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# World War I and the Origins of U.S. Military Intelligence

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the photos used in the book, as well as kudos to Robert Bills for his technical support. Thanks to the librarians and archivists at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the US Army Heritage and Learning Center, and my local library in Fairfax County who patiently retrieved dozens of books on interlibrary loan. Finally, thanks to my wife, Marilyn, who not only encouraged me but added her editorial skills to the project.

Photos originated from the Library of Congress (LC), National Security Agency History Office (NSA), the US Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM), and the NARA. One of the photos is copyrighted and came from Brown Brothers. I am hopeful that this summary will serve as a useful introduction to the rise of military intelligence in the 20th century. As always, I alone am responsible for any mistakes.

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# 1

## Steps to War

“Spare no pains, no cost, to gain information of the enemy’s movements and designs; whatever sums you pay to obtain this end, I will cheerfully refund.”

—General George Washington

The history of US Army intelligence leading up to World War I consisted largely of isolated stories in which the actions of individuals and visionaries would play as important a role as official Army initiatives. The first advocate for exploiting information was none other than George Washington, who had, as a young officer, witnessed firsthand the consequences of intelligence failure; following the French and Indian War, Washington would dedicate himself to studying all available books on the subject. For most of the Revolutionary War, General Washington, as commander of the Continental Army, would also serve as his own intelligence chief—creating spy rings, applying deception, and ordering that all plans be kept as secret as possible. Trenton and Yorktown, two of Washington’s greatest triumphs on the battlefield, were aided by intelligence and secrecy. Unfortunately, those who came after him did not learn from Washington’s example of practicing the art of knowing one’s enemies and saw no need to establish a permanent intelligence organization within the new republic’s War Department. Apart from the lack of vision on the part of its military commanders, America did not feel threatened by enemies on its borders and thus saw no need for an early warning mechanism. Being a democracy, the United States also did not acquire a tradition of court intrigue and dependence on foreign alliances—conditions that spawned the use of trained spies and secret communications among European nations.

Each time a major war broke out during the 19th century, commanders in the field depended on observation and reconnaissance as their chief means of information gathering; management of intelligence collection within major army headquarters was left in the hands of veteran officers who possessed neither training nor special talents. This would hold true for both the North and South during the Civil War, but the conflict did witness the first attempt by the Union at centrally collecting information for the purpose of informing its leadership in Washington, D.C., as to the current status of the enemy's forces. In peacetime, the Army's primary focus remained on the frontier, where it provided order and protection during America's long movement westward, and subsequently came to rely on a number of intelligence tools in fulfilling its mission. To chart new territory, the Army utilized topographical engineers; to pacify the Plains Indians, the Army depended on the reconnaissance skills of its cavalry and scouts, eventually establishing a Corps of Indian Scouts in 1866.

In 1885, the War Department finally took its first step toward organizing a viable intelligence agency when the adjutant general created the Military Information Division (MID) in order to answer questions on foreign military matters for the secretary of war. The term *information* was selected instead of *intelligence* because in the 19th century, the latter term was often equated with the day's news, as evidenced by a number of papers employing the term as part of their title. MID's first home was located in three offices on the first floor of the ornate State, War and Navy Building (now the Eisenhower Executive Building) next to the White House. Other, more subtle factors were also at work that reinforced the decision to organize the division. A number of reformers believed that gathering information on Europe's forces would potentially benefit the War Department's own plans to transform the Army into a more professional organization. The new MID also ensured that the Army kept pace with the Navy, which had recently established an Office of Naval Intelligence to collect data on emerging technology from maritime powers.<sup>1</sup>

In the 19th century, the Army occasionally dispatched military observers overseas, such as during the Russo-Turkish War, but the longest of these assignments was for only six months. On September 22, 1888, Congress passed an act that provided for a more permanent means of collecting and classifying military information from abroad, and in turn, gave MID its first real function. In the future, the War Department would appoint officers as attachés who would be entitled to transportation and computation of quarters while on duty, plus the assistance of a clerk to help with day-to-day correspondence. On March 11 of the following year, the first two military attachés departed the States: one destined for the US legation in London and the other to Berlin. Soon, other officers were on their way to the capitals of Austria-Hungary,

Russia, and France. Once settled into their new duty stations, the attachés set about to obtain a wide variety of data thought to be of value to the US Army; the information falling into two broad categories: general and technical or scientific.<sup>2</sup>

During the coming years, MID's mission and capabilities continued to grow, eventually forming four branches. One dealt with digesting incoming reports from attachés and using the information to publish books, monographs, and maps for distribution within the Army; among the early publications was Major Theodore Schwan's *Organization of the German Army*. Another branch monitored the strength of the National Guard as well as prepared plans for its mobilization. A third was assigned the task of watching the northern border, frequently sending officers on hunting and fishing leave for the purposes of visiting and mapping the Canadian wilderness. The last branch kept close tabs on countries within the Caribbean, and on the eve of the Spanish-American War, would dispatch several officers undercover to Puerto Rico and Cuba.<sup>3</sup>

Having served as an instructor at the Fort Leavenworth School, forerunner of the US Army Command and General Staff College, Colonel Arthur Wagner was best known as an advocate for professionalization of the Army's leadership; later he would help to establish the Army War College. Wagner also played an equally important role in the development of military intelligence by promoting the thinking that all modern armies should have a viable organization to collect information. He subsequently authored a book on the subject—*The Service of Security and Information*—the first of its kind in the US Army. Wagner also published a second book, *Organization and Tactics*, in which he called for the Army to assign an intelligence officer to each major field headquarters. In 1896, the arrival of Colonel Arthur Wagner as chief of MID marked an important moment in the organization's development; unfortunately, during the Spanish-American War, the Army's commanding general in Cuba kept Wagner from putting into practice many of his revolutionary ideas. Apparently, Major General William Shafter believed that Wagner's proposed Intelligence Bureau was, in actuality, an attempt by the War Department to spy on how the war was being conducted in the field, not to collect information on the enemy.

By the turn of the century, America was demonstrating to the world that it was a rising power. In the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, the United States liberated Cuba and assumed responsibility for the Philippines. In 1898, the United States also acquired the Hawaiian Islands, further extending its presence in the Pacific, and in 1903, it gained the rights to construct the Panama Canal, which would eventually link the world's two great oceans. Coinciding with these dramatic changes, Secretary Elihu Root modernized

the War Department in 1903 by establishing a General Staff, which was divided along three functional lines: administration, intelligence, and plans as modeled by the French.<sup>4</sup> Of the 44 officers assigned, 6 were given over to intelligence, the so-called Second Division, which absorbed MID's missions. Although this restructuring gave intelligence an elevated status, the Second Division remained far from its modern equivalency; the division still operated only for purposes of the General Staff and possessed no authority to influence the organization of intelligence within the larger Army.

In light of its international obligations, the United States finally began to grow its standing Army over the next 10 years until it reached 100,000—a fourfold increase—yet still miniscule when compared to the major powers of Europe. Paradoxically, its intelligence capacity would virtually disappear over the same period. In 1908, the Second Division, now situated in the Lemon Building not far from the White House, underwent a series of organizational changes that unfortunately would prove its undoing. The Third Division, which had oversight of operational planning and was the major consumer of information generated by the Second Division, was relocated to Washington Barracks (now Fort McNair) situated in the southwest corner of the District of Columbia. Given limited means—one automobile—to courier documents between the two divisions, the chief of staff Major General J. Franklin Bell signed off on the recommendation that the Second and Third Divisions be merged at Washington Barracks. Bell's decision was believed to have been prejudiced by an incident that took place several years before in the Philippines where he had suffered the embarrassment of having his support for a certain matter openly overruled in favor of a position held by the local intelligence element.<sup>5</sup>

In any event, the Second Division did not go quietly but strenuously objected to the recommendations and pointed out that it existed to serve all of the War Department, not just operations. The division's staff members also departed with the consolation that an ad hoc committee of War Department senior officers agreed with their position. Irrespective of these arguments, the Third Division was subsequently renamed the War College Division, and residual functions of the Second Division consolidated within a paper organization called the Military Information Committee, whose members were members in name only and were preoccupied with their normal day-to-day duties.

It is easy to dismiss the absence of a permanent intelligence element within the War Department on the eve of the Great War. The long delay in acquiring an authoritative command over the Army and its lack of a General Staff were certainly key factors that had discouraged such thinking. Still, it is hard to understand the failure by the Army leadership to see the need for routine

intelligence reporting on developing situations internationally and the need for such basic tools as maps, especially when the United States became responsible for security interests in the Pacific and the Caribbean.

Although the War Department was once again without an active intelligence organization, the number of attachés assigned grew over the years to cover most of the European nations along with Mexico, Japan, and a number of countries in the Caribbean basin. However, without someone within the War Department to assist them, they lacked any professional guidance on what type of information the Army actually wanted collected. A member of the General Staff later acknowledged the consequences: "the collecting, digesting, and filing of military information of foreign countries . . . appears never to have been carried on continuously," and the "work of attachés is without proper supervision and guidance, and therefore to a large extent, the value of their work is lost."<sup>6</sup>

As far as any intelligence effort in the field on the eve of the Great War in 1914, the Army possessed only the Military Information Division in the Philippines, where for 15 years it had gathered information on local guerrillas, managed informers, and created maps. Besides monitoring the activities of potential Filipino insurgents, the small intelligence element helped to expose the occasional attempts by the Japanese to conduct espionage in hope of fomenting unrest within the islands. The Philippines also served as a staging area for several trips by officers traveling incognito to China to map railroads and other lines of communications. Interest in China had grown since the European powers, Japan, and the United States had acquired a commercial stake in the country and had deployed an international force to quell an anti-foreigner rebellion on the part of the Chinese.<sup>7</sup>

Elsewhere within the Pacific region, Army Lieutenant A. Seone and Commander Joseph Thompson of the US Navy Medical Service conducted a two-year reconnaissance of Japanese fortifications and coastal facilities while disguised as South African naturalists, which gave them cover as they traveled about to collect specimens for their research. Finally, the Army began language classes in both Japan and China for a handful of officers on a rotating basis. Ironically, on the eve of war in Europe, the Army's limited collection efforts were in the Pacific, and in the eyes of its handful of intelligence officers, Japan posed the greatest threat to US interests.<sup>8</sup>

## THE SIGNAL CORPS

The US Army also possessed a second intelligence player—the Signal Corps, begun in 1860 under the able leadership of General Albert J. Myer. As a

medical doctor, Myer had first acquired an interest in communications when he created a sign language for the deaf. In the Army, Myer developed a wig-wag system that employed flags and torches during the Civil War to relay messages in a timely fashion from high atop towers and elevated platforms. Using their telescopes, Signal Corps personnel also possessed an extended view of the landscape. While stationed on a mountain, Signal Corps personnel had first warned of General Robert E. Lee's army crossing the Potomac River and advancing into Maryland during the Gettysburg campaign. The Confederate Signal Corps took its mission a step further by reasoning that all collected information required transmission, and thus intelligence should logically fall under its control. Consequently, the Confederate Signal Corps not only carried out its day-to-day communications responsibilities but also ran the South's spy nets inside the Union capital of Washington, D.C. In the 1890s, the Army Signal Corps, which by then called itself the Service of Information, would dust off the same argument in an unsuccessful bid to bring the Military Information Division under its direct control.<sup>9</sup>

Balloons had seen limited action in both the Civil and Spanish-American Wars. Consequently, as the Signal Corps entered the 20th century, its leadership maintained an interest in, but not a commitment to, the use of balloons for the purposes of observation and command and control of troops in the field. In 1907, the environment began to change under the new chief Signal officer, Brigadier General James Allen and his assistant, Major George O. Squier, who had the distinction of holding a doctorate in engineering from Johns Hopkins University and was already considered a pioneer in electrical communications. On his own, Squier began to study aeronautics and followed the progress of the Wright brothers and their heavier-than-air flying machine. In August, General Allen named Squier chief of the newly created Aeronautical Division with the mission of all matters pertaining to military ballooning, air machines, and kindred subjects. Four months later, the Army solicited bids for a two-passenger craft that could fly at least 40 miles per hour in a sustained flight. Because the Signal Corps did not possess sufficient funds to sponsor the trials, the Board of Ordnance and Fortification agreed to provide the necessary funds.

