

Chapter 8

OSS in Action: The Mediterranean and European Theaters

In war it is the results that count, and the saboteurs and guerrilla leaders in Special Operations and the Operational Groups, the spies in Secret Intelligence, and the radio operators in Communications did produce some impressive results. In this unconventional warfare, Donovan believed that “persuasion, penetration and intimidation ...are the modern counterparts of sapping and mining in the siege warfare of former days.” His innovative “combined arms” approach sought to integrate espionage, sabotage, guerrilla operations, and demoralizing propaganda to undermine enemy control and weaken the interior lines of communications and supply in enemy’s rear before and during the assault at the front by conventional forces of the Allies.¹

At the end of the war in Europe, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, credited the Special Operations of the American OSS and the British SOE with the very able manner in which the Resistance forces were organized, supplied and directed. “In no previous war,” he added, “and in no other theater during this war, have Resistance forces been so closely harnessed to the main military effort....I consider that the disruption of enemy rail communications, the harassing of German road moves and the continual and increasing strain placed on the German war economy and internal security services throughout occupied Europe by the organized forces of Resistance, played a very considerable part in our complete and final victory.”²

It has been estimated that during World War II, the total number of people who served in the OSS probably numbered fewer than 20,000 men and women altogether, less than the size of one of the nearly one hundred U.S. infantry divisions, a mere handful among the sixteen million Americans who served in uniform in World War II. Among the 20,000 OSSers, probably fewer than 7,500 served overseas.³ The number of agents

¹ “OSS Organization and Function,” (June 1945), OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 141, Box 4; and “History,” *ibid.*, Entry 99, Box 75, National Archives II, College Park, Md., hereinafter, National Archives II

² Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower to the Director, OSS, UK base, 31 May 1945, reprinted in Office of Strategic Services, *War Report of the OSS*, vol. 2: *The Overseas Targets* (New York: Walker & Co., 1976), 222. A similar letter was sent to the Executive Director of SOE, British Maj. Gen. Colin Gubbins.

³ These figures were given by Geoffrey M.T. Jones, an OSS veteran and then President of the Veterans of the O.S.S. Association, at an international historical conference on the topic, “The Americans and the War of Liberation in Italy: Office of Strategic Services and the Resistance,” held in Venice, Italy, 17-18 October 1994, proceedings published in Italian and English, as *Gli Americani e la Guerra de Liberazione in Italia: Office of Strategic Service(O.S.S.) e la Resistenza/ The Americans and the War of Liberation in Italy: Office of Strategic Services(O.S.S.) and the Resistance* (Venice: Institute of the History of the Resistance, 1995), 202.

the OSS had behind enemy lines was far smaller. It remains undisclosed, but one indication of how many OSS agents may have been infiltrated as spies, saboteurs, guerrilla leaders or clandestine radio operators, is the number who took parachute training, the primary method of infiltration. In all, more than 2,500 men and dozens of women received OSS parachute training.⁴ Yet, despite the comparatively small size of Donovan's organization and the even smaller contingent who risked, and sometimes lost, their lives in the shadow war, the OSS made significant contributions to victory in World War II.

The following two chapters aim not at being a full account of the OSS accomplishments overseas, which would be impossible in such a limited space.⁵ Rather, within an overall context of the role of the OSS in foreign theaters of operation, the emphasis here is on the actions of OSSers whose preparation included training at Areas A, B, and C in Catoctin Mountain Park and Prince William Forest Park. Particularly important here are the achievements of the OSS and also how the spies, saboteurs, guerrilla leaders, and radio operators, who received at least part of their training at the camps in these National Park Service areas applied their training in their overseas missions and accomplishments.

The American Landings in North Africa, 1942

OSS's first opportunity to prove itself came in connection with the U.S. invasion of French North Africa in November 1942. As early as the late summer of 1941, Donovan's fledgling organization had begun placing a dozen agents, code named the "twelve apostles," in the collaborationist Vichy French colonies of Morocco and Algeria. A bevy of American businessmen and scholars with connections with France and its colonies, they were ostensibly given minor assignments with U.S. consulates, but these were covers for their clandestine missions. By January 1942 when President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill agreed on the invasion of North Africa (Operation Torch) in November, the agents were given the missions of obtaining intelligence and building "fifth column" resistance in Vichy French North Africa. They quickly established a clandestine radio network, gathered intelligence about defenses and the 100,000 Vichy French troops and their commanders, obtained maps of suitable air and sea landing sites, and sought through encouragement and financial inducements to

⁴ Patrick K. O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs: The Unknown Story of the Men and Women of World War II's OSS* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 12, which deals with the European and Mediterranean Theaters but not the Far East.

⁵ The official OSS report on the agency's overseas activities runs 460 pages. Office of Strategic Services, *War Report of the OSS*, Vol. 2, *The Overseas Targets*, with new introduction by Kermit Roosevelt (New York: Walker & Co., 1976). This report, declassified and published in 1976, was originally prepared by the Strategic Services Unit, successor to the OSS, in 1947.

gain support from resistance elements among the Riff tribesmen and other indigenous, Muslim, anti-French groups along the coast and in the mountains and the desert.⁶

In the United States, Donovan, with approval by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, sent a team of spies into the Vichy French embassy in Washington, D.C. in March 1942 to obtain code and cipher books. OSS operative Elizabeth (“Betty”) Pack, code named “Cynthia,” a beautiful aristocratic divorcee, and Charles Brousse, a press attaché at the embassy whom she had seduced, plus an unidentified safecracker, recruited by the OSS for his expertise in picking locks and opening safes, successfully photographed military and diplomatic codes and other secret documents from the safe in the Vichy French embassy.⁷

Summer 1942: As the time for the Allied invasion of North Africa grew near, OSS’s Secret Intelligence agents joined the effort to try to persuade the Vichy French forces to support the landings. Special Operations agents sought to prepare sabotage units and recruit native resistance fighters. When 50,000 U.S. troops followed by 15,000 British soldiers landed at half a dozen locations along the North African coast beginning on November 8, 1942, OSS reception groups met the troops on many of the beaches and guided them ashore.⁸ Inland, OSS agents sabotaged military targets, cut off enemy communications lines, and were ready to guide American paratroopers at a designated safe drop zone using a top secret radio beacon. Although the paratroopers’ planes never arrived because of false starts and high headwinds, other OSS efforts demonstrated their effectiveness in the field. Together with representatives from the U.S. Army and the State Department, OSS representatives helped convince much of the Vichy French officer corps in North Africa not to forcibly resist the American invasion.⁹ Despite some pockets of French resistance, the dangerous invasion, with troops convoyed thousands of miles to land on a hostile shore, was an overall success.¹⁰ The OSS received credit from Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall for its contribution to that victory through intelligence which was of high quality, abundant and accurate in its description of the terrain and the enemy’s order of battle, that is, the identification and nature of the enemy Army, Navy, and air force units facing the Americans, the location of French

⁶ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 11-16. See also, “Certain Accomplishments of the Office of Strategic Services,” p. 1; attached to William J. Donovan to W.B. Kantack, OSS Reports Officer, 14 November 1944, “Accomplishments of OSS, 15654, copy in CIA Records (RG 263), Thomas F. Troy Files, Box 12, Folder 98, National Archives II.

⁷ H. Montgomery Hyde, *Cynthia: The Most Seductive Secret Weapon in the Arsenal of the Man Called Intrepid* (New York: Ballantine, 1965); Elizabeth P. McIntosh, *Sisterhood of Spies: The Women of the OSS* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 26-31. OSS also conducted such a “black bag” break-in at the embassy of Spain, which was then officially neutral but actually pro-Axis under Franco.

⁸ “Certain Accomplishments of the Office of Strategic Services,” p. 1; attached to William J. Donovan to W.B. Kantack, Reports Officer, 14 November 1944, “Accomplishments of OSS, 15654, copy in CIA Records (RG 263), Thomas F. Troy Files, Box 12, Folder 98, National Archives II.

⁹ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 16-18.

¹⁰ The price in casualties for French North Africa was 1,200 suffered by the Americans, 700 by the British, and 1,300 by the French. On the invasion, see Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, Theater in World War II* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004).

headquarters and the names of officials upon whom the United States could rely for assistance in the administration of civil affairs. The OSS, particularly its SI branch, had proven itself to the U.S. Army's high command.¹¹

With the successful Allied landings in French North Africa, the U.S. and British forces under overall command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower headed east toward German occupied Tunisia. OSS set up a regional headquarters in Algiers and worked with the British Special Operations Executive to aid the advance. In the process of gathering tactical intelligence and sabotaging enemy communication and transportation, OSS agent Carleton Coon, a Harvard anthropologist and authority on North Africa, led a group of some 50 American, French, and Arab guerrillas. Among other innovations, Coon is credited with inventing "detonating mule turds," plastic explosives specially shaped and colored like mule or camel dung and scattered along desert roads to disable German tanks and trucks.¹² The Allied advance came to a temporary halt, however, when the German *Afrika Korps* launched a counteroffensive in February 1943, catching the American Army by surprise and driving them back through the Kasserine Pass. A desperate local commander ordered Coon and his guerrillas to try to stop German tanks with hand grenades and other weapons, but after planting a few mines, Coon declined to have his highly-trained specialists used as regular infantry against tanks, a decision later endorsed by the OSS.¹³

Jerry Sage, German POW camps, and "the Great Escape"

Misuse of OSS personnel in several incidents in North Africa also led to the wounding of several other OSS agents and the capture of at least two of them. Lieutenant Elmer ("Pinky") Harris, from Areas A and B, was wounded in action near Sabeitla, Algeria, but quickly recovered and was subsequently assigned to Allied and OSS headquarters in Algiers.¹⁴ Less fortunate were Jerry Sage and Milton Felsen, both alumni of Area B. In January 1943, Sage, by then promoted to major, had been sent to North Africa for SO work. But when the Germans in Tunisia counterattacked at Kasserine Pass in February 1943, some local American commanders directed most of the OSS personnel there to the front. Carleton Coon's group had been one of these, but it had quickly withdrawn and none had been captured. Others were not so fortunate. One such group

¹¹ Bradley F. Smith, *The Shadow Warriors: O.S.S. and the Origins of the C.I.A.* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 156, for reference to the Army's assessment; OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 18, for Marshall's December 1942 letter to William J. Donovan noting the important role of the OSS.

¹² Carleton S. Coon, *A North African Story: An Anthropologist as OSS Agent* (Ipswich, Mass.: Gambit, 1980).

¹³ *An Army at Dawn*, 361; OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 20-21.

¹⁴ Robert E. Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, HQ, U.S. Marine Corps, 1989), 174.

included twenty OSS agents that William J. Donovan and a 37-year-old assistant named Donald Downes, had assembled in the United States to conduct espionage and other clandestine activities in Generalissimo Franco's fascist but officially non-belligerent Spain. The possibility of a German occupation of Spain and a drive across the Straits of Gibraltar, with or without Franco's consent, was considered a major strategic danger to the Allies. The Americans in Downes' group were agents that he had trained at Area B at Catoctin Mountain Park. Among them were five former members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade of American leftists who had fought against Franco in the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. They knew Spain well and several of them were members of the Communist Party of the United States. This was an example of Donovan's willingness to use some communists as agents when they knew the area and had contacts with local Resistance leaders in Europe, many of whom were communists. The other part of Downes' group was composed of Spanish political refugees, members of the defeated Republican government, recruited by the OSS in New York and Mexico City.¹⁵ Now, despite Downes' protest, most of his intelligence team was diverted from its planned mission to Spain to the front lines in French North Africa, where they joined Jerry Sage's Special Operations unit.

By happenstance in North Africa, Sage had enlisted one of the few African Americans to serve in the OSS. The United States military still kept blacks in racially segregated units in World War II, and the OSS did not officially recruit African Americans. But when Sage arrived in North Africa and sought a truck to transport his men and equipment, an ordnance officer responsible for vehicles would not let Sage take the truck without a driver from the motor pool. With the truck came a driver, an African-American corporal named Drake from an all-black transportation unit. Corporal Drake, whose Sage's memoirs identify only by his rank and surname, was from Detroit. He became part of Sage's OSS Special Operations team and quickly learned SO skills, including close combat, knife-fighting, and demolitions.¹⁶ Sage and his unit recruited locals, trained them in the use of explosives, and planning missions to infiltrate enemy areas and destroy lines of communication and supply as well as ammunition depots.¹⁷

Attached to the U.S. Fifth Army, the SO team came temporarily under orders of a British infantry regiment. The English colonel ordered them to make a reconnaissance

¹⁵ Donald C. Downes, a graduate of Phillips Exeter and Yale who had taught at a boy's preparatory school, in Cheshire, Connecticut, had worked before U.S. entry into the war as an amateur agent for Office of Naval Intelligence in Turkey and the Middle East, then joined and became a rising star in the OSS. See Downes' memoir, *The Scarlet Thread: Adventures in Wartime Espionage* (London: Verschoyle, 1953). After the German counteroffensive was defeated, Downes began to establish a clandestine network in Spain. However, a key Spanish spy was caught, betrayed the network, and all thirteen of the spies that Downes had sent into Spain were arrested and executed by Franco's government. It was a major disaster for the OSS. Bradley Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 75-82.

¹⁶ Jerry Sage, *Sage* (Wayne, Pa.: Miles Standish Press, 1985), 69-70. Another African American, elderly jazz band leader Henry Perkins, was briefly recruited as a spy by OSS operative Waller Booth in Tangiers in late 1942. O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 45.

¹⁷ Maj. Jerry Sage, interview, 30 March 1945, p. 1; Schools and Training Branch, "Interviews with Returned Men," OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 159, Folder 1729, National Archives II.

patrol. Sage was reluctant to do so because it was daylight and his team usually operated at night, but he accepted the order. They advanced stealthily in two sections. Sage moved into a *wadi*, a dry channel, with two sergeants, Milton Felsen and Irving Goff, both former Spanish Civil War veterans, who had received OSS training at Area B. Sage then motioned the other section forward. As soon as they arrived, the Germans, tipped off by Arabs, Sage later concluded, opened fire with artillery. Sage and Felsen were both wounded, Felsen more seriously.¹⁸ Goff poured sulfa into Felsen's open wound and helped bandage both men. When they heard the clank of approaching German tanks, Sage ordered Goff to escape with the other section. Goff looked back as he scurried away and the German soldiers approached: "The major, in an Abercrombie & Fitch brown jacket, was visible a mile away. He was silly, but great enough to stand up and divert them."¹⁹ Sage's action allowed the other three OSS men, including Goff, to get away. When Sage and Felsen were about to be captured, both of them quickly buried all their OSS gear in the sand: pistols in shoulder holsters, Fairbairn daggers, a special belt and vest with hidden pockets, and their spy gadgets. Felsen, an enlisted man and seriously wounded was turned over to the Italians for medical treatment. "Get well," Sage told him, "because we're going back."²⁰

As an officer, Sage was taken for questioning. He convinced his interrogators that he was a downed flier and consequently was taken to a prisoner of war camp for captured Allied aviators, first in Italy and then in Germany itself. Strong-willed, determined and imaginative, Sage escaped at least half a dozen times from such camps, but each time he was recaptured. Still, he earned the respect of his fellow prisoners and the nickname, "the Big X," prison slang for an escape or exit artist.²¹

During his two years in German prisoner of war camps, Sage later reflected that he had drawn upon his inner resources, which he said were his religious faith and "the superb training I had received under Donovan."²² His paramilitary training was of great use, he said, when at one of the main POW camps late in the war, he was put in charge of turning a group of aviators into commandos to seize the camp in case the Nazis decided to liquidate all the prisoners. Teaching them the art of silent killing, the sentry-kill, and

¹⁸ Ibid., 2; see also Sage, *Sage*, 83-88; and OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 20-21.

¹⁹ "Irving Goff," interview in Studs Terkel, *"The Good War": An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984), 494. Terkel spelled the name as Felsden; Sage spelled it Felsen.

²⁰ Maj. Jerry Sage, interview, 30 March 1945, p. 3, Schools and Training Branch, "Interviews with Returned Men," OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 159, Folder 1729, National Archives II; and Sage, *Sage*, 58, 83-88.

²¹ Ibid., 1-10, Schools and Training Branch, "Interviews with Returned Men," OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 159, Folder 1729, National Archives II. On Sage's many escape attempts, see also Walter Wager, "Slippery Giant of the OSS," *Men*, July 1961, 32; and Lt. Cmdr. Richard M. Kelly. USNR, "He Never Stopped Trying [to Escape]," *Blue Book: The Magazine of Adventure for Men* (September 1946), 42; Richard Kelly had head of OSS's Maritime Unit in the Adriatic, 1943-45.

²² Sage, *Sage*, 305.

other lethal techniques from the OSS schools, Sage trained his thirty, hand-picked “*kriegies*,” he said, into an effective “storm-trooper group.”²³

That had been while Sage was part of the planning for the large-scale breakout from *Stalag Luft III*, later the basis for a 1963 film, *The Great Escape* with Steve McQueen. But because of his escape record, Sage was removed to a more secure prison camp before the actual breakout occurred at *Stalag Luft III* in the spring of 1944. He was fortunate, because all but three of the 76 men who escaped, before the discovery of the tunnel stopped the remaining 174, were recaptured, and 50 the 73 who were recaptured were executed by the Gestapo.²⁴ Sage finally escaped successfully in January 1945, this time from a prison camp in Poland as the Red Army approached. From wireless radio transmitter in a hidden office of the Polish underground, he tapped out a message picked up by OSS base stations in Egypt, Italy, and England: “Jerry the Dagger is on the loose and coming home!”²⁵ He made his way home via the Ukraine, Turkey, and Egypt. Arriving at OSS headquarters in Washington in March 1945 a month before V-E Day, Sage received a warm, personal welcome from General Donovan, who declared happily, “I knew you’d get home early, Jerry!”²⁶

Major Peter Ortiz, the most famous Marine in the OSS

Although the majority of the uniformed OSS SO and SI officers had received commissions in the Army or the Army Air Corps, there were a few naval officers and a couple of dozen Marines.²⁷ The most famous Marine in the OSS was Major Peter Julien Ortiz, who with two Navy Crosses and numerous other medals became one of the most decorated officers in the Marine Corps in World War II. Ortiz had been born in New York City in 1913 to an American mother and a French-Spanish father from a prominent French publishing family. Although he spent his childhood with his mother in California, his father insisted that he be educated in France. He studied in a lycée and then a French university, but in 1932, the rebellious 19-year-old youth joined the French Foreign Legion as a private. He was wounded in action against indigenous rebels in French North

²³ Sage, *Sage*, 207, 327, 431. Upon his return to Washington, Sage told his old mentor, “Dan” Fairbairn “that his training really worked, including the sentry-kill and everything else he had taught.”

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 277-304; the 1963 film was based on Paul Brickhill, *The Great Escape* (London: Farber & Farber, 1951). For details of the escape attempt, see also Alan Burgess, *The Longest Tunnel: The True Story of World War II’s Greatest Escape Tunnel* (New York: G. Weidenfeld, 1990), and Tim Carroll, *The Great Escape from Stalag Luft III* (New York: Pocket Books, 2005).

²⁵ Sage, *Sage*, 396. “Dagger” was Sage’s code name.

²⁶ Sage, *Sage*, 431; for documentation, see Lt. Col. John W. Williams to Capt. David C. Crockett, 24 March 1945, subject: Major Jerry Sage, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 160A, Box 23, Folder 1028, National Archives II.

²⁷ Their stories are recounted in Robert E. Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, HQ, U.S. Marine Corps, 1989).

Africa, received many medals for heroism, and was promoted to sergeant and then acting lieutenant. In 1937, he returned to the United States and became an adviser on military affairs to film companies in Hollywood. Two years later, at the outbreak of World War II, he rejoined the Foreign Legion as a lieutenant, fought the Germans when they invaded France in 1940, was wounded and taken prisoner and held as a POW for fifteen months before escaping and returning to the United States.

In June 1942, Ortiz joined the U.S. Marine Corps as a private but after boot camp was awarded an officer's commission and soon became a captain. In December 1942, he was sent to Tangier, Morocco officially as assistant naval attaché, but that was a cover for his real assignment. He had already been assigned to the OSS to organize Muslim tribesmen and scout German forces to help prepare the assault on the German position in Tunisia. In March 1943, as the new U.S. Corps Commander, Major General George S. Patton, Jr., launched a major attack, Ortiz was wounded during an encounter with a German patrol behind enemy lines. A German bullet shattered his right hand, but Ortiz rolled on his other side and with his left hand tossed grenades which quickly silenced the enemy machine gun. His men dragged him to safety. Ortiz was brought back to the United States, and after surgery and recuperation, he was temporarily reassigned to OSS headquarter in Washington, D.C. That spring, he spent time training and helping instruct at the OSS's Special Operations training camps at Areas A, B, and F. In the summer of 1943, Ortiz was sent to England for Special Operations training with a multinational, "Jedburgh" team preparatory to being parachuted twice into German-occupied France in 1944, where eventually he too, like Jerry Sage, would become a prisoner of war, but at different German POW camps.²⁸

OSS HQ, Training Camps, & Base Stations in MEDTO

During the winter of 1942-43, OSS established its main headquarters for the Mediterranean Theater of Operations (MEDTO) in Algiers. By February, OSS/Algiers had training officers for SI and SO operations, including a parachute school run by Colonel Lucius O. Rucker, a no-nonsense paratrooper from Mississippi who had run a similar school at Area A in 1942. His new parachute school just west of Algiers included weekly classes ranging from ten to seventy. They were mostly indigenous recruits, Spanish, Italian and French nationals, willing to become intelligence or special operations agents for the United States. Under an inter-Allied agreement, British SOE continued to have overall responsibility for the special operations in the Mediterranean Theater, including those of the American OSS. The first unit of Italian SI recruits, three officers and nine enlisted men, arrived in March 1943, a second contingent in June. From the United States, representatives of MO, R&A, and X-2 arrived in mid-1943. The North

²⁸ Ibid., 40-47; and "Peter Julien Ortiz," in W. Thomas Smith, Jr., *Encyclopedia of the Central Intelligence Agency* (New York: Facts on File, 2003), 180-181. Surprisingly, Ortiz is barely mentioned in the official history of the Marine Corps and then only in the POW section. Benis M. Frank and Henry I. Shaw, *History of Marine Operations in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1968), 5: 748. *Operation Secret* (Warner Bros., 1952), starring Cornel Wilde, was very loosely based on Ortiz.

African campaign ended in May 1943 when the German forces in Tunisia surrendered. In July, the first Operational Group arrived, it was composed of Italian Americans who had trained at Areas F, B, and A. During the winter of 1943-1944, French OGs began to arrive, so did a second Italian OG. In addition to the parachute school, there were also OSS schools run by the SO, SI, and Communications Branches for indigenous agents as well as for advanced training for American OSSers who had graduated from the training camps in the United States. Similar OSS training camps were established in Britain, India, and China. In addition to the extra training for foreign-speaking American SO and OG members, OSS instructors at the main OSS training camps in Algeria also trained Italian, Yugoslav, and French agents recruited for special operations work in their own countries.²⁹ Richard W. Breck, Jr., who after the war would play professional baseball for the Pawtucket Slaters, as “Bobo Breck,” and who had gone through SO instruction at Areas B and A, helped train foreign agents in demolition work at the Algiers camp. He later participated in the Allied campaigns in northern Italy.³⁰

Among the OSS recruits at the training camp in Algeria was John (“Jack”) Hemingway, son of the famous author. Young Jack had been only five when his parents divorced, and he had spent much of his youth in boarding schools. He later he dropped out of the University of Montana and Dartmouth College. After Pearl Harbor, the 19-year-old youth enlisted in the U.S. Army, and by the end of 1942, he was serving in the Military Police in North Africa. Like his father, young Hemingway wanted to see action and experience danger, so through friends of the family, he was able to leave the MPs and be reassigned to the OSS. First Lieutenant Jack Hemingway was welcomed into the OSS and assigned as an instructor and student at the organization’s initial main training camp at Chr ea, Algeria, in a cedar forest on a 6,000-foot mountaintop behind the provincial city of Blida. The location would later be moved to Kol ea on the beach near Algiers, after local boys sneaked into the mountain camp and accidentally blew themselves up with an unexploded mortar round. Hemingway taught weapons usage to French and American agents for SI, SO, and OG. He remembered that “among the teaching staff was a number of very tough, young men. They had all been to the OS training schools in the States, and some of them had been through training in England as well. One of them impressed me especially. He was the only one of the younger men who had been in the field, and his toughness was not put on...He had been commissioned in the field and, being several years older than I, he filled the spot one always has for a hero figure. His name was Jim Russell.” Lieutenant James Russell had risen through the ranks in the Army. He would later take part in Special Operations missions in Sardinia, Corsica, and France.³¹

Stephen J. Capestro from Edison, New Jersey, had undergone SO training at Area A, but when he arrived at the SO training camp in Algeria, he found Jack Hemingway as one of his instructors. Capestro remembered the intensive parachute training and as well as field exercises day and night. The trainees were, for example, dropped off in the

²⁹ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 57, 166-69.

³⁰ Obituary, “Richard W. Breck, 83, Was Veteran of World War II, Raytheon Manager,” *Patriot Ledger* (Quincy, Mass.), *OSS Society Digest* Number 984, 18 March 2005, at osssociety@yahoo.com.

³¹ Jack Hemingway, *Misadventures of a Fly Fisherman: My Life With and Without Papa* (Dallas, Tex.: Taylor Pub. Co., 1986), 127-134. Quotation is on page 131.

countryside in uniform with only a compass and a hand drawn map and told to find their way back. The indigenous people, Berbers and Arabs, were often hostile, Capestro said, seeing the United States as helping France control of its colony. They sometimes booed the Americans soldiers. Later Capestro reflected on differences he felt in training in the United States and in North Africa, particularly the night exercises. “The difference is, for example, taking training overseas behind enemy lines, or lines that aren’t friendly lines [such as Arab North Africa] and doing training in the United States.... There’s a hell of a difference. If you’re on a highway in Virginia, and you hitch-hike home, there’s no problem. In North Africa, I didn’t know. If the people came out, they could have been enemies. They could have robbed me personally or attacked me out of hate for the Americans. Because on many nights on training sessions in North Africa, I saw them, their looks, and their snarling dogs. I could tell they were saying nasty, nasty things. On training missions if they found you alone, what would happen? They might have hijacked your wallet or worse. It concerned me. I just didn’t know.”³²

Communications were vital, and following the invasion of North Africa, the OSS set up the first U.S. communications station in Algiers and transmitted all Army and State Department messages until an Army Signal Corps established a unit there. By March 1943, OSS had expanded its Algiers station into a major communication facility. It included a message center at SI headquarters in Algiers and a large Communications headquarters with a base radio station and a main receiving station nearby at Cape Matifou. Sarah (“Sally”) Sabow, daughter of Hungarian immigrants from Bayonne, New Jersey, was a cipher clerk and one of six women sent to OSS MEDTO HQ in Algiers. Her boss was Major Peter Mero, one of the Commo Branch’s main recruiters and entrepreneurs, and a frequent visitor to the CB School at Area C. From 1943 to 1945, Mero was in charge of all OSS communications units in the MEDTO. He and Sally Sabow married after the war.³³ Some distance away from these stations, a communications school was established to train indigenous agent-operators for clandestine work in their native countries. By May 1943, OSS Algiers was in direct contact with OSS clandestine stations throughout the region and was also linked to stations around the world.³⁴

Another OSS radio base station was established at the eastern end of the Mediterranean in Cairo, Egypt. Lieutenant James Ranney, a former instructor at Area C, was stationed there and remembered the powerful transmitters, which relayed messages between OSS headquarters and agents in the field and also beamed a daily news broadcasts prepared by Morale Operations or other OSS units to Italy, the Balkans and other areas of eastern Europe. The station’s equipment included half a dozen Hallicrafter HT-4 transmitters, each rated at 400 to 500 watts. There were four cage dipole antennas

³² Stephen J. Capestro, oral history interview with G. Kurt Piehler, 17 August 1994, p. 29, typescript in the office of the Rutgers Oral History Archives of World War II, New Brunswick, N.J. Capestro’s back was broken in a military vehicle accident in North Africa in which the driver was killed. Capestro was returned to the USA for treatment.

³³ Obituary, “Sarah M. Mero: Handled Secret WWII Transmissions,” *Chicago Sun Times*, 25 November 2003.

³⁴ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 170-71.

as well as two rhombic antennas and two Beverage “Wave” antennas, one of which was 3,000 feet long.³⁵

The main OSS communications base in the Mediterranean remained at Algiers, until well into 1944, but after the invasion of Italy in September 1943, a station was established at the Italian Adriatic port of Bari and subsequently at Brindisi, when Bari became inadequate for certain operations due to mechanical and atmospheric difficulties.³⁶ In July 1944, the main headquarters for OSS communications in the MEDTO was shifted from Algiers to Naples, or more precisely, the 1,200-room Royal Palace of the Bourbon Kings, at Caserta, which in 1944-1945 served as the headquarters of the Supreme Command of the Allied Forces in the Mediterranean Theater. Naval Lieutenant Frank V. Huston, who trained at Area C, was in charge of communications training and the message center at Bari and Caserta and succeeded Peter Mero when the latter left for the United States in 1945.³⁷

Gail F. Donnalley, an OSS code clerk, who had spent a few weeks at Area C before being trained at OSS headquarters, served at CB base stations in Cairo, Egypt, and Bari and Caserta in southern Italy. He had a very small part in the negotiations for the surrender of the German troops in Italy. At Bolzano where *Waffen SS* Lieutenant General Karl Wolff, military commander in northern Italy, had his headquarters and was negotiating through OSS’s Allen Dulles in Bern, Switzerland to surrender, the OSS had assigned a young, German-speaking Czech, code-named “Wally”, as a radio operator in Wolff’s headquarters to transmit the messages back and forth. They put him in the attic of Wolff’s headquarters, and he would send messages from the German commander to the OSS base station in Caserta, where Donnalley, working at the OSS radio base station. “We would decipher it, then cipher it [with a more complex cipher] and send it on to Dulles in Switzerland,” Donnalley recalled. “This went on for four to five months. On the day before the surrender [which occurred 2 May 1945], the S.S., who, of course, knew he was up in the attic, brought him down and beat him up and then sent him back up to radio the German surrender. They were frustrated and angry about having lost the war. After the surrender, ‘Wally’ was brought down to Caserta, where we in the OSS met him. He looked about 17 and was about 5 foot 5 and had curly hair. By that time, he did not look beat up. He did not speak English, or at least not to us. We shook hands and thanked him in English, and he mumbled something in his own language.”³⁸

³⁵ James F. Ranney, “OSS Radio Station JCYX—Cairo, Egypt,” in James F. Ranney and Arthur L. Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVets Papers*, 2nd ed. (Covington, Ky.: James F. Ranney, 2002), 31.

³⁶ James F. Ranney, “OSS Radio Station DMX—Bari, Italy,” in Ranney and Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVets Papers*, 2nd ed., 29-30.

³⁷ Frank V. Huston’s personnel file, supplied by his son Steve Huston to the author, 24 September 2005. For Max Corvo’s SI side of the dispute with Mero over relocating the radio station, see Max Corvo, *The O.S.S. in Italy, 1942-1945* (New York: Praeger, 1990), 127, 138-40, 161.

³⁸ Gail F. Donnalley, telephone interview with the author, 30 April 2005. See also the chronology in Guy H. Nicholason, “Operation Sunrise,” Ranney and Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVets Papers*, 2nd ed., 43-47.

Donovan Joins the Invasion of Sicily

Although the OSS rejected use of its agents as combat infantrymen as a misguided waste of resources, Donovan, himself personally enjoyed being in combat at the front and frequently and needlessly exposed himself to its dangers. In the U.S. invasion of Sicily in July 1943, the OSS director and a few of his men accompanied the 1st Infantry Division, landing with them on the first day, and staying with them for a few days during their advance inland. Captain Paul Gale, a staff officer from the 1st Division whom Donovan later recruited for OSS, said Donovan kept pushing him to take the jeep farther forward. “General, we’re getting where the Italian patrols are active,” Gale warned. “Fine,” Donovan replied. Soon enough, they ran into an Italian patrol. Donovan leaped up and fired the machine gun mounted on the jeep. “He was happy as a clam,” Gale recalled. “We had a hell of a fire fight.” But Major General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., the division commander, subsequently chewed Gale out “for getting such an important man into such a bad position.”³⁹ Donovan’s delight in getting into dangerous situations became legendary. Years later, Irving Goff, who had trained at Area B and had been with Jerry Sage’s unit until Sage was captured, told oral historian Studs Terkel about the general’s bravado in Sicily and Italy. “We moved from North Africa into Sicily. Donovan’s on the boat with us. He’s on the beach with us. He’s in a foxhole with us. Hell, we hit Anzio on a PT boat together. German plane came down, Donovan’s standin’ there. He was a great guy, but he had foolish guts. I yelled at ‘im, ‘Get down, general!’ He wouldn’t get down, and bombs droppin’ all around.”⁴⁰

In the invasion of Sicily, the U.S. Army command did not want to alert the Germans to the impending operation, and, therefore, refused to authorize a major OSS infiltration to lead guerrilla resistance. Nevertheless, in addition to Donovan’s personal landing with the invasion force, some OSS teams were infiltrated behind enemy lines at the beginning of the invasion. Although some members of one team were captured,⁴¹ other OSS teams did some effective work. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall told a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the completion of the Sicily campaign, that “the O.S.S. got in ahead of operations in Sicily and evidently accomplished things rather satisfactorily.”⁴²

The OSS subsequently played important roles in Sardinia, Corsica, and on the Italian mainland. With the invasion of Sicily, the Italian monarch Victor Emmanuel ordered the arrest of fascist leader Benito Mussolini and replaced him with Army Chief

³⁹ Richard Dunlap, *Donovan: America’s Master Spy* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1982), 399, quoting his own interview with Paul Gale.

⁴⁰ “Irving Goff,” interview in Terkel, “*The Good War*,” 494.

⁴¹ The chief of the SO unit in Sicily, Lt. Col. Guido Pantaleoni, was captured leading a team through enemy lines. OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 55.

