

## Axis Broadcasts relating to Australia, India, Iran and Iraq<sup>1</sup>

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As it is based on a single day in the BBC Monitoring Service archive, this paper can only present a snapshot, and a hazy one at that, of the chosen subject area. Nevertheless, compared to some of the regions explored in this AHRC/IWM/BBC Monitoring project, material in the archive relating to wartime colonial and semi-colonial zones is limited, so, with the aid of the hand-list, it was possible to home in upon a relatively small number of boxes with relevant names, such as 'Germany in Hindustani and Persian', 'Near East, including Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Sudan, Palestine etc', and 'Dutch East Indies and Far East British'.<sup>2</sup> I chose to focus on material relating to the Middle East and Iran and Iraq in particular because of a current project on this theme, and on material relating to Australia and India.<sup>3</sup>

The broadcast transcripts viewed in the archive resolved themselves into several distinct themes for the purposes of this paper:

- An Axis focus on the injustice of Allied war aims and Allied occupation/colonial rule. Specifically singled out were Anglo-American capitalism, Russian Bolshevism, British colonialism, and the resource and territorial ambitions of the three Allied powers.
- An emphasis in German broadcasts on stories relating to Axis military success, Allied military failure, and intra-Allied discord.

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<sup>2</sup> The boxes consulted were: E89 'Germany in Hindustani and Persian'; M90 and M91 from M84-145, 'Near East, including Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Sudan, Palestine etc'; AJ G42-42 'Dutch East Indies and Far East British'; and BBC Mayfair CT.

<sup>3</sup> Provisionally titled *The Pink Elephant and the Peacock Throne: Iran, Iraq and the Allies during the Second World War*. Research for the book was funded by an AHRC grant awarded to Yasmin Khan and me in 2012. The book, which compliments Yasmin's recent *The Raj at War* (Bodley Head, 2015), will be published by Yale University Press in 2017.

- The presentation in German and Japanese broadcasts of the Axis powers as friends of independent nations and of Arab and Asian peoples, as potential liberators from imperial rule, and as benign and progressive overlords.
- A propensity for German and Japanese propaganda to peddle bald-faced lies as well as general truths about the nature of British rule and Allied war aims (even though the Allied powers would strenuously have denied them).
- A focus on poor conditions suffered by civilians living under Allied rule or occupation, and British indifference to the suffering of Indians.
- A focus in Japanese broadcasts on the care they were taking of Allied prisoners of war and the benefits of membership of the Co-Prosperity Sphere.
- Iranian and Iraqi reactions to conflict with the British and the Russians.

### **Iran, Iraq, and the Middle East**

The documents viewed offer a unique record of what was being said to people in the region, and provide alluring snippets from non-belligerent, non-Western societies caught up in the currents of global war and local anti-colonial struggles. Important context was the collaboration between German authorities and pro-Nazi Arab leaders and Islamist exiles in Berlin, especially Rashid Ali and the Grand Mufti, Haj amin el-Husseini. In Berlin such individuals learned from one another about how best to fuse Islamist Jew-hatred with the modern conspiracy theories of Nazi anti-Semitism. Shaped by this background, the anti-colonialism of these leaders was set in an Islamist context. The core message of German propaganda was this: Help us free you from the British yoke and realize your dreams of self-determination; Germany is your natural ally against (British and French) imperialism, Bolshevism, and the Jews. A victory for Germany and the proliferation of this ideology would have had profound consequences for the estimated 700,000 Jews who at the time resided in the Middle East and North Africa. Hitler was personally interested in Nazi efforts in this region, as were key agencies of the Nazi state. The Department of Radio Policy in the Foreign Ministry worked closely with the Political Department, and shortwave broadcasting took place seven days and nights a week. Many listened in; the US

Office of War Information estimated that there were 90,000 short wave radios in the region, with broadcasts often heard by people in cafes and public places and news quickly passed on by word of mouth.<sup>4</sup>

Bare-faced lies are key instruments in the propagandist's toolbox, and the Germans and Japanese excelled in their application. Indeed, they were rendered more effective because the lies were probably believed by the propagandists themselves. On the day that Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa, broadcasts in Persian from Zeesen claimed that the Soviets had 'directed foreign policy entirely against Germany' and that the Soviet Union was ready to attack it, 'betraying its pledges to the German government'.

