

WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT THE SCANDINAVIAN PIRATES?

Part 3 -DCR

Philip Champion

DCR was Denmark's second pirate -a breakaway from the pioneering Radio Mercur which then merged with them after four months. Information for this article is taken from Paul Dane's talk at "Zeezenders 20" in 1978 which is included with DCR recordings I've listened to on the <http://radiohistoria.jvnf.org> website. Some extra items came from www.scandinavianoffshoreradio.com (staff lists) plus Gerry Bishop's 1975 book "Offshore Radio." Henrik Nørgaard who wrote a book on Radio Mercur and DCR in 2003 has checked the article and made some corrections.

Tests for 'DCR' ('Danmarks Commercielle Radio') -it was known on air by both names -began on September 14th 1961. We know that Anders Dahlerup was on these tests. They used 93.94 MHz but always announced it as ' 94.' The first words on DCR on opening on September 15th were the station name given by a male which was followed by a trumpet jingle rather like Mercur's. This led to the opening 15 minute "Her er vi" (Here we are) programme with Vagn Jensen and Hans Vangkilde who were talking about commercial radio and, of course, themselves. There were no records played in it. In a 45 minute programme "Hvad siger de?" (What do they say?") Hans Vangkilde talked to Vagn Jensen then went out and about recording short interviews with a number of people (10 men and two women) with a record between each of them. As he talked street noise could be heard. One of the topics mentioned was State radio and commercial radio and what they wanted to hear from the new station. Music was half instrumental, half vocal with five records each but no artists or titles were given. It ranged from light instrumental/classical including the "Minute Waltz" to several 'show' tunes (like "There's No Business Like Show Business") and some easy listening sounds, all vocals in English except for several songs together from a Danish opera. The show was introduced and closed by a female announcer. This was followed by "Blid Musik" (Gentle Music) which included a monologue by Hannah Bjarnhof.

DCR set itself up as a serious alternative to Danmarks Radio. As well as pop and easy listening music they wanted to include opera, theatre and talk -the more commercial Radio Mercur not including the latter three. DCR also wanted less prominence to adverts than Mercur gave. They felt that advertising caused undue pressure or influence on programmes. They wanted to compete with Danmarks Radio's public service outlook while incorporating the popular shows aired on Mercur. Most staff were key people, often original, who had defected from Radio Mercur. According to "Offshore Radio" the staff dissatisfaction went back to 1960 and 1961 when those concerned made repeated and failed attempts to buy out the two shareholders: founders Ib Fogh (75%) and Peer Jansen (25%). Leading the setting up of DCR was Mercur's Production Manager Benny Knudsen. He was joined by legal consultant Børge Agerskov, the cousin of Mercur's founder Peer Jansen and who had originally investigated the legal possibilities of broadcasting from a ship, and who had helped to set up Mercur. Others were Hans Vangkilde, Mercur's Programme Director who had been with them from the start. With him came Vagn Jensen who had run Radio Mercur's advertising operation. Now he ran Ekko Reklame from Næsborgvej, Hvidovre, København. The DCR operation was run from a location south of the capital. Others to come from Radio Mercur were "the best of Mercur's staff" : Anders Dahlerup who was DCR's Programme Manager, announcers Nete Schreiner and Lea Dalby (also archivist) plus engineers Jerry Katz and Preben Ploug. With them was the financier Alex Brask Thomsen (from Finansbanken) who had got Mercur on its financial feet two years earlier. To have such major defections after the pioneer pirate was established for three years shows their dissatisfaction. They had expected to take more Mercur staff with them but some stayed put. DCR did also recruit staff new to radio like announcers Jorgen Krogh and Bent Thalmey (not listed in Gerry Bishop's "Offshore Radio" book) and engineers Jens Erik Lindhardt and Poul Nyrop.

The 240 ton "Lucky Star" had the radio equipment fitted out at sea en route from Belgium where the vessel had been equipped, to avoid the authorities' attention. With the limited area of International Waters in the Øresund the "Lucky Star" was anchored only a few hundred yards from the Radio Mercur ship. The transmitter was a German-made Siemens 5kW one but a directional aerial gave it an ERP of 44kW on ' 94' MHz. Whereas in Sweden Radio Nord had shown for five months that it was possible to broadcast both taped programmes and live from the sea DCR decided to keep to the all-tape format as on Radio Mercur. The studios were in the København suburb of Hvidovre while the sales office was in the centre of the capital. Whereas Radio Mercur broadcast at breakfast then went off until mid afternoon (though gradually filling these hours) then came on and off throughout the evening, DCR from the start missed out the morning and just ran, except Sundays, from 3.30 pm through 11pm but Saturdays 2 pm to 3 am.. On

Sundays they broadcast for most of the day: 9 am until midnight. Their signal covered all of Sjælland, east Fyn and on good days over to Århus on the east coast of Jylland.

