

Tube Of The Month

TUBE WARS - EPISODE 1

The French Empire Strikes Back: le TM (FOTOS)

The early development of the triode tube coincided with the military buildup in Europe. The Germans and the English were very keen on utilizing the advantages of the new technology. The French were not prepared for reliable communication when WWI began.

In 1914 a Frenchman named Pichon was working for the German firm Telefunken on assignment in the U.S. to procure examples of communications equipment for analysis in Germany. He had immigrated to Germany after deserting the French Army, but was widely traveled as a Telefunken executive in charge of patents. He had even visited the French military and suggested they work with Germany on communications technology. When war was declared, he was traveling through London on his way to Germany. He wouldn't support the Germans against the French, so he sailed to France and was arrested as a deserter. He knew the officers handling French military communications and had them contacted. They instructed the guards to bring him to Paris at once. Pichon came with his pockets and bag full of DeForest audions and instructions on how to make them. Pichon was back in the French Army now.

The French sent the samples to Lyon where a group of physicists could analyze the tube and develop a design that could be manufactured in large numbers. A local lamp making company, E.C.&A. Grammont, was retained to make the tubes. The final design was called the TM (Télégraphie Militaire) and marked with the Grammont trademark "Fotos". The tube worked well and the demand was high. In order to meet production, another lamp company was employed and those tubes were marked "Métal". By the end of the war, over 100,000 TM tubes had been made. The British and the Dutch made their copies of the TM and after the war, the tube was used in the first telephone repeaters in France. The tube's four pin base became a European industry standard for many years.

If this story wasn't strange enough, after the war, Pichon returned to Germany to work for Telefunken.

More photos at <http://n6jv.com>.

