

Chapter 1 : Sub Rosa | RedShelf

Sub Rosa is a brief, action-packed history of the early years of the Office of Strategic Services, the World War 2 predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency. The authors were there on the front lines, and write with an eminently readable style that draws the reader into the world of secret missions into occupied territory.

It was written in by two authors who served with it on missions to help the resistance behind the lines in Nazi-occupied France. Thus, it has a freshness and accuracy borne of recent experience. On the down side, at the time of writing much historical analyses of OSS operations and their impact on the progress of the war rema This brief account of the origins and range of work done by the Office of Strategic Services precursor to the CIA during World War 2 was fascinating and informative. On the down side, at the time of writing much historical analyses of OSS operations and their impact on the progress of the war remained to be carried out, and the secrecy of many missions was still under wraps. Getting information on the plans and capabilities of enemy and potentially enemy nations called for teamwork with diverse experts and active undercover work by agents on the scene in these countries. The intentions of world domination by Germany and Japan made the development of a home-grown spy organization more acceptable and necessary. We get an incisive sketch of his leadership style, but never enough to satisfy my interests spurred by countless cameo appearances in fiction and broad historical accounts of the war. Donovan was born in a lace-curtain Irish home in Buffalo. He won the Congressional Medal of Honor while leading the famous Fighting 69th in World War 1, and afterwards rose to such prominence as a lawyer that he was the Republican nominee for Governor of New York in Throughout his career he had a shrewd penchant for first names, for meeting the right people, and for expanding generously in every direction. He was its spark plug, the moving force behind it. In a sense it could be said that Donovan was OSS. Donovan exercised his free reign and generous funding to hire for his new agency a whole bunch of military types bored with their civilian status or current duties and itching to make a difference. Academic and technical experts of all stripes were hired, from history and languages to engineering and business spheres. Regardless, the growth of the agency went into high gear after Pearl Harbor, soaring toward its ultimate peak of 12, employees. Typically, a team of three included an American officer, a radio operator, and an enlistee with local connections or foreign language skills. When success at hooking up with the local resistance was accomplished, the next step would be radioing back information on enemy activity and arrangement for clandestine air drops of needed supplies and weapons. A small subset of volunteer agents were on their own like as in the common conception of a spy from literature and film, typically in positions with local governments critical to monitoring enemy operations. The authors illustrate the varieties of success and failures of the initiatives in France, Holland, Italy, Thailand, Burma, Morocco, and Switzerland. I loved this range in the stories. Of these, the latter two were independent countries, and both were sites of an espionage extravaganza think of the movie Casablanca. Examples from France reveal cases where the agents joined a strong organization of the resistance maquisards and waged wide-ranging and effective guerilla operations. In others, they had to build a resistance group from scratch. Coordination and alignment with the objectives of the conventional military forces was a fine art. In the case of Italy, the advance of Allied forces up from Sicily was so glacially slow that the guerilla activities were premature and resulted in a systematic and brutal scouring of partisan bands. In Thailand, the secret invaders were able to harness the support of the premier himself, who served as the main leader of resistance activity. In Burma, a small band of American and British agents Detachment and the Merrill Marauders were able to take an airfield with the help of Kachin tribesmen who were well skilled in fighting invaders over the centuries and in a strength that eventually swelled to thousands. Compared to battle deaths of nearly, 5, Japanese soldiers, less than Kachins and 15 Americans died in combat. The hit and run tactics of the resistance in France and Italy were estimated by the authors to incur more modest but respectable comparative ratios of 3 or 4 enemy kills per Allied combatant killed. The book usefully divides the OSS mode of field operations into stages: Discussions of these steps provided a number of fascinating stories, including triumphs and tragic failures. Examples of women as agents were noted but not given attention equal to the interest I had in that subject. It was ironic how this modern war

