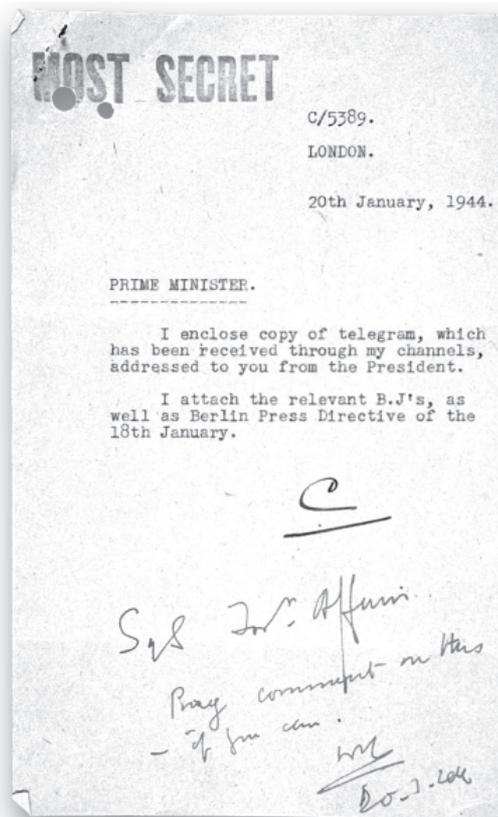


Pray comment On January 20, 1944, 'C', the head of the S.I.S., sends to Churchill a message he has received from Roosevelt through his channels (PRO file HW.1/2344)



APPENDIX I: 'Received through C's Channels'

IT SEEMS THAT there are items of Churchill–Roosevelt correspondence which, if not lost or destroyed, are still awaiting release. These were just some of the two or three hundred signals which Sir William Stephenson's organisation in the U.S.A. passed each week via the radio station of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.) to the Secret Intelligence Service (S.I.S.) in England, using a code readable only by the British. (Stephenson was director of 'British Security Co-ordination,' with headquarters in New York.) Some items have now reappeared, having been removed from the three depositories of Churchill papers (Chartwell trust, Churchill papers,

and Cabinet Office) between 1960 and 1963 by the security authorities and Government Communications Headquarters (G.C.H.Q.).¹

As we saw in our first volume (*e.g.*, page 194), Winston Churchill took an almost schoolboy delight in establishing clandestine channels of communication. Quite apart from the 'Tyler Kent' series of Churchill–Roosevelt exchanges from 1939 to 1940, which began even before he replaced Neville Chamberlain as prime minister, he used intermediaries to outflank the regular channels, and then delighted in going behind the backs of those intermediaries as well. He established private radio links to Lord Cork in Norway and to Lord Gort in France, by-passing both the war office and Britain's own allies; and to General Auchinleck in 1941 and 1942.

All this is well known. It is now clear that after Churchill took office at No. 10 Downing-street in 1940 he and Roosevelt created a secret conduit – a link which was quite distinct from the radio-telephone link (on which see Appendix II) and did not only handle exchanges on codebreaking. Its genesis can be seen in a letter from Desmond Morton, Churchill's friend and confidant on Intelligence matters, released to the Public Record Office in January 2001; written on July 22, 1940, this advised the prime minister that 'C' (head of the secret service) had been in close touch with J. Edgar Hoover, director of the F.B.I., for some months, and that Hoover was keeping Roosevelt briefed on this. The United States were at that time of course nominally neutral. The president, Major Morton reported, had now notified 'C' through Hoover that, if Mr Churchill ever wanted to convey a message to him without the knowledge of the state department (or, by implication, of the foreign office), 'he would be very glad to receive it through the channel of "C" and Mr Hoover.' In the past, Hoover explained, there had been occasions 'when it might have been better' if the president had received messages by such means.² This was a reference to the unfortunate Tyler Kent affair in which a U.S. embassy clerk in London had nearly blown the gaff on their secret exchanges (see our vol. i, chapter 1).

When Churchill and the president started to serial-number their correspondence, Lord Halifax, the ambassador in Washington, realised that there were items that he was not seeing. The secret prime-minister/president ('PRIME–POTUS') exchange was the next stage. Hoover claimed to his superiors in July 1941 that Stephenson was using this PRIME/POTUS exchange to explain why no American official could be permitted to know the code used. Hoover's political chief, the attorney general Francis Biddle, tackled the British embassy about this anomalous situation on March 10, 1942.

