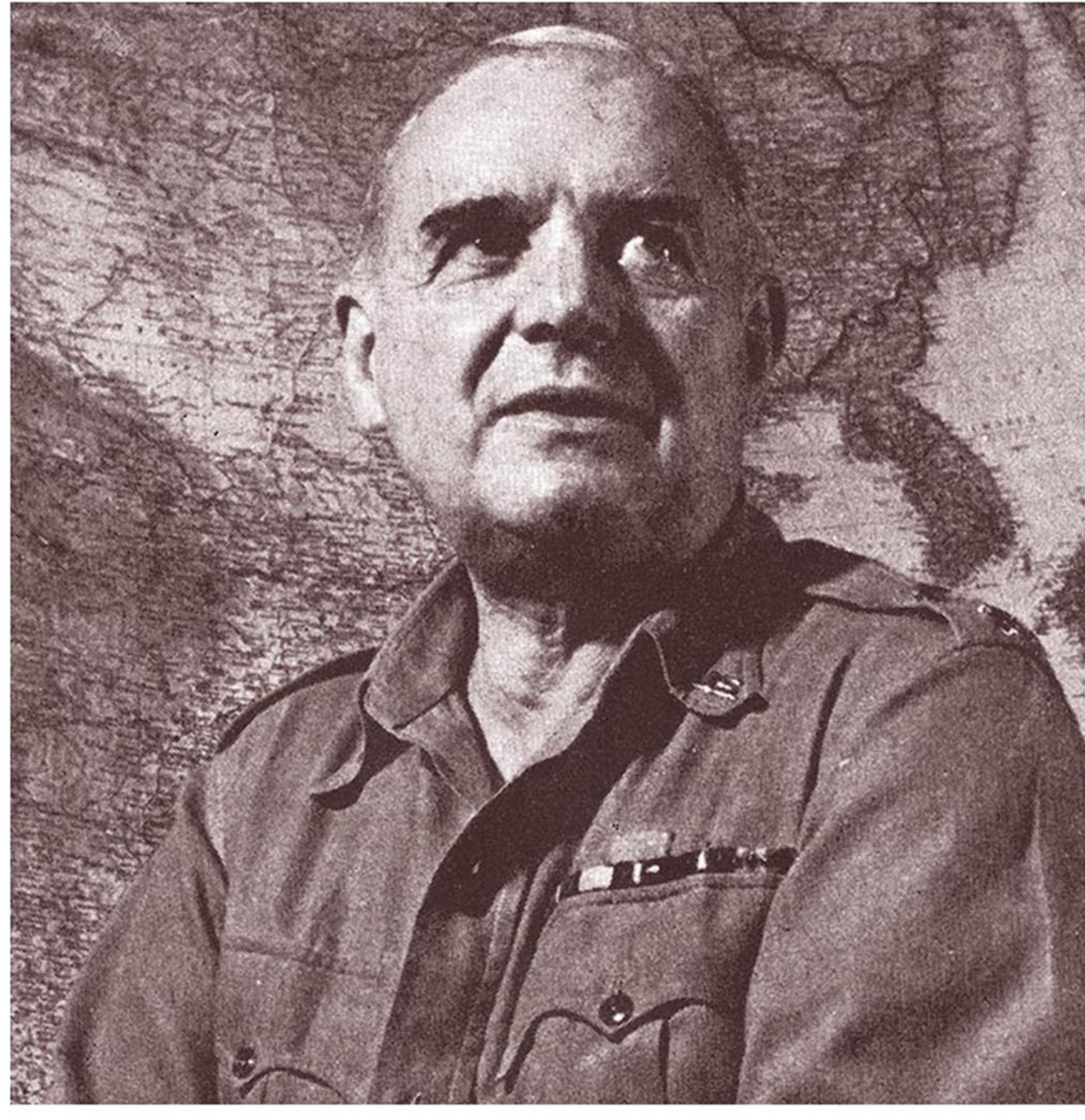


# CLOAK and DAGGER

BY LIEUT. COL. COREY FORD AND  
MAJOR ALASTAIR MAC BAIN

Here is the story of how we won the desperate battle of espionage. It was won by many men—average Americans—hair-trigger trained and organized with cold and deadly efficiency. Their story is one of the greatest stories of the war, and it is told here by two officers who have watched the operations of the Office of Strategic Services at firsthand. The authors have been associated with O.S.S. since the early days of the war, and have an intimate knowledge of its world-wide activities. Their story of the United States' first all-out participation in black warfare, espionage and super-secret wartime intelligence is based on personal experiences, interviews with Office of Strategic Services personnel in the field and on official Washington records which are here made public for the first time



