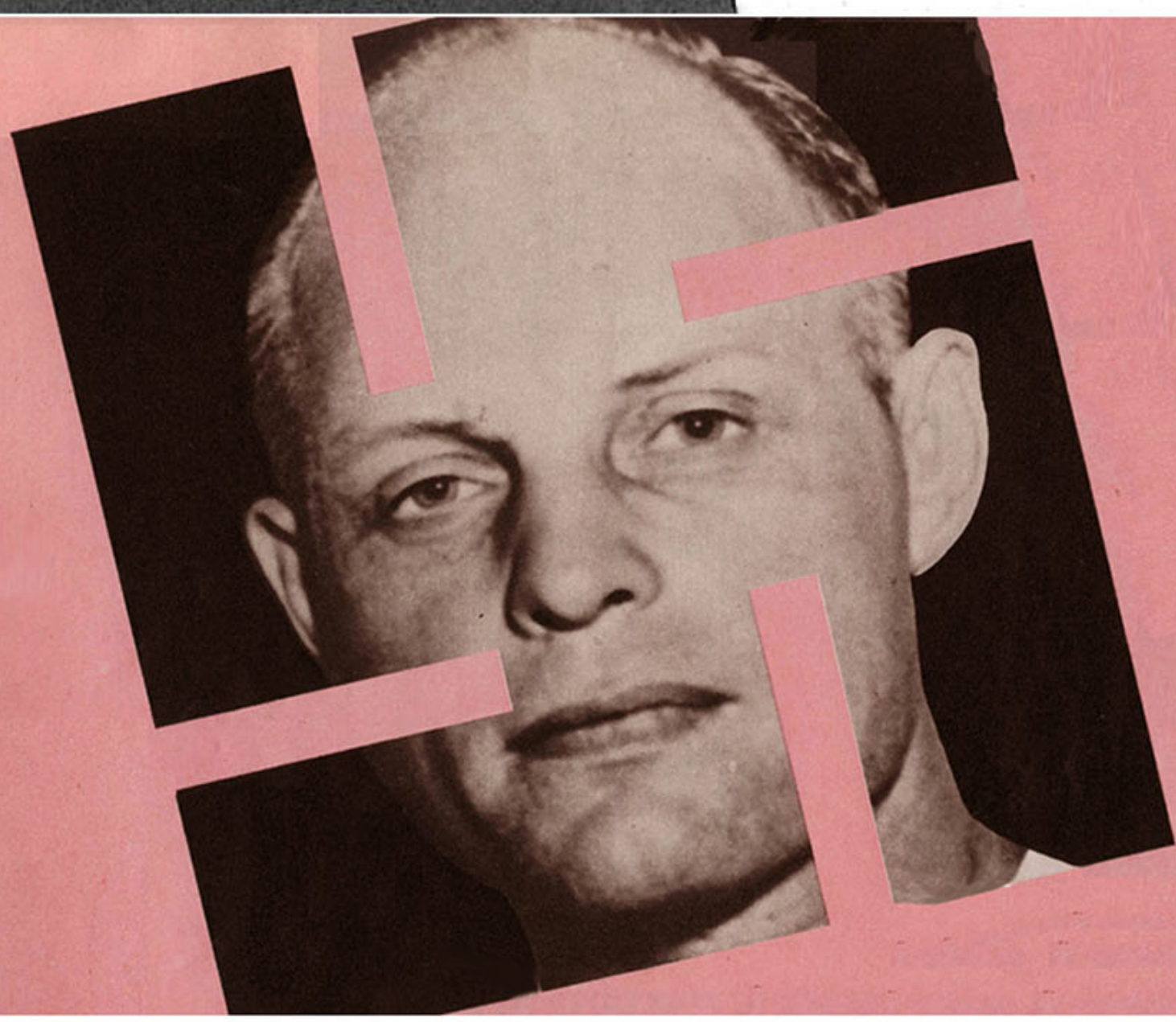


Collier's

APRIL 24, 1943

Hitler's Spies are Experts

By J. Edgar Hoover
and Frederick L. Collins



One who was caught: Axel Wheeler-Hill, a naturalized American working with a Nazi spy ring, wound up in jail.