With unparalleled enmity the Bolsheviks of Russia have prepared themselves against National-Socialist Germany. The Moscow Bolsheviks are on the point of stabbing National-Socialist Germany in the back at a time when Germany is engaged in a war for her existence. Germany cannot leave this active menace to her Eastern frontier unanswered . . . The German nation knows that in this war it has not resorted to arms only to defend its existence but also to save the whole civilised world from the dangerous Bolshevik intrigues and threats, and to open the way to the prosperity of the whole world.  
(Broadcast from Zeesen, 22 June 1941, Persian for the Near East)

Long after the heady days (for the Nazis) of summer 1941 had passed, German broadcasts for the Middle East were still at it. Days before final surrender, an item entitled 'Allied advance into Germany cannot bring decision' brought the claim that the Allies were 'taking advantage of Germany's concentration on the Eastern Front to save European civilization'. (1 April 1945)

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<sup>4</sup> Pertinent works include Adrian O'Sullivan, *Nazi Secret Warfare in Occupied Persia (Iran): The Failure of the German Intelligence Services, 1939-1945*; Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*; David Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War*; Barry Rubin, *Nazis, Islamists, and the Making of the Modern Middle East*; Annabelle Sreberny, *Persian Service: The BBC and British Interests in Iran*; and Youssef Aboul-Enein, *The Secret War for the Middle East: The Influence of Axis and Allied Intelligence Operations during World War Two*.

As will be seen, in terms of bald-faced lies Japanese broadcasts for Australia emphasizing the health of prisoners of war and the holiday camp-like atmosphere of the internment camps were particularly egregious. Similarly, the frequent claims that Germany and Japan stood for freedom, human rights and democracy were direct inversions of the truth. But the lies were given greater currency by the fact that Axis broadcasts also contained significant truths about the nature of Allied war activities and aims and the nature of British or Russian imperialism. First of all, there was an emphasis on the callousness of the Allies, particularly the British, as imperial masters. Station Free India 'for India and Indians abroad', broadcasting in Persian on 1 September 1943, reported food shortages and epidemics in India and 'numberless deaths owing to starvation and malaria'. Despite this situation, foodstuffs from Australia allocated to India were being diverted to South Africa. In the same month, Free India Radio, also transmitting in Persian, reported Subhas Chandra Bose's tour of Malaya aimed at gathering support among captured Indian Army servicemen for the Japanese-sponsored Indian National Army. Indian soldiers, it was reported, 'are always placed in the forefront of the battle and thus lives are lost uselessly. Another form in which Britain's indifference to the welfare of Indians is manifested is the way she is handling the food situation in India. For a long time in the streets of Calcutta, people have been dying of starvation'. (10 September 1943)

As well as this alleged indifference to the suffering of subject peoples, the Germans and Japanese had other easy targets at which to aim their propaganda. One was the self-interested war aims of the Allies - and in parts of the world where the Allies were the incumbent external powers, by virtue either of colonial rule or wartime occupation, Axis states could portray themselves as champions of freedom and willing partners for those who wanted to be rid of the Allied presence. A Persian language broadcast from Zeesen on 18 September 1943 disputed British claims that Iran was infested with Axis agents – the major *casus belli* for the Anglo-Soviet invasion of August 1941 and a major reason for Iran's declaration of war against Germany on 9 September 1943. The German radio adopted an incredulous and hurt tone: Germans in Iran had almost all been engaged in commercial or industrial activities, it was claimed, and Germany had

given Iran little cause for its bellicosity. 'On the other hand, the aggressive attitude of Britain and Russia must be annoying to the Persians; nearly the whole of Persia is occupied by British or Russian troops'. Broadcasts repeated the accusation that 'Russia is desirous of extending her sphere of influence in Iran and the Arab countries', and that the 'Americans want the same kind of exploitation, specially oil'. (11 February 1944) A news item transmitted in Persian on 21 November 1944 bore the title 'Russia plans Kurdistan Soviet Republic'. 'Soviet agents, mostly Armenians, have for some time been distributing arms and ammunition to the Kurds of those countries and instructing them to rise against the Iranian Government and fight regular troops' (23 November 1944). It was hoped in Moscow, the broadcast claimed, that the resulting unrest would give the Red Army an excuse to 'maintain order'. Russia was seeking to 'penetrate into Iran, annex that country and gain an outlet to the Persian Gulf'.<sup>5</sup> (21 November 1944)

