

Nigel West: SOE

SOE's Charter

The original Cabinet memorandum, drafted by Neville Chamberlain in July 1940, which created SOE. Never previously published, it was misplaced in SOE's files and has recently come to light in another secret archive.

MOST SECRET.
S.P. (40) 271.
19th July 1940.

COPY

WAR CABINET

HOME DEFENCE (SECURITY) EXECUTIVE.
SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE.
Memorandum by the Lord President of the Council.

1. The memorandum which I circulated to the Cabinet on 27th May (S.P. (40) 172) gave particulars of the organisation of the Home Defence (Security) Executive, which was set up under the chairmanship of Lord Swinton to co-ordinate action against the Fifth Column.
2. In addition to presiding over the Home Defence (Security) Executive, Lord Swinton has been entrusted with executive control of M.I.8 and is thus responsible for counter espionage activities in Great Britain.
3. The Prime Minister has now decided that Lord Swinton shall also exercise operational control over the work of M.I.6 in respect of all the activities of M.I.6 in Great Britain and in Eire. M.I.6 will also continue to place at the disposal of Lord Swinton all information in their possession which may have a bearing on Fifth Column activities in Great Britain or Eire.
4. The Prime Minister has further decided, after consultation with the Ministers concerned, that a new organisation shall be established forthwith to co-ordinate all action, by way of subversion and sabotage, against the enemy overseas. The Prime Minister requested me to set on foot this new organisation in consultation with those concerned. Action is accordingly being taken as follows: -
 - (a) An organisation is being established to co-ordinate all action, by way of subversion and sabotage, against the enemy overseas. This organisation will be known as the Special Operations Executive.
 - (b) The Special Operations Executive will be under the chairmanship of Mr. Dalton, the Minister for Economic Warfare.
 - (c) Mr. Dalton will have the assistance of Sir Robert Venetiaert.
 - (d) The Special Operations Executive will be provided with such additional staff as the Chairman and Sir Robert Venetiaert may find necessary.
 - (e) The various departments and bodies taking part in underground activities will, for the time being, continue to be administered by the Ministers at present responsible for them.
 - (f) The departments and bodies affected which will now be coordinated by Mr. Dalton are:

Title	Alternative Title	Administrative Authority
Sabotage Service.	S.P.	F.O.
M.I.8.	-	W.O.
Department Electrics House.	Sir Campbell Stuart's Organisation.	Joint F.O. and Minister of Information.

-2-

Mr. Dalton will also have the cooperation of the Directors of Intelligence of the three Service Departments and of the Secret Intelligence Service (M.I.6) for the purpose of the work entrusted to him. Mr. Dalton will also keep in touch with Lord Hankey.

- (g) The planning and direction of raids by formed bodies of British or Allied ships, troops or aircraft will remain the function of the Military authorities, but Mr. Dalton will maintain touch with departments planning such raids in order to afford any possible assistance through the channels he coordinates.
- (h) Any Department obtaining information likely to be of value to Mr. Dalton will place their information at his disposal.
- (i) All operations of sabotage, secret subversive propaganda, the encouragement of civil resistance in occupied areas, the stirring up of insurrection, strikes, etc., in Germany or areas occupied by her will be submitted before being undertaken by any Department, to Mr. Dalton for his approval.
- (j) Mr. Dalton will co-ordinate the planning operations of underground warfare and will direct which organisation is to carry them out. He will be responsible for obtaining the agreement of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs or other Minister interested to any operation which is likely to affect their interests.
- (k) It will be important that the general plan for irregular offensive operations should be in step with the general strategical conduct of the war. With this end in view, Mr. Dalton will consult the Chiefs of Staff as necessary, keeping them informed in general terms of his plans, and, in turn, receiving from them the broad strategic picture.
5. Lord Swinton and Mr. Dalton will arrange for any consultation that may be mutually helpful or may be necessary to prevent overlapping between the Home Defence (Security) Executive and the Special Operations Executive. Normally, no doubt, consultation between their respective staffs will suffice for this purpose.
6. The Prime Minister has requested that Lord Swinton and Mr. Dalton should regard me as the member of the War Cabinet whom they should consult and to whom any inter-Departmental difficulties, should they arise, would be referred.

(Int'd) M.O.

Privy Council Office, S.W.1.
 19th July, 1940.

* Note: The organisation of this Department is being reviewed.

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C O P Y

W.P (40) 271.

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(Int'd) M.C

Private Council Office, S.W.1.

19th July, 1940.

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Riktig avskrift av Nigel West "The story of SOE".

Tommy Natedal
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