

MINUTE SHEET.

Reference.....

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Rev. 21/6/48.
 Group Capt. Jones, Air Attaché.
 Squadron Leader Stacey, Assistant Air Attaché. *J.S.*

Following our talk after lunch about the Norden bombsight, I set down the data which I have so far come across. The Cabinet attached great importance to securing from the Americans the release of the bombsight. Thus the Prime Minister wrote on the 25th August 1939 to the President asking for its release - the efforts of the Air Attaché to obtain this having failed. The President replied release was not practicable. The suggestion by Mr. Churchill to the President in a message of 16th Oct. 1939 that Britain might give America Asdic if ~~they~~ ^{Washington} could guarantee its secrecy, led to the idea of getting the Norden sight released as a quid pro quo - which was thought might be acceptable provided an adequate self-destroying device to prevent the bombsight falling into the hands of the enemy were available. The latter condition seemed to be met in December when the Ambassador was told (tel. 860, Dec. 5th) that the Air Ministry had designed such a device. But the Navy Dept. was opposed on the ground that this the most jealously guarded secret might become available to the enemy.

The matter apparently rested until after Dunkirk. On July 1st, ¹⁹⁴⁰ the Ambassador put two points to the President:-
 (1) that British scientists had stabilised a British automatic bombsight which it was claimed was as good as the Norden, if not better, but production would take a long time;
 (2) the efficiency of the new German high altitude bombing tactics seemed to show that they had a sight similar to the Norden. The file ends on that point without any indication of the President's reply.

The point I am trying to establish was when the bombsight was finally released to us. I suspect it must have been in 1941 because the Ambassador's weekly political

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[OVER.

G.202/-/39
 "Norden
 bombsight"

G.15/-/40

330/38/41

summary for 17th Sept. 1941 informed London that a spy trial had revealed that the "jealously guarded secret" had in fact been sold to the Germans in 1938!

If without too much trouble you could supply the missing link in the story I would be most grateful.

I am writing, as I told you, for the Cabinet History Committee the history of overseas supply and would like to make a reference to the bombsight as so much importance was attached to it in 1939-40; but it is difficult to use the early material without knowing, and being able to make a summary reference to, the end of the story.

H. Duncan Hall

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June 15th 1948

P.S. Neither the Green nor White Registries appear to have anything on the Norden bombsight for the second half of 1940 and the whole of 1941.

Mr. Duncan Hall.

Reference your query regarding the Norden bombsight, I am afraid that I have drawn a blank. Our file on this subject was destroyed in November, 1947.

From the very meagre information that I can find on the subject among our files, I think that the sight must have been given to us at the end of 1940 or the beginning of 1941.

I suggest that the people who can give you the correct answer are undoubtedly the Air Ministry.

So sorry that I cannot be of further assistance.

M. J. ...
R. C. Douglas Glc.

R.A.F. Attache'

18th June, 1948.

A-12/4/1.

RCJ/jkr