

2. Holland

The chronological pattern of Resistance in Holland is rather different from that usual in Western Europe. S.O.E.'s efforts to establish contact were entirely unsuccessful until the spring of 1944, and there was not the usual steady growth from the days of 'Torch' to those of 'Overlord'. Dutch Resistance was not in a position to contribute much to 'Overlord', and luckily not much was required of it. But the situation continued to improve during the summer, and there was a first great crisis at the time of the Arnhem landing, Operation 'Market'. The Arnhem landing failed, and Holland was then of necessity abandoned to its most bitter winter of the whole war. Perhaps one-third of the country was free, the rest was almost in the front line; even when the Armes paused for breath savage underground war continued in Holland.

Reorganisation in London

We have followed (1) S.O.E. Is early plans to the point of their complete collapse in the winter of 1943-44. One result of the disaster was a thorough reorganisation in London. On the British side Cdr. Johns was in January 1944 appointed Regional Director for the Low Countries, in February Major Bingham was replaced by Lt.Col. Dobson (previously of the Belgian Section) as officer in charge of the Dutch Section. On the Dutch side there was no change in the arrangements for the secret intelligence branch (B.I.) which was still the field of M. Van't Sant, acting through Major Somer: but the military side was turned upside down. The Organisation previously known as the M.I.D. became the B.B.O. :
Bureau Bi jzondere Opdrachten - 'Special Tasks' .

Col. De Bruyne was replaced in March 1944 by Maj. General van Oorschot, and most Of the higher staff also disappeared:

(1) Above p. 465.

prominent among the new men with actual experience in Resistance were General van Oorschot's personal assistant, Capt. Klijzing, and one of the founders of the sabotage organisation C.S.VI, Capt. de Graaf. General van Oorschot had no authority over the B.I., but he was on good personal terms with Major Somer.

The State of the Resistance

In Holland S.O.E.'s misfortunes had not left Resistance entirely without communications with London, since S.I.S. was also in the field. But these communications were extremely bad, and they were not intended (as S.O.E. communications were) to be used to improve the organisation of Resistance as a fighting force. This was one reason for the confused state of Resistance early in 1944; another was the psychology of the Dutch, whose politics are very stable, yet at the same time obstinate and factious: a third reason was the intensity of Gestapo action through informers, who were so active in penetration that no single resistance organisation could be regarded as fully secure and permanent. The situation may be set out somewhat as follows, though this scarcely does justice to the confusion.

Para-military First, there were three main movements 'with 'para military' branches: -

- (a) The Orde Dienst (O.D.) standing somewhat to the Right.
- (b) The R.V.V. (Resistance Council), which had emerged late in 1944 to group various movements loosely affiliated to the old political parties of the Centre.

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- (c) The Knok Ploegen (K.P.), which had arisen locally to provide assistance for workmen evading German conscription of labour, and had developed into an active working-class sabotage organisation. There was no country in Europe where the Communists were so insignificant as in Holland, but the K.P.'s point of view was closest to that of Communist Resistance, and if a Communist bogey had to be found it could be found most easily in the K. P.

To these may be added the small specialist sabotage organisation, C.S.VI.

Civil Organisations

Second, there were the non-military organisations, almost too loose to be called organisations.

- (a) The Clandestine Press, referred to above. (1)
 - (b) The National Steun Fonds, the financial organisation of the Resistance. (2)
 - (c) The Landelijke Organisatie (L.O.), mainly concerned with the provision of false papers and other assistance to those living underground.
 - (d) The National Committee (N.C.), which dealt with welfare work, mainly assistance to the dependents of those killed or deported by the Germans.
 - (e) The Centrale Inlichtings Dienst (C.I.D.), which was designed primarily to watch the working of the German repressive services: it also looked after the construction of a clandestine telephone network, which was of great value to the Resistance in the final stage.
- (1) Above p. 4.66.
(2) There is an excellent account of this, 'De Bankier van het Verzet', in 'Nederland in Oorlogstijd', for January/ February, 1948..

Resumption of Operations.

When it came to the resumption of activity by S.O.E., the obvious lines of approach were to the R.V.V., K.P., C.S.VI, for the organisation of military action, and (on behalf of P.W.E.) to the Clandestine Press. In mid-February 1944 Lord Selborne and General Gubbins had impressed the importance of a fresh approach on the Dutch War Minister, M.O.A.C. Lidthe de Jeude,(1) and during March permission (2) was given to resume air operations, provided that for the present all agents were dropped blind, so that there should be no risk of 'Gestapo reception'. Priority remained low, compared with that given to France, and conditions were extremely difficult for air operations, so that it is fairly easy to summarise the missions sent up to the end of August 1944, when the situation was changed by the imminence of the Arnhem operation.

31st March. To the Clandestine Press. T. Biallostowski ('Draughts') with a wireless operator 'Beziqie' J.A. Steman): they lost their wireless set in landing, but were eventually provided with another. Biallostowski came out for an interval in July 1944, leaving a local recruit ('Draughts II') in his place. Steman remained to the end and kept his set going in the area of the Hague.

31st March:

One party to contact C.S.VI, another to contact R.V.V. All four agents concerned were caught in May 1944, but they succeeded in delivering the directives given them in London.

April: No operations.

- (1) Copy on S.O.E. Archives File 5/100/2.
- (2) Correspondence with D. of I(R), Air Ministry, concerning resumption of operations on S.O.E. Archives Vile (AD/E S.O.E./Holland.

SECRET

P1130088
967.

31st May Two agents were sent in to organise railway sabotage in preparation for D-day, but the aircraft was shot down over Holland an, they were lost with the crew.

June: No operations.

5th July: Lt. L. Mulholland ('Podex') to make contact with the R.V.V., Lt. A. de Goede ('Rummy') with the K.P. They with their operator ('Cribbage') established an extremely important point of contact in Rotterdam; 'Rummy' also worked in Amsterdam.

5th July: Four others were sent to the R.V.V. in the Veluwe area, but their aircraft was shot down and they were lost.

7th Aug: S. Postma ('Sculling') was sent with a wireless operator to make contact with the L.O. in the Veluwe, and eventually established himself in Utrecht. He and his operator were lost in November and December, 1944, but their work was carried on by M. Cieremans ('Cubbing') who provided a very important point d'appui up to the Liberation.

9th Aug: F.L.J. Hamilton ('Rowing') and his sister ('Tiddleywinks') were sent to take a wireless set for Biallosterski at the Hague and also to help with clandestine propaganda. Miss Hamilton broke a leg on landing, and was in hospital (under cover) almost until the liberation: her 'brother did useful work in North Holland, based on Amsterdam. This did not however add to the existing wireless channels.

SECRET

28th Aug: Two agents and a wireless operator were dropped to build up resistance in the Veluwe area - the 'hinterland' of Arnhem: in the confusion caused by the operation they split. One of them went to Rotterdam as an instructor for the R.V.V., another with the wireless operator ('Charades'), moved to the Overijssel, where they provided essential assistance up to the Liberation for a succession of local resistance leaders.

28th Aug: Three agents intended for Eindhoven were in an aircraft which was shot down; two of them survived, but they were in no position to carry out their mission.

It will be seen how tenuous were the results. Three aircraft out of nine had been shot down; the remaining expeditions eventually produced four fairly permanent centres of communication, in the Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht and Overijssel, but so far only three of them were operational. The quantity of stores delivered was negligible - 73 Stens and 35 rifles, according to one return which gives the total uD to the end of August 1944. The Resistance possessed a little equipment of its own, and it had now received some Allied directives: but it would have been madness to throw it into the battle of 'Overlord', and in fact it played no organised part. There was of course individual sabotage on a small scale, but there was no question of a concerted attempt to block the Dutch railways: these were in any case of little importance to the German concentration in Normandy.

The situation changed when the British broke through across the Seine in the last days of August: they were in Brussels on 3rd September, in Antwerp on the 4th, patrols

P1130090
988.

entered Dutch territory - after a little slackening, of speed on the 11th. It looked now as if the momentum could be maintained by the Arnhem operation, and all Holland, or a great part of it, might be liberated at a stroke. Dutch Resistance, ill-equipped as it was, was therefore flung into the balance, and there was a situation of almost open revolt, which called forth extremely violent repression.

Formation of the N.B.S.

On 31st August an order from S.H.A.E.F. set up the N.B.S. (Nederlandsche Binnenlandsche Strijdkrachten - Dutch Forces of the Interior) under the command of Prince Bernhard, who was in turn directly under the command of General Eisenhower. (1) This appointment was announced on 3rd September, and Prince Bernhard moved his H.Q. to Brussels on 9th September. (2) There he was assisted by a representative of S.O.E.'s Dutch Section, (3), as well as by members of the Dutch civil 'B.I.'. At the same time in London there was constituted a standing committee of the Dutch B.B.O. and B.I., the British S.O.E. and S.I.S., which met daily. Now that the time of pressure had come there was no longer serious friction between the competing organisations outside Holland.

The Driehoek

Unfortunately inside Holland the position was not so easy. The plan was that the N.B.S. should include the para-military wings of O.D., R.V.V. and K.P., which should retain their political identity, but should be merged for military purposes. The direction in occupied Holland should be in the hands of three representatives, one from each organisation - the Driehoek ('Triangle') or 'Delta Centrum': this was located in Amsterdam.

- (1) SHAEF/17240/28/Ops(C) - GCT 370-19, quoted in S.O.E. Dutch History, August 1944.
- (2) Code name 'Northaw'. The H.Q. moved to Breda on Dutch territory early in 1945,
- (3) S.O.E. helped to fly in arms to Belgium for the equipment of Dutch forces to maintain order in the portion of Holland liberated at this stage.

SECRET

Under its general control Holland should be divided into 6 Zones, 14 Regions, and in each there should be a single commander who should if possible be in direct communication with the Allies. This did not go forward smoothly. There were the usual lines of cleavage: on the one hand Resistance as a whole claimed that it be given special rights in the post war world; on the other hand Resistance fell apart into Right and Left, O.D. versus K.P., with the R.V.V. on the whole inclining towards the latter. (1) These troubles produced sympathetic reactions in the London Government: on 26th January 1945 the Ministry of the Interior resigned over the question of purging collaborationists, and in February Prof. Gerbrandy reconstituted his Cabinet. Within Holland the problem was never finally resolved, but it seems to have been tided over by the appointment of Major General Koot as sole commander of the N.B.S. within occupied Holland.

Air Supply- Holland now had reasonably high priority, and air operations were not as dangerous as they had been, since the Allies stood on the land frontiers of Holland. It will be convenient here to insert the statistics of deliveries by air until the Liberation.

	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April
Aircraft								
sorties	86	130	83	22	10	18	40	79
Successful	42	47	40	13	3	4	27	53
Containers for								
S.O.E.	765	996	834	231	53	62	514	1,179
S.I.S.			1	4		10	74	48
S.A.S.			6	22				
Packages for								
S.O.E.	71	108	83	25	14	14	92	190
S.I.S.		6	4	3			7	8
S.A.S.		4	4	4				

(1) In the end (January 1945) it appears that of 13 Commanders named, 7 were O.D., 4 K.P., 2 R.V.V. - S.O.E. Dutch History, under 6th January 1945, (Yellow Annex).

SECRET

P1130092

This shows clearly the burst of activity in September and October; the reduced activity in the winter months when both the weather and the Gestapo were at their worst; the relatively low proportion of successes even at this stage; the final effort in March and April 1945. Arms dropping was stopped finally on 24th April, 1945, in order to give the enemy no pretext for interfering with the dropping of food which was then begun.

The Arnhem Operation.

Even in August S.O.E. had begun to concentrate agents for the area of possible Allied advance; two parties had already been dispatched for the Veluwe and one for Eindhoven. When the time came for the Arnhem operation four 'Jedburghs' (mixed Dutch, British, U.S.) accompanied the Airborne Forces, one with Corps H.Q. and one with each of the three divisions engaged: of these only the first, 'Edward', proved to be of importance in operations. A fifth team, 'Dudley', went into the Veluwe before the operation: this consisted of Major Brinkgreve (Dutch), Major Olmsted (U.S.), and Sgt. Austin, the wireless operator (British). Of these only Olmsted survived the war, but Brinkgreve made a great name for himself in the Overijssel, where his team (with 'Charades') (1) provided the kernel of resistance up to the Liberation. Finally on 8th September Biallostowski, ('Draughts'), on his second mission, went with a wireless operator to Amsterdam to open contact with the central 'triangle' of the N.B.S. 'Draughts' himself was mortally wounded in February 1945, but his work was taken over by a local recruit 'Dr. X' (Arend), who continued to work with the wireless operator, 'Backgammon'. This was an absolutely vital link in the Dutch chain of command. It should be added that a

(1) Above P- 987.

further party of four as dropped on 15th September,, this provided two sabotage instructors for Rotterdam, an additional wireless eperator ('Boating') for Amsterdam, and the agent Cieremans ('Cubbing') who ultimately became the chief contact with Utrecht. (1)

On D-day, the 17th September, the Dutch government called for a general strike in the Dutch railways, which was destined to remain unbroken until May 1945. A message from General Eisenhower was also broadcast in which he claimed the status of regular combatants for the N.B.S. and called on the population South of the Lek to stand by to assist the Allies: elsewhere there was to be no general rising for the present. At the same time secret messages through S.I.S. and S.O.E. channels called for railway sabotage (2) and gave more precise instructions for assistance to the airborne troops at Arnhem. It was impossible for these measures, taken at this late hour, to have any serious effect on the movement of German troops by road, but there was for the first time a burst of railway sabotage timed and placed in accordance with an Allied Plan; 'Piet van Arnhem' and his men came into the open and gave valuable local assistance; in addition, there were first reports of attempts by Resistance to preserve the port of Rotterdam - the Potential blockships 'Borneo', 'Westerdijk', and 'Axenfels' were all sunk at this time.

German Counter Action

The failure of operation 'Market' was plain by 25th September; nevertheless the wave of excitement and sabotage

- (1) The Dutch History also refers to an S.A.S. Party ('Regan', later 'Fabian') sent at this time to the Drenthe area: this was reinforced on 9th October by 'Portia II' (later 'Gobbo'). Both parties remained in wireless touch until the spring of 1945, and returned safely. The History expresses some scepticism about their training and security: nevertheless, they survived, and did work of value.
- (2) SHAEF Directive SHAEF/17240/28/Ops.C of 27th August 1944. S.O.E.- Dutch History, September 1944 p. 4.

SECRET

continued into October, and it was not until November that German counter-measures began to have serious effects. German policy had various branches. One tactic was the deportation to Germany of able-bodied men swept up at random in 'razzias' in the streets: very large numbers of men were deported in this way from all the main towns except Amsterdamp where the garrison commander was anxious to 'reinsure'. A good many members of the N.B.S. were thus removed from the scene. Punishments for suspected assistance were brutal and reprisals were taken ruthlessly for any 'incident'; over 400 lives are said to have been exacted for an attack on the Gestapo chief Rauters. In addition the Germans continued to use cunning as well as force. They were still well served by informers, and they regularly used the old trap of opening local negotiations with individual resistance leaders on one pretext or another. At the same time the whole population lay under the crushing threat of imminent starvation.

This intense pressure in a confined space was bound to be effective. Arrests were reported from Rotterdam at the end of October. In November S.O.E's agent Postma ('Sculling') was caught and killed, with 12 local leaders, at Utrecht: Mulholland ('Podex') was accidentally caught un in a razzia in Rotterdam and was deported to Germany. The Rotterdam chief of K.P., 'Frank', 'was killed in December and S.O.E. lost 'Dudley's' wireless operator in Overijssel, the wireless operator in Rotterdam and the wireless operator in Utrecht: communications were kept open with difficulty. The only gain during these three months was the establishment of a good man, P. Tazelaar ('Necking') with a wireless operator in Friesland; a second operator was got in for Rotterdam and there was a rather unsuccessful Political mission to N.B.S., H.Q. in Amsterdam,

SECRET

carried out P. de Beer, who returned to England in January 1945. On the whole, it was necessary for the present to draw back. The population at large was warned to avoid violent action. Air supply operations were suspended for some time at the end of November in order to stop reprisals. S.O.E.'s own men were told that their first duty was to maintain themselves in being till the spring and that all contact with Resistance was to be cut except in cases of absolute necessity. The N.B.S. Command was urged to decentralise thoroughly to its Regions: and in each Region to divide the working teams of saboteurs from the military reserves which would take no overt action before mobilisation.

The Situation, January February, 1945

The date at which progress could begin again was set back by the Rundstedt offensive, and the bad times continued until March. In the middle of January there was a serious loss of arms in Rotterdam. In February Biallostowski was badly wounded and captured in Amsterdam, two instructors and a local operator was caught and killed in Rotterdam, in Overijssel the local leader, Evert, was killed, there was a serious wave of arrests in Friesland. The food situation was becoming desperate. On the other side of the account, the S.O.E. wireless contacts were never broken in any area: some of the native Resistance leaders managed to come out, (notably 'Rob', the K.P. leader in Rotterdam, and 'Richard' the R.V.V. member of the Directing Committee), and the political tension was somewhat relaxed: there were some excellent reports of rescues and of sabotage - in particular the sinking at Rotterdam of the block-ship 'Westerdam' and the giant floating-crane 'Titan'. During January and February 1945 there were only two operations of any importance: an extra wireless operator was sent to the

local leader in Overijssel, and 'Rob' , the K.P. leader (M. Van der Stoep) went back to Rotterdam in February, with a special mission from Prince Bernhard to persuade the warring factions to accept the rule of the Commander N.B.S. (1)

The March Offensive.

But on 7th March the Americans secured their bridgehead at Remagen, and the main crossing of the Rhine was planned for 23rd March (Operation 'Varsity'). The final stages of preparation for action in Holland are recorded in the Minutes of an S.O.E. Conference on 19th and 20th March. (2) For the zone of the Canadian advance, in Eastern Holland, it was now fairly simple to issue action messages for attacks on railways and roads, for the collection of tactical intelligence, and for the preservation of important installations and technicians. It was more difficult to ensure that this should happen without provoking sabotage and mass reprisals in Western Holland: the Resistance was now relatively well-armed, and the temptation which had to be resisted was very strong, but on the whole discipline held good even at breaking point. The following figures indicate what had been sent by S.O.E. up to 15th March, 1945: a good deal of course had been lost.

Explosives	20,905 lbs,
Stens	14,344
Rlifies	2,928
Carbines	765
Pistols	2,175
Grenades	20,085
Brens	362
Bazookas	286
Piats	14

In April the N.B.S.reckoned that they had about 9,350 armed men in the Regions still occupied.

- (1) Code-name 'Scrape'. He was killed in an attack on a Gestapo H.Q. on 11th April.
- (2) S.O.E. Dutch History, March 1945 and Appendix.

In March there were two missions designed to reinforce the area of advance, and these were overrun by the Canadians early in the offensive. There was also an additional wireless operator for Rotterdam, and an assistant for Van der Stoep there. There was finally an important mission carried out by Major J.J.F. Borghouts ('Swish') who had already been distinguished in desistance as 'Peter Zuid', and was now sent back to Amsterdam to assist the Commander of the N.B.S., Major General Koot: he played an important part in the negotiations of the last days.

In the East of Holland, the zone of Canadian advance, matters went straightforwardly, in a fashion now familiar. (1) The Resistance smoothed the way for the advance, and took over responsibility for order without special incident. S.O.E's men in Overijssel and Friesland were recovered safely, except that the popular 'Dudley', Major Brinkgreve, was killed in action a few days before the final offensive. By the middle of April Holland East of the IJssel Meer was virtually clear of the enemy, and the Canadian First Corps faced West towards the fortress of Holland. The problem was now to avoid a battle, not to fight one, and it was eventually solved by extremely cautious and complex negotiation, which began in the middle of April and involved Seyss-Inquart, Blaskowitz, the Dutch Government, the Resistance, General Eisenhower, Field-Marshal Montgomery, General Foulkes (of the 1st Canadian Corps), as well as many subsidiary characters.

The Last Phase.

If it had come to a battle, the most vital task of the Resistance would have been to resist German attempts at

- (1) A joint Jedburgh/SAS team landed in Veluwe on 3rd April and a Jedburgh was sent to Drenthe on the 7th.

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996.

'scorching' the ports or at drowning the soil of Holland in salt; a desperate risk unless the Allies overran German resistance very quickly, but one on which the whole future of Holland depended. Luckily, it did not come to this, and in practice the Resistance's greatest contribution was to ease communications through the lines, in particular by the use of its secret telephone network, which was at the disposal of Prince Bernhard for conversations with the Dutch leaders in Amsterdam. By about 25th April it was pretty clear that the Germans would give way, though it was not until 4th May that Field Marshal Montgomery received the surrender of the Group of Armies which covered the military command in Holland. The final problem was that of the maintenance of order while the Allies marched in to disarm the Germans, and this unluckily gave rise to controversy. The N.B.S. at first possessed no arm-bands or other means of identification, and it was felt (rightly or wrongly) both by Prince Bernhard and by General Foulkes that incidents were certain to occur if large numbers of unidentified civilians with arms in their hands were let loose among the hated Germans - who were much more heavily armed than the Dutch. The Resistance was therefore ordered not to carry arms while on duty, until issued with some official means of identification. This was a sensible order; furthermore, it was an order to which the N.B.S. paid little or no attention; nevertheless, it left them with a feeling that their services were perhaps not fully appreciated, and that the great day had been slightly marred.

Conclusion.

It is certainly easy to underrate the Dutch resistance. Its help to the Allies was given mainly in inconspicuous ways, in particular by supplying intelligence, and it took very

little formal or conspicuous part in Allied military campaigns by way of sabotage and guerilla warfare. This war largely a matter of geography. Things were undoubtedly made worse by S.O.E's early blunders, but these blunders themselves arose in part from geography which made it exceptionally difficult to work into Holland. As it proved, the Dutch for the most part fought their own underground war without much reference to the needs of the Allies, but it must be remembered that it was an extremely fierce and brutal war. The official Dutch casualty figures for losses in the war are 210,000 dead (including about 104,000 Dutch Jews) of whom 23,300 lost their lives as a result of resistance.(1)

In the last year of the war S.O.E. and its, agents worked well, and went some distance towards the creation of a working system of communications and command, but one must still regret that it was not possible sooner to relate Dutch sacrifices to an Allied plan, and either to mitigate them or to draw from them greater military advantage.

