

Sefton Delmer

Chapter Seventeen

AT TEN minutes past eight on the evening of July the 20th, 1944, the DNB Hell-schreiber in the MB newsroom began clicking out with tantalising deliberation the first news of what, for all of us, was to become the greatest news story of the war.

The ribbon of tape from the Hell-schreiber ran straight through to the typewriter of blonde and buxom Mimi Molnar, a German-speaking Czech girl, whose duty it was to read the spidery tracings of the Hell-schreiber, and type them straight into her machine. Ordinarily Mimi Molnar merely took the DNB stuff down without taking it in. Typing DNB bored her. She wanted to write herself, not type. But what she was typing now made her sit up with excitement.

" Dr. Gutmann," she called, "please come over here and look at this. It looks important." Hans Gutmann got up from his desk, walked over to the Hell machine and read the copy over her shoulder, as she was typing it. His eyes goggled.

" Give me that," he roared as he tore the page out of her machine and rushed away to call first Karl Robson, who was on duty, and then me. Dick Crossman who was writing the directives for the `white' psychological warfare attack at SHAEF had come down to visit me at R.A.G. and talk over plans. We were at dinner savouring the penultimate bottle of a most perfect Graacher Himmelreich 1934 when Gutmann got through to me. "It has happened," Hans exulted over the telephone.

" What has?" I asked irritably. " The Army has risen against the Party. They have tried to murder Hitler." For a moment I thought it was a legpull, that Frank Lynder or the Corporal had been trying to play one of their silly tricks on poor old Hans.

For a revolt of the army against Hitler and the Party would be the consummation of all we had been working for. Enmity between the army and the Nazi Party-which the army had itself created, financed and fostered as its political instrument-was

what we had been trying to stimulate, exploit, and aggravate ever since Corporal Sanders and I had first launched Gustav Siegfried Eins three and a half years before. We had been constantly reporting and rumouring a growing cleavage between the generals and the Fuhrer with all the means at our disposal. Only recently I had learned of the infuriated reaction of the Party authorities to a circular letter posted for us by our Polish friends, in which the East Prussian Gauleiter Erich Koch warned that the Fuhrer was in danger, that "certain circles that do lip service to the sacred name of Prussianism but show none of the heroic spirit of the Seven Years War ... were preparing a Putsch to remove the Fuhrer from the command of the Wehrmacht and replace him with a traitor, an oath-breaking General."

" Are you sure no one is trying a stupid hoax?" I asked Gutmann." Of course it's no hoax. Here, listen in for yourself. The story is now coming over the Deutschlandsender." And Gutmann held the receiver to his radio so that I could hear the Berlin announcement. Sure enough there it was in the cultivated fluting voice of the Deutschlandsender's news reader:

". . . a criminal attempt on the life of the Fuhrer . . . time bomb ... miraculous escape ... preserved by providence for his great task ... small group of irresponsible reactionaries ... hue and cry ... Fuhrer himself will speak over radio and disprove all rumours. . . ."

Dick Crossman and I abandoned Mrs. Maddy's venison, as if we had been stung by another of Crossman's wasps. We jumped into a car and raced over to MB. Karl Robson had already put out the first flash announcements. Child, Karl, Gutmann, Virchow and I, with Crossman sitting in as a welcome adviser, now quickly decided what we would say.

After ten minutes of discussion I laid down that our main line would be that this was a `Peace Putsch'; that high staff officers of all three services were behind it because they knew the war was lost and wanted to save Germany; that they had issued a proclamation to the German people and the Wehrmacht announcing that Hitler had been deposed and a new government formed which was to begin immediate peace negotiations; and that the `Peace Putsch' had not been put down despite what the government would now be saying. The fight was still on.

" We must make it clear," I said, "that this conspiracy had very important leaders and that it was widespread. It had accomplices everywhere, even in the Fuhrerhauptquartier itself. We must paint a picture of confusion. Some army units are following the orders of the 'peace-generals' by disarming and imprisoning SS guards and Gestapo, and by seizing munition dumps. Elsewhere Nazi officers have the upperhand. And don't forget-we must implicate as many officers as we can, without losing credibility."

As the story grew and more details came through on the

Hell-schreiber and the Goebbels radio, Dick Crossman felt that our ministerial masters should be informed. He hoped they might be induced to take cognizance of the rebellion and authorise some statement to encourage the generals in their hopes. But in any case they should be informed what had happened. So he telephoned Bruce Lockhart.

Poor Bruce Lockhart was in bed with a painful attack of shingles. He was not at all anxious to call up the Ministers. But Dick persuaded him. It was after midnight when Bruce Lockhart rang back.

" It was as I feared," he said, "And I have a message for you, Dick, from Brendan Bracken who is dining with the P.M. Bracken says, he is amazed that you should have fallen for this all too obvious Goebbels canard, and will you please never disturb him with such nonsense again. Please tell the B.B.C. to refrain from saying anything that could suggest we accept the story that there had been a revolt by the generals."

Even worse was to befall our political warriors of the official voice of Britain the following morning. Any hopes they might have cherished of splitting the Germans and inciting the generals to further rebellion were crushed. For Grossman and * The Minister of Information. Garleton Greene were not only stopped from saying anything to encourage the rebels, they were specifically ordered to announce that His Majesty's Government was not prepared to absolve the army from its responsibility for the war or to differentiate in any way between Germans and Germans. All were responsible. The only terms on which Germany could have peace were-as before-unconditional capitulation.

