

Appendix I
S.P. Control and P/W Welfare

The refugee S.Ps. described below were paid out of a Special Fund provided by D.D.M.I.(P/W) and they were also in receipt of family allowances on the same scale as an 'other rank' in the British Army – the I.O. Welfare Officer whose duty it was to look after them saw to their pay and allowances and maintained constant touch with them in order to prevent ennui, a danger ever - present after long spells of nerve-racking communion with prisoners, to whom in the large majority they harboured intense dislike, if not hatred.

The Welfare Officer's policy vis-a-vis Ps/W was to disassociate himself completely from the Interrogating Officers and the Intelligence aspects of the camp generally. This proved to be sound as it quickly spread and was believed, with the result that Ps/W often confided in him seeking his sympathy. This enabled the Welfare Officer to exercise subtle persuasion which often resulted in facilitating the work of the Interrogating Officers. There are a number of noteworthy instances of tough and fractious Ps/W becoming amenable to interrogation. The Welfare Officer must be patient, sympathetic by character, wide awake and a good actor.

On 30 October 1940 what appeared to be a German Air Force P/W arrived at Cockforsters [sic] Camp together with three other Ps/W who were collected at various places. He wore the correct uniform and an identity disc and was in possession of unimportant trifles usually found on Ps/W. He seemed resigned to his fate and gave the ordinary particulars associated with P/W personalia.

After reception, medical inspection etc. being completed, he was assigned to a P/W room.

This latest arrival was a pre-war refugee from Germany, who had placed his services at our disposal. He had been interviewed and investigated from every possible angle and finally vetted before he arrived at Cockforsters, and supplied with the uniform etc. he was wearing.

The refugee soon after arrival was visited by a British officer, who with the assistance of an officer from A.D.I.K. (the Air component of C.S.D.I.C.(UK));

arranged details regarding name, past history, rank and career befitting his physique, accent and personality etc. He had to learn his part as a soldier in the G.A.F., literature dealing with aerial activity had to be absorbed, drawings and photographs of German planes had to be studied and visits organised to depots where a German machine could be seen and explained. When he felt sufficiently confident he was placed in a room with a P/W after being briefed as to what was required.

Few people were aware that there was an S.P. in the camp. He lived under exactly the same conditions as ordinary Ps/W except that he had a daily walk with a British officer, to whom he reported progress. Facilities existed which enabled all conversations to be checked. If the S.P. got into difficulties, ways and means had to be found to relieve the situation. In the same way, when he was finished with his man, the S.P. had to be removed in such a way that no suspicion remained. It was generally arranged that the P/W left the S.P., the former usually expressing regret at losing such a pleasant companion.

The first experiment was eminently successful and with experience and constant coaching more subtle methods were applied and with ever-increasing knowledge of German mentality in war-time, and additional details of flying, training, tactics and strategy it was seldom found that a P/W could withstand a well-trained S.P., if of the right type and personality. The garrulous would be allowed to 'run on' and, if suspicious, the S.P. pretended to be security-minded and was hurt by his companion's boorishness and lack of trust. In these circumstances, the S.P. would often suggest a game of chess in the course of which a question skilfully put would often produce good results.

In 1940 more and more S.Ps. were introduced selected from amongst refugees in the U.K. Incidentally, 93 persons were interviewed and only 4 selected as great difficulty was experienced in

finding people possessing the proper personality, intelligence, courage, outlook and memory. It was also required that S.Ps. should be good judges of people and have some knowledge of the world outside Germany and Austria.

The training of these refugee S.Ps. followed the course already described and after a remarkably short period of training they were able to pose as a member of any arm of the German Armed Forces. Wherever possible they posed as a member of a different arm to that to which their victim belonged.

Here it might be mentioned that all movements of S.Ps. had to be worked out beforehand with infinite care. S.Ps. had to be exercised in such a way that they never came within sight of any point from which they might be observed. Then again walks had to be carefully timed so that the S.Ps. did not meet Ps/W when leaving or entering the building. The Camp Interpreter and certain reliable warders who came into contact with the S.Ps. had to be brought into the picture. They had to remember never to address an S.P. by name or pretend that they had ever seen him before. Addressing him by the wrong name or appearing to know him when he was supposed to be a new arrival might have ruined everything.

S.Ps. were entitled to buy certain goods from the canteen. These goods were entered up on an account card in the name way as genuine Ps/W and signed for by him in a P/Ws presence. Care had to be taken that this card corresponded with his temporary name, rank and supposed time of arrival. The detailed work was very exacting. A somewhat ill-fitting uniform might pass muster if an S.P. was playing the role of an O.R. but as an officer he had to have a uniform that fitted well and corresponded with the time he was supposed to have worn it. Any decorations he wore had to have a convincing story attached to them with all corroborative details. He had to be conversant with the behaviour of GAF officers in the Mess, towards superiors, inferiors and one another, acquire the latest slang terms and be thoroughly acquainted with the latest reactions to current events.

Ps/W often became suspicious of microphones and refused to talk within four walls, but did not mind talking in the open air. In such cases it was arranged that exercise in the enclosure be prolonged or given more frequently. the S.P. memorised all information imparted to him and generally wrote it down in the lavatory at the earliest opportunity or arranged a sign to be taken out at once, ostensibly for interrogation. One of such signs was the low humming or whistling of a pre-arranged popular song. Another was the mention of a pre-arranged name, such as General Bagaroff, in connection with the Russian campaign. Needless to say, the latter sign meant that the S.P. for some good reason, wished to be taken away from his companion.

A careful study of Ps/W selected for the centres plus the co-operation of the regular S.Ps. and constant check on conversations between Ps/W enabled recommendations being made to the Naval, Army and Air components of the centres as to which Ps/W would be likely to co-operate willingly. This resulted in a team of Ps/W-stool pigeons being recruited, the results of which proved to be excellent. They were approached on ideological, sentimental or religious grounds and here the Welfare Officer played a most important part. These selected persons were led up to the point of volunteering to obtain information from their fellows. Naval prisoners proved to be the most approachable and the results they produced were of the greatest value. Indeed, some of the information in regard to U-Boat locations and tactics may be described as having been of vital importance. These S.Ps. were given preferential treatment in the form of better quarters, extra cigarettes and beer occasionally. This all sounds simple but great care has to be taken to select properly and to make the approach gradually, employing all the amenities described above.

It is of interest to note that the total number of Ps/W serviced by S.Ps. from 1940 to 1945 was 1506.