⁴² “Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 108th meeting, 19 August 1943, CCS 334 (8-7-43x), item 9, copy made by CIA historian Thomas F. Troy from a copy in the files of Edward P. Lilly, Ph.D., a JCS historian; CIA Records (RG 263), Thomas F. Troy Files, Box 4, Folder 30, National Archives II.

of Staff, General Pietro Badoglio, who immediately began secret but prolonged negotiations with the Allies over armistice and peace terms. Eventually, the Allies agreed to recognize the royal government of King Victor Emmanuel with Badoglio as prime minister. Meanwhile, the Germans quickly freed Mussolini, moved in 16 divisions and took control of most of Italy. The Allies were supported by the Italian government in exile and the disarmed Italian Army, but most effectively by the anti-fascist Italian Resistance groups behind German lines. The Allies invaded southern Italy in September 1943 after the Italian Government surrendered.

A Four-Man OSS Team Takes Control of Sardinia

While the main Allied planning in the Mediterranean in late summer 1943 concerned the invasion of the Italian peninsula, General Marshall saw a job for the OSS in the Italian island of Sardinia. There were almost 20,000 German troops still on the island in addition to an Italian garrison of 270,000 men. Marshall wanted to “give Donovan a chance to do his stuff without fear of compromising some operation in prospect. If he succeeds, fine, if not, nothing will be lost.” Eisenhower, acknowledging that OSS was “a high level intelligence gathering agency,” concurred.⁴³

OSS’s mission to capture Sardinia without the need for a full-scale Allied invasion was assigned to a four-man Special Operations team led by Lieutenant Colonel Serge Obolensky, who had trained at Areas B and A and then co-authored a training curriculum for Operational Groups and taught them at Area F.⁴⁴ By 13 September 1943 when the mission was parachuted into Sardinia, the Italian government had surrendered a few days earlier and the U.S. Army had landed at Salerno. The Germans were taking over Italy and there were German units on Sardinia. Eisenhower wanted the OSS to obtain the surrender of the Italian forces on the island and if possible to get the Italians to harass the Germans who were departing for Corsica. The OSS team would carry letters from Eisenhower as well as the Italian King and Prime Minister to the garrison commander, General Basso, ordering him to surrender. Donovan apparently selected Obolensky because he believed the former Russia prince had both the social standing and the bravado to persuade the Italian general in charge to surrender to him as a representative of the Allied Force Headquarters.

The team consisted of Obolensky, First Lieutenant Michael Formichelli from New York City, an original member of the Italian-American OG, whom Obolensky had known at Areas A, F and B, who would serve as an interpreter, plus two communications specialists, Second Lieutenant James Russell, SO, an instructor at the OSS training school in Algeria, and a British radio operator, Sergeant William Sherwood, SOE, who

⁴³ Ibid.; correspondence including Marshall to Eisenhower, 21 August 1943; Eisenhower (actually via his assistant, W. Bedell Smith) to Marshall, 22 August 1943, Marshall to Eisenhower, 23 August 1943, and Eisenhower to Marshall, 28 August 1943, all in Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, 21 Vols. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970--), 2: 1211-12.

⁴⁴ Smith, *OSS*, 16-18; Serge Obolensky, *One Man in His Time: The Memoirs of Serge Obolensky* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1958), 340-351.

would relay information to the OSS base station in Algiers. Neither Formichelli nor Russell had ever jumped before, but both volunteered. Since, the OSS had no contacts on the island, this would be the most dangerous of infiltrations, a “blind jump,” leaving them entirely on their own in enemy territory. On the night of 13-14 September 1943, the four men parachuted into the Sardinian countryside through an escape hole in the belly of a black-painted bomber. The drop went smoothly. Jumping into a combat zone at age fifty-two, Obolensky became the oldest combat paratrooper in the U.S. Army, but this was not a point he thought about at the time. Rather he was concerned that in the bright moonlight, the white parachutes might alert the island’s defenders to their arrival. It did not, and the team members landed safely, buried their parachutes and assembled. While Russell and Sherwood were left in the valley to protect the radio equipment, Obolensky and Formichelli set off hiking through the night and early dawn for the city of Cagliari fifteen miles away. A friendly farmer told them that the nearest town was still occupied by the Germans, so they skirted it and using their map and a compass reached a railway station at the next town. In their U.S. Army uniforms and with submachine guns, the Americans emerged from a field into the railroad station to the astonishment of the passengers and waiting there and the local police officers at the station. Taking the initiative and acting boldly as if he had a regiment of troops waiting behind him, Colonel Obolensky demanded to see the officer in charge, and when he appeared declared brusquely: “I have a very important message from the King of Italy and General Badoglio to General Basso....Take me to him!”⁴⁵

At the station, the watching crowd thought the American liberation of the island had begun and started to cheer. Uniformed members of the *carabinieri* politely led the two American officers to the local military commander, a colonel, who, cordially if cautiously because the Germans were still in the area, arranged to have them escorted to General Basso’s headquarters. There the general anxiously consented to “follow the orders of my king.” He agreed to surrender, but warily declined to attack the German troops which were leaving for Corsica and then northern Italy. Some of the Italian officers wanted to fight the Germans, but a fascist paratroop division mutinied when it heard of the surrender and shot the general’s representative. Until the paratroopers’ mutiny was quelled, the four Americans, now reunited, were kept in a safe house protected by armed *carabinieri*. Thirty-six hours after having left Algiers, the OSS team was able to radio headquarters that the mission had been accomplished: “except for the Germans retreating in the far north, Sardinia was ours.”⁴⁶ A few days later, Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. arrived with a token occupation force and formally accepted the surrender of the 270,000 Italian troops on Sardinia.⁴⁷

To Die in Corsica

⁴⁵ Obolensky, *One Man in His Time*, 354-359.

⁴⁶ Quotations from *ibid.*, 360-363. See also Lt. Col. Serge Obolensky, “Report of Sardinia Operation,” typed copy of Obolensky’s report in History of OSS OGs in Italy, n.d. [1945] typescript, pp. 24-25, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II.

⁴⁷ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 61-62; Albert Garland and Howard Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1965), 258-61.

A separate OSS mission to the nearby French island of Corsica proved more costly. Special Operations Branch had sent a four-man team—an American and three Corsicans—ashore from a submarine one night in December 1942. It was the first OSS secret agent team infiltrated into enemy-occupied Europe. As they arrived on the beach, they carried weapons, munitions, and a million French francs and Italian lire. Mussolini's Italian Army had occupied the Vichy French island the previous month. Disliking the occupying Italian fascist regime, French Corsicans supported the team, but the secret agents were eventually captured, tortured and executed in the summer of 1943.

After the Italian government in Rome surrendered on 8 September 1943, the French Resistance on Corsica rose up, 20,000 strong, seized many towns, and called upon the Allies to help them get rid of them of the occupying Italian and German forces. An expeditionary French force from North Africa landed along with a detachment OSS French and Italian speaking Operational Groups, consisting of two officers and thirty enlisted men that Eisenhower had requested to accompany the French as a token Allied force. The two officers were Major Carleton Coon and Lieutenant Elmer (“Pinky”) Harris now recovered from the wound suffered in the North African campaign.⁴⁸

Because of the earlier OSS mission, the local Corsican Resistance cooperated more with the OGs than with the French troops, whom they distrusted. The OSS proved both aggressive and heroic. On 25 September near Barchetta, a three-man OG team led by First Lieutenant Thomas L. Gordon of Brownsville, Pennsylvania, one of the four original OG officers trained at Areas A, F, and B, was on advanced patrol when it under heavy German mortar and artillery fire. The OSSers remained in position to cover the withdrawal of a French unit when enemy reinforcements arrived. A French captain observing it from a nearby hilltop, stated later that it was one of the bravest acts he had ever seen. Continuing to fire until the end, the three OSS men, Lieutenant Gordon, Sergeant Rocco T. Grasso of Babylon, New York, and Sergeant Sam Maselli, were killed by mortar fire. All three were posthumously awarded medals for bravery from the American and French governments.⁴⁹ Gordon was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest military decoration for heroism of the U.S. Army (after the Medal of Honor); Grasso and Maselli the Bronze Star Medal.

During the twenty-five days that the Germans held their defensive perimeter while withdrawing through the post of Bastia, the OSS had the only Allied agent inside Bastia, sending information on enemy movements. Moving around the city to avoid capture, this indigenous agent was able to flash daily reports that enabled Allied planes to blast German armored units and ammunition caches as well as transport vessels in the harbor.⁵⁰ When the Germans completed their withdrawal, OSS established advanced OG

⁴⁸ Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS*, 174-76.

⁴⁹ History of OSS OGs in Italy, n.d. [1945] typescript, p. 14, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II. See also OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 59-61.

⁵⁰ “Certain Accomplishments of the Office of Strategic Services,” p. 2; attached to William J. Donovan to W.B. Kantack, Reports Officer, 14 November 1944, “Accomplishments of OSS, 15654,” copy in CIA Records (RG 263), Thomas F. Troy Files, Box 12, Folder 98, National Archives II.

and SI bases on Corsica from which they infiltrated agents and staged raids along the coast of German-occupied Italy.

OSS on the Italian Mainland

As the American Fifth Army and British Eighth Army began their agonizingly slow progress up the Italian peninsula from September 1943 through May 1945, they were aided by various branches of the OSS. The main Allied effort in the Italian campaign, a grinding war of attrition involving series of largely frontal attacks on successive German-fortified positions up the mountainous peninsula, was one of the least mobile and comparatively most costly of the war.⁵¹ The Allies found themselves confronted by the skilful German Field Marshall Albert Kesselring and dogged German troops in formidable defensive positions. Under Lieutenant General Mark Wayne Clark, one of the war's most complex and controversial commanders, the Americans and their Allies fought ferociously lethal battles at Salerno, Anzio, the Rapido River, Monte Cassino, before finally arrivin in Rome in June 1944, just a few days before the invasion of Normandy. Thereafter, his resources drained for the campaigns in France, Clark put increasing reliance in 1944-1945 on coordination between his slowly advancing troops and the sabotage and intelligence from behind the German lines in northern Italy by Italian Resistance forces supplied and guided by agents of the OSS.

OSS agents went ashore soon after the U.S. Fifth Army's initial landing at Salerno, south of Naples, on 9 September 1943. Italian-speaking OSS agents from various operational branches, SI, SO, OG, X-2, MU, even R&A, served as interpreters, helped recruit Italians for supporting functions, and penetrated German lines and report on enemy units and deployments. From North Africa, OSSer Donald Downes attached his 90-man SI unit, including Irving Goff and other former leftists from the Spanish Civil War, who had been given paramilitary training at Area B, to Clark's Fifth Army. Mexican-born but Kansas raised, Sergeant Louis Joseph ("Luz") Gonzalez, 25, who trained at Area A in September 1943, worked in the Research and Analysis Branch office at OSS headquarters in Caserta, supervising a staff of 50 enlisted men and 100 Italian civilians engaged in translating Italian documents. He later described himself to his family as having been a "Rear Echelon Cloak and Dagger Kid."⁵² The operational branches also recruited indigenous agents. At one point there were three different OSS units reporting back to OSS Mediterranean headquarters in Algiers but with practically no coordination. They had some great successes, such as getting four Italian agents into German-occupied Rome with a transmitter/receiver (Radio Vittoria), which produced important information, and a joint operation (code-named Simcol) between the Italian-speaking OGs and British SAS, which, with the help of the Italian Resistance movement,

⁵¹ Douglas Porch, *The Path to Victory: The Mediterranean Theater in World War II* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004); Rick Atkinson, *The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944* (New York: Henry Holt, 2007).

⁵² "Louis Joseph Gonzalez," biographical information provided by his son, Ronald Gonzalez, letter to the author, 16 January 2008.

exfiltrated to safety by air, land, or sea at least 2,000 Allied POWs who had escaped or were released from Italian prison camps when Italy surrendered.⁵³

It was in this period, that Joseph (“Jumping Joe”) Savoldi, Jr., the Italian-born American football star and professional wrestler who trained at Area B, participated in the “McGregor” Mission, first seeking surrender but subsequently looking for information from Italian admirals and scientists about recent new weapons developed by the Axis. The McGregor team included Commander John M. Shaheen, former Republican party publicity director in Illinois, Ensign E. Michael Burke, sports promoter and later President and co-owner of the New York Yankees, Lieutenant Henry Ringling (“Bud”) North, scion of the circus family, Savoldi and a few others.⁵⁴ Most of the team, including Savoldi, went ashore with the invading Army at Salerno in September 1943. Later they took high-speed PT (patrol-torpedo) boats to the island of Capri where they met with sympathetic Italian admirals and anti-fascist scientists and learned about the Germans’ new radio-guided bomb as well as the Italians’ deadly new magnetic-activated torpedo designed to explode underneath a ship, breaking it in two. This was an important coup for the OSS.⁵⁵

Infiltrated Italian and American agents some ten to fifty miles behind German lines in southern Italy were particularly helpful in providing target information for Allied artillery and bombers.⁵⁶ One of the most effective of these was Peter Tompkins, 24, son of an affluent American family who had lived in Rome before the war. Infiltrated into German-occupied Rome, he made contact with the Italian Underground. Using the clandestine Radio Vittoria, he sent real time tactical intelligence about German plans and deployments, which proved more immediately useful than the Ultra decrypts which took two or three days to decipher and deliver. The intelligence provided by Tompkins and his Italian agents was credited by the U.S. Army with saving the Anzio beachhead with its

⁵³ History of OSS OGs in Italy, p. 14, n.d. [1945] typescript, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II.

⁵⁴ Information on the McGregor Operation (the spelling of the project’s name varies.) is in Lt. Col. Corey Ford and Maj. Alastair MacBain, *Cloak and Dagger: The Secret Story of the OSS* (New York: Random House, 1946), 149-176; Michael Burke’s memoir, *Outrageous Good Fortune* (New York: Random House, 1984), 94-100; Corvo, *OSS in Italy*, 83-86, 95-97, 110-13, 134; and in the records of the McGregor [sic] Mission, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 179, Box 286, National Archives II.

⁵⁵ On Savoldi’s recruitment and mission, see Lt. Col. Carroll T. Harris to Lt. Cmdr. William H. Vanderbilt, 23 July 1942; and 1st Lt. W.R. Mansfield to Mr. William Mudge, 19 May 1943, subject: prospective Italian recruits, p. 2, and Maj. Charles J. Eubank to Mr. Joe Savoldi, 9 December 1944, all in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 92A, COI/OSS Central Files, Box 42, Folder 687, National Archives II. I am indebted to archivist Larry McDonald for bringing this document to my attention. On the mission, see also O’Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 53-56, who does not mention Savoldi; and lifeline chronology, photographs and clippings as well as copies of falsified Italian Army identification cards and other wartime documents, and a postwar undated, unidentified U.S. newspaper clipping, William P. Moloney, “Bare Savoldi’s War Mission.” Included in J.G. Savoldi, grandson of Joseph Savoldi, Jr., email messages to the author, 26 and 30 May 2006, and packet to the author, 30 May 2006.

⁵⁶ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 67, 81.

50,000 American and British troops southwest of Rome from being crushed by the Germans in early 1944.⁵⁷

In a separate operation in 1943 and 1944, the OSS Secret Intelligence Branch, seeking strategic as contrasted to tactical intelligence, inserted and recruited agents in central and northern Italy. The overall effectiveness of that operation remains the subject of controversy.⁵⁸ A few of those indigenous operatives ultimately became double agents and were “turned” against the Allies by the Nazis, or were Nazi agents from the start. As the Allies advanced, the Nazis and Italian fascists also planted “stay-behind” agents for purposes of intelligence gathering and sabotage. The task of hunting them down belonged to OSS Counter-Intelligence, X-2, and particularly its chief in Italy, 26-year-old Lieutenant James Jesus Angleton, Jr., who had joined the OSS in September 1943, and gone through OSS training camps in Virginia and Maryland, including SO training at Area B. Dr. Bruno Uberti, a refugee from fascist Italy who trained at Area B with Angleton remembered Angleton as “extremely brilliant but a little strange....I would have liked to have been one of his friends,” Uberti said, “but he never gave me the chance because he was so secretive.”⁵⁹ The son of an overseas vice President for the National Cash Register Company, Angleton completed his training with a successful industrial espionage scheme in which he was able to infiltrate the office of the chairman of the Western Electric Company. Fluent in Italian because his father’s office had been in Milan, Angleton was enrolled in Counter-Intelligence and soon dispatched to the Italian desk of that branch in London and subsequently in Rome, where by the end of the war, his special X-2 units were credited with capturing more than a thousand enemy intelligence agents. This was the beginning of a career that would make James Jesus Angleton, Jr., the most famous and controversial of the CIA’s spy catchers.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Peter Tompkins, *A Spy in Rome* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), 29-72. Credit to OSS Rome’s Radio Vittoria for saving the Anzio beachhead was given by the G-2 of 6th Corps, a Colonel Langevin, is in “Accomplishments of the OSS, 15654,” p. 2, attached to William J. Donovan to W.B. Kantack, Reports Officer, 14 November 1944, copy in CIA Records (RG 263), Thomas F. Troy Files, Box 12, Folder 98, National Archives II; for similar see Martin Blumenson, *Salerno to Cassino* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1969), 393. For Tompkins’ critiques, see Peter Tompkins, “Are Human Spies Superfluous?” in George C. Chalou, ed., *The Secrets War: The Office of Strategic Services in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1992), 129-39; and Peter Tompkins, “Operative in Rome,” 4 October 1944, Interviews with Returned Men, Schools and Training Branch, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 2, Folder 31, National Archives II.

⁵⁸ The controversy over OSS SI operations in Italy, 1942-45, is reflected not least in the negative assessments by British author Anthony Cave Brown, *The Last Hero: Wild Bill Donovan* (New York: Times Books, 1982), 484-507; and the positive explanations provided by the operations officer in the Italian Secret Intelligence Section of the OSS, Max Corvo, *The O.S.S. in Italy*. Marine Lt. Walter W. Taylor, 29-year-old Yale graduate, Harvard Ph.D. and neighbor of Donovan’s, who trained at SO schools at Areas A and B in 1943, wound up infiltrating Italian SI agents from Corsica to the mainland in PT boats and rubber dinghies. He earned a Bronze Star for his heroism in one such expedition in June 1944 near Genoa. Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS*, 177-82.

⁵⁹ David C. Martin, *Wilderness of Mirrors* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 12-13.

⁶⁰ Caricatures of Angleton, particularly in his role as CIA’s counter-intelligence chief, have appeared in numerous spy-thriller books and films, most recently, Robert DeNiro’s film, *The Good Shepherd* (2007), starring Matt Damon. For contrasting views of Angleton and the Cold War, see the favorable view of Robin W. Winks, *Cloak and Gown: Scholars in the Secret War, 1939-1961* 2nd ed. (New Haven, Conn.:

Operational Groups Join the Fight in Italy

The Operational Group for Italy was the first of the OSS OGs to be sent into combat. It consisted of nearly 150 officers and men, primarily second-generation, Italian Americans, who had been recruited from U.S. Army units, then given OG training at Areas F, B, and A before being dispatched in September 1943 to North Africa for additional training there and use in Italy.⁶¹ A second Italian Operational Group was organized and trained at Areas F and B in October and November 1943. It then followed replaced the first group at the OSS training camps in Algeria. The OSS Italian OGs were under the overall command of Colonel Russell B. (“Russ”) Livermore, a New York lawyer with whom Donovan had worked before the war. In the first group, the operations officer was Captain Albert R. (“Al”) Materazzi, who trained at Areas A, F, and B, and been with the unit from the beginning. As the first OG unit to be trained, it had had its problems, Materazzi recalled. Area F at the Congressional Club had not been ready for them when they arrived and their training was rushed.⁶² By the end of October 1943, the unit moved from Algiers to liberated Corsica with orders to harass Germans in northern Italy, while the main Allied forces were bogged down 200 miles to the south. Corsica is only 35 miles from the Italian mainland, and it became the headquarters for the first Italian Operational Group and the point of departure for its raids as well as some of the infiltration of SO and SI agents into central and northern Italy, usually by fast boats but by parachute drops if farther inland. The OGs took control of some of the smaller islands off the important port of Livorno (Leghorn), south of Pisa, and beat back raids by German commandos. Allied Forces Headquarters ordered the OGs to undertake coastal raids for intelligence, sabotage, and to draw German units away from the front line in the South. The Italian OGs staged a series of raids, probing behind enemy positions, capturing prisoners, destroying bridges, cutting rail lines, and exploding concrete shore

Yale University Press, 1996), 322-437, 539; and the hostile view of Tom Mangold, *Cold Warrior: James Angleton: The CIA's Master Spy Hunter* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 42 and passim.

⁶¹ “Operational Group `A,”” chronology, no page number but following page 31, in History of OSS OGs in Italy, n.d. [1945] typescript, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II.

⁶² Albert Materazzi, telephone interview with the author, 23 September 2005; and Caesar Civitella, telephone interview with the author, 18 April 2008. Both contended that the criticism of some of the Italian American OGs during their training made by Roger Hall, an instructor at Areas F and B, in his acerbic account of his OSS experience, *You're Stepping on My Cloak and Dagger* (New York: Norton, 1957), 39-42, was unfair and unwarranted. For support of the positions of Materazzi and Civitella, see Emilio T. Caruso, “Italian-American Operational Groups of the Office of Strategic Services,” *The Americans and the War of Liberation in Italy*, 219-220. On the other hand, Area B commander Capt. Montague Mead made a stark contrast to a visiting inspector from the Security Branch, praising the Norwegian OG then at the camp and denigrating the recently departed Italian OG. A. van Beuren to Weston Howland, 24 September 1943, subject: Areas B and B-2, p. 2, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 146, Box 223, Folder 3106, National Archives II.

gun emplacements before withdrawing.⁶³ Throughout the winter of 1943-1944, these OG teams gained the distinction of becoming the northernmost American troops fighting in the Mediterranean Theater. However, they paid a heavy price for their harassment of the Germans.⁶⁴

The “Ginny” Mission and a German Atrocity

Most of the raids by the Italian-American OGs were successful, but the “Ginny” Mission in late March 1944 ended in disaster. Part of Operation “Strangle” to cut the main German supply line in Italy, the Genoa-La Spezia coastal railroad, the plan was to blow up a crucial railroad tunnel near *Stazione di Framura* some fifty miles south of Genoa. In the week to ten days it would take to repair the tunnel, Allied airpower would be able to destroy the long lines of backed up supply trains backed up far beyond the mountains.⁶⁵

On a moonless night, a team composed of 15 Italian Americans from the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area, all of them trained at Areas F and B, set out in PT boats with 650 pounds of explosives to blow up the railroad tunnel. First Lieutenant Vincent (“Vinny”) J. Russo of Montclair, New Jersey, one of the initial four OG officers to train at Areas A, F, and B, was in command; First Lieutenant Paul Traficante was his deputy. Among the 13 enlisted men was Technician 5th Grade Rosario Squatrito, (nicknamed “Saddo” and “Rosy Squat”), a quiet, young tool and die-maker, from Staten Island, New York, whose nephew would later write an account in his uncle’s memory.⁶⁶ In the darkness, the fifteen men, hoisted their weapons, radio, explosives and other gear into three inflatable dinghies and paddled silently to shore. They headed inland toward the tunnel, and their radio operator soon reported back that they were “on the target.” But suddenly enemy flares light exploded off the coast and shore searchlights began flashing across the water as German patrol boats raced toward the American PT boats. There was an exchange of machine gun fire, and the Americans headed back to Corsica. The PT boats returned the next several nights to the prearranged point, but there was no contact with the OG team. There had been no explosion at the tunnel, and the team had disappeared.

Not until a year later in April 1945 did OSS discover the fate of the Ginny Mission. Once ashore, the team had left the explosives in the rafts and sent scouts to locate the nearby tunnel. But it was almost dawn when the scouts returned, and Lieutenants Russo and Traficante decided to wait until the next night to approach the guarded tunnel and set the charges. Meanwhile, the team hid in an empty barn. They had

⁶³ The most important of the islands were Gorgona and Capraia. OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 77-79. Max Corvo, “The OSS and the Italian Campaign,” Chalou, ed., *The Secrets*, 192.

⁶⁴ History of OSS OGs in Italy, n.d. [1945] typescript, p. 15, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II.

⁶⁵ Albert Materazzi interview in O’Donnell, *Operatives, Spies and Saboteurs*, 59-60.

⁶⁶ Joseph Squatrito, *Code Name: Ginny* (Staten Island, NY: Forever Free Publishing, 2001).

hidden the dinghies well from the land side, but in the morning a fisherman saw them from the water and informed the local fascists. Alerted, the fascist militia and the German garrison sent out patrols and soon found the saboteurs in the barn about a mile from the tunnel. Although surrounded, the Americans opened fire from the barn. In the fire fight, a number of them were wounded, including their leader, Lieutenant Russo. Facing the inevitable, the group surrendered. They were interrogated, and on Sunday morning, March 26, only five days after they had landed, all fifteen, were taken in trucks to a open field along the coast called Punta di Bianca, southeast of La Spezia. There in two groups, their hands tied behind their backs, they were executed by a German firing squad and their bodies thrown into a large pit, their hastily dug, unmarked grave.⁶⁷

Early in the war, Hitler had issued an infamous “Commando Order,” directing that captured Allied commandoes or parachutists engaged in sabotage or guerrilla operations should be treated as spies instead of prisoners of war and summarily executed regardless of the fact that they were in military uniform and operating as Army units.⁶⁸ This was, of course, a violation of the Geneva Conventions about treatment of military prisoners of war. In regard to the Ginny Mission, a German communiqué at the end of March 1943 had stated that the commandoes had been “annihilated in combat,” but the truth gradually emerged through subsequent message intercepts as well as local Italians. When he learned that the members of the Ginny Mission had been executed, Donovan ordered that the German general in command of the region, General Anton Dostler, was to be taken alive so that he could be tried as a war criminal. Dostler was captured at the end of the war, and although he pleaded that he had only followed Hitler’s orders, this was not accepted as justification, and it was noted that he had continued to insist on the execution over the objections of several of his subordinate officers. In October 1945, Dostler was tried and convicted by a U.S. military commission in Rome, the first German general to be tried as a war criminal. Dostler was executed by an American Army firing squad near Naples, Italy at daybreak on 1 December 1945.⁶⁹

Arming the Partisans against the Germans in Northern Italy

For nearly ten months, until the summer of 1944, U.S. Army commanders in Italy failed to understand how best to use the men of Donovan’s organization, because many

⁶⁷ History of OSS OGs in Italy, n.d. [1945] typescript, p. 17, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II; Squatrito, *Code Name: Ginny*. See also Brown, *Last Hero*, 475-83; OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 79; O’Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 59-61; Corvo, *OSS in Italy*, 162.

⁶⁸ On Hitler’s instructions, see “Commando Order,” I.C.B. Dear and M.R.D. Foot, eds., *The Oxford Companion to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 257-58; also Brown, *Last Hero*, 473-74.

⁶⁹ Brown, *Last Hero*, 479-83.; and Squatrito, *Code Name: Ginny*; Capt. Albert R. Materazzi testified against Dostler at his trial in Rome in November 1945. “OSS Raiders’ Story is Told,” *New York Sun*, 18 November 1945, clipping in packet sent by Albert R. Materazzi to the author, 31 January 2005.

of the professional soldiers still viewed them with a mixture of jealousy and contempt as privileged but naïve amateurs. As Peter Tompkins, the highly successful SI agent in Rome, recalled bitterly, “Unfortunately, despite the fact that we had been at war over two years, the OSS had been granted little opportunity by field commanders to prove itself an effective weapon of espionage and sabotage behind the enemy lines; most of us were still being frowned on by the brass as a collection of madmen. I had therefore been obliged, by lack of facilities, or even of recognition, to operate more or less clandestinely not only from the Germans, but from our own side as well.”⁷⁰ An official account by the OSS put it more diplomatically, stating that a summary of the operations of the Italian-speaking OGs from September 1943 to June 1944, showed that the type of operations they performed, “though highly successful and effective, was not strictly that for which they had been originally intended.” “It was not until July of 1944 that AFHQ [Allied Force Headquarters, MEDTO] began to understand the manipulation of OGs as a weapon to weaken and disrupt enemy communications behind his lines.”⁷¹

This realization by Allied theater commanders in the Mediterranean that they could and should use OGs effectively in connection with indigenous resistance movements, may have resulted from a combination of factors. One was their successes in Italy, another was their successes in France in the summer of 1944, and a third may have been because the Allied armies in Italy were reduced in strength in 1944 as veteran units were transferred to the new battle zones in France. Consequently, the American campaign in Italy was forced to place more reliance than in the past on anti-fascist partisans behind German lines in northern Italy. The Italian Resistance Movement was composed of a diverse spectrum of anti-fascist groups that had arisen spontaneously, but these parties joined together after the Allied landings in September 1944 under the National Liberation Committee (CLN) to cooperate with the Allies, which said it could put 90,000 partisans into the field if the Allies would supply them with arms and other material support.⁷² Dealing with Resistance movements in enemy-occupied countries was a new phenomenon for the Allies in World War II and one that was complex because it often interlinked political and military problems. The British secret service agencies sought to undermine communist, socialist and other leftist groups in the Italian Resistance. London’s postwar political aim was for a conservative Italian government under a constitutional monarchy. In contrast, most of the American agents, unlike the British, were of Italian ethnicity, and even more importantly, unlike the British, the American OSS dealt equally with the partisans groups regardless of their political affiliation. The primary OSS strategy was to facilitate mutual relationships with all active partisan groups

⁷⁰ Peter Tompkins, *A Spy in Rome* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), 18-19.

⁷¹ History of OSS OGs in Italy, n.d. [1945] typescript, p. 17, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II.

⁷² Under an agreement signed 7 December 1944, the CLN agreed to put 90,000 partisans into the field and the American SO and British SOE agreed to provide a monthly expense per man of 1,500 lire, a total of 80,000,000 lire a month, to be repaid by the Italian government after the war. OSS, *War Report of the OSS: Overseas Targets*, 109.

in order to maximize the military effectiveness of the Resistance against the German Army.⁷³

More than a hundred SO, SI, and OG teams, including both Americans and Italian nationals, were infiltrated behind German lines into northern Italy between 1943 and 1945. Among the Italian nationals trained and deployed by the OSS was Piero Boni. After the war, Boni, a member of the Socialist party, would emerge as the second highest ranking official in CGIL, Italian General Confederation of Labor, the largest confederation of labor unions in Italy. But in 1944, he was a 24-year-old labor lawyer from Rome, who had been earlier drafted into the Italian Army as a 2nd lieutenant, and after the Italian surrender in 1943, had returned to Rome, joined the Italian Resistance movement in the capital and met OSS's Peter Tompkins. In the summer of 1944, Boni was among those members of the Resistance selected and trained by OSS for intelligence and special operations missions in the North. Like many others in the Resistance, he was struck by the political impartiality of the OSS in dealing with the partisans from the left to the right.⁷⁴

Boni and the other members of his OSS training class underwent three weeks training by the Americans in July 1944. The first two weeks were spent at an OSS school by the sea in Naples, where the instructors were Italian Americans, who had been trained at Areas F, B, or A, and the curriculum replicated that of those OSS training camps in Virginia and Maryland. "They gave us American cigarettes and my first chewing gum," Boni recalled.⁷⁵ Instruction was in Italian and the OSS recruits were trained in observation and reporting, transmission and reception using five-letter groups in code, and the effectiveness of various demolitions, particularly plastic explosives. They also practiced with American and British pistols, submachine guns, hand grenades and bazookas. "I particularly liked the bazooka," Boni said. "That was a new weapon, and it was good. Later [in northern Italy], we used the bazooka to shoot out a window at German headquarters!"⁷⁶ From Naples, the Italians were taken for a week of training and jumps at a parachute school staffed by British and American instructors at Brindisi. Captain Elmer ("Pinky") Harris had helped to establish the school in the winter of 1943-

⁷³ Albert Materazzi, telephone interview with the author, 23 September 2005; and Max Corvo, "The O.S.S. and the Italian Campaign," *The Americans and the War of Liberation in Italy*, 35, albeit most were from the south of Italy and their dialect was often difficult for northerners to understand.

⁷⁴ The following is based on Piero Boni, Rome, Italy, in-person interview with the author, 15 July 2007. Silvia Boni, his daughter and a good friend of the author, served as interpreter; plus Piero Boni, "Relations between the Americans and the Italian Resistance," *The Americans and the War of Liberation in Italy: Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.) and the Resistance* (Venice: Institute of the History of the Resistance, 1995), 214-217. I am indebted to Mr. Boni for the interview and for a copy of this volume. For concurrence about the differences between the American and British attitudes toward the partisans, see Mario Fiorentini, "The 'Dingo' Mission: Operating in the Genoa-Piacenza-Parma Triangle," *ibid.*, 248; Tullio Lussi, "The O.R.I. and the O.S.S. Collaboration," *ibid.*, 272-273; and Ennio Tassinari, "My Four Missions with the Allies: From Initial Distrust to an Effective Co-operation," *ibid.*, 314.

⁷⁵ Piero Boni, Rome, Italy, in-person interview with the author, 15 July 2007.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* In addition to the bazooka, Boni preferred, for his own personal weapons, an Italian Beretta pistol and submachine gun. He said the latter had a longer range than the British Sten submachine gun. He also liked the Colt .45 automatic pistol for its impact. In the field, he carried both a Beretta and a Colt .45.

1944, but in April, Harris had become so ill with abdominal pains in what would eventually be diagnosed as intestinal ulcers that he was transferred back home to Bethesda Naval Hospital for recuperation.⁷⁷

After their training, Boni and five other Italian agents were parachuted into northern Italy in late July 1944 as the “Renata” Mission. They were soon performing their mission’s goals: making contact with the local Resistance group, in this case near Parma, arranging for arms, food, and other supplies to be airdropped to the Resistance, and most importantly, obtaining information about the German forces in the area. By wireless radio or couriers, they information on enemy units, equipment, particularly armor and artillery, minefields, and movements of troops and military supplies, usually with dates and map coordinates.⁷⁸ The information sent back was valuable. One of their couriers took the German plans for reinforcing the Gothic Line, the main German defensive position in northern Italy. “We had an Italian engineer, who was working in the German Army headquarters, and he provided the plans to us, and we sent them to the Americans, so they knew exactly what the Germans were going to do, when and where.”⁷⁹ Soon, however, the Germans learned about Boni and the others by capturing and torturing a team member until he gave them the information. A special brigade of SS troops was sent to find them, and on 17 October 1944, the team awoke to find the village surrounded. “We destroyed the radio,” Boni said. “Eight men were killed in the fighting with the Germans, including the head of the Partisans... I jumped from a window... to the ground and then leapt into the river and thus escaped.” Dodging Germans for a month, Boni and another survivor, code-named “Comandante Beretta,” were finally able to get to the OSS command post in Siena in mid-November 1944.⁸⁰

Despite incursions by the SS brigade, the partisan forces in the district of Parma had increased in size and momentum, and through Boni and Commandante Beretta, they requested a full-fledge OSS mission to operate between the partisan command in Parma and the advancing Allied armies. Allied Command quickly authorized the “Cayuga” Mission.⁸¹ It was typical of the approximately thirty OSS Italian OG missions in northern Italy during 1944-1945. It was composed of Italian Americans and consisted of Captain Michael Formichelli, a veteran of Sardinia, and six enlisted men, all of them trained at Areas F and B. With the way cleared by Boni and Beretta, the initial elements of the “Cayuga” Mission parachuted into the Parma district on 23 December 1944. Back in the zone, Boni was reassigned to the “Rochester” mission, an SO mission, continuing the tasks of the earlier Renata Mission and including several Italians headed by another American, a Captain McClusky. The “Cayuga” and “Rochester” missions now operated

⁷⁷ Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS*, 176.

