Broadcasting in the UK and US in the 1950s

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Historical Perspectives

Edited by

Jamie Medhurst, Siân Nicholas
and Tom O'Malley

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Social Fears, and the Media: Historical Perspectives (2013). He is currently writing (with Siân Nicholas and Marc Wiggam) a new history of the British press in the Second World War, based on research funded by the Leverhulme Trust. He is co-founder and former editor of the journal *Media History*, and is on the National Council of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom.

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Finally, the editors would like to thank all the contributors to this volume for their forbearance during the editing process, Cambridge Scholars Publishing for supporting the publication (and for being flexible with deadlines), and Aberystwyth University for granting research leave to one of the editors to complete this publication.

Jamie Medhurst, Siân Nicholas and Tom O'Malley
Aberystwyth, December 2015

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

JAMIE MEDHURST AND TOM O'MALLEY

In an age of digital communications, where radio, satellite, television and computing have come together to allow instant access to information and entertainment from around the globe, it is sometimes easy to overstate the break with the recent past that these developments imply. Indeed, in the USA and the UK there was a period between the 1920s and the 1980s when the available technology and regulatory frameworks only allowed the public to access national systems of broadcasting. After the 1980s, technological and regulatory change in both countries and further afield began to open up national spaces to more regular opportunities for viewing and listening to output from across the globe: starting with cable and satellite, and moving forward after the development of the 'world wide web' in the 1990s to the world of tablets and mobile telephony and a host of associated technologies. Yet from a historical perspective it is important to recognise that the national dimensions of communications, including broadcasting, have always been framed within different sets of international political, economic, cultural and technological relationships.

It has been commonplace in media and cultural studies, in the last four decades at least, to consider media systems in their global dimensions. Media theorists have long considered communications within a broad transnational perspective, exploring their relationship to culture, power and social change.[1] Work in media studies has not only involved examining issues of textual exchange, for instance in television studies, but has also focused on situating developments within the changing field of communications in broad international contexts.[2]

Although much media history has been criticised for being too national in focus, historians have nonetheless recognised the international forces which have been at play in shaping the development of communications.[3] The invention of printing and the subsequent spread of books across Europe and the globe testified to a medium which by its very nature

encouraged the flow of information and cultural practices across borders and between different communities in different countries.[4] Early modern newsbooks were embedded in networks of news gathering and distribution which extended beyond national boundaries and encompassed 'news communication networks that extended from Messina to Uppsala, from Lisbon to Warsaw and beyond'.[5] In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, technologies of print, telegraphy, cable and radio allowed for international contact between media systems, facilitating the exchange of ideas and content across international borders.[6]

By the twentieth century newsgathering was dominated by international news agencies with bases in the USA, the UK and around the globe, which were responsible for the flow of news between, and within, national boundaries. News was an international affair, and radio became a tool for governments wishing to influence opinion in other countries.[7] During the Second World War the importance of radio as a technology that could cross national boundaries reaching the populations of allies and enemies alike was appreciated by all the combatants.[8] Between the 1920s and the 1960s the cinema and radio industries in the UK and the USA exchanged stories and formats.[9] Indeed Anglo-American interactions across the main media of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have proven a fruitful area of reflection and research.[10]

Television, so easily seen as the last technology to succumb to the effects of internationalisation subsequent to the technical and political changes of the late twentieth century, was in fact from the outset characterised by international interactions. In recent years, work has been published taking a comparative approach to television history which has examined the interactions within Europe and between Europe and America from the 1950s onwards.[11] In addition, there has been interest in the idea of television in the Anglophone world, looking at transatlantic interactions from the early phases of the development of the technology, through the growing market for formats in the 1950s and outwards to connections with Australia and Hong Kong in these years.[12]

This volume contributes to this work by bringing together in one volume essays on developments in UK and US broadcasting in the 1950s. The essays encourage reflection about how the two systems were developing and being understood within national boundaries, and also raise issues about the ways in which those systems interacted. Some contributions deliberately focus on international issues, while others embed the international dimension within the discussion; all offer a critical commentary on developments during the 1950s.

