

# Annex 13. David Sissons to Desmond Ball, 16 October 1996

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16 October 1996

Prof Desmond Ball  
Strategic & Defence Studies  
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Dear Des,

I was recently in correspondence with my wartime colleague, Prof Ian Smith, about his solution of the Kormoran cryptogram. As he was the last of us to be demobbed (He remained with the Section until November 1946) I took this occasion to ask him whether they were working on Soviet traffic after my departure in September 1945.

I quote from my letter to him of August 29th:

"To my surprise, I've been told that in late December 1945 Mornington were working on Soviet traffic. Steve Mason, the Secretary of the ASWG Association, writes (26/6/94):

In December 1945, the AWAS left Mornington to be discharged and male personnel from Kalinga replaced them. I had the unenviable task of bringing a party of 30 returned men from Brisbane, through their home states of NSW and Vic, to Mornington. . . . Understandably, enthusiasm for the work was at a low ebb, but we took mostly Russian high speed traffic. On occasions, with the use of incentives, full logs were produced - I can remember one night's work which yielded more than 1,000 messages. A liaison officer, WO Harry Dempsey, was appointed . . . and every Wednesday he took our work to Mic Sandford at Victoria Barracks.

Were you and Eric involved in this or was it kept secret from the Section?"

Ian's reply (September 29th) (on audio-tape as the fingers of his right hand were temporarily out of action with arthritis) reads as follows:

I have a recollection of reading and translating Russian plain-language messages picked up by Mornington - after the arrival of the Central Bureau people from Brisbane - probably December 1945. They were, I think, Russian Post Office messages between individuals - or else office messages, mainly from economic units in the Far East referring decisions to Moscow for approval, or statistics - monumentally banal.

I remember Bob Botterill among the arrivals from Brisbane. He was working on various codes including, I think, French codes. They had been stolen when sent to Djibouti on an English naval ship and had been photographed.

I thought this might interest you

*Regards*  
*David S.*