

NOW SET EUROPE AFLAME

THE CANADIAN CONNECTION TO THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE



COLONEL (RETIRED) BERND HORN

THE CANSOFCOM EDUCATION & RESEARCH CENTRE

MISSION

The mission of the Canadian Forces Special Operations Forces (CANSOFCOM) Education and Research Centre (ERC) is to support the professional development framework within the Command in order to continually develop and enhance the cognitive capacity of CANSOFCOM personnel.

VISION

The vision of the CANSOFCOM ERC is to be a key enabler to CANSOFCOM as an intellectual centre of excellence.

ROLES

The CANSOFCOM ERC is designed to:

1. Develop educational opportunities and SOF specific courses and material to enable CANSOFCOM professional development (PD);
2. Provide and / or assist in accessing academic advice on diverse subjects to support CANSOFCOM personnel undergoing professional military education (PME) and PD;
3. Conduct focused research and provide advice on seeking additional research capacity for CANSOFCOM best practices and force development;
4. Record CANSOFCOM's classified history;
5. Coordinate the publication of CANSOFCOM educational material; and
6. Support CANSOFCOM's "up and out" Communication Strategy.

In brief, the ERC helps to make the cognitive warrior a reality. We prepare members to make good decisions in the midst of chaos and complexity. Essentially, we help to enable members to be their best under the worst of circumstances.

As such, we are also an opportune mechanism to showcase the Command's commitment to the growth and development of the cognitive warrior.

Significantly, the ERC provides not just the intellectual knowledge and skills but perhaps even more importantly it helps to shine a light on Command values and project internally and externally our continued commitment to being the best we can be by focusing on both a robust training and education regimen.

As much as we would never deploy an operator who is not qualified on their weapon, we must never send out someone who is unable to think critically, assess vast amounts of information and be competent and confident in their decision-making capabilities.

The mind is our greatest asset and it is the Command's Education and Research Centre that is tasked to develop this capacity within the Command. We teach people how to harness their greatest strength, their most reliable tool on any and every mission: their brain.

NOW SET EUROPE
AFLAME

“NOW SET EUROPE AFLAME”:

THE CANADIAN CONNECTION TO THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE



COLONEL (RETIRED) BERND HORN

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FOREWORD

I am delighted to introduce a special edition of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) Education and Research Centre's (ERC) monograph series: *"Now Set Europe Aflame": The Canadian Connection to the Special Operations Executive*. This monograph is written in recognition of the Special Operations Executive's (SOE) eightieth anniversary in 2020. During World War II, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill created the SOE to conduct acts of sabotage, subversion and intelligence gathering, as well as to raise secret armies of partisans in Nazi-occupied Europe. He gave the Director of the SOE the simple directive, "Set Europe Ablaze" and he allowed the secret organization to disrupt the enemy wherever they could be found.

The SOE was a unique wartime creation that reflected an ethos predicated on determination and selflessness. Employment in the SOE was extremely hazardous. Under the constant fear of detection by the Gestapo and German counter-intelligence, an agent's failure could result in indescribable torture, dispatch to a concentration camp and, often, a death sentence.

Importantly, the SOE's rich character and history are shared by a number of Canadian national security and national defence entities. For example, Canadians during WWII acted as operators and agents working behind enemy lines. Moreover, Camp X, located in Whitby, Ontario, was a special training school that trained agents for overseas duty and provided a conduit for training, instructional material, as well as equipment for the American Office of Strategic Services. Finally, the famous Canadian Sir William Stephenson, code-named "Intrepid," ran SOE operations in North and South America. The close wartime affiliation with UK and US allies persists to this day.

As such, Canada has a close nexus with the SOE. It is for that reason that our national intelligence and defence institutions, namely the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), CANSOFCOM, the Communications Security Establishment (CSE), the Canadian Forces Intelligence Command (CFINTCOM), as well as the Canadian Military Intelligence Association

F O R E W O R D

(CMIA) and the Pillar Society have endeavoured to mark and celebrate the SOE's eightieth anniversary by honouring the Canadian participation in that secret organization, as well as its lasting legacy in the Canadian national security environment.

David Vigneault
Director
Canadian Security Intelligence Service

INTRODUCTION

The loud roar of the 1,010 horse power engines driving the three-bladed Rotol variable-pitch propellers of the Bristol Bombay bomber engines reverberated through the still French countryside as the aircraft passed overhead. François Melançon, nervously standing in the shadows of the forest that surrounded the open field, swore quietly to himself. The Boche patrols will certainly have heard, if not seen, the lumbering aircraft and figure out that a “parachutage” was underway. He would have to gather the containers and agents being dropped quickly and leave the area before it was swarming with German troops.

The full moon cast a bright glow on the surrounding rural landscape and François could easily see the parachutes swinging lazily in the darkened sky as they floated to earth. He quickly motioned to the others hidden in the dark recesses of the woods to move out to collect the dropped containers that held weapons, explosives and other necessary equipment for the Resistance to sabotage the German war effort.

François then heard the crashing of branches followed by a loud thump on the ground nearby, followed by some swearing. Moving cautiously through the woods he came across an individual tangled in parachute rigging and tree limbs. “André I presume?” François queried using the agent’s code name.

Special Operations Executive (SOE) headquarters in London had dispatched André and his wireless operator, code named Phillipe, to the rural Normandy sector to assist with the expansion of the resistance networks. German counter-intelligence, as well as the Gestapo, had taken a heavy toll of many of the existing French resistance cells. Immediate action was necessary. However, the interrogation of captured agents, as well as members of the French underground, had begun to cause great damage to the SOE French network of agents and cells as one operation after another had been compromised. It appeared that every parachute drop of equipment or agents had become a dangerous gamble.

Once all the containers had been collected, parachutes bundled up and the two agents located, the reception party quickly followed a forest path to a

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one lane dirt road that ran through the pitch-black forest. Suddenly, out of the darkness loomed the darkened shapes of two vehicles. The containers were loaded aboard a clapped-out Peugeot DK5 1.5 ton cargo truck. The old dilapidated truck was a risky means of transport, but in wartime France, it was less conspicuous than a newer reliable lorry. Piles of manure were repositioned in the bin to cover the containers should they run into a German patrol.

The two SOE agents were loaded into the back seats of a Citroën 11CV sedan. Their suitcases, especially the one containing the precious wireless radio set, were carefully stowed in the trunk. Without turning on their headlights the two-vehicle convoy slowly crept along the forest lane. Once they hit the main road, the vehicles turned on their lights and sped off, trying to put distance between themselves and the drop zone.



Artwork by Katherine Taylor

Meeting by Moonlight.

The Citroën sedan led with the old truck following at a distance. As the sedan tore around the bend in the seemingly abandoned road, the driver slammed on the brakes and uttered an involuntary stream of expletives as the weak rays of the headlights illuminated a German Field Police roadblock only a hundred metres ahead. To attempt to stop, turn-around and drive away would be suicide. It would only invite a hail of bullets and pursuit. The only course of action was to trust their forged documents and bluff their way through.

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Fortuitously, the truck driver caught the red glow of the brake lights before entering the bend and quickly came to a stop. The transmission growled painfully as he grinded the gears, frantically attempting to shift into reverse. The gear finally popped into place and he released the clutch and quickly backed-up until he could turn up a darkened country lane.

The Citroën sedan slowly approached the road block. The driver stopped and rolled down his window. Believing a good offense was the best defensive, he quickly began to hurl invectives at the approaching sentry. “Merde, have you nothing better to do than to bother hard-working folk trying to get home to bed!”

The German sentry ignored the verbal assault. “Papers!” he demanded, his voice simmering with irritability and fatigue. Off to the side, mounted on the hood of a *kubelwagen* two other sentries manned a German MG-42 machine gun, which they had carefully aimed at the sedan.

“Come on, we’re tired and want to go home,” François pleaded, handing the sentry the stack of identification papers and curfew passes.

“Why are you out driving so late?” questioned the sentry.

“We work at the railway yard and our shift just ended. Look it’s bad enough that pig of a supervisor keeps putting us on the night shift,” François railed, as he gripped the steering wheel, “don’t make it any worse for us.” He knew the cover-story and forged documents would not stand careful scrutiny. A check with the railyard would quickly confirm its lack of veracity. In addition, a trained counter-intelligence agent would probably realize the documents were forged. However, François was counting on the fact that the sentry himself was tired and bored, and in the dim light of a torch would not be able to notice any anomalies or nuances with regard to official stamps, paper quality, dates or signatures.

The sentry flashed his flashlight across the documents and into the automobile to check the faces. He seemed to hesitate on the identification papers of the two newly arrived SOE agents, or was that just his imagination thought François. “Well since we have to wait here we might as well have a cigarette,” muttered François offering the German sentry the package of smokes.

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The German sentry hesitated. Grabbing the cigarettes, he queried, "Do all of you work at the railyard?" The SOE agents answered in mono syllables trying not to betray their anxiety, accents, or lack of proficient French.

The sentry pocketed the package of cigarettes in his tunic and passed the stack of documents back to François. He was about to let them go when the lights of another car approached from the opposite direction. The Opel Admiral Saloon four door sedan rolled to a stop a few metres from the Citroën. It remained in the middle of the road, blocking any forward progress.

A short man with a fedora and calf-length black leather coat slowly exited the passenger side of the vehicle and approached. The mood in the Citroën immediately tensed. Even the German sentry seemed to stiffen. François realized that instead of a tired, disinterested soldier manning a roadblock for the last six or more hours they now had to deal with an agent from the German *Abwehr*, or worse, a thug from the Gestapo.

François started the engine. The German sentry quickly rebuked him and told him to shut it down. François smiled at him and then slipped the car into reverse and stomped on the accelerator. The Citroën shot backwards catching everyone by surprise. But the element of shock was momentary. The night air was suddenly pierced by the smooth rhythmic staccato of the MG-42 machine gun as tracers quickly stitched a path to the withdrawing vehicle. The windshield shattered as bullets slammed into the car frame making it sound like a hail storm on a corrugated metal roof.

The driver, struck multiple times in the torso, lost control of the vehicle and it careened into a ditch. François was dead and the co-driver seriously wounded, but the two SOE agents had escaped the fusillade of bullets unscathed. They quickly bailed from the vehicle and slipped into the shadow of the woods as the machine gun bullets continued to pound into the disabled vehicle and seemingly stalked them into the forest.

The game of cat and mouse had begun. They now had to create distance between themselves and the pursuing German authorities. In addition, they had to find a contact with the French underground before they were run down. To be caught meant brutal interrogation at the infamous Gestapo

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Prison at 3 bis, Place des Etats-Unis, in Paris. And, if one survived, dispatch to a concentration camp, where execution as a spy was virtually inevitable.

This drama in one form or another was the reality for numerous SOE agents operating in the myriad of different Axis occupied countries. In those dark, early days of the war when Britain stood seemingly alone, still reeling from the stunning German victories in Europe and expecting invasion, it seemed Britain had little recourse to strike back at the German war machine. Fortuitously, the newly appointed British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, refused to accept a defensive mentality. Instead, he insisted on a means of lashing out at the Germans and forcing them to relinquish at least some of the initiative. One means he actively pressed for was the ability to sabotage and subvert the German war effort and industry. He understood that the vast occupied territories and populations the Germans controlled represented their Achilles heel. Churchill believed if he could create an organization that could conduct sabotage, subversion, assemble secret armies and gather intelligence in the German rear areas, then he could cut into the effectiveness of the enemy's war effort and force them to redirect military personnel and resources in order to combat the threat.

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THE CREATION OF THE SOE

By the spring of 1940, the Allies had already suffered at the hands of the German war machine. On 1 September 1939, sixty German divisions, nine of which were armoured, tore through Poland forcing the country to collapse in less than a month. Then, in April of 1940, German forces seized Norway and Denmark. There was little doubt in anyone's mind that France and the Low Countries would be next.

The hammer fell on 10 May 1940. In the inky darkness of pre-dawn, 2.5 million German soldiers, divided in 104 infantry divisions, nine motorized divisions and 10 armoured divisions, supported by 3,500 combat aircraft, smashed into the Low Countries and France.¹ The German use of combined arms, aptly titled “Blitzkrieg,” which combined speed and firepower through the use of tanks, armoured vehicles, paratroopers and close support aircraft, created an impressive offensive capability that embodied surprise, mobility and destructive power. It appeared to be the perfect marriage of fire and movement. Not surprisingly, the Allies were caught, once again, off guard and their defenses crumbled in the face of the German onslaught.

The Allied failure stemmed as much from the German tactics and strategic surprise (by cutting through what the Allies had defined as the impassable Ardennes Forest with the bulk of their armoured divisions) as it did from the inability of the Allies to shed their First World War experience and doctrine that lulled them into what they believed would be a replay of the Great War. In fact, the French commander-in-chief, Marshal Petain told the Senate Army Commission, “This [Ardennes] sector is not dangerous.”²

Not surprisingly then, the majority of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), approximately 400,000 strong, along with their French allies, stuck to the “Dyle Plan” and waited for what seemed the inevitable German sweep through Northern Belgium and Holland. Their plan was to counterattack the enemy and halt them as they had done in the First World War.³ By

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the time they realized where the main thrust lay, the Germans had already pierced deep into France and threatened to cut off the BEF.

The German destruction of the West was achieved in forty-six days, but the campaign was virtually decided within the first ten days. The speed and decisiveness of the new multi-dimensional battlefield overwhelmed and paralyzed the Allied forces deployed to defeat the enemy thrust. By 27 May 1940, the British had begun Operation Dynamo designed to evacuate as many Allied troops from France as possible. By 4 June, by using virtually every vessel in England that could float, the British had evacuated approximately 338,226 personnel from Dunkirk.⁴

The British war effort seemed in tatters. The military informed the British War Cabinet that there fewer than 600,000 rifles and only 12,000 Bren guns in the whole of the United Kingdom.⁵ All of their armoured vehicles, heavy weapons and equipment were still burning and smoldering on the beaches of Dunkirk. Britain now had to rebuild, re-equip and retrain its army. As if this was not catastrophic enough, they also had to simultaneously prepare for the inevitable German invasion of England.

For most, the logical deduction was that Britain had no other choice but to surrender the initiative and dig-in and wait for the next German offensive. The British military high command, overwhelmed by the task that they faced, saw only a defensive battle in the short term. The only two viable forms of offensive action, they argued, were the traditional economic blockade utilizing the superiority of the Royal Navy (RN) on the high seas and strategic bombing conducted by the Royal Air Force (RAF).

This unimaginative way forward, however, was not accepted by all. Importantly, on 4 June 1940, Winston Churchill was appointed prime minister. Churchill would prove to be a constant irritant to senior British commanders. For the former military officer, war correspondent, adventurer and politician, the offensive was all that mattered. He realized that only through offensive action could a nation provide its military and citizens with the necessary confidence and morale to sustain a war effort. Not surprisingly then, on the same day he was appointed Prime Minister he declared in the House of Commons, “we shall not be content with a defensive war.”⁶

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Churchill was not to be denied. That same afternoon, he penned a note to his Chief of Staff of the War Cabinet Secretariat, General Hastings Ismay. “We are greatly concerned,” he wrote, “with the dangers of the German landing in England.” He pondered rhetorically, “why should it be thought impossible for us to do anything of the same kind to them?” He then added, “We should immediately set to work to organize self-contained, thoroughly-equipped raiding units.”⁷ Churchill knew intuitively that winning a war meant maintaining the initiative. As such, Churchill mused, “how wonderful it would be if the Germans could be made to wonder where they were going to be struck next, instead of forcing us to try to wall in the island and roof it over!”⁸

Imperial War Museum (IWM) H-002646



**Prime Minister Winston Churchill examining
a Thompson sub-machinegun.**

Two days later, Churchill sent additional direction to Ismay. He explained:

Enterprises must be prepared with specially trained troops of the hunter class who can develop a reign of terror down these coasts, first of all on the “butcher and bolt” policy; but later on, or perhaps as soon as we are organized, we could surprise Calais or Boulogne,

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kill and capture the Hun garrison, and hold the place until all the preparations to reduce it by siege or heavy storm and been made, and then away. The passive-resistance war, in which we have acquitted ourselves so well, must come to an end. I look to the Joint Chiefs of the Staff to propose me measures for a vigorous, enterprising, a ceaseless offensive against the whole German-occupied coastline.⁹

Churchill maintained his combative approach. Despite virulent and constant resistance from the military establishment, commandos and paratroopers were created.¹⁰ Initially, the Allied effort at creating commandos and other special operations forces (SOF) to chip away at the German war machine proved useful by feeding an offensive attitude, providing combat experience and forcing Germans to place more emphasis on defending the occupied coastlines. It also facilitated the destruction of German war materials and economic capacity, as well as achieving a number of strategic coups (particularly the capture of German Enigma encryption equipment, enemy codes and radar technology).

For Churchill it was still not enough. He realized that the population in the German occupied territories would eventually bristle under the yolk of an oppressor. He felt that there was potential to create even more trouble for the Axis powers. Moreover, in the wake of the rapid collapse of the French government and military during the German offensive, many, including Churchill, believed the rumours that the collapse of France was assisted by German fifth columnist working behind Allied lines. Although these rumours were blatantly incorrect, at the time, the perception remained. For Churchill the logic was simple – if it worked for the Germans, why not then for British?

Churchill, surprisingly in this instance, was not alone. As early as 19 May 1940, the Chiefs of Staff Committee, in wake of the calamity occurring on the Continent which already foreshadowed the expulsion from France, considered alternate means of striking back at Germany. They concluded, “The only other method [aside from economic blockade and bombing] of bringing about the downfall of Germany is by stimulating the seeds of revolt within the conquered territories.” They assessed that “the occupied countries

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are likely to prove a fruitful ground for these operations, particularly when economic conditions begin to deteriorate.” Amazingly, they accorded, as a result of the current circumstances, irregular warfare “the highest importance” and they called for the necessary preparations to create the required “special organisation” as quickly as possible.¹¹

A mere six days later, the Chiefs of Staff submitted a report to the War Cabinet that reinforced their earlier conclusion. “Germany might still be defeated by economic pressure,” they asserted, “by a combination of air attack on economic objectives in Germany and on German morale, and the creation of widespread revolt in her conquered territories.” Importantly, they stressed, “the only method of bringing about the downfall of Germany is by stimulating the seeds of revolt within the conquered territories.” Additionally, the Chiefs of Staff declared, “this form of activity as of the highest importance.”¹²

Despite the alacrity with which the Chiefs of Staff presented their conclusion, the realization of a special organization to undertake irregular warfare was far more obtuse. Bureaucratic churn and protected fiefdoms mired potential solutions as discussions between the War Office, the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and various ministers seemingly went nowhere. By 29 June 1940, the Foreign Secretary released a report that recommended concentrating the various secret services (i.e. D Section (SIS), Electra House (EH), and Military Intelligence (Research) (MI(R))) under one organization.¹³ The Foreign Service paper even recommended divorcing D Section entirely from the SIS since it was focused more on gathering intelligence. A significant stumbling block remained. The debate continued to revolve around the nature of this new organization. Should it be under military authority? Or, should it be separate ministry, such as a Ministry of Political Warfare? Dr. Hugh Dalton, an outspoken, ambitious, socialist-leaning, labour minister was representative of many. He was adamant that the organization being considered should never fall under military control. “Regular soldiers,” he railed, “are not fit to stir up revolution, to create social chaos, or to use all those ungentlemanly means of winning the war which come so easily to the Nazis.”¹⁴



IWM, HU-066567

**Hugh Dalton, Minister of Economic Warfare,
responsible for the creation of the SOE.**

Dalton was a member of the wartime coalition government. Furthermore, he was in charge of the Ministry of Economic Warfare, which included “black” propaganda, namely lies and misinformation. He insisted that the new organization responsible for creating resistance movements in German occupied territories must operate “entirely independent” of ordinary Governmental, Departmental or Cabinet rules and supervision. Even the

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War Office was to be excluded from any supervisory role. He explained that the key to success was not only the exemption from oversight, but also “a certain fanatical enthusiasm” by those in the secret special organization.¹⁵ Dalton expounded:

We must organise movements in every occupied territory comparable to the Sinn Fein movement in Ireland, to the Chinese guerrillas now operating against Japan, to the Spanish Irregulars who played a notable part in Wellington's campaign or - one might as well admit it - to the organisations which the Nazis themselves have developed so remarkably in almost every country of the world. We must use many different methods, including industrial and military sabotage, labour agitations and strikes, continuous propaganda, terrorist acts against traitors and German leaders, boycotts and riots.¹⁶

Apparently, Churchill had found an ally. The idea of a secret organization to sow chaos in German-occupied territories excited the audacious prime minister. By 8 July 1940, Churchill pressed for a report on what progress had been made with regard to the development of the new organization responsible for irregular warfare. Always impatient, he now took matters into his own hands. Churchill invited Dalton to dinner and drinks late one evening to further explore the concept. Later that night the Prime Minister offered Dalton the job to head up a “new instrument of war,” officially called the Special Operations Executive (SOE) or, unofficially, as Churchill preferred, the “Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare.” Prior to dismissing Dalton for the evening, Churchill commanded the new Head, “now, set Europe ablaze!”¹⁷

Churchill followed up his informal offer with an official correspondence on 16 July 1940, laying out the task and offering Dalton the position as Head of the SOE. In addition, Churchill also quickly announced the creation of the SOE to his War Cabinet. Three days later, on 19 July, Neville Chamberlain, the Lord President of the War Cabinet committee, wrote, “The Prime Minister has further decided, after consultation with the Ministers concerned, that a new organization shall be established forthwith to co-ordinate all action, by way of subversion and sabotage, against the enemy overseas.”¹⁸ The War Cabinet duly approved the new SOE and its charter on 22 July 1940.

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Matters now moved quickly. Churchill directed that Section D be cut to the new SOE. This was done so quickly that the head of the SIS was only notified after the fact. The SOE also absorbed EH and MI(R). Although the amalgamation was executed swiftly, there was agreement by the two Heads of both the SIS and SOE that all SOE cypher communications would be run through SIS (thus allowing them to monitor activity). In addition, the SOE agreed that any intelligence they collected would be passed on to the SIS. Finally, both parties also agreed that the SOE would seek SIS approval before engaging any SIS agent. This marriage, however, would not last for long.¹⁹

The mandate and objectives Churchill passed to Dalton and the SOE were almost unlimited. The Prime Minister's charter instructed the SOE "to undertake subversive action of every sort and description against the enemy." Churchill's intent was to exploit "every present means of harassing the enemy and damaging his war effort," as well as to assist in the creation of secret armies "by arranging for the supply of personnel, communications, arms and explosives etc., and by strengthening any underground propaganda that may be necessary to the ultimate objective of embarking on large-scale operations."²⁰

The SOE had both short and long-term objectives. In the short-term, they were to create as much administrative difficulty as possible for the Axis powers. Planned measures varied "from the encouragement of venality amongst officials and of 'go slow' movements in industry, to active sabotage of shipping, factories and transportation facilities. The SOE also attempts to create a 5th Column organisation with the object of assisting eventual military re-occupation."²¹

The long-term objective of the SOE was to organize a deep program of resistance amongst the population of the occupied territories. The intent involved maintaining pro-Allied sentiment in the occupied territories, as well as fostering active anti-Axis movements. Specific instruction detailed the requirement. The SOE policy stated:

In all countries now occupied or likely to be occupied by the Axis powers we must establish:

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- a. An organisation to carry out skilled sabotage and raids which, combined with air and seaborne raids from overseas, will reduce the vital resources of the Axis. This sabotage organisation, assisted by propaganda from overseas, will also be responsible for fostering a campaign of passive resistance and minor sabotage amongst the population with the object of reducing Axis morale.
- b. An organisation of secret armed forces that can co-operate in any military offensive we may be able to take in the future and so compensate for our lack of trained troop[s].²²

The ambitious intent was matched by wide-sweeping powers. The War Cabinet set a firm directive that the SOE would not be the subject of Parliamentary discussion.²³ Despite the seemingly blank cheque, Dalton's work was cut out for him. The entire SOE, as an organization and concept, was completely new. Very few had given much thought to, and most were still suspicious of, irregular war activities. As such, the SOE proved to be an enormous experiment. Few, if any, of the new SOE decision-makers or operators had experience in irregular warfare and the "dark arts." The organization was rapidly standing up and constantly evolving with few precedents to guide it. As one noted historian remarked, "Costly mistakes were inevitable."²⁴

Initially, the SOE fell on what little experience it did have. At its start it was organized along three functional branches that clearly reflected its originating elements. Electra House was rechristened SO 1 (and remained responsible for propaganda) and Section D was retitled as SO 2 (operations). In addition, a third entity, called SO 3, was created to undertake planning and intelligence. By September 1940, however, it had been already dismantled and its elements absorbed into SO 2.²⁵

SO 1 undertook two forms of propaganda. The first was called "preparational." This form of propaganda was the art of persuasion with a view to producing a specific perspective or "a frame of mind." The second form was titled "operational." This method entailed influencing others with the view to producing action.



Author photo

Electra House.

The conduct of political warfare and propaganda, from the perspective of the War Cabinet and the Chiefs of Staff Committee, was all important. As early as 25 November 1940, the Chiefs of Staff ordered that “subversive activities should be given preference over the [organization of] secret armies in occupied territories.” That month, broadcasting stations (also known as Research Units (RU)) began to broadcast messages shaped specifically for audiences in Germany, Italy and Occupied Europe. Sefton Delmer, the head of SO 1 revealed:

We want to spread disruptive and disturbing news among the Germans which will induce them to distrust their government and disobey not so much from high-minded political motives as from ordinary human weakness. [The listener] finds that we are anti-communists who once thought Hitler pretty good, fought alongside him in fact, but are now appalled at the corruption, godlessness, profiteering, place-hunting, selfishness, clique rivalries and Party-above-the-law system which the Party has.²⁶

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Inter-departmental rivalry and focus on “turf” soon played its hand. On 27 August 1941, the backroom struggle between the Ministry of Economic Warfare, which was responsible for SOE SO 1, and the Ministry of Information, which was normally responsible for propaganda and the dissemination of information, resulted in SO 1 being absorbed by the Ministry of Information, along with the propaganda wing of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Amalgamated, these entities now formed yet another new independent organization called the Political Warfare Executive (PWE).

From this point on, the SOE consisted solely of SO 2, which was now renamed simply SOE. It was broken into country directorates and each respective country directorate was in turn divided into one or more sections. For example, France had six distinct sections within its directorate. The official SOE policy articulated:

The activities of SO 2[SOE] may be divided as follows:

- a. Direct Action which embraces all operations requiring some degree of force, such as Savanna,²⁷ or projected attacks on certain power stations in France. Direct action is limited to countries now occupied by Germany.
- b. Indirect Action covers every means from clandestine sabotage to moral disintegration and may take place in any country where the Germans are undertaking activities in support of their war effort.²⁸

As a result, the SOE was focused on training agents and wireless operators that could be deployed into the Nazi-occupied territories with the aim of establishing basic subversive organizations that could be expanded as required and as circumstances permitted. The main functions of these subversive entities were:

- a. Political Subversion and Propaganda: to encourage the population of the occupied countries against the forces of occupation and to undermine the morale of the latter.
- b. Sabotage: to build up a sabotage organization wherever the Axis can be effectively attacked, which is mainly in the occupied

territories. The object of this activity is to wear down the Axis morally and economically and so hasten the date by which our military forces can take the offensive. Sabotage efforts must be correlated with those of the fighting services especially the bomber forces, and our present short term policy is, therefore, based on the instructions recently given to Bomber Command whose efforts we intend to supplement by attacking rail, sea, canal and road transport. The sabotage organization must also be prepared to harass the Axis lines of communication, should Great Britain be invaded, and to intensify its activities in close co-operation with any allied invasion of the continent.

- c. The Organization of Secret Armies: To build up and equip secret armies in occupied territories. These armies, in co-operation with the sabotage organizations, will be prepared to assist our military forces when they take the offensive, either directly in the theatre of operations or indirectly elsewhere, by attacks on communications, whether telegraphic or transport, by neutralization of seizure of aerodromes, by a general attack on enemy aircraft and personnel, and by producing disorder in the enemy's rearward services.²⁹

In essence, the SOE was charged with carrying out subversive warfare against the Axis by any method deemed necessary, as long as it fell within the parameters of specific policy or aims dictated by the War Cabinet, as well as other Departments of State.³⁰

Although the original intent was for a myriad of organization to have tentacles into the SOE, this organization never came to pass. Dalton managed to secure near autonomous control over the SOE. Nonetheless, there was still a degree of oversight and coordination. The War Cabinet stood up the SO 2 Executive Committee, later renamed the SOE Council, which consisted of the heads of the various government and military branches. It met once or twice a week for the lifespan of the SOE.



**Hugh Dalton (right) and Colin Gubbins (centre)
speak with Czech officers.**

Importantly, the newly established organization was extremely fortunate that the War Office approved the posting of Colonel Colin Gubbins in November 1940, who had just been released from the Auxiliary Units for guerrilla warfare in England. An experienced and respected officer, Gubbins was responsible for training SOE personnel, as well as the conduct of operations planned and executed by the respective country sections. He brought with him the skills he had acquired at military intelligence, where he had been a key component of MI(R) from the beginning. In addition, he had commanded the independent guerrilla companies in Norway during the German invasion and was the author of a series of pamphlets for the War Office on the principles of guerrilla warfare and sabotage. Not surprisingly, Gubbins would later head the SOE. Significantly, his experience and leadership helped the neophyte organization move forward and prosecute missions in its early days when internal resistance was seemingly everywhere.

Despite the initial appeal to the concept of subversion, sabotage and guerrilla warfare as a means to defeat the Axis powers, once the initial shock of the fall of France dissipated and the looming threat of German invasion dissolved,

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senior military commanders quickly distanced themselves from the idea that irregular warfare would be an important war-winning strategy. Instead, they hurriedly reverted to their traditional and more conservative perspective of disdain. As early as 4 September 1940, the Chiefs of Staff forwarded a report to the War Cabinet that declared, “Subversive operations must be regarded as a strictly supplementary course of action, and must conform with regular operations undertaken as part of our strategic plans.” Moreover, they now clearly set out objectives for the SOE that were more in lock step with conventional operations:

- a. Sabotage of key plants, commodities and communications, to supplement the effects of the blockade and air attack;
- b. the containing and extending of as many of the enemy’s forces as possible, thus forcing him to expend his military resources; and
- c. the preparation of the requisite conditions for a general rising of subject populations to synchronize with the final military pressure we exert on Germany and Italy or to coincide with land operation in any particular theatre.³¹

With clear direction, Dalton and his SOE staff now had to determine how to operationalize their mandate. Patently, the SOE’s challenge was to assess the “revolutionary potential in Europe” at any given point in time, to act, as one internal document described, as “the official midwife of revolutions, [to] ease the birth pangs and minimize the danger of stillbirth.”³² An internal SOE memorandum explained, “It is, nevertheless, SOE’s task in the present struggle to harness such revolutionary potential as exists in Europe to-day and to direct it to the best advantage of the Allied war effort.”³³ As the SOE staff examined the complexity of the problem, specific lines of operation slowly fell out, namely subversion, sabotage, the raising of secret armies and the conduct of guerrilla warfare.

SOE planners made a deliberate decision early on to separate sabotage cells from the efforts to create secret armies or in other words resistance movements. Control of both would continue to be from Britain, however, the necessity to separate the two entities stemmed from the necessity to

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ensure that if one component was compromised, the other would not be affected. This separation was critical since both activities called for completely different qualities and characteristics in both the personnel selected to organize and lead the respective organizations. Sabotage cells would be expected to conduct operations immediately, while the secret armies would only be mobilized once Allied ground force operations were ready to strike at Germany in the occupied territories.³⁴

Initially, the primary focus was sabotage to impede the German war effort in the occupied territories, as well as to force the enemy to dissipate their resources on rear area security. As important as the War Cabinet and the SOE viewed sabotage of the German war effort, careful attention was given to controlling the amount of activity undertaken to ensure that meaningless action that had very little actual impact did not trigger ferocious enemy reprisals that could dissuade, if not kill, any desire of the local population to create an initial resistance movement. "In partisan warfare," one experienced SOE agent revealed, "it is better to do a really big job or none at all. The small ones make for more backlash than they're worth."³⁵

Courtesy Lynn Philip Hodgson (LPH)



A successful sabotage mission derailing a locomotive in France.

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There was also a more self-serving reason to initially desist from conducting too many minor sabotage missions. One official report explained:

The most likely revolutionary situation in almost every country in Europe is precisely that which SOE wishes above all to avoid, that is, that by some act of unprecedented beastliness the Germans may drive their victims to a point beyond which any change inevitably becomes a change for the better. This desperation will result in a spontaneous rising which may not accord at all with Allied strategy or SOE plans, and which it may be impossible to exploit.³⁶

In addition to operations, the SOE was also responsible for the undesirable task of co-ordination and liaison with the General Staffs of the Allied Governments whose territories were occupied, as well as with the Free French General Staff. Quite simply, the General Staffs and political heads of all these entities referred their queries and complaints on “all matters in connection with sabotage and the organisation of resistance and secret armies” to the SOE.³⁷ Not surprisingly, this task proved particularly onerous.

The exacting mandate was not the only challenge faced by Dalton in establishing the SOE. Before he could make any real head-way he had to find and recruit the necessary qualified personnel. Due to the secrecy in which the SOE was veiled, a public advertising campaign was a non-starter. As a result, recruitment became a very personal, individual affair, normally conducted by the respective country sections.³⁸ As such, discrete inquiries were made to find service personnel with specific language and country profiles. More often than not, it was individuals tapping into their own networks of friends and acquaintances. One recruiter described it as:

a kind of club; you were invited to join. There were academics... oil men, bankers and regimental soldiers; all had to be ready to collaborate with civilians, opposition leaders, monarchists, anarchists, Communists, anyone who could harass the Germans, and be ready by any means to blow up bridges, derail trains and help create civil disobedience.³⁹

The initial haste of creation, coupled with the ad hoc recruitment, which lacked any form of selection criteria or standards, created a lack of credibility

in the new organization. The initial philosophy of seemingly “anything goes” also strained acceptance to many outsiders. This approach was reinforced by Dalton’s view that a “fanatical enthusiasm” was required, which rapidly led to an “ends justify the means” approach to business. This philosophy was clearly evident in one SOE report that unequivocally declared, “We do not really ‘ex officio’ care whether anti-Axis elements which we support are cannibals, anarchists, atheists, or thugs; our role is to cause embarrassment to the Axis by fostering and supporting any movements which may be inimical to the Axis, but we take no responsibility for the beliefs held by our protégés.”⁴⁰

Initially at any rate, there was an unabashed complete absence of moral conscience or conduct. One SOE report revealed, “Blackmailing responsible personnel connected with targets and threats of a ‘dim’ future that awaits them on our arrival should they not cooperate with us achieved results. The kidnapping and temporary restoration of wives and mistresses has also been successful.”⁴¹ In yet another example, an SOE operational letter divulged:

We know of a certain rather famous brothel keeper in Rhodes. Overtures are to be made to him regarding the acceptance of certain highly attractive and desirable ladies who are at present interned in Cyprus, and who are willing to work for us. These ladies can be sent in by the ordinary white slave traffic smuggling process, which has been going on between Turkey and Rhodes continually. This particular brothel caters for the amusement of many highly placed officials in the Island, and we hope it may prove firstly a source of information and secondly a means of contacting these officials.⁴²

It should be no surprise then that the SOE also sourced some its personnel from the criminal underworld. In fact, one of its most effective agents owned a chain of brothels. In addition, the SOE relied on professional forgers to manufacture the necessary documents for its agents since it could not get the necessary support from the SIS (i.e. MI6). Moreover, a retired burglar ran the SOE’s lock-picking course.

As a result of this arguably necessary, but unsavoury, approach to acquiring “human resources,” it is not hard to comprehend why to conventional military minds, the SOE was considered highly disreputable. Dalton himself

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quipped of one his new recruits, “a thug with good commercial contacts,” while a colleague rejoined, “not exactly the person to be trusted with the private means of a widow or orphan.” Yet, the individual was deemed perfect for the SOE. He was used to smuggle out raw materials and deal in black market currency to subvert the Japanese war effort.⁴³

Notwithstanding the SOE need for “special” skills and talents, they did themselves no favours by advertising the type of characters they were recruiting since their philosophical approach was not a closely guarded secret. One government official noted, “Valuable work is, I am informed, being done by SOE personnel in maintaining and developing useful contacts amongst certain categories of persons not readily accessible to Government officials; but here again it is for consideration how far this work is vitally necessary and how much of it ought not to be done.”⁴⁴

Not surprisingly, it did not take long for opponents of the SOE to emerge. Clearly, not everyone accepted the fanatical approach to subversion and sabotage that Dalton avowed. Underscored by rampant organizational and philosophical rivalry and personal biases, the acrimony of particular military commanders was heightened by the perceived lack of credibility and competence of SOE leaders and personnel, as well as their apparent absence of a moral compass. As one Brigadier remarked to an SOE lecturer after listening to a talk on guerrilla warfare, “Your lesson was very interesting ... but you know, don’t you, that our country believes in a gentlemanly manner of fighting.”⁴⁵

In no time, the SOE had a tranche of internal enemies. Professor M.R.D. Foot, the official historian of the SOE, observed, “SOE was never a popular department. It was created in a tearing hurry, during the appalling summer crisis of 1940 when it felt as though the heavens were falling.”⁴⁶ He assessed its newness was a key reason for the antipathy of others. “Like haste,” he wrote, “[newness] always a point of offence to the set-minded.” Foot explained that from the very beginning the SOE consciously set out to be original and different. This of course was quite dissimilar from what others found acceptable. He insisted, “therefore, it [the SOE] collected enemies in Whitehall [British Government].” Foot also believed that the SOE’s first head, Dr. Hugh Dalton, was also a reason for its unpopularity. Dalton was known to be abrasive and he normally rubbed people the wrong way.⁴⁷

Whether due to Dalton, or a myriad of other reasons, the fact was that SOE was vastly unpopular. A writer for the *Times Literary Supplement* assessed, “among whose [SOE] higher executives many displayed an enthusiasm quite unrestrained by experience, some [of whom] had political backgrounds which deserved a rather closer scrutiny than they ever got, and a few [who] could only charitably be described as nutcases.”⁴⁸ Additionally, Churchill was regularly assailed by complaints that the SOE was “infested with crackpots, communists, and homosexuals.”⁴⁹ Colin Gubbins recalled, “at the best SOE was looked upon as an organization of harmless backroom lunatics which, it was hoped, would not develop into an active nuisance.”⁵⁰ Both General Sir Claude Auchinleck and Air Chief Marshal Charles Portal whinged to Churchill that parts of the SOE were “a bogus, irresponsible, corrupt show.”⁵¹

In fact, Air Chief Marshal Portal regularly attacked SOE effectiveness. He grumbled, “It [the SOE’s effect] is anybody’s guess. My bombing offensive is not a gamble. Its dividend is certain; it is a gilt-edged investment. I cannot divest aircraft from a certainty to a gamble which may be a goldmine or may be completely worthless.”⁵² Portal also had issues with the morality of dropping agents who would then assassinate enemy personnel. For him there was a clear difference between dropping a spy and encouraging assassins, a difference that he believed was lost on the SOE.⁵³ As one SOE agent recalled, military senior officers “resisted bitterly the whole idea of letting a lot of thugs loose on the continent.”⁵⁴

Another major antagonist was Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary. As the Minister responsible for the Foreign Office, he was also accountable for the SIS, a chief rival of the SOE. A letter sent to Eden from a senior Foreign Office official reveals the sentiments at the time. “You [Eden] know that you have always had my sympathy in your dealings with SOE and your endeavours to control them,” the protagonist wrote, “All along I have had the impression that S.O.2 [SOE] rather stank in your nostrils.”⁵⁵

Significantly, Eden’s head of the SIS, Stewart Menzies, was also a major detractor of the new organization and a major ally in Eden’s opposition to the SOE. Initially, the SIS assessed the SOE as a “rather ineffective and ridiculous collection of amateurs who might endanger SIS if not kept quiet.” However, this view soon changed and the SIS came “to regard SOE as dangerous rivals, who if not squashed quickly, would eventually squash

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them.”⁵⁶ As one observer scrutinized, there was always the looming threat of “C’s [Menzies’] determination to expunge SOE from the Intelligence alphabet.”⁵⁷

The acrimony between the SIS and SOE is actually not difficult to comprehend. Quite simply, any stunning act of sabotage would provoke an intense security response from the enemy, which in turn, would threaten agents responsible for acquiring secret information. In fact, the SIS second-in-command counselled his senior:

We have to face the fact that S.O.2 [SOE] lives and grows - at an astonishing rate - seemingly without any governing factor as far as finance goes, and that whether we like it or not they do become in a sense competitors. If we cannot kill [it], and I do not think we can let us for [the] sake of work and war effort try to live on & work on friendly terms. I for one counsel Collaboration.⁵⁸

Aside from the philosophical differences and the rivalries, another irritant that created animosity and enmity was the heavy cloak of secrecy that the SOE adopted. Professor Foot acknowledged, “The haste of SOE’s begetting was one reason for its unpopularity; another was the density of the veil of secrecy in which it shrouded itself. This was sometimes overdone.”⁵⁹ As many SOF organizations have recognized only too late, excessive secrecy actually harms an organization. People tend not to accept, or trust, what they do not understand. And, importantly, senior political and military decision-makers and commanders resent, and often take as personal insult, the inference that they are not important enough to be included in the secret circle of information. All makes for bad relations.

Despite all the challenges, the SOE weathered its critics and organizational hurdles and quickly grew in stature and capability. With the full support of Churchill, the SOE began its operations and expanded its reach. It would soon have a global footprint. Importantly, the international outreach swiftly included a Canadian nexus.

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A MAN CALLED INTREPID: THE START OF THE CANADIAN CONNECTION

Overcoming the internal challenges, namely, the animosity of political and military decision-makers, was difficult enough, however, the SOE faced an even more demanding task – that of finding talented individuals to fill their myriad of requirements. Their net was cast wide and far. A perfect example, was the 45-year-old, Canadian, Sir William Stephenson, also known as the “Quiet Canadian,” and later as the “Man Called Intrepid.”¹

Stephenson was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba on 23 January 1897. On 12 January 1916, he left his job as a telegraph delivery boy to enlist in the 101st Battalion, Winnipeg Light Infantry. He was sent to France six months later where he was subsequently gassed during a German attack. By April 1917, he was promoted to sergeant and at this juncture decided to join the Royal Flying Corps as a fighter pilot. He deployed to France once again in February 1918, where he crashed behind enemy lines. He was subsequently wounded and captured, but later escaped. By the end of the war Stephenson had won both the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and the Military Cross (MC).



Courtesy LPH

Bill Stephenson was a fighter pilot in WWI.

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With hostilities over, Stephenson became a successful entrepreneur and businessman. He also dedicated a great amount of time and study to the application of radio, which resulted in his invention of a means of publishing photographs for newspapers by transmitting the images through radio waves. The first image appeared in the *Daily Mail* in December 1922.² He patented the wireless photography process, which made him a millionaire before he was thirty years old.³ He next ventured into the radio business and acquired Sound City Films, which represented the largest film and recording studios outside of Hollywood. He quickly extended his portfolio to include holdings in the steel and cement industries. In fact, one of his companies, Pressed Steel, made 90 per cent of the car frames for the leading British automotive manufacturer. Impressively, another of his enterprises was Alpha Cement, one of Britain's largest cement companies.

With such substantial commercial interests, Stephenson soon found himself globe trotting on a regular basis. He quickly established a vast international network of friends and business contacts, which included bankers, financiers, industrialists and politicians. Importantly, his business interests also endowed him with insight into national industrial capacities, such as German steel production, which later proved vitally important in assessing Hitler's war production capability. Predictably, his vast knowledge of potentially sensitive commercial information, combined with his extensive travels, brought him to the attention of the Industrial Intelligence Centre in London, which was focused on gathering information on strategic commodities. Stephenson's recruitment now acted as an important portal into the influential British inner circle of security and governmental mandarins.

This access would prove fortuitous for Churchill. The British Prime Minister quickly recognized in Stephenson, due to his wide network of business and friends, a means of opening doors in the United States that remained closed to the British. As such, Stephenson, who had become part of a very influential clique, became an extremely valuable asset to Churchill, who apparently trusted Stephenson unconditionally.⁴

Not surprisingly then, Churchill decided that Stephenson would be his man in the Americas. He fully appreciated the Canadian's rejection of bureaucracy and his inclination to identify the core of a problem and then deal straight

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with the decision-maker who could best help to solve the problem, rather than waste time working through an organizational hierarchy of managers. In short, Stephenson was a man of action much like the British Prime Minister himself. An individual that Churchill decided could make a difference in North America.

Courtesy LPH



Stephenson the entrepreneur in the interwar years.

Stephenson's first foray to the United States on behalf of the British, in the spring of 1940, was as a representative of the SIS at the direction of Stewart Menzies, Britain's chief of intelligence.⁵ Menzies instructed Stephenson to re-establish a high-level liaison with J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Although Hoover was amenable to working with the SIS, he conceded that he was under strict orders from the State Department not to collaborate with Britain in any way that could be seen as contravening the US Neutrality Acts.⁶ As such, Hoover stipulated that the liaison would be a personal one between himself and Stephenson. Furthermore, he insisted that no other US government department would be involved.⁷

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Since the first visit proved successful, Menzies dispatched Stephenson to the US once again in June 1940, this time in the capacity as the British Passport Control Officer (PCO). This appointment was the time-honoured cover for the senior SIS representative in New York. By all accounts, the position was at Churchill's direction. Stephenson recalled the Prime Minister's final clear and simple guidance:

You [Stephenson] know what you must do at once. We have discussed it most fully, and there is a complete fusion of minds between us. You are to be my personal representative in the United States. I will ensure that you have the full support of all the resources at my command. I know that you will have success, and the good Lord will guide your efforts as He will ours. This may be our last farewell. Au revoir and good luck!⁸

Although Stephenson's original assignment to New York was singularly to act solely as the SIS representative, in December 1940, the Director of the SOE, Sir Frank Nelson, requested Stephenson to also act as the SOE representative in the Western Hemisphere. The SOE task became a major undertaking for Stephenson. It was all part of Churchill's underlying instruction, which seemed harmless on the surface, but was laden with not so much nuance. Churchill detailed, "do all that was not being done, and could not be done by overt means, to assure sufficient aid for Britain, and eventually bring America into the war."⁹

The first challenge Stephenson faced was finding the necessary manpower. The PCO staff in existence was limited and came nowhere close to providing the necessary horsepower to fulfill all of the tasks he was given. Therefore, he turned to his Canadian business associates, as well as his First World War squadron mate and friend, Tommy Drew-Brook, a Toronto stockbroker, to help recruit Canadians from all realms of life (i.e. business executives, technicians, newspaper and communication experts, university professors and police authorities, as well as office staff).¹⁰ Overall, approximately 800 Canadians were recruited, mostly through newspaper ads, to work for Stephenson.¹¹ This group now deepened the Canadian connection with the SOE even more.