Not all of them do

From businesslike German schools come the professional spy and the saboteur—cunning, ruthless, superbly trained for their specific tasks. They'll be hard to stop, says Mr. Hoover, and catching them—in time—is a job in which every American can give the F.B.I. a hand

IT IS perhaps too early to hope that Hitler is burning bridges behind him, but he *is* blowing them up, literally—and railroads and water mains and power plants, too—in all-out training of his assassins in their job of sabotaging property and communications in the United States.

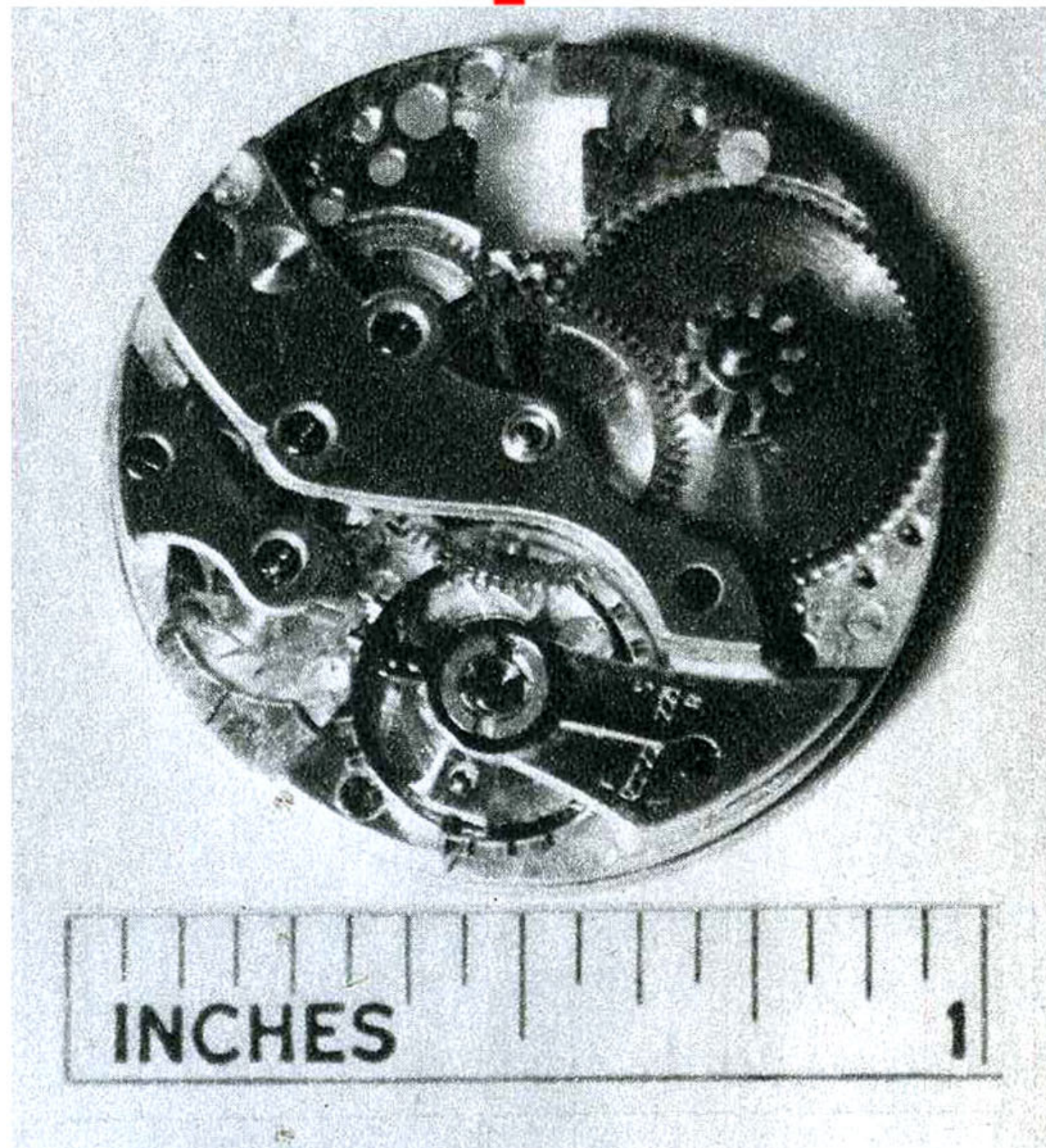
The capture and conviction of eight German saboteurs who landed on our Eastern shores from a Nazi submarine did not end the peril. They merely emphasized it. Adolf Hitler's spy factories have been training spies and saboteurs for years, and every potential saboteur is given practical tests, on carefully selected proving grounds, in the destruction of life and property.

