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The Holocaust on British Television: Shaping Collective Memory since 1945

by

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ABSTRACT

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THE HOLOCAUST ON BRITISH TELEVISION: SHAPING COLLECTIVE MEMORY SINCE 1945

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In the ever-growing body of scholarly research that focuses on Britain and the Holocaust there has been no in-depth and sustained analysis of a single and specific area of cultural history. Very little attention has been paid to television and even less to British television specifically. If a fuller understanding of how the Holocaust has been assimilated by British society is to be achieved, television's engagement with this catastrophe cannot be ignored, dismissed or derided as lowbrow ephemera. The present study will examine the specific contribution that this highly accessible conduit has made to collective memory of the Holocaust in Britain. It will map the key television initiatives selected from Holocaust-related programmes broadcast between 1946, when the BBC resumed transmissions after the Second World War, and 2001, when Britain's inaugural Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) ceremony was held.

The thesis begins by providing a critique of collective memory. It will then situate Holocaust-related television within the context of history on television in Britain and engage with debates surrounding the amenability of this medium to the recounting of history. The first chapter will examine Richard Dimbleby's lifetime and posthumous contribution to collective memory. It will identify the crucial details that were omitted from his made-for radio accounts of Belsen when extracts were broadcast by the BBC in 1945 and show that the precise content of his 'historic' and 'famous' broadcast has remained obscure to this day. It will also show that his contributions are part of a wider trend to efface Jewishness within the context of the liberation of Belsen.

The second chapter will elucidate the specific ways in which the television documentary *The World at War*: 'Genocide' was a groundbreaking production in terms of its contribution to British television history and collective memory. It will show how it defied all expectations in respect of what ITV could offer. It will show how 'Genocide' was the first televisual treatment that sought to explain the origins of the Holocaust and to represent the catastrophe as a single historical narrative in its own right. It will also show to what extent 'Genocide' assisted in shifting the focus of attention from Belsen to Auschwitz in Britain's evolving collective memory and how it provided a unique opportunity for an unprecedented number of survivors to appear on prime-time British television.

The third chapter will examine Holocaust programmes and the way in which they were distributed across the British terrestrial television landscape throughout 1995 to gain an insight into how far Jewish wartime experiences and Britain's ambiguous response to the unfolding of the Holocaust were allowed to interfere with the dominant version of Britain's war memory. The final chapter will examine television's specific contribution to Britain's first Holocaust Memorial Day and the impact of HMD on Holocaust-related programming in the television schedules.

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List of Abbreviations

AJR	Association of Jewish Refugees
ATV	Associated Television
BARB	Broadcaster's Audience Research Board
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBC WAC	British Broadcasting Corporation Written Archives, Caversham
BBFC	British Board of Film Classification
BFI	British Film Institute
C4	Channel Four
C5	Channel Five
HET	Holocaust Education Trust
HMD	Holocaust Memorial Day
IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority
ITA	Independent Television Authority
ITN	Independent Television Network
ITV	Independent Television
IWM	Imperial War Museum
NFT	National Film Theatre
NFTVA	National Film and Television Archives
RAF	Royal Air Force
TAM	Television Audience Measurement
VE Day	Victory in Europe Day
WDR	Westdeutscher Rundfunk
WWII	World War Two

The cry from the skies of Auschwitz and Treblinka will resound to the end of the world; it signals the final limit of humanity's capacity for inhumanity.

Claude Lanzmann[1]

[1] Claude Lanzmann, 'From the Holocaust to the *Holocaust*', in *Telos: A Quarterly Journal of Critical Thought*, no. 42, winter 1980, pp. 137-43, p. 137.

Introduction

In the growing body of scholarly research that focuses on Britain and the Holocaust, the approach to analysing cultural history has been very broad in its focus. Analysis of a single and specific area of British cultural history has, until the present study, not been undertaken. Television's engagement with the Holocaust, in particular, has triggered little scholarly interest in the Anglophone world, where all but a single monograph has appeared that is solely devoted to the Holocaust on television. This focuses on American television and was published in 1999.[1] Filmic confrontations with this catastrophe, on the other hand, loom large within academic discourse relating to the Holocaust.[2] With the exception of a small number of individual television productions which have come under scholarly scrutiny, British television has largely remained unmapped terrain.[3]

If a greater understanding of how the Holocaust has been assimilated by British society is to be achieved, television's engagement with this catastrophe cannot be ignored, dismissed or derided as lowbrow ephemera. This popular medium has played, and continues to play, a central role in shaping popular perceptions of the suffering endured by the Jewish people under the Nazis. It provides an easily accessible and unique conduit for the potentially wide circulation of depictions of the Holocaust, informing each successive generation. The present study will address the near-absence of research in this field. It will map key television initiatives selected from Holocaust-related programmes broadcast between 1946, when the BBC resumed transmissions after the Second World War, and 2001, when Britain's inaugural Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) ceremony was held. The selection of these initiatives has been determined

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[1] Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999).

[2] For example, see: Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), first published in 1983; André Pierre Colombat, *The Holocaust in French Film* (Metuchen, Scarecrow Press, 1993); Ilan Avisar, *Screening the Holocaust: Cinema's Images of the Unimaginable* (Indiana University Press, 1988).

[3] Lucy Dawidovicz problematized the use of the 1965 BBC documentary *Warsaw Ghetto* as a pedagogic tool in schools, see: Lucy S. Dawidovicz, 'Visualizing the Warsaw Ghetto: Nazi Images of the Jews Refiltered by the BBC: A Critical Review of the BBC Film "The Warsaw Ghetto"', in *Shoah*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1978, pp. 5-6 & 17-8. G. Jan Colijn examined the 1996 documentary *Anne Frank Remembered* in a comparative frame with other depictions of Anne Frank's life, see: G. Jan Colijn, 'Review Essay: *Anne Frank Remembered*', in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, spring 1996, pp. 78-91.

by their potential impact on and contribution to collective memory of the Holocaust in Britain.

The first chapter of the thesis will critically examine the British broadcasting icon Richard Dimbleby's lifetime and posthumous contribution to Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust. It will clarify the precise content of the radio broadcast in which he informed the British public of the liberation of Belsen in April 1945, and reveal that it was a sanitized and dejudaized version of the despatch he sent back to the BBC. The extent to which this dejudaization deviated from the BBC's coverage of the Nazi persecution of European Jewry in other contexts during the war years will also be discussed. It is an unrecognized fact that Richard Dimbleby made and sent back a second recording about Belsen, none of which featured in the broadcast. Nevertheless, permutations of both recordings have been used to illustrate and masquerade as what is now frequently referred to as his 'historic' or 'famous' broadcast. This chapter will show that, despite these epithets, the precise content of his broadcast has in fact remained obscure up to now. It will also examine how far both his radio and television contributions are part of a wider trend to efface Jewishness within the context of the liberation of Belsen. It will argue more precisely that the Jewish and British experiences have rarely been reconciled within a single narrative of the liberation of Belsen and seek to explain this phenomenon.

The World at War series is commonly perceived to be a groundbreaking documentary series in terms of the treatment of history on television and the history of the medium. The second chapter will show that the series defied all expectations in respect of what ITV, the channel on which it was broadcast, could offer. Within academic discourses surrounding post-war confrontations with the Holocaust, the significance of 'Genocide', the episode that centres on the Holocaust, has been repeatedly acknowledged, but there has been no detailed examination of precisely what makes this documentary significant. This chapter will elucidate the specific ways in which 'Genocide' was a path-breaking production in terms of its contribution to British television history and to collective memory of this catastrophe. It will contend that 'Genocide' was the first televisual treatment that sought to explain the origins of the Holocaust and to represent the catastrophe as a single cohesive historical narrative in its own right. Moreover, it will argue that this treatment of the Holocaust assisted in shifting the focus of attention from Belsen to Auschwitz in Britain's evolving collective

memory, and that it provided a unique opportunity for an unprecedented number of survivors to appear on prime-time British television. It will also problematize the ratings success of 'Genocide' through a contextual analysis and a consideration of the effects of seriality.

1995 marked the fiftieth anniversary of VE Day and the liberation of the Nazi camps. This milestone was the catalyst for an unprecedented number of Holocaust-related programmes. The third chapter will examine these programmes and the way in which they were distributed across the British terrestrial television landscape throughout 1995 to gain insight into how far Jewish wartime experiences and Britain's ambiguous response to the unfolding of the Holocaust were allowed to interfere with the dominant version of Britain's war memory. The final chapter will examine television's specific contribution to Britain's first Holocaust Memorial Day and the impact of HMD on Holocaust-related programming in the television schedules.

The interdisciplinary nature of this thesis has required the use of a broad range of research methods and analyses. In some instances the methods are more closely allied to a historical approach; in others, to media and cultural studies approaches. To gain insight into the kind of contribution the programmes under scrutiny have made to Britain's collective memory, I have endeavoured to draw on as much existing material as possible within the timeframe allowed by the project. This has included radio and television programme scripts where the programmes themselves are no longer available or accessible; archival audio recordings; production files; relevant websites; and, with respect to more recent television broadcasts, interviews with television personnel.

Throughout, I have striven to gauge contemporary responses to the programmes under analysis. To this end I have scoured the national and Jewish press, the Jewish journal *AJR Journal* (*Association of Jewish Refugees*), the television listings magazines the *Radio Times* and *TV Times, Sight and Sound*, and the BBC journal *The Listener* for both programme reviews and viewers' letters. I have also approached television companies for access to their audience research data and viewers' letters. However, this latter source has yielded little as the BBC has a twenty-five year rule on access to archival material, and Thames Television, the television company that produced *The World at War*, does not permit outside researchers access to its archives owing to the expense associated with document retrieval. Information relating to viewer ratings has been gleaned from television personnel and secondary sources. Where viewer ratings

have not been available I have endeavoured to gauge the success of programmes through a consideration of the audience shares of the channels on which they were broadcast, channel profiles, their place in the television schedule and, in the case of the first chapter, the iconicity of Richard Dimbleby.

To a great degree the corpus itself has influenced the analytic methods employed to gain insight into and, in some instances, explain the likely impact of a programme. For example, in the case of programming broadcast to mark the 1995 commemorations I have examined broadcasting patterns and channel remits to help gauge its impact on collective memory.

Textual analysis is employed to varying degrees of detail throughout the thesis to help determine the kind of contribution different programmes have made. This has included a consideration of programme structure, mise-en-scéne, soundtrack, cinematography and editing techniques. My analysis is informed by historical debates concerning Belsen in history and memory, Britain's war memory, Jewish specificity, the historiography of the Holocaust and the status of Holocaust survivors in Britain. The degree to which textual analysis is employed is a measure of the extent to which the programme under analysis is pertinent to the themes under discussion. Textual analysis is complemented by discussions of the institutional and historical context of the programmes to reveal, for example, the groundbreaking contribution of 'Genocide' to British television history as well as Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust in the second chapter of the thesis.

The corpus under scrutiny in this thesis is necessarily highly selective. Rather than being representative of television's output during a period that exceeds half a century, it focuses upon key moments. The generic focus of the thesis is diverse, including news and current affairs programmes, documentaries and outside broadcasts. The fact that no fictional programmes are singled out for detailed analysis is not by design, but rather a product of the limited ground that could be covered. Why I chose to scrutinize a particular key moment will be made clear in the individual chapters.

Before beginning the analysis of television's contribution to Britain's collective memory of this catastrophe, the introduction will provide an overview and critique of the debate surrounding the concept of 'collective memory' as it will underpin the present thesis. Following this, it will provide an overview of Holocaust-related television programming since 1946. Holocaust-related programmes have become a subgenre of

televisual history. Whilst little has been written about the former, the opposite is true of the latter. In view of this, the introduction will also trace the presence of history on television and engage with debates relating to the amenability of this medium to the recounting of history.

Collective Memory

The transformation of a concept

In recent years, the term collective memory has been widely used within historical, sociological and cultural studies. Memory here is employed in a way that differs from its common usage. Essentially, its use is metaphoric. This transfer of the term from its original field of application to that of history, sociology and cultural studies has entailed some fundamental semantic and conceptual modifications. In everyday usage, memory denotes an individual's mental and physical capacity to recall an element of an experiential past, whether in thought, behaviour, repeated actions or the like. By contrast, the metaphorical use of memory within these discourses seldom refers to individual recollections.

The majority of those who employ the term collective memory trace its origin back to French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Yet in its present-day incarnations the concept bears only a remote resemblance to the term as he conceived of it. Within his conception collective memory is the product of individual memories which are fused into a whole as a result of the cohesion of the group in question.[4] Ilana Bet-El retains and indeed emphasizes the link to individual memory in her understanding and use of the term by defining collective memory simply as the sum of the individual memories of a collectivity.[5] But this does not acknowledge the dynamic interplay between individual memory and collective memory that Maurice Halbwachs insisted upon:

[4] Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York, Harper and Row, 1980), pp. 31-2

[5] Ilana Bet-El, 'Memory, Evidence and Film', in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1996, pp. 577-80, especially p. 577.

> While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember. While these remembrances are mutually supportive of each other and common to all, individual members still vary in the intensity with which they experience them. I would readily acknowledge that each memory is a viewpoint on the collective memory, that this viewpoint changes as my position changes, that this position itself changes as my relationships to other milieus change.[6]

All examples of 'coherent bodies of people' given by Maurice Halbwachs are of small groups in which everybody can interact with everyone else.[7] Collective memory as it is predominantly used today, on the other hand, can belong to collectivities such as nations or religions whose members do not personally know one another and may never do so. They might only be aware of the existence of the collectivity to which they belong. Moreover, in Maurice Halbwachs's conception of collective memory, first-hand experience was central; collective memory was based on individual memories of the shared experiences of a collectivity of people and was kept alive through continual evocation of those memories and their interaction with each other. Maurice Halbwachs distinguished the concept of collective memory from that of historical memory, which he defined as a non-experiential memory of the past informed by external sources.[8] In its present-day incarnations the concept of collective memory is closer to his notion of historical memory than to his idea of collective memory in that it generally refers to external sources about the past rather than personal experiences of the past. As Iwona Irwin-Zarecka states, a "'collective memory' [...] is best located not in the minds of individuals, but in the resources they share.'[9]

Similarly, Michael Bomme and Patrick Wright assert that:

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[6] Halbwachs (1980), p. 48.

[7] Ibid., pp. 31-2.

[8] See: ibid., pp. 51-2.

[9] Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 1994), p. 4.

> Memory has a texture which is both social and historic: it exists in the world rather than in people's heads, finding its basis in conversations, cultural forms, personal relations, the structure and appearance of places [...][10]

The broad definition of collective memory implicit in these two passages has been criticized by Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam. They argue that its use within historical discourse is 'useless and even misleading' because 'memory is a personal human faculty that is related to actual personal experience'.[11] This objection, however, ignores the possibility that it can be useful to define new concepts which single out relevant aspects of society with greater clarity than existing ones. Employing the term 'collective memory' to mean any representations or evocations of the past that are available to a collectivity retains the core meaning of memory as representations of the past. What is more, collective memory so defined is relatively stable and can be studied with relative ease, whereas what occurs within the minds of individuals is variable and not directly accessible.

Collective memory in the sense of representations and evocations of the past can take the tangible form of historical writings, the holdings of archives and museums, monuments, fictional prose, and audiovisual and print media; or a ritual form, such as commemorative ceremonies and annual memorial and remembrance days. The aggregate of these forms, when they are made available to a particular collectivity of people, becomes that group's collective memory. As we shall see, however, such collective memories can become the site of conflict and contestation. An analysis of television's contribution to Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust will shed light on the impact of this catastrophe on British society. By employing this term I wish to underline what the televisual recollections of the Holocaust under analysis reveal about how Britain as a society has chosen to remember this event. This will form a recurrent theme throughout the thesis.

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[10] Michael Bommes and Patrick Wright, "Charms of residence': the public and the past', in Richard Johnson, Gregor McLennan, et al. eds., *Making Histories: Studies in history-writing and politics* (London, Hutchinson, 1982), pp.253-301, p. 256.

[11] Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, 'Collective Memory - What Is It?', in *History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past,* vol. 8, no. 1, spring/summer 1996, pp. 30-50, p. 43.

Collective memory, history and myth

In his study *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* Peter Novick argues that there is a crucial distinction between collective memory and historical consciousness or knowledge. I take this latter to mean professional history, or at least the consciousness or knowledge that emanate directly from it. This is because he characterizes it in terms which are usually used to describe good practice in professional history. Thus he argues:

> To understand something historically is to be aware of its complexity, to have sufficient detachment to see it from multiple perspectives, to accept the ambiguities of protagonists' motives and behavior....Historical consciousness, by its nature, focuses on the *historicity* of events - that they took place then and not now, that they grew out of circumstances different from those that now obtain.[12]

He describes collective memory in a way that suggests that it can be contrasted with the kind of knowledge that emanates from professional history. As he puts it, collective memory

> simplifies; sees events from a single, committed perspective; is impatient with ambiguities of any kind; reduces events to mythic archetypes....Typically a collective memory, at least a significant collective memory, is understood to express some eternal or essential truth about the group - usually tragic. A memory, once established, comes to define that eternal truth and, along with it, an eternal identity, for the members of the group.[13]

Echoing Peter Novick, Jay Winter and Emmanuel Siran claim that it is 'important to separate any notion of "collective memory" from historical knowledge'. In stressing the objective nature of historical knowledge, they insist that 'collective memory is not what historians say about the past'.[14] But by excluding the work of professional historians from collective memory on such grounds, these three authors make a

[12] Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory: The American Experience* (London, Bloomsbury, 1999), pp. 3-4.

[13] Ibid., p. 4.

[14] Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, 'Setting the Framework', in Jay Winter & Emmanuel Sivan, eds., *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 6-39, p. 8.

distinction which is difficult to sustain. For how is it to be determined that an account of the past simplifies, and by whom? Historical accounts, even those provided by professional historians, are frequently challenged for their failure to address the complexities of the events they purport to represent or for their propensity to 'see events from a single, committed perspective'. A case in point can be found in Britain's orthodox historiography of the Second World War. Many Holocaust historians have taken issue with what they see as a simplified account of Britain's response to the Nazi genocide, an account that does not foster self-scrutiny. They suggest that this historiography when referring to the Holocaust focuses predominantly on Britain's role during the liberation of the camps while failing to highlight shortcomings in Britain's response to the fate of Jews under the Nazis.[15] In turn, William Rubenstein takes issue with these Holocaust historians' claims that Britain could have saved more Jews. He argues that, along with the USA, Britain seized every opportunity that presented itself.[16]

Moreover, excluding professional history from collective memory is conceptually unsound because, just as with other forms of collective memory, historical writings are available to a collectivity and inform that collectivity's perceptions of the past. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the distinctive nature of the contribution professional historians can make to collective memory: their accounts of history tend to have authority, but at the same time they seldom reach a mass audience unless they manage to disseminate their ideas via popular media such as the press, radio, film or television.

In his study *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France Since 1944*, Henry Rousso scrutinizes French political, social and cultural life throughout the post-war period to reveal how French society has dealt with the Vichy regime. Underpinning his study is a conception of collective memory which diverges from that of Peter Novick and with which I would concur. As he puts it, 'the collective memory of an event is shaped by all representations of that event'.[17] He argues that they include '*official carriers*', which consist of 'ceremonies, monuments, and regular or irregular celebrations

[15] For a more in-depth discussion of this issue, see chapter three of this thesis.

[16] See: William D. Rubenstein, The Myth of Rescue: Why the democracies could not have saved more Jews from the Nazis (London, Routledge, 2000).

[17] Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France Since 1944* (London, Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 219.

organized by national or local governments'; *'cultural carriers'*, which comprise literature, film and television; and *'scholarly carriers',* such as scholarly works of history.[18] He also points out that certain of these representations will become more dominant than others at any given time. Effectively, they will become the dominant memory of the event in question.

Collective memory is not just made up of different forms of representation, the collectivity in question usually includes different groups. With their different memories of the past, these groups contribute to collective memory in different ways. The diverse nature of collective memory means that it is often a site of conflict, as the abovementioned account of disputes over Britain's orthodox historiography of the Second World War shows. This has been acknowledged by a group of authors, the Popular Memory Group, who contend that 'the field [of collective memory] is crossed by competing constructions of the past, often at war with each other'.[19]

While Peter Novick makes a clear distinction between collective memory and historical knowledge, he discerns a connection between collective memory and myth. Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam go one step further and insist that collective memory is synonymous with myth. As well as taking issue with the usefulness of the term on the grounds that memory is predicated on personal experience, they also question its usefulness on the grounds that it is merely a new-fangled term for myth.[20] On the basis of my own definition of collective memory, I would argue that, just as collective memory encompasses professional history, so too can it encompass myth. Like myth, certain elements of the collective memory of an event can, as Peter Novick puts it above, 'express some eternal or essential truth about the group'. An example of collective memory as myth in this sense is provided by ideas around the resistance in France, as described by Henry Rousso. The version of the past mobilized within this myth

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[18] Ibid., pp. 219-20.

[19] The Popular Memory Group employs the term 'popular memory' in a way that is synonymous with 'collective memory' as I have defined it. Popular Memory Group, 'Popular memory: theory, politics, method', in Bommes and Wright (1982), pp. 205-52, p. 207.

[20] Gedi and Elam (1996), pp. 30-50.

downplays the role of the Vichy regime and maximizes the role played by the French resistance.[21]

Collective memory and identity formation

Collective memory has an important function in relation to a group's identity. Like individual memory, it is subject to selection, omission and reinterpretation of the past. The past invoked belongs to or relates to the group and therefore can be said to represent how that group chooses to see itself. Just as an individual's memory of their past functions to constitute their identity, so a group's collective memory of its past functions to constitute that group's identity. When the group is a nation, collective memory can function to create and reinforce a sense of national identity. National identity can be described as a sense of belonging to a collectivity that is delimited by national boundaries, laws and sovereignty. This sense of belonging can include a belief in a shared history, heritage, culture and even character that are unique to that collectivity and distinguish it from those of other nation-states.[22]

Television has traditionally been an important factor in creating and promoting a sense of national identity not least because the reach of its broadcasts tend to coincide with national boundaries. At its inception, television, like radio before it, was 'to construct and address a national public'. Central to broadcasting's mission was the drive to unify and define the nation, to disseminate national culture and to resist non-domestic influences.[23] Today, this is not so pronounced across the entire landscape of terrestrial, digital and satellite television. However, much of what is broadcast on terrestrial television continues to address the nation specifically, disseminating political, social and cultural values within national boundaries. When television deals with the national past,

[21] Rousso (1991), p. 10.

[22] This definition has been inspired by a range of sources, including Brian Jenkins and Spyros A. Sofos, 'Nation and Nationalism in Contemporary Europe: A Theoretical Perspective', in Brian Jenkins and Spyros A. Sofos, eds., *Nation and Identity in Contemporary Europe* (London, Routledge, 1996), pp. 9-32; Kenneth Lunn, 'Reconsidering Britishness: The Construction and Significance of National Identity in Twentieth Century Britain', in ibid., pp. 83-100; William M. Johnston, *Celebrations: The Cult of Anniversaries in Europe and the United States Today* (London, Transaction Books, 1991); Lucy Noakes, *War and the British: Gender, Memory and National Identity* (London, I.B.Tauris Publishers, 1998); and Stephen Haseler, *The English Tribe: Identity, Nation and Europe* (London, Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996).

[23] Michele Hilmes, 'TV Nations', in Michele Hilmes, ed., *The Television History Book* (London, British Film Institute, 2003), pp. 1-3, especially p. 1.

it can become part of the collective memory of that nation, providing a sense of shared history and heritage that can in turn create a sense of national belonging and identity. But what is the specific nature of the medium's contribution to collective memory? Some have argued that television has a crucial role in shaping people's views of the past, while others have suggested that television is intrinsically incapable of creating historical memory. It is to this debate that I will now turn my attention.

History on Television

The evolution of history on terrestrial television

During television's formative two decades, history was not the staple subject of television documentaries that it is today. The television documentary, a term more loosely used then than it is today, focused on immediate and contemporary topics such as social issues, judicial procedure and policing methods.[24] History was more likely to be encountered in the cinemas than on the television screen. While television documentaries centred on issues of the day, according to Pierre Sorlin 'there were few [feature] films directly concerned with questions of the day' although 'present-day concerns were fully involved in films ostensibly dealing with the past'.[25] However, history would become an increasing focus of television documentaries. Thus Taylor Downing asserts that by 1964 historical documentaries made for television had begun to outnumber those made for the cinema. He points out that during this year the BBC produced television's first 'history mega-series', *The Great War,* consisting of twenty-six parts.[26] Elsewhere, this documentary series has been hailed as 'the first milestone of television history'.[27]

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[24] See: Elaine Bell, 'The Origins of British Television Documentary: The BBC 1946-1955', in John Corner, ed., *Documentary and the Mass Media* (London, Edward Arnold, 1986), pp.65-80, p. 74.

[25] Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History: Restaging the Past* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 209.

[26] Taylor Downing, 'History on Television: the Making of 'Cold War', 1988', in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television,* vol. 8, no. 3, 1998, pp. 325-32, p. 325.

[27] Philip M. Taylor, 'Television and the future historian', in Graham Roberts and Philip M. Taylor, eds., *The Historian, Television and Television History* (Luton, University of Luton Press, 2001), pp. 171-77, p. 175.

If during these first decades of British television, history was not frequently treated in documentaries, depictions of the past could nevertheless be encountered in other forms such as television dramas. These dramas employed past times as a narrative backdrop and were not necessarily concerned with historical events or figures. They were still capable, however, of conveying an idea of the cultural, social and economic climate of the period depicted. In this way they contributed to television audiences' perceptions of the past. During the 1950s, over half of all television drama serials were set in the past.[28] The period depicted could be as distant as the sixth century or as recent as the early twentieth century. Most were adaptations of literary classics, especially from the nineteenth century. There were very few historical drama serials, that is to say dramatic reconstructions of historical events and the lives of historical figures, or dramatizations of particular historical events populated by fictional characters. With no fewer than seventy-nine drama serials set in the past during the 1950s, with most comprising six episodes, but some comprising as many as thirteen, whilst history per se was not a regular feature of the schedules, depictions of the past as narrative backdrops were. This situation only changed during the 1970s, when historical drama serials became so common that, according to Paul Madden, by 1975 the genre had become a 'popular staple of television schedules'.[29]

The amenability of television to the recounting of history

Despite the ubiquity of history on the small screen, many media specialists have argued that this medium is incompatible with the idea of memory and history. In recent years, television has been conceptualized as a medium that encourages forgetfulness, instantaneity and liveness as opposed to memory and history. The implication is that its contribution to collective memory is minimal. In theorizing the relation between television and time, Mary Ann Doane, for example, asserts that this medium insists upon 'present-ness'.[30] Drawing on Roland Barthes's theory of photography, she asserts that,

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[28] The following information on drama serials is based on: Ellen Baskin, *Serials on British Television 1950-1994* (Aldershot, Hampshire, Scolar Press, 1996).

[29] Paul Madden, 'Jim Allen', in George W. Brandt, ed., *British Television Drama* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.48.

[30] Mary Ann Doane, 'Information, Crisis, Catastrophe', in Marcia Landy, ed., *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media* (New Jersey, USA, Rutgers University Press, 2000), pp. 269-85, p. 269.

whereas photography depicts something *'that-has-been'*, which 'ensures the reality and the 'pastness' of the object photographed, the essence of television is its insistence upon the *"this-is-going-on"* of what is screened'; that television is 'a celebration of the instantaneous'. In her view television annihilates memory and by extension history. This is owing to what she sees as the medium's 'continual stress upon the 'nowness' of its own discourse'.[31] Stephen Heath argues along similar lines, claiming that television

> produces forgetfulness, not memory, flow, not history. If there is history, it is congealed, already past and distant and forgotten other than as television archive material, images that can be repeated to be forgotten again.[32]

Yet, the idea that television is today welded to liveness is overstated. It is more applicable to the character of television during its formative years. Essentially, television was then seen to have the capacity to present 'live events' and to convey 'actuality'.[33] Viewers could 'go with the theatre queues and the shopping crowds and the workers streaming into the shops and docks'; they could go 'underground with the miners and aloft with the steelworkers'. Although entertainment and education were part of television programming, it was the 'television of actual events' which seemed to offer the really distinctive character of the medium: 'the ability to give the viewer a front-row seat at almost every kind of exciting or memorable spectacle'. This would be its 'greatest service'.[34] Studio performances and productions were usually transmitted live to the television viewing public. However, the introduction of videotape in 1958 meant that recording became less expensive and more widely practised.[35] This increased the instance of a time-lapse between events and studio performances and their subsequent transmission. Pre-recorded programmes increasingly became a feature of the schedules, which had hitherto been mostly made up of either entirely live programmes or live

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[31] Ibid., p. 274.

[32] Stephen Heath, 'Representing Television', in *Logics of Television,* ed., Patricia Mellencamp (Bloomingdale, Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 279.

[33] Briggs (1979), p. 14 & 188.

[34] Ibid.

[35] George W. Brandt, 'Introduction', in George W. Brandt (1981), p. 16.

programmes that were supplemented by brief filmed inserts.[36] The television schedule increasingly became a composite of these programmes and pre-recorded broadcasts, until today it predominantly consists of the latter. The medium's relation to 'liveness' is now fundamentally different from what it was during its formative years. Its quality of 'liveness' today is much less pronounced than Mary Ann Doane and others would have it.

Echoing her view but also acknowledging implicitly the great reliance on recorded material that has become a typical feature of television schedules, Andrew Hoskins nevertheless insists upon the live quality of this medium. Thus he asserts that 'in some ways [television] resists history, it is in effect timeless, operating in a perpetual present; [it] is always 'live''.[37] He continues: 'It is not that the [electronic] media do not dwell on the past as obsessively as historians, but that they appear to recast it instantaneously'.[38] The view that television is allied to 'liveness' is also taken up by John Ellis. He, too, explicitly acknowledges the combination of live and recorded broadcasts that is characteristic of television schedules, but he suggests that the recorded programmes do not undermine what he sees as the live quality of television. As he puts it:

> Television's sense of liveness does not depend solely upon its programmes; it also lies in the very organization of transmission. Transmission is live, even when the programmes are not. So recorded programmes are able to claim the status of liveness for themselves simply because the act of transmission attaches them to a particular moment.[39]

But to suggest that the live aspect of television forms its defining feature is to overlook a number of other factors which would seem to interfere with it. Firstly, whilst the transmission and act of viewing might well take place simultaneously, television programmes may employ markers of the past which are capable of conveying a sense of history. In documentaries these can, for example, include archival film footage and

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[36] See: David Self, *Television Drama: An Introduction* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1984), pp. 37-41.

[37] Andrew Hoskins, 'New Memory: mediating history', in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television,* vol. 21, no. 4, 2001, pp. 333-46, p. 341.

[38] Ibid., p. 342.

[39] Ellis (2000), p. 31.

historical documents. In reconstructions and dramatizations, the mise-en-scène can function as a marker of the past. Neither Andrew Hoskins nor John Ellis discusses the significance of such techniques. Secondly, the live aspect of television transmissions can be transformed by the use of the home video-recorder to time-shift and archive programmes. When viewers watch programmes that they have recorded on videotape themselves, they are evidently no longer watching live transmissions. When they archive programmes the act of viewing can be repeated at will, much in the same way as the reading of a book can.

Historians and the historical content of televisual history

While some media specialists have argued that television is inherently unsuitable for mediating history, some historians have been known to take issue with the textual content of televisual history. Jeremy Keuhl, a producer of historical documentaries, for example, was moved to defend his profession from the frequent criticisms that historians have levelled at historical television documentaries in the article 'History on the Public Screen II'.[40] Some historians, he explains, criticize documentary renderings of history for tending towards superficiality, triviality and incompleteness.[41] These criticisms, he believes, stem from their inability to grasp the specificity of television and the various constraints that the medium imposes on programme makers. He highlights the fact that some historians have produced their own programmes in an endeavour to provide good historical content. However, he believes that the results of their efforts, though commendable, have been less than successful essentially owing to their lack of understanding of the medium's specific characteristics.

Robert A. Rosenstone, himself a historian, also takes issue with the disdain with which some of his colleagues view audiovisual treatments of history. Since his primary concern is the historical film, he discusses documentaries only briefly and other genres not at all. He urges historians to accept and treat such films as legitimate ways of presenting history rather than as reflections of the socio-political conditions of the era in

[40] Jeremy Keuhl, 'History on the Public Screen II', in Alan Rosenthal, ed., *New Challenges for Documentary* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988), pp. 444-53.

[41] Ibid., p. 452.

which they were produced or merely as adaptations of written history.[42] Given the stylistic similarities between historical films and many historical television dramas, much of his discussion is also relevant to the latter genre. Historical television dramas tend to adhere, for example, to the six characteristic ways in which, according to Robert A. Rosenstone, the historical film and documentary create their world. Thus he suggests that the historical film provides a progressive, finite narrative with a moral that revolves around individuals, emotionalizing and dramatizing history and providing the mise-en-scène of the past.[43]

However, he is very specific about which audiovisual presentations of history should be treated as legitimate accounts of history. He clearly states that he is endeavouring to defend not the 'costume drama that uses the past solely as a setting for romance and adventure', as do many television dramas, or the documentary, but rather 'a new kind of film....one that seriously deals with the relationship of past to present'.[44] He characterizes such films as those that are concerned with trying to 'understand the legacy of the past'.[45] He adds that the 'past they create is not the same as the past provided by traditional history, but it certainly should be called history - if by that word we mean a serious encounter with the lingering meaning of past events'.[46] Thus, as a historian, he has a relatively narrow view of what constitutes proper audiovisual history.

Whilst Jeremy Kuehl defends the television documentary against the criticisms of historians and Robert A. Rosenstone argues for a certain kind of historical film to be treated as a legitimate way of dealing with history, Steve Anderson goes even further. He argues that the analysis of televisual history even in its less conspicuous forms, for example in the form of fantastic narratives such as science fiction and time-travel narratives, is worthwhile to gauge how 'historical evidence is culturally processed,

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[42] Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995a), pp. 48-9.

[43] Ibid., pp. 55-61.

[44] Robert A. Rosenstone, 'Introduction', in Robert A. Rosenstone, ed., *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1995b), pp. 4 & 3.

[45] Ibid., p. 4.

[46] Ibid., p. 5.

disseminated, and remembered'.[47] The latter two writers engage in a process of at once deconstructing the traditional discipline of history and augmenting the credibility of audiovisual representations of history to narrow the chasm between professional and popular history, which they identify with written and audiovisual history respectively. Robert A. Rosenstone points out that professional historical accounts are not objective windows onto the past, but are constructions of the past from the particular viewpoint of the historian, not unlike historical films. Both Robert A. Rosenstone and Steve Anderson's discussions draw on historiographical debates with particular reference to Hayden White.[48] He affirms that professional history draws on the literary tradition, that it combines narrativity with literary tropes rather than chronicling history with all its discontinuities, disruptions and chaos. He argues that the use of the literary form in professional accounts of history has a direct bearing on the content of that history.[49]

Since television studies is a young academic discipline, it is only recently that media specialists have begun to question television's suitability to treat history. By contrast, historians' scepticism vis-à-vis televisual history was in evidence as early as the 1960s. This can be explained by the traditionally conservative ethos of the discipline, which was difficult to reconcile with the perceived populism of television, giving rise to antagonism from a very early stage. According to Philip M. Taylor, many historians displayed antipathy towards this medium's renditions of history.[50] As an example, he points out that when historian A.J.P. Taylor's television lectures were aired in the 1960s, they 'merely served to confirm Taylor as a rogue', and that the televising of *The Great War* in 1964 exposed the underlying enmity between historians and programme makers.[51]

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[47] Steve Anderson, 'History, TV and Popular Memory', in Gary R. Edgerton and Peter C. Rollins, eds., *Television Histories: Shaping Collective Memory in the Media Age* (Kentucky, University of Kentucky Press, 2001), pp. 19-36, p. 25.

[48] For the way in which they draw on Hayden White's contributions to historiographical debates concerning the nature of history, see: ibid. and Robert A. Rosenstone (1995a), p. 35

[49] See: Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1978).

[50] Roberts & Taylor (2001), pp. 171-77.

[51] Ibid., p. 175.

The power of television to impact upon collective memory

In order to underline the value of historical films as legitimate mediations of the past, Robert A. Rosenstone urges that they be looked upon as similar to oral traditions of preliterate societies both past and present.[52] He likens the filmmaker to the narrator of oral traditions, emphasizing that neither is or was professionally trained in the discipline of history. A comparison can also be drawn between oral traditions and historical television programming. Such a comparison is interesting not just because of the similarities, but also because of the differences involved. According to Jan Vansina, in preliterate societies 'oral tradition forms the main available source for a reconstruction of the past'.[53] In societies where audiovisual media are well developed, television can play a similar role in that it has become a major source of information about the past.

Jan Vansina points out that oral tradition accounts were typically group accounts. These accounts became the 'oral memories' of groups as diverse as 'villages, chiefdoms, kingdoms, associations, and various kinship groups'.[54] Televisual mediations of history also operate in communities, but typically larger ones, on a regional, a national, and sometimes even global scale. They are therefore more far-reaching. Moreover, oral traditions are asynchronous in that the narrator would have only a limited audience at any one time and might recount the past at different times to reach as many members of the group as possible. By contrast, the recounting of history on television is usually synchronous in that transmission of a particular depiction of the past occurs throughout the television-viewing community simultaneously. Furthermore, according to Jan Vansina the narrator of oral traditions may modify their recital in response to audience reactions to achieve the desired effect.[55] This can give rise to a heterogeneous collective memory among the group. Televisual history on the other hand, is more likely to forge a homogeneous collective memory within the community in that a single account in a single broadcast can be transmitted the length and breadth of a country.

These are differences in degree, but there are also differences in kind which might point to television's greater power to shape collective memory. In the case of oral

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[52] Rosenstone (1995a), p. 78.

[53] Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Survey in Historical Methodology* (London, Routledge, 1965), p. 1.

[54] Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 19.

[55] Vansina (1965), p. 5.

traditions, there were characteristically no images at the narrator's disposal. As the recital was oral, the visualization of the past was entirely left to the audience's imagination. When it comes to history on television, this is far less the case. With recourse to photography, archive film footage and reconstructions of the events, the visualization of the past is less incumbent upon the audience's imagination; television can provide a visual memory of the past. For those who never experienced the Holocaust first-hand, for example, their visual memory of it would be entirely informed by photographs, archive film and reconstructions they have encountered in books, museums, newspapers, at the theatre and the cinema, and above all those that they have seen on television. For those who did experience this event first-hand, these sources can supplement, enhance or refute their experiential memory. By providing a visual memory of the past, television turns the viewer into a vicarious witness of that past.

John Ellis defines the twentieth century as 'the century of witness'. He suggests that owing to the existence of mechanical media such as photography, film and then television, people 'know more and have seen more of [the twentieth] century than the generations of any previous century knew or saw of theirs'. His conviction is that these media have radically altered our relationship to the world 'beyond our experience' and how we perceive it. However, he is not so much concerned with the witnessing of past events that occurred during that century as with the witnessing of contemporary events more or less as they were unfolding. The implication is that people become vicarious witnesses to remote places and events through the eyes of the person behind the camera. Whilst he discusses some precursors of television such as photography and film, his main focus is television. He asserts that this popular medium has enabled people to witness 'remote events as they happened', that it has 'provided its audiences with a powerful sense of co-presence with the events it showed' and turned witnessing into a 'domestic act, happening in the home rather than in a public space of entertainment'. According to John Ellis, television 'sealed the twentieth century's fate as the century of witness'.[56]

His discussion thus centres on the specifically spatial dimension of experience, but his thesis is also pertinent to viewers' relationship with history as transmitted on television in that historical television programming has transformed more people into

[56] Ellis (2000), p. 9, 32 & 33.

vicarious witnesses of past events than ever before. Television has brought moving images of the past into the household. Through the act of watching those images, which are central to historical programming, the viewer becomes a vicarious witness to events that unfolded not only outside their spatial experience but outside their temporal experience, too.

More specifically, with the circulation and recirculation of archival film footage relating to the Holocaust, television increases at once the temporal and quantitative reach of these images. It extends the act of witnessing far beyond what could have been conceived when the footage was originally made. Television has ensured the longevity of these images in collective memory of the Holocaust.

It seems reasonable to suggest that, owing to the strong presence of history on television, to paraphrase John Ellis, in the twentieth century people might well have had a greater opportunity to know more and to see more of the past than in any previous century. In this way, television has significantly increased the scope for the creation of a widely shared visual form of collective memory.

For every academic who theorizes that television is not amenable to the production of historical consciousness, at least one other can be found who takes the opposite view. They argue that historical programming has a huge impact on the public's perception of history and by implication makes a significant contribution to collective memory. Gary R. Edgerton claims that 'television is the principal means by which most people learn about history today'.[57] His conviction is that television has a huge capacity to convey history in the form of feature films, docudramas, miniseries, and documentaries. Whilst Robert A. Rosenstone endeavours primarily to elevate the status of a certain type of historical film, he also affirms that 'today the chief source of historical knowledge for the bulk of the population - outside of the much-despised textbook - must surely be the visual media'.[58] Similar evaluations of television's role in influencing the public's perception and knowledge of the past are made by Alan Rosenthal. He assesses the historical documentary in the following way:

[57] Edgerton (2001), pp. 1-16, p. 1.

[58] Rosenstone (1995a), p. 22.

> Clearly, the documentary history has become a major - possibly the most important - means for learning about the past. In an age when reading is in decline, the documentary - much more than the theater, newspaper, or feature films - may well be the only serious access people have to history once they have left school.[59]

John E. O'Connor argues along similar lines in respect of film and television more generally. He claims that

> whatever many people today do know (or think they know) about history is much less likely to have come from books or from university lectures than from such moving image presentations as 'Holocaust', 'Roots', 'I Claudius', 'Shogun', and 'The Winds of War'. Without having read a book or gone near a classroom, millions of viewers in 1981 thought that they had learned all that was worth knowing about the American Civil War by watching several evenings of an 'epic' TV series, 'The Blue and The Gray'.[60]

Arguing for the impact of the moving image on the public's perception of war more specifically, John Whiteclay Chambers II and David Culbert assert that

> The public memory of war in the twentieth century has been created less from a remembered past than from a manufactured past, one substantially shaped by images in documentaries, feature films, and television programs.[61]

With a similarly specific focus, Judith E. Doneson speculates:

> It is not far-fetched to assume that a majority of the population has obtained much of its knowledge of the Holocaust from television.[62]

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[59] Alan Rosenthal, 'Documentary and History', in Alan Rosenthal, ed., *New Challenges for Documentary* (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1988), pp. 425-34, p. 426.

[60] John E. O'Connor, *Image as Artifact: The Historical Analysis of Film and Television* (Florida, Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1990), p. 10.

[61] 'Introduction', in John Whiteclay Chambers II and David Culbert, eds., *World War II, Film and History* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 6.

[62] Judith E. Doneson, 'History and Television, 1978-1988: A Survey of Dramatizations of the Holocaust', in *Dimensions*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1989, pp. 23-27, p. 23. Similar claims have been made by Alvin H. Rosenfeld and Philip M. Taylor. In explaining why he thought it worthwhile to examine televisual representations of the Holocaust, Alvin H. Rosenfeld makes the following claim for television more generally:

All of these claims are based on impressionistic evaluations of television's influence rather than systematic empirical studies. Other academics have, however, presented empirical evidence of the impact of certain historical television productions on collective memory. Their findings illustrate the far-reaching influence of television on what members of media-dominated societies understand about the past. The effects that televisual depictions of history can have and, indeed, have had on audiences undermine the view taken by those who insist that television is incompatible with the idea of memory and history.

Television's ability to contribute to collective memory becomes apparent when the reactions provoked by some televisual representations of the Holocaust are considered. The German reception of the American television mini-series *Holocaust* in 1979 is particularly remarkable. Anton Kaes highlights both televisual and extra-televisual responses to this mini-series. He explains that, in response to the programme, Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR), the German television broadcaster of *Holocaust,* received in excess of 30,000 telephone calls and thousands of letters; the print media and radio stations confronted the issue of German war crimes; editorial confessions concerning discrimination against Jews appeared in the print media; and viewers were invited to participate in discussions after each episode of the series lasting many hours.[63] His assessment of the series' impact on German audiences is that it 'broke through thirty years of silence and left an indelible mark on German discussions of the Holocaust'.[64] If a little emphatic, this assessment nevertheless suggests that, far from engendering

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> As everyone now recognizes, television is today the most influential single force in American popular culture. What one sees in one's living room night after night directly influence [sic] one's general image of reality, and even influence [sic] the apperceiving powers of imagination itself.

Alvin H. Rosenfeld, 'The Holocaust in American Popular Culture', in *Midstream*, June/July 1983, pp. 53-9, p. 54. Philip M. Taylor argues for the power of historical television programming and asserts that more people will watch a historical television programme than will ever read a history book on the same subject throughout the lifetime of its author. Philip M. Taylor, 'Television and the Future Historian', in Roberts & Taylor (2001), p. 175.

[63] Anton Kaes, *From* Hitler *to* Heimat: *The Return of History as Film* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 30.

[64] Anton Kaes, 'History and Film: Public Memory in the Age of Electronic Dissemination', in Bruce A. Murray and Christopher J. Wickham, eds., *Framing the Past: The Historiography of German Cinema and Television* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), pp. 308-32, p. 311.

forgetfulness, this example of televisual history had the opposite effect: it dispelled forgetfulness.

Whilst it cannot be disputed that *Holocaust* had a seismic effect, twenty-three years earlier, from 1956, the theatrical adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank* forced Germany to confront its recent past. According to Alvin H. Rosenfeld, the story of Anne Frank was one of the 'first prods to public memory' in Germany.[65] Anton Kaes's general conclusion from his study of Germany's reactions to *Holocaust* as well as German society's endeavours to come to terms with its record of inhumanity during WWII through the audiovisual media is that:

> Surpassing schools and universities, film and television have become the most effective (and paradoxically least acknowledged) institutional vehicles for shaping historical consciousness.[66]

There is also anecdotal evidence in Britain which suggests that televisual renditions of historical events have created knowledge of aspects of the past when such knowledge did not previously exist. Thus in 1974 the 'Genocide' instalment of Jeremy Isaacs' highly acclaimed twenty-six part history documentary series *The World at War* was broadcast for the first time on British television. This broadcast commanded an audience of between eleven and twelve million.[67] A British journalist who saw 'Genocide' wrote, 'Why had we never been told before?' He went on to reveal that the 'next day, among colleagues and friends, the sense of shock was palpable'.[68] The reactions to certain Holocaust-related programmes are clear indicators of television's capacity to influence and shape society's view of this historical event.

