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by
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Introduction

I have often thought that one of the obstacles to creating truly **objective** military history is an inclination to write with a subtext that, like in sports reporting, roots for one side or the other.

In this study of Radio Propaganda against Germany in WW II, we may not avoid that pitfall, but I would advise the reader and listener that you must be especially nimble: in this story, our good guys may do some very wicked things. And the bad guys, the Nazis in this case, may be on the receiving end of some especially nasty lies, disinformation,

rumors and tricks. All concocted by OUR side, often in the interest of turning the inherent weaknesses of the Nazi state against itself.

A major challenge in researching these, mostly British, operations, was simply that almost all the related records and documents were destroyed at the very end of the war in Europe, undoubtedly to avoid the embarrassment that a history of purposeful government lying might be revealed.

The sources for this paper are many bits and pieces plus two biographies: *The Black Game* and *Black Boomerang* by two of the principals who ran the operations. Proving the *effectiveness* of their efforts will not be easy. Most of the evidence is anecdotal. But I found tantalizing indeed the speculation that British radio stations, pretending to be German, may have influenced the German mindset.

Anecdotal Evidence on the existence & effect of gray and black radio

For example, from Goebbels' Diaries:

November 28, 1943

In the evening the so-called "Calais Soldiers Broadcast" which *evidently* originates in England and uses the same wavelength as Radio Station Deutschland when the latter is cut out during air raids, gave us something to worry about. The station does a very clever job of propaganda and from what is put on the air one can gather that the English know exactly what they have destroyed and what not.

Joseph Goebbels, The Goebbels Diaries: 1942-1943. trans. Louis P. Lochner (Garden City: Doubleday, 1948)

Definition of Terms

<p>White propaganda (clearly identified)</p>	<p>BBC, Voice of America, Radio Berlin</p>	<p>“This is London calling” VOA plays “Yankee Doodle” "Germany Calling"</p>
<p>Gray propaganda (unidentified - who do you think it is?)</p>	<p>Not (clearly) identified</p>	<p>“Keep listening to “Der Chef” ”This is GS1” (gray/black)</p>
<p>Black propaganda (It says it's one thing. It's not.)</p>	<p>Radio Concordia (France, 1940) (It's a Goebbels operation)</p> <p>Official German Radio (It's not. It's British pretending to be Official German Radio.)</p>	<p>“This is Radio Concordia”</p> <p>“Hier ist der Reichsender”</p>

The meaning of propaganda and the limitations of this inquiry

I'd like to emphasize that this paper will confine itself to Gray and Black propaganda. This is NOT about white radio, that is, it is NOT about the BBC, or Lord HawHaw, or Axis Sally, Tokyo Rose, or Nazi jazz from Hamburg, on radio stations which clearly identified themselves, and about which much has been written. Note that the problem with these WHITE sources evidences the very reason GRAY & BLACK radio stations were created: that is, "London Calling", "Yankee Doodle" and Radio Berlin were labeled in the mind of the listener on the other side: ENEMY PROPAGANDA. Think of the way that the very word, **propaganda**, is intoned in American English: "Why that's just propaganda!" meaning untrue, slanted, and in the interest of the enemy and **not in your own country's interest**. Even if a white radio station, like the BBC, were to have listeners, say in Germany, chances are they'd be anti-Nazi Germans to begin with and broadcasting to them would be preaching to the converted. Gray and black propaganda evolved precisely to get around this limitation of white propaganda

Keep in mind that white propaganda, from Berlin or London, can distort or lie too. In fact, a case can be made that much of the information on black and gray radio was *more* truthful than white. Remember that white propaganda says "I" and "you" while gray and black propaganda says "we". The head of British gray and black propaganda said, "we must never lie by accident." (Cover with "The Truth" on its head from the *Calvin website* at <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/>).

Nazi Minister of Propaganda Josef Goebbels considered his own propaganda vital and, remembering the upheavals in Germany in the wake of WW I, strongly felt that the enemy's propaganda might well be deadly. In this paper, we will see how Goebbels was able – with a straight-face – to ban listening to foreign broadcasts and to make it a patriotic cause to turn in your regular radio set for a radio with limited receiving power. We will see how a little -known, Berlin-born British subject, Sefton Delmer, was able to concoct myriad schemes to circumvent Goebbels' effort; he even to created a situation where Germans, listening to gray and black radio and aware they were **probably** from enemy stations, were able, in Plato's phrase, to willingly suspend disbelief.



German weekly humor magazine *Lustige Blätter* (Merry Pages) shows statue of "The Truth" on its head.

The History & Evolution of Gray And Black Radio Propaganda

The origins of gray and black propaganda extend back to Sun Tzu around 500 BC postulating **rumor** as a weapon of war. But just before the age of radio, there's one possibly significant series of events worth noting: by 1918, Lord Northcliff's Crewe House in London had become a factory for all kinds of propaganda aimed at Germans on the Western Front. In October, 1918 alone, over 5 million leaflets were dropped on German trenches, including a troop information newspaper of undeclared origin, *Heer und Heimat* (Army and Homeland), and subversive pamphlets bound with covers that looked like popular German books. (Jolly) Imagine how this might have contributed to the post-World War I "stab-in-the-back" theory or to the mindset of one German soldier, Adolph Hitler, until he was gassed on October 16th.

In the 1920s and 30s, the public everywhere was entranced with radio. It may be hard, in our media-bombed age, to appreciate just how magical it was. Voices in the ether. Folks spent hours twiddling the radio dial, catching words from the nearest big city or from across the ocean. You might read one or two newspapers but here, on your radio, were dozens. In real-time, we'd say now. Hitler loved radio and Goebbels delivered a paper in 1933 entitled *The Radio as the Eighth Great Power*" (Calvin website at <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb56.htm>).

Interestingly, most authorities (Howe, et al) agree that the first recorded use of gray or black radio propaganda was Nazi against Nazi. Between September 1934 and January, 1935,

adherents of Nazi renegade Otto Strasser set up a short wave transmitter in Czechoslovakia which claimed it was broadcasting from inside Germany. The short-lived venture ended in a hail of gunfire when the Gestapo tracked it down, sent a team over the border, and killed the chief engineer and destroyed the transmitter.

During the Spanish Civil War, Goebbels supplied a mobile transmitter that worked in the guise of a Republican station.

And it seems that the Nazis really did start **big-time** gray and black propaganda radio.

