THE SABOTEUR AT WORK

Second in a series of important articles about the activities of the Fifth Column in America

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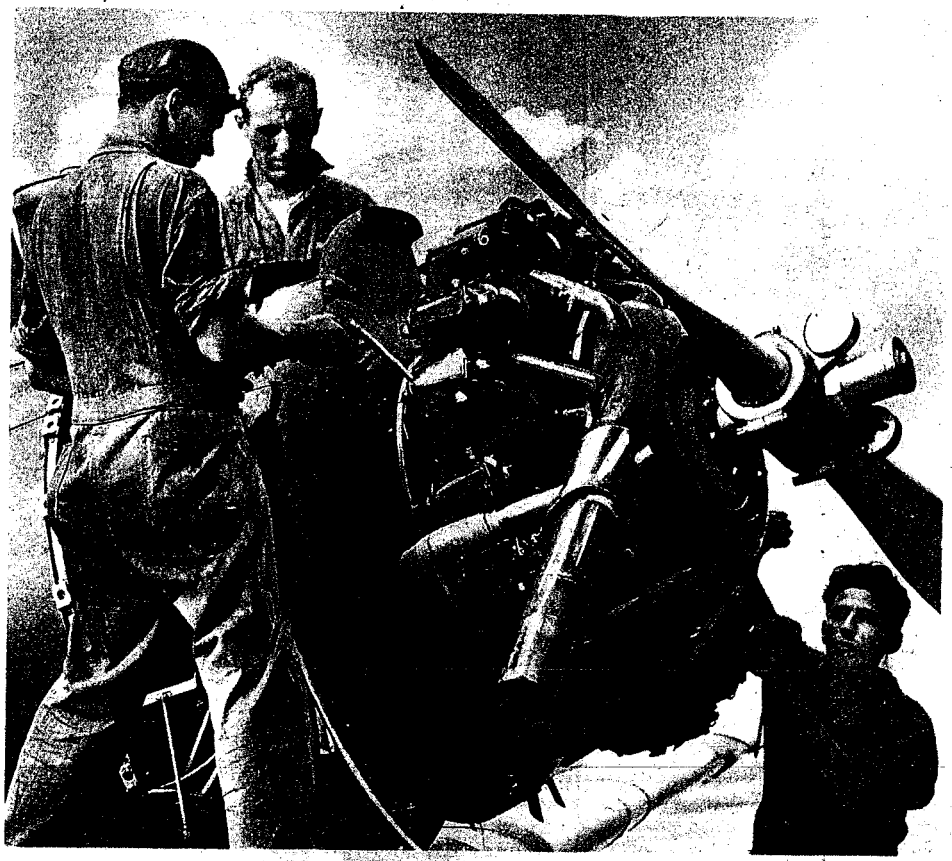
THE saboteur is one of the most potentially dangerous members of the fifth column now working inside America. Whether he seeks to destroy our machinery, to burn our materials, to block the orderly functions of our government in time of emergency, to poison our food or water supplies — or whether he merely specializes in the plain bungling of work — he is a serious menace to our internal security.

When it is skillfully performed, by even small groups of foreign agents, sabotage is often more disastrous than results secured by a regiment of soldiers in time of war. The explosion on Black Tom Island, New Jersey, in 1916, is proof of this. Three men were killed and many others were injured in that blast. Thirty-three carloads and ten barges of ammunition, valued at over $20,000,000, were destroyed. The explosion shook the entire area of metropolitan New York, causing a million-dollar loss in shattered glass in Manhattan alone.

The horrors of well-executed sabotage become obvious when we consider a city in darkness, its water supply polluted or its transportation system wrecked. Last summer the nation was shocked by news of the wreckage of a crack streamliner in the West. Frequent similar disasters could be expected once the experienced saboteur moved into action.

Sabotage has none of the romance often associated with espionage. It is a grim, sordid thing. Waste and horror follow in its wake. It is carried on by the espionage agent or the traitorous individual who works with him. The spy is very often the advance agent of the saboteur, who, with torch and bomb and destructive weapons, may spread desolation throughout the country, cripple the nation's industrial plants, make it difficult to feed and supply troops, destroy the morale of the civil population and undermine national-defense programs.



U. S. Army Air Corps

We need first-class workmen who are also first-class Americans—like these

of supply. He strikes at the fountainhead of our power. It is not practical, of course, to draw a definite line of demarcation between the efforts of spies seeking to discover secrets of our military and naval defense and offense, and that part of the army of spies and associated saboteurs that strikes at our industries.

Aims at Supplies

OBVIOUSLY, our military and naval secrets would be of little avail to us if supplies and materials could not be promptly transmitted to our military and naval forces. An army in the field, possessing the most modern, effective arms, is useless without an ample supply of ammunition. The saboteur strikes at this flow of ammunition. Our Army and Navy cannot defend us unless they are fed. They cannot engage the enemy unless the supply of steel from our steel plants is sufficient to provide the implements of defense. It is the saboteur's goal to hamper the manufacture and delivery of these supplies.

