

## APPENDIX: Studies in Broadcast Proganda

**SECRET**

### STUDIES IN BROADCAST PROPAGANDA

No.16 THE 'INVASION' OF BRITAIN IN

GERMAN PROPAGANDA

( May 12th - 30th)

The propagandist's raw material  
Analysis of German broadcasts  
The general picture  
Italian and Russian versions  
Purpose and lessons of the campaign

With the Compliments of

The British Broadcasting Corporation

3rd June, 1940.

THE 'INVASION' IN GERMAN PROPAGANDA.

We have assembled from the Digest all references since May 12th on the German, Italian and Russian radio as to the imminent fate of Great Britain. The number of statements runs into hundreds and they range from a detailed and quantitative account of the machinery and processes of invasion to mere general threats based on Germany's possession of the Channel ports. In order to discover anything like a clear pattern in these broadcasts we need to keep in mind (a) a calendar of events for the three weeks, (b) distinctions between (i) German Home News Bulletins, (ii) German broadcasts to this country, (iii) German broadcasts to the neutrals. As a first generalisation it is perhaps not too rash to say that the invasion story was started by our own politicians and journalists, the Germans seized upon it to (i) tell their own people how panicky we were, (ii) aggravate our panic, (iii) assure the neutrals that we were as good as finished. For at least the first two weeks the German radio did not promise German listeners anything like a pending invasion of Britain; they did say that possession of the Channel ports gave them new air and submarine bases for dealing with England, but there was no definition of 'dealing' apart from the references to blockade.

As to the Events:

- May 10 Invasion of Holland and Belgium.
- 11)
  - 12) British press full of parachutist stories
  - 13)
  - 14 Mr.Eden appealed for Local Defence Volunteers
  - 15 Dutch capitulation
  - 16 S.E.England closed to all aliens
  - 17 -
  - 18 Antwerp captured. French Cabinet reorganised
  - 19 Camelin dismissed
  - 20 Abbeville occupied by Germans. B.E.F.moves from Maginot Line to Channel ports
  - 21 British press discusses 'Can Hitler invade Britain?'
  - 22 Reynaud's'miracle' speech. Giraud captured. Duff Cooper: "The danger .... is close before our doors"
  - 23 Boulogne captured. Emergency Powers Act. Arrest of Fascists
  - 24 King's speech
  - 25 15 French Generals dismissed
  - 26 Ironside appointed C-in-C of the Home Forces. Germans at Calais
  - 27 Fall of Calais
  - 28 Belgian capitulation. German women interned in Britain
  - 29 B.E.F.withdrawing to coast. Evacuation of S.E.coast

Throughout this period the British press was discussing dangers of parachutists, possibilities of invasion and Fifth Columnists.

If we now turn to the relevant broadcasts from Germany we have a day-by-day picture along the following lines :-

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<u>DATE</u>	<u>TO GERMANS</u>	<u>TO BRITAIN</u>	<u>TO NEUTRALS</u>
May 12	Nothing.	Quotations from neutrals referring specifically to invasion.	Nothing.
13	Nothing.	Similar quotations as above.	Swedish and Spanish; vague panic in London.
14	Nothing.	Parachute panic.	Parachute panic in England.
15	Air and Naval bases on Dutch coast bring air menace nearer to Britain.	Hamburg: Air attacks on Britain N.B.B.S: Invasion imminent.	To European neutrals: bases for air attacks To Africa and Arabia: invasion imminent.
16	Parachute scare. Quotes neutrals on value of new bases.	Air Force within striking distance.	Generally: England seriously menaced. To Greece: also quotes "Daily Mail" on certainty of invasion.
17	Britain seriously menaced.	N.B.B.S: Thousands of bombers on our doorstep.	Quotes neutral press on fear of impending air attack. Except to Norway where quotes Italians that England must prepare for invasion.
18	Quotes neutral press on parachute panic.	Vague threats.	Vague threats.
19	Quotes U.S. on England's fear of invasion. Also new bases threatens English lines of communication in Channel.	Hamburg: Parachute panic.	Vague threats, except in Hindustani which gives definite threat of invasion.
20	Panic in Britain. New bases for attacking Britain.	Hamburg: Parachute panic. N.B.B.S: Details of the invasion.	Quote Italy to Dutch and Danes on dangers of parachute landings.



