

Ultra: I Was There

Volume I

To My Loves

Ultra:
I Was There
Volume I

Landis
Gores





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About the Author

Landis Gores (1919-1991) was born in Cincinnati, Ohio. Graduating cum laude at the age of 15 from Walnut Hills High School, he attended Princeton University, where he majored in English Literature, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and graduated summa cum laude in 1939.

From Princeton Mr. Gores went on to the Harvard Graduate School of Design, graduating in 1942, and receiving the A.I.A. Gold Medal that same year. At Harvard, Mr. Gores became friendly with professor Marcel Breuer (formerly professor at the Bauhaus) and Philip Johnson, future fellow members of a group of modern architects that would later be known as the Harvard Five. Also in 1942, Mr. Gores married Pamela Whitmarsh. Together they would raise five children in southern Connecticut.

While still at Harvard, Mr. Gores became a second lieutenant in the Reserve Army Training Corp. The very day after graduation, Mr. Gores reported for active duty with the First Cavalry Division. By chance, he encountered renowned jurist Telford Taylor, a Major in Army Intelligence. Taylor suggested he apply to the Code and Cypher Service of British Military Intelligence (MI). Fluent in French and German, Mr. Gores was released to the Service and assisted in its secret effort to break the highest-level codes of the German High Command. Only in 1974 was this effort revealed to the world as Ultra. He spent eighteen months with MI at Bletchley Park, for which service he was awarded the Legion of Merit and the Order of the British Empire.

At the end of the war he was transferred to the Army Reserve with the rank of major. From 1945 to 1951, Mr. Gores worked with Philip Johnson — at first as an employee and later as an associate — on the Booth house, the Rockefeller townhouse, the Hodgson house, the sculpture garden at MOMA, and Johnson's own Glass House. Also during this period, Mr. Gores designed and built his own residence. It is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1951 Mr. Gores began his own practice. Three years later he was stricken with polio, and his personal mobility became compromised. He continued an architectural career nonetheless, designing and constructing York Research Laboratory (1958), the Irwin Pool House (1960), the Close residence (1965), Strathmore Village (1966), the Van Doren Hospital (1968), the House for All Seasons (1979), and a number of other buildings. He was made a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1973.

Mr. Gores wrote numerous articles on architectural and environmental issues for national periodicals and professional journals. He also served on the editorial board of *Connecticut Architecture*, and, in 1948 and 1952, as visiting lecturer and instructor of architectural design at the Pratt Institute of New York.

Author's Preface

This book is in truth and in essence a journal, modest of purpose and encircled by specific limitations. Over thirty years I had never intended nor expected to write it; indeed I was sworn not to write it nor even to speak of it. My children, in keeping with their generation, were only mildly and nominally interested in what their father had been up to in the rapidly receding epoch of World War II. And yet as with approaching maturity they increasingly sought knowledge of their roots and forebears, that gap in the record of my younger years became perceptible, and my reticence here alone in our conversations could only be disquieting on both sides. Such vague musings as I then permitted myself, thus prompted toward composing a totally screened personal memoir for retention within the family, were however to undergo successive sharpenings as during a single decade four of my closest and most continuous friends, blood brothers in this wartime mystery, died at relatively early ages. The solitude I sensed at remaining the only survivor redirected my thoughts to a modestly expanded though as ever deflated intimate chronicle of our camaraderie, capable of being shared with those four bereaved families now in their necessitated ignorance cut off from any illumination on their fathers' part.

But it was not until the evening of October 23rd, 1974, as I listened idly and accidentally to radio news flashes awaiting the final report of the day's trading on Wall Street, that I was electrified by the one-minute piece of a 'London correspondent' about the publication that very day of a book telling the thus far hermetically secret and almost unbelievable tale of continuously current Allied knowledge and exploitation of the critical mass of most secret German High Command messages all through World War II: something called *The Ultra Secret*, by Frederick W. Winterbotham. I listened transfixed, hoping for a broadcast expansion or at least repeat not however to come again that evening; none the less, as I spun out my secret of three decades to my attentive but now at last no longer excluded wife all through dinner and long after, I had heard enough, I knew only too well who Freddie Winterbotham was and what the cognomen 'Ultra' subsumed. The story, at least so far as his version of the story went, was now in the public domain. Thus in the years succeeding I have felt both freed and impelled to go ahead, slowly and intermittently as other obligations permitted, in setting down my memories of that still bright and vital wartime experience, of that time of joint harness less in arms than in wits-matching, that survive from my days in the Ultra Service. And if these essentially personal reminiscences prove to be of such historical scope as to interest a general reading public or, more likely and more to the point, to add through their circumstantial detail to the historians' store of the progress of some of the campaigns of World War II and especially of the command decisions therein involved, I shall be grateful to have been of service, to have made a contribution however modest; but altogether I have still only a personal memoir to offer.

With genesis and scope thus established the reverse should also stand simple and clear, as to what it is not: not a systematic nor exhaustive, nor entirely scholarly or authenticated exposition of the role of the Ultra Service during World War II. Several books already in the public eye compiled with such announced or at least implied intentions have elucidated aspects of the overall Ultra picture with varying precision and compass. It is now to be hoped that the most scrupulous of those barely factual efforts will be extended and amplified until complete coverage is achieved. And it is only right and obligatory here to note that it is highly probable that such precise documentation will uncover inaccuracies in more than

one of these my all too personal memories, drawn in the majority as they inevitably are from that iceberg that lurks under the water of Ultra information, possibly never to come to surface in the light of public day. But time is of the essence as those who participated in the wartime functioning of the Ultra Service pass beyond this life in accelerating numbers, taking with them their direct understandings of situations and relationships necessarily outside the sphere of perception of later non-participant chroniclers.

Even now these several decades later the Ultra picture in its full extension remains less than entirely accomplished: a consensus of correspondence among sometime initiates indicates that of the total Ultra production only the larger half of one of seven categories, the most immediately cogent to be sure, has been publicly released, the minor earlier half still withheld from access, and the balance of six either impounded or incinerated — the rumours differ on particulars. Meanwhile, the official one-time inspection incorporating one or two further major components of that balance, restricted to the accredited recording team compiling the four volumes of *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, is to be followed by permanent closure of the files. The categories of approved release are assuredly gratifying, but the presumably permanent disappearance of the remainder renders an unexceptionable reconstruction of the entire corpus of the Ultra Service quite impossible. And since my own principal involvement was not in the field of directly advised field commands nor of other patently conspicuous revelations but rather in the voluminous subtler supplementary but often significantly illuminating categories now not only beyond reach other than of official prescription but in those sectors mooted as destroyed, my undertaking must necessarily be cast in the mould of a memoir: of remembrances of times past no doubt tinct with the stain of imperfect subjectivity instead of a documentation precisely checked against archival materials. And so in rushing in where angels fear to tread I have put this story together in the hope it may be found the work of an honest and devoted fool, if not one of vocational sacrosanctity.

My continuing regret as I have watched the pile of my pages rise has been that it should be I whom Chance or Destiny has chosen as survivor to set out this record of comradeship as well as consequence in an effort which shaped the history of an epoch. All among my departed quartet of peers-or-better could surely have told much of this story more immediately, more succinctly and more authoritatively from their closer points of vantage: David Blair as a University-trained historian and an accomplished, then already budding man of letters; Hugh Leech and Curt Zimansky as quintessential scholars, analysts, critics and expositors across a fabulous spectrum of intellectual interests; and Peter Palmer — well, it might have been a bit difficult to persuade Peter in his wonderfully disarming modesty to contemplate such an inevitably formal distillation of our effervescent life experience together, but had he set his hand to it surely his version would have defied improvement. And in further justification of my diffidence, any of their recordings of our fraternity of effort would doubtless have been less culpable of the paired liabilities of parochialism and of pedantry all too often sensible in my micrometric testament. But they are all gone now, gone without mortal knowledge of the release of the secret of our common bond, and as such perhaps the more serene for having been aware only of the intense participation mystique of our special sodality; the mantle thus falling on me however secondary in qualification, I can only hope to be found properly discharging my obligation to the unforgettable warmth and colour of our ancient personal joys and friendships, as well as offering a measure of historical recollections not previously noted or if noted reported from different observation posts with different perspectives.

