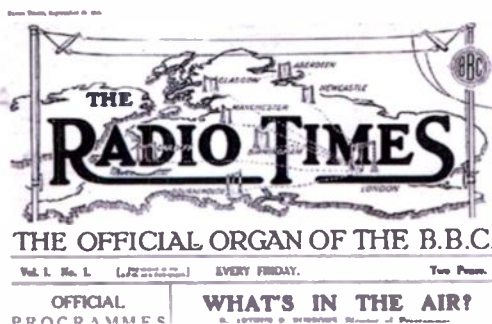


THE BBC & RADIO LUXEMBOURG

A Comparison Of Broadcasting Styles And Attitudes

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree
of BA (Hons) Journalism and French Combined Honours Programme,
University of Central Lancashire, May 1999



by Paul Breeze

The BBC & Radio Luxembourg

A Comparison of Broadcasting Styles and Attitudes

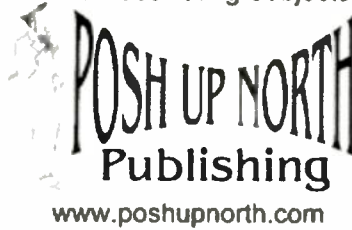
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Interesting Books...
...Fascinating Subjects!



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The BBC & Radio Luxembourg

A Comparison of Broadcasting Styles and Attitudes

Synopsis

This dissertation concerns the events surrounding the birth and development of public radio broadcasting in Britain and Europe and will examine and contrast in particular the early history of the BBC - the world's best known public service – and Radio Luxembourg, which grew to become the world's largest and most innovative commercial radio station.

One area that will not be addressed as part of this study is the effect of the introduction of television both on Radio Luxembourg and to the BBC, which will have most certainly been considerable to all radio broadcasters.

Observations will, therefore, relate to radio transmission, licensing and regulation based issues only and on a purely European scale.

Front Cover images:

Radio Luxembourg advert

First Issue of the BBC's Radio Times – 28th September 1923 (BBC Archive)

Early presenter for both BBC and Radio Luxembourg Christopher Stone (Radio Pictorial, 1934)

Back Cover Images:

Promotion sticker for Radio WAKY 107FM, Luxembourg, mid -1990s (Author's collection)

Radio WAKY sponsoring a car racing event at the racing track at Mondercange in Luxembourg, September 1997. (Author's photo)

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Introduction

The aim of this study is to chart the early history of radio broadcasting in the UK and to compare it with that of Luxembourg, against a backdrop of regulation and competition in Europe.

The motivation behind this choice of topic is two fold.

Firstly, I recently spent a year working in both the written press and broadcasting in Luxembourg and the way that a country with a population of only 350.000 interacts with - and maintains its own identity despite being surrounded by - such powerful neighbours as France, Germany and Belgium has been a marvel to me ever since.

Secondly, despite having similar beginnings in the early days of radio, the English language services of the BBC and RTL ended up taking very different directions.

The BBC has grown to become one of the world's most respected entertainment and news providers, while the RTL English service disappeared completely from the airwaves in 1992, despite having been a world leader in the domain of popular music and entertainment for many years.

I plan to examine the differing directions taken by each company and sum up the later history leading to the present day circumstances of both organisations.

Broadcasting was a state monopoly in the United Kingdom and Luxembourg from very early on and its development differed greatly from broadcasting in the United States which was not regulated by central government and quickly grew into a chaotic commercial "gold rush" with ever growing numbers of stations vying for listeners with uncoordinated power outputs, often on overlapping wavelengths.

For the purpose of this study, I plan to remain firmly on a European scale where comparison can be more easily made and will be more relevant to the European reader.

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Chapter One - Early Advances In Broadcasting

1.1 Marconi, Writtle and the PMG

Many ground breaking experiments had been carried by such scientists as Michael Faraday (1791-1868), James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879) and Heinrich Hertz (1857-94) but radio broadcasting as we know it first became a reality in 1896 when the Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi demonstrated his newly developed science of Wireless Telegraphy (WIT) on Salisbury Plain (Nichols, 9 & Briggs 1985, 43).

He went on to transmit Morse code between Bournemouth and the Isle of Wight in 1898 and progressed to sending a message from Poldhu in Cornwall to St John's in Newfoundland by the end of 1901. Morse was used widely during the first world war for military purposes and, by 1919, Marconi had sufficiently developed his initial concept to the point of being able to transmit the human voice across the Atlantic (Nichols, 9).

Following on from this success, he established the UK's first public broadcasting station at Writtle, near Chelmsford, which transmitted two half-hour programmes every day (Nichols, 9).

On 15th June 1920 Dame Nellie Melba broadcast a ½ hour operatic performance from the Writtle studio. The event - sponsored by the *Daily Mail* - could be heard right across Europe and was even picked up as far away as Newfoundland (Briggs 1995, 43).

Unfortunately, the government and the Post Office thought that such events as the Melba concert were "a frivolous use of a national service" and, after complaints that public broadcasts were also interfering with military signals, Marconi's transmissions were banned by the Postmaster-General in the Autumn of 1920 under the Defence of the Realm Act (Briggs 1995, 46).

The Postmaster-General had initially assumed the power to regulate the use of radio based on the outdated Wireless Telegraph Act of 1904 (Briggs 1985, 33), which was completely inadequate to cope with the new medium, having been instigated for the regulation of Morse only. For this reason, the Post Office took the step of banning all public broadcasting until more relevant laws could be introduced (Nichols, 9).

During this period, the only radio broadcasts that could be heard in the UK were those from the French Eiffel Tower station and from the Hague (Burns, 3).

The Postmaster-General's veto was only rescinded in December 1921 after the government received a petition from 63 wireless societies with over 3000 signatures (Briggs 1995, 46) and, after much consideration, the Post Office issued 4000 licences to private individuals to receive wireless broadcasts and a limited number to operators of transmitting stations, one of whom was Marconi (Nichols, 9).

On 13th January 1922, Marconi was authorised to restart transmissions (Briggs 1995, 53) and the Writtle 2MT station went back on air on 14th February 1922 with a licence permitting 15 minutes of broadcasting each week (Nichols, 9).

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The test transmissions emanating from the Writtle studios were fairly basic, with Marconi's own staff playing their musical instruments or purely reading lists of railway line names. Even so, they gained an ever growing band of listeners – some as far afield as Madrid and Rome (Briggs 1995, 42).

In addition to the Writtle station, Marconi gained permission to set up another broadcasting station from its London headquarters - Marconi House on the Strand. Unfortunately, many stringent government restrictions were still in place and broadcasting was limited to one hour per day within a particular timeframe and a 3 minute interval was required after every 7 minutes of output (Briggs 1995, 67- 68).

The new London based station was called 2LO and it first went on the air on 11th May 1922, broadcasting live commentary of a prize fight at Olympia which had been arranged by the *Daily Mail* and, after the summer of 1922, many of the restrictions were lifted and music was allowed to be broadcast more freely (Briggs 1995, 68/9).

1.2 Other British Stations

However in 1922, the Marconi company did not have a complete monopoly over broadcasting in the UK. In fact, the Post Office was rather concerned about Marconi's dominant position in the new industry and wanted to ensure that it didn't gain a monopoly (Gibbons, 127).

Metropolitan Vickers - "Metrovick" - had begun early test transmissions playing gramophone records from the home of the head of research, APM Fleming in Hale, west Manchester (Hartley, 8).

Fleming had visited the United States in 1921 and saw for himself the "ethereal chaos of 500 stations feverishly competing with each other, often with similar frequencies and little or no liaison" and therefore readily accepted the need for strict regulation in the UK (Hartley, 8).

The first serious 2ZY station broadcasts, now emanating from the Metrovick factory in Trafford Park, began on 17th May 1922 (Hartley 12) and the station became part of the newly formed BBC on 14th November 1922 (Briggs 1995, 78).

The Western Electric Company set up two broadcasting stations – the 500w powered 2WP in London (8th November 1922) and 51T in Birmingham, which started broadcasts under the BBC banner on 15th November. (Crisell, 13, Briggs 1995, 81, Briggs 1985, 25).

The government, however, was still concerned about potential chaos and, as a consequence, the Postmaster-General initiated talks in mid May 1922 between the country's leading wireless manufacturers with a view to forming a broadcasting syndicate. He made it clear to all parties that a state-enforced monopoly would be the only workable option but, at the same time, that the Post Office itself did not have the desire to manage such a monopoly on behalf of the Government (Briggs 1985, 26).

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Chapter Two - The BBC As A Private Company.

2.1 The British Broadcasting Company Limited - 1922

The first incarnation of the BBC – the British Broadcasting Company Limited – was formed on 18th October 1922 and its founding members saw its initial purpose as to establish a broadcasting service to act as a sales tool to encourage sales of their radio receivers.

Its chairman was the Rt. Hon Lord Gainsford – a coal baron – and the board of directors was made up from the managing directors and chairmen of the 6 main radio manufacturers in the country – the “Big 6”, ie.:

Marconi Wireless Telegraph Co. Ltd,
Metropolitan Vickers Electrical Export Company Ltd,
Radio Communication Company Ltd,
Hotpoint Electrical Appliance Company Ltd,
General Electric Company Ltd
and the Western Electric Company Ltd (Briggs 1995, 114 - 115).

