

# The History of the Twentieth Century

## Episode 369

### “Operation Sledgehammer”

#### Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

*Silly people, and there are many, not only in enemy countries, might discount the force of the United States. Some said they were soft, others that they would never be united. They would fool around at a distance. They would never come to grips. They would never stand bloodletting. Their democracy and system of recurrent elections would paralyse their war horizon to friend or foe. Now we should see the weakness of this numerous but remote, wealthy, and talkative people. But I had studied the American Civil War, fought out to the last desperate inch.*

Winston Churchill.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 369. Operation Sledgehammer.

As soon as the United States entered the war, its top military leaders were champing at the bit for an invasion of German-occupied France. The Americans had no patience for the British strategy of picking away at the periphery of the Nazi empire. They wanted to take on the Wehrmacht at once, in 1942.

US President Franklin Roosevelt pledged to Soviet leader Joseph Stalin that the Western Allies would open a second front against the Germans before the end of 1942, as a means of forcing the Germans to redeploy military units away from the East and take some of the pressure off the Red Army. In private communication, Roosevelt told Churchill that Allied losses might well be heavy, but it would be worth it nevertheless, if German losses were also heavy and if German forces had to be drawn away from the Eastern front.

In April 1942, US Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall and Roosevelt’s trusted aide and advisor Harry Hopkins traveled to England to make their case for one of two options. The first plan, Operation Roundup, called for an invasion of France in early spring of 1943. The Americans figured they could contribute 30 divisions by then and the British Army 18.

If that sounded ambitious, well, wait until you hear the second plan, dubbed Operation Sledgehammer. This version of the plan would come into play in the autumn of 1942, if the Germans seemed on the brink of defeating the USSR. Allied soldiers would land on the French coast and capture a French port, perhaps Brest or Cherbourg, then build a defensive line around the city and hold it through the winter and into 1943, all the while being supplied and reinforced by sea through that port.

In June 1942, Winston Churchill and his top military leaders visited the United States once again, to hammer out their differences with the American military on how best to proceed with the war against Germany. The trip began with Churchill visiting President Roosevelt at his home in Hyde Park for informal talks.

Along the way, Churchill took note of the obsolete ships tied up along the Hudson River and proposed that such old ships could be used as part of the invasion of Europe by deliberately sinking them off the shore and building a breakwater. Admiral King was less than enthusiastic about this idea, but Roosevelt liked the sound of it. Later, he would observe, "Great fellow, that Churchill, if you can keep up with him."

Churchill was always coming up with new ideas. He had been this way in the last war, and age had not dampened his brainstorming. Of course, his biggest idea in the last war was Gallipoli. Franklin Roosevelt is also quoted as having said of Churchill that he had a hundred ideas a day, and four of them were good.

Formal talks were held in Washington, and it was at one of these meetings that Roosevelt and Churchill learned of the fall of Tobruk to Erwin Rommel's army. No doubt that piece of news helped influence the discussion; the two leaders agreed to postpone an invasion of Europe until 1943, and instead proceed with the British proposal for an invasion of French North Africa.

One of Roosevelt's first decisions after those meetings was to appoint a new theater commander for US forces in Europe. He chose the 51-year-old General Dwight Eisenhower, a staff officer and military planner working under Army Chief of Staff George Marshall, who was impressed with Eisenhower's planning and organizational skills. Eisenhower was stationed in London and tasked with planning the North Africa invasion, originally codenamed Operation Gymnast, and later Operation Torch, as well as preliminary planning for a cross-channel invasion of France in 1943.

America's top military commanders, General Marshall and Admiral King, remained staunchly opposed to Operation Torch, even after meeting with their British counterparts in London in July. They suspected the British were primarily motivated by their desire to protect their many colonial interests in Egypt and the Middle East. Marshall advised Roosevelt that if the British refused to cooperate in an invasion of France this year, then the US should put Europe on the back burner and concentrate its efforts against Japan in the Pacific.

Roosevelt rejected Marshall's suggestion. He told Marshall that was exactly what Hitler was hoping the US would do, and that capturing remote islands in the Pacific Ocean would do nothing to assist the Soviet Union. Roosevelt overruled his commanders and ordered them to make Operation Torch their top priority, to be carried out as soon as possible. This was the first of only two occasions during the war when Roosevelt gave his military commanders a direct order contrary to their recommendations.

