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The Four Minute Men: Progenitors of Today's Influencers

Darlene W. Natale

Abstract

The Four Minute Men (4MM) was a national volunteer group of over 75,000 speakers during World War I who rehearsed war-related presentations on behalf of the federal government targeted their home communities (Creel, 1924). They served the U.S. government through the Committee on Public Information and helped influence U.S. citizens to register for the draft, fund the war, and perform other patriotic duties through the power of their word-of-mouth speeches given between film reels in movie theaters. The success of this program resulted from the direct delivery of messages to audiences. This paper proposes that the 4MM speakers affected their communities in a manner the government, NGOs, and agencies could not because they delivered trustworthy word-of-mouth messages directly to their audiences. Twenty-first century influencers have adopted the 4MM game plan of sidestepping traditional media channels by using eWord-of-Mouth messaging hallmarked with trustworthiness to motivate audiences. Successful social media influencers have the power to reach and impact their followers in brief posts that individuals consume in seconds.

The U.S. government spent just over \$101,000 to reach 11 million people and help convince the U.S. pacifist population to sign-up for the draft, buy Liberty bonds, conserve food, support the Red Cross, and perform other patriotic duties using a word-of-mouth (WOM) innovation designed for volunteer speakers. Designated as the Four Minute Men (4MM), a homage to the patriotic men of the Revolutionary War era, these speakers bypassed mass media and homed in on their audiences using influence based in trust and credibility. They were named the Four Minute Men for the four-minute time slot available between the film reel changes in WWI-era movie theaters.

“The truth—that is the kernel of the Messages of the Four Minute Men. Those who do not believe should not attempt to convince others,” the 4MM were advised regarding their speeches about war. (News Bulletin C, p.1). Jowett & O’Donnell (2015) defined persuasion

as a process of influence: “A persuasive message has a point of view or desired behavior for the recipient to adopt in a voluntary fashion” (p. 37). That was the role of the 4MM, and social media influencers (SMI) today operate in much the same way: reaching out to their online community using eWOM and suggesting a path. Social media influencers (SMIs) are “everyday, ordinary Internet users who accumulate a relatively large following on blogs and social media” (Abidin, 2021, p.1). Audiences see influencers as real people with whom they have a relationship “and are therefore seen as being more trustworthy to their followers. People are more likely to take referrals from people they trust. This makes influencers valuable to brands.” (Steele, J. 2020) Both the twentieth century and twenty-first century influencers found their success by circumventing traditional media channels and establishing effective word-of-mouth communication.

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This paper submits that social media influencers are the contemporary 4MM who wield influence in their communities with the potential to impact marketing on a remarkable scale using direct messaging rather than traditional media. For example, a typical WWI-era mass marketing effort may have included a poster emblazoned with threatening images of Huns or of Uncle Sam seemingly pointing directly at the viewer. However, the 4MM innovation brought their word-of-mouth messages directly to their audiences in the intimate setting of silent movie houses across America in the four minutes between changing film reels. This innovation, led by known, trustworthy individuals, was a marketing bonanza for the U.S. government for recruiting and for selling bonds to fund World War I. This new strategy was different from the German strategy used at the time. “Where the German junkers have dealt in falsehoods and misrepresentation to keep their people in ignorance, the Four ‘Minutes’ Men have made the truth the strength of their appeal to and influence upon the American people.” (*San Francisco Examiner*, 1918, p. 20).

Social media influencers create brief messages that exert tremendous power over their audiences using their eWord-of-Mouth messaging on a variety of social media networks. Social media influencers are “independent third-party endorser(s) who shape audience attitudes through large followings on blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media.” (Freberg et al., n.d.). According to clicklaboratory, the top characteristics of these influences are: trustworthiness; respected; impactful; engaging; and direct. They are also able to grow audiences. (Mains, 2023, p. 5). These traits are remarkably like those of the 4MM. Mains wrote that good influencers must have a combination of characteristics including authenticity and relatability (p. 6). Other studies (Jung & Im) cite trustworthiness as a top characteristic of an influencer.

Klaus-Peter Wiedmann and Walter von Mettenheim studied the relevance of social media influencer requirements. “The results show that the most important requirement is trustworthiness followed by attractiveness; surprisingly, the relevance of expertise is virtually nil” (p.707). Weidman and von Mettenheim reviewed previous studies of influencer marketing using the Source-Credibility Model (p. 716). Source credibility proposes that receivers are more likely to be persuaded when the source seems credible. Credible sources keep message receivers from generating counter-arguments (Sternthal et al., 1978, p. 307). Hovland et al. wrote in 1953 that the “perceived expertness and trustworthiness of the communicator may determine the credence given them” (p.20). The 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer found

consumers are “Buying on Trust” (pp. 8-9) and suggest using influencers to breakthrough to the 18-34 age group where 63% trust influencers more than brands (p. 22). Three of four consumers now avoid advertising, and 63% of brands use trusted influencers to break through (Edelman, 2019).

Influencer compensation is calculated based on level of influence and number of followers. Campbell & Farrell (2020) used metrics from the Association of National Advertisers and Launchmetrics to define five categories of influencers from celebrity to nano. The nano-influencer will have up to 10,000 followers, micro-influencer up to 100,000 followers and macro-influencers between 100,000 and a million followers. (p.4) The 4MM performed in much the same capacity as 21st-century influencers, speaking for the product or cause, except their remuneration was patriotic fulfillment and an ego boost – not dollars and products or merchandise.

The Milieu that fostered the creation of the 4MM

America maintained its neutral stance as the European war commenced in 1914; however, the May 1915 sinking of the British R.M.S. *Lusitania* ocean liner roused patriotism and temper disinterest in the war because more than a hundred Americans were among the 1,191 lost in the U-boat attack (National Museums of Liverpool, n.d.). Then, the February revelation of the Zimmerman cable that showed Germany’s attempt to lure Mexico into a war against the United States (*The New York Times*, 1917) further ignited American fears.

German hostility increased the groundswell of support and a sense of the inevitability of war and “found every patriotic citizen eager to see his personal line of duty, and his opportunity for service to the country” (The Four Minute Men of Chicago, 1919, p. 10). A group of men meeting at Chicago’s exclusive lakefront Saddle & Cycle Club in March of 1917 were motivated to discuss the importance of “developing sentiment” for patriotic service for each citizen as proposed in Oregon Senator George Chamberlain’s universal service bill (*New York Times*, 1917). The men, including a young Chicago millionaire Donald M. Ryerson, Senator Medill McCormick, and William McCormick Blair, discussed the impact of patriotic speeches and settled on making addresses in movie theaters (The Four Minute Men of Chicago, 1919). Ryerson took the idea home and fleshed it out, inspired by the Revolutionary War’s “Minute Men” (*Chicago Tribune*, 1917, p.66).

Ryerson made an experimental four-minute speech at the Strand Theater in Chicago on March 31, 1917, expressing patriotism and support for the Chamberlain

bill. A few days later, he met with a group of men and established the structure of the 4MM organization and named officers. Ryerson would serve as president, Stephen Gardner, George R. Jones, and Keith J. Evans respectively as treasurer, secretary, and assistant secretary (Four Minute Men of Chicago, 1919).

World tensions continued to escalate, and in a joint session of Congress on April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson told the body that the German government claimed they would use their “submarines to sink every vessel that sought to either approach the ports of Great Britain and Ireland or the Western coasts of Europe or any other ports controlled by the enemies of Germany within the Mediterranean” (Wilson, 1924, p.373). These bellicose German promises to target merchant vessels edged the U.S. closer to war. On April 4, two merchant vessels were sunk by the Germans, and the United States declared war on Germany two days later, on April 6, 1917 (Library of Congress).

When the United States entered the war, the Chamberlain Bill was set aside, and the draft was enacted as the “Universal Selective Service” (The Four Minute Men of Chicago, 1919). The 4MM met on April 9 and decided to take their idea to Washington. Ryerson decided to act when, on April 14, President Wilson announced the creation of the Committee on Public Information.

Creel Committee

Wilson, who had campaigned on neutrality, found himself in need of a messaging expert. He reached out to a newspaperman George Creel who was given a cabinet-level position to head the Committee on Public Information even before U.S. troops headed abroad (militaryhistorynow, 2014). The other members of the C.P.I. included the secretaries of State, War, and the Navy.