In 1990 the French state illustrated its faith in the power of television to influence the public's view of history when French Minister of Culture Jack Lang

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[65] For an account of the German reception of Anne Frank see: Alvin H. Rosenfeld, 'Popularization and Memory: The Case of Anne Frank', in Peter Hayes, ed., *Lessons and Legacies: The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World* (Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1991), pp. 243-78, p. 264.

[66] Kaes (1992), p. 309.

[67] According to Jeremy Isaacs speaking at the 'Holocaust, Genocide and the Moving Image' five-day symposium held at the Imperial War Museum (IWM), London, in April 2001.

[68] Quoted in, Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal imagination: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1994), p. 256.

demanded that all French terrestrial channels interrupt their programming to simultaneously broadcast Alain Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard/Night and Fog*.[69] The Minister of Culture felt compelled to do this after a wave of anti-Semitic attacks in France. Presumably, he wished to remind certain sections of French society where such bigotry had led in the past. It seems that he was convinced of the merits of representing history on television and of its capacity to function as a producer of memory.

The Landscape of Holocaust-related Programmes

Tracing programmes

In this thesis Holocaust-related programmes are taken to include any productions that explicitly centre on the origins, the implementation or the aftermath of the 'final solution'. To trace such programmes I relied on a combination of sources as to date a single database listing all programmes broadcast on British television is not available. For programmes broadcast before 1995, my sources included the subject index cards of 'Programmes-as-Broadcast' by the BBC, which I searched using key words such as 'concentration camps', 'Nazism', 'genocide', 'Jews', 'Auschwitz' and 'Holocaust', and the programme review index of *The Listener*. Both of these sources are held at the BBC Written Archives in Caversham (BBC WAC). I also searched the video archive index at the Wiener Library in London, which was particularly useful for tracing programmes broadcast after 1988 as it holds an extensive collection of off-air recordings of relevant programmes dating back to that year; and the British Film Institute's and the Imperial War Museum's databases. For the purpose of chapters three and four, which focus primarily on 1995 and 2001, respectively, my source was the *Radio Times* as well as the Wiener Library. Programmes broadcast by ITV and Channel Four (C4) before 1988 proved difficult to trace as scouring the schedules of the *TV Times* since 1955 was not practicable. For this purpose I relied upon the *AJR Journal,* which signalled notable Holocaust-related broadcasts; and the BFI's film and television database.[70] The

[69] *Nuit et brouillard/ Night and Fog,* dir. Alain Resnais, France, 1955.

[70] The *AJR Journal* was founded in 1941 for the benefit of Holocaust refugees and survivors; the BFI's film and television database selectively covers programmes from 1960.

overview of Holocaust-related programmes below might therefore be more comprehensive in respect of the BBC's output.

The formative years

The contribution of television to Britain's collective memory of what we now understand as the Holocaust has been evolving both quantitatively and qualitatively since broadcasting resumed in 1946. Today, documentary has become the staple generic form for Holocaust-related programming and the most familiar televisual mode for treating this catastrophe. However, it was not until 1961 that the first Holocaust-related documentary appeared on British television screens. This came in the form of ATV's *Eichmann*, broadcast by Associated Rediffusion to coincide with the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Israel. According to the *TV Times,* this documentary provided the 'background to the trial and the drama of the 15-year hunt for Adolf Eichmann.'[71] Until the 1970s, Holocaust-related documentaries were rare. During these years, *Eichmann* and the BBC's hour-long documentary *Warsaw Ghetto,* broadcast in 1965, stood alone.[72] If *Eichmann* represents the first Holocaust-related television documentary, *Warsaw Ghetto* was the first such documentary with the kind of retrospective and historical sensibility that informs many of today's documentaries related to the Holocaust.

One of the earliest Holocaust-related dramas on British television was an adaptation of Erwin Sylvanus's play *Dr Korczak and the Children.*[73] This Studio 4 production by Rudolph Cartier was broadcast in 1962 by the BBC. It told the true story of the death of 66 children from Dr. Korczak's Warsaw ghetto orphanage in the gas chambers at Majdanek on 12 August 1942. They were accompanied by the old Jewish doctor, who refused the offer of his own life.[74]

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[71] Tx. 22 February 1961, Associated Rediffusion. Neither a script nor a recording of this documentary has survived. The only indication of its contents can be found in the *TV Times,* February 19-25th, 1961, p. 33.

[72] Tx. 18 November 1965, BBC 1.

[73] Tx. 13 August 1962, BBC.

[74] See the synopsis provided in the BFI Film and TV Database, http://www.bfi.org.uk/filmtvinfo/ftvdb; and 'Dr. Korczak and the Children', in: *Radio Times*, 9 August 1962, p. 19.

Rudolph Cartier, who was born into a Jewish family in Vienna in 1904, worked in the German film industry before he fled the Nazis soon after 1933.[75] In 1965 he directed another Holocaust-related drama, *The Joel Brand Story*, which was broadcast by the BBC as part of its *Play of the Month* series. It dramatized Eichmann's offer of free conduct to a neutral territory for the Jewish leader, Joel Brand, on the condition that he barter the lives of one million Jews to the Allies in exchange for 10,000 new lorries.[76]

Prior to these documentaries and dramas, the Holocaust was most frequently confronted in other generic forms, such as news magazine, current affairs, arts magazine or talk show programmes. However, when the Holocaust was treated in these forms it was most often in an oblique way. Until the 1950s this subject was largely absent from the schedules with the exception of a film about the Nuremberg trials in 1946.[77] By the 1960s, broadly in parallel with increasing air time and the concomitant increase in programme production generally, related programmes increased in number. As might be expected, the first post-war programmes dealt with the immediate aftermath of the Nazis' persecutory policies, focusing on the rehabilitation and resettling of displaced persons, and the Nuremberg war crimes trials. These were augmented by and gradually gave way to televisual responses to and accounts of related post-war news events.[78]

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[75] See his biography in the BFI's Screenonline guide to British film and television history, http://screenonline.org.uk).

[76] *Play of the Month: The Joel Brand Story*, tx. 14 December 1965, BBC 1.

[77] Tx. 8 October 1946, BBC. The title of this film is not provided in sources. During the fifties programmes included an instalment of the news magazine programme *Behind the Headlines*, which examined how Jewish immigrants were surviving and settling in Britain, tx. 17 July 1957; the talk show *The Brains Trust*, whose topic under discussion was whether the public would in the future agree or disagree with Winston Churchill that Rudolf Hess was being mistreated, tx. 3 November 1957, both BBC.

[78] These included an international architecture and sculpture competition to find a memorial for Auschwitz in the arts programme *Monitor*, tx. 9 November 1958, BBC; the publication of related books and theatrical film releases; for example, an instalment of the current affairs programme *Panorama* featured an interview with Joel Brand to coincide with the publication of his book *Advocate for the Dead*, in which he recounts Eichmann's proposal to him, and the news programme *Tonight* featuring an interview with *Judgement at Nuremberg* director Stanley Dramer, *Panorama*, tx. 21 April 1958 and *Tonight*, tx. 18 December 1961, respectively, both BBC; the second Auschwitz trial and the capturing of Eichmann and his subsequent trial in Jerusalem, which was the subject of a large number of programmes in 1960 and 1961. On Eichmann: news magazine programme *Late Night Final*, tx. 25 May 1960; current affairs programme *Panorama*, featuring Israeli PM David Ben-Gurion discussing the trial, tx. 2 June 1960; *Tonight*, tx. 2 February 1961; *Panorama*, tx. 10 April 1961; *Tonight* with Victor Gollancz discussing his booklet on the trial, tx. 9 June 1961; and an instalment of the talk show programme *Meeting Point,* in which the topic under discussion was what light the trial sheds on human nature, tx. 30 July 1961, all BBC. Few scripts and recordings of these programmes or related documents have survived, so little light can be shed on the exact nature of their content. The principle sources containing information relating to

By the mid-1960s programmes took on an increasingly retrospective sensibility. For example, in 1959 the six-part BBC television documentary series *After the Battle* featured an item on the liberation of Belsen. In 1965, *Panorama* featured a similar item. Both of these will come under scrutiny in the first chapter of this thesis.[79] The news magazine programme *24 Hours* marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto by the Nazis, as did an instalment of the news magazine programme *Europa.*[80]

The 1970s and 1980s

The 1970s marked a watershed in Holocaust-related programming, with the broadcasting of the first documentary to deal with the catastrophe as a single historical narrative, 'Genocide', an episode of the twenty-six part documentary series *The World at War.*[81] Other documentaries included Marcel Ophüls's *Le chagrin et la pitié/The Sorrow and the Pity,* a controversial groundbreaking French documentary, which examined the French resistance during the Occupation; *According to the Rules,* a documentary reconstruction of a lawsuit for defamation brought by Dr. Wladislaw Dering against the novelist, Leon Uris, who claimed he was a Nazi war criminal in his novel *Exodus*, first published in 1958; and *The Final Solution,* a documentary in two parts which grew out of research undertaken for 'Genocide'.[82]

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content was the BBC's Programme-as-Broadcast list and the *TV Times* and *Radio Times*. Where descriptions are included they are very brief.

[79] *After the Battle*, 30 December 1959, BBC; *Panorama*, 12 April 1965 and 31 December 1965, BBC. Treblinka, one of the Nazi extermination camps, was the subject of the news magazine programme *24 Hours* on two consecutive days. One of these featured an interview with Jean-François Steiner, the author of a newly published book, *Treblinka. 24 Hours*, tx. 26 May 1967, BBC 1.

[80] *24 Hours*, tx. 19 April 1968, BBC 1; *Europa*, tx. 17 July 1968, BBC 1. Other programmes with a retrospective sensibility include various instalments of 24 Hours one of which focused on survivor and Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal and his pursuit of Nazi criminals, while another explored attitudes of the United States Government to the genocide of the Jews during the Second World War, and featured an interview with Arthur Morse, author of *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy. 24 Hours*, tx. 5 October 1967 and 10 April 1968, BBC 1. Holocaust-related themes were treated relatively frequently in *24 Hours,* an instalment of which also featured interviews with a medic and Brigadier Glyn Hughes, who were involved in the liberation of Belsen. *24 Hours*, tx. 21 November 1968, BBC 1.

[81] The reasons for this watershed will be explored in chapter two.

[82] *Le chagrin et la pité/ The Sorrow and the Pity*, dir. Marcel Ophüls, France, 1969, tx. 10 September and 28 December 1971, BBC 2. *24 Hours*, tx. 9 September 1971 and *Late Night Line Up*, tx. 11 September 1971, BBC 1, responded to its controversial content. *According to the Rules*, tx. 13 March and 20 April

In terms of drama, too, new ground was broken with the broadcasting of the American mini-series *Holocaust.*[83] This was a four-part dramatization of a Jewish family's struggle for survival under the Nazi regime and, as in 'Genocide', the Holocaust was depicted as a single historical narrative in its own right. The broadcasting of *Holocaust* in Britain proved to be a highly controversial media event, eliciting a great deal of attention from critics, commentators, Holocaust survivors and prominent Jewish figures in the national press.[84] Throughout the 1970s, Holocaust-related current affairs programmes continued to be broadcast, with the Holocaust denier David Irving allowed a platform for his revisionist views, and other programmes focusing on Nazi war criminals.[85]

The 1980s witnessed an increasing number of dedicated Holocaust-related broadcasts. Many of these were domestic productions. They included two Rex Bloomstein documentaries broadcast in conjunction with one another, *The Gathering,* which combined survivor testimony with coverage of a gathering in Israel in 1981 of some four to five thousand survivors, and *Auschwitz and the Allies,* an investigation into how much the Allies knew about Nazi concentration camps; and Sidney Bernstein's *A Painful Reminder,* a documentary about the liberation of the Nazi camps, most notably Belsen, which went into production in 1945 as a film conceived to demonise the Germans, but which was initially abandoned owing to the cold war political realignment, where Russia was the new foe and Germany the newfound ally.[86] Amongst the more noteworthy non-domestic productions were Marcel Ophüls's four-hour documentary *Hôtel Terminus: Klaus Barbie, sa vie et son temps/Hotel Terminus: Life and Times of*

1973, BBC 2. *The World at War:* 'Genocide', tx. 27 March 1974, ITV. *The Final Solution*, tx. 12 & 19 August 1975, ITV.

[83] *Holocaust*, tx. 2, 3, 4, and 5 September 1978, BBC 1.

[84] Another American mini-series in three parts, *QB VII,* dramatized the post-Holocaust life of a survivor who was put on trial for war crimes, tx. 25, 26 and 27 April 1976, BBC 1.

[85] 24 Hours, tx. 5 November 1971 and current affairs programme *The Frost Programme*, 9 June 1977, BBC 1. Most notable programmes during the seventies focusing on Nazi war criminals included two instalments of *Panorama,* entitled 'A Blind Eye to Murder' and 'Gustav Wagner', respectively. The former was about the injustice of West Germany's statute of limitations, which would permit Nazi war criminals freedom from arrest after 30 years, tx. 20 February 1978, BBC 1. The latter focused on the deputy commandant of the Nazi extermination camp Sorbibor, who was awaiting the outcome of extradition proceedings at the time, tx. 18 June 1979, BBC 1.

[86] *The Gathering,* tx. 15 September 1982, BBC 2; *Auschwitz and the Allies,* tx.16 September 1982, BBC 2; and *A Painful Reminder*, tx. September 1985, ITV.

Klaus Barbie, which focussed on the eponymous Nazi war criminal and for which BBC 2's Sunday evening schedule was cleared; a controversial drama *Playing for Time*, about a member of the French resistance, Fania Fenélon, who was tortured and sent to Auschwitz where, as a musician, she played in the camp orchestra; and Claude Lanzmann's monumental nine hour testimonial documentary *Shoah*.[87]

The 1990s and beyond

During the 1990s, there was a further increase in Holocaust-related programmes on British television. Schedulers could now draw on the growing body of existing programmes, giving rise to a number of repeats such as 'Genocide', *Shoah*, and part of the *Panorama* item 'Belsen After Twenty Years'. The theatrical release of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* in Britain in 1994 triggered a cluster of related television programmes.[88] There were many new single one-off documentaries as well as some short documentary series, and many of these were offered by C4.[89]

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[87] *Hôtel Terminus: Klaus Barbie, sa vie et son temps/ Hotel Terminus: Life and Times of Klaus Barbie*, dir. Marcel Ophüls, France/USA, 1988, tx. 9 April 1989, BBC 2; *Playing for Time*, tx. 11 January 1981, ITV; and *Shoah*, dir. Claude Lanzmann, France, 1982, tx. 18 and 19 October 1985, C4. For an account of the making of *A Painful Reminder*, see: Elizabeth Sussex, 'The Fate of F3080', in *Sight and Sound: International Film Quarterly*, spring 1984, pp. 92-7. *Playing for Time* proved controversial owing to the casting of Vanessa Redgrave, who was an activist in the cause of Palestinian nationalism. Other domestic productions included: *Missing Hero*, a BBC documentary focusing on Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Jews during the War, tx. 20 March and 18 November 1980, BBC 2; *Panorama*'s 'Butcher of Lyon', on Klaus Barbie, tx. 7 February 1983, BBC 1; and another BBC documentary *From Bitter Earth: Artists of the Holocaust*, which focused on Jewish artists during the Holocaust, featuring testimonies from surviving artists and showcasing their drawings, tx. 8 July 1988, ITV. Other non-domestic production included: a German mini-series *The Oppermanns,* dramatizing the life of a successful Berlin Jewish family under the Nazi threat, tx. 30 January 1983, BBC 2; the penultimate part of the American documentary series *Heritage: Civilization and the Jew:* 'Out of the Ashes', which focused on the fate of the Jews under the Nazis, tx. 30 May 1985, C4; and an American drama *Wallenberg: The Hero*, on the aforementioned Swedish diplomat, tx. May 1985, ITV;

[88] *Schindler's List,* dir. Steven Spielberg, USA, 1993. *Face to Face*: 'Steven Spielberg', tx. 31 January 1994, BBC 2; *Schindler*, dir. Jon Blair, 1983, UK, tx. 22 February 1994, BBC 2; and *Steven Spielberg on Schindler*, tx. 8 March 1994, BBC 1.

[89] Single documentaries included: *Chasing Shadows*, in which the late Holocaust survivor and Rabbi Hugo Gryn revisited his home town of Berehovo, in what was then Czechoslovakia, to highlight the once-rich Jewish life there and the subsequent decimation of the town's Jewish community, tx. 1 April 1991, C4; an almost two-hour C4 production *Lodz Ghetto*, which provided a detailed account of life and death in the Polish ghetto through the use of archive footage, extracts from diaries, photos and some reconstruction, tx. 6 May 1991, C4; *Primo Levi: The Memory of the Offence*, a profile of the Holocaust survivor and writer, tx. 11 November 1992, BBC 2; an instalment of the C4 historical documentary strand *Witness*, 'Another Journey by Train', in which British neo-Nazis were taken to Auschwitz to meet and have their views challenged by Holocaust survivor Kitty Hart, tx. 17 October 1993, C4; another C4 offering of just over two hours, *Tango of Slaves*, explored the transformation of the Holocaust from fact to fiction, tx. 31 January 1994, C4; another two-hour C4 documentary, *The Long Way Home*, recounted the struggle of

This decade was also marked by a major anniversary in 1995, namely the fiftieth anniversary of Victory in Europe Day (VE Day) and the liberation of the Nazi camps, which will form the subject of the third chapter of this thesis. This anniversary event provided a focus for Holocaust-related broadcasts. During that year, there were no fewer than 43 hours of such programming, which included the abovementioned repeats as well as many new productions, including the major documentary *Anne Frank Remembered.*[90] In 1997, the BBC launched its major award-winning six-part documentary series produced by Laurence Rees, *The Nazis: A Warning from History,* of which the fifth part, 'The Road to Treblinka', focused on the Holocaust.[91] This was also the year that *Schindler's List* was first broadcast on British television.[92]

The turn of the millennium saw the inauguration of Britain's first HMD in 2001. Television was active in marking this event by providing related broadcasts as well as by creating and broadcasting the inaugural ceremony, which will be the subject of the final chapter of this thesis. Subsequent HMDs continued to provide a focus for Holocaust-related broadcasts. In 2002, the BBC broadcast the multi-award winning BBC and HBO Films co-production *Conspiracy*, a dramatization of the Wannsee conference held in January 1942, at which the 'final solution' was formalized by the Nazis.[93] The BBC's digital channel BBC Knowledge, as BBC Four was then called, marked the event by broadcasting a cluster of programmes, including Alain Resnais's documentary film *Nuit et brouillard/ Night and Fog* for the first time on British television, which will also come under scrutiny in the final chapter.[94] Other notable broadcasts were the film *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* in 2003, and the major six-part BBC

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survivors to reach their homeland of Israel after the liberation, tx. 25 April 1998, C4; and *Roots Schmoots,* in which Howard Jacobson explored what it means to be Jewish and what impact the Holocaust has had on Jewish identity, tx. 22 March 1993, C4. Short documentary series included Rex Bloomstein's three-part *The Longest Hatred,* which explored Christian anti-Semitism, the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany, and Islam and anti-Semitism, *The Longest Hatred*: 'From the Cross to the Swastika', 'Enemies of the People' and 'Between Moses and Mohammad', tx. 9, 16 & 23 April 1991, ITV, respectively.

[90] *Anne Frank Remembered,* dir. Jon Blair, UK, 1995, tx. 8 May 1995, BBC 2.

[91] *The Nazis: A Warning from History*: 'The Road to Treblinka', tx. 8 October 1997, BBC 2.

[92] *Schindler's List,* tx. 19 October 1997, BBC 1.

[93] *Conspiracy,* tx. 25 January 2002, BBC 2.

[94] *Nuit et brouillard/ Night and Fog,* tx. 27 January 2002, BBC Knowledge. The other broadcasts on this channel were *The Music of Terezin* and *The Wannsee Conference/ Wannseekonferenz,* dir. Heinz Schirk, Germany, 1984, 27 January 2002, BBC Knowledge.

documentary series produced by Laurence Rees, *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the 'Final Solution'* to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in 2005.[95]

Television's evolving availability

The impact of Holocaust-related programmes on collective memory is heavily influenced by the availability of the medium to the public. Until the early 1950s, cinema and radio were the audiovisual media of mass communication. In time, though, television would change the status of these media. In his survey of British Second World War-related cinema between 1945 and 1960, Nicholas Pronay points out that between 1945 and 1950 half the British population attended the cinema each week, making cinema 'the principal medium of communication and attitude formation in Britain'. From 1955, however, cinema's status began to wane. By 1960 on average only a fifth of the population attended the cinema each week.[96] Cinema could not compete with the new technology of television once enough households had acquired a set. The same was true of the once popular newsreel. Increased access to television, and thus television news, eventually brought about the demise of this medium. Television's impact on radio was less dramatic, however. In 1949 Norman Collins, the head of the BBC television service, wrote in the *BBC Quarterly:* 'The television public is at the moment a small one: it is no more than a hundredth part of the radio audience'.[97] According to Asa Briggs, 1953 was 'a critical year in the shift from home listening to home viewing'.[98] One commentator claimed that television 'came of age with the [Queen's] Coronation [in 1953, which]...united the country'.[99] In 1955 radio audiences were nevertheless still much larger than those of television, and the BBC *Radio Times* magazine continued to feature

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[95] *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport*, tx. 24 January 2003, BBC 2; and *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the 'Final Solution'*, tx. 11, 18 & 25 January, 1, 8 & 15 February 2005, BBC 2.

[96] Nicholas Pronay, 'The British Post-bellum Cinema: a survey of the films relating to World War II made in Britain between 1945 and 1960', in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television,* vol. 8, no. 1, 1988, pp. 39-53, p. 39.

[97] Quoted in, Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Vol.IV: Sound and Vision* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 239.

[98] Ibid., pp. 242.

[99] H. Hopkins, *The New Look* (1963), p. 295, quoted in ibid., p. 458.

the radio listings before the television listings.[100] However, the sale of combined radio and television licences increased rapidly, and by 1962 they had outstripped that of the single radio licence when it was at its peak.[101]

When British television resumed transmissions after the War, the BBC was the only broadcaster of the only channel until 1955, when a second channel, ITV, began transmitting. Until then, in the absence of choice, a programme was more likely to be watched by most with access to a television set. Television's impact was nevertheless very limited as it was circumscribed by the restricted geographical reach of television transmitters and the fact that very few households were equipped with a television set.[102] With increased access to a set and the installing of more transmitters, by the 1960s a single programme could command 10 million viewers.[103]

The potential impact of a single programme was and still is determined by the interplay between the extent of public access to a television set, the number of channels and programmes available, and the status of the channels in the minds of the viewing public, factors which have all evolved since 1946.[104] Thus, for example, whilst in the 1970s and early 1980s a programme could be seen by almost all households, the likelihood of this happening was diminished by the availability of several channels. John Ellis has referred to this period as 'the era of availability' as distinct from the period before the seventies, which he has referred to as 'the era of scarcity'. The era of availability is characterized by several terrestrial channels broadcasting continuously with the gradual emergence of cable and satellite channels.[105] Notwithstanding the presence of several channels vying for the viewing public's attention, a single

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[100] Briggs (1979), p. 9.

[101] Barrie MacDonald, *Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: A Guide to Information Sources* (London, Cassell, 2nd edn. 1993), p. 80.

[102] Briggs (1979), p. 4.

[103] See: Howard Smith, 'Apartheid, Sharpeville and 'Impartiality': the reporting of South Africa on BBC television 1948-1961', in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1993, pp. 251-98, p. 292, fn. 11.

[104] This final factor will be examined in Chapter Three of this thesis.

[105] John Ellis, *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty* (London, I.B. Tauris Publications, 2000), p. 39.

programme could still command huge audiences comparable to peak audiences in the 1960s.

From the 1990s cable and satellite television channels began to proliferate and by the end of the decade had made significant inroads into the television viewing public's time spent watching the terrestrial channels. John Ellis has referred to this period as 'the era of plenty', in which the viewer is faced with a wide array of channels from which to choose. As non-terrestrial channels proliferate and more people begin to watch them, the impact of the traditional channels, BBC 1, BBC 2, ITV and C4, is likely to become increasingly diffuse. Moreover, a generation of television viewers is emerging for whom these traditional channels will never have formed their sole choice. These channels will probably not have the same status or appeal for this and successive generations as they had, and perhaps still have, for earlier generations who grew up with them. As a result, they are more likely to look beyond the terrestrial television landscape to meet their viewing needs.

Whilst there is now a much greater choice of programmes on offer than when the BBC had the monopoly on television, there are at the same time far more people with access to a television. As a result, the overall impact of BBC programming is likely to be greater now than it was when it was the monopoly broadcaster between 1946 and 1955. However, with the growing number of non-terrestrial channels, it still remains that the collective impact of terrestrial television is waning. At the same time history, at least in the form of the documentary, has never been as present on BBC 1, BBC 2, ITV, C4 and C5 collectively as it is today. From monitoring the television schedules from week to week, it is easy to see that historical programming is a staple feature of terrestrial television. This is even while such non-terrestrial niche channels as UK History and The History Channel offer a constant flow of historical programming from dawn until dusk. Terrestrial television will form the main focus of this thesis as, at least up to the late 1990s, satellite and digital television's contribution to collective memory was still very limited. However, in the final chapter the contribution in 2002 of the BBC digital channel BBC Knowledge will also be scrutinized.

Chapter 1

Belsen and a British Broadcasting Icon

Bergen-Belsen was handed over to British forces by the Nazis on 15 April 1945. The liberation was mediated around the world through radio broadcasts, newsreels, the press and public photographic exhibitions. These mediations threw the British public into a state of collective shock and outrage; never before had such accounts and images of human degradation and misery been heard or seen.[1] According to the findings of Mass-Observation, the images of Belsen 'deeply horrified' the British public.[2] The conditions found in this camp were the worst of all those liberated by the Western Allies.[3] Those present at the scene felt an enormous responsibility and compulsion to record and convey to the British public, as faithfully as possible, the extreme nature of what confronted them. So extreme were the scenes of human misery, that those who witnessed them and whose task it was to communicate them, were mindful of the possibility that the public might doubt the veracity of their accounts. Newspaper editors often employed pre-emptive measures in anticipation of the public's incredulity. They sometimes highlighted the provenance of the reports, revealing that they were provided by correspondents and reporters at the scene, or specifying the high-ranking status of the person upon whose eye-witness account the report was based.[4]

Television has ensured that some of these accounts and images achieved iconic status during the six decades that have elapsed since the liberation of Belsen. They have repeatedly appeared on or been transmitted by television to recall this event, making them a significant part of Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust. One of those whose task it was to inform the free world of what had been uncovered at Belsen was Richard Dimbleby. On 17 April 1945 he wrote and sent the BBC an account of what he

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[1] Joanne Reilly, *Belsen: The Liberation of a Concentration Camp* (London, Routledge, 1998), p. 50.

[2] Tony Kushner, 'The Impact of the Holocaust on British Society and Culture', in *Contemporary Record,* vol. 5, no. 2, autumn 1991, pp. 349 - 375, p. 357.

[3] Reilly (1998), p. 57.

[4] Ibid., pp. 56 - 7.

had witnessed at the camp.[5] Two days later the BBC Home Service broadcast a passage from this despatch.[6] It was through his voice and carefully chosen words that the British public first heard an eye-witness account of a German concentration camp. As we shall see, it left an indelible impression on radio listeners and has become an iconic mediation.

If the mediations of the conditions in Belsen sent a wave of shock across Britain, the reality of the camp had a far greater impact on those who were involved in and present at its liberation. The experience proved to be a transformative event in many of their lives. Richard Dimbleby's fellow war correspondent for the BBC, Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, observed how, when he saw him on his return to the Press Centre of the Advance Headquarters of the Second Army near Belsen, from his first visit to the camp, he was,

> a changed man... I had never seen Richard so moved. Until then I had always regarded Richard as a man who would never let his feelings show through his utterly professional surface efficiency. But here was a new Dimbleby.[7]

As we shall see, through his broadcast in 1945, Richard Dimbleby made a significant contribution to contemporary public knowledge and the nascent collective memory of Belsen and of what later came to be known as the Holocaust.

During the early post-war decades, Belsen loomed large in Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust. The welter of atrocity images and accounts of the liberation of Belsen offered to the public in 1945 combined to ensure that the concentration camp would become symbolic of Nazi evil in the public mind. Periodically throughout the rest of his life, Richard Dimbleby returned to the subject and the site of Belsen for radio and television, to ensure that the British public would not forget the depravity he had witnessed. Some weeks after his first radio broadcast about Belsen, he reminded the British public of the atrocities he had witnessed in a report about the relief operation

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[5] A transcript of Richard Dimbleby's original despatch is held at the BBC Written Archives Centre (BBC WAC), file no. WRU C7726. A recording of it is held at the Sound Archives at the British Library, catalogue no. NP7976R.

[6] A partial transcript of what was broadcast on 19 April 1945 is held on Microfilm 129 - 'Home News Bulletin', BBC WAC. The BBC Home Service provided domestic radio broadcasting as opposed to overseas radio broadcasting.

[7] Quoted in: Jonathan Dimbleby, *Richard Dimbleby: A Biography* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1975), p. 193.

within the camp in the radio magazine programme *The World Goes By*.[8] In 1959 he returned to the actual site of Belsen to make a short film about the liberation to feature in the final episode of the six-part BBC television series *After the Battle*. In each episode of this series a former war correspondent returned to sites from which he had reported during the conflict. Richard Dimbleby's final contribution during his lifetime was to mark the twentieth anniversary of the liberation of Belsen, where he returned a final time, just before his death. There he made the short film 'Belsen After Twenty Years' for an instalment of *Panorama* in 1965. With his contributions, most significantly his 1945 radio broadcast of the liberation, but also this short *Panorama* film, Richard Dimbleby played no small part in helping to create and perpetuate Belsen's symbolic status within collective memory.

Yet, his contributions did not end there. Even after his death his impact has been remarkable. As we shall see, extracts from his reports have been featured in numerous media sources right up to the present. If Richard Dimbleby's contribution to collective memory demands scrutiny because of its huge impact and longevity, it is also of interest because of the way in which the majority victim-group at Belsen, the Jews, are depicted.

An examination of his contribution, however, would be inadequate without a close consideration of what this broadcasting figure meant to the British public; his public persona has been brought to bear upon the reception of all that he produced. For this reason, the following analysis is informed by public discourses relating to his status as a broadcasting as well as a national icon more broadly. After tracing the evolution of his twofold iconicity, I will discuss the contemporary impact of his 1945 broadcast on the liberation of Belsen. I will also trace the recurring presence in collective memory of the material that Richard Dimbleby recorded and sent back to the BBC about the liberation by identifying the numerous and varied media sources that have showcased it to date. An examination of the way his Belsen-related material has been featured will reveal that, despite references to the 1945 broadcast as 'famous' or 'historic', its precise content remains obscure to those who did not hear it when it was originally transmitted. With the support of archival sources, I will show that the 1945 broadcast was a highly edited version of what the broadcaster sent back to the BBC, with crucial details omitted. I will also trace the gradual and tardy incorporation of these details.

[8] *The World Goes By*: 'Belsen', tx. 19 May 1945, BBC Home Service.

From Richard Dimbleby's radio contribution to collective memory, I shall turn to his televisual contributions, *After the Battle* and the *Panorama* item 'Belsen after Twenty Years'. I will examine how the Jewish presence at Belsen is represented in each of these programmes and how 'Belsen after Twenty Years' was part of a wider trend to efface Jewishness in the context of the liberation of the camp. For this purpose, I will draw on other mediations and representations of Belsen circulating in the 1940s as well as the wider landscape of Holocaust-related television programmes. The analysis of *After the Battle,* however, will reveal that Jewishness was only written out of depictions of Belsen which contextualized the liberation as part of the narrative of Britain's involvement in the camp.

The Impact of Richard Dimbleby's Belsen Despatch on Collective Memory

Richard Dimbleby's iconicity

In the words of Prime Minister Harold Wilson, speaking in 1964, 'whatever [Richard Dimbleby] puts his hand to he brings to it an air of authority'.[9] Throughout Richard Dimbleby's career in broadcasting the status and authority he held imbued any subject that he treated with 'weight and importance'.[10] His prominence was established well before the British public would hear his account of the liberation of Belsen. By then, he had already carved out a formidable reputation of authority and reliability. Prior to the outbreak of the War he had become the BBC's senior reporter, entrusted with all the major assignments, including, for example, Neville Chamberlain's return from Munich. His career is heavily punctuated by firsts in the broadcasting industry, most of which came before his entry into Belsen, and indeed included it. He was the first reporter to be named in a BBC bulletin. From the anonymous 'our observer' to introduce reporters, he became 'our observer, Richard Dimbleby'.[11] When War was declared he became the BBC's first war correspondent, often reporting from the front line.[12] Moreover, he was

[9] Quoted in *Universe*, 13 November 1964, Richard Dimbleby press cuttings, BBC WAC.

[10] Richard Lindley, *Panorama: Fifty Years of Pride and Paranoia* (London, Politico's Publishing, 2002), p. 32.

[11] Dimbleby (1975), p. 86.

the first war correspondent to enter Belsen and to describe what he found and what had taken place there. Of his entire wartime career, it is for this that he is most remembered today.[13] In a memorial service held at Westminster Abbey on his death, the Bishop of Guildford, Dr George Riendorp, recalled only his Belsen experience of his wartime career.[14] During the War he had become something of a personality. Of his whole career, though, he is best remembered as *Panorama*'s studio presenter. Yet, even before he had joined the *Panorama* team in 1955 he was broadcasting's 'heavyweight hero'.[15]

After the War his reputation grew from strength to strength with such popular radio programmes as *About Britain*, *At Home, London Town, Twenty Questions* and *Down Your Way*.[16] The latter two programmes regularly commanded fifteen and ten million listeners, respectively.[17] As television's reach spread across Britain he became a national celebrity.[18] In 1953 the *Sunday Dispatch* described him as 'Britain's No.1 radio and television star'.[19] The Prime Minister believed that he was 'the most commanding personality in television today.'[20] He was the television commentator for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, which has been described as 'the most important single day in the history of British television'.[21] Over twenty million people watched the ceremony and listened to his commentary from Westminster Abbey. So great was his authority that many were under the impression that he rather than the Archbishop of Canterbury was the master of the ceremony.[22] By 1965, the year he returned to Belsen

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[12] Ibid., p. 88.

[13] Lindley (2002), pp. 32-3.

[14] Bishop of Guildford, 'His Example Shone Bright', in Leonard Miall, ed., *Richard Dimbleby, Broadcaster* (London, BBC, 1966), pp. 170-2, p. 171.

[15] Lindley (2002), p. 32.

[16] Ibid., pp. 32-3.

[17] Dimbleby (1975), p. 207.

[18] Lindley (2002), p. 33.

[19] The *Sunday Dispatch*, 2 June 1953, Richard Dimbleby press cuttings, BBC WAC.

[20] Quoted in *Universe*, passim.

[21] Dimbleby (1975), p. 234.

[22] Lindley (2002), p. 31.

for *Panorama*, the *Financial Times* referred to him as a 'semi-sacred' television personality.[23]

As a national celebrity he was frequently the subject of gossip columnists. The interest that both his career and his private life generated in the national press is testimony to his star status, which increased ever more once he joined *Panorama*.[24] Moreover, his public appeal and status were so great that he himself became the subject of an instalment of *Panorama*.[25] Whilst it is true that he was at times the subject of vitriol from his critics in the national press, for the most part he was eulogized. The *Sunday Times* claimed that he was a 'national institution [...] our Public Orator; the custodian, not exactly of public morals, but of the public sense of conformity, decorum and propriety [and that] he spoke for the majority'.[26] The anniversary celebrations to mark his 25 years in British broadcasting were a newsworthy event, which was reported in many national dailies.[27] It is no less significant that, fully aware of his iconicity and hold over the public, the BBC was intent on retaining his services. On a number of occasions they endeavoured to persuade the freelance broadcaster to accept contracts for fear of losing him to rival ITV companies.[28] If the BBC was mindful of Richard Dimbleby's hold over the public, they were also aware of his skill and talent. The contemporary head of Outside Broadcasts at the BBC, Peter Dimmock, openly referred

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[23] The *Financial Times,* 2 January 1965, Richard Dimbleby press cuttings, BBC WAC.

[24] For example, in December 1950 the *Radio Times* sketched out his professional life-story; in November 1958, the *Daily Mail* featured a three-part profile of him that promised to provide an 'intimate, revealing, close-up of one of the most successful and controversial figures ever to look out of a TV screen'; and in December 1962, the *Sunday Observer* featured a lengthy profile of the broadcaster. 'Dimbleby was the BBC's First Reporter' in, the *Radio Times,* 3 December 1950, Richard Dimbleby press cuttings, BBC WAC; Dimbleby (1975), p. 319; 'Dimbleby - Myth and Reality' in, the *Sunday Observer,* 23 December 1962, Richard Dimbleby press cuttings, BBC WAC.

[25] In September 1957 he was invited to interview himself on the programme. His questions were recorded in advance and answered on air. Dimbleby (1975), p. 326.

[26] See: ibid., pp. 319-28 for Jonathan Dimbleby's account of his treatment in the national press.

[27] The *Daily Mail*, 21 September 1961; the *Evening News*, 22 September 1961; and the *Daily Telegraph*, 23 September 1961. Richard Dimbleby press cuttings, BBC WAC.

[28] Dimbleby (1975), p. 328. If the national press is to be believed, in 1954 he was offered a personal contract that, at £7000, was hitherto the largest ever offered by the Corporation, the *Standard,* 5 November 1954. When he declined the contract the BBC increased the offer to £10,000, the *Daily Telegraph*, 6 November 1954. This compares with £8000 earned by BBC Director General Hugh Greene in 1960, the *Standard,* 13 May 1960. Richard Dimbleby press cuttings, BBC WAC.

to him as 'the prince of commentators' and the 'master'.[29] In the words of another contemporary, Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, he was revered as 'the finest professional of us all' within the BBC.[30]

As well as an icon of broadcasting, discourses surrounding him suggest that he was emblematic of what people regarded as quintessential English qualities. The two facets of his iconicity were not mutually exclusive; some commentators believed that his embodiment of Englishness was instrumental to his success as a broadcaster. Many within the BBC took this view. According to a member of the *Panorama* team, John Mossman, it was believed his impact on viewers owed much to the fact that he

> reflected many of the key qualities of the English. He was simple, and had a very straightforward and concrete approach to things and situations. He had a strong sentiment and a strong loyalty and I'd say probably did more than anyone else to show the place of the Royal Family in the Sixties.[31]

Outside the BBC the idea of him as a repository of national qualities was articulated in and propagated by the national press. In his capacity as *Panorama*'s presenter, the *Daily Sketch* in 1964 claimed that 'he [had] become the visible incarnation of something essentially British as the chimes of Big Ben, warm beer, and the flag on Buckingham Palace'.[32] The perception of him as the embodiment of national traits was complemented and reinforced by the way in which he was seen to be closely identified with the nation; as a national figure he loomed large. His close association in the public mind with Royalty, which is obliquely alluded to above by John Mossman, national events, state occasions, general elections and the like, undoubtedly served to align him with the nation, contributing to his national iconicity. The description of him as 'the voice of the nation' appears to bear this out, as does the claim that when he died an era 'in the British way of life came to an end'.[33]

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[29] Dimbleby (1975), p. 272.

[30] Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, 'Farewell', in Miall (1966), p. 172.

[31] Miall (1966), p. 169.

[32] Anthony Bristow, 'The Inside Secrets of *Panorama*', in *Daily Sketch*, 6 April 1964.

[33] See: Dimbleby (1975), back inside jacket.

Having gained public pre-eminence through his long and successful career in broadcasting, Richard Dimbleby's death in 1965 precipitated mourning on a national scale. It was announced on all television channels, with ITV paying tribute to a revered competitor by interrupting broadcasts for two minutes. The fact that the Dean of Westminster immediately suggested that a Memorial Service be held in the cathedral 'where England honours those who have done outstanding service' and the fact that this service was televised live and rebroadcast that evening, commanding over eleven million viewers, is testament to his national standing.[34]

The contemporary impact of the 1945 broadcast

Richard Dimbleby's account of Belsen appeared on *War Report*, a news programme composed of reports recorded by war correspondents, often on the front-line. It has been described as the most 'unforgettable' and the most 'moving' broadcast of his entire career.[35] Testifying to the indelible impression it left on many of those who heard it, years later, it is claimed, members of the public would approach him in the street to tell him how his report had horrified, outraged and caused them misery.[36] It was also highly regarded within the BBC, though whether this was owing to the quality of the broadcast or the subject matter is unclear. The BBC compiled reports which highlighted what it considered to be the 'outstanding' reports of the day. For the twenty-four hours ending 19 April 1945, the broadcast of Richard Dimbleby's report is highlighted.[37] Yet, within these daily appraisals his broadcast did not necessarily stand out from others also related to Nazi concentration camps, which were also frequently viewed as 'outstanding'. On the same day an interview with a British prisoner interned at Buchenwald was also deemed to be superlative. On other days reports related to Buchenwald and Dachau were highlighted as 'outstanding'. Nevertheless, Richard Dimbleby's broadcast numbered among the Nazi concentration camps reports that were judged more highly than reports related to other news from the war front on their respective days of broadcast.

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[34] Ibid., p. 170 and pp. 167-8.

[35] Reilly (1998), p. 30 & Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, in Miall (1966), p. 43.

[36] Dimbleby (1975), p. 194. The evidence remains anecdotal. It was not customary for the BBC to carry out research on the public's response to individual *News Report* instalments. Nor are there any letters from listeners to be found at the BBC WAC.

[37] File no. R28/222/3, BBC WAC.

In the estimations of local BBC correspondents, who frequently listened to *War Report*, Richard Dimbleby ranked number two among ten BBC war correspondents for the quality of his despatches and the pleasantness of his voice.[38] If the view of local BBC correspondents is in any way suggestive of how the listening public might have viewed the quality of war correspondents' despatches, then Richard Dimbleby was very well placed to deliver an account of the scenes that were encountered at Belsen.

Whilst those writing for the press endeavoured to convey the shock and horror of the scenes that confronted them, it would have been difficult for the written word to compete with the broadcast word. The immediacy of Richard Dimbleby's voice heard over the airwaves, shot through as it was with emotion fresh from the scene of the atrocities, ensured this. While making his recording for the BBC, he broke down no less than five times.[39] As well as being able to convey emotion more effectively than the written word, the broadcast word was able to reach a greater part of the British public. Radio audiences were typically larger than press readership. Like radio, the press was a domestic medium, primarily consumed within the privacy and comfort of the home. However, newsprint shortage meant that its circulation was limited during the War, leaving radio to act as the principal news medium in Britain.[40] During this time radio enjoyed the pinnacle of its success, which continued for ten years following the War.[41] Richard Dimbleby's account as broadcast on *War Report* followed immediately after the nine o'clock news bulletin and typically inherited sixty percent of its listeners. During the week that his account of Belsen was broadcast, an average of thirty nine percent of the population listened to the news programme.[42] Asa Briggs's findings suggest that it commanded anything from ten to fifteen million listeners.[43]

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[38] *Listener Research Report*, file no. R/9/9/9, BBC WAC.

[39] Miall (1966), p. 47.

[40] Andrew Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting* (2nd edn. London, Routledge, 1997), p. 66.

[41] Andrew Crisell, *Understanding Radio* (London, Methuen, 1986), p. 27.

[42] *Listener Research Bulletin*, no. 241, file no. R9/1/5, BBC WAC. These were weekly accounts of listening
trends and evaluations of output by listeners.

[43] Asa Briggs, *History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: Volume III - The War of Words* (London, Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 662.

The subsequent use of Richard Dimbleby's despatch

In addition to the aforementioned account sent back to the BBC, Richard Dimbleby recorded another. However, it has proved impossible to find, in the BBC archives or elsewhere, any evidence that indicates when it was recorded, whether it was a despatch sent back shortly after his visit to the camp or when it was broadcast to the British public in 1945, if indeed it was. The only documentary evidence that has come to light is an entry in the BBC Sound Archives catalogue. Here it is described as an edited version of the first despatch, which was received by the BBC on the same day. However, the wording of the recording held at the National Sound Archives of the British Library shows that it is not an edited version, but in fact an entirely different account.[44] At one minute and twenty seconds it is far shorter than the eleven minutes and forty-four seconds of the first account, of which it is a condensed version. Whilst it retains much of the horror of the full version, it does not mention Jews. Instead, it refers to the various nationalities represented in the camp. Although its provenance and use in 1945 remain an enigma, extracts from this condensed account, as from the first, have been widely circulated. Various permutations of both accounts have been repeatedly featured in diverse media forms. However, it is primarily through television programmes that Richard Dimbleby's despatches have contributed posthumously to Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust. In chronological order these have included:

- the final episode of the aforementioned *After the Battle*, broadcast in 1959.

- the aforementioned item in *Panorama,* entitled 'Belsen After Twenty Years', broadcast in 1965.

- *Richard Dimbleby at Belsen.* This was a composite programme by the BBC of what was presented as his radio broadcast, and part of the *Panorama* item 'Belsen After Twenty Years', which was televised to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in 1995. Indeed, this programme was an initiative to recall his significant contribution to collective memory of the Holocaust.

[44] 1SE0061048, National Sound Archives, British Library.

- the second instalment of *What Did You Do in the War, Auntie?* This was a two-part programme that examined the BBC's role during the War, and was broadcast in the same year to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of VE Day.

- the fourth episode of *The 1940s House,* broadcast in 2001. This was a five-part C4 series that recreated wartime conditions in which a modern family were to live.

- *Reflections on the Holocaust: Holocaust Memorial Day,* broadcast in 2001. This was a broadcast by the BBC of the official Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony held at Methodist Hall in London.

