



'Mass Deception without Deceivers'? The Holocaust on East and West German Radio in the 1960s

Author(s): René Wolf

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Oct., 2006), pp. 741-755

Published by: [Sage Publications, Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30036417>

Accessed: 27/12/2012 08:04

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Sage Publications, Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Contemporary History*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

René Wolf

‘Mass Deception without Deceivers’? The Holocaust on East and West German Radio in the 1960s

The so-called ‘Auschwitz Trial’, which took place in Frankfurt am Main, lasted from 20 December 1963 to 18 August 1965. The intention of its instigators had been to deal effectively with nazi perpetrators on an unprecedented scale. But the historical significance of the trial was far from evident at the time, against a background of waning public interest and Cold War rhetoric. This article will argue, however, that it was the radio reports, with their direct access and personal involvement, which played a major role in the changing of hearts and minds and the questioning of preconceived interpretations, spear-headed by journalists, writers and intellectuals.

The interest generated by the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961 appeared to cross ideological boundaries; demonstrating a seemingly genuine willingness to engage with the ‘un-mastered’ past throughout the two Germanies. But despite being hailed as one of the first ‘complex’ trials in West German legal history, attempting not only to prosecute a greater number of individuals but also to analyse and expose the National Socialist system of terror to a wider public, the proceedings of the Auschwitz Trial — and the reporting of it — nevertheless managed to get caught up in the ideological exchanges of the Cold War.

The radio broadcast, with its personal immediacy, was thought to exert an immensely persuasive — and therefore subversive — influence on an ideologically polarized world. This ‘hot’¹ medium, however, had instigated great changes in its audiences through the wartime experience of listening to the radio; the ‘voice of authority’ coming from the radio set had become ‘background noise’.² News and current affairs programmes — now competing with tabloid journalism and television — were listened to but not remembered.³ Nevertheless, radio had the ability to disseminate information to the widest possible audience, with around 86 out of 100 households possessing (or listening to) a radio set in the late 1950s and early 1960s, in both the GDR and the

1 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (London 2003; first edn 1964), 326.

2 Stefan Kursawe, *Vom Leitmedium zum Begleitmedium* (Cologne 2004), 186.

3 B. Lutz and R. Wodak, *Information für Informierte — Linguistische Studien zur Verständlichkeit und Verstehens von Hörfunknachrichten* (Vienna 1987), 28.

FRG.⁴ Within this context, the radio coverage of the Auschwitz Trial was, not just for ideological purposes, its most important outlet.

In 1945, after the end of the war, a swift and fair trial of the main war criminals in an open court was seen by the Allies as the most effective means of bringing about reconciliation with the general public of the defeated Germany. The broadcasting of the trials on radio helped in this respect. The reporting of the Nuremberg Trials had emphasized the ideological differences between East and West Germany, the Soviet-controlled Berliner Rundfunk employing, among others, a young Markus Wolf⁵ to comment on proceedings, while in the Western zones reporters chosen by the military authorities ranged from former German exiles such as Eberhard Schütz for the BBC⁶ to a certain Dr Gaston Oulmán, who turned out to be an international fraudster and con-man, for the American broadcasts.⁷

After the Nuremberg Trials, prosecutions against nazi crimes and war crimes continued in Germany, albeit with less international and national press and radio publicity. Prosecutions were hampered by a general unwillingness on the part of the state authorities and judiciary to deal with such matters, as well as the absence of any legal precedent. In the GDR everything appeared to be dealt with in one fell swoop with the 1950 'Waldheim' trials, during which 3442 persons were tried at the regional court (*Landgericht*) Chemnitz (Karl-Marx-Stadt) between 26 April and 14 July 1950 at the rate of 142 cases a day.⁸ In the Federal Republic prosecutions were more drawn out and characterized by notably mild sentencing and many acquittals. The turning point came with the *Einsatzgruppen* trial in Ulm in 1958, which aroused sufficient public interest for the government to act by establishing the *Länder* Justice Departments' Centre for the Prosecution of National Socialist Violent Crimes (*Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Verfolgung Nationalsozialistischer Gewaltverbrechen*) in December 1958 in Ludwigsburg, Baden-Württemberg.⁹

The main force behind this move was the state prosecutor general of Hesse, Dr Fritz Bauer. Bauer, a German Jew, had been incarcerated by the nazis in 1933, but managed to flee first to Denmark, then to Sweden. When he returned to Germany in the late 1940s he was one of the few qualified jurists who had no links with the former regime, and one of the few who ceaselessly

4 Konrad Dussel, *Hörfunk in Deutschland* (Berlin 1997), 119.

5 Markus Wolf, *Memoirs of a Spymaster* (London 1997), 41–2.

6 Ansgar Diller and Wolfgang Mühl-Benninghaus (eds), *Berichterstattung über den Nürnberger Prozess gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher 1945/46 — Edition und Dokumentation ausgewählter Rundfunkquellen* (Berlin 1998), 12–13.

