

RESISTANCE & SOE: TASK INSTRUCTIONS

The key question: What was the role of Special Operations Executive and what kind of people worked for it?

Your task

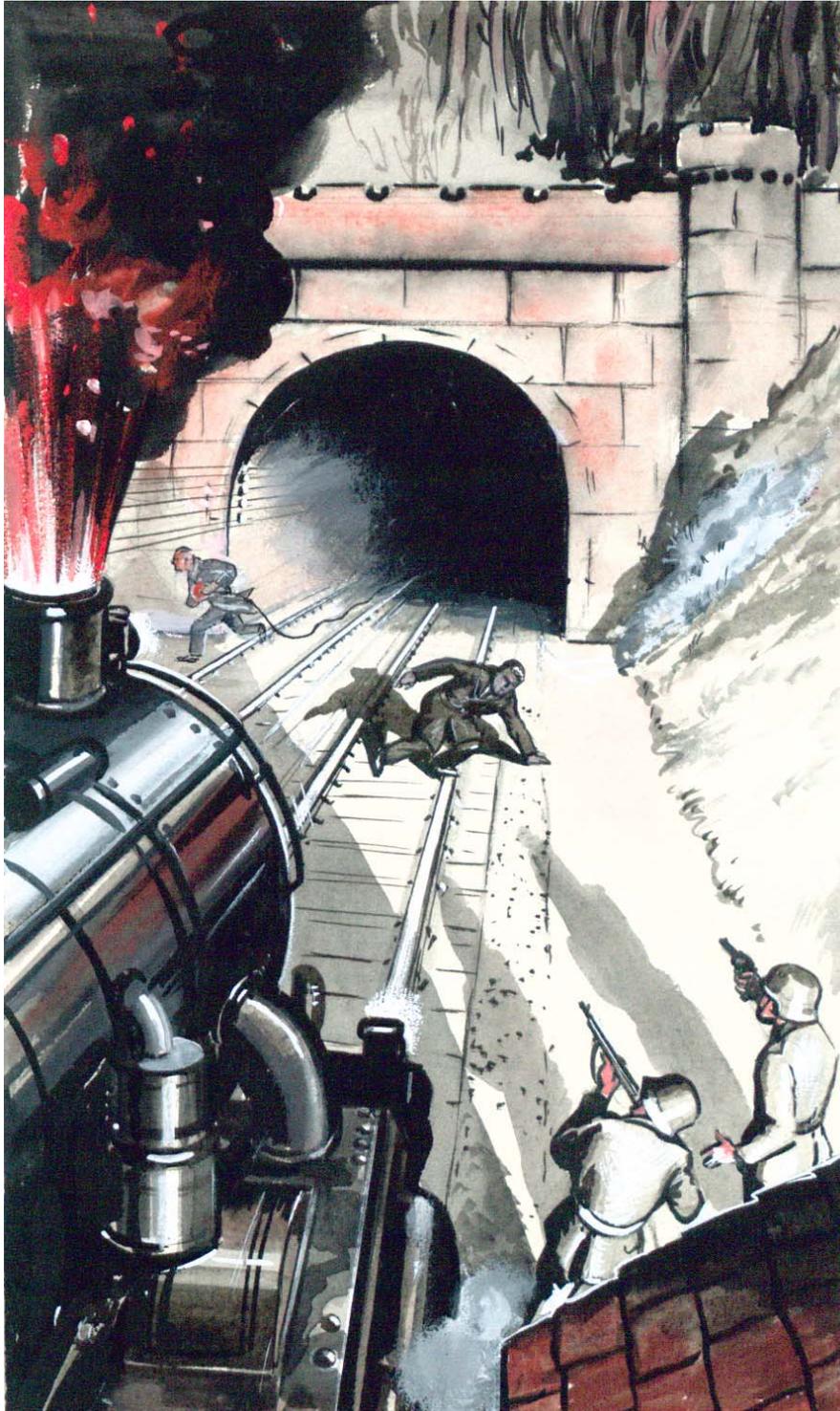
Use our sources to find out about the people who worked for the SOE and create a recruitment poster for more agents.

Use the outline to plan your poster.

Here are some artists' impressions of SOE agents in action

Catalogue refs: a: INF 3/488; b: INF 3/502

Source a



Source b



WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

What is this source?

These pictures were produced by government artists and show the activities of SOE agents in the Second World War.

The British Ministry of Information commissioned this artwork for the wartime "Boys' Adventure stories". Along with posters, magazines, postcards and photographs, childrens' books containing images like this, were also used to support the war effort on the home front.

What's the background to this source?

From 1939 to late 1942 Germany and its allies had the upper hand in the war. During this period it was difficult for Britain and its allies to take any direct action against German forces. To tackle this problem British Prime Minister Winston Churchill set up the Special Operations Executive (SOE). SOE's job was to go into occupied countries and spread propaganda, collect information and attack important targets.

SOE had two main departments. SO1 dealt with propoganda while SO2 dealt with active operations. SO2 agents went into occupied territory to blow up railways, bridges, radio transmitters and similar devices.

It's worth knowing that..

SOE did not just operate in Europe. Agents like Christine Granville (who also features in this investigation) were also active in North Africa and in Asia against the Japanese.