⁷⁸ See for example, Lossowski, Ops [Operations], cable to Renata [Mission], 14 October 1944, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 139, Box 48, Folder 446, National Archives II.

⁷⁹ Piero Boni, Rome, Italy, in-person interview with the author, 15 July 2007.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ History of OSS OGs in Italy, n.d. [1945], Operations, p. 5, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II.

on their own but kept in frequent contact with each other.⁸² They provided much valuable information for the advancing American Army, such as enemy targets and where the retreating Germans were building defenses, erecting anti-tank ditches and emplacing mines.⁸³ OSS Florence praised “Coletti” (Boni’s code name) for “the high level of intelligence you have been sending.”⁸⁴ The praise came from Lieutenant Irving Goff, who years later recalled that “We had eighteen radio teams speaking German, French, English, Italian in northern Italy....The intelligence we sent was called by Allied headquarters the best from any source. We had house-by-house....We had an overlay map of all the German positions. The American Army knew where every German was.”⁸⁵

Formichelli’s “Cayuga” mission established contact with the unified Resistance command in the Parma area, which directed thirteen partisan brigades, nearly 4,000 partisans. Despite having their radio broken and suffering a broken ankle on the drop into the mountains, Formichelli and his team of Italian-American OGs evaded or beat off several German patrols. The team was constantly on the move, traveling through the mountains at night, on foot or with horses or mules, stayed in private homes, churches, barns, even shepherds’ huts. Formichelli held several meetings with partisan leaders, and after they accepted OSS leadership, he dispersed members of the mission to instruct the various brigades in guerrilla tactics, sabotage, and the proper use and maintenance of the weapons, explosives, radios and other materials. With his approval, 76 air drops were made bringing supplies to the partisans and the Cayuga Mission.⁸⁶ Preparatory to the final Allied offensive in April 1945, General Mark Wayne Clark called for a partisan uprising to immediately attack enemy transport columns, garrisons and encampments, blow up enemy command posts and ammunition and gasoline depots, and cut enemy telegraph and telephone lines. At the same time, they should try to prevent retreating enemy from destroying bridges, power plants, and other facilities that would be needed by the advancing Allies.⁸⁷ The partisans, including those in the Parma area, did rise up and simultaneously staged night attacks on all German command posts in the area. They also

⁸² “Concerning the Relationship between Rochester and Cayuga Missions,” memorandum prepared by Piero Boni (code-named Coletti) for the author and translated and emailed to the author by his son-in-law, Professor Ugo Rubeo of the University of Rome, 11 September 2007. A detailed history of the Renata, Rochester, and Cayuga missions may be found in Piero Boni, *Giorni a Compiano* (Days in Compiano) (Compiano, Parma, Italy: Compiano Arte Storia, 1984); and the reports on OSS OG website, ossog.org.

⁸³ See incoming messages from the Rochester Mission to OSS headquarters in Siena and then Florence, 24 November 1944 through 16 March 1945, succeeded by the Dodgers Mission (when new radio crystals had arrived) to OSS HQ, 16 March through 5 April 1945, all in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 139, Box 51, Folder 474, National Archives II.

⁸⁴ Outgoing message from Fajans, Ops, Florence to Rochester, 22 February 1945, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 139, Box 51, Folder 474, National Archives II.

⁸⁵ “Irving Goff,” in Terkel, *The Good War*, 496.

⁸⁶ “Report of the Cayuga Mission,” typed copy of the original report by Capt. Michael Formichelli in History of OSS OGs in Italy, n.d. [1945], OSS Records, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II.

⁸⁷ Outgoing message, Ops 2 to Dodgers, 4 April 1945, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 139, Box 51, Folder 474, National Archives II.

attacked local garrisons and established roadblocks to hinder the German retreat. On 25 April partisans, according to plans approved by Formichelli, rose up in Parma, as in other northern cities, overcame the German guards and took over the city. In Parma, the 34th U.S. Infantry Division arrived that night. Formichelli arranged for the partisans to stage a victory parade through the city's streets and then surrender their weapons.⁸⁸

During the five-month "Cayuga" mission, Formichelli subsequently reported that the partisans in his zone had been engaged in 182 actions, conducted 38 acts of sabotage, blowing up 6 railroad bridges and 7 highway bridges. They destroyed two trains loaded with arms and ammunitions, three locomotives, 41 trucks, and captured 57 trucks and numerous weapons and stocks of ammunition. They had attacked 43 enemy command posts and eliminated 26 of them, killed 612 enemy soldiers, wounded 750, and taken 1,520 prisoners, which did not include the enemy prisoners taken during the final stages of the partisan cooperation with the Allied Forces.⁸⁹

Danger and Death in the Dolomites

What would become one of the most famous OG missions in northern Italy, the "Tacoma" Mission, began rather strangely. Both the commanding officer, Captain Howard W. Chappell, and his radio operator, Corporal Oliver Silsby, were members of a German-American Operational Group that OSS had recruited and trained in Maryland and Virginia for use in German-speaking countries. Why were these two members of the OSS German OG being deployed in Italy? The main reason was because of Chappell's persuasiveness and his ardent desire for action.

Howard W. Chappell was one of those extraordinary individuals that so typified the OSS. He came from Cleveland, Ohio, the first of four children of a post office worker and a nurse. Because of his mother's Prussian birth and ancestry, he was bilingual in English and German. A natural athlete, he played football in high school and college at Ohio State and Case Western Reserve and was also a Golden Gloves boxer. In June 1942, he joined the U.S. Army, earned an officer's commission, and served first in the Military Police and then as a parachute instructor at Fort Benning, Georgia. It was at Benning, that he gained his nickname, "Flash Gordon." This was due in part because of his movie-star looks—he was 6'2" tall, with broad shoulders, blond hair, and blue eyes. It was also because of his daring, even reckless, antics. In one episode, he allegedly perched on one of the horizontal bars of a jump tower, tossed out his parachute and leaped with it to the ground. In another, when some of his men were beaten up in a bar fight in notorious Phoenix City, Alabama, just across the state line from Fort Benning, he retaliated by driving a 2 ½ -ton Army truck through the front of the tavern. As a paratroop officer fluent in German, Chappell was recruited for the German OG being organized by the

⁸⁸ Report of the Cayuga Mission," p. 4 by Capt. Michael Formichelli, in History of OSS OGs in Italy, n.d. [1945], OSS Records, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II.

⁸⁹ "Report of the Cayuga Mission," typed, undated copy of the original report by Capt. Michael Formichelli, p. 6, in History of OSS OGs in Italy, n.d. [1945], OSS Records, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II.

OSS. Like most other OGs, he trained at Area F and then Area B. In June 1944, he was sent to North Africa to await further orders.⁹⁰

As the months dragged by, Chappell became tired of waiting to be deployed, and he asked Italian OG operational officer, Albert Materazzi for mission behind enemy lines.⁹¹ He got his wish in December 1944, a month after his 24th birthday. It was an assignment to organize the partisans to block the German Army's vital supply and escape routes from northern Italy to Austria and Germany through the passes in the Alpine and Dolomite Mountains. This was the "Tacoma" Mission. The other two original volunteers were Corporal Oliver Silsby and Sergeant Salvadore Fabrega. Silsby, the radio operator, was from Detroit, Michigan. He had received his OSS communications training at Area C, then been sent to North Africa and subsequently made two jumps into Yugoslavia.⁹² At 32, Fabrega was the oldest of the three; trained as part of the Italian Operational Groups, he was fluent in Italian and accompanied the mission as its interpreter. He had a complicated and somewhat unclear history. Born in Catalonia in 1913, he later left with his Spanish parents to spend four years in Germany before the family moved to Argentina. In his teens, he became a merchant seaman and traveled around the world. In addition to Spanish and German, he learned to speak Italian, French, and English. From 1936-1939, the former Catalan fought in the Loyalist Army against Franco's forces in the Spanish Civil War. Twice wounded, he left for France at the end of the war and joined the Foreign Legion. Later, he deserted and when France fell in 1940, he fled to England and then the United States, working in the merchant marine and becoming a U.S. citizen. Living in New York City, he joined the U.S. Army in 1942; the OSS recruited him into the Italian OGs and trained him at Areas F and B in 1943.⁹³

The day after Christmas 1944, Chappell, Silsby and Fabrega leaped out of plane into a snow-covered Alpine clearing, 200 miles behind the Germans' front lines. They quickly began training the partisans in the raiding tactics, demolition work, and the use and maintenance of Allied weapons provided by air drops. Two raids successfully destroyed forty thousand liters of fuel and a locomotive with four cars of troops and material. Later, the team took in a couple of Austrian *Luftwaffe* personnel, who said they were deserters. But when it was discovered they were planning to rejoin their unit and inform on the team, their throats were cut. On 21 February 1945, three American sergeants of the "Tacoma" mission parachuted in to help with the partisans, Eugene Delaini, a weapons expert, Charles Ciccone, a demolitions man, and Eric Burchardt, a medical corpsman. When Italian Fascist militia moved into the local village and cut off

⁹⁰ Information on Howard W. Chappell from his son, Jack R. Chappell, email to the author, 5 October 2007, telephone interview, 13 October 2007, and Howard Chappell's military records and other documents supplied to the author, 17 October 2007; confirmation of the nickname from Caesar J. Civitella, telephone interview with the author, 18 April 2008.

⁹¹ Albert R. Materazzi, telephone interview with the author, 30 August 2007.

⁹² Dewey Linze, "Howard Chappell Recalls Christmas Flight Behind Enemy Lines in War," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 December 1961, E-6; William L. White, "Some Affairs of Honor," *Reader's Digest*, December 1945, 137.

⁹³ "Report on the Tacoma Mission," p. 1, typed, copy of the original report by Capt. Howard Chappell, in History of OSS OGs in Italy, n.d. [1945], OSS Records, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II.

the Americans' food supply, the team and its partisans sneaked down from the mountain at night and in a firefight, blasted their headquarters with machine gun fire and 18 rounds from the bazooka, a new weapon which the frightened fascists referred to as a "mysterious cannon."⁹⁴

The raids and rumors about the presence of an American team caused the German headquarters in the area to dispatch initially more than a hundred, heavily armed Fascist troops to capture the "Tacoma" mission. The Americans and partisans moved through the snow in mule-drawn sleds, but the Americans were awakened the morning of 28 February with cries from the partisans that "Fascists are coming—hundreds of them!"⁹⁵ The Americans and partisans hit the Fascist troops with fire from rifles, submachine guns, light-machine guns, and mortars. There were now six American OSSers, plus nine rescued Allied aviators, and two dozen Italian partisans. During the day's action, 120 Fascists and two partisans were killed. That night, both sides withdrew; the next day, German troops arrived and blasted the mountaintop with artillery for six hours before overrunning it, only to find it the stone-hut vacant, except for a booby trap that the Americans left inside the door and which killed six Germans.⁹⁶ Field Marshal Kesselring, the German commander in Italy, concerned about the threat to the key German lines of supply and potential routes of withdrawal through the Alpine passes, now ordered that the partisans and their American leaders had to be captured at all costs. In the ensuing manhunt by 3,500 German troops, the combined "Tacoma" and "Aztec" missions found themselves surrounded on the morning of 6 March 1945; they had been betrayed. Everyone had to run for his life in different directions through the mountainous countryside. Most escaped, but half a dozen partisans and two Americans were captured. Radioman Oliver Silsby was the first to become exhausted and collapse. Captain Chappell stopped to help him, and both were captured, although Chappell was able to escape into the brush. Fabrega, who had dropped behind with two partisans, was also captured.⁹⁷

Interrogated by the SS in Belluno, Fabrega stuck to the story that he was a downed American aviator and knew nothing of the OSS or the partisans. He, like the

⁹⁴ "Report on the Tacoma Mission," p. 6, typed copy of the original report by Capt. Howard Chappell, in History of OSS OGs in Italy, n.d. [1945], OSS Records, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1; and Lt. Cmdr. Richard M. Kelly, "Torture Preferred! [an article on Salvatore Fabrega in the Tacoma Mission]" *Blue Book: Magazine of Adventure for Men* (June 1946), 60-61; clipping in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 7, Folder 7, National Archives II. See also Summary of the Tacoma Mission on OSS Operational Groups website, www.ossog.org/italy/tacoma.html, accessioned 23 September 2007.

⁹⁵ Kelly, "Torture Preferred!" *Blue Book*, 62; clipping in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 7, Folder 7, National Archives II.

⁹⁶ "Report on the Tacoma Mission," pp.6-7, typed copy of the original report by Capt. Howard Chappell, in History of OSS OGs in Italy, n.d. [1945], OSS Records, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II; and Kelly, "Torture Preferred!" *Blue Book*, 62-63; clipping in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 7, Folder 7, National Archives II.

⁹⁷ "Report on the Tacoma Mission," p. 8-10, and Report of the Tacoma Mission by Cpl. Oliver M. Silsby, pp. 4-5, attached to typed copy of the original report by Capt. Howard Chappell, in History of OSS OGs in Italy, n.d. [1945], OSS Records, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1; and Kelly, "Torture Preferred!" *Blue Book*, 64; clipping in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 7, Folder 7, National Archives II.

partisans captured with him was tortured, tied to chairs, beaten with clubs, and given electric shocks to various parts of the body. Fabrega did not disclose information. The next day, he and forty other prisoners were taken to the Belluno town square. The square was filled with townspeople, but all was quiet except the barked orders of the SS officers. A small German truck was backed under a tree; two youthful but beaten partisans stood in the rear. An officer brought Fabrega brought forward and asked the two youths if they knew him. Both said “no,” despite the fact that they had been allied with the “Tacoma” mission for weeks and had shared the same stone hut with Fabrega only forty-eight hours earlier. Germans now beat them again and looped nooses over their necks, but neither said a word. Both looked up at the sky. The officer waved his arm, the driver pulled the truck forward, and the two bodies swung on the ropes. The silence was broken by a woman’s scream.⁹⁸

The rest of the Italian prisoners were then hanged, some by rope nooses but others savagely snagged by the throat on meat hooks. Fabrega kept to his cover story and continued to be starved and tortured. After eleven days, he was taken to an SS prison camp near Bolzano, 150 miles north. Startlingly while on the way, the Italian driver, “Sette,” a chauffeur for the SS commander in Belluno, told Fabrega that he was also a spy for the OSS and tried to convince Fabrega to escape with him to the partisans. But the sergeant, either not believing him or realizing the importance of the kind of information the spy provided the Americans, declined. Instead Fabrega remained in the car all the way to the SS-run prison camp. There, he continued to undergo torture and interrogation.⁹⁹

While Sergeant Fabrega and Corporal Silsby were prisoners, Captain Chappell had escaped capture, despite being wounded in the leg. He was caught again, but using the silent killing technique taught by William (“Dan”) Fairbairn, he snapped the guard’s neck and took his weapon. He later killed an SS lieutenant with a walking stick. He was able to regroup with the partisans and other American OSS team members, Sergeants Ciccone, Delaini and Burchhardt. When the Allied offensives began in April 1945, they and the partisans scattered roadways with four-pronged road spikes, which caused considerable damage to vehicular traffic, they tore down telephone poles and telephone and electric wire, and blew up bridges at Vas and Busche, and killed a couple of dozen enemy troops. On 24 April, seeking to get to a mountain pass to prevent retreating Germans, Chappell and two other Americans, aided by a blonde Italian countess, hid in boxes in the back of a truck, as their partisan driver narrowly got them through two German road blocks. Together with partisan groups in the area, they mopped up a number of small German garrisons and learning that a large convoy was headed north, they blew up a bridge just north of Caprile and set up a road block and a trap for the Germans in the narrow winding mountain road. When the convoy arrived, Chappell and the partisans opened fire from the high ground, killing some 130 Germans in fifteen minutes. The single-file convoy was trapped, and after the initial firefight, its leaders asked for terms of

⁹⁸ Kelly, “Torture Preferred” *Blue Book*, 66-67, clipping in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 7, Folder 7, National Archives II.

⁹⁹ William L. White, “Some Affairs of Honor,” *Reader’s Digest* (December 1945), 136-54; Kelly, “Torture Preferred,” *Blue Book*, 67-70 in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 7, Folder 7, National Archives II.

surrender. Chappell said unconditional surrender, and after a few minutes of threats and discussion, the 3,500 Germans surrendered. Among the prisoners were a number of SS men, including the notoriously cruel Major Schroeder, head of the SS in the region and responsible for the torture and executions in Belluno and elsewhere. When Schroeder surrendered, after first threatening to kill all the civilians he had as hostages, he was found to be carrying the weapon the Americans had given to a teenage partisan who had served as Chappell's assistant. The youth had been captured in March, and in torturing him in a vain attempt to get him to betray the Americans, Schroeder's SS men had cut off his hands and gouged out his eyes before executing him. The morning after the surrender of the German convoy, several officers of the 504th Panzer Division and other units told Chappell that they were very disturbed about being confined with SS and asked to be separated. Chappell granted their request. That night, he summoned Major Schroeder and his seven SS officers to his quarters, where they talked in German. Chappell's report tells what happened next:

We became quite friendly and even joked about how they had once captured me. We drank a little wine, and I learned the name of the spy who had disclosed my location prior to 6 March. *This man was later killed in an attempt to escape.*

We laughed about the fact that some of my equipment that had been captured was in his, and some of his officers, possession. He told me at this time that neither he nor any of his officers had ever committed any outrages and they regretted some of the brutalities that other Germans had committed.

Before he left he told me that he was glad that he had surrendered to me because all of his staff felt I would treat them as they would have treated me, if they had the chance. That was the way I felt about it. *All of them were killed that night trying to escape.*¹⁰⁰

Over the next few days, as the Allies advanced north, Chappell, his men, and the partisans extended their roadblock farther south preventing the escape of more German troops. They tied up several German divisions and forced the surrender of 7,500 *Wehrmacht* troops. On 3 May, Chappell drove down to Feltre and welcomed the U.S. 85th Infantry Division and turned the German prisoners and his intelligence information over to the advancing American Army.¹⁰¹ Both Fabrega and Silsby had survived the prison camp. In the final days of the war, Fabrega escaped in the confusion and went to Merano, where the top SS officials in the region were located. Brazenly, he walked into an SS barracks, announced he was a U.S. Army captain and told the Germans they were restricted to the barracks. His bluff worked, they stayed put, and when the U.S. 10th Mountain Division arrived the next day, Fabrega turned the city and the SS troops over to them, courtesy of a sergeant of the OSS. Thus ended the Tacoma Mission. All three

¹⁰⁰ "Report on the Tacoma Mission," pp. 15-16, copy of report by Capt. Howard Chappell, in History of OSS OGS in Italy, [1945], OSS Records, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II. Italics added.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 17; plus Albert R. Materazzi, telephone interview with the author, 30 August 2007.

initial members were awarded medals, Fabrega the Distinguished Service Cross, Chappell the Silver Star Medal, and Silsby the Bronze Star, for their heroism.¹⁰²

Effectiveness of the Resistance in Italy

Although the most publicized, the Tacoma Mission's success was not unique.¹⁰³ Lieutenant George M. Hearn, a former football player from San Jose State College in California, who joined the OSS in December 1943, received SO and MU training in OSS training camps in Virginia and Maryland, and then ran boats along the Adriatic coast, bluffed a German commander in the city of Chioggia near Venice with the threat of an air attack, and accepted the surrender of a heavily armed garrison of 1,100 German troops on 24 April 1945.¹⁰⁴

Sergeant Caesar J. Civitella, who had trained at Areas F and B with the OSS Italian OGS, was part of the "Spokane/Sewanee" Missions in the Tyrolean Alps in March 1945, which prevented German destruction of bridges and power facilities by seizing a hydro-electric facility supplying power to Milan, removed road mines, and forced the surrender of various German garrisons including the one guarding the Stelvio Pass in April 1945.¹⁰⁵ Across northern Italy, within days after the uprising had begun on 25 April, the patriot forces had taken over the cities of Turin, Genoa, and Milan, which formed Italy's key industrial triangle. Mussolini, his mistress, and some of his ministers sought to escape to Switzerland. Civitella and his unit were directed to go after Mussolini, capture him and hold him for trial.¹⁰⁶ But before the Americans could reach him, the Italian dictator and his mistress were captured by partisans near Lake Como and the Swiss border. They were summarily executed by partisans on 28 April and their bodies hanged upside down in downtown Milan. The German military governor of northern Italy, *Waffen-SS* Lieutenant General Karl Wolff, who had been negotiating via the OSS office of Allen Dulles in Bern since February, finally signed an armistice on 2 May 1945, six days before Germany surrendered. Those negotiations helped provide a crucial framework for the surrender of the German Army in Italy, and the fact that it was

¹⁰² "Report on the Tacoma Mission," by Capt. Howard Chappell, p. 17; and Report of the Tacoma Mission by Cpl. Oliver M. Silsby, pp. 6-8, attached to *ibid.*, both in History of OSS OGS in Italy, n.d. [1945], OSS Records, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II. In the ranking of military awards, the Distinguished Service Cross, is the second highest in the Army, after the Medal of Honor. The Distinguished Service Medal is third, the Silver Star is fourth, and the Bronze Star is fifth in precedence in the awards for bravery in combat.

¹⁰³ See the after action reports on the OSS Operational Groups website, www.ossog.org.

¹⁰⁴ Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger*, 162-73.

¹⁰⁵ Summary of Spokane and Sewanee Missions, OSS Operational Groups website, www.ossog.org/italy/spokane-sewanee.html, accessed 10 June 2008.

¹⁰⁶ Caesar J. Civitella, telephone interview with the author, 18 April 2008.

the OSS that Wolff approached indicates the importance that German High Command attached to Donovan's organization.¹⁰⁷

This new form of warfare, the use of small teams of highly trained special operations combatants to supply, train, and direct indigenous insurgent groups, proved successful in Italy. In 1944, the Germans had used a hundred thousand Italian police and Fascist militia to contain the Italian Resistance. But by February 1945, the unified and Allied-directed Resistance movement had grown so strong in northern Italy that Field Marshal Kesselring ordered his commanders to suppress it, even if it meant bringing German combat units from the front.¹⁰⁸ Even so, entire regions of northern Italy had by the end of the winter been cleared of German forces, and the German commander-in-chief admitted that it was impossible to move troops or supplies through the area except in large, heavily-guarded convoys.¹⁰⁹ British General Harold Alexander, Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean, estimated that Kesselring had detached as many as six of his nearly twenty divisions to control the partisans, and some historians agree with that judgment.¹¹⁰ In addition to their main role in espionage and sabotage, the partisans, inflicted 2,700 German casualties and 3,800 casualties among Italian Fascist troops, according to official figures. But Kesselring argued that a more realistic estimate was some 5,000 German soldiers killed and 8,000 missing and presumed killed. His intelligence officers claimed the figures were even higher.¹¹¹

The number of Americans in the OSS Operational Groups in Italy who were killed in action included three officers and nineteen enlisted men; several officers and enlisted men were wounded; one officer and seven enlisted men were captured. This was from an original contingent of seventeen officers and 126 enlisted men.¹¹² These figures did not include casualties in other OSS branches, for example, the mysterious death of

¹⁰⁷ See Jochen von Lang, *Top Nazi: SS General Karl Wolff: The Man between Hitler and Himmler* (New York: Enigma Books, 2005).

¹⁰⁸ On 26 February 1945, Kesselring, telegraphed the following to SS, police, and Army commanders in northern Italy: "Activity of partisan bands...particularly in the areas of Modena, Reggio and Parma...has spread like wildfire in the last ten days. The concentration of partisan groups of varying political tendencies into one Organization, as ordered by the Allied High Command, is beginning to show clear results. The execution of partisan operations shows considerably more commanding leadership. Up to now it has been possible for us, with a few exceptions, to keep our vital rear lines of communications open by means of our slight protective forces, but this situation threatens to change considerably for the worse in the immediate future. Speedy and radical counter measures anticipate this development. It is clear to me that our only remedy, and one which is unavoidably necessary to meet the situation, is the concentration of all available forces, even if this means temporary weakening in other places [i.e., the front lines]." Reprinted in OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 114.

¹⁰⁹ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 115.

¹¹⁰ Porch, *Path to Victory*, 641; David Travis, "Communism and Resistance in Italy, 1943-1948" in Tony Judt, ed., *Resistance and Revolution in Mediterranean Europe, 1939-1948* (London: Routledge, 1989), 91.

¹¹¹ Porch, *Path to Victor*, 640; Albert Kesselring, *Kesselring: A Soldier's Record* (New York: William Morrow, 1954), 272.

¹¹² Figures on OSS OG casualties compiled by the author from the chronology of Operational Group "A" in History of OSS OGs in Italy, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives II.

Captain Roderick G. (“Steve”) Hall, a 28-year-old Special Operations officer who had trained at Areas F and A in the winter of 1943-1944, parachuted into northern Italy, but was caught, tortured and executed by the OVRA, an Italian Fascist organization similar to the Gestapo, in January 1945.¹¹³ Nor does it include the killing of Major William G. Holohan, deputy chief of SO in Italy, murdered in December 1943, allegedly by two American members of his own mission, the Chrysler Mission, as a result of personal animosities and differences over Holohan’s policies towards the partisans in Northern Italy.¹¹⁴ Many more Italians, of course, also paid with their lives in the shadow war against the Nazis. The Germans launched major anti-partisan offensives in the winter of 1944-1945 that included massacres of civilians, sometimes whole villages, for aiding the Resistance in its attacks on German soldiers. A total of some 35,000 Italians, including partisans, died, some 21,000 were wounded, and 9,000 were deported to slave labor camps in Germany, as a result of German reprisals and the anti-partisan campaign.¹¹⁵

At the end of the war in Europe, General Mark Wayne Clark commended the OSS Special Operations and Operational Groups for their roles in the “outstanding success of partisan operations in the areas where these men operated.” The OSS operational unit with the U.S. 5th Army later received a Presidential Distinguished Unit Award.¹¹⁶ In the

¹¹³ A member of a prominent New Hampshire family, who attended, without graduating, both Harvard and Yale, Hall had often skied in the Italian Alps in the prewar period. Joining the Army and then the OSS, Lieutenant Hall received SO training at Areas F and A, and was sent to Italy. In August 1944, Hall was a member of an SO team parachuted into northern Italy near the Austria Alps, to aid the partisans and hamper German lines of communication and supply. The team split up. Hall’s group blew up a number of railroad bridges, but Hall, a loner, left Lt. Joseph Luckitsch in November 1944 and set out alone toward Ampezzo, where he was convinced the Germans had been building a secret highway which he hoped to destroy. After the war, an investigation revealed that he had been captured in Ampezzo by the OVRA, Fascist secret police, who tortured and finally killed him. Stewart Alsop and Thomas Braden, *Sub Rosa: The O.S.S. and American Espionage* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1946), 200-214. Hall had trained with Hall at Areas F and A with Jacques F. Snyder, author of “Cloak and Dagger Days,” typescript memoir, n.d. [1990s], p. 23, provided by his son, James Snyder, to the author, 16 January 2008, plus information he obtained for the author from his father’s training. James Snyder, email to the author, 13 February 2008.

¹¹⁴ Holohan, a Wall Street lawyer, former staff member of the Securities and Exchange Commission, and an Irish Catholic close to Donovan in age, was selected by Donovan to lead a delicate mission in the fall of 1943 to reduce internecine strife among the political partisan groups in northern Italy. Both his personality and policies in dealing with the partisans, angered at least two of the other five members of his team assembled from SI, SO, and OG personnel. He mysteriously disappeared 27 September 1943. In the 1950s, the Italian government found Holohan’s body in Lake of Orta north of Milan and with testimony from witnesses, convicted two members of Holohan’s team, Lt. Aldo Icardi, a Pittsburgh lawyer who had been his intelligence chief, and Sgt. Carl LoDolce, an engineer in Rochester, New York, of his murder. But their 1953 conviction in an Italian court had been *in absentia* and its sentences of death for Icardi and 17 years in prison for LoDolce were never carried out. The U.S. government did not proceed against the two men, who proclaimed their innocence, and their lawyers successfully resisted all efforts to extradite them. Anthony Cave Brown, *The Last Hero: Wild Bill Donovan* (New York: Times Books, 1982), 721-27, 804-18.

¹¹⁵ Porch, *Path to Victor*, 638; Paul Ginsburg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London: Penguin, 1990), 70.

¹¹⁶ Gen. Mark W. Clark, HQ, 15th Army Group, to Commanding Officer, 2671st Special Reconnaissance Battalion, Separate (Provisional) [the final designation of the OSS OG headquarters attached to 5th Army], May 1945, letter of commendation, plus other letters, and Presidential award provided in General Order 72, War Department, 18 July 1946, reprinted in *The Americans and the War of Liberation in Italy*, 223-224.

long, frustrating Allied campaign in Italy, the OSS, like the British SOE, helped to compensate for the limited resources available to the Allied commanders in Italy by supplying and directing thousands of Italian partisan forces in the German's rear. The OSS did not alter the course of events in Italy, but they, particularly the OGs who called themselves "Donovan's Devils,"¹¹⁷ did help, in ways far beyond their small numbers, diminish some of the difficulties confronted by the Allies in their advance up the Italian peninsula.

Directing the Resistance in France

To the U.S. high command, the Mediterranean theater was always peripheral to the main arena, the cross-channel assault on the German Army in France and the thrust into Germany itself. OSS, like British SOE and SIS, had an important role in that strategy. The role was firstly to establish contacts inside German-occupied France and provide intelligence about enemy strength and defenses and secondly, when the Allied invasions began, to lead French Resistance groups, the *maquis*,¹¹⁸ and block or at least impede German reinforcements.

The Allies decided to invade northern France, with a smaller subsequent attack in the south, at the Quebec Conference in August 1943. The target date set for the early summer of 1944. As part of the planning for this major western drive against Hitler's Third Reich, the OSS created large bases in London and in Algiers from which it planned, trained, and directed the extensive operations with the French Resistance to aid the Allied invasions. Rivalry and distrust existed among the different political groups in the Resistance in France, as in Italy, and there was outright hostility between the Communist Partisans and the others. The Communists were also deeply suspicious of the OSS and the British SIS and SOE. The Allied agencies were often caught among these rivalries, but they were able in varying degrees to work with most of them with the frequent exception of the Communists.¹¹⁹ Indeed, it was in part because of the internecine rivalries among the French underground, that General Eisenhower approved the use of British, American and French special operations teams in an attempt to direct the fragmented French underground to accomplish effective, coordinated attacks upon targets that would directly aid the Allied invasion and defeat of the German Army.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ "Donovan's Devils" referred especially to the OGs. Al Materazzi, "Italian-American OGs Attend Memorial Ceremony in Ameglia," *OSS Society Newsletter*, Summer 2004, 10.

¹¹⁸ *Maquis* was the term for the thick, hampering and resilient underbrush native to French Corsica, and the predominantly young men and women of the French Resistance adopted the term to apply to themselves.

¹¹⁹ H.R. Kedward, *Resistance in Vichy France* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1978); and Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). For examples of this rivalry in operation and its effects on some of the OSS operations, see Hélène Deschamps Adams, "Behind Enemy Lines in France," in Chalou, ed., *The Secrets War*, 140-64.

¹²⁰ Neilson MacPherson, *American Intelligence in War-Time London: The Story of the OSS* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 82.

Joint discussions in London in the summer of 1943 among OSS, SOE, SIS and the Free French forces of General Charles DeGaulle concluded that the main Resistance efforts *before* the D-Day should be directed toward obtaining intelligence as well as conducting sabotage of factories, power plants and fuel storage depots, in order to reduce the flow of war materials to the German forces. SO began infiltrating agents—French-speaking Americans or French nationals dressed in civilian clothes—into occupied France by parachute or rubber raft in early summer 1943. Months before the Allied invasion, 85 OSS officers, enlisted men, and civilians worked behind enemy lines in France as part of the SO/SOE effort to build secret circuits among the *maquis* that would serve as nuclei for an eventual uprising of Resistance at the time of the invasion.¹²¹ In the first six months of 1944, Resistance groups connected with the Allied agents sabotaged more than 100 factories producing war materials for the Germans, cut power lines, several railroad tracks, disabled more than a thousand locomotives and fomented strikes in coal mines.¹²² Several agents were killed in skirmishes or captured and executed by the Germans, as were members of the French Resistance who had helped them.¹²³ Although SO initially suffered a considerable number of casualties, it became increasingly effective. By the time of the Normandy invasion, OSS SO had become as effective as British SOE as the two agencies organized a potent, armed French Resistance of some 300,000 men and women.¹²⁴

Women did play an important part in espionage and sabotage in France. The *maquis* had long used women as well as men, and the British and Americans joined them. The risks were high. Thirteen SOE women agents were executed by the Nazis.¹²⁵ There were fewer American women agents and none was captured. The most famous, Virginia Hall, a Radcliffe graduate and former Baltimore socialite, was one of the most effective OSS espionage agents in France. This American socialite, who spoke fluent French, had been working as a code clerk in the U.S. embassy in London in 1940 when SOE recruited her and sent her, posed as a New York journalist, to Vichy France, where she organized and ran a very effective string of French undercover agents. She had a wooden leg, the result of a prewar hunting accident. It did not deter her, but it gave her a characteristic limp. “The woman who limps is one of the most dangerous Allied agents in France,” the Gestapo declared. We must find and destroy her.”¹²⁶ The Germans never did find her, but their intensive search forced her to leave France and return to England via Spain.

¹²¹ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 192.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 192-93.