But our story concerns itself, first, with an upstanding middle-aged American, of unquestioned character and repute, who landed in Germany in 1939 to visit his mother, a resident of Mülheim, in the Ruhr.

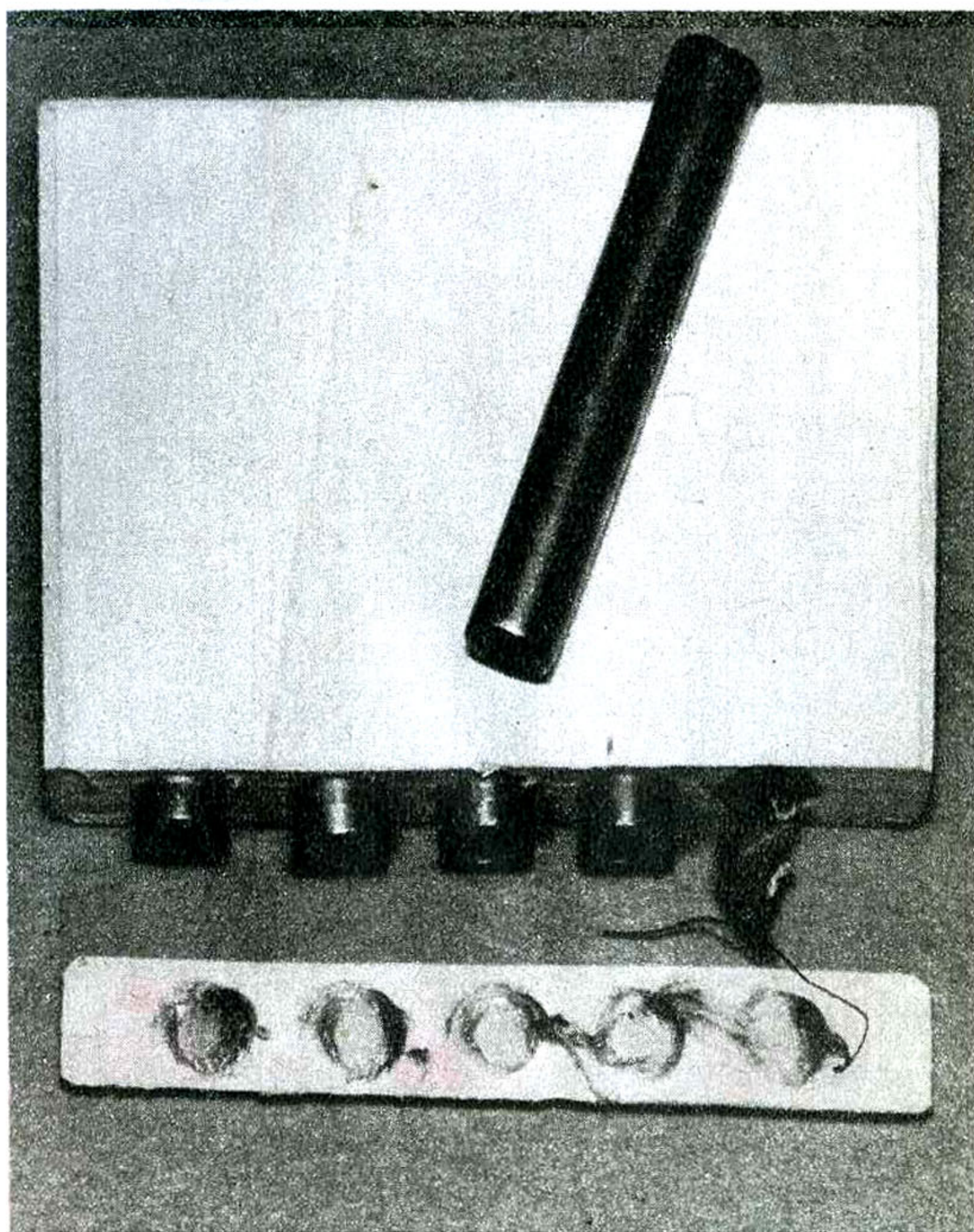
The dream of almost every naturalized American is to make a return journey to the land of his birth; to revisit the scenes of his childhood and to show his family and friends that he has "made good" in the land of his adoption. Of none is this more true than of the self-respecting, family-loving German-born. So the man (whom we will call William Stoltz) was making a pilgrimage to his aged mother's home on a mission we can all understand and respect.

