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SOE HISTORY

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D SECTION; Early history
to September 1940

S. O. E.

EARLY HISTORY TO SEPTEMBER 1940

INTRODUCTION

D section began in April 1938 as an internal section of SIS. The late OSS had come to the conclusion that some form of organisation was needed to counteract the more violent activities of the Nazi party. D section was not an offspring of the war. It was initiated in peacetime and was designed to operate in peacetime. It was the outbreak of war and the extension in importance of D activities that made it necessary to alter the original conception of its activities and to regularise them under a Minister. This recognition of the large part that could be played in the war by organised sabotage led to the formation in July 1940 of SOE.

The original object of D section was to provide lines of communication for covert anti-Nazi propaganda in Neutral countries and to direct and harness the efforts of the various anti-Nazi organisations then working in Europe. It was essentially a weapon of offence. At the same time, it was decided to develop sabotage devices and this also came within the charter of D section. Thus at the outbreak of war the section was working with two objects, the development of devices and the introduction of illegal matter into neutral states. Simultaneously the War Office was developing a department under Lt. Col Holland known as MIR, which was to undertake sabotage and guerrilla warfare in countries after their occupation by the enemy, when D section would cease to operate. Today, SOE is a combination of D section and MIR, although it possesses far more money and power than either of those bodies ever did.

In April 1938 the late chief of the Secret Intelligence Service invited Major GRAND "to cogitate upon the possibilities of sabotage". GRAND's early training had been in Imperial Chemical War Research and the R.M.A. Woolwich, and he had had experience as a Royal Engineer in France,

Russia and the Middle East and on the Indian frontier.

MAJOR GRAND'S SURVEY

[Handwritten: 15/10/41]

At the beginning of the following June the War Office enquired whether GRAND's services with M.I.4. would be wanted after June 7th. He was therefore asked to furnish a preliminary note on his researches, but (as this might be delayed by the necessity for collation by the various sections) the War Office were told that GRAND would be wanted for a further two months with an option until December 31st.

GRAND's preliminary survey showed that he had already appreciated the value of interference with electric supplies and telephone communications, the adulteration of food, the sabotage of industrial installations by the introduction of camouflaged explosives or by forest fires (in the case of factories concealed in forests), the sabotage of railways by explosives disguised as coal or by interference with points, the introduction of deleterious substances into the lubricating or fuel system of warships and aeroplanes, the introduction of diseases into crops and animals, incendiarism in dockyards and the distribution of rumours and forged ration cards. These activities, suitably publicised, would lead to a feeling of disquiet and the use of numbers of troops as guards.

He divided the work into three classes:-

- (1) General sabotage, which he thought could be best carried out by the Communist organisation in Germany
- (2) Special sabotage, for which lone workers would be required.
- (3) Moral sabotage, which would require one man in every town with an automatic telephone exchange, and might be suitable work for the Jews.

Dumps of sabotage material would have to be set up as follows:-

- (1) In Scandinavia, for Swedish iron ore shipments, Finnish food shipments and the passing of supplies to German workers in Hamburg, Kiel etc.
- (2) In Eastern Czechoslovakia or Hungary, to deal with Roumanian oil and food supplies from the Danube and Italy
- (3) In Belgium or Switzerland, to introduce sabotage devices to workers in Southern Germany, the Ruhr, the Saar etc.

This survey was passed to the various sections of the Secret Service, who commented variously that it was ambitious, that it merely scratched the surface, that it went too far and too fast, that it was too wide or that too much of it was of doubtful practicality. One officer took the line that he was against active preparations in peacetime; another declared that there were no Communist or anti-HITLER organisations in Germany, while a third thought that the organisation of sabotage within Germany should be left to the anti-Nazi organisations, one of which he had reason to believe was considering the problem.

On October 19th 1938 GRAND circulated a minute in which he reported technical progress in methods to carry out the schemes which he had suggested. The organisation required for the section's activities in peace and in the preparatory stages for war had been considered, and the task divided itself into the establishment of sure communications from England to the neutral countries surrounding Germany and from those countries to Germany itself. The appointment had been requested of three representatives of (at an annual cost of £2,000 each) covering in the first instance Scandinavia and the Baltic, in the second Roumania, Hungary and Yugoslavia and in the third Belgium, Holland, Luxemburg and Switzerland. A Fleet Street agency had begun work on a survey of the press of the world. It was proposed to spend £250 on surveying all the anti-Nazi movements throughout Europe. A card index was being established of persons who had influence in various quarters such as the Vatican, the intellectual section of the Communist party, the Trade Union movement etc. There were hopes of using the Jews and the Roman Catholics for a whispering organisation throughout Germany. £2,000 were to be spent on experimental work in connection with devices, and £1,000 would be required for initial stocks. An individual was to be appointed (at a cost of £600 a year) to investigate the transport of material from England to representatives abroad.