One month after the attack on Poland, Goebbels' Ministry for the Enlightenment of the People and Propaganda added to its domestic and international services a third section: Bureau Concordia. As the Phoney War evolved into the conquest of France, the French heard unidentified radio stations which seemed to be Communist urging pacifism and peace and messages that "France was weak, Germany was strong, and Britain was using France for its own imperialist purposes (Bergmeier & Lotz) The station would



"reveal" deficiencies in the French armament industry and express concern for the country's future if the army lost their spirit. (Photo from the *Why We Fight Series, The Nazis Strike*, OWI/US Signal Corps, 1943)

The station would report that the French government fled the country, leaving the people to fend for themselves and that they "knew" of cholera in Paris, and "advised" listeners to withdraw their savings from bank accounts and stock-pile food. This type of broadcasting continued till France was in a chaotic and frenzied state. In Goebbels diary he writes, "The minister reported that an analysis made by our diplomatic services confirms the effectiveness of our broadcasts, that their success is one hundred per cent, and that the collapse in the enemy camp can be attributed to a major degree to these broadcasts" On June 24, a couple of days after the surrender of France, the German secret stations closed down because they had achieved what they had been created to do. (From the *German Radio and Fascism in the 1930's* website at <http://www.sit.wisc.edu/~pnpoltzer/index.htm>)

Shortly after the Fall of France, Goebbels launched the New British Broadcasting Station, an early project of William Joyce, before he became Lord Haw Haw. **The Germans also ran stations intended for North American listeners, such as Radio Debunk operating from Bremen tho claiming to be "the Voice of All Free America" transmitting from the Midwestern United States.** " [Sound clip of Radio Debunk](http://www.earthstation1.com/Station_D.E.B.U.N.K..html). (From the *On the Short Waves* website at http://www.earthstation1.com/Station_D.E.B.U.N.K..html)

When the Nazis' preparations for the invasion of the British Isles was at its peak, Goebbels gloated in his diary, on May 29, 1940, "We are stoking up panic...Have pushed secret stations into top gear...Churchill keeps up the bluster, fear sweats from every pore of his body...We haven't yet turned up the steam full blast in our broadcasts. Waiting for that until just before the catastrophe." As it turned out, it was Goebbels who'd be on the receiving end.

The man who'd give it to him was a man he knew quite well:

Sefton Delmer

During Hitler's 1932 election campaign, the Nazi entourage included a British journalist.



Photos by Sefton Delmer, provided by his son Felix Delmer, appeared in "Black Propaganda" by Mark Kenyon in issue No. 75 of "[After the Battle](#)" Used with permission.

He's **not** in these photos. He's **the photographer who took these photos.**

Sefton Delmer was born in Berlin in 1904. His father was an Australian on the English faculty of The University of Berlin and Sefton grew up to speak German like a native. He became the German correspondent for Lord Beaverbrook's *Daily Express* and personally knew Hitler, Hess, Goering, Goebbels and Roehm. I recommend to you his account of his meetings with some of these Nazis at the scene of the Reichstag Fire as a notable work of journalism of the era (See <http://www.heretical.com/miscella/reichstg.html>).



At the beginning of the war, Delmer, by then in Britain had to clear up some doubts about his loyalties. The British thought he might be a German agent or Nazi sympathizer because he was

German-born and had spent most of his life in Germany. At the same time, the Germans put him on the Gestapo's *people of interest* list that they planned to use if England was conquered.

(Sefton Delmer's son has begun to publish his father's work on the web. This fulltext undertaking adds previously unpublished photos and other material to this indispensable work. See <http://www.seftondelmer.co.uk/contents.htm>)

Most British intelligence and deception operations were run by committee. The Twenty Committee, the operations surrounding Enigma and even the BBC were committee operations. But Delmer was a controlling personality who had got the backing from on high to somehow get to the Germans through the ether, get into the German mind, and somehow, get into their ears. **That** wasn't going to be easy.

The People's Radio



Photos in this section from the **Antique Radios - Germany** site at antike-radios.com Used with permission.

Perhaps remembering how, in 1918, Allied propaganda had shattered German morale and the cohesiveness of their armed forces, Hitler had Goebbels make a determined effort that Germans would hear the Nazi voice and not others.

A radio receiver for the people, Volksempfänger VE 301 — whose model number represents the day on which the Nazis seized power, January 30 — was quickly developed and introduced in 1933. All German manufacturers were subsequently required to produce models of the People's Radio set for the standard price of 76 Reichsmarks

Compare this receiver with the kind most Europeans had in the '30s and '40s



The ordinary radio on the left is marked for stations all over Europe and had a shortwave band. The People's Radio on the right had a simple dial, no shortwave and is only marked for German frequencies.

In case there's any doubt, a bright orange tag was hooked to the tuning knob.



It reads: "Think about this: Listening to foreign broadcasts is a crime against the national security of our people. It is a Fuehrer Order punishable by prison at hard labor."

Later in the war, listening to foreign radio was punishable **by death**...but at the same time, late in the war, the hunger and need for better war information may have made more Germans take a chance.



But in the '30s in Germany, in a campaign meant to define if you were a good German or not, people turned in their regular receivers with which they could receive broadcasts from all over Europe and the world - while no hype was spared on the People's radio with limited reception.



Poster from *The German Propaganda Archive* at Calvin College at <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/>
*A Poster from the 1930s - All of Germany listens to the Fuehrer
on the People's Radio*

This was "a whispered joke" of the time:

Dear God Make me mute and dumb,
> that to Dachau, I don't come.
> Dear God stuff up both my ears,
> So neither one a clear word hears.
> Dear God Make me deaf and blind
> stop up my nose, befog my mind
> In every way just let me show
> Our world is wonderful, I know
> Unseeing, deaf and mute and mild,
> I am my Adolf's dearest child.

English adaptation and verse by Philip S. Goodman

Gustav Siegfried Eins

Not many Germans heard the first broadcast of GS1 on May 23rd 1941 . But for those who did, they heard the program open, as did so many international broadcasts in WW II, with a series of coded message like “This is GS1 calling GS18” “This is GS1 calling GS47 ” followed by a coded message. Then “Der Chef”, the Chief, introduced himself:

He appeared to be a typical diehard loyal old Prussian Army Officer whose colourful and outspoken views showed him as deeply loyal to the Fatherland, and indeed the Fuehrer, but severely critical of many of the Nazi policies and conduct of the war. Above all, he was scathingly contemptuous of the Nazi party rabble that had seized the Fatherland in the Fuehrer's name. Listeners tuning in would naturally gain the impression that they were listening to a clandestine German military transmitter broadcasting coded strategic messages and diatribes from a senior officer who could not contain his opinions any longer. (Michael R Burden, "The Biggest Aspidistra in the World" <http://members.aol.com/skywave48/aspidistra.htm>)

This was pure Sefton Delmer where he drew upon his years in Germany and his insights into the German personality of the era. Now head of the British Political Warfare Executive's gray and black propaganda effort, he had no end of tricks up his sleeve.