So, why the 1950s? In the UK this was the period when post-war austerity gave way to an age of affluence and hope, summed up in the oft-quoted assertion made in 1957 by the Conservative Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan: 'Let's be frank about it: most of our people have never had it so good.'[13] In media terms, radio held its ground but faced increasing competition from television as a medium of entertainment and, later in the decade, news and information. The Coronation of Elizabeth II in June 1953 was a major turning point in terms of the purchase of television sets and the consumption of television. The advent and roll-out of the advertising-funded commercial television network Independent Television from 1955 onwards accelerated television's dominance and helped establish the medium as a key symbol of the emerging consumer culture. The period also witnessed increased interaction between the UK and US in the sphere of broadcasting. As Michele Hilmes has argued in her transnational history of American and British broadcasting *Network Nations*:

> Both for Britain and for the United States, this transnational relationship was deeply productive, providing a constant circuit of influence and adaptation that, while often resisted or even reviled, nonetheless worked powerfully to enliven and expand the cultural horizons of both nations.[14]

Nevertheless, this relationship gave rise to increased fears about the 'Americanisation' of British culture, a theme explored in a number of historical studies of broadcasting.[15] One issue that is clear from the chapters in this volume is that this was a period of transition from mass radio to mass television, one to which governments and populations on both sides of the Atlantic had to adjust quite rapidly.

The volume begins with Siân Nicholas seeking to contextualise any exploration of broadcasting in the 1950s by reflecting on the immediate legacy of the wartime BBC for post-war British broadcasting. How did broadcasters seek to move forward from the war? What lessons did they feel they had learned? Why did so many broadcasters, administrators and commentators see the war as not the BBC's greatest moment but an embarrassing discontinuity, even regression, from its principal public service aims? Jamie Medhurst then moves on to discuss the report of a landmark committee on broadcasting, chaired by Lord (William) Beveridge, which not only took stock of the state of radio and television broadcasting in the immediate post-war period in the UK but also laid the foundations for the future development of broadcasting in that country. An analysis of key documents held at the BBC archives and of the evidence submitted to the committee reveals a confident Corporation, but also one

which was fully aware that nothing could be taken for granted, not least its monopoly on broadcasting.

Kate Lacey's chapter challenges the view put forward in many media histories that television's rise and dominance effectively pushed radio from its position as the dominant medium. Lacey also draws on the notion of intermediality, questioning the dividing line between the 'old' medium of radio and the 'new' medium of television. Tim O'Sullivan then considers perceptions of British television in the 1950s. How and why did TV in Britain assume the forms that it did in these early years? How did its 'menu' of programming develop and transform during the period? How was television advertised, and how did it come to 'colonise' time and space in the British home? For, as O'Sullivan argues, it was in this period that television replaced cinema as 'the essential social habit of the age'.

In his chapter, Allan Jones discusses the unsuccessful attempts in the late 1950s and early 1960s to bring the BBC's output under the centralised control of the scientific community, justified on the grounds of 'national interest'. The chapter analyses these events in relation to the 'two cultures debate' associated with C. P. Snow's famous 1959 lecture, and, drawing on the work of American historian Guy Ortolano, argues that the dispute with the BBC was not so much about 'science versus humanities' as about technocracy and modernisation.[16] Next, Tom O'Malley discusses responses to television in the UK in the 1950s, and in so doing draws comparisons with responses in the US. The focus in this chapter is on the ways in which New Left and labour movement responses to television provide evidence of the complex ways in which society was coming to terms with the rapid spread of this new form of mass communication.

Two chapters then directly address transatlantic media connections. Darrell Newton examines the transatlantic relationship between the BBC, ABC Radio and issues of national identity, specifically a 1955 programme in which discussions of immigration and its effect upon the imagined communities of America and Britain were compared. This episode of *America's Town Meeting of the Air: Minority Problems in our Metropolitan Areas* was broadcast on BBC radio in February 1955 and focused on the issue of growing West Indian populations in London and the post-war surge of Puerto Ricans into New York. Meanwhile, Jean Chalaby studies the television format trade in the 1950s, tracing its origins, uncovering the world's first deals and identifying the first television formats that aired in the UK, France, Spain and Italy. He demonstrates that the key principles of the television format trade were established by the early 1950s and that the trade was an Anglo-American invention.

