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## Review: *Hitler's Radio War* by Roder Tidy

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## **Hitler's Radio War**

Roger Tidy

London, Robert Hale, 2011

240 pp., illus., appendix, bibliography, and index, £ 20.00 (hardcover)

Roger Tidy's book, *Hitler's Radio War*, desperately needs a subtitle. As it stands, it is rather broad and non-descriptive. But what would a fitting subtitle read like? Maybe it could read "The Nazi Foreign Broadcasts to Great Britain and Other Select Countries" or possibly "Lord Haw-Haw, Axis Sally and Other International Nazi Radio Traitors?" The difficulty of deciding on a clear subtitle points to one of the most significant weaknesses of Tidy's study. While it recounts many of the overt and covert international radio stations by Hitler's Germany during World War II and discusses numerous foreign radio broadcasters employed by the Nazis in great detail, the book lacks a clear focus and argument which tie the narrative together.

Tidy's book is composed of twenty-seven chapters which discuss many of the well-known as well as lesser-known short- and medium wave radio stations set up by Hitler's propaganda ministry during the war intended to manipulate public opinion abroad and garner support for the Nazi cause. More than half of the book focuses on radio stations targeting England and other countries in the British Isles. Each of the chapters deals extensively with the foreign radio personalities who aided Nazi Germany in these endeavors. Not surprisingly, William Joyce, better known as the infamous "Lord Haw-Haw," plays a prominent role in these early chapters as do other foreign broadcasters of the "Germany Calling" program. All of these radio traitors, even the less significant ones, are introduced to the reader via short biographical sketches. While this provides intriguing insights into the circuitous routes which led many foreigners to throw in their lot with Nazi authorities, it also means that some chapters deteriorate into little more than lists of short biographies without much interpretation and analysis. Aside from the "Germany Calling" program, Tidy covers the rise of the New British Broadcasting Station and Radio National as well as broadcasts aimed at Irish, Scottish and Welsh audiences in the first part of his study.

In the second half, the book broadens its perspective by including Nazi international broadcasts to other parts of the world as well as programs directed at the Allied troops especially towards the end of the war. It is not clear what drives the selection of the specific programs, and most are discussed in a rather cursory manner. In this fashion, the reader learns about the *Free India Radio* and the *Free Moslem Radio* as well as numerous other programs directed at Arab, South African (Afrikaans) and South American audiences—all in one chapter (Chapter 17). Next follow short descriptions of programs aimed at Croat, Greek and—via short-wave—American audiences. Nazi battle radio stations for Allied soldiers and seductive female radio personalities such as Axis Sally and Mary of Arnhem close the sweep of international Nazi radio stations and programs presented in the book.

From an academic perspective, there is not much new in this book. Tidy limits himself to British archives only and does not include any German-language publications in his analysis. Most of the topics he discusses have been covered in previous publications. There are numerous studies on William Joyce, for example, and Hitler's international radio programs to most parts of the world have been discussed extensively in other studies, as Tidy's endnotes and bibliography highlight as well. Recent books, such as

Jeffrey Herf's *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (2009), have covered even the less familiar aspects of these propaganda efforts by Hitler's Germany. In addition, the organization of Tidy's book is often weak or poorly conceived. Many of the chapters are rather brief, some as short as three or four pages, with minimal endnotes and documentation. Fewer, more substantial and more heavily documented chapters would certainly have strengthened this study.

There might well be a niche market for this study, however, especially for lay readers unfamiliar with this topic and interested in biographical sketches and anecdotal information. Tidy knows his topic well and frequently inserts intriguing historical and biographical details. Combine this with the general intrigue and mystique surrounding everything which has to do with Hitler and Nazi Germany, and this book might well out-sell some of its more thoroughly researched, as well as more analytical and clearly focused, academic rivals.

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