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XVII. ANALYSIS OF UNITED STATES COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY

If the choice and training of the eight Nazi saboteurs raises some doubts as to the complete effectiveness of the German Intelligence and Sabotage organization, their landing in the United States and the subsequent handling of the case should be anything but a source of satisfaction to American agencies charged with security and counter-intelligence. The history of the affair reveals a lack of security measures in the face of numerous warnings, a lamentable lack of cooperation between the respective agencies involved, and a failure to use to the fullest advantage the eight individuals seized as potential sources of intelligence regarding enemy activities.

When we consider the questions raised by the actual landing of the agents from submarines on the beaches at Amagansett and Ponte Vedra, it should be remembered that rumors and reports of varying credibility had been received for months concerning landings of enemy agents by submarines. Some of the information previously received, although not verified, had described probable landing maneuvers that coincided very closely with the procedure actually followed at both spots. A number of instances had occurred where the information, while not definitely substantiated, was of such a nature as to suggest the very strong possibility that agents had been landing. Yet in neither case was the approach of the submarine to the coast detected nor the landing operation prevented by patrol forces either off shore or on the beach.

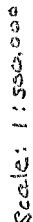
The encounter of the Coast Guard at Amagansett with the group as they landed from the rubber boat indicates that an adequate beach patrol can serve a useful purpose. The fact that he was unarmed six months after the declaration of war, and in the face of repeated indications that such landings would be attempted, is difficult to understand. Under the circumstances the Coast Guardsman in question probably acted as intelligently as was possible. If, however, he had been armed, or even if he had been able to communicate directly with the Coast Guard station without losing contact with the group, it would have been possible to capture the entire group while they were still on the beach.

Five days later another group of saboteurs landed in exactly the same manner on the coast of Florida with no interference whatsoever. By this time the entire Atlantic Coast had been put on the alert for just such landings. Orders had been issued that the patrols should be armed and keep their beat in pairs. Even the region of Ponte Vedra itself had, within the proceeding three weeks, been the scene of an alleged, although unverified, landing operation. Nevertheless, the agents were able to land and proceed inland unmolested and without the knowledge of any defensive organization until their movements were given away by a member of the other group.

Although certain features, such as the lack of arms of the beach patrol, would appear to be subject to criticism, what these two landings really demonstrate is the extreme difficulty of covering adequately the entire coastline facing the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. An increase in the number of personnel on beach patrol and an improvement in the communications system between the patrols and their headquarters might well be of some benefit. It might also be useful, if it has not already been done, to survey the coastal area with a view to determining the sections most suitable for such landings.

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Many stretches of the coast could be eliminated; for example, those where it is impossible for a submarine to approach within a relatively close distance to shore and those where the nature of the shoreline itself or the waters adjacent thereto make landing in a small rubber boat impossible or extremely hazardous. If this were done, it might then be possible to concentrate the defensive forces in those areas offering the most favorable conditions for clandestine landings..

Certain lessons may also be learned from the manner in which the search for the agents who landed in Long Island was conducted in the hours immediately following their landing. The presence of these agents and the indication that they were probably hostile was reported to the Coast Guard station at Amagansett by CULLEN within a very short time after the landing took place. We know that the agents were flustered and did a hasty and rather superficial job of burying their sabotage materials and clothing, and that they remained hidden in the area until daybreak. The surprising thing in the reports of the activity of the Coast Guard and other agencies which were immediately summoned into the action is that they concentrated their search upon the immediate area of the landing and apparently failed to take any measure to cut off the retreat of the agents. When Chief Boat-swains's Mate BARNES called out all hands from Amagansett station and armed them he placed the men along the beach in such a manner as to prevent further landings and to detect any movement on the beach itself. By 1:45, a.m. a relatively short time after the landing, the Coast Guard Intelligence Office in New York City had been notified and the Duty Officer had advised the District Coast Guard Intelligence Officer as well as the Duty Officer of DIO, 3ND. Two Coast Guard officers were immediately sent to Amagansett from headquarters, New York City, and at approximately 4:30 same morning, the time of their arrival, patrols were still out searching the area immediately adjacent to the site of the landing; with the coming of daylight these patrols discovered the sabotage material. There is no indication that either the Coast Guard authorities on the spot or the officers at headquarters at New York suggested any patrol of the routes by which the agents might leave the area, in order to intercept them. An examination of the attached sketch of the eastern portion of Long Island will reveal that the agents landed in a cul-de-sac. The only practicable egress from the area is via the highways and railroads which traverse the neck of land west of Southampton and the ocean highway running southwest of Southampton. There is a possible alternative route to the North to Shelter Island, but this would involve the use of a boat. In other words, by a thorough patrol of the two highways at the points where they cross narrow strips of land and a careful surveillance of the railroads, virtually all the means of exit from the area could have been sealed with the use of relatively few men. Instead, the men available were concentrated in the immediate area of the landing while the saboteurs were permitted to move out of the area in perfect freedom.