Creel wrote that the Committee practiced salesmanship and advertising. The best salesman who came to Creel’s office door was Ryerson, who decided to bring the 4MM plan he tested in Chicago to fruition. Creel recalled that in the first hours of the Committee, Ryerson approached him with his plan. “Fighting for breath, a handsome rosy-cheeked youth burst through the crowd and caught my lapel in a death grip” (Creel, 1920, p. 84). Creel wrote that Ryerson had tried out the scheme in Chicago, and the success of the venture had catapulted him on the train to Washington and to me” (p. 84). Creel wrote that had he had the time to truly consider the Ryerson plan, he may have decided against

it because of the difficulty in controlling speakers, given the government’s authority. However, within 10 minutes, Creel appointed Ryerson the national director of the Four Minute Men (Creel, 1920).

President Wilson understood the power of word-of-mouth communication and wrote to the 4MM on November 9, 1917, that “The spoken word may light the fires of passion and unreason or it may inspire to highest action and noblest sacrifice a nation of freemen. Upon you Four-Minute Men, who are charged with a special duty and enjoy a special privilege in the command of your audiences, will rest in a considerable degree, the task of arousing and informing the great body of our people” (The Four Minute Men of Chicago, p. 22).

Dounce (1917) compared the Four Minute Men to Paul Revere and the Minutemen of the American Revolution. “The Four Minute Men of to-day has taken on a share of the Revere job. He volunteers to tell the people of his neighborhood things the Government at Washington wants them to know about the war and its problems and their part in them” (Dounce, 1917, p. 40). Indeed, the speeches were formed from bulletins sent by the Committee on topics of national importance in the war effort.

Influencers

The University of Chicago Assistant Professor Bertram G. Nelson trained the fledgling group of Chicago 4MM to use their public speaking medium precisely to target their audience. Nelson was a member of the university’s Public Speaking Department. Because of his success with the Chicago group, Nelson was sent to Washington, D.C., to become associate director of the Four Minute Men in the C.P.I. (*The Daily Maroon*, 1918). The unpaid 4MM influencers sprang from the elucidations of Ryerson and gladly rehearsed and took the stage to convince their fellow citizens of the patriotic path needed.

“And let it be borne in mind that these were no haphazard talks by nondescripts, but the careful studied, and rehearsed efforts of the best men in each community, each speech aimed as a rifle is aimed and driving to its mark with the precision of a bullet” (Creel, 1920, p. 64). At the instigation of the Los Angeles Theater Owners organization, display ads were placed in newspapers urging patrons to show the 4MM the same respect you show to the flag and further requesting theatergoers should remain seated during the brief speeches. The talks had to be precisely four minutes, or reports were filed with the strict 4MM organization. Some theaters

would imperceptibly flash a theater light to alert the 4MM so they could wrap up on time (Four Minute Men News, 1918).

The “best men” of 4MM were generally trustworthy and well-spoken people, including attorneys, judges, businessmen, firefighters, mail carriers, and even a former professional baseball player. Their ability personally to deliver the government’s persuasive messages via word of mouth reached their audiences in a way the mass media of the era was unable.

Though the Committee only existed for ten months, the 4MM held vast sway over their neighbors. Audiences were affected by the messages of the 4MM and assimilated them. As with the social media influencers, the 4MM’s goals were to affect behavioral changes—compel people to buy something (Liberty Bonds) or to change behavior such as conserving food, donating to the Red Cross, enlisting in the military, or donating binoculars to the Navy – over 23,000 sets were donated to the navy (Four Minute Men News, p. 7). Similarly, 21st-century influencers, typically ordinary people, are often used to spread their message locally, regionally, nationally, or worldwide (Hu, Min, Han, & Liu 2020).

The speeches by the 4MM were controlled from the start by the national headquarters, which released bulletins. The speakers learned in the first bulletin that they were limited to four minutes. They were instructed to divide the speech into approximate parts: a 15-second opening, 45 seconds for the description, and 15 seconds for the final appeal. In addition, it was suggested that the speakers read newspapers for “new slogans” or “phraseology” (Larson & Mock, 1939) to improve their presentation techniques. The first bulletin and presentations by the 4MM were for the military draft May 12-21, 1917 (Creel, 1920). The 4MM organization reached out to the whole U.S. population and attempted to inspire even those who could not read or who were non-native English speakers. During WWI, over 17% of the population was foreign-born, and another 20% had one or both foreign-born parents (Cornebise, 1984). “Wilson fostered unity at home. A nation of 100 million people, sprung from many alien and antagonistic stocks, was welded into a fighting whole” (Lasswell, pp. 217, 218).

Ryerson leaves 4MM helm

A change came to the 4MM leadership when Ryerson accepted his commission as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy in June. Ryerson and about two hundred other officers in the naval reserves were ordered to Annapolis, Maryland,

for courses in seamanship, navigation, ordinance, and gunnery to begin on September 15 (*Chicago Tribune*, 1917, July 7). One of the original innovators of the 4MM, William McCormick Blair [Billy Blair] of Chicago, took over leadership of the national organization in Ryerson’s stead (Creel, 1920). In October of 1917, a national “Four Minute Men Day” was held to rouse the spirit for Liberty Loans (*Chicago Tribune*, 1917, October 14). With the ascension of Blair, the 4MM stayed the course working tirelessly for the CPI.

Following his three months of training, Ryerson was tapped to be an instructor at Annapolis until he was sent abroad for duty (*Chicago Tribune*, 1917, Nov.11). Ryerson’s patriotism went beyond the formation of the 4MM and serving in the Navy. He used \$85,000 of his own money to commission the Great Lakes Boat Building Company in Milwaukee to design a patrol boat to military specifications. The Navy commissioned it on August 1, 1917 to patrol the Great Lakes. At the conclusion of the war, the U.S.S. Sea Tag [Seatag] was returned to Ryerson (Naval History and Heritage Command, n.d.). President Wilson wrote this in a letter to Ryerson and his 4MM on November 18, 1917, expressing the gratitude of the U.S. government for their WOM presentations.

The 4MM were well organized and handled many speakers so efficiently that Creel requested that the organization take over the C.P.I.’s Division of Speaking. In September 1918, the 4MM reached virtually every U.S. community, including Alaska, *Porta* Rico, Cuba, the Philippines, and Hawaii (Independent Record, 2018). The 4MM leagues continued to grow, and a Women’s Division was developed to address audiences at matinees [afternoon] of movie showings and live theater. These Women’s Divisions had their own officers (Four Minute Men News, 1918). They also spoke at women’s clubs, in manufacturing plants, and on the streets (Mock & Larson, 1939).

Speeches Expanded Beyond Theaters and the Spoken Word

The influencers were so well received nationwide that many groups and organizations requested the 4MM speakers. Under the authority of their state directors, 4MM began providing speeches to clubs, labor unions, fraternal lodges, local meetings, Native American reservations, lumber camps, luncheons, colleges and universities, houses of worship, and even sporting tournaments. In Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, the Lehigh Valley Coal Company scheduled a series of 4MM



Image 1. Newark's Four Minute Men organization at Washington Monument, Broad Street, Newark. Image Courtesy of the National Archives. Photographer: Mayor's Office, Newark, N.J.

speeches to increase production. While state fairs hosted the 4MM speakers, many 4MM state conferences were held at these fairs (Four Minute Men News, Edition E, 1918).

In San Francisco, the 4MM speakers took to trucks for street meetings and appeared in hotels and cafes to address the public. A branch of the 4MM was established in the San Francisco Labor Council (*San Francisco Examiner*, 1918). The New York City 4MM created an Italian Division to utilize the Italian-language press, which reached some 400,000 readers, and to present at motion pictures to influence 20,000 - 40,000 people in theaters each week. The organization was also enrolling churches and lodges and creating a sway expected to encompass three million Italians nationally, which the regular 4MM speakers did not access. The goal was to connect with, and affect, the readership of the audiences of many Italian-language newspapers in the country. Thomas J. Rouillard, a Sioux, was appointed a

4MM to speak to his people on 4MM topics (Four Minute Men News, 1918). He said that he thought the Indians were doing their best for the country but that more could be done if they understood what the war meant to them. He encouraged them to support the Liberty Loans drives, the Red Cross, and military recruiting (Four Minute Men Volunteer Speeches during World War I, pp. 3-4).