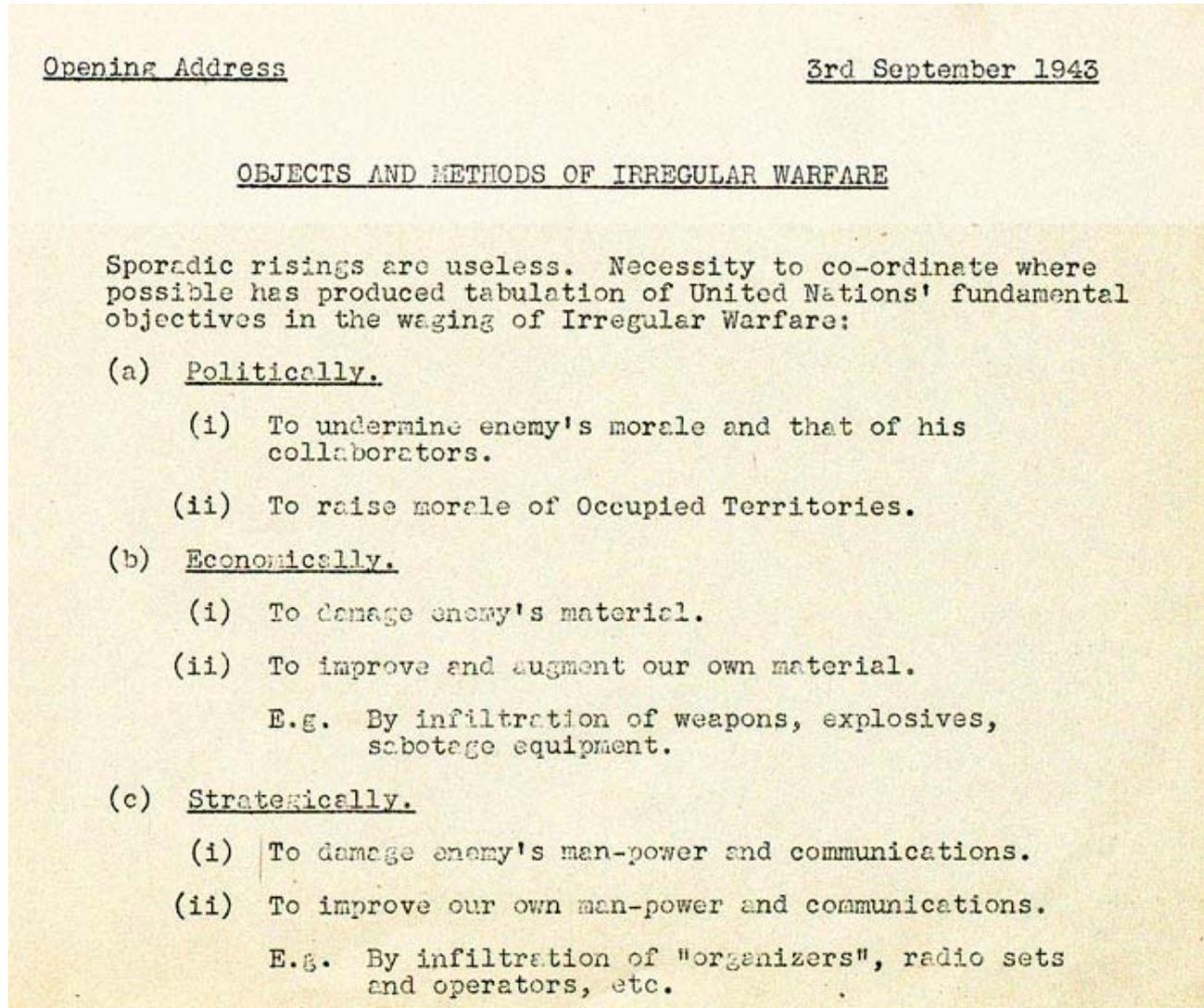
Many SOE agents were not British. The majority of these had been driven out of their home countries by the German occupation. They were then recruited because they would be able to blend in easily to the country they were working in.

What do we learn about SOE from this source?

1. Where are both agents operating?
2. Artists produced both of these scenes. Does this mean they are pure imagination? Use the other sources in the box to help you answer.
3. What do you learn from this source about the type of people who became SOE agents?
4. Why is it likely that **Source b** was used as propoganda?

Extract from the records of the Special Operations Executive setting out some of their aims

Catalogue ref: HS 7/55



What is this source?

This source is part of a series of lectures used to train SOE agents. This "opening address" sets out the aims and methods of the Special Operations Executive.

SOE was designed to try and take the war to the Germans at a time when Britain was unable to attack Germany in any other way, except by bombing.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

What's the background to this source?

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was anxious in the early 1940s that Germany was able to use the resources and manpower of the lands it had conquered for its war effort. He was also aware that there were resistance movements in the countries that Germany had occupied. The aim of the SOE was to try and disrupt Germany's use of its conquered lands and to help resistance movements.

SOE was formed in the summer of 1940 by a direct order of Churchill. It was under the control of Hugh Dalton, Minister of Economic Warfare.

It's worth knowing that...

When SOE was first set up there was a good deal of tension between it and the existing intelligence services, MI5 and MI6. MI6 generally operated spies abroad and preferred a low-key approach that it felt was better at collecting information. By contrast, SOE's approach was more disruptive to enemy operations. Some in MI6 felt this would endanger MI6 operations by making the Germans more aware of the danger of enemy agents.

SOE had two main departments. SO1 dealt with propaganda while SO2 dealt with active operations.

What do we learn about SOE from this source?

1. Study the political aims. What type of actions might SOE use to achieve these aims?
2. Now repeat this exercise for Economic and Strategic aims.
3. Write your own definition for the term "irregular warfare".
4. What type of people would the new SOE be looking for?

WESTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

These document extracts relate to the citation of SOE agent Christine Granville. A citation was a statement recommending a person for a medal for bravery

Catalogue ref: HS 9/612

Extract a

Citation in respect of				Date Recommendation passed		Army Form W. 3121.
MISS MARY CHRISTINE GRANVILLE				forward		
of I.S.S.U.6 Special Ops (Med)				Received	Passed	
Division				SO(M)		
				AFHQ		Believe
Schedule No.	Unit	Reptl No.	Rank & Name	Action for which commended	Recommended by	Honour or Reward
-	I.S.S.U.6	-	Miss Mary Christine GRANVILLE	<p>Miss Mary Christine Granville is a Polish patriot of high integrity who has been employed by this organization for four years, much of the time on work of the most dangerous nature inside occupied Europe. During this time her work has been not short of remarkable and of the greatest value to the Allied cause. She is now in the process of becoming a British subject and of, in fact, being commissioned into the W.A.A.F.</p> <p>On the night of the 6th/7th of July she was infiltrated into Southern France by parachute to act as liaison officer to the chief of the area, a British Field Officer working with the Maquis. She was also commissioned in view of her exceptional language qualifications and experience in such matters, to work on the possibilities of the subversion of satellite enemy troops. This last field had not previously been exploited by this organization in France.</p> <p>She started work immediately and within a week reported that she had done the preparatory work on the subversion of Polish troops in the German Army, and that the possibilities were considerable. On the 17th July, her Area Commander reported that her work with these troops was already proving so widespread that it was essential to send another officer to help her.</p>	<p>W. Stawell by W.A.M. STAWELL C.B.E., M.C. Maj.Gen.SO(M)</p>	<p>George Cross O.B.E. (Brave G.M.)</p>