Halifax however stated that ‘he had inquired of Stephenson whether these cypher messages going forward were kept secret because they reflected a correspondence between the President and Mr Churchill,’ and that ‘Stephenson denied that he had ever made any such statement.’ This was not quite the same thing as the *ambassador* denying it: Lord Halifax was seen to be smiling blandly as the Americans left his embassy, causing Biddle to remark: ‘Somebody has been doing some tall lying here.’³

It is evident that the link was used for more than just ‘codeword’ transactions. We have seen on page 193 anecdotal evidence of Roosevelt, shortly before Pearl Harbor, passing a crucial message (‘negotiations off. . .’) through his son James and William Stephenson to Mr Churchill; Stephenson and H. Montgomery Hyde, who worked for him in New York, both confirmed this. Other items of this submerged correspondence that are of purely ‘codeword’ significance are now floating to the surface in the archives. A month after Pearl Harbor, Churchill wanted Roosevelt to be shown a particular intercept, of Japanese Ambassador Hiroshi Oshima reporting from Berlin on Hitler’s winter setbacks and on his future military plans: on February 9, 1942 the prime minister accordingly directed ‘C’ to ‘make sure President sees this at my desire.’ Since the message bears the annotation that Commander Alastair Denniston, the deputy director of Bletchley Park, was ‘wiring Hastings,’ the Washington end of the link is established as being through Captain Eddy Hastings, the S.I.S. station chief there.⁴ The passage of the German naval squadron through the English Channel in 1942 provides further graphic evidence. On February 21, reading Bletchley Park’s secret report on the mining of *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, Churchill wrote to ‘C’ that it should surely be laid before the president, and he added these words of high significance: ‘I am inclined to send it with a covering note by my secret and direct line.’⁵

This conduit operated in both directions. On March 20, 1942 Roosevelt sent through it to London the American intercept of a message from Oshima reporting that Ribbentrop, Hitler’s foreign minister, had urged Japan to seize Madagascar, at that time a Vichy-governed colony. ‘C’ forwarded it to Churchill, stating: ‘President Roosevelt has requested that you should see the attached BJ Report, No. 102,443. C.’ Churchill initialled it, ‘wsc, 20.3.’⁶

THIS APPENDIX presents necessarily only an interim survey of this secret exchange, but it evidently continued throughout the war. In January 1944 the Soviet Communist Party organ *Pravda* published a mischief-making story

about Churchill negotiating personally in Lisbon with top Nazis. The American codebreakers translated a Japanese dispatch from Madrid alleging that Ribbentrop had paid a visit to Lisbon to meet Churchill (who had not however turned up). Roosevelt cabled to Churchill about this on January 20 (illustration); 'C' forwarded it 'through my channels.'⁷ Roosevelt's message read: 'As a possible clue to [the] original *Pravda* story, refer to Madrid–Tokyo 1342 of 23rd December in MAGIC part one of two-part message. ROOSEVELT.'⁸ Of course, if believed, this intercept might well have caused concern in Washington. Churchill sent a reply to Roosevelt (drafted by 'C') on January 22; it is missing. On January 23, an S.I.S. official in Washington (O'Connor) responded to London, for the attention of 'C' alone: 'Your telegrams 395 [hand-written: '*Telegram re MAGIC to President*'] and 399 of 22nd January. He [Roosevelt] is away for a week but the messages are going by safe hand air bag tomorrow Sunday morning and I shall destroy remaining copy of 399 on Monday.' In his telegram CXG.395 (which has the interesting pencil endorsement '*PM file*'), the prime minister had quoted only paragraph 6; the rest, being of lower security, had gone by regular embassy channels. Paragraph 6 concerned a MAGIC intercept of a dispatch by the Irish minister in Rome about the political confusion reigning in Italy.⁹

So it went on. Eleven days after the crucial interception of a FISH (*Geheimschreiber*) message on June 17, 1944 (see our vol. iii) in which Adolf Hitler elaborated his coming strategy in Italy, Churchill's private secretary, T. L. Rowan, penned a TOP SECRET letter to the prime minister: "'C" asks that you will agree to send the message through his channels to the President.' The message began with the words: 'Attention is also directed to BONIFACE of June 17 wherein Hitler is said to have ordered the Apennine positions to be held as the final blocking line. . . Kesselring's task [is] to gain time till the development of the Apennine position was achieved, a task which would require months.' In a handwritten comment, also sent to Roosevelt, Churchill pointed out among other things that the new heavy fighting east and west of Lake Trasimene showed that Hitler's orders were being carried out.¹⁰