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With the expanding manpower pool and portfolio of tasks, Stephenson's cover as PCO was beginning to fray. His organization had ballooned and could no longer be housed under the cover of PCO. In essence, Stephenson was building a new secret organization in North America from scratch. It now had three main components: the secret intelligence division; the special operations division and the security division. In discussions with Hoover, the Director of the FBI suggested Stephenson name the growing organization British Security Cooperation (BSC).¹²

Importantly, Hoover became an invaluable ally. His patronage in the early stages proved to be significant. He directed his officers to assist the BSC in any way possible and provided a wireless channel for telegraphic communications between BSC and SIS headquarters, which was the only means of transmission during the early start-up period. In essence, Hoover and the FBI were engaged in a full-up alliance with British intelligence and the SOE.¹³

The next major problem for Stephenson was one of accommodations. Not surprisingly, with the expansion of personnel, the original suite of PCO offices quickly became inadequate. Stephenson used his own finances to move the PCO from a cramped set of offices in the Cunard Building off Wall Street, to the 35th and 36th floors of the Rockefeller Centre on Fifth Avenue. His new organization was still known to the casual observer as British Passport Control since it was the actual location for people to sort out passport and/or visa problems. Behind the curtain, however, it was in fact Britain's "intelligence window" into America.

Despite his focus on the Americas, Stephenson was still tethered to Britain. His BSC responded directly to the Security Executive, officially designated the Home Defence (Security) Executive.¹⁴ The Security Executive cast a wide net over any, and all, activities that had a national security nexus, such as communications, censorship, travel, ports, shipping and internment of foreign nationals. Importantly, it also provided guidance and direction to the BSC.¹⁵

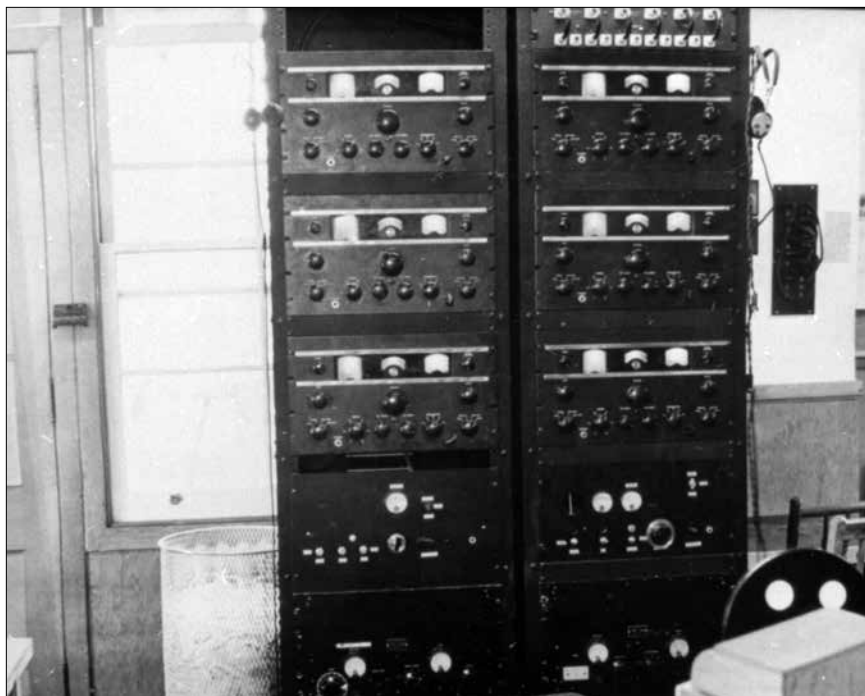
Although Stephenson's mandate from Churchill was to get the Americans involved in the war, he and his BSC had to tread carefully and work within the confines of the US Neutrality Acts, or at least not get caught

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violating the statutes. This tight-rope act was easier said than done. After all, the embryonic BSC represented a large number of very active British departments and organisations. Specifically:

- a. SIS;
- b. Security Executive;
- c. SOE;
- d. MI5 (Security Service); and
- e. Passport Control.¹⁶

Moreover, BSC was also responsible for Station M, which was responsible for fabricating “forged” letters and documents that were used by agents behind enemy lines. Station M had a laboratory in Canada that was established with the help of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), under the cover of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).¹⁷ As a result, doing Churchill’s bidding and staying “under the radar” were not always compatible.



Courtesy Whitby Library Archives (WLA), 29-005-003org

Hydra radio equipment.

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Already laden with a myriad of responsibilities, late in 1941, BSC added yet another division to its organization, namely, communications. This additional department was created to meet three basic needs. First, to create a means of secure, rapid communication between BSC and its Washington D.C. office. Second, to purchase special wireless equipment that was available only in the US for the British war effort. And, finally, to create a secret communication network in Latin America in case underground activities were required should the Axis alliance take power or inspire *coups d'états*. Once established, the BSC Communications Division also fulfilled the function of transmitting the exchange of intercepted enemy messages between American and British intelligence agencies.¹⁸

Clearly, with the vast portfolio of sensitive responsibilities the cover of Passport Control Officer was no longer viable. As a result, in January 1941, the British government changed Stephenson's appointment to Director of Security Coordination in the US. From a British perspective, the BSC was now a vitally important link to the Americans. A British government report elaborated on its official role:

BSC is represented on the Western Hemisphere Security Committee, which meets regularly in Washington, New York and Ottawa in rotation. BSC maintains close liaison with the US Services in Washington and New York and as a member of the Joint Intelligence Committee in Washington is in touch with the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff and Joint Staff Mission. Contact also maintained with OSS (New York and Washington), the Coast Guard Service, FCC, and the Departments of State and Justice in Washington. Through Washington office liaison is established with the Embassy and British Missions.¹⁹

Churchill, as he was apt to do, continued to give a stream of direction to Stephenson. Among the list of not insubstantial action items was the rather daunting direction to:

1. Get the White House to approve a list of essential supplies Britain needed immediately;
2. Investigate enemy activities in the US;

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3. Institute adequate security measures against the threat of sabotage to British property;
4. Organize American public opinion in favour of aid to Britain;
5. Establish a SOE network throughout Latin America;
6. Recruit likely SOE agents in the United States and other American countries;
7. Help influence public opinion in the US in a pro-Allied direction;
8. Make contact with various European refugee and exile movements in the New World; and
9. Help create secret communications channels for SOE networks.²⁰

Of greatest importance, Stephenson, whose code name was now “Intrepid,” agreed with Churchill’s desperate need to bring the Americans into the war. In fact, he felt that an integral component of his appointment in New York was to generate American public support for the British war effort and cultivate a pro-British American sentiment.

Although Stephenson had a good working relationship with Hoover, he astutely realized that Colonel William J. “Wild Bill” Donovan, a First World War veteran, winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor, renown lawyer and politician, as well as one of the President’s trusted advisors, was his single most important contact in the US.²¹ Therefore, he convinced Donovan to visit London, England in July 1940, so that Donovan could assess for himself the British war effort and ability to defeat the Nazis.

The fact-finding mission paid huge dividends for Britain. Donovan returned with four clear convictions:

1. That the British would fight to the last ditch;
2. They could not hope to hold the last ditch unless they got supplies at least from America;
3. That supplies were of no avail unless they were delivered to the fighting front - the protection of the lines of communication was a sine qua non; and

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4. That fifth column activity was an important factor [later to be proven wrong].

As a direct result of his visit, on his return to the US, he wrote articles, delivered radio broadcasts and actively lobbied to support Britain. He was also influential in the destroyer for bases deal that was signed on 3 September 1940, which provided 50 aging destroyers for convoy escort in exchange for the rights to air and naval bases in Bermuda, Newfoundland, the Caribbean and British Guinea.

In the early spring of 1941, Donovan made a second trip, this time accompanied by Stephenson, to London. The relationship between the two men became an integral element of the strategy to bring the Americans into the war. One British historian went so far as to assess that the Stephenson/Donovan relationship “was eventually to form the basis of a full-scale Anglo-American intelligence alliance.”²²

Library and Archives Canada (LAC) C4250



**British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and
President Franklin D. Roosevelt.**

Stephenson also cultivated a close working relationship with Robert Sherwood, one of the President’s key speech writers. Sherwood, a devout Anglophile and anti-Fascist, made a practice, with the President’s full knowledge, of allowing Stephenson to read the draft of speeches written for

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the president and provide comment to capture the British point of view to ensure the speeches supported the British war effort.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, the American President, also assigned his close friend, millionaire businessman Vincent Astor, as his personal liaison to Stephenson so that he could be regularly informed of specific British concerns, or requirements, that could not be passed through normal diplomatic channels. This conduit also allowed him to get briefed on BSC investigations into enemy activities in the US.²³

Not surprisingly then, with this deep and influential network of Americans, the impact Stephenson had in the United States proved to be extremely powerful. SOE historian M.R.D. Foot observed, Stephenson played “a leading part in persuading the owners of the United States news media that it was a more constitutional line to take to be anti-Nazi than to be isolationist.” He explained, “This transition, which the bulk of the American newspapers and broadcasting stations made between the summer of 1940 and the summer of 1941, encouraged American opinion to follow suit, with world-shaking results.”²⁴

Stephenson’s impact did not stop there. He was also instrumental in obtaining American assistance in the form of:

- 100 Flying Fortress bombers for the Royal Air Force (RAF) Coastal Command;
- Over a million rifles for the newly formed Home Guard; and
- Kayaks, landing craft, sub-chasers, wireless equipment, radio valves, parachutes and war materials for the Middle East.

Stephenson’s influence was so profound that Lord Louis Mountbatten, Commander of Combined Operations Command, confided:

I believe too that he [Stephenson] was the man who persuaded President Roosevelt to declare that the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea were no longer combat areas within the meaning of the American neutrality Act, so that it was possible for the Americans

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to send war material to the British in the Middle East Theater, and the ships the whole way escorted by American ships.²⁵

Undeniably, Stephenson fully understood the importance of BSC and its ability to advance the British war effort, particularly at a point when Britain was at its weakest and the Americans were still officially neutral. He later explained:

During the period under review, an organization in the Western Hemisphere restricted in its authority to collecting intelligence by established means would have been altogether inadequate and that the success of secret activities was primarily dependent upon the coordination of a number of functions falling within the jurisdiction of separate government departments in London. It was only as a result of such coordination that the British Security Coordination had the necessary elasticity to meet the urgent demands of the situation and to adapt itself readily to swiftly changing needs.²⁶

CHAPTER 3

STEPHENSON AND THE AMERICAN CONNECTION

Nowhere was Stephenson and the BSC's impact felt more than in the effort to bring the Americans into the war. He was extremely influential in promoting the pro-British sentiment that was essential in recruiting American support and, in accordance with Churchill's strategic intent, ensuring their participation in the war.

This task proved daunting, especially since isolationist tendencies ran deep in the US. Prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941, Stephenson carried out a number of activities in the Americas:

1. The collection of intelligence concerning United States and Latin American affairs – both foreign and domestic – affecting British interests;
2. The collection of external intelligence – intelligence that is to say, derived from sources within the Western Hemisphere but relating to areas outside the Western Hemisphere;
3. The penetration of unfriendly, as well as enemy, diplomatic and consular missions;
4. The establishment in Latin America of an SOE organization, with the primary purpose of preparing for underground activities in the various republics against the possibility (which at the time seemed far from remote) of Axis invasion or Axis-inspired revolution;
5. The organization of free movements among foreign exiles and minorities in the Western Hemisphere for the purpose of encouraging and strengthening resistance in the occupied countries;

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6. The direction of subversive propaganda from American sources both to Europe and the Far East;
7. The institution of measures to prevent the enemy from smuggling supplies both to and from the Western Hemisphere;
8. The institution of security measures in Latin American ports where British ships called;
9. The recruitment of agents in the Western Hemisphere to undertake either SI or SO work in enemy-occupied countries;
10. The training of agents for the establishment in Canada of a special training camp which was opened coincidentally with Pearl Harbor; and
11. The procurement in the Western Hemisphere of special supplies for the underground in occupied countries.¹

These tasks were significant. Although the Americans were not as sensitive as the British to the threat that existed in the Americas to the Allied war effort, there was reason for concern. The British assessed the potential threat as substantial. After all, in the United States alone there were 6,000,000 German-speaking Americans and an additional 4,000,000 Italian-speaking Americans. Moreover, many of these US citizens with ties to the Axis powers were employed in factories that produced British war materials. Others worked in the freight yards, railways and on the docks through which Allied war material travelled. With orders of war materials worth \$4,000,000,000, the risk to the British war effort were substantial.² “It was a dangerous situation,” the BSC official history recorded, “for a wide-scale sabotage campaign in the private factories producing arms for British account or against the large proportion of Britain’s 20,000,000 tons of shipping which used American ports could have proved disastrous.”³

Although the British Purchasing Commission was technically responsible for prevention of sabotage in the US, aside from minimizing risk in the factories that produced war materials for Britain, it had little ability to secure the plethora of ports from which the material was sent. Moreover, the

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American authorities showed little concern for protecting British property. Not surprisingly, BSC absorbed the British Purchasing Commission and immediately expanded its scope of activities, importantly by posting security officers, designated as Consular Security Officers (CSOs), to all American and South American ports where British ships called to load war supplies. The CSOs' primary task was to protect British ships while in port from possible saboteurs. The tempo of a single three-month period highlights the scale of activity. During this period, CSOs and their staffs in North America carried out over 5,000 inspections on nearly 800 ships. In South America, they conducted over 2,500 inspections on 859 vessels.⁴ In the end, throughout the war, not a single British ship was lost or seriously held-up from sailing due to accident or sabotage in an American port.

To assist with security and cut down on smuggling, the BSC also instituted the Ships Observers' Scheme. Under this program one or more observers were appointed among the crew of every neutral ship sailing from the US or Latin America. These observers would be met by an agent in all the principal ports at which the respective ship would dock. The observer(s) would then report all suspicious activity (e.g. Nazi or communist talk among the crew, smuggling, suspected Axis agents). The program met with some significant intelligence coups but overall fell short of expectations. Since the program necessitated agents working in the US, once the Americans passed legislation restricting the activities of foreign agents operating on American soil, the BSC shifted control of the program to the US Office of Naval Intelligence.⁵

Security aside, Stephenson focused considerable attention on the important task of swaying American opinion and trying to move the US from an isolationist stance to one of active participant. As such, Stephenson sought out sympathetic journalists and media moguls. Papers such as the *New York Post*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *New York Times* and *Baltimore Sun* became important allies. Conversely, hostile papers that could not be co-opted were targeted for action to put them out of business.

The same approach extended to radio stations. In fact, a New York based radio station, WRUL, which possessed a powerful short-wave transmitter, was subsidized by BSC and became an important propaganda tool. Stephenson

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recruited foreign news editors, translators and announcers, and he went so far as to provide news bulletins and commentaries.⁶

BSC also took aim at the American isolationists and German-American clubs. By the spring of 1941, BSC estimated there were approximately 700 chapters and a million members of American isolationist groups. In fact, Britain's ambassador to the US reported nine out of 10 Americans favoured staying out of the war.⁷ As a result, Stephenson and the Canadian-heavy BSC certainly had their work cut out for themselves.

Undaunted, the BSC infiltrated members into the isolationist groups in an effort to turn up information that they could use to discredit the organizations and prove they were a front for the Nazis. In fact, BSC was eventually able to demonstrate that there was active Nazi activity in New York, Washington, Chicago, San Francisco, Cleveland and Boston. In some cases, they were actually able to trace German money transfers to the America First groups.⁸ This information was readily provided to J. Edgar Hoover and Bill Donovan.

BSC agents also attended meetings to keep track of members and worked at creating effective counter-measures. Notably, the BSC agents were not above harassment. For example, when Senator Gerald Nye spoke in Boston in September 1941, agents distributed thousands of handbills labelling him an appeaser and "Nazi lover." In addition, agents tried to disrupt an America First Rally at Madison Square Garden by printing phoney tickets.⁹

Following the apparent philosophy of the SOE that the ends justify the means, the BSC also recruited agents to penetrate enemy or enemy-controlled businesses, propaganda groups, diplomatic and consular missions. BSC agents and representatives were posted to key points in Washington D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle. One such agent, Amy Elizabeth (Betty) Thorpe, code named Cynthia, was directed to renew her relationship with Italian naval attaché Alberto Lais, who was posted to the Italian embassy in Washington. Cynthia is credited with warning the Americans of the plans to scuttle ships harboured in the US and for assisting in acquiring Italian ciphers. Later, posing as a journalist, she infiltrated the Vichy French Embassy and obtained copies of secret correspondence and the French naval ciphers.¹⁰

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No potential avenue of approach to disrupting enemy activity in the US was overlooked. The BSC also established contact with several minority groups with the aim of creating pro-Allied movements and recruiting agents. For example, Austrian-Americans were approached and an organisation known as "Austria Action" was formed in an attempt to unite all anti-Nazi Austrians. This group became the first minority organization to receive benevolent recognition from the US Department of Justice, which was then keeping a watchful eye upon all foreign minorities in the USA.¹¹

In addition, the BSC, working with American Yugoslavs, established the "Slav Bulletin" and created a centre for anti-Nazi activities among the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in the US. Lectures were arranged by democratic Slav leaders and groups were established to watch Nazi agents among the Croats and Slovaks. Similarly, close contact was established with the main Ukrainian democratic group, known as the "Defence of the Ukraine."

The BSC also established contact with members of the Hungarian Communist Party. In addition, BSC special operations ran a Hungarian language newspaper to counteract pro-German feelings. BSC further developed ties with anti-Nazi elements among the Carpatho-Russian clergy and they developed a close co-operation with the Mazzini Society, as well as extending contacts to the various labour organisations with young Italian Socialists in an attempt to persuade them into a more active anti-Nazi policy.¹²

Attention was also focused on winning over Arabs. "At the time when a British crusade to liberate Syria was considered imminent," the official BSC history recorded, "the principal American Arab newspaper *Al Hoda* was persuaded to become entirely pro-British." In addition, a Near East Information Bureau was established in New York, and broadcasts over WRUL were subsidized in all the principal Near Eastern languages.¹³

Importantly, subversive propaganda was also directed against enemy agents. For example, Dr. Kent Rieth, a German diplomat, arrived in the US in 1934, with the double mission of buying up American owned oil properties in Eastern Europe, as well as contacting all US political groups favouring isolationism in an attempt to hinder application of the Lend-Lease Bill. In May 1941, SIS handed a document of Rieth's activities to SOE for

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appropriate action. SOE conducted a press campaign breaking the story as an exclusive to the *New York Herald Tribune* and then fed other angles of the story to other newspapers and agencies. As a result, Rieth was harassed by media for ten days, after which he was arrested by the FBI and subsequently expelled from the country.¹⁴

The SOE also conducted a pressure campaign against I.G. Farbenindustrie, which the British perceived as a powerful and dangerous concern doing much harm, especially through its connections with the various companies of Standard Oil. Its vice president was a German named Von Rath, a naturalized American who had also been a German agent during the First World War, acting in the capacity of a commercial counsellor at the German Embassy in Washington D.C.. As an American citizen, a wealthy man, and a member of all the best clubs in New York, the SOE believed Von Rath was possibly the guiding brain behind the activities of Farben in the U.S. After two weeks of pressure, in which his name and activities were widely publicized, he resigned. Additional pressure was kept on the company for several more weeks with similar successful results. The Farbenindustrie interests in the US were eventually taken over by nominees of the US government.¹⁵

In short, the BSC/SOE stopped at nothing to achieve their aim. In fact, initially they also conducted break-ins in an attempt to access information, codes and correspondence. However, once the Americans joined the Allied war effort following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent German declaration of war on the United States on 11 December 1941, Stephenson and the BSC no longer had to focus on swaying American opinion or conducting investigations into enemy activity.¹⁶ The Americans now actively took this mission on themselves.

The American shift in public opinion toward supporting the war came none too soon, as the days of BSC activity in the US were coming to an end. First, the US State Department had finally taken notice of the BSC activities inside the country. Already by the Spring of 1941, they ordered Stephenson's and the BSC operations to be curtailed. Their concern was that a "...full size secret police and intelligence service is rapidly evolving."¹⁷ In addition, in early 1942, Senator Kenneth McKellar introduced a bill that required

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all agents of foreign governments working in the US to register with the US Justice Department and detail all agents and their activities. The Bill passed on 28 January 1942, and it did not differentiate between friendly or unfriendly powers. As a result, the BSC/SOE was required to restrict some of its efforts and pass them to the Americans to conduct. Instead, Stephenson and his organization now focused on Latin America. This new primary focus, however, was not without its own problems either.

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STEPHENSON AND THE BSC IN SOUTH AMERICA

Once the Americans were in the war, full effort could be focused on Latin America, which to the BSC/SOE, represented a potential powder keg. Latin America was an important source of supply for war materials. In addition, there were significant economic and political interests at play, which the Axis powers shared. Significantly, to the Germans, Latin America represented vital resupply and refit sanctuaries for their naval vessels deployed far from home. As such, the region was important to all the belligerents. Despite the overt threat, the BSC/SOE had to tread lightly, as the Latin American countries were highly sensitive to their sovereignty and resented foreign power interference, or intrigues.

Complicating matters even further was Clausewitzian *realpolitik*. Although the allies were dedicated to working together to defeat the Axis powers, both American and British economic concerns fuelled national interests. The US State Department was diligent at blocking British actions in Latin America and the British Foreign Office, perceptive to the Latin American and US political sensitivities, also concentrated their efforts at thwarting SOE activities in the region, while simultaneously working hard to protect British economic and political interests.

Regardless of the economic and political dynamics at play, many British Government officials, especially those in the SOE, were deeply concerned of the latent threat. One Government report explained, "It [South America] is at the same time the source of supply of many commodities essential to the war effort of the United Nations and the area of investment of £1093 million of British capital."¹ The importance was not hard to understand. Oil wells in Venezuela and the Dutch West Indies supplied 80 per cent of the fuel used by the Royal Navy and a significant portion of aviation fuel for the Royal Air Force. Furthermore, bauxite mines in the British and Dutch Guianas represented 70 per cent of the Allied aluminum supply.²

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Economic and political interests aside, there was also the real issue of enemy activity. Lord Louis Mountbatten confided to General George Marshall that “it was clear that the Axis agents were having a free run in these [South American] States and it was most important that the position should be reversed as soon as possible.”³ Sir Charles Hambro, the second Director of the SOE, agreed “that the situation there was serious and required drastic action.”⁴ In addition, another senior British government official acknowledged, “... the situation in South America worried us greatly. ...Our problem in South America would be the obverse of our policy in Europe. We had to prevent sabotage, and SOE’s contribution to that could be to attack, by underground methods, the people in South America who were about to organise sabotage.”⁵

The British Chiefs of Staff agreed. On 9 June 1942, they dispatched a telegram to their Joint Staff Mission in Washington. They relayed:

We are anxious to see an end of Axis machinations in Latin America which constitute serious potential threat to Allied supplies...Our policy in regard to secret anti-Axis activity has been one of laissez faire to avoid risk of upsetting Latin American states...Although overt security measures to prevent sabotage to ships and cargoes have been organized in all major ports by British Security Coordination...except for this Axis have virtually had a free run...It is therefore highly important that secret work should start quickly...We have recommended to Ministers concerned that resources of both SIS and SOE should be made available...We have also recommended that British Security Coordination should extend their overt security measures.⁶

The concern is not difficult to understand. After all, as a Government report revealed, “South America is one of the few sources of war supplies still available to the United Nations and it is a matter of vital importance to see that the enemy takes no successful action to impede their production and free flow to the USA and to the UK.”⁷

The SOE’s official assessment of the situation mirrored that of the senior British leadership. Captured German documentation only reinforced the perceptions of the dire situation.⁸ A formal SOE threat assessment explained:

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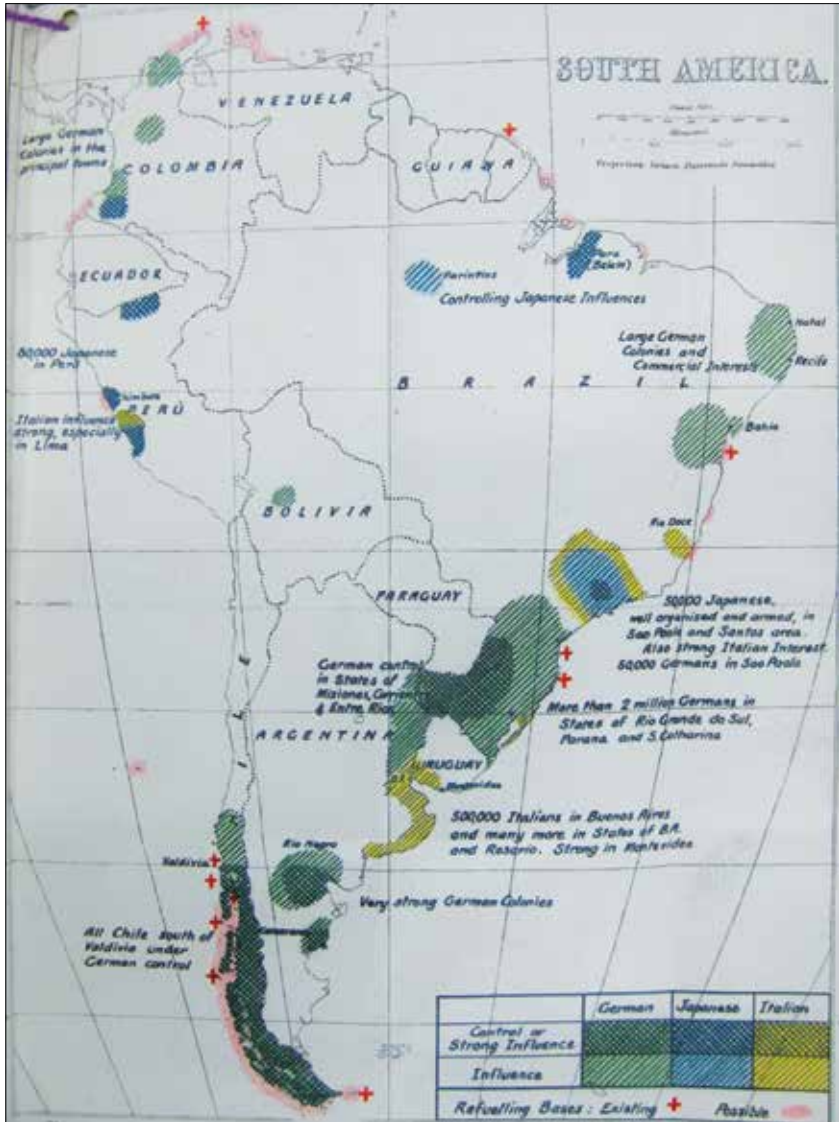
Latin America is now the only considerable neutral area in the world and, since the loss of the East Indies and Malaya, it has become an indispensable source of many products vital to the Allied war effort. It is therefore essential that these supplies should not be sabotaged and that there should be no breach of the peace in South America, which would inevitably cause their interruptions. ... Unfortunately, the Governments in all the South American countries are unstable and their armies weak and often divided in loyalty, while physical, political, economical and ethno-graphical conditions are ideal for subversive operations. ...Moreover, the continent is permeated by hostile minorities of which the German and Japanese are highly organised, armed and prepared for subversive action, ranging from the supply of raiders and submarines and sabotage of exports, to military and political action on the largest scale.⁹

Quite simply, unlike the Americans, the British believed that the Axis agents were running amok in South America. Their case seemed to be strengthened with the revelation in early 1940, that the Argentinian Government uncovered a plot, just five days prior to the intended launch date by the Nazi agent Arnulf Fuhrmann and his accomplices, to overthrow the Uruguay government and subsequently mobilize all German residents to create a German colony.¹⁰

Even the Foreign Office, who considered the SOE their arch nemesis and despite all their efforts to restrain SOE activities, conceded that South America was an area of deep concern. A classified report explained:

Nowhere in the world are the physical, political, economic and ethnographic conditions so suitable for subversive operations by either side as in Latin America. In all States there are large colonies of Germans, Italians or Japanese, and these, particularly the Germans and Japanese, have for years past been organised, prepared, and in some cases strategically placed in order to assist the Axis war effort when required.¹¹

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National Archives (NA)

SOE map of South America showing areas of enemy infiltration and influence.

Suspensions of enemy activity ran rampant in Allied circles. The SOE saw menacing shadows in almost every Latin American country. For example:

Brazil – Although there was no proof that Axis forces were using local bases for supplying submarines, officials suspected that German submarines

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were using bases in the mouth of the Amazon. Moreover, there was widespread belief that enemy sabotage would be conducted on a large scale.¹² Furthermore, the SOE assessment underscored the Japanese threat, specifically, “Japanese colonisation,” which analysts described as following a tactical plan. Significantly, a SOE report declared that the Japanese had a military force of approximately “100,000 men with modern automatic light weapons, including anti-tank guns, hand grenades, machine guns, a completely organised army-staff and all men properly regimented” and ready to go.¹³

Chile – The SOE perceived the German minorities to be “fully organized.” In addition, the SOE reported that the Germans had prepared refuelling bases, as well as frontier defences in the Concepcion-Los Angeles area to prevent interference from the North.¹⁴

Columbia – SOE rated the country as only “weakly pro-Ally.”

Cuba – The SOE suspected the enemy was using Cuba “as a clearing house for Axis agents in South America and as a supply base for Axis vessels in the Caribbean.”¹⁵

Mexico – British diplomats reported sighting of enemy submarines off the coast; landing of refueling parties; approximately 5,000 well-organized German citizens; approximately 4,000 Japanese individuals (with ex-servicemen reportedly organizing in districts).¹⁶

Paraguay – Rated as a “tinderbox,” the danger of revolution always being present.¹⁷

Peru – The SOE highlighted the threat posed by a strong German colony, as well as a Japanese colony of approximately 80,000 people. SOE assessed it as “a latent menace, and reports have already been received of their having established refuelling bases on the Peruvian coast.”¹⁸

Venezuela – SOE assessed oil supplies vulnerable to submarine attack, as well as the fact that the enemy “are known to have prepared landing grounds.”¹⁹

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And so, the BSC/SOE, armed with what they considered a compelling threat picture, set forth to tackle the problem. The SOE lines of operation for South America consisted of:

1. Countering Axis organisations by secretly contacting and supporting the parties and minorities sympathetic to the Allies. This will involve organising them and supplying them with money and arms;
2. Exposing the activities of pro-Axis parties so that the Governments concerned can be pressed to take action against them;
3. Protecting sources of supplies for the Allies from sabotage by Axis agents;
4. Neutralising Axis strongholds and bases already formed; and
5. Causing the confiscation or destruction of supplies and dumps destined for Axis use.²⁰

Not surprisingly, based on Stephenson's record to date, the SOE was relatively successful. In Bolivia, the SOE warned the anti-Axis Government of a planned Nazi-inspired revolt, which not only strengthened the British position but led to the adoption of numerous security measures and encouraged a wave of anti-Nazi feeling. In Brazil, the SOE provided evidence of skulduggery to the President that resulted in the revocation of the Italian *LATI* airline concession in Brazil. In addition, the SOE supplied information to the Brazilian police authorities in January 1942, which included detailed files on all Germans in the strategic Natal area. This disclosure led to the arrest and imprisonment of numerous Germans. Furthermore, it led to the break-up of the Stoltz espionage group. The SOE also revealed that the Governor's newspaper was receiving subsidies from the Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels. The Governor was subsequently removed.²¹

The SOE had similar success in Colombia, where their release of information led to the arrest and deportation of many Germans, as well as the destruction of a rising Fascist party. Additionally, German agents Erich Guter and Wilhelm Dittmar were arrested for possessing an illegal wireless transmitter,

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photostatic equipment and compromising documents. Furthermore, a consignment of 2,000 anti-British books imported from Argentina were destroyed. Significantly, they were also able to convince the government to implement new restrictions on Japanese colonies within the country and the SOE broke up *Accion Nacional*, a totalitarian party, by disclosing the party's activities and ties. Finally, the SOE was able to influence the Government into passing a law to expropriate property of Axis nationals.²²

Elsewhere, SOE agents used personal influence to persuade certain Chilean Cabinet ministers to push the government into rupturing relations with the Axis powers and implementing a law to liquidate all German businesses. In addition, files on German agents were supplied to the police. In Ecuador, the Government was provided with evidence on individuals involved in pro-German activity, including the President's own brother-in-law. Individuals were either deported or incarcerated. In Venezuela, the same techniques of disclosing information resulted in the expulsion, or black-listing of several important Germans and German firms. Also, 4,000 anti-British pamphlets were destroyed and the Spanish ciphers were stolen from the Spanish Ambassador. In Uruguay, the "Radio Continental" in Montevideo, a powerful Axis propaganda station, was completely destroyed.²³

In Central America, SOE agents conducted a partial survey of the region and prepared a long list of targets. They were also able to influence the Costa Rican government to pass a law expropriating all property belonging to individuals from Axis powers and the elimination of all German commerce.²⁴

Concurrently, throughout the region, the BSC/SOE agents were also laying the foundation for an underground organization to carry on resistance should the Axis invade Latin America, or in the event that any, or all, of those countries declare themselves allies with the Axis. As such, agents compiled a list of all strategic targets (e.g. strategic communications such as bridges, railway lines, airfields, wireless, telephone and telegraph stations; war industry related – electric plants, waterworks, mines and factories) that would derail the enemy.

Despite the relative success of the BSC/SOE, their days were numbered. The British Foreign Office, trying to balance maintaining British friendly relations with Latin American countries and the United States, as well

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as protecting British economic and political interests, perceived SOE operations as extremely hazardous to their efforts. The fear of discovery of SOE meddling, much less SOE operations, or, even simply the potential discovery of SOE intent to conduct activities, not to mention subsequent consequences, rattled British diplomats. As such, the British Foreign Office worked hard at discrediting SOE assessments of the threat and the requirement for active operations in the region. One Foreign Office diplomat asserted, “the likelihood of some Axis-inspired coup is generally dismissed, except either (a) with outside assistance, or (b) in the event of the war taking a much more serious turn.”²⁵ Another representative explained:

The Axis threat to our supplies from South America is not as great as SOE would have us believe. ... If SOE were to be given carte blanche in South America the result would be that we should have endless quarrels with the State Department who are very touchy about the Western Hemisphere, Pan-America etc and also with the local governments, as a result of which our supplies might be endangered to a far greater extent than by sabotage on the part of German or Japanese residents.²⁶

Quite simply, the Foreign Office wanted a halt to SOE action, arguing that the threat was minimal and the pursuit of operations, which entailed great risk of detection, would only jeopardize relations with the Latin American states, as well as the US. The Foreign Office insisted, “possibly our greatest asset in Latin America today, in view of the unfavourable course of the war, is our reputation for respectability. This asset would be lost if we were to be detected in exactly that form of ill-doing of which we have so successfully accused our enemies, and relations between the UK and these countries, including economic relations, might suffer considerably, both during the war and the postwar periods.”²⁷

Exacerbating the issue, was the US hostility to any British presence in Latin America, which the British perceived was largely based on economic interest. Nonetheless, the enmity was stark and had to be addressed. As one official report warned:

We know that the State Department are opposed to the undertaking of any subversive activities in Latin America at all. *A fortiori*,

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they are opposed to such activities on our part; and it would be extremely dangerous to fly in the face of their express disapproval by indulging in such activities in a region which, whether we like it or not, must be regarded as peculiarly within their sphere of interest.²⁸

In the end, despite the British view that the Americans were “a bit too complacent about the situation in Latin America,” and they seriously questioned the US motives, they acquiesced to the American pressure.²⁹ After all, no one wanted to antagonize their rich, resource laden, and powerful new ally.

As such, Stephenson’s SOE efforts in Latin America came at a price. A British Government representative sent to sort out the rivalry between the Foreign Office and the SOE in Latin America, revealed that Intrepid was “probably irretrievably compromised with the State Department.” The British official recommended that Stephenson, especially in light of his other tasks and responsibilities, “devote his activities to close collaboration with Colonel Donovan in North America and Africa – and possibly the Far East.” The recommendation also called for a new appointment to be deployed to Washington D.C. to be responsible for the whole of Latin America. This new appointment would “work closely with the State Department and superintend both SOE and SIS organisations. These two organisations, in so far as the State Department agreed, would work in close cooperation in the various countries concerned, thus putting an end to the existing rivalry between them and the constant troubles which are at present continually cropping up.”³⁰

The controversy finally came to an end in December 1942, when the Head of the SOE reported that the SOE organization in Latin America would be reduced and their operations suspended. Only a minimum of SOE representatives, enough to enable activities to be resumed in the event of unexpected future developments, would be left behind.³¹ Consequently, BSC/SOE closed down its operations in entirety in Latin America on 1 October 1944. Nonetheless, the impact on the war effort of BSC/SOE efforts in this region of the world was considerable. The Head of SOE wrote, “We have been instrumental, through our local representatives and facilities

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in Canada, in conceiving and setting up the Security Scheme for the protection of British strategic raw materials, their sources and supply lines.”³²

In the final tally, the BSC was immensely successful in the Americas. Axis interference with Allied shipping amounted to only six vessels damaged. Importantly, none were sunk. Furthermore, the FBI acknowledged that they received a great deal of information from South America through BSC, material that they could not get from their own sources. In fact, 90 per cent of British high-grade intelligence emanating from South America came through BSC/SOE.³³

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CAMP X

BSC/SOE operations in the United States and Latin American furthered the British war effort, particularly during the dark days before American involvement in the war. Key to this success was the Canadian nexus in the Americas. Importantly, the Canadian connection did not end there. Even as Stephenson and his largely Canadian staff at BSC were managing the Latin American portfolio, he was simultaneously working diligently on cementing his relationship with the Americans, particularly with Donovan and the FBI. He now planned to tie the Allies even closer together. Specifically, Stephenson intended to establish a special training school close to the Canadian/US border that could train both Canadian SOE agents, as well as Americans. This school became not only a key component in selecting and training Canadian agents, it also assisted the Americans in establishing their own special operations capability.

The draw on Canada for SOE operatives began early on. Even as Churchill and the SIS were recruiting Stephenson, the SOE realized it faced a recruiting problem and it decided to approach the Canadian military. Quite simply, the number of required linguists and those with specific skills and knowledge was very limited. As a result, the SOE, which faced problems finding enough of the “right type” of person from the start, had to expand their recruiting pool. For example, by the end of 1941, there was a critical shortage of expert linguists. However, the requirement extended beyond mere language proficiency. The SOE needed “men and women who were not only thoroughly acquainted with the countries to which they were to be sent, but possessed courage and physical stamina of a degree sufficient to enable them to live the lives of hunted outcasts with the threat of torture and death constantly in the offing.”¹

This search for such resolute individuals, who were capable of deploying behind enemy lines and conducting nefarious activities, began as early as 12 March 1940. This beginning was four months prior to Churchill creating the

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SOE, during the short, limited foray into irregular warfare during the gloomy Phoney War period. At this time, the British War Office had approached the Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) in London to inquire if the Canadians could recommend personnel for “irregular leaders or guerilla warfare jobs.” The War Office explained that the individuals would receive “social and political” training with regards to particular German occupied countries. The intent was to employ the trained agents for political missions, “especially at the end of the war when conditions may be somewhat chaotic.”²

Initially, Major-General Andrew McNaughton, the Canadian overseas commander, refused. Philosophically, he was not a supporter of special operations forces or special warfare.³ However, the following year, in 1941, with no imminent employment of the Canadian troops in the offing, he relented and allowed soldiers from the Canadian expeditionary force to volunteer for special service.

The British decision to look to McNaughton for recruits was predictable. Canada, with its diverse make-up, dual founding nationalities, and heavy immigrant population, provided a rich recruiting ground. Specifically, the British were looking for French-Canadians for service in France, Canadians of Eastern European descent for the Balkans and Chinese Canadians for Far East operations. The British also tapped into their offices in North America, specifically BSC. With the concurrence of the Canadian Government, the British recruited a number of volunteers among Canadian Yugoslavs. These Canadians actually became the first to be selected for SOE operations in the war. They were later followed by other Canadians with ethnic roots in Italy, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria.⁴

Back in England, by late 1942, the shortage of French speaking wireless operators became severe. One SOE Staff officer counselled:

It is true that some of these groups [French resistance cells] will probably be infiltrated by the Gestapo and will be more of a danger than assistance, but in the majority of cases we should be able to rely on the advice of one of our own men as to the potential value and possibilities of the various groups that will undoubtedly appear. We therefore suggest that the necessary steps be taken urgently to

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recruit in as large numbers as possible men who have the following qualifications:

1. Good French (but not necessarily complete bilinguality);
2. Physical courage; and
3. Sufficient intelligence combined with just enough leadership to enable them to carry out one simple and specific job.⁵

The SOE staff officer also advised that “all efforts should be made to approach the Canadian Forces ... to obtain men with the necessary qualifications.”⁶ With McNaughton’s former approval, the War Office now directly approached the chief signals officer of the Canadian Army to identify likely candidates. As it worked out, the vast majority of Canadian SOE agents were wireless operators, who were nominated by the chief signals officer. The other Canadian agents who volunteered were vetted by the senior intelligence officer at CMHQ in London.

The Canadians, from the British SOE leadership perspective, were a seemingly ideal solution to their personnel problem. The linguistic and cultural attributes, and knowledge of these volunteers, provided the SOE with, in many aspects, ready-made operatives. Inculcating the specific technical skills would just be a matter of training. Initially, the British Government enrolled the volunteers directly into the SOE. In fact, Canadian military serving personnel were released from the Canadian armed forces and re-enrolled into British service. Ominously, the terms of agreement and service were simply verbal due to the haste of recruiting and the secrecy surrounding the organization, which often meant that administration was minimal at best. Not surprisingly, these arrangements soon proved to be unsatisfactory as some of the early volunteers found themselves simply abandoned if they became hurt, unfit for service, or decided to quit. As a result, by the end of 1942, the Canadian government established a system by which volunteers were “loaned” to the British War Office for terms of six months. Respective personnel and administrative files were kept with the CMHQ.⁷

Those who joined the SOE quickly realized they were in a special organization. All recruits “were quickly made to forget all thoughts about Queensbury

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rules and so-called ‘gentlemanly’ warfare ... [and they] were taught a vast range of sabotage techniques and bizarre methods of killing.”⁸ Moreover, they were thoroughly trained in advising, arming and assisting members of the various resistance movements in the enemy-occupied countries.

Successful volunteers underwent several phases of training. The first phase focused on physical conditioning. In addition, the course provided all the recruits with an in-depth proficiency with Allied and German small arms, as well as expertise in explosives and demolition work. During this period volunteers also received instruction in the recognition of German uniforms and equipment.

Instruction at the Commando Training Centre in Arisaig, in the Western highlands of Scotland near the Isle of Skye, was the next phase of training. During this stage recruits conducted arduous field training and live-fire exercises. Following the commando training came parachute qualification in Manchester. Once operatives had completed their “qualification training,” they were next separated according to their respective skills and sent to specialized training centres.

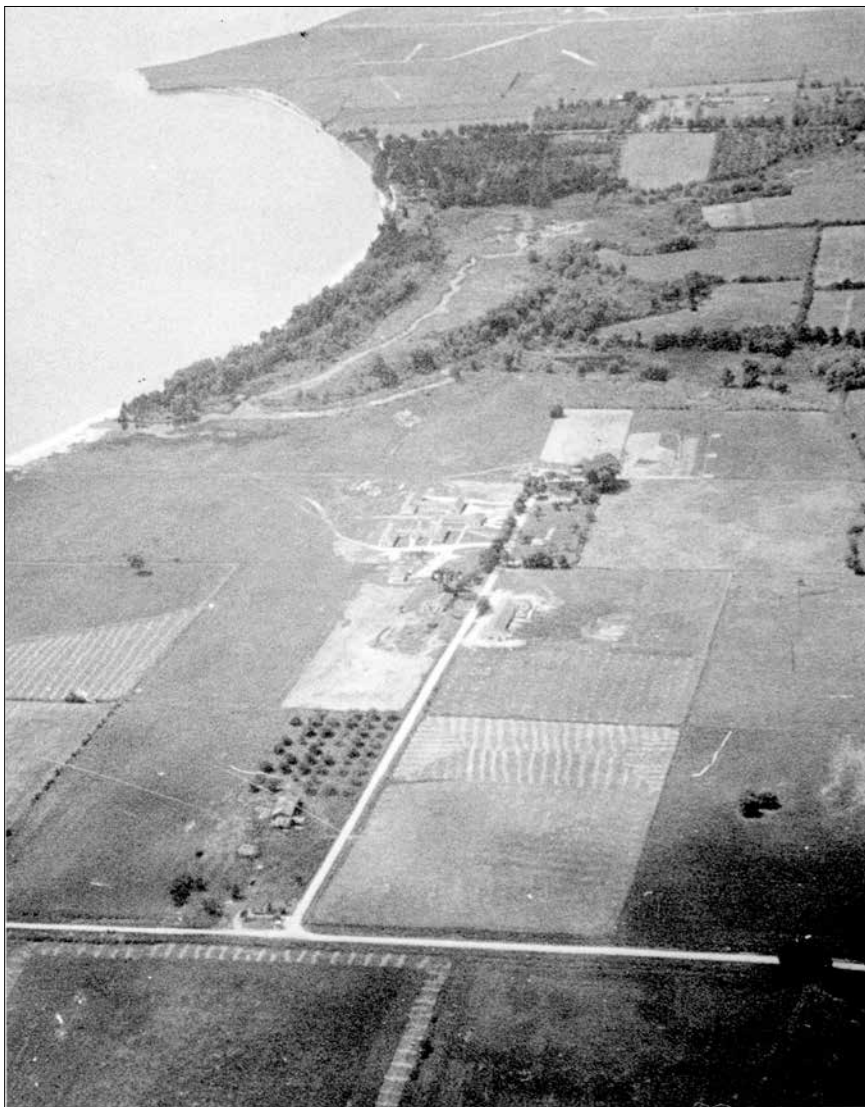
Training, not surprisingly, was a critical component of SOE success. As such, they developed an elaborate framework. Preliminary schools were created to provide elementary training, as well as to act as a filter to weed out candidates before they learned too much of their mission or the SOE. Next, para-military schools provided training in demolitions, weapons, tactics and communications. For those going to occupied Europe, a trip to the Commando school at Arisaig in the harsh, remote Western reaches of Scotland was also a required stop.⁹ Finishing schools furnished more in-depth knowledge in the art and science of leading a clandestine existence. Finally, operational briefings were conducted in country section apartments prior to deployment.

