

WAR OF WORDS AND MUSIC

Transcript of the Documentary

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Maybe they were lonely, or maybe they just liked her music. Perhaps by 1944 they knew they were winning. But the GIs in the South Pacific made her one of the most popular disc jockeys ever.

IVA TOGURI: Hello, you fighting orphans of the Pacific. Hows tricks? This is after her weekend Ann, back on the air strictly under union hours. Reception OK? Well it better be, because this is all-request night, and I've got a pretty nice program for my favorite little family, the wandering boneheads of the Pacific Islands. The first request is made by none other than the boss. And guess what. He wants Bonnie Baker and "My Resistance Is Low." Low, what taste you have, sir, she said.

Yet Iva Toguri is an obscure name, ignored by history that once burned her with its spotlight. The U.S. Government tried her for treason, saying she had attempted to demoralize American troops as the legendary propagandist the GIs called "Tokyo Rose."

IVA TOGURI (introduced as "Ann"): This is Monday, washday for some, rifle cleaning for some, and for the others, just another day to play. Let's all get together and forget those washday blues. Here's Kay Kaiser, Sully Mason, and the Playmates, so come join the parade, you boneheads. (music)

The legend was far from the truth, but it had strong roots in the power of her radio popularity. Iva spent eight years in jail for treason. Yet there was no such person as Tokyo Rose. The name she used was Orphan Ann, but as many as twenty women went on the air for Radio Tokyo to play records and try to demoralize the American GIs. The GIs called all of them by the generic name "Tokyo Rose."

IVA TOGURI ("Ann"): I see Betty's getting impatient for her request of the evening. Oh, come on, don't hold back, Betty. What is it you want to hear? Don't be bashful.

BETTY: Can you oblige with "My Heart Belongs to Daddy?" Bea Wayne doing the vocal of course.

IVA TOGURI ("Ann"): Well, no sooner said than done. (music)

Robert Anderson served on the USS Half Moon in the South Pacific.

ROBERT ANDERSON: Tokyo Rose had a beautiful voice. She was easy to listen to. And that was kind of appreciated, and besides, it was a sexy voice as far as the troops were concerned. And they liked that. She could lead into the music portion of it beautifully.

Paul Snyder says she was well-known in the submarine force.

PAUL SNYDER: She was female and there were a lot of lonely guys out there in the Pacific and that was about the only feminine voice they could hear, so they used to tune her in a lot.

Dick Grant, a former Intelligence Officer, was with the Army Air Corps in New Guinea.

DICK GRANT: She had a real sweet voice. It was a sexy voice, whether she was trying to make it sexy or not, we were pretty lonesome down there in New Guinea and any woman's voice was kind of sexy at the time. But she had good delivery, and she evidently had good intelligence, or the Japanese Imperial Staff had good intelligence. They just fed the propaganda to her.

The legend grew as Japan beamed broadcasts over short and medium-wave transmissions. From Tokyo to Manila, Saigon, south to New Guinea, north to the Aleutian Islands, they broadcast in English, and used for bait the latest American music.

(Fade up Teddy Wilson's orchestra, "Mean to Me.")

Iva Toguri was a California girl. She paid her first visit to relatives in Japan in the summer of 1941. When war broke out she was caught in the alien country of her ancestors, unwilling to renounce her U.S. citizenship, but unable to return home.

She got a job as an English-speaking typist at the Japanese Domei News Service. The military government needed broadcasters who spoke English. Iva refused. She said she had no experience. But the army gave orders at Radio Tokyo. Iva went on the air.

(This is Radio Tokyo calling in the Pacific - voice under next segment) (male voices)

Iva worked with a team of three men, all of them Allied prisoners. Major Charles Cousens, called "the Walter Cronkite of Australia," wrote her lines. Both he and Iva

tried to diminish the effectiveness of the propaganda. They exaggerated the facts to make them preposterous.

But by then, the Japanese broadcasts had become the only game in town. The many voices called "Tokyo Rose" told the GIs their own troop movements. Dick Grant:

DICK GRANT: The Tokyo High Command had some kind of intelligence net that really produced, because Tokyo Rose would get on the air and, for instance, "The 5th Fighter Squadron - when you come over Rabaul tomorrow we're going to be waiting for you." Specifics like that - she would name the targets that had been planned to be hit the very next day.

Leo Rhein was with the Forty-first Quartermaster Company in Australia and New Guinea.

LEO RHEIN: She would address units. She would address companies, or regiments, or battalions. And they knew exactly what regiments or battalions were there. And it even got to the point where she could pinpoint individuals; and she'd, say, give somebody's name and a certain unit, and say that he was at a certain place, and so you knew pretty well that some information was getting through, that they knew where people and where units were.

Les Tucker, on the USS North Carolina, said Tokyo Rose had the news first.

