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REPORT OF THE FIRST INVESTIGATIONS ON THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MAJ. WILLIAM HOLOHAN, CAV. LEADER OF THE CHRYSLER MISSION. THIS MISSION WAS PARACHUTED AT THE MOTTARONE ON THE NIGHT OF 26 SEPTEMBER 1944.

1. After staying less than one month on the Mottarone, Chrysler moved to the Western shore of Lake Orta, as guests of the Servizio Informazioni Partigiane (S.I.P.). The Mottarone zone was dangerous because the Nazi-Fascists had started mopping-up operations in the area. A system of changing place often was adopted to escape detection by the enemy. The member lived in strict secrecy, in unoccupied villas, under the protective watch of the Security Service of the SIP. Information gathered on the spot indicate that the presence of American officers in the zone was ignored by the civilian population.

2. The mission consisted of Major William Holohan, 1st Lt. Aldo Icardi, and Sgt. Carl Lo Dolce as radio operator. It was accompanied by "Pupo" and "Manini" who are SIP partisans. On the night of 6-7 December 1944, while moving to a new residence, the mission was attacked by unidentified persons. Lt. Icardi, Sgt. Lo Dolce and the two partisans are safe, but there is no news of Maj. Holohan.

3. I arrived on the spot the evening of 7 December, and immediately began to investigate.

a. "Giorgio", Chief of the SIP, stated what follows:

"The mission lived in a large villa located South of Lagna, on the shore of Lake Orta. Two partisans, Pupo and Manini, guarded the villa. Only they, the caretaker of the villa, and Don Carlo, vice-director of the San Giulio Seminary, knew the refuge of the American officers and took care of liaison with persons of the resistance movement and the Northern Italy General Command.

The members of the mission were concerned about their safety. Especially in the last few days they were particularly nervous because of the many mopping-up operations carried out near the Mottarone zone. Don Carlo disclosed to them that the caretaker of the villa had talked with some local people. He stated that they were trustworthy persons. However, according to pre-arranged plans, the mission decided to move to another villa further away.

The SIP chief wanted to accompany them personally, as he had always done in the past. He requested them to send a message to Pella and inform him if they decided to move on the night of Wednesday, 6 December. Giorgio sent a messenger, Bruno, to the villa of the mission. Bruno stayed with the American officers until 2030, reached Pella at 2055 and stated that the Major had not yet decided to move.

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Between 2330 and 2400 that same evening, shots from automatic weapons, pistols, the explosion of a hand grenade, then more shots from automatic weapons were heard in Pella.

The entire mission was scheduled to stop overnight at a certain house and then proceed the following day. At about 0050, Lt. Icardi reached Pella and went to the house. He was alone. He was very excited and stated that, after Bruno's departure, the Major had decided to move that same evening. They immediately loaded everything on the boat which was to take them, Manini and Pupo to Pella. Lt. Icardi was on the shore when he heard footsteps and then shots in the garden of the Villa. Realizing that they were being attacked, he fired 3 or 4 pistolshots in the direction of the footsteps and immediately ran away to evade the attackers. He arrived at Pella hoping to find his companions there. He knew nothing of their whereabouts nor did he know where they were at the moment the incident occurred, or if they were safe. He only remembered that the major was near him when the first shots were heard.

The following morning Giorgio was informed that Sgt. Lo Dolce and Pupo were safe in a villa which the mission had previously occupied. There was no news of Major Holohan and of Manini."

On the evening of 7 December it was still believed that they were safe at Pettenasco, on the Eastern shore of Lake Orta, where Manini lived. This belief was also founded on the fact that SIP men had ascertained that the boat was no longer on the shore in front of the villa where the incident took place, nor was there any trace of the abundant material which the mission had.

