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M.S.

(1) Enclosed as shown below is a report of the escape from a German Prisoner of War Camp of the following N.C.O. and other ranks, brief details of whose performances are given opposite their names:-

<u>Name</u>	<u>Resume of Report</u>	<u>Encls.</u>
3705 Cpl. <u>PHELAN, E.J.A.</u> 4 R.M.T. Coy., N.Z.E.F.	Cpl. PHELAN and Pte. SILVERWOOD were captured in CRETE on 1 Jun 41. Cpl. PHELAN escaped from the Germans and was at liberty in CRETE for about 18 months before being captured with four Australians while attempting to escape by boat. He also attempted to escape from an Arbeitskommando near the Czechoslovak frontier in Feb 43 but was caught trying to board a goods train. Pte. SILVERWOOD was at liberty in CRETE for about seven months before his final capture. Spr. SIMMONS was captured near DUNKIRK on 30 May 40. He escaped with a companion from a work party at BEUTHEN in Mar 41 and was recaptured after five days on a goods train. He made a second attempt in May 42 to escape from a work party at the paper factory at KRAPITZ, hiding in a wagon loaded with paper, but was recaptured at the first junction.	1A
4499 Pte. <u>SILVERWOOD, E.</u> 4 R.M.T. Coy., N.Z.E.F.		
2069923 Spr. <u>SIMMONS, F.</u> 226 Field Coy., R.E.		

All three escaped from Arbeitskommando E117 at OPPELN on 20 Dec 43, and went by train via BRISLAU and BERLIN to STETTIN where they spent several days in a boarding house. In STETTIN they got in touch with Swedish sailors who took them on board their vessel, hiding them until their arrival in Swedish waters.

(2) I recommend all the above for the award of the M.M.

26. Mar 44.

J. D. Sinclair
D.M.I.

I agree

H.B. Williams
MS

28.3.44

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Ref 1A

MOST SECRET.

M.I.9/S/P.G.(G)1723.
(G)1724.
(G)1725.

ESCAPED FROM ARBEITSKOMMANDO E 117
(OPPELN) VIA STETTIN TO SWEDEN.

The information contained in this report is to be treated as
MOST SECRET.

ACCOUNT OF ESCAPE OF

3707 Cpl. PHELAN, Edward John Allan, 4 R.M.T. Coy., N.Z.E.F., attchd. 7 Armoured Div. ✓
 4499 Pte. SILVERWOOD, Earle, 4 R.M.T. Coy., N.Z.E.F., attchd. 7 Armoured Div.
 2069923 Spr. SIMMONS, Frederick, 226 Field Coy., R.E., 48 Div.

Left: STOCKHOLM, 23 Jan 44.

Arrived: LEUCHARS, 24 Jan 44.

(For personal details please see end of this Report.)

1. Cpl. PHELAN.

(a) CAPTURE.

I was captured at SPHAKIA, (CRETE) on 1 Jun 41 and taken to a prison camp on the N.W. coast of the island.

(b) ATTEMPTED ESCAPE IN CRETE.

I escaped from this prison camp at night, along with Sgt. BARKER. We went to the N.W. corner of the island, and I lived with peasants for a considerable time while we were trying to find some means of getting away. Sgt. BARKER and I parted company, and from about 6 Jun 41 to 25 Sep 42 I was with a CRETE peasant who was also trying to avoid the Germans.

We lived mostly in the hills, occasionally visiting his home. Eventually I met four Australians. We were armed with German tommy guns and pistols and captured a patrol boat which plied between the N.W. coast of CRETE and the Greek mainland carrying oil. We went round the coast for about 80 miles till we reached the vicinity of SPHAKIA, our idea being to try to pick up more British troops. We had been told that there were no German outposts on the coast, but when we called in at a small cove and dropped anchor, a German post opened up over our bows with machine guns. We had a Greek crew of seven, whom we put into a small boat and sent towards the Germans while we dived off the blind side of the boat and swam...

INTERVIEWED BY: I.S.9(W), M.I.5, 25 Jan 44.
 D.D.M.I. (P/W), I.S.9(X), 26 Jan 44.
 P.W.2(a), S.O.E. P.I.D., F.O. } 27 Jan 44.
 European Int. B.B.C.
 Spr. SIMMONS only - A.G., 5 Feb 44.

APPENDIX A.
Distribution: I.S.9.
 M.I.6 (for I.S.9(W))
 I.S.9(W) File.

