

F R E E L A N C E - G A S P A R D C I R C U I T

Major John Hind FARMER (Hubert)'s Organization [continuation of STATIONER Circuit]
[See also SPITWRIGHT Circuit]

Date

History of Organization

Sqd Ldr SOUTHGATE [see STATIONER Circuit] had been approached by GASPARD, the head of a French group covering a wide area in the PUY-de-DOME, LOIRE, HAUTE-LOIRE and CANTAL with the request for arms and supplies. An agreement was reached to cooperate as this group had a number of notable sabotage exploits to its credit, including the attack on the liquid oxygen works at MASSIAC, and the burning of a stock of 40,000 tyres at the MICHELIN works at CLERMONT-FERRAND [see STATIONER Circuit achievements].

1944

Apr 29/30 Parachuted In order to exploit this possibility Major John Hind FARMER (Hubert) and his courier, Miss Nancy WAKE (Hélène) were parachuted to SOUTHGATE's dropping ground in the Massif Central with instructions to get in touch with GASPARD through SOUTHGATE.

On arrival they were taken to a safe house in COSNE d'ALLIER belonging to M. VILLCHENNON, a Radio Merchant.

May 1

The next day Sqd Ldr SOUTHGATE contacted them. At 4.00 p.m. he decided to take them as well as VILLCHENNON and MARTIN (Chef d'Action de l'Allier) to MONTLUÇON. On arrival in this town SOUTHGATE suddenly changed his mind, saying that he had to return to his house. Next day they heard that SOUTHGATE had walked straight into a Gestapo trap and had been arrested together with his W/T operator (Aime). FARMER and Nancy WAKE thereupon decided to move away as quickly as possible and drove in a gazogene to the village of AYAT. Here they met LAURENT one of GASPARD's chief Lieutenants. With him they proceeded to MASSIAC in the CANTAL in a car stolen from the Germans, hoping to find GASPARD. But as MASSIAC had just had a descent by the Gestapo it was decided to spend the night in the woods.

May 2

On arrival at a Château approx. 15 km from St.FLOUR they met two more of GASPARD's Lieutenants, PRINCE and JUDEX.

May 7

An Inter-Allied Mission under Major F.H. CARDOZO arrived in the PUY-de-DOME, not having any knowledge of the ~~FREE~~ Mission nearby. [See BENJOIN Mission.]
FREE LANCE

May 10

GASPARD finally arrived and was handed two million francs which FARMER had brought. At the same time GASPARD was informed of the military targets which had been allotted to his organization. GASPARD sent the Mission to the Chief of Resistance of the district, M. FOURNIER in CHAUDESAIGUES who, in turn, sent them to a very small village named LIEUTADES, where they remained without wireless and thus incapable of doing much work until 15 May when:

Apr. 30

~~Apr. 15~~ Lysander - 2nd Mission: (for 1st Mission see TINKER) - Capt Denis Joseph RAKE (Roland) W/T operator landed and made contact with Major FARMER. They established their HQ at CHAUDESAIGUES and got down to work at once.

Major FARMER reported by W/T that GASPARD's organization had immense possibilities as a fighting force as it was situated in strategic centres but was in dire need of arms. His groups consisted of:

3,000 men in MONTMOUCHET; 1,250 in FRIDEFONT and VIADUC de GARABIT; 2,500 in Le LIORAN and 1,000 in FLIX-St.GENEY.

Although the short summer nights made it difficult to deliver to so remote an area the following dropping operations were successfully carried out:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Operations</u>	<u>Containers</u>	<u>Packages</u>
<u>1944</u>			
June	8	150	163
July	2	19	14
Aug	6	113	41
Totals	16	282	218

Major FARMER agreed with GASPARD to arm the Maquis in the CHAUDESAIGUES district which was growing apace and on D-Day had reached a figure of 4,000 men.

June 4

Parachuted LONDON telegraphed that Lieut René DUSSAC (Anselme) US Army had reached the safe house of Mme RENARD in MONTLUÇON and awaited collection. Miss Nancy WAKE was despatched by car from CHAUDESAIGUES to MONTLUÇON accompanied by an armed Maquisard to collect this officer. On arrival he told FARMER that his mission was to act as liaison officer between the Maquis and any American parachute troops that might drop in the area. As a second duty he was to find, when requested, landing grounds for airborne troops, and thirdly to act as weapons instructor. Lieut DUSSAC did very good work as instructor owing to his intimate knowledge of weapons and their tactical use.