7 Maximilian Alexander, *Das Chamaeleon. Der Mann der sich Gaston Oulmán nannte* (Hamburg 1978).

8 Agenda: *Nationalsozialismus und Justiz. Die Aufarbeitung von Gewaltverbrechen damals und heute* (Münster 1993), 38–9.

9 M. von Miquel, "Wir müssen mit den Mördern zusammenleben!" NS-Prozesse und politische Öffentlichkeit in den sechziger Jahren' in Fritz Bauer Institute (ed.), *'Gerichtstag halten über uns selbst' — Geschichte und Wirkung des ersten Frankfurter Auschwitz Prozesses* (Frankfurt 2001), 98.

pursued the prosecution of nazi war criminals. His efforts left him, and his staff, isolated and often the recipients of death threats. It was Bauer who discovered the whereabouts of Adolf Eichmann in 1958, and, not trusting the German authorities, passed the information to the Israeli Secret Service, MOSSAD. Bauer was the central co-ordinator of all the so-called 'Auschwitz Trials' in Frankfurt, which started with the 'Proceedings against Mulka and others', the first Auschwitz Trial in December 1963.¹⁰

Prosecuting the SS members directly involved in running the Auschwitz concentration and death camp was, under the prevailing judicial circumstances, difficult, to say the least. The court employed the historians Hans Buchheim, Helmut Krausnick and Martin Broszat to illustrate the complexities of the camp system and to stand as expert witnesses. A further problem was also to know whom exactly to prosecute. Several of the former Auschwitz murderers were living freely, under their own names, in the FRG. Wilhelm Boger, the notorious torturer of the Political Section in Auschwitz, was only taken into police custody after one of his former victims reported him repeatedly to the authorities and to the International Auschwitz Committee in Vienna.¹¹ Then late in 1960, the arrest of the last commandant of Auschwitz Richard Baer, who had been living under an assumed name as a forestry worker, was a major breakthrough. But Oberstaatsanwalt (QC) Erwin Schüle, as head of the Zentrale Stelle, had bigger ideas – to prosecute not just Boger and Baer, but a total of 26 persons, known to the authorities through a file smuggled out of Poland by the *Frankfurter Rundschau* journalist Thomas Gnielka. This file contained the names and activities of the notorious Auschwitz guards together with the lists of those they had shot 'while trying to escape', their superiors and other personnel. The legal complexities of such a case, which involved many authorities from several countries, including Poland and the GDR, took time. By the time the case came to trial in late 1963, two of the defendants — one of whom was Baer — had died while awaiting trial, and another two had been excused on medical grounds.¹² The accused included Robert Mulka, second in command (adjutant to Höß); from the camp Gestapo (Political Section) Wilhelm Boger and Pery Broad; chief guard Oswald Kaduk; pharmacist Victor Capesius; doctors Lucas, Schatz and Frank; nurses Josef Klehr, Herbert Scherpe and Emil Hantl and even a prisoner-functionary (Kapo) Emil Bednarek, a total of 22 persons, accused of 4243 murders and 28,910 cases of accessory to murder — an indictment of over 700 pages.¹³

The Zentrale Stelle, in accordance with the West German judicial system, appointed three prosecuting counsels; the main (West German) state prosecu-

10 Matthias Meusch, *Von der Diktatur zur Demokratie. Fritz Bauer und die Aufarbeitung der NS-Verbrechen in Hessen 1956–1968* (Wiesbaden 2001), 8–22.

11 Hermann Langbein, *Der Auschwitz Prozess. Eine Dokumentation*, 2 vols (Frankfurt 1995), vol.1, 22.

12 *Ibid.*, 32–4.

13 Gerhard Werle and Thomas Wanders, *Auschwitz vor Gericht. Völkermord und bundesdeutsche Strafjustiz* (Munich 1995), 54.

tion team led by Fritz Bauer, and two adjunct prosecutors (*Nebenkläger*) who, in German law, as additional prosecutors, represented individual victims against the same defendant. In the Auschwitz Trial the two additional prosecutors were Henry Ormond, representing victims from 15 different countries, and Professor Dr Friedrich Karl Kaul, acting as the adjunct prosecutor for the six GDR citizens bringing charges against Mulka and others.¹⁴

As Kaul's appointment as adjunct prosecutor appeared to be disputed, the SED leadership launched an 'ideological offensive' against the Federal Republic to force the issue. An underground publication of lists of prominent nazis still in public service in West Germany (later published as the *Braunbuch* or Brown Book) revealed that Erwin Schüle, head of the Zentrale Stelle, had joined the SA in 1933 and the NSDAP in 1935. During the war he had been ordnance officer during the siege of Leningrad, involved in the 'scorched earth' policy and in charge of the 'special punishment squad' (*Sonderstrafkompanie*), infantry division 253.¹⁵

This was, of course, a great setback for Schüle and the Zentrale Stelle. Schüle made the mistake of denying his past at first, but when firm evidence emerged from East Berlin he withdrew from active duty and remained nominal head of the agency until his move to the *Bundesgerichtshof* (Appeal Court) in 1966. Schüle was never implicated in any crimes, but the international embarrassment this caused the FRG had the desired effect: GDR adjunct prosecutor Kaul was admitted to the Auschwitz Trial, although recent research shows that Kaul had to persuade his superiors to let him attend the proceedings in Frankfurt and was only given permission to do so two days before the trial began.¹⁶

One programme which prepared the West German public for the upcoming Auschwitz Trial, after the preliminary inquiries had finished and a date for the trial had been set, was broadcast in March 1963 by the regional broadcasters for the Land Hesse, *Hessischer Rundfunk*. It was written by Thomas Gnielka, the journalist who had originally found the files which made the trial possible. Under the title 'Konzentrationslager Auschwitz' in the *Zeitfunk* series, it was billed as a *Sondersendung*, transmitted during prime time in the evening.¹⁷

The programme's format was straightforward: it plotted the history of the concentration camp from its planning stages through to its partial destruction and evacuation at the close of the second world war. Emphasis was placed on the main culprits (Wilhelm Boger, Josef Klehr, Oswald Kaduk) and the main

14 Annette Rosskopf, 'Anwalt antifaschistischen Offensiven — Der DDR Nebenklagevertreter Friedrich Karl Kaul' in Fritz Bauer Institute (ed.), *'Gerichtstag halten über uns selbst'*, op. cit., 145.