As a codicil to my Preface, a few lines are in order in the matter of acknowledgments and of authenticity. In the first category my obligations are many and my appreciation most sincere, but three are primary and central. To my own store of memories spanning less than a year and a half I have been privileged to add literally innumerable descriptions, attributions, clarifications and recollections offered me by Kay

Author's Preface

Cockburn Blair in dispensations offered over the entire time of my planning and compiling of this work, brought forth from her full five years of diversified immersion in the Ultra Service. Virtually every vignette not militarily operational in context or strictly personal to my daily round I owe to her provenance, not to mention more than a little infectiously memorable sharing of our almost private sport in observing the long German entanglement in the Balkans. Her recent sudden passing, full fifteen years after David's, has none the less come as a sobering shock of the passage of time, and has left a void in my survivor pattern no less poignant than the earlier departures of my four immediate compeers.

My second overriding debt is to my onetime senior overseer and arbiter in the line of duty, Ralph Bennett, President of Magdalen College, Cambridge. Apprised early that the very day after release of the first body of Ultra field signal typescripts Ralph had commenced to put together a precise chronicle of the Ultra aspects of the Allies' Western Front campaign of 1944-1945, I presumed as my own far less authoritative in-house memories took shape to appeal to him for verification of my inevitable subjectivity and fallibility as well as for help in securing copies of those actual signals which because of my specific connection I desired to confirm in entire detail. My list of desiderata arrived however only after Ralph, with reading galleys of his Ultra in the West finished, had no further occasion for visits to the P.R.O. at Kew where the originals lay; meanwhile all my historical queries were so definitively encompassed within his completed investigation that his forthcoming book was the obvious full and entirely effective Rosetta Stone for my inquests. And so I have availed myself of his undertaking as my guide and mentor, my talisman and touchstone throughout that major phase of the war on which we shared access and activity every day and almost every hour during its progress, but which only he has reviewed and restudied with true scholarly accuracy and inclusiveness.

My third capital obligation is to my formal commanding officer during my active Ultra involvement, Telford Taylor, whose multiplex postwar activities have placed him in the American public eye in too many roles to tabulate here; but in his chosen avocation of historian and writer on major situations of international substance in this century his broad scope and infinite concern for precision have afforded my typescript a scrupulous inspection and correction service which to my mind could not have been equalled anywhere else under the sun. His patient reading, annotation and correction of errors of fact by the dozen as well as his helpful and often provocative analyses and inquisitions have refined my text within every sub-section if not on every page. And his steadfast encouragement of my making this compilation, his agreement in the importance as well as the exhilaration of our wartime service as justification for the plenitude of detail I have here set in writing and for record, have been simultaneously stimulus and recompense for my continuing labors in exposition of an otherwise almost surely unrecorded inside story of unusual configuration.

To several others who have willingly granted me the benefit of their reading of my typescript on both sides of the Atlantic I stand also in debt. Here in the United States Elizabeth and Robert Slusser were the first to undertake plowing through my typescript, evaluating it both for content and for publishability as well as furnishing special details of information to which they virtually alone had access. Across the Atlantic a similar courtesy of text reading as well as early encouragement has been extended by Peter Calvocoressi, himself the author of a pellucid exposition primarily of crucial decyphering triumphs in his *Top Secret Ultra*; so also have I been aided and stimulated by advice and counsel and answers to questions within his panoramic frame of reference from Sir Herbert S. (Bill) Marchant: all as fellow workers in the vineyard unsurpassed in their capacity as discriminating tasters of my vintage.

Others who have willingly shared of their store of memories with me include Margaret Zimansky, herself occupied in analogous though geographically quite separate intelligence activity during the period of my concern but none the less most generous with reminiscences and personal data to augment my own rich store of memories of Curt. Beverly Kitchen Almond has refreshed me especially in detail on

the American contingent from her vantage point as hub of the ever spinning whorl of those nearly fifty Ultra Service Americans appearing on her Morning Report. To my several surviving Princeton colleagues I am grateful for contributions of personal histories while I was compiling a brief and rudimentary resume of Princetonians in the Ultra Service for the Princeton Alumni Weekly in 1975, together with subsequent recollections and observations as our correspondences have continued: Adolph Rosengarten, Edmund Kellogg, Yorke Allen, Langdon Van Norden and William T.B. Carnahan. To Ernest Bell III I declare a debt for encouragement in my first phases of compilation and for some useful early copies of signals brought back from the P.R.O. as well as other materials valuable as corroborative evidence. And finally, small notes of gratitude to my daughter Valerie over these years offering me the fruits of her vocation as a librarian to scout out and scour out a wide range of obscure records and documentations in search of precision of detail or accuracy of allusion, and to old family friend Laurence Buckley interested enough from his days as a Mosquito-flying Pathfinder pilot in the R.A.F. to proofread my entire final typescript.

In the matter of authenticity, and of the accuracy thereby implied, I cannot over-emphasize the caution that I am here setting out recollections and reminiscences, my own and from colleagues: entirely conscientiously, and as reliably as to me possible, but with noted exceptions drawn from memories largely unverifiable or subsequent readings no longer distinguishable. Where I have been able to rely on the guidance of Ralph Bennett's book there can of course be no doubts; in other cases where I have been able to check my recollections against the actual sent signals the accuracy should be likewise beyond question. But it has been on the one hand beyond my compass or capacity to read through every one of the fifty thousand signals released; and on the other hand the preponderance of my corpus as considered deals with matters never deemed necessary of field signalling and as such not presently accessible whatever their actual disposition. With reference to the authorized British Intelligence in the Second World War now at last available after a round dozen years of compilation, I have been from the first conscious of the parallel between my chosen amateur course and the incontrovertibly correct record there in progress; but with the presumable time lapse before completion even then appearing so inevitable I embarked however rashly on my own less formal memoir against the knowledge of my own mortality as well as that of my colleagues. I have thus, in perhaps misplaced pride but in conscious admission of personal limitation, made no effort to revise or even check out exhaustively my manuscript: where I may be found completely out of line I must only confess to failure of memory or occasional unconscious and unidentified introduction of non-Ultra testimony.

For the rest, certain books are to be noted as having been particularly valuable and enlightening for their testimony after the fact: I cite first Walter Warlimont's *Inside Hitler's Headquarters* for its provision of fascinating counterpoint to my curiosity, for its rich supply of chronicles of the actuality of supreme level decisions on the German side to compare with the incredibly apt educated guesses and deductions we were so often able to draw at the historical hour of occurrence. In a more circumscribed phase I have similarly utilized sections of Hugh Trevor-Roper's *The Last Days of Hitler* for a comparable clarification of the situation at the time necessarily found mysterious when Hitler relieved and disinherited Goering in the final hours of the Third Reich. For the rest my corroborative browsings, cross-checks and tangential illuminations have been too numerous and too fragmentary to justify a bibliography that would be in addition deceptive in implying a degree of scholarship I do not claim: where however direct and specific assistance has been rendered or precise reference made I have noted my source within my text in that same line or paragraph. A final acknowledgment for stabilization and continuity on a more general and open level is due to *The West Point Atlas of American Wars*, for its service both as cartographic base and as complementary summation of Allied armed force activity where affecting or affected by German operations detected through our Ultra revelations.

Notes on Modes, Methods and Militarese

In compiling this book I have seen fit to shape my retelling in a manner in several ways different from other earlier published books in some cases treating a larger picture with markedly less detail, in others perhaps in greater detail but only in more limited areas or with more limited scope of reference. Although surely of ordinary human frailty in my attempt to cleave to the classical ‘nothing in excess’, I have endeavored here to concentrate on a continuous surveillance of the progress of World War II in Europe within the brackets of my service in and familiarity with the Ultra Service. The result has been none the less a very long story, to readers perhaps unduly complicated and fluctuating for its insistence on that very broad compass which to me was the essence of the intelligence process, of materials and methods so central that their omission would eventuate in a presentation at best partial and inaccurate of the historical phenomenon under survey. Under this persuasion I have chosen to include arguably microscopic coverage of the mechanism that was the Ultra Service, especially its analysis and dissemination processes, followed by a continuing chronicle of the military progress of the war as the insights offered by our Ultra contributions affected outcomes ranging from local confrontations to strategic decisions and the operations of major campaigns.