The task of dividing the Germans was therefore right back in the laps of the `black' men. And we had got down to it, uninhibited as we were by ministerial complexes about estranging the Russians by `softness' towards the Germans. All that first night and throughout the next days we were busy clothing the bare skeleton of news Goebbels had given with details of our own invention which would implement the general picture we wished to present. My memories came in useful, particularly those of what had happened on the night of the long knives on June the 30th, 1934, and in the days that then followed Hitler's purge of the Stormtroops.

By the time our story was fully launched we had involved almost as many members of the German Wehrmacht, the Foreign Office, and the administration generally in the `Peace Putsch' as have ultimately claimed to have been conspirators when the allies took over from Hitler in 1945!

One of our aims was to involve German Officers in the conspiracy whom we wanted the Gestapo and the SD to suspect of complicity. Among those whom we successfully implicated in this way was the German Naval Attache in Stockholm. He was recalled from his post and arrested-much to

the annoyance of his British opposite number who had found him useful! When the German Officer subsequently returned to Stockholm, he complained bitterly of the shabby trick the Soldatensender had played on him.

What we did not however know or even suspect at this time was that in our own immediate target area of the Western Command the revolt had been carried far further than anywhere else.

In Paris the Gestapo and SS men were, in fact, arrested and disarmed by the army-and kept that way for a night. I would like to think that our reports on what was happening in the rest of Germany and on the East Front had something to do with this. It is certainly true that the rebels in Paris believed the Putsch was a success long after the other plotters had discovered it was not.

To me, the most astonishing and gratifying aspect of the generals' coup was the way Hitler's Third Reich appeared to be doing its best to live up to the picture we had been presenting of it, a picture which I myself had always regarded as a propaganda caricature. But here were genuine German generals rising in rebellion against Hitler just as though 'Der Chef' of Gustav Siegfried Eins were directing them. And the Gestapo and the SD had been shown up as the fumlbers we had always said they were. It was incredible.

Even today I am still baffled by the failure of the Gestapo to discover the plot and nip it in the bud. For, far removed from the scene of the drama as I was at MB, I could have warned Himmler what Count Stauffenberg was up to. I knew that Stauffenberg was in a plot against Hitler at least two months before he pushed his briefcase, with the time-bomb in it, under Hitler's conference table. For German officer prisoners gossiping together under the microphones of their country house prison camp in England had mentioned Stauffenberg as belonging to a group which intended to get rid of the Fuhrer. If the officers gossiped like this in England it seemed to me they must also have gossiped in Germany. But the Gestapo's big ears did not hear them. Or, if they did, they did not understand what they heard. Which was as bad, if not worse.

With all this to encourage us, the Soldatensender now demanded that an end be put to the war in order to save Germany. And in our self-appointed capacity as spokesmen of the 'decent fighting frontline soldier' we turned the heat on Hitler himself, whom hitherto we had never attacked directly and in person. In a talk by Rene Halkett the day after the abortive assassination attempt we ridiculed the allegation that the time-bomb was of British manufacture and that the whole attempt was a British plot.

Rene Halkett (reading his script, a monacle jammed into his left eye) : "The British and the Americans and the Russians are the last people to want to rid us of the Fuhrer. On the contrary. The enemy can wish for nothing better than to have us led by a man

who has never learned the soldier's trade, who relies on mystic inspiration, who, in his conceit and ignorance interferes in everything and everywhere. Why a fellow like that is for the allies-an ally!"

We defended the Officers' Corps, that sacrosanct Prussian caste, against the attack which the Nazi Labour leader Dr. Robert Ley had made on it in his sycophantic ecstasy over the tyrant's preservation. The Corporal, speaking in his best `Der Chef' style, tore into Ley to avenge the German `Peace Generals'.

" Herr Robert Ley is of the opinion," he drawled haughtily through his hawklike nose, "that German officers are a lot of ungrateful, blueblooded pigdogs to whom the Fuhrer gave back their uniforms only to have them come along and shove a bomb under his desk. High time, says Ley, that the National Socialist Revolution does the job it should have done earlier and exterminates the entire lot of them. Well, let us take a look at the fellow who says all this and the men he is saying it about."

After which introduction the Corporal proceeded to lambast Ley as a callous war profiteer who had grown rich and fat while children starved, who owned a whole string of town and country houses (addresses given) into none of which he had allowed so much as one bomb refugee.

" And men like Colonel Count Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg," he mouthed the title with just the right amount of unctuous Offiziers-korps deference for the nobility, "whom Ley calls a cowardly idiot-after he is dead-such men have been out at the front fighting the war which has made this Ley a multimillionaire."

Followed praise of Stauffenberg as a staff officer plus a brief history of his career. The Corporal stressed that Stauffenberg's promotion to the High Command of the Army had given him insight into `what was really going on', and that it was this which prompted him to take the action he had taken.

" If anyone is to be called ungrateful it is not such brave men as Stauffenberg, who had the courage to speak out and act for the good of the fatherland, but the lickspittle lackeys in the Fuhrer-headquarters who have been hushing up the facts in an artificial fog of sycophantic optimism." It was a fine virile talk put over with force and emotion. Many more like it followed. And each contained not just a rodomontade of invective and denunciation, but plenty of" inside information and `news' to widen the cleavage and fced the new `peace movement'.

