

# Turning a War Crime into a Weapon

*How the Razing of Lidice and Ležáky Aided the Allied Powers' War Effort*

**Jackson Bowman**  
**Auburn University**

## Abstract

On May 27th, 1942, Nazi German SS General Reinhard Heydrich was assassinated in an infamous event called Operation Anthropoid. The Nazis responded to this assassination by razing two Czechoslovakian towns: Lidice and Ležáky. While there are many books and writings about Operation Anthropoid and the German reprisals, there are very few that explicitly discuss how the Allied Powers used this tragedy to demonize the Nazi government and garner public support for the war effort. Providing a comparative study of the responses by Britain, America, and the Czechoslovakian government-in-exile, this article analyzes how various methods of propaganda were employed to galvanize respective civilian populations against Nazi Germany.

## Article

On May 27, 1942, Czechoslovakian Special Operations unit members executed an assassination mission targeted at Nazi SS (Schutzstaffel, or Protection Squadron) General Reinhard Heydrich. Slovak soldier Josef Gabčík and Czech soldier Jan Kubiš wounded the General seriously enough that he eventually died, although that was unclear at the time of the operation. Even though it would take Heydrich over a week to succumb to his injuries, the Nazi government immediately began a harsh series of retaliations. On May 29, the British newspaper *The Times* reported that the “Reprisals Begun in Prague.”<sup>1</sup> The German retributions led to the deaths and forced relocation of thousands of innocent Czechoslovak civilians. At the time this article was released, no government knew what the Nazi German government would do for its reprisals against the Czechoslovak people. No government knew the towns of Lidice and Ležáky would be razed with all men of those towns executed, women deported to labor camps, and children forced into adoption. All that was known was that one of the most feared and notorious Nazi leaders had been attacked. All that was universally understood was the Nazi government would retaliate and do so harshly.

The assassination of Heydrich—which was code named Operation Anthropoid—was a monumental event in the course of the war that had multiple immediate effects on Germany. These effects included Adolf Hitler losing one of his favorite and most reliable generals. Another effect was the seeming partial lapse of control over the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, which the Nazis had firmly controlled for roughly two years. Finally,

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<sup>1</sup> “Reprisals Begun in Prague,” *The Times*, May 29, 1942, 4.

there was an economic impact due to the fact that the controlled provinces were industrial powerhouses and were paramount to the success of the Nazi war effort. The Germans thus felt the immediate effects of Operation Anthropoid on their war effort, but how did the assassination of SS General Reinhard Heydrich and, more significantly, the draconian German reprisals affect the Allied Powers' war effort? This article argues that the Allied Powers used the destruction of the two towns of Lidice and Ležáky as propaganda to garner public support by further demonizing Nazi Germany in the eyes of the civilian populations. To prove this point, this article analyzes and compares the responses of the British population, the American population, and the Czechoslovakian government-in-exile through a study of multiple primary and scholarly secondary sources. These three major players are discussed in this article in chronological order by the swiftness of their respective responses with the swiftest being the United Kingdom, then the United States, and finally the Czechoslovakian government-in-exile. Analyzing a range of propaganda campaigns involving a variety of media, from posters and speeches to radio addresses and film, this article covers, in-depth, an aspect often overlooked in other sources, specifically how the Allied Powers used these events to evoke the emotions of their populations to gain support for the war effort on the home front.

### **How It All Began**

The events that led to Operation Anthropoid can be traced back to 1938 with the Austrian Anschluss. Immediately following the successful annexation of Germany's neighbor, Hitler turned his attention towards the invasion of the Czechoslovakian border region called the Sudetenland. Secretly, he planned on invading the Czechoslovak regions of Bohemia and Moravia as well. The provinces of the Sudetenland, Bohemia, and Moravia consisted of the northwestern half of Czechoslovakia, while the province of Slovakia consisted of the southern half. In accordance with Hitler's wishes, the German high command prepared for the full invasion of the northern three Czechoslovakian regions.<sup>2</sup> Before Hitler could launch an invasion, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain requested a diplomatic meeting. That meeting resulted in the infamous deal that came to be called the Munich Agreement. That agreement ceded the Sudetenland to Germany. On October 1, 1938, the Sudetenland was officially annexed into the Third Reich.<sup>3</sup> On March 14, 1939, the southern half of Czechoslovakia was turned into the German client state named the Slovak Republic.<sup>4</sup> And two days later, the German military invaded the other two Czechoslovak provinces of Bohemia and Moravia turning them into a protectorate.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Hossbach, Hossbach Memorandum, Conference in Reich Chancellery, November 5, 1937, available at The Avalon Project, Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library, <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/hossbach.asp>, accessed May 30, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Neville Chamberlain, Edouard Daladier, Adolf Hitler, and Benito Mussolini, "The Munich Pact," September 29, 1938, available at The Avalon Project, Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library, <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/munich1.asp>, accessed May 30, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Bradley Adams, "The Politics of Retribution: The Trial of Jozef Tiso in the Czechoslovak Environment," in *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath*, eds. István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 252.

<sup>5</sup> Moses Moskowitz, "Three Years of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia," *Political Science Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (1942): 353.

With the invasion and occupation of those provinces, Hitler and the Third Reich dismantled the nation of Czechoslovakia. Within a six-month period, Germany made the Sudetenland part of Germany proper, the region of Slovakia a client state, and the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia a German protectorate. The German government let the former president of Czechoslovakia, Emil Hácha, retain his position in the new protectorate.<sup>6</sup> Even though Hácha remained president, Germany immediately appointed former foreign minister of Germany, Baron Konstantin Hermann Karl Freiherr von Neurath, as the Reich-Protector of Bohemia and Moravia. As Reich-Protector, Neurath would have true power over the region. Even though he enacted many of the policies of the Third Reich, Hitler believed he was not strict enough towards the Czechoslovak people. On September 27, 1941, Hitler made the decision to send the man whom he described as “a man with an iron heart,” General Reinhard Heydrich of the SS, the Nazi paramilitary organization.<sup>7</sup>

SS General Reinhard Heydrich was a member of the Nazi elite. He had been with the Nazi Party since 1931, and in 1934, he was appointed as the head of the Nazi secret police, the Gestapo, by Heinrich Himmler. He was “in control of the master list” for the Night of Long Knives and “was entrusted with the preparation of the Final Solution in Europe.”<sup>8</sup> At the beginning of World War II, Heydrich was put in charge of forming the Nazi special units called the Einsatzgruppen (task forces). These units followed the Wehrmacht into lands the German military occupied. Their job was to arrest and execute anyone who was deemed a threat to the Reich. The units Heydrich created were responsible for the executions of 33,771 people over a two-day period outside of Kiev in 1941.<sup>9</sup> He earned his reputation through the actions in which his units took part and his career accolades.

When he was transferred to Prague, Heydrich brought his reputation with him and continued to carry out acts similar to those he had previously done. In his mind, he had one primary goal and that was to “Germanize about half of the Czech population.”<sup>10</sup> His official title was Deputy Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, but Heydrich was the de facto leader who made and enforced the laws and decrees throughout the region. Immediately upon his appointment as Deputy Reich-Protector, he announced martial law throughout the region. At the end of this period, he gave a speech to the German officials in Prague in which he stated “that the number of sentences [of death] by courts-martial is approximately 400 to 500, while the number of arrests was and it is between 4,000 and 5,000.”<sup>11</sup> Throughout his roughly yearlong reign, hundreds of people were executed, and thousands of people were

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<sup>6</sup> George Frost Kennan, *From Prague after Munich: Diplomatic Papers, 1938-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 98.

