



Actress Mildred Gillars.

She used to be in radio.

Axis Sally on Trial

The Washington cabbie shot a glance at his fare. "So you've been watching that 'Axis Sally' trial," he spouted. "Take it from me, that dame will get off. She's got James J. Laughlin for a lawyer. I don't like the man personally, understand. But if I was in a jam, mister, I'd go to him and he'd get me cleared."

Probably the capital's most publicized mouthpiece, Laughlin has won freedom for countless alleged members of the blackjack set. With equal facility, he obtained acquittal for himself when personally charged with using phony evidence (1944) and with intent to abort (1948). As could be expected, the bald, eloquent lawyer took in his jerky stride the defense of Axis Sally, even though the indictment against her read: Treason on 10 counts.

The faded, 48-year-old woman, born in Maine as Mildred E. Sisk and known as Mildred E. Gillars since she took her stepfather's name at 7, was alleged to have broadcast wartime enemy propaganda from Germany.

Axis Sally

Sorry Tale. As her trial opened last week in Washington's Federal District Court, chief prosecutor John M. Kelley Jr. told fragments of the story most tabloid readers know by heart . . . how Miss Gillars went broke while in Europe in the '30s . . . how she took a job in 1940 with the Reich Radio Broadcasting Co. and stayed on when the U.S. entered the war . . . how she disk-jockeyed Bing Crosby records to U.S. troops, allegedly surrounding *When the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day* with admonitions like: "Why don't you go back to your wives . . . ?" How the Justice Department found her in Germany at war's end and brought her to trial after three years' evidence collecting.

Probably because the law requires at least two witnesses to prove each overt act of treason, Kelley leaned heavily on the testimony of former Reich Radio propagandists brought from Germany. Witness Hans von Richter spat out his gum at the judge's request, then admitted he had frequently seen Miss Gillars do Germany's Africa-beamed *Home, Sweet Home* broadcast. Short, haughty Adalbert Houben testified in thick German accents that Miss Gillars was paid between 2,000 and 3,000 marks a month (\$800 to \$1,200), or more money than he got himself as broadcast director for the Reich Overseas Radio.

Misled? Laughlin, in a dramatic plea to the jury of six men and six women, pictured Axis Sally as the product of a broken home, as a frustrated actress who became blindly devoted to the teachings of first one professor, then another. In the U.S., her idol was "Prof. Newcomb" at Ohio Wesleyan University. In Germany, it was Prof. Otto Koischwitz, a radio official whose personality Laughlin described as "hypnotic." Miss Gillars wept at the mention of Koischwitz's name.

Her dainty white handkerchief, poised for tears, was as much her trial trade-mark as the "old look" black frock which revealed her pretty knees. Often, too, she fingered her neck nervously. If she is convicted on even one count, it might not be hers for very long.