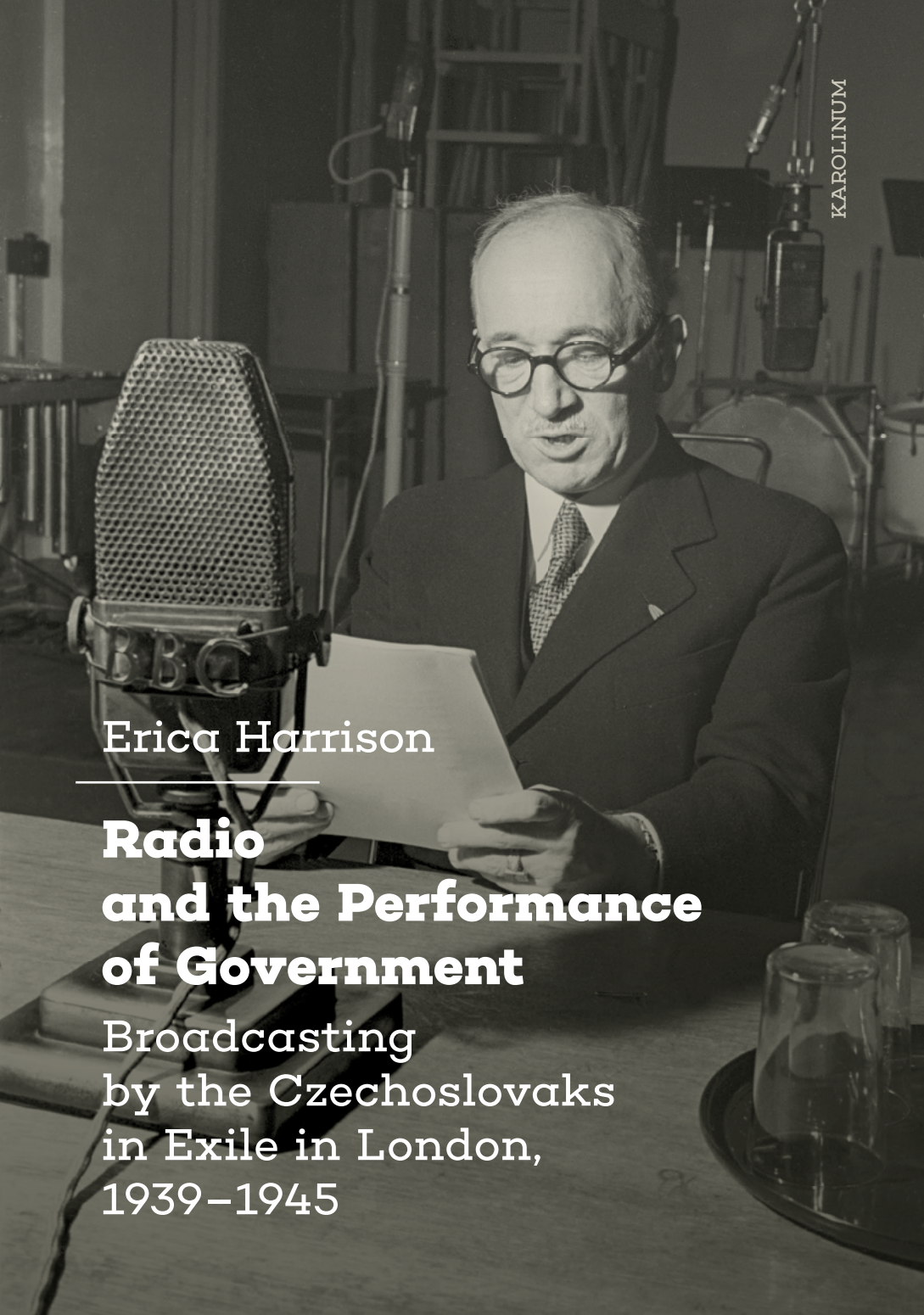

Erica Harrison

Radio and the Performance of Government

Broadcasting by the Czechoslovaks in Exile in London, 1939–1945

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This book is dedicated to my father, who never got to read it but would have been proud of it anyway.

List of Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBC WAC	BBC Written Archives Centre
BBC WBC	BBC Wartime Broadcasts Collection
CNA	Czech National Archive, Chodov, Prague
CRA	Český rozhlas (Czech Radio) Archive, Prague
FO	Foreign Office
HSĽS	Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana (Hlinka Slovak People's Party)
LN Z	*Londýn Zpravodajství* (*London News*)
LTS	London Transcription Service
MNO	Ministerstvo národní obrany (Ministry of National Defence)
MOI	Ministry of Information
MSP	Ministerstvo sociální péče (Ministry of Social Welfare)
MZV	Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
PKWN	Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego (Polish Committee of National Liberation)
PRS	Poradní rozhlasový sbor (Radio Advisory Committee)
PWE	Political Warfare Executive
SNR	Slovenská národná rada (Slovak National Council)
TNA	The National Archives, Kew, UK
ÚVOD	Ústřední vedení odboje domáciho (Central Leadership of the Home Resistance)

Introduction

"At one time, [radio] really was the only weapon left to us."
Prokop Drtina, *Hlas svobodné republiky,* 4 March 1945[1]

Between March 1939 and April 1945, the Czechoslovak Republic disappeared from the maps of Europe, continuing to exist only as an imagined "free republic" of the radio waves. Following the German invasion and annexation of Bohemia and Moravia, and the declaration of independence by Slovakia on 15 March 1939, the short-lived Second Czechoslovak Republic was no more, and it would take six years of war before its successor could again be declared by government representatives on state territory. From their position in exile in wartime London, former Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš and the government which formed around him were dependent on access to radio microphones in order to communicate with the public they strove to represent. The broadcasts made by government figures in London from 1939 to 1945, culminating in the government's own programme, were the most prominent public platform on which they could perform as a government, enabling a performance of authority to impress their hosts, allies, occupying enemies, and claimed constituents. An examination of the content of these broadcasts offers a new means by which to explore the exile government's understanding of the republic it worked to reinstate – both its past and

