



Allied Communication to the Public during the Second World War: National and Transnational Networks ed. Simon Eliot and Marc Wiggam.

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Total war brings civilians into the front line, and a prerequisite for any modern conflict is the implicit, if reluctant, consent of a nation's population. It is necessary to marshal and maintain morale and attack the opponent's will to fight; as Susan Carruthers has put it, "munitions of the mind"¹ are integral to modern warfare. This contention is well-trodden ground in the scholarship, but this anthology, while giving due attention to propaganda and censorship aimed at the home front, also explores relatively virgin territory. In its twelve chapters, American, British, French, German, and Norwegian scholars discuss subjects ranging from British periodicals sent to the United States, the response to anti-Semitism in Polish forces, and the UK government's inducements to get its people to lend it money.

Unsung characters emerge. For example, in October 1940, Hugh Carleton Greene, brother of novelist Graham Greene, at age twenty-nine was placed in charge of the BBC's German Service. Fluent in German and a former Berlin correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, he was tasked with transmitting radio programs to a German audience that did not want to listen and, later in the conflict, were being preached messages of peace while RAF and US aircraft were carpet bombing their towns and cities. As a broadcaster, how do you gain the trust of an audience being killed in their thousands by your country's air raids?

In her chapter, Emily Oliver (Univ. of Warwick) reveals that Greene's solution was to restructure his programming to include new features and formats, as well as satire, while retaining an emphasis on news and commentary. He aimed to make the BBC's German Service the voice of truth. Strict censorship protocols and pervasive propaganda made this an unattainable ambition. But thanks to Greene's inclusion of reports of British military reverses and insistence on a calm and measured delivery by all speakers, the German Service programs became an appealing alternative to the exaggerations and hectoring of Nazi broadcasts.

Greene also countered German attempts to jam his broadcasts by transmitting noises on the same wavelength and insisting that his presenters deliver their text slowly and clearly; they had also to possess "deep resonant voices rather than high pitched voices."² Two announcers took turns presenting news bulletins, and elaborate features using complicated effects were eliminated entirely. Greene claimed he and his staff had "invented a new German style," free of complicated syntax and favoring precision and clarity over florid expression. And, indeed, the German audience grew as the tide of war turned, even though the Nazis made it illegal to listen to the broadcasts (151-52).

Joseph Clark's chapter highlights Carlton Moss, an American screenwriter, actor, and film director who increased the visibility of Black servicemen in the war. Initially, US government-

1. *The Media at War* (NY: St. Martin's, 2000) 55.

2. Hugh Greene, "Visit to Stockholm in 1942," BBC Written Archives Centre (18 Sept. 1963).

sponsored films featured white soldiers almost exclusively. This became a cause célèbre for a Black press indignant that African Americans were being overlooked. Black visibility was seen as an essential part of the Double V Campaign, which argued that victory over fascism abroad would help achieve victory over racism at home. In response to criticism, the US government commissioned two films, *The Negro Soldier* (1944) and *Teamwork* (1946). Moss, an African American who had worked with John Houseman and Orson Wells on the Federal Theater Project in Harlem, wrote and produced both films.

The War Department produced *The Negro Soldier* as part of Frank Capra's Why We Fight series; its script's initial draft was considered too dramatic. Moss was employed as a man who "really knows the background of the Negro"³ and the resultant forty-minute film was a commercial success. Almost every Black serviceman saw the film and millions of white soldiers viewed it as part of an official education program. *Teamwork* was meant to highlight the benefits of interracial cooperation by showing Black and white soldiers working together, but, with the war over and the army demobilizing, it met stiff resistance from film exhibitors—"They literally could not give the film away" (89).

For many African American servicemen, the United States they returned to was the same lousy one they had known before. It was a decade before the ambitions behind the Double V Campaign even began to be realized. For Blacks in the postwar years, the visibility Carlton Moss had worked so hard to secure was a painful reminder of hopes dashed (90-91).

The essays gathered in *Allied Communication ...* clarify "how the Allies created new channels to promote and state Allied aims" (18), beginning with Britain and its Ministry of Information and then widening its purview to a range of countries to which the Allies communicated. This is a subject of daunting scope and, inevitably, some chapters succeed more than others in adhering to this shared theme. Diversity of subject provokes a diversity of response, and discrete chapters will appeal to some readers more than others, according to their specific interests. My own favorites are the chapters by Oliver, Clark, and Henry Irving (on the Ministry of Information). A test of an academic work of this nature is whether it provokes an "I didn't know that!" response. Simon Eliot and Marc Wiggam are to be thanked for compiling an anthology that will clear that hurdle for anyone interested in Second World War propaganda and manufactured consent.

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