These secret communications obviously continued until Roosevelt's death. On July 18, 1944 Churchill ordered 'C' to send to him down their secret conduit the BJ No. 133,668 (a dispatch by the Turkish minister in Budapest on the seventh, about the crisis caused there by the Jewish problem and the failure of a coup against the Regent, Admiral Horthy); Churchill instructed 'C,' 'This shd reach the President as from me.'¹¹

In conclusion: some of the more astute historians have already drawn attention to the lack of explicit discussion of ULTRAS, MAGICS, and similar materials in the published Churchill–Roosevelt correspondence.¹² Equally, the operations of agencies like the S.I.S., Special Operations Executive, and the O.S.S. are scarcely touched upon in that series. It is now evident that these and other communications went by a special secret conduit.

The ‘weeder’s have not been able to prevent us from catching glimpses of a paper trail that documents its existence. The complete files of messages themselves may have sunk, but not entirely without trace. Sufficient ‘slicks’ remain on the surface to prompt us to ask for proper search to be made for survivors.

APPENDIX II: ‘Telephone Jobs’

SOME OF THE negotiations between Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt were transacted by radiotelephone. A ‘telephone job’ (vol. i, chapter 42) would settle outstanding problems. This raises two issues: the possible existence of transcripts (we have conducted a thirty-year search for them); and the danger that the enemy could eavesdrop on these conversations.

In theory, security was strict. In wartime Britain, the censoring was performed by the Postal and Telegraph Censorship Department, directed by Sir Edwin Herbert, with headquarters in the Prudential Buildings at Nos. 23–27 Brooke-street in the City of London. His telephone censors first issued a standard warning to the caller, then monitored the conversation. Callers were immediately disconnected, regardless of rank, if they mentioned sensitive topics like bomb damage or, later, the V-weapon attacks on southern England. The censors also transcribed the conversations in shorthand. It is therefore not idle to speculate that the transcripts may survive in the archives. Indeed, the secretary of the cabinet informed ministers in August 1942 that the department of censorship would ‘send a record of every radio-telephone conversation’ to the ministry responsible, both as a record and as a lesson on indiscretions.¹³

That being so, where is the Cabinet Office file of Mr Churchill’s transatlantic (and for that matter, other) ’phone conversations? There are so many

unanswered questions: what passed between him and President Roosevelt before May 10, 1940 – was the 'phone call that Churchill received on October 5, 1939 (vol. i, page 194) really their first such communication? We simply do not know. What part did Churchill and Hopkins play in the fateful decision to impose oil sanctions on Japan with their midnight 'phone call to Roosevelt on July 24–25, 1941 (pages 20 and 96 above)?

The censors cannot have had an easy task with Mr Churchill. One girl who acted as a censor after December 1941 remembered that he was morose, taciturn, and sometimes sarcastic. When she issued the standard warning to him, he told her to 'get off the line.' Once, after a German bomb caused heavy casualties at Holborn Viaduct in London he began telling Eden, who was in Ottawa, 'Anthony, my dear, a terrible thing has happened –.' She cut him off, and repeated the censorship warning to him; connected again, he resumed, 'Anthony, a terrible thing happened at –' and got no further. She was struck by the difference between the prime minister's real (telephone) voice and the voice she heard making speeches on the radio. At the end of his calls, instead of 'Goodbye,' Churchill habitually grunted, 'KBO' – keep buggering on.¹⁴

In the United States 'phone, cable, and wireless communications were at first monitored by the U.S. navy, from an office headed by Captain Herbert Keeney Fenn, usn. Fenn was Assistant Director of Censorship from September 1940 to August 1945, and Chief Cable Censor in the Office of Censorship. His naval personnel were transferred to the Office soon after it was created on December 19, 1941; in February 1942 it employed 1,819 personnel, manning fourteen stations.¹⁵ President Harry S. Truman ordered the records of the office sealed in perpetuity when he closed it by executive order on September 28, 1945 (they are housed in Record Group 216 at the National Archives). So we have no way of knowing whether transcripts of the PRIME–POTUS 'phone conversations exist in Washington.¹⁶

THE INHERENT deficiencies in 'phone security were a matter of growing concern throughout the war. General George C. Marshall testified that he had always been conscious of the risks. The conversations were originally carried by commercial radiotelephone (the transatlantic cable had been deliberately interrupted to prevent leaks); they were shielded only by 'privacy' arrangements – a scrambler which offered no real security. At their meeting on January 14, 1942 the president and prime minister agreed to improve their telephone communications.