With this overriding consideration in mind I have constructed my volume in a scheme hoped to clarify and expedite my story to readers in keeping with their particular interests. As may be perceived from my Table of Contents my framework shows a series of twelve chapters, each identified by a roman numeral, which deal with the immediately functional or operational recollections offered. Surrounding these major chapters are associated sections of more atmospheric nature under diversified designations, ten ‘Interludes’ bearing Arabic numbers plus a ‘Postponed Prelude’ and an ‘Epilogue’ to round out with non-military exposition the environment in which this portion of my life was lived. Accordingly, for those whose interest is restricted to the military history involved the major chapters will be found to contain all material relevant to their quest; the remainder of the text provides background largely personal as is inherent in any set of memoirs but, beyond being felt worthy of inclusion as essentially relevant to occurrences and situations within my historical time frame, is seen also as offering a panoramic review of the stage setting upon which the operative process was performed. In addition a certain amount of initial stage setting found in Chapter I will open the book on the primary activities to be recounted thereafter.

A central consideration in my methodology is the matter of military terminology: so completely has this compilation been integrated with experiences recollected from my days of Ultra Service I have found myself continually both remembering and writing in the same modified bilinguistics which were our habitual lingua franca—or more correctly lingua teutonica—as we maintained surveillance on every aspect of German military activity. At the same time, all too often conscious of my own confusion on reading other chronicles of World War II operations where a lack of clear and rapid distinguishability between opposing forces frequently occurs in closely interlocked situations as participating formations and command staffs become jumbled among identical categorical designations, I have felt advised to adopt a system of identification which I hope may prove immune to confusion if at the same time requiring some specialized understanding. Hewing to a general pattern of German terminology for German activity and of conventional English terminology for all other activity, my system will present

little difficulty for those of even modest familiarity with the German language; for readers entirely unacquainted I trust that a modicum of patient ingestion coupled to a usage presumably logical and consistent will lead them to conclude that the resultant clarity was worth the undeniable effort.

As a general position words in German—as well as of necessity in any other foreign language but far less frequently—appear in italic, with such specific exceptions as are noted below. Each initial appearance of a German word or phrase is followed by a translation in parentheses; repetition of such items, many of them so basic and common as to appear almost endlessly, is felt to justify waiving of a second translation, but the glossary at the end of the book will be available where memory flags. One regrettable propensity of the German language however renders this effort at simplicity often in vain, the combination of several specific words into one wearily sesquipedalian word so cumbersome that a German resort to abbreviation is almost habitual. But the abbreviations themselves carry through the first letters at least of each of the components: in hopes of showing the way such abbreviations have been compounded, I have again the first time around allowed the combination to run out its full length of separates but in subsequent use returned to the actual German practice of one unbroken word or of an abbreviation as opportune. A specially extended and ferocious exemplar is Reichs-Eisenbahn-Transport-Wesen (National Railway Transportation System) which when spelled out completely and correctly becomes Reichseisenbahntransportwesen but appears shortened to Reichs.Eisb.Trpt.Wesen where encountered after first appearance.

Amongst the advantages accruing to incorporation of German terminology to my mind generally unquestionable the most frequent and most pungent applications are to military formations and ranks of commanders. Here, harking back to both my most immediately previous paragraphs, come the exceptions I have allowed myself: in sectors where the minimized abbreviation of a standard category is used to reduce the length of text as much as possible, the designation whether for example of 'Inf.Div.' or of 'Genlltn.' has not been italicized. Where however the application is generic rather than specific, where neither a formation number nor an officer's name is appended, a full terminology or often a semi-abbreviation appears in italics: e.g. a German armoured corps will appear categorically as a Panzerkorps sometimes reduced to Pz.Korps although when individualized XIV Pz.K. will occur; as for personalities the topmost officer rank appears as Generalfeldmarschall, but the individual commander as Gen.Feldm. von Rundstedt or whoever. Against an attempt at this point to demonstrate essentially analogous treatment of a variety of infrequent or aberrant usages, it is my hope that the general tendency of method embraced will clarify itself as examples accumulate in my text.

Turning now to formation designation itself, the largest single category of bilingual usage, a series of sub-paragraphs is indispensable to permit the non-specialist reader to wade into this ocean of terminological ripples and wavelets.

1.<~>Highest German Military command is the Heeresgruppe, abbrev. H.Gr., so entirely equivalent to Anglo-American Army Group, abbrev. A.Gp., as to obviate need for further comment.

2.<~>Next lower command, 'Army' in Anglo-American usage, has German equivalents both in Armee, essentially generic, and Armeekorps, more strictly speaking Army HQ; since however an Army of either nationality is essentially only a commanding staff, I have preferred to employ the abbreviation 'AOK' as being at once visually distinguishable from opposing 'Army' commands of the same level and often of the identical number. One secondary distinction is also properly noted here: unlike our forces, four different types of AOK's appear on the German side, standard mixed infantry 'AOK's', armoured 'Pz.AOK's', and one only mountain, or 'Geb.AOK' (Gebirgs-Armeekorps) and one only parachute, or 'Fallsch.AOK' (Fallschirm-Armeekorps).

3.<~>One level lower a parallel situation obtains: here, against undifferentiated Anglo-American Corps staffs the German variants are 'AK.' for basic Armeekorps, 'Pz.K.' for Panzerkorps, 'Geb.K.' for Gebirgskorps and 'Fallsch.K.' for Fallschirmkorps, and once at least an otherwise undocumented 'Jaeg.K.' for Jaegerkorps.

4.<~>At division level the stream both broadens and diverges but the pattern continues involving not only the four categories above cited, the basic being the 'Inf.Div.', but involving an addition of 'PG.Divs.' for Panzergrenadierdivisionen and a minor amplification of 'FJ.Divs.' for Fallschirmjaegerdivisionen, plus later developing 'VG.Divs.' for Volksgrenadierdivisionen: the detailed distinctions entailed by such terminology will be examined along with other yet more rarefied variants as they are encountered in my text.

5.<~>An entire German shadow army of replacement and reserve components likewise bobbing frequently to the surface involves four other types of divisions best left lie until studied in necessary detail in Chapter IV to follow.

