

RADIO AS A TOOL OF PROPAGANDA IN WORLD WAR II

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I- INTRODUCTION

Radio as a result of reaching great amounts of people is used as a propaganda vehicle. Although, using film, television, newspaper and some other mass media types is possible, this paper aims to find out the examples of the usage of radio. In the History of Broadcasting course we dealt with radio and television as a nature of the course, therefore, other than radio and television, are not our subjects. Investigating both radio and television as a propaganda instrument may be interesting, but because of the two main reason, I excluded the television and I included the radio. First, during the World War II radio was used vastly as a propaganda medium, television sets were not wide spread at homes as a result of the television broadcasting's early years. Second, radio's usage is a huge subject, limitation of pages is required.

A- DEFINITIONS OF PROPAGANDA

The word propaganda comes from the name of a central organ of the Catholic church, "the Congregatio de Propoganda", which was

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set up by Pope Gregory XV in 1662 to take charge of the church's promotion of faith among non-Christian populations (Kecskemeti 1973, p. 884).

Most of the time, word "propaganda" corresponds with negative terms and negative usages in our minds. Words like "lies", "distortion", "deceit", "manipulation" and "brainwashing" used as synonyms for propaganda.

Arnold Perris defines propaganda in **Music As Propaganda**, as "spreading of ideas, information or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause or a person" (Perris 1985, p. 5).

In contrast to common sense, Perris added positive meaning to propaganda beside of negative sense. What Perris did against to bias on a propaganda, just reevaluated the term in a time span.

The definition given by Garth Jowett in **Propaganda And Persuasion** makes the term much more feasible and reveals the neutrality found in previous definition: "Propaganda is the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions and direct behavior to achieve response that furthers the desires intent of the propagandist (Jowett 1987, p. 10).

II- RADIO AS A TOOL OF PROPAGANDA

The propagandist, in order to achieve his goals must use some instruments. The goal of propagandist is to reach and manipulate the masses, to do so he needs to use mass media.

According to Marshall Mc Luhan, radio is a hot medium, while television and print are cold. Radio effects most people person to person offering the spoken communication between the speaker and the listener as Mc Luhan puts it.

Radio was gradually becoming the most widespread method of reaching great masses of people, since receiver sets has been so reduced in price that millions, in every country of the world, were able to purchase an instrument and so listen broadcasts.

The one of the problem of any propagandist, is a perceptual one, for instance, individuals must perceive the stimulus-situations through which the propagandist hopes to exert his influence. Through the sense of audition people are able to obtain the stimulation

offered by most forms of passive amusement: they hear music, drama literature, poetry, news, political speeches, etc. People voluntarily listen the radio programs and then the propagandist has an opportunity to begin the fuction. This, is the psychological explanation of radio as an important propaganda stimilus-situation (Doob 1935, p. 360-361).

A- BEFORE WORLD WAR II

The potential of radio as an instrument of propaganda had long been appreciated. Marconi had considered it to be "the greatest weapon against the evils of misunderstanding and jealousy". Yet such a view was based upon a fundementally optimistic view of the way in which states regard one another. Radio provided governments with an ideal instrument of political propaganda in the ages of the politicised masses. It had been used during the 1914-18 war but its impact had been limited because transmissions had largely been confined to morse code (Short 1983, p 28).

The first known use of radio was in 1915 when Germany provided a daily news report of war activities, which was widely used both the domestic and the foreign press that was started up-to-date news. Although, these broadcasts were in Morse, they served their purposes. Its potential had been sufficiently well appreciated that the allied peacemakers at Versailles prohibited German broadcasting from Naven, Hanover and Berlin or the construction of any new stations for a period of three months after the peace treaty had been signed (Jowett 1987, p. 82).

In the 1920s, radio was used in international disputes. During the 1923 Franco-Belgian invasion of the Ruhr, for example, a radio "war" did break out between the Berlin and Eiffel Tower stations. The German government was quick to recognise the value of radio as a mean of enabling those Germans who had seperated from their homeland by the terms of Versailles treaty to keep in touch and retain their sense of nationality. During the 1930s the lofty BBC ideal that "Nation Shall Speak Peace Unto Nation" had given way to the exploitation of broadcasting as an instrument of aggressive propaganda. Out of the 30 European national broadcasting systems in 1938, 13 were state-owned and operated, 9 were government monopolies operated by autonomous public bodies or partially

government but, only 3 were privately owned or run. Under such circumstances, radio propaganda became a regular feature of international relations and an instrument of national policies.

This development had become apparent with the transmissions from Radio Moscow (established in 1922 and greatly extended in 1925) when the Soviet Union developed the world's first short-wave station. For Lenin, radio was "a newspaper without paper... and without boundaries" (Short 1983, p. 30).

B- DURING THE WORLD WAR II

i- American Propaganda

With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 the United States was in the propaganda business. President Franklin Roosevelt consolidated foreign and domestic propaganda into an Office of War Information (O.W.I.). Its job was to supervise and coordinate all government information functions. The journalist Elmir Davis was appointed the director of O.W.I.