Here’s an analysis of just a few elements of a GS1 broadcast:

Broadcast	Appearance / Speculation	The truth
GS1 (meaning left to the imagination of the German listener)	Gregor Strasser (a “red-brown” Nazi shot in the Roehm putsch”) Gepürfte Sicherheit German certification mark controlled by the German Ministry of Labour.... General Staff – is this the real voice of the Wehrmacht?	Nothing Delmer’s people joked, it means <i>Gurkensalat</i> (<i>Cucumber Salad</i>)
“This is GS1 calling GS18” “This is GS1 calling GS47 ”	Many members in this underground	There was just GS1
Coded message	A conspiracy	Not hard to break
Decoded message = “Hans	Conspirators will meet	There are 100s of

meet Johan at the Odeon at 1400 on Tuesday”		Odeon Cinemas around Germany ...make security services spin their wheels
“As we said in our last broadcast...”	There have been previous broadcasts...	It’s the first broadcast. Undermines the Nazi’s monitoring-reporting service

Indeed, American State Department officials in Berlin soon reported back to Washington about strange clandestine radio broadcasts from a German army officer called "Der Chef" Apparently, the US was not officially let in on the closely guarded secret of British gray or black radio until June, 1942. (Learner)

"Gustav Siegfried Eins" continued on the air until November 1944, by which time some 700 broadcasts had been made by "Der Chef", who was in fact a Berliner named Peter Seckelmann who had left Germany for Britain before the war. There was a dramatic sendoff for "Gustav Siegfried Eins" and "Der Chef". In the midst of his last broadcast there were sounds of a sudden commotion, cries of "schweinhund" and a burst of machinegun fire. So seemingly the Gestapo had finally tracked down this voice of German integrity or so it was all dramatized in the British studios at Milton Bryan, a few miles from another top-secret operation, the code-breaking center at Bletchley Park.

Atlantiksender

In 1943 Sefton Delmer started another radio station to be broadcast in German called Deutsche Kurzwellensender Atlantik.(German Short-Wave Radio Atlantic). The name of the radio show was shortened to **Atlantiksender**.

Winston Churchill was very keen that the U-boats (German submarines) should receive a radio service like this. He felt that because the submarines were cut off from Germany the men on board were more likely to believe what was broadcast, if it sounded genuine. To help the show sound really German the band of the British Royal Marines recorded real German military music. They even invented a sailor's sweetheart called Vicky. The show spread rumours that German

prisoners of war were earning large wages working in America . This was to make the Germans feel that there might be advantages to being captured or surrendering. The German Authorities soon realised this station was British propaganda but could do nothing to stop it or to stop their sailors from listening to it.

{PWE Web Site http://clutch.open.ac.uk/schools/emerson00/pwe_page6.html}

Apparently, unlike in Germany proper, U-Boats commanders and radiomen had great latitude in choosing what broadcasts would be piped thru their submarines.

On the 22nd of March 1943 between 8 and 11 in the evening, Atlantiksender began regular broadcasts.

The star announcer of 'Atlantiksender' was Vicky, the 'sailor's sweetheart' who sent birthday greetings to her 'dear boys in blue', congratulated them on the birth of a son or daughter, and discussed the problems of their wives and families. From the sweetness of her voice, nobody could suspect that Vicky had in fact lost half of her family in the gas chambers of Auschwitz .

Atlantiksender had several things going for it:

- A former U-Boat radio operator who wrote many of his own scripts and gave his former comrades at sea inside dope including tips on how to delay sailings or operations.
- Music – the best. Not inhibited by Nazi cultural dictates. Including the banned Marlene Dietrich and jazz. One historian said that Delmer had invented “infotainment” – that slick and fast-moving combination that keeps your ears glued to a station.
- A working German News Service teletype, left behind in London in 1939, so that tuning into this **not**-hard-to-find station got you the most up-to-date news & information right from Berlin – so no one could object.
- Multiple short-wave transmitters, including a mobile one so that the Germans would continually get different fixes on the source.

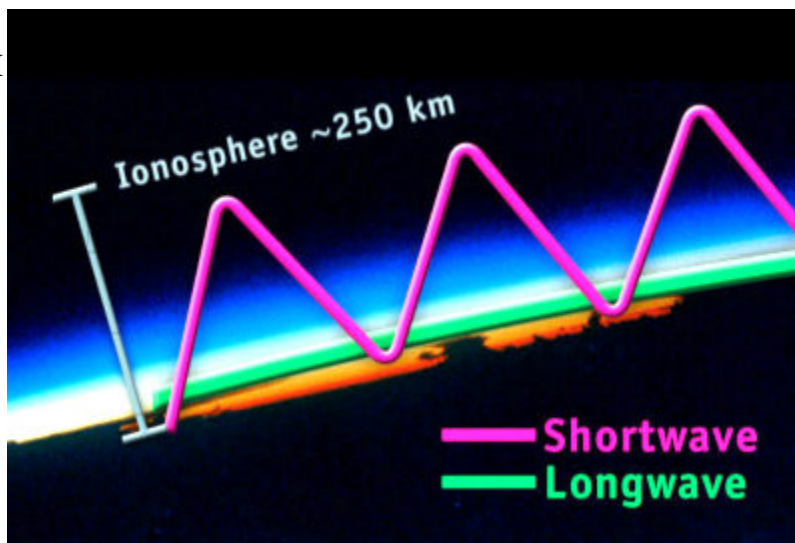
Short-wave was just the right medium for Atlantiksender.

Reception

- a crucial issue in gray and black radio propaganda.

You may remember that generally,

- TV and FM bands are essentially line-of-sight. Perhaps with a range of 30 miles.
- The AM or Medium/Longwave band can reach hundreds or even a thousands of miles plus, especially after dark. In the WW II era, this was the prime radio source...but the receivers of Goebbels' People's Radio were limited to AM (plus the Lower frequency European Longwave) and not very good at receiving the more distant stations.



- Atlantiksender, GS 1, and most of the 40 plus radio projects run by Sefton Delmer used the **shortwave** band thru 1942. Fairly low-powered transmitters could bounce their signals off the ionosphere and be picked by receivers thousands of miles away.

Reception was a crucial issue in gray and black radio propaganda. In some spots in the Atlantic, the only way to get broadcasts of Hitler speeches was courtesy of the British Atlantiksender and its multiple shortwave transmitters. Keep in mind that 90% of the airtime was straight German news and events. Again, Delmer often told his staff, “we must never lie by accident.”

But the enemy's heart was in Germany and the vast majority of Germans had neither shortwave radios nor even good AM radios able to pickup distant signals after dark. But I found two exceptions to this:



If you were a trusted Nazi party member, you might get issued a simple attenuator embossed with the Party symbol that would pull in more distant stations on your People's Radio. As the war progressed, fewer and fewer of these were allowed while penalties for listening to foreign

radio were increased to death.

And as the tide began to turn against Germany, and German news began to dissemble more, the need to listen to some other voice increased.

Even with an ordinary People's Radio, a little cleverness and a short length of wire inserted at exactly the right points thru the back panel might satisfy an increasingly urgent quest for news on which your whole future might rest.

This story is told by a Croat enlistee in the Wehrmacht stationed in Austria in August of 1944:

..... we were attending a lecture on military strategies. A German senior officer held it in a large room with maps on the wall. The officer's face was badly disfigured and his eyes looked at us sternly but with a certain sorrowful air. He had been explaining the Allies' strategies on the Normandy peninsula and the possible options the Allies might have for cutting Normandy off from the rest of France . Suddenly, one of my comrades said from the back of the room: "It's already happened!"

