

BROADCASTING the NEXT WAR

by GRAY STRIDER

If war should come, will radio bring the sounds of battle into your loudspeaker? The author tells of the startling plans of broadcasting companies.

SHOULD the lamps once more go out all over Europe and civilization shrivel under tons of explosive death and creeping fogs of poison gas, a new factor will be on hand to record it.

Radio, the erstwhile minstrel boy, will be at the front, if war comes, to give it voice.

How is radio preparing for war? How will the broadcasting chains play their parts in the next European conflict?

Those were the questions I took to Paul White, Director of Public Affairs of the Columbia Broadcasting System, following that chain's dramatic work on the eve of Hitler's entry into Vienna. CBS, as you know, had on short notice brought London, Paris, Berlin, and Vienna into American loudspeakers on March 13th at 8 p.m. and let American public opinion serve as its own mixing panel.

Such a job spoke of further preparation. Calm, heavy-set Paul White agreed to discuss this delicate subject with me. I spoke to him at his office on the seventeenth floor of the Columbia Broadcasting Building at 485 Madison Avenue, New York. He is one of the few radio executives who doesn't twiddle his fingers, slew around in his chair, and look at his stop watch every few seconds.

White's position is an important one. As Director of Public Affairs, he arranges broadcasts of news, sports, public events, talks, educational programs, foreign presentations, and religion. He uses the transatlantic telephone as casually as you would call your office. In times of crisis he may go from Saturday until Tuesday with less than nine hours sleep, as he did when Hitler recently acquired Austria. It doesn't seem to get him down. Paul White is not the dramatic type of radio executive you meet in the movies. But a quiet man who does his job with a minimum of words and gestures.

"In time of war," Mr. White said, "the importance of radio as a force in forming public opinion and in providing up-to-the-

minute information from the combatant countries can hardly be overestimated. In the recent Austrian crisis," he continued, "we brought the public a speedily arranged five-way international broadcast which may point to our future course of action if large scale hostilities ever materialize."

Since this March 13th broadcast may serve as a model of what will actually happen during war time you may be interested to know how such a round-robin pick-up from Europe was worked out.

"The turmoil which followed Hitler's swift action made contact with Europe extremely difficult on that Sunday," Mr. White explained. "Most of the Continent folds up over the week-end and it was almost impossible to get in touch with the proper authorities in a short space of time."

"In practically every European country—there are some exceptions—communications are a separate ministry and broadcasting in general comes under that classification. The British Broadcasting Corpora-



Paul White, CBS Director of Public Affairs, arranges radio presentations from abroad.

tion is a private organization but operates under a government charter. In France, the Ministry of Post, Telephones, and Telegraphs controls the radio. In Germany, is the *Reich Rundfunk Gesellschaft*."

In this connection, it should be noted that Columbia's representatives have excellent diplomatic contacts. In getting a short wave broadcast from Europe, the political

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H. V. Kaltenborn was the first to describe a battle from the actual scene of action. While shown here with the Spanish rebels, he later talked from the other side, also.

Earshot of the Editor

(Continued from page 4)

Of these 135,000 own ten shares or less, and 15%, or about 35,000 own one share only. Only 10% of the stockholders own a hundred shares each and no one individual owns as much as 1/2 of 1% of their stock. There are few companies in the United States whose ownership is so widely distributed as that of RCA. They have stock holders in every State of the Union. And of their total number, 100,000 of them are women. This will belie the general opinion that the public at large does not have confidence in radio as an industry, all conditions to the contrary notwithstanding.

THE F.C.C. announces that there are not any B.C. frequency monitors meeting their requirements commercially available. It seems a pity that with so many radio engineers out of a job that there is not one single company making a frequency monitor commercially available which meets these requirements. Certainly if one company were to make one available it might alleviate the unemployment situation a little.

WE are reliably informed that the manufacturer of five meter transceivers has fallen off to a point where it is practically non-existent. This is due to the fact that many unlicensed people were purchasing and using these sets, and that the monitoring of these bands is extremely difficult by the Government: We believe that this ban is good; and we further recommend that on the sale of completed transmitters to a customer, the customer be required to furnish and exhibit his license and sign for the transmitter. The number of the transmitter, if it is a commercial job, should be recorded with the Commission and that the transfer of each one of these finished transmitters also be recorded. In this way the amount of illegal operation within the bands would be minimized. Ultimately, of course, the onus of inspecting the customer's license will fall upon the retailer, but in the final analysis the retailers who assist the amateurs will have that much greater following. The regulations requiring a license are just and the requisites for the license itself are certainly easy enough for almost anybody to pass the test. There seems to be no reason why illegal operations should take place at all.