**O**N a historic night in November of 1942, a message was flashed in code to the German-held African coast: "Ecoute, Yankee, Franklin, Lincoln, Midway, Pilgrim—Robert arrive! Robert arrive!"

That long-awaited signal, picked up by five American radio stations operating under the very noses of the Nazis—"Yankee" in Algiers, "Franklin" in Oran, "Lincoln" in Casablanca, "Midway" in Tangier, "Pilgrim" in Tunis—spread like wildfire through the tense underground. Messengers hurried to the cellar headquarters of French resistance groups. Cars sped through the night, ignoring the sentries' sharp commands to halt. Moslems gathered in silent groups, ready. In pubs and brothels and walled-in villas, the word was whispered: Robert was coming. The American invasion forces were landing tomorrow. The time was now.

For eighteen months, preparations had gone on for this moment. A handful of undercover agents—members of a secret Intelligence agency without precedent in American history—had infiltrated through the German lines, organized native resistance, supplied them with propaganda and arms. Led by Major Carleton S. Coon, former Harvard professor of anthropology, and Marine Colonel William A. Eddy, winner of the Navy Cross and DSC in World War I, they had set up a clandestine radio network which was virtually our only link with the anti-Axis French. Brazenly worming their way into Nazi headquarters, they had obtained the complete text of the German plans for meeting an Allied landing. Day after day they had sent back vital intelligence to the Allied High Command.

Several months before D-Day Africa, an American businessman, a member of this secret agency, had smuggled Malverne, chief pilot of Port Lyautey, from Casablanca to Gibraltar, whence he was rushed to the United States to give our Navy information about landing facilities, channels, harbor installations. Another agent, Ridgeway Knight, had waited in the surf of the enemy coast on a certain midnight, winking his flashlight in code as an American submarine surfaced and a party in a rubber boat paddled toward him with muffled oars. The beam of his light shone on the face of General Mark W. Clark, commander of the coming African invasion. The general was led to a waiting car, rushed to his now famous rendezvous. . . .

All was in readiness as the Allied fleet of several hundred ships glided through that eventful November night. Too late, the Germans on watch in Algeciras and Ceuta and Tangier radioed frantically to Wiesbaden, and the Stukas began to warm up in Sardinia. Already the alerted African underground had risen to overthrow the local Vichy government and suppress opposition. With General Eisenhower on Gibraltar, Coon and Eddy were on the air constantly, exchanging last-minute intelligence with their five secret stations. Loyal French pilots, who knew every inch of the coastline and harbors, guided the Allied ships accurately to their destinations. Malverne himself triumphantly steered the first American destroyer into his home port.

As the landing boats loomed out of the darkness, they saw the welcome torches of this handful of American agents standing on the enemy beaches, blinking directions as they approached. That lightly opposed invasion of Africa was more than a milestone on the long road to Berlin. It was the opening chapter in the hitherto untold story of a bold new venture in black warfare: the Office of Strategic Services. . . .

You might have walked past its headquarters, unsuspecting, a dozen times. They are located in a drab and down-at-heel section of Washington: a group of brick-and-limestone buildings huddled in the shadow of an ancient brewery, an apartment house, a ramshackle school. Only the guards with shoulder holsters who challenged you at every door would have indicated that there was anything secret behind their anonymous walls.

Inside, the creaking corridors and the tiny boxlike offices,

crammed with filing cabinets and clacking typewriters and paper-littered desks, would have reminded you of any small-town law firm on a humid Southern afternoon. Gray-haired statisticians, research experts, accountants in shirt sleeves poring over columns of figures. A mild-looking scientist with a magnifying glass, studying a yellowed sheet of German business stationery. A foreign language professor translating an article on economics from a Japanese magazine. . . .

