

# DX'ing The Clandestines

**SHORT-WAVE  
LISTENING**

## Propaganda Fills the Air Waves

BY DON JENSEN

**I**F YOU INSIST on powerful, easy-to-tune signals, fixed frequencies and English-only broadcasts, you'd better stick to the major international shortwave services. But if you're tired of "spoon-fed" SWL'ing, have a taste for contemporary political intrigue and like things a bit mysterious, join the growing ranks of shortwave listeners who DX the clandestines.

Although clandestine broadcasting stations have been around since the 1930's, only in recent years have substantial numbers of SWL's paid much attention to them. Because clandestine DX'ing, as a distinct aspect of the hobby, is relatively new, some confusion in terms has resulted. Despite a tendency to call any sort of illicit radio activity a clandestine, the term applies only to secret or semi-secret stations whose purpose is to spread political propaganda of one form or another.

Clandestines should not be confused with pirate stations, which, while unauthorized, are commercial ventures, broadcasting boldly and skirting government licensing laws. In recent years, popular-music pirate stations, transmitting on the medium-wave bands from off-shore oil or flak towers and small ships in international waters, beamed rock-and-roll programs to audiences in England, Holland, New Zealand and several of the Scandinavian countries. Stricter laws and government crack-downs have now driven most of these pirates from the air.

Nor should the "home-grown peanut"

stations, noted in some of our bigger cities interfering with regular broadcasts, be confused with the clandestines. These illicit transmitters are the playthings of misguided youngsters whose idea of fun is to own their own radio stations. Normally they are shut down in short order by the FCC, but new ones always spring up.

Other secret transmitters mistakenly termed clandestines are the so-called "numbers" stations. Nations on both sides of the Iron Curtain use them to transmit instructions to their espionage agents abroad. These spy stations send cipher messages in long series of numerals. They trace their history to World War I Germany, which sent Morse messages to agents among the North African Berber tribes.

**What Kind?** Real clandestine shortwave broadcasters may be "white" or "black." The "whites" make no bones about their politics, though often they hide their transmitter locations. Most clandestines today fall in this category. The widely-heard "Radio Americas" on Swan Island in the Caribbean was a typical "white" clandestine before it left the air last May.

More subtle are the "black" stations, which attempt to deceive their audiences not only about their locations but about their political affiliations as well. "Black" clandestines pretend to be what they are not, on the theory that listeners will believe a friendly voice before they will one that readily admits belonging to the "enemy."



One of the most successful "blacks" was the World War II, British-run "Deutcher Kurzwellensender Atlantik." Using a 600-kW transmitter at Crowborough, England, "Atlantiksender," as it was dubbed, pretended to be a German Navy outlet. Its psychological attack was aimed primarily at U-boat crews in the North Atlantic. With just enough anti-British sentiment to make it seem a Nazi station, "Atlantiksender" skillfully slipped in plenty of misinformation designed to undermine the morale of the enemy sailors.

World War II had a few clandestine radios that managed to broadcast sporadically under the noses of authorities in Axis-controlled territory. One was the Flemish Freedom Station, "the free transmitter of oppressed Belgium," heard in 1942. Another was a patriotic Dutch station in Nazi-occupied Holland. It came on the air at irregular intervals, once every two or three weeks. It would broadcast for five minutes or so and then vanish from the air before the Gestapo could trace it. Its audience was tiny but its defiance of the enemy gave hope to the Dutch people.

Improved direction finding techniques, which can speedily track down a hidden station, make this sort of clandestine broadcasting too risky in the 1960's. Today, virtually all clandestines are operated, often secretly, from friendly territory.

The average DX'er, without access to the massive Adcock direction finding antennas and government intelligence reports, finds the task of locating the clandestine transmitters much tougher.

Usually the life span of a clandestine station is limited. Whenever a political crisis develops, one or more of the secret radio stations crops up. When the situation cools, the mysterious voices vanish.

**Asia.** With Southeast Asia the world's current major trouble spot, it is not surprising to find a large concentration of clandestines in this area. Government and news service monitors in Tokyo and Hong Kong regularly tune the Vietnamese-language programs of the Viet Cong radio to get the latest slant on what Hanoi is thinking.

