

~~SECRET~~**(U) Virginia Hall's Career in the Central Intelligence Group and CIA**

(U) Virginia Hall Goillot^a is perhaps best known for her wartime service in the British Special Operations Executive and the American OSS, but she actually spent more time in CIA. She served as an officer in various elements of the postwar clandestine service from 1946 until her mandatory retirement in 1966 at the age of 60. She was one of a handful of relatively senior female clandestine service officers. In 1952, for example, she was one of six female GS-13 officers in the clandestine service (and one of only 18 in the Agency).^b At the time, they were the highest ranking women in the clandestine services.

(U) After the war, the 40-year-old Hall resigned from the OSS just three days before President Truman disbanded it. She was eager to remain in the intelligence business, however, so in December 1946 she took a position with the Strategic Services Unit (SSU), which had been salvaged from the OSS. By the time she joined SSU, it had been transferred from the War Department to the Central Intelligence Group (CIG) to form the nucleus of the Office of Special Operations (OSO), CIG's foreign intelligence collection arm. Hall, who spoke Italian fluently, was assigned to the Italian desk and dispatched [redacted] as a contract "field representative." There she collected and transmitted economic, financial, and political intelligence with special emphasis on the Communist movement and its leaders. She found the job "unsatisfactory" and, in July 1948, resigned.¹ She did not specify precisely what she disliked, but later in her career she made it clear that she preferred paramilitary (PM) work to foreign intelligence (FI) collection.²

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(U) On returning to the United States, Hall settled in New York City and in March 1950 began working for the National Committee for a Free Europe, a CIA front organization associated with Radio Free Europe. As head of the Albanian, Yugoslav, and Baltic desks, she handled relations with Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Yugoslav, and Albanian exiles. In addition to conducting interviews and translating material, she listed her duties as counselling and assisting the Committees and refugee groups of those countries in their endeavor to "keep alive the spirit of freedom and resistance in their native lands in their purpose of bringing about the liberation of all Iron Curtain countries."³

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(C) Hall [redacted] (courtesy of (b)(3) CIA Museum).

(U) In 1950, Hall applied for employment with CIA, although she had no specific position in mind. Filling out the forms was a time-consuming process—"a major operation," she wrote to a colleague, apologizing for taking so long. Her background investigation was underway as early as spring 1950,

^a (U) Hall married her wartime partner, Paul Gaston Goillot in 1957. As she is best known by her maiden name, we will use it throughout this report.

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but she did not leave NCFE's offices in the Empire State Building until December 1951.⁴ She took the oath of office with CIA in Washington on 3 December 1951.

(S) Hall entered on duty with CIA as a GS-13 intelligence officer (ops). She was assigned to the Office of Policy Coordination, the covert action arm that had been established under Frank Wisner in 1948. (In a sense, she had already worked for OPC, which had created NCFE.) As a case officer (her official title) and head of the paramilitary desk, she planned and directed PM activities for WE/3 (France)—preparing projects, interviewing and recruiting staff agents, planning training and cover for those agents, and giving support and guidance to the field. Her focus also included planning for aftermath of a possible Soviet invasion of Western Europe: preparing escape and evasion nets, staybehind resistance and sabotage nets, and collecting operational intelligence to facilitate the work of those nets.⁵

(S) During 1952, OPC and OSO were forcibly (and unwillingly) merged by DCI Walter Bedell Smith to form the Deputy Directorate of Plans (DDP). Hall became one of the DDP's first female operations officers.⁶ She was assigned to Southern Europe Division's PM staff, where she focused on the Balkans. In that capacity, she helped prepared overall strategic division and area plans, as well as special reports and memorandums for senior PM staff. She also monitored and reviewed certain country operations and supported field operations with guidance and technical support. Pointing to her wartime experience as a clandestine agent, her supervisors noted that she "has an unusually clear understanding of agent operations and problems." They deemed her especially suited for detailed operational planning, but noted that her overall potential would be enhanced if she were given an opportunity to handle a project in the field. She was also viewed as a potential asset for a denied-area branch that needed special assistance.⁷

(S) Hall's next assignment, beginning in July 1954, also involved paramilitary projects. As an ops officer in Political and Psychological (PP) Staff, she reviewed Western Europe Division's paramilitary and PP activities in light of changed targets, unconventional warfare requirements, and new operational concepts. She conducted a country-by-country review to assess overall plans and operations. Although she was praised for being independent, versatile, and willing to accept responsibility, her experience was deemed her greatest streng(b)(1)

(S) In May 1955, Hall transferred to (b)(3) in the Near East and Africa (NEA) Division, still serving as a paramilitary officer. Her specific assignment, as recorded on her fitness report, was "planning and implementing a major political action project; arranging and preparing for participation in the project as case officer—principal agent." The second part of the task required her to conduct a survey (b)(1)

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(b)(3) From January to June 1956, she travelled (b)(1) periodically sending back her (b)(1) observations. On her return to Washington, she wrote a comprehensive report in which she laid out (b)(3) her conclusions and recommendations.