1 Prokop Drtina, *A nyní promluví Pavel Svatý…: Londýnské rozhlasové epištoly Dr. Prokopa Drtiny z let 1940–1945* (Prague: Vladimír Žikeš, 1945), 450. Unless otherwise stated, all translations in this work are the author's own.

its future. The challenge of projecting certainty at a time when even the most fundamental issues were in doubt is highlighted by contrasting the confident claims made over the radio with the heated behind-the-scenes negotiations, both within the Czechoslovak government itself and with various British authorities. Would there be a Czechoslovak state after the war? If so, where would its borders be drawn? Who would be permitted to live there and who would be excluded? Who would lead such a state, and to which allies would they pledge allegiance?

Although such questions were pivotal to Beneš and those around him, they were generally of peripheral interest to the British political and broadcasting structures who controlled access to the radio and had rather different priorities. The frequency and content of the Czechoslovak government broadcasts were determined by the particular relationship the exiles had with the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), with various branches of the British government and propaganda structure, and with other allies, such as the Soviet Union. The Czechoslovaks navigated the challenging landscape of wartime London with greater success than some contemporaries, alternately helped and hampered by their status in British eyes as a minor ally. While they had to fight against British indifference towards Czechoslovak issues, as well as occasional outright obstruction, they were also able to achieve greater latitude in their radio work by virtue of the fact that such issues were of lesser concern to Britain than, for example, French or Polish matters.

This book touches on multiple topics – the history of the former Czechoslovakia and the specific activities of the wartime Czechoslovak government-in-exile, the history of Britain, of the BBC, of European radio – and the period of the Second World War looms large in the core mythology of each of these. Since the end of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–38), following the Munich Agreement, the experience and legacy of that state has been much reflected upon, both by its erstwhile citizens and by its promoters and detractors abroad. Study of the war period – wedged in between the pre-eminent First Czechoslovak Republic and the start of the Communist era in Czechoslovakia (1948–89) – offers an opportunity to trace early assessments of the former and the roots of the latter, as the wartime exile movement featured both democratic and Communist branches (the latter largely based in Moscow). It also marks the beginning of the end of the political careers of prominent figures of the pre-Communist period, notably Edvard Beneš and Jan Masaryk, whose fate and reputations are much entangled with that of the state. The ongoing influence of the Second World War

on British culture and self-perception is readily apparent in the still frequent references to the "spirit" of both Dunkirk and the Blitz, which are invoked by politicians and the media whenever the country faces a challenge (both became early clichés of the COVID-19 pandemic). However, the transnational aspect of what has been termed the "London moment" tends to be forgotten, with the Churchillian image of Britain standing alone against Germany continuing to hold sway in the British public memory, in defiance of the reality of a multicultural and multilingual wartime capital.[2] For the BBC, which celebrated its centenary in 2022, the war remains a definitive period, in which the broadcaster acquired its international reputation for impartial, accurate news reporting, and produced landmark broadcasts, such as Chamberlain's announcement of war and Richard Dimbleby's report from Bergen Belsen, which now form part of the timeline of British radio. For the medium of radio as a whole, the war period represented a coming-of-age moment, in which its ability to cross borders and defy local censorship, and to immediately "break" important news, enabled it to outstrip the written press and dominate a media landscape as yet unthreatened by television. As the many shelves of books on the topic will proclaim, wartime radio is radio in its prime, weaponised by all sides and hosting a babble of voices, all competing with each other for their own imagined audience. This wartime "moment," then, centred on London, forms a key point in the histories of both Europe and the media, which continues to offer new avenues for study.

This is the first publication to take as its subject matter all the broadcasts made by the Czechoslovak exiles in London via the BBC, the vast majority of which are preserved in script form at Český rozhlas (Czech Radio) in Prague. As will be described in further detail later in this book, the exile government co-operated closely with the BBC from the summer of 1940 within the programme *Hovory s domovem* (*Conversations with Home*), and later took on its own "free time" programme entitled *Hlas svobodné republiky* (*Voice of the Free Republic*), with government figures also appearing in broadcasts by the BBC's own Czech(oslovak)

2 The project "The London Moment: Exile Governments, Academics and Activists in the Capital of Free Europe, 1940–1945," funded by the Volkswagen Foundation at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, examines multiple aspects of this transnational "moment" in history as representatives of many nations gathered in London. Wendy Webster has also sought to update public understandings of the diversity of wartime Britain more generally, in *Mixing It: Diversity in World War Two Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

service.[3] Approaching this corpus as a whole and contextualising the broadcasts within the political negotiations going on behind the scenes offers new insights not only into the thinking of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, but also into the wartime working of the BBC and of the British government. Although such an examination reveals several interesting themes that will form the basis of the rest of this work, it cannot, of course, be exhaustive, and there remains much material for historians pursuing particular topics not examined in detail here.[4] A close study of the wartime broadcasts by the Czechoslovak government-in-exile therefore offers something new not only to historians of Czechoslovakia and Central-Eastern Europe, but also to those seeking to understand the war more widely, as well as historians of nationalism, of broadcasting, and of radio studies.