The BBC's first General Manager, appointed in December 1922, was John Charles Walsham Reith, a Scottish engineer with no prior knowledge of broadcasting (Briggs 1985, 44). Nonetheless he was to become a significant player in the shaping of the new organisation.

2.2 Licensing

All radio receiver sets sold in the UK had to be of BBC manufacture and had to be licensed by the Post Office (Gibbons, 127) and to finance itself, the BBC was to receive half of the 10 shilling licence fee and a 10 per cent royalty on all receiving sets sold (Nichols, 11).

Unfortunately, by the spring of 1923, the growing band of amateur enthusiasts and home wireless builders were able to avoid paying royalties or licence fees, meaning that the BBC was losing out on revenue, which led it to object to the Post Office. At the same time, the Post Office was also coming under fire from the *Daily Express*, which was running a critical campaign claiming that the system of licence fees should be abolished, having only been based very dubiously on the old 1904 Telegraphy Act (Briggs 1985, 43).

By this time nearly 50,000 receiving licences had been issued – mainly to the wealthy upper-middle classes. Indeed, the owning of a radio remained an indicator of social status for much of the 1920s as the cost of a receiver and licence was way beyond the means of most working men. The average worker earned about £68 per year; and a radio receiver might cost anywhere between £25 and £100 (Wood, 31-32).

This situation was only satisfactorily resolved with the introduction of the Wireless Telegraph (Explanation) Bill 1925 which gave the Post Office a legal right to enforce licence purchase and therefore consolidate the BBC's source of funding (Briggs 1995, 177).

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Although the BBC was, at this stage, operating as an independent company, the Postmaster General retained control over broadcasting on behalf of the government and had the power to ban any subject that could be considered contentious, political or likely to offend certain sections of the public. This included political talks, particularly anything to do with socialism, and no news was initially permitted to be broadcast, news remaining strictly in the control of the press barons (Wood, 31).

2.3 Press Relations

Under the terms of its licence, the BBC was not allowed to broadcast any news or information "other than that obtained and paid for from the news agencies". This was changed however by an agreement reached on 11th November 1922 under which the news agencies were to supply the BBC with "news for use between 7pm and 11pm only". This would be a "daily summary of the world's news, enough to fill one half-hour bulletin and solely for the purposes of distribution within the British Isles" (Briggs 1995, 120-122).

The newspapers also insisted that the BBC pay to have their programme listings advertised. The BBC refused and the press promptly boycotted all coverage of the BBC. (Briggs 1995, 129). As a consequence of this, the BBC launched the *Radio Times* in September 1923 to publish their programme listings and to "shape the public image of the BBC" (Briggs 1995, 270).

In June 1926, the BBC added to their radio publications with the launch of *World Radio* magazine, which carried details of the foreign programmes which were, by then, also available to the British listener (Briggs 1995, 280).

2.4 The Sykes Committee - 1923

The Sykes Committee was set up by the Postmaster-General in April 1923 with Sir Frederick Sykes as Chairman. (Briggs 1985, 49).

Its purpose was to "examine the areas of monopoly, censorship and government control in British broadcasting" and made its report to parliament in August 1923 (Briggs 1995, 152-159).

The Sykes Report stated that, as "radiotelephony was so far reaching and relatively cheap, control of such a potential power over public opinion and the life of the nation ought to remain with the state" and that "the operation of so important a national service ought not to be allowed to become an unrestricted commercial monopoly" (Gibbons, 57).

The report expressed approval of Reith's approach to educational values and the high standard of broadcast material (Gibbons, 58) and also observed that having advertising on the BBC would "lower the standard" (Briggs 1995, 150).

It also recommended that formal advertising be banned but did, however, allow for sponsored programmes to be broadcast and eight concerts, all sponsored by newspapers, were transmitted during 1925 and one in 1926 (Briggs 1995, 172). The report also recommended that the BBC should from then on be funded from licence sales alone (receiving 75% of the fee instead of 50%) and would no longer receive royalties from the sale of each receiver set (Briggs 1995, 150).

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2.5 The Crawford Committee – 1925/6

By 1925, the number of fee paying licence holders had risen to over two million and the government decided that it was now time to take this power out of private control and place it firmly under the control of the government (Wood, 32).

To examine the ways of achieving this, the Postmaster-General set up a second committee of enquiry under the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres.

Speaking before the Committee, the Wireless League criticised the BBC monopoly and its single channel broadcasting, calling for greater variety in programmes and the Radio Association urged the need for different programmes on different wavelengths: "Just as every reader of the newspaper can read what he wishes and omit what he wishes, similarly it should be possible for the listener to tune in to highbrow music if he prefers it or a jazz band if he wishes" (Briggs 1995, 309-310).

John Reith told the Crawford committee that he saw the BBC's role as to the "maintenance of high standards, the provision of the best and rejection of the hurtful" (Gibbons, 58) and the Committee accepted Reith's proposal, that "the Corporation should be a public institution, free from commercial pressures by continuing to be funded by licence fees, but also free from government interference" (Crisell, 18).

The final report proposed that the BBC should be "established as a public corporation, as a trustee for the national interest of broadcasting" (Gibbons, 57) and that it should be used "for the general public interest and not for the benefit of powerful or rich interest groups" (Annan, 9).

Like the Sykes report two years earlier, Crawford approved of the emphasis that the BBC was putting on quality but was also "wary of too much high brow material" and observed that the listener was "entitled to some latitude in the content – too much high brow would be unwise if it were more than the listener would be prepared to accept" (Gibbons, 58).

In fact, as was later to be observed during the 1949 Beveridge enquiry: "broadcasting without listeners has no purpose at all" (Gibbons, 66).

The Crawford Report was published on 5th March 1926 and its recommendations were accepted by the Postmaster-General on 14th July 1926 (Briggs 1995, 318), with the resulting charter creating the British Broadcasting Corporation on 1st January 1927 for a period of 10 years (Briggs 1995, 327). It was decided that this new Corporation should be established under a Royal Charter instead of a statute so as to demonstrate that it was not just a puppet of the government (Briggs 1985, 90).

2.6 The General Strike - 1926

The General Strike ran from 3rd to 12th May 1926 and quite significantly, took place between Crawford's report being published and it being accepted by the Postmaster-General for implementation (Briggs 1995, 329).

As all the newspaper printers were on strike, the BBC became the public's only source of news about the strike and this it did by broadcasting news in 5 daily bulletins (Crisell, 19).

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During the strike, the Government was divided as to how to use the BBC – whether to use it as a propaganda tool to smash the strike or to leave it independent. Fortunately for the BBC, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin felt that the latter was better and decided to “leave the BBC with a considerable measure of autonomy and independence” (Briggs 1995, 331).

The company was, however, prohibited from making editorial comment on the strike (Wood, 33) and in fact, the Postmaster-General's instruction not to editorialise on matters of public policy is still a condition of the BBC's Royal Charter to this day (Gibbons, 41).

Commenting on the Government's attitude to the BBC during the strike, Reith, said that, although the BBC had been “for the government in the crisis”, it was essential that it retained public confidence otherwise 3½ years' work would have been wasted (Briggs 1995, 332).

He also said that he saw the new Corporation as a logical successor to the Limited Company: “The policy of the BBC during its stewardship of the service had led logically and indeed inevitably to the creation of a Public Corporation” (Briggs 1995, 267).

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Chapter Three - The BBC As A Corporation

3.1 From Company to Corporation - 1927

The final board meetings of the old BBC, held on 21st October and 12th November 1926, had the liquidation of the company as main item on the agenda but the question of the new Corporation's right to take over the manufacturing patents from the old Company was fiercely contended for many years (Briggs 1995, 352).

As things turned out, the Company was not finally wound up until December 1929, at which time 1600 other manufacturers and 80 wireless dealers had joined the Big Six as shareholders, albeit in a very minor capacity (Briggs 1995, 352/366/368).

In December 1926, the British Broadcasting Company Limited was dissolved as a broadcasting concern and was replaced by a Corporation operating under a Royal Charter, with Reith becoming its first Director General (Wood, 32).

The new British Broadcasting Corporation was placed under the control of a board of governors - "persons of judgement and independence" but the terms of the Royal Charter make it quite clear that "broadcasting was seen from the outset as an instrument for serving the interests of the government, rather than a means of providing an entertainment service" (Wood, 33).

Under the terms of the new broadcasting licence, the Postmaster-General retained authority to approve wavelengths, heights of masts and hours of transmission; he was further invested with powers to take over or close down the BBC in case of emergency and during the General Strike of 1926, the BBC had been prohibited from making comment on the strike, or even reporting on the happenings in the country (Wood, 33).

3.2 The "Reith Sunday"

John Reith believed that it was God's will that he was in charge of British broadcasting and that the BBC's monopoly made it his duty to choose and broadcast the kind of programme he thought was good for the British public - rather than the kind of programmes the general public might have chosen for itself (Wood, 35) - a "blatant attempt by the BBC to try and "improve" its listeners rather than provide the kind of programmes that most of them wanted" (Crisell, 46).

Whilst being a worthy ideal in principle, it was this very diet of dull, serious material which played straight into the hand of the European based stations who immediately set out to offer a lighter mood of music (Nichols, 11).

3.3 BBC Expansion

During Autumn and Winter 1923, the BBC built several local relay transmitters around the country and the first relayed national transmission took place in May 1924 (Briggs 1995, 197-199). In the Summer of 1925, station 5XX was opened at Daventry. At the time, it was the biggest broadcast station in the world at 25Kw and also the first long wave station (Briggs 1995, 204).

