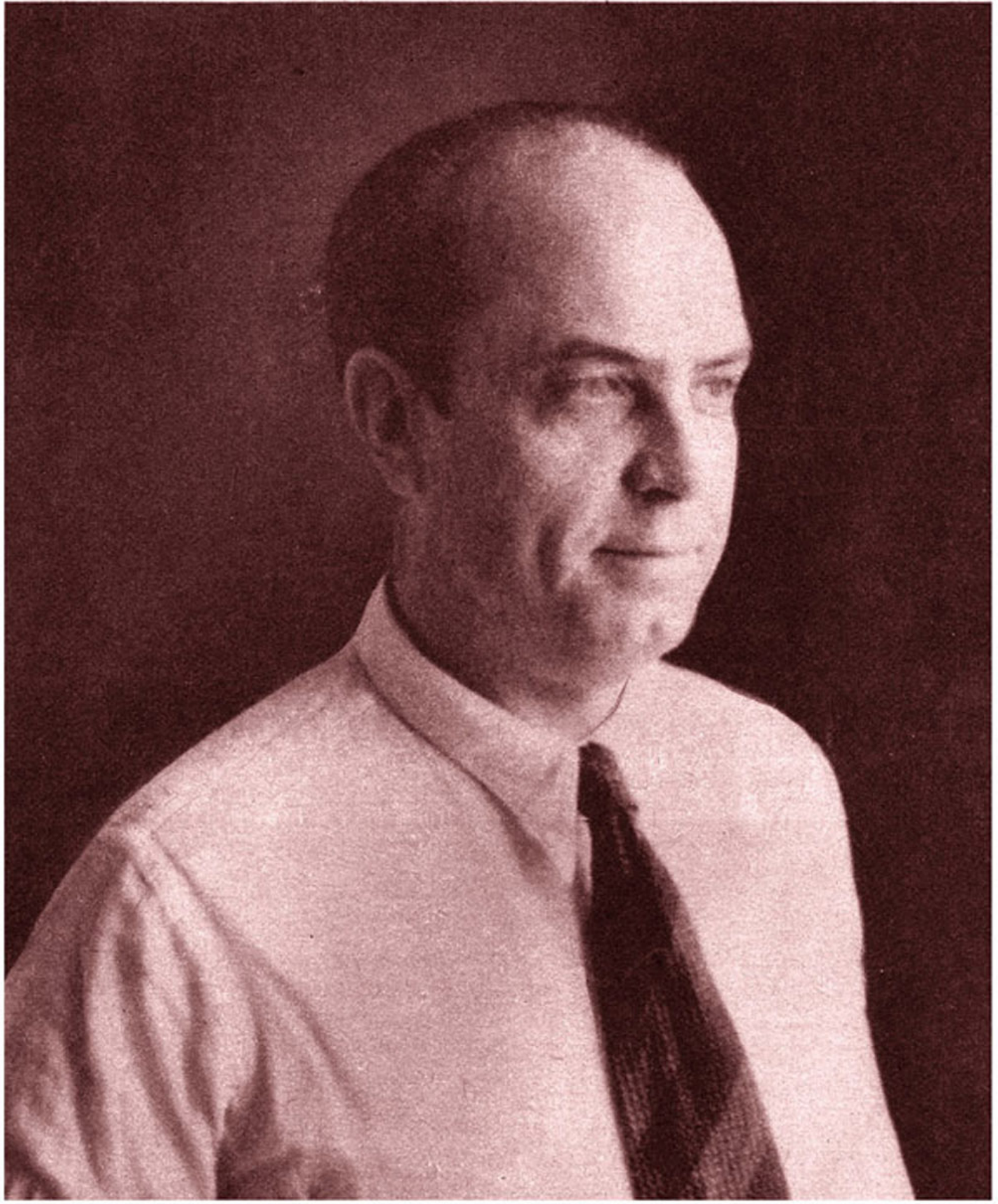


LORD HAW HAW FROM AMERICA

ROBERT BEST, FORMER AMERICAN REPORTER,
WORKS FOR NAZI RADIO

BY ALFRED TYRNAUER



ROBERT H. BEST, the traitor, is celebrating the first anniversary of his first appearance in Dr. Goebbels' short-wave show this month. But it is by no means the first anniversary of his pact with the Nazis. There can be little doubt that he had sold his broad Southern accent, his honor and his country to Hitler years before the outbreak of the war.