15 Norbert Podewin, *Braunbuch — Kriegs und Naziverbrecher in der Bundesrepublik und Berlin (West)*. Reprint der 1968 Ausgabe (Berlin 2002), 141.

16 Annette Weinke, *Die Verfolgung von NS-Tätern im geteilten Deutschland* (Paderborn 2002), 239.

17 *Sondersendung 'Konzentrationslager Auschwitz' vor Beginn des Auschwitz Prozesses*. Hessischer Rundfunk, Frankfurt am Main, Ton und Wort Dokumentation, Archive No. 187043/187044, first broadcast 16/3/1963.

witnesses (Dr Czeslaw Glowacki, Dr Tadeusz Paczula and Kasimierz Smolen) as well as words from the prosecutor-general of Hesse Dr Fritz Bauer. Most issues were covered: the lateness of the prosecutions, the obstacles to possible earlier prosecutions, the unrelenting views of most of the accused, the hell of Auschwitz.

Among the many witness interviews, that of Tadeusz Paczula stands out particularly, with his vivid recollections from his years as scribe, recalling in minute detail the daily life and death in Auschwitz. Throughout these conversations the interviewer's astonishment was clearly audible, as much of this evidence had not been heard in public before.

The programme's construction around the issues arising from a prosecution of this kind was noticeably careful, taking into account the increased public interest since the Eichmann trial as well as expressions of public unease. The continuing ideological confrontation with the GDR found little room in Gnielka's programme, with only one reference to the nazi files in East Berlin's possession, 'where these documents found their way to the public in the form of well aimed propaganda material against the Federal Republic'.¹⁸

In the closing sequence of 'Konzentrationslager Auschwitz' two alternating narrators pointed to the uniqueness of the impending trial, which would not only focus on the crimes of individuals but also aim to reaffirm the virtues of a tolerant, liberal and democratic society. Therefore, so the author argued, calls for a general amnesty for crimes committed during the Third Reich were unacceptable:

Narrator 1: But could there be an amnesty for murder without shaking the foundations of our criminal law? The prosecutor-general of Hesse Dr Bauer has a different opinion about the meaning of trials like these; an opinion which is worth the closing statement of this programme.

Fritz Bauer: The aim of these proceedings is not just to look back. It is the task of these criminal proceedings to establish new values. Out of the ash and ruins of Germany grew a new state and a new economy. And a new human(itarian) belief is needed. This has to rise, like the phoenix, from the hell of Auschwitz and has to emerge from our Auschwitz Trial. What we mean is the concept of equality for all humans, lack of prejudice and tolerance towards everybody. I am here not to hate but to love, said the poet. This should be the lesson of this trial.¹⁹

For the East German broadcasters the lesson to be drawn from this trial was that they should continue their campaign against Dr Hans Maria Globke, Chancellor Adenauer's private secretary, who had been exposed as a senior nazi civil servant and credited with the authorship of the legal commentaries for the 1935 Nuremberg Race Laws. Albert Norden, chief of the East German propaganda section against the West, and in possession of the 'Nazi Archive' captured by the Soviets at the end of the war, had patiently waited for Globke to rise again in the FRG's civil service until he became Adenauer's chief aide, in

18 Ibid., 44'23".

19 Ibid., 62'50"-64'00".

charge of the Chancellor's office, before exposing his past. Or, as Jeffrey Herf puts it: 'Had Norden tried to create a figure to suit his purposes, or had Adenauer been seeking ways to give the Communists a tempting target, neither could have done much better than Globke.'²⁰

Within the context of the Globke debate, after prolonged and fruitless attempts by the SED leadership to 'increase class antagonism' through 'guiding' trade unions and the left in the FRG, Norden and Ulbricht decided that more material aimed at arousing agitation needed to be broadcast.²¹ Agitation, according to the GDR's *Political Dictionary of Socialist Journalism*, should be characterized by its ability to 'shake up and spur on' (*aufrütteln und anspornen*); it 'strongly directs itself at the emotions of the people, explores their opinions, appealing to their enthusiasm and their [ability to] hate'.²² Examples of how this was achieved within the context of the Globke issue were two programmes broadcast on the *Deutschlandsender* (broadcasting to the FRG), one entitled 'The Children of Zamość or, How the White Colour of Innocence Turned Black',²³ the other 'Collection Point Żelazna Street',²⁴ in January and April 1963 respectively. Both programmes linked Globke to the Final Solution with a mixture of edited interview clips (of Globke and others) together with comments from experts and the alternating narrators. In addition sound effects were repeatedly used to emphasize particular points. In 'The Children of Zamość', a recording of Globke's denial of any knowledge of the 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question' was followed by the following sequence:

Narrator 2: Why does this man lie so cold-bloodedly?

