

# Annex 11. David Sissons to Desmond Ball, 22 May 1996

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I think that Emma Craswell's search of the SRDJ series for the three Harbin-Tokyo telegrams has now gone as far as it need. My report on it, The Search in the SRDJ Series for the Harbin-Tokyo Telegrams is enclosed (Enclosure 1). Also enclosed is my complete correspondence with her (Enclosure 2) in case any points should require elaboration.

My inference is that these three telegrams are among the 'Temp' numbers that she has listed as missing in Box 156, i.e. among those in the 'Temp' series withheld by NSA at the time of declassification.

It seems to me that, if you wished to continue the search, there are three lines of approach that could be followed: (i) search for the telegrams, as John Taylor suggests, among the mass of wartime material released by NSA last month; (ii) seek their production in the U.S.A. under their Freedom of Information legislation; (iii) seek the production of 'D' Special intelligence Section LHQ's register of intercepted Japanese diplomatic telegrams for the relevant period under Section 40 of the Australian Archives Act 1983. Let me outline these approaches one by one:

#### (i) The NSA Material Released on 4/4/96

The enclosed diskette (Enclosure 3) contains the National Archives press statement on this latest transfer (NSA.HTM) and the inventory of file titles of the 4923 items constituting it (NARAFIND.HTM). These I downloaded from the Internet. I suggest that you get your staff to copy the diskette and run you off a hard copy for your records.

This inventory runs to about 167 pages (A4) and a number of the items will interest you quite apart from the current search. Note well the three caveats in the press statement: (i) The transfer includes, in addition to new material, some copies of files already available (E.g. Item 3414, 20 Mar 1942, 'FRUMEL Outgoing/Incoming Messages', may be a file that you have already xeroxed); (ii) Related records are scattered throughout the collection; (iii) File titles often do not reflect the full content of the item. To this I would add a fourth caveat: the date attributed to the item (Column 4) is no indication to the date range of its contents. Take for example Item 2738: the item is dated 9 September 1940 but the file title is 'Chronology of Cooperation Between

SSA and GCCS [i.e. Bletchley] 1940-45'. Presumably the item date means the date of the earliest paper in the file.

Be this as it may, the transfer contains much that for me sounds exciting, e.g. cipher texts, work-sheets and solutions for the systems that were our stock-in-trade - FUJI (J-19), NE, JBC and JBD. So far as I'm aware, this is the first time that NSA has released cipher text and work-sheets since the Pearl Harbor Attack hearings. This will make it hard for our DSD to continue to rule that such material is still sensitive. Very exciting is Item 3428, 6 Apr 1943, 'Copies of Messages Supplied by Australia with Clarifying Notes'. This could be the long sought after succeeding volume to SRMN-006, 'R.A.N. Support to U.S.N. through A.C.N.B.: Summaries/Translations of Japanese Messages Feb-Dec 1942, which, you will remember, contained translations of some 200 diplomatic telegrams that Trendall, Bond & Co had solved.

I have been through the inventory twice. None of the titles appear to me to be likely to contain the specific Harbin telegrams for which you are searching. It would be looking for a needle in a bottomless pit rather than in a haystack. I do not recommend it.

In her Email to me of April 17th (of which David Horner has a copy) Emma Craswell passed on John Taylor's suggestion that, if this latest inventory contained no likely titles, she should contact Tom Johnson or David Hatch in the historical section at NSA to see if they can confirm whether or not this latest transfer contains any SRDJ translations hitherto withheld. This seems to me well worthwhile.

(ii) An Approach to NSA under F.O.I

If in her dealings with Johnson or Hatch she found them knowledgeable and on the ball, then she could take up with them the practicability of seeking the production of these particular telgrams (and their transmission details, ascertainable from SIS's logs — particularly call-sign, power of transmitter, frequency, and precise time of day) under F.O.I.