¹²³ On such casualties, see, for example, the “Stockbroker” circuit that operated in Eastern France near the Swiss border. OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 193.

¹²⁴ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 177-79.

¹²⁵ Susan Ottaway, *Violette Szabo* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2002), 97-112, 115-116, 147-148. A list of the SOE women agents executed by the Nazis is on pages 178-179.

¹²⁶ Gestapo report quoted in O’Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 173.

In late 1943, Virginia Hall transferred to the OSS SO Branch, and was code-named “Diane.” Because of her wooden leg, she could not be parachuted back in, so OSS returned her to France by swift boat. She was landed on the Brittany coast at night, three months before the Normandy invasion. Dying her hair gray and hiding her limp under the full skirts and shuffle of her disguise as an elderly peasant woman, Hall moved around the countryside in the central region of France, living in different places to avoid the Germans who tried intensively to find her by triangulating her radio signals and offering rewards for her capture. She was co-organizer of the Heckler Mission, and working in the central France regions of Haute Loire and Le Puy in 1944, she financed, armed, and helped to direct a couple of thousand members of the *maquis*. In July 1944, three plane loads of arms, ammunition, and demolitions finally arrived, and these enabled the *maquisards* to destroy a number of bridges and tunnels and eventually to force the several thousand German troops out of Le Puy by sheer bluff. Her three battalions of Resistance fighters killed 150 German soldiers and captured 500 more. Finally in mid-August a three-man, multinational Jedburgh team arrived from OSS Algiers, and they organized a Resistance force at Le Puy of 1,500 men, a group, which Hall continued to supply with money and arms as she obtained them from Allied airdrops. For her heroism, she was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.¹²⁷

The D-Day invasion, June 6, 1944, was the largest amphibious invasion in history; 175,000 American, British, and Canadian troops landed in Normandy that day, followed by hundreds of thousands of others. An OSS Special Operations unit attached to the U.S. 1st Infantry Division, was scheduled to land at Omaha Beach at 4:30 a.m. two hours before the infantry assault began, in order to make contact with *maquis*, who knew the local area. Although their ship anchored within 300 yards of the shoreline in the predawn darkness, it proved impossible to land the OSS SO party. One of them, Major Francis (“Frank”) A. Mills, a 29-year-old Oklahoman from the field artillery who had trained at Area A, looked on in horror at the slaughter on Omaha Beach. “Standing on the open deck, we could only watch as thousands of U.S. soldiers died during the day. We saw many small craft sink and many soldier’s bodies floating past us with the outgoing tide....God was with us that day and did not allow us to land two hours earlier as planned—or our OSS detachment would certainly have been destroyed.” It was not until the next day that the OSS unit was allowed to go ashore with division headquarters. “We did land, moved across the beach the next day, and finally got ashore,” Mills recalled ‘—making our way through bodies and body parts, and debris, and on and into the village of St. Mere Eglise...until contact was made with the French Resistance.’¹²⁸

Always seeking adventure, Donovan himself was also in the action. Against orders of the Secretary of the Navy, he persuaded an old friend to allow him in the

¹²⁷ Judith L. Pearson, *Wolves at the Door: The True Story of America’s First Female Spy* (Guilford, Conn.: Lyons, 2005); see also “Mission Heckler, Activity Report of Virginia Hall (DIANE),” OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 190, Box 741, National Archives II.

¹²⁸ Col. Francis B. Mills with John W. Brunner, *OSS Special Operations in China* (Williamsburg, N.J.: Phillips Publications, 2002), 435-437, quote on 437; obituary, “Francis Byron Mills,” *Washington Post*, 1 October 2005. A more detailed account of the OSS off Omaha and Utah beaches was provided in a memoir by David Doyle, an OSS radio operator on board the same vessel as Mills. David W. Doyle, *True Men and Traitors: From the OSS to the CIA: My Life in the Shadows* (New York: John Wiley, 2001), 34-35.

forefront of the naval armada. From the cruiser *U.S.S. Tuscaloosa*, he and David Bruce, SI chief in London, watched the first waves of troops hit the beaches. In mid-afternoon, the two men went ashore at Utah Beach. That landing spot had been easily secured, but when Donovan and Bruce followed the infantry and OSS men into the hedgerow farm country, they suddenly came under enemy machine gun fire. Both dove to the ground, and, according to Bruce, Donovan turned and said, “David, we mustn’t be captured, we know too much.” Checking their pockets, they realized that neither had brought any of the OSS cyanide pills given to agents to avoid being tortured into revealing agency secrets, Donovan then whispered, “I must shoot first.” “Yes, Sir,” Bruce responded, “but can we do much against machine-guns with our pistols?” “Oh, you don’t understand,” Donovan said. “I mean if we are about to be captured I’ll shoot you first. After all, I am your commanding officer.”¹²⁹ Fortunately the Germans were pushed back by American units, and Donovan did not have to shoot either of them to avoid capture. Afterwards, Donovan returned to London and then to Washington, while Bruce set up an OSS field headquarters in a secured area of the Normandy beachhead.

The Jedburghs

The special operations plan to support the Normandy invasion was to use various Allied teams to lead the French Resistance in the disruption of enemy communications, attacks on troop movements and supply columns, and raids on enemy headquarters in order to impede the German opposition to the Allied advance. The most famous of these teams were the Jedburghs.¹³⁰ This was the code name for nearly one hundred three-man, multi-national teams, composed of two officers and an enlisted man as radio operator. The teams were drawn from Special Operations forces of the United States, Great Britain and France, and always included at least one native-speaking Frenchman. The “Jeds” went through advanced training together in Britain and served together, but each wore the military uniform of his country. Their mission was to direct, supply and coordinate the Resistance groups according to directives from the Allied high command. The American

¹²⁹ Anecdote by David K.E. Bruce at a speech at the annual dinner meeting of OSS veterans, Washington, D.C., 26 May, 1971, quoted in R. Harris Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America’s First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 184-85. A more extended version is in Richard Dunlop, *Donovan: America’s Master Spy* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1982), 439-440. Bruce may have embellished the story a bit when he told it in 1971. In a 1958 account to a former colleague, Bruce emphasized their search for their lethal pills but did not have Donovan saying he would use his pistol on both of them. David Bruce to Whitney H. Shephardson, 16 August 1958 and attachment, copy on Wallace R. Deuel Papers, Box 61, Folder 5, Library of Congress.

¹³⁰ Will Irwin, *The Jedburghs: The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces, France 1944* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 36-38, who rejects the prevalent story that the name came from a training camp near Jedburgh, Scotland, as he notes that the Jedburgh training camp in Britain was 250 miles away at Milton Hall near Peterborough, in east, central England not too far from Cambridge. His persuasive argument is that the term was simply a name selected from the approved list of British code names. On the training in the United States OSS camps of future Jedburghs, see pp. 43-50. See also Colin Beavan, *Operation Jedburgh* (New York: Viking/Penguin, 2006).

Jeds were OSS Special Operations officers or enlisted radio operators, who before advanced and team-training at Milton Hall and other locations in Britain had completed their OSS training in the United States, at Areas F, B or A for the officers and Area C for the radiomen. Between June and September 1944, 276 Jedburghs were parachuted into the war zone. Of these, 83 were Americans, 90 Britons and 103 Frenchmen. Most of them were dropped into France (with a few dropped into Belgium and Holland).¹³¹

In support of the Normandy Landings

In northern France, ten Jedburgh teams jumped into the countryside on D-Day, and some twenty more teams followed in subsequent weeks. Most went into Brittany, the large peninsula west of Normandy that was heavily garrisoned with German troops, which could pose a threat to the flank of the invasion force. Allied headquarters wanted the Jeds to direct thousands of French Resistance fighters and contain the Germans there by cutting off rail and roadways. They might also help conventional forces seize the big ports of Brest, Lorient, and Nazaire, which would be needed for supplying the rapidly expanding expeditionary force.¹³²

Secretly airdropping OSS agents and supplies behind enemy lines in northern Europe from January 1944 through the end of the war, was the mission of the “Carpetbaggers,” a couple of squadrons of special, black-painted, four-engine, B-24 “Liberator” bombers assigned to the U.S. 8th Air Force in Britain (OSS airdrops in the Mediterranean were conducted mainly from Algeria and later from Italy).¹³³ Flying alone at night, quickly and at low altitudes, usually not more than a mile high, the plane would drop propaganda leaflets as a cover for its real mission. “We’d be looking for a meadow, then flashes from a couple of flashlights would appear,” recalled Lieutenant Eugene Polinsky, a navigator from Maywood, New Jersey. “We would drop down to 200 to 400 feet, open the bomb bay doors and send out supplies, munitions, etc. in parachute containers—or insert an agent.”¹³⁴ The anonymous agents, whether men or women, were

¹³¹ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 199. There were a few Dutch and Belgian Jeds; they served on the teams sent into those countries.

¹³² Irwin, *The Jedburghs*, 114.

¹³³ The squadrons, first the 36th and 406th, later joined by the 788th and 850th Bomb Squadrons, were part of the 801st Heavy Bombardment Group, 8th U.S. Air Force. The nickname “Carpetbaggers” came from the original codename for the operation. During the war, the Carpetbaggers flew more than 3,000 missions and delivered 556 agents and 4,500 tons of supplies to Resistance forces, but in the process, 208 members of the aircrews were lost to German nightfighter planes, antiaircraft guns, and crashes. OSS and other agents were also airdropped by British planes as well. Ben Parnell, *Carpetbaggers: America’s Secret War in Europe*, rev. ed. (Austin, Tex.: Eakin Press, 1993); Ron Clarke, “The Carpetbaggers,” illustrated history on website of the Carpetbagger Aviation Museum, Harrington, Northamptonshire, England, <http://harringtonmuseum.org.uk/CarpetbaggerMuseumHomePage.htm>, accessed 17 July 2006.

¹³⁴ Eugene Polinsky, Grand-View-on-Hudson, New York, presentation at the author’s seminar on World War II at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J., 21 March 2007. His earlier oral history interview is on the website of the Rutgers Oral History Archives of World War II. <http://oralhistory.rutgers.edu>.

known simply as “Joes.” He or she would slide back a cover from a round hole in the bottom of the fuselage, the “Joe hole,” sit with legs dangling out and when given the signal would drop into the night. At 200 to 400 feet, the agent would be on a ground in a few seconds, barely enough time for the parachute to open.

One of the first, French-speaking Jedburgh teams dropped into Brittany right after D-Day was Team “Frederick” that included Sergeant Robert R. (“Bob”) Kehoe, 21, from New Jersey, a graduate of Areas C and B, as the radio operator. It included a 26-year-old British major, Adrian Wise, who had been on two commando raids along the Norwegian coast, and a French lieutenant, Paul Bloch-Auroch, a 32-year-old reservist who had served in France and North Africa. Although unlike them Kehoe had never been in battle, he felt ready. “The experience at B-2 was a great morale builder,” Kehoe recalled later, “and, when we departed in mid-December [1943 for Britain], we are in top physical condition.”¹³⁵ In England, he spent several months training with his new teammates.

On the night of 9 June 1944, three days after D-Day, Jed Team “Frederick” parachuted into the Forêt de Duault, a forest in the north central part of the Brittany Peninsula. Their mission: connect with the French Resistance and prevent German troops or supplies from getting to Normandy by blowing up bridges and railroad lines and setting up barricades and ambushes on roadways. As they neared the drop zone, Kehoe remembered that after checking his equipment, he repeated the 23rd Psalm. The local Resistance set a triangle of bonfires to mark the drop site and when the three men reached the ground, gave them a warm cups of strong Breton cider. Kehoe quickly established radio contact with the OSS base station in London. Consequently, more than one hundred reinforcements from British Special Air Service (SAS), Frenchmen in this case, soon arrived. But the increased activity also led several hundred German troops to come looking for them. The Germans may have been tipped off by informers. They posted notices declaring that those found aiding parachutists would be shot, but informants would receive monetary rewards. The SAS dissipated into small groups and headed south, several were killed in skirmishes along the way. The Jed team decided to go it alone. With the Germans only a few hundred yards behind them, Kehoe buried the radio equipment so the team could move faster. With the help of courageous local French men and women, the team survived and even continued operations against the Germans. The first night on the run, as the team huddled in a concealed drainage ditch, their savior was a young woman, who like so many other female schoolteachers played a key role as guides, couriers, and coordinators in the *maquis*. Kehoe called them “the lifeblood of the Resistance.”

For the next three weeks, despite German searches and massive sweeps, Jedburgh Team Frederick survived in the woods in their increasingly dirty uniforms amidst the coldest, dampest June in decades. At one point the Germans came within three or four feet from where the team members lay hidden in a briar patch, their guns drawn. “I was unable to prevent my hand [with the .45 pistol] from shaking constantly,” Kehoe remembered. “Curiously, however, whenever a threat approached, the shaking stopped as my whole body became tense and alert. The body hormones apparently knew their job

¹³⁵ Robert R. Kehoe, “Jed Team Frederick: 1944: An Allied Team with the French Resistance,” *Studies in Intelligence: Journal of the American Intelligence Professional* (June 2002), Office of Strategic Services, 60th Anniversary, Special Edition, p. 104.

and did it well.”¹³⁶ Recovering the radio and re-establishing contact with London, the team arranged for supply drops for the local organized Resistance and helped train the young *maquisards* in the use of the weapons and demolitions.

By mid-June, the team was working actively with an armed and organized local Resistance to prevent tens of thousands of German troops in Brittany from moving east to attack the Allied force in Normandy. German truck convoys were subject to Allied air attacks during the day, but were generally safe at night, until the Jeds organized, trained and supplied the French Resistance to attack them. As the team radio operator, Kehoe was the key link with headquarters. While the others slept during the night, he had to listen to one-way broadcast instructions from London scheduled from midnight to 3 a.m., because daylight airtime was reserved for quick two-way transmissions from the field operators. In rapid Morse code, the broadcast would first list those who had messages coming. If none for his team, Kehoe would sign off, otherwise, he listened until the message to him was sent and then later to the repeat to ensure accuracy. Accuracy was difficult but essential, especially in setting up airdrops. The message was, of course, enciphered. Although the base station’s powerful transmitters sent a strong signal, it was often hampered by bad weather or enemy jamming. “The entire radio spectrum sometimes resembl[ed] a mass of screeching cow birds,” Kehoe said.¹³⁷ At night, sometimes in the rain, the radio operator in the field would copy the text of the message by the light of a weak flashlight. He would then decipher enough to see if it were urgent, and if not would wait until daylight to decipher the rest using a sheet from the “one-time pad” which was burned after each use. The one-time pad was based on a memorized transposition system keyed to a signal at the beginning of the transmission of where to start the five-letter groups on the pad. The Germans launched more sweeps, including a massive one in which 4,000 troops were sent out against the Jeds and the Resistance. Several members of the local *maquis* were killed in these, but the Jeds had now learned to plan for such attacks and had arranged in advance for escape routes and clear responsibilities to avoid confusion and delay.

Jed Team “Giles,” jumped into Brittany on the night of 8 July 1944. It included a British radio operator, a French captain, and an U.S. Army captain, Bernard M.W. (“Bernie”) Knox. The 29-year old Knox had been born in Britain, graduated from Cambridge, fought on the side of the Republic in the Spanish Civil War, where he suffered a near fatal wound, then later moved to New York with his American fiancé whom he married in 1939. With the outbreak of the war, Knox joined the U.S. Army, became an officer and a U.S. citizen. Stationed back in England in 1943, he was recruited by the OSS, which trained the fluent French speaker for a Jedburgh Mission. When his combat experience in Spain became known, he was also made an instructor.¹³⁸ Dropped into Brittany, Knox’s team was one of a dozen Jed teams, whose mission was to organize arms and finally help open the way for Allied armies to get to the port of Brest. When

¹³⁶ Kehoe, “Jed Team Frederick: 1944,” p. 127.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹³⁸ Bernard Knox, *Essays, Ancient and Modern* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), xi-xxvii. See also, “Nice Article from Jed Bernard Knox,” [transcript of a 1998 lecture by Knox at New York University], *OSS Society Digest*, Number 2102, 18 July 2008, ossociety@yahoo.com.

Patton's army broke through Avranches, Knox's team led others in a series of successful ambushes of elements of the hardcore, veteran German 2nd Parachute Division that tried to block the U.S. forces. They obtained a number of prisoners, many of whom had participated in atrocities against French civilians in the area. The French forces demanded they be turned over and quickly executed most of them.¹³⁹ His *croix de guerre* citation cited the Jeds arming and direction four thousand *maquis* to help liberate Brittany.

In mid-July, the Allies broke through the German lines at St. Lô and Lieutenant General George S. Patton's Third U.S. Army, led by its armored divisions, began its famous, fast-moving, long-ranging swing south and east to trap Germans in Normandy from the rear. Looking at Patton's plans for his giant right hook drive, his superior, General Omar Bradley allegedly asked "but what of your right flank?" To which Patton reportedly answered, "The French Resistants are my right flank."¹⁴⁰

Patton and Allied headquarters counted on the French Resistance, armed, trained, and directed by the OSS and the SOE to help protect Patton's right flank and his exposed lines of communication and supply and to help preserve the bridges and roads his armored columns needed for their rapid advance. On 2 August, London radioed new orders to Jed Teams in Brittany, Normandy and throughout northern France: "Allied advance will probably be rapid in your direction. Task is now preservation not destruction. Greatest importance...road [to] Morlaix, Sant Breuc, Lamballe. You will prevent enemy...demolition...on this and secondary roads..."¹⁴¹ Jed Team Frederick had by then 2,000 armed French *maquis* to assign to the highway to Morlaix and another 2,000 to watch and defend the roads, bridges and causeways on the secondary routes as well. While the main thrust of the Third Army swung southeast toward Paris, sizable armed columns also directed west into the Brittany peninsula toward Brest and the German submarine bases as St. Nazaire and Lorient. The armored columns counted on having the French Resistance keep the roads open for the American tanks, which they did. The Jeds met up with the lead tanks on the way to Morlaix, and the commander of the column quickly asked them for the *maquis* as guides in front and to protect his supply line behind. When the Germans in the Paimpol peninsula on the north coast began taking revenge on the local population and committing atrocities, Kehoe's team was able to convince the American general commanding the armored spearhead to divert some of his tanks and air support to protect the *maquisards* and other local residents against the heavily armed Germans. Thus the Allies aided the Resistance as the Resistance had been aiding the Allies. As a result of the Jeds, the French Resistance and Allied armor, the large German garrisons, with tens of thousands of troops in Brittany, were unable to provide reinforcements for the German effort to contain the Allied landings in

¹³⁹ O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 177-78; Irwin, *Jedburghs*, xii-xvii; Jed Team "Giles" Report, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 103, Box 1, National Archives II. In 1945, Knox was sent to northern Italy where he helped Italian partisans harass the retreating Germans. His unit was subsequently scheduled to assist in the invasion of Japan. Knox, *Essays*, xxix-xxxiii.

¹⁴⁰ Kehoe, "Jed Team Frederick: 1944," 130.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 130.

Normandy.¹⁴² Years later, Major General John K. (“Jack”) Singlaub, who had been a Jed on another team, called Team Frederick, with its British and French officers and Bob Kehoe, its American radioman, “one of the bravest, most effective Jed outfits in France.”¹⁴³

A 23-year-old Vermonter of French-Canadian ethnicity named Paul Cyr was part of Jedburgh Team “George,” which had considerable impact on the French ports in Brittany. The OSS had recruited him from the airborne school at Ft. Benning in 1943 and gave him SO training at Areas F and B. In Britain, he was assigned to a team with a French commander and a French radioman. They were dropped into southeastern Brittany three days after D-Day. Their first problem was that the overeager *maquis* immediately attacked the Germans before an adequate supply of arms and munitions arrived. Consequently, the Germans counterattacked, and the Jeds had to blow up five tons of explosives and escape with their French SAS men to avoid capture. The Germans tracked them with dogs and executed families who sheltered them. One or two of the Resistance leaders had been informants for the Gestapo. In a new district, where the Resistance was trustworthy, Captain Cyr and Team George led local *maquis* in numerous attacks on German troop convoys, railroads, canals and bridges. Through French construction engineers, Cyr’s team obtained accurate plans for the German coastal defenses and submarine pens at St. Nazaire. Because of earlier reports of French traitors and a two-week gap in transmissions, London would not respond to their radio signals, believing the radio had been captured. So Cyr had to take the plans in person to Patton’s Third Army headquarters. Allied air forces subsequently bombed the key parts of those U-boat facilities and significantly reduced the effectiveness of German submarine operations in the Atlantic. More immediately, Third Army headquarters drew upon the *maquis* directed by various Jedburgh teams, like Cyr’s, to provide guides and to protect Patton’s right flank and growing lines of communication and supply as the Third Army make its famous sweep eastward across France.¹⁴⁴

Jumping into northwest Brittany in early July, just before the American breakout from Normandy was Captain William B. (“Bill”) Dreux, a French American from New Orleans, who had trained at Areas F and A in the fall of 1943. In Brittany, he was accompanied by two Frenchmen in Jed Team “Gavin.” The Germans who were all around, later identified and shot a butcher and veterinarian who sheltered Dreux. The Jed team sent back reports on German strength to Allied headquarters by radio or using young French girls on their bicycles as couriers. In one raid, Dreux led a group of *maquis*

¹⁴² Ibid., 130-32. The fact that the Germans were able to hold out for many months in the major ports in Brittany was a result of the Allied command’s underestimation of the German defenses there.

¹⁴³ John K. Singlaub with Malcolm McConnell, *Hazardous Duty: An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Summit Books/Simon & Schuster, 1991), 68.

¹⁴⁴ Irwin, *Jedburghs*, 121-130, 260; Captain P.C. [Paul Cyr], “Jedburghs in Action,” 16 December 1944, pp. 1-11, “Interviews with Returned Men,” Schools and Training Branch, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 2, Folder 31; see also an account of Capt. George G. Thomson, radioman, Sgt. John White of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and their French teammate on Jedburgh Team Alec in Lt. Cmdr. Richard M. Kelly, “Guarding Patton’s Flank,” *Blue Book Magazine* (January 1947), 62-71, copy in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 7, Folder 7, National Archives II. Cyr and his teammates parachuted in again in the “George II” mission into the Loire region of western France on 7-8 September 1944.

to try to punch a hole through the rear of German concrete bunker defenses on the Brittany coast. His group consisted of untrained French youths and some former French colonial soldiers from Senegal and Algeria. The Germans knew they were coming, drew them into a trap, and opened fire with machine guns. The colonial soldiers disappeared. The young Frenchmen stood fast but took a beating before Dreux could get them out. “I had made a tactical error,” he recalled sadly, “for which others paid the price.”¹⁴⁵ He learned from that experience, and subsequent patrols proved effective. Dreux led the liberation of more than one town, and his team’s mission was hailed as a success when he returned to Milton Hall and ultimately to the United States.

Yet, after the war, as he grew older, became a successful lawyer and raised a family, Dreux began to raise questions about the impact of his actions. He could not forget the lives lost because of him: the Frenchmen who had been executed because they helped him, the teenagers shot down in an ambush into which he had inadvertently led them. The French villagers later reassured him that the defeat of the Nazis had been worth the price, but the deaths continued to haunt him.

Returning to Brittany in 1951, Dreux’s thoughts went back to that airborne mission seven years earlier. “My mood was fatalistic on the plane [in 1944], but that was because there was nothing I could do about the flak, night fighters, or the pilot’s navigation. Yet beginning with the moment I flung myself out of the bomber the rest was up to me—up to me and chance. It was not so easy to be fatalistic from then on...,” he said in 1951 to a French priest, who had protected him in 1944. “I’d been thinking of those days behind the lines and that one of the qualities of that life was simplicity. All I wanted to know then, for example, was what lay around the next bend of the road, or whether that enemy machine gun in that clump of trees could cover the road to my left, or how soon it would be before I could stop and rest. Could I trust this Resistance leader? That barn we were hiding in, what was the best escape route if a German patrol came, and could we fight our way out?” “Most of the questions were like that,” he reflected. “basic and uncomplicated. There was no need to consider a compromise between integrity and money, between moral courage and popularity. The answers often were not easy, but you got them fast enough.”¹⁴⁶

Jeds in Central and Southern France, July and August 1944

While some of the Jedburgh Teams parachuted into Brittany beginning in June, others jumped into central France in July to help the Allied advance eastward after the breakout from the Normandy lodgment. And still others parachuted into southern France in preparation for the 15 August Allied landings on the French Riviera and the drive north up the Rhone River Valley. Jed Team “James” was headed by Lieutenant John K. (“Jack”) Singlaub, 24, a UCLA graduate and paratrooper, who had trained at Areas F and

¹⁴⁵ William B. Dreux, *No Bridges Blown* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), 229-57, the quotation is on xii. For more on Dreux, see a memoir by his friend and fellow trainee at Areas F and A, Aaron Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets: The Birth of the Special Forces* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1986), 4-7, 65-68.

¹⁴⁶ Dreux, *No Bridges Blown*, 314.

B in the fall of 1943. He was supported by a French executive officer and an American radioman, Sergeant Anthony J. (“Tony”) Denneau from Green Bay, Wisconsin.¹⁴⁷ At 2 a.m. on 11 August Singlaub’s team parachuted into the Correze region, the rugged, wooded hills of the Massif Central. The highway and railroad from Bordeaux northeast to Clermont-Ferrand and on to Lyons, was the main German escape route from southwestern France, and Allied headquarters wanted the tens of thousands of enemy troops in the German First Army Group to be trapped there.¹⁴⁸ Team James was met by leaders of units of some of the ten thousand members of the Resistance in the area. The French were anxious for revenge. The notorious German 2nd SS Panzer (“*Das Reich*”) Division had been hampered in its movement through the area by the cutting off of the rail line and by constant harassment; consequently, the SS had committed extensive atrocities in Tulle and in Oradour-sur-Glane, where they killed hundreds of men, women, and children, machine gunning the men and burning the women and children locked inside the town church.¹⁴⁹ After meeting with the local Resistance commanders, the team headed for Egletons, a key town along the highway, where Gaullist and Communist forces, actively hostile to each other, were uncoordinatedly maintaining a stalemated siege of the German garrison, holed up inside a three-story concrete schoolhouse. Singlaub impressed the rival French forces with his skill and bravery. First, he helped shoot down a strafing German plane. Then, despite suffering bloody wounds to his ear and cheek from shell fragments, Singlaub grabbed a heavy Bren submachine gun, rushed forward, and from behind a shattered tree trunk, emptied two thirty-round magazines into the German gun crew sixty meters away, killing all of them. Team James forced the surrender of several small, isolated German garrisons along the main highway; they also convinced local French leaders to stage a series of small ambushes along the highway, particularly on the relief columns. The Germans’ retreat was harassed for weeks. After seven weeks in the field, much of it with only minimal sleep, Team James, was flown back to England, their mission accomplished.¹⁵⁰

Major William E. Colby, who would later become head of the CIA under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, was an “Army Brat,” born in St. Paul, Minnesota, and raised at military facilities around the world, including China. On a scholarship, he went to Princeton University, spent a summer in France, and obtained a commission through Army ROTC. He had just finished his first year at Columbia Law School, when he was called to active duty in 1941. Bored with the field artillery, he joined the paratroops, from which OSS recruited him in September 1943. By December,

¹⁴⁷ Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, 34-41; see also John K. Singlaub, interviewed by Maochun Yu and Christof Mauch, 31 October 1996, CIA Records (RG 263), OSS Oral History Transcripts, Box 4, National Archives II; and John K. Singlaub, Arlington, Va., telephone interview with the author, 11 December 2004 and 6 January 2005.

¹⁴⁸ Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, 42-43.

¹⁴⁹ Max Hastings, *Das Reich: The March of the 2nd SS Panzer Division through France* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1981), 161-79.

¹⁵⁰ Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty*, 45-69; Maj. H.A. Murray, “Interviewer’s Report,” on John K. Singlaub, 1 February 1945, CIA Records (RG 263), OSS Personnel Records, Accession # 61-574, Box 52, National Archives II.

the 23-year-old paratroop officer had completed SO training at Areas F and B and was bound for England as a Jedburgh.¹⁵¹ The youthful, scholarly looking major was assigned to head Jed Team “Bruce” with two French soldiers. Their mission was to aid the French Resistance in the Yonne Valley some sixty miles southeast of Paris. Instead of being dropped into a rural area, the plane on a mid-August night, dropped them right into the center of a German-occupied town. The falling supply containers woke up the townspeople as well as the Germans, and the Jedburgh team had to dodge patrols for two days until they were able to reach the *maquis*. Although it was later discovered that the local Resistance had been run by a collaborator working with the Germans, by August 1944, Colby realized the Nazis would be defeated and he did not endanger the Jeds. Colby’s team obtained airdrops of several thousand rifles as well as mortars, bazookas, and machine guns for the increasing number of Frenchmen and women joining the Resistance. They ambushed German patrols, attacked convoys, blew up supply depots, and destroyed several bridges across the Loire River to impede German units from the South from attacking the flanks of the Allied armies which were driving toward Germany.¹⁵²

Years later an American Jedburgh named Aaron Bank would be celebrated as the “Founder of Special Forces,” because of his role in creating the first of a continuing line of these special units in the U.S. Army.¹⁵³ Bank began his special operations career with OSS in World War II. A native New Yorker, Bank had worked as a youth as a lifeguard and swimming instructor in the Bahamas and southern France after high school. Traveling through Europe in the 1930s, he became fluent in French and German. He joined the U.S. Army as a private in 1939 and served in a transportation unit. But after completing OCS in 1943, he volunteered for OSS. The 40-year-old Bank took OG training at areas F and A, but was chosen to become a Jedburgh instead. He completed his Jed training in Britain. At the end of July 1944, Jed Team “Packard,” with Captain Bank assisted by two Frenchmen, parachuted into southeastern France to aid the Resistance in impeding German troops and supplies. Bank’s main task was to get the guerrilla leaders to make their ambushes short and furious—hit and run—and to watch their flanks while the action was underway. The Germans tried to track them down. Bank had some narrow escapes. But his mission was successful. Some 3,000 effective guerrillas were armed and directed, supplied by a dozen or more airdrops. They ambushed numerous convoys and imposed about a thousand or so casualties on the enemy. Like the other successful teams, they had helped a phantom Army arise, strike, and repeatedly melt away, helping to bleed the enemy economically and militarily. As the advance elements of the U.S. 7th Army overran Bank’s territory, liberating the region, the

¹⁵¹ “Interview: William Colby, Former Director, Central Intelligence Agency,” *Special Warfare*, 7:2 (April 1994); 40-41; Will Irwin, *The Jedburghs: The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces, France 1944* (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2005), 132-134.

¹⁵² Colby, *Honorable Men*, 23-26, 38-44; see also Irwin, *Jedburghs*, 132-151.

¹⁵³ Richard Goldstein, “Col. Aaron Bank, Who Was ‘Father of Special Forces,’ Dies at 101,” *New York Times*, 6 April 2004; “Col. Aaron Bank, U.S. Special Forces Founder, Dies,” *OSS Society Newsletter* (Summer 2004), 13; “‘Father of Special Forces,’ Dies at Age 101 in California Home,” *Special Warfare*, 16:4 (May 2004): 48-49.

head of the local Resistance invited Bank to address the cheering crowd from the balcony of the city hall in Nîmes. When they saw him in his U.S. Army uniform complete with a miniature American flag on it, the crowd went wild with shouts of “*Vive les Américains!*” It was, recalled Banks, who would soon be assigned missions in Germany and Indochina, “the zenith of our mission. It was the thrill of a lifetime!”¹⁵⁴

Numerous other Americans served on Jedburgh Teams in 1944. Lieutenant Lucien E. (“Lou”) Conein with Sergeant James J. Carpenter as radio operator, plus a French executive officer, deployed as Jed Team “Mark” from Algeria to southwestern France on the night of 16-17 August 1944. Born in Paris, Conein had been raised in Kansas City by an aunt. He served in the French Army, 1939-1940, then the U.S. Army, and transferred to the OSS in 1943, where he trained at Areas F and B, before being sent to Jed School overseas and then parachuted into France. There he worked with the *maquis*, including the Corsica Brotherhood, an underworld organization allied with the Resistance. Like Colby, Singlaub, and Bank, Conein would later become one of the most famous of the former Jedburghs, in his case emerging as one of the leading covert operators of the Cold War, first in Eastern Europe and then in Vietnam., where he worked for more than a decade and played an important role in the 1963 coup against South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem.¹⁵⁵ Other Jeds included Lieutenant Stewart J. O. Alsop, 30, in Jed Team Alexander in central France. (The Alsop brothers, scions of an old and wealthy Connecticut family and all Yale graduates, included Stewart, the Jed; John, 29, who served in France with an Operational Group; and journalist Joseph who did not serve in the OSS.¹⁵⁶) Major Horace W. (“Hod”) Fuller from Massachusetts, a graduate of Milton Academy and Harvard College, had joined the Marines in 1941 and been seriously wounded at Guadalcanal in 1942. Not content to ride a desk in Washington afterward, he joined the OSS in September 1943, trained at Areas F and B, and parachuted into southwestern France from Algeria in late June 1944, as the head of Jed Team Bugatti, which also included two French soldiers. Operating out of the

¹⁵⁴ Aaron Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets: The Birth of Special Forces* (Navato, CA: Presidio, 1986), 13-62, quotation on 59. Erwin, *Jedburghs*, 244, 274-75. Captain Bank was later selected to head Operation Cross (often erroneously referred to as Operation Iron Cross), a plan authorized by General Eisenhower in March for snatching or killing Adolph Hitler and key members of his inner circle should they retreat to a “national redoubt” in the Bavarian Alps. Bank recruited 100 young anti-Nazi Germans, mainly communists, from POW camps, trained them for two months as commandos. In early May 1945, posing as German mountain infantry, with *Wehrmacht* uniforms and weapons, they were ready to board the planes which would drop them into the target area, when Bank received word that the mission had been aborted. Hitler had not left Berlin, there was no Alpine Redoubt, and the war in Europe was nearing its end. “Father of Special Forces,’ Dies at Age 101 in California Home,” *Special Warfare*, 16:4 (May 2004): 48-49; Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets*, 72-99; Christof Mauch, *The Shadow War Against Hitler: The Covert Operations of America’s Wartime Intelligence Service* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 178, 185-97.

¹⁵⁵ Erwin, *Jedburghs*, 280-71; Bart Barnes, “Lucien E. Conein Dies at 79: Fabled Agent for OSS and CIA,” *Washington Post*, 6 June 1998, B6; Tim Weiner, “Lucien Conein, 79, Legendary Cold War Spy,” *New York Times*, 7 June 1998; Conein’s name was pronounced co-NEEN.