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<u>DATE</u>	<u>TO GERMANS</u>	<u>TO BRITAIN</u>	<u>TO NEUTRALS</u>
May 21	Quotes British press on parachute panic.	Hamburg: Threatened consequences of Channel control. N.B.B.S: Invasion details.	To Dutch etc: consequences of Channel control. To Turks: threats of invasion.
22	Quotes Russian press on imminent invasion.	Nothing.	Quotes B.B.C fears of invasion.
23	Quotes British press on parachute panic; points out value of new air bases.	Quotes British fear of invasion.	Points out value of new air bases.
24	Great opportunities for air attacks.	Britain's insularity has disappeared.	To Italy: potentialities of motor boats. To Dutch: quote U.S. on invasion and England's fear of invasion
25	War approaches Britain.	Nothing.	Quote U.S. and Russia on invasion possibilities. Point out value of Channel ports.
26	"There are no Islands" British air bases can be attacked.	N.B.B.S: Details of invasion.	To Italy: "impending menace of German invasion." To Dutch: England to be a battlefield.
27	England fears invasion; non-stop raids on Britain possible; quotes "Daily Mail".	Panic fear of invasion.	Successful blockade now possible.
28	Nothing.	Government panic. Motor boat threat to Navy and can carry troops.	Quote English press on fear of invasion.
29	Nothing.	German mastery of Channel complete.	Nothing.
30	Nothing.	Quote neutral press on invasion possibilities by air and motor boats.	Nothing.

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The general picture of the campaign, therefore, was:-

1. To German listeners

The campaign opened late and dealt with two main themes, (a) German successes in Holland and Belgium provide better air and naval bases from which Britain can be attacked, (b) the British parachutist panic. In the treatment of the former theme there was no direct statement that Britain was about to be invaded. For handling the second theme they relied largely upon quotations from the British press. Both themes dropped after the 27th.

2. To British listeners

Here the campaign started first. Hamburg steadily fed the general fear of parachutists and invasion following upon the loss of the Channel ports. N.B.S. provided all the most lurid details of the machinery of invasion. In the last few days of the survey, however, even Hamburg dealt with the motor boat threat.

3. To Neutral listeners

Here again the campaign started by describing Britain's parachute panic, but there was soon apparent a stemming of the attack: the Western European neutrals were told of the menace to Britain resulting from Germany's new air and sea bases, while the more distant neutrals were given (often via the British press) the more vivid threats of invasion. To the Western neutrals the first explicit threats of invasion appeared on the 26th; they were not, however, maintained and the more general threats of a successful blockade became, as in the broadcasts to Germany and Britain, more common.

We examined over the same period the broadcasts in the Digest from Italy and Russia. We may summarise as follows:-

Italian broadcasts: The subject was mentioned practically every day and from the beginning, apart from British panic, suggested (by quoting British and Russian press) that invasion was a possibility. On the 26th the high spot was reached with a statement that Germany would first establish air mastery so as to safeguard her transports; she would also use a secret weapon. From that date on the story weakened and was maintained largely by quotations from the British press.

Russian broadcasts: According to the Digest Moscow dealt with the possible invasion on eight out of the 19 days covered. At first the statements dealt with Britain's parachute panic and with Germany's newly acquired and better air bases for attacking Britain. On the 23rd, however, there was a detailed account 'based on statements of German officers' of the plan: British naval and air bases would first be destroyed and then torpedo boats, U-boats and bombers would deal with British warships and transports. On the 25th appears the first invasion story proper (quoting Swedish newspaper): troops to be landed from air and torpedo boats and supported by amphibious tanks. On the 27th and 30th, however, Moscow's only contribution was to quote neutral scepticism about the practicability of the invasion.

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Purpose of the Campaign: The first and obvious function of the campaign was to create and feed panic in this country, in part by direct talks through the medium wave stations and in part by giving lurid details to rumour spreaders through the N.B.S.; this station is presumably monitored by most of the national newspapers who thus are the unconscious agents of the station. It is possible that in feeding the lay and press panic they hoped to affect, to their own advantage, both in France and as between France and this country the disposition of British troops and materials.

A second purpose presumably was to supplement the campaign in neutral countries to bring them down on the German side of the fence. Large sections of the neutral press (and not merely the 'tied' sections) were apparently persuaded that Britain was on the run.

Lessons of the Campaign: The organisation of the campaign was simple and almost of mathematical elegance. From the Dutch parachutists onwards the Germans had merely to pass quotations back and forth between the British and the neutral press and radio. Italy, and to a lesser extent Russia, helped the 'passes' on. Apart from a study of the organizational aspects of the campaign there is the problem: can we learn anything about Germany's intentions? It must be remembered that the German radio has rarely misled its <sup>home</sup> listeners. It has on this occasion apparently not thought it worth while to promise them an invasion of England by an air borne army. It has, however, frequently discussed the value of the Channel ports in providing air bases from which to attack Britain and naval bases from which to carry on the blockade of Britain; of the various newer weapons, mention to any appreciable extent has been made only of torpedo motor boats. The German propaganda machine presumably feels safe in the promises implied in these statements.