- *Images of Belsen,* broadcast in 2001. This was a Radio 4 programme that provided an account of the liberation of Belsen and examined the way in which it was mediated to the British public in 1945. Like *Reflections on the Holocaust,* this programme was also broadcast to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.[45]

As well as taking audio form, material from Richard Dimbleby's accounts of Belsen has also appeared in print. Examples include Leonard Miall's *Richard Dimbleby, Broadcaster* in 1966, a tribute to him on his death by his colleagues at the BBC; his official biography *Richard Dimbleby: A Biography* by his son Jonathan Dimbleby, published in 1975; *Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice* by Geoffrey Robertson in 2002; and the C4 book *The 1940s House* that was published to coincide with the television series.[46] Some of his material has been made available commercially by the BBC. In 1985 it featured in the recordings *The Second World War: Original Recordings from the BBC Archives - September 1939 - August 1945* and *Victory in Europe - 1945.*[47] Moreover, audio clips from Richard Dimbleby's accounts can be heard on a number of websites, including one related to the aforementioned radio

[45] *Richard Dimbleby at Belsen,* tx. 9 January 1995, BBC 2; *What Did You Do in the War, Auntie?,* tx. 9 May 1995, BBC 1; *The 1940s House,* tx. 18 January 2001, C4; *Reflections on the Holocaust: Holocaust Memorial Day,* tx. 27 January 2001, BBC 2; and *Images of Belsen,* tx. 27 January 2001, Radio 4.

[46] Miall (1966) p. 44-5; Dimbleby (1975), pp. 190-3; Geoffrey Robertson, *Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice* (London, Penguin, 2002), p. xi; and Juliet Gardiner, *The 1940s House* (London, Channel 4 Books, 2000), p. 37.

[47] Both released by BBC Records in 1985.

programme *Images of Belsen*; and The Radio Academy website, where it is showcased in a brief summary of his professional trajectory.[48]

In addition to these various media forms making extracts from his Belsen material available to the public, Richard Dimbleby contributes to collective memory through another conduit. Some of his material is used in schools up and down the country as part of the national history curriculum in Britain. The Government's Department for Education skills website for teachers, The Standards Site, recommends playing his broadcast to pupils in Year 9, Key Stage 3 History as a prelude to the question 'What happened when people found out about the Holocaust?'.[49] Its use in this capacity will ensure that it remains part of Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust for younger generations even if the above-mentioned broadcasts, recordings and books have been forgotten.

The Reinvention of Collective Memory

The 1945 broadcast

The British public were not to hear the whole of the report that Richard Dimbleby sent back to the BBC, but only a number of extracts. Whilst neither a sound recording nor a full script has come to light, the exact content can reasonably be deduced from two documents. A surviving partial script of *War Report* indicates the broadcast by several words with which it began and ended. The partial script of *War Report* corresponds exactly to the several words which open and close a text that is presented, though ambiguously, as Richard Dimbleby's broadcast by his former fellow war correspondent Wynford Vaughan-Thomas and described as 'the most moving despatch that Richard Dimbleby ever broadcast for the BBC'.[50] The several words with which the text opens

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[48] www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/aboutradio4/diary/052shtml and www.radioacademy.org/halloffame.dimbleby_r/, respectively.

[49] www.standards.dfee.gov.uk/schemes2/secondary_history/his19/19q6?view=get

[50] Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, 'Outrage', in Miall (1966), pp. 42-3, p. 43. The book does not state its sources. However, it is possible that this text is based on a full transcript of the broadcast. According to a long-serving archivist at the BBC WAC, such a transcript was seen in the 1970s but it has since disappeared. My discussion of the broadcast is based on the working assumption that this text is a reliable reproduction of its contents.

and closes correspond exactly to those of the partial script of *War Report*. If this is taken to be a reliable source, the public heard a highly edited and abbreviated version of Richard Dimbleby's original despatch.

The content of this abbreviated version did not do justice to the driving impetus behind the despatch: Richard Dimbleby felt a compulsion to reveal everything he had learnt about the camp. When he returned to the Press Centre of Advance Headquarters of the Second Army after his first confrontation with Belsen, he told Wynford Vaughan-Thomas:

> It's horrible; human beings have no right to do this to each other. You must go and see it, but you'll never wash the smell of it off your hands, never get the filth of it out of your mind. I've just made a decision.... I must tell the exact truth, every detail of it, even if people don't believe me, even if they feel these things should not be told. This is an outrage...an outrage.[51]

The original script consisted of five and a half pages, whereas the equivalent of little more than one and a half pages was broadcast to the British public. In the editing process his detailed breakdown of how many internees had been killed or left to die during the previous months, and of how many had been found ill from lack of food, or acutely ill or dying from starvation or disease was all but lost. In its place, the presenter of *War Report* only revealed the total number of internees found alive in the camp.[52] Gone also was Richard Dimbleby's enumeration of the various diseases that were raging through the camp: typhus, typhoid, diphtheria, dysentery, pneumonia and childbirth fever. His vivid description of the 'smell of death and decay, corruption and filth' that pervaded the whole site had also been dispensed with. The British public were also spared his arresting descriptions of the most harrowing scenes and barbarous acts. His vivid description of how 'Germans had burned alive thousands of men and women in a single fire', which was based on what an internee had told him; of a mass burial pit the size of a 'tennis court' into which naked bodies were 'tumbled in one on top of the other'; and of how 'in the frenzy of their starvation, the people of Belsen had taken the wasted bodies of their fellow prisoners and removed from them the only remaining flesh – the

[51] Richard Dimbleby quoted by Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, in Miall (1966). pp. 42-3.

[52] Home News Bulletins scripts on microfilm 129, BBC WAC.

liver and kidneys – to eat', were all but gone.[53] What remains of the original despatch in the broadcast is a heavily edited account that, whilst both arresting and harrowing, was nevertheless selected in order to mitigate the horror of Belsen.

This kind of mitigation was not unique to the BBC but echoed wider practices within other media forms. Since the 1990s, the way in which the liberation of Belsen was mediated to the British public in 1945 has come under increasing scrutiny. Joanne Reilly has pointed out that the most graphic imagery was withheld from the public as it was believed to be too distressing.[54] In her study of media images of the concentration camps in Britain in 1945, Hannah Caven points out that the prevailing concern of newspaper editors and newsreel censors was that the public might refuse to accept the veracity of such imagery, and dismiss it as propaganda.[55] Certainly, the reaction of the BBC to Richard Dimbleby's original despatch is an example of how the veracity of such extreme atrocity material could be called into question. When the BBC received his despatch, staff were incredulous and refused to broadcast it until it could be verified by newspaper reports. However, his threat never to make another broadcast if it was not transmitted compelled the BBC to broadcast it, but in abbreviated form.[56]

An unrecognized fact: Richard Dimbleby's reference to Jews

An early contribution to the debate surrounding the mediation of the liberation of Belsen to the British public was Jon Bridgman's observation that the reports did not adequately reflect the camp's specifically Jewish character.[57] From 1943 Belsen mainly operated as an exchange camp for prominent Jews. These Jews were withheld from the transports to the East specifically to be exchanged for Germans held prisoner by the British or Americans. Towards the end of the War the function of the camp changed to become a reception centre for survivors of the death marches and transports from the

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[53] Quoted from the sound recording of the original despatch held at the British Library.

[54] Reilly (1998), p. 30.

[55] Hannah Caven, 'Horror in Our Time: images of the concentration camps in the British media, 1945', in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2001, pp. 205-253, p. 227.

[56] Dimbleby (1975), pp. 193-4.

[57] Jon Bridgman, *The End of the Holocaust: The Liberation of the Camps* (London, B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 1990), p. 34.

extermination camps in the East, most of whom were Jewish. By the time the camp was liberated, approximately 37,000 inmates had perished, and again the majority were Jewish. Of the approximately 60,000 surviving inmates at the time of liberation about two-thirds were Jewish.[58] While more Jews were killed in Auschwitz than any other camp, more Jewish survivors were liberated from Belsen than from any other camp.[59] Depending on whose figures are thought to be accurate, between a third and half of all Jewish camp survivors were liberated from Belsen.[60] To be sure, at the time of Belsen's liberation these comparisons could not be made; nevertheless, at around 40,000 the number of Jews liberated from the camp was nothing short of phenomenal.

Within academic discourse, Richard Dimbleby's broadcast has been marshalled as evidence, along with press articles and newsreels, of the contemporary media's general failure to so much as acknowledge the presence of Jews in the camp.[61] This notion has begun to percolate through to the public sphere. In the Radio 4 programme *Images of Belsen*, for example, writer and presenter Jo Glanville stated emphatically that 'Even Richard Dimbleby's famous broadcast made no reference to the fact that most of the inmates were Jewish'. After featuring an audio clip extracted from his two accounts, she calls upon Tony Kushner to explain the almost universal omission of references to Jews in the 1945 mediations of Belsen.

The reluctance to emphasize the specifically Jewish aspect of Nazi persecutions and atrocities in Government responses and media reports during the war years has been imputed to a number of factors. Within British society, it has been argued, there was an aversion to singling out Jews as a specific group for special consideration for fear of

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[58] For a history of the functions of and conditions in Bergen-Belsen, see: Catherine Lattek, 'Bergen-Belsen: From 'Privileged' Camp to Death Camp', in Jo Reilly, Tony Kushner et al., eds., *Belsen in History and Memory* (Frank Cass, London, 1997), pp. 37-71.

[59] The number of Jews liberated from Belsen is all the more staggering when compared with other camps. For example, out of an estimated 70,000 inmates liberated at Dachau 8,000 were Jews; of 81,480 at Buchenwald 8,000 were Jews; of 17,000 at Mauthausen 1,700 were Jews and no more than 3000 inmates were found in each of the Eastern camps. See: Bridgman (1990).

[60] Jon Bridgman presents the conflicting figures of various historians. Ibid., pp. 57-8.

[61] See: David Cesarani, *Britain and the Holocaust* (London, Holocaust Educational Trust, 2001), p. 16 and Tony Kushner, 'Fifty Years After the Holocaust and the Second World War', in *Patterns of Prejudice,* vol. 29, nos. 2 & 3, 1995, p. 4. David Cesarani's HET publication is primarily distributed to schools in Britain as part of Holocaust education, and is recommended by the Trust for this purpose. The absence of references to Jews in Richard Dimbleby's broadcast was also noted in a newspaper review of the publication. See: 'Britain was wary of Nazi refugees', in the *Independent*, 3 November 1998.

giving credence to Nazi anti-Semitic practices. Identifying victims according to their national provenance was the preferred approach.[62] Moreover, the Government wished to avoid propagating the notion that the War was being waged to save European Jewry. More specifically, coming in the wake of the Normandy invasion, the revelations of Nazi atrocities committed in the western concentration camps provided the Government with a justification for the war effort as well as a way of assuaging guilt associated with the civilian death toll of the Dresden bombings: the atrocities served to cast the German population in a demonic light.[63]

An additional explanation has been suggested in respect of the downplaying of the Jewish presence in Belsen, specifically. According to Tony Kushner, the 'scale and immediacy of the horror limited the possibility of understanding the specific background of the camp inmates'.[64] Similarly, Joanne Reilly has suggested that the chaos of the first few weeks was not conducive to communication between the liberators and the internees. She explains that the former were too busy to listen; the latter too ill to speak. These conditions were compounded by the language barrier.[65]

It is an unrecognised fact that, contrary to what the 1945 broadcast might suggest, Richard Dimbleby did not fail to notice the presence of Jewish internees in Belsen. In his drive to 'tell the exact truth, every detail of it', he stated that there were 40,000 people in the camp, that there were 'Germans and half a dozen other nationalities - thousands of them Jews', in the original report that he wrote and sent back to London.[66] Thus he managed to see beyond the sheer horror and chaos of Belsen to glean some knowledge relating to the specific background of the camp's internees. What is more, in his attempt to describe the composition of the camp's inmates he emphasized the presence of a vast Jewish contingent. The absence of Jews in the broadcast was thus the result of an editorial decision and not an effect of myopia induced by the prevailing conditions in the camp. The extracts chosen by the BBC coupled with the use, by the presenter in the introduction to the *War Report* instalment, of the non-specific term

[62] See: Reilly (1998), p. 51.

[63] See: ibid., pp. 52-2 & Kushner (1991), p. 355.

[64] Kushner (1996), pp. 214-5.

[65] Reilly (1998), p. 33 & 51.

[66] File no. WRU C7726, BBC WAC.

'inhabitants' to designate the internees, suggests that the Corporation favoured a universal approach to the reporting of a catastrophe that affected the Jewish community over and above any other victim group persecuted under the Nazi regime.[67]

The omission in this particular broadcast was consistent with the coverage of the liberation in the BBC's contemporary news bulletins. The Jewish element of Nazi atrocities was effaced in bulletins that featured items focusing on Belsen on 20 and 21 April 1945, for example.[68] Indeed, this effacement was general practice within the BBC. Exactly a month after part of Richard Dimbleby's Belsen despatch was broadcast, the BBC broadcast *The World Goes By:* 'Belsen'.[69] This was a twenty-five minute account by Richard Dimbleby of the medical relief operation under way in the camp. Britain's role, or rather the relief effort of Brigadier Glyn Hughes, was the main focus. Like contemporary news bulletins relating to Belsen, this was a dejudaized depiction of the camp.

Documentary evidence of an editorial decision to downplay or even avoid mention of Jews in Belsen reports has not come to light. However, the BBC had in its possession a copy of a diary written by one of its reporters, Patrick Gordon Walker, detailing his visit to the camp during his stay in the area beginning on 20 April 1945.[70] The BBC's treatment of this document strongly suggests a reticence vis-à-vis Jewishness. In his covering letter to the BBC, Patrick Gordon Walker suggested that his diary might be of interest to the Corporation. On the BBC's typescript of the diary it is clearly stated that the material was 'private and confidential' and 'not for publication in any form'. His diary was replete with references to Jews. Ultimately, it depicted Belsen as the site of a predominantly Jewish tragedy. It described the relief operation and two Jewish Sabbath services, one in great detail. More significantly, however, it linked Belsen to a wider and systematic programme of mass killings of Jews by the Nazi regime, a programme about which the BBC had reported earlier on in the War as will be

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[67] For the full introduction to Richard Dimbleby's item in *War Report*, see: file no. R28/222/3, BBC WAC.

[68] Home News Bulletins scripts on microfilm 129, BBC WAC.

[69] The remit of this programme was to feature short talks on topics of human interest. File no. R28/282, BBC WAC.

[70] A letter written by Patrick Gordon Walker that was enclosed with the copy of the diary was dated 4 May 1945. The diary recounts only two days. However, it is not clear whether this represented the whole duration of his stay. File no. E2/612, BBC WAC.

outlined shortly. It provided a detailed account of routine practices in Auschwitz fashioned from the testimonies of many of the Jewish survivors who had been transported from the extermination camp to Belsen; it revealed how Jews from Auschwitz repeatedly informed the diarist that internees were selected for the gas chambers and the crematoria, where many of them were buried alive. The BBC's unwillingness to publicise this material, combined with the absence of references to Jews in the aforementioned news reports and broadcasts relating to Belsen, strongly suggests that the Corporation endeavoured to conceal Jewish suffering in the camp.

This represents a shift in the Corporation's wartime broadcasting practices and policy relating to the coverage of the specific plight of European Jewry. Towards the end of 1942 the BBC reported on the mass extermination of Jews in Poland, in its home news bulletins.[71] The BBC regularly drew on the *Jewish Chronicle,* which was one of its main sources of information relating specifically to the persecution of the Jewish population.[72] These broadcasting practices culminated in official policy. As expressed in a statement made by BBC Director General William Haley in November 1943, the BBC's official line was to report 'in the news bulletins the facts, as they are reported from time to time, of Jewish persecutions.'[73] The BBC followed a similar pattern to the national press in that it informed the public about the specific tragedy that befell Europe's Jews in earlier wartime reporting, yet when it came to Belsen reticence prevailed.[74] Nonetheless, this reticence vis-à-vis Jews in 1945 was not universal within BBC reports. Shortly after Belsen was liberated a news bulletin broadcast on 30 April 1945 made explicit reference to Jewish suffering. It featured an item detailing the

[71] For a list of the news bulletins, see file no. R28/88/3, BBC WAC.

[72] Between January 1942 and December 1943 the BBC took up 42 out of the 46 front-page leading stories, which dealt explicitly with the plight of Europe's Jews. See: Jean Seaton, 'The BBC and the Holocaust', in *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 2, 1987, pp. 53-80, p. 63.

[73] File no. R34/277, BBC WAC. It is worthwhile noting that in a Ministry of Information (MOI) memorandum dated 20 May 1940, detailing the relations between it and the BBC, the Corporation agreed to 'bow to [the] decisions' taken by the governmental department and was 'prepared to place [itself] entirely under the control of this Ministry.' File no. R34/472/1, BBC WAC. Yet, in July 1941 the MOI stated in another memorandum that 'horror stuff [...] must be used very sparingly and must deal always with treatment of indisputably innocent people. Not with violent opponents. And not with Jews.' PRO: INF 1/151 Part 4, July 1941, Plan to combat the apathetic outlook of 'What have I got to lose even if Germany wins?', quoted in Caven (2001), p. 229. The Director General's statement in 1943 and the BBC's reporting of atrocities committed against European Jewry suggest that the BBC did not 'bow to [the] decisions' taken by the MOI but acted independently on this issue.

[74] For an overview of earlier wartime reporting of the Jewish plight in the British press, see: Reilly (1998), p. 54.

discovery of the charred remains of thousands of Jews in Landsberg.[75] The consistent dejudaizing of Belsen in BBC reports and broadcasts marked the beginning of a tradition of failure to reconcile Jewish suffering and British involvement within a single narrative of the liberation of Belsen in British culture and society, a theme that will be explored below.

A legacy of error

In most of the media sources identified above, passages have erroneously been presented as the original 1945 radio broadcast, or parts of it. In fact they have been a composite of material from either one of Richard Dimbleby's accounts or both and have seldom corresponded to what was broadcast to the British radio-listening public in 1945. Essentially, those hearing the featured archival audio clips are misled to believe that they are hearing part or all of the broadcast that threw the public into a state of shock in April 1945. What is more, these passages are frequently hailed as his 'famous' or 'historic' broadcast from Belsen. From early on, television participated in this reinvention of the emergent collective memory of Belsen with Richard Dimbleby himself in 'Belsen After Twenty Years' and *After the Battle*. The *Panorama* item begins with a composite of extracts from his original despatch, only some of which was broadcast in 1945. Richard Dimbleby accurately introduces them as part of the report he recorded for the BBC, but misleadingly suggests that they were broadcast to the public. In his episode of *After the Battle,* extracts from this despatch are also featured, none of which appeared in the 1945 broadcast. In this instance, Richard Dimbleby does not introduce the extracts himself. The text insert that opens the episode, like all the other episodes, suggests that the programme showcases wartime broadcasts made by the former war correspondent. The insert reads: 'A reporter returns in peace to battlefields where once he told to a listening world the story of war'.

This reinvention persisted into the 1990s. In *Richard Dimbleby at Belsen* Jonathan Dimbleby takes up the mantle from his father to remind the public of Belsen. He did not, however, succeed in revealing what part of his father's despatch 'made an indelible impression', as he put it, on the radio-listening public in 1945 despite an implicit promise to do just that. Instead, he reneged on his promise and showcased

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[75] Home News Bulletin index on microfilm, BBC WAC.

extracts that were lifted from both accounts, none of which were featured in the radio broadcast. If Richard Dimbleby's son, who was his official biographer, could not get it right, it should come as no surprise that others did not either, not even the BBC itself. In the same year, 1995, the BBC programme *What Did You Do in the War, Auntie?,* which was a self-reflexive account of the Corporation's wartime role, featured extracts lifted from his condensed account, none of which were used in the 1945 broadcast. In introducing the audio clips, the programme's presenter recalled the challenge that faced Richard Dimbleby in finding the words that would capture for *War Report* the scenes with which he was confronted. After recounting the drama surrounding the BBC's reaction to his despatch, the presenter explained that the report was broadcast and 'the full horrors of the Holocaust were now revealed for the first time'. Yet, as we shall see, the 'full horrors' of Richard Dimbleby's despatch were not 'revealed' in the 1945 broadcast. In fact, they were not to be revealed to the public until over half a century later.

This legacy of error persisted into the new millennium in 2001. The C4 series *The 1940s House* featured extracts from Richard Dimbleby's original despatch, none of which were heard by listeners of *War Report* in 1945. This is similarly striking given that the series strived for authenticity in its endeavour to recreate the conditions and atmosphere of the time so that they could be experienced by a modern-day family. To this effect the adult members of the family congregated around a radio to listen to the 1945 broadcast, but that was not what they heard. The tie-in publication to accompany the series, which is widely available in civic libraries, reinforced this error. In it author Juliet Gardiner explicitly and inaccurately states that the extract featured in the series was the report heard by the public in 1945. It is also worthwhile remarking that the author also erroneously states that Richard Dimbleby was on location when he made the report, that he 'stood outside the charnel house of Belsen concentration camp, and in a low voice told listeners to *War Report* about' the liberation.[76] In fact, he made the recording back at army headquarters, some distance from the camp.[77]

Yet again, in the Radio 4 programme *Images of Belsen* in 2001, extracts that did not correspond with anything in the *War Report* instalment were presented as part of

[76] Gardiner (2000), p. 237.

[77] Dimbleby (1975), p. 193.

what programme presenter Jo Glanville emphatically called 'Richard Dimbleby's famous broadcast'. This claim is all the more remarkable in light of the fact that it was made within the context of a critical discussion of the way in which the liberation of Belsen was mediated to the British public in 1945. On the same day, which was Holocaust Memorial Day, *Reflections on the Holocaust* featured material from his original despatch, some of which did correspond to what was broadcast as part of *War Report* in 1945. However, it is introduced in a way that erroneously suggests that it is the entire broadcast: 'The BBC's Richard Dimbleby was the first war correspondent to enter Belsen in April 1945: here is his report'. Of all the examples of media sources featuring extracts of Richard Dimbleby's Belsen material that have come to light, Wynford Vaughan-Thomas's tribute, in the publication *Richard Dimbleby, Broadcaster*, is the only one that in its entirety corresponds precisely to what was broadcast on 19 April 1945. However, in introducing the transcription of the broadcast, Wynford Vaughan-Thomas does not state very clearly what it is, but ambiguously introduces it as 'the most moving despatch Richard Dimbleby ever broadcast for the BBC'.[78]

In respect of the remaining examples, Jonathan Dimbleby's *Biography* features only extracts from his father's original despatch, yet they are presented as the entire despatch, as 'what he sent back to London'. The extracts in the other examples are lifted from his condensed account and therefore do not correspond to the 1945 broadcast. These, however, are identified in a non-committal way, leaving listeners or readers to draw their own conclusions. This is symptomatic of what seems to be a universal confusion surrounding what precisely was broadcast to the British public in 1945. Consumers of all but a few of these permutations are erroneously led to believe that they are listening to the very words spoken by Richard Dimbleby that shocked the British public in 1945.

The circulation and re-circulation of the various permutations of Richard Dimbleby's accounts within the public sphere means that the nature of the accounts' contributions to collective memory has been diverse. One trend that can be observed is the increasing use of atrocity material originally omitted from the 1945 broadcast. Forty years on, the BBC chose not to include any of the more graphic material in the war-related commercially available recordings *The Second World War: Original Recordings from the BBC Archives - September 1939 - August 1945* and *Victory in Europe - 1945* in

[78] Vaughan-Thomas in Miall (1966), pp. 43-5.

1985. Perhaps this was owing to the ease of access of this material to children within the home. The true horrors of Richard Dimbleby's revelations were not to be heard until half a century later. *Richard Dimbleby at Belsen,* in 1995, was the first source to include his account of the mass burial pit and of internees being burned alive. However, the most extreme fact remained unheard until 2001 in *Reflections on the Holocaust.* Towards the end of his despatch, Richard Dimbleby stated that 'there is one more awful [fact] than the others that I have kept, to end'. This was his description of the evidence of cannibalism in the camp that was found by Army doctors. Of all his depictions of atrocities, this appears to be the last that was revealed to the public.

As with his descriptions of extreme atrocities, producers of these media sources have been slow to take up his reference to thousands of Jews at Belsen. Only very recently has it been included in any of these sources. In the 2000 publication to accompany the C4 series, *The 1940s House,* the extract from Richard Dimbleby's Belsen material describes how there were '40,000 men, women and children in the camp, German and half a dozen other nationalities, thousands of them Jews'. In stark contrast, the audio clip featured in the programme makes no mention of Jews at all despite the production team's knowledge of such a reference, as indicated by its inclusion in the book. This is all the more striking given the fact that the audio clip is much longer than the combined extracts featured in the accompanying book.

The inclusion of additional and diverse material taken from Richard Dimbleby's accounts in the various broadcasts, publications and audio clips suggests that much of this material is likely to have been sourced directly from a complete recording or transcript of his accounts. Yet, with the sole exception of *The 1940s House* publication as late as 2000, the producers of these multiple mediations have not seen fit to include his reference to Jews.

Richard Dimbleby's Depiction of Belsen on Television

The status of Panorama

Originally a radio contribution to collective memory of the Holocaust, over the past six decades Richard Dimbleby's Belsen material has now become primarily a televisual contribution. To satisfy the expectations of television audiences it has been featured with

illustrative atrocity footage to lend images to the words that were so carefully chosen to depict the scenes to a world as yet without the mass medium of television. Richard Dimbleby himself was instrumental in initiating this shift from radio to television contribution. He made the move from one mass medium to the other, taking his Belsen material with him, which featured in *After the Battle* and the *Panorama* instalment 'Belsen After Twenty Years'. In each programme this material formed an element of a contemporary retrospective report by Richard Dimbleby, which served to frame the extracts antithetically as we shall see.

In terms of its potential impact on collective memory it is significant that this subject was confronted in *Panorama*, one of the most viewed and respected television programmes, by Richard Dimbleby, the most revered personality in broadcasting. 'Belsen After Twenty Years' was a fourteen-minute documentary-style report embedded in a fifty-minute programme that also reported on other topical issues. By contrast, today's documentaries and dramas on the subject are characteristically more than three times this length and take a single subject as their focus. Similarly, the *Panoramas* of today are single-subject hour-long programmes. From the vantage point of the present, it would be easy to conclude that such a brief treatment of the subject in a current affairs programme would have little impact on collective memory. Yet, this was a characteristic way in which British television treated Holocaust-related themes at the time. The genre was a staple feature of television, and it has been suggested that by 1960, 'current affairs television dominated the medium'.[79] Moreover, the prestige of *Panorama,* the high level of interest it elicited in the press and its weekly average viewing figures, combined with the status of anchorman Richard Dimbleby, strongly suggest that the brevity of its reports did not preclude their making a powerful impact on the public.

First broadcast in September 1955, *Panorama* marked the beginning of a new television genre. It was to treat, in the words of Richard Dimbleby, 'topical but non-immediate news',[80] and was television's first current affairs programme. It has been hailed as the 'most important regular programme ever produced by the BBC' and its birth is said to have been 'a momentous event in the history of the BBC'.[81] The success of the

[79] Dimbleby (1975), p. 353.

[80] Ibid., p. 267.

[81] Ibid. and p. 272.

series was so great and its generic character so unique that it became synonymous with the BBC. In the words of the contemporary BBC Director General, Sir Hugh Greene, 'Panorama with Richard Dimbleby would become the embodiment of the BBC, so that it would be impossible to conceive of the BBC without them'.[82] With Richard Dimbleby in the chair, the programme very quickly became a national institution. As former *Panorama* reporter Richard Lindley put it, *'Panorama* had become part of the fabric of the nation'.[83] Former *Panorama* presenter Sir Robin Day observed that *'Panorama* was a major event of the week, eagerly awaited by press, politicians and people alike.'[84] Leonard Miall affirmed that, what 'was said in *Panorama* on Monday evening came increasingly to be headlined in Tuesday's morning newspapers'.[85] Further illustrating the popularity of the programme, the *Daily Sketch* featured a profile of *Panorama,* entitled 'The Inside Secrets of *Panorama*', that ran over five days.[86] Each week, this programme commanded the attention of an average of eight to ten million viewers, who generally believed it to be an authoritative source of information.[87]

Between the time of its inception and 1965, the series had repeatedly reported on ongoing news that related to the Holocaust. These reports most often focused on Nazi war criminals, especially Eichmann during the time of his capture and his trial in Jerusalem, between 1960 and 1961. However, it was not until Richard Dimbleby's 'Belsen After Twenty Years' that the subject was confronted in such a direct and graphic way. According to *Panorama's* producer at the time, Robert Rowland, this item was highly regarded in the BBC Talks Department by which it was made. He has also suggested that it received good reports in the press.[88] At national level the only example

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[82] Quoted in ibid., p. 273.

[83] Lindley (2002), p. 76.

[84] Sir Robin Day quoted in: ibid.

[85] Quoted in ibid., p. 42. As an example of such a headline Lindley recalls the Fleet Street reaction to an item in *Panorama* about the British motorists' dislike of British cars. A headline read *'Panorama* deals million pound blow to British car industry'. Ibid.

[86] The *Daily Sketch*, 6-10 April 1964.

[87] Robert Rowland, *'Panorama* in the Sixties', in Anthony Aldgate, James Chapman and Arthur Marwick, eds., *Windows on the Sixties: Exploring Key Texts of Media and Culture* (UK, I.B. Taurus, 2000), pp. 154-182., p. 157.

[88] Letter from Robert Rowland to Brigadier Glyn Hughes, file no. T58/279/1 BBC WAC.

of such a report that has come to light is a detailed review of the item in the *Daily Mail*. Since it was the only programme reviewed, it seems to have been regarded as the one that made for the most compelling viewing on the day of broadcast. The review described it as 'a very simple and moving reminder'.[89] In some television reviews at local level, it was headlined and also emerged as the most significant programme on its day of broadcast.[90] Robert Rowland found the item on Belsen the most memorable he had worked on for *Panorama,* above items on Oswald Mosley and Martin Luther King's assassination.[91] If in terms of its potential impact on collective memory it is significant that this subject was confronted in one of the most viewed and respected television programmes by the most revered personality in broadcasting, in terms of the nature of its contribution to collective memory, twenty years after the liberation of Belsen, this programme did nothing to raise awareness of the particularly Jewish character of the camp.

Dejudaizing Belsen

An extract from Richard Dimbleby's original despatch set to archive film footage launches *Panorama*'s item on Belsen. It is followed by present day film of his visit to Belsen from where he recalls his earlier experiences, which in turn is followed by Brigadier Glyn Hughes's account, part of which is also set to archive footage. The item concludes with Richard Dimbleby's report from a Sue Ryder residential home in Suffolk about the resident survivors. It is the final, but main item in the programme. This is suggested by the programme's opening aerial-view of the giant obelisk monument that stands at Belsen, shown in anticipation of the item, and the fact that it was the only item of the three featured to be mentioned in Richard Dimbleby's introduction to the programme. In his introduction, he explains that the item will be shown at the end of the programme because of its unsuitability for children.

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[89] The *Daily Mail*, 13 April 1965, p. 3.

[90] See, for example: 'Shame of Belsen', in *The Belfast News-Letter*, 'The horrors of Belsen-and a plea for mercy', in *Peterborough Evening Telegraph* and 'Forgotten Allies', in *Peterborough Citizen and Advertiser*. All appeared on 13 April 1965.

[91] Lindley (2002), p. 126.

More than merely overlooking the specifically Jewish character of Belsen, the item appears to be at pains to dejudaize the catastrophe and cast it in a universal light. The image of the Jewish memorial forms the focus at the start of Richard Dimbleby's film of his return to Belsen in 1965. Yet, there is a conspicuous evasion of its references to the Jewish presence at Belsen. The prominent Star of David that dominates the memorial is edited out, as is the part of the epitaph that refers specifically to the Jews. Instead, only the final phrase of the epitaph, 'Earth conceal not the blood shed on thee!', is revealed by the camera as Richard Dimbleby stands atop its stepped plinth reciting it to launch his commentary. He emotively recalls the liberation from the Jewish memorial, highlighting the now absent scenes which he encountered in 1945. The only physical traces remaining, he points out, are the mass graves with their inscriptions revealing the numbers of dead buried, and the tombstones. This observation is illustrated by a series of frames, some featuring single and others multiple tombstones. None of their inscriptions refers to Jewish victims. However, as he surveys the residual physical traces of the camp's liberation, the sole signifier of Jewishness in the entire report comes into view. This is a Star of David on one of the tombstones. The unique way in which the Jewish tombstone is filmed seems to subtly detract from this symbol, rendering it insignificant even. All the half a dozen or so tombstones featured are shown in their entirety. But whilst the camera zooms into the inscription on the Jewish tombstone, gradually squeezing the Star of David out of the frame, the other tombstones remain whole. This suggests a deliberate attempt to marginalize the Jewish symbol. The framing of the Jewish tombstone becomes all the more striking when considered in conjunction with the accompanying commentary, as they are incongruous. Referring to the Jewish tombstone, Richard Dimbleby points out that:

> There's [a tombstone] which is just a square of marble someone has just lain down on the heather and is left where it was put some years ago.

It is the form of the Jewish tombstone that is of interest here, yet the camera zooms in to focus more closely on the inscription. By contrast, in the immediately preceding frame of another tombstone it is the inscription that is of interest, about which Richard Dimbleby informs the viewer:

> There's one [a tombstone] that bears the inscription of the names of a whole family up to and including the grandmother that died here together.

Yet the camera does not zoom into this inscription. The programme's exclusion of the Star of David on the site's Jewish memorial and tombstone belies the fact that the majority of those who died at Belsen were Jewish.

The glossing over of the specifically Jewish nature of the tragedy is also evident in the programme's concluding report about survivors living in a Sue Ryder residential home in Suffolk. The report illustrates the long-term and debilitating effects of the Nazi persecution on some of the survivors of Belsen. Richard Dimbleby points out that one inmate survived a four-hundred mile death march from Auschwitz to Sachsenhausen; that another was beaten so severely that he was barely able to walk; and that another survived the death transports in cattle trucks. If this report highlights the experiences of individual residents, it does not highlight the reasons why each of them was persecuted. Instead, it refers to the reasons in a general way, stating that some were persecuted because of their race; others because they fought in the resistance; and others because they assisted the Allies. If the term 'race' is employed here to refer to Jews along with Roma, Sinti, and perhaps even Poles and Russians, the programme neither acknowledges nor conveys the particularly anti-Semitic motivation behind Nazi persecutions. The implication is that enemies of Nazism were just as likely to be persecuted, and in equal fashion, whether they were Jewish, Romany, Polish, Russian, a resistance fighter or if they assisted the Allies. The programme's universal tone is reinforced.

Christianizing Belsen

In 'Belsen After Twenty Years' a Christianizing strategy is employed to represent Belsen, which needs to be problematized. If 'Belsen After Twenty Years' failed to highlight the Jewish specificity of Belsen it nevertheless provided an indication of the extreme suffering endured at the hands of the Nazis, be it through direct persecution or wilful neglect. Richard Dimbleby and Glyn Hughes recount the scenes of degradation and depravation that confronted them. The latter's account is more graphic in its detail and is accompanied by similarly graphic archive footage. However, the programme mitigates the suffering depicted in these eye-witness accounts and the accompanying

atrocity film footage, as it does the destructive essence of the Holocaust more generally. The closing comments and final frame are shot through with a redemptive rhetoric. Richard Dimbleby asserts that the survivors of Belsen in the Sue Ryder home act not only as 'examples of the depths' but also of the 'heights of human behaviour'. This redemptive tone is echoed in his reading of a prayer written by a woman prisoner on a scrap of paper, found in Ravensbrück concentration camp:

> Oh Lord, remember not only the men and women of good will but also those of ill will. But do not only remember all the suffering they have inflicted on us. Remember the fruits we brought [as heard] thanks to this suffering. Our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this. And when they come to judgement, let all the fruits that we have borne be their forgiveness.

Implicit here is the notion that this most barbaric and inhumane massacre of proportions never before witnessed in the history of civilization nevertheless provided an outlet for the expression of the greatest humanity. The programme promotes the view that within the depths of such human depravity, it is possible to find some redemptive comfort. Ultimately, it ends on an uplifting note, restoring the faith in humanity that its account of depravity might challenge.

Whilst the present-day film in the item begins by concealing the Jewish signifiers of the memorial from the viewer, it concludes by showcasing the Christian symbolism of the camp. Providing a measure of visual symmetry, it closes with a frame of the huge French cross erected on the site. The use of this archetypal Christian symbol is juxtaposed with the reading out of the abovementioned prayer. As well as reinforcing the programme's redemptive theme, the reading of this prayer ends the programme by an explicit call to forgive the perpetrators. In a letter to Major General Viscount Monckton of Brenchly, dated 15 April 1965, *Panorama* producer Robert Rowland revealingly expressed his hope that 'the tone we struck in [the item] managed to avoid arousing old enmities as much as possible'. The discourse of forgiveness with which the item concludes can at least in part be explained in the context of cold war politics. [92]

However, the way in which the reading of the prayer is juxtaposed with the image of the cross, which fills the final frame, adds a particularly Christian dimension to

[92] File no. T58/279/1, BBC WAC.

the programme's redemptive tone. The prayer explicitly asks for the perpetrators to be forgiven in spite of the suffering they meted out on their victims, while the image of the cross evokes the Crucifixion, which is fundamental to Christian beliefs. In doing so, it recalls how Jesus died to redeem all sinners. By concluding the programme in this way, a Christian light is retrospectively cast over the whole of this representation of Belsen, and by extension the camp itself.

The Christianizing strategy in 'Belsen After Twenty Years' is problematic not merely because it adopts a redemptive tone in the face of the most serious crimes the world has seen. The history of the entanglement of the Christian tradition with anti-Semitism is long, stretching right back to the inception of Christianity itself. The Crucifixion recalls an event in the Christian Biblical narrative that catalysed antagonistic sentiments towards Jewry. Within Christian ideology Jews have been deemed responsible for the death of Christ, and the notion of divine punishment of Jewry for this ostensible crime of deicide was conceived.[93] Subsequently, Christian ideology became the motivating impetus behind many anti-Semitic measures. These include Christian legislation in the Middle Ages to ensure the political, commercial and social impotence of Jews, which at times led to outbreaks of violence against them and to their ghettoization.[94] In medieval Europe the accusation of Blood Libel, that is the alleged ritual murder of Christian children for their blood to make unleavened bread for Passover; the accusation that world Jewry secretly plotted to overthrow Christendom and gain world domination; and the accusation that Jews conspired to poison the wells of Europe and were ultimately responsible for the Black Death, which wiped out a third to half of Europe's population, combined to produce a lot of bloodshed.[95]

In effect, Christian ideology is invoked to forgive and redeem the perpetrators for having committed crimes against humanity for which it sowed the seeds. The British clergyman, James Parkes, devoted himself to exposing the Christian origins of anti-Semitism. In his publication *Judaism and Christianity*, he maintains that there is a direct

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[93] For example, James Parkes points out that adherents to Judaism 'were under a curse as a result of the crime of deicide.' James Parkes, *Judaism and Christianity* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 12.

[94] Ibid., p. 119 & p. 121.

[95] Ibid., pp. 170-1.

causal link between the Holocaust and the Christian Church. Having traced the Christian origin of anti-Semitic acts throughout the ages, he then asserts that:

> In our own day and within our own civilization, more than six million deliberate murders are the consequences of teaching about Jews for which the Christian Church is ultimately responsible, and of an attitude to Judaism which is not only maintained by all the Christian Churches, but has its ultimate resting place in the teaching of the New Testament.

The Church, he continues:

> must accept the ultimate responsibility for the massacres in Hitler's death-camps which are the result of the attitude they are unwilling to change. And they must accept that they are allies - however reluctantly - of the Fascism which is still alive and still making use of antisemitism.[96]

Equally noteworthy in this context is the fact that the programme showcases the Sue Ryder Home, which had a pronounced Christian character. The decision to focus on such a Home combined with the Christian framing of Belsen in the programme betrays, at best, a lack of awareness; at worst, a lack of sensitivity to the Christian origins of Jewish suffering. Since there is no mention of Jews in the programme it cannot be argued that the Christian framing of Belsen is pursued in a reconciliatory spirit.

Anglicizing Belsen

The dual strategies of dejudaizing Belsen in order to depict it in more universal terms and Christianizing the camp stem from a wider and more overarching drive within the item to focus uniquely upon British involvement in the liberation. In line with this strategy, the Christian framing reflects the broad religious character of British culture. The Christian Church was significant in contributing to conceptions of British identity, and this is evident at many levels of society. The Crown, the State, education and the media were all conduits for the expression, perpetuation and reinforcing of the Christian tradition and, to some extent, remain so to this day. As the national broadcaster the BBC has endeavoured to appeal to the broadly Christian character of Britain through its religious programming both on radio and television. It has been doing so since at least as early as 1928. This was the year that BBC radio first broadcast the *Daily Service,* which

[96] Ibid., p. 167.

continues to the present, bringing Christian worship and music to its listeners. BBC television first broadcast church worship on Christmas day in 1949. Its long running programme, *Songs of Praise,* broadcast on Sundays, began in 1961.

The recollection of certain memories by Richard Dimbleby and Glyn Hughes, and selection of archival film footage to lend images to these memories as well as the way in which they are configured are also instructive in this context. The material from Richard Dimbleby's original despatch and illustrative archival film footage that open the *Panorama* item on Belsen combine to emphasize the horror of the camp. Richard Dimbleby describes the thousands of wandering waif-like figures and the masses of expired bodies strewn about the camp. The more graphic accompanying footage includes piles of corpses, bodies strewn about the camp as well as the mass burial pits. After expressing his wish that all those 'whose duty it is to direct the war, from Britain and America could have [gone with him] through the barbed wire' to witness what he had and after depicting some of the scenes that confronted him, he concludes with a description of how a girl in an advanced state of starvation and emaciation stretched out 'her stick of an arm and [gasped]...'English - English - medicine - medicine'.' The way in which the extract concludes has a dual function. In combination with the images of mass death and illness it recalls the colossal relief operation that was undertaken by the British. It also anticipates the British focus of what follows in the main part of the Belsen item.

Later in the item Glyn Hughes recalls an event which symbolized the transfer of the camp from the Nazis to the British liberators. He recounts how British forces conducted a ceremonial burning of the final hut on 18 May 1945. As part of this ceremony, a portrait of Hitler and an Iron Cross flag were burnt. In their stead a Union Jack flag was raised. This forms the culmination of his entire account of the liberation as he experienced it. The corresponding archival film footage of the ceremony is employed to accompany his description of this ceremonial burning of the last hut and refiguring of national symbols. Tony Kushner has argued that Belsen became 'Britain's camp' from the time of Britain's military and medical involvement in its liberation and that this found expression on the site itself through the refiguring of national symbols at the hut-burning ceremony. He concludes that through this ceremony 'British proprietorship of

the camp was [...] confirmed for all to see.'[97] It could be said that twenty years on in 1965, 'British proprietorship' of Belsen was signalled anew on television for the benefit of younger generations and reiterated for those who had lived through the period and were exposed to the original mediations of the camp liberations in 1945.

There is little inherently questionable about the way the audio clip of Richard Dimbleby's original despatch and Glyn Hughes's account culminate in an emphasis on British involvement and takeover of the camp. After all, Britain was a key player in the vast relief operation at Belsen and as a direct result of the efforts of British men and women thousands of internees were delivered from a slow and agonizing death.[98] However, the fact that the two accounts culminate in such an emphasis in a narrative of the liberation that eschews Belsen's Jews so completely, underscores the programme's drive to foreground British involvement even at the expense of a greater consideration of the camp's victims.

The drive to stress Britain's involvement in the liberation of Belsen is further assisted by the fact that Richard Dimbleby's account represents the perspective of a public figure who was widely perceived as the embodiment of the nation. Whereas Glyn Hughes's account and the accompanying archival film footage of the hut-burning ceremony along with the refiguring of national symbols is a conspicuous way in which British proprietorship of Belsen is expressed in this instalment of *Panorama*, Richard Dimbleby's national iconicity helps to lay claim to Belsen in a far less conspicuous, perhaps subliminal way.

A notable exception: After the Battle

The fact that the programme is at pains to highlight Britain's involvement over and above the plight of Belsen's Jews is further suggested by several extra-textual factors. By 1965 there was little justification for the omission of Jews in any depiction of Belsen, or the Holocaust more generally, which in 1945 could in part be explained by a lack of awareness. The intervening twenty years had seen an increasing, if still incomplete, awareness of the Nazi extermination programme and its implication for European Jewry during the war years amongst the public. As early as 1945 it was made clear at the

[97] Kushner (1997), p. 191.

[98] For a detailed account of the relief operation, see: Reilly (1998), pp. 19-49.

Nuremberg trials that the Nazis' policy was to wipe out the whole of the European Jewish population. Yet the crimes against the Jews did not gain a prominent place in the trial.[99] This was also true of the Belsen trial in the same year.[100] Owing to the Eichmann trial in 1961, however, where the Jewish plight took centre stage, this awareness increased significantly. During the course of 1961 the trial firmly placed European Jewry at the centre of the Nazis' exterminatory policies. Eichmann was indicted for his part in killing six million Jews, and during the news coverage of the trial this figure was repeatedly stated to refer to the estimated number of Jews that perished at the hands of the Nazis. Reference to and details of mass killings and deportations of Jews to concentration and extermination camps, of conditions in the camps and of the treatment of Jews in the Axis territories were made in the charges against him and revealed by survivor testimonies and documentary evidence used against Eichmann during the course of the trial.[101] One of the primary functions of the Eichmann trial was didactic. In the words of the contemporary Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion: 'We want to establish before the nations of the world how millions of people, because they happened to be Jews, and one million babies, because they happened to be Jewish babies, were murdered by the Nazis.'[102] The trial elicited a great deal of interest which was reflected in television programming as well as the national press.

On the site of Belsen itself, long before the Eichmann trial, the predominance of Jewish suffering had been articulated. As early as April 1946 the Jewish memorial was erected on the site with a prominent Star of David. The epitaph on the memorial made direct reference to Jewish victims, stating that 'Israel and the world shall remember thirty thousand Jews exterminated in the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen at the hands of the murderous Nazis. Earth conceal not the blood shed on thee!'. This increased awareness of and willingness to confront the particular plight of European Jewry was reflected within the wider television landscape during the early to mid sixties, but not in 'Belsen After Twenty Years'.

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[99] Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (London, Penguin Books Ltd., 1987), p. 201 & p. 4.

[100] Kushner (1994), p. 226.

[101] For details of the fifteen charges made against Eichmann, see: The *Times*, 10 April 1961: for details relating to persecution and atrocities see: *ITN News* transcripts of the trial from 11 April to 15 August 1961, www.itnarchive.com.

[102] Quoted in: Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Penguin, London, 1964), p. 9.