On September 3, 1908, Orville Wright and his aircraft arrived at Fort Myer, Virginia, just across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., to undertake the first flight from a military installation, achieving several new records in the process, but on September 17, disaster struck shortly after takeoff with Wright at the controls and Lieutenant Thomas Selfridge as a passenger. (Selfridge was chosen for the initial tests because he and fellow officer Benjamin Foulois had already piloted cigar-shaped balloons with motors.) One of the two pusher propellers split, cutting a guy-wire that collapsed the rudder,

causing the aircraft to plummet to the ground. Wright was seriously injured and Selfridge lay dying—the first air pioneer to make the supreme sacrifice; the historical marker would read “in an effort to aid man's endeavor to fly.”

The tragedy would fail to deter the Army in its quest for an airplane, and almost a year later in July 1909, the Wright brothers returned to complete a round trip between Fort Myer and Shooters Hill (now the site of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial) overlooking the city of Alexandria while maintaining a speed of 42 miles an hour. To mark Shooters Hill, the Signal Corps inflated one of its stored balloons and tethered it to an unmanned pylon. First Lieutenant Benjamin Foulois was the lone passenger on the flight, and President William Howard Taft was among the crowd on hand to witness the historic event. On July 30, 1909, the Army awarded the Wright brothers a \$30,000 contract to provide an aircraft and to train a handful of pilots.<sup>10</sup>

Lieutenant Foulois was not among those who received training from Wright, but he would be the one sent with the 40-horsepower aircraft to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, with the following instructions: “Take plenty of spare parts, and teach yourself to fly.”<sup>11</sup> Given only \$300 in congressional funding, Foulois soon had to dip into his own pocket to finance maintenance and employed a local blacksmith to forge parts; following several crashes, the lieutenant decided it was in his best interest to install the first seatbelt made from a saddle strap. Still, these early steps by Foulois and his enlisted assistants, known locally as the “crazy birdmen,” were considered crucial ones. In 1911, Major H. A. Erickson interested the Army leadership in combining photography with the airplane when he submitted superb aerial photos of the San Diego area. The same year, other milestones were achieved, for instance, night flying and the development of a more powerful scout plane (Wright Type C) that contained room for an observer along with wireless and photographic equipment.

The years 1912 and 1913 were equally important ones in the early history of Army aviation. Congress allotted an appropriation of \$125,000 for the purchase of five new aircraft and the formation of an aero company at Fort Sam Houston. For the first time, the War Department established the designation of aviator with performance standards as well as an increase in pay. In 1913, the aero company would evolve into the 1st Aero Squadron (Provisional), which, on paper, consisted of 20 officers and 90 enlisted men. An Army pilot and his observer also completed a cross-country flight from Texas City to San Antonio 200 miles away, establishing a new two-man record, but more importantly for intelligence purposes, on the return flight the observer made a sketch map that measured 18 feet in length, reinforcing the aircraft's potential value as a reconnaissance platform.<sup>12</sup>

Although not as dramatic as the aircraft, the Signal Corp experienced advances in communications, most notably the coming of the wireless that held long-term implications for intelligence. Known initially as the wireless telegraph, the system allowed for the transmission of Morse code by electromagnetic waves rather than wires. The discharge of a spark across a gap caused by the pressing of a telegraph key generated the electromagnetic waves that relayed the message. The Signal Corps first used the wireless in 1906 during military operations involving US Army troops in Cuba. However, dissipation of energy over the broadband limited how far signals could travel. Further advances in continuous wave technology coupled with the invention of the vacuum tube were necessary before wireless telegraphy would evolve into radiotelephony.<sup>13</sup>

Although private inventors and the Navy led the way, the Signal Corps proved adept at repackaging emerging technologies for military uses. Yet at no time did the Signal Corps give thought to future exploitation of these emerging technologies for intelligence purposes, despite the fact that during both the Civil and Spanish–American Wars, Army personnel had gained important information through the use of wiretapping of telegraph lines. The hasty deployment of elements of the Army’s V Corps to Cuba during the Spanish–American War had been attributed to a Signal Corps wiretap of a cable from Spain relaying news that its main fleet had been dispatched to the port of Santiago de Cuba.<sup>14</sup>

If the Signal Corps lagged behind in new technologies, one could sympathize and attribute it to the absence of congressional funding; but the Signal Corps’ lack of progress in the area of cryptology, the study of making and breaking codes, was less understandable as it was at the very heart of the branch’s mission—communications. Perhaps one reason for the inattention was that cryptology had been historically associated with diplomacy rather than military affairs. Just prior to World War I, the Signal Corps had at its disposal the War Department Telegraph Code, a bulky code designed primarily to save telegraph charges, not to safeguard messages. Because of its administrative nature, the Telegraph Code did not possess the necessary vocabulary for use under actual combat conditions, but it did have a substitution table of encipherment to pass classified messages. Unfortunately, too often communicators employed their own homemade systems—an additive or subtractive method—in an attempt to garble sensitive communiqués. For instance, during the Spanish–American War, signal personnel simply used the number of the year 1898. For nonheadquarters elements in the field, the Signal Corps devised a handheld, celluloid device called the Army Cipher Disk, based on the simple principle of mono-alphabetic substitution. The concept was more than 400 years old, and the disk itself resembled one used by the Confederate

Army during the Civil War. Realistically, it offered about the same degree of security as toy secret rings later found in cereal boxes. The failure of the Signal Corps to protect communications had left the Army’s secrets open for all to read.<sup>15</sup>

## WAR IN EUROPE

Events had transpired long before 1914 to set the stage for conflict in Europe and to make the forthcoming war appear inevitable. Germany had embarked on a total armament program under Kaiser Wilhelm II, whose saber rattling and martial strutting would have been comical if the consequences were not so dire. France, with the continent’s second largest army, still remembered its bitter loss to Germany in 1870 that had given rise to the Third Republic. The spark that finally lit the powder keg of Europe occurred at just before 11:00 A.M. on June 28, 1914, in the streets of Sarajevo in Bosnia, a southern province of Austria. Gavrilo Princip, a member of a secret society called the Black Hand, fired into the open car, killing the visiting Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir apparent of the Austro–Hungarian Empire, and his beloved wife, Sophie—all for the cause of a greater Serbia. In the aftermath of the assassination, failure of Europe’s diplomats to avert war, flawed strategies embraced by its military leaders, and a series of entangling alliances would soon bring the powers of Germany, France, Russia, and Great Britain into the conflict.

Halfway around the world, President Woodrow Wilson responded by embracing America’s long-standing policy of keeping out of Europe’s wars. Wilson proclaimed, “Force will not accomplish anything that is permanent, I venture to say, in the great struggle which is now going on, on the other side of the sea,” and he went on to urge that Americans remain neutral in thought as well as deed. The problem for Wilson was that United States could not or would not enforce its neutrality. In theory, Americans should have been able to trade equally with all belligerents, but the British proceeded to announce the whole of the North Sea be considered a military area and that all ships must consequently first stop in Dover for sailing directions through the minefields. This pronouncement flew in the face of international law that placed the North Sea outside of territorial waters, plus the fact that the British list of what was contraband continued to grow until it conveniently excluded all items even remotely of value to the Central Powers. From 1914 to 1916, American exports to France and Great Britain rose from \$750 million to \$2.5 billion; at the same time, they would drop from \$345 million to \$2 million for the Central Powers. Germany, which was not a sea power, proceeded to launch U-boats to counter the blockade and reduce the delivery of materiel

of divisions ready for immediate deployment, Germany most likely would not have been as quick to choose war. Two days later, President Woodrow Wilson responded to Germany's decision by severing diplomatic relations and announcing the arming of America's merchant ships.

The sinking of the Cunard liner *Laconia* along with an American steamer and three freighters in a month's time made war inevitable. To compound America's grievances, the White House received word from the British that it had decoded a diplomatic telegram from the German foreign secretary, Arthur Zimmermann, to his country's representative in Mexico. For more than a year, British cryptanalysts had labored within Room 40 inside the Old Admiralty Building in London to read the German-to-Mexico link; this had led to the breaking of a coded message that contained an enticement to the Mexican government to join in war against the United States, with the promise that it might reoccupy the lost territories of New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. To add insult to injury, Germany had transmitted its diplomatic messages by using US diplomatic channels in Berlin or via a wireless station at Sayville, Long Island—a courtesy the White House had extended when hostilities first broke out in Europe. President Wilson's response to Germany came at 8:30 on the evening of April 2 when he delivered his war speech to Congress; only one phrase would be remembered: "The world must be made safe for democracy." Four days later, congressional members overwhelmingly passed a joint resolution declaring hostilities against the Central Powers.

Among the military intelligence personnel affected by the prospects of war were those attachés within nations belonging to the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Turkish Empire). In January, the War Department directed Captain Richard H. Williams, a coast artillery officer, to return home at once. Williams had been the only foreign attaché to be assigned to the Turkish Army during the ill-fated Gallipoli Campaign by the British; later he accompanied the Bulgarian and German armies in their offensive against the Rumanian-Russian forces. Consequently, the German government had no intention of letting Williams go so that he could use his knowledge against them in the forthcoming war. The Germans first required that he go back to the United States via Berlin, where for eight days Williams told of being subject to everything but an x-ray to ensure authorities that he carried no sensitive documents with him.<sup>2</sup>

German authorities finally granted Captain Williams permission to depart, but by this time it was the 11th hour and hostilities were now at hand. The Danish ship bearing Williams to Sweden had no more than left the harbor in Copenhagen when word was received that Germany and the United States were officially at war. German authorities immediately dispatched a ship to intercept the transport and take Williams into custody. Somehow, the US

officer was able to elude the search party; from Sweden he traveled through Norway and Iceland before arriving back in the United States. Having evaded detention, Williams appropriately received from his friends the new nickname of "Houdini," after the famous escape artist.

### MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SECTION

Following the declaration of war by the United States, the governments of Great Britain and France began sending delegations to the United States to coordinate its future role in the war. Among the first to arrive were Allied intelligence officers. Naturally, Army officials directed these representatives to the War College, where only courtesies were exchanged, as there was no active intelligence organization with which to hold talks. With the blessing of General Kuhn, Captain Ralph Van Deman went to see the chief of staff in person on several occasions in an attempt to persuade him of the necessity for a separate military intelligence department. Because America's new allies possessed extensive intelligence organizations, Van Deman reasoned that it was only logical that the US Army would want to follow suit; however, General Hugh L. Scott assumed the stance that should the Army need intelligence in the future, all that would be required was simply to ask the British and French for the desired information. Van Deman paraphrased Scott's thinking: "Here, we are now ready for service—we would be pleased if you hand over to us all the necessary information concerning the enemy which your intelligence services have obtained."<sup>3</sup> For good reason, General Scott had never been known as a visionary; former President William Howard Taft once describing the general's mental processes as "wooden to the middle of the head." However, Van Deman did not believe Scott's lack of appreciation of intelligence to be unique but one probably shared by a majority of US generals.

Besides turning a deaf ear, the chief of staff also specifically forbade Van Deman from approaching the secretary of war. Regardless of the consequences, Van Deman remained resolved to see the matter through, even if he had to use an envoy. The first person whom Van Deman confided in was "one of the best known and respected women novelists of the United States." Edith Wharton, author of such classics as *Ethan Frome* and *The Age of Innocence*, is the most likely candidate for the unnamed lady.<sup>4</sup> Wharton had been a longtime champion of the American Volunteer Ambulance Corps in France; more importantly, she had a friend in British intelligence and would have been fully aware of the crucial role it was playing in the war. Van Deman first met Wharton while escorting her on an inspection tour of nearby

military installations at the request of Secretary of War Newton D. Baker. Wharton had undertaken similar visits to Allied camps at the behest of French generals during her frequent visits overseas. Understandably, Van Deman's new confidante expressed dismay that the US Army should lack an intelligence organization of its own and readily agreed to take up the matter with the secretary at the earliest possible opportunity. As insurance, Van Deman also availed himself of a second messenger—a longtime acquaintance—the superintendent of the district police, Raymond Pullman, who happened to eat breakfast every morning at the same club as Secretary Baker.

On April 30, the president of the War College received the anxiously awaited phone call ordering Captain Van Deman to report at once to the secretary of war. For the next half-hour, Van Deman described in as much detail as time allowed the role being played by Allied intelligence and the problem that the lack of an American counterpart posed. At the end of the briefing, Secretary Baker advised Van Deman that he should expect orders within 48 hours, assigning him the task of establishing an intelligence organization. This was somewhat out of character for Baker, as he tended not to interfere in military matters. On May 3, the Army War College responded to the secretary's directive by creating the Military Intelligence Section (MIS), which no longer would employ the term *information* but instead adopted the term *intelligence* in keeping with the British tradition. Its mission would be "the supervision and control of such system of military espionage and counterespionage as shall be established . . . during the continuation of the present war."<sup>5</sup> Not only would Van Deman be given the task of organizing the branch, but being the only person immediately available with any knowledge whatsoever of military intelligence organizations and their activities, he would also serve as its first head. Van Deman soon rose to the rank of colonel, but having crossed the chief of staff, he would witness his promotion to general officer temporarily scuttled.

Whether by design or accident, the War College, not the War Department, prepared the order that created the MIS. This would undercut the MIS's authority because it allowed Van Deman no direct access to the chief of staff and left the MIS without any leverage when dealing with other members of the staff, thus delaying responses for assistance and cooperation. Van Deman's immediate supervisors sympathized with the situation and attempted to redress the matter on several occasions—General Joseph Kuhn with General Scott and later Colonel P. D. Lockridge with Scott's replacement, Major General Tasker H. Bliss—each time without success. In his refusal to approve the recommended changes, Chief of Staff Bliss did serve notice that Van Deman should notify him of potential problem areas. Van Deman resolved to take full advantage of this offer. Among other things, he pointed out to the chief

of staff that the MIS possessed no authority to implement security practices. For instance, the MIS staff had learned that certain suspicious persons were requesting copies of the "Army List and Directory," a monthly publication containing the name, rank, and address of every officer in the Army coupled with information on various organizations, their missions, and locations, but the adjutant general vigorously resisted MIS's recommendation that it suspend the issuing of the publication until the end of the war. In this particular instance, the opposition would become less and less defensible, and eventually, Major General Henry P. McCain, the adjutant general, acceded to MIS's wishes.

In setting up the MIS, Van Deman turned to Allied counterparts for their advice and assistance—in particular, Lieutenant Colonel C. E. Dancey of the British Military Mission. Subsequently, Van Deman chose to structure his organization after the British model because the French employed a separate civilian agency for portions of its counterintelligence mission; this coupled with the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) having already selected the British system as their blueprint. As a starting place, Van Deman utilized the mission statement contained within the general order that organized the MIS; for the internal structure, he relied heavily on the British model, which called for the creation of functional subsections as needs arose and resources became available. Consequently, some missions existed in embryonic form within another section long before they became separate entities. For instance, military attachés played an important role from the beginning and contributed to various mission areas, but MI-5 (Military Attachés) would not officially come into existence until March 1918.

By the end of 1917, the MIS possessed the following structure: MI-1 Administration (Personnel and Office Management); MI-2 Collection and Dissemination of Foreign Intelligence; MI-3 Counterespionage (Military); MI-4 Counterespionage (Civilian Sector); and MI-8 Cable and Telegraph (Making and Breaking of Codes). During the course of the war, military intelligence used the French term *counterespionage* and a British term *negative intelligence* interchangeably to represent the discipline of counterintelligence, the craft of keeping one's secrets from foreign intelligence services.

The MIS began with only two enlisted soldiers and a handful of civilians—so small a staff that it was located in an office overlooking the War College library. Given permission to select his own assistants, Van Deman chose Captain Alexander Coxe, who had served with him in the Philippines and China, and Major A. P. Ahern, recently retired from the War College. Any success enjoyed by the MIS could in part be attributable to their administrative skills. At the height of its existence, the MIS would never have more than six regular officers assigned. This left the MIS hunting for individuals who possessed a

specific area of expertise from the civilian sector, commissioning them in either the National Army or Officers Reserve Corps, and then permitting them to select their own staff; in this manner, they were more likely knowledgeable of others who were qualified in their respective field. Initially, most received commissions in the Signal Corps because there were numerous unused billets in its Aviation Section, but over time, the MIS turned to any and all branches that held available slots.<sup>6</sup>

This informal approach worked for the most part but occasionally had its glitches. For instance, when several new officers reported to the War Department—one a Rhodes scholar, the second a former embassy official, and the third a recognized world traveler—there was initial confusion on how to utilize such qualified individuals. Consequently, the receiving office temporarily put them to work filing documents. In time, someone in the chain of command suspected there might be a mistake, so he began checking around and soon discovered that Van Deman had been eagerly awaiting their arrival. In another instance, Van Deman personally chose the prominent New York attorney Nicholas Biddle to be in charge of his city's MIS office—a logical choice due to Biddle having served as special commissioner to the NYC Police Department. When his paperwork finally showed up at the War Department, none of the approving officials had an inkling why an applicant with his credentials would want to become an officer in the Signal Corps and nearly turned him down. It took the intervention by future Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, who happened to be working in the War Department and was Van Deman's close friend, to resolve the issue. Despite the occasional hiccup, nearly 300 officers were slowly but steadily added over the next year and half to the MIS staff. By the war's end, the MIS would secure the services of 1,200 civilians (excluding the personnel working at the MIS branch offices). Beside clerks and typists, the civilian force included investigators, a guard force, and various maintenance personnel. Budget-wise, the MIS received well over \$1 million for expenditure in fiscal year 1918 alone.<sup>7</sup>

The need to obtain information from those already involved in the intelligence war was high on the agenda of the new MIS. Naturally, the MIS began with agencies that had similar missions, such as the domestic branch of the Office of Naval Intelligence and the Bureau of Investigation within the Justice Department, both with a piece of the counterintelligence pie. Eight years earlier, the attorney general had created the Bureau of Investigation to assist in the investigation of corruption and other violations of federal law, but in late 1916, he had assigned the agency several hundred additional agents to keep watch on German sympathizers. Consequently, upon declaration of war, the bureau moved quickly to arrest a number of the more militant suspects. The *Literary Digest* reported that during the last week of September 1917

alone some 90 persons were arrested or interned. On the other hand, the navy did not organize its domestic branch until May 1917, and like the MIS, would be starting from scratch. A third player with whom the MIS exchanged liaison officers from the beginning was the State Department, because it too shared a need for foreign intelligence. Besides conducting formal liaisons, MIS personnel soon began informal contacts at the working level.

As the need arose, MIS staff members established communications with various counterparts within the Departments of Justice, Treasury, Interior, and Commerce. Interestingly, the secretary of treasury specifically forbade his Secret Service, which protected the president, ferreted out counterfeiters, and exposed land fraud, from coordinating with the MIS. Despite the prohibition, the head of the Secret Service still acknowledged the requirement to be informally in touch. As the nation mobilized, the MIS soon added wartime agencies such as the Food Administration, Committee on Public Information, War Trade Board, War Industries Board, National Research Council, and Censorship Bureau to its list. The MIS also conferred with numerous Allied missions on the home front as well as intelligence agencies abroad on a case-by-case basis. By the war's end, the MIS had 21 officers who were devoted full time to liaison work and were routinely in touch with 16 Army staff elements and departments plus 28 other military and civilian agencies.

### THE BIGGER PICTURE

The War Department was responsible for procuring and training the personnel to fill the intelligence officer positions at home and overseas. Unfortunately, the MIS lacked sufficient manpower as well as authority to select personnel on its own or even to determine the qualification guidelines. In July, the adjutant general directed departmental commanders to name 160 men to undergo officer training for intelligence assignments, using the following broad instructions to guide their selection process: "a young college instructor with language ability." As demonstrated in at least one case, it was fairly easy to circumvent the system. Asked if he knew French, a future intelligence officer later confessed that he had a ready reply, "Well, Sir, I made a great many trips to Paris and never had any difficulty getting around." Little did the approving officer suspect that this supposed "command of the French language consisted primarily in telling the taxi drivers to take me either to the railroad terminal at Gare du Nord or to the Moulin Rouge."<sup>8</sup>

One responsibility that the MIS did handle concerned the applications for the new Corps of Interpreters, which was established on July 4 with an initial allotment of 58 officers and 72 sergeants. Intelligence took over the

To assist them, the regional MIS had a thousand-member Volunteer Intelligence Corps, composed of civilians who possessed their own badges and credentials. In one instance, Army counterintelligence infiltrated the IWW by using one of its agents disguised as a laborer; over time the undercover operator was able to gain access to some of the inner councils. During the coming months, the Army worked closely with the Justice Department, which would eventually prosecute more than 100 members of the labor movement.

### THE ADVENT OF YARDLEY

In an extremely shortsighted use of its personnel, the Army did not assign its most accomplished cryptologists, Captain Parker Hitt and Major Joseph Mauborgne, to positions where their unique skills could be utilized. Like Hitt, Major Mauborgne had prepared a number of insightful articles on code breaking, including solving the British Playfair field cipher. Ironically, both officers would conceive of cipher devices that, if they had been developed, could have greatly aided in securing US combat communications.