June 18

GASPARD's Maquis at MONTMOUCHET was attacked by a German force estimated to be 1,500 strong using aircraft as a cooperating arm. The enemy, though suffering heavy losses, forced the Maquis groups to retire to CHAUDESAIGUES.

1944
June 20

On this day an all-out attack against CHAUDESAIGUES was made by the Germans, using armoured cars, tanks, artillery, 4 Junkers 88, and 2 Fockewulfs 190. The attack lasted from 7.00 a.m. until after nightfall. In face of such an overwhelming force the order to retire was given. Major FARMER, 4 Canadian Airforce pilots, Mme FOURNIER and Nancy WAKE left the village of FRIDEFONT taking refuge first in a nearby wood and then in a deep gorge. During the battle contact with Capt RAKE : is lost. The Maquis suffered heavy losses and were dispersed over three departements: CANTAL, PUY-de-DOME and ALLIER.

June 21

Realizing that without a W/T operator their activity would be greatly curtailed, FARMER despatched Nancy WAKE to LARQUEBROU where, he had heard, a W/T operator from ALGIERS was working. It proved impossible to find him though she managed to pass a message to William D.J. DUNTON (Desiré) [see AUTOGIRO Circuit] for transmission to LONDON. No acknowledgment was ever received. Major FARMER and Lieut DUSSAC went in search of Capt RAKE. They were equally unsuccessful. In these attempts Nancy WAKE covered approx. 200 km on foot.

July (early)

Three weeks were spent in trying to contact some other British W/T operator or organizer. They and two local recruits travelled from St.SANTIN to MORIAT by car with four bicycles strapped on to the roof. From MORIAT by van to GIAT in the PUY-de-DOME. From GIAT by train to MONTLUÇON. From here Nancy WAKE cycled to CHATEAUROUX (100 km) trying to locate Major MAINGARD (Samuel) [see SHIPWRIGHT Circuit]. FARMER cycled through VICHY to LAPALISSE being equally unsuccessful.

In despair they joined the Maquis at GIPCY where they helped by giving instruction. They decided that if they heard nothing from LONDON by the end of the month they would endeavour to return to England via Spain.

July 22

Great was their delight when, on 22 July they heard a message broadcast by the BBC "en clair" for "Hélène et Hubert" announcing the arrival of "François" on the dropping ground in the CANTAL which was about 250 km from where FARMER was when he heard the message. They set off at once by car for St.SANTIN where the field was located.

July 25

Parachuted Lieut Roger Louis FAUCHER (François) a W/T operator dropped safely near St.SANTIN and contact with LONDON was re-established at once.

July 27

Two days later Capt RAKE who, although wounded in the CHAUDESAIGUES' battle had walked 250 km during five weeks in his endeavour to find Major FARMER, finally succeeded in contacting him. After receiving a new set of codes and crystals dropped to him at St.SANTIN, he recommenced his W/T work for FARMER.

July 28

As all the Maquis, after the MONTMOUCHE and FRIDEFONT attack had been dispersed over three departements, CANTAL, PUY-de-DOME and ALLIER, FARMER decided to split up the area. Capt RAKE and Lieut DUSSAC remained in the CANTAL, whereas FARMER, Nancy WAKE and Lieut Roger FAUCHER returned by car to the ALLIER. On their passage through the CREUSE, just North of EYGURANDE they narrowly escaped arrest. They were warned at the last moment by a farmhand that a pitched battle between the Maquis and the Germans was in progress.

On receipt of instructions from LONDON that it was more important to assist the Maquis groups in the ALLIER and the PUY-de-DOME than in the CANTAL, Capt RAKE was fetched back and Lieut DUSSAC was installed in the PUY-de-DOME near AMBERT where LONDON had intimated that 60 French para-troopers were to be dropped.

July 29

Major FARMER reported Maquis groups in action at PONTGIBOUD, SAUXILLANGES, AMBERT, THIERS, GIAT, LA PEYROUSE, St.GERVAIS, AIGUEPERSE, FORET de CUIREIS, YGRANDE, BESSON, VALLON CERILLY and DENEVILLE.

