

*Teachers and students, the following is an excerpt from one of our books and is absolutely factual with respect to what actually happened to some of our Camp-X agents after their capture while executing their top-secret mission into German occupied Hungary. The agents were trained at Camp-X during the summer of 1943; the events below took place in 1944.*

“Kindly loosen those hand restraints on your way. We don’t want Canada passing out.” the Lieutenant interjected. The rest nodded, chuckling. I was relieved and grateful again to this man who so effortlessly integrated his chivalric code with the ethics of his profession.

While we waited for the ‘expert’ team to arrive, the panel quietly discussed the protocols under which my interrogation would proceed. I understood every word, thank God. It would turn nasty, if I were evasive, hostile, or unforthcoming. The sergeant returned with the uniformed interpreter who seated himself beside the Lieutenant. A Security Service private and a corporal entered with two additional chairs, which they placed at either side of the desk. The corporal saluted and whispered to the Lieutenant, then he and the private exited, closing but not locking the door. Who was ‘Csongor’ and what was his special expertise? My Hungarian language heritage notwithstanding, I found the name ‘Csongor’ amusingly droll. I daydreamt that he might suddenly materialize out of a cloud of smoke.

There was a lull, as we awaited Csongor’s arrival. The Lieutenant took this time to review the background details of my case for the benefit of the earnest male interpreter. I surmised from his diminutive stature, banal appearance, and thick eyeglasses that he was a student conscript and then recalled that the loathsome Nazi Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, held an accredited Ph.D. in Philosophy.

The Lieutenant briefed the interpreter telling him that Tito’s courier organization in the Pécs region had indeed been penetrated and thoroughly compromised. He described Bertrand’s capture when he arrived at the ‘safe’ house, along with the Partisan courier and confirmed that Gus was physically coerced into sending messages to Bari. Worse, Hungarian Counterintelligence had ‘turned’ Gus’ radio and codes to intercept and decipher all of our W/T traffic with Bari, and had correctly deduced from our wires that we intended to drop into the Orfu area within a month of our Drava River fiasco. From time to time, they paused and looked at me directly as if sniffing for any scent of my understanding. It was extremely difficult not to betray my complete dismay as these shocking revelations were disclosed, all the while struggling to maintain my composure while feigning non-comprehension.

Neither German nor Hungarian Intelligence had been able to pinpoint our landing zone, a Bureau officer continued. Nonetheless, our Halifax was picked up on German radar screens well before we passed eastward over the Drava River and vectored us into Orfu airspace. German Intelligence immediately informed their Hungarian counterparts precisely where we had parachuted and ‘the game was afoot’! We had indeed jumped blind, or, more exactly, blindly, into the waiting arms of that posse of superannuated scarecrows.

The door was flung open and the room rose to attention. Hail the Mighty Csongor. The Lieutenant ordered that I also stand in the presence of Colonel Ference (Frank) Csongor, Hungarian Second Bureau. What a disappointment! Csongor the Great was an immaculately groomed, handsome, greying bureaucrat, in his mid-forties and of medium height and build, sporting conservative grey pinstripes and lustrous black patent shoes. His diamond-stud tiepin

and massive cufflinks were the equivalent in value to the country's gross national product. His sidekick was a rather unlovely, pockmarked hulk, a Master Sergeant of the Bureau, carrying an ominous black leather case, similar to a medical doctor's satchel; I smelled trouble.

Csongor's opening questions, in English through the interpreter, ran according to interrogation routine, a recap of the Lieutenant's queries. He then tried again, without the interpreter, in Hungarian. I shook my head, feigning bewilderment. Not satisfied, he addressed me in Slav, of which I had a limited understanding, gained from my father. Again, I stared at him uncomprehendingly. For this, I received a boot in the shin of my right leg, from the 'sergeant doctor'. I shrugged as though it was beyond me to reply in a language of which I was ignorant. Another boot, this time for my insolence or ignorance, or both?

Now came German. "Wo ist dein funk?"

I thought it best to try to convince them that I had a minimal understanding, which was true, if it would prevent another application of the hobnailed boot. Funk I knew was radio.

"Ich habe keine funk."

This did not please Csongor, either grammatically or factually, who launched into a tirade that I could not follow, the gist seeming to be that they knew I had landed with one.

But I had two! If only they knew!

"Where have you hidden your codes?" he asked next, in German.

I responded with "Keine codes", which got me a laugh and another kick. He tried several more parries in German to which I answered jawohl, nein, or whatever came to mind, eliciting more laughter but no boots. I was obviously pathetically impoverished in Deutsche, and had overreached my limit.