Both allies recognised, but overlooked, the danger that the Nazis would intercept these conversations. We now know that this danger was very real indeed. Hitler's minister of posts, Wilhelm Ohnesorge, controlled a telecommunications research laboratory, the *Forschungsanstalt der Reichspost*, which had established listening posts in Holland in a direct line behind the aerial arrays in England; this *Forschungsstelle* (research unit) at Wetterlin was capable of intercepting both ends of the transatlantic radiotelephone traffic. They were scrambled, but the scrambling technique employed was one originally devised by Siemens, a German firm; the Nazis readily created a device for unscrambling the conversations.

This device was certainly in use from 1941 onwards. The Nazi scientists intercepted and recorded hundreds if not thousands of the conversations. Where are the recordings and transcripts – documents of no doubt considerable embarrassment to the Allies – now? The records of Wetterlin have vanished, like those of Hermann Göring's parallel codebreaking agency, the *Forschungsamt*. British Intelligence officers are known to have cleansed the captured German files of sensitive materials after 1945 (*e.g.*, those concerning the Duke of Windsor); they may also have weeded the files of any 'phone transcripts before restoring them to Bonn. Ordinarily, such intercepts would have ended up in the archives of the S.I.S. or of the U.S. National Security Agency at Fort Meade, Maryland. Some experts questioned by us believed that they had seen references to the intercepts in U.S. Army Security Agency files at Arlington Hall, Virginia; others directed our inquiries to the depository of communications materials at Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. The late Professor Sir Frank Hinsley came across no trace of them in preparing his Intelligence histories.¹⁷ These lines of inquiry must be regarded as 'in suspense.'

The weeding, if indeed it was carried out, has not been one hundred per cent – it never is. A few transcripts survive, scattered about the archives of the German foreign ministry and in Heinrich Himmler's files. Himmler's papers indicate that he forwarded the Wetterlin transcripts by landline direct to Hitler's headquarters, certainly on occasions during 1942, and his files confirm that there were by then already many hundreds of reels of recording tape. On April 9, 1942 S.S.-*Gruppenführer* Gottlob Berger (chief of the S.S. *Hauptamt*, or Central Office) wrote to Himmler asking for two *Geheimschreiber* – the code-transmitters known to Bletchley Park as FISH – to speed up the transmission of the transcripts to headquarters. 'The yield so far is meagre,' he conceded, 'for the reason that we lack the type of

people who can understand American telephone jargon.' Just as some Allied generals did not appreciate the value of ULTRA, Himmler did not seem too excited by the break-through that Ohnesorge's boffins had achieved; he replied a few days later merely, 'Meanwhile we have indeed received the further reports, of which I am forwarding a suitable selection to the Führer.'¹⁸ Inevitably this disappointed Ohnesorge. On May 21, 1942 Berger wrote to Himmler's office advising that the Post Office minister wanted to discuss Wetterlin with the S.S. chief in person: 'Please tell the Reichsführer S.S. that he and not *Obergruppenführer* Heydrich must get his hands on the reports.' The new teleprinters would carry the reports direct from the listening post to the Führer's headquarters. Berger advised: 'He [Ohnesorge] is going to ask: What does the Führer say?'¹⁹

In July 1942 Harry Hopkins and General Marshall visited London for staff talks. Wetterlin intercepted the resulting 'phone conversations between London and Washington. ('The people talking,' reported Berger, 'are primarily staff officers, deputy ambassadors, and ministers.') On the twentieth, Berger wrote to Himmler: 'Although they operated only with codewords in the 'phone conversations that we tapped, my appreciation is as follows: today and tomorrow there is to be a particularly important conference between the British and Americans. At this conference they will probably determine where and when the Second Front is to be staged.'²⁰

On July 23 Berger read a transcript recorded at 4:10 P.M. the previous day (on 'reel 599') between a 'Mr Butcher' in New York and the prime minister in London ('The operator called out several times: Hello, Mr Churchill').²¹ There are references to other similar intercepts in the German files. Joseph Goebbels's diary records that the Nazis listened in on Anthony Eden's 'phone calls from Washington to London about the Italian crown prince Umberto in April 1943.²² Lapses like these may explain why the archives captured by the British are now almost bare of these transcripts.

