Retracing Resistance: An Analysis of the Experiences of Missing F Section Women of the Special Operations Executive

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Abstract:

This study investigates the experiences of the missing female operatives of the British Special Operations Executive F Section during the Second World War. This research analyzes these women's movements and treatment, as much as can be reconstructed, from their arrest until their deaths in German concentration camps. In analyzing the experiences of the captured and executed women of the SOE, this thesis illustrates the variables that shaped their fate: when and where they were interned and executed, the role of Nazi personnel, and the conditions and priorities of the camps in which they were held. Contrary to the SOE's intentions, women's gender did not protect them, since for the Nazis women spies were a double threat.

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Introduction

Western women's roles in the war effort during the Second World War have largely been associated with the Home Front. Most women in Britain and North America supported the war in traditionally feminine spheres such as nursing and clerical work, though some took on new roles, such as working in ammunition factories and driving ambulances, due to the absence of male workers. A small percentage of women, however, took on clandestine paramilitary work, by which they aimed to help defeat Nazi Germany more directly. In Britain, the Special Operations Executive (SOE) was established with the goal to help liberate Nazi-occupied Europe through actions of sabotage and subversion by the Allied forces. SOE agents were sent across Europe in significant numbers, but there was a particular emphasis on France: 470 SOE agents were deployed to France ("F section"), thirty-nine of whom were women.[1] These F section female agents were assigned roles as couriers or wireless operators because their gender was thought to give them a "natural" cover that made them inconspicuous. Unlike their male counterparts in the SOE, women operatives were denied formal military status and were considered "non-combatants" despite their participation in paramilitary activity. British women were not allowed to enlist in the military and were, rather, assigned to civilian auxiliary organizations for women such as the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). This civilian distinction meant that female operatives were not considered soldiers. Nevertheless, the SOE gave its female agents honorary rank (often Second Lieutenant) in hopes

[1] Juliette Pattinson, "'Playing the daft lassie with them': Gender, Captivity and the Special Operations Executive during the Second World War" *European Review of History* 13:2 (2006), 1.

that such military status might give them authority in the field and, if they were caught, protect them: it was hoped they would be treated as prisoners of war rather than as enemy agents.

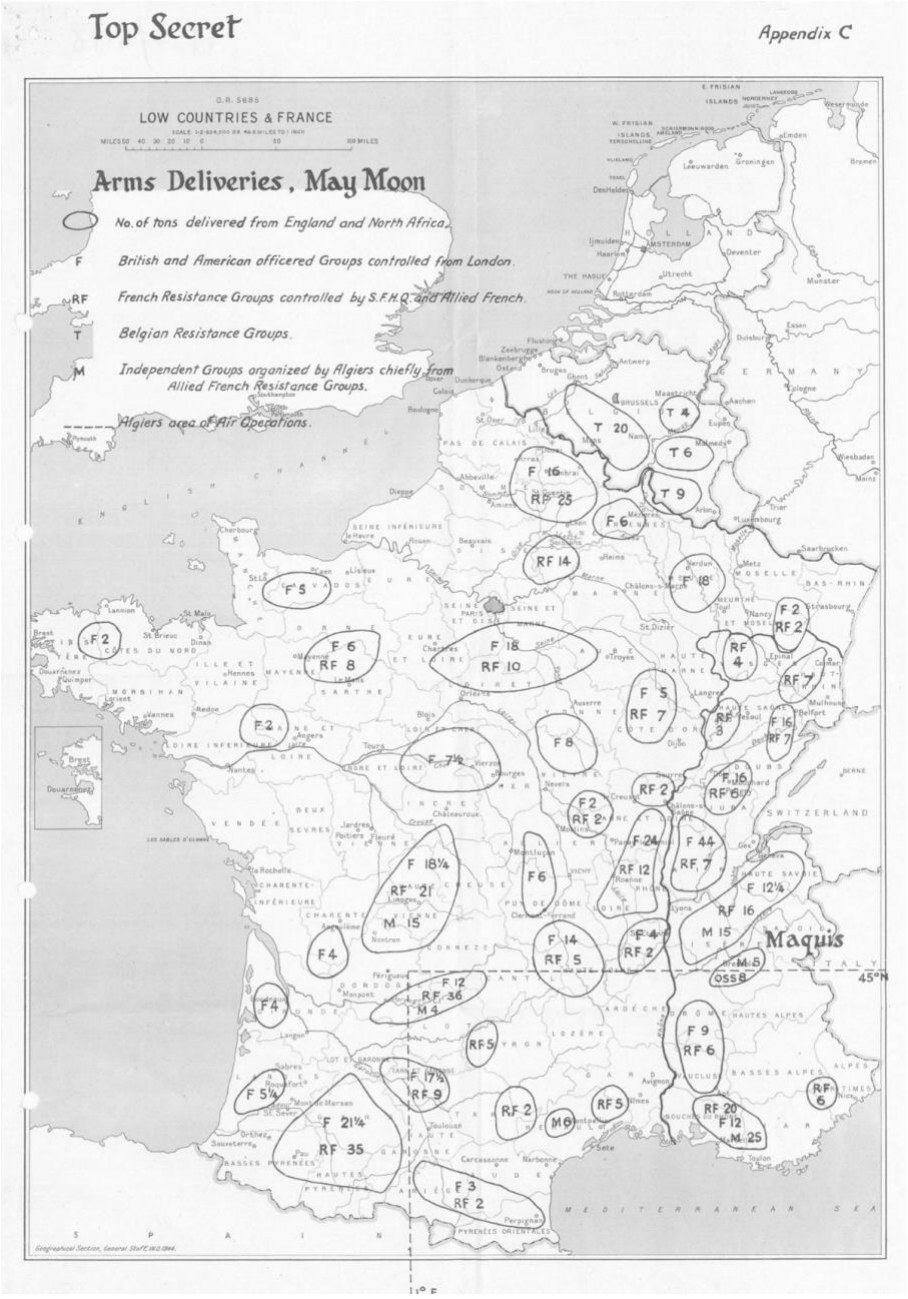

Figure 1. Map of the Low Countries and France showing arms deliveries to various resistance groups. The British National Archives. HS 8/898/120.

Ultimately, twelve F section female operatives were captured and executed by the Nazis during the Second World War.[2] This thesis analyzes these women's treatment, as much as can be reconstructed, from their arrest until their death at one of three concentration camps (Ravensbruck, Dachau, and Natzweiler-Struthof) and examines several themes raised by their experiences. First, there was no established system or consistent policy for dealing with women intelligence agents arrested in France. While there was the *Nacht und Nebel* ("Night and Fog") policy that directed Nazi officials to make Allied subversive operatives "disappear" or become untraceable after arrest, there was no distinct outline of how to go about this, nor any specific reference to female operatives. Therefore, treatment after arrest appears to have depended on many variables: where and when agents were arrested, the Nazi personnel in charge of their interrogations, and the conditions in and priorities of the camps to which they were sent. Second, their gender does not appear to have protected them as the SOE had hoped since proportionally more SOE women than men were arrested, deported, and executed. Of thirty-nine female operatives sent to France, sixteen were arrested and sent to prison and concentration camps. Pattinson states that seventeen women experienced long-term captivity, fifteen were deported to Germany, ten were executed, two "died as a result of treatment received in captivity," and three survived.[3] However, this research highlights that in fact twelve of the captured women SOE agents were executed, while one died of illness related to treatment in the camps and three survived.[4] Meanwhile, there were 441 male agents sent to France and 104 arrested and sent to camps. Sixty-nine male operatives were executed and twelve died as result of treatment in the

[2] Andrée Borrel, Vera Leigh, Diana Rowden, Sonia Olschanezky, Noor Inayat Khan, Yolande Beekman, Madeleine Damerment, Eliane Plewman, Violette Szabo, Denise Bloch, Lilian Rolfe, Cecily Lefort.
[3] Juliette Pattinson, *Behind Enemy Lines: Gender, Passing, and the Special Operations Executive in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) 155-6.
[4] Yvonne Rudellat died of typhus following the liberation of Bergen-Belsen. Odette Sansom, Yvonne Baseden, and Eileen Nearne survived Ravensbruck.

camps, leaving twenty-three male survivors.[5] Among male SOE agents, 22% survived Nazi captivity, while among women agents only 18% survived. By obtaining the available and surviving SOE women's personnel files from the British National Archives, my research contributes to existing scholarship by piecing together these women's experiences as much as can be told, from war crimes reports, interview transcripts, images, maps, etc., within their files. This research also takes into account various concentration camp and French prison documents from the British archives, also placing this topic into a broader context that is often absent in SOE research.

Female operatives' ambiguous status -- officially civilian, but with honorary military rank and performing paramilitary work alongside men with military status -- also offered no protection. In the end, for the Nazis, female operatives were a double threat: as "spies" they were a threat to security and to the war effort, as women engaged in paramilitary activity they were a threat to gender norms.

Historiography

The first research into the experiences of the SOE's missing female agents was conducted by their handler, Vera Atkins, immediately after the war. The SOE was disbanded in January 1946 and Atkins was determined to locate missing operatives, or at least uncover their fate. Atkins launched her search for these missing agents as a member of the British War Crimes Commission: she gathered evidence for the prosecution of war criminals, visited numerous concentration camps, interviewed prisoners and camp survivors, and interrogated Nazi officials. Through this work Atkins managed to uncover the fates of the captured and executed female

[5] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 155-6.

operatives. Her findings are included in the individual personnel files for these agents (located in the British National Archives), which form the basis of my study.

The British National Archives holds numerous SOE official documents related to the inner workings of the agency, its agents, the SOE networks in France,[6] and the organization's political, economic, and strategic goals.[7] SOE personnel files contain information on individual operatives, their personal life, and their work within the SOE. Each file is different: files contain anywhere from thirty-five to six-hundred pages, depending on the operative. Most of the files contained letters from agents to Vera Atkins, wireless transmitter reports from France to the London SOE headquarters, pay stubs and, for the sixteen women who were arrested, Vera Atkins' reports from the post-war period. Various files contained information on the women's family history and life before coming to the SOE. For example, Denise Bloch was living in Lyon, working as a courier for the French Resistance before she was recruited by the SOE in 1943.[8] Meanwhile, Diana Rowden's file includes details of her life as a journalist before the SOE. Some the files included the cover story that went with their new identity while in France.[9] Andrée Borrell was given the name Denise Urbain to carry out her work as a courier for the Physician circuit near Paris,[10] while Noor Inayat Khan used the alias Jeanne Marie Renier to become the first female wireless operator in France.[11]

[6] The British National Archives, "Correspondence with Winston Churchill regarding SOE activities in occupied France," HS 8/897/62.
[7] Ibid.
[8] The British National Archives, "Denise Madeleine Bloch -- born 21.01.1916," reference HS 9/165/8.
[9] The British National Archives, "Diana Hope Rowden, aka Juliette Therese Rondeau -- born 31.01.1915, died 06.08.1944," HS 9/ 1287/6.
[10]The British National Archives, "Andrée Raymonde Borrel-- born 18.11.1919, died 06.07.1944. With photographs," HS 9/183.
[11] The British National Archives, "Noor Inayat Khan, aka Jeanne Marie Renier -- born 01.01.1914, executed 13.09.1944 at Dachau concentration camp," HS 9/836/5.

Other files contain interview transcripts of Nazi officers and wardens from the war crimes investigations. In some cases, survivor testimonies from prisoners of concentration camps or various prisons in France and Germany were included in the files. For instance, Vera Leigh's file included testimony by Gestapo guards and Gestapo interrogators that detailed her transfer from prisons to concentration camps.[12] Similarly, Eliane Plewman's file was compiled with personal witness testimonies of former prisoners (including SOE operative Odette Sansom) and SS guards.[13] These interviews also speak to her transportation between various prisons, as well as her treatment in this process. Meanwhile, the personnel file for Cecily Lefort employs survivor and witness interviews and depositions to provide insight into her arrest and transfer to multiple prisons.[14]

Violette Szabo and Yolande Beekman's files are particularly distinctive as they primarily focus on the women's experiences within their circuits in France. Szabo was a part of two separate missions to France, the first to investigate the status of a circuit in Rouen, the second as a courier for the Salesman circuit.[15] Meanwhile, Yolande Beekman was a part of the Tell circuit as a wireless operator. Beekman was constantly on the move between safe houses, in order to relay messages back to London.[16] She played a key role in organizing weapon and explosive drops to the various resistance cells.

[12] The British National Archives, "Vera Eugenie Leigh, aka Suzanne Chavanne, formerly Ira Eugenie Glass -- born 17.03.1903, died 06.07.1914," HS 9/910/3.
[13] The British National Archives, "Eliane Sophie Plewman, nee Brown --Bartroli, aka Eliane Jacqueline Prunier -- born 06.12.1917, executed at Dachau 13 September 1944," HS 9/1195/1.
[14] The British National Archives, "Cecily or Cecily Margot Lefort, aka Cecile Marguerite Legrand -- born 30.04.1900, executed 01.03.1945 at Ravensbruck concentration camp. With photographs," HS 9/908/1.
[15] The British National Archives, "Violette Reine Elizabeth nee Bushell -- born 26.06.1921, died January 1945," HS 9/1435.
[16] The British National Archives, "Yolande Elsa Maria Beekman nee Unternahre, aka Yvonne Marie Yolande Chauvigny -- born 07.01.1911, died 1944," HS 9/114/2.

It is important to note that not all SOE personnel files survived after the war. Some personnel files along with other operational files were deliberately destroyed, others were lost in a fire at SOE headquarters in 1945. This has made it much harder for scholars to know for certain the full extent of SOE operations and its operatives' experiences. However, there were women who managed to survive the concentration camps, who have helped piece together some unanswered questions.

F section SOE operative Yvonne Baseden survived being arrested and sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp. Her personnel file is the most detailed of the surviving personnel files. This is likely due to her being able to recount her own experiences to the SOE. Baseden discusses her experiences in the field, being arrested, staying in various prisons, being in Ravensbruck, and her liberation from the camp. The report also includes various SOE reports of her training, her deployment, and wireless messages from the field. For instance, the file breaks down the organization of her circuit and its high-ranking members, and how the circuit managed to carry out various operations.[17] The file also recounts Baseden's memories of the treatment of other prisoners in German prisons and at Ravensbruck, including medical experiments. The British National Archives also has record of Baseden's witness deposition for the United Nations war crime trials on the "ill-treatment of British Nationals at Dijon, France, Saarbrucken and Ravensbruck between June 1944 and April 1945.*"*[18] While some of the information detailed in the deposition was already included in the personnel file, this deposition goes into further detail on her experiences after being arrested. In particular, she discusses her

[17] The British National Archives, "Yvonne Jeanne Therese de Vibraye Burney formerly Bailey née Baseden, aka Odette, aka Y.J. Bernier, aka Bursar, aka Toga -- born 20.01.1922," HS 9/240/2.
[18] The British National Archives, "Yvonne Baseden witness deposition, In the matter of war crimes and in the matter of the ill-treatment of British Nationals at Dijon, France, Saarbrucken and Ravensbruck, Germany between June 1944 and April 1945," RW/2/7/4.

interrogation by Gestapo officials at Dijion, and her forced labour at Saarbrucken and Ravensbruck.[19] Eileen Nearne also survived Ravensbruck. Nearne's personnel file contained less content in comparison to Yvonne Baseden's, but it did include personal testimonies of Nearne's experience in the SOE in France, and the various prisons and camps that she was in. Unlike Baseden and Sansom, Nearne managed to escape and hide out in a church until the Americans liberated Leipzig, Germany.[20]

Oral histories have also been considered in this research, in particular the Imperial War Museum's interviews with Odette Sansom, Yvonne Baseden, Maurice Buckmaster, Selwyn Jepson, and Vera Atkins. Odette Sansom was an operative who was stationed with F section in 1942. While I wasn't able to access Sansom's personnel file, her interview with the Imperial War Museum discusses her recruitment to the SOE, her training, deployment into France, her participation in missions, her arrest, and her imprisonment at Fresnes and at Ravensbruck. During this time, she described being tortured at Fresnes and kept in solitary confinement while in Ravensbruck. Her testimony about her time within the camp provides valuable insight into the treatment of other SOE agents in Ravensbruck.[21] Yvonne Baseden's interview recounts her experiences within the SOE and within Ravensbruck concentration camp. This interview expands on her experiences mentioned in her personnel file.[22] Maurice Buckmaster was the Head of F section and worked alongside Vera Atkins during her time with the SOE. Buckmaster was also a part of the Judex Missions, where F section agents returned to France after the war to meet and thank Resistance members for their participation in the war effort. Buckmaster oversaw

[19] The British National Archives, "Baseden," HS 9/240/2.
[20] The British National Archives, "Eileen Mary Nearne, aka Alice Wood, aka Jacqueline Duterte -- born 15.03.1921," HS 9/1089/2.
[21] Odette Marie Sansom, interviewed by Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, October 31, 1986, interview 9478.
[22] Yvonne Baseden, interviewed by Legasee: The Veterans Video Archive.

every operation and knew of every recruit, therefore his testimony with the Imperial War Museum is valuable. In his interview in 1986, he discusses numerous agents, such as Noor Khan, and his work with Vera Atkins.[23] Selwyn Jepson became the head recruiting officer for SOE's F section in 1942. In his interview with the Special Forces Club, he discusses his experiences in pushing for women to be operatives.[24] He divulged that many members of British government and members of the SOE pushed back against women's recruitment. It was ultimately Winston Churchill who allowed women's recruitment to move forward, due to the SOE's initial failure to infiltrate France and establish successful underground networks. Jepson's interview provides an interesting look into the recruitment of women in F section. Vera Atkins' interview discusses her life and work with the SOE and other operatives in the field.[25] Atkins describes her introduction to the SOE and how she was recruited. She also discusses her search for the missing female agents, and her role in the Nuremburg trials.

In the immediate post war years, the wartime experiences of female agents captured public interest. Films such as *Odette* and *Carve Her Name with Pride*, focused on the lives of F section operatives Odette Sansom and Violette Szabo and were amongst the top grossing films in Britain in the 1950s. Ian Fleming supposedly based one of his female characters on an SOE agent. Alongside this public fascination with female operatives, there was also a distinct critique of the SOE for allowing women to participate in espionage, especially after the fates of the executed women agents were made public. Authors Elizabeth Nicholas and Jean Fuller blamed the SOE for not better preparing, or protecting, women agents.[26] Nicholas and Fuller's criticisms

[23] Maurice James Buckmaster, interviewed by Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, October 17, 1986, interview 9452.
[24] Selwyn Jepson, interview by the Special Forces Club, Imperial War Museum, 9331.
[25] Vera May Atkins, interviewed by Conrad Wood, Imperial War Museum, January 6, 1987, interview 9551.
[26] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines*, 7.

were also shared by much of the British press, which demanded answers surrounding the deaths of female agents. This public unrest prompted Dame Irene Ward M.P. to propose a motion in 1958 to the House of Commons that demanded an investigation into the SOE. There were access restrictions on the deceased agents' personnel files, which prompted concern that the British government was trying to cover up blunders that may have cost the agents their lives. [27] The public scrutiny of SOE and the British government led Prime Minister Harold MacMillan to order the Foreign Office to commission an official history of the SOE in France.[28] MRD Foot was appointed as official SOE historian. Foot wrote *SOE in France, An Account of the British Special Operations Executive in France 1940-1944.* Published in 1966, Foot's study outlines the inner workings of F section. Foot had access to the organization's confidential materials and conducted interviews with former senior officials at the London headquarters of the SOE and female and male agents who had been deployed behind enemy lines.[29] This thesis uses Foot's work in discussing F section's operatives' training and recruitment. For instance, Foot describes how F section prepared its agents to become spies, and trained them to survive under any circumstance, such as being arrested and interrogated. Foot also distinguishes between the different kinds of training schools or groups. He does include some women operatives' experiences and discusses how the SOE introduced women to combat and weapons training, along with highlighting other skills that women had that were useful for the war effort. Scholar Juliette Pattinson suggests that Foot's publication was used to justify F section's recruitment and training of women and to promote a more positive view of the SOE that countered Nicholas,

[27] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 8.
[28] Ibid.
[29] MRD Foot, *SOE in France, An Account of the British Special Operations Executive in France 1940-1944* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1966).

Fuller, and Ward's criticisms.[30] Nevertheless, Foot's work is helpful in reconstructing the training and support that SOE women agents received, and the SOE's official view of their value and potential contribution. This project also employs Foot's *SOE: An Outline History of the Special Operations Executive 1940-1946.*[31] Published in 1984, this book looks at the SOE's structure, membership, and effectiveness as a whole, rather than just in France.

In contrast, Nigel West's *Secret War: The Story of SOE, Britain's Wartime Sabotage Organization* analyzes the structure and operations of the SOE's F section.[32] West highlights the organization's successes and failures, particularly analyzing operational mistakes such as the collapse of the Prosper circuit and the number of arrests that followed. West also questions Foot's Cabinet-commissioned official history, which he sees as an attempt to cover up any controversy.

Denis Rigden's *How to Be a Spy: The World War II S0E Training Manual* also offers an analysis of the inner workings of the SOE as an organization.[33] Rigden specifically focuses on SOE's training programs, facilities, and techniques, in preparing its agents to infiltrate behind enemy lines. Rigden does this by highlighting SOE's four training stages: the Preliminary Schools, Paramilitary Schools, Finishing Schools, and the provision of a flat in London where agents could be given a final briefing before being sent out into the field.[34] The text also refers to numerous other specialist schools that trained agents in specific tasks and skills, such as making explosive. Rigden's work provides important detail about the training an SOE operative

[30] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 8.
[31] MRD Foot, *S.O.E., An Outline History of the Special Operations Executive 1940*-1946 (London: Pimlico, 1984).
[32] Nigel West, *Secret War: The Story of SOE, Britain's Wartime Sabotage Organization* (Newsburyport: Pen & Sword Books, 2019).
[33] Denis Rigden, *How to Be a Spy: The World War II SOE Training Manual* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1984).
[34] Rigden, *Spy*, 5.

received, but doesn't include the individual experiences of agents, any personal testimonies, or any discussion of SOE women.

In contrast, Juliette Pattinson has written extensively on women's experiences and gender relations within the SOE. Pattinson is one of the leading scholars of women in the SOE and focuses primarily on the gendered experiences of SOE operatives. Pattinson's *Behind Enemy Lines: Gender, Passing and the Special Operations Executive in the Second World War*, explores the experiences of male and female agents by discussing the various stages of recruitment, the stages of training, strategies of operating unnoticed in France, the treatment of operatives after arrest, and their execution.[35] Pattinson primarily draws from SOE personnel and operational files and interviews conducted with surviving SOE staff and concentration camp survivors for her analysis. She argues that gender was a tool used by both men and women agents, which contributed to the ability of SOE agents to "pass" as French during their deployment.[36] Her comparison between men and women operatives provides a nuanced understanding of women's status and roles in the SOE. Pattinson continues her gendered analysis in discussing SOE agents' incarceration: some women opted to stick with their cover stories and employ stereotypical feminine behavior, such as confusion, naivety, and innocence, to try to deceive Nazi officials.[37] Similarly, male agents' gender also enabled them to stick to their cover stories, which allowed them to pass as a black marketeers or RAF pilots, in order to be considered as POWs and to be protected under the Geneva Convention.[38] Thus, both male and female operatives used gender as a tool to navigate and cover their clandestine operations. However, Pattinson also highlights that

[35] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines*, 6.
[36] Ibid.
[37] The appendices appear in a full storymap titled *Retracing Resistance:* An Analysis of the Experiences of Missing F Section Women of the Special Operations Executive.
[38] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,*157.

in some cases male and female agents didn't see the point in carrying on with their cover stories and admitted to their clandestine work.[39] Pattinson also focuses on gendered forms of torture and sexual violence that were inflicted on some female agents.[40]

These themes are also found in Pattinson's articles. "'Passing unnoticed in a French crowd:' The passing performances of British SOE agents in Occupied France" highlights the way that women would manipulate their gender during their missions or after being arrested.[41] "'Playing the daft lassie with them': Gender, Captivity and the Special Operations Executive during the Second World War"[42] and "'The best disguise': performing femininities for clandestine purposes during the Second World War"[43] illustrate the "complex interaction of the identities of 'woman', 'soldier', and 'prisoner'' in Nazi captivity.[44] Here, Pattinson argues that these captured female operatives resorted to gendered stereotypes to try to survive, and highlights how the Gestapo and SS responded to women who overstepped gender boundaries by working in espionage.

Since Pattinson's *Behind Enemy Lines*, scholars have continued to take an interest in the experiences SOE female operatives and the role that their gender played. Robyn Walker's *The Women Who Spied for Britain: Female Secret Agents of the Second World War,* takes a biographical approach to discussing women's experiences and gender relations within the SOE.[45]

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 163.
[41] Juliette Pattinson, "Passing unnoticed in a French crowd" The passing performances of British SOE agents in Occupied France," in *National Identities* (London: Routledge Press, 2010).
[42] Juliette Pattinson, "'Playing the daft lassie with them': Gender, Captivity and the Special Operations Executive during the Second World War," *European Review of History 13:2* (2006).
[43] Juliette Pattinson, "The best disguise: performing femininities for clandestine purposes during the second world war" in *Gender and Warfare in the Twentieth Century: textual representations*. ed. Angela Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).
[44] Ibid.
[45] Robyn Walker, *The Women Who Spied for Britain, Female Secret Agents of the Second World War* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2014), 2.