The reality was, although this was not known at the time, the Germans had 23 combat divisions stationed in northern France in 1942, which would have been more than enough to overwhelm the handful of divisions the Western Allies would have been able to land on the French coast, without even the need to withdraw units from the Eastern Front. The decision to delay the invasion saved the Allies from a catastrophic defeat.

It was after this decision was settled that Churchill felt the need to travel to Moscow and explain to Joseph Stalin in person why there would be no second front in Europe after all. He traveled to Moscow via Cairo, where as you know, he replaced General Sir Claude Auchinleck as head of the Middle East Command with General Harold Alexander. Then it was on to Moscow, where Churchill was joined by Averell Harriman, representing the United States.

Churchill began the series of meetings with Stalin by asking him how the Soviet war effort was going. Stalin described the dangerous situation developing on the southern part of the front, where the Germans were advancing toward Stalingrad and threatening the Soviet Caucasus. More about this next week. It was an awkward introduction to the news that Churchill had come to deliver, that Stalin could expect no Western Allied ground force in Europe this year.

Stalin asked why the British were so afraid of the Germans, a remark which offended Churchill deeply. In response, Churchill noted that Hitler had not attempted to land soldiers in Britain in 1940, not out of fear of the British Army, but of the uncertainties and dangers inherent in a large-scale amphibious operation.

Churchill talked up the British bombing campaign over Germany and the coming Operation Torch, which helped improve Stalin's mood. Churchill then raised the matter of the British suspension of Arctic convoys to Archangel, following the disaster of convoy PQ 17, but pledged they would be resumed later in the year.

The mood was friendlier by the end of that first meeting, but those accusations of British cowardice continued to irritate Churchill. He told Soviet foreign minister Molotov, "Stalin will make a great mistake, to treat us roughly when we have come so far." Molotov told Churchill, "Stalin is a very wise man. You may be sure that, however he argues, he understands all."

At a later meeting, Stalin again accused the British of cowardice and self-serving motives. He told Churchill, "You cannot win a war without fighting," angering Churchill again. Harriman passed him a note, suggesting he not take Stalin's insults too seriously.

Instead, Churchill launched into an extended reply, which Harriman later described as one of Churchill's best speeches, in which he defended British honor and stressed British determination to defeat Hitler at any cost. He spoke so fast that the translator fell behind and Stalin didn't even get a translation of much of it, but Stalin only laughed and said, the words were not important; what was vital was the spirit.

The talks ended with dinner between Churchill and Stalin, along with Stalin's sixteen-year-old daughter, Svetlana. The dinner was cordial, and Churchill left the Soviet Union convinced that he had mended the breach in relations with the USSR.

[music: Sousa, "The United States Field Artillery March."]

After declaring war on the United States, Adolf Hitler ordered the Abwehr, German military intelligence, to begin a covert operation to conduct sabotage missions in the United States, missions aimed at damaging the American war effort and demoralizing the American public.

The chief of the Abwehr was a Navy man, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris. We've bumped into him before on the podcast, and it was to him the duty fell to organize this operation.

This would not be an easy assignment. Not that the Abwehr were strangers to espionage operations in the Americas. They had already established a spy network in the United States that was up and running at the beginning of the war. To tell that story, I'm going to begin by introducing you to a man named William Sebold. Born Gottlieb Sebold in Mülheim, a town in the Ruhr Valley region of Germany, he served as a German Army engineer in the First World War. In 1922, he moved to the United States, where he married and worked in the aircraft industry. He became a US citizen in 1936.

In 1939, Sebold came to Germany to visit his mother. He was approached first by the Gestapo, who interrogated him regarding military aircraft in the United States. Then an Abwehr agent contacted him and told him they knew that when he applied for US citizenship, he had failed to disclose that he had once served time in a German prison. The agent asked Sebold to become a spy for Germany upon his return to the United States, warning him that if he refused, Abwehr would reveal the omission in his citizenship application, and the US government would revoke his citizenship and deport him to Germany. The Abwehr agent also made threats regarding Sebold's relatives living in Germany.

Sebold agreed, and spent seven weeks in an Abwehr training program, where they taught him how to operate a secret shortwave radio station. They wanted him to set up such a station in the US, where he would receive instructions from the Abwehr, pass them along to other German agents in the US, receive their reports in return, and forward them back to the Abwehr in Germany.