Before beginning analysis of the wartime performance of the Czechoslovak exiles, I should explain that my use of the term "performance" is not intended to imply insincerity or intentional deception on behalf of the performers. As I hope to show in this study, all the Allied exiles in London were forced to tread a difficult path between their wishes for their home countries and the limits of what their hosts would permit. The Czechoslovaks faced even greater challenges here than some other nationalities, as British policymakers were by no means as committed to the post-war recreation of a Czechoslovak state as they were to some other countries, and Beneš and his allies acknowledged from the start that they would not be in a position to make any binding decisions about the post-war settlement alone. With limited means by which to enact policy or deploy resources, this radio performance was one of the few means by which the London exiles could work to protect their country and try to ensure its future, and they valued it as such.

It is my contention that all government in exile is a performance of government in the absence of power, and the Czechoslovaks were one of many Allied governments that sought to establish themselves in London during the conflict, putting on a show to convince the public of their

3 BBC terminology is as inconsistent as many other British sources, using the words *Czech* and *Czechoslovak* largely interchangeably. BBC sources thus refer to the "Czech Service," "Czech Section," "Czechoslovak Service," and "Czechoslovak Section." The use of *Czech* slightly predominates – although this is possibly favoured purely for length rather than any considered reasons – and so this is the term most often used within this book. However, it should by no means be interpreted as an erasure of the contribution of Slovak staff and broadcasters.

4 See, for example, Jan Láníček, "The Czechoslovak Service of the BBC and the Jews during World War II," *Yad Vashem Studies* 38, no. 2 (2010): 123–53.

authority and legitimacy. The Czechoslovak exiles used the radio for more than this, however, as radio was the stage on which they performed not only politically but also nationally. Performance of this kind was nothing new to the Czechs as, prior to the creation of the Czechoslovak state in 1918, individuals could "perform" their Czech national identity within Austria-Hungary through small acts, such as purchasing certain newspapers and attending certain events, that demonstrated their participation in a growing Czech civil society. Historians of Czech nationalism and the Czech National Revival – a period with which the London exiles explicitly sought to link themselves – have described the performative aspects of Czech national identity on an individual scale, identifying the appropriation of this identity as a decision to openly participate in the Czech national "project."[5] In the wartime context, this performance graduated from the personal to the public, and was intended to be both demonstrative and attractive to listeners in what had been Czechoslovakia, encouraging them to follow the exile government's lead and to accept their interpretation of what Czechoslovakia was and would be after the war. The exile government's wartime broadcasting is thus best understood as an attempt to represent a nation, its state, and its government over the radio.

Isolated from its territory and unable to exercise executive or administrative authority over the population it claimed to represent, the exile government that formed around Edvard Beneš created an alternative Czechoslovak state in miniature, complete with ministries, schools, armed forces, and national celebrations. The Czechoslovak exile community in Britain during the war was one of many, and all the gathered European nations created their own clubs and organisations, seeking to continue part of the national life abroad. While Britain was not the only country to host exiles in this period (several countries also had exile movements in the USSR, with varying degrees of rivalry, as well as in the USA and elsewhere), the communities there tended to be the most structured, and many gained an "official" air as more and more governments-in-exile were established in London. These communities included a wide range of organisations, from chamber orchestras and children's choirs to air squadrons and refugee committees, all to some degree or

5 Vladimír Macura has written on the performative nature of Czech national identity in this early period; see, for example, *Masarykovy boty a jiné semi(o)fejetony* (Prague: Pražská imaginace, 1993), 11–13. Chad Bryant has done likewise; see, for example, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 4–5, 12–16.

another representing their home country in Britain.[6] The only means by which these alternative wartime mini-states could be shared with the majority of their compatriots, however, was via the medium of radio, and the BBC's European broadcasts formed a vital connection between London and occupied Europe. For those living under occupation, the radio became more than just a source of information: reports reached London from the Nazi-controlled Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, describing how "in spite of threats of a death sentence, the English Radio is always listened to," with speeches by figures such as Beneš and Masaryk providing "the ELIXIR which keep [*sic*] us all going."[7] Listeners highly valued news they felt they could trust, with one letter from the Protectorate explaining that "the London broadcasting has another meaning for us, in that it helps us to survive the evil times in which we are living since it far surpasses everything which we are obliged to listen to and read all the time here."[8]

Although the BBC shared this commitment to accurate news, in other ways its broadcasting priorities diverged significantly from those of the Allied governments. While BBC hosts were seeking to promote a positive projection of Britain and prioritising official requirements on the British side, the various Allied governments were subject to different pressures in their on-air performances.[9] Although the show of legitimacy and leadership put on by the London exiles was partly for the benefit of Britain and the other Allied nations, who could endorse this legitimacy by formally recognising exile governments as representatives of their state, the real audience for much of this performance was the peoples of occupied Europe. Exile politics relies on belief, and politicians abroad must convince those left at home that they truly represent them, that they are

6 For studies of various aspects of these communities, see Martin Conway and Jose Gotovitch, eds., *Europe in Exile: European Exile Communities in Britain, 1940–45* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001).

7 Surveys of European Audiences, Enemy Occupied Countries Other than France [SEA, EOCOTF], 5 July 1941, pp. 4–5, 27/41, file 1A (April–July 1941), European Intelligence Papers [EIP] series 1c, E2/192/1, BBC Written Archives Centre [WAC], Caversham. Emphasis in original.

8 SEA, EOCOTF, 2 August 1941, pp. 3–4, 31/41, file 1B (Aug–Nov 1941), EIP series 1c, E2/192/2, BBC WAC.

9 In his history of British broadcasting, Asa Briggs described the provision of wartime news as the BBC's most important work, and many BBC memos testify to its perceived importance, in *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, vol. 3, *The War of Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 11. The projection of Britain was also promoted as an important task for European broadcasts; see, for example, "British Broadcasting and Allied Governments," undated, E2/15, BBC WAC.

connected by a shared vision of the future as well as a shared past. The wartime broadcasts by the Czechoslovak government-in-exile were thus a performance of government, predicated on the belief that a Czechoslovak Republic would be restored, and that those in London and those at home shared certain ideas and values that would define that state.