At the outbreak of hostilities, the War Department received numerous letters from amateur cryptologists offering their services. One came from a George Fabyan, who would present the Army with a unique opportunity. Fabyan was an eccentric philanthropist who had established a think-tank called Riverbank in Geneva, Illinois, just west of Chicago. Among his odd mannerisms was the suspending of furniture from the ceiling by chains and purchasing unclaimed freight and luggage that he proceeded to examine with a childlike curiosity. Fabyan's eclectic interests were also reflected in the facilities of Riverbank itself, a working farm but with a tea garden, zoo, and Dutch windmill. Riverbank served as a home to scholars who received free rein to study a variety of Fabyan's pet subjects, among them cryptology, because Fabyan believed that a code was contained in Shakespeare's plays that would reveal who the real author was. There is little evidence that anyone on his staff actually shared Fabyan's theory, but Riverbank opened up for several of them a completely new world of codes and ciphers to which they would eventually dedicate their lives. Riverbank cryptologists included William F. Friedman, who was Russian by birth and a graduate of Cornell University where he had studied genetics; his wife, Elizabeth Smith Friedman, was a student of literature; and J. A. Powell, former director of the University of Chicago Press.<sup>27</sup> On behest of the Signal Corps, Major Mauborgne journeyed to Riverbank to witness Fabyan's operations firsthand; following his visit, Mauborgne quickly wrote back to the War Department that it should take immediate advantage of Fabyan's offer to decipher captured messages.

But all the plans for Riverbank proved premature and did not factor in the arrival of 28-year-old Herbert O. Yardley. Born in a small town in Indiana, Yardley followed in the footsteps of his father, a railroad telegraph operator, and moved to Washington, D.C., in 1912 to work for the State Department as a clerk and telegrapher in its code room. Yardley had demonstrated from an early age that he was too bright and too ambitious to remain in his current position forever. While on night shifts with little to do, he busied himself by studying how the department's codes were constructed, among them a 500-word message between President Wilson and his closest advisor and confidant Colonel (honorary) Edward M. House. Finding US codes too simple, he turned next to more challenging foreign samples: "I knew most of the telegraph operators in Washington, and got some of them to steal a few coded diplomatic messages of various governments; these I practiced on."<sup>28</sup> Each success reinforced in Yardley's mind the obvious—he was gifted and he had found his calling as a cryptologist. His first major accomplishment was to prepare a 100-page paper that would lead the State Department to adopt a new method of encoding its messages.

With the announcement of war, Yardley took his crusade for greater utilization of cryptology to the War Department and eventually found himself face-to-face with Van Deman. Although Yardley remembered the small office and staff as being anything but impressive, he was in awe of Van Deman, whom he described as being Lincoln-like in appearance with a "heavy-lined face" and "deep eyes." Yardley proceeded to remind Van Deman that all of Europe's Great Powers possessed large and established staffs to read foreign codes and that "it was immaterial to America whether I or someone else formed such a bureau, but such a bureau must begin to function, and at once. . . . How except by reading the secret messages of foreign governments was she to learn the truth?" Yardley concluded by arguing that the German army was using wireless transmissions in code to direct the movement of their ground forces. "These messages must be intercepted. Who would attempt to solve them? General Pershing would demand a cryptographic service in France. Who would train cryptographers for this venture?" Van Deman responded to the questions by saying that he liked Yardley's confidence well enough but not his age. However, in the end Van Deman set aside any misgivings and told Yardley to report for duty on Monday morning.<sup>29</sup>

While establishing the American Cryptographic Bureau, Captain Yardley sought knowledgeable personnel to staff the effort.<sup>30</sup> Yardley first called on the Allies to send help but received only silence in return. His next step proved a crucial one—the offering of a commission to John M. Manly, a quiet-spoken scholar, who headed the English Department at the University of Chicago, and was destined to become a leading authority on Chaucer.

Regarded as an expert on literary ciphers, Manly had also routinely corresponded with the Riverbank staff. As a rule, Yardley, who had only briefly attended college, looked down on academics because in his thinking many of them did not possess the unique gift of “cipher brains.” Regardless, Manly would soon become Yardley’s closest associate and would bring along former colleagues and university staff who helped to fill out the cryptologic organization.<sup>31</sup> Yardley initially planned to divide the effort. In this arrangement, he was to attack enemy codes while Manly focused on ciphers. (Codes were groups of letters and numbers that represented words or terms; ciphers usually substituted letters for an equal amount of plain text.)

America had no more than entered the conflict when the War Department learned it had far more to worry about than the threat posed by spies and sabotage. The British informed the assistant secretary of state that the confidential communications being transmitted to Europe and General Pershing lacked protection. The Germans were reading the United States mail by laying induction wires several hundred feet alongside the transatlantic cable so that telegraph operators onboard U-boats could copy the messages; this was probably why the Germans decided not to sever the cables.<sup>32</sup> A Signal Corps officer would confirm the Allies’ suspicions by duplicating the German system. The Germans also possessed a photographed copy of the War Department’s telegraph codebook. Apparently, one had been lost or stolen in 1916 during the Punitive Expedition to Mexico, but it was a moot point due to the code being subject to cryptanalytic attack anyway.

Instead of turning to the Signal Corps for answers, the War Department handed the problem off to its newest member—the Military Intelligence Service—to solve. Perhaps the culmination of these daily challenges was the reason that someone described Van Deman as looking “old and terribly tired,” but in this particular instance, Van Deman could turn to Yardley to provide the answer. In response to the problem, Yardley brought on board a former member of the State Department’s code room—Altus E. Prince—and provided him with 10 clerks. The subsection quickly set out to prepare codes, ciphers, and tables for use in safeguarding communications between the War Department and the American Expeditionary Forces in France. It would take almost a year before Prince could actually produce altogether new codebooks, but in the interim, his staff created replacement tables every two weeks for the existing Telegraph Code of 1915 to secure the sending of secret messages. One of the unexpected consequences of the American Cryptographic Bureau assuming this mission was that at least on the home front, the Signal Corps had relinquished its traditional role of making and breaking codes.<sup>33</sup>

Security concerns led Yardley to establish a separate communications center for sensitive mail instead of using the facilities of the adjutant general.

Open 24 hours, the center transmitted nearly 100 messages over the course of an average day, and the center possessed the capacity of dispatching messages to Paris within 30 minutes. More importantly, this process ensured the careful handling of all classified information; during one nine-month stretch, 25,000 messages were sent and received, half plain and half code. Special emphasis was placed on highly sensitive communiqués prepared by the Department of Ordnance and transmittals directed to bureaus overseas, to 40 military attachés worldwide, and to hundreds of intelligence officers scattered across the continental United States.<sup>34</sup>

Although Riverbank failed to become the great code-breaking agency originally anticipated, its resources and facilities did provide the Army with an immediate answer for training cryptologic officers. As a first step, Riverbank dispatched Powell to the Signal Corps School to learn what was presently being taught on the subject. By October, Riverbank had created a curriculum for a two-month course. Besides offering instruction, Riverbank began to prepare professional pamphlets on various aspects of cryptology; the studies reflected a scholarly approach to the subject. Publications, such as *A Method of Reconstructing the Primary Alphabet from a Single One of the Series of Secondary Alphabets*, did not impress Yardley, who was quick to point out that his staff had already exceeded such work. Yardley even commented that he believed one of the documents was a deliberate steal. These types of remarks reflected a growing tension behind the scenes between Yardley, who desired complete control of the cryptologic mission, and Fabyan, who continued to demand a visible role.<sup>35</sup>

Yardley soon became a court of last resort; mysteries that defied solution elsewhere within the MIS made their way to his desk. Perhaps the most bizarre case involved a dead carrier pigeon delivered by a member of the Department of Justice who wanted to know if its perforated feathers carried a hidden message; but it did not take Yardley long to determine that lice, not enemy agents, were the real culprits. A second more credible challenge came from the Department of Justice with an attached note that concerned a message intercepted from a German prisoner at an Army base. Yardley quickly recognized it for what it was—shorthand—but at the time, over a hundred different styles were being practiced throughout the world. He immediately left for the Library of Congress where he learned that the most commonly used system in Germany was the Gabelsberger; librarians also produced a 20-year-old magazine article on the subject that included testimonies from various individuals living in America who had studied the shorthand system in question. In a stroke of good fortune, several of the people listed just happened to reside in Washington, D.C., and one worked for the library itself. That same night, Yardley and the acquired expert burned the midnight oil to

translate the message that revealed the prisoner's escape plan. Because the shorthand expert was himself a German American, Yardley took the added precaution of having a copy sent to another expert in New York for a second transcription.<sup>36</sup>

Word quickly spread to the Department of Justice and various censorship offices to send all letters in shorthand to Yardley's organization. As a result, a completely new subsection was formed along with enough experts to read over 30 different styles. Placed in charge of the operation, Franklin W. Allen, a partner in a prestigious law firm in Manhattan, freely donated his services and generously dipped into his own pocket to pay for supplies; furthermore, the shorthand operation was run out of his former law office. Besides reading messages, Allen's staff assembled a bibliography on shorthand systems as well as created a list of specialists living in America who could decipher numerous rare foreign systems. When some of the shorthand documents turned out to be simply Yiddish or Arabic, the staff turned these over to translators assigned to the MIS. When no specialist was available to solve a particular style of shorthand, Allen and his assistants attacked the problem as if it were a cryptogram. Finally, the section was responsible for training 15 shorthand specialists for the AEF, where they would be given the assignment of transcribing interrogations of high-ranking prisoners of war.

Not all cases that came Yardley's way were as easily solved as shorthand. For instance, an individual who had been a reluctant recruit by German intelligence entered the United States to spy but instead turned himself in. Having brought with him shoestrings and handkerchiefs impregnated with a secret ink, he eventually wound up in the office of the MIS and ultimately at Yardley's desk. Unfortunately, there was no one who could discover the reagent needed to expose the hidden ink, not even America's preeminent chemist and its first Nobel Prize winner in the field, Theodore W. Richards of Harvard.

A second opportunity at deciphering hidden writing soon presented itself. A search of a woman suspect who was caught while crossing the Mexican-US border revealed what appeared to be a blank piece of paper hidden in her shoe. When he received the note, Yardley immediately suspected that it contained some type of secret ink, and he surmised that given the background of the individual and the place where authorities apprehended her, a chemical reagent might not be necessary. Yardley called for a chemist from the National Research Council to supply any available equipment that could apply heat to paper. Using this makeshift laboratory set up in the basement, Yardley's people were quickly able to read the message written in Greek and intended for German agents. It also marked the beginning of another subsection—secret inks. By December, the American Cryptographic Bureau

no longer seemed an appropriate designation for an element involved in such matters as shorthand and secret inks so the MIS changed the name to MI-8.<sup>37</sup>

Yardley used the outcome of this one secret-ink case to improve the capabilities of his new subsection. By attaching Van Deman's signature to a cable, Yardley placed a request to Great Britain for professional assistance. Stanley W. Collins, England's foremost ink expert, soon arrived in the United States for the purpose of instructing Americans in the hither-to unknown world of secret writing. Unfortunately, MI-8 was only able to acquire the services of a couple of qualified chemists and would be forced to depend mostly on motivated novices as trainees. During his first lecture, Collins made it clear that German chemists had rightly earned their reputation as the world's best, and that it was not just the secret inks themselves, but the sophisticated manner in which German intelligence used them, that would present the greater challenge.

