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# 1

## The Origins and Development of SOE's Security Section

The Security Section of the Special Operations Executive, known by the symbol D/CE, formed part of the larger Intelligence and Security Directorate, under the overall control of Air Commodore Archibald Robert ('Archie') Boyle.<sup>1</sup> Born on 11 August 1887, Boyle embarked upon a career in the army in 1907, and won two Military Crosses during the First World War.<sup>2</sup> He entered the civil service in 1922 under a scheme established at the end of the war, and following a brief spell at the Foreign Office was posted to the Air Ministry, where he rose to the rank of Assistant Under Secretary of State.<sup>3</sup> On the outbreak of the Second World War, the Secretary of State for Air 'asked him to relinquish his civil service status and put on the uniform of an airman', and he succeeded Air Commodore Buss as Director of Intelligence.<sup>4</sup> In this capacity, Boyle became involved with the double cross operations being developed by MI5. J.C. Masterman acknowledges Boyle's role in *The Double-Cross System*, noting how he 'chanced his arm' in 'approving information for the SNOW network'.<sup>5</sup>

It was widely felt that following the outbreak of war Air Intelligence had 'not come up to a very high level', and likely as a consequence of this a further reorganisation at the Air Ministry saw Boyle pushed sideways into the position of Air Liaison Officer, with responsibility for 'all Air Attaches all over the world' and for 'liaison with Foreign Air Ministries in this country'.<sup>6</sup> Although there was 'no real soreness' on Boyle's part towards the Air Ministry as a result of this move, it became known that he felt 'somewhat badly treated' and was unhappy with his new position. SOE moved quickly, as Boyle was known to have expressed an interest in joining the organisation. SOE's Chief, Sir Frank Nelson, felt that Boyle, who was 'highly thought of in most quarters', would represent a 'valuable acquisition' for SOE, 'by reason of his long

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experiences, his very valuable contacts and last, but not least, because of his charming personality'. Boyle was later recalled by another security officer, Aonghais Fyffe, as a kind, approachable man, never dictatorial or domineering, who was 'highly respected'. In a description evocative of the fictional spymaster George Smiley, he recalls how Boyle would attend meetings and listen to the proceedings with his eyes closed. The difference, in Boyle's case, being that he did so while smoking a pipe, and 'on one occasion he actually did close his eyes and dropped his pipe!'<sup>7</sup> But, as M.R.D. Foot notes, behind the kind facade of 'dear old Archie Boyle' lay a 'keen and suspicious mind, honed by twenty years' experience of air intelligence'.<sup>8</sup>

Boyle joined SOE on 7 July 1941 as policy adviser to Nelson. Given responsibility for the Intelligence and Security Directorate, his appointment coincided with an extensive shake-up of SOE's existing security machinery. SOE's original Security Section (D/T Section) had been a very small scale affair. Established in October 1940, it had been headed by Lt Col Edward Calthrop, who divided his time between security and his other duties as SOE's liaison officer with the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). A keen sportsman who had served in France and Belgium during the First World War, he had been confined to a wheelchair in the early 1930s, and went on to become SIS Head of Station in Brussels.<sup>9</sup> Under Calthrop, D/T Section was responsible for rudimentary matters of security, also supporting the fledgling Country Sections in their search for suitable recruits by 'furnishing them with names obtained from the records of aliens registered with the Police'.<sup>10</sup>

Calthrop's staff consisted of Captain E.R.W. Breakwell – who was soon replaced as his deputy by E.C. Whetmore – J.D. O'Reilly, and a civilian administrator. Born in London in September 1896, Edwin Charles Whetmore had been studying for a degree in Modern Languages at King's College London when the First World War broke out. He left King's, becoming a Second Lieutenant in the Durham Light Infantry in May 1915, and was wounded in France the following year. In April 1918 Whetmore became an officer in the Intelligence Corps, proceeding to hold a number of military posts during the 1920s before becoming involved in the textile export business.<sup>11</sup>

John ('Jack') Dermot O'Reilly was seconded from Scotland Yard, and given responsibility for SOE's liaison with the police. He was godfather to SOE's well-known cryptographer Leo Marks, who recalled being given a severe dressing down from him for being 'the first NDO [Night Duty Officer] in the history of SOE who had failed to report a single one of the scraps of paper which the security department deliberately left lying

around as a trap for indolent young watchpuppies like me!<sup>12</sup> O'Reilly had been a member of the Intelligence Corps during the First World War, after which he joined Special Branch, spending 8 years as liaison officer in Paris and Brussels. He was initially appointed to SOE in January 1941 for a three-month trial period as liaison officer with Special Branch, joining the organisation on a full-time basis at the time of the shake-up in July. A personnel report on O'Reilly acknowledged his 'marked talent for making contacts'. This, combined with his 'knowledge of the Continent gained in his previous Police work', made him a 'most successful liaison officer'.<sup>13</sup>

With Boyle's appointment as Director of Intelligence and Security in July 1941, Calthrop's association with security came to an end, as liaison with SIS was separated from security work. Major General John Henry Foster Lakin, who had previously served in the Indian Army and more recently with MI5, was appointed head of the new Security Section under Boyle. Lakin was a distinguished soldier who had held high military office in India, and was aide-de-camp to King George V from 1931 to 1933. At an unknown point following his 'retirement' in 1936, Lakin joined MI5.<sup>14</sup> This, in turn, led to his appointment with SOE. The Director General of MI5, Sir David Petrie, later wrote to Lakin stating that 'the best thing I did was to get you out of a very minor post here into one in which your energy and experience would have full scope. The benefit to S.O.E. no one can doubt.'<sup>15</sup>

Lakin took responsibility for liaison with MI5 on Director General and Deputy Director General level, and on matters of operational security, such as they existed at this early stage in SOE's operational development. As his deputy, Whetmore took responsibility for the physical security of the organisation, along with liaison with the Home Office and the armed forces. Former Security Officer Peter Lee recalls that Whetmore was tremendously popular within the Section, but within months of the new security set-up he was replaced as deputy head of Security by John Watt Senter, who had joined the Section with Lakin, taking responsibility for day-to-day liaison with MI5. Writing about Whetmore's departure in November 1941, at which point his transfer to SIS was under consideration, Boyle noted that 'we have parted with his services because he did not fit in', going on to note that although 'undoubtedly . . . a capable person', Whetmore 'did not appear to be cooperative here under the new organisation . . . his presence here would not enhance security or general happiness of the staff'.<sup>16</sup> There was likely more behind Whetmore's departure from SOE than an inability to 'fit in'. In the same letter, Boyle went on to note that 'We cannot . . . deny employment with "C"'s

organisation . . . even though we may have suspicions that the subject is not a trustworthy person. We have, at present, no proof.' He did not elaborate further.