<sup>7</sup> Mario R. Dederichs, *Heydrich: The Face of Evil* (Barnsley: Greenhill Books, 2016), 16.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Maracin, *Night of the Long Knives: Forty-Eight Hours That Changed the History of The World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 114. Richard Breitman, “Plans for the Final Solution in Early 1941,” *German Studies Review* 17, no. 3 (1994): 491.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald Headland, *Messages of Murder: A Study of the Reports of the Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police and the Security Service, 1941-1943* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1992), 100.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Bookbinder, “Hitler Reconsidered: A New Construct by Peter Longerich and His Contemporaries,” *German Studies Review* 43, no. 3 (2020): 593-603.

<sup>11</sup> Vojtěch Šír, “První stanné právo v protektorátu” [The First Martial Law in Protectorate], *Fronta*, April 3, 2011, <https://www.fronta.cz/dotaz/prvni-stanne-pravo-v-protektoratu>, accessed May 30, 2023.

forcibly relocated.<sup>12</sup> These numbers and policies enacted earned him the nickname “the butcher of Prague.”

### **The Inception of Operation Anthropoid**

With the German invasion of Poland in 1939, Great Britain was plunged into its second war with Germany in twenty years. After the German invasion and occupation of France in late spring of 1940, Great Britain was the last fully free nation in Western Europe, but it was under intense pressure from the German bombardments. With the situation as dire as it was, the British began looking for new ways to conduct unconventional warfare that would aid their conventional military strategies. One method that was chosen was to combine intelligence services Section D and MI(R), into a consolidated agency called the British Special Operations Executive (SOE).<sup>13</sup> On July 22, 1940, the War Cabinet appointed the Minister of Economic Warfare, Hugh Dalton, to head the new organization. With his appointment, Dalton recalled Prime Minister Winston Churchill saying to him, “And now, go and set Europe ablaze.”<sup>14</sup> With their mission firmly understood, they began planning ideas on how to conduct these operations against Nazi Germany and the Axis Powers. The SOE found a partner for their ideas with the Czechoslovakian government-in-exile.

At the time of the German invasion, the members of the Czechoslovakian government who chose not to capitulate to the Germans fled and created a government-in-exile with its headquarters in Great Britain. That government-in-exile was led by Dr. Edvard Beneš, who was the Czechoslovakian president preceding Emile Hácha. From the German invasion in 1939 until 1942, Beneš’s government fought for recognition by the Western Powers, but it was an uphill battle. There were two major obstacles they had to face. First, they had to demonstrate their relevance and authority to the world. During the period following the German invasion and occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, President Beneš “had not so far been able to secure unity among Czechs and Slovaks abroad, and his influence in the Protectorate [of Bohemia and Moravia] and Slovakia was uncertain.”<sup>15</sup> Second, upon the proving of their relevance and authority, they had to show the world that they were unequivocally loyal to the Allied Powers not the Axis. The government-in-exile had a small intelligence agency as well as a small army of soldiers who fled the nation in 1939. The intelligence agency acted independently, while the Czechoslovakian soldiers were enveloped in the larger military of the United Kingdom. Each branch was fighting those two obstacles. It took until July 21, 1940, for the Czechoslovakian government-in-exile to be recognized by the British as the provisional government.<sup>16</sup> It took until the winter of 1941

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<sup>12</sup> Milan L. Hauner, “Terrorism and Heroism: The Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich,” *World Policy Journal* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 87, doi:10.1162/wopj.2007.24.2.85. Hauner is a Czech author who was born in 1940, so he heard first-hand the experiences of people who lived through the occupation and were old enough to comprehend it.

<sup>13</sup> Aaron R. B. Linderman, *Rediscovering Irregular Warfare: Colin Gubbins and the Origins of Britain's Special Operations Executive* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 119.

<sup>14</sup> Hugh Dalton, *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton 1940–45* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), 62.

<sup>15</sup> Stefan Talmon, “Who is a Legitimate Government in Exile? Towards Normative Criteria for Governmental Legitimacy in International Law,” in *The Reality of International Law. Essays in Honour of Ian Brownlie*, eds. Guy S. Goodwin-Gill and Stefan Talmon (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 515.

<sup>16</sup> Jíří Musil, *The End of Czechoslovakia* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000), 186.

for the Soviet Union and the United States to recognize Beneš's government. They only did so because Slovakia joined Germany in its war against the Soviet Union on July 22, 1941 and formally declared war on the United States and the United Kingdom on December 12, 1941.<sup>17</sup> By 1942, Beneš's government-in-exile in London and Slovakia had been officially recognized and both had chosen their side in the war.

Prior to the government-in-exile being deemed a legitimate government, the interests of the British SOE and the government-in-exile complemented each other, which led to the December 1940 meeting between British SOE representatives and the Czechoslovakian intelligence led by Colonel František Moravec.<sup>18</sup> That meeting formed the foundation for the mission to assassinate Deputy Reich-Protector SS General Reinhard Heydrich. The mission would be codenamed Operation Anthropoid.<sup>19</sup> Immediately following that meeting and the secret agreement to work together, men of Czech and Slovak descent were handpicked from the Czechoslovakian units and put through a selection process. That selection process would be for the mission in Czechoslovakia and run by men of Czech and Slovak descent, but it would be supervised and equipped by British SOE agents.<sup>20</sup> After the intense selection process, Josef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš were the men who were selected to lead the operation.<sup>21</sup> The planning and preparation for this mission took place in secret. Regardless of who knew about the mission prior to its execution, without the SOE, Operation Anthropoid would never have gotten off the ground nor would it have ever been successful. There is no apparent connection between the British government's recognition of Beneš's government-in-exile and the SOE's approval of Operation Anthropoid because the planning for the mission began roughly six months prior to formal recognition.

### **Operation Anthropoid and the German Reprisals**

Throughout the winter and spring of 1942, there were multiple undercover operations being planned and prepared, but the two that would be successful were the Silver A and Anthropoid missions.<sup>22</sup> They had separate missions but were dropped into the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia simultaneously on December 28, 1941.<sup>23</sup> Silver A's mission was to aid the domestic resistance groups with communication to the Allied Powers. The Anthropoid group's mission was to assassinate Deputy Reich-Protector SS General Reinhard Heydrich. Once these groups landed in Czechoslovakia, they received "absolute and unconditional support from the Sokol resistance movement."<sup>24</sup> This movement made it possible for the Anthropoid paratroopers to remain in the Protectorate, undetected, from their initial landing in December until their mission in late May.

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<sup>17</sup> Musil, *The End of Czechoslovakia*, 186.

<sup>18</sup> Zdenek Spitalnk, Petr Bjacek, and Col. Michal Burian, *Anthropoid: The Silent Witnesses* (Prague: Ministry of Defense-MHI, 2018), 19.

<sup>19</sup> Spitalnk, Bjacek, and Burian, *Anthropoid*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Spitalnk, Bjacek, and Burian, *Anthropoid*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Spitalnk, Bjacek, and Burian, *Anthropoid*, 19.

