

" A n O l d - E s t a b l i s h e d R a c k e t "

— S I S

My transfer, or rather my drift, from SOE to SIS was completed in September, 1941. A dynamic lady who made the same move a year or so later was happy at the change, because, as she said: "If you have to work for a racket, let it be an old-established racket." I could have said the same earlier, if I had thought of it. It would have been stupid to underrate the ability of the new men flowing into Baker Street, and their objective was a thoroughly worthy one. Yet they brought with them a style of strained improvisation as they left their tidy offices in the City and the Temple to spread disorder and financial chaos throughout Europe, gamekeepers turned poachers one and all. It was great fun in theory with ideas whizzing up and down the corridors. But most of the hard work involved pleading with the Air Ministry and the Admiralty for an extra aeroplane or an extra small

boat and SOE had yet to establish itself with Britain's perennially conservative services.

SIS was also undergoing changes, and its staff was expanding, but all too slowly, to meet the growing hunger of the services for intelligence. But there was a hard core of established practice and a staff structure to correspond. The new accretions did little to change its essential nature. SIS resembled the Chinese in their ability to absorb and digest alien influences. Under pressure, it took in representatives of the Foreign Office and of the service departments, of whom Patrick Reilly alone left a significant mark. It even survived more corrosive imports, such as Graham Greene and Malcolm Muggeridge, both of whom merely added to the gaiety of the service. In short, I was happy to find solid ground beneath my feet, and to get down to real work.

As is well known, the headquarters of SIS were then in Broadway Buildings, just across the road from St. James's Park Station. But the wartime organisation had outgrown its original habitat. Both Section V and Central Registry had been displaced to St. Albans, while other odds and bits had been scattered around London and the Home Counties. On arrival at St. Albans, I was billeted on some horribly rich people called Barnet, whose wealth was not the only horrible thing about them. He was conveyed daily between his house and the station in a chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce, while she locked up the sugar and counted jam-pots lest the maids should pilfer. In a mercifully short time, I found a convenient cottage on the farthest outskirts of town, where I could be

free of unwanted interruption. Within a few days, I bought a pheasant from a man at a bus stop. He told me that he 'sometimes got a chicken,' so I fared well thereafter.

Much will be heard of SIS in the following pages and a general, though far from comprehensive, picture of its activities should emerge in due course. At this stage, it is necessary to give only a summary account of its structure and proceedings, to assist the reader in understanding my story from the outset. It should be understood that any summary account must be an over-simplification. If the British genius leans towards improvisation, then SIS is a true reflection of it. The organisation is like an old house, the original plan of which is still visible though dwarfed by subsequent additions.

SIS is the only British service authorised to collect secret information from foreign countries by illegal means. Its monopoly in this respect is sometimes infringed by enthusiastic amateurs. But whenever such infringements come to light, they lead at best to acrimonious inter-departmental correspondence, at worst to serious confrontations in Whitehall. The words "by illegal means" distinguish the secret service from other news-gathering agencies, such as the Foreign Service and the press, though some nations fail to appreciate this fine, and sometimes illusory, distinction. Thus, in the Middle East, as I know from personal experience, journalists are confused with spies—often rightly so. Yet, however blurred in practice the distinction is real. SIS alone receives secret funds for which it is not accountable in detail, so that it

may get information from foreign countries which is not obtainable by ordinary, lawful means.'

The basis of SIS activity is the network of agents, almost always of foreign nationality. These agents work, directly or indirectly, under the control of an SIS office, known as a "station," housed in a British Embassy and thus protected from the action of local authorities by diplomatic convention. Their motives in working as agents are various, ranging from the heroic to the squalid. The great majority are paid for their work, though not too well. On the whole, SIS prefers to have agents on its payroll, since the acceptance of pay induces pliability. The unpaid agent is apt to behave independently, and to become an infernal nuisance. He has, almost certainly, his own political axes to grind, and his sincerity is often a measure of the inconvenience he can cause. As one SIS officer remarked in disgust of the Vermehrens, the German couple who defected to the British in Istanbul during the war: 'They're so God-awful conscientious you never know what they're going to do next.'

Information collected by agents finds its way, directly or by devious means, to the local SIS station responsible for their recruitment in the first place. There it is given a preliminary assessment, for value and accuracy, by SIS officers disguised as diplomats. If considered of interest, the information is transmitted, with appropriate comment, to London headquarters. Transmission is normally by foreign service

'The latest figure available to me, for 1966-67, is £-10 million—a fourfold increase in twenty years of peace.

communications, radio or diplomatic bag, according to the degree of urgency. At the time of which I am now speaking, the pre-war disguise of Passport Control Officer for the chief SIS representative was still in wide use, although it was already a little less than opaque. Its advantage was that the holder of that office was legitimately entitled to make enquiry into the records of visa applicants, and one type of enquiry could lead to another. Its disadvantage was simply that the device had become known. In a later chapter I will deal with more recent disguises.

