the Polish government-in-exile and the Underground, orchestrated by the Polish communists in Poland and the Union of Polish Patriots (UPP), an embryo of the Polish puppet government sponsored by Stalin, was in full swing. The analysis which follows will describe how the Polish Service was recognised as an important medium with the power to influence Polish attitudes and conduct towards their 'liberator'. More importantly, in the period under discussion, the relationship between the Polish Service and the Polish Underground became central to the former remaining an impartial source of information, given the BBC obligation to follow the official line of the British government which required concealing information about crimes committed against the members of the Polish Underground as well as the suppression of truth about the sovietisation of liberated Polish territory. As the Underground was the main channel through which the

¹ NA, FO 371/39422, PWE Directives for Poland, PWE Special Directive for Polish Service, 23 March 1944.

Polish broadcasts were distributed, the issue proved highly problematic. The Polish Service continued to present the motives of the Soviet leader in a positive light, stressing the importance of the Anglo-Polish alliance, despite Churchill's official support for the Soviet territorial demands in February 1944 and few months later, Stalin's recognition of the Polish Committee for National Liberation (PCNL), a joined body of the UPP and Polish communist in Poland, as the only legitimate and representative governmental apparatus to administrate liberated Polish territory.

Creation of the Union of Polish Patriots and the Berling Army

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Stalin had used the controversy surrounding the discovery of the Polish officers' graves at Katyń as a pretext for breaking off diplomatic relations with Poland. The evidence demonstrates that his plan for taking control of the administrative apparatus in Poland and the annihilation of the Polish Underground was already in place in the beginning of 1943.² In March 1943, a meeting between Stalin and prominent Polish communists in the USSR, namely Wanda Wasilewska, Hilary Minc and Wiktor Grosz, resulted in the establishment of the Union of the Polish Patriots (UPP). It is worth mentioning that the UPP was formed on Russian soil regardless of the fact that non-Russian organisations were outlawed on their territory. Their political programme called for friendship with the USSR, recognition of the Curzon line and discrediting of the Polish government-in-exile as a legitimate governmental body.³ In many respects their manifesto was similar to that of the exiled government; they did not refer to communist ideology, arguing instead for equal rights irrespective of nationality or religion. The main difference was that the UPP was promising the incorporation of the German northern and eastern territories after the war, namely East Prussia and Danzig and part of Silesia, something which the Polish government in London could not do. In addition, the UPP claimed that it was made up of Polish citizens expressing the will of all Poles. Positioning themselves as the guarantors of the freedom and independence of Poland, the Soviets endeavored to manipulate the Poles' emotions by placing patriotism and pro-Soviet attitudes on the same level. As Davies demonstrates, '*patriotic was a new code-word meaning pro-Soviet*'.⁴ In their propaganda, special care was taken to convince the public that this movement came from the Poles themselves, emphasised by the names chosen for the puppet government (Polish Patriots), its newspaper (*Free Poland*), and the radio station Kościuszko broadcasting in Polish from the Soviet Union, named ironically after a national hero who led an uprising against Russia in the eighteenth century.

² Kochanski, H., *The Eagle Unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War* (London: Penguin, 2102), p. 371.

³ Duraczyński, E, *Rząd Polski na Uchodźstwie: 1939-1945* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1993), pp. 229-31.

⁴ Davies, N., *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw* (London: Macmillan, 2003), p. 152.

Moreover, on the UPP initiative, in May 1943 the Polish Kościuszko Division was created in the Soviet Union under Zygmunt Berling's command. Formed under Soviet auspices and the political control of the UPP, the Kościuszko Division, which in March 1944 expanded to become the First Polish Army, also known as the Berling Army, claimed to be made up of Polish volunteers residing in the USSR. In fact, joining the army was not entirely voluntary. As Kochanski points out, it was important to Stalin that the army was considered to be Polish.⁵ In order to achieve his goal, in January 1943, he took the passports of all those who still remained in the USSR and Polish citizenship was offered to those who joined the Berling Army.⁶ However, the creation of the new army faced a bigger challenge. After the departure of the Polish Army under Anders command from the USSR in March 1942, there was a shortage of high ranking military men and the majority of those who wanted to join the Berling Army were of Jewish origin. The UPP, in charge of the creation of the army, decided to recruit Red Army officers and generals, whilst soldiers with Jewish origin were told to conceal their background in order to win the trust of the Polish nation and to demonstrate that all Poles, regardless of their religion and ethnicity, supported the UPP, as the Berling Army was to become central to establishment of the communist rule in Poland.⁷ Therefore all soldiers were subjected to Marxist-Leninist doctrine before being sent to the battlefield.

The creation of the UPP and the Berling Army was a difficult subject to deal with. Kirkpatrick argued that the BBC should not offer a platform for Soviet anti-Polish propaganda, but, at the same time, the Polish government should not be allowed to respond to UPP accusations on the air.⁸ Subsequently, it was agreed that no information would be given by any of the BBC channels without previous consultation with the Polish authorities regarding: the UPP promises of the incorporation of East Prussia and Danzig after the war, the Berling Army formed under Soviet auspices in the USSR, and news from Russian sources about resistance to the Germans in Poland promoted by the communists.⁹ The Polish government, on the other hand, was forbidden to comment on UPP declarations and discussions of the Polish post-war frontiers. However, by November 1943 the ban on those topics was under discussion following an approach to the British Foreign Office by Moscow for Polish officials to speak kindly about the Kościuszko Division. Frank Roberts suggested that the BBC should re-evaluate its previous decision, arguing that it contradicted the BBC policy of impartiality and truthful reporting.¹⁰ Most of the Polish bulletins from this period did not survive the war, but it is clear from the analysis of the

⁵ Kochanski, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 377.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 378.

⁸ BBC WAC, E2/13/2, Allied Governments Broadcasts: Poland, Memo from Kirkpatrick to all editors of the European Services, 23 June 1943.

⁹ BBC WAC, E1/1148/3, Minutes of Meetings, 30 June 1943.

¹⁰ BBC WAC, E1/1149/2, Polish Service, file 1b-2, 1943-53, Memo by Frank Roberts, 24 November 1943.

PWE directives for the Polish Service that the Polish-Soviet political and territorial disputes remained taboo topics. It was only on 25 May 1944 that the PWE decided to break the silence on the Berling Army in the Polish broadcasts.¹¹ Yet information regarding both the UPP and the Berling Army was given on other BBC Services prior to this date, resulting in Polish government complaints to the Foreign Office for describing the Berling Army as '*a patriotic body liberating Poland*'.¹² However, this had little impact.

'Balancing' pro-Soviet propaganda

The PWE, aware of the political views of the listeners in Poland, continued the policy of avoidance regarding the Polish-Soviet border whilst highlighting the necessity of re-establishing diplomatic relations between the countries, a difficult undertaking given Stalin's hostility to the Polish government-in-exile. The PWE directives made it clear that, in broadcasts to Poland, British government support of the Polish government must be emphasised but it was also acknowledged that the British government was '*the sole agent of Russian policy*'.¹³ In a speech broadcast to Poland on 30 June 1943, Churchill addressed Stalin as a great friend and appealed to the Polish government to reach an understanding with Russia. The same stance was presented by the British press cited in the Polish broadcasts: the Red Army was praised for its bravery and Maisky for his openness; however, references for the need for '*better understanding*' suggested assent to Stalin's demands.¹⁴ In a similar vein, emphasis was placed on the friendly attitude Poland in Stalin's speeches and his desire to see the future Poland as a democratic and an independent country. In contrast, Polish politicians remained subject to censorship as was the case for Sikorski's speech on 3 May 1943 when two sentences were redacted by the censor: first, that there must be limits to the concessions and, second, that Poland was a test case for allied cooperation.¹⁵ An official Polish government complaint to the BBC regarding this issue had no impact on the BBC policy of suppression of any topic which might be seen as offensive to the Soviet ally.¹⁶ Subsequently, the same treatment was given to his speech from 3 July 1943 when the security censor redacted references to Wilno and Lwów and also to Danzig and Warsaw, cities occupied by the Germans.¹⁷

On 4 July 1943, Sikorski died in a plane crash during take-off from Gibraltar. The new Polish Prime Minister, Stanisław Mikołajczyk, like his predecessor, believed that both Churchill and Roosevelt had leverage with Stalin and, as long he maintained their support, Polish interests

¹¹ NA, FO 371/ 39424, PWE Directives for Poland, May 25 1944.

¹² BBC WAC, E1/1148/3, 30 June 1943.

¹³ NA, FO 371/34555, PWE Directives for Poland, Weekly directives for Polish Service, week 27 May- 2 June 1943.

¹⁴ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 6:15pm, 30 June 1943.

¹⁵ BBC WAC, E1/1148/3, 16 June 1943.

¹⁶ Ibid, 23 June 1943.

¹⁷ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 6:15pm, 3 July 1943.

were secure.¹⁸ Yet, as Prażmowska points out, given the Red Army victories and the inability of Britain and the USA to open the second front, Eastern Europe would be left in the Soviet sphere of influence.¹⁹ However, Mikołajczyk's position within his cabinet was much weaker than Sikorski's. The main challenge to his authority came from newly appointed Commander-in-Chief, General Kazimierz Sosnowski, and President Władysław Raczkiewicz, both advocating for a firmer approach toward the Soviet Union. As the Director-General of the PWE, Bruce Lockhart, observed, Poles were unrealistic in their political demands, pointing out that the friction within the Polish government in London and the lack of the support for the Polish Prime Minister was leading to widespread criticism.²⁰ In Poland too, it was believed that eastern Poland had not yet been lost. On 15 August 1943, the representatives of the four major political parties in Poland issued a manifesto outlining, among other issues, opposition to any territorial concessions and calling for:

*'a constant watchfulness concerning Soviet influence, which is becoming increasingly marked in the allied countries and a ceaseless recalling to their consciousness of the latent danger in Russian-Communist totalitarian peace aims'.*²¹

As Kochanski observes, they had *'no idea of true impact of the break in relations between Poland and the Soviet Union'*.²² Yet, taking into account, on the one hand, the limited access to information and, on the other, the Polish government-in-exile's assurances that Britain and the USA supported Polish territorial claims, it is not surprising that the leaders of the political parties in Poland were not prepared to change their policy. Both the BBC Polish Service and Radio Polskie took an active part in convincing the Underground and, by extension, the Polish nation, not only that it was possible to regain occupied territory but, more importantly, that the independence of Poland was secure. For example, in a speech broadcast by the Polish Service on 29 July 1943, Mikołajczyk referred to Britain and the USA as the most important allies of Poland and thanked Churchill and Roosevelt for acting as mediator between Poland and the Soviet Union, declaring at the same time that Poland would welcome the resumption of friendly relations with Stalin.²³ The Polish broadcasts also cited the British and American press which gave the impression of international support for Poland's claims. Polish courier, Jan Nowak, reporting in July 1943 to Jan Rzepecki, the head of the Polish Bureau of Information and Propaganda [Polskie Biuro Informacji i Propagandy] (BIP) on his earlier visit to Britain,

¹⁸ Kochanski, op. cit., pp. 351-2.

¹⁹ Prażmowska, A. J., *Britain and Poland, 1939-1943, The Betrayed Ally* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 170.

²⁰ Lockhart, R. H. B., *Comes the Reckoning* (London: Arno Press, 1972), p. 161.

²¹ Deklaracja Porozumienia Politycznego Czterech Stronnictw Reprezentacji Politycznej, in 1943, in Czarnocka, et al., *Armia Krajowa w Dokumentach*: Vol. 3 (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1990), nr. 477, p. 56.

²² Kochanski, op. cit., p. 350.

²³ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 11: 15pm, 29 July 1943.

stressed how shocked he was about Anglo-Saxon attitudes to Polish-Soviet affairs.²⁴ In Nowak's opinion, both Britain and the USA attached little significance to Polish affairs and the Poles' view of their allies was far too idealised. In response, Rzepecki argued that the aim of propaganda in Poland was to maintain public morale and the will to fight the occupant. Therefore, in his view, pessimism was premature and would only benefit the Germans and Polish communists.²⁵ According to Rzepecki, the press in a democratic country did not always express the official government line. Thus it was not important what newspapers and the BBC reported, but rather what Churchill and Roosevelt '*think and do*'.²⁶

Eden and other representatives of the Foreign Office such as Frank Roberts, were highly sceptical that Stalin would abandon his plan for the incorporation of the eastern part of Poland into the USSR. So was the director of the Polish Region PWE, Moray MacLaren whose job was further complicated because, officially, until February 1944, the British government did not support Stalin's claims to the Curzon line. The struggle to remain unbiased in the Polish broadcasts is evident in the directive's attempt to '*balance*' pro-Polish and pro-Soviet arguments. At the same time that Polish politicians were arguing increasingly in their speeches that the eastern part of Poland should not be sacrificed in order to please Stalin, Polish listeners were to be reminded about the great achievements of the Red Army and their major role in fighting against the Axis.²⁷ However, when the Polish government was under attack, directives advised that special attention should be given to Britain's support for the Polish government.²⁸ Yet, as the Polish Service Editor, Gregory Macdonald explained after the war, rather than '*balancing*', it was important for the Polish Service to remain neutral, given the difficult relations between two of Britain's allies and the imperative that the Service should not become a platform for anti-Soviet or anti-Polish propaganda.²⁹

In November 1943, the first meeting between Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill took place in Tehran. Although, officially, the Polish-Soviet frontier was not on the agenda, both Churchill and Roosevelt agreed that Stalin's territorial demands would be kept secret from the Polish government until October 1944 (see chapter 3). Roosevelt, in particular, insisted that the agreement was not publicised as he was counting on 6,000,000 American voters of Polish origins in the upcoming election.³⁰ Yet, even prior to the meeting of the Big Three, the BBC had received an official guideline from the Ministry of Information to refer to the Polish-Soviet

²⁴ Nowak, J., *Kurier z Warszawy* (Warsaw: Znak, 2009), p. 147.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

²⁷ NA, FO 371/34555, PWE Directives for Polish Service, 27 May -2 June 1943.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, weeks: 6-12 May; 3-9 June 1943.

²⁹ BBC WAC, Collection of Macdonald's papers and articles, Book review of Asa Briggs III volume, *the History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: The War of Wards*, 30 October 1970.

³⁰ Kochanski, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

border as the *'former Polish frontier'*.³¹ The Polish authorities protested, but were directed to discuss the matter with the Foreign Office.³²

Both the proceedings and the outcomes of the Tehran Conference were to be treated with caution and, if possible avoided in the Polish Service broadcasts.³³ The Polish Service bulletins from this period did not survive the war and so there is no evidence of how the Conference was covered. However, as already demonstrated, the Polish bulletins had been written in accordance with the PWE guidelines and censored before they went on the air. In addition, Macdonald assisted Maclaren in the preparation of the PWE directives. From this point on, differentiated coverage of the events was out of the question.

Between the hammer and the anvil

The evidence of the arrests and killings of the members of the Polish Underground by the Soviet partisans and sponsored by Stalin the Polish communists in the eastern part of Poland were reaching the Polish government in London frequently.³⁴ The Polish Service was banned from making any reference to these atrocities or to the fears of the Underground, as noted by the PWE, that Stalin's main goal was to make the country leaderless in order to install his own puppet government.³⁵ The censorship of Polish sources was highly problematic; the Underground not only supplied reports on the conditions in occupied Poland but was also the main channel through which the BBC broadcasts were syndicated. As explained in chapter 4, due to the fact that the German occupants had introduced the death penalty for listening to or possession of a radio, it was the Underground which was the main audience for Polish broadcasts and distributed their content in form of the clandestine press and leaflets. Consequently, the Polish Service needed to adjust to the needs of the Underground rather appealing to mass audiences as was the case for other BBC foreign-language services (see chapter 1). It also meant that it was up to the Underground to decide what information was suitable for printing.

Therefore, by not acknowledging those reports, the BBC risked its reputation as an unbiased and neutral broadcaster. The Soviet NKVD, on the other hand, was condemning the Polish resistance for a lack of the cooperation with the Germans. The PWE acknowledged that the *'neutral position in propaganda (was) generally weak'* and *'neither dignified nor useful'*, pointing out that up to that point there had been no attempt to defend the Polish government and

³¹ BBC WAC, E1/1148/3, 17 November 1943.

³² Ibid.

³³ NA, FO 371/34556, PWE Directives for Polish Service, week 9-15 December 1943.

³⁴ See Czarnocka et al, op. cit.

³⁵ NA, FO 371/34555, week 23-29 September 1943.

the Underground against Soviet attacks in the Polish broadcasts.³⁶ The BBC situation seemed to be unmanageable; whether or not it reported Soviet crimes, it was going to be accused of bias. This was not only a problem for Polish but for all languages broadcasts, including the BBC Home Service. Both Poles and Russians monitored the BBC Services and any reference to Polish-Russians matters was interpreted as the official stance of the British government. Yet it was precisely for this reason that the Poles listened to the BBC. It was understood that the corporation was expressing the official line of the British government and its stance with regard to Polish-Soviet affairs was central to the strategy and propaganda of the Underground.

With the Red Army approaching the pre-war Polish frontier, the seriousness of this state of affairs and the importance of breaking the silence on the Soviet imprisonment and slaughter of the Polish Home Army leaders and soldiers was discussed by the PWE at the highest level:

*'Either we must endeavour to convert what would appear as the rape of a defenceless country into something more in conformity with the Tehran declaration, or we must admit that our Russian Allies have in fact different methods from those of the Anglo-Saxon military gentleman. (...) After our long propaganda commitment in favour of the Polish underground movement, to present its liquidation in a favourable light, and by endeavouring to do so we shall certainly become vulnerable. By representing rape as seduction we incur the danger of acquiring the unsavoury reputation of the pimp'.*³⁷

The memorandum concluded that the recognition of the Polish Underground as the only legitimate authority in Poland should be acknowledged in the BBC Polish broadcasts. In addition, the recognition of the Polish government-in-exile as the only government of Poland should be emphasised, as well as its claims to pre-war border. According to the author of the memorandum, this approach was particularly significant because the Underground was loyal only to the Polish government in London and thus any disapproval or questioning of its policies would have implications for their view of the BBC and the British government, resulting in a loss of trust of the part of the Polish public and the Polish Army. More importantly, he argued, the Polish broadcasts should defend the Polish authorities in Poland and in London from UPP attacks. The advice was *'to express hope and belief'* that the relations between two neighbours would be restored whilst people's *'alarms and doubts'* should be voiced in a *'measured manner (...)* while endeavouring nevertheless to calm and not to incite them'.³⁸ It was acknowledged that while this approach might not be the best solution, the situation was so complex that, even if the events changed *'our position in political warfare will in any case be so difficult (...)* that

³⁶ NA, FO 898/225, General PWE Directives, Top secret, 'propaganda after Russians enter Poland, unnamed, 9 December 1943.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

this will make very little difference'.³⁹ Although, the author of this memorandum is unknown, given tone and pro-Polish stance and support for the Polish Underground, it is likely that it was Moray Maclaren.

Liberation or invasion?

In December 1943, as the Soviet troops were approaching the Polish-Soviet border, it became evident that Soviet army's entry into Poland was going to be particularly problematic. Officially, the British government did not recognise any territorial changes concerning Poland since August 1939 and this declaration was emphasised in the Polish broadcasts.⁴⁰ However, as Maclaren observed, since diplomatic relations between Poland and Russia had been suspended, *'on the eve of the Soviet troops crossing the pre-war Polish frontier, Poland will be under invasion by a non-friendly power'*.⁴¹ However, Maclaren, was wrong in stating that Soviets were crossing the pre-war Polish frontier. The only territorial changes which had occurred since 1921 concerned the occupation of Poland by Germany and the USSR, starting in September 1939. The so-called Ribbentrop-Molotov line, dividing the country between the two occupations was annulled in 1941 after diplomatic relations between Poland and the USSR were restored. From that point on, according to international law, the Red Army was crossing the Polish-Soviet border. Nonetheless, since 1941, Stalin had been questioning the Riga line, the pre-war Polish-Soviet frontier, which in his view, had been *'imposed'* on the USSR (see chapter 3).⁴²

Given the constant disagreement regarding the frontier, it is interesting how little was known in the BBC in 1944 about the origins of the Curzon line. Macdonald recalls when in 1943 (month not given) the Polish eastern border was under attack he had suggested that Newsome circulate a memo about its history.⁴³ Although Newsome agreed, it was soon announced on the loud speakers in all offices that it had been withdrawn. According to Macdonald, the complaint came from left wing staff in Bush House *'but there was no attempt to meet my facts, to prove me wrong'*.⁴⁴ In January 1944, however, a memo written by Maclaren explaining the origin of the Curzon line was circulated in the BBC. According to this paper, the border established by the Riga Treaty (the Riga line) in 1921 was not a clear agreement between Poland and Russia.⁴⁵

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ BBC WAC, E2/128/2, Central Directives: PWE/PID, 22 December 1943.

⁴¹ NA, FO 371/39422, PWE Central Directives, Special Guideline on the Polish Frontier, 3 January 1944.

⁴² Kaciewicz, G. V., *Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the Polish Government in Exile, 1939-1945, Studies in Contemporary History*, Vol.3 (London: Springer, 1979).

⁴³ MPC, Macdonald's notes, undated.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ BBC WAC, E2/13/2, Paper by Newsome, 11 January 1944.

Yet, there was no reference to the fact that the Curzon line did not differ much from Ribbentrop-Molotov line.

MacLaren, aware of the political implications of the Soviet army crossing of the Riga line, emphasised that the Polish broadcasts should refer instead to *'1939 Polish frontier'* rather than saying that the Red Army had entered Poland.⁴⁶ In this situation, it was also acknowledged that discussion of the Polish-Soviet boundary could no longer be avoided. The ban was lifted, but the directives highlighted that special attention should be paid to British government support for this *'ambivalent settlement'*.⁴⁷ Significantly, the Polish Service was recognised as an influential medium having influence on Polish citizens' attitudes and conduct towards their *'liberators'*. On 3 January 1944 the PWE issued a Special Directive for the Polish Service emphasising the need to *'encourage disciplined restraint and maintenance of calmness under provocation'*.⁴⁸ Moreover, the BBC Polish broadcasts should be supportive and free of *'fears or doubts'* as *'this line (was) one-sided but inevitable'* despite the fact that that population in Poland had been *'the subject of provocation'* caused by the massacre at Katyn and knew about the UPP and Polish communist activities in Poland.⁴⁹ The directive stressed that the *'total national unity of Poles'* with its government in London must be highlighted in the Polish Service programmes.⁵⁰ Given that the Polish Underground was seen as the main obstacle in reaching agreement with Stalin on the frontier issue, the broadcasts were also *'to encourage'* dialogue between the Polish officials in London and the leaders of the Polish Underground.⁵¹

The Polish government in London followed the guidelines, and as before, Polish officials' speeches played an important role in maintaining public morale. In addressing the Polish nation on 5 January 1944, Mikołajczyk maintained that the Red Army should be welcomed but stressed, at the same time, that *'we should have preferred to meet the Soviet troops not merely as allies of our allies, fighting against the common enemy, but as our own allies as well'*.⁵² The Polish Premier, in referring to the history of the Polish-Soviet border, emphasised that the Soviet troops had entered Polish territory and it was expected that liberated land would be returned to the Polish government-in-exile, the only legitimate government of Poland, recognised by the United Kingdom and the USA. His views, however, apparently differed from those of the Director of the European Service, Noel Newsome, who continued to argue that Stalin was right in his territorial demands, while leading British newspapers, notably *The Times*

⁴⁶ NA, FO 371/ 39422, PWE Directive for Polish Service, week 3-9 January 1944.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid, Special Directive for Polish Service, 3 January 1944.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Mikołajczyk, S., *The Rape of Poland: Pattern of Soviet Aggression* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1948), p. 305.

argued that *'200 years has shown that Russian-German friendship inspired by fear of Polish claims means enslavement for Polish people'*.⁵³

Polish- Soviet reconciliation

According to a special directive dated 16 January 1944 the PWE *'reached a turning point in propaganda to Poland'* as *'for the first time the Polish government was willing to discuss all outstanding questions'*.⁵⁴ It was not, however, the first time the Polish government was keen to discuss the post war Polish-Russian border. As explained earlier, Mikołajczyk was neither prepared nor in a position to make territorial concessions towards the USSR but, as before, he was open for negotiation, taking as a starting point the Riga line.⁵⁵ The PWE remark is puzzling given that it was not the Polish government which had changed its policy but the Soviets. On 11 January 1944, the TASS Soviet agency reported that the Soviet government was ready to renew diplomatic relations with Poland based on *'solid good neighbourly relations and mutual respect'* but on condition that Poles accept the Curzon line.⁵⁶ Although the same communiqué attacked the Polish government for being unrepresentative, *'detached from its people'* as well *'incapable of organizing an active struggle in Poland against the German invader'* and hostile to the USSR, Duraczyński demonstrates that both American and British authorities took this as a sign of Stalin's willingness to negotiate.⁵⁷ The Polish government in responding to the TASS communiqué issued an official statement affirming that it was also its *'sincere desire'* to reach a satisfactory settlement *'acceptable to both sides'*.⁵⁸ However, he did not indicate in any way that it was willing to accept the Curzon line; Mikołajczyk informed Churchill that he would consider the Curzon line as demarcation line whilst insisting that the final decision regarding the broader should be settled after the hostilities ended.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the British Foreign Office insisted that the BBC should state that:

'the Poles have made this helpful response in the face of proposals of extensive territorial adjustments involving half of pre-1939 Poland and a large number of Poles. They have however the prospect of territorial adjustments elsewhere'.⁶⁰

In the light of this misinterpretation – or lack of understanding – of events, the PWE insisted that the Polish government had shown willingness to compromise with regard to the eastern

⁵³ BBC WAC, E2/131/15, European News Directives, file xv, 1944, 11 January 1944.

