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 thermo-
nuclear 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.
• 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-Elliot, 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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