¹⁵⁶ Alsop and Braden, *Sub Rosa: The OSS and American Espionage*, partially a history and partially a memoir including a recounting of Alsop’s own experiences as a Jed but under the pseudonym “Bill Wheeler,” 136-84; see also Smith, *OSS*, 190.

Pyrenees Mountains, the team was successful in blowing up railroads, especially the main line from Spain which had been delivering iron ore to the Germans. When the Allies invaded along the Riviera, Fuller's team led an uprising of 5,000 *maquis*, ambushing numerous columns of Germans, delaying them or forcing their surrender. France. Fuller was awarded the Silver Star medal.¹⁵⁷

Special Operations Teams in France

Much of the writing about the OSS in Europe has focused on the Jedburghs, but there were other OSS paramilitary teams in the ETO as well, SO and OGs. The most famous SO operative there was undoubtedly Marine Major Peter J. ("Pete") Ortiz, who having recovered from his wounds from North Africa and undergone SO training at Areas F and B, was parachuted twice into France in 1944. On the moonless night of 6 January 1944, Ortiz, a British officer and a French radio operator were dropped in Mission "Union" into the mountainous Haute Savoie region of southeastern France to help the 3,000 *maquisards* there on the Vercors plateau. Ortiz wore a Marine officer's uniform and the others their country's uniforms. They were the first Allied ground forces to arrive in France since 1940, and the French locals cheered them heartily. They arranged for the supply of weaponry and began training the Resistance in their use. Ortiz also liked to thumb his nose at the Germans, for example, by stealing Gestapo vehicles or making public appearances in villages in his Marine uniform. In the most famous episode, Ortiz entered a café where German officers were drinking and cursing the *maquis* and Allied operatives, flamboyantly threw back his cape revealing his Marine Corps uniform. He opened fire with a .45 Colt automatic in each hand, killing or wounding the Germans before disappearing into the night. For his activities in the "Union" Mission, including leading many raids behind enemy lines between 8 January to 20 May 1944, Ortiz was awarded the Navy Cross.¹⁵⁸

Promoted to major, Ortiz returned to the French Alps eight months later on 1 August 1944. This time, he parachuted in as commander of Union II Mission to lead the *maquis* in raids against the retreating Germans and prevent the enemy from sabotaging key installations. Ortiz's second in command was Captain Francis L. ("Frank") Coolidge, who had trained at Area E north of Baltimore and subsequently been an instructor at Area A-4 in Prince William Forest Park.¹⁵⁹ The other members of Union II included a French Army officer, and five U.S. Marines in the OSS. The Marine sergeants

¹⁵⁷ Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS*, 132-46.

¹⁵⁸ Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS*, 114-118; Benis Frank, "Colonel Peter Julien Ortiz," OSS Marine, Actor, Californian, <http://www.militarymuseum.org/Ortiz.html>, accessed 3 September 2007.

¹⁵⁹ Francis L. Coolidge, summary of interview by Schools and Training Branch, 30 November 1944, p. 3, Interviews with Returned Men," OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 2, Folder 31, National Archives II.

had been recruited by OSS in late 1943 from the 1st Marine Parachute Regiment. Sergeant Merritt Binns had been a parachute rigger and instructor at Quantico, Virginia. “They asked for volunteers, especially those who knew French,” he recalled. A number volunteered for hazardous duty, and five of them after attending OSS SO courses at Area F and A, and then in England, accompanied Ortiz.¹⁶⁰ The team jumped at 400 feet, and one of the sergeants, Charles R. Perry from Massachusetts, was killed when his chute failed to open. Another, Robert La Salle, was injured so badly that he could not continue in the mission. The rest spent several days training the *maquisards* with the weapons that had been dropped from B-17s and then began attacking Germans. The Germans sent a force of nearly 4,000 to destroy what they believed was an entire Allied battalion, in the process, wiping out the entire village of Montgirod that had harbored the Americans and the *maquis*, burning the town and killing the villagers. The next day, 16 August 1944, the Americans were forced to move out in daylight, and while moving just below the ridgeline, they were confronted by an armored German patrol and were forced to take cover in the nearby village of Centron. The Germans started to surround the village and Ortiz and Sergeants Jack Risler and John Bodnar, who were the closest to the enemy, were pinned down by machine gun fire. On the other side of the village, Coolidge and the other two sergeants were able to escape by jumping into the Isere River. As the German infantry advanced, supported by the armored cars, Ortiz realized the situation was hopeless to him and also to the town, which might suffer the same fate at Montgirod. The French civilians urged him to surrender to avoid reprisals. Bodnar, a resident of Collegeville, Pennsylvania, later recalled that “Major Ortiz said that he was going to talk with the Germans and that we should try and sneak out while he did.” Bodnar said, “Major, we are Marines. We work together, we stay together.”¹⁶¹

Bullets splattered around his feet as Ortiz arose, then put his hands up and walked forward, requesting in fluent German to speak to the officer in command. When the German major appeared, Ortiz negotiated the surrender of his Marines in exchange for the safety of the town. He said they had only been passing through and that the villagers had not been harboring them. When Ortiz motioned the other two Marines forward, the German major could not believe that his battalion had been held off by only three men, but Ortiz, their automatic weapons, and a search of the town, convinced him. The Marines, and the French officer, who was captured later, were held in a naval prisoner of war camp near Bremen until it was liberated. Ortiz received a second Navy Cross for his actions. Coolidge and the other two sergeants were able to escape to American lines. After the war, Ortiz remained in the Marine Corps reserve, but as a civilian, he returned

¹⁶⁰ Merritt Binns, Fannitsburg, Pa., telephone interviews with the author, 3 and 4 April 2007.

¹⁶¹ John P. Bodnar, 82, at the commemoration ceremony in Centron, France, 1 August 2004 of the 60th anniversary of the team’s airdrop into France, quoted in Master Sgt. Phil Mehringer, “Operation Union II: Marines Land in France 60 Years Ago,” <http://www.leatherneck.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-16379.html>, accessed 3 September 2007. Jack Risler, 83, the only other survivor still alive in 2004 was also at the ceremony. A slightly different rendition of Bodnar’s response to Ortiz’s order for the two sergeants to try to escape was given by Ortiz himself in his after-action report more than a year later. Ortiz wrote that “Sergeant Bodnar was next to me and I explained the situation to him and what I intended to do. He looked me in the eye and replied, ‘Major, we are Marines, what you think is right goes for me too.’” Maj. Peter J. Ortiz, USMR, “Chronological Report of the Capture and Subsequent Captivity of Members of the Mission Union,” 12 May 1945, quoted in Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS*, 122.

to Hollywood as both a technical adviser and a minor actor under his friend, director John Ford.¹⁶²

Among the SO teams in the Loire region, Sergeant Herbert R. (“Herb”) Brucker, was an OSS radio operator trained at Area C. Born in the United States, he had been raised since infancy in bilingual Alsace-Lorraine and became fluent in French and German. Returning to the United States in 1938, he joined the U.S. Army in 1940 and was trained as a radio operator by the Signal Corps before volunteering for the OSS in 1943. He had been sent briefly to Area B, but did most of his SO training at Area E, and presumably did his OSS Communications training at Area C.¹⁶³ He was then detailed to British SOE in January 1944 for additional training, was promoted to lieutenant, and was parachuted into central France on 27 May 1944 as the radio operator with and SOE team on the “Hermit” project of organizing a new circuit of French agents because the Germans had broken the last ring and executed several of them. He remained in France until September. The training, particularly the SOE training had been vital. “SOE training was far superior,” he later conceded. “It made most of my OSS/SO stateside training seem amateurish.”¹⁶⁴ Brucker later recalled one instance where he and his officer ran into trouble. Coming unexpectedly across a German roadblock on their tandem bicycle, they were inspected. When the Germans were about to find the pistols in their clothes and their radio in the suitcase, they shot their way out. They left the radio and their other supplies and ran as fast as they could. The remaining Germans continued to fire after them. Brucker knew he would be tortured and then executed if captured. That is what happened to the Hindu Indian woman SOE radio operator in the region before him. “I had now geared myself to immediate reaction if I was hit anywhere,” he remembered. “As long as I’m hit anywhere but the feet I will continue running. If they hit the feet, I take the pistol and blow my brains out, so I kept on running and eventually found a safe house whose owner was part of the Resistance.”¹⁶⁵ The team survived to continue its mission with great success. Brucker was promoted to lieutenant and awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. His next assignment was in China and after the war in 1952, he would become one of initial members and instructors of the U.S. Army Special Forces.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Master Sgt. Phil Mehringer, “Operation Union II: Marines Land in France 60 Years Ago,” <http://www.leatherneck.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-16379.html>, accessed 3 September 2007; “Peter Julien Ortiz,” in W. Thomas Smith, Jr., *Encyclopedia of the Central Intelligence Agency* (New York: Facts on File, 2003), 180-181.

¹⁶³ Charles H. Briscoe, “Herbert R. Brucker, SF Pioneer: Part II Pre-WWII-OSS Training 1943,” *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History* 2:3 (2006): 26-35.

¹⁶⁴ Herbert Brucker interviewed by Charles H. Briscoe, 8 March 2007, Fayetteville, N.C., quoted in Charles H. Briscoe, “Major Herbert R. Brucker: SF Pioneer, Part III: SOE Training & ‘Team Hermit’ into France,” *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History* 3:1 (2007): 73.

¹⁶⁵ Herbert Brucker quoted in O’Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 173.

¹⁶⁶ Charles H. Briscoe, “Major (R) Herbert R. Brucker, DSC: Special Forces Pioneer: SOE France, OSS Burma and China, 10th SFG, SF Instructor, 77th SFB, Laos, and Vietnam,” *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History* 2:2 (2006): 33-35.

Another group of SO men were assigned, like Brucker, to a joint SO/SOE mission in France. This one, Mission Freelance, was headed by an experienced British captain and included a Canadian captain and four American officers, Major Edwin Lord, Lieutenant Richard Duval, Michel Block, and William Butts Macomber. The last came from an old upstate New York family including newspaper publishers, politicians, and judges. Young Macomber had graduated from Phillip's Andover Academy and Yale University, where he was President of the debating society and played varsity football and lacrosse and was captain of the wrestling team. After graduation, he joined the Marines, received a commission in December 1943, and transferred to the OSS, where he received SO training in Maryland and Virginia, and additional training in Britain. He was assigned as the weapons officer to the Freelance Mission which was parachuted into Montlucon in south central France. Macomber trained groups of *maquisards* in the use of automatic weapons, and they ambushed German convoys heading away from the advancing Allies.

The team heard rumors of surrender talks between German officers and Patton's 3rd U.S. Army. Lieutenants Macomber and Block with their *maquis* units met with German officers who made clear that they wanted to surrender to the Americans not the *maquis* and refused to have their units disarmed until they were escorted through *maquis* areas to the U.S. Army. The two and a few hundred *maquis* were in a town with 6,000 armed German troops. After several tense hours, they were eventually able to help connect representatives of Patton's Army with a German major general, named Elsar, who surrendered his 19,000 troops. It was an extraordinary capitulation, as Macomber wrote in his report. "To my mind it is one of the outstanding events in the overall story of the *Maquis* resistance in France. Of course Elsar's 19,000 were not militarily defeated by the *Maquis* which surrounded them. They were actually overcome by the joining¹⁶⁷ of the American Third and Seventh Armies, for this destroyed their escape route. Nevertheless...the nearest American regular troops that could be brought against them were those of the Third Army north of the Loire, and every bridge across the Loire was blown. If they had chosen to fight it out, it would have meant the diversion of sizeable forces and considerable cost in time, manpower, and material. Had there been no *Maquis* active, the Germans would almost certainly have followed this course. It is highly significant that the *maquis* so completely destroyed their nerves by continual sniping and ambush and by killing every prisoner which fell into their hands."

Jacques F. Snyder, the saxophone playing, French-raised American soldier, who had joined the OSS and undergone SO training at Areas F and A in 1943, parachuted into France in 1944. His mission was for Secret Intelligence as well as Special Operations in the Grenoble area in the southeast. He was accompanied by a Frenchman, Jean Coppier, who had served in the *maquis*, but left France and enlisted with the OSS in Algeria. Snyder was only a private, and Henry Hyde, a former international lawyer who ran SI in Algeria, decided to give him a captain's insignia to give him more status in dealing with the *maquis*. Snyder and Coppier were parachuted into the mountainous region of southeastern France in May 1944. Since most of their mission was intelligence gathering about the German units in the area, they wore civilian clothing after the initial jump. Yet they also engaged in paramilitary operations, including attacking convoys and facilities

¹⁶⁷ Lt. William B. Macomber, Jr., Activity Report, Circuit: Freelance, OSS (SO), W.E. Section, 18 September 1944, quoted in Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS*, 159-60.

with guns and plastic explosives disguised to look like potatoes and radioing for Allied bombing attacks. They brought in B-17 bombers which destroyed German ammunition and supply trains on the mail line between France and Italy. Rail traffic came to a standstill. Despite several close calls with the Germans and an ambush by communist partisans, Snyder and Coppier survived four months behind enemy lines until the 7th Army arrived in Grenoble in August 1944 and Private Snyder in his captain's uniform joined the French population in welcoming the liberators.¹⁶⁸

Some other SO operatives were not as fortunate. One of them was Roberto Esquenazi-Mayo, a native Cuban and graduate of the University of Havana, who immigrated to the United States in 1941 to continue his studies, he enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1943, at age 22. He soon volunteered for the OSS, and after SO training in Maryland and Virginia, he was parachuted into southern France near Spain in August 1944. Unfortunately, he fractured his leg very badly in the landing and was unable to continue the mission. He was rescued by Spanish Republicans working with the French Resistance, who got him out of the country and to a military hospital in North Africa.¹⁶⁹ Another disappointed OSS SO officer was Lieutenant Roger Hall. A former instructor at Areas F and B, Hall had been sent to Britain and in late July 1944 was parachuted into Normandy near St. Lô to join a Jedburgh team, whose leader had been wounded. He arrived safely only to be told by the wounded officer that two hours earlier the advance elements of the U.S. Second Armored Division had raced through pursuing the Germans and that Hall had landed behind his own lines. His brief mission was over.¹⁷⁰

Operational Groups in France, 1944

While the three-man, multinational teams called Jedburghs became famous, Donvaon's other combat units, the Operational Groups, were also contributing intelligence and sabotage to hinder the enemy. The OGs, usually composed of men from particular American ethnic groups, but sometimes including foreign nationals, were organized to fight in sections of a dozen men or more, and fought they did. The Jeds understood that. "The Operational Groups were not the 'glamour boys.' Those soldiers were doing the hard work and not getting much publicity," explained ex-Jed and former

¹⁶⁸ Jacques L. Snyder, "Cloak and Dagger Days," typescript memoir, n.d. [1990s], pp. 13-28, provided by his son, James Snyder, to the author, 16 January 2008, plus information he obtained for the author from his father about Areas F and A, James Snyder, email to the author, 13 February 2008.

¹⁶⁹ Later, as an American university professor of Spanish, Roberto Esquenazi-Mayo wrote an account entitled of his military service, memories of a student soldier, *Memorias de un Estudiante Soldado* (Habana: Dirección de Cultura, Ministerio de Educación, 1951). A briefer version for use in Spanish language classes, edited, with introduction, notes, exercises, and vocabulary by George Thomas Cushman was published by W.W. Norton in New York in 1954.

¹⁷⁰ Roger Hall, *You're Stepping on My Cloak and Dagger* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1957), 163-66.

CIA Director William Colby in 1993.¹⁷¹ The first 200 volunteers in the French Operational Group graduated from Area F in the fall of 1943. Major Alfred T. (“Al”) Cox, who had succeeded Serge Obolensky as head of OG training at Area F, trained them hard. Cox was a strong and able athlete and an intelligent and commanding leader. Graduating from Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, with a civil engineering degree and membership in Phi Beta Kappa, he was captain of the football team, co-captain of the baseball team, and class President. From ROTC, he became an infantry officer and was instructing in guerrilla warfare at the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, when the OSS recruited him. He recruited other capable officers and instructors like Lieutenant Arthur (“Art”) Frizzell from Fort Huron, Michigan, to help train and lead the French OGs.¹⁷²

When the OSS French OGs had finished their training at Area F, the Congressional Country Club, Cox, as their commanding officer, took them to Area A at Prince William Forest Park, and then to Algeria. They arrived in Algiers in February 1944, and they went to the OSS parachute school there and continued their field exercises, preparatory to being dropped into France south of Lyons in August 1944 to aid the Allied landings of nearly 500,000 men along the French Riviera beginning 15 August. Additional French OG groups arrived subsequently, and they were sent to England, where under Lieutenant Colonel Serge Obolensky, they would join an OSS Norwegian OG unit and be deployed north of Lyons. More than twenty OG teams, most of them OSS French OGs but some in the southeast were OSS Italian OGs, were parachuted into occupied France in the late summer of 1944.¹⁷³

Directing the French Resistance in sabotage and intelligence gathering, the OSS provided excellent tactical intelligence for Lieutenant General Alexander Patch and the 7th U.S. Army as part of the southern invasion force, “the best briefed invasion in history.”¹⁷⁴ On Corsica, OSS radio operator, Edward E. Nicholas, III, trained at Area C, recalled the day the invasion of southern France began on 15 August 1944. “One morning I awoke to a mighty roar. Outside, the sky was full of planes from horizon to horizon and as far as the eye could see. The invasion of southern France was underway.”¹⁷⁵ It proved

¹⁷¹ William E. Colby quoted in Henry Buningham, “Ex-CIA Chief Salutes Army Green Berets,” *Fayetteville [N.C.] Observer-Times*, 11 September 1993, 15. I am indebted to Caesar J. Civitella, for this article. In an attempt to enhance understanding of the OGs, an OSS Operational Group website was constructed in 2005. See <http://www.ossog.org>.

¹⁷² Ian Sutherland, “The OS Operational Groups: Origin of Army Special Forces,” *Special Warfare*, 15:2 (June 2002): 2. The hometowns, or more accurately permanent addresses given in 1945, by members of the OSS French OGs and OSS Chinese OGs were listed in Lt. Col. Alfred T. Cox, HQ OG Command, SSUK, to All Personnel Concerned, 8 November 1945, subject: Permanent Addresses, French and Chinese OGs, a six-page typed list attached, provided in “OG French and Chinese Address List,” *OSS Society Digest* Number 1132, 4 September 2005, ossociety@yahoo.com, accessed 4 September 2005.

¹⁷³ “Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, French Operational Group,” www.ossog.org/france.html, accessed 12 June 2008; Troy J. Sacquety, “The OSS... Operational Groups,” *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History*, 3:4 (2007): 40.

¹⁷⁴ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, vii.

¹⁷⁵ Edward E. Nicholas, III, “How We Won the Great War,” typescript memoir notes, p. 7. I am indebted to his son, Ned Nicholas, for providing me with a copy of this document.

a highly successful, if much less publicized invasion than that at Normandy. With the loss of 2,700 American 4,000 French military casualties, the Allied force captured 57,000 German soldiers, pursued the enemy up the Rhone River Valley, and quickly liberated the ports of Toulon and Marseilles. By October 1944, those two ports were handling over one-third of the more than one million tons of American supplies reaching Europe.¹⁷⁶

Operational Groups Fight the Germans in France

While the Jeds and SO agents were in two- or three-man teams, the Operational Group sections ranged from ten to twenty uniformed and well-armed personnel. In all, 356 Americans in 21 OG teams parachuted into France in 1944. Most of them had trained at Areas F and B. The majority were flown from bases in Algeria, but a few departed from England.¹⁷⁷ OG Section “Percy Red” was composed mainly of Norwegian Americans, led by Captain William F. Larson and including Technician Fifth Class (T/5) Arne Herstad from Tacoma, who had been waiting in vain for a mission to Norway. Instead, beginning on the first of August 1944, the 18 OGs were parachuted into the Haute Vienne region of central France to connect with the *maquis* and impede the movement of German troops. Operating near Limoges, they blew up bridges, blasted highways, dug anti-tank ditches, and planted mines and booby traps. On 11 August the team blocked a German armored train by blowing up a bridge in front of it. But in the ensuing fire fight, Captain Larson was fatally wounded. Despite his loss, the Norwegian OGs continued their mission and eventually met up with Colonel Obolensky and OG “Patrick” before being flown back to London.¹⁷⁸

Lieutenant Rafael D. Hirtz, who was born in Argentina but grew up in California, led OG Section “Donald” that was dropped into Brittany on 5 August. Their mission was to initiate guerrilla activity and to protect a large and particularly important bridge across the Pense River for Patton’s armored columns. “We had about two weeks behind German lines before we knew that Patton’s armor was coming through,” Hirtz recalled. “I never took off my uniform, and we held the bridge so that when Patton’s tanks did come through, they went right over it.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ For OSS role, see Richard S. Friedman, KK4XX, “OSS Operations in Anvil/Dragoon,” in Ranney and Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVets Papers*, 2nd ed., 49-54; and “Excerpts—OSS Activities with 7th Army,” 5-page typescript in Donovan Papers, “Black Book,” CIA Records (RG 263), Thomas F. Troy File, Box 4, Folder 30, National Archives II.

¹⁷⁷ Ian Sutherland, “The OSS Operational Groups: Origin of Army Special Forces,” *Special Warfare*, 15:2 (June 2002): 2-13.

¹⁷⁸ “Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, Percy Red,” www.ossog.org/france/percyred.html, accessed 24 June 2008.

¹⁷⁹ Rafael Hirtz, transcript of interview, 12 February 2004, Veterans History Project, Library of Congress, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cocoon/vhp-stories/loc.natlib.afc2001001.00094>, accessed 10 January 2007; and www.ossog.org/france/donald.html, accessed 24 June 2008.

At the beginning of September, Hirtz was one of nearly sixty members of OG Section “Christopher,” combined with Jedburgh Team “Desmond” that were dropped by ten planes into the Poitiers area to harass and destroy German units fleeing southwest France toward the Belfort Gap into Germany. Section “Christopher’s” mission was carried out although several of the men were wounded and 1st Lieutenant W. Larson was killed during an ambush on German troops (this was a different Larson than Captain William F. Larson, commander of the “Percy Red” Mission who was mortally wounded during an attack on a German armored train.¹⁸⁰ New York socialite and hotel magnate Serge Obolensky, former Czarist officer and Russian émigré after the Bolshevik Revolution, commanded OG Section “Patrick,” two dozen members of a French OG, into central France to protect vital power stations from destruction by retreating Germans. Ironically this staunch anti-Bolshevik, was assigned to a Communist *maquis* group, to whom he had to give acknowledgment in the victory celebration following the liberation of the town of Chateauroux.¹⁸¹

Private Emmett F. McNamara, a 22-year-old radio operator from the Roxbury district of Boston, was part of Section Lindsay that parachuted into south central France on 17 August 1944. The OSS had recruited him in 1943 after he graduated from the Army’s Signal Corps school at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey and claimed that he could speak French. He spent a couple of weeks at Area B learning OSS codes and radio equipment, then more than a month at Area F doing more practicing and also going through the close combat, weapons, and field craft training with the French Operational Group. He earned his paratrooper’s wings in England, where in the plane on his way to his first jump he recalls sitting across from Lieutenant Colonel Serge Obolensky, who was in his fifties. “I looked across at him and said to myself, ‘If this old man can do this, so can I.’ He did, he jumped right out, and so did I, right behind him.” In mid-August, McNamara jumped into France. The unit landed in rough terrain and several men were injured, including the commander of the “Lindsey” Section, 1st Lieutenant P. Earle, who broke his leg in three places. McNamara and fellow radio operator, Robert (“Bob”) Vernon from Idaho, established contact with London, taking turns with one of them turning the hand cranks to generate power for the transmitter and the other tapping out the Morse Code on the telegraph key. The 20-man section, accompanied by the *maquis*, quickly accomplished its primary mission, obtaining the surrender of a German of 120 troops around the hydroelectric plant at La Tuyere. Some of the Americans and members of the French Resistance then set up an ambush for a German truck convoy near St. Fleur, but the *maquis* had underestimated the number of German troops in the convey which actually numbered more than 500 soldiers. “They outnumbered us and started firing,” McNamara recalled. “Most of the French ran away. Emile [Private Emile G. Roy] got up and started to run, but he got hit in the leg. I carried him over to the truck, we had hidden behind a hill, and we got away.”¹⁸² Later the American ambushed a smaller column and also captured a German unit before the American armies arrived.

¹⁸⁰ On the death of 1st Lt. W. Larson, see “Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, French OG, Section Christopher,” www.ossog.org/france/chrisotpher.html. Accessed 12 June 2008.

¹⁸¹ Obolensky, *One Man in His Time*, 380-88.

¹⁸² Emmett F. McNamara, telephone interview with the author, 2 September 2008; see also OSS, French Operational Group, U.K.-to-France, Lindsey Section,” www.ossog.org.

Most of the OSS French OGs were sent into southern and central France as Company B from OSS Algiers, under the overall command of Lieutenant Colonel Alfred T. Cox.¹⁸³ Between June and September, 14 OG teams were infiltrated into southern France to support the 7th Army's invasion. Ten were French-speaking teams, three Italian-speaking and one mixed. Lieutenant Erasmus Kloman, a Princeton graduate who had trained at Areas F, B, and A among others, was given responsibility for logistics for the OG teams from Algeria and the selection of sites for their infiltration.¹⁸⁴ In their after-action reports, the OGs indicated that the training they had received prior to their actual operations had been more than adequate. Many remarked that what they faced in the field provide easier than the problems continually worked out during their practice period. However, they wished that there had been more stress on French military nomenclature, maintenance and repair of radios for radio operators, and the operation and maintenance of all types of foreign vehicles and weaponry. The OG teams found the American bazooka and the British Gammon grenade invaluable in ambushing enemy tanks and other vehicles. But the Marlin submachine gun was held to be unreliable, and the OGs believed that each section should be supplied with Browning Automatic Rifles as well as light machine guns.¹⁸⁵

Major Cox personally led OG Section "Lehigh," whose mission in August was to coordinate all the Operational Group campaigns along the west bank of the Rhone River. He found that as the Allied success became more certain, the *maquis* overconfident and despite OG recommendations wanted to attack German Army units directly, in which case they were usually defeated, instead of operating in true guerrilla fashion—hit and run ambushes and raids and slashing at the enemy flanks. Or they wanted the glory of liberating French towns and cities rather than doing the necessary work of harassing and impeding German columns.¹⁸⁶ One of those it helped coordinate was Section "Louise" headed by Lieutenants Roy K. Rickerson and W. H. McKenzie III, who had been trained along with their dozen men at Areas F and B. Five days after being parachuted in on 18 July, Rickerson's section used nearly 200 pounds of plastic explosives and destroyed an important suspension bridge which collapsed into the Rhone River. That same day, McKenzie and his men blew up a railroad viaduct that collapsed onto a highway below, severing both lines; in another mission, they derailed a train carrying 16 tanks and 5 box cars filled with enemy supplies. On 29 July, with the *maquis*, the section ambushed a column of 400 Germans, killing or wounding near 100 and destroying a tank and six trucks. Later 37mm anti-tank guns were airdropped, and Rickerson and his men rolled them into the mountains and ambushed retreating German units below. On 25 August,

¹⁸³ Operational Report, Company B, 267th Special Reconnaissance Battalion (Provisional), Narrative History of the French OGs, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 99, Box 44, National Archives II.

¹⁸⁴ Erasmus H. Kloman, *Assignment Algiers: With the OSS in the Mediterranean Theater* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 36-41.

¹⁸⁵ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 207.

¹⁸⁶ "Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, French OG, Section Lehigh," www.ossog.org/france/lehigh.html. Accessed 12 June 2008.

after an attempted ambush of a convoy in a valley near Chomerac turned into a trap sprung by the Germans, the *maquis* fled, leaving the Americans to fight their way out. They did, but Rickerson received some superficial if still bloody wounds. At the end of August as the Allies moved northward, Rickerson, in an extraordinary bluff, told a German colonel in command at Chambonte that he and his men were surrounded by advance elements of the American and French armies. The bluff worked, and 3,800 troops surrendered to the handful of Americans. It was one of the largest single captures by an Operational Group in France.¹⁸⁷

Section "Lafayette" was one of the OSS Italian OGs sent into southern France in August 1944. Lieutenants O.J. Fontaine and L.L. Rinadi commanded a dozen men, including Technician Fourth Class (T/4) Caesar J. Civitella, a young Philadelphian and paratrooper, who had joined the second group of OSS Italian OGs and trained at Areas F and B before being sent to Algeria for further training. Section Lafayette parachuted into the western Rhone River Valley on 29 August 1944 to harass the enemy and protect installations valuable to the advancing Allied armies. They quickly linked up with Lieutenants McKenzie and Rickerson of the Louise Section and were there when Rickerson bluffed the German commander into surrendering 3,800 men to the Americans. At the beginning of September, the combined units moved up the river, following the overall commander, Major Cox, arriving at Lyon to take part with the *maquis* in the celebration of the liberation of that city. Afterwards, the Italian OGs were transported by ship from Marseilles to Naples and then by truck to Tuscany, where they would participate with the Italian partisans in the Resistance in northern Italy over the winter of 1944-1945.¹⁸⁸

OSS and the Allied Drive across France

Coordination with the *maquis* behind enemy lines had been quite successful. During 1944, some 523 OSS Special Operations agents and OG troops were infiltrated into occupied France. Of these 85 were SO agents and radio operators, 83 were Jedburghs, and 355 were members of Operational Groups. The OSS worked with the *maquis* in the largest uprising of resistance forces in history.¹⁸⁹ As the Resistance rose up against the Germans following the Allied invasion, the OSS/SOE operation dramatically increased the delivery of side arms, machine guns, bazookas, mortars, ammunition and explosives, medical supplies, food rations, shoes and uniforms. Before the invasion, these were supplied clandestinely at night. But between June and September 1944, responding

¹⁸⁷ O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 189-93; OSS, *War Report of the OSS; Overseas Targets*, 205-6. "Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, French OG, Section Louise," www.ossog.org/france/louise.html. Accessed 12 June 2008.

¹⁸⁸ "Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, French OG, Section Lafayette," www.ossog.org/france/lafayette.html. Accessed 12 June 2008; and Caesar J. Civitella, telephone interview with the author, 18 April 2008.

¹⁸⁹ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 219.

to calls from radio operators with teams of Jeds, SO agents and OG sections, OSS sent in mass flights of hundreds of B-17 and B-24 bombers to air drop 5,000 tons of such supplies to the French Resistance.¹⁹⁰

The result was of great assistance to the success of the Western Allies. The uprising of this civilian Army aided and directed by the OSS and the SOE impeded the Germans through controlled sabotage, ambush and irregular combat. By harassing lines of communication and supply, the Resistance diverted whole German divisions from the front. Within a week after D-Day, the Resistance had accomplished the destruction of 800 strategic targets ordered by General Eisenhower's headquarters. They cut all the field telephone lines and forced the Germans to rely mailing on messages sent by radio, which the Allies, could intercept and decode using "Ultra." The OSS and the *maquis* provided regular intelligence on German units, enabling, for example, the Allied to stem a projected German attack at Baccarat and to hamper the German retreat at Dienze. At least 5,000 *Wehrmacht* soldiers were redirected to try to stop major attacks by OSS-led Resistance units in Correze alone. In a major multiplier effect, with simply a handful of OSS and SOE agents, the Resistance liberated all of France south of the Loire and west of the Rhone, forcing the surrender of 20,000 German troops. Through the destruction of bridges, waterways, railroads, isolated garrisons and sometimes the actual engagement of troops, large sections of German military manpower, artillery, armored units and materiel were delayed or diverted from opposing the Allies armies. At Normandy, this gave the Allies added days and sometimes weeks before German reinforcements arrived. In one case, Resistance groups, directed and supplied by Jedburgh Team "Amonnia," under American Captain Benton McDonald ("Mac") Austin, a French executive officer, and American radioman Sergeant Jacob B. ("Jack") Berlin, were able to slow down, through blasted bridges and railroad lines, a crack German armored division, the 2nd SS Panzer ("Das Reich") Division, as it struggled to reach the invasion beachhead from southwestern France. Six weeks after D-Day the 2nd SS Panzer Division had advanced only one hundred miles and was still two hundred miles from Normandy. With the help of OSS or SOE directed *maquis* forces, several other German divisions were delayed for nearly a month.¹⁹¹

As the Allied armies drove across France, OSS Special Operations personnel were attached to the General Staff Section of the headquarters of each American Army and Army Group to coordinate with the OSS agents and the *maquis* on the flanks and in front of the advancing armies.¹⁹² Effectiveness often depended upon the attitude of the regular Army Military Intelligence (G-2) officer—unsympathetic in the 1st Army, which eventually banned the OSS, supportive in Gen. George S. Patton's 3rd Army, and most supportive in the south of France from Lt. Gen. Alexander Patch's 7th Army. OSS provided 79 percent of the pre-invasion intelligence on the German Order of Battle for the 7th Army, including location and condition of German defenses, even camouflaged

¹⁹⁰ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 198-99. These supplies included 27,000 containers, each holding up to 220 pounds, which were parachuted in, and 10,000 packages, holding up to 100 pounds of non-breakable items, such as clothing and packaged food rations, which were dropped free.

