

CANARIS

-the Man Between?

IN March, 1915, the German cruiser Dresden, sole survivor of the Battle of the Falklands, dropped anchor in Cumberland Bay in Chilean territorial waters. Looking around, the German officers saw little difference from a hundred other cul-de-sacs they had seen in a summer-long flight from destruction. There was no warning visible that shortly the luck of their ship would come to an end.

Four months earlier, all the other ships of Admiral Spee's squadron had been destroyed in the dramatic avenging of the British defeat at Coronel. Only the Dresden escaped and it was poetic justice and a strange sequel to two great battles that one of the two ships that now appeared to trap the German fugitive was the cruiser Glasgow, the only British warship to survive Coronel.

Captain John Luce of the Glasgow straddled the Dresden with his first salvo,

inflicting much damage, whereupon the German commander signalled that he was prepared to parley, and the Dresden's steam pinnace brought a German lieutenant alongside the Glasgow. The official report of the action does not give the lieutenant's name, only an account of the skilful and plausible arguments that he put forward to save his ship. Undeterred by any arguments about the breach of neutrality in conducting a battle in Chilean waters, Captain Luce merely re-stated that his orders were to sink the Dresden wherever he might find her. At last, all arguments unavailing, the lieutenant returned to the Dresden which was then scuttled.

It is in this anonymous fashion that Hitler's future Chief of Intelligence, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, first appears in British records, and it is typical of this most enigmatic member of the Nazi hierarchy that he should appear nameless—as if by his own choosing.

This mystery man of German Intelligence, as he has been called, is the subject of a BBC programme to be heard from 2YC and 3YC during the coming week. Based on the books *Chief of Intelligence*, by the British journalist Ian Colvin, and *Canaris*, by Karl Ashbagen—a German who knew his subject personally—this programme is a dramatic reconstruction of the available evidence about the man, what he did for the allies and what he did against the Hitler regime, and how he finally died for his part in the generals' plot against Hitler.

Canaris, it is claimed, made sincere efforts to prevent war breaking out, and when these efforts failed, gave warnings to Norway, Holland, and Belgium of their impending invasion. He also deliberately failed, it is said, to carry out missions designed to bring about the assassination of Winston Churchill, and the drawing of Spain into the war. These are claims which most authorities accept; it is the motives behind these actions which give rise to disagreement. Was Canaris pro-British or merely anti-Hitler—or was he perhaps playing his own secret game? Touching the third possibility, both Ian Colvin and Ashbagen record that whoever they interviewed among the Admiral's subordinates (even his most intimate lieutenants) each believed he had Canaris's complete confidence—and that he was the only one to do so.

"Every German officer I met," says Ian Colvin, "put a little more into the por-

trait, but each was sceptical about the lines his colleague had drawn. 'That can't be true—or the Admiral would certainly have told me about it.' How often was I to hear that answer! How often I saw their faces cloud with suspicion that their own idea of him was incomplete." And from Ashbagen: "... The farther I pushed my enquiries the clearer it became that those who really did stand nearest to Canaris were just those who realised that they had been able to see but a part of his activities and to glimpse but a part of his personality ..."

In February, 1944, Hitler sent for Himmler and ordered him to create one single service out of the SS Intelligence and the Abwehr, or military intelligence, and Canaris ended his 10-year career as Abwehr chief. This downfall, it has been said, could have forced Canaris towards one more desperate move for power or for patriotism—the bomb plot of July, 1944. The day after the bomb saw Hitler still alive and merely singed; Canaris a prisoner, and only death ahead to give him eventual freedom.

German patriot or British spy, statesman, double dealer, or inveterate intriguer, Canaris remains one of the most enigmatic figures of World War II. *Admiral Canaris*, which was written and narrated by Edward Ward and produced by Anthony Irwin, will be heard from 3YC at 10.0 p.m., Tuesday, August 6, and 2YC at 6.58 p.m. on Saturday, August 10.

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