There is no point in devoting too much time to criticism of the action of this case, but it is possible that a lesson can be learned from it to apply to further similar occurrences. It would appear wise that commanding officers of Coast Guard stations and other section bases maintaining beach patrols survey the possible routes of egress from their areas with a view to determining the most strategic control points in the regions - whether on

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highways, railroads, or in open country. It is recognized that few areas will present the natural advantages offered by Amagansett for preventing the escape of agents whose presence has been detected but with whom contact has been lost. Nevertheless, if such plans are made, reserve forces, held at the station or section headquarters or available from nearby inland posts, could be quickly concentrated at such points.

It is not entirely clear as to just what time, on the morning of June 13, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under whose primary jurisdiction the investigation of the landing at Amagansett fell, was notified of the occurrences. It appears, however, that it was sometime fairly early in the morning. By the time the Federal Bureau of Investigation arrived to take charge, most of the sabotage materials had been removed by the Coast Guard to the office of the Captain of the Port in New York. It appears that the neighboring Army post at Montauk was not advised of the occurrences until towards noon of June 13, at which time a patrol of twenty men was sent to the Amagansett station. After the Federal Bureau of Investigation took over the direction of the investigation, there was a continued lack of cooperation between the respective counter-intelligence agencies. Certain Coast Guard officers retained some of the material found on the beach and undertook their own investigation, which they carried on for at least 48 hours without the knowledge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Inasmuch as during this period they enlisted the assistance of various police organizations, the security of the investigation may well have been compromised. At the same time it would appear that the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under whose jurisdiction the primary investigation fell, failed to keep the other interested agencies fully informed as to the progress of the investigation or the information disclosed. This friction continued and even increased after the apprehension of the eight saboteurs was announced. It would serve no useful purpose to blame any one agency more than the others, but it is clear the effectiveness of the entire handling of the case was seriously handicapped by the lack of cooperation.

The Delimitation Agreement marks out certain spheres within which Federal Bureau of Investigation, Military Intelligence Service and Office of Naval Intelligence have investigative jurisdiction, but it also enjoins a full exchange of information between the three agencies. As long as the respective agencies fail to have complete confidence in each other and fail to recognize that they are all engaged in helping to win the same war, there will not be this full exchange of information. It would appear that the three agencies and their representatives in the field should have it impressed upon them that they are engaged in a common effort; that the objective is not to obtain credit for one or another agency, but to work together in the most effective manner in order to promote the security of the United States from enemy espionage and sabotage.