Before leaving for the US, Sebold visited the US consulate in Cologne, met with the Consul General and told him everything. He agreed to become a double agent and cooperate with the American FBI.

With FBI assistance, Sebold opened an office in Manhattan that purported to be that of an engineering firm, but was actually used as a meeting place for German spies. The office was fitted with listening devices and two-way mirrors. The FBI set up a shortwave radio station on Long Island and made contact with the Abwehr, pretending to be Sebold. For more than a year, they exchanged hundreds of messages with the Abwehr, in which they sent false information about American military and industrial secrets, and received instructions which allowed them to identify a large number of German agents in the United States and Latin America.

In June 1941, the FBI arrested 33 of these German agents in the US, 30 men and three women. They were prosecuted and sent to prison in December 1941, just after Pearl Harbor.

It was and is the largest espionage case in American history, and the US government entered the war confident it had fully dismantled the German espionage network.

So in early 1942, when Hitler ordered Canaris to begin undercover sabotage missions in the United States, he had to start from scratch. This project was dubbed Operation Pastorius. The name comes from Francis Daniel Pastorius, a German lawyer who founded Germantown, Pennsylvania, the first German settlement in North America and a gateway for German immigration. He later began the first anti-slavery movement in the American colonies. Fun fact: My own German ancestors came to America in this way, and some of them crossed paths with Pastorius. One of them got mixed up in a big lawsuit against Pastorius, but that's a story for another day.

To implement Operation Pastorius, the Abwehr recruited eight Germans who had lived in the United States for extended periods of time and were familiar with the country. Two of them were US citizens. All but one of them were members of either the Nazi Party or the German-American Bund.

The eight recruits were trained in the use of explosives, given forged identification papers and \$175,000 in US currency. They were assigned a number of sabotage targets in the United States, including the hydroelectric plants at Niagara Falls, the Hell Gate bridge in New York City, the Ohio River locks at Cincinnati, and the Pennsylvania Railroad's Horseshoe Curve in Altoona. In addition to these economic targets, they were instructed to commit acts of pure terrorism, by setting off bombs in public places, like railroad stations, and in Jewish-owned businesses.

On June 12, 1942, the German U-boat *U-202* delivered four of the saboteurs to Amagansett, New York, near the eastern tip of Long Island. The agents came ashore at night along with their explosives and equipment. They wore German Navy uniforms, so that if they were caught, they would be eligible for prisoner-of-war status.

Once ashore, they changed into civilian clothes and buried some of their equipment, but shortly after midnight they were discovered by 21-year-old Seaman John Cullen of the US Coast Guard, stationed at Amagansett. Cullen had been given one of the less glamorous assignments, to patrol the beaches of eastern Long Island, looking for something suspicious. Like German saboteurs dropped off by a U-boat and attempting to sneak into the United States.

Cullen spotted the group of four men, just misty outlines in the late night fog, really. He shone his flashlight at them and asked them to identify themselves. One of the men explained they were fishermen who had gotten lost. He spoke good American English and his story sounded plausible, but then Cullen heard one of the other men speaking in German. That man was also lugging a heavy bag.

Cullen was unarmed, except for a flare pistol, which he was supposed to fire into the air if he found anything suspicious. The English-speaking man stuck a wad of money into Cullen's hand and told him, "You didn't see anything."

Cullen pretended to agree, then returned in haste to his Coast Guard station and reported what he had seen. An armed patrol returned to the site, but the four men were already gone. The patrol discovered the explosives the team had buried. The Coast Guard knew to dig because the saboteurs had left their shovel behind.

The four rode the Long Island Rail Road into New York City and checked into a hotel.

Three days later, the other four were dropped off by *U-584* at a beach in Florida south of Jacksonville. They came ashore in swim suits, but wearing German Navy caps, which I guess they figured would count as being in uniform. Once they came ashore, they also changed into civilian clothes. Two of them took trains to Chicago, the other two to Cincinnati.

The eight were supposed to meet together in Cincinnati on July 4—very funny, Adolf—and then begin planning their campaign.

One of the eight was named George Dasch. He was a US citizen and that one member of the group who had never belonged to either the Nazi Party or the German-American Bund. The day after their arrival in New York, Dasch opened the window in the upper-story hotel room he shared with one of the other agents, named Earnest Burger, told him they needed to talk, and announced dramatically that if they did not come to an agreement by the end of this conversation, only one of them was leaving the hotel room by the door. The other would be going out the window.

