

Below is the final part of a November 1941 file memorandum by Claud Sykes as an MI-5 officer in Section E.3.

Sykes had recently come across Karl Otten and they had a chat. Otten, who had been working for the BBC as a script writer had just been abruptly dismissed. The Overseas Service program for which he wrote was sponsored by the Political Warfare Executive, and Otten and the PWE officer who directed the program, Crossman, had incompatible personalities and policy views. Accordingly, the PWE had the BBC fire Otten. The PWE reported to the Foreign Office but was not part of that ministerial department.

In mid-1942, the BBC re-hired Otten to write for its Home Service.

I gather Karl is still working for one of our organisations. He told me Mrs. Holmes would know all about his work for them. He did not know the name of this section (or would not tell me) but I gather from the type of work he mentioned it should be S.I.S. He says he has never received any payment and had not wanted any, having regarded his B.B.C. job as adequate remuneration, plus a cover for his other work. He said he would like to get back to the B.B.C. and admitted when challenged that he wanted to get his own back on Crossman by procuring an engagement with another section. His idea is to apply to a Mr. Newsome, who is responsible for the "London Calling Europe" feature, and he seems to think he has good prospects of a job with him. He asked me not to take any steps on his behalf until he knew definitely whether this prospect would materialise or not and promised to get in touch with me as soon as he knew anything one way or the other.

C. P. Sykes
E.3. 21/11/41.

MI-5 file on Karl Otten, TNA KV 2/1123.

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Note: The secretive organization for which Otten was working without pay was not the S.I.S. (MI-6) as Sykes supposed, but the Special Operations Executive. That organization operated in German-occupied territory and conducted reconnaissance and sabotage operations, and provided guidance and support for partisans. Almost always, SOE officers sent abroad were nationals of the country in which they operated. Like the PWE, the SOE reported to a ministerial department (Ministry of Economic Warfare), but was not part of it.