¹⁹¹ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 220-21.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 192.

ones, with what General Patch praised afterwards as “extraordinary accuracy.”¹⁹³ Such close-in work took its toll, and between August and October 1944, of the American and French agents operating in front of the U.S. 7th Army to provide tactical intelligence, 10 were killed, 15 wounded, and 39 captured, some of whom were tortured and later died.¹⁹⁴

Among those captured was Lieutenant Jack Hemingway, son of the famous author. He had joined the OSS in North Africa and trained there under Lieutenant James Russell, Special Operations, who had himself trained at SO camps in Maryland and Virginia and been part of Serge Obolensky’s four-man mission to Sardinia in 1943. In his first combat role, Hemingway, together with Russell, and two French radio operators, was parachuted into the south of France in mid-August 1944 assist local *maquis* and report on enemy defenses. Jack Hemingway was an avid fisherman like his father, and he took with him on the parachute drop not simply his pistol but a rod and reel and a fly fishing box.¹⁹⁵ Much of the mission proved disastrous—the two Frenchmen were seriously injured on the jump, the radio was broken, and later, a dozen, teenage members of the resistance were captured with the OSS explosives and tortured and killed by the Nazis. Hemingway narrowly avoided capture when a German patrol saw him fishing in a stream, but luckily mistook him for a solitary French peasant and passed him by.¹⁹⁶

On a second mission, this time with an OSS Secret Intelligence team attached to the 3rd Division of the U.S. 7th Army, Hemingway found himself amidst the fluid battle lines in eastern France. One night in November 1944, he was helping to infiltrate an indigenous agent through and behind German lines. As one of his superiors, Peter M.F. Sichel, a member of the famous wine grower and merchant family, explained later, “Jack did not follow instructions and stayed with his agent much too long, thereby ending behind the German lines.... Jack was wounded in the leg and captured. We did not know if he had his little [OSS] notebook on him, and had to change all kinds of future missions, and agonized over him, not knowing if the Germans knew of his activities. Fortunately he had no compromising material on him and the Germans took him as a junior officer of the 7th Army.”¹⁹⁷ Lieutenant Hemingway spent the rest of the European war in German POW camps. Afterwards, helped by a courageous war record, a *croix de guerre*, and what Jack called “a nice set of scars,” the often stormy relationship between the son and the irascible novelist improved, especially as Jack remained in the Army after the war.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 216-19, 238-39.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹⁹⁵ Hemingway, *Misadventures of a Fly Fisherman*, 135-138.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁹⁷ Peter M.F. Sichel, interview with the author, 9 July 2008; and messages in the *OSS Society Digest*, Number 1262, 29 January 2006, and Number 1263, 30 January 2006, osssociety@yahoo.com, both accessed 31 January 2006; other accounts of the episode are in Hemingway, *Misadventures of a Fly Fisherman*, 170-175; and Lt. Cdr. Richard M. Kelly, USNR, “Spy Work Ahead,” *Blue Book Magazine*, August 1947.

¹⁹⁸ Eric Homburger, “Obituary: Jack Hemingway,” *Guardian*, 4 December 2000, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive>, accessed 17 September 2007; and Hemingway, *Misadventures of a Fly Fisherman*.

Piercing the Third Reich

As the American Armies moved through eastern France to the German border, OSS Secret Intelligence (SI) sought to obtain effective tactical and strategic information useful to the western Allies. Within their own country, the Germans could rely upon secure telegraph and telephone lines instead of wireless radio transmissions that the Allies had intercepted and successfully decoded through “Ultra.” OSS SI units with some of the American armies were able to obtain valuable tactical information by infiltrating German agents through the German Army lines. One OSS SI section that was particularly effective was that in Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch’s U.S. 7th Army, which had advanced north up the Rhone River Valley from its landings on the French Riviera in August 1944 and arriving at the Moselle River, on the south end of the Allied line, some fifty miles from the Rhine in December. Patch had benefited from use of French-speaking OSS SI and SO agents since the Riviera landings, but now as his army approached Germany, he needed German-speaking agents to learn what was going on behind the *Wehrmacht’s* lines. So joining Henry Hyde, the head of SI with the 7th Army, and Peter Sichel, his chief assistant, were two ethnic Germans, Lieutenants Charles A. (“Carl”) Muecke and Peter Viertel, recruited from the Marine Corps in the Pacific. The bright and talented son of working-class German parents who had immigrated to Queens in New York City, Muecke had graduated with honors from the College of William and Mary and joined the Marines. Viertel had been born in Dresden but moved with his family in the 1930s to Hollywood, where his father was a movie director and Peter wrote screenplays, including Alfred Hitchcock’s *Saboteur* in 1942. After the U.S. entered the war, he joined the Marines.¹⁹⁹

For native-speaking German agents to send back through the German Army lines, they concluded that the best source would be recent German POWs. The use of POWs for such a purpose was a violation of the Geneva Convention as well as of regulations from General Eisenhower’s office; nevertheless, General Patch after a meeting with Donovan, quietly side-stepped these prohibitions, and the four-man OSS SI section began recruiting anti-Nazi German POWs, and even a few German-speaking women, as agents. If they passed all interrogations, they were then taken to a secret training area for indoctrination, training, and the memorization of a cover story.²⁰⁰ When needed, the agents were lead up to the front lines by SI members from the 7th Army or one of its divisions and then sent forward through the German lines at night. Normally, this went relatively smoothly, although as the Hemingway’s case, there sometimes were problems either with the

¹⁹⁹ Peter M.F. Sichel, telephone interview with the author, 9 July 2008; Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS*, 183-85/

²⁰⁰ Joseph E. Persico, *Piecing the Third Reich: The Penetration of Nazi Germany by American Secret Agents during World War II* (New York: Viking, 1979), 109; OSS, *War Report of the OSS: Overseas Targets*, 294.

Americans or the Germans. So they also added short-range parachute drops in which the German agents were parachuted behind enemy lines at night disguised as German soldiers with passes showing they were on leave from their units and on their way to or from home. The 7th Army SI unit handled three dozen infiltrations into Germany in the winter of 1944-1945. Two-thirds returned with valuable intelligence within a week or two to a prearranged place.²⁰¹

These German agents provided important tactical information. For example, Peter Sichel said, they determined where the German air force was launching its jet fighters, since Allied aircraft could not fight any nearby airbase for them. A German POW agent learned that the jets were hidden under trees near the autobahn, the superhighways and Munich, and they took off and landed on the autobahn near Augsburg and Munich. The Allies then bombed them under the trees and also destroyed the nearby autobahn. In another instance, a German POW agent located the long-range cannon, the “Big Bertha” that the Germans were using to shell Allied lines, but which aerial reconnaissance could not find. It was hidden on a railway car in a tunnel and only rolled out to fire. The Allies then bombed the tunnel shut. The agents also provided warnings of the German Army’s build up for its surprise attack through the Ardennes Forest in December 1944. “We also obtained information about the buildup which led to the ‘Battle of the Bulge,’” Sichel recalled. “We knew about this last build up of the Germans. We had sent people behind the lines to get information of what units were there, the [German Army’s] order of battle.”²⁰²

Deep penetration of the German police state proved, at least until the chaos of 1945, more difficult than tactical infiltrations. British and American services both viewed it as exceedingly difficult. The first American espionage unit to penetrate deep into Germany and Austria, a team that infiltrated through Yugoslavia in July 1944 had been wiped out within six weeks. In fact, all the twelve OSS teams sent into the Third Reich from the Mediterranean Theater had been captured or killed.²⁰³ In the beginning of September 1944, the first OSS agent to be parachuted into Germany from England was dropped into the German homeland. Jupp Kappius was one of the German Jewish refugees who had fled to the United States from Hitler’s genocidal regime. The OSS recruited him and in 1944 trained him and his wife, Anne, in OSS training camps in the United States and England to be infiltrated back into their homeland to create an underground resistance movement and commit acts of sabotage. In the industrial cities of the Ruhr area of Germany, Kappius began organizing among disaffected workers. To avoid using a radio to communicate with Jupp Kappius, his wife, disguised as a German Red Cross nurse, served as a courier, twice traveling between the Ruhr and neutral

²⁰¹ Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger, Marines of the OSS*, 186-90.

²⁰² Peter M.F. Sichel, telephone interview with the author, 9 July 2008. Although poor weather conditions in December 1944 prevented photo-reconnaissance and the Germans had imposed radio silence at the tactical level, “Ultra” intelligence, as well as the German POW OSS agents revealed the massing of German forces, at Allied commanders at the highest level concluded, mistakenly, that they were being assembled to resist the next Allied offensive and possibly to try to counterattack it after the Allies had launched the next attack on either side of the Ardennes Forest. Charles B. Macdonald, *A Time for Trumpets: The Untold Story of the Battle of the Bulge* (New York: Morrow, 1984).

²⁰³ OSS War, *Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 305; O’Donnell, *Operatives, Spies and Saboteurs*, 255.

Switzerland with vital information. Another German woman refugee, Hilde Meisel, who completed her OSS training with Anne Kappius, and was code-named “Crocus,” was sent to Vienna, where she set up an intelligence network. However, on her trip back through the mountains to Switzerland to report on her success, Meisel was spotted by an SS patrol as she approached the Austrian-Swiss border. She was almost to the border when a sharpshooter hit her, shattering her legs. She fell to the ground, and seeing the SS patrol running towards her, Hilda Meisel put a lethal, cyanide pill into her mouth, bit down on its shell, and died instantly.²⁰⁴

OSS casualties in France

Success by the OSS, SOE and the Resistance in France in 1944 did not come cheaply. It was paid for in blood, by hundreds of *maquisards* and by dozens of members of the OSS and the SOE and those who worked for them. The OSS casualty rate, particularly among the small teams was higher than normal combat statistics for frontline infantry units. OSS had 523 special operations personnel fighting behind enemy lines in France in 1944, all of whom had received at least preliminary training in the OSS camps in Maryland and Virginia. Of these 83 were Jedburgh officers or radiomen, 85 were SO officers and their radio operators, 355 were members of OG sections. Of the 523, a total of 86 were casualties. Of these 18 were killed; 17 were missing, or captured, although very few became prisoners of war; and 51 were wounded. This meant an overall casualty rate of about 17 percent, almost one out of every five or six in combat.²⁰⁵

Of the 83 American Jedburghs, 5 were killed in action, 6 percent, almost double the 3 ½ percent overall death rate; 3 were missing or captured; and 6 were wounded.²⁰⁶ The injuries of some were quite severe. Captain Cecil F. (“Skip”) Mynatt, Jr., the commander of Team Arthur parachuted into eastern France in August, fractured his spine in the landing. Captain Douglas (“Doug”) DeWitt Bazata, head of Team Cedric in eastern France was badly wounded in action. Major Cyrus (“Cy”) E. Manierre, Jr., headed team

²⁰⁴ Tom Moon, *This Grim and Savage Game: OSS and the Beginning of U.S. Covert Operations in World War II* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2000), 237-38. Beginning in January 1945, William Casey, who had become SI chief in London, began parachuting anti-Nazi German POWs, converted by OSS into agents, into Germany. Thirty-four teams were dropped safely due especially to the increasing chaos in Germany in 1945, but for a variety of reasons, only seven ever established direct communication. Joseph E. Persico, *Piecing the Third Reich; OSS, War Report of the OSS; Overseas Targets*, 305.

²⁰⁵ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, xii, 220.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* Of the roughly 280 Jedburghs of all nationalities, a total of 21 were killed, a death rate of almost 8 percent. John K. Singlaub with Malcolm McConnell, *Hazardous Duty: An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Summit Books/Simon & Schuster, 1991), 69, 530n. At least three British-led Jedburgh teams were ambushed shortly after landing and most of their members killed. Two Jedburgh teams were entirely wiped out. In the Vosges Mountains in mid-August 1944, the French lieutenant of Team Jacob was killed in a firefight and the two other members captured; the commanding officer, a British major, was executed and the radio operator, a British sergeant imprisoned. Iwin, *Jedburghs*, 175.

Dodge, which was dropped into southeastern France in late June. Manierre was later captured and brutally tortured, and although liberated in May 1945, he never fully recovered from those beatings by the Gestapo.²⁰⁷

Some of the American Jeds died in their parachute or weapons accidents, some were slain in combat, and some were executed. The parachute of Sergeant Lewis (“Lew”) F. Goddard, a radio operator part of Team “Ivor” that dropped into central France, failed to open and he was killed instantly when he hit the ground. Lieutenant Lawrence E. (“Larry”) Swank, a West Pointer, had joined OSS served as a demolitions instructor at Area B before going over to Britain to become a Jed. As the commander of Team “Ephredrine,” Swank and two Frenchmen parachuted successfully into the Savoie department of southeastern France on the night of 12-13 August 1944. Subsequently in an accidental shooting by inexperienced *maquis*, Larry Swank was killed.²⁰⁸ Sergeant Lucien J. Bourgoin, a radio operator, was killed in action with Team “Ian” in central France. All three members of Jedburgh Team “Augustus” were captured and executed in August 1944. The commander of Team Augustus was Major John H. Bonsall, a Princeton University graduate from Morristown, New Jersey. He had become an artillery officer in 1941 and an OSS Special Operations officer in 1943, undergoing training at Areas F and B that year before being sent to England to become a Jed. In Britain, the 25-year-old Bonsall was teamed up with Sergeant Roger Côté, 21, a radio operator from Manchester, New Hampshire who had graduated from Area C, and Captain Jean Delviche of the French Army.²⁰⁹ On 15 August, they were dropped about one hundred miles northeast of Paris, near Soissons in Picardy, behind the lines of the rapidly retreating German Army. A few members of the Resistance greeted them, but Bonsall soon radioed London that it was “impossible to form *maquis* now due to one, too many Boche [Germans]; two, lack of good hiding areas; three, very few arms.”²¹⁰ Indeed, movement by these three Jeds was extremely risky because the entire area was still contested, with German units in rapid retreat, pursued by advance elements of Patton’s Third Armored Division less than six miles away. The fast-moving American armored forces had already overrun the area originally assigned to Bonsall’s team, and the Jeds found themselves behind American lines. Instead of considering their mission over, however, Team Augustus decided to re-cross the fluid lines, get back behind the fleeing German forces and organize the *maquis* there to attack German convoys.

On the stormy, rainy night of 30 August 1944, dressed as French civilians and with false identification papers, the three Jeds borrowed a horse-drawn peasant cart from a friendly farmer and with their weapons and radio under a load of hay, they started off

²⁰⁷ Irwin, *Jedburghs*, Appendix, pp. 248-279, a list of Jedburgh Teams in France, including casualties; on Manierre, see also Singlaub with McConnell, *Hazardous Duty*, 69, 451.

²⁰⁸ Singlaub with McConnell, *Hazardous Duty*, 69; Irwin, *Jedburghs*, 258-259; John K. Singlaub, telephone interview with the author, December 11, 2004. Although a trainee, Singlaub assisted Larry Swank in demolitions instruction at Catocin Mountain Park in November 1943.

²⁰⁹ Irwin, *Jedburghs*, 155-164.

²¹⁰ OSS/London, OSS/London: SO Branch War Diary, Volume 4, Book 6, Report on Team Augustus, p. 4; and SFHQ G-3 Periodic Report Number 84 (27 August 1944), p. 5, both cited in Irwin, *Jedburghs*, 164.

on the back roads. They had traveled more than a dozen miles when, late that night, as they arrived at the village of Barenton-sure-Serre, three miles from their destination, the storm had grown so fierce and the night so dark, that the Jeds probably did not see the three German tanks posted at a check point at the rural intersection until they were at them. Around 11 p.m., some residents of the nearby village heard a dozen shots. Half an hour later, the tanks, elements of either the 9th SS Panzer Division or the 116th Panzer Division moved out, continuing the German retreat eastward. In the morning, the villagers found three bodies at the intersection, all with bullet holes in the back of the head. Bonsall and Deviche lay side by side; Côté, who had apparently made a break for it, lay face down, his arms outspread, a dozen yards away. The Germans had stopped the wagon, probably found the weapons and radio in the back, concluded the men were spies and decided to execute them summarily. In the morning, the villagers buried the three in unmarked graves beside the local church and put a French flag over them; the *maquis* arrived and held a military ceremony. Later that day, the U.S. 3rd Armored Division swept through the area on the heels of the retreating German forces.²¹¹

Among the 355 members of OSS Operational Groups in France, 10 members were killed, 4 missing or captured, and 40 were wounded.²¹² One of those killed was First Lieutenant Paul A. Swank from Houston, Texas, who despite the same last name was no relation to Larry Swank who was killed in a shooting accident. Paul Swank was second in command of OG Section "Betsy." His unit had parachuted into the Department of the Aude between Toulouse and the Pyrenees Mountains on 11 August. Their mission was to block German reinforcements from interfering with the Allied invasion of the Riviera scheduled to begin four days later. Working with the *maquis*, they destroyed a number of bridges and railroads. On 17 August, the section attacked garrison of Germans guarding a huge warehouse of supplies for the German Army. When it was learned that the Germans were rushing up reinforcements from Couiza, Paul Swank and four enlisted men, along with eighteen *maquisards* sought to head them off by blowing up a bridge across the Aude River near Quillan. Approaching the bridge, Swank discovered that a column of 250 motorized German infantry was too close to the bridge to get the explosives attached to its columns. Instead, Swank quickly set them into a cliff alongside the road. As the German trucks approached, he set off the explosives, spilling down rocks and debris and forming an improvised road block substantial enough to slow but not prevent enemy passage. Leaping out of the trucks and deploying for action, the German infantry opened fire. Swank ordered his men to escape to the nearby hills, while he and a sergeant remained to cover their retreat. In the ensuing firefight, the sergeant was hit in the hand and foot, but managed to withdraw under covering fire from the other OGs and the *maquis* who had taken position behind rocks on the hill. Swank continued to hold off the Germans. Although hit eight times in the arms and chest, he kept firing as long as he could hold up his weapon. He was still conscious when the Germans reached him and an officer shot him in the head. The senior American sergeant, a regular Army NCO, said afterwards of Lieutenant Swank, "I've never served under a better, more considerate

²¹¹ Irwin, *Jedburghs*, 164-176.

²¹² OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, xii, 204-5, 220. Nearly half of the injuries resulted from the initial parachute jump.

man. He had more guts than the rest of us put together. His loss to those that knew him is irreparable.”²¹³

Paul Swank’s commanding officer wrote that “The German officers later remarked to inhabitants of a neighboring village that they had never seen a man fight as bravely or as long until killed.”²¹⁴ Inspired by Swank’s courage and self-sacrifice, the twenty remaining men, led by Technician Fifth Grade Nolan J. Frickey of New Orleans, Louisiana, laid down such a heavy fire, which killed or wounded nearly fifty Germans, that the enemy retreated, concluding that they faced a much larger force. This enabled the rest of OG Section Betsy and the *maquis* to capture the German warehouse, which contained enough food rations for one million troops for ten days. Technician Fifth Class (T/5) Nolan Frickey received the Silver Star Medal, and Lieutenant Paul Swank was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.²¹⁵

OG Captain William F. Larson and at least three OG enlisted men were killed in action in central and southern France in August 1944. Captain Larson, a member of the “Percy Red” mission, was, as mentioned earlier, mortally wounded in action against a German armored train near Limoges. Technician 5th Grade Raymond Bisson of Rochester, New Hampshire, and Sergeant Camille A. Barnabe from Woonsocket, Rhode Island, had both participated in several successful bridge demolition and other actions behind enemy lines since their infiltration on 26 July. On the night of 3-4 August, Bisson, crawled 60 yards under heavy machine gun fire and destroyed a locomotive with his bazooka in the enemy-held Annonay Station near Ardeche. Five nights later, he helped place demolitions that destroyed a main railroad bridge near St. Etienne, southwest of Lyons. His friend, Sergeant Barnabe was killed on 10 August, when the Germans bombed the village of Vanosc, a *maquis* stronghold and the headquarters for the OG section. Disregarding the rain of bombs, Bisson administered medical aid to many of the wounded. A little less than three weeks later, on 28 August, Bisson was in a car driving to rejoin the section preparatory to attacking an enemy column near St. Julien Moline-Molette, when the automobile was strafed by a fighter-plane, he was killed instantly. Sergeant Bernard F. Gautier from Union City, New Jersey, and Technician 5th Grade Robert D. Spaur from Georgetown, Kentucky, members of an OG section, parachuted into southern France on 7 August. Their section conducted successful raids, but five days after their arrival, when the section ambushed a German motorcycle patrol leading a troop convoy near Rialet, d. Spaur was killed instantly in the firefight. After the initial

²¹³ Newspaper clipping, “KIA-France,” by Corporal. M.L., undated [November-December 1944] and unidentified [OSS Area F Newsletter, *Attention Please*], in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 146, Box 223, Folder 3105, National Archives II. See also OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 206.

²¹⁴ Lt. Col. Alfred T. Cox to Director [of the OSS], 20 December 1944, subject: Visit to Families of Operational Group Personnel Killed in Action, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 12, Folder 149, National Archives II.

²¹⁵ Newspaper clipping, “KIA-France,” by Corporal. M.L., undated [November-December 1944] and unidentified [OSS Area F Newsletter, *Attention Please*], in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 146, Box 223, Folder 3105; General Orders Number 70, 17 April 1945, Award of Distinguished Service Cross (Posthumous), “Paul A. Swank,” and General Orders Number 71, 18 April 1945, Award of Silver Star, “Nolan J. Frickey,” from Maj. Gen. George D. Pence, chief of staff, by command of Gen. McNarney, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 12, Folder 149, National Archives II.

firing, Gautier ran out onto the road to prevent the Germans from setting up a machine gun. He was shot in the back and killed by a wounded German. The surviving Americans and the *maquisards* subsequently killed all the Germans. Both T/5 Raymond Bisson and Sergeant Bernard F. Gautier were posthumously awarded the Silver Star Medal for bravery in action.²¹⁶

A Hero and a Tragedy: Chris Rumburg's Death

“Show me a hero, and I’ll show you a tragedy,” F. Scott Fitzgerald declared, and the heroic death of former Washington State University football star and OSS Area A instructor, Ira Christopher (“Chris”) Rumburg, certainly confirmed that epigram. Rumburg was literally larger than life. When he arrived at Washington State University in 1934 from Spokane, he was 6-feet, 3 inches tall and weighed 190 pounds. A natural athlete and leader, he worked his way up to be in his senior year, captain of the football team, champion heavyweight wrestler, and President of the student body. In football, he not only showed his leadership but his toughness. Throughout the Cougars’ season, he was plagued with injuries, including a bruised back, but he kept playing until finally a battered leg aggravated an old shinbone injury put him out of action for the final two games of the season against Stanford and Oregon. Rumburg was also cadet commander of university’s ROTC battalion, and he received a lieutenant’s commission in the Army reserves upon graduation. He served first at Hunter Liggett Military Reservation in California, and he served as an infantry instructor.²¹⁷

Called to active duty in World War II, Chris Rumburg, like several other former WSU athletes and reserve officers, Art Dow, Joe Collart, “Pinky” Harris and Jerry Sage, was invited to become an OSS Special Operations instructor by Ainsworth Blogg, the first commanding officer at Area B. In the spring of 1942, Rumburg had driven across country from Seattle to Washington, D.C. with newlyweds Art and Dodie Dow. He had served as an instructor at Area B and then Area A in 1942-1943.²¹⁸ By 1944, he was in England and a lieutenant colonel assigned to the headquarters of the 264th Regiment of the 66th Infantry Division, possibly as an OSS adviser. In mid-December 1944, the

²¹⁶ General Orders Number 71, 18 April 1945, Award of Silver Star (Posthumous), “Raymond Bisson,” “Bernard F. Gautier,” from Maj. Gen. George D. Pence, chief of staff, by command of Gen. McNarney; and Col. Alfred T. Cox to Director [of the OSS], 20 December 1944, subject: Visit to Families of Operational Group Personnel Killed in Action; and letters from Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan to Mrs. Agnes Bisson, and the next of kin of other OG members killed in southern France, 23 December 1944, all in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 12, Folder 149, National Archives II.

²¹⁷ Jason Krump, “Stories that Live Forever, Part III: The Epitome of Courage [Ira Christopher Rumburg],” Washington States University: Official Site of Cougar Athletics, <http://www.cstv.com/printable/schools/wast/genrel/052207aae.html>. Accessed 13 June 2008.

²¹⁸ On Chris Rumburg in the OSS and at Areas A and B, see Sage, *Sage*, 21, 430; Dorothea Dean Dow (Mrs. Arden W. Dow), telephone interviews with the author, 15 May and 9 and 15 June 2005; J.R. Brown to J.R. Hayden, 7 July 1942, [report on course at Area A-2, 21 June to 3 July 1942], OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 161, Folder 1754, National Archives II.

Germans in a surprise counterattack broke through the American lines in the Ardennes Forest in Belgium and France. Reinforcements were rushed in. The 66th (“Black Panther”) Division was dispatched to relieve the 94th Division and contain large numbers of enemy troops in the Brittany-Loire area. On Christmas Eve, Rumburg and 2,200 men from the division boarded a transport ship that was to take them from Southampton, England to Cherbourg, France for the trip to the front. The transport was the SS *Leopoldville*.²¹⁹

An old Belgian passenger liner refitted as a transport, the *Leopoldville*, was jammed with American troops that wintry evening as she chugged across the channel accompanied by another troopship and four escort destroyers in a diamond formation. Many of the men on board, most of them young soldiers, 18 to 21, were singing Christmas songs. They were within six miles of Cherbourg, when shortly before 6:00 p.m., in the early dark, there was an enormous explosion and the entire ship shook. A German submarine had snuck through the escort screen and slammed a torpedo into the ship’s hull. An estimated one hundred of the troops were killed instantly. But that was just the beginning of the tragedy. Steel beams snapped, tables and equipment had been thrown into the air and crashed down upon helpless men. Water gushed into the hull and soldiers struggled to get out of the rapidly filling lower compartments. Many of the interior metal stairways from them had been twisted into a mass of steel and splintered wood. Only two steel ladders remained for evacuating survivors from the large troop compartments below. A destroyer stayed to help, but the rest of the convoy steamed to Cherbourg to escape the submarine. The destroyer evacuated most of the stretcher cases. A British cruiser came alongside and urged the men packed along the railings to jump across. But in the choppy sea, some fell between and were crushed. The cruiser pulled away. The soldiers waited for aid since tugboats were due from Cherbourg, but around 7:30 p.m., the *Leopoldville* suddenly lurched heavily to starboard and swiftly sank, stern first. Then the soldiers began leaping into choppy waters of the English Channel, where the swells were up to twelve feet high. The ship went down quickly. Tugs, Coast Guard cutters and PT boats began to arrive from Cherbourg, searching for survivors in the dark and frigid waters. About 500 soldiers are believed to have gone down with the ship, another 250 are believed to have died from injuries, drowning, or hypothermia. The ship’s captain and four of his crew went down with the ship, but most of the Belgian crew had fled, taking to the lifeboats around 7:30 p.m. without indicating that the ship was sinking or lowering the remaining floater nets, rafts, and lifeboats for the American soldiers. The ship then went down quickly. In all 763 American soldiers perished, including three sets of brothers. It was the worst transport sinking experienced by an American infantry division.²²⁰

Lieutenant Colonel Rumburg had been in the officers’ quarters on the upper decks when the torpedo had exploded below the water line. Rushing down to assess the situation, he helped lead dazed and wounded men through the debris to the main deck. Several times with his enormous strength, he carried men on each of his broad shoulders. Later, as he and other officers peered down into a jagged, gaping hole in the metal floor

²¹⁹ Krump, “Stores that Live Forever, Part III: The Epitome of Courage.”

²²⁰ See Allan Andrade, *S.S. Leopoldville Disaster, December 24, 1944* (New York: Tern Book Co., 1997).

down into the “E” deck, they heard a voice calling for help. They flashed down lights into the swirling water four to eight feet below, but could not see the source of the calls. Rumburg shed his coat, slid into the water below and swam to the sound of the voice. He found the soldier trapped in debris, and while Rumburg was pulling it aside, a timber fell and crush his hand, severing two fingers. Nevertheless, he was finally able to drag the debris aside and pull the sputtering soldier to a position below the hole. Before the men above could get ropes down to them to pull them up, a sudden surge of incoming water swept them upwards and smashed their heads against a bulkhead. Rumburg was dazed, but the soldier was knocked unconscious and out of the colonel’s arms. Rumburg tried again to find him, but after his earlier exertions, more than 15 minutes in the freezing water and the loss of blood from his wounds, the colonel was too numb and exhausted to sustain himself let alone resume the hunt for the missing soldier. They got a rope around his waist and after half a dozen attempts finally got the 200-pound colonel back up through the hole. He was carried up to the infirmary. Later, when it became evident that the ship was going down, he climbed out on deck.²²¹

A letter from a friend who joined the 66th Division shortly afterwards and heard about his heroism from men who had survived described Rumburg’s final moments: “One of his men was about to enter the water without his ‘Mae West’ [life preserver]. So Chris took his off and gave it to him. Chris then jumped in the water and swam around getting his men to the rafts and seeing that they stayed calm. He found one fellow that was having trouble getting to the raft. So he helped him to the raft and helped shove him on. Then after using up all the great strength that God gave him, his hand slipped from the side of the raft and sank from sight. I have heard about a lot of acts of courage during this war...but none greater than this.”²²² Chris Rumburg is credited with saving the lives of more than one hundred of his fellow soldiers. His body, like those of 500 others, was never found, and in the end, he was one of the nearly 800 American soldiers who perished on the Leopoldville, a tragedy the details of which were kept from the public for more than fifty years.²²³ Chris Rumburg was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart, and celebrated by Washington State University with a memorial fund created in 1974 and in 1997 at Fort Benning, Georgia, by veterans of the 66th Infantry Division in their Leopoldville Disaster Monument. In death, his heroism was commended by the commander of the 66th Division, Major General Herman F. Kramer, who wrote that “the memory of his deeds will remain long in the minds of scores of men he succeeded in saving from a similar fate.”²²⁴

²²¹ Krump, “Stores that Live Forever, Part III: The Epitome of Courage.”

²²² Capt. Robert Campbell, 66th Infantry Division, to J. Fred (“Doc”) Bohler, WSC Athletic Director, 9 August 1945, excerpted in Krump, “Stores that Live Forever, Part III: The Epitome of Courage.”

²²³ “Cover-up: The Story of the S.S. Leopoldville,” The History Channel, www.history.com; see also Andrade, S.S. Leopoldville Disaster, and Andrade’s website, www.msnusers.com/ssleopoldville; Krump, “Stores that Live Forever, Part III: The Epitome of Courage;” Dennis Hevesi, “A Fight to Honor Forgotten Men of the Leopoldville,” *New York Times*, 8 May 1995. Of British, American and Belgian governments, the first to begin declassification of information on the Leopoldville disaster was Great Britain in 1996.

²²⁴ Krump, “Stores that Live Forever, Part III: The Epitome of Courage;” www.history.com; www.infantry.Army.mi/musuem/outside-tour/monuments/66th_inf_div.htm, accessed 14 June 2008.

Blowing Up Bridges in Greece

Greece was occupied by German troops in the spring of 1941, the government, including the king fled. Almost immediately a Resistance movement emerged to fight the occupiers. The country was plunged into abject misery, including a shortage of food as Germany reaped the foodstuffs, and the Resistance grew despite severe reprisals. Even though the majority of the 500,000 to 2,000,000 members of the Resistance were leftists rather than communists, the Communist party dominated the National Liberation Front (EAM/ELAS) and the *Andarte* as the partisans were called. A smaller Resistance group, the National Republican Greek League (EDES), was a more conservative, royalist organization. By 1943 sporadic civil war broke out between the communists and the royalists, as they fought each other as well as the Germans. In November 1942, a British SOE team parachuted into central Greece and with the help of the Resistance blew up a viaduct which carried the main north-south railway line between the key cities of Athens and Salonika. This was the most spectacularly successful sabotage operation in German-occupied Europe since the beginning of the war, and it demonstrated the potential for future special operations missions in Greece and elsewhere. Although SOE had senior responsibility in the Balkans, OSS began its operations there in 1943. The main OSS objectives of working with the Resistance in Greece were to hamper the shipment of vital supplies to Germany, to impede the effectiveness of the Germans in Greece, and to keep the numerous German divisions of occupation troops there from being transferred to fight against Allied armies in Italy or in France.²²⁵

OSS was, from the beginning, willing to work with the both factions of the Resistance, whichever one had control in their particular area. After a few Secret Intelligence operations, the first major OSS mission into Greece was the “Chicago” or “Evros” Mission under Special Operations officer Captain James G.L. (“Jim”) Kellis, an extraordinary man in an organization of unique individuals. Kellis had long had a vision of a role in that area of the world. A Greek American from Yorkville, Ohio, he had left his hometown after graduating from high school, traveled widely in the eastern Mediterranean and studied at the renowned St. Athanasse International College in Egypt. With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Kellis joined the Army Air Corps and was commissioned a second lieutenant. He was working on routine assignments at an air base in Florida, when the United States entered the war in December 1941. Kellis, then 26, became obsessed with the idea of Americans helping to liberate occupied Greece. Soon, he completed a detailed plan for American special operations there and submitted it to Army Intelligence in the War Department. In the fall, he was recruited by the Special Operations Branch of OSS. He spent the winter of 1942-1943 at SO training camps at Areas F, B, and A. By May 1943, he was at the OSS eastern Mediterranean headquarters in Cairo, and not long afterwards he completed a detailed proposal for blocking railroad

²²⁵ Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-1944* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993).

shipments of large amounts of chrome ore that neutral Turkey was shipping to Nazi Germany. His plan was to blow up two key railroad bridges in northeastern Greece. It would not be an easy task as there had been no previous SOE or OSS infiltration in that area and the region was heavily guarded by troops from the nine German and eleven Bulgarian divisions in Greece.²²⁶

Because of the lack of knowledge about partisan groups in the area, OSS ruled out infiltration by air or sea. Instead, an advance team of Kellis and two other men would try to penetrate the German-guarded, Greek-Turkish border on foot. Kellis was accompanied by two other Greek Americans, already in the SO Branch, and both from the Navy. Seaman Spiro “Gus” Cappony, 20, from Gary, Indiana, was the team’s radio operator. Cappony had trained at OSS Area C and then with Marine Captain John Hamilton, (actor Sterling Hayden) at Area B. But after that training, their proposed joint mission was cancelled; Cappony had been sent to Cairo and Hayden was sent to Italy where he skippered gun-running ships to partisans in Yugoslavia, and Cappony was sent to Cairo. After assignment to Kellis’s mission, he took parachute training. The other member of Kellis’s team was Petty Officer Michael Angelos of Chicago, whose specialty was demolitions. Angelos had received his OSS demolitions training at Areas A and B. Typical of OSS informality, Cappony and Angelos referred to their commanding officer as “Captain Jim.”²²⁷

Moving stealthily at night and dodging German patrols, the three men—Kellis, Cappony, and Angelos—sneaked across the border into Greece in early 1944. They were dressed in civilian clothes and carried bags containing their American uniforms, a radio, some weapons and money in local currency as well as gold coins. All three could speak Greek fluently, and a friendly fisherman put them in contact with the local leader of the *Andarte* partisans. He was suspicious of these newcomers, but when he realized that the Americans could supply his men with arms and ammunitions, he agreed to help Kellis in his mission. Cappony radioed the news to the OSS office in Cairo and also made contact with the OSS base station in Bari, Italy. But the team had already been betrayed. An informer had notified the Germans and patrols approached the village. When the partisans identified the informer, Cappony later recalled, they “dragged him out naked, made him march up the hill, dig his own grave, and then shot him in the head.”²²⁸ The American team withdrew from the village and moved to the top of the highest mountain in the area. There they lived in caves or old Greek Army tents and subsisted on bean soup, black bread, and an occasional piece of cheese. “I went from 180 to 118 pounds,”

²²⁶ Lt. Cmdr. Richard M. Kelly, USNR, “Mission to Greece,” *Blue Book: Magazine of Adventure for Men* (November 1946), 76-78, copy in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 7, Folder 7, National Archives II. Kelly was head of the OSS Maritime Unit in the eastern Mediterranean, 1943-1945.