"WHISPERING" AND SABOTAGE

On November 4th 1938 GRAND put forward a scheme for enlarging the

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whispering organisation in Germany. The general idea was that one man should be selected in London or a neutral country who had three friends with contacts with Germany; each of these three would in turn recruit not more than three others, and so on. Each man would pass on to his three recruits any rumour which he received from his superior. In this way the organisation would be kept in water-tight compartments, as each individual's identification would be known only to his recruiter and to those whom he recruited. All communications would be verbal, and each individual would be free to decide whether to pass on any message he might receive. Any individual who had already been recruited but was approached by another recruiter must not disclose his employment, but might either say he preferred not to act or might accept the fresh offer - but pass on no messages from the second recruiter.

On the same date GRAND asked Z. (Col. DANSEY) whether he had any contacts in industries connected with oil, rubber, aluminium, railways, margarine and edible oils, power houses, naval engine rooms and foundries. It was wished to be ready to supply them with sabotage materials.

Answering these two minutes Z. said that he had been tempted to start whispering, but had been restrained by the likelihood that the whisperer might be made a fool of by a subsequent announcement by the British Cabinet. Furthermore he doubted whether a "Mafia-like" organisation was required for whispering. As regarded active sabotage, he thought this must be merged with national policy. Since Munich he had felt that it was quite wrong to supply materials to those who were at present willing to use them, because it would not agree with what appeared to be the existing policy. He did not like to encourage human beings to risk their lives unnecessarily, and under present conditions it would be a dangerous game because the materials would be in the hands of men whose interests were to torpedo Mr. CHAMBERLAIN's efforts for peace.

To this GRAND pointed out that active sabotage was a matter on which they had been instructed to work and that no question of the immediate distribution of stocks had been raised in his memorandum.

B. ORGANISATION

GRAND recruited two technicians, one a civil expert in telecommunications (Mr. E. SCHROETER), the other a naval expert in explosives and the chemistry of incendiaries (Lt. Cdr. A.J.G. LANGLEY, R.N.). Other men, and women too, were gradually enlisted for their intimate knowledge of the peoples of those countries in which the war was to be fought. During the Munich crisis GRAND organised a pyramidal sabotage network throughout the main Skoda armament factories in Czechoslovakia.

PREPARATIONS FOR WAR

At the beginning of July 1939 it was clear that war was extremely probable and the activities of the section were therefore increased.

The problems were:-

- (1) Obtaining and training sufficient personnel;
- (2) Increasing communications into Germany;
- (3) Intensifying propaganda;
- (4) Arranging for war expansion.

The personnel problem was solved by establishing a Territorial system by which suitable individuals were trained in peacetime, and nine persons were obtained who in civil life were the heads of big organisations. With a number of selected individuals, specialised knowledge of practically all the big industries was represented.

It was not until September 1939 that the organisation which had been born almost "in a shed at the bottom of a garden" was enlarged to the status of a sectionalised and self-sufficient department of war. Recruitment was still gradual; no professional saboteurs existed in Britain, and as a nation we had not only distrusted political propaganda and felt a distaste for it but we had obstinately refused to comprehend it. The functions of the section were only gradually detached from the general background of war. Even at this stage the writer of this earlier history complained that some of the section's most vital projects had been vetoed almost at zero hour for political reasons; at the same time some of its most valuable projects had been remote from the sphere of sabotage and propaganda.

The section was originally conceived as has been seen, as an integral though distinct branch of the Secret Service, to whom it was indebted for patient guidance and co-operation. In its turn the section was able to maintain a regular flow of valuable information from the constant expeditions of its officers or agents into all the countries of Europe, from the intimate relations the section had established with virtually every anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist organisation in Europe, from the development and exploitation of the Secret Censorship

and from the section's contacts with its sabotage and propaganda sub-agents resident in enemy or enemy-occupied countries. In July 1940 an officer _____ was appointed by SIS to act as liaison with D. section. His charter enabled him to assist and advise in matters of policy and generally to pave the way towards more perfect co-operation between all Sections.

CONTACTS

During November and December 1939 a branch was established under Lt. Col. M.R. CHIDSON, D.S.O., M.B.E. and Capt. T.S. FAIRLEY to deal with various activities in the United Kingdom such as the handling of emigre organisations, the contacting of individuals and various problems involving secret action in England, such as the secret shipping of stores. By August 1940 the section had established working relations with ten political organisations of a Labour, Catholic, Jewish or emigre nature in Great Britain and over twenty others abroad, including the International Transport Workers' Federation in England, the L.E.X. group in Germany, the Social Democrats and Slovene organisations in Austria, the Czechoslovakian and Polish organisations in Hungary, the Poles and Communists in Roumania, Giustizia e Liberta and the Slovenes in Istria and Italy as well as other organisations in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Palestine and Egypt, including Mihailivists in Bulgaria, with the object of developing communications, propaganda and sabotage, receiving information and supplying personnel and ultimately stimulating revolt. Even as early as 1939 the section was able to claim passive resistance, demonstrations, the chalking up of anti-Nazi slogans and other disturbances as well as strikes and other "outrages" in Germany and

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occupied territories.

PL
ACCOMMODATION

The early days of (as it was then called) were spent figuratively and literally in the cellar of SIS headquarters at Broadway Buildings. As the section achieved more and more independence and enlarged its personnel and activities, it became necessary to find outside offices, particularly as it became clear that, with the outbreak of war, the section would receive semi-autonomy.