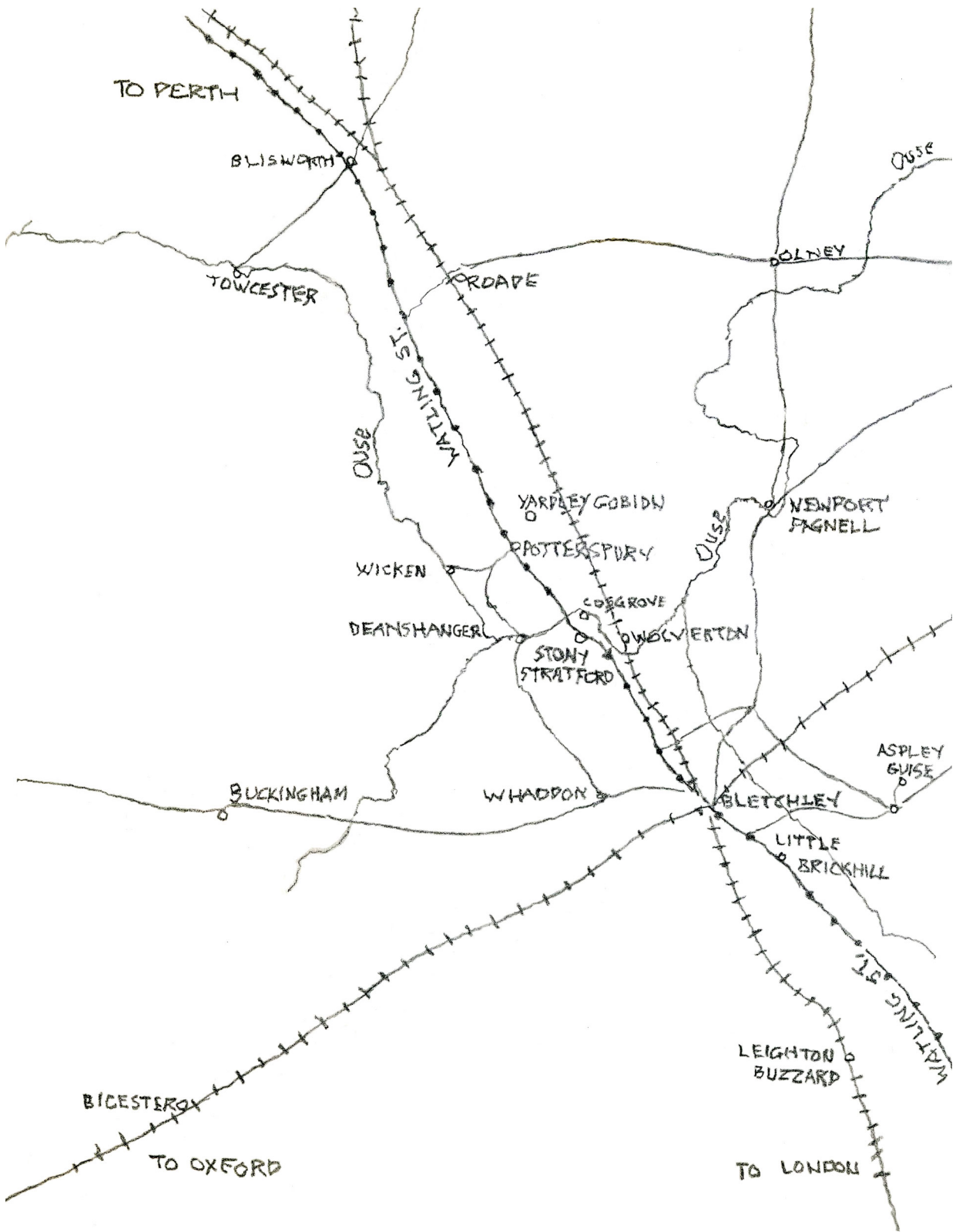
6.<~>At lower levels internationally accepted designations apply for Regts. (regiments), Btlen. (battalions) and Kpen. (companies); one divergence is however basic, the German Bataillon referring only to infantry and engineer (Pionier) units at that level while all other arms and services are designated Abten. (Abteilungen). Within the reserve system the same bifurcation obtains.

Returning to formation terminology, it is to be hoped that one other practice here employed will aid in clarifying the melee so often occurring not only in battle engagements but in analysis of plans and operations where opposing forces must be simultaneously considered. All German forces appear without indication of nationality, all other formations and staffs whether in Anglo-American alliance or in German are presented with their national specification: i.e. 28 Inf.Div. is German, 28 US Inf.Div. is American; 6 Pz.Div. is German as opposed to 6 US Armd.Div., 6 British Armd.Div. and 6 South African Armd.Div. Similar distinctions apply at Corps and Army level; at the top the linguistic division is felt to suffice, with a Heeresgruppe opposed both to an Army Group ever capable of international composition and to the exclusively Russian equivalent of Front.

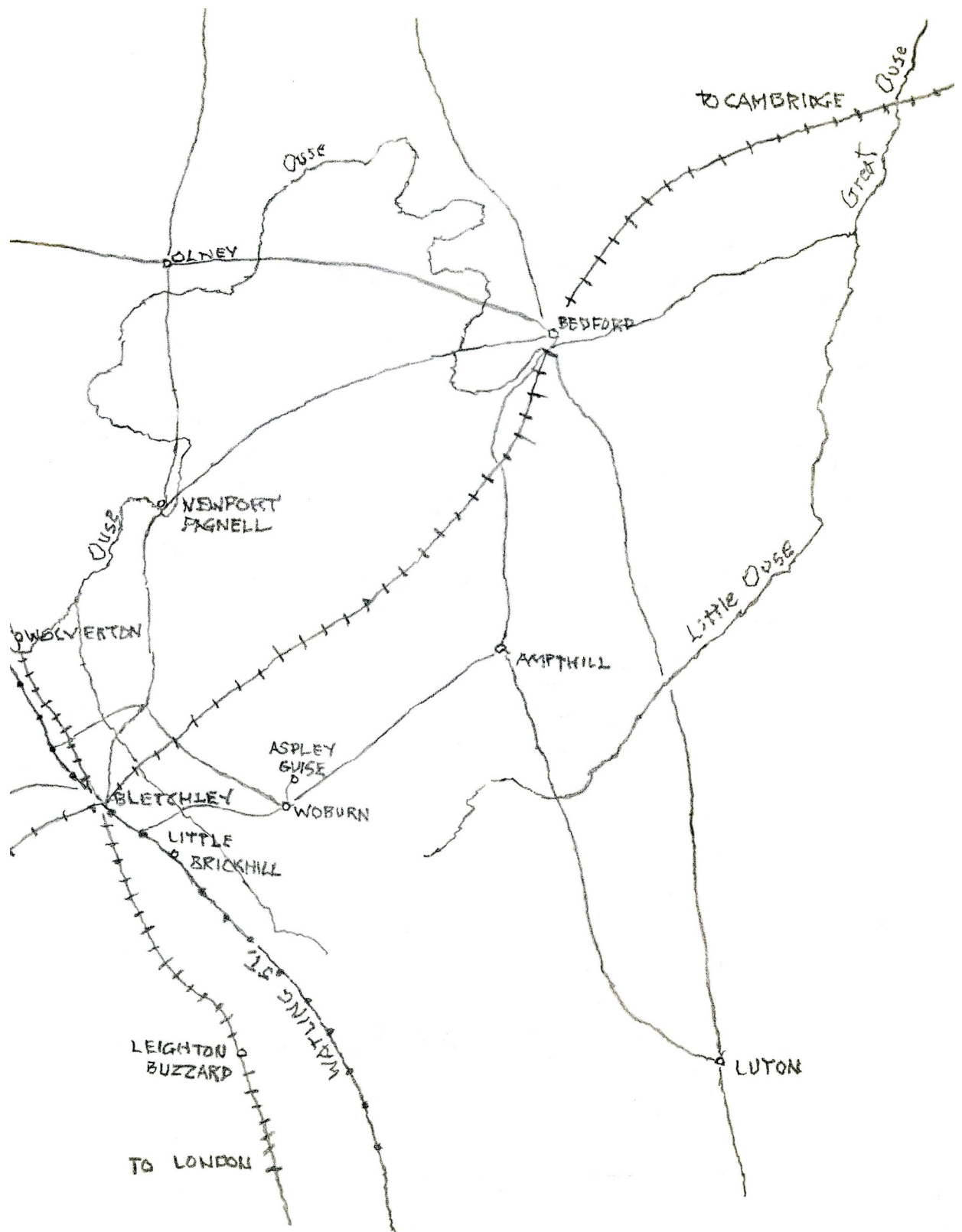
And finally and fortunately less involved a consideration of officer designations: here it is hoped a listing again from the top down may suffice. First the German abbreviation, then the grade spelled out in full, then the American equivalent and finally the parallel rank in the paramilitary Waffen-SS of dread repute:

Gen.Feldm.	Generalfeldmarschall	Gen. Army	None
Genobst.	Generaloberst	General	Oberstgruppenfuehrer
Gen.d.(Inf.)	General d.(Infanterie)	Lt.Gen.	Obergruppenfuehrer
Genlltn.	Generalleutnant	Maj.Gen.	Gruppenfuehrer
Genmaj.	Generalmajor	Brig.Gen.	Brigadefuehrer
Obst.	Oberst	Colonel	Standartenfuehrer
Obstltn.	Oberstleutnant	Lt.Col.	Obersturmbannfuehrer
Maj.	Major	Maj.	Sturmbannfuehrer
Hptm.	Hauptmann	Capt.	Hauptsturmfuehrer
Obltn.	Oberleutnant	1st Lt.	Obersturmfuehrer
Ltn.	Leutnant	2nd Lt.	Sturmfuehrer