Stateside shortwave listeners can do the same. The "Radio of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation," which announces in Vietnamese as, "Dai Phat Thanh Giai Phong," is regularly heard in this country. Unlike most clandestine stations today, the Viet Cong transmitter does broadcast an English program. Beamed to U.S. troops in South Vietnam, it is heard Saturdays at 1315 GMT. Its transmitters probably are quite powerful and supposedly are located near Hanoi. Earlier, the U.S. military command reported the station operated secretly from within South Vietnam, in the jungles of Tayninh Province near the Cambodian border about 75 miles north of Saigon. It is believed to have moved following bombing attacks by American Air Force B-52's.

DX'ers also report reception of another Asian communist clandestine, "La Voix du Pathet Lao," which also announces as "Stani Withayu Kachai Siang Khana Pathet Lao." Lately it has been heard in western North America on several shortwave frequencies. Though a Chinese or North Vietnamese transmitter site has been long suspected, there is now growing evidence that it may actually be situated in the communist-controlled part of Laos.

Beginning last July, official monitors in Hong Kong noted a mysterious anti-Mao Chinese station calling itself the "Voice of the People's Liberation Army." This outlet, not to be confused with the real PLA station in China's coastal Fukien Province, is a clandestine voice that calls on Red army commanders and troops to prepare for a "true communist" revolt against Mao-Tse-tung. It denounces the Peking regime for "usurping communist power, lying to the masses, and cheating the PLA." Some China watchers believe that this clandestine is actually located on Taiwan, others suspect a Soviet Far Eastern site. Generally, however, it is believed the station really is transmitting from within mainland China, perhaps in Hunan or Hupei Provinces. Because of the chaos existing in Red China today, such operation is possible.

So far, it has not been heard by U.S. shortwave listeners and its frequencies are not yet known.

West Coast listeners have heard a com-



munist voice aimed at audiences in Thailand. Operating in the 31-meter band, the "Voice of the People of Thailand" has been reported since 1962. Seldom reported, but active in recent years, are the "Neutral South Vietnam Broadcasting Station," and its sister outlet, the "Neutral Thailand Broadcasting Station"; the "Voice of the People's Army," controlled by the North Vietnamese army; the "Voice of the Movement for Independent Neutral Thailand," belonging to the pro-communist Thailand Independence Movement; "Kmer Seri," directed to Cambodia from Peking; and the "Radio of the Neutralist Party of Laos." All follow the Red line.

On the other side of the ideological fence is the "Voice of the Patriotic Militiamen's Front," heard occasionally by U.S. SWL's, announcing as, "Day la Tieng Noi cua Mat Tran Dan Quan Ai Quec." Though claiming to be a patriotic North Vietnamese voice, the station seems to be operated secretly by our side from somewhere in the northern part of South Vietnam. It urges the North Vietnamese to oppose the Hanoi regime and its Red Chinese allies. In order to gain credibility with its intended listeners, VPMF also denounces the South Vietnamese government and the American military "intruders," thus giving a "black" cast to its broadcasts.

Its daily, hour-long transmissions begin with a distinctive drum-and-cymbal interval signal, usually about 1400 GMT, and end with dictation-speed coded instructions to sabotage agents.

But not all of the continent's clandestine radio activity is located in the Far East. One of the oldest Asian clandestines is "Azad (or Free) Kashmir Radio," which has been on the air for some 20 years. This station is located in Muzaffarabad, about 36 miles from the ceasefire line that divides Kashmir, the troubled little country claimed by both India and Pakistan. It is one of Pakistan's psychological weapons in its campaign to gain control of the ruggedly beautiful Kashmir Valley.

**Europe.** The turbulent Middle East is a natural target for clandestines, most of which originate from the communist Balkan nations, notably Bulgaria. Most widely heard of these is "Peyk-e-Iran, The Iranian Herald," which supposedly transmits from Sofia to the Kurdish and Persian-speaking peoples of Iran. Until early last year, the station also broadcast communist-oriented propaganda to Iraq, under the Arabic name, "Saut-ul-Sha'abi Iraqi." But with Moscow's changing relations with the Baghdad government, word apparently went out to end these programs.

"Peyk-e-Iran" waged a duel with an equally interesting jamming station, possibly located in Iraq, which tried to interfere with reception in the Middle East. This jammer was known to DX'ers as the "Kiss Me Honey" station, from a fragment of a popular song it repeated endlessly on Peyk-e-Iran's frequencies.