Most of the SOE special training schools (STS) were located in the United Kingdom. However, a few were opened in other overseas locations as well. STS 101 was opened in Singapore in July 1941, but its staff and students were forced into the jungles to carry out guerilla warfare once the city fell to the Japanese in February 1942. The SOE also opened STS 102 in Ramat David, near Haifa in the Middle East, in December 1942, to train agents for

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operations in the Balkans and the Middle East. Its third overseas school was based in North America. Once again, the Canadian nexus was all important. Arguably, it would become the most important of the external schools.¹⁰

Courtesy LPH



Aerial view of Camp X.

Stephenson raised the idea for creating a secret agent training school in Canada on 6 September 1941, when he hosted a dinner at his residence, which was located at the exclusive St. Regis Hotel in Manhattan. Tommy

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Davies from SOE headquarters in London, had come to New York to discuss a number of issues. One of those issues was in fact establishing a training school in North America.

Another key guest was Alfred James Taylor, a wealthy Vancouver businessman who is credited with turning Camp X from concept to reality.¹¹ Taylor, already known to Stephenson through his business dealings, was working with the British Supply Council in Washington D.C. at the time, which brought the two men even closer together. Taylor had used his business contacts to help recruit administrative assistants for the BSC and he had arranged for cover positions for some of the executives who were appointed to some of the most sensitive positions in the secretive organization.



Courtesy WLA, D2013-008-001org

Camp X from the air.

The morning following the dinner, Davies and Taylor met, along with two BSC executives, as Stephenson was unavailable, and decided on the location of the camp on the shores of Lake Ontario, near Whitby, Ontario. The location was deemed ideal because there was ample isolated land for training, yet it was easily accessible from Toronto. Importantly, the proximity to Toronto offered three flights a day to New York, which allowed for easy communications with BSC headquarters and American organizations. Davies briefed Taylor on the exact nature of the training to be undertaken

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and the requirements of the camp itself. Taylor went immediately to work upon Davies' agreement in principle, pending London's approval, that Taylor be given a free hand to find a site and build the camp and have it ready, fully furnished, by November 1941.

Taylor wasted no time. He immediately called his brother who owned a construction company in Toronto. Next he called a senior partner of the Toronto architect firm Allward and Gouinlock.¹² The proverbial train had left the station. SOE headquarters approved the project a mere five days after the original dinner that set the idea in motion. Moreover, it authorized £25,000 for preparation of the site and construction of the necessary buildings. Less than a week later, Taylor, through a nebulous entity known as the "Rural Realty Company Ltd.," simultaneously purchased two lots (Lots 17 & 18) comprising 260 acres in the Broken Front (lakefront) concession. Taylor paid for the property himself and he agreed to provide it free of charge to the British government for the duration of the war.¹³

CBC.ca



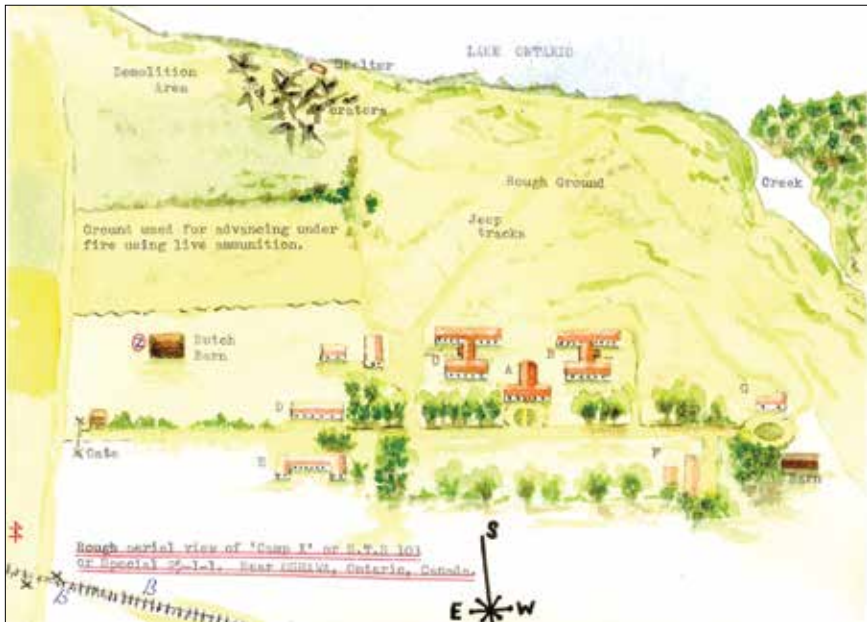
Artist conception of Camp X.

Interestingly, the issue of official Canadian approval was never seriously considered. Indeed, it was almost an afterthought. Other than Stephenson and Taylor, there were no other Canadians or government officials at the dinner or subsequent deliberations. Nonetheless, once apprised of the situation, the Canadian authorities quickly agreed. An official SOE document in October 1941 noted, "We have ascertained that SOE have

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come to an arrangement with the Canadian Government for the setting up in Canada of a Special Training School to be known as 207 Military Mission.”¹⁴

The agreement was actually reached in October 1941. Colonel W.H.S. Macklin, Director of Staff Duties in Ottawa, on behalf of the Chief of the General Staff (CGS), informed Major-General Charles Constantine, the Commanding General of Military District No. 2 (M.D. No. 2) that the British Government was setting up a Special Training School in Whitby, Ontario. Macklin informed Constantine that the accommodations were already under construction and that the Commandant would be accompanied by instructional staff and 16 students. Macklin also explained that “the Minister has approved all this and has also approved a proposition that we do not set this unit up as a distinct unit of the Canadian Army.” By taking this approach Macklin noted they could avoid approaching Parliament for authority. He ensured to clarify that “The Minister’s intention is that we give the British every assistance in running this school, which is regarded as an important one.”¹⁵



Layout of Camp X.

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The Canadian Army cover name for Camp X became Military Research Centre No. 2.¹⁶ The manning of the school was a combination of British and Canadian personnel. An SOE document laid out, “the other ranks staff of which will be partly Canadian and partly British. As regards the Canadian other ranks, these will be provided by the Canadian Military Authorities, and we understand all the arrangements are agreed.”¹⁷

Colonel Macklin quickly addressed the personnel issue. He immediately wrote Major-General Constantine, “we have been asked to find certain assistance in the way of administrative staff and transport.” Quite simply, the personnel were to be sourced from M.D. No. 2. Macklin explained, “you should select them carefully with a view to picking reliable men who can keep quiet about their duties.”¹⁸ The staff was required for duty no later than 15 November 1941. Importantly for the tight-fisted Mackenzie King Government, the British indicated they would pay all expenses.

Macklin’s final point set the tone for the entire endeavour. He reinforced, “CGS asked me to impress the need for every precaution as regards secrecy.”¹⁹

For administrative purposes the school was controlled by BSC in New York. Decisions on training policy and practice, however, were in the hands of SOE’s Director of Training in Britain. He also appointed the commanding officer (CO) and instructors.²⁰ The school’s non-teaching staff were provided by the Canadian Army. To the SOE, Camp X was an extremely important post. In fact, they sent their top instructors from Beaulieu, their premier finishing school in England, to the new facility. These appointments were an indication of how significant they considered the school and its American connection.²¹

Unlike most SOE schools, STS 103 was purpose built rather than taking over established buildings and manors. Instructors and students occasionally called the facility “Camp X,” but most commonly they referred to it as “the Camp,” or “the Farm,” as much of the property had been farmland. Locals, based on the high level of security and frequent explosions, believed it to be a demolitions training area.²²

The purpose of Camp X, however, was more complex than that. Its “clientele” was one indication of its eminent role. The “students” at Camp X included:

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- a. South American Security Scheme personnel;
- b. European expatriate Canadian volunteers;
- c. Canadian military volunteers;
- d. SO and SI Operations personnel (Canadian and American);
- e. (US) Office of War Information (OWI) personnel; and
- f. members of the FBI.²³

In fact, an official SOE report captured the wide training audience:

In December, 1941, a school was opened in Canada for training personnel in SOE methods of warfare. Officers from the New York Head Office, Chief Agents in Latin America and members of OSS and FBI were trained at this school. Canadians, Yugoslavs, Italians, Hungarians, Romanians, Bulgarians, etc., recruited in Canada, were trained at the school and it was then arranged for the majority of them to be infiltrated into Europe.²⁴

In the end, for Stephenson the establishment of Camp X represented a critical accomplishment. Firstly, it provided a vehicle for selecting and training Canadians designated for SOE operations in Occupied Europe. It would be the first step in a detailed and thorough preparation of agents prior to dropping them into a very hazardous environment where the “game” of cat and mouse had deadly consequences. However, arguably, of equal, if not greater importance to Stephenson, was the ability of Camp X to provide an intimate link and support to Donovan and his embryonic special operations organization. It would become another Canadian contribution to furthering the cooperation and assistance of the United States to the Allied war effort.

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Courtesy LPH



Camp X Main Gate.

Courtesy LPH



Keep Out sign at the entrance to Camp X.

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CAMP X AND THE AMERICANS

Its importance aside, the training at STS 103 was diverse and exacting. Canadian volunteers recruited in Canada were first sent to Camp X for assessment and elementary training. They normally spent four to five weeks training and were then sent to the UK for advanced instruction. Overall training, depending on specific assignments, could take up to six months. All agents had a thorough grounding in unarmed combat and the use of small arms, as well as on the use of explosives and modern industrial sabotage. All had to be parachute qualified and received extensive instruction on their target country.

Although the training was essential, equally important to the establishment and existence of Camp X was its role in cementing the American connection. In November 1941, the US was not yet directly involved in the war and its Neutrality Acts made direct cooperation with the Allies challenging. Moreover, the American special operations and intelligence regime was woefully immature, if not non-existent.

The British were clearly ahead of the Americans in this regard. In fact, the US president consistently lamented his inability to know what his potential enemies were doing. He railed at the deplorable state of US intelligence. President Roosevelt revealed that he had no idea of German plans, German potential, the threat to Pearl Harbor or the intentions and plans of neutral countries.¹ Roosevelt blamed the inadequate intelligence on his collecting agencies (i.e. State department, FBI, Military Intelligence Division (MID), Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI)). As one official noted, “We knew nothing about what the enemy was doing, while for instance every traveller leaving Japan had definite orders as to what to report and what to look into while travelling.”²

In 1939, as a result of President Roosevelt’s dissatisfaction with his intelligence apparatus, he directed the MID, FBI and ONI to coordinate their

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intelligence efforts. He demanded intelligence that would provide him more situational awareness of the increasingly dangerous and hostile world that was emerging. At first the Roosevelt Administration had no clear idea of what information it thought the intelligence services should be gathering. As the Axis countries achieved a cascade of military successes without the Administration having adequate warning, it realized the enormous problem it faced. At the heart of the failure of the intelligence system was the rivalry and internecine conflict between the various players. Not surprisingly, each agency jealously protected their domains. In addition, all were focusing on subversion, sabotage and espionage.³ As a result, President Roosevelt was basically blind to the capabilities and intent of other nations.⁴

Despite constant reassurance from the various intelligence agencies that coordination had been achieved, the President continued to be surprised by enemy activities. On 4 April 1940, President Roosevelt directed the heads of the MID, FBI and ONI to examine the creation of an intelligence coordination capability similar to the British model in the event that the US would enter the war. Concurrently, Colonel “Wild Bill” Donovan began to advocate, despite the vociferous objections of the three existing agencies, for a centralized intelligence collection and analysis organization.⁵

All of these actions were occurring as the British intelligence services were requesting better intelligence coordination between the two countries. As noted earlier, this request led to the dispatch of William Stephenson to meet with the director of the FBI and develop a mutually beneficial relationship. Stephenson quickly acted on this connection. For instance, the BSC provided Hoover with intelligence that he was able to leverage to influence the ONI, in essence the US Navy, to deploy four destroyers into Mexican waters to monitor and report on the movements of sixteen German and Italian ships tied up in the Mexican ports of Vera Cruz and Tampico that were preparing to run the blockade. When the Axis ships attempted to sail on the night of 15 November 1940, the US destroyers approached the ships and trained their searchlights on them. In the ensuing panic, one German ship was scuttled and the rest fled back to port where all but three were expropriated by the Mexican Government in the following year. The remaining three ships attempted to run the blockade but were quickly captured by British warships because the US Navy shadowed the ships and

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continually reported their positions allowing British warships to intercept and capture them.

The capture of the three ships was not a solitary success story. Stephenson and the BSC were also responsible for passing misinformation through Hoover who would subsequently circulate the material through one of his agents, who was acting as a German sympathizer, to the German embassy. For example, to deter the Germans from using poison gas in England, the BSC passed a report that revealed that Britain was prepared to use its secret weapon, consisting of glass balls containing chemicals that produced a terrific heat that could not be extinguished through any known means.⁶

Although the BSC information was disseminated as required, by June 1940, the three American intelligence agencies (i.e. MID, FBI, ONI) had worked out the division of intelligence work abroad. The FBI was responsible for the Western Hemisphere and the MID and ONI divided up the remainder of the world.⁷

Nonetheless, through the winter of 1940/1941, President Roosevelt remained disappointed with the level of intelligence he was receiving. He was, once again, surprised by the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, particularly its amazing initial success. He still found himself lacking the necessary information to anticipate events and make the necessary decisions.

As a result, on 11 July 1941, the President ordered the creation of the office of the Coordinator of Information (COI).⁸ The chief branches included research and analysis, geography, economics, psychology, foreign nationalities, oral intelligence and foreign information service.⁹ The Presidential directive read:

There is hereby established the position of Coordinator of Information, with authority to collect and analyse all information and data, which may bear upon national security; to correlate such information and data, and to make such information and data available to the President and to such departments and officials of the Government as the President may determine; and to carry out, when requested by the President, such supplementary activities as

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may facilitate the securing of information important for national security not now available to the Government.¹⁰

Colonel Donovan accepted the appointment of director. However, he requested three guarantees before he would undertake the new task:

1. Direct reporting to the President;
2. Access to the President's secret fund to support the work of COI; and
3. All departments of the Government be instructed to give him such material as he might need.

The President agreed to all of the conditions.¹¹

For Donovan, the immediate pressure was immense. Many, including the President and the Chiefs of Staff, expected Donovan and his COI to produce instantaneous results despite the fact that he had not had the time, or authority, to make the necessary preparations. In the end, Donovan's survival was based on the support and assistance of Stephenson and the BSC, at least in the early stages, and arguably, at least until June 1942. Specifically, BSC provided Donovan and the COI the bulk of COI's secret intelligence before Pearl Harbor occurred, as well as for several months following the attack. In addition, BSC controlled, through intermediaries, two short-wave radio services – one for broadcasts to Europe and Africa and the other for broadcasts to the Far East. These networks were made available to COI immediately after Pearl Harbor and they were the foundation of all of the American short-wave radio propaganda.

The BSC also trained COI officers (both of the SI and SO Division), as well as COI agents at Camp X. Moreover, the BSC supplied COI with all the equipment which it needed for special operations for a lengthy period after Pearl Harbor when such equipment was not yet in production in the US. Finally, Stephenson and the BSC also assisted Donovan and the COI with the establishment of its SO division and the creation of its worldwide system of clandestine communications.¹²

Courtesy LPH



Camp X Instructors.

As such, the close personal connection between Stephenson and Donovan and the BSC/SOE and the COI ensured that the embryonic American secret intelligence organization got off the ground.¹³ Despite the success of the COI, approximately a year later, on 13 June 1942, President Roosevelt directed a change. He created the OWI responsible for all overseas propaganda other than Black (i.e. covert) propaganda and COI was transformed into the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which now became an arm of the US Services. Donovan remained the head and his responsibilities were:

to collect and analyse all information and data which may bear upon national security, to correlate such information and data, and make the same available to the President and to such departments and officials off the government as the President may determine, and to carry out when requested by the President such supplementary activities as may facilitate the securing of information important for national security not now available to the government.¹⁴

Importantly, Donovan now reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).¹⁵ The President made this change to ensure that the JCS would have the most detailed and relevant information available to them prior to the planning of operations.

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As such, the OSS mission was primarily to collect information that would be of operational value.¹⁶ More specifically, the President designated the OSS “as the JCS agency charged with the planning, development, coordination, and execution of the military program for PW [political warfare].” The PW program was limited to operations conducted in direct support of actual or planned military operations. It included:

- a. Sabotage, guerrilla warfare (personnel limited to organizers, fomenters and operational nuclei);
- b. Espionage and counter espionage in enemy occupied or controlled territory;
- c. Contact with underground groups in enemy occupied territory; and
- d. Contact with foreign nationalities’ groups in the United States.

It is important to note that Intelligence functions of OSS were restricted to those necessary for implementing the military program for PW and for preparing assigned portions of intelligence digests. In addition to the above, additional duties specifically assigned to OSS included:

- a. Developing PW plans and doctrine in consultation with War and Navy Departments and other United States agencies;
- b. Developing characteristics of special weapons and equipment for special operations;
- c. Conducting special operations not assigned to other agencies or under direct control of the Theatre Commander and organizing, training, and equipping individuals required therefore;
- d. Maintaining liaison with all other government agencies engaged in PW activities; and
- e. Collecting, evaluating, and disseminating information desired for the execution of PW.

The President also assigned the following official duties to the OSS:

- a. Developing PW [Political Warfare] plans and doctrine in consultation with War and Navy Departments and other United States agencies;

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- b. Developing characteristics of special weapons and equipment for special operations;
- c. Conducting special operations not assigned to other agencies or under direct control of the Theatre Commander and organizing, training, and equipping individuals required therefore;
- d. Maintaining liaison with all other government agencies engaged in PW activities; and
- e. Collecting, evaluating, and disseminating information desired for the execution of PW.

By November 1943, the OSS was also given the task of assisting the SOE in the provision of leadership, organization, communications, material and training to Resistance movements.¹⁷

Not surprisingly, with no experience of its own, or with its sister agencies, the OSS looked to the SOE. As one historian observed, “the conception of coordinated operations in the field of secret activities, which BSC originally exemplified, was the basis upon which the Americans built, with astonishing speed, their own highly successful wartime intelligence service.”¹⁸

Courtesy LPH



American trainees at Camp X.

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Central to building this wartime intelligence capability was Camp X. It became both a schoolhouse and template for the OSS. In fact, an SOE document revealed, “In order to assist in the establishment of Colonel Donovan’s organisation [OSS] special courses were drawn up and carried out at the SO Training School in Canada [Camp X].”¹⁹ A British report on the cooperation between the SOE and OSS noted, “In February 1942, OSS had no training-schools, and the need for them was urgent...two special courses for OSS personnel were arranged by the Commandant of the SOE school in Canada, STS/103.” The report assessed, rather condescendingly, that it was “a parent-child relationship.”²⁰ In sum, the report summarized the substantive assistance the SOE provided to the OSS, largely through Camp X and its staff:

- a. SOE trained the first OSS instructors;
- b. SOE trained the first OSS field agents;
- c. SOE officers spent many weeks, during the crucial period of the growth of the organization, in lecturing, demonstrating, and advising at OSS schools;
- d. The revisions by which, in 1942-3, the OSS training scheme was set on its feet were planned by SOE officers;
- e. The lecture-books used by SOE were handed to, and adopted by, OSS schools; and
- f. SOE provided the equipment with which the OSS schools got started.²¹

In the end, the SOE, primarily through Camp X and the Canadian connection, delivered training to American personnel; made available their entire suite of lectures and publications; and furnished the special devices developed for special operations. Throughout, the SOE reinforced its operating philosophy, which was also captured in the school syllabus, “Employ all methods of irregular warfare. END JUSTIFIES THE MEANS [capitalization in the original].”²²

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Courtesy LPH



American trainees at Camp X.

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TRAINING AT CAMP X

The training and activities in Camp X were shrouded in secrecy. The focus, however, was very clear to those attending training. “We learned,” Les Davis revealed, “how to kill a person smartly – in a short time.”¹

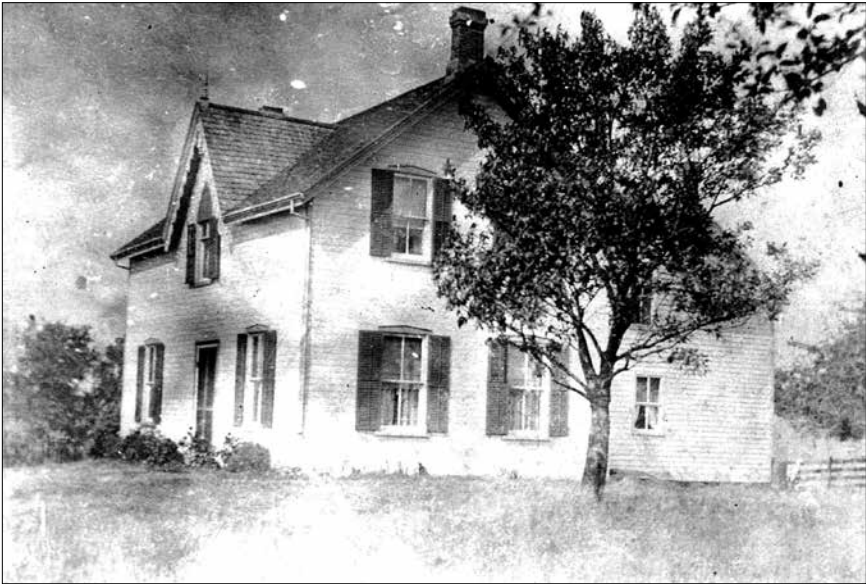
The school opened on 9 December 1941.² The training syllabus at Camp X was broader than any of the other SOE establishments. American students were given the Group B (Finishing School) training, as well as advanced instruction on propaganda. The Canadian SOE volunteers who were earmarked for deployment in enemy-occupied territory were given only the Group A (paramilitary) training. The rest of their instruction was completed in Britain. An official SOE report noted, “Courses at the school [Camp X] consisted of training in Intelligence, creation of an SOE organisation, unarmed combat, small arms, demolitions and incendiaries, and wireless telegraphy.”³ The official BSC history explained:

The new recruit [at Camp X] was taught the importance of accurate observation; and his own powers of observation were frequently put to practical test by moving or removing objects in his room. He was taught how to shadow a man and how to escape surveillance himself, how to creep up behind an armed sentry and kill him instantly without noise; and how to evade capture by blinding an assailant with a box of matches. In the unarmed combat course he learned many holds whose use would enable him to break an adversary’s arm or leg, or knock him unconscious or kill him outright. He learned to handle a tommy-gun and to use several different types of revolvers and automatic pistols, as well as the use of a knife. Much of his time was spent in mastering the arts of sabotage. He was taught the simplest way of putting a motor car out of commission without leaving trace of his interference. He learned how to attach explosives to a railway track or an oil tank in the way to cause the greatest damage; how to make simple types

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of grenades and explosive and incendiary devices using material that could easily be purchased. He was also taught how to make and write with secret inks, use different kinds of codes and cyphers for communication with agents and how to interrogate a prisoner to best effect. He was trained in parachute jumping. Practical tests were conducted too, in the city of Toronto with the help of the Toronto City Police.⁴

Joseph Gelleny, a Hungarian-born Canadian, attended Camp X. He described the camp as an unimpressive collection of wooden huts and out-buildings out in the bush. He remembered it had very tight security around it, despite the fact that there did not appear to be anything of any particular interest or value there. “When I arrived at the camp,” Gelleny recalled, “I was made a part of a group who were largely Canadians with Hungarian backgrounds. I also met some Yugoslavs while I was there, but we pretty much stayed with our own because that’s the way it had been arranged.”⁵



Courtesy WLA, 28-000-010

Sinclair House.

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Courtesy LPH



Camp X buildings.

Courtesy WLA, 29-005-001org



Camp X commanding officer's quarters.

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Although agents trained in their cultural groups due to the desire to reinforce nuances in language and culture, all volunteers were first required to complete basic training, which lasted several months. Gelleny described:

The first objective was to be in absolutely top shape. We had a tremendous amount of physical exercise: running, jumping out of towers, climbing, scaling walls - anything and everything. Then we were given training on a whole range of weapons, including German guns of all kinds. We had to know them inside and out, how to load and fire them, and how to dismantle and reassemble them blind: Sten guns, automatics, whatever, which we did over and over and over again. Then came explosives. It was important to our repertoire of skills that we know how to attack such targets as trains, roads, bridges, and transmission lines. And, we learned how to kill a person a dozen ways, including how to do it without your victim being able to make a sound.We had to learn to recognize German uniforms, planes, vehicles, whatever. We were shown how to disguise ourselves and how to stop someone from following us. In short, we were taught anything you could possibly need if you were working behind enemy lines. As a final exercise, we were dropped off blind in the bush, twenty miles from camp, with nothing to work with, then told to find our way back. There'd be a time limit.⁶

Gelleny summarized, "We were trained to live by our wits, in any circumstance....On one occasion I was dropped off in Toronto, dressed in the uniform of a German soldier. My assignment was to take photographs of war materiel production factories. If picked up by the Toronto police, I was expected to be able to talk my way out."⁷

Andy Durovecz, another Camp X alumni, agreed. He asserted, "The training physically and mentally was of the highest order." He confirmed that each national group was trained separately, isolated from the other, similar groups, which were usually small in number (about a dozen at a time). He emphasized the training "was intense and very rough." Durovecz explained:

In this service a trained agent was somewhat of a one-man unit, his own 'army', handling everything from the decision-making of

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a general down to the dirtiest routines. He had to know how to do his own killing, demolition, plan his attack and retreat, and above all – stay alive to carry out the next assignment.⁸

Courtesy LPH



Training at Camp X.

Unsurprisingly, all training had an aim and a purpose. A perfect example was the “drinking test.” A normally scheduled social evening, which included drinking, was more than just a social affair. First, it allowed the instructors to see how each potential agent handled their alcohol. For instance, did anyone have a weakness for it? Second, the agents in training were required to get re-acquainted with their respective native drinks. Finally, and according to Durovecz most importantly, the agents had to get used to drinking, period. “Being able to hold one’s liquor,” Durovecz asserted, “is one of the principal defensive and offensive weapons of a secret agent. One must be able to out-drink one’s opponent and remain fit for action.”⁹

Drinking aside, two critical components of the training were physical fitness and weapons familiarization. Durovecz recalled, “Physical training got tougher as we progressed. The idea was to survive not only punches but also the blows of a club or the butt of a rifle. There were exercises to maintain

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mobility in the most impossible situations.” He also recounted, “There was every kind of hide-and-seek, climbing through pipes and fences, through the narrowest of gaps, over standing or moving objects, hanging on by the skin of one’s teeth, then jumping down and disappearing – things a normal human being would not even attempt, thinking them impossible. But the impossible became possible after proper practice.”¹⁰



Courtesy LPH

Covert transportation – the hay wagon.

Weapons familiarization was another key element of the training program. One agent revealed:

We were taught at Camp X that any object of everyday use could be a weapon: a box of matches, a lighter, a nail file, fountain pen, pencil - or anything else within reach. Even a newspaper, a hat, a glass of water, or a handful of sand could be a deadly weapon. One could blind an enemy for a moment, or divert his weapon wielding hand when it mattered. The key was to catch on quickly and act with determination and speed.¹¹

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Foreign and allied weapons were also an integral component of the training plan. One agent described, “We had to learn to handle our weapons blindfolded, by touch alone. We took them apart and reassembled them blindfolded. We learned how to conceal weapons, even when subjected to close observation and body-searches, as when entering a building.”¹²

The agents were also instructed in close quarter combat in shooting ranges that resembled rooms. “For a start,” one agent depicted:

We shot at standing or moving man-sized dummies attached to a wire stretched between two walls. When the doors were closed and the lights switched off, and it was pitch dark, we had to shoot at standing figures that we had a chance to take a good look at in the light. Later they were moved in the dark, which meant we had to guess at their location, listening to every sound, smelling the air and trusting instinct. This took perfect mind-body coordination.¹³

In the end, the training was simply about killing. Major William Ewart Fairbairn, the unarmed combat specialist who learned his trade as a policeman on the treacherous streets of Shanghai, consistently reminded the aspiring agents, “You’re interested only in disabling or killing your enemy...There’s no fair play; no rules except one: kill or be killed.”¹⁴ One operator acknowledged, “All of us who were taught by Major Fairbairn soon realised that he had an honest dislike of anything that smacked of decency in fighting.”¹⁵ Another agent in training echoed those sentiments. He explained:

We had lots of classes on what to do if you were behind the lines. We learned all the things that could give you away. There was the use of weapons, close-up and hand-to-hand...It was all stuff that was dirty, not the kind of thing you learned in infantry school. You played dirty here. We learned how to dislocate someone’s arm while you had a knife under their rib.¹⁶

The training itself was conducted largely within the confines of the camp, but some training took the recruits out into the public. One agent described, “beyond the guarded fences of Camp X, our training fields stretched out in all directions of the compass to faraway areas, covering hundreds of square miles from our central location.” He affirmed, “The area from Oshawa to Toronto

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and the whole countryside tens of miles to the north provided all kinds of targets for the practicing of demolition, destruction, diversion, dissipation. We built imaginary situations that resembled similar targets and situations in the country to which we would be sent.”¹⁷



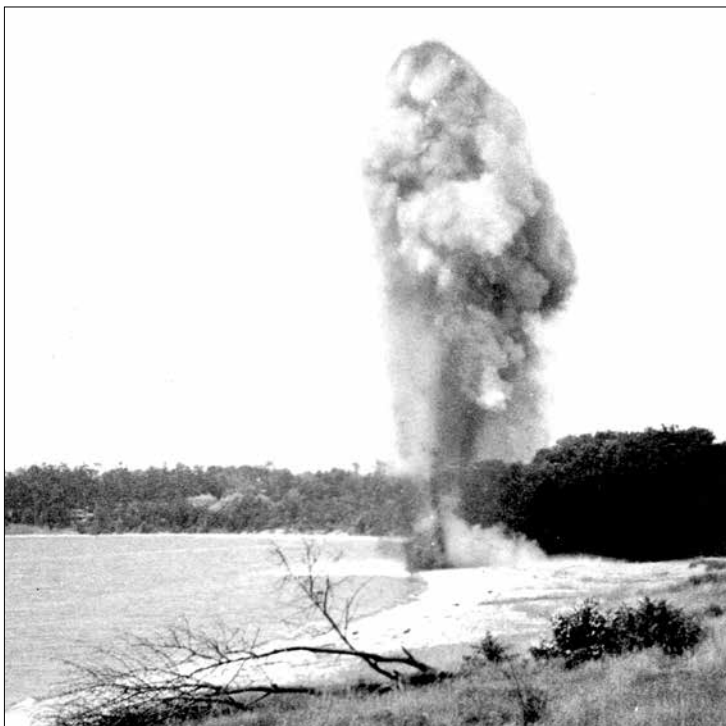
Courtesy LPH

Practising placing explosives.

In fact, Toronto, particularly its railway station, was a popular venue. The agents studied the roundhouse, as well as the turntable platform that placed engines on their tracks. The agents were also taught how to start, get up steam and stop a locomotive. In fact, a number of prospective agents stole a locomotive and just narrowly escaped a catastrophic collision with a passenger train. Durovecz insisted, “It was an unwritten law at Camp X that this sort of mischief, however dangerous, should be regarded as a bold venture rather than an offence against good order and military discipline.”¹⁸

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Courtesy LPH



Courtesy LPH



Demolitions training.

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Another favourite target was the Oshawa General Motors plant, which at the time was an enormous industrial factory. The plant was a substantive contributor to the war effort manufacturing tanks, armoured personnel carriers, armoured vehicles and motorized artillery. Durovecz explained:

We first went on a survey of the works with a view to formulating plans of action. Places of entry and retreat had to be found. Finally, the plan of action, including calculated risks was worked out. Similar surveys were carried out at the Toronto Telephone Exchange, power stations, oil and gas depots and similar sites. Everything was, of course, merely simulated, but the experience gained was nevertheless invaluable.¹⁹

As interesting as the physical training was, there was a dark side to the work of the agents that also had to be covered. As part of the psychological preparation, the SOE instructional staff spoke to the reality of spy-craft behind enemy lines, namely, the likelihood of capture and subsequent torture. “As part of our psychological preparation,” Durovecz acknowledged, “we were shown a terrible film obtained from France by the SOE. It was made by the Germans in a torture chamber and it showed what they did to the likes of us if caught.” The film clearly illustrated the savage, sadistic torture methods the Nazis applied to captured Allied agents. “When the lights were turned on,” Durovecz conceded, “we all looked pale and were covered in sweat. We were asked if we still wished to carry on with the job... None of us threw in the towel, but the film taught us to hate the enemy even more.”²⁰

The psychological preparation ensured all the agents were clearly aware of the potential consequences of their intended actions. It did not, however, detract from the mission focus. Additionally, the SOE staff visit to Camp X revealed, “The spirit of STS 103 is good and the discipline is high. The Camp is well kept and it compares favourably with training establishments of a similar character in England, particularly in view of the difficulties with which the Commandant is faced in having Canadians under his command who are not trained in the same way as English troops.”²¹



Practising passing security “Spot check” in preparation for operating behind enemy lines.

Aside, from the apparent “issues” working with Canadian troops, which were not explained in the report, there were some administrative matters that created concerns to the inspection party. Although satisfied with the level of training, the inspection party had some issues with the command and control of Camp X and the training regime. The report emphasized that the “higher control” of the school was confused. It elaborated:

For financial purposes it [Camp X] is under the control of New York [Stephenson/BSC] and it is also under the direction of New York as regards certain administrative functions. On the other hand, as regards training and policy it is responsible directly to DCD(O) in England. The officers at STS 103 have a tendency to regard themselves as a separate Training Mission sent out from England, responsible only to DCD(O) and that they may train whomsoever they please. They regard co-operation with New York rather as a matter of courtesy than as an obligation. Up to the present no difficulties have arisen, but the principle of having a school in Canada operating under a loose arrangement which makes it partly responsible to London and partly to New York is unsatisfactory. The solution would appear to be to make it responsible to New York for all purposes and New York would then be responsible to London.²²

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Despite the apparent concern nothing was ever done to change the reporting relationships.

Other concerns also surfaced, specifically about the press and potential discovery of the camp. The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Terence Roper-Caldbeck, devised a cover story should the local press begin to ask questions. He explained to the District Officer Commanding, Major-General C.F. Constantine, "I now feel that it might be easier to keep the Press quiet if your Press Liaison Officer could take them into his confidence and tell them a slightly fuller story about our activities, saying he knows they will keep the information to themselves. If they are not told a story of some kind, I am rather afraid that they will start guessing and their speculations might appear in the Press in a form likely to attract considerable attention."²³

Secrecy was such that even the District Commanding Officer was not even completely in the know. Major-General Constantine wrote, "Incidentally, I have not told him (Press Liaison Officer) of your special activities, but informed him that they were of such a nature that even I did not know exactly what you were doing and it was imperative that the press not 'speculate in print.'"²⁴ The Camp's true purpose was never revealed during the War and it went on to provide cover for more than just the training of secret agents.



Courtesy Lieutenant-Colonel B. G. Bangsboil

Practising infiltration techniques at Camp X.

CHAPTER 8

THE INTRODUCTION OF HYDRA AT CAMP X

Camp X, officially called Military Research Centre No. 2, was also the main pipeline for intelligence traffic between London, Washington and Ottawa. The communications centre within Camp X was code-named Hydra and it was manned entirely by Canadians. Initially, the official position on Hydra manning was that only military personnel would be employed. However, a number of the 28 personnel eventually selected to operate Hydra were in fact civilian.¹

Hydra was named after the Greek mythical creature with many heads as a result of its transmitting rhombic aerials, which had a three-wire system for radiating the signal. In addition, the transmitters in use had a specially fitted multiplex unit that allowed for up to three different frequencies to be transmitted at one time. Hydra was established in Camp X because the existing arrangements with the Americans had become unworkable. By late 1941, the BSC found itself faced with a series of serious communications problems.² The existing agreement with the FBI, allowed SIS and SOE telegrams between New York and London to be passed through Washington D.C. over an FBI wireless channel. This channel linked FBI headquarters and a British communications centre in England. Under the existing system, a landline from New York to Washington D.C. was used to relay the telegrams, at which point a staff of six individuals working in a secure code room would encode the messages. BSC traffic to locations other than London were sent over Western Union cables.³

In October 1941, two issues strained the existing arrangement. First was the severe shortage of special wireless communications equipment in England. Moreover, Colonel Richard Gambier-Parry who was the head of Section 8 (Communications) of MI6 (i.e. SIS) believed he could not rely on the telex link between New York, Washington and London because the coded Typex messages being sent were passing over American lines and he judged it was just a matter of time before those were cut or intercepted.

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Courtesy WLA



Canadian Security Establishment (CSE)

Hydra radio equipment.



CSE, 800-0214-1-cmky

Hydra station radio tubes.

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The second issue was London's concern that the Nazis would seize parts of South America and as such the Government directed the installation of a secret communications network in the event that an underground resistance movement(s) would need to be established. As a result, Stephenson endorsed the plan to locate the secret radio station capable of sending coded messages overseas at Camp X. After all, the camp was isolated, had several acres of level ground ideal for erecting antennae, as well as room to build transmitting and receiving buildings. He also appointed another Canadian to solve the immediate BSC communications problems by purchasing secret wireless equipment from the US and providing expertise into the establishment of the secret communications network for South America.⁴

A month later, in December 1941, when the initial training staff for Camp X arrived in Whitby, Ontario, their number included three members of the Royal Corps of Signals. Importantly, a large two and a half kilowatt transmitter was acquired in Toronto from an amateur radio enthusiast and months later a ten kilowatt unit was obtained in Philadelphia. By May 1942, the link was in full operation.



Communications equipment at Hydra.



CSE, 800-0057-1-cmyk

Communications equipment at Hydra.

Originally the station used the somewhat cumbersome Typex machine. However, the communicators quickly adopted a new machine developed by Canadian professor Benjamin (Pat) Deforest Bayley who was the head of the BSC communications system. The new cypher machine was called the “Telekrypton.” It was a tape driven system instead of the keyboard operated typex machine. The machine was revolutionary. It encrypted Morse code in such a way that commercially available Western Union teleprinters, which worked on the basis of a punch tape that operated on ten-minute repetitive spindles, with a procedure that replaced them with a two-hour unique process. The “Telekrypton,” which was renamed the “Rockex 1” after the place of its birth in the Rockefeller Centre, in New York, could safely use commercial landline and transatlantic cables. Importantly, it reduced the time to transmit a top-secret message to England to one minute.⁵ Edward Travis, the head of Bletchley Park, visited Stephenson in New York and obtained the details of the machine so that it could be reproduced in Britain.⁶

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Courtesy WLA



Hydra communications room.

CSE, 800-0126-1-cmyk



Communications equipment at Hydra.

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In the end, Hydra outlived its host, STS 103, which closed its doors in April 1944.⁷ Hydra remained in existence and became part of Canada's contribution as part of a 1947 agreement between the "Five-Eyes" (i.e. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States) to bring all the signals intelligence organizations under a single umbrella. Later, other NATO countries, as well as other Allies, joined the network, albeit with certain disclosure restrictions. This expansion created a worldwide signals intercept network. Camp X, however, was renamed the Oshawa Wireless Station after the war and it was turned over to the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals as a wireless intercept station.⁸



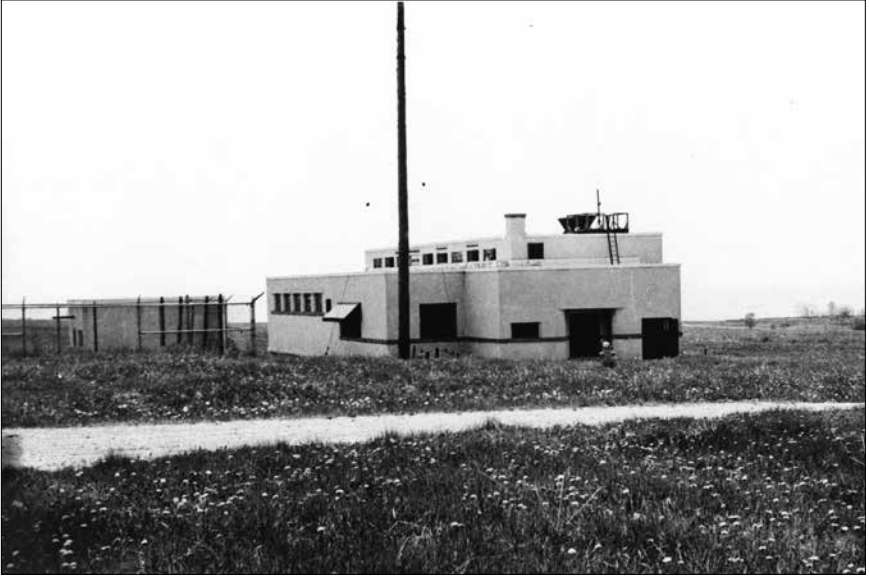
Courtesy WLA

Evelyn Davis in the Hydra Teletype Room, May 1942.

Significantly, however, the secretive Camp X served a final role in the realm of espionage. In the fall of 1945, Camp X was used by the RCMP as a secure location for interviewing Soviet embassy cypher-clerk Igor Gouzenko who defected to Canada on 5 September 1945. He brought with him 109 documents including code books, which subsequently revealed the extensive Soviet espionage operation that existed in Canada. Gouzenko exposed that the Soviets had been undertaking espionage activities in Canada since 1924, and that Soviet spies had penetrated numerous Canadian institutions.⁹

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Courtesy LPH



The rebuilt post-war Hydra building.

Courtesy LPH



Post-war buildings at Camp X.

CHAPTER 9

ADVANCED TRAINING AS AN AGENT

The importance of Camp X in selecting and training both Canadian agents, as well as American personnel, was instrumental. However, it was just the beginning. The true test would be the ability of its agents to prosecute the *raison d'être* of the SOE, namely, operations to disrupt the German war effort. Nowhere were these contributions more important than in Europe.

Key to operations in Europe, or anywhere for that matter, was the deployment of talented agents. As indicated earlier, initially, most agents were recruited almost as part of an exclusive club based on linguistic, cultural or specific expertise. As much of the art and science of SOF was in its infancy, it is not surprising that SOE selection was inefficient, if not ineffective. Initially it consisted of as little as an informal interview, or at most attendance on a three to four-week selection/training course that SOE leadership eventually assessed as too leisurely and ineffective. Many of those on course subsequently failed out of the process. This failure rate represented a waste of scarce time and resources. Therefore, by July 1943, a four-day selection course (student assessment board (SAB)) was developed that applied a variety of psychological and practical tests to candidates over a four-day period. In this manner they screened questionable volunteers out early. The SAB took less time and provided better results. For example, of a group of eighteen officers selected in Canada and sent to England for training, only two of the eighteen were actually selected.¹

John Debenham-Taylor, an instructor at the SOE finishing school at Beaulieu, explained what they were looking for in a potential agent:

The sort of thing that we looked for were indications of how people reacted to surprise situations: whether they managed to treat the whole thing quite calmly and not give any indication of being rattled by them. Secondly, was simply the general intelligence and quickness of people to grasp what you were trying to tell them and to carry it out when they did exercises to show that they'd absorbed

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the lesson. Thirdly, the question of temperament and readiness to accept instructions and orders. Some people did exactly as they were told and others queried it or tended to be excessively laid back about it, as though it was unimportant. It seemed to me this was an important factor in judging to what extent you know the agent was likely to be obedient to the instructions he got. It was a bit of a hit and miss business assessing an agent, but I feel that if you applied those three maxims, you were getting near an accurate picture.²



IWM, HU_047953

SOE agent on a Marseille street, 1941.

For those who volunteered to be agents, wireless operators and organizers working behind enemy lines, the rewards were virtually non-existent. Recruiters and instructors observed that there were many demands placed on those risking their lives behind enemy lines, yet little but a patriotic sense to drive them. After all, the life of an agent required anonymity, as well as the absence of reward. It also meant that individuals had to shed their moral compass and adopt the SOE philosophy of the “end justifies any means.” Instructors continually emphasized to candidates that the “rules of this

game are different.” In addition, agents had to develop habits of exactness, punctuality, attention to detail, as well as personality traits of imagination, ingenuity, cleverness, leadership, loyalty and patriotism. Finally, a great sense of personal courage was also necessary.³

Predictably, the SOE discovered that effective missions were accomplished through the efforts of amazing men and women. The requirement for excellent personnel was self-evident. After all, the enemy also used its highly capable individuals to counter the SOE. As a result, the competition in, as well as consequences of, the deadly cat and mouse game of espionage and counter-espionage was severe. The SOE and OSS instructors consistently reinforced in their students that “survival and success go to the quickest, cleverest, most ruthless and most patiently persistent” individual.⁴

Consequently, the hunt for high calibre agents was not easy. The SOE found that “with a few notable exceptions the members of foreign minority groups in the Western Hemisphere had insufficient interest in the land of their origin to be prepared to return to it, at the sacrifice of their existing comforts, on an arduous and dangerous mission.” Moreover, many had forgotten their original language or could speak it only with an accent. Interestingly, Anti-Fascist intellectuals who had sought sanctuary in the Western Hemisphere were, in general, “not of tough enough fibre to be suitable either for SOE or SIS work, while the majority of the roughnecks did not seem to care greatly who won the war.”⁵

Interestingly, the SOE observed that there were two types of revolutionaries. They assessed:

One is the patient, intellectual conspirator, who very rarely possesses the qualities of the second type. The second type partakes of the qualities of a successful bandit chief, i.e. he must be ruthless, determined, eager to take risks and able to make very rapid decisions. Whilst it is probably not difficult to find considerable numbers of the first category the problem of finding candidates for the second is far more difficult, for his qualities are such as can usually only be discovered in actual practice. It will, I think, be found that guerrilla bands most often produce their own leaders by a process of trial and error, and of survival.⁶



Courtesy LPH

Yugoslav Canadians training at Camp X.

