

HOW SPIES ARE THWARTED

(By 23/762)

CENSORSHIP in New Zealand is a mild affair compared with the vast organisation in Britain which deals not only with letters, but with packages and parcels of every kind of merchandise addressed to foreign countries. Letters, incidentally, are the least important of censorship activities.

Since war broke out, enemy agents have been at work in every country in Europe. Through them goes a stream of information, much of it seemingly idle gossip, and the members of censorship organisations must be constantly on the alert to prevent important news from reaching the enemy.

The methods employed are amazing. During the last war we learned many lessons which have become routine practice for this one. Bogus trading firms, for example, were one of the chief clearing houses for enemy spies—hence the reason for keeping a close eye on their correspondence. One sharp official discovered that an agent had written his message under the stamp; others had punched tiny code holes into the pages of a sales catalogue. Even pieces of string are suspect, for secret notes have been found in them.

Opening Letters

The opening of letters has become quite a science, as it is frequently necessary to open a letter, remove and photograph the contents and return them without raising suspicion. One method is to slit the letter and re-seal it with a special pulp paste. Only a microscope will reveal the fact that it has been opened. Another method is to notch the letter under the stamp, remove the contents by rolling them round a split wire, and seal the notch again when the stamp has been replaced.

Cameras are being increasingly used as a means of detecting enemy messages, as photographs reveal more easily faint pin holes over certain written words which may be the clue to an enemy code.

One of the oldest forms of espionage is the use of invisible ink. The application of special "developers," however, quickly reveals messages written between the lines of inoffensive letters. To-day it is possible to reveal a message by the use of special chemical processes and to make that message invisible again when it has been read and the contents noted. This process has been used during the present war so that enemy agents may be encouraged to write further letters and so reveal their plans or their sources of information.

Secret Hiding Places

One source of supply for the enemy was recently revealed in the London Censorship Office. An official noticed some tiny scratches on a film container. They seemed to have been made in haphazard fashion, but they roused his suspicions. He had the film photographed, and a code expert discovered a message for which a "Dutch" importer is still probably waiting.

The censor's job requires patience and constant application. Everything is suspect—string, wrappers, cardboard, the heels of shoes, the patterns in socks. During the last war one important secret code message, bound for Germany, was discovered pasted into a roll of wall-paper. Another was found in the gummed joint of a cardboard wrapper. Important messages were frequently found in the bindings of books, in shirts, and even inside tennis balls. The story is also told of a suspect who could never be caught until one day an agent, while going through his luggage, picked up his comb and began to study it. He had noticed some tiny dots on the teeth of this comb, a new one. The microscope and the camera showed up a pattern which proved to be most interesting to the decoding experts.

These code experts are among the most important members of the censorship department. They are all specialists in the use of numberless foreign codes, and each has his cryptograph key beside him. Sometimes he pores for hours and even for days over one message.

Increase in Staff

When the last war began only 170 people were employed in the British Censorship Department. By 1918 the staff had been increased to over 5,000 experts who worked night and day, sorting and sifting letters and parcels. This time the department began with a staff of over 3,000 including schoolmasters, clergymen, bankers, lawyers, and linguists (some can speak 130 languages and dialects). Over 1,700 people, mostly women, are engaged in sorting letters. In five months they intercepted over ten million pounds worth of contraband.

Diplomatic Leakages

A French writer suggests that one reason why Hitler was the best-informed man in Europe until the war broke out was that even the German diplomatic service is not above theft. Vital information, this writer says, was obtained by "stealing" communications sent home by foreign Ambassadors in Berlin.

The man behind this plan is believed to have been Ribbentrop, whose bureau worked with the Gestapo, Dr. Paul Schmidt (Hitler's translator), and the head of the Information Service of the German Army. Through this organisation Hitler received copies of instructions sent to Ambassadors in Berlin. These were in code, so, to secure the key, Ribbentrop would send a note of apparent importance to an Ambassador, asking that it should be submitted to his Government. The Gestapo would then intercept the message during transmission; experts would decode it, and soon the German Foreign Office would know the secret. Since the war broke out, and this "theft" has become known, neutral countries send messages to their Ambassadors by personal couriers.

NORWAY'S DEFENCES

Small Army And Navy

NORWAY, which remained neutral through the last war and for many years has settled all its difference amicably, has a small standing army consisting of 4325 regulars, 1424 in military schools, and an annual contingent of about 15,000 under training. All able-bodied men, from 22 years upwards, must undergo compulsory military training, except the clergy and pilots. In war time, however, all men between the ages of 18 and 50 years are called up for service, but only men of the first line can be sent out of the country.

When Norwegian men are called up for service, they must serve for six years in the first line, six years with the reserve, and four years with the second reserve. Military training, however, is not arduous, as the men may train from between 18 and 102 days a year, according to the demand.

The small standing army is occupied in manning the forts along the coast, the principal of which are at Oscarborg, on the Oslo Fjord, Agdenes, Trondheim, Bergen, Tonsberg and Christiansand.

When Norway and Sweden became separate kingdoms by negotiation in 1905, a number of forts along the South Swedish frontier were dismantled and a neutral zone established by convention.

Norway's navy is no stronger than its army. The total number of officers and men on permanent service is 1200, but all sea-faring men between 22 and 38 are liable for maritime conscription, and given preliminary training. The total strength of the navy consists of 4 battle-ships for coastal defence, 5 destroyers, 9 submarines, 3 gunboats and 17 torpedo boats.

There is also a small air force consisting of 64 seaplanes and 72 airplanes.

When war broke out last September, Norway slightly increased her forces, and had ordered a number of fighting aircraft from Britain and America. Apparently, some of these machines had arrived just before the Germans invaded the country.

Norway was not equipped for a war with a powerful enemy. Her battleships were only small ones, of 3500 to 4000 tons, and her torpedo flotilla was intended only for coastal defence. A start was made in 1928 to reorganise and modernise the fleet, but very little had been done to improve its strength.

Interest in the Black Sea

Reports that the Allied blockade may soon operate in the Black Sea have been published and denied, for Turkey has stated that she has not given permission to Allied warships to pass through the Bosphorus. At the present time, large quantities of Russian petrol are shipped across the Black Sea from the oilfields



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of Caucasia and carried to Germany via the River Danube. Batum, on the Black Sea coast near the Russian-Turkish frontier, is the port from which the oil is shipped, and Allied warships could without difficulty prevent the transports from reaching the ports of Rumania if they decided to institute the blockade in those waters. It was reported some time ago that Russia had mined certain areas of the Black Sea, particularly round her naval base at Sevastopol, on the Crimean Peninsula, and at Odessa. A French naval officer has recently gone to Turkey to superintend the Turkish fortifications of the Bosphorus and the Black Sea coast. Russia's fleet is divided between the Black Sea squadrons, whose headquarters are at Sevastopol, and the Baltic Sea squadrons, which have Kronstadt as their base.

Picture Theatre at Papakura

A picture theatre with a seating accommodation of 500 has been opened in Papakura Camp. It is intended that similar theatres should eventually appear at Trentham and Burnham. Programmes at Papakura are changed three times a week, and the admission price is sixpence. The interior of the theatre has been painted green, and electric fans have been installed to keep the air circulating.