

MAJOR RICHARD RUBINSTEIN

This story was originally written by SWW2LN supporter Martin Sugarman in his 2017 book [Fighting Back](#) about his late friend Major Richard (Dick, or Ruby) Rubinstein MC, Croix de Guerre, who served as an SOE Jedburgh in France and in Burma. Martin has now submitted this in memory of Ruby Rubinstein, who died 23 February 2005. Given his place of birth, it seems inevitable that he joined SOE.....



Richard Arthur Rubinstein was born in Baker Street, London on 29th August 1921, son of Arthur Bernard (born in Birmingham) and Floris Rubinstein (nee Newport, who was born in London). They had married in 1920 after Floris converted to Judaism; they belonged to Marlborough Place (formerly the St John's Wood) synagogue, where Richard learnt his Hebrew and was bar mitzvah. Arthur was an importer of millinery and associated goods for the clothing trade and his father had come as a Jewish immigrant to Britain from Latvia in the early 19th century. Richard's grandfather, Bernard, had been a junior officer in the Tower Hamlets Rifles Volunteers, mostly a Jewish unit. He married the sister of his Company Commander, Julia Lazarus, scion of the old Exeter Jewish family. Bernard's father, Joseph, was President of the Synagogue in Mitau, Latvia and allocated stallholder areas for peddlers in the ghetto market. Only peddlers among the Jews were permitted to travel, and through them Joseph established an underground escape network to save young Jewish boys from the tortuous experience of compulsory service in the Czarist army, where they were put in high-risk battalions in the hope they would be killed or simply forget their Jewish roots. Perhaps in some way, Richard's wartime secret work in SOE could thus be seen as the continuation of a family tradition in clandestine operations!

Richard went to University College School between 1929 and 1939 and then won a place at Imperial College to read aeronautical engineering. Meanwhile, as the 1930's war clouds gathered, and asked by his mother not to join the OTC at school in 1934, he instead, aged only 16 years, joined the Territorial Army at the Duke of York's Barracks, Chelsea, on 23rd March 1938, where, with the connivance of the recruiting officer, lied about his age to get in. He attested as CofE and was now a member of the Royal Engineers, as Sapper 2051152 (321 Company 26 Anti-Aircraft Battalion); this later became 26th Searchlight Regiment, Royal Artillery in August 1940. Mobilised at the Munich crisis whilst still at school, and then temporarily demobbed, he was at a Territorial Army camp in August 1939 when war was declared and so never was able to take up his place at Imperial College. He went straight into the Forces.

In charge of a sound locator during the London Blitz, he sometimes faced anti-Semitism in the barrack room but was always able "to look after myself" [1]. Aged 19 in February 1941, he successfully tried for a Commission, passing out in June as 2nd Lieutenant No. 193114 from 133 OCT Unit. He became a searchlight troop commander (69 Searchlight Regiment, RA, Royal Fusiliers) in Norfolk, commanding six

searchlight sites and over 80 men, using a motorbike to keep control over a 50-mile circuit. By 1943 he was a Searchlight Battery Training Captain in charge of over 24 searchlights in Wiltshire, sometimes flying with the RAF nightfighters, to check on the performance of his lights to form a neat cone to indicate a target to the fighters, and also flying with new bomber crews to help them interpret the night sky and avoid the searchlights that they would meet over enemy territory.

By 1943 he wanted to take a more active role in the fighting war, but was rejected by the RAF and Commandos. He married his sweetheart Gay Emily (nee Garnsley) in April 1943 and then saw a notice at his HQ asking for volunteers to work in Occupied Europe, language skills not essential! He applied and was sent on a three-day selection course [205 Selection Board at STS 3, Stodham Park] in August 1943, in a large country house near Petersfield in Hampshire. Promoted to Captain, he was accepted with the comment, "he appears well motivated but is he tough enough?". After six weeks he was ordered to report to a London address near Trafalgar Square, from where he was sent to another country house (on November 17th 1943) at Hatherop Castle [STS 45] near Swindon.