Dasch told Burger that he hated the Nazis and was planning to contact the FBI and tell them all about their sabotage mission. Burger agreed to defect along with Dasch. Dasch then telephoned the New York office of the FBI and explained to the agent he reached that he was a Nazi spy who had just landed in America via U-boat and wanted to turn himself in.

The FBI agent replied, “Yes, and Napoleon called yesterday.” Then he hung up on him.

Dasch decided he needed to provide evidence to prove his claim, so he took the train to Washington and telephoned FBI headquarters there, telling his story again and explaining he was the same guy who had called the New York office a few days ago. FBI agents came to his hotel, where he showed them \$84,000 in US currency the Abwehr had provided him. The FBI agents were convinced and arrested him. Using information Dasch provided, the FBI then located and arrested the rest of the group, along with sixteen Americans who had assisted them in one way or another, including the parents of one of them.

Initially, there was some uncertainty in the US government over how to try and punish the saboteurs. They hadn’t committed any actual crimes yet, apart from illegally entering the United States. If this was a civilian matter, tried before a civilian court, the most they could be charged with was conspiracy. Attorney General Francis Biddle proposed treating them as POWs, which would allow the US to keep them in custody until the end of the war.

President Roosevelt rejected both possibilities. He wanted all of them executed, and the sooner the better, so he issued an executive order creating a military tribunal to try the saboteurs. This would be the first time civilians were tried before a military court within the United States since the American Civil War. Lawyers representing the defendants appealed to the US Supreme Court to have the case tried in a civilian courtroom. The Supreme Court denied the appeal and unanimously upheld the power of the President to try them in a military court.

All eight were found guilty on August 3, 1942 and sentenced to death. Roosevelt commuted the sentences of the two who exposed the plot, Dasch and Burger, to thirty years and life imprisonment, respectively. The other six were executed by electrocution five days later. Adolf Hitler asked why he even had an intelligence service, if all it produced were incompetents who got themselves killed on their first attempt.

The discovery of the sabotage ring naturally drew great public interest in the United States. When FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover announced the arrests, he declined to reveal the fact that the two of the saboteurs had turned themselves in, instead presenting it as if the FBI had discovered and broken up the plot on its own.

[music: Brown, “Big Band Swing P5.”]

Early in the morning of August 19, 1942, Allied ground forces landed on the French coast.

The Soviets were constantly calling for a second front in Europe, and the Americans were champing at the bit. Churchill and the British military had talked them out of a full-on invasion this year, but even they recognized the need to do *something*.

In lieu of an invasion, the British military began planning a large-scale raid on a French port. This raid would serve four purposes: first, to demonstrate the Western Allies’ determination to

return to the continent; second, to test the German shore defenses in northern France and assess the state of the German occupation forces in France; third, as a sort of practice mission, testing the Allies' amphibious landing tactics, and in particular the coordination of land, sea, and air forces of multiple nations; and fourth, encourage the Germans to redeploy units from the Eastern Front to shore up their defenses in France, and thus take some of the pressure off the Red Army.

At this time, Churchill was planning for this to be the first in a series of raids against the French coast, increasing in size over time. Louis Mountbatten, whom we met before, when he was captain of HMS *Illustrious*, was assigned the task of planning these raids.

The raid on Dieppe was originally planned for June, but rehearsals on the English coast were unpromising. That and bad weather forced a postponement until August, which became a security concern. Over 10,000 Allied personnel knew something about this raid and the odds of keeping it secret any longer seemed low. Some commanders, notably Bernard Montgomery, believed the Germans must have heard about the operation and recommended calling it off, but Mountbatten wanted to proceed. He argued that after hearing about the June raid, and then that it was called off, the Germans would never expect them to be so stupid as to proceed with exactly the same plan in August.

And if that sounds like something General Melchett might have said in *Blackadder*, well, in fact he did. See episode one of series four.

The Germans were in fact aware that the Allies were planning some kind of amphibious operation on the coast of France sometime in 1942.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division was selected to supply the main force of about 5,000 soldiers. Remember that Canada had been at war with Germany for nearly three years now, and Canadian soldiers had yet to enter combat against the Wehrmacht. The only combat any Canadian armed force had seen so far was in Hong Kong, where 2,000 Canadian soldiers made up part of the city's defense. All of them were either killed or captured by the Japanese. Canadian soldiers stationed in Britain were eager to contribute something to the Allied war effort. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Division's commander, Major General Roberts, said to his soldiers, "Don't worry men; it'll be a piece of cake." He would come to regret those words.

