

One man's history in OSS

At Work With Donovan

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In 1941, I was serving as editor of the *Survey of Current Business* in the Department of Commerce, having left a position as Instructor of Economics at Harvard. I was due to return to Harvard in February 1942, but the Japanese attack on 7 December caused me to cancel that. Then, in March, Professor Edward S. Mason, a distinguished economist, asked if I would join the staff of the Research and Analysis (R and A) Branch at the Coordinator of Information (COI), the forerunner of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Mason was then a member of the guiding board of analysts of R and A. He put to me an irresistible proposal: that after a brief indoctrination, I travel to London to explore and report back on how the British were handling economic intelligence.

My indoctrination at COI of less than three weeks focused principally on reports on Germany, Britain, and the general state of the war. I received only rudimentary information about the overall organization and functions of the COI, and I knew nothing of its continuing turf battles.

I was given a letter signed by COI chief Col. William J. Donovan which laid out the objectives of my mission as Special Assistant to the Director of the R and A Branch, William L. Langer. My objectives were to establish close liaison with the head of the COI office in London, with the Ministry of Economic Warfare (MEW) and with the British Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). I was to return to Washington whatever information I could obtain from the MEW, and I regarded the exploration of intelligence activities there as my primary task. It provided intelligence for economic warfare purposes, such as preclusive buying, as well as for military needs. The British had developed the technique of analyzing aerial photographs of German plants to a high degree, using their own plants as prototypes. Although a similar source was not available for the Soviet Union, MEW also appeared to have acquired a surprising amount of information on that country.

MEW intelligence, like R and A in Washington, was manned to a considerable degree by experts from academic life.

I shipped back to R and A many documents freely provided by the various divisions of MEW. These and other sources of information I returned proved of high value. I also sent to Colonel Donovan highlights of the JIC Committee meetings, as well as a summary of conclusions of some of the papers.

Meeting the Chief

My first meeting with Donovan would occur in London in June 1942. As I awaited his arrival, I had no idea of the critical juncture at which the COI then stood. For months Donovan had staved off assaults on the organization from the military, Budget Bureau, State Department, and others. Only through Donovan's relationship with President Roosevelt did the COI survive.

I learned later that the President had fashioned two orders that laid out the future direction of the COI. One provided for the consolidation of information agencies into an Office of War Information, to which the COI's Foreign Information Service was transferred. The other placed the remaining functions and staff of COI under the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) as a supporting agency, renamed the Office of Strategic Services.

Although these orders were on the President's desk, and all concerned were acquainted with the details, the President had not yet signed them when Donovan set off for London on 12 June. He arrived to find that, as of 13 June 1942, he was officially the head of the OSS.

I soon received an invitation from the Colonel to join him at breakfast in his suite at Claridges, his favorite hotel. I was very curious about this man about whom I had heard much, but had not yet met.

He proved to be a medium-sized, rather heavy-set, genial Irishman who greeted me with “Hello, John, so nice to see you again.” The “again” rather tickled me, as it was in character for the soon-to-be General Donovan. He was friendly, informal, and sought to put others at ease.

Donovan was much interested in the sessions of the JIC. A major reason for his journey to London, however, lay outside my range of knowledge and competence at that time: the need to coordinate subversive activities of the new OSS with those of the British. This was especially the case with Special Operations (SO)—organizing and aiding resistance groups in enemy territory and carrying out acts of sabotage and subversion. Britain’s Special Operations Executive (SOE) already had established a capacity in these fields, while the COI, with help from the British, had been rapidly building up its own resources. The need for close coordination and division in areas of activity had become evident. Donovan on this visit achieved agreement on arrangements to meet these objectives.

With Donovan’s return to Washington, my own mission in London also drew to a close. I had searched through the intelligence section of the MEW from top to bottom and sent back a steady stream of studies and documents. On 26 June I headed back to Washington, where Langer told me that I was to serve as his special assistant in charge of building up and administering support of R and A units abroad. I continued at this task until October 1943. My performance was interrupted only briefly in April 1943, when I was appointed an ensign in the US Naval Reserve and underwent a short course of indoctrination in the Washington area.

