

PoW radio # 8

'Buchenwald Transmitter'

Country of origin:
Germany

View of the cinema hall of concentration camp Buchenwald showing the location of the projection booth and the fake lightning arrestor system.

Remarks

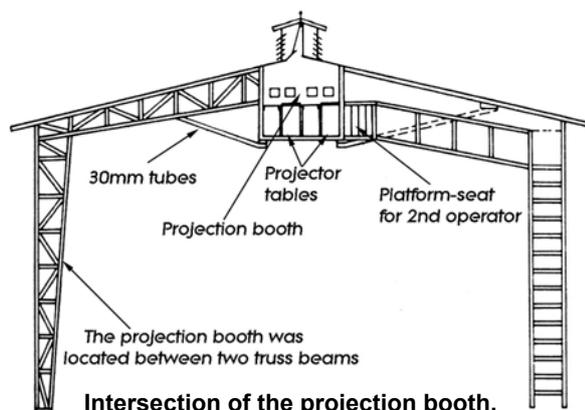
Gwidon Damazyn, a Polish engineer and radio-amateur with pre-war callsign SP2BD, held captive in the Buchenwald concentration camp since March 1941, constructed a secret shortwave transmitter, hidden in the air duct of the camp's cinema hall. On April 8 1945 at noon, Damazyn and Russian prisoner Leonov sent a message in Morse: *'To the Allies. To the army of General Patton. This is the Buchenwald concentration camp. SOS. We request help. They want to evacuate us. The SS wants to destroy us.'*

The text was repeated several times in English, German, and Russian. After the last transmission, the headquarters of the U.S. Third Army responded: *'KZ Bu. Hold out. Rushing to your aid. Staff of Third Army.'* *)

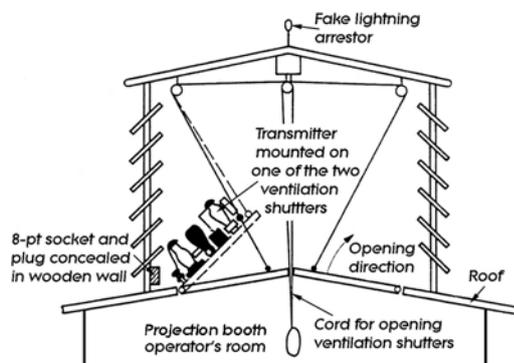
The transmitter was comprised of two free running RS 241 triode valves connected in push pull, mounted on a wooden breadboard. The exact frequency of the transmitter was not mentioned in the documentation (estimated around 8MHz in the GFGF article). The transmitter was powered by a Telefunken 400V power unit from AC mains. Apart from CW Morse operation it could be amplitude modulated by a Körtung 25W film sound amplifier. Both units were connected to the transmitter by a concealed 6-point connector. It may be assumed that the power input of the transmitter was about 40-50W.

The cinema hall's lightning arrestor system was 'modified' by inserting separation joints. The two now insulated lightning conductors, constituting a 2x15m dipole, were connected to the transmitter by a short feeder. The first tests with the secret transmitter were carried out in February 1945. On 6 April 1945 contact was made with the 3th US Army, who eventually liberated the concentration camp on the 11th of April 1945.

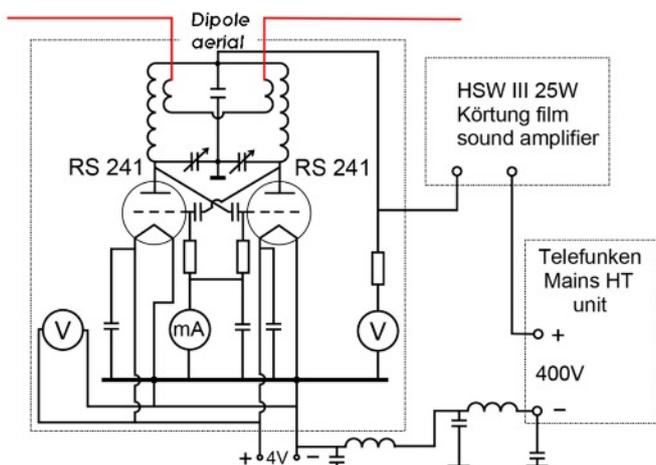
Reconstructed from a number of documents, the drawings on this page were published in Wolfgang Eckhardt's article published in 2005. The original German text in the drawings was replaced with an English translation.



Intersection of the projection booth.



The transmitter was concealed on top of one of the two ventilation shutters in the air duct.



Circuit diagram reconstructed from an original sketch.

DATA SUMMARY

- Organisation:** Prisoners of concentration camp Buchenwald.
- Year of Introduction:** 1945.
- Transmitter:** Push-pull oscillator.
- Frequency:** Short wave Assumed 8MHz. CW and AM.
- Valves:** RS 241 2x.
- Modulator:** Körtung HSW III 25W film sound amplifier.
- Aerial:** Dipole concealed as fake lightning conductor.

References:

- Wolfgang Eckhardt, Jena, Germany. 'Geheimer Empfängerbau im KZ Buchenwald', GFGF Funkgeschichte, Nr. 161, (2005) ©.
- Permission to use the illustrations and information for this chapter was kindly granted by the author Wolfgang Eckhardt and the Gesellschaft der Freunde der Geschichte des funk-wesens GFGF.
- Bruno Häberer and Helmut Körner, Germany. 'Die illegalen Sender des KZ Buchenwald', Radio und Fernsehen, Heft 18 24/1967, DDR.
- Helmut Hartung, 'Signale durch den Todeszaun', VEB Verlag Technik, Berlin, DDR, 1974.
- *) Source: Wikipedia, Buchenwald concentration camp.