CHAPTER 10

Translating Occupied Poland into English, 1939–1955

JOANNA RZEPA

Introduction

As Hilary Footitt has observed, "The business of war has seldom been a monolingual one. Whether we choose to notice it or not, the 'ground of war' is almost always a landscape marked deeply by languages" (2012, 229). The transnationalism of war and occupation requires communication across languages and, thus, requires translation. Paying close attention to linguistic and cultural transfer is crucial to a better understanding of the contact zones of war and occupation (Baker 2007).

Indeed, if World War II is considered from a translation-oriented perspective, one quickly realizes that language expertise played a strategic role both at the front (intelligence, counter-intelligence, diplomatic dispatches) and in occupied societies in general (communication with the occupiers, propaganda, and counter-propaganda disseminated in various languages). Translation was also a medium of communication within the large coalition of Allied countries. It allowed for the narratives of conflict to travel across languages and cultures, providing readers of Allied states with an opportunity to gain access to witness accounts of life under occupation.

This chapter's focus is specifically on English-language translations of Polish narratives of Nazi and Soviet occupation published in the United Kingdom between 1939 and 1955. Drawing on recent research in translation studies and book history (Bachleitner 2010; Rundle 2010), it discusses the state interventions that shaped wartime publishing and had a significant impact on the reception of translated books. It explores the position of translated texts on the British book market, interrogates the framing of translations through various paratexts (i.e., introductions, prefaces, forewords, epilogues), analyzes the textual construction of a witness voice, and, finally, evaluates the reception of translated texts among British readers through a study of reviews and debates that they generated.

Wartime Book Market, State Propaganda, and Translations

The impact of the war on the British book market was significant. As Iain Stevenson observes, "Publishers not only played a pivotal role in the war effort, but the war was also crucial in creating new conditions" (Stevenson 2010, 107). Changes in publishing assumed a global scale, leading to a significant international expansion of British and American publishers funded by state-sponsored institutions, such as the British Council and the International Book Association (Hench 2010). As wartime propaganda was dependent on printed matter, books were considered an important tool of ideological warfare or, in W. W. Norton's words, "weapons in the war of ideas" (Hench 2010, 45). The wartime home market was beset by problems that all publishers struggled to navigate, including paper rationing and shortages of labor, and—in the case of some, such as Longmans—the destruction of their warehouses and offices during the Blitz. When the Ministry of Supply appointed a paper controller, the publishers' quotas were reduced to 60 percent of their consumption in the previous year. This was further reduced to 37.5 percent in 1941 (Stevenson 2010, 115–17). Thus, while "the number of titles published annually in Britain dropped from 14,904 to 6,747," the demand for books remained high, given that alternative forms of entertainment, such as cinema or pubs, were severely restricted due to air raids and blackouts (Holman 2008, 25).

Throughout the war, various British publishers maintained close informal relations with the British Ministries of Information and Supply, as printing books that were deemed to be of propaganda value allowed publishers to increase their paper quotas. The government, in turn, benefited from this situation by having the opportunity to frame the narrative of the war in ways considered most beneficial to the war effort. The Ministry of Information worked with publishers such as Hutchinson, Faber, Collins, Odhams, and the Hogarth Press, who published titles that the government considered to be of ideological value, lending their imprints to prevent the public from viewing the material as state propaganda (Holman 2008, 98–100).

The political role of book publishing became even more important when, with the ongoing Nazi invasion of Europe, London became the headquarters of governments and royalty from Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, and Yugoslavia. This unprecedented diplomatic development created a situation in which several governments with their own information and propaganda departments and cultural diplomacy attempted to vie for the attention of British readers by means of translation and publishing campaigns. Because the exiled governments did not have the resources to offer practical help to the populations of their Nazi-overrun states, much of

their effort was directed at influencing the policies of the British and American governments instead. As Michael Conway points out, the exiled governments' existence was characterized by strong "bonds of dependence on the Allies," and they "could do or say nothing of significance either to the outside world or to their native lands without the approval of their British minders" (2001, 257–58).

The relations between the British government and the exiled governments were shaped through official diplomatic channels and networks, but they were also, to a great extent, informed by public opinion: "Official concern with public opinion and the state of national morale embraced a growing interest in reading and in the nature of people's responses not just to literature but also to published information and propaganda" (Holman 2008, 48). These responses were regularly monitored by the Mass-Observation project and reported to the British Ministry of Information, which could then design propaganda and publishing campaigns in response to the public mood at any given time (McLaine 1979). The exiled governments, with their own Ministries or Bureaus of Information, also recognized the importance of book publishing for drawing attention to their narratives of the war, or even for reframing the dominant narrative in British political discourse.

What was particularly important for all Allied governments who launched propaganda campaigns during World War II was to distance themselves from German propagandists and avoid "giving the impression that published material was subject to any form of central control" (Holman 2008, 99). This posed a number of difficulties, as maintaining high public morale and winning the ideological war were dependent on "channels through which particular messages or impressions might reach a designated audience" (Holman 2008, 99). These objectives, however, could be effectively achieved through the development of successful relationships with publishing houses that were willing to embrace covert sponsorship by governments—while these sponsorships led to the production of books that could not be attributed to the state.