In 1927, a second Daventry station - 5GB - began broadcasting and became the world's first to offer an alternative programme. In 1930, Daventry 5XX became known as the National programme and 5GB as the Regional programme (Briggs 1995, 27)

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Unfortunately, it was clear to many - but not the BBC itself - that its standard diet of educational and worthy programmes was not really what the listening public wanted to hear. A ballot of listeners by the *Daily Mail* in 1927 showed that most people preferred to hear variety and concert programmes to symphonies and talks (Briggs 1965, 70).

At the time of the Crawford committee, performers and artists had complained that their live shows were being adversely affected by radio broadcasts, saying that the "freshness of West End shows was blunted by the time they reached the provinces" and Rupert d'Oyly Carte had gone so far to completely refuse permission for Gilbert & Sullivan concerts to be broadcast (Briggs 1995, 314).

This impasse was overcome to a certain extent in October 1928 when a new agreement with the General Theatre Corporation, enabled the BBC to broadcast fortnightly variety shows from the Palladium, which had been previously prohibited under an earlier agreement to protect artists' rights from broadcasters (Briggs 1965, 82).

By the mid 1930s, BBC listeners in the UK were a more representative cross section of the population than they had been in the mid 1920s. In fact, by 1935 98% of the population were able to receive one BBC programme and 85% could choose between the national and Regional stations (Briggs 1965, 253).

3.4 The Ullswater Committee & The New Charter – 1935/6

The Ullswater committee was set up in April 1935 under Lord Ullswater, an ex-speaker of the House of Commons. Its purpose was to examine the position of the BBC and the renewal of its Royal Charter which was due to expire on 31st December 1936 (Briggs 1965, 481).

The BBC told the committee that, as far as its programme policy was concerned, it had "aimed at providing a service somewhat ahead of what the public would demand were it possible for such demand to be made articulate and intelligible" (Briggs 1965, 482).

Much of the evidence at the Ullswater committee was not "against the BBC but against broadcasting itself" as contentious suggestions were made that all had been well with the British music industry before the advent of the BBC and that "Children's Hour broadcasts had destroyed the sale of children's books" (Briggs 1965, 492).

The Ullswater Report was published on 16 March 1936 and stated that that "it had been widely recognised that the practice of excluding advertisements from broadcast programmes in this country is to the advantage of the listener" (Briggs 1965, 350).

Most of the recommendations of the Ullswater Committee were accepted and the Charter was extended for 10 years without significant alteration (Briggs 1965, 511).

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3.5 The BBC Overseas

Trial Empire broadcasts began in November 1927 from a special short wave station G5SW set up at the Marconi plant in Chelmsford (Briggs 1965, 372) and an international short wave station was built at Daventry in 1932, with the first worldwide broadcast being made on 25th December 1932 when King George V addressed his peoples across the Empire (Wood, 36).

In October 1937 the Postmaster-General announced that the BBC would undertake broadcasts in languages other than English and on 3rd January 1938, the BBC commenced broadcasts in Arabic to counter Mussolini's propaganda broadcasts to the Middle East from Radio Bari (Wood, 36).

The BBC Latin American service began in March 1938 and from 27th September 1938 – the time of the Munich crisis - a nightly news bulletin was broadcast in French, German and Italian (Briggs 1965, 370) and unbeknown to most, under a secret agreement in July 1938, Reuters news agency agreed to transmit fabricated news prepared by the Foreign Office, with the intention of deceiving enemy and neutral nations (Wood, 50).

During 1939, overseas and European services were expanded including dedicated services to Spain, Portugal and South Africa (Briggs 1965, 647) and by the end of World War II, the BBC had extended its services to broadcast in 43 different languages (Wood, 49).

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Chapter Four - International Growth and Regulation

4.1 Early Broadcasting in Europe

By 1922, broadcasting stations had sprung up in Belgium, Germany, Spain, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Finland, Norway. France started test transmissions from the Eiffel Tower in 1922 (Nichols, 11) and, in October 1923, the German government "invented" the concept of state broadcasting under the auspices of the Reichspostminister as Station Berlin went on the air from the Voxhaus, Berlin on 29th of that month (Wood, 20).

In 1925, Captain Leonard Plugge, who was later to become a major player in the establishment of early commercial radio, persuaded the London store Selfridges to sponsor a fashion talk broadcast from the Eiffel Tower station in Paris (Briggs 1965, 351).

During 1928–30, Sunday concerts sponsored by radio manufacturers were broadcast on Radio Hilversum, which could easily be picked up by listeners in Britain, but such commercial interests were short-lived, however, as the Dutch banned sponsored programmes in 1930 and Belgium followed suit in 1932 (Briggs 1965, 351/352).

4.2 The IBU and the Geneva Conference – 1925/6

With broadcasting becoming widespread across Europe, it became apparent that international regulation was necessary to avoid conflicts and a European framework for discussion was set up with a view to holding a conference.

The BBC, however, chose not to go to the 1924 Geneva Conference as Reith felt that establishing Esperanto as an international language seemed higher on the agenda than regulating broadcasting: "why not spread British thought in French or English, which are increasingly understood?" (Briggs 1995, 283-284).

The BBC thought that a world broadcasting agreement would be more useful than a purely European one and also refused to go to the second Geneva conference, scheduled for April 1925, deciding instead to organise their own conference in London for March. Representatives from 10 countries attended the London Savoy Hill conference and the International Broadcasting Union (IBU) – or UIR (Union International de Radiophonie) - was officially formed, with its headquarters, somewhat ironically, to be based in Geneva (Briggs 1995, 287).

The IBU constitution was drafted in Geneva on 3rd and 4th of April 1925 and the BBC's Charles Carpendale (who Reith had appointed as his deputy in 1923) was named as its first president (Briggs 1995, 288).

The "Geneva Plan" for the allocation of wavelengths was drafted during 1925 and accepted in 1926, with Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland all signing up to it (Briggs 1995, 290).

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4.3 The Washington Conference - 1927

The Washington Agreement of November 1927 was the first fully international Radio Telegraphic Convention since 1912 and, as such, had a lot of catching up to do with the advancing in broadcasting in the previous 15 years.

The Washington agreement merely allowed for the 80 contracting countries to "assign any frequency and any type of wave to stations in their territory upon the sole condition that no interference with any service of another country will result therefrom" (Briggs 1965, 340).

4.4 The Prague Conference - 1929

In 1929 a conference of governments in Prague established the first European broadcasting framework but the ensuing Prague Protocol was "neither the interest of the engineer nor of the broadcaster, but the authority of governments" (Briggs 1965, 343).

4.5 The Madrid Conference - 1932

The 4th International Radio Telegraphic Convention held in Madrid in September 1932 complicated things. Russia and France refused to comply with the general consensus regarding wavelength allocation and no real progress was made. The smaller countries left the conference particularly disgruntled (Briggs 1965, 343).

4.6 IBC and Radio Normandy

By the early thirties, the BBC had already managed to get itself involved in a cross border broadcasting dispute - with a small station that had been set up in a Benedictine monastery in Fécamp, northern France.

Captain Plugge - a late twenties adventurer - discovered and quickly took over this amateur enterprise and transformed it into "Radio Normandy", with the express intention of beaming radio programmes to southern England (Nichols, 15).

From this small start, he set up the rather grandiosely named "International Broadcasting Company", commonly referred to as "IBC", to sell American style on-air advertising and, by 1931, Radio Normandy was broadcasting popular music programmes to England every night between midnight and 3 am (Nichols, 15).

IBC went on to bombard Britain with English language programmes from a number of radio stations spread out all over the continent, namely: Radio Toulouse, Radio Paris (both 1931), Radio Rome (1932) (Gifford, 126) and in May 1933, first offered the chance to advertise on Luxembourg, with its first sponsored programmes for British listeners being planned for Sunday 4 June, on 1191 metres (Nichols, 22).

The BBC were horrified at this prospect, and their campaign against Radio Luxembourg intensified. They found an ally in the British press who also saw the IBC and Radio Luxembourg as a threat to their own advertising revenue and a concentrated campaign was launched to boycott Radio Luxembourg which was to be maintained for almost 50 years (Nichols, 24).

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4.7 French Government Policy

Radio Paris was taken over by the French government in April 1933, and sponsoring stopped in November and Radio Toulouse had controls imposed upon it in July 1933 but a new French commercial long wave station - Poste Parisien - began broadcasting commercial programmes in English in November 1933 and was followed by Radio Lyons in 1936 (Briggs 1965, 365).

Repeated efforts by the BBC to persuade the French governments of the 1930s to control commercial broadcasting from their soil all failed.

In 1934, the French Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs sent warning letters to stop English advertising programmes, without any success and, in 1937, the same Ministry admitted that taxes imposed by the French government to act as a deterrent had been easily evaded (Briggs 1965, 365).

In December 1937, it was reported that the Chautemps government was about to prohibit all English sponsored programmes but, in January 1938, Chautemps resigned and the new Minister of Posts and Telegraphs did not seek to follow this matter up (Briggs 1965, 365).

Other countries however, were becoming more amenable to BBC pressure - including Austria, Denmark, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Germany in 1936 and, by spring 1939, Luxembourg and the French pirate stations were the only ones still broadcasting advertising programmes to Britain. (Briggs 1965, 366).