Narrator 1: There are two reasons for this.

Narrator 2: Firstly, the gentleman is, today, Secretary of State to a Chancellor who openly accepts his lies as the truth, despite knowing all the facts. Secondly, the gentleman does not wish — for reasons of career and not reasons of conscience — to burden himself with new blame.

Narrator 1: To date, there are six-and-a-half million lives on the debit side of his account of guilt, snuffed out, trodden and suffocated lives. Six-and-a-half million. That's quite a number. The statistic of death. The person in charge of it was in Berlin, in Hitler's Ministry of the Interior, a bureaucrat of death (pause) . . .

Narrator 1: (Loud, pronounced) Dr Hans Josef Maria Globke (loud minor seventh chord — six seconds, then fade).²⁵

20 Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory. The Nazi Past in the two Germanys* (London 1997), 184.

21 Michael Lemke, 'Kampagnen gegen Bonn', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 41 (April 1993), 154.

22 John Sandford, 'What are the Media for? Philosophies of the Media in the Federal Republic and the GDR', *Contemporary German Studies, Occasional Papers No. 5, University of Strathclyde* (1988), 17.

23 *Die Kinder von Zamość oder Wie die weisse Farbe der Unschuld schwarz wurde*, Archive No. 20132610, DRA Potsdam-Babelsberg.

24 *Sammelpunkt Shelesnastrasse. Dokumentation zum 20. Jahrestag des Aufstandes im Warschauer Ghetto*, Archive No. 2013258000, DRA Potsdam-Babelsberg.

25 *Kinder von Zamość*, 3'19"–4'26".

'Collection Point Żelazna Street' followed three months later. The similarities between the two programmes were very obvious, with similar sequences, identical witnesses and near-identical edits. Most surprising were the recollections of a Polish Colonel Bolkowiak, who claimed that the Warsaw Ghetto uprising had been organized by the Polish Workers' Party and agents from Moscow.²⁶ Again the emotive theme of the murder of children emerges through 'witness accounts' of occurrences in the ghetto, and again Globke is implicated:

- Narrator 1: The head of the Jewish Historical Institute, Professor Bernard Mark, explained:
- Bernard Mark: In general Globke took part in the discrimination, isolation, deprivation and inhuman oppression of the Jews. In this manner Globke exposed himself as a top racist and nazi. He belonged to those fascist functionaries who paved the way for the *Einsatzgruppen*.
- Narrator 1: Globke today is Secretary of State in the Chancellor's office (hammer on anvil sound).²⁷

The hammer on anvil sound effect had replaced the musical chord sound effect and the programme was broadcast in (very rudimentary) stereo.²⁸ Whether these technical changes made any difference to the listener is questionable but certainly the didactic construction of 'Collection Point Żelazna Street' and 'The Children of Zamość' contained all the elements of effective propaganda and agitation: notions of heroism, the struggle of all humanity, the lessons of history and death.

By the latter part of 1963 East German broadcasters had switched their attention to the upcoming Auschwitz Trial. In an evening commentary of 13 November, journalist Wolfgang Dost spelt out the 'official line'. The trial's presiding judge Hofmeyer, according to Dost, had been a nazi 'blood judge', having sentenced an entire family, including grandfather and baby, to death for aiding the enemy, and the tribunal's original judge Dr Forester had been deemed biased, because, according to the commentary, he had intended to question leading West German industrialists about their involvement in the Auschwitz camp complex.²⁹ Neither of these allegations could be verified. Dr Forester had asked to be relieved of his presidency as he feared his own bias, whereas the allegations against Judge Hofmeyer were not corroborated anywhere, including the *Braunbuch*.

These ideological aspects were not lost on the West German broadcasters, who saw the inclusion of the GDR adjunct prosecutor Kaul as something of a challenge to discredit the East German's performance in the courtroom. At the end of the opening day's proceedings the Frankfurt *Hessischer Rundfunk's*

²⁶ *Sammelpunkt Shelesnastrasse*, 5'48"-9'34".

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 26'20"-26'50".

²⁸ This meant that this programme was broadcast not only on the *Deutschlandsender* on MW but also for domestic consumption on FM in the GDR.

²⁹ File 207/01/02/06-7, Signatur: Kommentare 1963, DRA Potsdam-Babelsberg.

political chief editor Werner Ernenputsch filed a report which, rather uncharacteristically for the *HR*, referred to the GDR as ‘the Zone’ and lamented the inclusion of Kaul in the proceedings. However, if he had to be there, Ernenputsch wrote:

In this case it might be a good idea to ask Mr Kaul to do something for Heinz Brandt, who had been imprisoned by the nazis for eleven years in jails and concentration camps. Heinz Brandt, a West German trade union editor, appears to have been abducted to East Berlin and in 1962 was sentenced by the Supreme Court of the Eastern Zone, on the grounds of alleged espionage, to 13 years hard labour.³⁰ As is apparent, inhumanity wasn’t the prerogative of the nazis.³¹

