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24TH OCTOBER, 1940.

WAR CABINET.

"ARANDORA STAR" INQUIRY.

Report by Lord Snell  
(circulated by direction of the Prime Minister).

I was appointed by the Prime Minister, by letter dated 12th August, with the following terms of reference:

to inquire into the method of selection of aliens to be sent overseas in the "ARANDORA STAR"; whether the actual selection of individuals was in accordance with the method determined; and generally, the responsibility for the action taken; and to report to the War Cabinet.

In conducting the inquiry I have had the assistance of Sir Grattan Bushe, Legal Adviser to the Dominions and Colonial Offices.

I have taken evidence, oral or written or both, from the War Office and the Home Office including M. I. 5., and from the Private Secretary to the Lord President of the Council who has been associated with these and other Departments in the arrangements for carrying out the programme for the deportation of aliens.

In order to understand the circumstances in which Germans, Austrians, and Italians were embarked on the "ARANDORA STAR" for deportation to Canada, it is necessary, I think, constantly to bear in mind the position which then obtained. France had collapsed, Italy had declared war and an attempt at invasion appeared to be imminent. On 23rd May the War Office had asked for the internment of all enemy aliens and on 3rd June Lord Swinton on behalf of the Home Defence (Security) Executive had represented to the Lord President the danger of retaining alien internees and prisoners of war in this country.

On 11th June the Minister of Home Security reported to the War Cabinet that he was taking steps to place under custody desperate Italian characters. When this had been done he would take into custody, with certain exceptions, male Italians between the age of 16 and 70. The Lord President reported at the same meeting that Canada had undertaken to receive 4,000 internees and 3,000 prisoners of war. The figure of 4,000 would, the Lord President pointed out, absorb the most dangerous characters amongst the Germans (2500) and Italians (1500). The War Cabinet



took note of these statements and gave general approval to the action being taken in regard to the internment of Italians.

On 21st June further reports were made to the War Cabinet regarding the arrangements for deporting internees; the War Cabinet invited the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to ask the Governments of the Dominions, other than Canada, whether they would be prepared to accept internees or prisoners of war or both and if so in what numbers.

The position in the middle of June was that, broadly speaking, all male Germans, Austrians and Italians in this country between the age of 16 and 70 had been interned, that Canada had undertaken to receive 4,000 internees which would absorb the estimated number of "dangerous characters" and that other Dominions were being asked whether they would be prepared to accept internees.

More than one witness has stated that the instructions on the subject of deportation were not limited to deportation of "dangerous characters". I think that this is true. The circumstances at the time were such that it may well have been thought desirable to remove from this country as many internees as possible and removal might, indeed, have been in the interest of the internees themselves. I am confirmed in my belief that the War Cabinet did not mean to confine deportations of internees to dangerous characters by the fact that the Lord President in his memorandum of 2nd July made it clear that 'B' and 'C' categories were being deported and the Cabinet concurred.

Turning now to the machinery for embarkation, I should explain that the actual work of collecting aliens for the boats rested with the Prisoners of War Directorate of the War Office. Their procedure was to send the more dangerous characters first. Accordingly the first ship to sail for Canada (the "Duchess of York") had about 2,100 Category 'A' Germans and Austrians and 530 prisoners of war on board.

The "ARANDORA STAR" was placed at the disposal of the War Office on the 19th June, the date of sailing being given as the 25th June. (The boat eventually sailed on 30th June and was torpedoed on the morning of 2nd July). The Germans and Austrians to be put on board were immediately selected from Category 'A' camps. In all, 473 Germans were embarked of whom 123 were merchant seamen captured at sea and were treated automatically as coming under Category 'A'. The remaining 350 had either been placed in Category 'A' by special Tribunals appointed by the Home Office or were among those persons interned as being members of the Nazi organisation or Nazi sympathisers.

All the Germans and Austrians on the "ARANDORA STAR" were therefore persons who had been individually ordered to be interned on grounds of national security and accordingly could properly be regarded as coming within Category 'A'.

The selection of Italians for the "ARANDORA STAR" presented a different problem. Whereas the Germans had been placed in categories, the Italians had not. Before the outbreak of war with Italy, however, M. I. 5 had at the request of the Home Office prepared a list of those Italians who were regarded as "dangerous characters". This list was based mainly on membership of the Fascist Party. Such membership was regarded as sufficient ground for suspicion, since it involved an oath of fidelity to the Leader and a promise to shed blood if necessary for the cause. Moreover, reports had been received that local branches of the Fascist Party had been guilty of espionage and attempted sabotage in Canada and the Suez Canal area.