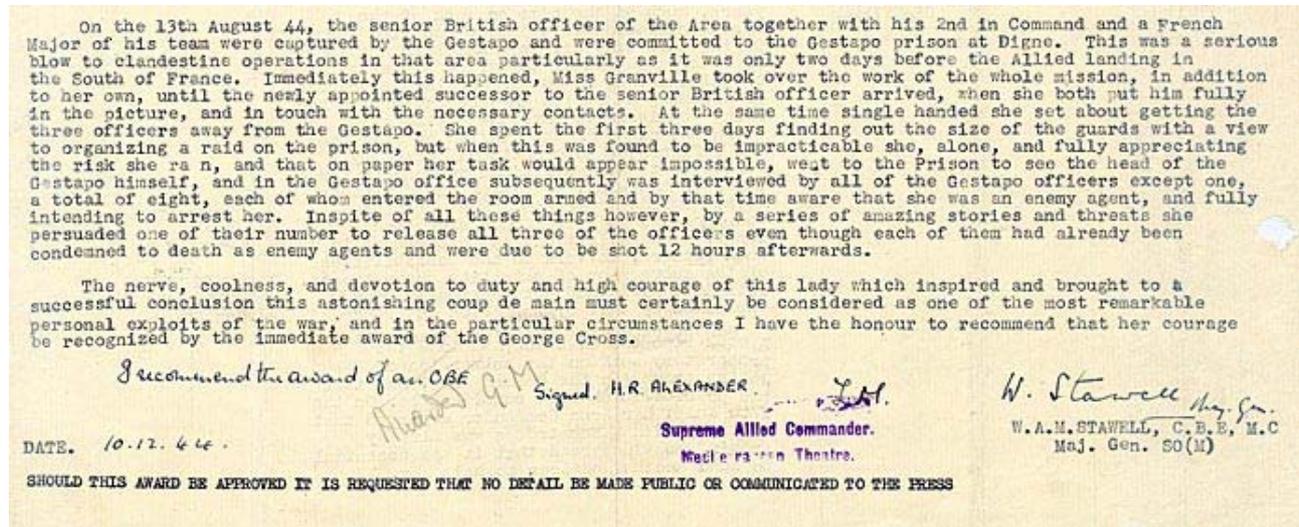
Extract b

When the invasion started she remained in the Vercors during the whole of the battle for the plateau and finally escaped through the lines with the French General commanding F.F.I. South Eastern France, on the day that it fell. During the whole of this time she continued with her work on satellite troops and on her various liaison duties, and in fact was so effective that she was able to report that the Polish troops at Briancon would be prepared to surrender to the Maquis if certain conditions were fulfilled.

From the Vercors, she was sent to Col de Larche on the Italian frontier where she personally managed to effect an important liaison, which had not previously been successful, with Col Marzalani of the Italian Maquis. Later she penetrated into Northern Italy where she remained on another important liaison mission, often under fire, for the next two weeks.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

Extract c



What is this source?

These documents come from the personal file of SOE agent, Christine Granville. The extracts are part of her citation, a document recommending the award of a medal for her work in the war. You can also find her photograph in the source box.

Christine Granville was actually cited for medals on other occasions for her work in Poland.

What's the background to this source?

Granville was an agent for the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Her name was actually Kristina Gizycka and she was Polish. She escaped the occupation of Poland by Germany. She was brave, intelligent and spoke several languages. This made her an ideal SOE agent. She worked in Poland, France, Italy and North Africa as a British agent.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was anxious in the early 1940s that Germany was able to use the resources and manpower of the lands it had conquered for its war effort. He was also aware that there were resistance movements in the countries that Germany had occupied. The aim of the SOE was to try and disrupt Germany's use of its conquered lands and to help resistance movements.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

It's worth knowing that...

Christine also worked in Hungary and Turkey as a British agent. In 1941 she was arrested and interrogated. She escaped but the Gestapo now had a photograph of her and were looking for her. Despite this, she returned to Poland to carry out her work.

At the end of the war she was told by British intelligence that they no longer had any use for her, and she felt bitter about this. She returned to Poland and started working for the Polish intelligence agencies.

What do we learn about SOE from this source?

1. Study **extracts a-c**. Make a list of Christine's achievements.
2. Which qualities or qualifications would have helped her most to carry out this work successfully?
3. A citation is a recommendation for a medal. If you were the Prime Minister would you have awarded Christine the medal?
4. Would it be going too far to say that Christine was the perfect SOE agent?

WESTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

Recommendations for awards for the members of an SOE operation in Norway, February 1943

Catalogue ref: HS 2/185

MOST SECRET

RECOMMENDATION FOR AWARDS.
S.O.E. OPERATION "GUNNERSIDE"

7

Fenrik Joachim Holm Boe Ronneberg.
Fenrik Casper Idland.
Sergeant (A/Fenrik) Knut Anders Haukelid.
Sergeant Fredrik Thorbjørn Kayser.
Cpl. (A/Sgt) Storhaug, Hans.
Cpl. (A/Sgt) Strømsheim, Birger Edvan Martin.

After the tragic failure of C.O. OPERATION FRESHMAN, an S.O.E. party GUNNERSIDE was immediately mobilised to destroy the high priority product of the Norsk Hydro Works at VEMORK.

The complete technical and scientific intelligence was made available on 15th November, 1942, by Chemical Engineer Jomar Brun, who had just arrived in the United Kingdom after escaping from VEMORK, and Captain Leif Tronstad R.N.A. who participated in the planning and experimental erection of the actual plant. This proved that the essential damage could be carried out by a smaller party than was previously considered necessary, provided they were highly trained men who could render a good account of themselves and were in first class physical and mental condition.

The party finally selected were all volunteers who had full knowledge that the previous attempt had failed; that the enemy was fully alive as to the objective; that the area had subsequently been visited by Reichs-Commissar Terboven and Colonel-General von Falkenhorst, Commander-in-Chief of the German Army in Norway; and that the local garrison had been strongly reinforced.

The party were ready to fly during the December moon period, made an unsuccessful flight on 23rd January, 1943, and were eventually successfully dropped 60 Km.N.W. of the actual target at midnight on 16th/17th February, 1943.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

What is this source?

This source is part of a recommendation for medals to be awarded to a number of SOE agents for a mission they carried out in Norway.

Many SOE agents were awarded for their actions in the war. They faced terrible dangers and could be treated as spies if captured.

What's the background to this source?

After invading Poland, Hitler's forces invaded Denmark and Norway. Norway was especially important to Hitler. It had aircraft and submarine bases that could be used to attack ships supplying Britain from North America. Norway also had important natural resources, such as timber. Norway also had efficient hydroelectric power plants to generate electricity.

The Norwegians resisted with British help when Germany invaded in April 1940. However, the British were defeated and Norway surrendered in June 1940. Despite this, there was an important underground resistance movement in Norway. This movement had strong links with British intelligence and received supplies and equipment throughout the war.

It's worth knowing that...

As well as resources, Norway had technology as well. The Germans used bases and facilities in Norway to research and develop new weapons and equipment.

One of the German research facilities was involved in the early stages of the German programme to develop a nuclear bomb. However, Hitler cancelled this project.

What do we learn about SOE from this source?

1. Where did the SOE get its information about the Vemork works?
2. Why were the agents involved in Operation Gunnerside Norwegian?
3. In what ways does Operation Gunnerside show the bravery of these agents?
4. What does this source tell you about SOE activities?

Extracts from the SOE descriptive catalogue of special devices

Manual explaining the sleeve gun

Catalogue ref: HS 7/28

SLEEVE GUN

Catalogue No. N 254.



DESCRIPTION. Like the Sleeve Gun Mk. I the Mk. II is a short length, silent, murder weapon, firing 0.32 inch ammunition. It is a single shot weapon designed for carriage in the sleeve with the trigger near the muzzle to aid unobtrusive firing when the gun is slid from the sleeve into the hand. The gun is intended for use in contact with the target, but may be used at ranges up to about three yards; the silencing element cannot be removed for replacement since the gun is not intended for prolonged use.

The gun is fitted at the rear end with a ring to which the carrying lanyard can be attached.

In appearance the main difference between the Sleeve Gun Mks. I and II, is in the cocking tube of the Mk. I, which runs parallel to the main cylinder of the gun for its whole length; the depth of the weapon is thus near to its maximum value of 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches throughout the length of the gun. The Mk. II has no cocking tube and the only considerable protuberance from the main cylinder is the trigger; except for the foremost inch of the gun, the depth is therefore little more than the cylinder diameter of 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. As a result, the Mk. II is a slimmer weapon than the Mk. I and much neater in appearance.