The structure of headquarters in London was based on a division of responsibility for the production and assessment of intelligence. Those who produced the stuff should submit their wares to independent scrutiny before the finished article was sent to government departments. In accordance with this principle headquarters was divided into two groups of sections known respectively as *XT* Sections and *Circulating* Sections. The "G" Sections administered overseas stations, and supervised their operations. Each had regional responsibility; one would manage Spain and Portugal, another the Middle East, a third the Far East, and so on. *Circulating* Sections assessed the intelligence received, and passed it on to interested government departments; they would then pass back to the "G" Sections the judgement of those departments, together with their own. The *Circulating* Sections were divided, not regionally, but according to subject matter. One would handle political intelligence, others concerned themselves with military, naval, economic and other types of information.

Section V, to which I found myself attached, was in a peculiar position, in more than one respect. In name, it was a Circulating Section, and its subject matter counter-espionage. But, whereas the other Circulating Sections dealt with regular government departments, such as the Foreign Office, the Admiralty and the rest, whose knowledge of secret operations was marginal, Section V's main "customer" was itself a secret organisation: MIS. This, it might have been thought, should have led to mutual understanding and smoother cooperation. In fact, the reverse was the case, and it was not until the war was nearly over that reasonable harmony between the two organisations was attained. This unhappy situation was partly due to personal factors, which were aggravated by the fog, not to mention the hysteria, of war. But it was also due to basic differences of opinion about the line of jurisdictional demarcation between the two organisations. MI5 argued that counter-espionage was indivisible, and that they were entitled to all information on the subject available to Section V. Cowgill, speaking for Section V, rejected that view, maintaining that MI5 were entitled only to information bearing directly on the security of British territory, with the implicit rider that he himself was sole judge of the relevance of information to British security. He claimed, apparently in all sincerity, that MI5 were planning to set up their own counter-espionage organisation in foreign territory, while MIS, in their turn, suspected Cowgill of withholding from them essential information on the pretext of safeguarding the security of SIS sources. These clashes were to put me

in a whole series of awkward situations, as my own sympathies in the debate were usually with MIS. To avoid needless trouble, many of my subsequent communications to MI5 had to be made verbally.

Partly out of this painful situation, there arose a second peculiarity of Section V. In the early days of the war, the demands of the senior departments on SIS were urgent and overwhelming. As we shall see, there were also powerful people in SIS who regarded offensive intelligence as the only serious form of intelligence in wartime. As a result of these pressures, SIS stations abroad were concentrating more and more exclusively on getting information required by the armed forces, such as troop movements, naval concentrations, air potential, weaponry and so on. Counter-espionage was starved of resources, and MIS was justified in complaining, not only that Section V was withholding information, but also that SIS was not getting enough anyway. This was a charge that Cowgill could not ignore; he felt much the same himself. But he was not strong enough to force through the necessary diversion of existing SIS resources to counter-espionage goals. He preferred to circumvent the existing establishment by having specialist officers of his own attached to overseas stations. Nominally, such officers came under the general administration and control of the "G" sections; but most of the latter were far too busy to pay them any attention, and their day-to-day instructions emanated direct from Section V. The "G" officer in charge of Spain and Portugal, for instance, was a certain Fenwick, who had come to SIS from the oil business. He acquiesced, with

only a minimum of grumbling, in the posting of counter-espionage specialists to Madrid, Lisbon, Gibraltar, and Tangier, and within weeks had practically forgotten all about them. So all went smoothly, provided I paid him a courtesy call every now and then and (in his own words) "munched a chop" with him. The general effect of this arrangement was that Section V, though still a Circulating Section in name, acquired some of the functions of a "G" Section. It became a hybrid, regarded with a degree of suspicious incomprehension by the rest of SIS. The position suited Cowgill well. It enabled him to claim that counter-espionage was an esoteric art, calling for wisdom not revealed to the common run of intelligence officers. He thus acquired a certain immunity from criticism within SIS. Unfortunately, he could not expect the same respectful hearing from MI5.

Although I have said that SIS is the only British organisation authorised to collect information by illegal means, it does not follow that it is alone in collecting secret intelligence. By interception of wireless signals, it is possible to obtain huge quantities of secret intelligence without breaking any national or international law. Before wireless messages can be read, they must be deciphered. This was done in wartime Britain by the so-called Government Code & Cypher School at Bletchley. Much of their work was brilliantly successful. I must leave it to learned opinion to decide how much more could have been achieved if the wrangling inside GC&CS had been reduced to manageable proportions. (The same could

be said of most government departments, not to mention the universities in peacetime.)

