

Silencing Lord Haw-Haw:
An Analysis of British Public Reaction
to the Broadcasts, Conviction and Execution
of Nazi Propagandist William Joyce

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HST 499: Senior Seminar
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Western Oregon University
June 16, 2015

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On April 29, 1945 the British Fascist and expatriate William Joyce, dubbed Lord Haw-Haw by the British press, delivered his final radio propaganda broadcast in service of Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany.¹ Apprehended by British forces one month later, Joyce was returned to England to face charges of treason for assisting the enemy.² Despite being born in America, raised in Ireland and naturalized as a German citizen in 1940, Joyce would be prosecuted as "a person owing allegiance to his Majesty the King," having "adhered to the King's enemies elsewhere than in the King's realm – to wit, in the German realm, contrary to the Treason Act of 1351."³ Joyce, however, even to his execution by hanging on January 3, 1946, saw himself as a British Loyalist who, he insisted, "hated the idea of dying as England's enemy."⁴ Joyce, this paper will argue, was convicted and executed not as a result of any damage his propaganda may have inflicted upon the British war effort or the people of Great Britain, but because of the climate of retribution prevalent in the immediate aftermath of the war. Whether enjoyed, tolerated, dismissed or despised, Joyce had not brought about the death of even a single British citizen; his notoriety, however, ultimately brought about his own. British public reaction to his broadcasts as recorded in contemporary newspapers, one almost universally that of amusement, serves to underscore his propaganda's failure to effect the terror and despondency Joyce sought. Despite their sense of outrage and betrayal at what they considered as a fellow countryman's treason, the British public, in the end, were not as interested in seeing Joyce hang as were British government officials. The landmark trial leading to his death sentence remains a fixture in the study of

¹ Peter Martland, *Lord Haw Haw: The English Voice of Nazi Germany* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 68-69.

² "William Joyce Captured," *Times* (London), May 30, 1945, accessed April 25, 2015, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/archive/article/1945-05-30/>.

³ "Joyce for Trial: Claim to be a German," *Times* (London), June 26, 1945, accessed April 25, 2015, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/archive/article/1945-06-26/>.

⁴ Martland, 99.

treason law, and books continue to be written about his life and brief career as the English voice of Nazi Germany; William Joyce, it would seem, has yet to be silenced.⁵

Joyce's unlikely journey from his birthplace in Brooklyn, New York to his position as Josef Goebbels' favorite propaganda radio broadcaster began in Ireland.⁶ His father, Michael Joyce, was an ambitious young man, unusual in his loyalty to the British Crown rather than to the Irish nationalism fomenting in Galway where he and his wife Gertrude (known as 'Queenie'), met and married.⁷ Rather than pursue his fortunes among the much maligned Irish Catholic in England - characterized by Friedrich Engels as savages who slept with their pigs – Michael departed for the United States in 1888.⁸ Four years later, he filed in the Court of Common Pleas of New Jersey a declaration of intention to become a United States citizen “and to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any and every foreign prince, potentate, state, and sovereignty whatever, and particularly to the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, whose subject he has heretofore been.”⁹ Having successfully fulfilled all requirements for naturalization, Joyce's parents became American citizens, a legal status they later failed to renew but never renounced, even after returning to Ireland in 1909, three years after William's birth.¹⁰

At the age of fifteen, William moved to England where, one year later, he began science studies at Battersea Polytechnic, followed the next year with attendance at Birkbeck College where he studied for four years, graduating with a 'first' in English, 1927.¹¹ From there he continued his education, taking a year's post-graduate study of philology in 1928, followed by

⁵ Ibid., 102.

⁶ M. A. Doherty, *Nazi Wireless Propaganda: Lord Haw-Haw and British Public Opinion in the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2000), 73.

⁷ Mary Kenny, *Germany Calling; a Personal Biography of William Joyce, Lord Haw-Haw* (Dublin: New Island, 2004), Kindle edition, chap. 1.

⁸ Ibid. -

⁹ J. W. Hall, ed., *The Trial of William Joyce* (London: William Hodge and Company, Limited, 1946), 2. -

¹⁰ Ibid., 2-3. -

¹¹ Ibid., 4. -

two years' study of psychology at King's College, London.¹² By the time he began his career as a Nazi radio propagandist he was highly educated and well-trained for his particular vocation.

During these years of formal education Joyce became involved with British fascist politics. From 1923 to 1925, as a member of the *British Fascisti* he participated in actively combatting Communism through speeches, rallies and electioneering.¹³ From 1927 until 1930 he spoke for and assisted the Conservative Party, later leaving it¹⁴ in 1933 for membership in Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF).¹⁵ There he discovered his talents for public speaking and propaganda while developing his world political views, including a fierce opposition to both capitalism and Bolshevism, favoring an ultra-conservative return to Anglo supremacy.¹⁶ His vehement hatred of Jews, another prominent theme in his later writings and broadcasts, emerged at this time. Violence thereafter played an increasingly important role in his political life when, after having been dismissed by Mosley from the BUF for his extremist views and activities, Joyce, by now gaining a reputation as a savage street-fighter, formed his own group, the more Hitler-oriented National Socialist League.¹⁷

It was also during this time, in 1933, that Joyce made his ultimately fatal mistake of applying for a British passport, falsely claiming to have "been born at Rutledge Terrace, Galway, Ireland." The date of the application was, in one of the larger ironies of Joyce's life, July 4.¹⁸ Having been granted the passport through a falsified application, Joyce was still in no legal sense a British citizen – a status he never obtained. Subsequently he applied for and renewed his passport upon

¹² *Ibid.* -

¹³ *Ibid.*, 5-6. -

¹⁴ *Ibid.* -

¹⁵ Doherty, 13. -

¹⁶ Hall, 14-15. -

¹⁷ Doherty, 13. -

¹⁸ Hall, 4. -

its five year expiration in 1938, and again in 1939, ten day before the outbreak of the war, a matter of supreme importance at his later trial.¹⁹

Moving to Germany with his wife Margaret (later to be known as ‘Lady Haw-Haw’) in September of 1939, he was employed with German radio, English-Speaking division, within several weeks, and a year later, in September 1940, he was granted German nationality.²⁰ He continued as a broadcaster for the German radio service until April 30, 1945, the date of his last identified broadcast.²¹ Nearly one month later, on May 28, 1945, he was identified (from recognition of his voice) by two British officers near Flensburg on the Danish frontier, arrested, and promptly returned to England to face trial for high treason.²²

The brief preceding summary of Joyce and his career as Nazi radio propagandist draws on an extensive body work on the subject; a great deal has been and continues to be written about Joyce, either directly as biography or tangentially as part of studies concerned with the broader topics of Nazi Propaganda, propaganda in general, or treason law. On one end of the spectrum, the authors find little sympathy Joyce, while some, occupying a more neutral ground, present documentary evidence with little personal commentary. A few to the other side of the divide, though, while still maintain a well-justified disdain for some of his actions and opinions, have found redeeming qualities in the man and are reluctant to paint him as the mindless fanatic described in the more sensationalist treatments.