In contrast, both German and Japanese broadcasts highlighted examples of 'liberation' under the auspices of their power and presence. On 27 October 1943 the German overseas service in Persian offered the example of the Balkan states which were, it was claimed, 'happy under German patronage'. This was juxtaposed with Britain's desire to divide the Balkan countries for the benefit of Russia, a news item based on a story in the *Voelkischer Beobachter*. A broadcast in Persian on 11 September 1944 discussed the plans for a new League of Nations (the emergent United Nations Organization), predicting that such American-led initiatives would lead small states to suffer. At the Dumbarton Oaks conference then taking place, the broadcast claimed, the Allies 'intend to trample on the rights of small nations'.

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<sup>5</sup> Reports also show how Iranian newspapers aired concerns regarding Russian intentions. The source was monitored morse transmissions from Iran in Russian (some sent from Tehran to the Tass news agency). They show the monitoring of Iranian newspapers, reporting on their not infrequent attacks on the USSR. 'Saed newspapers and those following in their wake – Bukhtar, Sitaray etc have finally overstepped all bounds and are trying to outdo each other in slanderous and provocative attacks on the USSR. The 'Soviet Government is sacrificing the lives of its citizens for the freedom of small nations'. Govt should recall Kavtaradze from Persian. 'Endeavouring to impress upon its readers that Persia is now under the threat of losing her independence, Raad [newspaper] makes the provocative appeal: 'People of Persia, be ready for everything; appeal for God's help!' Edalat newspaper – 'no concessions so long as foreign troops remain on Persia's territory' (in reference to the Russian demand for an oil concession).

The Japanese had similar good news stories to tell about their presence as opposed to that of the Allies. A broadcast from Tokyo stated that 'Japan wishes that all countries like Thailand, Borneo and Java should be free and independent countries. She does not want that India should be under the hard grip of starvation and misery'. This was a regular theme: a broadcast from Batavia for India on 4 September 1942 bore the title 'Corpulent British Empire must disgorge India'. 'The defeated Britain stood for capitalism and territorialism and the victorious Nippon stands for democracy and human rights'. A broadcast for India on 3 February 1943 drew this point of comparison: 'The Greater East Asia War is a monumental struggle between the Nippon ideology of wise, prudent, imperial government and the Anglo-American ideology of ruthless, selfish oppression by money-grabbing capitalists'. Given this situation, and Japan's ardent desire to see Britain's stronghold in India crumble, a broadcast from Batavia for India, in English, appealed to Indian soldiers and workers alike to conduct acts of sabotage. 'It is the duty of soldiers under British command to turn their weapons against the British. Employees in munitions factories should strike at once, having first made sure that all machinery has been made unusable. The people should break into the prisons and release our leaders . . . Life is worth living only when one has freedom and independence . . . Asia for the Asiatics and India for the Indians'. (24 December 1942)

Commenting on the Allied pretensions about 'democracy and justice for all nations', the announcer on the German overseas service in Persian offered two contrasting examples. 'He addresses his listeners and asks them to look at the condition of India. He says that instead of a rule of democracy a rule of stagnation, misery and starvation prevails. Then he takes the case of Iran. He says that instead of recognising the sovereignty of Iran, the Allies are trying to be big bullies and have taken control of the Persian railway and other means of communication'. (German Overseas Service in Persian, 25 October 1943)

One can imagine that at least some people listening to the broadcasts would have been persuaded, or had their suspicions confirmed, regarding the nature and effects of Allied occupation.

When Americans saw their own oil supplies being exhausted they decided to look elsewhere, and began to exert pressure on the Persian Government . . . The Russians want to secure their position against the British and American who intend to double-cross them in the long run . . . Now Persia realises the plight in which the British have landed them by inviting the Bolshevik hordes to overrun their country . . . American concessions will be very beneficial to the Jews and Armenians, who will be able to fill their pockets at Persian expense. (German overseas service in Persian, 9 October 1944)

Axis broadcasts were on relatively firm ground when they described the consequences of Allied occupation. 'Since most Arab countries have become centres for Allied military forces they are faced with great economic difficulties', a German broadcast in Persian stated on 10 October 1944. The Allies 'especially Britain will probably prevent the union of Arab states and frustrate their hopes'. 'In countries occupied by the Allies', the broadcast continued, 'three causes are contributing to the rapid dwindling of the population – famine due to looting by the Allies and their inability to ship foodstuffs; lack of security due to Allied inability to maintain order; epidemics due to undernourishment and Allied inability to send medical supplies . . . But the Allies are not satisfied with all that. They exploit the people and their natural resources and grow rich on the proceeds of their robbery'.

