

SECRETS & SPIES RESEARCH DOSSIER

Strange Life of the “Spy” Tokyo Rose

by Miki Ito - Sendai Shirayuri High School, Japan

During WWII, radio propaganda played a prominent role in conducting the war. Tokyo Rose is known as the most famous personality of radio propaganda in Japan. The name was given by Allied troops in the South Pacific during World War II to all female English-speaking radio broadcasters of Japanese propaganda (Tokyo). The programs were broadcast in the South Pacific and North America to demoralize Allied forces abroad and their families at home by emphasizing the troops' wartime difficulties and military losses.



Movie poster on *Tokyo Rose* (1MDB)

Iva D'Aquino is the most famous person who had been known as “Tokyo Rose.” She led a checkered life because of her role as Tokyo Rose. Iva Toguri is her maiden name. She was born on July 4, 1916, to Japanese immigrants in Los Angeles. She had spent her youth there and joined some ordinary American activities such as Girls Scouts and her school tennis team. In 1941, when she was 25 years old, her parents sent her on a trip to Japan to help care for her aunt who was terribly sick (Andrews). Meanwhile, political tensions between the US and Japan was growing. Toguri eventually tried to return to



Early life in the US. (Linda)

America, but she could not obtain a ship ticket to her home. A few days later, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor.

Once the war started between the United States and Japan, Toguri could only know that it is impossible to leave Japan. Japanese authorities tried to persuade her to renounce her US citizenship and swear allegiance to Japan (Andrews). Despite many other Americans in Japan agreeing to do so, she refused. As a result, she became classified as an enemy alien and kept under close observation. Over the next several months, she suffered the harassment by neighbors and military police, and finally she decided to move to Tokyo in order to take a job. Until August 1943, she worked as a typist for Radio Tokyo (27).

At the Radio Tokyo, Toguri met Major Charles Cousens, an Australian military officer who had been captured in Japan. Having been a successful radio announcer before the war, he was then forced to produce the propaganda show called “Zero Hour” (Andrews). It was propaganda disguised as entertainment for the US soldiers to demoralize them by telling them their girls back home were seeing



Charles Cousens
(Rouse)

other men (Biography). Its main purpose was dispersing propaganda. Cousens thought that Toguri would be perfect as a radio announcer because she had a voice that was rough, almost masculine, and was just what he wanted. From her encounter with Cousens, she became one of the Tokyo Roses.

Starting in November 1943, she used the name “Orphan Annie” on the *Zero Hour* and was broadcasted while reading Cousen’s scripts in a joking manner, sometimes even warning her listeners that the show was



Toguri on *Zero hour* (Rouse)

propaganda meant to inspire anxiety (Andrews). There were dozens of other English-speaking women who read propaganda; however, why is Iva Toguri only famous as a Tokyo Rose?

On April 19, 1945, Toguri married Felipe Aquino, a Portuguese citizen of Japanese-Portuguese ancestry (Rouses). So, she quit her job and moved to Atsugi to live with her husband’s family. She continued



With husband, Japan 1945 (Rouse)

looking for a way home to the US. At the time of the Japanese surrender in August 1945, Toguri and her husband were in dire financial straits (Rouse), so, she sold her story when American reporters offered \$2,000 for an interview with the famous Tokyo Rose (Andrews).



Interview with reporters (Rouse)

Once her identity became public, Toguri was made into the symbol of Japan's wartime propaganda and arrested on suspicion of treason (Andrews). She was in jail for over a year until



Mugshot, 1946 (Rouse)

the government investigation concluded that her broadcasts had been nothing more than “innocuous” entertainment (27). After being released, she managed to return to the US; however, in 1948, she was arrested again and charged with eight counts of treason.

At her trial in San Francisco, Toguri stressed that she had remained loyal to the United States by working to make a farce of her broadcasts (Andrews). Charles Cousens even came to the United States to



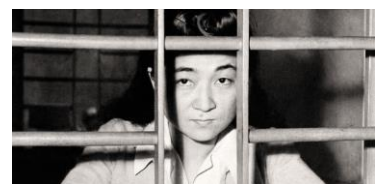
Federal Court in San Francisco (Rouse)

testify on her behalf, but the prosecution produced a series of Japanese witnesses who claimed to have heard her make incendiary statements on the air. In October 1949, a jury found her guilty of one count of treason. She was stripped of her American citizenship, given a \$10,000 fine, and sentenced to ten years in prison.



Newspaper report of sentencing, 1948 (Peterson)

In 1956, Toguri was released from a women's prison in West Virginia and could be reunited with her family while was living in Chicago. She began to help her father's business,



Behind bars, 1948 (Rouse)

but her reputation as “Tokyo Rose” always continued to follow her (Andrews). She was forced to fight off a deportation order from the U.S. government, and received no answer from repeated presidential pardon requests. On January 19, 1977, President Gerald Ford granted the request. She was then 60 years old, was exonerated of treason, and her American citizenship was restored. “It is hard to believe,” she said at the time. “But I have always maintained my innocence—this pardon is a measure of vindication.” On September 26, 2005, Toguri died at her home in Chicago. She was 90 years old.



Toguri in 1977
(WWII)

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