Dead silence followed. After a few seconds, the officer asked: "HOW DO YOU **KNOW THIS? – THE SUPREME ARMY COMMAND (OKW) HAS NOT ANNOUNCED THIS!**" No explanation was necessary - we sat there like wet, sodden dogs.

Later, back in our barracks room, the People's Radio's wire-bridge had been carefully and quickly removed and stowed away. Fortunately, there wasn't any inspection afterwards. (Lifestory - <http://www.cosy.sbg.ac.at/~zzspri/lifestories/vemp.html>)



Was this a soldier likely to desert or surrender?

So Sefton Delmer was reaching into ordinary radios, even as far away as Austria . He would get a transmitter which would make his grey and black radio propaganda projects some of the biggest, brightest voices on German radio – even on the limited People's Radio.

The Biggest Aspidistra in the World!

If you ever listen to radio these days, you've probably heard "50,000 watts clear channel". Today, as in the 1940s, it is still the maximum power allowed a US radio station. But in 1941, the RCA Corporation in New Jersey built for WJZ a transmitter 10 times more powerful. When the Federal Communication Commission refused to lift its ceiling of 50,000 watts, the WJZ 500,000 watt transmitter was briefly orphaned. Until the British heard about it.

The transmitter was crated up, shipped to the UK and installed in bombproof headquarters in Sussex. They named it after a song sung by the English music hall entertainer, Gracie Fields:

The Biggest Aspidistra in the World!

On the 8th November 1942, this radio transmitter briefly took part in the invasion of North Africa – but then it became largely the property of the BBC and white propaganda. (Photo by Felix Delmer appeared in "Black Propaganda" by Mark Kenyon in issue No. 75 of "[After the Battle](#)" Used with permission)



Since Sefton Delmer and PSE had been a major force in obtaining it from the United States, they, of course, wanted to use it. By October, 1943, Delmer had a transmitter and a new station ready for prime time.

Its purpose was to broadcast propaganda to Europe, the majority of which was under German occupation.

Above all, **Aspidistra** allowed Delmer to broadcast loud and clear to ordinary radio sets all over Germany and German occupied Europe, including to Goebbels' People's Radios.

Soldatensender Calais

(Later Soldatensender West)

On shortwave at this time "Atlantiksender" had expanded its output and was broadcasting from 6:30 pm until 7 am the following morning.

Meanwhile, "Soldatensender Calais" using the all-powerful Aspidistra on medium-wave, began reaching an enormous audience in France, operating on a frequency close to the German national "Deutschlandsender" home service.

The super-powered signals sometimes drowned out all other nearby signals on the small insensitive radio receivers issued to the German servicemen in France . The broadcasting hours of the station were gradually increased throughout late 1943 and 1944. By D-Day (6th June 1944), "Soldatensender Calais" was on the air from 8 pm through 5 am.

German veterans of occupied France recall that the PWE programmes had a seductive gloss. They were convincingly couched in the slang of ordinary soldiers, and thanks to British agents in the field, senior commanders and politicians were invariably referred to by their German nicknames, not all of them complimentary.... All kinds of rumour, subtle innuendo, and disquieting inside information could be included in supposedly patriotic talks and harangues in favour of the Fatherland. A favorite theme was that German divisions stationed in France that were too combat-ready were prime candidates for the Eastern Front. ([Lerner](#))



Enemy broadcast
Rumors come out of the airwaves like complainers come out of the woodwork.

As the Allied invasion progressed, the breakdown in the Germans' field communications became so grave that many of their commanders began tuning in to *Soldatensender Calais* for situation reports, and using them to constantly update the changing order of battle on their staff maps. The reports, obtained directly from SHAEF headquarters, were accurate 99 times out of 100. The hundredth time came when some false information was inserted at the request of tactical deception experts, to send the enemy headlong into a trap.

One incident at this time might show that the detail in the broadcasts was indeed listened to and resulted in a specific capitulation. *Soldatensender Calais* had been dropping references to new American ultra-modern "superweapons" including talk of a new phosphorous shell that could penetrate anything. The German General commanding the fort that blocked the advance onto the Cherbourg peninsula insisted he was under orders to fight to the last man. Then, in negotiating a way out the commander proposed that if the Americans could fire one of those new phosphorous shells, it would prove his position was hopeless. The Americans fired an ordinary anti-tank shell into the wall of the fort. Good enough. The general trooped out with his men. (Delmer, *Black Boomerang*)

In late 1944, with the fall of Calais to the Canadians, "Soldatensender Calais" simply renamed itself "Soldatensender West" and continued as before. It still had a lot more to say on the progress of the war, and in its role as "spokesman for the decent fighting front line soldier" was now demanding an end to the war, in order to save Germany. The target of the Soldatensender's attack was now Hitler, who previously had never been criticized directly. The station reported how he had been reduced to a shambling, nervous wreck, kept alive only by repeated injections of drugs. Proclaimed a speaker on the station, "The enemy can wish for nothing better than to have us led by a man who, in his conceit and ignorance, interferes in everything and everywhere....A fellow like that is - for the Allies, an ally." (The Biggest Aspidistra in the World! <http://members.aol.com/skywave48/aspidistra.htm>)

Deniability

You remember the "whispered wit" of the radio listener's prayer. Another piece of whispered wartime wit in Germany, which may well have been disseminated further by Delmer's gray and black radio, goes something like this:

It's Berlin, 1944, after a heavy bombing. A man, tired of rationing and disaster, goes to a restaurant to get a good meal. "A bottle of Riesling," he says.

The waiter shakes his head, "We don't have any."

"Gewürztraminer?"

"Nein," the waiter says, "No wine."

"All right," says the disappointed man, "Forget the wine. I'll have an artichoke with butter, then a pork roast with string beans."

"No more artichokes," says the waiter, "And no pork at all."

On and on it goes. Whatever he wants, they don't have it.

Disgusted, watched with annoyance by other diners, he finally asks for just a cigar and a brandy.

The waiter is shaking his head before he even finishes asking. "No cigars. No more brandy."

The man is furious. "Damn him!" he shouts, slamming his fist on the table, "That blowhard bastard has destroyed this country!"

Two stony-faced men at the next table get up, identify themselves as Gestapo, and place him under arrest. He asks loudly, "What did I do? Just got a little angry, that's all!"

"You were complaining, slandering, we all heard you attack The Führer!"

"I complained, yes, but -- attack The Führer--?"

"You said that blowhard bastard has destroyed this country!"

Glancing at his gawking fellow diners, he says, "Of course! That blowhard bastard, **Churchill**, has destroyed **our** country!" Then to the Gestapo men, " **Who did YOU mean?**"

English adaptation from a German original by Philip S. Goodman

In other words, in a dictatorship, understanding or perhaps **misunderstanding** is crucial.