Aware of the dangers to security, the British progressively restricted the number of users until only government ministries had authority to use the system. Sir Edwin Herbert had written to all users in July 1940 about the risk of the radiotelephone: 'It must now be accepted that conversations by this medium can be, and are being, intercepted by the enemy, and such indiscretions may therefore have a far-reaching and very serious effect on the security of this country.'²³ Churchill was in favour of all such conversations being monitored (though not his), given that 'frequently high officials

make indiscreet references which give information to the enemy': so Sir Edwin, spending several weeks in Washington assisting the Americans in setting up their own censorship system after Pearl Harbor, told his American counterpart, Byron Price. Sir Edwin's advice was that interruption of indiscreet conversations was a necessary evil, since 'scrambling has been shown to be ineffective.'

Not everybody agreed. Roosevelt argued on January 27, 1942 that there should be exceptions to the mandatory 'cut-off' rule.²⁴ Herbert too was uneasy, asking Price in one subsequent telegram: 'Can censors in the last resort be expected to over-rule the President or Prime Minister in person?'²⁵ British government ministers objected that during talks with American cabinet members and higher levels, the censors 'should not break the connection,' but merely issue their verbal warning. Roosevelt concurred, and directed his private secretary to 'phone Byron Price that nobody of cabinet level or above should be subjected to cutting-off.'²⁶ This new regulation took effect on the last day of March 1942. Once an operator identified such a high-level call by the codeword *tops*, the censor was forbidden to cut off the call if the party at either end overruled him.²⁷ The *tops* list was periodically updated, *e.g.*, Edward Stettinius replaced Sumner Welles in November 1943.²⁸ Moreover, only the censor in the originating country could cut the call.

This new system seems in retrospect particularly perverse, since by the spring of 1942 the British firmly suspected that the Nazis were listening in on the transatlantic radiotelephone. 'Experts here,' wrote one Canadian official in London, 'consider that the security devices . . . while valuable against a casual eavesdropper, afford no security whatsoever when tapped by a fully-qualified radio engineer with ample resources. Therefore . . . it is practically certain that they are all overheard by the enemy.'²⁹ Only limited conclusions were drawn from this. Very few people were allowed on any ministry's 'permitted list.'³⁰ Private calls were not allowed. Journalists had to provide a pre-censored script. The cabinet secretary Sir Edward Bridges repeatedly warned all ministries against indiscretions. Writing with a precision that suggests detailed knowledge of the Wetterlin operation, Bridges warned in August 1942 – only a few days after the Himmler–Berger letters that we have quoted – that there was no security device which gave protection against skilled Nazi engineers: 'It must be assumed that the enemy records every word of every conversation made.' No 'phone censor, he advised, could prevent every indiscretion, he could only cut off the call and

then inevitably too late, and he had no control over the distant party's indiscretions.³¹

Churchill was an uncomfortable but nevertheless frequent user of the link. 'I do not feel safe with the present free use of the radiotelephone either to USA or to Russia,' he confessed to Eden in October 1942.³² Besides, there were others than just the Nazis whom he did not want to listen: 'You will appreciate,' Canadian government officials were warned before 'phoning from London, 'that your conversation will be listened to by the American Censorship.'³³

Over the next months the information about Wetterlin must have hardened. In February 1943 the foreign office sent a 'most secret' warning to Sir Edwin Herbert that the Germans had set up a big interception station employing four hundred people at The Hague in Holland for monitoring the transatlantic radiotelephone.

'We already knew,' this warning stated, 'that they had the necessary apparatus in Berlin to "unscramble" the Transatlantic telephone. . . The Hague would be the best place for the Germans to do this job, as you will notice that it is practically in line with London and New York.'³⁴

WHEN IT was seen that the commercial scrambling device in use until then, the 'A-3,' was insecure, inventors working at the Bell Telephone Laboratories had begun developing another system. This was X-RAY – also known as PROJECT X and THE GREEN HORNET (because it emitted a buzzing sound like the theme music of a popular American radio programme of that name). It was a scrambling system of great complexity, and terminals were eventually located in Washington, London, Algiers, and Australia; and thereafter at Paris, Hawaii, and the Philippines. An X-RAY telephone scrambler terminal would be carried to Sebastopol aboard the U.S.S. *Catoctin* for the Yalta conference in February 1945. In June 1945 a terminal was installed at the I.G. Farben building in Frankfurt which housed U.S. army headquarters.

The system was so secret that the corresponding patents, entitled 'secret telephony,' were awarded only in 1976 to the inventors.³⁵ It was as secure as could be. Not even the operators could listen in. At the sending and receiving end, electronic equipment sampled the power in each of ten frequency bands in the user's voice fifty times a second, and assigned a different signal amplification value to each sample. Unique matching pairs of phonograph discs of random noise were used to encode and decode at each end. Known to the U.S. army as SIGSALY, each X-RAY terminal was

large, taking three rooms to house and six men to operate. The equipment at each terminal included over thirty seven-foot racks fitted with 'vocoders,' oscillators, high-quality phonographs, filters, and one thousand vacuum tubes; these radio valves consumed 30,000 watts of power, necessitating in turn the installation of air conditioning equipment.