R and A

A few words about R and A are appropriate at this point. Never before and probably never since has such a unique group of scholars been assembled—historians, economists, political scientists, geographers cartographers, and others, many of them leaders in their fields. They numbered over 900 in all at the peak. During the war, they produced some

2,000 reports, as well as basic handbooks on foreign countries and countless memorandums. Initially R and A was organized along functional lines—economic, geographical, and psychological (political) divisions, not always communicating with each other. But in January 1943 the branch was reorganized in a way that reflected the military’s theaters of operation overseas. This forced the academic disciplines to work together, although not always harmoniously.

Organization Overseas

R and A followed the troops, establishing outposts in each theater of operations when accorded permission. These outposts provided information for Washington headquarters, as well as for use within the theater itself. London led the way, followed by Algiers in late spring of 1943. As the troops advanced and territories were secured, R and A sent in units that reported on local conditions, attitudes, and personalities—at Caserta, Bari, and Rome in the Mediterranean Theater. Other outposts were set up in Cairo and Istanbul to monitor developments in the Balkans and the Near East. In the Far East, units operated in Kandy, Ceylon, and finally at China’s wartime capital in Chungking and later Kunming. My major concern, however, was London—vitaly important because it was the location of SHAEF Headquarters and a multiplicity of information sources.

Recruiting for R and A abroad was a pleasure. OSS had been awarded a military allotment, and it held a high priority in claiming individuals for transfer within the services. At this point, many academic experts had been drafted and were assigned to infantry and other units. I was able to identify some of these men personally, while others were recommended by R and A divisions. Those selected would be plucked from a humdrum existence, given sealed orders, and transportation to report to a mysterious address in Washington. On arrival, they became part of the OSS military detachment assigned to R and A.

Unfortunately, the OSS allotment was long on enlisted personnel and short on officer slots. Many enlisted men, as a result, were permitted to operate in civilian clothes. This enabled them to deal more effectively with high-ranking opposite numbers in the Army and Navy.

New Assignment

In October 1943, Langer informed me that Lt. Col. Otto Doering, head of General Donovan's secretariat, had asked that I be transferred to a unit working in direct support of the General as European Theater Officer. In that job, I exercised a primary role in coordinating the support by branches at Washington headquarters of their activities in the European Theater. To carry out that task I spent March and April in 1944, before D-Day, at OSS headquarters in London, as well as at its Field Detachments, including the OSS airfield at Harrington from which night drops behind enemy lines were launched. I reported back to Col. Doering on the OSS operating units' need for further support and recommended priorities among them.

I also served as the representative at headquarters for Col. David Bruce, the head of OSS in the European Theater, on matters not put directly to General Donovan or one of the assistant directors. Thanks to Bruce, OSS in London possessed outstanding leadership. Years later he was to serve as a special representative in the Vietnam peace negotiations and as Ambassador to Great Britain, France, and Germany. His social, intellectual, and personal qualities enabled him to interact with leaders at the highest level. He was ably supported by his deputy, Col. Russell Forgan. A young naval officer I had known in Washington, William J. Casey, served as a staff assistant to Bruce and Forgan.

The General Joins the Invasion

General Donovan was not one to sit and direct OSS from an office chair in Washington. In many ways he was a hands-on leader, traveling frequently in the field. And where decisive action occurred, he was apt to be on the spot. It was not surprising, then, to find him in England in early June of 1944 preparing to participate in the cross-channel invasion of

Normandy. He and Bruce accompanied the invasion fleet and on 7 June went ashore on Utah Beach. Concurrently, more than 100 OSS agents reported on enemy troop movements behind the lines, while an equal number worked with French Resistance in sabotaging rail and communications links.

Again in mid-August, when action shifted south to capture Marsaille, the General joined the invasion force with leaders from the OSS unit in Caserta—a unit that provided much of the intelligence required in planning the operation.

Planning for a CIA

On 14 September 1944, General Donovan returned to New York following the invasion of southern France. For some time, he had been considering the need for continuing a central intelligence agency after the war ended. He asked Lieutenant Colonel Doering to draft a memorandum setting forth the mission and basic characteristics of such an organization, and he sent this to Budget Director Harold D. Smith, in response to Smith's request for Donovan's plans after the conquest of Germany.

The memorandum was carefully crafted, and I had commented on several drafts. Basically, it called for continuing an OSS-type of agency, to be run by a director appointed by the President, but guided by a board of representatives from the State, War, and Navy Departments. The agency would be responsible for all secret activity, including secret intelligence, counterintelligence, cryptanalysis, and subversive operations. It would operate only outside the US, using its own communications and both vouchered and unvouchered funds. In a word, essentially OSS as it then stood.