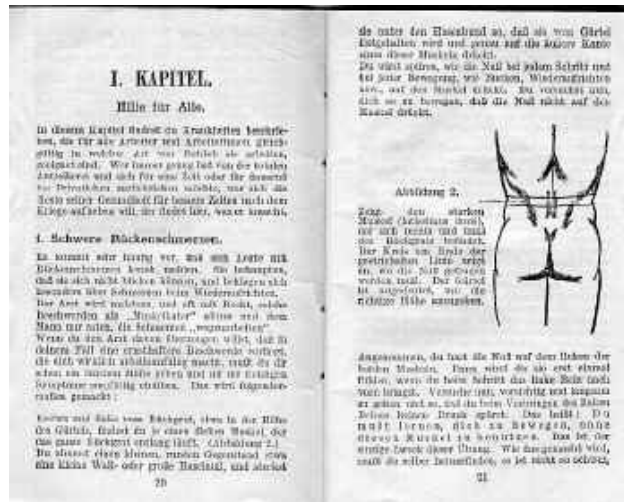
So if you were listening to Black Radio and the fiercest Nazi walked in on a dubious story, chances are that one minute later the radio would be giving straight news from Goebbels' Ministry or a Hitler Speech. And chances are it was the clearest, loudest station on the dial. Delmer stated his formula as "dirt, cover, cover, dirt, cover, cover...."

An email correspondent wrote me about his German school in wartime, "To this day I remember some of us youngsters laughing behind our Greek language instructor's back when he heard the loudspeaker blaring forth Calais stories in the school hallway and he thought it was straight news."

Content

What else was in these broadcasts? Unfortunately, the destruction of the scripts and recordings at the end of the war prevents me from giving you live examples.

However, the production of gray and black leaflets was also headed by Sefton Delmer and there are indications that there was some coordination between the many millions of leaflets dropped and the radio broadcasts of *GS1*, *Atkantiksender* and *Soldatensender*. Here are some examples:



This booklet was called "Sickness saves" ... or can save your life. Full of tips which radio could have used piecemeal, about how to get off duty when sick call comes around. First principle: that the physician be convinced you're a patriotic citizen who has the misfortune to feel bad. Second principle: Don't tell the doctor what you think is wrong...he must discover it for himself as he drags the symptoms out of the patient.

This became THE underground work for the common soldier...and on both sides. Goebbels had it translated into English and dropped by plane and artillery over Allied lines.

It's well known that millions of perfect counterfeit ration books were dropped over Germany. They were so perfect that Goebbels purposely made crude copies of these ration books, had them dropped on his own population so he could find people to arrest and hold up as examples and warnings.

In the last year of the war, Nachrichten fuer die Truppe - News for the Troops - was Delmer's most widely known publication. It was gray in the sense that it never admitted it's origin - providing a slim margin of "willing suspension of disbelief" and of deniability. On one hand, it fell from Allied planes. On the other hand, it's news reporting, like other gray and black products, was almost always impeccable.

NO. 40, 1945, 12. März 1945

NACHRICHTEN FÜR DIE TRUPPE

KÜSTRIN GEFALLEN

Letzter Riegel vor Berlin

U.S.A. - Sowjets spalten Brückenkopf Daanzig in zwei Teilkessel auf

Danzig in Teilmarsch
 Der Kampf um die Festung Danzig ist gestern von den Sowjets gewonnen. Die Besetzung der Festung ist mit zwei Tagen in der Anzahl eingerechnet. Die Besetzung der Festung ist mit zwei Tagen in der Anzahl eingerechnet. Die Besetzung der Festung ist mit zwei Tagen in der Anzahl eingerechnet.

Baskowitz droht mit Standgerichten
 Der Kommandant der Festung Baskowitz hat sich dem Feind ergeben. Die Besetzung der Festung ist mit zwei Tagen in der Anzahl eingerechnet. Die Besetzung der Festung ist mit zwei Tagen in der Anzahl eingerechnet.

Marsch in zwei Richtungen
 Die Truppen sind in zwei Richtungen marschierend. Die Besetzung der Festung ist mit zwei Tagen in der Anzahl eingerechnet. Die Besetzung der Festung ist mit zwei Tagen in der Anzahl eingerechnet.

Jeden Monat schuldhaft 130 Mark mehr
 Die Preise sind in jedem Monat um 130 Mark gestiegen. Die Besetzung der Festung ist mit zwei Tagen in der Anzahl eingerechnet. Die Besetzung der Festung ist mit zwei Tagen in der Anzahl eingerechnet.

THE LOWDOWN

Vol. 47 LXXIII April 1945, 3rd Edition *** Three Star First

BATTLE EAST OF BERLIN RAGING ALLIED TANK LOSSES HUGE SMALL NATIONS FOR SALE FAR EAST WAR UNTIL '47?



NEWS FLASHES
 Between April 1st and April 15th, the attacking G.I.s have lost not less than 1,500 tanks. The battle goes on with unceasing force. A Allied tank losses of the Western Front amounted to 1,875 tanks for the same period. The war in Italy has not yet suffered any catastrophic losses of men. The military strength is estimated at four divisions, more than half of which are fresh and fully trained. There is no reason to suppose that the Japanese in China would surrender even if the Japanese mainland were overtaken.

U.S. for the San Francisco Conference
 The San Francisco Conference will be held in San Francisco. The United States will be represented by a number of its leading figures.

12 out of 18 nations delivered up to Stalin
 The United States will be represented by a number of its leading figures.

Truman - the new man
 The new man in the White House is Harry Truman. He is a man of action and a man of courage. He is a man of action and a man of courage.

A German leaflet for Allied soldiers in Italy.

I'm also showing here Goebbels' counter publication to *Nachrichten*. *The Lowdown*, even in the last days of the Reich, kept up a fierce offensive against the Allies.

Intrusion Operations

This is a somewhat different use of Black Radio. You might call it a tactical use. Or you might call it pure black radio. It doesn't just pretend to be a legitimate, official station. It **becomes** the legitimate, official station. And it can be quite unnerving to the listener.

My research turned up only two examples of intrusion operations, one the only example of Soviet black radio operations I've come across and it's from an East German film based on the autobiography of a German family in the east, presumably recounting true

events:

A middle class Prussian family is seated on their terrace and the very distant sound of Russian artillery is heard. They are listening to a German news broadcast. Evacuations have briefly brought together a lot of the family members. Several are in uniform. On the radio, the German announcer is giving a news item, something to the effect, "...a further announcement from the Headquarters of the Fuehrer." Followed seamlessly, apparently by the same announcer, "He's crazy, you know." And then the announcer, without dropping a beat, continues the factual news item.

The family members don't even look at one another. But one switches off the radio. Silence. Certainly no one will repeat what they all heard; the Gestapo would misunderstand.

The pressures of war and evacuation, the loss of physical security, are clear in the closeups of the faces --now reflecting on whether they've been brought to this point by a leader who's crazy.

The business about "Nothing **focuses the mind** like facing the **hangman's** noose" might characterize the dawning state of mind of many ordinary German civilians and soldiers in 1944 and 45.