Programmes referred explicitly to the persecution of the Jews. In 1958 an instalment of *Panorama* featured an interview with Joel Brand, who discussed his book *Advocate for the Dead*, which detailed the proposed deal to exchange a million Jews for 10,000 lorries from the Allies. The ATV *Eichmann* documentary broadcast in 1961 and other programmes related to the trial have already been mentioned in the introduction to this thesis. It is also worth highlighting that the ATV documentary was a major initiative, judging from the *TV Times's* endeavour to draw in viewers. The television guide devoted its entire front page to the documentary, included a double-page spread about its protagonist by Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal, along with a brief account of the narrator's credentials, and featured a picture of the narrator in the day's schedule.[103] In 1963 the *Tonight* programme marked the twentieth anniversary of the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto by focusing on the Nazi attempt to exterminate the Warsaw Jews. In the following year another instalment of the news programme provided an account of Oskar Schindler, who saved many Jews from concentration camps.[104] Only a matter of months after 'Belsen After Twenty Years', the BBC produced and broadcast the hour-long documentary *Warsaw Ghetto,* which clearly and consistently states the Jewish specificity of the ghetto. In the same year the BBC produced and broadcast *The Joel Brand Story*. This was a dramatization of the abovementioned attempt to barter one million Jews for 10,000 lorries from the Allies, which was directed by the highly regarded television director, Rudolph Cartier.[105] The lack of references to the Jewish presence at Belsen in the item cannot be attributed to a lack of awareness or knowledge.

Richard Dimbleby's earlier treatment of Belsen in *After the Battle* is another example of a Holocaust-related programme which explicitly mentions Jews. More significant, however, is the fact that it does so in the context of a depiction of Belsen. As such, it runs counter to a tradition of dejudaization that began with the earliest treatments of Belsen in the press reports and the aforementioned BBC broadcasts and news bulletins in 1945. Donald Bloxham has pointed out that in September of the same year testimony of Jewish survivors at the Belsen war crimes trial was sidelined and that of the

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[103] 'Eichmann: Book-keeper of death', Simon Wiesenthal, and 'Why?' asks John Freeman, in *TV Times,* 19-25 February 1961, pp. 6-7. For the day's schedule see: pp. 32-3.

[104] *Panorama,* tx. 21 April 1958, BBC; *Tonight*, tx. 16 April 1963 and *Tonight*, tx. 15 December 1964, BBC 1.

[105] *Play of the Month:* 'The Joel Brand Story', tx. 14 December 1965, BBC 1.

British liberators and minority British internees predominated. He explains that the prosecution summoned British Army personnel as their first witnesses and that the first survivor of Belsen to take the stand was British. He also points out that British witnesses were given priority over their Jewish counterparts despite the fact that these latter had more harrowing testimonies to share. The Jewish witnesses were called upon last, by which time the interest of the press had already begun to wane. Consequently, the predominance of British testimonies was further accentuated in the overall press coverage of the trial.[106]

Belsen is also dejudaized in the 1947 British feature film *Frieda*, directed by Basil Dearden. This film has as one of its principal protagonists a British soldier who survived Belsen. His status as a survivor is used to dramatic effect in a film that failed to mention the fact that most of his fellow inmates were Jewish. Tony Kushner has identified these treatments as evidence of a process which began with the earliest mediations of the camp's liberation in 1945. The effects of this process were to define and cast the ongoing memory of Belsen as British.[107] The aforementioned BBC radio broadcasts and news bulletins relating to Belsen in 1945 add to the evidence which suggests that such a process existed; the Belsen item in *Panorama* shows that twenty years on this process was still at work. Indeed, the recirculation of this item in *Richard Dimbleby at Belsen* without any qualification by Jonathan Dimbleby shows that fifty years later this process was not questioned. Common to all these treatments of Belsen is an emphasis on Britain's involvement and a concomitant writing out of the Jewish presence in the camp. *After the Battle*, however, does more than simply break with this tradition. Its inversion of this formula makes it the antithesis of this tradition: it unequivocally reinscribes Jews as the principal victims at Belsen whilst simultaneously effacing Britain's involvement in the camp's liberation.

Like 'Belsen After Twenty Years', the Belsen item in *After the Battle* opens with an audio clip from Richard Dimbleby's original despatch. It is, however, much briefer, with a different focus. The harrowing scenes that were encountered are represented neither verbally nor visually. Only his introduction of the 'unadorned facts' along with the wish, as expressed in 'Belsen After Twenty Years', that the British and American

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[106] Donald Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001), p. 99.

[107] Kushner (1997), p. 190.

directors of the War could have witnessed the atrocities are featured. These 'unadorned facts' include his breakdown of how many inmates were found in the camp, ill or dying, and how many had been killed or left to die in the few months prior to the liberation. The finer details in respect of the various diseases from which the inmates were suffering and the lack of food are not included, nor are his references to the national provenance of the internees and the fact that thousands of them were Jews. The audio clip is thus similarly dejudaized to that featured in *Panorama.* Nonetheless, in *After the Battle* this strategy does not persist beyond the audio clip featured in this item.

As a counterpoint to 'Belsen After Twenty Years', it is remarkably explicit about the camp's overwhelming Jewish majority, and the manner in which it is expressed is even more striking. Again like 'Belsen After Twenty Years', *After the Battle* employs the Jewish memorial as a visual focal point and a base from which Richard Dimbleby can deliver his commentary. In contrast to the way in which it is featured in *Panorama,* however, it is here captured for viewers to see in its entirety, with all its Jewish signifiers - the Star of David and the epitaph that specifically refers to the Jewish dead - conspicuously displayed. What is more, in his commentary he underscores the specific function of the memorial; that is, to commemorate the 'thirty thousand Jews who were exterminated' at Belsen. This comparative analysis throws into even greater relief the almost total lack of references to Jews or Jewish signifiers in the Belsen item featured in *Panorama.*

How can the existence of such antithetical treatments by the same person be explained? The explanation lies in the different ways the camps are contextualized in the respective items, and the wider contemporary atmosphere in which they were each produced. In *After the Battle,* Richard Dimbleby recalls the Allied bombing of Cologne and invasion of Germany from the West, employing audio clips from various war correspondents' despatches, but mainly from his own. These elements are juxtaposed with his accounts of the progress of certain German cities under post-war reconstruction with accompanying interviews by German nationals to show how the Nazi past is confronted. The emphasis is thus more on the German experience of the wartime destruction and post-war reconstruction of Germany than the British experience there. In this vein, Richard Dimbleby's visit to Belsen in *After the Battle* is followed by a visit to the nearby village of Bergen. As he stands outside a church, the congregation disperses after a service, and he explains how the villagers are unwilling to confront what took

place fourteen years earlier in the concentration camp. Nowhere is it mentioned that British forces liberated Belsen. Indeed, no mention of Britain's involvement is made at all. Save the implicit recalling of the liberation of the camp by the British that Richard Dimbleby's appearance might engender, the British experience is rendered wholly inconspicuous and insignificant in this context.

The *Panorama* item was broadcast in a year which marked the twentieth anniversary of VE Day, so Britain's part in the War was being commemorated in society at large. The fact that 'Belsen After Twenty Years' was broadcast in the context of a commemorative year goes some way towards explaining its sole focus on the efforts and memories of the British. As part of this commemorative context, Belsen became an integral part of Britain's war memory.[108] *After the Battle* appeared in an atmosphere of resurgent anti-Semitism and neo-Nazi agitation from right-wing extremist groups, which began in 1958 and continued until 1961 in Britain and various other parts of the world, notably Germany and the United States.[109] According to Tony Kushner, this 'created an awareness in Britain that a younger generation had grown up which was unaware of what had occurred during the war'.[110] *After the Battle* appeared in the early stages of this atmosphere of resurgent anti-Semitism and growing awareness of the lacuna in the younger generation's knowledge of the Jewish catastrophe. It reminded viewers of where such bigotry had led in the not so distant past. The treatment of the camp in this programme stands out as an anomaly among representations of Belsen, in that it did not focus upon the British experience of the liberation at the expense of Jewish suffering. Its

[108] The theme of Britain's war memory is central to the discussion in chapter three.

[109] Various related incidents and responses to these incidents elicited a great deal of interest in the media. For a contemporary account of some of the more dramatic incidents and responses to them, see the following articles in the national press in 1960: The *Times*, January 4, p.10; *News Chronicle,* 18 January, p.1; The *Times*, 13 January, p.10. Concern over these manifestations of anti-Semitism generated related television current affairs and news programmes by both of Britain's television broadcasters in the same year. As well as covering the swastika incidents and the upsurge of neo-Nazi activity in its news programmes *Late Night Final*, tx. 6 January, BBC and *Tonight*, tx. 7 January, BBC, the BBC examined British attitudes towards Jews in an instalment of *Panorama,* tx. 11 January, BBC. Similarly, Associated Television (ATV) broadcast *Searchlight on Nazism over there - and over here*, tx. 18 January, which focused on contemporary anti-Semitic incidents in German as well as in British society. Some of these linked the incidents to the specifically Jewish experience during the war. Other programmes included: *Brain's Trust*, which featured a discussion of whether anti-Semitism is endemic to the German character in response to an anti-Jewish demonstration in Germany, tx. 1 January 1959, BBC and *Panorama*, on the rising tide of anti-Semitism in Germany, tx. 2 January 1959, BBC. Another instalment of *Brain's Trust* endeavoured to find a historical explanation for the persistence of anti-Semitism in various parts of the world, tx. 7 January 1960, BBC.

[110] Kushner (1994), p. 250.

sole focus on Jewish suffering shows that the two experiences could not be reconciled within a single narrative of the liberation of Belsen.

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As an icon of British broadcasting who repeatedly returned to the subject of the liberation of Belsen, and whose treatments of this event have been circulated and recirculated within the public sphere via such media conduits as radio, commercial audio recordings, books, the web, but above all television, Richard Dimbleby has made a significant impact on Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust both during his lifetime and posthumously. The periodic recirculation on television since 1959 of extracts from his despatch and a second, but elusive, account of the liberation has ensured the iconic status of these first impressions of the atrocities encountered at Belsen.

In recognition of the original impact of the 1945 broadcast, over the past six decades producers of various media conduits have sought to offer the public a glimpse of the emergent collective memory of 1945. By employing extracts that were not actually broadcast, however, their endeavours have in fact resulted in a reinvention of that memory. This prevailing lack of historicity is the result of confusion over what was actually broadcast. To be sure, the extracts selected by these producers provide an impression of what Richard Dimbleby described that so deeply shocked the British public in 1945. However, my research shows that they do not reflect anything near the true content of that broadcast and that this has resulted in a distorted view of the way in which Belsen was mediated to the British public in 1945.

Historical academic discourses surrounding the *War Report* item have pointed to its absence of references to Jews. However, it remains unrecognized that Richard Dimbleby saw beyond the chaos and horror of the first days of the liberation to glean detailed knowledge of the composition of the camp, including the presence of thousands of Jews, which he stated in his original despatch. The absence of references to Jews in the *War Report* item can, beyond any reasonable doubt, be imputed to the BBC. A wilful omission on the part of the BBC is strongly indicated by the absence of references to Jews in the Corporation's coverage of the liberation of Belsen in its news bulletins as

well as the fact that it vetoed the publication of any material from Patrick Gordon Walker's diary, in which Jews emerged as the prime victim. With the exception of *The 1940s House* publication, none of the aforementioned conduits of Richard Dimbleby's original coverage of the liberation has included his reference to Jews.

The analysis of 'Belsen After Twenty Years' and *After the Battle* in a comparative frame reveals a stark contrast in their respective treatments of the presence of Jews at Belsen. By obscuring the Jewish presence in order not to detract from the centrality of Britain's involvement in the Belsen narrative, the *Panorama* item perpetuated a tradition of mediations and representations of Belsen that began the moment news of the liberation broke; *After the Battle* stands out as an anomaly among other depictions of Belsen in that it reinscribes Jews into the Belsen narrative, depicting them as the prime victim. This latter programme shows that Jews were not universally written out of Belsen. A comparative analysis of different representations of Belsen suggests that this kind of effacement was more likely to occur in the context of a depiction of British involvement. Ultimately, Jewish suffering and British involvement was not reconciled within the same narrative of the liberation of Belsen until much later, during Britain's Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony in 2005.[111]

The treatment of a single and isolated strand of the larger narrative of the Holocaust in *After the Battle* and the *Panorama* item, respectively, is representative of the way in which this event was treated on British television during the first three decades after the liberation. The ATV documentary *Eichmann*, broadcast in 1961, and the BBC documentary *Warsaw Ghetto*, broadcast in 1965, are other examples of this single-strand focus. It was not until 1974 that the disparate strands of the Holocaust coalesced into a single and unified historical narrative on British television. This was in 'Genocide', an episode of the 26-part *World at War* documentary series. Just as Richard Dimbleby's treatments of the Holocaust have had a long and lasting impact on British collective memory of this event, so, too, has 'Genocide'. It is to this contribution that I will now turn.

[111] See the final chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 2

The World at War: 'Genocide': Breaking New Ground

At the 'Holocaust, Genocide and the Moving Image' five-day symposium held at the Imperial War Museum, London, in April 2001, the day devoted to Holocaust documentary in film and television was a composite of clips, lectures and discussions centring on six European productions in chronological order.[1] Some of these productions were selected for the landmark status they had achieved in their respective countries of origin. *The World at War*: 'Genocide' was the first of the three British productions to be showcased. *The World at War* series was premièred on Wednesdays at prime-time on ITV, running from 31st October 1973 until 8th May 1974; 'Genocide' was first televised on 27th March 1974. It was the first attempt on British television to provide a comprehensive view of what later became widely known as the Holocaust.[2] From its first airing on British television right up to the present it has been and remains one of the best-known British television productions that centres on this event.

Like all episodes of *The World at War* series, 'Genocide' is a discrete text which represents a single narrative strand of the War that can stand up to viewing in isolation from the rest of the series. Yet, the status of 'Genocide' as an integral part of a larger documentary series is brought to bear on both its content and impact. The following analysis will therefore take on board the dual identity of 'Genocide' as at once a discrete text and an integral part of T*he World at War* series.

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[1] *Nuit et brouillard / Night and Fog,* dir. Alain Resnais (1955), France; *The World at War* (episode 20: 'Genocide'), series producer Sir Jeremy Isaacs, episode producer Michael Darlow, 1974, UK; *The Nazis: A Warning from History*, producer Laurence Rees, 1997, UK; *Silence* (animation), dir. Orly Yadin, Sylivie Bringas, 1998, UK; *Holokaust* (a major television documentary series that was under production and due for broadcast in Britain by C4 autumn 2001. However, it has not yet been broadcast), France, Germany, UK; Wannseekonferenz / *Wannsee Conference*, dir. Heinz Schirk, 1961, Germany.

[2] Thirty years after the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps the term 'Holocaust' had not gained currency in Britain. Whilst the disparate elements of the Holocaust are combined to form the single historical narrative of this catastrophe, the term is not employed in 'Genocide'. Moreover, the term was rarely used in contemporary discourses surrounding the documentary. Only one instance of its use has come to light during my research and here it is employed generically to refer to incidents of mass barbarism more generally. See: Peter Fiddick, in *The Guardian*, 13 May 1974. In all, I have identified seven press reviews and a published interview with associate producer Jerome Kheul, in Alan Rosenthal, "The World at War': The Making of a Historical Documentary', in *Cineaste*, vol. ix, no. 2, winter 1978-79, pp. 6-25.

The series has received the adulation of television critics and historians alike. When it was first broadcast its audience figures averaged fifteen million. 'Genocide' specifically achieved between eleven and twelve million viewers.[3] Its audience has increased cumulatively over the three decades since its first airing as part of *The World at War*. Shortly after its first airing came to a close, the National Film Theatre in London screened all twenty-six parts as 'an opportunity for those who missed all or some of it on television to catch up' and 'for others to take a second look'.[4] It has been rebroadcast on British terrestrial television five times since its première, from as early as 1976 to as recently as 2001.[5] On the UK History channel it is broadcast on a loop. Today, thirty years after the première, interest in the series continues. It is still commercially available on video-cassette and DVD. Indeed, the thirty-year anniversary was seized upon by Thames Television and Freemantle Home Entertainment to market a special edition of the series on DVD. 'Genocide' is in all likelihood one of the most-viewed British television productions about the Holocaust, whether watched through the medium of broadcast television, the big screen at the NFT, videocassette or DVD.

The fact that *The World at War* was produced by an ITV company surprised many viewers, who wrote in to Thames Television.[6] According to the Associate Producer of the series, Jerome Kuehl, the general assumption held both within and outside the BBC was that the Corporation was the rightful home for such a production.[7] In the first section of this chapter I will argue that, contrary to prevailing assumptions, *The World at War* was entirely within the scope of ITV's broadcasting ethos and, indeed, played a role in consolidating it. I will argue that, firstly, while the quality and seriousness of the production and its generic form as a war-related documentary series might traditionally have been associated with the BBC's output, such characteristics fell increasingly within the scope of ITV at the time. Secondly, I will argue that ITV's

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[3] According to Jeremy Isaacs speaking at the abovementioned symposium.

[4] Jeremy Isaacs, 'The World at War', *NFT Programme*, July-August 1974, p. 47. The series ended in March on television and was screened by the NFT from 29 July to 3 August 1974. The screening of television programmes at the NFT was far from common practice.

[5] ITV rebroadcast the series in 1976, Channel 4 in 1984 and 1987, and BBC 2 in 1995 and 2001. Source: Thames Television, London.

[6] Douglas Johnson, 'TV images of war', in *New Society*, 31 January 1974, pp. 267-8, p. 267.

[7] Rosenthal (1978-79), pp. 6-25, p. 9.

commercial imperatives gave rise to an international emphasis in the series, a conspicuous lack of emphasis on Britain's wartime achievements and even the presence of certain iconoclastic elements.

The significance of 'Genocide' as a confrontation with the Holocaust has not escaped the attention of academics with an interest in this catastrophe.[8] Yet a detailed examination of precisely what makes it significant has not been forthcoming. The remaining two sections will be devoted to elucidating the reasons why this documentary was a landmark event in Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust. The driving impetus behind 'Genocide' was a desire to explain at once the origins, implementation and effects of Nazi genocidal policies; and it was the first programme to do so on British television. In the second section of this chapter, I will examine its qualitative impact on collective memory through an analysis of critical discourses surrounding the documentary in the national press and its innovative elements. In addition to setting a precedent as the first televisual chronicle of the Nazi persecution of Europe's Jewish population, 'Genocide' set a precedent in three other specific ways. Firstly, it was the earliest televisual treatment that sought to explain the origins of the Holocaust; I will show how this documentary's endeavour to appeal to popular audiences was at the expense of a comprehensive account of the origins of this catastrophe. Secondly, 'Genocide' cast Auschwitz as the locus of the 'final solution'; I will argue that this documentary assisted in shifting the focus of attention from Belsen to Auschwitz in Britain's evolving collective memory of the Holocaust. Thirdly, I will show how this episode of *The World at War* provided a unique opportunity for an unprecedented number of survivors to become active narrators of their individual and collective wartime experiences on prime-time British television.

The success of 'Genocide' points to its significant impact on British collective memory of the Holocaust. This success, however, is not necessarily a reflection of high levels of interest in this event within British society. In the third section of this chapter, I will situate 'Genocide' within the wider context of Holocaust memory in Britain. I will argue that this production put television at the vanguard of Holocaust memory in the 1970s, as engagement with this catastrophe in other spheres of cultural, social or political life in Britain was at a very low level. Furthermore, embedded as it is in a narrative of the Second World War, 'Genocide' is also the earliest attempt to

[8] For example, see: Kushner (1994), p. 256; Cesarani (1996), p. 628; and Zelizer (1998), p. 172.

contextualize the Nazi genocide as part of the War in British culture. I will argue that the success of this account of the pre-war and wartime plight of European Jewry is largely the result of this contextualization. With the exception of the liberation of the camps, the Second World War and the Nazi genocide prior to this series tended to be depicted as mutually exclusive events. The chapter will close by revealing the extent to which this contextualization fed into popular mythology relating to Britain's motivations for going to war with the Nazis when it was first broadcast.

ITV and *The World at War*

Entertainment, education and popular appeal

The World at War was born of a desire to represent the most significant events of the Second World War to an international audience. The overall producer of the series, Jeremy Isaacs, called upon the director of the IWM, Dr. Noble Frankland, whom he had appointed as historical adviser to the series, to identify fifteen decisive campaigns that he believed could not be omitted. The remaining eleven subjects of the series were to be chosen by Jeremy Isaacs himself. They would include political, moral and economic themes as well as treatments of the causes and the results of war. According to Jeremy Isaacs, the subject of the Nazi genocide could not be left out of such a comprehensive chronicle of the Second World War, even though it was not a military subject. The series had an international scope, with a depiction of the war effort and sufferings of five principal nations involved in the conflict; they were Germany, Japan, the USSR, the USA and Britain. The experiences of the War were told from the perspective of both victor and vanquished.[9] Each episode of the series was primarily a composite of archival film footage and stills, rarely seen by the public, and testimonies. When *The World at War* was first broadcast on British television screens nationwide, critical discourses were replete with superlatives. The *Times* television critic deemed it to be a 'splendid series'.[10] The respective critics of the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Express* described it as

[9] For an account of the genesis of *The World at War* according to Jeremy Isaacs, see his article 'Voyage of Discovery' in the *Daily Telegraph*, 1 March 1995, p. 21.

[10] The *Times*, 13 December 1973, NFT *The World at War* press jacket.

'monumental'.[11] The critic in the *Evening News* averred that it was an 'excellent series' that was a 'tremendous tour de force of research', which made for 'compulsive viewing'. The *Financial Times* regarded it as the 'definitive version' of the Second World War.[12]

The pedagogic value of the series was seized upon within critical discourses. When it came to a close the *Daily Telegraph* enthused that this 'magnificently well-made series has proved itself to the last, the most genuinely educative survey of the 1939-45 period yet produced on television'.[13] When it was rebroadcast in 1976, the *Evening News* television critic recommended that 'the entire *World at War* series be shown repeatedly at peak times so that emerging generations are reminded of the bestialities mankind is capable of committing'.[14] Two decades after it was first broadcast it was still regarded as a powerful educational resource. Broadcaster and MP Julian Critchley was prompted by its rebroadcast in 1995 to address a letter to Gillian Shephard, the Education Secretary at the time, in the *Independent*.[15] In it he urged her to encourage the use of the series in schools as an introduction to the Second World War. The significance of the series was noted not only by television critics. In an annual appraisal of ITV's output the Independent Broadcasting Authority deemed 1973 to be a 'vintage year for documentary programmes', citing *The World at War* as ITV's 'most ambitious and prestigious documentary undertaking'.[16]

The fact that a series of such a calibre hailed from an ITV company took many viewers by surprise. They were unable to reconcile the documentary series with their perceptions of ITV, believing that it was more in the tradition of the BBC to produce such a series. Within the BBC itself it was believed that if a series about the Second

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[11] *The Daily Telegraph,* 29 November 1973, the *Daily Express,* 9 May 1974; NFT *The World at War* press jacket.

[12] The *Evening News,* 16 May 1974, the *Financial Times,* 31 October 1973; NFT *The World at War* press jacket.

[13] *The Daily Telegraph,* 9 May 1974, NFT *The World at War* press jacket.

[14] The *Evening News,* 17 May 1976, NFT *The World at War* press jacket.

[15] The *Independent,* 30 January 1995, NFT *The World at War* press jacket.

[16] *IBA Annual Report and Accounts,* 1973-74, p. 13. For an explanation of the structure of ITV see p. 79 of this chapter. The ITA became the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) under the Sound Broadcasting Act 1972 with the added responsibility of organizing independent local radio stations.

World War was to be made, it would be by the Corporation.[17] Indeed, as James Chapman observed, the BBC had already produced a number of war-related documentary series.[18] These included *The Lost Peace* (1966) and *Grand Strategy of WWII* (1972) as well as *War in the Air* (1954) and *After the Battle* (1959). The BBC's First World War documentary series *The Great War* (1964), which also comprised twenty-six parts and featured copious amounts of archival footage and interviews, was the natural precursor to *The World at War*. At first sight, these factors would point to the BBC as the more likely producer of the series, yet a closer examination of the television broadcasting landscape and the series' international emphasis shows that it was in keeping with the ethos of ITV. The surprise elicited by the series was the product of a widespread and firmly entrenched conviction that the BBC and ITV represented polar opposites in British television broadcasting. This belief dates back to the inauguration of ITV.

In anticipation of the introduction of ITV there was great controversy. This stemmed from fears that it would mirror commercial television in the United States and lead to a debasement of British culture.[19] One concern was that the overriding objective of a commercial broadcaster was to produce programmes that would deliver viewers into the hands of advertisers to be seduced into buying their products. There were also fears that advertisers would influence the content of programmes.[20] The introduction of commercial television in Britain was opposed by many influential groups, including the Labour Party, peers, vice-chancellors, trade unions, bishops as well as the national press.[21] While some of the concerns associated with advertising were allayed after the inauguration of ITV in 1955, there remained a chasm between the perceived identities of

[17] Rosenthal (1978-79), p. 9.

[18] James Chapman, *'The World at War*: Television, Documentary, History', in Graham Roberts and Philip M. Taylor, eds., *The Historian, Television and Television History* (Luton, Luton University Press, 2001), pp. 127 - 44, p. 130.

[19] Stephen Hearst, 'Broadcasting Regulation in Britain', in Jay G. Blumler, ed., *Television and the Public Interest: Vulnerable Values in West European Broadcasting* (London, Sage, 1994), pp. 61-78, p. 66.

[20] Jeremy Potter, *Independent Television in Britain. Volume Three: Politics and Control, 1968-80* (London, Macmillan, 1989), p. 193.

[21] James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power and Responsibility: The Press and Broadcasting in Britain* (London, Routledge, 1991, 4th edn.), p. 189.

ITV and the BBC. This is notwithstanding the constitutional parallels between the two rival broadcasting companies.

ITV was a two-tiered organization made up of the Independent Television Authority (ITA) and the private contractors that provided the programmes. The ITA was established by the Television Act of 1954 to construct and operate transmitters and to contract out regional broadcasting franchises to programme companies. The terms of the Act obliged the ITA to ensure that the companies provided public service programming in the manner of the BBC. They were required to inform, educate and entertain through the provision of a balanced programming schedule.[22] According to George Wedell, the secretary of the ITA from 1961 to 1964, the similarities between the documents that governed the respective broadcasters suggested that there was an 'essentially unitary character [to] the broadcasting system of the United Kingdom'.[23]

It was left to various cultural and political players to determine what kind of programming was to be regarded as informative, educational or entertaining. In practice ITV was widely thought to be failing in its responsibility to educate and to inform. ITV's programming up to 1964 has been described as being dominated by genres such as quiz game shows, variety spectaculars, American film series and soap operas. At the same time, ITV was seen to be winning the ratings war with the BBC. By as early as 1957, out of 539 programmes that were listed in a Television Audience Measurement (TAM) top ten rating, all but three were from ITV. In politics, the press, academia and the arts there were anxieties concerning ITV's perceived failure to adhere to a public service ethos and its programming was seen as a threat to cultural standards.[24] In the words of Andrew Crisell, 'commercial television had won the lion's share of the audience, but the BBC retained a moral and cultural superiority'.[25] It was to the consternation of many that a series like *The World at War* came to be produced by a broadcaster whose image,

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[22] For an account of the inauguration and functions of the ITA, see: Burton Paulu, *British Broadcasting in Transition* (London, Macmillan, 1961), pp. 30-56.

[23] E.G. Wedell, *Broadcasting and Public Policy* (1968), p. 51, quoted in Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: Competition 1955-74. Volume V* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 4.

[24] Andrew Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting* (London, Routledge, 2000), p. 93.

[25] Ibid., p. 109.

identity and programming output was widely associated with light entertainment and regarded as incongruous with a public service ethos.

In fact, by the early 1970s ITV felt that its programming policy had changed to such an extent that *The World at War* was perfectly in keeping with its ethos. Indeed, the series itself exemplifies the converging identities of the two broadcasters. Perceptions to the contrary were, however, still so widespread that the preface of the *Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Annual Report and Accounts 1972-3* took issue with the 'largely fictitious image of Independent Television [...] as little more than a trivial round of undemanding entertainment. Those who so freely criticise along these lines betray a deplorable ignorance of what the service contains'.[26] The shift in ITV's policy was precipitated by the findings of the Pilkington Committee in 1962, which was set up in anticipation of ITV's and the BBC's respective reviews in 1964. The views of the nation's cultural opinion makers were vindicated by the report of the Committee. It claimed that ITV had failed to fulfil its public service obligations as stipulated by the Television Act of 1954. The Report recommended that ITV begin anew, with the ITA's responsibilities extended to planning the schedules, for which it would buy its programmes from the contracted television companies, and the sale of advertising time. It also recommended that the third channel be awarded to the BBC.[27]

The subsequent Television Act of 1964 did not institute such radical reforms, at least where power over programming was concerned. Rather than fully empowering the ITA to buy programmes from the companies to fill schedules that it had planned, the Act enabled the Authority to exert stricter control over programme and schedule content than before. Thus it could call upon the companies to produce specified serious programming and prescribe its place in the schedule.[28] Through the Act, however, the Government did award the BBC the third channel, which became BBC 2.

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[26] *IBA Annual Report and Accounts, 1972-3*, p. 9.

[27] Crisell (2000), p. 119.

[28] Ibid., p. 118.

In part, this was a measure of the Government's dissatisfaction with ITV; a second ITV channel was to be withheld until such time the ITA could show that it was able to appeal to minority and specialized tastes.[29] The additional channel granted to the BBC enabled the organization to concentrate on competing more directly with ITV for audience share without compromising its educational and minority programming.[30]

The gradual transformation of ITV continued, and by the mid-1970s it was felt that the broadcaster had radically improved its adherence to a public service ethos. If the Pilkington Report was a turning point for ITV, a large reduction in 1971 in the rates of the levy imposed on advertising revenue further propelled the transformation. The reduction amounted to an extra £10 million for ITV. One of the reasons for this reduction in the levy was to provide ITV with the resources to further improve the quality of its programming. The Authority and the companies promised the Government that they would do so. There was a great incentive to fulfil this promise as the extent to which the quality of programming was seen to improve had a bearing on whether the Government would review the way in which the levy was calculated. Since its introduction by the Television Act in 1964 it had been calculated as a percentage of advertising revenue. It was in the interest of ITV to persuade the Government that standards could be improved further were the levy assessed on profits instead.[31]

The World at War was conceived of in the wake of a change from a levy on revenue to a levy on profits in February 1971, making use of the attendant financial windfall.[32] Owing to the changes in ITV's programming during the early part of the decade, the broadcaster's output began to receive an increasing amount of attention from television critics in the national press.[33] *The World at War* is a case in point; almost every episode was reviewed in the press, with 'Genocide' garnering the lion's share of attention.

As ITV's output became more respectable to the cultural elite, the BBC's output also changed in an endeavour to win back the audiences it had lost to its rival during the

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[29] Potter (1989), p. 3.

[30] For an account of the transformation of ITV's programming see: Crisell (2000), p. 116.

[31] Ibid., p. 27-8.

[32] Isaacs (1995), p. 21.

[33] *IBA Annual Report and Accounts: 1973-74,* p. 12.

1950s. The game shows, soap operas and American imports that had peppered the schedules of ITV came to be found in equal measure in the schedules of the BBC. In the words of Andrew Crisell, for 'ITV [...] convergence meant moving 'up-market' - becoming less competitive more duopolistic: for the BBC it meant going 'down-market' - becoming more competitive and less duopolistic.'[34] Moreover, the convergence of the broadcasters was also manifest at the level of their respective personnel. A two-way flow of personnel between them engendered cross-fertilization. According to the official history of independent television:

> a steady trickle of senior BBC staff flowed into ITV bringing BBC attitudes and aspirations with them, while some ITV notables (Ian Trethowan, a future BBC Director-General, among them) journeyed the other way [...] Lady Plowden, Vice-Chairman of the BBC was appointed Chairman of the IBA (as the ITA became) and brought values traditionally associated with the BBC. [35]

The history goes on to explain that notwithstanding the movement of personnel between the organizations and the fact that both operated within a public service framework, the BBC maintained its self-perception of superiority. This found expression in the expectation within the BBC that it would be the broadcaster to produce a series on the Second World War when the time was right. ITV's production of *The World at War* series helped many to realize that ITV's identity had changed. Official recognition of this change came when the next commission of enquiry into television broadcasting after the Pilkington committee reported: the Annan committee in 1977 judged ITV's output more favourably than the BBC's.[36] By this time, enmity towards ITV became increasingly unfashionable among commentators.[37]

The increasing respectability of ITV among the cultural elite did not mean that *The World at War* was aimed at a minority audience. Rather, the series was conceived to appeal to a certain demographic that was without 'a great deal of education, without high

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[34] Crisell (2000), p. 119.

[35] Potter (1989), p. 3.

[36] Charles Barr, 'Broadcasting and Cinema: 2: Screens within Screens', in Charles Barr, ed., *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London, BFI, 1986), p. 206-24, p. 219.

[37] Potter (1989), p. 4.

incomes, without a profound and abiding interest in the great literary tradition of the Western World', which, in the eyes of the production team, typified the ITV audience. What is more, the production team deemed the BBC's output on this subject to be overly didactic and criticized the Corporation for employing a Latinate diction unsympathetic to the Anglo-Saxon language of ITV's audience.[38] Judging by the viewing figures achieved by *The World at War* series, the producers succeeded in their quest to reach a broad audience. With the production of this series, ITV defied the expectations of critics who still regarded the company as chiefly chasing high audience figures through programmes which were deemed to provide no more than light entertainment. To its competitor, the BBC, it proved that it was able to produce an ambitious documentary series, which was to be received with critical acclaim. It also demonstrated that the ambitions to inform and educate about matters of great seriousness did not have to be at the expense of providing a programme with great popular appeal. In this respect, *The World at War* series was a milestone not just in the development of Holocaust memory in Britain, but also in the history of ITV and, more generally, British television.

Downplaying Britain

The World at War was conceived to appeal not only to a national but also an international audience in line with the commercial imperatives of ITV. While the sale of airtime to advertisers represented the mainstay of ITV's revenue, this income was supplemented by profits yielded from the sale of its programme guide, the *TV Times*, and programme sales abroad.[39] Unlike the income received by the BBC through the licence fee, which is guaranteed as long as the public are satisfied with its services, all of ITV's sources of income were variable. Consequently, there was a greater incentive for ITV to maximise the income from these sources. At twenty-six fifty-minute episodes, the series was a major undertaking and cost Thames Television one million pounds to produce. As a measure of its international appeal, by mid-1975 these costs had almost been recouped through global sales to no fewer than fifty countries.[40]

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[38] Rosenthal (1978-79), pp. 9-10.

[39] Potter (1989), p. 192.

[40] 'Sales pay for 'World at War'', the *Daily Telegraph*, 23 July 1975, from *The World at War* press cuttings filed under Broadcasting Programmes, 5 July 1974 – 17 March 1984 at BBC WAC.

The drive to give the series an international appeal limited the scope for a parochial depiction of the War. Despite being made by a production team that was mainly British and having as one of their main objectives the contrasting and comparing of Britain's war experience with that of other nations, only two episodes centre uniquely and one primarily on Britain's experience. Thus 'Distant War', the second episode of the series, centres on Britain's island-perspective of the overrunning of mainland Europe by the Nazis; 'Alone in Britain', the fourth episode of the series, focuses on the Battle of Britain and the Blitz; and 'Home Fires', the fifteenth episode, depicts the wartime experiences of Britons on the home front as well as including political analysis.

The parochial sensibility of these episodes has a strategic function, ensuring that the series contains some national appeal. More specifically, 'Distant War' suggests a desire to capture the attention of a national audience from very early on in the series as it privileges a nationally specific perspective of the early stages of the War. It depicts Britain's reaction to the declaration of war on Germany, the panic that ensued and the subsequent reprieve, the so-called 'Phoney War', Britain's military success and fiasco in the Battle of the Plate and Norway, respectively, and the replacement of Neville Chamberlain by Winston Churchill. Extending its compass beyond the national, the episode also depicts the Nazi invasion of Poland and Norway, and the fall of Finland to the Russians. However, while life in Britain after war is declared is shown in some detail in this episode, there is total elision when it comes to the specific plight of the Poles under the Nazis. Once the attention of a national audience has been captured by this episode, the rest of the series does little to appeal to nationally specific sentiments. Indeed, rather than consistently emphasizing Britain's wartime achievements, they are often played down or ignored completely. What is more, certain widely held and self-satisfied perceptions of Britain's wartime role are challenged.

These iconoclastic elements are not explicitly inscribed in the narration, but are implicit at a structural level. This is determined by the editorial decisions that govern the selection of archive footage, testimony and the soundtrack, and the way in which these are ordered, juxtaposed and counter-pointed throughout to form the structure of the individual episodes and the series as a whole. Examples of such iconoclastic material include the claim that the Russians could have defeated the Germans single-handedly and the notion that it was not so much the British Royal Air Force (RAF) that won the

Battle of Britain as it was the German Luftwaffe that lost it.[41] In 'Alone in Britain' this latter point is made through the selection of testimony from the Luftwaffe Wing Commander at the time, Adolf Galland. He affirms that the full invasion force was never launched and that, after the defeat of a small deployment of German battleships in the Channel, the Luftwaffe was mobilized to carry out an air offensive. He goes on to highlight a number of shortcomings that prevented the Luftwaffe from carrying this out effectively.[42] His testimony also reveals that the air offensive over England was launched as a decoy to deflect attention away from Hitler's plans to invade Russia. By including a testimony that admits to the incompetence of the German air force and the weakness of resolve to invade Britain, Britain's achievements in defending itself against the Nazis in the Battle of Britain are played down. More specifically, the cherished heroism of the British RAF was called into question, and many viewers voiced their disapproval.[43]

It is not only through editorial decisions within this discrete episode that the weakness of the Germans' resolve to invade Britain is implied. Editorial decisions also determine how the episodes relate to each other across the series as a whole. The meaning of one episode might be affected by that of another, and the order of episodes can facilitate comparison and contrast between the depicted events. 'Alone in Britain' is a case in point. This episode is featured between 'France Falls', which depicts the Nazis' easy victory in France, and 'Barbarossa', which depicts the German operation to invade the Soviet Union. Whilst the juxtaposing of 'Alone in Britain' with 'France Falls' casts Britain in a formidable light, in that it defended itself against invasion, its juxtaposing with 'Barbarossa' then diminishes this achievement. 'Barbarossa' states that three million German troops were mobilized to carry out the operation, begging comparison with the

[41] Rosenthal (1978-9), pp. 14 & 10. At the abovementioned conference, Michael Darlow suggested that by 1971 the Second World War had taken on mythical status. He revealed that the aim of *The World at War* series was in part to demythologize the simplistic conception of Britain's wartime role as having stood alone against the Nazi scourge.

[42] These included a lack of training to engage in an independent war over England and the bombers' limited range owing to the need to return to France for refuelling. This latter shortcoming meant that aircraft could remain over London for up to two hours only.

[43] According to Associate Producer of the series Jerome Kheul, this repudiation filled 'the postbag with opposition mail and [brought] Royal Air Force Benevolent Association secretaries down on our heads'. Ibid., p. 10.

deployment of a mere two hundred thousand to invade Britain as described in 'Alone in Britain'.

A less iconoclastic, but nevertheless non-celebratory tone typifies the depiction of Britain's response to knowledge of the annihilation of European Jewry and involvement in the camp liberations in 'Genocide'. Through the careful placement of selected testimony the documentary suggests the inadequacy of Britain's response.[44] The description of Britain's response by the contemporary Foreign Secretary Lord Avon, Anthony Eden, is inserted between eye-witness accounts and a narrated account of the Warsaw ghetto uprising with illustrative archival film. The first of the eye-witness accounts describes how internees were asphyxiated en masse and is provided by SS Lance Corporal Richard Böch; the second describes how women prisoners were transferred naked in the dead of winter to the locus of annihilation at Auschwitz and is provided by Rudolf Vrba, a Czechoslovak Jewish survivor.[45] Anthony Eden's testimony is featured as a response to survivors' frequently expressed wonder at the absence of any intervention on the part of the outside world. As one survivor featured in 'Genocide' puts it:

> We used to say where is the whole world? Where is the United States? Where is Russia? Do they know what is happening here in the extermination camps at all?

Anthony Eden reveals that there was abundant evidence of the atrocities and he outlines the response of the Allies:

> The evidence was so extensive, one could hardly fail to give it credit. We decided that one of the things we must do was to make a joint statement in each of our capitals at the same time declaring what our information was and what this horror was being perpetrated and also making plain our detestation of it and our determination that those responsible for it should be punished when the war was over. On that we got agreement on [as heard], after some

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[44] Britain's response to the plight of Europe's Jews is a theme that will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

[45] A decade later, Rudolf Vrba set out his thoughts and memories of Auschwitz in Claude Lanzmann's documentary, *Shoah*, in 1984.

> negotiation near the end of 1942 when I made this statement in the House of Commons with, I must say, a dramatic effect far exceeding anything that I'd expected.

He then recounts how the entire House rose to express its outrage and sorrow over the treatment of the Jews and to observe a moment's silence. To underscore the contemporary significance of the cabinet's reaction, the documentary reveals that it received press coverage at the time by featuring a press cutting of *The Daily Mail,* which recounted the incident. Eden then explains that Lloyd George revealed that such a reaction was unprecedented in all his years in Parliament.[46] Whilst on its own his account of the verbal and silent detestation and protestation of the Allies might well suggest that the Allied response was adequate, by juxtaposing it with tales of extermination and Jewish heroic resistance in the Warsaw ghetto its inadequacy is strongly implied.

The absence of any flag waving in 'Genocide' is highly conspicuous. The narration of the liberation of the concentration camps of West Germany in this episode is accompanied by archive footage of Belsen. Much of this comprises what have now become among the most salient and enduring, even iconic, images in Britain's collective memory of the atrocities. They include: a female internee gratefully embracing a soldier's hand; another half-naked scratching herself, her back turned to the camera; a half-naked male internee picking over clothes, all pictured sitting in the compound of the camp; and the most ubiquitous and representative of all images relating to Belsen, of bodies being bulldozed into mass burial pits. These images of Belsen, however, are summoned to bear witness in a symbolic rather than referential way, as testament to the conditions and atrocities that prevailed in concentration camps more generally with no explicit reference to their provenance. If the specificity of Belsen is purged from this depiction, so too is the context within which Britain's role in its liberation could have been highlighted.

[46] The draft of the statement drawn up by the British on 8 December 1942 became the joint Allied Declaration. This was the first official denunciation of Nazi atrocities against the Jews. See: Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (London, Penguin, 1998), p. 153.

In light of the special place that Belsen had within Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust, both Belsen and Britain are rendered conspicuous by dint of their absence.[47] Going against the grain, this treatment of the camp liberations focuses more on the eastern extermination camps, most notably Auschwitz, than the western concentration camps.[48] In line with this emphasis on the east, the Russian forces are cast as the protagonists of the liberation, liberating as they did the extermination camps of Majdanek and Auschwitz. Those who liberated the western concentration camps, by contrast, are anonymously referred to as rescuers.

Closing a Lacuna in the Public's Knowledge

Reacting to 'Genocide'

'Why had we never been told before?' asked a British journalist when 'Genocide' was first broadcast.[49] The 'palpable' shock that he observed among his colleagues the following day was far from atypical. Critical discourses surrounding 'Genocide' universally and emphatically seized upon the documentary's power to shock and horrify. One critic suggested that it was 'probably the most unbearable film ever made'.[50] Other critics described it as being 'on the borderline of the unbearable' or 'the most terrible hour of sustained horror ever shown on British television'. Another judged that it featured 'the most sickening and harrowing footage'.[51] It was also deemed to be 'a shocking yet sensational dissection of shameful history'.[52] Yet the horror did not obscure the pathos of what Europe's Jews were forced to endure and suffer. Some critics found the depiction of their plight so poignant, they were moved to tears. They revealed how

[47] For an account of how Belsen has been remembered in British culture, see: Tony Kushner, 'The Memory of Belsen', in Jo Reilly et al. eds., *Belsen in History and Memory* (London, Frank Cass, 1997), pp. 181-205.

[48] This will be discussed in detail in the subsection below entitled *From Belsen to Auschwitz.*

[49] See: Kushner (1994), p. 256.

[50] Mary Malone, 'Too much of a bad thing', in the *Daily Mirror*, 28 March 1974., NFT press jacket.

[51] Nancy Banks-Smith, 'Genocide' in, *The Guardian*, 28 March 1974; Sean Day-Lewis, 'Witnesses tell of Nazi murder of Jews', in the *Daily Telegraph*, 28 March 1974; Peter Lennor, in the *Sunday Times*, 13 March 1974, NFT press jacket.

[52] Shaun Usher, 'You can even get used to slaughter', the *Daily Mail*, 28 March 1974, NFT press jacket.

they 'tended to burst into tears and not always during the most painful passages', and how they 'sat in front of [their] television set unable to hold back the tears'.[53]

Such emphatically expressed responses to this documentary are at once indicative and symptomatic of a pervasive ignorance surrounding the nature of the Nazi decimation of mainland Europe's Jewish population. This ignorance stemmed from a dearth of similarly direct confrontations with the subject in British culture.[54] If in 1974 'Genocide' was addressing an audience that was largely ignorant of what the Jews endured under the Nazis, how did it attempt to close this lacuna in viewers' knowledge?

The genesis of the Holocaust

'Genocide' explains at once the origins, implementation and effects of Nazi genocidal policies. For the first time on British television, the evolution of the Nazi racial and anti-Semitic ideologies that underpinned the discriminatory policies that set the catastrophe in motion, and their gradual transformation into policies of annihilation, were outlined. As a historical television documentary it succeeded in its attempt to reduce the lacunae in the public's knowledge of this period by providing such an outline. However, this achievement is tempered by its depiction of the Holocaust as little short of an aberration within the continuum of European history. In the spirit of the series' populism, the documentary seeks to demonize the Nazis by barely looking beyond their leading figures for the origins of the Holocaust. Ultimately, 'Genocide's narrow focus on the Nazis in its account of the genesis of the catastrophe implicitly reaffirms the case for having fought the regime. As we shall see later on in this chapter, critics were receptive to what was an implicit justification for the war effort.

The opening scenes of 'Genocide' cast Heinrich Himmler as the originator of the Nazi dream of a superior German race. The narrator delineates how Himmler drew on neo-Darwinism to inform his racial ideas. In this way, the documentary alludes to a theory that preceded Nazism. The expression 'neo-Darwinism', however, remains unexplained, there is no indication of how widespread or influential this theory was prior

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[53] Nancy Banks-Smith, 'Genocide', in *The Guardian*, 28 March 1974; Peter Fiddick, in *The Guardian*, 13 May 1974, NFT press jacket.