A far cry from the headlines, the clash and thunder of battle. Yet these dusty offices were a battlefield—the strangest and perhaps the most crucial battlefield of the war. These filing cabinets were arsenals, their contents as vital as bullets or bombs. From these obscure buildings, like the waves of a powerful radio station, a network of secret intelligence stretched around the globe from Washington to Berne, to Caserta, to Chungking, to Berlin itself. Behind their barred windows was an organization as revolutionary in our military history as the atomic bomb.

Look more closely through that magnifying glass. The tiny steel engraving on that German letterhead furnished the only available reproduction of a Nazi war plant, which our Army Air Forces subsequently bombed into rubble. Study that Japanese magazine. Hidden in its pages was the key to a critical bottleneck in the Nip aircraft industry. Thousands of such jigsaw facts and figures were gathered by O.S.S. agents, equipped with powerful radio sets, who parachuted behind the enemy lines and flashed their information back to these unromantic-looking analysts in their Washington cubbyhole—to give us a detailed picture of the enemy's total war economy. That picture determined our aerial bombing program—according to Von Rundstedt, the deciding factor in the defeat of Germany.

The story of O.S.S.—the fabulous story that has been shrouded till now in complete military security—is the story of average everyday Americans who successfully outmaneuvered and outwitted the centuries-old espionage systems of Axis Europe and Asia. It is the story of humdrum law clerks or teachers or insurance salesmen—your own husband or son or brother—who donned paratrooper boots and leapt into the rushing darkness over Burma, or paddled ashore from a submarine at night in Italy or southern France.

It is the story of respectable American businessmen, never guilty before of any greater duplicity than a bluff at three-card stud, who posed as innocent wine merchants or booksellers while they picked locks, rifled safes, directed the underground in dynamiting factories and bridges. To many citizens, accustomed to think of their country as a gullible Uncle Sam, whose striped pants pockets are ready to be picked by any foreign spy, the record of O.S.S. must stand as a proud American achievement. . . .

#### A Conference with the President

The story begins on an afternoon early in 1942, when President Roosevelt called General William J. Donovan to the White House on an urgent and confidential matter. For over a year (starting before Pearl Harbor) General Donovan, as Co-ordinator of Information, had been assembling military and economic and political intelligence that concerned the security of the United States. Now, the President ordered, his civilian organization was being transformed overnight into a military agency under the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to act as a supporting unit for the Army and Navy.

This Office of Strategic Services, as it would henceforth be called, was to "collect and analyze strategic information" and to "plan and operate special services"; sabotage, black warfare, similar clandestine operations that did not normally fall within the jurisdiction of the regular armed forces. New methods of warfare required new concepts and new weapons, Mr. Roosevelt said. The United States was about to embark on activities that had never been indulged in by this nation before.

It was a staggering order. For the first time, Uncle Sam was going into the international cloak-and-dagger business, and the business was starting virtually from scratch. The prospect would have floored any man but General Donovan, who had won the Congressional Medal of Honor and the nickname of "Wild Bill" for his bravery when he was leader of the fighting Sixty-Ninth in World War I.

General Donovan had a unique combination of unbounding curiosity, a flexible imagination that leapt to new ideas, an affinity for danger, a way of getting what he wanted. Two years before, Mussolini was known to be amassing many troops in Africa, but no one was allowed to see them. Donovan, realizing that grave times were on the hori-



An O.S.S. trainee moves cautiously through the "Scare House," where diabolical traps test his alertness, his reflexes and his emotional poise. Suddenly confronted by a pop-up dummy of a Nazi Storm Trooper, this trainee's reaction is the approved one

zon, visited the Fascist leader in Rome, and was likewise refused permission. He shrugged casually: "It doesn't matter. We know the Italians haven't got much of an army anyway." The Duce, infuriated, issued personal orders that this skeptical American was to be taken everywhere, shown everything. Donovan went, and saw.