<sup>22</sup> Spitalnk, Bjacek, and Burian, *Anthropoid*, 29.

<sup>23</sup> Spitalnk, Bjacek, and Burian, *Anthropoid*, 29.

<sup>24</sup> Spitalnk, Bjacek, and Burian, *Anthropoid*, 25.

Five months after their initial landing in the Protectorate, Anthropoid paratroopers Jan Kubiš and Josef Gabčík stood at the bend of Vychovatelna in Prague-Liben when Heydrich drove by in his open roofed car.<sup>25</sup> As his car slowed down, Gabčík attempted to open fire with his Sten M II submachine gun while Kubiš lobbed a bomb at the car. Gabčík's submachine gun jammed and Kubiš's bomb did not go into the car, but Gabčík was still able to wound Heydrich's bodyguard with his pistol, and most importantly, Kubiš's bomb went off close enough to the car to send shrapnel into Heydrich.<sup>26</sup> The infection from the shrapnel wounds eventually killed him.

On May 29, 1942, the global reporting began describing initial reprisals taken by the new Deputy Reich-Protector Kurt Daluege. These reprisals were nothing out of the ordinary for the Germans as occupiers. Compared to the "400 Shot to Avenge Two Germans" in Konvo as reported on the previous day, Daluege and Berlin were quite tame compared to Hitler's immediate request.<sup>27</sup> After Heydrich was assassinated, Hitler requested the "murder of up to 10,000 Czechs" as a reprisal, but Reich-Protector Karl Hermann Frank dissuaded him.<sup>28</sup> Since Hitler could not kill 10,000 people, the secondary reaction was to create a curfew between the times of 9:00 p.m. the 27th and 6:00 a.m. the 28th, closing all civilian amenities like bars, cinemas, and restaurants, and the arrest and execution of those who aided the Anthropoid paratroopers.<sup>29</sup>

On June 9, 1942, however, the Germans committed the harshest and most surprising act of their reprisals. The mining town of Lidice was found to have aided the Anthropoid paratroopers avoid detection.<sup>30</sup> Hitler ordered the police to raze the town. All the male population were executed, and the female and children population were forcibly relocated to concentration camps. Nothing in the town was spared—not the livestock, agriculture, buildings, or even the dead.<sup>31</sup> Everything and everyone from that town was brutally destroyed and defamed. Fifteen days later the same fate fell upon the town of Ležáky. Ležáky was razed because Gestapo agents found a radio transmitter that belonged to the Silver A group that landed with the Anthropoid group. Since the Germans did not know about the separate missions of these two groups, they believed that they were working together. The razing of those two towns shocked the world, but not because it was the first time the Germans had razed towns.

The primary reason it shocked the world, according to Alan Gerrard of the website "Lidice Lives," was because the Nazis filmed it.<sup>32</sup> Not only did the rest of the world read about the

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<sup>25</sup> Spitalnk, Bjacek, and Burian, *Anthropoid*, 31.

<sup>26</sup> Spitalnk, Bjacek, and Burian, *Anthropoid*, 31.

<sup>27</sup> "Reprisals Begun in Prague," *The Times*, May 29, 1942, 4.

<sup>28</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Lidice: The Annihilation of a Czech Town," *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, June 9, 2021, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/lidice>, accessed May 30, 2023.

<sup>29</sup> "State of Emergency," *The Times*, May 28, 1942, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Carmen T. Illichmann, "Lidice: Remembering the Women and Children," *UW-L Journal of Undergraduate Research* 8 (2005): 1.

<sup>31</sup> Jan Kaplan and Krystyna Nosarzewska, *Prague: The Turbulent Century* (New York: Koneman, 1997), 241.

<sup>32</sup> Ian Willoughby, "A True Act of Solidarity: How Barnett Stross and the Miners of Stoke-on-Trent Helped Rebuild Lidice," Radio Prague International, April 8, 2021,

destruction of the villages, but they got to see it as well. Up until Lidice, the Germans had tried to cover up and hide their apparent atrocities, with the exception of Heydrich's well-known nickname "The Hangman." He had earned this nickname from his actions prior to his appointment to the Protectorate. While they could chalk Heydrich's harsh actions up to the war, they could not hide the fact that their actions at Lidice would be universally denounced as evil. Instead of attempting to hide Lidice, they promoted it. Through filming it and transmitting it on the radio, the Germans sought to make Lidice a symbol and a lesson for the rest of the world. The message transcribed on the poster read: "All the male adults of the village have been shot. The women have been sent to a concentration camp. The children have been handed over to the appropriate authorities. The buildings of the locality have been leveled to the ground and the name of the community has been obliterated."<sup>33</sup> The German destruction of Lidice was an attempt to erase the town and its people from the earth, but instead, the Allied Powers immortalized Lidice through news stories, films, and monuments. From June 1942 until the end of the war, Lidice became a powerful weapon of propaganda against the Germans.

### **The British Response**

Immediately following the events of May 27, 1942, the British newspaper *The Times* reported that "in Berlin last night that Heydrich, chief of Gestapo for the occupied countries, was wounded when an attempt was made on his life in Prague yesterday."<sup>34</sup> The newspaper reported six stories that day regarding Heydrich. "Attack on Heydrich" was the headline for that day's section.<sup>35</sup> At this time, most of *The Times* reporting was Heydrich's biographical information, recent travel information, and standard reporting on the events of that day. For the next two days the papers would discuss different aspects of the mission. On May 29, 1942, *The Times* described the immediate response to the assassination attempt by saying "the whole population of Bohemia and Moravia over the age of 15 have been told to register with police by midnight tonight."<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, it added that anyone "without a registration card" or "those who hide any unregistered person" will be arrested and executed.<sup>37</sup> The first executions to take place during the manhunt were reported on May 30, 1942, with the German-controlled radio "last night broadcast the names of 12 more persons, including four women, sentenced to death" and "two families in the small town of Rokiban, Bohemia has been shot."<sup>38</sup> The first section of reporting by *The Times* offered very little in regard to gauging the feelings of the British people, but the future articles begin giving a snapshot.

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<https://english.radio.cz/a-true-act-solidarity-how-barnett-stross-and-miners-stoke-trent-helped-rebuild-8190520>, accessed May 30, 2023. "Lidice Lives" is the modern and continued version of the original "Lidice Shall Live" campaign and has an archival collection that discusses the "Lidice Shall Live" campaign from its inception to its postwar actions.

<sup>33</sup> Humphrey Jennings, dir., *The Silent Village* (London: Crown Film Group, 1943).

<sup>34</sup> "Attack on Heydrich," *The Times*, May 28, 1942, 4.

<sup>35</sup> "Attack on Heydrich," 4.

<sup>36</sup> "Attaché Case Found," *The Times*, May 29, 1942, 4.

<sup>37</sup> "Attaché Case Found," 4.

<sup>38</sup> "12 More Czechs Shot," *The Times*, May 30, 1942, 4.