### **Broadcasts from Baghdad and Tehran**

Transcripts of broadcasts from Iranian and Iraqi radio offer rare and intriguing impressions during the moments of high drama in 1941 when the two countries found themselves at war with the Allies. In May 1941 British forces from India and Palestine joined those already based in Iraq to defeat the Iraqi army and overthrow the government of Rashid Ali. In August 1941 British and

Soviet forces invaded Iran, defeated the Iranian armed forces, and forced the abdication of Shah Reza Pahlavi. An Allied occupation ensued, which included 30,000 American troops engaged in the operation of the trans-Iranian supply line transporting military aid from the Gulf to the Soviet Union.

On 1 April 1941 Rashid Ali and the officers of the 'Golden Square' usurped power and declared the formation of a 'National Defence Government'. This put the regime on a collision course with the British, as the new government sought to restrict the movement of British troops across Iraq permitted under the terms of the 1930 Anglo-Iraq Treaty. In addition, the new Iraqi government actively sought German military assistance, which was forthcoming in the form of small arms imports and the arrival of Luftwaffe aircraft. Two days after Rashid Ali's coup a 'news commentary for the Near East' broadcast in English from Baghdad was picked up by the monitoring service. It probably came from the Ministry of Propaganda, though reception was so poor that it was barely possible to hear a complete sentence. What the listener did pick up were frequent references to 'infringements of sovereignty' and phrases such as 'shedding blood', 'attacked the Iraqi forces', 'capitalists', 'just and noble cause', and 'serving British imperialism'. The transcript provided this fragmentary extract to illustrate:

But at the same time we do not allow anyone

The liberation of our homeland

Our love of freedom and (determination?) to defend it

The League of Nations

May I stress again . . . in order to deprive Iraq of its sovereignty and smash its freedom and independence.

The Prime Minister said, 'Comrades, patriots, heroism, do whatever is necessary to defend the honour of our country and obtain victory'. (3 May 1941)

Baghdad was broadcasting in Arabic, English, German, and Italian. It carried news of British ambassador Sir Kinahan Cornwallis's meeting with the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, reporting the 'intentions of his government to establish a military base at Basra, which is a clear contravention of the treaty'. On 3 May, what the monitor described as a 'semi inaudible news commentary from Baghdad', broadcast in English, claimed that

[Iraqi] military measures had surprised the British military command: But instead of behaving reasonably, the Britishers, whose nerves have been exhausted by ?? became excited. They attacked the Iraqi forces at Habbaniyah and at the same time in Baghdad (Note. Announcer's voice rises to a shriek of emotion and becomes inaudible) . . . Mothers, brothers, wives that you are serving this nation. We are conscious of a just and noble cause.

The monitored broadcasts offer fascinating and extremely rare Iraqi perspectives on events as they unfolded. On 4 May 1941 the Iraqi government sent a code message to its Ankara legation. 'The announcer started a message in code by the following announcement: This is Baghdad (three times). This is a message to the Iraki legation in Ankara (three times). It is the Iraki Foreign Office message'. Baghdad broadcasting in German for Germany then carried an 'urgent' item – 'Iraqi Premier Addresses Nation'. He thanked the people 'for the complete order and discipline they had preserved'. There was a report on ongoing air and military operations:

The high command of the Iraqi armed forces announced: Our forces draw the ring around the aerodrome of Habbaniya steadily closer. The garrison is continually being bombarded by our artillery. It is presumed that the enemy .... will be beaten. Many fires were caused in ammunition and fuel dumps. At the western border of the oil fields our recon troops went into action and are in contact with the high command . . . Our troops have contacted the enemy and operations are carried out according to plan. Secondly two enemy aeroplanes today unsuccessfully attacked our army. One was shot down by machine gun fire and the other forced to turn back . . . The high command of the air force reports: Firstly our bombers dropped bombs on the aerodrome of Habbaniya causing

heavy damage. All our aircraft returned safely to their bases. Secondly two enemy aeroplanes of the Wellington type directed a concentrated attack on a military camp this morning. They were intercepted by our fighters. One was brought down and the other turned back.