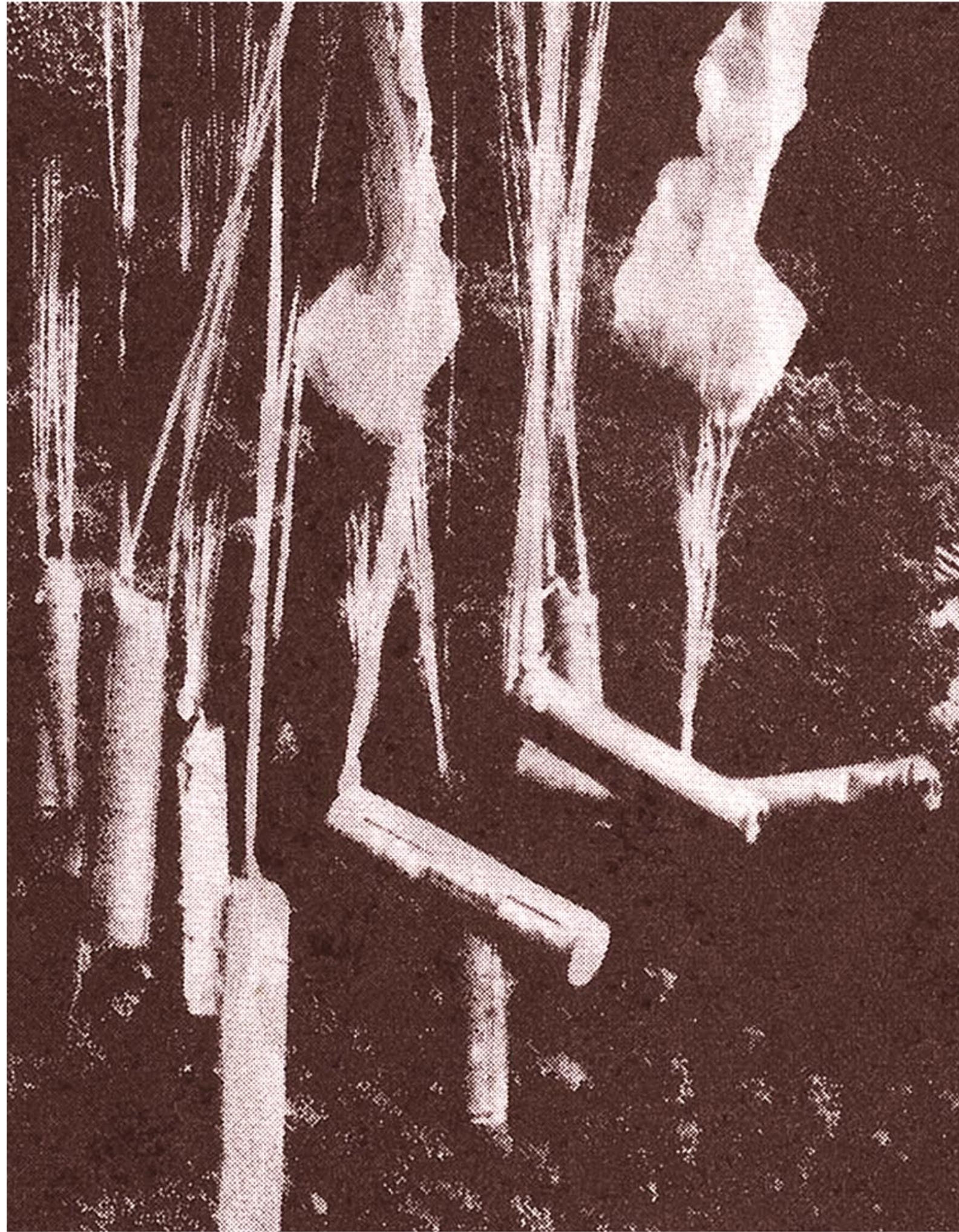
He had been head of a prominent New York law firm when he was called back into service. He tackled the new problem in the orderly way that a lawyer would handle a case. He hired the best possible staff of research experts, of prosecutors, of special investigators. Strength of character, he decided at the outset, was the first requirement for subversive and dangerous work. The type of American who could best lead a double life behind enemy lines, he insisted, was the man who had never lived a double life before. It was easier to train an honest citizen to engage in shady activities than to teach honesty to a man of dubious background.