Unsuccessful in his attempt to join SIS, Whetmore ended up in Gibraltar, where he became Chief of Staff to the temporary Governor Admiral Sir G. Frederick Edward-Collins and later General Mason Macfarlane's 'personal operation staff officer'. Whetmore founded the Gibraltar Joint Intelligence Centre in September 1942, and remained 'most anxious' to join SIS when the war came to an end. SIS did not want him, having received adverse reports on his behaviour in Gibraltar, where he had interfered 'to a serious extent with "Y" and R.S.S. affairs, which were not his legitimate concern' – part of what appeared to be 'a considerable programme of Empire building' by Whetmore to 'make himself the sole channel for Intelligence of the special material and all other types in Gibraltar'. On top of this, he was considered to be 'singularly lacking in discretion'.<sup>17</sup>

Despite such characteristics, Peter Lee later recalled that Whetmore's departure from the Security Section was considered 'an absolute tragedy. Everybody adored Whetmore in SOE', a marked contrast to the prevalent attitude towards his successor, John Senter: 'nobody liked Senter very much. He was a very shrewd, tough, self-made barrister. Very clever man.'<sup>18</sup> Another security officer recalls Senter as a 'very autocratic' figure.<sup>19</sup> Born in Edinburgh in May 1905, Senter studied law at Edinburgh University, and was called to the Bar (Middle Temple) in 1928.<sup>20</sup> Rejected by the Army on medical grounds when called up in July 1940, he went on to become a 'Civilian Assistant' at the War Office prior to joining SOE, a description which obscures the fact that he had joined MI5.<sup>21</sup> Senter initially took responsibility for matters of day-to-day liaison with MI5, such as security vetting, censorship and legal questions. In November he was promoted, taking Whetmore's place as Head of General Security and deputy head of the Section as a whole.

Jack O'Reilly, meanwhile, continued to conduct liaison with the police within the reorganised Section. In addition, he undertook liaison with the Registrar General's Department, Ministry of Labour, H.M. Customs and the Board of Trade, assisted by Captain Arthur Maldwyn Baird, who joined the Security Section as Assistant Police Liaison on 4 July. Captain Norman Mott, a 'much liked, laconic pipe-smoker who was never seen to be anything less than cool and controlled, however dreadful the crisis', took responsibility for the security of Headquarters and other buildings in the London area.<sup>22</sup> Mott is remembered fondly by Peter Lee, who

recalls that he 'did the most marvellous imitations of Donald Duck. When we were being bombed all night, and tempers were rather frayed, he used to keep us sane.'<sup>23</sup> Born in London in September 1910, prior to the outbreak of war Mott had worked in insurance in the City, spending the 1930s as an internal auditor for Sun Life Assurance. He joined the Queen's (West Surrey) regiment in 1940, and was commissioned into the Intelligence Corps in January 1941. In February he joined SOE, initially as a Field Security Officer.<sup>24</sup>

Peter Lee himself took responsibility for SOE's Field Security Police. He joined SOE following a six-month spell at the War Office, during which time he 'discovered in the basement two very secret rooms': one was staffed by SOE, the other by SIS. As Lee later recalled, he went looking for a job, with no success, but later received a phone call when a position became available unexpectedly. He went 'haring off' to the basement, where he met Whetmore:

Eventually, on June 1st, I arrived at SOE and I was briefed. I was dressed as a lieutenant, and Whetmore, this very nice major as he then was, then told me about the organisation that I had joined. To my astonishment I was going straight into the sort of books that one read at prep school, I couldn't believe my ears! This went on for three hours, and at the end of it he said, 'Well now we'll break for lunch, but what are you doing dressed as a lieutenant? Go out and buy some pips, it's a captain's job'. And when I came back, now dressed as captain, he then let me know I was in charge of three field security sections . . . for the next two and a half years I started to organise the physical security of our establishments all over the country.<sup>25</sup>

Field Security non-commissioned officers constituted a vital part of the Security Section's physical security arrangements. On 19 December 1940 Whetmore applied to the War Office for three Field Security Sections to be allocated to SOE, requesting personnel who could speak a variety of European languages.<sup>26</sup> These were granted, with a fourth added later in the year.<sup>27</sup> The main function of the Field Security personnel was to accompany recruits through the various stages of training, recording their progress and highlighting any flaws in their characters that could possibly prove fatal in the field.<sup>28</sup> In a memo circulated on 8 February 1941, Calthrop notified Country Section heads that 'all parties of students should be accompanied by one or more F.S. personnel from the very outset of their training'.<sup>29</sup> He asked for

3-day notice when a party was due to undergo training, along with details of its composition – the size of the party, nationality, training centre to be used – so that the most appropriate personnel could be allocated. In order to allay any suspicions, Calthrop emphasised that 'F.S. personnel are clearly instructed that their outward function is not contra-espionage, but that of assisting trainees in every possible way, including their contacts with the training staff', acting as interpreters if necessary. Their presence, however, invariably drew suspicion from those undergoing training, especially those who had escaped from occupied Europe: 'Usually there is a period of a few days when the students look upon me with some suspicion and the idea of "Gestapo" at the back of their minds', wrote Lt Turnbull in April 1943.<sup>30</sup> Peter Lee recalls that the Commandants of the Special Training Schools also thought that Field Security 'were part of the Gestapo'.<sup>31</sup> The schools were run by regular army officers, who 'had an almost paranoiac dislike of anything to do with security, which they regarded as something to do with espionage and spies'.