Not many weeks had gone by after the Generals' Putsch when I received even more dramatic confirmation that the Gestapo and SD were not up to their jobs. They had not even been able to close the stable door after the bomb had burst. As a new recruit for my team I was being offered one of the men who had taken part in the coup. He had managed to escape from Germany to

Spain and had now come to England anxious to continue from here the fight in which he and his friends had failed in Germany.

Bruce Lockhart rang me on the green painted secret telephone in my office.

" Are you with me?" came his husky, eternally anxious voice when we had `scrambled'. "C has just been through to me," he said, using the cypher by which the chief of the Secret Intelligence Service is known.* "He wants to know whether you would be interested in having one of the Twentieth of July fellows on your team. The man has just arrived in Britain. Might be able to give you some useful background. You're not to use him as a. voice though."

" Sounds fine to me, Bruce," I said, "But I would like to take a look at him before I commit myself."" Of course, of course. I'll fix it. When can you go?"

* In Britain the identity of the Head of the Secret Intelligence Service is kept a strict secret. Never is he referred to by his name, but only by the cypher C. And even that cypher until recently was only known to a few. Not for him the personal publicity which Allen W. Dulles, or J. Edgar Hoover get in the United States or General Reinhard Gehlen in present-day Germany. Or for that matter such as I accorded to the late Admiral Canaris in Germany during the war-much to the amusement and satisfaction, as he himself once told me, of C.

And that is how I first came to meet Dr. Otto John, that tragic victim of post-war Germany's vendetta against the `traitors and collaborators' and of Whitehall's eternal readiness to sacrifice the friends of Britain. I found John in one of the innumerable London school buildings that had been turned over to the government for the duration of the war.

My own school, St. Paul's, had been serving my fellow Old Pauline Field Marshal Montgomery as his planning head quarters for the invasion. The school which I was visiting now had been turned into an interrogation and detention centre for incoming aliens.

Dr. Otto John was occupying, all by himself, what must before the war have been one of the assistant masters' private studies. It was a dark and gloomy room. But even in its darkness one thing shone out-the peroxide brightness and blondness of Otto John's hair.

" Good God," I thought, "I do hope he is not another one of those!" For C had already supplied me with a German diplomat who wore long silk stockings. I did not wish to complicate the life of my little community at MB by adding to it yet another member

of exotic tastes. My first words, therefore, when we had been introduced and left alone to talk, formed a highly personal Beaverbrook-type question.

" Do you peroxide your hair regularly, Herr Doktor? It is a becoming colour."

Otto John laughed. I was relieved to note that he laughed freely and easily.

" I dyed my hair and eyebrows black while I was hiding from the Gestapo in Spain," he said. "Now I have used a little artificial aid to start my hair on the road back to its normal fairness. I did not relish looking like a Zebra while the black dye grows out."

As we talked I looked him over. It was clear that he was still suffering from the mental strain of his narrow escape. His blue eyes were fixed on mine with an unnecessarily concentrated stare. Beneath his rather short and stubby nose he was drawing down his upper lip as though to prevent it from twitching. But when he spoke he was clear and articulate.

The first thing I wanted to hear from John was how he had got away. It seemed almost too good to be true, I told him, that one of the most important plotters of the conspiracy should have escaped the Gestapo so easily. After all he had been moving around quite openly among men who, because of their known attitude to the Third Reich, had been immediately arrested when the great round-up began after the Putsch. His own brother had been arrested-and condemned to death. How was it possible for Otto John to have escaped abroad? At MB we had assumed that flights to foreign destinations would have been automatically stopped just as all flights out of Britain had been stopped in the weeks that preceded D-Day. It seemed a routine precaution for a Security Service to take.

" No," said Otto John, "you were wrong in assuming that. The Lufthansa flight to Spain on the morning of July the 24th was allowed to leave as usual. The Gestapo bosses are not as imaginative as all that. For them it was good enough that only passengers with exit visas could leave. I had my permanent exit visa as a Lufthansa official who had to travel frequently to Madrid on Lufthansa business. I presented it at Tempelhof Airfield and they let me through."

" Did you say you only left Berlin on the 24th?" It seemed unbelievable. But even more incredible-if one had any sort of respect for the efficiency of the Gestapo-was that John, in the time before he left, as he now told me, moved openly around Berlin calling on a number of his fellow plotters. He telephoned to Stauffenberg's secretary in Stettin to inquire after Stauffenberg-`he is travelling' was her answer-and he called at the homes of two other conspirators to find one of them arrested while the second, the Foreign Office man and former Oxford Rhodes Scholar Trott zu Solz (also arrested later and executed) urged him "Get out, Otto. You're the only one of us who can get

abroad. Hurry!"

He made it all right. The Lufthansa plane flew straight through to Barcelona and thence on to Madrid. Once in Madrid John immediately got in touch with the British.

Under orders from his associates in the opposition group he had been secretly meeting members of the British and American Intelligence ever since 1942, putting them in the picture concerning the plans and expectations of the conspirators, and giving them also any bits of information that came his way. For Otto John and his friends believed that the only way in which Germany could be saved physically and morally from the evil that Hitler embodied was for them to fight him in every possible way.

As soon as the British in Madrid learned of the danger John was in, they smuggled him out of Spain into Portugal. Even in Lisbon the Gestapo and SD were still after him. But our people got him safely aboard a British aircraft and brought him to England-only to shut him up in London in this not very congenial interrogation and detention centre.