Therefore, in April 1939, offices were found on the 6th floor of No. 2 Oaxton Street, which was attached by an obscure passage to the St. Ermina Hotel. These offices remained the Headquarters of the London Office during the whole period under review. In 1940 the expansion of personnel made it necessary to obtain more space, and an internal stairway was constructed to the floor below which was also taken over. The section were fortunate in the way of air damage during the blitz, and suffered materially only from one near-miss which struck Transport House adjoining. No more than superficial damage was done to D offices, although some officers were surprised to find on their desks files of the Rajputana Railway (1884-5) etc.

In common with most organisations during the immediately pre-war period, D section expected the outbreak of war to be accompanied by the immediate bombardment and destruction of London. Therefore for some time previously, steps had been taken to draw up a plan of evacuation to country stations. This plan was the responsibility and achievement of Squadron Leader F.C. ROWE. On Sept. 1, ROWE requisitioned a Residential Private Hotel near Welwyn. This hotel, The Frythe, was rechristened and became the headquarters of the section. The house, built in the worst Victorian neo-gothic style of ornamental red-brick, possessed fairly extensive grounds and was well-concealed from the public eye. It had two entrances, one from the Great North road, and one from a country lane. A guard was supplied by the Beds. & Herts. Regiment. The house, though unattractive from the aesthetic point of view, was well supplied with hot water and served as an adequate, if somewhat crowded, headquarters. Until it was clear that the blitz was not immediately

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forthcoming, the section lived and worked at the Frythe, commuting to London only for essential contacting. The more plutocratic members had already agreed to lend their cars to the section (such was innocence!) so transport was not lacking. Compensation was almost entirely moral: A private line to Broadway and an internal exchange were provided, while a Post Office Box was hired as a cover address for the Section. For officers' recreation, a dart board and table tennis set was provided, while the usual indoor sports and pastimes were popular.

For the period during which the Frythe was D HQ, the section lived in what would now be regarded as luxury, although at that time the contrast with peacetime conditions was more acute. No incidents occurred except an outbreak of sentry-baiting, which led to considerable alarm but was finally traced to the outraged manager of the Hotel, who had strenuously resisted the summary ejection of his residents. Braving trip-wires and live ammunition, his knowledge of the terrain, coupled with the inexperience of raw soldiery stationed in dark Autumn nights amidst the witchlike rhododendrum bushes, enabled the Manager to cause demoralisation by ghostly whistling, banshee wailing and stealthy prowling round the house. He even managed on one occasion to assault the armed and expectant sentry, making his escape down 'spook alley' with a gleeful cackle of eery laughter. Finally the police were brought in and he was discouraged from further activity. The Station was under the Command of Lt. Col. M.R. CHIDSON.

Other houses were requisitioned at a later date. The devices section under Commander LANGLEY, R.N. were accommodated at Aston House, which was requisitioned in October. The Propaganda section obtained the cream of the accommodation at the Old Rectory, Hertingfordbury; a beautiful little house in delightful grounds. This was taken over in Mid-September.

In March 1940 it was decided that the work of various sub-sections of D section could be more effectively carried out in London, and therefore certain members of the staff moved back from the country and a second floor was acquired to accommodate them and various new recruits.

INTER-SERVICES PROJECTS BOARD

In April 1940 the formation of the Inter-Services Projects Board was imminent. It was proposed that its membership should include representatives of the Admiralty, the Air Ministry, M.I.6., C.S. and the War Office. The Board was to be primarily consultative and advisory, its objects being:-

- (1) To co-ordinate projects for attacking the enemy by irregular operations.
- (2) To prevent the lapsing of any project of value.
- (3) To provide Service planning staffs with advice and intelligence derived from the exchange of ideas between members of the Board.
- (4) To ensure that the operations of each service were complementary to the others.

SECTION SUBDIVIDED

In April 1940, to relieve GRAND of the burden of departmental detail, it was found necessary to make a basic alteration in the organisation. Section D. was therefore divided into four sub-sections on a functional basis as opposed to the mixed geographical divisions, and each of the sub-sections was placed in the charge of a senior officer known as an "Assistant D". Heads of Sections were to appeal in the first instance to the appropriate "Assistant D".

The expansion of the war field led to the creation of two new sub-sections, the first to deal with Italy and the second to deal with the Caucasus and South Russia.

INVASION PRECAUTIONS

In May 1940, with a view to arranging a centre for the continuation of the section's activities should the Government decide to move to the west, a search began for a suitable house. Preparations were made to fortify Station IX against air-raids and enemy attack. The defences of Station XII were considerably increased and arrangements were made to demolish the outlying magazine by closing a switch in the main building in the event of enemy attack. By the following month the plans for

evacuations were complete and a suitable house, to accommodate twelve to fourteen people (for GRAND and his immediate staff), had been requisitioned and furnished in the west of England.

TECHNICAL PLANNING SUB-SECTION

As, under the existing system, it appeared that there was too much duplication and waste in the collection of information required for plans by the Service departments, a meeting was held in June 1940 between GRAND, Captain KNOX (Admiralty) and Commander AENOLD-FORSTER and it was decided that the section's Technical Planning section should undertake to supply information to General BOUENE (Director of Combined Operations). Since then a great deal of information has been submitted.