War conditions brought to the fore issues related to the materiality of book publishing as well. As Hench observes, "books were among the most conspicuous victims of this vicious warfare. Millions were destroyed by air raids, ship sinkings, infantry actions, orchestrated book burnings, and civilian paper drives" (2010, 19). Printing presses in the countries overrun by the Nazis were either shut down or allowed to publish little other than German propaganda. In the case of Poland, the Nazis not only halted the production of new books but also carried out a deliberate destruction of public and private libraries. The Polish authorities and authors were thus completely dependent on British publishers and on the few Polish publishers who managed to relocate their firms to London before the outbreak of the war.

Translating Nazi-Occupied Poland

The Polish government-in-exile closely analyzed the British public's mood and attitudes when designing their translation and publishing campaign. The Polish Ministry of Information followed all the main British newspapers, and members of the Polish Research Centre (PRC), which was set up and sponsored by the Ministry, toured the country engaging in cultural diplomacy: delivering public lectures on topics related to Polish history, culture, society, and the political situation, and reporting back on the responses of their British audiences. The PRC's 1944 memorandum stipulated that "Polish propaganda has to be subtle," emphasizing "British society's general dislike of propaganda of any type." Careful attention was paid to the ways in which Polish speakers were perceived by British audiences. Speakers discussing the Nazi occupation of Poland were instructed to remain calm and composed and to "avoid any kind of affectation, sentimentality, or exaltation" (PRC Collection, 434/203).[1] This would ensure that they would come across as reliable and trustworthy witnesses. The same principles applied to printed material.

However, what made it particularly difficult to engage British readers with publications that were based on reports and witness accounts coming from occupied Poland was that British readers had a general distrust of anything they perceived as 'atrocity propaganda.' Namely, due to the legacy of propaganda narratives from World War I that had been subsequently exposed as misleading or entirely false (Kingsbury 2010), both the British and the American public approached reports of atrocities coming from occupied Europe with a big dose of skepticism. In 1942, journalism scholar Vernon McKenzie observed:

> I have been shocked and puzzled by the seeming callousness with which friends and acquaintances decline to accept reports from Nazi-held areas, even when they are based on unimpeachable evidence or on official proclamations and admissions in the Nazi-controlled press. (McKenzie 1942, 269)

Considering public reactions to atrocity stories, McKenzie concluded that, during World War II, these types of narratives were met mostly with indifference and hostility, as well as a refusal to engage with them critically. "Millions were so conditioned," McKenzie argues, "that when the day came when Hitler invaded Poland they could say, or at least feel, that they were 'fed up by horror reports,' or that 'one side is probably just as bad as the other'" (1942, 270).

For his part, Arthur Koestler, a Hungarian-born Jewish writer who worked at the British Ministry of Information from 1942, connected the public's mistrust

of atrocity accounts to the perceived distance between British readers and the populations of Nazi-occupied states:

> [B]oth 'knowing' and 'believing' have varying degrees of intensity. […] Distance in space and time degrades intensity of awareness. So does magnitude. Seventeen is a figure which I know intimately like a friend; fifty billions is just a sound. A dog run over by a car upsets our emotional balance and digestion; a million Jews killed in Poland cause but a moderate uneasiness. (Koestler 1944, 30)

According to Koestler, the news coming from occupied Europe did not seem relatable enough to the British public, and it did not seem real. While people would see "films of Nazi tortures, of mass shootings, of underground conspiracy and self-sacrifice" and be moved by them, they would not "connect it with the realities of their normal plane of existence" (1944, 30).

Aware of these difficulties, the Polish government-in-exile developed its publishing campaign in a way that was designed to counter British readers' distrust of state-sponsored propaganda; their reluctance to become emotionally involved in material that appeared too foreign, distant, or peripheral; and their distrust of atrocity stories and any material that did not appear 'believable,' which could be viewed as state-controlled fear-mongering. The primary aim of the Polish government-in-exile's publishing campaign, then, was to present Poland's case and the Polish war effort as issues that were, in fact, close and relevant to the British reader—and to do this, the published texts had to appear both trustworthy and not too far removed (Rzepa 2019b). While the texts themselves carried indelible foreignness—dealing with Poland, a far-away country about which most of the British readership knew quite little—the Polish authorities tried to win British readers' trust by domesticating the translations through extratextual and material elements. Specifically, they domesticated these translations by means of paratexts (such as prefaces and introductions by British MPs and public intellectuals), imprints (i.e., commissioning British publishers to print selected translations), and distribution channels (e.g., inclusion in British publishers' catalogues).

Liberty Publications was one of the most important London-based imprints established by the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna* (PPS)), and it was sponsored by the Polish government through the Polish Social Information Bureau. It published English-language pamphlets "dealing with different aspects of Polish life and with questions and problems concerning Poland" (Adam Ciołkosz Papers, 133/95). As the titles they printed had an explicit and open focus on Polish issues and were often based on underground reports brought from occupied Poland, the editors sought to secure an endorsement from well-known

British politicians and public figures, in the form of a preface or a foreword for each of their publications. Such an introductory paratext would typically be two or three paragraphs long and reaffirm the value and relevance of the publication. While the name of the pamphlet's author was in most cases suppressed, the name of the person who endorsed it featured prominently on the cover to generate trust and credibility in the eyes of British readers.