Finally, Kristin Skoog and Alexander Badenoch turn their attention to the International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT). As the authors argue, the IAWRT's efforts to link prominent women broadcasters over borders make them an ideal point of entry for transnational histories of broadcasting in the 1950s. Skoog and Badenoch explore the ways in which the women negotiated their various identities as women, as professional broadcasters, and as representatives of broadcasting organisations. The authors also explore the programming ideas and practices these women shared.

We hope this collection will assist in clarifying the relationships between different national media systems during the 1950s, although at the same time we are aware that much more work is needed before we can develop a firmer grasp of these relationships. This kind of work not only enriches our understanding of the past, but also acts as corrective to over-hasty assumptions about the novelty of recent developments in global communications.

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Notes

[1] Paddy Scannell, *Media and Communication* (London: Sage, 2007); John B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity. A Social Theory of the Media* (Cambridge, Polity, 1995).

[2] For a useful introduction to textual analysis within a transatlantic context, see Glen Creeber ed., *The Television Genre Book* (3rd ed. London: BFI, 2015), and Toby Miller ed., *Television Studies* (London: BFI, 2002). The international focus of contemporary media studies is also exemplified in James Curran, *Media and Society* (5th ed. London: Bloomsbury, 2010), and Ib Bondebjerg and Peter Golding eds., *European Culture and the Media* (Bristol: Intellect, 2004). A leading journal in the field, *Media, Culture and Society,* publishes material reflecting this approach.

[3] James Curran, 'Media and the making of British society, c. 1700-2000', *Media History* 8, no. 2 (2002): 135-55.

[4] Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002); Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[5] Joad Raymond, 'Newspapers: a national or international phenomenon?' *Media History* 18, nos. 3&4 (2012): 256.

[6] The literature on this topic is extensive and growing. A sense of the extent of international interactions in the media of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries can be gleaned from the following: Denis Cryle and Chandrika Kaul, 'The Empire Press Union and the expansion of Imperial air services 1909-1939, with special reference to Australia, New Zealand and India', *Media History* 15, no. 11 (2009): 17-30; Dwayne R. Winseck and Robert M. Pike, 'The global media and the empire of liberal internationalism, circa 1910-1930.' *Media History* 15, no. 9 (2009): 31-54; Joel H. Weiner, *The Americanization of the British Press, 1830s-1914: Speed in the Age of Transatlantic Journalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Chandrika Kaul ed. *Media and the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Simon Potter, *Broadcasting Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Chandrika Kaul, *Communications, Media and the Imperial Experience: Britain and India in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[7] Jonathan Silberstein-Loeb, *The International Distribution of News: The Associated Press, Press Association and Reuters, 1848-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Michael A. Krysko, *American Radio in China: International Encounters with Technology and Communications, 1919-41* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Potter, *Broadcasting Empire.*

[8] For example: Martin A. Doherty, *Nazi Wireless Propaganda: Lord Haw-Haw and British Public Opinion in the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Thomas Hajkowski, *The BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922-53* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

[9] Jeffrey Richards, *Cinema and Radio in Britain and America, 1920-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

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[13] Harold Macmillan, 20 July 1957, quoted in Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London: Abacus, 2006), 80.

[14] Michele Hilmes, *Network Nations: A Transnational History of British and American Broadcasting* (London: Routledge, 2012), 3.

[15] See, for example, Valerie Camporesi, *The BBC and American Broadcasting 1922-1954* (Fucecchio: European Press Academic Publishing, 2000); Su Holmes, *Entertaining Television: The BBC and Popular Television Culture in the 1950s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); Tom O'Malley, '"Typically anti-American"? The labour movement, America and broadcasting in Britain, from Beveridge to Pilkington, 1949-62', in Wiener and Hampton eds., *Anglo-American Media Interactions,* 234-53.