As well as dealing with such suspicion and hostility, the job was physically demanding, as Field Security personnel participated fully in the training process, 'assisting instructors when necessary as interpreters, and giving the trainees every help both in absorbing the instruction, and in adjusting themselves to the conditions of our service'.<sup>32</sup> Reporting on a recruit in his early forties, a man who refused to be outdone by any of the younger trainees, C.S.M. Thomas recorded that 'Only the most earnest pleading can restrain him from over-doing all his training'; his determination to show his fitness was proving 'a little discouraging for us weaker vessels who stagger along painfully behind on cross-country runs etc'.<sup>33</sup>

The Field Security NCOs who accompanied recruits on their training were 'purposely not shown any of the individual dossiers on recruits held at H.Q. before training commenced', to prevent the formation of any preliminary opinions.<sup>34</sup> Rather, they followed the principle of 'really getting to know a person by living and working with him'. As such, Field Security personnel required 'a natural faculty for assessing another man's character correctly, quickly and without prejudice' in addition to 'an expert knowledge of the languages and countries of the trainee'. In order to ensure that this criterion was met, candidates were 'hand picked' and underwent interviews at the Intelligence Corps Depot – a special concession made to SOE by the Commandant, Lt Col Brooks.

Field Security NCOs paid particular attention to the attitudes of trainees towards the unholy trinity of drink, money and women, as Peter Lee recalls,

If you've got a garage mechanic who's an absolutely brilliant radio operator, and was recruited for that job, [if he] had a very modest wage as a garage mechanic and was then dropped into France with half a million Francs around his belt as the paymaster for the circuit, you had to be absolutely sure that that chap would not suddenly start going into expensive hotels and taking out beautiful girls . . . you had to be absolutely sure. You had to know exactly how they reacted when they'd had 'one over the eight'. My NCO's used to spend as much time as possible with them, especially when they were on leave after the courses were over, to see how they behaved with women . . . because, after all, intelligence services in any country use women as agent provocateurs.<sup>35</sup>

Weekly reports on trainees were prepared, and submitted to Lee via the School Commandants. Copies were then forwarded by Security to the Country Section concerned. It was later claimed that these reports were 'of great assistance', as 'important details were occasionally revealed to the F.S. N.C.O.s which were not likely to be admitted in formal interviews conducted by commissioned officers':

The best known instance was that of a recruit who privately informed an F.S.P. during training that in peace time he had been a smuggler across the Franco-Belgian frontier. The account which he had originally given to his interviewing officer amounted in fact, to a 'cover' version of his civilian activities, and this important qualification for courier work might have been overlooked altogether.<sup>36</sup>

Lee describes the work of Field Security as 'almost a sort of branch of the Red Cross – we really had to try and make it possible for the agents to do their extremely dangerous work and come out of it alive. The only way to do that was to have a very, very keenly developed sense of security.'<sup>37</sup> A similar sentiment was expressed in a report on Field Security activity compiled at the end of the war: 'They set out to make each trainee as security conscious as possible, in his own interest, as well as that of the Organisation as a whole',

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while the reports on trainees were felt to have fulfilled a valuable function:

The importance attached to the judicious selection of agents was at all times self-evident. Mistakes were inevitable, but anything which reduced the margin of error was an important contribution to the ultimate success of S.O.E. in the field. The Reports of F.S.P. on trainees were of great assistance from this point of view and this represents the most important service rendered to S.O.E. by F.S.P.<sup>38</sup>

The importance of the service provided by Field Security was not always appreciated by the Country Sections, which exhibited a certain hostility towards any kind of interference in their operational affairs, even when it was in their own best interest. Lee recalls having to exhibit a considerable degree of tact when dealing with the Country Sections. Of the process whereby Field Security Reports were prepared for Country Section heads, he notes,

I always used to go through all the reports with them [the FSP NCOs] before I sent it to the Country Section head, to make quite sure that my NCO and I really understood the form . . . we had to be very careful what we said – couldn't upset operations by just being stupid. But at the same time, we had to warn the Country Section head if we'd found anything that was liable to jeopardise their operations once they went into the field. After all, it's fairly important for people to stay alive in a set-up like this . . .<sup>39</sup>

Difficulties arose with Belgian Section Head Hardy Amies in the case of an unnamed mechanic who, while a capable wireless operator, was considered by Field Security to be 'absolutely appalling', exhibiting a fondness for drink, no responsibility with money and a tendency to pick up 'the most awful women'. Lee duly informed the Belgian Section of these concerns, but his report was overruled and the mechanic sent to the field, where he promptly picked up a peroxide blonde and took her to the Palace Hotel in Brussels, which was 'absolutely stiff with Gestapo people'. According to Lee, as a result of his arrest 18 people were shot.

In particularly serious cases, Security could take further steps to make its concerns known, as it did in the case of the Dutch Section agent Arnoldus Albert Baatsen, alias Bouwman. Bouwman's behaviour initially raised concern in November 1941, when he was given leave to spend

the weekend in Cambridge but was seen at the Salisbury Hotel in Hertford 'with a female companion who he introduced as a friend from London'. Upon his return, the 'seriousness of this action from the security point of view' was impressed upon him.<sup>40</sup> By December 1941 Bouwman was being considered 'as a candidate for the Cooler', described by Lee as having 'gone sour'.<sup>41</sup> It was noted that 'the rest of the party with whom he was working had little or no confidence in him, and he was becoming a bad influence on them'.<sup>42</sup> Pending a decision on his disposal, Bouwman was held at the Field Security Depot in Kingston. Lee was unsurprisingly thrown when he discovered in late January that a complete volte-face had taken place and that Bouwman had been chosen for a mission. He wrote to Lakin, noting that 'I have not had until yesterday anything in writing that he was to be used on an operation, or that he was not in fact being considered as a candidate for the Cooler.' Lee questioned this decision to 'use a man who has such a poor security record and seems to be a foolish, theatrical and boastful type'. So serious was Security's concern that Senter appealed directly to SOE's Director of Operations, Colin Gubbins:

I feel that I must bring to your notice the fact that Bouwman has been reported to us on many occasions for extreme lack of discretion. I suggest that you should be satisfied that the importance of the project entrusted to Bouwman justified this risk.<sup>43</sup>

However, even this was not enough to prevent Bouwman being sent to the field, as the Head of the Dutch Section Charles Blizard turned security's concerns on their head, portraying them as strengths that could prove advantageous in the field. Defending his agent, Blizard wrote that he did not see the matter in the same 'somewhat gloomy light' of the Security Section:

It is felt that, although Bouwman is admittedly boastful and apt to dramatise himself in any circumstances, he has other peculiarities of character, more especially a way with women, which should aid him in escaping detection. He is, furthermore, full of grit and determination. I see no reason to anticipate that he would, under grilling, disclose more details of our organisation and of other agents than any man in a similar position. His lack of discretion would, I feel, be tempered by the thought of imminent danger to his own person.<sup>44</sup>

Operational considerations weighed heavier than security concerns, and Bouwman was sent to the field, where he was greeted by a German reception committee and subsequently 'poured out to his captors a torrent of detail about where he had been trained, and how, and by whom'.<sup>45</sup>

In August 1942, Senter replaced Lakin as Director of Security, as ill health forced Lakin to take less exacting duties.<sup>46</sup> His departure drew comment from the Director General of MI5, Sir David Petrie, who wrote,

We shall part with General Lakin with regret. Our relations with him, both official and personal, have been of the happiest, and we hope that his health will improve with the less exacting duties of his new post. Much the same applies to Senter, than whom there could be no more acceptable successor to General Lakin, and whom we shall be glad to continue to help in any way we can.<sup>47</sup>

As a result of Senter's promotion, Lt Col the Hon Thomas Gabriel Roche was appointed to fill his former position. A barrister by profession, Roche was commissioned in the 92nd Field Regiment RA (TA) in April 1938 and served in France between September 1939 and June 1940. He originally joined SOE in March 1941 as a member of the Intelligence & Planning Section, becoming personal assistant to both Col Anstruther, Director of Intelligence, and Lt Col Bryson, Director of Plans. In June he became Head of the General Intelligence Section. In October 1942 he transferred to the Security Section, becoming Head of General Security and deputy head of the Section as a whole under Senter. Roche's personnel reports describe him as having a 'reserved personality' with 'a high standard of personal efficiency'.<sup>48</sup> He was thought to combine 'acumen with a readiness to master detail'.

Despite relinquishing the role of Section head, Lakin did not leave the Section altogether. It was felt by Sir Charles Hambro, Nelson's successor, that SOE's security arrangements in Scotland could be improved – a concern which coincided with Lakin's need for 'less exacting duties'. Lakin duly established a security office in Rothesay Terrace, Edinburgh, in September 1942.<sup>49</sup> The office was responsible for coordinating the security of operations mounted by SOE's Norwegian Section from their Shetlands and Burghead bases, and the security of SOE's Training Schools at Arisaig.<sup>50</sup> For 'administrative purposes', Scotland was divided into a Western and an Eastern Area. In addition to commanding the holding facility for failed recruits at Inverlair (covered

in Chapter 2), Major Albert Adamson ('Aonghais') Fyffe was responsible for the Western Area, which included Special Training School (STS) 21 (Arisaig House) and 25 (Garamor House), as Security Liaison Officer, STS Scotland. The Eastern Area covered all other security issues in Scotland, which were dealt with from the Edinburgh office by the Assistant Security Officer, Pilot Officer the Hon John Leslie.<sup>51</sup>

Fyffe also went on to take responsibility for the security of the recently established para-military training complex at Aviemore (STS 26), where he arranged for a small security detachment to be quartered, reporting to him 'but available to help in any way required'.<sup>52</sup> Consisting of three requisitioned lodges (Drumintoul, Glenmore and Forest), STS 26 was a Norwegian-only training facility. The area was chosen for the training of Norwegian agents 'because of the reasonable similarity of terrain – mountains, lochs, high passes, and snow in quantity in the winter months'. Fyffe was responsible for approaching 'the Service and civil authorities concerned in the exercises, schemes, and rehearsals, or in whose areas or districts these were to take place'. He also enjoyed the trust of Aviemore's first Commandant, Major Charles S. Hampton, and participated in some of the training exercises that were arranged.

Lakin was not replaced upon his death in February 1943, as the number of raids upon the Norwegian coast mounted from Scotland had begun to decline by this point. Instead, in addition to his existing responsibilities, Fyffe became SOE's Chief Security Officer in Scotland, and embarked upon a punishing weekly schedule:

I used to leave Inverlair each Monday morning about three o'clock to catch the first 'milk-run' ferry at North Queensferry to get to my office in Rothesay Terrace, Edinburgh, where I had a staff of two officers and four NCOs to maintain a link with Scottish Command, and to keep an eye on what that Command was doing that might impinge on any of our STS in Scotland; in addition that office kept watch on the SOE Signals station at the former Belhaven School at Dunbar. I usually left Edinburgh on Tuesday night to return to Inverlair; on Wednesday morning I visited Ballina [ie Burghead], usually for lunch, and went south to Drumintoul [ie Group 26] for reports from my detachment there... As a rule I was back at Inverlair by Thursday night at latest to go to Group A Arisaig for all of Friday. Saturday was C.O.'s inspection at Inverlair with a full parade ground by the firing ranges. Sunday was a 'free' day but it was back to the merrygoround early Monday morning.

Fyffe continued to maintain this schedule until February 1944, at which point he was replaced by Samuel Leonard Darby. A schoolteacher, Darby had taught at Winchester College and Bromsgrove Academy, where he was Senior Classical Master during the late 1930s. He enlisted in the Intelligence Corps in October 1940, and joined SOE as a Field Security Officer in the Hertford area in January 1942, proceeding to join the Military Security sub-Section in the spring of 1943.<sup>53</sup> Fyffe returned to London, where he was appointed head of the Military Security sub-Section as preparations for D-Day gathered pace.<sup>54</sup>

As SOE continued to grow, the work of the Security Section developed into two distinct areas: general and operational security. The main body of the Section, General Security, handled all non-operational security matters, including liaison with the Security Sections of SOE's overseas Missions, for which the Security Section developed a watching brief (explored in greater detail in Chapter 3).<sup>55</sup> General Security was further divided into three sub-sections: Travel Control, General and Military. Travel Control dealt with 'all travel control questions and censorship of mail'; the General Section 'handled vetting questions, maintained personnel records, arranged training schemes . . . liaised with the J.A.G.'s Branch on legal matters, controlled the allocation of code numbers, etc' while the Military Section took responsibility for Field Security, liaison with the Home Forces and acclimatising new Security personnel prior to overseas posting. ('There was generally a junior officer attached to the Section for training prior to taking up an appointment overseas.')