## REPORTS AND MORE REPORTS

The MIS began to publish daily and weekly intelligence summaries for the chief of staff. From the beginning, the scope of the subject matter went far beyond military subjects to include an ambitious agenda—economic, agricultural, industrial, and social—all naturally weighted to events on the home front or within Mexico. Early editions contained articles on antiwar speakers at farm cooperatives in the Midwest, the presence of IWW laborers in the oil fields, German sympathizers within the Pierce-Arrow Motor Company, and the existence of various socialist groups and their propaganda efforts. Eventually, the number of sources for articles included the AEF, Office of Naval Intelligence, and State and Justice Departments. For foreign news, the summaries were dependent on attachés but also frequently drew from newspaper clippings (foreign and domestic) as well as handouts from the Allies.

The arrival of officers with journalistic and academic backgrounds soon dramatically improved the overall tenor and substance of the documents by furnishing insights not typically found in newspapers. Commenting on antiwar literature found within the black community, the editor offered the following explanation: "The Negroes at large, even among the better educated, are beginning to doubt whether their loyalty will be repaid, or whether they should not seize the opportunity offered, when the mass of our troops are engaged in a foreign war, to strike a blow for the full recognition of their rights."<sup>38</sup> On other occasions, writers referred readers to professional papers on a subject if they desired more information and perspective; for instance,

A helpful source for the Information Division was Major W. P. Cresson, who held a PhD and was best known before the war for having written a book on czarist Russia. Cresson was serving as the first secretary to the US legation to St. Petersburg when Colonel Nolan persuaded him to leave the post and accept a commission with the G2. Unfortunately, Nolan's plans for the major to serve as the resident expert on Russia proved to be premature because a need arose within the AEF for someone who was knowledgeable on European royalty. Subsequently, Chief of Staff Harbord directed that Cresson be reassigned to the Belgian general headquarters; upon learning of the reassignment, Nolan encouraged Cresson to play the role of diplomat, not soldier, and to communicate America's ongoing support to Belgium's leaders and their people. While in his new assignment, Cresson still continued to provide US intelligence with valuable insights concerning recent developments in Belgium.

Another useful party who furnished crucial, hard-to-obtain information was Morton Fullerton, a correspondent with the *London Times* who had lived in various European capitals and had written a foreign affairs book, *Problems of Power*, on the eve of the Great War. The handsome American, whose signature was his mustache, just happened to be the secret lover of Edith Wharton, the novelist. He informed Nolan of his desire to be of service, but Nolan, knowing Fullerton to be an individualist, wisely thought it better not to offer him a commission. Instead, Fullerton continued to work on his own using his various contacts with national leaders and members of the French cabinet.

Throughout the war, Fullerton would periodically drop by to pay the G2 a visit or send him a personal note. Although Fullerton found Nolan totally ignorant of the map of Europe, he never felt a need to speak down to the US officer; this was evidenced by Fullerton freely sharing his strongly held views on a wide variety of conversational subjects that ranged from dismembering Germany at the end of the war, to purging Europe of bolshevism, to expressing his strongly held belief that President Woodrow Wilson was totally naïve in his approach to the postwar world. Perhaps the most practical information he shared with Nolan came in the form of a heads-up when the Allies on several occasions planned to promote the amalgamation of US forces with theirs. Forewarned, Pershing was always prepared to counter such proposals.<sup>17</sup>

### A DOWNED AIRSHIP

An event occurred in October 1917 involving staff members of the Information Division that illustrated the potential role AEF intelligence could play in the larger war. The Germans had just launched their greatest Zeppelin raid

to date, dispatching 13 airships to bomb various British ports and industrial centers. On their return trip, they ran into a violent storm that blew five of the dirigibles over France, quickly becoming easy prey for Allied planes. Two of the Zeppelins came down 40 miles west of Chaumont. Local French citizens had captured one by keeping the German crew from destroying it. The other's control car from which the pilot steered the ship bounced up and down on the ground until finally entangling itself in a tree. Eventually, the airship freed itself and, along with its crew, continued on to the Mediterranean Sea where all members would be lost.

Most of the AEF officers at the GHQ had vacated Chaumont to observe the French launching an attack on Chemin des Dames; one of the few left behind was Major Richard Williams. Hearing of the crippled airships nearby, he immediately commandeered a staff car and, along with a British general attached to the GHQ, headed to where the Zeppelins had touched down. Upon learning from the French that no papers were found on the captured craft, Williams and his companion followed the visible trail of the second ship until they arrived at a marsh. Unwilling to abandon the search, Williams waded into the water with his characteristic doggedness; the first piece of evidence recovered was a fragment of a German map, giving Williams hope that he was on the right trail. He continued to explore the area, gathering more and more pieces of varying sizes—totaling 40 bags—with some coming from the control car itself that remained lodged in the tree.<sup>18</sup>

Back at Chaumont, Williams and another officer from the Information Division, Captain Hubbard, worked into the night piecing together the pieces until they formed a coded map that covered the North Sea, the Irish Sea, Skagerrak (an arm of the North Sea between Norway and Denmark), and Kattegat (a strait between southwest Sweden and Denmark); only the English Channel was missing. The next morning, the pair was surprised to find the second half of the puzzle delivered to their doorstep in the most unexpected manner. A young US officer at the GHQ was telling all who would listen about the most amazing souvenir he and a fellow officer had acquired. Unknown to Williams, the two officers had actually been first on the scene and had taken from the captured Zeppelin an album with photographs and information on all types of German naval vessels, aircraft, and lighter-than-air ships. It did not take Williams and Hubbard long to realize what they held in their hands—documents that contained the key to unlocking the entire German U-boat campaign.

Playing the role of courier, Captain Hubbard immediately set out for British GHQ to obtain the necessary clearance stamp. From there he received a five-member guard force to accompany him the rest of the way to London where he proceeded to deliver the documents to an aide of Vice Admiral

By establishing a liaison office with the APL, the MIB was able to make better use of the organization's resources, especially as it impacted the Army's counterintelligence mission. For instance, the APL helped to locate many of the 300,000 members of the armed services who deserted over the course of the war. The APL also provided assistance to the general war effort; the membership assumed responsibility for gathering maps, books, magazines, and reports to provide US fighting forces with an orientation of French geography and culture. After screening the printed material, the MIB had tons of the documents shipped off to the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF).

A second civilian-based mission that Van Deman saw as being essential to the security of the nation's war effort was the protection of various industries and their workforce against arson or sabotage as well as the safe shipment of finished goods to ports of embarkation. Edmund Leigh, who had held a similar position with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad prior to the war, was placed in charge of the Plant Production Service. Because the scope of the new Plant Protection Service, which consisted of 340 agents, touched on matters of concern to the Army, the MIB formed a separate unit within MI-4 to support Leigh and sent liaison personnel to each of his 14 district offices. The close relationship with the MIB was further facilitated by the Plant Protection Service being headquartered in a neighboring office within the Hooe Building in downtown Washington, D.C. Initially, Van Deman had proposed commissioning Leigh, in keeping with the precedent of the APL leadership, but Leigh told Van Deman that he believed he could work better as a civilian than he could as an officer in the Army.<sup>10</sup>

The Plant Protection Service covered 5,000 industries and provided information to 30,000 plants to aid them in upgrading their security, such as hiring guards and watchmen, implementing identification systems, and taking steps to prevent fires. The system that the Plant Protection Service adopted to ensure loyalty within the rank and file was reminiscent of the one being employed by Army counterintelligence. At each facility, a pyramid of trusted workers watched over their fellow employees and reported any suspicious on-the-job behavior or talk; agents of the Plant Protection Service then initiated a follow-up investigation to determine whether the individuals in question were agitators or honest employees. After the war, Van Deman labeled the Plant Protection Service's effort as "excellent" for having successfully investigated over 5,000 cases that had interrupted or delayed war production.

Colonel Dennis Nolan requested permission to assign counterintelligence personnel to neutral countries. In response, the secretary of war issued a statement that outright rejected such a proposal, citing the examples of the French and British whose attachés routinely performed counterespionage duties within Holland, Switzerland, and Denmark, which bordered the enemy

or enemy-controlled nations. In early 1918, the policy was modified, again to imitate the Allies. In the future, US attachés worldwide were to assist in identifying and arresting all persons who attempted to evade passport controls. Besides passengers traveling to and from the United States, crew members on ships faced special scrutiny because of their ability to carry contraband materials and secret messages. Military attachés were on particularly high alert in Cuba, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Mexico, and Argentina. Several nations within the group had a sizable segment of the population sympathetic to the German cause; others were anti-American and still bore bitter memories of the Spanish-American War or past US interventions in their country's affairs.<sup>11</sup>

One of the most notable counterintelligence cases handled by military attachés involved Walter Scheele, German saboteur extraordinaire. Following America's entry into the war, a major manhunt was unleashed for the person or persons responsible for the incendiary devices being placed aboard US cargo ships carrying goods and munitions to the Allies. Upon learning that several of his compatriots had been arrested, Scheele, who was described as being by nature a nervous person, fled to Cuba, where he immediately came under suspicion of local authorities; in turn, they alerted Captain Thomas F. Van Natta. The US military attaché subsequently arranged for the arrest of the German chemist and his transfer back to Washington, D.C. Fortunately, Scheele became a most cooperative prisoner by providing important data on German gases and chemicals. Agents also used information obtained from Scheele to notify the Corps of Intelligence Police serving within the AEF's rear zone so they could direct searches of incoming cargoes for incendiary devices. While demonstrating how one of his bombs worked in a secret US laboratory near West Point, New York, Scheele suffered severe wounds from an explosion; he would never fully recover and, a short time later, succumbed to pneumonia.<sup>12</sup>

The neutral nation of Switzerland was full of spies and counterspies from all the belligerents. Upon visiting the country, one senior US officer reported that he found it so "loaded with German, Austro-Hungarian and Turkish spies it was thought best that I keep quiet as possible."<sup>13</sup> But as long as they did not threaten the country's neutrality, local authorities tended to allow them to ply their trade. One German agent in particular would become a great menace to the Allies—his identity was unknown other than "the Master." He used contacts in the various banks to understand how Allied intelligence was spending their money and had members of his spy ring infiltrate local police departments. Elsewhere, the German ringleader used agents to pose as hotel chambermaids and railroad conductors and paid off customs inspectors who monitored the borders and telegraph operators who copied down important

cables. The Master often used disguises and occasionally donned the uniform of Swiss officials to extract important information directly from members of Allied delegations. Over time, the Master was credited with the compromise of more than 200 agents, among them 21 French spies living in Germany in the spring of 1918. In the words of one French intelligence officer, the Master did more harm than “half of their German generals.”

The US Army officer in Thomas Johnson’s book *Our Secret War* was not named, but he would play an important role in exposing the identity of the German spy chief. It all began in the city of Bern, where by chance the officer, most likely assigned to the US military mission, ran into a foreigner whose family he had befriended before the war. “Zero,” as he would become known, was actually a German officer who was working as a spy for the Master. He also confessed to his US friend that his brother, also an officer, had been accidentally shot by a prominent German official and his death covered up. The American would use this personal tragedy and Zero’s displeasure with the course that the German Empire was taking as the means to win his support in unmasking the Master.<sup>14</sup>

As it turned out the Master was none other than Captain Karl von Einem, who frequently traveled between Germany and Switzerland to care for interned soldiers and was well known by many local officials. Although von Einem was caught, he had over the months compromised many prominent Swiss officials and would find his way into an asylum instead of a prison. From there, he made an easy escape using a waiting car and motor boat. Allied intelligence would receive notice of his successful break by means of an intercepted telegram that read, “Arrived here safely last night.” On the positive side, 60 members of von Einem’s ring were rounded up. As far as Zero, the Americans helped him and his sister to flee to Italy to avoid retribution at the hands of German officials.