Of the more critical works, author Francis Selwyn, in his 1987 *Hitler’s Englishman: The Crime of ‘Lord Haw-Haw,’* finds no redeeming qualities in William Joyce, describing him as an

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid. -

²¹ Ibid., 8. -

²² Martland, 73-75. -

“unsuccessful bully and thug” and an “embittered and ranting Nazi.”²³ Despite a certain lack of objectivity, Selwyn’s approach to Joyce’s career predominantly relies on a select sampling of the propagandist’s own words, observing that Joyce’s story “suggests that far and away the best thing was to let him show himself for what he was.”²⁴ Even a harsh critic of Selwyn, though, recognizes peculiar circumstances which gave rise to Joyce’s sentence:

Whatever the merits of the case against him or the outcome of the legal battle, no one could doubt that William Joyce was unlucky to be caught, tried and condemned at such a time. Had he continued to evade capture for a year or two, perhaps by reaching southern Ireland as Goebbels intended, it seems inconceivable that a trial at a later date would have led to his being hanged as a traitor.²⁵

Of the more moderate works, M. A. Daugherty’s *Nazi Wireless Propaganda: Lord Haw-Haw and British Public Opinion in the Second World War*, offers well-reasoned explanations regarding Joyce’s political beginnings and eventual adoption of Nazi ideology.²⁶ With a healthy skepticism, Daugherty challenges accepted assumptions, arriving at a more realistic interpretation of the entire experience of Joyce and Nazi radio propaganda. Similarly, Peter Martland’s *Lord Haw Haw: The English Voice of Nazi Germany*, provides a succinct, sober overview of Joyce’s life and career.²⁷ Published in 2003, Martland’s work avails itself of newly released files on Joyce – and his wife, Margaret – amassed by the British Security Services. These documents, as well as a detailed journal Joyce kept from February 27 to May 21, 1945, shed light on the extent of Joyce’s dealings with like-minded British citizens.²⁸ From his early days as a member of the BUF in the 1920s until just prior to his final departure for Germany in 1939, Joyce, a well-known agitator, had been the subject of Special Branch surveillance,

²³ Francis Selwyn, *Hitler’s Englishman: The Crime of ‘Lord Haw-Haw’* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1987), ix; 69.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, ix.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

²⁶ Doherty.

²⁷ Martland, 1-103.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 253-302.

conducted primarily by agent Maxwell Branch, known simply as “M” on the Joyce files.²⁹ From his reports emerges a portrait of Joyce as a highly capable propagandist possessing a propensity for violence coupled with a fierce but twisted loyalty to England and a virulent anti-Semitism.³⁰

The most thorough and balanced of the works comes from Mary Kenny in her ‘personal biography’ of Joyce, *Germany Calling*.³¹ Exhaustively researched, her study reveals the inescapable influences on Joyce yet recognizes his ultimate responsibility for his actions.

Alone in its near praise of William Joyce, J. A. Cole’s *Lord Haw-Haw & William Joyce: The Full Story*, published in 1964, seems to magnify the significance and influence of his broadcasts, as if to build a mythology of the man. Based in large part upon exclusive interviews with Mrs. Joyce, as well as undefined “previously unpublished material,” and anonymous German sources, Cole is free to embellish and dramatize his account far beyond what could be called ‘interpretation.’³² In describing Joyce as “intelligent, well-educated, dedicated, hard-working, fluent and sharp-tongued,” Cole consciously rejects earlier histories portraying Joyce as a “social reject, a crook and a buffoon,” attributing such characterizations to the emotional reactions of those who experienced the war years first-hand, as if this would somehow alter the legitimacy of their perceptions.³³

Lacking in nearly all biographies of Joyce, however, are examples of personal observations from newspaper articles documenting the perceptions of individuals who experienced Joyce’s broadcasts first-hand. In addition, little has been included from similar sources regarding the British public’s reaction to Joyce’s trial, conviction and, finally, execution. Focusing primarily on articles, letters-to-the editor, and even advertisements in smaller market publications, this

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 15. -

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 28. -

³¹ Kenny. -

³² J. A. Cole, *Lord Haw-Haw & William Joyce: The Full Story* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1964), 7. -

³³ *Ibid.*, 307. -

paper will attempt to provide the reader with a broader, more personal sense of how Joyce was received throughout the British Isles.

Before entering into a discussion of public reaction to Joyce's broadcasts, however, their content must be examined, entailing consideration of the radio as a relatively new medium, the essence of Joyce's politics, his anti-Semitism, and the European political culture of the time. In her *New Yorker* article, Rebecca West, an audience member herself, touches on some of these aspects:

...for he [Joyce] was something new in the history of the world. Not before have people known, as if he were a husband or a brother or a close friend, the voice of one they have never seen, and if ever they had imagined such a miracle it would not have occurred to them that the familiar unknown would speak to them only to prophecy death and ruin for them. All of us in England experienced this hideous novelty.³⁴

This 'novelty,' the cornerstone of the Nazi propaganda apparatus, had its origins back on March 12, 1933 when the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda (RMVP) was established by presidential decree, headed by Goebbels, the architect of the Nazi propaganda machine.³⁵ By the end of April, the ministry he had planned as having five departments covering radio, press, active propaganda, film, and theatre and popular education had expanded to seven.³⁶ Department III was Radio - Reich Broadcasting Company (*Reichfunkgesellschaft*).³⁷ While the other departments contributed to the goal of developing the *Volksgemeinschaft*, or National Community, envisioned by Hitler and Goebbels, the relatively new technology of radio seemed to hold a special place for Goebbels. He understood its immense capability as a tool for

³⁴ West, 30. -

³⁵ David Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 24. -

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 25. -

³⁷ *Ibid.*

propaganda and over the next 12 years would hone and harness its potential to varying degrees of effectiveness.³⁸

Early on, Goebbels had been correct in his assessment of radio's potential. In his speech at the 10th Annual Radio Exposition given on 18 August 1933, shortly after the introduction of the *Volksempfänger* (the inexpensive radio set manufactured and marketed specifically for the purposes of propaganda dissemination), Goebbels expounded on his vision for radio:

The radio will be for the twentieth century what the press was for the nineteenth century. With the appropriate change, one can apply Napoleon's phrase to our age, speaking of the radio as the eighth great power. Its discovery and application are of truly revolutionary significance for contemporary community life. Future generations may conclude that the radio had as great an intellectual and spiritual impact on the masses as the printing press had before the beginning of the Reformation.