(1) Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics, quoted in Manchester Guardian of 30th October 1948. The details given are:-

Jews deported	104,000
Forced labourers died in Germany	27,000
Resistance: executed in Holland	2,800
died in K.Z.L's in Holland	2,500
- do - in Germany	18,000
Civilians killed by acts of war	20,400
Aimed forces and Merchant Navy	7,850
Unclassified	27,450
	210,000

CHAPTER XXIXTHE FINAL FORM OF S.O.E.

So much of the organisation and political history of S.O.E. has already appeared in the context of the events which shaped it that this final chapter must be mainly one of summary and recapitulation. It is however proper in this place to present some comprehensive picture of the organisation as it existed in its prime.

1. POLITICSPacification

The political history of S.O.E. after the summer of 1942 falls into four phases. In the first phase, which lasts until the spring of early summer of 1943, Lord Selborne's policy of 'appeasement' towards the Foreign Office, P.W.E., and other hostile departments appears to bear fruit. Areas of conflicting responsibility are defined and delimited, the lower ranks of the organisation become more conscious that they have duties as well as rights in dealing with other departments, and there is some hope that these departments are beginning to respect S.O.E and to understand what it can and cannot do to help them.

The M.E.D.C. Crisis

Unluckily events in the Middle East renew the atmosphere of acute controversy and lead in September 1943 to what S.O.E. thought of as the 'Middle East Defence Committee crisis'. (1) in effect an agreement between the Foreign office and the military in the Middle East to eliminate S.O.E. as an independent directing body in that area. This is faced by S.O.E. as an issue which affects its future everywhere, not only in the Middle East: and it becomes involved in London with the competing claims of the Bomber Command's 'Battle of Berlin'

(1) Above p. 629.

and with the irrelevant but shocking evidence of S.O.E.'s mistakes in Holland. This phase of conflict ended in January 1944. It was closed partly by the resolution of Lord Selborne, partly by the good will of Mr. Churchill, partly because the imminence of 'Overlord' made the debate seem ridiculous: but it was also important that none of S.O.E.'s enemies had any constructive alternative to offer. If S.O.E. did not exist it would have to be invented: it was a going concern, the centre of a web of relationships which could not be handled (for instance) by the Foreign Office or by the War Office without a great change in the nature of these departments. It was tacitly admitted that S.O.E. had a job to do: the problem of definition was (very wisely) evaded, but it was now clear that the job was important and that it was not the job of any older department.

The Invasion

In the third phase, roughly from January to September 1944, S.O.E. is reaping the harvest of earlier labours and disappointments: there is little room for inter-departmental disputes while work is so intense and at the same time so exhilaratingly successful. S.O.E. has certainly moved a long way from the original 'grand design' of a unified weapon of political warfare: it is a fighting service, and its relations with the propaganda services are not strikingly more important to it than those of the other organs of the Allied military command. It has not secured the formal adoption of its doctrine of the 'Fourth Arm', but in practice its position and organisation are roughly comparable to those of the Admiralty, War Office and Air Ministry. The 'head office' is responsible for all administrative services recruitment, training, supply, signals, technical development,

the 'doctrine' of the service: its planners work very closely with the C.O.S. organisation: but operational control rests with the Supreme Allied Commanders, who work through integrated Special Operations H.Q.'s. of various types, in which S.O.E. is strongly represented and highly influential.

Winding-up

Pressure relaxes when the summer campaign is over. Scandinavia and some of the Balkan countries remain important, and there is a concentration of resources against Germany: but the greatest of all S.O.E.'s efforts had been in France, and all that remains there is the complicated task of 'liquidating' the organisation: tracing the missing, clearing financial claims, piecing together the story of what had really happened and drawing lessons for the future. War in the Far East continued and S.O.E.'s work there assured great importance in 1944 and 1945: but after V-E day in Europe there was no longer a sufficient role for an independent ministry. On 31st May 1945 Lord Selborne retired from office and responsibility for the organisation passed to the Foreign Office: during Mr. Churchill's 'caretaker' government, Lord Lovat, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, was specially concerned. Finally, on 31st December, 1945, S.O.E. closed down, leaving only a small nucleus to settle the endless problems of 'liquidation'.

2. SIZE AND COST OF THE ORGANISATION

There are certain obvious questions to which the reader will expect to find an answer at this stage. How big a department was S.O.E.? How many did it employ? What did it cost? Unfortunately it is for various reasons impossible to answer as directly as one would wish.

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The Difficulties

In the first place, it is extremely difficult to say where S.O.E. begins and where it ends. As regard, agents in the field, there is a series of delicate gradations. At one extreme are British officers and men, trained, paid and despatched by S.O.E. Then there are members of the foreign forces in Great Britain or the Middle East, also sponsored wholly by S.O.E, but dividing their loyalty between it and their own government. There are also agents recruited in the field by these 'men from England'; paid and directed by them but never themselves in direct contact with S.O.E. Finally, there is the whole mass of resistance

workers who took some money, or some arms, or some guidance from S.O.E., but were not in any sense at all its servants.

Even

within the circle of British government it is difficult to draw clear lines, because there was in war-time no elaborate system of accounting between departments. S.O.E. was not debited with the cost of the R.A.F. squadrons which served it; nor with the cost of the military and civil stores which it drew through various departmental channels; nor with many of the overhead costs of its training and supply establishments. The proportion of the costs of S.O.E. borne on the open vote of other Departments was fairly large, as it was the policy to limit payments from Secret Funds to those which could not with security be made in other ways; and there was a similar tendency to keep down the numbers of those employed directly by S.O.E. But individual cases were decided on their merits, and no general principle emerges.

In the second place, records of personnel were not kept centrally until a comparatively late stage in the development of the Department, partly for reasons of security, partly because selection was highly personal and total figures for establishment

and strength were not of much administrative value. This lack of system could not continue when manpower became the main bottle-neck in the war effort, and when many of S.O.E.'s formations had to work alongside regular military units: but it was not until September 1943 that a section was set up to keep S.O.E.'s manpower figures as a basis for bidding in the regular auction of manpower priorities.

Finally, the one part of S.O.E.'s records which has not been available to the historian is that covering its drawings from Secret Funds. These figures would make an interesting series, but there are good constitutional reasons for withholding them; and in any case they are of much less historical importance than seems likely at first sight. They did not cover more than a small part of the total cost of

S.O.E. , and their relation to that total cost varied greatly at different stages in the development of the department. Figures for cash expenditure in various countries have been given in the narrative where they are available; these figures are generally those recorded by the Section concerned, but they are not necessarily either accurate or complete.

Personnel Statistics

The upshot of this is that the only sets of figures worth including are those compiled by the Personnel Statistics Section from September 1943. As a starting point it may be recalled (1) that in July 1942 the figures for S.O.E. staff given by the 'Playfair Report' were: -

(1) Above p. 507.

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Home : H.Q.	691
Elsewhere	1,462
Middle East (excluding 444 Army personnel)	608
America	100
Far East & India	203
Other Missions	162
Total	3,226

This included all men and women, civilian as well as service. By June 1943 manpower shortage had become a serious matter and S.O.E.'s establishment of military personnel was formally limited to a 'ceiling' of 7,000. In August 1943 S.O.E. was anxious that this should be raised to 11,000, and there was much hard bargaining with the D.S.D. at the War Office (Maj.Gen.Steele).(1) The highest point reached by S.O.E. on the military side was a British Army establishment of 12,000 in February 1944, subject to a premise that not more than 10,000 personnel should actually be drawn from British army sources. In October 1941 S.O.E. attempted to secure a little more elbowroom, but this last attack was beaten off fairly easily by D.S.D., and these maximum figures were not exceeded so far as the British Army was concerned. By the end of 1944 the tide had turned, and throughout 1945 S.O.E. like all other service organisations was being pressed hard for a swift reduction of staff. (2)

The position as regards Army establishments is thus fairly clear: it is much harder to present adequate figures for actual strength, and to include 'bodies' drawn from other sources as well as from the Army. The Personnel statistics section took some time to get into its stride, and its first

- (1) The course of events can be followed fairly clearly in M.O.1 (S. P.) Folder B.M.546, which also circulated within the War Office.
- (2) C.O.S. (44) 286th Mtg. , Min. 12, of 24th August 1944, and ensuing series of C.O.S. papers to C.O.S.(46)25(0) of 23rd January 1946 (Largely on S.O.E.. Archives File 1/110/1).

figures which purport to be complete are for 15th December 1943.

(1) They may be summarised as follows: -

	Arm	Navv	R. A. F.	Civilians	Total
Hane	3,833	25	142	1,052	5,052
North Africa	298	51	19	82	450
Italy	143	1	3	17	164
Middle East	2,350	9	93	227	2,679
India	350	7	4	113	474
Other Missions	92	-	-	-	92
Totals	7,066	93	261	1,491	8,911

Within this total the proportion of officers (or civilians of officer status) was high, about 2,000 out of 9,000; and of these 475 were reported to be working at London H.Q. There are no figures for the clerical and other junior staff at H.Q., much of which was outside 'manpower' categories: but clearly the H.Q. was much bigger than in July 1942, when 247 'officers' had been served by 444 junior staff.

The figures for 30th April, 1944, show a very marked increase, which may, in part have been due to improved 'accounting' . as the figures are broken down in greater detail in the full table. The main heads are now as follows: -

	<u>Army</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>R.A.F</u>	<u>Women's</u>	<u>Civil-</u>	<u>Totals</u>
				<u>Services</u>	<u>ians</u>	
Home:H. Q.	401	12	52	214	816	1,495
Outstations	3,881	12	101	986	429	5,409
N.Africa &- Italy	891	53	28	121	-	1,093
Middle East	2,644	9	78	91	166	2,988
India & China	511	11	7	18	139	686
Miscellaneous	73	3	-	-	5	81
Totals	8,401	100	266	1,430	1,555	11,752

Of these 2,222 were officers or of equivalent status.

(1) App. A to paper forwarded on 17th January 1944 - Folio 8A on B.M.546..

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These complete totals were apparently produced at this Stage only as a result of special enquiries, and they do not begin to run as a monthly (eventually a weekly) series until October 1944. The trend during, the hectic summer of 1944 can be shown from the series of figures for Army personnel only, which begin at the end of 1943. No-one who has tried to compile such figures will be surprised that this series does not at first sight quite match the totals given by special investigations. There is no reason to doubt its accuracy as an indication of the main trend

	<u>Army Personnel Only</u>			
	15 Dec. 43	30 Apr.44	Jul. 44	31 Oct.44
Hcræ	3,833	4,202	4,231	4,315
Middle East	2,350	2,663		
N.Africa & Italy	441	801	3,709	3,593
India	350	428	764	940
Miscellaneous	92	73	92	-
	7,066	8,167	8,796	8,848

From this point the tale is taken up by the series of totals, which purport to be complete except for the exclusion of Indian Army personnel and Indian civilian labour.

	31 Oct. 1944	31 Dec. 1944	31 Mar. 1945	30 Jun. 1945	30 Sep. 1945	30 Nov. 1945
Home: 'officers	1,484	1,410	1,388	1,120	578	379
Other	6,073	5,492	5,498	4,546	2,342	1,336
Med: 'officer,	778	686	422	168	23	20
Other	3,264	3,003	2,287	677	49	46
India: 10fficer,	450	540	676	770	830	563
Other	843	1,132	1,427	1,678	2,122	1,691
Totals: 'officer'	2,712	2,636	2,486	2,056	1,431	962
Other	10,180	9,627	9,212	7,103	4,513	3,073
Grand Total	12,892	12,263	11,698	9,161	5,944	4,035

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These figures are quite adequate for our purposes, and may be summed up broadly as follows: -

(a) SOE. reached its maximum expansion in the late summer and early autumn of 1944, when its total British strength was probably just under 13,000: of these just under 9,000 were drawn from the British Army.

(b) The strength available for 'Force 136' in India continued to increase until after VJ-day: and included much native Indian and other native assistance outside these figures.

(c) The total includes about 450 ATS, 60 WAAF, and 1,500 FANY, as well as nearly 1,200 civilian women: about 3,200 women, of whom about 400 were of 'officer status'.

(d) Apart from the women's services, the proportion of 'officers' was very high. Taking men only, there were about 2,300 officers in a total of under 10,000. Many of these officers were of outstanding quality, either as specialists or as fighting men - or as both. The 'other ranks' on the other hand were largely of low medical categories engaged in 'housekeeping' duties,

(e) The organisation was now almost entirely military: apart from female secretaries, it included only about 400 civilians in all.

This is therefore an inconclusive section. The evidence will support only these very general conclusions: and even if there were more evidence, it would not help us to decide whether S.O.E. was 'economically' run and whether it 'paid its way'. Too much of the cost lay outside the direct control of S.O.E.

3. INTERNAL ORGANISATION AT H.Q.

We have already seen that S.O.E.'s internal organisation was always in transition: at any given moment some part of the machine was in process of adaptation to new crises. But Some Picture of its working can be given by annotating briefly the composition of the S.O.E. Council during the peak period of June 1944. (1)

C. D. and his Assistants

Chief of the Organisation & Chairman of Council C.D.):

Major-General C. McV. Gubbins, who was in effect the Commanding Officer, under the general direction of Lord Selborne. 'Council' met weekly, and most issues of policy were discussed by it and recorded in its minutes: but the organisation was commanded by a man, not by a Committee.

Vice Chief (V/CD) Mr. H.N. Sporborg, (who held the rank of Colonel, but acted normally as a civilian). On the retirement of Mr. Gladwyn Jebb in May 1942 there was abolished the old duality between C.E.O., the Minister's right-hand man or 'Permanent Secretary', and 'C.D.', the active manager: Mr. Sporborg was attached to Lord Selborne rather as Principal Private Secretary (for S.O.E. business) than as 'Permanent Secretary'. When it was decided in September 1943 (after considerable heart-searching) to appoint a soldier to the post of C.D., the additional post of V/CD was created and was filled by Mr. Sporborg as a civilian. The post of Private Secretary was now taken over by a younger man, Mr. Victor M. Cannon-Brookes.

Deputy Chief (D/CD): Mr. M.P. Murray, a civil servant of the administrative class. who had much experience on the organisation side of the Air Ministry. His appointment in November 1943 represented a rather belated attempt to take advantage of Whitehall experience of large-scale organisation: the more conventional of the war-time Ministries were built

(1) An. organisation chart for the Spring of 1944 is at App. N.

from the first on a scaffolding of professional civil servants, who rendered immense service by introducing simple principles of order and inter-departmental cooperation at the outset. Mr. Murray assumed general responsibility for problems of internal organisation, served by a Directorate of Organisation and Staff Duties, there was an immense volume of work for this Directorate to do, but it came rather behind events and its job was in the main to clean up rather than to plan ahead.

Assistant Chief (A/CD): Air Commodore A.R. Boyle, who combined the posts of Director of Intelligence, Director of Security and Director of Personnel Services. Intelligence was, it turned out, primarily handled by the Country Sections, and little came of the original plan for a central Directorate of Intelligence, but Security and Personnel were of enormous importance and required the continuous application of persistence, experience and tact.

Chief Staff Officer to C. D. and liaison with Chiefs of Staff: Colonel R.H. Barry, whose job was virtually that of Director of Plans, as it came to be understood in the Service departments - a post of liaison between strategic policy and the multiple concerns of specialist Directorates.

The remaining posts on this high level fall into three categories:-

Regional Directorates

Director of London Group: Brig. E.E. Mockler-Ferryman, under whom came France, Holland and Belgium (Colonel R.E. Brook), Scandinavia (Col. J.S. Wilson) and Germany (Col. R.H. Thornley). Integration with the Americans and French causes some confusion here: from January 1944 there was full integration with O.S.S.

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(in S.F.H.Q.) as regards the whole S.H.A.E.F. area (which excluded Germany) from June 1944 there was integration with the French in E.M.F.F.I. for France alone.

Director of Mediterranean Group: Col. D.J. Keswick, who was the London 'opposite number' of the integrated organisation S.O.M. (Special Operations Mediterranean), which came into being in Italy in April 1944. (1)

Director of Cairo Group (more exactly 'Head of S.O.M.'): Maj.General W.A.M. Stawell, who was naturally not often present in London.

Director of Par East Group: Colonel G. F. Taylor, a very old S.O.E. hand, who was the London end of all questions relating to the Japanese war.

Director of Delhi Group: Mr. Colin Mackenzie, S.O.E.'s representative at Lord Mountbatten's H.Q., who was not frequently in London.

Service Directorates

Director of Finance and Administration: Group Capt. J.F. Venner, the pillar of financial orthodoxy and channel of liaison with the Treasury. Under him. came a less orthodox financier, Mr. Walter Pletcher, who was responsible for all S.O.E. Is vast and curious dealings in foreign currencies.

Director of Recherche, Development and Supply: Colonel F.T. Davies. Here lay the responsibility for research (Prof. D.M. Newitt, F.R.S.), and for all S.O.E.'s large production activities.

Director of Signals: Colonel F.W. Nicholls, the enthusiast who had built up the S.O.E. signals system from its beginnings in the spring of 1942.

(1) There is a history of H.Q. S.O.M. with S.O.E. Archives.

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and five business men of various types. About half of them had been in the organisation from very early days and had risen with it: Major Gubbins and Mr. Taylor had been at work in M.I.(R) and D. Section before S.O.E. was invented, Mr. Spurborg, Wing Commander Venner and Major Davies had been in it from the first, and others had come in before the end of 1941. All alike believed passionately in the purpose and possibilities of S.O.E. : the fact that they had heavy administrative duties did not prevent them from speculating and debating on the nature and power of 'subversion'. There was no agreed and analysed 'staff College' doctrine: but there was none the less an immensely strong 'public opinion' within the organisation which expressed itself forcibly on Council level and was felt much lower down. The administration of S.O.E. had many failings which can be defended only by explaining the stress under which the organisation grew: but much had been put right by the summer of 1944, and there was a spirit of excitement and personal concern which atoned for much. The distribution of duties was sometimes obscure or overlapping; but the entire staff was looking for duties, not seeking to evade them, This was not an unmixed blessing, but it meant that things somehow got done, fairly speedily and fairly correctly, though not with perfect economy. Luckily the staff as a whole were relatively young ever, at the top, at least by Whitehall standards, and many of these physically fit for it had intervals of operational experience: if security prevented them from going to the field, at least they took part in training and in many cases visited missions and stations overseas. This had two advantages: the organisation was in spirit pretty close to the fighting line, and it suffored less

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than many departments from sheer physical collapse under the strain of overwork. Few of the I old S.O.E. hands I were absent from duty through sickness for any long period during the war. (1)

4. ANCILLARY SERVICES

Enough has already been said of the tangled history of S.O.E.'s Missions overseas in the Mediterranean Theatre and in neutral capitals: but it remains to give some account of the great ancillary services in England, which lay behind all operational work but have so far been crowded off the stage by the narrative of events for which they were largely responsible. The technical. aspects of their work have been fully dealt with in the confidential 'Handbooks' which each section produced before its dissolution: their administrative problems were extremely complex, but not fundamentally different from those of other war organisations. There were however a number of developments from S.O.E.'s work which were new, either in conception or in scale, and it is desirable at least to illustrate these here, though it would not be possible to do them justice except by a more technical account.

The main heads are:-

- (i) The design and manufacture of special equipment and its des-atch to the field.
- (ii) The training of agents.
- (iii) The maintenance of radio communication with agents.

It will be simplest to look at these in their developed form,

- (1) P.W.E. makes an illuminating contrast in this respect: see Sir R. Bruce Lockhart's 'Comes the Reckoning' and a little chart of sickness among directing staff given in Mr. Garnett's history of P.W.E.

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ignoring most of their complex early history.

(i) Research, Production and Supply

Research

First, the Research Section, Station IX; some small but valuable assets were inherited from D. Section, (1) but the main line of development began early in 1941 at 'The Frythe', Welwyn Garden City, when research was first formally separated from production. Under the Director of Scientific Research, Prof. Newitts there were four main lines of activity - physico-chemical, engineering, operational research and camouflage. The first two of these were built round the problems of fuses and of devices in which to use them. On the physico-chemical side great advances were made in the development of simple fool-proof timefuses and incendiaries, and in the technique of explosive charges to be used for clandestine work: the engineering side arose out of the development of such devices as the magnetic 'limpet' bomb. Chemical research diverged into biochemical fields, such as the investigation of poisons, sleeping doses, suicide pills, and the development of special rations for various operational conditions. Engineering was involved naturally in the design of special fire arms, silent or easily concealed: less naturally in the production of submersible craft. There was not much logical justification for the development at Welwyn Garden City and Staines Reservoir of such craft as the 'Welman' one-man submarine, its larger brother the 'Welfreighter', and the 'Sleeping Beauty' motor submersible canoe, which should all in theory have been naval responsibilities. But they were well designed and they reached production fairly rapidly; that part of the job was well done,

(1) See Appendix B to Research and Development Section History.

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however unorthodox the organisation. But unfortunately it proved in the end that they were not very suitable for S.O.E.'s purposes, at least in Europe. In Norway (1) for instance it proved to be safer and more effective for agents to work with simpler weapons; their most important asset was skill patience and local knowledge, not 'suicide weapons', however ingenious. The trouble was that the research department had pushed on with the development of weapons in advance of any experience from which operational requirements could be framed.