METHOD OF USE. The gun is carried up the sleeve until required, it is then slid into the hand and the muzzle pressed against the victim, at the same time operating the trigger with the thumb. After use, the gun returns to its position up the sleeve and all evidence such as the empty case is retained in the gun.

DIMENSIONS. Overall length 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Diam. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".

WEIGHT. 26 ozs.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

What is this source?

The devices shown here come from the Descriptive Catalogue of Special Devices and Supplies used by the SOE. It was compiled and issued by the War Office. The advice about disguise comes from the special training programme used at SOE's training schools. Here, agents would learn how to operate in occupied countries.

These sources suggest a wide range of skills that were required to be an effective agent and the many dangers they faced.

What's the background to this source?

From 1939 to late 1942 Germany and its allies had the upper hand in the war. During this period it was difficult for Britain and its allies to take any direct action against German forces. To tackle this problem British Prime Minister Winston Churchill set up the Special Operations Executive (SOE). SOE's job was to go into occupied countries and spread propaganda, collect information and attack important targets.

SOE had two main departments. SO1 dealt with propaganda while SO2 dealt with active operations. SO2 agents went into occupied territory to blow up railways, bridges, radio transmitters and similar devices.

It's worth knowing that...

The catalogue contains many other devices that could be used on a mission. Agents are shown how to conceal explosives in fake logs and plaster fruit. They are shown how to hide information in soap, sponges and tubes of toothpaste. Vital equipment such as radio sets is shown camouflaged (disguised) as vacuum cleaners, portable gramophones and bundles of twigs.

Many SOE agents were not British. The majority of these had been driven out of their home countries by the German occupation. They were then recruited because they would be able to blend in easily to the country they were working in.

What do we learn about SOE from this source?

1. What does this source show about the work of SOE agents and the dangers they faced?

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

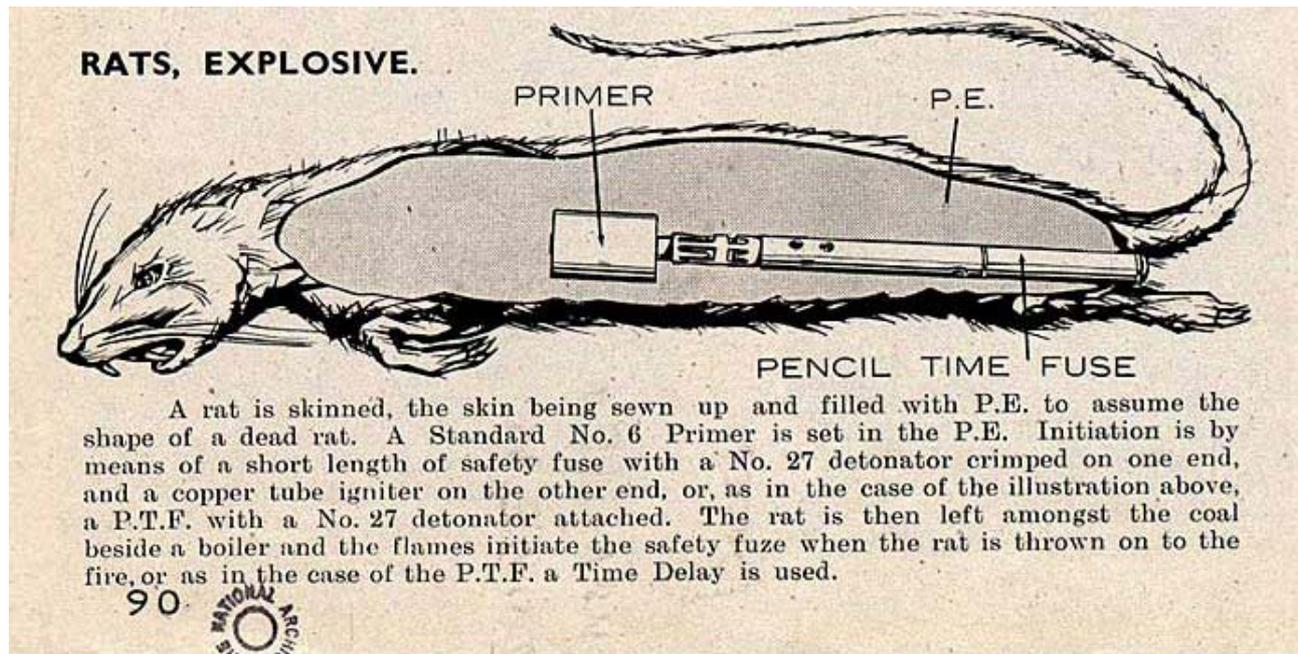
2. Do these sources provide any evidence that SOE took good care of its agents?
3. Can we learn anything from these sources about the type of people who became agents?

Use this outline to plan your poster.

Extracts from the SOE descriptive catalogue of special devices

Instructions for creating an exploding rat

Catalogue ref: HS 7/49



What is this source?

The devices shown here come from the Descriptive Catalogue of Special Devices and Supplies used by the SOE. It was compiled and issued by the War Office. The advice about disguise comes from the special training programme used at SOE's training schools. Here, agents would learn how to operate in occupied countries.

These sources suggest a wide range of skills that were required to be an effective agent and the many dangers they faced.

What's the background to this source?

From 1939 to late 1942 Germany and its allies had the upper hand in the war. During this period it was difficult for Britain and its allies to take any direct action against German forces. To tackle this problem British Prime Minister Winston Churchill set up the Special Operations Executive (SOE).

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

SOE's job was to go into occupied countries and spread propaganda, collect information and attack important targets.

SOE had two main departments. SO1 dealt with propaganda while SO2 dealt with active operations. SO2 agents went into occupied territory to blow up railways, bridges, radio transmitters and similar devices.

It's worth knowing that...

The catalogue contains many other devices that could be used on a mission. Agents are shown how to conceal explosives in fake logs and plaster fruit. They are shown how to hide information in soap, sponges and tubes of toothpaste. Vital equipment such as radio sets is shown camouflaged (disguised) as vacuum cleaners, portable gramophones and bundles of twigs.

Many SOE agents were not British. The majority of these had been driven out of their home countries by the German occupation. They were then recruited because they would be able to blend in easily to the country they were working in.

What do we learn about SOE from this source?