OldMagazineArticles.com

Spies



Nazi instruments of destruction. Above, a 13-jewel watch mechanism for time bomb. Below, detonators which were concealed in wooden blocks



But as he set foot on German soil for the first time in nearly twenty years, the Nazi immigration official who examined his American passport ordered him brusquely to stand to one side. Immediately, a man in civilian clothes approached and demanded Stoltz's name and destination. He gave his mother's address in Mülheim.

"You will wait there," commanded the stranger, who was an agent of the Gestapo, "to hear from us in the near future."

A few days later, Stoltz received a letter from one Doctor Gassner stating that the writer had a matter of importance to discuss with him. The "matter of importance" was, in the first instance, an effort to obtain information on plane production in the United States. Stoltz, an engineer, had worked in several aircraft plants, but could not give Gassner the information he sought. Whereupon the Herr Doktor told him that it had been decided that Stoltz should return to the United States to act as a Nazi spy. When Stoltz asked who had done the deciding, he was told only: "Our society."

Stoltz refused to obey, but when he reached his room he found that his American passport—the only evidence of his legal right to be in Nazi Germany—had been stolen. While he was gloomily analyzing the fix he was in, Doctor Gassner reappeared, with a grim person of military

bearing, who was introduced as Doctor Renken but who was in fact Major Nikolaus Adolf Fritz Ritter of the Nazi Secret Service.

Robbed of his American credentials and threatened with reprisals against his mother and other relatives in Germany, William Stoltz had no alternative. He had to obey the Nazi agents' commands. He was, therefore, taken to the German Espionage School at Hamburg and delivered into the hands of still another "doctor," the notorious Henrich Kurtz, also known as Heinrich Sorau, who had discovered and trained Lilly Carola Stein, the Mata Hari of the New York spy ring. Not all recruits for the Nazi espionage system are so brazenly kidnaped as was William Stoltz; but in the great majority of cases some form of compulsion is employed. With the younger men the approach is more subtle.

I have in mind the case of another German-born American visiting the Fatherland, who found himself assiduously cultivated by a very attractive young girl in the Foreign Office. Through her he met officers of the General Staff and other dignitaries who, according to the German caste system, would normally have treated him with contempt. Flattered, the young man, who was a machinist, began answering questions about American life in general and his own work in particular, until he realized too late that he had gone too far to turn back. His new "friends" had him in their power.

Older men like Stoltz—and younger ones qualified by intellect or experience—are usually assigned to espionage; the younger and mechanically inclined, to sabotage. The terms are not interchangeable. The espionage agent discovers; the sabotage agent destroys. In gangster vernacular, one "cases the joint," and the other "cracks the crib." There are several schools for teaching each of these operations in Germany and in its subjugated countries. The espionage school on the outskirts of Hamburg, to which Stoltz was taken, and the sabotage school near Berlin are typical of the lot.

The espionage school is an unobtrusive four-story building adjoining a police station in a middle-class neighborhood. Every attempt is made to conceal the institution's importance. Even the office where Principal Sorau sits is small and bare. Students are boarded far from this center and brought to classes by automobile.

The sabotage school, being situated in a secluded country district where such precautions are not needed, more nearly resembles a modern college or small university. It has a large main building containing offices, study and recreation rooms, dining room and laboratory, and several smaller buildings, mostly remodeled dwellings in which the students sleep. Extensive grounds, including rifle range, proving field and playgrounds, are enclosed by a high stone wall. A near-by river furnishes facilities for bridge and canal operations.

Ruthless Third Degree

The trainee, before entering either school, has been thoroughly grilled. He has been forced to tell the story of his life to different inquisitors—usually four or five—and has taken an oath of secrecy, the violation of which he knows will be

4 Spies

punished with unbelievably severe penalties. But even after he has matriculated, he remains subject to all sorts of tests and traps. School officials break into his room in the middle of the night and accuse him of disloyalty to see how he reacts; stool pigeons try to snare him with sneers at Hitler and the Nazi regime; his landlady reports every detail of his private life; even on days off, he is followed and watched.