This is the central problem of organisation for all research into weapons, and it was particularly difficult for S.O.E. to solve it. It began its work by the light of nature, entirely without operational experience: and it was hard for it to capitalise experience as it was gained. Saboteurs are not usually good technical observers, nor can they take with them technical advisers, so that Operational Research was not possible for S.O.E. in the same sense as for the other services. There was a serious danger that the user and the scientist would remain apart, and that research would be wasted on unreal problems. An Operational Research Section

Operational Research Section

was ultimately formed in July 1943, but its work was in practice rather liaison than research: its position was that of the Director of Operational Requirements in the Air Staff, not that of the 'boffin' attached to a night fighter squadron armed with new radar equipment. On the one hand it knew the Country Sections and (when possible) it met their best agents, on the other it knew what technical development had done and

(1) As we have seen above, p.1023 (the failure of 'Vestige').

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could do if asked. Putting these two sides together, it could frame an operational requirement which would be closely related to practical needs: and it would then follow through the development of the new device from this point up to final trials which would precede a decision on production.

This is probably the most that can be done. In the latter days of S.O.E. there was talk of technical missions to the field, and of specialised training for selected agents: but the obvious difficulties were not overcome and it is doubtful if they can be overcome. In the really critical phase of an underground war it is quite impossible to put detached observers in the front line. It requires the highest skill and concentration at that stage for front line troops even to maintain themselves in being, and they cannot be expected to look after scientists in the field. The most that can be done is to see that the scientists (or selected scientists) live, work, and think with the staff sections which direct the battle.

Camouflage Second, there was camouflage, which had rather a special meaning in this context. Perfection of disguise in every detail was necessary to protect the agent: and in addition rougher but effective camouflage was necessary to allow rapid concealment of many ordinary items of stores - containers, ammunition, weapons and so forth. In the early days Country Sections dealt with their own problem individually as best they could, and the first general adviser on Camouflage did not arrive until November 1941. This was an energetic film technician, Mr. (later Lt.Col.) J. E. Wills, and the inspiration of drawing on the film studies for experts proved to be very sound: a small workshop, with a staff of 3, was opened at the

Research Station (Station IX) in January 1942, and this small force expanded eventually into an establishment of some 300, including a bewildering range of experts in all sorts of trades.

The final organisation was:-

Station XV: the 'Thatched Barn', a road house on the Barnet Bypass, which was the main production centre for the camouflage of stores.

Station XVA: 56, Queens Gate, S.W.7, where prototypes were designed for reproduction in quantity. This was also the main centre for 'ageing' clothing to a condition which would match the wearer's story. In addition, it was necessary that the tailoring of clothes should give no hint of British origin: at first sufficient genuine clothing could be secured from refugees or exiles, but in the end production was required on a considerable scale. This was mainly in the hands of outside firms, employing refugee work-people who produced in their own national styles. Unconscious that there was anything odd about their methods.

Station XVB was buried in the desolate halls of the Natural History Museum in South Kensington, which lay derelict for the duration of the war. Its main purpose was to serve as a centre for the instruction of agents and others in the principles of camouflage- but in course of time its 'Demonstration Room' became a very remarkable museum, displaying S.O.E. 'gadgets' for the benefit of all whom it was desired to impress and to instruct, from H.M. The King downwards. Some of the 'gadgets' were of intense practical interest: there was for instance a series of agents' wireless sets ranging from the first heavy and clumsy suit-case to the last vest-pocket model; there were standard fuses; there

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were devices such as the limpet, which saw much hard service. There was also a certain amount of fantasy; explosive rats, designed to cause confusion to any enemy who flung their corpses into a furnace, and Balinese images sculptured out of plastic explosive, in the hope that native agents might be able to sell them (complete with time fuses) to Japanese departing from the East Indies.

Finally there was Station XVC the photographic and make-up department, accommodated in a small house in Trevor Square.

Forgery

Closely allied to the problem of Camouflage was that of forgery. Convincing documents were as vital as convincing disguise: so vital that there was an independent Documents Section, served by its own production department, Station XIV, at Briggens, near Royden, in Essex. As has already been mentioned, (1) this grew at first out of Polish enterprise.

Production

Production in part developed from Research and Camouflage: S.O.E., made a good deal of its own equipment in its own workshops, and there were occasional outcries about the overlapping of its work with that of the regular production departments. But on the whole S.O.E. produced or purchased directly only small quantities of specialised equipment: its requirements were for the most part met through orthodox channels. Military stores were drawn through the War Office, under the alias of M.O.1 (S. P.) ; stores were also drawn, on a much smaller scale, from the Admiralty and the Air Ministry. If special production was necessary, the appropriate supply department was generally willing to give S.O.E.

(1) Above p. 478 - See also History of Station XIV, copy with S.O.E. Archives.

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adequate priority for its small needs without serious debate on a high level. (1)

Stores Depots

Within the S.O.E. organisation there were certain central points for the handling of stores: the military equipment depot at Knoll School, Camberley; the arms section, which was from the latter part of 1941 at Bride Hall, Welwyn; the Motor Transport Section, with its own repair depot at North Road Garage, Welwyn. These presented no unusual problems: what was new and remarkable was the organisation for making up containers and packages for dispatch to the field.

Packing

At first each package was made up individually, generally by the officers of the Section concerned, and the parachutes were packed and attached at the R.A.F. Depot at Henlow, which also packed the parachutes used by the agents themselves. This was a hole-and-corner business, carried out in a mysterious way behind a screen at one end of a large Parachute Repair Shop.

Henlow

By the end of 1941 there had been substantial expansion, and in May 1942 there was set up the 'Special Parachute Equipment Section', with a staff of 30, largely WAAF: in all from May 1942 to January 1945 it handled 19,863 packages, manufactured 10,900 parachute harnesses, and packed 27,980 parachutes, as well as doing a good deal of repair work. From May to September 1944 the monthly rate was 1,692 packages, 775 harnesses,

- (1) The only serious incident known to the author is the 'parachute crisis' which occurred towards the end of 1943. There was an acute shortage of store-dropping parachutes to meet the needs of Airborne Forces, S.A.S. and other organisations as well as S.O.E. , and this threatened at one time to be as bad a bottle-neck as the allocation, of aircraft. A special effort was made, both to increase production and to economise expenditure, and it was in the end successful.

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2,127 parachutes. In addition the unit acted as a research and development centre for the use of parachutes in special operations, and it was largely responsible for the development of various 'shock-absorbing' containers (1) and of the 'leg-bag' technique for dropping personal stores actually with the agent.

Station 61 Henlow was concerned with the mechanics of dropping: the contents of the packages were handled mainly by S.O.E.'s own packing station, Station 61, which was opened at Audley End, Saffron Walden, in October 1941, and moved in April 1942, to Gaynes' Hall, St. Neots. The big expansion began in the summer of 1942, when the idea of the 'standard container' was introduced; various 'contents lists' were standardised, (2) so that an operational section could meet most contingencies from the stock of ready-packed containers which was built up at Station 61. The Packing Station had still to meet special requirements at times, but for the most part it was working on a steady crescendo to build up a reserve stock of containers for D-day. Its record of containers packed was:-

1941	95
1942	2,176
1943	13,435
19"-	56,464
1945	4,334
Total	76,504- some 10,000 tons.

The record 'pack' for one day was 1,160 containers on 6th July 1944. At the peak the S.O.E. establishment was about 150, and 96 soldiers and 100 R.A.F. men were specially attached for the final drive: most of these were men of low medical category. The Pioneer Corps was also sometimes called on for further reinforcements.

(1) principally "Hairlok", 'Koran" fibre, and wire-mesh baskets.

(2) Eventually there were 15 lists for H-type containers, 32 for C-type:-
47 varieties in all.

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Even this does not complete the story of packing in Britain. An outside firm, Messrs. Carpet Trades Ltd. of Kidderminster, were called in to help in November 1943, and packed about 18,500 containers: the Americans at top speed developed their own packing station in 'Area H', which employed over 250 workers. (1) It is to be remembered too that this organisation in Britain served only those countries which could be reached by air from Britain. There was a substantial packing organisation in North Africa to serve the South of France, and Middle East (eventually Italy) had an enormous commitment for maintenance of guerilla forces in the Balkans.

Personnel Despatch

It was at Station 61, finally, that the different elements came together to make an operation. It was the headquarters of the Air Liaison officers who were in direct touch with the squadrons regarding each night's decision to fly or not to fly: it was the 'hotel' at which agents were kept and comforted through the last ordeal of waiting for weather and perhaps of flying in vain; and the packing station sent with them the stores on which their work depended. The three sections were separately organised, but linked finally under the authority of the head of the 'Personnel Despatch Section'. as the man responsible for the safety and welfare of the agents passing through his station.

(ii) Training (2)

When S.O.E. was set up in the late summer of 1940 it did not inherit much in the way of training establishments from its predecessors. In the spring of 1940 M.I.(R) had initiated

- (1) There seem to be no figures for the total number of containers packed by the Americans.
- (2) There is a very clear summary of developments by Major Forty.

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what became an important Commando training centre in the West Highlands, and part of this (round Arisaig) was still under the control of M. I.(R) when it was merged with S.O.E. D. Section had not become interested in training until very late, and its school of sabotage and clandestine warfare at Station XVII (Brickendonbury, Herts) was not opened until after the birth of S.O.E. It was perfectly clear that if S.O.E. was to make any progress with its large plans it must have at its disposal a steady flow of men well selected and trained, and from the first it tackled the training problem

The 'Davies Plan'

with energy. When Major Davies came over from M.I.(R) in the autumn of 1940 one of his first tasks was to make a plan (1) for training; this plan was adopted at once, and its broad outlines were never altered, though there were important changes in detail.

The plan envisaged four stages:

(a) Preliminary Schools, centres where the capacity and character of students could be assessed without taking them very far into the secrets of the organisation.

(b) Para-military Schools, based on the M.I.(R) courses at Inverailort: at this stage it might be necessary also to give training in parachuting or in small boat landing. Certain agents, it was thought, would be required only for 'butcher-and-bolt' raids, and their training would finish here: it proved in practice that work of this sort was not S.O.E.'s natural business, and in the end almost all agents went on to the next stage.

(c) The Finishing Schools, which would teach the methods of subversive warfare and would hold the agents until required

(1) Paper of 12th October 1940, on Archives File 2/160/28.

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for operations. Each Country Section would have its own School, but the Schools would be grouped round a common centre.

(d) Finally, each Country Section would also have a flat in London which it would use for the final briefing and dispatch of agents.

What happened to this pattern in practice was briefly as follows:

Preliminary Schools

(a) For Preliminary Schools S.O.E. secured in the winter of 1940-41 six large houses in the Home Counties, to which should be added the Free French School, Inchmery House, Beaulieu, Hants. ; this last ultimately passed out of S.O.E.'s hands and became a depot for the Free French parachute company. These continued to be the main points of entry into the service of S.O.E. until the summer of 1943, but they proved to have some disadvantages in practice. It was not very easy to invent effective courses which gave away no secrets: the students sent to them by Country Sections were not always well selected, yet it was difficult to convince a Country Section of their mistakes at so early a stage of training: Country Sections in a hurry were apt to complain of the delay of three or four weeks which the preliminary course involved, and to try to push their men straight on to a later stage of training. S.O.E.'s experience (like that of other services) was that much effort was wasted on students who were eventually rejected at a late stage of training - or (worse still) were passed as fit in the hope of avoiding this waste: and it suffered the additional disadvantage that students rejected late in their training know too much and could not be returned at once to the outer world. Hence the

'The Cooler'

invention of the 'I.S.R.B. Workshops, Inverlair, Invernesshire': 'The Cooler', where incompetent or unlucky (1) agents were

(I) This sort of incarceration implied no stigma of treachery, which could be dealt with in other ways.

The S.A. B.

impounded until their knowledge of secrets was not 'hot' enough to be of any importance. S.O.E. therefore had recourse to the solution favoured by the other Services, and set up in June 1943 a Students Assessment Board (S.A.B.) with a 'country-house' (STS.7) at which candidates were submitted to the usual battery of psychological and practical tests.

This replaced the Preliminary Schools, and seems to have had some success in reducing wastage at later stages of training: it should however be noted that by this time Country Sections had grown more expert in the initial selection of candidates.

Para- Military Schools

(b) The Para-military Schools grew up in a group of ten shooting lodges in the district of Arisaig and Morar, where there was plenty of admirably rough and secluded country. The training here was of the usual 'Commando' type, and requires no description in detail. One of these Schools (STS 23b) was intended for para-naval training, but in the end concentrated mainly on training for attacks on shipping, using various specialised devices. Parachute training was primarily the responsibility of the R.A.F. School at Ringway outside Manchester, (1) but S.O.E.'s students had to be kept apart except during the actual air training and it was therefore necessary to secure two houses (STS 51 (a) and (b)) in the neighbourhood of the airfield where students could be housed and do their gymnastic ground training.

The Arisaig Group could accommodate up to 75 students; the course was at first three weeks, gradually extended to five. STS 51 could take 70 students, and normally gave them at least five days' training: but many went on operations after a much shorter period.

- (1) Admirably described in G/Capt. Newham's book 'Prelude to Glory'.

Finishing Schools

(c) :11; was intended that the Finishing Schools should be grouped in the neighbourhood of Beaulieu, Hants. Each would be limited to one nationality, but there would be a single staff headquarters for them all, so that instructors could serve more than one school. Eventually eleven houses were acquired, with accommodation for about 80 students for a three weeks' course. The training was organised in five main departments: A - the technique of clandestine existence: B - practical exercises designed to test knowledge of this technique: C --enemy organisation: D - propaganda: E - codes. This original scheme was never abandoned in principle, but there --7ere a number of important modifications in practice.

Holdin Schools

(i) It was soon seen that it was impossible to use the same establishments both to take agents speedily through courses, and to hold them for indefinite periods and put them in final training for a specific operation; therefore early in 1941 S.O.E. began to acquire houses as 'Holding Schools' (later known as 'Operational Schools') in which students could be segregated according, to nationalities. There were in the end seven such schools, which did not prove altogether satisfactory. For one thing it was extremely difficult to plan work effectively under such conditions of suspense; for another the Country Sections often preferred to hold their agents ready for briefing in London rather than in some distant country house. The Training Directorate never felt that it had a complete answer to this problem.

Country Section Schools

(ii) Certain Country Sections and certain nationalities succeeded in asserting special control over the training of their own agents. In the case of Denmark this arose naturally from an attempt by the Country Section and the School Commander to find a really effective role for the

SECRET

Danish 'Holding School', STS 45 at Hatherop Castle, Fairford, Gloucestershire. This remained under the Training Directorate, but became in effect Danish headquarters whence students were sent to the other schools and to which they returned for various 'integrating courses'. The Norwegian Holding School (STS 26) at Drimintoul and Glenmore Lodges in the Cairngorms similarly developed into the main H.Q. of the Linge Company: this was an integral part of the Norwegian Army under its own officers, and in addition Col. J.S. Wilson, head of the Norwegian Section, took a particular interest in its operational training and had one of his own officers permanently in residence. Eventually, in the summer of 1943, control of STS 26 was transferred to the Norwegian Section.

The Polish and Czech Schools developed in the same direction for different reasons; both these governments had a privileged position in England and enjoyed considerable 'extra-territorial' rights, and in the end they found it politically expedient to assume full responsibility for their own training. Hence in 1943 the Training Directorate ceased to be responsible for the general Polish School at Audley End (STS 43), for the 'Polish Minorities' School near Horsham

(STS 63) and for the Czech School at Chicheley Hall (STS 46): there were of course still certain special courses which had to be provided for Poles and Czechs in other S.O.E. Schools.

Special Schools

(iii) There was also a tendency for the centralised plan to break down into 'special subjects'. The main schools of this kind (apart from the Signals Schools, which will be dealt with later) (1) were:-

STS 17, the old D. Section School at Brickendonbury, which became a centre of training in industrial sabotage, 'counter-scorching', and the manufacture of home-made explosives.

(1) Below p. 1141.

SECRET

SECRET

1131.

STS 39 or STP. more commonly known as 'the Hackett School', which was designed to produce specialists in subversive propaganda and the assessment of public opinion. This mainly served P.W.E., but it also indicated the general lines of more elementary training in the same field which was given to S.O.E. organisers at the 'Finishing Schools'.

STS 40, the 'Reception Committee' school, which was set up in September 1943 as a result of the introduction into operations of the S-phone and Rebecca/Eureka, which were often found to fail through mistakes in their use. The School gave a concentrated 10-day course in their use and maintenance, which was particularly important because it gave additional confidence to the R.A.F. in carrying out dropping operations. For air landing operations, which were even more dangerous, The R.A.F. trained S.O.E.'s men themselves at Tempsford aerodrome.

STS 3 (later STS 47) specialised in mines and in the use of enemy weapons.

STS 37(a) was a small school which trained a limited number of agents in photography and microphotography.

Each of these specialist schools became also in some sense a research establishment working on the development of operational methods and training technique: STS 17 in particular made remarkable progress not only in methods of attack but in the technique of teaching amateurs quickly how to recognise the key points of complicated industrial installations.

It will be noticed that all these schools, national and specialist, represent another principle conflicting with that of centralization originally put forward by Major Davies. It is possible to imagine a system in which (after the Students'

SECRET

SECRET

Assessment Board stage) each Country Section should run its own operational and holding school, as a central point for the general training of all its agents, and should send out its men according to its own plans to obtain special training in a series of specialist schools. These 'technische hochschulen' might be administered by a centralised Training Section, but the nature of their special subjects would mean that each would be much more closely affiliated to the appropriate technical section. Such an organisation has one obvious advantage, for it puts both the operational sections and the research sections directly in touch from the beginning with the pupil, the man who is to be the man of the spot. But there are also serious objections. If it is logically pursued such decentralisation is apt to be administratively expensive; it is not too secure, for it is hard to avoid mixing specialist schools; and if there is no strong centralised training section it becomes much more difficult to bring the experience of different countries to bear on the same problem, so that a doctrine common to the whole organisation can be built up and steadily improved.

The Training Directorate

The S.O.E. system was built up by ad hoc decisions, not without controversy, and it represented a working compromise between centralisation and decentralisation. Some of the Country Sections were little interested in training; others were so interested that they wished to take control themselves. The Training Directorate, on its side, was never altogether happy about its own position. It had begun life as a section under Brig. Gubbins as Director of Operations and Training, and it was up-graded to the status of Directorate in September 1941. But its Director was never a Member of the

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S.O.E. Council, to which he was responsible first through Brig. Gubbins, then through Brig. Mockler-Ferryman. It thus did not come quite into the front rank of the organisation in London, and it had no status at all overseas. In form it was the training Directorate of the 'H.Q. for Western Europe' and it had no control over the training arrangements made locally by other H.Qs. of equal rank in North Africa, Italy, Middle East and India. The one exception to this was STS.103 near Toronto, which was planned in the summer of 1941 to assist Colonel Donovan in building up his own organisation in the U.S.A. and to give preliminary training to men recruited in the Americas by S.O.E. STS.103 dealt only with para-military training and propaganda; its first course began in December 1941. In this case the training programme was controlled by the Training Directorate in London, though the School was administered by the New York Mission.

Output of 'Graduates'

There was thus no centralised responsibility for the whole of S.O.E. training, and it is not easy to give a comprehensive picture of its methods and output. There are no figures for the number of men trained in the Mediterranean Theatre: the output there was considerable, but (to judge from operational experience) a high proportion of the officers sent to the Balkans were by London standards virtually untrained. In England the organisation provided some 13,500 'courses', covering about 6,800 students, of whom only 480 were British. In this large total there were included various services to other organisations. Some 760 Americans of various origins were trained for O.S.S., as well as many nationals of other countries recruited by the Americans. Parachute training was arranged for the S.I.S. and some of the S.A.S.: the

Jedburghs (1) were trained at M.E.65, which was an S.O.E. establishment deliberately kept apart from the other schools so as not to compromise the military status of the Jedburghs: the hasty training of the Allied Airborne Reconnaissance Force (2) in the spring of 1945 was only made possible by setting to work the resources of the S.O.E. training organisation. This large output was naturally expensive to produce: men and women had often to be trained swiftly, always very secretly. In Britain there were something like fifty separate training establishments: each of them was small, and had to handle small courses: often individual pupils had to be trained for special tasks which could not be reduced to a syllabus. The establishment was large relative to the output, probably 1,200-1,400 officers and men at the peak period, yet it could not have been significantly reduced within the terms of the problem set.

Conclusion Subversive training on this scale was an entirely new thing in England, and it would be easy to find flaws in the organisation while it was learning its job. But in the end it was very expert and very flexible, and it was indispensable to the operational work of S.O.E. if there is any general lesson to be drawn for the future, it is not that greater weight should be given either to the 'schoolmasters' or to the operational and technical experts, but that the two should be more intimately blended and that the idea of training as a whole should be given the highest possible status within the organisation.

There were two important schemes for 'blending' which were carried out too late and under too great pressure to be effectively

- (1) Above p. 931.
- (2) Above p. 1100.

tested. One of these was to put the whole H. Q. Staff of S.O.E. through the training machine, either by making all recruits complete the regular agents' courses or by arranging a special Staff Course on similar lines. Six Staff Courses were run during the summer of 1943, but the project was then swept away by pressure of work and it was not re-started until March 1945. The second scheme was for weekly Training Meetings at which all interested Sections should be represented under the chairmanship of the Director of Training. This was not initiated until July 1944, but it was not pressed very strongly on a high level and it was in any case too late to be of much service.

Both these experiments are obviously of interest for the future, but an improvement in the status of training is also to some extent a matter of organisation at the top. This does not mean that all training activity should be concentrated under a single Director or Dictator of Training, with power to overrule other Directors on matters within his competence. Indeed, it is better to think of a Training Staff than of a Training Directorate. The Training Department will naturally assume direct administrative responsibilities, but their exact scope is not important. What is vital is that the 'chief trainer' should be a man of experience and authority equal to those of any Director within the organisation, and that his field should extend over every activity of the organisation at home and overseas. It is in practice impossible to impose training on unwilling clients; it is therefore all the more important to persuade on the highest possible level, and to pull together the interests ramifying through the whole organisation which go to make up a proper training plan.