Walker begins her book by offering background information on the SOE and further delves into the dangers and risks female operatives faced when going behind enemy lines. Walker highlights that women were largely considered to make effective undercover agents.[46] The SOE recognized that women would have much more freedom of movement, which would allow them to enact the SOE's subversive agenda in occupied countries. Walker differs from Pattinson in that she dedicates specific chapters to specific female operatives from F Section, making hers a more biographical, and less analytical, study. In fact, this tends to be the main approach to this topic. A great many biographies of SOE women have been published. These include *A Life in Secrets* by Sarah Helm, which focuses on Vera Atkins;[47] Arthur J. Magida's *Code Name Madeleine: A Sufi Spy in Nazi Occupied Paris*, about Noor Khan;[48] Penny Starns' *Odette: World War Two's Darling Spy*; [49]Tania Szabo's, *Violette: The Missions of SOE Agent Violette Szabó GC,* about her mother Violette Szabo;[50] and Pearl Witherington Cornioley and Hervé Larroque's *Code Name Pauline: Memoirs of a World War II Special Agent*.[51]

Like Walker, Beryl Escott's *The Heroines of SOE: F Section, Britain's Secret Women in France,* devotes chapters to each of the women of F section and aims to reconstruct their experiences and provide background personal information. Escott also provides insight into the creation of the SOE, its recruitment processes, and training schools, with a particular focus on

[46] Walker, *Spied for Britain*, 2.
[47] Sarah Helm, *A Life in Secrets* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005).
[48] Arthur J. Magida, *Code Name Madeleine: A Sufi Spy in Nazi Occupied Paris* (New York: W.W. & Norton Company, 2020).
[49] Penny Starns, *Odette: World War Two's Darling Spy*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2009).
[50] Tania Szabó, *Violette: The Missions of SOE Agent Violette Szabó GC* (Stroud: The History Press, 2015).
[51] Pearl Witherington Cornioley and Hervé Larroque, *Code Name Pauline: Memoirs of a World War II Special Agent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

women operatives' introduction to the agency. Escott's work includes information on agents whose personnel files have been destroyed such as Lilian Rolfe and Sonia Olschanezky.[52]

Mission France: The True History of the Women of SOE is a relatively new study by Kate Vigurs, published in 2021.[53] Like Pattinson, Walker, and Escott, Vigurs provides background research on the structure of the SOE and an introduction to F section's female operatives. However, she also discusses the movement of operatives once they were arrested by the Gestapo. Vigurs employs SS documentation, SOE official documents, and personal testimonies from survivors as primary sources in order to record what these operatives experienced while incarcerated. Vigurs describes the methods employed by the SS during interrogations for male and female prisoners, and highlights gendered differences. Vigurs argues that apart from some prominent female SOE agents, the majority of the female F section operatives' stories have been forgotten or not yet shared. Therefore, she dedicated her book to retracing the stories of the lesser-known F section women operatives. Peter Jacobs *Setting France Ablaze: The SOE in France during WWII* also focuses on reconstructing F sections SOE operatives experiences by using SOE personnel files, interviews, and memoires and biographies.[54] Jacobs highlights the contributions that male and female operatives made towards the Allied war effort through their subversive work. Jacobs' structure is very similar to that of Kate Vigurs, however Jacobs additionally provides background context of the organization and its circuits.

Stephen D. Yada-McNeal takes a broader approach to the analyzing resistance, and focuses on women's involvement in the various forms of resistance to the Axis occupations, in

[52] Beryl E. Escott, *The Heroines of SOE: F Section, Britain's Secret Women in France* (Stroud: History Press, 2012).
[53] Kate Vigurs, *Mission France: The True History of the Women of SOE* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021), 4.
[54] Peter Jacobs, *Setting France Ablaze: The SOE in France during WWII* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2015).

50 Women Against Hitler: Female Resistance Fighters in World War II.[55] Yada-McNeal argues that women were typically overlooked and underestimated, which made them assets to clandestine operations, and that women's involvement in the resistance was ultimately vital to its survival. Yada-McNeal describes what resistance looked like in numerous Western European countries, such as France, Italy, Greece, Belgium, and the Netherlands, before focusing on select female resisters. He does this to highlight the impact of some women's involvement in the resistance, and how these women transcended gender boundaries in the process.

Jonathan Walker's essay "Sue Ryder and the FANYS of SOE" in *Women in War: From Homefront to Front edited by Cecilia Lee and Paul Strong,* investigates women's involvement in resistance through the FANY organization.[56] Walker argues that the stories of the thirty-nine F section women have overshadowed the involvement of the nearly 2,000 FANY women employed by the SOE. FANY's were often employed as coders, wireless operators, drivers, and housekeepers. Walker explores the various contributions that other FANY's have made to the SOE and the resistance movement. In particular, Walker focuses on Sue Ryder who was a counsellor to SOE agents. Walkers highlights how civilian organizations like FANY and the WAAF played an essential role in the success of the SOE.

Scholarly literature on Nazi concentration camps provides an interesting contrast with that on the SOE. Nikolaus Wachsmann's "Looking into the Abyss: Historians and the Nazi Concentration Camps" analyzes early research on the camps from before the end of the war to the present. Wachsmann states that scholars largely avoided concentration camp research after the end of the Second World War until the 1980s and 1990s. The first publications about

[55] Stephen D. Yada-McNeal, *50 Women Against Hitler: Female Resistance Fighters in World War II* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2018).
[56] Jonathan Walker, "Sue Ryder and the FANYS of SOE" in *Women in War: From Homefront to Front Line,* eds., Cecilia Lee, Paul Strong (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2012).

concentration camps were from survivors who had managed to escape Germany or to get their story out while the Nazis were still in power.[57] After the war, survivors of concentration camps published autobiographies or wrote detailed accounts of the various camps.[58] However, these early narratives lacked an audience and systematic research was not undertaken until the 1980s and 1990s.[59] In contrast, public interest in the fates of the British women in Nazi concentration camps sprang up in the immediate postwar period, captivated attention through media and popular culture, forced an official history, and continues to inspire scholarly and popular accounts today.

The particular experiences of women in Nazi captivity is one of the fields of concentration camp research that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s and has continued to develop. Initially this scholarship focused on Jewish women in the death camps but has since expanded to include the experiences of a wide variety of women prisoners in the various types of Nazi camps. *Experience and Expression* edited by Rebecca Scherr and a group of Holocaust historians is a recent collection of essays on women of various religious and ethnic backgrounds in the Holocaust.[60] While the book does not include SOE women and their experiences, it highlights the significance of forced labour (the backbone of the concentration camp system) in which some SOE women were involved.

The focus of scholarship on women in Nazi concentration camps (as opposed to death camps) has largely been on Ravensbruck, the concentration camp for women. Ravensbruck was

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[57] Nikolaus Wachsmann, "Looking into the Abyss: Historians and the Nazi Concentration Camps." *European History Quarterly* 36:2 (2006): 247.
[58] Wachsmann, "Abyss," 247.
[59] Some recent examples of Concentration Camp scholarship are Jane Shuter. *The Holocaust: The Camp System* (Chicago: Reed Educational and Professional Publishing, 2000, 2003); Michael Thad Allen, *The Business of Genocide: The SS, Slave Labor, and the Concentration Camps* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).
[60] Rebecca S Scherr., et al. *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 1.

specifically designed by Heinrich Himmler for labour and as a result was primarily used for political prisoners, though other prisoner groups were in the camp as well. Sarah Helm employs a biographical approach in *If This Is a Woman: Inside Ravensbrück, Hitler's Concentration Camp for Women*, by analyzing personal testimonies of survivors to uncover the treatment that women endured there.[61] Rochelle Siadel's *The Jewish Women of Ravensbrück* also incorporates personal testimonies and camp history in order to highlight Jewish women's experiences, which Saidel argues historians tend to ignore or downplay in their focus on political prisoners.[62] The experiences of the four SOE women held at Ravensbruck highlight some of the main themes of this scholarship -- they were used as forced labour, they were treated as political prisoners, and they suffered tremendously as a result of their captivity.

It is also noteworthy, however, that the remaining SOE women were also sent to camps intended primarily for men: Natzweiler-Struthof and Dachau. The gendered dimension of this aspect of their imprisonment is not discussed in the SOE scholarship so far, and SOE women are absent from the concentration camp scholarship. There is little discussion surrounding SOE female operatives' ambiguous status as civilians with honorary rank in a paramilitary organization and its effect on their treatment and movements once arrested. While Pattinson and Vigurs do mention these women's ambiguous status, they use it as an example of gender discrimination, rather than looking at consequences of this ambiguity for women agents. Scholars have also not placed the experiences and movements of the sixteen SOE female prisoners in the context of the German concentration camp system.

Structure

[61] Sarah Helm, *If This Is a Woman: Inside Ravensbrück: Hitler's Concentration Camp for Women* (New York: Little Brown Book Group, 2015).
[62] Rochelle G Saidel, *The Jewish Women of Ravensbrück* (New York: Terrace Books, 2006).

This thesis contains an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter one provides the context for the study. The first part of the chapter discusses the creation of the SOE and provides a brief introduction to the recruitment process and criteria, and to the training schools. This section highlights the SOE's assumption about female operatives which their eventual experiences call into question: that the women's gender gave them a "natural" cover as spies, and that either formal civilian status or honorary military rank would protect them in the field. The second section offers an introduction to the concentration camps. The Nazis created a vast network of camps with goals and purposes that were constantly shifting depending on the war effort and the regime's priorities. This context is important for making sense of women SOE agents' experiences in Nazi captivity. Who women agents were is significant, but so is when and where they were imprisoned. The importance of this context is well-established in concentration camp literature, but not yet picked up in SOE scholarship.

Chapters two to four focus on the women who died in the camps, divided according to camp. Each chapter discusses the respective experiences of operatives, while the analysis focuses on the "when" and "where" and what factors may have influenced the women's treatment and fate. The women executed at Natzweiler-Struthof (a primarily men's camp) were Andrée Borrell, Vera Leigh, and Diana Rowden, and Sonia Olschanezky. They were executed by lethal injection and then cremated on 6 July 1944. They are the focus of chapter two. Chapter three investigates the experiences of SOE women incarcerated and executed at the Nazis' first concentration camp, Dachau: Noor Inayat Khan, Eliane Plewman, Madeleine Damerment, and Yolande Beekman. The women agents were shot in the back of the head on 12 September 1944. Chapter four details the experiences and movements of the operatives who perished at the Nazi women's camp, Ravensbruck: Denise Bloch, Violette Szabo, Lilian Rolfe, and Cecily Lefort. Bloch, Szabo, and

Rolfe were shot in the back of the head sometime between 25 January 1945 and 5 February 1945. Lefort is believed to have been gassed in a gas chamber in January or February 1945.[63] Yvonne Rudellat is also included in this chapter, as she was imprisoned in Ravensbruck before she died of typhus on 22 April 1945, a week after the liberation of Bergen-Belsen. Chapter five analyzes the experiences and movements of the women who survived arrest and internment in concentration camps -- Yvonne Baseden, Odette Sansom, and Eileen Nearne -- to establish what factors contributed to their survival.

Ultimately, this thesis illustrates the many variables that shaped the experiences of women SOE operatives: where and when they were arrested, the Nazi personnel in charge of their interrogations and transfers, and conditions in and priorities of the camps to which they were sent. Significantly, their gender did not necessarily offer the protection the SOE had intended, and in some ways put women agents at additional risk. More than anything, British female intelligence operatives were seen by the Nazis as a threat, which guaranteed their deaths.

[63] Yvonne Rudellat also spent time in Ravensbruck before being deported to Bergen-Belsen, where she died of typhus following the camp's liberation.

Chapter I:

Contexts: The Special Operations Executive and the Nazi Concentration Camps

In order to understand what happened to these SOE women operatives, we have to understand the contexts, values, and assumptions of the SOE that deployed them, and of the Nazi Camp system where they were imprisoned and died. After failing to infiltrate and establish circuits in Nazi-occupied France, the SOE recognized that women operatives could be a potential asset to their covert operations. As women, the SOE assumed that their gender would provide an added cover and protection. However, this was not the case. In retracing these women's experiences and movements, we also uncover inconsistency in values and policy within the Nazi structure. The Nazis believe that women should be restricted to the home. Therefore, in arresting SOE women operatives for espionage, there appeared to be internal conflict of how to deal with women who blurred traditional gender roles. The Nazi camp system, and the experiences of inmates in this system, was shaped by many variables determined by the course of the war and the Nazi regime's goals and priorities, thus highlighting why some women operatives' experiences in camps differed from others.

The Special Operations Executive

The SOE was created in 1938 with the establishment of an organization called "Section D." The D in the name was inspired by the destruction that was caused by sabotage and subversion tactics in the Balkans in 1912 and 1913. By the summer of 1939, Military Intelligence Research (MI R) had concluded that guerilla warfare could be useful in diverting enemy forces if it was properly

used in conjunction with the regular armed forces.[1] On 24 May 1940, the British government agreed to a restructuring of organizations concerned with subversive activities, which ultimately led to the formal establishment of the Special Operations Executive on 1 July 1940.[2] The SOE established its headquarters on Baker Street in the West End of London.[3] Churchill tasked the organization with "setting Europe ablaze" through sabotage and subversion, which it aimed to do in three ways: politically, economically, and strategically.[4] Politically, the organization aimed to undermine the enemy's morale and that of Germany's collaborators, while additionally aiming to raise the morale of the populations of German occupied territories.[5] Economically, the organization aimed to damage enemy materials, while improving and augmenting Allied forces' materials by supplying weapons, explosives, and sabotage equipment. And strategically, the SOE aimed to damage enemy forces' power and communication lines, and in the meantime improve those of the Allies, which could be done through the deployment of "organizers", radio sets, and operators. This could take the form of destroying transformer stations, sinking German minesweepers and damaging U-boat batteries.[6] In order to achieve these goals, the SOE established sections and staff assigned to each Nazi-occupied nation.[7] France was assigned four sections: Section RF was the Gaullist section, Section EU/ P was dedicated to Poles in France, Section F was independent from de Gaulle, and section D/F was used for escape lines and clandestine communications.[8] This thesis focuses on the operatives of F section.

[1] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines*, 2.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Jacobs, *Setting France Ablaze*, 1.
[4] Neville Wylie, *Introduction*: *Special Operations Executive-New approaches and Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2006), 1.
[5] The British National Archives, "Lecture folder STS; part I," HS 7/55.
[6] The British National Archives, "Copy of paper regarding SOE 'Major Contributions,'" HS 8/897/99.
[7] The British National Archives, "Use of political groups for SOE activities" HS 6/319.
[8] Vigurs, *Mission,* 4.

Maurice Buckmaster was the third head of F section, and was the only leader of the section to successfully infiltrate agents into occupied France.[9] Other than attending a War Office intelligence course at Minley Manor, Buckmaster had no experience in secret operations, and yet he effectively built up a network of independent circuits that were established throughout France.[10] Each section was responsible for establishing its own underground networks and circuits that operatives worked in. Within each circuit there were four primary roles that SOE operatives held. The organiser was responsible for building up the resistance group. An arms instructor trained new recruits, and planned and conducted covert sabotage missions.[11] A wireless operator was consistently in contact with the base stations to arrange the dropping of supplies, and a courier was in charge of a number of tasks such as conveying weapons, passing messages from one resister to another, organizing liaison meetings, and locating ideal dropping grounds.[12] Women agents were restricted to the roles of courier and wireless operator. The rest of the circuit was made up of resistance members and French nationals who had been recruited locally.[13]

It wasn't until Selwyn Jepson replaced Lewis Gielgud as the F section recruiting officer in 1942, that women were even considered as possible candidates to go into occupied France, as couriers and wireless operators.[14] Jepson thought that female spies would be less conspicuous in occupied France than their male counterparts. He assumed that women would be able to move more freely around France to transmit valuable information back to London or other networks, giving them an advantage over male agents. However, women's involvement in combat was

[9] West, *Secret War,* 102.
[10] Buckmaster, *Oral History,* 9452.
[11] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines*, 2.
[12] Ibid.
[13] The British National Archives, "Persecution of SOE agents and sympathisers by their political enemies and measures taken for their protection," HS 6/318.
[14] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 25.

discouraged and thought to be inappropriate in Britain during the Second World War.[15] Jepson remarked that in his aim to recruit women, he faced an immense amount of opposition from those who exclaimed that "women under the Geneva Convention, were not allowed to take combatant duties, which they regarded resistance work in France to be."[16] It took some time for Jepson to formulate a response to this opposition, and he eventually turned to the anti-aircraft units for answers. According to Jepson the "anti-aircraft units always had [female] Auxiliary Territorial Service officers on their strength and that when it came to firing an anti-aircraft gun the person who pulled the lanyard that released the trigger, was a woman."[17] Jepson argued that the prohibition on women's use of arms had no legal foundations, rather it was simply an entrenched value in British society.[18] Despite this, opposition continued from members of the British government. Only intervention from Churchill himself in 1942 overcame this opposition, and women were finally allowed to be recruited. However, in order to go forward with female SOE agents' participation in British intelligence, women were designated as "non-combatants," even though they carried out the same military training and paramilitary activity as their male counterparts.[19] The SOE maintained this distinction because it was not an official military organization, and therefore could not award military distinctions unless its agents had been in the military for a minimum of six months. Since women were not allowed to enlist in the military, and women's auxiliary organizations such as the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) were recognized as civilian organizations, female agents were considered civilians, not soldiers. Furthermore, if the British public found out about the

[15] Gerard J DeGroot, "Whose Finger on the Trigger? Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries and the Female Combat Taboo," *War in History* 4:4 (1997): 437.
[16] Jepson, *Oral History,* 9331.
[17] Ibid. This was a poor, and misinformed, analogy. ATS officers were not allowed to pull the lanyard specifically because firing a gun was considered combat.
[18] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines*, 26.
[19] Ibid.

women's military participation in the SOE, and were outraged, the government could claim that they were "non-combatants." However, because these female operatives were technically civilians in a paramilitary organization, the SOE wanted to give their female agents the appearance of military status (often through the honorary rank of Second Lieutenant) in hopes that this would give them sufficient authority to function in the field, and may protect them if they were caught. It was hoped that that they would be treated as a prisoners of war (POWs).

Because there was a limited supply of French speaking Britons who could "pass" as French civilians in France, the organization recognized that in order to meet the growing demand for agents they would have to also recruit more broadly.[20] SOE recruits came from a variety of backgrounds, and many were often recruited from different military organizations, while others had played an active role in local Resistance movements. Most female recruits were not living in France during the German occupation and had no experience in any resistance activities.[21] Women were typically recruited from within established organizations such as the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF).[22] If women were recruited from outside these organizations, they would be placed into them as a front for their covert activities.

The initial recruitment process was followed by a preliminary training stage. New agents travelled by car or train to spend two to four weeks in a country house in England.[23] Many government departments took over country houses after 1939. This provided an opportunity for the SOE to step in and requisition the homes, as training facilities, without anyone's knowledge.

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[20] Pattinson, "Passing," 4.
[21] Maurice Buckmaster, *They Fought Alone: The True Story of SOE's Agent's in Wartime France* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2014), 43-44.
[22] Walker, "FANYS of SOE," 434.
[23] Jonathan Rée, *A Schoolmaster's War: Henry Rée a British Agent in the French Resistance,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 15.

For F section the best known "school" for the first training stages was at Wanborough Manor, south-west of Guildford.[24] Here, agents were given basic military and physical training, which included cross country runs and other exercises. Recruits were introduced to elementary map reading, and training with firearms like pistols and sub machine guns. To assist these potential agents in their training phases, each was assigned a conductor officer -- female agents were allocated to female officers -- sent by their designated country section.[25] In the early phases of the introduction of women to the SOE, there weren't female advisors, therefore they were assigned to male officers. These men and women played an essential role in the training process, as the best of them were resting or retired agents who could offer advice from their own experiences. These officers were tasked with submitting weekly progress reports on their designated agents.[26] If the agents passed this initial stage -- which many didn't -- the agents would then be cleared to continue on to a much more intense and rigorous paramilitary training.

After June 1943, the recruiting process was restructured and the preliminary course was replaced by the Student Assessment Board. However, if agents passed the board, the next step remained unchanged: agents were sent to a paramilitary course in Arisaig, Scotland. Due to the naval bases close by and the lack of accessible roads, the region was a restricted area, making it a perfect spot to set up tactical training schools. Paramilitary courses continued with physical training, but also taught agents "silent killing, knife work, boat work, and rope work."[27] Agents were trained to use British and enemy weapons, were taught field craft, elementary Morse code, advanced raiding tactics, railway demolitions, and other skills.

[24] Foot, *An Outline History*, 103-105.
[25] Foot, *SOE in France,* 99-100.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

Concluding their five weeks of training in Arisaig, the agents would then move on to "finishing school" or Group B schools, located in a set of country houses in Hampshire. Group B was divided into five sections, each containing its own departments and instructors.[28] Department A was responsible for teaching agents how to maintain their cover, how to act when under police surveillance, and how to deal with being interrogated. Department B was intertwined with Department A, its role was to conduct exercises with the materials learnt within Department A. Department C dealt with the organization of enemy forces, whether covert or overt. Agents were briefed on the German Wehrmacht, Abwehr, and Gestapo, but also on Italian, Japanese, and Vichy French organizations. Department D was responsible for handling the clandestine dissemination of propaganda, also referred to as "morale warfare."[29] Department E taught the use of ciphers, secret links, and codes, these topics were always up to date by including information from intelligence reports, the enemy press and radio, and Country Sections. Once the new agents had nearly reached the end of Group B courses, they were put through a final test, to determine if they were prepared for the field. This last test typically involved detonating explosives, which were used routinely by operatives in France for railway demolitions.[30] If the operative passed the final test, the agent would be put up in an apartment until they were called for their mission. The women agents were largely parachuted or dropped into France by Lysander, a short-winged plane that was able to land in small fields. Before their departure, Vera Atkins would accompany the female operatives to the departure airfields.[31] Atkins briefed the agents, as well as made sure the BBC messages were transmitted, to make sure that there would be a reception committee prepared for the agents' arrival once they touched

[28] Rigden, *Spy,* 6.
[29] Ibid.
[30] The British National Archives, "Correspondence," HS 8/897/62.
[31] Helm, *Atkins,* 17.

ground.[32] She then took each agent aside to go over their cover stories for a final time and go through final checks. Atkins discussed each agent's false identity cards, false military documents, and ration cards, while additionally looking through each agent's pockets, checking their labels and laundry tags. She examined every piece of equipment and additional clothing to make sure there was no link that could connect them to Britain.[33] Once this check was completed, Atkins would then give the agents French merchandise, such as cigarettes, a recent French newspaper, or photographs of their "relatives" in their pocket or luggage.[34] Agents were also given a cyanide pill in case they were captured by the Gestapo.[35] Lastly, before the agents were set to board the aircraft, Atkins offered each agent an opportunity to speak with her privately, as one last chance to change their minds, ask any questions or requests. Agents only flew into France during the full moon of each month. The full moon provided natural light for the pilots to see the rivers which acted as landmarks. It was only during this period that agents were deployed, therefore if poor weather or new details of enemy forces within the region of deployment emerged, this process was delayed; the agent would have to wait until the next full moon to be deployed.[36]

[32] Helm, *Atkins,* 19.
[33] Atkins, *Oral History,* 9551.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Pattinson, "British Secret Agents," 414.
[36] Witherington Cornioley, *Pauline,* 40.

Appendix 1: SOE Training and Deployment Locations.[37] For the Map Legend see page 122.

Once the war was over and countries were being liberated from German occupation, SOE operatives in their assigned regions were notified by the London headquarters that their clandestine work was over. The London Headquarters set up an office in Paris, first at the Hotel Cecil and then at 37 boulevard des Capucines, and called for F section agents to leave their networks and come check in with the agency at this office. The Paris office closed on 10

[37] The appendices are available as an ArcGIS Story Map, titled "Retracing Resistance: An Analysis of the Experiences of Missing F Section Women of the Special Operations Executive." https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/ca957dbbd05b4bb6b9670b66eff77726

December 1945, as the number of SOE operatives checking in dwindled. Those who didn't check in were put on a Missing in Action list. However, when the Special Operations Executive was officially disbanded in January 1946, many missing or presumed dead agents were still unaccounted for. Vera Atkins -- the handler for the female SOE operatives of F section -- felt a level of responsibility to find out what happened to her missing agents and took it upon herself to seek answers.[38] At the beginning of her investigations, Atkins received little support from the British government. For instance, John Senter -- head of SOE security directorate -- said that her search should be stopped and that she should confine herself to "welfare work."[39] However, Atkins would not be deterred. As Nazi atrocities were coming to light, there was a growing demand for justice. The SOE ultimately decided to support her investigations into the missing agents.[40] By the beginning of 1946, Atkins was funded by the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) and travelled across Germany to search for the missing SOE agents who were believed to be in concentration camps.[41] Atkins worked with the war crimes section of the Judge Advocate-General's department of the British Army.[42] Through numerous interrogations with Nazi officers, Atkins was able to narrow down her search to three concentration camps where the female agents were held and died: Dachau, Natzweiler-Struthof, and Ravensbruck.[43]

Nazi Concentration Camps

The Nazi camp system was both methodically planned and inconsistent, evolving according to a range of internal and external pressures. Camps evolved to support the Nazi war effort, and the regime's ideological beliefs. While the term "concentration camp" is often used to refer to all

[38] Helm*, Atkins* 76.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Helm, *Atkins,* 85.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Atkins, *Oral History,* 9551.
[43] Pattinson, "Lassies," 275.

