

Arthur B. Darling Interview:

DONOVAN, William J.

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Donovan, William J. Interview

He had before him the draft of the first two chapters on "Origins in War" and "Plans in Peace Time," and commented as he read. During the course of his reading, he made other remarks which I have held aside for recording at the end of this paper.

I/9(2)
I/11(1)
I/16(1)
I/20(2)
I/29(1)

He liked the style of the first three or four pages. Its simplicity appealed to him. But with his own historical interest in intelligence always in mind, he took exception to the thought that counterintelligence came later. His idea was that counterintelligence in this country began at least with the Revolution. On the next page (p. 2) he noticed the reference to a recent visit of German officers and remarked that some who had been tried at Nuremberg had come to this country. The implication was that I had nothing new.

I/43(2)
I/58(1)
X/56(2)
I/32(1)
I/102(2)

Beginnings
of
Counter-
Intelligence

German
Officers
Shown
America

When Donovan came to the statement with regard to propaganda (p. 5) just after the quotation from Daniel Webster, I got my first blast. He did not like the remark about purveyance of information. It was untrue. Propaganda was a weapon of exploitation; it could be crooked as well as straight. My statement, he said, was much too compact at this point. He thought that I should open up at once the use of propaganda to break the will of the enemy. As for the rest of my statement, he thought it complicated, academic, stilted. I remarked that in his opinion it was "pedantic." He smiled and said it certainly was.

Propaganda
a
Weapon
of
Exploitation

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Donovan stopped there to give me his concept of psychological warfare. My fact was wrong, he said, when I spoke of the growth of propaganda in psychological warfare. It had not grown out of propaganda. It had existed since the days of the Trojan Horse. Psychological warfare, he said, was a fusion of many elements, political and economic as well as psychic; and it moved rapidly into physical operations. The target, however, was the other man's mind. The purpose was of course to break his will to resist. General Donovan opposed any attempt to separate the elements of psychological warfare from each other. My thought with regard to the relativity of truth left him utterly cold. And yet he was praising intellectual honesty as an attribute of individuals. I felt sure that he himself took pride in being forthright and honest. When it came to affairs of state, however, war was the normal. All means were to be employed.

Psychological Warfare Ancient

Relativity of Truth no Concern

[See the interview with Admiral Leahy.]

It was not right to say (p. 6) that the President sent Donovan abroad at Knox's suggestion. Ambassador Kennedy was declaring that Britain could not stand. Roosevelt sent Donovan for two purposes. The first in importance was to discover if Britain could stand up to the German attack. The second was to examine the operations of German fifth columns. Donovan reported orally. There was no written statement, he said, prior to his memorandum of June 10, 1941. I gathered that his report favored the British against Kennedy's pessimism. It was after this trip to Europe that Donovan went with Knox to visit the Pacific Fleet. Here came the story of

Donovan to Europe in 1940

Visit with the Pacific Fleet

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his remark to certain officers that if the Americans could launch aircraft from their carriers so close to Pearl Harbor the Japanese might do the same. The Navy men replied that it would be impossible for the Japanese to get into Pearl Harbor.

The next trip to Europe by Christmas 1940 was as I have it (p. 7), but too briefly. Donovan gave me more about Dykes, the British officer who accompanied him, and about their negotiations in Yugoslavia. The Regent (Prince Paul), he said, was pro-Nazi; in the course of their conversation Donovan picked up the fact that the Germans planned to land at Bengasi. He reported this to General Wavell. Wavell's intelligence officer did not believe it. The result, according to Donovan, was that the Germans swept to the outskirts of Alexandria. As for King Boris of Bulgaria, Donovan and his British colleague "got him on the run." The Germans indeed sensed enough of his purposes, as I have written. According to Donovan they were very worried. He has a copy of Dykes' diary. I may see it anytime I wish. Upon his return, he talked with Stimson, Knox and Jackson as I have written, but left no memoranda with them. Dykes was a high ranking British engineer on the Planning Staff. He was sent with Donovan by Churchill.