The difficulty in finding the necessary agent “raw material” was somewhat mitigated for the British by their Dominions. The official BSC history identified that “Canada was by far the most fruitful field of recruitment, and Yugoslav-Canadians the most successful recruits.”⁷

For the few Canadians deemed potentially capable of becoming agents, they were initially screened, selected and trained at Camp X. Upon completion there, their next step was dispatch overseas. “We were shipped overseas to the UK for the final stages of our training,” remembered Joe Gelleny. He continued:

Our first base was a large commando-training centre in Arisaig, near the Isle of Skye. We spent some twenty-some days there and never once did we see sunshine; it rained every day at least once. ... The training at Arisaig was more rigorous than at Camp X. We were taken through paramilitary exercises, such as trying to run in full kit across a boggy swamp with live rounds and explosions going off around you. But after going through such training, you began to build enormous confidence in your ability to handle any physical challenge...From Arisaig, we were sent to parachute training near Manchester, England. But unfortunately that course was only a week or so. Then the SOE started to separate us according to skills.⁸

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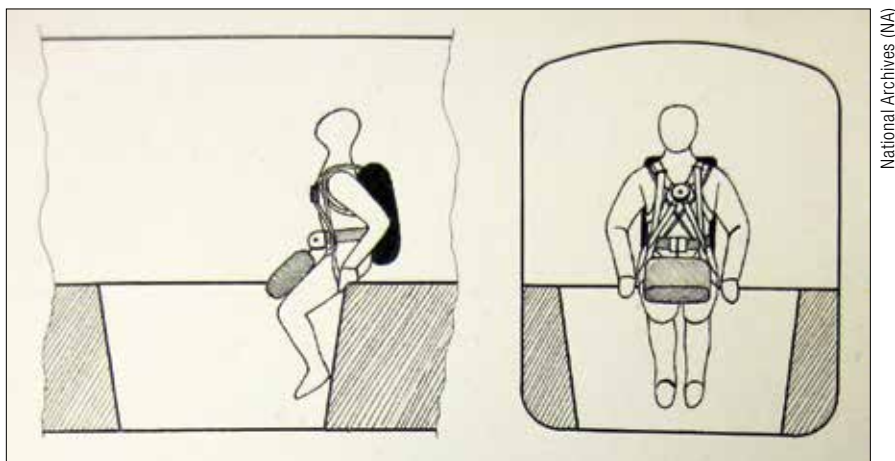
After finishing specialty training everyone was sent to SOE “finishing school” at a series of manor houses southwest of London, where trainees were grouped according to their specialty.⁹ Training became a continuation of what they had learned at Camp X. Agents were taught to use their head and each limb as a weapon of attack and never to stop just because an opponent was crippled. One Canadian recruit commented, “It [the philosophy] turned our values upside down.” Agents were then sent from the Group A schools (i.e. aggressive techniques of subversive warfare) to the Group B finishing schools for three to four weeks where they learned the defensive skills of how to survive in a hostile environment (e.g. counter surveillance, police methods and techniques, inconspicuous behaviour).¹⁰

As mentioned, agents also underwent parachute training at the Parachute Training School at Manchester at Ringway airport. The parachute centre called the SOE agents “specials.” They arrived in groups of 30 and undertook an abbreviated course that lasted only four days rather than the normal three weeks. They were concealed in safe houses and after preliminary instruction on parachuting conducted two drops from a balloon from 700 feet, two daylight drops from a Whitley bomber and a night drop.

IWM, HUJ_068721



SOE agent undergoing parachute training at No. 4 Middle East Training School in Kabrit, Egypt, March 1943.



National Archives (NA)

Graphic from an SOE document showing the proper jump position from a Whitley bomber.

Throughout their training the agents were kept under close scrutiny. “We were put under intense observation, testing and review,” Gelleny reminisced, “Psychiatrists and psychologists were always checking us over, asking questions, and challenging us.”¹¹ The agents were given briefings on what to expect once operating behind enemy lines, as well as practical instruction on disguising one’s appearance. Fundamental to undercover work was the ability to remain the “grey man” and avoid scrutiny or suspicion. Operatives were also shown techniques on surviving interrogation and torture without giving up key information. Finally, they continued to refine their self-defence and killing skills. Gelleny asserted that in a three-week training period alone, “they taught us such skills as arson, blackmail, B&E [break & enter], more extensive shooting from the hip techniques, forgery, invisible ink, sabotage, assassination, and even more ways of silent killing.”¹²

The system of schools with their elaborate in-depth training schedules were designed to give agents the best possible chance of success behind enemy lines. However, survival was as much a question of detailed planning, training and preparation as it was the agility of thought and action of the agents. Once training was complete, the stakes increased exponentially. After all, it took only one simple mistake while on operations to meet a most unpleasant future.



Unarmed combat training.



Unarmed combat training.

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Courtesy Lieutenant-Colonel B.G. Bangsboil



SOE/OSS training in Scotland.

Courtesy Lieutenant-Colonel B.G. Bangsboil



SOE/OSS training in Scotland.

CHAPTER 10

OPERATIONS IN EUROPE

Undeniably, operational success behind enemy lines depended on the careful and skilful preparation of the agents that would be dropped into German Occupied Europe. Equally important was the command and control structure for the various missions. Ironically, despite the fact that the SOE, and especially Stephenson and the BSC, greatly assisted the Americans in creating the OSS, the neophyte secret service organization soon began to rub the SOE the wrong way. Although slow to start, once the Americans fully comprehended the requirement and mobilized the capacity to create their organization, namely the OSS, it quickly took root.

Potential for tensions between the two, now, arguably, competing secret service organizations, was not lost on senior military decision-makers. From the beginning, the British Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, “stressed the importance of the closest liaison between anything which was set up by Colonel Donovan and the corresponding British Services.” He warned, “There would be great danger in too many organisations dealing with the same subject.” Colonel Donovan was equally aware of the challenge. From the start he reiterated “that he intended that his organisation should work in the very closest touch with the British. He did not intend that there should be any ‘crossing the wires.’”¹

As a result, to attempt to avoid any tensions, the American and British authorities held discussions in London in June 1942 to delineate SOE and OSS operations. As part of the agreement American Missions were set up in British zones in order to contribute “such services and equipment as are best available from America and will be used by the Head of the British Mission in whatever way he thinks most advantageous.”² Expressly agreed upon was the caveat that “The Head of the American Mission was forbidden to take action without the approval of the Head of the British Mission, to whom the former was bound to look for all directions and instructions.” Although the agreement was initialled by Colonel Donovan, before long the British began

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to doubt whether it was actually ratified by the American Chiefs of Staff. To the British it quickly appeared as though “the Americans [had] never made any serious attempt to implement it.”³

By March 1943, the dissonance between agreement and reality was so great that then-Director of the SOE, Sir Charles Hambro addressed the problem. He sent a letter to his subordinates explaining, “We can dot the i’s and cross the t’s indefinitely, but that we should not try to tie OSS down too rigidly.” Hambro believed that the OSS “must keep their own identity as a separate organisation and that our chief aim must be that they should do nothing without consulting us.” He insisted that the emphasis be on “‘consulting’ and ‘working with,’ rather than obtaining our ‘approval’ and ‘consent.’”⁴

Hambro, however, was not naïve. He ruminated:

We are in a difficult position for if we refuse to extend them the open hand of co-operation and take them into our confidence, we shall be criticized for inter-departmental jealousy. After all, the Americans and the British are in this war together etc., etc., and are brothers in arms. If, on the other hand, we do not succeed in maintaining our control, we shall be criticised for having failed to do so and for the consequences that are bound to follow. In these circumstances, I think our only course is to help them in every way that we can by assigning to them a certain role on which they can get to work. This will, I hope keep them busy and content. At the same time, we must watch them and it will be our fault if they take us unawares.⁵

For some of his subordinates the writing was on the wall. One lashed out, “Personally, I think they [Americans] are simply paying lip service to the idea of agreement to keep us quiet and that as soon as they have got their personnel, schools, equipment for War Stations, W/T [wireless] sets and aircraft etc. they will throw off this paper control and do just what they like.”⁶

Nonetheless, despite the early growing pains, the SOE and OSS initially worked closely together. For instance, during Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa in November 1942, a combined SOE/OSS organization supported the operation. The special operations orders specifically stated,

“The joint OSS/SOE organization will assist by subversive action the landing and subsequent operations of the three Task Forces and the subsequent advance of the 1st Army into Tunisia.”⁷ By Spring 1943, OSS had access to the SOE War Station in England, which allowed them to communicate in their own cyphers with any of their own agents in Western Europe.⁸

Tensions, however, continued to emerge with regards to control and coordination of operations in Europe. SOE senior leadership continually railed at their supposed allies. Complaints included observations that ranks in the OSS were generally one above the corresponding SOE rank, which gave the Americans a continually advantage. In addition, SOE leaders and planners fumed at the fact that the OSS had limited experience in operations compared to the SOE that had a three-year “head start” start in Europe. Furthermore, SOE mandarins continually pointed out that SOE had the bases, the schools, the communications, the air liaison and the experienced staff to do an operation. As one SOE senior articulated, “I do not think there is any reason why cooperation or efficiency should suffer by authorizing the SOE Commander to act as the coordinator for operations. On the contrary I think it may be of assistance to OSS in developing and exercising a very complex and delicate type of organization.”⁹

Philosophical approach was another point of friction between the two organizations. One SOE executive complained to Churchill, “the American temperament demands quick and spectacular results, while the British policy is generally speaking long-term and plodding.” He warned that “OSS’s hankering after playing cowboys and red Indians could only lead to trouble for the alliance.”¹⁰

The continuing pressures finally came to a head and led to the eventual drafting of a new agreement. For the Americans, the “hard and fast delineations of spheres as in the present 1942 agreement [were] undesirable.”¹¹ This perspective is easily understood since the original 1942 agreement was heavily skewed to British control since they had the advantage of having an organization already in place at the time. For instance, the original 1942 agreement stipulated:

Where the Americans have little interest in an area it would be assigned exclusively to the British organisation and the Americans

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would either stay out or be represented at most by a liaison officer and a small staff. Where the Americans have a major interest there would be a separate American mission but it would work under the direction and control of the British mission.¹²

Predictably, the one-sided agreement lasted only as long as it took for the Americans to establish their own version of the SOE, namely the OSS. Once the OSS was operational, the US predominance began to take effect and a new agreement was required. As such, the American Chiefs of Staff approved a policy that clarified, "To avoid the confusion resulting from two completely independent organizations working in the same field initial assignment of US and British areas of operation would be made, but the US could assign its own missions, with headquarters, stations and agents to British territory to operate under direction and control of the British 'Controller' and vice versa."¹³

Furthermore, to assist with the command, control and coordination of special operations in Europe, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEP) created a Special Force Headquarters. A SHAEP document explained:

Special Force Headquarters is a combined United States/British Headquarters formed from an amalgamation of those divisions of the United States SO Branch of OSS and of the British SOE, concerned with those countries (less Germany) in the Supreme Commander's sphere. Under the operational control of Supreme Headquarters, Special Force Headquarters is under the joint command of British and United States directors. The main concern of Special Force Headquarters is the organisation and issuance of orders to Resistance behind the enemy lines. This is carried out from the Headquarters in London, assisted in the case of Holland by Special Force Staff Detachments at Headquarters of 21st Army Group and First Canadian and Second British Army.¹⁴

"Turf" battles aside, the main purpose of both the SOE/OSS remained to disrupt the German war machine to shape the continent for the eventual return of Allied forces. From the perspective of the British Chiefs of Staff Committee, they defined the basic characteristics of SOE activities as:

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- a. Normally subversive – e.g. sabotage, and carried out in enemy occupied territory behind the line of contact with our forces;
- b. May however be overt on occasion. Such occasions should be limited to those when allied intervention can be expected before the enemy can quell the resistance and punish those taking part;
- c. In either case the operations are conducted or organized by SOE agents. These agents are or pretend to be natives of the country in which they operate; and
- d. Agents are generally civilians. In any case they operate in plain clothes, and do not pretend to or claim the rights or privileges of a member of the armed forces of their own or any allied country – e.g. to be treated as a prisoner of war.¹⁵



A delay action fuse in a tin, complete with 12 acid ampules of varying time delays.

Clearly, by this point in the War the Allies believed that subversion, sabotage and the raising of secret armies would assist in the liberation of Occupied Europe. An SOE brief explained:

The Axis Powers, by the enormous extension of territory which they at present control and by their brutal behaviour to the occupants, have laid themselves open to all forms of subversive warfare. Without outside support however it is quite impossible to continue such warfare for long, owing to the lack of direction and control, of materials, of communications etc.

S.O.2 [SOE] is the organisation which is now endeavouring to exploit that situation. Sabotage and explosive materials and devices have been despatched to most countries in Europe in large quantities; money has been provided to subsidise opposition parties; wireless sets and courier services have been established to facilitate communications. In the case of emigre Governments, S.O.2 has direct contacts with them all so as to assist and to direct their own efforts...S.O.2 is, in fact, acting not only as the counter to German Fifth Column activities, but also as its counterpart. The Axis is waging total war and must be answered in the same way; its Fifth Column must be 'out-columned,' and all oppressed peoples must be encouraged to resist, and assist in the Axis defeat. This can only be done by inciting them, and organising them, and providing the means and training for effective action. This SO2 is endeavouring to do, and the time will come when the combined efforts of these peoples, suitably timed and staged, will play a valuable part in the eventual defeat of the Axis.¹⁶

It was with this end in mind that the SOE, and later with the assistance of the OSS, set their sights. The British intended that the occupied populations assist in their own liberation. However, they also realized that this could only be done with the proper direction and support.¹⁷ Importantly, the nature of the conflict, namely total war, meant that the SOE and its agents would make "use of any method which may suit the circumstances."¹⁸ In essence, SOE undertook "direct action," which embraced all operations requiring some degree of force, as well as "indirect action," which covered all means

from subversion, such as moral disintegration, to sabotage, as well as the raising of secret armies.¹⁹

The aim of subversion was simple, namely, the encouragement of the occupied populations to rise against their oppressors and undertake direct and indirect actions assist the Allied cause. Subversion was intended to foment silent/passive resistance. It included:

1. The insertion of British news items in the local press;
2. The dissemination of leaflets in enemy territory;
3. The spreading of subversive whispers;
4. The encouragement of foreign General Staffs to take special measures against possible German invasion;
5. The subsidization of political opposition parties in neutral or semi-neutral countries;
6. Labour disruptions;
7. Attacks on the morale of the enemy forces; and
8. Encouragement of locals to join resistance movements and undertake sabotage.²⁰

The SOE viewed sabotage, the physical destruction or dislocation of supplies useful to the enemy, as an especially effective tool to disrupt the German war effort. Hugh Dalton, SOE's first political chief believed firmly that supporting guerilla forces behind enemy lines was an integral element of any sabotage organization. He affirmed as early as July 1940 that "we must organise movements in every occupied territory."²¹ Sabotage was of particular value to the SOE as it was different, and easier to accomplish, than highly technical *coup de main* acts that require detailed planning and the use of specially trained operatives. Conversely, sabotage consisting of innumerable simple acts could be carried out by ordinary individual citizen-saboteurs. This approach was in keeping with the SOE/OSS sabotage manuals that explained:

Where destruction is involved, the weapons of the citizen-saboteur are salt, nails, candles, pebbles, thread or any other materials he might normally be expected to possess as a householder or as a worker in his particular occupation. His arsenal is the kitchen

shelf, the trash pile, his own usual kit of tools and supplies. The targets of his sabotage are usually objects to which he has normal and inconspicuous access in everyday life...A second type of simple sabotage requires no destructive tools whatsoever and produces physical damage, if any, by highly indirect means. It is based on universal opportunities to make faulty decisions, to adopt a non-cooperative attitude, and to induce others to follow suit...This type of activity, sometimes referred to as the “human element,” is frequently responsible for accidents, delays and general obstruction even under normal conditions.²²

Through the collaboration with occupied populations, the SOE hoped to generate thousands of simple acts of sabotage carried out by thousands of citizen-saboteurs. In essence, the SOE believed that the slashing of tires, draining of fuel tanks, acts of arson, abrading machinery, malingering, were all effective methods to waste materials, manpower, and time, thus degrading the German war effort. “Occurring on a wide scale,” the SOE/OSS planners believed, “simple sabotage will be a constant and tangible drag on the war effort of the enemy.”²³

When it came to sabotage there was another important Canadian link, specifically, a Canadian instructor named Bert “Yank” Levy, an expert on irregular warfare, who the SOE employed to teach an understanding of sabotage and guerilla warfare to their agents. Levy served in the British Home Guard, possessed experience with the British Army in Palestine and Trans-Jordan, and undertook nefarious activities in Mexico and Nicaragua prior to joining the military. He explained the intricacies of sabotage and guerilla warfare:

As a guerilla you must be a dim but sinister shadow, a mosquito in a darkened tent that stings first here then there, his victims unable to trap him. Silent, lurking in tiny bands in riverbeds, ditches, ravines, hillsides, empty railway cars, flitting from cover to cover, and like a gadfly pricking the bulky body of the enemy force, striving to goad it into wastage of effort and material. It is our job to buzz around the enemy, stabbing him here then there, with sudden unexpected jabs, destroying or appropriating his stores, munitions and supplies,

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cutting his communications, trapping his messengers, ambushing his convoys or trucks. In general, creating a considerable amount of hell, and wearing him down.²⁴

Additionally, SOE training documents underscored the importance of guerilla warfare as part of its irregular warfare activities. These publications highlighted, “Guerrilla warfare is one of the great war-winning weapons; virtual impossibility for enemy to combat subversive movements on a large scale simultaneously in all his conquered territories.”²⁵

IWM, MUN_000213



A Type IV Limpet Mine camouflaged in a red petrol can.

The importance of guerilla warfare and sabotage as part of irregular warfare was also underscored by the support it received from the research and development community. BSC's Station "M", working with the Canadian National Research Council and OSS provided special devices worth six million dollars, as well as forged identity papers for agents. It also sourced authentic clothing from enemy countries, as well as articles such as knives, fountain pens and suitcases. Station "M" staff obtained these items from European refugees on a replacement basis. They also raided clothes stored for prisoners of war and internees, as well convincing individuals who had

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accumulated clothes to ship to Russia under a “Bundles for Russia” drive to pass over some of the garments for operational use.²⁶

Special weapons and devices were also developed for SOE at Station IX, at “The Frythe,” a small private hotel in Welwyn Garden City. This was the same location from which, since August 1940, SOE wireless research had been based. Station IX, also known as the Welwyn Experimental Laboratory, additionally lent its name to some of its exotic creations such as the Welrod silent pistol and the Welbike (portable motorcycle) and the Welfag (.22 calibre firing device concealed in a cigarette). Special weapons and devices were also manufactured at Station XII (Experimental Station 6 (War Department) ES6 (WD)) at Aston House near Stevenage.²⁷



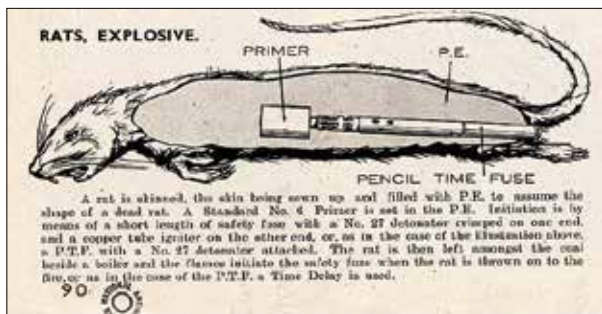
IWM, EOU_012207

Decoy overshoes, commonly called “sneakers,” were worn over conventional footwear. They were made especially as a deception device for SOE agents.

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In addition, the research community developed contaminants to sabotage lubricants and fuel. When researchers determined that sand and sugar were not effective, or in the case of sugar hard to come by in wartime Europe, they developed special compounds such as “turtle eggs,” which consisted of bad lubricant contained in a small palm sized rubber packet that could be slipped into the oil aperture of an engine. When heated the rubber melted and the bad lubricant mixed with the engine oil. “Special grease” was also manufactured that had a disastrous effect on engine bearings and axles of rolling stock. Additionally, the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich developed a plastic explosive called RDX (Research Department Explosive), which was mixed with oil in an approximate 85 per cent to 15 per cent ratio. This mixture gave the explosive a consistency of plasticine and was far superior to dynamite or any other commercial explosives since it was extremely stable and required a well-embedded detonator to trigger an explosion.

Researchers also developed such devices or “toys” as they were called, as explosive coal, explosive cow/mule/camel dung, as well as explosive “stone” lanterns or Balinese carvings. Not to be outdone by their SOE colleagues, the OSS also developed an explosive flour, called “Aunt Jemima” that was a mixture of 75 per cent RDX and 25 per cent wheat flour. It could be baked to look like a loaf of bread. In extremis, it could also be eaten.²⁸



**Explosives hidden in a dead rat.
Intended to blow up industrial facilities when the
dead rats would be thrown into blast furnaces for disposal.**

The governing principle for sabotage was to cause maximum damage and confusion to the enemy in the shortest possible time. However, agents and their saboteurs were carefully instructed that this objective did not translate into “unlimited authority to blow everything at sight.” The SOE

was concerned that an abundance of small, obvious acts of sabotage would irritate the enemy and prompt him to take increased security precautions, or reprisals against local populations. As many of these minor acts of sabotage did not vitally affect the larger war effort, planners believed that they could work against the saboteurs in the long run. As such, the SOE reminded its agents that “in every case the importance of the objective must be weighed against the possible consequences of the act.”²⁹

The SOE utilized a number of other methodologies to achieve their aim of disrupting the German war effort. Some of these strategies were innovative and did not even require agents or their networks to actually put themselves at risk. For instance, the “Blackmail Policy” proved quite successful. Quite simply, organisers targeted industrialists. Agents simply proposed to the owner, manager or some junior competent authority in a vital factory that they should immobilise a particular machine tool or vital producing plant so as to deny production to the enemy. If the target refused the “offer,” the SOE agent would explain the alternative, which was a bombing raid by the Royal Air Force (RAF). Such an attack, it was pointed out, would result in increased suffering to personnel and the total loss of the property owing to the infinitely lesser precision afforded by aerial bombardment compared with ground sabotage.³⁰

Yet, another means of creating chaos was the anonymous letter. The SOE/OSS instruction manuals explained:

An anonymous letter is a weapon which is readily available to any literate person. No special materials are required except those which are accessible to all persons...The anonymous letter writer and the amount of damage which can be accomplished amongst enemy personnel is only limited by the ingenuity of the writer applied to the environment in which he is living.³¹

Although subversion and sabotage, as well as intelligence gathering, were central to the SOE role, they were certainly not the SOE's only lines of operation or focus. The SOE believed there was great benefit to accrue from investing in the creation of secret armies that would tie down large numbers of enemy troops and assist with the liberation of occupied territories. Prime Minister Churchill himself spoke to the importance of secret armies when he addressed the Canadian Parliament. He extolled:

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The second phase which will then open may be called the phase of liberation. During this phase we must look to the recovery of the territories which have been lost or which may yet be lost, and also we must look to the revolt of the conquered peoples from the moment that the rescuing and liberating armies and air forces appear in strength within their borders. For this purpose it is imperative that no State or region that has been over-run should relax its moral and physical effort in preparation for the day of deliverance.³²

The SOE knew, however, that for the phase of liberation to be successful meant their support. After all, they assessed that “Insurrections, of popular uprising type, feebly armed and without modern weapons, are foredoomed to unsucces [sic] as the quick arms of enemy forces may frustrate the insurrection, execute reprisals and exterminate the population as well as destroy the region of insurrection.”³³ And, since the SOE fully understood that a well-armed insurrectionist movement could dramatically assist liberating forces, it invested accordingly. With weapons and training, the SOE believed it could assign its secret armies a number of tasks:

- a. seizure of aerodromes and landing grounds;
- b. piecemeal destruction of small and isolated German garrisons;
- c. provision of a cordon to prevent German troops from being sent to reinforce vital areas; and
- d. supplementing their supplies of arms and equipment from German garrisons and munitions factories.³⁴

The theory and planning was relatively easy. The next step, however, was the actual establishment of these organizations on the ground. This phase would be more problematic. Nonetheless, the SOE certainly did not suffer from a lack of confidence. Ambitiously, the SOE planned, by October 1942, to raise secret armies in four primary locations consisting of a large number of personnel:

- a. Norway 9,000 personnel;
- b. Holland 5,000;
- c. Belgium 6,000; and
- d. France 24,000 personnel.³⁵

The planners envisioned that these secret armies would also be augmented by sabotage organizations that would be completely separate from the larger group. These sabotage organizations, which would range in size from seven to ten individuals, would be responsible for conducting sabotage on a continual basis, whereas the secret army was intended to spring into action only in support of Allied armies during liberation.³⁶

The SOE's ambitious plans clearly required a large support base of SOE agents and wireless operators. The bold program also meant that the SOE agents had to recruit and organize resistance cells in the occupied countries to grow the sabotage organizations and secret armies. This requirement was always a hazardous undertaking. The SOE agents knew what they wanted, it was just a question of finding the right individual. The SOE official guidance for selecting host nation agents explained:

The type of agent whom you should look for will be the "organiser." First decide, when you have assured yourself of his reliability, for which particular category he will be best adapted, e.g. "Political subversion," and train him to do that work only. A good organiser should have:

- a. Personal qualifications:
 - i. fanatical antipathy to the Germans and everything German,
 - ii. courage, resource and determination,
 - iii. leadership and ability to command respect, and
 - iv. a flair for underground work.
- b. Technical qualifications:
 - i. he must be under no suspicion, must have excellent cover and should have no conspicuous features,
 - ii. an expert knowledge of the territory he is going to work,
 - iii. he must have the right connections, and
 - iv. a technical knowledge of the branch he intends to organise.³⁷

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Artwork by Silvia Pecota



“Midnight Rendezvous”

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Importantly, the SOE organizers cautioned, “above all,” to guard against recruiting an individual who possessed too strong a personality because “there is always the danger that he will be conspicuous.”³⁸

Despite the constant sniping and animosity the SOE faced from political, interdepartmental and military senior decision-makers and leaders, the British Chiefs of Staff Committee believed in the potential the SOE represented. As a result, they built in a robust role for SOE agents and their resistance networks for the upcoming Allied invasions. They specifically directed that all SOE/special operations activities within the sphere of operations of the Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Forces fall under his operational control.³⁹ Their guiding principle, however, was “to inflict the maximum casualties, in men and material, on the withdrawing enemy and thus to undermine his morale by spreading a spirit of defeat among his withdrawing forces.”⁴⁰ Specific targets included railway demolitions, sabotage of telecommunications, attacks on headquarters, harassing road transport and small parties of enemy troops.

Notably, both the SOE and OSS took on major activities, both at the strategic and tactical levels, as the invasions began. SOE parties were attached to army organizations at the corps or army level to assist with operations. For example, during Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily, the SOE dispatched a small party called G (Topographical Liaison) Unit to 13th Corps. This group kept military representatives at the corps headquarters. In addition, they deployed a number of personnel in plain clothes into the Allied occupied territories to contact anti-Fascist elements and to recruit personnel for work further forward on the island, or on the Italian mainland. They were successful and succeeded in recruiting a small number of local sympathizers with contacts on the mainland. Importantly, these volunteers were prepared to infiltrate into Italy in order to “prepare the ground for Allied troops.”⁴¹ Specifically, they were to organize and carry out sabotage and other subversive activities.⁴²

At the more tactical level, the Army Force Headquarters (AFHQ) provided direction to the SOE:

- a. Your primary task will be to establish contact with your resistance groups and to bring about, with all the resources at

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your disposal an immediate hampering of the movement of German troops in or into the Pantaloon area; and

- b. Your subsequent tasks will be:
 - i. To gather together and strengthen your contacts with subversive elements within our own lines and to recruit from amongst them personnel to work on attacking vital military objectives, behind the enemy lines., and especially to make attacks on communications;
 - ii. to establish contacts with your resistance groups in territory still occupied by the enemy, to supply them with sabotage material, and to direct their activities in such a way that they conform to the military situation; and
 - iii. through your political contacts, to keep the army commander continually aware of the possibilities of a 'coup d'etat' within a given town or district.⁴³

For the subsequent invasion of Italy, the British Chiefs of Staff placed SOE operations under the command of the Commanding General within the theatre and area of operations (AO) they were operating in. They directed, "Special Forces, [an official designation given to the SOE by the War Office] will be directly under command of Commanding General, Fifth Army and will at all times keep the Army Commander and his staff fully informed of Special Force activities."⁴⁴ The Fifth Army in turn directed the SOE/OSS to conduct two specific types of tasks:

Tasks. There are of two types, and must be kept entirely separate:

- a. Military:
 - i. to concentrate on causing the maximum disruption of communications of the German forces in Italy;
 - ii. destruction of aircraft;
 - iii. undermining the morale of the German forces in the field;
 - iv. attacks on fuel.
- b. Political:

To build up, without the knowledge of the Italians, clandestine networks based on existing groups to prevent, for obvious

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military reasons, any form of chaotic conditions due to political upheaval in the country.⁴⁵

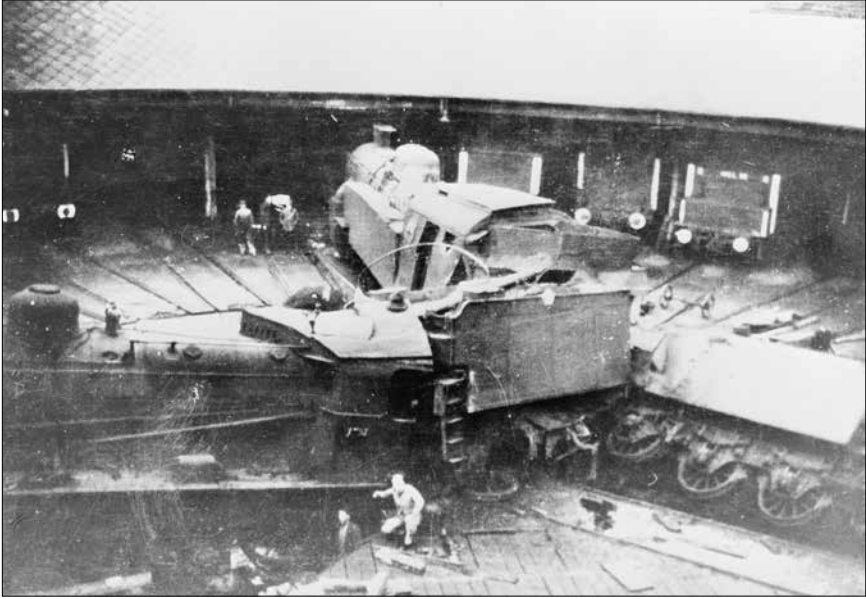
In the simplest terms, SOE agents were to be deployed prior to the collapse of the Fascist regime and “spread defeatism and confusion among Axis troops, and to disrupt in every possible way German communications and transport.”⁴⁶ Their main tasks were:

- a. the contacting of subversive elements (particularly political contacts) which have been working for SOE in Italy during the past eighteen months;
- b. the employment of these elements to assist in the weakening of enemy resistance behind the enemy lines by attacking vital military objectives, especially communications; and
- c. Recruiting of individual agents from among the local populations to assist in (a) and (b) above.⁴⁷

Although the SOE was active worldwide, its principal contribution to the defeat of the Axis powers was arguably in its assistance to the defeat of the Germans in Occupied Europe. In countries such as France, Holland and Belgium, to name a few, where the yoke of Nazi rule was the heaviest, the SOE’s investment in agents and resistance movements provided the greatest dividends. The main tasks SHAEF allotted to resistance groups for D-Day, the invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944, centred chiefly around “the disruption of communications, principally railway communications.” The anticipated tasks were:

1. Attacks on Luftwaffe personnel and aircraft (this is now a priority...);
2. Delay in Road Transport (tyre bursters, ambushes, etc);
3. Attack, or if necessary, very temporary preservation of Aerodromes;
4. Attacks on petrol and ammunition depots;
5. Reception of Airborne or Parachute troops and the provision of local guides who would be able to give a commanding officer up to date information regarding local conditions; and
6. Neutralisation or suppression of Civilian authorities who might prove unfavourable to us.⁴⁸

IWM, ZZZ_011837_E



Rail roundtable and locomotives destroyed in France.

As D-Day approached SHAEF provided more specific direction. In April 1944, SHAEF HQ directed the SOE to begin to shape the theatre. Specifically, the SOE was to make every effort:

- a. to lower the morale of the German occupying troops;
- b. to ensure the maximum degree of dispersal of the German occupying troops; and
- c. to disrupt and destroy the German Air Force.⁴⁹

SHAEF also set a priority of targets to sabotage to prepare for D-Day:

Between D-14 and D-day – priority targets:

- a. to attack local headquarters of the enemy;
- b. to mark headquarters by ground signs conspicuous from the air;
- c. to mark landing grounds suitable for paratroops;
- d. to cut telephone and other communications;
- e. to erect simple road blocks;
- f. to start fires, particularly in coastal towns;

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- g. to prevent demolition of bridges and installations of value to the Allies, but not to prevent the demolition of railways and railway communications; and
- h. to harass the enemy generally in these areas.

On D-Day – priority targets:

- a. The disruption and destruction of the German Air Force;
- b. U-boat supplies and U-boat crews;
- c. petrol and oil dumps; and
- d. enemy military communications.⁵⁰

Significantly, the SOE was ready for its missions. Prior to D-Day, the SOE revealed to the Chiefs of Staff Committee that it had in excess of a million men formed in resistance groups in Europe ready to conduct clandestine operations against the Axis forces. The SOE believed that although the Resistance cells were only lightly armed and operating in small detachments, they “should be able, if well controlled, to immobilize many enemy divisions.” The SOE concluded, “The direction and equipment of resistance groups may therefore prove to be of high value in diverting enemy forces and facilitating Allied military operations.”⁵¹

The SOE belief was proven correct. Interestingly, the great majority of SOE missions prior to D-Day were actually conducted by Allied nationals and very few by British officers.⁵²

As the Allied operations struck deeper into Europe, pushing the Germans out of the occupied countries, the SOE began to focus on Germany itself. To this point, the majority of the SOE effort had been almost exclusively on building-up the resistance networks and secret armies in the occupied territories. However, by 11 August 1944, Germany had become SOE's priority target. “We must start upon the penetration of the Reich itself,” the Director of SOE asserted, “upon means of disrupting it and upon building up inside it a suitable organisation to use during the post-armistice period and perhaps to lead to future clandestine subversive work by whatever agency is charged by H.M.G. [His Majesty's Government] with these functions in peacetime.”⁵³

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The SOE strategy contained a multi-pronged approach, which included:

- a. Mass subversion of German Administrative officials in Occupied Territories;
- b. Subject to the directives of SHAEF any activity that will cause large movements of people in Germany or create administrative chaos;
- c. Attacks on the German Security Services especially the S.D. organisation and all its branches;
- d. Organisation of each country's Nationals inside Germany;
- e. The recruiting from the local Underground Movement of Agents who, for money or revenge, will be willing at a later date to go into Germany and carry out specific tasks allotted to them;
- f. Demoralisation of German troops and mass desertion;
- g. Attacks on any German assets and holdings in occupied countries; and
- h. Development of channels to handle supplies of "black" propaganda.⁵⁴

In the end, the SOE seemingly proved its worth and strategic purpose through operations in Occupied Europe. The years spent on preparation, training, cultivating, nurturing and supporting agents, resistance movements and secret armies, as well as maintaining a persistent campaign of sabotage, subversion and intelligence gathering, all came to the fore during the Allied invasions and subsequent operations.

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CHALLENGES TO SOE OPERATIONS

Despite the ultimate success the SOE arguably achieved, reaching the end goal was not easy. Although the concept of subversion, sabotage and raising large resistance networks made eminent sense to many, there remained a large number of disbelievers who consistently worked against the SOE. In addition, a number of other challenges continually worked at stymying SOE efforts to dismantle the Axis war machine. For the SOE, the Clausewitzian “friction” in undertaking operations and achieving success was significant and often a close-run thing.

The myriad of challenges in running operations was captured in a SOE memorandum. It explained, “Like all human enterprises, the work of SOE depends greatly on the human factor.”¹ This observation captured one of the greatest “frictions” the SOE had to overcome to succeed, namely human frailty, which expressed itself in many ways including vice and self-interest. Some individuals and nations preferred others take the risks and do the fighting; some individuals and organizations saw only rivalry and potential competition for power and resources; and some individuals sold out to the enemy to save their own lives. It is an understatement to state that these challenges all severely tested the SOE.

The failure of conquered, occupied nations to assist in their own liberation seems counterintuitive, yet, it was a very real problem for the SOE as well. One report noted, “The fact remains, however, that the people in occupied Europe are unsatisfied by our appeal to fight for ‘democracy’ which as a political creed was never well suited to their temperaments and which now corresponds less than ever to the ideas or needs of the time.” The author explained that many of the people of occupied Europe “identify the appeal to fight for democracy with the failures of the older generation before the war.”²

Denmark became a notable example of the reluctance to support a subversive campaign against the Germans. Denmark’s lethargy was a sore point for the SOE, which saw subversive action in Denmark as critically important in

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order to reduce to an absolute minimum the Danish contribution to the German war effort, as well as to shape Danish co-operation and assistance for potential Allied operations on Danish territory. In addition, it was important to undermine German authority and their seeming veil of invincibility.

However, the SOE's efforts fell short. They had begun operations in Denmark in January 1942, and met little success. "Our greatest difficulty," one SOE report lamented, "has been to persuade the Danish people that sabotage is a necessary instrument of war."³ The SOE was eventually able to recruit a small band of conspirators and collaborators, but the majority of the population "held the views that, for good or evil, since the King and Government had capitulated to the invader, it was un-Danish for the people to take the law into their own hands and so prejudice the position of their King."⁴

Facing a wall of indifference, the SOE took decisive action to convince the Danes of the need to cooperate. In January 1943, the RAF conducted a Mosquito bomber raid on the Burmeister & Wain's Shipyards, in Copenhagen. The Danish attitude literally transformed overnight. Apparently, the realization that the Allies were seriously concerned with the manner in which Danish industries were supporting the German war effort was driven home. The bomber raid sent a clear message that if the Danes would not do their part in limiting German production, then the RAF would do the job for them. As an SOE report captured, "It was a grim choice of Sabotage or Bombs, and they chose the former because of the lesser risk to human lives."⁵ Notably, results were almost immediate. "Our rising record of sabotage," lauded a SOE assessment, "over the last twelve months, which would not have been possible without the help of thousands of local collaborators, dates directly back to that one bombing raid, which has not since been repeated."⁶

The Danes were not the only group with which the SOE had difficulties. Personal interest, particularly with regards to safety, livelihood and economic gain continually created friction and the French proved to be a very wily and difficult group with which to work. After the initial shock of defeat in the spring/summer of 1940 wore off, some French officers, prior to demobilization, had time to plan underground resistance in general terms before being separated from each other and their men. The planning was, not

surprisingly, rather vague, being more theoretical than practical considering the time available. However, it planted the seed. By the autumn, resistance began to sprout. It was at this time that the SOE created the French (“F”) Section. While there was no clearly articulated policy, the section operated under the general operating imperative “to foster subversive activity by all means against the enemy.”⁷

IWM, HU_003213



Lieutenant Odette Marie-Céline Sansom, courier “F” Section.

By February 1941, drawing from known and trusted individuals, SOE planners drew up a list of possible organisers who could be approached in France. In addition, another list was established based on reports from escaped prisoners, both British and foreign, who provided the names of those who had helped and facilitated escape from occupied Europe.⁸

“F” Section also undertook the *compilation of a list of important targets throughout France*.⁹ However, there were three main challenges:

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- a. how to confirm that worthwhile resistance movements existed;
- b. if they did exist, how to establish contact; and
- c. how to provide the sinews of war to those in occupied territories prepared to fight.

“F” Section deduced the first and third challenges required the establishment of physical means of communication; the second the ability to transmit and receive messages, information and orders at an acceptable speed.¹⁰

However, the challenges proved to be more complex. General Charles de Gaulle became the de facto leader of Free French forces and he was anything but cooperative with the SOE. As one SOE report captured:

Owing to the policy of the Government that French arrivals in UK should be placed at the disposal of General de Gaulle, we [SOE “F” Section] were prohibited from attracting men of French nationality who would have been suitable for radio work, and we, therefore, had to look for that extremely rare phenomenon, an Englishman - or at any rate a national other than French - speaking French as fluently as his own language, with a suitable temperament for radio work and a desire to volunteer for this particularly dangerous and difficult task.¹¹

Not surprisingly, the British quickly determined that French Canadians were a perfect replacement to act as SOE organizers for resistance movements in France.

Nonetheless, aside from the difficulty of working with exile governments and leaders, SOE officers soon found that internal divisions within the French Resistance itself also created no end of frustration. Quite frankly, they were never quite sure with whom they were dealing. Self-appointed resistance leaders, hidden agendas and political manoeuvres, compounded by petty personal jealousies made the task of the SOE agents extremely difficult.¹² An SOE assessment bluntly opined, “Now, at this particular time, I would defy anyone to say who has betrayed anybody, or rather who has not betrayed everybody.”¹³

The Albanians also proved to be less than reliable. One report stated, “They [Albanians] are extremely venal and are liable to take pay from, and deliver

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the goods to, both sides.”¹⁴ The SOE had struggles with the Norwegians who also had their limits of what they were prepared to do and suffer to support the Allied cause. Again, a SOE assessment determined:

We believe that if interference with the business [Herring Oil Industry] were organised so as to interfere with the livelihood of the Norwegian fisherman, we should do our cause harm - not only in Norway itself but possibly among the many thousands of Norwegian seamen upon whom we depend for the movement of a great deal of ocean going tonnage for our own war supplies. We consider that any attack upon the Herring Oil industry should be designed in such a way as to interfere with the delivery of the oil to Germany after it has left the hands of the fishermen, and then only if they have been paid for it.¹⁵

Predictably, gaining the cooperation of the conquered countries was not without its difficulties as personal interests and motivations were not always aligned with SOE intent. This situation created frictions that were complex and difficult to circumnavigate. However, it was not only external nations that created these realities.

IWM, HU_067339



SOE officer meeting with partisans in Albania, August 1943.

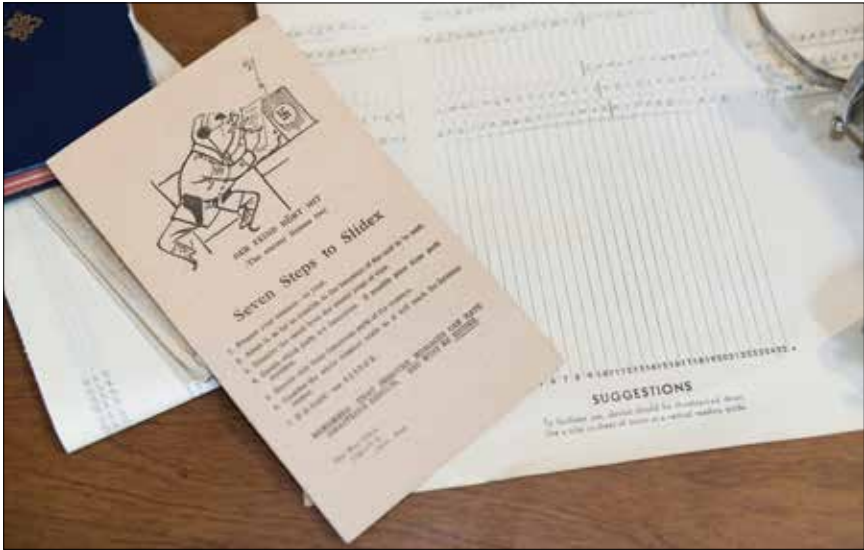
The SOE also had to contend with internal frictions. As mentioned earlier, the rivalry and difficulties the SOE faced in its creation from internal competition, particularly with the Foreign Office (FO) and the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) never abated. In fact, the tensions and lack of cooperation between FO/SIS and SOE even created delays in operations in Greece.¹⁶

Similarly, the disdain from the RAF also never diminished. Senior individuals such as Air Chief Marshal Portal resented the SOE not only because of the threat they posed to the diversion of aircraft from the strategic bombing of German cities, but also because of philosophical differences. Portal scoffed at the idea of SOE operations. "The dropping of men dressed in civilian clothes for the purpose of attempting to kill members of the opposing forces is not an operation with which the Royal Air Force should be associated," Portal railed, "there is a vast difference, in ethics, between the time honoured operation of the dropping of a spy from the air and this entirely new scheme for dropping what one can only call assassins."¹⁷ In fact, Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, believed that assassination was "war crimes business."¹⁸ Indeed, what aircraft the RAF provided was normally done reluctantly and only after very firm and pointed direction from higher authority.¹⁹

The greatest "friction" to SOE operations, however, was the Germans themselves, particularly their counter-intelligence activities. The Allies harboured no illusions regarding German capabilities. A 1943 training manual clearly warned:

Experience shows that the German C.E. [counter espionage] authorities are highly organized and methodical; impossibility therefore of leaving anything to chance. Conversely, the very rigidity of the system gives Agent certain loop-holes, provided he conforms to regulations and controls and has an idea of methods used by the police and a cast iron story.²⁰

SOE agents were inculcated with the mantra that "security cannot be taught by rule-of-thumb. It is a frame of mind attainable through self-discipline, self-training that will make the taking of precautions a habit."²¹ Importantly, they were constantly reminded to be the "grey man;" to "be inconspicuous. Avoid all limelight by being an 'average' citizen in appearance and conduct."²²



“Seven Steps to Slidex” Encryption.

Unfortunately, this approach was not always enough. The German counter-espionage organization was both skilled and ruthless. They cast their net wide and deep. They used various methods to catch and trap agents. Surveillance of individual premises, railway stations and public places for both locating suspects, as well as any suspicious individuals was a staple of the CE methodology. They also controlled hotels, lodging houses and taxis. In addition, they followed suspects, as well as keeping a watch on their relatives and friends. House and individual body searches were a common practice.

Beyond surveillance, the Germans also focused on interception. They routinely vetted the postal system, including everything from censorship, random check of letters and targeted interception of suspect addresses, names on blacklists, as well as letters to neutral countries. In addition, they would resort to burglary to access courier and official mail. The CE authorities would also intercept telephone and telegraph traffic. Significantly for the SOE agents, the Germans became highly skilled at Direction Finding (D/F) of wireless radio transmissions to the point that they could detect and locate a set within a radius of 32 kilometres (km) and be able to narrow down the search to a point where the operator could hear the key strike at approximately 100 metres.²³

The German CE agents would also run sting operations to unearth enemy agents. They would routinely provide bogus offers of service and pass on false information. For instance, they would offer to supply boats to facilitate escapes or provide rendezvous points for escapees. Additionally, they would attempt to organize acts of sabotage and resistance hoping to identify active insurrectionists. They would also penetrate cells by utilizing agents who would offer their services or use double agents, notably Allied agents who had been captured and turned. On some occasions, the Germans would arrest an individual and then have them rescued by strangers who purported to belong to the resistance. This method proved successful on several occasions. The freed detainees revealed a great deal of information through sheer relief and excitement following their staged rescue. Similarly, the Germans also used fake arrests and releases to create credibility for their own agents.²⁴

The darker side of the German CE efforts included interrogation. The interrogations focused on anyone they thought might provide information useful to the CE effort. This group included, prisoners of war, captured SOE agents, persons whose names had been mentioned in other interrogations, or friends and families of those who had been detained and implicated.