Rabbi A.G. Robinson in New York City arranged for Yiddish and English speakers to address 25,000 people weekly in 30 theaters. In addition, the directors of several New York Young Men's Hebrew Associations sent 4MM Yiddish speakers into shops where employees were predominantly Jewish. The Hartford, Conn., 4MM went a step further for the 1918 Independence Day celebration and had speakers lecture to various national groups in their languages, including Italian, Polish, Magyar-Hungarian, Russian, Ukrainian, Armenian, and Bohemian Slovak. The topic for the Hartford addresses was "The Meaning of America," and attendees were

urged to get naturalization papers (Four Minute Men News, 1918).

Wilson had the 35,000 4MM deliver his Independence Day speech in more than 5,000 communities nationwide on July 14, 1918 (Wilson, 1924). These WOM speakers expanded his audience exponentially to 3.5 million, a significant increase over what might have been possible otherwise because there was no way technologically to reach such a vast audience; commercial radio did not come along until 1920. Mock and Larson called the 4MM America's "nation-wide hookup" during WWI. "The Four-Minute Men were so many separate loud-speakers, reproducing with greater or less fidelity the words of Woodrow Wilson as interpreted by the CPI" (Mock & Larson, 1939, p. 113.) This was a groundbreaking communicative concept that once again skirted mass media using WOM to bring the president's message to millions.

When National Director Billy Blair resigned to enter the military, he was succeeded by William H. Ingersoll, the marketing manager of Ingersoll watches, who had comprehensive experience in management and planning marketing campaigns (Four Minute Men News, 1918).

"It has now reached isolated 'cow camps,' into the mines and the timber camps, by dog sled over the frozen trails into the far places of Alaska, into Hawaii, the Philippines and Panama—wherever loyal Americans are gathered together" (*The San Francisco Examiner*, 1918, October 27, p. 20). In the war's latter stages, Scott County, Iowa, ministers were asked to join the 4MM and deliver speeches directly to their congregations (Cram, 1919).

W.H.J. Gorman, the Director of the Leominster, Massachusetts 4MM, instituted a plan to have each member write an editorial of 500 words for the daily newspaper for each campaign. They were edited, revised, and signed by the author prior to publication. "I have a cosmopolitan corps—two ministers, two letter carriers, two shop superintendents, telephone manager, one teacher, three lawyers, and myself," Gorman noted (Four Minute Men News, 1918, p. 13).

Junior 4MM

Like the experimental start of the 4MM in Chicago, which led to the national organization, so was the beginning of the Junior 4MM. Minnesota requested a Junior War Savings Stamps campaign [March 1918] and it was so successful that 1.5 million copies were distributed to students in 200,000 schools nationwide. Then, a million Junior Liberty Loan bulletins were

sent to all the schools in the country (Four Minute Men News, Edition D, 2018).

In April that year, Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo sent a letter addressed to all the boys and girls in America's schools to exhort them to raise money for the Third Liberty Loan campaign. The opening of the letter to the children was encouragement that all patriotic Americans "if not privileged to shoulder a gun" want to know what they can do to help. They were told the prize competition for "little speeches" would help them all directly and would make them the "patriotic bearers of America's message" (Four Minute Men School Bulletin, No. 3, 1918). The same method of inducement was used for the Fourth Liberty Loan contest and the Junior Red Cross roll call (Creel, 1920).

Creel wrote that the Junior 4MM expansion was "almost as important as the original idea, for the youngsters of the country rallied with a whoop, and what was more to the point, gave results as well as enthusiasm" (p. 91). In the simplest sense, the plan was for teachers to use "the bulletin as a textbook" and expound on the 4MM information and the students would write speeches (Creel, n.d., p. 99) The students wrote and delivered their speeches to the whole school, sometimes to parents and community members, or to several classes depending on the school size. Some schools permitted extemporaneous speeches in classrooms and the competitions (pp. 92-93.) The winners were given an official certificate from the government, commissioning them as 4MM.

The Junior 4MM establishment in schools was a valuable tool for the organization to motivate student fundraising and patriotism and to reach the parents. The Birmingham, Alabama, chapter founded 520 War Savings Societies in schools. As a result, students bought over \$93,000 worth of War Savings Certificates and Thrift Stamps and were credited with almost \$500,000 in Liberty Bond sales (Four Minute Men News, Edition E, 1918). The superintendent of Auburn School District in New York School wrote of the Junior 4MM program that it was an excellent example of "oral English and motivation" (Keller, 1940, p. 23).

Colleges

The 4MM spread to college campuses, too, as all colleges were sent information outlining the 4MM information to be studied for speeches. In September of 1918, colleges received the request from the CPI to form 4MM chapters. Some college newspapers such as the Columbia "Spectator" and the University of Chicago "Daily Maroon" covered the 4MM on campus and



Image 2. Patriotic activities of the girls at Goucher College, Baltimore, Maryland. One of the college's "Four Minute Men" speeches given in a corner of the dining-room. Photo courtesy of the U.S. National Archives.

beyond. The concept was to have an instructor act as the college chairman who would review the CPI's bulletins and work with the students to practice speeches on suggested topics. In addition, all students who wished to receive the 4MM insignia had to deliver a speech to the college community during the semester (Four Minute Men News, Edition E, 1918).

At Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland, the young women Four Minute Men gave their brief talks as the students awaited their meals. The college had an active program in support of the war effort. They raised funds for the Third Liberty War Loan Drive in the college chapel and received over \$25,000 in subscriptions in less than a half hour (National Archives, n.d.).

At Vassar, faculty member Mary Yost accepted the government's request, and it complemented the work some of the students started for the War Council the previous spring. Yost and Professor Mary Cochran, the head of the English speech courses, determined that no one would speak as a program representative who was not in speech training. As the material sent by the 4MM headquarters was simple and brief, it was easily mastered. The students delivered speeches for the 4th

Liberty Loan campaign in the dining halls and on "Soap boxes" at midday recess or on their way to the chapel in the evening. The women spoke to various groups depending on the topic of the speech. The groups included the campus community, granges, a women's club, and even local schools for a Red Cross speech. Some speakers branched out and assisted the county health department in talks on public health (Yost, 1919). The *Vassar Quarterly* weighed in on their campus 4MM writing, "The Four Minute Men Organization has been of distinctive value, partly because of its efficiency in its field of publicity, and partly because of the added power it has given to the girls themselves, in that it has made them better speakers, better debaters, better citizens." (1919, p. 211). Further down the Hudson River in New York over a 100 Columbia University students took part in two phases of war work as Four Minute Men speakers to promote the Liberty Loans and as national and state food inspectors (Columbia Spectator, 2018).

Patriotic Singing

The Chicago 4MM organization held a rally dinner at the Mid-Day Club in May of 1918. The Four

Minute Men Quartet wrote and performed songs for over two hundred men at the event (Four Minute Men News, 1918). The singing was created by demand. "People wanted to exercise their voices in moments of patriotism, so a bulletin of specially selected songs was issued" (Creel, 1924, p. 93). The plan was directed by the chairman and reported as successful. The men were encouraged to use upbeat rhythms. The song lyrics were shown on slides that the local chapter purchased for 15 cents. The lyrics to popular tunes were often changed to patriotic phrasing (Oukrop, 1975).

In New York City, 22 4MM singers attended the Interborough Junior Four Minute Men Savings Contest Finals. First, they awarded the winner a \$50 Liberty Bond and other contenders some War Stamps. Then the 4MM song men entertained with familiar songs most reworded, including "America," "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Dixie," and "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" (Keller, 1940).

Success of 4MM

Peace led to the cessation of the highly successful

4MM propaganda activities. Creel wrote that over 7.5 million speeches were presented to over 134.4 million people and that the 4MM sold \$2 billion in Liberty Bonds and War Stamps. The design that led to this tremendous success involved the composition of 4MM Bulletins by the head of a Chicago ad agency and distribution through the state chairmen. The 42 bulletins included a May 12-21, 1917, dedicated to the draft and the final December 24, 1918, was "A Tribute to the Allies" (Creel, 1920). Creel calculated the value of 4MM volunteer efforts were worth almost \$10 billion to the country.