(S) This stint in NEA may have been the unhappiest period of Hall's career as she and her supervisor had a serious dispute about the level of her performance.⁹ Hall was so incensed at the comments on her fitness report that she wrote a rebuttal and took her case (on at least three occasions) to Inspector General Lyman Kirkpatrick.¹⁰ The supervisor who had sent her on the TDY (and who had been transferred almost immediately after) endorsed her performance as "outstanding" and "highly competent." He laid the blame for any perceived failings squarely on the shoulders of the NEA offices. Without guidance from those offices, he stressed, Hall could not have been expected to plan third-country operations based on her survey and should not have been criticized for failing to do so.¹¹

(S) Not surprisingly, Hall left NEA, and in January 1957 she joined (b)(1) the Western Hemisphere Division. As an area operations officer, she supervised and provided guidance

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for PP operations in those countries, arranged cover and travel for both staff and contract agents, and prepared and reviewed project outlines. She seemed to be back in her element: her supervisors regarded her as a distinct asset, and her fitness reports reflected their respect for her performance. Again, it was her versatility, intelligence, and competence that stood out. She had, they agreed, "no outstanding weaknesses."¹² She was considered to be one of the most experienced PP/CA officers. Her varied experiences and keen interest in all aspects of PP activity (as well as FI problems in her areas of responsibility) enabled her to approach problems with broad base of knowledge and understanding.

(S) During 1961, in addition to her normal duties, Hall was assigned important tasks relating to a



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Her performance ratings continued to be excellent. Her managers highlighted her knowledge of the region and its personalities, her experience with covert action, and her concise and well-considered dispatches and cables. Although there was some concern that her absence from the field was leading her to be conservative, this conservatism was not viewed as affecting her efficient management of the field stations for which she was responsible, and she was seen as particularly adept at picking out the flaws and pitfalls of operations proposed by those stations.¹⁴



(C) Hall in 1964 (from her CIA Biographic Profile)

(S) In 1966, having reached mandatory retirement age and suffering from a series of medical problems, Hall left the Agency. At the time she began her career, she probably had more combat experience (for which she was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross) than most of CIA's male officers—including several future DCIs. She spoke Italian, French, and German fluently. Nevertheless, in her 14 years at CIA, she had been promoted only from GS-13 to GS-14. Moreover, despite her OSS experience and the occasional recommendations of her supervisors, she had never served a tour overseas as a CIA officer. Some male CIA officers felt she had been sidelined—shunted into backwater accounts—because she had so much experience that she overshadowed her male colleagues, who felt threatened by her.¹⁵ One later observed, "Her experience and abilities were never properly utilized."

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¹ (U) Gerald K. Haines, "Virginia Hall Goillot: Career Intelligence Officer," Prologue (Winter 1994), p. 258 (CADRE C01137583); Virginia Hall Official Personnel Folder; personnel qualifications questionnaire, c. 1953. (S)

² (U) Hall OPF; December 1956 PAR. (S)

³ (U) Haines, p. 258; Hall OPF; personnel qualifications questionnaire, c. 1953. (S)

⁴ (U) Hall OPF; letter to [redacted] 16 August 1951. (U) (b)(3)

⁵ (U) Hall OPF; personnel qualifications questionnaire, c. 1953. (S)

⁶ (U) Haines, p. 258. (U)

⁷ (U) Hall OPF; January 1954 PAR. (S)

⁸ (U) Hall OPF; December 1954 PAR. (S)

⁹ (U) Hall OPF; December 1956 PAR. (S)

¹⁰ (U) Lyman B. Kirkpatrick Diary, vol. III, January 1956–December 1958, passim (CADRE C02210680). (S)

¹¹ (C) Hall OPF; Memorandum for the Record by [redacted] PP Staff, "Fitness Report on Virginia Hall Goillot, (b)(3) dated 28 December 1956," 14 May 1957; Hall Memorandum for the Record, "Fitness Report dated 28 December 1956." (S)

¹² (U) Hall OPF; January 1958 PAR. (S)

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¹⁴ (U) Hall OPF; various PARS for period 1961-65. (S)

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