

WOODCUTTER CIRCUIT

Organization of Lieut Albert Victor WOERTHER (Justin)

Date	History of Organization
1942	M. Albert Victor WOERTHER who had worked with a Resistance group in France since 1941 was arrested and incarcerated in the EYSSES prison in 1942.
1944 Jan 3	Together with 53 other prisoners he escaped on 3 Jan 1944 and crossed the Pyrenees on foot, reaching England on 8 March 1944.  After going through a course of training and being commissioned in the British Army he volunteered for action in France.
July 17/18	<u>Parachute</u> lieut WOERTHER was dropped near MACON and was received by Capt JAURENT-SINGER, the W/T operator of Capt Jean REGNIER [see MASON Circuit]. WOERTHER's mission was to deliver one local Radio operator Emil BONNET (Kind) to Major FRAGER in the YONNE [DONKEYMAN Circuit] and to obtain useful contact addresses from him. Thereafter he was to proceed with his own local W/T operator Armand BOUVIER (Tactful) to NANCY to organize resistance East of that town as far as METZ where an Alsatian group had been reported.
July 20	Lieut WOERTHER with Emil BONNET and Armand BOUVIER proceeded to CHASSY-sur-THOLON to contact Major FRAGER (Jean-Marie, Louba) but as he could not be found WOERTHER proceeded to PARIS to the second safe house address he had been given.
Aug 1	Here he got in touch with Roger BARDET second-in-command of FRAGER's organization. BARDET informed WOERTHER that FRAGER himself had left for NORMANDY. The fact that he had been arrested was concealed. WOERTHER handed BARDET 500,000 francs and placed the W/T operator at the disposal of the FRAGER circuit.  BARDET gave WOERTHER and Armand BOUVIER one of his own liaison agents with instructions to introduce them to another Roger working in NANCY at the Societe LOREMA. But on arrival there they soon discovered that this Roger was working for the Gestapo.
Aug 7	WOERTHER thereupon made the acquaintance of Marcel FERRIN, Director of the Cooperative of MAKEVILLE, who put him in touch with the Chief of the FFI in NANCY. After numerous interviews the latter declared he had all the arms he needed and refused to cooperate with the British.  Through the garagiste TRAHER of MAKEVILLE Lieut WOERTHER contacted a group of 50 men in MAKEVILLE with whom he subsequently worked satisfactorily.
Aug 20	About this time a certain ELTZER (Jean) twice got in touch with WOERTHER and asked insistently to be allowed to transmit a message to LONDON through WOERTHER's W/T operator. As transpired later, this French naturalised German had been recruited originally by Major FRAGER but had been arrested by the Gestapo and was subsequently released on condition that he should help catch British W/T operators. ELTZER was given a rendezvous with the W/T operator Armand BOUVIER at the NANCY cemetery. However instead of BOUVIER he was met by the Commandant de Gendarmerie DESBROSSES who dealt with him in the manner of those times. ELTZER was never heard of again.
Aug 27/28	WOERTHER also got in touch with 12 men at LIMEY where he succeeded in staging his first parachute operation on the farm Ste BARBE à REMENAUVILLE, belonging to M. Emile THOUVENIN in spite of great difficulties as the Germans had shortly before occupied the surrounding country. The recognition signals could only be made for a very brief period for fear of disclosing the dropping ground to the enemy. The arms received were divided between the LIMEY group and the Maquis under Commandant FRANCOIS at PONT-à-MOUSSON which carried out effective attacks on Railways and Telecommunications and a number of ambushes on German road convoys.  A second parachute operation had to be abandoned on account of the presence everywhere of the retreating German forces which cut all circulation between NANCY and LIMEY. Furthermore there were several German tanks in the farm where BOUVIER had hidden his W/T transmitter.
Sept 1	Armand BOUVIER was arrested by the Germans together with Adrien LALLEMAND, son of the Mayor of LIMEY and accused of being members of the Maquis operating in the forest of QUATREVAUX, 2 km from LIMEY. Guarded by 12 German soldiers they were driven towards NANCY when the lorry was suddenly attacked by the Maquis in the QUATREVAUX forest which enabled them to escape.
Sept (early)	At the beginning of Sept, Lieut WOERTHER lost contact with his W/T operator Armand BOUVIER as the front line established itself between LIMEY and NANCY.

1 9 4 4  
 Sept 9/10 Parachute Lieut Alphonse SYBILLE (Sanche) [see also CARVER Circuit] was dropped in to act as assistant to Lieut WOERTHER in the NANCY-METZ area.

NOTE: SYBILLE had been active in Resistance in TARBES since August 1943 and rendered good services to SOUTHGATE and BOITEUX (q.v.). When he became gravely compromised due to his activities in TARBES and ANGOULEME, he left via Spain on 14 June 1944. Here he was imprisoned in the concentration camp MOLINAR de CARRANZA until 10 August when he left for LONDON. After attending some courses and being commissioned he was sent to France - see above. On 23 Sept 1944 he was recalled to LONDON and transferred to the B.C.R.A.L.

Sept 15 Lieut WOERTHER entered NANCY together with the American troops and re-established contact with BOUVIER and through him with LONDON.

Sept 24 In accordance with orders given them by the SFHQ of the Third American Army, Lieut WOERTHER and his W/T operator Armand BOUVIER started for STRASBURG but WOERTHER received a W/T signal en route ordering them to proceed to PARIS and to report to Major HAMILTON on completion of his mission.

Oct 7 Armand BOUVIER returned to MAXEVILLE.

- NOTE:
- (1) The members of the WOODCUTTER Circuit organized the cutting by SNCF employees without the use of explosives of the railway lines near PONT-à-MOUSSON three times, thereby holding up traffic for 24 hours on each occasion. [No dates recorded.]
  - (2) Numerous road ambushes near PONT-à-MOUSSON were organized by the local Maquis. [No dates or details recorded.]
  - (3) Overhead telephone lines were constantly cut in and near PONT-à-MOUSSON from mid-July until liberation.