Nazi camps, there were actually several types of camps, of which concentration camps were just one type. Concentration camps were initially meant for "re-educating" political opponents of the regime, and later labour camps, transit camps, prisoner of war camps, and extermination camps were developed.[44] From the beginning of the Second World War, the distinction between concentration camps and labour camps became blurred as concentration camps acquired labour components. This evolution in the function of concentration camps has been divided by scholars into three periods: 1933 - 36 (a period of consolidation), 1936 - 42 (a period of expansion and creation of death camps in 1941 - 42), 1944 -1945 (a renewed focus of forced labour, especially armaments).

The first period encapsulates the Nazi regime's rise and consolidation of power from 1933 -1936. This period included the construction of a series of incarceration facilities to imprison political opponents -- primarily Communists and Social Democrats -- of the Nazi regime.[45] Arrests were made by the Gestapo, which was also in control of transfers of prisoners to camps and their releases. Meanwhile, the SS managed and oversaw the camps. The Nazis believed that the prisoners needed to be "rescued" -- by being sent to concentration camps -- from the "wrong ideas" that they had been "infected with."[46] By the fall of 1933, the Gestapo also began to arrest "asocials" -- beggars, alcoholics, prostitutes, re-offending criminals, and others who were viewed as outcasts in society. Most of the early incarcerated individuals were sent to Dachau concentration camp. Dachau served as a model for the concentration camp system, as its establishment in 1933 made it the first and oldest of the concentration camp network.

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[44] Yad Vashem. "Concentration Camps." Yad Vashem The World Holocaust Remembrance Centre. https://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205925.pdf . Accessed May 14, 2022.
[45] Shuter, *The Holocaust*, 4.
[46] Shuter, *The Holocaust,* 13.

SS chief Heinrich Himmler played a key role in the development of concentration camps. In 1934, Himmler centralized the camps that incarcerated prisoners under the order of "protective custody" through an agency called the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps (IKL).[47] He then assigned Theodor Eicke -- the commandant of Dachau concentration camp -- as "Inspector of Concentration Camps and SS Guard Units."[48] Himmler was impressed with Eicke's development of "Rules of Discipline and Punishment for the Prison Camp" and "Service Regulations for Watchmen" that were implemented at Dachau to govern and conduct the guards and administrative structure.[49] These regulations were spread amongst other concentration camps, and were later adopted to serve as guidelines for concentration camps until the end of the war. Because of the implementation of these regulations at Dachau, Himmler saw Eicke with potential to succeed in this new position. Under this new title, Eicke became the head of the guard units, which came to be known as SS Death's-Head Battalions. Eicke and the guard units answered to the IKL, and were tasked with commanding, administrating, and guarding the concentration camps. Eicke was in charge of six camps in this period, with approximately 3,500 inmates: Dachau, Esterwegen, Sachsenburg, Lichtenburg, Moringen, and the Columbia House in Berlin-Tempelhof.[50] The camp commandants and the SS Death's-Head Battalion personnel were responsible for the constant cruelty that often led to the murder of inmates. These deaths had to be reported to the SS, and were routinely falsely written up as suicides, accidental deaths, justified killings of prisoners who were trying to escape, assaulting a guard, sabotaging

[47] Christian Goeschel and Nikolaus Wachsmann, "Before Auschwitz: The Formation of the Nazi: Concentration Camps, 1933-39," *Journal of Contemporary History 45:3* (2010): 523.
[48] Thad Allen, *Business of Genocide*, 37.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 30.

production, or inciting a prisoner's revolt.[51] The camp authorities also reported murders as deaths from acute illnesses, such as "weak hearts" or "interrupted circulation."[52] The camp system, including its guards and prisoners were not subjected to a review by any legal or administrative authorities outside of the SS and designated police units, thus making its commandants and guards immune to repercussions.

By the second period (1936 - 1942), almost all the concentration camps that had previously been established were shut down, except for Dachau.[53] These older camps were replaced by newer and larger camps, like Natzweiler-Struthof, Buchenwald, and Auschwitz, which were able to accommodate more prisoners. The women's camp Ravensbruck was established at this time.[54] As the prospect of war loomed, the Nazis expanded the forced labour element of the camps. Once the Second World War began, forced labour expanded even further to include populations from throughout Nazi occupied territory, to support the Nazi war effort.[55] Throughout this period the number of prisoners interned in concentration camps increased dramatically, with the SS and police authorities targeting more groups who were a "danger to Germany society"[56] including Freemasons, Jehovah's Witnesses, clergy who opposed the Nazis, and non-Germans after Germany began to occupy Europe. Roma and Sinti and homosexuals were also targeted because their actions were considered "criminal" and a threat to German

[51] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Concentration Camp System: In Depth" *Holocaust Encyclopedia*. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/concentration-camp-system-in-depth . Accessed on May 12, 2022.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Yad Vashem, "Concentration Camps." Yad Vashem The World Holocaust Remembrance Centre. https://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205925.pdf. Accessed May 14, 2022
[54] Dieter Pohl, "The Holocaust and the Concentration Camps' in *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany: The New Histories,* ed. Jane Caplan and Nikolaus Wachsmann (New York: Routledge, 2010), 150.
[55] Thad Allen, *Business of Genocide,* 57.
[56] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Concentration Camp System: In Depth." Holocaust Encyclopedia. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/concentration-camp-system-in-depth . Accessed on May 12, 2022.

society. Resistance fighters and, occasionally, prisoners of war were also held in concentration camps. These groups in particular were understood to be a "threat" to the Nazi regime. Once the Second World War began, Heinrich Himmler forbade the release of concentration camp prisoners for the duration of the war.

In December 1941 and January 1942, Death Camps were established at Chelmno, Treblanka, Sobibor, and Belzec. Jews of all ages were sent to the camps to be murdered, most immediately on arrival in the camp. However, a few hundred individuals were left alive in the camps to sort through clothing of the victims, and to service SS facilities in occupations like blacksmiths and carpenters.[57] Prior to this, Jews who had been arrested were sent to concentration camps as political prisoners, "stateless" internees, or other categories of inmates. But from fall 1941, Jews were murdered in Death Camps in accordance with the "Final Solution." Majdanek and Auschwitz, originally built as concentration camps, were expanded to serve as death camps, though Auschwitz had many sub-camps committed to forced labour. Around the same time, in February 1942, Himmler extended the use of concentration camp labour to support the German war effort. Concentration camp prisoners were exploited as forced labourers in the German armaments industry, manufacturing weapons, and other essential items for the German war effort. Private companies and state enterprises could submit a request for concentration camp labour from the SS.[58] If it was approved, sub-camps were either built next to industrial factories to house the prisoner-labourers, or factories were built within or near the camp grounds. The SS transferred the prisoners under their guard to German state-owned firms and private firms, and the SS would be compensated for providing the workers.[59] In

[57] Dan Stone, *Concentration Camps: A Short History* (London: Oxford University Press, 2017), 4.
[58] Marc Buggeln, "Forced Labour in Nazi Concentration Camps," in *Global Convict* Labour, eds., Christian Guiseppe De Vito and Alex Lichtenstein (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 345.
[59] Buggeln, "Forced Labour," 345.

Ravensbruck, for example, some prisoners were responsible for building rocket parts for the Siemens electric company.[60]

Female SOE agents appear to have been considered political prisoners by their Nazi captors (Yvonne Baseden stated in her postwar deposition that she was labeled as a political prisoner. Eileen Nearne was forced to wear a red triangle badge identifying her as a political prisoner.) From Vera Atkins' work to retrace the movements of F section female operatives, we know that the missing women were sent to three concentration camps: Natzweiler-Struthof, Dachau, and Ravensbruck. Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp was 50 km south-west of Strasbourg in the annexed French region of Alsace-Lorraine. Established in May 1941, it began receiving male and female prisoners associated with the French Resistance and the SOE in 1943, when it became a dedicated camp for "Night and Fog" prisoners. Throughout the camp's existence, inmates were used as forced labour. Initially this was in granite quarries and on construction projects, but from 1944 camp inmates became increasingly valuable for producing armaments. By 1944, there were fifty sub-camps with over 20,000 prisoners.[61] A gas chamber was built in Natzweiler in 1943, though the SOE women killed there were executed by lethal injection immediately on arrival in the camp in July 1944.

[60] Saidel, *Ravensbrück*, 12.
[61] Vigurs, *Mission*, 214.

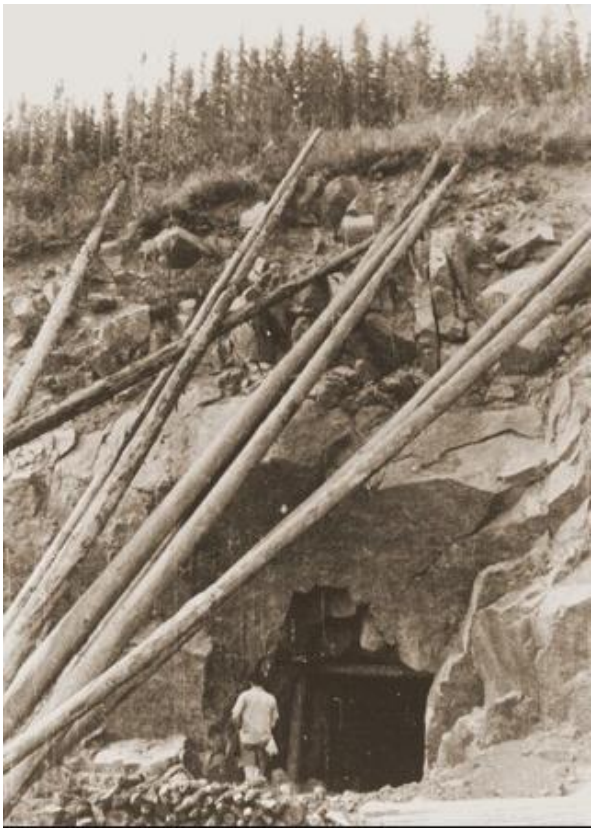


Figure 2. Entrance to a factory at Natzweiler-Struthof. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Dachau concentration camp was established northwest of Munich in March 1933. Dachau was the first concentration camp and was intended for political prisoners. It served as the model for all later concentration camps. Dachau interned both men and women, and is estimated to have held 3.5 million people between 1933 and 1945.[62] Like Natzweiler-Struthof, Dachau was also used for forced labour. It had a crematorium, and a gas chamber, though there is no evidence that the gas chamber was used for murder at Dachau.[63] But, mass executions by shooting regularly took place at Dachau. Initially the shootings took place by the bunker courtyard, until

[62] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum "Dachau". 2021. *Encyclopedia.Ushmm.Org*. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/dachau.
[63] Ibid.

an SS shooting range was created. F Section women agents were shot at Dachau immediately upon their arrival in September 1944.

Figure 3. Dachau Barracks. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 55026.

Ravensbruck was established in May 1939. Ravensbruck was originally intended to be a work camp for female political prisoners. Prisoners were responsible for heavy outdoor physical labour, such as building roads and housing for the SS guards or building rocket parts for the Siemens electric company.[64] Those who were unable to perform hard labour had to stay in the barracks and knit clothing for the army.[65] Those too old or sick to be productive were killed. Ravensbruck also saw numerous medical experiments performed on its prisoners. Ravensbruck staff rarely received direct orders, and instead oriented themselves to the rules established by the

[64] Saidel, *Ravensbrück*, 13.
[65] Ibid.

commandant.[66] On the chance that the doctors received oral instructions, they were often adapted and modified in order to inflict violence onto prisoners.[67] Executions at Ravensbruck were by shooting, transfer to killing ("euthanasia") centres, and gassing from early 1945 onward. Three of the SOE women killed at Ravensbruck were shot in early 1945. One, Cecily Lefort, was gassed.

Figure 4. Ravensbruck Barracks. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The F section female operatives were all executed at forced labour camps, rather than death camps. Forced labour camps did have the capability and facilities to carry out executions, and the women executed at Natzweiler and Dachau were killed immediately after their arrival. However, at Ravensbruck, F section operatives had to participate in forced labour like other

[66] Kate Docking, "Gender, Recruitment, and Medicine at Ravensbruck Concentration Camp, 1939-1942" in *German History 39:9* (2021): 2.
[67] Docking, "Medicine at Ravensbruck," 2.

political prisoners. Most of F section's female operatives were arrested in June or July 1944, around the time of the D-Day invasions. However, despite the majority of these women being arrested around the same time, some women were sent to Natzweiler in July 1944, Dachau in September 1944, while others were transferred to Ravensbruck in August or September 1944. From witnesses, we know that the women sent to Natzweiler were sent there due to overcrowding at Karlsruhe prison. Dachau was also close to Karlsruhe prison and may have been selected for a similar reason. Meanwhile Ravensbruck was much further in north-eastern Germany, requiring several trains to reach the camp from Karlsruhe. Potentially, as the Allied invasion progressed, the Nazis felt that it was more beneficial to relocate the remaining F section women further away from the Allied advances and use them in forced labour to help with their crumbling war effort.

Chapter II: SOE Women in Natzweiler-Struthof

Four SOE women were executed at Natzweiler: Andrée Borrel, Vera Leigh, Sonia Olschanezky, and Diana Rowden. These women were all arrested and eventually executed by lethal injection and then cremated in July 1944. Natzweiler's close proximity to France made it an ideal camp for the Nazis to implement the "Night and Fog" policy for "disappearing" French Resisters. This is especially true for the F section women operatives who were being held in Karlsruhe prison. Below, I will give an overview of each woman's experience up to their arrest. I also include the details of their arrests and executions, while offering analysis on common themes that are present in their experiences and movements.

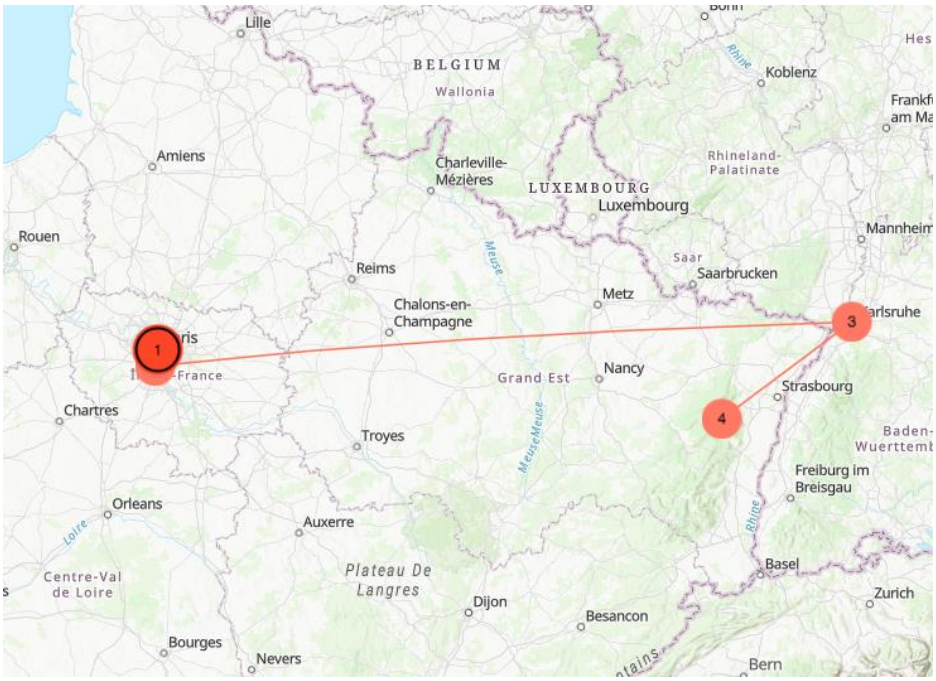
Andrée Borrel was born on 18 November 1919 in Bécon-les-Bruyères, France. After the outbreak of the Second World War, Borrel and her mother moved to Toulon, where she volunteered as a nurse for the Red Cross. After obtaining her nursing diploma, she spent several months working in hospitals around France. In this work, she met Lieutenant Dufour who secretly operated an organization that facilitated the escape of British airmen who were shot down over France, and British POWs who had managed to escape.[1] Borrel quit nursing to help Dufour in his operation. Borrel ran the Villa Rene-Thérèse in Canet Plage, which served as a safe house for escapees awaiting transit to England.[2] By December 1941, parts of Dufour's organization in the occupied regions had been dismantled due to denunciations. Because of the recent arrests, Dufour and Borrel closed the villa and went into hiding. Borrel hid with a friend who owned a hotel. On 23 January 1942, Borrel and Dufour met in Marseille, to plan their next

[1] The British National Archives, "Borrel," HS 9/183.
[2] Ibid.

move. However, the police had been tracking them closely, therefore, Dufour and Borrel agreed to flee to England. Borrel managed to get on a flight from Lisbon and arrived in England on 24 April 1942. Dufour had vouched for Borrel with the SOE and she immediately accepted to participate in subversive work.

Borrel excelled through the training schools. She was given the code name Monique to use in communications with London and other circuits, as an extra precaution in case a message got intercepted.[3] However, Borrel was also given a new identity as Denise Urbain, and a detailed backstory to memorize for use in the field.[4] This alter ego would provide her with alibies and persuade any officer questioning her identification. Borrel was parachuted into France in November 1942 as a courier to the Physician circuit in Paris and Normandy. Her cool and reliable demeanor led to her promotion to the (honorary) rank of lieutenant and co-organiser of the circuit.[5] Borrel often did the most dangerous work, such as recruiting, arranging rendezvous, organizing parachute dropping operations, and taking part in sabotage missions. However, on 23 July 1943 Borrel was arrested outside of Paris. Borrel was reported to be in Fresnes prison on 4 January 1944, and was later transferred to Karlsruhe. Borrel was one of the four women sent to Natzweiler on 6 July 1944, where she was later executed.

[3] Ibid.
[4] Urbain was born on 18 November 1919 in Lillers, Pas-de-Calais, of French parents. In 1913 her father had enlisted in the navy, where he served in submarines. Her mother was Eugenie Maurin, was born in Lille. After the war, Denise's father was employed as foreman in a factory in Puteaux. Until the age of 14, Denise went to the Ecole Communale in Puteaux and then to the École Pigier in Paris. In 1930, Denise's father died and her mother opened up a small dress-making business in Puteaux. In 1937, Denise began working with Morgan's Bank, Place Vendome, Paris, where she was first employed in the filing department and later as a typist. At this time, she was living with her mother at 161 boulevard St. Denis, Courbevoie until her mother's death in 1940. Denise continued working with Morgans up till the time of the collapse, when the Bank was moved to Chateau Guyon. She then went to stay with some friends in a small village near Yessingeaux where she remained until the end of 1941, helping them on their farm and looking after their children. Eventually, however, she got very bored and decided to go back to Paris to do some more active work. She returned to Courbevoie, where she took out a ration card at the end of December 1941.
[5] The British National Archives, "Borrell," HS 9/183.



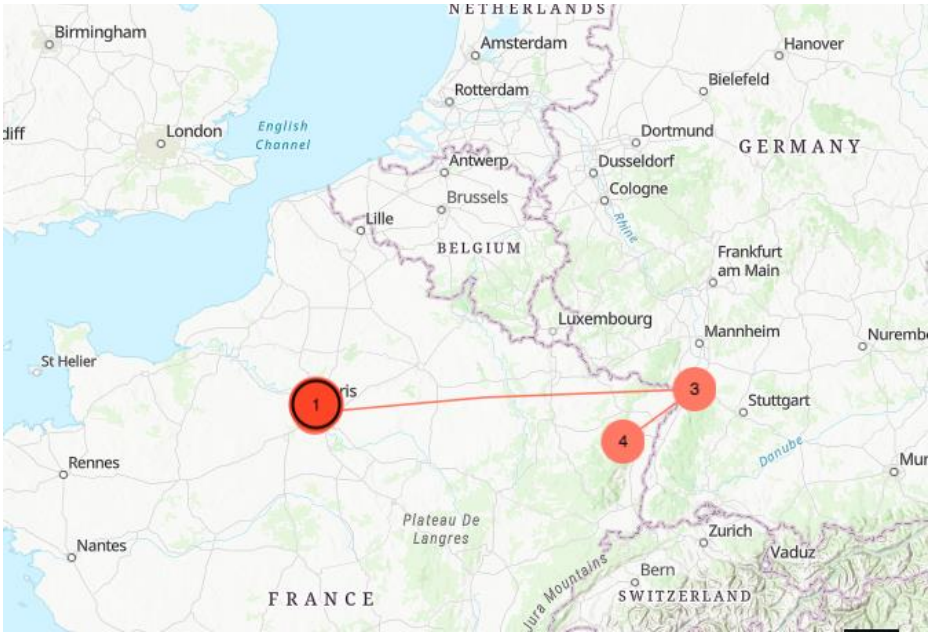
Appendix 2. Borrel's Movements Following Arrest. For the Map Legend see page 124.

Vera Eugenie Leigh was born as Vera Eugenie Glass on 17 March 1903. After being abandoned as a baby she was adopted by her American father and British mother. Besides her date of birth, little is stated in her file about Leigh's personal life or her operations. Leigh entered Occupied France on 14 June 1943 to serve as a courier and liaison officer in the Inventor circuit, situated in the region between Paris and the Ardennes. This area was considered extremely dangerous for British agents because of the highly active Gestapo presence, and the general severity of the occupation officials.[6] Leigh established herself as a milliner's assistant in Paris, while she secretly carried messages from her organiser to his various wireless transmitter operators, often situated at some distanced from Paris. Leigh assumed the identity of Suzanne Chavanne in order to make her drops, and assumed the field name Simone when in contact with

[6] The British National Archives, "Leigh," HS 9/910/3.

London or other circuits. Unlike some other SOE operatives, there was no cover story included in Leigh's personnel file.

Leigh's work as a courier earned her high praise from her superiors in the Resistance.[7] However, on 30 October 1943, Leigh and other members of the Inventor circuit were betrayed to the Germans and led into a Gestapo trap where they were arrested. Leigh was imprisoned in Fresnes until May 1944, when she and seven others female SOE operatives were transferred to Karlsruhe prison. During this transfer the women were handcuffed together for several days.[8] On 6 July 1944 she was moved by the Gestapo, along with three other women, to Natzweiler where she was executed.



Appendix 3. Leigh's Movements Following Arrest. For the Map Legend see page 124.

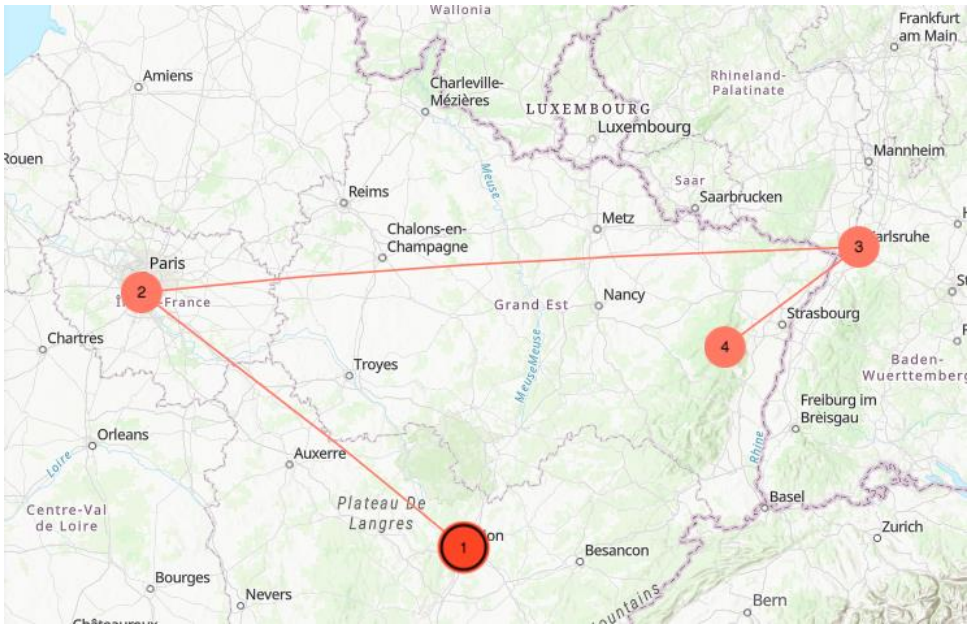
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

Diana Hope Rowden was born on 1 January 1915. Both of her parents were British; however, Rowden grew up in England and France. Before the Second World War she was a freelance journalist, and became fluent in French, Italian, and Spanish. She had considerable administrative experience in different organizations in France such as the French Red Cross and the Anglo-American Ambulance Corps.[9] As the war progressed, she managed to flee France and return to England and join the WAAF in 1941. She was recruited by the SOE and immediately began her training to be deployed back into France for subversive work.