In fact, the SOE soon realized one of its gravest miscalculations in recruiting agents in the occupied territories. A SOE manual explained:

The basic principle that recruitment should be confined to personal friends, whilst admirable in theory, received a severe and unexpected jolt in practice. The German C.E. authorities made a habit of asking an arrested agent who his personal friends and acquaintances were and then arresting these persons without further pretext. Though the arrests were haphazard and fortuitous, they led incidentally to many casualties in the ranks of the underground.²⁵

The German CE authorities were also not above kidnapping suspects in neutral countries.²⁶



Two SOE agents posing with a partisan in Crete, June 1944.

Interrogation became a major issue for SOE agents as the methods used by the CE authorities, mostly the Gestapo, were brutal. Questioning was normally carried out by four or five interrogators. They frequently offered detainees an immediate release in return for vital information. The interrogators also routinely provided an alleged confession of a colleague to bluff the detainee into revealing more material. If two agents were arrested simultaneously, one was invariably told at the beginning of his interrogation that the other had confessed.

The fact that interrogations were brutal is undisputable. The example of the torture of the Norwegian guerilla leader called Skogen is informative. A SOE report revealed:

Skogen was interrogated in sessions lasting, on an average, 20 hours each by three and sometimes four members of the Gestapo. At the outset the Gestapo were friendly. Later kindness alternated with bullying; and finally bullying predominated. At this stage bright lights were shone in his face; he was continually presented with incriminating confessions signed by his friends and by false statements that they were alleged to have made. When these

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methods proved ineffective, he was beaten up and a screwing apparatus gradually tightened round the bones of both legs until an attendant doctor stated that he could take no more torture without dying. During all this, Skogen gave away not one word of the important information which he had in his possession. Another victim was placed in a room where the temperature had been raised until it was barely tolerable, and interrogated by relays of Gestapo questioners. On refusing to divulge information, his head and entire body were submerged in a bath of ice-cold water where he was held until on the point of suffocation. His head would then be released and he would be asked the question which he had refused to answer. If he refused again, his head would again be submerged. This man talked.²⁷

In another case, a captured agent recounted his interrogation. He described:

With my hands still cuffed behind me I went up two flights in the apartment house, kicked at every step. Then they gave me the works: rawhide whips, clubs, and fists rained on me. They spread my radio equipment out in front of me and tried to force me to acknowledge it, and to admit my relations with the others who had been arrested. I denied everything, or remained silent, not having time to say anything but "No." Then they took me by the hair and beat my head against a radiator. I could not ward off these blows because my hands were still cuffed behind me. Then they took me upstairs to the top of the apartment where they had another nice trick. I was hung by a strong rope tied around the middle of my body and run through a pulley in the roof just over the stair shaft. Then I was whipped hanging in space with nothing to hold on to. My feet, my face, my head, my back were beaten until I was unconscious. They broke several clubs on my back. From time to time they let me down to the bottom and between whippings interrogated me.²⁸

Few interrogations were conducted without physical violence. The use of two-foot-long wooden sticks and rubber truncheons to beat a detainee was more common than specific torture. Many would argue that violence was often successful in the extraction of vital information and that each

success encouraged further brutality. For example, the use of wooden sticks to beat an agent led to the “blowing” of the entire Oslo Clandestine Press Organisation in December 1943. The success of this particular incident encouraged interrogators to beat victims even more severely than before.²⁹

In the end, many of the German CE efforts proved effective. For instance, the German *Funkspiele* involved the use of captured wireless sets, as well as on occasion their operators, or a German imposter, to continue to communicate with London. This effort turned a number of networks. The Germans called it “the England Game.” Since mid-1942, the Nazi intelligence service, the *Abwehr*, had been controlling SOE’s network in the Netherlands, capturing most of the agents parachuted into the country and forcing them to transmit false information back to London. The scale of the disaster was only discovered when two captured Dutch agents escaped from a Nazi prison and made it to Switzerland, where they informed the British that their network in Holland had been compromised. In all, the Germans captured 46 consecutive agents who were dropped into Holland immediately upon their landing.³⁰ In Belgium, the situation was little better. All eight working circuits were run by the Germans. In France, 17 agents from SOE “F” Section dropped straight into the arms of the Gestapo. By 1942, half of all SOE agents deployed to France had been eliminated.³¹

The capture of Canadian agent Frank Pickersgill, code-named “Bertrand,” and his wireless set, is but one example. Pickersgill and his wireless operator, John Macalister, were arrested within days of landing in France. Fortuitously for the Germans they also seized Macalister’s codes, as well as his security checks.³² The Germans then played a *Funkspiele* pretending to be Bertrand and proceeded to arrange for the drop of a large amount of material, which was subsequently taken by the Germans. They also captured a number of SOE agents and resistance members.³³

The Germans maintained another tactic to thwart SOE efforts – reprisals. Ironically, a German lessons-learned document highlighted the importance of gaining a population’s support. The report noted, “The fight against partisans would be simplified if the German forces succeeded in gaining the confidence of the inhabitants through correct and prudent treatment.”³⁴ Nonetheless, theory was quickly cast aside and reprisals became a reality.

The SOE was very conscious of the impact of sabotage on the population. For this reason, its general policy recognized that “Reprisals are almost certainly bound to ensue, and in each case the importance of the target must be weighed up against the effect of such reprisals on the population.”³⁵ In fact, to mitigate the impact of reprisals, the SOE enacted specific policies. For instance, the underlying premise was that:

All acts of sabotage are subject to such immense reprisals that sabotage work must of necessity be limited to comparatively few attacks on objectives. It is, therefore, highly important that each of these objectives be scientifically selected and the direction come from the highest authority.³⁶

The SOE’s concern for reprisals was as much humanitarian as it was pragmatic. The SOE leadership fully realized that their operations would meet with resistance from governments in exile, as well as their resistance cells in the respective occupied countries should reprisals take too great a toll. Experience had already taught them this lesson. One report to the Chiefs of Staff Committee revealed, “German reprisals against acts of sabotage and subversive activity have, however, been of such a brutal character, and the spread of German influence in the Balkans has been so marked, that Polish and Czech subversive activities supported by us have been seriously handicapped of late.”³⁷ As a result, a careful consideration of all actions was always undertaken.

As such, despite the enthusiasm and commitment to the cause of “setting Europe on fire,” the SOE faced innumerable hurdles and “frictions” that impeded their abilities to prosecute operations. From internal rivalries, to hesitant allies, to a cunning and brutal foe, the SOE navigated the challenges and worked diligently to set the stage in Occupied Europe for the day the Allies would return to the continent. In the final analysis though, success was dependent on the agents in the field.

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WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD: CANADIAN SOE AGENTS

Theory is normally relatively simple. It is always the execution of a plan that is consistently difficult. Although the SOE attempted to control as many variables as it possibly could, as well as mitigate the impact of those factors that it could not control, its ability to regulate events on the ground came down to a lesser degree on the preparation and support of its agents, and to a greater extent on the intellectual agility of their agents and their ability to adapt to, and operate in, a very complex, dynamic and lethal environment. One operator observed:

We learned the rules and made the rules as we went along. Some had no time to learn them; their first mistake was their last. At the start, it must be confessed we thought of the whole business as a game. A serious deadly one, but a game nevertheless.¹

The first real obstacle facing all agents was penetrating Occupied Europe. Various methods were used such as infiltration by Lysander aircraft, parachute drops, or insertion by boat, as well as entry by foot through a neighbouring country. The SOE often used bombing runs to cover the infiltration of agents. The difficulty, however, was convincing the RAF to divert bombers from other targets, or even to allow for their bombing routes to be adapted so that they could provide cover for SOE infiltration. In addition, the use of the RAF for cover went one step further. SOE agents were given airmen identity discs in order to give them a chance of being treated as prisoners of war if they were captured by the Germans.²

Once on the ground, the difficulties for the SOE agents magnified. Predictably, the loss rate of SOE operatives was high. In France, the casualty rate was 25 per cent.³ Not surprisingly, all agents very quickly learned two lessons. The first was the importance of radio communications. Without it, an agent or organiser was powerless and virtually ineffective. This reality



The Lysander aircraft was a robust workhorse that delivered many SOE agents into Europe.

was in itself problematic. The wireless radio sets weighed approximately fourteen kilograms and were not easily disguised. Routine German searches, spot checks and an efficient direction finding (DF) capability merely added to an agent's challenges. As a result of the difficult operating conditions, the average "life expectancy" of a wireless operator was only three months.⁴



Wireless set in a suitcase.

Author photo



Wireless set hidden in a suitcase.

The perilous operating environment also made robust cover stories extremely important. In fact, one SOE officer responsible for preparing agents strongly advocated for vigorous vetting of agents and their cover story. He insisted:

I strongly advocate that before proceeding abroad an agent should be put through a proper interrogation by officers in this country competent to carry out this interrogation so that the agent's cover story can be tested out. His cover story is his life line and if this is at fault in the slightest detail one must regard the agent as being inefficiently equipped for his job. In this respect I gather that the cover stories are prepared for the agent by the Country Sections who are of course in close touch with the training school but in many cases the training school when training an agent do not know what cover story is going to be given to the man they are training. If it is at all possible to combine these two operations, I would strongly advocate that this be done.⁵

The second rule that agents swiftly learned was that it was essential to prevent leakage between sabotage or resistance cells (or circuits as the SOE called them). Quite simply, each cell had to be completely "watertight."

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But even these precautions were not always enough. Most agents never spent more than three to four nights in the same house.⁶ Nonetheless, even constant movement was not a guarantee of safety. The problem always came down to who you could trust. By end March 1941, “F” Section had a preliminary list of only ten reliable Frenchmen selected for training. These men, for the most part, had acted as liaison officers with British units during the brief period before the German invasion. Importantly, they possessed background of both French and British military practice.

In the end, the British had to find additional “French” agents and wireless operators. As noted earlier, they looked to Canada. George Noble, whose actual name was Commandant Georges Bégué, was the first Canadian to be dropped into France. The SOE inserted Bégué in the area of Valençay and Levroux on the night of 5/6 May 1941. He made contact with SOE headquarters immediately upon landing and was followed by a number of other agents. Together they were responsible for reporting on the preparedness of French resistance organizations and their requirements.⁷

Tragically, the Vichy police captured Bégué and a number of others on 24 October 1941. He was sent to Beleymer Prison in Périgueux with ten other SOE agents. Fortuitously, he was transferred to a prison camp in Mauzac in March 1942, which had better living conditions. From there he escaped and crossed the Pyrenées Mountains into Spain where he was eventually captured and interned at the notorious Miranda do Ebro prison. He was eventually released and returned to England in October 1942. Subsequently, he became the signals officer for Maurice Buckmaster’s “F” Section for the remainder of the war.

Despite having some SOE-trained French agents on the ground, “F” Section suffered considerably from lack of a clear directive from higher headquarters on the prosecution of operations, due in part on the inability of the authorities to fully understand how far indigenous French resistance could be trusted. In addition, the Foreign Office imposed a “go slow” approach that limited SOE actions. In essence, the Foreign Office did not want the SOE conducting any sabotage that could be traced back to deliberate British interference. Nonetheless, the director of “F” Section decided to proceed with the dispatch of British officers, “on whom we could rely, in order that they might try out the temper of the local resistants.”⁸

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Even with their own people on the ground, however, the SOE found developing the resistance circuits and networks exceedingly difficult. The SOE agents had to select others who could act as leaders, organizers, recruiters, agents and saboteurs. But once again, the critical question of who you could trust was always an over-riding concern. Therefore, SOE agents had to first assure themselves of a prospect's reliability. Next they had to decide the particular category of work the potential recruit could best accomplish (e.g. political subversion, sabotage, intelligence gathering) and then they had to train the individual for that particular type of work.

Initially, the SOE leadership maintained a very tight control of sabotage activity in France. "It was our belief that premature explosion of French resistance was our worst danger," one F Section analyst revealed, "as there could at that time be no prospect of an early landing of Allied troops to sustain such a movement."⁹ Instead, the SOE initially focused on building and equipping the resistance networks so that they could be of the maximum value when it was actually required.¹⁰

Importantly, on 22 January 1943, the British Chiefs of Staff Committee gave the SOE a new directive that contained a key objective, namely "to undertake the sabotage of the German war effort by every means available."¹¹ The ban on violent sabotage was removed, and pressure was now placed on the recruiting of coup-de-main parties. Thereafter, sabotage incidents occurred almost daily in the greater Paris area, including very important attacks on electricity transformers, railways and oil storage facilities.

As the sabotage campaign kicked off, the SOE agents that undertook the clandestine field work to lead, establish, maintain and support the various resistance circuits and networks included Canadians. In fact, numerous French-Canadians served in France leading resistance forces. Although not a comprehensive list of all Canadian SOE operatives, this brief snapshot of some of the intrepid Canadian SOE agents furnishes insight on the Canadian contribution and the challenges they faced.



Courtesy LPH

Major Gustave Biéler

One of the most famous and successful of the Canadian officers to serve with SOE in the field was Captain Gustave Daniel Alfred Biéler. A Canadian of Swiss origin and French birth, he had been the Director of Translation for Sun Life Assurance Company in Montreal when the war began. Despite his age, Biéler volunteered for overseas duty. He originally joined the Régiment de Maisonneuve and served as its intelligence officer, but in April 1942, he had a chance encounter with the SOE Director of “F” Section at the War Office. Subsequently, he volunteered for service with the SOE. Biéler, the oldest recruit on his course, completed his training in November 1942 at the age of thirty-eight. Colonel Maurice Buckmaster, head of “F” Section, assessed Biéler as the best student the SOE ever trained.

Little time was wasted once he completed his necessary training. On 18 November, the newly promoted Major Biéler dropped into France, near Montargis. Misfortune struck immediately. The drop zone was exceedingly rocky and Biéler hit the ground hard and severely injured his spine. The debilitating injury was so serious that Biéler lay on the ground unable to move for hours until his companions, who had also jumped from the same Whitley bomber, found him and moved him to Paris. Linking up with his brother, who was in the French Resistance, Biéler was taken to a local hospital under the false identity of Guy Morin. He spent six weeks in hospital and then a further three months in a safe house recuperating. Throughout his ordeal, he refused offers from headquarters for air evacuation.

Once he recovered sufficiently to allow mobility, Biéler, who went by the codename “Commandant Guy,” relocated to St. Quentin, which was his area of operation (AO). Despite the lengthy recovery, he still experienced persistent pain and was unable to stand on his feet for more than five to

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six hours a day. Nonetheless, Biéler's focus was singularly on developing his sabotage circuit known as "Musician."

Biéler's skill and dedication to duty soon became evident. He astutely cultivated an affable relationship with French railway officials. This connection allowed him to stay up-to-date with the rail schedule and permitted him to assess the best, most worthwhile targets to strike on the vital rail network that traversed through his AO. At the height of their operations Biéler's Musician circuit sabotaged the main line between St-Quentin and Lille at least once every two weeks. They also worked with the railway workers to apply abrasive grease to locomotives, which resulted in at least ten locomotives being immobilized in the fall of 1943 alone.¹²

Equally important, Biéler and members from the Musician circuit were able to attach underwater limpet mines to a principal canal gate in St. Quentin and take out a target that the RAF had been unable to destroy. Later, they placed limpet mines to demolish forty loaded barges in the canal system. Working with officials in the canal's administration, they were able to time the explosions to do the optimum damage, blocking the canal for several weeks.¹³

Biéler's success was enormous. With great achievement, however, came increased scrutiny. By late 1943, German counter-intelligence began to close-in. Then, on 14 January 1944, the Gestapo struck, capturing Major Biéler, Mme Yolande Beekman his wireless operator, and 47 other members of the Musician circuit while at their headquarters in the Moulin-Brûlé café just outside of St. Quentin.¹⁴

His fate was now inexorable. He suffered three months of interrogation during which his back injury was exacerbated and one of his kneecaps was broken. His courage under torture was not lost on his superiors. His posthumous Distinguished Service Order commendation recounted:

Despite the most barbarous forms of torture by the enemy over a period extending over at least eight days, he refused absolutely to divulge the names of any one of his associates, or the location of any arms dumps. Despite the intense pain that he was suffering from the injury to his back, he faced the gestapo with the utmost determination and courage.¹⁵

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Biéler and 14 other British SOE agents were eventually sent to Flossenbürg concentration camp. On 5 September 1944, when headquarters in Berlin ordered his execution, so impressed were his captors at Flossenbürg with his courage and character that they mounted a guard of honour for him as he walked to his execution, which was by firing squad rather than the normal practice of hanging agents. The director of “F” Section later acknowledged, “This is the only instance known to us of an officer being executed in such circumstances by a firing squad with a Guard of Honour.”¹⁶

In 1943, only one other Canadian SOE agent, Lieutenant Joseph C. Gabriel Chartrand, was dropped into France. His mission was to build up a resistance cell in the Normandy area. However, German counter-intelligence activity, particularly in this potential invasion landing zone, was extremely heavy. As a result, he was unable to accomplish much. When he discovered that the Gestapo were circulating a very accurate description of his likeness, he moved to Paris where he continued his duty as a courier.



Artwork by Katherine Taylor

Dropping of SOE agents into France.

The following year proved more active for Canadian SOE agents in France. In the opening months of 1944, eight individuals were dropped into France. The most notable were Frank Pickersgill and John Macalister, as mentioned earlier.¹⁷ Although arguably the most well-known of the Canadian SOE agents of the Second World War, they actually achieved little since they were captured within three days of their arrival. Pickersgill was in Europe at the outbreak of the war. He made his way to France where he was interned by the Germans. However, he later escaped and was able to find his way back to England. In November 1942, in London, he became a commissioned officer in the Canadian Intelligence Corps. The following month, CMHQ “loaned” him to the SOE.

Macalister was also a student in France at the start of the war. His poor eyesight prevented his enrolment into the French Army so he returned to England, where he too joined the intelligence corps and subsequently the SOE.

Upon completion of training, Pickersgill and Macalister deployed to France. On the night of 15 June 1943, a Halifax bomber dropped the two Canadians at an approximate height of 150 metres, near Romarantin, south of Loire, France. French resistance members from the “Prosper” circuit met them at their pre-determined drop zone. The SOE had tasked Pickersgill and Macalister to develop a sub-circuit of “Prosper” north of Sedan. Unknowingly to Pickersgill and Macalister, or to the SOE for that matter, “Prosper” had been badly compromised due to its large size and more than its fair share of inept members. As the Canadians were led off to a safe-house, their safety was already in jeopardy. On 21 June, while in transit to the train station for the trip to Paris, the car they were travelling in with members of the “Prosper” circuit was stopped by a German checkpoint that was established at the entrance of the village of Dhuison. Their cover was quickly blown. Although the two French resistance members had initially been able to pass scrutiny, upon discovery of the Canadians, the Germans tried to recall the other two, who then decided to make a run for it in the vehicle. German gunfire caused the car to crash and severely injured the two resistance members.¹⁸

The catastrophe only worsened. Pickersgill and Macalister had with them two of the latest, more light weight compact wireless sets, radio crystals,

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the team's codes and security checks, as well as messages in clear to various agents. With the latest information, now adding to what the Germans had already accumulated, they decided to pounce immediately on the "Prosper" circuit. As a result, they arrested virtually the entire circuit, including its leader, before any could go to ground upon hearing of the arrest of the four captured saboteurs. After days of torture at the hands of the Gestapo, one of the French "Prosper" agents broke down and divulged even more names and addresses. The Germans eventually arrested hundreds of suspects and seized 470 tons of arms and explosives.



CBC.ca

Frank Pickersgill

Pickersgill and Macalister were severely tortured but never revealed any information. Another captured agent later affirmed, "Pic and Mac were given the usual beating up, rubber truncheons, electric shocks, kicks in the genitals and what have you. They were in possession of names, addresses and codes the Germans badly wanted, but neither of them squealed."¹⁹ Post war interrogations of German security personnel who were present confirmed the courage of the two Canadians. The Germans testified, "to the outstanding fortitude and courage displayed by both these officers [Pickersgill and Macalister] under interrogation and have categorically stated that neither revealed a scrap of information that was of the slightest use to the Germans."²⁰ Pickersgill and Macalister were eventually sent to a concentration camp at Rawicz, Poland.

Predictably, the Germans used the radio equipment and codes to play a *Funkspiele*, or wireless game, using Macalister's wireless set and codes, pretending to be Pickersgill. The German's called it the "Canadian circuit." An SS officer, Josef Placke, posed as Pickersgill. Placke was a prewar salesman, believed to have once lived in Canada. He spoke excellent English and French, and since no-one in the French resistance had ever met Pickersgill, he was able to pass himself off as the Canadian SOE agent. Placke arranged a large number of arms drops, as well as the reception of a number of SOE agents, including Canadians, all of whom landed in the arms of the Gestapo. It was not until mid-May 1944, when "F" Section finally began to suspect that Pickersgill's circuit, as well as several others were compromised. At that point, all further drops were suspended.

Pickersgill and Macalister were eventually brought back to Paris in hopes that they would cooperate with the *Funkspiele* and allow the Germans to reactive their link with the SOE in London. However, their attempt to get Pickersgill to cooperate failed. At the first opportunity he attempted to escape by jumping from a second storey window, in the process killing a guard and wounding another. The Germans reacted instantly and Pickersgill was hit by four different shots. Surprisingly, the Germans rushed him to a hospital where he eventually recovered from his wounds. On 8 August 1944, as the Allied armies were approaching Paris, Pickersgill, Macalister and 32 other agents were transported to Buchenwald concentration camp. There, on 11 September 1944, they were executed. A report on their deaths revealed:

The prisoners were brought into a basement of the crematorium on the night of September 11th. There they were beaten atrociously by a half dozen SS. They were then hanged on butcher hooks that had been cemented into the walls, until death came to them. Their bodies were immediately cremated in the furnaces.²¹

Another example of a Canadian SOE agent operating in France was Captain Joseph Henri Adelaar Benoit, who parachuted into the Saone valley on the night of 23 May 1944. At 38 years of age, Benoit was one of the older Canadians working for the SOE. Prior to enlisting, he was a switch board inspector and power-plant technician with the Montreal Tramways Company. As a result, he had specific expertise that allowed him to easily identify and select vulnerable points on any electric power system.

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Benoit organized a circuit at Reims and Espernay that focused on the destruction of ammunition and gasoline dumps, as well as disrupting reinforcements and supplies reaching the Normandy front-line. He twice severed the Reims-Berlin telephone cable, thus, disrupting German communications. Significantly, he also helped destroy a cache of V1 rockets. Having gleaned sensitive information on their location from a senior German officer, Benoit then conducted a careful reconnaissance. He was able to pinpoint 12 kilometres of tunnels near Rilly-de-Montagne that were full of V1 rockets and their components. A subsequent directed RAF bomber raid destroyed the entire cache.²²



LAC, PA129045

Canadian paratrooper links up with French Resistance fighter on D-Day.

Misfortune eventually caught up with Benoit, however. His driver, a member of the *Maquis*, was brash, vocal and enjoyed drinking in bars. This volatile mix ended in the driver's arrest by the Gestapo. As a result, Benoit was forced to escape south to Chaumont. There he organized and led a band of *Maquis* of 250 fighters.²³ Armed with enemy weapons, they assisted the Allied troops in "mopping-up" German forces during the Normandy campaign.

Another remarkable Canadian operating in France was Captain Guy D'Artois. He began the war as an officer in the Royal 22nd Regiment. He volunteered for the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion and was thus returned to Canada in the summer of 1942 to undergo parachute training. Given an opportunity to get into combat faster, D'Artois subsequently transferred to the newly created First Special Service Force a joint Canadian/American commando unit. However, while on leave in Montreal in September 1943, he grabbed another exciting opportunity and agreed to join the SOE. He completed training at Camp X and then proceeded to Scotland to complete his matriculation.²⁴ He was undoubtedly one of, if not the, best trained Canadian SOE operative.

Captain D'Artois parachuted into France near Lyon on 1 May 1944. SOE headquarters assigned him to the "Ditcher" circuit. His initial tasks were unenviable. First, he had to facilitate the cooperation of the "right" and "left" political elements of the local resistance movement to try to create a more unified, disciplined and effective fighting element against the Germans. His other responsibility was to create a small security unit responsible for identifying and capturing German agents and the despised French *Milice* in his AO.²⁵ In sum, his group arrested 115 collaborators.

D'Artois's skill was matched by his hard-heartedness. In fact, he demonstrated the same ruthlessness as his opponents. In December 1944, the Germans bludgeoned 59 captured *Maquisards* to death, denouncing them as criminals and terrorists. In retaliation, D'Artois lined up 52 captured German prisoners and executed them one at a time.²⁶



LAC, PA 206260

**Captain Lionel Guy D'Artois with his spouse.
They met while undertaking SOE training together.**

Known as *Michel le Canadien* by the French resistance members, D'Artois exhibited remarkable initiative. For example, he seized a rich French collaborator and held him for ransom. The money accrued was used to finance his entire unit. D'Artois also arranged for large arms drops prior to, and immediately, after D-Day, which allowed him to equip two battalions worth of fighters. He commanded one unit, numbering 700, by himself.²⁷ As such, his Unit continually cut rail lines and the night prior to the D-Day landings, they blocked 16 troop trains, disrupted and destroyed railways and telephone cables, blew up canal locks and continually attacked resupply and reinforcement convoys.

By the end of September 1944, D'Artois' work was complete and he reported to the advanced SOE headquarters in Paris. General Charles de Gaulle himself awarded D'Artois the *Croix de Guerre avec Palme*, France's highest award, at a special ceremony in Canada in 1946. The SOE also awarded him the Distinguished Service Order.²⁸

There were numerous other Canadians who operated in France with amazing results. For example, Lieutenant John Dehler dropped into occupied France on 7 August 1944. He quickly organized arms drops for the French Forces of the Interior (FFI) enabling them to conduct operations leading to the death or capture of over 2,000 enemy troops.²⁹

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Another, was Captain Leonard Jacques Taschereau who dropped into France in the area around Montvilliers. Taschereau took command of the *Maquis* in the Forêt de Soulaines. He became incredibly successful in arranging the dropping of arms and supplies with which he was able to equip a *Maquis* of 1,000 individuals. He was masterful at utilizing disguises posing as such characters as a funeral director and carpenter. On one occasion he donned the dark blue uniform of a French National Railway engine driver and with a select group of hand-picked saboteurs entered a railway roundhouse and placed demolition charges in twenty-two locomotives.³⁰ Later, when the US Third Army linked up with Taschereau's forces on 30 August 1944, he organized an ad hoc intelligence service of fifty agents who proceeded the Third Army on bicycles and provided information on the enemy until SOE headquarters ordered him back to England.

IWM, HU-053231



Maquisards gathering supply canisters dropped by Allied aircraft in the Haute Savoie.

In total, approximately 1,800 SOE agents were deployed to Occupied France between 1941 and September 1944. Of these, 25 were Canadians, seven of which were captured and executed.³¹

Importantly, Canadians serving in the SOE deployed to other theatres of operation other than France. In fact, a total of 48 Canadian Jugoslavs volunteered for service.³² They were deployed singly and were generally

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attached to British SOE teams as interpreters. Similarly, six Italian-Canadians were also recruited in Canada during the war. The SOE intent was to employ them in the same manner as the Yugoslav SOE agents who were trained, namely, as interpreters and agents to organize resistance in occupied enemy territory. However, all but one of the Italian-Canadian volunteers withdrew their service once faced with the actual prospect of dropping behind enemy lines.

Canadians were also infiltrated into Hungary. The case of Lieutenant Joe Gelleny, who went by the codename Lieutenant Joe Gordon, affords another window into the perils encountered by Canadian SOE operatives working behind enemy lines. Gelleny enlisted in the Army at the Cow Palace on the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto in 1942. His first choice was to join the paratroopers, however, his experience with ham radios, resulted in his assignment to the Signal Corps. Dissatisfied, he transferred to the artillery and was dispatched to Camp Petawawa.

Once his chain-of-command discovered that he could speak Hungarian, they arranged an interview with an SOE representative. Gelleny was a Canadian citizen, however, he was Hungarian born. His parents had emigrated from Hungary.

The SOE representative quickly persuaded Gelleny to volunteer for a special assignment. The recruiter convinced him that joining the SOE would be a quick method to obtain his commission, jump out of an airplane and do interesting work. However, the recruiter also revealed that Gelleny would need to temporarily transfer to the British Army, specifically to the SOE. The recruiter also promised Gelleny that he would be able to keep his rank at the end of the war. Enticingly, the recruiter explained once he completed his basic training he would be promoted to sergeant and once he completed his basic parachutist course he would be promoted to second-lieutenant. As Gelleny recalled, "it all sounded too good to be true, so I was happy to sign up."³³

Interestingly, at the time Gelleny was recruited, there was little prospect for sabotage or subversion in Hungary. One SOE report candidly assessed, "It must be understood that no appreciable sabotage can be promoted or carried out in Hungary for a long time to come and at least until the general

military situation alters drastically in our favour.”³⁴ The report noted that “Any work into Hungary must therefore be along ‘long-term’ lines, and must aim at influencing the course of events immediately before, and during, the final break-up of the Axis armies in Europe.” The report also divulged that “certain forces” were in place and if managed correctly, at the decisive time, could exercise “a powerful influence” for the Allied cause when the Third Reich began to disintegrate.³⁵

In February 1943, events began to develop. That month, Nobel Prize winning professor Albert Szent-Györgyi arrived in Istanbul, Turkey and contacted British representatives. He was acting on behalf of the Hungarian Popular Front and he revealed that he was in direct contact with leaders of the Social Democratic Party, the National Peasant Party, the Small Holders Party, the National Democratic Party and the Peace (Communist) Party. Szent-Györgyi also acknowledged that he had contacted the then-Minister of Defence and notified the Hungarian Prime Minister of his journey. He then revealed that with the exception of the Hungarian “fascists all parties and other organizations in Hungary would support a democratic alternative government if the country defected from the Germans.”³⁶

Apparently, the “peace” initiative by the unofficial Hungarian representative changed the attitude in the SOE. In June 1943, the SOE began to train agents with Hungarian background. A SOE appreciation later summarized, “Contact is being maintained with a ‘Surrender Group,’ representing a part of the Government.”³⁷ The summary and analysis explained that Allied victories in Russia and Sicily encouraged certain elements of the Hungarian “government to offer ‘unconditional surrender’ to the Anglo-American Allies in the hope of extricating themselves as cheaply as possible from the war.”³⁸ The Appreciation revealed that the SOE now “hoped that the [Surrender] group can be induced to accept a SOE party.” The intent of the team, code-named “Sandy” was to advise the Hungarian Government on means of increasing resistance to Germany, “but not on a sufficiently large scale to provide a German occupation,” as this prospect was undesirable to the British government.³⁹

Although willing to entertain the peace initiative, the British were understandably circumspect. As one senior military commander insisted,

“At this stage of the war, when the satellites will make every effort to climb on the band-wagon, we should exclude any flirtation with their political renegades, who will swarm after us, and confine our activities to direct action.”⁴⁰ He went on to predict, “I foresee another Bela Kun Red Terror in Hungary when the Axis breaks up. We cannot help that and must use it for our own ends if it will hasten the end of the war.”⁴¹

The flirtations with the “Surrender Group,” however, progressed slowly. By early November 1943, British patience was wearing thin. By 15 November 1943, the SOE recommended to the Chiefs of Staff Committee and the Foreign Office a severe bombing of Budapest without delay in order to send a message. The SOE missive stated bluntly, “The time has come to stop these temporising manoeuvres and to tell the ‘Surrender Group’ in a most categorical manner that Hungary is regarded as an enemy country and will be treated as such unless she proves by action her right to different treatment.”⁴²

The negotiations between the SOE and the Hungarian “surrender group” were clearly of dubious value. Nonetheless, on 19 March 1944, before any arrangements could be finalized, the Germans, aware of political intrigue, occupied Hungary. Regardless, the SOE was now intent on Hungarian operations and the focus became getting “trained SOE personnel with wireless transmission (W/T) sets into Hungary before the withdrawal or collapse of the German Army in order to hinder the withdrawal by all possible means.”⁴³

Infiltrating Hungary, however, was problematic. SOE agents faced a number of challenges including: a vigorous German and Hungarian counter-espionage services; efficient and ruthless police forces; the lack of any established resistance movement; and the total dearth of reliable contacts. Furthermore, the SOE also had difficulty obtaining forged Hungarian documents outside of Hungary.⁴⁴

In addition, the SOE agents faced the apathy, if not the hostility, of the Hungarian population. One report divulged, “The country population, were on the whole, hostile and to contact them ‘blind’ would be extremely dangerous.” More ominously, it recounted stories of “American fliers who had bailed out, or force landed [and] had frequently been ill-treated and, in some cases killed.”⁴⁵ Not surprisingly, the SOE assessed, “Therefore

infiltration will remain slow and uncertain. The highest degree of security must be ensured.”⁴⁶

The SOE determined there were two approaches to attacking Hungary. The first was by direct attack on targets or personnel whose destruction could handicap the enemy's war efforts. The second was “by seducing or suborning influential elements with the eventual object of bringing Hungary out of the war.”⁴⁷ Both methods were to be used simultaneously. The first agent, a Hungarian W/T operator trained in England, was successfully dropped in Southern Hungary on 9 April 1944.⁴⁸

The SOE, however, found that they had limited success. Nevertheless, they kept trying. Several other missions were infiltrated into Hungary in the spring of 1944, but some were quickly captured and others were evacuated for health and/or security reasons. On 4 June 1944, Canadian Gustave Bodo, code-named Lieutenant Gus Bertram, who was the advance element of the “Dibbler” mission, successfully entered Yugoslavia and linked-up with one of the few SOE teams still operating.⁴⁹ Bodo moved to his operational area and on 24 July sent a message indicating that he had moved north of Pécs and that he was staying with a peasant in the hills. As a result, the Dibbler Commander, British Captain John Coates decided to send Canadian team members Lieutenant Mike Turk (code named Mike Thomas) and Lieutenant Joe Gelleny, who was the wireless operator, to join Bodo.⁵⁰

Turk and Gelleny made four attempts, guided by Yugoslav partisans under the command of the legendary Partisan leader Josip Broz Tito, to get across the border by crossing the Drava River, but heavy patrolling by the Hungarian Home Guard forced them to abort each time. On 9 September they finally returned to their base camp.⁵¹ In the interim, contact was lost with Bodo. Unknown to the Dibbler team, he had been arrested by the Hungarian police. Despite the loss of contact, four days later, on 13 September 1944, Coates, Turk and Gelleny conducted a blind drop out of a SOE Halifax bomber North of Pécs in an attempt to link-up with Bodo and carry on with their mission, which included:

1. the creation of passive resistance and, if possible, risings amongst the industrial workers;

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2. the formation of sabotage groups;
3. the identification of specific targets in this area; and
4. the prevention of German demolitions of vital installations and communications.⁵²

The choice of Pécs was controversial. The area had a considerable population of German origin. However, it was also the only district in which SOE had a contact and, therefore, planners felt “we are justified in taking the risk.”⁵³

Unfortunately, the Germans were quite aware that the British were planning to drop agents and their radar easily picked up the Halifax bomber. Adding to the agents’ troubles was the fact that the drop was conducted at a higher than normal altitude and as a result, the Dibbler team and their equipment container were widely scattered. Coates and Turk were picked up almost immediately by the Hungarian Home Guard. Tragically for Turk, upon landing he had decided to change into civilian attire. The fact that he was not in uniform and that he was Hungarian, created a severe problem for him when he was captured. His Hungarian captors, as well as the Germans, branded him a traitor and a spy.



Courtesy LPH

Lieutenant Joe Gelleny before his capture.

Courtesy LPH



Lieutenant Joe Gelleny after his return from Hungary.

Fortunately for Gelleny, he was dropped at quite a distance from his teammates. Fortuitously, like Coates, he had kept his uniform on. Gelleny tried to signal his colleagues using both his flashlight and calling out “Dibbler.” His efforts, however, proved futile. Therefore, he buried his wireless set and other equipment, including the mission money made up of gold sovereigns, and he decided that at first light he would make his way to the emergency rendezvous point in an attempt to find his comrades.⁵⁴

Unable to find them, Gelleny holed up outside the village of Abaliget. His stay would not be for long. Tracking dogs with their handlers quickly ran him down. As a result, by 14 September the entire Dibbler team was in custody. Coates and Turk underwent a tactical interrogation in the village of Orfű. Coates was bound and then the Hungarians attached wires to his big toes and then to a hand generator. Coates remembered, they then began to “ring me up.” The electrical current created immense pain without leaving a single mark. Coates now agreed to talk and played out his cover story.

Gelleny was also taken to Orfű and interrogated, although the Hungarians treated him relatively well. The tolerable treatment did not last long. On approximately 15 September, the Dibbler team was moved to a military detention facility in Pécs. The team was now reunited. Upon arrival the Hungarians marched Gelleny in front of Coates and Turk to show them that

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they had captured the entire team. All three now underwent interrogation by both the Hungarian 2nd Bureau (security service) and the German *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD, or Security Service).⁵⁵

While in prison, the Hungarian soldiers and senior non-commissioned members were relatively friendly to Coates and Gelleny. Unfortunately, this benevolent attitude did not apply to Turk because he had been captured in civilian clothing. The interrogators, however, did not share this friendly sentiment. Gelleny was repeatedly questioned, earning himself kicks and punches when the inquisitors failed to appreciate his vague answers. Growing tired of his lack of detail, the interrogators attached electrical wires to his testicles and to a generator. Still not satisfied with the results, they proceeded to pour water on Gelleny to increase the pain. Not surprisingly, he suffered numbness in his extremities and he remained uncoordinated for a long period following the sessions.

On 5 October 1944, the captors moved the entire Dibbler team to Hadik military prison in Budapest. The team was initially incarcerated in the same cell but were separated the next day. The interrogations continued. The SOE operatives found a large difference between their Hungarian captors and the Germans. The Dibbler team felt that the Hungarians tried to make things as easy as possible for them.

In fact, two high ranking Hungarians approached Gelleny to convince him to send a message to his headquarters in Bari, Italy. He was to let them know that on 15 October 1944, Admiral Miklós Horthy, the Regent of the Kingdom of Hungary, would make an announcement stating that Hungary was withdrawing from the Axis alliance and calling for an official armistice with the Allies. They wanted to warn off the Allied command and arrange cooperation prior to the actual announcement.⁵⁶ Gelleny sent off the missive and the following day Horthy made the announcement. The Commandant of the Hadik prison briefed the Dibbler team, informing them that as far as he was concerned they were free men.

Events, however, became chaotic. The Germans forced Horthy to resign and installed a puppet dictator. Due to turmoil on the streets, the Dibbler team agreed that the safest place was to remain in the Hardik facility. On 8 November, the Hungarians smuggled the Dibbler team into Zugliget

prisoner of war camp to evade the Germans. The camp security at this location was extremely lax. It was actually a transit camp to hold Russian, British and American military personnel on their way to proper detention camps.

Despite the efforts at deception, the Germans found the SOE operatives at Zugliget and on 14 November renewed their interrogations. Two days later, coincidentally the same day the Dibbler team had planned to escape, the Germans kidnapped the entire Dibbler team and moved them into German controlled detention cells in the Hungarian 2nd Bureau headquarters building. Surprisingly, on 7 December, the Germans returned them to Zugliget. This time, Gelleny and his colleagues did not miss their opportunity to escape. Turk was sent to a Budapest hospital due to his deteriorating health, however, Coates and Gelleny made their escape on 12 December.

They remained together for five days until 17 December when they were at a safe house. The following day, Coates moved off to another location to hide, while Gelleny remained. He hid at the safe house, surviving repeated house-to-house searches, until the Russians captured Budapest in early February 1945. Gelleny, however, was not yet out of the woods. He was eventually arrested by the Soviets and moved into a prisoner of war camp with German prisoners. Fortunately, he was able to convince the Russian commander of the camp that he was in fact British. Given a Russian soldier as an escort, Gelleny walked approximately 230 kilometres to Budaörs, where the British and American delegations were stationed. Upon arrival, Gelleny was taken to the British Embassy and eventually flown to Italy and then transported by boat to Southampton, England. His experience, like so many others, was one filled with adventure, terror and courage.

Finally, two additional Canadian SOE agents were the husband and wife team of Alfred Gardyne de Chastelain, commonly referred to as “Chas” and his wife Marion. Chas was a civil engineer who worked for the British Unirea Oil Company in Romania in 1927 right to his departure from the country just prior to the start of the war. He was an accomplished racing car driver and by all accounts a dashing individual. In 1933, he married Marion Walsh who was the scion of a well-to-do family who also lived in Romania at the time. Athletic and extremely intelligent, she participated in luge racing and

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she attended the best schools in Switzerland. Importantly, she spoke seven languages including French, German and Romanian.



Courtesy John de Chastelain

Alfred “Chas” and Marion de Chastelain

De Chastelain’s experience in Romania, particularly his knowledge of the oilfields, as well as his friendship with King Michael, who was also an avid race car driver, brought Chas to the attention of the SOE. In 1940, he went to Istanbul to work for Colonel Bill Bailey, SOE’s man in Turkey. Chas became one of the SOE’s key players in their plans to destroy the Romanian oil wells that fueled the German war machine. He also believed, based on

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his thirteen years of experience in the country and his contacts there, that he could convince Romania to side with the Allies. As such, he worked tirelessly at attempting to orchestrate a coup in the country, which would install a government willing to surrender to the Allies.

In July 1943, Chas returned to Canada and from Camp X attempted to recruit Romanian speaking agents. He was unsuccessful. Next, de Chastelain joined the team for Operation Autonomous, which was initially designed as a military mission to disrupt the German lines of communication in Romania, but transitioned to a political one focussed on convincing the Romanian peace delegation, who were attempting to overthrow the Nazi-sponsored dictator General Ion Antonescu, to agree to an unconditional surrender to the Allies, specifically the Russians. On the night of 21 December 1943, Chas, along with two other agents in his team, parachuted through thick banks of fog and mist into Romania. The drop, unfortunately, was off target and not surprisingly, the team was captured the next day.

The Operation Autonomous team remained imprisoned until 23 August 1944, when King Michael led a coup that deposed Antonescu. De Chastelain and his team were then released and Chas was flown to Istanbul in an attempt to restore communications and support for the coup.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, Marion, his wife, returned to her parents who lived in the United States at the time. Here, due to mutual personal contacts in England and in the SOE, her presence was made known to Bill Stephenson who approached her and recruited her for the SOE, specifically his BSC. Due to her linguistic ability and worldly experience, Intrepid appointed her the handler for one of his most successful agents – Cynthia. Although very successful in her wiles, Cynthia could be manic and had a tendency to be overly emotional and have wild mood swings. As such, Marion became a vital link to keep Cynthia grounded and focussed. As a team, they were incredibly successful. As mentioned, Cynthia was able to provide information on Axis intentions, as well as codes.⁵⁸

CHAPTER 13

FORCE 136

Europe was not the only theatre of operations that witnessed intrepid Canadians working as SOE agents. As the war in Europe began to wind down, the SOE focus shifted to the Far East. The SOE component in the Far East was known as Force 136. It was larger than a brigade group and the official Canadian military report on the subject described it as a private army.¹ The organization was very informal and its commander was a civilian. Force 136 tasks, similar to the SOE in Europe, were to establish, train and arm indigenous underground resistance groups, sabotage industrial and military targets and conduct subversion, as well as deception.

One significant difference was the emphasis placed on operatives to undertake tactical and strategic intelligence gathering. Force 136 had a wide area of operations, which included Burma, Siam (current day Thailand), Indo-China (current day Vietnam), Malaya (current day Malaysia) and the eastern portion of Dutch Indonesia (Sumatra, Java). A special organization also existed to assist with the escape and evasion of Allied personnel.

Force 136, which was originally called GSI(k), ostensibly a branch of British General Headquarters (GHQ) India, was created in the spring of 1941 to prepare for possible operations in the East.² As part of this initiative, the SOE opened STS 101 at Tanjong Balai, approximately 16 kilometres from Singapore in July 1941. The objective of the special training school was to train local recruits in the use of weapons, demolitions and sabotage. When Singapore fell to the Japanese on 15 February 1942, the school shut down. However, its alumni now represented hundreds of guerrillas capable of fighting a guerilla war. In fact, the core of the Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army, which numbered 7,000 at the end of hostilities, consisted of STS 101 graduates.³

Much like in Europe, the SOE impact in the Far East was impressive. The SOE led guerrilla groups killed more Japanese forces than the regular Army. One guerrilla force alone is credited with killing an estimated 10,964 Japanese soldiers and wounding another 644.⁴



Courtesy Chinese Canadian Military Museum (CCMM)

Force 136 crest.

But the SOE success in the Far East was somewhat deceptive. Its operations were extremely challenging. First, most Western SOE operatives in the Far East had a major disadvantage, namely skin colour. As such, those of European decent were unable to travel freely in the more populated, urban areas without standing out. As a result, much of Force 136 activities transpired in a rural setting.

The requirement to stay hidden, largely in the jungle created additional difficulties. The alien culture of the locals, as well as the hostile jungle environment proved problematic for many, if not most, Europeans to fully adapt to. The heat, disease and insects endemic to the jungle all had a cumulative effect in wearing down the SOE agents. In addition, the population ranged from indifferent to hostile. This range of emotion is not difficult to understand as many were cowed by the brutality of the Japanese occupation and were terrified to bring undue attention on themselves. And finally, the fanaticism and savagery of the Japanese military proved to be an intractable enemy to combat.

Similar to Occupied Europe, Canadian SOE operatives played an important role in Force 136. The SOE tapped two major “groups” for recruitment. The first was Chinese Canadians that could easily fit into the surroundings in the Far East. As such, the SOE developed a plan to infiltrate a group of Canadian Chinese into mainland China where they would join forces with the communists to start special operations in the vicinity of Hong Kong.

Key to the recruitment of this group was Major Francis Woodley Kendall.⁵ He was a Canadian mining engineer who in 1939, lived in Hong Kong

and had done a great deal of relief work for the Hong Kong government. With conflict with Japan imminent, the general officer commanding Hong Kong, General, Sir A.E. Grasett requested Kendall organize a unit given the code-name “Z Force” to prepare for special operations in the event the colony of Hong Kong was ever occupied.

Kendall, with the assistance of others, prepared six food and ammunition dumps to be used by “Z” Force, whose name changed to the Reconnaissance Unit in October 1941. He also attended a course at STS 101 in July 1941. He proceeded to recruit Chinese saboteurs and was in the process of establishing a training centre for them when the Japanese overran the colony. During the siege Kendall and another civilian twice rowed out in sampans to attack Japanese ships being used as observation posts during the siege. He attached limpet mines sinking one and severely damaging another.⁶ Kendall’s courage and commitment stretched even further. On 18 December 1942, with the fall of Hong Kong imminent, he organized the escape of approximately 75 key government and military personnel in five motor torpedo boats and safely led them to guerrilla-controlled territory in China.



Operation Oblivion in their first training camp.

