

Intelligence in Public Media

Fighters in the Shadows: A New History of the French Resistance

Robert Gildea (Belknap Press, 2015), 593 pp., photographs, two maps, notes, bibliography, index.

Eisenhower's Guerrillas: The Jedburghs, the Maquis, and the Liberation of France

Benjamin F. Jones (Oxford University Press, 2016), 384 pps., photographs, one map, notes, bibliography, index.

Reviewed by J. R. Seeger

Max Hastings recently commented in a review in *The New York Review of Books* that he was pleasantly surprised that historians still had reasons to write about World War II and that avid readers of these histories still existed.^a This is especially the case as more and more of the records of the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS) are declassified and released to the public. As these documents are released, we begin to understand the complexities of local resistance to the Nazi occupation of Europe and how Allied services, most especially the SOE and the OSS, supported these resistance movements.

It is clear from these same documents that resistance leaders decided almost immediately that resistance to the Nazis would serve to transform their national governments from the status quo before 1940 to some new form of government after the defeat of the Nazis. On the ground in occupied Europe, resistance movements conducted operations on two fronts. First, they fought the Nazis and any fascist collaborators from their own country. Secondly, they fought other resistance groups that did not share their vision of a future government. It is not surprising that most of the records from the SOE and the OSS focus on the Allied assistance in attacking the Nazis, the Italians, and any fascist collaborators. After all, the role of the members of the SOE and the OSS in occupied Europe was to guide guerrilla operations and provide logistical support to the resistance. They were there to defeat the Nazis. While the SOE and OSS reports do have some descriptions of the complicated political and personal loyalties that were part of the resistance movements in Nazi occupied Europe, they are not complete.

Participation in any type of resistance during the Nazi occupation threatened more than the lives of the participants. It always meant risking the lives of immediate

family and, in many cases across Europe, the lives of innocents from the villages nearest acts of resistance. The Resistance members made decisions based on hatred for the occupation and the risks or gains from collaboration; they made those decisions over and over again each time they decided to act. French citizens in both occupied France and Vichy France had to decide to be members of the resistance, support the resistance, remain neutral, or collaborate with the Nazis.

Beginning in the 1950s, members of the resistance movements wrote their memoirs at the same time as the SOE and OSS operators. Memoirs of resistants were seldom translated into English. Two posthumously published memoirs—Daphne Joan Fry Tuyl Knox's *How Long Till Dawn* and Pearl Witherington Cornioley's *Code Name Pauline*—both provide rare glimpses into what it meant to be members of a French resistance movement and members of the civilian population.^b

The two books reviewed here—Robert Gildea's *Fighters in the Shadows* and Benjamin Jones's *Eisenhower's Guerrillas*—provide detail on the complicated loyalties and politics within the French resistance and between various French resistance groups and the French leadership in exile. Gildea's book focuses on the full array of organizations, ethnic groups, and personalities that made up the resistance in France, while Jones's book serves as an excellent counterpoint. Jones focuses on one set of Allied operations—the Jedburgh teams that were assembled prior to D-Day. Gildea covers the entire period of the Nazi occupation of France from 1940 until 1944, while Jones spends the majority of his book on the period from the entrance of US forces into the war in Europe in

a. Max Hastings, "What's New About the War?" *The New York Review of Books* 63, no. 4 (10 March 2016): 28–30.

b. Daphne Joan Fry Tuyl Knox, *How Long Till Dawn: Memoirs of One of the Charter Members and Original Founders of the Resistance Movement in Algiers and a Member of OSS* (Outskirts Press, 2013) and Pearl Witherington Cornioley, *Code name Pauline: Memoirs of a World War II Special Agent* (Chicago Review Press, 2013).

All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed in this article are those of the author. Nothing in the article should be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations.

early 1943 through the complete liberation of France in late 1944. Both authors use archival research from the most commonly used primary sources (SOE, OSS, and Allied war records) as well as far more obscure material from French national and provincial archives and German military records from the occupation. The use of archival material in both books adds greater clarity to the individual choices during the Resistance and underscores the deep courage exemplified by those involved. All of the books published on this topic over the past 20 years show SOE and OSS operators facing a “through the looking glass” world, where friends, Nazi collaborators, and fascist enemies changed places on a regular basis and where support for resistance movements was based as much on the Allies’ strategic political goals as on any local attempts to undermine the Nazis.^a

Robert Gildea’s work addresses two questions: who were the members of the Resistance and why were there multiple resistance movements in France? Gildea, a professor of modern history at Oxford University and author of another work on the French Resistance entitled *Marianne in Chains: Daily Life in the Heart of France During the German Occupation* (Picador, 2004), also describes French post-war politics that overshadowed stories of the many resistance movements and their members.