This was total intelligence. The job of O.S.S. was to know more about the enemy than he knew himself, to learn every detail of his economic and political and military situation. So, for his key personnel, General Donovan recruited prominent bankers and industrialists—names like Vanderbilt, Du Pont, Morgan—who knew European finance and who had an intimate knowledge of strategic areas. He enlisted noted diplomats like Hugh Wilson, our last ambassador to Germany, and Allen Dulles, whose subsequent dealings in Switzerland with General Wolfe of the SS (Elite Guard) provided one of the most fantastic episodes in the O.S.S. history. He enrolled leaders from all walks of American life: President James P. Baxter of Williams College; Brigadier General John T. Magruder, former chief of Army Intelligence; ace Hollywood director Captain John Ford, USNR, and Garson Kanin; Sterling Hayden, George Skouras, of Twentieth Century-Fox, Navy Lieutenant Henry Ringling North of Ringling Circus fame; Lieutenant Mike Burke, Penn All-America, and Jumping Joe Savoldi of Notre Dame, noted professional wrestler.

#### Socialites Scoff at Danger

There were bluebloods from the top drawer of the Social Register, Roosevelt and Armour and Guest. Oh So Social, the agency was promptly dubbed by uninformed and irresponsible columnists, who did not know that these representatives of America's Four Hundred volunteered without hesitation for dark and dangerous assignments. Captain Winston Guest flew into Jap-held China with an O.S.S. medical unit to locate General Jonathan Wainwright. Marine Captain Winthrop Rutherford led his team several times through the German lines in southern France. Captain Lester Armour spearheaded an O.S.S. party into besieged Paris. Fifty-four-year-old Colonel Serge Obolensky, New York man about town, disappeared from El Morocco one night to parachute into Sardinia, cut communication lines, organize the Partisans so effectively that they met our invading forces with flowers.

And there were the nameless thousands of



From occupied France to the Malayan jungles, American bombing planes kept O.S.S. infiltration teams supplied with food and weapons deep in enemy territory. These parachute containers hold supplies for O.S.S. men co-operating with the French underground

Americans who never made the headlines, doctors and editors and interior decorators, ornithologists and soda-jerkers and cowboys and clerks, who accepted voluntarily the peril and loneliness of a hunted existence behind the enemy lines. There were wives and sisters of men in services who flocked to join because of their stake in the war. There were recruits with every background of language and race; the conglomerate nature of America proved an invaluable asset in assembling an international agency. Many were of Italian or German or Japanese descent, newly made citizens with a burning desire to pay off their obligation to their adopted land as well as to drive the dictators from their ancestral homes. Some of them paid off that obligation with their lives.

The new agency set up headquarters in Washington in the buildings of the National Health Institute, to the ill-concealed discomfort of the erstwhile residents, who had barely time to pack up their experimental monkeys and baby chicks and ants before they were tossed out into the street. During those first hectic days, Intelligence officers worked elbow to elbow with test tubes and crates of guinea pigs, and a secretary opening a filing cabinet was apt as not to come on a family of white mice nestling in the secret papers. It was at least six months before they got rid of the last of the ants, they said.

Secrecy was the watchword: not the tip-toeing cloak-and-dagger mumbo jumbo of spy fiction, but the cautious silence of discreet men who realized that a careless word might endanger lives and jeopardize the entire project. Individuals tapped for this hush-hush society did not mention the fact even to their families. Your husband or son, if he had joined, would have told you merely that he was being sent on some special Army work. Probably a brief training period in this country, then he'd be heading overseas. No, he wouldn't have an address for a while.

He would not even have a name. He would become a number. With a group of other numbers, all in the anonymity of Army uniforms, he would be driven in a car with curtains drawn to a secret area outside Washington. Under the skilled eyes of psychiatrists, he would be put through a grueling three-day screening. If he qualified mentally and emotionally for the task ahead, if he did not crack, he would be moved to another and even more closely guarded area: a super-secret training ground in subversive warfare that flourished for three years, unsuspected by the public, less than an hour's drive from the heart of the capital.