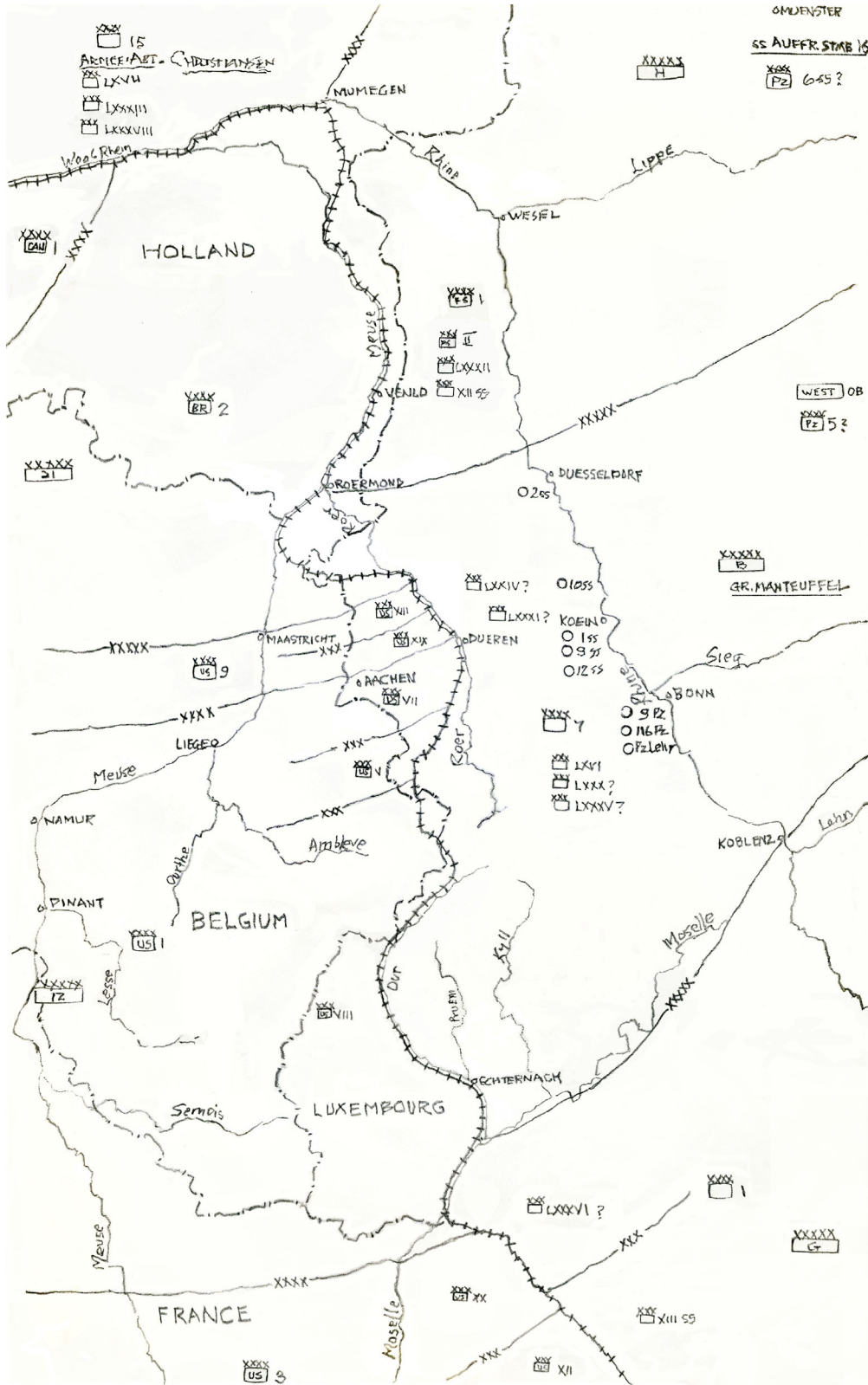
To complete the tabulation, abbreviations of the Waffen-SS ranks are as follows: Obstgruf., Ogruf., Gruf., Brif., Staf., Ostubaf., Stubaf., Hauptstuf., Ostuf. and Stuf.. In view of the relative rarity of personal identification of non-commissioned officers their listing has been waived, and individual appearances in the text are accompanied by explanations.



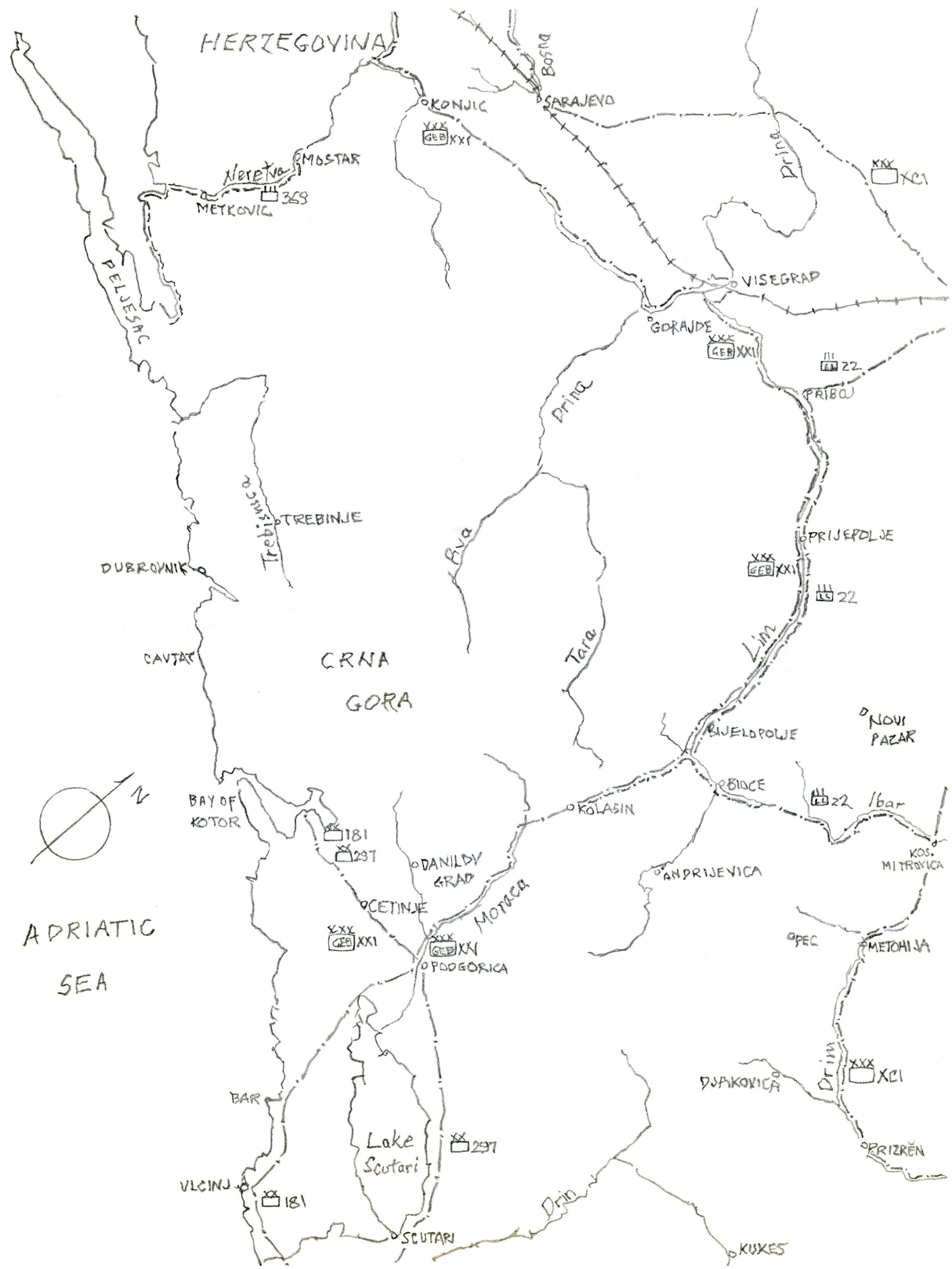
Bletchley and Environs (left)