The jousting was over. Colonel Ference Csongor picked up the black satchel and dumped its contents onto the desk, squarely in front of me. Like Galileo, brought before the Inquisition, I was being shown the instruments of torture, a strategy calculated to extract a confession by intimidation, then as now. Out tumbled a hand-cranked telephone magneto and a thick, rubber truncheon. The magneto had two long wires that ended in large alligator-jaw clips, attached to its terminals. As I looked on and speculated on my diminishing options, one of the soldiers unlaced my parachute boots and removed them, and my woollen socks. My chair was pulled away from the desk and a smaller chair, turned sideways, was placed about one-half metre in front. The interpreter ordered me to stretch out my legs with my calves on the seat of the far chair, so that my soles extended over its edge. My ankles were tightly lashed together with a long, rubber thong.

"Now, we'll start again. Why are you and your comrades here?" the interpreter repeated Csongor's words to me, in English. If ever I needed Blokey's wisdom, it was now!

I answered with name, rank and number. Csongor nodded to the 'doctor' who administered a stinging blow with the truncheon to the soles of my feet. I winced and bit my lower lip until it bled.

"Good, a very good warm-up," Csongor complemented the 'doctor' on his enthusiasm. "I want to get him to talk about radio procedures. First, ask him why he came here and keep at it, both of you, until I get the fully correct answer, which I already know."

I had little reason to doubt that he did. What a gift! I could 'listen in' before the bastard's questions were translated.

"Why did you come here, SOE Secret Agent Lieutenant Gordon: sabotage, assassination, or subversion? Answer!", the interpreter insisted.

I knew what to expect if I played dumb or stayed silent. To expedite my response, the doctor delivered a hard blow. I gasped and tried to draw up my knees, which earned me another great whack. If my feet had been thrust into boiling water the pain could not have been any more unpleasant; the after-effect was equally agonizing, with lingering, throbbing waves and a burning sensation as if a thousand red hot needles were jabbed under the sensitive skin of each sole.

'Time to talk, lad. Give him something to chew on, or it'll be a lot worse, but be economical with the truth.' Blokey had come through, again.

"I was sent to meet with the Partisans in Hungary and help them resist the German occupation." Csongor grimaced, but didn't order a blow.

'Good lad,' whispered Blokey. 'There's a grain of truth in that and no harm done to John, Gus, or Mike. He resents the Germans for being here, pulling their Ubermensch act on him night and day, and half wants to believe you. Keep it going, now.'

The blessed St. Joan of Arc had been guided throughout her campaigns and trials by her 'voices', but ended up burned at the stake. Was she insane or divinely inspired? Was I insane or hallucinatory? Or both? Regardless, my dialogues with Blokey did give me confidence and a comforting forum for psychological second thought, debate, and counsel; so far, he hadn't misled me.

"What is your assignment?"

I had heard it coming, in Hungarian. "I am a British Army wireless radio operator."

"Why did they need you here? If the mission, DIBBLER'S, purpose was to liaise, we Hungarians have very competent radio operators. I believe you are a spy and will treat you thusly."

I protested that I was in a British uniform and ought to be treated as a POW. He laughed and ignored my declaration.

"Where is your radio, then? Where are your crystals and codes? We're not stupid, Gordon. Did you bury them? If you did, the Lieutenant's men will find them all. A detail is out there at this moment, correct Lieutenant?" His next words were addressed to the Gendarme and not translated. "You should be with them to co-ordinate the search, Lieutenant, until my specialists have taken charge.

"Please accept my thanks for your fine work and give my very best to your lovely wife, your new baby and Chief Tamas! I will be telephoning him and sending a very favourable letter of commendation. You are dismissed, with my thanks and the gratitude of the Second Bureau, Lieutenant."

I thought I detected sympathy on the Lieutenant's aristocratic face as he squeezed past me.

“Where was your wireless training, Gordon?” continued Ference Csongor, without a pause.

“In England, sir.”

“Where in England?”

‘Don’t mention Beaulieu, dear boy, the Führer’s not a fan of ‘gangster school’ alumni. One way ticket to Prinz Albrecht Strasse to meet jolly what ho with Heinrich’s <sup>[1]</sup> head office minions.’

“I’m a Canadian and really didn’t get to know England very well in my short time there.”

“Was it in the countryside or in a city?”

‘Careful, Joe!’

“Kind of isolated, not close to much of anything, Colonel.”

“Really! How quaint! Try again. Refresh his memory, Gregor, if you would, please.” Gregor complied by applying his boot forcefully to my right knee.

“Where did you and your chums go for fun?”

“Aberdeen, Colonel.”

Gregor’s knuckles rapped me soundly on the cheekbone.

“Scotland? I think not.

“I’m sorry, I just don’t remember much about the location. It could have been somewhere in London,” I replied, attempting to be vague and sound sincere, all at once.

“Ah, The Government Code and Cypher School, of course. Bletchley Park. I know Bletchley Park. Was that it?”

“Sounds familiar. It might have been sir. I’m just not sure.”

“Bletchley Park, so that means that you must be a top dog wireless operator! I want you to show your expert skills by sending a signal to your HQ. We have one of your flimsy British Mark 1 radios next door, courtesy of your spy friend Zoltan. You don’t know Zoltan, a.k.a. Bertrand? I’m sure that you must know Agent Bertrand.”