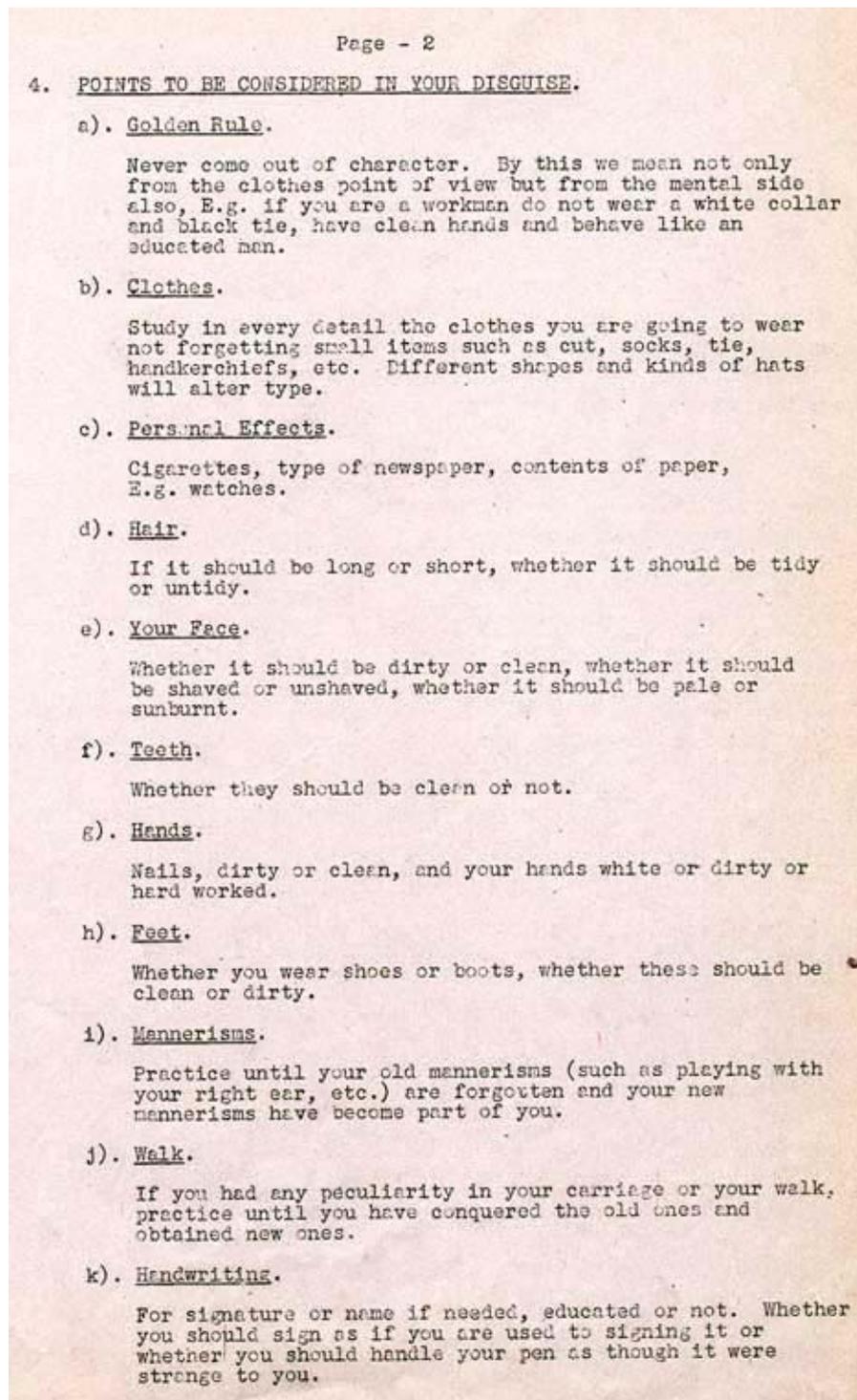
1. What does this source show about the work of SOE agents and the dangers they faced?
2. Do these sources provide any evidence that SOE took good care of its agents?
3. Can we learn anything from these sources about the type of people who became agents?

Use this outline to plan your poster.

Extracts from the SOE descriptive catalogue of special devices

SOE training advice on disguise

Catalogue ref: HS 7/55



WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

What is this source?

The devices shown here come from the Descriptive Catalogue of Special Devices and Supplies used by the SOE. It was compiled and issued by the War Office. The advice about disguise comes from the special training programme used at SOE's training schools. Here, agents would learn how to operate in occupied countries.

These sources suggest a wide range of skills that were required to be an effective agent and the many dangers they faced.

What's the background to this source?

From 1939 to late 1942 Germany and its allies had the upper hand in the war. During this period it was difficult for Britain and its allies to take any direct action against German forces. To tackle this problem British Prime Minister Winston Churchill set up the Special Operations Executive (SOE). SOE's job was to go into occupied countries and spread propaganda, collect information and attack important targets.

SOE had two main departments. SO1 dealt with propaganda while SO2 dealt with active operations. SO2 agents went into occupied territory to blow up railways, bridges, radio transmitters and similar devices.

It's worth knowing that...

The catalogue contains many other devices that could be used on a mission. Agents are shown how to conceal explosives in fake logs and plaster fruit. They are shown how to hide information in soap, sponges and tubes of toothpaste. Vital equipment such as radio sets is shown camouflaged (disguised) as vacuum cleaners, portable gramophones and bundles of twigs.

Many SOE agents were not British. The majority of these had been driven out of their home countries by the German occupation. They were then recruited because they would be able to blend in easily to the country they were working in.

What do we learn about SOE from this source?

1. What does this source show about the work of SOE agents and the dangers they faced?

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

2. Do these sources provide any evidence that SOE took good care of its agents?
3. Can we learn anything from these sources about the type of people who became agents?

Use this outline to plan your poster.

Extracts from the SOE descriptive catalogue of special devices

Articles that can be adapted to conceal information

Catalogue ref: HS 7/49

SECTION F.

ARTICLES CARRIED BY A STUDENT

This section could very well be a catalogue in itself as even the many articles mentioned in the following pages do not in any way cover the whole field of material which comes under this heading.

Almost anything which a person carries or makes use of professionally, by way of trade, for personal convenience or toilet purposes, can be adapted for concealment.

This section covers all types of articles but by no means all varieties, and for simplicity it has been divided into sub-sections.

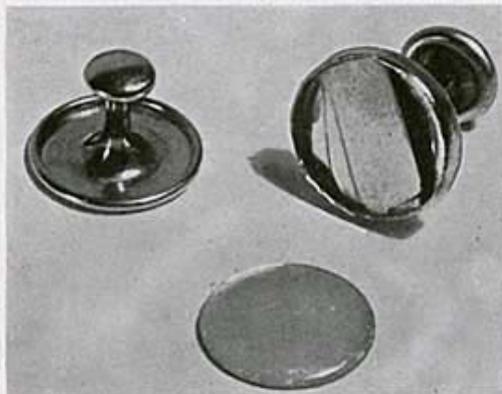
No. 1 sub-section deals with those concealments which are possible in the actual personal clothing and contents of the pockets of the average man.

PERSONAL ARTICLES.

The following is a short list of some of the articles which have been adapted:—

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Collar stud | Pocket torches |
| Collar stiffener | Pen knife |
| Coat button | Pipe |
| Cigarette holder | Pipe cases |
| Door key | Pencils |
| Fountain pen | Shoe trees |
| Finger ring | Shoulder paddings |
| Pocket petrol lighter | Shoe heels and soles |
| | Spectacles |

The following examples show what can be done with these articles:—



Collar Stud. A metal collar stud with a celluloid back can be used for concealing micro prints. The celluloid back is removed, and the print placed in the cavity. The celluloid is replaced and secured with a small application of Seccotine.

Necktie. A necktie can conceal a small code printed on silk. The code is secured to the back of the tie with two small press studs. This method is used in order that the code may be very speedily used and replaced. A tie adapted in this manner is worn quite normally and without any bulkiness showing.