While Generals, Eisenhower, MacArthur, and Stillwell encouraged psychological warfare operations, many other military officers thought of war exclusively in terms of men and weapons, not of words. Davis supported those in favor of propaganda when he said that;

"The war going to be won primarily by fighting, but we can point to plenty of proof in history that victory of the fighting forces can be made easier by psychological warfare and propaganda".

Davis had a realistic view of the role of propaganda during wartime (Mitchell 1982, p. 9).

The Office of War Information used radio that helped to shorten the war against Japan by telling the Japanese people that their cause was hopeless. The Japanese government was preparing to discuss surrender without informing the Japanese army or people. Through radio, the O.W.I. told about the proposed surrender. The Japanese government later admitted that once the people know about the peace offer, it had no choice but to surrender on terms of Allied countries.

During the war years another development was occurred. The United States Information Agency established the Voice of America (V.O.A.) in 1942, whose job was to make radio broadcasts to the

world in English and other languages describing what life in America was like. With Congress tightening the purse strings, however, these radio broadcasts never did compete in quantity with the number that the Communist broadcast. During a typical year, the V.O.A. broadcast a total of 618 hours a week, while Radio Moscow broadcast 997, Radio Peking 997, and Radio Cairo (frequently anti-America) 674 hours. The V.O.A. was later able to up its total programming to 730 hours a week.

Creative programming to the Voice America designed to reach the largest possible audience with effective messages woven into the broadcast schedule on a day-in and day-out basis. The entertainment industry and the advertising industry were working together. What they do in the United States have proven that they have the know-how to get results (Mitchell 1982, p. 11-12).

Another successful usage of propaganda in radio was realized by CBS. As signs pointed to a wider war in Europe, Edward Klauber, CBS's executive vice president, felt CBS must have a new European director. The position had been held by Cesar Saerchinger, and he had resigned, feeling the work had no future. In 1937 Edward R. Murrow headed for Europe to organize the work. In March 1938 Murrow was in Warsaw lining up a program for the **American School of the Air**. When German troops were crossing the border, Murrow flew to Vienna and on March 13, 1938, he broadcasts his first news report to American listeners.

This is Edward Murrow speaking from Vienna. It's now nearly 2:30 in the morning and Herr Hitler has not yet arrived. No one seems to know just when he will get here, but most people expect him sometime after ten o'clock tomorrow morning..."

CBS had everything ready when the war advanced. For eighteen days, September 12 through 29, the world was gripped intension shared minute by minute through radio. During this eighteen-day period, millions of Americans kept track of events through short-wave pickups. All the principals Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain, Daladier, Benes, Mayank- were heard on the air. It was the greatest show yet heard on American radio (Barnovw 1968, p. 76-80).

One strange example of a propaganda on radio took place on January 30, 1943, which was both the tenth anniversary of Hitler's coming to power and President Franklin Roosevelt's birthday. The Nazi Germans were still winning at that point, and Hitler was certain

to make the most of the anniversary. When it appeared likely that Hitler would broadcast to the world at 11:00 A.M. it was proposed that the British Air Force bomb Berlin at that exact moment and knock the Nazi radio off the air while the world listened. The idea worked. With perfect timing, British Mosquito bombers hit Berlin a few moments after 11:00 A.M. **Reichmarschall** Hermann Goering was substituting for Hitler. A few seconds after Goegering started to speak, explosions were heard in the background. Shouts and sounds of confusion followed, and then Radio Berlin went off the air. Germany was not invincible, after all. It was probably the only time that German radios broadcast American propaganda (Mitchell 1982, p. 10).

ii- Nazi Propaganda

The Nazis have been most ingenious in utilizing the radio. They know that with proper control its influence can be far greater than that of the press. Goebbels found broadcasting a highly attractive medium of mass propaganda. It was more suited than the press for employment in an authoritarian state; it was easier to control centrally; it was not wasteful of manpower; it left no easily accessible record. Above all, it was immediate and, it penetrated.

The first Nazi broadcasting to foreign country was aimed against Austria: the famous "radio war" developed in the summer of 1933 (Zeman 1964, p. 104-106).

They continued Nazi propaganda broadcasts during the war years. One of the Goebbels' admirers maintained quite candidly that radio should not be conducted by theatrical folk, who seek to furnish mere entertainment, but by politicians; his reasoning is clear and blunt:

"It is shameful that for years, when reform at the radio was being discussed, really decisive, i.e., political points of view were never brought into the foreground. Politics is life. Therefore all gossips about "unpolitical" radio is, as a matter of fact, demagogy which had better not venture into the field of public opinion. The radio must be political. Yes, indeed, it must reflect only one brand of politics and that is the politics of the statesman who is the leader."