Rowden was trained to be a courier in the region of Jura for an organizer who went by the code name Bob.[10] Rowden was given a new identity and accompanying documentation to use while in the field: she became Juliette Thérèse Rondeau.[11] Rowden was also given the code name Paulette, to use in messages between circuits and London, as another measure of protection. Rowden and another operative known as Claude parachuted into France on 16 June 1943, to join the Acrobat circuit. After a month in the field, Rowden's commanding officer was arrested. This seriously compromised Rowden's identity within the area, however Rowden continued to work with the wireless transmitter operator of the circuit. For four months Rowden travelled long distances in dangerous territory, while being tracked by the Gestapo, in order to maintain links between the various groups of the circuit. However, on 18 November 1943 Rowden was arrested

[9] The British National Archives, "Rowden," HS 9/1287/6.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Juliette was born in Caen (Calvados) on 31 January 1915. Her father Clement was in the publishing business and died at an early age in 1924. Her mother was Christine Martin. Juliette was a "sensitive" child, so her mother decided to tutor her at home at 81, avenue Niel until she was 10 years old. Juliette eventually went to school in Paris until 1932, when her mother fell ill and Juliette had to find a job to bring in money to help support them. After being employed in the Sales Department at Printemps department store she took up dress designing and hat modelling. In her spare time Juliette developed her linguistic skills and learned Italian, Spanish, and English, which enabled her to teach her own language classes and save up money to travel. Her mother, who had been very ill for some time, eventually died in 1935. Her mother left Juliette enough money to fulfil her childhood dreams of travelling around Italy and the southern coast of France. When the war broke out Juliette worked in a railway canteen in Nice, and after the armistice was employed by the Red Cross and did some work for the POWs in Nice and then in Marseille where she obtained her various identity papers.

in Dijon, and held in various prisons in and around Paris until May 1944. This is confirmed by the inscriptions on the walls of 84 avenue Foch, the Gestapo headquarters in Paris, which read "S/O.D.A. ROWDEN No: 4193 WAAF arrived 22/11/43 and left 5/12/43."[12]



Appendix 4. Rowden's Movements Following Arrest. For the Map Legend see page 124.

Unfortunately, because some of the SOE files were destroyed in a fire, there is no personnel file for Sonia Olschanezky, however Beryl Escott gives the following information about Olschanezky (though no sources accompanied this information): Sonia Olschanezky was born on 23 December 1923 in Germany. Her father was a Russian Jew and lost his Russian citizenship after the First World War. The family became refugees. Sonia's family lived in Germany, Romania, and France before the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1942, she was interned at Drancy for being Jewish, until she escaped using false papers stating that she had

[12] Ibid.

skills that could be economically useful to Germany. Following her escape, Sonia became a member of the French Resistance, as a courier and organizer. Through her work she came in contact with several SOE operatives, such as an organizer from the Prosper circuit. Her successful work as a courier, led to her promotion as a paid SOE F section courier for the Juggler sub-circuit. She used the cover name Suzanne Ouvard and the code name Tonia. She is one of the only F section female operatives to not have undergone training in Britain. Through her work, she became well acquainted with Andrée Borrel and Yolande Beekman who were also couriers and wireless transmitters in the surrounding regions. However, it was not long after the collapse of the Prosper circuit in 1943 and its sub-circuits in 1944, that Olschanezky was arrested. She had heard that an agent was landing in the area and that she was to meet him in a café. However, when she arrived at the café the Gestapo were waiting for her. She was arrested in January 1944, and sent to avenue Foch and Karlsruhe.[13]

SOE operative Odette Samson confirmed that Borrel, Rowden, Leigh, and four other female operatives were incarcerated in Fresnes prison before being transferred in a convoy together on 12 May 1944 to Karlsruhe where the women were then placed in the city jail for women.[14] The women were in "protective custody" until further instructions were given from Berlin. They were placed in separate cells, which they shared with German women who were arrested as political prisoners or criminals.[15] According to interviews conducted with the women who were in charge of the Karlsruhe women's detention centre at this time, the eight women received the same rations and treatment as other inmates and were given occasional exercise in

[13] Escott, *The Heroines,* 51-54.
[14] Ibid.
[15] The Karlsruhe prison records were destroyed before Vera Atkins could access them. Therefore, primary testimony from witnesses and those charged with war crimes played an essential role in tracking these operatives and in the war crimes trials.

the prison yard. Prison officials also stated that the women were not poorly treated, and that they were better off than those in concentration camps. The women were at Karlsruhe for several weeks, until chief warden Theresa Becker and deputy Ida Hager grew frustrated. Becker and Hager reached out to prison director Geisendoerfer about what could be done about the eight prisoners.[16] Geisendoerfer reached out to the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) in Berlin for an update on any news surrounding what to do with the SOE women.[17] Shortly after, Karlsruhe received orders to take four of the eight women and arrange a convenient execution for them in an unspecified camp.[18] The four women chosen by Karlsruhe officials, were the women arrested in 1943, Borrel, Leigh, Rowden, and Olschanezky.

In the early hours of 6 July 1944, the four women were taken from their cells at Karlsruhe and transported to Natzweiler concentration camp.[19] According to a German political prisoner at Karlsruhe who was employed in various tasks around the prison, the four women were transported around 4:00 or 5:00 am in a large grey car, with several members of the Gestapo and SS inside.[20] Natzweiler was situated approximately 160 km from Karlsruhe, in annexed Alsace. The women were given their belongings in suitcases, folded their coats over their arms, and looked like any other female civilian travelling.[21] They were then driven to the local train station, where they were accompanied by a small handful of female Karlsruhe guards to Strasbourg, and then took another passenger train to a local station near Natzweiler.[22] From there the four women

[16] Vigurs, *Mission,* 214.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] The British National Archives, "Leigh," HS 9/910/3.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Vigurs, *Mission,* 227.
[22] Ibid.

were then picked up in a vehicle and driven to the camp by its commandant, SS Fritz Hartjenstein.[23]

The women arrived at Natzweiler between 1:00 and 3:00 pm on 6 July 1944.[24] They were supposedly under the impression that they were going to be working in the kitchen or in the officers' mess and had no idea that they were going to be executed.[25] It is believed that the four women were first taken to the Gestapo office for a final interrogation. Former prisoners of Natzweiler stated that they saw four women being led down the main camp street by SS officers and taken to the Political Department in the camp.[26] From there they were placed in a block of cells making up the prison within the camp. On arrival they were placed together in one cell, after that they appeared to have been split up into two cells, and then before the evening they were placed into separate cells. Natzweiler was a men's camp, therefore the arrival of women was unusual and drew attention. Many inmates speculated at the time that the women were brought there to be executed. Three British officers who were not allowed to come close enough to be able to speak to the women, testified to their general appearance and behavior. They stated that the women were, or appeared to be, in good health, and were utterly defiant in their attitude to the SS. On the evening of 6 July 1944, the camp was placed under a curfew and all prisoners had to be in their barracks and behind closed windows.

Franz Berg, a German prisoner in charge of the crematorium stated that he was instructed to light the furnaces and have them at maximum heat by 9:30 pm.[27] At about that time Peter Straub -- the SS officer in charge of the crematorium -- accompanied by the SS doctor and

[23] Ibid.
[24] The British National Archives, "Leigh," HS 9/910/3.
[25] Vigurs, *Mission*, 229.
[26] The British National Archives, "Rowden," HS 9/1287/6.
[27] Ibid.

former camp doctor arrived at the crematorium. After ensuring that everything was in order, the guards locked up the prisoners who were working in the crematorium in the room where they slept. According to several interviews conducted after the war, the prisoners got into their bunks and the man on the top bunk could observe what went on outside through a fanlight. He told the others what he saw. First various camp officials arrived and all went into the doctor's room, which adjoined the men's bedroom. Then two SS men arrived with a British woman, she was taken into the doctor's room, and a few minutes later two SS medical orderlies dragged her out and along the corridor leading to the furnace room.[28] This process was repeated at fifteen-minute intervals for all four women. The fourth, however, resisted and started to scream, she was overpowered and a few minutes later she also was dragged out unconscious. The prisoners heard the doors of the crematorium open and assumed that the women were immediately cremated. The next morning the camp doctor, who had access to the crematorium, went into the building immediately after the curfew had been lifted. In the oven he found four charred bodies of women and an unburned shoe.[29]

During the postwar trials, Natzweiler's doctor, Werner Röhde, testified that each woman received a lethal injection in her arm. They were brought individually into the doctor's office under the false pretense of receiving necessary vaccinations.[30] Witnesses confirmed that the chemical used was phenol, often used as an anesthetic, but able to cause an overdose if the dosage was high enough. Röhde claims he chose the lethal injection as a substitute for the typical means of execution at Natzweiler -- shooting or hanging -- as he felt that it was more humane for the women.[31] The injections were administered and, once the women were believed to be dead,

[28] The British National Archives, "Leigh," HS 9/910/3.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Vigurs, *Mission,* 232.
[31] Vigurs, *Mission,* 233.

they were passed to camp guard Conrad Schultz to bring to the crematorium. However, several witnesses recalled hearing moans from the women while they were being dragged to the crematorium, and it is widely believed that the women were still alive when placed into the furnace.[32] It was even speculated that one of the women woke up while entering the fire at the crematorium and attacked Schultz, but was then pushed into the flames. During the Natzweiler trials, one guard recounted that the night the women were executed Schultz's face had been severely scratched, and he drunkenly told one of the guards about the incident that had occurred.[33]

According to Franz Berg, this was not the first-time women had been executed at Natzweiler.[34] Berg stated that in June 1943, four Jewish women had been given injections by the SS medical orderly.[35] The next morning Berg found a pink stocking garter on the floor near the oven, and on top of a pile of coffins there was a cardboard box of four or six empty glass vials, suggesting that a narcotic was used to cause an overdose.

The location and manner of the execution of Andrée Borrel, Vera Leigh, Diana Rowden, and Sonia Olschanezky was unusual. These female F section operatives were executed in a men's camp, perhaps out of discretion. That Natzweiler was a "Night and Fog" camp underscores this. The manner in which the agents were transported to the camp, also suggests that the SS officers did not want to draw attention to them, and would have made the SOE women harder to identify or track. Before and after the train rides, the women and their armed guards were driven from the prison and to the camp, never being left alone. These extra security measures suggest that these women were considered high importance prisoners. Borrel, Leigh,

[32] Ibid.
[33] Vigurs, *Mission,* 235.
[34] The British National Archives, "Leigh," HS 9/910/3.
[35] The British National Archives, "Rowden," HS 9/1287/6.

Rowden, and Olschanezky were also the only F section women to be executed through lethal injection and cremation. The other SOE women were shot or gassed.

While the women's gender didn't save them from execution, that doesn't mean that it didn't have an impact on their Nazi enemies. According to Pattinson, Nazi ideals of femininity played a primary role in the Nazis' understanding of women's roles.[36] For Pattinson, these deeply entrenched beliefs allowed female operatives to be successful in certain circumstances, as women often manipulated feminine stereotypes to carry out operations without suspicion.[37] Once the Nazis realized that women were actively participating in clandestine military operations, these women became a significant threat. British female operatives not only posed a tactical and military threat to the success of the Axis forces, but they also threatened gender dynamics. Women operatives were blurring gender lines of what was appropriate and acceptable, thus threatening social values. In this sense, women operatives were a double threat.

Despite this double threat, SS and Gestapo officers had various approaches to interrogating, torturing, and killing these agents. In the case of Natzweiler, Dr. Röhde chose a "more delicate" death for the women, rather than being shot or hanged like male prisoners. Röhde also expressed that he wasn't going to put the guards through the mental turmoil of shooting or hanging a woman. However, given the fact that at least one of the women struggled and may have been burned alive, his choice of method was ultimately crueler. Röhde's choice highlights the conflict between seeing the F section female operatives as enemy agents, and as women. This moral dilemma is not expressed in the same way when analyzing the fates of the other F section women.

[36] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 139.
[37] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 143.

Chapter III: SOE Women in Dachau

On 11 September 1944, four F Section women were executed at Dachau concentration camp: Noor Inayat Khan, Madeleine Damerment, Eliane Plewman, and Yolande Beekman. These women were shot in the back of the head by SS officer Friedrich Wilhelm Ruppert.

Dachau concentration camp was situated in the town of Dachau approximately 16 kilometres northeast of Munich. The camp was located on the ground of an abandoned munitions factory and consisted of thirty-two barracks. When the SOE women arrived at Dachau, the camp already had two crematoriums, a gas chamber, regular mass shootings, and medical experiments on prisoners. The summer and fall of 1944, the camp introduced around 140 satellite camps to increase war production of munitions for the Nazi war effort following the D-Day invasions.[1] The overall the camp would have held at least 200,000 prisoners.[2] While it is difficult to estimate the number of people who died at Dachau, scholars believe the number to be at least 40,000.[3]

Noor Inayat Khan was born on 1 January 1914, in Moscow. Her father was an esteemed classical musician in Europe, teacher in Sufism, and a distant relative of Tipu Sultan, ruler of Mysore, India. Her father was from Bombay and met Noor's mother Ora Ray Baker while touring the US. Shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, Noor and her parents left Russia for London. Once the war was over, Khan, her parents, and her three younger siblings who were born in London, moved to Suresnes, France. The family was given their house in Suresnes by a benefactor of the Sufi movement.[4] In 1927, Khan's father suddenly died from

[1] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum "Dachau". 2021. *Encyclopedia.Ushmm.Org*. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/dachau.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Magida, *Code Name Madeleine*, 46.

pneumonia, and she took the responsibility of caring for her grieving mother, and her younger siblings.[5] In 1931, Khan graduated high school and enrolled at the Sorbonne, majoring in child psychology, while also studying the harp and the piano at the École normale de Musique.[6] When she wasn't studying, she taught at Sufism to children.[7] While attending her music lessons she started dating Elie Goldberg. Khan's family had reservations about Goldberg, because he was Jewish and lower class.[8] To prove his sincerity, Goldberg became Sufi and changed his name to Azeem. The couple got married soon after. Khan became a writer and wrote poetry and children's stories until the outbreak of the war. In May 1940, the German invasion of France was underway, and the town of Suresnes experienced destruction from Axis bombing raids.[9] Khan and her family decided to leave Suresnes and escape to London. They drove to a train station in Tours, and got off the train in Le Verdon, a small port that was evacuating Allied troops and refugees.[10] The family got a hotel room to stay in while they tried to find passage to London. However, Khan found a bus to Saint-Nazaire after hearing about the bombing of the British ship the *Lancastria* by German planes on 17 June 1940. The *Lancastria* was 6.5 kilometres off shore with 9,000 British civilians and troops on board when it was bombed. There were over 6,000 casualties. Khan and her sister Claire had Red Cross training and wanted to help. Arriving at Saint-Nazaire was chaos, so much so that Noor and Claire didn't know where, or if, they could be of any use. So, they decided to go back to Le Verdon that night. Their bus arrived in Le Verdon just in time, as Khan's brother Vilayat had managed to secure a space for all of them on a Belgian freighter the *Kasongo.* They family left the port the night of 19 June 1940. The

[5] Magida, *Code Name Madeleine*, 47.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Magida, *Code Name Madeleine*, 49.
[8] Magida, *Code Name* Madeleine, 51.
[9] The British National Archives, "Khan," HS 9/836/5.
[10] Ibid.

darkness gave them cover from German planes and snipers. It took four days to reach the coast of England. Khan and her family arrived in Falmouth, Cornwall, and were given refugee papers. The family then travelled by train to Oxford, where they stayed in a bed and breakfast. After arriving in London, both Khan and Vilayat wanted to help in the war effort. Therefore, Vilayat travelled to London to await being called on by the Royal Air Force (RAF). With Khan's experience with the French Red Cross, she decided joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) in November 1940, to assist with the war effort. She spent six months training as a wireless operator in Edinburgh before she was selected to participate in an advanced wireless course.[11] While undergoing the course, her name was passed on to the SOE by an Air Ministry officer who observed her.[12] She was recruited to the SOE and began training in 1943, under the cover of being a FANY officer.

Noor Khan was tasked with infiltrating into France to work as a wireless operator for a locally recruited organizer, Cinema, who established the Phono circuit in the region of Le Mans. Phono was a sub-circuit for the larger Prosper circuit.[13] By June 1943, there was a high demand for wireless operators in France. All of the previous operators had been men, and were being arrested by local Gestapo officials, making it very difficult to carry out any subversive activities.[14] Therefore, Khan was trained as a wireless operator on an expedited course. She didn't finish her training at the SOE training school, and was very rushed in what she did learn. She wasn't considered a fully trained operative, but the need for an operator in France was more pressing. Khan was the first woman infiltrated into France to be a wireless operator. She parachuted to a reception ground northwest of Villeveque on 16 June 1943. She was met on the

[11] Yada-McNeal, *50 Women*, 63.
[12] Yada-McNeal, *50 Women, 64.*
[13] The British National Archives, "Khan," HS 9/836/5.
[14] Ibid.

ground by the leader of the reception committee for that area. Once Khan and the head of the reception committee made contact, she was taken to Paris. The leader of the reception committee gave her instructions on how to contact the circuit organiser, Cinema. Khan was given a cover story and papers in the name of Jeanne Marie Renier, and the code name Madeleine.[15]

In the weeks following Khan's arrival in France, the Gestapo had become very active in Le Mans.[16] The Phono circuit was disbanded when the Gestapo arrested Cinema -- the organiser -- and his chief lieutenants. Khan narrowly escaped and was constantly on the run from Gestapo officials. These arrests raised alarms back at the London SOE headquarters, and her superiors requested that Khan be pulled from France and brought back to London. However, she refused to abandon her post, as she would not leave her French comrades without communication. She also intended to build a new circuit in the process.

Khan was forced to be continuously on the move with her wireless transmitter equipment, in order to maintain communications with London. She managed to evade capture for over three months in which she even found herself shooting at a group of German officers after an altercation in Grignon, following an underground network meeting after curfew. Khan sent about twenty messages for Phono circuit. She relayed information about the status of the circuit and pin-points for the next reception grounds to London. She was also instrumental in facilitating the escape of thirty Allied airmen shot down in France. Because Khan refused to be pulled from the field, she quickly became the last and most vital link of communication with London in Paris.

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[15] Renier was born in Blois on the 25 April 1918. Her father was French and a Professor of Philosophy at Princeton, and her mother, Ray Baker, was American. Renier's father was killed during the First World War and after the Armistice, Renier and her mother returned to Paris. Here, Renier completed her schooling, and then attended the Sorbonne until 1938, where she specialized in Child Psychology. Apart from her studies, she spent much of her time as a nanny for various families. Once the Second World War began, Renier became a nurse in Paris, while her mother fled to the United States before the fall of France. With the German invasion, Renier fled south to the Bordeaux region. She quickly found employment as a governess for a family in Royan. She spent Christmas 1941 in Paris and obtained her new ration card on 30 December 1941.

[16] The British National Archives, "Khan," HS 9/836/5.

However, the Gestapo had devoted a significant amount of time trying to catch her, and eventually were given a full description of her appearance. Khan was denounced in October 1943 and was arrested and taken to the Gestapo headquarters at 84 avenue Foch. According to a statement taken from Josef Goetz -- a radio expert who worked at 84 avenue Foch -- Khan was denounced by a French woman: the woman "knew of an English wireless operator and was prepared to give her address on receipt of a large sum of money. She gave a personal description of the wireless operator, which matched that of Khan."[17] As far as Goetz knew, this was the only time in the entire F Section that there was an arrest following a denunciation from a person not connected with the resistance organization. Goetz also explained that Khan was of the greatest interest to the Gestapo headquarters staff. Goetz stated that he had first learnt of Khan's existence in early July 1943, after the arrest of several of her circuit members. In an attempt to track Khan, the Gestapo employed a wireless detection station in order to observe all wireless transmitter traffic for checks of the French section. The wireless detection station could identify the French section wireless operators, but it couldn't close in on an exact location of the signal, because it was constantly changing. Therefore, when a French woman came to avenue Foch and told Hans Kieffer -- Commandant of the Paris Gestapo -- that she was prepared to betray a female agent living in her apartment building, the Gestapo immediately arranged for Khan's arrest.

Following the arrest, Gestapo officials went through Khan's belongings and found her codes and messages from London.[18] The Gestapo hoped to use these codes to extract information from London, such as drop locations, safe houses, and names of resistance members. At the headquarters, Goetz was one of the members of the interrogation team. Goetz specifically

[17] Ibid.
[18] The British National Archives, "Khan," HS 9/836/5.

interrogated Khan about her wireless transmitting messages. Khan refused to cooperate and lied, consistently proving herself to be an unreliable source. She was imprisoned in one of the cells on the fifth floor of avenue Foch and remained there for several weeks. During this time, she made two escape attempts.[19] The first she made alone, by managing to get onto the roof through a bathroom. She was re-arrested after an alarm was set off. Two months after her first attempt, Khan, accompanied by Major Faille (a member of the Maquis), and Bob (Captain Starr, a British officer) attempted a second escape. The three managed to break through the iron bars in their cell windows and climbed through the windows up onto the roof. Together they used strips of their blankets and sheets knotted together to climb down to a balcony located on the third floor of a neighbouring house. They then smashed a window and entered the house. After an hour, Bob and Khan were located and Major Faille was found and taken back into custody by the Gestapo that same evening.

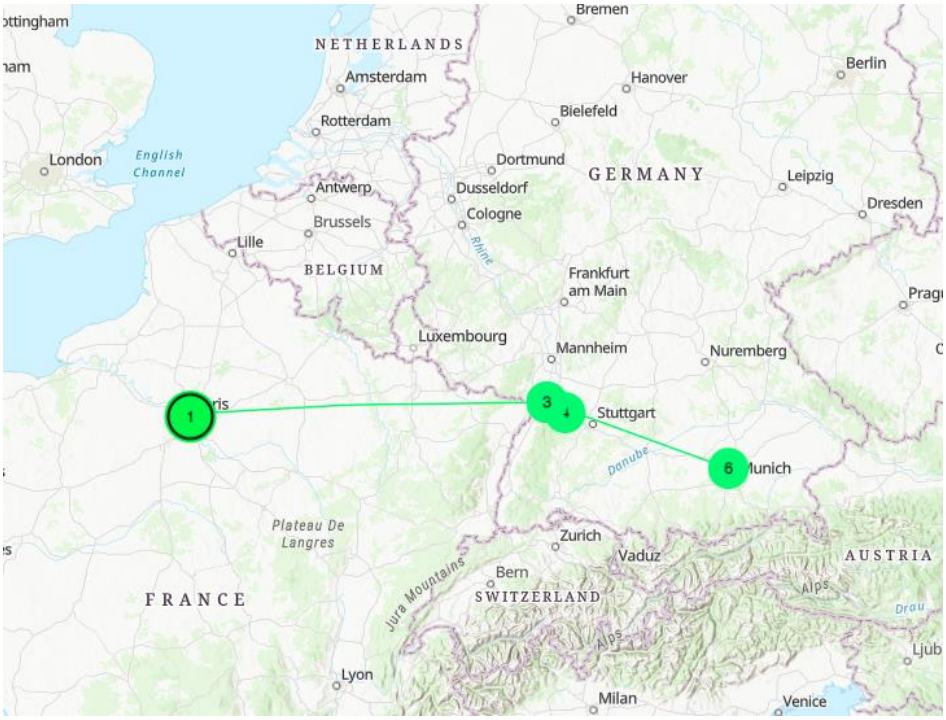
After their attempts to escape, Kieffer asked Khan, Bob, and Major Faille, to a sign a declaration stating that they wouldn't attempt any further escapes.[20] Khan and Major Faille refused, but Bob signed the agreement. Kieffer admitted that after the refusal to sign the declaration, he was the one who obtained permission from Berlin to send Khan and Major Faille to Germany for "safe custody."[21] Khan was the first SOE operative to be sent to Germany. She was transferred to Karlsruhe on 27 November 1943, and then to Pforzheim (a subsidiary prison) under the name Nora Baker. Wilhelm Krauss -- Head of Pforzheim -- stated in his sworn deposition to the War Crimes Investigation unit on 6 November 1946, that on orders from Berlin, Khan was treated as a "Night and Fog" prisoner, because she was considered dangerous and

[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

uncooperative. These prisoners were kept on the lowest rations and imprisoned in solitary confinement. Moreover, Khan had her hands and feet chained in her cell. Krauss admitted that these orders were carried out, however after some time he had decided to remove the chains from her hands because he felt sorry for her.[22] However, very shortly after Krauss received a phone call from the Karlsruhe Gestapo headquarters reprimanding him for not observing the regulations about the chains.

A fellow prisoner, Yolande Lagrave managed to make secret contact with Khan and supplied the details of the conditions that Khan experienced in a letter that was handed over to Vera Atkins. Lagrave stated that while she was interned at Pforzheim she corresponded with an English woman who had her hands and feet chained, was never allowed out of her cell, and could be heard regularly being beaten, presumably by Gestapo interrogators.[23] Khan gave Lagrave her mess tin before she was transferred back to Karlsruhe, which was inscribed with the name Nora Baker, Radio Centre, Officers' Service, RAF, 4 Taviston Street, London. It was to this location that Lagrave sent her letter, which was eventually turned over to Vera Atkins. Khan was kept in these conditions for ten months before being transferred back to Karlsruhe prison on 11 September 1944.[24] From there she was sent to Dachau concentration camp on 12 September 1944.