#### Taught to Meet the Enemy

Here he would be taught to meet the enemy on the enemy's terms. He would park all idea of clean sportsmanship along with his name, and learn to fight barehanded, gutter style, with all the dirty tactics of gutter fighting: a knee in the groin, a savage slash with the side of the hand across an Adam's apple, a jab at the eyes with fingers stiffly hooked in a tiger's claw.

With a masked instructor at his elbow, he would move with drawn revolver through a

cleverly designed Scare House that rivaled any Coney Island Chamber of Horrors in one-a-minute thrills. Boards would teeter realistically underfoot as he felt his way along a dark hall, footsteps would echo mysteriously ahead of him, a concealed phonograph would grind out the rumble of guttural German voices around a poker table, the clink of glasses and slap of cards. A turn of the corridor would reveal a suddenly lighted dummy dressed in the uniform of a Nazi Storm Trooper, confronting him. Whirl, fire. Careful, now, there's someone in the room just ahead. Reload, safety off, hammer cocked. Burst open the door, fire; fire again.

He would be taught other black arts: to blow a safe, to photograph secret documents in an office at night, to set a demolition charge or remove the fuse from a time bomb. This is the proper way to get abrasives into a truck's motor, for example. This lethal instrument, planted in an airplane, will explode automatically when the ship gains a certain altitude—a secret device that grounded much of the Luftwaffe at a critical moment during Rommel's advance on Egypt. These secret documents can be smuggled across an enemy border by an innocent-looking peasant leading a cow whose teats have been dilated and stuffed with rolls of microfilm. He would study counterfeiting enemy money or ration stamps in order to disrupt war economy. He would practice short-wave radio, code, sending spot weather reports. He would learn to be alert, resourceful, silent.

### Everything in Strict Secrecy

Perhaps he would return home for a brief visit before heading overseas. He would not tell you what he had been doing, of course. Just some routine training: Army stuff. He would be just as casual about where he was going next. He didn't know for sure. Hoped he might get to drop in on some interesting places. He'd send you a postcard.

So you thought of him safe and secure in a headquarters somewhere overseas; and at night, as you sat down to supper, you wondered whether you would get a letter from him tomorrow. And at that very moment, somewhere over the enemy country, he would be crouching beside the open door of a speeding airplane and staring down into the midnight darkness. His parachute would be securely fastened, his map and K-rations and compass and knife would be in place, he would pat the .45 in its holster at his belt.

His mouth would be dry, but the palms of his hands would be wringing wet. The enemy was down below him, waiting. Perhaps their radar had picked up the airplane. Perhaps their patrols were alerted; perhaps they had already surprised and overpowered the underground group with whom he was to make contact. The jump master would motion him to get ready. He could not make it, he knew. He would have to quit. And then he would hear the signal, and suddenly he would be over-ending into space, straightening with a stunning jolt, drifting earthward in the most terrible silence he had ever known: alone, irrevocably on his own. . . .

It was perilous work. A careless word, a single false move, would alert the ubiquitous enemy. He might be betrayed at any moment by quislings in the underground. Then he would learn that the price of enemy information comes high. There was Navy Lieutenant James Harvey Gaul, a brilliant young archeologist from Harvard, who parachuted into Czechoslovakia to work with the local forces of the interior in maintaining an underground railroad for evacuating downed American fliers. Ambushed behind the lines, young Gaul retreated with his team of Partisans through the enemy-infested mountains to a hideout near Polomka. It was hopeless: they were surrounded by two hundred troops, and after three hours of fighting were forced to yield. Gaul was dragged to the notorious Mauthausen Concentration Camp near Linz, Austria. He was executed by a firing squad without revealing any word of his secret mission.

Or there were the fifteen soldiers from the 267th Special Reconnaissance Battalion of O.S.S.—mostly New York youngsters of Italian descent—who volunteered to dynamite the main tunnel of the coastal railroad running from Genoa to La Spezia. Two Navy PT boats, waiting offshore to pick them up after their mission, were surprised by German E-boats; one was sunk, the other driven off. Later attempts to rescue the stranded party of fifteen were unsuccessful, and weeks of air reconnaissance could discover no sign of them.