### COUNTERINTELLIGENCE IN ACTION

On the eve of World War II, a military intelligence officer was busily reconstituting a counterintelligence element within the Army to meet the emerging security challenges. As he looked back to World War I for perspective, one case stood out in his mind as representing the potential impact of Army counterintelligence; the investigation was also notable because it touched on several echelons of the intelligence system as well as various disciplines. Van Deman would simply label it “a most spectacular piece of work.”

Kurt Jahnke, a German-born naturalized US citizen and former Marine, was a seasoned veteran of the espionage business having teamed up with Lo-

thar Witzke in perhaps two of the more memorable acts of sabotage against the United States. On the East Coast, the pair had pulled off the destruction of the Black Tom terminal in New York harbor, and on the West Coast, they had orchestrated a similar attack on the Navy Yard at Mare Island near Vallejo, California. Knowing that he was a suspect in the Mare Island explosion, Jahnke boldly walked into the local offices of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) where he proceeded to offer his services as a counterspy to help apprehend the culprits. His actions so caught the authorities off guard that Jahnke would gain the necessary time to disappear south of the border.

When Jahnke arrived in Mexico City in 1917, he proceeded to appoint himself chief of what remained of Germany’s secret service. Soon thereafter, an informant relayed news to the MIB that Berlin had assigned one of their star agents, K. A. Jahnke of Mexico City—to promote mutiny in the US Army. This warning—coupled with the British having intercepted and decoded German communiqués that also named Jahnke and disclosed several of his plans—was enough to motivate the Allies to take preemptive action. The British employed William Graves, a black Canadian, who had once lived in the United States.

The intelligence officers of the Western Department launched a second operation on their own. At the border town of Nogales, Arizona, Captain Joel A. Lipscomb directed Special Agent Byron S. Butcher to recruit an informant who could report on the activities of potential German spies. His choice proved to be an excellent one—Paul Altendorf from Poland, who had studied medicine at the University of Krakow. After much time spent traveling throughout South America, Altendorf had taken a commission as a colonel under the Mexican military governor of the State of Sonora, which bordered Arizona. The final player was William Neunhoffer, a Texan by birth but with German parents. In real life, Neunhoffer was an attorney from San Antonio, but as a member of the Texas National Guard, he had helped to secure the border in response to Pancho Villa’s raid. The Justice Department had specifically recruited Neunhoffer because of his ability to speak both German and Spanish fluently and quickly dispatched its new agent to Mexico City under the guise of a draft dodger. None of the three Allied counterspies knew the identity of the others, and it is very unlikely that the parent organizations ever bothered to coordinate their operations in advance.

In November, Jahnke received the long-awaited marching orders from the fatherland by way of a Danish sea captain. In response, Jahnke laid out a very ambitious plan that included the bombing of the Panama Canal as well as various industrial and military targets within the western United States. For the latter assignment, Jahnke chose the one man whom he could depend on to pull it off—his former partner, but Witzke would not be going alone. Three

thin vapor of iodine. This vapor gradually settles into all the tiny crevices of the paper, all the tissues that had been disturbed by pen and water. Even to the naked eye there forms a clear outline of writing." No longer was it necessary to test one known reagent after another. Subsequently, MIB set up two laboratories—one within its Washington office to handle input from across the United States. Upon receiving his commission, Aloysius J. McGrail, a 27-year-old PhD in chemistry from nearby Catholic University, took charge of the effort.<sup>28</sup> The Army established its second secret-ink laboratory at the postal censorship office in Manhattan, where Emmett K. Carver, who possessed a PhD in chemistry from Harvard, was given oversight authority. Four women at the Manhattan office weekly treated an average of 2,000 suspicious letters with chemicals, but they would discover only 50 missives that contained possible secret writings. Among the group's successes was a letter signed "Maud" that possessed a number of cover addresses in several neutral countries along with instructions to target docks, war industries, and mercury mines. This resulted in the War Industries Board implementing tighter security measures within America's mercury industry.

The triumph of iodine vapor was short-lived; the German scientists once again assumed the lead by developing a means to trump the test. Finally, after hundreds of experiments, US chemists discovered the new method of concealment: "if a letter is written in secret ink, dried, dampened lightly by a brush dipped in distilled water, then dried again and pressed with an iron—secret ink cannot be developed by an iodine-vapor bath . . . because the dampening process disturbs all the fibers of the papers."<sup>29</sup> With this revelation, it appeared that a standoff had been reached; the Allies could not read German secret inks and vice versa. Somewhat by chance, scientists then discovered that by brushing strips of two different chemicals on a suspected letter, they would run together if secret ink were present. It was now only a matter of time before a second general reagent became available that could reveal all secrets. When it happened, Allied intelligence immediately put new safeguards into place.

### MORE REPORTS

Elsewhere, the MI-2 staff began to forward their daily and weekly summaries to the president and secretary of state. A new feature was the current order of battle and updating of events on the western front, especially as it pertained to the US sector. The summaries also contained developments in the evolving situation in Russia—a matter of upmost interest to the Wilson administration. In his documentary history, Richard Challenger cites various examples of the

types of insights provided: "Transportation is the key to supplying economic aid to Serbia. The railroads are fast becoming useless under the present inefficient Russian management. If present conditions continue it will soon be impossible to send materials to the interior in sufficient quantity and congestion will ensue at the ports of debarkation if freight is shipped from America in large quantities." A report from the military attaché in Russia argued that involvement in a civil war would be counter to US and Allied interests. "It is important to understand Trotsky's point of view. He was never under German direction" and "Negotiations for peace are inevitable and further attempts to interfere with the same will only serve to embitter the Russian people." On the subject of rising concerns that Germany itself might turn to bolshevism, a summary contained the following assurances: "A reliable and experienced observer who has returned from Berlin states that Bolshevism will never prevail in Germany and that most Germans are afraid of it."<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, there were other reports that were simply inaccurate. In the early months of 1918, the weekly intelligence summaries frequently contained updates on the location and timing of the anticipated German offensive based more on rumors than solid intelligence. There was often the tendency for new intelligence officers to want to play the role of prophet rather than objective analyst. An example of serious misjudgment was repeating the fears frequently voiced by Allied analysts that Germany's real strategy was the creation of a "Teutonic corridor," which would supposedly stretch to China and India. This meant that the German leadership would withdraw some or all of their forces on the western front in order to shift them to Asia. The basis of such thinking was attributable to Germany's role in fomenting revolution within Russia.

Marlborough Churchill lamented the fact that few in the AEF actually read the weekly report regarding the activities of the MIB, because they were often too busy. Churchill also acknowledged that merely reading a report was not enough; greater personal contact between G2 and MIB was essential. The lack of communications and coordination could be attributed in part to MIB not becoming a separate division until August; at the same time, the buildup of line units prevented Nolan from sending more officers back to speak directly with members of the War Department staff.<sup>31</sup>

### FINISHING THE COURSE

During the summer of 1918, military intelligence achieved an organizational and operational status at home that would not be surpassed until World War II. The appointment of Major General Peyton C. March as the chief of staff

was responsible for this elevated position. Fresh from the battlefields of France, where he had served as chief of artillery for the AEF, March reorganized the General Staff into four functional divisions, designating intelligence as one of them. This was just one of many actions taken by March in his drive for greater efficiency. Consequently, on August 26, MIB changed its title to the Military Intelligence Division (MID), but it was more than just a mere redesignation. The director of military intelligence could now organize, direct, and coordinate the intelligence service, and for the first time, he gained, at least on paper, a piece of the intelligence training mission. Nevertheless, when MID attempted to exercise control over intelligence training in the field, the War Plans Division resisted, resulting in an agreement that left the director of military intelligence with only a small voice in policy matters, particularly as they pertained to the recruitment and training of positive intelligence personnel.

The new MID also brought with it new leadership. Ironically, Colonel Van Deman, who had worked so hard to make this day a reality, was not on hand at the inauguration of MID but had departed several days earlier for France. As a regular officer who desired a future in the Army, Van Deman knew that it was imperative for him to seek wartime service overseas. Future intelligence professionals would never forget Van Deman's contributions and sacrifice, and in time, would bestow on him the honorary title of "Father of Military Intelligence."

Recently arrived from France, where he had held a leadership post within the G2 staff at the GHQ, Marlborough Churchill was a logical choice to replace Van Deman as the new director of military intelligence. An officer who served under both men said that Churchill had the bearing of "a fine line officer" but still managed to relate to his subordinates in an informal manner; the same officer went on to state that he considered Churchill to have been an outstanding executive. The MID benefited from Churchill's close personal ties to Chief of Staff General March, something that Van Deman never enjoyed during his tenure. The 40-year-old Churchill would also have the distinction of being one of two US intelligence officers who, for the first time, acquired the rank of brigadier general. (Nolan, the AEF G2 received a simultaneous promotion in August.)

The MID was now large enough for General Churchill to bifurcate it into two major branches in keeping with the British. The Negative and Positive Branches further divided the various sections between them. It was logical that MI-3 (Counterespionage Military Service) and MI-4 (Counterespionage Civilian Sector) should fall under the Negative Branch and that MI-2 (Foreign Intelligence) should be under the Positive Branch. But it was not so obvious that MI-8, which touched on both intelligence collection and security of

communications, belonged solely to the Positive Branch, and other sections, such as MI-6 (Translation), were meant to support all of MID. This created a lack of balance in the new organization. Between July and September, the last four sections were established: MI-9 (Field Intelligence), MI-10 (Censorship), MI-11 (Passports) and MI-12 (Graft and Fraud)—all but MI-9 falling under the Negative Branch. In a final analysis, 42 of the 57 sections and subsections belonged to the Negative Branch, and of those few assigned to the Positive Branch, at least half of them had a hand in counterintelligence-related missions.