[22] There is no evidence that Krauss ever took off the chains: many prisoners of the prison had witnessed her feet and hands always in chains.
[23] The British National Archives, "Khan," HS 9/836/5.
[24] Ibid.



Appendix 5. Khan's Movements Following Arrest. For the Map Legend see page 124.

Madeleine Damerment's file was also destroyed, therefore little is known about her experiences. However, we do know that she was a courier for the Bricklayer network.[25] Damerment was born on 11 November 1917 in Torte Fontain, Pas de Calais, and lived most of her life in Lille. After the German invasion, she became involved in the underground escape line "Pat" -- helping Allied POWs and stranded soldiers get back to Britain. Through this work she became acquainted with SOE operatives Andrée Borrel and Nancy Wake. However, after several arrests were made throughout the network, Damerment's involvement was compromised, and she was forced to escape to Britain. On the way to Britain she fell ill with an undisclosed illness and had to recover in the hospital. She was then recruited by the SOE and began training in October 1943. She was given the code name Solange and parachuted into an area near Sainville

[25] Escott, *The Heroines*, 126. Escott once again does not provide any sources for this information.

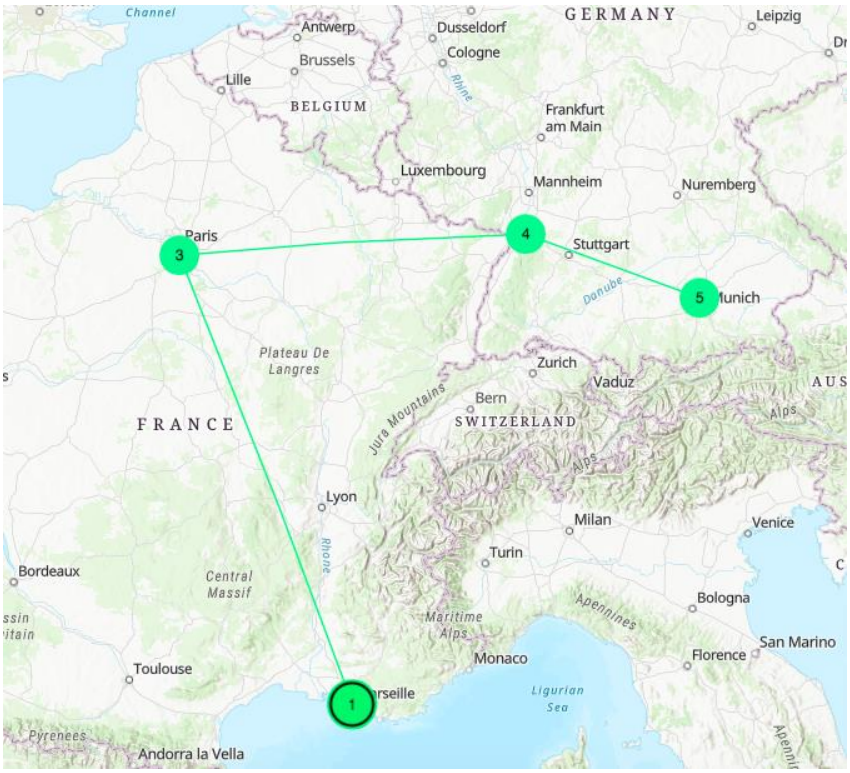
on 28 February 1944. Waiting at the reception grounds were numerous SS officers; she was arrested and transferred to Fresnes prison and avenue Foch.

Eliane Sophie Plewman was born in Marseilles on 6 December 1917. Her parents were British, as was her husband, who was a lieutenant in the Royal Air Force (RAF). Before becoming an SOE operative, Plewman worked for the Press Section of the British embassy in Madrid until 1941. Plewman was trained as a courier to assist the Monk circuit located in Marseilles. To carry out her work, she was given a cover story and the false identity of Eliane Jacqueline Prunier.[26] She was also given the field name Gaby and the code name Dean, in order to hide her identity through various forms of communication.[27] After successfully completing her training, Plewman parachuted into the Jura region of France on 13 August 1943. Upon her arrival into the region, she became separated from the circuit.[28] Instead of laying low, she managed to make several new contacts and met up with her circuit members and circuit organizer Bernard. Plewman worked as a courier for the Monk circuit for six months, during which time she travelled constantly between the various local resistance groups, supplying them with arms, wireless transmitter equipment, and documents, and acting as a guide for newly arrived agents.

On 23 March 1944, Plewman was arrested in an apartment in rue Merandet in Marseilles. She was sent to Les Baumettes prison in Marseilles, before being transferred to Fresnes prison, where she remained until May 1944.[29] On 12 May 1944, Plewman along with several other SOE female operatives were taken from Fresnes and placed on a train to Karlsruhe. Plewman travelled with the women who were executed at Natzweiler concentration camp. On arrival, the women

[26] The British National Archives, "Plewman," HS 9/1195/1.
[27] Vigurs, *Mission,* 19.
[28] The British National Archives, "Plewman," HS 9/1195/1.
[29] Ibid.

were placed in separate cells which they shared with German women who were political prisoners. According to the interviews conducted by Atkins with some of these German female political prisoners, they weren't poorly treated at Karlsruhe. However, one document in Plewman's personnel file stated that she was tortured for not giving up information during interrogations at one of the prisons she was held in. There is no supporting information provided within the file about where this treatment took place, or by whom. On the afternoon of 11 September 1944, Plewman was told by Fraulein Becker -- the head of the women's jail in Karlsruhe -- to prepare for her departure. Plewman received her personal belongings back -- the non-valuable pieces -- in preparation for the transport. That evening Plewman and three other women, including Noor Khan, were taken from their cells by a warden on night duty and handed over to the Gestapo officials, before being taken to Dachau concentration camp.



Appendix 6. Plewman's Movements Following Arrest. For the Map Legend see page 125.

Yolande Elsa Maria Beekman was born on 28 October 1911, in Paris. She moved to England in 1929. Beekman's parents also moved to England, along with her two sisters, who joined the WAAF. Beekman was fluent in French and Italian and spoke English with a slight accent. Before joining the SOE, she worked as a children's clothing designer in London, and then joined the WAAF, where she was recruited with her husband Jaap Beekman to the SOE, but for the Belgian section.

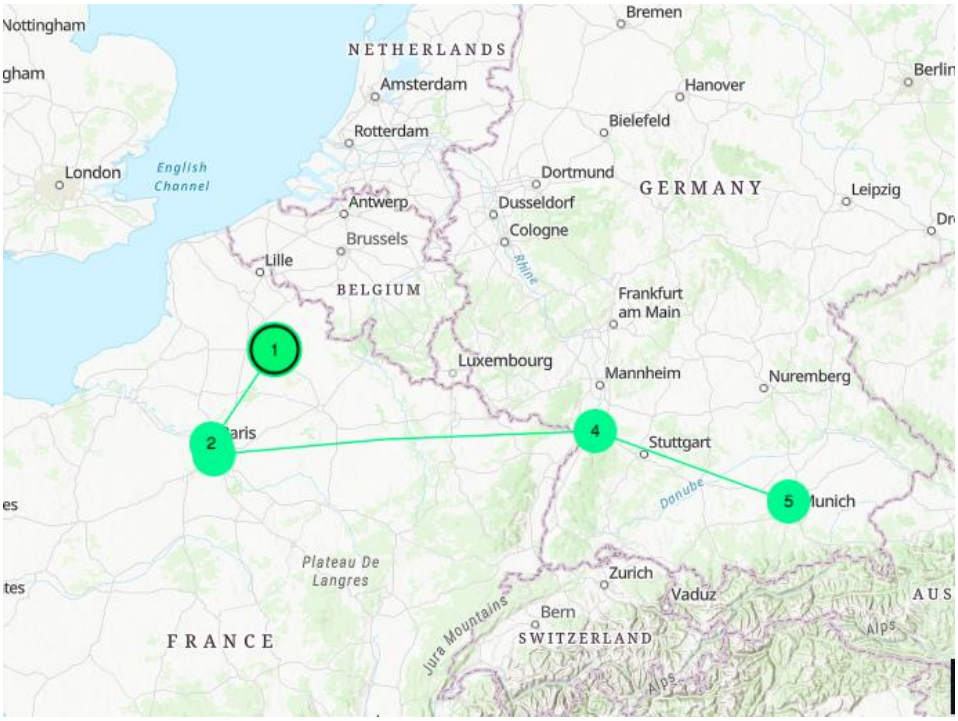
Beekman completed the various training stages of the SOE to become a wireless operator for the Musician circuit, located near Lille, which was part of a region of France administered from Belgium. She parachuted into the Tours area on 17 September 1943, under the alias Yvonne Marie Yolande Chauvigny and the operational name Palmist.[30] Upon arrival, her reception committee was unable to reach her location, and she was forced to travel to Lille via Paris with no assistance, while carrying her wireless transmitting equipment. Despite the risks, Beekman arrived in Lille undetected. On arrival, Beekman lived with a Madame Lefevre, on avenue de la Republique in Saint Quentin. Beekman only lived at this residence for a short period of time because Madame Lefevre could no longer accommodate her. On 4 October 1943, Beekman moved into the home of a Monsieur Boury and operated out of his attic. She worked with Gustave Bieler (the Canadian organiser of the Musician circuit), as well as with a British man known as Marius. By Christmas, some of the resistance members started to notice the same cars driving by the house. Out of caution they decided it would be best to move Beekman's transmitting operations to the Café Moulin Brulé in Saint-Quentin.

In early 1944, one of the local resistance members was denounced, and the arrests of a large majority of the circuit members soon followed, including Beekman. Beekman and Bieler

[30] The British National Archives, "Beekman," HS 9/114/2.

were arrested on 13 January 1944 outside the Café Moulin Brulé and taken to the prison at Saint-Quentin. On 17 or 18 January 1944, Beekman was seen accompanied by four Gestapo officials at the local pharmacy, her face was swollen and she appeared to have been beaten very badly. The Gestapo officials spoke to Monsieur Corteel, the owner of the pharmacy, asking for "the money."[31] This evidently referred to money that belonged to the Tell circuit, which was spread out and hidden in various locations. Corteel denied any knowledge of any money being held or used for resistance purposes. Beekman was placed back into her cell in the Saint-Quentin prison, until she was transferred to 84 avenue Foch -- Gestapo headquarters in Paris -- and then to Fresnes prison.[32] On 12 May 1944, Beekman, along with SOE operatives Odette Sansom, Diana Rowden, Vera Leigh, Eliane Plewman, and Andrée Borrel, were transferred by train to the women's jail in Karlsruhe.[33] Beekman remained in Karlsruhe until 11 September 1944, when she was then moved to Dachau concentration camp.

[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.



Appendix 7. Beekman's Movements Following Arrest. For the Map Legend see page 125.

From the investigations carried out by Vera Atkins and the War Crimes Investigation units in early 1946, it appeared that four SOE operatives had been transferred from Karlsruhe on 6 July 1944 to Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp, where they were executed by lethal injection and cremated. At this point in the investigation it was clear that three of the four women were Diana Rowden, Vera Leigh, and Andrée Borrel.[34] Based on descriptions from guards and prisoners at Natzweiler, it appeared that the fourth woman was Noor Inayat Khan. However, after further investigation it became apparent that Khan was detained in Pforzheim prison.[35] In August 1946, Atkins and her team obtained evidence that showed a Nora Baker had arrived at Pforzheim prison from Karlsruhe on 27 November 1943. Atkins also found documentation of Khan being sent back to Karlsruhe on 11 September 1944. Around this time Atkins was also

[34] The British National Archives, "Khan," HS 9/836/5.
[35] Ibid.

forwarded the letter from Madame Lagrave, which detailed Khan's treatment while incarcerated at Pforzheim. Lagrave referred to Khan as Nora Baker. This new information, along with eyewitness accounts, suggested that Khan couldn't have been executed at Natzweiler because she was still imprisoned at Pforzheim. Further interrogations of Gestapo officials led Atkins and her team to believe that on the 12 September 1944, Noor Inayat Khan, Eliane Plewman, Madeleine Damerment, and Yolande Beekman were transported to Dachau concentration camp.[36]

The four SOE women were collected by three Gestapo officials the morning of 11 September 1944, and were driven in a car from the prison to a nearby train station.[37] Gestapo chief Josef Gmeiner had received a telegraph from the RSHA in Berlin ordering that the four women be taken to Dachau, where they would be executed.[38] The SOE women were unaware that they were going to be executed. They were dressed as civilian women, under guard by Gestapo officials, and taken on multiple trains to Bruchsal, then Stuttgart, and finally Munich.[39] They travelled in a train compartment together and freely spoke in English the entire journey. They ate sausage and bread, and smoked English and German cigarettes offered to them by their guards.[40] After arriving at the Munich station in the late afternoon, the group boarded a local train to Dachau -- about thirty-two kilometres northwest of Munich -- and arrived late in the evening.[41] The women were forced to walk the remaining two kilometres to the camp.[42] Once they arrived, the women were handed over to the camp officials, and spent the night in the cells

[36] Ibid.
[37] The British National Archives, "Plewman," HS 9/1195/1.
[38] Vigurs, *Mission,* 237.
[39] The British National Archives, "Plewman," HS 9/1195/1.
[40] Vigurs, *Mission,* 240.
[41] The British National Archives, "Plewman," HS 9/1195/1.
[42] Ibid.

at the jail in the camp.[43] The next morning between 8:00 am and 10:00 am, the women were taken from their cells and shot in the back of the head by SS officer Friedrich Wilhelm Ruppert near the crematorium compound.[44] The women's bodies were then cremated. Gestapo officials and the prison director confessed to the murder of these women in their postwar interrogations.[45] According to the letters that Atkins sent to the victims' family members, the women were not aware that they were going to be executed.

In the years following their deaths, new evidence has revealed disturbing details about the nature of these women's experiences before their execution. It has been speculated that Khan was separated from the other F section women because she was considered a "dangerous prisoner." She was chained in her cell and outside, almost naked, while at Dachau.[46] Witness testimony claimed that she was beaten by guards.[47] This coincides with other witness testimony that claimed that Khan was almost beaten to death by SS officer Ruppert the night before she was killed.[48] Stephen D. Yada-McNeal proposed that Khan may have been singled out in her treatment due to her race, as well as her reputation of being "dangerous."[49] Other scholars suggest that Khan was raped that same night.[50] There has not been confirmation about whether Ruppert was the assailant in the sexual violence towards Khan, however it is speculated that these incidents are connected. For instance, Yoop, a camp guard at Dachau, testified that Khan had been stripped, kicked, and abused all night by officer Ruppert.[51]

[43] The British National Archives, "Khan," HS 9/836/5.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Vigurs, *Mission,* 240.
[47] Vigurs, *Mission,* 240.
[48] Yada-McNeal, *50 Women,* 72.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 164.
[51] Vigurs, *Mission,* 240.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Colonel H.J. Wickey, a Canadian Military Intelligence officer who was imprisoned at Dachau during this time, claimed that the women had not been shot together.[52] He claimed that Plewman, Beekman, and Damerment were barely dressed in "rags," "handled very roughly," and slapped several times before being shot in the back of the neck.[53] Meanwhile Wickey stated that Khan had been separated because she was considered a dangerous prisoner, and was shot in her cell with a small pistol. Other witnesses claimed that she was "half dead" when her body was dragged to the crematorium. SS officer Friedrich Wilhelm Ruppert was confirmed as the executioner of the SOE women in Dachau and hanged in 1946 for war crimes.[54]

The experiences of F section women who were executed at Dachau is similar in several respects to that of the women who were executed at Natzweiler. They were all interned first at Karlsruhe women's prison, their executions were ordered, and then they were transferred by train "disguised" as civilian women, and immediately executed on arrival in predominantly male camps. This once again highlights how important discretion was to the Nazis. However, agents' treatment and execution were conducted very differently in Natzweiler and Dachau. In Natzweiler, there was an emphasis on the fact that these operatives were women. The doctor at Natzweiler chose a method of execution that he supposed would be painless, out of consideration for the "weaker" sex, and to prevent any trauma to the guards by executing women. In Dachau, guards physically, sexually, and mentally abused the interned SOE agents before shooting them. However, what this difference in treatment and execution also reveals is the influence of the authority in charge.

[52] Ibid.
[53] Vigurs, *Mission,* 240.
[54] Yada-McNeal, *50 Women,* 72.

It was assumed by the SOE that women's gender and status (whether civilian or military) would protect them if they were arrested. However, this was not the case. Some women operatives were subjected to gendered torture inflicted by male interrogators, as we see in the case of Noor Khan.[55] Pattinson describes that female members of the French Resistance and other political prisoners -- no names were listed -- had electric currents run through their nipples, electrodes inserted in their vaginas, had their breasts severed, or were raped by guards.[56] Based on witness testimony, scholars now believe that Noor Khan and Violette Szabo may have been raped during their imprisonment. The Gestapo also used violence against women as a means of torture against men. For example, SOE agents Edgar Hargreaves recalled that he was forced to observe sexual violence inflicted on female prisoners and claimed it "was much worse than anything that ever happened to oneself."[57] Pattinson concludes that this gendered and sexualized violence against women was a way of punishing or re-feminising women for trying to overstep gender boundaries,[58] and that rape was used by soldiers as a reward, and to humiliate and emasculate their enemies who weren't capable of protecting "their women."[59] That is not to say that SOE F section men weren't sexually abused, but that there is simply a lack of evidence -- personal or witness testimony -- that F section men were sexually assaulted. The experiences of SOE women in Natzweiler and Dachau illustrate that their gender, far from being a "cover" or protection, put women at greater risk.

[55] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 163.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 164.
[58] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 166.
[59] Ibid.

Chapter IV: SOE Women in Ravensbruck

Between January and February 1945, four F Section women were executed at Ravensbruck concentration camp: Violette Szabo, Lilian Rolfe, Denise Bloch, and Cecily Lefort. Yvonne Rudellat also spent most of her imprisonment at Ravenbruck, before being transported to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.[1] Unlike the other executed F section women, Szabo, Rolfe, Bloch, and Lefort, were all subjected to forced labour for months before their executions. Szabo, Rolfe, and Bloch were shot in the back of the head, while Lefort was gassed in gas chamber with over 150 other prisoners. The fact that Lefort was killed with other prisoners, and not separated like the other F section women, suggests that the Nazis either didn't know she was a covert operative, or she managed to slip through the cracks. We may assume the same thing about Rudellat, who was sent to Belsen where she died of typhus after the camp was liberated. Like Sonia Olchanezky and Madeleine Damerment, Lilian Rolfe's files were destroyed and therefore less is known about their experiences, although we do know that Rolfe was a wireless operator for the Historian network.[2]

Ravensbruck concentration camp was situated near the village of Ravensbruck, approximately 80 kilometres north of Berlin. By 1945, Ravensbruck had more than 50,000 prisoners with approximately 6% of the prisoners from France.[3] It had eighteen barracks, two that were warehouses, and one that served as a penal block -- where the F section women were sent before their execution, and where Odette Sansom was held. By 1945, the camp was extremely overcrowded and had an outbreak of typhus spreading throughout the camp. While the

[1] Escott, *The Heroines*, 156.
[2] Ibid.
[3] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum "Ravensbrück." *Encyclopedia.Ushmm.Org*. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/ravensbrueck . accessed on August 3, 2022).

F section women were imprisoned at Ravensbruck there was the possibility of being selected for medical experiments, being shot or gassed for failing the "selection" program, being sent as forced labour to various sub-camps, or working in the brothels. By 1944, forced labour was primarily agricultural work and work on local industry projects -- textiles or electrical -- or munitions production. With over forty sub-camps there were around 40,000 female prisoners participating in forced labour at Ravensbruck in 1944, seven of whom were F section operatives.[4]

Denise Madeleine Bloch was born on 21 January 1916 in Paris. Bloch grew up in France and became a member of the French resistance before escaping to England in 1943.[5] She worked as a courier for the resistance in Lyon. After a several resistance members had been arrested, Hilaire -- the organiser of her circuit -- decided that someone had to travel to England to report on the status of the network. He also hoped that there would be a possibility to receive a wireless operator and more money during the May full moon drops. Bloch spoke English well enough to potentially pass as an English woman in order to get onto a ship to England. Therefore, it was decided that Bloch would be the one to go. She left from Agen on 1 May 1943 through the Pyrenees on foot into Spain. She then managed to escape to England by boat. Bloch had another identification card, in the name of Katrine Bernard, in her possession. Upon arrival in England she was held for questioning. British officials asked Bloch whether the Gestapo would know her as Bloch or as Katrine Bernard. She replied, "Ask Captain Gibson." Gibson was an official of the SOE. Gibson was soon alerted of Bloch's' arrival in England and picked her up from holding.

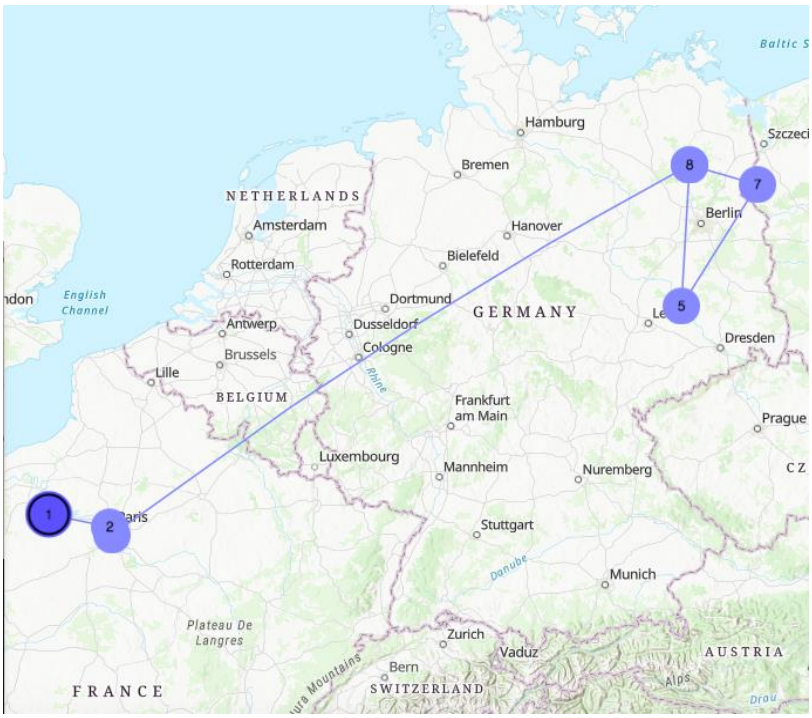
[4] Ibid. Odette Sansom, who was in Ravensbruck, was in solitary confinement for the entire period of her captivity and not used for forced labour.
[5] The British National Archives, "Bloch," HS 9/165/8.

Bloch was then interrogated by the SOE where she relayed Hilaire's message. After being cleared of any suspicion by the SOE, she was recruited as a wireless operator.

Bloch successfully completed the SOE training schools as a wireless operator and parachuted into France on 2 March 1944. Bloch assumed the identity of Danielle Williams (or Woods depending on the documentation). She was assigned to the Clergyman circuit in the Nantes area, under its organiser Captain Robert M.C. Benoist, who was known as Lionel.[6] According to her file, Bloch completed excellent work for Clergyman until she was arrested in June 1944, near Évreux. Bloch and Captain Benoist, who had also been arrested, were taken to a prison at 3, place des États-Unis, and then transferred to Fresnes prison after interrogation at 84, avenue Foch.[7]

According to Bob Starr -- another SOE operative -- in June 1944, Captain Benoist was brought to avenue Foch and received preferential treatment. Bloch was allowed to visit him in his cell and stay there on occasions. It is unknown why Captain Benoist and Bloch were given preferential treatment following their arrest.

[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.



Appendix 8. Bloch's Movements Following Arrest. For the Map Legend see page 125.

Violette Bushell was born in Paris on 26 June 1921.[8] Both of her parents were British, and she spent most of her life in England. Bushell married Étienne Szabo in 1940, but he was soon deployed overseas as part of the French Foreign Legion. Violette Bushell, now Violette Szabo, worked as a switchboard operator in London until she enlisted in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in April 1941. Later that year, Szabo found out she was pregnant, and gave birth on 8 June 1942 to her daughter Tania. Étienne Szabo missed the birth of his daughter due to being stationed in North Africa. In 1942, the SOE offered Violette Szabo an opportunity to work as a field agent in France. Due to her fluency in French and English she was a promising recruit. However, it was the death of her husband Étienne, killed in action at the Second Battle of El Alamein in October 1942, that solidified her decision to join the SOE.[9] Szabo saw it as an

[8] The British National Archives, "Violette," HS 9/1435.
[9] Ibid.

opportunity to fight against the forces that killed her husband. She joined FANY as a cover for her clandestine work, and was sent to the training schools, while her daughter stayed with Vera Maidment.[10]

Unlike most other SOE women of F section, Szabo was sent on two missions into France. Szabo volunteered to parachute into France on 5 April 1944, to complete an investigation on the Salesman circuit in Rouen and Le Havre.[11] After several arrests of resistance members from the circuit, Szabo needed to find out if the circuit had been infiltrated by the Gestapo. Szabo joined the circuit and managed to establish contact with resistance members who hadn't been turned. This was an extremely dangerous process as the SOE didn't know who was loyal to the resistance or the Gestapo. In undergoing her missions for the SOE, Szabo used the alias of Corinne Reine Leroy. During this mission she was arrested twice by the Gestapo but managed to escape both times. Ultimately, Szabo completed her mission and concluded that the Salesman circuit was beyond repair and had to be disbanded. She returned to London on 30 April 1944.