And so every night, except Sunday, for example, all the German stations have broadcast what has been called "The Hour of the Nation". Many of the programs have presented excellent music

written, of course, by strictly German composers. These musical events, moreover, have been prefaced with vocal propaganda much in the manner of an American commercial "plug". The leaders of the Nazi Party, in addition, have often canceled the scheduled broadcast and have delivered speeches; in this manner they have used for political purposes an audience that has tuned in to hear music. Beside this "Hour" other aspects of German broadcasts were worth nothing. A host of the speakers talked about Germany's military strength, her history, her lost territories, Nazi social policies, and the new position of the women. In one Christmas program St. Nicholas told a storm trooper that children whose fathers were storm troopers would receive gifts, whereas those whose fathers were not storm troopers would be overlooked on Christmas Eve. There were also radio sketches which dramatize the life of Hitler and the growth of the Nazi movement. Germans, moreover, were encouraged to purchase cheap radio sets in order to listen to important political speeches through a local organization in most parts of the country these sets were too weak to receive foreign stations (Doob 1935, p. 287-288).

iii- British Propaganda

BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) is the "public corporation" which operates the huge British radio system. Of its three main services Home, Empire, European- the European Service achieved sustained propaganda successes probably unequalled in the history of broadcasting during the wartime broadcasts (Lerner 1971, p. 50).

The BBC in its broadcasts to occupied Europe and to the enemy in the Second World War, carried conviction to friend and foe alike because it was a pillar of its policy to tell the truth, and to tell the truth in respect of whether it was good or bad. In December, 1941, when Japanese were sweeping down the Malayan peninsula towards Singapore, the British battleship **Prince of Wales** and the battle cruiser **Renown** were sent up North from Singapore to attempt to stem the Japanese advance by laying down a heavy artillery barrage with their big guns in front of the Japanese. Their mission failed. Both the battleship and the battle cruiser, lacking aircover, were attacked and sunk by Japanese land-based aircraft. The BBC

gave the news of this disaster to the world at once. It was by giving the truth-good or bad-that the BBC won and maintained its credibility (Roetter 1974, p. 17-18).

iv- Propaganda at Radio Luxembourg

Radio Luxembourg was an extraordinary phenomenon. Serving a tiny nation, it had one of the continent's most powerful transmitters, able to penetrate a large part of the Europe. Capable of broadcasting with 150.000 watts, it was more potent than any American domestic station, the most powerful of which were at that time limited to 50.000 watts.

Radio Luxembourg in 1944 and 1945 served for Allied countries. The propaganda strategy was the work of the remarkable Hans Habe. Hans Habe, born Janos Bekessy in Hungary in 1911, was a prominent journalist and newspaper editor in pre-war Vienna. After he was captured by the Germans, he managed an escape through the United States. Then, he enlisted in the American army and after special training was involved in psychological warfare both in North Africa and Italy. With the steady advance towards Germany, he became the key strategist at Radio Luxembourg. He directed both "white" and "black" -acknowledged and unacknowledged- broadcasting activities.

During his years, the station, with using lower power, 30.000 watts, purported to be an underground German station operating behind German lines. It used a different frequency -1212 kilocycles- and called itself "Twelve Twelve". It went on the air with "Hello, this is Twelve Twelve calling". It was not overtly anti-Nazi but suggested that the German authorities were fallible and making mistakes. The idea was to convey the image of compact underground group.

Much of its strategy had been planned in advance. Music was never used-only talk. The Twelve Twelve team was made to live in isolation, to avoid any hint of interaction with other Radio Luxemburg programming. Although it had been on the air just 127 nights, the Twelve Twelve caper was perhaps the most succesfull program of the Radio Luxemburg from the view point of the propaganda (Short 1983, p. 192-196).

v- Japanese Overseas Broadcasting

Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK), the Japan Broadcasting Corporation was established in 1925 and began overseas broadcasting in 1935. As part of its domestic services, it established links with broadcasting services in Europe and North America.

NHK overseas section followed the patterns of the overseas programmes of the BBC during war years, that is news eyewitness. It also adopted the dynamic style of the programmes from Germany and the brisk announcements of San Francisco and the confident speech of the "Voice of America" (Short 1983, p. 319-321).

III- CONCLUSION

The special qualities which made radio such an effective instrument of international propaganda were simple. It relied upon the spoken word and was thus more direct in approach and personal in tone than any other available medium. It was also immediate and extremely difficult to stop when jamming devices were inefficient. Radio was capable in their geography, literacy, political and ideological affiliations or of their social status. Moreover, because there were no territorial limitations to its range, radio enable the propagandist of one nation to speak directly and immediately to large numbers of people in another countries (Short 1983, p. 31).

Radio is still one of the most powerful mass medium in propaganda activity. Today's international arena, radio is even unique medium that can go through over the barriers and regulations. For technical reasons, most commonly used radio frequency is SW (Short Wave) is not included in domestic American radio receivers and this makes foreign originated radio activities ineffective (Short 1983, p. 81).

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