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General Donovan

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES
RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS BRANCH
BIOGRAPHICAL REPORT

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Name: SKORZENY, Otto

Nationality: Austrian

Region: Vienna and Berlin

Birth date and place: 12 June 1908, Vienna

Major positions: SS-Obersturmbannführer and Lt. Col.
(Oberstleutnant) of the Waffen-SS

Former Head (Chef) of Section S (sabotage)
of Amt VI in the Reichssicherheitshauptamt
(RSHA)

Former Head (Chef) of Section D (sabotage)
of the Militärisches Amt of the RSHA

Family History: Skorzeny comes from a middle class family; his father, Anton, was a construction engineer in Vienna. He is married. 1/

Education and Work
History and Political History:

Skorzeny attended Realschule and Technische Hochschule in Vienna and graduated as a construction engineer in the early 1930's. 1/ During his university years he was a member of the German nationalist fraternity "Marcomannia". The members of this fraternity were known as radical German nationalists and as being in close contact with German rightist circles and with Nazi organizations. 1/12/ At the same time he also became a member of the Steirischer Heimatschutz (Styrian Home Guard), the wing of the Heimwehr which split off from the official Heimwehr organization because its members did not agree with Starhemberg's anti-Nazi politics; practically all members of the Steirischer Heimatschutz became members of the illegal Nazi party after 1933. 1/ 12/

After termination of his studies, Skorzeny held various positions as an engineer in building trade. 2/ However, his main interest was concentrated on politics; in May, 1932 he joined the Nazi Party in Vienna; he became a member of the Allgemeine SS on 1 February, 1934. 1/ At that time the Nazi Party in Austria, and consequently also the SS, was already outlawed and the Nazis tried to force the Austrian Government to submit to their will by a series of terroristic actions in which members of the SS were instrumental. 12/ Skorzeny was the leader of a motor squad of illegal SS men when the Germans invaded Austria in March 1938 and subsequently served as motor vehicle inspector of an SS-Abschnitt (SS group) in Austria, apparently entirely abandoning his civilian occupation as a construction engineer. 1/ At the outbreak of the war, Skorzeny joined the German Army and first served as an officer candidate with the Air Force. In January 1940 he volunteered for the Waffen-SS (Military SS) and served as Obersturmführer in the SS-Division "Das Reich"; later he was transferred as Hauptsturmführer to the Sicherheitsdienst (SD) (Counter-Intelligence and Security Service of the SS) 1/.

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While serving in the SD he is reported to have planned and executed the kidnapping of two British agents from Holland in 1940 (the so-called Verlo incident). 4/ He became known when he parachuted with a small party of SS men near the place in the Appennines where Mussolini was held as a prisoner of the Italian Government and brought him to Hitler's Headquarters in the middle of September 1943. For this achievement he was made an SS-Sturmabführer and awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. 13/ At about the same time he was put in charge of sabotage operations in various sections of the Abwehr organization (German Counter Intelligence Service), originally headed by Admiral Canaris, were subordinated to the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Main Security Office of the SS) headed by Ernst Kaltenbrunner. 3/ In the Reichssicherheitshauptamt he was Head of Section S, (sabotage) of Amt VI and Head of Section D (sabotage) of the Militärisches Amt (military office). 4/ Orzeny boasted after his capture by American troops, that in his capacity as head of the German sabotage activities he was the master mind which planned the kidnapping of Admiral Nicholas Horthy, former Regent of Hungary. 11/ He is said to have been entrusted with the task of spreading terror behind the Allied lines with the help of specially trained saboteurs and murderers using stolen American uniforms and vehicles. He is reported to have planned the assassination of the Allied Commander-in-Chief, General D. Eisenhower. 10/ 11/ He also organized the SS Streifkorps (raiding or patroling unit), a major sabotage agency operating in the last months of the war, and the so-called 150 Panzer Brigade, another subversive organization, which was, however, later dissolved. 5/ Another report credits Skorzeny with the forestalling of a planned Hungarian Army lurch against Horthy. 6/ In the course of his activities in the SS Skorzeny was made a SS-Obersturmbannführer and Lt. Col. in the Waffen SS. 5/ In the last weeks of the war he was mentioned on several occasions as one of the pure leaders of the Werewolves and as the likely chief of German post-war sabotage activities. 7/ 8/ However, all these plans were frustrated by his capture by the American troops on 16 May 1945. 9/

Sources:

- 1/ Neues Wiener Tagblatt, 16/17 September 1945
- 2/ FCC Daily Report 16 September 1943 (Berlin radio)
- 3/ FCC Daily Report, 13 September 1943 (Berlin radio)
- 4/ OSS Sources, 1 January 1945
- 5/ OSS Source S, 17 February 1945
- 6/ OSS Source S, 19 February 1945
- 7/ OSS Source S, 14 April 1945
- 8/ OSS Source S, 20 April 1945
- 9/ OWI European News Digest, 18 May 1945 (London radio)
- 10/ New York Times, 18 May 1945
- 11/ New York Times 22 May 1945
- 12/ OSS Source T, 24 August 1945

13/ FCC Daily Report 15 September 1943 (Berlin radio)

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