

~~TOP SECRET//COMINT//X1~~

(U)Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series

(U)After The Tunnel: From Berlin to London to Cheltenham, The Story Of LPG

[(U//~~FOUO~~) After posting our articles on the Berlin Tunnel last week, we were pleased to receive an item which added more interesting information to the story. Our writer is Mr. Peter Freeman from GCHQ. Our thanks to Mr. Freeman.]

(TS//SI) The story so far: Transcription of the voice material intercepted from the SIS/CIA joint Berlin Tunnel operation (REGAL) was carried out in London by Russian-speaking emigres. The transcription organisation, known as the Main Processing Unit (MPU), was run by SIS, but mainly paid for by CIA.

Competition for Transcription Resources

(b)(1)
(b)(3)-50 USC 403
(b)(3)-18 USC 798
(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

(b)(1) (TS//SI) The REGAL tunnel was closed down by the Soviet authorities in April 1956, but there was still a large backlog of material requiring processing. The emigre workforce had been recruited because [redacted] CIA needed an instant set of native Russian-speaking transcribers, and there was no other source of such people; at the same time emigres, who had at a minimum left their homelands about 40 years earlier, were willing and eager to strike back at their Soviet enemy [redacted]

[redacted] GCHQ proposed [redacted] that some members of the MPU, who were still transcribing backlog REGAL material, might be more usefully employed [redacted] The initial proposal was that 38 people, 30 of them transcribers, should be devoted to this task.

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~~(TS//SI)~~ It did not, however, escape NSA's attention that this would give CIA an even greater insight into what was surely by anyone's definition "normal" COMINT. Although suspicions of a "CIA takeover" were suppressed, CIA's enthusiastic reception of the proposal probably awakened them again. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A New Permanent Role

(b)(1)
(b)(3)-50 USC 403
(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

(b)(1)
(b)(3)-50 USC 403
(b)(3)-18 USC 798
(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

~~(TS//SI)~~ Even as REGAL transcription was ceasing, [REDACTED] took over. Many of the new organisation's transcribers were former members of MPU, with others newly recruited. All the staff were taken on board as British civil servants, though of a rather unusual type. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)

[REDACTED] GCHQ paid for accommodation, management and communications. The organisation became known as the London Transcription Centre, later the London Processing Group (LPG) under which title it was well known throughout the 1960s. [REDACTED] its British head, C.L.S. (Bungy) Williams, ran the operation until his retirement in 1972, and although he was a dominating character, U.S. deputies such as Jack Gurin kept pace with him. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)

New Sources

(b)(1)
(b)(3)-50 USC 403
(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36

~~(TS//SI)~~ Material [REDACTED] became increasingly prolific, but gradually field stations changed their staffing by acquiring more linguists to cope with it, while the content, though linguistically much more complex [REDACTED]

(b)(1)
(b)(3)-50 USC 403
(b)(3)-18 USC 798
(b)(3)-P.L. 86-36



(S) Considering that few of the LPG emigres were younger than 60 even in 1960, it is amazing that the operation lasted so long. Throughout the 1960s GCHQ tried hard to recruit British-born Russian speakers in the numbers and of the quality needed, but even in 1971 the proportion of these in LPG had only risen to 45 percent. Thereafter, however, the problem eased, and during the 1970s the question of bringing LPG into GCHQ's main complex at Cheltenham received increasing attention. Most of the organisation moved in 1977, and the London buildings were vacated in 1982 (they continued to stand empty for almost 20 more years). The closure was marked by a ceremony attended by many "old hands," and a signed photograph of London Bridge hangs in Cheltenham to commemorate in particular the many who were driven from their homeland but found a way to retaliate against the Bolsheviks.

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