I had seen enough of Otto John, during our talk, and heard enough from him of his underground work and friends, to make up my mind that I certainly wanted to have him in my team, if he would join it. He knew the people around Hitler and a good many others, too. He would be invaluable in bringing us up-to-date and filling in those bits of detail and local colour essential to our operations. Even if he did not turn out to be a writer, he would still be immensely useful. So I now went into the routine which, with only slight variations, I used with all prospective recruits once I knew I wanted them.

" I am in charge of a unit," I said, "about which I can only tell you very little at this stage. But I will tell you this-we are waging against Hitler a kind of total war of wits. Anything goes, so long as it serves to bring nearer the end of the war and Hitler's defeat. If you are at all squeamish about what you may be called upon to do against your own countrymen you must say so now. I shall understand it. In that case, however, you will be no good to us and no doubt some other job will be found for you. But if you feel like joining me, I must warn you that in my unit we are up to all the dirty tricks we can devise. No holds are barred. The dirtier the better. Lies, treachery, everything. Your experience in Germany, your acquaintance with leading Germans-which you would of course have to place unreservedly at our disposal-would I think make you very useful. What do you say?"

I had deliberately overstated the rascality of our operations. I did not want John to develop pangs of conscience once he had joined the unit. John looked me in the eyes for a moment.

" Mr. Delmer," he said, "My friends have given their lives in the attempt to rid Germany of Hitler. They believed that we

Germans must ourselves liberate the world from this Satan. I understand your unit consists largely of Germans . . ." I nodded in confirmation, ". . . although it is of course under your direction. I shall be happy to join my fellow countrymen in their work. Anything that you ask me to do, whatever it may be, I shall consider a continuation of the war my friends and I have been waging against Hitler. May I ask you to do the same?"

"Of course. I will most certainly do that Dr. John. I must say that you will find that your attitude coincides exactly with that of the other German members of my team." We shook hands. "But now there is the little matter of your name," I said. "I usually give my associates English names in place of their German ones you know. But as `John' sounds so English I think I'll give you a German name for a change! How would you like to be called Oskar Jiirgens?"

Otto John stood up, made a little mock bow and clicked his heels. "Oskar Jurgens," he said, introducing himself in German style, and then roared with laughter.

When he was brought down to me in the country a couple of days later, I immediately made him a member of my `household brigade' at R.A.G. and I did not regret it.

Quite apart from the many excellent suggestions with which `Oskar Jurgens' came up at our mealtime conferences in R.A.G. the psychological impact of his presence among us was immensely stimulating. For he, in his person, provided living evidence that, suppressed and submerged, another Germany still survived which it was well worth trying to excavate from under the debris. A Germany which recognised its collective responsibility for Hitler and the need to expiate the infamies committed under the Fuhrer.

For me, in particular, this was an encouraging discovery. I had, of course, long been aware of the peace feelers put out from time to time by German diplomats and others who claimed to be speaking and acting on behalf of Germany's `Inner Opposition'. But while I considered that it was well worth fostering this opposition, particularly where army leaders were involved, I refused to accept it as a sincere moral force. I was convinced that these overtures sprang not from a genuine repudiation of Hitler's war of conquest, but from an opportunist desire to insure against its possible failure. Moreover I had been impressed with the all too transparent strategic intentions behind many of the peace feelers. They were simply aimed at splitting the alliance. One group of emissaries from the so-called `Resistance' wanted to make a deal with the AngloAmerican West, while the German Armies continued the fight against the Russians with Anglo-American backing. The other wanted to make peace with the Russians and renew the old Reichswehr alliance with the Red Army. So I approved the lipping brush-off our Stockholm embassy's cultural attache Roger Hinks had been giving German opposition approaches with his immortal, "If you'll feel

my peace, gentlemen, I'll feel yours."

In Otto John, however, I was getting to know a very different type of German Resistance leader. From him I was hearing, too, about such fellow plotters of his as Dietrich and Claus Bonhofer whom I had, of course, heard of long before but who, it now became clear to me, were not just trying to lay off a bad bet. They were inspired to action by a deep Christian conviction of the need to expiate their nation's crimes. I was now convinced of their complete sincerity even though they had accepted as fellow conspirators men whom I still dismissed as mere opportunists.

Otto John told me how he had joined the opposition to Hitler through his friend Claus Bonhofer under whom he was working in the legal department of the Lufthansa Airways concern. John's blond hair, blue eyes, and pink cheeks, with their air of super-Nordic health and zest, coupled with his Lufthansa job had given him the entree to the pilots' mess of the Fuhrer's personal Courier and Transport squadron. From these pilots he had learned the secret of Hitler's impending march into Prague in 1939 and had been able to warn Admiral Canaris, who was the head of Germany's `Abwehr' espionage and used his position to provide cover for more active plotters of the resistance inside his organisation. That had been his first intelligence coup for the `inner opposition'. Most productive of all the information which John gave me was his account of Himmler's flirtation with the Resistance. As a result I laid on an operation which I called `Himmler for President'. This was a rumour campaign to suggest that the ambitious Himmler was out to double-cross his wounded Fuhrer, remove him from power, and take his place himself. The story which John had told me made me feel that such a campaign might not be too far from the truth.