Bletchley and Environs (right)



Unit Positions in the Low Countries



Unit Positions in Yugoslavia

Ultra:
I Was There
Volume I

CHAPTER I

Entry Station: Euston

At Bletchley Park

The Heart of the Matter

Postponed Prelude:

A Picaresque Progress Ending in Enigma

Entry Station: Euston

Bright Morning Meeting

The winter day had broken cloudless, bracing but still eminently temperate, over the metropolis of London: a climatic phenomenon frequent enough thereabouts to give the lie to the complaints of eternal fogs and coal-smoke particulate palls overhanging the British capital which had swirled about my ears since earliest remembrance. But stirring here in that slowly brightening late January light of 1944 I had already a sense of a different morning, a tingling of expectation in the above-freezing air: the time had come for my first venture outside the city after three weeks of heel-cooling and general institutionalized frustration awaiting useful assignment at the pleasure of the War Department in Washington as disbursed by its local plenipotentiary deputies. Heretofore I had eked out my impatience with wanderings on foot or by bus or Underground over a fair bit of London and at least the major sights of Westminster; but this day I knew would call for a faster pace of activity in response to a more dominant summons. And so, stepping out from my fifth-floor billet in a white-faced and trimless Georgian town-house in Harley Street, and swinging up halfway round Cavendish Square with its pretentious post-Baroque pillared porticoes and friezes, I hailed a cab to relieve me of my heavy Val-Pak as being a bit much for the mass-transit complications of the Oxford Street Tube, the Tottenham Court Road Bus, and another Euston Road Bus to my rail terminus destination.

Thus at the same moment liberated and enthroned in this prototypical vertical and vintage vehicle, well polished in dark maroon with thin body-stripe of Chinese Red, black leather seat and mahogany trim inside, I welcomed a fluidity of itinerary not previously accorded. Propelled by my driver across Great Portland Street with time for a glance leftward to Portland Circus rounded out by the great curved colonnades of upper-crust town houses screening the vista into Regent's Park beyond, I rolled through the tumult of Tottenham Court Road until gliding into the neat residential squares of Bloomsbury. First Bedford Square, then Bloomsbury and last Gordon, into which we turned to go three quarters of the way around — here a moment at last for signplate recognition, seeing in imagination T.S. Eliot out that very minute for his morning walk to offices at Faber and Faber — every square sharing an urbane and understated continuity of design in quietly pedimented windows under almost uniform cornice lines. But suddenly, brusquely, my sedate taxicab moved out as though exploded onto the bustling lorry-way of Euston Road; then shortly past Euston Square and left through the great open iron esplanade gates, set firm between tall Doric columns more Baroque than Neo-Classic with Ionic colonnettes, mouldings and pilasters bearing superimposed segmental arches interspersed among the various pediments. And at last hard right into Euston Station itself, unloading amid a jumble of florins and half-crowns and shillings and pence, and on through to the great L.M.S. train-sheds spanning overhead: ambitious exemplars of Victorian engineering which now I am told have yielded to the functional improvements of a century of progress while the old sculptured entry portals still survive as an ironic stage-set.

Despite the expedition furnished by my private conveyance, as I approached the R.T.O. office door where I had been instructed to establish contact at 9:45 I saw already congregated the three American

officers I had been told to watch for. I identified myself promptly to the officer perceptibly senior both in age and grade; he reciprocated, confirming himself to be Major Hilles as anticipated, and then introduced me to the others, Capt. Fellers and Lt. Allen. Our group thus complete, we moved on to secure an empty compartment on the 10 A.M. Perth Express, slid the glass door shut behind us, and set about advancing our acquaintance. That we were all now bound up together on a mission of some confidentiality each of us by a separate osmosis was aware; but perhaps since even in the movies railway compartments are notoriously insecure, the first instruction handed down was one of bland generality, merely that henceforth there should be no more last names or designations of rank in our address, where we were about to be working everyone operated on a first-name basis. Then, to start the ball rolling, the major offered a personal thumbnail sketch: Ted Hilles, professor of English at Yale, now nearly six months in England on his present still unilluminated assignment. But the rest was self-evident, dignified, inescapably cultured and well-spoken, wearing a tailored officer's long dress coat to my silent admiration as I contemplated my own loose and shapeless reversible gray trench coat: but at least mine was practical in comparison to the others' short hip-length wool coats which afforded only the worst of both worlds. On Ted's blouse shone forth not only a pair of Air Force wings from staff duty days, but also a World War I Victory Ribbon: that time, to answer our question, it had been the infantry, in the Forest of the Argonne.

Jim Fellers speaking next stood short and slight, brisk, a touch of game-cock, seeming never at a loss for an answer just touched by a southwestern drawl: an Oklahoma lawyer with some five years' practice after local Law School, more recently moved through various U.S.A.A.F. staff postings to the Air Force Intelligence School at Harrisburg, but like the rest of us now first reporting to a new and unknown assignment. Yorke Allen, well over six feet tall, unmistakably patrician, earnest of commitment but with an underlying sense of humour breaking out through an initial twinkle at opportune light moments: I remembered him marginally from my first year at Princeton when he then a senior had been a campus figure as President of Clio Hall, the more conservative of the two college debating societies. Volunteering after Pearl Harbor, Yorke had whiled away nearly two years working up to desk-and-gumshoe sergeant in the Counter-Intelligence Corps just off lower Broadway, until old contacts in the Pentagon had arranged his assignment here as a budding specialist in he had no idea what, but decked out with a bright and shiny second lieutenant's commission complete with brassy crossed rifles of infantry to suit. For myself, my first lieutenant's silver bars already dingy from eight months in grade, I recited my brief litany of Princeton collegiate curriculum, Field Artillery R.O.T.C. simultaneous with a graduate degree in Architecture at Harvard, six months' line duty with a horse howitzer battalion, and a year and a month in various slots at Camp Ritchie, the Army's Military Intelligence Training Center in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Maryland.

First Trace of a Well-Worn Track

Last all-aboards shouted and whistles blown, our Perth Express chuffed off through the dingy track-cuts and backyards of Hampstead and Maida Vale, of Kensal Green and Willesden Junction: as we paused briefly for pick-up at the last Ted assured us we would soon find this to him habitual trek as familiar as the stops on the New Haven between Mount Vernon and Stamford, Darien and West Haven. Verging from suburban into rural, we made another pick-up stop at Watford, the station farthest out on the Underground; then suddenly, turning sharply to the north, we steamed along the floor of a deep rock cut and plunged into a tunnel, emerging in another veritable canyon of steep-walled clefts through a substantial range of high-piled and stony whitish cumuli for three miles at least: the Chiltern Hills, the ancient historic barrier which screened the London basin from the nearest haunts of the irridentist

Britons of earliest Saxon days. Yet equally suddenly on the other side a serene and smiling countryside, also suburban in a sense but more of an old-world amalgam both cosmopolitan and rural, quite un-American; or was it only the relative absence of our ubiquitous automobile culture? Our L.M.S. express was now hurtling along at its blue-ribbon best, making no further stops in this pastoral landscape, but as Ted promised I would come from later less urgent journeys to a degree of sensed familiarity with them all.

First stop on the local schedule now so hurriedly bypassed was Hemel Hempstead and Boxmoor, settled in among long rolling meadows, old and plentiful its great trees, willows already in faint yellow arched out over rippling streams, occasional venerable stone-walled Tudor houses but the majority of late nineteenth century Arts and Crafts or Picturesque. Hereafter a comparable Berkhamstead, likewise genteel and suburban, where on a later trip I would bid farewell to a classic clearly retired Colonel Blimp thus far sharing my compartment: in street tweeds for his part, he cheerfully inferred from the trace of the rubbed inner-calf pattern on my dress boots that the American cavalry must ride with stirrups on the ball of the foot rather than 'driven home' as had been *de rigueur* in his Hussar days, thus initiating a fretful if slightly suspect reminiscence of the Mahdi and Omdurman. Next Tring, another old town with older church, and not far thereafter well up on a vast hillside a series of arched and pedimented ruins of classical complexion so striking and sharp etched in their nearby whiteness against the dark tree-greens and lighter grassy slopes that they would become a lodestar to catch my passing eye. My early evaluation of them as antiquarian *folies* out of Horace Walpole's eighteenth century has since yielded to more recent exploratory diggings with a verdict of sophisticated Roman and Roman-derived habitation in this Chiltern-Cotswold area, where even after the Imperial departure the Britons held off the Saxons until the seventh century. And penultimately Cheddington, even less remarkable than Tring; more perceptible were the runway patterns and hangars and maintenance sheds of the Fortresses and Liberators of Jimmy Doolittle's Eighth US Air Force intermingled *passim* with the York and Lancaster facilities of the RAF's Bomber Command.

