

SECRET HISTORY FILES

D. P. 5685

LOW COUNTRIES & FRANCE

SCALE 1:10,000,000 OR 400 MILES TO 1 INCH

MILES 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Arms Deliveries

APRIL MOON

- No. of tons delivered From England.
- No. of tons delivered From Algiers.
- F British-officered Groups controlled From London.
- RF French Resistance Groups controlled by S.O.E. and Allied French.
- G Giraudist Groups: being integrated with Allied French Resistance Groups.
- M Independent Groups organized by Algiers chiefly from Allied French Resistance Groups.
- Algiers area of Air Operations.

13
FRANCS

CARTE D'IDENTITE

Nom : *Bouquet*

Prénoms : *Pierre*

Profession : *And 4 2 8RF ZG*

Né le *16/5/1909*

HOW TO BE A SPY

The World War II SOE Training Manual

INTRODUCTION BY DENIS RIGDEN

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The World War II SOE Training Manual

Introduction by Denis Rigden



THE DUNDURN GROUP
TORONTO

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Front cover:

arms deliveries to units in France prior to 6 June 1944 (TNA: PRO, HS 6/597);
fake identity card produced by SOE's Camouflage Section (TNA: PRO, HS 7/49);
'Waiting for the planes' (TNA: PRO, HS 5/121)

Back of jacket:

still of Jacqueline Nearne from the film 'Now It Can Be Told'
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Publisher's Note

This publication reproduces the basic syllabus used at the Special Training Schools (STSs) of the Special Operations Executive. The version reproduced here – to our knowledge the most complete and comprehensive of the surviving SOE training materials – was used at STS 103 in Canada, better known as Camp X. The lecture folders containing the syllabus are to be found in two files, HS 7/55 and HS 7/56, which may be consulted at the National Archives, Kew. The aim has been to reproduce the words, layout and appearance of the original documents as faithfully as possible. However, to keep the extent of this edition within bounds, the lists of library books, films and supplementary reading material have been omitted. Also, where necessary, lines and lettering have been strengthened in some of the illustrations; obvious typing errors have been corrected; and cross-references have been revised to conform to the pagination of this edition. The Introduction and Index are modern additions.

The National Archives is grateful to the Imperial War Museum for permission to reproduce the pictures from their photograph archive that appear on pages 3, 5, 15 and 23 and on the back of the jacket; and to Lynn-Philip Hodgson, Director of the Camp X Society, for permission to reproduce the photographs from his book *Inside-Camp X* that appear on pages 10, 12, 13 and 16. All other photographs are from the National Archives Image Library.

Primary Sources

SOE documents in the National Archives:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| HS 7/55 | Syllabus of Lectures at STS 103 (Camp X). |
| HS 7/56 | Lecture Folder STS 103. Minor Tactics, Demolitions and Fieldcraft Lectures. Physical Training Syllabus. |
| HS 7/52 | Group B Syllabus (in the Finishing Schools) |
| HS 7/51 | <i>History of the Training Section of SOE, 1940–1945</i> by Major G.M. Forty. |
| CAB 102/649–52 | <i>History of the Second World War: The Special Operations Executive – Britain and the Resistance Movements in Europe</i> , by W.J.M. Mackenzie, Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford. |

Introduction

'When you are fighting for your life against a ruthless opponent you cannot be governed by Queensberry rules. This government [Neville Chamberlain's] would rather lose the war under Queensberry rules than do anything unbecoming to an absolutely perfect gentleman. That kind of thing will not do.'

Commander R.T. Bower, MP for Cleveland, 8 May 1940,
two days before Winston Churchill became Prime Minister

Men and women training to serve during World War II in the Special Operations Executive (SOE) were quickly made to forget all thoughts about Queensberry rules and so-called 'gentlemanly' warfare. Many of these carefully selected trainees (or students, as SOE officers called them) were taught a vast range of sabotage techniques and bizarre methods of killing, some using knives, guns and 'booby-trap' devices made by SOE's own talented teams of scientists and technicians. Some of these students also learned about waging war through disseminating black propaganda that would sap the enemy's will to fight. All the SOE agents serving in the field, in their clandestine struggle against Nazi Germany or Japan's militarist regime, were also thoroughly trained in how best to advise, arm and otherwise aid members of the Resistance movements in the enemy-occupied countries. In giving such advice the agents needed to be skilled negotiators, able to



SOE officers in discussion with a partisan in Albania. Agents were taught how to advise, arm and otherwise aid Resistance movements in various parts of the world. (TNA: PRO, HS 5/121)

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persuade guerrilla groups when to strike and when to hold back. When Resistance fighters undertook operations independently, it usually achieved little or nothing of military value and often resulted in the enemy taking savage revenge on the local civilian population. Trained to be aware of the dangers of rash guerrilla action, SOE agents strove to ensure that all irregular warfare served the strategic aims of the Allied leaders.

The Special Operations Executive was created in July 1940,¹ in the deepest secrecy, from the fusion of three other unpublicized organizations: Section D of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI6); a branch of the Foreign Office known as EH or CS; and a research group in the War Office initially called GS(R), later MI(R),² these initials standing for General Staff (Research) and Military Intelligence (Research) respectively. All these small and poorly funded ‘parents’ of SOE had existed only since shortly before the war. Section D – some commentators say that the D stood for ‘Destruction’, while others believe it was an arbitrarily chosen initial – had begun devising various schemes for sabotage and subversion in Europe in the event of hostilities against Hitler’s Germany. EH had studied how anti-Nazi propaganda campaigns might be conducted, and MI(R) had begun a broad study of irregular warfare (an assignment overlapping that of Section D).