Gildea shows that the decisions to become involved in the French Resistance were not based on a single motivation, and that the members of the resistance were not all French. In his chapter “The Blood of Others,” Gildea catalogs foreign fighters inside the resistance movements, including displaced Jews, displaced Spaniards, displaced Poles, and many others who fled the Nazi occupation or the rise of fascism in their own countries.

In 1940, Prime Minister Churchill challenged the SOE leadership to make the German occupation of France as uncomfortable and expensive as possible. This meant sabotage and subversion were the primary missions of virtually every French resistance unit supported by the SOE. Meanwhile, the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) ran their own intelligence collection networks inside France. These were made up of French citizens who

resisted the occupation through espionage. For other resistance movements not part of the SOE or SIS networks, resistance meant “slowdowns” in key factories in France and propaganda efforts. The best known of these was *Combat*, the resistance newspaper in Paris.^b

As the resistance movements expanded in France with SOE and OSS assistance, Gildea argues that the main question in 1943 and 1944 was whether the Resistance should expand into a national insurrection or conduct operations in support of the Allies’ invasion of Europe and the strategic effort to drive the Nazis out of France.

Gildea concludes that the story of the resistance has been airbrushed many times by many different political actors over the past 70 years, beginning with General de Gaulle’s using BBC broadcasts into France prior to the invasion and later through the careful elimination of “counternarratives” that might refute the Free French story of a single resistance under de Gaulle and his key subordinate, Koenig, with no help from either the communist lead partisan resistance or “outsiders,” which would have included foreign fighters and the SOE and OSS support.

Benjamin Jones’s book details the French resistance units affiliated with the Free French government in exile and their relationship to the Jedburgh operations prior to, during, and after D-Day. Jones is the dean of arts and sciences at Dakota State University and formerly a USAF captain in the 352nd Special Operations Group. Like Gildea, Jones is a respected scholar in the area of special operations and, most especially, in special operations in France during World War II. Jones’s research over nearly 20 years focuses on the relationship between units in occupied France (both independent Free French and the SOE and OSS guided teams) and the Allied headquarters in London. Jones’s research uses extensive primary source material from US, UK, French, and German archives, including recently released archives of written reports from the field, as well as diaries and memoirs of US, UK, and French leaders.

Eisenhower’s Guerrillas, a culmination of Jones’s previous research, discusses the last full year of the German occupation of France and the Allied plans to use the French resistance to support OVERLORD—the Allied

a. For additional readings on the European resistance to the Nazis, please see Marcia Christoff Kurapovna’s 2010 *Shadows on the Mountain* (John Wiley and Sons), Roderick Bailey’s 2008 *The Wildest Province* (Random House), and Jonathan Walker’s 2008 *Poland Alone* (The History Press).

b. For additional reading from *Combat*, see Albert Camus, *Between Hell and Reason—Essays from the Resistance Newspaper Combat, 1944–1947* (Wesleyan, 1991).

invasion of Europe. In contrast to Gildea, who speaks of the “resistance in France” rather than the “French Resistance,” Jones focuses on the Free French units and the command relationship between these units and the Free French leadership in exile from 1943 until D-Day.

Jones describes the Jedburgh teams as made up of three individuals—two special operators and one communicator. Jedburgh teams always had at least one member of the Free French Army and either a British SOE or US OSS/Special Operations (OSS/SO) officer. These individuals would parachute into France in military uniform and act as liaison elements with the Free French resistance units, serving as communications links between the Free French resistance units and Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) headquarters and providing logistics support—designing and implementing plans for air drops of supplies to the resistance.

Jones divides each chapter of his book into discussions of resistance operations in France and, separately, the complex political machinations taking place inside the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) and between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill regarding the liberation of France. This style of moving back and forth from the tactical operations on the ground to the strategic challenges in London and Washington makes for challenging reading. However, both the tactical and strategic aspects of the story are key to Jones’s premise that French resistance successes in France after D-Day only occurred because SHAEF leadership finally selected a single leader to represent the resistance and that leader, de Gaulle, had a strategic plan for the resistance units.

Jones argues that General Eisenhower was the first to recognize the practical reasons for the Allies’ need to accept de Gaulle as the single French leader in the Allied camp, and it was no easy task for Eisenhower to convince his military superiors and the Allied political leadership to agree. Jones points out that de Gaulle—who was “poorly prepared and had never shown any inclination at national-level political leadership . . . [and who] would, over the next few months, compensate for his inexperience with an abundance of pride”—was an uneasy ally even before Operation TORCH and the invasion of North Africa.

