

CHAPTER 2

CROSS BORDER RADIO

OUTLAWS MAY USE

by MURPHY McHENRY



RADIO circles on the Pacific Coast were turned today farry not long ago by the continued presence of a radio pirate ship which had taken into itself a very popular spot on the dial and started broadcasting without regard for the land stations with which it interfered.

The primary purpose of the unlicensed broadcast was to advertise the gambling, liquor, and other dubious pleasure activities of the ship upon which it was built—all these activities beyond the 12-mile limit, of course. Thousands responded to the advertising and the owners waxed rich. They found other sundry rackets, such as a fortune telling program, which brought in additional money and finally assumed such an extensive program that one Los Angeles station was threatened with a complete loss of audience and business because the ship's radio signal was the more powerful of the two.

After numerous unsuccessful attempts of a local nature, the floating broadcasting establishment was silenced, but only after the state department at Washington, D. C., had made diplomatic representations which forced a Central



This is one of the several super-stations along the United States coast, which are used by officials of the Federal Radio Commission to keep a constant check on the hundreds of radio stations in the U. S.

SUPER-STATIONS at Sea

Broadcasting stations without a country seek new ways to flood the United States with radio advertising barred by federal commission. Two hundred outlaws face war by the government.

American country to cancel the ship's registry.

However, this ship had proved the way and now, with the United States making headway in its fight to regulate stations just south of the Rio Grande river, within the shelter of Mexico, it appears that soon floating broadcast palaces may be dotted here and there outside the 12 mile limit, particularly in the Gulf of Mexico.

There is little chance that the border broadcasters will give up without a struggle. Led by XER's spectacular Dr. John H. Brinkley, formerly of Millard, Kansas, and now of Del Rio, Texas, they have found too many ways to gather in otherwise hard earned dollars to sit by complacently and be persuasively hushed. Dr. Brinkley has made millions of dollars as a result of his broadcasts. Others, working along numerous lines, have taken in many more millions.

And that is why, in the face of possibilities that they may be driven out of Mexico, these professional-minded broadcasters



Here is the entire conception of how the broadcasting system now proposed for use can may look. Were there a perfect ground for broadcasting purposes and it is likely produced that entire system, these distant the privilege of broadcasting on United States soil, would create some greater coverage if they had proper equipment anchored nearby the 12-mile zone on the Gulf of Mexico. Below, left, are some second of the huge new tubes which will be used in broadcasting 500,000 watt power into WLR's antenna. Others are already planning to compete with the huge tubes.

John Brinkley



Wolfman Jack

Border Blaster Cities

- | | |
|-------------|------------------|
| 1 Tijuana | 6 Piedras Negras |
| 2 Rosarito | 7 Monterrey |
| 3 Nogales | 8 Nuevo Laredo |
| 4 Cd Juarez | 9 Matamoros |
| 5 Cd Avuña | 10 Tampico |



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John Brinkley (1885-1942) was a contentious American medical doctor who experimented with transplants of animal testicular glands into humans as a means of restoring male impotence. In the world of radio he broke new ground by establishing the age of Cross Border Radio.

A quack doctor whose trick was to insert goats' testicles into humans, Brinkley had a knack for publicity. He used newspapers, direct mail, then, in 1923, his own radio station KFKB in Kansas. In between live performances by singers and musicians he would promote his medical treatments available at 'affiliated' pharmacies only. The American Medical Association and Federal Radio Commission disapproved and in 1930 both his medical and radio license were revoked. After unsuccessfully attempting to regain both his Kansas medical and radio

license he relocated to Del Rio, Texas. While there he hit upon the idea of broadcasting from Mexico to the US. In 1931 he got a Mexican government license for a 75 kW station on 840 kHz AM. His station, at Villa Acuña was located on the opposite side of the Rio Grande from Del Rio, he simply rented a landline from his studio in Texas to the transmitter in Mexico.

Under the call sign of XER Brinkley used his new station to resume his medical practice and run a political campaign for Governor. The station could be heard as far north as Canada. Whilst his political ambitions remained frustrated his coffers overflowed. Male listeners were offered an array of expensive concoctions which included Mercurochrome injections and pills, all designed to help them regain their sexual prowess. At his clinic he also performed prostate operations. It is reported that he performed over 16,000 operations, at \$600 (\$7,000 today) a time, to combat male impotence. It has been claimed that up to 1938 Brinkley earned \$12 million.

Other American promoters became inspired by the advent of Cross Border Radio and

many new stations were added along various points of the borders of Mexico with the United States.