... It would not have been possible for us to take power or to use it in the ways we have without the radio and the airplane. It is no exaggeration to say that the German revolution, at least in the form it took, would have been impossible without the airplane and the radio.

... . The radio is the most influential and important intermediary between a spiritual movement and the nation, between the idea and the people.³⁹

At the outbreak of war the British government, out of fear over the possibility of massive casualties inflicted upon people gathered in public venues, inadvertently aided Goebbels in his mission by closing all theaters, concert and dance halls, and, most significantly, cinemas where weekly newsreels provided many with their only source of news about the war.⁴⁰ Additionally, wartime contingency plans had hopelessly disrupted the usual BBC broadcast fare of live talent, necessitating a monotonous stream of light organ music or gramophone recordings interspersed with news bulletins and government edicts.⁴¹ In response, British listeners were more than eager for some entertainment, regardless of its source.

³⁸ Ibid, 26. -

³⁹ Joseph Goebbels, "Radio as the Eighth Great Power," *German Propaganda Archive*, accessed March 17, 2014, - <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb56.htm>.

⁴⁰ Martland, 37.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Into this vacuum stepped William Joyce. Although the title “Lord Haw-Haw had originally applied to another British expatriate broadcasting for the Nazis, former British army officer Norman Baillie-Stewart, the name was quickly applied to Joyce after Baillie-Stewart left the radio service, fed up with the inane material he had been furnished by the German Foreign Ministry.⁴² Joyce rose quickly within the English-speaking division and by September, 1940, when the heavy bombing of London had begun, he had gained the praise of Josef Goebbels who, in his diary entry of September 11 noted, “We’re re-orienting our radio service. The English language and the Freedom stations to produce terror and panic.[sic] We’re really stepping up the pressure. Lord Haw-Haw is brilliant.”⁴³

The substance of Joyce’s propaganda apparently derived from political beliefs formed much earlier in his life reflecting, not surprisingly, those of his father.⁴⁴ A business-minded man, Michael Joyce originally held strong political allegiance to the capitalist British ideals of industriousness and individual ambition.⁴⁵ Although renouncing allegiance to the Crown upon attaining U.S. citizenship, he remained staunchly British, an allegiance William was to later profess in the extreme.⁴⁶

William’s anti-Semitism, too, seems to have formed through exposure to opinions his father developed in response to dealings with Jewish landlords during the family’s time in Brooklyn at the turn of the century.⁴⁷ Hostility toward perceived Jewish domination of business and Jewish

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Doherty, 73.

⁴⁴ Kenny, chap. 1.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Kenny, chap. 1.

left-wing radicalism comprised a central theme of early twentieth century Fascism, an attitude and belief system clearly embraced by William as early as his teens.⁴⁸

In 1920, at the age of fourteen, he had already sided with the Crown as a volunteer with the ‘Black and Tans’, a ruthless paramilitary force of ex-servicemen recruited by the British government to reinforce the Royal Irish Constabulary against Irish guerrillas fighting for home rule.⁴⁹ A. W. Miles Webb, a childhood contemporary of Joyce’s in Galway at the time recalled the fanaticism Joyce had already developed: “Certainly he reviled everyone who held anti-British views. There is no one more pro-British than your extreme Irish loyalist, he is almost as fanatic as Joyce certainly was and he was heartily detested by, not only the ordinary local Irish townspeople, but even by the average loyalist, too.”⁵⁰

This sort of fanaticism carried over to his membership in the *British Fascisti* where he so antagonized his political opponents in the Communist Party that at a conservative election meeting in 1924 he was “razored” as communist agitators rushed the stage, receiving the livid scar from ear to mouth on the right side of his face, which he bore for the rest of his life.⁵¹

It was not until his ouster from the BUF, though, and the formation of his National Socialist League, that Joyce fully committed his life to his new politics. “As Joyce,” writes Peter Martland, “the man who claimed absolute loyalty to Britain and its empire, embraced Nazi ideology and tactics, Adolf Hitler became his new hero and thereafter was the model for all his ideas.”⁵²

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ J. A. Cole, *Lord Haw-Haw & William Joyce: The Full Story* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1964), 23.

⁵⁰ Martland, 8.

⁵¹ Selwyn, 27-29.

⁵² Martland, 18-19.

As the war approached, Joyce and his organization came under increasing scrutiny from the Home Office, leading to his and his wife's defection to Germany on August 26, 1939, two days prior to an attempt by officials to locate and detain them.⁵³

On September 11, 1939, barely two weeks after arriving in Germany – and presumably rejecting any claim to British citizenship - Joyce delivered his first broadcast for the German Overseas Service in his soon-to-be familiar fake, “upper-class” British accent.⁵⁴ Always his targets were the same – communist, the British press, international capitalism and, especially, Jews. His broadcasts generally took the form of pointing out the failures of British military or British policy, intermixed with blatant falsehoods of his own creation or those passed on by Goebbels and his Ministry of Propaganda, all intended to create dissention and panic among the British listening at home.⁵⁵ In the following transcription of Joyce's June 22, 1940 broadcast, the day France and Germany concluded an armistice, he delivers one of his more serious threats: (parentheses and stress added in bold by the British transcriber to relate the emphasis in Joyce's voice))

In this matter [of RAF bombing raids on Germany], as in all others, [the] Fuehrer has been very patient. But it would be absurd to assume that nothing would be done to protect ordinary non-combatant people of Germany. **All resources of warning have now been exhausted.** (These last eight words heavily stressed). You will agree that these warnings have been numerous, and now (sinister pause), unfortunately (this word was laughed), you will see the results of disregarding them. The British people have taken no action to restrain their government from attacking non-combatants, and **deeply as we regret the necessity** (heavily stressed) from departing from principle which we honoured long after England had abandoned it, it will be shown once again that Germany of today **cannot be provoked with impunity** (heavily stressed). Her women and children are entitled to be protected in [the] **most effective fashion** (heavily stressed). We wanted, and tried, to keep the war as clean as possible. Churchill wanted to make it dirty, and he has succeeded. To [the] British people we would say: Do not waste your time abusing us for **repaying like with like** (heavily stressed). Take your complaints to Churchill, who must

⁵³ Ibid., 28-29. -

⁵⁴ Selwyn, 87-94. -

⁵⁵ Martland, 33-34. -

bear full responsibility for this terrible development in war that we tried to wage against combatants only. **He is the culprit** (heavily stressed).