Donovan sent a copy of the memorandum to Isador Lubin, an assistant to the President and a strong supporter of OSS. Lubin showed it to the President, who, on 31 October 1944, formally invited Donovan to consider postwar intelligence needs and organization.

Doering's memorandum was then circulated to all interested parties. The continuation of a central intelligence agency in peacetime gained some support from civilian agencies but little from the military. Nevertheless, the idea survived.

Meanwhile, in November 1944, I was appointed Donovan's assistant executive officer for Europe and Africa, as the theater officers were phased out. I monitored cable traffic with those areas, had access to pouch material, and continued to coordinate the support of activities by Branch headquarters in New York.

New Job for Casey

In mid-December 1944, the Germans staged a surprise counterattack through the Ardennes in Belgium. They advanced to a road center called Bastogne, defended by Americans. A few days before Christmas, Donovan flew to Paris. He regarded the Ardennes offensive, which by 28 December was failing, as an Allied intelligence failure. He then appointed Bill Casey as the new chief of intelligence for the European Theater.

Casey had been head of Bruce's Secretariat since October 1943, and I had interacted with him on many occasions. He was enterprising, energetic, and highly intelligent; in effect, he had become Bruce's executive assistant.

Donovan told Casey that his mission was to penetrate Germany. Because he would be dealing with military personnel at a high level, Casey was allowed to revert to civilian status, becoming inactive in the Naval Reserve. Colonel Forgan, who had succeeded Bruce as head of OSS in Europe, and Casey soon met with General Betts, General Eisenhower's American deputy G-2. Betts informed them that crossing the Rhine would become the main Allied operation, with the Ruhr and the Frankfurt areas as major targets. Most needed was information on troop movements behind the lines. Forgan and Casey also visited Sir Stuart Menzies and Sir Gerald Templar, heads of the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and the German section of SOE, respectively. Both were skeptical that Germany could be penetrated, and they had no plans for a similar operation.

Still, Casey persisted. He wrote down a list of objectives, headed by troop movements through rail centers, and set about selecting agents and preparing all necessary documents. He was able to obtain some

agents from prisoner-of-war camps. In London, Casey sought agents among Poles, Belgians, Dutch, Czechs, and Russians, all of whom could carry the cover story of a foreign worker, as well as Germans.

Meanwhile, plans were taking shape in SHAEF for a wide Allied sweep to the Rhine. At the end of January, Casey visited General Betts again at SHAEF Headquarters outside Paris and told him that OSS was prepared to send 100 intelligence observers into Germany. He and Betts then developed a list of 20 major cities to be covered.

Early dispatch of missions was limited by availability of aircraft and inclement weather. Only six got off in February. Then, on 1 March, a team of native Berliners was dropped near the city and found themselves free to move about. By end of the March moon period, Casey had 30 teams operating. Meanwhile, the Allied armies had made great strides. They reached the Rhine on 7 March, after a two-day advance, and crossed that key barrier on 23 and 24 March.

Casey managed to keep ahead of the rapidly moving troops, providing timely intelligence through OSS detachments, but only with great difficulty. From 17 March to 25 April, 58 teams were sent into Germany, accomplishing a task the British judged had minimal chance of success.

Planning Ahead

It became apparent to us all in the Winter of 1945 that Germany would soon be defeated and divided by the Allies into previously agreed zones of occupation. OSS prepared for this by organizing 208 officer and professional personnel and a somewhat larger backup clerical and enlisted group to be concerned solely with intelligence. This force was put in place in April 1945, some weeks before V-E Day on 8 May.

At the request of the War Department, R and A had produced a 2,000-page civil affairs handbook on Germany for planners and administrators, and top R and A experts were appointed advisers to American

representatives to the Allied Control Council. X-2, OSS counterintelligence, became exceptionally busy interrogating Gestapo and Abwehr officers and helping track down Nazi intelligence agents still at large.

In January 1945, at a meeting involving Donovan, Allen Dulles, and Robert D. Murphy, US political adviser to General Eisenhower, it was agreed that espionage should not be limited to the American zone but that it also should be conducted in the British, French, and Russian sectors. Donovan had become increasingly suspicious of Russian intentions to cooperate with the West in postwar policies and programs. So when a German intelligence officer on the Eastern Front, Gen. Reinhardt Gehlen, fled to the Alps to surrender to Americans with his files and his group, he was taken to OSS headquarters. The Gehlen organization was debriefed, and it was allowed to continue operating its network in Russia.

