

[Clark on Galbraith. The British Press and Nazi Germany: Reporting from the Reich, 1933-9. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. 276 pp. \\$115.00 \(cloth\), ISBN 978-1-350-10209-5.](#)

Discussion published by Jennifer Wunn on Wednesday, December 7, 2022

Review published on Monday, November 28, 2022

Author:

Kylie Galbraith

Reviewer:

Toby Clark

Clark on Galbraith, 'The British Press and Nazi Germany: Reporting from the Reich, 1933-9'

Kylie Galbraith. *The British Press and Nazi Germany: Reporting from the Reich, 1933-9.* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. 276 pp. \$115.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-350-10209-5.

Reviewed by Toby Clark (Independent Scholar) **Published on** Jhistory (November, 2022)
Commissioned by Robert A. Rabe

Printable Version: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=57250>

It is tempting to view the relationship between the British press and Nazi Germany solely through the prism of military history. Journalism had experienced a boom in Britain during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as newspaper production costs fell and literacy levels within the population rose. War reporting had received legitimacy from the Crimean War of 1853-56, and by the time the Boer War broke out fifty years later, reporters like Winston Churchill wrote for huge audiences in Britain. During the Second World War, British newspapers reported on battles with small stylized maps with large arrows to illustrate advances and black-and-white photographs of tanks ploughing the desert sand. Bold titles proclaimed major wartime events: D-Day, crossing the Rhine in 1945, and the atomic bombs. In contrast to this bellicose image, built on the foundations of a PhD thesis, *The British Press and Nazi Germany*, by Kylie Galbraith, analyzes the prewar years: 1933-39. This periodization coincides with the rise of Adolf Hitler to power in 1933 and the onset of war in 1939, signaling that this book is not about military history. In Germany, however, these years were far from peaceful.

Other books on this subject have been published, all of which Galbraith examines and then sets aside in the introduction. In the literature review, the author convinces the reader that existing scholarship is by no means complete and there is a gap in the historiography that can and will be filled. Furthermore, the key question is posed: how much information about Nazi Germany was available to the British reading public? Having qualified her question, specifying that the book will focus on atrocities and conceding that one had to be reading newspapers in order to discover the truth, Galbraith has set the scene for her study.

Citation: Jennifer Wunn. *Clark on Galbraith. The British Press and Nazi Germany: Reporting from the Reich, 1933-9. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. 276 pp. \$115.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-350-10209-5.* H-German. 12-07-2022.

<https://networks.h-net.org/node/35008/discussions/11960235/clark-galbraith-british-press-and-nazi-germany-reporting-reich>
Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.

Across seven chapters and an excellent conclusion, Galbraith examines events in Germany and the reporting of these events in Britain. With each chapter, another Nazi attack takes place: upon the church, Jewish Germans, political opponents, and the concept of democracy itself. This book uses case studies drawn from major British newspapers and magazines to show the depth of the universal opposition to Nazi Germany. In examining these case studies, however, Galbraith does not neglect broader history. For instance, when considering the persecution of the German Jews in the recently acquired Saar, something that Hitler had promised not to do for a year, Galbraith includes a discussion of broader world events. It was the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935, coinciding with the flagrant breach of law occurring in the Saar, that distracted British reporters. Italian colonial aspirations were competing for space in British newspapers and for the attention of their reporters and readers, she notes. Without excusing British newspapers for this oversight, Galbraith makes the point that many distractions existed for newspapers during the volatile 1930s.

With lucidity and efficiency, in the conclusion, Galbraith looks back across the evidence and argues that British newspapers were unified in reporting and denouncing both the Nazi Party and the Germany that was being created. Even the most distracted and casual reader, she states, could have known that Hitler was leading a brutal and oppressive regime. Despite knowing the details, how could the British have failed to act? Galbraith argues that the British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, did not confront Hitler over these appalling crimes because that could have led to war. British hawks could have used the British press to voice their concerns at humoring the Germans. Churchill would do so upon the death of the German president, Paul von Hindenburg, in 1934, which removed the final barrier to the establishment of a Nazi dictatorship. British newspapers speculated that the position of president would be retained but only as a puppet, with the true power resting with the Nazi Party. As it was, British readers discovered that Hitler had combined the role of president with his own role as chancellor, consolidating his power further.

The strength of this book is the unemotional media representation of the growing evil within Germany. Galbraith allows the evidence to speak for itself. For instance, a piece in the *Morning Post* in 1933 explained, "Herr Hitler has frequently asserted that nothing happens in the party without his knowing and desiring it" (p. 151). This comment would be banal if Hitler were running a company or a football team, but it becomes sinister when we consider Nazi crimes. The question of how much Hitler knew about the persecution of the Jews, a subject favored by sympathizers and devil's advocates everywhere, is answered here in the positive. Christianity, democratic values, and personal freedoms within Germany were also threatened. Hitler created an environment where evil could flourish and encouraged it to do so. Foreign journalists in the field could see as much and their newspapers in Britain backed them, so much so that some British papers were banned in Germany for weeks at a time. Clearly, the German government preferred their crimes to remain hidden.

Ultimately, *The British Press and Nazi Germany* does provide answers. Yes, the British press knew all about Nazi atrocities and, yes, the reading public in Britain could learn about them. While these answers could have been guessed before reading this book—after all National Socialism was an "in your face" style of political leadership—this fact does not lessen Galbraith's achievement. This study shows the facts behind the answers in comprehensive detail. *The British Press and Nazi Germany* is now the definitive book on this subject for the time period 1933-39.

Citation: Toby Clark. Review of Galbraith, Kylie, *The British Press and Nazi Germany: Reporting*

from the Reich, 1933-9. Jhistory, H-Net Reviews. November, 2022. URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=57250>

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).