Door Key. A door key has been successfully adapted for the concealment of small microprints. The shaft of the key is drilled to about three quarters of its length, and a small stud is made which fits into the hollowed shaft by means of a left handed thread. See illustration.



WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

What is this source?

The devices shown here come from the Descriptive Catalogue of Special Devices and Supplies used by the SOE. It was compiled and issued by the War Office. The advice about disguise comes from the special training programme used at SOE's training schools. Here, agents would learn how to operate in occupied countries.

These sources suggest a wide range of skills that were required to be an effective agent and the many dangers they faced.

What's the background to this source?

From 1939 to late 1942 Germany and its allies had the upper hand in the war. During this period it was difficult for Britain and its allies to take any direct action against German forces. To tackle this problem British Prime Minister Winston Churchill set up the Special Operations Executive (SOE). SOE's job was to go into occupied countries and spread propaganda, collect information and attack important targets.

SOE had two main departments. SO1 dealt with propaganda while SO2 dealt with active operations. SO2 agents went into occupied territory to blow up railways, bridges, radio transmitters and similar devices.

It's worth knowing that...

The catalogue contains many other devices that could be used on a mission. Agents are shown how to conceal explosives in fake logs and plaster fruit. They are shown how to hide information in soap, sponges and tubes of toothpaste. Vital equipment such as radio sets is shown camouflaged (disguised) as vacuum cleaners, portable gramophones and bundles of twigs.

Many SOE agents were not British. The majority of these had been driven out of their home countries by the German occupation. They were then recruited because they would be able to blend in easily to the country they were working in.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

What do we learn about SOE from this source?

1. What does this source show about the work of SOE agents and the dangers they faced?
2. Do these sources provide any evidence that SOE took good care of its agents?
3. Can we learn anything from these sources about the type of people who became agents?

Use this outline to plan your poster.

Extracts from the SOE descriptive catalogue of special devices

How to conceal an aerial

Catalogue ref: HS 7/49

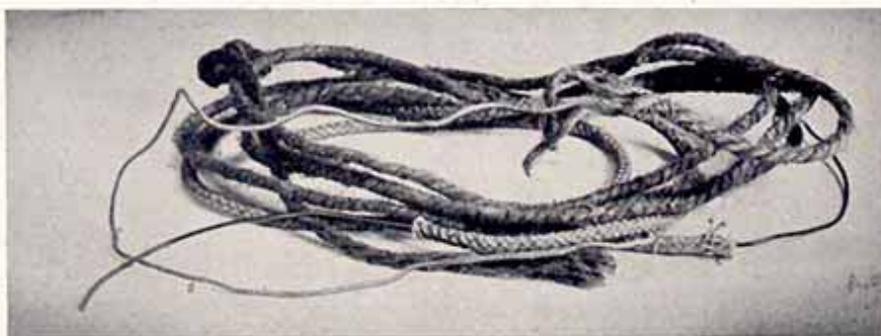


AERIALS.

A good aerial always improves the performance of a wireless set, and an agent can make use of one with little fear of detection if it is concealed in a rope clothes line or window sash cord.

The illustration on the left shows aerial disguised as a tendril in its natural surroundings.

The illustration below shows the finished clothes line aerial. This aerial is made by twisting the rope strands over the aerial: a rope making machine can be adapted to do this work. In the case of the window sash cord, the centre core of the cord is withdrawn and the wire threaded back in its place.



WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

What is this source?

The devices shown here come from the Descriptive Catalogue of Special Devices and Supplies used by the SOE. It was compiled and issued by the War Office. The advice about disguise comes from the special training programme used at SOE's training schools. Here, agents would learn how to operate in occupied countries.

These sources suggest a wide range of skills that were required to be an effective agent and the many dangers they faced.

What's the background to this source?

From 1939 to late 1942 Germany and its allies had the upper hand in the war. During this period it was difficult for Britain and its allies to take any direct action against German forces. To tackle this problem British Prime Minister Winston Churchill set up the Special Operations Executive (SOE). SOE's job was to go into occupied countries and spread propaganda, collect information and attack important targets.

SOE had two main departments. SO1 dealt with propaganda while SO2 dealt with active operations. SO2 agents went into occupied territory to blow up railways, bridges, radio transmitters and similar devices.

It's worth knowing that...

The catalogue contains many other devices that could be used on a mission. Agents are shown how to conceal explosives in fake logs and plaster fruit. They are shown how to hide information in soap, sponges and tubes of toothpaste. Vital equipment such as radio sets is shown camouflaged (disguised) as vacuum cleaners, portable gramophones and bundles of twigs.

Many SOE agents were not British. The majority of these had been driven out of their home countries by the German occupation. They were then recruited because they would be able to blend in easily to the country they were working in.

What do we learn about SOE from this source?

1. What does this source show about the work of SOE agents and the dangers they faced?

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

2. Do these sources provide any evidence that SOE took good care of its agents?
3. Can we learn anything from these sources about the type of people who became agents?

Use this outline to plan your poster.

Photograph of Christine Granville, SOE agent

Catalogue ref: HS 9/612



What do we learn about SOE from this source?

Look at the photograph of Christine Granville. Would her appearance be relevant to SOE if they were looking for an agent?

An SOE mission

Catalogue ref: IWM RMY 78

Courtesy of the [Imperial War Museum](#), London.

Extract from a film called "Now It Can Be Told" produced by the RAF Film Production Unit for the British Government in 1946 about the work of British agents during the war.

Transcript

Interviewer: I want you both to go to occupied France.

Female agent: France?

Male agent: How?

Interviewer: By sea or air, only you won't be going in uniform.

Male agent: What do we do when we get there?

Interviewer: Organise resistance. Act as liaison officers with London.

Male agent: Will we be working together?

Interviewer: I hope so. Miss Williams will be your wireless operator. I don't need to say that the job is dangerous and difficult. That must be obvious to you both. Are there any questions before you decide?

Female agent: What made you pick on us?

Interviewer: It wasn't just haphazard. We make extensive inquiries before we recruit our people.

Male agent: Do you think that we are right people for the job?

Interviewer: We're sure of it.

Male agent: All right, I'm on!

Female agent: Of course!

What is this source?

This film is a reconstruction showing the work of men and women who belonged to the Special Operations Executive in WW2. The SOE was set up to carry out missions in enemy territory. British agents working with the French Resistance are shown disrupting enemy communications in preparation for the Normandy landings.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

The film was produced in 1946 by the RAF Film Production Unit and was paid for by the Central Office of Information.

What's the background to this source?

When the Germans overran most of Europe in 1939–40 there were still many people in the occupied lands who were prepared to resist them. The job of the SOE was to locate people who could resist the Germans and also send agents in to help the resistance movements.

Resistance took many forms. Many resistance workers focused on collecting information about German activities, troop movements and weapon sites. Some took part in sabotage operations, destroying important factories and rail links. It was a very dangerous activity. Resisters risked being tortured and executed. There were often reprisals for acts of resistance as well.

It's worth knowing that...