Thanks to the www.offshoreradio.de website we can find out a lot more about the vessel. It was built in 1913 as "Roelfina 1", a two-masted freighter, by the H. van der Werff shipyard in Stadskanaal in the northern Dutch province of Groningen. The 21 metre long vessel was a sailing ship without an auxiliary motor. (An earlier Scandinavian radio ship had also started as a sailing ship: the "Margarethe" of 1921 was a three-masted schooner which was later fitted with an engine and in 1960 was converted to the radio ship "Bon Jour" of Sweden's Radio Nord and eventually was renamed "Mi Amigo.") The "Roelfina 1" was owned by Hendriks Holwerda in Gasselternijveen, Netherlands. It was named after the owner's wife Roelfina. In 1927 a three-cylinder four cycle engine by Brons Motoren Fabriek was fitted. This lasted until 1961 when a Dan Normo engine was installed. At some point she was rebuilt and her tonnage increased from 131 to 167. It went through a succession of owners from 1932. First H. Sloots Rzn bought it in 1932 then J. Sloots was the owner. In 1946 C. Holscher of Rotterdam bought it for their Kustvaartbedrijf NV fleet and renamed it "Taurus." Ten years later it was sold to A. Oudman also of Rotterdam who sold it on in 1960 to Alex Brask Thomsen of København. The ship was said to be registered as the "Nijmah Al Hazz" in the Lebanon. Though no records of that exist a photo clearly shows this name painted on the bow. It was though registered as "Lucky Star" in Panama. For several weeks in the summer of 1961 it was moored in the Maashaven in Rotterdam at the Waalhaven shipyard.

DCR had its own logo just as Mercur did. DCR's had three circles, one around each of the white capital letters of the name in blue, black and blue.

An undated half hour in September from "Jorgen Krogh spiller plader" (plays records) started with a customary theme tune of 30 seconds of light, bright guitar music. His presentation was straightforward and quite quiet. The music was very much MoR with female American vocalists like Doris Day (two by her), Frank Sinatra, Elvis "Heartbreak Hotel", a lively Chris Barber's Jazz Band instrumental, a Danish record which sounded like it came from a musical, a French female -Juliette Greco- on two records sung in French. As was common in those days the record label was given. Jorgen managed to fit nine records in the 30 minutes though there were no adverts during the section of the programme I heard.

DCR actually had a Top 10 sponsored by Micro Radio. Theme music was big band, not untypical of the time. The announcer Hans Vangkilde presented it in a straight style. Then again this was before the upbeat style of Alan Freeman or the Top 40 pirates became common. Typical of the time was the fact that the show had a female voiceover intro. at the start. As well as easy-listening hits of the time there were pop records like Helen Shapiro's "Walking Back to Happiness", Petula Clark with "Romeo", Elvis, Eddie Hodges "I Ain't Gonna Wash For a Week" or Paul Anka. There were a few lengthy discourses by Hans about the sponsor Mikro Radio. Chart positions were given but not the previous week's or how many weeks on the chart. I suspect that DCR had nothing against pop or easy listening music but rather more what was between the records. Presumably they wanted informative talk between the records rather than having little more than a jukebox with artiste names and titles given in between.

In Hans Vangkilde's "Fyraften" (Closing Time) on December 7th from 5 -5.30 pm his links were generally short and softly spoken. In the half hour were three MoR instrumentals two of which were in the 'trad jazz' style then in vogue, three Danish male vocal records, a Danish male and female duo doing their version of "Good Gracious Me" in Danish, Noel Coward, a lady singing a cha-cha-cha in German plus Petula Clark singing "Sailor." It was a very good MoR show for its time with some parts quite lively for that format.

Like Radio Mercur, DCR had short programmes showcasing a featured artiste. On January 16th 1962 Nete Shreiner played the American singer Dinah Shore from 7 -7.15 pm. After a second or two pause after each record Nete kept her links very short, just announcing the artiste and the title. At 7.15 was "For Visens Venner" (For Ballad Friends) with Bent Thalmey. From 7.30 -7.45 in "Små ensembler" Anders Dahlerup talked more between the records. The show can be described as MoR with a brisk, jazzy instrumental, a male/female group singing a Danish version of "Kiss Me, Honey Honey" then slowing with a Swedanes record, a George Shearing instrumental and another instrumental. Then there was one of the few DCR adverts -this one for a holiday company. After a bit of dead air and a repeated (flugel ?) horn jingle a female announced "Du lytter til DCR -Danmarks Commercielle Radio." There were also ads for Schweizisk Ur Import (Swiss Watch Import). A male introduced "Kendte guitarister" (Famous Guitarists) till 8 pm. The first record was a lively vocal piece with extended guitar middle, a lively Danish guitarist, then a classical Spanish guitar item, an easy -listening Danish singer/guitarist then a lively guitarist.