⁵⁴ BBC WAC, R34/663, Propaganda Directives, Polish Service, PWE Special Directive for Polish Service, 16 January 1944.

⁵⁵ Davies, op. cit., p. 141.

⁵⁶ Raczyński, E., *In Allied London* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962), pp. 184-5.

⁵⁷ Duraczyński, op. cit., pp. 295-6; Raczyński, *ibid*.

⁵⁸ Raczyński, op. cit., p. 187.

⁵⁹ Kochanski, op. cit., pp. 435-6.

⁶⁰ NA, FO 371/ 39422, Foreign Office to Washington, 15 January 1944.

frontier and that the Polish Service should play an important role in the negotiations because of their wide audience in Poland and the Polish Army around the world. The Polish Service was to convince its listeners about the rightness of decisions made by its government and the necessity of maintaining a friendly attitude towards the Soviet Union who, as their liberator, would guarantee Poland's independence.⁶¹ The most important point, however, was to highlight that the Polish government was not giving up the territories but evaluated its principles. Yet no attempt was to be made to contradict the explicit communist propaganda within Poland. Therefore, it was important that Poles, regardless of their political views, give total support to this matter. In order to achieve this end *'propaganda will be built on selling it to Poland'* rather than being grounded in a *'logical argument'*.⁶²

The Polish broadcasts were to be based on three principles, notably: that Russia was a powerful factor in the fight against Germany and peace in Europe could not be guaranteed without her participation; that Poland, in particular, should therefore *be 'encouraged to develop and maintain friendship with Russia'*; and, most importantly, that the Polish government, *'in the interest of stable organisation of a peaceful brotherhood of nations, and in consultation with Great Britain and the USA is making a most valuable contribution to this end'*.⁶³ Above all, it should be stressed, that the Polish government was not *'sacrificing'* the eastern territories or abandoning its *'principles'*.⁶⁴ In addition, the Polish broadcasts should emphasise that the Polish people in Poland and throughout the world should *'welcome and support the action of its government'*.⁶⁵

Both Churchill and Eden tried unsuccessfully to reason with the Polish Prime Minister to accept the Curzon line. The prospect of compromise between Poland and the USSR was further complicated by the fact that Stalin argued for removing members of the Polish government in London who, in his view were anti-Soviet and replacing them with communists.⁶⁶ In addition, the Polish government was asked to make an official statement on the Katyń massacre, acknowledging that the crimes were committed by the Germans.⁶⁷ The situation was not helped by the fact that on 17 January TASS announced that the Polish government had misled public opinion and, because there were no diplomatic relations between the Polish and the Soviet government, the negotiations could not take place.⁶⁸ It was emphasised that it was the Polish government in London which was unwilling to establish friendly relations and was actively participating in *'the hostile, anti-Soviet slanderous campaign of the German invaders in*

⁶¹ BBC WAC, R34/663, PWE Directive for Polish Service, 16 January 1944.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Duraczyński, op. cit., p. 301.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 300.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 297.

connection with the murders at Katyn'.⁶⁹ However, the main focus for the attack was the Polish government's refusal to accept the Curzon line.

In response, the Polish Service was to avoid direct comment on the Soviet rejection of the renewal of diplomatic relations, whilst special care was to be taken not to imply that *'the door (was) finally closed'*.⁷⁰ Additionally, the Polish broadcasts should avoid topics which could diminish the trust of Polish people. The Polish Service was also prohibited from making any comparison between Poland and other Baltic States where, after recapturing Latvia and Estonia from the Wehrmacht in 1944, the authorities had continued sovietisation and collectivization reform and all those who opposed the newly established puppet governments were subject to mass deportation.⁷¹

HMG support for Stalin's territorial demands

Speaking in the House of Commons on 22 February 1944, Churchill supported Stalin's demands regarding the Curzon line.⁷² However, he pointed out that the final discussion of the Polish-Soviet border would occur during a post-war peace conference. With the British government officially backing Stalin's claims, the PWE warned that *'it would be a fatal error in propaganda to encourage even the slightest territorial hopes which may not be fulfilled'*.⁷³ Instead, broadcasting to Poland should concentrate on a more important matter, notably, assurance that Poland's independence was not at stake.

The Polish government-in-exile rejected the Curzon line whilst the leaders of the Polish Underground and the Polish Army made an official protest.⁷⁴ Expressing the view of the Polish nation that the eastern part of Poland should not be sacrificed, they questioned Churchill's pro-Soviet stance. Given this, it is surprising that the Polish Service was told to continue *'playing'* on Churchill's prestige, albeit, as Maclaren observed after visiting the Polish Troops stationed in Scotland, not all Poles were negative regarding the British Premier's declaration. To his surprise, the morale of the Polish soldiers was high as they were convinced that Churchill's

⁶⁹ Raczynski, op. cit., p. 189.

⁷⁰ NA, FO 371/39422, PWE Directive for Polish Service, 20 January 1944.

⁷¹ Mole, R., *The Baltic States from the Soviet Union to the European Union: Identity, Discourse and Power in the Post-Communist Transition of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 51-70. Both states were previously invaded by the Red Army in 1940 consequently incorporated to the Soviet Union as Latvian and Estonian Socialist Soviet Republics.

⁷² Duraczyński, op. cit., p. 311.

⁷³ NA, FO, 898/228, Director-General's Files, PWE Special Directive for Polish Service, 24 February 1944.

⁷⁴ Gen. Komorowski do N.W., : Odpowiedź RJN I DEL. Rządu w Sprawach Polsko-Sowieckich, 1 March 1944, in Czarnocka et al., op. cit., nr. 561, p. 294

speech was a *'tactical manoeuvre'*.⁷⁵ Maclaren reported later: *'their veneration for Churchill was so great that they simply did not believe him when he said that Poland must lose Wilno'*.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, knowing that the dissemination of the Polish broadcasts depended upon the Underground, it was expected that, after Churchill's speech, the influence of the Polish Service would decrease. The matter had been discussed during a meeting in the Foreign Office on 9 March 1944 between Maclaren, Roberts and the Assistant Under-Secretary, Oliver Harvey.⁷⁷ It was decided that PWE should implement British policy in the BBC broadcasts with regard to the relations between Poland and the USSR and, in particular, the subject of the Curzon line. In order to achieve this end, Maclaren had approached three accredited Polish writers with a proposal to contribute anonymous material in the form of talks which, after editing by the PWE, were to be used in the Polish BBC programmes. According to Maclaren, *'by using first-class Polish journalists and writers with an expert knowledge of the country we could best put across the view point we wanted'*.⁷⁸ It was further agreed that these talks should avoid any discussion of future frontiers. The anonymous writers expressed views in consonance with the British government, notably, that Poland should accept the Curzon line. However, they stressed that they were genuine patriots *'regarded as acting and writing in good faith by all but the most extreme of their compatriots'*.⁷⁹ The writers agreed to supply the talks on the condition that they would remain anonymous, but they wanted Mikołajczyk to be informed of their identity. Aware that he could not give his approval for such talks, the writers stated that they would only proceed if he did not express *'define disapproval'*.⁸⁰

Consequently, Maclaren approached the Polish Prime Minister in order to obtain his consent. Committed to persuade Mikołajczyk, he emphasised that the talks would be labelled as the HMG point of view, with the entire responsibility held by the latter. No criticism of the Polish government would be contained in those talks; on the contrary, *'where HMG's policy marched with that of the Polish Government, we would stress our support of that Government'*.⁸¹ Thus Mikołajczyk did not need to show his approval, simply to express a *'lack of disapproval'*. However, Maclaren failed to convince Mikołajczyk who warned that if this plan was carried out, he would formally protest to the Foreign Office.⁸² Maclaren argued that his refusal could have even more profound consequences, notably, the end of PWE cooperation with the government-in-exile. He was determined to proceed with or without the Polish Prime Minister's blessing,

⁷⁵ NA, FO 898/228, Maclaren to Roberts, undated.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ NA, FO 898/228, Report of Polish Regional Director's Meeting with Polish Prime Minister, Maclaren to Roberts, 11 March 1944.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

pointing out that it would be better if the latter at least approved the writers. Maclaren, however, later admitted that Mikołajczyk's consent was crucial; first, if he protested, the Polish Service staff might resign or, in a more optimistic scenario, the Polish announcer might refuse to read the talk and, more importantly, the Polish Underground would not disseminate any information which contradicted its government's foreign policy.⁸³

Administration of the Polish liberated territory

By the end of February 1944, the PWE focused on reporting on the Soviet administration of the liberated Polish territory and the growing propaganda of the Polish communists in Poland, notably the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) and their military wing, the People's Guard (GL), renamed in January 1944 the People's Army (AL) and acting as competitor to the Polish Home Army (AK) (see chapter 3). In November 1943 the PPR, without consulting Moscow, established the State National Council (KRN), which claimed to be empowered to act on behalf of the nation.⁸⁴ The KRN had the same goal as the UPP notably, destroying the authority of the Polish Underground and the Polish government in London and preparing the ground for the establishment of communist rule in Poland.⁸⁵ However, communication between the two organisations was interrupted, only to be restored in the beginning of 1944, due to the Wehrmacht offensive in the east. The Polish Underground sent a memorandum to the Polish government in London which was circulated in the Foreign Office and the BBC, giving evidence on Polish communist behaviour and tactics and describing their propaganda as *'pseudonymous (and) using a cloak of extreme Polish nationalism, attacks on government-in-exile, irresponsible resistance to the Germans and the stigmatisation of the Underground as cowardly'*.⁸⁶ Yet, the leaders of the Underground were faced with a much complex problem, notably their policy towards the command of the Soviet troops which had been establishing their own administration on *'liberated'* Polish territory.

A plan for a national rising against the German foe had already been drawn up in the first years of the war and was developed further when Polish-Soviet diplomatic relations were restored and it was assumed that the Polish Army formed in the Soviet Union would take part in the liberation of Poland.⁸⁷ But in 1944, given that the Polish government in London had failed to restore relations with Stalin and all signs pointed that, once the Soviets liberated Poland from

⁸³ NA, FO, 898/226, Polish and Czechoslovak, Maclaren to PID, 31 March 44.

⁸⁴ Duraczyński, E., *Między Londynem a Warszawą: Lipiec 1943 – lipiec 1944* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1986), p. 101.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ BBC WAC, E40/236/1, European Service Papers World Service Registry, Poland, 1942-1957, Memorandum: The Underground Movement in Poland and its relation to the Communist Party in Poland in the light of Soviet Policy (undated).

⁸⁷ Siemaszko, Z., *Dziewięć Spojrzeń na Powstanie Warszawskie w latach 1969-2014* (London: Siemaszko, 2014), pp. 92-4.

the Germans, no attempt would be made to pass the administration to the Underground and the Polish government-in-exile, it was decided that steps had to be taken in order to regain Polish land. The Commander of the AK, Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, instructed his soldiers to attack retreating German armies in the eastern provinces and reveal themselves to the Soviet command.⁸⁸ In this way, military cooperation with the Soviets was to be established, leading to recognition of the AK authority and control in the region. Special orders were given from London by the Polish Commander-in-Chief, General Sosnowski, to announce to the Soviet command entering Polish soil that:

'by order of the Government of the Polish Republic, we present ourselves as the representatives of the Polish administration (as commanders of AK units) with a proposal to establish collaboration on these territories with the armed forces of the Soviet Union, for mutual action against the common enemy'.⁸⁹

It was understood that after Poland was liberated the Polish government then in exile would be able to return to Poland and take over the political steer but, before this could occur, the Polish Underground government, Delegatura, acting as the government designate in Poland, was the necessary political apparatus (see chapter 3). In January 1944, the Council of National Unity (RJN) was created which consisted of representatives of four major Polish parties. In March 1944, the Council of National Unity announced its manifesto *'What the Polish Nation is fighting for'* which argued, among other things, for international recognition of the pre-war Polish-Soviet border and the annexation of German territory in the north and west, as proposed by the allies.⁹⁰

What the Polish government and the AK did not, however, was that Stalin already had already given orders to disarm AK units and kill those who resisted in November 1943.⁹¹ Moreover, all men between 17 and 35 living on Polish *'liberated'* territory were subject from April 1944 to conscription to Berling's First Army. Those who resisted were arrested and in many cases deported to the Soviet Union. By July 1944 over 6,000 AK soldiers had been detained.⁹² Although the criteria for conduct towards the Soviet Army and the administration of the Polish Underground on territory liberated from Germans, known under the cryptonym operation *'Tempest'*, had failed in the east, they were later applied in planning for the Warsaw rising.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 94.

⁸⁹ Gen. Sosnowski do Gen. Komorowskiego: Dwie Uchwały Rady Ministrów w Związku z ujawnianiem się AK, 20 February 1944, in Czarnocka at el., nr. 553, p. 284.

⁹⁰ Declaration of the Council of National Unity, 15 March 1944, in ibid, nr. 573, p. 361.

⁹¹ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 390.

⁹² Ibid, p. 391.

Notwithstanding, the BBC suppressed information about the situation in eastern Poland. On 11 April, in directives for the European Service, Newsome stressed that news about Polish demands of the Soviet Army '*must not be broadcast*' in any of the BBC foreign language programmes.⁹³ Moreover, despite the fact that the Polish Underground reports about Soviet misconduct had been passed to the British government by the Polish authorities in London, nothing was done to assist the Polish Home Army or to question Stalin's intentions.⁹⁴ Given that the Polish sources were not trusted in Whitehall and the Polish Underground was accused of anti-Soviet activities, Bór-Komorowski suggested in March 1944 that an allied commission should be dispatched to Poland in order to witness the anti-Polish activities orchestrated by the Soviet Union.⁹⁵ The proposal was refused by the British Prime Minister on the grounds that such action would aggravate Stalin and result in the British government being accused of sending spies to Poland.⁹⁶

In this political climate, the future of broadcasting to Poland was particularly problematic in light of the consensus among the PWE officials that the Soviet occupation of Poland was highly probable. Already in February 1944, Maclaren observed that the Soviet military occupation of Poland would result in '*feasible propaganda to Poland (being) seriously reduced*'.⁹⁷ A month later, in a private letter to Harvey, he also expressed his concerns regarding the future of the Polish government in London.⁹⁸ In his view, there was consensus in Whitehall that it would cease to exist.⁹⁹ However, Maclaren held the view that, as long as the British government recognised the Polish government, the Polish broadcasts should remind their listeners about the importance of supporting their government. This line was particularly important, because regardless of the political situation, Poles were needed to continue fighting against the Germans. A Special Directive for the Polish Service issued on 23 March stressed that in broadcasting to Poland:

⁹³ BBC WAC, E2/131/16, 11 April 1944.

⁹⁴ See reports of the Polish Underground from April 1943 -July 1944 in Czarnocka et al, op. cit.

⁹⁵ DCA, AK do N.W.: O przysłanie Komisji Alianckiej jako światka antypolskich akcji ZSRR, 30 March, in ibid, nr. 586, p. 385.

⁹⁶ Premier do Del. Rozmowy z Churchillem w sprawach polsko-sowieckich, 12 April 1944, in ibid, nr. 593, p. 399.

⁹⁷ NA, FO 898/225, PWE Policy and Planning: Poland, Draft Memorandum on white and black propaganda to Poland, 22 February 1944.

⁹⁸ NA, FO 898/228, Maclaren to Harvey, 15 March 1944.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

*'our words must be rather more forceful and dramatic than we ourselves would consider appropriate. Our programmes would acquire an increasingly emotional anti-German tone, going beyond factual reporting. The political questions should fall into the background but we should not give an impression that we are concealing anything.'*¹⁰⁰

The Polish Service followed the guidelines and on 25 and 26 April reported on the cooperation between the Polish Underground and the Soviet command in Wołyń district and Lwów.¹⁰¹ On 27 April, it reported again on the successful Polish-Soviet military cooperation, going so far as to suggest post-war collaboration between the Polish Underground and the Soviet Union.¹⁰²

Yet, according to dispatches received by cable from Poland in April 1944, apart from complaints about UPP communist propaganda and the People's Army looting, the Underground maintained that the relations with the Soviet command were good.¹⁰³ It was also in Poland's interest to emphasise that cooperation with Soviets had been established and, more importantly, that the Polish Home Army was fighting against Germans and not, as claimed by the Polish communists and Stalin, that they had remained passive. But, as mentioned earlier, it was understood that the future of Poland's independence depended on Soviet recognition of the Polish Underground administration on liberated territory.

Given the mistrust of the Soviets, special precautions were taken by the Polish Underground. While it was acknowledged that links with the Soviet command had to be established, it was imperative that the organisation and structure of the Underground should be kept secret. Komorowski was therefore outraged when on 12 April the Polish Service broadcast the Polish emissary, Jerzy Lerski's (pseudonym 'Jur') appeal to all Polish Underground organisations to reveal themselves to the Red Army command. The Director of the Polish Telegraphic Agency (PAT), Stefan Litauer, however, acting as a Soviet secret agent, had altered the text before passing it to the Director of Radio Polskie, Karol Wagner.¹⁰⁴ Yet, what Jur said was that the regional commanders of the AK should welcome the Soviets with the Polish flag as *'allies of our allies'* and appeal for join fight against the common enemy.¹⁰⁵ The unverified scrip was then aired by both Radio Polskie and the Polish Service.

In May Frank Roberts expressed his concern regarding Soviet propaganda directed against the Polish government and the Polish Underground, urging the Foreign Office to take a firmer

¹⁰⁰ NA, FO 371/39422, PWE Special Directive for Polish Service, 23 March 1944.

¹⁰¹ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 25-26 April 1944.

¹⁰² Ibid, 5: 45pm, 27 April 1944.

¹⁰³ See in Czarnocka et al, pp. 391-420.

¹⁰⁴ Lerski, J., *Emisariusz Jur* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicz Interim, 1989), p. 159.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 158.

stance toward the USSR.¹⁰⁶ He admitted that the Soviet accusations were found untrue and that it was Stalin's aim to discredit the Polish Home Army's actions, given their loyalty to the Polish government-in-exile, which the Soviet leader considered unrepresentative of the Polish nation. However, he argued, the Foreign Office was in a difficult situation as the Polish Underground was the only source which contradicted the Soviet accusations whilst the Soviets had a monopoly on the reporting of developments in eastern Europe. Moreover, as Roberts observed, the British press supported the Soviet version of events and it was also clear that Stalin did not want British government intervention into Polish-Soviet affairs. Therefore, he argued, *'mentioning those issues on radio would only make situation worse'*.¹⁰⁷ While his advice was that the BBC should report on the Polish Home Army operations against Germans in Poland, he emphasised that *'we should not ... "answer back" when the Russians resort to misleading allegations'*.¹⁰⁸

Reporting on Berling Army and anti-Polish propaganda

On 25 May the Polish Service was instructed to break the silence about the Berling Army, which by then was also *'liberating'* Poland, because few days earlier Churchill had made reference in a speech to the Polish troops fighting alongside the Soviet forces. The issue had been on an agenda at a meeting dealing with broadcasts to Poland at which there was discussion on Maclaren's directive that it was unwise to refrain from reporting on the Berling Army when people in Poland knew about its existence.¹⁰⁹ In his view, it would be far worse if information came from the Polish or Soviet sources, possibly resulting in civil war. Thus, while it was admissible for the Polish Service to mention the Berling Army in its broadcasts, it was not necessary to refer to its connection to the UPP, because *'although their leaders speak in provocative manner it does not mean that it is the official line of Stalin'*.¹¹⁰

The PWE directives for the BBC Polish broadcasts, however, illustrate the difficulties in dealing with this subject. In May, the Polish Service was instructed to report that Berling Army was made up of patriotic Poles, while highlighting that the political views of the army's leaders should be avoided.¹¹¹ It was not only officers' support for communists' ideology which was problematic, but their allegiance to the UPP, which openly challenged the Polish government-in-exile's authority. By June, Maclaren was advising caution in reporting about Berling Army. *'What we know about them'*, he argued, *'is derived from propaganda material'*.¹¹² Maclaren

¹⁰⁶ NA, FO 371/ 39425, PWE Directives for Poland, Memo by Frank Roberts, 10 May 1944.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ BBC WAC, E1/1148/ 4, letter from Maclaren to Newsome, 25 May 1944.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ NA, FO 371/39425, PWE Directives for Polish Service, week 25-31 May 1943.

¹¹² Ibid, week 1-7 June 1944.

further argued that the political leaders of that army *'may cause us embarrassment in the future'* and so the Polish Service should concentrate instead on the Polish Underground, given the extent of national support and the Home Army willingness to cooperate with the Soviet Union.¹¹³

Prior to this, on 21 May, all the BBC channels had been banned from referring to the Berling Army; instead the term the Polish forces in the USSR was to be used and it was forbidden to mention the political views of their leaders.¹¹⁴ This was done to disconnect them from any political connection with the UPP and the USSR.¹¹⁵ It was noted that men conscripted to the Berling units would hold considerable influence in Poland since they would return to Poland before the Polish Army under Anders' command, then fighting in Italy with the Allied forces. Subsequently, they would become an important part of the Polish Service listenership; for this reason, the BBC should refrain from talking unfavourably about the Berling units.¹¹⁶

An examination of the Polish Service bulletins, however, demonstrates that in May the topic continued to be avoided. Nothing was said about the UPP, the Berling Army or, indeed, about the Polish-Soviet affairs and the news concentrated instead on the situation on the western front. Nor were any of these issues discussed in the press review, probably because, as Frank Roberts observed, most of the British press was pro-Soviet.¹¹⁷ According to the British ambassador to the Polish government-in-exile, Owen O'Malley, however, by mid-1944 pro-Soviet meant anti-Polish and was:

*'stimulated by all Government departments, nearly all newspapers, the BBC, the Army Bureau of Current Affairs, the Army Education Department, the Political Warfare Executive, and every other organ of publicity susceptible to official influence'.*¹¹⁸

The Polish Service Editor, Gregory Macdonald, however, whilst observing that *'the BBC had no political opinion and was required to broadcast statements made by the government'*, recalls in describing the challenges caused by the Polish-Soviet political turbulences that:

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, week 25-31 May 1944.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, week 15- 21 June 1944.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, week 25-31 May.

¹¹⁷ NA, FO 371/ 39425, PWE Directives for Poland, Memo by Frank Roberts, 10 May 1944.

¹¹⁸ O' Malley, O., *Phantom Caravan* (London: Murray, 1954), p. 231.

*'over and over again we had to take the decisions whether to conceal the truth which might well endanger morale, or whether to give it, and I am glad to say, that however painful the process, at least the Polish people, for whom we had so deep sympathy, were never deceived from London'.*¹¹⁹

Yet, the Polish government -in-exile did not share his views. In May the Polish Ministry of Information liaison to the BBC, Jan Baliński, complained that the European Service reported stories *'which were untrue and out of balance'*.¹²⁰ He argued that *'The Polish government is a subject of political speculations and hasty conclusions and delicacy of Polish-Russian relations may lead to international misunderstanding jeopardising European reconciliation'*.¹²¹ As an example, Baliński cited Clement Fuller's report broadcast on the BBC that, during the conference in New York, the Polish Prime Minister had said that Poles wished to approach the Russian government.¹²² However, what the Polish Prime Minister had in fact said was that *'both governments have a duty to collaborate with each other'*.¹²³ Even more controversial was the broadcast which falsely claimed that the Russians had arrived in Poland and, under their umbrella, had created a council which included all Polish parties.¹²⁴ Baliński argued that information about Poland should be verified with the Polish Ministry of Information before broadcast. Kirkpatrick, the European Service Controller, responded that the BBC was willing to cooperate with the Polish authorities and verify information about the Polish government and the Polish Underground and the military, but not about Poles in the USSR.¹²⁵

Broadcasting to Poland was confronted with an even bigger challenge when on 22 June 1944 Polish communists and the UPP joined forces and formed the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PCNL), a month later recognised by Stalin as the only legitimate Polish governmental body to administrate *'liberated'* territory.¹²⁶ In response to this political development, the PWE directives for the Polish Service stressed the importance of avoiding reports that the situation was *'hopeless'*, instead placing emphasis on the British government position that the Polish government in London was the only government of Poland.¹²⁷ In addition, the Polish government and Underground calls for full cooperation with the Red Army should be reported without reference to the fact that, up to that point, this had not been achieved.¹²⁸ Moreover, the broadcasts must discourage a premature rising and emphasise that

¹¹⁹ MPC, Macdonald's notes, undated.