In August 1943, John said, Himmler had received Professor Johannes Popitz, a Conservative politician, who just after Hitler took power, had served as a minister in Goring's Prussian cabinet but was now one of the leaders of the `Inner Opposition'. Popitz had expounded to Himmler the hopelessness of Germany's position, the urgent need of peace with the West, and he had given it as his considered opinion that a separate peace with the West was possible, if Hitler was removed and Himmler ruled in his stead. The Western powers, Popitz had argued, were scared of letting the Russians get too strong. They would be only too pleased to shore up Germany as a bulwark against Bolshevism providing the Germans rid themselves of their unfortunate Fiihrer and the unspeakable Ribbentrop. What was needed in Hitler's place was a man who was strong, but humane and reasonable.

Himmler was impressed. He was even more impressed when he received a similar lecture from another Nazi turned Resistance leader. This was Himmler's personal friend, the lawyer Dr. Carl Langbehn. And he authorised Langbehn to travel to Switzerland

to find out from his contacts there how the Western allies would react to the suggestion of a separate peace with a Himmler Germany. So Langbehn duly travelled to Switzerland on the same mission with which Himmler in the last weeks of the war was to entrust the Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte.

Langbehn's mission, however, had leaked out, and to save himself from the wrath of Hitler, Himmler had him arrested shortly after his return to Germany in September 1943, I was, of course, sorely tempted to put out the story just as John had told it to me with only a few embellishments added to bring it up-to-date. But I refrained. For I had no desire to excite the suspicion of Stalin with stories of German proposals of a separate peace with the West. So instead, I laid on the 'Himmler for President' campaign. It is not one on which I look back with pride and satisfaction. For in at least one of its features it was far too light-hearted and flippant and made a silly prank out of something that should have been a serious subversive operation.

We started off well enough however with reports of preparations by the SS to seize munition stores belonging to the army as well as other strategic points in the Reich. We quoted speeches and articles about Heinrich Himmler which we said were part of a new propaganda drive to popularise and glamourise the Reichsführer SS as the 'people's friend'. We revealed alleged instructions to press photographers issued in connection with the 'popularisation campaign'.

" The personal photo-reporter attached to the Reichsführer SS, SS Sturmbannführer Paul Kurbjun, after careful study of the physiognomy of Heinrich Himmler, has come to the conclusion that the left side of the Reichsführer's face has a kindlier expression while his right profile gives a more masculine and martial impression. SS Sturmbannführer Kurbjun has accordingly decreed that for internal service use in the SS pictures are to be issued showing predominantly the right side of the Reichsführer's face while the left side is to be preferred for shots showing the Reichsführer SS in friendly conversation with folk-comrades or with children."

Next we reported that Field Marshal von Rundstedt had complained at the way the SS Hauptamt (Headquarters office) was issuing directives to the National Socialist leadership officers, the Nazi equivalent of the Communist Political Commissars, at divisional level without going through the normal channels of the Army High Command. Rundstedt feared, we said, that the next move would be for Himmler to issue strategic and tactical orders direct to army units. In yet other items we revealed the grave concern of the Reichsführer SS concerning the wounded Führer's failing health, both physical and mental, and his preparations to replace him should the need arise. We reported too the counter-intrigues of Bormann and SS Obergruppenführer Müller. All this was fine. It presented an entirely credible picture of a dying despotism in its

last agonies of disintegration. Alas, in my eagerness to support this picture with documentary `evidence' I went much too farwell beyond the bounds of what was plausible.

As a first document I got Armin Hull to produce for us an exact replica of the printed forms of the `Oath of Loyalty to the Fuhrer' sworn by German soldiers on joining the Wehrmacht. We had found a number of copies of this print among the documents captured at German staff headquarters in France and the counterfeiting presented no difficulty. But I made one change. For the name of Adolf Hitler I substituted that of Heinrich Himmler.

These forms with a new version of the Wehrmacht oath we then said had been prepared by Himmler in readiness for his assumption of power. In addition to having copies of it left around by underground agents in places frequented by Wehrmacht personnel we published a photograph of the document in ,Nachrichten fur die Truppe with a suitable elucidation by our omniscient military commentator Oblt. J. von O. Even this document I am willing to accept today as not too far-fetched.

But the next document I asked Hull to produce for me was utterly beyond the bounds of possibility, and I ought never to have ordered it. This was a set of German postage stamps showing, instead of the head of Hitler, that of Himmler. From the counterfeiting point of view it was a masterpiece. The Himmler head was engraved in exactly the same style as the head of Hitler on the ordinary German postage stamps. Which was not at all surprising. For Hull had been producing scores of thousands of Hitler postage stamps over the past three years. We used them for our posting jobs in the Reich because our agents quite understandably felt it beneath their dignity to subsidise the German war effort with even the price of a postage stamp.

Unlike the stamp itself, however, the story that went with it was entirely unconvincing. Philatelist Himmler, it said, eager in his vanity to taste in advance the pleasures of Fuhrerdom, had secretly ordered these stamps to be made in readiness for the day of his accession. He loved looking at them. But owing to the mistake of a subordinate official a few sheets had been prematurely issued to the Post Office and the public and despite the frantic efforts of trusted Gestapo and SD agents to hunt them down and retrieve them, quite a few were still in circulation.

My friends of the underground went into operation with considerable enthusiasm for this silly Delmer stunt and posted letters and newspapers bearing the Himmler stamp in letterboxes all over Germany. S.O.E. agents delivered German newspapers with wrappers bearing the stamps with counterfeited cancellation marks to subscribers in Sweden and Switzerland who we knew were regular recipients of German

newspapers. But no one noticed the Himmler stamps. Not even when in my gloom at the lack of an echo to the operation I asked that the newspaper wrappers with the Himmler stamps should be delivered to known philatelists. The trouble was that Hull's counterfeit was far too excellent, the Himmler stamp much too similar to the Hitler stamp, and the public-including the philatelists-far too unobservant. Finally, in sheer despair, my friends in S.O.E. sold some wrappers to stamp dealers in Stockholm and Zurich, and that way, the story of the Heinrich Himmler stamp did at last percolate into the neutral press. But as an operation that stamp campaign had most sadly and badly misfired.