Afterwards, Kendall taught at the SOE’s Eastern Warfare School in Poona, India until July 1943, when he deployed to London to lead Operation Oblivion. Operation Oblivion was designed to deploy Canadian Chinese SOE agents with Chinese communist guerrillas to assist them in their fight against the Japanese occupying forces. Kendall’s first hurdle was the Americans. Kendall travelled to Washington D.C. to obtain US approval

for the operation. Since the Anglo-American alliance had agreed to partition the different theatres of operation, China had been allocated to the Americans. As such, they objected for political reasons, specifically, that the SOE mission intended to work with Mao Tse-Tung's communist guerrillas, whereas the Americans had clearly sided with Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist Chinese forces.

Undeterred, Kendall next visited William Stephenson at the BSC in New York, to discuss his next problem, the recruitment of Chinese Canadians.⁷ Following his visit with Intrepid, he travelled to Ottawa to speak with governmental and military officials. He now hit another obstacle. The Canadian Government was sensitive to the "lack of enthusiasm" in British Columbia for the recruitment of Orientals for military service. In fact, the Government, despite facing a recruiting crisis resulting in a lack of reinforcements for combat units in Europe and an impending conscription crisis, refused to accept offers of service from Chinese or Japanese Canadian volunteers. Those who turned up to recruiting centres to join the military were told to put their name on a waiting list. However, recruiters also warned them that they were unlikely to be called. It was only after months of lobbying, and the sudden need for Chinese recruits for the SOE, that Kendall finally received ministerial approval for his quest for candidates.⁸

Once approved, the Canadian military authorities, as well as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) who actually were responsible for vetting all prospective volunteers, provided the necessary cooperation and support. Although given approval, the next challenge became finding the requisite recruits, namely, patriotic Chinese Canadians who still had some interest in their country of origin. A serious problem was the level of discrimination that second generation Chinese still faced in Canada. The resentment of this poor treatment, compounded by a general apathy to the war in the West, made it predictably difficult to find volunteers prepared to take on dangerous duty on behalf of Canada or the British Empire.⁹

Kendall overcame much of his trouble by drawing on the few Chinese Canadians that had managed to enrol in the Canadian Army. In total, Army officials interviewed 25 young Chinese Canadians, four from Ontario and the rest from British Columbia. From this group Kendall selected twelve for

training for Operation Oblivion at the newly established Lake Okanagan training camp, which was located in a small cove called Goose Bay, approximately 16 kilometres from Penticton.

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Louie King and Norman Wong undergoing training at Commando Bay.

The secret training camp was officially called Commando Bay because of a misunderstanding by Government officials regarding the actual role of Operation Oblivion. The training staff broke the selected volunteers, who were all promoted to the rank of sergeant, into two distinct groups.¹⁰ For the next four months, one group of four was given in-depth training on wireless transmissions (W/T), while the other group of eight focused on skills such as stalking, silent killing, demolitions, jungle travel and survival, as well as sabotage and weapons training. The W/T operators next deployed to India for several weeks of training in cryptology at the SOE school at Meerut. The other eight volunteers travelled by ship to Queensland, Australia.

Despite the original reluctance at recruiting Chinese Canadians for military service, the Canadian Government appeared to change its perspective after the initial group was trained. When the SOE requested an additional 25 personnel in December of 1944, the Minister of National Defence authorized

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recruitment of up to an additional 150 Chinese Canadians.¹¹ In January 1945, the remaining Chinese Canadian volunteers were recruited and sent to India via England. Approximately fifteen of these men were shipped to Australia to join the Operation Oblivion team.



Operation Oblivion personnel in Australia.

By mid-December 1944, the Canadians had completed their training and deployed to Australia. However, the political dynamic of the American support of the nationalist army in China once again became an impediment. The American Commander of the “China War Theatre” in his secondary role as Chief of Staff to Chiang Kai-Shek, refused to allow the British SOE mission to deploy. The Americans did not want the least possibility of any Allied mission contacting or working with Mao’s communist guerrillas who were opposing both the Japanese and the American sponsored Kai-Shek’s Nationalist Chinese forces. In addition, the American were suspicious that the British were simply trying to rekindle their influence, if not their Empire, in the Far East. On 25 April 1945, due to the continuing tensions with the Americans, the SOE scratched Operation Oblivion.

Despite the American objections, Force 136 remained in the Far East theatre of operations. A small number of Canadian Force 136 operators were deployed behind Japanese lines in Burma, Borneo, Malay and Singapore. Tasks included acting as interpreters, supporting and training local resistance fighters in sabotage missions, finding and liberating prisoner-of-war (PoW) camps, as well as maintaining law and order after the Japanese surrender.¹²

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Operation Oblivion training in Australia.

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Force 136 personnel in India.



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Canadian Force 136 personnel in India.

One specific example, was twenty-nine-year-old Captain Roger Cheng who led the first group of Chinese Canadians, a team of five, behind enemy lines in Borneo.¹³ Cheng was an electrical engineer who graduated from McGill

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University. He also spoke fluent Cantonese which made him extremely qualified to lead the mission. The team's expansive mission included contacting and befriending Dyak head-hunters, as well as providing them with equipment and training. In addition, the SOE directed Cheng's team to assist with sabotage, find Japanese units and attempt to force their surrender, locate PoW camps, organize tribesmen into local security forces, patrol rivers and prevent retaliation against Japanese troops and collaborators.¹⁴



Canadian Force 136 radio operator in Malaysia.



Canadians Hank Wong and Eddie Chow, as well as an unknown Force 136 display a war trophy.

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The second group of Canadians who served in Force 136 consisted largely of veterans of the SOE "F" Section from the Canadian Army overseas. This group was originally intended for service with the Indo-China section. A number of the French-Canadian officers who had parachuted into France had subsequently returned to England when their tour of duty was completed and found it difficult to return to regular army life. Therefore, they volunteered for a fresh tour of duty that held the allure of excitement and adventure. After a short course in jungle warfare in Ceylon the small group of officers was preparing to drop into French Indo-China when the mission was terminated. Force 136 headquarters deemed it suicidal after some French officers were parachuted into the area and immediately rounded-up by the Annamite Nationalists and handed over to the Japanese.¹⁵

Some of the French-Canadian officers were instead passed to the Burmese section of Force 136 to conduct operations ahead of the southward advance of the British 14th Army. As a result, a number of Canadians, Major J.H.A. Benoit and Captains J.P. Archambeault, R.J. Taschereau, and P.C. Mounier dropped into the Karenni region close to the Burma/Thai border. Their task, working with Karen guerrillas, was to ambush Japanese troops attempting to escape from Burma over the mountains to Thailand. The mission was extremely difficult as their sector passed through narrow and tortuous jungle trails since there were no major roads or railways. Their technique of ambushing the enemy consisted of laying cortex detonation cord in 100 metre lengths in the vegetation beside the trails. The detonation cord had grenades attached at suitable intervals. The SOE protagonists would then explode the charges as Japanese convoys passed through. In addition, each officer commanded small forces of native levies from the Burmese Nationalist Army (BNA) who provided diversions for the ambush and completed the mopping up after the attack.¹⁶

Another Canadian operated in the area north of Shewbo. Lieutenant C.C. Dolly was a Trinidad born East Indian whose parents immigrated to Canada. Dolly, who spoke a number of native dialects current in the theatre of operations, was a natural for Force 136. Although an untrained recruit in January 1945, he was nonetheless dropped into the field as early as end-February to report on the movements of 4 and 41 Japanese Infantry Divisions. Often dressed as an Indian Coolie and sometimes as a native Burman, Dolly would calmly drive bullock carts for the Japanese supply services. He found the BNA levies unsatisfactory

and preferred to work alone. The Japanese became frustrated with his success and subsequently sent two officers into the jungle dressed as Buddhist priests to assassinate him. However, unable to adequately disguise the noise of their weapons under their yellow robes, the Japanese assassins were quickly captured.¹⁷



Seven Canadian SOE officers returning from the Far East.

An additional Canadian initiative commenced towards the end of July 1945. Major Joseph Henri Adelard Benoit and former journalist Captain Roger Marc Caza decided to form the first Canadian Jedburgh Team (consisting of an OC, 2IC, W/T operator and an interpreter) as part of Operation Tideway Green. Their task was to drop into the northern part of Johore State in Malaya, where they were to contact Chinese Communist forces who had proven themselves to be the most aggressive of all irregular armies operating against the Japanese. The Jedburgh's specific mission was to provide day-to-day intelligence on the movement of Japanese forces in Western Johore, as well as block three highways in their area.

Benoit and his team jumped from a Liberator bomber into Northern Johore on 5 August 1945, the day prior to the atomic bomb being dropped on Hiroshima. They spent the next six days, half of them in torrential rain, bashing through 120 kilometres of jungle to get to their objective. En-route they gathered information on Japanese movements. However, when they arrived at their destination they discovered that the Japanese had surrendered, which made the planned Allied invasion of Malaya on 9 September 1945 redundant. As such, the mission was terminated.¹⁸



IWM, HU_065731

Japanese forces on parade after being disarmed in Ubon, Thailand.

Nonetheless, Benoit and his team remained in theatre and assisted liberated Allied PoWs. In fact, they located 900 starving and sick prisoners and organized food and medical drops for them. The Tideway Green Team stayed in Malaya conducting police work and civil administrative duties until mid-November 1945, at which time they were redeployed to Canada.¹⁹



LAC, PA 206264

Six SOE members returning from duty in Burma and Southeast Asia.

In all, throughout the war 227 Canadians served as SOE operatives behind enemy lines. Although this short summary of select Canadian agents does not provide a comprehensive account of all of the missions or Canadian operatives, it does furnish insight and a window on the challenges and accomplishments of some of the Canadian SOE agents. Indeed, it was not always the planning or training that made the difference. Rather, it was the individual creativity,

Artwork by Katherine Taylor



Force 136 patrolling in the jungle.

ingenuity, courage and daring that led to mission completion. It was the ability of the individual agents to adapt and innovate based on circumstances and environment that led to SOE success. As was shown, Canadians were instrumental in assisting SOE to prove their detractors wrong.

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WHAT WAS THE VALUE OF THE SOE?

Despite a track record of daring-do and success, as the war began to wind down pressure to minimize, if not shut down, the SOE increasingly rose from a murmur to a crescendo. The SOE's original nemeses and rivals continued to harbour their resentment and antagonism to the secretive organization. Overt opposition intensified. In February 1945, the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff (VCIGS) challenged SOE manning requirements. His staff wrote:

He [VCIGS] considers that SOE must show in detail just what man-power they are using and where and why; and that they must justify up to the hilt their requirements, in view of the obvious reduction in commitments in Europe. Further, he is not satisfied with the very large figure which is apparently required in the Far East; I cannot, myself, understand how we could conceivably justify 3,000 men for SOE in the Far East.¹

Other conventional commanders shared the disparaging assessment, if not disdain, for the SOE. One assessment rated the SOE as “of little tactical military assistance to direct military operations.” It insisted that the SOE had “little effective coordination below General Staff Army Group level” and went on to critique that the “Secret nature of SOE acted to its disadvantage ... regarding liaison with regular forces.”² Similarly, and not surprisingly based on the RAF long-standing opposition to the SOE, the Vice Chief of the Air Staff asserted, “I think the organization and direction of SOE on the whole was amateur and not half as effective as it might have been.”³ Yet another group insisted, “the strategic effect of SOE operations was negligible.”⁴

The criticism, however, was heavily influenced by partisanship, ideological differences, a dose of jealousy and the changed circumstances. At the start of the war, the Allies were in a difficult bind. Having withdrawn from the

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European continent under German pressure without any of their heavy equipment, facing what was perceived to be an imminent invasion, and with the requirement to completely rebuild and retrain its army, there was little the Allies could do to strike back at the German war machine. The War Cabinet itself had affirmed:

Our programme of air expansion cannot come to fruition until 1942, and, in order to achieve the strength at which we aim, our first-line expansion during 1941 must be limited. If we try to expand too quickly in the next 12 months, we cannot hope, at the same time, to build up our air power to a decisive strength in 1942. The same considerations apply to a lesser extent to the Army, whose programme cannot be expected to be complete until 1942....The general conclusion, therefore, is that our strategy during 1941 must be one of attrition.⁵

As such, the SOE was one of a few viable tools to disrupt the German war effort. Starting from virtually scratch, with little to no real experience to draw from with regard to the irregular nature of warfare, specifically subversion and sabotage, it is not hard to comprehend why many perceived the SOE to be amateurish, particularly at the beginning. Excessive secrecy and a reluctance to inform and educate others with regard to their utility and methodology, as well as a lack of transparency with the senior conventional chain-of-command, all compounded to exacerbate any and all perceived SOE weaknesses and shortcomings.

In all fairness, an objective appraisal indicates that the successes achieved by the SOE were impressive. For example, one 1942 Foreign Office report acknowledged:

It has been shown that sabotage within occupied countries can be immensely successful when directed, and given assistance from Headquarters in England. Individual acts of sabotage such as the simultaneous destruction of six railways leading from Warsaw to the Eastern Front, the destruction of Radio Paris which was transmitting vital information for the enemy, the destruction of transformers supplying power to the electric grid system of Southern France, including shipbuilding yards at Bordeaux, are each the immediate

result of one flight of one aircraft across occupied country, and its safe return. The damage achieved is often more than accomplished with the loss of 15 or more planes in mass bombing raids.⁶

Furthermore, the SOE released quarterly reports and summaries that were assembled for Prime Minister Churchill and the Chiefs of the General Staff. These monthly summaries, compiled by region, provide insight into the impact of the SOE effort. The cumulative total of the sabotage efforts (e.g. destruction of locomotives, industrial equipment, vehicles, shipping, hydro transformers, etc) not to mention the more difficult to measure subversion efforts (e.g. work slowdowns, disruption to productivity, non-assistance to the occupying power) undeniably begin to paint a picture of a continual drain on the German war effort and a requirement for the Germans to spend more time, manpower and resources in combatting the Allied sabotage and subversion campaign, not to mention the effort in replacing lost or damaged infrastructure and equipment.⁷

Enemy reaction is always an excellent means to determine effect. By the end of 1942, the Gestapo headquarters in Paris ordered the German counter espionage personnel to dismantle the SOE. It directed, "The French Section [SOE] organisation in Paris must be rooted out as an overriding priority task."⁸ In another theatre of operations, a letter from a German soldier on the Eastern Front to his parents revealed, "Now the Partisans have started their activities in Poland and hardly a train reaches its destination, everything is being blown up."⁹

By June 1942, the SOE fielded 385 agents in Occupied Europe. A year later, they had 650 agents in the field.¹⁰ Significantly, by 1943 the SOE had created an impressive number of secret armies:

- a. Poland 100,000 personnel;
- b. France 30,000;
- c. Norway 20,000;
- d. Holland 10,000; and
- e. Belgium 5,000.

Additionally, the SOE also supported a large number of guerillas in the field, specifically 180,000 in Yugoslavia and 20,000 in Greece.¹¹ Undeniably, the

consistent number of acts of sabotage and subversion conducted by a large number of resistance groups and secret armies had a cumulative effect on the German war effort, as well as morale. After all, the “war of the flea” is both physically and psychologically exhausting. As such, SOE operations were making themselves felt.



IWM, HU_057107

A group of Maquis known as the “poachers” Savournon, Haute Savoie. SOE officers can be identified third and fourth from the right.

The most recognizable impact SOE efforts had on Allied operations was during the lead up and actual invasion of Occupied Europe (D-Day), as well as the subsequent Normandy Campaign. For example, once the BBC aired the coded announcement that the invasion was about to begin on the night of 5/6 June 1944, SOE supported Resistance cells conducted hundreds of acts of sabotage in support of the invasion. In fact, the French Forces of the Interior (FFI) cut the French railways at 950 different points.¹² In total, there were 3,000 confirmed rail cuts in France and Belgium between 6-27 June 1944.¹³

The immediate impact of the SOE-directed actions resulted in the denial of the German ability to rapidly counter-attack the beachhead. For example, the 2nd SS Panzer Division *Das Reich* with its heavy tanks had been deployed to Montauban, just North of Toulouse so that it could be deployed to counter-attack an Allied invasion. However, the Division relied on rail transport to bring its armour to bear. The normal three-day trip dragged on

for 16 days because the rail line between Toulouse and the beachhead was continually cut. Similarly, the 11th Division took three days to move from the Eastern Front to the Rhine River. It then took an additional three weeks to reach Caen on the Normandy coast.¹⁴

The SOE also dispatched three-to four-man Jedburgh teams tasked with assisting local resistance networks to coordinate and focus their efforts.¹⁵ The Jedburghs, whose motto was “Surprise, kill and vanish,” provided a wireless link, supplied arms and ammunition and delivered training on the use of weapons and basic tactics.¹⁶ Fourteen teams dropped into Brittany alone and helped organize 20,000 resistance fighters. William Colby, a future CIA director, described their mission as “to harass the Germans as much as possible...ambushes on the road, blowing up bridges, that sort of thing.”¹⁷ The end result was the requirement for the Germans to expend a massive effort to simply fight the French Resistance.¹⁸ Significantly, 8,000 Frenchmen were fighting in Massif Central alone.¹⁹ The Chiefs of Staff Committee acknowledged:

There can be no doubt that at a time when the Germans were exerting every effort to obtain more manpower, the dispersion of troops in protective and internal security duties had an effect on the land battle. In June 1944, the Germans were forced to employ 5,000 troops to disperse the guerillas in the Correze and approximately 11,000 with artillery, were engaged against resistance in the Vercors in July. On 20th July, the 11th Panzer Division was still operating against resistance groups in Dordogne.²⁰

By 10 June 1944, the SOE rightfully claimed a degree of success. An internal assessment reported, “Virtually all organisers have carried out successfully their D-day tasks, which have included the derailment of at least two trains in tunnels, the mining of road bridges over which German armour was expected, the blowing up of transformers supplying power to electric railways, and the cutting of telecommunications in widespread areas.”²¹ Their appraisal was arguably understated. The Chiefs of Staff Committee was far more effusive in its praise. It judged that the SOE-supported resistance movement aided Allied operations:

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1. [by sapping] It sapped the enemy's confidence in his own security and flexibility of internal movement;
2. by diverting enemy troops to internal security duties and keeping troops thus employed dispersed;
3. by causing delay to the movement of enemy troops:
 - (a) concentrating against the Normandy beachhead;
 - (b) regrouping after the allied break-out from the beachhead;
4. by disrupting enemy telecommunications in France and Belgium;
5. by enabling Allied formations to advance with greater speed through being able to dispense with many normal military precautions, e.g. flank protection and mopping up;
6. by furnishing military intelligence; and
7. by providing organised groups of men in liberated areas able to undertake static guard duties at short notice and without further training.²²

Additionally, a SHAEF report issued just after D-Day lauded, "The actions of the Resistance groups in the South resulted in an average delay of 48 hours in the movement of German reinforcements to Normandy, and often much longer. The enemy was facing a battlefield behind his own lines."²³ SHAEF Headquarters explained:

The widespread and continuous sabotage caused outside the capabilities of Allied air efforts ...it [sabotage] succeeded in imposing serious delays on all the German divisions moving to Normandy from the Mediterranean, and forced the enemy to extensive and intricate detours ... both main railway lines up the Rhone Valley were closed for a good part of the time, the route on the right bank at one time for ten consecutive days.²⁴

The SOE Resistance Program was also of immense assistance to the Allied war effort through its destruction of the German pool of locomotives, irreplaceable machine tools and heavy cranes. In fact, sabotage in France alone between September 1943 and September 1944 accounted for almost as many locomotives as the total disabled by air action during the same

period. Moreover, the increase in repairs made necessary by sabotage overwhelmed the repair facilities. It forced the deployment of railway troops, reserve troops, defence workers and German railwaymen to guard and rebuild the vital lines and thereby overwhelmed the German administrative system for the occupied countries.²⁵

In addition, the SOE through its connections with the *Société nationale des chemins de fer*, encouraged slow-downs, absenteeism and strikes. In fact, the German Director of French Railways claimed this subversion was a major contributory factor to the German failure to adequately maintain transport facilities to allow for the deployment of German forces to contain the Allied bridgehead in Normandy.²⁶

The SOE achieved similar results during Operation Dragoon, the invasion of Southern France, in August 1944. The American 3rd Infantry Division History noted, "A major factor aiding the speed and success of our movement was the activity of the French resistance groups."²⁷ The 3rd Infantry Division assessed that the efforts of the SOE supported resistance network was equivalent to that of four to five divisions. In fact, with regard to Operation Dragoon, British General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean Theatre, acknowledged that the FFI "reduced the fighting efficiency of the *Wehrmacht* in southern France to forty per cent at the moment of the Dragoon landing operations."²⁸ In addition, the FFI were credited with capturing approximately 42,000 German prisoners of war during the operation.²⁹

The example of Denmark, which was actually slow to fully commit to SOE activities, is also telling. For instance, major operations included the attack on the Burmeister & Wain power station in Copenhagen, which was engaged in U-Boat production in 1943 resulting in it being out of commission for nine months; the destruction of 30 German aircraft, the aero mechanised workshop and special tools at the Aalborg West aerodrome in 1944; the destruction of material and machinery of the Torotor factory in Copenhagen that was engaged in V1 and V2 rocket manufacturing; the destruction of the Rifle Syndicate armament factory; and the complete destruction of the Always Radio factory during U-Boat production.

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In addition, there was also minor sabotage, particularly against Danish railway traffic. During February 1945, for instance, as the Germans were attempting to withdraw forces from Norway to reinforce their crumbling front-lines elsewhere, they were repeatedly attacked and stalled in Denmark. The 223 Panzer Division and the 166 Infantry Division were successfully attacked over 100 times. In fact, in a period of one week, more than half of their 44 trains were immobilised in Denmark.³⁰



Courtesy LPH

Another successful sabotage mission in France.

The SOE also accomplished other significant coups. For instance, on 27 May 1942, they orchestrated the assassination of the brutal and much hated SS-*Obergruppenführer* (lieutenant-general) Reinhard Heydrich as part of Operation Anthropoid in Czechoslovakia. Heydrich was head of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (Reich Security Main Office). As such, he was responsible for the entire Nazi secret police apparatus. In this capacity he was second-in-command to *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler, commander of the *Schutzstaffel* (SS). Heydrich was also a leading proponent of the “Final Solution,” namely the extermination of the Jews (i.e. the Holocaust).

However, perhaps the most singular spectacular achievement of the SOE was its destruction of the German atomic weapon program. Churchill and other Allied leaders were extremely concerned with the prospect that Hitler could gain access to an atom weapon. Churchill himself conceded that the idea of Germany attaining the atomic bomb “lay heavy on my mind.”³¹ The idea was not preposterous since Otto Hahn, a German physicist, successfully discovered atomic fission in December 1938.³² This discovery, compounded with Hitler’s stunning victory in Europe in the spring of 1940, provided German physicists with an amazing windfall. Suddenly, they had access to: heavy water (deuterium oxide)³³ from the Norsk-Hydro plant in Vemork (Rjukan), Norway; thousands of tons of uranium ore from the Union Minière in Belgium; the use of the only cyclotron in existence,³⁴ albeit not completely finished, in Paris; and access to the doyen of nuclear physicists, Niels Bohr in Occupied Denmark.³⁵

In the summer of 1941, when British Intelligence discovered that the Norsk-Hydro plant was in the process of increasing its heavy water production ten-fold, it became clear that the Germans were actively involved in atomic weapon research.³⁶ Planners quickly realized that the heavy water could be the weak link in the German program. Not surprisingly, the Norsk-Hydro facility, which was located in extremely inhospitable terrain, nestled between two mountains, became a priority target. As a result, a sabotage mission was required. The first attempt, Operation Freshman, in November 1942, was a failure. The two gliders carrying commandos crashed. The few survivors were captured by the Gestapo and subsequently murdered.

In February 1943, a second attempt, codenamed Operation Gunnerside, was more successful. In the end, a small team of 11 SOE operators temporarily knocked out the Norsk-Hydro’s production capacity. However, production was re-established to full capacity by mid-August. Frustrated, the Allies now attempted to bomb the plant despite protest by the Norwegian government. Of 828 bombs dropped, reportedly only two hit the electrolysis plant. Nonetheless, the persistent Allied attempts convinced the Germans that they should transfer the heavy water and equipment to Germany. This move gave the SOE its final opportunity. On 20 February 1944, as the Germans were in the process of transferring the equipment and remaining stocks

of heavy water to Germany, SOE saboteurs blew up and sank the ferry that was being used to cross Lake Tinnsjo for the first leg of the journey.³⁷

In the final analysis, it is difficult to refute the fact that a force of 750,000 SOE supported partisans operating in Europe and the Balkans alone would create a substantive military problem for the Germans.³⁸ And, although SOE operations are not synonymous with resistance movements, an official report rightly assessed, "SOE provided organization, communications, materials, training and leadership without which 'resistance' would have been of no military value."³⁹ It is for this reason that a SHAEF report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 18 July 1945 acknowledged, "It can be fairly concluded, therefore, that SOE activity forced the Germans to retain considerable forces in areas of no immediate military value to us. The forces could have been usefully employed elsewhere and were contained by an economical expenditure of effort."⁴⁰ Major-General Colin Gubbins, the last Director of the SOE, concurred. He wrote:

Admittedly there were all over France from the moment of German conquest individual Frenchmen and French women determined to resist, but I think to be quite fair, that it was primarily the British who slowly gave to the Nation a will to resist. It sounds a hard criticism of the French to say this, but without the parachuting into France of British leaders, instructors, Wireless Operators, Couriers, etc., and the example they set (even though many fell into Gestapo hands through lack of security, and so on) which gave the necessary rallying point or focus, little would have happened.⁴¹

The SHAEF report also commented on the morale factor. "The part which SOE played in the organisation of passive resistance," the Committee attested, "had not only very valuable direct effects, such as the Dutch railway strike and the action of the French railwaymen, but greatly bolstered the morale of the people generally."⁴²

In sum, despite the virulent criticisms of the SOE that carried on into the post-war era, the general assessment by the Allied Supreme Commander and many other senior leaders was that the SOE was of immense strategic value. In fact, one official report actually acknowledged that "SOE's reputation

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lags behind its performance.”⁴³ Nonetheless, in total, the Supreme Commander’s staff assessed, the SOE assisted Allied operations by:

1. sapping enemy morale;
2. diverting troops to internal security;
3. causing delay to movement of enemy troops;
4. disrupting telecommunications/lines of communications;
5. furnishing military intelligence; and
6. providing organization to groups of men in liberated areas to undertake guard duties [for] prevention of demolitions – counter scorched earth.⁴⁴

In fact, their report conclusively stated, “SOE operations made a substantial contribution to the victory of the Allied Expeditionary Force.”⁴⁵

General Dwight D. “Ike” Eisenhower, himself noted in his memoir, “without their [SOE and Resistance movements] great assistance the liberation of France and the defeat of the enemy in western Europe would have consumed a much longer time and meant greater losses to ourselves.”⁴⁶ Eisenhower also wrote to Major-General Gubbins and Colonel David Bruce, head of OSS European Theatre, at the end of the war and commented:

In no previous war and in no other theater during this war, have resistance forces been so closely harnessed to the main military effort. While no final assessment of the operational value of resistance action has yet been completed, I consider that the disruption of enemy rail communications, the harassing of German road moves and the continual and increasing strain placed on the German war economy and internal security services through-out occupied Europe by the organized forces of resistance, played a very considerable part in our complete and final victory.⁴⁷

Indeed, Eisenhower went so far as to say, “the Resistance in France shortened the war by nine months.”⁴⁸

Colonel Donovan, the Director of the OSS, also weighed in on the value of the SOE and OSS. He observed that the usefulness of the SOE and OSS was

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not just “in its role in hastening military victory, but also in the development of the concept of unorthodox warfare which alone constitutes a major contribution.”⁴⁹ Similarly, esteemed SOE historian, Professor M.R.D. Foot, calculated that the total strength of the SOE in personnel, at its peak, was approximately that of a weak division. As such, he concluded, “no single division in any army exercised a tenth of SOE’s influence on the course of the war.”⁵⁰

Amazingly, despite of SOE’s achievements, its perceived value was still a contentious issue at the end of the war and into the post-war period. Not surprisingly, its fate hinged on the ability, as well as the desire, of its supporters to protect it in the tumultuous days following the defeat of the Axis Powers.

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SETTLING ACCOUNTS: THE SOE AT WAR'S END

Remarkably, the SOE's contribution to the Allied war effort is still debated. Equally amazing is the fact that some of its files remain classified to this day, which speaks to the sensitivity of its actions during the war and, arguably, to its accomplishments. Irrefutably, the SOE was a unique wartime creation that represented innovation, adventure and a fanaticism by its personnel to the Allied cause. SOE personnel demonstrated extreme courage, tenacity, guile and incredible adaptability. Moreover, rightly or wrongly, they followed the SOE mantra of the “end justifies the means” as an approach to the covert war that they undertook. In the end, the SOE, in keeping with Churchill's directive and with an ever-present Canadian nexus, set Europe ablaze.

Despite its achievements, the future of the SOE was far from secure. After all, from its beginning, the SOE had an entourage of critics, detractors, rivals and outright opponents. As noted throughout the book, the rationale for the anti-SOE sentiments was rooted in a wide range of factors that included differences in the philosophy of fighting war, the lack of SOE transparency, the general distrust of secretive organizations, the “selective club” mentality associated with SOE recruiting, organizational rivalry and competition for influence and resources, as well as the fear of uncontrolled SOE operations impacting ongoing political and military activities. In addition, some of the enmity came down to simply incompatible personalities.¹

Luckily for the SOE, its patron, Prime Minister Churchill lent his personal support, which provided a shield to protect the nascent organization. However, this patronage more than likely was another factor that created animosity with others. Predictably then, in light of the deep distrust that most societies have for secret organizations, despite the SOE's many achievements during the war, its success failed to win over its detractors. As a result, before the war was even over the struggle over what would become of the SOE began.

The fight over control of SOE activities began relatively early. In fact, the “harnessing” of SOE effort actually commenced in September 1943. The British War Cabinet recognized that SOE activities were assuming “an increasingly military character and are progressively widening in scope and quickening in tempo.”² Concurrently, the Allied steamroller began to crush the Axis forces and push them back on numerous fronts. Quite simply, the Allies no longer had to rely on the “scalpel” (i.e. raids, sabotage and subversion). They could now simply use the “sledge hammer” resorting to conventional operations that relied on overwhelming mass and firepower. As such, SOF operations overall had started to wane, transitioning from direct action raids to unconventional warfare and strategic reconnaissance.

SOE operations were no different. As such, the British Chief of Staff Committee took steps “to bring SOE activities under operational control of the respective Allied Commanders-in-Chief in Europe and in South-East Asia.”³ Their objective was to align all activities, particularly SOF, including the SOE, with the planned conventional operations and campaigns. In fact, the Chiefs of Staffs issued specific direction:

It is intended to attach Allied Missions to the Supreme Allied Commander on the opening of operations. This will go some way to rectify the difficulties at present experienced; and in the meantime Allied Commanders-in-Chief are assuming a greater degree of control over SOE policy, which will bring SOE activities into closer relation to projected operations.⁴

Concurrently, the British Chiefs of Staff Committee also put to bed the ongoing aggravation of the rivalry between SOE special operations and the Foreign Office security intelligence service activities. The Committee judged the integration of SOE and SIS was clearly essential. Therefore, a concerted effort was made to pool the resources of the two organizations. By December 1943, the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia Command had organized both under one officer.⁵

Furthermore, to make their case for “coordination of SOE” the British Chiefs of Staff Committee examined reports from the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). From this study they drew several conclusions that clearly reflected their attitudes regarding SOE operations. They declared:

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- a. the Minister of Defence, Chiefs of Staff and Commanders-in-Chief are less informed about SOE operations than about military operations;
- b. SOE activities have conflicted with the policy of His Majesty's Government and are liable to continue to do so under the present organisation;
- c. Conflict between particular SOE operations, operations of regular forces and of SIS are in general avoided;
- d. A certain lack of confidence, however, exists between SIS and SOE;
- e. Subversive activities controlled by Allied Governments, e.g. by Polish Ministry of the Interior, or by French National Committee, must be suspect as they are vulnerable to penetration;
- f. Excessive expansion of SOE communication channels and duplication with SIS endanger both SIS and SOE;
- g. The larger the subversive organization the more vulnerable it becomes;
- h. The Germans are fully appraised of SOE activities and are taking increasingly energetic measure for protection.⁶

The intense focus on the SOE soon reached a tipping point. By November 1944, the tug-of-war over who would control, or what was to become of, the SOE in the post-war world was well underway. One general staff officer wrote, "The post-war organization of SOE and SIS requires considerable study, and we are far from sure that we would agree to the Foreign Secretary's statement that 'the only sound plan in the ultimate future will be to place SOE and the SIS under the same controlling head.'"⁷ The Chiefs of Staff Committee surprisingly agreed. They asserted, "[the Chiefs of Staff] wish to place on record their emphatic disagreement with the opinion of the Foreign Secretary that S.O.E. and S.I.S. should eventually be brought under a single executive, as opposed to Ministerial lead."⁸

The British Chiefs of Staff Committee, although not always supportive of the SOE, were against allowing the Foreign Office to control the SOE. Committee minutes reveal the dire consequences the British Chiefs of Staff envisioned should this occur. The committee minutes stated, "this would mean accepting the danger of the strangulation of SOE and would undoubtedly make it more difficult to remove either SIS or SOE from Foreign Office control at a later stage should it be expedient to do so."⁹

The SOE's allies were not silent either. A high-level War Office staff assessment articulated the requirement, if not necessity, for the SOE. It asserted:

- a. It is concluded that SOE should continue in peacetime in connection [with] the United States in OSS, the Russians in NKVD [People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs], & how the French in the new Division General d'Étude et Recherche have made provision for permanent organizations covering S[pecial] O[perations] work;
- b. It is essential that SO work should be kept separate from SI anyhow in the field or otherwise loyalties could clash. The set-up of the other parallel bodies all keeps SO separate from SI although they may be coordinated at the top under one head (e.g. General Donovan of OSS with both OS & SI separately under him);
- c. SOE is necessary in peacetime so that unacknowledgeable work can be carried out (e.g. keeping in touch with elements hostile to the government of a country with which HMG is ostensibly on friendly terms); and
- d. It is also desirable that the framework of the organization with its training schools & research stations should be maintained so that they can be rapidly expanded if the need should ever arise.¹⁰

Notwithstanding the support for the SOE by its protagonists, by the end of the year, the Chiefs of Staff Committee did an about-face and recommended that the Foreign Office proposals be accepted. However, they did stipulate a number of caveats:

- a. That it is only a temporary measure and that it in no way prejudices the future control of either SOE or SIS;
- b. That the Chief of Staff would prefer to see SOE and SIS under the control of the Ministry of Defence; and
- c. That SOE should continue to work under their own head and should not be placed under the Head SIS.¹¹

The Committee's recommendation, however, was irrelevant. The British Government directed a committee, headed by Sir Findlater Stewart, a senior public servant who left his position in India as the permanent under-secretary of State for India to take up an executive appointment in Home Defence in London, to examine the status of the intelligence services for the future. Under Stewart, the committee agreed on a clear position and issued directives accordingly:

- i. Agreed that S.O.E. and S.I.S. should, for the present, be placed under a common executive head;
- ii. Instructed the Joint Planning Staff to prepare a revised directive to S.O.E. accordingly;
- iii. Agree that arrangements should be made to appoint an Executive Head of the Secret Service having separate Special Operations and Secret Intelligence branches with common services; and
- iv. Invited "C" [Head of SIS] and "CD" [Head of SOE] to effect such measures of co-ordination as were practicable.¹²

Lord Selborne, the Minister of Economic Warfare, under whose jurisdiction SOE officially rested, also provided his recommendation to the government on 25 May 1945. Selborne believed that the SOE was "a war-time experiment which may be said to have proved successful." He rated the main tasks of importance as:

- a. The creation, maintenance and operation of resistance forces in enemy-occupied countries;
- b. The organization and execution of sabotage in enemy and enemy-occupied territory;
- c. The dissemination of subversive propaganda in enemy and enemy-occupied territory;
- d. Certain specialized financial operations of a clandestine character as required by His Majesty's Treasury; and
- e. Procurement of information, passed to the interested Departments of HMG through, or by arrangement with SIS, or by direction of Theatre Commanders.

Notwithstanding, Selborne's acknowledgement of SOE achievements, he also conceded that the SOE was a product of "wartime improvisation." He believed that it suffered under "serious handicaps that could have been avoided had S.O.E. had a more clearly defined status within the official war-running machine." He identified these shortcomings as:

- a. The inherent distrust of Departments for any new organisation whose functions and composition they do not fully understand;
- b. Overlapping with other organizations, particularly those whose work is of a clandestine nature;
- c. Growing pains, leading to frequent re-organisation with consequent temporary loss of efficiency and duplication of effort;
- d. Owing to the circumstance that in the past there has been nothing in the nature of the "S.O.E. Courses" which Service officers and diplomats could take as part of their professional education, S.O.E. has been handicapped by the fact that any senior officer coming into the organisation was entirely ignorant of the technique of the organisation;
- e. A general failure in Government circles to understand that S.O.E.'s
- f. activities are both world-wide and, in the clandestine sphere, unacknowledgedable [sic]; and
- g. A tendency on the part of H.M. Representatives abroad, including Commanders in the field, to use S.O.E. for tasks not strictly within its charter and to some extent their private agency.¹³

Selborne's critique was based on his intent to learn from the SOE experience. He insisted, "I have noted the above-mentioned handicaps in order that the lessons of the past five years should not be over-looked. In particular, the relationship of S.O.E. to other clandestine and para-military organizations and government departments, and the scope of its future activities must be clearly defined in the light of these lessons. Importantly, the Minister of Economic Warfare also cautioned:

Despite the end of the war with Germany, Europe is in a dangerously unsettled state and the British Empire must consequently be prepared

for a major or minor war in any part of the world. If Germany's return to power and aggression is to be avoided over the next twenty years there are immediate and continuing commitments for S.O.E. on the continent of Europe. There are also other and perhaps more immediate dangers in the combating of which S.O.E. is in a position to assist. It is noteworthy that the parallel organisations in both France and Belgium have already approached S.O.E. with a view to enlisting not only its guidance and support but its active co-operation. It is important, too, to note that Sir Edward Appleton has stated that the present trend of science and technical development in all departments of modern industry and national life make it certain that subversive operations will play an even greater part in any future war than they have in the present war.¹⁴

Despite the turbulent debate on the future of the SOE, most of the key stakeholders agreed on the requirement to maintain the SOE, at least until the end of the war with Japan. The central issue of contention was ownership. With the disbandment of the Ministry of Economic Warfare after the defeat of Germany, a new reporting relationship was required. Selborne (as the outgoing minister) explained:

The Foreign Secretary and I have recommended to the Prime Minister that S.O.E. should not be wound up on the cessation of hostilities. Moreover, the Chiefs of Staff, while agreeing that the S.O.E. should be under the Foreign Secretary as long as the war with Japan lasts, have reserved the right to reconsider the position of the S.O.E. (and of the S.I.S.) at the end of the war; thus implying that they are concerned in the continuance of Special Operations in some form after that date ... If this is not done there is a great danger that the valuable experience of the last few years will be lost beyond hope of recovery. Already extensive cuts in man-power are being imposed and the question of the disposal of specialized equipment and personnel has arisen.¹⁵

Selborne then reiterated that SOE was a secret organization whose role he defined as "to further the policy of H.M.G. by unacknowledged [sic] action in all parts of the world." In addition, he clearly articulated its functions as:

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- a. To collate, examine and assess all information bearing on future clandestine operations and to study and develop the art of underground warfare. To provide lectures for the Imperial Defence College and the Staff Colleges, and to participate in the planning of future military operations in peace time and in the preparation for Staff talks with friendly Powers;
- b. To train persons to carry out all forms of clandestine activity, e.g. covert propaganda, rumours, influencing public persons and minorities, and the study of objectives for sabotage;
- c. To study, to devise and to maintain small reserves of all material required for sabotage and clandestine operational activities of all types, including communications; and
- d. With the concurrence of the Foreign Office and under their general direction to serve the clandestine needs of H.M.G. abroad in any or all of the following ways:
 - i. to give covert support of a foreign government or organisation by counteracting discontent and special unrest, and by subsidies, if necessary,
 - ii. to maintain contact with elements of a foreign country with whom H.M.G.'s official representatives may not establish relations,
 - iii. to influence prominent individuals, political, commercial, industrial, etc., and to counter the activities of recalcitrant individuals,
 - iv. to give covert support to British interest and to create and foster clandestine opposition to foreign interests hostile to the British Empire,
 - v. to undertake clandestine financial transactions required by H.M. Treasury, and
 - vi. to establish the nucleus of organizations in foreign countries capable of fostering partisan activities should the need arise and to do so in the suitable cases in co-operation with the appropriate agency of the Government of the foreign country concerned. In certain cases this will involve the setting-up of a net-work of clandestine communications.¹⁶

The outgoing Minister of Economic Warfare provided further clarification of his views with regard to the post-war make-up of the SOE. Selborne believed it should be organized on a civilian basis and that “the best results from the country’s clandestine services would be obtained by keeping them as separate operational entities, but merging them into a single Service under one executive head.” Selborne advocated that under such a system, SIS (MI6), PWE, MI5 and SOE together would form a clandestine Service, in essence, as a fourth arm to the three fighting Services. He believed SOE would be the operational arm of this “fourth service.” He argued that under such a system, there would be greater coordination, closer liaison and economy in personnel and resources because the administrative, research and material equipment would be common to all elements of the clandestine organizations.

Lastly, Selborne recommended that the “unified Secret Service” would best serve the country if “it were to come directly under the Minister of Defence.” In this manner, he believed, the “unified Secret Service would be employed to the greatest advantage and that a balance would be struck between the political and military considerations which are always present in connection with this type of work.”¹⁷

In the end, Selborne recommended that, in addition to maintaining the SOE to carry on its work against Japan until the war ended, the Government issue an immediate directive defining the scope of SOE post-war activities. Moreover, he argued the Government should authorize the retention of a nucleus organization to provide for those activities. He went so far as to assert that the nucleus must comprise:

- a. a small staff charged with the study and development of subversive activities, adequately served by a training branch, a small technical research station, and a communications development branch to ensure that our equipment for this type of activity (at present the best in the world) keeps abreast of developments; and
- b. An organisation controlling small out-stations in all parts of the worlds which would assist in counteracting elements hostile to H.M.G. in the countries in which such elements are located.¹⁸

CHAPTER 15

In the final analysis, however, the studies, consultations and debates mattered little. On 26 July 1945, the British Labour Party, led by Clement Attlee, won the British election. Attlee now replaced the combative Winston Churchill as the new British Prime Minister. Significantly, the SOE now found themselves without a champion to protect them. Consequently, the new Prime Minister and his foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin, agreed that the SOE should be disbanded. The decision was made final on 15 January 1946, when Sir Alan Brooke, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and Stewart Menzies, head of the SIS, concurred.¹⁹

In reality, however, the SOE was not actually disbanded. Rather, it was subsumed by the SIS. The amalgamation that the SOE fought off for the entire war now occurred. It became the new Special Operations Branch of the SIS.

The new organization was quickly engulfed in scandal. The Files of BSC, which were in New York, were burned at Camp X over several days. Then, in February 1946, a fire broke out on the top floor of 64 Baker Street that gutted the entire top level and destroyed nearly all the wartime SOE records. Whether the fire was set intentionally to destroy sensitive information, or an accident, remained a heated debate for an extended period of time.

For Canada the decision on the fate of special operations was far simpler. Canadian commanders and politicians were never big supporters of special, particularly secret, organizations. Although they supported the “loan” of Canadians to the SOE, especially since it represented such low numbers, it was more a question of supporting Allies, particularly in the early years of the war when manpower was not an issue, rather than a philosophical statement of endorsement. For instance, by September 1945, they had disbanded all of the organizations (i.e. Viking Force, Naval Beach Commando “W”, First Special Service Force, 1 Canadian Parachute Battalion) that could be considered special operation forces. All of these units had owed their establishment to political expediency, rather than a belief in operational utility or importance.²⁰ In the end, when the war came to a close, the Canadian SOE volunteers were unceremoniously either returned to their units or demobilized.

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Similarly, Camp X, despite its contribution, was closed in April 1944. It remains, nonetheless, an important part of Canada's contribution to the SOE in the Second World War. The school trained 500 students and conducted 52 courses.²¹ Furthermore, it was a shining example of civilian-military cooperation. One official report noted, "The relations between STS 103 and the local military authorities and the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] appear to be excellent. The camp appears to be able to obtain within limits anything it requires in the way of men, material and facilities from these sources."²²

Author photo



Camp X memorial plaque erected on the original site of the Second World War secret installation.

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Importantly, Camp X trained not only Canadians recruited for SOE work but also Americans from OSS, ONI, OWI, US Military Intelligence and the FBI, as well as Canadians from the RCMP, Military Intelligence, Department of External Affairs and Wartime Information Board.²³ In fact, Camp X provided the instruction, as well as the template for the OSS and OWI, as well as other American organizations to train their personnel and set-up their own schools.²⁴ Not surprisingly, Stephenson described Camp X as the “clenched fist” of all Allied secret operations in World War II.²⁵



Author photo

Quieter days on the Camp X beach.

Notwithstanding the lack of philosophical sponsorship, the Canadian commitment and contribution to the SOE were significant. Although the SOE was a British organization, the Canadian nexus proved extremely valuable. First, Canada provided agents of ethnic, linguistic and cultural background that allowed the SOE to have a core of reliable, well-trained individuals to conduct the necessary operations for recruiting, organizing, arming and leading subversive and sabotage activities, as well as information gathering.

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Second, William Stephenson, the man called Intrepid, and his BSC were incredibly important to the British war effort. The relationships he forged with Bill Donovan and J. Edgar Hoover, Directors of the OSS and FBI respectively, were critical to developing, nurturing and solidifying American involvement, cooperation and support to the Allied war cause, particularly prior to the entry of the US into the war. The cooperative relationship was also essential in paving the way for the acquisition of British war material from the Americans and its security in their ports.

Equally important was Stephenson's efforts at influencing a shift in US opinion from isolationism and/or sympathetic attitudes towards the Hitler regime to one of supporting the Allied cause. Through aggressive "marketing" and counter-espionage, which uncovered Nazi activities in the US, Stephenson and the BSC were able to substantively increase American support for the Allied cause.

Additionally, in the early years, BSC became the conduit of intelligence for Donovan's fledgling Coordinator of Intelligence office and later the OSS, allowing Donovan to provide information to the President and the armed services even before he and his organizations were fully running. Moreover, Stephenson facilitated the creation and growth of American special operations by providing instruction, lesson plans, publications and special devices that the US had access to until they could "grow" their own clandestine organization, namely the OSS, which during the post-war period became the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Furthermore, Stephenson and his BSC, which was largely staffed by Canadians, were able to ensure the security of British war materials in South American ports, as well as uncover Axis intrigue and espionage in several South American countries. As a result of BSC actions, the Allies maintained a steady stream of war supplies flowing out of South America. Moreover, they thwarted Axis penetration of that continent.