Liberty Publications managed to secure the endorsement of a number of British MPs, including Philip John Noel-Baker, future winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, who wrote a foreword to *Underground Poland Speaks* (1941); Vernon Bartlett, who introduced *Unknown Europe* (1942); Arthur Greenwood, who wrote a preface to *Towards a New Poland* (1942); Lord Wedgwood, who endorsed *Stop Them Now* (1942); and Jennie L. Adamson, who wrote a foreword to *Camp of Death* (1944). Both *Stop Them Now* and *Camp of Death* were based on intelligence reports produced by the Polish Underground Movement and witness accounts. They described the ongoing persecution and extermination of Polish Jews (*Stop Them Now*) and the camp of Auschwitz (*Camp of Death*). Accordingly, in their forewords, both Lord Wedgwood and Jennie L. Adamson emphasized the need to treat the accounts as credible sources of information on the developments in Nazi-occupied Poland. Wedgwood contended that "those who shut their eyes, who refuse to believe and seek to escape from thought of what is going on in Poland […] are guilty" (*Stop Them Now* 1942, 3). His foreword was followed by an introduction penned by Szmul Zygielbojm, a Jewish refugee from Poland and member of the Central Committee of the Jewish Socialist Party "Bund" and of the Polish National Council in London. Zygielbojm urged the reader to accept the veracity of the reports: "I realise that the facts contained in […] this booklet are so monstrous and inhuman that most normal persons would hesitate to believe them. And yet they are true and real […]" (*Stop Them Now* 1942, 4). The facts to which Zygielbojm was referring included the eyewitness account of the gassings of Jews in the extermination camp of Chełmno (Kulmhof), which had started to operate in 1941 and was where the majority of Jews from the Łódź Ghetto were murdered. By giving British readers access to those early witness accounts, the editors of the pamphlet were attempting to draw attention to the fact that "the policy of the Germans is to wipe out entirely, not only the Jews in Poland, but the Jewish population of the whole of Europe"—and were urging their readership to intervene and find a means to prevent it (*Stop Them Now* 1942, back cover).

In a similar way, *Camp of Death* aimed to provide the British public with a narrative account of life in the concentration camp of Auschwitz. Based on the pamphlet *Obóz śmierci,* ("Death Camp") authored by Natalia Zarembina and clandestinely published in Poland in 1942 (Fleming 2014, 195–97), *Camp of*

Death reported on the situation in Auschwitz in 1941 and early 1942, before the mass exterminations of Jews began. However, the footnotes that the editors of the English translation attached to the text provide additional information about the ongoing mass murder. "Large transports of people," wrote the editors in the final footnote, "have been directed from the trains immediately to the gas chambers and killed there without registration on the camp-roll" (Zarembina 1944, 30). That said, the murder statistics provided in the pamphlet were lower than those in other underground reports arriving in London to which the editors would have had access. As Michael Fleming suggests, the editors "were very well aware of the sensibilities of their British audience and sought to establish credibility" by providing data that looked less shocking and more trustworthy (2014, 196). At the same time, the editors did incorporate some of the recent numbers, adding in a footnote that the estimated number of Jews killed in the camp by December 1943 amounted to 1 million.

The distribution of such pamphlets presented a challenge to Liberty Publications. While printing anonymous pamphlets that had a price on them (on average, they were sold for one to three pence and could thus be considered of commercial value) was relatively effective at the beginning of the war, it was increasingly difficult by 1944 to find a market for them. In September 1942, *Stop Them Now* was printed in 60,000 copies, most of which had been distributed by December 1944, when only 160 remained in stock. *Camp of Death*, on the other hand, was printed in 25,000 copies in July 1944 and did not sell well, even though it was advertised in the *Times Literary Supplement* and other outlets. Liberty Press still had 10,000 copies in stock by December 1944 (Adam Ciołkosz Papers, 133/95). They continued to advertise it throughout 1945, even after Auschwitz was liberated, changing the text of the advertisement accordingly: "Full story of the Concentration Camp in Oświęcim recently liberated" ("Other New Publications" 1945). Yet distribution and reception of the pamphlet remained hindered, which can be largely attributed to its perceived lack of credibility and to a simultaneous lack of interest in the subject matter among the target audience, who, by then, would have encountered numerous reports on liberated concentration and extermination camps in the daily press.

In December 1944, *The London Typographical Journal* published a first-page review of *Camp of Death* (Anonymous 1944), which, while endorsing it as a text that should be read, at the same time undermined its veracity. "So much horror has been described for us in the daily and weekly Press in its accounts of German concentration camps," the anonymous reviewer contended, that "we fear that repletion of the stories has given rise to suspicion. Is it true? we ask." Their response to this profoundly important question is to state that even if "only half [of *Camp of Death*] is true—nay a tenth—it is sufficient to outlaw those who gave

the order to those who carried them out" (Anonymous 1944). While explicitly condemnatory of the crimes described in the pamphlet, the reviewer's words also draw attention to the possibility that readers might, in fact, be dealing with a piece of atrocity propaganda and that only a tenth of the account might be credible. The reliability of the text is undermined as the focus shifts from the crimes being described to the interrogation of the veracity of the source itself.

Thus, in the final years of the war, despite sustained attempts at a wide distribution of titles that aimed to give British readers insight into what was happening in Nazi-occupied Poland, Liberty Publications struggled to reach its target audience. In their correspondence with the booksellers W.H. Smith & Son in February 1945, the publishers emphasized that their publications, including *Camp of Death*, "deal(t) with subjects which are at the moment being widely discussed and upon which public interest is focussed"—but the response they received from W.H. Smith & Son was unequivocal: "pamphlets of this nature and price have very little chance of sales at our branches" (Adam Ciołkosz Papers, 133/111).