What those articles lacked in emotion, the next two make up for. After the first three articles written regarding Heydrich and the assassination attempt, there was an eleven-day break between articles. The next article written about Heydrich discusses his death and his memory. The article gives a short history of Heydrich's time as Deputy Reich-Protector and, most poignantly, gives a short history of the people who suffered under him. The section titled "The Victims" recalled that "from September 26 to and including October 1, 120 persons were shot or hanged."<sup>39</sup> It further goes on to recall what Heinrich Himmler said about Heydrich at his funeral. Phrases that were used were "purest of character," "deep sense of justice," and "charity."<sup>40</sup> The editors of *The Times* made sure those descriptions of Heydrich were overshadowed, both on the paper and in importance, by the accounts of the victims of Heydrich's government. Oddly enough, *The Times* did not explicitly report on Lidice or Ležáky until June 26. The June 10 article discussed Heydrich instead of the razing of Lidice, which happened on that same day. On June 26, "the second Czech town . . . razed to the ground" was too much to ignore.<sup>41</sup> On that day, the headline was "Czech Village Wiped Out."<sup>42</sup> This article about Lidice and Ležáky, along with contemporary reporting from around the world, created an opportunity for the Allied Powers to use German evil for their own good.

In a war that consisted of an exorbitant amount of propaganda, the Allied Powers were able to turn those stories into a weapon. The weapon was wielded by a campaign, called "Lidice Shall Live," which started in the small British mining town of Stoke-on-Trent. "Lidice Shall Live" was an international campaign that began on September 6, 1942, by Sir Barnett Stross in an attempt to raise awareness of the atrocity and raise money to rebuild the destroyed town.<sup>43</sup> Stross was a Polish immigrant of Jewish descent who was then a British politician whose constituents included the residents of Stoke-on-Trent.<sup>44</sup> In defense of starting a campaign during the war, he argued that "[t]he miner's lamp" of Lidice could "send a ray of light across the sea to those who struggle in darkness."<sup>45</sup> The campaign was started in a small mining village, but the launching ceremony was a large event. The president of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, Edvard Beneš, and his wife were in attendance to see the ceremony in person. Alongside him were other people of high rank from the government-in-exile, British politicians, members of the mining union, and other international leaders, such as the Soviet ambassador to Great Britain.<sup>46</sup> In his speech to the gathered crowd, President Beneš made sure to include the fact that Lidice was not an isolated event but that towns throughout Eastern Europe had met the same fate.<sup>47</sup> Throughout the war, people of Stoke-on-Trent and around the world would bring donations. These donations would often be "up to a week's worth of wages despite the hardships of

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<sup>39</sup> "The Victims," *The Times*, June 10, 1942, 4.

<sup>40</sup> "Himmler's Eulogy of Heydrich," *The Times*, June 10, 1942, 4.

<sup>41</sup> "Czech Village Wiped Out," *The Times*, June 26, 1942, 4.

<sup>42</sup> "Reprisals Begun in Prague," *The Times*, June 26, 1942, 4.

<sup>43</sup> Alan Gerrard, "Launching Lidice Shall Live—an Account," *Lidice Lives*, September 21, 2022, <https://lidicelives.org/2022/09/07/launching-lidice-shall-live-an-account/>, accessed May 30, 2023.

<sup>44</sup> Gerrard, "Launching Lidice Shall Live."

<sup>45</sup> Jessica Rapson, "Mobilising Lidice: Cosmopolitan Memory between Theory and Practice," *Culture, Theory and Critique* 53, no. 2 (2012): 129-145.

<sup>46</sup> *Lidice Shall Live* (London: Movietone News, 1942).

<sup>47</sup> *Lidice Shall Live*.

the time.”<sup>48</sup> After the war, the “Lidice Shall Live” campaign was so successful that it would be able to rebuild “new Lidice . . . overlooking the site of the old village.”<sup>49</sup> During the war, the “Lidice Shall Live” campaign did much more than just take donations for the rebuilding of the town. The campaign, after its spectacular launch, swiftly began further raising awareness by commissioning documentaries, posters, and speeches.

One of the documentaries made about Lidice was the film *The Silent Village*. The film was released on August 9, 1943, and tells the story of Lidice with an original and intentional twist.<sup>50</sup> Stoke-on-Trent is 900 miles away from Lidice, so British film director Humphrey Jennings recreated the story as if it happened to the Welsh mining village of Cwmgiedd.<sup>51</sup> Jennings received help with the production by the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the British Ministry of Information, and the villagers that resided in Cwmgiedd.<sup>52</sup> The film’s intention was to make a story that happened across the continent seem as if it happened at home. It was made to pull on the heartstrings of the British people. The film used many different techniques to add an emotional aspect. From the portrayed innocence of the townspeople going about their day to the children playing and, most impactfully, the journey of a family portrait, the film was acclaimed as a propaganda masterpiece.<sup>53</sup> The movie *Schindler’s List* used a similar strategy to evoke an emotional response from its viewers. In *Schindler’s List*, one girl in red is followed throughout the entire movie until her demise, which is made to show the evils of the Nazis. In *The Silent Village*, a family portrait played the same role. In multiple scenes it is shown hanging on the wall of a family house, but at the end of the movie, it appears cracked and burned on a pile of rubble that is alluded to as the remains of that family’s house. This film became one of the many renowned propaganda films to come out of World War II and eventually gained international recognition.

Two of the posters that commemorate Lidice say, “Lidice Shall Live” (Figure 1) and “This is Nazi Brutality” (Figure 2), with the former being followed by a transcript of the German radio transmission quoted above. Much like the American “We Can Do It!” poster, those two posters were mass-produced and distributed throughout Great Britain in an effort to further demonize the Nazi German government. The first poster (Figure 1), created by the Czechoslovak British Friendship Club around 1942, showed what appears to be a British soldier holding an Enfield rifle overlooking the former skyline of Lidice. The soldier is red, with flames protruding from under him, alluding to the fact that they must avenge the town.

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<sup>48</sup> Jackie Reynolds, Janet Hetherington, Ann O’Sullivan, Kelvin Clayton, and John Holmes, “Cultural Value: The Story of Lidice and Stoke-on-Trent: Towards Deeper Understanding of the Role of Arts and Culture,” report of the Staffordshire University Arts and Humanities Research Council, March 12, 2014, 2, available at STORE—Staffordshire Online Repository, <http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5444/>, accessed May 30, 2023.

<sup>49</sup> Zeina Elcheikh, “Remembering 10 June,” Visual History, June 9, 2020, 3, available at <https://visual-history.de/en/2020/06/09/remembering-10-june/>, accessed May 30, 2023.

<sup>50</sup> *The Silent Village*, IMDb, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0139612/>, accessed May 17, 2023.

<sup>51</sup> *The Silent Village*.

<sup>52</sup> *The Silent Village*, IMDb.

<sup>53</sup> Adrian Danks, “*The Silent Village*,” *Senses of Cinema*, June 4, 2014, <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2006/cte/q/silent-village/>, accessed May 30, 2023.

