WESTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

These document extracts relate to the citation of SOE agent Christine Granville. A citation was a statement recommending a person for a medal for bravery

Catalogue ref: HS 9/612

Extract a

MISS MARY C	RISTINE GRA		- manual -		
			SO(M) APHQ	20 Decre	
hedula No. Unit	Regtl No.	Rank & Name	Action for which commanded	Resemented by	Honour on Royard
I.S.S.U.		Miss Mary Christine GRANVILLE	Miss Mary Christine Granville is a polish watriot of high integrity who has been employed by this organization for four years, much of the time on work of the most dangerous nature inside occupied Furdering this time her work has been not she of remarkable and of the greatest value to the Allied cause. She is now in the proof of becoming a Fritish subject and of, in in being commissioned into the #A.A.F. On the night of the 6th/7th of July she was infiltrated into Southern France by parachute to act as liaison officer to the chief of the area, a British Field Officer working with the Maquis. She was also commissioned in view of her exceptional language qualifications and experience in such matters, to work on the possibilities of the subversion of satellite enemy troop. This last field had not previously been exploited by this organization in France. She started work inmediately and within a week reported that she had done the preparatory work on the subversion of polish troops in the German Army, and that the possibilities were considerable. On the 17th July, her area commander reported the her work with these troops was already proving so widespread that it was essentis to send another officer to help her.	W. Starre W. Starre W. A. M. STAWHELL C.B.E., M.C. Maj.Gen.SO(M)	George Orient O.B.E. (Insumb

Extract b

When the invasion started she remained in the Vercors during the whole of the battle for the plateau and finally escaped through the lines with the French General commanding F.F.I. South Eastern France, on the day that it fell. During the whole of this time she continued with her work on satellite troops and on her various liaison duties, and in fact was so effective that she was able to report that the Polish toops at Briancon would be prepared to surrender to the Maquis if certain conditions were fulfilled.

From the Vercors, she was sent to Col de Larche on the Italian frontier where she personally managed to effect an important liaison, which had not previously been successful, with Col Marzzalani of the Italian Maquis. Later she penetrated into Northern Italy where she remained on another important liaison mission, often under fire, for the next two meeks.

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Extract c

On the 13th August 44, the senior British officer of the Area together with his 2nd in Command and a French Major of his team were captured by the Gestapo and were committed to the Gestapo prison at Digne. This was a serious blow to clandestine operations in that area particularly as it was only two days before the Allied landing in the South of France. Immediately this happened, Miss Granville took over the work of the whole mission, in addition to her own, until the newly appointed successor to the senior British officer arrived, when she both put him fully in the picture, and in touch with the necessary contacts. At the same time single handed she set about getting the three officers away from the Gestapo. She spent the first three days finding out the size of the guards with a view to organizing a raid on the prison, but when this was found to be impracticable she, alone, and fully appreciating the risk she ra n, and that on paper her task would appear impossible, went to the Prison to see the head of the Gestapo himself, and in the Gestapo office subsequently was interviewed by all of the Gestapo officers except one, a total of eight, each of whom entered the room armed and by that time aware that she was an enemy agent, and fully intending to arrest her. Inspite of all these things however, by a series of amazing stories and threats she persuaded one of their number to release all three of the officers even though each of them had already been condemned to death as enemy agents and were due to be shot 12 hours afterwards.

The nerve, coolness, and devotion to duty and high courage of this lady which inspired and brought to a successful conclusion this astonishing coup de main must certainly be considered as one of the most remarkable personal exploits of the war, and in the particular circumstances I have the honour to recommend that her courage be recognized by the immediate award of the George Cross.

I seconmend the award of an OBE & Signed H.R. AKEXANDER

Supreme Allied Commander. Madle ratten Theatre.

SHOULD THIS AWARD BE APPROVED IT IS REQUESTED THAT NO DETAIL BE MADE PUBLIC OR COMMUNICATED TO THE PRESS

W. A.M. STAWELL, C.B.E, M.C. Maj. Gen. SO(M)

What is this source?

These documents come from the personal file of SOE agent, Christine Granville. The extracts are part of her citation, a document recommending the award of a medal for her work in the war. You can also find her photograph in the source hox.

Christine Granville was actually cited for medals on other occasions for her work in Poland.

What's the background to this source?

Granville was an agent for the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Her name was actually Kristina Gizycka and she was Polish. She escaped the occupation of Poland by Germany. She was brave, intelligent and spoke several languages. This made her an ideal SOE agent. She worked in Poland, France, Italy and North Africa as a British agent.

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.

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It's worth knowing that...

Christine also worked in Hungary and Turkey as a British agent. In 1941 she was arrested and interrogated. She escaped but the Gestapo now had a photograph of her and were looking for her. Despite this, she returned to Poland to carry out her work.

At the end of the war she was told by British intelligence that they no longer had any use for her, and she felt bitter about this. She returned to Poland and started working for the Polish intelligence agencies.

What do we learn about SOE from this source?

- 1. Study extracts a-c. Make a list of Christine's achievements.
- 2. Which qualities or qualifications would have helped her most to carry out this work successfully?
- 3. A citation is a recommendation for a medal. If you were the Prime Minister would you have awarded Christine the medal?
- 4. Would it be going too far to say that Christine was the perfect SOE agent?