Distribution of this Report.
 D.D.M.I. (P/W) (2 copies) M.I.9. M.I.19.
 I.S.9. I.S.9(W). M.I.9(d) (13 copies).
 H.I.6 (for I.S.9(d)). M.O.1 (S.P.) (Lt.-Col. Butters).
 MIS-X.ETOUSA. MIS, POW Branch (for JOHNSTON)
 (2 copies). Lt.-Col. H.B.A. de BRUYNE.
 A.L.O., M.I.9. A.F.H.Q. (for HOLDER).
 S.I.O., F.O.N.A.S. File.

APPENDIX B.
Distribution: No. 1. M.I.6. M.I.10.
 M.I.14. M.O.1 (S.P.)
 D.D.I.C. (Admiralty)
 P.I.D., F.O.
 A.I.1(a) P/W.
 C.I.O. Bomber
 Command, R.A.F.
 A.L.O., M.I.9.
 H.I.19(2).
 MIS-X.ETOUSA. (2).
 File.

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Recaptured and swam ashore. We managed to climb the escarpment, but within three days we had all been caught. The names of the Australians were:-

Cpl. Bert ARMSTRONG.
Gnr. Frederick SHARP.
Rfn. Michael BELL.
Pte.(?) Albert SMITH.

I was taken to the civil prison in GALATAS and kept there for about a month. Here I was interrogated by the Gestapo who could not believe that our party had been on the island since the British evacuation, and thought we were Special Service troops. I was then sent to PIRAEUS, and was about 15 days in a small civilian prison there. I tried to escape from this prison by hiding in a clothing cupboard, but I was caught almost immediately after leaving the building. After this I was sent to Stalag VIIIB (LAMSDORF, Upper Silesia), which I reached late in Oct 42.

(c) ATTEMPTED ESCAPE FROM ARBEITSKOMMANDO E 453.

At LAMSDORF I was put on a working party and sent in Feb 43 to ARBEITSKOMMANDO E 453 at STRAMBERG, about 3 miles from the Czechoslovak frontier, where I was employed in a cement factory which was also producing aluminium. I escaped from this factory alone after about four months. I had maps and compasses which I had got from Czechs, but was in uniform. I walked about 65 kms. in the hills and was then caught trying to board a goods train. I was sent back to LAMSDORF, but having already been nine days in a civilian gaol, I received no further punishment.

2. Pte. SILVERWOOD.

(a) CAPTURE.

1941
1 Jun
Captured
SPHAKIA

Feb 42
Stalag VIIIB.

I was captured at SPHAKIA on 1 Jun 41 after waiting four days in the hope of being evacuated. I escaped almost immediately from the prison camp and was at liberty for about a month. I then gave myself up in order that I might be registered and write to my people. After I collected a certain amount of food I escaped again from the camp (at GALATAS) and was at large in CRETE for about seven months, but found it impossible to get off the island. I was finally recaptured in Dec 41, and reached Stalag VIIIB in Feb 42.

3. Spr. SIMMONS.

(a) CAPTURE.

30 May 40
Captured
FRANCE.

I was captured on 30 May 40 midway between CASSEL and DUNKIRK with a party consisting of an officer and nine O.Rs. who were trying to reach the coast.

(b) ATTEMPTED ESCAPES.

29 Mar 41
Escaped
BEUTHEN

4 Apr 41
Recaptured,
WEIDEN

30 May 42
Escaped,
KRAPPITZ

(i) I got away on 29 Mar 41 from a working party at BEUTHEN (GERMANY, 1,000,000, Sheet 118 6580) where I was working in the mines. I was accompanied by Sgt. W. TAYLOR, R.T.R. We hid in a wagon of coal and were taken to DRESDEN. The Germans started unloading the coal and knocked off before completing the job. We moved to another train which took us about 50 kms. back the way we had come. We changed into another train and got as far as WEIDEN (South of PLAUEN, SAXONY)(GERMANY, 1,000,000, Sheet 134, 103554). In WEIDEN we were discovered in a box wagon by railway officials on 4 Apr. We were sent back to LAMSDORF, where I received 14 days in the cells. My feet were frostbitten on this attempt.

(ii) On 30 May 42 I escaped from a paper factory at KRAPPITZ (GERMANY, 1,000,000, Sheet 117, 9590) near OPPELN with Q.M.S. WELTON, Sherwood Foresters, and Cpl. T. WALKER, Dorset Regt. We hid in a wagon loaded

/with a.....