More recently, the jammer used segments of other popular recordings in an at-

| STATION  | FREQUENCY* (kHz)       | TIMES (GMT)**    |
|--|------------------------|------------------|
| Radio Libertad   | 15,050                 | 2200-0400        |
| Radio of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation (Viet Cong) | 10,030                 | 0900-1630        |
| Voice of the Patriotic Militiamen's Front                            | 7216                   | 1400-1600        |
| Voice of the People of Thailand                                      | 9428                   | 1400             |
| La Voix du Pathet Lao  | 4701, 6199             | 1200; 1400-1530  |
| Azad Kashmir Radio   | 3625, 3980             | 1130-1745        |
| Radio Peyk-e-Iran  | 11,415, 11,695, 17,760 | 1400-1800        |
| Radiofonikos Stathmos I Foni Tis Alithias                            | 6212, 8070, 9950       | 0530; 1630; 1730 |
| Radio Espana Independente  | 17,700                 | 0600; 1330       |
| Radio Euzkadi  | 13,250, 15,032         | 2030; 2130       |
| Radio Free Russia (NTS)  | 6400                   | 1300             |

\* Frequencies may vary 50 KHz or more  
 \*\* Times do not necessarily represent complete schedules



tempt to block the clandestine. These included the Beatles' "Can't Buy Me Love," and "My Blue Heaven."

Two other secret stations believed located in Bulgaria are "Radiofonikos Stathmos I Foni Tis Alithias (Voice of Truth)," aimed at Greek audiences, and "Bizim Radio," intended for listeners in Turkey and Cyprus.

Spain has been the target of clandestine communist broadcasts since the end of that country's civil war 30 year ago. A station known as "Radio Espana Independente," the mouthpiece of the Spanish Communist Party in Exile, is no doubt the oldest clandestine still active. It uses a number of shortwave frequencies and transmits either from Russia or from near Prague, Czechoslovakia. A similar outlet, "Radio Portugal Livre" is directed to the other nation on the Iberian peninsula.

A few years ago, the Spanish government attempted to retaliate with its own secret station, "Radio For the Liberation of Great Russia," which identified with portions of Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture," and broadcast anti-communist propaganda. It used the transmitters and frequencies of powerful "Radio Nacional de Espana."

The Spanish government also is regularly attacked by a mysterious, non-communist voice, "Radio Euzkadi." Controlling this station is the Basque government in exile, with headquarters in Paris. It claims to represent the Basque people who live in the northern Spanish provinces. Broadcasts are in Basque and Spanish, with occasional English announcements, from transmitters

presumably, and curiously, located in northern South America.

"Narodno Trudovoi Soyuz," the anti-communist National Alliance of Russian Solidarists, founded in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in the late '30's, has a unique portable station on the air at Sprendlingen, near Frankfurt, Germany. Its relatively low-powered transmitters are truck-mounted. "Radio Free Russia," as it is known west of the "Wall," apparently has the tacit approval of the Bonn government, for it has been on for about 18 years. It claims to have been heard as far as the Ural Mountains, deep in Mother Russia. A small, Belgian-based organization, known as "Radio Omega," uses the RFR facilities for twice-daily religious broadcasts to Russia.

**Africa.** The "dark continent" was curiously quiet at the time this was written. A few years back, the United Arab Republic tried to stir revolutionary movements with its "Voice of Free Africa" from Cairo. Today, for the most part, exiled African nationalist groups reach audiences in their homelands with special programs over regular government stations in sympathetic, neighboring countries. "Radio Zambia" directs programs to the African troops in Rhodesia's defense force. There have been daily broadcasts of the "Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola," from the government station in Kinshasha, Congo Republic. Those of the "National Front for the Liberation of Angola" are aired from

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#### CZECHOSLOVAKIA — 1968

The most exciting clandestine radio activity of recent days took place in Czechoslovakia as thousands of Soviet bloc troops poured across the borders (August, 1968). Within hours, the renowned short-wave broadcaster RADIO PRAGUE was off the air.

While the invasion may have caught most of the world by surprise, it was soon obvious that the Czechs were well prepared. Before a single day had passed at least 15 clandestine stations were on the air!