To sum up very briefly the place of Section V in the intelligence world: As part of SIS, it was responsible for the collection of counter-espionage information from foreign countries by illegal means. The department chiefly interested in its intelligence was MI5, which was responsible for the security of British territory and therefore required as much advance news as possible of foreign attempts to penetrate British secrets. Some of the work of Section V was also of interest to other departments. For instance, the Foreign Office had a direct interest in the facilities offered by neutral governments to the German intelligence services. The efforts of Section V were at first supplemented by the Radio Security Service [RSS], which intercepted enemy intelligence signals, and by GC&CS, which read them. Before the war had gone on long, these roles were in fact reversed. Section V's investigations abroad were directed mostly to filling in the gaps in the extraordinarily comprehensive picture derived from signals intelligence.

It is now time to turn to some of the personalities involved, many of whom loom large in my subsequent story. The head of Section V, as I have mentioned, was Felix Cowgill. He had come to SIS from the Indian police shortly before the war, and had already made his mark. His intellectual endowment was slender. As an intelligence officer, he was inhibited by lack of imagination, inattention to detail and sheer ignorance of the world we were fighting in. His most

conspicuous positive quality, apart from personal charm of an attractively simple variety, was a fiendish capacity for work. Every evening, he took home bulging briefcases and worked far into the small hours. Friday nights, as a regular habit he worked right round the clock. Mornings would find him, tired but still driving, presiding over a conference of his sub-section heads and steadily knocking an array of pipes to wreckage on a stone ash-tray. He stood by his own staff far beyond the call of loyalty, retaining many long after their idleness or incompetence had been proved. To the outer world, he presented a suspicious and bristling front, ever ready to see attempts to limit his field of action or diminish his authority. By the time T joined Section V, he was already on the worst of terms, not only with MIS, but also with RSS, GC&CS and several other SIS sections as well. Glenalmond, the St. Albans house in which Section V had established its headquarters, already felt like a hedgehog position; Cowgill revelled in his isolation. He was one of those pure souls who denounce all opponents as "politicians."

Unfortunately, Cowgill was up against a formidable array of brains. Most of our dealings with GC&CS on the subject of German intelligence wireless traffic were with Page and Palmer, both familiar figures in Oxford. RSS presented the even more formidable Oxonian combination of Trevor-Roper, Gilbert Ryle, Stuart Hampshire and Charles Stuart. Herbert Hart, another Oxonian, confronted him in MI5, though here Cambridge too got a look in with Victor Rothschild, the MI5 anti-sabotage expert. All these men out-

classed Cowgill in brain-power, and some of them could match his combativeness. Trevor-Roper, for instance, was never a meek academic; and it was characteristic of Cowgill's other-worldliness that he should have once threatened Trevor-Roper with court martial. It is a tribute to Cowgill that he fought this combination for nearly five years without realising the hopelessness of his struggle. How often would he fling off a furious minute denouncing this or that colleague, and then softly murmur, with a gleam of triumph, "and now let's get on and fight the Germans!"

The main issue on which these personal battles were joined was control of the material derived from the interception of German intelligence-signals traffic. When the question first arose, the Chief of SIS had vested control in the head of Section V. There was plenty to be said for the ruling, and, to the best of my knowledge, it was never seriously challenged. What was challenged was the way in which Cowgill exercised his control. He realised at once that he had been dealt a trump card, and from the beginning he guarded it jealously, even to the point of withholding information that might have been put to effective use. His foes held him guilty of seriously restrictive practices, while he held them at least potentially guilty of disregarding totally the security of the source. After a hassle with Cowgill, Dick White, then Assistant Director of the MI5 Intelligence Division, claimed to have had a nightmare in which the material concerned was on sale at the news-stands.

Cowgill's relations with the rest of SIS posed problems of a different order. Here he was faced, not with

what he regarded as excessive interest in his doings, but with the danger of total neglect. During the war, offensive intelligence absorbed most of the energies of SIS. Counter-espionage, with its emphasis on defence, was reduced to Cinderella status. This was largely due to the influence of Claude Dansey, who was then Assistant Chief of the Secret Service, or briefly ACSS. He was an elderly gentleman of austere limited outlook who regarded counter-espionage as a waste of effort in wartime, and lost no opportunity in saying so. His speciality was the barbed little minute, which creates a maximum of resentment to no obvious purpose.