[16] Guy Ortolano, *The Two Cultures Controversy: Science, Literature and Cultural Politics in Post-war Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

CHAPTER TWO

NOW THE WAR IS OVER:
NEGOTIATING THE BBC'S WARTIME
LEGACY IN POST-WAR BRITAIN

SIÂN NICHOLAS

Introduction

The achievements of the wartime BBC are today so well-known as to have attained the status of myth. Yet it is a curious fact that once VE-Day was over the most immediate priority of the Corporation appears to have been largely to distance itself as fast as possible from many of its most vaunted wartime successes. This distancing was evident in debates about the wartime and post-war function of broadcasting and about the BBC's own continued monopoly status, and was embodied above all in the much-heralded launch of the BBC Third Programme a year after the end of the war, a development presented in large part as a specific *repudiation* of the more populist approach on which so much of the wartime BBC's achievement arguably rested.

This chapter seeks, therefore, to explore the history of British broadcasting in the short transitional period between the end of the Second World War and the shift to full post-war peace-time broadcasting, with particular reference to this unexpectedly critical response to the BBC's wartime record. This critical stance, which can be seen from both outside and from within the highest echelons of the BBC, begs several questions about the impact of the war on post-war British broadcasting. Were the war years, in fact, quite the watershed in the history of the BBC that is usually suggested? How was the legacy of the war for British broadcasting addressed and understood by British broadcasters and critics at the time? Why, in particular, did so many broadcasters, administrators and commentators regard the BBC's wartime record not as the Corporation's own 'Finest Hour', but an embarrassing discontinuity, even a regression,

from its core public service aims? As this chapter will demonstrate, post-war judgments on the BBC's wartime record were considerably more contested than is typically presented. However, this contested memory would play its own significant, if not always predictable, role in the shaping of broadcasting in 1950s Britain.

The BBC at War

According to the conventional narrative, during the Second World War the BBC broke with its past to inform, educate and entertain on a level and in a manner never previously attempted, at a time when all three core aims were of equal and fundamental importance, not just to their audiences but to the nation and to the war effort as a whole.[1] The 1930s had been not so much the 'Golden Age of Wireless' of popular memory but instead were widely regarded, including by some within the BBC itself, as a period of increasing sterility, a time in which the experimental ardour of the BBC's early years was replaced by institutional complacency and creative conformity, exemplified in the architectural and administrative behemoth that was Broadcasting House (opened in 1934).[2] However, when war broke out in September 1939, after a hesitant start in which it appeared the BBC might come under the control of government or that broadcasting might even be suspended altogether, the Corporation succeeded in broadening its scope and widening its popular appeal to become part of the very fabric of wartime life, with such programmes as the Nine O'Clock News, *ITMA* and *The Brains Trust* essential elements of wartime national popular culture.[3]

Several key developments marked out wartime broadcasting from the BBC's pre-war broadcasting culture. The emergency BBC Home Service, launched on Friday 1 September, two days before war was actually declared, offered an element of continuity with the inter-war National and Regional Programmes, providing a broadly varied, if at first highly restricted, schedule of programmes to a nation that everyone had expected to be subject to immediate and massive aerial attack. However, the addition of the BBC Forces Programme on 7 January 1940 represented both a dramatic break with the classic Reithian principles of 'mixed' scheduling and a frankly revolutionary acknowledgement by the BBC that one essential function of radio in wartime had to be to provide a high proportion of light entertainment and light background listening, something Sir John Reith, the BBC's first and most influential Director General, had considered anathema, preferring to privilege the broadcast needs of the discerning wireless listener-in.[4] The needs of wartime

established BBC news from early morning until midnight as a part of daily broadcasting life, rendering obsolete the pre-war sanctions on broadcast news that had hitherto restricted BBC news to no more than a handful of evening bulletins collated from the news wires and enlivened by occasional eyewitness recordings.[5] The self-conscious adoption of more informal presentation styles and the introduction of a wider range of broadcast voices both in terms of class and regional diversity made the BBC sound more representative of its audience than ever before, while the dramatically enhanced role accorded BBC Listener Research allowed the Corporation to become more knowledgeable about, and responsive to, that audience than ever before. Some areas of BBC output clearly struggled under wartime conditions: drama, for instance, was hamstrung by the narrowness of the pool of available actors, and classical music output tended to adopt a more conventional and self-consciously 'British' repertoire.[6] However, in other areas of broadcasting the war appears creatively to have been a liberation, with feature programmes, documentary features and outside broadcasting, notably in the field of war reporting, above all pushing the boundaries of what had previously been considered possible.[7]