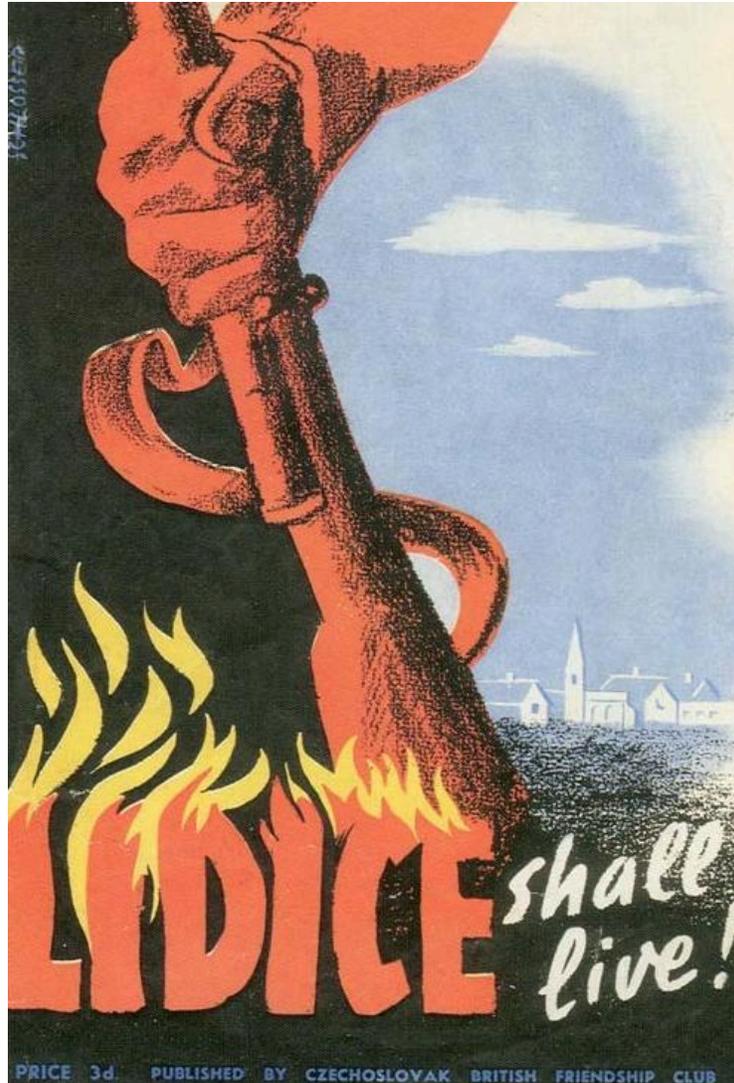


Figure 1: "Lidice Shall Live" propaganda poster, c. 1942.<sup>54</sup>

The second poster (Figure 2), created by Lithuanian-American artist Ben Shahn in 1942, portrays a civilian with a bag over his head about to be executed. While the first poster told its story primarily through the picture, the second told its story primarily through words. The German radio transmission that was quoted on the poster is meant to evoke the feeling of disgust and hatred towards the Nazi government as well as validate that the story is true. The addition of the German radio transmission adds proof to the story of Lidice. It shows the British population that it was not a made-up story or false narrative intended as propaganda. Instead the events portrayed in this poster actually happened and should be avenged.

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<sup>54</sup> "Lidice Shall Live," poster, 1942, available at Wikimedia Commons, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/41/Lidice\\_shall\\_live.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/41/Lidice_shall_live.jpg), accessed May 29, 2023.

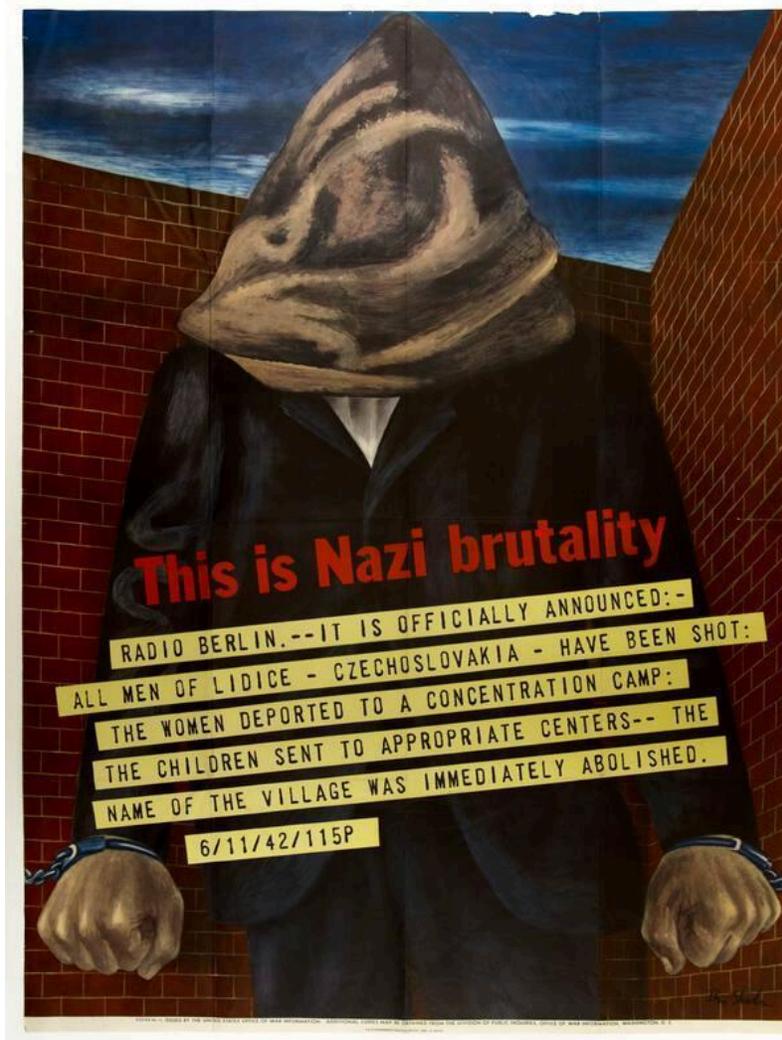


Figure 2: "This is Nazi Brutality" propaganda poster, 1942.<sup>55</sup>

Through the previous two years of conflict between Great Britain and Nazi Germany, there were many accounts of war crimes and stories that made the British population hate the Germans, like the Blitz. The razing of Lidice and Ležáky was very similar to the previous British claims of the 1914 "Rape of Belgium," in which the British military reported mass war crimes committed by the German army. Those war crimes consisted of massacring innocent civilians, the stripping and raping of nuns, and the crucifixion of a Canadian soldier with German bayonets.<sup>56</sup> These reports led to a similar wave of anti-German

<sup>55</sup> Ben Shahn, "This is Nazi Brutality," poster, 1942, US Government Printing Office, available at Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, <https://fdr.artifacts.archives.gov/objects/14690/this-is-nazi-brutality?ctx=4dff9b92ff771b85206d7bf82bc5e2e9a90c5dc0&idx=3>, accessed May 29, 2023.

<sup>56</sup> "Alleged German 'War Crimes,'" The UK National Archives, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/spotlights/alleged.htm>, accessed May 30, 2023.

propaganda featuring the slogan “Hang the Kaiser.”<sup>57</sup> After the war though, it was proven that many of the reported war crimes were made up for the sole purpose of propaganda. The razing of Lidice and Ležáky was vastly different from the “Rape of Belgium” because it was videoed in its entirety by the German forces for their own use as propaganda. Because of that, there was no denying that those reported atrocities actually happened.

