

A “Mirror” up to Society? Popular Expectations of Democracy in the Daily Mirror, 1945-1979

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Abstract

During the early postwar years the Daily Mirror enjoyed a uniquely close relationship with its readership, priding itself on providing an outlet through which the “voice of the people” could play a role in the political discussions of the day. In the lead up to the 1945 General Election, the paper dedicated copious amounts of space to readers’ contributions and used their own discourse to reflect broader changes in public opinion. However, by the 1979 General Election the media landscape looked very different. Television had come to dominate the public sphere, and the Sun’s meteoric rise to newspaper stardom forced the Mirror to reflect on their journalistic strategy in order to appeal to an ever-changing public. This paper will explore these shifts; investigating changes in the media landscape and how they impacted the ways the Mirror facilitated public involvement with political debate. Through paying attention to the ways the “voice of the people” was presented within the newspaper, it will also reflect on the continuities and changes in popular expectations of democracy. Throughout the postwar years there was a redefining of concepts of “the political” and thus changes in the way the “voice of the people” was constructed. Through this comparative discussion, this paper will argue that the Mirror continued to play a vital role facilitating political communication and transforming vernacular discourse into public debate.

Author information

Jamie Lee Jenkins is a PhD candidate working on the Voice of the People project. She is currently investigating popular expectations of democracy in Great Britain between the end of the Second World War and the late 1970s. Her work focuses on the media, specifically tabloid newspapers, popular participation and democracy. Jamie’s key research interests are British political culture in the postwar period, the interaction between the media and politics and the social history of Britain in the latter half of the 20th century. She was trained at the University of Warwick and the University of Sheffield.

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Wednesday, 16 June - Session 4 - **9,00-10,30 CET (Webex)** - Panel – *The culture of debate in and beyond parliament: a comparison of Britain, Germany and The Netherlands, c. 1870-1990*

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