The cause of counter-espionage should have been defended, at that high level, by Valentine Vivian, whose title was Deputy Chief of the Secret Service, or DCSS. He was a former Indian policeman, and had been head of Section V before the war. But Vivian was long past his best—if, indeed, he had ever had one. He had a reedy figure, carefully dressed crinkles in his hair, and wet eyes. He cringed before Dansey's little minutes, and shook his head sadly at his defeats, which were frequent. Shortly before I joined Section V, Cowgill had brushed Vivian aside, making little effort to hide his contempt. It was no thanks to Vivian that Cowgill finally won his battle for increased appropriations for Section V, and with Vivian that was to rankle. It may seem that the feelings of so ineffectual a man scarcely require mention in a book of this kind. But, at a later stage, they were to play a critical part in my career.

It was more than a year before I was directly af-

ected by these high-level rivalries. My first duty was to do my job and learn it at the same time. I was given precious little guidance from above, and soon became indebted to my head secretary, an experienced girl who had been in the service before the war and was able, despite chronic ill health, to keep me from the worst pitfalls. The volume of work was monstrous. As a result of staff increases, we were now six in the Iberian sub-section, doing the work which two were supposed to have done before. Small wonder that one of them committed suicide. We were still regularly swamped with incoming mail. Some allowance must be made, of course, for Parkinson's Law; even so, like many of my colleagues, I could only keep pace with my towering "in-trays" by taking a fat briefcase home in the evenings. Every day brought a few telegrams from Madrid, Tangier or Lisbon. We received showers of minutes from other sections of SIS and of letters from MI5. Once a week, we received depressingly heavy bags from the Peninsula, where our representatives were still thrashing around in the dark. For every lead that produced results of any kind, a dozen lured us tortuously into dead ends.

A typical muddle confronted me at an early stage. An SIS agent in Madrid stole the diary of a certain Alcazar de Velasco, a particularly nasty Falangist from the Spanish Press Office, who had visited England a month or two previously. The diary stated explicitly that he had recruited a network of agents on behalf of the German Abwehr; names, addresses, and assignments were given in detail. It was not until

many weeks' work had been wasted that we reached what was surely the correct conclusion, namely, that the diary, though undoubtedly the work of Alcazar de Velasco himself, was fraudulent from beginning to end, and had been concocted solely for the purpose of extracting money from the Germans.

Yet the theft was not entirely fruitless. We had long suspected Luis Calvo, a Spanish journalist working in London, of passing to Spain information that might comfort, and possibly aid, the enemy. The fact that his name appeared in the diary as a recruit for the Alcazar de Velasco network suggested a promising means of extracting a confession, spurious though we thought the entry to be. Calvo was accordingly arrested and taken to the "tough" interrogation centre on Ham Common. No physical violence was used to break him down. He was merely stripped naked and propelled into the presence of the camp commandant, a monocled Prussian type called Stephens who punctuated his questions by slapping his riding-boots with a swagger-stick. We had made a correct assessment of Calvo's nerve. Appalled by his compatriot's frivolous treachery, and doubtless by the swagger-stick, he said enough about his activity to warrant his captivity for the duration. Another by-product of the famous diary was derived from the fact that it mentioned Brugada, the Spanish Press Attache in London, in compromising terms. Brugada was the last person to want a scandal, and proved satisfactorily cooperative when MI5 hinted delicately that the diary might furnish the Foreign Office with a plausible pretext for declaring him *persona non grata*. He did not actually

do much serious spying for MI5; but he passed on enough gossip about visiting Spaniards to earn a code-name: Peppermint.

A more spectacular success came our way soon afterwards, although I broke all the rules to achieve it and caused a ghastly mix-up which was only resolved after the war. We received an intercepted telegram showing that the Abwehr was sending two agents to South America on the Spanish S.S. "Cabo de Homos." With a carelessness which was all too frequent in Abwehr communications, their names were given in full. One was a certain Leopold Hirsch, travelling with his wife and mother-in-law, the other Gilinski. Shortly before their embarkation, a second, more mysterious message was received from the German out-station in Bilbao, confirming that Hirsch and his "ORKI companions" were ready to leave. "ORKF was intriguing. What could it be but an organisation of revolutionary international communists—some splinter group of Trotskyists sponsored by the Germans with a view to confounding our Russian allies? We therefore passed the whole passenger list of the "Cabo de Homos" through our records, finding at least a dozen whose careers suggested possible links with dissident Communism. Of these, perhaps half looked as if they might well be scoundrelly enough to fall in with Abwehr intrigues.