It was reported that the British had attacked a hospital 'although clearly marked by the red crescent'.

The south command announces: A number of (Indian?) mountain snipers were captured and handed over to the police. The high command announces to the enemy forces surrounded by our forces that good treatment as POW is guaranteed to them if they surrender to the high command and put up no resistance . . . High command communique No5 issued this evening: The western command announces that the Iraqi forces are still besieging the garrison at Habbaniya. The garrison commander received a request to surrender . . . avoid senseless resistance.

Attempts were made to get the Iraqi people behind the armed forces as they fought the British. On 8 May 1941 Baghdad broadcast a speech in Arabic from 'the Grand Mufti to the Islamic World':

To all Moslems all over the world I call to work together in a spiritual collaboration. The hour is critical and the chance is here. The British, who are attacking Iraq and the people, or in other words your brother Moslems, were those who fought in the past the Arab nations, no indeed all Moslems all over the world. The British did not give the Moslem world any rest. You remember the bloodshed of the Arabs in Palestine, and everyone of you in the Islamic World knows the sort of atrocities the British imposed upon the Palestinians. Their main aim was to destroy an entire Islamic nation in order to build a Jewish country on the bodies of the Moslem. Look at what the British are doing in Iraq now. They are already occupying some parts of the country and want full occupation by

violating the freedom and independence of this Moslem country, for the military and Imperialistic objectives. The British atrocities cannot be forgotten or forgiven but God is watching them, and their bad deeds. From that you know that God is helping you if you help each other. Look at what Britain has done to the Arabs in Berka in her recent movements there, or what she has done to the Arabs of Hadramout, Oman, and Transjordan. She is using all these Moslems Arab countries as bases for her Imperialistic objectives. What has she given them? Nothing, indeed tyranny and oppression and has stolen their freedom. In India they have destroyed the Indian Empire and divided people among themselves. What was the result of all these criminal actions? Poverty and weakness for all the Arab countries and for all the Moslems in the world. But there was another result caused by these atrocities. Hatred for Britain in the hearts of all the Arabs, who cannot deny it or hide it any longer . . . God is against the tyrant and the oppressor, and defends those who are struggling against them because God does not like aggressors or tyrants.

A Baghdad broadcast in German for Germany on 6 May 1941 conveyed the news that the Aleppo municipality in Syria had telegraphed the Iraqi premier with a message of solidarity: 'Aleppo stands firmly behind the Iraqi Government. The town is prepared to bring all sacrifices in the interests of the common cause'. The Iraqi government telegraphed back, thanking Aleppo 'for its assistance and noble attitude towards this holy fight'. The same broadcast also brought news from the Iraqi army high command. 'Our fight is an example to the whole Arab world'. The broadcast inflated British aircraft losses, while all Iraqi planes were reported to have returned to base.

Broadcasts took the form of rallying cries. News in Arabic for the Arab world on 4 May 1941 issued 'A Call to the Iraqi People':

O believers in God and in his Prophet. Fighting is written for you, to free yourselves and your country, collaborating together as one man supporting your noble government under the leadership of Rashid Ali and with the support of your brave and courageous army . . . Our reward will be a great thing in the hereafter, this great thing that we have been promised by God is paradise for all Moslems who struggle for right . . . I call you, all Iraqi people, to the battlefield, to the scene of honour, shoulder to shoulder against the tyrant, the British who started aggression against us. We will defeat them with our united effort and with the strength of our great army. Remember that your struggle is for dignity of the country and for freedom.