De Gaulle insisted that his own representative take command of Resistance operations in France and further insisted that he be placed in charge of all Allied opera-

tions in occupied France. De Gaulle’s choice to represent Free French interests, Gen. Marie-Pierre Koenig, was not an ideal leader for SHAEF Special Force Headquarters (SFHQ). As a conventional French Army armor officer with little experience in unconventional warfare, Koenig was, however, loyal to de Gaulle and that was most critical. The tensions created by the addition of Koenig resulted in the departure of the senior SOE officer, Brig. Eric E. Mockler-Ferryman. These tensions were based in part on Koenig’s personality and in part on the fact that SOE and OSS had been running independent operations in France for years before Koenig was on the scene. As a result of these tensions, Koenig—while commander of the Jedburgh program and nominally the commander of SFHQ—remained unaware of other established Allied intelligence operations in France and in the rest of Europe that were conducted without his knowledge or approval.

As this work takes the reader through the design and implementation of the Jedburgh program leading up to D-Day, mixing the difficulties of producing 100 teams; obtaining the necessary weapons, equipment, and air frames to deliver them; counterintelligence worries; and the in-fighting taking place between Washington, London, and Algiers (where de Gaulle had established the French government-in-exile), it seems a wonder that any Jedburgh operations were ever conducted. In fact, operations just prior to OVERLORD and throughout the summer of 1944 were exceptionally successful from a strategic perspective, destroying critical infrastructure and tying up German military resources throughout France, when those resources could have been used to fight the Allied advances.

While the Gildea and Jones books advance our understanding of the resistance to the Nazi occupation, neither book discusses the extensive intelligence collection operations that also took place in Occupied France. In 1940, SIS intelligence officers were inserted into France by various clandestine means with the mission to build intelligence networks reporting on the Nazi occupation. By 1942, OSS/Secret Intelligence (OSS/SI) officers were conducting similar, independent operations. The French members of these SIS and OSS/SI networks were most certainly part of the “resistance in France,” even if they were not associated with any structured French resistance organization.

There are many lessons that can be gleaned from books on the challenges of intelligence and special operations in Nazi-occupied Europe, and these lessons are delivered best when they focus on the political complexities of the European resistance movements, rather than on dramatic combat operations behind Nazi lines. Together, Gildea and Jones highlight several striking lessons.

First, special operations teams inserted into occupied France to support the resistance had a very different view of their mission from that of their colleagues in the resistance. Well before the UK or UK Special Forces decided to pay attention to a specific resistance unit, the leaders of the resistance unit had decided the desired political “end state.” Anyone who was in the way of the end state became an adversary, and any force that supported that end state (even if it was originally the enemy) became an ally. Both Gildea and Jones make it clear that, by the time the SOE and OSS were sending units into occupied France, the resistance movements in France were less interested in defeating the Nazis than in insuring a specific type of future France. Jones captures this lesson with a simple quote from Jedburgh Team HUGH’s last transmission: “Fighting was over, politics began, [Team] HUGH left.” (272)

Second, and corollary to this first lesson, is the counterintelligence lesson. Throughout the European theater in World War II, resistance leaders often used selective intelligence production and outright deception as a means to gain Allied support and undermine Allied support to their political adversaries. While successful resistance operations were almost always a result of excellent local intelligence collection, it is also true that most of the failures—and especially the capture of SOE and OSS teams—were the result of the actions of traitors from within the resistance network. One of the reasons SIS and SOE operations and OSS/SI and OSS/SO operations were

rarely linked in the field was that SIS, SOE, and OSS headquarters’ staff in London realized this threat. Both Gildea and Jones note that resistance movements rarely had an interest in operational security, beyond avoiding capture by the Nazis. Gildea points out the only resistance movement in France that had any operational security awareness was the communist resistance, but only because of the history of anti-communist operations by the French government in the 1930s.

Finally, there will always be logistics challenges in supporting resistance movements, and it is critical that special operators recognize this before they promise any support to a resistance movement. During World War II, the SOE was constantly in conflict with the Royal Air Force (RAF) and in competition with RAF counterparts in the SIS to obtain equipment and to have airframes available for their missions. Once the United States arrived in theater, OSS leadership obtained SHAEF approval for two dedicated squadrons of B-24 bombers assigned to support clandestine operations. “The Carpetbaggers,” as members of those squadrons named themselves, became the primary Special Operations aviation capability. As SOE and OSS gained traction inside France and in other parts of occupied Europe, the demands for personnel, weapons, ammunition, and equipment quickly outpaced the capabilities of the Carpetbaggers.

As Max Hastings states in his recent article, World War II remains an event that historians continue to analyze with great success. This is partly because even as the number of World War II veterans who could serve as primary sources decreases, the number of potential archival sources increases. While the SOE and the OSS were disbanded in 1945, there are still lessons their history can teach us today. *Fighters in the Shadows and Eisenhower's Guerrillas* prove this point.