Criticism and Resistance were Weak

Most reproaches came from within the 4MM ranks rather than from the public. The national organization set the bar high for speakers, and the state chairpersons continually reviewed the speakers' work. The 4MM News highlighted excerpts from speeches and potential methods to improve upon them. The organization stressed that speakers need to be correct and understand that they are speaking for the government, not for themselves. Editions of the 4MM News featured a full



Image 3. Four Minutemen Chorus performs at a rally for the Fourth Liberty Loan Campaign, Federal Hall, New York City in 1918 during World War I. The Four Minute Men was a public speaking organization of the Committee on Public Information. Bain News Service. Courtesy: Flickr Commons project, 2016)



Image 4. Celebrations for the signing of the armistice. Hazelton, PA. Victory parade. Four Minute Men section. National Archives. Photographer: A.W. Drake, Hazelton. Courtesy of the U.S. National Archives.

page of criticisms of excerpts of speeches delivered “off” the message of the CPI. Some of the gaffes were simply errors and others misrepresented the government policies. One example was this excerpt: “That these rights and liberties may be carried fully to our sister nations, Great Britain, Italy, and France, that they too may be assured of an everlasting peace bottomed upon the same rights and liberties that we Americans enjoy” (Four Minute Men News, 1918, Oct. 1, p. 8). The 4MM organization stressed in its critique that the U.S. government would not seek to impose our style of democracy on our allies. Other speeches claimed the war was between the Saxons and the Hohenzollerns rather than the preferred government comparison of democracy versus autocracy.

Creel (1920) reported “pathos” and humor” in some happenings, as men who imagined themselves a William Jennings Bryan traveled to Washington to plead their case when a 4MM organization rejected them. Another blend of pathos and humor occurred in mid-October as speeches began at theaters in Davenport, Iowa. The local organization heard that an unreceptive audience might attend one of the dozen local theatres. “With that in mind, the chairman and his committee deemed it wise to send a man of some physical corpulence, and a man who could be depended upon to say what he left home to say, to fill this assignment,” wrote County Chairman John C. Higgins. (Cram, 1919, p. 67). Speaker Robert T. Armil took the stage and soon heard people moving for

the lobby. He ordered the doors closed and delivered not the scripted speech but instead one that expressed his strong sentiments. He may have spoken for more than the four-minute allotment because of his emotions but was not reprimanded for exceeding the 4MM directive. John Higgins reported that after that, the speakers were met with “the closest and most fervent attention” (p. 68).

A charge of disloyalty was lodged against the Missouri State 4MM Chairman E. M. Grossman, when the state’s Council of Defense sent a telegram to the national director of the 4MM. When Attorney Grossman heard of the charges, he explained that his remarks were on a client’s behalf. He promised to resign if this disparaging situation hindered the work of the 4MM (*St. Louis Star and Times*, 1918). Sixty-four 4MM met a few days later and adopted a resolution expressing their confidence in the integrity and loyalty of Grossman. They said that the questionable comments made by their chairman were in a federal court defense of his client on disloyalty charges (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 1918). After a week of criticism and investigation by the national organization, Grossman resigned as the state chairman (*St. Louis Star and Times*, 1918).

Armistice: Farewell to the 4MM

The government shuttered the CPI, and the 4MM organization was dissolved on December 24, 1918. In a farewell letter to them, President Wilson extolled the work of the 4MM, writing that the “name of the Four

Minute Men has become a part of the history of the great war, I would not willingly omit my heartfelt testimony to its great value to the country, and indeed to civilization, as whole during our period of national trial and triumph” (Wilson, 1919).

The armistice did not prevent some of the disbanded patriots from stepping up. Many marched in victory parades. Some appealed for funds to help the discharged veterans acquire civilian clothes (National Archives, 165-WW-134A-43) and the Los Angeles chapter hosted a “demobilization” banquet for their 4MM (Bishop, 1995). The women of Vassar considered their public talks too valuable to stop, so the college incorporated the Speakers’ Bureau into the debating society and their work continued. Yost observed two young women deliver a public health speech to 50 people in a church. “With a really charming simplicity and lack of self-consciousness, however, those two girls took up, took that unresponsive audience into their confidence, put before them quite forcefully because so sincerely some of the new facts about public health, which they had been asked to give, and won a decided success” (Yost, 1919, p. 252).

School teachers nationwide protested the discontinuation of the 4MM’s National School Service on pedagogical grounds. These protests prompted Creel to reach out to President Wilson, who was able to continue funding through the Department of the Interior (Creel, 1920). However, the abrupt ending of the organization did not sit well with some individuals of the 4MM. These influencers who appeared before large and supportive audiences several times a week were suddenly relegated to obscurity. They spoke for and with the power of the government of the United States but were relegated to their everyday work sans applause

Discussion

For \$101,555, the CPI funded the very efficacious 4MM campaign for a year and a half. The national organization did not reimburse state or local offices for any expenses. Creel calculated what the 4MM could have cost the nation if not for all the voluntary contributions estimated to be over \$2.5 million. Creel extrapolated additional savings to the government, including calculating each speech presented at \$4 = \$4 million. If they had not negotiated free usage of the theaters, that would have cost \$2 million, and the traveling speakers’ expenses of \$8,275. The free publicity contributed by the press was an added value of \$750,000. Creel computed the Grand Total of these contributions was

\$9.9 billion. The speakers were not paid or reimbursed for any expenses. Instead, they compelled the public to buy into the Liberty Loan campaign and sold \$2 billion in Liberty Bonds and War Stamps to fund the war.

Additionally, the organization worked to promote the Red Cross successfully, collected binoculars for the Navy as their Swiss and German sources were no longer available, and encouraged food conservation (Creel, 1924, pp. 93-97). The 4MM were very effective influencers of WWI. Their campaign was a tremendous success that convinced the country to set aside its reluctance, participate in the European war, and support the troops with their funds.

The legacy of the 4MM methods did not end with the closing of the CPI. Current influencers have implemented the techniques successfully employed by those 20th-century communicators: trustworthiness and word-of-mouth communication and the noteworthy sidestep of traditional marketing channels.

Today’s influencers, as the 4MM, motivate through use of word-of-mouth and persuasion. “Word of mouth is known to be one of the most credible and trusted sources of marketing. Social media influencers are masters at eWOM” (Gluckman, 2017, p. 79). Craig Baracs of the University of San Diego School of Business wrote that influence is “the ability to bring others around to your way of thinking, not because you control the situation as you might with power, but because you persuade others to view a situation or thing in a certain way. Exercising power can bring *compliance*, even if it’s reluctant compliance. Exercising influence can bring *consent*, consciously or not” (Baracs, 2021). More than a century before this was written, the 4MM exerted influence and America consented to help the war effort and today’s SMI use this technique to market goods, services, and ideas.

An excellent example of the “consent” fashioned by the influence of 4MM was found in a labor dispute at a sugar refinery along the Delaware River wharves. After working a full week, the stevedores were declining overtime work. The 4MM soldiers told the workers about the potential ramifications of their time off to U.S. soldiers serving abroad and made a request for volunteers to work overtime. The gentle influence of the 4MM soldiers resulted in all the stevedores staying on the job and clearing the docks (Four Minute Men News, 1918, Oct. 1).

Similarly, SMIs and companies can exercise a type of “intentional influence” (Celep & Brenner, 2014) to move stakeholders or to take the actions required to solve

a problem. “We’ve convened social sector practitioners. Repeatedly, the notion of influence resonates with leaders, and many of them see influence in their work.” (Celep & Brenner, 2014).

Customer engagement behaviors, employed by today’s SMI, have been defined, “as the customers’ behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers” including word-of-mouth (WOM) activity, recommendations, and other actions (Van Doorn, et al., 2010, p. 253). Authenticity allows an influencer to relate with followers on a new level and aids in building a relationship between followers and brands. (Glucksman, 2017).

Today’s influencers provide similar fiscally-sound messaging when promoting the products and the slogans of their sponsors because of their direct eWOM messaging through social media while sidestepping traditional and prevalent media channels. The S.M.I. are the 4MM of our generation disseminating messages that receivers may not be receptive to if the source were governmental, N.G.O.s, or marketers.