Courtesy LPH

Sir William Stephenson, the man called “Intrepid”.

The third significant Canadian contribution, as mentioned earlier, was Camp X. Important for the selection and training of Canadian agents for overseas duty with the SOE, it was also significant for its importance in providing training, publications, technical know-how and equipment for the neophyte OSS, as well as other US agencies (e.g. FBI, OWI), which allowed them to gain a giant leap forward as they created their special operations and intelligence capabilities. It also facilitated closer cooperation with the Americans, particularly before they entered the war. Camp X, particularly Hydra, was also critical as a communication hub for encrypted message traffic for the British Government, SIS and SOE.

In summary, most would agree that Stephenson and his BSC performed impeccably. By the end of the war, “not a single British vessel was lost or seriously held up by sabotage in a United States port throughout the war.” Yet, the damage inflicted by Stephenson’s organization “to German property and nationals certainly exceeded the total damage caused by the Axis powers on the whole of the American continent.”²⁶ Major-General Colin Gubbins, who became the last Director of SOE, described Stephenson’s exploits as, “a series of brilliant individual coups against Axis powers.” He went so far as to acknowledge that Intrepid’s “slightest wish is to me more than a command.”²⁷

This sentiment is not hard to understand. After all, Stephenson and the BSC, staffed with a multitude of “quiet Canadians” fulfilled a number of key functions:

1. The establishment of a secret organization to investigate enemy activities and to institute adequate security measures in the Western Hemisphere;
2. The procurement of certain essential supplies for Britain;
3. The fostering of American intervention; and
4. The assurance of American participation in secret activities throughout the world in the closest possible collaboration with the British.²⁸

The cumulative effect of the Canadian contribution makes a strong case for the statement that the Canadian nexus to the SOE was substantial. In the end, the “ungentlemanly way of war” may not be Canadian doctrine. Nonetheless, although Canada is not a warlike nation, Canada has always proven to be a nation of warriors. Throughout the conflict 227 Canadians served in the SOE in the various theatres of the conflict. In addition, Royal Canadian Air Force personnel and those posted to RAF units also served in the Special Duty Squadrons used to drop weapons and insert and extract SOE personnel.²⁹ Unquestionably, the accomplishments and sacrifices of these intrepid individuals helped in diminishing the abilities of the German and Japanese war machines and assisted in the destruction of their regimes, made Canada proud and set a distinguished legacy for Canada’s special operations forces to follow.

CHAPTER 15



Artwork by Silvia Pecota

“Midnight Express”

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 1

1 For a detailed account of the Battle for France see: Matthew Cooper, *The German Army 1933-1945* (Landham, MD: Scarborough House, 1978); Len Deighton, *Blood, Tears and Folly. An Objective Look at World War II* (New York: Castle, 1999); Len Deighton, *Blitzkrieg. From the Rise of Hitler to the Fall of Dunkirk* (Edison, NJ: Castle, 2000); Karl-Heinz Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend. The 1940 Campaign in the West* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005); and Philip Warner, *The Battle of France* (London: Simon and Shuster, 1990).

2 Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War. Their Finest Hour* (Toronto: Houghton Mifflin Company Boston Thomas Allen Limited, 1949), 36.

3 The Dyle Plan refers to the Allied plan to stop the German advance in Belgium since it represented a far narrower front to contain the Axis advance. Therefore, the Allies planned to advance to the Dyle River in Belgium once the Germans had violated Belgian or Dutch neutrality. The plan was then to entrench and halt the German thrust much like the previous war. General the Viscount Gort, "First Dispatch" (Covering the period 3rd September, 1939 to 31st January, 1940), 25 April 1940, *Supplement to The London Gazette*, March 1941, 40. National Archives (NA), CAB 66/17, Memoranda, W.P. (41) 128 -W.P. (41) 177, Vol. XVII.

4 See Christopher Hibbert, "Operation Dynamo," *History of the Second World War*, Part 6, 164; Cesare Salmaggi and Alfredo Pallavisini, *2194 Days of War* (New York: Gallery Books, 1988), 4 June 1940; I.C.R. Dear, ed., *The Oxford Companion to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 312-313; and A.J. Barker, *Dunkirk: The Great Escape* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1977), 224. The cost had been substantial. The losses at Dunkirk amounted to 68,111 killed, wounded, taken prisoner from the BEF. In addition, the British left behind 2,472 guns, 63,879 trucks, 76,000 tons of ammunition and 600,000 tons of fuel and supplies. The Royal Navy (RN) lost 243 ships (out of more than 1,000 engaged). Exact numbers vary between these sources and others but they all reflect the general magnitude. A major problem with determining numbers is the actual categorization / description of weapons and equipment.

5 John Parker, *Commandos. The Inside Story of Britain's Most Elite Fighting Force* (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2000), 15.

6 Cecil Aspinall-Oglander, *Roger Keyes. Being the Biography of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Keyes of Zeebrugge and Dover* (London: Hogarth Press, 1951), 380.

7 *Ibid.*, 380. Vice-Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten put it in simpler terms. He declared, "We cannot win this war by bombing and blockade alone." Cited in John Terraine, *The Life and Times of Lord Mountbatten* (London: Arrow Books, 1980), 83.

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- 8 Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, 243.
- 9 Ibid., 246-247. The Prime Minister also added the requirement for deep inland raids that left “a trail of German corpses behind.” Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, 246-247. See also Colonel J.W. Hackett, “The Employment of Special Forces,” *Royal United Service Institute* (henceforth RUSI), Vol. 97, No. 585 (February 1952): 28.
- 10 Bernd Horn, “Strength Born From Weakness: The Establishment of the Raiding Concept and the British Commandos,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Autumn 2005): 59-68; Colonel D.W. Clarke, “The Start of the Commandos,” 30 October 1942, 1. NA, DEFE 2/4, Records of the Ministry of Defence, Military Operations Records, Combined Operations Headquarters, War Diary Combined Operations Command (COC), 1937-1963; and *Combined Operations. The Official Story of the Commandos* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943).
- 11 Cited in David Stafford, “The Detonator Concept: British Strategy, SOE and European Resistance After the Fall of France,” *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (April 1975): 192.
- 12 Cited in W.J.M. Mackenzie, *The Secret History of SOE: The Special Operations Executive 1940-1945* (London: St. Ermin’s Press, 2000), 60.
- 13 As early as March 1938, MI6 (also known as SIS) created a new department “to plan, prepare and, when necessary, carry out sabotage and other clandestine operations, as opposed to the gathering of intelligence.” The cell was called Section “D” (often referred to as Section IX). The “D” apparently stood for destruction. By 31 May 1938, Section D had gone so far as to conduct a preliminary survey of possible targets for sabotage, mainly in Germany, which included the electrical supply system, telephone communications, railways and defilement of food supplies and agriculture through the dissemination of pests to crops or diseases to animals. Keith Jeffery, *The Secret History of MI6* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2010), 320-322. See also, Mackenzie, *The Secret History of SOE*, 12-37.
- 14 Cited in Charles Cruickshank, *SOE In The Far East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 2. The term “Nazi” was a commonly used word to refer to Hitler’s ruling National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP).
- 15 Cited in William Manchester and Paul Reid, *The Last Lion. Winston Spencer Churchill. Defender of the Realm 1940-1965* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2012), 273. White propaganda refers to largely truthful information.
- 16 Hugh Dalton, *The Fateful Years: Memoirs 1931-1945* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd, 1957), 368.
- 17 Cited in William Manchester and Paul Reid, *The Last Lion. Winston Spencer Churchill. Defender of the Realm 1940-1965* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2012), 273.
- 18 War Cabinet Memorandum by Lord President of the Council, Neville Chamberlain, 19 July 1940. Imperial War Museum (IWM) display, 15 January 2012.

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- 19 Jeffery, 353. Rivalry and distrust would exist throughout the war. The initial control of communications, as well as provision of forged documents by SIS, were means by which SIS was able to control, to a degree, the activities of the new SOE. However, in April 1942, the SOE took over control of its own communications.
- 20 "The Reconquest of Norway. SOE's Role," 6 April 1942. NA, HS 2/218, File SOE/Norway 68.
- 21 "Memorandum on the Functions and Responsibilities of SOE and the Relationship with the Army," 4 September 1942, 1. NA, WO 201/2714, SOE.
- 22 "SO 2 Programme," 9 June 1941. NA, HS 2/79, File Policy and Planning of SOE Activities in Denmark.
- 23 Mackenzie, 99. The expectations of the War Cabinet were simply untenable. They expected Dalton to take directives from the Chiefs of Staff committee; guidance from the Foreign Office regarding objectives for underground political activity in enemy-occupied countries, as well as control and direction with regards to neutral countries; and guidance from the Dominions Office, Colonial Office and India Office regarding activities in their respective spheres of administration. On top of that, the SOE was also to be open to requests for certain special activities to be undertaken on behalf of Government Departments such as the Treasury, the Foreign Office, Ministry of Economic Warfare, the Ministry of Supply, the India Office, the Dominions Office, the Colonial Office and the Admiralty. To serve so many disparate masters was unrealistic.
- 24 Kenneth Macksey, *The Partisans of Europe In The Second World War* (New York: Stein and Day, 1975), 173.
- 25 OSS Syllabus - lesson plans, ND. Author collection.
- 26 Memorandum for War Cabinet, "Future of the Ministry of Information," 24 June 1941. NA, CAB 66/17, Memoranda, W.P. (41) 128 -W.P. (41) 177, Vol. XVII; and Ian Dear, *Sabotage and Subversion. The SOE and OSS at War* (London: Cassell, 1996), 11, 84-85.
- 27 Operation Savanna, was conducted on 15 March 1941. It entailed inserting SOE trained French paratroopers into Occupied France to ambush and kill German pilots of the *Kampfgeschwader* 100 pathfinder formation who operated out of the Meucon airfield. These pilots spearheaded Luftwaffe bombing raids on Britain. Upon landing in France, the French commandos discovered that the pilots no longer transited to the airfield from their billets by bus. Instead, each pilot made his own way to the hanger. As a result, the raid was cancelled.
- 28 "Organization and Method of Working of S.O.2." NA, WO 193/626, SOE Organization and Policy, 30 Mar 40-Aug 41.
- 29 "Outline Plan of SO 2 Operations From September 1st, 1941 to October 1st 1942, ND." NA, HS2/79, File Policy and Planning of SOE Activities in Denmark.
- 30 "Organization and Method of Working of S.O.2." NA, WO 193/626, SOE Organization and Policy, 30 Mar 40-Aug 41.

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31 "War Cabinet - Future Strategy - Appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff Committee," 4 September 1940, 46. War Cabinet Weekly Resume (No. 53), NA, CAB 66/11, Memoranda, W.P. (40) 321 -W.P. (40) 370, Vol. XI.

32 Memorandum, "Note on SOE's Relations with Revolutionary Movements in Europe," 2 November 1942. NA, SOE Files, Poland 9, April 1942-February 1943.

33 Ibid.

34 SOE policy did allow for Secret Army personnel, in the interim, to: be usefully employed on minor sabotage not requiring technical skill, and in fostering similar action and passive resistance amongst the general populace. They might also provide armed covering parties for raids by saboteurs. SOE planners also realized that no uniform system could be adopted throughout the occupied countries, therefore they attempted to lay out some common characteristics that should be followed when organizing saboteurs and secret armies:

- a. Groups of saboteurs and secret armed forces should be kept small, 6 or 7 men in the case of saboteurs, and not exceeding 10-12 for armed forces. The latter should have a higher organisation of companies consisting of 3 or 4 groups.
- b. Not more than 10 such groups or companies should be controlled by a district organiser.
- c. Not more than 10 districts should be controlled by an area organiser.
- d. Both district and area organisers should have deputies as well as a small staff and area organisers should have their own wireless communications, couriers and dumps of arms and sabotage materials.
- e. Where a single organisation has been decided upon the area organiser will direct the activities of both the saboteurs and the armed forces. On the lower levels they will invariably be separate.

See "SO 2 Programme," 9 June 1941. NA, HS 2/79, File Policy and Planning of SOE Activities in Denmark; and "Outline Plan of SO 2 Operations From September 1st, 1941 to October 1st 1942," ND. NA, HS2/79, File Policy and Planning of SOE Activities in Denmark.

35 Macksey, 165.

36 Memorandum, "Note on SOE's Relations with Revolutionary Movements in Europe," 2 November 1942. NA, SOE Files, Poland 9, April 1942-February 1943.

37 Letter, "Following from Chiefs of Staff No. C.O.S. (M.E.) 271, General A.F. Brooke, Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee to Commanders-in-Chief, 2 Jun 42." NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.

38 The SOE operated globally but was organized into eight permanent sections based on function and targeted country or geographical area. Specifically, the eight sections were:

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1. Air Liaison (AL Section)
2. Escape (DF Section)
3. France (F and RF Sections)
4. Iberian Peninsula (H Section)
5. Netherlands (N Section)
6. Belgium (T Section)
7. Germany (X Section)
8. Yugoslavia (Y Section)

In the Far East the SOE created Force 136 to operate against the Japanese forces based on the same missions and principles as it did in Europe.

39 Ivor Porter, *Operation Autonomous. With SOE in Wartime Romania* (London: Chatoo & Windus, 1989), 67.

40 Memorandum, "SOE and Revolutionary Movements in Europe," MPX to MX, 7 December 1942. NA, SOE Files, Poland 9, April 1942-February 1943.

41 Dear, 134.

42 Letter, to Brigadier G.M.G. Davey, from MO4, GHQ, 9 January 1943. NA, HS5/584, File Greece No. 585A.

43 Ibid., 149.

44 Letter, Moyne to Bullard, 26 June 1943. NA, KV4/171, General Policy on Liaison with SOE. The SOE also regularly turn a blind eye to the killing of prisoners. In a classified document listed as "Most Secret," SOE staff conceded that the "Disposal of prisoners after capture is a very difficult problem." Over seven decades later, the details of the rather lengthy paragraph remain classified. In addition, numerous SOE reports revealed that prisoners were regularly killed by partisans and guerrilla bands and there was little they could have done, even if they had wanted to, to prevent it. At one point SOE supported partisans were told to issue "passes" to Italian troops that would provide safe conduct. The SOE operatives readily admitted, "we don't know whether the partisans would honour that pass, but we didn't give a damn; the idea was to make the Italians completely useless to the Germans." Dear, 156-157; and "Guerilla Warfare. Notes on Discussion with Brigadier Myers, 1 October 1943." NA, HS 5/425, SOE Files, Greece, No. 190, Vol. 2.

45 Cited in Andy Durovecz, *My Secret Mission* (New York: Luqus Publications, 1996), 36.

46 M.R.D. Foot, "What use was SOE?" Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), February 2003, 76.

47 Ibid., Foot explains that Dalton was a labour minister who was given SOE as a sop by Churchill to allow the opposition party to control one of the secret services. Dalton was later relieved when he used SOE's telephone tapping facilities to spy on his colleagues on the Labour Party's national executive.

48 Cited in David Stafford, *Britain and European Resistance 1940-1945. A Survey of the Special Operations Executive, with Documents* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1980), 4.

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- 49 Cited in Manchester and Reid, 274.
- 50 Cited in Jonathan F. Vance, *Unlikely Soldiers. How two Canadians fought the secret war against Nazi Occupation* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008), 116. Gubbins also observed that senior military staff saw the SOE as “a somewhat disreputable child.” Cited in Giles Milton, *Churchill’s Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare* (New York: Picador, 2016), 50.
- 51 Vance, 274.
- 52 Macksey, 52. The War Office staff was little different. They maintained, “We are sure of our artillery and aircraft; we know exactly what they have and have not done. You saboteurs may provide us with a bonus, but it will be a bonus, not a certainty.” M.R.D. Foot, “Was the SOE Any Good?” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 16 (1981), 176.
- 53 Macksey, 53.
- 54 Cited in Milton, 50.
- 55 Macksey, 53. Colin Gubbins stated, the Foreign Office regarded SOE personnel as “nasty people who run around with explosives.” Cited in Vance, 117.
- 56 Jeffery, 356.
- 57 Leo Marks, *Between Silk and Cyanide. A Codemaker’s War 1941-1945* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), 147.
- 58 Jeffery, 354.
- 59 Foot, “What use was SOE?”, 76.

CHAPTER 2

- 1 For a full, detailed biography of Sir William Stephenson, see Bill Macdonald. *The True Intrepid. Sir William Stephenson and the Unknown Agents* (Surrey, B.C: Timberholme Books Ltd., 1998). There are other biographies as well, particularly Harford Montgomery Hyde, *Room 3603* (Toronto: Ballantine Books, 1962) and William Stevenson, *A Man Called Intrepid* (Guilford, Connecticut: Lyons Press, 2000). However, both are criticized for their inaccuracies. In fact, the Stevenson book has been called fiction by some.
- 2 Patrick Howarth, *Undercover. The Men and Women of the SOE* (London: Phoenix Press, 1980), 26.
- 3 Macdonald, *The True Intrepid*, 54.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 58.
- 5 British Security Coordination (henceforth BSC), *The Secret History of British Intelligence in the Americas, 1940-1945* (New York: Fromm International, 1999), xxvii.

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6 The US congress passed a series of Neutrality Acts in the 1930s as a result of the increasing conflict in Europe and Asia. Their root lay in a growing belief that isolationism and non-interference was the best policy, particularly after the experience of the First World War. The Nye Committee hearings (1934-1936), as well as a number of books, fuelled a popular belief that American participation in the First World War was orchestrated by bankers and arms dealers for financial gain. As a result, powerful lobbies in Congress pushed for non-interventionism. Democratic President F.D. Roosevelt and his Secretary of State, Cordell Hall, were strongly against the Neutrality Acts.

7 BSC, xxvi.

8 Macdonald, 5 & 71.

9 Cited in Ibid., 72.

10 For example, a simple ad was placed in the *Toronto Telegram* – “Wanted women for specialized military work, Apply; Mr. Bill Simpson, 25 King St. W. Toronto.” Simpson’s real name was Eric Curwain, who acted as Stephenson’s chief recruiting officer. See Lynn Philip Hodgson, *Inside Camp X*, (Port Perry, Ontario: 2002), 65. Hodgson asserts that this one ad alone resulted in the recruitment of 1,500 women from mainly Toronto but also other parts of Canada.

11 Macdonald, 80.

12 BSC, xxx.

13 The relationship would eventually sour as the FBI’s exclusive relationship with BSC deteriorated once Stephenson became involved with Bill Donovan as Co-ordinator of Information and later as Head of the Office of Strategic Services. In addition, when the US entered the war, BSC began to deal with a multitude of other security organizations.

14 The Security Executive was created by Churchill in June 1940, as one of his first acts as Prime Minister, as a result of the disastrous outcome of the German invasion of the Low Countries and France. The catalyst to stand-up the committee was partly his dissatisfaction with the existing security and intelligence agencies, but also his erroneous belief that the German success in Europe was partly due to fifth column activity. As a result, Churchill wanted to ensure a coordinating body existed that would make certain fifth columnists would not be possible in England, particularly should the Germans invade.

15 David Stafford, *Camp X* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys Publishers, 1986), 13.

16 “British Offices in Washington,” 24 March 1943. NA, HS7/76, File History 43, Notes on American Organisations and Personnel.

17 BSC, 104.

18 Ibid., xxxv. Stephenson and the BSC integrated SIS, SOE, censorship, codes and ciphers, security, communications and controlled all these functions in the Western Hemisphere.

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- 19 "British Offices in Washington," 24 March 1943. NA, HS7/76, File History 43, Notes on American Organisations and Personnel.
- 20 BSC, xxviii; and Stafford, *Camp X*, 28.
- 21 Donovan earned the title "Wild Bill" as a result of his aggressive command of the "Fighting 69th." Although a Republican, he was also close friends with the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, the Secretary of War, Henry Stimson and the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox. BSC, 39.
- 22 Stafford, *Camp X*, 27.
- 23 BSC, 16-17.
- 24 Foot, "What use was SOE?", 79.
- 25 BSC, 11 & 31-32.
- 26 Ibid., xxi.

CHAPTER 3

1 BSC, xxxii & 55. The senior hierarchy of the SOE viewed their operations outside of Europe as immensely important. The Political Warfare section responsible for the USA, working through the BSC, had specific objectives:

1. Political warfare campaign to European, African, and Middle Eastern theatres, through ostensibly American shortwave broadcasts in 15 languages over most powerful American stations.
2. Political warfare within USA forming and directing interventionist societies, holding meetings, planting material in newspapers (especially through Overseas News Agency, controlled by SO), distributing pamphlets (ten million copies of one pamphlet alone), spreading rumours.
3. Campaign against America First and other isolationist societies: collections of material for US newspapers to publish and US government agencies to use; organized opposition; exposure of isolationist propaganda machine, ending in prosecution of George Hill and the German agent George Sylvester Viereck.
4. Analysis of anti-British and isolationist feeling after Pearl Harbour, used by President in his speech of February 1942, and by US government in introducing new restrictions on anti-Roosevelt and anti-Allied propaganda, leading to prosecutions for treason.
5. Guidance of the propaganda activities of COI and OSS along lines favourable to British policy throughout the world.

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See "SOE/New York – Activities of GP, GO1, and GO3 Sections," 22 November 1944. NA, HS7/79, File SOE History 46, SOE Activities in USA and Latin America, 1940-1944.

In January 1941, the SOE also implemented a plan to:

1. Appoint a representative in each Latin American Republic with a view to establishing an SO organisation to cover Latin America.
2. Recruit in the Americas citizens of enemy or enemy occupied countries who would return to their countries of origin to contact already existing subversive elements and to form new subversive cells.
3. Take any warrantable notion likely to influence the entry of the US into the war and to discredit the enemies of the Allies in the US.
4. Make contact with all the various groups of dissatisfied European refugees and free movements in the USA.
5. Arrange lines of communications from the Western Hemisphere into enemy and enemy occupied countries. See "A Short History of SOE Activities in the USA and Latin America." NA, HS7/79, File SOE History 46, SOE Activities in USA and Latin America, 1940-1944.

2 BSC, 241.

3 Ibid., xxvi & 239.

4 Ibid., 243-252. Similarly, the Americans developed a program called Ship Observer Unit (SOU) in December 1942 to "secure strategic information about military, naval, economic, and political conditions in enemy-occupied and neutral territory." Seamen's organizations, ship operators and other maritime channels were accessed by American agents to gather information. The OSS official history noted that the SOU was far more successful at getting information from seamen than Army, Navy or FBI agents, since seamen tended to have a mistrust of the official agencies, seeing them akin to police. Roosevelt, xiii.

5 Roosevelt, 163-165.

6 Ibid., 20 & 59-65.

7 Macdonald, 82.

8 BSC, 66-87; and Macdonald, 83.

9 Macdonald, 83. This ploy backfired. The rally was poorly attended so those who arrived with the phoney tickets hoping to create a ruckus were simply shown to their seats. Their presence simply filled seats that would have gone empty giving the appearance of a larger body of supporters than actually existed.

10 BSC, 193-198, 204-208 and 214-216; and Macdonald, 183-184.

ENDNOTES

- 11 "A Short History of SOE Activities in the USA and Latin America." NA, HS7/79, File SOE History 46, SOE Activities in USA and Latin America, 1940-1944. See also BSC, 407-416.
- 12 "A Short History of SOE Activities in the USA and Latin America."
- 13 Ibid. See also BSC, 59-60.
- 14 BSC, 153-155.
- 15 "A Short History of SOE Activities in the USA and Latin America." See also BSC, 55-57 & 143-151.
- 16 The German declaration of war was based on the American violation of its neutrality. There was some merit to their accusation. On 11 September 1941, the President had publicly ordered the US Navy and US Air Force to shoot on sight any German war vessel. He reiterated this policy publicly once again on 27 October 1941. "German Declaration of War with the United States, 11 December 1941." <<http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/gerdec41.asp>>, accessed 3 January 2014.
- 17 Quoted in Macdonald, 101.

CHAPTER 4

- 1 "South America," 15 May 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.
- 2 BSC, 253.
- 3 "Extract from the Minutes of a Meeting of the Chiefs of Staff on 16th June, 1942," COS (42) 180th Meeting. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.
- 4 "Extract from the Minutes of a Meeting of the Chiefs of Staff on 16th June, 1942," COS (42) 180th Meeting. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.
- 5 "Interview with the American ambassador, 5th May 1942." NA, FO 371, File – 1942, General File No. 56.
- 6 Cited in BSC, 257.
- 7 "Memorandum," 27 March 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.
- 8 "SOE/New York – Activities of GP, GO1, and GO3 Sections," 22 November 1944; and "Outline of SOE Activities in USA and Latin America." NA, HS7/79, File SOE History 46, SOE Activities in USA and Latin America, 1940-1944; and BSC, 276.

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9 “Memorandum by SOE on Axis Penetration in South and Central America,” 1 April 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56. The report added,

The [US] State Department considers that their ‘good neighbour policy,’ combined with economic pressure, can secure all that the Allies require. For this reason, United States action is confined to the activities of the FBI, which is a branch of the State Department concerned with secret intelligence. Colonel Donovan’s organisation, which includes the American counterpart of SOE, with whom we work in close and most friendly cooperation in other parts of the world, is not at present allowed to operate in South America, although this decision may be reconsidered in the near future.

10 “COS (42) 180th Meeting, Extract from the Minutes of a Meeting of the Chiefs of Staff on 16th June 1942 –Meeting with Colonel Donovan.” NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56. BSC, 276.

11 “South America,” 15 May 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.

12 Telegraph, Sir N. Charles, No. 326, “From Rio De Janeiro to Foreign Office,” 21 March 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.

13 “South America – Appendix,” 15 May 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56; and “Memorandum by SOE on Axis Penetration in South and Central America – Annex A,” 1 April 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.

14 “Memorandum by SOE on Axis Penetration in South and Central America – Annex A,” 1 April 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.

15 “Memorandum by SOE on Axis Penetration in South and Central America – Annex A,” 1 April 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File - 1942, General File No. 56.

16 Telegraph, Mr. Bateman, No. 104, “From Mexico to Foreign Office,” 23 March 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.

17 Telegraph, Mr. Brickell, No. 11, “From Asuncion to Foreign Office,” 28 March 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.

18 “Memorandum by SOE on Axis Penetration in South and Central America – Annex A,” 1 April 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.

19 “South America – Appendix,” 15 May 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56; and “Memorandum by SOE on Axis Penetration in South and Central America - Annex A,” 1 April 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.

20 “Memorandum by SOE on Axis Penetration in South and Central America,” 1 April 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.

ENDNOTES

- 21 "SOE/New York – Activities of GP, GO1, and GO3 Sections," 22 November 1944; and "Outline of SOE Activities in USA and Latin America." NA, HS7/79, File SOE History 46, SOE Activities in USA and Latin America, 1940-1944. See also BSC, 288-342.
- 22 "SOE/New York – Activities of GP, GO1, and GO3 Sections," 22 November 1944; and "Outline of SOE Activities in USA and Latin America." NA, HS7/79, File SOE History 46, SOE Activities in USA and Latin America, 1940-1944.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Report, "SOE in S. America," 16 April 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.
- 26 Minute, "Mr. O Scott," 25 April 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.
- 27 Minute, "Proposed SOE Activities in Latin America," 24 April 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.
- 28 Minute, "Proposed SOE Activities in Latin America," 24 April 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.
- 29 Report, "SOE in S. America," 16 April 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.
- 30 Letter, "Personal and Secret," 28 March 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.
- 31 "Special Meeting held in Board Room, 64 Baker Street at 1700 hours on 18th August 1944." NA, HS 6/260. SOE Files, Belgium No. 228.
- 32 Letter, CD to Cadogan, CD/3983, 17 December 1942. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56.
- 33 BSC, 343.

CHAPTER 5

- 1 Colonel F. H. Walter, "Cloak and Dagger," Historical Section (GS), 29 June 1946, 3.
- 2 Roy MacLaren, *Canadians Behind Enemy Lines 1939-1945* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 14.

ENDNOTES

3 His outlook on special operations forces was captured in a letter to the Chief of the General Staff in Canada. He wrote, "I have watched with interest the organization here of such special units as Commandos, Ski Battalions and Paratroops. The cycle is always the same - initial enthusiasm which is very high, drawing good officers and men from regular units, distracting and unsettling others, and upsetting the units' organization. With a prolonged period spent in awaiting employment, the enthusiasm evaporates." Lieutenant-General A.G.L. McNaughton, 19 August 1941. Library Archives of Canada (LAC), RG 24, Vol. 12260, File: 1 Para Tps/1, Message (G.S. 1647), Lieutenant-General McNaughton to Major-General Crerar, 19 August 1941.

4 Walter, 3.

5 "Future Programme," F/FR/2161 to A/DE, 29 July 1943. NA, HS 7/121. File – SOE History 86.

6 Ibid.

7 Walter, 5; and Maclaren, 23.

8 Public Record Office (PRO), *SOE Syllabus. Lessons in Ungentlemanly Warfare, WWII* (London: Public Records Office, 2001), 1.

9 Raiding parties did only the para-military course and were then sent to a holding school. The commando school at Arisaig, which belonged to MI(R), became the first of the para-military schools. The first courses for SOE were conducted in December 1940 at Brickendonbury and Arisaig.

10 A three-digit identifier for a STS meant it was located outside the UK. During the war over 60 SOE training establishments were created worldwide. By January 1945, a total of 1,768 SOE personnel were employed at the various special training schools. The breakdown was 149 officers and 1,619 other ranks (ORs). Another 1,164 personnel were employed at research facilities. Total SOE numbers had actually decreased from 4,361 in September to 3,962 by January 1945. "Statement of SOE Activities Prepared in Consultation with MG 1 (SP), MO 1, 15 February 1945." NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.

11 Stafford, *Camp X*, 17-19.

12 Ibid., 21.

13 Ibid., 22-23.

14 Letter, "207 Military Mission," 30 October 1941. NA, WO 193/631, MO1 Collation, SOE Series General SOE 9, Military Mission 207. STS Canada.

15 Letter, Macklin to Constantine, 25 October 1941. Lynn Philip Hodgson files (hereafter LPH Files).

16 BSC, xi. Hodgson notes that the RCMP called Camp X - S25-1-1. Hodgson, *Inside Camp X*, 18.

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- 17 Minute Sheet, MO1/BM/1480, 13 November 1941. NA, WO 193/631, MO1 Collation, SOE Series General SOE 9, Military Mission 207. STS Canada.
- 18 Letter, Macklin to Constantine, 25 October 1941. LPH Files.
- 19 Ibid. He noted, "the officer selected to be Adjutant and Q.M. should, therefore, be a very reliable type... They do not need to know the purpose of the school as their work is purely administrative."
- 20 The school had three COs during its existence. They were Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Terence Roper-Caldbeck, Lieutenant-Colonel R.M. Bill Brooker and Lieutenant-Colonel Cuthbert Skilbeck.
- 21 David Stafford, *Secret Agent. The True Story of the Special Operations Executive* (London: BBC Worldwide Ltd., 2000), 39.
- 22 PRO, *SOE Syllabus*, 13. It was only after the war that the locals actually learned of the true nature of the camp. Camp X historian Lynn Philip Hodgson asserts that the name Camp X was given by the locals due to the "mysterious goings on behind the barbed wire." Hodgson, *Inside Camp X*, 178.
- 23 "Notes by GM 175 on STS 103," (as result of visit on 8th & 9th March, 1943). NA, HS7/76, File History 43, Notes on American Organisations and Personnel. The FBI members trained at STS 103. An official report captured, "While it is not known to what extent they benefited by this instruction from a practical point of view, there is little doubt that the offer of STS-103's facilities has done much to help BSC's general relations with the FBI." "American Organizations in Washington with whom British Security Coordination Works," 24 March 1943, 5. NA, HS7/76, File History 43, Notes on American Organisations and Personnel.
- 24 "Outline of SOE Activities in USA and Latin America." NA, HS7/79, File SOE History 46, SOE Activities in USA and Latin America, 1940-1944.

CHAPTER 6

- 1 OSS Syllabus, Captain William G. Tharp, 2 September 1944. National Archives, File: Wash-OSS-Ops-97.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 In 1936, the President directed the FBI to provide information on a regular basis on communist and fascist subversion in the US. This drove much of the focus on espionage, subversion and sabotage by the three existing intelligence organisations. See Dennis De Brandt, "Structuring Intelligence for War," *Studies in Intelligence. Journal of the American Intelligence Professional*, OSS, 60th Anniversary Special Edition, June 2002, 43-44.

ENDNOTES

4 Ibid., 43.

5 Ibid., 43.

6 BSC, 5-7.

7 The President had already authorized the FBI to carry out counter-intelligence and security operations in Latin America. Ibid., 51.

8 Roosevelt, 5 & 9-27; and BSC, 54.

9 Roosevelt, 29-92; and OSS Syllabus. Later additions included Secret Intelligence (SI) because intelligence was rated as inadequate from normal open services and Special Operations (SO) because there was no other agency to conduct unorthodox operations.

10 Roosevelt, 8.

11 Ibid., 8. The President and Donovan originally agreed that it was “advisable to have no directive in writing” for specific functions of the COI. Moreover, words such as “military,” “strategic,” “intelligence,” “enemy,” “warfare,” “psychological,” “attack,” etc. were carefully avoided both in the Presidential order and in the White House announcement on the subject. However, by late October 1942, the “vagueness” in the directive began to backfire, as the COI ran into “real or imagined” conflicts with other government departments. As a result, Donovan recommended writing out the directive to “avoid misunderstandings with other departments.” Ibid., 9 & 15.

12 BSC, 28.

13 The official history of the OSS actually makes mention of the close personal relations between Stephenson and Donovan. Roosevelt, 76.

14 BSC, 25.

15 OSS Syllabus. Under the OSS construct the major divisions were: Intelligence (SI, R&A, FN, X-2); Operations (SO, MO, ON); and Services (all administrative functions).

16 Memorandum, “United States Office of Strategic Services (OSS), 9 Oct 1942.” NA, WO 193/1007, File Information on Similar American Organisations.

17 “Abstract of JCS 155/7/D, Dated 5 April, 1943.” NA, WO 204/11598, Ops SOE/OSS.

18 BSC, xxi.

19 “A Short History of SOE Activities in the USA and Latin America.” NA, HS7/79, File SOE History 46, SOE Activities in USA and Latin America, 1940-1944. See also Roosevelt, *War Report of the OSS*, 76.

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- 20 Anthony Moore, "Notes on Co-Operation Between SOE and OSS," January 1945. NA, RG 226; Entry 136, Box 158, Folder Appendix III, 1722.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 "Abstract of JCS 155/7/D, Dated 5 April, 1943." NA, WO 204/11598, Ops SOE/OSS.

CHAPTER 7

- 1 Sue Ferguson, "Forgotten Truths About Camp X," *Maclean's*, April 14, 2003, 49.
- 2 Minute Sheet, "Stores for special units," 13 November 1941. NA, WO 193/631, MO1 Collation, SOE Series General SOE 9, Military Mission 207. STS Canada; and PRO, *SOE Syllabus*, 11. The first course was actually scheduled to start on 1 December 1941, however, it was delayed.
- 3 "A Short History of SOE Activities in the USA and Latin America." NA, HS7/79, File SOE History 46, SOE Activities in USA and Latin America, 1940-1944.
- 4 BSC, 423-424.
- 5 Joe Gelleny in Blake Heathcote, *Testaments of Honour* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2002), 194-198.
- 6 Ibid., 194-198.
- 7 Marks, 47. Gelleny stated, "The RCMP starting doing background checks on me, on my family and everybody I knew. They gave me all kinds of tests: psychological tests, personality tests, IQ tests." Gelleny in Heathcote, 194-198.
- 8 Durovecz, 3.
- 9 Ibid., 28.
- 10 Ibid., 63.
- 11 Ibid., 65-66.
- 12 Ibid., 66.
- 13 Ibid., 66.
- 14 Cited in Patrick K. O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies and Saboteurs. The Unknown Story of the Men and Women of World War II's OSS* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 4.

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- 15 Dear, 24.
- 16 Cited in O'Donnell, 4.
- 17 Durovecz, 3.
- 18 Ibid., 57-58.
- 19 Ibid., 68-69.
- 20 Durovecz, 85.
- 21 "Notes by GM 175 on STS 103," (as result of visit on 8th & 9th March, 1943). NA, HS7/76, File History 43, Notes on American Organisations and Personnel. Bickham Sweet-Escott, a banker and during the war one of Collin Gubbins' inner circle, observed during a visit that Camp X, "was organized with real Knightsbridge barracks efficiency and there was a great deal of spit and polish, saluting and sharp words of command." Cited in Giles Milton, 253.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Letter, Roper-Caldbeck to Constantine, ND. LPH Files.
- 24 Letter, Constantine to Roper-Caldbeck, 8 January 1942. LPH Files.

CHAPTER 8

- 1 Hydra personnel were all civilians at first, although there was a desire to make them all military. "Notes by GM 175 on STS 103."
- 2 David White, "The Rockex Cypher Machine. Its History and How it was used," unpublished manuscript, ND. LPH Files.
- 3 An official report noted, "At STS 103 in Canada, there is a radio transmitting and receiving station (referred to as Hydra) through which all cables to and from London are received and sent. The Commercial Cables are only used in the event of a breakdown of Hydra. Commercial Cables are used for the purpose of communicating with Central and South America." "Notes on the Present SO Organisation in the Western Hemisphere," ND, 10. NA, HS7/76, File History 43, Notes on American Organisations and Personnel.
- 4 BSC, 446-449. The secret network for South America was eventually dropped.
- 5 Dwight Hamilton, ed. *Inside Canadian Intelligence* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2011), 146.
- 6 BSC, 457.
- 7 See BSC, 447-497 for a detailed account of Hydra.

ENDNOTES

- 8 The Oshawa Wireless Station ceased operations in 1969.
- 9 Canada passed all the documentation to the CIA in Langley, Virginia. See John Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows. The RCMP Security Service* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1980), 6, 65 and 71-79.

CHAPTER 9

- 1 Harold A. Skaarup, *Out of Dark – Light. A History of Canadian Military Intelligence* (Bloomington, IN: iuniverse, 2005), 65.
- 2 Stafford, *Secret Agent*, 34-35.
- 3 OSS Syllabus.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 BSC, 417.
- 6 Memorandum, “SOE and Revolutionary Movements in Europe,” MPX to MX, 7 December 1942. NA, SOE Files, Poland 9, April 1942-February 1943.
- 7 BSC, 421.
- 8 Gelleny in Heathcote, 197.
- 9 SOE special training schools were almost all isolated country mansions, many quite opulent and grand, taken over for the duration of the war. This is one reason that many detractors stated SOE stood for “Stately ’omes of England.”
- 10 Dear, 25.
- 11 Gelleny in Heathcote, 198.
- 12 Ibid., 199.

CHAPTER 10

- 1 “Extract from the Minutes of a Meeting of the Chiefs of Staff on 16th June, 1942,” COS (42) 180th Meeting. NA, FO 371/30501, File – 1942, General File No. 56. For the Americans, to ensure the coordination of PW operations with military operations, they created a Planning Group consisting of nine members within the OSS organization

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charged with supervising and coordinating the planning and execution of the military program for PW. As such all major operations for PW were to be integrated with the military and naval programs by the Planning Group and submitted after approval by the Director of OSS to the JCS for approval. "Abstract of JCS 155/7/D, dated 5 April, 1943." NA, WO 204/11598, Ops SOE/OSS.

2 Letter, Glenconner to Leeper (Head of Mission British Embassy to Greece), 18 May 1943. NA, HS5/587, File SOE / Greece No. 586A. The author also noted, "As I had been constantly warned by Head Office not to be difficult where the Americans are concerned...."

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 "S.O. Operation Instructions to Lieutenant Colonel W. A. Eddy, U.S. Marines," 14 October 1942. NA, WO 204/115, Ops SOE/OSS. Specifically, the US president ordered the OSS to carry out "certain preliminary negotiations with French Leaders in North Africa." In fact, the expected results were such that the operation order stated, "The success of these negotiations may greatly reduce, or even make unnecessary, the tasks given you in these instructions." "S.O. Operation Instructions to Lieutenant Colonel W. A. Eddy, U.S. Marines," 14 October 1942. NA, WO 204/115, Ops SOE/OSS.

8 Letter, Glenconner to Leeper.

9 Memorandum, "Coordination of SOE/OSS Operations," G-3 section to G-3, 19 July 1943. NA, WO 204/11599, File Policy SOE & SOE / OSS Combined.

10 Cited in Mark Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 6-7.

11 "War Cabinet Chiefs of Staff Committee – SOE Anglo-American Collaboration," COS (42) 327, 30 June 1942. NA, WO 193/1007, File Information on Similar American Organisations.

12 Ibid. British spheres of influence where the Americans would be allowed a small liaison cell were listed as India, East Africa, Western Africa, Balkans and Middle East. Western Europe was recognized as a major sphere for Britain but since the US was deploying a great number of troops, arrangements were made for a US mission to work alongside the British.

13 Telegram, JSM Washington to WCP London, 5 June 1943. NA, WO 193/1007, File Information on Similar American Organisations.

14 Letter, SHAEF/17515/Ops(C), 10 December 1944. NA, WO 219/5307, File SOE/OSS Activities. Due to the Allied advance and the large areas of France and the Low

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Countries that was liberated a Special Force Mission was established in Brussels to deal with matters relating to operations in the Low Countries and Luxembourg.

15 Memorandum, "Role of SOE in Land Operations," G-3 to Chief of Staff, 3 April 1943. NA, WO 204/11599, File Policy SOE & SOE/OSS Combined.

16 "Organization and Method of Working of S.O.2," 24 March 1941. NA, WO 193/626, SOE Organization and Policy, 30 Mar 40-Aug 41.

17 Memorandum, "Subversive Activity in the Occupied Territories," NA, KV4/171, General Policy on Liaison with SOE.

18 "Organization and Method of Working of S.O.2," 24 March 1941. NA, WO 193/626, SOE Organization and Policy, 30 Mar 40-Aug 41.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Cited in Dear, 7.

22 Office of Strategic Services, *Simple Sabotage Field Manual No. 3*, ND, 1.

23 Ibid., 2.

24 Cited in Durovecz, 32. As an example of an intended campaign, a SOE document explained, "For example, in Norway, the SOE intent in late November 1940 was two-fold. First, "we aim at organising the indigenous anti-Nazi organisations which already exist into well-trained and well-equipped groups of saboteurs and guerilla fighters who would be ready at a given signal to cut communications, destroy important objectives and annihilate scattered German garrisons in many parts of Norway either as a widespread, independent operation or as an organised diversion to coincide with some important offensive movement elsewhere. Secondly, we aim at tip-and-run raids, probably from the sea, by groups of specially-trained men, combined perhaps with attacks from the air on particular objectives. We hope that a series of these independent operations, coupled with a carefully controlled policy of passive resistance and, later, also spasmodic acts of sabotage by our indigenous organisations, will keep the enemy continually in a state of alarm in Norway so that he has to maintain much larger garrisons throughout that country and generally pay a lot more attention to holding it in subjection than would otherwise be necessary." Memorandum, "Policy," 29 November 1940. NA, HS 2/218, File SOE/Norway 68, April 1940 to December 1944.

25 SOE Lesson Plans, "Guerilla Warfare," "A" No.1, April 1943. LPH Papers. The lesson plan also stated, "Surprise, surprise, surprise. Hit hard where the enemy is most vulnerable, disappear completely and reappear for another raid somewhere else." It also emphasized "only engage in an operation which promises a 75% chance of success."

26 BSC, 427.

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27 Milton, 85-87, 163-65, 212-214, 297-298; and Dear, 37. Station IX (the Frythe or Firs as it is sometimes referred to) is credited with producing approximately three and a half million anti-personnel mines, one and a half million sticky bombs, one million puff-balls and two million anti-aircraft fragmentation bombs, as well as millions of booby traps, specialist explosives and complex fuses. Milton, 298.

28 Dear, 39.

29 Binney, 94.

30 "F Section," no date, 9. NA, HS 7/121. File – SOE History 86.

31 OSS Syllabus – lesson plans, ND. Author's collection.

32 Memorandum, "SOE's Plan for Co-operation with the Polish Secret Army," 2 January 1942. NA, HS 5/59, File Albania – Operational Directives Foreign Office Directive to OC Allied Mission in Albania. Churchill also stated, "I feel it is right at this moment to make it clear that, while an ever-increasing bombing offensive against Germany will remain one of the principal methods by which we hope to bring the war to an end, it is by no means the only method which our growing strength now enables us to take into account."

33 "Characteristics of a Modern insurrectional Movement, Description of a Descent Region and of its Work During the Descent," 1. NA, HS4/155, SOE Files, Poland 28.

34 Memorandum, "SOE's Plan for Co-operation with the Polish Secret Army," 2 January 1942. NA, HS 5/59, File Albania – Operational Directives Foreign Office Directive to OC Allied Mission in Albania; and "SOE's Plans for Co-operation with the Polish Secret Army," 2 January 1942. NA, HS4/160, SOE Files, Poland 32.

35 "Outline Plan of SO 2 Operations from September 1st, 1941 to October 1st 1942," ND. NA, HS2/79, File Policy and Planning of SOE Activities in Denmark.

36 Ibid. The SOE also proposed to build up and equip by 1 October 1942, sabotage organizations that would work as a corollary to the secret armies, to the fullest extent that local circumstances would permit in the following countries:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| a. Norway | 525 personnel; |
| b. Denmark | 430; |
| c. Holland | 1050; |
| d. Belgium | 700; |
| e. France | 2800; |
| f. Poland | 1820; and |
| g. Czechoslovakia | 1225 personnel. |

The SOE calculated that the sabotage group would number 7-10 personnel and the secret army group 12 personnel. Their calculations were then based on the premise that two 250 lb containers would be required by each group for initial equipment. To support their

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1941-1942 campaign to raise their groups and armies a total of 1,356 sorties, over a seven-month period, with an average of 194 sorties a month, were required. The following six months 1,278 sorties, or an average of 213 a month were needed. The problem that arose was the reality that in the fall of 1941, operations could only be carried out in moonlight, which restricted the flying to 10-14 days a month and it entailed using a large number of aircraft for a short period, which would be vetoed by the RAF because of the going belief that the aircraft would be most valuable for bombing. The SOE also intended to increase or commence the establishment of similar organizations in the Balkans, Switzerland, Tunisia, French West Africa, Algeria, Tangiers, French Morocco, Turkey and Iran and further afield in India, the Far East and South America.

37 Memorandum, S4 to 4351, "SO 2 Policy in Denmark," 12 June 1941. NA, HS 2/79, File Policy and Planning of SOE Activities in Denmark.