[54] See: David Cesarani, 'Great Britain', in David Wyman, ed., *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University, 1996), pp. 599-641.

to Nazism. In fact, 'Genocide' implies that Social Darwinism was devised by Himmler by suggesting that he transposed the Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest from the animal kingdom to the realm of humankind in order to inform Nazi racial ideology and eugenics.

The notion that Social Darwinism can be attributed to Himmler is erroneous. The application of Darwinism to society and its appropriation for theories of race reaches back to the mid-nineteenth century. A belief in the existence of racial hierarchies, which is associated with a lone extremist in 'Genocide', was in fact widespread including among liberal and progressive-minded people during the nineteenth century and beyond.[55] The idea of creating a master race of German people resonated with German society partly because thinking in terms of racial hierarchies was so widespread, but this is not conveyed in the documentary.

Whilst 'Genocide' does highlight the appeal of Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda to 'feelings and beliefs deep-rooted in European Christian culture', this assertion is not developed any further. Thus it does little to undermine the emphasis on the Nazis. As discussed in Chapter One, as early as 1948, James Parkes had argued for the continuity of the Holocaust with the long history of anti-Semitism in his history of the relations between Jews and Christians.[56] In 1961, Raul Hilberg had set out significant continuities in European anti-Jewish policies from the fourth century BCE in his publication *The Destruction of European Jewry*.[57] In the introductory chapter he interprets the Nazi genocide as 'the culmination' of a successive trend which moved from conversion and expulsion to annihilation. He also explains how the attribution of racial characteristics to Jews can be traced back at least to the seventeenth century.[58] It has been said that by the end of the 1960s Raul Hilberg's book was regarded as a 'classic and definitive work on the Holocaust.'[59] The extent to which the Holocaust was continuous with the past as

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[55] See: Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society* (London, MacMillan, 1996), pp. 90-1 & p. 101.
[56] See: James Parkes (1948), p. 167.

[57] Raul Hilberg, 'The Destruction of the European Jews: Precedents', in Omer Bartov, ed., *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath* (London, Routledge, 2000), pp. 21 - 42, p. 25.

[58] Ibid., pp. 36 - 7. The continuities between Nazi ideology and practices and previous forms of racism and anti-Semitism are explored further in subsequent works, for example: George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (London, J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1978).

[59] Kushner (1994), p. 248.

expressed in these works is, however, not reflected in 'Genocide'. According to the simplified explanation in 'Genocide', the Holocaust was a freak phenomenon that bore little relation to past treatments of the Jews. In demonizing the Nazis by suggesting that this catastrophe originated almost entirely from the extremist ideas of a group of zealots, principally Himmler, the Holocaust emerges as an event that is remote from the rest of humanity, and the continued and universal relevance of the Holocaust is not conveyed.

For a greater emphasis on the continuities between the anti-Semitism that underpinned the Nazi genocide and the past, viewers would have had to wait for one of the hour-long documentaries *Shadow on the Cross,* broadcast in 1990 by C4; or 'From the Cross to the Swastika', which was the first instalment of a trilogy entitled *The Longest Hatred* that was produced by Rex Bloomstein and broadcast in 1991 by Thames Television.[60] Both were narrow in their focus, tracing the history of Christian anti-Semitism and asserting that the Holocaust was the culmination of this long history, echoing both James Parkes and Raul Hilberg. *Shadow on the Cross* also pointed out specific parallels between Church edicts and Nazi laws such as expulsions, yellow badges and the burning of Jewish literature.

However, more limited explanations of the origins of the Holocaust were still being circulated on British television twenty-one years after 'Genocide', albeit with less emphasis on the Nazis. These included '1933 - Master Race', a fifty-minute documentary combining original archive film footage and photographs with testimonies, which was an instalment of the BBC's major twenty-six part twentieth century history documentary series entitled *People's Century*; and *Hitler Stole My Ideas,* a one-off C4 documentary, which specifically explores the ideological roots of Nazism.[61]

'1933 - Master Race' opens with a depiction of Hitler's seizure of power in 1933. Setting the scene, it first outlines how the German public was seduced by Hitler's

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[60] *Shadow on the Cross,* tx. 5 June 1990, C4; *The Longest Hatred:* ' From the Cross to the Swastika', 'Enemies of the People', 'Between Moses and Mohammed', tx. 9, 16 & 23 April 1991, ITV, respectively. Rex Bloomstein has produced a number of Holocaust-related documentaries. These include the aforementioned *The Gathering,* a two-part documentary that combined testimony with coverage of a gathering held in Israel in 1981 of four to five thousand survivors, tx. 15 September 1982, BBC 2; *Auschwitz and the Allies,* an investigation into how much the Allies' knew about Nazi concentration camps, tx. 16 September 1982, BBC 2; and *Liberation,* a single documentary, combining liberator testimony with archival footage and a narrated chronicle of the liberation of Nazi camps, tx. 22 January 1995, C4. Viewing copies of these are held at the Wiener Library.

[61] Tx. 8 & 13 (rpt.) November 1995, BBC 1, and 30 April 1995, C4, respectively.

promises of economic regeneration, which would lift them out of the all-pervasive despair of the previous fifteen years. It also highlights the feeling of jubilation that swept over the country as Hitler's promises bore fruit and German national pride was restored. According to this documentary, it was in this context that the German public was beguiled by the notion of a supreme German race and accepted Nazi propaganda that blamed the Jews for Germany's former failings. It provides only a brief and very general reference to the history of anti-Semitism. The narrator explains how in their anti-Semitic propaganda the Nazis 'drew on old hatreds, old jealousies towards the Jews'. The programme then proceeds to illustrate how the Jews were gradually excluded from the mainstream of society and eventually ghettoized, then deported to the east ostensibly for resettlement. It does not look beyond the Nazi period in any significant way to form connections between the Holocaust and forms of racism and anti-Semitism that predated the Third Reich.

Unlike 'Genocide' and 'Master Race', *Hitler Stole My Ideas* is not a chronicle of the Holocaust: its sole focus is the origins of Nazi racial ideology. Nevertheless, it is not without its shortcomings. Whilst this documentary looks beyond Nazi ideology for an explanation of the origins of the Holocaust, it alleges that ultimately they are to be found in the racial theories of Jörg Lanz. According to this documentary, the racial ideas that Hitler delineated in *Mein Kampf* were directly shaped by those propounded by Lanz in his journal *Ostara: Newspaper for Blond People,* which predated Nazism by over twenty years. While *Hitler Stole My Ideas* acknowledged the existence of racial theories that predated Nazism, it did not amount to a serious attempt to unravel the ideological roots of Nazism. Essentially, it merely transferred the origin of Nazi racism from one individual, Hitler, to another, Lanz. What is more, Lanz is deemed by historians to have been a figure on the 'paranoid, occultist' fringe of racial thinking around the turn of the century.[62] Indeed, this documentary seemed at pains to portray him as an otherworldly crank. To this effect, an actor speaking and dressed as Lanz, with blackened eyes wearing a white monk's habit with a symbol resembling a swastika emblazoned on its front, argues that Hitler stole his theories of racial purity. He then outlines those theories and reads extracts from his various writings. Lanz is portrayed as having had a manner

[62] See: Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933 - 1945* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 34.

that bordered on the grotesque. Moreover, the supportive score employed throughout the programme has a pronounced mystical character. The effect of all these elements is to associate the roots of Nazi racism and anti-Semitism with an eccentric individual at the periphery of society.

From Belsen to Auschwitz

The innovative impulse of 'Genocide' was augmented by its challenge to the symbolic status of Belsen in British collective memory of the Holocaust. As explained in the previous chapter, to the extent that there was a British collective memory of what we now know as the Holocaust, the liberation of Belsen loomed large. Notwithstanding the prolonged focus on Auschwitz and some of its horrifying details during the Eichmann trial, Belsen continued to eclipse it as the central memorial trace of the Jewish tragedy.

The impact of Auschwitz on British society was, for many years, far less dramatic than that of Belsen for a number of reasons. One of these is that Auschwitz was liberated by Soviet not British troops and thus resonated less with national interests. To this must be added the fact that when Auschwitz was liberated on 27 January 1945, the Russians made little effort to publicize what they had uncovered until the western concentration camps were liberated.[63] The British public was so shocked by the images and accounts emanating from Belsen that circulated in the public sphere in 1945 that it was difficult for them to see beyond the camps of the west to those of the east, when Auschwitz finally did receive more attention in the press.[64] Whilst at Auschwitz the liberating Soviet forces found evidence of mass murder in the form of gas chambers, crematoria, skeletal remains and relics, only some three thousand internees remained in the camp; this compares with the sixty thousand with which the British were confronted when they entered Belsen. The Nazis had endeavoured to sanitize the camp as far as possible by removing as much immediate evidence of human misery and atrocities as they could and by evacuating internees on death marches to what became reception camps in West Germany, including Belsen.

[63] See: Zelizer (1998), p. 50

[64] Ibid., p. 215.

'Genocide' challenges the primacy of Belsen within collective memory as it reinscribes Auschwitz as the nadir of the 'final solution'.[65] The narrative strands of this documentary converge on Auschwitz. The provenance of the survivors featured in 'Genocide' from such diverse territories as Poland, Hungary, Holland, Italy and Czechoslovakia points up the sheer geographical scale of the deportations to Auschwitz and suggests the camp's centrality as the destination for the pan-European deportations of Jews. As well as emerging as the principal destination for the deportations from occupied territories and transports from ghettos, Auschwitz emerges as the site of the culmination of the Nazis' extermination methods and crimes against humanity. In emphasizing the centrality of Auschwitz within the Nazis' programme of genocide, all other camps are subordinated to anonymity and referred to as camps in the west or camps in the east, with the exception of a fleeting mention of Majdanek. The focus of 'Genocide' is the Nazis' extermination methods in the east.

Each episode of *The World at War* series begins with a preamble that precedes the opening titles, which encapsulates its central concern and typically combines a frame of a single scene with an assertion made by the narrator. The preamble to 'Genocide' is launched with a frame of one of the most emblematic images of the 'final solution', namely the archway that stands at the threshold of Auschwitz. The camera leads the viewer beyond the gates to reveal some of the residual physical traces that remain in the desolate grounds of the extermination camp: the railway lines along which were transported more than a million victims to their death, the once electrified fences enclosing the compounds, and the imposing watch towers. These scenes of Auschwitz have a dual function. They suggest the centrality of the camp within Nazi annihilation policies and anticipate the exposition that follows in the programme. The accompanying allusion by a survivor to the extraordinary nature of the Nazi crimes provides an additional dimension:

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[65] Nearly a decade later the primacy of Auschwitz as the nadir of the 'final solution' was challenged in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah,* which posited Treblinka as its locus. Similarly, in 1997 Laurence Rees chose to focus on Treblinka in his landmark documentary series *The Nazis: A Warning from History:* 'The Road to Treblinka', tx. 8 October 1997, BBC 2. Echoing Claude Lanzmann, he revealed at the aforementioned 'Genocide and the Moving Image' conference that he believed Treblinka to be the symbol of the Holocaust and not Auschwitz as mostly Jews were exterminated at the former.

> What we went through will be difficult to understand even for our contemporaries, and much more difficult for the generations that have already no personal experience from those days.

He underlines the challenge associated with the documentary's attempt to convey the unimaginable horrors of the Nazi genocide.

'Genocide' helped to pave the way for subsequent depictions of the Holocaust which centred on Auschwitz. These included Thames Television's *The Final Solution,* a three hour documentary that employed additional Holocaust-related material originally sourced for 'Genocide', which was televised in 1975; and British survivor Kitty Hart's documentary-length testimony, *Return to Auschwitz,* broadcast in 1979, in which she recounts her camp experience. Yet, as recently as 1991, there was still evidence to suggest that Belsen was highly significant to the way British society chose to remember the Holocaust. In 1991, 'Belsen in 1945' was the first permanent Holocaust-related exhibition to be opened in Britain, at the IWM. It centred on the British relief effort during the liberation of Belsen.[66]

Whilst the influence of 'Genocide' in catalysing a shift from Belsen to Auschwitz in Britain's collective memory cannot be disputed, the watershed came with the phenomenally successful theatrical release of *Schindler's List* in 1994 in Britain. By the following year, there were clear indicators that the shift in Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust was complete. The BBC used the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz as a springboard to launch its commemorative television programming on BBC 2, entitled 'Remember Season', marking fifty years since the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, which will be examined in the following chapter. This initiative culminated in the re-broadcasting of 'Genocide' on the date Auschwitz was liberated. Survivors of the camp residing in Britain, such as, Trude Levi and Anita Lasker Wallfisch, were sought by the media for their testimonies. Reflecting the increased interest in the camp, Anita Wallfisch remarked that it was the first time that anyone had asked her about her experiences. Trude Levi revealed that she was contacted by the media no fewer than twenty times in the space of a couple of days.[67] This shift was to

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[66] Kushner (1994), p. 264.

[67] See: Kushner (1997), pp. 6-7 and Tony Kushner, 'Fifty Years after the Holocaust and the Second World War: 'Wrong War, Mate", in *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 29, nos. 2 & 3, 1995, pp. 3-13, pp. 3-4.

crystallize in the establishment in 2001 of a national Holocaust Memory Day on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

Survivor testimony

'Genocide' enabled an unprecedented number of Holocaust survivors to bear witness to their torments on prime-time British television, augmenting yet further the innovative character of this documentary. At the inception of *The World at War,* the production team wished to differentiate the series from previous television documentary series about the Second World War. One of the ways in which it set about achieving this was by avoiding the use of 'mandarin experts' and 'pundits' when 'the experience of ordinary people could be used to tell the story'.[68] According to Jeremy Isaacs, the approach adopted in the series was also driven by a compulsion to show academic historians that history could be successfully treated on television through the use of visual material combined with the oral testimony of 'ordinary people'.[69] Holocaust historians had shown little faith in the credibility of the oral testimony of Jewish survivors in presenting the past objectively. Hence such major works on the catastrophe as Gerald Reitlinger's *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* and Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews,* first published in 1953 and 1961, respectively, largely avoided drawing on them. An approach which made extensive use of survivor testimony was only adopted as late as 1986, when Martin Gilbert drew on the voice of the survivor to structure his historical work *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy.*[70] It remains, however, that the former approach helped survivors to

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[68] Jerome Kuehl in Rosenthal (1978-9), p. 9. The expression 'ordinary people' to describe Holocaust survivors is unfortunate in view of the extraordinary nature of the abyss into which they were thrust and the torments they had to endure; the extraordinary circumstances that enabled them to emerge from that abyss, some barely alive; and the extraordinary resilience which has enabled them to live and cope with their traumatic past. Many, of course, chose not to live on after the offence. See: Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (London, Abacus, 1992), pp. 52-67.

[69] As revealed by Jeremy Isaacs at the abovementioned symposium.

[70] Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Vallentine Mitchell, London, 1953), Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Quadrangle Books, Chicago, Ill., 1961), and Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (William Collins, Glasgow, 1986). For a brief account of the presence of the voice of the survivor in historical works on the Holocaust, see: Kushner (1994), pp. 2-5.

gain credibility since their accounts can be verified with recourse to the existing hard historical evidence and data provided by archival documents.[71]

In 'Genocide' specifically, according to producer Michael Darlow, the desire to counter historians' lack of faith in the oral testimony of 'ordinary people' was combined with the moral imperative of countering Holocaust denial.[72] This is ironic because such a moral imperative underpinned many historians' reluctance to use survivor testimony and to instead privilege that of the perpetrator in their historical works: they were acutely aware of the potential incredulity of their readership because of the appearance of Holocaust revisionist publications.[73]

'Genocide' eschews the traditional top-down perpetrator- and liberator-centred approach that typified earlier historical confrontations with the Holocaust. It offered a unique opportunity for Jewish survivors to recount their personal experiences to the mainstream television-viewing public, allowing them to assume the active role of narrator of their own history. It contrasts starkly, for example, with 'Belsen after Twenty Years', a liberator-centred account in which the voice of the victim was muted. Somewhat different, however, was the approach adopted in the first major Holocaust-related documentary by the BBC, *Warsaw Ghetto* in 1965. Whilst this fifty-minute history of the ghetto does not include any testimonies, survivor Alexander Burnfes narrates the Jewish plight. His narration is accompanied by archival film and photographic images. He also acted as an adviser. Nevertheless, the history that Alexander Burnfes narrates is not a personal and individual survivor-centred account, but an impersonal collective history of death, survival and resistance in the Warsaw ghetto.[74]

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[71] See: Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (London, Penguin Books, 1994), pp. 53-4.

[72] He also revealed that it was this moral imperative that led to the making of *Auschwitz: The Final Solution*.

[73] Kushner (1994), p. 3. Such publications appeared as early as 1947. For a survey of the earliest Holocaust denial publications, see: Lipstadt (1994), pp. 51-64.

[74] It should be noted here that a shortcoming of this documentary was its uncritical and sole reliance upon Nazi film footage. This footage was made by the Nazis with the express intention of casting Jews in an unfavourable light, which was part of a wider propaganda programme. For a critique of the use of Nazi film footage in *Warsaw Ghetto*, see: Dawidowicz (1978).

The authority vested in the survivor in 'Genocide' to convey the horrors of the decimation of the Jews had a precedent on television only in the news coverage of the Eichmann trial nearly fifteen years earlier. Unlike at the Nuremberg trials, the focus of the trial was less on the perpetrators than on the victims; and by allowing one survivor after another to take the stand to bear witness in a legal context, the Holocaust survivor was imbued with unprecedented authority.[75] *ITN News* coverage of the trial on ITV devoted some airtime to survivor testimony. Survivors' accounts of how their families perished, how they survived, and of the horrors they witnessed were similar to those featured in 'Genocide'. Indeed, Rivka Yosselevski, a Polish Jewish woman, who recounts how her family were killed by the Einsatzgruppen and how she survived, also appeared as a witness at the trial, and her testimony was reported on ITV.[76] Whilst personal and survivor-centred accounts were present in the news coverage of the trial, the voices of the survivors were audible neither directly nor through the vehicle of an interpreter but rather mediated through a combination of reported speech and quotations delivered by television news journalists. It is unlikely that the BBC rendered the voices of the survivors any more audible for the British television viewing public in its news coverage given that the extracts used were provided by ITV, which had secured the rights to cover the trial.[77] By contrast, in 'Genocide' the voice of the survivor was clearly audible directly or with the aid of a voice-over.

By both contemporary and earlier standards within the televisual landscape, survivor testimony in 'Genocide' was nothing short of abundant; by today's standards, however, there is nothing remarkable about it. Survivors have become ubiquitous, representing the ultimate voice of authority in Holocaust documentaries since 'Genocide'. Undoubtedly, 'Genocide' played a significant role in bringing this about, propelling survivors onto prime-time television, addressing eleven to twelve million viewers. But other factors also played a role. Awareness that survivors were aging and their numbers diminishing meant that making and having a record became ever more

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[75] Tim Cole, *Images of the Holocaust: The Myth of the* 'Shoah Business' (London, Duckworth, 1999), pp. 9-10.

[76] Rivka Yosselevski provided her testimony on 8 May 1961, the 18th day of the trial, which ran for 73 days in all. It was reported on the same day by *ITN News*. See: *ITN News* transcripts from 11 April to 15 August 1961, www.itnarchive.com

[77] See: File no. R22/404/1, BBC WAC.

compelling; the passage of some thirty years of post-war life cushioned them sufficiently to enable them to confront their horrific past; and the testimony from ordinary people was increasingly valued.

Whole documentaries have been devoted to survivors, and there are instances of individual survivors commanding the space of entire programmes. One of the earliest examples of these latter is the aforementioned *Return to Auschwitz*. A later example is *Chasing Shadows* broadcast in 1991, a documentary in which Hugo Gryn returns to his home town, Berehovo in Hungary, to examine the effects of the Nazis' policies of annihilation on the town's once rich Jewish life, and recounts his and his family's experience of persecution. *Primo Levi: The Memory of the Offence* was a documentary with a slightly different approach, in that it paid tribute to the eponymous Auschwitz survivor through the testimony of survivors who knew him.[78]

'Genocide' features six survivors, each of whom bears witness to the torments they endured at Auschwitz. Avraham Kochavi, a Polish Jew, recounts his deportation and arrival; Rivka Yosilevska, another Polish Jew, describes a mass shooting; Primo Levi, an Italian Jew, recalls his deportation; Rita Boas Koupman, a Dutch Jew, tells of her first impressions on arrival, particularly the overwhelming stench that emanated from the furnace chimneys; Rudolf Vrba, a Czech Jew, also recounts his first impressions on arrival as well as some scenes that he witnessed inside the camp, offering some personal reflections.[79] The most airtime, however, is reserved for the final, and undoubtedly the most harrowing, testimony: Dov Paisikowic, a Hungarian Jew, who was consigned to work in the crematoria and forced to assist victims into the gas chambers, bears witness to the edge of the abyss.

The geographical scale of the deportations of Jews to Auschwitz is conveyed in 'Genocide' through the appearance of survivors from all over Europe. Three of the five

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[78] *Chasing Shadows,* tx. 1 April 1991, C4 and *Primo Levi: The Memory of the Offence*, tx. 11 November 1992, BBC 2.

[79] In terms of delivery, Rudolf Vrba's contribution to 'Genocide' is the most remarkable. His stoicism is frequently punctuated by ironic smiles, belying the horrific experiences that he describes. He was one of the few English-speaking interviewees to appear in *Shoah*. The remarkable way in which this survivor bears witness has also been observed by John Pym, who suggests of his appearance in *Shoah*, 'Of all the witnesses, he [Rudolf Vrba] is the one whose demeanour, whose frank, ironic smile, whose precise, organised speech, would lend support to the theory that some people, given the circumstances, are innate survivors [...] Vrba tells his story with a notable sense of his own detachment from it.' *Sight and Sound*, vol. 54, summer 1985, pp. 187-9, p. 189.

survivors recount their experiences in a foreign language. As an audiovisual medium, television lends itself to the use of foreign-language testimony without entirely compromising its impact. Unlike the blind medium of radio, television is able to capture the emotions that inflect the physiognomies of these survivors as their experiences are relayed through a voice-over. The language barrier nevertheless demands that some compromise be made even on television if the testimony is to be intelligible to viewers with insufficient knowledge of the language spoken. Where a voice-over in English is employed the survivor's own voice is obscured just as it would be on the radio. Whilst in 'Genocide' an attempt is made to convey the emotion that inflects the survivor's voice, this is not always successful. In the case of Dov Paisikowic's testimony, close listening reveals that these inflections are not fully captured and conveyed by the voice-over. Television can circumvent this compromise through the use of subtitles, but this strategy is not without its own shortcomings. If subtitles are more successful in allowing the emotional inflections present in the voice of the survivor to be heard, they divert the viewer's attention away from the survivor's physiognomy, at least while they are being read. What is more, the effort required to read subtitles runs the risk of undermining the popular appeal of any programme.

By appearing on television to provide testimony in this way, survivors expose their physiognomies to the scrutiny of the camera and by extension the gaze of the viewer. The visibly glazed and, at times, bloodshot eyes of many of the survivors in 'Genocide' point to the shedding of tears between sequences. Viewers were not invited to witness these emotionally charged moments as they were edited out; they remained private. It is uncertain whether this editing process was an effect of commercial factors such as restrictions on programme length and the concomitant demands to include as much narrative information as possible at the expense of static emotional displays, or whether it was bound up with ethical concerns such as a desire to respect the privacy of those that offered their testimony to the television viewing public. Whatever the rationale in this instance, later Holocaust documentaries have frequently captured for public view survivors breaking down as they recall their traumatic experiences.

The most noteworthy of these is Claude Lanzmann's 1985 nine-hour documentary *Shoah,* which epitomized such liberalism.[80] Here the voice and the

[80] *Shoah* was first broadcast on British television by C4 in 1987 over two consecutive nights without commercial breaks. This kind of scheduling was remarkable for British television and helped to establish a

physiognomy of the survivor were assigned a key role in conveying the past. To Claude Lanzmann it was crucial to capture the emotions of the survivors on film, whether expressed verbally or visually, to assist in his endeavour to show the 'presentness' of the Holocaust because, in his view,

> The worst crime, at once moral and artistic, which may be committed in creating a work of art devoted to the Holocaust, is to consider it as *past*. [...] A film devoted to the Holocaust can only be [...] an investigation into the presentness of the Holocaust, an investigation into a past whose wounds are so fresh and so keenly inscribed in consciousness that they are present in a haunting timelessness.[81]

Certainly, constraints on programme length that affected 'Genocide' are not in evidence in *Shoah*. Thus, in this latter film, the camera can linger on the faces of those bearing witness and the soundtrack can savour their silences.

A similarly liberal approach to filming emotionally charged moments in testimonies was adopted in the aforementioned British television production '1933 - Master Race'.[82] In this documentary, Jews and Roma recount their experiences of persecution. Zvi Michaeli, a Lithuanian Jewish survivor, recalls the day, aged sixteen, when he was marched with his family and village community to be shot and thrown into a ditch by the *Einsatzgruppen*.[83] He recounts how everyone was forced to remove their clothes and that when the community rabbi was forced to follow suit he realized to what depths humanity had sunk. As he describes how his younger brother clung to their father's leg and how, when shot, his father fell onto him and implored him 'You will

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unique identity for C4, which began broadcasting in 1984. See: Sylvia Harvey, 'Channel Four and the Redefining of Public Service Broadcasting', in Hilmes (2003), pp. 50-55, p. 54.

[81] Claude Lanzmann, 'From the Holocaust to the *Holocaust*', in *Telos: A Quarterly Journal of Critical Thought*, no. 42, winter 1980, pp. 137-43, p. 143.

[82] It is likely that survivor testimony in this documentary is part of the legacy of *Shoah*. Shoshana Felman asserts that '*Shoah* is the story of the liberation of the testimony through its desacralization [...] What the interviewer above all avoids is an alliance with the silence of the witness, the kind of emphatic and benevolent alliance through which interviewer and interviewee often implicitly concur, and work together, for the mutual comfort of an avoidance of the truth.' 'In an Era of Testimony: Claude Lanzmann's Shoah', in *Yale French Studies*, spring 1991, pp. 39-81, p. 53.

[83] Out of a population of 150,000 Lithuanian Jews in 1939, an estimated 135,000, or 90%, were killed. Landau (1992), p. 316. The *Einsatzgruppen* were mobile killing units of SS commandos who would shoot and toss Jews into ditches. They were employed only in the east. Later on, the *Einsatzgruppen* employed mobile gas vans for greater efficiency.

survive', he begins to sob convulsively. Although such emotional responses are absent in 'Genocide', the survivors' visibly glazed and at times bloodshot eyes nevertheless provide a glimpse of the 'wounds [that] are so fresh and so keenly inscribed in consciousness'.[84]

Belsen is the source of the most graphic and horrific atrocity imagery in 'Genocide'. The source of the most harrowing testimony, however, is Auschwitz. Belsen imagery of bulldozers at work is left to speak for itself, accompanied as it is by a silent soundtrack; where there is a dearth of available imagery, 'Genocide' draws on testimony to convey the horrors of Auschwitz. If none of the survivors are captured breaking down, the camera nevertheless serves to signal key moments in their testimony by providing close-ups of the expressions that colour their face for even closer scrutiny. During Dov Paisikowic's testimony close-ups signal the most horrific details of his descriptions. As he begins to describe the minutiae of his daily duties in the operations of the gas chambers and both the manual and mechanical cremation of bodies, from a medium close-up from chest up the frame gradually dilates to focus attention solely upon his expression.

The demands of an audiovisual medium, however, dictate that illustrative images should accompany the spoken word wherever possible. Dov Paisikowic's account is unrelenting in its graphic and horrific detail, the impact of which is augmented by the fact that it is a first-hand experiential account told by someone who was forced to carry out such duties, and who has had to live with the memories of his involvement as well as with all the other losses he endured. Yet his testimony is punctuated by archival photographic images of the once-operating crematoria and gas installations, internees at work cremating victims in a large pit, and the haunting face of an elderly man. Whilst the intention may have been to simultaneously augment the horror through illustration of the testimony and to provide a glimpse of available pictorial evidence of the atrocities to dispel incredulity, this strategy runs the risk of shifting the focus of attention away from the testimony. Ultimately, it risks mitigating the intensity of the testimony and its power to horrify, as well as militating against viewers imagining the horrors themselves.

'Genocide' enabled these survivors to address the British public through a prime-time television slot. Through this medium, survivors gained admission to the private

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[84] Lanzmann (1980), p. 143.

sphere of the home, which represented the most intimate confrontation, the only confrontation even, that most members of British society would hitherto have had with survivors of the Holocaust. Since proportionately there were so few survivors living in Britain, the chance of knowing or meeting one was remote.[85] This was compounded by the widespread reluctance of survivors to recount their experiences during the early post-war decades. Some felt British society unreceptive to their stories; others, rather than dwelling on their past, preferred to anticipate a brighter future, one in which they could rebuild their lives; and others still expended all their energy on surviving economically. Whether their silence could be imputed to psychological, social or economic factors, many survivors in Britain felt isolated and unable to discuss their past torments.[86] By enabling survivors to bear witness on prime-time television, 'Genocide' sent out a clear message to a once largely uninterested British public: the harrowing testimonies of survivors were worthy of audience, indeed, should be given audience. This documentary helped to pave the way for such survivor-centred documentaries as *Return to Auschwitz* and *Chasing Shadows*, raising the profile of survivors in Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust.

On the other hand, it did nothing to highlight the presence of survivors within British society. It is unclear whether the text captions employed to introduce each survivor, for example, 'Czech Jew', designated their country of origin or their country of residence or both. Whether or not the English-speaking Czech and Dutch Jews were in fact British residents is thus not made clear in 'Genocide'. It can be said, however, that none of them have since been visible in the public sphere to bear witness to and raise awareness of the Holocaust in Britain, as a number of other British survivors have. The apparent absence of British survivors in the documentary means that viewers were not alerted to one way in which the Holocaust has become part of British history. In this respect, *Return to Auschwitz* and *Chasing Shadows* are antidotes to 'Genocide' as they do

[85] There are no definitive figures relating to the number of survivors granted entry into Britain after the War, but the information that exists suggests that they were few. Under pressure from Jewish communities in Britain the Government instituted a scheme in November 1945 which permitted 'distressed relatives' entry into Britain. Of the 5,600 immigrants admitted under this scheme by the end of 1949, no more than 2,000 were Jewish. Moreover, whilst 7,000 foreign spouses of British citizens were granted admission, very few of these were Jewish. According to David Cesarani, 'By the end of 1948 [...] of the eighty-five thousand DPs [displaced persons] that had entered Britain only an insignificant fraction were Jewish.' Cesarani (1996), pp. 615-6.

[86] Survivors Kitty Hart and Gena Turgil have testified to this effect. See below, p. 109.

showcase British survivors and thus assist in the process of inscribing the Holocaust into British history.

An Anomalous Success

At the vanguard of Holocaust memory

At first sight, the eleven to twelve million viewers commanded by 'Genocide' would suggest that the subject matter was of great interest to the British public. Yet, a consideration of the wider landscape of Holocaust initiatives in Britain suggests that the converse is closer to the truth. At the root of resistance to Holocaust-related initiatives within British society was a perception of the catastrophe as remote from British history. This perception engendered ignorance of the Jewish wartime plight. 'Genocide' emerged on the public scene at a time when very little else was happening that related to the Holocaust.[87] Very few historical works had been published during the first post-war decades. Gerald Reitlinger's *The Final Solution* published in 1953 was a solitary historical work from a British historian. Another work published in Britain in the same year as the Eichmann trial, though not by a British historian, was Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of European Jewry*. By the close of the 1960s both had become classic texts about the Holocaust. British historians, though, tended not to confront the Nazi genocide even in the context of their works on modern German history. This evasion was striking enough for American historian Lucy Dawidowicz to remark that 'English historians of modern Germany [...] astonish us with the minimal attention they give to German anti-Semitism and the destruction of the Jews.'[88] Similarly, the literary world seldom turned its attention to the Holocaust, and the few works that emerged failed to achieve a wide circulation. On the level of education there was very little related to the subject of the Holocaust in schools until the 1980s, with no courses specifically dealing with the Holocaust at higher educational establishments until the late 1980s.

From an international perspective, Britain's absence of a Holocaust memorial was striking. Permanent memorials had already been established in the United States,

[87] The following outline of Holocaust-initiatives in Britain is based on Kushner (1994), pp. 255-278.

[88] Lucy Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1981), pp. 31-2, quoted in ibid., p. 254.

France, Poland, Israel, among other countries, with nothing comparable in Britain at the time. Campaigns to establish such memorials were met with resistance. In 1973, the idea of establishing a memorial in Britain was not welcomed by the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster. Failing to grasp either the national relevance or universal implications of the catastrophe, the former suggested that Germany was the more suitable location to memorialize the millions of Jews who perished under the Nazis. In arguing against such an initiative, the latter unwittingly gave a good reason for a memorial. He argued that British society had not quite grasped the horror and magnitude of the Holocaust. In essence, British society numbered among the last to grasp the significance of these crimes against humanity.

Against this backdrop the achievement of 'Genocide' in reaching an estimated eleven to twelve million viewers represents a milestone in the development of Holocaust memory in Britain, and is emblematic of television's capacity to inform and educate where other initiatives fail. Ultimately, the success of this documentary situated the medium at the vanguard of Holocaust memory in Britain, reaching as it did beyond the readerships of Raul Hilberg, Gerald Reitlinger and the few literary authors who confronted the subject. School children and students of higher education alike were more likely to learn about the Jewish catastrophe from watching *The World at War* than they were from their respective history classes.

Success, seriality and dependence

The barren landscape of Holocaust memory suggests that the success of 'Genocide' cannot be accounted for by high levels of interest in the catastrophe in British society. Its success was partly the result of the wider historical narrative in which it was embedded. *The World at War* appealed to the powerful resonance in British society of the Second World War more generally. The presence of this series within the schedules was well-timed. 1974 has been deemed a year of national disaster in that Britain's world standing was diminishing rapidly and the economic climate was bleak. In this atmosphere *The World at War* could serve as a reminder of Britain's former status as a key player on the world stage alongside its Allies during wartime, notwithstanding the production team's avoidance of nostalgia.[89] In terms of television specifically, the climate of economic

austerity made television viewing one of the principal leisure activities at the time as it was free at the point of consumption. As Jeremy Potter explains, '[t]he more dire the state of the economy, the less other amusements could be afforded and the greater the nation's dependence on the box in its sitting room'.[90]

The success of 'Genocide' was also the result of the time-honoured strategy of the series format, of which it was an integral part. The series format was, and remains, an integral feature of television and can typically take any generic form. It aims to increase the audience share as the series progresses or at least to maintain a constant audience, to prevent viewers from defecting to competing channels or other competitors for the public's leisure time. Had 'Genocide' appeared in the television schedule as a single one-off documentary, it would not have had the same impact. This notion did not escape the attention of one television critic when it was first broadcast:

> If it were put on at the local cinema, we wouldn't have gone. If it were slotted in as a box special somewhere on its own, we'd have ducked it. But, placed in a series that's hooked us, we couldn't turn tail.[91]

'Genocide' was the twentieth episode of the series. This far in, many viewers would already have established their television viewing patterns, routinely tuning in for each instalment of the series on Wednesday evenings. The broadly linear character of the historical narrative leant itself to the series format. Yet this type of routine weekly viewing was further encouraged by the use of a bridging device to link the discrete narrative of each episode. An example of the effective use of this device can be seen in the link that is made between 'France Falls' and 'Alone in Britain', the third and fourth episodes, respectively. After the depiction of France's fall to the Nazis, the narration closes with an audio clip of Winston Churchill announcing that 'the Battle of France was

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[89] In his account of the inception and making of the series, Jeremy Isaacs's affirms that, 'the 50 of us - producers, directors, researchers, film editors - who spent three years making the series were engaged not on a nostalgia trip but on a voyage of discovery. We wanted to find out what happened and tell that'. 'Voyage of discovery,' in The *Daily Telegraph*, 1 March 1995, p. 21.

[90] See: Potter (1989), pp. 6 & 12.

[91] 'Too much of a bad thing', in the *Daily Mirror*, 28th March 1974, *The World at War Bfi* press jacket. Hereafter, all press articles related to this series are from this source unless otherwise stated.

now over; the Battle of Britain was about to begin', thus anticipating the following episode.

Such a bridging device is not employed to link 'Genocide' with its preceding episode, 'Pincers'. Instead, the curiosity of the viewer is aroused more subtly. 'Pincers' concludes by depicting the Allies' attempt to cross the Rhine. The testimony of 30th Corps Commander General Sir Brian Horrocks closes the episode as follows:

> At nine o'clock in the evening, I remember waiting sitting in a command post. Then the news came through that the Black Watch were over the Rhine. Rather historic in a way. They were over the Rhine.

If the placing of this testimony at the end of 'Pincers' was successful in arousing the curiosity of viewers about what made this a historic achievement, and what lay in store for the Allies beyond the Rhine in the heartland of enemy territory, they would have felt compelled to continue watching the series. However, they had to confront 'Genocide' before their curiosity could be fully satiated. Although 'Genocide' reveals what had been taking place in the German heartland and in the name of Germany, it was not until the next episode, 'Nemesis', that the narrative of the Allied advance through Germany would reach its conclusion.

Television critics in the national press implicitly alluded to the impact of the series format on their appreciation of *The World at War*. As early on in the series as the fourth week one critic was effusive about its appeal: 'Like some irresistible juggernaut, Thames' monumental *The World at War* (ITV) rolls triumphantly on, showing no sign of losing the momentum which began to impel it four weeks ago'. Having followed the whole series, another critic deemed it 'compulsive viewing'.[92] With an average of fifteen million viewers tuning in each week between the end of August 1973 and mid-May 1974 it would not have been unreasonable to dub Wednesday nights *'The World at War* night'.

[92] Richard Last, 'Fine Research Inspires 'World at War'', in The *Daily Telegraph*, 29 November 1973 and Richard Afton, *The Evening News*, 16 May 1974.

Remembrance of a forgotten aspect of the War

This documentary also stands as a milestone contribution to Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust because it reinscribes the wartime Jewish experience into the wider narrative of the Second World War, two narratives that had typically been represented as mutually exclusive. 'Genocide' focuses solely upon the fate of the Jews under the Nazi regime, tracing the growing onslaught from its incipient phase of social ostracism in the 1930s to its end point of extermination and liberation in the 1940s. By dint of being part of *The World at War* series, the Jewish pre-war and wartime experience is contextualized as part of a larger narrative of the Second World War. Within 'Genocide' itself, the Jewish experience is woven into the overarching history of the War in two distinct ways. Firstly, it briefly raises the question of the Allied response to evidence of the atrocities during the War and, secondly, it provides a short account of the Allies' overrunning of the camps in the closing months of the conflict. Where the wartime experience of Jews had been contextualized as part of the larger war narrative prior to this documentary, it was most typically confined to their liberation from the Nazi concentration camps by the Allies. The aforementioned *After the Battle* and *Panorama* item exemplify this approach. Another audiovisual, but filmic, example is the British film *Frieda*. Yet these latter two examples must be qualified as they both fail to highlight the Jewishness of the majority of the victims featured in their brief accounts and footage of the liberation of Belsen. Consequently, their respective contributions to collective memory of the specifically Jewish wartime experience are very limited unless, that is, the viewer implicitly understands that the majority of victims were Jewish.

Before *The World at War,* cultural artefacts and initiatives related to WWII were ubiquitous, just as they have been since. On the level of film alone there was a profusion of Second World War-related films made in Britain. In a survey of the period between 1945 and 1960, Nicholas Pronay identified eighty-three such films.[93] He concludes that the War 'was seldom absent for more than two or three months from British screens' up to 1960. Yet none of these films addressed the fate of the Jews. It should be said that *Frieda* appears to have escaped the attention of Nicholas Pronay although it comes within the compass of his definition of war films as 'films that were produced whose

[93] Nicholas Pronay, 'The British Post-bellum Cinema: a survey of the films relating to World War II made in Britain between 1945 and 1960', in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television,* vol. 8, no. 1, 1988, pp. 39-54, p. 39.

stories took place during the war years and in which the war itself played a role in the unfolding of the story [or which] directly reflected on it'. In Second World War-related television documentaries, films, fictional publications, historical works and education in schools the wartime experience of Jews had been largely forgotten.

The reinscribing of the Jewish fate into the overarching narrative of the Second World War made it possible to juxtapose their catastrophe with that of other groups, in particular national ones. This is in keeping with one of the objectives of the series to compare and contrast the wartime experiences of various nations as highlighted at the outset of this chapter. The atrocities meted out against Europe's Jewish population can be viewed in a comparative frame, across the entire series, with the experiences of the British, French, Russians, Americans, Dutch, Germans, and so on. Such a representation of the Jewish catastrophe in a comparative frame had seldom, if at all, been attempted prior to this series. In British society, the juxtaposing of the Jewish and British war experiences was generally not welcome. The conviction that the sacrifices made and suffering endured by the British during the conflict were great meant that there was little scope to appreciate the fate of other groups. This was especially so in instances where the fate of others was worse, as there was a concern that the ordeal of the British might pale into insignificance. The irreconcilability of the Jewish and British experiences within narratives of the liberation of Belsen, as shown in the previous chapter, illustrates this point. Implicitly testifying to this situation, survivor Kitty Hart observed that:

> everybody in England would be talking about personal war experiences for months, even years, after hostilities had ceased. But we [...] were not supposed to embarrass people by saying a word.[94]

Similarly, survivor Gena Turgel observed that when she came to England, 'people seemed very preoccupied with themselves. Some said: 'We also had a hard time. We were bombed and had to live in shelters. We had to sleep in the Underground.''[95]

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[94] Kitty Hart, *Return to Auschwitz* (New York, Atheneum, 1985), p. 11, quoted in Zelizer (1998), p. 163.

[95] Gena Turgel, *I Light a Candle* (London, Grafton, 1988), p. 177, quoted in Kushner (1994), p. 238.

Justifying the war effort

If traditionally the respective wartime experiences of the Jews and the British could not be juxtaposed to invite comparison because of fears that the latter's might pale into insignificance, at times both were represented to retroactively justify the British war effort. Images of the liberation of Belsen in 1945 were frequently employed to this end. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the revelations of the Nazi atrocities in the western camps came at an opportune moment in the wake of the Normandy invasion. They provided the Government with a justification for the war effort as well as a way of assuaging the guilt associated with the civilian death toll of the Dresden bombings: the atrocities served to cast the German population as demonic.

It has also been observed that a popular mythology purporting that Britain fought the War to deliver the Jews from the Nazis had sprung up after 1945. Tony Kushner has identified its workings in a Department for Education document entitled, *The End of the Second World War,* which was circulated to secondary schools in Britain as recently as 1995. In a section of the document entitled 'What were the Allies fighting for?' there followed a subsection headed 'The Holocaust'. In this section it was alleged that:

> One aspect of the Nazi tyranny against which the Allies fought was its obsessive concern to 'cleanse' society by removal of elements deemed injurious to its health. 'Harmful' groups included, among others, political opponents, the 'asocial', the mentally or physically handicapped, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, gypsies and Jews.[96]

This is by no means an isolated example. Television has also been instrumental in reinforcing and perpetuating this myth. Also in 1995, Channel Four broadcast a documentary entitled *Victory*, which will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter. The constant cross-cutting between the unfolding of the Holocaust and the Allied military campaigns throughout the documentary was a means of structuring *Victory,* and the attendant effect was to suggest that the Allies fought the war to save the Jews.

'Genocide' neither goes this far nor does it explicitly hold up the Nazi persecution of the Jews as a justification for Britain's war efforts. Its demonisation of the Nazis

[96] Department for Education, *The End of the Second World War: The commemoration of VE Day and VJ Day* (London: DFE, 1995), pp. 12-14, 39-40, quoted in Kushner (1997), p. 12.

combined with the atrocities it depicted nevertheless fed into public discourses surrounding the war effort. The documentary was seized upon as a retrospective justification for the conflict that was chronicled in the nineteen preceding episodes. Featured as it was towards the end of the series, one television critic saw 'Genocide' as a tardy explanation for fighting the war, declaring that it 'took until episode 20 of ITV's *The World at War* - but at last we discovered the big reason why we *had* to go to war'.[97] Another critic stated that 'the most terrible hour of sustained horror ever shown on British television [was] abundantly justified [for] showing exactly why the war against Hitler's Germany was just and necessary'.[98]

But if Britain was right to go to war in light of what happened to the Jews, is this also a reason why it did go to war? And did it in fact do everything it could to hinder or put an end to the Holocaust? These questions are not posed by the reviewers. Indeed, the former is not and the latter is only fleetingly addressed by 'Genocide'. This is unsurprising as it is only since the late 1970s that Western Allied knowledge and responses have been scrutinized and problematized within historical debates relating to the Holocaust.[99]

* * *

'Genocide' was a ground-breaking confrontation with the Holocaust. It appeared on the British cultural scene at a time when there were few Holocaust-related initiatives. As the earliest attempt on British television to provide a cohesive account of the decimation of Europe's Jews, it went some way towards closing a lacuna in viewers' knowledge. However, in its endeavour to demonize the Nazis it barely looks beyond the regime for an explanation of the origins of the Holocaust. The attendant effect is to implicitly reaffirm the case for the war effort, increasing the popular appeal of 'Genocide', and to represent the Holocaust as an aberration unconnected to other historical developments.

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[97] James Thomas, 'After the horror: A kiss a soldier will never forget', in the *Daily Express*, 28 March 1974.

[98] Sean Day-Lewis, 'Witnesses tell of Nazi murder of Jews', in the *Daily Telegraph*, 28 March 1974.

[99] William D. Rubenstein charts the evolution of the historiographical debates in his book *The Myth of Rescue* (London, Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-14, first published in 1997).

Reaching an estimated eleven to twelve million television viewers in Britain, its immense impact on collective memory cannot be disputed. Yet, its ratings success cannot be attributed to a particular interest in its subject matter as resistance to Holocaust-related initiatives in the public sphere was common. Rather, it was a result of the fact that 'Genocide' was embedded in a chronicle of the Second World War, a subject which had a powerful resonance for the British public, and the effects of seriality.

Although 'Genocide' hailed from a broadcaster that was widely associated with trivial and popular fare in the public mind, the entire series was perceived to be of high calibre. Many viewers were surprised that such a series had not been produced by the BBC, yet the changing identity of ITV and its international outlook meant that *The World at War* was fully in line with the latter's programming ethos.