The 4MM sold \$2 billion in Liberty bonds for the meager \$101,000 government investment in the program. A century has passed and still some things remain the same. The need for one-on-one communication to change minds is still a necessity. The technology may change, but one on one communication is still perceived as the most trustworthy. The SMI are the Four Minute Men of the 21st century answering the call of brands (governmental, NGO, or non-profit, or for-profit entities) to create unique non-mass media methods to communicate eWOM messages based on trust..

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Book Reviews

*The Correspondents:
Six Women Writers on the Front Lines of World War II*
By **Judith Mackrell**. Review by **Mary M. Lamonica**

*Global Journalism:
Understanding World Media Systems*
By **Daniela V. Dimitrova** Review by **David Bulla**

*The Newspaper Axis:
Six Barons Who Enabled Hitler*
By **Kathryn S. Olmstead** Review by **Gregory Borchard**

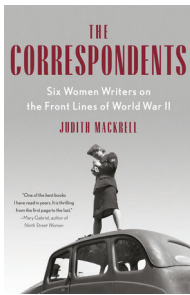
*NBC Goes to War:
The Diary of Radio Correspondent James Cassidy From London to the Bulge*
By **James Cassidy**, Edited by **Michael S. Sweeney** Review by **Willie Tubbs**

*Journalism and Jim Crow:
White Supremacy and the Black Struggle for a New America*
Edited by **Kathy Roberts Forde and Sid Bedingfield** Review by **Debra Reddin van Tuyl**

The Correspondents:

Six Women Writers on the Front Lines of World War II

Book by Judith Mackrell



The Correspondents: Six Women Writers on the Front Lines of World War II. By Judith Mackrell. (New York: Vintage Books, 2023, 464 pp. ISBN: 978-0-385-547-666.)

Judith Mackrell's *The Correspondents: Six Women Writers on the Front Lines of World War II* (New York: Vintage

Books, 2023) tells a story of determination. And it is a story, albeit a well-researched one, told in a lively narrative style that draws extensively on primary sources, including letters, diaries, news stories penned by the correspondents themselves, interviews, and unpublished, archival materials.

Mackrell, a noted biographer, who also works as a dance critic for the English newspaper *The Guardian*, follows the narrative template she created in her 2014 book, *Flappers: Six Women of a Dangerous Generation*, to examine another group of heroines. She again unpacks the lives of six women, sometimes devoting space to their individual lives and at other times intertwining their tales, to craft a story that informs modern readers of the heroism, danger, anger, frustrations, and triumphs faced by all female correspondents during World War II. Although one could quibble with her selection of the correspondents (for there were approximately 250 female correspondents and photographers who covered World War II on the Allied side), all six had compelling adventures and all six faced restrictions on their movements that their male counterparts did not face.

Readers are introduced to and follow the exploits of six distinctly different personalities, some of whom were veteran reporters, while others were young and new to the profession. We learn how all the women came to be reporters and are informed about their pre-war reporting, which provides context, prior to being taken through

a riveting, linear narrative of their wartime exploits. Although many female and male correspondents are mentioned throughout the book, Mackrell centers her tale around Clare Hollingsworth, an English journalist who broke the news of World War II and who slept with a pearl-handled revolver at her side in Romania as the rule of law broke down;¹ one-time *Vogue* cover model and photographer Lee Miller who risked her life and scooped her male colleagues to cover the battle of Saint-Malo and was rewarded with being put under military house arrest for her efforts;² Sigrid Schultz, who hid her Jewish identity and risked her life reporting on the rise of Nazism in Berlin;³ Martha Gelhorn, who would alternately fight bureaucrats and ignore them at her own peril to cover the war to its finish, including the Nuremberg trials; Virginia Cowles, a one-time “society girl” columnist whose extensive pre-war and wartime travels led her to interview Mussolini, and to report from London, Paris, Moscow, and North Africa; and Helen Kirkpatrick, a veteran correspondent, who although “never sentimental” about American G.I.s, would berate U.S. military officials during the Battle of the Bulge when she learned that the soldiers were freezing to death in their foxholes for lack of winter clothing and bedding.⁴

Using carefully selected facts, memorable anecdotes, and well-researched information, Mackrell tells the story of two parallel conflicts: the gender discrimination from military and government officials that caused the women to surmount obstacles via creative thinking and equally creative interpretations of their orders to get to the front lines, and a parallel story line of triumph in the face of adversity. Indeed, some of the finest stories of the war were generated by these courageous, ambitious women who slogged through mud, stepped over enemy dead, risked death themselves while under fire, and who had to hitch rides with soldiers or stow away on ships to get to the front lines to obtain their stories and photographs.

Along the way they nursed wounded soldiers, fell in love, were forced to argue for their right to report, and, at times, were detained for disobeying orders to stay behind the lines.

Aimed at a popular, rather than a scholarly, audience, the author provides her readers with a riveting account that is more intriguing than many fictional stories of the war. For example, Martha Gelhorn scooped her husband, Ernest Hemingway, with her account of the D-Day invasion by locking herself in a bathroom on a hospital ship to get across the English Channel after being told to stay in England. Although she spent many anxious hours concerned that she would be discovered and put off the ship, Gelhorn arrived at Omaha Red, the American sector of Omaha Beach, and discovered “a slaughterhouse” of “oil, mud and blood,” with the “nightmarish flotsam of the dead” bobbing on the surface of the water. While some male reporters might consider her arrival via hospital ship a stunt, her action was motivated by rage—not only against military bureaucrats who, she claimed, treated women correspondents like “lepers,” but also against Hemingway who, in what Mackrell terms “an act of pure malevolence,” had ousted Gelhorn from her reporting position with *Collier's* magazine, taking the plum job for himself.⁵

The Correspondents is a testament to the public's continued fascination with World War II and, especially, women war correspondents. Mackrell's book joins Nancy Caldwell Sorel's 2011 tome, *The Women Who Wrote the War: The Compelling Story of the Path-breaking Women War Correspondents of World War II*; Catherine Gourley's 2007 young adult book, *War, Women, and the News: How Female Journalists Won the Battle to Cover World War II*; Penny Colman's 2002 *Where the Action Was: Women War Correspondents in World War II*; Lilya Wagner's 1989 work, *Women War Correspondents of World War II*; the recently released *Reporting World War II*, by G. Kurt Piehler and Ingo Tauschweizer, and numerous stand-alone biographies of women correspondents

Mackrell's compelling narrative gives readers interested in World War II a different perspective on the conflict--as seen through the eyes of correspondents who witnessed the highs and lows of warfare: from the rise of fascist leaders in Spain, Germany, and Italy, the relentless bombing of London, dusty battles in North Africa, the frigid Battle of the Bulge, the liberation of Paris, the downfall of Nazi Germany, the harrowing nightmares that awaited male and female correspondents alike as they arrived with American soldiers to liberate the Nazi concentration camps, to the final coverage of

the war--the Nuremberg trials, where reporters heard incredulous denials of responsibility amid stony-faced defiance.

The war, especially the reporters' time covering the atrocities at Nazi concentration camps, took its toll on the correspondents. As Mackrell notes, Lee Miller, a one-time *Vogue* cover model turned war correspondent and photographer, spent her post-war years suffering from depression and drinking heavily.⁶ She died a year before post-traumatic stress became a diagnosed psychological disorder. Although she covered the London blitz, the battle of St. Malo, the battle of Alsace, and the liberation of Paris, the horrors of Buchenwald and Dachau never left her.⁷

While *The Correspondents* joins a growing field of books about women war correspondents, the book's author goes beyond bringing women's history, journalism history, and World War II history together to stress the important role that a free press plays in a democratic society. Through the reporters' words and deeds, Mackrell reveals that her subjects recognized that they had an obligation, indeed, a responsibility, to provide their readers with accurate accounts of the war, no matter how harrowing those stories might be and no matter how much pressure they faced from military and civilian authorities to water down their stories. That reminder of the press's responsibility to the public remains as timely today as it did almost eighty years ago.