Despite such exhortations, the forces of the British Empire resoundingly defeated the Iraqi military and compelled Rashid Ali and the Grand Mufti to flee the country. The British invasion of Vichy Syria followed in June and then, in August, British forces invaded Iran from bases in Iraq and the Persian Gulf in conjunction with Russian forces from the north. Iranian radio broadcasts captured the sense of bewilderment caused by this rapid invasion, defeat, and subsequent occupation. A broadcast in Persian from Tehran reported an article in the newspaper *Ittilaat*, entitled 'The people's bewilderment':

The government of Iran has ever since the beginning of the present conflict made great efforts in preserving the neutrality and in preserving its friendly relations with the neighbouring countries. But as our Prime Minister stated in his effective speech in Parliament, Fate would have it that we should also be dragged into the fire of this world-burning war and that a peace-loving and disinterested nation should be involved in troubles and hardships . . . Of course, our readers are right in being sorrowful as a result of these events for we are now faced with great difficulties quite outside our expectations and which we did not deserve, but our government had no other choice and there did not seem any way out of the crisis but that which the government has taken . . . We must point out that the expectations of the Iranian nation from the two governments of the

USSR and Great Britain in view of friendship and good neighbourliness, was much more, and we are disappointed. (BBC Mayfair Tehran in Persian for Iran 11 September 1941)

BBC Monitoring also picked up a statement from the Iranian Prime Minister in which he 'expressed his utmost regret and deplored the raging of the world war and the sufferings of humanity and the spreading of this war to Iranian territory'. (Flash 10 September 1941, Station Tehran, Arabic for Arab world) Another broadcast covered an item from the newspaper *Iran* on the 'Bombing of open cities' and the casualties this had caused. It was

against the principles of warfare to bomb civilians, the paper stated, and concluded by saying that this act of the attackers in spite of it being an act of aggression will create astonishment among the civilised world, to whom we protest and declare that the Iranian government which is supported by the people had no intention of going to war, and only wished to maintain peace and security . . . Not only from time immemorial has it been the characteristic of the brave soldiers of Iran to sacrifice their lives for their country and even today all the soldiers and officers of the powerful imperial army are endowed with this quality, but also every one of the inhabitants of this ancient country is filled with the same spirit, and it is through this spirit of sacrifice and observance of the duty of giving their life for their country that the Iranian nation has been able to resist throughout the length of its long history in the face of the most formidable and terrifying events of the world's history, and continue for some 27 centuries to live a life full of honour and glory. . . As the course of events is today become increasingly grave, the Iranian nation must also increase its attentiveness and endeavour not to let any blow be struck at its dignity and honour, and should prepare itself for immediate action. (BBC Mayfair Tehran in Arabic for the Arab world 27 August 1941)

But it was already too late. On the day of this broadcast, the Shah ordered his forces to observe a ceasefire after they had been resoundingly defeated by the Allied invaders. Radio broadcasts sought to calm the public as the dust settled, issuing a statement from the Premier's regarding rumours in Tehran: 'Many untrue and forged pieces of news are current and it is even said that people are leaving the capital. There is no danger for Tehran. There is a plentiful supply of bread

and wheat but of course if each person buys ten pounds of bread instead of one pound, the government will be faced with some difficulties'. (Tehran in Persian for Iran 31 August 1941)

Though they did not do so immediately, soon the Allies felt the need to occupy Tehran and district as well as the rest of the country. Iranian broadcasts sought to reassure the population and encourage them to behave appropriately towards the occupiers:

As the people of the capital know the Soviet and the British forces have come to Iran only for the purpose of protecting their military and strategic interests and as the official notes have made it clear their action is in no wise directed against the country. People are expected to act courteously and kindly towards them, and if they wish to buy. The people of the capital must conduct themselves according to the moral principles of the Iranian people. Should any member of the Soviet and British forces perhaps do something to the people the people must not retaliate but must immediately inform the police. (BBC Mayfair, 20 September 1941)

It was announced that 'Germans without a permit from the Soviets or British are to report to the local police by 24<sup>th</sup> September. Those who do not will be arrested and punished'. (20 September 1941)

There was extensive radio coverage of the swearing in of the new Shah following his father's abdication (and British-arranged exile to Mauritius and then South Africa, where he died). Tehran radio broadcast running commentary on the oath-taking, which took place in Parliament, including coverage of the procession from the Royal Palace down Pahlavi Street and Shah Street, witnessed by huge crowds.

With God Almighty, the Omnipotent, as my witness, I swear by the Holy Koran and by whatever else is holy in His eyes, that I will devote all my endeavours to preserving the independence of Iran and to safeguarding the frontiers of the country and the rights of the nation.....