The next move is to rebuild and enlarge his self-esteem. He is told that he is fulfilling his duty to the land of his birth, that he is doing something bigger and better than ordinary men do. Pep talks drive home the theory that one saboteur who attains his objective is more valuable than a whole division of troops. Parallel with this building-up of the ego, there is a systematic effort to ridicule the mentality and resources of the people in the country where he is to operate. Americans, he is told, have no counterespionage system at all, are just a bunch of "dumb clucks." One instructor made a statement which, in these troubled days, I wish was true.

"Americans," he shouted to his class, "are just a bunch of G-men!"

The trainee's day is typically German in its faithfulness to routine—calisthenics before breakfast; classes throughout the forenoon in general chemistry; the theory of explosives, incendiary materials, detonators, primers, mechanical, chemical and electrical timing devices; lectures and blackboard demonstrations. After luncheon—for beginners: laboratory work, preparing incendiaries and explosives; for advanced students: field work using them. From 4:00 to 4:30, sports and relaxation—strictly supervised, of course—during which any one of the instructors (usually regular army officers of the bruiser type) may rush up, shouting, "Defend yourself!" On one such occasion, an American youngster countered with a right to the chin that downed the officer, who struggled to his feet with a grudging, "You can!"

Having mastered the theory and practice of making fuses, detonators, explosives, etc., the student turns to the grimly practical business of using them. By this time, the definite objective of the individual saboteur has been established. If he is to be sent to Panama, civil engineers, waterways inspectors, and specialists on canals take him in hand; the complicated mechanism of locks and sluices is demonstrated with actual installations on the near-by river; points where the most damage can be done are located and explained.

Finally, the student is required to experiment with actual charges of dynamite and other explosives until he has proved that he can carry out instructions, working alone. If he is to be sent to New York to destroy the Hell Gate railroad bridge or to San Francisco to blow up the beautiful bridge across the harbor, models of these great structures are built to scale and the sabotage student is required to experiment with charges (also reduced to scale) until he has learned just where and how much explosive to use.

These model bridges are not toys, but sizable, practical bridges, over water—and they go up with a bang.

The secret approach and the quick getaway are not neglected. The student has not qualified for postgraduate work until he can reach the required point on, say,

a railroad track, attach his charge of dynamite to the rail, ignite the fuse and make his escape without attracting the attention of the guards on duty. Realistic getaways under fire are staged with bullets whizzing dangerously close as the saboteur flees to safety across tottering trestles and exploding canal locks.

Advanced students are taken on tours of war industries and power plants to see installations similar to those they are expected to destroy. And before they can be graduated *summa cum laude*, they are sent on actual sabotage missions to near-by enemy countries to test, by the only sure method (the most difficult thing for the regimented Nazi mentality to achieve), the ability to act alone.

Education in Espionage

While all this was happening to our young machinist friend at the sabotage school near Berlin, William Stoltz, was a student in the Hamburg espionage school.

Basic training at the school which Stoltz attended concerns itself chiefly with various forms of secret communications, not only their use but their manufacture. The graduate student must know where to obtain and how to mix ingredients used in secret-writing compounds and in the reagents needed to restore these writings to visibility; he must also know how to construct short-wave radio and telegraph sets from easily obtainable materials. Transportation of these facilities is usually impossible. The spy therefore must be self-starting and self-contained.

For students who have been away from the United States for some time, refresher courses are provided, with lectures by returning Nazis who have recently been in the section of America in which the student is to work. These lectures are accompanied by detailed maps, aerial photographs and lists of Army and Navy establishments, war industries and other key points in the section. Reading of American newspapers for as many years back as the student has been absent from the country is prescribed, and examinations on American current events during those years are conducted.

After this general training, the student is taken to Stuttgart, where files are kept of all important industries and industrialists in the United States. He is expected, of course, to know the managing personnel of the organizations for which he worked, but at Stuttgart he is able to brush up on changes in that personnel, and also to get a good working knowledge of the key men in all essential industries in his own section of the country. All of this information—in fact everything taught at the espionage or the sabotage school—must be learned by heart.

Final steps consist of providing the now thoroughly qualified spy with detailed instructions on the information he is to obtain and a "cover story" of sufficient plausibility to explain his presence and assure his safety.

The German espionage authorities seem most interested in the number of our convoy ships, the strength of our fleet, the courses of transoceanic shipping, buoy markings of channels, developments in navigation engines, new protective devices against submarines, performances of new planes and, of course, production figures

Spies

on all kinds of war materials. One question on every espionage agent's carefully memorized agenda is: "Where are the worst bottlenecks?"

