



**AFTER THE  
BATTLE**  
IT HAPPENED HERE

# TV PICTURES FROM OCCUPIED PARIS

Even before the current wave of nostalgia washed through British television, the Second World War had been a rich source of material for the programme makers. Granada's immensely popular *Family at War* was only one of many series showing life on the Home Front. But as we sit in front of our TV screens in the 1980s watching pictures of people sitting around wireless sets in the 1940s, it is strange to think that a small group of British servicemen and women actually served their country by spending several hours of a wartime day watching television. Not that they sat comfortably at home being entertained by the genteel output from BBC's Alexandra Palace — that had gone off the air without ceremony on September 1, 1939 at the end of a Mickey Mouse cartoon. These viewers were the WRNS and RAF personnel based at a secret listening post perched on the cliff top at Beachy Head in Sussex. Exposed to frequent air attacks from Focke Wulf 190 hit-and-run raiders as well as the south-westerly gales, this special 'Noise Station' — so called because its attention was primarily directed, not at Morse and RT transmissions, but towards navigational beacons, radars and radio-controlled bombs — kept a daily watch on the television signals from the Eiffel Tower; from the earliest tests in the summer of 1942 until the programmes ceased in August 1944. As well as providing an insight into German morale, this monitoring had the added bonus that newsreel shots of bomb damage might reveal how efficient had been the RAF's bombing of targets in Germany and occupied France.

Before continuing with an account of this little-known episode of the war, it is worth considering the history of European television

in the 1930s, a time when there was much experimentation into the number of lines required to make up a picture of good definition on a television screen. The BBC's low definition television service, inaugurated

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for regular use in 1932, used only 30 lines. In Germany, regular television broadcasts with