STS 3 Stodham Park (left) and STS 45 Hatherop Castle

Richard was to be trained for an SOE Jedburgh team to be inserted into North West Europe. Most teams were intended for France. They comprised one British or American officer, an officer of the country of insertion and a sergeant wireless operator (WO) of the same nationality as one of the officers. Jedburghs were unique in being the first military group that was truly international and were under joint SHAEF [2] /SOE command. Their aim was to parachute in, after D Day ahead of the advancing Allies, with arms and other supplies, wearing full British or Allied uniform, and work with the SAS and French Resistance to harass the enemy en route to Normandy from various parts of France, who were attempting to stop the Allied invasion. They were to aid the advancing Allies in whatever way they could, depending on the local situation. At Hatherop Castle, the British and Americans trained together up to January 1944 and then they were all moved to Milton Hall (2 miles from Peterborough) where the French members joined them in a cohort of 300 men to make up 100 Jedburgh teams [3]. Milton Hall [ME 65] was part of the Fitzwilliam Estate and was the permanent home of the European Jedburgh Teams, commanded first by Lt Col Frank Spooner and later by Lt Col Musgrave.

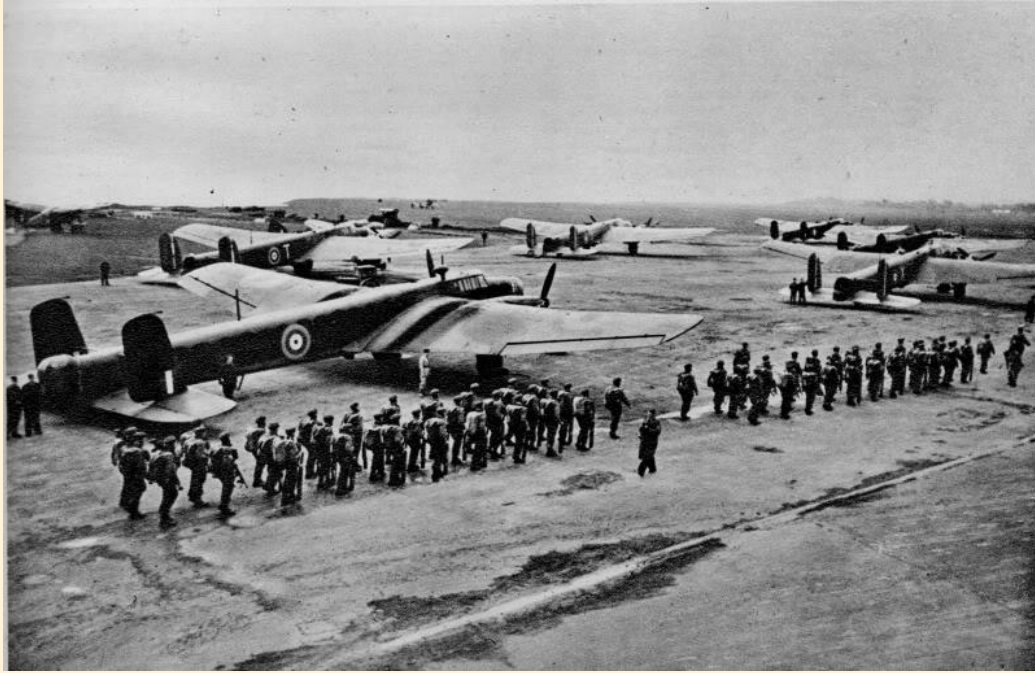


ME 65 Milton Hall and Jedburgh trainees

In his first training report [4] dated 4/12/43, it was questioned whether “his temperament would stand the strain of action” although he “was very keen and confident”. His 7th report on 4/3/44, described him as “a leader who obeys orders...mixes well with the French to practice the language...keen, aggressive and popular”. By his 8th report (13/3/44) [5] he “spoke French fairly well” and was “practising continually to improve...was very fit with lots of endurance...was a forthright type that people would have faith in, with above average organising powers.....keen, quick, estimates situations well, has leadership ability, is intelligent and contented with his work”. His Company Commander – Major B W Gilmour – wrote, “he is the type who can do all three duties equally well (liaison, organisation, leadership)...his French is easily understood, he has plenty of tact and drive and personality....can be trusted to do any job well...a first class officer in every way and is very popular with all nationalities”.