Within the past two decades, the British government has unclassified documents that show the newspapers were not the only entity discussing the war crimes of the Germans in Czechoslovakia. In the Parliament’s War Cabinet minutes for June 15, 1942, minute two on page seventy-five records how the cabinet discussed how and if they were to retaliate against the German atrocities. The proposal was that the British Royal Air Force “should destroy a number of German villages by air attack,” but it was rejected on the grounds that it would take too many resources and be too risky for the bomber crews.<sup>58</sup> From the British newspaper’s immediate response to the creation of the “Lidice Shall Live” campaign and the public speeches to the creation of the movie *The Silent Village* and the joint production and global distribution of propaganda posters to the secret War Cabinet records of major British leaders, it was obvious that the British government and newspaper editors saw the stories of those two towns as a way to aid the war effort by galvanizing the British population against Nazi Germany.

### **The American Response**

On June 10, 1942, *The New York Times* broke the news of the razing of Lidice to the United States. The headlines of *The New York Times* were considerably more poignant than those of the British *Times*. The headline that Americans read was “Nazis Blot Out Czech Village; Kill All Men, Disperse Others.”<sup>59</sup> The American newspaper got straight to the point with the first sentence of that article stating, “All men in the Czechoslovak town of Lidice have been shot.”<sup>60</sup> The body of that article contained quotes from the infamous German radio transmission in which they recounted what happened to the town of Lidice. An additional aspect of that article that should not be overlooked was its placement in the paper. That article was on page one. It was one of the first articles the reader would see, and that was done purposefully. The next day, *The New York Times* published an article entitled “Worst Act ‘Since Dark Ages.’”<sup>61</sup> That article had very little content, but the content it did have spoken loudly. It chose to publish the part of the Czechoslovakian government-in-exile’s statement that the razing of Lidice was “the most dastardly German act since the dark ages.”<sup>62</sup> After recounting what the paper viewed as the most important part of the Czechoslovakian government-in-exile’s response, they use the word “slaughter.”<sup>63</sup> The word

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<sup>57</sup> The poster is available at “We’re going to hang the Kaiser under the linden tree,” Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ihas.200199230.0/?sp=1>, accessed May 30, 2023.

<sup>58</sup> War Cabinet 74<sup>th</sup> Conclusions, June 15, 1942, p. 75, The UK National Archives <http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/large/cab-65-26.pdf>, accessed June 10, 2023.

<sup>59</sup> “Nazis Blot Out Czech Village; Kill all Men, Disperse Others: Germans Blot Out Bohemian Village,” *The New York Times*, June 11, 1942, 1.

<sup>60</sup> “Nazis Blot Out Czech Village,” 1.

<sup>61</sup> “Worst Act ‘since Dark Ages,’” *The New York Times*, June 12, 1942, 6.

<sup>62</sup> “Worst Act ‘since Dark Ages,’” 6.

<sup>63</sup> “Worst Act ‘since Dark Ages,’” 6.

choice for the single sentence published regarding Lidice that day was meant to pack an emotional punch. What the American newspaper chose to publish speaks volumes about what emotions and reactions they were trying to evoke from their readers immediately after the incident occurred. While the British newspaper had titles and articles that were aimed more at objectively recounting the news, *The New York Times* immediately added emotion to its reporting. This is a stark difference between the methods of reporting of the two newspapers, but the feelings of anger, hatred, and disgust are the same for both populations.

Much like Great Britain, the American newspapers were not the only American entities to decry the Nazi atrocities. There was a wave of politicians and statesmen who released public statements that resembled what the newspapers were already printing out. On June 12, 1942, Secretary of State Cordell Hull issued a statement that described the Nazi's acts as "butchery" and added "his [Hitler's] act is in thorough keeping with all he represents."<sup>64</sup> His words were published by multiple major American newspapers with the ability to reach millions of readers. In August of the same year, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a warning to the leaders of the Axis nations and a promise to the leaders of the Allied nations that the former would stand trial for their military's "practice of executing scores of innocent hostages."<sup>65</sup> This was at the behest of the three exiled governments of the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, and Luxemburg. Those nations were afraid that a similar situation as Lidice and Ležáky would happen to them at the hands of the Nazi occupiers.<sup>66</sup> President Roosevelt's announcement came with no surprise to the American population or Allied nations; instead, it was an expectation. But at the Casablanca Conference in 1943, President Roosevelt told the world that the Allied Powers would only accept unconditional surrender from the Axis Powers so that they could not "escape the consequence of their crimes."<sup>67</sup> Though the atrocities in Bohemia and Moravia were not explicitly stated in Roosevelt's address, they were still fresh in the minds of the Allied Powers' populations and politicians and furthermore affected the talks and decisions made at the Casablanca Conference. While both nations had powerful reports and official statements issued by national leaders that would define the course of the war, the most influential aspect of both nations' responses was the actions their respective general populations took. The actions both nations' general populations took looked vastly different but were equally as effective.

The British population started the "Lidice Shall Live" fundraising campaign, while the American population most notably renamed an Illinois town in Lidice's honor. On July 12, 1942, the Illinois town of Stern Park Gardens announced that it would rename itself

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<sup>64</sup> "Hull Denounces Slaughter," *The New York Times*, June 13, 1942, 5.

<sup>65</sup> W.H. Lawrence, "President Warns Atrocities of Axis Will Be Avenged," *The New York Times*, August 22, 1942, 4.

<sup>66</sup> Lawrence, "President Warns Atrocities of Axis Will Be Avenged," 1.

<sup>67</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, Casablanca Conference (Radio Address), Feb. 12, 1943, *The Public Papers of F. D. Roosevelt*, vol. 12, 71, available at ibiblio, <http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1943/1943-02-12a.html>, accessed May 30, 2023.

“Lidice” to commemorate the Czechoslovakian village.<sup>68</sup> *The New York Times* reported that there were 10,000 people who attended the renaming ceremony.<sup>69</sup> One of the headline speakers was 1940 Republican presidential candidate Wendell Willkie. Willkie was one of the few Republicans who supported military aid to the Allied Powers and was openly supportive of President Roosevelt’s different aid initiatives. While at the ceremony, Willkie gave a speech entitled “Eulogy of Lidice.” The primary message of his speech, and the ceremony as a whole, was encapsulated in his last line: “Let us here highly resolve that the memory of this little village of Bohemia, now resurrected by the people of a little village in Illinois, will fire us, now and until the battle is over, with the iron resolution that the madness of tyrants must perish from the earth, so that the earth may return to the people to whom it belongs, and be their village, their home, forever.”<sup>70</sup> Alongside Willkie and a myriad of other speakers that denounced the Nazi German government, President Roosevelt “hailed the community as a world shrine of freedom.”<sup>71</sup> Even President Beneš heard about and commented on the renaming ceremony. He applauded the “detestation of the inhuman behavior of the Nazi criminals” and furthermore argues that those Nazi behaviors are what brought together the Allied Powers.<sup>72</sup> The large ceremony and the transformation of the town into a memorial was part of a larger effort to make sure that the name of Lidice was never forgotten and was never truly blotted out from the Earth.