At 8 pm there was Nete Schreiner's hour "Mens de andre ser fjernsyn" (While the others are watching

TV) where she played no less than 19 records. There were eight instrumentals ranging from orchestral to big band but others with either a guitar organ (Klaus Wunderlich) or banjo or piano (Oscar Peterson) leading. In my Radio Nord article I commented on the high number of instrumentals that Swedish station played. Perhaps it was a reflection of radio in that era. Five records were by male vocalists like well-known Americans such as Billy Eckstein, Bobby Rydell and George Hamilton IV while six by females including Shirley Bassey, Rosemary Clooney, an Italian lady Pier Angeli singing "Volare" in her own language, a lady singing in French and Britain's Barry Sisters; and one record by a mixed vocal group -The Swedanes. What was noticeable was that she announced and back-announced the records. Nete's links were relaxed, quite quiet and gave a rather cosy feeling. Also there was no talking over records with a second or so pause after each one. As usual the intro. and outro. over the theme tune was done by a person of the opposite sex.

Bent Thalmey was back at 9 pm with "Bents Pladebar." Here he played a set of live recordings of George Shearing and his quintet (instrumental) , a mixed Danish duo who seemed to speak a routine over a musical background then do a song, and a dance orchestra. It was very much in the BBC Light Programme style! "Plademik" filled the next hour with non-stop music, 13 instrumentals and six relaxed vocals including one from Elvis Presley and a Spanish male singer singing to a cha-cha. A taped "Du lytter til DCR -Danmarks melody radio" was played three times during the programme. Three ads were interspersed: Skibsøl, Schweizisk Ur Import and one with a cat sound effect. Hans Vangkilde did "Næstsidste Runde" (Penultimate Round) from 10.30 -11. This was unusual in that the intro was given by another male, unlike the usual Mercur and DCR practice of using someone of the opposite sex. Before the first record was an advert for SAS sung by male and female singers. Only the first record was vocal, by a German male, then the other eight were all various styles of instrumental, no less than four being from the Norrie Paramour Orchestra. Hans compered the show in his usual quiet style. After the outro announcement the programme ended with another advert -Schweizisk Ur Import. So really in this half hour show the ads had been kept to the beginning and end, leaving the rest commercial-free.

The Scandinavianoffshoreradio website lists 17 people involved in DCR. There were four co-founders, three announcers, four engineers, four sales consultants and a secretary. Of course there would also be ship's crew and engineers plus people tendering DCR.

There were several advertisers. One was for SBS, partly sung by female and males with a male voiceover. They had ones for Pressens Radioavis and Oxford Kiks. As stated above there were at least three more. It seems that DCR's adverts were generally boring, often just being read from a piece of paper, rather than the productions which Mercur provided. In fact the ex-Mercur people expected to take many of the advertisers with them but this did not happen.

There was also some kind of competition -"Se og Hør uddeler" (See and Hear award) with 1,000 Kroner each week for DCR's listeners.

It seems that those listeners who preferred popular music stuck with Radio Mercur. Those who liked the classical music disliked DCR's commercials though. With listening response weak and little advertising the situation was bleak with the station close to collapse. So when Mercur's two main shareholders who had been blamed for its decline -both tax exiles now and majority shareholder Ib Fogh regarded as difficult to work with -agreed to resign the way was clear for DCR and Mercur to merge on January 29th 1962. However, the former rebels of Knudsen, Agerskov and financier Thomsen headed Mercur -which continued just as it had before! So ended DCR after just four months. It had achieved a 'palace revolution' at Mercur which apparently continued to sound the same as it always did.

The DCR ship "Lucky Star" was used for Radio Mercur and even for the resumption of broadcasts in August 1962 after the Danish MoA. The radio-mercur.dk website gives some idea of what happened after the vessel was seized and taken into port. In November 1963 it was bought by Mr. Whitthøft-Rasmussen of Haldestad and towed from København to a shipyard in Egersund on November 14th 1963 for conversion as a ordinary freighter. Jan Drejer Jensen said he served on it in 1967 but then it was called "Kamilla Whitthoft". It carried pig iron and sand to the United iron foundries at Fredersværk. Later the skipper bought the ship and renamed it "Vendelbo" and based it in Aarborg. It ran aground in Saksøbing inlet on July 28th 1971. The website broadcasting-fleet.com said it was sold in 1974 to Poul Christensen who took it to his scrapyards Dansk Skipsophug in Nakskov.

Next time: Offshore radio comes to Sweden -Skånes Radio Mercur and Radio Syd.