Further intense training consisted of parachute jumps at RAF Ringway [STS 51], study of German army weapons and tactics, explosives and sabotage, unarmed combat, ambush and guerrilla techniques, radio operation, etc. Richard was given the code name of “Augure” and also false French identity papers [6] (in the name of Robert Andre Richard, which maintained his own initials, so it could easily be remembered) as an industrial designer, in case he ever had to make an escape in civilian guise. The risk, however, was very great, as the records show that few SOE/SAS captives – in uniform or not – escaped execution. They were given wireless skeds (schedules) for reporting in [7] .



STS 51 RAF Ringway

Into France

On the night of August 5th 1944 at 2200, Richard's team - known as Douglas 1 and consisting of a British Tank Corps WO, Sgt. John D. Raven code name Halfcrown [8], and French officer Jean Roblot, cover name Jean Ronglou, code name Anachorere [9] - was joined by 2nd Lt. J Poignot from the local FFI group and took off from Fairford in an RAF Stirling [10]. Richard was dressed in full British paratrooper uniform with a captain's rank and gear, armed with a .45 colt revolver and M1 carbine with folding stock, a commando knife, and 5 million francs for local purchases and wages for the French Resistance! However, they could not find the DZ (Dropping Zone) [11] and so returned to Fairford till next day. This was fortuitous as their supplies had not arrived at Fairford to accompany them and were to be dropped for them later! The following day Aug. 6th they went to Keevil and took off at 2315 with two Stirlings. They were dropped successfully this time with all their nine "supply packages" into Brittany just north east of Vannes [12] at an SAS base named Dingson [13], with 17 French Breton SAS reinforcements, to work with the local Resistance to help cut off the German naval bases garrisons from Normandy – especially around the port of L'Orient. They were met by 150 local people of all ages and then marched to a prepared campsite.



Sgt John Raven of Douglas 1

To get to the local Resistance HQ it was necessary to travel by lorry and boat from Nostano, but there was room for only 6 packages and two were hidden at the DZ – one having been lost! Security was not good though and the day following the drop, one of the women Resistance workers was arrested by the Germans. Hiding in woods, Richard's team then went to pick up the packages at Nostano and arrived ten minutes after a German search party had left – fortunately finding nothing! From the woods and away from prying civilian eyes, they made their first contact with London at 0715 on Aug. 7th. That night they were moved to the safety of local FFI HQ [14]. This was the house of a M. Tristan, Deputy for Morhiban – and the 5 million francs were handed over. They were then hidden on 8th Aug. at a small oyster farm where they stayed for a week, sending many messages to London, but making only poor contact with Mission Aloes. On Aug. 16th they moved to FFI HQ at Vannes itself and made contact with the US Army.

In his report, Richard complained of poor responses from London for supplies to the SAS and FFI, which lowered his standing with the locals.

Most of the Brittany countryside was empty of the enemy by now, but they were still strong in the port areas and it was here that the Germans had to be harassed and contained. Richard's team also assisted the SAS with the landing of several gliders carrying arms for 3000 men, and later, Dakotas with further supplies [15]. By late August their job was done. Richard reckoned that they had really arrived too late to be of real use to the FFI (Forces Françaises de l'Interieur) [16] as much of the information on local German strength was already known to the Americans; and so they were extracted by Dakota to Normandy and thence by plane (which was also carrying wounded troops), to Hendon aerodrome on Aug. 24th.

Here Richard faced the irony of customs charging him duty on a silk dress length he had bought in France for his wife Gay – a red flowered pattern, she remembers!

He and Gay then enjoyed some leave on a friend's boat, sailing the Thames – but with orders to ring in every day to HQ at Milton Hall. After 4 days he was recalled and told that his team would soon be dropped again, this time as Douglas 2, into Eastern France. During the preceding week they underwent some further training and then the day before, Richard's WO, John D. Raven, was injured by a mis-firing pistol and was replaced by a young and not too experienced American, John T. Van Hart [17].

Following a poor briefing, they flew from Harrington aerodrome in Northamptonshire on the night of 15th September in an American OSS Liberator and dropped in Jura, 28 kms. south east of Besancon, on a plateau near the village of Reugney [18] with several packages, some of which were lost when parachutes failed to open.

Their job was to assist the active local Maquis in working together and harassing the German lines as the American and French forces were advancing north from the Rhone valley region after the Allied invasion of Southern France. However, the area was already mostly liberated, but after a few days, the Arnhem airdrop had occurred in Holland and Richard's team were ordered to march north with the Resistance along the west bank of the Rhine in the valley of the River Doubs and generally help create havoc among the Germans, to prepare for an Allied Rhine crossing. But with failure at Arnhem, an autumn Rhine crossing could not take place and so the team were told to report on German troop movements. Here, near Montbeliard, they did important work gathering information for the advancing Free French Forces for the capture of Belfort. But again, response from London was poor and eventually Douglas II was ordered home.

