

Sent Prisoners Camera, Love Notes, Girls Admit

Espanola, March 19 (CP).—The bizarre story of five young Espanola girls exchanging love letters with German war prisoners in the Northern Ontario internment camp, and of one of the girls sending letters out of the country and buying a camera for a prisoner, was unfolded in magistrate's court here today.

The five girls, aged 15 and 16, pleaded guilty to charges under the Defense of Canada Regulations of communicating with the prisoners and were placed on suspended sentence after Magistrate E. Arthurs and Crown Attorney E. D. Wilkins of Sudbury, thirty-five miles east of here, reprimanded them.

Of the girls' action in sending letters to the United States for the prisoners, Magistrate Arthurs said, "It may mean the loss of thousands of lives overseas," and the Crown Attorney declared: "The Nazi will stop at nothing, and he has apparently tried to use these girls as tools for his nefarious work."

The story was unfolded for the most part by Corporal Jack Burger of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and bits were filled in as the chastened girls, part of the time in tears, answered questions of the magistrate and Crown Attorney. The court was closed except to the press.

As told by Burger, who testified that the letters mailed for the Germans "might have contained information very valuable to the enemy," the story had its beginning about February, 1941, and continued for a year.

Letters were exchanged between the girls and the prisoners; letters described by Burger as "silly love-affair things" which contained nothing incriminating. The girls sent the prisoners pictures of themselves; some of the girls received presents, such as lockets and rings, from the prisoners.

The oldest of the group was the "ringleader," Burger testified. She mailed letters in German for a prisoner, received money from the United States and bought the prisoner a camera and picture-developing equipment.

A regular postoffice system was set up between the prisoners and the girls. A place would be chosen for letters to be left, used for a while and then changed.

The girl who bought the camera said she was afraid not to help the prisoners because she had been told by a guard the prisoners would remain in Canada after the war and "because I was told the prisoners would double punish us after the war when they got free if we did not help them."

One of the girls was quoted by Burger as saying a prisoner smiled back at her when she smiled at him "at a hockey game" in February,

1941, and shortly afterward she began writing him letters. Another girl said once one of the prisoners kissed her.

One of the girls testified that her acquaintanceship with the prisoners began when her father brought her a letter from a prisoner. Her father delivered her answer and three other letters before he joined the Veterans' Guard at another Northern Ontario point.

"They likely did it in a spirit of romance, but it goes beyond that when prisoners make dupes of them like that," Mr. Wilkins said, adding that "it is amazing that such a thing as a camera from the outside world could be got into the compound. Just what else could be smuggled in if the camera got in!"

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