

STUDENT HANDOUT 2

THE THIRD REICH PLANS AN ATTACK

Two German submarines eased out of Lorient, France on May 26 and 28, 1942, each carrying four saboteurs well-trained in explosives, and American language, current events, and geography. By nightfall of June 13, 1942, four were landed at Amagansett, Long Island, New York; the others arrived a few days later in Florida. Large rubber rafts piloted by German sailors brought them ashore; the sailors and rafts returned to the sub.

The Germans were clad in full military uniforms. Though their purpose was sabotage, the uniforms would insure that if they were caught, they merely would be imprisoned until the end of the war. That way they hoped to avoid certain death meted out to spies and saboteurs. The uniforms were quickly swapped for civilian clothes and, using small folding trench shovels, buried with their baggage.

They had brought four water-tight boxes containing bombs formed like large coal lumps, other explosives, timers, fuses, primers, and detonators. They even had adhesive explosives to use on railroad locomotives. Also, \$87,660 in cash--mostly fifties with about \$1,600 in small bills--along with Social Security cards, Selective Service (draft) cards, and a supply of American clothes accompanied them. Their work of devastation could take two years; they were prepared for the stay.

Their money included gold certificates which had been recalled in the 1930s and no longer circulated. In addition, some of the bills bore Japanese language characters. There were no German agents or sympathetic Americans to meet them; they were on their own. And their landing was observed by an unarmed US Coast Guardsman on routine patrol.

Hearing voices in a foreign language, the Guardsman was alarmed. The Germans offered him \$260 to not report their presence. The Guardsman quickly but quietly alerted his base. When other Guardsman arrived, they found no traces of the Germans, hearing only the sub's motors as it moved to deeper water. The German agents had eluded them, and were on a train to New York City where they stayed that night.

For unknown reasons, the saboteurs' leader, George John Dasch, then went to Washington, stayed overnight, and the following morning reported the saboteurs' presence and plans to J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI Director. All were arrested by June 22, 1942; a secret military trial ordered by President Franklin Roosevelt was held from July 8 to August 4; and six of the original eight saboteurs were executed August 9, 1942. One received life; Dasch was sentenced to thirty years. In 1948 President Harry S. Truman commuted these sentences and the two returned to Germany on April 16, 1948.

Their targets were three Aluminum Company of America plants, Philadelphia's Cryolite [used to make aluminum] Plant, Pennsylvania Railroad Newark, NJ Depot, PRR-New Haven Railroad Hell Gate Bridge, Ohio River locks, Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad bridges and tunnels, as many railway station and department store storage lockers as they could do, and the Pennsylvania Railroad's Horseshoe Curve near Altoona, PA!



Equipment buried by German saboteurs during World War II.
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