When the "ARANDORA STAR" was placed at the disposal of the War Office on 19th June, the time available for selecting internees for deportation was very short. The boat was then due to sail on the 25th. In order that the necessary arrangements for railway travelling etc., could be completed in time, it was essential that the schedule of deportees for the "ARANDORA STAR" should be available on 22nd June.

A copy of the M.I.5 list of "dangerous" Italians was sent to each of the five camps concerned and the Camp Commandants were instructed to mark for deportation any person named on the list who might be in their camp. The lists, which contained about 1,500 names, could not be delivered to the camps until about 21st June. A period of only about 24 hours was therefore available for identifying the Italians for deportation. The difficulties were increased by the fact that a number of Italian names have alternative spellings. There is, too, reason to suspect that in one or two cases an Italian who wished to get out of the country impersonated a man whose name appeared on the M.I.5. list. Be that as it may, subsequent scrutiny showed that out of 717 Italians appearing on the embarkation list of the "ARANDORA STAR" the names of 26 did not coincide with names on the M.I.5. list. In about a dozen of these cases, however, the names are so similar as to suggest that the persons embarked were in fact persons whose name appeared in the M.I.5. list.

It will be observed that, in selecting the more dangerous characters for early deportation, the War Office had to rely entirely, so far as Italians were concerned, on a list of persons drawn up mainly on the basis of membership of the Fascist Party. None of these Italians had any opportunity of appealing to a Tribunal against their classification. In so far as importance can be attached to the procedure of sending "dangerous characters" first, I cannot regard the method of selecting "dangerous" Italians as satisfactory. I realise, however, that under the conditions prevailing at the time of the declaration of war by Italy it was important that the work of deporting aliens should proceed without delay and that there was no alternative but to classify the Italians on such information as was already available.

I have delayed the conclusion of this inquiry in order to see whether I could obtain from the Home Office particulars of any complaints which might have been made by relatives of persons on the "ARANDORA STAR", but none have been produced, and the only cases to which my attention has been drawn are certain cases which were raised in the House of Commons and dealt with by the Home Secretary.

#### CONCLUSIONS.

The War Cabinet laid down no definite instructions as to the method of selecting aliens to be sent overseas on the "ARANDORA STAR" and other boats. This statement requires some amplification.

Following the invasion of the Low Countries, the War Cabinet, on strong representations from the military authorities, gave instructions that a large number of enemy aliens should be interned within a very short period of time. In the conditions prevailing in this country in May and June, it was felt that to keep large numbers of aliens in this country, even in internment camps, presented a grave danger to the public safety, and the policy of sending internees overseas was decided upon. I think it is clear that the underlying idea



was that the first stage, at any rate, would be to send out of this country those aliens who were proved or known to be dangerous characters. It would not, however, be right to say that the orders issued ever laid it down that only aliens who could be described as dangerous characters were to be sent overseas. Further, the need for speedy action, and for sending aliens overseas in large numbers, was repeatedly emphasised in Minutes from the Prime Minister calling for periodic reports on the progress achieved.

The War Office, in collecting internees for deportation, did in fact proceed on the principle that the more dangerous characters should be the first to be deported.

All the Germans and Austrians on the "ARANDORA STAR" had been classified as Category 'A', and I see no reason to question the machinery of classification.

In the case of the Italians, no classification by Tribunals had taken place, and there was no alternative but to work on such material as was already available, i.e. the material in the possession of M.I.5.

The responsibility for the compilation of lists of dangerous Italians rested with the Branch known as M.I.5., and, as time did not permit of further scrutiny, these lists were accepted as being the equivalent of the Category 'A' Germans and Austrians. The lists were largely based on membership of the Fascist Party, which was the only evidence against many of these persons. M.I.5. apparently took the view that those who had been only nominal members of the Fascist Party, and those who were ardently Fascist, were equally dangerous. The result was that, among those deported, were a number of men whose sympathies were wholly with this country. I cannot regard this lack of discrimination as satisfactory, and I think that M.I.5. must bear some of the responsibility for the results which followed their decision.

Among the Italians deported was Signor Anzani, who had lived in England for 20 years and was the Secretary of the Italian Section of the League of the Rights of Men. His name, however, had been placed on the M.I.5. list in error, as he was not a member of the Fascist Party.

In compiling the embarkation lists of Italians it seems likely that errors occurred in about a dozen cases. These errors were due largely to the fact that the work was carried out under great pressure. Taking the broad view of the programme of deportation, I do not consider that this number of errors is a cause for serious criticism.

(Signed) SNELL.

24th October, 1940.