The Washington terminal was installed in March 1943; it was located in Room 3D928 at the new Pentagon building. Originally, General Sir Hastings Ismay learned, another X-RAY terminal was to have been installed in the White House itself, but Roosevelt did not fancy being 'phoned by Churchill at all hours and in April Ismay told the prime minister that it would not be fitted there after all. The second terminal was installed in the Public Health Building in downtown Washington instead. The London end initially terminated in the Americans' communication centre in the sub-basement of Selfridge's department store annexe at No. 14 Duke-street, not a hundred yards from where these words are being written.

The Americans began installing this X-RAY system in London too, but it would be a year before Churchill would or could use it. 'A United States Officer,' General Ismay informed him on February 15, 1943 referring to a Major Millar, 'has just arrived in London with instructions to install an apparatus of an entirely new kind for ensuring speech secrecy over the radio-telephone.' One strange feature, which struck the British government quite forcibly, was that their allies insisted on retaining physical control of the secret equipment and the building housing it in London.

At first they would not let the British even see it in operation in America; by February, only the legendary Dr Alan Turing of GC&CS had been allowed to inspect it. The dangers of letting themselves in for this arrangement seemed obvious to the British, but Churchill merely minuted 'good,' and the installation went ahead.³⁶

The London end was installed during May 1943 and seems to have been serviceable soon after. The Americans made an overseas test call over the X-system on June 29, and a formal inaugural call was made between London and Washington on July 15.³⁷ On the nineteenth, Henry Stimson, visiting London, 'talked over the new telephone with Marshall,' in Washington.³⁸ On July 27 the American military authorities informed the British joint staff mission in Washington that this transatlantic scrambler link to Selfridge's was now 'in working order.' At first the British were told that onward extensions to Whitehall would not be possible.³⁹ During August however the Americans installed the link from the Selfridge's terminal to the war cabi-

net offices in Great George-street.⁴⁰ Later a further extension known as an OPEPS was run to a special cabin in the underground Cabinet War Rooms, where largely fruitless attempts were made to remind Mr Churchill of the transatlantic time-difference by fixing an array of clocks on the wall above the door (where both 'phone extension and clocks can still be seen today).

Mysteriously, despite the July 1943 calls, the new X-RAY system proved ineffective right through to October, when extra valves were supposedly added; the British had by then unsuccessfully attempted four calls from the Cabinet War Rooms extension. The Americans blamed atmospheric, but the British harboured their own suspicions, believing that this excuse was pure invention.⁴¹ Probably because it provided better voice quality than the tinny SIGSALY, Churchill continued for many months to prefer the insecure 'A-3' scrambler to the evident delight of the Nazis who continued to listen in. They certainly recorded Churchill's call to Roosevelt on July 29, 1943, and deduced from it that, whatever the Italian regime's protestations to the contrary, they had done a secret deal with the Allies. This indiscretion gave Hitler sufficient warning to move Rommel's forces into northern Italy.⁴²

Tantalisingly, the files show that the Americans routinely offered verbatim transcripts of each conversation to the respective calling party.⁴³ Churchill's lapses remained however a source of worry both to the Americans and to his own staff. One example was at eight P.M. on October 7, 1943: announcing himself as 'John Martin' (his principal private secretary's name), he telephoned the White House and evidently asked for the president by name. Roosevelt was four hundred miles away at Hyde Park, and Hopkins took the message.

Churchill, he noted, had telephoned to ask whether Hopkins had read his 'long dispatch' that morning – evidently a secret message sent to Roosevelt along Churchill's secret conduit (see Appendix I) – referring to Anglo-American differences over the campaign in the Aegean Sea. Hopkins retorted that it had not been 'received well,' and was likely to get a dusty answer. The prime minister now stated that he had additional information which he was cabling at once, and proposed to fly to Africa to see Eisenhower about the matter personally, as it was of urgent importance. 'It was clear,' concluded Hopkins, 'that he was greatly disturbed when I told him that our military reply would probably be unfavorable.'⁴⁴

Just over an hour later, at 9:10 P.M., Churchill again called Hopkins (still using the old 'A-3' scrambler system), 'and,' according to Hopkins's memo, 'stated that if the President would agree, he would like to have General

Marshall meet him, presumably at General Eisenhower's headquarters, at once.' Hopkins assured him that he would talk to FDR about this and let him know.

