Ken Follett

From: Ken Follett
Sent: 20 November 2000 12:27
To: Dan Starer (E-mail)
Cc: Bernard Green (E-mail)
Subject: Phone sabotage

Here's a summary of where I'm at on the subject of telephone sabotage. I am sending it to Bernard Green. Would you forward it to Stan Swihart? I'm disappointed not to have heard from him but maybe he's mulling things over. You might also send this to Brian Dyes and Sam Hallas, whose ideas I have used.

In 1940 France had fewer than 4 phones per 100 people. The German occupation must have created a large extra demand for phone facilities. Furthermore, the French network was radial, based on Paris, whereas most of the additional traffic would have been linear cross-border, from Berlin to various French locations where there were large German army bases.

Nobody so far has been certain exactly what arrangements the Germans made, and in particular whether there was a separate telephone network for the German military. However, the likeliest scenario is that they must have built additional facilities to supplement the existing French system; that the additional facilities must have been linear cross-border rather than Paris-radial; that the new facilities must have been automatic, not manual; and that they must have been at least partly restricted to military use.

On that basis, here is the fictional scenario as I see it:

1.   There is a large building on the outskirts of Reims that houses the local telephone exchange serving the city and surrounding area.

2.   The exchange has been partly modernised. Some callers in the Reims area can dial nationally, but others still have to speak to an operator for all calls other than local.

3.   The Germans have taken over this building and used it to house additional equipment as follows:

        a.   The automatic exchange for all voice and teleprinter traffic between Berlin and German forces all over northern France.

        b.   Amplification equipment for the same.

    ∧   c.   A key node in the Reichsbahn's Europe-wide PBX which controls all French trains.

4.   The Resistance destroy the exchange cable chamber through which run all the cables for all these systems. They also burn the records cards which show how the cables are connected. They also burn the MDF (could someone please decrypt this acronym for me?). Because the chamber is in the basement of the building, the repair team will first have to use digging equipment to access the cables. Then they will take several weeks to correctly reconnect all the cables without the help of the records.

5.   During this period, all calls which would normally have passed through the new German military network will have to be rerouted via the old French system. Most calls will therefore have to pass through old-fashioned manual exchanges. There will be great congestion on the system and this will impede German communications and, crucially, force the military to use wireless communication in preference to the phone system.

        Does this work?

d.   A new long-distance cable made up of wires that can transmit multiple circuits passes through the building.

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