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Interview with Dr. K.R.M. Short
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Dr. Short is Senior Lecturer in History at Westminster College, Oxford, and Secretary General of the International Association for Audio-Visual Media in Historical Research and Education. He is the Editor of the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*. At the time of this interview he was teaching at University of Houston School of Communication.

(I introduce myself, tell him I've read his book, ask how to get in touch with Namikawa Ryo, who wrote the chapter about NHK. He talks about the Bellagio conference that led to the book, says Namikawa Ryo was 85 at the time and may not still be living; says his son is the best cameraman in Japan. Recommends I talk to Gordon Daniels at Leeds. Says NHK is publishing material with information about the war but it's in Japanese.)

CK: About your book, in the preface you talked about latent propaganda in films, in other words escapist fantasy that helped a repressed people to forget their repressions. Do you think radio can serve that purpose?

KS: Well I think it depends. Radio is a rather more diffuse medium. First of all it's something that happened in the marketplace, as readily as it could, within the confines of one's home. The difficulty is that whereas the movies provide you with a document which is almost timeless, there are very very few radio broadcast recordings left, particularly in things such as news. One does have the old
recordings of things like the Jack Benny Show, but radio is... my own feeling is that radio had... a potentially greater impact on morale than the movies.

For example if you look at the Time magazine in 1940... George Schaeffer of RKO had, through George Gallup, a series of polls done by a new Gallup organization called the Audience Research Institute. And Schaeffer at RKO wanted to know what Hollywood audiences actually were, so obviously he could tailor his product to tap the market more effectively, which was very avant garde considering the fact that most Hollywood moguls guessed by the seats of their pants or whatever.

CK: This is audience research? That's the first time -

KS: Yes, that's right. It was actually run by a young Scot by the name of Ogilvie. And Ogilvie, as soon as the war begins, goes to work for the British Ministry of Information, so he goes from one form of propaganda to another. But what the Audience Research Institute did was to do a very very thorough (survey)... It was never published since it was a job being done for RKO, and it wasn't something for public consumption. But you do get the sort of general, overall import, statistics being published in Time Magazine, as to what American audiences were really doing.

But I think the point that I'm slowly getting around to making is that what is so startling is that first of all
(they found) the American cinema audience was probably closer to 50 million attendances a week, as opposed to much higher figures that had formerly been quoted. On a given Sunday evening their estimate was that you would probably have 10 million people at the movies, but there were probably 16 million people sitting home listening to Jack Benny. So that the radio audiences, from the standpoint of entertainment, were probably anywhere from 30-40 percent higher than the movie audiences at the same period. When you're talking about the heyday of movies, you're talking about an even greater heyday from the standpoint of radio entertainment.

Now I don't know of anyone who has done a serious study of the way in which wartime radio entertainment reflected the needs of national defense. The Office of War Information certainly had a division which was concerned with the planting of what one would call positive images into the radio scripts. In other words if you look at soap opera scripts I think you'd probably find - I know that I've seen evidence of key wartime issues being planted in soap operas to create positive views on a wide range of subjects, everything from recycling tin cans to thinking better of the Chinese people.

CK: Right. They still do. There's still plenty of that on television.

KS: Well sure there is. But during the war it becomes a
matter of policy. And it happened only within a very limited period of time, that’s one thing you have to keep in mind, which makes it more accessible in the sense that the Office of War Information’s Domestic Division really was only in gear for the period of summer of ’42 to summer of ’43. Because by then Congress has cut their appropriations to the bone, because they don’t want a domestic propaganda branch keeping the New Deal in office for another four years. But during that period of ’42 to ’43, I think there’s an excellent field for research looking at the way in which the Office of War Information used radio to promote the general and specific goals which were being devised within the OWI for the purposes of raising American morale as well as improving American perceptions of its allies.

CK: What do you think that it takes to be successful at doing this? I mean some propaganda is successful and some isn’t.

