

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

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Opening Address

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OBJECTS AND METHODS OF IRREGULAR WARFARE

Sporadic risings are useless. Necessity to co-ordinate where possible has produced tabulation of United Nations' fundamental objectives in the waging of Irregular Warfare:

(a) Politically.

- (i) To undermine enemy's morale and that of his collaborators.
- (ii) To raise morale of Occupied Territories.

(b) Economically.

- (i) To damage enemy's material.
- (ii) To improve and augment our own material.  
E.g. By infiltration of weapons, explosives, sabotage equipment.

(c) Strategically.

- (i) To damage enemy's man-power and communications.
- (ii) To improve our own man-power and communications.  
E.g. By infiltration of "organizers", radio sets and operators, etc.

**What is this source?**

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

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

## WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

### What's the background to this source?

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

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

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### It's worth knowing that...

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

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

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### What do we learn about SOE from this source?

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