A note on sources should be recorded here. Although this study aims to analyse the government broadcasts as broadcasts – that is, as audio transmissions intended to be heard by an audience – in most cases the only surviving record of a given broadcast is the written script. While some speeches by prominent figures such as President Beneš and Jan Masaryk were recorded, they represent only a fraction of the hours broadcast, not all of these recordings have survived, and those which have seem to be re-recordings done at a later date (rather than an actual recording of the live broadcast), and as such are not a record of the programme as broadcast.[10] The written record, by contrast, is extremely robust, as BBC wartime censorship demanded the submission of scripts in full, both in the original language and in English translation, prior to broadcast. An almost complete collection of these scripts survives at Český rozhlas in Prague, and this forms the largest primary source base for this study. Research into other BBC wartime services faces this same issue and, while there will inevitably be some audio aspects that cannot be examined without audio sources, the BBC's requirement that announcers stick closely to their submitted scripts or risk being taken off air means that the written record can be taken as a reliable record of the content of the broadcasts.[11] I aim to analyse the government's programmes not only as political texts, but also as radio broadcasts, intended to be spoken and heard rather than read. This approach, drawing on broadcasting theory alongside historical sources, demonstrates the unique characteristics of radio as a medium which can contribute to this mission of nation-building from a distance, showing it to be the ideal medium for exile politics.

10 A BBC memo from August 1941 explains that the Czech and Polish section of the LTS is exceeding its monthly budget because the recordings "in almost every case, had to be specially produced"; Transcription Manager to O.C.Ex, "London Transcription Service – Possible Increase in Programme Expenditure for 1942," 26 August 1941, London Transcription Service, R13/163/1, BBC WAC.

11 Vike Martina Plock faced the same issue for her recent study of the BBC German Service during the war, based largely on the scripts retained at the BBC Written Archives Centre in Caversham; see *The BBC German Service during the Second World War: Broadcasting to the Enemy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 2.

The primacy of the nation and the validity of the nation-state were central to the Czechoslovak exile government's work, and this is reflected in the prominence of national themes in both its public broadcasting and its off-air discussions. In the wartime context, however, when states disappeared from the map and Nazi Germany proposed a "new order" that challenged existing understandings of the nations and states that made up Europe, the conceptual nature of nationhood was made clear.[12] Removed from the borders that previously defined them, the occupied nations instead formed a "miniature Europe" in London, represented by small groups of exiles all seeking to establish bonds that united them with a distant population and justified their respective political causes.[13] Study of these exile movements raises questions not only about how the representatives of each individual nation sought to define and represent their compatriots, but also how complex ethnic, historical, and linguistic ties between peoples can be appropriated and reinterpreted for political purposes. While this project naturally focuses on the Czechoslovak expression of these issues, both exile politics and broadcasting defy traditional borders and are by their very nature international; research into the political maelstrom of wartime London and the complex negotiations between allies still uncertain of the war's eventual outcome highlights the fact that no single nation or state resolves either its political or ideological affairs in a vacuum. The Czechoslovaks, like all their fellow exiles in London, were affected by their position in Britain and their current and historic relations with both their allies and their enemies. This study therefore seeks to examine the exile government in its international context, so as best to understand the work done by this particular group of exiles, striving to use wartime propaganda to guarantee a future for the nation they wished to represent.

12 Understandings of nationhood in Europe are now undergoing further changes under the influence of the political structure of the European Union and the economic interdependence of Europe as a unit. James Casteel has argued that the process of "Europeanization" has not advanced as quickly in historical studies as in other areas and the nation as a concept continues to be central to European understandings of the past; see "Historicizing the Nation: Transnational Approaches to the Recent European Past," in *Transnational Europe: Promise, Paradox, Limits*, ed. Joan DeBardeleben and Achim Hurrelmann (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2011), 153–69, esp. 153–54.

13 "We have in London at the present time a miniature Europe," said Richard A. Butler, undersecretary of state for foreign affairs, during a House of Lords debate on the Diplomatic Privileges (Extension) Bill on 20 February 1941; see *Hansard*, HL Deb., vol. 369, col. 329, 20 February 1941, accessed 15 May 2022, https://hansard.parliament.uk.

The term *propaganda* is used repeatedly in this work and should also be defined for the sake of clarity. *Propaganda* is used here to describe any and all attempts to present information or ideas with the intention of impressing a certain aspect or interpretation upon the audience. Studies of propaganda have tended to draw similarly wide definitions to cover what has been variously termed *propaganda*, *information*, *political warfare*, and *psychological warfare* by those working within it but is, essentially, information presented with an agenda, or in accordance with a certain point of view. In public discourse, however, *propaganda* has negative connotations of disinformation and dishonesty, as a result of which it is a term which political figures tend to employ to accuse their enemies of misleading communications, rather than being a word they would use to describe their own activities. These negative connotations are nothing new and were apparently already sufficiently well established in British discourse by 1940 for writer John Hargrave to wish to argue against them in his book *Propaganda, The Mightiest Weapon of Them All: Words Win Wars*. Hargrave summarised the matter simply: "Where there is Information plus Direction, there is Propaganda." While some claimed propaganda to be the province of fascist or totalitarian governments, Hargrave maintained that the presentation of information is propaganda when it is influenced even slightly by a given point of view and that, therefore, "no government has ever been possible without it."[14] More recent studies of propaganda have also tended to favour broader and more forgiving definitions of the controversial term; in his study of the relationship between British radio and resistance in occupied Europe, Michael Stenton suggested that "every society has a need to proclaim truths, to publish useful instruction and to work up the collective capacity to change its ways. This is propaganda."[15] In a 2013 collection of essays on propaganda, the editors framed their understanding of the term widely enough to incorporate everything from Nazi anti-Semitism to modern-day commercial advertising and the work of NGOs such as Greenpeace, stressing that propaganda takes many forms and that the attempt to influence a target audience with information "need not necessarily

14 John Hargrave, *Propaganda, The Mightiest Weapon of Them All: Words Win Wars* (London: Wells Gardener, Darton & Co., 1940), 29–30.

