

Maureen and Mike

# Mansfield Library

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

## **Archives and Special Collections**

Mansfield Library, University of Montana

Missoula MT 59812-9936

Email: [Archives and Special Collections](#)

Telephone: (406) 243-2053

The following transcript is a scan of the original and has not been edited. For additional assistance, please contact Archives and Special Collections.

Max Kraus is a retired Foreign Intelligence Officer with the USIA. During World War II he was with the U.S. Army 84th Infantry Division and used a mobile loudspeaker to speak across enemy lines in German to urge the soldiers to surrender. His broadcasts are credited with the surrender of 2500 enemy troops.

MAX KRAUS

I served during World War II with a psychological warfare unit which did combat propaganda...so I can present some expertise on the subject.

(I explain what I'm doing, ask permission to record)  
First of all, with radio, Dr. Short from England talks about latent propaganda - (What kind?) Latent, meaning subtle, it's the kind of propaganda that doesn't have a direct message, but it has more of a subtle psychological effect, to lay down your arms and go home, and what are you fighting for, this kind of thing. Escapist fantasy. Is that a technique that was used a lot in World War II?

MK: Well, um, in part yes, in part, also, in Europe, and I'm not acquainted with Tokyo Rose's broadcasts since my service was in Europe, I think our messages were somewhat less subtle and latent,...I mean they were definitely aimed at inducing surrender in enemy troops and undermining civilian morale by pointing out that the war was really lost and people shouldn't be foolish and lose their lives at the last moment when they could surrender to the Allied armies and survive the war and be reunited with their families.

CK: Do you think it had any effect?

MK: Yes, very definitely.

CK: How could you tell?

MK: Well in addition to using the radio broadcasts, we also, and I did a good deal of it myself during the war,

used mobile loudspeaker systems to talk directly across the front lines to the enemy troops when they were nearly cut off, and ...so...and.. for instance during the final drive from the Rhine to the Elbe I worked mainly with a mobile loudspeaker system with the 84th Infantry Division and they credited my surrender appeals with the surrender of about 2500 German troops. And there was a very well documented radio operation targeted at the city of Lorient during the war in Brittany ...where we...some... due to I think Austrian or German-born psychological warriors, broadcast into the fortress which was pretty much cut off, at regular intervals, and they talked enough of the German troops into coming out of Lorient and surrendering to us so that we never had to actually take Lorient by assault. It held out until the end of the war but had become militarily insignificant.

CK: I see. (ask for spelling of Lorient)

MK: It's one of the towns on the coast of Brittany, just south of the English Channel.

CK: I see.

MK: It was one of the main German U-boat bases together with St. Lazare, and Brest.

CK: Do you think that the messages from the radio were effective because they were true?

MK: Yes. I mean this was our cardinal rule. Don't ..always ... always tell the truth, don't lie. At least in

our ...in what we called white propaganda. Because for instance we had also a black propaganda station in Europe during World War II that operated out of Luxembourg, the British had several which pretended to be underground stations inside of Germany which were operated by anti-Nazi...mainly officers. And as long as you ...these black propaganda stations could take liberties with the truth, because they did not avow their true origin. In all white propaganda, where it obviously came from Allied sources, we had a very firm rule of always speaking the truth because ... if the enemy could check up on what we were telling them and found out that it wasn't so, we would have been discredited.

CK: I see. Can you...OK, you would define white propaganda as being...

MK: White propaganda is propaganda which does not hide its origin. Black propaganda pretends to originate from a different source, there's sort of an area in between which is called grey propaganda which leaves it's origin kind of in doubt. But black propaganda and white propaganda are the principle categories which we differentiate it.

CK: I see. I've read the definitions but somehow I understood that one was more obvious in its message and the other was -

MK: No. No.

CK: I see.

MK: The...Tokyo Rose obviously came from Japan and therefore was white propaganda.

CK: Yes, she did, the broadcasts were obvious, in their message as well.

MK: Yes.

CK: Is this a standard kind of format, to play music or something that is part of the culture of the enemy? In other words she played American music and gave them the message, what's the use in fighting, your ships are being sunk, and so on. Is this an effective kind of broadcast, or does the effectiveness depend on -

MK: The effect of any propaganda depends on whether you ... during the war, 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. This is why the propaganda... our propaganda broadcasts, leaflets, loudspeaker operations in Germany during the final phase of the war were very effective. Because the German troops really knew that there was no way that they could win, and therefore it was frequently enough, especially during loudspeaker broadcasts, to talk to them in their own language, to tell them that if they surrendered they would be treated well, in conformance with the Geneva convention, and give them instructions in how to surrender. Because there is always a risk involved

in surrendering during a battle, because the enemy may not know - may not be sure whether you are trying to surrender or trying to charge their positions.

CK: Uh huh.

MK: By having somebody speak to them in their own language and say if you throw away your weapons, walk slowly with your hands up in the air toward our lines, we will take you prisoners and we will treat you in conformance with the Geneva convention and you will survive the war.

CK: Has it ever happened that the message was false, and that they were shot trying to surrender?

MK: Not that I know of. I don't know of any incident when that was deliberately done.

CK: I see. What branch of the government were you working for, when you were doing this kind of dangerous work?

MK: I was with the U. S. Army, with the Psychological Warfare Detachment of the 9th U.S. Army, in Europe.

#

Note: Max Kraus is listed in the 1956 Who's Who in America as a Foreign Intelligence Officer with the U.S. Information Agency.