

The story of Michel Hollard, by George Martelli, 1960

Clothbound edition

Price SFr. 32.50 without dispatch

Review

When France capitulated in 1940, Michel Hollard was determined to continue the struggle against the Germans by acting as an Allied agent. He started to build up and organizing a network, which he called the *réseau Agir*. In January 1942 it became for two years, a highly successful information service in favour of the Allied Cause in Northern France. In British intelligence circles *Agir* soon became famous for the accuracy of its reports.

The success of the organisation was entirely due to Michel's outstanding capacity for leadership. He chose the agents himself, collected their information and nearly always handed it over personally to the British-intelligence officers in Switzerland. It sounds quite incredible but he succeeded in crossing the heavily defended frontier between France and Switzerland on ninety-eight separate occasions.

The *réseau Agir* was completely self-contained; no wireless was used and it did not rely on British parachute drops for supplies. It was entirely dependent on the initiative of the quick-witted, cool-headed and extremely brave Frenchman. At great personal risk, Michel Hollard reconnoitred in 1943 a number of heavily guarded "V.I." sites in France and dispatched the blueprint of a the launching platforms via Switzerland to England. With this information available, in December, 1943, the R.A.F. struck with such devastating effect that the Germans were forced to abandon their original plan of despatching 5,000 flying bombs a month to London and to adopt a much more modest programme.

Shortly afterwards in February 1944, Michel Hollard was betrayed to the Germans and arrested in Fresnes prison, where he was subjected to every sort of torture. Ultimately sent to incarceration in the Neuengamme extermination camp, he had at the end of war great luck in successfully escaping.