

WESTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

Recommendations for awards for the members of an SOE operation in Norway, February 1943

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MOST SECRET

RECOMMENDATION FOR AWARDS.
S.O.E. OPERATION "GUNNERSIDE"

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Fenrik Joachim Holm Boe Ronneberg.
Fenrik Casper Idland.
Sergeant (A/Fenrik) Knut Anders Haukelid.
Sergeant Fredrik Thorbjørn Kayser.
Cpl. (A/Sgt) Storhaug, Hans.
Cpl. (A/Sgt) Strømsheim, Birger Edvan Martin.

After the tragic failure of C.O. OPERATION FRESHMAN, an S.O.E. party GUNNERSIDE was immediately mobilised to destroy the high priority product of the Norsk Hydro Works at VEMORK.

The complete technical and scientific intelligence was made available on 15th November, 1942, by Chemical Engineer Jomar Brun, who had just arrived in the United Kingdom after escaping from VEMORK, and Captain Leif Tronstad R.N.A. who participated in the planning and experimental erection of the actual plant. This proved that the essential damage could be carried out by a smaller party than was previously considered necessary, provided they were highly trained men who could render a good account of themselves and were in first class physical and mental condition.

The party finally selected were all volunteers who had full knowledge that the previous attempt had failed; that the enemy was fully alive as to the objective; that the area had subsequently been visited by Reichs-Commissar Terboven and Colonel-General von Falkenhorst, Commander-in-Chief of the German Army in Norway; and that the local garrison had been strongly reinforced.

The party were ready to fly during the December moon period, made an unsuccessful flight on 23rd January, 1943, and were eventually successfully dropped 60 Km.N.W. of the actual target at midnight on 16th/17th February, 1943.

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What is this source?

This source is part of a recommendation for medals to be awarded to a number of SOE agents for a mission they carried out in Norway.

Many SOE agents were awarded for their actions in the war. They faced terrible dangers and could be treated as spies if captured.

What's the background to this source?

After invading Poland, Hitler's forces invaded Denmark and Norway. Norway was especially important to Hitler. It had aircraft and submarine bases that could be used to attack ships supplying Britain from North America. Norway also had important natural resources, such as timber. Norway also had efficient hydroelectric power plants to generate electricity.

The Norwegians resisted with British help when Germany invaded in April 1940. However, the British were defeated and Norway surrendered in June 1940. Despite this, there was an important underground resistance movement in Norway. This movement had strong links with British intelligence and received supplies and equipment throughout the war.

It's worth knowing that...

As well as resources, Norway had technology as well. The Germans used bases and facilities in Norway to research and develop new weapons and equipment.

One of the German research facilities was involved in the early stages of the German programme to develop a nuclear bomb. However, Hitler cancelled this project.

What do we learn about SOE from this source?

1. Where did the SOE get its information about the Vemork works?
2. Why were the agents involved in Operation Gunnerside Norwegian?
3. In what ways does Operation Gunnerside show the bravery of these agents?
4. What does this source tell you about SOE activities?