During the period between the landing and the apprehension of the eight Nazi agents, they moved freely over a considerable part of the United States. They not only traveled around at will, but made contact with numerous friends and relatives in the cities which they visited, disclosing to a number of these friends and relatives the method by which they had arrived and the nature of their mission. It is significant that none of these friends or relatives

with whom the enemy agents made contact reported the fact to the United States authorities. Although they were undoubtedly influenced by considerations of friendship, the fact still remains that they were willing to put these ahead of their loyalty to the United States and its security. If the loyalty of these persons was so shallow, it must be assumed that there are hundreds or perhaps thousands more among the individuals of enemy alien origin who would be moved by the same considerations. As there are indications that agents sent to the country from Germany are instructed to contact such friends and relatives in the United States, this fact embodies both a source of danger and a possible means of effective counter-intelligence. Under-cover agents should be developed among these groups, keeping constant touch with their sentiments, movements, and contacts so that the arrival or circulation of enemy agents may promptly become known.

The fact that all the agents were apprehended before they had an opportunity to fulfill any part of their mission means that there is no way of judging the security against sabotage of the objectives which had been assigned to them. We have been given some insight into the particular features of American industries and transportation which the Germans deem it most desirable to interrupt, as well as the proposed means of attack. We may take advantage of this information to make certain that these points are especially well protected. It is clear that the guards at vital points must be adequately and thoroughly instructed in the type of sabotage to expect and the means with which to combat it.

In addition to the light thrown on security and counter-intelligence in the United States by the landings of the 8 Nazi saboteurs it is believed that certain comments should be made on the handling of the case from the point of view of Intelligence of a positive nature. After the landing of the 8 agents became known, the first objective was quite properly to catch them. Through the voluntary surrender of DASCH and his description of the whole plot this capture was effected before any of the saboteurs had a chance to attack their objectives or even to become well established in the United States. Subsequent to their capture it was, of course, important from a counter-intelligence point of view to determine the contacts which they had made in the United States and to obtain from them all information which would make it possible to improve the security of the United States. This part of the job appears on the whole to have been well done. The capture of these 8 Nazi saboteurs offered, however, an opportunity to obtain information concerning the enemy which was largely neglected. There also existed the possibility that the 8 saboteurs and particularly the two who were out of sympathy with the Nazi Government could be used to obtain further information from the enemy concerning their intentions in the United States. This latter possibility was eliminated with the announcement of the capture of the 8 agents and with the execution of 6 of them.

It appears unfortunate that any publicity at all was given either to the landing of the 8 agents or to their subsequent arrest. It is recognized that the movements of the representatives of various counter-intelligence organizations around Amagansett, together with some of the subsequent investigations, must have aroused considerable comment that probably led to the leakage of information. Furthermore, it is recognized that undoubtedly circumstances arose both before and after the apprehension of the 8 agents

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(information as to which is not now available in the Office of Naval Intelligence) which made it necessary to announce the capture of these 8 agents. Nevertheless, it would have been of advantage if the German Government could have remained in ignorance of their capture, thus enabling contact to be established with the mail drops and possibly with later groups coming to the United States. It also appears to be unfortunate that by giving DASCH and BURGER a lighter sentence and announcing that this had been done because of their cooperation with American authorities, Germany was in effect informed that these two individuals had given full information to American authorities. Knowing this, it would appear almost certain that the German sabotage organization would modify its plans and also that it would countermand any orders to proceed to the United States that might have been issued to individuals with whom members of this group were familiar. Thus, it would seem highly improbable that KAPPE, BARTH or SCHMIDT would now be sent to the United States. While the above developments were unfortunate, they were probably unavoidable and it is useless to wish that things might have been different.

More important was the failure to use to the utmost these 8 Nazi saboteurs as sources of military and naval intelligence. There is no evidence that at any time between their capture and their final execution or sentence, were they questioned or examined by representatives of either the Military Intelligence Service or the Office of Naval Intelligence. Except for what information may have been extracted from them during the course of their trial, their examination was entirely in the hands of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The latter agency was naturally primarily interested in domestic security and in obtaining information relative to the violation of any Federal Statutes by persons within the United States. Nevertheless, it would appear that, inasmuch as Military Intelligence Service and Office of Naval Intelligence were excluded from access to these individuals, Federal Bureau of Investigation had an obligation to obtain all information possible of an intelligence nature.