(N. B. The whole talk was read in the most dramatic fashion).⁵⁶

Similar broadcasts continued through the Blitz, revealing Joyce's contempt for a British population experiencing death and destruction on a nightly basis.

Not until April 2, 1941 did William Joyce revealed his name on the air, this in reaction to a wildly embellished version of an interview he granted a reporter for the *Evening Standard*. In that broadcast, he also delivered the following rationale for his work as a radio propagandist in Germany:

I, William Joyce, will merely say that I left England because I would not fight for Jewry against the Fuehrer and National Socialism, and because I believe most ardently, as I do today, that victory with a perpetuation of the old system would be an incomparably greater evil for England than defeat coupled with a possibility of building something new, something really nationalist, something truly socialist.⁵⁷

Historian William Shirer who, as a foreign war correspondent providing audio reports for Western audiences and for a time worked in common circles with Joyce, sharing the same broadcast facilities, maintained a somewhat different perspective, citing Joyce's "titanic hatred for Jews and an equally titanic one for capitalists" as the driving forces of his adult life.⁵⁸ "Strange as it may seem," Shirer continued, "he thinks the Nazi movement is a proletarian one which will free the world from the bonds of 'plutocratic capitalists.'"⁵⁹

Joyce expressed these views more fully in the tiresome diatribes of his book *Twilight Over England*, which William Shirer described as "a hodge-podge of Nazi nonsense about England, studded with obvious truths about its blacker and meaner side."⁶⁰ Of the 100,000 copies

⁵⁶ Ibid., 46-47. -

⁵⁷ Ibid., 51. -

⁵⁸ Ibid., 49-50. -

⁵⁹ Ibid, 50. -

⁶⁰ Ibid.

published specifically for distribution to British prisoner-of-war camps, not a single copy could be located by British Security Services for introduction into evidence for Joyce's 1945 trial.⁶¹

As for the lesser but curious matter of the origin of the moniker "Lord Haw-Haw," the attribution is to "Jonah Barrington," the pen name of a columnist at the time writing for the *Daily Express*. As J. W. Hall recounts:

It occurred to [Barrington] that the most effective counter [to Joyce's broadcasts] was ridicule, and he wrote an article about these broadcasts in which he referred to the broadcaster as "Lord Haw-Haw," and gave an imaginary pen-picture of him as a brainless idiot of the type of "Bertie Wooster" in Mr. P. G. Wodehouse's books.⁶²

C. E. Bechhofer Roberts, editor of a volume entitled *The Trial of William Joyce*, declares that "Joyce was by far the best of the Nazi broadcasters in English. His voice and delivery were excellent; his matter was entertaining and often plausible and – in a service not remarkable for its intentional humour – his imitations of Mr. Churchill were masterly fooling."⁶³ Other reactions to Joyce's broadcasts ranged from amused to terrified. West's September, 1945 *New Yorker* article captures one response to the broadcasts of Lord Haw-Haw:

It was very difficult not to come on Joyce's wave length when tuning in to the English stations, and there was an arresting quality about his voice that made it hard not to go on listening. It was a rasping but rich voice, like Father Coughlin's, and it was convincing in its confidence. It seemed as if one had better hearken and take warning when he suggested that it was the destiny of his people he had left behind in England to die and the destiny of his new masters in Germany to live and conquer, and that, therefore, his listeners had better change sides and submit. ... He was not only alarming, he was ugly; he opened a vista into hell...⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ibid. Regrettably, a copy could not be retrieved for this paper. A republished copy, however- facsimile reprint number five- may be accessed through the Imperial War Museum.

⁶² Ibid., 8-9.

⁶³ C. E. Bechhofer Roberts, foreword to *The Trial of William Joyce: with some Notes on Other Recent Trials for Treason, etc.* (London: Jarrolds, 1946), 9. Two separate 1946 publications cited for this paper are entitled the *Trial of William Joyce*, and while both contain identical matter regarding the trial and appeal transcripts, they differ in additional content and have different editors.

⁶⁴ West, 30.

A January, 1940 letter to the editor of the *Sunderland Echo* by a Fulwell resident, signed J. I. G., expresses a far more common response to the broadcasts of Lord Haw-Haw:

Every jibe at our leaders, each item of propaganda, and every contradictory “falsehood” is greeted with howls of laughter that would flatter even “our Gracie” herself. As usual, the officials’ underestimation of our intelligence has prompted them to counteract these silly accusations with similar childish methods.⁶⁵

J. W. Hall, attorney and editor of *The Trial of William Joyce*, although deliberately avoiding Joyce’s broadcasts as much as possible, believing that to listen would play into the enemy’s hand, found that most of his acquaintances were enthusiastic listeners typically expressing this sentiment: “Oh, I always tune in to Haw-Haw and have a good laugh. He’s the funniest turn on the air. One can’t take him seriously.”⁶⁶

Government and BBC officials, however, regularly assumed an inability of Haw-Haw’s audience to accurately evaluate his propaganda. A December, 1939 document from the War Office to BBC Director-General Frederick Ogilvie does reveal a growing concern over the effect propaganda broadcasts were having on public morale: “The transmissions are, I think you will agree, ingenious; and though the British public’s first reaction was one of amusement, I am not sure that the constant reiteration of Lord Haw-Haw is not having a bad effect.”⁶⁷ While not urgent, the tone of the letter suggests that the British government found itself helpless to counter the propaganda beyond a suggestion to “put on every evening after Lord Haw-Haw’s talk a British broadcast (possibly by a humorist such as P.G. Wodehouse or Beechcomber) to

⁶⁵ “German Propaganda Broadcasts,” *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, January 18, 1940, *British Newspaper Archive*, accessed May 31, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000640/19400118/132/0005?browse=false> .

⁶⁶ Hall, 10.

⁶⁷ Aylmer Vallance, “A Letter from the War Office, Whitehall,” *Lord Haw-Haw: The Nazi Broadcaster who Threatened Britain*, *BBC Archive*, accessed April 25, 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/hawhaw/8924.shtml?page=txt>. J. W. Hall’s *The Trial of William Joyce* contains the nearly entire BBC report on public reaction to Haw-Haw broadcasts.

caricature His Lordship.”⁶⁸ His voice, an English voice, reached – at least for some - a visceral vulnerability; the power of Joyce’s propaganda lay not so much in the message as in the messenger. If one of their own could be swayed, went the reasoning, perhaps there was something in his words, after all, that demanded attention.

The reactions to Joyce’s propaganda broadcasts, as revealed in smaller newspapers across Great Britain, serve to illuminate not only how Joyce was truly received, but to substantiate the claim that his broadcasts ultimately failed in their attempts to dishearten the British listeners, and in fact proved to be a unifying force in Britain’s determination to win out against Hitler and his Nazi war machine.