This documentary casts survivors as central protagonists of the Holocaust and afforded them a prime-time slot in the television schedules. From this privileged position they were able to address a British public that had rarely been exposed to the survivor as an active narrator of their pre-war and wartime experiences; the British public was more accustomed to third-person accounts of the Nazis' treatment of Jews. 'Genocide' raised the profile of survivors and helped to pave the way for other survivor-centred documentaries.

'Genocide' was also innovative in that it challenged the symbolic status of Belsen in British collective memory and ultimately catalysed a shift from Belsen to Auschwitz. Its focus on Auschwitz was a departure from the more Anglo-centric perspective typical of previous representations of the Holocaust, with their focus on Belsen and British involvement. Whilst it employs what have now become recognizable archival moving images of Belsen, it does not seize the opportunity to point up Britain's role in the liberation of the camp. Indeed, neither the camp nor the involvement of the British is mentioned in its depiction of the West German reception camps and their liberation.

The apparent absence of British survivors coupled with the fact that 'Genocide' did not mention British involvement in the liberation of Belsen meant that the Jewish catastrophe was depicted as an event that was relatively remote from British society. Viewers were left to draw their own conclusions about the link between the Holocaust and Britain. But these shortcomings should not detract from the huge achievement of 'Genocide' as an innovative Holocaust-related initiative or from its unique contribution

to Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust. Twenty years on, many Holocaust-related television programmes would make the catastrophe relevant to British society, although this was done in ways that are at times open to criticisms of parochialism and distortion, as will be observed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

Inserting the Holocaust into Britain's War Memory

The previous two chapters chiefly examined the contributions of a broadcasting icon and a single instalment of a documentary series to Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust. These contributions are remarkable for their iconic and groundbreaking status and thus demanded close scrutiny. The focus of the present chapter is 1995. At a total of just over 43 hours, Holocaust-related programming in 1995 was more extensive than during any other year in the history of British television; this fact alone would make it worthwhile examining. However, the focus of this chapter, as well as the next, is also driven by what Barbie Zelizer has perceptively characterized as 'event-driven' memory; that is to say, a 'predictable and patterned way of marking the past' in the form of anniversaries.[1] 1995 was a highly significant year in this respect, marking as it did the passage of half a century since Victory in Europe Day, and the liberation of Nazi concentration and death camps by Allied forces.[2] 2001 was an equally remarkable year as it saw the inauguration of Holocaust Memorial Day in Britain, which will form the focus of the next, and final, chapter of this thesis.

1995 occasioned widespread reflection upon and contemplation of the war period; commemoration ceremonies and events were held the length and breadth of Britain. Television was instrumental in bringing together parts of the population to participate in these ceremonies and events from their homes. This television coverage was supplemented in the schedules by a large number of programmes focusing on this period in twentieth century history.

What follows is an examination of Holocaust programmes and the way in which they were distributed across the British terrestrial television landscape throughout 1995.

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[1] Zelizer (1998), p. 180.

[2] The large number of Holocaust-related programming cannot be solely attributed to the passage of half a century. Other factors also played a role, such as the approach of the new millennium, which will be discussed further in the next chapter; the influence of the hugely successful *Schindler's List*, theatrically released the previous year, may also have been a factor; and a growing commitment to multi-cultural and anti-racist initiatives since the 1970s, borne of a 'move from a liberal assimilationist ideology to a more pluralistic vision of British society', creating an atmosphere in which it was thought worthwhile lessons could be gleaned from the Holocaust. See: Kushner (1994), p. 261.

The aim is to gain an insight into how far Jewish wartime experiences and Britain's ambiguous response to the unfolding of the Holocaust were allowed to interfere with the dominant version of Britain's war memory. This inquiry will be informed by the different channel profiles, which can affect a programme's impact on collective memory. I will begin by examining the heterogeneous character of the terrestrial television landscape and its uneven impact on collective memory. I will then discuss the nature and moral underpinnings of Britain's dominant war memory, and show how it was disturbed by Holocaust-related television programming in 1995. This will pave the way for my analysis of specific programmes and their pattern of distribution across the schedule.

A divided landscape

Television's ubiquity means that it plays a primordial role in terms of its potential impact on collective memory. This is not to suggest, however, that British television is a homogenous entity in which any programme screened will necessarily have as great an impact as any other. On the contrary, a programme's potential impact is complicated by a myriad of factors, and those I consider here are not exhaustive. By 1995, some two decades since the premier of 'Genocide', the televisual landscape had changed considerably. Television could be divided into terrestrial and non-terrestrial sectors, and a fourth terrestrial channel, namely C4, had become available. There was thus a proliferation of available channels and a concomitant fragmenting of the television audience. Terrestrial television will nevertheless be the focus of this chapter because it reaped by far the largest audience share and still had the potential to make a particularly significant contribution to collective memory.[3] The existence of four terrestrial broadcasters at the time, BBC 1, BBC 2, ITV and C4, rendered this sector a heterogeneous entity, each channel differing in respect of its overall impact on collective

[3] In the year under scrutiny, 1995, terrestrial television accounted for 91.4 percent of the audience share. This was in spite of increased cable and satellite television viewing compared with the previous years. According to Screen Digest and the Broadcaster's Audience Research Board (BARB), even in households with access to cable or satellite television, terrestrial television viewing accounted for 65.6 percent of all television viewing time in 1995. The most-viewed non-terrestrial channel was Sky One with 4.9 percent. The remaining nineteen channels and 'others' averaged approximately 1.5 percent. What is more, of the 22.4 million television households, only 4.42 million subscribed to either cable or satellite. This suggests that cable and satellite television did little to undermine the grip of terrestrial television on the viewing public in Britain. The statistics relating to cable and satellite television viewing, the number of television households subscribing to cable and satellite and audience share were taken from *The Bfi Handbook 1995*, pp. 46-7.

memory. This is largely due to a complex interplay between the individual channels' remits, profiles, their legal and institutional status, their differing audience shares and the viewing public's perception of the broadcasters in light of these factors.

Under the Agreement of the Royal Charter, drawn up between the BBC and a secretary of state, the BBC is obliged to provide a public service whose purpose is to inform, to educate and to entertain. The Agreement also stipulates other requirements which the BBC must adhere to in respect of programming. These requirements are replicated in the Television Act passed to regulate ITV and C4.[4] However, whilst all channels must adhere to a public service ethos, there is a propensity amongst the television viewing public to dichotomize the broadcasters and, as we have seen in the previous chapter, this tendency dates back to the inauguration of ITV. Typically, the BBC is perceived as a public service provider, and ITV and C4 as broadcasters with more commercial imperatives, even though, according to Paddy Scannell, this distinction is 'misleading' because the 'terms under which commercial broadcasting was established by government made it part of the public service system from the beginning'.[5] Nonetheless, the adherence to a public service ethos leaves great scope for manoeuvre, engendering a range of channel profiles, which, in turn, compounds the tendency to dichotomize the broadcasters. In *The Blue Book of British Broadcasting 2000*, BBC 1 is said to be a 'channel of broad appeal' whilst BBC 2 'offers an eclectic mix of programmes [catering] for special interests and [devoting] significant amounts of airtime to many important, but non-mainstream genres'.[6] ITV is 'a mass audience channel, [which] has to appeal to as wide a cross section of viewers as possible' and C4's profile differs from the other channels as its remit requires that it 'appeal to tastes and interests not generally catered for by Channel 3 (ITV)'.[7]

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[4] For a detailed explanation of the requirements as laid out in the Agreement of the Royal Charter and the Television Act, see Stuart Hood and Thalia Tabary-Peterssen, *On Television* (London, Pluto, 1997), pp. 48-53.

[5] See: Paddy Scannell, 'Public Service Broadcasting: The History of a Concept', in Andrew Goodwin and Garry Whannel, eds., *Understanding Television* (London, Routledge, 1990), p. 17.

[6] Robert Mann, ed., *The Blue Book of British Broadcasting 2000* (London, Taylor Nelsen Sofres Tellex, 2000, 26th edn.). This is in keeping with the BBC's own characterization of its channels. See *BBC Annual Report & Accounts, 95/96.*

[7] Mann (2000), p. 106 & p. 8.

Furthermore, both BBC channels are established by and operate within the remit of the Royal Charter and are funded by the public through the levying of the television licence fee. They therefore have a different status to ITV and C4. The BBC is, and is predominantly perceived to be, a national institution with crown and state affiliations. As a broadcaster, the BBC is more closely linked to British national identity and wields greater authority than other broadcasters. Throughout its history it has consistently played a leading role in enabling the British public to witness through their television screens the pageantry of national icons. It has also defined itself as the national broadcaster. In her article, 'How the BBC pictured itself', Christine Whittaker claims that for

> most of the twentieth century, the BBC ranked alongside the Monarchy and the Church of England as a central part of British life [...] And up till now, like (or perhaps unlike) the Monarchy and the Church of England, the BBC retains the status of a national institution.[8]

BBC television has a long tradition of providing live coverage of official ceremonies and commemorations deemed to be of great national importance. This tradition reaches back to its year of inception, 1936, when it provided live coverage of George IV's coronation. Since its formative years, it has cleared the schedules to transmit the coronation of Elizabeth II, Royal weddings, annual Remembrance Sunday ceremonies from the Cenotaph in London, the trooping of the colour and various anniversary commemorations relating to the two world wars. It is within this tradition that the BBC offered live coverage of the official commemoration ceremonies of the fiftieth anniversary of VE Day, where the Queen and other members of the Royal family were in attendance. Continuing to cast itself as the national broadcaster, since September 1998 the BBC has brought live daily coverage of debates held in the House of Commons into the homes of the British public through its digital channel BBC Parliament. It has also branched out to the Internet, where it has created 'one of the most highly acclaimed and popular sites'.[9]

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[8] Christine Whittaker, 'How the BBC pictured itself', in Graham Roberts and Philip M. Tayler, eds., *The Historian, Television and Television History* (Luton, University of Luton Press, 2001), pp. 145-56, p. 145 & p. 156.

[9] Ibid., p. 155.

As for ITV and C4, whilst it is true that they operate under the terms of the Television Act, this is not necessarily widely appreciated. What is more, these broadcasters have no association with the crown, nor are they financed directly by the people but rather through advertising revenue. These factors combine to make ITV's and C4's perceived status as a national institution and connection with British national identity more diffuse. As a result, collective memory on BBC 1 and BBC 2 is perceived as more authoritative than collective memory on ITV and C4. Perhaps this is why in 1990 the National Film and Television Archive (NFTVA) at the BFI, whose dual purpose is to 'collect and preserve the UK's moving image heritage; and to share it with the broadest range of audiences',[10] began to make off-air recordings of all the BBC's televisual output whilst only making selective recordings from the other terrestrial channels.

The broadcasting patterns of war-related programming in 1995 that come under scrutiny in this chapter further corroborate and perpetuate the BBC's links to national identity. This is true both in quantitative and qualitative terms. The BBC broadcast more war-related programming jointly between its two channels than the combined output of ITV and C4. In all, 225 hours and 20 minutes of the terrestrial schedules were devoted to such programming. Jointly, the BBC channels broadcast 128 hours and 20 minutes (57%) of this total. The total airtime broke down as follows: BBC 1 offered 47 hours and 35 minutes (21%); BBC 2, 80 hours and 45 minutes (36%); ITV, 48 hours (21%); and C4, 49 hours (22%). As part of this programming, the BBC chronicled and celebrated its own contribution to Britain's war effort in the two-part documentary *What Did You Do in the War, Auntie?* By underscoring its role in an event which represents a cornerstone of Britain's national identity, as will be discussed below, the BBC implicitly linked itself to national identity. The comments of the BBC's managing director in respect of VE Day programming highlighted the broadcaster's self-perception:

> Once again the BBC proved its ability to bring the nation together for occasions of great significance. The 50th anniversary of VE Day in May 1995 followed by the

[10] Quoted from *bfi Collections: A User's Guide* (2000).

commemorations of VJ Day in August and Remembrance Sunday in November underlined the BBC's role as the national broadcaster.[11]

Audience share also has a role to play in respect of a channel's contribution to collective memory. The popularity of a channel can influence a programme's ratings and thereby increase its contribution to collective memory. Average annual audience share is usually divided such that BBC 1 and ITV have a third each, with the latter having the edge by several percent. BBC 2 and C4, by contrast, average around ten percent each, with the former having the edge by one or two percent. During 1995 for example, the channels averaged an audience share of 32.2, 37.2, 11.1 and 10.9 percent respectively. Thus BBC 1 and ITV were the majority broadcasters; BBC 2 and C4 the minority.[12]

Britain's war memory

In her study *War and the British: Gender, Memory and National Identity,* Lucy Noakes asserts that Britain's diminishing status on the global scene has engendered a tendency in the British heritage industry to recall three eras during which Britain can be perceived as having been 'Great'. These eras, which are presented as defining moments in Britain's past, are Tudor Britain, the Britain of the Industrial Revolution and the Second World War.[13] She observes that these particular junctures in British history have become recurrent themes at various heritage sites across Britain such as theme parks, heritage centres and museums. She also highlights the repeated invocation of the Second World War as a key moment in the national past within political discourse. Thus she cites as an example the frequent allusions by Margaret Thatcher, the prime minister between 1979 and 1991, to this period when she alluded to making Britain 'Great' once more.

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[11] *BBC Annual Report and Accounts 95/96*, pp. 17-8.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Lucy Noakes, *War and the British: Gender, Memory and National Identity* (London, I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), p. 45-6. The view that the Second World War represents an era during which Britain is perceived to have been 'Great' is also expressed in K.O. Morgan, *The People's Peace* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 4.

Echoing Margaret Thatcher, at the 1995 Labour Party Conference, the party leader, Tony Blair, alluded to the Second World War as a victory to be proud of and as one of the reasons why Britain was a 'great country'.[14]

Lucy Noakes also points out that this historical event has been a recurrent theme within British cultural life more generally, enlisting various feature films and television series broadcast between 1945 and the 1980s and set during the War to illustrate.[15] There is further evidence to suggest a great preoccupation with this event in Britain's cultural production, such as Nicholas Pronay's aforementioned survey of Second World War-related films, along with repeated broadcasting of *The World at War* series and its multiple screenings at the NFT. Moreover, the NFT regarded Second World War-related British films and television series as such an important cultural phenomenon that in 1985 it dedicated a programme of screenings entitled 'National Fictions' to them.

The rhetoric of greatness in references to Britain and the Second World War is all-pervasive in public discourse. For example, during the Euro 2000 football championships, hardcore English supporters frequently invoked the period in their chanting to suggest their national superiority. While in the Netherlands, they chanted 'If it wasn't for the English they'd all be Krauts'; having been arrested in Belgium by riot police, they argued that they deserved to be exonerated given Britain's victory during the War. In an instalment of *Panorama* entitled 'England's Shame', which focused on English football hooliganism, the presenter David Hewitt concluded that:

> When England travels, a significant minority uses the occasion to assert their national identity, an identity rooted in the last war, of an island nation undefeated, superior to others.[16]

If the heritage industry marginalizes or even excludes certain eras in order to throw into relief Tudor Britain, the Britain of the Industrial Revolution and the Second

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[14] Transcript of Tony Blair's speech to the 1995 Labour Party Conference, in 'News from Labour' issued by the Labour Party Conference Media Office, pp. 5-6.

[15] Noakes (1998), p. 5.

[16] Quoted from the programme transcript, which was available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/audio_video/programmes/panorama/transcripts/ The programme was transmitted on 20 June 2000, BBC 1.

World War, it simultaneously marginalizes and excludes certain aspects of these eras. In British collective memory, Britain's part in the Second World War has tended to be remembered in a way that inspires images of unity and sentiments of national pride. The seeds for this were sown very early on. Against all the odds, Britain collectively fought and subdued, in Winston Churchill's words, 'the most tremendous military power that has been seen'[17] and in so doing helped deliver the world from the looming threat of fascism.[18] The official expression of the dominant version of Britain's war memory can be found in national museums such as the Imperial War Museum, monuments and ceremonies organized by the Government at national and local level. It has its popular counterpart in film, television, literature, the press, popular journals and history books, and other cultural products; and its scholarly counterpart in historical writings by members of the academy. That is not to say, however, that the boundaries between these different modes of expression are impermeable as, for example, historians' writings also appear in the press and popular journals, and they frequently act as historical consultants for television documentaries.

Testament to the centrality of Britain's war memory to British national identity, 8 May 1995 was declared a public holiday to mark the fiftieth anniversary of VE Day in Britain. On this bank holiday weekend, a three-day festival was held in Hyde Park with the royal family and foreign heads of state in attendance. British society was relieved of its quotidian duties and commitments to enable the celebration and remembrance of a defining moment in its history. In his study of anniversaries in Europe and the United States, William M. Johnston observes how cultural managers and national governments seize upon the anniversaries of national luminaries and events to stage commemorations in order to articulate national identity.[19] The fiftieth anniversary commemorations of VE Day formed one such event. It provided a space to reflect upon what it means to be British, what it means to belong to Britain. It encouraged remembrance of what was represented as a major national achievement, as a signal moment in British history. To

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[17] This phrase was used by Winston Churchill in his victory speech. For a fuller version of his speech, see p. 137-8 of this chapter.

[18] See: Noakes (1998), pp. 2-4 and David Cesarani, 'Lacking in convictions: British War Crimes Policy and National Memory of the Second World War', in Martin Evans and Ken Lunn, eds., *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, Berg, 1997), pp. 27-42.

[19] William M. Johnston, *Celebrations: The Cult of Anniversaries in Europe and the United States Today* (London, Transaction Books, 1991), p. 39 & p. 88.

be British, it was implied, is to share in the legacy of this achievement. One of the peculiarities of fiftieth anniversaries is that such occasions may happen but once in a lifetime. As William Johnston explains:

> Regularity of celebrations at fifty-year intervals means [...] that slightly over half those involved can hope to experience two such anniversaries, at say age 25 and 75 while the other half will experience just one, somewhere between age 25 and 55. Major anniversaries end in an acknowledgement: 'We will not be doing this again for 50yrs.'

He then goes on to suggest that the effect of this is to 'inspire reflection on human mortality'.[20] The prospect of being able to participate in or witness a once-in-a-lifetime anniversary can transform that anniversary into a singularly momentous occasion, a major event in the creation and perpetuation of national identity.

After fifty years of peacetime, living memory of WWII was beginning to recede. The fiftieth anniversary of its end was seized on as an ideal occasion to mobilize that memory to teach post-war Britons about a defining moment in their national past. To this end, national commemorative initiatives unfolded throughout Britain. The fiftieth anniversary commemorations of VE Day became a media event with television capturing the ceremonies and festivities in real-time. The television viewing public was able to participate in the commemorations of the particular version of the past that was transmitted into their homes the length and breadth of Britain.

Disturbing Britain's war memory

Collective memory, like individual memory, is subject to selection, omission and reinterpretation of the past. In order to construct and maintain the monolithic nature of Britain's dominant war memory, other memories have necessarily been marginalized. The emphasis on the war effort both on the front line and the home front in this version means that it speaks and appeals to the concerns of mainstream Britain only; the concerns of Britain's Jewish population about the persecution of Jews in Nazi-controlled territories are not reflected. According to David Cesarani, 'this silence is a denial of

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[20] Ibid., p. 32.

something that [British Jews] feel is now fundamental to their being and signifies a refusal to accept the reality of their experience'.[21] By inserting the Jewish wartime experience, the unitary nature of Britain's war memory might well be disturbed, but to do so would be to recognize the magnitude of the loss that Jews in Britain have incurred in respect of their relations and co-religionists on the continent, the loss incurred by the Jewish community at large, and the universal resonance of these crimes against humanity.

In 1995, the presence of the Holocaust on British television suggests that programme makers and schedulers were not entirely averse to disturbing the monolithic character of Britain's war memory. Thus, of the 225 hours and 20 minutes of airtime devoted to this period, 36 hours and 50 minutes (16.3%) dealt exclusively with the Holocaust, and 6 hours and 30 minutes (2.8%) dealt briefly with it. The pattern of distribution of these programmes largely mirrored that of the war-related programming with the least on BBC 1, at 1 hour and 50 minutes (3.7%); the most on BBC 2, at 23 hours and 30 minutes (29%); and a comparable amount on ITV, at 6 hours and 15 minutes (13%) and C4, at 5 hours and 15 minutes (10.7%).[22]

Britain's war memory can be disturbed in another way, however. To construct and uphold its moral integrity, certain aspects of the War are glossed over. To illustrate his assertion that 'the war is understood almost universally as honourable and noble, fought with right and justice exclusively on the Allied side', David Cesarani recalls the drama in 1993 surrounding the installation of a monument in London to commemorate Sir Arthur 'Bomber' Harris.[23] Recalling how German protests against this commemorative initiative were met with 'incomprehension and indignation', he argued that this episode revealed how it was

> almost unthinkable to hold that the Allies committed unjust acts in pursuit of victory, or that the eventual success of the Allied armies signified anything other than the supremacy of right over might.

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[21] David Cesarani. 'Great Britain', in David Wyman, ed. *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University, 1996), p. 634.

[22] These figures are based on my own quantitative analysis of programming.

[23] Cesarani (1997), p. 28.

The intransigence apparent here can also be glimpsed in respect of the lack of confrontation with Britain's wartime response to the Nazi genocide in Britain's dominant war memory. We have already seen in the last chapter that since the late 1970s Western Allied responses to the plight of European Jewry have been increasingly scrutinized and problematized within historiographical debates relating to the Holocaust.[24] If by the late 1980s the view taken by most Holocaust historians was that the Western Allies 'were at fault for failing to rescue more Jews',[25] this view found little or no expression within the 'honourable and noble' framework of Britain's dominant war memory. Britain's war memory as a whole is thus a site of conflict, and the marginalized voices that claimed Britain failed Europe's Jews struggled to be heard.[26]

Britain has no geographical link to the Nazi extermination sites or the sites of deportation, and was neither a perpetrator nor a collaborator. Nevertheless, Britain became connected to the Nazi persecution and mass murder of the Jews in ways that were far from inconsequential. Throughout the 1930s as well as after the Nazis' genocidal campaign got under way, Britain was repeatedly called upon to respond to and act against the Nazis' racial policies and extermination programme. During the 1930s, British politicians tolerated Nazi state racism for fear of jeopardizing appeasement; in the spirit of appeasement, the British and French Governments brought more Jews under Hitler's persecutory regime by ceding the Czech Sudetenland to the Germans in the Munich agreement, and this in spite of the knowledge of the maltreatment of Jews already under the yoke of Nazism;[27] after the Nazis came to power in 1933, strict

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[24] Rubenstein (2000), pp. 1-14, first published in 1997.

[25] Ibid., p. 218.

[26] David Cesarani has argued for a Holocaust museum that should provide a corrective to the dominant version of Britain's war memory, suggesting that 'an honest appraisal of Britain's wartime record' is needed. He explains:

> This will mean looking critically at the willingness of British politicians to tolerate Nazi racism; Britain's ambiguous record on immigration and refugees; the reasons for the official scepticism towards news of the 'Final Solution' in 1942, and the inadequate response.

See: David Cesarani, 'Holocaust and its heritage', in *The Guardian,* 29 December 1994, p. 18.

[27] See: Kushner (1994), p. 48 & p. 50. The Nazis' annexation of Austria, in March 1938, precipitated a mass exodus of Jews fleeing from Nazi brutality and anti-Semitic statutes. Even before the 'Final Solution' had been conceived of, it was clear that Jews were being subjected to extreme levels of brutality at the hands of the Nazis.

immigration rules were maintained, making it difficult for Jews to flee from persecution to Britain, and this policy was only briefly eased in 1938-39; when news of the 'Final Solution' was received, it was met by Government officials with scepticism at best and incredulity and indifference at worst; and finally, notwithstanding knowledge of the 'Final Solution', Britain prevented refugees who had managed to escape from the axis territories from entering Palestine.[28] According to William D. Rubenstein, in the mid-1990s, this list of British failings represented the dominant version of war memory in transatlantic historiography of the Holocaust. The following qualitative analysis of Holocaust-related programmes will reveal the extent to which the Jewish catastrophe was allowed to interfere with the monolithic nature and moral underpinnings of Britain's war memory in the more popular sphere of television.

BBC 1

VE Day commemorations programming

VE Day commemorations programming was provided by both of the BBC's channels, but live coverage of the official ceremonies was allocated to its majority channel, BBC 1. This channel broadcast 23 hours and 20 minutes of VE Day commemorations programming from 2 May to 4 June. As might be expected, the density of commemorations programming was at its greatest during the VE Day weekend, comprising mostly live coverage of the official state commemorations. The titles of these programmes suggest that the commemorations emphasized jubilation, celebration and reconciliation, they were: *VE50 St Paul's Cathedral Service: A Great Deliverance*, *VE50 Hands of Friendship: Nations Reconciled* and *Celebration Concert: It's a Lovely Day Tomorrow,* broadcast on 7 May, and *Memories and Celebrations* as well as *VE50 The Nation Celebrates*. The latter two figured among the core programmes, broadcast as they were on 8 May, VE Day itself. According to the *Radio Times,* the official commemorations were attended by key national figures, and many of the ceremonies

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[28] See: ibid., p. 34; Cesarani (1994), p. 18; Michael R. Marrus's chapter on 'Bystanders' in *The Holocaust in History* (London, Penguin, 1993), pp. 156-83; and Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: An Investigation into the Suppression of Information about Hitler's "Final Solution"* (London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980).

unfolded at venues of high national standing or great significance, including Westminster Hall, Buckingham Palace and St Paul's Cathedral.

Programmes other than those providing coverage of official commemorations and commemorative events offered insight into the British war effort both on the front line and the home front.[29] Some of these emphasized courage, for example, the series of six documentaries entitled *For Valour.*[30] According to the *Radio Times,* these focused on Britons who were awarded medals for their displays of courage. The only film to be broadcast as part of this channel's VE Day programming was *The Battle of Britain.* Televised on VE Day itself, it figured alongside the other core programmes mentioned above. The *Radio Times* underlined its important status as a cultural representation of the War by describing it as a 'classic British war epic'. The televising of this film on VE Day was arguably intended to shore up a sense of national identity rooted in a formidable British military campaign during the Second World War. Finally, the documentary *Coming Home* was described in the *Radio Times* as an exploration of the adjustments that families were forced to make when servicemen returned home.[31]

BBC 1 also broadcast the two-part documentary *What Did You Do in the War Auntie?* and the six-part news programme *News 45: VE Day.*[32] According to the information provided in the *Radio Times*, it was only in these two documentary series that the Holocaust was confronted on this channel. These two series of programmes, however, were retrospectives of the whole of the War period and of the days that led up to VE Day, respectively. Their format permitted all but a fleeting confrontation with what befell the Jews of Europe. *What Did You Do in the War Auntie?* featured two reports relating to the Holocaust, which amounted to merely 7 minutes out of a total of 2 hours. Similarly, *News 45* devoted 4 minutes of its 1 hour and 30 minutes to the catastrophe. Notwithstanding their brevity, these depictions are worth examining more closely to determine how the Holocaust was remembered in the context of Britain's war memory.

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[29] The *Radio Times,* editions 7-13, 14-20, 21-27 May, 28 May - 3 June & 4-10 June 1995.

[30] Tx. 7, 9, 14, 22 and 28 May, and 4 June 1995, BBC 1.

[31] Tx. 7 May 1995, BBC 1.

[32] Tx. 2 and 9 May, and 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 May 1995, BBC 1, respectively.

Both *What Did You Do in the War Auntie?* and *News 45: VE Day* were major BBC initiatives, commanding extensive attention in the *Radio Times*. The two-part documentary combined archive film footage and present-day personal recollections of those who formerly worked at the BBC to shed light upon the past. Employing a narrator to cohere the disparate elements, it chronicles and celebrates the contribution made by the Corporation to Britain's war effort. It nostalgically elucidates the role of the Corporation in keeping British society informed about events; how it bolstered morale on both the front line and the home front and provided a link between the two; and how it increased the productivity of workers on the home front. Yet it also critically examines the BBC's role. For example, it reveals that on certain occasions the BBC was sparing with the truth in its reporting of events, at times to avoid lowering morale on the home front or to conceal information from the enemy, and at other times on the grounds of political expediency. It is within this critical context that the first of the two depictions of the Holocaust appeared in the second hour-long instalment of this documentary.

What Did You Do in the War Auntie? reveals that BBC Monitoring picked up Hitler's speeches, which were often replete with anti-Semitic diatribe. Vladimir Rubenstein, who worked for the Monitoring Service, explains that there was 'considerable evidence' of the systematic annihilation of the Jews. In addition to this allusion to what Britain knew about the Holocaust, the programme reveals how the reports of Nazi persecution of the Jews were met with scepticism at both the BBC and the Foreign Office. According to the programme, this kind of scepticism prevented the BBC from circulating intelligence relating to the Holocaust.

Similarly, Sir Frank Roberts, who worked at the Foreign Office, highlights the political expediency behind not emphasizing the Jewish particularity of the reports that were disclosed: the BBC did not wish to give the Arabs the impression that it supported the Zionist cause. Vladimir Rubenstein admits that the BBC should have done more to warn all those who participated in Nazi crimes that there would be severe reprisals after the War. He also regrets that the BBC did not take the opportunity to inform German occupied territories that, contrary to the widespread belief that Jews were being resettled and put to work in the east, they were being exterminated. This documentary endeavours to offer an insight into how the BBC dealt with reports of the brutalities perpetrated against the Jews and the 'Final Solution', and it confronts the organization's failure to come to the aid of European Jewry.

The other reference to the Holocaust in this documentary is to the liberation of Bergen-Belsen by British forces. Since *What Did You Do in the War Auntie?* was ultimately a profile of the BBC's role during wartime, the liberation is presented through the filter of extracts from Richard Dimbleby's 1945 dispatch. These extracts are accompanied by archive film footage of Belsen, which depicts the horrific spectacle of depravity encountered by the liberators. The liberation of the camps is also featured in *News 45*. This series of programmes reconstructed original news reports from 1945, using contemporary news broadcasters to read them out with accompanying newsreel footage. In keeping with the main thrust of the programme, the liberation is presented within the context of the Allied Victory. Both these programmes provided liberator-centred accounts, and in the process the perspective of the Jewish internee was completely elided.

What Did You Do in the War Auntie? and *News 45* contained the only televisual representations of points of contact between the British wartime experience and the Holocaust throughout BBC 1's 1995 programming. Whilst there was a critical assessment of the BBC's position and lack of action in respect of the persecution of the Jews, a similar assessment of Britain's overall wartime record was lacking in the programming. Moreover, the reports on the liberation served to emphasize the decency of the western Allies for having liberated the victims of Nazism.[33] The liberation of the camps is one of the positive ways in which Britain became involved in the Holocaust. Far from disturbing the moral integrity of Britain's war memory, the highly selective nature of Holocaust memory on this channel served largely to reinforce it.

Arguably, the self-congratulatory rhetoric of the official VE Day celebrations would have made it difficult for BBC 1 to directly confront Britain's wartime record in respect of responses to the Jewish plight. If it had chosen to do so, the BBC would have had to swim against the tide of mainstream sentiments as expressed by public commemorations; in the end, it chose not to. Overall, *What Did You Do in the War Auntie?* was a celebration of the BBC's achievements during the War. In the main, it asserted that the BBC was essential to the British war effort, that it played no small role in bringing about Britain's victory. The main focus of *News 45* was the gradual

[33] This has not escaped the attention of Tony Kushner. See: Tony Kushner, 'Approaching Belsen: An Introduction', in Jo Reilly, David Cesarani, eds., et al. *Belsen in History and Memory* (London, Frank Cass, 1997), p. 4.

capitulation of the enemy and the victory celebrations throughout Europe. The tone of celebration and jubilation that pervaded these programmes adhered to and contributed to the self-congratulatory and jubilant spirit of VE Day commemorations more generally. The few minutes that they devoted to the Holocaust did little to undermine that spirit nor, by extension, to interfere with Britain's war memory at large. Ultimately, there was little room to dwell on a subject more likely to evoke despair and lamentation than celebration in the VE Day programming of BBC 1. The evocation of these sentiments was relegated to the BBC's minority channel BBC 2, whose VE Day programming focused primarily on the Jewish wartime experience.

BBC 2

VE Day commemorations programming

BBC 2's corpus of VE Day programmes was transmitted from 5 to 8 May. In terms of air time it was quantitatively inferior to that of BBC 1's, totalling 8 hours. Five of these 8 hours were devoted to the Jewish wartime experience, but there was no allusion to Britain's response to the Nazi genocide. The salient mood of VE Day programming here was antithetical to that of BBC 1; it was more melancholic than upbeat. Holocaust memory was far less selective on this channel, and it was articulated from a Jewish perspective. In all, there were three programmes that focused on the Jewish experience. They were *Correspondent*, aired on 6 May, as well as *Anne Frank Remembered* and *A Day to Remember,* both transmitted on VE Day.

The current affairs programme *Correspondent* featured the BBC correspondent Jonathan Charles, a British Jew whose grandparents fled Nazi persecution. For this programme he returned to Nuremberg to speak to former neighbours of his family and report on the legacy of the Holocaust for young German non-Jews and the few Jews that today remain in Nuremberg. The conviction that the legacy of the Holocaust is ongoing provides the impetus for this programme. It makes explicit some of the tangible effects of the Holocaust that are felt in present-day German society. In his report from Nuremberg, Jonathan Charles stresses the magnitude of the loss incurred by the Jewish community and that the legacy of the Holocaust 'weighs heavily on us all'. He does this

by illustrating how that loss manifests itself very clearly by the near absence of Jews in Nuremberg, a city that once had a thriving Jewish community. He visits the former neighbour of his grandfather in Nuremberg. As they walk along the street she points to all the homes in the neighbourhood in which Jews resided before the deportations. In this way, the former Jewish residents are remembered by underscoring their absence. He then attends a service at the local synagogue, but it is a small affair with only a handful of people present. The service is striking owing to the absence of Jews signified through the presence of so many unfilled seats. This absence is apparent on the level of the image, but to further emphasize its reality and poignance, Jonathan Charles makes the causal link between this near-empty synagogue and what took place fifty years before:

> As I prayed in Nuremberg synagogue, seeing how few people were there, it struck me that Hitler had really got what he wanted - a Jew-free Germany. There were once 10,000 Jews in this city - most joined the six million dead in the concentration camps. Nothing will bring back the once vibrant community that lived here; a whole world has been lost forever.

His grandfather fled to England to escape Nazi persecution, making him two generations removed from his family's direct experience of the Holocaust. Yet, he acutely feels the loss borne by the local Jewish community. He draws on Angela Gurenberg, a Jewish contemporary of his living in Nuremberg, to articulate how that loss can manifest itself in everyday life. It is a loss that clearly affects her as a Jew. But she also alludes to the loss experienced by non-Jews, whose lives too have been touched by the absence created half a century ago. She explains:

> If people meet me and I tell them that I am Jewish, they tell me: 'Oh you're the first Jew I've met.' And I always think: what a horrible thing to say. Because I think, if they were a little more sensitive to the issue, they wouldn't say it because they would realize I'm the first Jew they've met because they've killed everyone else.

Ultimately, this programme emphasizes the destruction of European Jewry, and its lasting legacy of loss and absence.

Lawrence L. Langer has observed a tendency on the American cultural scene to represent the Holocaust in a way that negates its destruction. Above all, he takes issue with the repeated use of Anne Frank's diary as a representative narrative of the

Holocaust in all its multiple permutations, whether theatrical or cinematic adaptations, such as the 1956 Broadway play and the 1959 film by George Stevens. Referring to this latter adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank* as well as other treatments of the Holocaust on the American scene more generally, he enquires:

> How much darkness must be acknowledged before we will be able to confess that the Holocaust story cannot be told in terms of heroic dignity, moral courage, and the triumph of the human spirit?[34]

Jon Blair's two-hour documentary film *Anne Frank Remembered* is an antidote to its predecessors. It circumvents the ethical pitfalls that Lawrence L. Langer rails against, effectively demythologizing the best-known victim of the Nazis. Whereas previous treatments had focused solely upon life in the Annex, this documentary goes beyond the Annex to elucidate the horrific fate of its occupants. Jon Blair's extension of Anne's biography has resulted in a narrative that is shot through with sentiments of extreme pathos and despair. It provides a sensitive, intimate and honest profile of Anne prior to the Annex, revealing her spiritedness and joy of life as well as the hardship she endured. It also charts the meticulous preparations for the secret Annex and builds up a picture of the family's life in confinement. Otto Frank's desperate and protracted struggle to find his family after the War, all of whom had perished unbeknownst to him, and to have his daughter's testimony posthumously published are also recounted. Moreover, Otto Frank alludes to the legacy of his daughter's diary and its universal and contemporary resonance in the context of racial intolerance.

In its final 30 minutes, *Anne Frank Remembered* narrates the life and death of the Frank family after their capture. Through archive and contemporary film footage, survivor testimony and Kenneth Branagh's doleful narration, it recounts the deportation of the Franks to Westerbork transit camp and their subsequent deportation to Auschwitz, where their family was torn asunder. Otto is separated from the rest of the family, which becomes all the more poignant in view of the father and daughter's reciprocal adulation as depicted in the first part of the documentary. It then reveals how Anne and her sister Margot were led on a death march from Auschwitz to Belsen, separating them from their mother. Following this, the documentary provides a vivid account of how the sisters

[34] Lawrence L. Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 158.

slowly perished in the abominable and undignified conditions of Belsen. Further augmenting the pathos of this biography, Lies Goslar, a survivor of Belsen, reveals that Anne felt she had nobody left in the world as Margot was on the brink of death, and she presumed her mother dead and her father selected for the gas chamber. The implication of this is that, feeling all alone, Anne's hitherto indomitable spirit and will to live had slipped away, leaving her to perish. This intimate and sensitive profile of Anne Frank, her slow degradation and ultimate destruction provide the sense of a precious life snatched away and desecrated; it is the predominant Jewish wartime experience in microcosm.

As part of this series of VE Day programming, the official Jewish war commemorations ceremony at the Bevis Marks synagogue in London was shown in the context of the commemorations programme *A Day to Remember* on VE Day itself. It combined scenes from the ceremony at the synagogue with survivors' recollections of persecution. BBC 2 is a channel whose identity is associated with 'special interests' and 'non-mainstream' fare. These factors act to frame the programmes' reception, they provide an interpretative framework. By broadcasting the Jewish ceremony on its minority channel, the BBC failed to represent this ceremony as something that concerns, or that should concern, the wider British population. The same is true of the Jewish wartime experience as depicted in all three of these programmes. It might be said that the BBC preferred to undermine neither the emphasis on British national unity nor the celebratory tone of mainstream public VE Day commemorations. Nonetheless, the fact that depictions of the Jewish wartime experience and the official Jewish ceremony were featured at all suggests that the plight of European Jewry was taken on board as a significant, though not central, aspect of the War as a whole.

Since the Jewish wartime experience featured so centrally within the VE Day commemorations programming of this channel, it emerged as an integral part of Britain's war memory. Thus, unlike on BBC 1, the concerns of Britain's Jews were reflected on this channel and the monolithic nature of Britain's war memory was called into question. It remains, however, that neither on BBC 1 nor on BBC 2 was there a concerted attempt to problematize Britain's response to the unfolding of the Holocaust in the context of VE Day commemorations programming. The moral integrity of Britain's war memory therefore remained undisturbed. As we shall see, it was in the context of Auschwitz

commemorations programming on BBC 2 that this aspect of Britain's wartime record was broached.

Auschwitz commemorations programming: *The 'Remember Season'*

From 7 to 25 January, BBC 2 commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by broadcasting 15 hours and 15 minutes of Holocaust-related programmes under the title 'Remember Season'. This season comprised nine programmes, three of which either related or at least alluded to Britain's role in relation to the Holocaust. They were *Richard Dimbleby at Belsen,* an episode of *Open Space* entitled *Bringing the Holocaust Home,* and 'Genocide' broadcast on 9, 14 and 25 January, respectively. The first of these served at once as a tribute to 'the master of broadcasting', as Richard Dimbleby's son referred to him in the programme, and as a potent reminder of what the British encountered when they liberated the remaining inmates of Belsen.

The second of these programmes, *Bringing the Holocaust Home,* featured David Cesarani who argued for the establishment of a Holocaust museum in Britain. This programme is striking for its direct confrontation with Britain's war memory, which, like no other programme, explicitly challenges its moral and exclusive underpinnings, laying bare the contested nature of this dominant version. David Cesarani takes issue with the marginal status accorded to the Holocaust in Britain's national and official discourses of commemoration. In the prologue to the programme, he underscores this marginalization by juxtaposing film coverage of the large-scale national war commemorations held annually at the monumental Cenotaph in London, attended by the head of state, the prime minister and other Government ministers, with the low-key ceremony held at the obscure and unassuming Holocaust memorial in Hyde Park, where British Jews congregate to commemorate the Holocaust. He also points out the centrality of Britain's war memory to British heritage and how it is a cornerstone of national identity, arguing that Britain's involvement in the Holocaust means that this catastrophe is clearly 'part of British history' and should therefore be inserted into that memory. He explains how Britain's response to the Jewish plight was not altogether unproblematic, asserting for example that Britain closed the doors of Palestine to Jewish refugees in spite of having knowledge about the 'Final Solution'. In arguing for a Holocaust museum in Britain, the historian states his agenda clearly: Britain should confront this aspect of its past and

Britain's marginalized Jewish war memory should be inserted into Britain's official memory of the war.

The third and final of these programmes, 'Genocide', also alluded to Britain's response to the plight of European Jewry. However, as we have seen in the last chapter, whilst it suggests the inadequacy of the response through the strategic juxtaposing of selected testimony, the treatment of this issue is ambiguous. The extent to which the reaction of the House of Commons is elaborated through Eden's testimony and the allusion to its press coverage could reasonably be interpreted as reinforcing the moral underpinnings of Britain's war memory.

ITV and Channel Four

VE Day commemorations programming

Like both BBC channels, ITV also featured VE Day programming. This popular channel broadcast 7 hours and 10 minutes, comprising thirteen programmes, to commemorate VE Day from 16 April to 9 May. As in the VE Day programming on ITV's mainstream rival channel BBC 1, the Holocaust did not loom large. ITV provided coverage of the various commemorations events held across the country as well as documentaries which focused on life on the home front and experiences of British servicemen. As part of its VE Day programming, this channel featured three 30-minute documentaries entitled *Londoners at War*. As the title suggests, these documentaries examined the experiences of Londoners during the War. One of these instalments, *A Schindler Survivor*, aired on 9 May, examined the wartime experience of a Jewish Londoner, Edgar Durtheimer. He recounts his story as he makes a journey of remembrance to Poland and then Israel to the grave of Oskar Schindler to pay homage to the man who saved his life. This programme was conceived of and transmitted in the wake of Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List*, which received its theatrical premiere in Britain the year before. It therefore appeals to the interest that was recently elicited by the film. However, *Londoners at War* differs somewhat in its perspective. Unlike *Schindler's List*, this programme privileges a survivor-centred rather than a Schindler-centred account of events. Despite the feel-good factor that characterized this programme in its emphasis on redemption rather than

destruction, it nevertheless focused on the Jewish wartime experience. This was the only programme on ITV or Channel 4 broadcast to commemorate VE Day that related to the Holocaust. While to a limited degree Britain's war memory emerged as pluralistic on ITV, there was nothing to undermine its moral essence: there was no reference to Britain's response to the Holocaust on this most widely viewed of all the channels.

The VE Day programming on C4 was quantitatively inferior to all the other channels. It broadcast 3 hours and 20 minutes of programming, which comprised a series of 10 minute programmes entitled *Loved Ones* between 1 and 6 May inclusive, featuring personal tributes to lost relatives. Attesting to the centrality of Britain's war memory to national identity, VE Day celebrations were written into that week's episode of the soap *Brookside,* aired on 3 May. Otherwise, in accordance with its remit to differentiate its programming from that of ITV, C4 provided alternative viewing to the VE Day celebrations by transmitting live coverage of a glamrock concert throughout the VE Day weekend. According to the programme synopses in the *Radio Times*, C4's VE Day programming contained no references whatever to the Holocaust.

C4 did, however, differentiate itself from ITV in another way, which was far more remarkable than its coverage of the concert. If neither ITV nor C4 broadcast a season of Holocaust commemorations programming in the style of BBC 2, all of C4's four documentaries centring on the Second World War period and broadcast in the course of 1995 focused exclusively on Holocaust-related themes. One of these was broadcast in commemoration of the Holocaust. This was the hour-and-a-half long documentary *Liberation*, which was transmitted on 22 January, five days before the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Like *What Did You Do in the War Auntie?, News 45* and *Richard Dimbleby at Belsen,* it linked Britain to the Holocaust at the moment of the liberation. It narrated the liberation of the Nazi camps through a succession of eyewitness testimonies provided by the Allied liberators: the Russians, the Americans and the British. These were unified by a narrator who contextualized each testimony by providing rudimentary information about some of the camps and the dates of their liberation. The documentary also employed archive film footage to add historical authenticity to the testimonies and to press home the horrors of the camps. With the

exception of this and the two-hour long documentary *Victory*, which is examined below, neither C4 nor ITV featured any references to Britain's links to the Holocaust.[35]

Victory*: Perpetuating a myth*

Victory was a major international co-production televised by C4 on 3 August. Its transmission coincided with neither the fiftieth anniversary commemorations of the liberation of Auschwitz in January nor with those of VE Day in May. Therefore, it was not framed by a call to remember in the way that most of the Holocaust-related programming was during 1995. That said, *Victory* is of particular interest as it was the only programme that linked the British war effort to the fate of the Jews not only at the point of the liberations of the Nazi camps, but at many other junctures too. This documentary, however, linked the two strands in an ambiguous way. If *Bringing the Holocaust Home* went some way towards demythologizing Britain's war memory by calling into question its moral and monolithic underpinnings, *Victory* fed into the popular mythology surrounding Britain's war effort. According to this documentary, the aim of the Allied war effort was to deliver Europe's Jews from Nazi persecution, although this is never stated explicitly.

Victory chronicles the main events of the Allied war effort in Europe and the Nazis' war against the Jews. It narrates both strands from 1942 when Hitler was 'master of Europe'. Having explained which European territories had fallen to Hitler and his plans to expand further east, the documentary proceeds to depict some of the key Allied military campaigns: the nocturnal bombing raids on German cities, the advance into Sicily, the surrender of Italy, the D-Day landings in Normandy, the landings in Southern France, the Battle of Berlin, and the liberation of Paris. The war effort on the British and American home fronts is also depicted. Interwoven throughout are depictions of and references to some of the key points in the Nazis' campaign against the Jews. In its overall structure the documentary is committed to representing the unfolding of the 'Final Solution' as much as it is to the war effort, thereby privileging neither the Allied nor the Jewish strand of the Second World War. The attendant effect is that the Holocaust emerges as a central part of the War.