--Mary M. Cronin,
New Mexico State University

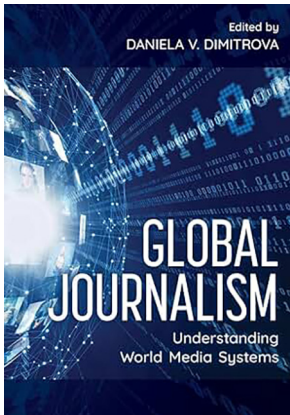
Notes

- 1 Judith Mackrell, *The Correspondents: Six Women Writers on the Front Lines of World War II* (New York: Vintage Books, 2023), 164.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 270.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 294.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 251, 253.

Global Journalism:

Understanding World Media Systems

Book edited by Daniela V. Dimitrova



Global Journalism: Understanding World Media Systems. By Daniela V. Dimitrova, ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021, 239 pages. ISBN: 978-1-5381-4685-9.)

While *Global Journalism* is not marketed as a historical take on international media, the best parts of the book take a longer view of the

particular media system being examined. This makes the book much more historical than perhaps editor Daniela Dimitrova, a university professor at Iowa State University, may have intended.

For example, Raluca Cozma's chapter titled "Covering International Conflict and Crises" comes under the Current Issues section of the book. Cozma starts with World War II and radio, not with, say, the war in Ukraine and social media. Cozma, a veteran television journalist and professor at Kansas State University, brings Edward R. Murrow into her chapter going back to his days with CBS in Europe. Cozma observes that Murrow "essentially created modern broadcast journalism" with the help of William L. Shirer and Robert Trout, in London, Berlin and New York, respectively.¹ Murrow covered the Nazis and presented them to American audiences on his show *World News Roundup*, which has survived on radio to this day. Once the Nazis invaded Poland in September 1939 and the war in Europe took off, Murrow covered it with his "This Is London" show. Despite the dangers involved, as his studio was bombed several times, Murrow refused to retreat to an air shelter and would call what he saw from a rooftop in London. He thought to do otherwise

was unmanly. As Cozma remarks, what Murrow did was make CBS's global coverage rival that of any major English-language newspaper.

Cozma goes on to note rightly that international news has declined in the years since World War II, although there have been moments when it recovered temporarily (during the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the September 11th terrorist attacks, etc. ...). This is in stark contrast to the level of international news on radio and in newspapers and magazines in the first decade after World War II. A whole generation of Americans had either fought in the war or helped one home front with production, intelligence, and logistical support. They were attuned to the wider world because Americans were in far-flung places fighting a war that was occurring in both Europe and the Pacific. The lack of international news since September 11 and the Iraq War had turned the United States back to its insular manner and means that Americans have little understanding of the nuances of international politics, economics, and societies.

Claudia Kozman's chapter on the media in MENA (Middle East and North Africa) also starts with the historical angle. She points to the origins of modern communication, including Egyptian invention of papyrus for written communication. Before that critical textual inventions were made in Mesopotamia.

Dimitrova also points out that Fredrick Seaton Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm's *Four Theories of the Press* serve as an essential document for understanding international media, especially in the middle of the twentieth century. They detailed four systems in their seminal work and created a continuum for understanding media systems: the authoritarian theory; the social responsibility theory; the libertarian theory, and the Soviet communist theory. Dimitrova rightly points out the limitations of these normative theories, and yet in many ways remains "a reference

point for research and scholarly investigations of media worldwide.” Kozman certainly shows how much of the media in the MENA region tends to an authoritarian approach, and the practical power of Russian propaganda and social media manipulation in recent years harkens back to the Soviet media system.

Elad Segev’s chapter on international news flow in the digital age. He points to the power-proximity model of news flow, which shows the United States at the center of the global media system. There is a definite hierarchy with Russia, the UK, China, Japan, France, and Germany acting as major nodes in the system. While the nature of the flow of international news has changed, there has long been a global system. For example, for a good portion of the twentieth century the BBC (the UK) and CBS (U.S.), along with Reuter’s and AFP, would have had central positions in the global media system.

H. Denis Wu points to the importance of technology in his chapter. Wu alludes of the McLuhan-Powers “global village” model to note how television broke down national barriers.² Obviously, the internet, cellular telephones, and social media have supplanted TV as the major technological implements of the global village. Indeed, the advantage gained in having the internet as a medium for reducing time and distance can best be seen in how applications such as Zoom and Skype keep together families who have dispersed around the world for employment. Again, though, technology has been doing this all along to global media. No invention changed realities more than the invention of the telegraph, which led to an explosion of media technology innovations in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Much the same can be said of the printing press invented in the fifteenth century.

Jane Wyatt also notes in her chapter on media freedom that theories of press freedom go back at least to John Milton’s *Areopagitica* in 1644. The Americans added their take with the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In general, the Enlightenment understanding of the need for a free flow of information and an unfettered press became central tenets of functioning democracies. These human rights stand in stark contrast to a fettered, bullied, and shuttered news media in much of the world—where Western notions of press freedom are laughed at and populations know to avoid such attitudes or face finding oneself living in the hotel on the “other side of the sun.”

In summary, while *Global Journalism* is much more than a historical look at international media, it does include historical understanding of complex media systems. Historians would do well to read it and

encourage their graduate students to read it as well. Dimitrova and her authors have provided an estimable overview.

--David W. Bulla
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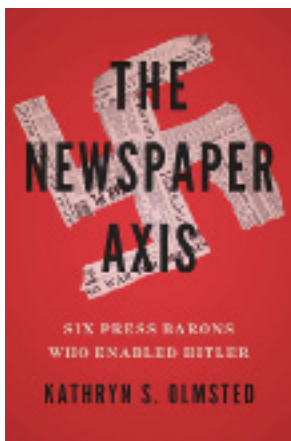
Notes

- 1 Raluca Cozma, “Covering International Conflict and Crises,” in *Global Journalism: Understanding World Media Systems*, Daniela V. Dimitrova, ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 203.
- 2 H. Denis Wu, “Technology’s Role in Global Journalism and Communication,” in *Global Journalism: Understanding World Media Systems*, Daniela V. Dimitrova, ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 30.

The Newspaper Axis:

Six Barons Who Enabled Hitler

Book by Kathryn S. Olmsted



The Newspaper Axis: Six Barons Who Enabled Hitler. By Kathryn S. Olmsted. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2022. 328 pages. ISBN: 9-78-030025-642-0.)

Kathryn S. Olmsted's *The Newspaper Axis: Six Barons Who Enabled Hitler* provides an overview of content from select newspapers in the years

before and during World War II, profiling six powerful publishers who favored a non-interventionist approach to the rise of European fascism. Olmsted features four American publishers who advocated nationalism to an audience of millions through print and radio: Robert McCormick (*The Chicago Tribune*); Joseph Medill Patterson (*The New York Daily News*); Eleanor “Cissy” Medill Patterson (*The Washington Times-Herald*); and William Randolph Hearst (*The New York Journal* and various media outlets). She includes two other publishers in England to round out the trans-Atlantic alliance: Lord Harold Rothermere, whose *London Daily Mail* praised Hitler’s leadership, and Lord Max Beaverbrook, whose *Daily Express* claimed that defending Europeans against Hitler ran counter to British interests. Olmsted reveals the ways these media figures shared editorial pieces and coordinated their responses to international events by targeting audiences with populist messages that included fascist and anti-Semitic tropes. She argues these columns initially weakened the response of the U.S. and Britain to the rise of Nazism.

At the same time, Olmsted claims, these publishers upheld white supremacy by favoring military intervention to exercise power over non-White nations.