LES TUCKER: I remember when the Chicago was sunk, and we took on the survivors, oh, approximately 36 to 48 hours off the Chicago. And I can remember that broadcast, what date I can't tell you, one or two or three days after, but the Chicago had been sunk. They knew it - they had sunk it. And the only way we knew about it at the time was from the survivors.

Paul Snyder:

PAUL SNYDER: I remember in 1944 that the rumor was that Tokyo Rose was really an American spy who was providing Naval information to Navy submarines particularly, because it was uncanny when we would get a message that the Seattle-Maru was at such-and-such a longitude and latitude and we would hit that longitude and latitude and there would be the Seattle-Maru.

Gareth Moon, with the Marines, watched an air fight from Guadalcanal.

GARETH MOON: That evening when we listened to Tokyo Rose she told how the Imperial Japanese Forces had made an air strike at Guadalcanal, and then she proceeded to tell the exact truth. She told how many planes they lost, six or seven of their planes were lost and two of ours were lost, and she told how the battle hadn't turned out as well as they wanted, that the Americans had actually chased off the Japanese planes - partly because they had run out of gas and had to go back to Munda, I suppose - but she told the truth. And we were amazed about that.

The news was not always reliable.

GARETH MOON: What we found out afterwards was what she told about the other place was absolutely false, there was no truth to it at all. But we, having heard about what had happened at Guadalcanal in which she told the truth, were almost inclined to believe that there had been a terrible massacre up on the other island, and that we'd had some bad luck back there.

Les Tucker found some disinformation as well.

LES TUCKER: The ship I was on, which was the USS North Carolina, was consigned to the depths twice. I don't remember the exact dates, but there we are just floating around, you know, as well as ever, doing our job.

The men knew the broadcasts exaggerated, but they stayed tuned. And sometimes, they worried. Navy men in the New Hebrides had to take atabrine tablets to prevent malaria, and it turned their skin yellow. Robert Anderson remembers Tokyo Rose told them they would become sterile.

ROBERT ANDERSON: Propaganda goes so far, but that kind of worried the young fellows out there and some of them planning on getting married...I know an MD on board ship had to come on and say, "Don't worry, fellows, that is strictly propaganda - there's no research saying that atabrine tablets are going to cause sterility."

They weren't sterile, but they were far from women. And the voice on the airwaves tried to play on their fears.
Paul Snyder:

PAUL SNYDER: This particular thing about telling us that some 4-F was back wining and dining our sweetheart was really almost an every night thing with her. And it was very smart, because she did figure out that there were only probably four or five really important songs that everybody would have some feeling for or relate to some girl. The girl that I was going with at the time, I particularly

remember "Harbor Lights" was our song. She played a lot of "Harbor Lights" - I don't know how effective that was.

Barry Zorthian, a communications specialist, worked with the Voice of America and for Information Vietnam.

BARRY ZORTHIAN: The basic technique of appealing to the desire for home, the desire to be with family, the desire to be in familiar surroundings and therefore to be less than committed to fighting, is standard operating procedure if you will.

Though they laughed, everyone who heard Tokyo Rose remembers that part of her message. It's the same technique advertisers use for hard sell - to repeat until the listener remembers a brand name. Broadcast historian Dr. Kenneth Short says you have to be cautious before you dismiss the effects of a repeated message.

DR. SHORT: 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.

But the United States never tried to block Japanese radio. Instead, they provided their own training films, the now classic "Why We Fight" series by Frank Capra. Armed Forces Radio slowly got into gear. Author Larry Suid says it was started by the servicemen.

(Glenn Miller softly in background "In the Mood")

LARRY SUID: And by that I mean military radio stations which were created purely to relieve the boredom of the troops in the field. And they were spontaneously created by the men themselves. General Marshall brought in Capra and Tom Lewis, not in response to Tokyo Rose, because when this was started the troops with a few exceptions were not fighting. I mean, there were troops on Guadalcanal, they were fighting on Wake Island, but the idea was domestic. Domestic in the sense of whatever they throw at us, this is what we're going to do. It wasn't in reaction to Tokyo Rose that Armed Forces Radio was created.

(Bring up Glenn Miller)

But by 1944, when Iva was on the air, the enemy broadcasts still filled a vacuum with entertainment for war-weary listeners. Ken McConnell was with the Signal Corps in the South Pacific.

KEN McCONNELL: The program was very entertaining. We used to be able to - when I'd pick it up on the radio - lots of times the crew would request that we plug it in through the PA system. She played real good records. They had all the American records. I recall that when "White Christmas" first became available, they had it available within a week or so of the time when it came out in the United States. And it was a wire recorded version, it was excellent.

Gareth Moon:

GARETH MOON: Just like anything else - when we were out on the islands anything we had to do was diversion. We did things that would be boring as all get-out back home but out on the islands it was just something to do.

