

I n a n d O u t o f S O E

Although the failure of our first training venture was depressing, it had the advantage of getting me back to London, where I could at least feel nearer to the corridors of power and decision. In practical terms, it did me little immediate good. I had no specific duties, and therefore could not lay claim to office space. I drifted round Balcer Street, trying to memorise the new faces and fit them into a coherent organisational pattern, a most difficult task for anyone at that time. Everybody seemed very busy, if only moving furniture. In the presence of such activity, my idleness embarrassed me. It was like a cocktail party at which everybody knows everybody but nobody knows you.

Improbable though it seemed at the time, I was witnessing the birth-pangs of what was to become a formidable organisation. If I have described its origins, such as I saw them, in flippant terms, it is

because flippancy is unavoidable. Between the wars, the intelligence service had enjoyed a mythical prestige; but the myth had little substance. This statement may strain the credulity of many, especially in the absence of published records. But is it any more incredible than the known fact that the prestigious fleet sent to Alexandria to frighten Mussolini away from Abyssinia was incapable of action because it had no shells? The truth is that, under a succession of complacent and indifferent governments, the secret service had been allowed to wither, just as the armed forces had withered. Apart from financial starvation, there was little serious approach to staffing and system. Just as horse-minded officers were allowed to dominate the army twenty years and more after the battle of Cambrai, so the secret service, because its Chief happened to be an admiral, was overloaded with naval rejects. No particular blame can attach to Admiral Sinclair for this; thrown entirely on his own slender resources, he naturally picked his subordinates from the circles he knew best.

As for system, there was virtually none. When, as a result of the Fifth Column scares in Spain, the potential importance of undercover action against an enemy seeped into what passed for British military thinking, the result was reluctant improvisation. Section was grafted on to a sceptical SIS, to plan noisy acts of derring-do, while the theme of "black propaganda" became the toy of a number of government fringe organisations which stumbled about in the

Underground" or subversive propaganda.—*Eds.*

dark, bumping into one another. Small wonder that the results in the first year of war were minimal. In case I should be thought to exaggerate, let me quote Colonel Bickham Sweet-Escott, one of the ablest and most perceptive officers to serve SOE throughout the war: "Our record of positive achievement (Summer, 1940) was unimpressive. There were a few successful operations to our credit, but certainly not many; and we had something which could be called an organisation on the ground in the Balkans. But even there we had failed to do anything spectacular . . . our essays in Balkan subversion had succeeded only in making the Foreign Office jumpy. As for Western Europe, though there was much to excuse it, the record was lamentable, for we did not possess one single agent between the Balkans and the English Channel."² Strange, but true.

This was the background of the changes described in the last chapter. But they were only small parts of a much bigger programme of reform. In July, 1940, Churchill invited Dr. Dalton, the Minister of Economic Warfare, to assume sole responsibility for all undercover action against the enemy. To discharge this responsibility, Dalton called into being an organisation which he called the Special Operations Executive. Originally, it was divided into three parts: SO1, for black propaganda; S02, for sabotage and subversion; and S03, for planning. SO1 was later rechristened Political Warfare Executive, and S02 took

²B. Sweet-Escott, *Baker Street Irregular* (London: Methuen), 1965.

over the name originally given to the organisation as a whole, Special Operations Executive. For the sake of brevity, I will refer to them in future as PWE and SOE, even if the events described took place before the change of name. SO3 need bother us no longer, as it soon drowned in paper of its own making and died an unlamented death.

I was beginning to wonder how long I could go on drawing pay without working for it when I received a summons from Colin Gubbins. He had been put in charge, among other things, of our training programme, and must have heard my name in connection with the abortive Brickendonbury experiment. Gubbins, of course, was to achieve great distinction by the end of the war, and I am pleased to think that at that first interview I sat up and took notice. The air of his office crackled with energy, and his speech was both friendly and mercifully brief. A friend of mine nicknamed him Whirling Willie after a character in a contemporary comic strip. It was rumoured that he could only find time for his girl-friends at breakfast. But he was man enough to keep them.

Gubbins began by asking if I knew anything about political propaganda. Guessing that he would like a monosyllabic answer, I replied: Yes. He went on to explain that the new training establishment was being planned on an ambitious scale. There would be a considerable number of technical schools for demolition, wireless communication, and the rest. In addition, he was setting up a central school for general training in the techniques of sabotage and subversion. Under-

ground propaganda was one of the techniques required, and he was looking for a suitable instructor. He wanted me to go away and produce a draft syllabus on the subject. He showed me to the door with the words: "Make it short."