¹²⁰ BBC WAC, E1/1148/4, 1 May 1944.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 445.

¹²⁷ NA, FO 371/39425, PWE Directives for Polish Service, week 6-12 July 1944.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

such orders could only be issued by the government in London.¹²⁹ Acknowledgement of the Underground heroic resistance against the Germans and of the Polish people's suffering were to be the main themes in the broadcasts.

By the end of July, Stalin's political motives for the elimination of the Polish Underground were in the open. In Wilno and Lwów, where communication between the Underground and the Soviet command had previously been established, the regional AK commanders had been invited for talks, only to be arrested and deported to the USSR.¹³⁰ Although Mikołajczyk had appealed to Churchill to intervene with Stalin, the British Prime Minister offered no challenge to the arrests of the AK members but instead attacked the AK for fighting in cities which were the subject of dispute with the USSR and urged Mikołajczyk to go to Moscow in order to find a compromise.¹³¹ The Polish government also tried to secure the combatant rights of the AK as part of the Polish Forces. This would mean that the AK would be protected by international law and the killing and arrests of the AK soldiers by the Soviets would be recognised as a crime, something what the Churchill and Roosevelt were not prepared to do.¹³² Those rights were finally given to the AK only during the Warsaw rising, and only after four weeks of Polish government appeals to the allies (see chapter 7). The bulletins from June and July 1944 did not survive, therefore it is impossible to know how these developments were reported.

Conclusion

The analysis of the PWE directives demonstrates that the Polish Service had been recognised as an important medium of British foreign policy, having significant impact on the political views of its listeners. Although it was acknowledged that Polish broadcasts could not become a platform for anti-Polish or anti-Russian propaganda, it is evident that the Service attempted to convince its listeners about the necessity of accepting Stalin's territorial demands. It is important to note that in the dispute over the Polish-Soviet border, only the Polish government was criticised for its unwillingness to compromise whilst Stalin's standpoint was not questioned. At the same time, the '*compromise*' to which the BBC and the British press were referring, became a euphemism for bowing to Stalin's terms. It is also interesting that whilst attempts were made to prevent the Polish government from discussing the post-war Polish borders, British papers such as *The Times* and the *Daily Mail*, published articles in support of maintaining the Curzon line. Moreover, special care was taken by the Polish Service to avoid not only anything that could upset Stalin but also could undermine the Polish government and

¹²⁹ Ibid, week 29 June- 5 July 1944.

¹³⁰ Commandant of the district of Wilno to the Central Command of AK, 15 July 1944, in Czarnocka, et al, nr. 666, p. 560.

¹³¹ Mikołajczyk to Churchill, 18 July 1944, nr. 670, *ibid*, p. 563; Minister of National Defence to Commander-in-Chief, 21 July 1944, nr. 675, *ibid*, p. 570.

¹³² Kochanski, *op. cit.*, p. 397.

the Underground's authority. Given that the Underground was the main channel through which the Polish broadcasts were distributed, the support for this organisation remained central to the end of the war. However, with the establishment of Soviet administration on Polish liberated territory and the growing importance of the communists in Poland, the challenge of the future audience had to be addressed. The next chapter, which deals exclusively with period of the Warsaw rising, demonstrates further challenges for the Polish Service, in particular, in a period when Stalin's political manoeuvring, including his plans for the occupation of Poland and annihilation of the Polish Home Army had come into the open.

Coverage of the Warsaw Rising: 1 August – 2 October 1944

Introduction

'Continue to play up the Poles' gallant fight in Warsaw and avoid any suggestions that the Red Army is delaying its assault for any reasons other than those which delayed the fall of other great fortresses until they have been fully investigated and their garrisons cut off'.¹

This chapter examines the Polish Service coverage of the Warsaw rising in the context of political and military developments and the extent to which the broadcasts were influenced by the British government's foreign policy. During the Battle of Warsaw, it became transparent that Stalin's main objective was to install a communist government in Poland and annihilate the Polish Underground. For over two weeks the Soviet Union denied that the uprising was even taking place and after finally acknowledging it, Stalin not only failed to assist the insurgents, but refused the Allied Air Forces to land on the Soviet bases. The principle of maintaining the unity of the allied coalition resulted in the withholding of information from Polish listeners and the British public despite the fact that daily reports from Warsaw were received in London. The analysis is based on the Polish Service bulletins from 1 August 1944 to 2 October 1944, the Political Warfare Executive (PWE) directives for the Polish Service and the BBC European Service directives. It is supported by an examination of the broadcasts of the Home Service in order to demonstrate that in spite of BBC awareness that the Poles were also monitoring other BBC stations, domestic UK coverage of the uprising differed from that of the Polish Service.

Political situation before the rising

In the week just before the outbreak of the rising, the BBC Polish Service continued to assure its listeners that the British government still recognised the Polish government-in-exile and was acknowledging the Polish Underground's part in the liberation of Poland. These assurances were particularly important given Stalin's claims that the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PCNL), also known as the Lublin Committee, was the only representative governmental body in Poland and that the Polish Underground had collaborated with Germans (see chapter 7). Recognising that Poles were afraid of Soviet occupation, the PWE Polish region stressed that they had to be kept calm and restrained. Therefore, the broadcasts should emphasise the British government pledges to maintain the territorial status quo in Europe which

¹ BBC WAC, E2/131/18, European News Directives, 6 August 1944.

could be only achieved if agreement between Poland and the Soviet Union was reached.² In addition, given that the Polish Prime Minister, Stanisław Mikołajczyk, had the full support of Polish citizens, the broadcasts were to highlight his '*willingness*' to resume negotiations with Stalin.³

The same line was taken by the BBC and the British press which presented Stalin as '*an architect of enduring peace*' and supported his claims to the Polish eastern territory.⁴ On 25 July, the BBC Home Service broadcast a Soviet Foreign Office statement claiming that they had no plans to set up their own administration in Poland; on the contrary, the Soviet Union wished to help Poles to liberate their country and establish '*a free, independent and democratic Poland*'.⁵ Yet, the arrangements with regard to the future government were to be made only with the Lublin Committee, which Stalin recognised as the only legal authority in Poland. The broadcast finished with the emotional avowal: '*The Soviet government repeats! It does not wish to acquire any part of Polish territory or to change the social structure of Poland*'.⁶ Although the Polish Service bulletins from June and July 1944 did not survive the war, it can be assumed that this was also broadcast to Poland, partly because official statements were usually broadcast by the Polish Service and, more importantly, because it was in line with British government foreign policy to convince the Poles that the USSR should be seen as a rescuer and a friendly neighbour.

This propaganda line, however, was met in Poland with disbelief in the light of the arrests, killings and deportations of the soldiers of the Polish Home Army (AK) by the Soviets (see chapter 7). The information regarding these atrocities came from Polish sources and, given that the Polish Underground was seen as anti-Soviet, their authenticity was questioned. Yet, the evidence pointing to Soviet misconduct was overwhelming. In particular, the establishment of the communist administration of liberated Polish territory under the PCNL umbrella had a massive impact on Polish public opinion; it resulted in fear that the main interest of the USSR was the occupation of their country.⁷ At the same time as operation '*Tempest*' [Burza] was taking place in the eastern part of Poland, the Polish government approached Eden regarding the granting of combatant rights for the Polish Home Army, not only so they would be protected

² NA, FO 371/39427, PWE Directives for Poland, 27 July, 1944.

³ WAC, E2/131/18, 23 July 1944.

⁴ Nicholas, S., *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 170.

⁵ WAC, BBC Home Service Bulletins, 9:00pm, 25 Jul 1944.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Bell, P.M.H., *John Bull and the Bear: British Public Opinion, Foreign Policy and the Soviet Union, 1941-1945* (London: Hodder Arnold, 1990), pp. 138-40.

against German but, more importantly, Soviet atrocities.⁸ Combatant rights, however, were only granted in the fifth week of the rising.

Outbreak of the Warsaw rising

The Warsaw rising started on 1 August 1944. The cable informing about the outbreak was received by Polish telegraphists at Branes Lodge in London the same day.⁹ However, because the message did not have the authorisation of the AK command, it was ignored.¹⁰ It was only on 2 August, when the Commander of AK, Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, confirmed that the rising had begun, that the Polish government released information to the public. The British and American governments claimed that it had taken them by total surprise; Stalin did not acknowledge that the uprising was taking place until 13 August.¹¹ Yet, Moscow radio had already appealed on 29 July to the citizens of Warsaw to assist the liberation of the capital and, a day later, the Soviet controlled station Kościuszko broadcast in Polish:

*'Soviet forces are advancing forcefully and approaching Praga (...) people of the Capital! To arms! May the whole population rise like a stone wall around the CNL (Committee of National Liberation) and the capital's Underground Army!'*¹²

London was aware of these broadcasts; dispatches from the eastern front were also confirming that the Red Army was preparing for the liberation of the Polish capital. The broadcasts of the Polish Service and Radio Polskie, however, were in sharp contrast with Soviet appeals; instead of *'to arms'*, they advised: *'be patient, do not strike too soon'*.¹³

Contrary to what was claimed, it was not a secret that the AK was planning an uprising and more importantly, as Macdonald in 1971 recollected, *'everyone was expecting it'*.¹⁴ The Polish Service editor explains:

'In the BBC (...) we were waiting for it. (...) the Soviet communiqués told of the victorious advance of the Red Armies towards the Vistula. We knew also from the monitoring of broadcasts that Radio Moscow and Radio Kosciuszko were calling on the people of Warsaw to rise. (But) ...some of us knew more'. I knew (...) of Operation Burza by the Home Army, (...) that in the general plan for the Warsaw rising the

⁸ Ciechanowski, *The Warsaw Rising of 1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 67.

⁹ Davies, N., *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw* (London: Macmillan, 2003), pp. 11-13.

¹⁰ Siemaszko, Z., *Dziewięć Spojrzeń na Powstanie Warszawskie w latach 1969-2014* (London: Siemaszko, 2014), p. 13.

¹¹ Davies, op. cit., p. 164.

¹² Ibid, p. 165. Praga refers to suburbs of Warsaw east of river Vistula.

¹³ Briggs, A., *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: The War of Words*, Vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 619.

¹⁴ BBC WAC, Macdonald's papers and articles, *'The battle of Warsaw'*, 1971, p. 5.

*Government Delegation and the Home Army Commander had discretion when to begin the battle, within certain dates. Of course, the British Government and General Staff had also been informed, though they themselves had their difficulties— in liaison with the Kremlin and the Red Army.*¹⁵

This was further confirmed in the dispatches from the eastern front. *The Times* reported on 1 August that the Russian High Command had announced the previous night that Marshal Rocossovsky's men were fighting within 10 miles from Warsaw. 'It is clear', *The Times* concluded 'that a bridgehead has been established over the river above the city'.¹⁶ *The Times* dispatch was also included in the Polish Service press review.¹⁷

The BBC Home Service followed the same line. On 1 August it reported at 7:00 am that the Russians were 12 miles from the Polish capital and were getting ready for the liberation. The afternoon bulletin gave a further update, announcing another advance of 9 miles towards Warsaw. The broadcast of the Polish Service was more detailed: 'the Red Army captured three Warsaw suburbs: Wolomin, Radzymin and Otwock and was 15 kilometres from the heart of the city'.¹⁸ According to this broadcast, the AK had cooperated with the Red Army and an air fight was taking place between Russians and Germans over Warsaw; both reports were untrue. First, no cooperation or communication had been established between Warsaw and the Russian command; all messages sent by the insurgents to the Soviet command were ignored; and, secondly, Stalin had given orders forbidding the Red air force to fly over the Polish capital.¹⁹

In addition, before news of the outbreak of the Warsaw rising had reached London, the director of the PWE Polish Region, Moray Maclaren, together with one of the BBC programme writer, Louis MacNeice, had prepared a programme celebrating the liberation of the Polish capital by the Red Army.²⁰ This programme, written already on 31 July and recorded on 1 August, also highlighted the desire of the Polish nation for good relations with the USSR and acknowledged the Polish Underground's achievements. Given that it touched on sensitive subjects, permission for broadcast was required from the Foreign Office.²¹ In general, the Foreign Office official, Frank Roberts, argued that it was a good idea to broadcast such programme but had reservations regarding 'the playing up of the Polish Underground Army and the Polish Underground State'.²² The BBC was willing to modify the script, but became concerned that the Polish

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ *The Times*, Digital Archive, p. 5. The Times reported first time on the outbreak on 3 August.

¹⁷ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 7:20am, 1 August 1944.

¹⁸ Ibid, 9:20am.

¹⁹ Ritchie, A., *Warsaw Rising: The Fateful Uprising* (London: Harper & Collins, 2014), p. 493.

²⁰ NA, FO 371/39427, Frank Roberts to Features Department, 2 August 1944; The programme was recorded on 1 August at 7:15pm; rehearsal at 10.30a.m.

²¹ BBC WAC, R34/516, Policy: Poland, 1939-44, Leslie Stokes to Foreign Office, 2 August 1944. and ibid.

²² NA FO 371/ 39427; Roberts to Features Department, 2 August 1944.

announcer would inform the Polish government about the changes. Nevertheless on 4 August the Foreign Office changed its mind; there was a veto on the broadcast of the programme by all BBC Services.²³ However the European Service directives referred on 1 August to an item prepared by the European Service news desk called '*The Fall of Warsaw*' and required all the BBC foreign Services to broadcast it and to play Polish and Russians anthems after the main news.²⁴ It is likely that the programme in question had been prepared by Maclaren and MacNeice, but because only written bulletins survived the war, it is impossible to verify that this was indeed the case (see chapter 2).

Reporting on first week of Warsaw rising (2-7 August)

Following the Polish government official statement on the afternoon of 2 August about the outbreak of the rising, all the BBC Services broadcast the news. On the same day Churchill also confirmed this news in the House of Commons.²⁵ Macdonald recollects that the typescript with the recording had arrived between 1 and 2pm. However, it could not be broadcast before 3:30 pm because it had to be first translated and then approved by Newsome.²⁶ The news was first given in the bulletin at 5:45 pm. Only the first three minutes of this bulletin, however, belonged to the Polish Service whilst the remaining 12 to Radio Polskie; the news about the outbreak of the rising was included in Radio Polskie while the main story in the Polish Service was Churchill's review of the war situation in a speech to House of Commons.²⁷ It was reported by Radio Polskie that '*the Polish Home Army begun their open fight aiming at the mastering of Warsaw*' instead of '*liberating*' as originally written.²⁸ The term was changed by the policy censor, A. R. Birley. The additional security and policy stamps on the page with the announcement, indicate that the information was added at the last minute. But there was also another reason for this course of action; as Macdonald points out, when information about the development at the eastern front was delivered at 3:00 pm, Soviet sources had not mentioned anything about the outbreak of the rising.²⁹ The news was eventually broadcast by the Polish Service at 7:45 pm, but again the word '*liberation*' was redacted. Instead it was announced: '*the Polish Home Army began their open fight ~~aiming at the liberation~~ to gain control of Warsaw*'.³⁰ It was also claimed that the Russians were in the Praga suburbs.

²³ BBC WAC, R34/516 'Policy' Poland, 1939-44, 4 August 1944.

²⁴ BBC, WAC, E2/131/18, 1 August, 1944.

²⁵ Gilbert. M., *Winston. S. Churchill*, vol. 7 (London: Heinemann, 1968), p. 871.

²⁶ MPC, MacDonald, unpublished papers, undated.

²⁷ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 5:45pm, 2 August 1944.

²⁸ Ibid, Polskie Radio bulletin, 5:45pm, 2 August 1944.

²⁹ MPC, Macdonald's private notes, undated.

³⁰ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 7:45pm, 2 August 1944.

The directives for the European Service, however, urged all foreign broadcasts to report that the Red Army was '*converging on Warsaw*'.³¹ The Polish Service also cited Churchill's speech to House of Commons, in which the British Premier had argued that the Russians had '*liberation in their hands*', and, therefore, that Poles must maintain friendly attitudes towards their liberator. However, two sentences from Churchill's speech were redacted by the policy and security censor: '*I salute Marshal Stalin, that great champion of his country and I firmly believe that our 20 years treaty with Russia will prove to be one of the most lasting and durable factors in preserving the peace order, and progress of Europe*'; and that it was '*bravely Russian arms*' which liberated Poland.³² Although the BBC was entitled to follow the official British government line, it was understood that some of parts of Churchill's statement could be interpreted as anti-Polish and, given the already tense situation between Poland and the USSR, it was deemed prudent to omit these references.

In the first week of fighting, the PWE directives did not address the subject of the rising but instead concentrated on the Polish-Soviet relationship. On 3 August, the director of the Polish Region PWE argued that in broadcasts to Poland '*we must evoke the maximum of friendly confidence in Russia (but) without committing ourselves to any specific implications of what this relationship should be now and after*'.³³ In addition, Polish listeners should be told to join the Berling Army (see chapter 7). This appeal, however, was not broadcast by the Polish Service. It is likely that Macdonald, who took an active part in the preparation of the PWE directives for the Polish Service, protested against such a message being aired.

In those first days of the rising, both the BBC Home and the Polish Service reported on further Russian progress towards Warsaw. On 3 August, the Polish Service reported that the AK actions were co-ordinated with the Russian advance and that liaison with the Soviet command had been established. However, the commander of the AK, Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, cabled London next day, protesting that this information was untrue.³⁴ According to the Director of Radio Polskie, Karol Wagner, the editor of Radio Polskie objected to this information being broadcast, pointing out that it was false, but he was told to '*shut up*'.³⁵ On 4 September, the Polish Service went as far as to claim that Poles together with the Red Army were '*clearing the Germans out of Praga suburbs*'.³⁶ Interestingly, the original script stated that it was the '*Polish patriots*' who were assisting the Red Army, referring to members of the Union of the Polish

³¹ BBC WAC/ E2/131/18, 2 August, 1944.

³² Ibid. 7:45pm.

³³ NA, FO 371/39427, PWE Directives for Polish Service, week start 3 August 1944.

³⁴ Dowódzca AK do Sztabu Naczlengo Wodza, 4 August 1944, in Czarnocka, H. et al., *Armia Krajowa w Dokumentach*: Vol. 4, (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1990), nr 769, p. 55.

³⁵ PUMST, 2.3.11.1, (89), L.dz.1075/kt/kw/44, 'Notatka Służbowa dla Pana Ministra Informacji Profesora Kota od kierownika Radia Polskiego, 7 August 1944.

³⁶ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 23:15pm, 3 August and 1:15 am, 4 August 1944.

Patriots (UPP), an organisation formed by Polish communists in the Soviet Union in 1943, which had merged with Polish communists in Poland (PPR) in July 1944 to become the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PCNL), the only legitimate administrative organ recognised by Stalin (see chapter 7). This demonstrates that the Polish Service was relying on Soviet sources. However, the term *'Polish patriots'* was redacted by the security censor and replaced with *'Poles'*. It seems that the intention of the Polish broadcast was to indicate that not only the communists but all Poles, including the Polish Underground, were cooperating with the Soviets and, more controversially, that the Red Army was present in the capital. By 5 August, however, the Polish Underground reported back to London that there had been no joint action of Poles and Russians and the movement of the Red Army had halted. Newsome instructed the European Services to

'continue to play up the Poles' gallant fight in Warsaw and avoid any suggestions that the Red Army is delaying its assault for any reasons other than those which delayed the fall of other great fortresses until they have been fully investigated and their garrisons cut off'.³⁷

On 6 August the Polish Service coverage included the Bór communiqué acknowledging that the movement of Rokossovsky's army *'quieted down three days ago'*.³⁸ Yet, in the evening bulletin, the reference to the fact that the Russian forces were *'staying silent'* was crossed out in blue pencil, indicating that in the security censor's view, the report was no longer suitable for the broadcast.³⁹ The same censorship policy was applied next day and, in place of the Bór communiqué, it was reported that Russians had extended their bridgehead across upper Vistula, capturing 60 places.⁴⁰

In the first week of the uprising, the newspaper review of the Polish Service concentrated on quoting British newspapers commentaries on the liberation of Paris and, with the exception of a *Daily Herald* article on 5 August referring to the Polish Underground fighting against the Germans, nothing more had been said on this topic. Yet, Radio Polskie claimed in its broadcast on 7 August that all leading British papers had discussed the rising, perhaps in order to create the illusion that the rising was receiving widespread attention.⁴¹

The BBC Home Service mentioned the outbreak of the rising for the first time on 2 August at 7:00 pm. However, in contrast to claims made after the war, it was not reported as the most

³⁷ BBC WAC, E2, 131/18, 6 August 1944.

³⁸ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 7 August 1944.

³⁹ Ibid, 7:45pm, 6 September, crossed out at 7:45 p.m on 7 September 1944.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 1:15am, 8 September 1944.

⁴¹ Ibid, Polskie Radio Bulletin, 5:45pm, 7 September 1944.

important news of the day.⁴² In fact, the information did not made headlines and the later bulletins on the same day did not mention it at all. The headlines were occupied by the allied landings in Normandy and the news of the Red Army's victories.⁴³ In the following days, it continued to report on Soviet progress, but, by 7 August, had fallen silent on the subject. This led Macdonald to intervene in order to press all BBC Services to broadcast news about the Warsaw rising as '*it seemed that it was going to be played down*'.⁴⁴

The inconsistency of security and policy censorship demonstrates that the BBC relied on Soviet sources and ignored the reports of the Polish Underground. Although the progress of the Red Army was consistent with Soviet Home Service broadcasts picked up by the BBC Monitoring Service, the Soviet bulletins did not acknowledge that the uprising was taking place.⁴⁵ But, as Davies points out, all reports from the eastern front had to pass through the hands of the Soviet censor, which meant that the news in the press and the BBC in many cases was not up to date.⁴⁶ At the same time, not even the Polish Underground could believe that Stalin would give orders for the Red Army to withhold. The analysis of the bulletins also demonstrates that, although the directives and guidelines were the same, the extent to which they were exercised varied, leaving space for personal interpretation.

Second week of the rising (8- 14 August)

In the beginning of the second week of rising the European Service was instructed to avoid the topic of the Soviet army not entering Warsaw, and instead to report on Soviet liberation of the Baltic area and East Prussia.⁴⁷ At this stage, however, it was believed that there was no reason other than the purely military for the Russian delay as '*the reorganisation of the Russian supply system was necessary*'.⁴⁸ The information given in this period was in fact inconsistent across all the BBC broadcasts. Whilst the BBC Home and European Services continued to report on the Red Army progress, the Polish Service acknowledged that in fact it was not true.⁴⁹ On 10 August an official statement by the Deputy Prime Minister and Delegate of the Government in Poland, Jan Jankowski, which stated that from 3 August the Soviet progress toward Warsaw had ceased, was aired only by the Polish Service.

⁴² BBC WAC, E1/1147, Polish Booklet, English text of unpublished material on the work of the Polish Service, 1939-67.

⁴³ BBC WAC, Home Service Bulletins, 7pm, 2 August 1944.

⁴⁴ MPC, Macdonald's notes, 24 March, 1983.

⁴⁵ BBC WAC, BBC Monitoring Papers, Daily Digests of World Broadcasts, Soviet Home Service and Soviet Broadcasts in Polish, 1-6 August 1944.

⁴⁶ Davies, op. cit.

⁴⁷ BBC WAC, E2/131/18, 10 August 1944.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 12 August 1944.

⁴⁹ BBC WAC, 7:45pm, 10 August 1944.