OF particular interest to the ham who is contemplating a long extended trip will be the transmitter described by W9LLX in this issue which will be carried with him on a trip to the California coast and to Texas. W9LLX will keep in communication with RADIO NEWS through contact with a number of amateurs in the Chicago area. We will carry a running story of this venture of 9LLX, his wife and three children, as they trek across the country and into Texas.

FOR the amateur who uses a plane a five meter portable transmitter is described elsewhere in this issue. It is now a number of years ago since we used a similar transmitter in New York City and were able to get a range of in excess of 50 miles with less than 0.3 watt input.

NEXT month a five meter and ten meter transmitter for use upon a boat will be described. For those amateurs who have not much space we recommend the Vest Pocket Transmitter described in this issue. This rig is without a doubt the most compact that we have ever seen.

NEXT month a story on some of the troubles of a serviceman and how to overcome them will make an article worth reading. The A.R. R.L. situation as it develops further will be followed carefully and reported. In the popular departments, the comeback of Francis X. Bushman will be written. The "Blind landing" radio system, presently developed in the United States, will be discussed and described in full.

WHAT PRICE GLORY? One Frederick Fradkin, formerly the highest paid violinist at NBC is opening his own restaurant.

LAST month we asked what had happened to certain programs, notably "The Voice of Experience." Today we were politely but firmly

informed that "The Voice" was still on the air. As much as one can apologize to a voice, we do... and let that be a lesson to us! One thing makes us very happy, though,—some of the old-timers who made radio what it is, are still with us.

* * *

FROM the many letters from our readers we believe that we are getting closer and closer to what the reader wants. We intend to maintain our leadership and coverage of the entire radio field. No one particular part will be slighted, and we ask our readers who are not interested in some of the sections of the book to skip them and read those parts which appeal to them. Something of interest to everybody in every phase of radio will always appear in RADIO NEWS and we will inevitably be the ones who will scoop every other publication.

We know that many hams will be taking their vacations during the months of June and July; we trust they will take their radios with them and send word to us via amateur radio as to just what they are doing and where they are. We certainly will enjoy hearing from them. And so until next month—with best of DX, we wish you 73.

—50—

Broadcasting the Next War

(Continued from page 11)

angle is frequently more complicated than the physical.

"We decided at four o'clock Saturday afternoon, March 12th, to broadcast the following day," Mr. White went on. "In order to get our setup complete we talked frequently on the transatlantic telephone with Paris, London, Berlin, Prague, Warsaw, Rome, and Geneva."

"We keep one man in London and one in Central Europe on a full time basis: Edward R. Murrow and William Shirer, respectively. Then we have on call what we term *string men*, part time commentators who can be summoned when needed. Many of them are American newspaper men stationed on the Continent."

"Our men in Europe made representations to the proper officials and permission was granted."

I was told by an outsider who has no connection with CBS that the Hitler regime had confiscated all radio equipment in Vienna and the job of wangling permission to broadcast from that city was no sinecure.

"To get a broadcast from Europe across the Atlantic to the United States, you have your choice of two different communications companies," Paul White informed me. "One is the American Telephone and Telegraph Co., and the other, the Radio Corporation of America. Actually they are the same, so far as the type of facilities they furnish. It is a short wave hook-up in both cases."

"Some people think such programs are brought to the United States by cable. But you cannot put words through a line very many miles without having what is known as repeater points. And repeater stations on cable lines are impossible. You cannot place them at the bottom of the ocean. In our coast-to-coast line, for instance, we may have as many as 40 repeater points between New York and Hollywood."

"When the details of the over-seas program were straightened out by telephone



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and cable, only part of our job was completed. Our traffic department here had to line up the United States network and control it so they could cut the local programs at any time.

"Fifteen minutes before the transatlantic broadcast on March 13th, the Berlin station called RCA at New York. RCA went back to Berlin on another short wave band—to test the wave length. The quality was fuzzy. Berlin switched to another wave length. This second one proved satisfactory. At this point RCA trained several receivers on the short wave channel to select the best reception and re-transmitted it from the RCA receiver station at Riverhead, L. I., over telephone land line to our master control room. Here it was *mixed* and fed out to our WABC transmitter at Wayne, New Jersey, by land line; also down to the telephone headquarters on Walker Street, New York. From there it went over the land line network. After it reached each city in the chain it was put through to the local transmitter."

We are all familiar with the results of this exceptional international broadcast, perhaps the most exciting of the year. Mr. Shirer introduced Ellen C. Wilkinson, member of the British Parliament, who spoke from London; Edgar Mowrer, foreign correspondent for the *Chicago Daily News*, took up at Paris; Pierre J. Huss, International News Service man, came on at Berlin; and Mr. Murrow carried on from Vienna.