Against the backdrop of impending war, the BBC's battle against foreign commercial broadcasting lost some of its sting and the last unsuccessful international attempt to deal with it was made at the World Telecommunications Conference at Cairo in 1938, when all the participants at the Madrid Conference were present, along with representatives of nine new countries (Briggs 1965, 366).

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Chapter Five – Radio Luxembourg

5.1 Early Days - 1920-1931

What eventually came to be known as "Radio Luxembourg" originated from a group of wireless enthusiasts - the Amis de TSF (Telegraphie Sans Fils) - who used to meet in the Cafe Jacoby in Luxembourg town during 1920 (Nichols, 12).

One of them, a radio electrician called Francois Anen, set up a 100-watt transmitter in a house in Rue Beaumont in 1924 and, by 1926, this early set up had begun to transmit broadcasts of military concerts from the Place d'Armes, and various theatrical pieces in Luxembourg dialect (Nichols, 13).

Henri Etienne, ex-editor of radio newspaper *L'Antenne* proposed a proper radio service in Luxembourg using French and Belgian capital and, aided by Luxembourg entrepreneur Raoul Fernandez, he negotiated with the Luxembourg government and Post Office, forming in 1928 the Société d'Etudes Radiophoniques.

The company had a capital of 280,000 Belgian Francs with himself and Francois Anen as principals along with a group of Paris businessmen. The Société was recognised and given legal status on 19th December 1929 and the station in Rue Beaumont ceased transmission in January 1930 (Nichols, 13).

In August 1930, the Société was awarded a government broadcasting charter which ran to 18 articles but were not quite as restrictive as those operated by the BBC, calling simply for programmes which were "intellectual and educational as well as of general interest" (Nichols, 13).

"La station aura pour objet l'émission et la diffusion de sons et d'images d'après un programme d'un niveau intellectuel élevé, ainsi que de nouvelles et d'informations d'ordre générale et particulier" (Lux 1931, 825).

(Translation: The object of the station is the broadcast of sounds and images according to a programme of a raised intellectual level, as well as general news and information.)

However, more significantly for the rest of Europe - and the UK in particular - the charter also allowed for foreign language broadcasts (Nichols, 13).

"Les émissions se feront en langage clair, et suivant les besoins en patois luxembourgeois ou dans une langue étrangère autorisée par la commission de surveillance" (Lux 1931, 825).

(Translation: Broadcasts will be in clear language and, according to requirements, will be in Luxembourg dialect or a foreign language as authorised by the watchdog commission.)

But the main point of contention was the fact that advertising was to be allowed:

"Il est toutefois permis au concessionnaire de faire de la publicité dans les limites à fixer par l'administration des postes et télégraphes" (Lux 1931, 825).

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(Translation: The concession holder is, however, permitted to broadcast advertising within limits to be fixed by the post and telegraph administration.)

The concession was to be a monopoly to run for 25 years and the agreement was signed on 29th September 1930 by the Luxembourg government and the Société (Nichols, 14).

In June 1931, the Société d'Etudes was replaced by a new and larger organisation which took over all existing contracts with the Luxembourg government and at 15 million French Francs, had a much larger share capital of 15 million French Francs (Nichols, 13).

The new company, Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Radiodiffusion (CLR) had the largest shareholding and the second largest was held by the Banque de Paris et Pays-Bas, which went against the concession from the Luxembourg government requiring the board of directors to contain a majority of Luxembourg nationals (Nichols, 13) – *(for further details of share holders, see Appendix 3).*

5.2 British Representations

The BBC was alarmed at this obvious foreign influence that had acquired the proposed Luxembourg station and even more so that its proposed 100 kilowatts were more than enough power to cover Luxembourg and that the station intended to broadcast to other countries. With its long reach, the Luxembourg station could easily beam its transmissions as far as the UK and would therefore threaten the BBC's own broadcasting monopoly in the UK (Nichols, 14).

Knowing the congestion that had already been experienced in the long wave band, coupled with the memories of the hard diplomatic bargaining that had already taken place at the IBU regarding particular wavelengths, the BBC asked the Post Office to write to Luxembourg to express concern over its future plans (Briggs 1965, 353).

These representations were followed up in January 1932, when Charles Carpendale wrote, via the IBU, to Tabouis, his Vice-President, who was involved in Radio Paris and the Compagnie Générale de Télégraphie Sans Fil.

He pointed out that the BBC had not protested against English advertising from Radio Paris, Radio Toulouse, and Radio Normandy because these were French stations and their "employment for non-French purposes was more or less exceptional" but that Luxembourg was a different matter as its main object was to "broadcast advertising programmes to neighbouring countries, particularly those which do not allow advertising in their own national programmes" and that it was a dangerous precedent which might allow other powerful financial groups across Europe to freely broadcast their opinions (Briggs 1965, 354).

Tabouis, however, decided not to exert any of his obvious influence and instead chose to hide behind the sovereignty of Luxembourg after all, "what could the IBU do against a sovereign state?" (Briggs 1965, 355).

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Luxembourg's case, however, was not helped when, in May 1932, the British Post Office complained, backed up by the Air Ministry, that the test transmissions on 1250 metres "were interfering with British aircraft wireless signals" as well as infringing the Washington Convention (Briggs 1965, 355).

5.3 The Montreux Convention & An Offer Of Co-operation – 1932

Finally in June 1932, the IBU unanimously adopted a resolution at its Montreux convention, condemning Radio Luxembourg's 'piracy' of a long wave and in May 1933, two important IBU resolutions were passed, on the initiative of the BBC:

- against Radio Normandy:

"the systematic diffusion of programmes or messages, which are specifically intended for listeners in another country and which have been the object of a protest by the broadcasting organisation of that country, constitutes an "inadmissible" act from the point of view of good international relations"(Briggs 1965, 366).

and against the projected Radio Luxembourg:

"the Union cannot sympathise with any type of programme which is essentially based on the idea of commercial advertising in the international field" (Briggs 1965, 366).

Not surprisingly after these resolutions, Luxembourg's formal request for a long wave frequency was turned down at the Brussels and Lucerne conferences.

After this resolution, the Luxembourg government itself sent conciliatory replies to the IBU and Britain on behalf of CLR with a number of compromise proposals in an effort to win British support (Briggs 1965, 355).

In September 1932, Tabouis suggested that Radio Luxembourg as a "neutral and impartial station" could become "one of the essential elements in that European co-operation which the IBU had always desired", conveniently omitting to sponsored programmes in any way (Briggs 1965, 356).

Carpendale met representatives of CLR in London in January 1933 and it was suggested that the BBC might be represented on an international advisory board consisting of several members per country, German and Dutch broadcasters having already expressed an interest (Briggs 1965, 356).

CLR pointed out that unless the BBC participated in the venture, "advertising interests would be completely free to counter the BBC advertising and Sunday policies very effectively indeed" (Briggs 1965, 356).

Significantly, the BBC chose against following this particular line of action and instead, made preparations to resist the Luxembourg station when it finally went on air by all means possible.

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Before Radio Luxembourg went on the air in the spring of 1933, the BBC had already taken steps to alter its programming to minimise the advantage offered to advertisers from foreign stations. It lengthened the hours of broadcasting on Sundays to include transmissions between 12.30 and 3 p.m. but did not change the content of the programmes, therefore leaving Sunday variety and dance bands to Radio Paris and Radio Normandy (Briggs 1965, 361).

5.4 Luxembourg Goes on Air – 1933

In January 1933, the Luxembourg 200 kilowatt transmitter began test transmissions on 1185m long wave, switching to 1191 metres on 15th March 1933 (Nichols, 19).

The BBC immediately complained again that this was in contravention of the 1932 Montreux Resolution and article 5 of the 1927 Washington Conference, where Luxembourg had not been allocated a Long Wave frequency, but 223 metres and 230.6 metres in the Medium Waveband. The BBC further contested that Luxembourg was "pirating a Long Wave frequency for a country too small to need it and forcing advertising into Great Britain" (Nichols, 19).

On 3rd December 1933, Radio Luxembourg began its English language Sunday programmes, playing light, popular music in direct contrast and competition to the BBC's drab "Reith Sunday", the first broadcast being the Bush Radio Concert (Gifford 57).

From this point, the station built up its programming and went on to broadcast programmes destined for a different country each evening from 7pm to 11pm, with a mixture of light music, weather forecast, symphony music and news in the relevant language:

Monday – Italy, Tuesday – Belgium, Wednesday – Luxembourg, Thursday – Germany, Friday – Holland, Saturday – France, Sunday – Britain (Nichols, 19).

5.5 UK Press Embargo – 1933

In the UK, the BBC-instigated press embargo on Radio Luxembourg – playing on the fear that newspapers' own advertising revenues would also be affected by the new station – was an almost total success. With the exception of the *Sunday Referee*, the Newspaper Publishers Association had placed a total ban on information concerning Radio Luxembourg and Radio Normandy (Nichols, 28).

The *Sunday Referee* newspaper was expelled from the Newspaper Proprietors' Association in February 1933 for its continued association with Radio Luxembourg (Briggs 1965, 361).

Despite this media blackout, radio audiences grew and, as the commercial stations became more popular, their advertising rates rose to quite substantial sums which enabled them to offer attractive sums to big name stars to tempt them away from the BBC (Nichols, 28).