²²⁷ Kelly, “Mission to Greece,” 76-78, and Spiro Cappony, telephone interview with the author, 16 September 2006. In his memoirs, Hayden does not mention Cappony by name but refers only to “an enlisted man from the Navy who was fluent in Greek, telegraphy, and cipher,” Sterling Hayden, *Wanderer* (New York: Knopf, 1970), 310.

²²⁸ Spiro Cappony, telephone interview with the author, 16 September 2006.

Cappony said. “The menu wasn’t too good.”²²⁹ Relying on women and girls, whom the Germans permitted more freedom of movement than men, Kellis established an intelligence and courier network. Since he found the partisans largely unarmed and untrained, he recruited former officers and noncoms from the Greek Army and set up a guerrilla training school.

Arriving at local villages wearing their American uniforms with a U.S. flag patch on the shoulder, Kellis, Cappony, and Angelos would receive an enthusiastic welcome. The villagers were excited to see the Americans, especially Greek Americans who could speak the native language fluently. But in their sojourns as they moved closer to their targets, the Americans and the accompanying partisans often had to fight their way out of surprise attacks by German patrols. Once, they escaped only by leaping off a cliff into the trees and brush below.²³⁰ Having established a working relationship with the partisans, Kellis summoned the remaining section of the mission. They came ashore at night in March 1944, delivered by the OSS Maritime Unit in a *caïque*, a small, schooner-like vessel the Greeks used for trading all across the Aegean Sea. The new team members were Navy Lieutenant John (“Johnny”) Athens from Tulsa, Oklahoma; Gunnery Sergeant Thomas L. Curtis, a tough old Marine from Boston; and Chief Petty Officer George Psoinos from Lowell, Massachusetts. Unlike most of the OSS recruits, Curtis was a career military man. He had joined the Marines in 1935 and by 1942, the tough, brawny sergeant was an instructor at the Marine base at Quantico teaching men who would become part of the Marines’ 1st Raider Battalion. Later that year, he was one of the first Marines transferred to the OSS. His first assignment for OSS Special Operations Branch was to train its recruits at Area A in paramilitary combat and at Area D in amphibious warfare. In September 1943, “Gunny” Curtis was sent to Cairo to be part of the reinforcements for Kellis’s SO mission the following year.²³¹ The reinforcements brought ten tons of weapons, ammunition, demolitions, food, clothing, medicine, another supplies. These were hauled from the seacoast in horse-drawn wagons to the team’s mountaintop headquarters. With such equipment, the partisan force grew to more than 300 men, and Kellis began a rigorous training program geared to his sabotage mission. One group of partisans was trained by Gunny Curtis and others in the use of weapons. The other was trained by Angelos and others in the use of the new plastic explosives. The two groups were kept apart from each other, and neither was told of their objective.

Their objective was the destruction of the two main railroad bridges over the Evros River, one crossing into Bulgaria, the other heading west across Greece toward Yugoslavia. To distract the Germans, Kellis also decided on a diversion attack on a small bridge that was near the German garrisons but fifty miles from the real targets. In addition, deceptive rumors were circulated to the local Gestapo, who knew that there was an American team in the area, but could neither find them nor ascertain their objective.

²²⁹ Christin Nance Lazerus, “Greece Honors Spiro Cappony,” *Post-Tribune*, 23 November 2007, reprinted in *OSS Society Digest*, Number 1911, 25 November 2007, osssociety@yahoo.com, accessed 25 November 2007.

²³⁰ Kelly, “Mission to Greece,” 79-82.

²³¹ Arthur E. Mielke, “Gunny Curtis,” *Leatherneck Magazine*, January 1946, 22; Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS*, 99.

On 28 May 1944, the diversionary team, led by Psoinos and Cappony, and the two teams attacking the main bridges arrived at their target areas and saw the bridges for the first time. "We had no difficulty avoiding the German guards," Kellis reported, "but my first sight of the [Svilengrad, Bulgaria] bridge was a shock. It looked too big and too substantial for us to destroy, even with twelve hundred pounds of plastic [explosives]. The structure was built of steel and reinforced concrete. It had four massive concrete piers, each of which was eight by ten feet. The overall length was 240 feet, and a single railroad track rested on a heavy steel frame which was solidly set in concrete arches." Kellis and Athens realized that the explosives would have to be "very carefully placed and thoroughly tamped to utilize the full force of the explosion."²³² Around midnight on 29 May, Kellis's men eliminated the sentries and carefully and quietly planted the explosives. They were making the connections with the prima cord on the center of the bridge, when something awakened the Germans in their barracks. "They fired a flare and opened up with a machine gun and sub-machine guns in the general direction of the bridge," Kellis wrote.²³³ But the Germans were too late, the saboteurs set the fuses, ran from the bridge, and a few moments later the entire structure was shattered in a series of enormous explosions.

Meanwhile, the other main mission, headed by Gunny Curtis and Angelos, had launched their nighttime assault on the Alexandroupolis railroad bridge in Greece, a 100-foot long bridge supported by a single, eighty-foot high pier. They evaded a roving German patrol and when they arrived at the bridge itself, they found that the thirty guards were Greek policemen. Gunny Curtis held a submachine gun to the stomach of one of the Greek policeman, announced in fractured Greek: "I'm going to blow this bridge and I'll do the same to you if necessary."²³⁴ He then gave the frightened policeman the option of helping him. The man agreed and so did some of the others. As the Americans and some of the Greeks began to put 500 pounds of explosives in place, a German patrol arrived and started shooting. The partisans accompanying the Americans were able to hold them off, while the explosives were placed. Then Curtis shortened the time delay from nine to three minutes and sprinted away as fast as he could. Three minutes later a blast rocked the ravine, sent the bridge framework into the air, and shot a column of flame and smoke that could be seen for twenty miles. Fifty miles away, Cappony and Psoinos and their group of partisans had created a diversion at a bridge not far from the German garrison. With their missions accomplished, all three teams fled into the night and successfully evaded capture by the Germans.²³⁵

Kellis's mission was a complete success. The destruction of the two main bridges severely restricted the flow of chrome ore so important to the German war effort. The team had completely destroyed the bridge at Alexandroupolis. It took the Germans nearly five weeks to replace it. The Svilengrad Bridge was replaced with a temporary structure in three and a half weeks, but that was later washed out by the river's spring floods and

²³² Kelly, "Mission to Greece," 83.

²³³ Report of the Evros [River] Mission, as quoted in OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 123.

²³⁴ Mielke, "Gunny Curtis," 22.

²³⁵ Kelly, "Mission to Greece," 83-86.

never again carried any appreciable amount of freight shipments, and the supply of Turkish chrome to Germany was dramatically reduced.²³⁶

For the rest of 1944, the main OSS activity in Greece was the joint SOE/OSS Operation “Smashem” aimed at hampering the withdrawal of 80,000 German troops to be used against the major thrust of the western Allies following the Normandy and Riviera landings in France.²³⁷ The main OSS effort in conjunction with the partisans was the work of eight Greek-American Operations Groups, less than 200 men in all. The Greek government in exile had requested them. The OG teams were recruited from the U.S. Army’s 122nd Infantry Battalion, itself a special unit known as the “Greek Battalion,” half of whose members were Greek Americans and half were Greek nationals in the United States who wanted to fight the Germans.²³⁸ Like the other OGs, the Greek Americans and Greek Nationals trained at Areas F, B, and A before going overseas for additional training in North Africa. When they left the United States in December 1943, they were in high spirits, dressed smartly in the new trim, “Eisenhower jackets” and paratrooper jump boots, and singing in both English and Greek. Communications officer Theodore Russell said “We looked good, acted good, and the biggest thing, we felt good. Officers from other outfits would ask me, ‘Who are you guys?’ Security told us to say that we [were] truck drivers; they knew that wasn’t the case.”²³⁹

Beginning in April 1944, they infiltrated into Greece by parachute drop or fishing boat, and connected with partisan groups at strategic points. Led by officers such as Captain George Verghis and Lieutenants Nicholas G. Pappas and John Giannaris, they severed rail lines, blew up bridges, planted mines and fired bazookas and mortars at trains and truck convoys.²⁴⁰ Two enlisted men received Silver Star Medals in the guerrilla campaign. Despite being hit by a rifle bullet in the leg and then by grenade fragments in the head, Corporal Spero Psarakis from Brooklyn, New York, had continued to attack a German Army billet guarding the Athens-Salonika Railroad. With his submachine gun, he killed all eight Germans in the command center, which enabled the rest of his unit to destroy seven bridges along the line.²⁴¹ The other was T/5 Gus L. Palans, 23, from Burlington, Vermont, who like the others trained at Areas F and B in 1943; despite heavy machine gun fire, he helped prepare and blow a charge that destroyed a vital railroad

²³⁶ Maj. James Kellis Report, except reprinted in Kelly, “Mission to Greece,” 86.

²³⁷ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 123-24.

²³⁸ “Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, Greek Operations,” www.ossog.org/greek. html. Accessed 16 June 2008.

²³⁹ Ted Russell, interview in O’Donnell, *Operatives, Spies and Saboteurs*, 110-11. The “Eisenhower jacket” adopted in 1943 was a trim, waist-length jacket, popularized by General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

²⁴⁰ “Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, Greek Operations,” www.ossog.org/greek. html, accessed 16 June 2008.

²⁴¹ MTO USA, General Orders No. 71, 18 April 1945, Award of Silver Star, Maj. Gen. George D. Pence, chief of staff, p. 4; OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 12, Folder 149, National Archives II.

line.²⁴² Between September and December 1944, the OGs, supported by local guerrillas and supplied by air from Cairo, mined roads, ambushed more than a dozen trains and dozens of truck convoys, destroyed 15 bridges, blew up six miles of railroad track, and killed nearly 400 enemy soldiers.²⁴³

The Germans sought to capture, torture and kill partisans and the Allied teams, and also took reprisals against civilians. Among the 150 men in the Greek-American OGs, one was killed, and two officers and nine enlisted men were wounded.²⁴⁴ As Greek OG Group II, attacked a pillbox and outpost guarding the Salonika-Athens railroad line north of Lamia, Sergeant Michaelis Tsirmulas was mortally wounded by German machine gun fire. His commander, Lieutenant Giannaris, ran to help him and was nearly killed when he stepped on a mine. Subsequently, Giannaris spent the next two years in Army hospitals. Almost sixty years later, the Defense Department awarded all the members of Operations Group II Bronze Star Medals.²⁴⁵ SO units also continued active during 1944. After blowing up the Evros River bridges, James Kellis and his SO team attacked German transportation facilities throughout northeastern Greece. Kellis was wounded and so was Seaman Spiro Cappony, his radio operator, Cappony had been shot in the arm, and back at camp, the wound had begun to fester. Since the team at that time had no antiseptics and to prevent infection and gangrene, a pot of boiling olive oil was poured over the wound to cauterize it. Cappony fainted from the pain and still carries the scars. He recovered, but for some time he had to tap out his telegraph messages with his left hand. Kellis was decorated and Cappony was awarded a Bronze Star.²⁴⁶ By December 1944, the bulk of the German troops had surrendered or left, and the OSS OG and SO teams were withdrawn, having provided much secret intelligence, effectively supplied guerrillas, and performed a major contribution in delaying the removal of German troops to the crucial theaters of the war.

²⁴² Patrick Kane, "As the Tide Turned in World War II, Keeping Nazi Troops Away," Petersburg, Va., *Progress-Index*, 16 May 2008, A1, reprinted in *OSS Society Digest*, Number 2063, 27 May 2008, ossociety@yahogroups.com, accessed 27 May 2008.

²⁴³ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 124; O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 110-23.

²⁴⁴ Report filed with OSS Headquarters, 24 December 1944 of Greek/US OG Operations in Greece, 1944. I am indebted to Robert E. Perdue, Ph.D., for telling me about this document from the OSS Records (RG 226), telephone conversations, 31 August and 5 September 2007. This report deals only with the Greek/US OGs. There were other casualties in other OSS branches in Greece.

²⁴⁵ O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 118; "WWII O.S.S. Volunteer Unit to Be Awarded Bronze Star for Valor in Nazi-Occupied Greece," *OSS Society Digest*, Number 2043, 29 April 2008, ossociety@yahogroups.com, accessed 29 April 2008; Greek Operations, Group II, "Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, Greek Operations," www.ossog.org/greek.html, accessed 16 June 2008.

²⁴⁶ David Hendrix, "Under Deep Cover [Spiro Cappony]," undated [1996] and unidentified newspaper clipping, p. C-2, provided to the author by Spiro Cappony, 31 October 2006. Spiro Cappony, telephone interview with the author, 16 September 2006. Because of the wound in his right arm, Cappony had to telegraph his messages with his left hand. The base station operator noticed the difference and questioned whether it was really Cappony or whether the set had been captured. Through prearranged signal, Cappony was able to convince the base station that it was he. Cappony was awarded a Bronze Star.

Amidst Warring Factions in Yugoslavia

In Yugoslavia, the goals of the OSS were to help the resistance forces to sabotage railroad lines carrying supplies into Germany, to tie down tens of thousands of German occupation troops and prevent them from being used on the front lines against the Allied armies. In addition, the OSS in Yugoslavia rescued aviators who had been shot down on the bombing runs from Italy to the Ploesti oilfields in Rumania, and it also sought to deceive Hitler into thinking that the American invasion might occur in the Balkans instead of in Normandy. The Germans had invaded Yugoslavia in the spring of 1941 and occupied the most populated areas of the country, but a substantial Resistance movement quickly emerged and took refuge in the sparsely settled mountains. The movement split between the Partisans under Communist Party leader Josip Broz (“Tito”), a Croatian, with their core area in the mountains and forests of northern Bosnia, and the Royalist Chetniks under Yugoslavian General Draža Mihailović, a Serb, who operated out of their base in the wooded mountains of Montenegro in the south.²⁴⁷ Bitter enemies, they fought each other as much as the Germans. Among the undercover operations by the Western Allies, Britain initially had a monopoly in the Balkans, but in the late summer of 1943, Donovan was able, despite SOE objections, to begin sending OSS operatives into Yugoslavia to establish connections and sources of information independent of the British. In the third week in August, two OSS Special Operations officers were airdropped, one into the headquarters of each of the two hostile factions. Army Captain Melvin O. (“Benny”) Benson was infiltrated into Tito’s headquarters; and Marine Captain Walter R. Mansfield was air dropped into Mihailović’s camp.

Parachuting alone into the area near Mihailović’s base just before midnight on 19 August 1944, Mansfield was a highly regarded SO officer. A Boston native, Harvard graduate and a former member of Donovan’s law firm, the 32-year-old Mansfield had joined the OSS as a civilian. But he had attended Marine Reserve Officer class and also learned demolitions and guerrilla warfare at OSS SO training areas in Maryland, Virginia, and England.²⁴⁸ Accompanying him were 15 canisters filled with small arms, radios, and three tons of ammunition. A few minutes after he landed amidst the bonfires of the drop zone, he was surrounded by a small group of ragged-looking men with black beards. “I told...their leader that I was an American,” Mansfield recalled, “whereupon they all began to shoop, holler, and kiss me (black beards and all) shouting ‘*Zdravo, Purvi Americanec*’ (Greetings, first American). I mustered up my Serbian to reply, ‘*Zdravo Chetnici*’—the first American had landed.”²⁴⁹ Mansfield was later joined by

²⁴⁷ The term Chetniks was derived from *cheta*, the traditional Serbian name for the armed bands who had fought against the Ottoman Turks. As the rival Yugoslav movements fought each other as much as the Germans and took no prisoners, most of the 1.2 million Yugoslavs who were killed in the war may have died at the hands of other Yugoslavs. Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies, 1941-1945*, 2nd ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987).

²⁴⁸ Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS*, 73-75.

²⁴⁹ Walter R. Mansfield, “Marine with the Chetniks,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (January-February 1946): 4.

Lieutenant Colonel Albert B. Seitz and Captain George Musulin, an American of Serbian ancestry. All three were much impressed by the Chetniks.²⁵⁰

Allied action in Yugoslavia remains controversial. Leftists among the British SOE mission attached to Tito emphasized the superiority of his forces, overstating the communist partisans' numbers and accomplishments, while denigrating the Chetniks.²⁵¹ Although London cut off supplies to Mihailović, the OSS argued that both Yugoslavian factions were effective and should be aided in their separate areas of control—Tito in the north and west, Mihailović in the east and south. Captain Mansfield wrote strong endorsements of the Chetnik leader. Yugoslavs loyal to the monarchy and Mihailović had been among the foreign groups trained at OSS Area B. But at the Tehran conference in November 1943, Stalin and Churchill backed Tito and insisted that Roosevelt cut off all support for Mihailović.²⁵² Despite Donovan's protests, the American OSS mission to Mihailović were forced to leave the Chetniks in the early months of 1944.²⁵³

Tito and his Partisans had their admirers in the OSS. Captain Benson was the first, followed by Lieutenant Colonel Richard ("Bob") Weil, Jr., 27, a former President of Bamberger department stores, a division of R.H. Macy and Company, who accompanied one of the OSS mission's to Tito.²⁵⁴ In November 1943, Lieutenant George Wuchinich, a second-generation American from Pittsburgh whose parents had been Orthodox Serbs from Slovenia, and who had trained in 1942 at Areas B, A, C, D and RTU-11, led the "Alum" Team that was parachuted into Partisan-held territory in the mountains near Ljubljana in Slovenia in November 1943, the first OSS team to arrive in northern Yugoslavia (Tito's headquarters was farther south).²⁵⁵ Wuchinich was accompanied by a

²⁵⁰ Walter R. Mansfield, "Is There a Case for Mihailovic?" *American Mercury* (June 1946): 716; Albert B. Seitz, *Mihailovich: Hoax or Hero* (Columbus, Oh.: Leigh House, 1953).

²⁵¹ British policy initially supported Mihailović, but by the summer of 1943, exaggerated reports from British SOE/SIS officers in Yugoslavia contrasting Mihailović as inactive and Tito more aggressive led Churchill to reassess and break with Mihailović in favor of Tito. F. H. Hinsley, et al., *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, vol. 3, *Its Influence on Strategy and Operations*, part I (London: H.M. Stationers, 1984), 137-72. On the controversy, see Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies*; David Martin, *The Web of Disinformation: Churchill's Yugoslav Blunder* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1990); and Franklin Lindsay, *Beacons in the Night: With the OSS and Tito's Partisans in Wartime Yugoslavia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993).

²⁵² Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, Volume VII, *Road to Victory, 1941-1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986), 317-22, 571, 614, 640-41, 739-40, 755, 893.

²⁵³ Even though the OSS removed its official mission to Mihailović, it placed some SI officers with him for "infiltrating agents into Austria and Germany." William J. Donovan to Dwight D. Eisenhower, March 31, 1944; Eisenhower to Donovan, 9 April 1944, in Eisenhower, *Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 3: 1815.

²⁵⁴ James Grafton Rodgers, *Wartime Washington: The Secret OSS Journal of James Grafton Rogers, 1942-1943*, Thomas F. Troy, ed., (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1987), 32n. After the war, Weil became President of Macy's flagship store in New York City in 1949.

²⁵⁵ "A Good Joe Named George," 9 December 1944, p. 1, Interviews with Returned Men, Schools and Training Branch, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 2, File 31, National Archives II. Although "George's" last name is redacted on the typescript, the tab attached to it indicates "Wuchinich."

Greek-American radio operator, Sergeant Sfikes, and four other enlisted men. He found the Partisans suspicious of both the British and the Americans. But when Wuchinich was finally allowed to meet the local general and accompany the Partisans into battle against the Germans, he became glowing in his reports. Indeed, he compared them to the dedicated, long-suffering Continentals in the American Revolutionary War.²⁵⁶ Finally, in June 1944, Wuchinich gained enough trust to be allowed to pursue his assigned mission—to secure daily reports to OSS on the main Balkan railroad system which ran through Maribor at the Slovenian-Austrian border before dividing into separate main lines to Italy and Greece. Trekking through the mountains, they established an observation post overlooking Maribor and then returned to camp. From 30 June through 4 August, the observation post sent as much detailed information about troops and supplies going through the throat of the southeastern European rail network as the Allies could desire. The Germans finally located it, killed the radio operator and seized his equipment, but the Allies had gotten the information during period immediately following the Normandy invasion, which is when it was most needed.²⁵⁷ Wuchinich's team also gained valuable information from a deserter about the development and proving ground for the new "flying bomb," the V-1 "buzz bomb," rocket the Germans began to launch against England in mid-1944; and they helped rescue more than a hundred downed Allied aviators. Wuchinich's reinforced team did suffer casualties, however; at least two of the Americans were killed.²⁵⁸

Activity by the OSS increased dramatically in Yugoslavia in 1944, especially support for Tito and his Partisans. The number of OSSers attached to the Partisans grew from six in late 1943 to 40 men in 15 different missions in 1944. Major Frank Lindsay's SO team destroyed a stone viaduct carrying the main railroad line between Germany, Austria and Italy, impeding German reinforcements and supplies. From January to August 1944, Donovan's organization sent detachments of Yugoslavian-American Operational Groups, together with some Greek-American and other OG sections, all of them trained at Areas F, B, and A, to accompany British commandos on a series of raids on German garrisons along the Dalmatian coast of Croatia. There was a dual purpose in this campaign. One was to draw off German troops who were being used in a major offensive designed to crush Tito's Partisans. The other purpose was to deceive Hitler into thinking that the main invasion by the Western Allies might come in the Balkans instead of France.²⁵⁹ Corporal Otto N. Feher, from Cleveland, the son of Hungarian immigrants, was a member of the Operational Group team that helped raid and defeat the German garrisons on the sizable islands of Solta and Brac between Dubrovnik and Split. "They told us from the start, there's no prisoners. You get caught, you're dead," Feher said. He

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 1-10.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 11-19.

²⁵⁸ O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 84.

²⁵⁹ Raids were staged from Vis against the islands of Hvar, Solta, Korcula, Mjle, and Brac, and the Peljesac Peninsula. These, together with a list of the members of the Yugoslavian OGs (including some members of Greek and other OGs) are in "Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, Yugoslavian Operations," www.ossog.org/yugoslavian.html. accessed 16 June 2008.

also reported that nearly one quarter of his 109-member contingent (perhaps the contingent he originally trained with) were casualties during the war.²⁶⁰ The raids, together with the aerial attacks on German forces by Allied aircraft, assisted Tito in narrowly escaping capture. The OSS also kept supply lines open from Bari by which to sustain the Yugoslav Resistance.

Sterling Hayden in Tito's Partisans in Yugoslavia

OSS delivered agents and supplies to Yugoslavia in two ways—by air or by sea. By air, it was initially by parachute drops, although increasingly rough airstrips were built, first for small planes and then for two-engine transports. The majority of supplies came in by boat, despite the Germans' control of the coastline and patrol of the seacoast. OSS Maritime Unit was in charge of the seaborne ferrying, but it was actually performed by many men from Special Operations. The trip was 150 due north from Bari to the island of Vis, the OSS/SOE base nearly 50 miles from the Yugoslavian coast and was made in fishing boats and small schooners in an overnight run from Bari. One of the main skippers was 27-year-old actor and seaman Sterling Hayden (Captain John Hamilton, USMCR) of OSS Special Operations. After joining the Marines as a private in 1942, Hayden went to OCS and received an officer's commission (he also legally changed his name to John Hamilton to avoid publicity), was transferred to OSS Special Operations and underwent paramilitary training at Area B in the summer of 1943.²⁶¹ The initial plan was for Hayden and radioman Spiro Cappony, who underwent SO training with him at Area B, to go to Greece, but although Cappony wound up in Greece, Hayden was sent to Italy to skipper boats to Yugoslavia. Hayden was an experienced seaman who had spent nearly a dozen years sailing out of New England on various vessels from schooners, to fishing boats, to freighters. Now Hayden, along with Captain Melvin ("Benny") Benson, Lieutenant Robert Thompson, and Danish-born Captain Hans Tofte, co-instructor with William ("Dan") Fairbairn at Areas F, B and A, ran operation "Audrey," whose mission was to ferry supplies to anti-fascist partisans and retrieve rescued Allied airman from Yugoslavia as well as western Greece, and Albania.²⁶² With his clandestine cargo, Hayden sailed his old 50-foot sailboat with a diesel engine at night and through storm-tossed waters, evading high-speed German E-boats, Stuka dive bombers, and other hazards, and making ten successful trips back and forth across the Adriatic, taking

²⁶⁰ Brian Albrecht, "WWII Vet Recalls the 'Stuff that Stays with You,'" *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 27 May 2007, reprinted in *OSS Society Digest*, Number 1760, 30 May 2007, osssociety@yahoo.com, accessed 30 May 2007. The one quarter casualty rate may have included the more than a dozen Americans from the Dawes Mission to Czechoslovakia killed in January 1945.

²⁶¹ Hayden, *Wanderer*, 299-302; see also Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS*, 80-86.

²⁶² Hayden, *Wanderer*, 313-14; John Hamilton [Sterling Hayden], "Liaison Officer with the Partisans," 10 November 1944, p. 2, Interviews with Returned Men, Schools and Training Branch, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 2, File 31, National Archives II.

supplies and often returning with downed airmen who had been rescued by the partisans and the OSS.²⁶³

Intrigued by Tito's partisans, Hayden accompanied a band of them in the summer of 1944 deep into Croatia and in one episode within 20 miles of the border with Hungary joined them in the summer of 1944 and decided in the summer of 1944 to see some action inland and himself had been infiltrated deep into Croatia in the summer of 1944 to see them in action and in one mission, as far as twenty miles from the Hungarian border, nearly 200 miles inland, to rescue downed Allied aviators. He was impressed by their dedication to their mission for Yugoslavia and their support for the American OSS men, who they contrasted with British "imperialists." "It is impossible," Hayden later told a group of OSS trainees, "to work with the Partisans and not be completely moved by their determination and sacrifice."²⁶⁴

Some people in OSS believed that Hayden, Benson, Thompson and Tofte, the Operation Audrey supply team, had become too close to Tito's communist partisans and lost their objectivity. Most of the team was removed from the assignment in early 1944, and Tofte himself was sent back to the United States, officially for insubordination. Donovan personally liked Tofte and thought his operation had been quite successful. So in August 1944, the OSS director had Tofte transferred from SO to SI and sent to London where he became second in command of intelligence procurement.²⁶⁵ Sterling Hayden returned from the interior of Yugoslavia in July 1944, and resumed the sailing trips to the Dalmatian islands, in one of which he was ambushed on Korcula and almost captured. In the fall, he came down with jaundice and nervous exhaustion and was shipped back to the states in November 1944. After a month's rest, was sent to the OSS unit with the U.S. 1st Army as it pushed forward from eastern France into Germany. For his gallantry in the face of the enemy, Hayden was awarded the Silver Star Medal.²⁶⁶

The OSS effort in Yugoslavia was a success to the extent that its support of the Resistance did help keep many German divisions there and not at the main Allied fronts and it also helped rescue thousands of downed Allied aviators and aircrews. But given the political decisions made by the Big Three, Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt, the proportion of support went increasingly and overwhelmingly to Tito's Partisans instead of Michailović's Chetniks. In the summer of 1944, Tito's Partisans were again on the attack—against the weakened Chetniks as well as against the Germans. OSS re-established its contact with and support of Mihailović that summer, primarily through a new unit created to help rescue downed airmen. By the end of the war, some 2,000 downed airmen had been rescued and evacuated via Chetnik or Partisan controlled areas

²⁶³ Ibid., 3.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 2. See also the account in his memoirs, which is even more forthcoming about his admiration for the tough, communist partisans. Hayden, *Wanderer*, 315-320.

²⁶⁵ Henrik Krüger, Hans V. Tofte: *Den danske Krigshelt, der kom til tops i CIA* (Copenhagen: Aschelhoug, 2005). I am indebted to Henrik Krüger for this information from his book; Henrik Krüger emails to the author, 4 and 5 August 2006.

²⁶⁶ Hayden, *Wanderer* 320-333; Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS*, 86.

of Yugoslavia.²⁶⁷ The majority of these airmen were Americans shot down during U.S. 15th Air Force's bombing raids from Italy against the heavily defended Axis oilfields and refineries in Ploesti, Romania. Most were crews of B-24 "Liberator" bombers, but some were pilots of their fighter escorts. OG member Otto Feher remembered the Resistance bringing in a Tuskegee Airman, the first black pilot he had ever seen, who had eluded capture by the Germans for several weeks.²⁶⁸ Another 1,000 airmen had been rescued by OSS SO in the rest of the Mediterranean Theater, a total of 3,000 skilled Allied airmen rescued to fly again.²⁶⁹ Allied support of the wartime guerrilla operations, first of the Chetniks and then of the Partisans, had included the equipping of tens of thousands of guerrillas. They had held down 35 Axis divisions, including 15 German Army divisions that might otherwise have been deployed in Italy, France, or the Eastern Front.²⁷⁰ But Allied favoritism towards the Partisans and especially the Red Army's direct assistance in the fall of 1944 helped Tito create a communist state in postwar Yugoslavia.²⁷¹ Similarly, although a small OSS mission worked with the rival communist and non-communist resistance movements in tiny, neighboring Albania, primarily to rescue survivors from downed American planes, it was the communists who came to dominate the country in the postwar era.²⁷²

²⁶⁷ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 132; Gregory A. Freeman, *The Forgotten 500: The Untold Story of the Men Who Risked All for the Greatest Rescue Mission of World War II* (New York: Nal Caliber, 2007), of an OSS mission with the Chetniks that rescued 512 downed American airmen in 1944.

²⁶⁸ Brian Albrecht, "WWII Vet Recalls the 'Stuff that Stays with You,'" *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 27 May 2007, reprinted in *OSS Society Digest*, Number 1760, 30 May 2007, ossociety@yahoo.com.

²⁶⁹ OSS, Schools and Training Branch, "Office of Strategic Services (OSS): Organization and Functions," June 1945, p. 18, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 141, Box 4, Folder 36, National Archives II.

²⁷⁰ The 15 German divisions in Yugoslavia would otherwise have been a substantial help to the 26 German divisions fighting the Allies in Italy, for example. OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 127.

²⁷¹ After the German surrender in May 1945, Tito ended the coalition government in Yugoslavia, consolidated his and the Communist Party's power and took revenge on his enemies. Mihailović was denounced as a traitor and executed in July 1946.

²⁷² The Communist guerrilla leader, Enver Hoxha, remained dictator of Albania until his death in 1983. The OSS mission to Albania beginning in November 1943, was led by Army Captain Thomas E. Stefan from Laconia, New Hampshire, the son of Albanian immigrants, recruited by the OSS after Military Intelligence Service training at Camp Ritchie, and Marine Sergeant (and later lieutenant) Nick R. ("Cooky") Kukich, 27, a coal miner from Ohio and the son of Serbian immigrants, who received OSS paramilitary training at Area B and radio training at Area C. Peter Lucas, "A Marine Has Landed—Albania, 1943," *Leatherneck Magazine*, July 2004, 46-49; and Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS*, 87-89, an otherwise careful study, which mistakes Kukich's nickname for his surname, i.e., "Lieutenant Cooky." In a special mission in December 1943, Major Lloyd Smith of SI, with the aid of the guerrillas, successfully rescued 13 female U.S. Army nurses, 13 male medics, and four crewmen, who had been trapped in the Albanian mountains when their plane went off course in a storm and crashed in early November. See the memoir of one of the nurses, Agnes Jensen Mangerich as told to Evelyn M. Monahan and Rosemary L. Neidel, *Albanian Escape: The True Story of U.S. Army Nurses Behind Enemy Lines* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999); and Peter Lucas, *The OSS in World War II Albania: Covert Operations and Collaboration with Communist Partisans* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2007), 52-53.