Not, however, for the stamp dealers. A set of these Himmler stamps commands a high price in philatelic auction rooms today. I wish I had some.

I had, however, another and more effective shot in my locker for the discomfiture of the 'humane and kindly people's Friend' Herr Heinrich Himmler. This was a secret transmitter operated on short waves, ostensibly from somewhere behind the Eastern front, by an anti-Hitler group of the Waff'en SS. It fitted in neatly enough with our campaign of the Himmler double-cross.

Yes, in these last ten months of the war, even the loyal and devoted Waffhen SS had to be allocated its special Resistance Cell and Resistance broadcast in the imaginary German world of MB. The beauty of it was that the man who acted as speaker of 'Hagedorn'-that was how the station announced itself-was a genuine officer deserter of the Waffen SS. He spoke the genuine SS jargon and claimed to be the genuine emissary of a genuine Resistance group of the WafFen SS. In fact, he was so genuine, that I disliked and distrusted him from the first moment one of C's officers presented him to me. Rightly so, as it was to turn out after the war.

'Dr. Nansen'-his real name was Zech-Nenntwich-was a bright-eyed, bouncy, rosy cheeked young cavalry man who even in Austin Reed's grey flannel slacks looked as if he were wearing riding breeches. His SS Resistance group he claimed had its nucleus in the SS cavalry of which he himself had been an Obersturmfuhrer. Its secret leader, he said, was none other than the SS Cavalry Commander, Brigadier Hermann Fegelein, brother-in-law of Hitler's mistress Eva Braun and representative of the Waffen SS at the Fuhrer headquarters. Nansen himself as adjutant to Fegelein had been the second in command of the Resistance group. "Our men," he boasted to me, "will recognise my voice and obey my orders."

For my purposes it did not matter over much whether Nansen's claims were false or true, so long as he made his clandestine SS station sound convincing and the message his broadcasts conveyed worthwhile. I think he succeeded in both. For his main theme was the favourite saga of all true German soldier patriots-"We have been betrayed. We must rid ourselves of

those who have betrayed us . . ."

The patriotic ideals of the fighting heroes of the SS, Nansen declaimed, had been betrayed by the unworthy Fuhrer who had clothed his worst hangmen, sadists, and concentration camp gaolers in the 'Waffenrock' (uniform) of the noblest elite of German youth, thereby soiling their good name throughout the world. The 'Hagedorn' group was going to wipe out this stain while there was still time. And, true to our old Gustav Siegfried recipe, we gave him enough inside news to accompany these tirades to make Herr Himmler highly suspect and ensure the unfortunate Fegelein's disgrace. Fegelein did indeed fall under the Fuhrer's displeasure-allegedly for his cowardice-and was shot. Himmler was ultimately deprived by Hitler of all his offices. I do not, of course, claim this was our doing though we may have helped to create the right atmosphere. But although he was reasonably effective as a broadcaster I refused to treat our SS recruit as an ordinary member of the MB team. I did not allow him inside the compound. Instead I hived him off with an officer who had to watch over him in a special abode of his own. This was Paris House, a 'nouveau Tudor' mansion which one of the Dukes of Bedford had bought, beams, bricks, plaster and all, at a Paris exhibition of the Seventies, and re-erected in Woburn Park. Here, Child, Stevens, and I-and occasionally the Corporal and Max Braun-called on Nansen to discuss with him points of SS intelligence we wanted to elucidate. Most useful he was, too. And in between answering our questions Nansen recounted something of his own fantastic story.

" I worked with the Polish Underground," Nansen told me in his high-pitched tenor voice. "I procured Red Army guns for the guerrilla army of General Bor Komarovski and ammunition too to go with them."

" But why Soviet guns, Nansen ?" I asked, suspicious that he was romancing.

" Because the SS had large dumps of captured Soviet guns and munitions in Poland and I could get hold of the stuff without it being missed."

Yes, I thought, that sounded likely enough.

" I also helped the Poles free Polish Resistance men from an SS prison," Nansen went on. "Other Poles I smuggled to Sweden by pretending they were agents of the SD. Later when I was arrested and imprisoned by the SD myself, my SS group got me out and the Poles, in their turn, smuggled me to Sweden by their own special escape route. That is why I am here. For in Stockholm the Poles introduced me to your intelligence and they flew me to Britain."

I checked his story with my Polish friends. It was perfectly true. He had sold them Soviet guns and ammunition. He had helped their men escape and they had passed him over to Sweden. But I still did not feel like bringing him to MB. For one thing, I did not

know what effect contact with an SS man, even an allegedly repentant SS man, would have on some of my more emotional Jewish collaborators.