In this period, prominence was given to Polish Prime Minister Mikołajczyk's statement on his return from a visit to Moscow in the last days of July 1944 in an attempt to reach agreement on the post-war Polish-Soviet border. The resumption of talks with Stalin was met in London with both enthusiasm and apprehension as it was understood that allied assistance to insurgents depended on its outcome. However, although Newsome was of the opinion that prominence should be given to the meeting, the Foreign Office, on the request of the Soviet government, stopped Fleet Street and the BBC from reporting on the Moscow talks.⁵⁰ In failing to report what had happened, the BBC was risking its reputation as a reliable source of information since everyone in Poland knew that Mikołajczyk was meeting with Stalin and the Lublin Committee in Moscow. Only, on his return to London, did the Polish Service broadcast his public statement of 10 August, emphasising that the talks were very successful and had taken place in '*a friendly atmosphere*'.⁵¹

Mikołajczyk's statement proclaimed that the '*heroic Red Army was liberating the Polish lands with the direct help of the soldiers and people of the Polish Underground as the leaders of Poland*' whilst, with regard to other issues, '*no definite conclusion had been made*'.⁵² In fact, no agreement had been reached over either the border or the composition of the future Polish government; Stalin demanded recognition of the Curzon line whilst representatives of the Lublin Committee, namely, Bolesław Bierut and Edward Osóbka-Morawski, sought the annulment of the Polish constitution of 1935, thus challenging the legitimacy of the Polish government-in-exile.⁵³ Yet, Mikołajczyk had received Stalin's assurance of Soviet assistance to the insurgents. Given Stalin's denial that uprising in Warsaw was taking place, it was a big success.⁵⁴ Some historians, however, such as Norman Davies argue that by 2 August Stalin had already ordered his troops to withhold and, later, failed to approve Rokossovsky's new offensive plan, drafted on 8 August.⁵⁵ Borodziej disagrees, pointing out that, despite the opening of the Russian archive in 1990s, the gap from 8 August through 16 September in the file on '*Stalin and the Warsaw Rising*' means that there is not enough evidence pointing to this conclusion.⁵⁶ It would seem, however, that Stalin's motives with regard to the uprising were purely political and that it was not in his interest to assist the AK, particularly since the Polish

⁵⁰ NA FO, 371/39405, Clark Kerr to Foreign Office, 27 July 1944.

⁵¹ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 7:45pm, 10 August 1944.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Kochanski, H., *The Eagle Unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), pp.449-450.

⁵⁴ Bartoszewski, W., *Dni Walczącej Stolicy: Kronika Powstania Warszawskiego* (Warsaw: Krag, 1984), p. 37.

⁵⁵ Davies, op. cit., p. 268.

⁵⁶ Borodziej, W., *The Warsaw Uprising of 1944* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 88-89.

Premier had refused to accept his ultimata. Nonetheless, at this point, a setback caused by military factors could not be excluded.

The lack of Red Army support and the absence of a Soviet reply were not the only concerns of the AK; it was assumed that British and USA aircraft and the Polish parachute brigade would assist insurgents. As Bór explained in his memoirs:

'Everyone in Poland knew that in eastern Poland there were American bases for shuttle- bombing operations. Everyone knew, too, about the bombing of Bucharest, Polesi and Koenigsberg, all of which were further from English bases than was Warsaw (...). Everybody had heard the BBC praise Polish operational achievements on land, sea and in the air (...) that was why the population of Warsaw (...) was unable to understand the argument that air operations over the capital from British bases were impossible on account of the heavy losses'.⁵⁷

This issue was not addressed by the Polish Service. Bór's complaints about the absence of British and American help were never broadcast by the BBC. For instance, in the broadcast on 12 August the part of Bór's communiqué implying that no one was helping Warsaw was redacted by the censor.⁵⁸ In Bush House, Newsome did not hesitate to openly criticise Bór's communiqués which he thought were *'exaggerated and generally irritating, especially his appeals for help'*.⁵⁹ The content of the Polish Service bulletins differed in significant respects from what was happening behind closed doors in Westminster. As Davies points out, different British agencies not only followed different policies but, more importantly, were issuing contradictory advice.⁶⁰ Whilst Churchill, the War Ministry and SOE campaigned for urgent support for Warsaw, the Foreign Office was against it. In addition, as Roosevelt was not interested in becoming involved in matters which, in his view, concerned the Soviet sphere of influence, there was no pressure on Stalin to respond to British and Polish demands. Yet, the Polish Service broadcasts served their purpose; on 10 August *'people in Warsaw gathered in the streets and cheered: The Polish government, Great Britain and USA'*.⁶¹ It is worth mentioning that during the rising, Radio Polskie was subject to less censorship than the Polish Service. For instance, on 8 August in a Radio Polskie programme for the Polish Forces, Bór's communiqué stating that Warsaw had still not received any help from the USSR was broadcast.⁶² The

⁵⁷ Bór-Komorowski, T, *The Secret Army* (Barnsley: Frontline, 2011), p. 262.

⁵⁸ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 6:15pm, 12 August 1944.

⁵⁹ MPC. Macdonald's notes, undated.

⁶⁰ Davies, op. cit., pp. 298-300.

⁶¹ Bór-Komorowski, op. cit., p. 263.

⁶² BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, Radio Polskie bulletin, 12:45pm, 8 August 1944.

reference to the fact that the insurgents had not received help from Britain and the USA was redacted.

The situation changed on 13 August, nearly two weeks after the rising broke out, when TASS issued an official communiqué stating:

*'No attempt was made by the London Poles to inform the Soviet Command of their intentions (...). In consequence, full responsibility for the events in Warsaw will fall exclusively on Polish émigré circles in London'.*⁶³

This was not broadcast by the Polish or Home Service. However, Bór notes in his memoirs that on the same day, notably 13 August, it was broadcast both from Moscow and the BBC in London to Poland.⁶⁴ Yet, neither the Underground nor the Polish Government had ever claimed that they were in contact with the Soviet command. On the contrary, Bór immediately dismissed as fabricated the Polish broadcast from London claiming that the Home Army in Warsaw had established communication with the Red Army.⁶⁵ It is thus surprising that a day later the Polish Service announced that *'Marshal Stalin was impressed with the sacrifice and bravery of the Home Army'*.⁶⁶ Taking into account that Stalin had denounced the action of the AK as criminal, it is highly unlikely that these were his words.

Stalin had not only made his position clear to Poles but, more importantly, to the Western leaders. Both British and American ambassadors to Moscow were informed that *'Russia does not want to be associated with any adventure in Warsaw'*.⁶⁷ At the same time, permission for the landing of allied aircraft on Soviet airfields was denied. From this point the Soviet attitude to the rising was brought into the open; as Harriman later assessed, *'the Soviet Government's refusal (to help Warsaw) (was) not based on operational difficulties, but ruthless political calculation'*.⁶⁸ Not only was the Soviet Union refusing to help the insurgents, but they were attempting to stop other allies doing so. Żenczykowski goes as far as to argue that Stalin issued a *'death warrant on Warsaw'*.⁶⁹ Yet, the Soviet statement was concealed both from the British public and, more significantly, from the Polish government in London; officially, allied air forces were still waiting for clearance from the Russians.⁷⁰ Consequently, the Foreign Office informed the BBC that the plan to send both the RAF and the Soviet Air Force to assist the

⁶³ *The Times*, 13 August 1944, The Times Digital Archive.

⁶⁴ Bór-Komorowski, op. cit., p.267.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 14 August 1944.

⁶⁷ NA, FO 371/39499, Rising in Warsaw, Molotov to Clark Kerr, 16 August, 1944.

⁶⁸ Cited in Davies, op. cit., p. 321.

⁶⁹ Żenczykowski, T., *Samotny Bój Warszawy* (London: Wydawnictwo LTW, 1990) p. 66.

⁷⁰ NA, CAB, 65/43, WM (44) 107 Conclusions, 16 August 1944.

insurgents was still in progress.⁷¹ Contrary to Macdonald's claim that the Polish Service presented both Polish and Soviet points of view, quoting British and Polish press opinion, in the second week of the uprising and in spite of discussion in the British press regarding the lack of allies' help, none of these sources was cited in the Polish press review.

The BBC Home Service in the second week of fighting continued to report on further progress of the Soviet Army towards Warsaw, including its arrival on 14 August at a point only 12 miles north east of Warsaw. Communiqués and appeals for help and ammunition from the Polish Commander of the Underground Army were included occasionally, while the Home Service remained silent on the Mikołajczyk visit to Moscow. On 9 August, there was a brief mention that the talks had been suspended and that the Polish Prime Minister was to speak with the Lublin Committee, emphasising that a *'free and independent Poland (...) is in the interest of the USSR'*.⁷²

On night of 13-14 August the RAF dropped supplies over Warsaw and on 15 August, Bór's communiqué thanking the RAF pilots was broadcast by the Polish Service. It also included a description of the situation in the Polish capital, but there was no reference to the position of the Soviet army. In this period, the Polish Service bulletins concentrated on reporting the liberation of Paris and the gallant fight of the Polish Forces in Normandy and Italy. With regard to the Soviet offensive, the liberation of the Baltic States was given prominence while accounts of the military actions on the other side of the Vistula were confusing.⁷³ The bulletins of the Home Service did not differ much and the rising still did not make headlines.⁷⁴ Yet, on 18 August, the Home Service broadcast the false claim that the RAF had been dropping supplies over Warsaw since the beginning of the rising. The Polish Ministry of Information complained and further demanded an explanation why, up to that point, the BBC had used the terms *'fight'*, *'defence'* and *'battle'* rather than *'uprising'* to describe the AK actions.⁷⁵

The Soviet government statement from 13 August was addressed in the PWE directives for the Polish Service on 17 August, where it was stressed that, in the broadcasts to Poland, *'we should be careful not to hint that the early rising (...) is in need of any excuse or exoneration'*.⁷⁶ In addressing the matter of appeals for help and the fact that no efficient assistance had been given

⁷¹ Bell, P.M.H., *John Bull & the Bear: British public opinion, foreign policy and the Soviet Union, 1941-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1990), p. 147.

⁷² BBC WAC, Home Service, 9 pm, 9 August 1944.

⁷³ 16 August: *'Russians have flung back German attacks east of Praga'*; 17 August: *'Sandomir is in hands of Russians and will be a valuable base for new outflanking moves against Warsaw. German counter-attack in Praga being too difficult to break and that they flung the attack'*.

⁷⁴ 16 August 1944, (8am, 1pm, 6pm): *'Warsaw has been repealed'* and on 17 August 1pm: *'Russians had to withdraw from a place east of Warsaw, 7 miles from Warsaw'*.

⁷⁵ PUMST, 2.3.11.1, Minister Infomracji do Szefa Oddziału Specjalnego Naczelnego Wodza, 18 August 1944.

⁷⁶ NA, FO 371/39427, PWE Directives for Polish Service, 17 August 1944.

to insurgents, the Polish Service *'should not hint at an immediate relief of Warsaw within a matter of days, but should rather point to the difficulty of such an operation, using the analogy of the German delays before Kiev and Odessa'*.⁷⁷ More importantly, German weakness, the main theme of PWE Central Directives was not to be used in relation to the eastern front. The guidelines for other European Services were the same: *'report factually the gallant fight of the Poles in Warsaw, and give all news of Allied assistance reaching them, but avoid comment on the timing or coordination of their efforts'*.⁷⁸ The Polish broadcasts were to maintain that the Russian delay in the advance on Warsaw was a *'temporary hold-up'* due to *'determined German attempts to stop them before final advance on Berlin'*.⁷⁹ Furthermore British and American government support for Mikołajczyk's efforts to reach compromise with Stalin was to be highlighted.⁸⁰

In accordance with those directives, the Polish Service was reporting that the Russians had overcome *'fierce resistance'* but, at the same time, stating that they had *'extended their bridgehead across the Vistula and the German attacks were being repelled'*.⁸¹ On 19 August, Stalin's communiqué on further progress on the left bank of the Vistula and the capture of Sandomierz was cited. On the next day it was reported that the *'Russians advanced at many points (...) again tightening their rings around the remnants of three German divisions on west bank of the Vistula'* whereas the evening broadcast emphasised that *'it is only a matter of waiting until the Russian High Command judges the time ripe to make its final break-through attack'*.⁸² It was further added:

'There are signs that the relentless Russian attacks are recommencing. After an advance of 500 to 600 km on the centre front, a pause for regrouping and for the purpose of moving bases for supply and maintenance nearer the front was certain. It is a sign of the complete competence of the Russian High Command that during this period the Germans have been unable to revile the pressure on them on any part of the front (...) it was a clever Russian move to obtain at least one large and firm bridgehead over the Vistula in the first phase of their operations'.⁸³

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ BBC WAC, E2/128/7, Central Directives, PWE/PID, file 7, week 17-23 August 1944.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 10:35pm, 18 August 1944.

⁸² Ibid. 2pm and 7pm, 20 August 1944.

⁸³ Ibid.

In addition, as in previous weeks, no attention was given to the uprising in the Polish Service press review where the focus was on the liberation of Italy and Paris and the situation in Normandy.

In the third week of fighting there was a very important development when the Polish Service confirmed that the broadcasts of the insurgents' shortwave radio station, Błyskawica ('Lightning') could be heard in London. Nowak recalls:

*'On 15 August 'a happy event occurred (...). In the evening London for the first time confirmed radio reception of Lightning and repeated the first of the broadcasts given that morning. Incredible excitement! After a fortnight's struggle in the face of great difficulties the technicians had their moment of glory, and the journalists, writers, and poets knew that they were not talking to themselves. From then on, all those involved in programs broadcast in the morning sat next to their sets at night to listen to their own words returning from far away.'*⁸⁴

Bór, in contrast, writes in his memoirs that the BBC confirmed reception of Błyskawica on 17 August.⁸⁵ Whilst Błyskawica is not mentioned in the BBC Home Service bulletins at all, the Polish Service refers to it only on 17 and 20 August. However, is very unclear when exactly the first broadcast from Warsaw was picked up by the Monitoring Service.

Błyskawica went on air for the first time on 8 August and from that day transmitted daily in Polish and English. It was controlled by the Polish Underground, but an arrangement was also made for the pre-war Polskie Radio employees to broadcast on Błyskawica wavelengths. Transfer of English broadcasts to Polskie Radio airtime followed and Błyskawica was referred to in the Monitoring Service transcripts as the Warsaw broadcasting station of Polskie Radio.⁸⁶ The English bulletins were prepared by Jan Nowak and translated and announced by London born Adam Truszkowski, pseudonym 'Tomicki'. The first English programme went on air on 8 August at 14:30; later versions were broadcast at 10:15 and 22:30. Overall 77 broadcasts in English went on air during the rising.⁸⁷

Mazur and Ziółek claim that the BBC confirmed on 8 August that the broadcast was heard in London.⁸⁸ Macdonald correspondingly argues that he received a digest from the BBC Monitoring Service on the same day.⁸⁹ Moreover, an unpublished BBC paper, written after the

⁸⁴ Nowak, J., *Kurier z Warszawy* (Warsaw: Znak, 2003), p. 334.

⁸⁵ Bór-Komorowski, op. cit., p. 319.

⁸⁶ Nowak, op. cit., 331.

⁸⁷ Mazur G., *Biuro Informacji i Propagandy: SZP-ZWZ-AK, 1939-45* (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1987), p. 354.

⁸⁸ Ibid and Ziółek, Z., *Od Okopów do Barykad* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1973), p. 458.

⁸⁹ MPC, Macdonald's notes, undated.

war, also claims that, from that day, the ccommuniqués from Błyskawica station were rebroadcast fully every afternoon by the Polish Service.⁹⁰ Błyskawica broadcasts were also monitored by the Polish government at Barnes Lodge and recorded on discs and it was claimed after the war that these discs were used in the Polish Service programmes. However, when discs with music were played in the Polish Service broadcasts, the title of the song and length of the recording were indicated on the bulletin scrips. Yet, there are no information on the Polish Service bulletins referring to these recordings.

According to Nowak, the first confirmation that broadcasts from Warsaw were picked by the BBC Monitoring Service was received on 15 August. The surviving BBC Monitoring papers and the BBC bulletins, both in Polish and English, however, indicate something different. According to the BBC Monitoring transcripts, the broadcast from Warsaw was heard for the first time on 12 August.⁹¹ Then, there is a big gap in the transcripts until 22 August.

Thus it is extremely puzzling that in the Summary of the BBC World Broadcasts, based on BBC Monitoring transcripts, the broadcast from Błyskawica in English at 2:30 pm and in Polish at 10:00 am had already been mentioned on 21 August. From 22 August onwards, Błyskawica appears daily in both the transcripts and in the BBC Summaries. The last broadcast was picked up on 2 September when the station had to be moved after the district where it was located fell into German hands. Ironically, it was transferred to the former USSR Embassy in Warsaw.⁹²

The Monitoring Service records are of particularly important historical value, since they demonstrate what was known to the BBC and, by extension, to the British government about the situation in Warsaw during the rising. The Błyskawica broadcasts allowed the Polish Underground to directly address western leaders for the first time. They included detailed reports of fighting in the capital, German crimes committed against Poles, the screening of tanks with women and children and the mass shooting of civilians, as well as information about Soviet arrests of AK officers and party members in the east Poland who were later imprisoned in the ex-Nazi extermination camp at Majdanek.⁹³ It should be emphasised that the PCNL almost certainly knew about these events. In addition, the Błyskawica broadcasts from 24 August, discussed the lack of the Soviet assistance, and mentioned that cooperation between AK and the Soviet troops had been established in the period 1-4 August in the Lublin district. It is likely that this information was misinterpreted by the Monitoring and later by the BBC Polish Service which reported that liaison between the two was established in Warsaw, thus suggesting

⁹⁰ BBC WAC, E1/1147.

⁹¹ IWM, J75, BBC Monitoring Service Transcripts, Poland, Duxford, broadcast in English, 12 August 1944.

⁹² Mazur, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

⁹³ IWM, J75, 23 August 1944.

that the Soviets were assisting the insurgents, which was not the case.⁹⁴ In fact, the Soviet army withdrawal from the Lublin district on 5 August had resulted in AK soldiers being surrounded by German troops and taken into captivity. This information was included in the same Błyskawica programme and is also mentioned in the Monitoring Summaries. Yet it was not reported by either the Polish or the Home Service.

The Warsaw broadcasters also openly challenged on air Stalin's claims that the Soviet troops were not in a position to assist the rising. Whilst they thanked Britain for her contributions, they asked in the form of rhetoric questions why the Soviets had not helped when they were so close. '*We do not want to make any charges or to cast suspicions (...) but we cannot understand why help did not come*'.⁹⁵ However, what was released to the BBC remains an open question, and, cannot be resolved until the BBC Monitoring Service papers on Warsaw rising, which are still classified, will be open for research (see chapter 2).

Week 22–28 August

From 22 August, as Davies observed, the USSR policy changed from passive to active hostility as the NKVD received orders to capture and disarm all members of the AK who fell into their hands.⁹⁶ Moreover, Churchill became more anxious regarding coverage of the rising and directly complained to the British Minister of Information, Brendan Bracken, about suppression of information in the British press. In his view '*there (was) no need to mention the strange and sinister behaviour of the Russians*', but he questioned the censorship policy: '*is there any reason why consequences of such behaviour should not be made public?*'⁹⁷ Bracken argued that the British press did not have access to any reliable information since, in his opinion, the Polish sources were not trustworthy, and adding that: '*the press (...) distrusted Polish sources in London, especially the Polish Minister of Information, who was regarded in Fleet Street as an incompetent ass (whereas)...our public (...) regard Poles as a feckless race*'.⁹⁸

This argument, however, seems to be spurious as John Ward, a RAF Flight Lieutenant who escaped from a German POW camp in 1941 and joined the Polish Underground, had sent over 65 Morse code and telegraph dispatches to London during the rising.⁹⁹ Not only did *The Times* offer him a position as its war correspondent but his dispatches were circulated in the MoI Cabinet and War Office. Even more curious is the fact that Ward's name is not mentioned in any history of *The Times*, whilst his contributions to the rising are widely recognised in Poland.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 24 August 1944.

⁹⁵ BBC WAC Summary of World Broadcasts, 10:15am, 24 August 1944.

⁹⁶ Cited in Davies, op. cit., p.321.

⁹⁷ Churchill to Bracken, 23 August 1944, in Churchill, W., *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, vol. VI (London: Cassell, 1954), p. 122.

⁹⁸ NA, FO 371/39493, Status of the Polish Underground Army, Bracken to Churchill, 23 August 1944.

⁹⁹ Nowak, op. cit., pp. 332-3.

Churchill, however, was aware of the importance of Ward's articles and demanded an explanation of why were they suppressed. Bracken responded that '*if the government is willing to release the reports we have received from Ward (...) I think I can persuade the newspapers to publish them*'.¹⁰⁰

In this period the PWE directives for the Polish Service laid emphasis on reporting the gallant fight of the insurgents.¹⁰¹ However, the refusal of Soviet help was not addressed by the PWE, nor reported by the Polish Service. The lack of cooperation between the Home and Red Army received no mention whilst both the BBC Home and Polish Service continued to report on further Russian progress. On 26 August the Blyskawica broadcast suggested that the Polish Home Army was helping the Soviet Army by diversionary action against the Germans.¹⁰² A comparison of BBC Monitoring Service digests and the Polish Service bulletins demonstrates that all issues related to the lack of Soviet, British and American support, as well as information regarding the arrests of the AK soldiers and conscription to Berling's Army, were suppressed.

The British government also remained silent with regard to the lack of help for Warsaw, and Bracken opposed discussion of the issue to British press as, in his view, any hint at Soviet refusal for allied aircraft to land on their bases would work against allied unity. However, on 26 August *the Economist* published an article which, by comparing the liberation of Paris with Warsaw, pointed out that Poles had not been given moral or material assistance from their allies and, instead, were being accused of acting prematurely.¹⁰³ The author also observed that the Russians had not only refused allied planes permission to land on their bases but also on allied airfields behind the Soviet line. The article appeared in the Radio Polskie bulletin but was not cited in the Polish Service press review which cited the *News Chronicle* from 24 August on the Russian progress towards Warsaw.¹⁰⁴

In BBC circles, however, the Polish Service editor, Gregory Macdonald, actively campaigned against the suppression of news from Warsaw, and did not hesitate to criticise the BBC Home Service and Fleet Street for playing down the rising. His memo, written in the fourth week of the insurrection, directly attacking the Russians for their political manoeuvring and the media for not giving inadequate space to the rising, was circulated in Westminster and Fleet Street.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ FO 371/39494, Polish Home Army and help for Warsaw, Bracken to Churchill, 24 August, 1944.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. PWE Directives for Polish Service, 22- 28 August.

¹⁰² BBC WAC Summary of World Broadcasts, 26 August 1944.

¹⁰³ Bell, op. cit., p. 149.

¹⁰⁴ BBC WAC, Polish Service bulletins, 9pm, 24 August 1944.

¹⁰⁵ MPC, Macdonald has written 2 memos: on 16 and 24 August, only the latter was circulated on 24 August. He further added that Newsome was very upset that he had written the memos.

In the fifth week of the rising it became evident that the lack of help from the allies to the insurgents could not be avoided any longer. In particular, Vernon Bartlett's article in the *News Chronicle* on 29 August had a significant impact on British public opinion. The author openly criticised the Soviet denial of access to its air bases, pointing out that Stalin, who had previously promised to assist Warsawians, was now threatening the leaders of the Polish Home Army with court-martial and refusing to recognise their combat rights. Newsome instructed all the European Services editors to broadcast Bartlett's article.¹⁰⁶ It seems that it was at this point that his pro-Soviet feelings evaporated. In the European Service news directives, Newsome did not hesitate to vent his rage on the Soviet Union, stating:

'The Nazis tried to destroy Allied unity but unsuccessfully. Whilst the attitude of Britain in this trouble remained obscure and silence was maintained on the whole question of Polish unity, Polish-Soviet relations and the battle of Warsaw, there was some chance of this Nazi hope being nourished by this embarrassed silence! Now we have to come into the open (...) to show that we are not afraid to tell Russians when we consider them behaving badly ... to tell Poles when they are behaving foolishly and that we are not afraid to state uncompromisingly our adherence to our basic principles of determination to uphold the cause of justice and international relations even when this involves saying unkindly words to our greatest military ally'.¹⁰⁷

It became evident that Stalin was using the rising in order to achieve his goal, namely purging the AK and establishing his own puppet government. On 29 August, there was another important development when both the British and the US governments eventually decided to grant the AK combat rights.¹⁰⁸ On 31 August, the head of the Polish region PWE, Moray Maclaren acknowledged that broadcasting to Poland was becoming highly problematic as Poles were not only fighting for liberation from Germany, but feared Soviet occupation and were losing trust in the West.¹⁰⁹ He argued that special care should be taken in relation to the reliability of sources, as the communists were giving contradictory accounts of events to the Polish Underground. Yet, the European Service, in accordance with directives, was required to continue reporting that Poles and Russians were fighting together.¹¹⁰

On 29 August, the Polish Service concentrated on reporting the press conference organised by the Polish government at which Mikołajczyk announced that an agreement was going to be

¹⁰⁶ BBC WAC, E2/131/18, 29 August 1944.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 413.

¹⁰⁹ NA, FO 371/39427, PWE Directives for Poland, week 31 August- 6 September 1944.

