

CLANDESTINE CORNER"BURO CONCORDIA" OPERATED NAZI CLANDESTINES

England was the target of four Nazi clandestine "black" radio operations during World War II, each directed to a different segment of the population. The most vociferous of these was the New British Broadcasting Station, which addressed itself to a middle class audience. Its director, who also had a hand in other clandestine operations from Germany, as well as being a speaker on the national radio station, was William Joyce, dubbed Lord Haw-Haw.

A second operation was the Christian Peace Movement Station, which claimed to speak for that non-existent movement and addressed itself to the pacifists in England. The Workers' Challenge Station appealed to the extreme left wing of the British population, while Radio Caledonia preached Scottish nationalism meant for the shipworkers of the Clydeside. According to BBC technicians, all four were operated from within 100 miles of Berlin.

Early in 1940, plans were made in a heavily guarded villa adjoining the Rundfunkhaus on Masurenalle, in the Charlottenburg district of Berlin, for a "black" radio operation for Britain. The news in English was to be read live at the studios and the commentaries except in emergencies, were prerecorded. Programs were sent by post office land line to transmitters at Hamburg, Bremen, Cologne and Zeesen, according to availability.

The department in charge of these programs to England was known as "Buro Concordia" and its organization was assigned to a Dr. Erich Hetzler.

To produce radio programs sounding as though they were British in origin, posed a formidable staffing problem. The English speakers already being used on the national German radio could not broadcast from Berlin and still maintain the pose of operating from secret stations within England. Further, the men running a clandestine station such as was planned, must talk colloquial English and make local references, Hetzler realized. Joyce was chosen for the job and thereafter produced about nine-tenths of the scripts broadcast over the secret stations.

As the urgent need for a staff arose, Joyce interviewed disgruntled Britishers in German prisoner-of-war camps at Thorn in the Wartegau. After interviewing some, eight were chosen and they volunteered to broadcast against their own country. The material inducements were that the volunteers were to be moved to Berlin, would be accommodated in a house, allowed to wear civilian clothes and be paid a salary. Later, several others were also recruited as announcers on the secret stations.

The first program and the most ambitious was started in the latter part of February 1940 and put out broadcasts under the name of the New British Broadcasting Station for a half-hour each evening on shortwave from Gumbinnen in East Prussia. Studios and administrative space were at first located near the Berlin Rundfunkhaus, later under the press boxes at the Olympia stadium.

The major British papers were received a day late, which limited their usefulness for topical talks. Suitable research facilities were lacking. Radio monitoring in Germany was carried on by four agencies, none of them much good to Buro Concordia. The Reichsrundfunk monitors generally gathered only information favorable to Germany; the Forschungsamt (Research Office) headed by Goring, was mainly interested in military affairs; the propaganda ministry duplicated the work of the Reichsrundfunk; and the German foreign office's monitoring department maintained a superior attitude to the others. Eventually, Buro Concordia established its own monitoring of radio broadcasts.

The German "black" operations were handicapped by the fact that they were never allowed to play their roles so whole-heartedly that they criticized the Fuhrer or the Reich. No such self-criticism restriction was placed by the British on their secret radio operations and as a result, the latter were generally more apt to be taken for what they pretended to be, by their listeners.

On July 8, 1940, another secret German station, Workers' Challenge, was heard on medium wave in Britain as a program lasting 20 minutes. Like its companion station, NBBS, (although the secret stations never referred to each other in broadcasts) it

(Continued next page)

BURO CONCORDIA (Continued)

professed to be working somewhere in England, though its programs actually were transmitted by a portable transmitter moving about the Rhineland and later in Holland. Its announcers purported to be tough factory workers of Socialist views and often they used unprintable language never before heard on the radio in Britain.

The strains of "Loch Lomond" preceded, on July 18, 1940, an announcement in a suitable accent, of another station... "You are listening to Radio Caledonia, the Voice of Scotland." Ribbentrop, despite the time he had spent in London and ample opportunities to learn better, was convinced the tyrannical English were holding down the other nationalities in the British Isles by force and these minorities were awaiting their chance to overthrow the central government. This thought was sufficiently widespread in official Germany to support the establishment of a secret radio advocating a separate peace between Scotland and Germany.

The next station started by Buro Concordia, first heard in August 1940, showed an indication that another approach might pay off. Introduced by the music of a harmonium, and operating for a quarter-hour daily on shortwave, the new station was pacifist in sentiment and spoke for a fictitious body called the Christian Peace Movement. It is doubtful that this station ever did much good for the Nazis, though it was still operating weakly on the higher frequencies in April of the following year.

Occasionally a few lines in a British paper gave Concordia a hint that it had an English audience. Mimeographed excerpts from its broadcasts were found left in cinemas and a Britisher was charged with sticking inside a telephone booth, a label with the NBBS frequency. But it wasn't too much for a station claiming to speak for an organized fifth column. However, the stations were expected to grow in importance as the plans for the expected attack on Britain developed.

On August 14, 1940, NBBS was the first station to report that parachutists wearing British uniforms or civilian clothing had landed near Birmingham, Manchester, and Glasgow and were being concealed by fifth columnists.

At the time, the British public firmly believed that the invasion of Holland had been preceded by parachute drops of men disguised as nuns or Dutch soldiers. The Germans were correct in thinking the British susceptible to parachutist scares. The story was destroyed the following day when the British press reported that although empty parachutes were found on English soil, there were no traces of footprints leaving the cornfields and other places where the paratroops were supposed to have landed. Apparently, empty 'chutes had been dumped from German planes to create panic.

The New British Broadcasting Station continued its propaganda activities throughout the war. In late March 1945, with the Berlin defenses crumbling, the Buro Concordia moved out of the city and set up at Helmstadt. The staff of the clandestine Indian station (mentioned in last month's article) had already joined them there from Holland. Without delay, the engineers assembled their equipment, the editorial staff got to work on scripts and that evening, Good Friday, the Oebisfelde transmitter broadcast the NBBS program. Buro Concordia went on working until the American troops arrived in Brunswick, so near to Helmstadt and Oebisfelde that they could overrun these districts within hours. The staff, particularly those who had broadcast against their own nation, were advised to scatter. All foreigners had German identity cards, to enable them to submerge themselves in the local population. Most were caught and turned over to British authorities, however.

A Pole named Kowalski was the last to broadcast on one of Concordia's "black" services. Shortly afterward, technicians arrived from Berlin and put the Oebisfelde transmitter off the air. Hitzler burned all the stations' records, tapes and scripts in the yard of the Helmstadt hotel.

Joyce was eventually captured by the British in Austria. He was tried in England, convicted and in 1949, hung for treason.

----- 0 -----

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