By the autumn of 1942, SOE's 'physical' security had reached, or surpassed, the standards set by the War Cabinet Panel on Security Arrangements in Government Departments. Mott wrote a detailed paper on the subject in October, noting that 'I think that I can fairly say that we are rather ahead of the great majority of the recommendations made . . . especially as regards the Physical Security of our Buildings and the Recruitment, Selection and Supervision of Staff.'<sup>57</sup> Although further improvements were possible in theory, in practice they were likely to prove difficult to implement. Mott pointed to the negative attitude towards security exhibited by certain members of staff, particularly when it came to showing passes to the security watchmen:

It really is a remarkable thing that a request to show or make out a pass is, to some people, tantamount to asking them for their fingerprints or accusing them of treason and the watchmen do occasionally have rather a rough time with such people.

This did not bode well for the suggestion that the inspection of passes should be stepped up to include personnel leaving buildings; as Mott observed, it was 'a question whether the undoubted gain in security control of access . . . would justify the friction which would certainly be caused'. Such friction was likely to find expression at a high level; irritation at having to show a pass, Mott explained, was 'chiefly to be found in the upper strata of our community'. Security also had to balance its concerns with the needs of operations. For example, Mott thought it would be impossible to introduce a more rigorous vetting process for proposed members of staff without upsetting the Country Sections:

Judging by the impatience of most sections when confronted with a week's delay in vetting, I am certain that the addition of another three or four weeks in making definite enquiries, and this is a very conservative estimate of the time involved, would be denounced as quite impracticable.

Similarly, any hope of providing a course of instruction for new secretaries, covering such basic security topics as how to despatch documents securely, was likely to be frowned upon: 'sections usually require their secretaries in a Dickens of a hurry, and would not be willing to wait a week or so before they commenced work'.

While the Security Section had succeeded in making SOE's 'physical' security as efficient as was allowed, an even greater challenge for the Section emerged at the end of 1942, as the focus of concern shifted from physical to operational security. As SOE's Country Sections developed to a point at which they were able to undertake offensive action, considerable pressure fell upon the Security Section to ensure that effective operational security arrangements were in place. From this point, Security's secondary function, protecting SOE against debilitating restrictions imposed by Whitehall adversaries in the name of security, became increasingly apparent. Not only were the lives of agents potentially at risk; so too was the operational freedom of SOE as a whole, as the Security Section History later explained:

S.O.E. would retain its freedom of action only if it satisfied and convinced the other national Security organisations of its bona fides and of the energy with which it applied its own internal security precautions.<sup>58</sup>

In response to the growing question of operational security, Flying Officer Cyril Thomas Gibson Risch Miller was appointed in September 1942 to work in the new 'Security "Grill Room"', where he interrogated agents upon their departure to, and return from, the field. Writing to Col N.B. Crockatt of MI9, Boyle confided that Miller would 'be the first thoroughly trained person who can assure himself and ourselves that the people we send overseas are in fact likely to play their part, if interrogated, adequately'. A barrister specialising in maritime and international law, Miller had been Counsel to the Ministry of War Transport before joining SOE, and Boyle felt that his knowledge of law and experience in cross-examination would be 'most useful'. Recalling his wartime activities in 1949, when invited to give evidence to the Dutch Parliamentary Commission investigating the 'Nordpol' affair, Miller noted that his legal training 'enabled him to weigh evidence and form a conclusion as to whether the person whom he was interrogating was telling the truth or not'.<sup>59</sup>

The need for greater attention to operational security became increasingly apparent within the Security Section during the final months of 1942. Having settled into his new position, on 21 November Miller wrote to Senter on 'the danger of "penetration" by returning Agents who have gone sour':

the recent Belgian trouble illustrates this, and we really ought to have within our own Organization a standardized check on all returning Agents so as to avert this danger. As the war gets 'closer' into the enemy, I suspect that he will increase his efforts in this direction; and it is potentially a very real danger.<sup>60</sup>

The extent of the potential penetration problem facing SOE in Belgium was uncovered largely by accident, as MI5 explored the possibility of 'playing back' an SOE wireless set in Belgium that was known to be under enemy control. The standard investigation, carried out by C.P. Harvey of MI5's B1(a) Section, indicated that the rot had spread far further than one blown transmitter:

At an early stage it appeared to me that the blown Belgian transmitters could not possibly be used by B.1.A. since it was almost impossible to tell at any moment of time who was blown and who not or, where an agent was known to be blown, how far the area of compromise extended . . . from the security point of view the general picture is extremely disquieting since any refugee who claims to have

escaped from Belgium in recent months may be presumed at some time or other to have been in touch with one of S.O.E's agents or their contacts. Since the agents seem to be in frequent (if unauthorised) touch with each other and since an uncertain number of them are already brulés any such refugee may, in fact, be a German spy.<sup>61</sup>

The report sent a shockwave around MI5.<sup>62</sup> As the Security History later recorded, MI5 now 'felt bound to regard all escape lines as penetrated . . . not only were all refugees arriving in this country under suspicion, but also S.O.E. accredited agents, upon the ground that they might have been "turned" by the enemy and sent back'. The Security Section thus found itself 'obliged to treat all agents who had been in enemy hands as of security interest, and as suspect of having escaped with the connivance of the enemy, until the contrary was proved' – a position which did little to endear Security to the operational Country Sections, which had a tendency to think the best of its returning agents. A routine order was published on 15 January 1943, entitled 'Interrogation of Returned Agents', which advised Country Sections of the new procedure to be followed:

D/CE is now able to cover the interrogation of agents who return from the field and to assist in testing the cover stories of agents proceeding to the field. C.D. has indicated his view of the importance of this development, and wishes Country Sections to make contact with D/CE.G [Miller] in order to work out the necessary procedure.