¹¹⁰ BBC WAC, E2/131/19, 1 September 1944.

reached with the Lublin Committee and that the Polish communist party (PPR) would be included in the future Polish government. However, the Polish-Soviet frontier would be resolved after the war. The conference was in fact organised at the insistence of the British Foreign Office, that the Polish Premier publicly dispel the stories that the Soviets held down the AK.¹¹¹ Mikołajczyk's statement finished with appeals for help not only to Churchill and Roosevelt but also to Stalin. Yet the speech, was reported in full only by Radio Polskie.

On 1 September, the Polish Commander-in-chief, General Kazimierz Sosnowski, issued an Order of the Day. In addressing the Polish Home Army, Sosnowski accused not only the Soviet Union but also Britain for abandoning Poland, concluding that *'if the people of Warsaw... are to be made the victims of mass slaughter –then the consciousness of the whole world will be burdened with a dreadful sin'*.¹¹² His order was reported four days later in full only by Radio Polskie, whilst the Polish Service omitted the above passage and only cited the reference to the sacrifice of the Polish nation. Similar grievances were echoed in a speech delivered by the Polish Minister of Information, Stanisław Kot, on 1 September, commemorating the German attack on Poland and highlighting that the absence of help was *'casts(ing) a tragic shameful shadow on the Allies and their capacity to solve other great problems ahead of them'*.¹¹³ Again, the speech was broadcast in full by Radio Polskie whilst the Polish Service stated simply that *'Professor Kot reviewed the tributes to Poland in the British Press on the 5th anniversary of the outbreak of the war in the Radio Polskie bulletin'*.¹¹⁴ The bulletin followed an appeal from the Polish Pen Club in London to all journalists in Britain to break silence regarding the lack of help for insurgents and an appeal from of the United Committee of the Polish-American Associations to assist Warsawians and for the Soviet Union to change her policy regarding Poland. There was also appeal from the French nation to help Warsaw.

In the fifth week of fighting the Polish Service press review included articles from newspapers such as the *Observer*, the *New York Herald Tribune* and the *Manchester Guardian* which criticised the Soviet Union's conduct towards Poland. The stance of the last two papers' stance was particularly surprising, as they were known previously for supporting Soviet policies. *The Times* was also quoted. The paper, however, argued that the situation in Warsaw was a *'misunderstanding'* and that reports that the Soviet army stopped before the gates of the capital were a rumour. However, a sentence claiming that Soviet *'reluctance'* to help was justified because the Polish Underground was anti-Soviet was redacted by the policy censor.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ BBC WAC, R 28/19/2 News Background Notes, file 2, 29 September 1944.

¹¹² BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, Radio Polskie bulletins, 4:45pm, September 1944.

¹¹³ Ibid, 4:45, 2 September 1944.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 6:15pm.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 7:45pm, 31 August.

In the BBC Home Service, on 30 August, Bór's communiqués appear in the headlines for the first time.¹¹⁶ As in other Services, on 1 September prominence was given to the anniversary of the German attack on Poland. Polish-Soviet relations were discussed in detail whilst reference to Mikołajczyk's speech finished with an appeal to Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt for assistance with the words: *'public opinion is watching'*.¹¹⁷ Whereas on 4 September Warsaw was not mentioned at all, the evening bulletins the next day paid special attention to Sosnowski's previously mentioned Order of the Day and the response from members of the House of Commons and the British press.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, in the fifth week of the rising both the Polish and the Home Service continued to report on the Russian *'methodical'* progress towards the capital. This contradicted a German official report broadcast by Radio Berlin which described the movement of the Red Army as *'strangely sluggish'*.¹¹⁹

Week 6- 12 September

At that point, maintaining the morale of the population of Warsaw became a significant issue. On 6 September the Polish Service broadcast letters from King George VI and Roosevelt to the people of Warsaw and further appeals for help from the Scottish Committee for Polish Freedom.¹²⁰ The next day, the Polish Service also reported the *'sharp attack'* of the Lublin Committee on the Polish government, but no details were given.¹²¹ The PWE directives for the Polish Service in this period emphasised that *'any attempts to justify or explain the Warsaw rising (or) the inadequacy of the support which it received and its tragic failure'* should be avoided whilst Sosnowski's Order of the Day was to be played down as there was a danger of making him a hero given his popularity in Poland.¹²² More importantly, the articles regarding conditions in the parts of Poland administrated by the Lublin Committee should be suppressed and, instead, the Polish broadcasts should concentrate on the gallant fight of the Polish Army Forces in the West. At the same time, the central PWE directives stressed that the European broadcasts should avoid any explanations or justifications as to *'the failure of the rising becomes apparent'*.¹²³

Moreover, Newsome while maintaining that *'there will be no appeasement towards Russia'*, argued that:

¹¹⁶ BBC WAC, BBC Home Service, 6pm, 30 August 1944.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 1 -3 September.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 6pm, 9pm, 5 September 1944.

¹¹⁹ Cited in Davies, op. cit., p. 331.

¹²⁰ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins., 5:45pm, 6 September 1944.

¹²¹ Ibid, 5:45pm, 7 September 1944.

¹²² NA, FO 371/39427, PWE Directives for Polish Service, week start 7-15 September 1944.

¹²³ BBC WAC, E2/128/8, Central directives, PWE/PID, file 8, week 7-13 September 1944.

*'If the situation in Poland will not progress satisfactorily, this is not to be attributed to a Soviet desire to dominate Poland but to suspicions in Moscow –which have not been unfed –that there among some Poles of influence extreme nationalistic tendencies which take the form of hostility to Russia. (...) Any Polish Government cleared of all such suspicious will be entirely free to maintain a political, social, economic system which owns more inspiration to the West than to the East'.*¹²⁴

The treatment of the AK soldiers by the NKVD and the Polish communists became a particularly difficult subject to deal with. On 18 August, Edward Raczyński, handed Eden a report nearly 10 pages long prepared by the Polish Underground with detailed accounts of crimes committed by the Soviets and the Polish communists against Polish citizens and, in particular, on AK members.¹²⁵ Most shocking, however, was the cablegram sent to London on 19 August, claiming that the Soviets were filling the concentration camp at Majdanek, previously liberated from Germans, with AK soldiers.¹²⁶ According to reports monitored by the BBC from the Polish station Błyskawica, from the beginning of August, 2,700 officers and soldiers as well as representatives of the political parties in Poland were imprisoned in Majdanek.¹²⁷ None of these reports were made public.

Instead, following the PWE directives, the Polish Service gave prominence to Syrop's dispatches from Belgium whilst Sosnowski's attacks on Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt were silenced. On 12 September, however, the Polish Service aired the Polish government's official statement countering the Soviet accusations of Bór's failure to inform the Soviet High Command of the exact dropping points. It included reference to Mikołajczyk's conversation with Stalin and information passed to Moscow by the British military mission.¹²⁸ In the Home Service, the BBC kept quiet on Polish-Soviet relations; between 8 and 10 September the rising was not even mentioned once whereas the reports from the eastern front discussed only the liberation of Rumania.

In the press review, the Polish Service quoted newspapers which both supported and criticised the conduct of the USSR towards the rising. It included reference to the *New Statement* claims that the Polish government had given Stalin reason to be suspicious, but also to the Bartlett article in the *News Chronicle* on 6 September which pointed out that the Soviet leader's behaviour was unacceptable while nonetheless condemning Sosnowski's speech resulting in

¹²⁴ BBC WAC E2/131/19, 10 and 11 September 1944.

¹²⁵ Raczyński to Eden, 18 August, in Czarnocka et al, op. cit., nr .912, pp. 183-191.

¹²⁶ Szef Sztabu Okręgu Lubin do dowódcy AK: aresytowania AK na Lubelszczyźnie –prośba o wytyczne, 19 August, in ibid, nr. 876, pp. 148-9.

¹²⁷ IWM, Duxford, J75, 23 August 1944.

¹²⁸ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 7:45 pm, 12 September 1944.

support of the anti-Soviet outlook of London Poles. Most of Bartlett's article, however, was redacted by the censor, and only his view on Sosnowski's order was reported.¹²⁹

Week 13-19 September

On 13 September Stalin eventually agreed for the allied planes to fly over Warsaw. On the same day, the Polish Service broadcast messages of appreciation from Poland and the Polish government thanking British, American, Polish and South African airmen for delivering food and ammunition. Nothing, however, was mentioned about the insufficiency of those supplies.¹³⁰ On 15 September Stalin's official announcement was transmitted on the capture of Praga by the Red Army and the Polish troops. The Polish troops to which Stalin had referred, however, were the First Army, created in the USSR in 1943. As already mentioned, the European Service directives instructed all editors to play the Polish and Soviet anthems when the Red Army entered the capital.¹³¹ The bulletins also referred to Soviet airmen supplying food and ammunition. These supplies, however, were dropped in wheat bags without parachutes, resulting in their spilling when hitting the ground. The evening broadcasts included the Lublin Committee appeal to Warsawians:

*'help is coming from the heroic Red Army and Kosciuszko division. (...) whatever the intentions of those who started the rising prematurely and without agreement with the high command of the Red Army (...) we are with you, with all our hearts'.*¹³²

On 16 September the Polish Service reported that Bór had established close contact with the units of the Red Army.¹³³ This information, however, was untrue. In the seventh week of the rising communication with the Russian commander, Rokossovsky, still had not been established and Bór asked for the Polish government to pass on his message via the Soviet embassy in London. The Soviet ambassador, Victor Lebedev, refused to accept the note; it was eventually sent by the British Foreign Office to Moscow, but it had no impact.¹³⁴

On 18 September, the Polish Service concentrated on reporting the dropping of supplies by the USA Air Force. By this point, however, most of the city was in German hands, and most of the containers failed to be delivered to insurgents. The Polish Prime Minister's speech thanking allies for help and assistance was broadcast next day, referring to Warsaw as a *'symbol of the united efforts of the British Empire, USSR and USA'*.¹³⁵ This speech, however, was not his idea.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 6 September, 1944.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 13-14 September, 1944.

¹³¹ BBC WAC, E2/131/ 18, 16 September 1944.

¹³² BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 5:45pm, 15 September 1944.

¹³³ Ibid, 4:45pm, 17 September, 1944.

¹³⁴ Mikołajczyk to Lebedev, 18 September 1944, in Czarnocka et al, op. cit., nr. 1098, p. 346.

¹³⁵ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 10:15pm, 19 September 1944.

After Stalin had agreed to British and American pilots using his air bases, the Foreign Office had approached the Polish government to give a statement ‘*outright*’ that HMG had done everything they could to help the insurgents.¹³⁶ Mikołajczyk’s speech was then submitted to the Foreign Office to be approved.¹³⁷ As Bell observes, the fact that the Stalin allowed for the allied aircraft to eventually land on their airfield was considered in Whitehall as a big success and all efforts were employed to present it in the press and the BBC as the symbol of allied unity. For the same reasons, the Soviet refusal for a second operation was not released to the media.¹³⁸

The coverage of the rising by the Home Service was similar. It was in this period that Warsaw was finally given adequate attention. Between 13 and 17 September the fighting in the capital made headlines every single day in nearly every bulletin. However, it seems that the rising was given prominence due to the change in the Russian policy towards insurgents rather than in recognition of the events in Warsaw. The role of the Polish Underground was underplayed. According to the broadcasts there was no sign of the AK soldiers in the suburbs of Praga; it was the Red and Polish Army, referred to as Berling’s Army, that had fought Germans. It was added that Soviet troops were greatly welcomed and their bravery acknowledge by the Warsawians.¹³⁹ It is apparent, however, that the BBC relied heavily on Soviet sources as the reports from Bór differed. By 18 September Warsaw was again forgotten and nothing was reported on the situation until 22 September.

Week 20-26 September

Between 20 and 23 September, the Polish Service reported that the Russians were helping the Polish Home Army and a day later, according to the Bór communiqué, the Polish Underground had allegedly established liaison with the Soviets in three main areas of the Polish defence in the capital. In the press review, prominence was given to the Polish newspapers printed in London, such as the *Polish Daily Worker* and *Polish Daily*, which argued that the ‘*eyes of the world were concentrated on Warsaw*’.¹⁴⁰ This, however, was not true; by this point it had become clear that the British could do nothing more for Warsaw and the upcoming collapse of the rising had become a rather uncomfortable subject, discussed less than enthusiastically in the press or on the BBC Home Service where the headlines were at this point occupied with the victories in France and Belgium.¹⁴¹ On 26 September, in his speech to the House of Commons,

¹³⁶ Bell, op. cit., p. 160.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid, pp. 161-162.

¹³⁹ BBC WAC, BBC Home Service Bulletins, 7am, 8am, 1pm, 16 September 1944.

¹⁴⁰ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 5:20am, 26 September 1944.

¹⁴¹ BBC WAC BBC Home Service Bulletins, 24-26 September, 1944.

Churchill attempted to justify not only the British but also the Soviet failure to assist the Polish Home Army:

*'HMG always made it clear that we were too far to support the general rising to Poland (...) Great Britain always supported cooperation between Poland and the Soviet Union despite formidable and practical difficulties (and)... we furnished military supplies by air' (...). As soon as the government learnt that the rising had begun they expressed to the Soviet government that they would bring such aid to the Polish insurgents as lay in their power. The Soviet armies were at that time engaged in heavy fighting to the east and north east of Warsaw but when operational plans permitted, they sent supplies to the Polish forces and provided air cover. (...) This assistance had been gratefully acknowledged by the Polish Prime Minister and the Polish Commander-in Chief in Warsaw'.*¹⁴²

Ultimately, the speech which Mikołajczyk gave on 19 September was used against him. In contrast, Churchill's speech was cited in full in both the BBC Home and the Polish Service. It was emphasised that the RAF and USA Air Force had played a great part in supplying the Polish capital. This led the Home Service to conclude that Sosnowski was wrong to criticise the British and American governments for not helping Poland.¹⁴³

Week 27 September-2 October

In the last week of the rising the headlines of the Polish Service broadcasts were devoted to Churchill's speech and special emphasis was put on the Red Army's '*great assistance*' to the insurgents.¹⁴⁴ The Lord Mayor of London's appeal to the Mayor of Warsaw was quoted: '*We in London should not rest easy if we did not know that every possible effort was being made to send help to your tragic city.*'¹⁴⁵ The press review of the Polish Service gave prominence to *The Times* article reporting that '*the House cheered loudly when Mr Churchill prefaced an answer on Warsaw*'.¹⁴⁶ The broadcast further concentrated on coverage of the question session following Churchill's speech. Not all Members of Parliament, however, were content with the HMG policy with regard to Poland. Eden, who took charge of answering the questions, followed the same line as Churchill and emphasised that the British government did everything that it could.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, he argued that there was never a plan for HMG to assist the rising.

¹⁴² BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 6:45pm, 26 September 1944.

¹⁴³ BBC WAC, BBC Home Service, 6pm, 9pm, 19 September 1944.

¹⁴⁴ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 5:20 pm, 27 and 28 September, 1944.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 6:45pm, 27 September 1944.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 27- 28 September 1944, all bulletins.

Eden's reply to Sir A. Knox's question why Russians did not help the insurgents is worth quoting in full:

'My honourable friend is asking me why one of our allies did not give assistance to another of our allies. This is a question which might well be discussed in this House. But, I would rather give consideration to my reply'.¹⁴⁸

The Foreign Office Minister further denied that the NKVD was arresting members of the AK: he had raised this matter with Stalin who had informed him that it was a false accusation. But he added that *'in the current situation of delicacy (there is) a difficulty in asserting the facts'*. In his conclusion, Eden clarified that, after all, it *'is not HMG's business to be responsible or get involved in the disagreement between two allies'*.¹⁴⁹

On 28 September the Polish Service coverage focused on passages from Churchill's speech arguing for Poland to accept the border line proposed by Stalin who *'wants a free and independent neighbour'*.¹⁵⁰ The majority of the London press agreed with Churchill; the Polish Service also stressed that the USSR deserved a friendly neighbour. Two days later Soviet sources were cited, labelling Bór as a criminal who should be arrested as well as *The Times* article claiming that the Russians had provided supplies for Warsawians and blaming the AK for making the *'irresponsible'* decision to start uprising.¹⁵¹ Yet the press review omitted any reference to the rising, focusing on developments on the western front. The same line was followed by the Home Service and from 27-29 September the rising was not mentioned at all. On 2 October the BBC reported that the Soviet Air force was very active in Warsaw. In the broadcast to Europe the BBC did not give any prominence to the situation in Warsaw as Newsome argued that *'the best wisdom (was) silence'*.¹⁵²

The fall of Warsaw was reported for the first time by the Polish Section on 3 October at 5:45 pm. Only German crimes were discussed. On the Home Service the information about the capitulation did not come from Polish but Soviet sources. It was followed by quotes from TASS that Bór was absent throughout the rising.¹⁵³ When addressing the reasons for the rising's failure, it was announced that the Germans were too strong and that the Allies and the USSR did everything in their power to help.¹⁵⁴ The Polish Service press review the next day included an article in *the Manchester Guardian*, criticising all allies for the policy towards the insurgents.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 6:45pm, 28 September 1944.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 1:15am, 30 September 1944.

¹⁵² BBC WAC, E2 131/ 19, 1 October 1944.

¹⁵³ BBC WAC, BBC Home Service Bulletins, 1pm, 3 October 1944.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 6pm.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 7:45pm, 4 October 1944.

Yet, discussion on the causes of the collapse of the rising became an uncomfortable subject: in the following days the Polish Service focused on reporting on the western front, omitting any reference to the political reasons or impact of the failure of the rising.

Conclusion

In order to maintain the unity of the coalition, the BBC, acting as the mouthpiece of the government, suppressed information about the retreat of the Red Army and continued to give false information about its progress. Stalin's refusal to allow the Allied air forces to land on Soviet bases led Nicholas to argue that during the rising the '*British government deliberately misled the BBC and the press while vainly attempting to coerce Russia by threatening to release the truth*'.¹⁵⁶ The impartiality of the Polish Service was compromised by withholding accurate information about the Red Army progress and the political motives which lay behind Stalin's decision to withdraw his troops. Eden admitted in his memoirs that, although the Germans held up the Soviet advance '*Stalin (...) was content to see the Underground and intellectual leaders of Poland destroyed*'.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, contrary to what was claimed after the war, the rising had not been given prominence on all BBC Services.¹⁵⁸ It made headlines twice on the Home Service, on one occasion about its collapse. The coverage was better in the European Service but even Macdonald admitted that it was significantly toned down. The PWE Polish Region directives did not address the subject of the rising until 17 August. The selectiveness of the material used in the Polish Service broadcasts also demonstrates that information which threw light on Soviet Union political aspirations were expunged. Moreover, the press review was not, as it was claimed after the war, objective. In fact, the suppression of the news in this period led the head of the PWE Polish region, Moray MacLaren, to admit after the rising had collapsed, that the Poles were betrayed.¹⁵⁹ Feeling personally responsible, he suffered a nervous breakdown and retired from the political world.¹⁶⁰ The 'Battle of Warsaw' became the prologue to the Cold War; it was at this point that Stalin demonstrated to the West his uncompromising position on the Soviet political sphere of influence. As Macdonald observed: '*the Cold War was simply the process by which the West lost its illusions about Stalin's policy*'.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Nicholas, op. cit., p. 171.

¹⁵⁷ Eden, A., *The Eden Memories: The Reckoning* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 472.

¹⁵⁸ BBC WAC, E1/1147.

¹⁵⁹ Sykes, C., *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (London: Penguin books, 1985), p. 390.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ MPC, Macdonald's notes, undated.

Censorship and propaganda October 1944-July 1945

Introduction

This chapter explores a period after the collapse of the Warsaw rising in October 1944 to the German surrender and the allies' withdrawal of the recognition of the Polish government in London in July 1945. In political and diplomatic terms, the collapse of the Warsaw Rising had catastrophic consequences. Over 15,000 Polish Home Army (AK) soldiers were killed in action, 5,000 wounded and approximately the same number were taken into captivity by the Germans.¹ As a result, the Underground organisation, and particularly its communication structure, was seriously interrupted and the majority of the posts in Warsaw monitoring the BBC were destroyed. Aware of the situation, the head of the Polish Region PWE, Moray MacLaren, acknowledged on 12 October 1944 that they could no longer rely on the Underground for the distribution of the bulletins, declaring that this would affect their policy towards the Polish audience.² Because the broadcasts were no longer directed to professional listeners, but to *'the ordinary man (...) who [was] not well informed'*, he argued that *'we do not have to be afraid anymore of talking down to our audience'* and *'subtleties'* should be avoided as *'not much should be expected'* from listeners in Poland.³

In the eastern part of Poland administrated by the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PCNL), also known as the Lublin Committee, Polish communists took steps aimed at the interruption of communication between the east and the west of Poland and, more importantly, between Poland and the government-in-exile. Passed on 30 October 1944 by the Lublin Committee, the Defence of State decree introduced new categories of crimes punishable by death, notably, possession of, or knowledge of someone who possessed, a radio receiver.⁴ According to Underground reports, people caught listening or in possession of private radio were to be *'shot in the head on spot'* but, listening to official announcements in public or work places was allowed and encouraged.⁵ Moreover, in October NKVD launched operation *'Sejm'*, aimed at the liquidation of the Polish Underground and targeting any signs of nationalism.⁶ In December the new leader of the Polish Home Army (AK), General Okulicki, who succeeded Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski after the fall of the Warsaw rising, cabled the Polish government in

¹ Kirchmayer, J., *Powstanie Warszawskie* (Warsaw: Wiedza i Książka, 1978), p. 576.

² NA, FO 371/39427, PWE Directives for Polish Service, week 12-18 October 1944.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Sword K., *Deportation and Exile: Poles in the Soviet Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1996), pp. 159-60.

⁵ Komendant Białegostoku do Komendanta AK w sprawie terroru NKVD, 13 March 1945, in Czarnocka, H., et al., *Armia Krajowa w Dokumentach: October 1944-July 1945*, vol.V (London: Ossolineum, 1981), nr.1460, p. 329.

⁶ Kochanski, H., *The Eagle Unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), p. 432.

London warning that NKVD was more efficient than the Gestapo.⁷ Although the report was passed to Eden, the information remained concealed from the public. What is more, the Polish paper *Wiadomości Polskie* [Polish News], printed in London, was closed down after publishing an article about the Polish Home Army soldiers arrested and sent to Siberia.⁸ Questioned in the House of Commons, Eden also denied repeatedly until the end of the war, having any knowledge of crimes and deportations for which the Lublin Committee and the NKVD were responsible.⁹ The same approach was to be taken by the Polish Service; the PWE advised that the information about disturbances or acts of terrorism in the areas administrated by the Lublin Committee should be avoided.¹⁰ The Polish Service followed the PWE guidelines and did not report on these issues.¹¹

The Moscow Conference

After the rising, the relationship between Poland and the Soviet Union remained tense. The Polish government attitude regarding the acceptance of the Curzon line remained unchanged. However, the Polish Prime Minister was genuinely anxious that some compromise should be reached as it was not only the territorial losses which were now at stake, but also the independence of Poland. Persuaded by Churchill, Mikołajczyk agreed to meet with Stalin, although he made it clear that his position regarding the Polish-Soviet border remained unchanged. By the same token, Stalin, as Kochanski points out:

*'had not budged from his demand for recognition of the Curzon Line and, now that he had the Lublin Committee doing his bidding in Poland, he only needed to be seen to be talking to Mikołajczyk in order to satisfy the British and American governments; he had no intention of making a deal with the Polish Government in London'.*¹²

Nevertheless, both sides agreed to discuss Polish affairs and between 13 and 16 October 1944, representatives of the British and Polish governments and of the PCNL met in Moscow. Churchill and Eden were joined by Mikołajczyk and two other members of the Polish Cabinet namely, Stanisław Grabski and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tadeusz Romer, whilst the PCNL was represented by Bolesław Bierut and Edward Osóbka-Morawski. Kochanski argues that Roosevelt did not attend the conference since it was taking place only few days before the presidential election in the USA and it was felt that his presence could have had a negative

⁷ Generał Okulicki to Prezydenta: Sytuacja wojskowa i polityczna w kraju, 9 December 1944, in Czarnocka et al., nr. 1344, p. 181.

⁸ Karski, J., *Great Powers and Poland* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985) pp. 489-90.

⁹ Davis, N., *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw* (London: Macmillan, 2003).

¹⁰ NA, FO/ 371/39427, PWE Directives for Polish Service, 2 October, 1944.

¹¹ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, October-November 1944.

¹² Kochanski, op. cit., p. 454.

influence on Polish-American voters.¹³ Yet his absence also demonstrates that he was unwilling to keep his promise to support the Polish government or to admit that he had already agreed to Stalin's territorial demands.

