



Eisenhower's Guerrillas: The Jedburghs, the Maquis, and the Liberation of France by Benjamin F. Jones.

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Announcing D-Day to Parliament, Winston Churchill proclaimed that “this vast operation is undoubtedly the most complicated and difficult that has ever taken place.”¹ Who could doubt that? Max Hastings points out that it involved 4,500 ships, 8,000 planes, and almost 3 million men.² And let us not forget the weather, the tides—and the German Army. In *Eisenhower's Guerrillas*, historian Benjamin Jones (Dakota State Univ.) reveals additional dimensions of that complexity. Specifically, he recounts an Allied effort to insert small teams of soldiers into France to aid the Resistance forces after D-Day; the operation's code name was “Jedburgh.” Jones highlights the many limitations the “Jeds” labored under and attempts “to see why some ... efforts worked while others did not” (275). He clearly shows that many of Jedburgh's problems stemmed from an unresolved and highly emotional political question: who would rule France after its liberation?

That question proved to be the mother of all complexities. To put it bluntly, Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt and Free French leader Charles de Gaulle could not work together; Jones calls their relationship “frosty” (3). Roosevelt found the French general “outlandish and extremely arrogant” (73) and bent on restoring French colonial glory. He wanted Eisenhower to rule France after its liberation. De Gaulle, on the other hand, saw himself as the agent who would both regain national independence and bring about the “formation of a new France” (4-5). Churchill followed FDR's lead. Eisenhower and his planners were caught in the middle. Ike wanted nothing to do with French politics: “if de Gaulle did not want an Allied military government in charge of France, neither did Eisenhower” (89); liberation was his highest priority. The SHAEF³ commander recognized that “de Gaulle was the undisputed leader of the unified Resistance movements” (88), but he was barred by Roosevelt's “obstinacy” (91) from sharing “operational details regarding the landings ... [with] the French” (79). How, then, to make use of the ca. 100,000 eager Maquis/Resistance fighters? Eisenhower tried to solve this problem by appointing Gen. Pierre Koenig to oversee and coordinate the French popular rising, and shared some details with him. One can imagine Ike's frustration. On the very eve of D-Day, he noted in his diary that “all of our information leads us to believe that the only authority that *resistance* groups desire to recognize is that of de Gaulle” (127). However, his efforts to enlist the French leader's assistance through a BBC broadcast to the underground led to a scene where “de Gaulle verbally ticked off a long list of affronts” (128), most of which had nothing to do with Eisenhower.

Many groups wanted in on the pre-and post-invasion operations with the Maquis/Resistance. American, British, and French special operations forces participated. (Jones's Glossary of organi-

1. *The Second World War*, vol. 6: *Triumph and Tragedy* (NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1953) 6.

2. *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1984) 346-48.

3. Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force.

zational acronyms covers three pages.) However, “The Jedburgh plan was the first and most rigorously thought out and exercised” (271). Ultimately, there were 93 three-man teams, each containing at least one Frenchman (usually with a *nom de guerre* to disguise his identity); all team members wore uniforms. In the end, 265 “Jeds” deployed to France after D-Day (280). Their tasks were to “act as a focus for local resistance forces” (91) and support the Maquis (local groups) by arranging the airdropping of arms and equipment. “They sought to avoid politics [French, American, British] in conducting their military mission” (271). Eventually the teams took on additional roles, including acting as a reconnaissance force for some of Eisenhower’s regular troops. Their deployment lasted about three months. While they did have their successes, Jones argues that they could have done better, stressing that the effort was “a large-scale game of catchup due to the lack of ability to plan ... prior to the start of Overlord. The argument between FDR and de Gaulle, then, had deep ramifications” (213).

The difficulties on the ground in France caused ulcers at SHAEF. Resistance forces quickly “swelled to uncontrollable numbers” (210). “The problem was how to equip, train, and employ them all” (217), especially given the shortage of specialized air resources to supply arms (220). The Maquis comprised “scattered local resistance groups” (93); their leaders were amateurs whose control of their forces varied widely (175). There were traitors in many bands. “Murder and mayhem” occurred in many provinces (205). The Germans launched a “counter insurgency” and massacred civilians (263–69); the “Jeds” could not stop the Maquis from killing Germans, including prisoners (179, 199). Theoretically, General Koenig directed this insurgency, but his control was “intermittent.” On the ground, “chaos ... reigned within the command and control structure in various regions” (205, 235).

Increasingly, Eisenhower worried that anarchy might ensue after liberation; he was concerned about the future use of weapons being provided to the Resistance. However, those around de Gaulle brought order, in part by drawing the Maquis into the revived French Army. Jones judges that the overall effort was useful in regions like Brittany, but achieved “less than could have been done with more coherent organization and better arms” (236).

The volume closes with an intriguing examination of the postwar history of the Jedburghs. Many of those who aided the guerrilla campaign later attempted to apply the lessons of occupied France to restoring colonial authority in places such as Vietnam. In their view, Ho Chi Minh was the occupier and a Maquis-like campaign, supported by outside forces, was needed to defeat him. First the French and then the Americans struggled to achieve this outcome. Alas, neither could find a Vietnamese de Gaulle to rally forces against the North Vietnamese leader. For Jones, this highlights the “one off” quality of the Jedburgh efforts in 1944. As he says, “it would be difficult to see how it could be replicated later under other conditions” (273).

This is not the first book on the Jedburgh campaign. However, it is based on extensive research, including the voluminous official postwar debriefings, long buried in archives and barred to researchers. Most lower-ranking participants have maintained their pledge of secrecy and refused interviews. The book’s stories are interesting, but non-specialist readers may struggle to keep names, places, and organizations straight. That said, *Eisenhower’s Guerrillas* introduces us to a fascinating subset of the massive D-Day operation. It reminds us of the brutality of the Germans’ occupation and the eagerness of the French to be rid of them. And it illustrates all too clearly what Eisenhower dealt with every day. His bosses could be as problematic as the enemy.