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THE HISTORY OF BROADCASTING
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM
Vbl 3
VOLUME III

THE WAR OF WORDS

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stated diplomatically: 'Some listeners probably find them [the interruptions] amusing while others may be annoyed by them. We have already taken steps to reduce the effect of the interference, but should it become more troublesome we shall have to consider further and more drastic measures.'¹ Such measures did not prove necessary. The voice was stilled. The war continued.

There were many other 'intelligence' aspects of war-time broadcasting which were even more unfamiliar to British listeners in their homes. They did not know, for example, of the important contribution made by the BBC to the development of the 'Meaconing system'—relaying an enemy station through a BBC transmitter in order to confuse enemy aircraft seeking to use it for direction finding.² Lindemann wrote to Churchill in August 1940 of the possibility of sacrificing the home wireless for this purpose, but, though this supreme sacrifice was never made, the loan of a Daventry transmitter and the use of the pre-war television transmitter at Alexandra Palace for 'Domino' jamming of German aircraft range-finding proved highly successful in 1941.³ The BBC's Monitoring Service was able also to collect invaluable information about the German morse service and Hellschreiber system—notification to the German Press of texts, releases, and censorship stops—and to tap telephone as well as broadcasting circuits.⁴ Information collected from such sources had to be used, of course, with the greatest discretion, particularly as far as 'white' broadcasting was concerned.⁵ Developments in electronics and missile technology since 1945, like developments since then in 'psychological warfare', enhance rather than detract from the significance of what happened in the radio war between 1939 and 1945. The war, we now realize, offered a foretaste of bigger things to come.

¹ *The Times*, 16 Oct. 1941.

² For the first Meacons, see Price, *op. cit.*, pp. 34–5.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 48–9.

⁴ Monitoring of the DNB Hellschreiber service began on 23 Oct. 1941, was suspended on 1 Nov. 1941, and restarted in December. For morse, see 'BBC Monitoring Service, *Monthly Progress Report*, March, April 1942. The BBC itself ran a weekly morse service from August 1940 onwards, giving details of its regional programmes one week in advance. Morse news services for Europe were introduced in March 1942 after somewhat difficult negotiations with the Post Office.

⁵ The 'black' stations had a differential advantage not only over the BBC but over RRG.