When I got down to it, I realised that my knowledge of propaganda left much to be desired. I had no inside experience of modern advertising methods. My few years in journalism had taught me to report what was happening, often a fatal mistake in a propagandist whose task is to persuade people to do things. I consoled myself with the unconvincing reflection that the world had seen many successful propagandists who had been equally ignorant of the techniques of selling soap. But, to be on the safe side, I took the trouble to consult a few friends of mine in the advertising world from whom I picked up some basic principles that could be padded out to fill quite a few lectures. I have found that advertising people can be relied on for two things. First, they will warn you on no account to go into advertising; second, they will expatiate at length on the dirtier tricks of their profession.

Within a few days I felt that I had enough to sustain the draft syllabus which Gubbins wanted, provided I lent it reality by drawing on examples from European politics and from Fascism in particular. I compressed it all into a page and a half of foolscap and telephoned Gubbins to say that it was ready. In five minutes he was back again, saying that he had arranged a meeting in Charles Hambro's office to

discuss the paper that afternoon. It was the first time since the fall of France that I had seen any action to speak of.

Gubbins brought several of his staff officers along to the meeting. Hambro greeted us in his friendly, comfortable way, making us all feel at home. He took my paper and read it aloud, slowly and deliberately. At the end of it, he remarked that it all sounded very sensible. Gubbins's officers nodded in brisk, non-nonsense manner; they looked intensely military. To my surprise, Gubbins himself was smiling happily. "Exactly what I wanted," he said emphatically. "*Exactly* . . . what do you say, Charles?" Hambro said nothing in particular. Perhaps the Great Western Railway was on his mind. "Go ahead and do just that," Gubbins told me. The meeting was over.

I had now got specific duties which entitled me to a desk in Gubbins's offices. These were not at No. 64, but further up Baker Street towards Regent's Park. I set about expanding my draft syllabus into a series of full lectures. But I was still far from happy. The new school was to be located in Beaulieu, Hampshire, far from London. Such a distance would interfere horribly with my other pursuits. Sometimes it seemed that I would do better to throw my hand in, but I was deterred by two considerations. In the first place, it was essential to keep my foot in the door of the secret world to which I had gained access. It would be stupid to resign until I had a clear prospect of other employment in that same world. In the second place, knowledge is seldom wasted, and I could not lose by finding out what was going on in the Special

Operations' far-flung training establishments. I decided to stay on until something more rewarding turned up.

I had little doubt that the training people would let me go when the moment came. I knew that I would make a lousy lecturer. Since the age of four I have had a stammer, sometimes under control, sometimes not. I also had qualms about the subject matter of my course. The prospect of talking about political subversion did not worry me. There were very few people in England at that time who knew anything about it, and I had at least had a little practical experience in that field. But I was disturbed by my rudimentary acquaintance with propaganda techniques. I had drafted leaflets before, but had never printed one.

It was some time before we foregathered at Beaulieu, and I used it to fill some of the gaps in my knowledge. As often as possible, I visited Woburn Abbey, where Leeper presided languidly over the black propaganda people in PWE. (More than four years later, I found him little changed. It was the summer of 1945; he was languidly swatting flies in the British Embassy in Athens while Greece came to the boil.) But I was surprised to learn that he could be pettish on occasion. It was said that he clashed with Dalton more often than not, and gave the good Doctor much food for exasperated thought. There is some confirmation of this story in Dalton's memoirs.

If the new Baker Street was the preserve of banking, big business, and the law, Woburn had been stormed by the advertisers. Outside Leeper's own

sanctum, the place sounded like a branch of J. Walter Thompson. There were exceptions, of course: Dick Crossman, Con O'Neill, Sefton Delmer and Valentine Williams, to mention a few. But the majority, so it seemed, had just the sort of expertise I stood most in need of.

At first, I was treated with some reserve. Like all departments, especially new ones, Woburn was on the lookout for trespassers. But they soon realised that my interest in getting to know them was sincere, and that I was more than ready to accept advice. It was clear that secret agents in Europe would indulge in propaganda, whether we wanted it or not. That being the case, it was good policy for Woburn, as the authority responsible for black propaganda, to get a foot in the door in the shape of a cooperative instructor. After a few visits, I qualified for a lunch with Leeper. Valentine Williams, who was present, offered to drive me back to London in his official Rolls Royce. I would have liked to talk to him about Clubfoot. But we had lunched well and he slept all the way.