Training is a common interest: every part of the organisation has something to gain from it and something to contribute to it. The chief function of the Training Staff is to see that this is never forgotten, and that the right pieces of knowledge are brought quickly to the right places.

(iii) Signaqls (1)

The easiest way to impress a stranger with the scope and power of S.O.E. in its prime was to show him the main wireless stations at Grendon and Poundon. To the layman it looked as if there were forests of wireless masts, acres of floor-space, hundreds of girl operators and decoders; a sort of great telephone exchange planted in a corner of agricultural England, an exchange which looked normal enough, but served some very curious subscribers. Wireless and aircraft were the two vital links which bound the Resistance together and tied it to the Allied High Command: their importance is equal, though wireless fortunately never raised the grave issues of priority which made aircraft allocation a matter of high politics. The story of S.O.E.'s radio system could be told adequately only by a technician to experts, and the narrative here is no more than a skeleton.

At the outset, even after D. Section was divorced from S.I.S., the signals traffic of S.O.E. was handled entirely by Section VIII of the older organisation. By the end of 1941 it was obvious that this would not do: the problem was of a different kind, and it would shortly be on a different scale. In February 1942 S.O.E. obtained its own Chief Signals Officer,

- (1) The Signals history consists of disconnected sections dealing with various topics: much of it is useful.

Col. G. Ozanne, who began to plan ahead: in March 1942 the Independence secured

C.S. S. unexpectedly agreed to S.O.E.'s demand for independence: (1) in June 1942 the first station at Grendon in Buckinghamshire began to transmit. In due course the importance of the Signals Section was recognised by raising it to the status of a Directorate, and the Director (Brig. F.W. Micholls, O.B.E.) became a member of the S.O.E. Council in September 1943, He was directly responsible for the whole S.O.E. signals organisation in the United Kingdom, for S.O.E.'s 'main line' communications throughout the world, for wireless training in England, and for radio research and supply. At each overseas H.Q. there was a Chief Signals Officer who came within the local chain of command but was also accustomed to work closely with the Signals Directorate in London. The organisation was thus on lines familiar in the older services, and the only point of special interest is that the Director of Signals ranked high-within the organisation: it was fully understood that all operations without exception depended for their success on the efficiency of his Directorate.

(a) The Main Stations

The chain of main stations originally envisaged was as follows:-

The U.K.: three stations at Grendon and Poundon, in Bucks, not far east of Bicester.

The Mediterranean: main stations at Algiers and Cairo, subsidiary links at Gibraltar and Malta.

Africa: small stations at Freetown and Lagos (for Yichy West Africa) and at Durban (for Madagascar)

Far East: Main stations in India, Ceylon and Australia.

(1) Above p. 590.

Grendon and Poundon

The centre of development in the United Kingdom was Grendon Hall, Grendon Underwood, where the S.O.E. Training Section began in 1941 to give preliminary training for radio operators. The first transmitting station, with 12 channels only, was opened at Grendon in June 1942. In May 1943 a new station was added at Poundon nearby, with 40 channels directed to cover Southern Norway, Denmark, Holland and Belgium: Grendon was simultaneously extended to 32 channels, directed to France, Spain, North Africa and Northern Norway. Finally, in January 1944, a second Station with another 36 channels was opened at Foundon; this was erected, equipped and largely staffed by the American , and was intended primarily to meet the special requirements of 'Overlord', in particular of the 'Jedburghs', and of the Special Force Detachments which accompanied regular formations in the field. The combined stations, 108 channels in all, were linked to H. Q. in London by 15 teleprinter circuits.

To illustrate the work of this group of stations there are annexed as Appendices a graph of the number of groups sent, as well as sketch maps of the stations behind the enemy lines which had to be provided for at the time of 'Overlord', (1) It will be seen that at the peak period the traffic rose Steeply to over 300,000 groups a week, and Resistance stations were numbered by hundreds. Of course not all of these were active: losses were heavy even at this stage. But all had to be provided for in the Signals Plan until they had been formally written off as casualties. The provision made was on a generous scale, but lavishness at this point was a cheap form of insurance. There were virtually no complaints from the field about inefficiency or delay in the signals traffic with England.

(1) Appendix 0.

Malta and Middle East

The position was not so happy in the Mediterranean where working conditions were bad, operations were highly mobile, and equipment and staff had to be dispatched from England months in advance. The first Balkan missions were served only by emergency stations hastily provided in office buildings in Cairo, Haifa, Istanbul and Smyrna. In January 1942 a small station was opened at Malta, and it was this station alone which kept in touch with Mihailovitch at a critical stage of his career, (1) when Malta itself was under intense German pressure. An adequate War Station at Cairo was first planned in December 1941, but the plan suffered various set-backs in the summer of 1942: Rommel was for a time at the gates of Egypt, and effort had to be diverted to planning for a signals system which could be used if the Middle Eastern front collapsed. Then in the autumn of 1942 came Allied victories and an immense expansion of the British Liaison Missions in the Balkans. This caught the Cairo War Station unprepared, not entirely as a result of bad signals planning. Traffic went up to something like 100,000 groups a week, while the Station was still finding its feet and half trained staff were arriving in haste from England. By the spring of 1943 the traffic was at the rate of 150,000 to 200,000 groups a week, and there was a delay at one time of 3½ days in handling ordinary traffic: this meant that at least double that time was normally required to dispatch a reply to the stations in the field. There were cases where these delays had serious political consequences, for instance in the handling of David Wallace's political reports from Greece: (2) it was equally unfortunate that the Missions in the Balkans felt themselves to be badly served. The position in Cairo

(1) Above p. 172.

(2) Above p. 778.

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was not under control until the autumn of 1943, and by that time some of the burden was passing to newer stations which had their own troubles.

Gibraltar The Gibraltar station had its great days during 'Torch', (1) but it was never required for work into Spain (one of its main purposes) and by the spring of 1943 most of its responsibilities had passed to the Algiers station. This began in a small way with traffic to Corsica and Sardinia early in 1943; by July it was working under heavy pressure as a result of the Sicilian operation and the Italian surrender, and traffic had mounted to about 160,000 groups a week. There was then a lull, as some of the work passed to new stations in Italy, but there was another peak from May to August 1944, the days of the Special Projects Operations Centre (2) in Algiers, when the station was working with some 60 outstations in the South of France,

Italy The situation in Italy was confusing, because here Algiers and Cairo met. When Italy surrendered one station moved forward from Algiers with the 'Maryland' mission (3) to Brindisi, and was then established at Monopoli near Bari; its final location was in the Siena area, which was convenient in the winter of 1944-45 both for military H.Q. and for work into North Italy. From the East in the autumn of 1943 came the forward H.Q. of Force 133, anxious to improve communications with the Balkans, and it made its own -clans for an elaborate station at Torre a Ifare, near Bari, which was opened in August 1944. In addition, Force 399, which worked into Central Europe, had its own station at Bari: and

(1) Above p. 816.

(2) Above p. 866.

(3) Above P. 843.

SECRET

(to complete the confusion) the Balkan Air Force also had its own signals system for traffic to Yugoslavia and Albania. When S.O.M. was formed in April 1944, the three S.O.E. stations (Monopoli, Bari, and Torre-a Mare) all came under its aegis, and it began to be possible to plan more coherently. But it was already too late in the war to think seriously of erecting a new main station in Italy, and the three stations continued to operate independently. Certain H.Q. facilities were however concentrated under S.O.M. at Siena.

West Africa and Durban

The West African stations and that at Durban were never seriously tested in field operations. Those in South East Asia were of extreme importance in 1944 and 1945, but their work lies outside the scope of this history. it may be added finally that a Station was established at STS.103, S.O.E.'s training school at Toronto, which served the purposes of the New York Mission acting both for S.O.E. and S.I.S.

S.E. Asia

Toronto

All these main stations could be put in communication with one another as well as with the field, and S.O.E. thus possessed a world-wide radio network of its own. (1) This was however not the sole channel of S.O.E. traffic; with good code facilities it was perfectly possible to use Cables and Wireless and other normal channels in order to relieve pressure on S.O.E.'s staff or to reach Missions in neutral countries not in touch with an S.O.E. main station.

(b) Signals Training

Agents

Signals training was begun by the Signals Section early in 1941 in one of the Finishing Schools in the Beaulieu area: in the summer of 1941 the school was moved to Grendon Hall, and finally (at the end of 1942) was taken over completely by the

(1) A diagram of this is at Appendix P.

SECRET

Signals Directorate. Radio operators destined for the field received their wireless training at STS.52 (Thame Park), where they were also taught codes and cyphers: there was an out-station (STS.54B) at Dunbar to provide practice in long-distance traffic in realistic conditions. The complete course was one of six weeks, interrupted in the middle by 14 days of security training at one of the Beaulieu Finishing Schools. With the cooperation of Scotland Yard and the local police, wireless operators were also given opportunities to practice their work in England in conditions closely simulating those of Resistance. This careful training of diverse men in diverse tongues was a slow and laborious process, and even at the peak period STS.52 was only turning out 16-18 trained men a month. (1) The shortage of operators was often a serious drag on operations in the West, and over the world as a whole the need was only met because each main H.Q. trained its own radio operators; there were W/T schools in Middle East, North Africa and Italy, even in Occupied Greece, as well as in the Eastern theatre.

S.O.E. Staff

The Signals Directorate had to train its own staff as well as S.O.E.'s agents. In the spring of 1942 there was in England a staff of only about 250; by the spring of 1944 the position was roughly:-

H.Q.		300
Grendon	/	
Poundon I	/	600
Poundon II: U.S.		350
	British	70
Training Staff		250

a total of 1,220, excluding the Americans. The signals staff throughout the world was probably at its peak nearly 5,000

(1) In addition something like 135 operators were trained for 'Jedburghs' in the winter of 1943-44.

SECRET

strong. This total included on the one hand a small proportion of technical experts, on the other a fair number of drivers, clerks and so forth. But the main body were wireless operators and coders, and it was soon found quite impossible to obtain these ready-made through Service channels, or even to recruit civilian labour freely. The main source of recruitment was girls not old enough to be liable to industrial or military conscription, and a really fine body of young women was enlisted through the collaboration of the Ministry of Labour and the FANY organisation. These girls were trained by S.O.E. at STS.54a (Fawley Court, Henley), which could handle courses of 150 girls together, in training as operators and for other duties: in addition some 250 girls in all were trained in London as coders. The girls thus trained were freely used at overseas bases as well as in England, and everywhere they proved to be an unqualified success. They regarded the work as a privilege and a great experience; their morale was excellent, and most of them were quick-witted, adaptable, hard-working, and 'security-conscious' to the point of self-immolation.

So far the signals organisation did not differ radically from that of any other service. The special nature of S.O.E.'s work had its effects mainly on the production of equipment for use in the field, and on the various technical devices adopted to ensure security of the operator.

(c) Development and Production

S.O.E. possessed its own radio workshops at Stations 7a, b, c. and d on the outskirts of N.W. London (1) for development work, and also for production on a small scale:

(1) For location see list in S.O.E. Training History.

SECRET

but production was mainly arranged through the Ministry of Supply, which expended some L2,500,000 on radio equipment built to S. O. E. Is specifications. (1) There were perhaps three main technical problems:-

Size and weight of sets.

(i) Reduction in size and weight without sacrifice of power. In practice all requirements could never be met together in one transmitter/receiver set, but the ratio of weight to performance was steadily reduced. The original suitcase sets weighed some thirty pounds and this was eventually brought down, without loss of performance, to about 14 lbs., within the dimensions of 9½" x 4½" x 7½". There was also a 'Vest Pocket set' weighing only some 5 lbs. and measuring 7½" x 4½" x 1½" :

this naturally operated on low power, but it had an adequate range for use in Western Europe in good signalling conditions.

Generators

(ii) The provision of power when mains could not be used, either because of security or because of remoteness from civilisation. The maintenance of batteries and the charging of batteries was one of the nightmares of the agent, especially of the liaison officer in wild country; the simple production of electricity by human power seems to be one of the problems which science has not yet tackled seriously. After various rather 'Heath Robinson' experiments, a fairly successful hand generator was eventually produced, but (to judge by the abusive comments of users) it was far from being the perfect solution.

The M.C.R.

(iii) The third problem was somewhat simpler. For most purposes both a transmitter and receiver were essential, and

(1) Signals History of s.o.E. Chapter VII, and Appendix to that chapter.

a set incorporating both was of necessity rather elaborate. But for many purposes a receiver alone would be sufficient, for instance in the final stages of organising a reception committee; and it was a relatively simple problem to produce a receiver which was portable, easily worked and easily concealed. Hence the M.C.R. (Midget Communications Receiver) (1) which began to come into service at the end of 1943 and was distributed in very large quantities: some 26,000 were produced in all.

'Rebecca' and the S-phone

Two other inventions greatly influenced S.O.E.'s operations, the Rebecca/Eureka homing device and the S-phone 'walky-talky': these were however developed originally by other agencies for other purposes.

(d) Signals Security

Security had four main aspects:-

Signal plans

(i) First, defence against enemy D/F: German radio security in the West was excellently equipped, and if it had the chance to listen for long to any clandestine transmitter it could find its position quickly within very narrow limits. In S.O.E.'s early days the agent was given a signal plan allotting to him a regular call-sign and regular daily periods during which the home station would listen for his transmissions. This meant that if the Germans heard the agent once they could guess when he would be on the air again and could listen in readiness to replace his station. In August 1943 the first flexible signal plans, the 'V Plans', were introduced, and these went through two later and more complicated editions, the 'X Plans' of March 1944 and the 'Z Plans' of August 1944, the last of these did not repeat

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- (1) Set 9" x 2½" x 3½", weight 4 lbs. 2 oz.: Battery 7½" x 2½" x 3½", weight 3 lb. - 2

itself during a period of four months, and it was virtually impossible for the enemy to know transmission times in advance unless he captured a copy of the plan.

The 'Broadcast' Plan

Still greater flexibility was gained by two other devices. One was the 'Broadcast Plan', which was not related to the use of the B.B.C. for action messages in plain language. The scheme briefly was that there should be periods of communication in which agents received but did not transmit. One side of the dialogue could thus be conducted in perfect security, and their transmission period (which was the dangerous time) could be kept short. A number of agents would be given the same 'broadcast' time, and in these periods the home station would open transmission with pre-arranged groups (on a variable plan) to indicate which agents were to stand by for messages during the rest of the transmission period: those indicated would continue to listen until their own message was identified, all others could sign off till the next transmission time.

This was introduced early in 1943, though its general adoption depended on wide distribution of the M.C.R. which did not come until later. The complementary device, the 'Marker Channel system', which gave almost perfect flexibility to the agent in transmission, was only introduced into operations for the S.A.A.R.F. (1) in the spring of 1945. Under this system the base station transmitted call signs continuously on a series of prearranged frequencies- it also maintained listening watch on a second series of Prearranged frequencies. The agent would tune to the base-station's call sign, and would then call base (giving his own call-sign) on one of the second series of

The 'Marker Channel'

(1) Above p. 1100.

frequencies, those on which there was permanent listening watch. The base would then listen at once on a third frequency, the agent's own frequency as indicated by the call-sign, and he would begin to transmit his message on that frequency. Thus the base station need keep permanent listening watch only on a limited series of frequencies, yet the agent could establish communication at will on his own frequency, selected from so wide a range that the enemy could not watch them all. In addition, the agent's transmission time under this system would be greatly reduced; and various technical devices were invented to reduce it still further. In combination with the 'Broadcast' system of reception this came as near as possible to giving complete security to the agent at his most vulnerable point.

Codes

(ii) There was the problem of code. (1) The enemy of course was in no doubt about the existence of Grendon and Poundon and he could listen to them at his leisure; and at first it was relatively easy for him to decode their signals. High-grade ciphers could not be used because agents could not carry code books or any other document which could be identified as a code in the course of a routine search. Hence the codes commonly used were based on some key poem memorised by the agent, and they could be broken by the enemy, if he applied his resources to the problem. At the end of 1942 a special Cipher Security Section was formed at H.Q. to find the answer to this difficulty, and it developed the W.O.K. (Worked out Keys) and O.T.P. (One Time Pad) systems in forms which could easily be destroyed and were practically certain to elude a normal routine search. Keys could be reduced by microphotography to a tiny scrap which

(1) The 'Codes' handbook has interesting specimens of the codes used.

could easily be destroyed; or they could be printed invisibly on silk handkerchiefs and other articles of clothing. Messages enciphered on these systems could not be read unless the enemy was in possession of the code: and it was the agent's duty (a duty which was apt to be neglected) to cut away and destroy the used section of the 'pad' after each transmission. The new system was still vulnerable to treachery and to human error; but technique could not be carried much further.

Identification

(iii) Thirdly, there was the question of identifying the agent transmitting and establishing his bona fides. Here there were two independent checks. One was artificial, the introduction of a 'check' by the agent, for example the omission or alteration of a specified letter in a specified word of the message - say the third letter in the fourth word. This could be used even by an agent in the bands of the Gestapo, since he could lie to them with impunity about his check: his base would keep up the traffic with the set even though they knew that it was under enemy control. Second, the signals experts claimed that every individual operator had unmistakable idiosyncracies - 'finger-prints' or 'handwriting' - which were visible when his transmissions were mechanically recorded as a graph, and the 'finger-prints' of all operators were thus taken before they went to the field. It is fair to say that non-experts on occasion expressed scepticism, but there is good evidence of a fair ratio of success. This, in combination with the 'routine check', gave reasonable protection against anything except very thorough treachery.

'Umbrellas'

(iv) Finally, it was necessary to prevent the enemy from deducing anything of importance from the volume and direction of traffic from the home station. The amount of traffic to

Individual agents would be, masked effectively by the variable forms of signal plan, and by the use of efficient codes: but it was necessary also to disguise fluctuations in the total volume of traffic-beamed to any one country or area. This could only be done by constructing an 'umbrella' of bogus traffic, so that the total volume of traffic for each area either remained constant or was varied independently of the volume of the real traffic. This was laborious because the false traffic had to consist of intelligible messages properly encoded; the system was perfectly effective, but it consumed a good deal of time and trouble. (1)

This brief layman's account would scarcely satisfy the signallers, and it may not engage the attention of the general reader. But it is not a bad point on which to end this description of the structure of S.O.E. Nothing can go right with a clandestine organisation unless its signals system is secure, flexible and accurate. S.O.E. as an organisation was slow in starting, but at least some of its early troubles arose from the fact that there was no radio expert to give all his attention in its problems at the beginning. Its communications were not only clandestine, but also military; they involved the coordination of the action of considerable forces on a considerable scale. This meant the development of a new technique, quite different from the old 'spy' system. The technique did not exist when the Resistance was in its most difficult and dangerous phase, indeed it was only coming to maturity during the period of

- (1) It is rumoured that an 'umbrella' was also used for conventional messages sent on the B.B.C., but this was certainly not admitted to the B.B.C. who were extremely parsimonious with broadcasting time.

SECRET

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1150.

SECRET

intense activity in 1944. But in the end the work was well done, and it is hard to see that it can be carried much further until there is new technical advance in the general field of radio communications,

CONCLUSION

'I always had a horror of revolutionising any country for a political object. I always said, if they rise of themselves, well and good, but do not stir them up; it is a fearful responsibility'.

Sanhope's 'Conversation with the Duke of Wellington' .

It would be useless to attempt to summarise this extraordinary story, since that precedes is itself no more than a summary of activities which touch every part of the political and military history of Europe; and it is dangerous to insert a profit and loss account. It is obvious that in the vulgar sense S.O.E. showed a large military profit. In manpower directly employed it cost less than the equivalent of a division; a rather curious division, in which the officers were the pick of British youth, the rank and file were largely old crocks unfit for active service and girls deemed too young for conscription. Its private air force cannot (on the average) be reckoned at more than four squadrons: its private navy was tiny. The supply services behind these forces were not greater than would have been needed by equivalent regular formations and S.O.E.'s cash expenditure on subsidies to Resistance was probably no greater than its cash gains as a dealer in the European currency black market. The whole of this was by military standards a tiny commitment, and it needs no argument to show that the Resistance contributed to the defeat of Germany far more than the British expended on Resistance. That sum is bound to show a profitq whether we reckon in terms of Germans killed or targets destroyed or administrative effort saved.

SECRET

But was S.O.E. the lever which moved this immense mass ?
Or was it merely a small stone thrown into the torrent ? It
would be impertinent to give a definite answer to such questions
You cannot draw out Leviathan with a fish-hook: you cannot weigh
European history in the balance and set up a ratio between
the factors out of which it is compounded. S.O.E. was for
five years the main instrument of British action in the
internal politics of Europe: it was an instrument imperfect
in various ways characteristic of the British but it was
an extremely powerful instrument. While S.O.E. was at work
no European politician could be under the illusion that the
British were uninterested or dead: he might have reason to
believe that they were incompetent or sinister, but he was
bound to take account of them. The young men whom S.O.E.
turned loose on the continent, and the department which
backed them, had to be reckoned with seriously by Germany,
by Russia, by every political organisation in Europe. They
were an important part of history.

Can any lessons be learnt for the future ? The academic student
should be cautious on this ground. Venimus ubi tonat fulmen; these
are serious matters, and the only authorities worth listening to are
those who carry the weight of responsibility for the life and death and
torture of individuals and of nations. But there are some things
which can be said about administrative organisation without
transferring the discussion to the ground of high politics.

It is to be noted, in the first Place, that there have always been in
England two currents of opinion about what can now be called
'S.O.E. work'. One of them is represented by the Duke of
Wellington's saying quoted at the head of this

chapter. The plain Englishman is against it, not so much because it is dirty work, as because he can't see where it leads him: - it is a 'fearful responsibility'. In spite of this, England in modern times has always been a centre of subversion - known as such to others, but not to itself. At the periphery our Eastern and African Empires were built up largely by individuals burrowing like termites in the structure of older empires. At the centre England was in the 19th century a hotbed of revolutionary conspiracy, which made London seem as horrifying to the Emperors in Europe as Moscow now is to the Americans. In these matters the right hand of His Majesty's Government was careful not to know what the left hand was doing: the disposal of Secret Funds was one of the arcana imperi, and in any event most English subversion drew its support from other sources than the Treasury. Hence the strange two-sided picture: England to the outer world was the model of intrigue, subtlety and perfect secrecy, to itself it seemed above all bluff, simple and well-meaning.

