

CLANDESTINE CORNERWorld War II "Black" Radio Operations

The idea of "black" clandestine stations is that anyone who falls for the deception will believe he is hearing broadcasters who are on his side and are risking their lives to get their message across. For example, in WW-II, if Germany said, "This is Berlin speaking: You'd better make peace now," the average

American or Englishman could logically infer that the Nazis recommended peace because it would be a good thing for Germany. But hearing the same thing from a speaker whom he believed to be transmitting secretly in defiance of the German authorities, he might assume the speaker believed it a good thing for England or America. The lengths to which some of these "black" stations went to convince their audiences of their "genuineness" were amazing.

They cropped up all over Europe and Asia during the war. Italy had its anti-fascist, "Libertad Milan," France, its "Radio Corse Libre," Ulster, its secret Irish Republican station. Even the U.S. was supposedly the target of a clandestine station reliably reported to have been discovered on the west coast, broadcasting pro-Japanese propaganda.

The Germans made excellent use of a French language station in early 1940 which, among other things, attempted to promote pacifist sentiment in France and interfere with the prosecution of the war. This station seemed to be called both Radio Humanite, after the then suppressed French communist daily, and "La Voix de la Paix."

Run by the German propaganda ministry under the guise of an illicit service being put out by a large underground organization of Frenchmen, it played up grievances and fears and sought to undermine French morale. The German high command later thought it had played a role effectively and officially thanked the propaganda ministry and the staff of the German national radio, Reichsrundfunk, for their support.

Following the German invasion of Russia, a self-styled Russian Freedom Station, German controlled, urged Russian peasants not to destroy their crops and stores.

Ever since the war began, mysterious voices, supposedly transmitting from within Nazi-held territory, were picked up by monitors. One such claimed to be broadcasting from apartment houses in Prague, each day from a different location. Another said it originated in northern Norway, another from Hungary, several from Holland and two or more each from Austria and Bavaria. In the fall of 1941, yet another French Freedom Station, which signed on with the first six notes of La Marseillaise, was heard on frequencies in the 31 and 40 meter bands. If any of these stations were actually operated by true patriots from within occupied Europe, and this seems most unlikely, they would have been suicide ventures since existing direction finding gear made it possible for Gestapo technicians to track down the whereabouts of the bootleg transmitters. It can be assumed that these stations which pretended to be anti-Nazi, were really German controlled "black" stations.

Stations beamed to English audiences from Germany will be treated in a later article. Besides these, others were aimed at the British overseas empire.

A station called Radio Free India was, in fact, broadcasting from the Berlin area, and apparently later used transmitters in occupied Holland. Also of German origin was a station called "Anzac Tetoo", intended for Australian and New Zealand listeners.

An outlet with the curious name of "Debunk," located in Germany, made scurrilous charges that the U.S. Army was riddled with corruption. This task was given to an English-speaking announcer of the German radio staff who used the name Joe Scanlon in the spring of 1942. Scanlon was actually a fictitious name and probably was, in fact, the announcer Otto Koischwitz, who also broadcast other propaganda programs for the Reich under the name, "Mr. J.K."

"Debunk" tried to give American listeners the impression that they were hearing an outlaw station operated from the Midwest, whose purpose was to "tell the truth about the war and the Roosevelt administration." When it first went on the air, "Debunk" went to great lengths to make its listeners believe it originated in the central part

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BLACK RADIO (Continued) - of the U.S. Its announcers made their accents as "twangy" as they could, opened with a few bars of the "Star Spangled Banner," and announced the time as Central Standard.

Among later efforts by the Nazis to exploit "black" radio stations were the creations of three ostensibly clandestine transmitters designed to interfere with the Allied offensive in North Africa. These stations were "Brazzaville Two," which was supposed to be a Fighting French outlet in Africa; the "Voice of Truth," and "Radio Patrie," all of them really broadcasting from German controlled France or Italy.

"Brazzaville Two" was designed to be confused with the authentic Free French station broadcasting from Brazzaville, French Equatorial Africa. It issued contradictory orders, appealed to French soldiers fighting on the Allied side, and attacked the U.S.

The "Voice of Truth" went on the air to Africa with a strong anti-Semitic line for the purpose of creating animosity between Arabs and Jews. This station, probably located in Vichy France, paraded as an authentic Arab mouthpiece.

Fake freedom stations were used by the Germans with increasing frequency after 1941. Afghanistan was a favorite site for them, as Axis agents and even diplomatic missions were able to work there without interference.

These stations, usually not very powerful and not designed to carry very far, broadcast false news items against Britain and the U.S., in order to influence rural areas of Northwest India, Iran, Iraq and Arabia.

Radio Himalaya, which ostensibly was operating secretly from New Delhi under British noses, actually originated in Rome. The Free Egypt station was also probably Italian based. Radio India Independence broadcast from Tokyo.

To support Rommel's North African campaign, German authorities in 1942 set up an expensive operation known as Radio Free Arabia. It was expensive because broadcasting talent that could speak Arabic was hard to find in Berlin. There were few who were fluent and with the different government ministries bidding for their language services, they were expensive to hire. Yet the German ministry of propaganda was convinced it was worth the effort and expense because it had been advised of the tremendous effect the spoken word had in Arabic countries.

(Digested from "The History of Clandestine Radio Operations,"  
a DXplorer Radio Association publication.)