APPOINTMENT OF MINISTER

On July 17th the formation of a Special Operations Executive was approved by the Cabinet, and it was decided that a Minister should be appointed to co-ordinate the activities of M.I.R., Electra House, the D.C.O. and D. section. The Minister for Economic Warfare (at that time Dr. HUGH DALTON) was appointed. As a result of his appointment, the following month a certain reorganisation was considered necessary. An assistant "D" was appointed to deal with the major part of the routine work and the section was then divided into five directorates:-

- (1) The Director of Plans was to be responsible for the dissemination of general information to the sub-sections and for supplying plans and technical information on such projects as might be submitted.
- (2) The Director of Operations was to be in charge of the Country sections and the organisation available through them for the execution of projects.
- (3) The Director of Organisation was to be generally responsible for the co-ordination of departments and for administration, personnel, transport, accounts etc.
- (4) The Director of Services was to co-ordinate the activities of the various propaganda sub-sections and also possibly those of the officers planning and producing devices at Stations IX and XII, and the Balloon Warfare Station.
- (5) The Director of Special Projects was to be responsible for those undertakings which required individual attention and were outside the scope of the Plans Directorate.

As a result of this reorganisation the sub-sections which had been working as Station IX were removed to the London office, with the exception of that dealing with radio development.

APPOINTMENT OF SIR FRANK NELSON

Towards the end of the month the MINISTER appointed SIR FRANK NELSON (with the symbol C.D.) as commanding officer of the section, and he assumed his duties on August 28th. 1940

C. ACHIEVEMENTS

During the period under review (April 1938 - September 1940) the section achieved some notable results, of which the following were selected as samples in a report written in August 1940.

- (1) £500,000 worth of industrial diamonds were brought out of Holland.
- (2) £84,000,000 worth of gold bars were brought out under the nose of German bombers by an officer in the last French cruiser to leave Bordeaux.
- (3) M.I.R., an organisation for guerrilla warfare initiated by Colonel GRAND, was established as a branch of the War Department under Lt. Col. J. HOLLAND.
- (4) Instructions for precautions against sabotage produced by the section's Sabotage Device Supply Division were accepted by M.I.5. and were circulated to all parts of the Empire.
- (5) A documented exposure of the pro-Nazi influence of the so-called Oxford Group was compiled.
- (6) The processes and potentialities of the Secret Censorship were to be at the disposal of the Secret Service.
- (7) A thousand photographic copies of a secret German index of the whole Nazi hierarchy inside Germany was procured by the division in touch with the German emigre political organisations in Great Britain.
- (8) Up-to-date knowledge of good targets was provided by an officer in the course of his routine smuggling of arms etc. into Norway.
- (9) The Joint Broadcasting Committee, conceived by Colonel GRAND, came under the control of the Ministry of Information.
- (10) At the time of Dunkirk Colonel GRAND conceived the plan of organising throughout Great Britain a sabotage and intelligence network among the civilian population to be left behind in enemy occupied territory, and thirty officers of the section completed an organisation and distributed a vast quantity of incendiary material in over a thousand secret dumps throughout the country. This organisation was taken over by the newly constituted branch of the War Office, the Auxiliary Units.
- (11) The only officer who had so far lost his life did so when leading an expedition by air in an attempt to rescue the family of General DE GAULLE from German-occupied France.
- (12) The Section's supply division for sabotage devices had educated hundreds of officers and agents and had produced a considerable quantity of material.

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D. DETAILED HISTORY

In the following pages are given more detailed stories of the work of the various sections, territorial or otherwise. The work of propaganda is dealt with separately for the most part, and not under the countries concerned.

COURIERS

During the four weeks ending September 3rd 1939 two and a half tons of material (mostly propaganda) were run into Germany, Austria and Czecho-slovakia by main line through Switzerland (two lines), Belgium (Antwerp: one line) and Holland (one line). At the outbreak of war all channels ceased for about ten days, partly because of the arrest of key personnel and partly because of the chaos which prevented transport in and out of England. The lines were however re-established and by October were as follows:-

Switzerland - Germany	.. (2)
Switzerland - Italy	.. (1)
Belgium - Germany	.. (1)
Holland - Germany	.. (1)
Yugoslavia - Italy	.. (1)
Yugoslavia - Austria	.. (1)
Sweden - Latvia	.. (1)

These routes had capacities varying from a man-carried package to packing-cases measured in hundredweights. During November and December 1939 some of the existing channels were closed but the following new lines were opened up:-

Yugoslavia - Hungary
Hungary - Czecho-slovakia
Hungary - Poland
Hungary - Austria
Yugoslavia - Austria
Sweden - Germany
Sweden - Latvia
England - Norway

The last line made use of an official service to the Shetlands, a non-official service in the Shetlands, a hidden store in the Shetlands and a Norwegian coasting boat; a connection of the line ran through Norway to Stockholm. Earlier in the year a band of yachtsmen under FRANK CARR, and AUGUST COUREAULD had carried out work in connection with the landing of goods on the coasts of Norway, Denmark, Holland and Belgium which had been highly praised by the Admiralty.