We know that the censors at both ends were appalled by Churchill's breach of security. The next day, on October 8, 1943, Captain Fenn himself contacted Harry Hopkins at the White House to recommend that in future President Roosevelt and Churchill, when telephoning each other, call an agreed anonymous 'phone number in the United States, rather than that calls should be put in specifically for the 'prime minister' or the 'president.' He also urged them to use the new Army scrambler system, the X-RAY, which Hopkins confirmed he understood was in existence.⁴⁵

Underscoring the point, on October 12 Colonel Frank McCarthy (Marshall's secretary) warned Hopkins that the censors had listened in and that, while Hopkins had tactfully but consistently urged Churchill to watch his tongue, 'the prime minister cited names and places in such a way as to create possible danger for himself and others.'⁴⁶

Such a conversation – given the type of 'phone equipment used – would necessarily come to the attention of ten or even twenty people from the censorship clerks and their immediate superiors to the actual 'phone operators and others. 'In addition,' McCarthy reiterated, 'this equipment furnishes a very low degree of security, and we know definitely that the enemy can break the system with almost no effort.'⁴⁷

The British censors simultaneously echoed these warnings, but Churchill adopted a churlish attitude. The British files reveal his unhelpful response. Francis Brown, his secretary, reported to the cabinet secretary Sir Edward Bridges on October 11 that Sir Edwin Herbert, the chief censor, had come to see him on the tenth:

We agreed to draw the Prime Minister's attention to the records of his recent talks with Mr Hopkins on the transatlantic telephone and in particular to the fact that there were two things which would be evident to the enemy from these talks:–

- (1) the fact that there was grave disagreement at least between the Prime Minister and an American authority;
- (2) the fact that this disagreement was such that the Prime Minister might well have to make a journey.

The Germans could make great propaganda use of (1), and could take steps to find out more about (2) from their various agents.

Churchill's secretary sent the censorship reports back to Bridges, and asked him to arrange their return to Herbert, the Director General of the Postal and Telegraph Censorship – which is an important clue as to where the records may now be expected to reside.⁴⁸ Having read the damning note of his alleged transgressions, Churchill inked the comment: 'None of this has any operational significance. No one cd know what it was about. Shut down. WSC 11.X.' Regrettably, the transcripts are not in the file.

These and other lapses clearly tested General Marshall's patience. He referred to them only two years later, in a December 1945 hearing before the United States Congress on the Pearl Harbor disaster, when explaining his own fateful reluctance to use the 'phone to warn the commanding generals in Hawaii and the Philippines of the imminence of Japanese attack. This public accusation came to Churchill's ears, and he cabled a pained, and secret, message to Marshall on December 10, 1945:

You are reported to have stated to the Senate Committee that President Roosevelt and I had telephone conversations which were tapped by the enemy. I should be very much obliged to you if you would let me know exactly what it is you have said on this subject.

Of course the late President and I were both aware from the beginning even before Argentina [*sic*. ARGENTIA] that anything we said on the open cable might be listened into by the enemy. For this reason we always spoke in cryptic terms and about matters which could be of no use to the enemy, and we never on any occasion referred directly or indirectly to military matters on these open lines.

It will probably be necessary for me to make a statement on this subject in the future, and I should be very glad to know how the matter stands. Yours ever, WINSTON S. CHURCHILL.⁴⁹

Marshall cabled a courteous response: 'I testified in connection with the security phase of the use of the telephone to Hawaii and the Philippines and the Panama Canal Zone in the following words:

I say again, I am not at all clear as to what my reasons were regarding the telephone because four years later it is very difficult for me to tell what went on in my mind at the time. I will say this, though, it was in my mind regarding the use of [the] Transocean telephone. Mr Roosevelt – the president – had been in the frequent habit of talking to the prime

minister by telephone. He also used to talk to Mr Bullitt when he was ambassador in Paris and my recollection is that that (meaning the talks with Bullitt) was intercepted by the Germans. I had a test made of induction from telephone conversations on the Atlantic Cable near Gard[i]ner's Island. I found that that could be picked up by induction. I talked to the president not once but several times. I also later, after we were in the war, talked with the prime minister in an endeavor to have them be more careful in the use of the scrambler.