When we came to the President's military order (p.9), Donovan stated that the order was not withdrawn. It was rewritten to please the Army and Navy. It still was a military order. He was so positive about this that I have followed his statement and not the story in the "War Report" (Vol. I, pp. 261-262).

Donovan
and
Dykes
in
Yugoslavia
and
Bulgaria

The
Military
Order
of
July 11, 1941

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Criticism
from the
Bureau
of the
Budget

Then General Donovan came to the criticism (p. 10) from the Bureau of the Budget. His eye apparently fell on the word "ambitious" and I got the second explosion. I should consult Blanchard; he would see to it that I did. Who was this fellow Gosnell? Whoever he was, neither he nor W. O. Hall knew a thing about it! Obviously Donovan resented at that time, and still does, the accusation which you hear on so many occasions that he was personally ambitious. In his honest opinion, and he is certainly as honest as abrupt, he took a job for Roosevelt and stayed with it although his real ambition was to "lead troops." He is proud that General Marshall spoke of putting him in command of a division. He has been interested in warfare ever since the day when he enlisted as a private. This retort gave me the opportunity to mention his desire to take charge of an American Commando Force. He readily admitted that he would have been glad to do so.

A
Warrior

In this connection Donovan said that neither the Army nor the Navy had strength enough to control intelligence. It was his duty as well as opportunity (if that was ambition) to put the various parts of intelligence together in a "central" organization. This, he said, was an American contribution in the history of intelligence. A little later he said that the British kept separate "SE, SI, and PWE." Donovan did not agree with their idea. The United States was the first to put all clandestine elements into one organization.

The American
Contribution
to
Intelligence

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Cooperation
with the
British

I had written (p. 12) that the articulation with the British intelligence service was so close that for practical advantages on many occasions the British and American systems functioned as one. When Donovan's eye caught this assertion he blurted, "No, no, never." The British had offices in the same building and they gave a great deal of assistance to the Americans but there was never anything like articulation. I took note of this statement because, in the fall of 1944 when "OSS" was being accused of penetration by the British, General Donovan gave them credit (pp. 43-44) for having worked closely with the American intelligence service and having given "OSS" on occasion more information than it could get from either the Army or the Navy.

The Charge
of
Penetration

The British were always interested in three things, intelligence, communications and politics. So they were sometimes quite reluctant to share intelligence, particularly if it were associated with either one of the other two in such a way as to jeopardize British interests if exposed. Donovan spoke of William Stephenson, the British officer in charge of both "SE" and "SI" as being very helpful. I surmised that Stephenson was head of the British office in New York, but I am not certain.

The British
Interests

Inspections
by
McNarney
and
Horne

My statement (p. 16) with regard to inspections by McNarney and Horne was too scant. To Donovan this was in fact a crisis. He thought that I should have more on the episode. I was to return later for material in his possession, but illness in my family prevented until after he had left on his mission in Southeast Asia for President Eisenhower.7

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It was on page 20 that General Donovan found cause for his greatest blast. When he came to my sentence about the civilians in his agency, he gave it to me with both barrels about like this:

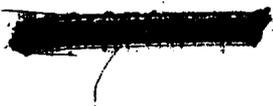
"How could you say such a thing! That makes me sore. Whoever told you that?" To my reply that it was often said, particularly by military men (I might have cited instances in the documents but I did not for I hardly had a chance), he retorted that the military men were the "leaky boys." I did not say anything. He cooled off immediately and later in the day, when talking to Houston in Washington over the telephone, remarked that perhaps he had been "a little rough on Mr. Darling." Before I left his office he was jovially thanking me for coming, expressing his pleasure, complimenting me for being honest and having a sense of humor. As he handed me with a smile one more of his speeches to read, I told him the hurricane story from Boston; I would read it "for fifty cents." He laughed. We parted on the friendliest of terms. I could come back to New York anytime, once a week if I wished, use anything he had there.