The "cover story" is naturally a variable quantity. The need of each agent is studied and met by a fabrication of falsehoods best calculated to protect him from molestation. Social Security and Selective Service cards, printed in Germany with ink and on paper identical with that used by our own government, perfect until submitted to tests in the F.B.I. Technical Laboratory, are given the spy who poses as a U. S. citizen. If he is to pose as a refugee, driven from his home in Germany or a subjugated country by Nazi persecution, he is equipped with a forged passport or other official papers that a bona fide refugee would carry. In either case, the identity claimed by the agent is a wholly manufactured one and entirely false in every detail.

Meticulous pains are taken to familiarize the spy with his new identity. Sometimes complete family histories are invented. A safer plan, and one that is followed whenever practicable, is to provide the agent with an actual family so securely under Nazi domination that the imposture is certain not to be discovered.

A Fabricated Family History

The arrested agent Bahr, for example, was furnished the protective background of a non-Aryan family, every member of which had been "liquidated" by the Nazi pogroms. No detail of these fake family histories is neglected; if a relative is a philatelist, the agent must memorize and chat glibly about every important stamp in the collection. He is (or so his tutors believe) prepared for *all* emergencies.

Some of this recruiting and training is done by an ostensibly private organization called the Ausland Institute, which, however, works in close affiliation with the official Ausland organization, which is part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is known to have received large grants of public funds. During the prewar period and before our own entry, the institute, because of its nominally private character, was able to carry on activities abroad inconsistent with relations between nations supposedly at peace.

The Ausland Institute has many executives engaged in this recruiting and training work. So has the espionage service of the High Command. Many of the instructors are well known to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, including the three "doctors" whose acquaintance William Stoltz was forced to make in the first months of his stay in Germany.

Gassner, a ruddy-faced, sandy-haired, loose-lipped, fat young man of about thirty, is the come-on expert or contact man, who conceals his domineering nature behind the huge steins of beer and piled-up plates of heavy foods with which he regales himself.

Renken, known as Nikki Ritter during his residence in the United States, is likewise the blond, stocky type of German, but his forty-five years, many of which have been spent in the secret service, have ruted deep lines of cruelty in his hard, determined face. He is called in when it is necessary to "turn on the heat." Kurtz (or

Spies

Sorau, as he was known to Lilly Stein) is one of the masterminds.

These men are still at work to wreck our war effort. Systematic recruiting of new members for their activities went on in this country for years during peacetime. One of the leaders in these activities in the United States was Walter Kappe, one-time editor of the Cincinnati *Freie Presse* and one of the founders of the Friends of New Germany, which later became the German-American Bund.

Our Number One Nazi

While Fritz Kuhn, Wilhelm Kunze and others absorbed the spotlight, Kappe, a former instructor in the sabotage school near Berlin and a real higher-up in the Nazi espionage regime, was generally recognized in informed circles as Number One Nazi in the United States. That he did his work well is indicated by the fact that he became propaganda director of Radio Berlin, Station DJB, upon his return to Germany and was reportedly in control of all radio equipment for Nazi propaganda, sabotage and espionage.

I emphasize the activities of these men to bring home the fact that the way has been patiently and skillfully laid for a sabotage drive in this country with which, at any time, we may be forced to cope. We should not be lulled into complacency by the fact that improved methods of law enforcement and counterespionage perfected through these same years by American Intelligence agencies, and now zealously employed by the F.B.I. and loyally co-operating state and municipal police forces, have so far prevented any foreign-directed act of sabotage such as the Black Tom disaster of the last war.

The citizen's duty is plain. Upon him depends to a great measure the internal security of the country. Without his help the F.B.I. would be sorely handicapped. The President of the United States has called upon law-enforcement agencies to report matters pertaining to sabotage and espionage to the F.B.I. The citizen should do the same whenever he has information based upon facts which cause him to become suspicious of anyone who might aid the enemy by endangering defense industries, transportation facilities or communications.

When the citizen does have suspicions like these, based on fact, he should at once notify the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. If he is uncertain how to do this, his local telephone company can put him in touch with the F.B.I. In an emergency he can call his local police headquarters, which will relay the information to the Bureau.

Often the mere appearance of our special agents or law-enforcement officers on the scene is enough to ward off the proposed sabotage, for the last words whispered into the ears of the Nazi spy or saboteur as he leaves Germany—and I have this information from many sources—are these: "Don't get the F B.I. down on you!"

Collier's