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The first of these was Christopher Stone, who had been a BBC compere since 1927. At that time, BBC announcers were still not permitted to descend to a personal level with the listeners and Stone's style of presentation was already markedly more relaxed than anyone else on BBC radio. The Luxembourg announcers would address their listeners as individuals and used the "voice-over" technique for introducing music, as opposed to the clipped BBC method of leaving a second or two of "dead air" between music and speech (Nichols, 30).

From very early on in 1934 it was clear that the BBC was suffering as a result of Radio Luxembourg's output and they engaged further diplomatic assistance from the Foreign Office, most of whose protests were based around the IBU resolutions of 1933 concerning transmissions in a foreign language. Unfortunately for them, the French government was reluctant to voice their support since the station was controlled by some fairly heavyweight French interests and the new Nazi government in Germany were keen to secure the use of Luxembourg's giant transmitter for their own purposes (Nichols, 30).

5.6 The Lucerne Conference - 1933

In the face of huge political pressure from the BBC and the British government, Luxembourg agreed to postpone its first UK advertising in the hope that this might help its case for official recognition of its right to a long wave frequency.

Unfortunately, the 1933 IBU conference in Lucerne agreed that Luxembourg was far too small to justify the allocation of a Long Wave frequency and instead offered only a medium wave frequency in the resulting convention which also stated that:

"the systematic diffusion of programmes or communications specially intended for listeners in another country and which have been the subject of a protest by the broadcasting organisation or organisations of such country constitutes an inadmissible act from the point of view of good international relations" (Nichols, 25).

An agreement was eventually reached but 8 of the 35 participating countries refused to sign the draft altogether and another 19 expressed reservations about particular wavelengths (Briggs 1965, 348).

Luxembourg refused to sign the Lucerne convention and on 15th January 1934 - just 24 hours after the Lucerne plan came into effect - Radio Luxembourg seized the 1304 meters frequency that had been allocated to Warsaw but not taken up (Nichols, 25).

Protests from the British Post Office, the Foreign Office and the IBU all failed as the Luxembourg Prime Minister repeatedly said that as it was a private organisation, there was "nothing he either could do or wished to do to stop CLR from conducting its affairs in its own way" (Briggs 1965, 366).

5.7 Concerted Efforts By The BBC - 1934

As international support for the campaign against Radio Luxembourg dwindled, the BBC turned their attentions homewards and banned Christopher Stone from their airwaves from the end of August 1934. They also went on to threaten other artists such as Stanley Holloway and Flanagan & Allen as well (Nichols, 31).

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The BBC then contacted the British Phonographic Industry, (forerunners of the Performing Rights Society), who were responsible for collecting royalty money from radio stations every time they played a record, and suggested to them that, due to the advertising revenue, Radio Luxembourg was richer than other radio stations. On 17th September 1934, the BPI raised Radio Luxembourg's fee quite considerably to a fee of 10 shillings for each record it played (Nichols, 27).

But by now the audiences were substantial and advertising revenue was correspondingly high, which led to an immediate expansion in Radio Luxembourg's English service with an extra hour of programmes on Thursday, Friday and Saturday and, surprisingly, a continued appearance by big-name artists who were seemingly willing to risk the displeasure of the BBC (Nichols, 33).

5.8 Differing Styles And Audiences

The Post Office Archives from 1935 show that one out of two of the British listeners interviewed listened to Radio Luxembourg regularly on Sundays but that on weekdays the figure dropped to 11 per cent. The BBC weekday service remained more popular than that of all foreign commercial stations combined, and British listening to foreign stations reached its peak when none of the Corporation's stations was transmitting.

In 1935 a new magazine called *Radio Pictorial* was launched. It covered specifically the continental commercial stations like Luxembourg and Normandy, with programme schedules, full length features about the stars, the stations themselves and photographs of the announcers. This was the kind of publicity which commercial stations had so far been denied by the British press and was just what they needed to establish a strong following (Nichols, 35).

To capitalise on its ever growing following, Radio Luxembourg struck a deal with Irving Harris of Western Electric to allow it to broadcast programmes based principally on movies - mainly RCA output and mainly films which had yet to go on general release.

This was at the time when film companies were entering one of the most flamboyant periods of Hollywood hype and the station bombarded listeners with information about their favourite stars all day long on a Sunday which was a sure-fire bet to win listeners over from the BBC (Nichols, 37).

In contrast, BBC programmes didn't start until 10.15 on Sunday mornings and began with church services and lectures of a character-building nature throughout the day. Light entertainment and popular music were not allowed until after 7 p.m. at night, by which time the radio audience had already made their programme choice for the day (Nichols, 38).

However, in October of 1936 the Cadbury chocolate company found that, when the BBC did include light entertainment on a Sunday evening, the letters they received from listeners to their sponsored programme on Luxembourg dropped from 25,000 to just 10,000, clearly showing that the success of Radio Luxembourg's programming policy was due almost entirely to the BBC's reluctance to give the listeners what they wanted (Nichols, 38).

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Advertisers and artists flocked to Radio Luxembourg and the advertising was so profitable that sponsors could easily pay their artists a great deal more than the BBC could possibly manage. By 1937 it was clear that the BBC policy of banning people who appeared on Radio Luxembourg was doing more harm to the BBC itself than to anyone else (Nichols, 43).

Throughout 1935, 1936 and early 1937, Britain continued to make diplomatic representations to the Luxembourg government, who continually pointed out that since the concession to the CLR expressly sanctioned foreign-language broadcasts and advertising, little action could be taken to prevent them. After almost six years of diplomatic protests, in late 1937 the British Ambassador in Belgium concluded that no useful purpose would be served by further representations and from the beginning of 1938 the BBC no longer tried to shut down Radio Luxembourg (Nichols, 45).

5.9 A Short-lived Peace Followed By War – 1938/9

After the 1938 Cairo conference, there was considerable feeling that efforts to destroy foreign commercial broadcasting were, in the Postmaster-General's own words, "very unpopular and achieving no results". Britain, with its large home market and its public service system of broadcasting was the only country which had this particular problem and the arguments for abandoning existing policy were carefully rehearsed and canvassed (Briggs 1965, 368).

At the last pre-war international conference, the European Broadcasting Conference at Montreux in spring 1939, the Post Office delegates were instructed not to raise the advertising question and, if consulted by other delegations, were to discourage them also from raising it (Briggs 1965, 368).

After this, the British began to come round to the idea that that it would be better to make use of Radio Luxembourg rather than to continue to seek to destroy it and, in September 1938, the previously unthinkable step was taken of providing Radio Luxembourg with recordings of Chamberlain's speech on the Munich crisis. This was later followed up with the re-broadcasting of other speeches by Chamberlain in December 1938 and March 1939 (Briggs 1965, 369).

By 1938, it had become quite clear that Radio Luxembourg's peak audience was on Sunday afternoons, Radio Normandy's during early evening and Radio Lyon's in the late evening (Nichols, 47). All stations except Toulouse had their peak audience on Sundays, largely thanks to the fact that most people ignored the BBC whenever there was an alternative available although this seems to have made little impression on the BBC (Nichols, 47).

By late 1938, Radio Luxembourg had four million listeners which was almost double the number of listeners to all the other continental stations and almost double the BBC peak audience of just over two million (Nichols, 47).

Unfortunately the continental radio stations began to go off the air at the very peak of their popularity as war broke out in Europe in 1939. The German propaganda machine rushed to take over the three 600-foot masts at Junglinster, which they would later use to relay the "Lord Haw Haw" transmissions aimed at demoralising listeners in Britain (Nichols, 53).

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Chapter Six - After The War

6.1 Luxembourg Recovers

The retreating Germans tried to dynamite the Radio Luxembourg transmitter to prevent it falling into the hands of the allies. This was unsuccessful, however, and the station was captured intact and immediately turned into a German language propaganda station seeking to create confusion behind enemy lines (Briggs 1985, 236).

CLR retook control of the station from the Allied forces in November 1945 and on 12th November, Radio Luxembourg returned to the airwaves as a commercial station - this time on the medium wavelength it had been allocated, with its early content based on material that had been hidden from the Germans, continued its pre-war populist music format (Nichols, 59/61).

In 1948, Teddy Johnson presented the first "Top Twenty" programme on Radio Luxembourg - the first chart show in the world - and this set the tone for Luxembourg's pop music broadcasts for many years to come. Top name guests and presenters recorded material in the London studio to complement shows presented by personality DJs in the Grand Duchy (Nichols, 67).

CLR became CLT in 1959 and operated its broadcasting concern under the new trading name of RTL – Radio an Televisioun Letzebuerg, which included, for the first time, three hours of radio in Luxembourgish per day (RTL Website).

The English service of Radio Luxembourg was at its peak in the 50s and early 60s, when some of its presenters became bigger names than the music performers themselves and the Station maintained its international appeal by broadcasting in several main European languages throughout the day, with the English service running daily from 7pm to 2am (Aldis, 55/65).

6.2 Post-war BBC

The BBC also re-established itself after the war, with the wartime General Forces Programme being replaced by the Light Programme in 1945 and the "highbrow" Third Programme starting up in September 1946 (Briggs 1985, 243).

The new labour government of 1946 renewed the BBC's charter and licence for five years without consulting a committee of enquiry (Crisell, 64) and the newly elected Conservative government of 1951 purely renewed the licence until 1962 (Crisell 76).