Accordingly, after consulting Cowgill, I sent a cable to the Defence Security Officer in Trinidad, where the ship was due to call, instructing him to arrest the Hirsch family, Gilinski, and a string of others. I had no power whatsoever to order this, or any other, ar-

rest. The proper procedure would have been a recommendation from me to MI5; another from MI5 to the Colonial Office; an instruction "subject to local objection" from the Colonial Office to the Governor of Trinidad; and an order from the Governor to the Defence Security Officer. Fortunately, the DSO was an enthusiastic type, and acted on my orders without further question. Still more fortunately, Hirsch promptly confessed, saying, with almost certain truth, that he had nursed no intention of carrying out his German assignment but had accepted it simply to get out of Europe. In the euphoria created by this "triumph," we tended to overlook the fact that the rest of the detained men could not be induced to admit to anything remotely resembling espionage. But search of their baggage showed that they were all smuggling in greater or lesser degree, so we had some small technical grounds for holding them, just in case.

The solution of the mystery came about a year later. My sub-section officer responsible for handling all intercepted material was struck by a sudden thought. He got on the telephone to Palmer at GC&CS, and asked him to look up the relevant signal from Bilbao. Could "ORKI" possibly have been a mistake for "DREI"?² Within a very short time, Palmer was back. Yes, it almost certainly was "DREI"; in fact, he could not understand how the cryptographers could have got ORKI in the first place. So, instead of Hirsch and his ORKI companions, we had Hirsch and his three companions, namely, his wife, his

² The German for "three," of course.—*Eds.*

mother-in-law, and Gilinski. By the time the British Government came to consider the claims brought by the others for wrongful arrest, I was safely out of the way, trying to penetrate the Soviet Union and the Balkan states from my comfortable base in Istanbul.

Hitherto, I have spoken only of the interception of wireless traffic. But there were several other forms of interception which, though less productive from the counter-espionage point of view, had their uses. There was the postal censorship which threw up one or two cases of interest, but less perhaps than might have been expected. There were also sophisticated techniques of opening foreign diplomatic bags. This method could not be used against the enemy directly, since German and Italian bags did not pass through British territory. But the bags of neutral states and of the minor allies, such as the Poles and the Czechs, were fair game. Such operations involved several complex procedures.

First, the courier had to be persuaded, by one means or another, to leave his bag in British custody. This was not so difficult as it sounds, owing to the inadequate courier systems employed by many states, and to the indiscipline of the couriers themselves. During the period that Britain was cut off from the continent, all diplomatic bags were carried by air. Delays in the departure of aircraft were of everyday occurrence, and it was always easy to engineer a delay even when flight conditions were favourable. On arrival at the airport, the courier would be confronted with an adverse weather report, or with the

discover}' of a technical fault in the aircraft, either of which could impose an indefinite wait. Thus he would have the choice of sitting on his bag in the airport lounge or going to the nearest town and enduring the rigours of a provincial hotel bedroom. In such circumstances, it was only courtesy on the part of the airport security officer to offer the perplexed courier the hospitality of his safe. "You can see me lock it up myself, old boy. It will be quite alright till you get back." A surprising number of couriers fell for this soft sell and went off, without encumbrance, to inspect the local talent—which, of course, the security officer was happy to provide on request.

As soon as the courier was safely out of the way, the security officer would inform the waiting experts and put the bag or bags at their disposal. Each bag and its contents were studied with minute care before they were opened. Every knot and seal was measured, copied and photographed; where necessary, chemical examination was also made. Then came the task of untying the knots, breaking the seals, extracting and photographing the contents. Finally, and hardest of all, was the job of replacing the contents exactly as found, with infinitesimally accurate reproduction of the original knots and seals. The Russians were exempt from this treatment, partly because their bags were invariably accompanied by two couriers, one of whom was always on duty, partly because of a belief that they contained bombs designed to obliterate the inquisitive. But the diplomatic correspondence of the South American states, of the Spaniards and Portuguese, of the Czechs, Poles, Greeks, Jugoslavs, and

many others, was regularly subjected to scrutiny. Despite the extreme care used, accidents sometimes happened. On one occasion, the red seals in a Polish bag turned purple under treatment, and nothing could be done to restore them. The Poles were regretfully informed that the bag in question had been "lost." This happy ending was possible only because the Poles, following their occasional custom, had entrusted this bag to the British for onward transmission—presumably because its contents were of minor importance. It would have been much more awkward if it had been accompanied by a Polish courier.

By early 1942, the trickle of intercepted Abwehr telegrams had become a flood. This was largely the work of Dilly Knox, who had succeeded in penetrating the secrets of the cypher machine used by the Abwehr. This comprehensive system of eavesdropping yielded fascinating glimpses of the intimate life of German intelligence officers. There was the case, for instance, of Axel, the German police dog. He had been posted from Berlin to Algeciras, presumably to guard the Abwehr out-station there from British agents sneaking across the bay from Gibraltar. On the last stage of its journey, Madrid sent a warning telegram to Albert Carbe, abas Cesar, the head of the Abwehr post at Algeciras: "Be careful of Axel. He bites." Sure enough, a few days later, Algeciras came up with the laconic report: "Cesar is in hospital. Axel bit him."