July (end)

By the end of July FARMER had re-established contact with GASPARD and it was decided to tour the departements visiting the Maquis groups and organizing dropping grounds near each one. Activity was considerable, including the blocking of a tunnel on the MOULIN-MONTLUÇON line by blowing up two trains inside it.

Aug (early)

GASPARD and FARMER visited within one week all the groups in the PUY-de-DOME area, and found suitable grounds. On return to ALLIER he ordered material by W/T which was despatched promptly [see table on preceding page]. St.HILAIRE was taken over and there was a succession of skirmishes in the area. Men were always available, arms being the limiting factor.

Aug 7

Parachuted Lieut John D. ALLSOP (Alonce) and Lieut (later Capt) SCHLEY (Samson) were dropped to Major FARMER's HQ located in the Forêt de SIVRET just North of YGRANDE.

Aug 8

The following morning a German patrol composed of three light vehicles and nine lorries carrying approx. 300 men attacked FARMER's HQ. Major FARMER was not present, having returned to the dropping ground to collect some containers that had not been found after the last parachute operation. The attack was successfully driven off, largely due to Lieuts ALLSOP and SCHLEY making good use of their Bazookas at close quarters.

Aug 11

FARMER, GASPARD, ALLSOP, SCHLEY and Nancy WAKE went on another tour round the Maquis groups to distribute the greatly needed money brought by ALLSOP and SCHLEY.

1944
Aug 19

On completion of this tour they established their HQ in the Forêt de TRONÇAIS, North of CERILLY, where they gave instruction to the local Maquis in the laying of ambushes. They also toured their positions which had been ordered by the Etat Major FFI of the ALLIER.

It was about this time that Major FARMER suggested to M. FABRE, Chief of Staff of the ALLIER, to take action against the German garrison of about 500 men in MONTLUÇON. It was agreed that Major FARMER should send the German Garrison Commander an ultimatum demanding the surrender of all German military forces and civilian personnel under a guarantee that the prisoners of war would be accorded Geneva Convention treatment. Although the Colonel appeared to be willing, his two Lieutenants, members of the SS., refused.

Thereupon the Maquis surrounded MONTLUÇON and occupied part of the town. Water, electricity and gas to the barracks were cut off. Every time any Germans attempted to leave the barracks, they were engaged by automatic and rifle fire by Maquisards placed in all streets leading to the building, causing severe losses. After four days the German Commander requested a three-hour armistice to bury the dead and evacuate the severely wounded to a French hospital. This was agreed.

Aug 25

But on the fifth day, a large German column of approx. 204 vehicles arrived from the direction of LIMOGES, relieved the beleaguered garrison and enabled them to escape. Although the column was ambushed repeatedly, it was of too large a size to be wiped out.

Aug 27

Major FARMER established his HQ at the Château de FRAGNE, 12 km from MONTLUÇON where he formed a new Maquis with 25 gendarmes. Lieuts ALLSOP and SCHLEY undertook the instruction of this group in ambush and demolition work. Although the training was completed in a remarkably short time, events moved so rapidly that this group was never used in active guerilla warfare, the Germans having withdrawn from the district.

Aug 30/31 Parachuted Major FARMER was joined by a team composed of Major Edwin LORD (Leonce) (US Army), Capt Pierre MEUNIER (Moralist) Canadian (on his 2nd Mission) [for 1st Mission see ACTOR Circuit], Lieut Michel Georges BLOCH (US Army), Lieut William MACOMBER (US Marines), Lieut DUBOIS (US Army) and Lieut Raoul DUVAL (Dorsay, Dweller).

Lieuts BLOCH, MACOMBER (MEDERIC), DUBOIS and DUVAL were each sent to a Maquis group as instructors. Major LORD was to act as inspector to see how his officers were proceeding in their tasks. Capt MEUNIER was sent to the Etat Major of the ALLIER as liaison officer.

Shortly after, the Mission's work having been accomplished, the Circuit was wound up and all personnel proceeded to PARIS from where they were flown back to the UK.

NOTE: The ACHIEVEMENTS of this Circuit are incorporated with those of the STATIONER Circuit.

(See also Russel BRADDON NANCY WAKE, London 1956)