Alongside renaming the town, the new Illinois town of Lidice also erected a monument called the “Light of Liberty” to further memorialize the martyred residents.<sup>73</sup> The monument was destroyed in 1995, but it was quickly replaced with the memorial that stands today. Regardless of the memorial’s future destruction, at the time it was a very outward expression of support for the Czechoslovakian town and no doubt evoked emotions of hatred of Germans in the United States. Another famous monument erected to commemorate the Lidice Massacre was the “Lidice Memorial” in Sokol Park in Phillips, Wisconsin. This monument was erected in 1944 by sculptor Vaclav Hajny, and it was built on the land owned by the Sokol of the area.<sup>74</sup> According to the Wisconsin Historical Society, “the tall round-topped red stone column represents the United Nations, the three iron rods represent the Czechs, Slovaks, and Moravians leaning on the United Nations for support. An evergreen frond symbolizes eternal life for the people of Lidice and the nation of Czechoslovakia. The three-quarter circle represents the rising sun of Lidice and Czechoslovakia.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Alan Gerrard, “12th July 1942, Stern Park Gardens—Lidice Illinois,” Lidice Lives, July 11, 2022, <https://lidicelives.org/2022/07/11/12th-july-1942-stern-park-gardens-lidice-illinois/>, accessed May 30, 2023.

<sup>69</sup> “Lidice, In Illinois,” *The New York Times*, July 14, 1942, 18.

<sup>70</sup> Wendell Willkie, “Eulogy of Lidice,” Stern Park Gardens, IL, July 12, 1942, available at Speech Vault, [http://www.speeches-usa.com/Transcripts/wendell\\_willkie-eulogy.html](http://www.speeches-usa.com/Transcripts/wendell_willkie-eulogy.html), accessed May 30, 2023.

<sup>71</sup> “Lidice Hailed as a Shrine of Freedom,” *Mattoon Illinois Journal Gazette*, July 13, 1942, 1.

<sup>72</sup> “Willkie Speaks,” *The Daily Chronicle*, July 13, 1942, 1.

<sup>73</sup> See an image of the memorial at “12th July 1942, Stern Park Gardens—Lidice Illinois.”

<sup>74</sup> Images and information about the Lidice Memorial can be found at “Sokol Park,” Wisconsin Historical Society, <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Property/HI19157>, accessed May 30, 2023.

<sup>75</sup> “Sokol Park,” Wisconsin Historical Society.

The United States and Great Britain often shared propaganda especially when it concerned the Germans. The two aforementioned propaganda posters directly referring to Lidice made it over to the United States, while the people of Great Britain heard about the renaming of the Illinois town. An aspect of this propaganda push by the United States that is not applicable to Great Britain is the fact that the United States had only declared war on Germany six months prior. Lidice and the propaganda campaigns, like the posters, documentaries, and renaming of towns, were some of the first anti-German propaganda to hit mainstream America. The razing of Lidice was one of the first events the United States could use as propaganda to turn the population against the Germans. While the British already had an excess of events and stories they could use as propaganda against Germany, on account of the three years of armed conflict, it should not be understated that this was one of the first major pieces of propaganda to hit the American newspapers after America officially joined the Allied Powers' war effort.

While it was one of the first major pieces of propaganda to hit American newspapers, it was also an acceptable kind of propaganda for the time. As stated earlier in the article, the towns of Lidice and Ležáky were blue-collar mining towns. At the time, the Democratic Party was the party of the blue-collar working man.<sup>76</sup> There was a section entitled "Industry and the Worker" in the 1940 Democratic Party platform.<sup>77</sup> That section concluded with the pledge that "We shall continue to emphasize the human element in industry and strive toward increasingly wholehearted cooperation between labor and industrial management."<sup>78</sup> Since Lidice and Ležáky were both blue-collar towns that revolved around mining, it struck a chord with the Democratic Party and, more importantly, its voter base. Like the workers in Stoke-on-Trent who felt a connection with the miners in Lidice and Ležáky, the American blue-collar workers also felt a connection with them, and the Democratic Party was obliged to listen to its voter base.

Another, more nefarious, reason why the razing of Lidice and Ležáky was an acceptable kind of propaganda was because neither town had a significant Jewish population; instead, they were people of Slavic descent. That was a distinction that cannot be overlooked because, at the time, America had powerful figures and groups who were vocal antisemites and held fascist beliefs. Among these figures were popular radio show host and Catholic priest Fr. Charles Coughlin, architect Philip Johnson, and Fritz Kuhn, who was the leader of the German American Bund.<sup>79</sup> The German American Bund was an American-based fascist group that modeled itself on Hitler's Third Reich. At its height, its membership reached approximately 25,000. Many Americans without allegiance to fascist groups or overtly antisemitic groups held antisemitic beliefs as well. As historian Katherine Archibald recalls, "time and again I have heard the statement that, whatever crimes Hitler had committed, his

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<sup>76</sup> "1940 Democratic Party Platform," July 15, 1940, Democratic Party Platforms Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/273219>, accessed May 30, 2023.

<sup>77</sup> "1940 Democratic Party Platform."

<sup>78</sup> "1940 Democratic Party Platform."

<sup>79</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "German American Bund," *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-american-bund>, accessed March 6, 2023.

ruthless pursuit of the Jewish evil was praiseworthy.”<sup>80</sup> Antisemitism was blatantly exemplified, if not through quotes, through the lack of coverage and the lack of government support for the German’s systemic murdering of Jewish people. As early as 1942, there were articles in newspapers discussing the German murder of hundreds of thousands of Jewish people.<sup>81</sup> It must be noted that in 1942 the United States Department of State confirmed and condemned the war on the Jewish people, but it would take until the creation of the War Refugee Board in 1944 for the United States government would take any meaningful action to aid the European Jewish population.<sup>82</sup>

One specific question that was posed by a professor at Auburn University following the presentation of this article in class was, “Why did the razing of Lidice and Ležáky quickly blow up in popularity in the United States, while the mass murder of Jewish people took so long to gain traction?” While one cannot state with certainty why Lidice and Ležáky were immediately influential while the murdering of millions of Jewish people took more time, the answer may stem from two key factors. First, there was a sizable number of immigrants who claim Czechoslovakian heritage in the United States at that time. That was evident by the different Sokols all over America having ceremonies of remembrance and honoring the people of Lidice and Ležáky. Sokols were Czechoslovakian gymnastics groups that would end up serving the dual purpose of building strength and infusing Czechoslovakian nationalism in their communities, even when overseas. The razing of Lidice and Ležáky was a time in which Sokols throughout the world joined to remember and honor their fallen people. In the United States, one of the most famous moments was when the Sokol from Phillips, Wisconsin, erected a monument for Lidice.<sup>83</sup> The second reason is uglier than the first. As discussed in the previous paragraph, an aspect of American history that is often overlooked is how antisemitism and fascism were popular beliefs in the pre-World War II era. The newspaper companies and the United States government thus may have viewed the Western Slavic people as a group who would attract more empathy than the Jewish people enduring the same fate.

From the immediate emotionally charged articles and the production and global distribution of propaganda posters to the renaming of the Illinois town to the political and religious views of the American people, the razing of Lidice and Ležáky affected and was shaped by American society in the early periods of the war. The two towns’ stories were expertly used to galvanize the already appalled American people against the Nazi Empire by evoking the emotions of hatred, fear, and disgust.

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<sup>80</sup> Katherine Archibald, *Wartime Shipyard: A Study in Social Disunity* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 109.

<sup>81</sup> Joseph W. Grigg, “200,000 Jews Are Killed by Germans,” *The Amarillo Globe-Times*, June 1, 1942, 5.

<sup>82</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “The United States and The Holocaust 1942-1945,” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, June 9, 2021, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-united-states-and-the-holocaust-1942-45>, accessed May 30, 2023 .