In his speech the Shah also said:

Now that the internal conditions of the country necessitate that I should undertake the onerous duties of kingship and carry the burden of the affairs of the country according to the law of the constitution, I find it necessary to point out that perfect and continuous cooperation between the government and the parliament is essential.

An amnesty for political prisoners was announced, as was the news that all Axis legations, except the Italian, had been evacuated. German, Hungarian, and Bulgarian citizens 'left by special motorcars, omnibuses and lorries via Tabriz for Turkey'. (BBC Mayfair Persian for Iran 18 September 1941)

Allied forces left Tehran within the month. 'On the occasion of the departure of the Soviet and British forces from the Teheran area, parades will be held tomorrow morning at 1100 at Maidan-I Jalaliyyeh. [Monitor's note:] The place named is a racecourse outside Teheran used for military purposes as well'. (BBC Mayfair CT 16 October 1941) A Radio Tehran broadcast the following day said that 'Today British and Russian Forces on the occasion of their departure from Teheran held a parade at the Jalallyah Fields'. (17 October 1941, Tehran Persian for Iran)

Striking the inevitable note of unenthusiastic acquiescence in the face of occupation, on 13 November 1941 Tehran radio, broadcasting in Arabic for the Arab world, reported the new Shah's speech on the opening of parliament. Regarding 'external policy he said that it will be in collaboration with the two other countries whose interests lie with ours . . . His Majesty began his speech by expressing his regret that Iran was affected by this world war, despite the Government's efforts to keep the country at peace and isolate it from this world tragedy. (13 November 1941, BBC Mayfair CT WPWO)

**'This is Batavia calling': Japanese broadcasts for Australia**

Japanese radio broadcasts were aimed at the people of the British territories in the east that they had failed to conquer, trumpeting the benefits of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere and the iniquities of British rule. British broadcasts and other forms of information and propaganda attempted to counter them: 'Beware Japanese broadcasts. They clear the way for Japanese bayonets', read a poster in Ceylon.<sup>6</sup> But other Japanese radio broadcasts were aimed at the non-Asian populations of British territories east of Suez, particularly Australia, attempting to undermine the resolve of the home population. In doing so, they had a potent weapon at their disposal: thousands of Australian soldiers, held captive in prisoner of war camps scattered across the Dutch East Indies and the conquered British territories of South-east Asia and the Far East.

The 'Dutch East Indies and Far East British' box in the BBC Monitoring Service archive contains a fascinating series of transcripts of Japanese broadcast from Batavia in the captured Dutch East Indies. Their target was the Australian population at large, specifically the relatives of captured soldiers. The broadcasts emphasized how well cared for the men were, how they were respected as brave warriors and, through their reasonable and friendly tone, sought to question why Australia was involved in a pointless war. Their major instrument was the reading of letters from Australian prisoners of war. These were targeted specifically at named families and contained both obvious and subtle propaganda points. In a broadcast on 1 June 1942, for instance, the letters of three soldiers were read. One was from Major G A G Kearnan, held captive in Java, to his wife, who lived at 2 Fitzwilliam Road, Vaucluse, Sydney. 'Your husband is under the good care of the Nippon Army authorities', a prisoner 'since the Dutch government hastily fled on arrival of superior Nippon forces'. Having forged a connection between a named soldier and his relative, the tone became intimate - 'He is well and fit, he still loves you' – and focused on familial matters close to the hearts of all those separated by war:

The kiddies must be getting quite big now . . . Regarding finance, if the company are not paying you anything at all, don't sell our shares; you can borrow some money from the

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<sup>6</sup> Sri Lanka National Archives, 29/4.

bank on the house. The army should be paying you, as the Japs put our names over the radio and the government accept that as a proof that we are alive and continue dependants' allowances.

Major Kearnan's letter, according to the broadcast, reported that 'Life in this prison camp is quite good. The Japs have treated us very fairly and honourably, not that I ever expected anything different'. The broadcasts struck a friendly tone, the Japanese authorities only too happy to help brave soldiers and their families: 'These letters which we broadcast reach the Australian families concerned in no time, and they are sent to you free of charge by the Batavia Broadcasting Station. We are glad to do this little favour for the Australian prisoners who in this war fought so bravely for their country'.