38 Ibid.

39 Memorandum, "Operational Directive to SOE/SO," 15 February 1944. NA, WO 219/5284, File SOE/SO Organisation and Terms of Reference.

40 "Action by Resistance Groups in the Event of a German Voluntary Withdrawal from Occupied Europe," 24 July 1943. NA, HS4/160, SOE Files, Poland 32.

41 Memorandum, "Memorandum to G3 AFHQ on SOE In Italy," 16 August 1943. NA, WO 204/11598, OPS SOE / OSS, File HS/AFHQ/ 2402.

42 Memorandum, "Appendix A, Memorandum to G3 AFHQ on SOE In Italy," 16 August 1943. NA, WO 204/11598, OPS SOE/OSS, File HS/AFHQ/ 2402.

43 Memorandum, "Appendix C, Memorandum to G3 AFHQ on SOE In Italy," 16 August 1943. NA, WO 204/11598, OPS SOE/OSS, File HS/AFHQ/ 2402.

44 Memorandum, "Operations, Special Force, Fifth Army, APO # 464, US Army," dated 24 August 1943. NA, WO 204/11598, OPS SOE/OSS, File HS/AFHQ/ 2402.

45 Memorandum, "OSS/SOE Resources for Operations in Italy, September – December 1943," dated 20 Sep 43. NA, WO 204/11598, OPS SOE/OSS, File HS/AFHQ/ 2402.

46 Ibid.

47 Memorandum, "Memorandum to G3 AFHQ on SOE In Italy," 16 August 1943. NA, WO 204/11598, OPS SOE/OSS, File HS/AFHQ/ 2402. The methodology utilized by the SOE was as follows:

The SOE party would proceed to the mainland in four main sections:

a. Section 1 (D-day)

This team would consist of the Commanding Officer, the adjutant, a wireless operator and set, and a clandestine section consisting of two Italian speaking officers and one wireless operator, all of whom would be in mufti. Their immediate tasks would be:

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- (1) To establish a small static HQ on the mainland on which future parties can concentrate.
 - (2) By means of the clandestine section to contact members of our groups and other Italian sympathisers immediately on landing.
 - (3) to establish contact, by means of a suitcase W/T set, with ISSU6, North Africa, the parent unit.
- b. Section 2 (D+2)
- Second-in-command
 - Remainder of personnel
 - 1 light signal section
 - 1 jeep
 - 4 motor cycles
- c. Section 3 (D+6)
- 2 clandestine sections, each consisting of 2 Italian speaking officers, 1 W/T operator, 1 Jeep (or if possible civilian car obtained locally), and 1 driver-batman, all operating in mufti.
- d. Section 4 (D+12)
- Holding and Training Section, whose task would be to receive, hold and train numbers of our groups and locally recruited agents.

Memorandum, "Memorandum to G3 AFHQ on SOE In Italy," 16 August 1943. NA, WO 204/11598, OPS SOE/OSS, File HS/AFHQ/ 2402.

48 "Future Programme," F/FR/2161 to A/DE, 29 July 1943. NA, HS 7/121. File – SOE History 86.

49 "Directive to French Country Sections for Planning and Operations," no date, 3. NA, HS 7/121. File – SOE History 86.

50 "Directive to French Country Sections for Planning and Operations," no date, 3. NA, HS 7/121. File – SOE History 86. SHAEF also issued a joint PWE/OWI and SOE/OSS Political Warfare Plan. It stated:

Activities undertaken as a continuation of current black and white propaganda themes supplemented by agents:

A. Preliminary Phase
Occupied Territories

(1) To Injure the Enemy

To supplement the specific SOE operations built around the Resistance groups, the unorganized masses of the populations will be educated, trained and directed to undertake on and before D. Day, destructive and negative actions leading to inter alia:

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- (a) immobilization of enemy rail, road, telephone and telegraph communications,
 - (b) undermining enemy troop morale,
 - (c) confusion and diversions in enemy back areas,
 - (d) guerilla activities, and
 - (e) promotion of strikes;
- (2) To Secure Maximum Aid for Allied Military Operations
- The population in general will be stimulated to assist the Allied military authorities, on the following broad lines:
- (a) utilization of inhabitants' local knowledge of enemy's dispositions, defences, dumps, etc.,
 - (b) utilization of local labour, skilled and unskilled, to supplement military personnel,
 - (c) preservation and reconstitution of local records useful to the Allies, and
 - (d) preservation of food-stuffs, livestock, fuel, vehicles, etc.; and
- (3) To secure the morale of civilian population and to guide their opinion between now and D. Day.

Germany

To assist the main Political Warfare campaign it is proposed to concentrate on two principal and potential Fifth Columns inside Germany:

- (1) Conscripted Foreign Workers – with whom some activity has already been generated by SOE, will be further trained and organized by special agents before departure from their own countries. Defeatist talk, rumours, and general nerve-war against the German civilians will be the chief weapons; and
- (2) Todt Organization – now manned chiefly by foreign workers, will also be penetrated so as to undermine the morale of German troops, the SD, the SS and Todt guards.

B. Preparatory Phase

Occupied Territories

As D. day approaches, the tempo of all activities will be accelerated.

C. Assault Phase

Occupied Territories

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Co-incident with the D-day official white announcement that “the invasion has begun” instructions will be issued to Resistance groups and agents to put into effect all operations designed to injure the enemy and to act on or prepare to act on those operations destined to secure maximum aid for Allied Military operations.

“Joint PWE/OWI and SOE/OSS Political Warfare Plan,” 5 October 1943. NA, HS4/58, File SOE Czechoslovakia, No. 56.

51 “Extract from COS (43) 249th meeting (O) Held 14th October, 1943.” NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.

52 “Statement of SOE Activities Prepared in Consultation with MG 1 (SP), MO 1, 15 February 1945.” NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.

53 Memorandum, CD/7092, C.D. to AD/E, AD/H, DP, AD/4, D/Q, 11 August 1944. NA, HS 6/260. SOE Files, Belgium No. 228.

54 Ibid.

CHAPTER 11

1 Memorandum, “Note on SOE’s Relations with Revolutionary Movements in Europe,” 2 November 1942. NA, SOE Files, Poland 9, April 1942-February 1943.

2 Ibid. The SOE also had issues dealing with many of the exiled governments and their military staffs.

3 Comment sheet on reference F/1543/130/19 of 17th January, SD to AD/E, 19 January 1944. NA, HS2/43, SOE Series, Denmark, November 1940 to October 1945. Another reported explained, “Guerilla warfare is not suited to the Danish temperament.... We have got to prepare the minds even of pro-British elements before they can be of use to us. Political assassination should be planned in such a way that they appear to be entirely inspired and carried out by Danes.” Memorandum, S4 to 4351, “SO 2 Policy in Denmark,” 12 June 1941. NA, HS 2/79, File Policy and Planning of SOE Activities in Denmark.

4 Comment sheet on reference F/1543/130/19 of 17th January, SD to AD/E, 19 January 1944. NA, HS2/43, SOE Series, Denmark, November 1940 to October 1945.

5 Ibid.

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6 Comment sheet on reference F/1543/130/19 of 17th January, SD to AD/E, 19 January 1944. NA, HS2/43, SOE Series, Denmark, November 1940 to October 1945. Additional pressure was placed on the Danes, particularly through Danish resistance groups, to understand the ramifications of their failure to take action with regard to the post war world. "It should be pointed out to the Danes," counselled one Foreign Office [FO] working group, "that, so far, they [Danes] have done nothing to justify anything other than a very back seat if indeed a seat at all, at the Peace Conference table, and only by action during the remainder of the war, indicating clearly their unity with the Allied Nations, would they deserve, or achieve, such a seat." In a letter to a Danish resistance group, SOE was equally abundantly clear that some form of action was required, and soon. "It would be most dangerous for Denmark," the letter warned, "if people started to say that the Danes were not prepared to do anything to help the United Nations cause until after the war was won, or until it was practically won." Letter, SOE HQ to SOE Stockholm, D429, 11 November 1942. HS 2/79, File Policy and Planning of SOE Activities in Denmark.

7 "F Section," no date, 1. NA, HS 7/121. File – SOE History 86.

8 Ibid., 1.

9 Ibid., 1.

10 Maclaren, 14.

11 "F Section," no date, 2. NA, HS 7/121. File – SOE History 86.

12 At one point, Lord Selborne, the Minister responsible for the SOE, directed his staff in relation to sharing information with General Charles De Gaulle and his staff, "I should wish you ...tell them nothing of our innermost and most confidential plans, and above all, such bases as you may establish in France must be our bases and known only to us." Cited in Mackenzie, 230.

13 Memorandum, "SOE and Revolutionary Movements in Europe," MPX to MX, 7 December 1942. NA, SOE Files, Poland 9, April 1942-February 1943. See also E.H. Cookridge, *They Came from the Sky* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1965), 171.

14 Letter, 141 to B/M, 24 May 1940. NA, HS 5/60, SOE Albania, No. 55.

15 Memorandum, "Norway," 1 September 1940. NA, HS 2/218, File SOE/Norway 68, April 1940 to December 1944.

16 Dear, 50. Even the British Chiefs of Staff Committee, who assigned operational tasks to the SOE, felt the SOE suffered from:

- a. Lack of Experience. An embryo organisation was started shortly before the war as an offshoot of SIS. This new Section was transferred from the Foreign Office and the present SOE organization was set up in mid-1940. Since this date its expansion in personnel and activities has been very

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rapid whilst the resources from which suitably qualified and experienced personnel can be recruited have been strictly limited.

- b. Conflict of Interest with SIS. Clashes of interests between SOE and SIS occur owing to the nature of their different activities and owing to overlap and competition in such limited facilities as recruitment of personnel, transport and inter-communications. These clashes, even with the closest liaison, cannot always be resolved as the two organisations are not in a position to assess the relative importance of their respective activities in each case;
- c. Control being exercised by a Ministry not in the full Strategic or Political Picture. In this respect SIS is at an advantage as it is under the Foreign Office and the Foreign Secretary is intimately concerned with the high direction of the war in all its aspects. On the other hand, SOE is outside the central war machine and its representatives are not always fully conversant with the strategic and political background. The issue of Chiefs of Staff directives which lay down priorities and indicate the work which the Chiefs of Staff would like to see carried out, cannot ensure that the day-to-day activities are closely related to the immediate operational requirements. Whilst closer liaison between the Service Departments, SOE and SIS in London might be achieved, we do not believe that this can provide a solution in itself.
- d. Control of Resistance Groups and National Armies actively engaged in Operations against the enemy. Experience has shown in the Balkans, and especially in Yugoslavia, that whereas SOE are able to initiate the formation and preparation of resistance groups, a time will come when either these resistance groups will develop in size or their activities will increase in scope to such an extent that SOE will no longer be able to exercise operational or administrative control satisfactorily. In such circumstances those groups must be transferred to the operational control of the Commander-in-Chief and fostered by the normal Service administrative machine. It is advisable that this transfer of responsibility should take place at an early rather than a late stage if full advantage is to be taken of their potentialities.
- e. Availability of Transport Facilities. The activities of SOE at present curtailed by a lack of suitable aircraft and sea transport. The Chiefs of Staff from time to time allocate craft to SOE indicating by the means of percentage the purpose for which SOE are to use them. A further difficulty, however, occurs because planned operations cannot always be carried out either owing to unsuitable weather conditions or hazards of the selected route. This uncertainty which is inevitable reacts unfavourably on our Allies.

“Memorandum by the chiefs of Staff - Co-ordination of SOE,” 29 December 1943. NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.

17 Ibid., 11.

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18 Milton, 178.

19 The availability of aircraft was always a point of contention. The Air Ministry consistently made the same argument. As an example, they assessed to support the SOE 1941-1942 campaign to raise their groups and armies necessitated 1,356 sorties over seven-month period with an average 194 sorties a month. The following six months required 1,278 sorties or an average of 213 a month. However, at the time in question drops could only be carried out in moonlight, which was confined to 10-14 days a month and entailed using a large number of aircraft for a short period when the RAF assessed they would be most valuable for accurate bombing. "Outline Plan of SO 2 Operations from September 1st, 1941 to October 1st 1942," ND. NA, HS 2/79, File Policy and Planning of SOE Activities in Denmark.

20 OSS Syllabus.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 SOE manual, "Training," ND, Part 3. NA, HS 2/229. File SOE/Norway 77.

25 SOE manual, "The Agents Life as an Individual," ND, Chapter II. NA, HS 2/229. File SOE/Norway 77.

26 OSS Syllabus.

27 Ibid.

28 O'Donnell, 155.

29 SOE manual, "CE Measures," ND. NA, HS 2/229. File SOE/Norway 77.

30 Foot, "What use was SOE?", 79. Numbers vary depending on source. The discovery of the German penetration threatened the very existence of the SOE. Its critics lobbied to have the SOE absorbed by SIS / MI6. Churchill, however, gave his confidence to the new director, Major-General Gubbins, and allowed the SOE to continue to exist. See also Mackenzie, 295-308. Mackenzie asserts that in total 56 agents were dropped into the Netherlands, 43 were dropped into German hands, 36 were later executed, 8 survived the war and the other 12 were listed as missing or dead. The SOE also dropped 544 containers of weapons and munitions into German hands.

31 Macksey, 118.

32 The security checks were a means of letting London know that the sender was okay. A lack of the security check or a change to its nature would indicate to headquarters in London that the agent had been captured and was operating under duress. Amazingly, in the case of the agent and radio set in Holland that was captured, the agent consistently failed to provide the correct security check when contacting London, yet headquarters

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remained oblivious and continued to dispatch agents. It was not until two SOE agents escaped and returned to England and revealed that the Germans were in control of the Dutch sets that the connection was terminated. See also Stafford, *Secret Agent*, 143-144; and Howarth, 226-227.

33 See Maclaren, 57-64; Cookridge, 59-63; Ford; and Vance.

34 "Captured German Document Entitled 'Principles of Guerilla Warfare' dated 25.10.41." NA, HS4/143, SOE Files, Poland, 9.

35 "Plan for SOE Activities in Greece," November 1942. NA, HS5/584, File Greece No. 585A.

36 Memorandum, "Projects for Sabotage Work in Occupied Countries," 18 December 1942. NA, HS4/143, SOE Files, Poland 9. The directive went on to state that "Targets should be selected with a view to slowing up an entire industry in any given area." Another document explained: "Not any German is killed and only those selected by GHQ for their particular brutality or others who are of particular importance such as Kutschera and Frank are killed. This selective policy has forced down the reprisal rate from 100 Poles to one German, to a present rate of twenty to one." Memorandum, "Polish Secret Army," 26 April 1944. NA, HS 5/59, File Albania – Operational Directives Foreign Office Directive to OC Allied Mission in Albania.

37 "War Cabinet - Future Strategy - Appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff Committee," 4 September 1940, 61. War Cabinet Weekly Resume (No. 53), NA, CAB 66/11, Memoranda, W.P. (40) 321 -W.P. (40) 370, Vol. XI.

CHAPTER 12

1 Howarth, 182. One SOE officer responsible for preparing agents believed:

I strongly advocate that before proceeding abroad an agent should be put through a proper interrogation by officers in this country competent to carry out this interrogation so that the agent's cover story can be tested out. His cover story is his life line and if this is at fault in the slightest detail one must regard the agent as being inefficiently equipped for his job. In this respect I gather that the cover stories are prepared for the agent by the Country Sections who are of course in close touch with the training school but in many cases the training school when training an agent do not know what cover story is going to be given to the man they are training. If it is at all possible to combine these two operations, I would strongly advocate that this be done.

Letter, Major Roberts, 21 February 1942. NA, KV4/171, General Policy on Liaison with SOE.

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- 2 Cookridge, 50.
- 3 Dear, 155; and Howarth, 298. The risks were not insubstantial. When 22 OSS agents were discovered in Spain, a neutral country teetering on support of the Nazis, nine were killed in a shoot-out and 13 captured. To avoid a diplomatic catastrophe, the US government disavowed the agents who were on an approved mission, stating they were a rogue element within the OSS that was no longer under governmental control. All 13 agents were subsequently executed by the Spanish government. O'Donnell, 47.
- 4 Stafford, *Secret Agent*, 146.
- 5 Letter, Major Roberts, 21 February 1942. NA, KV4/171, General Policy on Liaison with SOE.
- 6 Howarth, 80.
- 7 "F Section," no date, 2. NA, HS 7/121. File – SOE History 86.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 "F Section," no date, 2. NA, HS 7/121. File – SOE History 86.
- 10 For instance, the SOE shipped 418,083 weapons to the French Resistance during the war, 47 per cent being sub-machine guns. This is not surprising since the Sten sub-machine gun was so inexpensive to manufacture. PRO, *SOE Syllabus*, 18.
- 11 "F Section," no date, 8. NA, HS 7/121. File – SOE History 86.
- 12 Dear, 146; and Maclaren, 27-43.
- 13 Maclaren, 34.
- 14 Walter, 8-9.
- 15 Quoted in Maclaren, 69.
- 16 Ibid., 70.
- 17 See Vance, *Unlikely Soldiers* and George H. Ford, ed., *The Making of a Secret Agent* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1978) for a detailed history.
- 18 See Ford, 246-253. The SOE also dropped Lieutenant Robert Berret Byerly and Lieutenant Romeo Sabourin into the hands of the Gestapo-controlled "Prosper" circuit.
- 19 Ibid., 255.
- 20 Ibid., 255.
- 21 Ibid., 272.
- 22 Maclaren, 94; and Skaarup, 74.

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23 *Maquis* were rural guerilla bands of French resistance fighters (*maquisards*) during World War II.

24 When D'Artois was in London in December 1943, he met another new SOE recruit, 19-year-old Sonia "Tony" Butt. While on training together in Scotland they decided to get married on 15 April 1944. They did not see other for the next six months as each was sent on a separate mission. Butt, the youngest SOE operator to be deployed in the field, was dropped near Le Mans to assist the resistance movement to create as much havoc as possible prior to the Normandy invasion. They reunited in Paris after the Normandy campaign.

25 The *Milice*, or French Militia, was a Vichy French paramilitary force created in cooperation with the Germans on 30 January 1943, to assist with rooting out and destroying the French Resistance during World War II.

26 Cited in Maclaren, 97.

27 At least one source credits D'Artois with at one time commanding three battalions of resistance fighters numbering 2,400 personnel. See Skaarup, 75.

28 After the war, D'Artois remained in the Canadian Armed Forces. In 1947, he led a risky rescue operation in the Arctic to save Canon J.B. Turner who had been accidentally shot. He was awarded the George Medal for his efforts. Newly promoted, Major D'Artois was also given command of an embryonic force called the Canadian Special Air Service Company from 1948-1949. See Colonel Bernd Horn, *The Canadian Special Air Service Company* (Kingston: CANSOFCOM ERC Press, 2017); and Bernd Horn, "A Military Enigma: The Canadian Special Air Service Company, 1948-49," *Canadian Military History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter 2001): 21-30. He also served in the Korean War, completing an operational tour with the 1st Battalion, The Royal 22nd Regiment. D'Artois died in 1999.

29 FFI was the formal name given to French Resistance fighters by General Charles De Gaulle during the later stages of the war. The name change was intended to reflect the changing nature of French resistance from an occupied country to one in the process of liberating itself. During the liberation of France, FFI units were more formally organized into light infantry units that served the Allied cause along with Free French Forces. By October 1944, FFI units were amalgamated into the French regular army.

30 Canada, *Uncommon Courage*, <<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/second-world-war/uncommon-courage>>, accessed 24 February 2019.

31 Maclaren, 128.

32 In reality only 11 actually possessed Canadian citizenship. Another 12 were in Canada illegally and the remainder were American Yugoslavs. Walter, 18.

33 Gelleny in Heathcote, 194.

34 Letter, DH18 to AD 3, 27 October 1942. NA, HS 4/91, SOE Hungary No. 8. This assessment was not surprising as an SOE appreciation determined that "She [Hungary]

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had never been actively engaged in the War. She had suffered no severe casualties, she was not a defeated nation and, above all, there was no suffering amongst the civil population. Far from her alliance with Germany leading to a deterioration of conditions of life, Hungary in the last four years, has derived nothing but benefit from her association with Germany and the standard of living has continued, if anything, to rise.” “Appreciation on Special Operation in Hungary by Comd. Force 399,” No Date. NA, HS4/131, SOE Files, Hungary No. 47.

35 Letter, DH18 to AD 3, 27 October 1942. NA, HS 4/91, SOE Hungary No. 8.

36 Durovecz, 7-8.

37 “Appreciation of Possible SOE Operations in Hungary,” 4 December 1943, 2. NA, HS4/131, SOE Files, Hungary No. 47.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Note, VCD to CD, 21 July 1943. NA, HS 4/90, SOE Files, Hungary No. 7. He also noted that “our two year flirtation with Romania has brought us no dividends worth mentioning nor has ‘John’ helped forward subversion in Bulgaria.”

41 Ibid. The Béla Kun Red Terror referred to violence that was committed during the four-month reign of Béla Kun and his Hungarian Soviet Republic from March to August 1919. Similar to the “Red Terror” in the Soviet Union, it was aimed at destroying political opposition.

42 The committee was careful to note that the “Bombing of Budapest is justified in any case on purely military grounds, as it is the most important railway centre East of the Reich frontiers.” Report, “Hungary,” 15 November 1943. NA, HS 4/91, SOE Hungary No. 8. The sentiment was widespread within the SOE. A letter a week prior affirmed, “We should do all possible to obtain the bombing of Hungary. This is more likely than anything else to convince the Hungarian Government of the necessity of immediate action. Past experience has shown that the Hungarian Government is above all concerned to spare Budapest the direct consequences of war. These people appear to think that the British are fond of them and will give them preferential treatment. Until they are shown the contrary, they will go on thinking they ‘can get away with’ anything.” Letter, B4 to B1/ COS London, “Plans for Hungary,” 8 November 1943. NA, HS 4/91, SOE Hungary No. 8. And, a memorandum two days prior stated, “The ‘Surrender Group’ should be told in the most categorical manner that Hungary is regarded as an enemy country and should be treated as such unless she proves by action her right to different treatment... As soon as possible targets in Hungary should be bombed by the RAF. Such bombing would show the ‘Surrender Group’ that the British are serious when they say that Hungary is their enemy. It would shatter their complacency and convince them that they cannot count on any special tenderness of the British towards them in the future. It would bring home to Hungarian public opinion the desperate situation of their country and the need for speedy action.” Memorandum, “Work into Hungary,” 13 November 1943. NA, HS 4/90, SOE Files, Hungary No. 7.

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- 43 Memorandum, "Hungarian Operations," 9 December 1943. NA, HS 4/90, SOE Files, Hungary No. 7.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Memorandum, "Conversation with Lt. Col Howie, Monday 2nd October, 1944." NA, HS 4/90, SOE Files, Hungary No. 7.
- 46 Memorandum, "Hungarian Operations," 9 December 1943. NA, HS 4/90, SOE Files, Hungary No. 7.
- 47 "Directive for Hungary - SOE Operational Policy," 9 December 1943. NA, HS 4/91, SOE Hungary No. 8.
- 48 Once the Germans occupied the country in March 1944, all SOE agents were either captured or under such heavy surveillance that they became inoperable.
- 49 The Dibbler team consisted of British Captain John Coates, who was the leader, and Canadians Lieutenant Bertram (Bodo), Lieutenant Mike Thomas (Turk) and Lieutenant Joe Gelleny (Gelleny).
- 50 Coates was a former commando, schooled in the SOE training establishments and he spoke eight languages, including fluent German and Russian. SOE headquarters instructed him to "get in touch with the miners and industrial workers in the Pécs area and to endeavour to organise sabotage, strikes and passive resistance." He was also to examine and make plans for attacking local targets, but not to initiate attacks until ordered to do so. He was also to arrange for the infiltration of agents deeper into the country. Letter, "SOE Work in Hungary," AOC to BAF, 17 July 1944. NA, HS 4/132, SOE Files, Hungary No. 47.
- 51 "Brief Notes on the Activities of the Hungarian Section during the Past Six Months," 13 September 1944. NA, HS 4/132, SOE Files, Hungary No. 47.
- 52 Memorandum, "Hungarian Operations," 9 December 1943. NA, HS 4/90, SOE Files, Hungary No. 7.
- 53 Letter, MPH 2 to MHM, 10 September 1944. NA, HS 4/132, SOE Files, Hungary No. 47.
- 54 As usually there are discrepancies in accounts. In fact, Gelleny's own account of events differs slightly between his book, Joseph J. Gelleny, *Almost* (Port Perry, ON: Blake Book Distribution, 2000) and his chapter "Joe Gelleny," in Heathcote's *Testaments of Honour*, 194-214. See also "Summary of Report By Capt. J.G. Coates – Dibbler Mission Covering Period From 11 Sep 44 to 11 Jan 1945," 25 January 1945. NA, WO 204/11601, AFHQ Files, Report on SOE Mission in Hungary.
- 55 "Summary of Report By Capt. J.G. Coates – Dibbler Mission Covering Period From 11 Sep 44 to 11 Jan 1945," 25 January 1945. NA, WO 204/11601, AFHQ Files, Report on SOE Mission in Hungary.

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56 Gelleny, *Almost*, 186-190.

57 The Romanians offered the Germans an opportunity to withdraw from their soil uncontested. However, the Germans refused and former allies fought. The Allies formally recognized the Romanian change of status on 12 September 1944. Until that announcement, Soviet forces continued to push into Romania. They took over a hundred thousand Romanian soldiers prisoner and sent them to PoW camps in the Soviet Union. After the announcement, the remnants of the Romanian Army fought with the Soviets against the collapsing German Army until war's end. Although decorated by the Soviets for his actions, King Michael was forced to abdicate and leave Romania in 1947. For a detailed history of Operation Anonymous see Porter, *Operation Autonomous*.

58 "The Canadians: Marion De Chastelain," *Historica Canada*, <<https://www.historicacanada.ca/thecanadians#>>, accessed 24 February 2019; BSC, 193-198, 204-208, 214-216; and Macdonald, 183-184.

CHAPTER 13

1 Walter, 22.

2 Cruickshank, 83. The name Force 136 came into effect 17 March 1944.

3 Maclaren, 182. When STS 101 closed down due to the Japanese invasion many of the training staff returned to India to work in the headquarters. Some melted into the jungle to train and lead indigenous forces to fight the Japanese. See F. Spencer Chapman, *The Jungle is Neutral* (Bungay, Suffolk: Triad/Granada, 1982).

4 Dear, 207-208.

5 Kendall was a civilian who had been recruited by MI6 to organize an intelligence gathering network along the South China Sea from Taiwan to Hainan prior to the start of the war. When the SOE later told him he was required to use a military rank he decided to give himself the rank of major. Marjorie Wong, *The Dragon and the Maple Leaf. Chinese Canadians in World War II* (London, ON: Pirie Publishing, 1994), 120; and Maclaren, 184-187.

6 Cruickshank, 76; and Wong, 120.

7 See Wong for a detailed history of Chinese Canadian involvement in the Second World War, including a comprehensive look at their involvement in the SOE. See also the Canadian Chinese Military Museum website which contains a special project page for Force 136, <<http://www.ccmms.ca/>>, accessed 18 February 2019. I also would like to thank Theresa Mew, Neill Chan, Tracy Leong and Trevin Wong for assisting in arranging interviews and photographs of the Canadian F136 members.

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- 8 Maclaren, 185. See also Cruickshank, 156-157.
- 9 Cruickshank, 156-157.
- 10 Wong, 124. The training camp is now a heritage site located in Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park.
- 11 Maclaren, 200.
- 12 For example, after the Japanese surrender, more than 1,000 tons of supplies and 120 doctors and other relief workers were flown in to all PoW camps in Malaya in the first two weeks of September 1945. This was possible due to the work of Force 136 in identifying and locating the camps. Canada, *Uncommon Valour*.
- 13 The team consisted of Roy Chan, Louey King, Norman Low and James Shiu.
- 14 Chinese Canadian Military Museum Society, Special Projects – Force 136, <<http://www.ccmms.ca/features/the-story-of-force-136/>>, accessed 23 October 2018.
- 15 Walter, 23.
- 16 Ibid., 23.
- 17 Ibid, 24.
- 18 The SOE was heavily criticized by its detractors for its poor results in sabotage in the Far East. Most critics believed the SOE placed too much emphasis on guerrilla warfare activities and intelligence gathering (a departure from the SOE focus in Europe). See Cruickshank, 249-257.
- 19 Canada, *Uncommon Valour*.

CHAPTER 14

- 1 “Provision of Personnel for SOE,” DMO/641/LM, 15 Feb 45. NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.
- 2 “Chiefs of Staff Committee Value of SOE Operations,” 21 November 1945, 4-5. NA, AIR 20/7958.
- 3 Minute, VCAS to CAS, “Value of SOE Operations,” COS (45) 665 (o). NA, AIR 20/7958.
- 4 “SOE Activities in Greece, Crete and the Aegean, from June 42-Sep 44,” 8 Nov 45. NA, AIR 20/7958.

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5 “War Cabinet - Future Strategy - Appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff Committee,” 4 September 1940, 6. War Cabinet Weekly Resume (No. 53), NA, CAB 66/11, Memoranda, W.P. (40) 321 -W.P. (40) 370, Vol XI.

6 Memorandum, “Support and Employment of Secret Army in Poland,” 10 November 1942. NA, HS 5/59, File Albania - Operational Directives Foreign Office Directive to OC Allied Mission in Albania.

7 See the following sources for a record of the massive amount of damage and destruction caused by sabotage in the occupied countries: Memorandum to Prime Minister, “SOE Activities – Summary for the Prime Minister – Quarter: Mar-Jun 1942.” NA, REM 3/409/5; “F Section,” no date, 7. NA, HS 7/121. File - SOE History 86; “SOE Activities in Greece,” 8 April 1943. NA, HS 5/578, File – Greece No. 578; Memorandum to Prime Minister, “SOE Activities – Summary for the Prime Minister – Quarter: Apr-Jun 1943.” NA, REM 3/409/5; and “Situation in Yugoslavia,” Appendix A. NA, HS5/151, File – SOE Balkans, No. 7; Foot, “What use was SOE?”, 80; and Dear, 145-146.

8 “F Section,” no date, 7. NA, HS 7/121. File – SOE History 86, 10. The SOE observed that their efforts had created “a general feeling of alarm and despondency among the German troops dealing with the *Maquis* [French Resistance].”

9 “S-2 Report, No. 136, Enemy Situation,” 27 April 1944. LAC, RG 24, War Diary 1 CSS Bn, Vol 15,302.

10 Memorandum to Prime Minister, “SOE Activities – Summary for the Prime Minister – Quarter: Mar-Jun 1942.” NA, REM 3/409/5; and Memorandum to Prime Minister, “SOE Activities – Summary for the Prime Minister – Quarter: July-Sep 1943.” NA, REM 3/409/5.

11 Memorandum to Prime Minister, “SOE Activities – Summary for the Prime Minister – Quarter: July-Sep 1943.” NA, REM 3/409/5.

12 Foot, “What use was SOE?” 80.

13 “Chiefs of Staff Committee Value of SOE Operations,” COS (45) 146, 18 July 1945. NA. The SOE network “Hugh” reported 500 rail cuts in its area between 6 June and 6 July 1944. Nonetheless, it must also be pointed out that a major cause of delay to enemy troop movements was also due Allied strategic and tactical air forces.

14 Milton, 285-286; and Dear, 152.

15 “Surprise, Kill, Vanish: The Legend of the Jedburghs.” <<https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/2015-featured-story-archive/legend-of-the-jedburghs.html>>, accessed 16 March 2019. The teams normally consisted of a combination of an American OSS officer, a British SOE or SAS officer, a Free French officer or enlisted man, and sometime a Belgian, Canadian or Dutch serviceman.

16 Ibid.

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17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 188. For detailed accounts of the Jedburgh teams see: Colin Beaven, *Operation Jedburgh. D-Day and America's First Shadow War* (London: Penguin Books, 2006); Roger Ford, *Steel From the Sky. The Jedburgh Raiders, France 1944* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson), 2004; Will Irwin, *The Jedburghs. The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces, France 1944* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).

19 "F Section," no date, 74. NA, HS 7/121. File – SOE History 86.

20 "Chiefs of Staff Committee Value of SOE Operations," COS (45) 146, 18 July 1945. NA.

21 "F Section," no date, 15. NA, HS 7/121. File - SOE History 86.

22 "Chiefs of Staff Committee Value of SOE Operations," COS (45) 146, 18 July 1945. NA. The Committee also noted that SOE actions "successfully attacked targets which had been unsuccessfully attempted in the aerial interdiction programme."

23 Cited in Cookridge, 107.

24 Ibid., 108.

25 "Chiefs of Staff Committee Value of SOE Operations," COS (45) 146, 18 July 1945. NA.

26 Ibid.

27 Irwin, 338.

28 Ibid., 239.

29 Ibid., 237.

30 Dear, 17.

31 Thomas Gallagher, *Assault in Norway* (Guilford, Connecticut: The Lyons Press, 2002 ed.), 3.

32 Ibid., 3.

33 Heavy water or Deuterium oxide was vital to early experimentation since it has twice as many hydrogen atoms as ordinary water and is 10 percent heavier. The heavier weight acts as a slowing mechanism "moderating the speed of the neutrons set free in an atomic reactor and permitting these elementary atomic particles to achieve a chain reaction that could split the nuclei of a fissionable element and cause an explosive release of atomic power." The focus on heavy water was somewhat overblown. Allied scientists later discovered that graphite would also moderate the speed and was in fact more effective. See Dan Kurzman, "Sabotaging Hitler's Bomb," *Military History Quarterly*,

ENDNOTES

Vol. 9, No. 2 (Winter 1997): 38; Gallagher, 8; and Nigel West, "SOE's Achievements: Operation Gunnerside Reconsidered," *Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)*, Vol. 148, No. 2 (April 2003): 77.

34 A cyclotron is an apparatus in which charged atomic and subatomic particles are accelerated by an alternating electric field while following an outward spiral or circular path in a magnetic field. Katherine Barber, ed., *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

35 Dear, 119; and Stevenson, 113. Bohrs had already split the uranium atom with a release of energy a million times more powerful than the same quantity of high explosives." Stevenson, 55.

36 See Stevenson, 55-62, 78, 416-441; Jonathan F. Keiler, "The Prospect of a Nazi atomic bomb is sobering but German scientists themselves doomed the project to failure," *Military Heritage WWII History*, July 2004, 28-31; and Dan Kurzman, "Sabotaging Hitler's Bomb," *Military History Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Winter 1997): 38-47.

37 Bombing was in fact the first option the British considered. However, British Air Command felt that the difficult location of the plant made it near impossible to hit with the technology available at that time. Furthermore, the Norwegian government was reluctant to expose its civilian population to the possible collateral damage. Therefore, sabotage operations under the control of the SOE were undertaken. See Thomas Gallagher, *Assault in Norway* (Guilford, Connecticut: The Lyons Press, 2002 ed.); Janusz Pielkalkiewicz, *Secret Agents, Spies and Saboteurs* (London: William Morrow & Company Inc., 1973), 264-279; Nigel West, "SOE's Achievements: Operation Gunnerside Reconsidered," *Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)*, Vol. 148, No. 2 (April 2003): 77; and Dear, 119-130. The Allies had finally succeeded in destroying the heavy water capability of Norsk-Hydro. However, the effort was not entirely required. German scientists had concluded that a bomb building project was impractical and that nuclear energy would be useful mainly to power submarines. Similarly, Albert Speer, the Reich's armaments minister, concluded that the German atomic scientists could make little contribution to the war effort and thus, concentrated German experimental resources and energies on the more promising rocket and jet projects. See also Keiler, 32-33; and Kurzman, 47.

38 "Chiefs of Staff Committee Value of SOE Operations," 21 November 1945, 2. NA, AIR 20/7958.

39 "Annex – The Value of SOE Operations in the Supreme Commander's Sphere," 1. NA, AIR 20/7958.

40 "Chiefs of Staff Committee Value of SOE Operations," 21 November 1945, 3. NA, AIR 20/7958.

41 Cited in Foot, "What use was SOE?" 83.

42 "Chiefs of Staff Committee Value of SOE Operations," COS (45) 146, 18 July 1945. NA.

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- 43 Foot, "What use was SOE?" 79.
- 44 "Annex – The Value of SOE Operations in the Supreme Commander's Sphere," 2-7. NA, AIR 20/7958.
- 45 Ibid., 7.
- 46 Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1948), 296.
- 47 Cited in Irwin, 241-241.
- 48 Cookridge, vi.
- 49 Roosevelt, v. SHAEF Headquarters also sent a specific message with regard to the American OSS. It stated:

When the Office of Strategic Services was first established, the military services were not any better prepared to utilize services than it was to render the type of service ultimately required. However, its value in this theater has been so great that there should be no thought of its elimination as an activity.

Future value of the Office of Strategic Services in the European Theater appears to be high but is subject to certain contingencies. Valuable assistance in the prosecution of the war was effected by OSS by successful short range operations on the entire front where they obtained tactical intelligence and accomplished local sabotage. Strategic operations had the same objects as the tactical but were executed deeper within enemy territory. They were not consistently effective but had some sporadic successes of great importance. Also OSS performed admirably in helping to organize resistance groups in France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark and Norway and in assisting to supply them.

In the future OSS will function as an intelligence information gathering agency and as a counter-espionage organization. It is expected that a net utilizing high grade (personnel will feed back a wide range of intelligence and information to the Theater Commander through the tight control of the intelligence staff. Complete control by the Theater Commander of OSS activities within his theater or based on his theater is regarded as an essential prerequisite of efficient and smooth operations. Message, to AGWAR for Joint Chiefs of Staff, from SHAEF Forward, 23 May 1945. NA, WO 219/5307, File SOE/OSS Activities.

- 50 Howarth, 298.

CHAPTER 15

1 The pragmatic political stance that SOE took, namely to support any group that was willing to fight the Axis did not sit well with many who feared the post-war consequences of arming and training groups hostile to democratic ideals. For instance, the head of the SOE himself acknowledged, "In planning this resistance, it can therefore be said that SOE are not concerned with either political issues or the politics of the day: they are solely concerned in harnessing the maximum amount of available resistance to the one common end – the harassing and defeat of the Axis, and therefore of making them war conscious as opposed to being politically conscious." "SOE-PWE Policy Committee - SOE Activities in Greece - Memorandum by Head of SOE," 8 April 1943. NA, HS 5/579, SOE / Greece, No. 579.

2 War Cabinet, "Meeting to be held on 14 Sept 43." NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945. This is not surprising, since as Lord Selborne explained, "It is important to realize that the activities of S.O.E. in enemy-occupied countries cover all stages of subversive activity. It is usually necessary in the first instance to create a spirit of resistance amongst the population and then to begin the formation of the necessary cells and groups and the establishment of firm communications between them and the base from which the work is being directed. The early stages are therefore purely clandestine but the work, as it continues, acquires more and more a para-military character until it culminates in open guerilla activity in support of Allied military operations." Cabinet Defence Committee, Extract from the Minutes of DO(45) 4th Meeting held on 31 August, 1945. NA, WO 193/622, SOE Files.

3 The Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (COSSAC) controlled the SOE Western European Group in London and Allied Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean Theatre controlled the SOE Middle East and Balkans Group, as well as Northern Italy in Cairo. The rationale was to create closer relations between subversive activities and projected operations; facilitate closer liaison with the exiled government military staffs; and closer integration of SOE and OSS activities through the British-American staff of the Supreme Allied commander. "Draft Memorandum Chiefs of Staff SOE Operations," 29 December 1943. NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.

4 "Memorandum by the chiefs of Staff – Co-ordination of SOE," 29 December 1943. NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.

5 "Draft Memorandum Chiefs of Staff SOE Operations," 29 December 1943. NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.

6 "Memorandum by the chiefs of Staff – Co-ordination of SOE," 29 December 1943. NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.

7 "PM/44/716 dated 23 Nov 44 – Memo from Foreign Secretary to Prime Minister regarding his assumption of Ministerial responsibility for SOE on Disbandment of MEW," 26 November 1944. NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.

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8 Annex, "Draft Minute Chiefs of Staff Committee to the Prime Minister," 4 December 1944. NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.

9 "Chiefs of Staff Committee Meeting to be held on 27th November, 1944." NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.

10 Hand written memo, "Future of SOE," drafted by MO1 Colonel, 25 November 1944. NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.

11 "Chiefs of Staff Committee Meeting to be held on 27th November, 1944." NA, WO 193/633, SOE Series, SOE Organisation, 30 Apr 1942-28 May 1945.

12 Cabinet Defence Committee, Extract from the Minutes of DO(45) 4th Meeting held on 31 August, 1945. NA, WO 193/622, SOE Files.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid. He continued,

If it is agreed that we must be prepared for war in any part of the world, we must ensure that the nucleus of the necessary organisation exists and that we do not have to resort to improvisation owing to lack of foresight. This war has shown that clandestine work cannot ever be effective without careful planning and patient preparation. There are no short cuts to success in this art. It is not surprising that Russia, the United States and France are continuing to nourish their own clandestine organisation.

The traditional policy of Great Britain is to maintain the integrity of small European powers, but is already clear that their integrity is likely to be threatened, and that it will be no easy task to pursue our policy with success. S.O.E. can prove a valuable instrument in furthering H.M.G.'s policy in peace, and one without which the prospects of making that policy effective would be diminished. It is no doubt a national characteristic of the British to dislike and distrust secret organizations working in peacetime, but nevertheless I believe that the existence of S.O.E. in peace is essential to the national interest and that the not uncommon comparison with the Comintern is a false one since H.M.G.'s policy is defensive and not aggressive, and since S.O.E. is merely an instrument and does not attempt to shape policy.

15 Ibid. Donovan, argued that the formulation of national policy is "influenced and determined by knowledge (or ignorance) of aims, capabilities, intentions and policies of other nations. Roosevelt, *War Report of the OSS*, 117.

16 Cabinet Defence Committee, Extract from the Minutes of DO(45) 4th Meeting held on 31 August, 1945. NA, WO 193/622, SOE Files.

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17 Ibid.

18 Ibid. Similarly, OSS director, Bill Donovan argued, “It is not easy to set up a modern intelligence system. It is more difficult to do so in a time of peace than in a time of war.” He insisted that it was critical to create the new organization before the war ended and before the organization was dismantled and its personnel disappear “so that profit may be made of its experience and ‘know-how’ in deciding how the new agency may best be conducted.” Roosevelt, *War Report of the OSS*, xi.

19 Stafford, *Secret Agent*, 229; and Milton, 300.

20 See Colonel (retired) Bernd Horn, *We Will Find A Way: The Canadian Special Operations Legacy* (Kingston: ERC Press, 2018), 9-35; and Colonel Bernd Horn, “The Canadian SOF Legacy,” in Dr. Emily Spencer, ed., *Special Operations Forces: A National Capability* (Kingston: CDA Press, November 2011), 8-28.

21 BSC, 424.

22 “Notes by GM 175 on STS 103...”

23 BSC, 424.

24 BSC, 425; and NA, *SOE Syllabus*, 11-12.

25 Cited in O'Donnell, 2.

26 Cited in Howarth, 312.

27 Cited in Macdonald, 92-93. Gubbins also stated that Stephenson's liaison role was vital. Gubbins explained, “[Stephenson] played in the very highest quarters – at the top level in fact – Downing Street/White House ‘affaire’ which led to such splendid results.” Ibid., 92.

28 BSC, xxxvi.

29 Maclaren, 150, 172, 199-200. Approximately 3,226 personnel including all services and civilian employees were employed in the SOE by 1942. By 30 April 1944, the total strength rose to 11,752. Mackenzie, 717-719.

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Colonel (Retired) Bernd Horn, OMM, MSM, CD, PhD is a former infantry officer who has held key command and staff appointments in the Canadian Armed Forces, including Deputy Commander of Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM), Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment and Officer Commanding 3 Commando, the Canadian Airborne Regiment. He is currently the CANSOFCOM Command Historian, an appointment he fills as a civilian. Dr. Horn is also an adjunct professor of the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, University of Calgary, as well as an adjunct professor of history at the Royal Military College of Canada and a senior fellow at the Joint Special Operations University in Tampa. He has authored, co-authored, edited or co-edited over 40 books and well over a hundred monographs/chapters/articles on military history, Special Operations Forces, leadership and military affairs.

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

2IC	Second in Command
AFHQ	Army Force Headquarters
AO	Area of Operations
B&E	Break and Enter
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BNA	Burmese Nationalist Army
BSC	British Security Cooperation
CAFM	Canadian Airborne Forces Museum
CANSOFCOM	Canadian Special Operations Forces Command
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CCMM	Chinese Canadian Military Museum
CE	Counter Intelligence
CFINTCOM	Canadian Forces Intelligence Command
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIGS	Chief of the General Staff
CMHQ	Canadian Military Headquarters
CMIA	Canadian Military Intelligence Association
CO	Commanding Officer
COI	Coordinator of Information
COSSAC	Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander
CSE	Communications Security Establishment
CSIS	Canadian Security Intelligence Service
CSO	Consular Security Officers

G L O S S A R Y O F A B B R E V I A T I O N S

D/F	Direction Finding
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross
EH	Electra House
ERC	Education and Research Centre
ES6 (WD)	Experimental Station 6 (War Department)
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FFI	French Forces of the Interior
FO	Foreign Office
FSSF	First Special Service Force
GSI(K)	Force 136
HMG	His Majesty's Government
IWM	Imperial War Museum
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
Km	kilometre
LAC	Library Archives Canada
LPH	Lynn Philip Hodgson
MC	Military Cross
M.D. No. 2	Military District No. 2
MI5	Security Service
MI6	Secret Intelligence Service
MID	Military Intelligence Division
MI(R)	Military Intelligence (Research)

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

NA	National Archives (formerly PRO)
Nazi	National Socialist German Workers Party
NKVD	<i>Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del</i> (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs)
OC	Officer Commanding
ONI	Office of Naval Intelligence
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OWI	Office of War Information
PCO	Passport Control Officer
PRO	Public Record Office (now British National Archives)
PoW	Prisoner of War
PW	Political Warfare
PWE	Political Warfare Executive
R22R	Royal 22 nd Regiment
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RDX	Research Department Explosive
RU	Research Units
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
SAB	Student Assessment Board
SD	<i>Sicherheitsdienst</i> (Security Service)
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force
SI	Secret Intelligence
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service (MI6)
SO	Special Operations
SO 1	(SOE) Propaganda
SO 2	(SOE) Operations
SO 3	(SOE) Planning & Intelligence
SOE	Special Operations Executive

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

SOU	Ship Observer Unit
SS	<i>Schutzstaffel</i>
STS	Special Training School
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
VCIGS	Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff
W/T	Wireless Transmission
WLA	Whitby Library Archives

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