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Constam

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

Mr. E. G. Constam, Brown Palace Hotel, Denver, Colorado, has given us considerable information on the equipment used by German ski troops. Mr. Constam has stated to us that he has offered to make available his information as to the technical knowledge and training required for mountain warfare troop equipment. A report dated October 9, 1942, submitted by Ewing C. Sadler, of the Antitrust Division office in Denver, stated:

"Mr. Constam is a Swiss national but has recently taken out his first American citizenship papers. He was formerly an officer in the Swiss Army and one of his brothers is presently Commander of a Swiss Army Division and a member of the Swiss Military Council. Mr. Constam left his native Switzerland in April of 1940 and has been in this country continuously since that time. He is considered as an outstanding expert on skiing and mountain warfare. He is an engineer and has designed several portable trams and other equipment used in skiing and mountain warfare, on which he holds patents. He is presently located in Denver, Colorado, to supervise the construction of several portable trams for the Government Ski Project at Pando, Colorado, such work being done by the Mine & Smelter Supply Co. of Denver under a license from Mr. Constam.

Mr. Constam is perhaps the only man in this country who is thoroughly familiar with the type of equipment and methods used by both Germany and Italy in mountain warfare. He stated that at the outbreak of the war in Europe in 1939 Germany had stored over 500 portable trams, together with many brigade trams, monocables and other equipment used for mountain warfare. At that time, he said, Italy had over 250 portable trams in storage, as well as various other equipment mentioned. He did not have figures available since 1939, but ventured the opinion that such equipment had been increased materially."

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"Some time ago Mr. Constan volunteered his services to the United States Army for use in whatever capacity needed. He has also volunteered the use of his technical training and knowledge of mountain warfare troop equipment, but to date his offers have been refused by various officers of the United States Army to whom his services have been tendered. Questioned as to the reasons for his offers being refused, Mr. Constan advised the writer that he would prefer not to discuss the matter, as it might lead to a controversy and he does not wish to be the cause of any such issue being raised. The writer then asked Mr. Constan for his personal opinion on the subject and stated that any reasons given by Mr. Constan would be kept confidential and would not be relayed to the officers with whom Constan had corresponded. Mr. Constan replied that in that case he would be glad to give his opinion but that he had no actual proof to back up any statement he might make. He then showed the writer his personal files pertaining to all correspondence he had had with the various Army officials in Washington and with various officers of the Engineers' Board at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

"An examination of the correspondence indicates strongly that various engineering officers in the Army were very much interested in Mr. Constan's offer of service and his offer to supervise construction of troop equipment for mountain warfare, but that later the officers' recommendations were apparently overruled by the Engineers' Board. Mr. Constan appeared to be greatly disturbed by this sudden reaction and attributed the failure of his efforts to the inexperienced men on the Board, whom he considered merely as purchasing agents and entirely unfamiliar with the ramifications of the importance of the need of equipment for mountain warfare and transportation supply problems. Mr. Constan cited the experience and "business connections" of each member of the Board to substantiate his personal opinion. To illustrate the immediate need for production and training along this line, Mr. Constan cited the situation faced by the Allied troops in the Owen Stanley Mountain range. His opinion is that if this problem had been more fully explored earlier it would have been quite a simple matter for the Allied troops to cross the range and transport all supplies needed in a comparatively short time."

Another report submitted on December 18, 1942 states:-

"Mr. Constam has been in and out of Denver for the past two months. He still maintains his headquarters here. This morning I interviewed him again relative to further information regarding transportation facilities in and out of northern Italy. Mr. Constam is perhaps one of the best known informants on matters pertaining to his native Switzerland. Of course, he grasped immediately the idea that transportation facilities in and out of northern Italy necessarily means the Swiss National Railway system. He has always been quite helpful in furnishing any information he possesses and will continue to do so. In fact, he pointed out to me this morning various places on the railroad maps of Switzerland which you recently sent that are considered as strategic bottlenecks in case they are bombed or destroyed, thereby disrupting the entire transportation facilities. He stated further that he had six other specific places in mind that are not shown on the maps you sent. He stated that these maps are a bit too narrow, particularly toward the north and west. A further report will be forwarded at a later date. Mr. Constam is more than willing to furnish further information but would like very much for the Department to return the favor if at all possible in the following manner:

"Mr. Constam is considered as an outstanding expert on ski and mountain fighting. As pointed out in my previous report, he is an engineer by profession and holds patents on several types of equipment used by troops for supplies in mountain warfare. It is his opinion that the United States has sadly neglected preparation in this line of equipment in warfare. As an example he has cited repeatedly the difficulties which confront the Allies in the Owen Stanley mountain range. It seems as if some time ago Mr. Constam offered his services to the War Department in whatever capacity needed. He has been "kept on hook" by various War Department officials for many months. The Engineers' Board of the Army experimented with some of his equipment out of Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, and apparently was favorably impressed. By wires, letters, and other means of communication, various officers have informed him from time to time that they expected to accept his many offers to serve the Army in whatever capacity needed. This has fallen through from time to time in spite of the fact that the Army is still interested in both Mr. Constam's equipment and his services in a technical capacity. He is unable to understand much of the "bureaucratic and red tape methods" in existence in Washington and is somewhat bitter toward the Engineers' Board for the "run around" they have given him, at the same time still keeping him on hook.

He cited to me the inexperience of the Board members and pointed out that they had been appointed from civilian life and had come from wealthy manufacturing families and had no experience or insight as to the ramifications of the matters he had taken up with them.

"I gather from Mr. Constan's conversation that he would be more than willing to forego any royalty payments if the Army officials would decide definitely to proceed further with their experiments in training in this type of warfare. Incidentally, it should be pointed out here that Mr. Constan's equipment was used by the Army at the Pando, Colorado, ski project (Camp Hale). This equipment was manufactured by Mr. Constan's western licensee, the Mine and Smelter Supply Co., Denver, Colorado, and Mr. Constan himself was appointed in an advisory and technical capacity during the installation of such equipment. Apparently Mr. Constan would be willing to forego the payment of all royalties, as previously pointed out, if the Army would avail itself of his services in a similar capacity in similar projects which he feels should be undertaken immediately.

"Mr. Constan stated to me this morning that he would be more than happy to come to Washington and disclose all information in his possession to you and others in the Division and that he would disclose further all information in his possession as to objectives of attack which have been discussed in various meetings of the Swiss military council. He has participated in several of these discussions.

"In return for this information, Mr. Constan would greatly appreciate anything you or any other member of the Department could do in steering him to the proper Army officials so that a definite decision could be given one way or the other as to whether or not his offers were to be accepted by the Army. Mr. Constan has been quite frank with me and stated that if this could not be done he still would be more than glad to furnish all information he possibly could to this office. He stated further, however, that in return for such information he would consider it a great favor if any one in our Department having proper contacts with the War Department would assist him in his efforts to contact the proper sources there."

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"Mr. Constan stated that his family, home, and friends, are still in Switzerland and that he naturally would be hesitant in giving information at this time on specific objectives in Switzerland pertaining to transportation facilities, etc.,

as he would never want to be the indirect cause of the death of a single Swiss person. He qualified that statement, however, by stating that if the officials in Washington wanted exact information relative to Switzerland he would give it to them in person. He stated further, however, that he felt as if the same objective could be accomplished by furnishing such information on objectives outside the Swiss borders. As previously pointed out, he furnished me with some specific objectives (re railroad lines), all of them being located just outside the Swiss borders. As soon as additional maps can be secured he will point out further objectives of value."

Yesterday, I received a letter from Mr. Sadler in which he states;

"I am anxious to learn if you have heard anything further, as Mr. Constam has again contacted me on the matter and I doubt if he will be here in Denver much longer. It would be appreciated, therefore, if this matter could be expedited at your earliest convenience."

EDWARD H. LEVI  
Special Assistant to the Attorney General