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with a paper consignment to GRAZ (AUSTRIA) in the hope of being able to get to YUGOSLAVIA. We had food, but no civilian clothes. We were caught at the junction at KRAPPITZ near the factory. I got six days' cells for this attempt.

4. Cpl. PHELAN, Pte. SILVERWOOD and Spr. SIMONS.

ESCAPE FROM ARBEITSKOMMANDO E 117 (OPPELM).

(a) Preparations for escape.

On 6 Nov 43 one of us (Cpl. PHELAN) who was then still in Stalag VIII B received a letter from Sgt. CROWLEY (S/P.G. (G)1501) from STOCKHOLM. This was sent in CROWLEY's own name and said his guardian angel had watched over him, and that he was having a good time. This was taken to indicate that the route which CROWLEY had followed was satisfactory. The letter had been passed by the German censorship, probably without having been read, as a good deal of the censorship at the camp is now done by girls. The Germans did not take any action which would indicate that the contents of the letter had been noticed in any way. Sgt. CROWLEY had promised to send a postcard to indicate how he had got on, and had mapped out the route with Cpl. PHELAN before he left.

My (Cpl. PHELAN's) intention was to escape with Cpl. John BARRY, R.E.M.E., who had been sent back from his last working party on a charge of stealing two German blankets from the Kommando before he escaped. Cpl. BARRY and I (Cpl. PHELAN) got ourselves put on the same working party on which Pte. SILVERWOOD and Spr. SIMONS were already employed. This Kommando was E.117 at OPPELM (GERMANY, 1,000,000, Sheet 117, 9515) (Baku Cement Factory).

On the first day on the Kommando BARRY, who speaks fluent German, had a quarrel with a German foreman, as a result of which he was sent back to Stalag VIII B.

After this the three of us joined forces. Before leaving the Stalag we had all been individually in touch with the Escape Committee and had been supplied each with an Ausweis and a permit to travel by Schnellzug. These were type-written documents. In the case of Cpl. PHELAN a photograph was attached to the Ausweis.

We had the following equipment:-

(i) Money.

Cpl. PHELAN.

200 RM. from the Escape Committee and a further 250 RM. obtained by selling food, etc.

Pte. SILVERWOOD and Spr. SIMONS.

SILVERWOOD got 100 RM. from a P/W in exchange for a remittance form for £5. The Escape Committee provided 80 RM. for the two of us, and we raised an additional 20 RM. - making about 200 RM. in all between us.

(ii) Clothing.

Cpl. PHELAN.

On my first day in ARBEITSKOMMANDO 117, Cpl. BARRY got in touch with a Pole who gave me a suit of civilian clothes in exchange for a pair of boots and a pair of pants. This suit consisted of a blue serge jacket and grey worsted trousers. I had civilian shoes and shirt from home.

Pte. SILVERWOOD.

I had a French overcoat which had been retailored in the Stalag and dyed black, a pair of U.S. trousers dyed black, and a blue denim jacket. Because of the thinness of my jacket I had to wear my overcoat

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all the time. I had civilian shoes and shirt from home.

Spr. SIMMONS.

I had a French overcoat dyed black and retailed in the Stalag and battledress trousers, altered and dyed black. I had no jacket. I had civilian shoes and shirt from home.

(b) ESCAPE AND JOURNEY TO SWEDEN.

20 Dec 43 We escaped from our billets at the factory on 20 Dec 43, PHELAN being in one billet and the two others in another. PHELAN escaped from the billet about 1835 hrs. by cutting the wire surrounding the lavatory. The others walked out of the billet and climbed the main gate about 1800 hrs.

We met at OPPELN station about a mile from the factory. The tickets were bought by Spr. SIMMONS, who speaks some German. No papers were required, none being necessary for journeys under 100 kms. We had third-class tickets to BRESLAU by Personenzug. The train, which left at 1705 hrs., was crowded and we had to stand in the corridor. There was no control on the journey.

BRESLAU We arrived at BRESLAU at 1930 hrs., and got tickets for BERLIN, this time producing our identity papers. The booking was again done by Spr. SIMMONS. The train left at 2215 hrs. It was crowded, and we had to stand in the corridor for part of the journey, but had no difficulty with any officials.

