Peace and Power in Cold War Britain: Media, Movements and Democracy, c. 1945–68 by Christopher R. Hill.

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Until the twenty-first century, historians frequently presented the Cold War as a conflict solely between the Soviet Union and the United States. Since then, the emergence of transnational histories[1] has diversified that simplistic bipolar geopolitical focus to include other powers that pursued their own Cold War policies. Attention to the cultural aspects of the Cold War has shaped most studies of the conflict in the last two decades. In *Peace and Power in Cold War Britain*, cultural historian Christopher Hill (Birmingham City Univ.) follows a number of recent books[2] on Britain in the Cold War and the conflict's political and cultural effects on British society. He has taken a big step toward clarifying how various media organizations sided with activists or officials in challenging the preferred narratives of government, offering new insights into the peace movement and its relationship with the media.

Hill discusses British peace activists' use of television early in the Cold War to help make their case. Specifically, he explains how the inception of Independent Television (ITV) in 1955 helped to create an atmosphere in public culture where members of a new generation challenged politicians and old-style public intellectuals. In the process, they changed the dynamic of class visibility.

Activism against nuclear proliferation was reliant on the public availability of information about nuclear devices and their effects, which British governments of the 1950s attempted to limit by suppressing news coverage of the weapons through persuasion or legal means. Hill shows that the BBC in particular happily acted as a government mouthpiece for much of the decade. He charts the hegemonic battle waged by anti-nuclear activists, scientists, journalists, and broadcasters over governmental control of information and access to TV air time.

Hill sees the 1950s as ushering in a changing of the guard among Britain's intellectual elites. Older, upper-middle-class intellectuals found the new media environment less suitable for their "lecturing" style of presentation, while "angry young men" raised voices of radicalism in the new public sphere. Alongside this cultural elite came new-left critics who believed a socialist agenda could be advanced without recourse to traditional party politics. Both sides quickly realized that televised dramatizations "made politics more accessible and open participatory democracy was enriched by a technology of seeing" (42).

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1. E.g., Robert McMahon ed., *The Cold War in the Third World* (NY: Oxford U Pr, 2012); Thongh Vu and Wasana Wonsgurawat, eds., *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia: Ideology, Identity, and Culture* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard U Pr); Heonik Kwon, *The Other Cold War* (NY: Columbia U Pr, 2010).

2. E.g., John Jenks, *British Propaganda and News Media in The Cold War* (Edinburgh: Univ Pr, 2003); Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and The Cold War: The State, Propaganda and Consensus* (NY: I.B. Tauris, 2001); Holger Nehring, *Politics of Security: British and West German Protest Movements and the Early Cold War* (NY: Oxford U Pr, 2013); Andrew Hammond, *British Fiction and the Cold War* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Jodie Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain: Britishness, "Race" and the Radical Left in the 1960s* (id., 2013).

Hill maintains that even the working classes could now engage with politicians and political issues, sometimes replacing the more middle-class experts of the print and radio eras.

> What television facilitated, in other words, was a vernacular politics—a more democratic and equalizing set of cultural forms by which the currency of politics could be traded. The dark corners and secret spaces of post-war politics struggled to remain in the shadows following television. They became increasingly exposed and brought into public view. (42–43)

He argues that this democratization process amplified the message of the new left and spurred on the British peace movement of the late 1950s.

The book is based on careful archival research: the author has tapped previously little used primary sources, including the BBC Written Archive, ITV Authority Archives, Whitehall documentation, peace movement materials at the London School of Economics, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) collections, university special collections relating to CND, and the personal papers of individuals involved in the peace movement and the media.[3] These archival documents together with citations of contemporary published materials, including newspapers and broadcasts, as well as historical, cultural, and literary scholarship lend depth and force to the author's arguments.[4]

In his last chapter, Hill discusses how media policy on coverage of protests affected activism in the later 1960s and the incipient transnational aspect of the peace movement. News coverage tended to reduce newsworthiness to shock events that included violence or civil disobedience. The media also began to give emphasis to more radical voices within the peace and student movements around the time of the anti-Vietnam War protests in 1968. Concomitantly, the older, more moderate voices that had represented the CND at its foundation and afterward began to be less audible in policy discussions about war and weaponry. Protesters became more radical and engaged in more acts of violence to achieve newsworthiness. Moreover, protests that "publicise[ed] a single issue cause increasingly gave way to the practice of marching to publicise a social and political identity" (125). The author shows that the media's demand for human-interest stories to increase their audience share helped facilitate the emergence of identity politics. Though Hill touches on the links between Britain and the international axis of 1968, he could usefully have applied this transnational theme throughout his book to show that the British peace movement was but one element of a global protest against nuclear weapons.

Christopher Hill's new book is especially welcome at a time when the political environment is ever more fraught and divided, while protest movements, both left and right, seek to use new media to win support in a rapidly changing landscape. He has written a persuasive and salutary study of the interactions of media organizations with civil society and the state.

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3. So numerous are the archives Hill cites that one wishes he had included a guide to their abbreviations at the start of his endnotes.

4. Nonetheless, Hill could have made better use of the work of some key historians. E.g., he discusses the role of the BBC's subtle propaganda for Civil Defence but fails to cite Matthew Grant's *After the Bomb: Civil Defence and Nuclear War in Britain, 1945–58* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Nor does he discuss the debate between James Chapman and Mike Wayne on *The War Game* (dir. Peter Watkins, 1965; US 1967)—see Chapman, "The BBC and the Censorship of *The War Game* (1965)," *Journal of Contemporary History* 41.1 (2006) 75–94, and Wayne, "Failing the Public: The BBC, *The War Game* and Revisionist History, a Reply to James Chapman," ibid., 42.4 (2007) 627–37. Elsewhere Hill mentions work on the popular press and the nuclear question, but not Adrian Bingham, "'The Monster?' The British Popular Press and Nuclear Culture 1945–early 1960s," *British Journal for the History of Science* 45 (2012) 617–18.