There was another, perhaps more important, field for my researches at this time. It was all very well to teach agents the forms of propaganda. But the content of propaganda was just as important. Doubtless, the agents would get their orders on the day; but it was necessary to prepare them in advance for the sort of orders they would receive. This required a certain amount of political indoctrination, so that they would reach their fields of operation with at least some general idea of what the British Government had in

mind for the future. Woburn was not a good place to seek answers to such questions. Leeper and his men were themselves complaining of the lack of political direction from London.

For this purpose, I turned to Hugh Gaitskell. I had known him slightly before the war, when we had discussed Austrian problems. I cannot remember the nature of his interest, and I am quite sure that he did not know mine. At the time of which I am speaking, he was Principal Private Secretary- to Dalton, sitting right under the horse's mouth. He was closely associated with Gladwyn Jebb, whom Dalton had made responsible for Baker Street operations. Gaitskell was a very busy man and usually suggested our meeting for dinner at a pub off Berkeley Square. We would discuss my problems over sausages and mash. Sometimes we would go back to his office and consult Jebb or perhaps the Doctor himself. The latter was always ready with a hospitable whisky-and-soda. (I have already boasted of having recognised Gubbins as a man of distinction. To restore the balance, I must confess that I never suspected in Gaitskell the first-class Front Bench material which emerged later.)

On the whole, the result of these meetings was disappointing. Dalton was having his troubles with the Foreign Office. It was facile then, as it is now, to speak of a Foreign Office view. There are a lot of people in the Foreign Office and quite a few views. But when all the objections to a given course of action were taken into account, the common denominator which was left was usually unexciting. It often appeared that the British wanted a simple return to

the status quo before Hitler, to a Europe comfortably dominated by Britain and France through the medium of reactionary governments just strong enough to keep their own people in order and uphold the *cordon sanitaire* against the Soviet Union.

This view of Europe was incompatible with the very existence of SOE. Its aim, in Churchill's words, was to set Europe ablaze. This could not be done by appealing to people to cooperate in restoring an unpopular and discredited old order. It could not even be done by working on the feelings of the moment; they were conditioned largely by Hitler's uninterrupted sequence of victories. We could operate effectively only by anticipating the mood of Europe after a few more years of war and Nazi domination had steeled them to take the future into their own hands. This would, without doubt, be a revolutionary mood. It would sweep away the Europe of the 20's and 30's.

Dalton and Gaitskell, of course, saw the contradiction between their SOE mission and the Foreign Office view. But they had to walk warily because they themselves had no clear alternative. Both were sure, like good Socialists, that the European trade unions held one of the most important keys to the situation. But it was doubtful whether the unions would take the risks involved at the behest of a British Government, even if it contained Attlee, Bevin, Dalton and other socialists. To many, it seemed that wartime Britain was very different from the Britain of Baldwin and Chamberlain. But how could a foreigner be sure that it was not just a different cloak for the betrayer

of Abyssinia, Spain and Czechoslovakia? Suspicion was kept alive by the failure of the British to unfold a truly revolutionary propaganda. The lack of suitable political direction dogged us throughout the war. All resistance groups took our money and supplies; very few paid heed to the voice of London. They emerged only when they saw their own way to the future, not the way envisaged for them by the British Government. Thus the comparative success of SOE on the side of physical demolition and harassment was matched by its comparative failure in the political field.

This is not the place for a discussion of the limitations of SOE, whether imposed from outside or inherent in its own weaknesses. I mention these problems only to illustrate the doubts which beset me as I joined the teaching staff at Beaulieu. They explain why, in spite of the good companions I found at the school, my stay there was almost wholly unsatisfactory. My own shortcomings, and the enforced neglect of my other interests, contributed substantially to the unhappy state of affairs. I escaped to London whenever I could, usually on the pretext of visiting Woburn for talks on technical matters. But it was not enough. No wonder that my mess bill was consistently the highest.

My discontent was in no way due to my colleagues at Beaulieu, in whom I was lucky. Our commandant, John Munn, was a young colonel of the sensible military type, as opposed to the no-nonsense military, the mystical military and the plain-silly military. He neither barked nor advocated Yoga. He held together

a shoal of pretty odd fish in a net of personal authority. His treatment of us was adult, and his attitude to his own superiors was loyally critical. His Chief of Staff was an older man who had seen service in the First World War. He was fond of saying that he had security in his bones, and looked as if he had little marrow in them. But he was only occasionally a nuisance and had a pretty talent for the piano.