The
"Leaky
Boys"

Donovan's
Temperament

Donovan pointed out to me that my treatment of "X-2" (pp. 28-29) was superficial. He thought that I should give more credit to the British for letting the American intelligence service place men in their own organization to learn the names of Hitler's agents. He thought that my transition into criticism was too abrupt, that I should have been more comprehensive. The British, he said, were most anxious to protect their own country against penetration by the German agents and did an excellent job. He said that

Counter-
espionage



British
Success
with
German
Agents

they seized all German agents and turned them into "double agents."
This amazed me so that I asked, "Is not that remarkable?" He said,
"It certainly is."

The more I thought about it the more I felt that he exaggerated. Doubtless the British were successful, but they must have missed some of the German agents. It seemed less likely that they had made all of them into double agents, for the reason that the British kept a good many interned. Probably Donovan meant only that the British were most successful in apprehending and converting German operators, and at least exposed them so well that they dared not do anything further. For this reason, he said the British did not want American agents in their areas.

American
Agents
in
British
Areas

I had written (p. 30) that the first studies of "R & A" were not well related to one another or focused upon the needs of the Army and Navy. Donovan took exception to the statement and placed the blame more on the Army and Navy because they had not been able to tell "R & A" what they wanted it to produce. When the Army and Navy found out what they wished, the reports of "R & A" became better.

The Reports
of
"R & A"

MacArthur
and
Donovan

Donovan talked with MacArthur regarding the use of "OSS" in the Western Pacific. MacArthur told Donovan to see Sutherland. When Donovan offered to "put a team" in the Western Pacific, Sutherland said, "Turn them over to us." Donovan said "No, they would be dead wood to you and no use to us." In other words, Donovan might have operated in the Western Pacific (p. 32) if he had been willing to let the enterprise be entirely managed under



MacArthur's command. This of course he was not willing to do. The question was who would "get the credit." I then called Donovan's attention to MacArthur's statement (p. 65). Donovan said: "That's a very fair statement by General MacArthur from his own point of view." At this point we went off on the tangent of the Pacific War and never got back to discussion of the Donovan Plan. (pp. 33-48).

Nimitz

We turned to Donovan's relations with Nimitz. There came from Donovan the formula: "Well, he's a good friend of mine but —." Donovan never finished the sentence. In its place, he said that Nimitz's younger officers were constantly at the "OSS back door." I asked, "What for? A handout?" Donovan laughed and said, "That's the word for it." Then we talked on Wedemeyer in China.

"OSS"
in
China

Donovan said I ought to know more about the operations of "OSS" with Wedemeyer (pp. 66-67). He suggested that I get the record, some four volumes, probably in "OSS Archives" in the possession of the Agency. I should study operation "Augur" which was to be a complete "appraisement" of the Soviet activities. Donovan himself did business with Mao Tze-tung and got his consent to put a group with Mao's forces. This, said Donovan, would have given us a chance to find out all about him even the number of shoes his soldiers had. But the State Department forbade it.

Donovan
and
Mao Tze-tung

The second major operation for me to examine had to do with the Kwantung Army of Japan in Manchuria. It was supposed to number 750,000 men. Donovan said that he did not believe this; so he asked permission to go in and find out. But this operation too was

Japanese
Forces
in
Manchuria

stopped. I asked if it were checked by the State Department. He replied that certainly they had a part in it. Donovan was convinced that the Japanese force in Manchuria was hollow, that many of the troops had been sent elsewhere. We paid too high a price, he said, for Russian help in the Far East. If the weakness of this Army had been exposed in time, we might have been saved from dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan was much nearer collapse than we knew. I could feel strong convictions behind these statements. Donovan did not specifically mention Stimson in this connection, but I thought of Stimson's responsibility for the decision to drop the bomb in order to save the lives of American troops in the forthcoming invasion of Japan.