Hearst and McCormick, for example, suggested that the United States should spend its resources to dominate Latin America than to fight against members of their own race. The publishers profiled in general more clearly demonstrated these tendencies by promoting fear of the “yellow” race, claiming Japan would take over the world if not fought. A Hearst editorial Dec. 7, 1943, in *The San Francisco Examiner*, for example, claimed Hitler’s “vilest deed” was to ally Germany with Japan, against his “own white race with the yellow peril.”¹ In addition, according to Olmsted, the publishers featured in *The Newspaper Axis* resisted condemnation of Hitler because they either sympathized with the Nazis, or they “failed to sympathize with the Nazis’ victims,” worrying instead that challenging Germany would endanger the stature and strength of their Anglo-American interests.²

The book begins with discussion about the role isolationism played in the content of the press. While scholars have suggested that an isolationist approach, as defined in contemporary terms, cannot be clearly identified in newspapers at the time, Olmsted makes a case with the publishers she profiles that they called on readers in the U.S. and Britain to focus their attention inwardly and away from the struggles in Central Europe. She uses a pool of archival and secondary sources to investigate the machinations of the press of the era, providing evidence that these six publishers exercised remarkable influence over policy makers, at least. Her analysis of primary sources indicates these press barons developed a measure of success in shaping foreign policy as evidenced by the reluctance of both American and British decision makers to intervene in World War II until Hitler had secured his role as German dictator. While evidence from the archives cited throughout *The Newspaper Axis* indicates frustration among policy makers with the perceived influence of the right-wing press, the book offers less evidence that the content had

a measurable effect on the readers of these newspapers.

While the content featured from the selected newspapers makes the case clear that the publishers cared about keeping the political and economic interests of the U.S. and the British intact, it does not as convincingly argue that these publishers exercised exclusive callousness toward the Nazis' victims. The inclusion of content from other newspapers from the era for context would likely help to build the context for the purposes of contrasting editorial positions. Nearly a century later, for example, historians still puzzle—as did Laura Leff, author of *Buried by The Times: The Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper*—how *The New York Times*, which at the time could hardly be considered a right-wing or populist newspaper, published nearly 1,200 stories on the Holocaust during WWII, but only 26 of 24,000 its front-page stories dealt with the Holocaust, and many of those failed to report the targeting of Jews by the Nazi regime. While the material cited, including correspondences and the private papers of publishers, provides a disheartening perspective on the role of the press in its failure to address a threat to humanity at large, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The New York Daily News*, *The Washington Times-Herald*, *The New York Journal*, and the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* do not represent the press in its entirety.

In the end, Olmstead's larger point is not to focus on the right-wing media of the 1930s and 40s as a culprit; rather, she concludes that the growth of media after World War II through powerful conglomerates created the opportunity for the toxic ideas popularized by the likes of McCormick, Hearst, Rothermere, Beaverbrook, and the Patterson grew. "Far from recoiling in horror at their tactics, their successors would refine them and learn to apply them to different circumstances. Xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, and toxic nationalism still influence the debate over Anglo-American foreign policy."³ As the book shows, these popular newspapers and their owners failed to achieve their short-term aims, but they provided a foundation for conservative politics on each side of the Atlantic for decades to come. Along with this sobering analysis, media practitioners would do well to remember the multitude of times in which the press has since also led the call to war.

--Gregory A. Borchard
University of Nevada Las Vegas

Notes

1 Kathryn S. Olmsted, *The Newspaper Axis: Six*

Barons Who Enabled Hitler (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2022), 6.

2 *Ibid.*, 11.

3 *Ibid.*, 247.

NBC Goes to War:

The Diary of Radio Correspondent James Cassidy
from London to the Bulge

Book edited by Michael S. Sweeney



NBC Goes to War: The Diary of Radio Correspondent James Cassidy from London to the Bulge. By James Cassidy, edited by Michael S. Sweeney. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2022, 213 pages, ISBN: 978-0-8232-9932-4.)

NBC Goes to War manages to be equal parts historically enriching and bittersweet. The

book, which reveals for a mass audience the day-to-day thoughts and struggles of a journalist called upon to share news of the most consequential war of the twentieth century, wonderfully preserves an account of front-line reporting. As such, one can easily appreciate the book's value to the field of journalism history. But the book's forward and introduction are enough to inspire a tearful smile, at least for those historians, colleagues, friends, and family blessed enough to have known the late Dr. Michael S. Sweeney.

For those familiar with journalism history, Mike Sweeney's name is one with few peers. An impressive scholar with a heart for history and helping rising scholars find their way in the oft-crowded world of Academia, Sweeney passed in early 2022 following a courageous eight-year battle with cancer. Anyone familiar with Sweeney's personality and writing style will enjoy his contribution as editor. Dr. Sweeney is at his best in the dozen pages of narrative he offers; his historical acumen, skill as a storyteller, and wit are all on full display. Even someone who never met Sweeney will appreciate his brief tale of chasing down a valuable

primary source, the diary and transcripts of James Cassidy. It's a brief tale that, in all appropriateness, establishes both Sweeney's passion for journalism history and the immense importance of Cassidy's work eight decades ago.

Of the many historians who could have sought to preserve and share Cassidy's work, few could classify as more qualified than Sweeney, a scholar with an in-depth knowledge of the nature of journalism during the Second World War. Indeed, Sweeney's *Secrets of Victory* and *The Military and the Press* stand as timeless pieces of scholarship and excellent companions to *NBC Goes to War*.¹ However, Sweeney was always far more concerned with preserving and understanding history in its terms than being the star of a story. As such, he made the substantive writings of Cassidy, a journalist whose work was largely lost to history prior to Sweeney learning of him, the centerpiece of the work. As Sweeney points out in his introduction, not even the top search engines on the web returned much about Cassidy. That was an unfortunate reality, but one that will be improved thanks to *NBC Goes to War*.

In terms of content, students of World War II and journalism history will find a treasure trove of information. As Sweeney points out, Cassidy's writings provide a much-needed perspective. "Most history of combat is 'top-down,'" Sweeney writes. "It examines generals, presidents, strategy, battle tactics, and so on ... Cassidy's diary and transcripts flip all that to tell a 'bottom-up' narrative. They provide insight into war as fought and chronicled by ordinary men and women."²

James Joseph Cassidy was one of 362 American journalists credentialed to cover the war in Europe, and his coverage was collected and disseminated from the front lines and among the rank and file. He was the

first American radio journalist to broadcast live from Germany, a report he delivered amid a hail of mortar fire. Throughout the book, readers will be captivated by tales of life at the front, of the horrors and dangers of everyday life under fire, and of the dire circumstances under which the American military personnel and journalists found themselves. Unsurprisingly given his profession, Cassidy's writing is of the highest order, rich in detail, and difficult to set aside once taken up. Of equal value to the journalism historian, Cassidy's observations of his fellow journalists and descriptions of the day-to-day process of news dissemination offer a powerful glimpse into journalism as it was in Europe in the early 1940s. Journalists, in particular, will appreciate and sympathize with Cassidy's frequent headaches in getting his reports filed on time or at all as the realities of war and early-twentieth-century technology conspired to interrupt or impede his transmissions.

If *NBC Goes to War* was limited to just Cassidy's diary, it would be a book well worth reading, but Cassidy's broadcast transcripts from late December 1944 make the book a must-have for those whose passion or research agenda centers on the interaction between military and media. As has long been established, perhaps most skillfully by George H. Roeder, Jr., in his 1993 offering *The Censored War*, the American government curated coverage of the Second World War to such a degree that it was 1943 before the general public ever saw the body of a dead U.S. soldier and the spring of 1945 when censors okayed the publication of a photo that showed the aftermath of the brutal death of an American.³

Cassidy's transcripts are preserved in such a way that the reader sees what made air and which parts of each script were struck, either by the journalist for time or the censors for strategic reasons. This provides a wonderful means of comparing how the war would have been reported by one man absent government intervention. In fairness to the censors, their markings were spare and many of the items removed from Cassidy's were those that might have given too many details about the location or movement of U.S. troops. On December 26, for example, censors removed mentions of the Belgian towns of Malmedy and Chaumont.⁴ However, there were some instances in which censors softened language. The most telling example of this came on December 25, when censors struck a powerful sentence in which Cassidy described a German officer appearing to have ordered his men to slaughter rather than remove American prisoners.⁵ One might also find interesting the minor quibbles censors would occasionally have with Cassidy's choice of words. On December 22, censors

changed Cassidy's wording to say that the Germans had been "temporarily confined" rather than "stopped" in Saint Vith.⁶

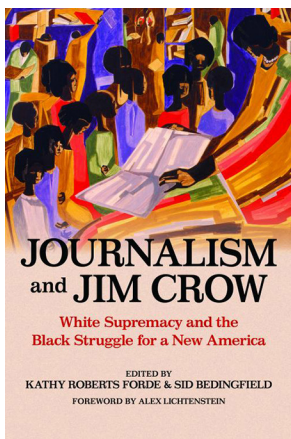
Overall, *NBC Goes to War* is a wonderful addition to the war historian's library. The book offers a perfect pairing of original material from Cassidy and scholarly perspective from Sweeney. With his access to some of the most intense fighting in Europe and skill for communicating the raw emotion of the moment, Cassidy provides the real-time perspective that historians often struggle to pin down. Sweeney serves as an ideal anchor and curator. This is not a book to which one would turn for historiography or new interpretations. That was never the point of the offering, nor should it have been. Sweeney's impeccable intuition was as astute as ever when he placed himself and his considerable intellect in a secondary position to the engaging words and work of a journalist whose immense contributions had been forgotten for long enough.