He should be advised in particular of all cases of returned agents, and in the case of those who have had any contact of any kind with the enemy advance information should be given to D/CE.G and provision is to be made for D/CE.G to interrogate any such agents before any interrogation is undertaken by the Country Section. This is of particular importance in view of our great responsibilities towards the Security authorities, and is regarded as having an important bearing upon the maintenance of the privilege we at present enjoy for special immunity from security control in the case of accredited agents, etc.<sup>63</sup>

The realisation that a significant number of SOE's agents in Belgium had been compromised further focused SOE's attention upon its operational security, and soon led to the development of the Grill Room into a fully fledged 'Special Security' Section in its own right.<sup>64</sup> Its creation was announced in a circular from Senter on 19 March 1943.<sup>65</sup> On account

of the location of its offices, the Special Security Section quickly became known as Bayswater. Essentially SOE's own counter-espionage section, Bayswater developed close links with MI5 and later with Section V of SIS.

Bayswater was headed by Major Richard Henry Atkinson ('Dick') Warden, a member of the Security Section since January 1941. Described by Lee as a 'wonderful character', Warden was born in December 1908 in London, and educated at Harrow and Cornell University. Following university, Warden returned to England and became well-known as an amateur steeplechase rider, riding in the Grand National, before going on to spend 3 years as an assistant racehorse trainer in Chantilly. Warden served in the Intelligence Corps from 21 October 1940 to 15 January 1941, at which point he joined SOE as a Field Security Officer. In May he joined the Security Section for 'special external security work'. His duties consisted of 'Security work connected with students and operational security of the Shetland Islands', along with 'Some experience of small scale raiding parties with S.T.S.62'. Warden proceeded to become an assistant liaison officer with MI5, dealing with both Travel Control and the London Reception Centre (LRC), the MI5-run facility which screened travellers from overseas upon their arrival in the UK. In his first confidential report, Senter described Warden as 'alert and sophisticated. He can be trusted to carry out any job with intelligence, assiduity and resource.' Boyle concurred with this view, adding his own opinion that Warden was a 'very painstaking and efficient officer with unorthodox but effective methods'. Senter repeated his remarks in his next two reports on Warden, although when signing off the second one Boyle inserted a rider: 'A good officer, though perhaps slightly immature in judgement.'

Miller's early practice of interrogating agents prior to their departure to the field, providing them with valuable experience of interrogation method, soon had to be discontinued owing to pressure of work in conducting interrogations of returning agents, along with investigations into groups in the field 'who were suspected of having fallen into the hands of the enemy'.<sup>66</sup> The Security History later claimed that, through its work, Bayswater was able to appease the concerns of MI5 as to the state of SOE's operational security:

There can be little doubt that these security interrogations were of great value as is shown by the fact that the national Security authorities were prepared to accept clearance as a result of such interrogations as equivalent to a clearance by their own officers.<sup>67</sup>

What the Security History failed to mention was the uphill struggle Bayswater faced in making the Country Sections fully appreciate the importance of the security interrogation of returning agents. A further Routine Order was issued on 2 July, which refined the instructions given in January and emphasised the importance of the new security procedure, which was clearly being ignored by some Sections:

In view of our agreements with other Services, and in order to retain the immunity from normal security control which we enjoy, it is most important that Country Sections should strictly adhere to the procedure. In particular, agents who have been in enemy hands will NOT be interrogated by Country Sections before the security procedure outlined . . . has been completed.<sup>68</sup>

It was found necessary to tighten the procedure further in August, following an investigation into the behaviour of the recently returned French Section agent Barry Knight. Knight had been in German hands, but the French Section failed to notify Security. This meant that no special arrangements were laid on for his arrival, which resulted in a storm of protest from MI5 (the incident is explored in greater detail in Chapter 5).

Bayswater faced additional difficulties in the form of 'passive resistance' from the Country Sections. Returned agents who had not been in enemy hands were instructed to write an account of their mission, which was analysed at Bayswater. The agent was then interrogated on any questionable points raised by their report. The first difficulty faced by Bayswater was in acquiring the reports: 'After just over three weeks of constant nagging', wrote Warden in August 1943, 'the "report" of the Cockles has arrived at Bayswater'.<sup>69</sup> Obtaining the report was only the beginning; the second problem for Bayswater was its content. In the case of the Cockles report, Warden used the word with caution, noting that it was actually 'what I can only describe as some bumph'. This tendency was widespread: in March 1944, Warden noted that 'we usually find agents' reports on their missions misleading and sadly lacking in essential details'.<sup>70</sup>

By the summer of 1943 it had become apparent that for SOE's allotted role in the invasion of Europe to be carried out successfully, 'added responsibilities' would be placed upon the Security and Intelligence Directorate as a whole. To accommodate these, the Directorate was reorganised. In March, following the resignation of John Hanbury-Williams as Hambro's 'Second Deputy', Boyle was appointed by SOE's Minister,

Lord Selborne, to take his place, becoming Chairman of SOE's Commissions and Promotions Board in addition to retaining overall responsibility for intelligence and security matters.<sup>71</sup> Over the following months, Senter became Boyle's General Deputy, maintaining his role as Director of Security, while both Warden and Roche were both made Assistant Directors of the Security Section, retaining their existing division of work that saw Warden focus on operational security at Bayswater, while Roche took responsibility for general security matters.<sup>72</sup> There was some concern over Roche's ability to handle the promotion, particularly his ability to take over Senter's contacts, along with further criticisms directed at his 'unmilitary appearance'.<sup>73</sup> Colin Gubbins, who had recently replaced Charles Hambro as Chief of SOE, was among those who took this view. Soon after the move, Senter came to Roche's defence, pointing out for the benefit of any remaining doubters that Roche had both successfully adopted his old contacts and 'smartened up'; the point was conceded by Gubbins. In his reports on Roche, Senter highlighted the value of his legal background to the Security Section, as it found itself dealing with 'difficult and high level security problems'.

Roche's former post of Head of General Security and deputy head of the Section as a whole was filled by Hugh Eames Park. A barrister, Park had been a Private in the Royal Army Pay Corps, prior to joining the Royal Air Force. He attended RAF Officers School in late 1941 before being appointed Pilot Officer with the Air Ministry. Park joined SOE as a security officer in January 1942, with responsibility for liaison with MI5 and for legal security work. A personnel report described Park as 'non-assertive and universally liked', qualities which were considered advantageous for his liaison duties with MI5.<sup>74</sup> His work was considered of a high standard and his experience as a barrister 'of constant value'.