The Conservative Government's Television Act of 1954 ended the BBC's TV monopoly with the establishment of the Independent Television Association and commercial television went on the air on 22nd September 1955 (Briggs 1985, 287).

6.3 Pirate Radio and Radio One

Despite this inconvenience on the TV front, things seemed to run very smoothly in the domain of radio for both the BBC and Radio Luxembourg until 1964, when offshore pirate radio stations began transmitting commercial pop music broadcasts to the UK.

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Radio Caroline went on the air on 26th March 1964, broadcasting from a former passenger ferry moored in international waters off Felixstowe. The new station was so popular that it received 20,000 fan letters during its first ten days of broadcasting alone (Baron, 38).

On 24th December 1964, Radio London started regular transmissions from a ship moored in the Thames Estuary and Radio City, Radio King, Radio Essex and Radio Scotland all joined the melée during 1965 (Baron 42).

As had happened in the 1930s, both the government and the BBC were appalled and the newly returned Wilson Labour government brought in the Marine, etc Broadcasting (Offences) Act which became law on 15th August 1967, removing the majority of the pirates from the airwaves (Baron, 44).

However, this time a lesson had been learnt as a National Opinion Poll from 1966 showed that around 45% of the British population listened to either an off-shore station or Radio Luxembourg during the week, with Luxembourg, Radio Caroline and Radio London each claiming in excess of 8 million listeners (Baron, 45).

Some 45 years after its formation, the BBC finally realised that the market for popular music broadcasting in the UK was still waiting to be tapped. A reshuffle of BBC services in 1967 finally recognised this with the launch in September of Radio 1 – a national pop music station.

In order to man the station, the BBC took on many of the former pirate DJs and also attracted several ex-Luxembourg personalities.

To complement the new look BBC radio package, the Light Programme was renamed Radio 2, the Third Programme Radio 3 and the Home Service became Radio 4.

These developments also drove Radio Luxembourg to change its traditional format of pre-recorded shows by guest presenters by switching to an "all live" format with a full team of DJs stationed in the Grand Duchy.

6.4 Independent Local Radio

In 1972, the Heath Conservative government introduced the Broadcasting Act, which allowed for the licensing of the first five independent local radio stations - the first of these, LBC, went on air on 8th October 1973 (Carter, 5).

By the mid eighties, the number of licensed ILR stations had snowballed and ILR was further enhanced by new Home Office plans in 1989 which established a new Radio Authority and allowed for an increase in local and "incremental" stations (Carter, 6).

Incremental stations = "specifically designed to allow new community, ethnic and special interest stations to be developed in existing ILR areas" eg Jazz FM which satisfies alternative music tastes in the same areas of operation as other local and regional stations.

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This has now led to practically every major town and city having one and sometimes two local commercial stations as well as being served by BBC local FM stations, which began in the late sixties to replace the old Regional MW Services (Briggs 1985, 347).

In 1992 the first national commercial radio stations – Classic FM and Virgin Radio – went on the air in the UK with a third – Talk Radio – being licensed in 1994 and the number of ILR stations rising to 219 by the end of 1998 (Carter, 7).

6.5 Deregulation in Luxembourg

In 1982 the Luxembourg government passed a law installing Luxembourgish as the official national language in the place of French and German as had previously been the case.

Since the formation of the EC and the ensuing increasing European integration, the whole question of safeguarding of the Luxembourgish identity has become increasingly important to the Luxembourg government – particularly because of the high proportion of foreigners who have settled (and still settle) in the Grand Duchy (example: 50,000 Portuguese in a total national population of 350,000).

In 1991, the Luxembourg government passed a new law, the “Loi du 27 juillet 1991 sur les médias électroniques”, which effectively ended RTL/CLT’s monopoly and allowed private companies to apply for radio licences.

“La présente loi vise à assurer dans le domaine des médias électroniques, l’exercice du libre accès de la population du Grand Duché à une multitude de sources d’information et de divertissement, en garantissant la liberté d’expression et d’information ainsi que le droit de recevoir et de retransmettre sur le territoire du Grand Duché tous les programmes conformes aux dispositions légales” (Mém.A-47 du 30 juillet 1991, p972 doc.parl.3396).

(Translation: This law aims to ensure in the area of electronic media, the free access for the population of the Grand Duchy to a multitude of sources of information and entertainment while guaranteeing freedom of expression and information as well as the right to receive and relay all legally conforming programmes within the territory of the Grand Duchy.)

However, this new move had as much to do with a desire to combat the small pirate stations that had sprung across the country during the 1980s as to keep in line with the general tendency across Europe towards deregulation of the airwaves:

“Avant l’entrée en vigueur de la nouvelle loi du 27 juillet 1991 sur les médias électroniques, l’offre de programmes luxembourgeois était particulièrement pauvre. Mais la pauvreté de l’offre purement luxembourgeoise laissait à partir de la fin des années 80, un vaste champ libre aux émetteurs non autorisés qui venaient et disparaissaient dans le désordre” (Ministère d’Etat, 11).

(Translation: Prior to the coming into force of the new law of 27th July 1991 regarding electronic media, the amount of Luxembourgish programmes on offer was very poor. But this poorness of availability of pure Luxembourgish content had allowed by the end of the 1980s a wide variety of unauthorised broadcasters to come and go in the disorder.)

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On 2nd November 1992, the Radio Luxembourg format changed its look forever with the extension of the German language service to 24 hours a day under the new station identity "RTL Radio – Die Größten Oldies", with broadcasts available throughout Germany on cable and Europe-wide over the Astra satellite (Bodinus website).

6.6 The Current Situation In Luxembourg.

When RTL finally decided to drop the English language international service - and modify the parallel German service - at the end of 1992, the language mix of radio across the Grand Duchy was changed considerably. Six new national stations were licensed:

- RTL Radio Letzebuerg – national Luxembourgish general entertainment station
- Den Neie Radio - alternative general content
- Eldorado – music for young people
- Radio ARA – minority groups
- Radio Latina – mainly immigrant population (Portuguese, French, Italian, Spanish)
- Honnert 7: de Soziokulturelle Radio – mainly speech and cultural issues

all of which – with the exception of Radio Latina - broadcast purely in Luxembourgish and, of the additional 15 local and regional FM stations that have been licensed, only two currently broadcast in English to meet the demands of the local expatriate population who work in the Grand Duchy's numerous foreign banks and European Institutions and those European listeners wishing to practice their English.

Sunshine Radio 102.2FM broadcasts from Limpertsberg in the capital and has a very "American sound" with a high proportion of US soft rock music and American accented presenters.

The one station in Luxembourg that still reflects the multilingual, multinational traditions of the "old" Radio Luxembourg is Radio WAKY 107FM, part of the French Europe 2 network, broadcasting from Hesperange, to the south of the city.

Radio WAKY has a broadcasting schedule which carries radio shows in French, English and Luxembourgish at particular times of the day and also continues the Radio Luxembourg tradition at weekends with a European Top 20 as well as sports and rock history programmes.

6.7 RTL – Big In Europe

RTL has not, however, been idle in the modern world of radio and TV broadcasting. CLT, its managing company, has merged with the German giant UFA and now operates many TV and radio stations broadcasting in German, French and Dutch. It also holds sizeable interests in other media groups, including, somewhat ironically, Atlantic 252 - a commercial radio station based in Ireland which broadcasts music programmes on long wave across the UK.

Chapter Seven – A Critical Analysis

Although having remained distinctly different organisations, there are many similarities to be found in the histories of the BBC and RTL / Radio Luxembourg – for example, both started off as private independent companies with national broadcasting monopolies guaranteed by government.

However the feeling in Britain was that, as broadcasting became more widespread and powerful, it was necessary to keep the industry under close government control and thus the BBC was transformed into a public corporation, with the threat of government seizure hanging over it if it did not conform to certain guidelines.

7.1 Could The BBC Have Continued To Use Advertising?

The BBC had sparred with the idea of advertising during its days as a limited company and had, indeed, often broadcast “sponsored” programmes. However, this was never the norm and, following on from the Crawford Report, the Royal Charter assured the BBC’s financing through licence fees alone and meant that the apparently “low brow” aspect of advertising was conveniently kept out of British-based radio broadcasting for almost fifty years.

Many long running wrangles could indeed have been avoided or lessened had the BBC continued using advertising. Licence fraud has always been commonplace in the UK – a crime that simply would not exist had the BBC been funded from its inception by advertising revenue.

It is also arguable that the BBC’s programme content would have been more popular among a larger cross section of listeners had the Corporation’s income depended on the number of listeners tuning in.

Advertisers pay the highest rates for slots during the most listened to programmes so the “Reith Sunday”, for example, would have had a very hard job to attract any significant sponsors.

Radio Luxembourg’s highly popular sponsored shows, which played mainly popular music, prove that audiences will always tune in to what they want to listen to, rather than what they are told they ought to listen to.

The problem with being dependent on advertising revenue – as was often pointed out by the various Government committees of enquiry and Charles Cargill of the BBC and IBU – is that the broadcaster can be subject to pressure – be it direct or indirect – from the advertiser which could, therefore, threaten the integrity and independence of the station.

A very recent example of this would be ITV’s decision to discontinue News at Ten so as to allow popular films and dramas to be broadcast uninterrupted after the 9pm watershed. While the broadcaster has maintained that this move is for the benefit of the viewer, it could be also be argued that such an arrangement would also attract better advertising deals for the commercial breaks during these programmes.