The Chief Instructor was a colourful character called Bill Brooker, who afterwards made a great success of the subsidiary training school established in Canada. He was the dynamic-salesman type, with an inexhaustible armoury of wisecracks and anecdotes, including a series in brilliant Marseilles argot. As far as I am aware, he had never lived an underground life. But, after a little research, he could talk to trainees as if he had never lived otherwise. He was assisted by a paler imitation of himself, who described himself as a drysalter. Drysalting, I learnt, was one of the more respectable of City occupations.

We had one of the pottery Wedgwoods, pale and wild-eyed, who would break long silences by unexpected and devastating sallies. There was Trevor-Wilson, who later displayed a gift for captivating both the French and the Chinese which proved invaluable when he was posted to Hanoi. He used to visit Southampton regularly on private business about which he would smile savourously and say nothing. One day he was refused official transport for the purpose and resolutely walked the whole way, there and back—some fifteen to twenty miles. It was the most determined act of gallantry in my experience. In

abrupt contrast to Trevor-Wilson, there was a Buchmanite³ who unhappily marked me down for conversion. The end came when he gave me his views on sexual intercourse and I remarked that I felt sorry for his wife. After that, our contacts were limited to table-tennis, which he played with a dexterity suggesting human origin.

The star of our team was Paul Dehn, who had now fulfilled his early promise as an entertainer. He proved that deep waters do not have to be still. At bottom, he was a serious man with a warm and generous strain of romanticism. On the surface, he bubbled and frothed like a trout stream. His tomfoolery at the piano shortened the long summer evenings, and some of his images are still with me. He claimed to have heard at a Manchester bus-stop the following snatch of conversation. First prosperous grocer to second prosperous grocer: "Adabitacunt last night. Aaaaah, it was luvly . . . just like a velvet marse-trap "

The one of us who achieved most public recognition after the war (if we except Paul Dehn) was Hardy Amies, the dress-designer. He was my first and only contact with that profession, and he looked the part in a large and elegant fore-and-aft, green for the Intelligence Corps. He was not a regular member of our mess, as he was liaison officer between the school and headquarters in Baker Street, one of his

³ Frank Nathan Daniel Buchman, an American evangelist and missionary, founder of the Oxford Group movement, who carried on an extensive campaign for "Moral Rearmament" in Great Britain, 1939. His followers were "Buchmanites."—*Eds.*

main duties being to dig out of headquarters material of potential value to our instructing staff. As our requirements were, at that stage, almost limitless, he could have made for himself a pretty wide field of enquiry. I felt unreasonably resentful of his presence as his job would have suited me better than my own.

The first fact to distinguish me from my colleagues was that I was alone in having had personal experience of life underground. Not one of the others had ever dreamt of lowering his voice when passing a policeman in the street. Yet subsequent experience convinced me that, in the circumstances, the choice of raw instructors was wise. Seasoned secret service officers were in desperately short supply. In practice, they could only have been drawn from SIS. It was clear that if SIS had been approached for suitable instructors, it would have followed time-honoured practice by off-loading its duds (if even they could have been spared). It is awesome to think what would have happened to the trainees if they had fallen into the hands of Foley of Berlin, Giffey of Riga, or Steptoe of Shanghai. As it was, our staff of instructors had more than their fair share of intelligence and imagination; beside them, some of the old hands would have looked imbecile. This view, I think, is borne out by experience. There has been much criticism of SOE; of its planning, its operations, its security. But attacks on its training establishment have been relatively and deservedly few.

The second fact that set me apart from my colleagues was that they were all in uniform. On occasion, Peters and Gubbins had both dropped remarks

about the desirability of getting me into the army. As I have already said, I thought that such a step might seriously limit my freedom of movement without offering any countervailing benefit. I found that the best way to maintain my eccentric status was neither to agree or disagree; in face of my apparent total indifference, the subject was quietly forgotten. Long before the end of the war, I came to realise my good fortune. I was never inhibited by dreams of promotion nor by the envy of colleagues, and never had rank pulled on me by senior officers outside my service.