## PROPAGANDA

The War Department handed intelligence a number of missions simply because the discipline of military intelligence was so undefined as to invite new initiatives. Back in September 1917, President Wilson had tasked his close personal advisor and confidant Colonel Edward M. House to supervise an initiative that insiders dubbed "the Inquiry." Working out of the home of the American Geographical Society in New York City, the group busied itself assembling the necessary data needed should a Peace Conference ever take place. Walter Lippmann, a prominent writer for the New York *Herald Tribune*, served as the first secretary, but it would not be until July 1918 that Colonel Van Deman would exchange liaison officers with the conference.<sup>32</sup>

George Creel, a former journalist and progressive reformer from Colorado, served as the nation's chief propagandist and defined his mission in the following manner: "What was needed, and what we installed, was official machinery for the preparation and release of all news bearing upon America's war effort—not opinion nor conjecture, but facts—a running record of each day's progress in order that the fathers and mothers of the United States might gain a certain sense of partnership." Creel went on to name those given the job of meeting these goals: "Newspapermen of standing and ability were sworn into the government service and placed at the very heart of the endeavor in the War and Navy departments, in the War Trade Board, the War Industries Board, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Labor." Although the military had no say in policymaking, MI-2 maintained close liaison with Creel's organization—the Committee on Public Information—in order to align the Army's activities with the national effort. More precisely, the mission of MI-2's new psychological subsection was "to study enemy propaganda and to see that suitable counter-propaganda was initiated, and also that positive propaganda of our own was introduced into enemy armies and enemy countries."<sup>33</sup>

To fulfill these functions overseas, Captain Herbert Blankenhorn, a former city editor of the *New York Evening Sun*, busily set about training personnel who would accompany him to France, where they planned to assemble the necessary resources to unleash a propaganda campaign across enemy lines. Blankenhorn proposed following up the fall 1918 campaign with a second initiative directed against Austria-Hungary. Of course, Blankenhorn's plans would have to first be coordinated with his French, British, and Italian counterparts, but for the immediate, only one thing remained before Blankenhorn could depart for France—a delimitation agreement had to be prepared between the War Department and the Committee on Public Information. The signed document gave the military authority over all propaganda efforts against enemy countries but not regarding neutral or Allied nations. Blankenhorn immediately departed carrying a letter to General John Pershing from Secretary Newton Baker, a strong advocate for the use of propaganda. Blankenhorn no sooner arrived in France when he received word that the Committee on Public Information had reneged on its earlier agreement. Upon further reflection, the committee members felt strongly that they and they alone possessed authority over all propaganda efforts; the military was to serve only in an advisory capacity.

Retrospectively, too many military and civilian players wanted a piece of the action because they had come to believe falsely that propaganda was a major factor in the conduct of the war. In the meantime, President Wilson had, at the request of the State Department and his advisor Colonel House, commissioned Lippmann, who was known as a capable spokesman and an original thinker, to assist the War Department in its propaganda effort. When Captain Lippmann arrived in France, he had with him additional instructions from Secretary Baker regarding the use of propaganda. In Baker's words, "I have assured the State Department and Colonel House that his [Lippmann's] work with us would not mean the termination of his duties with them."<sup>34</sup> Although assigned on paper to Blankenhorn's element inside the G2, Lippmann thought of himself as separate and continued to communicate directly with Secretary Baker and Colonel House.

Believing that Lippmann's actions could have potentially embarrassing consequences, military leaders in the War Department felt it necessary to send a reminder to Secretary Baker. "The gathering of data for propagandist literature, the printing of it, the distributing of it, in so far as this work relates to the projection of such material over the fighting lines among the enemy troops should be carried out by the Intelligence Section of the General Staff."<sup>35</sup> To put an exclamation point to the whole affair, General Pershing himself complained to the War Department that members of Blankenhorn's organization (a not too subtle reference to Lippmann) were going outside prescribed channels. Nolan finally solved the problem by dispatching Lippmann

and Blankenhorn to London to confer directly with James Keeley, a former US newspaperman who represented Creel's Committee on Public Information on the Inter-Allied Propaganda Board. From the meeting, the three arrived at an agreement that called for the AEF to place into Keeley's hands the information he requested. Subsequently, he and his staff would write, translate, and print the final products and then have them returned to the AEF for distribution across enemy lines.

### ATTACHÉS

World War I witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of assigned attachés (more than 100) overseas at some 26 different posts. In the spring of 1918, Van Deman approved the consolidation of all functions related to military attachés into a separate section (MI-5). As the War Department received added resources, it could for the first time provide attachés with much-needed support, especially in Europe, where they had taken on myriad new missions: propaganda-related activities, interrogation of escaped Allied prisoners of war and enemy deserters, detection of major smuggling operations, and location of hostile communications facilities.

Being an attaché was not a soft job. As Colonel Marlborough Churchill explained it, "these men performed a task that was at once difficult, delicate, and sometimes vital to the success of our arms."<sup>36</sup> Just because US officers and agents were operating in neutral countries did not mean that they were totally out of harm's way; even in Switzerland, they received their share of bumps and bruises. One officer reported that upon departing the US legation late one night, a burly figure suddenly appeared from the shadows. His black-jack rendered the victim semiconscious, but the military attaché was still able to keep the assailant from obtaining his sought-after prize—the keys to the building. On another occasion, a US case officer was ambushed while driving his car on a mission-related trip near the Italian frontier. This time a bit of luck allowed him to escape unscathed.

As far back as the summer of 1917, the British government had first proposed that Allied attachés within London, Paris, and Washington, D.C., take the lead in creating intermilitary intelligence groups. Ten months would elapse before the Allies in Washington finally established an official foreign liaison service so there could be "one channel through which all information of a military nature, imparted to the foreign military representatives, will be supervised and controlled."<sup>37</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Constant Cordier was the military intelligence officer selected to head the new organization and subsequently reported directly to the chief of staff.

In the summer of 1918, Major Royall Taylor, chief of the military mission in France, began participating with other Allied military personnel attached to the Second (Intelligence) Bureau of the French War Ministry. Having spent his early career in the diplomatic corps, 32-year-old Taylor was a perfect fit for the assignment. The so-called Inter-Allied Bureau regularly exchanged information on trade, political, economic, and industrial conditions in enemy and neutral countries and activity of enemy agents in Allied and neutral countries. Bruce W. Bidwell in his *History of the Military Intelligence Division* comments that there was “no evidence that the departmental military intelligence agency [MID] ever received any helpful information” from this group, but the greater sharing of intelligence did contribute to the war effort overseas, especially in the gathering of economic news from across Europe.<sup>38</sup> The staff of Major Taylor also routinely relayed to US counterintelligence any information obtained from the Allies regarding the names and identification of known enemy spies as well as their methodology; the names and descriptions of various criminals and undesirables; and any relevant data intercepted by French postal and telegraph controls. In turn, Taylor made available to his fellow allies similar information obtained by the Americans.

After abandoning their counterespionage role altogether, military attachés refocused the last four months of the war on collecting positive intelligence, but MI-5’s original idea of establishing a coordinated “spy-net” abroad was for the most part too little and too late. Still, MI-5 could point to examples of successes by individual attachés. In Italy, Colonel M. C. Buckey reported a week in advance that the Russians were planning to conclude a separate peace with Germany and to take part in Allied negotiations with Bulgaria. The US attaché to Norway enjoyed a close relationship with local authorities who passed on information concerning Germany’s involvement in the Russian Revolution. In Denmark, Colonel Oscar N. Solbert prepared a report indicating that the Danes were not starving but were, in reality, supplying Germany with a large amount of food and goods. He also learned from a German that his country was shipping arms and ammunition via U-boat to the Sinn Fein in Ireland. Ultimately, this would aid the British in foiling a plan to land a revolutionary leader in Ireland. Late in the war, Solbert alerted the Allies to mutinies taking place in several of Germany’s port cities. In Holland, Colonel Edward Davis ran one of the most successful US spy rings of the war. His informants included an individual who was close to an officer on the German General Staff and another who maintained a friendly relationship with the chief of engineers. And sometimes it was the innocuous that proved important. The attaché in Switzerland reported seeing an amusing story in a German paper about a man who rented his boots; digging further, he found

that exorbitant prices were being paid for used shoes, meaning only one thing—there was a scarcity of leather.<sup>39</sup>

Throughout the Bolshevik Revolution, the War Department had an officer in Russia who served both as liaison and military attaché. In February 1918, Colonel James A. Ruggles succeeded General William V. Judson and continued to work the intelligence mission out of the US embassy as it relocated from Moscow to Petrograd, Vologda, and finally Archangel in northern Russia. Ruggles and his staff would prove particularly adept in advancing the evolving US policy. In March, Colonel Ruggles and Major E. F. Riggs served as the representatives of Ambassador David Francis in a meeting with Leon Trotsky, who was commissar of war under Premier Nikolai Lenin; the topics of discussion involved the issue of US military support against the threat of a possible German invasion and the status of the Russian army. In September, Ruggles communicated his findings in person to members of the Supreme War Council in Paris.<sup>40</sup>

### CODE MAKING

As far as MI-8’s own code making went, it took until June 1918 before Army cryptographers finally produced a substitute for the 1915 Telegraph Code; the so-called Code No. 5, which had two parts, used super-encipherment tables to further enhance its security. Unfortunately, it took only a matter of days for various non-MI Army organizations to compromise MI-8’s masterpiece, and its replacement would not be ready until after the war was over. Chief of Staff General Tasker Bliss had also ordered that a special code be prepared for place names, but by the time code books were printed and distributed in October, the battle lines had been so redrawn as to make the documents no longer applicable. Cryptographers also went to work on a second specialty code to deal with casualty lists, but because no one staff element within the War Department could provide a complete list of all organizations and units overseas, there would be an intolerable delay before the code was finally finished. On the plus side, there were lessons learned in the production and distribution phase so that after the Armistice, when military intelligence issued a new code for attachés, it was in their hands within two weeks.<sup>41</sup>

In July, the Navy got out of the cryptanalytic business altogether when it fired its employees, turned its secret-ink equipment over to MI-8, and attached a liaison officer full time to MI-8. Apparently, from the start, personnel within the Navy office responsible for code breaking had remained quite secretive for a good reason—they were doing no work. The Navy Signal Office continued to maintain responsibility for creating its own codes, although

spoke at the occasion, reminded those present how much his country had sacrificed in just helping to bring American troops to France and that it was done in anticipation that at least five of the divisions should be "put in training behind our lines." But the prime minister's appeal would fall upon deaf ears.

Pershing was also forced to address the steadily growing criticism on how the Services of Supply (SOS) was being managed. Secretary of War Baker asked "Why in Heaven's name does it take so long to unload these ships and to turn them around?"<sup>4</sup> There were also concerns being voiced about the slow pace surrounding delivery of supplies, rations, arms, and ammunition into the hands of the Allies. To keep Washington from creating a separate command within the AEF's communications zone, Pershing recalled from the front General James G. Harbord, now commander of the 2nd Division, and placed him in charge of the SOS. Not only was Harbord an able administrator, but his recent successes on the battlefield helped to blunt criticism from the home front.

#### ARRIVAL OF VAN DEMAN

Although AEF intelligence remained focused upon supporting forthcoming offensives, important issues were still being addressed at GHQ. Over time, there had been growing cooperation between the AEF G2 and the MID. If left up to General Dennis Nolan and Colonel Ralph Van Deman, this undoubtedly would have happened much earlier, but one of the sticking points had been General Pershing's jealously guarding his total command and control within the war theater. No other issue so illustrated the problem as AEF's attempts to intrude on the prerogatives of military attachés. This dated as far back as Pershing's departure for France. Although he had received a letter of instruction that contained a sentence specifically exempting military attachés from his command, Pershing was not long in theater before he began to take steps challenging the clause, such as ordering officers attached to the London delegation to be reassigned to his headquarters. These plans were quickly abandoned when the War Department resisted. Later, when an attaché to France proceeded to collect information without first coordinating with general headquarters (GHQ) intelligence, General Pershing dispatched a strongly worded protest to Washington.