It was not long before we had a very full picture of the Abwehr in the peninsula. We knew the names,

pseudonyms, addresses, cover functions, and real functions of most of the staff at Madrid headquarters and at the many out-stations, such as Barcelona, Bilbao, Vigo, Algeciras, etc. When our knowledge was already as comprehensive as one could reasonably expect, a maddening incident occurred which illustrates the dangers of having two separate organisations working on the same subject in the same area. I have already said that there were exceptions to the rule whereby service attaches in British Embassies abroad did not engage in secret intelligence work. One of the exceptions was Captain Hillgarth, R.N., the Naval Attache in Spain. There was an arrangement, prompted by Hillgarth's personal acquaintance with Churchill, by which secret funds were made available to him for undercover activity. A condition of this arrangement was that Hillgarth's only contact with SIS should be with the Chief himself. The ostensible reason for this was security; Hillgarth's sources were to be particularly sacrosanct. But the condition also helped to feed the gallant officers' illusions of grandeur. As pseudonym for correspondence with the Chief, he chose Armada—natch!

One day, Cowgill asked me to make an appointment with the Chief to discuss an important communication from Armada. It was about the Germans in Spain. It was seldom that I saw the Chief in those days, and I was as shy in his presence as he was in mine. But I found him in a playful mood. He had been poaching on my preserves, he said; doing a spot of counter-espionage in Spain. He had given Armada authorisation to buy, "for a very large sum," details

of the leading Abwehr officers in Spain. Those details had been received, and he handed me a telegram—a distressingly short one, containing about a dozen names and a few particulars about each. Gustav Lenz was head of the outfit; Nans Gude, in charge of Naval Intelligence, etc., etc. I remarked, somewhat tactlessly that the information, so far as it went, was accurate. The Chief's eyebrows rose. How did I know it was accurate? Because we knew it all already. How much more did I know? A very great deal. Why hadn't the Chief been informed? But we compiled regular monthly reports of the progress of our investigations and a copy always went to the Chief. At this point he showed what an essentially nice man he was. "My dear Philby," he said with his characteristic quick smile, which had gone almost as soon as it came, "you don't expect me to read everything that's put on my desk!" We agreed that Armada's source should be asked for more, but of course nothing came of it. What incensed me was that I soon identified this precious source—a high official of the *Direccion General de Seguridad*—and knew that his price would have been very high indeed. And I had to fight to get an extra £5 a month for agents who produced regular, if less spectacular, intelligence!

One problem of intelligence is how to get it. Another, equally important and sometimes much more difficult, is how to exploit it. Picking up enemy agents as they reached British territory was all very well and good. But what about our painstaking analysis of the German establishment in the peninsula as a whole and the organisation in Germany from which it emanated?

nated? It was borne in on me gradually that our comprehensive knowledge called for more imaginative action than had been contemplated in the past. It was not enough simply to warn MI5 of the impending arrival in Britain of Abwehr agents or to effect the occasional capture in Trinidad. It should surely be possible to put our information to good use in disrupting, or at least seriously embarrassing, the enemy on his own chosen ground in Spain.

These thoughts were spurred by the gradual accumulation of intelligence to the effect that the Germans were contemplating an operation in Spain involving the use of advanced technical devices. The Abwehr code-name for the operation was Bodden. The Bodden is the name of the narrow strip of water separating the island of Rügen from the German mainland, not far from the wartime scientific research station at Peenemünde. Taken together with additional evidence that the Bodden experts, with their instruments, seemed to be closing in on Algeciras, this seemed a clear enough indication that something affecting the Straits of Gibraltar was brewing. We therefore consulted the formidable Dr. Jones, head of the scientific section of SIS, who studied the evidence, and pronounced fairly confidently that it indicated the installation of a device for detecting the passage of ships through the straits at night. As this would have introduced a serious new hazard into the supply position in the Western Mediterranean, I judged that the time was ripe for a new suggestion designed to scare the daylights out of the Abwehr in Spain.

I had already considered, and discarded, the possibility of putting SOE on to the Germans in Spain. Even if they had had the resources for such an operation, I doubted whether anyone on our side would really welcome a James-Bond-like free-for-all in Spain, where the authorities would have been against us. On reflection, it seemed that the diplomatic approach would be the best. We had a legitimate grievance against the Spanish Government for allowing the German intelligence a free hand on its territory, and a strong protest, based on detailed and cogent evidence, seemed quite in order. I had little hope that General Franco would take any action against his German friends; but I had no doubt at all that he would give them a friendly warning of their nakedness. My thoughts turned to General Westmacott, the Director of Extraordinary Intelligence in Compton Mackenzie's *Water on the Brain*, and his dictum: "After all, the whole point of the Secret Service is that it should be secret." It was a good assumption that Gustav Lenz, the head of the Abwehr in Spain, would be severely shaken if his secrets could be shown to be no secrets at all.