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[35] The other two documentaries broadcast by C4 were the aforementioned *Hitler Stole my Ideas* and *Witness: Drancy*, tx. 5 January 1995.

Formally, *Victory* is unique among all other Holocaust-related programmes aired during 1995 in that it is constructed almost entirely from spliced-together archive film footage. But it also relies heavily on a number of other authentic archive materials such as contemporary photographs, posters, stamps, diary pages and press cuttings to act as hard evidence in support of its narration. There are neither interviews nor eye-witness testimonies. *Victory* strives to present a version of the past that is as unmediated as possible. By eschewing interviews and eye-witness testimonies it also eschews any reliance upon relatively distant memories to recount the past: the personalized accounts of Jewish persecution and resistance are extracted from hidden diaries or reports written shortly after the events they depict. Nor is there even any recourse to memoirs. Memoirs differ from diaries and reports, in that more time usually elapses between the original event and its subsequent recording. This necessitates a greater reliance upon long-term memory, which may appear to increase the potential for distortion of the original memorial trace. *Victory*'s almost obsessive privileging of contemporary historical discourse over memoirs and testimonies suggests a determination to stake out a claim to historical authenticity and objective truth.

This claim to historical and objective truth throughout the documentary is, however, in the service of a problematic agenda: to cast the conflict as one fought to save European Jewry. If this is not explicitly stated, it is implicit throughout the documentary. *Victory* opens with an image of Hitler that fills the frame; it is 1 January 1942. The events that are subsequently depicted function to define him as the enemy. To this end, the narrator reveals Hitler's endeavours to expand his empire further eastward. The documentary proceeds to depict the Wannsee Conference held in Berlin on 20 January 1942 and explains how the plans for the 'Final Solution' were mapped out. However, the particular way in which the image of Hitler and the depictions of these events are juxtaposed with images of the Allies suggests that Hitler was fought to prevent both the expansion of the Third Reich and, above all, the implementation of the 'Final Solution'. Throughout the programme, the manner in which archive film footage representing the Jewish plight and that representing the Allied military campaigns are crosscut continuously suggests this.

To illustrate, *Victory* depicts the German occupation of France and enumerates the persecutory measures meted out against the Jews in Paris. This depiction immediately cuts to that of the Allies preparing to invade France. Further pursuing this

mode of crosscutting, after featuring a scene in which Goebbels delivered a speech at a press conference disclosing his plans to have 48,000 Berlin Jews deported to the east, the narrator reveals that detailed notes of the speech reached England eight months later. This scene is directly followed by an account of the Allied nocturnal air raids on Germany's cities as if to suggest the raids were motivated by this intelligence. The most explicit link made between the Allied war effort and the genocide of the Jews can be found when pictorial and narratorial allusions to these two strands are made in the same frame. Pages extracted from Anne Frank's diary, attesting to her knowledge of the invasion and the advancing Allied front, are superimposed on film footage depicting the Normandy landings.

The most striking aspect of all, however, is the suggestive way in which coverage of the liberation of the camps is juxtaposed with the only piece of film made in the present towards the close of *Victory*. This contemporary film features a long shot of a military cemetery where endless rows of crosses extend to the horizon, underscoring the human cost of the conflict. The immediate proximity of this image to the depiction of the liberations of the camps reinforces the view that the sacrifices made by the servicemen were motivated by the Holocaust. In 1945, images of the liberation of Belsen were used to demonize the enemy and retroactively justify the British war effort. Fifty years on, this documentary employs images of the liberation in a similar vein. Tony Kushner has suggested that

> After 1945 a popular mythology started to develop that Britiain had actually fought the war to end Nazi atrocities and even to save the Jews.

He then dismisses this re-invention of the war aim as 'an utter distortion of British responses to the Jewish plight'.[36] *Victory* feeds into this mythology. After the depiction of the liberations of the camps by the Allies, there are no further representations of military campaigns or achievements; it is followed by the scene of the military cemetery, which in turn is followed by Churchill's victory speech. His speech is reproduced over a montage of VE Day street celebrations and scenes already featured in the documentary. The implication here is that Europe's Jews were saved and therefore the Allied mission had been accomplished. Churchill addresses the crowds thus:

[36] Kushner (1997), p.12.

> My dear friends, this is your hour. This is not the victory of a party or any class. We were the first in this ancient island to draw the sword against tyranny. After a while we were left all alone, against the most tremendous military power that has been seen. The lights went out and the bombs came down, but every man and woman in the country had no thought to quit the struggle. I'd say that in the long years to come, not only will the people of this island but of the world, whenever the bird of freedom chirps in human hearts, look back at what we've done, then will say: 'Do not despair, do not yield to violence and tyranny, march straight forward and die if need be, unconquered.'

Viewed in the context of the documentary, the tyranny to which Churchill alludes in his speech can only be read as the Nazis' genocidal campaign. Similarly, Churchill's suggestion that 'not only will the people of this island but of the world [...] look back at what we've done' refers to Britain's success in saving many of Europe's Jews. Churchill's VE Day speech sowed the seeds of Britain's war memory at an early stage. This recourse to it, replete as it is with self-congratulatory rhetoric, suggests an attempt to appeal to sentiments of national pride. This documentary's implicit assertion that Britain fought the War to save the Jews of Europe from persecution and extermination connects Britain to the Holocaust not in a way that disturbs the moral uprightness that is central to Britain's war memory, but rather in a way that positively augments it.

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During 1995, television made a remarkable contribution to Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust. At a total of just over 43 hours, there was more Holocaust-related programming than during any other year in the history of British television. This was part of a wider and more general upsurge of Holocaust memory in Britain as the close of the millennium approached. In the early nineties, the Holocaust had become 'perhaps for the first time, an issue of national importance in the United Kingdom'.[37] 1995 saw the opening in Nottinghamshire of the successful Beth Shalom, the first Holocaust Memorial and Education Centre in Britain. The decade culminated in the Government's

[37] Kushner (1991), p. 349.

announcement of an annual Holocaust Memorial Day and the unveiling of the major permanent Holocaust exhibition at the Imperial War Museum.[38] During the same year a major international conference on the Holocaust, *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in the Age of Genocide,* was held in London and Oxford. In tandem with this event, a large gathering of first and second generation Holocaust survivors was organized in London. In terms of overall quantity, Holocaust programming was certainly in line with the trend towards assigning greater importance to this catastrophe in Britain's collective memory. Yet the uneven distribution of these programmes across the four terrestrial channels, combined with their selective absence in the context of VE Day commemorations programming, points to certain limits to that development.

The Imperial War Museum is the official custodian of Britain's war memory. By housing the major permanent Holocaust exhibition within this national institution, the Holocaust was cast as an important part of this memory. In the television landscape of 1995, however, Britain's war memory appeared to be too precious to grant the wartime experiences of Europe's Jews a prominent place within it. Ultimately, the distribution of programmes commemorating their wartime fate across the channels as a proportion of the general war commemorations programming meant that Britain's dominant war memory remained largely undisturbed.

The few minutes that BBC 1 devoted to the Holocaust in its VE Day programming did little to disturb the predominantly celebratory nature of Britain's war memory. What is more, this channel of 'broad appeal', which is regarded as a national institution suffused with authority, urged the British television-viewing public to remember the plight of European Jewry only insofar as it contributed positively to Britain's war memory: the only memorial trace of Britain's connection to the Holocaust was the liberation of Belsen by British servicemen. By contrast, BBC 2 devoted just over half of its VE Day programming to the Jewish tragedy. As a result, Britain's war memory on this channel was more pluralistic, but by dint of this version appearing on this minority channel, it became a 'non-mainstream' version broadcast for 'special interests' to a limited audience.

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[38] According to Clifford Longley, member of the executive committee of the 'Remembering for the Future 2000' Holocaust conference held in London and Oxford, the exhibition was the largest of its kind in Europe. See: 'Sacred and Profane: Why the Holocaust is a tricky subject', in the *Daily Telegraph*, 22 October 1999, p. 31.

Similarly, *Bringing the Holocaust Home* and 'Genocide', the only programmes to be critical of Britain's wartime response to the plight of European Jewry, were broadcast as part of BBC 2's Holocaust commemorations programming the 'Remember Season', in January and thus in the context of Holocaust memory rather than Britain's war memory. As a result, their potential impact on the moral integrity of the latter was limited.

ITV was the only other channel to speak to the concerns of Britain's Jews in the context of VE Day programming. That said, this channel devoted but 30 minutes out of a total of 7 hours and 10 minutes to those concerns, leaving Britain's war memory largely intact. In the few hours of VE Day programming offered by C4, the concerns of British Jews went entirely unacknowledged. Whilst it is true that all of this channel's wartime documentary output in the course of 1995 privileged Holocaust-related themes, by transmitting *Victory* C4 perpetuated the myth that Britain's main war aim was to save Europe's Jews from annihilation. In doing so, this channel ultimately shored up the moral foundations of Britain's dominant war memory.

Whether intentional, subliminal or accidental on the part of programme makers and schedulers, the use of Holocaust memory at certain junctures in the televisual landscape of 1995 functioned to underline the monolithic nature and moral underpinnings of Britain's dominant war memory. Whilst the quantitative presence of televisual recollections of the Holocaust was an indication of the advances that had been made in terms of Holocaust remembrance in Britain, the broadcasting patterns coupled with selective amnesia suggested that Britain's war memory was too precious to grant 'what many see as the most significant episode of the twentieth century, if not in world history'[39] the place many would argue it deserves.

[39] Kushner (1991), p. 349.

Chapter 4

The BBC and Holocaust Memorial Day

Like anniversaries, the imminence of a new year or decade can act as a catalyst to reflect on, contemplate, and draw lessons from past events. This retrospective urge took on new proportions with the advance of at once a new century and millennium, and retrospective initiatives abounded in all media and cultural forms. This temporal milestone served to fulfil an edifying, sanctifying or pedagogic function in preparation for the passage into the next era. In this context, the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research was initiated by Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson in 1998. Out of this initiative sprang the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, an intergovernmental conference on education, remembrance and research held in 2000 in Stockholm. At the conference, Britain announced its intention to hold an annual Holocaust Memorial Day.[1] Similarly, the permanent Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum was conceived of as a millennium project, and was declared open on 6 June 2000 by HM the Queen.[2] The cascade of initiatives in various cultural spheres that anticipated and coincided with this juncture combined to form an apogee in the evolution of Holocaust memory in Britain.

The drive to remember this particular catastrophe assumed a greater urgency with the knowledge that, within a single generation, these crimes against humanity would no longer be part of living memory as survivor and other eyewitness numbers dwindle.[3] Testimonies can serve to complement existing hard historical evidence by

[1] For information on the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, see: www.holocausttaskforce.org

[2] Suzanne Bardgett, 'Clipped and British', in *Perspectives*, winter 2000, p. 18.

[3] It seems appropriate at this juncture to mention the death of Rudolf Vrba, who bore witness to his experience in Auschwitz in 'Genocide' and *Shoah,* at 81 years old on 27 March 2006. It is one of life's ironies that only as their numbers diminish do survivors loom ever larger in collective memory. Witness, for example, the 600 strong presence of survivors at the Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony in 2005 to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the camps. The main objective of the event was to listen to, learn from and respect the survivors. Witness too, the major drives to make audiovisual recordings of as many survivor testimonies as possible by the Imperial War Museum, the Spielberg Foundation in the United States, Yad Vashem in Israel and the Centre de documentation juive contemporaine in France. This is in stark contrast to lack of interest during earlier post-war decades.

individuating the colossal crime, by adding to it an emotional dimension, and by increasing its immediacy as well as helping to dispel incredulity.[4] As living memory of these heinous transgressions recedes, new generations emerge for whom the Holocaust will be a distant historical event of the previous century and millennium. The increase in Holocaust-related initiatives can thus partly be explained by the need to devise effective strategies to captivate the interest of these generations and make them attentive to the impact of this event on the Jewish community and other persecuted groups as well as to its implications for humanity at large. Another factor is the increasing willingness of members of the Jewish community, with no firsthand experience of the Holocaust, to engage with the catastrophe to bolster a sense of Jewish identity.[5]

The influence of American initiatives, which have themselves been influenced by the factors mentioned above, must also be acknowledged. *Schindler's List* can be viewed as an example *par excellence*. Yosefa Loshitzky sees the film as a crystallization of 'the great locus of [...] angst' borne of 'the gradual disappearance of Holocaust survivors.'[6] Referring to discourses surrounding the film around the time of its theatrical release in the United States, Jeffrey Shandler points out that 'much has been made of *Schindler's List* as an affirmation of Spielberg's Jewish identity'.[7] As evidence, he points to an interview in which Steven Spielberg confirmed his desire to make the film as 'something that would confirm my Judaism to my family and myself'.[8] As a direct consequence of the film's theatrical release in Britain in 1994, interest in the catastrophe increased. Survivors have testified to an upsurge in demand for their eyewitness accounts in the wake of its release. It has also been observed that the establishing of the

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[4] The desire to dispel incredulity and create a record of the Nazis' most heinous crimes was one of the principal drives behind Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*. Firsthand experiential accounts from different perspectives from across the globe were collated in an endeavour to provide unimpeachable proof-positive of their occurrence; witnesses unknowingly corroborated each other's testimonies.

[5] For a critique of this latter, see: Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory: The American Experience* (London, Bloomsbury, 2000).

[6] Yosefa Loshitzky, 'Introduction', in Yosefa Loshitzky, ed., *Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on* Schindler's List (Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 1-17, p. 3

[7] Jeffrey Shandler, 'Schindler's Discourse', in Ibid., pp. 152-68, p. 162.

[8] Steven Spielberg quoted in Dotson Rader, 'We Can't Just Sit Back and Hope,' *Parade Magazine*, March 27, 1994, p. 7, in turn quoted in ibid.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington in 1993 called into question the absence of a similarly dedicated and permanent exhibition in Britain.[9]

The first HMD was held on 27 January 2001, a date that marked the fifty-sixth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. It was a state initiative supported by the Home Office and originally proposed by Labour MP Andrew Dismore in a Private Member's Bill in 1999 following his visit, with one hundred and fifty teachers, to Auschwitz-Birkenau organized by the Holocaust Educational Trust. In terms of official Holocaust-related initiatives in Britain, establishing a HMD was a milestone; remembering the Holocaust was given an official seal of authority as the state urged the public to remember.

Various related activities to mark HMD were planned and co-ordinated throughout Britain.[10] The centrepiece memorial project, however, was a national commemoration ceremony held at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, on Saturday evening, at the end of the Jewish Sabbath. As with the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps in 1995, television aimed to promote a widespread popular engagement with the Holocaust on the part of the British public, assisting the process of reflection and remembering on HMD. The BBC broadcast the inaugural ceremony live on its second channel, BBC 2, and on Radio Four, as *Reflections on the Holocaust: Holocaust Memorial Day.*[11]

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[9] This observation is made by Tony Kushner, see: 'Too Little, Too Late? Reflections on Britain's Holocaust Memorial Day', in *The Journal of Israeli History*, vol. 23, no.1. Spring 2004, pp. 116-29, p. 118. He also links the increased interest in the Holocaust to a growing commitment to multi-cultural and anti-racist initiatives since the 1970s, as alluded to in the previous chapter. A more critical view is adopted by Donald Bloxham, who suggests that this upsurge of memorial activity reflects a 'post-cold war liberal triumphalism' of which HMD is a part. Donald Bloxham, 'Britain's Holocaust Memorial Days: Reshaping the Past in the Service of the Present', in Sue Vice, ed., *Representing the Holocaust: In Honour of Bryan Burns* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 41-62, p. 57.

[10] The Local Government Association, which represents all 410 local authorities in England and Wales, encouraged all its member authorities to plan and co-ordinate local activities. See: Peter Smith, 'Local Councils and Holocaust Memorial Day', in *Perspectives*, winter 2000, p. 6.

[11] Tx. 27 January 2001, BBC 2.

At first sight, television might appear to have offered a relatively unmediated presentation of the ceremony for viewers at home, providing them with both a vicarious front-row seat and a roaming perspective in the tradition of the outside broadcast.[12] However, as will become clear, for the first time in its history the function of the BBC went far beyond the role of merely making an outside event accessible to television viewers at home.

As an outside broadcast, *Reflections on the Holocaust* belonged to a quintessential television genre with origins that can be traced back to the formative years of the medium. National ceremonies and events such as the annual Remembrance Sunday ceremony at the Cenotaph, anniversaries related to the two World Wars, coronations, royal birthdays, weddings and funerals, the state opening of Parliament and the Lord Mayor's Show are part of this generic tradition. The quality of liveness that is characteristic of this genre provides a unique viewing experience for the television audience. Yet, this television broadcast constituted a radical departure from the tradition to which it belonged. Unlike the broadcasts of state ceremonies and events that went before it, the BBC's level of involvement meant that both the event and its broadcast became a highly televisual enterprise. In the first part of this chapter, I will examine what contribution the BBC and television, as a specific medium, made to HMD.

Since *Reflections on the Holocaust* was part of a tradition of broadcasting major state events, the implication is that the Holocaust had become an event of great national significance. The content of the broadcast, combined with its place within a tradition that is replete with nationally specific occasions, implicitly inscribed the Holocaust into British history. Yet, the degree to which the content functioned in this way differed for the television and hall audiences respectively. The second part of this chapter will examine what contribution the broadcast of the inaugural ceremony, *Reflections on the Holocaust,* made to Holocaust memory.

In keeping with its self-perception as the national broadcaster, from the inauguration year of HMD to the sixtieth anniversary year of the liberation of the camps in 2005, the BBC took the lead among all the terrestrial broadcasters in marking the annual event. With the exception of the inauguration year of HMD, where the only other

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[12] The outside broadcast is characterized not by taking place outdoors, but rather by being an organized event that takes place away from the television studio and is transmitted live for television audiences to view as it unfolds.

terrestrial broadcaster to schedule a related programme was C4, the BBC was the sole terrestrial broadcaster to provide related programming. The BBC's output during the period since HMD was inaugurated has included some remarkable Holocaust-related audiovisual initiatives. The final part of this chapter will focus on the contribution of HMD to television, discussing the effects that a specific annual day of remembrance can have on the presence of this catastrophe in the television schedule. In this context, I will discuss the premiere of the classic Holocaust documentary film *Night and Fog*, which was broadcast by the BBC as part of its HMD programming in 2002, nearly fifty years after it was produced.[13]

The Contribution of Television to HMD

The role of the BBC

The level of participation of the BBC in not only broadcasting but also producing the inaugural ceremony for HMD, represented an entirely new role for the Corporation. It also represented a new way in which the medium contributed to collective memory of the Holocaust. When BBC television producer Daniel Brittain-Catlin approached the Home Office for the rights to broadcast the HMD inaugural ceremony, it soon became clear to him that the Home Office had little idea how to go about creating such an event. He suggested that the BBC could take creative control and the Home Office agreed. The BBC set up two teams, one to create the event and the other to create the broadcast.[14] The BBC orchestrated an event that combined testimony from survivors of the Holocaust and post-war genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia with artistic elements, such as musical performances, poetry and film inserts, as well as a key-note statement from Prime Minister Tony Blair. The Prince of Wales, leaders of the other main parties, and leading religious and community figures also attended the event.

The Home Office determined the timeframe of events to be remembered: references were to be made to post-war genocides, but the main focus was to be the pan-

[13] Tx. 27 January 2002, BBC Knowledge.

[14] This is an account of what Daniel Brittain-Catlin told the author in a personal communication, 11 April 2006.

European decimation of millions of Jews under the Nazi scourge.[15] Before the BBC had approached the Home Office, the latter had in place a committee of stakeholders in the event, which included the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Anne Frank Trust, the Pink Triangle Coalition and the Imperial War Museum. These stakeholders had already compiled a list of aspirations, which included the involvement of a multi-ethnic youth choir and the use of Richard Dimbleby's Belsen broadcast. The BBC producer Gaby Koppel determined the structure and form the event should take, and decided that film inserts should be woven throughout and high profile individuals participate.[16]

The fact that the Home Office agreed that a television broadcaster should create the national event was indicative of the perceived importance of the medium in the creation of Holocaust memory. More specifically, it consolidated and testified to the BBC's status as a national broadcaster with a strong public service responsibility. By the same token, the willingness of the BBC to be so involved was symptomatic of its self-perception as a national broadcaster with a strong public service identity. Indeed, within the BBC, such an initiative was deemed to be the preserve of the Corporation. As executive editor of events, Nick Vaughan-Barratt, put it:

> Without wanting to sound too much like the director-general, I do feel that nobody but the BBC would or could do this. Working on it was quite awe-inspiring, and, seeing everything coming together, you realise what an astonishing place this is to work.[17]

In essence, *Reflections on the Holocaust* was a public service broadcast. The BBC endeavoured to fulfil its public service responsibilities and to make a commitment to Holocaust remembrance in Britain over and above financial imperatives. Although the BBC had low expectations in respect of viewer ratings,[18] little expense was spared

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[15] See remarks by Gaby Koppel quoted in Philip Johnston, 'Anger over the 'forgotten' massacre', in *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 January 2001, p. 4.

[16] This account is based on a personal communication with Gaby Koppel, 6 April 2006.

[17] Emily Jones, 'Remember and be damned' from the online version of the BBC in-house journal *Ariel*, published on 27 February 2001.

[18] According to a report provided by BBC producers for the HMD Strategic Group meeting, Home Office, 8 February 2001. Viewer ratings are discussed later in this chapter.

by the BBC in producing the broadcast.[19] For example, the BBC enlisted its high profile World Affairs correspondent, John Simpson, to provide the commentary for the broadcast as well as despatching him along with camera crew and other personnel to Poland to make the introductory film insert about Auschwitz-Birkenau.[20] Despite the appearance of many high profile public figures and celebrities, the potential for the BBC to recoup expenses was limited by the programme's attachment to a specific time and place; it was a one-off production whose temporal and national specificity lent itself neither to re-broadcasting nor international sales.

Nevertheless, there were clear limitations to the degree to which the BBC was prepared to fulfil its obligations in this context. Its efforts at the level of production were not matched by a commensurate drive to ensure that the broadcast reach as large a mainstream audience as possible, with the ceremony being scheduled on the Corporation's second channel. Evidently, the BBC was not prepared to clear the schedule on its main channel. This forms a stark contrast with the fact that in 1995 the key official VE Day ceremonies were broadcast on the BBC's first channel. Viewed comparatively, a clear message is sent out: whilst the Holocaust is of great significance, its national resonance is nevertheless limited. Indeed, the BBC's anticipated viewing figures were largely borne of a conception that the 'vast majority of the population had no association' with this catastrophe.[21]

The tension between the significance of the Holocaust and its limited national resonance can also be glimpsed if the broadcasting of annual HMD and Remembrance Sunday ceremonies is viewed in a comparative frame. As testament to the significance of the former, the then BBC Director General Greg Dyke committed the Corporation to broadcasting the national HMD ceremony on notable anniversaries, and it was in this

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[19] The Home Office financed the ceremony; the BBC the broadcast. Personal communication with Gaby Koppel, passim. Nor did the Home Office spare much expense as, for example, all but two of the eleven film inserts featured in the Hall were created specifically for the initiative. Among these was yet another permutation of Richard Dimbleby's Belsen material, set to a new compilation of archival film footage of the concentration camp.

[20] In other areas of HMD-related programming, however, it can be said that the BBC was more frugal. It took the opportunity to make maximum use of its possession of the rights to broadcast *Schindler's List,* by featuring it after the ceremony. According to BBC Information, the BBC had broadcast the film twice before and once since. Tx. 19 October 1997, BBC 1; 13 September 1998, BBC 2; and 16 March 2003, BBC 1.

[21] Brittain-Catlin, passim, who also revealed that the BBC anticipated viewing figures would reach approximately 1m, less than the actual 1.4m.

spirit that the 2005 ceremony, which marked the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the camps, was broadcast on BBC 2.[22] Yet, when compared to the broadcasting of the Remembrance Sunday ceremony every year on BBC 1, with highlights of the ceremony re-broadcast on BBC 2 later in the day, the national resonance of HMD pales into insignificance. Clearly, HMD is yet to take its place in national consciousness to the extent that some other national ceremonies have. The producer of the 2001 HMD broadcast acknowledged this, but he is optimistic that this 'may yet happen'.[23] To be sure, the inaugural ceremony represents a first step, and it is still early days if we recall that the Remembrance Sunday ceremony was invented in 1921. Notwithstanding the scheduling of the HMD ceremonies on BBC 2, the Corporation's degree of involvement in creating and broadcasting them plays a crucial role in assisting the process of assigning them greater national importance.

Breaking with tradition

Britain's first HMD was marked by an unprecedented level of involvement on the part of a broadcaster in a state event. The national ceremony and its broadcast broke with a long tradition in which the broadcaster's role had been typically limited to providing coverage, commentary and some input to ensure that the event worked for television. Throughout the ceremony, genocide was confronted through a diversity of cultural forms, yet the extent of the BBC's involvement meant that it became a highly televisual event, rendering the experience of guests in the hall significantly televisual.

First and foremost, a televisual aesthetic informed the overall formal character of the ceremony. The ceremony was a succession of performative and illustrative segments, which, whilst thematically linked, were nevertheless discrete and disparate multi-generic elements. Its form was reminiscent of the bricolage sensibility that characterizes broadcast television, in which discrete television programmes of different genres form its constituent parts.[24] This televisual quality was further augmented by the

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Jane Feuer seeks to refine Raymond Williams's conceptualization of television as sequence or flow, according to which the medium delivers a continuous stream, making it impossible to isolate individual texts for analysis. She argues that there is no need to isolate these texts because such segmentation is

use of large monitors as a device to deliver many of the segments. The use of such monitors has become standard practice at many kinds of live performances and events to render performers larger than life. They extend to the live audience the privileged perspective that is typically the preserve of television viewers at home.

Yet, the use of monitors in this way did not make the viewing experience uniquely televisual for the guests. Their viewing experience was largely hybrid, amalgamating at once a cinematic, televisual and live experience. Thus, the size of the monitors coupled with the act of watching them as a viewing community in a single location made the viewing experience of the audience in the hall partly reminiscent of that of a cinema audience, while what actually appeared on the monitors was marked by a televisual aesthetic. This is exemplified by the heavy reliance, throughout the event, on film inserts that took the form of short documentaries in a style typifying the television documentaries or news reports that pepper the schedules. Indeed, the film insert focusing on the Rwandan genocide was an extract from Fergal Keane's award winning 1994 report 'A Journey into Darkness', for *Panorama.* Like the *Panorama* excerpt, other film inserts employed the direct address of a presenter that has typically set television apart from cinema.[25]

The practice of broadcasting only what appeared within the frame of the monitors during the screening of the film inserts further augmented the televisual quality of the viewing experience for the guests and the ceremony itself. It intermittently transformed the audience in the Hall from one that was watching a live event to one that was effectively watching broadcast television alongside viewers at home. Ultimately, the ceremony was a composite of broadcast television and live event.

A televisual aesthetic also informed the formal presentation of the respective testimonies of survivors Esther Brunstein and Roman Halter, which recalled the fragmenting of testimonies that is standard practice in historical and, more notably,

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already a property of the medium, preferring to characterize it as 'segmentation without closure'. See: Jane Feuer, 'The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology', in E. Ann Kaplan, ed. *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches, an Anthology* (The American Film Institute, L.A., 1983), pp.12-21, pp. 15-16.

[25] It is true, of course, that stylistic and formal devices employed in television documentaries can also be found in cinematic productions. An example of this is *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport,* dir. Mark Jonathan Harris, UK/USA, 2000, a documentary film, which features talking head testimonies combined with narration, film reconstruction and archival film. Yet it remains that, rather than blurring the boundaries between the two practices, cinematic productions of this kind are clearly informed by a televisual aesthetic.

Holocaust television documentaries. Rather than these survivors' entire narratives of persecution being delivered one after the other, segments from each were alternated. The televisual quality of this formal strategy was further accentuated by the survivors' appearance on the monitors that flanked the stage. This device directed the gaze and attention of the audience from one speaker to the other as they each delivered their short fragments.

The presentation of Richard Dimbleby's 1945 radio recording describing conditions at Belsen was similarly televisual. It exemplified the medium's capacity to re-circulate and transmit other media forms. Although the inclusion of the recording was not specifically at the behest of the BBC, it served as a reminder of the broadcaster's historic radio reporting of Belsen. Whilst television's ability to transmit other media forms and the frequency with which it does so sets it apart from other media, this capacity has also hindered the conceptualization of the medium as a distinct formal entity as opposed to merely a conduit for those other media.[26] The film insert was a multi-media composite of Richard Dimbleby's extracts; archival film footage of the liberation originally made for newsreels; and music score lifted from a cinematic film. The extracts were showcased in a way that recalled the style in which they have been previously presented on television. Originally from a report intended to be listened to on broadcast radio without the aid of the moving image, these extracts were presented so that they could be experienced as television by spectators at the event and viewers at home alike.

Almost sixty years of television had intervened since Richard Dimbleby's radio broadcast was first heard in 1945. During these years the staple mode of presentation of extracts from his report had been highly televisual. In an era where the moving image is all-pervasive, the power of an aural account alone was seemingly felt to be inadequate. The overlaying of Richard Dimbleby's extracts with an emotive music score to consolidate their pathos was another way in which producers chose not to rely solely upon the emotive tones and carefully chosen words of Richard Dimbleby. The score both recalled and anticipated *Schindler's List,* which directly followed the broadcast of

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[26] See: Jane Feuer, passim., especially p. 12.

the ceremony, as identical music functions as an aural motif to signpost the film's most poignant scenes.

The BBC's endeavour to create a ceremony that would be suitable for 'our era' resulted in a highly televisual event.[27] The acceptability of such an event to the audience in the Hall owes much to the fact that television is an omnipresent force, whose aesthetic has become an all-pervasive and naturalized part of contemporary consciousness and culture of modern industrialized societies. Most households in these societies own at least one television set, which, in many instances, is constantly switched on while the home is occupied. More specifically, it owes much to the fact that the aesthetics of television have had a structuring influence on collective memory of the Holocaust and other instances of genocide, in that television has played a primordial role in creating the collective memory associated with these atrocities in Britain.

The way in which television has done this is heavily informed and structured by representational devices and strategies such as: the direct address of a presenter, narration, edited film often overlaid with music score, the processing and circulating of many other cultural and media forms, edited and fragmented eye-witness testimonies, dramatic reconstruction, and so on. HMD and its broadcast were both symptomatic of and part of this phenomenon, and represented another example of television's contribution to collective memory; in this instance, however, with the added official seal of authority.

Liveness and the outside broadcast

Certain television programmes remain welded to their particular moment of broadcast, in that they are unlikely to be rebroadcast or to be made available for purchase because they are inexorably associated with a specific and transient occasion. This holds particularly true of certain outside broadcasts, such as official anniversary commemoration ceremonies relating to the two World Wars, trooping the colour, and annual Remembrance Sunday ceremonies. *Reflections on the Holocaust* can be added to this generic grouping. Typically, outside broadcasts preserve the medium's once characteristic ephemeral quality.

[27] Nick Vaughan-Barratt quoted in, Jones (2001).

Prior to the advent of the home video cassette recorder (VCR), one of the defining characteristics of television was the attachment of its programmes to the particular moment of their broadcast or rebroadcast. Programmes could only be viewed again if and when they were rebroadcast; television was intangible and unseizable. However, the arrival of the home VCR brought about some signal changes to television's ephemeral quality; it liberated programmes from their particular moment of broadcast by enabling the public to time-shift them. More significantly, it became possible to view and re-view programmes at will. Fewer television programmes are now left to repose in television archives until they are retrieved for repeat broadcasting, if at all. A whole industry has sprung up around the sale of television programmes. Documentary, drama, comedy, sitcom, soap, quiz show, reality show, to name but a few genres, have all become available on video cassette and, in more recent years, DVD formats for consumers to collect and view at their leisure, much in the same way as films. Indeed, it is not unusual for television programmes to achieve a cultural status and longevity akin to films. Television programmes, like cinematic films, have become increasingly collectible.

Reflections on the Holocaust is unlikely to be rebroadcast as it was conceived of and created as Britain's first national commemoration of the Holocaust. Its reappearance in the schedules on any subsequent date would cast an anachronistic shadow over the programme. Two days later, the BBC rebroadcast, as part of its commemorative programming on BBC Knowledge, the documentary *The Last Days*, which it originally broadcast with the ceremony as part of its corpus 'Reflections on the Holocaust' on BBC 2.[28] However, it did not rebroadcast the ceremony. Predictably, the ceremony has not been made commercially available to the general public in any format.

Time-shifting *Reflections on the Holocaust* can compromise its appeal. In broadcasting the HMD ceremony, television reprised its original and essential role, capturing an event in real time that, while planned and scripted for the most part, could not be edited to eliminate any unexpected errors. Television viewers could, for example, see and hear Holocaust survivors Esther Brunstein and Roman Halter as they delivered

[28] *The Last Days*, tx. 27 January, BBC 2 and (rpt.) 29 January 2001, BBC Knowledge. As part of its commemorative programming on the same evening BBC Knowledge also broadcast the documentaries *Varian Fry: The Artist's Schindler* and *Reputations*: 'Simon Wiesenthal', and the film dramatization *The Wannsee Conference/ Wannseekonferenz*, dir. Heinz Schirk, Germany, 1984.

their testimonies; as well as media figures such as Emma Thompson and Bob Geldof as they recited a poem and delivered a tribute to the righteous in real time.

Furthermore, the act of watching an event live, as part of a viewing community that extends beyond members of the television audience to also encompass the real-life audience of the event, can become an integral part of the viewing experience, even more so if prominent public figures are present in the real-life audience. The audience that congregated in Methodist Hall for the HMD ceremony was made up of many such public figures as well as the bearers of first-hand experiential memory of the Holocaust: survivors and liberators, some of whom also took to the stage like Esther Brunstein and Roman Halter. Through the act of viewing, members of the television audience became coterminous with these prominent public figures, in that they were also spectators of the performances, readings and screenings held in the Hall.

Nonetheless, whilst the event was captured in real-time, the intervention of the camera along with editing techniques ensured that audiences at home were offered a mediated version of the event. In the tradition of television's capacity to provide a privileged front-row seat to audiences at home, speakers and performers filled the camera's frame. But the viewer was offered more than just a front-row seat. The use of multiple cameras and zoom lenses meant that key public figures and guests in the Hall could be isolated for the television audience. In tandem with the camera, John Simpson's commentary served to direct the gaze and attention of the audience, and to provide additional background information. It also served to guide the television audience through the event in the same way as the official written programme did for the guests in the Hall, identifying speakers and performers.

Television was instrumental in transforming what would otherwise have been a private and exclusive affair, accessed with a state invitation only, into an affair that was public and inclusive; the medium permitted viewing access to all, in the spirit of its democratizing potential.

The appeal of quintessential television

The ability of television to simultaneously capture and transmit live events audiovisually sets it apart from other media forms and has done so since its inception. Another defining and ubiquitous, though not entirely exclusive, feature of television is its direct

address of the audience. This device is most commonly employed in such genres as news and sports programmes, chat, talk and reality shows and so on, but can also be identified in documentaries as well as in the outside broadcast. During the HMD ceremony, none of the participants addressed the television audience directly. In an outside broadcast the television audience is most commonly addressed by a commentator. They can appear within the frame, simulating eye contact with the television viewer while delivering their commentary, or they can address the viewer directly from outside the frame of the camera by acknowledging the viewer in their use of the second person singular pronoun. In the latter instance, without the use of this pronoun, the commentary becomes narration. In the case of *Reflections on the Holocaust,* the disembodied voice of John Simpson provided the commentary from outside the frame of the television camera. Rather than solely narrating the event, he addressed the audience directly in his commentary through his frequent use of the second person singular pronoun.

As a broadcast that combined the qualities of liveness and direct address, *Reflections on the Holocaust* was quintessential television in its traditional form. A little over half a century earlier, John K. Newnham could confidently pronounce that there 'you have the strongest appeal of television. It is life while it is happening'.[29] Yet, within the televisual landscape of today, this no longer holds true; live broadcasts do not necessarily command larger audience shares than recorded programmes. This is reflected in the viewing figures of the national ceremony as compared with those of other related terrestrial broadcasts to mark both the inaugural and subsequent HMDs, all of which took a different generic form.

The centrepiece televisual initiative was complemented by two other productions in the BBC's Saturday evening schedule. The first of these was the aforementioned documentary *The Last Days,* which featured testimonies from American Jews who returned to their former homes in Hungary; the second, *Schindler's List.* Another televisual offering to mark the day was *Battle for the Holocaust,* a British made-for-television documentary shown on C4. This was a polemical analysis of the multiple ways in which the memory of the Holocaust has been deployed for political, economic

[29] John K. Newnham, *Television Behind the Scenes* (London, Convoy Publications, 1948), p. 11 quoted in Charles Barr, "They Think It's All Over': The Dramatic Legacy of Live Television', in John Hill and Martin McLoone, eds., *Big Picture, Small Screen: The Relations Between Film and Television* (Luton, University of Luton Press, 1996), pp. 47-75, p. 51.

and social ends throughout the post-war era. The BBC's corpus of commemorative programmes concluded the following day with Sunday's instalment of *Songs of Praise.*[30] Here, the event was marked by the programme's presenter accompanying Mayer Bornsztyk, a British Jewish survivor, on his return to Poland with two younger generations of his family. The programme also showcased Britain's first Holocaust Centre, Beth Shalom, as well as featuring Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks reflecting on the implications of the Holocaust.

The national ceremony was watched by an estimated 1.4 million viewers, a figure that exceeded those of the two aforementioned documentaries, *The Last Days* and *Battle for the Holocaust*, which achieved 1.15 and 0.8 million, respectively. We have already seen that the figure also exceeded the expectations of the BBC. But the viewing figures of two dramatisations broadcast to mark HMD in 2001 and 2002 far exceeded those of the national ceremony; *Schindler's List* shown in 2001 attracted 2.5 million viewers, and *Conspiracy* commanded 4 million viewers in the following year.[31] At first sight, the much higher viewing figures of *Schindler's List* and *Conspiracy* suggest that viewers tend to prefer dramatized representations of the Holocaust. Such conclusions, however, need to be qualified by a consideration of scheduling patterns and viewing preferences.

During the week particular genres are more salient in the schedules on specific days. Since broadcasters schedule programmes to maximize ratings the schedules are a good indicator of viewing preferences. The schedules on Friday and Saturday evenings suggest that viewing preferences are primarily for light entertainment-oriented programming as they are dominated by such genres as quiz, comedy and reality shows, dramas, sitcoms and the like. The programming offered by BBC 2 on these evenings, however, is anomalous within the overall terrestrial schedule, in that factual fare prevails on this channel. This difference is not so pronounced during the rest of the week, when factual programming is available across the whole of the terrestrial schedule. The six-part documentary series *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the 'Final Solution'*, which, like *Conspiracy,* was a new Holocaust-related BBC production, and which was broadcast to mark HMD on the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of

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[30] Tx. 28 January, 2001, BBC 2.

[31] *Schindler's List*, tx. 27 January 2001, BBC 2.

Auschwitz in 2005, commanded viewing figures as high as *Conspiracy*. It went out on Tuesday evenings. *The Last Days* and *Reflections on the Holocaust* shared their place in the terrestrial schedule with such radically divergent fare as *Dad's Army, Jim Davidson's Generation Game, The National Lottery Jet Set,* and *Casualty* on BBC 1; and *Catchphrase, Popstars, Blind Date* and *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* on ITV. With the exception of *Battle for the Holocaust,* C4's programming was also entertainment-oriented with the reality show *The 1940s House*.

Creating a television audience

The relatively modest viewer ratings achieved by the ceremony belie the drive on the part of the BBC to make the ceremony appeal to television audiences. The producer of the broadcast, Daniel Brittain-Catlin, stated that

> We have tried to create a form of ceremony suitable for 2001 for both TV audiences and the people in the Hall. The Remembrance Sunday ceremony at the Cenotaph was invented in the twenties and this is something for our era.[32]

The drive to capture and retain the interest of the television audience gave rise to some additional material specifically created for that audience in the broadcast. No fewer than eight film inserts were broadcast and also screened during the ceremony to the spectators in the Hall. These were supplemented by a further three created for the broadcast and destined solely for the television audience. To convey the past, all three employed visual devices that are ubiquitous in historical documentary. Indeed, they drew on the whole gamut of available techniques to evoke periods that predated television. The first employed present-day film of the historical site of Auschwitz-Birkenau to show the surviving physical traces of the past. This formed the backdrop against which John Simpson outlined the centrality of the camp to the Holocaust and provided a brief account of what unfolded there. The second employed black and white archival film footage from the thirties to accompany a critical account of Britain's response to the Jewish refugee crisis before the outbreak of war. The third and final supplementary insert employed texts and archival documents from the twelfth century

[32] Quoted in Geoff Ellis, 'Holocaust Memorial Day', in the *Radio Times*, 27 January – 2 February 2001, p. 64.

along with present-day film to illustrate John Simpson's account of the persecution of Jews in medieval England.

The combined use in the first and third film inserts of the high-profile BBC Foreign Affairs Editor John Simpson to provide commentary on location was highly evocative of television news reports, lending a tone of urgency and immediacy to the subject matter. His formidable and authoritative public persona within British news broadcasting culture and his coverage of major news events lent gravitas to the broadcast for television viewers. The foreign affairs editor was a strategic choice on the part of the producer, who felt that both his historical and contemporary expertise and his calm voice would provide the right tone for the occasion.[33]

The content of this supplementary material functioned to capture and retain the interest of the television audience in three distinctive ways. The first film insert served to persuade the television audience of the significance of the date chosen for the annual memorial day by suggesting that Auschwitz was the nadir of evil. As John Simpson put it at the beginning of his commentary: 'I don't know of a worse place than this anywhere on earth.' This was followed by his account of some of the appalling practices that took place in Auschwitz, in which he described how deportees were crammed into cattle trucks and how selections for the gas chambers were carried out on their arrival. He went on to lead the television audience into the one surviving gas chamber, into which, he pointed out, seven hundred people were crammed at a time, and then incinerated in the crematoria.[34]

This film insert also highlighted the significance of the date chosen for the annual HMD by elucidating its commemorative function for other communities. The closing sequence of the insert featured the thousand or so survivors assembling at the camp in Poland earlier in the day to lay a wreath in remembrance of victims who perished. Survivors engaging in the act of remembrance at Auschwitz were then juxtaposed with the audience back in London. Scenes of survivors at Auschwitz revealed to members of the television audience that by engaging in the act of

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[33] Brittain-Catlin, passim.

[34] It is also worth remarking that John Simpson's visit to the site of Auschwitz recalled Richard Dimbleby's return to the site of Belsen for *Panorama* in 1965. They both represent formidable broadcasting figures visiting the memorial site most significant to their times.

remembrance, they became part of a memorial community that extended beyond themselves and the audience in Methodist Hall. This effect was increased when John Simpson pointed out, as the audience in the Hall settled and awaited the start of the ceremony, that Germany, Sweden and Italy hold their national HMD on the same date. The television audience was thus invited to be part of an even larger international memorial community.

Both the second and third film inserts increased the specific appeal of the broadcast to the nationally circumscribed television audience. Respectively, they made the Holocaust pertinent to the television audience by outlining Britain's response to the Jewish refugee crisis of the thirties; and by underlining historical continuities between Nazi anti-Semitic and British practices of the past by explicitly drawing parallels between the treatment of Jews in medieval England and their treatment under the Nazis. The establishment of HMD in Britain was a contentious issue. It was within an atmosphere of conflicting public views that the BBC endeavoured to mark Britain's first HMD. These two inserts functioned to allay doubts about the establishment of an annual day to commemorate the Holocaust in Britain. As we shall see, they implicitly engaged with and confronted some of the terms of the debate triggered by the Government's proposal to establish an HMD.

The Contribution of *Reflections on the Holocaust* to Holocaust Memory

Dissenting voices

In producing the ceremony, the BBC was aware that it was embarking upon a project of great sensitivity. Producer Gaby Koppel was mindful of the need to achieve a balance at the ceremony. She revealed that we

> knew there would be controversy [...] There were going to be anti-Jewish people, Jewish people who didn't like what we're doing, people who were in who didn't like the style of it, and people who were out who felt excluded.[35]

[35] Quoted in Jones (2001).

The 'Statement of Commitment' drawn up by the Home Office for HMD was derived from the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust. The conference culminated in all the heads of delegations agreeing to sign the Declaration of the Stockholm Forum. The 'Statement of Commitment' contains seven imperatives distilled from the eight principles of the declaration. They include the promise to remember the victims of all genocide. The HMD inaugural ceremony's theme title 'Remembering Genocides. Lessons for the Future' reflected its conceptual breadth. It was, however, conceived of by the Home Office advisory group to commemorate only the victims of genocides committed since 1945 as well as those of the Holocaust.

As Britain's first HMD drew closer, the concern surrounding the Home Office's decision not to mention the Armenian massacre during the ceremony intensified.[36] The Home Office came under attack for this exclusion, which was believed by Armenian groups to be the result of diplomatic sensitivity.[37] The Government's official line was that the ceremony was going to be about the post-1945 period and, in any case, the Government did not recognize the massacre as genocide. Pressure from Armenian groups persuaded the Government to come to a compromise decision: while the massacre was not referred to during the ceremony itself, the Home Office tacitly acknowledged the plight of the Armenians by inviting the Armenian ambassador as well as the Bishop of the Armenian Church and other Armenian guests to the ceremony. In the BBC's independent commentary, however, John Simpson did make specific mention of the Armenian massacre as well as the controversy surrounding its exclusion from the ceremony. In so doing he was aware that he would

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[36] The Armenian massacre refers to the killing of 1,500,000 Armenians in 1915 and 1916 in eastern Turkey during the final years of the Ottoman Empire. The question of whether there was a systematic attempt by the government of the Ottoman Empire to eliminate the Armenian people is in dispute; whilst Turkey denies having committed genocide and the British government does not accept the massacre as genocide under the definition of the 1948 UN Convention, other countries, such as France, have officially accepted the killings as genocide. See: Philip Johnston, 'Why we continue to deny that this was genocide', in the *Daily Telegraph*, 11 January 2001, p. 4.