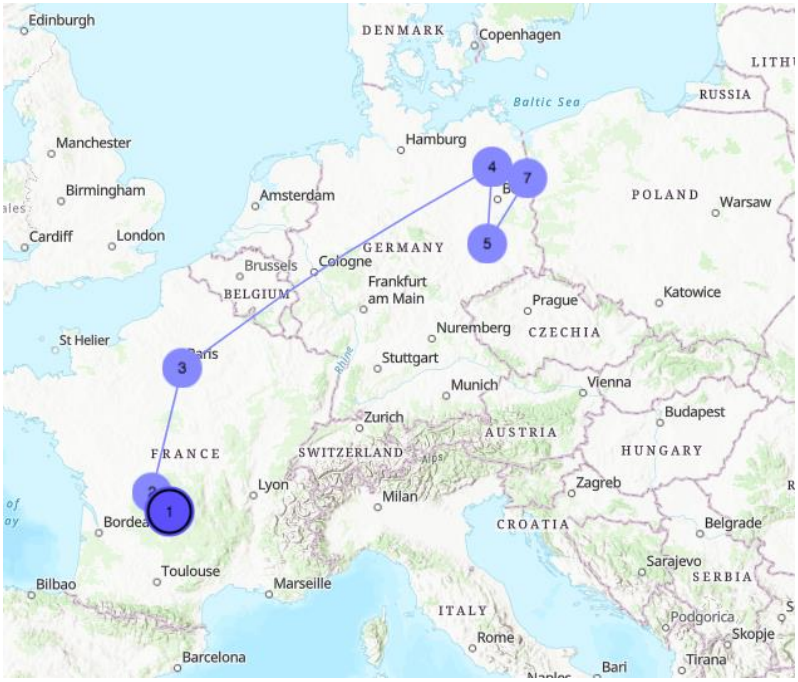
It was decided that Szabo would return to France as a courier for Phillippe Liewer, also known as Hamlet. Liewer and Szabo were tasked with rebuilding the Salesman circuit in the Rouen and Le Havre regions.[12] Szabo parachuted into Limoges on 7 June 1944, and contacted local Maquis groups in coordinating sabotage operations. On 10 June 1944, Liewer sent Szabo on a liaison mission to contact a resistance member named Nestor, to coordinate a meeting. The meeting place was over 160 kilometres away, therefore, Jacques Dufour -- a Maquis member known as Anastasie -- offered to drive her and her bicycle as far as possible through Maquis controlled areas. Liewer made sure the wireless transmitter was functioning properly, and gave

[10] The connection between Szabo and Maidment was not stated in Szabo's file.
[11] The British National Archives, "Violette," HS 9/1435.
[12] Ibid.

Szabo a loaded gun. Dufour and Szabo got into the front seats of the car and headed out. They stopped at a town on the way called La Croisille, to pick up another member of the resistance known as Barriaud. Dufour brought Barriaud along to keep him company on the drive back. Barriaud got into the back seat of the car, and they continued on their way. As they were close to the town of Salon-La-Tour (Corrèze) they came around a bend and saw a German roadblock about fifty yards away.[13] The German soldiers waved for Dufour to stop the car, Dufour responded by waving back and slowing down. Dufour told Szabo to prepare to get out of the car and run. Dufour stopped the car with about thirty yards between them and the roadblock. He got out of the car and started shooting at the German soldiers, while using the car door and a shield. Barriaud, who was in the back of the car, was unarmed, and took off running. Meanwhile Szabo was on the other side of the vehicle shooting at the German soldiers. She managed to take down one of the three German soldiers manning the roadblock. However, they quickly came under heavy fire from the other two German soldiers. Dufour ordered Szabo to retreat through the wheat field towards the woods about 400 hundred yards away, under the cover of Dufour's fire. Once she had reached the high wheat she resumed shooting, and Dufour took advantage of the cover to retreat as well. Dufour and Szabo walked crouched through the wheat field so that the German soldiers couldn't see the top of their heads. As they walked, they heard the arrival of armoured vehicles and more German soldiers running into the wheat field. Dufour and Szabo took turns firing, to buy time for the other to run. They were only a couple yards away from the woods, but Szabo was completely exhausted and bleeding through her tattered clothes. She told Dufour to go without her, and that she would cover him long enough to get away into the woods. Dufour managed to hide under a haystack in the courtyard of a small farm. Szabo was eventually

[13] The British National Archives, "Violette," HS 9/1435.

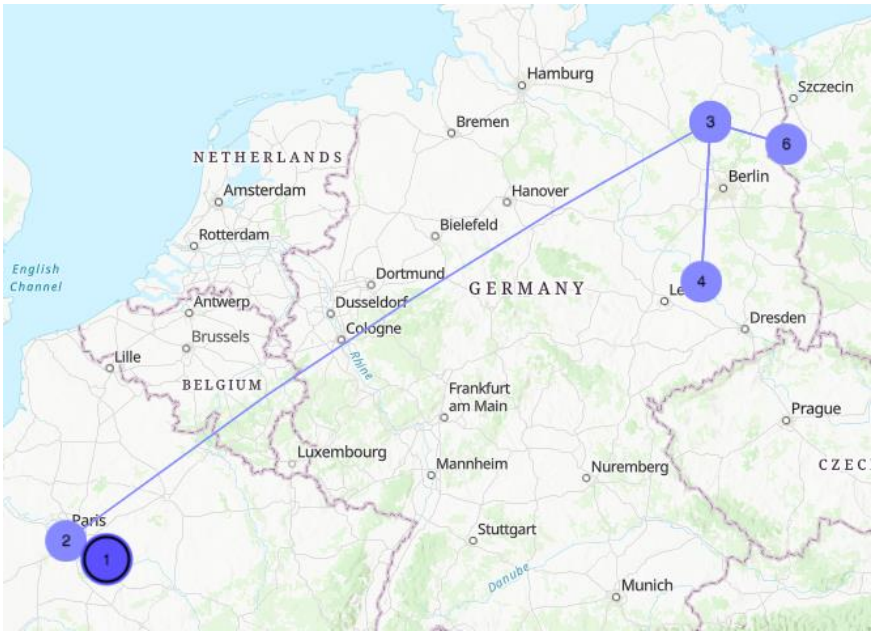
captured and taken to that same farm -- unknowingly -- and interrogated about Dufour's whereabouts. Szabo taunted and laughed at the German soldiers, not giving up any information. According to Vera Atkins, Szabo was taken to Limoges that day and placed in a local prison. She said her name was Vicky Tailor.[14] The next morning Szabo was removed from the prison and sent to Fresnes. She remained there until she was transferred to Ravensbruck. French resistance member and cell mate of Szabo in Fresnes, Hugette Desore, recalled that Szabo was sexually assaulted during her incarceration in Limoges.[15] Szabo confided in Desore in their cell that after her arrest an SS officer placed a pistol to her neck and said that he could kill her tomorrow if he wanted, and then raped her.[16]



Appendix 9. Szabo's Movements Following Arrest. For the Map Legend see page 126.

[14] Ibid.
[15] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 164.
[16] Ibid.

Lillian Rolfe was the third female SOE agent executed at Ravensbruck. Unfortunately, Lilian Rolfe's personnel file was destroyed therefore there is no primary evidence to examine about her experiences in the SOE. However, we do know that Rolfe was born on 26 April 1914. She was trained as a wireless operator for the Historian circuit and parachuted into France on 5-6 April 1944. Rolfe was arrested in Nangis on 31 July 1944.[17]



Appendix 10. Rolfe's Movements Following Arrest. For the Map Legend see page 126.

On 8 August 1944, Denise Bloch, Lillian Rolfe, and Violette Szabo were taken from Fresnes prison, chained together, and placed in a convoy of 300 people that was headed to Ravensbruck concentration camp.[18] The convoy arrived at the women's camp on 22 August 1944. The three women were seen arriving in the camp by SOE operative Yvonne Baseden, who was also imprisoned at the camp as a political prisoner. However, on 3 September 1944, Bloch,

[17] Rolfe was alleged to have been incarcerated in a prison at Poitiers, according to Szabo's file. The British National Archives, "Violette Reine Elizabeth nee Bushell -- born 26.06.1921, died January 1945," HS 9/1435.
[18] The British National Archives, "Bloch," HS 9/165/8.

Rolfe, and Szabo were transported to Torgau, in northwestern Saxony. There, Bloch, Rolfe, and Szabo were forced to work in a munitions factory, making parts for V-2 rockets. In comparison to Ravensbruck, Torgau's conditions were superior. The barracks had mattresses, running water, heating, and the women received decent meals.[19] SOE operative Eileen Nearne was also assigned to manual labour at Torgau, and stated that the women appeared to be in good spirits, particularly Szabo who was planning to escape. Szabo discovered a way to reach an open field behind the camp, by going through a locked door behind the washroom hut. Szabo got another prisoner to make her a key to this door and told Nearne about her plan. Nearne insisted that she wanted to escape with Szabo, and that they should go as soon as possible. But Szabo felt that they needed further planning before attempting the escape. However, before they could attempt it, someone denounced Szabo to the Torgau officers.[20] The SOE women continued working making munitions, but Lillian Rolfe's health had begun decline. During this period there was also significant hostility growing at Torgau, surrounding building weapons that would be used to hurt the Allies. The Torgau officials couldn't diffuse the unrest in the camp, therefore Ravensbruck commandant Fritz Suhren ordered 250 women from Torgau to Leipzig and another 250 women to Konigsberg camps.[21] On 5 October 1944, Bloch, Rolfe, and Szabo, were sent back to Ravensbruck.[22] By 19 October 1944 they were placed on another transport to Konigsberg. There, the women worked in the forests and on building an aerodrome.[23] By this point, Rolfe's health had declined further and she spent some time in hospital until 20 January 1945. Bloch was suffering from sores caused by malnutrition and her foot had turned gangrenous, leaving Szabo

[19] Vigurs, *Mission,* 249.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Vigurs, *Mission,* 251.
[22] The British National Archives, "Bloch," HS 9/165/8.
[23] Ibid.

as the only one left working.[24] While several witnesses mentioned Szabo's cheerful and determined spirit, others noted that as time went on, she became increasingly depressed. When the three women were recalled to Ravensbruck on 20 January 1945, it was a spark of hope. According to one of Vera Atkins' notes, the three women were hopeful that they might be released and repatriated via Sweden or Switzerland. But when they arrived back at Ravensbruck they were put into the punishment block.[25]

The punishment block was used to put women in solitary confinement: Julia Barry, a political prisoner working as a policewoman there, helped Bloch, Rolfe, and Szabo obtain food and clothing.[26] According to Barry, all three women were dressed in tattered clothing, were extremely dirty, and starving. Barry also pointed out the women's poor health: Rolfe and Bloch in particular were so weak they couldn't walk and were brought into their cells on stretchers. After three of four days in the punishment block, the women were sent to the "bunker," which was another block of cells. A day or two later, the women were taken out of their cells, and never seen again. Many rumours went around the camp, but no-one actually knew what had happened to the three women. Atkins received reports that the women had been hanged or shot, as well as a report that Rolfe and Bloch had been liberated and had been seen in Sweden and France. However, Atkins managed to interrogate the *SS* officer in charge at Ravensbruck, *Oberstuchfuhrer*. He was one of the few witnesses to what had happened to Bloch, Rolfe, and Szabo after they were taken from their cells. In the interrogation, Schwarzhuber stated that Bloch, Rolfe, and Szabo's names had been on an execution list compiled by the Gestapo in Berlin.[27] Therefore, the three women were recalled from Konigsberg to Ravensbruck. After

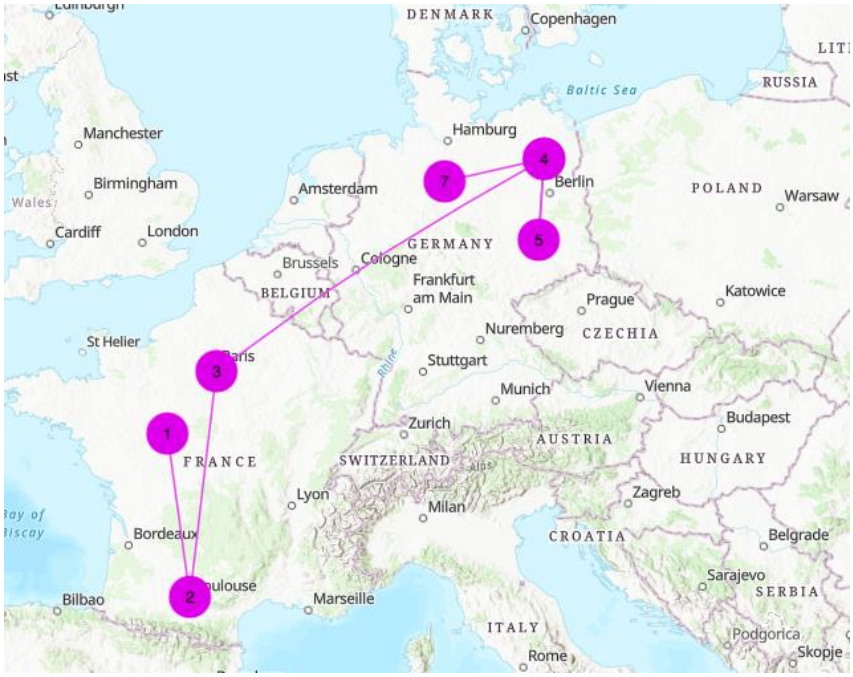
[24] Vigurs, *Mission,* 256.
[25] Ibid.
[26] The British National Archives, "Violette," HS 9/1435.
[27] Ibid.

being placed in the punishment block and the "bunker," the women were taken from their cells around 7:00 pm to the courtyard by the crematorium and shot.[28] Schwarzhuber stated that the arrangements for the execution of Bloch, Rolfe, and Szabo were made by Camp Commandant Suhren. Present for the execution was Dr. Trommer, SS Sergeant Zappe, SS Lance Corporal Schult, SS Corporal Schenk, Dr. Hellinger (a dentist), and Schwarzhuber. SS Corporal Schult shot Bloch, Rolfe, and Szabo, with a small caliber gun through the back of the neck. The death certificates were then signed by Dr. Trommer. Bloch, Rolfe, and Szabo's bodies were then cremated. It is believed that the three women's deaths took place sometime between 25 January and 5 February 1945.[29]

Yvonne Rudellat was a born on 11 January 1897 at Maisons Laffitte near Paris, and moved to Britain as a teenager. She was recruited by the SOE in May 1942 and deployed on 30 July 1942 as a courier for the Monkeypuzzle circuit in Tours.[30] She used the cover name of Jacqueline Gautier and the codename Suzanne. Rudellat was arrested on 21 June 1943 and sent to Toulouse, where she stuck to her cover story throughout her interrogation. She was imprisoned at the same prison as Cecily Lefort and Odette Sansom. She was then transferred to Fresnes prison in September 1943 where she remained until 21 August 1944. She was sent to Ravensbruck on the same train as Bloch, Szabo, and Rolfe, but there is no mention of Rudellat throughout Bloch, Szabo, or Rolfe's personnel files. Rudellat was also sent to Torgau for manual labour with Bloch, Szabo, and Rolfe, however she didn't stay long because of her failing health. She was sent back to Ravensbruck, where she was tasked with cleaning her block and knitting clothing. Rudellat was given a pink card which showed that she was unfit for heavy labour and

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Escott, *The Heroines*, 248.

noted that she was a "Night and Fog" prisoner.[31] Rudellat remained in Ravensbruck until 2 March 1945 when she was transferred to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. It is presumed that she was transferred with other ill or elderly prisoners.[32] Rudellat survived up until the liberation of Bergen-Belsen by British forces on 15 April 1945, however, she contracted typhus and died a week later on 22 April 1945.



Appendix 11. Rudellat's Movements Following Arrest. For the Map Legend see page 127.

Cecily Lefort was the first SOE operative to be imprisoned at Ravensbruck and was ultimately executed.[33] However, she travelled alone, and didn't have contact with any of the other SOE women.[34] She was born Cecily Margot Gordon on 30 April 1900 in London. Before her work with the SOE, Cecily Gordon married a French man, Alix Lefort. Cecily Lefort was

[31] Vigurs, *Mission*, 257.
[32] Ibid.
[33] The British National Archives, "Lefort," HS 9/908/1.
[34] Ibid.

appointed to an Honorary Commission in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) in the rank of an Assistant Section Officer (as her SOE cover), though she was not entitled to command, WAAF pay, allowances or benefits. In the SOE, Cecily Lefort was assigned as a courier to the Jockey circuit, which covered much of the Isère, Drôme, Vaucluse, Bouches-du-Rhône, and Montélimar regions.[35] She parachuted into France on 16 June 1943. She used the alias Cécile Marguerite Legrand on her fake identification cards, and the code names Teacher and Alice when communicating by letter or wireless transmitter. While carrying messages across the Jockey regions to other resistance groups, Lefort also assisted in sabotage missions. She managed to help build the sabotage teams across the regions of the Jockey network for three months before her arrest.

Lefort was arrested in the house of a resistance contact named Daujat in Montélimar, on 15 September 1943.[36] Lefort had ignored the advice of her network counterparts and arrived at Daujat's home at 4:00 am instead of going to his office during the day. That morning Daujat was visited by the Gestapo. Daujat managed to gather all compromising materials in his bag and escape out the back window of the home. Meanwhile, Lefort didn't have anything incriminating except a paper which she was unable to explain, and she was arrested. According to her personnel file, Lefort was brutally interrogated and treated poorly, but did not disclose any information to the Gestapo. Vera Atkins describes in one of her reports in Lefort's file that it was very difficult to track Lefort's movements after her arrests, due to the inconsistency with her interrogations. However, we do know that Lefort was imprisoned for several months at a military prison in Toulouse. On 1 February 1944, Lefort was taken to a railway station on the outskirts of Paris, accompanied by several female French Red Cross nurses, an opera singer, several women

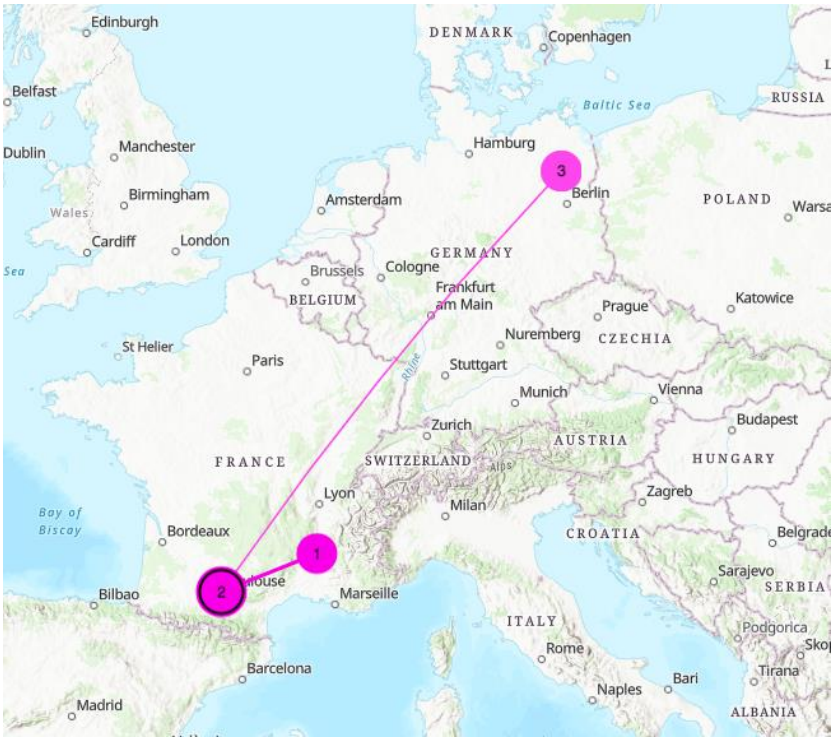
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

arrested for being part of the "Comet" escape line, and women arrested for prostitution.[37] They were given back their clothing to wear and their belongings. Once they arrived at the station, they were put into a cattle wagon that replaced the carriages on the train, with sixty other women. With little room to sit, poor ventilation, and little food or water, they eventually arrived at Ravensbruck two days later. Lefort and the other women on the train were forced to hand over their belongings and were quarantined before being integrated with the rest of the camp. Once quarantine was over, Lefort was assigned to Block 11 of the camp.[38] In fall 1944, Lefort fell ill, and experienced swollen legs and stomach pains. She was diagnosed with stomach ulcers or possible cancer by one of the senior camp medical staff.[39] Dr. Treite performed an undisclosed surgery on Lefort, presumably to remove a tumor.[40] In the recovery from her surgery, she was given better food for approximately two or three months before returning back to camp.

However, between 13 January and 28 January 1945, Lefort was transferred from Ravensbruck to Uckermark. Typically, elderly women and weak women who were no longer able to work were sent there on the promise of better treatment and living conditions. In actuality, it was a camp that women rarely survived. While the women didn't have to work, women whose health was failing or not recovering quickly enough were typically gassed or killed by lethal injection. According to Vera Atkins' research, Lefort and other women were called from their block, taken to the gas chamber, and gassed. Their bodies were then taken to the crematorium and cremated.[41] However, Kate Vigurs explains that, while the accounts from survivors of Ravensbruck and Uckermark vary, the most credible accounts suggest that Lefort

[37] Vigurs, *Mission,* 245.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Vigurs, *Mission,* 252.
[40] The British National Archives, "Lefort," HS 9/908/1.
[41] Ibid.

wasn't actually killed at Uckermark.[42] Rather, after two or three weeks at Uckermark, Lefort was fit enough to be sent back to Ravensbruck. She and a group of other women were forced to undress and taken into an anteroom where they were told they were going to be treated for lice. There, Lefort and around 150 other women were gassed in a gas chamber.[43] Like Bloch, Szabo, and Rolfe, she died sometime in January or February 1945.[44]



Appendix 12. Lefort's Movements Following Arrest. For the Map Legend see page 127.

Unlike the women who were executed at Natzweiler and Dachau, Bloch, Szabo, Rolfe, Rudellat, and Lefort were all sent to Ravensbruck, a women's camp, where they endured forced labour over a long period. Although they were accused of espionage during their interrogations,

[42] Vigurs, *Mission,* 257.
[43] Ibid.
[44] The British National Archives, "Lefort," HS 9/908/1.

and were considered political prisoners, they weren't immediately killed once they arrived at the camps. This discrepancy could be attributed to the need for forced labourers for the German war effort. The Axis powers experienced heavy losses after D-day and the Battle of Normandy, thus straining Germany's supply of men, weapons, and territory. At this point, the war had turned, and the Allies were invading German occupied territory from all sides. Therefore, providing as many prisoners to the German armament and manufacturing factories as possible may have been more pressing than the SOE operatives' immediate execution. The fact that these women were forced labourers, also highlights that they were treated like other political prisoners. The F section women were transported as any other prisoner going to a concentration camp, by train and cattle car alongside other prisoners.

Meanwhile, Cecily Lefort was arrested for suspicion of espionage, and was held in various prisons before reaching Ravensbruck. However, her execution does not match that of the other F section women at Ravensbruck. This inconsistency may suggest that the Nazis either couldn't confirm her SOE involvement, or she slipped through the cracks of the RSHA in Berlin, which had issued execution orders for the other SOE women.

However, what does appear to be consistent is that the executed F section women endured torture while incarcerated and terrible conditions in Ravensbruck. Through survivor testimonies we know that not all prisoners were tortured, though testimony has been contradictory. For instance, Violette Szabo claimed that she was not tortured, but there are reports that she was sexually assaulted while imprisoned. Additionally, Szabo told Barry how she, Bloch, and Rolfe had been tortured in order to gain information about the Allied invasion of France, once again conflicting with other reports.[45] Meanwhile, Denise Bloch received

[45] Ibid.

preferential treatment while at avenue Foch, but suffered once she reached the camp. This further highlights that there were no strict parameters for how to handle prisoners, especially those accused of espionage, rather it was left up to the individual interrogators of the various prisons. This can also be put into context when looking at the parameters set in place for SOE operatives who tried to escape. Noor Khan tried to escape prison twice and was considered a "dangerous prisoner." She was consistently chained and beaten for the rest of her incarceration. Meanwhile Szabo plotted to escape the Torgau camp and didn't receive nearly as severe treatment. This could be because Szabo wasn't successful in escaping, while Khan had to be re-captured. While Yvonne Rudellat was not executed at Ravensbruck, the horrible conditions and treatment in the camps ultimately led to her death.

Generally, in comparing the treatment and deaths of the SOE women from Natzweiler and Dachau to those in Ravensbruck, there are significant differences. There was no emphasis on discretion, rather the importance was focused on the war effort and outside events, and using these women in forced labour rather than immediate execution may have been seen as more important for the longer-term survival of the regime.