After V-E Day, Colonel Forgan retired, and Donovan divided the Continent into country missions, with Dulles in charge of Germany. OSS was assigned a headquarters in Wiesbaden, a small unit was also located in Berlin, and special detachments remained attached to Army Groups and Army Headquarters.

Seeking a Consensus

In the spring and early summer of 1945, I accompanied Donovan on three lengthy trips to Europe. On 6 April, just before departing on the first trip, a development concerning the proposed central intelligence agency arose. Again, the initiator was Isador Lubin in the White House, who told the President that action on the matter appeared to be stalled.

The President then signed a memorandum requesting that Donovan "call together the chiefs of the foreign intelligence and internal security units in the various executive agencies so that a consensus of opinion can be secured." Donovan immediately sent letters to 12 agencies asking them to comment on his proposal and, after his return on 25 April, to meet with him to obtain the desired consensus.

Back to Europe

My first trip with Donovan included London and Paris, followed by visits to all OSS detachments with armies and Army Groups in France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany. While traveling with Donovan, I came to admire more than ever his outstanding qualities. He had immense energy—he seemed to require only five hours of sleep—and great intellectual curiosity. In London and Paris, I had to supply him with a steady stream of books that he read upon retiring and frequently before rising—always history, biography, and the best of fiction. Donovan also was a man of great charm, a witty and extremely interesting conversationalist to whom figures of speech came quite naturally. He was inherently modest, and he was considerate of others.

In London

London remained a major base for OSS, containing the largest number of personnel outside the United States. R and A and X-2 were particularly active, and SI (espionage) and SO operations continued to be launched from the airfield at Harrington. London also provided the headquarters for OSS operations in Scandinavia. Donovan met with branch chiefs and reviewed these operations, especially the efforts to supply the Resistance forces in northern Norway. The British had not cooperated fully in this activity, refusing to allocate RAF aircraft manned by Norwegian pilots. In late March the use of American aircraft with inexperienced pilots had resulted in a disastrous drop in Norway of a group headed by Lt. William Colby, years later Director of Central Intelligence. Two planes crashed, men were killed, and many supplies were dropped irretrievably off target.

In Paris

We arrived in Paris on 12 April, occupying the suite overlooking the Place Vendome reserved for General Goering during the German occupation. We had

hardly settled in when we learned of the death of President Roosevelt. Donovan had been concerned about the President's health, and, before leaving, had set up some extensive briefings on the organization and activity of OSS for Vice President Truman. Because of the President's untimely death, however, the briefings did not occur.

OSS Without Roosevelt

Roosevelt's death deprived OSS of a leader who understood the agency's complex relations with military and other intelligence units. The situation with Truman was entirely different. He lacked knowledge of OSS, and he relied heavily on Budget Director Smith, who had his own views on the organization of postwar intelligence. Smith informed the President that he would be presenting these views, and he cautioned him against taking any action on postwar intelligence.

Donovan did not meet with Truman until 14 May, almost three weeks after Donovan's return from Europe on 25 April. The visit lasted 15 minutes, and Donovan was not given any encouragement.

Meanwhile, replies had come in to Donovan's request of 6 April for the views of interested departments on the proposal for a central intelligence agency. The most important was conveyed by Secretary Stimson of the War Department, who wrote on 1 May that the Departments of "State, War, Justice and the Navy have together examined the proposed Central Intelligence Service and are in substantial agreement that it should not be considered prior to the termination of hostilities against Germany and Japan." So, for the time being, the proposal was put on the shelf.

At this point, OSS was again the object of a calculated series of press attacks, chiefly in articles by Walter Trohan, a reporter considered to be close to J. Edgar Hoover. These appeared at a time when the House Appropriations Committee was considering the OSS budget request for the coming year. The articles accused OSS and the War Department of harboring Communists, requiring Donovan and General Bissel, G-2, to go to the capital to defend their personnel.