The first step was to convince Cowgill that the operation was both worth-while and feasible. Our indictment would have to be based largely on information derived from signals intelligence, and he was jealous of its safe-keeping, even *vis-a-vis* other British intelligence organisations. Yet the whole object of my proposal was that the document should be pro-

³ Compton Mackenzie, *Water on the Brain* (London, Chatto & Windus), 1954.

sented to an unfriendly Spanish Government in the hope that it would be shown to the Germans. To my great relief, Cowgill reacted favourably. He took my draft, in which I had been at pains to conceal our sources, to the Chief, who also approved. Fortunately, the Foreign Office link with SIS at that time was Peter Loxley, who had as much vigour as charm, and he lent the project enthusiastic support. Within a reasonably short space, instructions were sent to Sir Samuel Hoare, then British Ambassador in Madrid, to protest to General Franco in the strongest possible terms. He was to support his protest with a copy of my memorandum.

It is difficult to write nice things about Sir Samuel. But the truth compels me to admit that he rose to the occasion magnificently. He dressed the senior members of his staff in full uniform, and took them in a body to see the Head of State. What Franco then said to whom is not yet known. But the results were gratifying beyond expectation. Within two or three days, panicky telegrams were flying between Madrid and Berlin; all sorts of useless emergency measures were taken. There was even a report, not taken too seriously by us, that some of the chimneys of the German Embassy in Madrid were smoking unduly. The final triumph came in the form of a peremptory order from Berlin to Madrid: "The Bodden operation must be stopped in its entirety." We continued to get our signals intelligence without interruption. It was clear that the operation had not compromised our main source.

Encouraged by our success in Spain, we then

launched a similar operation against the Germans in Portugal, but with only indifferent results. In the case of Spain our problem had been straightforward. General Franco, after all, was a self-declared combatant on the side of the enemy. With very few exceptions, his senior officials sympathised warmly with the Axis. For that reason, we could be pretty sure that, wherever we hit, we would hurt our enemies. The Foreign Office had less than its usual crop of inhibitions about ruffling Franco's feathers provided it had a good case; and, on the intelligence side, we had so few friends in Spain that we had little to fear from enemy reprisals. The position in Portugal was significantly different. Far from being straightforward, it was horribly complicated and fuzzy. Dr Salazar, it is true, sympathised with the Axis. But he was far more cautious than his fellow-dictator in Spain, and pursued a more neutral line. For fear of disturbing Salazar's balancing act, the Foreign Office shrank from strong action calculated to force him down off his fence. He might only too easily have come down on the wrong side. We had our own narrower preoccupations on the intelligence side. Several senior Portuguese officials, whom we knew to be receiving money from the Germans, were also receiving money from us. It was usually impossible to assess which side derived most advantage, if indeed any, from this tangle. The last thing I wanted was to have the officials come to us with a request to make good the extra-curricular salaries which they might lose through the expulsion of their German paymasters.

In consequence, the contents of our protest, and the manner of its presentation, were less spectacular than in the earlier case of Spain. There was no full-dress approach of the Embassy to the wily Doctor. Instead, the British Ambassador, Sir Ronald Campbell, took the matter up during a cosy meeting with the Portuguese Foreign Minister, Sampaio, who showed considerable diplomatic resources in his responses. It was, he said, extremely wrong of the Germans to abuse Portuguese neutrality in the manner described in our protest. Were we sure of our sources? He himself encountered the greatest difficulty in evaluating intelligence reports. The whole matter was fraught with most awkward difficulty. For instance, he had heard reports that other nations were not far behind the Germans in illicit activity on Portuguese soil. If the Portuguese Government took action against the Germans, the German Government might insist on similar action against those other nations. Insistence of such a kind would put the Portuguese in a dreadful dilemma. He, Sampaio, would certainly convey Sir Ronald's protest to Dr. Salazar without delay. But, speaking personally, he doubted whether the Doctor would take the action we requested without a very careful examination of the whole many-sided problem. Having delivered this deft warning, Sampaio concluded with a gem of diplomatic logic. Why, he sighed, must warring powers indulge in espionage? If only they concentrated their whole intelligence resources on counter-espionage, there would be no objection from any quarter!

Although the head of the British counter-espionage

organisation in Lisbon was an exceptionally able and sensitive man, many of our Portuguese cases ended in the same indeterminate fashion. There was the regrettable case of Stilwell, a British businessman resident in Portugal for many years. His name came to our notice at a time when our knowledge of the German services in Portugal was still rudimentary. We were therefore inclined to regard the German intelligence operatives whom we had identified as much more important than many of them subsequently turned out to be. Among these was a certain Weltzien, a German merchant, who loomed large in our pre-war occupations. After much endeavour, we succeeded in purloining from Weltzien's office a card purporting to come from his card-index.