Listening to the radio became a daily ritual. Les Tucker:

LES TUCKER: It was a pleasure because we didn't have Armed Forces Radio set up at that time and it was entertaining.

Dick Grant:

DICK GRANT: Every evening around chow time between 6:00 and 7:00 when everyone had finished the chores was back home and everything, the most modern and up-to-date music emanated from Tokyo Rose and her evening broadcasts. And everyone tuned in to listen to the latest music from home. We didn't have Armed Forces Radio like we do now or like we did during the Korean War or the Southeast Asian War.

In April, 1944, the New York Times's George Horne wrote from the New Hebrides, saying Armed Forces Radio should try a different format to please the GIs. He said they would like to hear more dance bands. And he added, "They will probably continue to listen to Tokyo Rose, but no-one at home need worry about that." Bill Ohrmann:

BILL OHRMANN: She'd come on and say, Well, you boys fighting down there in the jungle, some 4-F back home is taking your girl out, and stuff like that. And we'd just laugh about it the next morning, and say, "Did you hear Tokyo Rose last night?" And the guys that were lucky enough to hear her would tell about it, you know. It was just an entertaining program for us. Nothing sinister at all.

Dr. Clifford Uyeda spearheaded the attempt to have Iva Toguri pardoned by President Gerald Ford. He says Major Cousens, who worked with Iva Toguri, recruited her for her obvious American sympathies.

DR: UYEDA: As far as he was concerned, Iva would be the most unlikely Tokyo Rose. Because of her voice. She does not have a soft voice at all. She has a rather sharp voice, which is still evident today. So knowing this, he said that he was going to have a program in which there'd be nothing that would be anti-American.

Iva did not hide her pro-American sympathies. Sometimes that worried the other Americans who were also stranded there.

DR. UYEDA: They didn't like her because they said she was just too outspoken. And after all, they said, the war was going on, you're in an enemy country, and you don't start saying things against the country where you're living. Because Iva would say, "America's going to win the war," and you don't say that in Japan during the wartime, that's not a very popular thing to do.

IVA TOGURI ("Ann"): According to union hours we are through today. We close up another chapter of sweet propaganda in the form of music for you, for my dear little orphans wandering in the Pacific.

The exaggerated announcements from Radio Tokyo became a source of entertainment in themselves. Will Clover, in the Navy, worked with radio communications and coded signals.

WILL CLOVER: She had a program there and told us that the Japanese forces had invaded the West Coast of the United States and had progressed to Oklahoma.

Leo Rhein:

LEO RHEIN: The claims that were made over the radio were so outrageous that they were unbelievable. The claim that they made in the Philippines was that there was so many American ships sunk in the Philippines that the water... the water rose a foot around the islands. You know, just unbelievable.

It was easy to laugh when the truth was clear. But truth is sometimes hard to come by. Americans in the South Pacific listened for news of their prisoners of war, who went on the air, but said what they were told. Ken McConnell monitored the speeches.

KEN McCONNELL: She didn't interview them - they would just perfunctorily read and you assumed or you felt certain that that's all they were doing. They were talking in a

very monotonous voice and "I'm so-and-so and I belong to such-and-such outfit and I come from so-and-so. I've been taken prisoner on so-and-so, and I'm receiving the Red Cross packages and they're treating me well and everything is fine." It was just a canned speech.

Mariano Villarin was captured in the Philippines and brought to visit Radio Tokyo as part of an indoctrination plan. Drawn to the sound of American music, he watched Iva Toguri speak into the microphone, and talked to the Allied prisoners who wrote her scripts.

MARIANO VILLARIN: They were on a starvation diet. But they were better treated than regular American POWs in prison camps, because they were there to broadcast, they were employed by Radio Tokyo so they got better treatment. But they were undernourished, of course, because there was a rationing system in Tokyo at that time. We were hungry too, though, we were hostages, but we were given better treatment than the American POWs.

Iva smuggled oranges from the countryside, and blankets for the men who shivered with malaria. Dr. Uyeda:

DR. UYEDA: So what Iva did was, she said she used to buy the things, and then would hand it over to Captain Ince or Major Cousens. Or Norman Reyes. And what they would do then is that they would put it under their coats, and when they visited, then they would go ahead and give it to the prisoners at the POW camp.

Many of the prisoners were from Bataan and Corregidor in the Philippines. They waited for liberation under appalling conditions of starvation and maltreatment. They waited until the battle of Leyte, in October 1944.