The tall, heavy-set South Carolinian, who was for nearly two decades a Viennese landmark, spending most of his time in the journalists' Café Louvre, arguing with everyone about everything, was, obviously, in the pay of the Nazis even before the seizure of Austria. During the critical period preceding the Anschluss, Bob Best, as he was called by his friends, revealed an extraordinary intimacy with certain Gestapo files, which could not be explained by professional interest. Later he refused to leave Vienna with his colleagues, he rather chose to leave the United Press, which he had represented for a number of years in Central Europe.

Several months before the fall of the Schuschnigg government, Mr. Best—habitually suffering with chronic monetary troubles—suddenly became a spendthrift, a man-around-town, and a night-club habitué. Son of a farmer-clergyman, brought up in a Puritanical atmosphere, it was a painful surprise to his associates to see him gradually shedding his scruples and principles, until he became a disgrace to his family as well as to his profession.

Bob Best was a promising young man when he went to Europe in the early '20s on a year's Pulitzer Fellowship from the Columbia School of Journalism (class of '22). But in Vienna he met his ruin in the shape of a strange woman of obscure origin, who claimed to be a countess, but the only certainty about her was that she was a drug addict. This sinister woman became the evil spirit of the young American—if he needed one. They lived together for many years, though she refused to marry "under her state"—as she put it. The real reason, probably, was that she had been married previously and could not obtain a divorce.

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ROBERT BEST

Anyway, Bob Best needed more and more money, first to satisfy her expensive passion, and then to get rid of her. No doubt, the Gestapo knew of his predicament—and this is how he was pressed into the service of the swastika—by bribery or extortion, or both.

So he became the leading American radio traitor, heading the little group of renegades, such as Fred W. Kaltenbach, a native of Iowa; not to be outdone by Goebbels in impudence, his latest stunt has been to announce, over the Berlin radio, that he would be a candidate for President of the U. S. in 1944! Bob Best tried to imitate the well-known British traitor, Lord Haw Haw, the most frequently quoted foreign propagandist of Dr. Goebbels. (Incidentally, few people know that the ignoble lord—whose real name is William Joyce—is also a native of New York.)

During the past year, Mr.—or Herr—Best, tried to play off all propaganda arguments of Dr. Goebbels and Lord Haw Haw. He appealed to the American people's prejudices, to their fears and avarice. He incited class against class, group against group, and all against the government. He singled out every popular leader as a Jew or a Communist, and constantly abused the President. For the "have-nots" he denounced the "plutocrats," and for the wealthy he condemned the ruinous war economy of the "Red" administration. Whenever the Axis scored a victory, he warned Americans to come to terms with Hitler, who is "invincible." When the tide turned, he spoke of the danger of "world Bolshevism."

But Nazi propaganda has become time-worn, and few people take it seriously now. Best is putting up a rather poor show, and he must increasingly be aware of the fact that his show will not last long.

What is ahead of him? Will he be tried and shot as a traitor after the fall of the Nazi Reich?

Or will Best escape and flee from land to land as a "man without a country"? Or will he try to make a living by committing new treacheries? Queer thing about Bob Best, the Nazi. He accepted bribes from the secret funds of the Austrian Clericals fighting Hitler, and even from the Jewish Rothschild Bank before he switched over to the Nazis, according to Austrian government officials in exile. Maybe, Mr. Best is already looking for new customers.

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