15 Michael Stenton, *Radio London and Resistance in Occupied Europe: British Political Warfare 1939–1943* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 114.

be misleading or biased."[16] Within this book, the use of *propaganda* to describe BBC broadcasts (both those emanating from purely British sources and those created in collaboration with representatives of exile groups) is an acknowledgement of the different perspectives that shaped their construction and is not intended to convey any further connotations, either positive or negative.

Analysis of propaganda also demands good knowledge of the context in which it was produced, both in a historical and national sense. As the list of alternative phrases above demonstrates, the term *propaganda* has elicited caution among English speakers and generated many euphemistic equivalents. In Czech sources, however, the term was rarely viewed negatively, and it was openly used by the London exiles to describe their own work. The Czechoslovak understanding of propaganda and the use of politics in the media more generally differed significantly from both contemporary and modern Anglo-American views and must be analysed accordingly. A grounding in the history of the First Czechoslovak Republic is therefore essential, not only to appreciate the context for the themes discussed in the government broadcasts, but also the manner in which the Czechoslovak exiles perceived radio and the role of state propaganda. Unlike many in Britain who viewed the whole concept of propaganda with suspicion, Czechoslovak politicians knew it to be a vital tool of statecraft.[17] Propaganda for the Czechoslovak cause among the Allies had been an integral part of the campaign carried out during the First World War by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (later the first Czechoslovak president) and his eventual successor, Edvard Beneš, which had resulted in the original creation of the Czechoslovak state in 1918. Masaryk himself wrote extensively about what he described as his campaign of "democratic propaganda," which aimed to promote the goal of Czech and Slovak independence from Austria-Hungary in the foreign press and to generate sympathy among the political elite of Britain, France, and America.[18] Beneš also had no qualms about describing much of his own

16 See editors' introduction to *Propaganda,* vol. 1, *Historical Origins, Definitions and the Changing Nature of Propaganda*, ed. Paul R. Baines and Nicholas J. O'Shaughnessy (London: SAGE, 2013), xxiv.

17 Research into the truth behind propaganda myths from the First World War led Arthur Ponsonby to conclude that "the injection of the poison of hatred into men's minds by means of falsehood is a greater evil in war-time than the actual loss of life." Public distrust of the concept of propaganda was perpetuated in books such as his *Falsehood in Wartime, Containing an Assortment of Lies Circulated throughout the Nations during the Great War* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1928).

18 Tomáš Masaryk, *Světová revoluce: za války a ve válce, 1914–1918* (Prague: Čin a Orbis, 1925), 99.

work during the war as "mainly propagandist," on the grounds that the idea of a Czechoslovak state should be spread as widely as possible; the public "had so imperfect a knowledge of us," he argued, that "this was the kind of work of which we stood most in need."[19] Historian Herbert Fisher wrote of the surprising success of Masaryk and his colleagues in establishing the novel idea of the independent and united Czechoslovak nation in the minds of the state's future citizens and allies, describing the Czechoslovak path to independence as "perhaps the most striking monument of the success of war-time propaganda," and going so far as to christen the state "the child of propaganda."[20]

Czechoslovakia: "The Child of Propaganda"

The Czechoslovak commitment to propaganda did not end with the successful foundation of the state, however, but rather remained a fundamental part of the work of its interwar governments, both internationally and within their own borders. As well as seeking to convince the world of the viability of this new Czechoslovak entity, the various governments of the First Republic also worked to promote the same idea among the state's citizens, by sponsoring the creation of a Czechoslovak national identity with which the majority of people could identify. Founder and first president T. G. Masaryk wrote that successful democracy was reliant on the political education of the public, in a spiritual rather than formal sense, and the media structure of the First Republic helped to further this education by presenting the public with a historical tradition of democracy in Czech thought.[21] The pivotal position of propaganda within the Czechoslovak political system was ensured by the creation of the Third Section within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí, MZV), tasked with managing the propaganda and promotion of the ruling government and its policies. Under foreign minister and later president Edvard Beneš, the Third Section's main task was the publishing of magazines and pamphlets on Czechoslovak topics for both domestic and foreign readers. However, it also influenced

19 Edvard Beneš, *My War Memoirs*, trans. Paul Selver (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1928), 103.

20 Herbert Fisher, *A History of Europe from the Beginning of the 18th Century to 1937* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1952), 1155.

21 Masaryk, *Světová revoluce*, 543.

the image of Czechoslovakia abroad, by clearing information for use by foreign journalists and sponsoring research trips for influential writers and academics from other countries.[22] The MZV also had its own publishing house, Orbis, which was heavily involved in the publication of foreign books on Czechoslovak topics and also brought out some of the most influential pro-government works of the First Republic for domestic readers, including Karel Čapek's much-feted book of interviews with Masaryk, entitled *Hovory s T. G. Masarykem* (*Conversations with T. G. Masaryk*).[23]

Politics and political propaganda were an established feature of the media in the First Czechoslovak Republic and the public was used to being exposed to political topics in print and over the wireless. Before the advent of radio the print media had boomed in Czechoslovakia, with some 2,250 different periodicals in 1920, ballooning to almost 4,000 by 1930.[24] Unlike countries such as Britain, where many of the largest newspapers, at least from 1914 onwards, were privately owned (albeit with political inclinations), the majority of the most popular periodicals in Czechoslovakia were directly run by political parties. As the Czechoslovak political system featured a multiplicity of parties and each one operated its own publication, these partisan newspapers dominated a large section of the press.[25] Most publications were upfront about their allegiances, but some, such as those published by the Melantrich publishing house, did not state their origins so openly.[26] Though freedom of the press was enshrined in the constitution, the state reserved the right to intervene in times of danger, to either fine or restrict the distribution

22 Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914–1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 70–71.