'I trust,' he concluded his message to Churchill, 'my statement will not prove of any embarrassment to you.'⁵⁰

Some time after the October 1943 episode, Churchill finally began using the X-RAY system, and he did so until the end of the war. A March 1945 memorandum specified: 'Stenographic transcription of all calls over the X-RAY system will be made,' as well as an electrical recording.⁵¹

We have found however only scattered transcripts of these X-RAY conversations, almost solely between army generals: *e.g.*, between Jacob Devers in London and Omar Bradley and others at the Pentagon in September 1943, and between Brehon Somervell in London and General Code at the Pentagon in August 1944.⁵²

Disappointingly few transcripts of Churchill's conversations are in the public domain. In the diary of President Truman's assistant press secretary we find this entry on April 25, 1945: 'Around noon, the President went to the Pentagon without warning. The press got wind of it, and were told it was an "inspection." Some learned that he went into the communication room. The fact was that he went over to talk over the European telephone, I believe, to Churchill.'⁵³ The transcript shows that they discussed the surrender of Germany.⁵⁴

Churchill also 'phoned Colonel McCarthy and Admiral Leahy on May 7, 1945 about arrangements for the surrender of Germany (the transcripts run to two and four pages respectively).

Transcripts of Churchill's other transatlantic conversations must have been made at the time; we must ask, where are they?

APPENDIX III: *Sikorski's Death*

IN 1967 THE GERMAN playwright Rolf Hochhuth produced a drama, *Soldiers*, about air warfare. Churchill's role in the 1943 death of the Polish prime minister Wladyslaw Sikorski was a secondary element of the play. This resulted in fierce controversy. After our book *Accident* was published,* David Frost devoted three special TV programmes to it. A highly defamatory book appeared, written by one Carlos Thompson: *The Assassination of Winston Churchill*. A number of officers and other witnesses contacted us: we spoke with the widow of the missing second pilot, and an S.O.E. officer based on the Rock told us what he had seen. Early in 1969 we asked the prime minister, Harold Wilson, to reopen the 1943 R.A.F. Court of Inquiry, and Woodrow Wyatt, MP, tabled a parliamentary Question.

The relevant government files were released to the Public Record Office just before this volume went to press. These reveal that in February 1969 the Intelligence Co-ordinator provided a background memorandum for the cabinet secretary Sir Burke Trend to forward to Wilson. This concluded that our book had conveyed as clearly as was possible without risking a libel suit that the Liberator's pilot, Edward Prchal, had 'assisted in the plane's sabotage.' 'He [David Irving] has clearly done a good deal of research among people involved in the Gibraltar arrangements and the Court of Inquiry and among United States and Polish émigré archives.'

In advising the prime minister to refute the sabotage allegations most robustly, Sir Burke warned him however to temper his remarks with caution since, not only were High Court writs flying, but 'the report of the contemporary R.A.F. court of inquiry contains some weaknesses which, if it were published, could be embarrassingly exploited.'

The 1943 inquiry did not 'exclude the possibility of doubt' on the possibility of sabotage, explained the cabinet secretary:

The shadow of doubt is certainly there; and a skilful counsel could make good use of it. Irving, in his book *Accident*, points to the weaknesses in the report, a copy of which he has certainly seen and may possess; and if challenged he might publish it.

* David Irving: *Accident – The Death of General Sikorski* (London, 1967). Extracts from the file on our website at fpp.co.uk/books/Accident.

Anything that the prime minister might say must therefore be consistent with what might need to be admitted if the inquiry's report later came into the public domain. Meanwhile, as Wilson was informed, the Intelligence community was limiting its response to providing 'unattributable' and 'discreet' help and 'encouragement' to those anxious to defend the late Sir Winston Churchill, notably his grandson, Mr Winston Churchill Jr., his wartime 'secret circle,' and the 'rather enigmatic' Argentine author Carlos Thompson (husband of the actress Lilli Palmer) whom Randolph Churchill had commissioned to write a book.

It was also hoped to destroy both ourselves and the playwright Hochhuth with legal proceedings (only Hochhuth was eventually sued). 'Irving,' Harold Wilson was advised, 'has called for a re-opening of the R.A.F. Court of Inquiry which he (rightly) claims is permissible under R.A.F. Rules.' Sir Burke Trende warned the prime minister:

It would be most unwise to agree, not least because of the weaknesses in the proceedings of the [1943] Court of Inquiry.⁵⁵

Harold Wilson concurred in this view. He did however inquire *en passant* whether Winston Churchill had in fact ordered the assassination. Sir Burke assured him in one word ('No') that he had not.