We had apparently hit a bull's eye. The entries on the card showed, in unmistakable terms, that Stilwell had quite recently and regularly been in receipt of regular payments from Weltzien. But our problem was by no means cut-and-dried. In itself, the card was no proof; it could have been a forger's. Some of us were struck by the odd fact that the very first specimen from Weltzien's card-index should have been right on the mark. A year or two later, with more experience to hand, we might have hesitated much longer than we did. But we had few spies actually in the bag, and were anxious for more. In addition, we were so bemused by the mysterious Weltzien that we were ready to take risks to learn more about him. Stilwell was therefore invited to return to England. He was arrested on arrival and brought to interrogation the following morning. Hi

manner under interrogation was dignified and resentful of his treatment. The sight of the famous card shook him just about as much as an innocent man would have been shaken. He was released without a stain on his character amid shame-faced apologies. We never got to the bottom of the Stilwell card, although we staged a raid on Weltzien's office with the object of stealing his whole card-index. Weltzien, however, was not caught off his guard, and the raid was as big a fiasco as the arrest of the innocent Stilwell. We soon recovered our poise when an increasing flow of serious intelligence proved that Weltzien was not a key figure after all; on the contrary, a very minor one.

Before leaving Portugal, I must recall a masterpiece of interrogation. A certain lady had entered Britain from Portugal, where she had been known to consort with a number of Germans, including German intelligence officers. Search of her person and effects yielded a small diary kept mostly in the form of cryptic abbreviations. The interrogator took her through the diary, entry by entry, but she proved to be exceptionally quick-witted, stoutly denying, with considerable plausibility, that any of the entries referred to German acquaintances. Bloody but unbowed, her tormentor tried one last desperate throw. "May I draw your attention, Mrs.—, to your entry of such-and-such a date? It says: 'Spent all day sitting on my fanny/ Now,' after a pregnant pause: *"Who* was Fanny? In what way was she yours? And *why* were you sitting on her?" Under the impact of this dreadful inanity, the lady broke down, and confessed all.

Her story showed that her relations with Germans at Estoril had indeed been intimate, but in no way inimical to the British war-effort.

It was at about this time that I nearly got into serious trouble. I have mentioned that Central Registry, housing the SIS archives, was next door to Glenalmond. Bill Woodfield, who was in charge of it, had become quite a friend of mine. I have been told that magenta is the only colour that the rainbow lacks. If so, Bill's face would be out of place in the rainbow. He had a liking for pink gins, which I shared, and a prudish appreciation of dirty stories. We used to foregather often to discuss office politics, of which he had had a long experience. This friendly connection paid off, and I was usually in a position to get files rather more quickly and easily than many of my colleagues. Bill was seriously understaffed, and the people he had were often ill-trained.

There was a series of files in Registry known as source-books. These held the particulars and records of SIS agents operating abroad. It was natural for me to want information on the agents operating in the Iberian peninsula, and my perusal of the source-books for Spain and Portugal whetted my appetite for more. I worked steadily through them, thus enlarging my knowledge of SIS activity as a whole. When I came to the source-book for the Soviet Union, I found that it consisted of two volumes. Having worked through them to my satisfaction, I returned them to Registry in the normal way.

About a week later, Bill telephoned to ask me for the second volume of the Russian source-book. After

consulting my secretary, I called back to say that, according to our books, it had been returned to Registry on such-and-such a date. After further fruitless search in Registry, Bill contested the accuracy of my records, and urged me to make a further investigation. I turned our office upside-down, with negative results. Bill and I met once or twice in the evening to discuss the mystery over a few pink gins. He told me that the normal procedure on loss of a source-book was for him to report immediately to the Chief. I managed to stall him for a few days, during which my alarm grew. I doubted whether the Chief would appreciate the excessive zeal which had led me to exhaustive study of source-books, especially as it had apparently resulted in the loss of one dealing with a country far outside the normal scope of my duties.

The lowering sky suddenly cleared. Bill telephoned me to offer a "full, personal apology." It seemed that one of his secretaries handling the source-books, wishing to save shelf space, had amalgamated the two volumes into one. She had then come over queer, and gone home with a severe bout of flu. She had only just got back to the office and, on being tackled by Woodfield, had immediately remembered what she had done. I accepted the apology gracefully, and suggested meeting again that evening. We did so, and drowned the painful memory in another flood of pink gin. I remember thinking for a brief moment, duly regretted next morning, that magenta was my favourite colour.