23 Karel Čapek, *Hovory s T. G. Masarykem* (Prague: Fr. Borový a Čin, 1946). For more on Orbis, see Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 4, 74.

24 Though there was some reproduction of content in smaller titles taking from their parent publication, these numbers remain impressive; see Jakub Končelík, Pavel Večeřa, and Petr Orság, *Dějiny českých médií 20. století* (Prague: Portál, 2010), 41.

25 For example, the National Democrats had several papers, including *České slovo,* and the Agrarians issued *Venkov,* as well as several local periodicals. In his extensive history of the First Republic, Zdeněk Karník suggested that, without their press presence, "political parties in this period had no hope of success," in *České země v éře První republiky (1918–1938)*, vol. 1, *Vznik, budování a zlatá léta republiky (1918–1929)* (Prague: Libri, 2000), 327. For more on the party political press, see ibid., 327–31.

26 Karník, *České země*, 1:329.

of publications that threatened the stability of the state or promoted criminal acts.[27]

Broadcasting was quickly popularised in the young republic and the political press soon expanded into this new medium. Regular broadcasting from Prague began in May 1923, and the broadcasting company Radiojournal was established in June of that year. Other stations grew up in Brno, Bratislava, Košice, and Moravská Ostrava throughout the 1920s, and the first simultaneous broadcasts, in which listeners across the country were able to listen to the same programme at the same time, began in December 1926.[28] By the end of 1933 there were over half a million radio licence holders in Czechoslovakia, with approximately 39 radio sets for every 1,000 inhabitants, largely concentrated in urban centres and more widely in central and northern Bohemia. This put Czechoslovakia on a par with countries such as Hungary (38 sets per 1,000 inhabitants) and France (33), but still far behind Great Britain (133) and Germany (77).[29] The number of radio sets in Czechoslovakia grew rapidly, however, almost doubling between 1933 and 1938, to approximately one million.[30] According to BBC intelligence, by the autumn of 1938 radio density in Czechoslovakia had reached the comparatively high level of 72.4 radio sets per 1,000 people – almost one in every other household – with the greatest density in Bohemia (83.2). It should be noted, however, that other regions had considerably lower levels of radio ownership: the BBC estimated there were 6 to 7 people per radio in Bohemia and Moravia, over 20 people per set in Slovakia, and approximately 65 per set in Subcarpathian Ruthenia.[31]

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27 For more on the laws governing the press in this period, see Končelík, Večeřa, and Orság, *Dějiny českých médií 20. století*, 33–34; and Karník, *České země*, 1:337.

28 Although the broadcaster, Radiojournal, was a single company, the different stations did enjoy some programming freedom; see Končelík, Večeřa, and Orság, *Dějiny českých médií 20. století*, 56–57, 60.

29 Figures taken from A. J. Patzaková, ed. *Prvních deset let Československého rozhlasu* (Prague: Radiojournal, 1935), 684; radio density by region is shown in a foldout map (obr. 2) between pp. 672 and 673.

30 David Vaughan, *Battle for the Airwaves: Radio and the 1938 Munich Crisis* (Prague: Radioservis, 2008), 19; Briggs, *War of Words*, 737 (Appendix C).

31 "BBC European Audience Estimates: Czechoslovakia," 6 January 1944, pp. 1–2, EIP series 5, no. 6, E2/184, BBC WAC. The BBC paper notes the lack of precise figures for Subcarpathian Ruthenia, but these figures correlate with Končelík, Večeřa, and Orság's record of fewer than 10,000 radio licenses in the region by 1938 and Czechoslovak government sources putting the population at just over 700,000 in 1937; see Končelík, Večeřa, and Orság, *Dějiny českých médií 20. století*, 63; "Opis: Statistický lexicon obcí v republice československé," Ministerstvo vnitra Londýn [MV–L] 114: Referát pro Podkarpatskou Rus (RPR) 2-10-2, Czech National Archive [CNA], Prague.

The new technology was overseen by the state from the beginning, in the form of the Ministry of Post and Telegraphs (Ministerstvo pošt a telegrafů), which owned a fifty-one percent stake in Radiojournal from 1925.[32] There was further political influence in the radio as political parties exercised considerable control over broadcasts targeting their traditional support base: for example, the Agrarian Party held sway over broadcasting for agricultural workers, the Social Democrats over programmes for urban workers, and the Traders' Party over broadcasting for industry and trade.[33] Radio journalist and historian David Vaughan noted the complaints made by some at the time that political influence was stifling Czechoslovak radio, and concluded that "in Czechoslovakia, radio never quite managed to emerge as a strong, independent public institution."[34] However, although the state retained control in the management of Radiojournal, the appointment of speakers, and the right to censor programmes, the compliance shown by the broadcasting company meant that there was relatively little interference in actual programme content. This lack of conflict has been attributed more to Radiojournal's willingness to abide by the verbal agreement and do "what the state expected of it" than to any particular political constraint.[35] Vaughan criticised this political dominance for allowing "party political squabbles," which "overflowed into Radiojournal's management and into the bodies overseeing public broadcasting," creating "an atmosphere of caution and self-censorship." However, Czech histories of the media tend to be less critical of this political influence.[36] Končelík and his co-authors described Czechoslovak radio in this period as a successful tool of public *osvěta*, "enlightenment," while other studies view the increasing political interest in radio as a natural result of the medium's growing popularity.[37]

Given the important questions of language in the wartime broadcasts from London which will be discussed later, it should also be noted that radio in the First Republic was not a solely Czech affair. Regular

32 Vaughan, *Battle for the Airwaves*, 20.

33 See Vaughan, *Battle for the Airwaves*, 22–23; Karník, *České země*, 1:339; on the Czechoslovak Traders' Party (Česoslovenská živnostenská strana středostavovská), see Barbara Köpplová et al., *Dějiny českých médií v datech: Rozhlas, Televize, Mediální právo* (Prague: Karolinum, 2003), 25.