Apart from producing pamphlets based on underground reports, the Polish authorities also aimed to attract British readers' attention by translating and publishing fictionalized literary texts based on witness accounts. Two such texts, penned by established Polish writers Aleksander Kamiński and Jerzy Andrzejewski, were brought to London in April–July 1944 by Polish resistance officers who were airlifted from Poland in clandestine military operations code-named Wildhorn I, II, and III (Rzepa 2019a). Both Kamiński's *Kamienie na szaniec (Stones for the Rampart*) and Andrzejewski's *Apel (Roll Call*) (Andrzejewski 1945) are based on real-life events. The former tells the story of the scouts' contribution to the resistance movement in Nazi-occupied Warsaw; the latter recounts a disciplinary roll call held in Auschwitz in the autumn of 1941. When the texts were delivered to the Polish Ministry of Information, they were translated into English, and two renowned British critics and poets were invited to write introductions to them: T.S. Eliot was approached by Adam Żółtowski, director of the Polish Research Centre (PRC), and Percy Hugh Beverley Lyon, headmaster of Rugby School, was contacted by Jan Baliński-Jundziłł, deputy director of the PRC. Eliot's and Lyon's endorsements were seen as incredibly valuable, as both men were important public intellectuals and would be perceived as impartial and unbiased parties with no obvious connections to the Polish government-in-exile. Both Eliot and Lyon were informed that the texts "most authentically" came from Poland and were "sent by our [Polish] Underground Movement." In his letter to Eliot, Żółtowski admitted that his desire was that "the most outstanding British critic should testify that the publication is well worth reading," and Baliński-Jundziłł informed Lyon that "a foreword from (him) would be most gratifying to my countrymen, as well as being a very fine introduction to English readers." Both

Lyon and Eliot agreed to write the introductory texts, and Eliot explicitly refused to "take payment from the Polish Government for a service of this sort" (PRC Collection, 434/124 and 434/193).

In early 1945, *Stones for the Rampart* was published with Lyon's foreword. In his foreword, Lyon put emphasis on the book's credibility, highlighting that it is "no tale of fancy," but rather "a record, written on the spot by those whose lives stood in daily peril of torture and death" (Górecki 1945, 1). While *Roll Call*, on the other hand, seems to have been withdrawn from publication (as it never appeared in print with Eliot's preface), in Eliot's correspondence with the Polish Research Centre, he too emphasized the need to establish the credibility of the text: "I think there should be some statement about the origin of the manuscript, or some readers will presume it to be simply a brilliant piece of imaginative fiction" (PRC Collection, 434/124; Eliot 2017a). In both Lyon's and Eliot's view, the reception of the translations hinged on their being perceived as non-fictional texts. While the Polish authorities could provide assurances to that effect, such assurances, in the eyes of the British reader, could amount to glaring examples of foreign propaganda that should not be taken at face value. This double bind provided an almost insurmountable challenge that seriously hindered the dissemination of translated texts.

Because the reception of publications that were perceived as state-sponsored propaganda was hostile, Polish authorities began to emulate the work of the British Ministry of Information by commissioning established British firms to print covert translations of Polish books that had propaganda value. The advantage of such an arrangement was that books published by British publishers, such as Hutchinson or Allen & Unwin, had the appearance of ordinary commercial books. Both the British and the refugee governments recognized that, as Holman observed, "propaganda was most effective when least visible, that is, when it appeared to be produced and distributed by a trade publisher with no connection to the Government" (2008, 102). Therefore, the covers and title pages of such commissioned publications would not disclose the fact that they were government-sponsored. Rarely, trade publishers took on the cost of publishing books that they considered to have commercial potential, which was the case for Jan Karski's *Story of a Secret State*, whose American edition was issued by Houghton Mifflin in 1944 and the British edition by Hodder & Stoughton in 1945 (Karski 1944, 1945). Karski, who was a courier of the Polish underground state and during the war carried reports of Nazi atrocities from occupied Poland to London, had to agree to Hodder & Stoughton's demand that his book should take the form of a first-person narrative and speak of his personal experiences as a liaison officer and courier, must not include any overt propaganda, and should not to be advertised by the Polish government-in-exile. These precautions were

taken by the publisher to ensure that the book would not be seen as yet another propaganda volume. They had significantly contributed to the book's popular success as it sold more than 15,000 copies in the first two weeks and was subsequently translated into other languages (Rzepa 2018). Yet such arrangements with trade publishers were incredibly rare. Most frequently, it was the Polish government-in-exile who took initiative and provided funding and resources to produce relevant publications.

In most cases, the title pages of government-commissioned publications did not include the name of the translator, instead attempting to pass for texts that had been originally written in English; by hiding their foreignness behind the British publishers' imprints, such publications could more easily attract British readers' attention. The only element of the title page that could give away the foreign nature of such books was the name of the author, and in some cases even this element was deliberately altered, suppressed, or anglicized. An example of such a publication is *Two Septembers: Warsaw 1939—London 1940*, published by Allen & Unwin in 1941 and written by Stephen Baley—whose real name was Stanisław Baliński.