D Sect LHO's Register

Since my return from Japan I have been in correspondence with some of the women in our D Section (they were girls when I last saw them). The cryptanalysts and I were in Room 86; the women were the other side of a communicating glass hatch, in 87; the British Consular officers were next to them in 87A. These ladies are proving very good value. Mavis Vernon, a fellow linguist, has confirmed, without any prompting from me, that it was Trendall and Graves that broke the GEAM cipher (with a bit of practical help from her) — before the British or the Americans. (Barnes told me this in 1945 but has no recollection of it to-day). But more relevant to our present inquiry are the recollections of Mary Stewart, a young Melbourne Arts graduate straight from the University who, when Bond & Co had solved the transpositions, used to apply the daily grids. She writes (28/9/95):

Prof Trendall usually brought the work in himself for Reba [Shearer] to log and later a T(translation) number. The log, known as the Koran, was a large brown hard-backed book which was meticulously kept by Reba, or deputy, with all details of the traffic and translation titles, and a card index of the subject matter.

I am quoting from her letter exactly as she wrote it. Although the syntax

leaves something to be desired (She was dashing off a long letter to catch the mail) the meaning is quite clear. This log would answer conclusively the question whether or not the DMI got these Harbin intercepts from us.

I suggest that you make out an application on the prescribed form (Enclosure 4) for access to this log under Section 40 of the Act. You might also consider whether, for good measure, you should in the same application apply for access also to the history of the Section that Bond was required to submit before he was demobbed (Peter Hastings and I were shown this at DSD in 1987) and to the wartime history of Nave's organization submitted by Jamieson in similar circumstances (Australian Archives B5554). The cost of the ensuing proceedings in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal will be the same irrespective of whether the application is for a single document or a number of different documents.

What will happen is that DSD, despite the statutory requirement to give an answer within 90 days, will drag their feet interminably for as long as Archives and you will let them. They will then refuse access. Archives will convey to you their refusal and at the same time inform you of your right to request within 30 days an internal reconsideration by Archives of the decision. In this internal reconsideration Archives will uphold DSD's decision and inform you of your right to take the matter to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. When you exercise that right there will follow conferences between you and DSD who may, in the course of these, offer some concessions in the hope of avoiding appearing before the AAT. I understand that it is not until after these preliminary conferences that the applicant has to pay money into court.

Why I suggest that you, rather than I, make the application is that you and the Centre have a high reputation for conducting serious work on the subject. This will undoubtedly impress DSD and the AAT (who will also be mindful that the press and public opinion will take a similar view when the Canberra Times reports the proceedings). I, on the other hand, can be made to appear as some senile old Dig (rank, Private) who never got nearer to the front line than Melbourne, trying to write his 'war-ee' based on the activities of his superiors — despite his signing in 1945 the standard undertaking (preserved in his dossier at Central Army Records Office) not to divulge such matters on pain of prosecution under the relevant provisions of the Crimes Act.

#### ASWG's Occasional Interception of Soviet Diplomatic Traffic

We know from its War Diary that the Australian Special Wireless unit in the Middle East at times intercepted Soviet signals traffic for Bletchley. When I last saw you I undertook to commit to paper the basis of my belief that the Aust Special Wireless Group on at least one occasion between the return of our troops from the Middle East and April 1945 was required to intercept Soviet diplomatic traffic. My belief is based on the clear recollections of two different conversations.

The first conversation was with Bond in Room 86 and therefore at some time between April and September 1945 (and probably closer to September than to April). I asked him whether we ever intercepted the diplomatic traffic of countries other than Japan. He promptly replied 'No' and then, after a few seconds, qualified this as follows: 'Only once. One message. It was to be handled with the utmost of secrecy and went straight into that safe', or words to that effect. He did not say that it was Russian. I assumed so; but I suppose it could have been French. I didn't press him for further details; for I

could see that he was speaking very reluctantly and probably regretted having spoken. I was rather puzzled; for his expression and gestures suggested that the document was still in the safe. Why go to all this trouble to intercept this message and treat the matter with such secrecy if it got no further than the safe — i.e. if you didn't send it on for solution/translation to whoever had requested the interception? But perhaps what he meant was 'I still have our copy of in in the safe'.

I don't see how it could have come into Bond's hands unless it had been intercepted by Mornington: ASWG dealt with DMI or with Bletchley direct and not through Bond. Unless reception conditions rendered it unsuitable, Mornington and not one of the other ASW Sections was the appropriate place for DMI to use for the interception of Russian diplomatic traffic.