Another rail cut, through only slightly less massive and white-faced escarpments of the northern screen range of the Chiltern Hills, and we were in Buckinghamshire at last near the end of our journey. Depressed tracks between high stone walls brought us almost blindered through one more quaintly venerable market town with the charmingly improbable name of Leighton Buzzard: but its excellent authentic prime hostelry, an inn with pub known as 'The Hunt', was home away from home not only for Ted but for virtually all the other field grade Americans with whom we would find ourselves working. We might count ourselves fortunate, we were told, if a few more places could be found there to take us in — in the event only Jim Fellers would so qualify, possibly in consideration that on arrival and assignment he would find his majority caught up with him. Good drinks, good food, good darts and good company, Ted reflected with perceptible incandescence; and after more than half a year now he could vouch for the grace attendant on creature comforts over the long pull.

A few miles farther along the train slowed down unmistakably at last for its first extra-metropolitan stop: our destination for the duration, the town of Bletchley. A grimy, dull and characterless industrial town we would find it, its social and economic genesis usually traced to nearby clay deposits for pottery and especially for brick-making; Ted told us with a wisp of a smile it had been for some time brooding over its accolade from Aldous Huxley as the dirtiest and drabest factory town in the Midlands, but in fact the only reason Huxley had become aware of it at all was for its status as the place one had to step down to change trains when going from Oxford to Cambridge, whence indeed the obligation for all the north-oriented expresses to stop here also. From the windows it seemed all too true; it would not be until several decades later that I would learn of the millennial significance of the clay-pits, the situs of many exhumations of early burial concentrations and other archaeological revelations: even in prehistoric

times it had marked the crossing of the two most important transit routes of what would become England, the great southeast-to northwest road known ever since its pavement by the Romans as the Watling Street, and the Ickniel Way, the native trek path at right angles running screened by the northern edge of the Chilterns. Once again the road-builders and railway-layers, following the inexorable logic of topography, had labored in the very traces to which the footsteps of their earliest forebears had intuitively responded.

At Bletchley Park

A Manor of Monstrosity

Climbing up a stairway and across a wire-caged bridge over the multiple railway tracks and through the exit wicket and turnstile along the station platform, we found ourselves in a stubby and grubby, archetypal Victorian rail station already etched in familiarity from multiple Hitchcock and comparable movies: complete with tea urn and sweets-and-notions counters rather sparse of wares in wartime austerity, and hard benches facing a smouldering, actually superfluous coal stove. As for the *dramatis personae* the scenario was equally typical: the timeless pair in attendance, a rumpled gray station-master and a frowsy, spasmodically astringent duenna of the counters could in a moment have been recruited to play from life the earthy pair remembered providing a raunchy *obbligato* to the diffidence of the protagonist couple in the final playlet of Noel Coward's 'Tonight at Eight-Thirty' to be immortalized between Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard in the post-war filming of 'Brief Encounter'.

Pushing out the far-side door behind Ted and through a well tended grove of tall dark trees, a short two minutes' walk brought us to the corner of a high cyclone-type chain-link fence with outward canted barbed-wire glacis at the top where stood a small gate and gatehouse and uniformed sentry on guard. This was the rear, the rail station entrance to 'the Park' Ted explained, we would no doubt be using it often and perhaps regularly, but for this morning we might not enter here: at the moment without passes we would have to go around to the main gates and have ourselves signed in. The floridly over-wrought ironwork of those gates leading to what had clearly been conceived as a manorial estate, fixed open between their brick piers, stood even further humbled by a prefabricated olive drab gatehouse-turned-office parked full length along one side to constrict passage to a single lane. Here, each detaching for the security clerk a copy of our travel orders validating us at this station, we were in a matter of minutes presented with small buff cards in oil-cloth folders which would henceforth confirm our right of access to this clearly special enclave.

More strolling than striding into 'the Park' as Ted continually dubbed it, we noted a prompt bifurcation of the roadway with the minor right offshoot enclosing an intervening large lawn of perhaps two acres, bright green as so nearly constant in England even though the month was still January by a day or two, dotted by stately trees none less than a century old. At left centre lay a shallow, very man-made reflecting pond, semi-circular at each end, stone edged and surrounded by ground cover doubtless chosen for its capacity for self-maintenance; away across the lawn to our half right a low but stout box hedge, beyond it nothing apparent until the receding tall treetops of the grove we had passed through on our way up from the station. In fact we were being hoodwinked by a favorite illusion of English landscape gardening to me in those days quite unknown, a 'ha-ha': a deftly sited man-made combination of walls, gully and depressed plateau, the last for cattle or sheep to graze upon unseen by the gentry taking their ease on the manor-house terrace. With the demands of war the low field beyond had been to a great extent filled in with one-storey, flat-roofed industrial type buildings, but they in turn were of such low profile as to preserve the illusion completely.

Leftward of the main driveway axis, behind the reflecting pool and centred with it on the greensward, loomed the seigneurie itself, a maudlin and monstrous pile probably unsurpassed though not for lack of competition in the architectural *gaucherie* of the mid-Victorian era: the self-glorifying residence of a local brick manufacturing tycoon. Built about 1860 in an indiscriminately imitative Tudor vocabulary out of an endemic dark red brick with beige coadestone trim, quoins, voussoirs and keystones, it was further hopelessly vulgarized by extensive porches and solaria as well as by batteries of tall casements in

intermittent profusion, all of painted wood trim rather than the stonework of the principal corners, mingling with what could only be termed incoherent abandon two-centred Gothic, three-centred Tudor, four-centred Perpendicular and ogival Flamboyant arches with English stick and French trefoil tracery, also pseudo-medieval crenellations with Baroque broken and reversed arch pediments; meanwhile the profusion of top-storey gables faced with cottage-style half-timbering, not to mention an overpowering copper-roofed, octagonal-walled to onion-topped pleasure dome with finial immediately suggestive of the pseudo-Orientalism of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton alongside oriels, turrets, bay windows and embrasures, all capped by myriad multi-potted chimneys in totally wanton location and configuration could only hulk into view as altogether inchoate, unfocused and incomprehensible, not to say indigestible.

Through the main Tudor entry arch we passed onto a stone-floored parvis, up one step and through the great oaken doorway into a quarry-tiled hallway extending around a huge and heavily articulated bi-parting monumental staircase, inescapably dominant but evidently also somewhat supererogatory in leading up to a second storey according to testimony of one there detailed only marginally occupied by a very few clerical staff 'not doing very much of anything'. Meanwhile at the main level sprawled a bewilderment of hallways and assembly rooms resonant in their oak floors and splendiferous in their wide, full-height neo-Elizabethan carved stone fireplaces and over-mantel assemblies of fauna and flora despite a total absence of grates or fuel. Among the largely empty rooms holding an occasional clerical worker with desk and files the largest drawing-room was now the canteen, for petty packets of biscuits and dubious coffee available after luncheon and supper at only tuppence the mug; a bulletin board nearby announced all manner of activities, entertainments and *divertissements* taking place in others of these rooms, apparently open and available for convocations of interested groups of a variety, specialty and eccentricity displayed across a characteristically English latitude.