Baliński was a Warsaw-born writer and poet who fled Poland in 1939 and settled in London, where he worked for the Polish Ministries of Information and Foreign Affairs. In *Two Septembers*, he recounts the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939 and the Battle of Britain in 1940. Writing about the campaigns that the Nazis waged against Poland and Britain, as well as the contribution of the Polish pilots who fought for Britain, Baliński argues that Poland and Britain share important ideals. He contends that "the ideal linking Great Britain in her heroic and successful resistance with that distant country which now lies under the yoke of enslavement to Germany is the love of freedom" (Baley 1941, 14). It is the common values and the experience of Nazi assault highlighted on the title page and in the introduction to *Two Septembers* that bind London and Warsaw together, making the book appear immediately relevant to the British audience.

Yet this was not the only way in which Baliński aimed to appeal to the British reader: he insisted on publishing the book under the pseudonym "Stephen Bailey." So committed was he to this pseudonym, in fact, that when Allen & Unwin sent him a draft of the advertisement slip with his real name, Baliński immediately complained, urging the publisher to "take steps to put the matter right" and correct the proofs and any advertisement materials (Allen & Unwin Collection, 122/10). The name that in the end appeared on the title page was "Stephen Baley" (rather than "Bailey"). Thus, not only was the book a covert, government-sponsored translation that assumed the appearance of an ordinary commercial publication, but it also pretended to be authored by an English speaker, not a Pole (as Baliński's letters reveal, it was translated into English by a "Mr. Stevens").

The cost of producing such publications was understandably high, and in the case of *Two Septembers*, the Polish Ministry of Information had to provide Allen & Unwin with paper, agree to purchase 1,000 copies of the book plus any unsold stock of the remaining 4,000 copies six months after the date of publication, as well as agree for Allen & Unwin not to pay any royalties on sold copies (Allen & Unwin Collection, 122/10).

Ultimately, *Two Septembers* and other books published under similar conditions were virtually unattributable. Furthermore, the radical anglicization of the material and the textual forms of such books meant that the translators' presence had to be erased as well: the books had to pass for original English-language texts. Indeed, today the translators' names can be recovered only from the surviving archival material, such as correspondence with publishers or invoices for commissioned translations. Yet despite the sustained efforts to conceal the foreignness of books such as Baliński's *Two Septembers*, reaching a wide readership for those titles nonetheless proved nearly impossible due to an apparent lack of interest in the subject matter. Commenting on wartime trends in readers' preferences, the Acting Manager of the Times Book Club observed in 1940: "The international affairs market is not as strong as it was before the war. […] There was a curious lack of interest in Poland. We had two books on Poland and we haven't done anything with either of them. Finland—yes" ("Book Reading in War Time," File Report 46, 18). Publishers, booksellers, and librarians observed an increased demand for prose fiction and a significant decrease of interest in political books. As the bookseller Christina Foyle remarked, "people are perhaps a little weary of reading of Hitler and the future of Europe" ("Book Reading in War Time," File Report 46, 9). This weariness, it seems, led to readers' gradual disengagement with publications that aimed to enhance their intellectual and emotional investment in the fate of Nazi-occupied Poland.

Translating Soviet-Occupied Poland

As the Soviet invasion and subsequent occupation of Poland on September 17, 1939 were perceived in Britain with ambivalence, publishing texts that narrated the experiences of people living under the Soviet occupation was even more challenging than bringing out narratives of the Nazi occupation. The Red Army came to occupy about half of the country, taking more than 200,000 prisoners of war and deporting more than 1 million civilians from eastern Poland to the Soviet Union in 1940-41. While Stalin's move to occupy Poland did not come as a surprise for the British government, as Keith Sword observes, "British policymakers had considerable difficulty in knowing how to interpret [it], and how to

react to it" (1991, 84). This resulted in a cautious tone within official government statements, along with ambiguous media coverage of the Nazi–Soviet collusion, all of which reflected the diplomatic concerns of alienating Moscow. The British public's understanding of the Soviet Union's actions at the start of World War II was characterized by a certain dose of optimism and repeated attempts to see them as justified by immediate political and military necessity. Analyzing the press coverage of those events, Claire Knight has concluded that "the popular press began to define Soviet distinctiveness as rooted in its intentions toward and subsequent actions in Poland, which were depicted as morally acceptable in contrast to those of Germany" (2013, 480). Thus, despite the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, the press framed Soviet actions as qualitatively distinct from Nazi Germany's and insisted on seeing them as halting Hitler's advance. With the exception of the Soviet invasion of Finland, which was compared by the press to the Nazi *Blitzkrieg*, Soviet actions tended to be seen in a positive light.

This kind of reporting generated much public sympathy for the Soviet Union, with "a large majority in favour of friendly relations with the Soviet Union" by April 1941 (Bell 1990, 35). The outpouring of support among the British public reached its culmination with the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union and the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of July 12, 1941, which confirmed Russia's status as a British ally. The reporting of the Battles of Moscow and Stalingrad captured public attention, and "the Home Intelligence reports recorded widespread and often deeply felt admiration for the Soviet Union among the British people" (Bell 1990, 88).

The British government was intent on controlling "any anti-Soviet elements which might divide opinion in the country," to maintain good diplomatic relations with the Soviets (Bell 1990, 67). Thus, publications that might threaten those relations were censored, so as not to antagonize the new ally. That said, the positivity of the coverage of the Soviet Union's actions was not dictated by the nature of Soviet actions or intentions (which were overwhelmingly ambiguous); rather, the orchestrated Soviet and British propaganda efforts—and, as Knight points out, the press's simultaneous attempts to reassure the British public—were designed to maintain high morale at the home front, and to minimize the perception of the Soviet Union as a possible future threat (2013).

