



SHORTWAVE BROADCAST CENTER

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THE VOICE OF THE REICH

Twelve hours daily, a propaganda barrage was directed at the United States by the high-powered transmitters of Hitler's Third Reich. By means of shortwave transmissions the Berlin Propaganda Ministry made a determined effort to influence public opinion in this country and Canada.

At 6 a.m. (EST) every morning, the German radio opened its special service beamed to North America, in what it termed "the American language". This morning session lasted until 9 a.m., and was transmitted on 9610, 11770 and 11240 kHz. (Yes, 11240 kHz.) The evening period began at 4:50 p.m. and closed at one the next morning. (It's interesting to note that Radio Moscow broadcasts in almost the very same time period today, from 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. EST, or 2200-0600 GMT.) German transmissions to England were heard perfectly in this country from 2:15 p.m. onwards. Regardless of the war, German broadcasts, according to Berlin, contained "a choice assortment". Here and there, Nazi speakers interpolated patriotic statements such as "Am Deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen." ("The spirit of Germany will cure the world.") Nearly four hours of German North American broadcasting time was devoted to spoken propaganda.

Before all news programs, the German radio tolled a bell for each British ship that had been sunk that day. After all news programs, the station used to broadcast the Reich's war slogan: "Germany is fighting for the removal of an injustice; the others are fighting for its continuation."

German programs to America were slanted for people of all tastes and levels of culture. Berlin presented colloquial dialogues between "Jim and Johnny", and "Fritz and Fred", along with "Letter to Iowa", to name a few of the old programs. Jim and Johnny were supposedly Canadians. Jim, a kind-hearted and amazingly informed milkman, lectured his sadly ignorant friend Johnny on European affairs as he delivered the daily quart of milk. This feature was presented every Thursday night at 10:50 (EST). Fritz and Fred were a German and an American who "chewed the rag" at the microphone for the Berlin shortwave station on Saturdays at 9:20 p.m. Fred hesitantly supported the British point of view until his views were demolished by the arguments of the bright Fritz. The "Letter to Iowa" came in every Monday at 8:45 p.m., and was a straight talk addressed to "Dear Harry and the folks back home in Iowa." Each program in this series was devoted to putting across one single idea, and only the simplest arguments were used. Berlin seemed to have a pretty low opinion of the average American's intelligence.

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For the more literate, the German radio used to present topical talks at 9, 9:20 and 10:50, a dramatic monologue entitled "Hot off the Wire" on Saturdays at 10:50 p.m., and a question-and-answer period called "Listen and Judge for Yourselves" on Mondays at 8:30(all EST). The topical talks were introduced by highly melodramatic titles such as "The Creeping Shadow", "England's Last Hour", and so on.

The language and arguments used differed according to the supposed cultural level of the listening audience, but the underlying strategy remained the same. It consisted of attacking every aspect of British policy and institutions, while praising German policy and the National Socialist way of life. Britain was depicted as America's "hereditary enemy"; Germany as America's "oldest friend". Radio Berlin pointed out that England had burned down the American capital in 1812, and that America was aided by Prussia in the Revolutionary War.

To transmit this message(and others) to the people of the U.S., Germany assembled a colorful team of announcers, and most of them had first-hand knowledge of American life and the American mind. The main propagandist in the English section was Fred Kaltenbach, named Lord Hee-Haw. Kaltenbach was a German-American born in Iowa. He was Jim in the "Jim and Johnny" program; Fred in "Fritz and Fred"; and he was the letter-reader in the "Letter to Iowa" spot. In late 1940, Lord Hee-Haw was working overtime to convince Americans that Britain was a lost cause. He saw London easily outclassed by Berlin, and urged "Dear Harry" in the "Letter to Iowa" show not to bet money on the wrong horse.

The top propagandist for Germany was the Oxford-accented Lord Haw-Haw, who started broadcasting to England in April, 1938, and two years later started to transmit to the United States. Haw-Haw was heard on the usual Berlin frequencies four times a day, threedays a week. It was the British themselves who gave Haw-Haw his spectacular build-up. J.B. Ward of the London Daily Express christened him in a book which immediately became a best-seller. Also, a musical review entitled "Haw-Haw" played twice nightly to packed houses in London. Lord Haw-Haw ridiculed the British upper classes and convulsed the British, who listened in ever-increasing numbers. By August, 1939, half of England's 18 million radio sets were tuned at least once a day to the Zeesen radio site, near Berlin, which was Lord Haw-Haw's broadcast headquarters. Some said Haw-Haw was Norman Baillie-Stewart, the notorious British officer who had been imprisoned for a year in the Tower of London for selling military secrets. Others had even wilder ideas of who the broadcaster was. Finally, the British government endorsed the London Picture Post's identification of him as William Joyce, an American-born Irishman who had served as propaganda director of the British Fascist Union.

His popularity was easily explained. He knew the British character and the correct approach to his audience. First he won a following by tickling John Bull on his funny bone. Then, posing as a sympathetic advisor to his countrymen, he fanned the flames of discontent already existing in the poorer classes. Lord Haw-Haw would often support his points by quoting chapters from the British press, periodicals, and even official British Government reports. In addition, he was continually bringing off stunts which left the British gasping. One day, for instance, he informed listeners that the clock on Weymouth Parade, London, was half-a-minute slow -- and it was!

Finally, we come to Edward L. Delany, originally from Glenview, Illinois, and known to 1940's shortwave listeners as E.D. Ward. This character was always

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on the spot to report the entry of Hitler's goose-stepping legions into the capitals of Europe. One of his most fantastic claims was that the United States and England had planned to form one nation, with the Duke of Windsor as First Viceroys to President Roosevelt. Delany ridiculously reasoned that the Duke would be the likely choice, since he had an American wife.

...Michael Silverstein

Next month by the same author: America speaks to the Reich.