Comments like the above were also common in the courtroom. Chief defence lawyer Dr Laternser took every opportunity to discredit Kaul, and, if possible, witnesses from the GDR. When the GDR Industry Minister Erich Markowitsch — himself a former inmate of Auschwitz — was called by the adjunct prosecution, Laternser initiated a line of questioning which, although found to be inadmissible, nevertheless must have had an impact on the jury. Laternser asked Markowitsch whether he, as Minister for Industry, was responsible for the building industry, and, if so, had he been responsible for the building of the Berlin Wall. Also, as a cabinet member, had he participated in the decision to shoot persons attempting to cross the border between the two Germanies and if so, the court should have Markowitsch arrested on the charge of complicity to murder.³²

This exchange was, of course, not reported in the daily commentaries on East German radio. Instead, the home addresses of the accused were broadcast,³³ along with the continuing attempt to expose (West) German ‘monopoly capitalism’ as the backbone of National Socialism and the Third Reich. The judicial publication *Neue Justiz* of 1964 stated that the requirement of the trial was to uncover the roots and to expose the main culprits:

These are people a few of whom again hold the levers of power in West Germany. The Auschwitz Trial must help the West German population to understand that only with the defeat of the might of German monopoly capitalism and the complete relinquishing of anti-democratic and anti-humanitarian ideologies will there be a true guarantee that these kinds of crimes will never again sully the good name of Germany worldwide.³⁴

Key to the SED’s attempt to turn the Auschwitz Trial into ‘a tribunal against the I.G. Farben conglomerate’ was the expert report of an economics professor from the Humboldt University in (East) Berlin, Professor Dr Jürgen Kuczynski.

Kuczynski’s report, entitled ‘The interconnections between the interests of

30 Herf, *op. cit.*, 428, footnote 56; see also Heinz Brandt, *Ein Traum, der nicht entführbar ist, Mein Weg zwischen Ost und West* (Frankfurt am Main 1985).

31 *Erster Tag Auschwitz Prozess*, Hessischer Rundfunk, Frankfurt am Main, Ton und Wort Dokumentation, Archive No. 4173737, 6’21”–6’49”.

32 *Der Auschwitz — Prozeß*, DVD-ROM (Berlin 2005), 28.829–28.838.

33 File 207/01/02/06–9, Signatur: Kommentare 1963/1964, DRA Potsdam-Babelsberg.

34 Rosskopf, *Anwalt antifaschistischen Offensiven*, *op. cit.*, footnote 17, 157–8.

economy and security police in the establishment and the running of the concentration camp Auschwitz and its subsidiary camps³⁵ was presented, at adjunct prosecutor Kaul's behest, on 19 March 1964, in the middle of the cross-examinations of witnesses. After a lengthy questioning of Professor Kuczynski by the defence, the expert statement was rejected by the court, on the grounds that it was biased, as it had overlooked later amendments of various statements. But it nevertheless had extraordinary and unexpected consequences.

A couple of days earlier the West German President Heinrich Lübke had awarded the *Bundesverdienstkreuz* (equivalent of an OBE) to Dr Heinrich Bütefisch, a prominent industrialist on various boards of directors in the petrochemical industry. But what had emerged from Kuczynski's report was Bütefisch's deep involvement in establishing the Buna plant at Auschwitz–Monowitz and the acquisition of slave labour. During the Third Reich Bütefisch had been on the board of I.G. Farben and a member of the SS, and had been awarded the *Ritterkreuz* (KBE) by Adolf Hitler. So the connection between the rejection of Kuczynski's assessment and the awarding of the *Bundesverdienstkreuz* to Bütefisch was seen, not just by the GDR, as the often commented on continuity between the Nazi past and the present in the Federal Republic. In the evening commentary programme of the *Deutschlandsender* on 20 March 1964 the journalist Martin Radman pointed out that usually, in any trial, a statement which would exonerate the defendants would be welcomed by the defence lawyers. But in Frankfurt today, he argued, the defence rejected the expert's statement not because it was from the GDR, but because the lawyers were protecting the real culprits and were in the pay of the government. This travesty of justice was evident in the honouring of Dr Bütefisch, who, among others, should have been one of the accused. By mentioning several other NS trials, which had taken place in the FRG as a result of tip-offs from the GDR, he implied that there were more to come:

It is understandable, therefore, when the *Mannheimer Allgemeine Zeitung* writes in its editorial: 'There are, most probably, a multitude of such files in the archives in the East. They will not stay there for ever. Again and again these drawers will open, and their mere squeaking will cause many a well-known man to pale. It is lucky that these drawers exist.' Well, lucky for you, my dear listeners in West Germany. But these drawers do not relieve you of responsibility. On the contrary: nobody can say they didn't know. Just as Prof. Kuczynski yesterday, we will continue to call a criminal a criminal and the guilty one guilty, because with murderers there is no bias and no statute of limitations (*Verjährung*).³⁶

The exposé from the East about Bütefisch's past could hardly have been more embarrassing for the Adenauer government and for the first time in its history a civil honour had to be recalled. The Chancellor's office attempted to excuse itself with the explanation that the files on Bütefisch's past (and con-

35 *Die Verflechtung von sicherheitspolizeilichen und wirtschaftlichen Interessen bei der Einrichtung und dem Betrieb des KZ Auschwitz und seine Nebenlager.*