The extension of the war front in May 1940 considerably curtailed the activities of couriers, and the services to Holland and Belgium had to be abandoned when these countries were invaded. During the first fortnight

they became irregular owing to difficulties in Italy, and in June they were entirely suspended. Flying boat services for materials and for personnel were used. In July communications were still greatly restricted, and only fourteen passages of any importance were taken. Arrangements were, however, made to conduct a form of courier service to the Balkans via Cairo; hitherto the representatives had to proceed to Cairo by sea via the Gold Coast or the Cape and thence by air to Egypt.

HOME DEFENCE

In May 1940 a plan of campaign was formulated to instruct the civil population on the subject of resistance in the event of an invasion. At a meeting of the Interservices Projects Board held on May 27th it was agreed that a force should be formed, to act in close co-operation with the military authorities, to deal with the enemy in the case of invasion or occupation of parts of England. This force was to be divided into two main sub-sections, - the M.I.R.s who would wage guerrilla warfare, and selected D. officers who would be attached for special duty to the twelve Regional Civil Commissioners. Under this plan a D. officer would work under the Regional Commissioner until the area passed under martial law, when he would serve under the military commander. Within smaller areas of the region he would organise a chain of individuals not liable to be called up for military service who would carry out acts of sabotage, and by judicial whispering he would encourage the general public unconsciously to train their minds to attacking the enemy by unarmed methods. He would arrange a headquarters storehouse for ammunition etc. These officers were provided with cars.

In the following months the work of the Home Defence sub-section progressed satisfactorily, and the organisation for civil home defence grew steadily. In the third week of July nearly 200 key men had been appointed and at least 1,000 dumps of material had been placed in the care of people capable of using them. Approximately 1,000 quarts of sulphuric acid, 90,000 capsules with which to prepare a minimum of 45,000 petrol bombs, 43,000 tyesules and 45,000 incendiary flares were provided. Officers of the section had recruited clergymen, gamekeepers, poachers, dentists and road-menders.

In July it was decided by the authorities that the risk of reprisals incurred by allowing civilians to engage in sabotage activities was too great. It was therefore decided that M.I.R. and D section home activities should be united and called C.H.Q. Auxiliary Units (under Colonel GUBBINS) and the members would be selected from Home Guard Units. However, Colonel

Viscount BEARSTED continued his organisation en bloc under the name of "Auxiliary Units (Special Duties)". It was not until the danger of invasion was relatively past that the organisation as originally planned by D section was dissolved.

BALLOONS

In the second half of 1939 investigations were completed by Lt. Col. JAMES O'HEA of a project to employ incendiary free balloons on a large scale, and the French technical authorities, M. DOLLFUSS, completely agreed as to its practicability and importance. A detailed scheme was submitted to the War Office on September 25th and a station established at Savehay Farm, Denham. Later, with a view to getting over the difficulty of hydrogen supplies in outlandish areas, a successful hot-air balloon was developed. At the beginning of 1940 considerable improvements were reported in the hot-air balloons, and one had been launched with a ground wind of 40 miles and been picked up 45 miles away. They were cheap to produce as they could be made of paper panels. In April 1940 it was reported that hot-air balloon exercises had been carried out in France, and that eight launches had been effected with balloons of different sizes and shapes and different burners; the longest flight had been made by an elongated 1,600 cubic-foot balloon carrying 5 lbs. and fitted with a petrol burner. The distance attained was 110 miles.

Meanwhile, in March 1940, a new idea had been put forward by Flight Lieutenant T.R. BIRD for ammonia-hydrogen balloons which would maintain a constant altitude by the replacement of part or all of the hydrogen or coal gas by ammonia. As the boiling point of ammonia is 33.50°C . and this temperature is reached at a height of 22,000 feet, the balloon would be kept in equilibrium by the alternate liquification and revaporisation of the ammonia as it rose into the lower temperature of a higher altitude or fell into the higher temperature of a lower altitude. In April, however, it was reported that the ammonia-hydrogen balloon idea seemed likely to be superseded by a system involving an auxiliary lifting balloon which would be cut loose when the main balloon reached the desired height, the main balloon then continuing its course at a constant level.

CENSORSHIP

Towards the end of 1939 a section was established to investigate the possibilities of the postal censorship from the point of view of information and of trade and moral sabotage against the Germans.

In March 1940 two additional personnel for the work in this department were sent to Gibraltar, and the extension of operations to Lisbon was suggested.

The invasion of the low countries ended certain activities but information was collected and distributed from Rome, Berlin, Madrid, Dublin etc. Four women members of the staff were recruited during May 1940.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Except in isolated instances it was unnecessary for the section to organise its own means of telegraphic or postal communication, as the facilities of SIS had been put at its disposal. The work of the tele-communications department was therefore almost exclusively on research, and the officer in charge of it (SCHROETER) had made considerable progress on three inventions in little more than a year. They were:-

- (a) The D-phone : a telephone which left scrambling far behind and encoded and decoded the human voice in any code which the user cared to insert in the mechanism.
- (b) The Duplex transceiver : a wireless telephone using a wave too short to be picked up by any other known receiver. It was an instrument of strictly limited range designed for communications between agents operating in foreign countries.
- (c) A high powered loud speaker to be used for mass broadcast propaganda launched either automatically by drifting balloons or by the pilot of an aeroplane. Even at ground level it had a range of intelligible speech of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

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The Commandant made a specific request for a better type of man to carry out the underground political warfare. Twenty-two students spent twelve two-hour courses at the Station X11 chalk pit, where it was possible for them to view explosions at a distance of five yards through armour-plated glass.