(Actuality: Gen. MacArthur) This is the Voice of Freedom, General MacArthur speaking. People of the Philippines, I have returned. By the grace of the Almighty God our forces stand again on Philippine soil, soil consecrated in the blood of our two people. (fade out) (NA 200-174)

Dick Grant:

DICK GRANT: How can you beat success? MacArthur was one of the most brilliant men in military history, in my estimation. He could have gone against every island on the way up, but he didn't - he left entire Japanese armies, like the 18th Japanese Army in Wewak, on the north coast of New Guinea - he left it there, bypassed it, went on up to the Philippines. You can't beat success.

Max Kraus, who fought with the 84th Infantry Division in Europe, used propaganda from a mobile loudspeaker across the front lines from the Rhine to the Elbe to urge the Germans to surrender. 2500 Axis troops turned themselves in.

MAX KRAUS: The effect of any propaganda depends on whether you are winning or losing. If you are losing there is no way in which you can ...talk the enemy into surrendering. And if you are winning it's relatively easy because there is already the tactical and strategic pressure.

Oxford University's Dr. Kenneth Short has published a book about radio and film propaganda.

KEN SHORT: Propaganda neither wins nor loses wars. It's simply a contributory factor towards the winning or losing. You could argue that a country that had the most effective propaganda could still lose the war because it had the smaller army.

They could create a mood with music and nostalgia, but the Tokyo Rose broadcasts will be remembered for not succeeding. Dick Grant:

DICK GRANT: I don't think they had any clear understanding of the Americans' psyche. This would make us want to hurry up and get the job over with and get home...Maybe the Japanese thought we were not a warlike race, or warlike people, I should say, and something like this would intimidate us. But I think it just got our dander up.

WILL CLOVER: I know we all got a big laugh out of it. In fact, it kept our morale kind of high.

BILL OHRMANN: When you feel like you're winning, your morale is pretty good and that's the way we felt. Because we could see our troops and ourselves moving up the coast by jumps and we felt confident the war would end some day.

At the end of the war, a mood of retribution pervaded society. In 1945 the U.S. Government jailed Iva Toguri in Japan on suspicion of treason. They released her a year later for lack of evidence. But when she tried to return home, the legend of a provocative spy created by the media met the young woman who smuggled medicine to prisoners. War crime trials filled the news. The FBI subpoenaed witnesses to try to put Iva Toguri, the typist and part-time announcer, behind bars. Mariano Villarín:

MARIANO VILLARIN: Question by the prosecutor: "Will you tell His Honor and the ladies and gentlemen of the jury what the defendant said on that occasion over the microphone, in substance, according to the best of your recollection?" So I said, she said, according to the best of my recollection, "Hello, honorable enemy, what do you have to say in the foxholes in New Guinea? Your girlfriends are back home running around with other men. It's about time you fellows went back home."

Dr. Uyeda:

DR. UYEDA: The interesting thing at the trial was that many of the persons, the American soldiers who testified saying that they pinpointed certain Sundays that they heard her, she was not, it would have had to be somebody else because she was not even broadcasting.

The trial took three months and cost half a million dollars. Out of eight counts of treason, the jury could only find grounds for one, Overt Act Six, that some time in October, 1944, she did speak into a microphone concerning the loss of ships. Mariano Villarín:

MARIANO VILLARIN: She said, "Orphans of the Pacific, you really are orphans now. How will you get home, now that all your ships are sunk?" But they were not, on the contrary, it was the Japanese ships that were sunk.

Iva Toguri received her pardon from President Ford on his last day in office, January 20, 1977. But the vets who remember her thought her trial was a mistake to begin with. Georgana Egeland's husband, Roy, fought in the Philippines on the USS Santee.

GEORGANA EGELAND: When Tokyo Roses's trial hit the front pages of all the newspapers, they were going to put her in prison for hurting the military and the naval boys morale so much, Roy says, "What a shame. What a shame." He said, "They should give her a medal." He said, "She was the only connection we had with what was happening at home." And he said, "She had all the latest records, all the best music, and all the latest news." And he said that he couldn't wait for her to come on so they could go and listen.

Leo Rhein:

LEO RHEIN: As the songs were played, and as they came out, we got them, or she got them, and she played them for us. And it was terrific. This was the bright spot of each day, was to gather round the radio and listen to her.

Gareth Moon:

GARETH MOON: We would listen to the music and instead of it making us homesick it made us feel better, because we were comfortable with it. That was the stuff we knew in high school and at home, and we enjoyed it. I don't think that Tokyo Rose as such ever made us homesick or upset. It was just kind of fun to listen to her. As I say, she was kind of an idol for a lot of the fellows.

Paul Snyder:

PAUL SNYDER: My organization, the Submarine Veterans of the United States of America, would like to have her back at a reunion some time. She's almost an affectionate friend in a way.

(bring up Billie Holiday: "Mean to Me")

"War of Words and Music" was produced by Clover Koopman and recorded at the Recording Center at Missoula, Montana. Engineered by Richard H. Kuschel. Executive Producer, Jane B. Koopman.

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