Of Security and Self-Service

Our occasion for entry was attendance at the weekly security briefing for new arrivals in the front drawing-room on the left now bright with winter sunshine streaming through the two triads of tall Elizabethan casements that opened onto the main lawn, pool and ha-ha. We four Americans found ourselves joining perhaps a dozen young Englishwomen, the major bloc 'Wren' ratings — from W.R.N.S., Women's Royal Naval Service — in their austere blue, unflinchingly short jackets and truncated stove-pipe skirts all totally unrelieved by ornament; a likewise non-commissioned pair of WAAF's — Women's Auxiliary Air Force — registered a bit less forbidding in better tailored uniforms of RAF blue-gray and at least vestigial winged insignia; perhaps two civilians were also present, but we for our part were the only males among the fifty folding chairs drawn up. Soon the Security Officer entered, closing the door secretively behind him: his every motion and action soft and silent, Captain Shaw spoke hardly above a stage whisper, displaying a constant, almost stage-trained smile on his small round face; but in contrast immediately eye-catching was his dress uniform blouse draped over his right shoulder leading to an empty sleeve. Perceptibly far too young for Passchendaele or Ypres, perhaps a casualty of Lord Gort's 1940 B.E.F. or of the tank battles in the Western Desert, we would never have to do with him again except for fleeting passes along the sidewalk near the pool, always the same etched smile, never a word beyond 'Good-Morning'; but in that initial hour he suddenly returned us to the tragic dimension of the war, telling us once more for openers of our common interest in, and obligation to, absolute security.

For me in first moments it evoked a daydream, having heard the selfsame essential message a dozen times at least, and indeed more than once for my sins required to deliver it to others even newer to the

game than I; but as the paragraphs rolled on I sensed new colours and depths appearing, an awareness of an elite secretive responsibility, of an enclave now opening whose very existence must be shrunk past inconsequentiality to total invisibility. Our work, we learned, and indeed our thinking must be oblique and camouflaged; even in our most exciting hours, with our most brilliant discoveries or deductions, we must remember our mandatory non-existence, and disguise what we might uncover even from those due thence to draw benefit. Capt. Shaw drew a cautionary example from an enemy surface shipping movement, of supplies to Rommel in North Africa some eighteen months before: our location data might never be directly utilized by air or naval forces, first RAF Recce or Fleet Air Arm must fly sorties not only to confirm the spotting but close enough to draw ack-ack or other overt acknowledgment of enemy notice. As the message accumulated so also the mystification, whatever the methodology which enabled this inscrutable intelligence echelon to come up with such treasures it was obvious both its value and its vulnerability were great: this was a game in which no blunders of loose talk could ever be forgiven, nor for the sake of everyone and everything could they even be contemplated.

On conclusion of our briefing we followed Ted to the in-Park 'Pub' just adjacent, out behind a rump pergola of wooden Tuscan columns painted white in attempted match with the integral Main House stonework but more than slightly delaminating over years of English fogs. The dull gray one-storey low-gabled wooden shell, once more like the gatehouse of a lightweight, clearly ephemeral panelized wall construction held triads again of low casements with even smaller matching clearstories above let into the sidewalls between section joint ribs serving to relieve an otherwise Stygian enclosure. On our entrance several faces were raised in affable greeting to Ted: there were at once introductions sadly no sooner made than popped out of one's head, a panoply of British uniforms of all forces and grades, male and female, plus at least an equal count of civilians, although at this hour without one distinguishable American uniform in sight. The beer, poured at once at room temperature, was more what I called ale except discouragingly weak at that, a poor reply to remembered Loewenbrau or Heineken's; but the problem lay, we were assured, in the wartime shortages of all good things, we should not judge this to be typical of an English brewmaster. Somewhat disenchanted none the less, I nursed my mug through the others' seconds until the 12:30 hour brought call for Second Lunch.

And so out again and back along the right flank of the Main House and around the corner to a great skeletal shed of glass and sheet metal with steel columns and trusses and purlins under a corrugated metal roof, clearly an unmitigated borrowing from some optatively reuseable fast-track factory assembly prototype. Officially the Dining Hall but almost universally termed the Cafeteria, it offered a characteristic self-service line in the centre with long tables and stubby light chairs branching into both wings and only lightly screened kitchen behind; its bill of fare was equally rudimentary with boiled beef, boiled potato, boiled cabbage, and steamed pudding for dessert topped by a yellow quasi-lemon sauce with coffee and milk for same available at the urns, the latter powdered of course, and bring your own saccharin. Perhaps the beef had undergone an inordinately slow roasting rather than a boiling, it was nourishing no doubt after its fashion, and at least for the first time novel enough to be edible; but, as we were early warned and soon learned for ourselves, mind-muddling and stultifying — as a twice-a-day disbursement especially, if one stayed on into the evening shift — every day for years. Yet for this moment at least we were willing and able to suspend disbelief, reacting to the sense of excitement still building as we moved through our introductory paces.

The Heart of the Matter

Into the Tabernacle

Time factors held to be permitting, we washed our pudding down with a second cup of coffee, this time the post-prandial tuppenny ration at the Main House canteen, amid a decorous and low-decibel gathering even more demure than at the Pub; then, in Ted's train again, out from the castle of gentility and farther into the compound. On our left a pair of dull-green Nissen huts, to us already familiar as Quonsets, in fact unmanned in a purely maintenance and storage usage while on our right rambled an assemblage of obviously equally temporary one-storey wartime buildings painted olive drab also: totally unremarkable, they elicited our attention only when Ted remarked them to be of the same primordial vintage as the original 'Hut 3' and 'Hut 6' earlier bypassed without notice on both sides of the Main House. To us it was all just numbers, moot and mysterious, until prompt arrival at our proper destination in the next building group began to unroll for us the chronicle of the burgeoning of Bletchley Park. Here a newer and more permanent agglomeration confronted us, laid out in a multi-fingered plan of one-storey flat-roofed school or industrial construction, red brick walls backed up by glazed red-orange hollow tile inside, with small-paned steel factory grade casement and awning combination windows, true exemplars of an international style for minimum cost quick-rise fire-resistant facility shelter. On centre axis of the U-shaped entrance court the blue-painted double steel door of main access bore a small 'Block D' sign above the lintel; but once inside the central hall two further signs directed us left to 'Hut 3', right to 'Hut 6'. Following Ted to the left through another pair of steel fire-doors, we made our way along a broad high-lit central corridor with the concrete floor echoing sharply to the steel taps on my newly acquired English regulation officer's 'boots'.

The focus had constricted for the last time: we were now at our destined Hut 3, whatever that signified. At the first hall crossing, up a half dozen steps to conform with the rise of the land, we turned right down a narrower and less luminous corridor; checking momentarily at the fourth door on the left, we entered past a minimal tacked-up pasteboard typed '3 US': again, nothing more. At once we were greeted effervescently by 'Bevo' — full name Beverly Kitchen, five feet two inches of dynamo, in her mid-twenties, curly-topped and sandy blonde, pert and pertinacious, a laconic but very bright Yankee career-girl-for-the-duration from New Hampshire via the Washington mill-race; introducing us, Ted spoke her praises as general stabilizer to the motley US contingent of which we were to become part, predicting she would prove both flotation pontoon and anchor to windward when particularly strident or idiotic crises blew up from the Pentagon. The only other American on hand at the moment, a tall, very slender and almost Gothic black-haired and soft-spoken 1st.Lt. USAAF was promptly introduced as Ed Kellogg. In easy chat for an idle moment the timbre and intonation of his speech were almost instantaneously familiar: nor surprising in fact, so many Kelloggs I had known from Princeton or Harvard, virtually all Grotonians, all brothers or cousins as I would later learn. Pausing in his preoccupation with cutting and pasting together a multiplicity of white paper strips of varying dimension printed in purple multigraphing ink, Ed supplied us on request with facts of billeting life until Ted, after bringing himself up to date from Bevo's log of the two days just past, summoned us to continue our tour of initiation.

Returning and crossing the central corridor, we turned first right down a short recessway, then through a half-glass door into a large room of dimensions unexpected in such an essentially rabbit-warren building: about thirty-five feet on each side, entirely free of columns or other internal support, obviously irregular in the roof framing grid, it relied for light on a bank of high windows perhaps twenty