Any success enjoyed by Joyce and his fellow Nazi radio propagandists was limited primarily to the “phoney war” period from September 1939 to September 1940, during which armed conflict between Britain and Germany had barely commenced, and the Blitz period, immediately following until May 1941.⁶⁹ That limited success came generally in the form of wild, baseless rumors generated by listeners to Lord Haw-Haw’s broadcasts, producing more fear and anxiety than anything - either accurate or fabricated - Joyce specifically transmitted. The Bishop of Bristol in his January 1941 letter to the *Diocesan Gazette*, exhorts British citizens to use all their influence “to check and suppress the foolish rumours that are passed from mouth to mouth as to what that renegade Englishman known as ‘Lord Haw Haw’ is supposed to have said about this or that district in our city...”⁷⁰

A July, 1942 Daily Mail article addressed the more tangible effects of Joyce’s propaganda and rumor, with an unnamed contributor’s remembrance of the earlier days of the war. “No one

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Doherty, 73-74.

⁷⁰ “Rumour and the Renegade Haw-Haw,” *Western Daily Press*, January 1, 1941, *British Newspaper Archive*, accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000513/19410101/040/0005?browse=false> .

actually heard [Joyce] mention any particular factory or area.” he writes.⁷¹ “It was always a friend who had been listening. Yet those rumours [of English cities named as bombing targets],” he continued, “did have an effect on attendance at work...”⁷² Suburban residents, he said residents, also feared attending events, especially at night, in the larger cities for fear of air raids.⁷³

At its most extreme, one reaction attributed to Haw-Haw broadcasts was the suicide of a woman who, depressed by listening to them, gassed herself.⁷⁴ Had this become a common occurrence the causal attribution to Joyce’s propaganda may have been more credible, but of significance is that the story appeared in newspapers across Great Britain, becoming part of Lord Haw-Haw lore.⁷⁵

That Joyce seemed to have access to special information regarding German military plans, particularly which English cities targeted for aerial bombing, as well as even the most minute details of small town life, was a common conclusion among listeners, when in fact he merely made reasonable guesses or, more often, had superior access to the latest reports from various British sources.⁷⁶ “It is disquieting” commented another associate of Hall, “to find how much information he seems able to get, and some of his forecasts seem to have been unpleasantly true.”⁷⁷ As but one section of a larger German news service that regularly monitored all British radio broadcasts, the English-speaking division was thought to be essentially one and the same

⁷¹ “Bombing of Germany,” *Hull Daily Mail*, July 29, 1942, *British Newspaper Archive*, accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000324/19420729/029/0003?browse=false> .

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Raymond Burns, “Propaganda by the Fireside,” *Portsmouth Evening News*, January 27, 1940, *British Newspaper Archive*, accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000290/19400127/076/0004?browse=false> .

⁷⁵ *British Newspaper Archive*, accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/> .

⁷⁶ Doherty, 111-15

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

with the entire Nazi apparatus, leading at times to a paranoia regarding Joyce's omniscience bordering on the absurd. As Chelmsford resident J. C. Chaplin comments in the *Essex Newsman*:

On occasion he was reported to announce that Colchester's Town Hall clock was two minutes slow. Of course, there was nothing sensational in a clock being that much unpunctual. But to show such knowledge would demonstrate at once the intimate and peculiar knowledge of our affairs in the possession of the German General Staff.⁷⁸

It was this mythical aspect of Joyce's persona that, along with the relative novelty of listening to foreign stations for news in English, increased the British people's awareness of his presence on the airwaves. At the peak of his listenership, Joyce, the BBC estimated, had garnered a following of 6 million loyal listeners – over one in every six adult citizens within reception range.⁷⁹

As the attacks continued into 1941, though, it became clear to listeners that many of Joyce's claims were simply ludicrous. The most reported case of refuting a lie broadcast by Joyce, (purportedly originating with Goebbels) involved the claim that Germany had sunk the British carrier *H. M. S. Ark Royal* late in 1939. As was the case with much of Joyce's propaganda, the effect was opposite of that intended. Numerous articles from across Great Britain tell of small church clubs, Legion clubs and individuals sending parcels to Royal Ark crew members in a show of solidarity.⁸⁰ Similar articles frequently describe the coalescing of a community, rallying in defiance of Lord Haw-Haw's miscalculated efforts. A later claim of Goebbels, repeated by Haw-Haw, concerning a blatantly obvious exaggeration of a seventy-two hour continuous bombing of Great Britain is ridiculed by a contributor to the September 1941 *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, who is astonished with the persistent Nazi faith in "the efficacy of the really big lie."

⁷⁸ "Will They Find William Joyce?," *Times* (London), May 4, 1945, *The British Newspaper Archive*, accessed May 29, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000530/19450504/013/0002?browse=false>.

⁷⁹ Martland, 42-43.

⁸⁰ "Where is the Ark Royal?," *Burnley Express*, January 27, 1940, *British Newspaper Archive*, accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000672/19400127/444/0014?browse=false>.

⁸¹Rather than allowing the propaganda to adversely affect his morale, he instead finds comfort in the fact that his own government “has not in the past hidden from [the British public] the destruction caused by German air raids.” Yet another example of Nazi propaganda fabrications broadcast by Haw-Haw, perhaps the most ridiculous of the war, concerns the famous clock Big Ben. The August 17, 1940 *Derby Daily Telegraph* reports, under the headline “Bats in Belfry,” that Lord Haw-Haw had announced the claim, “A great sensation was caused in London last night when Big Ben struck thirteen times at midnight.”⁸² In this instance, by involving such a prominent national landmark, the Nazi propagandists crossed the line into the preposterous, ensuring for all of Great Britain that the propagandists had now lost any credibility whatsoever.

Further indications of the less-than-terrified British response to the Lord Haw-Haw broadcasts include a February 1940 *Nottingham Evening Post* article, reprinted in several other newspapers, informing readers of “an Indian Mynah which imitates ‘Lord Haw-Haw’ and laughs cynically, while another bird says nasty things about Hitler...”⁸³ By January 1941, as reported in a *Yorkshire Post* article, eventually referred to simply as “Lord Haw-Haw,’ went on tour, delighting audiences “with his little song and dance act, with a bit of whistling and a few imitations thrown in.”⁸⁴ Even newspaper advertisements for radio sets traded on Joyce’s

⁸¹ “Goebbels Tells a Whopper,” *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, September 11, 1941, *British Newspaper Archive*, accessed June 5, 2015,

<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000563/19410911/016/0002?browse=false> .