They split up for safety reasons, and Jean took the American WO and went in one direction and Richard found a German motorbike and went in another. About 25 miles east of Besancon, Richard met the French army who were quite suspicious of his riding a German vehicle whilst wearing British uniform, and he was arrested and tied to a tree. He suggested that they call his HQ to verify his SOE story and to use the coded message "I have lived at number 77 since 1927" (his address in West Hampstead at 77 Broadhurst Gardens) [19]. This proved his identity and he was released, just as his comrade Jean turned up to find that the French were from his old regiment that he had left in 1943 (when joining SOE) in North Africa. He told Richard and the WO to go on alone as he was staying to fight with them. Richard told him that this was fine as their work was finished but that he should go to visit his parents first. He never did, and soon after was

tragically killed in the heavy fighting against the Germans in the Rhine valley forests area in November 1944, leading a company infantry attack.

Richard made his way to Paris SOE HQ using his letter of authority (which all Jedburgh team members carried, ordering whoever it may concern to assist the holder in any way possible) to obtain petrol. After a short leave he was returned to the UK by Dakota on October 4th 1944 and given some more time to spend with Gay, whose aunt lent them a car to use on a holiday.

For his work in France, Richard was mentioned in Despatches (London Gazette 30/8/45) and awarded the Croix de Guerre avec Etoile Vermeil (Bronze Star). His citation reads, “ Capt. Rubinstein volunteered for missions in occupied France and was dropped with an allied team for the first time in Morbihan on Aug 6th 1944 and the second time in Jura on 15th Sept. 1944. Although these two areas were particularly heavily controlled by the enemy, he was able to organise an important information system, which proved to be most useful for the Allied advance. This officer displayed the greatest bravery under all circumstances as well as complete devotion to his mission and to the common cause. Signed by De Gaulle, 16th Jan. 1946. [20]

Burma

Recalled to SOE in London, Richard was given the three options of either returning to the army, dropping into Germany with the SAS to release Allied POW's [21], or going to Burma. He chose to go to Burma. Higher authority also agreed that those who had the experience of fighting with the Maquis in France would be the first and best available to be switched to Burma after VE Day [22].

American Jedburgh members were off to help Chiang Kaishek's Nationalist Chinese, the French to fight in Indo-China and the British to Burma. At one point, in one of those strange ironies of war, Jedburghs were fighting on opposite sides as the Chinese advanced into French territory.

Richard left London on November 3rd 1944, arriving in Bombay via Liverpool and the Mediterranean on the SS Otranto, in December 1944, having had all the appropriate inoculations. Richard was attached to the famous Force 136 of SOE, based on a small, idyllic beach coconut plantation near Colombo in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), called Horuna. At that time Slim's 14th Army was fighting its way south from North Burma with the Chinese, towards Rangoon, which he wanted to reach before the Monsoon broke in June, and he welcomed any help SOE could give him in organising friendly Burmese to help harass and destroy the Japanese behind their lines, as they made their fighting retreat. The Burmese leaders had been as anti-British as they were anti-Japanese, but they soon realised when the Japanese occupied them, that the British were by far the lesser of two evils, and offered to help SOE.