While it's been clearly shown that in 1940, '41 and '42 the vast majority of Germans became enthusiastic about Hitler. Even those who had not supported him at the beginning, became adherents, especially with the victories in France and Russia.

With the beginning of the collapse in 1944 and 45, the Allies faced the problem of how to avoid an endless series of Nazi redoubts. In '40 and '41, they had seen the fanatical determination on the faces of the cheering German crowds.

The power of the Aspidistra, now boosted from 500,000 watts to 600,000 watts, was used for a somewhat different purpose in 1945, you might say tactically, for a series of Intrusion Operations. This was black radio in the extreme, where it literally took over Nazi broadcasts on the same frequency.

THE FIRST ASPIDISTRA INTRUSION OPERATION
EVENING OF 24 MARCH 1945

Object

'To cause stampede of the population in the Ruhr by suggesting to them that the Party has given an evacuation order for a chosen few and is leaving the rest to be destroyed where they are.'

Target Frequencies

599 kc - Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Channel

658 kc - Reichssender Köln

Method

Intrusion by ASPIDISTRA transmissions on target frequencies as soon as German transmissions ceased on the approach of British bombers.

Types of ASPIDISTRA Transmissions

Rebroadcasts of genuine German programmes from transmitters elsewhere in Germany unaffected by air raids (thereby giving the impression that the target frequencies were continuing to carry normal broadcasts).

Periodic special announcements:

ARP Channel

Instructions for immediate evacuation of those liable to military service and those in certain age groups from Zones 4 and 5 of Gau Düsseldorf. Announcement that certain bridges and ferry crossings unusable. 'All necessary measures to counteract panic among the remaining population are to be taken immediately. Individual evacuation independent of the march columns should be suppressed as far as possible.'

Reichssender Köln

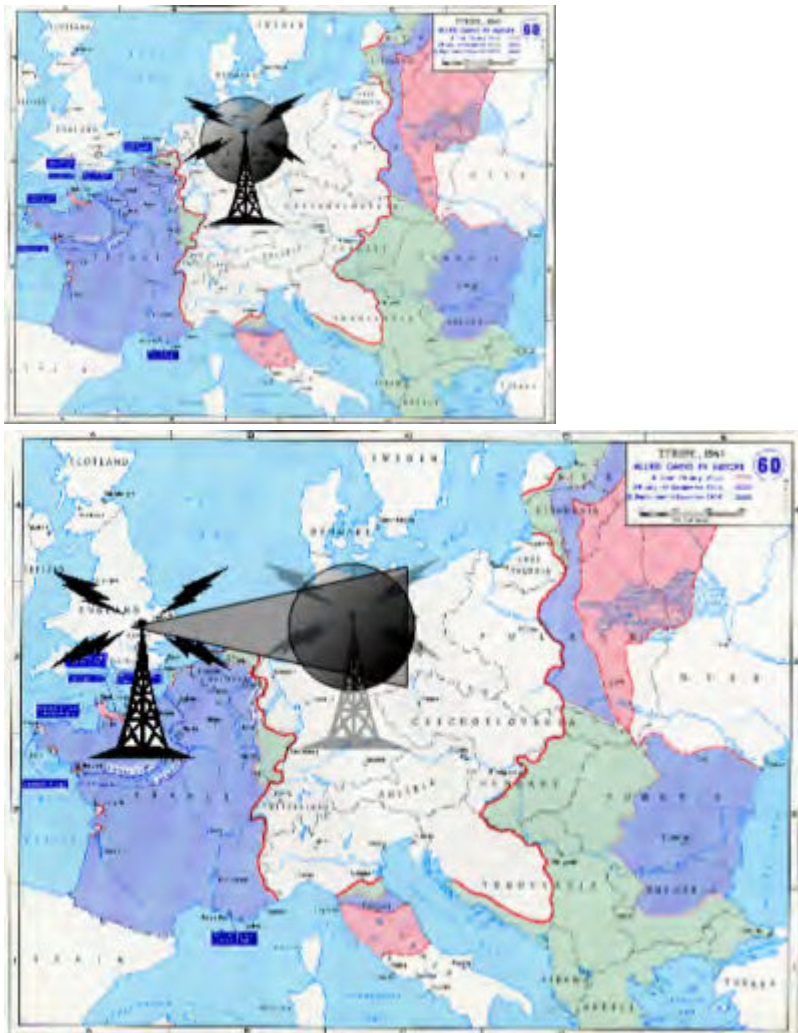
Preliminary instructions for evacuation of Gaue Essen, Düsseldorf, Westfalen-Nord and Westfalen-Süd. Warning that measures originally planned had become impossible and that evacuation would be limited to 'those suited to carry on the decisive struggle' and younger age groups 'on whose preservation the continued life of the nation depends.' The remainder should 'stick it out and, if need be, ...face death bravely.'

FIG. 5. Summary of first ASPIDISTRA Intrusion Operation—evening of 24 March 1945. Sources: PRO, CAB 102/610 (pp. 399-402) and FO 898/47.

On the evening of 30th March "Aspidistra" intruded into the Berlin and Hamburg frequencies warning that the Allies were trying to spread confusion by sending false telephone messages from occupied towns to unoccupied towns. The message advised that, from now on, any instructions or reports received by telephone should not be believed or

acted upon immediately, but should be confirmed by telephoning the supposed source of the call. This instruction, if fully followed, would seriously delay the carrying out of orders and place extra strain on the already half-crippled German telephone network.

On the evening of 8th April, "Aspidistra" intruded into the Hamburg and Leipzig channels to warn of forged banknotes in circulation. Then, on the following evening, there were announcements encouraging people to evacuate to seven bomb-free zones in central and southern Germany, where it was claimed that they would be safe from further enemy air attacks.



Maps produced by the author from maps at the [United States Military Academy Digital Library](https://digital-library.usma.edu/collections/maps/wpmaps/) digital-library.usma.edu/collections/maps/wpmaps/

The Germans tried to mount a defense into these intrusions. The following announcements were continuously broadcast by the German

radio stations:

"The enemy is broadcasting counterfeit instructions on our frequencies. Do not be misled by them. Here is an official announcement of the Reich authority."

But, of course, exactly the same announcement began to precede all bogus messages broadcast by "Aspidistra" too! "The enemy is broadcasting counterfeit instructions on our frequencies.....Here is the official....."

Epilogue

One might argue, at least about earlier gray and black ops, that because there was so little real

German resistance to the Nazis, the British had to invent some. Delmer knew the German mind of the time well. The star of GS1, Der Chef, was a conformist, a Prussian aristocrat, with a title Der Volk would look up to. But he also represented the complainer, the malcontent that some said underlies the German character. In the early 30s, when Delmer toured as a British correspondent with Hitler's entourage, Hitler took Delmer aside on occasion, and declared how he wanted an alliance with the British, but would also tell Delmer about his view of the "Schweinhund" or pig-dog, in every man.

