

New book tells of Londoner who Eavesdropped on Holocaust horrors

- New book reveals vast bugging operation against captured Nazis
- Historian uncovers full scale of operation to covertly record Nazi war crimes



Bugged: Fritz Lustig heard Nazis talk of atrocities such as those at Auschwitz

A wartime eavesdropper has revealed that he listened in on top Nazi captives chatting in cells about their roles in Holocaust atrocities.

Fritz Lustig was one of about 100 refugees, mostly German Jews, hired by British intelligence to eavesdrop on officers in bugged PoW cells around London.

The Jews not only recorded graphic evidence of the Holocaust but also strategic details about U-boats and the top secret V2 rocket programme.

Mr Lustig, 93, a retired accountant from Muswell Hill, was enlisted to work at so-called M Rooms in three stately homes where senior Nazis were held.

“We were working in two shifts from 8am to 4pm and then from 4pm until prisoners went to bed,” he said.

“As soon as we noticed that something important was being discussed we cut a record. The records we kept of atrocities committed were given a special marking in red. We knew these things were happening. I was fortunate because all my closest family had got out of Germany. The prisoners never saw us and we never saw them, I didn’t even know where their cells were.”

The scale of the eavesdropping — on more than 10,000 prisoners — was discovered by historian Helen Fry, an honorary UCL research fellow. Her book, *The M Room: Secret Listeners who Bugged the Nazis*, reveals how devices were planted in light fittings and fireplaces in PoW quarters at houses including Trent Park in Enfield and Latimer House near Amersham.

Of the 100,000 documents she sifted through at the National Archives in Kew, Dr Fry said one of the most chilling transcripts was of General Dietrich von Choltitz, the former military governor of Paris, saying: “The worst job I ever carried out — which however I carried out with great consistency — was the liquidation of the Jews.”

Dr Fry said: “They heard von Choltitz saying how Jews were lined up in pits in the woods and shot, and children thrown in.”

U-boat submariners were heard talking about the underground bunkers and pens that helped the Germans sustain the Battle of the Atlantic, while two generals discussed the V2 rockets that devastated London. However, the evidence was not used at the Nuremberg trials over fears that the method contravened the Geneva Convention and also that it would compromise other bugging operations.

Mr Lustig, the father of BBC radio journalist Robin Lustig, said: "I had to sign the Official Secrets Act which meant I couldn't talk about it. It is important that people know what we did."