Apart from the 5,000 Canadian soldiers, there were about a thousand British soldiers and commandos, plus a team of Free French commandos and about 50 US Army Rangers, supported by British, Canadian, and American air and sea forces.

The troops were to land at four beaches, codenamed Red, White, Blue, and Green. Red and White were direct attacks at the town of Dieppe, while Blue and Green were some distance along the coast east and west of the town. The plan was for the soldiers landing at Blue and Green to neutralize German shore batteries, then circle around Dieppe and cut it off, while the soldiers at



Red and White would seize control of the town. The operation was only meant as a one-day exercise; everyone would pull out by sunset.

Royal Navy warships bombarded the area prior to the landings, but the only ships involved were destroyers, as Admiral Pound did not want to send battleships into the English Channel and in range of the Luftwaffe. The memory of what had happened to HMS *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* was still fresh.

At Blue Beach, east of Dieppe, the Canadians landed, only to be pinned down by German artillery and machine guns positioned on a cliff overlooking the beach. At Green Beach, west of Dieppe, they were able to land safely and scramble onto higher ground before the Germans began firing, but many of the landing craft had drifted off course and put their soldiers ashore on the far side of the River Scie. In order to reach their objective, they first had to cross the only bridge available, but the Germans had already determined the importance of the bridge and set up machine guns and anti-tank guns to defend it.

One of the objectives here was a German radar station. The British were naturally interested in the capabilities of German radar, so they sent a radar specialist from the RAF along with a team of 11 Canadian soldiers to capture the station and study it. Because this radar specialist was knowledgeable about British radar, the 11 Canadians were under orders to shoot and kill him if necessary to prevent his capture.

This team reached the radar station, but it was too well defended for them to take it, although the British did pick up a bit of useful intelligence concerning German radar operations.

At Red Beach and White Beach landed the main force of Canadians, who were assigned to advance into Dieppe. They were supposed to be backed up by a force of 58 Churchill tanks adapted for amphibious operations, but the tanks were late in landing. Again, German soldiers in and above Dieppe fired on the exposed Canadians, who suffered many casualties. When the tanks landed, many of them got stuck. Beaches in this region are covered with large, smooth pebbles and the tank treads struggled to gain traction. Only 15 of the tanks made it across the beach and toward the town, where they were stymied by concrete barriers placed by the Germans. The guns of the Churchills were not powerful enough to destroy the barriers. Not a single one of the 58 tanks made it back to England at the end of the day.

General Roberts, observing from a ship offshore, incorrectly concluded that his troops were successfully entering the town and sent in his reserve force to assist them, but all that accomplished was to increase the number of casualties.

A commando force, including those 50 US Army Rangers, landed some 10 kilometers west of Dieppe. They were assigned to climb to the top of the cliffs and neutralize a German coastal battery placed there before it could fire on the landing craft. In this they succeeded, and mostly returned safely to England, the only real success of the day.

Thirteen kilometers east of Dieppe, a British commando force approached the beach with a similar assignment. This force was attacked by a German patrol boat; the landing craft dispersed. The survivors came ashore in a disorganized state. Most of them were forced to surrender.

The raid was called off early and the survivors withdrew. Of the 5,000 Canadian soldiers in the main force, about a thousand were killed, 2,500 wounded, and 2,000 taken prisoner. Fewer than half of them made it back to England. The Allies also lost a destroyer and 96 British and American airplanes. The Germans suffered 300 killed, another 300 wounded, and the loss of 48 aircraft.

What lessons can be learned from the failure of the Dieppe raid? Apart from that the Canadians always seem to get stuck with the wrong end of the stick? The Dieppe raid demonstrated that surprise was critical, as was the need to subject the defender to heavy air and naval bombardment. As much as you can bring to bear.

Most important, the failure of the Dieppe raid proved that landing on the French coast and quickly seizing a port was not feasible. This is crucial, because if the Allies land a large invasion force in France, that force is going to need supplies and munitions in quantities that can only be delivered by large cargo ships. Large cargo ships can't dock just anywhere; they require a deepwater port and proper dock facilities, including cranes capable of unloading heavy cargo quickly.