The saboteur operates in as many ways as there are methods of disabling plants, damaging material and supplies, crippling power and interfering with the manufacture of every type of product in a modern, industrial community.

Fire is a favorite weapon of this enemy agent. The damage done by disastrous fires in industrial plants is difficult to estimate. The saboteur in his work seeks to veil his activities so that fires and explosions will appear to be accidental. This is fundamental. He endeavors in every possible manner to make these disasters appear to have been caused by human frailty on the part of plant employees or by defects in the operation of machinery.

His methods have vastly improved with the advance of science. Explosions and fires, the favorite weapons of these agents, may be arranged so that the saboteur may be many miles away from the scene when the disaster occurs. For instance, a small vial may be placed in a supply of coal destined for the engines of a transport or a merchant vessel carrying goods of vital value to our armed forces. Chemicals inside the vial slowly eat their way through the container. This process can be timed so that the vessel will be miles

at sea before the chemicals cause the consequent fire.

Foreign agents practice similar schemes in industrial plants. And, when the time is ripe, they strike at power lines, public utilities, boilerhouses, engine rooms and railroad bridges. During the months and years preceding a war, they plan, chart, sketch and devise the specific methods to be employed at the appointed hour. They do everything that a skillful general does who knows that he must fight a battle against superior forces at some future time.

The saboteur does not always arrive from an enemy country at the outbreak of war or shortly before war is declared. For years, even for decades, a staff of agents may be working in key industrial plants in various countries. By reason of their long employment these agents will be almost completely immune from suspicion, thus making it extremely difficult to detect their activities.

To combat these far-flung sabotage activities, the FBI has instituted surveys of hundreds of industrial plants that have contracts with the Army and Navy to supply material for national defense. Specially trained Special Agents carefully consider every possible vulnerable point in these plants and then devise means by which they can be protected. Suggestions are made to plant executives and employees. I have never encountered a finer spirit of patriotism than is being exhibited by these industrial workers, who are helping in every way they can to make our national defense secure.

The necessity for insuring continued production of the commodities needed in our national preparedness cannot be overestimated. Let me illustrate the ways in which sabotage threatens this production, and the steps that can be taken defensively to meet these attacks. The objective of a saboteur is to break the continuity of the supply of necessary emergency or war materials. The expert saboteur discerns, usually through employment in a key plant, the particular buildings or the exact machinery vitally necessary to the continuance of production. Then he tries to halt or to slow down that production.

The following incidents that have actually occurred in some of our industrial plants show how the saboteur works, and emphasize the threat he holds for us:

Nails have been driven through cables causing short circuits; tools have been placed on ledges over generators so that vibration would cause them to fall into spinning gears; pieces of bent wire have been placed over the terminals of a switchboard; metal rods have been placed in generators; wiring has been changed so that meters and gauges did not accurately reflect the working condition of certain machinery; bricks have been lodged in troughs which carried off molten steel, thus causing an overflow.

To meet these threats experienced FBI Special Agents are sent to survey plants and to give defensive suggestions. These Special Agents are as well equipped, perhaps better qualified than the saboteur, to discern these vulnerable points of possible attack. They often can tell at a glance the points that are not sufficiently protected. They may recommend additional guards, or additional floodlights. They may recommend twenty-four-hour guard service where none exists.

Identity Badges

THEY may suggest that steps be taken to see that any visitors entering the plant are carefully scrutinized upon entry, their identity fully established; that they are required to wear distinctively marked badges while in the plant; that the time of their entry be registered; that they be escorted to the plant official with whom they claim to have business; that they be escorted to the gate upon exit, and that the time of their exit be duly registered and the badge taken from them.

They will suggest that no individual employees in positions of trust — and particularly no employees who are members of the police forces of these plants — should be continued in such employment unless their personal histories have been thoroughly investigated to determine their reliability and their immunity to enemy solicitation or corruption.

Since the saboteur seeks to make his acts appear to be accidents, we emphasize that no fires of mysterious origin should go uninvestigated. And because saboteurs are always seeking to learn how they can do the most damage, workers in positions of trust are urged to show their patriotism by refusing to disclose — to anyone — the confidential nature of their duties.

Fortunately, sabotage has been circumvented to a great extent during the present emergency, yet it cannot be denied that several serious plots have been averted only by the prompt action that has been taken.

There was the case of the skilled employee in an airplane factory who stole secret plans of a new bomber from the plant. Fortunately, we got them back and sent the thief to prison. And here is another case of a different type that occurred recently. One day when a workman returned from lunch he found emery dust in the mechanism upon which he was working. This mechanism was designed to steer a highly precise implement of war — and, if it were faulty, it would have resulted in a costly loss. Yet one employee who worked on the mechanism admitted that he had put an abrasive on the gears because he had a grudge against a fellow workman who worked too fast. The case is now pending trial.

The country's industries must continue operating at full force if our internal defense is to be maintained on a proper basis. Adequate defense of our industries against the saboteurs of the fifth column will help to spell certain national security.

Next Week: *How Spies Operate*