KS: (Laughs.) What it takes to be successful I think basically is to first of all, one has to know the - one must have a very clear idea of the target audience. I mean first of all you have to know what the problems are. And one of the things that people from Harold Lasswell onwards did was to create the concept that there was such a thing as public opinion, that public opinion was measurable, quantifiable. And once it was quantifiable then you were in a position to modify it by what people in the Office of War Information
called programs. So during this period there was a very heavy poll taken by a variety of means in the Bureau of Intelligence in the Office of War Information. They had three levels of information gathering, running from traditional Gallup poll sweeps down to individual in-depth interviews, in which they determined what - they decided what the questions were that they wanted answers on. Those seemed to be the crucial questions. They sent the questions out, they determined what the American people felt about these questions, and then they determined whether or not they had a problem. If people were positive, they didn’t have a problem, they could maintain what they called a low supportive propaganda profile. If the people were thinking the wrong thing, let’s say they were anti-Russian or anti-British, or anti-Chinese or anti-rationing, or anti-paying your income tax, then they realized they had to go about changing those attitudes. And they would change those attitudes by...a fairly intelligently conceived grasp of the fact that you’ve got to attack on a broad front. So they would create programs that would go into the press, into the weekly press, that would then be supplemented in the weekly magazines, as opposed to the daily press. Issues - things that would appear in the news reels, that would appear in the Office of War Information short subjects which were showing in the cinema, things that would then appear in radio programs.
In other words the secret of propaganda is that you are telling people something that they are prepared to accept, which is to say you are looking for gradual modification of attitudes rather than a volte-face. And you are telling it to them again and again from a variety of means, of media. So that it's very much a question of coming at them with the same thing from every conceivable angle, but in such a way that they are - they do not feel threatened or propagandized. And one really does have to examine the Office of War Information intelligence reports and see the programs that they then create, because it's by looking at the programs that you see the sort of breadth of the attack that they then mount to correct these opinions that they see as being detrimental to the war effort. And...I can document it through the cinema, I can document it in the press, I've seen enough to believe that if you look in the right places you'll be able to document it in the use of radio, particularly through network programming. You did not have direct censorship, but ...you didn't have censors in the studios, but I mean it's quite clear that network executives took (it) almost as seriously as they took the sponsor's pressure.

For a period of time they also took pressure from being patriotic Americans, from the Office of War Information, to help them pursue certain of these programs. If one got into...the production records and scripts for a series of
programs like the Kate Smith show, I imagine since that was always more of a variety show...you'd find a very clear input going into every week's or every day's shows. I forget how Kate Smith actually ran, I think she ran it daily, five days a week, for 15 minutes, of patriotic stuff designed to support the home front as well as improving views of one's allies that you were actually out there fighting for.

CK: You see that stuff in old Bing Crosby films, too.

KS: You see it in the movies.

CK: It's everywhere.

KS: Sure, but the very important point that you're raising is that it's also in radio, and the only reason that not enough has been made out of radio is because radio has not left very obvious documentation. I mean if it weren't for the insatiable appetite of American television, which demands the rerunning of old movies, one would not even have that as a source. The fact is that old radio programs don't have a market...unless you're just an old radio program nut. Old movies fill air time. Radio can fill air time by playing records, it doesn't have to play old radio programs. So that what happens is that whereas we can quite readily see the extent to which the movies were used for wartime propaganda purpose, we are only impressionably aware of what the radio was doing. And my own view was that radio made a greater impact, greater impression, than the movies did. And I would love to see somebody prepared to get in there
and prove it. CK: Why do you think radio — well, you’ve given me the answer pretty well —

KS: Look at the statistics, that radio entertainment, as entertainment, was more important to Americans in the ’40s than the movies were. The movies of the people had the press agents; radio did not. If you look at the reality, people listened to the radio. They sat home, they didn’t go out to the movies, particularly if they had small children. If one actually had access to the Audience Research Institute findings, you’d learn a great deal more about America’s habits. See, you didn’t go to the movies to get your news. You got your news from 1937 on by listening to any one of a dozen top-flight news broadcasters who in their 15-minute programs gave their very very strong opinions, some so strong like Beau(?) Carter that he got yanked off the air. But they provided the opinion-making for Americans, and the fact that you were hearing on the night’s news what you were going to read in the morning’s newspaper put radio in the forefront of opinion-making in the United States. So that from that standpoint the straight news, news commentators, the commentary programs made the sort of political side of opinion-making very much the province of radio. Movies could not touch it, not even "The March of Time." "March of Time" is extremely important in opinion-making in this period. But I see it as something that’s complementary to radio, because newsreels were not doing it,
newsreels couldn’t do it, they were basically an 8-minute entertainment filler. However if you then look at current event programs, the sort of town meeting of the air -

CK: Now this is on radio -

KS: On radio. You have radio programs which were facing major critical issues. You have all sorts of cultural programming that the FCC demanded and that certainly makes an important contribution, and I think you would find through the entertainment side of radio programming, a very clear effort to influence American public opinion. And you have to realize that in a period when you didn’t have television, people were turning their radios on when they got up for breakfast, they were hearing the news, the kids were coming home at lunchtime, and their mother is going to have been doing the wash with the radio on virtually all day long, they are going to suffer through Kate Smith and Our Gal Sunday, and whatever during their lunch hour, and Ma Perkins, and what have you, and I think you would find that the basic pattern of American home life, particularly from a woman’s point of view, was non-stop radio listening throughout the day. There’s 50% of your population. Except of course during war time you get large numbers of American women going out to work in industry, but even there you had radio, you didn’t have piped music, you didn’t have musak, you had the real thing in the work place.