There is (in the second place) an impression that in the 20th century subversion is of much greater importance than it used to be. This is to some extent an optical illusion. From the late seventeenth century there was in Europe in some sense a 'Trade Union of Kings': dog did not eat dog - beyond a certain point. This undeirthing was embodied in the practice of diplomacy and in the laws of war; often broken, but on the whole recognisable and on the whole observed.. The old structure has now been destroyed in Europe, largely by the action of Germany and of Russia; we lament its destruction and we forget that it

SECRET

never existed except in Europe. The rules were observed by Europeans only in relation to other Europeans: and the great event of European history from the 17th to the 20th centuries was that in these years the Europeans burst their Geographical bounds and destroyed every other political structure that existed in the world. In that process the sophisticated abstractions of war and diplomacy had no place: there were no rules to limit the subversion of barbarians.

But (in the third place) though subversion is no new thing, it has certainly as a matter of organisation entered upon a new phase. This is shown not only by the experience of S.O.E. but by that of other nations, some of which were much earlier in the field. 'The Minister' can no longer dissipate the Secret Service moneys through his own shabby agents on the backstairs; the merchant adventurer cannot buy for himself a Grand Vizier or a trading station. Efficient subversion is now a specialised profession which requires an elaborate organisation for training, communications and supply: it implies the same sort of services at headquarters as Service and Supply Departments provide for the armed forces. In Britain administrative centralisation was enforced by other considerations, which are peculiar to Great Britain but are likely to recur in any future British war. From 1939 to 1945 England was full of governments in exile whose greatest pre-occupation was to maintain contact with their own countries; they were all working like beavers to that end, and it was essential that there should be one single department which knew what they were doing, whether to help or to hinder. Their activities were much too multifarious for the Foreign Office to follow, and they were absolutely outside the ken of

any of the Service Departments. S.O.E. was essential as a 'buffer state'.

These two practical considerations made it impossible in the last resort for S.O.E.'s enemies in Whitehall to destroy S.O.E., and it is quite certain that in some form S.O.E. must be created again in any future war. But the nature of subversion itself makes it extremely difficult to place it conveniently within the administrative hierarchy. There are three sources of difficulty.

In the first place Subversion covers a wide range of activities which are all perfectly distinct from old-fashioned diplomacy and old-fashioned war, as known to international law. At one extreme there is open propaganda, appealing to other peoples over the heads of their rulers, but admitting its origin. Next to this comes 'black' -propaganda, which conceals its source. Propaganda of either kind can be conducted from the author's own territory, but its work cannot be completed except by agents on the spot. In the first stage these agents will work underground; they may have different tasks, intelligence, sabotage, or political leadership, but all alike will employ the techniques of disguise and concealment. Finally, there is open guerilla war, in which the forces nurtured by subversion come into the open as irregular military formations either under the leadership of their own chiefs or of a High Command in the outer world. These types of activity are complementary, indeed essential, to one another, yet in 1938 and 1939 the British government approached the single subject of Subversion separately from many angles. For 'white' propaganda there was the Ministry of Information,

1156.

With a shadow control the B.B.C., for 'black' propaganda Electra House,
for political agents and saboteurs 'D. Section',
for intelligence agents S.I.S., for Guerilla warfare M.I.(R). Each
of these five organisations in attempting to do its own job
encroached on the field of the other four, and all (except perhaps
S.I.S.) were regarded with
suspicion and distrust by diplomats and soldiers alike.

Dunkirk and the fall of France shook this kaleidoscope
violently. it was suddenly conceived that subversion was of such
importance that it must at all costs be unified under one strong
hand, and the original charter given to Mr. Dalton certainly
contemplated the unification of all these services except S.I.S.
This unification, or 'Grand Design', broke down almost at once.
There were two fortuitous reasons for this. First, it was
administratively quite impossible for Mr. Dalton to assume
responsibility for clearing up the quagmire of the Ministry of
Information as well as those of E.H., D. and M.I.(R), which had to
be dealt with at once. The Ministry of Information might have
been divided and destroyed in the summer of 1940; instead, Mr.
Dalton agreed with his enemy while he was in the way, and his
enemy (rejuvenated by Mr. Bracken) survived to break up the
original conception of S.O.E. Second, the surge of interest in the
oppressed peoples of Europe and the British Fifth Column soon
died down: even by the autumn of 1940 our hopes had been
transferred from Europe to America. S.O.E. continued to be
important, but it never again had a chance to secure overriding
priority.

THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

And overriding priority is certainly necessary to sustain the idea of a unified Ministry of Subversion. Such unification means the concentration of immense power in the hands of one man or of a small group, and it inevitably breeds resistance by rivals. The Nazi Fifth Column, which was so much admired in its day, was run chaotically, by a chaos of conflicting authorities. In Russia there is in theory a high degree of concentration; national policy is primarily a policy of subversion, and the diplomats and soldiers are relegated to a subordinate role below the level on which policy is made; neither soldiers nor diplomats have any place in the Politburo of the Party. But it is still not easy to see where the responsibility lies. There is one concentration of subversive power in the hands of the N.M.V.D. (Beria), another in the Secretary of the Russian Party and Secretary of the International Party; in addition the Foreign Minister (Molotov) and the Defence Minister (Bulganin) both stand high in the party hierarchy and both are served by secret services of their own. If it is impossible to produce a 'monolithic' system in Moscow, it is certainly impossible to do so in Whitehall, where neither the Foreign Office nor the soldiers have any intention of allowing themselves to be reduced to the level of executive agents of a political party.

This difficulty is all the greater because Britain is a democracy. A Ministry of Subversion is in its very nature exempt from any form of democratic control, and it is not tolerable to us even in -nr that the vital issue (,f national rolic.- should be entirely withdrawn from scrutiny by the House ,-- Commons. If they understood the issues, both Parliament and, the public would be as hostile to a unified Ministry of Subversion as are the older Departments in Whitehall.

The second main difficulty is that the principle of organisation by technique to some extent runs at cross purposes here with that of organisation by purpose. The unity of subversion suggest one kind of organisation, the technique of 'unacknowledgeable means' suggest another. 'Subversion' does not necessarily include all secret service, but secret service has a different unity of its own. On a conservative estimate, there were four British Secret Services in the war of 1939: S.I.S., S.O.E., M.I.9, and M.I.5.

All -four had much in common as regards technical development, training, knowledge of the enemy, and at least the first three made much trouble for one another by running independent networks of agents in enemy territory. Both security and economy suggest that some measure of unity at headouarters is essential, even if security requires that agents in the field should be kept distinct.

The third difficulty is that the work of a subversive organisation is not all of one piece. If all goes well with the campaign. there will in each field of action be a steady growth, from clandestine work conducted by a few agents in utter secrecy to open resistance closely related to a military plan. The problem begins as a spy's problem and ends as a soldier's problem, and to make matters worse it is not one problem but a series of problems - There is irregular warfare in Yugoslavia while in France the Resistance is still deep underground.

When France has reached the stage of irregular warfare, Yugoslavia under Tito has almost attained to the organisation of a state, yet in Holland the work is beginning anew. S.O.E. kept in step with this development by a gradual transition from civil to military in its Pattern of

organisation, first in the Middle East, then in the West; but the same department at each stage included men of very diverse habits of mind, and there was always a slight sense of strain between the ghost of D. Section and the ghost of M.I.(R).

For all these reasons it is useless to think that anyone can solve the problem of subversive organisation. There is no correct pattern laid up in Heaven which can be brought down to earth by an administrative genius. The most that can be demonstrated is that some mistakes will be in all circumstances disastrous, and that they must not be allowed to happen again.

In the first place the Foreign Office and the military must, from top to bottom, learn to understand what goes on in this vast field of action which lies between their conventional spheres. S.O.E. has many mistakes to its discredit, but the cause of its worst troubles lay outside its control. The Foreign Office (with certain notable exceptions) regarded S.O.E. as an interloper in diplomacy, it interfered only to prevent S.O.E. from acting. Information from Occupied Europe was extremely scanty and determination of policy was not easy, but the Foreign Office as a whole never grasped how S.O.E. could help it. It did not occur to it that S.O.E.'s British agents, great and small, were in a sense diplomats, sent en mission in circumstances of extreme danger and responsibility.

It took no responsibility for their training and very little for the preparation of their briefs. Surely it would not be impossible for the Foreign Office, even in war, to recruit and train fit young men in the diplomatic

SECRET

P1130159
1160.

service, so that it can use its own men even for desperate ventures ?

The military (unlike the diplomats) were perfectly clear that they could find a use for S.O.E. but that use was merely 'to kill Germans'; it was not understood that sometimes it costs too much to 'kill Germans', when the cost is reckoned in terms of British policy, not simply of British and Allied dead. The Army's experience of 'Civil Affairs', in all its forms, may have been enough to kill this fallacy, but it is one which dies hard in the minds of soldiers.

Second, it is intolerable that the lives of agents and of Allies should be endangered by competition and confusion between British Secret Services. There is every reason for keeping apart in the field intelligence networks, sabotage networks, escape lines, political agents; each has different conditions of work, and they merely endanger one another if they confuse their tasks. It may even be desirable in England that each task should be handled by an independent organisation. But no considerations of security should prevent these organisations from working so closely together that all British agents are in effect handled as a single force.

Third, subversive propaganda cannot in execution be divorced from subversive operations. It may be that each task is so large as to require a separate organisation, but these organisations must work together from top to bottom. If an agent in the field takes a line about British policy, his work will be destroyed if (through sheer muddle) a different line is taken by British propaganda, open or secret. It may sometimes be necessary to repudiate an agent deliberately, even at the peril of his life, but it is monstrous that it should lie done by accident - The relations between the Ministry of Information,

the Political Warfare Executive, and the Special Operations Executive were generally better at the bottom than at the top; those who knew, did their best to work together, but there were times when they were working behind the backs of their superiors. This is one thing that should never happen again.

With these considerations in mind it may be worth hazarding some suggestions for organisation in war. It is clear that the initiative in this whole field must in our system of government come from the Foreign Office, there is no other department competent to take the lead as regards external policy. It is also clear that the Foreign Office as an administrative department cannot single-handed control the vast ramifications of modern subversive organisation. Therefore let the Foreign Secretary in war become a coordinating rather than executive officer; he must stand very close to the Prime Minister, he must be assisted by a small but strong personal staff, and he must have power to co-ordinate and in the last resort decide all issues in the field of external policy. Under him let there be four separate organisations, each headed by a junior Minister and by a high official, to handle orthodox diplomacy, propaganda (white and black together), 'Special Operations' and 'Secret Intelligence'; to these should probably be added (as a fifth) Economic Warfare in the orthodox sense. It will be best to have five separate departments, because the task is so large, and esprit de corps and clarity of purpose are stronger in small departments; it will be best to have junior Ministers at the head of each, because those are highly political functions, and a balance between politicians of different shades is in the interests both of

efficiency and of public confidence. Nevertheless each department must be basically a Foreign office departmentg even though this involves a change in the character of the Foreign Office each must secure its fair share of the best brains in the career service. But in addition each must be strongly reinforced by talent from the outer world and the three 'subversive' departments, the equivalents of P.W.E., S.O.E. and S.I.S., will require also strong representation of the fighting services.

This last point is the most difficult of all to secure; in war the best fighting men will struggle to escape from offices in order to command units in the field. It is not wise to compel them to do otherwise, and it is worse than useless to by-pass the difficulty by posting them into subversive departments and. out again to their units before they have had time to learn the game. Yet committees on a high level are powerless to co-ordinate military and political demands unless there is already mutual confidence and working agreement on the lower levels. The problem must somehow be solved on these levels. The British Army fortunately has always had its small quota of eccentrics who have loved irregular war, even at the expense of their Careers, but the Navy and the R.A.F. have thought little of it, the notion of subversion is at first sight derogator to the professional dignity of sea power and air power. But this contempt rests on a misunderstanding which it is not impossible to overcome. It is obvious absurdity to suppose that strategy and politics seek different ends by different means; if they are to serve the nation both must seek the same end by all means that come to hand. Subversion is one of the most important of these

P1130162

1163.

means. It is not a Fourth Arm or a Fourth Service because its nature is alien to the conception of a profession of arms, but it is indispensable to the professional soldier to understand it and to use it. It is equally indispensable to the professional politician, and national policy can only exist when these two pull the same way.

WAR CABINET

HOME DEFENCE (SECURITY) EXECUTIVE

SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE

Memorandum by the Lord President of the Council

1. The memorandum which I circulated to the Cabinet on 27th May (W.F.(40)172) gave particulars of the organisation of the Home Defence (Security) Executive, which was set up under the chairmanship of Lord Swinton to co-ordinate action against the Fifth Column.
2. In addition to presiding over the Home Defence (Security) Executive, Lord Swinton has been entrusted with the executive control of M.I.5 and is thus responsible for counter espionage activities in Great Britain.
3. The Prime Minister has now decided that Lord Swinton shall also exercise operational control over the work of M.I.6 in respect of all the activities of M.I.6 in Great Britain and in Eire. M.I.6 will also continue to place at the disposal of Lord Swinton all information in their possession which may have a bearing on Fifth Column activities in Great Britain or Eire.
4. The Prime Minister has further decided, after consultation with the Ministers concerned, that a new organisation shall be established forthwith to co-ordinate all action, by way of subversion and sabotage, against the enemy overseas. The Prime Minister requested me to set on foot this new organisation in consultation with those concerned. Action is accordingly being taken as follows:
 - (a) An organisation is being established to co-ordinate all action, by way of subversion and sabotage, against the enemy overseas. This organisation will be known as the Special Operations Executive.
 - (b) The Special Operations Executive will be under the chairmanship of Mr. Dalton, the Minister of Economic Warfare.
 - (c) Mr. Dalton will have the assistance of Sir Robert Vansittart.
 - (d) The Special Operations Executive will be provided with such additional staff as the Chairman and Sir Robert Vansittart may find necessary.

SECRET

- (e) The various Departments and bodies taking part in underground activities will, for the time being, continue to be administered by the Ministers at present responsible for them
- (f) The departments and bodies effected which will now be coordinated by Mr. Dalton are:

<u>Title</u>	<u>Alternative Title</u>	<u>Administrative Authority</u>
Sabotage Service	"D"	F.O.
M.I.(R)	-	W.O.
Departement Electra House	Sir Campbell Stuart's Organisation	Joint F.O. and Minister of Information

Mr. Dalton will also have the cooperation of the Directors of intelligence of the three Service Departments and of the Secret Intelligence Service (M.I.6) for the purpose of the work entrusted to him. Mr. Dalton will also keep in touch with Lord Hankey.

- (g) The Planning and direction of raids by formed bodies of British or Allied ships, troops or aircraft will remain the function of the Military authorities, but Mr. Dalton will maintain touch with Departments planning such raids in order to afford any possible assistance through the channels he coordinates.
- (h) Any Department obtaining information likely to be of value to Mr. Dalton will place their information at his disposal.
- (i) All operations of sabotage, secret subversive propaganda, the encouragement of civil resistance in occupied areas, the stirring up of insurrection strikes, etc., in Germany or areas occupied by her will be submitted before being undertaken by any Department, to Mr. Dalton for his approval.
- (j) Mr. Dalton will co-ordinate the planning operations of underground warfare and will direct which organisation is to carry them out. He will be out responsible for obtaining the agreement of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs or other Minister interested to any operation which is likely to affect their interests.
- (k) It will be important that the general plan for irregular offensive operations is to carry in step with the general strategical conduct of the war. With this end in view, Mr. Dalton will consult the Chiefs of Staff as necessary, keeping them informed in general terms of his plans, and, in turn, receiving from them the broad strategical picture.

5. Lord Swinton and Mr. Dalton will arrange for any consultation that may be mutually helpful or may be necessary to prevent overlapping between the Home Defence (Security) Executive and the Special Operations Executive. Normally, no doubt, consultation between their respective staffs will suffice for this purpose.

6. The Prime Minister has requested that Lord Swinton and Mr. Dalton should regard me as the member of the War Cabinet whom they should consult and to whom any inter-Departmental difficulties, should they arise, would be referred.

(Int'd) N.C.

Privy Council Office, S.W.1.
19th July, 1940.

Note: The organisation of this Department is being reviewed.

ORGANISATION CHART SPRING 1941

APPENDIX B

S.O. (Dr. Dalton)
| \-----Sir Robert Vansittart
C.E.O. (Mr Jebb)
|
C.D. (Sir Frank Nelson)
|
AD/A (Sir Charles Hambro - also Deputy to C.D.) | S.(Mr. Wiekemann) | Scandinavia (Mr. Sporborg
| Belgium (Mr. E.F. Dadson
| Holland (Mr. R. Laming)

X. (Mr.Brien-Clarke | Germany (X)(Mr. Brien-Clarke)
| Iberia (H) (Lt.C.H. Scott,HNVR
| N. Africa
| W. Africa (W) Julius Hanau

D. (Mr. Sheridan)
Propaganda Liaison

DH.32 (Mr.D.L.J. P
Perkins)

AD/Z (Col. Davies) | France (F) (Mr. Marriott)
| Liaison with S.I.S. D/T (Col Calthrop)
| U. (The Americas) Capt. J.R. Leonard
| E. (Cdr. Milne) Equipment & Supply
| L. (Col Anstruther) | Intelligence & Planning
| Security (Maj. Gen. Lakin
| Service Liaison | D/Army and D/Navy and D/Air

D/Fin (G/Capt. Venner)
M. (Brig. Gubbins) | Poland (Capt. H.B. Perkins)
| Czechoslovakia (Mr. F.E. Keary)
| Operations
| Training

Notes:- (i) AD- (Col Taylor) was at this time. acting for C.D. in the Balkans

(ii) Main sources: Memos.by C.D. d/d 27th march 1941, and by AD/A dated 4 April 1941.

MEMORANDUM

Relations between S.O.E. and the Foreign Office

1. The Special Operations Executive is a secret and independent organisation directed by the Minister of Economic Warfare, for achieving the following purposes:
 - (a) to promote disaffection and, if possible, revolt in all enemy and enemy-occupied countries.
 - (b) to hamper the enemy's war effort by means of sabotage and 'partisan' warfare in those areas.
 - (c) to combat enemy interests and Fifth Column activities by 'unacknowledgeable' means and to create 'post-occupational' organisations in any other part of the world where S.O.E. may be permitted to do so.

2. These purposes shall in all cases be in harmony with the general policy of H.M. Government and S.O.E. shall be responsible for obtaining the agreement of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to any of their operations which are likely to affect his interests. For their part, neither the Foreign Office nor H.M. representatives abroad will take action on matters affecting S.O.E. without previous consultation with the latter or their local representatives. The Foreign Office further agree to make available to S.O.E. all Information affecting S.O.E. operations or likely to have a bearing upon S.O.E. operations and plans.

3. While it is established that, subject to paragraph 2 above, S.O.E. have a right to advance opinions and conduct operations on their own, they execute the policy of H.M. Government as laid down in their respective spheres by the Chiefs of Staff, the Foreign Office and other Departments of State. Once this policy is determined, the Foreign Office, so far as they are concerned, will give S.O.E. every facility for carrying it out. At the same time, it is clear that the degree of interest taken by the Foreign Office in the activities of S.O.E. varies in the different areas in which S.O.E. operates, as follows:-

(i) Enemy and Enemy-Occupied Territories.

Here S.O.E. work on the directives of the Chiefs of Staff Organisation (or, alternatively, of the responsible Commanders in Chief) in regard to the tempo of subversive operations, with complete liberty to use their own discretion in regard to the elements with whom they should get in touch. All acts of sabotage and the creation of disaffection against the enemy generally can be undertaken on the initiative of S.O.E., who will, however, keep the Foreign Office informed of any developments of political significance by means of a periodical report, and by liaison between the Departments concerned. If any organisation controlled by or in touch with S.O.E. is found to be in a Position to exercise a political

influence in the country concerned, S.O.E. will at once consult with the Foreign office Eind the Chiefs of Staff as to the line to be adopted in its dealings with such an organisation, and shall conform to the rulings Of the Foreign Office as to the political line to be adopted.

(ii) Unoccupied Franco and Unoccupied French Overseas Territories.

S.O.E. recognise that the Foreign Office have a special interest in these areas and agree not to conduct operations in them except with the knowledge and (subject to appeal) the consent of tile Foreign Office. In these areas the Foreign Office will not normally be informed of the details of subversive operations, but will give (or withhold) general consent to their being conducted.

(iii) Neutral Countries

Here the interests of foreign policy are predominant. Accordingly, the Foreign Secretary assumes full responsibility for deciding whether or not S.O.E. are to conduct aotivities in neutral countries and S.O.E. will take directives in these areas from him. it follows that save in regard to certain subjects, such as the recruitments of agents or the suborning of ship's masters, where the Foreign Office may give them general authority to proceed, S.O.E. will carry out no operations, and will take no active steps preparatory to operations, except with the knowledge and (subject to appeal to the Foreign Office) the consent of the Head of the local Diplomatic Mission. while it is essential that S.O.E. should select as their Head Representative in any neutral country some competent and trustworthy person, the Foreign Office, for their part, agree that the importance of subversive operations should be impressed on the Heads of the Missions concerned and that, in principle, the necessary preparatory work should be undertaken.

(iv) Allied Countries (except those in enemy occupation)

The interests of S.O.E. in these countries lie almost entirely in the recruitment of agents and co-operation with the Governments of the countries concerned in subversive operations. Provided that the Allied authorities concerned are in agreement, the Foreign Office do not wish to be consulted in regard to the recruitment of agents, though they should be kept informed of the main lines of co-operation in subversive matters.