34 Vaughan, *Battle for the Airwaves*, 23, 85.

35 Končelík, Večeřa, and Orság, *Dějiny českých médií 20. století*, 58–59.

36 Vaughan, *Battle for the Airwaves*, 85.

37 Končelík, Večeřa, and Orság, *Dějiny českých médií 20. století*, 62; see also Lenka Čábelová, "Československý rozhlas a stát 1923–1945," in *Konsolidace vládnutí a podnikání v České republice a v Evropské unii*, vol. 2, *Sociologie, prognostika a správa. Média*, ed. Jakub Končelík, Barbara Köpplová, and Irena Prázová (Prague: Matfyzpress, 2002), 291–306.

broadcasting began from Bratislava in October 1926, and "Slovak hours" were introduced into broadcasting from February 1928.[38] Broadcasting in German began in October 1925, originally being broadcast three times weekly, before being extended to 25 minutes a day from December 1926 and 30 minutes a day from 1929.[39] It has been estimated, however, that less than eight percent of Radiojournal broadcasts were in German by 1935 (despite the fact that almost a quarter of the population was German-speaking), and many listened to broadcasts from Nazi Germany instead.[40] While some deem this a "wasted opportunity," Czech historians of the media have suggested that Czech and Slovak listeners in the First Republic would not have tolerated too much minority-language broadcasting.[41] There were other small-scale ventures: 1933 saw the first broadcasts for the Hungarian minority in Slovakia; and in 1934 broadcasting for Subcarpathian Ruthenia began from Košice in all the languages of the region – Russian, Ukrainian, and the local Rusyn dialect.[42] As will be discussed in later chapters, the exile government in London was eventually granted permission to broadcast to Subcarpathian Ruthenia in Russian and Ukrainian, in addition to its Czech and Slovak broadcasts, but its repeated requests to broadcast in German were always refused by the Foreign Office for political reasons.[43]

Radio: The Ideal Medium for Exile

Studies of radio as a medium often focus on its position in the background of listeners' lives, something they half listen to while they drive to work or do the washing up. These works often attribute much of radio's power to this position as a "secondary" entertainment which listeners have come to take for granted as part of their quotidian experience. The radio audience, these studies contend, is so accustomed to the seemingly

38 See Köpplová et al., *Dějiny českých médií v datech*, 23, 27.
39 See Köpplová et al., *Dějiny českých médií v datech*, 18–19, 28.
40 Vaughan, *Battle for the Airwaves*, 27.
41 Vaughan, *Battle for the Airwaves*, 27; Končelík, Večeřa, and Orság, *Dějiny českých médií 20. století*, 62.
42 On Hungarian broadcasts, see Köpplová et al., *Dějiny českých médií v datech*, 34–35; for Subcarpathian Ruthenia, see Paul Robert Magocsi, *The Shaping of a National Identity: Subcarpathian Rus', 1848–1948* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 223.
43 The FO argued that the inclusion of broadcasts for German-speakers in the Czechoslovak programme would be interpreted as a sign that German-speaking territories would be included in post-war Czechoslovakia, and thereby contradict HMG's policy of not committing to any borders in Central Europe; see Chapter Two for more.

innocuous background entertainment that listeners do not stop to question it; the medium's very mundanity and ubiquity prevent its content and methods from being consciously analysed by its users and thereby facilitate its acceptance by the listener.[44] This study focuses on quite a different period in the history of radio, one in which listeners had to disobey police orders, secretly conceal or repair their radio sets, patiently try to work around the jamming of incoming broadcasts, post watchers outside the room, and mute the radio by setting it on a cushion, so that they could hear a few words from London without the risk of arrest; this is a study of a time when radio was not in the background.[45]

Broadcasting was also a high priority for exiled politicians, as they lacked the usual press and media routes to promote themselves among their home population. The Czechoslovaks in London were faced with a daunting task, as they were deprived of all the usual ways of communicating with their people at a time when the need to promote their cause had never been more urgent. By definition, exile governments lack the typical means of asserting their authority through public events and enacting legislation, and propaganda is all that is left to them; it is both the foundation of and the main forum for their leadership, as well as being their only means of promoting their plans for the future. In the wartime context, there was also a pressing need to encourage people at home to endure and resist, as well as to counter the propaganda attacks being made against the London exiles by the enemy authorities, all of which had to be carried out without any of the usual resources. Regular broadcaster Prokop Drtina wrote of the motivation behind some of his wartime talks, claiming he was guided by his sense of duty to "strengthen and constantly re-strengthen the faith of our people at home in victory," especially at times of difficulty for the Allied cause, such as following the fall of France in 1940.[46] He wrote of the urgency with which the exiled

44 Almost every study of radio as a medium asserts its ubiquity and mundanity as defining characteristics; see in particular Andrew Crisell, *Understanding Radio* (London: Methuen, 1986); Martin Shingler and Cindy Wieringa, *On Air: Methods and Meanings of Radio* (London: Arnold, 1998), esp. ix–x; Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), esp. 4–5, 7. Some have suggested that this ubiquity has contributed to a lack of institutional interest in the archiving of radio; see Laura J. Treat and Shawn VanCour, "Introduction: The State of Radio Preservation," *Journal of Archival Organization* 17, nos. 1–2 (2020): 1–12.