Short-wave listeners in North America heard stations announcing as THE FREE LEGAL TRANSMITTER OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, TRANSMITTER NORTHERN MORAVIA, FREE TRANSMITTER EASTERN BOHEMIA, and FREE RADIO BRNO on 11.99 MHz. Sometimes the familiar

voices of the announcing staff of RADIO PRAGUE were heard and recognized, but most of the broadcasts were handled by novice crews.

Also heard was the FREE TRANSMITTER OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK BROADCASTING on 7.345 MHz. This broadcaster was said to be operating from the outskirts of Prague itself. Listeners were often surprised by the strong signals—indicating that relatively high power transmitters were being used.

Much of the Czechoslovakia clandestine broadcasting activity is still a mystery. How did these stations operate under the very noses of Soviet troops? How were they able to befuddle the direction-finding equipment that the Soviets brought into the country?



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Brazzaville in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Algeria's 25-meter band frequency is used twice a week, Thursdays and Sundays, from 0015 to 0100 GMT, for a semi-clandestine program directed to Portugal. The broadcast, called "A Voz de Libertad," attacks the Salazar regime in Lisbon.

**Latin America.** In the mid and late 1950's, the real hot spot of clandestine radio was Latin America. The former "Radio Americas" was the best known and the best heard of the lot. "Radio Americas," and its predecessor, "Radio Swan," were anti-Castro voices, programmed by Cuban exiles. It took an active part in the Bay of Pigs invasion attempt, broadcasting coded signals to Cuba. These stations, reputedly, were financed and controlled by the Central Intelligence Agency.

There were quite a few other Cuban clandestines during this era, including one tiny outfit that allegedly broadcast from a pleasure yacht somewhere south of Miami. It aimed its blasts at Fidel's government in Havana. On the other hand, Cuban-based transmitters were heard trying to foment revolution in other Latin nations. These stations are now long silent, with the official government voice, "Radio Havana" taking up the slack.

Active again, after a strange silent period of several months early in 1968, is "Radio Libertad, La Voz Anti-Comunista de America." Its location has long been a matter of speculation but it probably broadcasts from somewhere on the north coast of South America, perhaps from Venezuelan territory. Published reports claiming it transmits from the Bahamas, from Swan Island, or even from a circling airplane, seem without foundation. There is a growing suspicion that this station has been taken over by a European exile organization.

Bolivia has been called the heart of clandestine operations. It was long the home of the greatest number of illicit stations in the Western Hemisphere.

In 1962, for example, some 34 of the 94 stations operating there were illegal. The Bolivian representative at the Interna-

tional Telecommunications Union meeting that year frankly admitted that his government was unable to silence the unlicensed outlets, most of which were run by powerful, leftist labor unions. In recent years, Bolivia has renewed its drive to shut down these clandestines.

This Cook's Tour of worldwide clandestine radio has included only a handful of the illegal stations in the shortwave bands. Clandestines come and go with the ebb and flow of international political tides. Perhaps some of these will have disappeared by the time you read this. Others will have sprung up to take their places. The situation is in an almost constant state of flux, but then, this is part of the fascination of DXing the clandestines.

#### GETTING THOSE CLANDESTINE QSL'S

Verifications from clandestine stations are rarities! None of the active clandestines aims its signals to North America; few announce in English. Usually they are careful not to disclose their locations and there is no readily available list of station addresses. But some listeners have been able to pry replies, though not always true verifications, from the mysterious stations. Though no guarantees are made, try the addresses below. A final tip: Clandestines seem more interested in comments about their programs or about the political situation closest to their hearts than in the usual sort of SWL report data.

Radio Libertad  
La Voz anti-Comunista de America  
C/o DYTA  
Apartado 20.064 z.p. 5  
Caracas, Venezuela

Radio of the South Vietnam  
National Front for Liberation  
C/o Mr. Pham Van Chuong  
Nekazanka 7  
Prague, Czechoslovakia

Radio Euzkadi  
Boite Postale 59  
Poste Centrale  
Paris XVI, France

Radio Free Russia  
Narodno Trudovoi Soyuz  
Postbox 4111  
Frankfurt, Germany

Radio Espana Independente  
Box 359  
Prague, Czechoslovakia

Radio Peyk-e-Iran  
Box 4176  
Stockholm 4, Sweden