But I did take pity on Nansen sufficiently to give him a companion. I arranged for him to be joined at Paris House by Wolfgang von Putlitz, a German diplomat friend of mine from my Berlin days.* `Mr. Potts' as we called him was not much use to me at MB. He had been out of touch with Germany too long. For it was in the earliest days of the war that the SD had got wise to him. Putlitz, who had been passing information and documents to the British over a number of years, had been forced to flee helter-skelter from his post at the German embassy in the Hague and take refuge in Britain. C had passed him on to me. At MB he contributed the occasional item to Max Braun's daily list of suggestions for the Soldatensender. The rest of the time he lounged elegantly around the compound, cheering up the secretaries with the happy smile which at Berlin cocktail parties in the golden twenties had earned him that highest of Berlin's social accolades: `Er hat ein gutes Auftreten!' (He has a good presence.)

So to put his charm to better use I now sent Putlitz along to cheer up our SS man. Before he went I made him promise me not to talk about MB to Nansen, and not about Nansen to MB. That was a waste of breath for both of us. For Putlitz gossiped to Nansen about everyone and everything he knew. Fortunately his knowledge was far from exhaustive. But it was enough for Nansen to try to `rehabilitate' himself, as he put it, by turning informer against the `worthless traitors and collaborators at MB', when he returned to Germany after the war.

In January 1950, Zech-Nenntwich, alias Dr. Nansen, was received by Chancellor Adenauer in a tete-a-tete audience at his Rhineside home in Rhendorf. For two hours Zech Nentwich sat with the old chancellor, so he boasted later, telling what he knew of the men who had worked with me, particularly of those who, like the Social Democrats, had become active in post-war Germany's political life and were now opposing Adenauer.

I am not really surprised that `Dr. Nansen's SS conscience' should have begun to prick him after the war. It must have been most galling for him to find his old SS comrades from the Gestapo and the SD trickling back into fat jobs with the new West German police and the multiplicity of security and espionage services that were springing up again in 1950. It is never pleasant for an opportunist to find he has backed the wrong side after all. But while he was at Paris House he collaborated most nobly and helped us, not only with his own broadcasts, but as a consultant on everything pertaining to the SS. He was invaluable for instance in the preparation of what was almost our last counterfeit-the forgery of a special series of moraleboosting propaganda sheets which Himmler was issuing to the units on the Western front. Himmler was now in overall command here and these leaflets were the idea of one of his

bright boys among the young SS political commissars. To remedy the distrust of the ordinary German soldier in the ever optimistic propaganda of his own side 'Scorpion', as he called himself, was promising to tell them the full truth however bitter.

" Send your questions to 'Scorpion FPN 00020' " he invited the comrades on each sheet. "If they are questions of particular importance which seriously concern the soldier then the 'Scorpion' will reply. He will always tell the unvarnished truth." It was a very tempting invitation and it was not Nansen's fault that our first 'Scorpion' nearly caused havoc on our own side.

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Donald Mc Lachlan had sent me several examples of the German 'Scorpion' together with the intriguing suggestion that we might be interested in contributing a 'Scorpion' produced at MB. " The splendid part is that the Germans are not delivering these 'Scorpion' leaflets to their troops by road," he wrote, "they are dropping them from the air. I can arrange for our counterfeit 'Scorpion' to be dropped to them in the same way and knowing your skill and Hull's, I see no reason why the troops should not be completely taken in."

I must explain that Donald, with a small team from MB consisting of Squadron-Leader Eliot Hodgkin ('the Squodgkin' to all at MB) and my admirably efficient P.A., Betty Golbourne, had followed SHAEF to France in order to be able to continue servicing us with intelligence, captured documents, and operational requests. Now he had gone forward and had temporarily attached himself to the staff of the U.S. 12th Army Group's intelligence chief, Brigadier General Edwin L. Sibert. The P.S. to Donald's note was most revealing: "I know you are terribly busy, but please try and do this and make a specially good job of it. I am anxious that we should impress Sibert with what we can do. He could be very useful to us.-D."

Impress Sibert we certainly did, but I rather doubt that his impression was favourable. Not that this was due to any shortcoming in our 'Scorpion'. What with the Corporal writing the text, Nansen vetting it for the correct SS style of language, and Hull doing a perfect job with type and paper, it was a useful contribution to the 'Himmler for President campaign'. For it clearly held out the possibility that Hitler should be deposed and his place taken by Himmler.

The question it answered was-"May the Fuhrer capitulate?" Our 'Scorpion' reply was-"No! If the Fuhrer shows the slightest sign of wanting to give in, then in accordance with the order of the Reichsfuhrer SS of October the 18th, 1944, the command must be taken over by the next highest Fuhrer who is willing to carry

on the fight. The Reichsfuhrer SS knew what he was doing when he issued that order."

And the leaflet made it more than clear that the situation was grave enough for any Fuhrer to capitulate.

We delivered a nice big batch of the MB Scorpions to Donald in the middle of November, and very shortly after Donald's friends in the U.S. Air Force dropped them on and around the regular readers of the genuine `Scorpion'. Donald rubbed his hands in glee and so did his U.S. accomplices. And then, as always happens when we feel too pleased with ourselves, Nemesis, the goddess of retribution, stepped into the scene.

In this instance she was disguised as a German peasant who sometimes crossed the lines and had already brought the Americans valuable information about the German units opposite them. This time, too, the peasant had some interesting information. But he also had a bunch of German papers with him, among them our `Scorpion'.

" Vurry, vurry interesting," I can hear the G.z Captain Stone commenting when the `Scorpion' was brought to him, "and vurry significant. This is a vurry serious situation. We ought to take advantage of it."

Captain Stone was not among the very restricted number of American officers whom Donald had taken into his confidence. Moreover, this was the period when it was the fashion for Intelligence Officers in the 12th Army Group sector to take the view that the German forces facing them were in a state of progressive disintegration-a view that had been deliberately fostered by subtle German deceptive moves in preparation for Hitler's `do or die' offensive in the Ardennes.