Disaster and Death in Czechoslovakia

Unfulfilled hopes, unforeseen setbacks and faulty planning led to the worst disaster in the history of the OSS. The place was central Slovakia. The time was the fall and winter of 1944-1945. The impetus was an uprising of several thousand partisans and the revolt of two divisions of the Slovak Home Army against the Nazi collaborationist regime as the Anglo-American armies pushed eastward toward Germany and the Red Army pushed the *Wehrmacht* westward towards the Czechoslovakian border. The Czech government in exile in London under President Edvard Beneš flew in a regular Army general to take charge of the 1st Czechoslovak Army in Slovakia and appealed to the Allies to aid the revolt which rapidly grew to more than 60,000 soldiers and partisans.²⁷³ To assist the Slovakian insurgency and rescue downed pilots, as well as to establish an intelligence network in Czechoslovakia and neighboring Austria and Hungary, the OSS's Special Operations headquarters for the Mediterranean Theater assembled two OSS missions of more than two dozen OSS personnel.²⁷⁴

Chosen to command the SO's "Dawes" Mission to aid the Uprising and help rescue downed airmen was Navy Lieutenant J. Holt Green, scion of an old and prominent family from Charleston, South Carolina. Holt Green was a graduate of the Harvard Business School and had managed the family's textile mills in North Carolina before joining the Special Operations Branch of the OSS in early 1943. He and most of the other SO members of the team had trained at Areas F, B or A; so had some of the SI members in addition to the SI schools; and the radio operators had, of course, also trained at Area C. Green was not inexperienced. Overseas, he had participated in several missions to Yugoslavia. Most of the enlisted men in the Dawes Mission were the kind of ethnic Americans with roots in the occupied countries that Donovan had seen as potential "shadow warriors" conducting espionage and sabotage behind enemy lines. Master Sergeant Jaroslav ("Jerry") G. Mican, a native of Prague, had emigrated to Chicago in the 1920s, become a U.S. citizen, earned bachelor's and master's degrees and taught foreign languages in a Chicago high school. Politically active in Chicago's Czech and Slovak communities, Mican knew influential political figures in Illinois and in the Czech government in exile, including Vojta Beneš, brother of the former Czech President. Although 42, Mican had enlisted in the Army as a private and then joined OSS/SO. It was Mican who selected some of the other Czechoslovakians for the mission: Sergeant Joseph Horvath, 24, who had immigrated from Slovakia to Cleveland, Ohio, with his parents in 1928; and Czech-born Sergeant John Schwartz (code named Jan Krizan), of SI, who had escaped from the Nazis in 1940, fled to New York, and joined the U.S. Army before being recruited by the OSS. The two radio operators were both Chicagoans: Army Private Robert Brown would accompany Holt Green, who he had previously served on a mission in Yugoslavia, Navy Specialist First Class Charles O. Heller, also a Czech speaker,

²⁷³ Jim Downs, *World War II: OSS Tragedy in Slovakia* (Oceanside, Calif.: Liefrinck, 2002), 23-46. After Germany absorbed Czechoslovakia in 1938, the eastern part, Slovakia, was made a separate state, albeit a vassal state, and the collaborationist leaders who were put in power adopted a Nazi style political system.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., Edward Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II* (New York: Ballantine, 1972), 184-85, and "Allied Help of the USA and Participation of the Americans in the SNU [Slovak National Uprising] in the Year 1944," Slovak National Uprising Museum, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, www.muzeumsnp.sk.

would be the radioman for Schwartz. This was the first team sent in as the “Dawes” Mission, and of the six, only Schwartz would survive.²⁷⁵

On an old landing strip near Banská Bystrica the center of the uprising in western Slovakia, two, four-engine B-17G “Flying Fortresses” of the 15th U.S. Air Force landed on 17 September 1944, with the six Americans and five tons of arms and ammunition. The crowd applauded, but downed American airmen waiting to be rescued, took one look at Green in his naval officers hat and asked “What the hell is the Navy doing here?”²⁷⁶ The two planes returned to Italy with 15 Allied airmen rescued by the partisans. Green and his team set up a headquarters and established communications with Bari. Three weeks later, a second and much larger OSS contingent of arrived on 7 October. Six B-17s with 32 P-51 fighter escorts filled the landing field. They brought in more than a dozen additional OSS personnel, plus twenty tons of supplies: submachine guns, bazookas, ammunitions, explosives, communications equipment, medical supplies, and food and clothing. They took back 28 downed American airmen. The second contingent included SO, SI, Commo, and Medical Corps personnel, because the OSS regional headquarters in Italy now sent more SI personnel to spread an intelligence network.

A former Austrian, Lieutenant Francis Perry, an SI officer from Brooklyn, was assigned to return to his native Vienna, 120 miles to the southwest, and recruit an espionage network. Captain Edward V. Baranski, SI, an ethnic Slovak from Illinois, who had been urging SI to infiltrate agent teams into Czechoslovakia for some time, was in charge of OSS SI’s “Day” Group, which was ordered to establish a ring of local spies in German-occupied Slovakia. His three SI team members included indigenous Slovak civilian agents, Anton (“Thomas”) Novak and Emil Tomes and civilian radio operator Daniel Paletich, a Croatian who spoke Slovak. Another group of SI agents, whose mission was to build a circuit of agents from Budapest, Hungary, 100 miles to the south, included two ethnic Hungarians from New York City, Lieutenant Tabor Keszthelyi and Sergeant Steve J. Catlos, plus Private Kenneth V. Dunlevy, an SI radio operator and cryptographer. Special Operations sent along Lieutenant James Harwey Gaul, son of a prosperous Pittsburgh family, who had done archaeological excavations in Slovakia while a graduate student at Harvard. He was to assist Holt Green. To instruct partisans in the use of American submachine guns, bazookas and other weapons as well as plastic explosives, SO weapons and demolition experts Captain William A. McGregor, former head of the lacrosse team at the University of Maryland, and Lieutenant Kenneth Lain, who had been an athlete at the University of Illinois, were included. Air Corps Lieutenant Lane B. Miller from California had been a B-24 “Liberator” pilot, who had been shot down and rescued by partisans in Yugoslavia, was to be in charge of the airmen rescue mission. Naval photographer Nelson B. Paris came along to record the historic mission with still and motion picture cameras. Learning about the mission, Associated Press war correspondent Joseph Morton from St. Joseph, Missouri, gained OSS permission at the last minute to accompany the group, and he climbed on board carrying his portable

²⁷⁵ Downs, *World War II: OSS Tragedy in Slovakia*, 48-55.

²⁷⁶ Hymoff, *OSS in World War II*, 186.

typewriter.²⁷⁷ Of these 13 men, only five, McGregor, Lain, Novak, Catlos and Dunlevy, would emerge from the mission alive.

Neither the Slovaks nor the OSS regional headquarters in Bari, Italy had anticipated just how quickly, forcefully and successfully the Germans would act, although Holt Green by radio had advised against sending in the second team and subsequently asked for an evacuation. Hitler recognized the danger the revolt posed to the supply lines to the *Wehrmacht* trying to stop the advancing Red Army, already in Poland, from getting to Germany itself, and he dispatched five veteran divisions, with artillery and armor, to crush it. When they quickly smashed the rebellious units of the Slovak Home Army, the partisans scattered, and SS, Gestapo, and special anti-partisan units hunted down partisans and those who had aided them. The Slovaks and the Dawes Mission had hoped that the Red Army, 200 miles away would break through the German defenses in the Carpathian Mountains, but the Soviets did not get through and liberate Slovakia until March 1945.²⁷⁸

OSS regional headquarters did eventually try to rescue the Americans, but bad weather prevented the flights, and then on 26 October, the German Army took Banská Bystrica and the airfield. Moving out ahead of the Germans, Holt Green decided to split the group of Americans, which had grown to 37 including the OSS teams and downed U.S. aviators, into four sections, hoping to reduce casualties and chances for capture. Like the partisans, the Americans headed for the Tatra Mountains to the north to await rescue by the Russians.²⁷⁹ The winter of 1944-1945 was cold and cruel, one of the worst in Europe in decades. Rain, mud, and then ice storms battered those seeking refuge in the mountains. Food was scarce. During a march of more than eighty miles along the mountain ridges in the direction of the Russian Army, the American OSS men and aviators lost members a few at a time. Then in mid-November, exhausted and freezing, all of the airmen along with two OSS officers chose to go down to a village and surrender. More were captured later as they tried to obtain food. As Christmas drew near, the remnants of the OSS mission, plus some British SOE and SIS agents, found shelter in a mountain hotel near Velny Bok, just north of Polomka, Sergeant Joe Horvath's birthplace. Holt Green organized a Christmas Eve party. On Christmas day they set flares for an expected airdrop of food and other supplies, but it did not arrive. On the next morning, 250 German troops of a special anti-partisan SS unit stormed up the mountain,

²⁷⁷ Hymoff, *OSS in World War II*, 186-89; Hymoff interviewed Schwartz, Catlos and Dunlevy in 1965, and reprints their report, *ibid.*, 189-221, 378n; Downs, *World War II: OSS Tragedy in Slovakia*, 11-18, 47-55, 78-84; and "Short Report on the American Mission to the Czechoslovak Forces of the Interior (CFI) at Banská-Bystrica; Sept.-Oct.1994; and "Dawes Military Mission to the Czechoslovak Forces of the Interior (C.F.I.), Banská-Bystrica, Slovakia; September-October, 1944," both in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 12, Folder 149, National Archives II.

²⁷⁸ OSS, *War Report of the OSS: Overseas Targets*, 134. The decision of the officers in Bari, Italy in charge of the "Dawes" mission to send in the second detachment despite Holt Green's advice led to a bitter dispute after the war. The official OSS evaluation did not acknowledge any responsibility although noting that there was "incomplete planning" in regard to the Slovak Resistance, and it blamed the failure of the uprising on lack of support from the Soviet Union and Great Britain. Downs, *World War II: OSS Tragedy in Slovakia*, 305-306.

²⁷⁹ O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 218.

overcame the partisan guards and captured Green and most of the Americans and British agents in his group after a firefight in which Green and James Gaul received gunshot wounds in their arms. The group had been betrayed by one of their partisan guards. Five members of the group, who had been quartered in a hut higher up the mountain, were able to avoid capture. The escapees included two Americans, Sergeant Steve Catlos and Private Kenneth Dunlevy; two British agents; and 24-year-old Maria Gulovich, a Slovakian schoolteacher and partisan, who had been hired by Holt Green as an interpreter and guide. She would help lead that small group to safety.²⁸⁰

Most of the members of the American and British missions, whether captured at Velny Bok or earlier, were taken 200 miles west to Mauthausen, near Linz, Austria, one of the infamous Nazi concentration and death camps. (The downed airmen, except for Lane Miller of the OSS mission, were taken to regular POW camps, and liberated at the end of the war.) The group from Velny Bok arrived on 7 January 1945, and Berlin sent special SS and Gestapo officers to interrogate them. Under the personal supervision of the camp commandant, SS Colonel Franz Ziereis, most of the British and American captives were tortured while being interrogated. The commanding officers were apparently tortured first. Captain Edward V. Baranski had his hands tied behind his back, his wrists attached to a chain hanging from a beam above, then he was hoisted upwards so that his whole weight pulled on his backward bent arms. He writhed in pain while being interrogated. Lieutenant Holt Green was put in a crouching position, his hands bound beneath his thighs, behind his knees. An interrogator struck him with a heavy whip across the face and back until they were bloody. The English major was tortured with what was called the “Tibetan prayer mill,” three or four wooden rings, which when strongly pressed together, crushed the victim’s fingers. The torture for these and other captives went on for two weeks. Berlin ordered them executed as spies, despite the fact that the military members had remained in uniform during the entire mission.

Beginning on the morning of January 24, 1945, the American and British prisoners—all of them that day or over the next three months, accounts differ—were taken one at a time to a windowless, underground bunker and shot in the back with a pistol by the camp commandant himself. The dead included British Major John Sehmer and several members of his SOE mission, among them a 30-year-old Slovak-American woman, Margita Kocková, a teacher who had returned to Slovakia and been assigned by the headquarters of the 1st Czechoslovak Army to be an interpreter for the British SOE team. The members of the American mission who were executed at Mauthausen included Captain Baranski, Lieutenants Green, Gaul, Keszthelyi, Miller, Perry, Sergeants Horvath and Mican; radio operators Brown and Heller; Navy photographer Paris; and AP correspondent Joe Morton, who had joined to report the story of the Dawes Mission. Two indigenous civilian members of the mission, Slovak Emile Tomes and Croatian Daniel

²⁸⁰ O’Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 221, citing a postwar report by Lt. Stefan Zenopian, one of the British SOE agents, “Zenopian Report,” OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 210, Box 295, National Archives II; Downs, *World War II: OSS Tragedy in Slovakia*, 205-236; Sonya N. Jason, *Maria Gulovich, OSS Heroine of World War II: The Schoolteacher Who Saved American Lives in Slovakia* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2008).

Pavletich, were captured and killed in Slovakia. Their deaths brought to 14 the total number of members of the Dawes Mission who were killed.²⁸¹

The group that had escaped capture at Velky Bok because they were farther up the mountain continued their wintry trek eastward through the mountains led by guide Maria Gulovich. Two weeks and fifty miles later, she and American Sergeants Steve Catlos and Kenneth Dunlevy, together with two members of the British mission, finally met the advancing Red Army. But instead of being rescued, they were interrogated by the Soviet secret police, who considered them possible spies and prevented them from contacting their own forces. Held anonymously in Soviet custody, the group was taken to Romania on the way to the Soviet Union. But at Bucharest, where there was an Allied mission, they were able clandestinely to contact an American general, and a group of GIs in jeeps came and whisked them to safety. The team brought with them their Slovak guide, Maria Gulovich, who later received a Bronze Star Medal for bravery and eventually became a U.S. citizen. Holt Green and James Gaul, the two commanders of the Dawes Mission, were posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.²⁸²

SS Colonel Franz Ziereis, the commandant at Mauthausen, was captured and mortally wounded by an American patrol on 23 May 1945, some sixty miles south of the camp from which he had fled at the approach of Patton's 3rd U.S. Army. Deputy Commandant, SS Lieutenant Colonel Georg Bachmayer, had shot his wife, children, and himself, the day Germany surrendered, May 7th. Torturer Walter Habecker was located by the British in 1947, arrested, and incarcerated in a military prison, where he later hanged himself. Some of the other interrogators and torturers were tried and hanged. Of the two top Nazis under Hitler, responsible for the executions at Mauthausen, as well as genocide against Jews and others and numerous other war crimes, SS chief Heinrich Himmler was captured and committed suicide with poison in May 1945. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Himmler's chief subordinate, who oversaw the SS, Gestapo, and the methods of liquidation of those in the Nazi camps, was tried, convicted, and sentenced to death at Nuremberg, with Donovan and several OSS men and others in the audience at the sentencing. Kaltenbrunner was subsequently hanged.²⁸³

²⁸¹ The Nazi regime publicly announced that 17 British and American "spies" had been executed on 24 January 1944; however, two of the witnesses, SS Officer Josef Niedermayer and Mauthausen prisoner Wilhelm Ornstein, later testified that only five to seven were killed on that date and the rest were executed subsequently. Downs, *World War II: OSS Tragedy in Slovakia*, passim, especially 285n; see also O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 224-225; "Report on Progress, 'Dawes' Case," OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 146, Box 36. Daniel Pavletich was captured in Piešťany and was executed either at Zvolen or possibly at Mauthausen; Emil Tomes was captured at Polana, escaped and was killed on 5 May 1945 in an uprising against the Germans. List of members with dates of capture and execution (or not) in Dawes Military Mission to the Czechoslovak Forces of the Interior (C.F.I.), Banská-Bystrica, Slovakia; September-October, 1944," OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 143, Box 12, Folder 149, National Archives II.

²⁸² Downs, *World War II: OSS Tragedy in Slovakia*, 247-325; O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 225-227, citing "Gulovich Report to OSS HQ," OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 108, Box 84; and "Experiences of Sgt. Catlos and Pvt.[sic] Dunlevy, Members of an OSS Mission to Slovakia," *ibid.*, Entry 210, Box 295, both in National Archives II.

²⁸³ Downs, *World War II: OSS Tragedy in Slovakia*, 150, 248, 271, 276, 322; Peter R. Black, *Ernst Kaltenbrunner: Ideological Soldier of the Third Reich* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Trapping German Troops in Norway

The Norwegian government in exile had asked the United States as well as Great Britain for assistance, and part of the help given by President Roosevelt was OSS support for the Norwegian Resistance. A number of Norwegian nationals received training from the Special Operations Branch at Areas B and A. Crown Princess Märtha, accompanying President Roosevelt, had visited Area B in 1942 while Norwegian Army Lieutenant Edward Stromholt was instructing them. Back in Norway, cooperating with the local Resistance, some of these saboteurs blew up German supply depots and sank a German steamship with an underwater mine. In addition, SO cooperated with SOE in organizing and supplying the Resistance with 450 tons of weapons, explosives, and other supplies by parachute drop from Britain, fast boat from Scotland, or overland from neutral Sweden.²⁸⁴

In addition, a Norwegian Operational Group was formed in 1943, when OSS recruited nearly 80 Norwegian Americans from among the U.S. Army's 99th Mountain Battalion at Camp Hale, Colorado.²⁸⁵ The OSS Norwegian OG received its OSS training at Areas F and B that fall, and as Corporal Arne Herstad from Tacoma, Washington, wrote to his fiancé in October, a group of them were called down to Washington, D.C. to stage an exhibition for Princess Märtha.²⁸⁶ That winter they underwent more training in Scotland, but they waited in vain for a mission to Norway. Instead, a number of them were parachuted into southern France in support of the Allied invasion of the Riviera in August 1944, among them, their new OG commander, Major William E. Colby, a future Director of Central Intelligence, who had gone into the Yonne Valley southeast of Paris as head of Jedburgh Team Bruce.²⁸⁷

Finally, they were assigned a mission in Norway in early 1945. The goal was to trap some 150,000 German troops concentrated in the Narvik-Tromsø area of northern Norway and prevent them from being transported back to defend Germany.²⁸⁸ Since the Allies now controlled the sea, and the roads were blocked with snow, the only escape route was the single track Norland Railway running down to Trondheim. The OG mission

²⁸⁴ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 146; OSS, Schools and Training Branch, "Office of Strategic Services (OSS): Organization and Functions," June 1945, p. 18, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 141, Box 4, Folder 36; "Summary of Westfield Activities," [Swedish-based OSS Special Operations sabotage missions in Norway] OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 210, Box 30, National Archives II.

²⁸⁵ "Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, Norwegian Operational Group," www.ossog.org/norway.html. Accessed 18 June 2008.

²⁸⁶ Corporal Arne Herstad to Dearest Andi, 6 October 1943, *OSS Society Digest*, Number 2062, 26 May 2008, ossociety@yahoogroups.com, accessed 26 May 2008.

²⁸⁷ Irwin, *Jedburghs*, 132-54.

²⁸⁸ OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 146.

was to intermittently destroy bridges and lines of railroad track to keep the thousands of German soldiers from getting to the war zone. Major Colby divided the men assigned to him into two groups. He would lead the 33-man main party, called Norso I. Lieutenant Roger W. Hall, who had been an instructor for various OGs at Areas F and B and who had been parachuted briefly into Brittany in 1944, would bring in a second group, Norso II, consisting of 19 men, a month later at the next light-moon. Norso II.²⁸⁹

To evade the Germans, air drops had to be made in moonless nights, but severe storms forced back attempts in January and February. Despite heavy winds, on 25 March 1945, eight planes left Britain headed toward the Arctic Circle, carrying the white-clad skiers of Norso I, their weapons, demolitions, and supplies. The groups sat tight-lipped as the planes then headed east to northern Norway. Only four of the planes got through to the drop zone, twenty men and half the equipment. Two of the planes and men that had been forced back, returned over Norway the next day, but both crashed in the stormy weather, killing all aboard. Without them, the party of twenty, led by Major Colby and Lieutenant Tom Sather, a native Norwegian who had moved to Brooklyn and become a U.S. citizen, joined by several members of the Resistance set out for their target, the railroad bridge north of Tangen, thirty miles over the mountains. They trekked on skis, dragging a massive sled with 180 pounds of explosives, through snow and sleet storms in temperatures that dropped to minus 20 degrees. Finally reaching the bridge several days later, they scaling down ice-covered cliffs several hundred feet high and bent to their task. Lieutenant Glenn J. Farnsworth, a demolitions expert who, aside from Colby, was the only other non-ethnic Norwegian in the unit, guided the men in setting the charges.²⁹⁰ Colby recalled the moment vividly in his report a written only few months later:

Quickly Farnsworth, Sergeant Myrland, Cpl. Kai Johansen, and Sgt. Odd Andersen set the charges under the long, I-girdered bridge. They planted all we had, enough for four bridges that size.

It is difficult to blow up steel—most often it simply bends out of shape. But the second Farnsworth touched the wires and the TNT went off, the structure vanished. The noise was awful, rocking back and forth between the hills. Even the softening lake seemed to jump, and it did crack with a boom like distant thunder. The happy men stood around with smiles on their grimy, weary faces. At last they had done something, and the Nordland railway was stopped.²⁹¹

After escaping pursuing Germans, the OSS team went farther down the line and simultaneously blew up more than a dozen sections of track over more than a mile with

²⁸⁹ “Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, Norwegian Operational Group,” www.ossog.org/norway.html. Accessed 18 June 2008.

²⁹⁰ William E. Colby, “OSS Operations in Norway: Skis and Daggers,” *Studies in Intelligence* (June 2002): 145-149. This mission report was originally written by Major Colby in 1945. See also William E. Colby and Peter Forbath, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), 26-29, 44-50; and “Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, Norwegian Operational Group, Norso I,” www.ossog.org/norway/norso_01.html. Accessed 18 June 2008.

²⁹¹ Colby, “OSS Operations in Norway, 149.

30 pounds of plastic explosives. “Then came the Germans like violated bees,” Colby wrote. The commandoes fled in the dark, but the Germans pursued them night and day for several weeks. Out of rations in the sparsely settled area, the men lived on a *grut*, an unappetizing Norwegian concoction of flour and water, obtained from scattered farmhouses. There were several firefights before Colby and his team finally made it to safety, their mission a success. The disruption of the crucial Nordland rail line interrupted the southward flow of enemy troops, reducing it to a trickle: from one battalion a day to only one a month. By the end of the war, there were still 100,000 German troops, 12 divisions, trapped in Norway.²⁹² The OSS Norso I team was the first Allied fighting unit to operate in Norway since 1940. When the war ended in May, Lieutenant Hall and his Norso II unit, which had been delayed, arrived to help with the surrender of German units.²⁹³

Afterwards, the combined units, two dozen men in their U.S. Army uniforms and the American flag, marched along smartly in several victory parades to the great acclaim by the Norwegian people, who cheered the “fabulous Norsos.” The War Department considered the difficult mission worthwhile. Colby and Sather were awarded Silver Star Medals and several of the other men received Bronze Star Medals. “Eleven of our men and fifteen Air Corps men had paid with their lives for our mission,” Colby wrote later. “We all hoped that our efforts had made these sacrifices worthwhile and helped to end the war by even a few minutes.”²⁹⁴

Effectiveness of OSS and the Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Europe

Like any new organization, the OSS had its successes and failures, but it emerged from World War II with considerable renown for its daring deeds and achievements. The European Theater received the greatest public attention, although the OSS had first proven itself in North Africa. The multinational Jedburgh teams garnered the most publicity. But the SO teams and OG sections were clearly also important, and they, like the American Jedburghs and some of the spies of SI and the counterspies of X-2, had generally received at least part of their OSS training at Area B in Catoctin Mountain Park or Areas A or C in Prince William Forest Park.

Major Alfred T. Cox, head of the OSS French OGs in 1944 conducted a post-operation critique, and all the responding OG members expressed the opinion that their

²⁹² Ibid., 149-52; OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 139.

²⁹³ “Office of Strategic Services, Operational Groups, Norwegian Operational Group, Norso II,” www.ossog.org/norway/norso_02.html. Accessed 18 June 2008. Hall, *You’re Stepping on My Cloak and Dagger*, 196-213.

²⁹⁴ William E. Colby quoted in Lt. Cmdr. Richard M. Kelly, “The Norso Mission,” *Blue Book: Magazine of Adventure for Men* (December 1946), 43; clipping in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 7, Folder 7, National Archives II.

extensive training had been effective. Some of the men indicated that the field training problems, half of which had been conducted at night, were more difficult than actual operations. Generally, the men of the French OGs believed that more emphasis on operating and maintaining foreign weapons and vehicles would have been helpful. So would more familiarity with methods of instruction to use with indigenous guerrilla fighters. The OGs found most of their equipment and weapons satisfactory, but the SSTR-1, radio transmitter/receiver, while compact, lightweight and having the necessary range was not durable enough for the rough handling it received and the OGs recommended more training for the radio operators on its maintenance and repair.²⁹⁵

Nevertheless, the men who operated the wireless telegraphy (W/T) radios that were the lifelines between the teams in the field and their regional headquarters and supply bases, were often able to work miracles with their sets. Sergeant Caesar Civitella of the OSS Italian OG had the greatest praise for his radioman, Technician Fifth Class (T/5) Joseph P. Seliquini, radio operator for the section on the Nancy Mission in southern France in 1944 and the Spokane/Sewanee Missions in northern Italy in 1945. Seliquini was from Philadelphia, Civitella recalled, and he was good in music. “They said if you were good in music and math, then CW [Continuous Wave; i.e. Morse Code] was easy for you. It was for Joe...He was a T/5 and one of the few enlisted men who received the Legion of Merit, which is normally reserved for officers. He got it because on his missions, he did not miss one message either to or from base. He had a perfect record.”²⁹⁶

Virtually all the OSS agents—Jedburghs, SO teams, and OG sections—agreed that the units had been inserted much too late to achieve maximum effectiveness with the *maquis*. Every day spent training the members of the French Resistance would have made them more combat effective. The situation in France, was rife with political disagreements among partisan groups, from the left to the right of the political spectrum. In his final report on debriefing of the Jedburgh teams in southern France, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth H. Baker also stressed the need for members of OSS teams to be fully briefed on the political situation in the country and among the Resistance groups and if possible the military operations should be strictly separated from political considerations.²⁹⁷ William Colby, who headed a Jedburgh team in France and an OG mission in Norway, and much later became CIA Director, said in an interview in the 1990s, that “in the Jedburghs, they taught us how to sneak around and shoot and use knives. But there was absolutely no training in the politics of the problem: how to get along with people. So I read Lawrence of Arabia’s book, and he had all sorts of things in here about how you get along with a strange culture, how to relate to them and handle yourself, how to defer and suggest. You don’t take command, you don’t boss people, you

²⁹⁵ Maj. Alfred T. Cox, Commanding Officer’s Report, Operational Report, Company B, 2671st Special Reconnaissance Battalion, Separate (Provisional), Grenoble, France, 20 September 1944, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 190, Box 741, National Archives II.

²⁹⁶ Caesar J. Civitella, telephone interview with the author, 29 April 2008; see also “OSS Operational Groups: Italian Operational Group, Spokane/Sewanee Missions,” and French Operational Group, Algiers-to-France Sections, Nancy Mission,” www.ossog.org.

²⁹⁷ Ian Sutherland, “The OSS Operational Groups: Origin of Army Special Forces,” *Special Warfare* 15:2 (June 2002): 11.

just have to work your way through it. It was good training in the basic principles of how you get along.”²⁹⁸

Inserting agent teams or military units far behind the battlefield to engage in unconventional warfare was an audacious experiment. OSS was learning as it went along. Evidence of its improving learning curve is provided by the declining casualty rate among OSS units by the final year, even as more OSS personnel were being put into the field.²⁹⁹ The wartime experience of the “shadow warriors” of the OSS showed the importance of individuals and small groups in leading and coordinating considerable numbers of armed civilians in the Resistance. Those young partisans could not replace conventional forces. But properly used, they could provide valuable intelligence information, harass the enemy and weaken his morale, temporarily interdict enemy lines of communication and supply and force the enemy to withdraw thousands of troops that were needed elsewhere to deploy at least temporarily to try to crush or at least contain the Resistance. Thus the OSS demonstrated the importance of the “war in the shadows.”

“The success and speed of the Allied Armies in the Battle of France are now recognized as due in large measure to the activity of the French Resistance,” Donovan wrote to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in February 1945 as the war in Europe neared its end. “The Resistance impeded the movement of German reinforcements towards the original Normandy beaches and guarded the flanks of the American armies driving to the Seine in the north and the Vosges from the south. It diverted whole German divisions from the front and harassed the enemy behind his lines. It supplied continuous strategic and tactical intelligence on the enemy situation, prevented German demolition of vital installations and assisted in isolating and mopping up enemy units bypassed by the Allied advance....OSS dispatched 187 secret agents into France.” “When the landings in Normandy became imminent,” Donovan continued, “steps were taken to assure maximum possible coordination of Resistance activity with the actual plans and needs of Allied armies...A similar cooperative arrangement was established with the [landings in the south of France] ...Throughout July, August, and September [1944] interferences with German movement by rail and road throughout France and severance of vital power and communication lines were widespread and continuous, and as a direct result, the Germans were greatly hindered both in moving troops and in bringing supplies.”³⁰⁰

A detailed report by U.S. Army (G-3) Operations about the work of OSS and British SOE with various Resistance movements in the Mediterranean and European Theaters of Operations, while also laudatory, was more specific in its assessment. The critique was written by an experienced professional soldier, Brigadier General Benjamin F. Caffey, Jr., an accomplished staff officer and commander (he led the 39th Regimental Combat Team in the capture of Algiers) who was a longtime, personal friend of

²⁹⁸ “Interview: William Colby, Former Director, Central Intelligence Agency,” *Special Warfare*, 7:2 (April 1994): 42.

²⁹⁹ OSS, *War Report of the OSS: Overseas Targets*, xii, 220.

³⁰⁰ Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan to Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 1945, reprinted in Francis B. Mills with John W. Brunner, *OSS Special Operations in China* (Williamstown, NJ: Phillips Publications, 2002), 442-446. Mills served in a SO team in France before being sent to China.

Eisenhower and whom Eisenhower considered “a most able, even brilliant officer.”³⁰¹ “Resistance groups, alone, cannot win a campaign or a battle,” Caffey concluded, “but they are capable of rendering important assistance to regular forces.”³⁰² His report noted that Resistance groups could conduct sabotage and engage in guerrilla activities, but they could not engage the enemy successfully in conventional offensive or defensive operations. “Every time they have attempted the latter [engage the enemy in conventional operations], whether in France, Italy, Yugoslavia, or Greece, they have been soundly defeated.” Even in 1945, Caffey made a point that was vitally important, although it was often forgotten in subsequent years. It was essential, he said, that the local civilian population be friendly. If not, it was virtually impossible for special operations detachments to accomplish their missions. That had been demonstrated in the failed attempts to infiltrate missions into Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria. In those cases, the local population not only would not protect the agents, but invariably reported their presence to the enemy. In its overall assessment, while voicing the regular officers’ familiar complaints about the paucity of professional officers in the OSS and British SOE and the consequent unfamiliarity with discipline and properly coordinated staff work, the Army’s G-3 report declared that “while OSS and SOE are hampered by poor staff work, their personnel in the field have done remarkably well. They deserve credit and appreciation for their fine work.... This method of warfare has a vast potential in obtaining military strategic and tactical objectives.” General Caffey warned his colleagues that “No commander should ignore this potential.”³⁰³

³⁰¹ Brigadier General Benjamin Franklin Caffey, Jr., while serving as a young officer, had earned a law degree at the University of Michigan in 1916, been a G-3 operations officer with the 1st Division in France in World War I, met and served with Eisenhower in the Philippines in the late 1930s. In World War II, Colonel Caffey had led the 39th Regimental Combat Team at the capture of Algiers, then was made brigadier general and assistant commander of the 34th (“Red Bull”) Infantry Division in Italy. Serving in its advance in Italy, he was twice injured and except for those disabling occurrences would have become a major general and a division commander. The second injury, badly frozen feet, led to his assignment in an important staff position in the Allied Force Headquarters, Mediterranean in early 1945, which is probably when he wrote this report. Subsequently, he was returned to the United States where he expedited demobilization. Subsequently, when Eisenhower became chief of staff, he appointed Caffey to the Operations Division of the General Staff. Later, Caffey served as U.S. military attaché to Switzerland before retiring from the Army and becoming first a professor at a university in Orlando, and then obtaining positions in the Veterans’ Administration and the Federal Civil Defense Administration during the Eisenhower Administration. Quotation and most of the background information from Dwight D. Eisenhower, Army Chief of Staff, to Director, Personnel and Administration, U.S. Army, 7 Feb. 1948, in Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Alfred D. Chandler, et al., 21 vols. (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970-2007), 11:237; see also 2:687n; 2: 1293; and 14:430n.

³⁰² Brig. Gen. B.F. Caffey, U.S. Army., chief, SP Ops S/Sec., G-3, [Special Projects Operations Center, G-3, Special Operations, Allied Force Headquarters, Mediterranean, under which the OSS SO and OGs operated in the Mediterranean theater] “Resistance Movements in Occupied Countries,” OPD 334.8 TS, Case #285, “top secret,” 5-page typescript report, undated [c. early 1945, before the end of the war in Europe], copy from the papers of Dr. E.P. Lilly, former JCS historian, located in the CIA Records (RG 263), Thomas F. Troy Files, Box 4, Folder 30, National Archives II.

³⁰³ Ibid.

The significance of this unconventional warfare as a contribution to Allied victory was recognized by major commanders in both the Mediterranean and European Theaters of Operations. It was acknowledged by American generals Mark Wayne Clark in Italy, Omar Bradley and George Patton in northern France, and Alexander Patch in southern France.³⁰⁴ German commanders, from Field Marshal Albert Kesselring in Italy to Field Marshals Gerd von Rundstedt and Walther Model in France, certainly recognized the seriousness of the problems they faced from increasingly assertive and effective Resistance forces organized, armed, and led in their rear by the Special Operations forces of the British SOE and American OSS.³⁰⁵ “The Resistance surpassed all our expectations,” General George C. Marshall, chief of staff of the U.S. Army, and the man responsible for American military strategy, is reported to have stated in 1946, “and it was they who, in delaying the arrival of German reinforcements and in preventing the regrouping of enemy divisions in the interior, assured the success of our landings.”³⁰⁶

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, in his contemporary praise for the combined Special Operations effort that coordinated the Resistance, declared: “In no previous war, and in no other theatre during this war, have Resistance forces been so closely harnessed to the main military effort.” He applauded the way the Resistance forces had been, in his words, “so ably organized, supplied and directed,” and, in addition, he gave special credit to those radio operators and others responsible for communications with occupied territory. He also congratulated OSS and SOE for the “excellent work carried out in training, documenting, briefing and dispatching agents.”³⁰⁷ Looking back in his memoir, *Crusade in Europe*, Eisenhower went even further, asserting that “the Resistance had been of inestimable value to the campaign.... Without their great assistance, the liberation of France and the defeat of the enemy in western Europe would have consumed a much longer time and meant greater losses to ourselves.”³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ OSS, *War Report of the OSS: Overseas Targets*, vii, 239; Irwin, *The Jedburghs*, 236-239. Ralph Ingersoll, one of the planning officers on the staff of Gen. Omar Bradley, commander of the U.S. Forces in the invasion of Normandy, wrote later that half a dozen German divisions had been used to contend with the French Resistance, divisions, which otherwise would have been fighting the Allies in Normandy. “It is a military fact, that the French were worth at least a score of divisions to us, maybe more.” Ralph Ingersoll, *Top Secret* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946), 181-183. In contrast, John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Viking, 1990), belittled the impact of the French Resistance and suggested that their entire contribution was barely equal to that of a single Allied division.

³⁰⁵ On von Rundstedt and Model, see Irwin, *The Jedburgh*, 240-241; on Kesselring, see Kesselring, *Kesselring: A Soldier's Record*, 272; and OSS, *War Report of OSS: Overseas Targets*, 114.

³⁰⁶ Quoted in Blake Ehrlich, *Resistance: France, 1940-1945* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965), 194.

³⁰⁷ Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower to Director, OSS, UK Base, ETO USA, 31 May 1945, reprinted in OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 222. For a recent scholarly assessment that OSS's SI and SO operations made “a useful contribution to the Normandy campaign,” see Nelson MacPherson, *American Intelligence in War-time London* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 91; and an even more glowing assessment of the achievements of the multinational teams is provided in Irwin, *The Jedburghs*, 235-245.

³⁰⁸ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 1948), 296.