- 1 Michael S. Sweeney, *Secrets of Victory: The Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio in World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Michael S. Sweeney, *The Military and the Press: An Uneasy Truce* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern Press, 2006).
- 2 James Cassidy, *NBC Goes to War: The Diary of Radio Correspondent James Cassidy from London to the Bulge*, Michael S. Sweeney ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2022), 3.
- 3 George H. Roeder, Jr., *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War Two* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1993), 1.
- 4 Cassidy, 174-175.
- 5 Cassidy, 174.
- 6 Cassidy, 168.

Journalism and Jim Crow:

White Supremacy and the Black Struggle for a New America

Book edited by Kathy Roberts Forde and Sid Bedingfield



Journalism and Jim Crow: White Supremacy and the Black Struggle for a New America. Kathy Roberts Forde and Sid Bedingfield, eds., (Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2021, 344 pp. ISBN 978-0-252-086-151.)

The White press was complicit in the political machinations and White Supremacy that

denied so many Black Americans their hard-earned civil rights beginning after reconstruction, rights guaranteed by the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. Prominent White journalists such as Georgia's Henry Grady, North Carolina's Josephus Daniels and Ethelbert Barksdale of Mississippi, and scores of others used the power of the press to win free labor for their industrial and political supporters in the form of convict leasing, ensure the election of Jim-Crow politicians, and support lynching. Kathy Roberts Forde and Sid Bedingfield and their chapter authors point to incontrovertible evidence on these points in their exploration of journalism in the early Jim Crow years.

The chapters explore topics as diverse, yet related, as racial terrorism, the rise and expansion of White Supremacy, the associated social and political costs of Jim Crow, and the role of the Black Press in resisting the attempts by White citizens to terrorize and disenfranchise their Black neighbors. A forward by Alex Lichtenstein maintains that White journalists used their papers to publish "unmitigated racist propaganda" and that they also became involved "business and political interests that benefitted from white supremacy" by defending unpaid convict labor, industrialists such as

Henry Flagler accused of peonage, and lynch mobs who wrested justice from officials. Southern journalists were less likely to be able to mount counter arguments than those who lived in the North or Midwest. Ida B. Wells is a frequent example in the book. Ultimately, the chapters together mount a cogent argument to the contention that journalism was a tool White Southerners used to regain control and power after the end of reconstruction.

Other chapters, perhaps the strongest in the book, examine the work of Black journalists in cultivating a growing tide of Black activism. Black journalists such as Joseph Charles Price and Simon Green Atkins of the North Carolina Southland worked to counter the idea of the New South touted by so many White newspapers and promoted instead a "Southland as it ought to be." Others, such as Ida B. Wells, led campaigns to demonstrate the speciousness of common rationales for lynching and other terrorist acts against Black Southerners. Still others, such as T. Thomas Fortune, went to even greater lengths, calling for a revolution and criticizing the efforts underway to undermine bi-racial democracy in the South. In the end, though, White Supremacy reigned, and most Black newsmen and newswomen found they could address the racial tyranny of Jim Crow more readily from the safety of New York, Chicago, or other points north and west.

Another set of chapters analyze how post-Reconstruction editors and publishers integrated their newspapers into the political system as sources of power to support business leaders and politicians who were working to dismantle the civil rights of Black citizens. These chapters focus on newspapers as propaganda devices that helped "sell" ideas such as convict leasing, systematic methods designed to employ violence as a means of disenfranchising Blacks, and lynching as a rational White response to alleged crimes by Blacks. The chapters layout step-by-step how White leaders

worked with White-owned newspapers to end bi-racial democracy in the South, and how Black-owned newspapers led the ultimately unsuccessful efforts to resist.

The book does an outstanding job of bringing to the fore a time period and political movements that receive far less attention than they should, given their centrality to the race in America today – movements and a time that are even more central than those of the Antebellum and Civil War periods. The book names those journalists who are culpable and in doing so rightly tarnishes the standing of prominent journalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who have been revered as leaders of the New South movement that brought industry and prosperity to the region following reconstruction. Henry Grady of the *Atlanta Constitution*, Francis Warrington Dawson of the *Charleston Post and Courier*, Josephus Daniels of the *Raleigh News and Observer*, and so many others are among those culpable for their roles in dismantling bi-racial democracy in the South after Reconstruction.

As significant and important as the work is, it is not without weaknesses. For example, while that naming of journalist names is a strength, it also leaves an unanswered question. After reading the work, one can't help but wonder if there were any White journalists in the South at all who worked on behalf of Black civil rights or whether the time was so dangerous that any dissent was likely to be ruinous. Likely there were none, but that seems an obvious question to be addressed in a work of this nature. Further, almost all of the chapters on the culpability of the press in creating the Solid South touch on the subject of convict leasing. These chapters are arranged by state, and convict leasing did not vary much from state to state. It was a vicious and violent system that provided free labor in the form of mostly Black people convicted on questionable charges such as "vagrancy." Because of the similarity of experiences across the range of states, perhaps a single chapter that dealt with convict leasing would have been more effective than piecemealing the topic across multiple sources.

Overall, this is a significant work that addresses a topic that deserves far more attention than it has received. Kathy Roberts Forde, Sid Bedingfield, and their team of authors are to be commended for delving into such an important, if disheartening, chapter of American history.

--Debra Reddin van Tuyl
Augusta University

Instructions to Contributors

The *Southeastern Review of Journalism History* is a bi-annual peer-reviewed journal inviting research papers on any facet of U.S. and international journalism history. We accept papers that employ a variety of approaches to journalism history (straight narrative, quantitative, theoretical, etc.).

The *Review* encourages both undergraduate and graduate students to submit papers that they have presented at mass communication conferences. Such conferences include, but are not limited to, those of the American Journalism Historians Association, AEJMC, AEJMC History/AJHA Joint Conference, ICA, Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression, and regional or mid-winter AEJMC conferences.

The *Review*, founded by Dr. Leonard Teel at Georgia State University (as *The Atlanta Review of Journalism History*), sees journalism history broadly and will consider all forms of mass communication that have had impact on any area of journalism's past. Topics in past editions have included column writing, coverage of major topics and events in national and international history (such as civil war, economic policy, frontier society, immigration, national liberation, racism, and slavery), muckraking, reporting arts, leisure, and sports, sensationalism, and travel writing, among others.

Papers are accepted on a continuing basis for publication in future issues. Papers should be double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font, with endnotes, and submitted in Microsoft Word format. Please limit article size to around 7,500 words (25 double-spaced pages in 12 Times New Roman), not counting the title page, abstract, and endnotes. Please use of the Chicago Manual of Style for formatting and citations. Please included the following:

- An email with the attached paper, with the author's name, the date, and her/his affiliation.
- In the attached paper, please include the title page, a 200-word abstract, body of the paper, and endnotes.
- Also include the author's information (email address, telephone number, institutional affiliation, student or faculty status) in the text of the email.
- An undergraduate student submitting a paper needs to also send a statement that her/his paper has been presented at a research conference (confirmation email or PDF of a conference program will do).

The journal is also accepting book reviews of recently published books. Reviews should be no more than 1,000 words in length and focused on books that deal with some aspect of journalism history.

Editors Debra Reddin van Tuyl and David W. Bulla of Augusta University coordinate paper submissions. They try to notify authors within three months of the outcome of the review process.

For submission of a research paper, please email Dr. van Tuyl at: dvantuy1@augusta.edu or (706) 339-0178

For submission of a book review, please email Dr. Bulla at: dbulla@augusta.edu or (706) 729-2416