The evening before insertion, extra pockets were sewn on tunics, seams strengthened, rifles zeroed, and rucksacks re-packed. The limit was 45 lbs. (about 18 kilos.) but with emergency rations, medical kit, wireless parts and ammunition, it was quickly exceeded. After the usual hectic briefing (they had not been warned off for the mission until 2000 hrs. on 23rd January! There were no written orders and only a brief verbal background – none of which exactly inspired confidence [23]), interviews, preparation of codes, and maps and reports to digest, on 25th January 1945, Richard took off at 1800 hrs. for Operation “Dilwyn/Monkey” [24] in an RAF Liberator from Jessore, about 50 miles north east of the SOE operational HQ in Calcutta. He was parachuted by night with two comrades, Major Hugo E. Hood (Somerset Light Infantry) and the Wireless Operator Ken Brown (Royal Tank Regiment), landing at 2130 hrs. They were to assist an SOE intelligence group led by William “Bill” A. Howe, MC (a former rice buyer who had lived in Burma for some years, alive today and over 90 years old, who was the senior British officer on the ground), his Burmese 2nd i/c was Capt. Kum Ge Tawng Wa, and his resistance group of about 200 men. They dropped, guided by fires, with their radios and a load of arms and other supplies onto a small plateau. Approaching the drop zone, the exit hatch in the aircraft was opened by the Dispatcher and all Richard could see was a beautiful tropical moon and thick forest; he was very frightened and chewing gum to calm his nerves during the long flight, with such ferocity, that it ended up all over his lips and chin! Suddenly he was pushed out into the silent, dark world below. He fully admits that he was always more afraid of the jump, than what awaited him on the ground!

This was Kachin country, a cheerful hill people, fiercely loyal to Britain and indeed many had been soldiers in the British led Burma Rifles and so formed the core of the resistance groups. They were met with hot coffee and then conducted to a comfortable hut with bamboo mats and blankets to sleep in. One subadar major with 20 years service told Richard in excellent English that he had been to Britain for the King George VI's Coronation in 1936 as ADC to the representative of the Burma Army and stayed at Wellington Barracks in The Mall!

The arms were distributed and immediately the British Army training and discipline of the Kachins took over as they formed up and started drilling and marching! Richard remembers being most moved and impressed by this experience. Many still wore bits of old British army uniform – belts, puttees, hats – which they had kept since the 1942 retreat, and now proudly wore. As time went by more and more former British Army veterans joined up and were given ID discs and by the end of January numbered about 350.

The Jedburghs had some army rations but generally depended entirely on the Burmans, who accepted them completely; they ate local food such as fruit, rice with chillies, and stewed meat and vegetables; Richard and the Jedburghs would sometimes supplement this with bartered eggs, buffalo milk and the occasional chicken. On special occasions a larger animal would be killed for a communal feed-up! They lived in the field with the Burmese, sleeping in thatched huts, or in the open with mosquito nets.

In the area of Kutkai/Kutkhia, cool at about 4000 feet altitude and 20 miles square, the country is very wild and, at that time, largely unexplored – and in appearance rather like Scotland with forested and grassy hills, heavily forested valleys, and few roads. Within 5 days, the group were ready, after some basic training, to go on the offensive. Richard organised and supervised many ambushes of Japanese military targets, mining and shooting up convoys on roads, in camps and along paths, inflicting many casualties, the Burmese often going in close with their dahs (short swords). Intelligence on the whereabouts of the Japanese and their movements would arrive from many local Kachin sources. It was also necessary to provide a small detachment to prevent the ravages of Chinese deserters and local bandits from attacking the villages of the Kachin whilst the men were away fighting the Japanese.

Some amenity drops organised by Richard, to assist the well being of Kachin communities, sometimes resulted in replies from HQ BCS (Burma Country Section) that they could not keep acting as “Fairy Godmother” due to scarce resources. The teams on the ground rather resented this attitude, but nevertheless such drops were periodically made.

Generally, the Burmese preferred to be told how to deploy and be given firm and clear instructions, and then wished to get on with the job without any interference from the Jedburghs. They were extremely tough,

fierce and courageous and wanted to keep their leaders (the British SOE, who after all supplied them with their means to resist) safe and sound at jungle HQ's, whilst they, by and large, did the face to face fighting. Wearing trousers, with lighter skins and especially being much taller than Burmese, they rightly protested that the British were simply far too conspicuous in the bush.

By Feb. 7th six actions had been fought (Feb. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th, and 7th) in which 109 Japanese had been killed, 31 wounded and 42 POW – later evacuated (Operation Cheetah Report).

By the end of February, Richard's men had despatched even more Japanese and wounded dozens of others. Groups of 10 –20 guerrillas would occupy concealed camps (or outposts) and after reconnoitering for enemy bivouacs, attack at night. Japanese stragglers would also be constantly picked off, day and night. Burmese casualties were very few. To support these fighting patrols, there were two mini HQ's, where fresh supply drops could be made, and from which the outposts were reinforced and supplied. They also formed a camp for local refugees and arranged drops for them of food, salt, blankets and clothing and medical supplies. On one occasion, 45 Indian escaped POW's arrived and their evacuation was arranged with SOE. They even recovered material looted from the Kachins by Chinese deserter bands.