The second conversation was with WO2 Allen Clifton who, as Ballard states in his book, at no time made any secret of his Communist sympathies. In conversation with me, he deplored the distrust and unfairness with which the Allies were treating the Soviet. For example, he said, ASWG were reading Soviet traffic. Unfortunately I cannot pinpoint the date at which this conversation took place. It was certainly not before October 1945, when I was sent to Labuan. I'd be very surprised if it was later than my arrival in Japan (February 1946). It was during that interval that I saw a lot of Allen. At Labuan in November and December we were in the same Mess and usually ate at the same table and went to the cinema together. We had adjoining bunks on the voyage from Labuan to Morotai just before Christmas. At Morotai we once again were members of the same Mess and then, as he states in his Time of Fallen Blossoms, we flew from Morotai to Japan together on the same D3 (a 3-day journey) in February (1946). I probably saw him a couple of times in Japan. (There we were in different units: he was Tom Millar's interpreter with one of the battalions in Kure and I was with the New Zealand field battery at Yamaguchi). The next time I saw him was for a couple of days at the General Details Depot at Royal Park in February 1947 when I was being demobbed. He had been taken on strength there pending his projected return to Japan while DMI conducted a security check on him. Apparently they reported adversely and he was discharged a few weeks later. I don't remember any prolonged conversations with him at Royal Park. After that I may have seen him or spoken to him on the phone a couple of times in Melbourne while I was an undergraduate. I distinctly remember in October 1950 telling another wartime associate that Allen had once told me that ASWG had been intercepting Soviet traffic.

I have given you this long rigmarole because it is important for you to know within certain limits when this conversation with Allen could have taken place — whether he could have been referring to the interception of Soviet Traffic that, we now know (Steve Mason's note on ASWG, Diplomatic and Press Sections enclosed in Ballard to D.C.S.S 24/5/94), ASWG resumed some time between the War's end and the disbandment of 52 Section at Mornington (16/2/46). I reckon that it was at Labuan that this conversation took place and that it therefore refers to interception during the war.

Allen was with ASWG for a time. We know from Ballard, who was with 51 ASW Sect at Darwin from January to mid-December 1943, that Allen was there with them for some time, arriving later than he did. How long he was there, I don't know; but it was longer than the period required for eligibility for the Defence Medal, whose ribbon he wore. He must have left Darwin before 30/4/44; for DMI's War Diary shows him on the staff of the Army Japanese Language School in Melbourne on that date. He remained there until posted to Labuan after the War's end.

I don't think 51 Sect was intercepting Russian traffic while he was with them. If it was, I think he would have said so in as many words. There are, I think, two possibilities. The first is that he was moved from 51 SEct on security grounds and that this was because they were about to intercept Russian traffic there. He was nobody's fool and would have set about finding out why. The other possibility is that one of his mates in ASWG, whose Section was engaging in Russian interception, told him about it over a glass of beer when he looked Allen up during a visit to Melbourne.

Allen died on 12/6/95. There is an obituary in the Melbourne Herald Sun 5/7/95.

Emma Craswell

I think David Horner has already arranged payment for her services to date. If not, this should be done promptly. I think she has done a good job and has not wasted time spent on the job. She has done a lot in her 35 hours.

I think we should ask her to make the enquiries with Johnson or Hatch at NSA that John Taylor suggests. In her Email of April 17th she says she has some free time after the end of this month.

If you required further browsing to be done at College Park, I think you could probably get a less qualified person to do it for a good deal less than \$Aust25 per hour. My daughter, Miranda, who found Emma for us, tells me that part-time work for students is at present very hard to come by. Miranda is now at Yale and, though quite as well qualified as Emma, has to take jobs at less than \$US10 an hour. Although the employment situation at New Haven is worse than in Washington, she thinks there are probably students in the Washington area who would do it for between \$US10 and \$US15 per hour. Unfortunately Miranda would not be able to find one for us; for all her friends in Washington are friends of Emma's.

My apologies for writing at such length,

(D.C.S.Sissons)

Encl: 4. (Please copy any that you wish but return the originals to me for my records).

P.S. I once again have an Email address <sissons@coffee.dialix.oz.au>. I hope this will be more permanent and more satisfactory than the last.