The complicated issue of Polish–Soviet relations, however, significantly challenged this framing of the public image of the Soviet Union and its contribution to the war effort. Since September 1939, the question of the future Polish–Soviet border was seen as a matter that would be increasingly difficult to solve, but the intervention of the British government led to the re-establishment of Polish–Soviet diplomatic relations in July 1941. These relations remained troubled by the question of the fate of Polish deportees to the Soviet Union. In this uneasy context, it was the discovery of the mass graves of Polish officers, whom the Red

Army had murdered in the forest of Katyń, that was the main cause of a deep diplomatic crisis in April 1943. Since German troops had made the discovery and Nazi-controlled media had been the first to publicize the massacre, the story was initially perceived in Britain as a piece of propaganda aimed at antagonizing the Allies. As the Polish authorities confirmed that thousands of Polish officers who were taken into Russia as prisoners of war were indeed missing, and Poland insisted that the International Red Cross should conduct an official investigation into the mass graves that the German troops had discovered, the Soviet government responded by breaking off all diplomatic relations with the Polish government on April 26, 1943. This rupture posed a serious problem for the British government, as the Katyń revelations could cause significant damage to Anglo–Soviet relations (Stanford 2005). To minimize the damage, the British Foreign Office advised "that the story should be treated as a German attempt to undermine allied solidarity, and that nothing was to be gained by going into the rights and wrongs of the matter" (Bell 1989, 75).

While the British government managed to preserve the central lines of its policy, which prioritized maintaining the Soviet alliance and downplaying the Katyń revelations, along with the accounts by deportees to Soviet forced labor camps, this policy was to the detriment of the public perception of the Polish government, as well as of the authors who attempted to bear witness to and publicize the experiences of Poles who survived imprisonment and deportation to the Soviet Union. This loss of credibility was so serious that, as Home Intelligence reports highlighted, the British public started to perceive the Polish government as "being pro-German" in their malicious allegations against the Soviet allies (Bell 1989, 81).

While the Polish authorities, during the war, prepared a collection of accounts from deportees to Soviet forced labor camps in the form of a "red book" that would detail Soviet crimes against Polish citizens, the book's publication was postponed until 1949 for diplomatic reasons (Zajdlerowa 1989, 2). Indeed, no such accounts were published in English translation until the end of the war. One of the first book-length publications to address this topic in English was Zoë Zajdler's *The Dark Side of the Moon* (published anonymously by Faber & Faber in 1946 with T. S. Eliot's prefatory note). Zajdler, who also published under the pseudonym of Martin Hare, was an Irish-born writer who moved to Warsaw with her Polish-born husband in the 1930s. Her 1940 book, *My Name is Million: The Experiences of an Englishwoman in Poland*, tells the story of how she escaped from Nazi- and Soviet-overrun Poland through Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, and how she and her husband were captured by the *Gestapo*. While Zajdler was soon freed and managed to make her way to London, where she made contact with the Polish government-in-exile, her husband's fate remained

unknown. Since she was an established writer who had published several novels before the war and had her own literary agent, Spencer Curtis Brown, her contribution to the Polish government's publishing campaign was highly valued. On November 21, 1942, Michał Protasewicz, Head of Bureau VI of the Polish General Staff and responsible for intelligence, sent a coded cable message to Warsaw to Stefan Rowecki, leader of the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, the Polish underground movement), inquiring about Zajdler's husband and adding that his wife is "a writer [and] contributes greatly to our cause. Information about her husband would be a small favour" (Boxes Collection, SK36). The reply from Warsaw confirmed that Zajdler's husband was well and revealed that he was an active member of the Home Army. When this exchange was taking place, Zajdler was already working on her next book, *The Dark Side of the Moon*, which tells the story of the Soviet invasion and occupation of Poland, and the subsequent deportations of hundreds of thousands of Poles to forced labor camps (known as the Gulag; see Khlevniuk 2004) in Siberia.

Since Zajdler was an experienced writer and Polish–English translator, she would not have had problems translating the deportees' accounts and editing them into a longer narrative. Her approach to the translation and editorial work can be characterized as, on the one hand, meticulously researched and informative, and on the other, uniquely personal. Zajdler positioned herself on the side of the occupied and, since she was in Poland when the Soviet Army entered the country, included autobiographical elements that add a personal angle and authenticity to her narrative. Indeed, she explicitly stated: "I shall set down, too, as much as I can of the emotions and sensations which we lived while the events were taking shape" (1946, 41). In that sense, her book is an attempt to convey not only a factual narrative of the Soviet invasion and occupation of eastern Poland, but also the emotional impact of those events on those who experienced them first-hand.

However, since Zajdler was able to escape to England in 1940, the chapters that narrate subsequent events, including mass deportations of Polish citizens, required her to adopt a different approach. To establish and maintain credibility within these chapters, she chose to build them around extensive citations of deportees' testimonies, which she herself translated into English. She provided an account of the research she conducted, engaging with "many hundreds of first-hand accounts" as well as "narratives, letters, diaries and other written statements of many hundreds of persons included in the deportations" (1946, 57). Further to that, she collected stories and statements "in personal conversations sustained over whole days, and in at least one case over whole weeks, with other deported persons, who reached England after 1941" (1946, 57), and she made use of official government documents to contextualize the personal narratives (much of which material is now in the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum

Archive). She strongly emphasized that "to all of this evidence, as received by me, not one word has been added and from it not one word (again, unless otherwise stated in the text) has been taken away" (1946, 57).