BERLIN Instead of going through to the Schlesischer Bahnhof the train stopped at the Ostkreuz Bahnhof in BERLIN and we changed into a local train to the Schlesischer Bahnhof. From there we went to the Stadtbahn to the Friedrichstrasse, and then by underground to the Stettiner Bahnhof. Here we booked for STETTIN, again producing identity papers. Our train, a D-Zug, was due to leave at 2315 hrs, but did not leave till about 0015 hrs. (21 Dec). The ticket collector on the train asked for our papers but did not question them.

STETTIN. We arrived in STETTIN about 1420 hrs. We left the platform by an overhead bridge, where the control was less strict than at the main exit. We had been advised in the camp to leave by this bridge. Our total travelling time had been 15 1/2 hours, plus four hours waiting at various stops.

From the station we walked along the Ufer Bollwerk (Pharus-Plan of STETTIN F 9), and at the Hansa Brücke (G 8) we met a Frenchman in P/W uniform. SIMMONS asked him where the French Stalag was, and he told us to go to the Finow Weg (K 11). We took a No. 1 tram bound for the Flughafen and got off near the Finow Weg. We saw a German guard on duty at the Lager and turned back.

We returned to the Ufer Bollwerk by tram. Our papers had been passed so often that we felt enough confidence in them to go to a hotel. We went to a boarding house called the Hotel Suhr, midway between the Hansa Brücke and the Baum Brücke. There were several German soldiers staying in this boarding house. We said we were Belgian workers who had to report in the morning to the Arbeitsamt and wanted a room for the night. We had to show our passes, which the proprietress copied into her register and returned them to us the following day. We got one single and one double room, and the proprietress said next morning that if we wished we could book the rooms for four or five days. We booked the rooms till 26 Dec.

22 Dec 43. We now went round the docks and travelled on trams trying to pick up Swedish seamen. We eventually met a number of Swedes in a brothel run exclusively for foreigners in the Klein Oderstrasse near our hotel. In the Bahnstrasse nearby there is also a small cafe - it has no name - near the Mexico Cafe which is much frequented by Swedish sailors. We met five or six Swedes in the brothel, all from one vessel. They spoke English and we told them we were English and asked them to take us to SWEDEN. They agreed immediately. This was on 22 Dec.

25 Dec Taken on board ship. On the night of 25 Dec we met the sailors again in the brothel by arrangement, and they took us with them that night to their ship, which

/was in the...

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26 Dec.

was in the harbour beside the Cross Kraftwerk (K 11). We had no difficulty in getting into the harbour, as there is no guard on the gate after 2200 hrs. and we entered the harbour about 2215 hrs. One of the sailors went on ahead on to the boat and took the German watchman into their messroom for coffee. While the watchman was there the other sailors smuggled us on board and hid us for the night under the boilers. Next day (26 Dec) we were moved to a rope locker where we were hidden for six days, being fed by the crew. The captain and officers did not know we were on board.

The ship sailed on 1 Jan 44. Shortly before we arrived in the Swedish port of OXELOSUND on 2 Jan our helpers moved us to the coal bunkers and instructed us to make a noise in order to attract the attention of the officers who in this way would think we had stowed away and would not suspect any of the crew of having helped us. We were "discovered" by the mate who gave us a meal and brought the Chief Officer. We were well received by the Captain and officers.

2 Jan 44
Landed at
OXELOSUND
(SWEDEN).

On 2 Jan we were landed at OXELOSUND, where we were handed over to the Swedish authorities who treated us very well. We were sent on to STOCKHOLM on 4 Jan.

Cpl. PHELAN.

Captured:
Date of Birth:
Army Service:
Peacetime Profession:
Private Address:

SPHAKIA, (CRETE), 1 Jun 41.
22 Jun 14.
Since 25 Sep 39.
Oil chemist.
250 Broadway,
NEWMARKET,
Auckland,
New Zealand.

Pte. SILVERWOOD.

SPHAKIA, (CRETE), 1 Jun 41.
21 Nov 14.
Since 15 Sep 39.
Panel beater.
206 Park Road,
HASTINGS,
Hawkes Bay,
New Zealand.

Spr. SIMMONS.

Captured:
Date of Birth:
Army Service:
Peacetime Profession:
Private Address:

Nr. DUNKIRK, 30 May 40.
9 Dec 18.
Since 26 Apr 39 (T.A.).
Lorry driver.
151 Rectory Corner,
THEALE,
Nr. Reading,
Berks.

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