



# Axis Sally: The American Voice of Nazi Germany

*Richard Lucas*

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## **Axis Sally: The American Voice of Nazi Germany** Richard Lucas

One of the most notorious Americans of the twentieth century was a failed Broadway actress turned radio announcer named Mildred Gillars (1900–1988), better known to American GIs as “Axis Sally.” Despite the richness of her life story, there has never been a full-length biography of the ambitious, star-struck Ohio girl who evolved into a reviled disseminator of Nazi propaganda.

At the outbreak of war in September 1939, Mildred had been living in Germany for five years. Hoping to marry, she chose to remain in the Nazi-run state even as the last Americans departed for home. In 1940, she was hired by the German overseas radio, where she evolved from a simple disc jockey and announcer to a master propagandist. Under the tutelage of her married lover, Max Otto Koischwitz, Gillars became the personification of Nazi propaganda to the American GI.

Spicing her broadcasts with music, Mildred used her soothing voice to taunt Allied troops about the supposed infidelities of their wives and girlfriends back home, as well as the horrible deaths they were likely to meet on the battlefield. Supported by German military intelligence, she was able to convey personal greetings to individual US units, creating an eerie foreboding among troops who realized the Germans knew who and where they were.

After broadcasting for Berlin up to the very end of the war, Gillars tried but failed to pose as a refugee, but was captured by US authorities. Her 1949 trial for treason captured the attention and raw emotion of a nation fresh from the horrors of the Second World War. Gillars’s twelve-year imprisonment and life on parole, including a stay in a convent, is a remarkable story of a woman who attempts to rebuild her life in the country she betrayed.

Written by Richard Lucas, a freelance writer and lifelong shortwave radio enthusiast, *Axis Sally: The American Voice of Nazi Germany* is the first thoroughly documented look at this mythologized figure of World War II.

## REVIEWS

“Arguably one of the more odious civilian figures to emerge from World War II was an American woman who broadcast radio propaganda aimed at U.S. troops. . . . What created the monster named Axis Sally? Mr. Lucas makes much of the deprivations suffered by a failed actress, and her frantic quest for fame.”

?The Washington Times

“Richard Lucas leaves no stone unturned in telling this rich and compelling story...”

Polish News, 01/03/2011

“an excellent biography of a woman who, driven by anti-Semitism and ambition, sold out her country.”

Ottawa Citizen

“...if you are willing to get a close look at yourself, while reading about someone else, read this book.

Mildred was neither the saintly and unsullied victim she sometimes portrayed and some believed, nor the vicious and treacherous villain the government prosecutors painted her as during her trial. She was human-

just like you, and just like me.”

Douglas County News, 01/2011

“...fascinating, well-researched account”

Publisher’s Weekly, 01/2011

“...reveals the mostly untold story of the unfulfilled Broadway showgirl who found international fame as the notorious mouthpiece of the Third Reich in broadcasts aimed at millions of GIs.”

King Features Syndicate , 01/2011

“With the advent of film and radio, propagandists discovered a whole new world in which to disseminate information, accurate or not, preying on the psyches of enemy soldiers. . . . Whether she was naïve or just an attention-starved actress, Mildred Gillars will always be remembered as the infamous ‘Axis Sally.’ She began to believe the Nazi propaganda she was spewing over the radio and, as the author states, “paid a heavy price for that delusion.””

?WWII HISTORY, 03/2011

“Lucas is a very thorough researcher but also an excellent storyteller. His book provides not just details of Gillar’s life, but also the period details and contemporaneous events that put those details into perspective...Lucas’ blend of excellent research, period detail and well crafter narrative answers the questions of how an American girl put herself on the wrong side of history.”

America in WWII, April 2011

"...a fascinating look at the life and trials of Mildred Gillars..."

Imagination Café Blob, 1/23/2011

“...a fascinating story of a woman who was so focused on herself and her show business dreams that she was easily convinced to broadcast and work at odds with her own country.”

Windy City Times, 02/16/2011

“...well-researched...”

The Advocate(LA) Online, 02/2011,

“...the first fully documented biography of the notorious World War II broadcaster...”

Senior Beacon, March 2011

“...provides the first full length biography of Gillars...raise(s) some important questions...”

Jerusalem Post, 3/6/2011

“...definitive...a sorry story, and an essential one for those interested in the history of the war.”

The Commercial Dispatch, 05/03/2011

“...examines one of the most infamous characters of the Second World War... The human drama which is history is filled with tragic contingencies or "what ifs."”

Iron Mountain Daily News, 05/16/2011

”For those of you interested in World War II history, there’s a fascinating biography available. It’s Axis Sally by Richard Lucas. The first half of the book follows her unusual childhood, her failed struggles to build a career in theatre in New York, and her career in Germany before and during the war. The second half chronicles her arrest, eventual trial for treason and her years in prison. Many of her actual broadcasts are reprinted, and the entire book makes interesting if a bit nauseating reading.”

Connie Meng, Canton Public Library

“The author did a great deal of research and did it well...The media still can do a great job of making and breaking anyone they want to go after. It makes you wonder how Axis Sally would do today spreading her stories through the media.”

Feathered Quill Book Reviews

“...an excellent biography of a woman who, driven by anti-Semitism, sold out her country.”

Esprit de Corps, Canadian Military Volume 19 Issue 3

“It’s subject is fascinating and has been researched well...an intriguing story...:

Lake Chelan Mirror

“...thoroughly researched...unearths some long forgotten aspects of the now mythic Sally...”

MILITARY REVIEW

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