They were found a year later. A G.I. who had been in the searching party told us the final chapter of the story back in Washington. He was working at a switchboard in O.S.S. headquarters when we saw him: the

heels of his combat boots still gray with Italian mud, were hooked on the lower rung of an operator's stool, and his big hand moved back and forth across the switchboard as he talked: "They'd all been dumped together in a slit trench after they were shot. They were still in uniform, only the shoes had been stolen off their feet. When we turned them over, the bones of their wrists were still tied with rope." His hand trembled a little as he plugged in a telephone cord. "We untied their wrists before we buried them. . . ."

In Europe, in the Balkans, in Burma and Indo-China the long fingers of the fast-growing agency were probing, groping their way deeper and deeper into occupied countries, reaching to the heart of underground resistance. In Yugoslavia, for example, an O.S.S. team established the first official military liaison with Marshal Tito and his Partisan army, directed Allied bombing of special targets in support of their operations, rescued over 800 American and British airmen who had been forced down in Tito's area. Another team penetrated Venice before its liberation, successfully prevented the planned German destruction of hydroelectric facilities and port installations, stole a complete chart of the mines planted in Venice harbor.

Half a year before Rome fell, several O.S.S. officers with the Fifth Army infiltrated the heart of the Italian capital. One agent lived for months in the house of a prominent Fascist, while 300 loyal Italians in his secret employ cased every road leading in and out of the city, keeping a twenty-four-hour watch on all troop and matériel movements heading south toward the threatened invasion post. When the trail got too hot, he joined the Italian secret police, doing Gestapo work by day and continuing his undercover activities at night.

### Securing German Plans

Another of the group actually subverted a liaison officer on Field Marshal Kesselring's staff and secured detailed defense plans of the German High Command, which were radioed to Fifth Army Headquarters at Anzio. During the beachhead crisis, their secret radio in Rome was on the air five times a day, sometimes for an hour at a time. Once a warning of a German counterattack at an unexpected point was flashed to Sixth Corps Army Intelligence, in the nick of time to move up reinforcements and save that section of the Anzio beach. The message was the last ever received. The radio operator was surprised at his set and shot through the back of the head by the Gestapo.

Biggest blind spot in our international intelligence in the early days of the war was Japanese-held South Asia. Not a word had come out of this inscrutable country after the Japs' swift conquest. Allied airmen forced down in its jungles disappeared without a trace. Military information, knowledge of enemy strength and fortifications, advance weather data were desperately needed by our Air Forces. Somehow the mysterious heart of Thailand must be penetrated, the patriotic Free Thai underground contacted and organized. Bangkok, the capital of the Asian kingdom, was the logical key to this double-locked door.

Selected for this storybook mission was a group of twenty-one Thai students, winners of competitive Thailand scholarships who were taking postgraduate courses in the United States. They were the most brilliant young men of their country, M.A.s and Ph. D.s enrolled at Harvard, M.I.T., Ann Arbor, Stanford. Slipping surreptitiously from their classrooms, they were taken to the closely guarded O.S.S. schools near Washington and trained for their secret assignment. Early in 1943, they were whisked in closed cars to the airport, flown direct to China.

There General Claire Chennault of the Fourteenth Air Force, craving word of some of his own A.V.G. fliers who had vanished in the Thai hinterland, co-operated to the full. A special airfield was constructed for them in southern Yunnan; and Lieutenant Colonel Nicol Smith of O.S.S., nationally known lecturer and author of the best seller *Burma Road*, led the group to this final jump-off point, ready for one of the war's greatest adventures.

Barefooted, dressed in tattered clothes to resemble Oriental cooks and peddlers, the party set out through the unexplored Yunnan jungles, their precious STR-1 radios hidden at the bottom of hampers packed with bright-colored cloth, combs, pins, mirrors and trinkets to trade with the headhunters. They went down the wild Mekong River a couple of hundred miles, left their canoes and started on foot across some of the fiercest headhunter country in the world, fighting their way step by step through the thunderstorms and flash floods of the tropical monsoon.