Brinkley's days were numbered though, with the advent of World War II he extended his support to the sympathisers of Nazi Germany by allowing them airtime. Although before the bombing of Pearl Harbour and the US declaration of war it was a step too far for the US government. In April 1941, the Mexican Government made a deal with the United States to restrict renegade stations such as XERA putting Brinkley's station out of business. The United States banned cross-border links between US radio studios and Mexican transmitters without a US license with legislation which became known as the Brinkley Act.

'Doctor' Brinkley's final years were not distinguished; he had lost his radio station; several of his former patients sued him for malpractice; the Internal Revenue Service indicted him for tax evasion and the US Postal Service for mail fraud. He was declared bankrupt in 1941. He then suffered three heart attacks and lost a leg to poor circulation. He died impoverished in San Antonio.

Britain has its own Cross Border Radio chronicle concerning a man called Captain Plugge. Leonard Plugge (1889-1981) was a businessman, Tory MP for Chatham and broadcasting pioneer. Plugge was also a fan of motoring holidays on the continent. During one holiday he stopped in the Normandy coastal village of Fécamp. In conversation he discovered that a member of the Le Grand family, which owned the town's Benedictine distillery, had a radio transmitter which was used periodically. Plugge offered to buy airtime to broadcast programmes in English to England from Normandy and Radio Normandy was born. A makeshift studio was fashioned from which the programmes were broadcast by Plugge's announcers, including Max Stanniforth, Stephen Williams, Bob Danvers-Walker and David Davies. Davies later became Managing Director of the South Africa-bound Cross Border Mozambique broadcaster Lourenco Marques Radio.

Not content with just one station Plugge created the International Broadcasting Company in 1931 as a commercial rival to the BBC by renting airtime from radio stations such as Normandy, Toulouse, Juan les Pins,

Poste Parisien, Barcelona and Rome and selling sponsorship to British companies who wanted to reach listeners to the new phenomenon of 'wireless'. IBC also sold advertising for Radio Luxembourg until 1936.

Radio Normandy's transmitter power was increased after Plugge came to an agreement with Gaumont British, the film studio proprietors, owner of 280 picture houses and, importantly, publishers of the entertainment-based Sunday newspaper Sunday Referee. Hitherto the press and BBC had been openly hostile but now Plugge had an ally; someone who would print his programme schedule. A new studio was established and Radio Normandy's large audience, extending as far north as the English Midlands was getting bigger. Colonel Richard L. Meyer was appointed General Manager of IBC and top entertainment stars of the day were featured on shows recorded in IBC studios and on location at theatres. The recordings, on movie film soundtrack and large recording discs, were played back in Normandy and the listening public back home lapped up the entertainment which contrasted sharply to John Reith's BBC output, especially on Sundays. Under Reith

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the BBC wasn't on-air until late on Sundays to give people time to go to church. Things were set fair but, unfortunately for Plugge, fate intervened and World War II began, Radio Normandy went off the air and on 10 June 1940 French troops sabotaged the transmitter on the eve of the German invasion.

During World War II Cross Border Radio took on a more furtive guise with all combatants engaging in 'Black Propaganda'. On the Axis side it ranged from the faintly absurd 'Germany Calling' Nazi broadcasts to the UK and US by the adenoidal William Joyce and others as 'Lord Haw-Haw' on the Reichssender Hamburg; 'Tokyo Rose', who delivered propaganda in the South Pacific from Radio Tokyo and was mostly identified as Iva Toguri D'Aquino but played also by Ruth Hayakawa, June 'The Nightingale of Nanking' Suyama and Myrtle 'Little Margie' Lipton who additionally broadcast from

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Japanese-controlled Radio Manila and 'Axis Sally' aka Mildred Gillars whose anti-semitic rhetoric was broadcast from Radio Berlin to Allied troops, often speculating on the faithfulness of their wives and sweethearts.

Soldatensender Calais was one of the British responses. It was operated from 1943 to 1945 by the Political Warfare Executive and was, ostensibly, a station of the German military broadcasting network called 'Soldier's Radio Calais' *Soldatensender Calais* operated from 6pm to dawn and unlike its predecessor *Gustav Siegfried Eins* was broadcast live from the purpose-built broadcast studio at Milton Bryan, on the edge of the Woburn Abbey Estate in Bedfordshire by announcers including the actor Marius Goring who spoke impeccable German. It operated on Medium Wave 833 kHz (360m), 714 kHz (420 m), and 612 kHz (490 m) with an associated shortwave station. It used 'Aspidistra' a 600-kilowatt RCA

transmitter built for radio station WLW of Cincinnati but rendered unusable after the Federal Communications Commission imposed a 50 kw power limit. 'Aspidistra' was, at the time, the world's largest medium wave transmitter and was housed in an underground bunker in Crowborough, Sussex. The station used a mixture of music, relays of speeches by Hitler and others, coverage of sport and current events interlaced with morale decreasing items such as warnings of confidence tricksters swindling German soldiers into being transferred from France to the Russian front. During the D-Day invasion of June 6, 1944, *Soldatensender Calais* broadcast information that the invasion area was much wider than it actually was. After the Pas de Calais area was overrun, the station changed its callsign to *Soldatensender West* and closed down without ceremony soon after.