So much for a time of political emer-

gency. But what would actually happen if war starts stirring up the kilocycles?

"The problems involved in the next war—if there is one—will prove very exacting," Mr. White said. "People will have their sets turned on almost constantly for news while it is in the making."

Right here we may as well face the question of propaganda. In the 1914-1918 conflict, we were infiltrated with propaganda through newspapers—via cold print and photograph. In the next war, we'll get it through the air. Our emotions will be stirred by words, human contacts, cheers, martial music. Also we may get broadcasts of actual battles. Machine-gun fire, and even groans of the dying, may be brought to our ears.

"In the recent Shanghai hostilities," Mr. White declared, "a unique situation developed. The transmitter was in the International Settlement and was available for use without any hindrance. Many broadcasts were sent from that point and speech was free and uncensored. I don't know any other place on the globe, outside of the United States, where a similar circumstance would prevail."

"What we will strive for in the next war—if any," Mr. White continued, "will be to present a balance of public opinion. We would use American newspaper men, foreign statesmen, publicists. Then, naturally, we would have qualified personalities speak from this country. In war time obviously nearly everybody's horizon becomes limited. If a man is on one side, he can't see the opposing viewpoint. We will attempt to present every angle of the question."

Asked whether radio would be able to broadcast actual battles, Mr. White replied: "That would be a matter of sheer chance. We once put real combat on the air. It was in September, 1936. Our foreign commentator, H. V. Kaltenborn, was broadcasting from Hendaye, on the French-Spanish border. Mr. Kaltenborn went across that little international bridge there with a microphone, amplifying equipment, and cable. We had ordered communication facilities from Hendaye to Paris and kept listening to the Paris channel. Suddenly we were switched through to Kaltenborn. He was in a hay field, hiding behind a brick building. You could hear machine gun bullets whining over his head and shells bursting around him, as the insurgents took Irun."

"Such a case could conceivably happen in the next war. But it is exceedingly doubtful if American broadcasting chains could bring their equipment to any country where conflict was going on. Perhaps you had better go and talk to Mr. Petersen, our assistant traffic manager, about that."

Mr. Petersen's comments were pithy and to the point. "If war comes," he stated, "the set-up physically would be about what we have now plus the diplomatic involvements which would arise. If we should want something from RCA or AT&T and get word back: 'Sorry. No channel available,' we would just have to handle the situation in some round-about way which would have to be worked out on the spot."

"If war comes, you can't say now what you would be up against because you don't even know the alignment of the countries—

who will be fighting whom. For instance, even at this time you can get nothing out of Lithuania on a decent circuit unless you route through Austria or Germany. You can get material from Russia but the lines are poor. And here's something which may or may not prove significant: the only method of getting broadcast from Czechoslovakia is by land line through Germany or Italy."

"In war time, if permission cannot be procured to broadcast from a combatant country, we will have to route the material around the belligerents and it will require considerable ingenuity. To get a line from where the action is taking place to the nearest RCA or AT&T pick-up point would be the problem. There are pick-up points wherever there are land lines. The American Telephone and Telegraph Company have telephone communications at present with practically all countries in Europe except Spain."

"In addition to finding suitable pick-up locations, there would also be the difficulty of getting equipment to that point and finding transmission facilities from there to your short wave channel. Equipment would include amplifiers, mikes, power supply, and so on. All this may sound easy but it won't be simple in war time. Even if an operator were able to bring his own equipment into a warring country for broadcast purposes, it would unquestionably be confiscated."

"In the next war, one aim of this broadcasting chain would be to present, where possible, eye witness accounts of what is transpiring. But as to going on the air from battle fronts—that will be largely a matter of chance and human ingenuity."

"In addition to the European hazards, both political and physical, once we get the information we want from the other side, we will have to co-ordinate our whole network here in the United States, for if one minor detail is forgotten, all efforts expended will be in vain."

To round out the potential broadcasting picture during a potential European war, I dropped by to see Abe Schecter, Director of the Special Events Department, at the National Broadcasting Company, in Radio City, New York.

"What part will our broadcasting chain play in the next European war?" Mr. Schecter repeated. "Good Heavens, your guess is as good as mine. Offhand I'd say that the fellow with the strongest pair of tonsils will be the winner."

When the flags start waving and they strike up the bands; when fanatics begin to bellow with all the force of their leather-lined lungs, I hope the broadcasting chains will not overlook one small matter. When they line up the generals and the admirals and the chancellors to speak; when they broadcast battles and dramatize air raids; when the last prime minister has had his way and his say, will they allow the little people to talk? The doughboy who spends his days in the muck; the mother who is fighting a losing battle to feed her children; the girl whose father will never come home?

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