⁸² “Bats in Belfry,” *Derby Daily Telegraph*, August 17, 1940, *British Newspaper Archive*, accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000521/19400817/006/0001?browse=false> .

⁸³ “Lord Haw-Haw in a Cage,” *Nottingham Evening Post*, February 8, 1940, *British Newspaper Archives*, accessed May 29, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000321/19400208/004/0001> .

⁸⁴ “Haw-Haw is Caged,” *Yorkshire Evening Post*, January 9, 1941, *British Newspaper Archives*, accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000273/19410109/137/0005?browse=false> .

popularity: “For radio’s funniest turn,” went one ad, “tune in to Lord Haw Haw of Zeesen on an All-Wave Superhet.”⁸⁵

A more somber assessment, though, is offered by a *Voice of Hamburg* report from February, 1940:

Although almost all listeners were to some extent critical, their attitude would depend on the degree of their own dissatisfaction and social insecurity. To an observer not personally implicated, the composite Hamburg announcer might appear merely as an unorthodox form of His Majesty’s Opposition, but to others who are hard hit much of what he says goes home.⁸⁶

The latter response, not the ridicule and dismissal of the most British listeners, was precisely the sort propaganda seeks to elicit; through exploitation of people’s dissatisfactions and prejudices, the propagandist gains credibility as one who understands the plight of his audience. Yet, as observed in the report, the sort of criticism levelled at the British government hardly surpassed the rhetoric of any domestic opposition.

Criticism of British government, however, was by no means exclusive to Joyce, as underscored by a December, 1939 letter to the editor in *The Times* underscores this reality in reference to a recent broadcast:

this rationing [of butter] is being so clumsily handled, through the stupid incompetence of the British Government, attested in numerous extracts from the British Press, that unofficial rationing has had to be brought into force before official rationing has begun. This was a superficially very effective broadcast. It contained no misstatements. Its facts, apart from its inference, were not only true, but their truth could be instantly verified by all who heard them.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ *Express and Echo*, January 6, 1940, *British Newspaper Archive*, accessed May 31, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001061/19400106/274/0005> . Early Joyce broadcasts originated from the German town of Zeesen. The majority of his later broadcasts originated from Hamburg.

⁸⁶ M. A. Daugherty, *Nazi Wireless Propaganda: Lord Haw-Haw and British Public Opinion in the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2000), 96. The author’s use of the phrase “composite Hamburg announcer” refers to the fact that, from late 1939 to early 1940, the name “Lord Haw-Haw” was originally used to indicate any of several minor and briefly-employed English broadcasters working for the German broadcast apparatus.

⁸⁷ Harold Hobson, Letter to the Editor, "Lord Haw-Haw" A Challenge from the B.B.C.?, *Times* (London), December 29, 1939, accessed April 25, 2015, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/archive/article/1939-12-29/4/4> .

While only a relatively insignificant criticism, this does demonstrate that, even in a time of war, disagreement with government policy was still accepted as legitimate, and served as a basis for much of Joyce's central propagandist aims – to divide the British along class lines.⁸⁸ The assumption was that by addressing social inequality and the deficiencies of the British capitalist system the poorer classes would rally around the view that National Socialism offered them what the British government could or would not, when in reality, the more 'sophisticated' listeners, those of higher income and education, supposedly immune to Nazi propaganda, were those more likely to favor coming to some sort of terms with Hitler, believing England's military position hopeless.⁸⁹ "Moreover," writes historian M. A. Doherty, "there were many politically sophisticated individuals in Britain who...held extreme right-wing political views, who were anti-Semitic, and who cared nothing about European political affairs except to the extent that they had a fear and hatred of communism."⁹⁰

A further irony, only partially addressed in the literature, concerns the well-documented phenomenon that to confess not listening to Haw-Haw was to place oneself outside the 'knowing' social group.⁹¹ What was not found in the research was the observation that, rather than dividing the British people along economic, social or political lines, Joyce's propaganda actually served to unite them over a common enemy. While this approach served the Nazis well inside Germany on their rise to power, it failed utterly among a British population facing the existential threat of Hitler's bombs.⁹² Several articles from British newspapers report small groups such as the Pitsea British Legion pledging a boycott of Haw-Haw broadcasts, or

⁸⁸ Doherty, 34-58.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 120-21

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

⁹² William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a single German Town 1922-1945* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1965), 22-34.

individuals calling on fellow citizens to refrain from listening; even in their refusal to listen they call for unity.⁹³

By as early as May of 1941, articles began to appear citing not only outright rejection of Joyce's messages, but a growing sense of unity in combatting rumors and propaganda. One such example from the May 26, 1941 *Nottingham Evening Post* reflects this attitude, expressed by the unnamed author of the "Wireless Whispers" column who observes, "people who have been hitherto adversely affected hearing of the alleged threats by this renegade British announcer, now stick to their guns, and challenge those who talk to them about him."⁹⁴ Continuing, the columnist cites the correspondence of a Mrs. 'B' of Aspley who, 'in readiness for the next chatterbox that comes along' clipped the previous week's column on the same topic, wishing she could "knock the block off Haw-Haw and all his blinking gang!"⁹⁵

By November of 1943, as a contributor to the *Aberdeen Journal* reveals, "the Germans themselves even are now shrinking from talking to Lord Haw-Haw. His name is rarely mentioned here now and few bother to listen to him.

The vision Joyce described in *Twilight over England* for German domination over Europe was inevitably shattered, of course, by the events of 1942 in Stalingrad and the tide of the war turning at last against the once seemingly invincible German war machine. By 1943 Joyce and his wife had already begun contingency planning. With Gestapo assistance Joyce was issued a set of papers in the name of Wilhelm Hansen, asserting his profession as teacher, his place of

⁹³ *Essex Newsmen*, April 20, 1940, *British Newspaper Archive*, accessed May 30, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000381/19400420/017/0002> ; E. T. P., "Calmness, Confidence – and Discretion," *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, May 31, 1940, *British Newspaper Archive*, accessed May 30, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000750/19400531/183/0007>.

⁹⁴ "Wireless Whispers," *Nottingham Evening Post*, May 26, 1941, *British Newspaper Archive*, accessed June 5, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000321/19410526/024/0003?browse=false> .

