

Ref.A083/3506

PRIME MINISTER

Yes. ms

1
 This seems straightforward.
 Agree, provided that the
Foreign Secretary and Secretary of
 State for Defence are also content?

Histories of the Special Operations Executive (SOE)

FERB

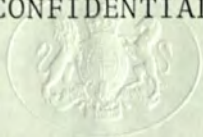
20.12

I am seeking your approval to the preparation of two official histories about Special Operations in Greece and in Scandinavia during the Second World War. Both histories would be published by the Oxford University Press (OUP) under the same arrangements as you approved for the 'History of SOE in the Far East' by Dr Charles Cruickshank which was published by the OUP on 13 October.

2. The approval for the history by Dr Cruickshank (your Private Secretary's letter of 2 May 1980 refers) was on the basis that the OUP funded the work; the Government provided facilities for privileged access to closed records under controlled conditions; and the author - who would be given the status of an official historian - and the publisher both agreed to accept any necessary changes in the text and to obtain approval before publication. These arrangements worked well at all stages.

3. There is a continuing interest and pressure from Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker, Chairman of the Special Forces Club, for further histories of special operations. The first such history 'SOE in France' by M R D Foot was produced by HMSO as part of the Government's programme of official histories. But the funds for this programme have been fully committed for some years and no slot for a further history on any subject is likely to emerge before the end of 1984. Mr Ian Gow, replying to Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker on your behalf in July 1981, said that a further private venture history (on the lines of the 'Cruickshank' model) offered the best prospect of initiating new work in the SOE field, after 'SOE in the Far East' was finished.

4. Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker has now proposed that Dr Cruickshank should prepare a history of SOE in Scandinavia; and that Mr Richard Clogg, a highly respected historian in the Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Kings College, should be made an official historian to write a history of SOE in Greece.



5. Sir Antony Acland and I believe that in these two areas there are worthwhile stories to be told. We cannot fund the work ourselves, but the arrangement with OUP would secure two further histories of SOE without any additional cost to public funds. Access to closed records will be necessary, and the facilities to service two authors can be made available. The authors will also draw on the memories of those who were directly involved in the events to supplement the documentary evidence. Dr Cruickshank and Mr Clogg have the right experience and standing, and are otherwise suitable, to tackle the work. No difficulties are foreseen in obtaining the necessary guarantees from them and the publisher as regards the right to change their text and their obligation to seek approval to publish.
6. I am sending copies of this minute to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and to the Secretary of State for Defence.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

19 December 1983



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

HISTORIES OF THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE

The Prime Minister was grateful for your minute of 19 December A083/3506. Provided that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence are also content, she agrees that official histories of Special Operations in Greece and Scandinavia during the Second World War should be prepared on the basis set out in your minute.

I am sending copies of this minute to Mr. Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Mr. Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

E. E. R. BUTLER

21 December 1983



NBPM

MO 23/2

PRIME MINISTERHISTORIES OF THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE (SOE)

I am content with the proposal which Sir Robert Armstrong put to you in his minute of 19th December. I trust that the Departments concerned will be given adequate time to consider the authors' manuscripts when they are presented for clearance.

2. I am sending copies of this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

W.A.

Ministry of Defence
9th January 1984

Defence - April 1980

Special Operations Exec.



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