CENSORSHIP

Origin of Scheme

Early in December 1939, MAJOR W.T. WREN was reading through a censorship summary when he was struck with the idea that mail in transit to Germany from the U.S. and other neutral countries might be used by D. Section for the insertion of propaganda. He immediately put forward his idea to GRAND who gave him sanction to travel to Liverpool to visit the H.Q. of the Postal Censorship. There WREN went in to consultation with the Chief Postal Censor, Mr WORTHINGTON, who expressed his great interest and promised his full co-operation.

During his survey of censorship organisation WREN came to the conclusion that the most suitable branch of the censorship for D. work was that of the Transit Parcels and A.O. (autres objets) mails at Cheshire's Garage, Myrtle Street, Liverpool.

Suitability of Mails

In charge of the Myrtle Street Branch was an assistant censor, Mr C.F. SOANES who had as his Deputy Mr ERIC MASCHWITZ. SOANES (in common with all Censorship personnel consulted) showed himself extremely enthusiastic, and after a few days MASCHWITZ was brought in as liaison officer between D. Section and the Censorship.

Dated the 22nd of December MASCHWITZ wrote a report on the suitability of mails for D. work. He divided neutral mails into three categories:- (a) Parcels mail, (b) first class mail, (c) second class (or A.O.) mail. He discounted (a) as of no possible use to D. Section owing to its bulk, the difficulty of disguising interference, and the technical impossibility of providing the right type of 'cover' for 'doctored' parcels which might be added. He hoped, however, that it might be useful for planting specific objects on specific addressees for special purposes.

He did not consider that the technical difficulties were insuperable for the introduction of propaganda into (b) but it had two disadvantages.

- (1) that it was known to be regularly censored in Britain and therefore the Germans might be suspicious of any propaganda found in it.
- (11) From the censorship point of view private letter mail was the most interesting and was therefore more heavily examined. The Germans would therefore be likely to discover any propaganda inserted in it and would withdraw it before arriving at its destination.

This left (c) as the most likely field of action. The A.C. mail included the mass of circular material, newspapers, samples, catalogues, Xmas cards etc.

MASCHWITZ proceeded in his report to go into complete detail of the history of A.C. mail from the time it was off loaded from ship at the port-of-arrival to the time it was reloaded having passed through the censorship. He also paid great attention to the various difficulties which would have to be overcome in order to ensure that no small point was overlooked which might arouse German suspicion that any matter had been introduced anywhere other than its point of origin.

The various points that made the A.C. mail the most suitable for our activities can be summarized as follows:-

1. Myrtle Street was the smallest of the Censorship branches housed in obscure premises and employing less than 100 persons. It was therefore the most secure.
2. A.C. mail was not sealed and therefore any matter introduced was not liable to detection through the process of opening and resealing envelopes.

3. Being unsealed, no censorship labels were attached and therefore there was no sign of censorship other than that the mail bags had been opened.
4. It was generally considered that the German censorship was subject to the same disadvantages as the British censorship, and that, in common with them, the Germans would pay less attention to the examination of A.C. mail owing to its bulk and small security interest.

Myrtle Street was therefore decided upon as the site of D. operations.

First Stage of Operations

As a result of MASCHWITZ's investigation it was soon realized that it was impracticable to insert propaganda in mail already "constituted". If propaganda appeared in letters of diverse types and origins, it would be quite clear to the German examiners that it had been introduced in transit, while, if propaganda was inserted in only one type of circular, it could be easily traced and proved not to have been inserted at source. It was therefore decided that extra material should be introduced into the mails in envelopes of American type bearing cancelled American stamps. This was made possible owing to the American practice of issuing "pre-cancelled" stamps.

'Pre-cancelled' Stamps

The use of the 'pre-cancelled' stamp is believed to be confined to the U.S.A. It is an ordinary postage stamp cancelled before purchase by being overprinted with the name of the city of purchase. They can be bought under licence by firms with large mailing lists, and being pre-cancelled they are not franked by the Post Office. It is therefore easy to remove them from one cover and transfer them to another. In order to collect stocks of these pre-cancelled stamps, three of the Myrtle Street Censorship staff were co-opted,

and sworn in, MRS POMEROY, MISS HITCHIE and MISS GAYL. These ladies roughly removed the stamps from their original wrappers and they were then sent to the office of the Secret Censorship (Room 99) where they were removed through the ardent co-operation of MR WARRER and his staff. WARRER was also able to produce a gum that was indistinguishable from the original.