45 Measures such as these were recommended by the BBC to ensure safety while listening to foreign broadcasts. They are recorded in intelligence documents such as SEA, EOCOTF, 17 November 1941, 47/41, EIP series 1c, E2/192/2, BBC WAC.

46 Drtina, *A nyní promluví*, 15, 21.

Czechoslovaks attempted to counter Nazi propaganda, their efforts to prove to listeners that they were receiving reliable information about events in the Protectorate without incriminating anyone, and their successful efforts at launching campaigns among listeners, such as the press boycott of 1941 (discussed later in this volume).[47]

In terms of contact with the general public in the Protectorate and Slovakia, the exile government was limited in the connections it could make. Although a variety of Czechoslovak periodicals were produced in Britain – from the pro-government weekly *Čechoslovák* (*The Czechoslovak*) to the pro-Communist *Nové Československo* (*New Czechoslovakia*) – these were not available to the home population.[48] The only way of transmitting written material was by organising leaflet drops with the Royal Air Force (RAF) which, because of Czechoslovakia's position in the centre of Europe, was impossible for much of the war. Even when leaflet drops became feasible from 1943 onwards, and the British Political Warfare Executive (PWE) produced both Czech- and Slovak-language leaflets for dropping, they were a low priority for an overburdened air force and frequently went out of date before a flight became available, leading them to be pulped. Although in these leaflets PWE often reproduced the texts of speeches that had been broadcast in the government programme, control of the leaflets' content remained firmly in British hands and, combined with the logistical difficulties in their delivery, this meant that leaflet drops never offered the exile government a viable alternative medium for its propaganda.[49]

Radio was therefore the only means for the exile government to communicate regularly and directly with the public it sought to represent, and as a medium it has many features that make it well-suited to those in exile. Radio enables speakers who have been forced from their countries and are based thousands of miles away to address their fellow

47 Drtina, *A nyní promluví*, 37, 42, 142.

48 *Čechoslovák* was first published in 1939 as *Čechoslovák v Anglii*, and advertised itself as an independent publication, despite its connections with the exile government. The shortened name was taken up from 1 January 1941 and the subtitle proclaiming independence was dropped in 1942. Beneš's nephew Bohuš Beneš was the paper's chief editor for several years. For more on the Czechoslovak press in Britain, see Bořivoj Srba, *Múzy v exilu: Kulturní a umělecká sktivity čs. exulantů v Londýně v předvečer a v průběhu druhé světové války, 1939–1945* (Brno: Masarykova Univerzita, 2003), esp. 395–96.

49 For more details on RAF leaflet drops, see the minutes of the meetings of the Leaflet Sub-Committee in FO 898/429, The National Archive [TNA], Kew. Examples of the leaflets produced, including the texts of many broadcasts, and details on the dates of drops can be seen in FO 898/506, 1942–45, TNA.

countrymen directly in their homes. Although efforts can be made to jam incoming broadcasts, normally by transmitting loud and disruptive noise on the same frequency, it is extremely difficult to block them out completely and broadcasts are capable of reaching anyone with a receiver. The British combated German efforts to jam their broadcasts by regularly increasing the number of wavelengths on which they transmitted, and incoming intelligence from the Protectorate suggested that jamming only occasionally made listening impossible, and then only in large cities such as Prague and Brno, where the Germans had erected jamming transmitters. Other reports suggested that there was usually at least one frequency that remained audible, sparking a rumour that it was kept open to aid the work of the German monitors.[50] Radio's ability to cross borders and the possibility for listeners to receive transmissions at a great distance from their source have been identified as key aspects of the medium's transnational nature, and these were vitally important characteristics for the isolated broadcasters in London.[51]

Another crucial characteristic of radio as a medium is the potential for the broadcaster's voice to be perceived by audiences as addressing them directly. Listeners have repeatedly been found to sense that a radio presenter is speaking to them personally, even when they are rationally aware that this cannot be the case, and broadcasting is therefore capable of creating an illusory feeling of proximity and intimacy between speaker and listener.[52] It brings would-be leaders into close (albeit one-way) contact with the people they hope to lead and, as an oral/aural medium, it enables speakers to use all the power of the human voice to appeal, persuade, entertain, and influence. The political and propagandist possibilities of the medium are therefore enhanced as broadcasters can play on listeners' emotions, appeal to their sense of humour, or challenge them by altering their use of language, and they can also use the airwaves to transmit extracts of poetry and music calculated to most affect their audience. Psychological experiments in the 1930s showed that not only did

50 "BBC European Audience Estimates: Czechoslovakia," 6 January 1944, EIP series 5, no. 6, E2/184; "BBC Monthly Intelligence Report," 16 August 1941, 33/41, EIP series 1a, E2/185; "BBC Bi-Monthly Intelligence Report, Europe," 18 June 1942, 25/42, EIP series 1a, BBC WAC. For more on methods and efficacy of jamming, see Edward Tangye Lean, *Voices in the Darkness: The Story of the European Radio War* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1943), 171–74.

51 For more on how radio both transcends borders and has been shaped by transnational processes and networks, see Suzanne Lommers, *Europe – On Air: Interwar Projects for Radio Broadcasting* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).

52 David Hendy looks at this intimate atmosphere of radio, in *Noise: A Human History of Sound and Listening* (London: Profile Books, 2013), esp. 290–91.