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As far back as 1939, the possibility of allowing advertising was already being mooted by some key government figures.

The Postmaster-General intimated that "if and when sponsored broadcasting was permitted, it would be undertaken by the BBC under state control" while Sir Robert Vansittart of the Foreign Office thought that "Britain might actually sponsor advertising stations abroad from which British programmes could be disseminated" (Briggs 1965, 368).

The Secretary of State for Air, Sir Kingsley Wood, was in favour of commercial broadcasting from within the UK and the Treasury hinted that "the BBC's licence revenue was becoming insufficient to cover the amount required for the future development of television and overseas broadcasting and that different ways for financing broadcasting might have to be considered" (Briggs 1965, 368).

It could be argued that the BBC always did carry advertising of a sort as it always used to advertise its own publications and products.

It is interesting to note that, 60 years on, the Treasury's observations have now become a reality as, in the modern world of international satellite television, the BBC has finally succumbed to the world of big business and their new channels do carry commercial advertising – as further examined in section 7.9 – *"The BBC – A Full Circle...?"*.

7.2 Why Did Luxembourg Target British Audiences?

Luxembourg realised right from the start that it would have to rely heavily on advertising revenue and would need to broadcast across a wide area in order to be able to attract the right type of sponsors.

The station broadcast to various European countries on different days of the week but it reserved its prime time entertainment – that broadcast on a Sunday – for the United Kingdom.

In the late twenties and early thirties most of Europe was in economic depression and both of Luxembourg's powerful neighbours - Germany and France - were arguably still in the process of rebuilding after the first world war. This meant that Britain, whose infrastructure had been left virtually intact after the conflict, would have been a better source of corporate backing and sponsorship.

7.3 A Question of National Culture?

Luxembourg's chequered history of constant domination by and alliance with its more powerful neighbours – France, Germany/Prussia, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands all at various times - more or less dictated that any new technological venture would have a multinational slant to it.

Post WW1 Luxembourg had been liberated from the German invaders but was in a poor financial state: "the old German alignment gone, coveted by Belgium, treated cavalierly by the great powers, its old markets closed to it" (Newcomer, 239).

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Under these constrictive circumstances, Luxembourg entered into an economic union with Belgium in 1922 - the "Union Economique Belgo-Luxembourgeoise" - a state of affairs that was to remain in place until the advent of the Euro in 1998.

The early, small scale attempts at organising a radio station in Luxembourg had shown that the necessary capital wasn't available from sources within the Grand Duchy alone and the injection of French and Belgian capital demonstrated right from the outset that this would clearly be a cross border affair. As the shape and size of the Grand Duchy had been constantly adjusted throughout the ages, "cross border" was a concept that the Luxembourgers had become very familiar with.

In his history of the Grand Duchy, James Newcomer observes that, despite a rural existence that had persisted for centuries, the Luxembourger was "wonderfully adaptable to twentieth century life" (Newcomer, 4-6) and that they "do not shirk the effort, are tenacious in everything and have a wide awake cleverness that enables them to adapt themselves to the most varied conditions" (Newcomer, 15).

The nation that Napoleon had written off as "squareheads" (Newcomer, 5) ironically went on to monopolise the airwaves across most of the area that the "little corporal" himself had conquered some 150 years before.

So when the opportunity appeared to capitalise on the strength of the 200Kw Luxembourg transmitter to make money out of other countries, the Luxembourgers were up to the task, stretching the terms of the government charter to the very limit, safe in the knowledge that there would be none of the threats of formal censorship of output which the BBC had always had looming over it from the British Government.

7.4 How Else Could The BBC Have Combated Radio Luxembourg?

Certainly, the BBC was in a very good position to know how to combat Radio Luxembourg within the United Kingdom, having previously operated as a private limited company itself. This meant that it knew exactly how to orchestrate an almost total black-out within the UK press regarding coverage of the Luxembourg station.

7.4.1 Could The BBC Have Joined The CLR Advisory Board?

As war clouds loomed across Europe, the BBC succumbed to the old adage "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" by using Luxembourg's high power transmitter to relay some of its own news items but this could have been a continuous and long standing arrangement had the BBC accepted the 1932 offer from CLR to take up a place on the international advisory board.

7.4.2 Could The Post Office Have Jammed Radio Luxembourg?

The BBC had toyed with the idea of offering the Luxembourg wavelength to another operator with a view to blocking out the Luxembourg signal. The down side to this idea, however, as conceded in a BBC memo, was that Luxembourg would purely switch to another wavelength. Plus this would give signal access to Britain to yet another broadcasting party which could also be left open to misuse.

Broadcast jamming was used by Nazi Germany in the 30s and 40s to inhibit news programmes from abroad being received within the Third Reich, and the Soviet Union used the same tactic to maintain its propaganda advantage across Eastern Europe

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during the Cold War so the technology was certainly available for Britain to have been able to block out commercial broadcasts from abroad had it chosen to do so.

7.5 Why Did The BBC Insist On Maintaining Its High Brow Image?

Certainly, the best way to combat Radio Luxembourg would have been to broadcast more popularly appealing programmes on a Sunday, as most research shows that listeners would have preferred to have listened to the BBC had the music been what they wanted to hear.

The BBC, however, believed that their way was the best. John Reith went so far as to believe that he had been awarded a "God given right" to set the level of British broadcasting and to decide what was best for people to listen to and the various committees of enquiry set up by the Government endorsed this policy on every occasion.

Burns observes that "the BBC was developed under Reith into a kind of domestic diplomatic service, representing the British - or what he saw as the best of the British - to the British" and that

"BBC Culture, like BBC standard English, was not peculiar to itself but an intellectual ambience composed out of the values standards and beliefs of the professional middle class, especially that part educated at Oxford and Cambridge."

"Sports, popular music and entertainment which appealed to the lower classes were included in large measure in the programme but the manner in which they were purveyed, the context and the presentation remained indomitably upper middle class, and there was too the point that they were only there on the menu as ground bait" (Burns 42).

From this, it is clear to see that, at the time of the formation of the BBC in 1922, Britain was still very much a world power being run by the aristocracy and the upper classes.

Britain had a huge empire and had recently overcome the combined might of the German and the Austro-Hungarian Empires in World War 1 and this meant that Britain felt it had to show the world how to do things "properly", ensuring that the British example was heard and followed.

Therefore, when Radio Normandy began its commercial broadcasts in 1931, the BBC widely dismissed them as "advertising in a blatantly American manner" (Briggs 1985, 129).

7.6 Why Was "Radio Luxembourg" Discontinued?

Having initially agreed to co-operate fully with this study, CLT/RTL have now chosen to remain tight-lipped over why they decided to close down Radio Luxembourg's English service after almost 60 years.

Dutch based Radio Luxembourg diarist Herbert Pjeda has proposed the following: *"Other stations more or less copied the successful market strategy and took peak position. There are many insiders in the business saying that Luxy had lost its clear format and was not as unique as it had been in the decades before."*

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CLT had to recognise decreases in the quantity of listeners and that of course meant less money from commercials" (Pjede website).

It is certainly true that independent local radio had a marked effect in Britain and, by 1991, every major town or city in the UK had its own local station of some sort, and in many cases two or three to choose from.

These stations were broadcasting popular music and local interest material on FM, which assured a good local signal and offered better advertising media to companies who wanted to focus on a particular geographic area.

This was in stark contrast to Radio Luxembourg which, since switching to AM in 1951, had a much weaker signal which crackled and faded in and out depending on weather conditions and other signals in the air and it was beamed at a very wide target area.

This meant that Radio Luxembourg could not possibly compete on a local level for local advertising and, at the same time could not offer a good enough sound quality to attract high profile national and international sponsors, who could get a better deal national and coverage via the ILR network.

7.7 Was Switching To Satellite A Viable Option?

Switching to satellite broadcasting was a way round this, with digital sound quality being beamed to millions of homes right across Europe. However, the drawbacks of satellite radio are numerous:

- 1) Satellite radio stations are not very well advertised in comparison to satellite TV stations so hardly anybody knows they are there;
- 2) not all satellite receiver systems can pick up the radio carrier waves;
- 3) each satellite radio station "shares" the same frequency as a satellite TV station, meaning that even if the listener chooses to listen to a radio station, his TV will still be showing TV pictures as well - at best an inconvenience and, at worst, a constant temptation to switch back to TV audio to hear what is going on.

As all commercial stations rely heavily on advertising, and advertisers need to be assured of a certain population coverage to make their advertising outlay worthwhile, it is arguable that, despite covering a very wide target area, satellite radio would have a much harder task in attracting sponsorship than many terrestrial stations.

In fact, many terrestrial radio stations – including the BBC – complement their normal FM or AM service by also having their programmes on satellite. This means that, in addition to their normal coverage, they can offer additional pan-European satellite coverage, which would be an interesting package to offer to would-be advertisers.

Had RTL taken this step with "Radio Luxembourg" and allowed the satellite service to complement the AM service, the problem of fading sound quality would have been circumvented and Radio Luxembourg may well still be in existence and leading the way in an ever more integrated Europe.

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7.8 BBC Radio – Competition On All Fronts

BBC Radio would appear to once again, have marginalised itself with regard to what its listeners really want. The rapid growth of the commercial radio industry on both a local and national level clearly demonstrates that the BBC is not satisfying everyone and that there is still a market to be catered for.