By late 1943, the Security Section was heavily involved in the investigation into German penetration of SOE's circuits in Holland (discussed in Chapter 7). The investigation revealed the need for the Routine Order regarding the interrogation of returned agents at Bayswater to be tightened still further. As Senter pointed out, the existing order specified the need to notify security of cases where agents 'have been in enemy hands'. The instruction, which Senter considered to be too narrow, was being followed to the letter by the Country Sections, which were neglecting to mention any other types of contact with the enemy that may have occurred. Senter believed that 'between now and D-Day a wider test than having been in enemy hands is called for', and proposed amending the wording of the order to cover 'contact of any kind with the enemy'.<sup>75</sup> Following discussion, Senter wrote to the head of SOE's

operational 'London Group', Brigadier Mockler-Ferryman, noting that 'recent events have shown that the "security" cases may embrace a wider category than those covered in these Routine Orders', and proposing extending their scope to ensure that Bayswater was informed in cases of agents 'who are known or thought to have been in contact with persons known or suspected to have been working for the enemy'.<sup>76</sup> The link between security and SOE's continued operational freedom was stressed once again, the draft order noting that 'in order to retain the immunity from national security control which we enjoy, it is most important that Country Sections should strictly adhere to this procedure'.<sup>77</sup> Mockler-Ferryman agreed, and the order was issued on 22 January.<sup>78</sup>

Stricter security measures aimed at 'all sections responsible for despatching agents to the field' were also introduced by Routine Order in December 1943, with 'a view to preventing leakage of information regarding the details of our organisation or in respect of forthcoming operations'.<sup>79</sup> No 'personal mail or written message' was now permitted to leave England, with conducting officers becoming 'personally responsible, shortly before the moment of departure, for making a thorough search of the person, clothing and articles carried by each agent'. Equally strict measures were to apply to returning agents; only 'short personal letters, not exceeding 36 words in length' were to be brought back, and these could 'refer only to family matters, and should give neither address nor surname of the writer, only some identifiable Christian or code name'. The Country Section officer meeting the returning agents was required to 'take from him all documents other than identity documents' and to 'conduct a search to see that there are no further documents'. Official papers brought back would remain the property of the Country Section concerned, while personal letters for delivery would be sent to the Security Section for censorship. Crews of aircraft or boats were also prohibited from carrying any papers.

Such an increased emphasis upon security precautions served to preempt wider security initiatives that followed in the spring of 1944. From 1 April, 'all unauthorised travel to and from a coastal zone from The Wash to Land's End and an area around the Firth of Forth was forbidden, other communications to and from those areas were considerably restricted and travel to and from Ireland was suspended'.<sup>80</sup> A few days later, all leave for British forces in the UK was suspended, while limitations were placed on the movements of Allied troops. This increase in security precautions saw the dual purpose of the Security Section – good security and its promotion – face its greatest challenge, as SOE's continued operational freedom found itself at its most exposed.

Roche wrote to an overseas security officer on 29 June, explaining the pre-Overlord security arrangements that had been put in place in order to prevent 'anything or anybody' leaving the country. 'As the whole trade of S.O.E. is to export persons to enemy-occupied territory', he continued, 'you can see they were rather a facer'. The problem was solved 'by inducing the various departments to relax their restrictions in our favour in return for undertakings that everything would be done in accordance with the drill approved by the Security Directorate of S.O.E.', which 'meant a lot of work both in laying matters on with the other departments and in supervising the internal security drill'.<sup>81</sup>

Boyle had been quick to see how events were moving, his thoughts sharply focused by the actions of SIS. On 10 April, Sir Stewart Menzies, Chief ('C') of SIS, had proposed a ban on 'the transport of agents from this country to France and the Low Countries by sea'.<sup>82</sup> As he was 'willing to be placed under a total prohibition on outward traffic by sea of personnel from this country', Menzies assumed that a 'similar total prohibition would also be placed on all similar operations by other clandestine organisations'. A copy of Menzies' paper was forwarded to Boyle, who informed the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) that, beyond sea operations already laid on for 15 April, SOE agreed 'entirely with "C"'s views'.<sup>83</sup> Boyle was quick to anticipate the appearance of further such restrictions, which would combine to effectively cut off SOE's links with the field. Writing to Senter, Boyle predicted that 'the next thing we can expect is an enquiry by the J.I.C. or some other body into the passage by air'.<sup>84</sup> Boyle's concern was quite valid; in an internal minute discussing the issue of continued transportation of SOE agents written in March, MI5's Guy Liddell noted his belief that 'The only really satisfactory way of dealing with this question would be to stop all agents going into the field for 2 months prior to D-day. I doubt whether anybody would be much worse off, and many of us might feel easier in our minds'.<sup>85</sup> SOE needed to move quickly to emphasise that it was taking security seriously, by imposing its own restrictions upon operational activity before worse were imposed from outside: 'Before D-day', wrote Boyle, 'we must be in a position to cover ourselves in every way'.<sup>86</sup> To achieve such security cover, Boyle proposed the establishment of a Special Security Panel, which would have responsibility for preventing the leak of information relating to Overlord through the establishment of temporary special security arrangements, coordinating these with the 'larger security interests' of MI5 and SHAEF.<sup>87</sup>

Boyle took his concerns to the SOE Council. He wrote to Mockler-Ferryman on 14 April, emphasising the points he had made at that day's