Chapter V: Defying the Odds

When the Second World War ended in September 1945, the surviving SOE agents' work was done. Across Europe agents were being called to check in at various offices and wait for arrangements to be made to send them home. However, many were still missing and presumed dead. Of the sixteen missing women of F section, only three managed to survive: Yvonne Baseden, Odette Sansom, and Eileen Nearne, all of whom went to Ravensbruck. Sansom and Nearne were the first to arrive in August 1944, followed by Baseden in September 1944. They all travelled separately from each other, and all had different experiences. Sansom was placed into solitary confinement and ultimately survived by pretending to be related to Winton Churchill. Nearne was arrested with a radio and managed to convince her interrogators that she didn't know what she was doing and was viewed as only a political prisoner rather than a spy. Meanwhile, Baseden was arrested for being in the home of a suspected resistance member. With no evidence on her, she also managed to convince her interrogators that she was not a covert operative. Both Nearne and Baseden participated in forced labour as political prisoners.

Yvonne Baseden was born in Paris on 20 January 1922. Baseden grew up in a bilingual household: her mother Antoinette de Vibraye was French and her father Clifford Baseden was British. Before joining the SOE, Baseden was an agricultural student until April 1940, and a typist for the British Power Boat Company until August 1940, when she joined the WAAF.[1] Baseden became a Section Officer within the organization and was recruited to be an operative for the SOE in April 1943. After successfully passing the training schools, Baseden joined the Scholar circuit located in the Jura region of France. She assumed the position of a wireless

[1] The British National Archives, "Baseden," HS 9/240/2.

operator and was tasked with training members of the local Maquis. There was no courier in the Scholar circuit, therefore all communications were done by wireless transmitter or face to face meetings.[2] In order to complete this work, Baseden assumed the cover story and identity of Yvonne Jeanne Bernier, a shorthand typist from Paris who was on holiday in Dole. Baseden was given an identity card, food cards, clothing cards, and a Carte de Travail with her new identity. In wireless messages, Baseden was referred to as Odette or Bursar, and was given the wireless transmitter code name of Toga.

Baseden and Scholar circuit organiser Lucien were scheduled to parachute into the Dole area on 12 March 1944. However, the reception team on the ground switched off its lights, mistaking the SOE plane for a German aircraft, as they were expecting a larger plane. Due to the miscommunication, and the moon period almost at its end, Baseden and Lucien had to parachute just outside of Condom in southern France. Hilaire -- a member of the Maquis -- had organized the drop, and was on the ground for their arrival, in order to verify their identification through a specific password which was given to Baseden and Lucien upon departure. Baseden and Lucien brought three wireless operator sets in suitcases, which had been thrown out of the plane when they jumped. After finding the suitcases, Baseden, Lucien, Hilaire, and a few additional members of the reception committee rode bicycles to a safe house about an hour away. Following protocol, Baseden and Lucien were placed in separate safe houses. Baseden stayed in a farmhouse for two or three days, until she was taken by car to another farmhouse, where she lived until 1 August 1944. In the meantime, Hilaire had sent a man to meet Baseden and Lucien's contact in Dole, however this contact had little information of value. As a result, Lucien himself decided to travel to Dole, and organized a member of the Maquis, Alphonse Queymeyer,

[2] Ibid.

to bring Baseden to Dole, the circuit's headquarters. It took five or six days to reach Dole by train and bus, during which time Baseden was never asked for her identification papers.[3]

Once in Dole, the circuit intended to co-ordinate dropping operations in districts that extended south from Dole to Nice and the Pyrenees. Lucien served as the organiser of the circuit, Baseden was the wireless operator, other members included Charles Hallouin, Robert Morel, "Jules," and "Mayor," who headed most of the regional operations and reception committees within the Pyrenees, Nice, and St. Etienne. There were approximately thirty reception grounds in the region, each given a code name after a flower.[4] On each reception ground was a team of twelve men. Instructions regarding lights and code phrases were given to the leader who was in charge of the arms dump near the ground. Lucien never saw these teams, but he often sent Robert Morel or another of his staff, to check on the dropped supplies.

Baseden successfully operated in the field for four months before being arrested. During this period, she sent eighty-nine messages and received sixty-one. While using the wireless transmitter someone would watch the road and the entrance from the window. A number of weapons were kept readily available, in case of an ambush from tracking the signal of the wireless transmitter to the safe house. At night, Baseden would listen to the broadcasts and always kept copies of her messages, as they usually concerned new dropping grounds. She did her own coding and de-coding and used all three wireless transmitter sets, each hidden at a separate location.[5] Baseden also taught local farmers in the circuit how to handle British and American weapons. She would bike to a local farm which was the site for the circuit's arms depot. The farms were near the circuit's reception grounds. Each weapons class consisted of

[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid. The personnel file only refer to Jules and Mayor in their code names.
[5] Ibid.

about ten men per session. The organization was able to use an abandoned mine -- shown to them by local farmers -- where they practiced shooting with live ammunition. Although Baseden never went on sabotage operations, she offered training in sabotage and making charges. She was selected to teach these classes because Lucien didn't want to risk meeting all the saboteurs himself. Baseden was also tasked with training two members of the organization as wireless operators. The SOE in London sent two more sets in order to train two new local operators along with codes and tests that the trainees had to pass.

Baseden, Lucien, Robert Morel, Charles Hallouin, and Jules mostly resided in a cheese factory in Dole called *Les Orphelins*.[6] They lived in an apartment on the upper floor, which was owned by a member of the circuit. There was a dropping ground nearby, therefore the factory served as a storage facility for arms. Although German officers came every day to collect cheese from the factory, they never came into the upstairs apartment. This was because a man named Graf owned the factory and was a German collaborator. Therefore, there was never any suspicion of a clandestine organization residing in the building. However, Baseden suspected that Graf's wife and one of his brothers knew what kind of work they were doing.[7] Lucien and Baseden also spent a month at a schoolmaster's house in a nearby village, out of fear of residing in one location for too long. Another storage facility for arms was located under the school. The pair then decided to relocate to an electrician's house, who happened to be the leader of the reception team on one of the large reception grounds. The circuit had planned a large daylight operation to take place on one of the grounds near the house.

On 25 June 1944 the circuit carried out a large-scale daylight operation. After the drop was successfully made, Baseden, Lucien, Robert Morel, Charles Hallouin, Jules, and other

[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

members of the organization hid the arms in the woods.[8] They then spent the night at a nearby safe house before returning to Dole the next morning. A young man around the age of twenty, who belonged to the Maquis, was participating in the operation. He was instructed to go to *Les Orphelins* -- the cheese factory -- with the wireless transmitter Baseden had been using. The young man was instructed to take a route that avoided the centre of Dole, thus avoiding any unwanted attention. The remaining members split up and travelled by bicycles on various routes. Baseden and the remaining members arrived at *Les Orphelins* around 11:00 am, however the young man had not yet arrived. Suddenly around 1:00 pm a dozen German soldiers surrounded the factory. At this point all the arms had been removed from the factory for the daylight reception, so there was no possibility for the members inside to defend themselves. Instead, Baseden and her comrades attempted to hide in various places in the factory and the upstairs apartment. When the German troops entered the factory, they had the young maquisard, who the circuit had placed in charge of Baseden's wireless transmitter. He had been beaten badly and appeared to have lost an eye. It was later learned that the young man had not followed the instructions, and had gone through the centre of the town, where he had been picked up by a patrol which found him in possession of the wireless set. As the German soldiers searched the factory, they found another member of the Maquis. They beat him in an attempt to extract information, which failed. They continued to search the grounds and found another resister hiding upstairs in the apartment. The Germans turned to shooting through the walls of the apartment, which resulted in several casualties of resistance members, one of whom was Lucien, who is believed to have taken a poison pill before being shot.[9] Baseden, Robert Morel, and Jules

[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

were all found in the upstairs apartment.[10] They were forced downstairs to the ground level of the factory and handcuffed. They were then placed into two cars and taken to the local police station, where they were separated and placed into female and male cells.

While imprisoned at the local police station, Baseden posed as a nurse during interrogations. She claimed that she was helping Robert Morel, who was a doctor and whose surgical instruments and bandages were found in Baseden's room at the cheese factory. The German interrogators believed her story because they thought that Robert Morel was a doctor working for the Maquis. After being held in the local police station for five days, Baseden was transported by Army truck to Dijon, with three French black marketeers and the young man that had been caught with the wireless transmitter.[11] Upon arrival at Dijon, Baseden was taken to the Gestapo headquarters. The Gestapo officers glanced at her papers and sent her to Dijon prison -- which was very close to the Gestapo headquarters -- without interrogating her.[12] Baseden was placed in cell 111 for two days, while the rest of her arrested circuit members from Dole arrived at the Dijon headquarters. Once the arrested circuit members had arrived, the interrogations began. Unlike her original interrogation, Baseden stuck to the cover story given to her by the SOE.[13] However, details about her previous work in Paris caused suspicion, as it was very difficult for the Gestapo to follow up on. Therefore, the interrogators asked for the name of her boss, when they saw her hesitate, they believed that she was lying about her identity.[14] As a result, Baseden was locked in a dark cellar with blacked out windows.[15] On the floor of the cellar

[10] Ibid.
[11] Yvonne Baseden, interviewed by Legasee: The Veterans Video Archive, https://www.legasee.org.uk/veteran/yvonne-baseden/ (accessed October 2, 2022).
[12] Baseden, *Oral History*.
[13] Ibid.
[14] The British National Archives, "Baseden," HS 9/240/2.
[15] The British National Archives, "Baseden Deposition," RW/2/7/4.

were two boards that acted as a bed, one of which was completely covered in blood.[16] On top of the boards was a small blanket.[17] The following day, she was taken from her cell to the interrogation room, where her interrogator carried out the interrogation in English. Baseden pretended not to understand what he was saying. He even called her Odette -- one of her field code names -- to see if there was any sign of recognition. After failing her interrogator's test, she was sent back to her cell and was denied any food or water until the following day when he would return. Her interrogator returned the next day asking about Nicole. Baseden pretended to think that Nicole was a woman, though she knew he was a member of the circuit who hadn't been arrested with her. For not cooperating, Baseden was denied food and water for another day. When her interrogator returned, he told her that the Gestapo knew that she came from England with Lucien, and that she was Odette. They also told her that she had parachuted to a reception ground in the south of France. The Gestapo had most likely ascertained this information about her circuit from other interrogations. However, Baseden continued to refute their claims. Overall, Baseden was interrogated at Dijon on and off for about two months. She was always interrogated by the same Gestapo officer and a civilian interpreter. Baseden stated in her witness deposition for the United Nations War Crimes Committee that she was not physically tortured, although the interrogator would step on her feet, or slap her in the face. On occasion her interpreter did try to intimidate her during interrogations, by firing bullets from his revolver between her feet. Baseden also experienced sexual intimidation when she was placed in solitary confinement. On one occasion she believed she was going to be sexually assaulted by two or three guards who were trying to bring her down to the cellars.[18] However she stated that "nothing like that

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 165.

happened."[19] Despite this, she stated that she was lucky to a have had a "reasonable" interrogator to deal with.[20]

The Gestapo was particularly interested in the achievements and the intentions of the circuit, and in information about the SOE. During one of Baseden's interrogations she was shown a large file which contained several images illustrating the various resistance circuits in France.[21] A number of the pages in the file were even devoted to members of the SOE and their pictures. Baseden recognized some of the images and names of SOE field agents in the file. There was even a blank spot for a picture of Colonel Buckmaster -- head of the SOE. The file also contained the address and telephone number for Orchard Court -- SOE headquarters. Shocked by the amount of information that the Gestapo had managed to obtain, Baseden did her best to not react to anything in the file. After weeks of interrogations, Baseden had successfully persuaded the Gestapo interrogator that she had little knowledge of the inner workings of the resistance network because she was just a wireless operator. This was completely false, as Lucien kept her very aware of all activities within the network, and often asked for her opinion on operational matters. Therefore, the Gestapo decided to switch tactics and focus on what Baseden knew about, the wireless transmitter. They forced Baseden to send messages to London, in an attempt to gain information on resistance members, reception grounds, safe houses, and so forth. However, the Gestapo forced her to send messages every day, not knowing that Baseden never did daily check-ins.[22] This unusual behaviour alerted the SOE headquarters that Baseden had most likely been arrested and was being forced to send messages.[23] Around 25 August 1944,

[19] Ibid.
[20] The British National Archives, "Baseden Deposition," RW 2/7/4.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] The British National Archives, "Baseden," HS 9/240/2.

Baseden and approximately thirty inmates from Dijon were sent to Saarbrucken concentration camp, due to the approaching Allied forces in the Dijon region.[24]

At Saarbrucken, Baseden met four or five other women from England who had also been arrested for clandestine work.[25] At Saarbrucken the German officials had taken all of their suitcases and personal possessions but, according to Baseden, the women were not poorly treated, "some food was provided, and the accommodation was not unreasonable."[26] However, she did witness ill-treatment of other internees by the camp authorities on multiple occasions.[27]After ten days at Saarbrucken, Baseden, the other British women, and fifty French women who were political prisoners, were loaded into a cattle truck and taken to Ravensbruck concentration camp.[28] The German officials returned the women's suitcases and personal possessions, however they had been rifled through and anything of value had been taken.[29] The journey to Ravensbruck lasted about a week, the women were given a ration of bread and sausage on two occasions during the journey, and nothing to drink.[30] Baseden arrived at Ravensbruck on 4 September 1944. On arrival, the women were marched to the camp by female SS guards. They were placed "in a hut in which a thousand to twelve hundred other women were living."[31] Inside there were three-tiered bunks with beds that could hold at least two people. There was one blanket per bed. One of the British women suggested to Baseden that they should try to be treated as Prisoners of War.[32] The pair mentioned this to one of the German officers who had escorted them all the way to the camp. The German officer agreed and said that he

[24] The British National Archives, "Baseden Deposition," RW 2/7/4.
[25] The British National Archives, "Baseden," HS 9/240/2.
[26] The British National Archives, "Baseden Deposition," RW 2/7/4.
[27] Ibid.
[28] The British National Archives, "Baseden," HS 9/240/2.
[29] The British National Archives, "Baseden Deposition," RW 2/7/4.
[30] The British National Archives, "Baseden," HS 9/240/2.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

would mention it to his superiors. However, the women never received a response. Baseden disclosed that this wasn't surprising, as they soon realized that there were a number of interned Russian women from the Soviet army, who were also considered political prisoners rather than POWs. She noted that the Russian women's presence in the camp confirmed the fact that the German authorities did not consider women to be POWs. Some of the French women who were political prisoners asked for better treatment, and the German officers referred this message to Berlin. Berlin's response was an execution order, and the French women involved were hanged. After the hanging, Baseden made the decision to make herself conspicuous and made a point to socialize with other political prisoners.[33]

The day after arriving at Ravensbruck, Baseden and the newest arrivals were paraded to the showers. All personal possessions had been taken by the guards, and the women were issued a uniform. The uniform consisted of a dress with a large cross on the front and back made by the insertion of a different coloured fabric. Baseden recalled that many of the prisoners suffered from dysentery and other diseases: the first thing she noticed when she arrived at Ravensbruck was that all the prisoner's skin appeared to be yellow, which she assumed to be due to the inadequate diet. The prisoners were of all nationalities and ages, and were all in stages of poor health.

The routine at Ravensbruck consisted of waking up at 4:30 am followed by roll call from 5:00 am till 7:30 am. Next was the parade, which usually lasted until 9:00 am, or until the working parties were made up. The parade exposed which prisoners looked fit or unfit to work. The working parties typically left the camp at 9:00 am and were engaged in various types of work.[34] Baseden was employed to uproot trees and unload trains. The trains usually came from

[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

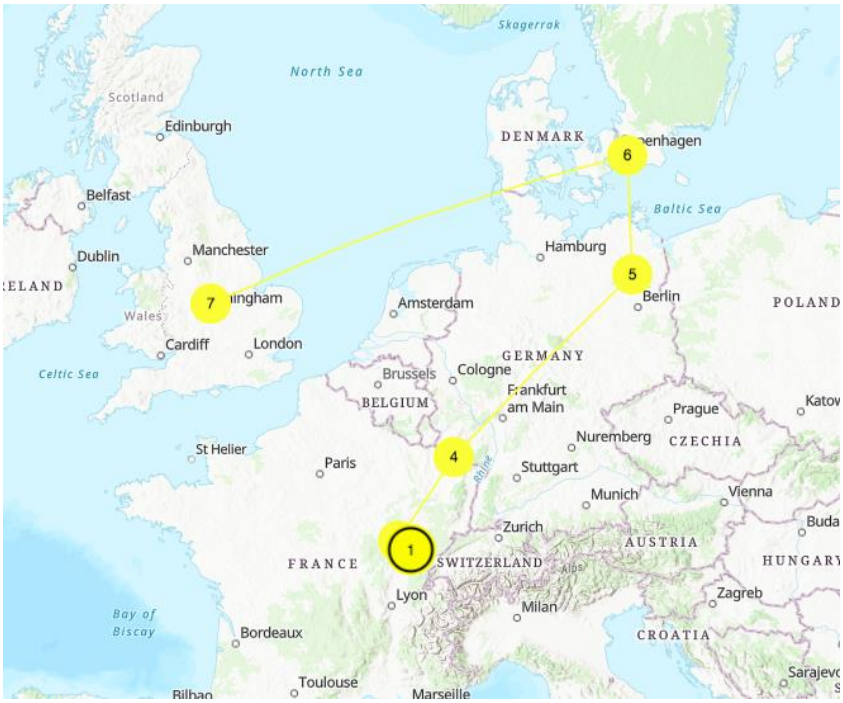
Warsaw, and were filled with looted goods, such as linens, silver, and other kinds of household items. On one occasion, Baseden was unloading a train when an SS officer entered the carriage carrying a wrench. While the SS officer entered the carriage a split pillow was accidently bumped from the top of the pile, and expelled a cloud of feathers into the officer's face. Out of rage the officer turned to Baseden and struck her at full force in the hip with the wrench. If it hadn't had been for a French woman who pushed Baseden out of the way, the officer would have struck her head.[35]

Towards the end of February 1945, Baseden started to work in the infirmary. After a week of work, she fell ill, and faked a fever in order to be admitted to the hospital. Baseden disclosed that this was a very dangerous plan because if it became apparent that someone was not likely to recover quickly or be available to work for some time, the doctors in charge had orders to select those individuals to be sent to the gas chamber. While in the hospital Baseden recalled a number of Czech, Polish, and Russian women being confined in block ten of the hospital. These women were called the "Rabbits" because they were subjected to various medical experiments, such as having their limbs infected with gangrene. It was rumoured that the women had been previously condemned to death, but had decided to subject themselves to the experiments on the promise that they would be released afterwards. Block ten of the hospital was primarily reserved for incurable individuals and tuberculosis cases. However, there was one room in which at least twelve women were confined, and labeled as "mentally deranged." While Baseden never saw them, she could hear their screams and cries.[36] Baseden remained in the hospital until her departure from the camp.

[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

By the end of March 1945, Russians troops were approaching Ravensbruck. The German officers informed the prisoners that they were considered hostages. However, on the following day they were informed that they could leave with the Swedish Red Cross transport, just before the Russians arrived. Baseden believed that the Camp Adjutant had sympathy for them, and that the other German officers knew nothing of their departures until it had already taken place.[37] Baseden and other political prisoners were taken to Malmo, Sweden, where she was quarantined in the Natural History Museum. Diagnosed with tuberculosis, Baseden spent two weeks at the Museum. Upon returning home, Baseden was still in poor condition and was admitted to hospital. She underwent a lobectomy on 28 July 1945, and was then treated at the King Edward VII Sanatorium in Midhurst, Sussex, for three or four months.[38] During her treatment she often wrote to Colonel Buckmaster and other HQ staff about the status of the Scholar circuit. She requested to return to France once her treatment was over, to thank those who were part of the network, and to help clear up any details or misconceptions. She also wanted to assist the families of those who were arrested and murdered in their work. The file did not disclose whether or not she returned to France.

[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.



Appendix 13. Baseden's Movements Following Arrest. For the Map Legend see page 127.

Odette Sansom was born in France but held British citizenship because of her marriage to a British citizen. In 1942, Sansom came to the SOE's attention after she heard an appeal on the BBC asking listeners to send in old photographs of the French coastline to help with the planning of the Allied invasion.[39] Instead of sending the photos to the Admiralty as requested, she accidently sent them to the War Office.[40] Shortly afterwards, Sansom received a request to attend an interview in London. During the interview she was asked if she would join an organization involved in clandestine work in France, and she immediately declined.[41] However, after months of thinking about the opportunity, Sansom agreed to try the SOE training. Sansom excelled in her training and was sent to France on 2 November 1942.[42] Her original mission was to set up a

[39] Vigurs, *Mission,* 82.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Sansom, *Oral History*, 9478.
[42] Ibid.

circuit in Auxerre. However, some of her papers were delayed and while waiting, she undertook courier work for Peter Churchill, leader of the Spindle circuit in Cannes.[43] On 14 April 1943, Sansom and Churchill were arrested,[44] and detained in Annecy until 13 May 1943, when they were transferred to Fresnes prison.[45] Sansom endured fourteen interrogation sessions, all except one of which were brutal.[46] During the first interrogation, Sansom saw an opportunity to try and save herself and Churchill. She claimed that Peter Churchill was her husband, and that she was actually the head of the underground network.[47] This lie would save Peter Churchill from extensive interrogation by the Gestapo. Sansom also claimed that Peter Churchill was the nephew of Winston Churchill, in hopes that this would spare them. But, for several months she also endured solitary confinement, had her toenails extracted, a hot poker laid on her spine, and fell ill due to the conditions of the prison. Sansom also experienced sexual intimidation, and recalled during an interrogation one of her interrogators unbuttoned her blouse.[48] She "was constantly threatened with worse treatment" if she didn't answer their questions.[49] The Gestapo wanted to know about her work, the whereabouts of the radio operator and other members of their circuit, but Sansom never revealed any secrets.[50] Eventually, the Gestapo recognized that she was not going to be coerced into telling them the answers they sought, so Sansom was put on trial in June 1943 and sentenced to death.[51] On 18 July 1944, Sansom was taken from Karlsruhe, where she had spent two months in a cell with three German criminals.[52] She was put on a train

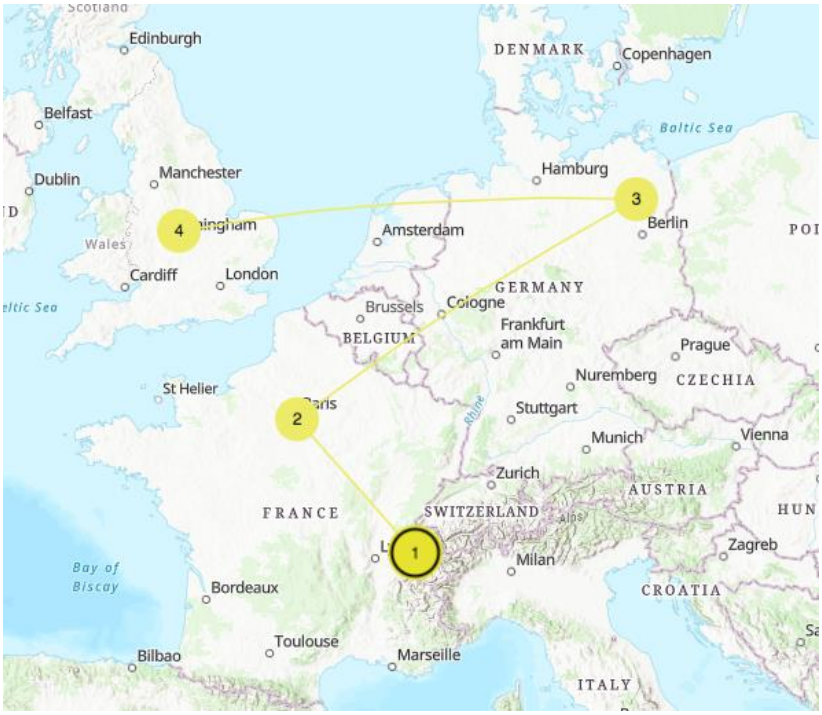
[43] Vigurs, *Mission,* 83.
[44] Starns, *Odette,* 9.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Starns, *Odette,* 10.
[47] Sansom, *Oral History,* 9478.
[48] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 165.
[49] Sansom, *Oral History,* 9478.
[50] Vigurs, *Mission,* 187.
[51] Sansom, *Oral History,* 9478.
[52] Vigurs, *Mission,* 246.

to a Frankfurt prison with German male prisoners. After a week she was then sent to an overcrowded prison in Halle. There Sansom recalled being beaten by one of the officers who thought that she was English. She was then sent to Furstenberg, and was forced to walk 5 kilometres to Ravensbruck concentration camp. In Ravensbruck, she spent months in solitary confinement in complete darkness.[53] She was told she was being punished for withholding information.[54] Another reason offered was her supposed relation to Winston Churchill. They wanted to keep her captivity a secret.[55] Sansom recalled being given food and water one week and then being forced to starve in complete darkness the next.[56] Camp Commandant Suhren would come to her cell once a month and asked her if she had anything to share or say, to which she responded no, and the cycle continued. While she never saw what was being done outside, she heard everything: screams, gunshots, and sirens.[57] By October 1944, Sansom had fallen ill, and she was taken to be X-rayed and informed she had tuberculosis. Rather than receiving treatment she was sent back to her cell.[58] However, Suhren and other guards believed that she was in some way related to Winston Churchill and so reserved "special punishment" for her in solitary confinement.[59] But they also decided that she was a prisoner worth keeping alive. Therefore, she was given infra-red treatment and vitamins and was treated for scurvy.[60] Sansom suffered torture, but also survived Ravensbruck, because of the lie she told. As the Allies began to liberate the concentration camps in Europe, the Nazis were scrambling to get rid of any prisoners and destroy and evidence. On 1 May 1945, the day after Hitler's suicide, Sansom was

[53] Sansom, *Oral History,* 9478.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Vigurs, *Mission,* 247.
[56] Sansom, *Oral History,* 9478.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Vigurs, *Mission,* 248.
[59] Sansom, *Oral History,* 9478.
[60] Ibid.

taken out of solitary confinement for the first time in over six months. The camp was in complete disarray.[61] Guards were burning files and prisoners were freely walking around. Suhren collected Sansom from her cell and planned to use her as a bargaining chip with the Americans, in exchange for his freedom and exoneration from his crimes.[62] Suhren drove Sansom towards the American lines.[63] Sansom didn't know what was going on and believed that Suhren was going to pull over to the side over the road and shoot her. However, around 10:00 pm Suhren and Sansom were stopped by the Americans. Sansom recalled that Suhren stated that she was "Frau Churchill" and she has been his prisoner. Sansom responded "this is the commandant of Ravensbruck. You make him your prisoner."[64] The American guards broke Suhren's gun and handed it to Sansom. With Suhren in custody, the Americans offered Sansom a room to stay in for the night, but she opted to sleep in the car after spending nine months locked inside. The car (which had also been full of incriminating papers) came back to England with Sansom and the files were used in the Ravensbruck war crimes trials. Following his arrest, Suhren was handed over to British authorities.[65] He received the death sentence in 1950. Sansom recalled in an interview with the Imperial War Museum that "she was lucky" and "she was never meant to survive." [66]

[61] Vigurs, *Mission,* 256.
[62] Sansom, *Oral History,* 9478.
[63] Vigurs, *Mission,* 260.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Vigurs, *Mission,* 262. He later escaped from Neuengamme camp but was rearrested not long after by the American authorities, and handed over to the French officials who were conducting the Ravensbruck trials in 1949.
[66] Sansom, *Oral History,* 9478.