Many of the 'British' agents were not British! Large numbers of people fled from the German advance in the early stages of the war and ended up in Britain. Some of these were recruited as agents to be sent back to their own countries because they spoke the language, they were familiar with those countries and they wanted to help their country.

The SOE was one of many organisations that carried out operations behind enemy lines. The SOE and other agencies also had to work closely with the RAF and Royal Navy, because agents were usually dropped in from planes or submarines.

What do we learn about SOE agents from this source

1. What training and equipment were they given?
2. What tasks did they carry as agents working in occupied France?
3. What type of people carried out this work?

Use this outline to plan your poster.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

Training

Catalogue ref: IWM RMY 78

Courtesy of the [Imperial War Museum](#), London.

Extract from a film called "Now It Can Be Told" produced by the RAF Film Production Unit for the British Government in 1946 about the work of British agents during the war.

Transcript

Male agent: They had their own ideas about getting us fit. No smart drill movements or parade ground stuff. They wanted us to look like ordinary unhealthy civilians and yet be able to take a commando battle course in our stride! They seemed to take a delight in making us climb up things and then jump down or slide down!

Female agent: We were taught all about firearms, British and foreign.

Male agent: And how to use them in any emergency.

Female agent: We went on a thirty-mile walk across country with only a map and compass to guide us.

What is this source?

This film is a reconstruction showing the work of men and women who belonged to the Special Operations Executive in WW2. The SOE was set up to carry out missions in enemy territory. British agents working with the French Resistance are shown disrupting enemy communications in preparation for the Normandy landings.

The film was produced in 1946 by the RAF Film Production Unit and was paid for by the Central Office of Information.

What's the background to this source?

When the Germans overran most of Europe in 1939–40 there were still many people in the occupied lands who were prepared to resist them. The job of the SOE was to locate people who could resist the Germans and also send agents in to help the resistance movements.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

Resistance took many forms. Many resistance workers focused on collecting information about German activities, troop movements and weapon sites. Some took part in sabotage operations, destroying important factories and rail links. It was a very dangerous activity. Resisters risked being tortured and executed. There were often reprisals for acts of resistance as well.

It's worth knowing that...

Many of the 'British' agents were not British! Large numbers of people fled from the German advance in the early stages of the war and ended up in Britain. Some of these were recruited as agents to be sent back to their own countries because they spoke the language, they were familiar with those countries and they wanted to help their country.

The SOE was one of many organisations that carried out operations behind enemy lines. The SOE and other agencies also had to work closely with the RAF and Royal Navy, because agents were usually dropped in from planes or submarines.

What do we learn about SOE agents from this source

1. What training and equipment were they given?
2. What tasks did they carry as agents working in occupied France?
3. What type of people carried out this work?

Use this outline to plan your poster.

More training and lectures for work in the field

Catalogue ref: IWM RMY 78

Courtesy of the [Imperial War Museum](#), London.

Extract from a film called "Now It Can Be Told" produced by the RAF Film Production Unit for the British Government in 1946 about the work of British agents during the war.

Transcript

Male agent: This really was a school. I mean we had lessons. The instructors were smooth university dons who had taken a course under "Pimpernel Smith" or "Raffles". They told us in the most gentlemanly manner how to organise our private lives as saboteurs, how to burgle a house, how to get out of handcuffs. They told us almost apologetically about 'lethal tablets', suicide pills, to be taken only as a last resort.

Female agent: We made notes about organisation and personal security.

Male agent: Learned how to recognise all ranks of the German services.

Female agent: Told how to use codes.

Male agent: How the BBC sent personal messages during the French news.

Female agent: The organisation of the Gestapo.

Male agent: Until our brains reeled under the load of information!

Male agent: At another school we were taught how to organise reception committees. That's local people who'd collect in a field the night the RAF were coming to parachute supplies.

What is this source?

This film is a reconstruction showing the work of men and women who belonged to the Special Operations Executive in WW2. The SOE was set up to carry out missions in enemy territory. British agents working with the French Resistance are shown disrupting enemy communications in preparation for the Normandy landings.

The film was produced in 1946 by the RAF Film Production Unit and was paid for by the Central Office of Information.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

What's the background to this source?

When the Germans overran most of Europe in 1939–40 there were still many people in the occupied lands who were prepared to resist them. The job of the SOE was to locate people who could resist the Germans and also send agents in to help the resistance movements.

Resistance took many forms. Many resistance workers focused on collecting information about German activities, troop movements and weapon sites. Some took part in sabotage operations, destroying important factories and rail links. It was a very dangerous activity. Resisters risked being tortured and executed. There were often reprisals for acts of resistance as well.

It's worth knowing that...

Many of the 'British' agents were not British! Large numbers of people fled from the German advance in the early stages of the war and ended up in Britain. Some of these were recruited as agents to be sent back to their own countries because they spoke the language, they were familiar with those countries and they wanted to help their country.

The SOE was one of many organisations that carried out operations behind enemy lines. The SOE and other agencies also had to work closely with the RAF and Royal Navy, because agents were usually dropped in from planes or submarines.

What do we learn about SOE agents from this source

1. What training and equipment were they given?
2. What tasks did they carry as agents working in occupied France?
3. What type of people carried out this work?

Use this outline to plan your poster.

Getting kitted with gadgets and suicide pills

Catalogue ref: IWM RMY 78

Courtesy of the [Imperial War Museum](http://www.iwm.org.uk), London.

Extract from a film called "Now It Can Be Told" produced by the RAF Film Production Unit for the British Government in 1946 about the work of British agents during the war.

Transcript

Officer: Here are your papers "Felix".

Male agent: Good.

Officer: Identity card, ration card, demobilization.

Male agent: Thank you.

Officer: Have you got your British Card? Good. Micro-photos of your targets?

Male agent: Oh yes.

Officer: Some small money that will be useful.

Male agent: Good.

Officer: And the money belt.

Male agent: Thank you very much.

Officer: Here are your papers. Can I have your British identity card?

(Female agent hands this over)

Officer: Good. Here's some lose money. Now you have your codes and WT plan haven't you?

Female agent: Yes, they were given to me in London.

Officer: Oh good. Felix, here are your lethal tablets.

Male agent: Thanks very much.

(Officer hands him a cork)

Male agent: How's it work?

Officer: Oh, I'll show you.

Male agent: In a cork, very neat! Thank you.

Officer: And "Cat", your tablets are in the lipstick.

Female agent: I see. Thank you.

Officer: Right.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

What is this source?

This film is a reconstruction showing the work of men and women who belonged to the Special Operations Executive in WW2. The SOE was set up to carry out missions in enemy territory. British agents working with the French Resistance are shown disrupting enemy communications in preparation for the Normandy landings.

The film was produced in 1946 by the RAF Film Production Unit and was paid for by the Central Office of Information.

What's the background to this source?

When the Germans overran most of Europe in 1939–40 there were still many people in the occupied lands who were prepared to resist them. The job of the SOE was to locate people who could resist the Germans and also send agents in to help the resistance movements.

Resistance took many forms. Many resistance workers focused on collecting information about German activities, troop movements and weapon sites. Some took part in sabotage operations, destroying important factories and rail links. It was a very dangerous activity. Resisters risked being tortured and executed. There were often reprisals for acts of resistance as well.