The 'Australian home news hour' broadcast from Batavia on 2 August 1942 opened with the music to the song 'Home sweet home'.

This is Batavia calling Australia. This is the Australian Home News Hour, bringing all Australian families news of their men now prisoners of war of the Nippon forces in Java. To-night we are going to read you another radio letter addressed to Mrs R. H. Allen, Box 50CC GPO, Sydney . . . Even as prisoners, they are keeping their brave soldiers' spirits. You should see them play volley-ball, deck-tennis, and other games in the large compound where they are making life as pleasant as can be. Groups of them also plant vegetables in the garden, as if they were in their own backyard.

Broadcasts reported on boxing contests, for which the Japanese (it was said) supplied trophies including silver cups and cigarettes. 'Competition is very keen and the regular healthy life of the concentration camps aids the men to keep in a fit condition. Much sunlight and fresh air, early to bed and early rising, a diet of rice, meat and vegetables and bread made by their own bakers from Australian flour, are reflected in the brown skins and clear complexions of the Australian prisoners. Of course, they are longing to be home again'. The health of the men and their relaxed lifestyle was emphasized: 'There a boy from Bondy [sic], just as brown and healthy as if he had

spent all summer on the beach; and a middle-aged sheep farmer from Longreach tending tomato plants as though in his own garden'. Japanese broadcasts also sought to persuade Australians that their future lay with the Co-Prosperity Sphere. 'The Australian Government is wrong to assume that her Continent is still closely tied to the British Empire. With communications severed and a great part of the former British possessions in India now in Nippon hands, it is about time Australia realised that her place is in the Asiatic sun'. (3 August 1942) The tone of these broadcasts, of course, contrasts starkly with what we now know about the nature of the Japanese camps, and the awful statistics regarding survival rates.

Progress under Japanese rule was another theme of Japanese broadcasts, often set in the context of criticizing British colonial rule. For example, there was news on the reconstruction of Singapore, or Shonan city as it had been renamed.

The restoration of communications, electricity, water supply, and sanitary systems being completed, further reconstruction and enlargement of the municipal system of Shonan will be undertaken by the Nippon military administration. An economic welfare section has been established to maintain and improve public welfare facilities. Plans are being drafted to establish schools for practical training in shipbuilding, and other industrial vocations. Moreover, encouragement will be given to the study of the Nippon language by the citizens. (Batavia for Australia and New Zealand, 2 August 1942)

Drawing the distinction between 'progress' under the Japanese as opposed to 'exploitation' under the British, the Mayor of Shonan declared that the city 'must be reconstructed as the industrial centre of the southern region under Japanese control, and it must not be the workshop for the exploitation of natives as Singapore had been'. (Batavia for Australia and New Zealand 4 August 1942)

Another supposed mark of 'progress' was the attention paid to restoring indigenous cultures that had been damaged by generations of European colonialism. Possibly unknown to the Japanese,

this was a familiar trait of incoming colonial powers; the British, for example, exhibited fantasies about restoring Indian communities to a pristine past, and on arrival in Tanganyika sought to remove the contamination of German rule by excavating and restoring the original culture. A broadcast recorded the endeavours of Lieutenant General Homa, 'Commander-in-Chief of Nippon Expeditionary Forces in the Philippines'. To these ends, he had

declared a comprehensive study of the Philippines manners and customs and the development of such points was fitting for the Asiatic culture and were essential for the moral and spiritual reconstruction of the Philippines as one of the nations in the Co-prosperity sphere. The Philippines have no ancient culture. Today the culture is a conglomeration of American influences and vestiges of many centuries of Spanish rule. Prolonged search for data on original Philippine culture before the arrival of the Spaniards proved successful. The study of the ancient Philippines has to be made from existing religious legends and folk lore.

General Homa deplored the fact that 'Nippon schools' were still teaching the European 'discovery' of the Pacific, and was developing schemes to rid the land of European influences. Japanese-led progress, as presented over the airwaves, embraced men and women equally. On 30 August 1942 'Batavia for India', again highlighting 'British terrorism in India', claimed that 'Indians everywhere are fighting for a united India'. As a concrete example of this, it cited the Indian women in Shonan who, under the leadership of E M Devi, former Professor of Political Science at the Women's College in Madras, were forming a woman's branch of the Indian Independence League (there was a Philippines branch as well).