(v) Central and South America

In all Central and South American States, whether belligerent, non-belligerent, or neutral the interests of foreign policy are also predominant and S.O.E. will only take action in co-operation with an authority duly constituted by the United States Government. Pending the constitution of such authority, no action including prepartitory action other than the recruitment of agents shall be undertaken until the approval of the Foreign Office has been obtained and, with the knowledge and consent of the heads of the local British Diplomatic Missions

P1130171

4. Peace Moves

If, in the course of their work, S.O.E. should discover groups or parties in any of the above mentioned categories or territories willing and able to embark on anything like peace negotiations, they will at once inform the Foreign Office, who will decide whether, and on what lines, negotiations shall be conducted.

5. Oganised groups of friendly enemy aliens and Exiled Allied Governments

In addition to the above mentioned areas S.O.E. should have certain relations both with organised groups of friendly enemy aliens an.-I with Exiled Allied Governments.

(a) Organised groups of friendly enemy aliens.

The purpose of S.O.E. in maintaining relations with such organisations outside this country is (i) to obtain recruits, and (ii) to assist S.O.E. Missions abroad to obtain such co-operation as they need from local elements for the conduct of operations in the territories concerned. S.O.E. will keep the Foreign Office fully informed of all dealings which they may have with such organisations and will, in this respect, conduct no policy of their own, but receive directives from the Foreign Office. On the other hand, any communications which such organisations may have with the foreign country concerned should be conducted through S.I.S. or S.O.E. channels since otherwise there would be grave risk of crossing lines and general confusion.

(b) Exiled Allied Governments.

Relations of S.O.E. with Exiled Allied Governments will be restricted to the operational plane. By this is meant, generally speaking, discussions regarding the recruitment and despatch of agents and material, the allocation of priorities (i.e., how best to distribute the available transport facilities and material as between all the Governments concerned) the formation of underground organisations and the exchange of ideas on technical matters . There Is nothing to reclude S.O.E. from carrying out the above objects through the agency of Allied nationals who may not be identified with or may even be Politically In opposition to the Allied Government in question, provided that S.O.E. ensure that their agents do not encourage any particular Political faction or participate in intrigues carried on in opposition to the Government recognised by H.M. Government.

6. Right of Appeal

As a Minister of the Crown, the Minister of Economic Warfare has, in his capacity as head of S.O.E. (and save as qualified in paragraph 3 (iii) above) a general right of

SECRET

appeal against an adverse decision by any Department to any particular proposal of his. On all matters affecting operations the suitable court of appeal would be the Defence Committee. It is understood that the Minister will only exercise his right of appeal in regard to matters which seem to him of the first importance from the point of view of the conduct of special operations.

7. Propaganda

The question of the extent to which S.O.E. shall deal with subversive propaganda is excluded from the present paper and forms the subject of separate arrangements between S.O.E., P.W.E. and the Ministry of Information.

P1130173 + P1130174 + P1130175 + P1130176

APPENDIX E.

C.D. (Sir G. Hainbro)

|
Advisers

D.C.D.(A)(Mr.W.J. Hanbury-Williams) | AD/P(Air Commodore A.R. Boyle) | Security
| Intelligence
| Liaison
| AD/Z (Lt. Col. F.T. Davies | Army & R.E. Supplies
| Scientific Research
| W/T Supplies
| D/Fin (Wing/Cdr. J.F. Venner) | Finance
| Administration

D.C.D.(0)(Brig. Gubbins) | MG | AD/E (Brig. Mockler-Ferryman) | D/S (to be appointed) Scandinavia
| D/R (Col.D.J. Keswick) France
Free France
Low Countries
| Italy & Switzerland
| M/X(Lt.Col.P.Wilkinson)Poland
Czechoslovakia & Germany
| MA | MO(Lt.Col.R.Barry) Operations
| MT (Col.J.Munn) Training
| MS (Col.G. Ozanne) Signals

July 8 1942. N.B. This chart is designed to show only the lines of responsibility of the Directors and does not indicate levels of seniority.

MOST SECRET

MEMORANDUM

SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

It has been suggested that a common Allied Staff should be formed to deal with all subversive activity in the occupied territories. The special function of this staff would be to co-ordinate and direct such activities in order that they might render the maximum assistance in any future Allied offensive.

2. The importance of the preparation of the peoples of Europe, at present subject to Nazi rule, to take their share in the overthrow of Germany has long been accepted by His Majesty's Government, and by its Military Advisers, and it was largely with this object in mind that the Special Operations Executive (S.O.E.) was created. The functions suggested for this common Allied Staff are at present covered by the S.O.E.

3. The present method by which S.O.E. works in close collaboration with our planning staff, and with the Chiefs of Staff Committee, enables activities in occupied Europe to be co-ordinated with the whole war plan.

4. We believe that the organisation of a common Allied staff to deal with these activities would serve no useful purpose, particularly as it would not be in a position to relate its recommendations to the requirements of the war as a whole.

5. S.O.E. should therefore continue to act as the co-ordinating authority, dealing with the General Staffs of the Allied Governments whose territories are occupied, and with the Free French General Staff, and acting as the agent to whom these General Staffs should refer all matters in connection with sabotage and the organisation of resistance and secret armies.

6. In view of the importance which we attach to subversive activities on the Continent, I am sure that you will give S.O.E. the closest and most whole-hearted co-operation.

Copies of this letter have been sent to the appropriate Belgian, Czechoslovakian, Netherlands, Free French, Greek, Norwegian, Polish and Yugoslav authorities.

(Sgd.) A.F. BROOKE.
Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee.

2nd June 1942

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P1130178

APPENDIX G.

COPY

C.O.S.(42) 133 (0)

12th May, 1942

WAR CABINET

CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE.

S.O.E. COLLABORATION IN OPERATIONS
ON THE CONTINENT

Note by the Secretary

The attached directive to the S.O.E. on their collaboration in operations on the Continent has been approved by the Chiefs of Staff.

(Sgd.) L.C. HOLLIS.

Great George Street, S.W.1.

12th May, 1942.

Annex.

C.O.S.(42)147th Meeting, Minute 5.

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ANNEX

Directive to S.O.E.
OPEPATIONS ON THE CONTINENT

The War Cabinet has approved xx that plans and preparations should proceed without delay for anglo-U.S. operations in Western Europe In 1942 and 1943 , the intention being to develop an offensive in stages as follows:

- (i) A series of raiding operations to be carried out during the summer of 1942 on a front extending from the North of Norway to the Bay of Biscay, coupled with
- (ii) An active air offensive over N.W. Europe;
- (iii) A large scale raid to bring about an air battle and or the capture of a bridgehead in France within the area in which adequate naval and air cover can be given during the summer of 1942 should it be decided to operate on the Continent;
- (iv) A large scale descent on Viestern Europe in the Spring of 1943.

2. Responsibility for these tasks has been allocated as follows:-

Initiation of offensive preparations	C.-in-C., Home Forces and C.C.O. Jointly.
Planning and launching raiding operations in 1942	C.C.O. In consultation with C4-in-C., Home Forces.
Conduct of Air Offensive	A.O.C.-in-C., Fighter Command in consultation with A.O.C.-in-C., Bomber Command.
Planning of Operations for a large scale raid and/or the capture of bridgehead in 1942. (Sledgehammer)	C-in-C., Home Forces, A-0-C.-in-C., Fighter Command and C.C.O. in consultation.
<u>Large scale descent on Western Europe in 1942</u>	C--in-C., Home Forces in conjunction with A.O.C.-in-C., Fighter Command (and other R.A.F. Commands as necessary) and C.C.O., in full consultation with the Naval Staff.

3. S.O.E. is required to conform with the general plan by organising and co-ordlinating action by patriots, in the occupied countries at all stages. Particular care is to be taken to avoid premature large scale risings of patriots

4. To this end S.O.E. should work in continuous collaboration with the Planning Staffs of the officers referred to in paragraph 2 above, who will keep S.O.E. fully informed.

5. S.O.E. should endeavour to build up and equip para-military organisations in the area of the projected operations. The action of such organisations will in particular be directed towards the following tasks:

Co-operation during the initial Assault

- (a) Prevention of the arrival of enemy reinforcements by the interruption of road, rail and air transport.
- (b) The interruption of enemy signal communications in and behind the battle area generally.
- (c) Prevention of demolitions by the enemy.
- (d) Attacks on enemy aircraft and air personnel.
- (e) Disorganisation of enemy movements and rear services by the spreading of rumours.

Tasks after landing

- (f) Provision of guides for British troops. These should know the dispositions of German troops and installations in the immediate neighbourhood.
- (g) Provision of guards for vital points. In the case of personnel that have not been armed and equipped before operations start, this will be completed on the arrival of the Allied expeditionary force.
- (h) Assistance in arranging for the provision of labour for work in docks and on communications and aerodromes.
- (i) Provision of raiding parties capable of penetrating behind the German lines to carry out specific tasks.

6. Copies of this directive have been sent to:-
Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces. Air Officers Commanding-in-Chief,
Fighter Command and Bomber Command. Chief of Combined Operations.

xx W.M.(42)54th Conclusions.

CORRIGENDUM to COS(42)133 (0)

9th August 1942.

At their meeting held on 8th August 1942 the Chiefs of Staff

"(e) Agreed that paragraph 5(f) to (i) inclusive of the Directive to S.O.E. should be cancelled."

It is requested that copies of COS(42)135(0) in your possession should be amended accordingly.

(Sgd-) L.C. HOLLIS

COS(42)231st Mtg.Min.2..

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APPENDIX J.

S.O.E. and P.W.E.

(Agreement of September 1942)

In order to provide the closest measure of co-operation between S.O.E. and P.W.E. in the Middle East, West Africa and any other centres to which it may later be agreed to apply the same principle the two organisations have agreed on the following delimitation of functions.

1. S.O.E. recognise P.W.E.'s desire to establish independent missions to conduct all forms of propaganda to the areas assigned to them in their Charter.
2. S.O.E. agree to hand over to P.W.E. in all areas to which this agreement applies, all broadcasting stations which they at present own or control; and not to establish any other stations in their stead.
3. P.W.E. however recognise that S.O.E., being charged by H.M.G. with all forms of political subversion, have need of special clandestine broadcasting facilities for operational purposes, and undertake therefore to provide these facilities on the following terms:-
 - (a) The broadcasts needed by S.O.E. shall be made, on the stations now transferred to P.W.E. control, by broadcasting teams provided by S.O.E. whose identity S.O.E. are not bound to disclose.
 - (b) P.W.E. will take the necessary steps to safeguard S.O.E.'s security in respect of these broadcasts.
 - (c) S.O.E. will submit scripts in advance to P.W.E. so that both parties may be satisfied that there is no conflict between the policy laid down by H.M.G. to S.O.E. and P.W.E. respectively.
 - (d) In receiving these scripts P.W.E. will bear in mind the operational purposes and character of the broadcasting, recognising that the operational policy involved therein is S.O.E.'s affair and does not necessarily form part of the propaganda policy which is the business of P.W.E.
 - (e) Both parties will do their utmost to make these broadcasting stations pursue a consistent policy in the interests both of S.O.E. and P.W.E.
 - (f) Any differences on interpretation of policy which may arise will be referred. to the Coordinating Committee in London.
3. S.O.E. will transfer to P.W.E. such personnel on the spot as can be release! without damage to S.O.E.'s operational work or the security of any secret organisation they control and as are willing to be transferred.
4. PW.E. will not put, or permit their overseas missions to put, agents into the field either for the dissemination of written propaganda or whispers, or to influence the opinions and sentiments of the populations concerned, or to obtain information about the effect of propaganda controiled by P.W.E. in those territories. All such work in the field shall, as heretofore, continue to be done by S.O.E. as agents for P.W.E.

P1130183 + P1130184 + P1130185 + P1130186 + P1130187 + P1130188

APPENDIX N.

CD-Maj.Gen.C. McV. Gubbins

V/CD-Lt.Col. H. Sporborg

|
Organisation and Staff Duties (D/CD-Mr. P. Murray) | Organisation A/G
| War Establishment

Operations Far East & Missions (AD – Col. G.F. Taylor) | SEAC BB

| Australia
| U.S.A. U
| Russia DP
| Africa W

Mediterranean Operations (AD/H – Col. D. Keswick) | W.Mediterranean AMX

| Italy J
| Balkans D/HT
| Central Europe MP

Intelligence, Security & Propoganda (A/CD – Air Comdr. A.B. Boyle) | Intelligence L

| Security AD/P
| Propaganda DQ

Signals (D.Sigs – Col. F.W. Nicholls) | Policy

| Research
| Maintenance Stg. Office
| Security Codes Cypers

London Group (AD/E – Brig. E.E. Mockler-Ferryman) | DR – Lt.Col. R.E. Brook (France & Low Countries)

| X – Lt.Col. Thornley (Germany)
| DS – Lt.Col. J.S. Wilson (Skandinavia)

Finance & Administration (D/FIN – Gp.Capt. J.F. Venner) | Finance

| Properties

Supplies (AD/Z – Lt.Col. F.T. Davies) | Research

| Productions
| Procurements
| Movements

SPRING 1944

P1130189

APPENDIX O (1)

CLANDESTINE STATIONS IN OPERATION PRIOR TO D DAY (MAY 4 4

SECRET
INDEX

Aalesund, Norway	312
Aarsaether K.J.	312
Abatzis	220
Abbay Kupi	745/6
"Actor"	See Maj. Landes
Adamson, Maj. J.C.	1016
"Adjudicate"	See Lt. Toodor Dzierzgovski
A.F.C.N.L. (Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation)	639/40
A.F.H.Q.	
G.3 Special Ops. Section	616
Operational control	620
Aga Company	10
Agoston Lieut.	771
Airey Maj-Gen.	854
Airey Col.	273,282
"A.K." (Polish Home Army)	792,793,798
Freston Mission	805
"A.L." (Polish People's Army)	793
"Alain"	See Capt. J.G. Duboudin
"Albert"	See Lt. R. Cottin
Aleanza Democratica Espanola	35
"Alexander"	See Abatzis
Alexander Field-Marshal	639,671,672
Algiers, N.Africa	
American interest	428 ff
H..Q.Med.Command	615
Allouis, France'. ('Radio-Paris')	373
Almerigotti	see Dr. Klein
"Alphonse"	See Lt. A. Brooks
Amery Julian	28
"Anchor" (Mission to Vestfold)	315
Andalsnes, Norway	74,75
Anderson Sir John	142,144,145

P1130191

2.

SECRET

"Anglo-greek Commiittee" (Cairo)	245,246,251
Anglo-Norwegian Collaboration Committee	323-328,998
"Animals" (attack on communications in Greece)	695, 696,697 , 698
"Anklet" (Lofoten raid)	319
Anstruther Col.	534,817
Anstey Lt.Col.	861,866
Anteleme Maj. J.A,F.	877,679,891
"Anthropoid" (Attack on Heydrich)	484,435
Anti-Fascist council	653
Antiparos , Greece	225
Antonescu Marshal	760,761,7 62,7 64
"Antrum" (Mission to Aalesund)	312
"Anvil" (Mission to Norway)	315
"The Apostles" (Greek contacts)	196
Appleyard Capt. J.G. D.S.O., M.C.	370,3 5
<u>"Apollo"</u>	See Yanni Peltekis
"Archambaud"	See Maj. Norman
"Archer" (Mission to Norway)	311, 1001, 1015
<u>"Archery"</u> (C.C.O. raid)	320
Arciszewski (Polish resist. leader)	796,804
"Armada"	921
Ares (or Area Veloukhlo tis	634,685,633,689,696,718,728.
Arisaig, Scotland	298
<u>"Aristide"</u>	See Maj Landes
Armstrong Brig. R.E.	638,652,653,661,662
Arnhem, Holland	990, 991
Aronstein Cast.	967
"Arquebus" (Mission to Norway)	313
"Arquebuse"	See Col. de Wavrin
<u>"Ar tic"</u> (Swedish op.)	9
<u>"Ascot"</u>	311

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OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

SECRET

Askoutsis W.	719
Asopus Viaduct, attack on	698
d'Astier de la Vi,-erie, Emmanuel	383,412,413,420,421,436, 437,864
d'Astier de la Vigerie, General de l'Air Francois	412,860
d'Astier de la Vigerie, A. Henri	413,428,814
Atherton, Maj. Terence	185
Atkinson Lt. (M.I.9 officer)	224,225,250
Attlee, Mr. C.	103,104,105,124-5
Aviemore, Scotland (S.T.S.26)	298
Avinin M.	909
<u>"Avonmouth"</u>	72
Auxiliary Units	77,78,88
Avdhela, Greece	696
Ayral Jean	423,425
Babington-Smith, Mr. David	364,490
Badoglio Marshal	828,829,833
Bailey Col. S.W. Work in Yugoslavia	29,150,164,194,637,638, 642,651,653,660,662
Balkans	199,210,256,270
de Baissac Lise	383,880,890
de Baissac Maj. Claude	383,880,890
Bakalbasis (mission to emigre Greek Govt.)	219
Baker-Byrne Capt.	1099
Bakirdzis Col. (the "Red Colonel")	202,205,219,239,244,693, 719.
<u>"Balaclava"</u>	839
Balduzzi Dr.	845
Balkan Air Force	664-5,749
Ball Kombetar	745
"Barbara"	306,310

Berling Gen.	793
<u>'Bernard'</u>	See Emmanuel d'Astier de la Virgerie
Bernard Cdt.	455,967
Bertaud Prof.	392
Bertholet René	1067
Berti Col.	710
Bertrand Henri	-424-5
Betnouard M.	816
Ballostowski T.	986,993
Bidault Georges	409,424-5,909,914
Bieler Maj .	885,891
Biggs Mr. Ernest	11,17,18
Billotte Col.	421,433,434,436-7-8,440
Bingen M.	917-8
Binney Mr. George (later Sir)	302
The "Bismarck"	306
Bitner M.	480,891
Bjölvefossen, Norway (Power Stn)	296
<u>"Col. Black's Scheme"</u>	760
Blacker Lt.Col. L.V.S.	65
<u>"Blackmail" Operations</u>	897,922,924
Bloc-Maseant	909
Bodington Maj. N.R.	
Work in France	37q3BO,381,387,885,891
Duboudin	384
Mission to Girard	404-5,442
Jouhaux	408
M.Gillois	981
Bodo Lt.	771-2
Bogomolov M.	190
Boisson M.	427,496,861
Boiteux Maj. Robt.	384,883,895
Bollaert A.	916-7-8
Bonnevie (Norwegian)	14,17
Bor-Komorowski 3en.	799
Borrel Mlle.	885
Boswall Mr. Houston-	531,1115

SECRET

Bothereau	(Relations with French Trade Unions)	409
Bou3hey	Lt.Col.	771-2
Bourdat	Sergent-Chef	394-5,423
Bourne	Lt.Gen.	95,98,101
Bourne-Patterson	vlaž.	335
Bowes-Lyon	Mr. L)avid	567,571
BowMan	Mir. Thomas	199,215,224
Boxshall	Lt.Col. E.G. OBE,	218,756 (n)
Boyle	Air Comiodore A.R.	118,1113
Bracken	Mr. Brendon	146-8,518,569,571
<u>"Braddock"</u>		1082 ff
<u>"Brandon"</u>		614, 815,817,936
Bratianu		758
Brault	M. Michel	912,916,927
Brickendonbury	Herts	See Stn.XVII
<u>"Bricklayer"</u>		See Maj. Anteleme
<u>"Bridford"</u>		302
Brinkgreve	Maj.	990
British Security	Coordination	500,514
Broad	Mr. Philip	109,112,114
Brochu	Cdt.	337
Brook	Col. R.E.	866,937,1095,1113
Brooke	Sir Alan ("Brooke" letter)	549
Brookes	Mr. Victor Cannon-	1112
Brooks	Lt. A. (later Maj.)	386,895
Brooks	8rig.	114,146-8
Brossolette	Capt. ('Seahorsel)	907
de Brouville	Comte Caze-Sencier	898
<u>"Brow"</u>		832,937
Brown	Maj. A.W.. 74-5	
<u>"Brumaire"</u>		See Capt. Brossolette
de Bruyne	Co.	458,983
Buckmaster	Col. M.	335,386,408,903,438
B.O.A. (Bureau d'Operations	418-9 Aérienries)	

Burg Head	300
Bull A&j.Gen. (U.S.Army)	866
Butler Mr. Euan	273,573,577
Cadett Mr.	348
Cadogan Sir Alexander	25,54,95,97,108,608,872, 1065
Cadorna Gen.	848
Calliure, France	910,914
Calthrop Lt.Col. E.E.	584,586
Cammserts Capt. F. (later Lt.Col.)	874,876,881,895
Campbell Sir Ronald	23,151,488,491
<u>"Cantinier"</u>	896
<u>"Capetanos"</u> (Greek brigands)	756
<u>"Carp"</u> Mission	420
Carnet Trades Ltd.	1125
<u>"Carte"</u>	See Girard
Cartigny	391
Caserta , Italy	515, 723
Casey Mr	
Minister of State, M.E.	245,278,281-2
Propaganda in M.E.	579
O.S.S.	597,600
Casson Lt.Col. Stanley	722
Cat Firth	299
Catroux Gen.	801-2
Caucasus	256
Cavedini	830
<u>"Cavern"</u>	644
C.C.O. (Combined Operations)	
Relations with	136,553
Norwegian raids	306-7,319-22,326
Bruneval	374
Appt. of Lord mountbatten	553
C.D.L.R. (Ceux de la Resistance)	908

SECRET

P1130197

Centrum van Sabotage VI (C.S.VI)	467
"Chaffinch"	1005
Chaberlain Mr. Neville	12,13,25,104-5
<u>"Champagne"</u>	1068
<u>"Chancellor"</u>	see Capt. G. Millar
Chantiers de la Jeunesse	818
Chapman Air Cdr. Ivelaw	946
"Charades"	987,990
,;hartrand Lt.	886
de Chastelain Col. A.G.G.	609,760,762-3
Chateauroux, France	361
Chateauvieux Col.	347
<u>"Cheese"</u>	See odd Starheim
"Chemises Khaki"	456
Chidson Lt.Col.	33,34,45,49,51
Cieremans M.	987
<u>"Col. Chris"</u>	See Col. C.k. 14toodhouse
Christensen Mr. A.E.	331
<u>"Chub"</u>	424
Churchill Maj. Oliver	848
Churchill Maj. Peter	379-60,382,405,871,873 876,420
Churchill Mr. Winston	
Organisation	103,134,624
Aircraft	626
Relations with Scandinavia	12,13
" " Pra n c e	346,378,397,434,912
" " Poles	479
" " Yugoslavia	647 ,650, 654, 656,658, 662 673
" " Greece	719
Cianea	831
<u>"Cinema"</u>	See Emile Garry
<u>"Citronelle"</u>	914
<u>"Clairvoyant"</u>	310
<u>"Clam"</u>	438
<u>"Claribel"</u>	487,533

SECRET

Clark Gen. Mark	816
Clarke Mr. Brien	314, 1060
<u>"Claudius"</u>	See J.P. Levy
<u>"Claymore"</u>	306
Clayton	47,150
Clemenceau Lt.Col.	378
Clemenceau Paul	877
Clipet Cdt.	836
<u>"Clowder"</u>	614,1071 ff
Cochet Gen. de l'Air	860,863,865,867,912
<u>"Cockerel"</u>	615
"Cod"	418
Collin	424
Colonna Capt.	835
<u>"Colossus"</u>	827
COMAC	919A
(Comite d'Action Militaire)	
Combat	425,904
Comidac	908
C.F.L.N (Comité Francaise de Liberation Nationale)	861-2,864,865,878
No. 2 Commando (on Vis)	665
No.62 Commando	375
C.G.E. (Gonseil Général d'Études)	422-3,904
C.N.C. (Comité National de Coordination)	975-6
C.N.R. (Gonseil stional de la Resistance)	906,909,914,916,918,
Constantinovic	161
Coombe Maj. (I.S.S.B.)	72
Cooper Mr. Duff	110, 139-148,593
Cordier	422,424
Corinth Canal	208,249
Corps Franc d'Afrique	818
Corsica	424

P1130199

10.