While Zajdler comes across as a thorough and confident editor and translator, she nevertheless drew the reader's attention to some of the challenges that she encountered when rendering the deportees' testimonies into English; her reflections touch on the crucial question of how to articulate experiences of extreme deprivation and violence in a way that will be understandable to readers who have nothing to compare them to and may indeed doubt their veracity. Addressing this question, she positioned herself as a mediator between the Polish deportees and English readers in an understanding that the latter's horizons of expectations would be substantially challenged by the testimonies included in *The Dark Side of the Moon*. For instance, in the chapter describing the train journeys that the deportees were forced to take, Zajdler reflected on the challenge of conveying the deportees' experiences to the British reader:

> The reader can be given facts. He cannot share the *experience*. He can read about the filth, but he cannot taste it in his throat and feel himself saturated by it, as these people did. He has smelt some unpleasant odours. […] His experience is unlikely to go further than this. The atmosphere breathed in by the people in these cars, the condition of the floors, the stench that rose from them, beat off the walls, lay under the roof, filled their hair, skin, pores and lungs, even while he reads, he has no conception at all; and cannot have. One can enumerate the horrors. (Zajdler 1946, 69, emphasis in the orginal)

Appealing to "the mind and the heart of the reader," Zajdler emphasized the need to suspend one's skepticism and believe the first-hand accounts included in her book. "Once you have grasped that these things can happen," she argued, "you know that they happened to all of these people all of the time. That nobody was spared" (1946, 69). Her editorial commentary includes a linguistic reflection on the difficulties of translating the deportees' accounts and finding a language that will be capable of conveying them in English. For example, when introducing the narrative of a 15-year-old girl, Irena, who was first imprisoned and then deported to a penal settlement in Starodub, she remarked: "In the translating of this document, […] I have felt an even profounder dissatisfaction than always before at the poverty of my own powers of evocation" (1946, 125). What Zajdler found particularly difficult to convey in English was the "fearful resignation" of deportees' accounts and the "gigantic implications […] behind every utterance of the single word 'home'" (1946, 125). Such critical reflections on the task that she had undertaken are a powerful framing device for Zajdler's book, as they

bring to the fore the editorial and translational difficulties that she encountered while editing the testimonial accounts. She consciously avoided appropriating the victims' voices, using punctuation to indicate clearly which passages constitute direct citations of the deportees' narratives.

At the same time, in the course of the book, she revealed the personal significance she felt in the task she had undertaken. As the reader learns in the first chapters, although Zajdler managed to escape when the German and Soviet armies invaded Poland in 1939, many of those "once dear to (her)" had "vanished in the Soviet Union" (1946, 112). In particular, she mentioned her father-in-law, who "died as a convict in the oblast of Novosibirsk in Siberia," where he was deported together with his daughter, son-in-law, and their two children. Engaging with numerous accounts of death in the camps, Zajdler tried to imagine her father-in-law's final moments, in a poignant passage that she ended with an emphasis on her hope that he might "have been reassured just before death by somebody" and that he might have died "not quite alone, not quite like a pariah dog" (1946, 113).

When Zajdler submitted the manuscript of her book to Faber & Faber in 1945, it drew the attention of T.S. Eliot, who wrote the preface to the book himself, though its publication was delayed until 1946. Zajdler delivered the last chapter of the book on June 28, 1945, but it did not appear in print until June 10, 1946. Eliot and co-directors at Faber were impressed by the book but perceived it as "very damaging to our Russian allies, and therefore a ticklish business" (2017b, 746). What Eliot saw as the strength of the book was "the comparative absence of atrocity stories," although he was cautious about the book's direct indictment of the Soviet government. He suggested that Faber put the book under "closest scrutiny" to ensure that, once it was published, its critics would not be able to "draw red herrings by magnifying the importance of minor errors of fact or interpretation" (Faber Archive). Furthermore, it was decided that the book would be published anonymously, for Zajdler was concerned about the safety of her husband, who was still in Poland; however, the book would also include a brief note by Helena Sikorska, wife of the Prime Minister Władysław Sikorski. Sikorska's note affirms that General Sikorski had "confidence in the author" and that she was "given access to official material and documents" (Zajdler 1946, 4). Thus, though the book was written by an English speaker and published by an established British firm (which would have made it appear less foreign and more relevant to the British reader), it was nevertheless presented as fully credible and trustworthy, since it was based on authentic documents. Furthermore, Eliot's preface emphasized that the book was written "as dispassionately and fairly as is possible," vouching for the author's unbiased treatment of the subject matter (Zajdler 1946, 5).

As one of the reviewers aptly observed, "Mr. Eliot's name has attracted to the book attention in wider circles than it might otherwise have won" (Degras 1947, 120).

Indeed, *The Dark Side of the Moon* did relatively well, selling almost 7,500 copies between its publication in June 1946 and June 1948 (Faber Archive). It received much publicity and was reviewed in many leading magazines, such as the *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Spectator*, and *International Affairs*. Reviewers considered Zajdler's work "one of the most affecting and important books published in many years" (Schwartz 1947, 602), and they emphasized the "strong and scrupulous sincerity" of the author, whose work makes "grim and melancholy reading" (Charques 1946, 363). At the same time, however, they drew attention to the problem of the author's credibility, noting that some readers might find it difficult to accept the truthfulness of the account, as "the brutality, callousness and suffering here described will seem incredible" (Schwartz 1947, 603).