System and Style of Addressing

After the decision had been taken as to how material would be inserted, the material had to be provided with an American background. It was decided that the first insertion would take the form of a New Year Card emanating from a fictitious Pan-American German league. This fictional central organisation was provided with a mailing list compiled on an addressograph system, built up from circular lists discovered to be already in existence by detailed examination of the A.O. mail. Through the co-operation of Colonel Viscount BEARSTED it was possible to obtain the loan of the Shell Addressograph Facilities. The Shell placed two trained operators at the disposal of D. Section and purchased three new American type stencil cutting machines. They were supplied with lists of names sent to them by the Censorship, from which they built up a large collection of stencils. (8000 that could have been increased to 30,000 at short notice).

First Pieces of Propaganda

The first pieces of propaganda which were printed consisted of:-
(a) The New Year Card. This depicted HITLER and STALIN dining off the vividly painted carcasses of Finnish and Polish children. The Caption quoted from HITLER's speeches that he would never be seen "wining and dining the Bolshevihs". These cards were to be enclosed in American type envelopes with pre-cancelled "New York" stamps which had been removed from the transit mail (b) Buenos Aires Cocoa leaflets. These were to be crumpled up and inserted in sample packets of coffee and cocoa that were at that time being regularly despatched to Germany from

the leading Grocery Firm of Leinweber and Cia., Buenos Aires.

Check up in the U.S.A.

Before actual despatch it was decided to send P. OGILVY to the U.S.A. in order to make sure that nothing had been done which might make it possible to trace the operation to its British origin. OGILVY was instructed:-

- (i) To investigate the regulations governing the issue of pre-cancelled stamps.
- (ii) to determine whether the Pan-American German League was satisfactory cover for the background of the leaflets.
- (iii) to procure American stamps and envelopes for future operations
- (iv) to recruit personnel for posting material in the U.S.A. and South America.
- (v) to post copies of the New Years Card so that it could become known in the U.S. prior to its appearance in Germany

Re-sealing of mail bags

Pending the receipt of the "O.K." from OGILVY, preliminary investigations were made into the routine of loading the bags. The U.S.A. mail bags were closed with a strap and buckle kept intact by a tin strip held in position by a lead seal. It was found possible to open the bag by cutting away the seal, leaving the tin strip intact. It was thus only necessary to find a method of making a new lead seal and forging the stamp of the U.S. Post Office. This was easily done. If there was a difficulty in forging the seals it was that their newness showed itself by their additional brightness. However, Mr WERRE was able to manufacture an artificial dullness by applying the lead to a bunsen burner and then painting it with a 50% solution of acetic acid. It was then heated again and painted with a 50% solution of washing soda. This produced the required effect.

Technique of Loading

In the actual loading of the bag the Section owed much to the energy and co-operation of Mr BLACKBURN, the Chief Postal Clerk of the Myrtle Street Office. The ritual was as follows:-

- (a) The impending arrival of the mail was signalled from the post of arrival to the G.P.O., together with the approximate time of arrival of the train which would carry it to Liverpool.
- (b) On the evening of the mail's arrival, the loading staff, who had been sworn in, remained at Myrtle Street after the regular staff had left.
- (c) The bags would be carried from the storeroom to the loading room, where they were opened by BLACKBURN, and loading would take place. Loaders would wear rubber gloves in order to avoid the recurrence of finger prints on envelopes purporting to come from widely separated places.
- (d) The doctored bags would then be resealed and replaced among the mail awaiting examination.
- (e) The next morning SCAMER the Censor in charge would order the release of the consignment after only a "test" examination. Included in the bags to be examined would be one which had already been doctored. In the normal course of examination the material inserted the night before would be discovered, and reported by routine channels for inclusion in the Censorship summary. This would provide added cover, by giving apparent proof of the genuineness of the material.

Difficulties of Loading

It was essential to avoid suspicion. Great care had therefore to be taken that material was always placed in the bag appropriate to the address.

Mail cleared for Germany was sorted in bags labelled for eight key cities, which acted as clearing houses for the mail to surrounding districts. An attempt was made to build up a list of towns served by each clearing house. This was made even more laborious by the fact that the three U.S. Postal Centres, (New York, Chicago and Philadelphia) all used different systems. In the event, it was found quicker to examine the contents of each bag and then match the enclosures with the original contents.

First Loading

All preparations were made and the Section in London were eagerly awaiting the O.K. message from OGILVY in New York. After some delay a message was received from OGILVY stating that he had not thought it advisable to post the material he had taken with him to New York, but that he saw no objection to loading operations taking place in Liverpool.

Therefore on receipt of information that a suitable mail was expected Major MONTAGU, Mr MACHINIST and Lieut. SAMUEL proceeded to Liverpool to supervise the first operation. At 6.30 the party made their way through thick snow to the Myrtle Street Garage. There they found Mr SOANES and Mr BLACKBURN together with the three girls already recruited. The operation took longer than was expected owing to a large proportion of the bags opened containing no envelopes but being restricted to newspapers. Seven workers had to introduce 2,000 envelopes into small bundles. Each bundle was tied with string and bore the name of the city to which it was consigned. It was not thought secure to introduce more than three or four doctored envelopes in each bundle nor to doctor more than 20 bundles per bag. The necessity of preserving cover made it necessary to dirty each envelope before insertion, and this, coupled with the fact that the workers were wearing rubber gloves, made the process long and laborious. The work took two nights, and at about 2 a.m. on the second night a tired and dirty group toasted the completion of the first operation with a bottle of champagne thoughtfully provided by Major MONTAGU.