with mechanized armies armed with tanks and artillery still provided an opportunity for individual human efforts by small bands of ragged volunteers armed with simple hand weapons and explosives to impede and disrupt their goals. The impacts of resistance activities and the information they provided is generally hard to gauge, but a number of clear cases of demonstrable outcomes were presented. A fine example is the fieldwork by OSS in North Africa that fooled the Germans on the site of the Allied invasion persuaded most forces of the Vichy French Army not to fight, thereby resulting in very modest casualty numbers when Eisenhower pulled off Operation Torch. Despite there being plenty of more in-depth histories of OSS and ones that benefit from decades of research, I would recommend this as an accessible introduction to the subject with some special energy in its presentation due to its writing so soon after the war. The quality of the writing reflects the talent of the authors, who went on to become famous journalists in print and TV media. It was a surprise for me to learn at the end how the OSS was disbanded and its research division shifted to the State Department. The new version of this book was provided by the publisher for review through the Netgalley program.

Chapter 2 : Sub Rosa: The O. S. S. and American Espionage by Stewart Alsop

By Stewart Alsop, Thomas Braden A exciting background of the workplace of Strategic companies, America's precursor to the CIA, and its mystery operations at the back of enemy strains in the course of global conflict II.

Sub Rosa The O. While a professor in Washington was studying the transportation system in France, an ex-Hollywood cameraman was making movies of war crimes for the benefit of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a sergeant in Washington was drawing a chart for the use of generals in Kandy, an Italian-speaking American was parachuting into the area of the Brenner Pass, and a major in London was cabling home in secret code, asking about his promotion. Some day the complete history of all that those 12, people did may be written. This is certainly not such a history. We were parachutists in OSS. Perhaps that fact has influenced our point of view. Nevertheless we believe that the most important work accomplished by OSS was in the fields of resistance and intelligence. We have told about that workâ€”not about all of it, for all of it would fill volumesâ€”but we have told what security and our own information will permit us to tell, and we have tried to show the kind of thing which OSS did in those fields. Major General William J. Donovan, who headed OSS, once said that the credit for his organization should go to the men who volunteered for duty with the express understanding that they would never get any credit. They were the men who did the work behind the lines in intelligence and resistance, who fought in the secret war. Theirs is the story we have tried to tell. On that same night of June 5, a German panzer division, fully equipped and up to strength, left Bordeaux in the south of France to make the three-day run to Normandy. There was talk of an invasion; nobody knew when or where it was coming. Perhaps, the German commander thought, this move had something to do with it. He ordered full speed. Exactly three weeks later, one third, 3, out of the 10, men in the panzer division, straggled on foot into the fighting in Normandy. They had no tanks, and no artillery: As a military machine, that panzer division had been totally destroyed. The gibberish had made sense to the men of the French maquis. At about the same time in another, more populous section of France, a man struggled up the steps of a railway station, a battered suitcase in either hand. He was an anonymous little man, respectably but not smartly dressed. His suit had the peaked lapels, the broad herringbone pattern of the country; he wore the universal crushed black felt hat. Fussily he searched for his ticket, handed it to the collector, and walked toward the train. Someone tapped him on the back, and he turned, slowly, casually. The Gestapo man gestured toward the suitcases. The little man put the two suitcases on the platform, and opened one; soiled clothes, a razor, a toothbrush, a piece of gritty war soap, a cheap novel. He was desolated, but the patron had the key. He believed it contained the personal belongings of the patron. He could find the patron and return within the hour. Such an innocuous little man. The Gestapo man shrugged, and gestured him on. A few hours later and the little man was in a room of a shabby little hotel in the outskirts of another town. The suitcase of the patron was open, lying on the bed, revealing the dials and the key of a portable transmitter. The antenna was attached to the bidet in the corner. Expertly the little man tapped on the key, dot-dash, dash-dash, dot-dot-dash, dash-dot. The German radio direction-finders were going to work, triangulating, searching for the new transmitter, trying to get a fix. It was not easy. There were so many thousands of transmitters all over the country and the Germans were short of equipment. Nevertheless, sooner or later, perhaps tonight, perhaps next week, the anonymous little man would have to move. In the meantime, dot-dash, dash-dash, dot dot dash: Two days later, the answer to the message was reported in a small story in the English newspapers: They are peculiar to France. Yet with minor variations in time and scene, they took place again and again in Yugoslavia, in Greece, in Italy, in the Lowlands, and in the Far East. They are facts which have had little attention in an America proud to be extolling the virtues of its conquering armies. Yet two of the leaders of those armies have been outspoken on these subjects. Strange that in countries subjugated by an army, which up to June 6, , was still, despite serious defeats, among the most powerful in the world, thousands of armed men could come out of hiding in their woods and homes to fight and run and fight again. Strange also that in a country where an estimated 26 German divisions were devoting themselves solely to guard duty, men with radios could travel from place to place by public conveyance, reporting everything they saw to a faraway invasion headquarters. Yet the men