The meeting of the Polish, Soviet and British representatives was given prominence in the Polish Service and it was emphasised that the conference proceeded in a friendly atmosphere.¹⁴ The TASS communiqué was quoted, stressing the Soviet hosts' welcoming approach towards their guests. Nevertheless, the proceedings of the conference were kept secret. Nor were details given after the conference ended. On 21 October the Polish Service reported that important progress had been made regarding the Polish question, but what exactly it meant for the future of Poland was not revealed.¹⁵ According to the same broadcast the discussions had '*notably narrowed differences and dispelled misconceptions*', adding: '*conversations are continuing on outstanding points*'.¹⁶ The British involvement in those negotiations was an important factor in political and diplomatic terms; it was recognised that the Polish broadcasts should highlight the fact that Britain showed great interest in Polish affairs and, more importantly, that Stalin welcomed the HMG position.¹⁷ Once again the Polish nation was assured of Britain's strong position in diplomatic negotiations with Stalin, reinforcing the conviction that, as long as Churchill would not agree to the USSR demands, any changes to Poland's territory or government could not be enforced.

Similar treatment was given to the meeting between Mikołajczyk and Bierut. It was reported that '*the conference helped the Polish representatives to ascertain each other's views*' and that the Polish Prime Minister was returning to London to seek Cabinet authorisation to resume the talks with the Lublin Committee; again no details as to what was discussed or agreed were given.¹⁸ In the following days the Polish Service continued to report on the positive outcome of the conference. An article in *The Times* on 21 October was quoted claiming that Mikołajczyk and Stalin got on well together and that Mikołajczyk '*strove earnestly for settlement*'.¹⁹ According to the Polish Minister of Information, Adam Pragier, all the British and American press reported that the talks were successful. Polish listeners were also reminded that Stalin's main interest was a free and independent Poland and his demand for the Curzon line was justified. However, this optimistic tone was overshadowed by the Lublin Committee's statement from previous day with the headline '*violent attacks on Mikolajczyk*' which criticised the Polish Premier and blamed his government and him personally for acts of terrorism in the liberated

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 9pm, 19 October 1944.

¹⁵ Ibid, 2:15am, 1 October 1944.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ BBC WAC E2/131/19, European News Directives, 21 October 1944.

¹⁸ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 9pm, 20 October 1944.

¹⁹ Ibid, 2:15am, 21 October 1944.

areas of Poland.²⁰ At the same time the Polish government-in-exile was accused for misleading international opinion by giving a contradictory account of events.²¹

In fact, while no progress was made nor compromise reached during the Moscow conference, the Polish government's misconceptions were clearly dispelled when Mikołajczyk was informed by Molotov that both Churchill and Roosevelt had already agreed to the Curzon Line in November 1943 in Tehran. He was also offered a position as the Prime Minister in the future government by the PCNL chairman. The price, however, was very high: 75% of places were to be given to representatives of the PCNL whilst only 25% to the non-communist parties.²² A positive outcome of the conference, however, was that Stalin assured Mikołajczyk in a private conversation that Poland would remain as a democratic state; according to the Soviet leader there was *'no place for communism in Poland'*.²³ Although Mikołajczyk rejected the PCNL offer in relation to the composition of the future government, unlike the Polish Council of Ministers, he was willing to accept the Curzon Line. The crisis within the Polish Cabinet caused by this difference of opinion and which led eventually to Mikołajczyk's resignation was subjected to censorship and suppressed from broadcasts.²⁴

Criticism of Polish 'stubbornness'

On 27 October the Polish Service broadcast Churchill's official statement to the House of Commons regarding the HMG position on Poland and the outcome of talks at Kremlin. Although his speech started optimistically, emphasising that the agreement between Poland and the Soviet Union was nearer, he blamed the Polish government for the current state of affairs, arguing that

*'had the Polish government taken the advice that the British government had given them at the beginning of the year, the complication produced by the formation of the PCNL would not have arisen'.*²⁵

The need for compromise and acceptance of Stalin's terms was once more highlighted, as well as the fact that it was in the interest of the Great Powers to reconstruct the Polish state:

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Pragier, A., *Czas Przeszły Dokonany* (London: Świdorski, 1966), p. 847.

²² Churchill's letter to Roosevelt, 22 October 1944, in Churchill, W., *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, vol.6, (Boston: Houghton, 1954), p. 209.

²³ Rozmowa Premiera Mikołajczyka ze Stalinem na Kremlu, 16 October 1944, in Czarnocka et al, op. cit., nr. 1260, p.80.

²⁴ BBC WAC E2/131/19, 22 October 1944.

²⁵ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 7:45pm, 27 October 1944.

*'It is a comfort to feel that Britain and Soviet Russia (...) and the United States, are all firmly agreed on the recreation of a strong, free, independent, sovereign Poland loyal to the Allies and friendly to her great neighbour and liberator, Russia'.*²⁶

But he also reaffirmed that the government-in-exile was the only legitimate Polish governmental body recognised by HMG.

Despite the fact that Churchill was very clear that Poland had to compromise, the Commander of the Polish Home Army (AK), General Okulicki was of opinion that the British government had only agreed to the Soviet demands because defeating Germany was its priority and that, after this was achieved, all concessions would come to an end.²⁷ According to his propaganda directives, with the increased British influence in Europe, the support for Moscow would become more entrenched.²⁸ Therefore the attitude towards Britain of the Polish Underground remained unchanged. As the Polish Home Army was faithfully fighting the Germans, Okulicki argued, so the British government should fulfil the promises given to Poland.²⁹

The Underground seems to have misinterpreted and misjudged the British government attitude towards the Polish problem and to its relationship with the USSR. Not only had Churchill clearly stated that the Polish government must accept Soviet demands but the same argument was expressed in the PWE directives for Polish Service with particular emphasis upon the fact that

*'the recent Moscow discussions should be represented to have fulfilled a useful purpose in convincing all parties participating in them of the inadvisability of the further prolongation of the present inconclusive situation in Poland and Polish-Russian affairs'.*³⁰

Moreover, the official line of the British government was to be plainly indicated in the BBC Polish broadcasts, notably, that *'any settlement of outstanding disputes must involve territorial revision'.*³¹ However, a significant influence on the Underground's interpretation of the Polish-Soviet relations at that time was the Polish government in London belief that the fate of eastern Poland could still be changed; the Polish Cabinet persisted in its refusal to compromise, on the grounds that Roosevelt had not expressed his position on the Curzon Line.³² Mikołajczyk

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Okulicki do Prezydenta, 9 December 1944, in Czarnocka et al, op. cit., nr.1344, p. 177.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ NA, FO 371/39427, PWE Directives for Polish Service, week 2-8 November 1944.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Duraczyński, E, *Rząd Polski na Uchodźstwie: 1939-1945* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1993), pp. 410-15.

disillusioned with the current situation and isolated in his views, resigned from office on 24 November 1944.

The response to Arciszewski's government

Mikołajczyk was succeeded by a member of the Socialist Party, Tomasz Arciszewski, evacuated from Poland just before the outbreak of the Warsaw rising. Churchill did not hesitate to openly express his disapproval concerning the changes in the Polish government.³³ He knew that Stalin would use Mikołajczyk's resignation as an argument to demonstrate the instability of the Polish government-in-exile (see chapter 3). Churchill's views were echoed in the PWE directives for the Polish Service, stating that HMG could not give the same level of support to the newly formed Polish government led by Tomasz Arciszewski.³⁴ The Polish Service was also to report on the PCNL attacks on the new Polish government.³⁵ However, a week later, Maclaren informed the Polish Service Editor, Gregory Macdonald, that in fact there was no clear policy regarding how to report on changes within the Polish government and only violent anti-Russian talks would be censored.³⁶

The future of the Polish state continued to be central to British foreign affairs. There was a widespread consensus among British politicians that the future of Poland and, more importantly diplomatic relations between Poland and the Soviet Union would, if unresolved, have a far reaching negative impact on United Nations' cooperation and post war peace in the world.³⁷ The British government also felt obligated to restore Poland's independence; after all, it was claimed, Britain went to war because of Poland.

Umiastowski argues that the need for the support of public opinion for government policy was the main reason why Churchill opened a debate on the Polish question in the House of Commons on 15 December 1944.³⁸ Rather than presenting new arguments, the Prime Minister proceeded by quoting from his own speeches of February 1944 on his return from Tehran and from a more recent speech in October 1944 – in both cases presenting the same argument, notably, that Poland had to accept the Curzon Line.³⁹ Referring to the Red Army sacrifice, he argued that Poland ought to '*make the great gift to Russia*'.⁴⁰ However, Churchill also expressed

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ NA, FO 371/39427, PWE Special Directive for Polish Service, 30 November 1944.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ BBC WAC E1/1149/2, file 1b-2, Polish Service, Maclaren to Macdonald, 4 December 1944.

³⁷ Umiastowski, R., *Poland, Russia and Great Britain: 1941-45* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1946), pp. 356-60.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Hansard, HC Debate, vol. 406 cc1478-578, 15 December 1944.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

his doubt that the PCNL was representative and lawful, emphasising that it was necessary for the Polish government-in-exile to resume talks with Stalin. The debate which followed the Premier's speech elicited great support for Poland from the members of the House of Commons and others who were invited, such as Miss Rathbone representing the Combined English Universities or Mr. Pickthorn from Cambridge University. Although there were some differences with regard to the future of the Polish-Soviet broader, there was consensus regarding the PCNL, which was labelled as '*bogus*'.⁴¹ Other significant facts emerged during the debate, notably, that all hopes for any kind of progress were focused on Mikołajczyk, described by Churchill as '*the only light which burns for Poland in the immediate future*'.⁴²

In fact, Arciszewski had not been mentioned in his speech at all whilst those who rejected Soviet terms were labelled as '*obstinate and inflexible (...) whose veto was like the former Liberum Veto, which played so great a part in the ruin of Poland*'.⁴³ This contradicted Arciszewski's report back to Poland. Not only did Arciszewski not refer to Churchill's speech in detail but he also argued that the Members of the British Parliament expressed favourable opinions about '*us*'.⁴⁴ Moreover, in the same report, the Polish Prime Minister stated that the US Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius, was in support of Polish government policy regarding the border issue and had assured them that the independence of Poland was a US government war objective.⁴⁵ However, as Mr. Pickthorn had highlighted during the debate, the Polish government seemed oblivious of the American policy outlined earlier by Stettinius, that

'the specific question of a guarantee of the Polish frontier by this Government (USA government) was not, and could not have been, at issue since this Government's traditional policy of not guaranteeing frontiers in Europe is well known'.⁴⁶

This statement was not cabled to the Polish Underground leaders in view of the persistent belief of the Polish government-in-exile that the USA had a decisive voice in the Polish-Soviet matters. Although Arciszewski was right in asserting that Poland received great support in the House of Commons and, more importantly, that Soviet political manoeuvring had been discussed, no steps were proposed in the debate as to how to address this issue; the main focus was on the question of continuity of HMG involvement in Polish-Soviet affairs. Kochanski goes as far as to assert that Churchill in his speech on 15 December '*effectively washed his hands of the Poles*'.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Arciszewski do Jankowskiego, 25 December 1944, in Czarnocka et al, op. cit., nr. 1363, p. 207.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Hansard, HC Debate, 15 Dec 1944, op. cit.

⁴⁷ Kochanski, op. cit., p. 460.

Unfortunately the Polish Service bulletins from December 1944 did not survive the war, but it can be assumed that Churchill's speech was aired, because the BBC European Service directives emphasised the necessity of broadcasting it across all the BBC stations.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, it was noted that, since his statement had been widely criticised in the Polish, British and American press for contravening the Atlantic Charter which guaranteed no territorial changes without full consent of countries involved, only quotes from the British press showing the '*wisdom, justice and consistency of the British government policy*' should be included.⁴⁹

On 31 December the PCNL transformed itself into the Provisional Government of Poland [Tymczasowy Rząd Polski], recognised on 4 January 1945 by the USSR as the only legitimate government of Poland (see chapter 3). In the Polish Service broadcasts prominence was to be given to the fact that Britain still recognised the Polish government-in-exile whilst the PCNL transformation into the Provisional government should be '*played down*'.⁵⁰ In addition, Mikołajczyk's article in *The Times*, in which he assured readers that Poland would not become a communist state and emphasised the necessity of reaching settlement with the USSR before the end of the war, was to be aired across all BBC channels.⁵¹ Furthermore, on 12 January 1945 the Red Army resumed its offensive on Warsaw and on 17 January Warsaw was '*liberated*'. Although the directives stressed that the Soviet offensive should be presented as '*well organised*' and there should be no mention that it was due to German miscalculations, the word '*liberation*' should not be used in the bulletins when referring to Warsaw.⁵² Listeners were also to be '*reminded discreetly or led to remind themselves*' about the important part, played by the American army.⁵³

Censoring of the communication with Poland

By mid-December 1944 the Foreign Office became anxious about the exchange of information between the Polish government in London and Poland, and messages which could be considered anti-Soviet were seen as a particular threat to British-Soviet diplomatic relations. Therefore, in the light of the upcoming conference of the Big Three, it was felt that all necessary steps should be taken in order to control the Polish communication channels. On 22 December 1944 Eden informed Edward Raczynski, that all communication between Poland and the government-in-exile would be subjected to HMG censorship.⁵⁴ Eden argued:

⁴⁸ BBC WAC, E2 /131/20, European News Directives, 16 December 1944.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ BBC WAC E2/131/21, European News Directives, 3 January 1945.

⁵¹ Ibid, 6 January 1945.

⁵² Ibid, 17 and 18 January 1945.

⁵³ Ibid, 1 February 1945.

⁵⁴ Eden to Raczynski, in Czarnocka et al, op. cit., nr. 1361, p. 202.

*'not that a ban should be placed upon all communication to Poland, but simply that (...) control should be exercised so that His Majesty's Government is aware of all the messages that pass between Poland and this country'.*⁵⁵

On 27 December, however, the Foreign Office requested that all communication with Russian-occupied Poland must cease.⁵⁶ The exchange of information with German occupied territory was allowed but instead, of the previous arrangement with the SOE, when the messages were *'post-censored'*, the request was made for all information to be censored prior to sending, including the material carried by couriers. A few weeks later, although the ban on communication with the Polish territory occupied by the Soviets was lifted, the pre-censorship remained.⁵⁷ Eden highlighted that nothing could be said that in anyway could upset Stalin, especially in the time before conference of the *'Big Three'* at Yalta.⁵⁸ After the conference had started, telegraphic communication with Soviet occupied Poland was prohibited again but, as Raczyński observes, nothing was said about cables from Poland.⁵⁹ Although communication with German occupied Poland was permitted, as late as a month after the conference was over, the Polish Underground complained that the Polish government in London had not informed them about the plans for the future *or 'maybe the government did not have a plan?'*⁶⁰ This demonstrates the extent to which censorship was exercised, and more importantly, that the Underground – and consequently the Polish nation – had to rely on Polish broadcasts from London for information; however, it should be recalled that all the speeches of Polish government officials were subject to the Foreign Office censorship.

The Yalta Conference

During the conference of the Big Three held at Yalta, also known as the Crimea Conference, which took place between 4 and 11 February 1945, the main topic on the agenda was the future of the Polish state. The agreement, made without the Polish government-in-exile present or consenting, reaffirmed the Soviet right to the Curzon Line and outlined a plan for the creation of the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity in Poland, which was to be based on the existing Provisional government in Poland but reorganised *'on a border democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from abroad'*.⁶¹ The ambassadors of the USSR, the USA and Great Britain, namely Molotov, Harriman and Clark Kerr respectively, were held responsible for supervising the meeting of all parties involved and the *'reorganisation'* of the Polish government which to take place in Moscow. After this

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Perkins to Colonel Utnik, 27 December 1944, *ibid.*, nr. 1365, p. 209.

⁵⁷ Okulicki do Centrali, 16 January 1945, *ibid.*, nr. 1386, p. 233.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Rozmowa Raczyńskiego z Warnerem, 9 February 1945, *ibid.*, nr 1419, p. 271.

⁶⁰ Delegat Rządu do Premiera, 11 March 1945, *ibid.*, nr. 1455, p. 324.

⁶¹ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 12-13 February 1945.

reorganisation had been achieved, the newly established Polish Provisional Government would be pledged to hold free and '*unfettered*' elections as soon as possible on the basis of universal suffrage and secret ballot.⁶² It was also stressed that all democratic and anti-Nazi Parties had the right to take part and put forward their candidates. The Yalta declaration concluded that only then would the British, American and Soviet governments establish diplomatic relations with the newly formed Polish government.⁶³

Interestingly, however, the future of the Polish government-in-exile had already been discussed in January 1945 by the BBC. In a document entitled *Guidelines from the BBC News Room*, there was discussion of a memorandum from the Polish Ambassador in London, Edward Raczyński, delivered to the British Under-Secretary of State for the Foreign Office, Sir Alexander Cadogan, and, in particular, his proposal to create the International Committee or Commission to govern Poland until the end of the war and his argument that no territorial changes should place until after the war.⁶⁴ The author of this guidelines, stated that the British government would turn down Raczyński's suggestions; instead the plan was to '*build up Mikołajczyk and send him to the Lublin Poles and so eventually to wash out the Poles in London, whom we now recognise*'. He further added that '*this line suits Russians who find Lublin convenient, capable of strengthening and general improvement*'.⁶⁵

The Polish Service reported the Yalta declaration in detail. Although the Polish Service Editor, Gregory MacDonald, was briefed by the Foreign Office on how to report on the agreement and told not only to present it in a positive light but more importantly to recommend it to Poles, he refused to do so.⁶⁶ As Macdonald recalls:

'On the principle that the truth must be told we reported it faithfully to Poland, quoting newspaper comments for and against it. But no single talk was ever broadcast in Polish recommending the Yalta Agreement to Polish listeners, although it was the policy of the major Allies, because no broadcaster in London had a right to dictate to Poles in a matter which they saw as a vital national interest'.⁶⁷

Moreover, talking about his job as the Editor of the Polish Service after the war, Macdonald proclaimed that:

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ BBC WAC, E1/1149/2, file 1b-2, Polish Service, Guidelines from the BBC News Room, 23 January 1945.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ BBC WAC, Collection of Macdonald's papers and articles, Book review of Asa Briggs III volume, *the History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: The War of Wards*, 30 October 1970.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

'At every point I tried to justify and defend Poland's national interests where they were under attack – at the same time representing British national interest to the Poles. The strategy was frequently successful, because both sides knew (or ought to have appreciated) exactly what I was doing'.⁶⁸

The Yalta declaration, which was broadcast though the day on 12 and 13 February, also included reference to the Atlantic Charter, for which Macdonald had been criticised by Walter Adams of the Political Intelligence Department (PID).⁶⁹ It was a sensitive subject as it included reference to the self-determination of the nation, whilst the PWE central directives for all the BBC European Services emphasised that

'our job is clearly to do all we can to promote the widest possible acceptance amongst the Poles of the solution of their country's political and territorial questions arrived at by the Crimea Conference'.⁷⁰

Macdonald, however, recalls that whilst the declaration was presented favourably on other BBC Services, everyone in the Polish Service newsroom was aware that it was very sad news for Poland, and it was reported without any comment.⁷¹

Yet analysis of the Polish Service bulletins demonstrates that, although, as Macdonald explained, the Polish Service did not recommend the agreement to Poles, the Polish Service' press review only cited newspapers which supported the agreement. This included *The Times* reporting that: *'under the shelter of this agreement it is scarcely conceivable that the rival Polish authorities can fail to come to terms in the Provisional Government of National Unity'*; the *Daily Mail* which called the conference *'a landmark in human history'*; left-wing papers such as the *Daily Herald* expressing the view that *'at least the impression was removed that the Provisional government was a puppet government of Russia'*; and the *Manchester Guardian* acknowledging that the Soviet Union *'has shown herself to move a long way towards meeting the Western Allies'*.⁷² The same line was followed by the *Daily Telegraph*, cited in the Polish bulletin on 14 February, commenting that *'yet in no other point does the Yalta Agreement reflect more or better a spirit of reciprocal'*.⁷³ Nothing, however, was said about acceptance of the Soviet Union's right to the Curzon line.

Significantly, newspapers which criticised the agreement were not included in the press review. For example, The *Scotsman's* article on 13 February argued that *'Russia had had her way, and*

⁶⁸ MPC, notes, undated.

⁶⁹ NA FO 898/228, Adams to Northern Department of PID, 26 February 1945.

⁷⁰ BBC WAC, E2/128/10, PWE/PID Central Directives, week 15-21 February 1945.

⁷¹ MPC, Macdonald's notes, undated.

⁷² BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 5:20am, 13 February 1945

⁷³ Ibid, 5:20am, 14 February 1945.

the new Poland can hardly be recognised as a really independent state’ or the *Observer*’s view that *‘judgement on the Polish settlement depended heavily on the interpretation to be given to the word ‘democratic’*’.⁷⁴ In fact, the Polish Service press review omitted any reference to the discussion taking place in the British press regarding the rightness of the Yalta agreement and instead concentrated on news from the frontline.⁷⁵ As Macdonald claims, although the Polish Service did not recommend the Yalta declaration to the Poles, it can be argued that it used the press review to present it in a positive light. The PWE official, H.C Bowen, observed himself on 26 February that the Polish Service had given full information about the Crimean declaration in accordance with the guidelines received from the Foreign Office and had quoted *‘respectable British press’*.⁷⁶ He argued in the same letter that, in order to help further in *‘conveying our case to Poland’*, official statements should be reported in the Polish broadcasts.

However, on 14 February, Macdonald was approached by Mr. Jagodziński from the Polish news agency Polpress, which was under the control of Polish communists in Poland, requesting that the Polish Service should either recommend the Yalta declaration to Polish listeners or include Polpress articles in the Polish Service press review.⁷⁷ Jagodziński explained to the Polish Service Editor that Poles would greatly benefit from accepting the Yalta terms, yet if such a recommendation were broadcast by Radio Lublin, a station run by Polish communists in the eastern part of Poland, Poles would not trust it as they would assume that it was propaganda coming from the Kremlin. However, he emphasised that Poles believe anything broadcast by the BBC. Therefore, if the Yalta declaration was endorsed by the Polish Service, it would have a great impact on public opinion in Poland. Macdonald, however, refused.

On 13 February 1945 the Polish government in London made an official protest regarding the Yalta declaration, which was compared to the fifth partition of Poland and attacked for *‘legalisation of the Soviet government into Poland’s internal affairs’*.⁷⁸ The agreement condemned because it had been made without Polish government participation, authorisation or knowledge and, more importantly, it violated the Atlantic Charter which guaranteed the right of every nation to defend its interests. In these circumstances, it was argued, the Polish government

⁷⁴ The *Observer* was printed on 18 February 1945, in Bell, P.M.H., *John Bull and the Bear: British Public Opinion, Foreign Policy and the Soviet Union, 1941-1945* (London: Hodder Arnold, 1990), p. 175.

⁷⁵ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, press review, 15-26 February 1945.

⁷⁶ NA, FO 898/228, H.C Bowen, Minutes to Northern Department of the Foreign Office, 26 February 1945.

⁷⁷ BBC WAC, E40/236/1, European Service Papers World Service Registry, Poland, 1942-1957. Jagodziński to Macdonald, 14 February 1945.

⁷⁸ Protest Rządu RP przeciw uchwałom w Jaltcie, 13 February 1945, in Czarnocka et al, op. cit., nr. 1423, p. 276.

could not recognise the agreement reached by the Three Powers but also, given the arguments above, it did not have power to *'bind the Polish Nation'*⁷⁹.

The official Polish government protest regarding the Yalta agreement was broadcast by the Polish Service on 14 February, yet it was not, as claimed in the Radio Polskie broadcast, given prominence in all the BBC Services and the America Calling programme.⁸⁰ In fact, the protest was redacted by the policy censor in all the Polish Service morning and afternoon bulletins on 14 February. There was a note on the 4:45pm bulletin that protest could be broadcast by all European Services excluding the Polish Service. By the evening the policy, had been changed and the Polish Service broadcast at 7:45pm that:

*'the Polish government in London last night issued a communiqué in which they declared that the decisions of the Crimea Conference concerning Poland "cannot be recognised by the Polish Government and cannot bind the Polish nation"'*⁸¹

Yet, the reference to the protest was not reported in detail, as asserted previously by Radio Polskie. It was in fact very brief and passages comparing the Agreement to *'a fifth partition of Poland, now accomplished by her allies'* were omitted.

In this period special attention was given to Polish officials' statements which, according to the Foreign Office, were to help conveying *'our case in Poland'*.⁸² Subject to Foreign Office censorship, they offered a moderate view on Yalta. The Polish Prime Minister, in voicing doubt as to whether the Crimean agreement gave Poland adequate guarantees, was reported as expressing his confidence in the USA and the United Kingdom *'fulfilling their duty towards their first ally'*.⁸³ The Polish Service also broadcast Mikołajczyk's response to the Crimea declaration, in which he expressed his dissatisfaction that Poland was not invited to the talks whilst pointing out that the Polish government policy of *'wait and see'* was especially harmful for Poland.⁸⁴ The speech of former Polish Minister of Information, Stanisław Kot, was also aired, presenting a more optimistic view of the future of Poland, and maintaining the belief that Poland could be restored as a democratic state if the representatives of the CNL were pushed out.⁸⁵ He was also of opinion that power was shifting from London to the Polish political parties in Poland.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, Radio Polskie bulletin, 5:45pm, 14 February 1945.