Discovery of the leaflets by the Censors

As previously agreed one doctored bag was passed through the Censorship in the normal way. Six out of a possible ten leaflets were discovered and created considerable sensation among the examiners, who immediately passed them to Mr SCAMPS in all good faith. SCAMPS delayed his report until the mail reached the German border, when he passed it on for inclusion in the Censorship Summary.

Second Loading

Owing to the inexplicable cessation of the coffee samples the second insertion took the form of a letter from a fictitious New York literary agent, OSCAR FINEH. OSCAR FINEH included an article, apparently torn out of the Literary Digest, attacking the health of the German people under Hitlerism, and offered to pay German doctors for an article refuting this allegation. It was intended in this way to bring the original article to the notice of the German doctors to whom the letters were addressed. These letters were to be included in the First Class mail, which precluded the use of pre-cancelled stamps. However, by that time 2008 unused U.S. stamps were available. The origin of the letters was supposed to be New York, and a specimen New York postmark was taken from a recent New York - Germany mail, photographed and redrawn for reproduction by Mr WEBER and his staff. It was then rushed to London, where an expert engraver produced a brass die within 48 hours. Before actual postmarking took place, experiments were carried out on the type of ink to use. Various inks show different degrees and tints of fluorescence when subjected to ultra-violet light. Ink therefore had to be discovered which was indistinguishable from the original. An added difficulty was the fact that the U.S. Post Office used mechanical franking machines so that the application of the ink was exceptionally uniform. Mr WEBER and MASCHWITZ attempted to reproduce the frankings by hand. Owing to the above difficulties only 200 envelopes were considered precise enough to pass muster. These

were duly loaded into the first class mail by Mr MOORE, a taciturn enthusiast and head of the distribution section at the Edge Lane Censorship Branch. Some of the envelopes were opened and fixed with censorship labels, while one bag was passed through for routine inspection in order that they could be discovered, and reported, as in the first loading.

Third Loading

It was now decided that, after these two experimental loadings, the next operation would take place on a larger scale. It was planned to insert 2,300 envelopes containing four different types of propaganda into the first class mail and 4,050 pieces into the A.O. mail. All the preparations were ready and a simple stamping set had been constructed which could reproduce an adequate stamp similar to that of the American mechanical franker at the rate of several hundred an hour. Seven brass dies of the appropriate post marks were manufactured.

Anticlimax

Elaborate plans had been made for loading the 6,350 pieces and HASKWITE and SAGHEL were in Liverpool when, on the very night that the operation was to take place, OGILVY returned from New York. In view of the report he made it was decided to abandon the scheme and this highly disappointing order was reluctantly obeyed by the enthusiastic helpers in Liverpool.

OGILVY's Report

On February 24th OGILVY wrote a nine page report on the reasons for taking his decisions:-

- (a) not to post the samples he had taken with him to the U.S.
- (b) to advise the abandonment of the scheme in toto
- (c) not to making his projected trip to Latin America.

His reason for (a) was that he was convinced by the S.I.S. representative in New York that the Americans would rapidly discover that the Pan American German League was non-existent and would connect OGILBY with the public appearance of the leaflets. His reason for (b) was that 1940 was the year of the Presidential election and that, were the leaflets discovered to be of British origin, the incident would be magnified by the Republicans to such an extent that, in the hysterical state common to Americans at Election time, it might sway the Election against ROOSEVELT. This consideration he considered to outweigh any advantage that might be gained by the circulation of a few thousand propaganda leaflets in Germany. His reason for (c) was that he had already found contrary to what he had been told, that S.I.S. possessed an organization in New York and that he was assured that they also possessed similar organizations in South America. It would therefore be redundant for him to travel to South America in order to set up amateur agencies when professionals were already available to do the required work on behalf of D. Section.

The suggestion was made in May 1940 that the B.B.C. should broadcast an invitation to members of the German Army and Navy to cease fighting and become prisoners-of-war, either by bringing their ships to a certain point or by approaching the French lines, and observing certain formalities. It was expected that this would have a bad effect of German morale.

Towards the middle of 1940 the introduction of propaganda material into Germany became increasingly difficult, but arrangements were made with a sub-agent to post some 2,000 letters a month at various places inside the country.

IN HOLLAND

The organisation of this section had been established by the beginning of 1940, and deliveries of propaganda letters and leaflets began early in January. A new outlet for propaganda in north German ports was set up but its activities were curtailed by police observation. During March, however, deliveries of letters and leaflets continued and a new outlet for leaflets at the rate of 1,000 a week was established. The average number of stamped addressed letters taken over to Holland during March included 3,000 a week, plus 200 Catholic pamphlets which were transcribed in Holland and brought the weekly total to roughly 10,000.

IN ITALY

The new sub-section appointed in May 1940 despatched 2,000 letters, 35,000 stickers and 48 rubber stamps for surcharging anti-British posters, and plans were afoot for delivering suitcases of materials for storage in Florence.

IN SPAIN

In May 1940 a considerable number of leaflets were distributed, and in June the Falange were reported to be considerably disturbed by propaganda activities in Spain. A second representative was sent to