BBC Radio 1 has had big problems combating the commercial stations and has had to resort to bringing in popular TV presenters – such as Chris Evans and Zoe Ball - to bolster up its constantly falling listener figures.

BBC Radio 2 seems to have the more secure niche of all the BBC national stations with a popular blend of easy listening and nostalgic music, but it is still having to face up to competition from the many classic gold stations that commercial concerns operate on their AM frequencies.

BBC Radio 3 has direct competition from the national classical music station Classic FM and the two regional (London and North West) Jazz FM stations.

BBC Radio 4 faces stiff competition from, quite bizarrely, within its own corporation in the shape of Radio 5 Live – a more upbeat national news, sport and current affairs station - as well as from the many BBC local radio stations which offer more in depth news on their own catchment areas.

7.9 The BBC Today – A Full Circle?

It is ironic that, having been a pioneer and world leader in the early days of radio and TV broadcasting, the BBC now seems to have run out of original ideas.

It has now branched into satellite TV channels, with its "BBC World" international news and current affairs channel being based very closely on the American CNN and the new "BBC News 24" - a 24 hours a day rolling news channel – looking very similar to Sky News.

BBC Choice is a general entertainment channel showing the best of BBC TV programmes and UK Gold is a collaboration with Thames Television and various other media groups showing vintage TV programmes to satellite viewers.

It is at this point that the BBC has arguably pushed its endeavours too far, as these channels are available by cable or satellite subscription only and also carry a lot of paid-for commercial advertising.

The BBC plan to launch itself into Digital TV in the near future and is asking for an increase in the normal terrestrial licence fee to cover the outlay.

It could be said that the BBC has gone full circle, bearing in mind that the initial British Broadcasting Company Ltd was set up in 1922 so that the "wireless trade could profit by selling receivers - with all the equipment, technicians, performers and administrative staff paid for out of money paid by the public for the right to listen to broadcast programmes" (Burns 9).

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Chapter Eight – Conclusions

Although RTL, like the BBC, has gone from strength to strength in the field of international broadcasting, the fact that "Radio Luxembourg" as such is no longer broadcasting in its famous, English language format means that many of the conclusions to be drawn from this study are fairly academic.

It is clear that, in the early days of broadcasting, Radio Luxembourg was the pioneer of popular music radio, stretching the rules of its own government charter to the very limit, and giving the public what it wanted – popular music on a Sunday – and the sponsors what they wanted – the chance to advertise their products in the British market place.

This success was mirrored and surpassed in the post war period and the fifties and sixties when Radio Luxembourg invented pop music with its innovative top twenty programmes and star presenters.

Despite losing its radio and TV monopoly in the UK, the BBC is still assured of its own revenue from licence fees and, as such, has never been forced to bow to the pressures in the free market place of commercial broadcasting.

But we should not forget that the BBC only really ventured into the world of popular music for younger listeners in 1967 once it had realised the need to satisfy this market with the launch of Radio One. From then on, Luxembourg was always going to struggle.

However, if we were to try and compare like with like, it could be argued that the BBC's Light Programme – the nearest that it ever really got to Luxembourg's format in the 50s and 60s – was also taken off the air itself when it was developed into Radio Two.

8.1 A Better Solution for Luxembourg?

Theoretically, the fact that RTL wanted to expand their Luxembourgish language service in 1991/2 did not really have to lead to the end of the English service. RTL Letzebuerg and RTL Die Größten Oldies are both broadcast on FM, so there would have been no technical problem in keeping the AM signal exclusively for the English service.

In fact, RTL could even have taken advantage of this opportunity to extend the English service to 24 hours a day to try and increase its saleability - duplicating the signal on satellite to ensure augmented reception across Europe.

However, the fact that they had already started up the long wave Atlantic 252 station in 1989 would suggest that the decision had already been made a long time beforehand.

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Appendix 1 – Milestones in English Broadcasting 1920-1933 (Wood, 34)

23.11 1920	Government imposes ban on broadcasting following transmissions by the Marconi company
18.10 1922	British Broadcasting Company formed by six manufacturers
15.12 1922	BBC registered as a limited company
23.12 1922	First orchestral concert broadcast
8.1 1923	First full opera broadcast from Covent Garden
21.1 1923	First symphony concert broadcast
23.1 1923	First military musical concert broadcast
24.1 1923	First broadcast of late-night dance music
9.10 1923	Broadcast of the Lord Mayor's banquet
28.11 1923	First experimental relay to and from the USA with KDKA
1.1 1926	BBC becomes a Corporation under a Royal Charter
4.1 1926	Compulsory for station announcers to wear evening dress
15.11 1926	Postmaster General reveals political ban placed on the BBC during General Strike
1.11 1927	Experimental transmission by short wave to the Empire
19.12 1927	Empire Service is inaugurated by King George V
15.3 1933	Radio Luxembourg comes on air with 200 kW of power
24.3 1933	BBC accuses Radio Luxembourg of pirating
7.4 1933	BBC asks the Union Internationale Radiophone (UIR) to prevent Luxembourg from broadcasting (to England)

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Appendix 2 – French Broadcasting and Radio Luxembourg (Wood, 45/46)

- 1920 French broadcasting begins with several radio stations
- 1920 The Amis de TSF (Telegraphic Sans Fils) builds 8100W transmitter, housed, at Rue Beaumont. Luxembourg
- 1920-6 TSF amateur group broadcasting regular programmes to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg- 1000 square miles
- 1928 Radio Toulouse gets a 8 kW transmitter, old 3 kW sent to Luxembourg
- 1928 Radio Normandy broadcasts programmes of light entertainment, mostly dance music, interspersed with advertisements, after midnight
- 1928-33 British listeners enjoy these programmes from France, as a welcome break from the BBC's transmissions
- 1931 Henri Etienne canvases support for commercial broadcasting
BBC is approached but declines to take part
- 1932 BBC makes diplomatic representations against the proposal
- 1932 Radio Luxembourg is given a charter from the French government to establish a 100Kw transmitter
- 1932 The Société d'études is replaced by a more powerful group with financial backing for commercial broadcasting. This new company, Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Radiodiffusion, establishes its offices in Luxembourg and buys the plateau of Junglinster plain
- 1933 French broadcasting of popular music finds favour with listeners in England. The BBC and the British government grow very concerned, with their monopoly being threatened by a handful of French stations from Normandy to Toulouse
- 1933 International Broadcasting company (IBC) formed in London for purposes of selling air time on French stations
- 1933 Radio Luxembourg comes on 1250 metres with 10 kW
- 1933 BBC monitoring station logs very strong signals on 1185 metres. This log entry turned out to be something of an understatement: Radio Luxembourg was broadcasting with 200 kW carrier power, equal to 800 kW peak power
- 1933 Radio Luxembourg moves to 1191 metres. Very strong signals reported from all over Europe. If it so wished, Radio Luxembourg could blot out any radio station in Europe, including the BBC's station at Daventry
- 1933 From May onwards Radio Luxembourg broadcasts 7 days week Mondays to Italy, Tuesday Belgium, Wednesday the citizens of Luxembourg, Friday and Saturday for France, with Sundays reserved for British listeners (deliberately coinciding with the BBC Sundays of religious programmes)
- 1933-38 The BBC, supported by the Postmaster General and the government, impose commercial sanction and lobby for international support, with the object of forcing Radio Luxembourg off the air
- 1938 Munich crisis intervenes

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Appendix 3

Shareholders of the "Compagnie Luxembourgoise de Radiodiffusion"
as described in the "Mémorial du Grand Duché de Luxembourg - Recueil Spécial" of
Friday 19th June 1931.

- 1) M. Charles Mazeaud, company administrator, Paris acting
 - a) in his own right
 - b) as mandate holder for:
 - i) Banque de Paris et des Pays Bas SA, Paris
 - ii) Compagnie Générale de Télégraphie sans Fil SA, Paris
 - iii) Etablissements Quillery SA, Paris
 - iv) L'Hydro Energie SA, Paris
 - v) Mme Henry de Jouvenel - pensioner, Paris
 - vi) M. Robert Bienaimé - industrialist, Paris
 - vii) M. Pierre Francois – administrator of Docks Rémois, Paris
 - viii) M. Jacques Lacour-Gayet, company administrator, Paris
 - ix) M. Maurice Espargillières, accounting expert, Raincy
- 2) M. Jean le Duc, director of companies, Vaucresson, acting
 - a) in his own right
 - b) as administrator of Societe d'Etudes Radiohoniques and
 - c) as mandate holder for:
 - i) Banque Industrielle Belge SA, Brussels
 - ii) Banque Parisien pour l'Industrie SA, Paris
 - iii) Agence Havas SA, Paris
 - iv) Sir Maurice de Their – owner of "La Meuse" newspaper, Liège
 - v) Compagnie pour la fabrication des Compteurs et Matériel d'Usines à Gaz SA, Montrouge
 - vi) M. André Meynot, administrator of Agence Havas, Croissy
- 3) M. Emile Reuter, lawyer, Luxembourg
- 4) M. Edmond Reiffers, notary, Luxembourg
- 5) M. Jules Neuberg, engineer, Luxembourg
- 6) M. Jean-Pierre Michels, businessman, Luxembourg
- 7) M. Joseph Franck, director of mines, Esch sur Alzette, Luxembourg
- 8) M. Jean Pierre Schmit, lawyer, Luxembourg



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