Trohan evidently also was responsible for the printing on 9 February of the full text of Doering's memorandum, outlining a central intelligence agency, which appeared in *The Washington Times-Herald* and *The New York Daily News*. The next day newspapers throughout the country picked up the story. Some opposed the idea of such an agency, but *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* editorialized that the proposal should be considered. The JCS, however, concluded that it would be inexpedient to push ahead with the proposal for the time being.

Traveling Again

On 17 May, I again accompanied Donovan as he left the US on a dual mission: to complete the visits to OSS detachments that had been interrupted by the death of the President, and to participate in preliminary planning for the trial of war criminals. Donovan had been appointed US deputy prosecutor for these trials, teaming with Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson, as the chief US prosecutor.

For 10 days, in London and Paris, the Supreme Court Justice and the General ironed out details with the British and French on the conduct of the trials. There remained meetings with the Russians, to be held later, that could prove difficult.

As always, Donovan received many visitors in London—among them this time were Isador Lubin, still a special assistant to the President; Ambassador Pauley, the wealthy oil man in charge of the Reparations Mission; and Dr. Sproul, President of the University of California. On one morning, the voice at the end of a phone said, "This is King Peter." The King of Yugoslavia was seeking Donovan's political and personal counsel.

I knew that Donovan and the OSS had been involved with Peter, a King essentially without a throne once Tito had taken power. Donovan had inserted an agent into the court of Peter—Bernard Yarrow, a former deputy to New York District Attorney Thomas E. Dewey.

Yarrow reported on political developments involving Peter and on Peter's relations with the British—a risky matter. These reports went to the President, the State Department, and the JCS. Tito had invited Peter to accept a regency to manage his affairs and a government drawn mainly from Tito supporters. Although Churchill and Roosevelt urged acceptance, Peter turned down the proposal. The British then sent Peter's full government back to Yugoslavia to sign the agreement.

Other Visits

We next moved south to OSS installations at eight locations from 3 June to 7 June. Caserta, the first, was the largest and most important. Allied Force Headquarters for Italy and North Africa was housed there in the King's summer palace. In Verona, on 4 June, Donovan was met by General Gruenther, Chief of Staff of Gen. Mark Clark.

The next day, we flew on to Salzburg and Pilsen. A tour through the great Skoda Iron and Steel Works in Pilsen revealed heavy damage to the plant but much less to machinery, which led us to conjecture that Germany's recovery might be more rapid than expected.

We went on to Munich and Frankfurt. From the air, both appeared to be obliterated, but still functioning. Frankfurt now housed SHAEF, and our own headquarters stood nearby in Wiesbaden. After stops again in Paris and London, we returned to Washington on 12 June. The respite was brief, for we would be off again in another 10 days.

The Budget Battle

It became difficult to maintain a positive outlook at OSS headquarters at this time. The series of false press articles prompted the House Appropriations Committee to ask the JCS for a statement on the usefulness of OSS and whether it should be continued. The Chiefs then put the question to the theater commanders. General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz responded as expected: OSS did not operate

in their theaters, and they saw no need for it in the future. The India-Burma Theater, where fighting had ended, also found no further use for it.

But other replies were positive. China's Commander felt that the value of OSS was likely to be extremely high. The Middle East recognized the great contribution OSS made in the Italian campaign, and it believed the agency essential so long as conditions in Italy, Austria, and the Balkans remained unstable. The European Commander considered the future value of OSS to be high, and he said its cessation in that theater should not be considered under any circumstances.

These replies were sent to the Appropriations Committee on 29 May, when Donovan was in London. He was advised of them by cable, along with the JCS judgment that OSS "would continue to be useful in the conduct of the war." But the poison distilled by Trohan and other publicity had penetrated deeply. Even before the Appropriations Committee received the information it requested, it cut the budget, and the President cut it further. The end result was a budget, of \$24 million, little more than half the amount originally requested.

Preparing for War Crimes Trials

In this unfavorable climate, Donovan on 22 June set off for London, and again I accompanied him. The major purpose of the trip was to complete arrangements for the war crimes trials. The next several weeks were given over to further discussions with the British and French, but with the Russians added. In the end, it was agreed that an international military tribunal should be created, and that trials should be held in Nuremberg, Germany, in the American zone. Moreover, organizations as well as individuals should be indicted, including the Gestapo and the German general staff and corps of officers.