36 File 207/01/02/06–9, Signatur: Kommentare 1963/1964, DRA Potsdam-Babelsberg.

viction to six years' imprisonment by an Allied military court at Nuremberg in 1947) had been inaccessible, as they were in the USA.³⁷

Perhaps the most bizarre and intriguing radio programme about the Auschwitz Trial by the *Deutschlandsender* was broadcast shortly after the Bütefisch scandal, on 18 January 1965 — while the trial was still in progress. Entitled 'Ehrenmänner' (Men of Honour) and presented as a 'feature', it had as its central theme a courtroom confrontation between a survivor witness and the accused Dr Victor Capesius and his lawyers, interwoven with several narratives about the prosecution of NS crimes in the FRG, flashbacks to Auschwitz, recordings of prominent politicians and perpetrators' statements.³⁸ The Auschwitz survivor and witness mentioned in the programme was a certain Anna Silberstein, now residing in the GDR. No witness under this name appeared in the Auschwitz Trial. In the course of the programme the actress playing Anna Silberstein even mentioned her prisoner number — 7103 — a number, according to the Auschwitz Museum in Oświęcim, which does not correspond with the name Silberstein.³⁹

With the aid of audio tape footage from previous programmes (such as the ones on the children of Zamość and Żelazna Street), *Ehrenmänner* explored the relationship between 'Anna Silberstein' and Dr Capesius as it became clear, through the use of a 'flashback', that the Auschwitz prisoner Silberstein had attempted to save some of the children from Zamość from a terrible experi-

37 Florian Schmaltz, 'Das Historische Gutachtens Jürgen Kuczynskis zur Rolle der I.G. Farben und des KZ Monowitz im ersten Frankfurter Auschwitz-Prozess' in *Gerichtstag halten über uns selbst*, op. cit., 128–30.

38 *Ehrenmänner*, Archive No. FEA 3, DRA Potsdam-Babelsberg, first broadcast 18/1/1965.

39 The museum in Oświęcim wrote the following after the author's request for information on this matter:

'Further to your letter of November 10, 2003, sent to the Museum via e-mail, we would like to inform you that we are not familiar with either the facts or documents pertaining to experiments with incendiary phosphorus, carried out by SS-Hauptsturmführer Dr Victor Capesius on Polish children from Zamość region.

Victor Capesius — head of SS pharmacy — from December 1943 carried out pharmacological experiments in KL Auschwitz. Together with other SS physicians he tried out on camp prisoners (males and females) tolerance and efficacy of new medicine on commission from German IG-Farbenindustrie, mainly Bayer company, belonging to this concern. By way of example, in 1944 he and SS physicians Weber and Rhode tried out meskalin on Jewish prisoners — it was an unspecified drug, which was supposed to elicit military secrets from POWs.

Of the prisoner staff, employed by him in the camp pharmacy, the names of two women from Transylvania are known. They were deported to the Auschwitz Concentration Camp in 1944, in transports from Hungary: a woman called Pirozshka, a chemist by profession, and Eva, a pharmacy student. Their family names, however, are unknown.

In the Museum's archives, in the partly preserved camp documentation, there are two female prisoners called Anna Silberstein. In neither case are their Auschwitz serial numbers known. One was Anna Silberstein, a Hungarian. Another, also called Silberstein, whose first name begins with 'A', a French Jew, aged 36, whose camp serial number was 50319, lived to be liberated from KL Auschwitz. We do not know, however, whether either of them had anything to do with Capesius in KL Auschwitz.'

ment by offering herself (sexually) to Dr Capesius. Capesius, after taking advantage of her offer, nevertheless submitted the children to the experiments, which had been asked for by 'an industrialist to test phosphorous materials'. Most suffered and died, and those who survived were gassed. 'This is in thanks for your whoring,' Capesius tells Silberstein.⁴⁰

But the general tone of this programme differed in the deliberate and continuous mixing of fact and fiction, and the use of sources which could not be corroborated. A scene which focused on an event not often mentioned in the West German accounts of Auschwitz, namely the trial and execution of the camp's commander Rudolf Höß in Poland in 1947 and the subsequent trials in Cracow, was typical of the programme's accusatory undertone. The (alternating) narrators pointed to the fact that a number of the accused had been sentenced in Poland but were then extradited to the West, where they were released. One such was Oswald Kaduk. A fictional Kaduk declared his anti-communism to the pre-trial judge, who subsequently released him from custody. While some of Kaduk's comments can be corroborated,⁴¹ the whole narrative around the character of Anna Silberstein appeared to be fictional, including the supposedly 'real' confrontations in the courtroom:

Anna Silberstein: I still have to report what happened to the children who survived after the experiments.

Judge: Weren't they gassed?

Anna Silberstein: All of them. But before they went down that road of no return, before they crossed the threshold into the house of death, they fell into the hands of him, over there!

Narrator 1: Again Anna Silberstein points at Boger. She knows now that her testimony will find no resonance here. But she takes up the fight. Just as then. But for her there is one big difference. Today her voice will travel further than this courtroom. Despite the lies and twists and turns the truth will find its way.

