

Haw-Haw William Joyce The Full Story

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William Joyce as his pre-war audiences saw him—aggressively untidy in trench coat and muffer, carrying a heavy stick, the tough, scarred features relieved by an underlying humour

LORD HAW-HAW

— and William Joyce

The Full Story

by

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Chapter 23

THE RED ROSE

In 1942 Büro Concordia still went on growing. To support Rommel the largest and most expensive secret station yet was set up, the German Propaganda Ministry having been advised of the tremendous effect of the spoken word in Arab countries. Arabs were scarce in Berlin and, with different ministries bidding for their services, very expensive. Free Arabia, as the new station was called, had to have them and to pay their price, and the result was thought to be convincing. An official Turkish bulletin quoted Free Arabia, accepting it for what it professed to be. The dashing Rommel became the symbol of a vigorous, audacious Third Reich. News poured into the Rundfunkhaus and the commentators made the best of things while Rommel's successes lasted.

Joyce scored two personal triumphs in that year: he won his wife back and he achieved his aim of becoming the chief commentator in the English Language Service.

He persuaded his wife to return by a Blitzkrieg, launched when she was ill and neglected. Having paid one visit, the doctor did not reappear. Her friends were working and nobody willingly undertook evening trips across Berlin in the black-out, with the possibility of being marooned in an air-raid shelter for hours. No letter came from Nicky.

After a restless night, she fell asleep during the day. When she woke she saw a cigar box on her bedside table. It contained carbon tablets, a red rose and a note from William.

Such old-world chivalry, from a man not given overmuch to graciousness, touched her. As Joyce had known she would, she telephoned him. Naturally enough, he said that he hoped soon to see her well again; they must meet and have a chat. She could not refuse.

The Red Rose

He was good company, lively, amusing and gentle. They arranged another meeting and soon the old routine was re-established. After their solitude they enjoyed being together.

But Margaret, her memory of the strain of life at Kastanien-Allee still fresh, felt that events were again getting out of control. Imploringly she wrote to Nicky to answer, telling herself that if he did not she would know that he was determined to drop her. She waited, giving him ample time to reply, but in vain.

While she was in despair Joyce proposed that she should return to him. She went back to her room and wrote what she intended to be her farewell letter to Nicky, telling him of her hopelessness and of her decision to go back to her husband.

Joyce gave her no chance to change her mind. They must be married again, he resolved, as soon as it could be arranged.

Their second wedding was almost as discreet as their divorce. The ceremony took place at Berlin-Charlottenburg register office on 11th February 1942 and they returned to their flat.

Three days later a furious Nicky telephoned her, outraged at her lack of faith, injured by her assumption that he had been luxuriating in a staff job, protesting that he had been in the greatest danger and out of reach even of such comforts as the delivery of mail. The High Command's bulletins, taking a broad and reassuring view of the situation, devoted no space to minor and ugly engagements when the German troops did not sweep all before them. Partisans had cut off his group for weeks and would have exterminated them if relief had not arrived. There he had been, thinking of her, while she. . . . Words failed him at the faithlessness of women. His temper had not subsided by the time he returned to the eastern front, and he left without giving her his army post office address.

Joyce was appointed chief commentator in June. The contract, which came into force on July 3rd, gave him a salary of 1,200 Reichsmarks (roughly £60) a month (not extravagant considering all he was doing), a Christmas bonus, and the right to three months' notice. Baillie-Stewart, the original (and in accent the only) Lord Haw-Haw, had retreated to the Foreign Office.

It is surprising that Joyce had to wait so long for recognition. His employers seem to have realized at this time that they had been unappreciative, as they offered him special facilities for a holiday abroad. Given, by the Propaganda Ministry, the

provisional choice of Norway, Turkey or Portugal, he selected Norway—a fortunate decision as it turned out to be the only country to which the Gestapo would let him go. He was flown to Oslo on a plane carrying occupation officials, Margaret travelled by train and ferry to meet him there, and they then went northwards to a requisitioned hotel reserved for the Gauleiter of Norway and his guests.

Food was plentiful in the hotel, in contrast to the situation outside. To Joyce's annoyance a young German was allocated to them as an interpreter, and possibly to keep an eye on them, but as the Joyces liked walking and their unwanted companion did not, he was easily persuaded to stay behind while they tramped the countryside.

One valley reminded Joyce of Connemara. They walked there several times, getting on visiting terms with an hospitable young farmer, to whom Joyce revealed his identity.

'You'll be hanged if they get you,' said the young man.

'I know,' replied Joyce. 'It doesn't matter.'

Over beer the host expounded his political views. He liked neither the Germans nor the English, and hoped for economic reunion with Sweden. Joyce pondered on this plan, without apparently being able to incorporate it in his own political scheme.

Breaking the return journey in Oslo, the couple met some Norwegian quislings. These shared Joyce's opinion that National Socialism had got into the wrong hands, and he concluded that they were the most sincere National Socialists he had met since leaving England.

A critic of Joyce's broadcasts appeared in Berlin in October. He was John Amery, the ne'er-do-well son of a distinguished British statesman. When France collapsed he had been living in the south. Associating himself with the Axis cause, he was now in Berlin to persuade Dr. Hesse to give him and other Englishmen a British radio hour in which they could speak uncensored. He urged that Baillie-Stewart's and Joyce's propaganda had been misdirected, being hostile when it should have tried to win the British over to an anti-Bolshevik crusade. All he got, apart from government hospitality, was a promise that his proposals would be examined and forwarded to the Propaganda Ministry. He attributed his rebuff to Joyce's influence. Joyce denied having any prejudice against Amery; all he had done, he said afterwards,

was to warn Dietze that Amery was irresponsible and that his playboy past would nullify his propaganda.

To judge by such talks as he gave, Amery was unlikely to have been more persuasive than Joyce or to have successfully challenged Haw-Haw's supremacy, for what that was now worth. German broadcasting still had a British audience, but the Ministry of Information obviously thought its size would not justify a full-scale survey. Inquiries of over 1,000 BBC local honorary correspondents revealed that 85 per cent thought listening was 'very small' or 'fairly small', but only 4 per cent claimed that it was non-existent. The amount of listening may well have been underestimated, but the conclusion that there was no ground for concern was reasonable.

His press publicity in Britain having fallen off, Joyce had little audience reaction to encourage him, but occasionally he received fan letters from German listeners. One, directed to Lord Haw-Haw, Esq., Reichssender Berlin, from a Hamburg listener, he preserved, perhaps because of its curiosity interest. The writer addressed him as 'Your Lordship' and went on: 'Some time ago you cited a few sermons of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the ill-famed Dr. Lang. The sermons amazed me and in my Tagebuch I made the following notation about them: "When I heard of the sermons of the Archbishop of Canterbury, I came to the conclusions that there must be an 'ill-church' in the land of 'Church-ill.' "' The writer concluded by assuring Joyce that 'I am always enjoying your "views on the news."'

Joyce replied: 'Dear Sir,—Thank you very much for your encouraging and amusing letter. I appreciate your puns and thoroughly conform with your views.

'It is good to know that you enjoy my "views on the news".'

'Heil Hitler!'

'WILLIAM JOYCE

'(Lord Haw-Haw).'

A solemn note was struck for the celebrations on 30th January 1943 of Hitler's accession to power, when dedication to a mighty cause was the theme. The campaign on the eastern front was going badly. In his Haw-Haw talk that evening Joyce, unusually reflective, declared: 'If National Socialism had accomplished nothing more than what already lies behind it, it would rank as