"With the help of a clever persistent propaganda, even heaven can be represented to the people as hell, and the most wretched life as paradise." Hitler said in Mein Kampf. While I don't think you could say that British radio psyops were Nazi inspired, Delmer's enthusiasm might have stemmed from his knowledge of Goebbels Radio Concordia as well as making sure the Nazis got a taste of their own medicine.

Goebbels knew that propaganda, especially gray and black propaganda, was a double-edged sword. His diaries often express concern that a wedge would be driven between the Nazi Party and the German people.

Toward the end of the war, the Soviet Armies approached Germany's eastern borders.

The world began to hear Ilya Ehrenburg's Soviet motto, "Comrade, kill your German!" A grim witticism, probably disseminated further by gray and black radio, was regularly whispered among the German populace: "Enjoy the War. Peace will be terrible."

One thing we have NOT dealt with here is the morality of gray and black radio. Is it a fair weapon of war? On one hand, is it more or less moral than an artillery shell? Or, does it corrupt both the parties on the sending and the receiving end and history too, in the way some would maintain that English propaganda at the end of World War I set the stage for the "stab-in-the-back" theory and thus the rise of the Nazis.

But, believe it or not, the brains behind British gray and black radio did have a moral crisis in the war's aftermath. In his aptly titled *Black Boomerang*, Sefton Delmer worried that his gray and black radio operations helped to build up the myth of a good anti-Nazi Wehrmacht.

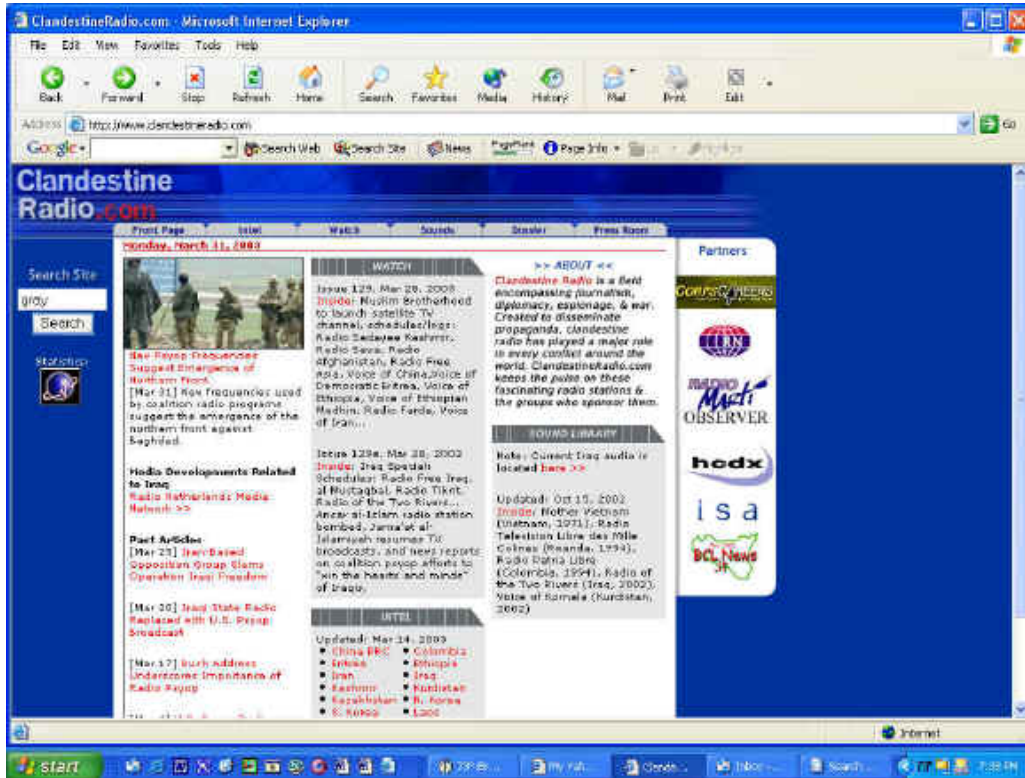
In the 1970s, the Watergate era with revelations about dirty tricks, newspapers & journals, especially in the UK, carried many references to WW II gray and black operations in relation to political dirty tricks in British and American politics.

There were intimations, at least in principal, that a nation could obtain victory in war, and yet suffer defeat in peace.

Gray & Black Radio Today

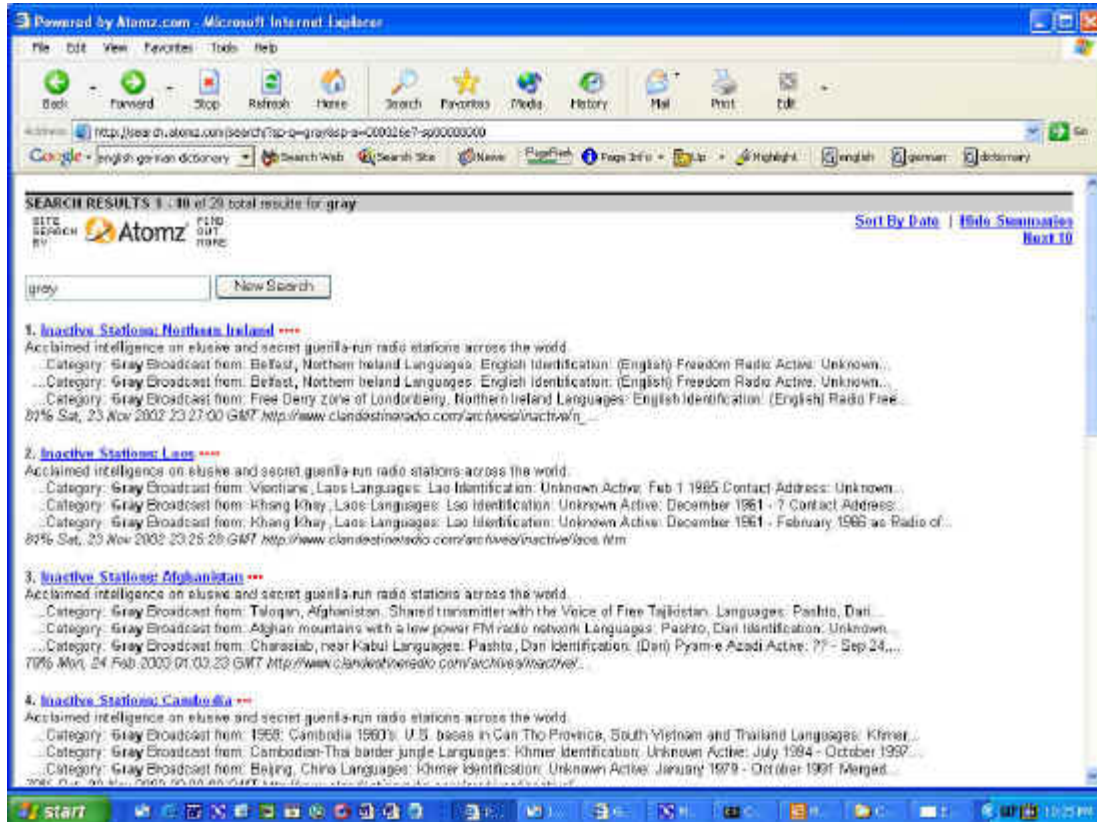
And today? Are there any more gray or black radio ventures?

