

# CONNECTED HISTORIES OF THE BBC: A UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX RESEARCH PROJECT, FUNDED BY THE AHRC.

**THE BBC AND THE COLD WAR** is a new digital resource that has been launched to coincide with the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9th November 1989. Three decades on, it is now possible to see this event, and the wider collapse of Soviet communism, in context and to examine the role of the BBC in mapping the Cold War conflict for audiences around the world.

Drawing on newly-commissioned interviews and using previously unreleased testimony from the BBC Oral History Collection **THE BBC AND THE COLD WAR** (part of the *100 Voices that Made the BBC* anthology) tells the behind-the-scenes story of how some of the most pivotal events of the Twentieth Century were reported: from the emergence of the Cold War in the late 1940s and the challenges of broadcasting over the Iron Curtain, through the threat of mutually assured destruction and the nuclear arms race, to the conflicts and uprisings that eventually led to the collapse of the Soviet system.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

- **Eugeniusz Smolar**, formerly Head of the BBC Polish Section, talks candidly in a new interview about the remarkable role the BBC played in reporting the Polish Solidarity movement, providing a vital link between events inside Poland and the outside world.
- How an **IBM computer**, gifted to the Polish Academy of Science, had an open telephone line to the IBM office in Vienna, and was used to help send information about conditions inside Poland to news outlets in the West after the imposition of Martial Law in Poland in 1981.
- How the BBC banned its own film about the effects of a thermonuclear attack on Britain: *The War Game*. The film, which was subsequently given a limited cinema release, won the 1967 Oscar for best documentary. Newly released, first-hand accounts from the BBC Oral History Collection reveal the inside story of collusion between the BBC and the government to censor the programme.
- How the wartime **BBC German Service** announced the contents of the German military newspapers before they had been read, or even printed.



## NEWS RELEASE NOVEMBER 2019

**THE BBC HAS OPENED UP ITS ARCHIVES, TO EXPLORE THE BBC'S ROLE DURING THE COLD WAR:**

<https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/100-voices/coldwar>

## PROJECT

The **100 Voices that Made the BBC** series is part of the AHRC-funded **Connected Histories of the BBC** project based at the University of Sussex and running from 2017 to 2021. For background, see:

<https://connectedhistoriesofthebbc.org/>

Image: Olive Shapley (producer) with Mrs Emerson in the colliery village of Craghead, County Durham BBC North Region  
01/01/1939

- How the women of **Greenham Common** established the most iconic nuclear protest in British history, to protest against the arrival of nuclear-tipped US cruise missiles.
- The creation of the **BBC Monitoring Service** as part of the BBC External Services (World Service) and the invaluable information it provided for the broadcasting, diplomatic and intelligence work of both the BBC and the British government.
- In new interviews, commissioned especially for this edition of *100 Voices that made the BBC*, Bridget Kendall, former BBC Correspondent in Moscow, and Elisabeth Robson-Elliott, the former Head of the BBC Russian Service give first-hand accounts of the **fall of the Berlin wall in 1989**, the failed Moscow coup in 1991, and the role of broadcasting during the Cold War.
- How the Stasi in East Germany kept a close eye on **the BBC's East Zone Programme (EZP)**, believing it to be a deliberate attempt to encourage listeners to become dependent on western news sources
- Oral history archive interviews with the Head of the BBC Hungarian Section, Ferenc Rentoul, and others, redefine our understanding of the role broadcasting played during the **Hungarian uprising**.
- How **Prime Minister Anthony Eden** unsuccessfully attempted to take control of the BBC during the 1956 Suez crisis, out of his frustration at its reporting of events.
- The **descent of the Iron Curtain** across continental Europe after the Second World War ensured the BBC's External Services to Europe would have a continuing and vital role to play in shaping the political and cultural experience of the Cold War.

## AUTHORS:

The website was curated and written by Alban Webb, University of Sussex, with additional material by Margaretta Jolly, University of Sussex, Will Studdert, Humboldt University, and John Escolme, BBC.

## PREVIOUS WEBSITES

in the **100 Voices that Made the BBC** series can be found at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/100-voices>

They include websites about The Second World War; British identity, the history of elections broadcasting, the birth of television, and the reinvention of radio in the 1960s.

## SHARE YOUR MEMORIES:

There is also a section called 'Share Your Memories' where you can upload your own thoughts and recollections as a viewer and listener.

## CONTACT

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