The great difference between Beaulieu and Brickendonbury was that we actually trained people at Beaulieu. We were no longer an overstuffed holding camp, but a real school. There was a group of Norwegians who were remarkable at fieldcraft. In one night exercise, after only a few weeks of training, the whole group succeeded in reaching a particular upstairs room in a house after penetrating thick woods strewn with alarms and booby-traps, laid by the head gamekeeper at Sandringham,⁴ and crossing an open garden heavily patrolled by members of the instructing staff. I was on patrol myself and could have sworn that not one had got through. There were my old Spanish friends from Brickendonbury, required to do a little work at last. After my first talk with them, they nicknamed me *el comisario politico*. These were presumably the same Spaniards whom my old friend,

⁴ One of the few thousand Nobby Clarices in Britain. He was seconded to us as fieldcraft instructor. ["Nobby Clark" is a rough British equivalent of "good Joe" or "nice guy."—Eds.]

Peter Kemp, met on the shores of Loch Morar, near Arisaig. In his instructive book, *No Colours or Crest*, Kemp writes of them: "A villainous crowd of assassins; we made no attempt to mix with them"—a remarkable case of telepathic judgment.⁵ My own feeling is that after being mucked around for a year or so by the British Government, they would cheerfully have killed anyone in the uniform of a British officer. But they exercised restraint.

It is only with sadness that one can recall the party of Dutchmen who attended our first course. Too many of them, owing to an operational disaster, were soon to be sent to certain death. Herr Giskes, a former Abwehr officer, has written of the capture in Holland of an SOE wireless operator, who thereafter communicated with England under German control and was responsible for party after party being dropped straight into the arms of waiting Germans. Subsequent enquiry seems to have established that the captured operator did in fact send the emergency signal telling HQ that he was in German hands, but that somehow his message was wrongly interpreted, or just ignored.

Shortly after the school opened, we were sent a party of anti-Fascist Italians, recruited from among Italian prisoners-of-war in India by Alberto Tarchiani and his friends. They were unfortunate in the

⁵ My views on Spain and Spaniards naturally differ from those of Peter Kemp who fought for General Franco during the Civil War. But I fully appreciate his description of the shock he suffered on first exposure to Hugh Quennell, the head of the SOE Spanish section.

choice of the British officer put in charge of them. He spoke perfect Italian, but was of the barking type. I used to wonder, not very sympathetically, when he would get a stiletto in his ribs. There were also two Frenchmen, booked for some special mission which was not divulged to us. One was Right, the other Left; but both had an admirable hatred of Vichy. They turned out to be my star pupils, and within a fortnight they were producing leaflets of a high standard. I mention this because they were almost the only trainees who took the slightest interest in politics or political propaganda. The others were probably better SOE material; brave but pliable, content to do what they were told without worrying about the future shape of Europe.

I was clearly bad SOE material, since worry about the future shape of Europe was my chief preoccupation. The war situation was going from bad to worse. The Greek army, facing the Italians in Albania, had shot its bolt by spring. The Yugoslav revolution of April, for which SOE claimed some credit (our people had been there and *post hoc, propter hoc*), was followed by the prompt invasion of Yugoslavia and occupation of Greece. Worst of all was the loss of Crete, for the defence of which sufficient British resources should have been available. The retention of Suda Bay would have been substantial compensation for the loss of the Balkan mainland. It was difficult to discuss such matters in our mess, where a tendency to the stiff upper lip masked realities. But still greater events were looming.

One fine morning, my batman woke me with a cup

of tea and the words: "He's gone for Russia, sir." After giving two rather perfunctory lectures on propaganda technique, I joined the other instructors in the mess for drinks before lunch. My colleagues were clearly plagued by doubt in this perplexing situation. Which way should the stiff upper lip twitch when Satan warred on Lucifer? "Russky's for the high jump, Yrn afraid/' said Munn reflectively, and his words were generally agreed, or rather approved. The spirit of the Finland volunteers was still very- much alive. For the moment, the subject was closed by the announcement that Mr. Churchill would address the nation that evening. It was clearly wisest to wait until the Prime Minister had spoken.

As usual, Churchill settled the question. By the time he had finished his speech, the Russians were our allies, my colleagues approved, and the upper lip clicked back into place. The only casualty was the spirit of Finland. But in the next few days, we were increasingly alarmed by the informed estimates that seeped through from London of the Red Army's capacity to resist the German onslaught. The Russian section of the War Office Intelligence Directorate wavered between three and six weeks for the duration of Hitler's Russian campaign. SOE and SIS experts said much the same. The most optimistic forecast I heard in those days was attributed to a Brigadier Scaife, then employed, I think, in the Political Warfare Executive. He said that the Russians would hold out "at least three months, possibly much longer." As Evelyn Waugh once wrote: . . . he was bang right."