Above all, during the war the BBC achieved the potential as a force for national unity and a common national culture that Reith had always claimed for it. That it did so by giving listeners far more of what they wanted as opposed to what its listeners *ought* to want was the wartime 'Reithian' paradox. Meanwhile, beyond the home front, another paradox: the BBC's wartime overseas services, the most heavily controlled element of the BBC's entire wartime output, gained an unprecedented reputation for telling the truth to the nations of occupied Europe and beyond.[8]

For Maurice Gorham, former editor of the *Radio Times* and wartime director of the BBC's North American services, 'the war saved the BBC from itself.'[9] However, not everyone was happy. Throughout the war the BBC was routinely pilloried in the press for the condescension of its talks output, the lameness of its Variety programmes, or the sheer unnecessariness, as they saw it, of its news bulletins.[10] It was criticised in Parliament for its alleged variously left or right-wing leanings. It was called to account by its own Board of Governors, most infamously for the alleged excessive sentimentality of Vera Lynn's wartime record request programme.[11] And wartime BBC Listener Research reports demonstrate that day-to-day criticism of the broadcast programme was part of wartime life just as much as it had been in the 1930s.[12] But even before the war was over siren voices were beginning to question the *overall* achievement of the wartime BBC. In February 1945, for instance, on Deputy Prime

Minister Clement Attlee's announcement that the renewal of the BBC Charter, due in 1946, was now under government consideration, a *Times* leader paid a strikingly back-handed tribute: recollecting 'the very high standard and reputation which the BBC had undoubtedly achieved before the war', it invited readers to 'give full weight in the war-time record to the fact that, whatever faults of judgment, choice or presentation there many have been in the home programmes, the BBC has been able and privileged … to operate both as a midwife and a nurse of European liberation'.[13] Once the war was over, these voices would gain in volume.

Immediate Post-War Responses

Indeed, once the war was over, public tributes to the wartime BBC seem remarkably few and far between. It is perhaps not surprising that the popular press, still hamstrung by stringent newsprint rationing, chose not to devote any of its precious space to praise of what was now a significant rival in the field of news.[14] More surprising is how the commentariat began lining up to damn the wartime BBC with faint praise: as early as December 1944, for instance, Cyril Connelly was decrying the wartime BBC's mediocrity in *Horizon*.[15] Even *The Listener*'s own radio critics took a turn. Writing in the issue published in the week of VE Day, Martin Armstrong, their Critic of the Spoken Word, asserted that 'war is bad for broadcasting. Stations are cut down, much time is consumed by repetitive outpourings of News, and worse still, there is a disproportionate supply of light entertainment'.[16] The following week its drama critic Philip Hope-Wallace went rather further:

> To mere broadcastings of other people's enjoyments, to the amateur croonings of works-managers daughters, to all tipsy-sentimental idiot-nostalgic patter, to these and a thousand other feeblenesses we can no longer extend the justification that somewhere they might be helping someone to forget the war for a few minutes.[17]

In fact in the whole second half of 1945 and into 1946 the only positive mentions of the war in the BBC's own flagship journal were a couple of printed letters praising the efforts of the BBC war correspondents[18] and publicity for two official tributes to the BBC's European services from the governments and people of Denmark and Holland. Thus in April 1946 the President of the Danish Radio Council, presenting a vase of Copenhagen porcelain to the Corporation, noted how 'The BBC became our national radio and we could not have wished for a better one' and that it was '[t]he only gleam of light during that dark time'.[19] A month later, the Prime

Minister of the Netherlands, at a dinner in Holland given in honour of BBC Director General William Haley (who this time received a Delft plate), voiced 'our gratitude to the BBC for all it did for us during the war …. The voice of the BBC was for us the living proof of courage and toughness … The whole of our nation lived in the hope given by these broadcasts'.[20]