The four-stage Training Plan

SOE, from its headquarters at 64 Baker Street,³ in London, quickly built up a large network of ‘Top Secret’ establishments called Special Training Schools (STSs). It inherited only two such facilities from two of its ‘parent’ bodies: from MI(R) a group of large houses in remote countryside in the Arisaig area of Inverness-shire in the Western Highlands of Scotland, and from Section D a school of sabotage and clandestine warfare at Brickendonbury Manor in Hertfordshire.

Shortly after Major F.T. (‘Tommy’) Davies⁴ of MI(R) joined SOE in the autumn of 1940, he devised a four-stage Training Plan. It was adopted by the SOE leadership immediately and its broad outlines were never altered, although there were important changes in detail, including the introduction of much highly specialized training. The plan envisaged Preliminary Schools, Paramilitary Schools and Finishing Schools, and the provision of a flat in London where agents could be given a final briefing before being sent into the field.

In the Preliminary Schools the students’ character and potential for dangerous clandestine work were assessed without revealing to them much about what SOE did. To house these schools, in the winter of 1940–1 SOE obtained six big houses in the Home Counties, to which was added the Free French School at Inchmery House, Beaulieu, in Hampshire.⁵ It was the piecemeal requisition of these and other large residences, some of them luxurious, that provoked students to make waggish remarks about the ‘Stately ’Omes of England’.

The Preliminary Schools syllabus covered physical training, weapons handling, unarmed combat, elementary demolitions (with no mention of what was in the SOE stores), map reading, fieldcraft and basic signalling. Much of this was the sort of training that any army recruit might expect to receive.



Inverie House, Knoydart, in the Highlands of Scotland. This was the base of STS 24a, one of SOE's most remote Paramilitary Schools – reachable only by motorboat from Mallaig. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, HU 82545)

However, the Preliminary Schools did have special security problems. As explained by Professor W.J.M. Mackenzie,⁶ SOE's official war historian from 1945 to 1948, these schools:

... continued to be the main points of entry into the service of SOE 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 [the geographical departments at SOE headquarters] 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. SOE'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 knew too much and could not be returned at once to the outer world.

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In an attempt to solve this security problem, SOE opened what were officially named the 'ISRB Workshops'⁷ at Inverlair, Inverness-shire – though informally, and more accurately, they were referred to as 'the Cooler'. It was there that incompetent or unlucky agents were held until their knowledge of secrets could no longer endanger operations or otherwise damage the war effort. Putting an agent or student in 'the Cooler' did not mean that he was regarded as a potential traitor; and, indeed, no criticism of his character was intended. He was kept isolated from the outside world for as short a time as was judged necessary.

Belatedly – in June 1943 – SOE introduced a much quicker and generally better system of selecting students. In place of the Preliminary Schools, it set up a Students Assessment Board (SAB). In a country house called Winterfold (STS 7, formerly STS 4) at Cranleigh, in Surrey, the SAB gave the candidates a wide variety of psychological and practical tests over a four-day period. This was in stark contrast to the Preliminary Schools course lasting up to four weeks and justifiably criticized as 'leisurely'. The SAB's examining team consisted of six military testing staff (three captains and three sergeants) and four Royal Army Medical Corps officers, comprising two psychiatrists (majors) and two psychologists (a captain and a lieutenant). After the testing, a final selection board – made up of the SAB president (the lieutenant-colonel commanding STS 7), the examiners, and representatives of the Country Sections – discussed the performance of each candidate thoroughly and suggested which of the men (and women at some sessions) should be chosen. However, the ultimate choice of students rested with the president. His decision could be overturned only by Brigadier E.E. Mockler-Ferryman, the SOE Council member whose duties included overseeing the training system. In exceptional circumstances, he was appealed to by Country Sections which had nominated candidates and then had them rejected at STS 7.

There were a few modifications of the SAB's selection system to meet particular needs, such as those of the Free French, the Poles and the three-member SOE-OSS Jedburgh teams which aided the French Resistance on and after D-Day. By the autumn of 1944, when the end of the war in Europe seemed to be in sight, SOE's training programme was being greatly reduced. As a result, the Students Assessment Board was disbanded on 16 November 1944. Any later selection of agents was usually done by the Country Sections alone.

The Paramilitary Schools

The Paramilitary Schools, or Group A Schools, were opened between November 1940 and June 1941. Numbered STS 21 to STS 25c, they were based in 10 shooting lodges in the Arisaig and Morar areas of Inverness-shire. The surrounding countryside, which includes Loch Morar and Loch Nevis, is rugged and remote, ideal for the commando-style training that was provided. One of the schools, STS 23b, based at Swordland, Tarbet Bay and Morar, began giving various para-naval instruction but eventually concentrated mainly on teaching how to use special devices when attacking ships. STS 22a, at Glasnacardoch Lodge, Mallaig, was a foreign-weapons school. The only instruction not given in Inverness-shire was