Need
for "OSS"

Donovan
to
Smith,
Director
of the
Budget

He asked me if I had his letter on the liquidation of "OSS" with placement of its assets in another agency. This is the letter of August 25, 1945 to Mr. H. D. Smith, Director of the Budget. Donovan wished me to make sure that he was not just trying to maintain "OSS" itself.

Donovan
and
Hillenkoetter

During the course of the talk he had spoken of Admiral Hillenkoetter as a fine fellow. I asked Donovan about his offer of a place in "OSS" to Hillenkoetter. Donovan replied that he had tried to get Hillenkoetter to take charge in the Pacific but the Navy would not let him go to "OSS." I then inquired about the success of Hillenkoetter's intelligence for Nimitz at Pearl Harbor. Donovan dismissed it as a failure. The more I thought about the statement, and talked it over with Houston, the more it seemed to me

His work
in the
Pacific

[REDACTED]

that Donovan was thinking of Hillenkoetter's work in terms of strategic intelligence, that is intelligence in every phase. From Hillenkoetter's statements to me, I gathered that he had been concerned in the Pacific primarily with "operational" intelligence. (See Hillenkoetter's story on the Alaskan campaign.)

Patrols
and
Resistance
Groups

As we were discussing Donovan's work in the Balkans for Roosevelt in 1941, he explained at some length the use of officer patrols to make contacts with resistance groups and to maintain liaison with the Air Force. Donovan said that he developed this idea out of his experience as a cavalryman.

Hitler's
Disadvantage

In passing, he made the arresting comment that Hitler was at a disadvantage in his intelligence because he was obliged to subvert. But all we had to do was appeal to the natural patriotism of the people with whom we dealt in going into a country overrun by war.

"Jay Franklin"
Carter

I asked him if he knew who had written the anonymous plan for Roosevelt (p. 43) in the fall of 1944. He said that it was John Carter. Neither of us could remember the middle name at the moment. Then I asked if he knew who had been guilty of the famous release (p. 58) to the press in February 1945 of his plan and Joint Chief's civilian plan. He said that it was General Bissell. I commented that there was a feeling in some quarters that it had been done by the "FBI." Donovan said no, it was Bissell. He was sure that it was Bissell because Bissell was so sore at the whole program.

General
Bissell

The "FBI"

Donovan thought that the "FBI" was glad enough to have it happen, but he did not think that Hoover or anybody else in the organization had anything to do with the exposure.

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Donovan
to
Walter B. Smith

Sometime during the interview I asked General Donovan if he recalled his letter to General Smith on September 17, 1943 with regard to making this permanent central intelligence agency a "fourth arm." He did not reply specifically about the letter but the inquiry led him to say that he still believed the agency should be headed by a civilian who should be individually responsible not to a board but to a superior between him and the President.

A
Civilian
Head

General Donovan had not changed his view with regard to the organization. In time of actual war he would expect of course, as he had always said, that the intelligence agency should come under the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He thought that military men should have a part in the agency. The head of it should be a civilian. But he should not be allowed to become a professional spending all of his time at the business. This idea was a relatively new development in Donovan's thinking.

Changed
from
Time
to
Time

Donovan made this point as we were riding downtown. The Agency he said should have career personnel in the offices. The "DCI" could have a professional "chief of operations." But Donovan thought, at this time anyway, that the "DCI" should be brought in from the outside from time to time, a fresh mind with different experiences. There doubtless was a great deal more in his mind. It seemed to me that I

The
Relation
of the
"DCI" to
His
Professional
Staff

should ask him to develop it the next opportunity I had to talk with him. He spoke also of the tendency to create a planning staff of subordinates and mediocrities. To General Donovan there should be a planning staff for the "DCI," but it should consist of very "high-level"

The
"Planning
Staff"

military men and four or five of wide and keen experience drawn from civil life.

* mpc } meaning? subordinates to DCI? why not ~~TOP SECRET~~