You bet:



Clandestineradio.com

Clandestine Radio.com. This well-managed, in-depth website keeps track of past and current pirate radio including gray and black radio. A site search on gray or black will show recent activities around the globe; in Ireland, Cambodia, Afghanistan, and, yes, Iraq.



This is from correspondence I had from Nick Grace, founder of Clandestineradio.com, at the time of the Iraq invasion:

Reading through (your paper) I am often reminded of the techniques utilized by the Bush administration to "soften" Baghdad and the Iraqi military in the months, days, and hours leading to Operation Iraqi Freedom. It's clear that Washington looked back to the British efforts during WWII against Germany, including intrusion and the surreptitious phone calls. In addition, I would add as well the Atlantiksender's use of personality to gain the listener's trust and empathy. This is evident nowadays with al Mustaqbal (The Future) and Radio Tikrit, both funded by the CIA and staffed by members of the Amman-based Iraqi National Accord. (These two stations targeted military officers and Ba'ath Party loyalists.)

Radio Tikrit is a black station... al Mustaqbal is gray. Both are tied to a group called Wifaq (Iraqi National Accord) that's favored and funded by Langley (the CIA).

The history of the uses of gray and black, especially in the enormously successful efforts to get the Iraqi officer corps to "just walk away" during the 2003 invasion, has yet to be

written.

Conclusions

I emphasize again that there are certainly no scientific conclusions to be drawn, much less than, say, the *Strategic Bombing Survey* where destruction is measurable but the effect on the outcome of the war is debated to this day.

SOE actually had plans to do surveys in May, 1945 but it was dropped with the same spirit that the documents and recordings were systematically destroyed and Delmer's staff were reminded that they had all signed the **Official Secrets Act**.

During the war, Delmer continually obtained feedback and new tidbits by bugging the British cages of German prisoners. The POWs were extensively monitored both for tidbits like insider-gossip from submariners for Atlantiksender and feedback on what they believed. Also, these bugs revealed what "those-in-the-know" thought and said. The sociological mechanics of almost any group could guarantee the alpha personality who would have "the real story"

Here's a family snapshot that's always fascinated me: apparently a German family or neighbors in their air raid shelter, 1944 or '45?. That's probably a People's Radio on the right. In this group, indeed in any group you know, aren't there several "alpha" personalities? The ones who know better, have the details and have the truth, rise above the common wisdom, know the insider info and take a kind of mental leadership of the group.



Photo from *The Decline and Fall of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan*, The. Dollinger, Hans. Crown : New York. 1968

This, I think, is the difficult-to-define sphere of human nature and of attitude change we seldom intellectualize. Is it possible that Delmer's great insight was into this sphere? Either one or two of these people might be assiduous listeners to *GS1* and *Der Chef* or to *Soldatensender*. Or if they are all so beaten down with bombings and threats to their physical security, perhaps the radio itself is the alpha character in this group.

Again, our evidence is anecdotal. Some who've written on the subject say that Gray and Black propaganda efforts were a joke and a waste of time (Learner & Crossman), while other speculate that Gray and Black might even have been an insidious motivator for the July 20th plotters against Hitler or even added to Hitler's paranoia about the loyalty of the military caste (Delmer, Jolly and Howe).

Morale is sometimes defined as "the ace in hole" in wartime: the factor that lets you win when supplies, weather, or the numerical superiority of the enemy say you should lose. Eisenhower convened his *Committee on Methods of Breaking the German Will to Resist* in November of 1944 to try to figure out why German morale was not yet broken.

Perhaps a better word than morale is will or heart. As in *giving your heart* or *heartbreak* or *to lose heart*.

In conclusion, I give you two more documents from the two years that followed Goebbels' 1943 diary entry about "the very clever job of propaganda" done by Delmer's black *Soldatensender*.

In 1944, from a Wehrmacht General:

Headquarters, 5 Feb. 44 .
Commanding General
709 th Inf. Div.
SUBJECT: Questions of leadership and Moral Defensive Measures against Enemy Propaganda

TO: Commanding Officers of Regiments and Battalions

1. The enemy is trying, with unheard-of hatred, with ever-changing tricks and ruses, with lies and falsehood and with everything however mean, to undermine the morale of the German people and to force a decision on the "battlefield of the war of nerves," just as he did in the First World War. In the West, the efforts of the enemy agitators have been intensified from month to month. I need only mention **the dangerous propaganda broadcast by the provocative enemy station "Soldatensender Calais."** (bold face mine)

Toward the end of the war, a Gauleiter (Nazi district boss) wrote to the military:

Gauleiter

29 March '45

General:

"Unless something outstanding and positive for Germany occurs within the next few days, we are faced with catastrophe. . . This... is the effect the dramatic war situation in the West has had on the morale of the population.

Rumours, strengthened through **enemy radio announcements in German transmissions**, do all that remains to finish off the fighting spirit of the Army and the endurance of the people."

Sefton Delmer turned information into a weapon itself – flexible, amazingly adaptable, furtive, dangerous to an enemy, yet -- dare one say it in the context of war's destruction? -- entertaining is a sense to both those who were targeted and those who used it.

There's a line by Clausewitz in his Chapter "Information in War":

A great part of the information
obtained in war is contradictory,
a still greater part is false,
and by far the greatest part
is of a doubtful character.

Clausewitz On War

Chapter VI Information in War

www.clausewitz.com/CWZHOME/On_War/BK1ch06.html

So it might be safe to say that Sefton Delmer, who would never lie by accident, is honored by Clausewitz's statement.

_____end_____

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[Intrusion Operations](#) | [Epilogue](#) | [Gray & Black Radio Today](#) | [Conclusions](#) | [About the author](#) |
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Bob Rowen has been a board member of the New York Military Affairs Symposium for almost five years. He is

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Bob served in the US Army in postwar Germany reporting from Munich, Augsburg and Berlin for the American Forces Network. He helped launch this organization's website nymas.org which is rated one of the top 10 resources on Wars and Conflicts on the Web by both Google and the Open Directory Project.

With tonight's paper, he is sensitive that there might be a concern that NYMAS's webmaster is a student of lies, disinformation, rumors and tricks. He would like to assure all that he truly believes in 100% accuracy for facts and in calling speculation just that.

The author is delighted to get questions, contributions, comments or concerns about this paper at rowen@nymas.org

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See also a very extensive bibliography of books on psychological warfare at <http://www.psywarrior.com/books.html>

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P. Wels of the **Antique Radios - Germany** site at antike-radios.com

Nick Grace, founder and webmaster of Clandestineradio.com

Felix Delmer, **Sefton Delmer's** son, has begun to publish his father's work on the web. This fulltext undertaking adds previously unpublished photos and other material to this indispensable work. See <http://www.seftondelmer.co.uk/contents.htm>.



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