⁸¹ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 7:45pm, 14 February 1945.

⁸² NA, FO 898/228, Adams, Minutes to Northern Department of Foreign Office, 26 February 1945.

⁸³ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 11:15pm, 15 February 1945.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 7:45pm, 17 February 1945.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 7:45pm, 18 February 1945.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Nevertheless, an analysis of the Polish Service bulletins demonstrates that in the days following the Yalta conference the political questions regarding the future of the Polish state took a back seat. More information was given on Radio Polskie which continued discussion of the Yalta agreement but also informed the Polish audience about the protests of the Polish miners and workers in France and the Polish editors in charge of the Polish dailies in the USA; none of those protest, however, was reported by the Polish Service.⁸⁷ Nor did the press review include the British press view of the protest of the Polish government. Yet, the discussion of this subject continued in the British press with Alistair Forbes arguing in the *Daily Mail* on 20 February that *'the Yalta documents might need the total redefinition of a number of English words, including 'democratic' and 'freedom-loving'*'.⁸⁸

The agreement reached at Yalta was also not welcomed by the Polish Armed Forces. Since they were continuing to fight on the western front, it was feared that the soldiers might revolt. Therefore, the appeals of the Polish government in London, for restraint and order and for people to behave in a *'dignified manner'* were given prominence in the Polish broadcasts.⁸⁹ Emphasis was placed on preserving solidarity as well as maintaining their brotherhood with the armed forces of Britain, Canada and USA with whom *'they have been bound by the bloodshed in their common struggle'*.⁹⁰ The General Anders' Order of the Day maintained a similar tone, although he did not hesitate to express his aversion to the Yalta agreement. His full speech was broadcast only by Radio Polskie whilst the criticism of the agreement was cut off in the Polish Service bulletins.⁹¹

Debate in the House of Commons (27 February 1945)

On 27 February 1945 a debate was opened in the House of Commons regarding the Yalta declaration with Churchill seeking the support of Members of the Parliament for the motion on Crimea, particularly the agreement concerning the future of Poland. Churchill's speech, broadcast in detail by the Polish Service, again attacked the London Poles stating that *'there would be no Lublin Committee no provisional government if Poles accepted our faithful counsel of a year ago'*; at the same time, he claimed that both the Lublin Committee and the Soviet army were received *with 'great joy in large areas of Poland, (and) many of the cities changed hands without a shot being fired'*.⁹² However the sentence: *'none of the terrible business of underground armies being shot by both sides which we feared'*, referring to the German and

⁸⁷ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, Radio Polskie bulletin, 5:45pm, February 1945.

⁸⁸ *The Daily Mail*, 20 February 1945, in Bell, op. cit., p. 175.

⁸⁹ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 5:45pm, 14 February 1945.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, Radio Polskie and Polish Service bulletin, 5:45pm, 16 February 1945.

⁹² Ibid., 5:45pm, 27 February 1945.

Soviet armies, was redacted by the policy censor, A.R. Birley.⁹³ Churchill further argued that the Soviet government's '*word is their bond*' and that '*no government stands more to its obligations, even in their own despite, than the Russian Soviet government*'.⁹⁴ This sentence was also redacted by A.R. Birley. The British Premier's avowal of Stalin's good will and assertion of Poland's independence contradicted the other points he was making, notably the offer of British citizenship to Polish soldiers who might feel that it was not safe to return to their country after the war.⁹⁵ Thus, Churchill acknowledged that there was a basis for the complaints of Polish soldiers about Soviet persecution.

The Yalta agreement was met with reserve in the House of Commons; in particular, the acceptance of the Curzon Line on Soviet terms and the fact that it was forced on the Polish nation were the subject of strong criticism. There was also widespread scepticism with regard to the prospect of holding free elections in Poland after the war. As a result, 22 Conservative MPs tabled an amendment to Churchill's confidence motion, seeking to add that

*'remembering that Great Britain took up arms (...) to defend Poland (...) and in which the overriding motive was the prevention of the domination by a strong nation of its weaker neighbours, the House regrets the decision to transfer to another power the territory of an Ally contrary to treaty and to article two of the Atlantic Charter; and furthermore regrets the failure to ensure to those nations which have been liberated from German oppression the full right to choose their own government, free from the influence of any other power'.*⁹⁶

As Radio Polskie noted in their broadcast, the motion was prepared in such manner that it was difficult to vote against it.⁹⁷ The debate was widely covered by the Polish Service whilst the press review, for the first time since the Yalta declaration was announced, consisted of quotes condemning the agreement, with even left-wing newspapers such as the *New Herald* criticising the Big Three for settling Polish matters without the representatives of the Polish government being present. The same view was expressed by a member of the Labour Party, Arthur Greenwood, arguing that the agreement had been reached behind Poland's back.⁹⁸ According to Eden however, '*when the Soviet government stated that they would accept the Curzon line with adjustments, all in favour of Poland, it could not be said that it was a grave injustice to*

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Full speech in: Hansard, nr. 39, vol. 408, pp. 1275/1285, 27 February 1945.

⁹⁶ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 27 February 1945.

⁹⁷ Ibid, Radio Polskie bulletin, 5:45pm, 21 February 1945.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 5:45pm, 27 February 1945.

Poland'.⁹⁹ While also making it clear that relations between Poland and the British government had changed, he nonetheless assured listeners about the bright future of their country, when Poland '*would be strong or even stronger than before*'.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, on the same day a *Daily Telegraph* article reporting on crimes committed against the Polish people by the Soviets and the disappearance of 2 million Poles to Siberia was quoted in the Polish Service bulletin.¹⁰¹ It was the first time the Polish Service openly acknowledged Soviet atrocities. The bulletins from March and April 1945 did not survive the war but, in May, Polish-Soviet affairs continued to be a sensitive subject. For example, a passage of the speech of Polish President, Władysław Raczkiewicz's broadcast on 3 May was redacted, in which he stated that it was his hope that:

'Poland will receive from the liberating allied armies adequate help and protection and when freedom will triumph in Poland, they will be able to return to a free and independent fatherland together with their other brothers scattered all over the world. This hope, which had been brought with the precious blood of our country which was the first to rise against German totalitarianism, is nourished to-day by the entire martyred Polish nation'.¹⁰²

The San Francisco Conference and arrest of the Polish Underground leaders

From the beginning, the creation of the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity was a fiasco. The Yalta declaration clearly stated that the representatives of the Provisional government, the Polish Underground and the Polish government-in-exile should take part in the formation of the future Polish government. However, according to Molotov, the Provisional government was given the right of veto and rejected most of the names put forward by the British and American governments, including Mikołajczyk, before they were invited to Moscow.¹⁰³ Molotov also declined to allow Allied observers into Poland on the grounds that they would '*sting the national pride of the Poles to the quick*'.¹⁰⁴ Both Churchill and Roosevelt insisted on a fast resolution because of the upcoming conference of the United Nations in San Francisco planned for April 1945 where Poland was to be one of the signatories. However, as Churchill noted in his memoirs, as much as they were under pressure for the formation of a new government in Poland, it was in Stalin's interest to delay as long as possible.¹⁰⁵ Soviet troops were in Poland and the Lublin Poles were purging Poland and liquidising any signs of nationalism; contrary to what Stalin had claimed earlier, the process of collectivisation and nationalisation was already in progress whilst most of Polish industry was moved to the

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 5:45pm, 28 February 1945.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid, 5:45pm, 3 May 1945.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 510.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Churchill, op. cit., p. 330.

USSR.¹⁰⁶ Stalin further argued that only Poles who publicly accept the Crimean declaration would be considered as candidates for joining the Moscow talks. Mikołajczyk, conscious of the seriousness of the situation and the necessity of having a voice in the creation of the new government, made a public statement, published in *The Times* and also broadcast by the Polish Service.¹⁰⁷ However, he did not declare that he accepted the Curzon line and, on this basis, his participation was declined. As a result, since Stalin did not recognise the Polish government-in-exile whilst the USA and Great Britain did not recognise the Provisional government, Poland was not represented at the United Nations conference in San Francisco (see chapter 3). The Polish government officially protested but without effect.¹⁰⁸ Consequently it attempted to send unofficial representation, but the USA government refused to grant the visas; only Aleksander Bregman and Zygmunt Lityński from the Polish Ministry of Information attended the conference, yet not as the official representatives of the Polish government, but as journalists.¹⁰⁹

The conference of the United Nations at San Francisco opened on 25 April 1945. The major issue under discussion was post-war security and maintenance of peace (see chapter 3).¹¹⁰ Although Poland was not present, representatives of the Soviet republics established during the war, namely the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, were invited. On 3 May, Molotov informed Eden and Stettinius that 16 of the Polish Underground leaders invited to talks in Moscow had been arrested by the NKVD on charges of diversionary activities against the Red Army and maintaining illegal radio transmitters in the Soviet rear.¹¹¹ In diplomatic terms, this issue was a major blow to British-Soviet relations since it was the British government which had supplied the list of names to Stalin and guaranteed protection of those who were to travel to Moscow. The information about the missing Poles had already reached London on 1 April 1945 and the British Embassy in Moscow unsuccessfully intervened to try to establish information regarding their disappearance; although they had already been interrogated in the prison at Lubianka, Molotov claimed that he knew nothing about the Polish underground leaders' whereabouts.¹¹²

By the beginning of May, however, the question of their disappearance was raised in the House of Commons and, on 2 May, the Polish Service quoted the announcement of Minister of State, Richard Law, that the British government was pressing the Soviets for answers.¹¹³ A day later,

¹⁰⁶ Okulicki do Prezydenta, 9 December 1944, in Czarnocka et al, op. cit., nr. 1344, p. 170.

¹⁰⁷ Duraczyński, op. cit., p. 464.

¹⁰⁸ Nota Rządu RP do Rządów W. Brytanii, Stanów Zjednoczonych i Chin, 12 March 1945, in Czarnocka et al, op. cit., nr. 1457, p. 327.

¹⁰⁹ Duraczyński, op. cit., p. 476.

¹¹⁰ Woodward, L. *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1962), pp. 532-533.

¹¹¹ Duraczyński, op. cit., pp. 476-50.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletin, 5:45pm, 2 May 1945.

Arciszewski's speech, which also addressed the issue of the missing Poles, was broadcast.¹¹⁴ It was not until 5 May, when an official statement was issued by Eden and Stettinius, that the Polish Service reported on the arrest of the Polish Underground leaders.¹¹⁵ Questions were asked as to why they had been arrested and were going to be put on trial? Why now? And why both American and the British officials had lied about their arrest? Yet, the full report explaining the circumstances of their capture and the offenses the Poles were charged with was not given prominence until 22 May. In addition, the discussion of the responsibility of the British government and the Inter-Allied Commission and the demand for intervention voiced by the British and the Polish press were not reported or quoted in the Polish Service press review from 12 May onwards.

The show trial of the 16 Polish underground leaders, which started on 18 June 1945, was widely covered by all BBC Services; representatives of western and American Embassies as well as the foreign correspondents were invited. All but one of the 16 Poles had pleaded wholly or partly guilty to the charges against them and confessed that they were acting on the orders of the Polish government-in-exile. Paradoxically the 16 were accused of leading the underground organisation and not submitting to Red Army command, actions which should have been seen as a symbol of patriotism rather than a crime. Moreover, in international law, it was illegal for a foreign court to prosecute the defendants (see chapter 3). No protest, however, was made by any of the Allies. Whilst the BBC directives emphasised that the trial should be reported objectively, and there should not be indications of whether if they were guilty or innocent, *The Times* correspondent was quoted in the Polish broadcast as saying that '*compared with those of English court-martials, the proceedings seemed informal*'.¹¹⁶ Space was also given to the *Manchester Guardian* article arguing that the trial simply aimed to please the western allies. As the Soviet prosecutor pointed out, in Soviet law, the 16 should be shot but '*because we live in days of joyful victory and these men are no longer dangerous to the Soviet Union which is mightier than ever*' they received prison sentences.¹¹⁷ It must be noted that, at the time the trial was taking place, the Polish politicians approved by Stalin were taking part in a meeting in Moscow to discuss the creation of the new Polish government, according to the Polish Service, '*in the most friendly atmosphere*'.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 5:45pm, 3 May 1945.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 11:15pm, 5 May 1945.

¹¹⁶ BBC WAC, E2/131/22, 18 June 1945; Polish Service Bulletins, 11:15pm, 5 June 1945.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

The war officially ended on 7 May 1945 but, as the last Polish government delegate in Poland, Stefan Korboński reported back to London, ‘*Warsaw acknowledged the news lukewarmly*’, adding: ‘*for us it does not change anything*’.¹¹⁹ Nor were the Polish soldiers or prisoners full of joy. Fearful of reprisals, Polish prisoners from the liberated labour camps in Germany refused to go back home. Challenged in the House of Commons by the Conservative MP Commander Bower, Churchill announced that the Supreme Commander in Chief would continue to provide shelter for Polish prisoners ‘*as long as conditions make it impractical or undesirable for them to be repatriated or otherwise provided for*’, clarifying that those unwilling to go home or ‘*in danger of reprisals*’ would not be sent back against their will.¹²⁰ His statement, broadcast by the Polish Service finished with an expression of hope that conditions in Poland would soon change. Yet only few days after the German surrender, Churchill expressed his anxieties regarding Stalin’s ‘*misinterpretation*’ of the Yalta decisions and attitude towards Poland. In a private letter to American President, Truman, he had already argued on 12 May 1945 that:

*‘an iron curtain is drawn upon their front. We do not know what is going on behind, there seems little doubt that the whole of the region east of the line Lubeck-Trieste-Corfu will soon be completely in their (Soviet) hands’.*¹²¹

The Polish Service continued to play an important role in this period, broadcasting SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) announcements directed to displaced people and prisoners from liberated German labour camps.¹²² These communiqués, which addressed prisoners of all nationalities, carried a special message for the Poles. Unlike others who received instructions how to return to their country of origin, Polish citizens were offered ‘*an opportunity*’ to indicate whether they wished to return to Poland.¹²³ Polish Soldiers were also offered to stay in the United Kingdom. Yet after the Polish Provisional government of National Unity was established in June 1945, the Polish Service broadcasts encouraged the soldiers to go back home.¹²⁴ Special broadcasts were introduced, emphasising the ‘*welcoming*’ attitude of new government in Poland.¹¹⁴ On 6 July 1945, both the USA and Britain withdrew recognition of the Polish government-in-exile. Following the fall of the ‘*Iron Curtain*’ in 1946, the Polish Service entered a new period in their broadcasts, becoming a platform of anti-communism propaganda.

¹¹⁹ Korboński, do Min. Berezowskiego, 8 May 1945, in Czarocka et al, op. cit., nr. 1541, p. 414.

¹²⁰ BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 5:45pm, 1 May 1945.

¹²¹ Churchill, op. cit., p. 498.

¹²² BBC WAC, Polish Service Bulletins, 11:15pm, 5 May 1945.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 5:45pm, 29 June 1945.

Conclusion

After the Warsaw rising the Polish Service continued to play an important role as a medium of the British government. The PWE directives for the Polish Service, written in accordance with British foreign policy, attempted to convince Polish listeners of the friendly attitude of the USSR and assure them of the allies' guarantees of the reconstruction of Poland as an independent state. Although the Polish Service broadcasts maintained that Poland was still an important ally, it became apparent that its fate had been already decided in November 1943 during the Tehran conference and, in fact, all further meetings of the Big Three only confirmed what had been already agreed. While it cannot be argued that the broadcasts of the Polish Service were biased, they were definitely not neutral. The selection of information and quotes from the press in the bulletins played a significant role in presenting in a positive light key political developments such as the formation of the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity. Polish officials' speeches that were subjected to Foreign Office censorship were recognised as having an enormous impact on listeners in Poland and acted as assurance of the allies' pledges. Nevertheless, analysis of the European Service broadcasts demonstrates that the political and diplomatic disputes related to Poland were not considered important. In fact, in the period 1944-1945, Poland was hardly mentioned. Taking into account that the main decisions regarding the future of Poland were made in this period, and the critical response of the Polish government-in-exile, it is also puzzling that there was not much discussion on those issues during the weekly meetings of the representatives of the BBC, Polish Service, the Polish Ministry of Information and the Foreign Office. The Polish Service continued to report on controversial subjects such as the trial of 16 members of the Polish Underground or VE-Day celebrations, to which the Polish government was not invited. However, it did not become critical of the Soviet regime until elections in Poland in 1947. Paradoxically, Poles subjected by the German occupants to the death penalty for listening to foreign stations in 1939, were exposed to the same laws by its 'liberator', cutting off the Polish nation from the outside world with an *'Iron Curtain'*.

Conclusion

During the Second World War the BBC Polish Service became an important source of information in Poland. Although listening to, or possessing, a radio was punishable by death under the German occupation, Poles were willing to risk their lives in order to access the information. For many, the BBC remained the only contact with the outside world, whilst listening itself became a symbol of resistance. The broadcasts from London had an enormous impact on listeners in Poland, allowing them to keep in contact with the Polish government which, after the fall of France had taken refuge in Britain. Polish officials often spoke on air, playing an important role in maintaining public morale. The broadcasts not only connected Poland with the rest of the world and informed Poles about what was happening in their own country, but also supported Allied intelligence and the sabotage of German actions. The Polish Underground, which acted more as a secret state than simply a resistance movement, monitored the Polish Service broadcasts and distributed the content in the form of clandestine newspapers and leaflets. These broadcasts were important not only because of their news value but also because the BBC was considered the mouthpiece of the British government and, as Britain was seen as the most important ally, her foreign policy and support in Polish-Soviet disputes were central to the future of Poland.

Funded by Treasury Grant, the BBC Polish Service, like other BBC European Services, was required to comply with the official policy of the British government which, throughout the war, pursued a pro-Soviet direction. Acting as the '*Voice of Britain*', it presented news from the British point of view. Polish programmes were subject to political and military censorship whereby, after USSR accession to the Allies' coalition, anything considered anti-Soviet was expunged. However, even prior to Stalin joining the Grand Alliance, the Polish Service was forbidden to mention the Soviet occupation in their broadcasts, the main reason being the refusal of the League of Nations to recognise the USSR attack on Poland in 1939 as a crime. Topics such as living conditions, deportations, the arrest and murder of the Polish intelligentsia and soldiers were outlawed, as was reference to the population in USSR occupied territory. Although the ban was lifted in January 1941, British-Soviet diplomatic relations continued to influence Polish broadcasts. Subjects such as disputes over the Polish-Soviet eastern border, the deportation of Polish citizens to the gulags, the discovery of the Polish officers' graves in Katyn and the arrests of members of the Polish Home Army by the Soviets were labelled as 'sensitive' and consequently suppressed. As a result, the impartiality and credibility of the BBC were questioned by Polish listeners.

After the cessation of diplomatic relations between Poland and the USSR in 1943, the subject of the post-war Polish-Soviet border became a major preoccupation for the Polish government-in-exile, with the British government willing to act as mediator between Mikołajczyk and Stalin. The Polish Service was recognised as a powerful medium in these negotiations and was used as a platform for convincing the Polish public to assent to the Soviet Union's territorial demands. The pledges of both Stalin and Churchill of a future independent and sovereign Polish state were often mentioned in the Polish broadcasts. However, as the acceptance of the Curzon line did not have the support of the Polish population, and in particular, of the leaders of the Polish Underground, it was acknowledged that this policy could not be based on logical argument, but rather had to be '*sold*' to Poland.¹ The British government, although aware of Soviet political manoeuvring, arrests and killings, shielded information from the public and required broadcasts to Poland to assume '*an increasingly emotional anti-German tone*' in order to portray the Nazis as the greater of two evils; political issues were to be presented only by way of background.² Yet special care was also taken to avoid the impression that information was being concealed. Similar treatment was given to the coverage of the Warsaw rising in 1944 when the Polish Service failed to give Polish listeners a comprehensive picture of the actual political and military situation. Although the Political Warfare Executive (PWE) had already acknowledged in February 1944 that it was highly probable that the Soviet Union would occupy Poland, right until the end of the war the BBC Polish Service continued to suppress information which could in any way undermine the Soviet Union position as a friendly neighbouring country and guarantor of Poland's independence. Any BBC criticism of Stalin or the Polish communists would have threatened the British government hope for good relations with the USSR after the war. More importantly, cross-listening was an issue: all other BBC programmes tended to favour the Soviet rather than the Polish stance and departure from this policy would have undermined consistency, a fundamental principle of the BBC.

Analysis of the Polish Service bulletins and the PWE directives also demonstrates that the Polish Service was not independent from the PWE or, by extension, the government. As the head of the PWE, Bruce Lockhart, rightly concluded, '*the PWE did not make policy, it executed it*'.³ Policy censors of the BBC broadcasts were responsible to the Foreign Office, demonstrating that the BBC was required to follow official foreign policy, an understandable position given that the country was in a state of war. In fact, it seems rather unlikely that any government at any time would have left broadcasters total freedom in the presentation of foreign affairs which could potentially affect diplomatic relations with another country and its international position. Even the former BBC

¹ BBC WAC, R34 /663, PWE Special Directive for Polish Service, 16 January 1944.

² NA, FO 371/39422, PWE Directives for Poland, 23 March 1944.

³ Lockhart, R. H. B., *Comes the Reckoning* (London: Arno Press, 1972), p. 185.

official historian, Asa Briggs, seems to contradict himself; whilst insisting that the BBC was independent from the PWE, he observes that the PWE policy was different in each country and in fact there is insufficient evidence to fully assess the relationship between the BBC and the PWE.

One of the aims of this thesis was to establish the extent to which the Polish government-in-exile had influence over the Polish Service broadcasts. The examination of primary sources shows that the Polish authorities' attempts to influence the BBC Polish programmes were not entirely successful. Their observations and feedback were taken into consideration and efforts made to establish good relationships and cooperation with its broadcasting arm, Radio Polskie, and the Polish Ministry of Information. However, while the Polish Service appreciated the needs of listeners in Poland, Polish officials' complaints regarding the treatment of Polish political affairs – which, in most cases, centred on misrepresentation of Polish interests – did not carry sufficient weight to change the content of the broadcasts. By the same token, although most Polish exiled politicians, including both Polish Prime Ministers, namely Sikorski and Mikołajczyk, complained behind closed doors about the Polish Service broadcasts, publically praising them while making sure that speeches destined for airing gave no hint of any disagreement between Poland and Britain. Maintaining allied unity was not the only British priority. It was equally important that Polish listeners were under the impression that Poland was considered an important ally. Yet analysis of Polish and British government correspondence and documents demonstrates that, in fact, after the breaking off of diplomatic relations between Poland and the Soviet Union in 1943, Poland was perceived by Britain as an *'inconvenient ally'*, particularly because the Foreign Office assumed that establishing a good relationship with Stalin was pivotal to a lasting peace after the war ended.

It was also the aim of this thesis to establish who listened to the Polish Service and what people thought about its programmes. Based on an analysis of both Polish and English sources, it appears that the main audience for the BBC Polish broadcasts was the Polish Underground, which monitored and distributed its content through the clandestine press and leaflets. This is not to say that the programmes were not accessed by individuals. However, given the death penalty for listening to or the possession of a radio under the German occupation, this was uncommon. Listening to the radio was not forbidden under the Soviet occupation, but records of the patterns of listenership and feedback from the audience in this region are very limited, thus making it impossible to draw overall conclusions.

What is clear from the examination of the documents is the prominent role of the BBC Polish broadcasts which were considered by the Polish Underground an important source of information recognised for its news value. Yet, as in case of the Polish government in London, in order to

maintain public morale under the occupation, a central plank of Polish Underground propaganda was to convince their countrymen that Poland was an important ally which they could rely on to regain the eastern territory after the war. After the collapse of the Warsaw rising in 1944 this view started slowly losing credibility and it was only with the Yalta declaration that the Polish Underground leaders acknowledged the real state of affairs. In private, complaints about the Polish Service were made not only about its imperfect understanding of Underground needs, but also regarding the absence of coverage of Soviet political crimes committed against Polish citizens. However, it was understood that British priorities lay in maintaining allied unity, a policy which the Polish government-in-exile supported. Yet, even when concerns were expressed by the Underground with regard to Britain's support for the Polish case, this information was withheld from the public.

An examination of the records also demonstrates that the BBC was considered by Poles as a mouthpiece of the British government and, for this reason alone, was regarded as a significant source of information for the Polish Underground on the direction of British foreign policy. While it was recognised that the British broadcaster was attempting to provide objective and unbiased coverage, there was also an awareness that BBC programmes were reflecting the view of its government. Therefore, it is evident that Polish Underground grievances were directed against the British government policy which was favourable to the USSR rather than the Polish Service.

