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WE SPIED . . .

We have spied very few new books worthy of note in this issue: the summer months are usually slow ones for publishers. The exception, to which we are devoting this column, is entitled *They Spied On England*.¹ Title notwithstanding, spies and espionage are a minor element in this book based on the war diary of Maj. Gen. Erwin von Lahousen, the Austrian intelligence officer who was brought into German military intelligence after the German-Austrian *anschluss* and became chief of the Abwehr's Section II. Section II was responsible for sabotage operations, and the misleading title arises from the authors' habit of equating "saboteur" with "spy," writing for example, ". . . where the submarines which had been detailed to take the spies to America were berthed. There the *saboteurs* were accommodated in a small dockside hotel. [Emphasis supplied.]"

Although it is thus devoted primarily to the operations of saboteurs who occasionally engaged also in the reporting of information, the book does include at least one case-history in the field of espionage. The authors have supplemented their main source, the 400 typed foolscap pages of General von Lahousen's diary covering the war years 1939 to 1943, by interviewing many of the persons involved in the events it describes.

General von Lahousen was close to Admiral Canaris, the head of the Abwehr, and must have been aware of Canaris' connections with those engaged in the plot against Hitler. The book cites the evidence pointing to Von Lahousen as the man who supplied (from English stock he had seized) the bomb fuses used in two of the attempts on Hitler's life, evidence similar to that brought out by Gisevius² in discussing the unsuccessful 1943 plant in Hitler's airplane. After hearing Von Lahousen's testimony for the Allied prosecution at the Nuremberg trials, according to the authors, Göring, in the dock, exclaimed, "That's another of those we forgot to hang, Ribbentrop!"

¹ By Charles Wighton and Gunter Peis. (London: Odhams Press Ltd., 1958. 320 pp. 18s.) Also under title *Hitler's Spies and Saboteurs*. (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1958. \$3.95)

² *To The Bitter End*, pp. 468-9.

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They Spied on England describes several of Section II's particular operations, including one not covered by that unfortunate title. This was the submarine landing of saboteurs in the United States, four on the Florida coast and four on Long Island, where George Dasch promptly turned himself over to the FBI and blew the whole operation. A chapter on the Nazi attempts to utilize the Irish Republican Army and other dissident Irishmen to stir up trouble for the British traces the Abwehr's growing disenchantment with this project: the Irish kept asking for arms and supplies but concentrated on advancing their own cause without regard to German interests. The story of the Welsh spy Arthur Owens illustrates the similar Nazi effort to exploit the fanaticism of Welsh nationalists. "Johnny," as Owens was known to the Abwehr, carried on successful espionage until his nerves gave way and destroyed his usefulness in 1941. The sabotage and paramilitary activities of the South African Olympic boxer, Robey Leibbrandt, are detailed in another chapter. The 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin had convinced this extreme Afrikaner nationalist that Nazi life was the life for him, and about a year after winning the South African heavyweight championship he returned to Germany to be trained for sabotage activities in the dominion. The German Foreign Ministry was also interested in him; it looked upon him as potential *führer* of a South African fifth column. His operations were successful for a time, his defiance and evasion of the South African police becoming a public scandal, but in the end his movement was penetrated by an agent of the government and he was captured. He was not released from prison until after the Malan government came to power in 1948.

The book devotes a good deal of attention to tradecraft, especially recruiting, training, and cover; the authors believe, in particular, that the problem of cover was not thoroughly thought through by the Abwehr. The kind of cover used was often appropriate enough, but the Abwehr was not always careful to provide backstopping or to brief the agent in sufficient detail to withstand interrogation. It is pointed out that in one case when the German agents were forced to live their cover for a short time before undertaking their mission, British interrogation officials were never able to crack them. The British remained suspicious of these men and kept them in-

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turned for the duration, but at least their lives were saved. Another episode of interest from the tradecraft point of view is the story of two Norwegians infiltrated into England. Just as the Abwehr was on the point of sending them out, a Norwegian infiltration agent of the British service fell into its hands. From the information gained through this lucky catch, the Abwehr was able to launch successfully a sabotage penetration which otherwise would probably have ended in failure.

The access the authors had to Von Lahousen's diaries and their elaboration of the material make this book an interesting addition to the literature of intelligence operations.