The most important step toward greater cooperation between the principal intelligence players occurred when the War Department reassigned Van Deman to the AEF. Immediately, Nolan tasked him to coordinate with the Allies on various issues left unresolved over time and to look for new ways in which the Military Intelligence Division (MID) staff members could assist their

AEF counterparts. Van Deman's first priority was to address a matter that involved both the military attaché in Paris and the G2, SOS; it concerned the issuing of US passports and visas. Normally, a local embassy only provided its military attaché the courtesy of review, but given the wartime conditions, the AEF demanded a more central role. Colonel Van Deman transmitted a letter to the State Department in which he attempted to justify the AEF's position: "To allow unrestricted travel of enemy agents is to aid the enemy in the prosecution of the war and therefore add to the number of killed and wounded of our forces, and to the prolongation of the war."<sup>5</sup>

The matter was finally resolved when the State Department created a central Passport Control Office in Paris that fully represented the interests of the AEF. Specifically citing the new arrangement as a prototype, Van Deman wrote a letter pressing the State Department's security service to revise the existing passport controls within England, Europe's neutral countries (such as Switzerland and Holland), and even Cuba, China, Japan, and Siberia and to embrace a general policy of greater coordination between state and the military; but this time, his request wouldn't even be acknowledged. While still in Paris, Van Deman also worked to improve communications security guidelines among the GHQ G2, the French Second Bureau (Intelligence), and the French postal censorship organization.

Van Deman then traveled to England, where he arranged for a committee of US, British, French, and Belgian intelligence officers to meet routinely at The Hague in the Netherlands to resolve long-standing issues, such as agents, exchange of information, and greater coordination at the working level. The basic reason why nothing had been done in the past was that the Belgian military attaché believed himself to be the senior officer, and both the British and French harbored serious reservations regarding the ability of Belgian intelligence to keep secrets. As a solution, Van Deman encouraged the establishment of a second committee to convene in London to discuss matters that could not be addressed at the Hague, but Van Deman's visit to England would not be a total triumph. US Consul General Robert P. Skinner refused to budge on the matter of granting any authority to military or naval attachés on passport and visa applications.<sup>6</sup>

Arriving back in Paris in October, Van Deman continued to address unresolved problems and to make progress concerning operations in Switzerland and other nearby countries. During the summer months, the Secret Service division had established counterintelligence elements in all adjoining neutral nations for the primary purpose of following the movement of known enemy agents, but the effectiveness of these so-called information centers had suffered from a lack of coordination between the local military attaché and MI-4 in Washington. Subsequently, Van Deman met with Colonel W. F. Godson,

the military attaché in Bern, Switzerland, and in a few weeks, he sent a message to General Marlborough Churchill at MID that an improved system had been agreed on; in the future, counterintelligence, not military attachés, would handle all related issues.

### ST. MIHIEL

The St. Mihiel salient—a huge inverted triangle consisting of woods, rolling hills, small villages, creeks, and the Rupt de Mad River—had existed almost from the beginning of the war and had posed a constant fear that the Germans would use it to strike deep into Allied territory. Eleven German divisions, totaling 75,000 troops, defended the salient against 400,000 Americans and 48,000 French, but the Germans occupied some of the finest defensive positions on the western front that were reinforced with thick barbed wire. It had been long in Pershing's mind to slice off the St. Mihiel salient, thus demonstrating his army's power; the offensive would also be AEF's first involvement in a large-scale offensive. On August 16, Pershing issued preliminary instructions to assemble forces for an early September offensive, but parts of the intelligence system had already begun to collect information months earlier. Because of the need to help pinpoint enemy batteries, US intelligence had six months before they sent sound and flash ranging systems to work with nearby French artillery.

Meanwhile, the 29th Engineers were busy preparing maps for the upcoming offensive. When the planned allotment of topographical troops for First Army did not arrive from the States, the 29th Engineers dispatched Colonel C. L. Hall and 65 enlisted men on September 1 to fill staff vacancies and to move with the First Army. Utilizing their mobile printing presses located in trucks, Hall's detachment set out to prepare maps for the 16 divisions involved in the attack. Although the engineers brought with them battle maps of the Toul sector created at the Base Plant in Langres in anticipation of the upcoming offensive, they quickly discovered that some of the maps were too small and the locations of operations were constantly shifting. Immediately a call for assistance went out to the French armies occupying nearby sectors to provide copies of existing maps and updates of recent changes. Fortunately, the French were able to forward the needed items to Langres where they were copied and printed just in time for the attack on September 12.<sup>7</sup>

Distribution was not a simple task, given the 15 tons of maps necessary to cover all contingencies. By now it was becoming all too apparent that a serious mistake had been made by locating the main printing operation at Langres, which was situated farther and farther from the battlefield; delivery

of maps was also complicated by bad weather, unpredictable telephone communications, and lack of motor transportation. Besides maps, Hall and his men copied over 2,300 aerial photos of the terrain over which the offensive would take place. To become familiar with the territory as well as to take much needed photos, US pilots and observers had flown French airplanes already operating along the sector to keep from arousing the enemy's suspicion.

In the rear area, US reconnaissance aircraft were being readied for the campaign. The air observation group assigned to First Army headquarters consisted of the 91st, 24th, and 9th Squadrons, but the 91st assumed the lead as it was the only one of the three with prior combat experience. All of the 91st Squadron observers had either served previously with the artillery or had attended the training center at Gondrecourt; as far as actual combat flight experience, no observer from any of the other sister squadrons had more than 10 hours' experience. In the area of photography, the 91st would also lead US squadrons in number of photos taken—some 3,700 during the course of the war. Plans called for four reconnaissance teams within the First Army Observation Group to be constantly ready to undertake all types of missions, while each corps had an observation group composed of both US and French squadrons.

The US sector north of Toul and facing the St. Mihiel salient was near enough to the region of Lorraine to have a mixed civilian population (speaking both French and German) with equally mixed loyalties. Most US soldiers found the locals a dour lot who sold their produce at fivefold the real value. On the eve of the St. Mihiel offensive in September 1918, the Corps of Intelligence Police (CIP) assembled a large number of its agents for the sole purpose of clearing enemy informers from the area of operations by setting up a system of travel controls; the effort was labeled a success when scores of refugees and line-crossers who lacked proper identification were stopped and questioned.

General Nolan gave orders that all US correspondents should assemble at Meaux until the evening before the attack so as not to alert German intelligence. It was during the St. Mihiel offensive that Nolan began the practice of laying out for newspaper reporters the overall plans of the upcoming campaign, and then going division by division and corps by corps to explain each of their objectives. Nolan also reemphasized to the reporters exactly what could and could not be printed. Looking back, he not only believed that his efforts led to more accurate news stories for the US public, but that the security reminders resulted in less censoring being required, thus allowing for more timely reporting. If the Americans were successful, Nolan anticipated that the press might raise the question of whether General Pershing had stopped too soon. Consequently, he went out of his way to reemphasize that the objectives of the operations were limited and what those goals were. While Nolan

withdrawing on schedule. By way of Luxemburg, the Army of Occupation reached the Rhine at Coblenz, eventually entering Germany and establishing its headquarters at the Fortress Erhenbreitstein. Over the next nine months, it would steadily draw down to only 6,800, eventually lowering its flag for the final time in January 1923.

One of Williams's first actions was to establish a political section under the direction of Colonel Newbold Morris, a former journalist. During the occupation, monitoring the evolving political situation in Germany was deemed of utmost importance. Morris reassigned several officers to the Berlin commission involved with the exchange of prisoners; Major General George Harris who headed the US delegation was informed by Morris that "you have nothing to do with them, except that they will live with you at the Hotel Adlon."<sup>2</sup> Although the US officers had not been trained as espionage agents, they were still able to establish low-profile contacts and make discreet inquiries with various bureaus within the German government. To aid them in their assignment, the agents were in possession of the so-called pocket code, which had been specifically designed by MI-8 in Washington for use by attachés and spies and contained 13,000 code groups, words, and phrases.

Perhaps the G2's most effective human source was a US officer turned spy whose cover designation was "A-1." Over time, he gained the confidence of the so-called Workman's Council and other radical groups in northern Germany and eventually found himself in Berlin. Here he used his talents as a former newspaperman to become an outspoken champion of several extremist elements, but his greatest contribution was acquiring documents that showed in some detail the Republic of Germany's plans for its new army—a force that was decidedly larger than what was publicly being discussed. Upon his return, the American Expeditionary Forces officer was formally decorated for his efforts.

Colonel Williams and his staff remained heavily focused on counterintelligence; in the early days of the occupation, the mission benefited from the dozens of CIP sergeants scattered among the combat units. Throughout the war, Coblenz had been a popular route taken by various German spies; consequently, Colonel Williams reassigned 20 CIP enlisted men and officers to that city alone. A typical case involved the search of two laborers; not only were their credentials forgeries, but the individuals themselves turned out to be members of the German foreign office. As the numbers of suspicious visitors continued to grow, US agents steered all suspects to the local hotel Riesenfuerstenhof, where they were placed under constant surveillance until the purpose of their travels could be fully ascertained. The hotel telephone operators and staff worked for the Americans, and many of the rooms were bugged with a dictograph. From these recorded conversations, counterintel-

ligence first became aware of the extent of the city's active black market that was manipulating the sale price of war surplus goods; US authorities would take subsequent action to have it shut down.<sup>3</sup>

The GHQ remained at Chaumont with General Dennis Nolan still in charge of intelligence and security matters; a forward G2 element was soon organized at Trier on the border of Germany. As the intelligence staff at the GHQ began to dissolve, one of the first to depart was Captain Guy Viskniskki, editor of the *Stars and Stripes*. When the guns of war went silent, his staff finally had had enough of his heavy-handedness and refused to publish another edition. This was not uncommon within a major newspaper but was unprecedented in the Army. As a member of General Pershing's staff observed, "You cannot expect these men to be soldiers just because they have put on a uniform. They are newspaper men and nothing you can say or do will make them anything else."<sup>4</sup>

Besides the disgruntlement of staff members, there was a culmination of complaints by various parties over the previous nine months, mostly from officers who could not persuade Viskniskki to print their articles. For instance, the story was told of a Catholic chaplain who showed up with such a demand. Captain Viskniskki ordered his fellow officer to get out immediately and then proceeded to follow him down the stairs, cursing how dare he try and "get propaganda in *The Stars and Stripes*." To heap further abuse, the editor returned to his office, leaned out the window, and sang Methodist hymns directed toward the departing chaplain. After the incident, Viskniskki himself believed that he had finally crossed the line and told everyone that the incident would be reported to Nolan, who was Catholic, and that he fully expected to be fired shortly. To the contrary, when Nolan did learn about the incident, he was more amused than offended, but in the end, Viskniskki had simply made too many enemies inside and outside of the newspaper, forcing the general to release him.<sup>5</sup>

Subsequently, Viskniskki did offer up a final proposal that Nolan and General Pershing readily endorsed. The former editor suggested that members of the US press corps be given a grand inspection tour so they could see firsthand what the AEF had accomplished. Three special trains with 200 newspaper reporters on board traveled from various ports and bases in the Services of Supply (SOS) to Chaumont, where they received briefings from key staff members. Then it was on to the various battlefields where officers conducted walking tours to show firsthand what each division had accomplished. Finally, they were sent to Coblenz to visit America's Army of Occupation. Besides the briefings, they were given pounds of mimeographed papers to take back with them. Intelligence also released captured documents in which German generals praised the fighting spirit of the US soldiers, but held back