Appendix 14. Sansom's Movements Following Arrest. For the Map Legend see page 128.

Eileen Mary Nearne was born in London on 16 March 1921. Her father John Nearne was British, and her mother Marie de Plazoala was French. Despite being born in London, Nearne grew up in Grenoble until 1942, when she and her sister Jacqueline decided to return to London to participate in the war effort by joining the First Air Nursing Yeomanry (FANY). Nearne was trained as a wireless operator. Through FANY she was recruited to the SOE.[67] At the training schools she received further training to be a wireless operator and cryptographer.[68] Her sister Jacqueline was also recruited to the SOE's F section.

Nearne was assigned as a wireless operator for the Wizard circuit in Scaux region.[69] She was given the cover story and documentation papers for Marie Louise Tournier. On 2 March

[67] The British National Archives, "Nearne," HS 9/1089/2.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

1944, she was flown to a field near Orléans, France, and made her way to Paris. She was accompanied by another agent whose name she didn't know, and whom she met twice daily in Paris in order to obtain the reports she had to transmit to England. Nearne then encoded them before sending them to London, and signed her messages with "Rose," "Pioneer," or "Petticoat."[70] For almost six months, Nearne maintained constant communication with London from one of the most dangerous areas in France. Nearne's personnel file states that her efficiency, perseverance, and willingness to undergo any risk in order to carry out her work made it possible to create a successful circuit. She was an essential part in the success of the delivery of large quantities of arms and equipment to the region. During her time in France she sent 105 messages.[71]

This success was cut short when Nearne was arrested by the Gestapo at 11:00 am on 25 July 1944 at Bourg-La-Reine.[72] She had just sent a message when she heard the Gestapo arriving. She had just enough time to burn the message and to hide the radio set before answering the door. However, the Gestapo agents searched the house and found the transmitting radio set. The Gestapo took Nearne to 84 avenue Foch to be interrogated. She stated that she had the radio set because she was working on a double transposition code. Her interrogator then asked how long she had been working as a wireless operator, and what organization she was working for. Nearne lied and said that she had joined an organisation in France and that she was recruited in a coffee shop. She was asked to disclose anyone she knew working in the organization, so she made up fake addresses to keep them busy. The Gestapo then put her in a freezing bath, and tried to make her talk, but she stuck to the story. Her interrogator continued with his line of

[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.

questioning and wanted to know who her contact was and what the rendezvous point was. She responded that she was supposed to meet her contact at the Gare St. Lazare at 7:00 pm. Intrigued by this information, some of the officers said they would go with Nearne to the rendezvous. Nearne and the some of the Gestapo officials arrived at Gare St. Lazare and waited until 7:15, but no one came.[73] However an air raid warning was sounded and Nearne explained that he must have been delayed because of it. The officers then took Nearne back to the Paris headquarters to be interrogated again. A few days later she was one of a group of suspected unnamed English and French female spies who were transported -- with little food, water, or sleep -- to Ravensbruck concentration camp.[74]

On 22 August 1944, Eileen Nearne arrived at Ravensbruck. She stayed there about two weeks and was then transferred to Torgau, where she stayed for about two months doing forced labour. While imprisoned at Torgau she saw Violette Szabo and some of the other SOE women and learned of Szabo's plans to escape.[75] But Nearne was transferred out of Torgau and arrived at Abterroda -- a subcamp of Buchenwald -- in October. At Abterroda, the SS commandant from Torgau visited, and Nearne heard that he was looking for two English girls who had escaped.[76] While at Abterroda, Nearne worked in a BMW plant, assembling the smaller parts of a Messerschmitt aircraft.[77] However, eventually Nearne refused to work and as a punishment her head was shaved and she was threatened with death if she didn't continue.[78] Nearne was transferred from Abterroda on 1 December 1944 and went to Markkleeberg camp (7 kilometres from Leipzig). There, Nearne worked on road maintenance for twelve hours a day wearing a

[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Vigurs, *Mission,* 254.
[78] The British National Archives, "Nearne," HS 9/1089/2.

grey jumpsuit with a red triangle badge on the left arm, to identify her as a political prisoner. As far as we know she was the only SOE women to wear a Nazi prisoner classification badge.

On 9 April 1945, the SS Commandant of the camp at Markkleeberg told the women that they were going to march out of the camp during the night.[79] The women knew that the Americans were not far from Leipzig, so Nearne and two French women decided to make an escape.[80] Around 11:00 pm on 13 August 1944, the women were passing through a forest and Nearne managed to jump out of the line and hide behind a tree. From there she managed to meet up with the two French women who had done the same. Together they walked through a nearby town and hid in a bombed-out house for three days. They then started off through the town. On their way, the women were stopped by the SS on patrol and asked for their papers. They claimed that they didn't have any papers because they were French volunteers working in Germany. Believing the lie, the SS officers let them go. Nearne and the two women then found church and slept in the garden that night. The next day, they reached Leipzig but were starving so they took a chance and asked for help in a German church. Nearne recalled that the people at the church were very kind to them and let them hide there for three nights.[81]

On 15 April 1945, the American military arrived. Nearne rushed out to meet them, told them she was English and asked them if they would show her where the Red Cross was.[82] They refused and instead put them up in a house for the night. The next morning the American troops put Nearne and the two French women in a camp. The captain of the camp interrogated Nearne with several SS members in the room. After hearing their stories, the captain assured Nearne that the SS officials would pay for their crimes. The following day Nearne was moved to another

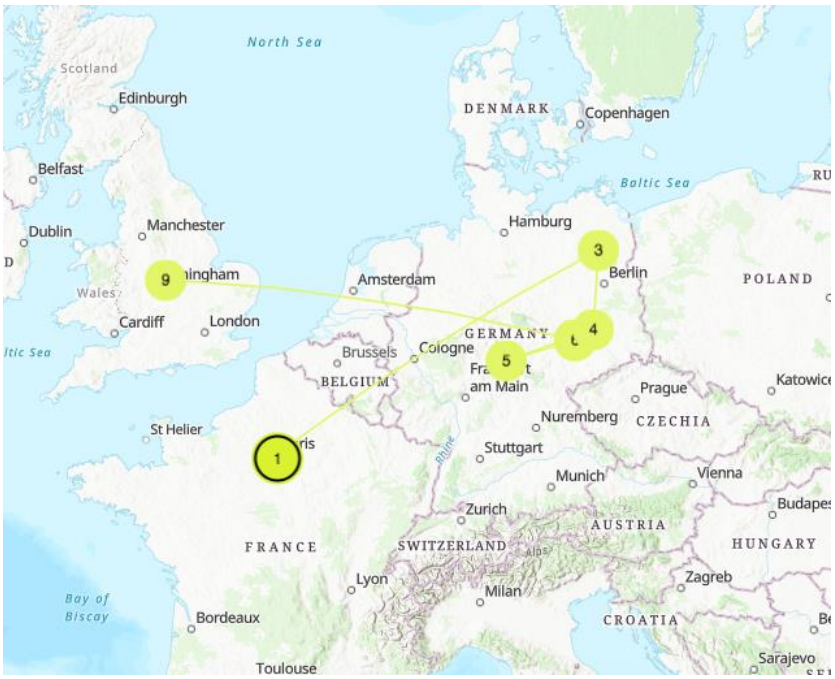
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.

camp with English prisoners, where she was interrogated by someone in the American Intelligence Service. They asked for her number and she told them she didn't have a number, they asked for her papers and she told them her story of how she was arrested and that the Gestapo had taken her papers away. She explained that she was a wireless operator and that she knew Colonel Max Baxter. However, they were not convinced and told her that she would have to go through many more camps before she was allowed into the UK by the British authorities. Throughout this process, Nearne recalled that she was placed in a camp with Nazis and treated as suspicious by the American forces.[83]

At the last camp, Nearne was again interrogated and told American investigators exactly how she landed in France and was arrested by the Gestapo.[84] The American intelligence service agents expressed great surprise that a plane was able to fly into France at night. They were very curious about Nearne's purpose in France and asked her about the organisation and training schools. Nearne didn't want to give too much away, therefore they thought that she must be a German agent. The American agents told Nearne that they would send a message for confirmation and for the time being she would have to stay in the camp with the Nazi women. Nearne requested to be separated from them, but it was refused and she received the same treatment as the Nazis. The American agents apologized to Nearne, but the risk of letting German agents go free was too high.[85] She remained in the camp for a month. During her stay Nearne reported to the Americans about the German women saying that they used to ask the Americans for cigarettes and get them to come to their rooms. The next morning one of the German women had her head shaved. After this, they put Nearne in a separate area of the camp.

[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.

One afternoon, an English major arrived at the camp to bring Nearne back to England. Nearne returned to England on 25 May 1945.



Appendix 15. Nearne's Movements Following Arrest. For the Map Legend see page 128.

Baseden, Sansom, and Nearne defied the odds of surviving torture and imprisonment in Nazi concentration camps. According to Juliette Pattinson, once agents were caught they would either stick to their covers stories or would openly admit to their clandestine involvement. Pattinson states that if the Nazis had found out that the imprisoned women were in fact "British agents working for the SOE they would have certainly been executed as the Geneva Convention concerning POWs did not protect them."[86] The experiences and survival of Baseden, Sansom, and Nearne illustrate that this wasn't always the case. Baseden was arrested while sharing a meal with one of her Resistance members. She didn't have a wireless transmitter on her nor was she

[86] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 157.

committing a crime, however her involvement with this individual automatically raised suspicion that prompted her arrest. Baseden chose to stick with her cover story, claiming that she was a local shorthand typist. Baseden's interrogations were mild, until local officers managed to arrest another resistance member who claimed that she was a radio operator and most likely came from England. As a suspected spy Baseden then experienced harsher interrogations, tests, and torture in attempts to gain information. However, the Gestapo weren't able to prove she was a spy. Therefore, she was transferred to Ravensbruck as a political prisoner. Meanwhile Eileen Nearne was arrested with a wireless transmitter in her possession and managed to convince her interrogators that she didn't know what she was doing. Nearne admitted to assisting the local Resistance but claimed that she was unaware of the political implications of her involvement. Nearne employed stereotypical feminine characteristics to appear helpless, confused, and timid in order to fool Gestapo officers, and it worked. Although this didn't save her from torture and interrogation, she wasn't executed with the other SOE women. And lastly, Odette Sansom openly admitted to being an SOE operative once she was arrested. Except, in doing so, she lied and said that she was related to Winston Churchill, in hopes that she would be seen as a valuable potential bargaining chip for the Nazis. This plan ultimately worked, and she spent her captivity in solitary confinement, rather than being executed. Sansom employed a ruse to survive, but Nearne and Baseden didn't do anything too different than the other F section SOE women.

Conclusion

Ultimately, sixteen SOE F section female operatives were arrested, of whom twelve were executed, one died of typhus due conditions in the camps, and three survived. These sixteen women were sent to three concentration camps, Natzweiler-Struthof, Dachau, or Ravensbruck, after being incarcerated in various prisons across France and Germany.[1] Proportionally more F section women than men were arrested and executed: of thirty-nine female operatives sent to France, sixteen (or 41%) were arrested. Meanwhile, there were 441 male agents sent to France and 104 (or 23%) arrested and sent to camps.[2] While incarcerated by the Nazis, twelve female operatives (75%) were executed. Meanwhile sixty-nine male operatives (or 66%) were executed. The SOE had hoped that women operatives' gender would offer them extra protection and cover, but it ultimately didn't. Juliette Pattinson compares men and women SOE agents' experiences in the field, but it is difficult to do the same regarding their captivity. The women who were executed in primarily men's camps, Natzweiler and Dachau, were not interned there. They were killed immediately on arrival. In Natzweiler, they were killed by lethal injection -- a method different from how men were killed in the camp. This choice was a direct result of their gender. The women who were killed in Dachau were shot, like male prisoners, but evidence suggests that some were raped first. The women who endured a long period of captivity in a concentration camp were in Ravensbruck, the women's camp. There, they were used as forced labour, suffered harsh conditions, and were executed by shooting or gassing like many other political prisoners in most concentration camps. In transit, many of the female SOE agents were sent to a women's prison in Karlsruhe. Some evidence suggests that they were treated well there, alongside other

[1] Some of the women sent to Ravensbruck were subsequently sent to sub-camps or other camps, such as Bergen-Belsen.
[2] Pattinson, *Enemy Lines,* 156.

types of women inmates, but it does seem that the warden also considered them a separate type of prisoner and ultimately -- by contacting the RSHA in Berlin -- triggered the order for their execution. The only place where men and women of the SOE were held together, and so where a comparison of their experiences is possible, was in Paris at Fresnes prison and at Gestapo headquarters at 84, avenue Foch. Here, there are more similarities than differences.

Fresnes prison is located south of Paris and had become the second largest prison in France by 1943. From the beginning of the German occupation, it was used to imprison captured SOE agents, members of the French resistance, political activists, and criminals. After their arrests, all the F section SOE female operatives were held at Fresnes prison around the time of their interrogations at 84 avenue Foch.[3] The Gestapo did their best to make sure that the agents were untraceable by keeping limited records or by destroying them when the war was coming to a close. This was due to the *Nacht und Nebel* policy which targeted political activists and resisters, and ordered for them to "disappear," to be imprisoned or killed. The Nazis intended that the *Nacht und Nebel* prisoners would be depersonalized and stripped of their identity before disappearing without a trace.[4] This policy was extremely effective as documentation about SOE agents at Fresnes is essentially non-existent. The records held at the British National Archives only hold deposition and investigative records related to male SOE operatives at Fresnes, which were created by the War Crimes Committee. The total lack of documentation of female presence remains unexplained.

Male agents' treatment at Fresnes was varied and inconsistent. The Gestapo wanted to obtain information about SOE underground networks, arms dumps, and wireless codes, and they

[3] The British National Archives, "Fresnes Prison, Paris, France: ill-treatment of prisoners," WO 311/103.
[4] Vigurs, *Mission*, 192.

often used various forms of torture to obtain it.[5] A war crimes report states that fifteen Allied officers who had carried out covert missions were arrested between June and August 1944 and were sent to Fresnes.[6] The officers were beaten and sentenced to death by the Gestapo in Paris. They often withstood being punched, kicked, and whipped in the interrogation cells inside 84 avenue Foch, along with other forms of torture.[7] A Canadian Major, 'Guy,' underwent severe torture and interrogation which included six instances of almost drowning and then being revived.[8] A Lieutenant Hogg was kept in Fresnes for three months in solitary confinement.[9] His guards and his interrogator would strike him to the ground from behind and grate his face along the floor.[10] The experiences of women prisoners compare with those of men being held at Fresnes and avenue Foch. Odette Sansom recalled that, during interrogation, all the women she was imprisoned with were beaten.[11] Sansom explicitly describes having her toenails extracted and having a hot poker laid on her spine. We also know that when Noor Khan and two male agents escaped from avenue Foch, they were all offered the chance at better treatment by signing a pledge that they would no longer try to escape.

One difference in the treatment of male and female SOE agents in Paris has to do with execution. Certain male agents were executed directly at Fresnes. A British captain was shot by a firing squad in the yard of the prison around 12 July 1943.[12] Of the 15 men arrested in the

[5] Pattinson, "Lassies", 279.
[6] The British National Archives, "Interrogation and torture of 15 British and allied officers in Gestapo prison, Fresnes near Paris, France, March 1944: further torture and ill treatment once transferred to Flossenbürg concentration camp, Germany," WO 309/2027.
[7] The British National Archives, "Interrogation and torture," WO 309/2027.
[8] Ibid.
[9] The British National Archives, "Fresnes Prison," WO 311/103.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Sansom, *Oral History,* 9478.
[12] The British National Archives, "Fresnes Prison," WO 311/103.

summer of 1944, a Canadian major and a British officer were also shot at the prison.[13] To our knowledge, no female SOE agents were executed at Fresnes.

The majority of SOE agents, men and women, were transferred to concentration camps to be executed, but to different camps. Of the men, 168 British and American officers were transferred from Fresnes to Buchenwald concentration camp on 15 August 1944.[14] The prisoners were forced into boxcars together with French civilian prisoners.[15] Most of the prisoners had fleas and large sores on their bodies from the unsanitary conditions and lack of food at Fresnes. During one of the days of travel, prisoners were forced to surrender their clothes and were left naked for 30 hours on the train.[16] The women, as we know, ended up in Natzweiler, Dachau, and Ravensbruck.

In analyzing the experiences of the captured and executed women of the SOE, this thesis has illustrated the variables that shaped their fate: when and where they were interned and executed, the role of Nazi personnel, and the conditions and priorities of the camps in which they were held. This research stands apart by analyzing SOE personnel files and piecing together various war crimes documents, interview transcripts, letters, and maps to retrace these operatives experiences. This research also places this topic into a broader context, by taking into account various concentration camp and French prison documents from the British archives. This angle is currently missing in SOE research. Ultimately, we have seen that, contrary to the SOE's intentions, women's gender did not protect them, since for the Nazis women spies were a double threat

[13] The British National Archives, "Interrogation and torture," WO 309/2027.
[14] The British National Archives, "Ill-treatment of allied prisoners of war during transfer from Fresnes Prison, Paris, France, to Buchenwald, Germany, 15-20 August 1944," WO 311/1015.
[15] The British National Archives, "Transfer from Fresnes," reference WO 311/1015
[16] Ibid.

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Movement Legend

The appendices are available as an ArcGIS Story Map, titled “Retracing Resistance: An Analysis of the Experiences of Missing F Section Women of the Special Operations Executive.”

https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/ca957dbbd05b4bb6b9670b66eff77726

Appendix 1: SOE Deployment and Network Locations

1 - SOE Headquarters - The SOE established its headquarters on Baker Street in the West end of London

2 - Wanborough Manor – preliminary training stage location, basic military and physical training

3 - Paramilitary Course – Arisaig Scotland, next step in the training stage, paramilitary training for 3-5 weeks.

4 - Finishing School, Country houses in Hampshire, last stage of training. If they passed they moved on to be assigned an underground circuit

5 - Borrel – November 1942, parachute location is unknown. Member of Physician circuit in Paris and Normandy region

6 - Leigh – 14 June 1943, parachute location unknown. Member of Inventor circuit in Paris and the Ardennes

7 - Olschanezky - Did not train in France, was locally recruited by SOE agents as part of the French resistance. Member of Juggler circuit in Châlons-sur-Marne.

8 - Rowden – 16 June 1943, parachute location unknown. Member of Acrobat circuit in the region of Jura.

9 - Khan – 16 June 1943, parachuted to reception ground 3.25 northwest of Villeveque. Member of Phono circuit in the region of Le Mans

10 - Plewman – 13 August 1943, parachuted into the Jura region. Member of Monk circuit in Marseilles.

11 - Beekman - 17 September 1943, parachuted into the Tours area. Member of Musician circuit in the Lille-Saint Quentin region

12 - Damerement – 28 February 1944, parachuted into an area near Sainville. Member of Bricklayer circuit.

13 - Bloch – 2 March 1944, parachute location unknown. Member of Clergyman circuit in Nantes region

14 - Szabo - 7 June 1944, parachuted into Limoges region. Member of Salesman circuit in Rouen and Le Havre.

15 - Rolfe- 5 April 1944, parachute location unknown. Member of Historian circuit in Orleans.

16 - Lefort –16 June 1943, parachute location unknown. Member of Jockey circuit covering the Isère, Drôme, Vaucluse, Bouches-du-Rhône, and Montélimar regions.

17 - Rudellat – 30 July 1942, parachute location unknown. Member of Monkeypuzzle circuit in Tours

18 - Baseden – 12 March 1944, parachuted into Condom. Member of Scholar circuit in the Jura region

19 - Sansom – 2 November 1942, parachute location unknown. Member of Spindle circuit in Cannes

20 - Nearne – 2 March 1944, parachuted into Orleans. Member of Wizard Circuit in Scaux region

Appendix 2: Borrel's Movements Following Arrest

1 - Arrested outside of Paris

2 - Fresnes Prison/ 84 avenue Foch

3 - Karlsruhe Jail

4 - Natzweiler-Struthof

Appendix 3: Leigh's Movements Following Arrest

1 - Arrested outside of Paris

2 - Fresnes Prison

3 - Karlsruhe Jail

4 - Natzweiler-Struthof

Appendix 4: Rowden's Movements Following Arrest

1 - Arrested in Paris

2 - 84 avenue Foch

3 - Karlsruhe Jail

4 - Natzweiler-Struthof

Appendix 5: Khan's Movements Following Arrest

1 - Arrested in Paris

2 - 84 avenue Foch

3 - Karlsruhe jail

4 - Pforzheim prison

5 - Karlsruhe Jail

6 - Dachau

Appendix 6: Plewman's Movements Following Arrest

1 - Arrested in Marseilles

2 - Les Beaumettes prison in Marseilles

3 - Fresnes Prison

4 - Karlsruhe Jail

5 - Dachau

Appendix 7: Beekman's Movements Following Arrest

1 - Saint-Quentin prison

2 - 84 avenue Foch

3 - Fresnes prison

4 - Karlsruhe prison

5 - Dachau

Appendix 8: Bloch's Movements Following Arrest

1 - Arrested near Évreux

2 - 3 bis Place des Etats – Unis

3 - Fresnes prison

4 - Ravensbruck

5 - Torgau

6 - Ravensbruck

7 - Konigsberg

8 - Ravensbruck

Appendix 9: Szabo's Movements Following Arrest

1 - Arrested in town of Corrèze

2 - Limoges prison

3 - Fresnes prison

4 - Ravensbruck

5 - Torgau

6 - Ravensbruck

7 - Konigsberg

8 - Ravensbruck

Appendix 10: Rolfe's Movements Following Arrest

1 - Arrested in Nangis

2 - Fresnes prison

3 - Ravensbruck

4 - Torgau

5 - Ravensbruck

6 - Konigsberg

7 - Ravensbruck

Appendix 11: Rudellat's Movements Following Arrest

1 - Arrested

2 - Prison in Toulouse

3 - Fresnes Prison

4 - Ravensbruck

5 - Torgau

6 - Ravensbruck

7 - Bergen-Belsen

Appendix 12: Lefort's Movements Following Arrest

1 - Arrested in Montélimar

2 - Prison in Toulouse

3 - Ravensbruck

4 - Uckermark

5 - Ravensbruck

Appendix 13: Baseden's Movements Following Arrest

1 - Arrested in Dole

2 - Dole police station

3 - Gestapo headquarters in Dijon

4 - Saarbrucken

5 - Ravensbruck

6 - Malmo, Sweden

7- England

Appendix 14: Sansom's Movements Following Arrest

1 - Arrested in Annecy

2 - Fresnes Prison

3 - Ravensbruck

4 - England

Appendix 15: Nearne's Movements Following Arrest

1 - Arrested at Bourg-La-Reine

2 - 84 avenue Foch

3 - Ravensbruck

4 - Torgau

5 - Abterroda

6 - Markkleeberg

7 - Leipzig

8 - American Intelligence Services Camps

9 - England