CK: Now, was this the same - What was the audience of
Mildred Gillars? She was called Axis Sally... She was an American, are you familiar with her?

KS: (Laughs) Yeah, I know about - You see you’ve got four fascinating characters. You’ve got Axis Sally. You’ve got Tokyo Rose. You’ve got Lord Haw Haw, William Joyce. And of course you’ve got Ezra Pound, who was the American poet who broadcast for the Fascist Italians. So you’ve got these people. I don’t know - William Joyce, Lord Haw Haw, has been fairly well written up, largely because they hung the poor bloke, though he was actually an Irish citizen. Axis Sally I’ve not actually seen much on.

CK: Well, I’ve heard - I went to the National Archives in the summer, and listened to some of her (broadcasts), and it’s quite different from Tokyo Rose, because as you were describing, some of it was aimed at the housewife who was home washing the dishes, and had very active talk about the situation. But with Tokyo Rose, I don’t know if you’ve heard her -

KS: I have heard her -

CK: - And I’d like to talk about her for a minute. I’m wondering, what was the Japanese government trying to accomplish?

KS: Well they were trying to in fact undermine the morale of the GI in the mud-filled foxholes. I mean this sort of typical one about Hello, GI’s, what are your girlfriends doing tonight on the heights overlooking the
Pacific in the convertibles with those 4Fs...The scripts that I've seen of Tokyo Rose suggest that it was basically, "We will provide you with music and a bit of fairly predictable undermining morale" sort of stuff. One of the things that you have to always keep in mind is that it's very easy to do propaganda when you're winning, it's more difficult to do it when you're losing. Because what really makes an impact is being able to announce your victories and the other guys' defeats. So long as Haw Haw was doing that he had an easy time; he had a very difficult time actually making his points after the war began to swing in the other direction. But it would be very interesting to look at the Axis Sally programming, keeping in mind that one of the problems always is where you're dealing with radio, is that I would say for the most part you could pretty well write off the impact of short wave broadcasting.

CK: And most of Tokyo Rose was on short wave?

KS: No, most of Tokyo Rose, if I remember, was actually on medium wave. That was because they were broadcasting to the front lines. And of course Haw Haw was broadcasting medium and long wave programs primarily out of Hamburg, which made his target area of Great Britain a very easy one to zero in on. But somebody like Dorothy Thompson, for example, who was doing short wave CBS propaganda for the United States, back in '39, '40, '41, of course was having to use short wave because that was the only way they could
actually get a signal into Germany. There's a fascinating book that Dorothy Thompson published I think in about 1941, which contains the text of her short wave broadcasts, which if I remember correctly, was entitled, *Listen, Hans*.

CK: Now I'm not sure who she was.

KS: Dorothy Thompson was one of those absolutely marvelous '30s women who was a political columnist, and

CK: -An American?

KS: A very tough American lady. I think by '40 she had - I don't actually know enough of the story of Dorothy Thompson except to recognize that she's a fascinating person, a person who was an influential opinion-maker and unique in being a woman at that time.

CK: Why do you think the Japanese used prisoners of war for their propaganda? I mean it seems to me as though that would be the worst population to pick from.

KS: I don't know. It may simply have been a matter of availability.

CK: And they're English-speaking.

KS: That's right. If you were able to use a *nisei*, obviously you've got somebody who could actually speak English. They were second generation.

CK: I've interviewed a number of veterans who can remember being in the foxholes and being in their ships listening to Tokyo Rose. And it's totally clear that the propaganda didn't work in lowering their morale. They loved
it, they looked forward to it.

KS: But the interesting question there, however, is whether or not it was in fact in some way succeeding. I mean the - you see, you may in fact turn it on, and you may laugh, and you may say isn’t that funny. But I think that what you have to ask is whether or not Tokyo Rose and her compatriots were not actually raising questions that in a sense lay in the back of people’s minds anyway. And if you’re worrying about what your girlfriend’s doing back in L.A., and if Tokyo Rose is reminding you about that question, you may on the outside be laughing, and on the inside you may be crying. So the one thing that I would suggest is that you have to be very cautious. I mean if you lose the war clearly your propaganda didn’t win it for you. But then again, I don’t – it’s one of the things that you always have to be very clear on, is what you actually expect that propaganda to have done. Propaganda neither wins nor loses wars. It’s simply a contributory factor towards the winning or the losing. You could argue that a country that had the most effective propaganda could still lose the war because it had a smaller army. What you’d have to be is fairly well-versed in both the theory and the practice of propaganda to be able to judge whether your expectations are in line with the sort of realities of it all. I know the British Government did a study of the potential impact of Lord Haw Haw’s broadcasting. Just because you turn the guy
on and laugh at him doesn't mean that you're not taking him seriously. He may still have some sort of influence, some sort of negative influence on you. I can't prove a thing, but I'm saying you have to be cautious.