The compliance of the Polish Underground with the Polish government-in-exile's policy also became problematic for the BBC and, by extension, for the British authorities because they could not criticise the Underground as the main syndicator of its bulletins. It was also understood that attempts to convince Poles to accept the Curzon line could be only achieved if Mikołajczyk was able to convince the Underground leaders. When the Polish Prime Minister failed to do so, the emphasis of the Polish Service was on the necessity for Polish-Soviet negotiations and Mikołajczyk's willingness to engage in dialogue with Stalin and, later, on assurances that the Soviet Union sought to establish friendly relations with Poland. Nonetheless, every effort was taken to avoid upsetting members of the Underground, as it was feared that the BBC would lose credibility in the eyes of the Poles.

Another conclusion which can be drawn from this research is the impact of the personalities involved in policy making, taking into account their own political views and agendas. In particular, it is evident that the Director of the European Service, Noel Newsome, had considerable influence on the shape of the broadcasts and direction of propaganda. While the BBC could not contradict the official line of the British government, his pro-Soviet outlook, admiration for Stalin and, more

importantly, his openly expressed dislike for the Polish government representatives and the Polish Underground have to be taken into account. In particular, his Propaganda Background Notes were valued by his colleagues who, in many cases, were unfamiliar with the background of the Polish-Soviet territorial dispute and relied on his view that the USSR was right to demand the incorporation of the Polish eastern provinces. What not many people in BBC circles, however, knew, that the Curzon line did not differ much from the Ribbentrop-Molotov line agreed between the Germans and Soviets in August 1939, that divided Poland into Nazi and Soviet "spheres of influence".

The impact of individuals on the Polish broadcasts is evident, in particular, in the role of the Polish Service editors. While Winch was difficult and disliked by the Polish Service staff, Radio Polskie and the Polish Ministry of Information, it would seem that his successor, Gregory Macdonald, played a substantial role in improving both Polish broadcasts and relations with the Polish authorities in London. It is clear from his papers that he wished that he could have done more for Poland, especially after the Yalta declaration when the feeling of the betrayal of Poland was widespread among those who saw through Stalin's political manoeuvring. And despite the fact that he was required to follow the official British government line, which did not always lie in the national interests of Poland, it is apparent that he supported the Polish case in as far as his position allowed.

Finally, this research set out to analyse previously undiscovered material on the Polish Service and, more importantly, to throw new light on the contemporary understanding of diplomatic relations between the allies and, in particular, between Britain, Poland and the Soviet Union. This relationship was important not only in context of the Second World War, but also in the ways in which the wartime work of the Polish Service have been interpreted in its aftermath. Three essential points have to be explained here: the majority of the Polish government-in-exile stayed in the UK after the war had ended; with the fall of the iron curtain, the Polish government was reconstructed in London; and the Polish Service, which continued to broadcast to Poland, not only became an alternative to the Polish stations controlled by the communists, but also established itself as an unbiased and objective source of information, associated by the audience overseas with democratic values and freedom of speech.

Thus, for example, a leaflet celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Polish Service in 1989, emphasised the Polish Service role during the Second World War as a significant and unbiased source of news. This assessment of the BBC Polish Service has prevailed until recently, with Pszenicki's *History of the Polish Service* arguing that the BBC Polish programmes during the war

were impartial and that censorship was '*pragmatic*' in character rather than political.⁴ It is noteworthy that the chapter on the Polish Service during World War II of his book is not based on analysis of primary sources, but rather on his own conclusions drawn from secondary sources. Other writers, however, in particular, Wyrwa and Grabowski, whose work focuses on Radio Polskie, the Polish government-in-exile and its relations with the BBC, question this interpretation.⁵

However, this thesis is the first to examine so far unseen BBC archival material on the work of the Polish Service. Supported by the PWE directives for the Polish Service and other documents of the Polish government-in-exile and the Polish Underground, it demonstrates that, although the Polish Service attempted to be objective, impartial and neutral, this was achieved by selectiveness rather than by presenting both Polish and Soviet sides of the argument. The BBC main aim during the wartime period was to present itself as the '*Voice of Britain*' and to avoid its broadcasts becoming a platform for political disputes, especially disagreements between her allies. Yet its policy was sometimes fluid in the pursuit of British government diplomatic ends as can be observed in the Polish Service coverage of the discovery of the Polish officers' graves at Katyń, the Warsaw rising, the Yalta conference or the Polish Home Army activities. It can be also argued that it was in the interest of the Polish government, which continued its work in London after the war, not to challenge the official BBC account of its wartime position as a symbol of impartiality, credibility and the '*weapon of war*'. Yet the examination of Polish Service records points to the conclusion that its programmes were selective in nature and failed to fully inform Polish listeners about the diplomatic situation involving their country. The fact that the Polish Service was regarded as the main source of information, expressing the views of the British government and quoting the British press in its Polish broadcasts also created the impression that Poland had the backing of the UK. However, this line was also maintained by the Polish officials, who by emphasising this point in their speeches, played an important part in deluding the leaders of the Polish Underground, and by extension, the Polish nation, that they could bargain with Stalin.

This thesis contributes to the current state of knowledge and understanding of the role of the BBC European Service during the Second World War as well as to studies on wartime propaganda and psychological warfare. In particular, recognition of the Polish Service as an important medium in furthering the British government's political and diplomatic ends demonstrates the power of transnational broadcasting as an instrument of propaganda. At the same time, the BBC Polish

⁴ Pszenicki, K., *Tu Mówi Londyn: Historia Sekcji Polskiej BBC* (Warsaw: Rosner & Wspólnicy, 2009), p. 74.

⁵ Wyrwa, T., Audycje Radiowe nadawane z Londynu, *Zeszyty Historyczne*, nr. 116 Paris, 1996; Grabowski, Z., Radio Polskie w Londynie, in *Polskie Radio w Czasie Drugiej Wojny Światowej*, (ed.) Budzyński, A., & Jasiewicz, K., (Warsaw: Polskie Radio SA, 2015).

broadcasts were described by many listeners as a '*light in the darkness*', bringing hope that the fight against the Germans was continuing and, more importantly, that Poland had not been forgotten. Despite the fact, that listeners in Poland questioned the objectivity of BBC reporting on Polish-Soviet affairs, its broadcasts were praised for their news value and factual reporting and, in particular, their coverage of the conduct of the war. The fact that Poles, exposed to harsh conditions under the occupation, could listen to broadcasts in their own language, and more importantly, to the speeches of both Polish and British officials acknowledging their suffering and speaking to them directly was a major factor in maintaining public morale. It is hoped that the insights emerging from this study and, in particular, from the previously unanalysed documents of the Polish Service, will serve as a platform for further scholarly investigation.

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Annex 1: Biographies of Polish Section staff

Grabowski, Zbigniew was born in Cracow, 22 December 1903. He studied Philosophy, English and French literature at Jagiellonian University in Cracow. Grabowski continued post-graduate studies in Paris and Oxford, and completed a PhD in 1930 in London. Later, he became a freelance journalists and contributed political articles to all leading Polish newspapers and periodicals. He also worked for the then large Polish newspaper, *Cracow Illustrated Currier* (IKC). From 1933 to 1935 Grabowski became a correspondent for IKC and Radio Polskie in Berlin and from 1937 to 1939 in London for the same organisations. In September 1939 he was employed as a Senior Announcer/translator in the BBC Polish Service where he worked until 1941. Later Grabowski became a lecturer to the British Army on International Affairs at the University of Bristol, the Ministry of Information and the British Council. He also worked as Editor of Radio Polskie (1941-1943), at the Polish Ministry of Information (1943–1944), from 1944 to 1945 at the Polish Desk in the Office of War Information at the American Embassy and in the years 1945-1946 as British war correspondent in London. He re-joined the Polish Service in December 1946 as a Programme Organiser. In 1964 he became an Editor of the Polish magazine *Kontynenty* printed in London and held this position until 1966. Grabowski also made a name for himself as a translator, in particular, of books by Conrad, Huxley and Lawrence, as well as foreign affairs' journals. He also pursued a career as a critic and writer, publishing under his own name as well as under pseudonyms Anna Grey, Antoni Jawnuta and Axel Heyst. His publications include: *Monograph about Walter Pater* (1929), *Ciszy lasu i twojej ciszy* (1931), *Europe Expects England* (1943), *Stones and Flowers* (1944), *Anna* (1946), *Rosa Mystica* (1966), *Fatherland Europe* (1967) and *The English Psychoanalysed*, (1997). In 1969 Grabowski emigrated to Canada where he died in 1974.¹

Kmiecik, Edward was born on 2 March 1915 in Berlin. He studied law and political economy at the University of Berlin. After graduation he began his career as a journalist working for Polish dailies in Germany such as *Nowiny*, *Gazeta Olsztyńska*, *Naród*, *Dziennik Polski* and the journal *Polak w Niemczech*. Kmiecik also worked for the Polish news agency PAT. After the war broke out, he worked at the Polish Council of Ministers' shortwave station and after capitulation escaped from Poland to France where he joined the Polish Army. After the fall of France in 1940 he joined the Polish Army in Scotland. In 1942, Kmiecik, was released for military service and started his work as the Dawn Editor in the Polish Service and Radio Polskie until June 1944 when he decided to work for the American military radio station in Luxemburg where he remained until May 1946.

¹ BBC WAC, L1/ 1,552/1, Grabowski's personal file.

Later, he worked as the Director of the Polish broadcasts for Poles living in Germany at a radio station in Frankfurt. He came back to Poland in 1947, where he continued his work as journalist. In 1958, however, he moved to Washington where he worked as Secretary at the Polish Embassy. He died in 1977.

Syrop, Konrad was of Jewish origin, born on 9 August 1914 in Vienna. He became a correspondent for the *Polish Courier* in France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Finland and, from August 1938, London. Syrop started his work as announcer/translator in the Polish Service in September 1939. From February to July 1941, he served with the Polish Armed Forces. On his return from the frontline, Syrop was promoted to the position of Polish Service Programme Assistant, working at the same time as Producer and script writer for tBBC European Service. In 1944 Syrop was sent to France, Belgium and Holland as a BBC correspondent. In June 1945 he was promoted to Senior Producer in the BBC European Production Department and in 1956 to Head of the Central European Service Department and Chairman of the Bush House Modernisation Working Party. In May 1946 Herman Grisewood supported his application for naturalisation. He retired in 1974 and he was awarded an OBE in 1975. From 1983 he chaired the Copyright Licensing Agency. Syrop was a writer. His books include: *Spring in October: The Story of the Polish Revolution* (1956), *Poland: Between the Hammer and the Anvil* (1968), *Poland in Perspective* (1982). He died in London 1989.

Lutosławski, Antoni Tadeusz was born in France, 10 December 1913. Before the outbreak of the Second World War, he worked for Polskie Radio in Warsaw. From September 1939 until 1941, he was employed at the BBC Polish Service as announcer/translator. He also worked in Radio Polskie in London until 30 June 1942.

Macdonald Gregory was born in Boston on 19 February 1903. Educated at Douai and at Wadham College in Oxford, where he read history.² Later at the School of Slavonic Studies, he specialised in Polish political history. From 1924 Macdonald worked as a journalist in London and regularly contributed to the *Catholic Times* and to the *G.K. Chesterton Weekly*.³ He also worked as correspondent to the *Warsaw Weekly*. After 1927 he became secretary of the Anglo-Polish Society, the Polish Relief Fund and consultant to the Polish Embassy in London. In June 1941, Macdonald started his career at the BBC; first as the scriptwriter at the European Production Section and from December the same year, in the BBC Spanish/Portuguese Service as a sub-editor.⁴ He also worked

² Obituary by Maurice Latey, 1987.

³ G. K.'s Weekly was a British publication founded in 1925 by G. K. Chesterton.

⁴ BBC WAC, L1/1, 183/1, Macdonald's personal file.

at the Polish Research Centre in London at the same time. In February 1942 he became the Editor of the Polish Service; to a large extent this promotion was influenced by the perseverance of the Polish government-in-exile, which sought to, replace Michael Winch. Macdonald held this position to the end of the war and in 1945 he became Head of the Central European Service. In 1958 he briefly took charge of BBC Russian broadcasts. Macdonald who, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, was of the opinion that Poland had been betrayed by the West, became a vigorous broadcaster and journalist unmasking the real face of Soviet rule in the Eastern Block. He continued to contribute to this cause to the end of his life. After the Second World War, Macdonald also became a Member of the East Europe Committee of the British Council and in 1961 received an OBE. His achievements during the war and in the communist period were widely recognised by the Polish Government in London, anti-communism activists, scholars and, most of all, Polish Service listeners. In 1955 he was honoured with one of the highest Polish orders, the Polonia Resituta, by the Polish government-in-exile. Macdonald died on 30 July 1987.

Wagner, Karol, real surname Pieńkowski, was born on 3 January 1909 in the Polish city of Sokołówka. He studied Law at Warsaw University. In 1935 Wagner became a speaker for Polskie Radio and in 1938 was promoted to the position of Director of Foreign Broadcasts. After the German invasion of Poland in 1939, Wagner escaped through Romania and France to England and from, February 1941, worked as an Announcer/translator in the Polish Service. In 1942 he became the vice-director at the Polish Ministry of Information in London and, in July 1943, a Director of the Radio Department, a position which he held until July 1945. From July 1949 to 1955 Wagner was in charge of the Polish Section of Radio Madrid. Between 1955 and 1974 he worked as the Director of *Radio Free Europe* in New York and from 1974 to 1976 as the Assistant Director in a radio station in Munich. He died in Italy in January 1988.

Żuławski Marek, the famous Polish painter and graphic artist, was born in Rome on 13 April 1908. He studied simultaneously law at Warsaw University and painting at the Academy of Arts in Warsaw. However, after two years he gave up law and concentrated on his career as an artist. In 1935, he received a scholarship to study in Paris and later in London. From 1940 Żuławski worked as Announcer/translator/ in the Polish Service and continued to work for the BBC after the war as an art critic. Żuławski is primarily known for his paintings. However, he also established his name in the literary world as an author of *Romanticism, Classicism and Back Again, From Hogarth to Bacon* and a memoir entitled *A Study for Self-Portrait*. He died on 30 March 1985 in London.

Annex II: Index of key Polish, British and Soviet actors

Ambler, E. F. – BBC Assistant General Establishment Officer (1938-1940)

Anders, Władysław – Commander of the Polish Army in the Soviet Union (1941–1943);
Commander of the Polish 2nd Corps, part of the Polish Arm Forces in the West (1944)

Arciszewski, Tomasz – Polish Prime Minister-in-exile (29 November 1944–2 July 1947)

Barker, Arthur – BBC Foreign Language News Editor (1939)

Barker, V.D. – BBC European Language Supervisor (1940)

Bauer-Czarnomski, Franciszek – Polish Embassy Press Attaché (1939–1940)

Berling, Zygmunt – Commander of the Tadeusz Kościuszko Infantry Division in the USSR (1943); Commander of the Polish First Army (1944)

Bierut Bolesław – Leader of the Homeland National Council (1943), Member of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (1944), President of Poland (1947)

Birley, A. R. – BBC European Service Policy Editor (1942–1945)

Bracke, Brendon – British Minister of Information (July 1941–May 1945)

Bór-Komorowski, Tadeusz – Commander of the Polish Home Army (March 1943–October 1944)

Bullock, Allan – BBC European Talks Editor (1940–1944)

Cadogan, Alexander – British Under-Secretary of State for the Foreign Office (1938–1948)

Campbell, Robin – BBC Polish Service Language Supervisor (1939–1940)

Chamberlain, Neville – British Prime Minister (May 1937–May 1940)

Churchill Winston – British Prime Minister (May 1940–July 1945)

Clark Kerr, Archibald – British Ambassador to Moscow (1942–1946)

Cooper, Duff – British Minister of Information (May 1940 –July 1941)

Dalton, Hugh – The Minister of Economic Warfare (May 1940–February 1942)

Eden, Anthony – British Foreign Minister (December 1940–July 1945)

Edwards, Donald – BBC European Service News Editor (1942–1944), Assistant of the BBC European Service Director (1944–1945)

Frank, Hans – Governor General of the General Government in Poland (1939–1945)

Gomulka, Wladyslaw – First Secretary of the Polish Workers' Party (1943–1948); Deputy Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland (January–June 1945), Deputy Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of National Unity (1945–1947)

Grant Duff, Sheila – BBC Czech Service Editor (1942–1944)

Griffin, Jonathan – Head of the BBC European Service Intelligence Department (1941–1942)

Grisewood, Harman – BBC Assistant Director Programme Planning (1939–1941); BBC European Service Assistant Controller (1941–1944); BBC European Service Controller (August 1944– May 1945)

Harriman, Averell – American Ambassador to the Soviet Union (October 1943–January 1946)

Hodson, D. M. – BBC European Service Night Editor (1942–1943)

Jundzill-Baliński, Jan – Liaison Officer between Polish Ministry of Information and the BBC (November 1940–May 1945)

Karski, Jan – Member of the Polish Underground and Polish Courier

Kirkpatrick, Ivone – Foreign Advisor to the BBC (1941); BBC European Service (October 1941–August 1944); Liaison between the BBC and PWE (1941–1944)

Kisielewski, Józef – Directors of Radio Polskie (June 1940–December 1942)

Kmiecik, Edward – BBC Polish Service and Radio Polskie Dawn Editor (1942–1944)

Korboński, Stefan – Head of the Polish Directorate of Civil Resistance (1942–1944); Chief of the Department of Internal Affairs in Poland (August 1944 –March 1945); Government Delegate in Poland (March 1945–June 1945)

Kot, Stanislaw – Polish Minister of Internal Affairs (1939–1941), Polish Ambassador to the USSR (1941–1942); Polish Minister of Information (January 1943–July 1943)

Marian, Kukiel –Vice–Minister of War of the Polish government–in–exile (1939–1940); General Officer Commanding the 1st Polish Corps based in Scotland (1940–1942); Minister of War of the government–in–exile (1943–1945)

Lockhart, Bruce – PWE Director-General (1941–1945); British liaison officer to the Czechoslovak government-in-exile (1944–1945)

Macdonald, Gregory – BBC Polish Service Editor (February 1942–May 1945)

Maclaren, Moray – Head of the PWE Polish Region (February 1942–November 1944)

Maisky, Ivan – Soviet Ambassador to Britain (1939–1943); Deputy Commissar of Foreign Affairs in Moscow (1943–1945)

Meissner, Janusz – Director of Radio Polskie (December 1942 –July 1943)

Mikołajczyk, Stanisław – Polish Prime Minister-in-exile (July 1943–November 1944)

Molotov, Vyacheslav – Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs (May 1939–March 1949)

Mościcki, Ignacy – Polish President (June 1929–September 1939)

Newsome, Noel – BBC European Service News Editor (June 1940 –December 1941); Director of the European Service (December 1941–October 1944)

Nowak, Jan– Member of the Polish Underground and Polish Courier

O'Malley, Owen – British Ambassador to the Polish government-in-exile (1941–1945)

Okulicki, Leopold – Commander of the Polish Home Army (October 1944–January 1945)

Osóbka-Morawski, Edward – Chairman of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (July 1944 –October 1944); Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of National Unity (June 1945 –February 1947).

Parker, Gibson – BBC European Productions Supervisor (1941–1942)

Pragier, Adam – Polish Minister of Information (1944–1949)

Purves, Gillian – BBC Intelligence Department for Poland (1940–1944)

Racziewicz, Władysław– Polish President-in-exile (September 1939–June 1947)

Raczyński, Edward – Polish Ambassador in London (1939–1941), Minister of Foreign Affairs (August 1941–July 1943)

Ratajski, Cyryl – Deputy Prime Minister in Poland (1940–1942)

Ritchie, Douglas – Assistant Director of the European Service (1941–1944); BBC Director of the European News Department (1944–1946)

Roberts, Frank – Head of the Central Department of the Foreign Office (1939–1945)

Romer, Tadeusz – Polish Ambassador to the USSR (1942–1943); Minister of Foreign Affairs (1943–1944)

Rowecki, Stefan – Commander of the Polish Home Army (June 1940 –June 1943)

Russell, F.G. – BBC European Service Day Policy Editor (1942–1944)

Rydz-Śmigły, Edward – Polish Commander-in-chief of Polish Forces (1939)

Rzepecki, Jan – Head of the Polish Bureau of Information and Propaganda (December 1939–October 1944)

Savery, Frank – Foreign Office Counsellor to the Polish Embassy in London; BBC East European Language Supervisor (1941–1944)

Sikorski, Władysław – Polish Prime Minister (1939–1943)

Simpson, Stanley – BBC Polish Service Sub-Editor (1943–1945)

Sosnowski, Kazimierz – Liaison with the Polish Underground.

Spey, J. M. – BBC European Service Dawn Bulletins Policy Editor (1944)

Starzyński, Stefan – Mayor of Warsaw (1934–1939)

Stettinius, Edward – US Secretary of State (December 1944–June 1945)

Stroński, Stanisław – Polish Minister of Information (1939–1943)

Thewes, J.A.P. – BBC European Service Dawn Policy Editor (1944–1945)

Wagner, Karol – Director of Radio Polskie (July 1943–July 1945)

Winch, Michael – BBC Polish Service Editor (1940–1942)

Zalewski, August – Minister of the Foreign Affairs (1939–1941)

Zazio, Evelyn – BBC Polish Sub-Editor (1943–1945)

Annex III: Second World War Timeline including important events related to Polish-Soviet affairs

1939

- 1 September – Germany invades Poland
- 3 September – Great Britain and France declare war on Germany
- 17 September– The Soviet Union invades Poland from the east
- 17 September – The Polish government flees into exile to France via Romania
- 28 September – Capitulation of Warsaw
- 30 November – The Soviet Union invades Finland

1940

- 5 March – Incorporation of the Polish east territories by the USSR as West Ukraine and West Byelorussia
- 9 April – Germany invades Denmark and Norway
- 10 May 10 – 22 June – Germany attacks France and Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Belgium
- 22 June – fall of France
- 10 June – Italy enters the war
- 14 June – The USSR occupation of the Baltic States
- 10 July – Hitler attack on Britain
- 27 September – Germany, Italy, and Japan sign the Tripartite Pact
- 28 October 1940 – Italy invades Greece
- 31 October – Britain defeats Germany
- 20–23 November – Slovakia, Hungary and Romania join the Axis.

1941

- 5 January – Creation of the Polish Workers' Party in Poland
- February – The Germans send the Afrika Korps to North Africa
- 1 March – Bulgaria joins the Axis
- 6 April – Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria invade Yugoslavia
- 17 April – Germany and Bulgaria invade Greece
- 22 June – Germany and its Axis partners invade the Soviet Union
- 12 July – Anglo-Soviet Treaty
- 30 July – Polish-Soviet Treaty

- 14 August – Britain, the USA and USSR sign the Atlantic Charter
- 7 December – Japan bombs Pearl Harbour
- 8 December – The United States declares war on Japan, entering World War II

1943

- 2 February – The USSR defeats Wehrmacht troops at Stalingrad
- March – Creation of the Union of the Polish Patriots in the USSR (formally recognised by Stalin in June)
- 13 April – Germans broadcast information about the discovery of the Polish officers' graves at Katyń
- 19 April –16 May – Warsaw Ghetto Uprising
- 25 April – The USSR breaks off diplomatic relations with Poland
- 4 July – Sikorski dies in a plane crash in Gibraltar
- 14 July – Stanisław Mikołajczyk becomes Polish Prime Minister-in-exile
- 28 November – 1 December – Conference at Tehran
- 31 December – Transformation of the Polish Workers' Party into Homeland National Council

1944

- 4–5 January – The Soviet Army crosses pre-war Polish -Soviet border
- 6 June – Beginning of the D-Day Landings
- 1 August – Beginning of the Warsaw Rising
- 3 August – Mikołajczyk's meeting with Stalin in Moscow
- 25 August – Liberation of Paris
- 2 October – Collapse of the Warsaw Rising
- 24 November – Resignation of Mikołajczyk
- 29 November – Tomasz Arciszewski becomes new Polish Prime Minister-in-exile
- 31 December – Establishment of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland

1945

- 12 January – The Soviets liberate Warsaw and Cracow
- 19 January – Disbanding of the Polish Home Army
- 4 –11 February – Yalta Conference
- 27 March – Arrest of 16 leaders of the Polish Underground by the NKVD
- 16 April – The Soviets launch their final offensive, encircling Berlin
- 25 April – 26 June – United Nations Conference in San Francisco

30 April – Hitler commits suicide

7 May – Surrender of Germany

21 June – Establishment of the Polish Government of National Unity

6 July – Withdrawal of recognition of the Polish government-in-exile by Britain and the USA