After hostilities ceased Captain Plugge hoped to go back to the old days and restart transmissions from France but changes in broadcasting regulations and a different attitude to radio listening meant it would never happen. After the war, IBC became a successful recording studio instead and many

famous stars including The Rolling Stones, The Kinks, The Who and Jimi Hendrix graced its portals.

If the BBC thought that with Plugge out of the way it could relax - it was misguided; an identical situation had developed featuring Radio Luxembourg. But it wasn't just Britain which was faced with Cross Border Radio. France had been bombarded with 'Radios Périphériques' since the 1930s with Radio Luxembourg from Luxembourg, Radio Andorre and Sud Radio from Andorra, Radio Monte Carlo from Monaco, and Europe 1 from Saarland, Germany all broadcasting legally across international borders at one time or another. This situation persisted, much to the annoyance of radio entrepreneurs in France, until the legalisation of private broadcasting within La République in the early 1980s.

The British government disdainfully identified stations like Radio Luxembourg as pirates because their intended audience was in the United Kingdom. The broadcasts were considered illegal on British soil as these stations were breaking the monopoly of the non-commercial BBC.

Unbelievably, listening to the broadcasts was technically a violation of UK radio-licence laws.

Additionally, even though contemporary technology would have easily permitted it, Radio Luxembourg wasn't allowed to broadcast live from its West End studios in Hertford Street as the GPO telephone monopoly forbade the linking of studios to Luxembourg's transmitters.

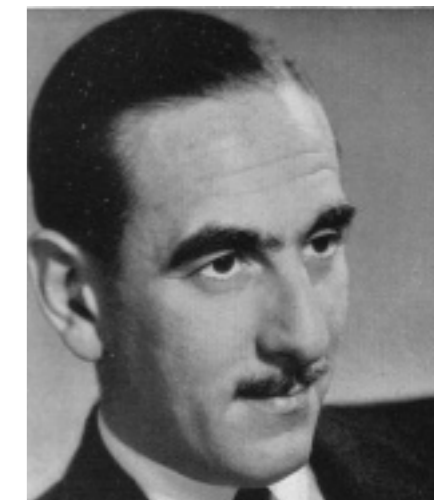
Often referred to as the Radio Luxembourg of South Africa LM Radio (Lourenço Marques Radio) was a privately owned and operated radio station broadcasting to Southern Africa from Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), Mozambique between 1933 and 1975.

Radio in Lourenço Marques began in 1933. From 1935 Radio Clube de Moçambique was launched, broadcasting mostly in English. In 1947, John Davenport and Colonel Richard L. Meyer, previously General Manager of the International Broadcasting Company formed Davenport & Meyer to take over the running of Lourenço Marques Radio. They recruited David Davies, also formerly of IBC to run the station. In 1948

LM Radio moved into the 'Radio Palace', a purpose built 4-storey building and started producing variety shows in front of live audiences. Things were looking up. From its inception radio broadcasting in South Africa had been provided by the state owned and operated SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) with unsurprising consequences. The late 1950s brought the immense worldwide appetite from youngsters for rock'n'roll and pop music and the response came from LM Radio. The station underwent a major format change to cater for younger listeners who were ignored in South Africa by SABC. LM Radio introduced its renowned LM Hit Parade and played a major part in promoting South African artists and music. Many a South African artist made their professional debut on LM Radio at the frequent road shows which freely toured South Africa and much South African announcing talent including John Berks, Gary Edwards, Frank Sanders, John Grierson, Robin Alexander, George Wayne and David Gresham all started at LM Radio before moving to other positions. In 1969 Meyer left LM Radio and much of its sparkle went; it was taken over by the SABC in 1972.

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Politics arrived on September 7 1974 when the station was occupied during a bloody uprising the administration of the station was taken over by the Frelimo army. In October 1975, following Mozambican independence from Portugal, LM Radio facilities were nationalised and the station closed down. In South Africa SABC Radio 5 took its place, staffed by many former LM announcers.



Colonel Richard L. Meyer