It was now more than ever necessary for me to get

away from the rhododendrons of Beaulieu. I had to find a better hole with all speed. A promising chance soon presented itself. During my occasional visits to London, I had made a point of calling at Tommy Harris's house in Chesterfield Gardens, where he lived surrounded by his art treasures in an atmosphere of *haute cuisine* and *grand vin*. He maintained that no really good table could be spoiled by wine-stains. I have already explained that Harris had joined MI5 after the break-up of the training-school at Bricken-donbury. It must have been sometime in July that he asked me if I would be interested in a job that called for my special knowledge of Franco Spain. He explained that it would not be with MI5, but with SIS.

In order to make sense of Harris's suggestion, it is necessary to anticipate, very briefly, matters that will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters. SIS was responsible for all secret intelligence work, both espionage and counter-espionage, on foreign soil. MI5 was responsible for counter-espionage and security in Britain and in all British territory overseas. The counter-espionage section of SIS, known as Section V, and MI5 were in fact two sides of the same medal. The primary function of Section V was to obtain advance information of espionage operations mounted against British territory from foreign soil. It was clear that effective advance warning from Section V would go far to help MI5 in its task of safeguarding British security.

Section V, according to Harris, was not providing adequate service. MI5 had been pressing SIS hard to make the necessary improvements, even to the

point of threatening to go into the foreign business itself. Such an extension of MI5's charter could not have taken place without a government decision, but some officials at least were prepared to take the issue up to the top. SIS, therefore, yielded to the pressure by substantially increasing Section V's budget to finance additional staff. As a high proportion of German intelligence operations against Britain were mounted from the Iberian Peninsula, the biggest expansion, from two officers to six, was planned for the sub-section dealing with Spain and Portugal. Harris told me that Felix Henry Cowgill, then head of Section V, was looking for someone with a knowledge of Spain to take charge of the expanded sub-section. If I was agreeable, Harris thought that he could put forward my name with good hope of success.

I decided at once to fall in with the suggestion, but I asked Harris for a few days to think it over. There might have been snags; in any case, I must rationalise my decision. Section V was located at St. Albans, not ideal, but immeasurably better than Beaulieu. My new job would require personal contacts with the rest of SIS and with MI5. There was also a suggestion of Foreign Office interest, not to mention the service departments. By accident, I discovered that the archives of SIS were also located at St. Albans next door to Section V. When I looked for drawbacks, I could only think that the job was not in all respects the one which I would have chosen, Spain and Portugal now lying far out on the flank of my real interest. But the same applied, a thousandfold, to Beaulieu.

A few days later, I told Harris that I would be most

grateful if he took the matter further. He first interested his own boss, Dick Brooman-White, who was then head of MI5's Iberian section, and was later to become a close friend, and I assume that the old-boy network began to operate. I rather think that the formal approach to Section V was made by Dick White," then a senior officer of MI5, and about the only one whose personal relations with Cowgill remained tolerable. (Dick White, "Big Dick," is not to be confused with Dick Brooman-White, "Little Dick." The former was much later to become head of SIS while the latter was elected Conservative M.P. for the Rutherglen constituency.) It was not long before I received a telephone call from Cowgill, asking me to go and see him.

Meanwhile, I was busy disentangling myself from Beaulieu. By means of two spectacular failures in the lecturing line, I made it impossible for anyone to contend that I was indispensable, and Munn received my decision to resign in his sensible and sympathetic way. He only asked me to stay on until I could find a replacement. Here, again, I was luck). I found at a loose end that same *soi-dviant* Hazlitt who, shoulder to shoulder with Commander Peters, had braved the German paratroops at Brickendonbury. The final arrangements took two or three weeks more, during which time I paid a visit to Cowgill at Markvate, on that detestably narrow stretch of the Great North Road. It is a measure of the informality of the times that I had not definitely applied for the job and that

⁶ Mr. (afterward Sir Richard) Goldsmith White.—*Eds.*

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Cowgill therefore could not have indicated his acceptance. Yet, in the course of a long evening, he told me exactly what my duties would be against a background of the structure of SIS as a whole. As his discourse was of a highly secret nature, I took it as a formal statement of intention. In other words, I considered myself hired.