



THE COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVER

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Above: A group of grimly intent operators staff a wartime listening post equipped with banks of National receivers.

Below: Navy radiomen operating a communications facility...location unknown.

The National Company At War

Among a group of photos from the National Company loaned to us by radio historian Alan Douglas are several showing the firm's receivers being manufactured and using during World War II. One of these depicts a row of rack-mounted, military-version HROs and what are probably RAW or RAS navy receivers staffed by operators wearing headphones.

This photo, one of my favorites, is somewhat of a mystery at present in that it is one of the very few in the collection that does not bear the mark of the photographer Benjamin Morse of Boston. This may mean that National did not originate the photo. I recall seeing it published during the war in either *Life* or *The Saturday Evening Post*, possibly in connection with the sinking of the German battleship *Bismark*.

If one of our readers can shed some light on this, we will publish the response. Aside from the question of provenance (British? American?), note the concentration of the operators, probably sitting there for hours on end, monitoring one frequency with fingers poised on the keys of the Underwood





Above: The facilities are crude, but the workstation layout looks quite efficient as nimble fingers swiftly assemble National coilsets.

Left: In July 1943, during the darkest days of World War II, another HRO comes off the line and is tweaked into life by a home front worker.

typewriter waiting for some signal.

A telegraph key can be seen just past the near typewriter. Did these operators act as two-way radio operators, sending as well as receiving? Interestingly, no doubt for security reasons, the receiver frequency charts have been covered with blank paper.

Another shot (also without the Benjamin Morse credit) shows a group of USN radio operators working in primitive conditions. Among the receivers visible are a Super Pro, some National sliding-coil models, and in the rear corner the ubiquitous HRO. Those chairs look mighty hard! Again, we have no details...the caption on the back states simply "Misc. - Navy pictures."

A number of pictures showed scenes in the National Company factory. One of these depicts a department, staffed by women, turning out coils for both the NC-100-type and the HRO-



type receivers. Again, the wartime facilities appear quite crude. Another shot, dated July, 1943, shows a young woman tuning an HRO using fairly sophisticated, for the time, General Radio test equipment. The speaker on the shelf is modified and is probably part of the overall test setup. Both factory photos are labeled "women in radio industry." 