

Foreword :

In 1943, the major intelligence networks (SIS, SOE, BCRA) created and operating since the beginning of the occupation of France and in the so-called free zone, since 1940-1941 and 1942 had suffered and were still suffering numerous and tragic losses that they would continue to experience in 1944 and until the end.

The services of the Abwehr and especially the Gestapo, despite the courage of the patriots composing these networks, arrested, executed, or deported many fighters of the shadow which were essential to inform the Great Allied Staff in England (SHAEF).

These large networks, whose names were Ajax, Alliance, Brutus, SOE F Buckmaster, Cohors, Confrérie Notre Dame, Castille, F2, Jade Fitzroy, Marco Polo, Phratrie, Saint Jacques, etc., were in danger of being completely destroyed before the «D-Day» corresponding to the landing of Allied troops on the coast of Normandy, that is to say at the time when they would be most needed to have reliable information at the appropriate time.

Birth of Plan Sussex:

This is why, in view of the preparation of the landing in France, the General Staff of General Eisenhower imagined in March 1943 to create a tripartite plan called «Plan Sussex», aimed at establishing, by parachuting agents in all the regions north of the Loire that would be potential combat zones, teams of two French officers in plain clothes (an observer and a radio) placed at strategic points. These were to provide in real time to the allies during and after the landing coherent information on the moral and material condition of the German army, its order of battle, its troop movements and in particular those of these divisions «Panzer», its stores of materials and ammunition, its installations of V1 flying bomb launching ramps etc., so that the General Staff can take timely decisions and intervene effectively, including by bombing on convoys, concentrations of troops and equipment.

Commander Kenneth Cohen of SIS (Great Britain) was largely responsible for the Sussex plan. Colonel Francis Pickens Miller of the OSS (USA) and Colonel Gilbert Renault (aka Rémy) for the BRCA (France) were also involved in developing the Sussex Plan.

There was another similar project called «Jedburgh» dedicated to the coordination of armed action, sabotage and maquis training. These teams were made up of teams of 3 men parachuted in uniform: an agent of the country receiving the team, an Englishman and an American.

The recruitment :

The recruitment was done from personnel of the French army (Land, Air, Sea).

Some volunteers, escaped from France by the sea: either from Brittany, or having passed the roadblocks established by the enemy at the demarcation line, then transiting through the Pyrenees, Spain and its sinister camp of Miranda and Gibraltar, presented themselves in Britain and passed the security formalities (Patriotic School of the MI 5), but most still came from units based in North Africa.

Of the 355 volunteers, all French, who had been pre-selected, 120 were retained after undergoing very thorough examinations, interrogations and psychological tests. The volunteers were between 17 and 26 years old. Only four were over 30.

The training:

These 120 agents transferred to the BCRA (Central Bureau of Research and Action); the Free France, secret services were subjected to intensive training for several months and trained in military intelligence techniques by British instructors of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and American instructors of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) at the Glenalmond House school and were messaged at Praewood House near St Albans about 40 kilometres from London.

The training included all the subjects likely to be used during intelligence missions to be performed. The very

sustained physical activity was led by non-commissioned officers of Her Majesty's commandos and by American Marines Sergeants Robichaud and Homola.

Louis Guyomard, an Agent Sussex, said: "The two instructors in question were good comrades and effective teachers for us, but sometimes it was painful. We trained every morning in close combat to be able to defend ourselves in case of aggression, but especially in case of necessity to kill cleanly, without noise and with bare hands by breaking the cervical vertebrae."

The training also focused on the knowledge of enemy materials: aviation, tanks, vehicles of all types, recognition of German units, ranks, unit totems, its order of battle, etc. "We also learned how to drive vehicles that we might have to use outside of cars, such as trucks, coaches, motorcycles (knowledge not common at the time), etc."

Also under consideration is sabotage with manipulation of all kinds of explosives including new plastic, grenades, and other «pranks and tricks». There were also boxing fights to test the combativeness.

Topography and orientation were also on the agenda. The challenge was to know how to transmit the coordinates of future terrain (DZ) that can be used for various parachutes of men and equipment, or even to mark a field for the night landing (LZ Pick Up) of liaison aircraft type Lysander or Hudson.

Among the most important subjects, at least for the «radio operators», were the courses in numbers to learn how to encrypt and decrypt messages. The essential complement to this training was of course to become familiar with the positions that officers would have to use on mission. It was also necessary to know how to arrange, orient and camouflage the antenna, a simple steel electric wire of about 6 to 8 meters, which had to be arranged in different ways, either in a straight line, in V, or in L, etc., to obtain the best possible reception according to the location of the radio. These radio sets were already very efficient since London-Saigon radio links had already been made.

These WT radio sets of American or English design fit in suitcases of ordinary appearance of civil style and worked only in morse code.

The training ended with a week-long parachute training course at the famous British Airborne School in Ringway, near Manchester.

The airdrops in occupied France:

The Sussex teams were divided into 25 Sussex/Brissex pairs operating in the UK action zone and 29 Sussex/Ossex pairs operating in the US action zone.