Council Meeting: 'namely, how important it is in my opinion that we should be in a position to set the pace regarding our own security problems against D-day, rather than to become the prey of the large band of persons who will be looking for culprits from now onwards'. Boyle emphasised his desire to 'keep one pace ahead of all the security problems which will come our way', noting that SOE would 'be very much less vulnerable' if such foresight could be applied.<sup>88</sup> Boyle's concerns had been given further urgency by the circulation of a War Cabinet memorandum on security on 12 April, which led him to reiterate the view that, should SOE wish to stay ahead in the security game, 'We must constitute our Special Security Panel immediately.'<sup>89</sup> The War Cabinet memorandum directed all government departments to 'examine what internal measures each should take to prevent the leakage from this country of any information relating to the Allied plans for the invasion of Western Europe'.<sup>90</sup> On Boyle's instruction, Senter drafted a minute which set out the objects and terms of reference for the Special Security Panel (SSP), to be ratified by the SOE Council.<sup>91</sup> The proposal received the Council's blessing, and the first SSP meeting was held on 18 April. It was agreed that Boyle should approach Sir Findlater Stewart, the senior civil servant on the Home Defence Executive who headed a committee on Overlord security, to 'see if he will act as co-ordinator for all outside security bodies and also for his general advice'.<sup>92</sup> Boyle wrote to Findlater Stewart, informing him that the Panel had been established 'for the protection of secret information relating to invasion plans'. Stressing the seriousness with which SOE viewed security, he explained that SOE had 'already examined some of the immediate Security problems', and 'taken action on the recommendations contained in the recent paper of the War Cabinet Security Panel'. Noting that 'One of the first decisions was the desirability of acquainting you with these steps and of asking for your general guidance', Boyle requested a meeting to discuss matters further, which took place on 24 April.<sup>93</sup> Boyle reported back to the SSP that Findlater Stewart 'agreed with our suggestion to report to him from time to time, keeping him generally informed of all matters dealt with by the S.S.P.'. Boyle also attended a further meeting convened by Findlater Stewart the following day, at which Churchill's dictum that 'no-one shall leave this island' was discussed. This meant that each exception would need to be 'specially considered', with reference to two key questions: 'Is their journey really necessary before D-day?' and 'Are they fit to travel?'<sup>94</sup> Boyle was also asked about the search of agents prior to departure and whether students spent their leave in restricted areas. He was 'happily able to report' that an 'intensified search' of departing agents

had been arranged, SOE having acquired the services of two Customs officials for this purpose, while the practice of allowing students to take leave in restricted areas had been stopped in March.

Boyle wrote to Findlater Stewart again on 27 April, highlighting the action taken by the SSP to ensure SOE's security prior to D-Day at its first three meetings.<sup>95</sup> From Boyle's summary, it is clear that an immediate impact upon existing security arrangements had been made. He informed Findlater Stewart that steps had been taken to make all SOE personnel aware of the issues raised by the War Cabinet Security Panel's report; a letter had been drafted to be sent to all Directorate heads, informing them of the need to convene meetings to emphasise the need for employees to avoid 'careless talk', along with a brief paper on the subject.<sup>96</sup> In addition, a summary of the War Cabinet Security Panel security paper had been compiled, highlighting the issues of relevance to SOE.<sup>97</sup> These papers were amended and agreed at the second SSP meeting on 20 April, and a telegram version, to be sent to all Missions and Groups overseas, was also prepared. Boyle also informed Findlater Stewart that 'We have tightened up our arrangements for the support of outgoing agents and have borrowed the services of two Customs Officers to assist', and that arrangements had been made 'for the censorship of all Allied courier which passes through our hands, both incoming and outgoing'.<sup>98</sup> In addition, he noted that the Panel had 'reviewed the question of Allied personnel who have access to this Headquarters for liaison purposes', and had 'given particular attention to the question of wireless transmitters under our control in the country', particularly those used by students during their training. Boyle noted that all wireless exercises which gave students use of transmitters 'without full control' had been discontinued, and that the secure storage of transmitters at Schools and Stations had been addressed. On the thorny issue of the continued despatch of agents to the field Boyle informed Findlater Stewart that each case would be 'specifically referred to Brigadier Mockler-Ferryman, so that he may decide whether despatch before D-day is operationally necessary'. He also drew attention to SOE's 'very close working arrangements with M.I.5', which would facilitate Findlater Stewart's wish 'of consultation with M.I.5 in any case where any doubt might arise'. Boyle closed by noting that he would be 'most grateful if you would let us know of any other points that occur to you which you think might usefully be examined by our Security Panel'.<sup>99</sup>

As the manner in which Boyle dealt with Findlater Stewart indicates, not only was good security vital, so too was the 'spin' put on it. Tightening SOE's security arrangements was not in itself sufficient,

without spreading word of such action to the right people – a vital move when a ban on travel overseas was in force. However, getting the security authorities on side was only half the battle. Here, as we have seen in other matters of security, the Panel had to contend with SOE's Country Sections and their dislike of rules and regulations, which were considered as bureaucratic obstacles that stood in the way of their operational goals. That certain parts of the organisation continued to behave as though travel restrictions did not apply to them had the potential to jeopardise continued travel for SOE as a whole, by destroying the image of total control over security that Boyle was determined to maintain during the run-up to D-Day. Boyle had been aware of the issue when advocating the creation of the SSP, observing that 'Our French friends are most determined in their efforts to evade regulations', which sat uncomfortably alongside 'abundant evidence of their own insecurity and of the attempts being made by the Germans to penetrate'.<sup>100</sup> At the SSP meeting held on 8 May, the recently issued Routine Order which detailed the procedure to be followed regarding overseas travel was discussed, and concern expressed as there 'seemed to be still a loophole'; it had been discovered that two officers, Col Roper-Caldbeck and Major Truskowski, had 'obtained transport for Italy on a Polish plane leaving Hendon', bypassing the necessary procedure.<sup>101</sup> It was agreed that Boyle should raise this serious transgression with a higher authority. He wrote to John Venner, SOE's Director of Finance, on 11 May, outlining the incident and noting that it 'shows that the effect of the Routine Order has not been appreciated by all Sections'.<sup>102</sup> Despite such incidents, the measures taken by the Panel 'as part of the official policy to "seal off" the U.K. in the months preceding D-day' meant that SOE 'retained its freedom of action' and travel between the UK and SOE's Missions abroad was able to continue, within reason.<sup>103</sup> Boyle later recalled,

The success of the pre-D day Security Panel... was noteworthy. Sir Findlater Stewart... more than once expressed approval of the work done by the Security Directorate of S.O.E., and the happy relations existing between S.O.E. and the Departments organising pre-D-day Security simplified our work and helped to produce most ample dividends.<sup>104</sup>

Security's role as 'operational protector' of SOE became increasingly redundant following D-Day, as the Section's attention shifted to unanswered security questions that had been raised earlier in the war, along with other 'clearing up' tasks. In matters of both general and

operational security that had occupied the Section up to this point, it can be seen that the Security Section succeeded in establishing and maintaining a high standard of security procedure, under the keen eye of Archie Boyle. However, the ultimate effectiveness of such procedure in practice was always reliant upon the support it received elsewhere in the organisation; in this respect, security always remained uncomfortably at the mercy of the operational Country Sections.

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