

1943 - 1944

BIGOT
BRITISH - MOST SECRET
U.S. - SECRET

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SECRECY

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Overview

SECRECY

While the many deceptions of Operation Bodyguard and Fortitude continued to baffle Hitler, great measures were taken to ensure that the real Normandy invasion was concealed. It would be vital, and especially difficult, to keep the extensive movements and concentrations of men, supplies, and ships necessary for the Overlord invasion a secret. The most rigid precautions were necessary.

Starting in September 1943, COSSAC adopted a special classification, known as BIGOT, by which all papers relating to the Overlord operations which disposed the target area or the precise dates of the assault were limited in circulation to a small group of officers subjected to stringent safeguards.

The most crucial period for secrecy was from March 1944 until after D-Day when the heaviest concentrations of troops and landing craft in the southern English coastal areas were being made. General Eisenhower requested that civilians not be allowed into the coastal areas, so exclusion zones were set up starting in mid-March. He also asked for strict communications censorship of civilians and press.

The civil ministries of England and Prime Minister Churchill objected to these measures because of the restrictions it placed on British citizens who were already under the stress of war. Complicating matters more were the many exiled kings, queens, princes and their entourages who were living in England and used to getting their way. General Eisenhower insisted, "It will go hard with

our consciences if we were to feel, in later years, that by neglecting any security precaution we had compromised the success of these vital operations or needlessly squandered men's lives." The War Cabinet and Prime Minister Churchill ministries conceded and the ban started in April, 1944. Britain became, temporarily, a police state isolated from the rest of the world.

Restrictions on the military would be even more severe. General Eisenhower ordered all units under his command to maintain the highest standard of security discipline, and that severe disciplinary actions be taken in the case of any violations. Ike also ordered that no one in uniform who had any knowledge of the invasion be sent on an operation where there might be danger of capture.

By mid-April the troops stationed in England were placed in "transit camps" and prohibited from leaving. All mail to and from foreign diplomats from any other countries—even our Allies—was subject to censorship. By May 25, all letters from American troops were suspended and foreign diplomats were forbidden from sending coded messages.

A full blackout was slowly put into effect. Cities which had bustled with uniforms and buses during the day fell suddenly silent, but throughout the night the constant hum of engines on the roads of southern England betrayed the secret movement of forces. If any Nazi spies had been present in the south of England, the secret would not have survived. But they had all been captured, and the secret was safe.