CK: I'm wondering about that myself. Because I'm hearing from vets who said, "Did you hear her last night? She was in great form." And everyone kind of looked forward to it. And it became this social hour and this coin that they talked - I mean that was the entertainment for a lot of them. For a lot of them it wasn't -

KS: Which is interesting in that in a sense you see - Somebody who you ought to talk to if you possibly can at some point is Eric Barnouw.

CK: I did, he was the one who told me about you.

KS: I see. But my guess is that the United States did not effectively produce a radio personality that could effectively, say, provide a substitute for Tokyo Rose. Now you'd actually have to do a very careful look at Armed Forces broadcasting. And Eric, of course, having had experience in that area, would be able to tell you if there's somebody who's actually written extensively on Armed Forces broadcasting in the Pacific theatre, to see exactly what they were doing, and the sort of programming that they were running. Because they were clearly going to be running primarily rebroadcasts of things like Bob Hope, and what have you, Lux Radio Theatre and -
CK: Did he study — did Eric Barnouw study the —

KS: Eric worked for them. I don’t know, you see somebody like Mike Kitross...Michael Kitross at Emerson College in Boston (I ask him to spell it) He’s professor of broadcasting at Emerson College in Boston, and co-author of the basic text for the history of broadcasting. Mike, who also was the editor of the Journal of Broadcasting would probably be the person who would be able to tell you if there are any competent studies of Armed Forces broadcasting in either or both theatres of war, because it would be important to look at what AFN’s broadcasting policy was in trying to deal with Tokyo Rose. Because the one thing you have to remember was that it was easily within the capability of the American Armed Forces to jam Tokyo Rose. I mean there would have been no problem at all, if they felt...There was a policy decision that clearly had to have been made not to jam her, on the grounds that she clearly was doing no harm.

CK: I wonder how we’d find out, if there —

KS: Ah well, how do we find out! I’ll tell you somebody else to talk to... (mentions David Culbert of Louisiana State University as a broadcast historian.) And David may be able to help you particularly because David is perhaps the most knowledgeable person in terms of U.S. Government documentation. David would probably be the person who would point you more directly to where the sources would be for
within - you see, in the Pacific theatre you've got two commands, you've got a Naval and an Army Command.

CK: Now I've spoken to both...not commands but to historians in the Naval Archives of Washington, and to historians at the Army Archives at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. The army has absolutely nothing about Tokyo Rose. Now I don’t know what they have about their own policy -

KS: What they would have at Carlisle at the Army War College would be not a great deal anyway. I mean where you are going to find it will be in the War Department Archives at Suitland.

CK: Where is that?

KS: Suitland, Maryland. It’s the Washington National Records Center. In other words it’s the National Archives Outstation. And there is a shuttle bus that runs between the two...What you need to do is to find out where the Armed Forces Radio policy making was going on, and what documents, what files, they are going to be in. Because I think it’s there you’ll probably find discussions about Tokyo Rose, for example, and other broadcasting of that sort, and questions as to what sort of programming they’d have to put on in order to draw listeners away from her, and whether or not she ought to be jammed or what.

CK: Another thing, just to finish with, I'm curious from your point of view, you wrote the article about film-making
in Hollywood and the attitudes toward Jews. I'm wondering if anyone has done a study about the effects of the blacklist in the 1950s and '40s, the communist blacklist, on film-making in Hollywood, and on the content.

KS: Well, I think there's probably been a lot ... the Cetlair Englund book on Inquisition in Hollywood is the basic book on that issue, on the impact of HUAC on the American film industry. How the film industry basically pulls back on all fronts. But in terms of films, you have to recognize that as soon as you get the Divorce Act, the divorce proceeding which breaks distribution from production in Hollywood through anti-trust legislation, Hollywood as a viable restrictor of content begins to collapse, and the influence of the Motion Picture Production Association and its production code begins to collapse with it. So that by 1954 Otto Preminger's quite prepared to not have a production code certificate with "The Moon Is Blue." And from that point on basically distributors were prepared to put anything on the screen they could get past local censors. So that in one sense the anti-communist thing comes almost at the end of Hollywood's being able to influence movie product as severely as it had done previously.