These pairs were composed of an observer and a WT operator.

Sussex teams completed 53 missions:

- The first 2 teams "Pathfinders", including a woman Jeannette Guyot, were parachuted on the night of 8 to 9 February 1944 on Loches (Indre et Loire) to prepare the reception and the parachuting grounds (DZ) for future teams that will be dispatched from April 1944.
- 52 Sussex teams, including another woman Evelyne Clopet (Mission Colère in July 1944), were then parachuted from April to September 1944. They were to blend into the population and were ordered not to participate in military actions.

Equipment :

Each Sussex agent was equipped with very complete equipment that allowed him to carry out his mission in occupied territory: 1 Colt 45 pistol and 50 cartridges, 1 commando dagger FS, 1 tear gas pen, 2 grenades «Striker», GSGS and Michelin road maps of the region scales 1/50,000 & 1/100,000, 1 pocket telescope, 1 multi-blade escape knife, 1 compass, K pills to stay awake several days in a row and of course 1 cyanide pill to commit suicide and avoid talking under torture in case of arrest.

Communication with London :

Each team had a transmitter/receiver WT set (American SSTR-1 or English Mark 7), to communicate with London

(Brissex Teams with the Station of the SIS/MI6 Section VIIIIP and OSSEX Teams with the Station Victor of the OSS).

Some teams, especially after D Day Landing, were equipped with specific S-Phone (VHF) or Klaxon (VHF) sets allowing ground-to-air communications directly with a radio operator in an aircraft. The S-Phone, a two-way radio, was invented by the radio section of the SOE (Special Executive Operation: British Special Operations Office). The Klaxon (VHF) was designed by Section VIII of the SIS for use at a much higher altitude and longer range than the S Phone (UHF). They proved remarkably effective because emitting a wave in an ascending cone virtually undetectable by the enemy.

It should be noted that RAF Special Squadron 226 (Royal Air Force) composed of "B25 Mitchell" aircraft under the command of Squadron Leader Whinney was created specifically for Sussex missions using the S-Phone or Klaxon.

French airmen, including Joseph Kessel @Marius, the famous writer and journalist, and his friend André Bernheim, were integrated into Squadron 226. They were in phonetic contact with the «Sussex» teams on the ground who could thus guide the attacks of the allied aviation and artillery on the concentrations of tanks and all the enemy troops. RAF 226 Squadron conducted 72 “Ginger” operations for the Sussex Teams.

Sussex officers participate in the liberation of Paris with the “T-Force”:

A little-known aspect of the Sussex missions was the integration of Sussex agents into the special unit «T-Force» commanded by Colonel US Tompkins. These teams with special pass priority had the mission to go to the various German staffs to search, identify, recover or arrest any individual (scientists, dignitaries, Gestapo agents, high-ranking soldiers and French traitors), and of course seize German documents and archives (armament, V1, V2, jet aircraft, submarines etc.) likely to interest the Allies.

The heavy balance sheet of the missions Sussex:

Even today the exact number of arrests, deaths and disappearances during these missions is not formally established, especially for the part of the agents who participated in the English missions. Finally, the reports of disappearances and the circumstances of arrests are very synthetic. The following is not exhaustive or definitive.

Fourteen Sussex team members died during their missions, among them:

- Captain Jacques Voyer was already one of the most seasoned secret agents in Free France. Wounded and captured on 10 June 1944 while observing a convoy near Chartres, he was tortured for 8 days before being shot on 27 June 1944. Captain Jacques Voyer was made a Companion of the Liberation posthumously.
- The sub-lieutenants Evelyne Clopet, André Noël, Marcel Biscaino, Aristide Crocq and Roger Fosset were arrested on 9 August 44 and taken to the Vendôme Kommandantur. There they were tortured on the night of August 9 to 10, 1944 and then brutally murdered around 3:00 am (time on the death certificate «drawn up on August 10 at 10:00 am»). Their bodies were found in Saint-Ouen, Carrière de Bel-Air (Loir-Et-Cher).

Seventeen locally recruited officers were arrested and died either in ambush or deportation.

Five Sussex agents and four local agents arrested, including four deportees, were either released or escaped.

All these agents received the highest English or American distinctions, in addition to the French distinctions.

Jeannette Guyot was among the only two women to be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross during the Second World War, the second highest American decoration after the Congressional medal. Virginia Hall is the other woman who worked for the O.S.S.

René Veuve was buried in the cemetery of Arlington (USA) in March 2013 which is a rare privilege.

Colonel Passy Dewavrin, head of the BCRA (Central Bureau of Research and Action based in London) will say: «The Sussex plan worked perfectly and obtained results that far exceeded the forecasts».

General Donovan, Commander-in-Chief of the OSS (Office of Strategic Service) at the headquarters of General Eisenhower declared on the decoration ceremonies in December 1944 on the Champs-Élysées: “You Sussex have been the Allied vanguard and have done a crucial and decisive job for victory.”