The subsequent Parliamentary debates over the future of the BBC, notably the proposal for a new inquiry into broadcasting before the next charter renewal, also took a distinctly critical line towards the BBC and its future role. Opening the debate on the proposed inquiry on 16 July 1946, James Henderson-Stewart MP, leader of the National Liberals, offered a degree of praise for the wartime BBC, though this again noticeably focused on the BBC's overseas, rather than home, wartime services:

> For the staff of the B.B.C. itself, particularly its higher executives, I must profess the most profound admiration ... When I think of their behaviour during the war, when their machine was disorganised, their office was bombed, their staff and materials cut in all directions, then I say, frankly, that I stand amazed at the brilliance of their achievements. Nor are we … alone in our appreciation of that wartime achievement. The voice of the B.B.C. mercifully rang out far beyond our shores during those years of struggle, and brought comfort and strength to millions of suffering men and women in all parts of Europe and beyond. For a long time, it was the only clear and clean voice on the air of Europe.[21]

However, with the war very much still on people's minds, much of the debate focused on the propaganda role of radio, and the role, responsibilities and potential dangers of a monopoly broadcast service going forward into the peace. While some speakers went out of their way to praise aspects of the BBC's performance and governance, notably former BBC Governor Sir Ian Fraser, the debate was perhaps most striking for the concerns expressed about the power of radio itself ('an agency of the mind, which, potentially at least, can ennoble or utterly destroy the social life of mankind'), as well as the retention of elements of wartime government influence over the BBC ('a polite authoritative rule' as Henderson-Stewart put it), to which the BBC's monopoly status was widely considered to be linked.[22] Meanwhile, former wartime Minister of Information Brendan Bracken took the opportunity in the debate to praise what he claimed was the significantly higher standard of American radio under its sponsorship-based funding model[23] - a particularly low blow given the longstanding 'culture wars' between British and American broadcasters.[24]

Within the BBC too, any self-congratulation at its wartime record appeared tempered with self-doubt. Morale was low across much of the Corporation, and there was an exodus of senior wartime production staff, including Howard Marshall, lately of the War Reporting Unit, and John Watt, wartime Director of Variety and one of those perhaps most responsible of all for the BBC's wartime populist successes.[25] In the flurry of memoirs published by both current and former BBC staffers in the late 1940s it is striking how downbeat are their reflections on the war and its aftermath, how strong their abiding sense of deflation and frustration. Actor, compère and former news announcer Wilfred Pickles, for instance, described how much the blatant wartime factory propaganda he broadcast in the role of 'Billy Welcome' had depressed and embarrassed him at the time, while former announcer Joseph MacLeod went further and deplored the poor morale, administrative sclerosis and 'contempt of the masses' that he felt had undermined BBC programme makers throughout the war.[26] Val Gielgud, wartime Director of Features and Drama, meanwhile derided the wartime serial dramas whose production he had overseen as 'the flattery of the ego of the common man'.[27]

The BBC's wartime record was thus, within barely a year of the end of the war, under both internal and external revision. The BBC's own wartime success as a propaganda medium appeared in retrospect to have set a very dangerous precedent. As the *BBC Year Book 1946* noted: 'with the end of the war a whole new phase of broadcasting, we may hope, has come to an end; that phase in which deliberately false and misleading propaganda has been loosed upon the world with the express purpose of enslaving public opinion and causing strife among nations'. The BBC may have been on the side of the angels in this instance, but the malign power of broadcasting in this context was too strong to be ignored. Meanwhile, with '[i]ntellectual stimulus and refreshment from the BBC … as rare as good wine in recent years',[28] the question of 'restoring' quality to broadcasting was seen by its recently appointed Director General William Haley as the BBC's principal task for the peace. Both these concerns in turn played their part in the growing debate around the BBC's post-war monopoly status. While the BBC's original broadcasting monopoly had been a largely regulatory response to particular circumstances, and its wartime monopoly generally accepted as the best possible way to unite a nation during a national emergency, the appropriateness of that monopoly now the war was over and once normal governance was resumed was very much in commentators' and politicians' minds.