who came out of the woods to fight that night were not a motley mob. They did not rise disorganized, as candidates for slaughter. They were told where to strike, and when. They had arms and ammunition. They had huge stocks of food and clothing. Often they had with them Allied soldiers in uniform, parachuted to them behind the enemy lines, to direct or to aid their efforts. The little man with the radio was just as well prepared. He knew by heart the country over which he traveled, the dangerous areas and the relatively safe ones. He knew where to find friends. He carried in his pocket enough false identification to satisfy anything but the most searching examination. These are minor similarities but they point to the common source. The most important relationship between the men of the resistance and the secret agent with the radio is that both were directed and supported by the outgrowth of an idea which was as new to the American mind before as the atomic bomb, and which, like the bomb, was seldom mentioned outside the covers of ten-cent thrillers. The men of the maquis in France, the partisans in the rest of Europe and in Burma, Siam, and China were armed, supplied, and generally directed by a joint British-American effort in secret intelligence and resistance. The secret agents in Europe owed their presence behind the lines to the same effort. Both the partisans and the secret agents looked for their American orders and their American aid to a vast, secret, sprawling organization in Washington with the boondogglesque name, Office of Strategic Services. OSS, as America abbreviated the title, has, in fact, been called a boondoggle. A case could be made for all these titles, and probably will be. That they were coined at all, however, is significant evidence that OSS throughout the war did at least one job thoroughly well, namely the job of not letting anybody know very much about what OSS was doing. The fact is that OSS did two main jobs. One was tying the resistance effort of the occupied countries to the military effort of the Allied powers. The other was ferreting out and accumulating in one vast central organization all the intelligence about enemy countries, enemy people, and enemy plans which America had or could discover. Both these jobs involved tremendous study and research. Both required that America, contrary to the instincts of Americans, lean heavily on the experience of her British ally. Most important of all, both these jobs required learning from the beginning, for neither of them had ever been done by Americans before. OSS it was originally called COI, or Co-ordinator of Information, but to avoid confusion its later title will be used from now on began as an agency for collecting information, and for disseminating propaganda. Its staff consisted in the main of scholarly experts who collected information—principally about enemy or occupied countries—from the Library of Congress and other sources; and publicists who sent out propaganda, although there was a good deal of confusion in the beginning as to just where the propaganda was to go. As a sort of sideline effort to this work, there was a division which took movies, and one which made charts of the war effort. As the years went by, it became more and more difficult to explain the presence of these last two in an intelligence organization, but in the beginning they seemed quite logical, since not even Major General Donovan was quite certain what it was supposed to do. How OSS, with those beginnings, got into the field of resistance and intelligence is a story of amoebic growth which probably could not have happened outside of the United States.

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*Sub Rosa, by Stewart Alsop and Thomas Braden** Posted on June 3, by seattlebookmama I was invited to read and review this title by Net Galley and Open Road Media.*

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Stewart Alsop (Author) Stewart Alsop () was a longtime political columnist and commentator on American affairs. A graduate of Yale University, he worked in book publishing until World War II.

Chapter 9 : Thomas Braden - Wikipedia

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