The Sussex Network Café:

After the war, the surviving agents used to meet once a month at a dinner in a café, located 8 rue Tournefort in the 5th arrondissement of Paris, where they had been hidden by Madame Andrée Goubillon. This café was painted at the liberation in September 1944 by the SIS (Secret Intelligence Service) and baptized «Café Sussex». Unfortunately, this café no longer exists, and Madame Goubillon died in 1988. The mayor of the 5th arrondissement unveiled a plaque commemorating the role of this café and its owner during the war. The replica of this commemorative plaque is on display at the museum.

The Plan Proust :

On the sidelines of the Sussex Plan and on the same principle, a complementary Franco-American bipartite plan called «Plan Proust» was implemented under the OSS.

While the Sussex Plan has been launched for several months and already entered its operational phase, the US General Staff expects enormous difficulties after the landing. He wants to strengthen the number of intelligence teams operating in France. The future missions are not yet defined but they will also be part of the gigantic operation Overlord.

In March 1944, the recruitment campaign in North Africa begun for Sussex continues for the benefit of Proust. Thus on March 6, 1944 some of the future Proust agents embarked in Algiers accompanied by the last recruits of Sussex. They disembarked in Liverpool on 17 March, following the traditional circuit of newcomers to England by passing the security formalities (Patriotic School of the MI 5).

The rise of this new plan is not without difficulty. Volunteers «get lost» between Algiers and London, others are assigned as soon as they arrive to missions unrelated to Proust. Some recruits were finally refused, not having the level desired by the leaders of the plan.

It is in mid-April that the training of about fifty selected agents will begin.

The training:

The deployment of the Sussex Plan in France frees American instructors who can now devote themselves to Proust. The Proust agents will receive the same training as Sussex agents in the Drungewick Manor near Horsham (Sussex).

On May 21, 1944, the Proust force numbered 65 men.

If we add the few French BCRA/OSS liaison officers involved in this Plan, we have a precise idea of the French workforce that can claim to have passed through the Plan Proust, or less than 80 people.

The implementation of the missions will be mainly by parachuting except for two teams deposited by PT boat by the maritime section of the OSS and, two other teams deposited by plane.

End of Proust and Sussex missions:

At the end of the summer of 1944, the American bridgehead on the continent was considered strong enough for the Allied special services to put an end to the missions «Proust» and «Sussex».

At the end of August, the small number of men still in training in England was sent to France. They are distributed in the «Field Detachment» (SI/OSS) which accompanies the 3rd & 7th American Armies, to help them in their operations of intelligence, or they are assigned to the O.S.S base of Paris which has just been released.

Most return to the DGER (Directorate General of Studies and Research) which will offer them other missions (Cdo DGER A 220, Cdo DGER A221 Vaucheret, etc).

Of the agents Sussex participate to missions “HEBE” in Germany in 1945:

The mission was to obtain military, economic and political information by interrogating all prisoners of war, political

deportees and escaped workers and identify and prohibit as far as possible the entry into France of suspicious or enemy elements.

The DGER detaches many of them in the nineteen screening centres for prisoners and deportees from France and Germany (CPAF) to entrust them with counter-espionage operations. All returnees, regardless of their nationality, undergo security interrogations in these centres, with special services trying to obtain strategic, political or economic information from them.

«Sussex», «Proust», «Jedburgh», all these personnel take various destinations.

The Sussex and Proust plans are well over.

Other intelligence missions: "Vicarage" S.A.A.R.F. (Special Allied Airborne Reconnaissance Force) and military security missions "Hébé", "Nulton", "Nicotine" etc. will use these personnel.

Some Sussex and Proust will leave for missions in the Far East (Commando Conus, missions Kay 1 & Kay2, Force 136).

But this is another story...

A museum pays tribute to the men and women involved in these secret and special missions:

The MM PARK in LA WANTZENAU presents more than 400 rare objects and souvenirs related to the plans «Sussex», «Proust» and the Conus commando! 80% of the pieces presented to the public are donations from former Sussex agents or their families.

<http://www.mmpark.fr/index.php?p=boutique&ref=LPLS>

In Alsace, 12 km north of Strasbourg, this unique exhibition in Europe presents a gigantic collection devoted to the Second World War and the main belligerents:

- Hundreds of mannequins, armoured vehicles, trucks, light vehicles and motorcycles, personal belongings, an airplane, a German boat afloat in basin etc.

Visitors will also be able to access and discover an original themed games area (Paid attractions) dedicated to young and old:

- Two unique and unprecedented flight simulators in the region, the «tree climbing» course, a shooting range for air rifle.

Projection and presentation room (30 seats)

Fully equipped meeting room (80 seats in classroom mode & 160 seats in theatre mode)

Shop (souvenir books-CP- etc.)

Bar and snack bar

The book «The Sussex Plan» (History & Collections edition) abundantly illustrated and a beautiful reproduction of the rare enamel Sussex badge are on sale at the museum shop and on the site of MM PARK.

<http://mmpark.fr/index.php?p=boutique&ref=LPLE>