Anna Silberstein: Boger shouted: 'I will get you to know the devil' as he drove the children to the gassing block, where an SS man stood at the ready with a sack full of sweets. Because every child got a sweet before it stepped from life to death. [Military band plays Edward Könige's '*Glückliche Reise*' (happy journey) — the tune most played by the parade ground orchestra at Auschwitz — for eight bars, then the same tune is played by a small dance band with strings to imply a more sedate setting, the boardroom of I.G. Farben in 1942.]⁴²

This section, when closely analysed, is remarkable. Not only does a non-existent witness interact with a real defendant, but the wording of her statements originates verbatim in the Children of Zamość and the Żelazna Street programmes, where they were made in reference to Majdanek and Treblinka. Although the programme was billed as a 'feature' and not as a documentary,

40 *Ehrenmänner*, 29'06".

41 Bernd Naumann, *Auschwitz. A Report on Proceedings against Mulka and Others* (London 1966), 111.

42 *Ehrenmänner*, 37'04"–38'01".

claims of its authenticity were made repeatedly throughout. How was this possible?

The theoretical rationale for presenting this as a relatively coherent continuity is the Marxist–Leninist distinction between ‘objectivity’ (*Objektivität*) and ‘objectivism’ (*Objektivismus*). The journalists of the GDR possessed objectivity as they were aware that partiality (adhering to the party line) and objectivity ‘form an inseparable unity’ in Marxism–Leninism,⁴³ and that the so-called ‘objectivity’ of the Western capitalist media was merely a deception and a cover-up of bourgeois values, a false ‘neutrality’ which was termed ‘objectivism’. Therefore a complete fusion of party and press was needed: the total integration of the press into the party was the necessary political–ideological condition for journalistic activity.⁴⁴

In this case, the objectivism of the ‘falsehood’ can be maintained by the very argument it is trying to present. First, any denial of the story by the West can be seen as further proof of continuity between the Third Reich and the FRG, backed by ‘monopoly capital’, a further conspiracy against the true anti-fascist, cleansed German Democratic Republic. Second, by adopting the moral high ground, a GDR radio programme can ‘intimidate’ the (West) German listeners into a shamed complicity with the murderers of Auschwitz, which will diminish critical listening. And third, radio listening can be inconsequential. Whether Anna Silberstein existed or not is unimportant to the listener. The ephemeral experience of listening to the broadcast will leave only an overall impression, possibly of outrage, shame and unease in the West and self-righteous indignation in the East.⁴⁵ *Ehrenmänner* remains one of the most curious programmes under discussion here.

The programmes on West German radio which dealt with the Auschwitz Trial were quite different. By the time the trial started optimism regarding the possibility of justice had subsided and most of the longer in-depth broadcasts appeared to offer a mixture of introversion and gloom. One such example, which was also hailed as one of the most influential and most widely discussed programmes, was Horst Krüger’s lengthy radio essay ‘In the Labyrinth of Guilt’ (*Im Labyrinth der Schuld*) on 29 April 1964, broadcast by the *Südwestfunk*, Baden-Baden.⁴⁶ Krüger, editor of the SWF’s night-time programming and little known to the public up to this point, wrote down his impressions of

43 Sandford, *What are the Media for?*, op. cit., 14.

44 Ibid., 15.

45 According to audience research in the 1960s, only approximately 2 per cent of West German listeners tuned into GDR broadcasts, and less than 20 per cent of East Germans listened to the West, although it was technically not difficult to do either. Liselotte Mühlberg, ‘Hörerforschung des DDR-Rundfunks’ in Heide Riedel (ed.), *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit . . . 40 Jahre DDR Medien* (Berlin 1993), 177, and Fritz Eberhard, *Der Rundfunkhörer und sein Programm — Ein Beitrag zur empirischen Sozialforschung* (Berlin 1962), 31.

46 *Im Labyrinth der Schuld. Ein Tag im Frankfurter Auschwitz-Prozeß*, Südwestfunk, Baden-Baden, Archive No. SWF 5776567100/200, first broadcast 29 April 1964.

his first visit to the court in Frankfurt. The 68-minute programme detailed the issues surrounding this experience, from the embarrassment of mentioning the word 'Auschwitz' in public to personal recollections of wartime experiences, to the irrational curiosity about the accused. The broadcast came to the attention of the influential critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki after its first airing and subsequently appeared in the journal *Der Monat*, before being printed by the newspapers, including the paper which carried Reich-Ranicki's column, *Die Zeit*.⁴⁷

Krüger's essay is still considered to be one of the most celebrated works on the Auschwitz Trial to date.

Regular reporting and commentary from Frankfurt came in broadcasts by the NDR's Axel Eggebrecht. Most of these have survived (over 35 hours of audio tape) in the archives and form an accurate, fascinating and critical account of the proceedings in Frankfurt. A veteran journalist (he covered the Bergen-Belsen Trial in 1945), Eggebrecht transmitted first weekly, then monthly, lengthy (45–90 minute), intensely analytical programmes. He described his impressions of the defendants — as *petit bourgeois gone wild (wildgewordene Spießbürger)*⁴⁸ — and of the lawyers, the problems of 'working through the past' rather than of just coming to terms with it, of objectivity in the light of such gruesome evidence, and the limitations of a court of law to judge and pass sentence on such crimes. Over the months of reporting, however, his clarity of vision became clouded and he grew deeply pessimistic as a result of his encounters with members of the German public. In his concluding piece he commented:

But the usual vigorous public debate which surrounds every murder trial hardly occurred. Why? Let us not kid ourselves, many people were not just indifferent to the Auschwitz Trial, it was a nuisance; not just the facts, which came to light month after month, but the fact that the trial happened at all. It is not surprising when former fellow travellers say, 'let sleeping dogs lie', but what is much more disconcerting is the lax indifference of the uninvolved.⁴⁹

Eggebrecht's broadcasts went out on the 2nd and 3rd NDR frequency and did not necessarily have large audiences (maybe one eighth of the total number of possible listeners). Nevertheless, he was widely acknowledged as an authority on this and other NS trials and the broadcasts remain a tribute to Eggebrecht and the NDR, who, despite waning interest in the Trial and adverse public opinion, continued with them. But in his memoirs Eggebrecht recalled his general unease at the time: 'Repressive tolerance and consumer terror were indeed elements of this new un-freedom, which we all felt.'⁵⁰ He

47 Fritz Bauer Institut (ed.), *Auschwitz Prozeß 4Ks 2/63 Frankfurt am Main* (Frankfurt 2004), 762.

48 *Zwischenbilanz vom Auschwitz Prozess*, Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Hamburg, Archive No. NDR DWR 15219/1–2, first broadcast 17/11/1964.

49 *Abschlußbericht über den Auschwitz-Prozeß in Frankfurt/Main*, Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Hamburg, Archive No. NDR DWR 16072, first broadcast 7/10/1965, 87'06"–88'51".

50 Axel Eggebrecht (ed.), *Die zornigen alten Männer. Gedanken über Deutschland seit 1945* (Hamburg 1979), 24.

remained pessimistic about the new Germany, stating that in comparison to other European nations, 'here, the Enlightenment only happened in homeopathic doses'.⁵¹

The broadcasts from the Auschwitz Trial were a turning point in the way the West German media dealt with the issue of the Nazi past. Despite the pessimism expressed by Eggebrecht and others, many of the issues arising from the Auschwitz Trial started to be addressed in programmes put out by West German public service broadcasters at a somewhat later date, and on the more popular 1st and 2nd wavelengths. Heiner Lichtenstein, H.G. Adler, Joseph Wulf, Herman Langbein and T.W. Adorno all became prominent commentators on the ongoing NS trials. It seemed therefore less surprising to hear Simon Wiesenthal pronounce on an NDR programme of February 1968 entitled 'A nation plays blind man's bluff or the search for NS criminals' (*Ein Volk spielt Blinde Kuh oder die Suche nach den NS-Verbrechern*)⁵² that the only winners of the Cold War were the (un-prosecuted) Nazi war criminals and murderers. While this had been quite evident at the time of the Auschwitz Trial, to broadcast such a conclusion would have been unthinkable in the early 1960s.

GDR broadcasters occupied themselves less and less with the subject of NS trials as the 1960s drew to a close. Programmes dealing with the NS past were restricted to a very small number, produced for specific anniversaries and commemorations.

But there was still a sincerity of engagement despite ideological contortions. Whereas it is still mystifying why GDR broadcasters chose to invent and falsify material, it is important to note that the East German transmissions fulfilled an important function, namely to expose (and bring to trial) un-prosecuted war criminals. It appears, to use Heinz Steinert's dictum (after Adorno) as a 'mass deception without deceivers' (*Massenbetrug ohne Betrüger*).⁵³

The assessment of how these programmes were received by their respective audiences remains problematic. Apart from a few listeners' letters in connection with the broadcast of Peter Weiss's '*Die Ermittlung*', nothing survives in the archives. However, some general audience figures hold a few clues. With the exception of the 1980s in the GDR, radio audiences were extremely loyal to their 'preferred' (or local) station: nearly 80 per cent of listeners East and West did not retune their sets when listening to something disagreeable, and valued the familiarity of 'their' radio station above anything else.⁵⁴ This shows an interesting relationship developing between the broadcasters — or, to use Wulf Kansteiner's terminology, *memory makers* — and the listeners, the

51 Ibid., 25.

52 *Ein Volk spielt Blinde Kuh oder Die Suche nach den NS-Verbrechern*, Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Hamburg, Archive No. NDR DWR 18840/1, first broadcast 19/2/1968.

53 Heinz Steinert, *Die Entdeckung der Kulturindustrie* (Münster 2003), 185.

54 Konrad Düssel, 'Vom Radio- zum Fernsehalter. Medienumbrüche in sozialgeschichtlicher Perspektive' in Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried and Karl Christian Lammers, *Dynamische Zeiten* (Hamburg 2003), 673.

memory users.⁵⁵ The continued efforts of the radio stations to deal with the past and their partially unwilling listeners appear to result in, through the medium of the radio, a role reversal of the standard psychoanalytical process, turning the 'talking cure' into a 'listening cure'.

This evidence remains circumstantial. But it nevertheless points to a changing attitude in the general public and in radio audiences, made possible by the commentators and journalists, who showed remarkable courage and consistency. This mediated Holocaust narrative — through the critical examination on the radio — made the past accessible again and the broadcasters' efforts created a new historical consciousness which made possible a meaningful working-through of the past.

René Wolf

teaches courses in Modern German and European History at Royal Holloway, University of London, where he has just completed his PhD.

55 Wulf Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies', *History and Theory* (May 2002), 41, 197.