A rift soon developed between Donovan and Jackson, both stubborn men. Donovan urged the Justice to enlist the President's help in removing the war crimes indictment against the German general staff and officer corps, but Jackson could not be persuaded. Donovan then resigned as special assistant to the chief prosecutor.

But the OSS remained involved in the trials. The prosecuting team included OSS General Counsel James B. Donovan and Assistant Director Ralph Albrect. R and A research analysts helped interrogate the Nazi defendants and prepare briefs against them.

More of the Same in Washington

On 13 July, we returned to Washington, where Donovan found the situation of the OSS little changed. Further adverse publicity appeared alleging that OSS had large funds unaccounted for and that it was topheavy with representatives of international banking and business. Donovan met with newsmen on several occasions, and favorable reports also appeared, one notably in *The New York Times*.

Another attempt to keep alive the issue of a postwar central intelligence agency was launched, this time through Congress. Donovan urged Senator Harley Kilgore, Chairman of a Military Affairs Subcommittee reporting on Germany's war potential, to direct attention to the need for a central intelligence agency to assess that potential.

But events at this point were moving rapidly. Atomic bombs were dropped on Japan on 6 and 9 August 1945. On 2 September, Japan formally surrendered and World War II was over.

Budget Director Smith, busy trying to pare back war-time agencies, was ready for this moment. In July he had inquired about Donovan's plans for further reductions in personnel. The General responded that OSS was operating on a liquidation budget, cutting back operations to those consistent with obligations in the Far East, in occupied Germany and Austria, and with the maintenance of missions elsewhere in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. He foresaw the completion of liquidation by 1 February 1946 at the latest.

At that point, Donovan wanted to return to private life. But he went on to raise the question of the disposition of OSS assets, and he again outlined the case for a central intelligence agency. He met with OSS branch chiefs to discuss the organization's future, and he also informed missions overseas of his response to Smith.

OSS Goes Public

For some time, those of us on Donovan's staff had been urging him to release information on OSS accomplishments as a counter to the barrage of misleading negative information. He finally agreed, and he and his branch chiefs met with newsmen in early September. They described the plight and problems of American intelligence, cited some of the accomplishments of OSS and individual officers, and laid out the controversy over the future of the agency, as well as Donovan's plan to return to private life.

The *Chicago Daily News* subsequently published five comprehensive articles, the last of which was entitled "If OSS Didn't Exist, It Would Have To Be Invented." Articles appeared throughout the country, as I and others marshaled examples of operations, including the work with Resistance groups in Europe that paved the way for invasions, collaboration with the underground in Japanese-occupied Thailand, and the release of Japanese-imprisoned General Wainwright and of the Doolittle air crews. *The Washington Post* reported "4,000 Stranded Flyers, Rescued by OSS Underground Railway," and *The New York Times* headlined "US Cloak and Dagger Exploits and Secret Blows in China Bared." All this helped to lift staff morale, but it had no decisive impact on Truman and Smith.

Final Rites

On 13 September, Smith again discussed OSS with Truman, and they agreed that the time had come to dissolve OSS. The Budget Bureau had drawn up an order transferring the R and A and Presentation Branches to the State Department and the remainder to the War Department as a Strategic Services Unit. Donovan had not been consulted on this proposal.

When he saw it, he asked if the JCS, to whom he reported, had seen it. This was a detail the Bureau had overlooked. The JCS then received the order, but they did not concur until 20 September. When they transmitted their decision to the Bureau, they were informed that Truman had that day already signed the order. OSS was terminated.

Truman also addressed a letter to Donovan, acknowledging the "capable" leadership he had brought to a vital wartime activity and reassuring him that the peacetime intelligence services were being erected on facilities and resources mobilized by OSS.

On 27 September, Donovan held a final gathering of employees. He left us on a positive note: "You can go with the assurance you have made a beginning in showing the people of America that only by decisions of national policy based upon accurate information can we have the chance of a peace that will endure."

On 1 October, R and A and Presentation personnel formally joined the State Department. The rest of us, 9,028 in all, formed the new Strategic Services Unit. Donovan was reassigned to duty with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War. He returned formally to civilian status on 12 January 1946, there to carry forward his fight to establish a central intelligence agency.

I found that I would be eligible to retire from the Navy on 1 January 1946, and made plans to leave it and the Strategic Services Unit at that time. I received the Commendation Ribbon from both the Navy and War Departments. And thus ended what I later came to regard as the most interesting period of my life.

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