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

birth, Galway.⁹⁶ In 1944, it became clear that with the Allied armies closing in, he and his wife must evacuate their Luxembourg base for the relative safety of Berlin.⁹⁷ By mid-march of 1945, they fled the city and successfully resumed broadcasting from Apen, near Hamburg.⁹⁸ When those facilities neared capture, they at last fled to Hamburg, where on April 29, 1945, William Joyce made his final, drunken broadcast:

Now, in this most serious time of our age, I beg you to realise the fight is on. You have heard something about the Battle of Berlin. You know that there a tremendous world-shattering conflict is being waged. Good. I will only say that the men who have died in the Battle of Berlin have given their lives to show that whatever else happens, Germany will live. No coercion, no oppression, no measures of tyranny that any foreign foe can introduce will shatter Germany. Germany will live because the people of Germany have in them the secret of life, endurance, and will of purpose. And therefore I ask you in these last words – you will not hear from me again for a few months. I say ‘Es lebe Deutschland’ Heil Hitler and farewell.⁹⁹

If in nothing else, he was accurate in that he would be heard from soon. The following statement of British Captain Alexander Adrian Lickorish describes the capture of William Joyce:

On 28 May 1945 at about 7:00 pm I was with another officer Lieutenant Perry in a wood, a mile from the Danish frontier near Flensburg gathering fuel. A little earlier we had seen an individual, a man who was also in the wood and as we were collecting logs at 7:00 pm he turned towards us and waving his stick indicated some wood in a ditch. Thereafter he remained near us and presently spoke to us in French but we ignored his remarks except to thank him in German. After a while he said in English ‘Here are a few more pieces’. I immediately recognised his voice as that of a broadcaster on the German radio known as William Joyce. I desired to confirm my suspicions and had a discussion with Lieutenant Perry. We evolved a plan as a result of which when the man was placing the wood on our truck Lieut [enant] Perry taxed him by saying ‘You wouldn’t happen to be William Joyce would you?’ He put his hand in his pocket¹⁰⁰ and Perry shot at his hand. Joyce fell to the ground saying ‘My name is Hansen. I rushed to him and searched him with a view to disarming him. Joyce said ‘I am not armed’. Looking through his pockets I found in the inner jacket pocket a Reisepasse in the name of Wilhelm Hansen and a

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 67-69.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁰⁰ Accounts vary as to where in his anatomy he was shot. Some have him shot in the thigh, but one account has it that he was shot in the ‘buttock’, which would understandably be sanitized for the press.

Wehrepasse in the name of William Joyce. We treated his wound by giving first aid, later handing him over to the appropriate military authorities.¹⁰¹

Two days later, upon questioning by MI5 officer Captain William James Skardon, Joyce gave the following statement, presented here in full:

I take this opportunity of making a preliminary statement concerning the motives which led me to go to Germany and broadcast to Britain for the German radio service. I was actuated not by a desire for personal gain, material or otherwise, but solely by political convictions. I was brought up as an extreme Conservative with strong imperialistic ideas, but early in my career, in 1923, I was attracted to Fascism and subsequently to National-Socialism. Between 1923 and 1939 I pursued vigorous political activities in England - at times as a Conservative, but mainly as a Fascist or National-Socialist. In the period immediately before this war I was profoundly discontented with the policy pursued by the British Government-first, because I thought it would lead to the eventual disruption of the British Empire, and, secondly, because I thought the existing economic system entirely inadequate to the needs of the times.

Turning to his praise of Hitler, Joyce continues:

I was very greatly impressed by the constructive' work which Hitler had done for Germany and was of the opinion that throughout Europe, as also in Britain, there must come a reform on the lines of National- Socialist doctrine, although I did not suppose that every aspect of National-Socialism as advocated in Germany would be accepted by the British people. One of my dominant beliefs was that a war between Britain and Germany would be a tragedy, the effects of which Britain and the British Empire would not survive, and I considered that a grossly disproportionate influence was exerted on British policy by the Jews, who had their reasons for hating National-Socialist Germany. When in August, 1939, the final crisis emerged I felt the question of Danzig offered no just cause for world war. As, by reason of my opinions, I was not conscientiously disposed to fight for Britain against Germany I decided to leave the country since I did not wish to play the part of a conscientious objector, and since I supposed that in Germany I should have an opportunity to express and propagate views, the expression of which would be forbidden in Britain during the time of war.¹⁰²

His last claim here omits the reality that in Great Britain before the war his National Socialist League consisted of less than a dozen members. Ostracized from Mosley's group, Joyce would have found few listeners had he remained in England, regardless of any political suppression he may have encountered. Broadcasting from Germany, he did enjoy an audience far larger than he

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 74-75. -

¹⁰² "Joyce for Trial: Claim to be a German," *Times* (London), June 26, 1945, accessed April 25, 2015, - <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/archive/article/1945-06-26> .

could ever have gathered in England, yet that, too, was short-lived. By 1943 few in Great Britain bothered to listen to anything he had to say.

Not quite four months from his capture, William Joyce, the self-proclaimed British Loyalist and patriot, stood in a London courtroom, the “Old Bailey,” to stand trial on three counts of treason, two of them dependent upon his presumed status as a British citizen, a presumption soon to be dispelled.¹⁰³ The third, founded in part upon interpretation of a law enacted nearly six centuries earlier, pertained not strictly to British nationals, but to the general term “person,” a loophole just wide enough to accommodate Joyce.¹⁰⁴ The real issue, alleged in that third count, went to whether Joyce, despite his American citizenship, the fact he never had been of British nationality, and had obtained a British passport through a falsified application, owed allegiance to the Crown and had adhered to the King’s enemies between September 18, 1939 and July 2, 1940, the expiration date of his invalid passport.¹⁰⁵ The presiding Judge determined that Joyce did indeed owe allegiance and asked the jury to decide whether he had adhered to the King’s enemies.¹⁰⁶ For a British jury in 1946, less than six months from the end of the War in Europe, there could only be one verdict. Therefore, on September 19, 1945, William Joyce was convicted and sentenced to death.¹⁰⁷ As Rebecca West observed upon the reading of the guilty verdict, “People wanted Joyce to pay the proper legal penalty for his treason, but not because they felt any personal hatred against him. They wanted to be sure that in any other war this peculiarly odious form of treachery would be discouraged before it began, and that was about the limit of their interest in the matter.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Hall, 18-19.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. -

¹⁰⁸ West, chap. 1. -

Eight days later Joyce submitted a notice of appeal to Court of Criminal Appeal against his conviction on the following four grounds:

1. The Court wrongly assumed jurisdiction to try an alien for an offence against British law committed in a foreign country.
2. The learned judge was wrong in law in holding, and misdirected the jury in directing them, that the appellant owed allegiance to His Majesty the King during the period from 18th September, 1939, to 2nd July, 1940.
3. There was no evidence that the renewal of the appellant's passport afforded him or was capable of affording him any protection or that the appellant ever availed himself or had any intention of availing himself of any such protection.
4. If (contrary to the appellant's contention) there was any such evidence, the issue was one for the jury, and the learned judge failed to direct them thereon.¹⁰⁹