<sup>83</sup> An image is available at “Lidice Memorial Phillips Wisconsin,” Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lidice\\_Memorial\\_Phillips\\_Wisconsin.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lidice_Memorial_Phillips_Wisconsin.jpg), accessed May 30, 2023. Images are also available on “Sokol Park,” Wisconsin Historical Society.

## The Czechoslovakian Government-In-Exile's Response

After the initial meeting between the British SOE representatives and Colonel Moravec that provided the foundation for Operation Anthropoid, President Beneš was eager to make the plan a reality. Moravec and other members of the government-in-exile had fears of Nazi reprisals, which were universally understood to be inevitable if the mission was carried out. Beneš understood the threat of Nazi reprisals, but he justified it by saying “where national salvation was at stake, even great sacrifices would be worth it.”<sup>84</sup> He justified the potential catastrophic loss of life because he saw that the assassination of Heydrich was a major step in the direction of regaining Czechoslovakian sovereignty. He believed that the assassination would reignite patriotic and nationalistic feeling in the citizens within the Protectorate and that would help show the Allied Powers that the people of Bohemia and Moravia are firmly on the side of them.<sup>85</sup> The reprisals that the Germans induced post-Anthropoid were on a much greater scale than any of the planners expected. After the success of Operation Anthropoid until his death, President Beneš did not clearly admit that he was the person who gave the order to execute the mission.<sup>86</sup> He was proud of those who executed the mission, but his immediate response was to say that the Czechoslovak resistance acted independently and conducted this mission without any outside help.<sup>87</sup>

One of the primary reasons Beneš did not take credit for planning and ordering the mission was that he wanted the domestic resistance groups to be ignited by the assassination.<sup>88</sup> He also wanted them to receive international acclaim for the mission. As noted earlier in the article, ever since Czechoslovakia was divided and the government became a government-in-exile, Beneš struggled to unify the dislocated Czechs and Slovaks and prove his authority and relevance. Operation Anthropoid was a way to unify the people by showing them that they were able to stand up and resist the Nazi occupiers. If the dislocated and occupied Czech and Slovak people saw that they could stand up and resist the Nazis, it would unify the people with national pride and they would support their “true” president, President Beneš. A more sanguine and alternative interpretation would be that the German retribution was expected by Beneš, and he wanted to use the German punishments as a wake-up call for those who had grown comfortable with the German occupation. He wanted to use the Germans as a tool to shock the lackadaisical citizens into a ferocious nationwide resistance movement. Regardless of the true reasoning, Beneš refused to publicly take credit for ordering the assassination. In a roundabout way, by assigning credit to the domestic resistance groups, Beneš was able to partially address both of the aforementioned problems.<sup>89</sup> He was able to begin unifying the Czech and Slovak people and that gave him relevance and authority, most importantly, in the eyes of the Western Allied Powers.

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<sup>84</sup> Adam Leong Kok Wey, “Operation Anthropoid: The Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich and the Fate of a Nation,” *The RUSI Journal* 157, no. 2 (2012), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03071847.2012.675808>.

<sup>85</sup> Leong Kok Wey, “Operation Anthropoid.”

<sup>86</sup> Leong Kok Wey, “Operation Anthropoid.”

<sup>87</sup> Leong Kok Wey, “Operation Anthropoid.”

<sup>88</sup> Leong Kok Wey, “Operation Anthropoid.”

<sup>89</sup> Leong Kok Wey, “Operation Anthropoid.”

While the Czechoslovakian government-in-exile did not have the same means of production or distribution as the United States or Great Britain did, they did have one thing the other powers did not. Beneš and his government had the ability to call themselves Czechoslovakians and be the propaganda itself. Instead of mass-producing propaganda posters and movies, Beneš commonly used himself as the vessel of propaganda. He employed his first-hand experiences, knowledge of the situation in the Protectorate, and his bottom-line up-front style of public speaking to appeal to people's emotions. By giving speeches denouncing the Nazi oppression and having his quotes in newspapers, he was able to reach every nation in the Allied Powers. He would commonly give speeches during major public events and dedications. For example, Beneš was at the launch of the "Lidice Shall Live" campaign in Stoke-on-Trent and was also at the dedication of the renamed town of Lidice, Illinois, and he would give televised addresses. At the launch of the "Lidice Shall Live" campaign, Beneš called the Germans "barbarous."<sup>90</sup> While in Illinois, he was able to be seen by the 10,000 Americans in attendance while acting as an ambassador for Czechoslovakia. And on his first recorded television response to the razing of Lidice, he informed the audience that he had "seen the eyes of the Czecho-Slovak soldiers and airmen blaze with anger."<sup>91</sup> He then went on to say that "justice, believe me, will come" in regard to the Nazi reprisals.<sup>92</sup> Beneš and his government were able to be living propaganda. Everywhere they traveled, they were raising awareness for Czechoslovakians and the Nazi atrocities.

## Conclusion

While there are many books and writings about Operation Anthropoid and the German reprisals, there are very few that explicitly discuss how the Allied Powers used this tragedy to further demonize the German government. The importance of support on the home front of a war cannot be overstated. Look no further than the Vietnam conflict's failures to fully appreciate this argument. When the home front does not support a war, that war becomes extremely hard to wage. Previous historians have been fascinated with the events surrounding the assassination of Heydrich, but very similar to Robert McNamara's system of judging success in the Vietnam War strictly by body count, they leave out the aspect of civilians' emotions. One of the most substantial ways Great Britain retained and the United States gained the emotional support of their civilian populations on the home front was through the story and subsequent propaganda campaigns centered around the atrocities of Lidice and Ležáky. This article adds the emotional analysis of the home front that other historians have left out.

The greater "Lidice Shall Live" campaign and all the international fundraising efforts raised the modern equivalent of roughly one million pounds. After the war, the campaign fulfilled

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<sup>90</sup> Edvard Beneš, "Speech at 'Lidice Shall Live' Dedication," British Movietone News, September 6, 1942. The video can be found at Gerrard, "Launching Lidice Shall Live," <https://lidicelives.org/2022/09/07/launching-lidice-shall-live-an-account/>, accessed June 10, 2023.

<sup>91</sup> Edvard Beneš, "Lidice Statement," British Movietone News, June 29, 1942, available at <https://youtu.be/QFMjYhJNmeQ>, accessed May 30, 2023. Information about the speech, including a transcript of it, can be found at Alan Gerrard, "President Beneš Statement on Lidice," Lidice Lives, June 27, 2022, <https://lidicelives.org/2022/06/27/president-benes-statement-on-lidice/>, accessed May 30, 2023.

<sup>92</sup> Beneš, "Lidice Statement."

its promise and rebuilt the town of Lidice and brought back as many of the original residents as possible. The horrific story of Lidice galvanized the entire world, shown by the campaign's global donor support. It gave the Allied Powers stories to demonize the Germans, and through the "Lidice Shall Live" campaign, posters, documentaries, and various memorials of Lidice, they did. The British propaganda posters were used to give a snapshot of the story to evoke emotions of anger quickly, while Humphrey Jennings's documentary and the renaming of the Illinois town were used to commemorate the town. President Edvard Beneš used his public speaking prowess when traveling to the Western Allied Powers in order to make it feel real for the civilians who were hundreds and thousands of miles away. Through the use of propaganda, the Allied Powers turned a war crime into a powerful weapon used to galvanize their populations against Germany.