It's worth knowing that...

Many of the 'British' agents were not British! Large numbers of people fled from the German advance in the early stages of the war and ended up in Britain. Some of these were recruited as agents to be sent back to their own countries because they spoke the language, they were familiar with those countries and they wanted to help their country.

The SOE was one of many organisations that carried out operations behind enemy lines. The SOE and other agencies also had to work closely with the RAF and Royal Navy, because agents were usually dropped in from planes or submarines.

What do we learn about SOE agents from this source

1. What training and equipment were they given?
2. What tasks did they carry as agents working in occupied France?
3. What type of people carried out this work?

Use this outline to plan your poster.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

How to set up a resistance organisation in occupied France

Catalogue ref: IWM RMY 78

Courtesy of the [Imperial War Museum](#), London.

Extract from a film called "Now It Can Be Told" produced by the RAF Film Production Unit for the British Government in 1946 about the work of British agents during the war.

Transcript

Male agent: Now the real work started, the real work of building up an organisation. The French were marvellous. I used to borrow everything from them. It was impossible to buy a bike and before I managed to get one on the black market I had to live on borrowed bikes. I say live on, it almost became that. My plan was to organise eight or ten resistance groups within a radius of 25 miles of the town. I had to do everything by personal contact. It was amazing how one good contact, a farmer, a wine merchant, priest led invariably to another. Broadly speaking there were three kinds of contacts and I tries to keep them separate. In the first group were the active ones; those I could rely on to a job work- sabotage or taking part in a reception committee. Then there were safe houses, usually older people who could be relied upon for hospitality and where I could go at any time of day or night and get a bed or meal no questions asked. Then, thirdly there were the letterboxes that is, people like caf' proprietors or garage owners where I could leave messages or meet people by appointment without attracting attention. Of course, we couldn't use telephones, they'd be tapped, even internal letters were censored. I had to keep a good look out for controls on the roads and avoid them where possible.

What is this source?

This film is a reconstruction showing the work of men and women who belonged to the Special Operations Executive in WW2. The SOE was set up to carry out missions in enemy territory. British agents working with the French Resistance are shown disrupting enemy communications in preparation for the Normandy landings.

The film was produced in 1946 by the RAF Film Production Unit and was paid for by the Central Office of Information.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

What's the background to this source?

When the Germans overran most of Europe in 1939–40 there were still many people in the occupied lands who were prepared to resist them. The job of the SOE was to locate people who could resist the Germans and also send agents in to help the resistance movements.

Resistance took many forms. Many resistance workers focused on collecting information about German activities, troop movements and weapon sites. Some took part in sabotage operations, destroying important factories and rail links. It was a very dangerous activity. Resisters risked being tortured and executed. There were often reprisals for acts of resistance as well.

It's worth knowing that...

Many of the 'British' agents were not British! Large numbers of people fled from the German advance in the early stages of the war and ended up in Britain. Some of these were recruited as agents to be sent back to their own countries because they spoke the language, they were familiar with those countries and they wanted to help their country.

The SOE was one of many organisations that carried out operations behind enemy lines. The SOE and other agencies also had to work closely with the RAF and Royal Navy, because agents were usually dropped in from planes or submarines.

What do we learn about SOE agents from this source

1. What training and equipment were they given?
2. What tasks did they carry as agents working in occupied France?
3. What type of people carried out this work?

Use this outline to plan your poster.

A mission for "Felix" and the Gestapo attempt to locate "Cat" transmitting

Catalogue ref: IWM RMY 78

Courtesy of the [Imperial War Museum](#), London.

Extract from a film called "Now It Can Be Told" produced by the RAF Film Production Unit for the British Government in 1946 about the work of British agents during the war.

Transcript

Male agent: For my next operation I used another field with a new reception committee. I tried the "Eureka" this time and it worked very well. The aircraft, fitted with special apparatus, picked up our radar waves ten minutes before we heard the engines. The navigator had to watch a green line that moved horizontally across a dial, this line showed him at once when he wondered off course. All he had to do was to keep it in the middle. It was a grand feeling seeing the stores dropping to us. It meant we could soon begin our sabotage activity. It wasn't only explosives we needed, it was just as important to have arms for protection.

We knew the Germans had wireless direction finding stations in France. Once they realised an operator was working within a certain area, they sent out small listening vans. Finally, they were able to place a transmitter to within a few hundred yards, then, they'd watch until they were sure of the actual room. This meant the operator had to be continually on the move. "Cat" hadn't been working in the same room for very long, so perhaps we were a little too confident.

There are shots of German police officers listening to transmissions.

Subtitles: Send two men to Place Carnot - they're transmitting now.

There is sound of loud piano music.

Two men walk towards "Cat's" building and knock on the door of her apartment. They ask her to show her papers. They search the apartment, but find nothing and leave.

Female agent: Luckily, I had made an arrangement with the girl who lived in the house opposite to keep a sharp lookout when my curtains were drawn. That meant I was transmitting or receiving. So when I'd heard a loud thumping on her piano, the danger signal, I was all prepared to receive those unwelcome visitors.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

What is this source?

This film is a reconstruction showing the work of men and women who belonged to the Special Operations Executive in WW2. The SOE was set up to carry out missions in enemy territory. British agents working with the French Resistance are shown disrupting enemy communications in preparation for the Normandy landings. The film was produced in 1946 by the RAF Film Production Unit and was paid for by the Central Office of Information.

What's the background to this source?

When the Germans overran most of Europe in 1939–40 there were still many people in the occupied lands who were prepared to resist them. The job of the SOE was to locate people who could resist the Germans and also send agents in to help the resistance movements.

Resistance took many forms. Many resistance workers focused on collecting information about German activities, troop movements and weapon sites. Some took part in sabotage operations, destroying important factories and rail links. It was a very dangerous activity. Resisters risked being tortured and executed. There were often reprisals for acts of resistance as well.

It's worth knowing that...

Many of the 'British' agents were not British! Large numbers of people fled from the German advance in the early stages of the war and ended up in Britain. Some of these were recruited as agents to be sent back to their own countries because they spoke the language, they were familiar with those countries and they wanted to help their country.

The SOE was one of many organisations that carried out operations behind enemy lines. The SOE and other agencies also had to work closely with the RAF and Royal Navy, because agents were usually dropped in from planes or submarines.

What do we learn about SOE agents from this source

1. What training and equipment were they given?
2. What tasks did they carry as agents working in occupied France?
3. What type of people carried out this work?

Use this outline to plan your poster.

Resistance outline

<p>THE SOE NEEDS YOU</p>	
<p>Britain still needs agents because...</p>	
<p>List and or show images of some of the things here which SOE agents carried out:</p>	<p>List and or show images of the various personal qualities and abilities SOE agents showed (e.g. bravery, speaking languages etc)</p>
<p>List things here which would be useful for particular types of mission e.g. being male or female, old or young, fit and so on:</p>	<p>List or show some of the training or support the SOE provided for agents</p>
<p>INTERESTED? THEN GET IN TOUCH WITH US</p>	