SECRET

C.O.S.S.A.C.	620,
Cottin Lt. R. (also known as Cottin-Burnett)	377,379
Courtauld Maj . George	118,
Courtauld Samuel	37,49
Cowburn Maj. B.H.	379,381,384,385,387,879
<u>"Crayfish"</u>	424
Creed Maj.Gordon	697
Crete	253,733
Crockett Maj	62
<u>"Cribbage"</u>	987
Cripps Sir Stafford	181,602
Croce Benedetto	837
Croft Gapt.	72
<u>"Crow"</u>	315
<u>"Cubbing"</u>	See M. Cieremans
Cumberlege Lt. Cdr.	208
Cutsem Brig. van	112,114,125
Cuvrilovic Dr.	160,161
Cvetkovic (Yugoslav P.W.)	162
Czechoslovakia	482-486,807-812
Czernin S/Ldr.	1072
"D"	See Col. arand
"D" Board	120
"D" Section	2 - 111.
"D/B" Section	365-6
"D/M" Section	56,59,63
D.C.O.	Sea Lt. Gen. Bourne
D.P.A.	274
D.S.O.	274
D.S.P.	276-7
Datson Mr.	449

SECRET

SECRET

Dahl Serg.	74-5
Dalton Mr. H..	
Organisation	97,101-8,121,234,570,270,517 139-148,567, 569
Relations with French	346,372,396,
" " Yugo:	162
" " Albania	209
" " Poles	476
Dandicolle Lt. J.	890
Danish Conaittee	330
<u>"Danforce"</u>	1055,1058
Darlan	339,428-9,859

THIS-0-A-COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS
RETb,jNgP UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF JU9,PQD~IC RECOMS ACT

Darton Maj.	1061
"Das Wahre Deutschland"	6
"David"	See Maj. de Baissac
Davidson Mr. Basil (later Col)	655,767,770
Davies Brig. E.F.	747-8
Davies Maj. Wostyn-	667,753
Davies Capt. T. (Later Col.)	67,76,115,1114,1126
Deakin Maj. F.W.	649
Diedieu Lt.	890
Deinboll Lt. Peter	1011
Dejean 14.	399,
Delestraint Gen.	423,904-5,9,10,917
Delfosse M.	451-2,966
Denmark	329-334,1047-1059
Dericourt F/O	362,875
<u>"Desirable"</u>	184-5
Despotopoulos	699
<u>"Diamond"</u> (Op. "Isinglass")	225
<u>"Diamant-Berger"</u>	See M. Gillois
Diethelm M.	399,421,432,437,439
Dimitratos M.	233
Dimitrov George	155,752 757
Direction Générale de Recherches et Études	865

SECRET

SECRET

"Disclaim"	184-5
Dismore Lt. Col. L.H	354
"Ditcher"	See Maj. Brown-Bartrolli
Djuric	668
TheDodecanese	208
Doganis	232
Dolbey Lt.Col.	735
Domville . G/Ca pt	285,775
Dennadieu Lt.	393,394
"Donkeyman"	See Maj . Frager
Donovan Col. (U.S.Army)	159,500,594-5,597-8,1133
Doublong O.	1005
"Dragoon"	867,932,957
"Draughts"	See T. Biallosterski
Duboudin Capt. J.G.	384,387,895
s.s. "Duchessa d' Aosta"	342,497
Duff-Cooper Mr.	6-7,346
Dugmore Maj .	667-8
Dulles Mr. Allan (O.S.S.)	854
"Dunstable"	894
Dupont Capt.	891
Dzierzowski Lt.	481,891
E.A.M. (Ellenike Apeleutherotike Metopan)	
Relations with British	221,230,237,244-5,688,691, 722-3,
" " B.L.O's	717,719
" " Gk.King	706,725
E.D.E.S. (Gk. Resistance)	239, 692
"Col. Eddie" - Eddy Col. (O.S.S.)	See Lt.Col. E.C. Iyers 493,614

SECRET

Eden Mr. A.	
Organisation	83,105,526-531
Propaganda	570,578-9,582
S.I.S.	591
Aircraft	626
Relations with YuFo:	175,188-9,649,659
" " Greece	216-218,701,722
" " Belgium	451
" " France	378,399,431-3,436-7,440,444
"Eel"	420
Ehrgott Capt. (O.S.S.)	712
E.K.K.A. (Gk. Resistance force)	239,720
El Mano	491-2
Electra House ("E.H.")	5-7,42,87,91,94,98,106,109, 111,150
Eisenhower Gen.	618,814
Elliott Air Vice-larshal	665
Elliott Maj. K.J. (" <u>Disclaim</u> ")	185
Elliott Capt. K.S.	71
Elphinston Col.	63-69
Emery Mr. Horace	20-1
" <u>Enamel</u> "	644
E.M.F.F.I. (Etat Major of the Fr.Forces of the interior)	348, 618,935,959
Ethiopia	254
" <u>Eugène</u> "	See Lt. Pertschuk
" <u>Excerpt</u> "	644
Exindaris M.	707

THIS IS A COPY.THE ORIGINAL IS
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3(4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

<u>Faber &- Faber</u>	10
Fact Films Ltd.	39
"Falaise"	494
F.A.N.A. (Communist Org.)	405-6,420,908
F.A.N.Y's	512-13
F.N.C. (Albanian National Liberation Front)	745

P1130204	
" <u>The Forty Thieves</u> "	439
Fourcaud Lt.Col.	913
Frager Maj.	383,404, 442, 870,874-5, 891,897
F.T.P. (Francs Tireurs et Partisans)	406,413,882,890,902,904, 914
France	18,335-445,859-965
"Franchi"	See Lt. Sogno
Franck Mr. Louis	495
Fraser Capt.	12,14
"Frawest"	496
Freedom Council	See Section on Denmark
Frenay (alias "Mouflon")	968-9
Fresnay -A. Henri	411,413,904,914
Frodsham	28

THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINALS IS
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

Gabcik Sgt-	484-5
Gagnoni Col.	835
Gaiswinkler Albrecht	1078
Gaitskell Mr. H.	109,111
S.S. "Galtesund"	314
Gamelin Gen.	62
" <u>Gannet</u> "	1005
Ganshof M. (Ganshof van der Meersch)	967,979
Garnett Mr. David	5,572
Garrett Maj. Alasdair	329
Garry Emile	878
" <u>Gaspard</u> "	896,914
de Gaulle Gen.	See France
Gavrilovic	27,151,160
s.s."Gazcon"	497
Gedye Mr. G.E.H.	1061,1070

SECRET

P1130205

16.

SECRET

17.

le Gentilhomme Gen.	396
George King, of Hellenes	245,233,277,701-2
Georges Capt.	420
Georges Gen.	861-2
Gerbrandy Dr.	458,989
German Social Democratic Party	31
Gherassimos ("Odysseus")	206,213,220-1,230,238,249,250
Gibraltar Fishing Fleet	357
Gibraltar Flotilla	356-7
"Gilbert"	See F/O Bericourt
Gill	17-8
Gillois M.	871
Ginsburger M.	919A
Giona, Greece	242,684
Girard	383,404-5,442,870-4,887
Giraud Gen.	354,430,859,861,864,905
Giraudist Orgs.	868-9-70
Giskes Oberstleutnant	462,466
Glazer Cdt.	456,970
Glen Lt.Cdr.	150
Glendonner Lord	
In Middle East	247, 281,283,774,572,600 , 315,721,786
On Yugoslavia	178
" Greece	234-5,705
de Goede Lt. A.	987
Goeland Co. (Goeland Fleet)	20-1
"Goldfish"	420
.3onata3 aen.	202,222,223,228,232,707
Gonfreville, France	76
Goodwill Mr.	47-8,257
Gorgopotamos (Bridge)	685
GØrtz Lt.Gen.	331,1056
Gouin M.	409
de Graaf Capt.	984
Gram Gregers	1012,1021,1026
Grand Maj. Lawrence (later Col.)	2,3,13,25,29,31,36,40,53, 83-107,110,337

Grande Ivar	1014
Grandclément M.	880, 887
Granville Christine	876
Greece	18,71,195-252,681-743
Greenless Maj	644
Grendon Hall	1138,618
Greenwood Maj	644
Grégoire Maître	977
Grierson G/Capt. C. McK.	618
Gries Michel	422
Grisar Cdt.	455,967
Groehl Karl	31,1066
"Grouse"	315
Grove r-Williams Capt.	385,391
G.S.1(K)	150,276
G.S.(R)	52-3,150,274-5
Gubbins Maj. Gen. Sir C. McV.	59,66,67,78-80,116,178, 351,431,432,440,450-1,469, 524,536,538
de Guélis Maj. J. Vaillant	379,836
Guillement Capt. Dumont-	886,891
Guillery Capt.	976
Guinness Lt.Col. D.R.	532,602
Guisburger	909
Guistizia e Liberta.	828
"Gunnarside"	1008
Gutt M.	450
Hackett Maj.	566
"Hagfish"	424
Haifa	214,246

P1130207

Halifax Lord	12-3, 25, 54, 95,97,98,103,104
Hall Miss Virginia	381,382 ,387, 895,
Hamoro Sir Charles	278,301-2,522,782
Relations with Scandinavia	302,301, 323-8,331
" " French	440
" " Belgiums	432
" " Greece	701
Liaison with N.M.V.D.	608
O.S.S	598
Propaganda	578,580,582
Hamilton F.J.L	987
Hammer	332-4
Hammond Col.	727
Hampton Lt.Col. C.S.	1033,1045
Hands S/Ldr.	750
Hankey Lord	12,13,25,88,84-97
Hansen Duus	1047
Hansen Hedtoft	333
Hansteen Gen.	322
Harcourt Lt.Col. Lord	749/50
Hardy Col. René	910
Hargreaves Capt.	644
" <u>Harling</u> "	243,250
Harriman Mr. Averell	595
Harrington Maj.	756
" <u>Harrow-Root.</u> "	See Jean Ayrat
HauckM. Henri	408
Hauge Jens Christian	1034
Haugesund, Norway	313
Haugland Knut	1010,1026
Hawkesworth Capt.	644
Hayes Capt. J.B.	962
Hazan Maj.	384
Hazell Col.	479,393,1096
Head Maj. G.H.	29, 185

THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINALS IS
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

SECRET

"Heinrich"	See Col. Verbeck
Helford Base, Cornwall	355-6,554
liielmsman"	See Capt. J.B. Hayes
"Henna"	184-5
Henquet Lt.	889
"Hermit"	See Lt. Henquet
Herriot M.	877
Heslop Capt. R.H. (later Lt.Col-)	385,896,913
Het Parool	466
Heydrich	484-5
Heywood Gen.	207-8
Hill Lt.Col.	604,608
Hill MAJ. D.R. Oakley	151,209
"Hilaire"	See Lt.Col. G.R. Starr
Hiller Maj	883,899
Hillgarth Capt.	364
Himmler	302,1092
"Historian"	See Capt. G.A. ~iilkinson
Hoare Sir Samuel	365,488,489
Hodgson Miss E.M.	1060,1066
Holbrook Admiral L.S.	555
Holdsworth Lt.Cdr. G.R.N.V.R.	15,16,355,839
Holland Maj. A.C.	490
Holland Col. J.F.G.	49,53,55,83-107
Hollingsworth Cdr.	1058
Hollis Brig. C.	628
Holmes Mrs.	44
Hoover Mr. Edgar G.	500,594
Houseman Capt.	913
Hubbard Lt.	713
Hudson Maj. C.S.	879,889,890

Hudson Capt. (later Col)	661
Yugoslavia	165 170-2 182,184,194,640-1,661
Poland	805
Hulton Edward	37
Humphries Maj . L.	46,337,346-7-8,365
Huntemann Sonderfeuhrer	462,465
Hutchison Lt.Col. J.R.H.	354,931
"Hydra"	184-5
Hymans M. Max	375,870
Ibar (River)	649,652
Inchmery House,Mr.Southampton	389-90
Independent Companies	80,81,294
Infante Gen.	710
Information, Ministry of	5,6,38,39,44,139,518,563
Ingr Gen.	67,468,486,810
International Federation of Trade Unions	32
International Federation of Transport Workers	32,1066-7
Inter-Services Research Bureau	116,515
I.S.K. (Internationaler Sozialistische Kampfbund)	31, 1066,1037
I.S.S.B. (Inter Services Security Board)	72,81
I.S.F.B. (Inter Service Project Boa rd)	77,86,119
Iraq	255
"Isinglass"	224
Ismay Gen.	162, 323,535,701
I.S.S.U.6 (inter Services Signals Unit)	See "Massingham"
"Ivan"	754

Jajce, Yugoslavia	658
Jarrot M.	921
Javanovic	183,639
" <u>Jean</u> "	See Maj. Feuleve
Jeanneney	877
Je Maintiendral	466
Jebb Mr. Gladwyn	97,108-9,112-3,278,521,1112
"Subversion"	125,131
Relations with de Gaulle	349,432
" " N.K.V.D.	603
Propaganda	577
" <u>Jedburghs</u> "	929-33,990
Jefferis Maj. M.R. (later Sir)	59,64-5,73,74
Jennings Col.	282
" <u>Jerooa</u> "	See Woluwe
" <u>Jerome</u> "	See M. Michel Brault
Jerusalem Bureau	261,573
Jerusalem Station	256,276,582,767
Jewish Agency	34
Jewish Boycott Committee	34
Johnstone Lt.Col.	270
J.I.C. (Joint Intelligence Committee)	629
" <u>Jockey</u> "	See Lt.Col. Cammaerts
Johns Cdr.	983
Joint Technical Board	515
Jones Capt.	875
Jones Maj. W.M.	649
Joint Broadcssting Gormaittee	43,44
Jordan Lt.	688
" <u>Josephine A (and B)</u> "	369,371,394
Jouhaux M.	407-8
Jourdain Abbé	453
Juin Gen. 429	
" <u>Julien</u> "	See Capt. C.T. L-*chemnan

P1130211

22.

Julitte Cdt.	424
Juncker Fleming	334,1047
Kanellopoulos Panaglotis	201,205,220-1,222,227
Op. "Isinglass"	244
Party in Greece	229,244
Entering Gk. Govt.	233,236-7 699
Anglo-Greek Committee	245,687
Prometheus II	248
Op. "Thurgoland"	249
Albania	700
Resignation	701
To peloponese	728
Karapanyotis	704
Kaphandaris	203,232,707
" <u>Karageorge</u> "	581
Karayiorgis	393
Kartalis	692,699,707,712
Keble Lt.Col. C.W. (later Brig.)	285, 774,778,786
Yugoslavia	643
Kemp Capt. P.	70
Kennedy-Purvis Admirai Sir C.E.	85
Kenyon Maj .	63,78,88
de Kergorley	395
Keswick Lt.Col. D.J.	
Trade Union Relations with Fr.	408
Relations with de Gaulle	441,861
" " Belgiums	450
Massingham	815
Organisation	1114
Keyes Admiral Sir Roger	136
Kahn Princess Inayat	878
Kieffer Jean	875,881,890
" <u>Kip</u> "	See Lekkas
Kirkos	262
Kirkpatrick Mr. I	146-8,572
" <u>Kitbag</u> "	319

Klein Dr.	830
Klement Lt.	768
Klijzing Capt.	984
Knesevic	162
Kneufken	32,33
"Knife"	73,80
Knight Maj. C.T.	450
Koenig Gen.	348,618,865,919A,935,957
Koenig Kurt	1068,1069
Kominos	699,707,712
Kondylis Gen.	202
Koot Maj. Gen.	989,995
Koryzis M.	211
Kosta Pecanac	167
Kot Prof.	473
Koutsaina, Greece	720
Koutsoyannopoulos Lt.Cdr.	206,212,220,227,239,240, 248-9,683,689,691
Kreipe Gen.	736
Kriegel M.	919A
Kronberg	295
Kubis Sgt.	484-5
Kuehnel	1068
Kukiel	479,891
Kwapinski	893
Kymi, Euboea	226
Labit	391-3,422
Labour Socialists, The (Gk)	232
Lacoste	409
Ladas	222
the "Lady"	294
La4in Maj.Gen.G.	584

P1130213

24.

SECRET

Lalatovic Maj.	171
Lambrakis M.	707
L.F.A. (Land Forces Adriatic)	665,749
Landes Maj . R.	383,880-1,899
Langley Cdr.	51,64
Langlois Col.	918
LangmoeRubin	See Rubin Larsen
Larissa	710,712
" <u>Lark</u> "	312
Larsen Lief	1006
Larsen Rubin	294 - 296
de la Laurencie Général de Coral	383 403-4,413
Lavdas	249
Laverdet	394-5,423
Lawrenceson Mr. A.C.	27,28,150,164
Leathy Admiral	336
Lebedev	191
Leeper Mr. R.A.	110,113,146-8,270,348,580, 704,706,722,723,707,709,710, 721
Lefeuvre Ars.	See Miss Stamper
Légion-Belge	451
Leirvaag Olaf	294
Lejeune Capt.	861
Le Trocquer	868
Lekkas	219
Lemnitzer Maj.Gen.	854
Lencement	393
Lepage M.	449,456,966
Leroy Lt.	383
Lerwick, Scotland	299-300,555
Letac Sgt. Joel	370,372,395
Levant Fishing Patrol	555

SECRET

Levy Dr. (of Antibes)	382
Levy J.F.	413,904
"Lex"	31,32,1066
Lezennes	419-20,425
Liaskovo, Greece	696
"Libération"	383,412-3,421-2,425,902,908
"Libération Franjais"	419
"Libération Nationale"	383, 403,413, 419
"Liberté"	383,411,413,416,419
Lidice, Czech:	485
de Liederkerke P.	456,967,970,974,979
Liewer Maj. P.	886-7,900
Lillehammer, Norway	315
Lindberg Konrad	305,339
s.s."Lindi"	499
Lindsay Capt. Michael	68
Linge Capt. Martin	297-8,306,316,320
Lippmann Ole	1056
Livio L.A.	970
Livno, Yugoslavia	659
Lloyd Lord	97
" <u>Lobster Pot</u> "	355
Loch Ailort, Scotland	80, 477
Lockhart Mr. Bruce	145,146-8,571
Lofts Capt. P.H.A.	186,638
Long Range Desert Group	255,274
Longe Maj .	913
Longhi Pietro	See Dr. Alfredo Pizzoni
Longo	848
" <u>Louba</u> "	See Maj. Frager
" <u>Louis</u> "	See Lt. Leroy
Low Countries	447-467,966-997
" <u>Lucas</u> "	See Baron Pierre de Vomecourt

SECRET

P1130215

26.