[37] See, for example: Kamal Ahmed, 'Holocaust Day mired in protest', in 21 January 2001, the *Observer*, p. 10-11; Philip Johnston, 'Anger over the 'forgotten' massacre', in the *Daily Telegraph*, 11 January 2001, p. 4; Robert Fisk, 'Remember the first holocaust', in 'The Friday Review', the *Independent*, 28 January 2000; Robert Fisk, 'Britain excludes Armenians from memorial day', in the *Independent*, 23 November 2000. In his critique of HMD, Donald Bloxham contends that the Government's unwillingness to recognize the Armenian massacre as genocide, and thus exclude it from the commemorative scope of HMD, undermines the need to remember as the driving force of the initiative. Bloxham (2003), p. 54.

> offend loads of people, but I just think it's too bad and we all know who was murdered in large numbers by whom. I don't think we should have to worry about diplomatic sensitivities on a day when we're commemorating those who died.[38]

Thus despite the Government's position, the BBC took a stand in its broadcast of the event and asserted its editorial independence over the issue of the Armenian massacre. Producer Daniel Brittain-Catlin felt that the plight of the Armenians needed to be addressed in the programme. As a direct consequence of his decision, Turks demonstrated outside the venue during the course of the event.[39]

The controversy went beyond which collectivity should or should not be commemorated at the ceremony, however. The Government's proposal to establish an annual day to commemorate the Holocaust was mired in controversy from the outset. Some commentators called the entire memorial project into question because catastrophes that they considered more closely linked to British history had not already been similarly memorialized. In this vein, Rhoda Koenig, writing in the *Daily Telegraph,* lambasted the Government's proposal.[40] She opined that Britain's involvement in the Holocaust in terms of official responses to the Jewish refugee crisis of the thirties, the signing of the Munich agreement, and the refusal to bomb concentration camps were inadequate reasons for its memorialization. She contrasted these 'sins of omission' with Britain's 'active participation in the slave trade' to argue that the links between Britain and the Holocaust are comparatively weak. Thus, since Britain was not a perpetrator nation, the reasons for holding such a day were less compelling than those associated with an equivalent national day to commemorate slavery. Nor did she believe that England's medieval anti-Semitism lent any weight to establishing an HMD. As she put it:

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[38] Quoted in Jones (2001).

[39] Brittain-Catlin, passim.

[40] See: Rhoda Koenig, 'The Holocaust is not the hub of history', in the *Daily Telegraph*, 19 October 1999, p. 26.

> Though England expelled its Jews in 1290, and we had to wait for Cromwell to be officially allowed back, we have more than made up for past injuries since. Britain has even had, in Disraeli, a Jewish prime minister [...][41]

Dan Stone feared that such a memorial day would 'relieve the community of the burden of memory', recalling James E. Young's contention that 'the impulse to memorialize events like the Holocaust may actually spring from an opposite and equal desire to forget them', essentially divesting 'ourselves of the obligation to remember.'[42] According to Dan Stone, after the grief elicited by HMD the public's need to consume other forms of memory work, such as museums, films or television programmes, during the rest of the year would diminish.[43] He also called into question the value of the Government's will to remember if at the same time it is implicated in other humanitarian crises. Another concern of his was that the memorial day would function to shore up the Government's moral superiority and relieve it from acting against contemporary discrimination.

Writing after the event, Donald Bloxham questioned the integrity of the whole enterprise. Echoing Dan Stone, he contended that HMD was pursued by the Government because it provided a context in which to cast itself as the antithesis of all that the Nazi regime represented, that at its heart the enterprise was an opportunistic political expedient. According to his interpretative model, the Government's implicit motive was to 'emphasize the positive values of Britain and of civilization', and, quoting Tony Blair, to provide ''an opportunity to re-assert the democratic and civil values which we share''.[44] He also took issue with the commemorative scope of the first and second HMDs as represented in the ceremonies and the educational pack. He argued that the efforts to commemorate particular groups were not always commensurate with 'their relevance in the Nazi world-view'.[45]

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[41] Ibid.

[42] James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (London, Yale University Press, 1993), p. 5.

[43] Dan Stone, 'Day of Remembrance or Day of Forgetting? Or, Why Britain Does Not Need a Holocaust Memorial Day', in *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2000, pp. 53-9, p. 56.

[44] Bloxham (2003), pp. 57-8.

[45] Ibid., pp. 54-7.

Some commentators opined that the use of the term 'Holocaust' to denote the annual remembrance day put too great an emphasis on the fate of European Jewry, and ran the risk of obliterating the memory of other victim groups of the Nazis as well as of other genocides. Other commentators did not welcome what they perceived as a persistent dwelling upon Jewish catastrophe at the expense of knowledge relating to other aspects of Jewish culture.[46] Unsurprisingly Greville Janner, the Chairman of the Holocaust Educational Trust, which was to be a stakeholder committee member of the event, enthusiastically welcomed the Government's willingness to officially remember the Holocaust. Writing in the *Express*, he put forward three reasons why this catastrophe should be recalled in Britain. Firstly, because it was 'the most massive attempt in [the twentieth] century to wipe out an entire people'; secondly, because it 'signals the dangers of allowing dictators to destroy democracy'; and, thirdly, because 'some half a million British Jewish citizens, like myself, suffered through the Holocaust'.[47] Irrespective of whether or not British Jews suffered through the catastrophe themselves, they may regard it as an integral part of their collective history. As highlighted in the previous chapter, David Cesarani has argued that they feel the Holocaust is 'now fundamental to their being'.[48]

Other contributors to the debate acknowledged these sentiments, but nevertheless argued that they provided no justification for HMD. Rabbi Yitzchak Y. Schochet revealed that 'the Holocaust strikes at the very core of my heart as a Jew and as a human', not least because he had lost many members of his family. Nevertheless, he felt further development of Holocaust education in schools was preferable to establishing an HMD.[49] Echoing David Cesarani, Natasha Walter wrote that for 'many non-observant Jews like myself, [the Holocaust] has become the touchstone of our

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[46] See, for example: Richard Ford, 'Doubts over day to mark Holocaust', in the *Times*, 19 October 1999, p. 6; Rabbi Yitzchak Y Schochet, 'Need for education, not more speeches', in the *Express*, 19 October 1999, p. 9; Readers letters, 'Remember suffering of all victims', in the *Times*, 23 October 1999, p. 23; Natasha Walter, 'We all need a day to mark our painful pasts', in 'The Monday Review' in the *Independent*, 24 January 2000.

[47] Greville Janner, 'A signal of respect for all persecution victims', in *The Express*, 19 October 1999, p. 9.

[48] Cesarani (1996), pp. 599-641, p. 634.

[49] Rabbi Yitzchak Y Schochet, 'Need for education not more speeches', in the *Express*, 19 October 1999, p. 9.

identity'.[50] But she also lamented what she viewed as a dearth of memorial work relating to the plight of other victim groups of the Nazis and of other catastrophes.

Another detractor argued that a memorial day would be inappropriate because the impact of the catastrophe on British citizens pales into insignificance when compared to its impact on other Europeans. As he put it:

> Most European countries have a Holocaust Day and that is wholly appropriate. Many of their citizens have powerful ties to those who died in concentration camps and it has directly touched their history.[51]

Within the debate surrounding the relevance of holding an annual HMD in this country, little or no mention was made of the Britons who were involved in the liberation of Belsen despite the devastating and long-lasting impact that witnessing the effects of Nazi persecution had on them.[52]

Inscribing the Holocaust into British history

The highly conspicuous editorial drive on the part of the BBC to make the Holocaust relevant to British society for the television audience was a way in which the broadcast implicitly engaged with some of the negative discourses that surrounded the establishment of a national HMD. Whilst the connections that British Jews and the involvement of Britons in the liberation of Belsen represent were not made in any of the film inserts, they were invoked for the television audience by John Simpson in his accompanying commentary to the broadcast. Between the film inserts, contributions and performances, he identified many survivors and at times explicitly specified that they were British. He also highlighted the presence of Major Richard Williams of the British 8th Corps, who was involved in the liberation of Belsen. It is not certain, however,

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[50] Natasha Walter, 'We all need a day to mark our painful pasts', in the *Independent*, 24 October 2000.

[51] 'Honour our heroes first', in *The Express*, 19 October 1999, p. 10. Whilst the author does not explicitly mention Jews, it is reasonable to assume that they are implied.

[52] In the context of his argument for the establishment of a national Holocaust museum in Britain, David Cesarani has specified a number of historical connections that Britain has with the Holocaust. These included the link represented by the liberation of Belsen by British troops. See: David Cesarani, 'Should Britain Have a National Holocaust Museum?', in *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, vol. 7, no. 3, winter 1998, pp. 17-27, pp. 19-20.

whether this was in response to criticism of HMD or whether it was related to the composition of the television audience, as will be discussed shortly.

By contrast, attempts to inscribe the Holocaust into British history for the audience in the Hall were much less pronounced. At times implicit links between Britain and the Holocaust went unmentioned, for example when British Jews provided their individual testimonies. Esther Brunstein and Roman Halter, both Jews hailing from Poland who settled in Britain, recounted their experiences of persecution. Ben Helfgott, also from Poland, did not provide any testimony, but expressed his gratitude that an HMD was being established in Britain. None of these survivors made any allusion to the fact that they had settled in Britain. Moreover, the liberation of Belsen was recalled during the ceremony by the film insert showcasing extracts from Richard Dimbleby's original despatch. It made no direct reference, however, to the role of British forces in the liberation of Belsen. It is also worth noting that the effacement of Britain's role in the liberation within the ceremony is consistent with a tradition identified in the first chapter of this thesis. According to this tradition, within representations of the liberation of Belsen, the British and Jewish strands of the narrative are seldom reconciled.

It might be argued, however, that the participation of Esther Brunstein, Roman Halter and Ben Helfgott linked Britain to the Holocaust irrespective of whether they referred explicitly to the fact that they had settled in this country. If their identity as British Jews was not already known from their public personas, it may have been deduced from their participation in such a nationally specific ceremony. Similarly, extracts from Richard Dimbleby's accounts have been showcased with such frequency in narratives of Britain's involvement in the camp's liberation that, within national collective memory of Belsen, his material has doubtless become redolent of that involvement.[53]

More explicit links were made during the ceremony through the provision of second-hand accounts detailing how contemporary British individuals were involved. As well as providing an account of her own experience of being separated as a child from her parents in order to gain refuge in Britain, Vera Gissing paid tribute to British 'righteous gentile' Sir Nicolas Winton. Under his initiative, six hundred and sixty-nine

[53] The BBC did not, however, pass up the opportunity to highlight its achievement in having the first war correspondent enter Belsen. This was stated in the introduction to Richard Dimbleby's recording in the film insert.

children, including Vera Gissing, were brought to Britain from the Sudetenland and were thus delivered from Nazi persecution. The lasting impact of his actions was also highlighted when Vera Gissing pointed out that he had, effectively, also saved the descendants of those children. Sir Bob Geldof explicitly paid tribute to other Britons, to whom he referred as righteous. He provided an account of how a group of British prisoners of war saved a starving Jewish girl by sharing their rations while on a death march.

Antithetical tones

The links between Britain and the Holocaust made in the ceremony itself were predominantly celebratory in tone, but a distinction was made between official and individual responses. In the testimony of Vera Gissing and the accompanying film insert, the plight of Czech Jews was imputed to Neville Chamberlain, who signed the Munich agreement with Hitler. By contrast, in her tribute to Sir Nicholas Winton, individual members of British society were cast as generous and altruistic in welcoming Czech child refugees into their homes under his initiative. Similarly generous and altruistic were the British prisoners of war to whom Sir Bob Geldof paid tribute in his contribution. Ultimately, individual Britons were feted.

The representation of British connections to the Holocaust was far less celebratory in tone for the television audience. The second made-for-television film insert was a critical appraisal of Britain's response to the Jewish refugee crisis of the thirties. It revealed that the Government refused to relax its strict immigration controls owing to high levels of unemployment, and that the Jewish community was obliged to take on full financial responsibility for incoming refugees to avoid their becoming a burden on the State.[54] The insert also highlighted the controversy sparked by the influx of thousands of Jews into Britain after Kristallnacht in 1938, and how the press incited anti-Jewish sentiments. As if to redeem Britain's record, the film insert concluded with the revelation that sixty thousand Jews were permitted entry before the outbreak of war. Nevertheless, the redemptive impact of this revelation was soon undermined when in his

[54] These strict immigration controls had been instituted in 1919. Accordingly, immigrants were permitted entry into Britain only in cases where they either had a work permit or were able to show proof of financial independence. It was only after Kristallnacht that the controls were relaxed in response to public outrage. See: Cesarani, (1996), pp. 599 – 641, p. 603.

commentary John Simpson deemed the numbers inadequate in his damning verdict that 'More lives could have been saved but they weren't'.

The opportunity to celebrate Britain's response to the refugee crisis in the wake of Kristallnacht was not taken up. After the film insert detailing Britain's response to the refugee crisis, John Simpson identified a number of survivors in the audience who entered Britain through the *Kindertransport* scheme.[55] His pronouncement that 'more lives could have been saved', however, cast a shadow over the positive response on the part of Britain that these survivors reflected. Thus overall, Britain did not emerge solely as a welcoming and generous country of refuge. This ran counter to the discourse of nostalgia and gratitude that normally pervades representations of the *Kindertransport.*[56]

In his introduction to the third supplementary film insert, John Simpson's evaluation of Britain's past in respect of the treatment of Jews contributed to the critical tone of the material destined solely for the television audience. He stated:

> When we consider the horrors of the twentieth century it's perhaps worth recalling that there's scarcely anything the Nazis did to the Jews which hadn't been done to them in medieval England. The English led the way in cruelty.

In the film insert itself he then recalled how, like the Nazis, the medieval English forced Jews to wear yellow Stars of David; how Jews were massacred in pogroms; were attacked all over England and expelled, not being allowed to return to England for over three centuries. In the *Observer* six days prior to HMD, Will Hutton took issue with the absence of confrontation with the treatment of Jews in medieval England on the official HMD website.

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[55] Through this scheme 10,000 Jewish children from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia gained refuge in Britain between December 1938 and August 1939.

[56] See: Tony Kushner, 'Too Little, Too Late? Reflections on Britain's Holocaust Memorial Day', in *The Journal of Israeli History*, vol. 23, no. 1, Spring 2004, pp. 116-129, p. 123.

Having visited the website, he anticipated that none

> of this [...] will be remembered on 27 January even though the statement of purpose that accompanies the Holocaust Memorial Day says it provides an opportunity 'to examine our nation's past and learn for the future'.[57]

His concern was not borne out by the supplementary material destined for the television audience.

Audience composition

The different ways in which Britain's links to the Holocaust were treated can partly be interpreted as a response to the different viewing practices and concomitant needs of the respective audiences, whose composition, as we shall see, was perceived by the BBC to be dissimilar. The need to capture the interest of a television audience at the outset of a programme, as well as to compel them to continue viewing throughout, is far more pronounced than that characteristically associated with an audience present at a performative event such as the HMD ceremony. Even after a television broadcast has begun, it is constantly under the threat of competition from programmes offered by other channels, whether terrestrial or otherwise, as well as from other media and activities. This ease of choice and absence of commitment characterizes television's mode of consumption.

In terms of audience commitment, a performative event is to be found at the other end of the spectrum. Very seldom does such an event come under the threat of concurrent competition in a way that compares with television. In most cases, the simple fact of having made the physical effort to attend a specific performative event, ordinarily coupled with having paid to attend it, ensures a higher level of commitment on the part of the audience.

The imperatives of capturing and retaining the attention of the television audience are inseparable from its anticipated composition. The uptake of terrestrial television is circumscribed by national boundaries. The nationally introspective film inserts and John Simpson's identification of British guests at the ceremony speak

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[57] Will Hutton, 'We have blood on our hands, too', in the *Observer*, 21 January 2001, p. 30. Official HMD website address: www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk

directly to the nationally constituted television audience. In elucidating links between Britain and the Holocaust, producer Daniel Brittain-Catlin wished to make the catastrophe relevant to a British television audience. Thus they can partly be seen as an attempt to capture and retain the interest of an audience regarded as potentially volatile. But in line with the BBC's public service responsibilities, he also wished to inform a television audience that he felt knew the Holocaust happened, but had little knowledge of any details. In particular, he wished to close what he saw as a lacuna in the television-viewing public's knowledge relating to Britain's foreign policy during the Jewish refugee crisis prior to the outbreak of war.[58]

If the television audience was largely British, the audience attending the ceremony was largely international. According to John Simpson's commentary, approximately sixty countries were represented at Methodist Hall. Thus the content of the latter two inserts might have been considered too nationally specific for an audience with such a large international contingent. In contrast to the BBC's perception of the television audience, the audience in the Hall was assumed to be well-informed. This was because it was primarily made up of people with first-hand experience of either the Kindertransport initiative or the Holocaust itself, as refugees, survivors or liberators.[59] Furthermore, if one of the functions of the three inserts was to create a television audience and persuade them of the merits of establishing a HMD in Britain, the majority of the invited guests would probably already have been persuaded in this regard.

Other factors also combined to reinforce the level of commitment associated with attending the HMD inaugural ceremony, such as the sensitive nature of the event and the fact that attendance was by official invitation. For any member of the audience, to have got up from their seats and left would have exposed them to disapproval or at least pressure to explain themselves. Such pressure would have been absent for most television viewers.

The commemorative compass

The commemorative compass that structured the ceremony was an additional factor that arguably precluded the inclusion of the three supplementary film inserts. The ceremony

[58] Brittain-Catlin, passim.

[59] Ibid.

itself was in line with the Home Office's objective to commemorate post-war genocides, but for that of the Jews to be its chief focus. The made-for-television film inserts, on the other hand, focused solely on the fate of the Jews. Whilst, in John Simpson's commentary during the arrival of the guests, other genocides that were to be commemorated as well as victims of the Armenian massacre were mentioned, here, too, the chief focus was the fate of the Jews. This also reflected John Simpson's view as expressed in an article that he wrote for the *Sunday Telegraph* some days prior to the ceremony:

> The fact is that Jews, while certainly not the only victims of Nazi Germany's programme of extermination, were the chief ones. Although the precise figures are disputed it is perfectly clear that far more Jews were murdered at one time than members of any other ethnic or religious group in this century.[60]

The ceremony began by recalling the collective plight of European Jewry in the extermination camps through the reading, by Emma Thompson, of Nelly Sachs' poem *O, The Chimneys*. This was followed by a film insert chronicling the history of the Holocaust; Esther Brunstein's and Roman Halter's respective testimonies; the Foundation Choir singing *Remember when I'm gone away*, written to commemorate Anne Frank; and the film insert showcasing extracts from Richard Dimbleby's account of the liberation of Belsen.

The commemorative compass of the ceremony was then extended to other victims of the Nazis; Sir Ian McKellen paid tribute to Roma and Sinti gypsies, black Germans, the physically disabled, non-Jewish Poles, Serbs and Slavs, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian clerics and Marxists. After Sir Bob Geldof's tribute to the British righteous, and Vera Gissing's testimony and tribute to Nicolas Winton, the victims of genocide in Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia were recalled. In this context, Sir Antony Sher highlighted the failed legacy of the injunction 'Never Again'. Another film insert featured an excerpt from the film *The Killing Fields*;[61] Var Hong Ashe recounted her experiences of persecution under Pol Pot's regime in Cambodia; excerpts from Fergal

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[60] John Simpson, 'How modern man has made genocide a workable process', in the *Sunday Telegraph*, 21 January 2001.

[61] *The Killing Fields*, dir. Roland Joffé, UK, 1984.

Keane's 'A Journey into Darkness' report for *Panorama* were showcased, and he appeared in person to recall and take issue with the world's failure to prevent the Rwandan genocide; a musical interlude was performed by a Rwandan band; another film insert featured a testimony of persecution from Bosnian refugee Zlata Filipovic; Kemel Pervanic, another Bosnian refugee, provided his personal account of persecution.

The focus of the ceremony then returned to Europe's Jews: Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks issued a call to remember and to learn the lessons of the Holocaust and a Jewish memorial prayer was sung for its victims. After the prime minister's key-note speech, ITV newscaster Sir Trevor MacDonald introduced the final film insert of the ceremony, which outlined the seven statements of commitment of HMD. Ben Helfgott's statement of gratitude provided closure to the ceremony. Had the three made-for-television films been included in the ceremony, the overall emphasis on the fate of the Jews during the Holocaust would have been even more pronounced. This would have exposed the organizers to the charge that other genocides were not sufficiently represented.

The Contribution of HMD to Television: Showcasing *Night and Fog*

A catalyst for Holocaust programming

The existence of a specific annual day to mark the Holocaust provides a point in the year around which related programming can coalesce. We have seen how there can be a proliferation of programmes around HMD, as there was in 2001 and 2005. There are many advantages that spring from this, not least that the programmes are framed by a call to remember, which can serve to maximize a programme's impact on collective memory. HMD alerts the television-viewing public to the possible presence of Holocaust-related television programmes in the schedules. Prior to the establishment of such a memorial day, programmes were less frequently attached to a specific date or wider culturally significant occasion. This meant that they could go unnoticed in the schedules, especially if they were single initiatives that were not part of a series. HMD can also be the catalyst for some remarkable broadcasting initiatives.

The record of BBC television's output to mark HMDs beyond 2001 has included productions that rank among the more notable British Holocaust-related television initiatives during this period. These include *Conspiracy,* featuring an all-star British cast; Laurence Rees's BBC documentary series *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the 'Final Solution'*; and the broadcast of the ceremony to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the camps.[62] As with the inaugural ceremony, the BBC was at the creative helm of this event. It was, however, more nationally specific in its scope. HM the Queen was in attendance, along with political and religious leaders; it was held at Westminster Hall; according to the commentary, there were six hundred British Holocaust survivors in the audience; and on this occasion Belsen rather than Auschwitz was the central focus. Interestingly, in contrast to the representations of Belsen referred to in chapter one, here the British and Jewish experiences of the liberation were reconciled. Major Dick Williams and survivor Susan Pollack were filmed on site sharing their respective memories of liberation.

The BBC also broadcast initiatives not specifically made for or by it, or by television generally. These included *Schindler's List,* and the documentary films *Night and Fog* and *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport.*[63] The latter two were television premiers. The television premier of *Night and Fog* was particularly remarkable because it came nearly fifty years after the film was produced. This fact is all the more remarkable because of its long-established status as a classic piece of documentary filmmaking and representation of the Holocaust.

An exemplar

It comes as no surprise, then, that when the BBC broadcast *Night and Fog*, the reviewer in the *Radio Times* was emphatic:

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[62] A book, written by Laurence Rees, was published by BBC Books to accompany the six-part documentary series. The series was also aired on French television to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the camps, tx. 26 & 27 January 2005, TF1. For the occasion of this anniversary, BBC Worldwide licensed the series to broadcasters worldwide. See: BBC Worldwide *Press Releases: Auschwitz series and book success*, www.bbc.co.uk.

[63] *Schindler's List*, tx. 27 January 2001, BBC 2; *Night and Fog*, tx. 27 January 2002, BBC Knowledge.

> François Truffaut declared this to be the greatest film ever made. It's certainly the most powerful.[64]

Yet, it took forty-seven years for the film to reach British television screens. Directed by Alain Resnais in 1955, *Night and Fog* debuted at the Cannes Film Festival in 1956, having already been awarded the Prix Jean Vigo. A thirty-five minute documentary film that traces the Nazi policy of persecution and extermination and the Allied liberation of the concentration camps, it was one of the earliest and, in terms of its atrocity imagery, most direct post-war audiovisual confrontations with the Holocaust.[65]

Despite its age, Alain Resnais's film has come to be regarded as an accomplished and even exemplary audiovisual treatment of the Holocaust within critical discourse. In his brief historical overview of cinema's response to the Holocaust, the *Observer's* film critic Philip French effused that *Night and Fog* is a 'benchmark movie [which] set the standards for everything that was to follow'.[66] He regarded it as the single most important point of reference for the Holocaust across all generic film forms. Similarly, in a *Guardian* review of Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful*, where the merits or otherwise of treating the Holocaust in comic form were discussed, *Night and Fog* was acclaimed as one of 'cinema's great statements about the Holocaust' with which the former could not compete.[67] In his evaluation of the aesthetic, ethical and historical merits of *Schindler's List*, the *Guardian's* veteran film critic Derek Malcolm revealed that it 'did not always hit me squarely between the eyes [because] Resnais's *Night and Fog*, Lanzmann's *Shoah* and several other European Holocaust films [...] had already done more than half the job beforehand'.[68]

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[64] The *Radio Times*, 26 January – 1 February 2002, p. 53.

[65] Anyone seeing *Night and Fog* today would see it in its original uncut version in French with English subtitles. It was broadcast in its entirety, and when the film was submitted by the British Film Institute in 1990 and again by Nouveaux Pictures in 1998 to the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), the film industry's self-regulating film censorship and classification body, it was passed for video release uncut and classified as 15. See: BBFC website http://www.bbfc.co.uk. However, when it was first commercially released in Britain in 1956, cinema-goers were shown a heavily censored version of the film. The British Board of Film Censorship, as it was then called, required much of the film's atrocity footage to be removed. See: BBFC file '*Night and Fog*', held in the BBFC archives, London.

[66] Philip French, 'Hollywood and the Holocaust', in the *Observer*, 13 February 1994, p. 14.

[67] Jonathan Romney, 'Not film of the week: *Life is Beautiful*: Camping it up', the Guardian, 12 February 1999, p. 6. *Life is Beautiful*, dir. Roberto Benigni, Italy, 1996.

[68] Derek Malcolm, 'The Film and the Reality', the *Guardian*, 17 February 1994, p. 4.

It is not only within critical discourse that Alain Resnais's film has achieved such authoritative status. Practitioners in the audiovisual industry hold it in equally high esteem. In 'Screening the Holocaust', an instalment of BBC 2's long running late-night arts programme *The Late Show,* broadcast in 1990, film and television producers and directors examined the aesthetic and ethical dilemmas associated with making Holocaust films.[69] The programme was punctuated with scenes lifted from *Night and Fog*, which were used, but seldom identified, as an authoritative visualization of assertions made by some of the contributors. The American producer of *Triumph of the Spirit*, Arnold Kopelson, highlighted *Night and Fog*'s pedagogic value.[70] In arguing against the reconstruction of scenes of Nazi atrocities, French film director Louis Malle opined that the power of *Night and Fog* demonstrates that such strategies are superfluous.

Similarly, the producer of the 'Genocide' episode of *The World at War,* Michael Darlow, has described *Night and Fog* as a superlative treatment of Nazi genocidal practices. His experience of viewing the film for the first time when it was nationally released in 1960 was 'shattering'.[71] In the estimations of Michael Darlow, this film came to represent the definitive audiovisual reference point for the Holocaust. So it was with some scepticism that he responded to *The World at War* series editor Jeremy Isaacs's request that he produce 'Genocide', some thirteen years after he had first seen *Night and Fog.* His conviction was that the existence of *Night and Fog* meant there was no call for further treatments of the subject in audiovisual form.[72] Nevertheless, after some persuasion from Jeremy Isaacs he undertook the project and proceeded with trepidation. As it happened, Michael Darlow managed to step out of the shadow of *Night and Fog* and produced an antithetical documentary. Unlike the univocal nature of *Night and Fog*, 'Genocide' was multi-vocal in that it relied heavily upon testimony to depict the catastrophe. Moreover, whilst the former effaced its Jewish particularity, the latter emphasized it, as we have seen.

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[69] *The Late Show*: 'Screening the Holocaust', tx. 18 December 1990, BBC 2.

[70] *Triumph of the Spirit*, dir. Robert M. Young, USA, 1989.

[71] Michael Darlow revealed this in a conversation with the author at the IWM conference on genocide and the moving image.

[72] As revealed by Michael Darlow when he spoke at the IWM conference.

Further corroboration of *Night and Fog*'s perceived power came when the NFT screened the film as an extension of one of the first major Holocaust exhibitions in Britain in February 1983: 'Auschwitz: An Exhibition', held at St. George in the East Church in Stepney, East London. Following the screening, Auschwitz scholars and survivors of the camp were present to discuss the film. What is more, the NFT was quick to identify it as a landmark film and helped to establish its classic status from as early as 1956, when it was first screened in Britain. Between 1956 and 1983, the NFT screened *Night and Fog* no fewer than ten times.

Proceeding with caution

British television editors, by contrast, were slow to seize on this film. It is true that until the 1980s, as we have seen in the introduction, the subject of the Holocaust was rarely treated on British television. Nevertheless, in subsequent years the medium made increasing use of Holocaust-related material. When the film was eventually broadcast it appeared on one of the BBC's digital channels, BBC Knowledge, which has since been re-branded as BBC 4. At the time of broadcast in 2002, the BBC's digital output was taken up by forty percent of the British population; BBC Knowledge commanded 1.5 million viewers across the whole week.[73]

The BBC had originally intended to broadcast *Night and Fog* on BBC Knowledge to mark the inauguration of HMD in 2001, but difficulties in obtaining licensing rights in time prevented them from doing so. The decision to televise the film was taken by Nick Ware, the managing editor of BBC Knowledge. In the first instance, his decision was based on his understanding that the 'immense power' of *Night and Fog,* as the first significant film to be made about the Holocaust, had not diminished. More striking though, was his revelation that the film's depiction of the plight of non-Jewish victim-groups was a crucial factor in his decision. His conviction was that most contemporary audiovisual treatments of the Holocaust centre solely upon Jewish victims; he wished to redress the balance. In critical discourse *Night and Fog* is highly revered, yet in academic discourse it has been criticised for playing down the anti-

[73] The viewing figures of BBC Knowledge were provided by Nick Ware, managing editor of the channel at the time in an interview the author conducted with him on 30 January 2002. What follows in respect of its broadcasting is based on this interview.

Semitic dimension of Nazi persecutory and annihilatory policies.[74] Nick Ware's motivation runs counter to criticisms levelled at the film in this regard.

If *Night and Fog* dejudaized the Holocaust, accompanying programmes offered by BBC Knowledge on HMD in 2002 reinstated Europe's Jews as the principal victim-group of the Nazi regime. Alain Resnais's film was flanked in the schedule by two programmes that centred uniquely on Jewish aspects of the catastrophe. *The Music of Terezin,* a BBC documentary that focused on the survival of Jewish inmates of the Czech concentration camp Terezin through their composing, playing and enjoyment of music, preceded *Night and Fog.*[75] It was followed by *The Wannsee Conference*, a reconstruction of the 1942 conference attended by leading Nazi officials where the 'final solution' was formalized.[76]

It is a measure of the BBC's cautious approach that *Night and Fog* was never intended for airing on its terrestrial channels. The BBC's broadcasting of a popular film like *Schindler's List* on its second channel suggests that the Corporation preferred to play it safe. *Schindler's List* and *Night and Fog* are highly divergent treatments of the Holocaust not just in terms of their age, genre and their respective languages. The former mitigates the horrors of the Holocaust through its redemptive narrative and had already made a huge impact on collective memory when it was theatrically released in 1994 and broadcast on terrestrial television in 1997 and 1998.[77] It also focuses on the specific plight of Jews under the Nazis. By contrast, in Britain the latter was and remains an ultimately little-known film, which powerfully combines archival atrocity imagery with a cautionary inflection.[78]

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[74] See: Avisar (1988), p. 15; Robert Michael, 'A Second Look: *Night and Fog*', in *Cineaste*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1984, p. 37; and Charles Krantz, 'Teaching *Night and Fog:* History and Historiography', in *Film and History,* vol. 15, no. 1, February 1985, pp. 2-15, p. 5.

[75] *The Music of Terezin*, tx. 27 January 2002, BBC Knowledge.

[76] *The Wannsee Conference/ Wannseekonferenz,* tx. 27 January 2002, BBC Knowledge.

[77] For the exact dates of broadcast of *Schindler's List* on British terrestrial television, see: fn. no. 20 of this chapter.

[78] For a fuller discussion of the reception of *Night and Fog* in Britain, see: Judith Petersen, 'A Little-Known Classic: *Night and Fog* in Britain', in Ewout van der Knaap, ed., *Uncovering the Holocaust: The International Reception of* Night and Fog (London, Wallflower Press, 2006), pp. 106-128.

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The establishment of HMD and the inaugural ceremony to mark it represented a milestone within collective memory of the Holocaust in Britain: for the first time, remembering the Holocaust was given an official seal of authority. Holocaust remembrance became part of the national landscape of anniversary commemorations and ceremonies such as VE Day, D-Day, Remembrance Sunday and the like and its national significance was suggested. The decision of the Home Office to permit a television broadcaster to act as the principal conduit and producer of the event is testament to the perceived importance of television in contributing to collective memory of the Holocaust.

Since its inception, the BBC has consistently provided live coverage of Britain's national anniversary commemorations and ceremonies. The BBC's long association with such national events and initiatives has helped it to establish and maintain its identity as a major national institution. *Reflections on the Holocaust* was part of the BBC's tradition of involvement in capturing and marking state events and initiatives for television viewers. If the establishment of HMD and the inaugural ceremony by the Government was an affirmation of the Holocaust's national significance, so, too, was the participation of a broadcaster that is commonly held to be a leading national institution and public service broadcaster. Yet, there was a tension between the affirmation of the Holocaust's national significance and its perceived resonance for the British public. *Reflections on the Holocaust* was broadcast on BBC 2 rather than BBC 1.

The BBC's role in acting as more than merely a conduit for a cultural and state event commemorating the Holocaust meant that the ceremony, and by extension its broadcast, represented a radical departure from tradition. This is at its most conspicuous in the highly televisual character of this event. However, the different modes of consumption coupled with the international and national composition of the respective Hall and television audiences engendered different imperatives, which shaped the content of the ceremony and its broadcast. As a result, the extent to which their respective content was nationally specific was not identical. The BBC's drive to fulfil its public service commitment to inform and educate its nationally constituted television audience meant that it offered additional information about the Holocaust that was more nationally specific in its perspective.

The contribution of HMD to television has been an annual date around which related programmes can coalesce, and for which new initiatives are triggered. The BBC continued to mark this day of remembrance beyond the year of the inauguration ceremony, sometimes with remarkable initiatives, such as bringing the classic Holocaust documentary film *Night and Fog* to a British television-viewing public for the first time, and always playing the lead role among the four terrestrial broadcasters. HMD has enabled the BBC to confirm and further consolidate its public service identity whilst showing its commitment to assisting the process of remembering a catastrophe that many would rather ignore.

Conclusion

It is fitting to have ended this thesis with a chapter that attests to the perceived importance of television in the creation of collective memory of the Holocaust. Representations of history have been a staple feature of television schedules throughout the medium's existence. They have assumed multiple generic forms and styles, ranging from documentary to dramatization. Holocaust-related television programmes have become an integral part of this body of output, and their presence on the small screen has increased considerably over the decades. The extent of interest in the annihilation of Europe's Jews among programme makers and schedulers could be glimpsed at the abovementioned 'Holocaust, Genocide and the Moving Image' symposium, where Janice Hadlow, the contemporary Head of History, Art and Religion at C4, revealed that one third of Second World War-related programme proposals received by her department centred on the Holocaust. Her approach to commissioning was underpinned by the conviction that a saturation of images and material related to this catastrophe was ineffective. In her endeavour to circumvent this pitfall, her policy was to commission only new material with fresh perspectives on the Holocaust.[1] She was not alone in adopting such an approach. Similarly, Nick Ware, the aforementioned managing editor of what was at the time BBC Knowledge and is now BBC 4, also believed that the Holocaust needed to be depicted in new and fresh ways in order to capture the interest of viewers.[2] In support of this view, he cited the success of *Conspiracy*, which achieved four million viewers when it was broadcast on a Friday night by BBC 2.[3]

Treatments of the Holocaust on British television have been viewed by tens of millions of people over the decades and have often represented the principal mediations through which the public has been confronted with this event. Yet, the Holocaust on British television remains a vast and largely uncharted vista of hundreds of programmes broadcast during a period that spans over half a century, and which is perpetually expanding. Both the focus and generic form of these programmes have been highly varied. They have emerged from and been variously informed by not only an ever-

[1] Janice Hadlow revealed these details in a talk she gave at the above-mentioned Holocaust, genocide and the moving image conference.

[2] Interview with the author, 30 January 2002.

[3] Tx. 25 January 2001, BBC 2.

changing industrial and historical context, but an increasing understanding of what is now known as the Holocaust, an increasing willingness to confront the catastrophe, and an increasing cognisance of its effects and implications for Jewry and the rest of humanity. That said, as 'Genocide' shows, television programmes are not solely the repository of existing attitudes; they can function dialectically as a catalyst in some of these processes. These programmes have also been informed by the periodic declassifying of official documents, the opening of archives and developments in historical research.

So vast is the terrain that it is beyond the scope of any single study to examine the entirety of television's output on the Holocaust. By necessity, the corpus under scrutiny in this thesis has been highly selective and is not intended to be representative of British television's output overall. Rather, it represents key moments in television's contribution to Britain's evolving collective memory of the Holocaust. Many remarkable televisual treatments also deserving of close scrutiny have necessarily been relegated to the margins of this thesis: *Warsaw Ghetto*, *Eichmann*, *The Final Solution, Kitty: Return to Auschwitz*, *Anne Frank Remembered*, *The Nazis: A Warning from History*, *Conspiracy*, and *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the 'Final Solution'*, to name but a few. Where their place in Britain's collective memory is concerned, they will have to form the subject of future research, as will the controversy surrounding the broadcast of the American mini-series *Holocaust* by the BBC in 1978.

Ultimately, this medium has been at the forefront of shaping and creating popular perceptions and knowledge of the Nazis' nihilistic endeavours to wipe out all physical and memorial traces of Europe's Jewish population. It is this conviction that has been the driving impetus behind this thesis and which has informed the research questions underpinning it: What can we consider to be the key televisual contributions to Britain's collective memory of the Holocaust since broadcasting resumed in 1946, and why? How has television risen to the challenge of commemorating this event on key dates? Can any differences in the output of the various terrestrial broadcasters be observed? What can be gleaned from the broadcasting patterns in respect of the importance of the catastrophe to British society? How might a broadcaster's profile and identity influence the content and impact of a programme? Can any overarching themes or trends be observed in television treatments of the Holocaust?

In any attempt to address these questions, the looming figure of Richard Dimbleby could not be ignored. His lifetime and posthumous contribution to collective memory of the Holocaust demanded scrutiny because of his status as a broadcasting icon and household radio-cum-television personality, who 'dominated the airwaves in a manner inconceivable in our own time'.[4] His contributions straddle the transition from the era of radio to television, from the war years to the post-war years, from the wartime generation to subsequent generations, and thus provide a measure of continuity between past and present that will undoubtedly continue into the future.

In a contemporary climate where resistance to Holocaust-related initiatives prevailed in wider society, 'Genocide' stood at the vanguard of Holocaust memory in Britain. Its enormous impact when first broadcast and its longevity mean that 'Genocide' represents one of Britain's key Holocaust-related television initiatives. It was the first programme to refer to the Holocaust as a discrete historical event; it marked a shift from Belsen to Auschwitz as the key site of the Holocaust in British collective memory; and for the first time it introduced millions of viewers to the voice of the survivor. However, an evaluation of 'Genocide''s quantitative and qualitative impact can be divorced neither from its broadcasting context nor from the effects of seriality, an integral feature of television. The popularity of ITV and the embedding of this Holocaust documentary within a series that centred on the Second World War combined to augment the impact of 'Genocide' beyond what it would have achieved had it been a single one-off documentary.

In 1965, a year that marked the twentieth anniversary of VE Day and the liberation of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps, Richard Dimbleby's *Panorama* item, 'Belsen After Twenty Years', was the only commemorative programme related to the Holocaust. Whilst this item commemorated the liberation of Belsen, the Jewish presence in the camp was subject to amnesia; the focus was on Britain's involvement in the liberation. Thirty years on, however, the memorial landscape had changed radically. In terms of memorialising the Holocaust, 1995 can be viewed as the immediate post-*Schindler's List* period. In the wake of the film's phenomenal success, the Holocaust began to resonate more widely with the British public. Television programme makers and schedulers were attentive to this changed climate. Within the

[4] As stated by David Cannadine in *A Point of View:* 'Voice of the nation', tx. 16 December 2005, Radio 4. The transcript of this programme can be found at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/magazine/4535738.stm

context of VE Day commemorative programming that year, the Jewish wartime experience was widely acknowledged; a little less than six hours of programming was devoted to it. Within the specific context of Auschwitz commemorative programming, no fewer than sixteen hours of airtime were devoted to the Holocaust. This total of nearly twenty-two hours of airtime would have been inconceivable in 1965.

Half a century after the liberation of the Nazi camps, television rose to the challenge of remembering the catastrophe by broadcasting forty-three hours of related programming throughout the year. The contribution of this significant amount of programming to Britain's collective memory, however, cannot be considered in isolation of the specific channels on which it was broadcast: almost all of this programming was confined to BBC 2, a minority channel which broadcasts for special interests to a limited audience. This kind of relegation to the periphery is a trend that could also be observed more recently, since Britain's official memorial milestone of the Holocaust in Britain, the inaugural ceremony of HMD in 2001, was also broadcast on BBC 2. If the establishment of HMD and the inaugural ceremony by the Government along with the participation of the BBC, which is commonly held to be a leading national institution and public service broadcaster, combined to affirm the significance of the Holocaust in Britain's national memorial landscape, this affirmation was tempered by the broadcasting of the ceremony and the HMD-related programming on the BBC's terrestrial minority channel.

As recently as 2005, the presence and participation of the Queen in the official ceremony to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz was not deemed to have broad enough appeal for the mainstream audience that is the target of the BBC's first channel. Despite the relatively strong presence of the Holocaust on television in 1995 and the active involvement of the BBC in HMD, there remains some way to go before this catastrophe is projected as one of the defining events of modern history. To be sure, there is no guarantee that such programming will ever feature on the schedules of the BBC's most mainstream channel as the event recedes ever further into the past, is no longer part of lived history and faces the constant threat of denial.

Within the wider television landscape, the proliferation of niche channels has given rise to dedicated history channels such as The History Channel and UKTV History. What effect will they have on the presence of Holocaust-related programming on terrestrial television's mainstream channels? Will such programming become the

preserve of these niche channels with their special interest audiences or will the terrestrial mainstream channels respond by exhibiting a competitive spirit? The first HMD saw a comparable amount of airtime devoted to the Holocaust on BBC 2 and The History Channel. This contrasts starkly with the following HMD when The History Channel far outstripped BBC 2 in terms of its Holocaust-related programming, with four hours compared to no airtime on BBC 2. That year the BBC's related programming, which amounted to three hours, was broadcast on BBC Knowledge. Nevertheless, as long as there remains a strong commitment to a public service ethos and a self-perception as the national broadcaster, it seems unlikely that the BBC would cede its duty to deliver educational programming in the form of historical productions to the niche channels entirely.

The conviction that Britain's war memory is sacrosanct represents another overarching theme that can be observed in the treatment of the Holocaust on British television. The analysis of Richard Dimbleby's contribution to collective memory of the Holocaust and other media depictions of the liberation of Belsen suggests that the British and Jewish experience of Belsen have rarely been reconciled within a single narrative. Only as recently as 2005, during the HMD ceremony to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Nazi camps, was such a reconciliation achieved. However, this reconciliation occurred within the context of Holocaust memory rather than Britain's war memory. Moreover, during the extensive programming of 1995 to mark fifty years since VE Day and the liberation of Nazi extermination and concentration camps, neither Britain's ambiguous response to the Jewish plight nor the Jewish wartime experience were allowed to interfere with the dominant mainstream version of Britain's war memory.

The contents of the inaugural HMD broadcast, combined with its place within a tradition that is replete with nationally specific anniversaries and commemorations firmly inscribed the Holocaust into British history. This development was part of a process which began with the establishment of the permanent Holocaust exhibition at the IWM and which was more fully realized with the broadcast of the HMD ceremony to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in 2005. The IWM is the official custodian of Britain's war memory. By housing the major permanent Holocaust exhibition within this national institution, the Holocaust was cast as an important part of this memory and by extension British history. With the HMD ceremony in 2005, the

focus on British Holocaust survivors and Belsen lent the event a particularly national character.

In 1974, 'Genocide' reached some eleven million members of the British public. It did much to inform the first post-war generations and also to serve as a reminder to earlier generations of the Nazis' near-annihilation of Europe's Jewish population, their history and culture. This documentary continues to be employed as a pedagogic tool in school history lessons, and is rebroadcast periodically on terrestrial television and frequently on the UKTV History channel. In 1995, the unprecedented presence of the Holocaust on British television left 'popular consciousness of the Holocaust at a much higher level'.[5] In 2001 television marked the inauguration of HMD with a number of related programmes as well as the broadcast of the official ceremony. Yet, despite all these initiatives, in 2004 the BBC released the findings of a survey which revealed that nearly half the adult population claimed that they had never heard of Auschwitz. Amongst respondents aged under 35 and women, the figure increased to 60 per cent.[6] Rather than pointing to a failure on the part of television to contribute to Holocaust memory, this survey underscores the continued need for the medium to confront this event. Indeed, a follow-up survey carried out during the last weekend in January 2005, after HMD, suggested that 94 per cent of the population had heard of Auschwitz.[7] The survey was conducted half way through Laurence Rees's BBC documentary series *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the 'Final Solution'*. Whilst this increased awareness cannot be wholly attributed to television, its influence cannot be denied.

Various groups, in particular the Muslim Council of Britain, continue to contest the existence in the official commemorations calendar of a day to mark the Holocaust specifically. They campaign for a day to commemorate genocide more generally to be instituted in its place. Despite the passing of over half a century during which collective memory of the Holocaust has moved towards an apotheosis, a deeper and wider understanding of the impact and enormity of this event on humanity is still to be achieved. As Israeli President Moshe Katsav stated at the ceremony held at Auschwitz-

[5] Cesarani, (1996), p. 635.

[6] See: BBC Press Release: *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the 'Final Solution'*, http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2004/12_december/02/auschwitz.shtml. The survey of 4000 nationally representative respondents over 16 years of age was conducted in February 2004.

[7] See: BBC Press Release: *Awareness of Auschwitz and the Holocaust soars*, http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2005/03_march/17/auschwitz.shtml

Birkenau to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the camp's liberation in January 2005, the Holocaust 'is not only a tragedy of the Jewish people, it is a failure of humanity as a whole'.[8]

One of the challenges that television producers will face is how to convey this truth to future audiences who may feel increasingly disconnected from this catastrophe, and who will be part of an ever more fragmented television audience. How television seeks to confront this challenge in the future will determine whether it will remain at the forefront of shaping and creating Britain's collective memory of events that mark 'the final limit of humanity's capacity for inhumanity'.[9]

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[8] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4212671.stm

[9] Lanzmann (1980), p. 137.

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