

LANDESTINE CORNERBritish Clandestine - Gustav Siegfried 1

Probably the most successful of all the WW-II "black" broadcasters were a series of stations operated by the British from England. Several, including the famous Gustav Siegfried Eins, will be discussed this month. Other British clandestines will be treated in subsequent issues.

The British organization responsible for the clandestine broadcasts was known as Special Operations 1 (SO-1), which got into the game early in the war. Prior to October 1940, this agency used two research units (RU's), as the secret stations were designated for cover purposes. They were loosely controlled by SO-1, but most of the work was done by a group of German exiles. One station called itself "The German Freedom Station," and was a right-wing operation headed by a former Reichstag deputy of the German Centre Party. The other was called "Sender de Europaischen Revolution," the Radio of the European Revolution, and was run by a group of German Marxists. It was headed by a man named Neubeginn, though overall direction came from a member of SO-1, Richard Crossman.

"The German Freedom Station," broadcast on 9,710 kc/s., and began transmissions with "Achtung! Achtung! Here is Germany Calling! Germans, look for the truth! Listen to our broadcasts. You must realize that he who condemns the Nazis need by no means be an enemy of Germany; but he who is a friend of the Nazis can never be a true friend of Germany." This station conducted what it called "advanced lessons in sabotage through the radio waves," for workers in the Reich's industrial areas.

The left-leaning Radio of the European Revolution broadcast from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on 9,615 kc/s. It appealed to workers to "shake off the Fascist yoke" and preached a doctrine of European community, good will and Marxism.

In October 1940, British "black" operations took on a new look, one which made them stand out from the rest of the clandestine propaganda stations of the war. The reason for the new approach, largely, was the appearance of a new head of SO-1, Sefton Delmer.

Delmer was an experienced journalist who had grown up in Germany, spoke the language fluently and had access to detailed reports of conditions within the Reich from British intelligence, reports of bomber crews and captured German personnel. For the years the station was operating, and in fact, until 1962 when Delmer wrote a book of his wartime experiences, the project remained a closely kept secret.

Delmer was born in Berlin in 1904, son of an Australian professor who lectured at Berlin University. He left Germany in 1917 but returned ten years later as a free-lance journalist. At the war's start he returned to London and in late 1940 became director of SO-1. He is now chief foreign affairs reporter for the London Daily Express and as recently as 1962 he lectured the U.S. Army's Psychological Warfare School, Ft. Bragg, N.C., on his activities with propaganda broadcasts.

The new twist of Delmer's was what he referred to as "psychological judo," exploiting the impetus of the enemy's own ideological preaching to turn it against him. One other break with propaganda tradition initiated by Delmer was that the clandestine station should not sound as though it was directed to the general public. He recalled the way he had sometimes found himself listening to the salty conversations of ships' captains talking over the radiotelephone at sea. He intended to make the German listener believe he was eavesdropping in much the same sense on radio talk not intended for his ears. As he twiddled the knobs of his set, he would suddenly find himself tuned in to what sounded like the signals traffic of a clandestine military organization sending cyphered instructions to secret cells all over occupied Europe. In between cypher messages, a lie-hard of the old Prussian school would use the transmitter to give members of the supposed organization his caustic and salaciously outspoken views of what was going on--views which, while being spiced with plenty of inside information, would show him as a loyal and devoted follower of the Fuhrer, but scathingly contemptuous of the "rabble" that had seized control of the fatherland in the Fuhrer's name." The stations were assigned to demonstrate a growing split between the conservative elements of the German army and the radicals of the Nazi party.

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OBSCURINE CORNER (Continued) - Delmer says, "To add special irony, I decided that the boss leader should be introduced as 'der chef,' the chief. For this was the title which I had heard the members of his immediate entourage refer to Hitler as I traveled around Germany with him in 1932, and the station itself we would call 'Gustav Siegfried Eins,' GS-1, signalers German for our 'George-Sugar-One' -- and leave it for the listeners to decide what these cabalistic initials signified. Did they mean Geheimsender 1, (secret transmitter 1); or Generalstab 1 (general staff 1); or perhaps as one staffer suggested, Gurkensalat 1 (cucumber salad 1)? I had no idea, nor did anyone else. We were soon to hear the most intriguing theories being reported back to us from many and elsewhere abroad."

GS-1 went on the air May 23, 1941. The leading character, der chef, was played by Paul Sanders, an ex-mystery writer who had lived in Germany until 1938, and who was attached to a British Army Pioneer (Engineer) Corps unit. Studios were in a brick house in the little Bedfordshire village of Aspley Guise. The first transmission began very early with der chef announcing his call and dictating some code signals:

"Here is Gustav Siegfried Eins. Here is Gustav Siegfried Eins," the voice repeated about 45 seconds. And then, "Calling Gustav Siegfried Achtzehn (18), here is a message for Gustav Siegfried Achtzehn..." Then followed a message in number code. It was a high grade cypher and when broken by the Reich Central Security Office, as it was intended to be, read, "Willy meet Jochen Friday, row five, parquet stalls, second performance, Union Theater." Delmer says, "I fondly imagined leather coated Gestapo agents attending every one of the hundreds of Union Theater cinemas on the look out for Willy and Jochen." Then in voice announcement followed a transmission attacking various Nazi underlings, such as Himmler and Nazi labor czar Fritz Sauckel.

The Gustav Siegfried Eins station also aimed its blows at the weak link in the Axis, being German assistance to the "weak sister Italians" was a waste of men and materiel. Italian forces in Africa were scathingly referred to as the "macaroni front."

The success of this station in keeping its true identity a secret is apparent, even in studying comments by British and American authors, written in the early 1940's.

One author said he had information that the station was really German and was operated by associates of Rudolf Hess, a Nazi leader who hoped to make peace with England and form an Anglo-German alliance against Russia. Another writer said, "A neutral informant in close touch with members of the Nazi party has asserted that Station Gustav Siegfried Eins is located in Germany, that is whereabouts are known to the Gestapo, that its operators cannot be arrested because the power behind them is a figure so eminent that his disgrace would cause a disastrous upheaval on the home front. This figure is, of course, Hermann Goering (head of the Luftwaffe)."

For an interval signal, GS-1 used the second line of an 18th century folk song by wig Holty, played on an out-of-tune piano. The first bars of the song were used as interval signal by the Reich's own Deutschlandsender and GS-1's signature tune simply answered back with the next notes. This remained der chef's interval signal for the 18 months of Gustav Siegfried Eins' existence.

Such good reaction was obtained from the broadcasts of this station that the British became worried their American allies would believe there really were internal frictions between the Nazi party and the army and that this alone would bring Germany to its knees. President Franklin Roosevelt was told the story of GS-1's deception. Unfortunately, the news was soon all over Washington.

With the station's value now on the line, it was decided that der chef would have "die" and at the end of October 1943, the station went off the air as the chief was caught by the Gestapo at last."

But this final broadcast resulted in the only bad slip of the station's career, for it died twice. Delmer explained it thus: "A transmitter engineer, knowing no German and unaware of the final nature of the broadcast -- complete with tommy gun salvo and 'ff, f...gee you, you swine!'.. went through his usual routine and repeated the recording an hour after the broadcast that was supposed to be the chief's last. Unfortunately, I never heard it. I have never met anyone else who did."

(Digested from "The History of Obscure Radio Operations,"
A DXplorer Radio Association publication.)