SECRET

Lulea	8, 9,32
<u>"Lumps"</u>	13,14
Lunna Voe	299
Lussu Emilio	828
Lyttleton Mr.	245,278
Maaloy, Norway	320,326
McCaffery John	827
Mackenzie Mr. Colin	514,1114
Maclean Brig. Fitzroy	638,651,658
Maclean Lt.Col. N.L.D.	746,748
McNabb Capt. O'Brien	213,250
Macpherson Mr. G.P.S.	273
Macpherson Maj . Ian	756
Macek Dr.	166
<u>"Macmis"</u>	664
Madagasoar	498
Magli General	835
"Maid Honor"	3742398
Maingard Capt.	900
"Mainmast B"	416-7
Maisky M.	174,i31,169-190,192
Malachta Dr.	486
Mallaby Lt.	830,833
<u>"Mallard"</u>	312
"Mallory S/Ldr."	492,813,
In N.Africa	493-4,817,822
Maniadakis	212,719
Malraux André	887,902
<u>"Mandamus"</u>	See A.J. Wendelen
<u>"Manganese"</u>	811
Mangin Col.	916-7
MAniu M.	156-8,758,760,763-4

Manuel Cmdt.	863
Manus Max	1012,1021,1028
The Maquis	612,889,895,910
March-Phillips Maj. G.	374-5
Marchand Capt. J.	896
Marechal Col.	916-7
" <u>Marie</u> "	See Miss V. Hall
" <u>Marie-Claire Mission</u> "	917
Marin M. Louis	908
" <u>Mark</u> "	196,206
Markos	770
" <u>Marksman</u> "	See Lt.Col. Heslop
Cincar Markovic	162
Marissal Col. Jean	967,970
Marriott Mr. H.R.	348,408
Marteaux Dr.	973
" <u>Maryland</u> "	See No. 1 Special Force
" <u>Mason</u> "	See Capt. Regnier
Massigli M.	861-2,881
" <u>Massingham</u> "	614-6,815,831ff,839-40,861
Mast Gen.	816
Masterson Mr. T.S.	30,152,164,215,273,275
Matheson Miss Hilda	43
Matthey S/Ldr.	1061
Mauran Mr.	697
Mauriao 14. Prancois	908
Mavromichalis 14.	219,232
Maximos	232
Maxwell Ar. T.	214,247,267,270,273,277,280, 281,573-4,593
Mayer M.P.	498-500,883,899
M.C.R. (Midget Communications Receiver)	950
M.E.24	1095
M.E.4 3	616
M.E.65	931,1134

SECRET

P1130217

28.

SECRET

M.E.D.C. (Middle East Defence Committee)	629,1103
de Menthon M.F.	409
"Mercier"	See Moulin
Merignac Airfield	369
Metaxas	200-1,211
Michael King	764
"Michel Capt"	See Capt. Trotobas
Mihailovitch Gen.	
First contacts	168,172-3
Civil War	179,182-4
Relations with Medic	182
" " British	637- 680
S.O.E. relations with Bulgaria & Rumania	753, 759
Mikič	27
Mikolajczyk	473,796,798, 804, 893
Military League	155,752
M.I.5	584-5
M.I.9	63, 81,139,224 356
M.I.10	72
No.4 Military Mission	475
No.13 Military Mission	74
Millar Capt G.	898
Milorg (Central Norwegian Leadership)	309, 1000,1003
"Minna"	813,819
Minshull Lt. R.N.	368
M.I.(R)	See Book I
"Minister"	See Capt. Mulsant
Mirkovic Gen. Bora	162
M.O.1(S.P.)	515,552
M.O.4	614
Møller M. Christmas	333
"Monica - Bardsea"	891-2,1096-7

SECRET

Monkton Sir Walter	6,7, 236,272,278,573
"The Montenegrin Freedom Forces" 171	
Monnet M. Jean	861,862
"Moonshine"	302
Morandat M.	417,419,425
Moravec Col.	483,486
More Capt.	644
Morgan Maj.	644
Morris Mr. H.F.G.	490
Mortimore Mr. L.H.	364 Note (3)
Morton Mr. D.	97,146,350,399,445
Møsjoen, NorwaY	311
"Mouf lon"	See Freney
Moulin M. Jean Fie rre	401,425,
Mission to de Gaulle	403 413 319,421,422 ,431
Work in France	423,904,907,908,910,914
Mountbatten Lord	553
Moutet M.	409
Moyne Lord	582
Muirhead Maj	365
Mulholland Lt. L.	987,992
Mulsant Capt.	891
Munck Ebbe	331
Munn Lt.Col.-	815
Munthe Lt. (later Maj)	72-3,301,310,832,837
M.U.R.(Mouvements Unifies de la Resistance)	907
Murphy Mr. Robt.	413,428,488,813,597
Murray Mr. M.P.	118,1112
"Musgrave"	618
"Muscian"	See Maj. Bieler
Musters Lt. Chawurth-	298
Muus i,olemming i3ruun	1047ff
Myers Lt.col. E.C.	
Mission to Greece	682-5,387-8,392,722,392-3,695, 396, 699,707,712,
Work with SHAEF	937
Mylonas	232

P1130219

30.

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RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

"Napkin" See Duus Hansen

N.B.S. (Nederlandsche
Binnenlandsche Strijdkraft) 908 ff

Nasjonal Samling 318
"National Bands" 692-3
Nearne Miss J. 899
Nebe Lt.Gen. 1065
Nedic 167, 182

Nelson Sir Frank

Work with S.O.2 110,125,267, 268-70,278,522
Relations with Fr. 346,347,349,352,371-2
" " Yugo: 178
" " S.I.S. 586,593
" " O.S.S. 594-5

Neokhori, Greece 718
"Neronian" 644
"Nestor" See Capt. Poirier
Nermann Ture 11
Neugebinnen Group 31
"Neucols" 496
Newitt Prof. 509,1118
"Newsagent" See Capt. J. Marchand
Nicholls Col. A. 748
Nicholls Col, F. W . 1114,1137ff
Nicodème Capt. 967
"Nicholas" See Maj. Boiteux
M.I. D.(Q) 555
N.K.V.D. 174,514, 604,610
"Noah's Ark" 717-8,724,726,728
"Noble Geo." See Georges Bégué
Nordentoft Lt.Col. 331
Norman Maj. 885
Norway 20-28,286-328,998-1046
Norwegian Independent Company 298
" " Naval Unit 300

SECRET

Obolensky Lt.Col. (O.S.S.)	831
O.C.M. (Organisation Civile et Militaire)	405,879,907
Øen Col.	1034
Olmsted Maj. (U.S.Army)	990
Orde dienst	459,434,436,984
<u>"Odysseus"</u>	See Gherassimos
<u>"Olive"</u>	See Lt. François Basin
O.S.S. (Office of Strategic Services)	595-7,597-601
In Mediterranean	615,813-4,652
SOE/So	836
0.R.A.(Organisation de Résistance dans l'Armée)	870,896,914,918
Orthiz Capt. (U-S. Army)	913
Ostojic Maj.	171
Otten Karl	31
<u>"Otto"</u>	See Balduzzi
<u>"Outclass"</u>	417
<u>"Overcloud"</u>	393,395
Oxelosund ,	8-10,32
Ozanne Col. G.	1137
Palairt Sir Michael	195
Palmer.Maj.	73,
Pangalos Gen.	202,205
Pans J.fd.	970
Parker Lt.Gol. Dodds-	839,861
Parodi M.	916,919A
Parri Ferruecio	846,848,850,853-4
Papadimitriou Miss Elli	205-6,232,246,701
Papandreou	232,720,725,732
<u>"Passy Col."</u>	See Col. De Wavrin
Patriotic Front	752,756-7,
Pavelic	167,170
Fawson x1aj Maj	205,215,242,730

P1130221

32.

SECRET

Pearson Capt.	897
" <u>Pedagogue</u> "	See Capt. Pearson
Pedersen Frithof	305,309
" <u>Pedlar</u> ",	See Maj. Bodington
P.E.E.A. (political Committee of jqational Liberation)	719
Pellay Lt.	921
Peltekis Yanni	691,707,730-33
Pendelbury Mr.	71,196,213
" <u>Penguin</u> "	313
" <u>Perch</u> "	419
" <u>Perf ormance</u> "	302
" <u>Permit</u> "	See Lt. Dedieu
Pertouli, Greece	698,705,712 ,714
Pertschuk Lt.	387,876
Pessac, France	369
Petain Marshal	343,427,859-60
Peter King	173,656,663,658
Peter Prince (brother of Greek King)	214,246,249
Peterson Sir Maurice	531
Fetit Gen.	350,353
Petzamoglou George	232
Peyrouton M.	861
Peugeot Works, Sochaux	897
Peulevé Maj. H.L.T.	899,902
Philip André	409,439-40,444,861-2,935
" <u>Philippe</u> "	see Dr. Levy
" <u>Physician</u> "	See Maj. F.A. Sutthill
"Pick-Up" Operations	363
" <u>Pickaxe</u> "	605-6
Pierlot M.	448-9,451,970,979,981
"Pimento"	See Maj. A. Brooks
Pinerola Division	710-11

SECRET

Pinsent Capt.	365
Piquet-Wicks Capt.:	352,354,390
Pirie Mr. Ian	195-6,210,215,236,246
Pizzoni Dr. Alfredo	850
"Plake. Agreement"	719,724
Plastiras Gen.	202,240
Playfair Mr. E.W.	522
Pleven Mi.	440
Plisner M.	980
" <u>Podex</u> "	See Lt. Mulholland
Poirier Capt. J.	902
Poland	66,468-481,788-806
Polish Military Wireless Research Station	478
Politico Military Course	79,81
Pollock Lt.Col.	150,257,258,263,270
Portal Sir Charles	626
Porter Maj.	760,764
Postal Censorship	41-42
Postma S.	987,992
Poundon, England	618
Presenti, Gen.	829
Price Mr. John	406,408
" <u>The Princes</u> "	331,332
Prichard Maj. A.C.G. Hesketh-	1071ff, 1073
"Probst"	31
" <u>Prometheus I</u> "	See Col. Bakirdzis
" <u>Prometheus II</u> "	See Lt.Cdr. Koutsoyannopoulos
Psaros Col.	
E.K.K.A.	239,692
Political approaches	244
"Natband" project	693
Joint H.Q. Pertouli	698,712
Civil War	696,713
Dea th	720
Puchau M.	411,412
Purie	363-4

SECRET

P1130223

34.

SECRET

P.W.E.(Political Warfare Executive)	5,41,139-148,271,276, 457,521,570,565,579
Pyrojmaglou Prof. Kominos	692
<u>"Quadrant"</u> (air supply to guerrillas)	627
Quennell Mr. Hugh	364
Quisling .	318,1004
Raad Van Verzet (R.V.V.)	467
Radio-Paris	373
Radio-Patrie	871
"Radio-Patrie"	See Capt. de St. Genies
Rafferty Capt. B.D.	897,899
Rallis Peter	232
"Ratweek"	671
"Raven"	312
Rechenmen Capt. C.T.	900
Ree Capt. Harry	897-8,924
Régnier Capt.	895
Reichsbanner	31
<u>"Relator"</u>	489
Retinger M.	796,793
"Rex"	See Moulin
Reynaud M.	877
<u>"Rodium"</u>	644
Richards Lt. Brooks, R.N.V.R.	819
Rickman Mr. A.F.	10-14
Riddle Capt.	756
Rinnan Henry	1014
Ritchie Air Vice Marshal A.P.	628,1115
Rivet Col.	861
Rjukan, Norway	315

" <u>Roach</u> "	423
" <u>Robert</u> "	See Moulin
Robertson Capt. Chas.	186-7, 639
Rognes Capt.	321
Ronin Gen .	861
Roosevelt President	653,663
Rootham Maj.	644
Roseberry Lt.Col. C.L.	827,832-3,839-41
Rosenthal Lt. Pierre	896,913
Rottbøll Capt.	332-3
Roussos M. (not E.A.M. rep.)	704
Roussos (E.A.M.)	699,707,712
" <u>Rowing</u> "	See F.L.J. Hamilton
" <u>Ruoble</u> "	301-2
" <u>Rudder</u> "	843
Ruge Gen.	75
" <u>Rummy</u> "	See Lt. A. de Goede
" <u>Rupees</u> "	644
Rusea	828
Russell Capt. David	759
St. Genies Capt. de	877,897
Saillant	909
Salazar Dr.	490,492-3
" <u>Salesman</u> "	See Maj. P. Liewer
" <u>Salmon</u> "	419-20
Salvidori Max	631
" <u>Sam</u> "	See Lt.Col. Hill
Sansom Mrs. Odette	381,874,876
Sarafis Col.	692-3-4,696,718,723
"S.A.S.11	933
" <u>Savanna A (and B)</u> "	350,391,368-9
Scameroni Capt.	834
Schive Capt. J.	304

P1130225

36.

SECRET

Schoop	427
Schultz Fleet	20
" <u>Scientist</u> "	Maj. de Baissac
Scobie Gen.	727
" <u>Sconce</u> "	489
Scott Sir David	531
Scott-Harston Lt.	72
" <u>Sculling</u> "	See S. Pos tma
" <u>Seahorse</u> "	See S/Ldr. Yeo-Thomas
Sebastian Mr. Graham	199,215,244,
Sehmer Maj	644,772,809
Selborne The Earl of	234,521,570
Greece	234,704,246,
Middle East	278,281,567,579,631
O.S.S.	600
Aircraft	326
Selby Maj .	644
Serreulles M.	917
S.A.P. (Services d'Atterrissages et Parachutages)	419,423
Seymour Maj.	747
S.F.H.Q. (Special Force H.q.)	617,866
Sforza Count	851
Sheppard Maj. (later Col.)	693,595,728
" <u>Snipwright</u> "	See Maj. Maingard
" <u>Shrimp</u> "	424
Signals, relations with S.I.S.	588-9
Sikorski Gen-	67,468,473-4,479,547,788,891
" <u>Silver A</u> "	485
Simon Lt. Jean	898
Simovic, Gen.	162-3,172,180,183
Simpson Lt.Col. Adrian	69,150,257

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OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

S.I.S.

Relations with S.O.E.	2,4,105,137,518,554,585-6,594
Greece	250
Norway	313,323
N.I.D.(C)	356
France	407,483
Spain	491
W.Africa	495
"Six Colonels Organisation"	251,687
Sjøberg Lt.	See Archer Mission
Skinnarland Einar	315,1009-10,1042
Smilay Maj.	750
S.O. Board	120
Soderman Dr.	1065
S.O.1 (formerly "E.H.")	111,114,138,139,150,256,270,348
S.O.2	111,114,120,128,132,138,257, 265,271,268,297
S.O.3	111-2
S.O.N.	97,104,120,272,627,866
Sogno Lt.	B45,350,853
Sophianopoulos	232
" <u>Sophie</u> "	See M. Serreulles
Sophoulis	203,232,707
Sosnkowski Gen.	473
Soustelle M..	865,1095
Southgate S/Ldr. M.	899
Spaak M.	451
Special Detachments	819ff ,936-7
Special Duties Wing	628,631
No. I Special Force	614,616,839,841 ff
S.O.M. (Special Operations Mediterranean)	615-6
Spiliotopoulos Col. (later Gen.)	689-90,728
" <u>Sphinx</u> "	248
" <u>Spiritualist</u> "	See Capt. Dumont-Guillement
S.F.O.C.	615,866,867
Sporborg Mr. H.N.	278,522,326, 352,399,431-2,436 1112,531
"Sprinkler"	439

" <u>Spruce</u> "	"See Maj. Boiteux
S.P.U.22	893-4,1097
Spyromilio Milto	206,215,236,219,235
Stamper Miss	44
SDtarheim Capt. Odd	305,307,314,1013
Stark Ad. (U.S. Navy)	1022
Starr Lt.Col. G.R.	888,399,926
Starr Capt. J.A.R.	898
Station 333	220,222,225,237,242,251,683
Stations 7 (a)(b)(c)(d)	1143-4
Station IX	50, 1119
Staticn XII	50-1,509, 1123
Station XV	1121-2
Stati on XVII	50,297,1130,1133
Station 61	511,1124
" <u>Stationer</u> "	See S/Ldr. Southgate
Stawell Maj. Gen.	615,786, 1114
Steel Mr. C.E.	786
Stephanopoulos	232
Stephenson Sir William	12,500,594,567,595,596
Stevens Lt.Col. J.M.	695,726
Stirbey Prince	761-2
" <u>Stockbroker</u> "	See Capt. H. Ree
Stockholm Air Service	292
Stockholm Mission	301
Stott Capt.	715
S.T.S. 3	1131
S.T.S.14	510
S.T.S.18,19,20A,20B	478, 1130
S.T.S. 26	298, 1130
S.T.S.38	510
S.T.S.41	298
S.T.S.43	478
S.T.S.37a	1131

S.T.S.39 (or S.T.P.)	1131
S.T.S.40	1131
S.T.S.46	478,1130
S.T.S.52	1142
S.T.S.54(a) and (b)	1142-3
S.T-S-63	892,1130
S.T.S.103 (Toronto)	1135,1141
Stuart Sir Campbell	5,6,109
" <u>Sub-Arctic</u> "	9
Subasic Dr.	664
Suda Island (off Crete)	206
Suttill Maj. F.A.	385,878,887,891
Svolos Prof.	719
" <u>Swallow</u> "	1008
" <u>Swan</u> "	314
Szentgyorgu Prof.	768
" <u>Table</u> "	332-3
Tabor Gen.	791,795,
Tallent Sir Stephen	5P42
Tamplin Col. G.R.	285,774
Tarchiani	832
Taverner Brig.	264-5
Taylor Col. G.	47,154,164,196,258,578
Organisation	115,523,130,531
Teitgen M .	416
Telemark, Norway	315
Templer Maj.Gen.	1095
Tempsford	628, 632
Tennant Mr. F.	301
Televaag, Norway	315
Thackthwaite Maj-	335,913
Theotokis	232
Thomas S/Ldr. Yeo-	906,917

P1130231

40. SECRET

Thomé S/Lt.	413,425
Thompson Maj . Frank	754-5
Thornhill Lt.Col.	150,258-9,269,270-1
Thornley Mr. R.H.	1060,1113
" <u>Thurgoland</u> " Operation	249
" <u>Tinke r</u> "	See Maj . Cowburn & Capt. Dupont
" <u>Title</u> "	1006
Tito Gen. (later Marshal)	171,182,609, 643-4, 359,650,666 , 669,670,755
Togliatti	849
Torbjørn Roff	1005
" <u>Torch</u> "	494,495,1140,614,816,859,904
" <u>Torment</u> "	614,794
Torp M.. Oscar	322-3,326
Torrance Maj. Watt-	817,819
" <u>Treasurer</u> "	See Capt. de Brouville
" <u>Triangle</u> "	881
Trifunovic Ilija	152
"Triumph" H.A.. Submarine	171,223
Tronstad Prof.	321,327, 1042
Trotobas Capt.	885-6,891,921
"Trots-Allt"	11
"Trouw"	466
Truelsen Lt.	1053
Tsaldaris	203,232
Tselos	249,251
Tsigantes Maj. John	249
Tsimas	696,699,707,712
Tsirimokos	690,699,707,712
Tsouderos M.	212,215,220,228,232,235,245, 246,704,709,720,724
Tullinger Hugel	32
Tupanjanin	151,160
Turcanu	759-60,764
Turck Capt.	38o

SECRET

Turkey	253
Turnbull Mr. R.	301,331, 1051
Tzimos	690
<u>"Union"</u> Mission	913
United Correspondents	39
U.S.S.R.	90
Ustashi	170
<u>"Vail Ian t"</u>	See de Vogué
<u>"Valrimont"</u>	See M.. Kriegel
Van der Stoep M.	994-5
Vansittart Sir Robt.	34,105,108,137
Van't Sant	458-9,983
Vassiliades M..	732
Vlassov Gen.	811
Velchev Col. Damian	752,757
Velebit Col. (later Gen .	659,664
Vellacott Mr.	581
Veloukhiotis Ares	See Ares
Vemork	310,1006ff
Venizelos Sophocles	202
<u>"Ventriloquist"</u>	See Baron Philippe de Vomecourt
Veny Col.	See Brig.Gen. Jean Vincent
Verbeck Col.	874-5
Veres Laszlo	768-9
<u>"Vestige"</u>	1023
<u>"Victoire"</u>	377
<u>"Vidal Gen."</u>	See Gen.. de Lestrain
<u>"Vigilant"</u>	837
Villiers Maj. C.H..	1073 -4
<u>"Villon"</u>	See Ginsburger

P1130233

42.

Vincent Brig.Gen. Jean	882-3
Vincent Maj.	851-2
Viviani, Greece	685
Vlakhos	694
Vlaicu	753-9
de Vogue	919a
de Vomecourt Jean	377,379
de Vomecourt Baron Pierre	336-7,378-9,891
de Vomecourt Philippe	377,379,384,889
Von Moltke Helmuth James	1064
Wade Capt.	644
Wallace Mr. David	210,698-9,707,712,727
Watson Cdr. R.D.	555
Watson Mr. Hugh Seton-	193
de Wavrin. Col.	351,2,5,401,421,436,438,440, 860,862,906
Wtavell Gen..	47 ,207,258,264
Weitzen	831
Weizmann Dr. Chaim	43
Wendelen A.J.	972,974
West Maj .	207
Weygand Gen.	427-8,430,435
"Whale"	438
".Wheelwright"	See Lt.Col. G.R. Starr
de Wiart Gen. Carton-	65
"Wildhorn"	795
Wilkinson P/O E.M.	384-5
Wilkinson Capt. G.A.	890
Wilkinson Maj. P.A. (later Col.)	78,474,436,1071f f
Williams Mr. J..Hanoury-	522,524
Wille Lt.Gol. J.E.	1120

SECRET

Willson Col. J.S.	115-6,288,327,998-1046,1113
" <u>Windproof</u> "	809
Wines Maj- (O.S.S.)	712
Wingate Lt. Col. R.S.L.	496
Witherington F/ O Pearl	900
Woerther Lt.	897
Woluwe	968-9
" <u>Woodcutter</u> "	See Lt. Woerther
Woodhouse Lt.Col. C.A.	682-5,687 689-90,710,712,716-7, 724,720,727, 729
" <u>Wrestler</u> "	See F/O Pearl Witherington
Wright Maj. Chalmers-	893
Wyatt Maj. D.A.	853
" <u>Xavier</u> "	See Lt.Col. R. Heslop
Yak Mission	254
Young Maj. G.A .D.	87-8
Yugoslavia	19-30,149-194,637-680
" <u>Yvonne</u> "	See Yanni Peltekis
Zangas Cdr.	246
Zannas	204,223,244
Zannas Alexander	207,219
Zannas Sitir	223
Zdrojewski Maj-	891
Zervas Col.. (later Gen.)	239,243-4,250,683 - 738
Zog King	744-5
Zymierski Gen. Rols	798