Indeed, the question of credibility and its lack is a recurrent theme in the reception of narratives of the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland and the deportations of Poles to forced labor camps. Ada Halpern's *Liberation Russian Style*, which was published in English in 1945, was prefaced with a foreword by Eleanor Rathbone, a British MP and humanitarian activist. In her introduction, Rathbone emphasizes the credibility of Halpern as a first-hand witness who was deported from Lwów (now Lviv in Ukraine) to Kazakhstan, to be released in 1941. For Rathbone, Halpern's credibility as a witness and author is built around her lack of association with the Polish government-in-exile who "might be suspected of prejudice based on their dislike of the Soviet system and government" (Halpern 1945, v). It bears noting that, as Britain and the United States withdrew their recognition of the Polish government-in-exile under Stalin's pressure on July 5, 1945, the public's perception of any overt links to the Polish authorities would have had the chance of harming the author's image. Indeed, Halpern is presented as a believable witness because she is an independent writer whose account can be characterized by "clarity, simplicity, restraint, and apparent absence of bitterness or exaggeration" (Halpern 1946, v). Since the British public generally questioned the veracity of deportees' accounts (as a review of *The Dark Side of the Moon* pointed out, readers with little knowledge of the Soviet Union would have considered many first-hand accounts a work of fiction), it was important for such narratives to come across as believable at the textual level. To construct an image and voice of a believable witness, the author and translator had to adopt a style characterized by emotional restraint, sincere simplicity, and lack of explicitly articulated anti-Russian or anti-Soviet prejudice. Some authors went further and chose to address the reader directly, acknowledging their doubts and skepticism. In the opening pages of *Vanished without Trace*, Antoni Ekart, who spent eight years in Soviet camps, asks:

> How to explain to men and women in London or New York that there is slavery in Russia and that every year several million people who are victims of it die at their

> work from sheer exhaustion? Who would believe me in Stockholm or Paris when I say that torture is organized by the State, acting through Government Departments staff by intelligent and educated people? (Ekart 1954, 10)

Despite the translators' and publishers' efforts to emphasize the veracity of Zajdler's, Ekart's, Halpern's, and others' accounts, the perceived lack of credibility came to define the early reception of most accounts of the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland in the eyes of the British public. Edward Crankshaw, a British writer, journalist, and political commentator who specialized in Soviet affairs, testified to this skepticism in his introduction to the English translation of Józef Czapski's *The Inhuman Land*, which appeared in 1951. The book narrates Czapski's deportation to the camp in Gryazovets; his release in 1941 as a result of the Sikorski–Mayski agreement; and his subsequent search for fellow Polish officers from the camps of Starobelsk, Kozelsk, and Ostashkov, who—as Czapski later found out—had been murdered by the Soviet army in Katyń. Introducing the book to British readers, Crankshaw emphasizes its literary qualities, "enriched by the artist's detachment and common sense" (Czapski 1951, 2–3). At the same time, he remarks that the "real trouble is that people will not believe" Czapski or other Polish authors (Czapski 1951, 4). This lack of belief and the refusal to engage with the accounts of survivors of the Soviet camps are something that Crankshaw ascribes to the wider political context and its pressures, but also to a sense of guilt over the British government's political decisions at the Yalta Conference. He highlights the absurdity of the dominant opinion that claimed that the British public should not believe what "Poles have to say about their sufferings at the hands of the Russians because, as victims, they are prejudiced witnesses," and he urges British readers to end the "mental boycott of the Polish tragedy" (Czapski 1951, 4).

Conclusion

The drive to publish English translations of witness narratives and first-hand accounts from those who had direct knowledge of life under the Nazi and Soviet occupations was one of the Polish government-in-exile's foremost priorities in London. This task was by no means an easy one, as the wartime publishing market in Britain was shaped by political and material pressures, including paper rationing, staff shortage, and state censorship. Just as importantly, it was increasingly difficult to make material of foreign provenance appeal to the British readership. The public's distrust of atrocity propaganda hindered the reception of texts describing the Nazi occupation, particularly describing the ongoing

persecution of Polish Jews. The reception of titles narrating the experiences of the Soviet occupation was shaped by the political pressures of the Anglo-Soviet Agreement; namely, this agreement made it difficult for British publishers to bring out texts that were critical of the Soviet ally. Indeed, it was only with the onset of the Cold War that the testimonies of deportees to the Soviet forced labor camps were re-evaluated as trustworthy sources. The annotated bibliography *Books on Communism*, edited by R. N. Carew Hunt, which, after its publication in 1959, became one of the most important research sources for scholars of the Soviet Union, provided an extensive list of testimonies of those who had survived Soviet camps and prisons—and it included Czapski's, Ekart's, Halpern's, and Zajdler's books, among many others. It is worth bearing in mind, though, that the reassessment of these works was part of the larger Cold War propaganda project, sponsored by covert funding from the British Information Research Department (Smith 2010; Defty 2004). As Soviet Russia turned from a British ally into an enemy state, the reception of the testimonials that thematized the experiences of Polish deportees underwent a radical shift; these narratives were now treated as key sources for British anti-communist propaganda. Thus, texts that were initially met with skepticism and doubt, due to the political questions that they raised, came to be seen as early warnings that should have been heeded before it was too late.

Notes

1. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from the archival material held at the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (PISM) and the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust (PUMST) collections are my own.

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