Securing such a port has to be job one of any invasion force, and it has to be done fast, or else the Germans will surely sabotage the port facilities before withdrawing. They'll mine the harbor, destroy the cranes, and generally trash the place to a degree that it could take weeks or months before the port is usable again. The landing force can't wait that long to receive supply.

That's a problem the Allies need to work on, and the outcome of the Dieppe raid suggests that had the Americans had their way, and the Allies landed in France in 1942, the likely result would have been catastrophic.

Veterans of the raid believed that the Germans must have had advance knowledge of the assault, as they seemed quite well prepared for it, although there is no proof of this. Remarkably, in the August 17 edition of the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper, one of the clues in the crossword puzzle was "French port." The answer was "Dieppe." This triggered an MI5 investigation to determine whether the *Daily Telegraph* crossword puzzle was being used to send coded messages to the Germans, but the investigation concluded it was mere coincidence.

Amazingly, Canadian Brigadier General William Southam, who participated in the Dieppe raid, brought a copy of the assault plan along with him, and when he was captured, so was his copy of the plan, which the Germans analyzed carefully. Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, whom you'll recall had previously commanded Army Group South and had been relieved of his command by Adolf Hitler for permitting a German withdrawal from Rostov-on-Don in

November 1941, was now serving as commander-in-chief of the German Army in the West. His take on the Dieppe plan was that it was too rigid, saying “the plan is in German terms not a plan, it is more a position paper or the intended course of an exercise.”

The raid was a propaganda gift to the Germans, who derided the operation as evidence of the gross ineptitude of the Allied militaries, compared with the skilled and professional German Army. French Head of State Philippe Pétain congratulated the German Army for repelling what he called “British aggression” and offered to provide French soldiers to assist in defense of the coast, an offer the Germans brushed aside, although it did provide more fodder for the Nazi propaganda machine. German and French soldiers working together to defend France from British aggression.

The most important consequence of the failure of the Dieppe raid was that it led General Eisenhower to conclude that even a 1943 invasion was not feasible, and that the earliest possible date for an invasion of France would be May of 1944. Also, in Germany, Adolf Hitler issued a secret order, known to history as the Commando Order, in which he declared that the use of commandos was a violation of the Geneva Convention, and therefore commandos were not eligible for prisoner of war status, even if they were in uniform. Any captured commando was to be summarily executed.

The Commando Order violated the Hague and Geneva Conventions, to which Germany was a signatory. Hitler claimed that Allied commandos mistreated their own prisoners as a justification for the order, but the claim was false and even if it were true, that would not release Germany from its obligations under the Hague and Geneva Conventions.

Only twelve copies of the Commando Order were committed to paper and distributed to senior commanders, who were told to pass the order down the ranks orally, which is a pretty good sign that they all knew full well that what they were doing was a violation of international law.

We'll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening, and I'd especially like to thank Shreemoyee for their kind donation, and thank you to Corey for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Shreemoyee and Corey help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you'd like to become a patron or make a donation, you are most welcome; just visit the website, [historyofthetwentiethcentury.com](http://historyofthetwentiethcentury.com) and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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And I hope you'll join me next week, here on the *History of the Twentieth Century*, as we turn back to the German offensive on the Eastern Front. We haven't taken a look at that in a while, but it's making everyone pretty nervous, so let's take a look at developments there. Not One Step Back, next week, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. In 1948, US President Harry Truman granted George Dasch and Earnest Burger, the two saboteurs who had turned themselves in, executive clemency conditioned on their deportation to US-occupied Germany.

Back in Germany, the two found themselves frequently insulted and harassed by their neighbors, who regarded them as traitors. Dasch tried relocating to East Germany, but the East German security services regarded him as a likely American spy, so he returned to the West and settled in Bavaria. In 1957, a member of the West German Bundestag inquired as to the possibility of prosecuting the two men for treason against Germany. The prosecutor declined.

Dasch claimed he had studied US law before he left on his mission and noted that the US Espionage Act only provided that violators were subject to prison. He had not anticipated that the others would be executed.

Not much else is known about Burger. It appears he died in 1975. Dasch died in 1992 at the age of 89.

The six agents who were executed were buried in an unmarked grave in Washington. Some time later—no one knows when—the US-based National Socialist White People's Party placed a small stone monument to them on nearby woodland belonging to the National Park Service. The monument went unnoticed for decades until it was discovered and removed by the National Park Service in 2010.

[music: Closing War Theme]