I promptly interrogated Lt. Icardi, who confirmed everything he had told Giorgio.

b. "Pupo", the partisan, stated what follows:

"On the night of 6 December, after the SIP messenger had left, Major Holohan suddenly decided to move. Pupo, the Americans and Manini loaded the material on the boat, using the road which leads from the villa to the quay. (See attached map). He then returned to shut the door of the villa and to hide the key in the usual place. Pupo had just hidden the key and was turning around the corner of the villa when he thought he heard some footsteps. He proceeded a little further, then he felt sure there was someone on the road where the columns are. He challenged: "Who is there?" Some shots were the answer. He turned around the corner, fled reaching Villa Maria, and notified Giorgio. A few hours later he was joined by Sgt. Lo Dolce.

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He does not know where the other were at the time of the attack. He was armed with a Sten but had not fired. He did not see the attackers but had only heard their footsteps;"

Sgt. Lo Dolce was still very much excited on the night of 8 December. He calmed down only after he had joined again Lt. Icardi.

c. His impression, as related to me, follow:

"At the time of the incident, he was on the shore, at the spot marked on the attached map. He heard the footsteps and the shots. Realizing that they were being attacked, he fired almost an entire Marlin clip in the direction of the noise. He then ran southward, hid in a bush, and later reached villa Maria, where he found Pupo. He did not know where the others were at the time of the attack. He did not see the attacker but did hear their footsteps".

Manini sent a note from Pettenasco; the note reached Pella on the morning of 9 December. Manini stated he was there alone, with the radio, the material and the boat. He knew nothing about the others. He advised looking for them in the zone. A mopping-up operation which was then taking place blocked him on the Eastern shore of the lake. He would come to Pella as soon as possible.

After this communication, I immediately began a more accurate search for the major, around the villa. I went to the villa to investigate.

d. I interrogated the caretaker, who stated what follows:

"On the night of 6-7 December, between 2330 and 2400 he heard some shots fired in the garden. From his window he could not see anyone. Shortly thereafter he distinctly heard the rowing of the boat which was then leaving. No one came to his place either during or after the incident. He does not think that anyone entered the villa after the mission left. On the morning of 7 December he went into the villa and found everything normal. Near the lake, on the shore (see point marked on the map) he found about 25 Sten or Marlin cartridge cases, the same type the mission and the SIP partisans used (MWK and PI 43). During the night he had not dared leave the house."

I visited the villa and did not find anything abnormal. On the road which runs along the Northern side of the villa, I found

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about 90 cartridge shells for Stens, the type in possession of the SIP. The columns had been hit as indicated on the map. In the small meadow, near the shore, there were indications that a 'Sipe' grenade had exploded there. I found the spring. There was nothing else noticeable. It seems that the major had just one 'Sipe' grenade on him. SIP men and two priests were sent out to investigate in the zone, but thus far there have been no results.

- e. Manini crossed the lake on the evening of 11 December. He related the following:

"On the night of the move, while Pupo was shutting the doors of the villa, he had gone up to the villa, using the stairway which runs parallel to the path. When he reached the top, he heard steps in the road where the columns are, then heard Pupo challenge "Who is there?", and then two shots from the road with the columns. He stepped forward a few meters, fired his Sten, backed up while continuing the fire (about three clips altogether), then he ran through the trees 'till he reached the wall which runs around the garden. As he jumped over the wall, he heard the explosion of a grenade near the shore. No one was on the shore, and he believes the attackers had also left. He pushed the boat into the water and rowed away while shots from the villa were being fired in the direction of the lake. He feared that a mopping up operation was under way; therefore, considerably excited, he headed for the opposite shore of the lake, toward Pettenasco. He had everything in the boat, except the Major's and Lt. Icardi's packs, which they wore on their persons. He did not know where the others were at the moment of the attack. He did not see the attackers but he did hear their footsteps."

At this point I discontinued my investigations because I had to go to Milano to do some work. I asked SIP to continue to investigate.

Major Holohan always wore his uniform. He was not familiar with the zone because they travelled only at night and then only when he had to change refuges. He had most of the money belonging to the mission on his person. The balance of the money was carried by Lt. Icardi and Sgt. Lo Dolce. The major did not speak Italian.

/s/ Paolo Landi

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