How he loved to show off his knowledge: Mark 1, DIBBLER, Bletchley GC&CS, Zoltan/Bertrand. I was concerned that he might have already learned a great deal more from Gus.

“I’m sorry sir, I can’t do that.”

“Can’t or won’t?”

‘Here it comes!’ Doctor Gregor delivered three thumping blows to my throbbing feet. I could feel that the welts were wet. I tried to turn my soles inward to look for blood.

“Pay attention to me if you want to be able to walk upright to your own execution!” ‘Not much motivation to sustain me.’

“Can’t...sir.” The pain was so severe that I felt myself on the verge of nausea.

“Why not, Gordon? Have you forgotten how, since you landed? How inconvenient for you!” he laughed sardonically.

“I have no codes and the truth is, sir, there’s no way to send to my HQ without them.” That was weak. My jacket was lying in a heap on the floor. ‘Please, don’t let them search it!’

“You are lying. All W/T operators have codes. Very well, you have forced me to be more persuasive.” He turned to the ‘doctor’, “Gregor, I’ve had enough of this bastard’s stalling. You two, unfasten his ankles. Remove his trousers and spread his legs; make sure you hold his knees apart.”

‘You knew this could happen, laddie. It was covered in your lectures by the Prof. and field vets. Doesn’t make it feel any better, but others have survived it, and much worse. It’s going to hurt like blue blazes but you’ll live if you scream bloody blue blazes. Loudly! They don’t want the truth. They already know the truth. He wants you to suffer. This villain’s a sadist, a bully, maybe a psycho, and as vain as the Queen of Sheba into the bargain. Needs to be the master of any poor devil he can dominate. You’re it. Loves to hurt, so give the audience what they paid to hear. You’ll get through it and have many long years and babies, who God willing, will look like their mother.’

“Gordon, you will be begging me to allow you to send a message before this day is out! Now, his feet!” He spoke matter-of-factly as if he had just audited my tax return and was describing the penalties to be assessed.

Gregor summoned the private to carry the magneto to the desk. As Gregor put on a pair of kid gloves from the satchel, the private carefully attached one of the two lead wires, with the giant-sized alligator clips to the side of each big toe. I thought I would literally ‘go through the roof’, as the metal fasteners bit into the skin. ‘Dear Alexander Graham Bell, or was it that Hungarian tinkerer Nicola Tesla, why did you have to invent this infernal thing?’ I shut my eyes and tried to think of my lovely Helen’s smile.

“Turn!” ordered Csongor. Gregor happily complied. I heard the mechanical whirring of internal gears and cogs as he rotated the hand crank. The charge of electricity that resulted seemed to ignite every neural pathway like a powder trail as it flashed up into my calves and crotch with white and blue flames. My legs thrashed in violent convulsions.

“Gregor doesn’t like you, Gordon. Allied bombs annihilated his wife, two young children, and their grandparents in Budapest! I hand picked him for you. Again!”

This time, the gear’s whining escalated rapidly in pitch as he cranked for vengeance. My legs were filled with flaming gasoline. I screamed.

“Stop! Give him water and pour the rest on his feet.”

I heard the clink of glass against metal and the gushing of water being poured and I opened my right eye. The light was blinding. From a metal pitcher on the desk, the private was filling a drinking glass, the edge of which he thrust between my involuntarily clenched teeth and managed to half-empty the contents down my throat. With the dregs, he meticulously drenched each of my legs from toe to thigh.

“Feeling better? I hope you’re refreshed because we’re not through. When you’re ready to stop playing hero and send the message, all of this will vanish, like waking from a bad dream, Gordon. Ready or not?”

“Not!” I barely managed to gasp it out, sputtering, recovering from the sudden, forced ‘watering’.

“Oh, just so you know. You’ll feel much more pain now. Water is such an excellent conductor.”

Yes, Blokey, this is a first class, genuine bastard villain.’

The interpreter’s normal prison paleness was now bathed with a pale green discolouration, matching his bulging frog eyes.

“Again!” Now, thanks to the wonders of science, the pathway of agony was both inside my legs and like skittering lightning, dancing on my skin’s surface. I screamed very loudly. Csongor held up his hand, like a traffic cop. He left the room. Within two minutes, he returned. Washroom break?

“You are a fool, a liar and a spy. Your partners in crime have just confessed to everything and we have located your radio and codes. Your civilian friend, Agent Thomas, is not doing well under our care. ‘Mike had been caught in civilian clothes!’ He is also a Hungarian and is being treated as a traitor.” He straightened his tie. “Will you send the message? Warm supper and sleep time. You must be exhausted, no?” he queried, buffing his immaculate cuticles on his suit jacket’s sleeve.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer-SS. In 1936, Adolf Hitler appointed Himmler supreme head of all Nazi security and police services, including the KRIPO (criminal police), ORPO (civil police) Gestapo and Sicherheitsdienst (SD) security police. Secret Police HQ was located in Berlin, on Prinz Albrecht Strasse.