Although rejected unanimously, attorney J. W. Hall records in 1946 that “many – possibly a majority...thought the appeal would succeed¹¹⁰ In that same year, C. E. Bechhofer Roberts also concurs: “It would be idle to pretend that lawyers were, or are to-day, altogether satisfied with the outcome of the affair. New law had been made, or, rather, the existing law had been stretched almost to the breaking-point – and a man had died for it.”¹¹¹

Regarding the prosecution, Hartley Shawcross, one of three attorneys assigned that duty, later wrote of his participation as Attorney-General in the Joyce case, ‘it remains in my mind as one of which I am not specially proud.’ Kenney notes that other distinguished British personalities, such as historian A. J. P. Taylor considered the proceedings ‘a piece of legal chicanery,’ agreeing with what some legal experts in their characterization of the process as ‘judicial murder.’¹¹²

Suggestive of political motivation, Mr. L. A. Byrne, another of the prosecuting attorneys, was

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 19. -

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33. -

¹¹¹ Roberts, 26. -

¹¹² Kenny, prologue. -

made a judge before the proceedings ended.¹¹³ Furthermore, all agreed amongst themselves that they would be led at the Old Bailey by whichever Attorney-General would retain office after the upcoming election.¹¹⁴

In the press, contrary to a somewhat inflated accounting from later biographers, notices of Joyce's capture, trial, sentencing and execution, while in a few instances receiving the "banner headlines" reported by Kenny, were relegated to relatively inconsequential placement among similar, 'less-noteworthy' news items of the day.¹¹⁵ In the "Current Events" section of the *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, for example, on September 17, 1945, under a far larger item on improved railway service, a one hundred and four word article announces the start of the Joyce treason trial, with all but eighteen words addressed to the occurrence of several people sleeping overnight outside the courtroom to ensure seats within.¹¹⁶ Even less spectacular were the notices of his execution such as the sixty-four words devoted to the event by the January 4, 1946 edition of the *Western Daily Press*, tucked between a report of a man narrowly escaping an automobile crash and a smaller piece on the possibility of the recent 'cold-snap' making ice-skating possible.¹¹⁷ While many notices of his execution gave greater coverage, that some barely acknowledged it speaks to a turn in the public concern for Joyce; widespread interest in the once notorious Lord Haw-Haw died with him.

In defense of their actions government officials took the position that to reprieve Joyce would have stirred a public outcry. In response, Hall observes:

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, chap. 12.

¹¹⁶ "Notoriety," *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, September 17, 1945, *British Newspaper Archive*, accessed May 31, 2015, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000563/19450917/009/0002?browse=false> .

¹¹⁷ "William Joyce Hanged," *Western daily Press*, January 4, 1946, *British Newspaper Archive*, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000513/19460104/045/0004?browse=false> .

It may, however, be doubted whether there would have been any popular clamour, for very much to my surprise I have found, with a universal reprobation of Joyce's conduct, an almost equally universal feeling, shared by lawyers and laymen, servicemen, and civilians, that (with the utmost respect to the eight out of nine learned judges) the decision was all wrong, and that an unmeritorious case has made bad law.

Echoing the sentiments of many British citizens who, as Kenny relates, had 'flooded' the offices of the British Home Secretary, the Prime Minister and King George VI with appeals for clemency, Hall emphasizes, "The feeling, and it is, I believe, strong and widespread, is not so much that Joyce, having been convicted, should have been reprieved, but that he should not have been convicted."¹¹⁸ As Kenny reports,¹¹⁹ "the file for letters and telegrams to the Home Office pleading for mercy for Joyce was three inches thick."

Supporting the assertion that the British public was not the central impetus for Joyce's execution, a 1964 *Times* review of J. A. Cole's *Lord Haw-Haw-and William Joyce: The Full Story*, by an unnamed book critic, characterizes Cole's assertion that Joyce, "for the British probably qualifies as the most-hated man of the Second World War," as "nonsense."¹²⁰ Continuing, the critic observes: "On balance Lord Haw-Haw did more to cheer us up than to spread alarm and despondency. He was feared by non-combatant brass-bats and others who had got on to the publicity bandwagon because, for them, it was an article of faith that the general public, at home and on service overseas, could not "take it" as they could."¹²¹ The average citizen, the writer implies, had a more considered reaction to Joyce, neither completely dismissing nor embracing his message.

In the end, the record reveals that Joyce, although regarded by most as a highly intelligent and capable broadcaster, he and his propaganda came to be regarded by the British public as little

¹¹⁸ Kenny, chap. 1; Hall, 35-36.

¹¹⁹ Kenny, prologue.

¹²⁰ "On the Air for Hitler," *Times* (London), November 19, 1964, accessed April 25, 2015, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/archive/article/1964-11-19/16/9> .

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

more than a joke - comic relief during in a deadly serious time. “He was, no doubt, responsible for a certain amount of distress to persons residing, or having relatives and friends residing, in the places he mentioned as intended targets,” offers Hall, “but since his purpose was undoubtedly the more serious one of causing alarm and despondency among the population generally, he must go down to history as not merely a knave, but an unsuccessful knave.”¹²² In his personal life, he could be alternately vicious and violent or charming and reasonable. Obsessed with his hatred for Bolshevism and his paranoid belief in a world-wide Jewish conspiracy of domination he embraced National Socialism as the remedy for these ‘evils’, believing through his contorted reasoning that he, as a true British patriot, was advocating for a rejuvenated Great Britain. Yet, as Roberts observes, “‘Propaganda’ is effective only when addressed to a wavering or already demoralized audience: the vast majority of Britons who, even in 1940, did not know they were beaten, were then and thereafter wholly unaffected by it.”¹²³ If agreed, then, that his propaganda had little negative impact, what could the justification for his conviction and execution? Quite simply – and understandably - revenge. By so openly and unashamedly siding with what, by the end of the war, became the most murderous regime of the twentieth century, especially in light of revelations of atrocities committed in Nazi concentration camps surfacing at the time, Joyce’s fate, regardless of English law, had already been determined. The British public, in the end, had called for leniency, but by that time the process had, within government, taken on a momentum of its own. For a brief moment William Joyce captured the ear of a nation, yet his notoriety all but evaporated upon his death. His only lasting, and certainly unintentional, impact was that on English jurisprudence; in concert with England’s judicial system, government officials, and the British press, Joyce brought about the doctrine that a British Court has, in certain circumstances,

¹²² Hall, 10. -

¹²³ Roberts, 9. -

the right to try an alien for a crime committed abroad.¹²⁴ In this, William Joyce's voice still reverberates.

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¹²⁴ Hall, 33.

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