Peace-Time Broadcasting

The rejection by the BBC hierarchy of the wartime populist turn was not immediately evident. True, the first two peacetime services, the Home Service and the Light Programme, came on stream with almost indecent haste on 29 July 1945. But they broadly followed the wartime demarcation of content between the Home Service and Forces Programme (General Forces Programme from 1944), and did not of themselves represent a significant change. The critics were not impressed: Philip Hope-Wallace, writing in *The Listener* on the first anniversary of the shift to the peacetime service, summed it up succinctly as 'Different twiddle, same old twaddle'.[29]

Substantial elements of the BBC's wartime variety and light music output thus remained on the new Light Programme. *Music While You Work* and *Workers' Playtime* retained their positions as key elements of the daytime schedule. Of other wartime favourites, *Hi Gang!*, first broadcast in 1940 and starring London-based American comedians Vic Oliver, Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyons, continued through the 1940s. *Desert Islands Discs*, launched on the Forces Programme in 1942, embedded itself into the BBC's post-war schedule. On the Home Service, *Saturday Night Theatre*, first broadcast in 1943, remained a cornerstone of the BBC's post-war popular drama output, as did *Appointment with Fear*, first broadcast in 1943, on the Light Programme. The wartime consumer advice programme *Can I Help You?* continued into the peace, and wartime programmes aimed at women such as *Calling all Women* and *The Housewife in Wartime* provided the inspiration for the new *Woman's Hour* from 1946. *ITMA*, of which more later, was retained on the Home Service as a mark of its special status, though it was rebroadcast afterwards on the Light Programme.

Other wartime successes also continued in a 'demilitarised' format. *Merry-Go-Round* (1944-46), became one of the great early peacetime Light Programme successes, outstripping even the Nine O'Clock News, against which it was scheduled on Friday nights. Its rotating fictional military base settings had featured RAF station Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh, with former *Band Waggon* star and now Flight-Lieutenant Richard Murdoch as the station commander and Wing Commander Kenneth Horne, late of ENSA, as his slow-witted deputy; the Royal Navy ship HMS Waterlogged, with Sub-Lieutenant Eric Barker; and 'Studio Stand Easy' with Sergeant Charlie Chester. All three now reappeared in peacetime with the same casts but their locations now demobilised. The record request programme *Forces' Favourites* remained in adapted form

as *Family Favourites*. Pre-war favourites such as *In Town Tonight* that had successfully met the challenge of the war years also made the transition once more into peacetime broadcasting.

Much of this output was very popular with listeners. However, Maurice Gorham, Director of the new Light Programme, found himself hamstrung by the attitude of senior colleagues. His introduction into the schedule of the popular wartime BBC Overseas Service series *The Robinson Family*, the BBC's first attempt at a family serial drama, was met with hostility from Director of Drama Val Gielgud on the grounds that 'he didn't mind it going out overseas but he wasn't going to degrade his standard by having it heard at home'. Gielgud was in this instance overruled by Haley, but Haley himself was so alarmed by the popularity of *Family Favourites*, which received 17,000 requests in its first week alone, that he imposed a series of new restrictions on record request programmes.[30]

The Third Programme 1946

Hopes for a 'restored' BBC were placed above all on the first major new development of the peacetime Corporation, the launch of the BBC Third Programme. This service, which had been in development since at least 1943, had been adopted with enthusiasm, and it was subsequently championed by William Haley after his appointment as BBC Director General in 1944. Haley had a vision of broadcasting almost as formidable as Reith's, and saw in the Third Programme the means to restore to British airwaves that serious and intellectually challenging broadcast content which the war had so regrettably driven away, albeit by abandoning the principle of 'mixed' broadcasting that Reith had so long championed.[31] It would complete the pattern of the BBC's post-war broadcasting for listeners in the UK, serving as the apex of Haley's famous 'cultural pyramid', with the Home Service and Light Programme forming the middle and the base respectively.[32] It would restore quality to music broadcasts; it would recapture the initiative in serious drama; it would provide intellectual stimulus. It would justify the BBC's monopoly.

The Third Programme commenced broadcasting on 29 September 1946. A special edition of *The Listener* described the target audience for the new programme: 'the alert and receptive listener, the listener who is willing first of all to make an effort in selection and then to meet the performer half way by giving his whole attention to what is being broadcast'.[33] And the new service explicitly turned away from many of the innovations brought by wartime. It would have no fixed daily schedule, so