So the captain, never questioning the genuineness of the document for one moment, rushed it by special dispatch-rider to General Sibert's H.Q. And, there, on the following morning, it was the subject of a full scale intelligence inquest with political experts analysing it and General Sibert himself deciding that he would suggest to the Ops. people that they should make an attack on this front in view of the parlous state of German morale. The irony is that Sibert was making this recommendation at the very time when Hitler, impressed by the sparseness of the American forces in the Ardennes sector-only four American divisions were holding a front of eighty miles-was just about to complete the build-up for his last counter offensive.

Poor Donald sat in on this conference nervously turning his gold-braided naval commander's cap round and round and asking himself, should he speak up and tell the meeting the truth, or should he keep quiet. In the end he decided it would be tactless for him to speak before so many officers. He would get hold of Sibert privately later, and warn him. That, however, was not altogether easy for a mere naval commander and a

British one at that. When at last Donald managed to break in on the general, Sibert glowered displeasure.

" Yes, what is it ?" he barked, and there was none of his usual affability in his welcome."

It's about that `Scorpion' leaflet, sir," said Donald as nervous as a schoolboy talking to his headmaster."

Yes, vurry interesting and significant," said General Sibert, now rather more mollified. "

I am sending it on to General Bradley with a suitable recommendation." And he made as though to wave Donald away. But Donald stuck it out.

" I did not want to mention this at the conference this morning, sir," he said in that precise, academic voice of his.

I, "But that leaflet is not evidence of German morale, sir. It is one of ours, made in Britain. What we call a `black' operation, sir. The sort of thing I told you about when I first had the privilege of being presented to you."

Sibert stared at Donald in angry disbelief, and then his face relaxed into a shout of laughter.

" Well, I'll be goldarned," he said. But suddenly he realised the non-humorous aspects of Donald's revelation. He called his aide, "Get me Hansen on the 'phone," he said. "I must stop ' that German leaflet getting through to Brad." I Then he turned to McLachlan again. "

Really Commander, I think I should have been warned about this operation in advance. Supposing you had not been present at this morning's conference . . ."

Donald explained that he had informed a small and select number of U.S. officers, but that he had not felt it right to ; bother the General himself about what was really just a routine `black' operation. General Sibert accepted that, good sportsman that he is. But I do not think that we won in him a great friend and supporter for `black'. At least not for British `black'. ,

We went on and did three or four more `Scorpions', less , complicated than this first one, but each telling the truth in its most naked and unvarnished state. I wondered how long it would be before Himmler found out what was happening and stopped his bright lads dropping leaflets on the German units from the air. And sure enough by the time our third leaflet had been received the Germans had abandoned this dangerous form of news supply. They issued special orders that only `Scorpions' passed by hand were genuine. And in a new edition of the `Scorpion' they announced that `Scorpions' lying on the ground were to be ignored as `enemy poison'.

Even though Sibert had not been too pleased, this `Scorpion'

operation made a great impression on the other intelligence officers of General Bradley's 12th Army Group whom Donald had put into the know. Donald, thinking that von Virchow was the wizard behind it, told them a little about this remarkable young German officer from the true German `Resistance'. The result was that about a week after the incident, I was visited by two American Intelligence officers from General Sibert's staff.

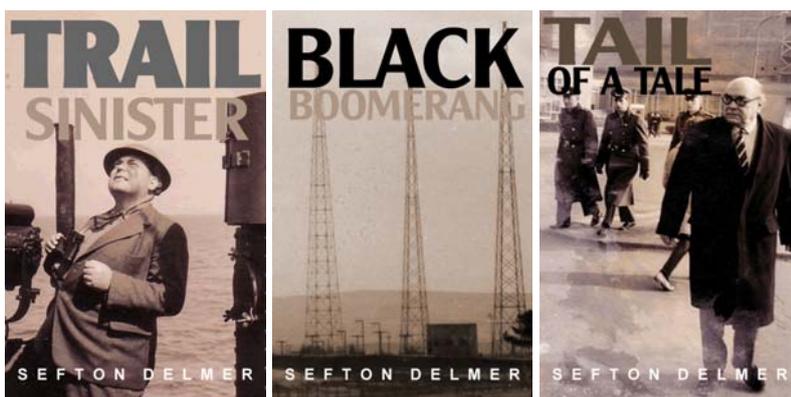
They asked me whether they could borrow Virchow from me for a few days for a most important operation. The German commander opposite one of the American units had signified his readiness to negotiate a surrender if the Americans would send him as a negotiator an American officer accompanied by a German. Apologetically I told my American visitors that I could not jeopardise anyone so deep in our secrets as Virchow. What a pity I did not offer them `Nansen'. For the German commander's readiness to negotiate surrender was, of course, just a variation on the `Venlo trick,'* designed to lull the Americans into false confidence before the Ardennes offensive.

Poor Nansen. I am being a little unkind. After all he is not such an unusual phenomenon as all that. Though I must confess he is the only one among the Germans that worked with me.

* On November 8th, 1939 the German SD man Walter Schellenberg, masquerading as an emissary of the German `Resistance' lured the British Intelligence agents, Captain Payne Best and Major R. H. Stevens to the German-Dutch frontier at Venlo and with the aid of a commando of SS troops shanghaied them across the border.

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