That monsoon was their best ally. The Japs never dreamed that anyone would infiltrate through headhunter country, particularly at that dreaded season of the year. Leading their mules, they walked for 400 punishing miles. Their guide was a Chinese priest, whose family had been Catholics since the 17th century. He was amateur boxing champion of China, spoke nine languages, had been educated in Switzerland and Russia and was political adviser to the 93d Chinese Division. At night, the ragged and nondescript group would halt to rest, and the steaming jungle camp would be the scene of as cosmopolitan a conversation as ever was heard in a seminar at Harvard. Oblivious to the weird noises of the tropic night, or the mitten-footed Jap patrols near by, they would discuss grave questions of philosophy or world events, or play a quiet game of contract bridge beside the trail with headhunters for kibitzers.

The journey was expected to take two weeks; it lasted 87 days. The party lived off the land, fighting disease and starvation. Several nearly died of amoebic dysentery. Two were captured and killed by the Japs. Only four out of the original twenty-one reached the capital of their native country. Two years later, when Lieutenant Colonel Smith rejoined them at the secret O.S.S. hideout in Bangkok, one of the Thai agents proudly revealed that he was still using the original STR-1 radio he had lugged in a hamper all the way from China.

### The Headquarters in Bangkok

O.S.S. headquarters were in an innocent-looking building in the center of Bangkok's residential area, surrounded by a high iron fence; for two years it was undetected by the thousands of Jap troops occupying the capital. American officers reached the hideout by devious means. From Rangoon a C-47 would fly to a secret O.S.S. field, where the agent would transfer to a four-passenger Fairchild of the Thai Airways, marked with a white elephant. Just at dusk, the Thai plane would land at Don Muang, scoot past the parked Jap planes and the hundreds of soldiers guarding the runway and wheel into the single Thai hangar on the west side of the field.

The hangar doors would close, the sweating passenger would crouch low and scurry to a waiting car that sped him through the safe darkness. Once in O.S.S. headquarters, the American officer never ventured out of his room, eating and working and sleeping in the same tiny cubicle, starting at every footfall in the corridor outside his door. One American major spent three months in a room ten feet square, collapsed at last in a complete mental breakdown.

Swiftly the underground resistance increased, guerrilla camps began to dot the wild back country, much-needed weather reports reached the 10th and 14th Air Forces in ever-increasing numbers. Tiny radios flashed locations of targets for pinpoint bombings, intelligence on Jap troop movements across Thailand to Burma, information about enemy divisions with names and strength of units.

### Rescuing War Prisoners

For the first time, rescue of captured fliers was possible. One of Chennault's best AVG pilots, Lieutenant William McGarry, had crashed somewhere on the Burma-Thai frontier in midsummer of 1942. "From the way his plane landed in the trees, we are sure it did not burn," General Chennault told Colonel Smith in Kunming, "and I have a hunch that Mac is still alive. Ask your underground to find him." Smith flashed the signal from Kunming to all O.S.S. field-units in Thailand. The tireless agents infiltrated every Jap internment camp, located McGarry in a jungle stockade, bribed the Jap guards to look the other way while they spirited the dazed and emaciated flier to O.S.S. headquarters in Bangkok. A Catalina landed at a rendezvous point off south Thailand. McGarry was returned safely to Chennault.

The climax of their rescue activities came in late summer of this year, when O.S.S. discovered that 300 members of the ill-fated cruiser Houston were alive in a Jap concentration camp in Thailand. The U.S.S. Houston had disappeared mysteriously in the Java Sea battle back in March of 1942. No word of the ship or its complement had ever been received, and the Navy Department had given up hope of any survivors. Now, after three years, native O.S.S. agents found two gaunt and bearded U.S. sailors wandering in a Thailand jungle. They were brought to Major Robert Bartlett of Los Angeles, chief of the outpost camp, where they told their nightmarish story, and revealed the incredible

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**O.S.S.**

news that over three hundred of their shipmates were still alive, despite torture and disease and starvation. The result of this startling bit of information was that medical supplies, doctors, nurses and cooks were parachuted in immediately following the Japs' capitulation, and no time was wasted in leading these 300 Americans back from the land of the dead.

*continued...*



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October 6, 1945

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