DASCH and BURGER were the only ones who may be said to have given any substantial amount of information concerning conditions in Germany. DASCH on his own initiative and under intelligent questioning supplied a large amount of information relative to Germany and to the voyage over on the submarine. BURGER gave a certain amount of interesting information concerning the rivalries within the Nazi Party and between the Party and the Army. There is, however, no evidence at present available to indicate that any strong effort was made to obtain information relative to conditions in Germany from the other 6 saboteurs, who have now been eliminated as possible sources of information. In view of DASCH's long and fairly detailed account, it would have been extremely useful to have checked his statements by questioning of the other agents. Two of the others had been in positions where they might have obtained information of great strategic value - NEUBAUER in the Army and KERLING in the Propaganda Ministry in Berlin. They had all traveled more or less in Germany in recent months. Little effort appears to have been made to have checked DASCH's and BURGER's comments on the food and morale situation with the other agents. Even in the cases of DASCH and BURGER many possible fields of questioning appear to have been ignored. Thus, no one of them was asked concerning the effect of the bombings by the Royal Air Force of Lubeck and Rostock. There is no evidence that any of them were questioned concerning

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the volume of industrial output in Germany either as to ships, planes, or armaments; yet two of the agents had worked for a considerable length of time in a motor vehicle factory where they must have been able to have obtained some idea of the rate of production. DASCH gave considerable data concerning the construction and operation of the submarine on which his group came to the United States. Most of the other agents must have had equal opportunity for observation aboard the submarine, yet not even sufficient information was elicited from them to check that furnished by DASCH. It would have been interesting to have obtained data concerning the submarine on which KERLING and his group traveled in order that it might be compared with that obtained on the other submarine. Similarly DASCH was the only one of the agents from whom information was obtained concerning the German intelligence and sabotage organization. A number of the other agents had been active members of the Bund or the Friends of New Germany, while resident in the United States. It would have been useful to have obtained from them information concerning the activities of other former Bund members who had returned to Germany and the extent to which the German High Command is using persons formerly resident in the United States.

It is recognized that the 6 saboteurs who were executed might well have refused to answer questions of the type suggested above. They appear to have been loyal to the Nazi regime and might well have been unwilling to give information that would be used against it. There is, however, no evidence at hand showing that an attempt was made to obtain this information. As to a fuller questioning of DASCH and BURGER it may be suggested that the opportunity for this still exists. One wonders, however, whether they were not more eager to cooperate with American authorities before being sentenced to 30 years and life imprisonment respectively than at the present time.

Much the same situation applies to the materials and equipment which the saboteurs brought with them as applies to the agents themselves. This material was seized very promptly. Its general nature was announced to the public. It was obviously of importance as an exhibit in the legal proceedings against the saboteurs. It was, however, also of importance to Military and Naval authorities as a potential source of information on the materials and devices developed by the German sabotage organization. Requests were made by representatives of the Navy, and possibly also by the Army although this is not known, for permission to examine this material. This permission was not granted until the trial of the saboteurs had been completed. Hence, it was almost two months after the discovery of these explosives and incendiary equipment before they were made available to representatives of the appropriate bureaus of the Army and Navy.

The above comments are not made so much for the sake of criticizing the handling of this case as for the sake of indicating the possible precautions which should be taken in the event that another similar opportunity arises. It is believed that if such cases are to be handled exclusively by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, one of two procedures should be adopted. Either qualified representatives of the Military Intelligence Service and Office of Naval Intelligence should be given an opportunity to interrogate such agents for information of interest to their particular services, or the Federal Bureau of Investigation should be informed of the type of information which

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Military Intelligence Service and Office of Naval Intelligence are interested in obtaining and be requested to make every effort to obtain such information. It is believed that the former course would be preferable inasmuch as properly qualified Military or Naval personnel would probably be in a better position to evaluate the information as it was obtained and in the light of what was previously known. At all events, it is suggested that in the future a case such as this one should be treated not only as a violation of our domestic laws and a threat to our internal security but as an opportunity for obtaining intelligence concerning the enemy.

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