Among the Burmese fighters with Richard was Duwa (Chieftain)"Rusty" Shan Lone, who already had an MC and OBE from 1942. He worked with another resistance group some miles from Richard's and they both soon amalgamated to form a 400 strong anti-Japanese unit [25] .

As Chiang Kaishek arrived in March from the north, Richard and his team were ordered out (in Dakotas, which brought more arms for the resistance; they used a captured Japanese landing strip at Kutkai) after almost 2 months behind enemy lines. With him went 13 young Kachins to join the Jedburghs as armed SAS-style soldiers for Force 136 (Special Forces) , in more hostile Central Burma.

Richard was meant to collect arms and pay the guerrillas at army rates; in fact, many weapons were deliberately left behind so the Kachin could protect themselves later from local outlaws and Chinese deserters. A last supply drop of cloth and salt was arranged and he gave away several thousand pounds in silver rupees , whose sparkle the Kachin delighted to see and who mistrusted paper money anyway. At Kongsá they even re-opened the local church and market (bazaar) and a small hospital. A peace party (manaus) was held, with speeches and religious thanksgiving ceremonies to Richard and his team; there was dancing in full silk and feathered head dresses and swords, and some amusement when Richard was asked to demonstrate English dancing! There was of course a huge feast and the killing of a buffalo. Touching gifts were exchanged – native crafts for tobacco and sweets – and many goodbyes. It was particularly moving when everyone stood and sang "God save The King" in English and Burmese.

Richard's debriefing report did make some criticisms of HQ – namely, lack of information of exactly where Allied troops were, to save them sending raiding parties into areas that the enemy had already left; too few supply drops for local people who were sacrificing so much to help the Allies; lack of interpreters with the Jedburgh Teams; poor radio procedure by HQ; too few medical supplies ; and that they wanted British blankets and groundsheets replaced by USA hammocks and sleeping bags!

Pyinmana

Arriving in Calcutta Richard's team went to their rest house in a block of flats run by SOE, re-entering the unreal world of peace time India; here the team let off steam and scrubbed away the stench of their unwashed sojourn in the wildest of jungles, wrote their reports, were debriefed and then were returned to Ceylon. Their hut at Horuna was now adorned with trophies – mostly Japanese swords and flags – and they had adopted a green parrot [26] .

Newly arrived teams from Europe were sent on acclimatisation training in the thick Ceylon jungle, but Richard's men were spared that and disappeared on leave into Colombo till needed.

After a week, they were informed that as veterans of the Burma guerrilla campaign, they were very highly valued. Richard (now a Major) was made a team leader and with Dick "Doc" Livingston, a Rhodesian, who had just been with SOE in Greece, and Ken Brown again as WO, was to be dropped now into Central Burma as Operation Chimp [27]; they would be one of a number of Jedburgh teams to be dropped near Rangoon. On reaching Calcutta, however, Richard developed an infection from some scratches he obtained on the beach in Ceylon and was hospitalised for three days. By this time his mission was switched to the Mandalay area and was now urgent as Slim's forces were approaching the town and needed immediate support from the SOE agents. After sleeping all night at the airport, within 8 hours of leaving his sick bed, Richard was with his team in a Liberator, at 0700 hours over Burman jungles again, this time dropping by day at 1015 am. on 9th April 1945. They parachuted in, 20 miles north of Pinyinana, landing in a dry river valley, about 50 yards wide, which was surrounded by forest, at map reference IQ434460 – in full view of the Japanese! Richard noted that only one smoke fire guided them in and there was no recognition signal.

There were 5 in his team, as he had two Burman Army men with him as interpreters. Two of the team fell in trees, but without injury, and two containers collided and crashed to earth spilling their contents – but by the time the Japanese arrived, all had disappeared! This time Richard's men [28] were welcomed by Communist fighters of the AFO (Anti-Fascist Organisation), and taken by bullock cart for about 12 hours into the Sittang valley, along which ran the main roads and railway, to the village of Kyatahaung, where they arrived around 2a.m. on April 10th. With them came about 10 containers of rifles, Brens, grenades etc for the guerrillas. With the help of two ex-Burma Rifle havildars, the men were quickly trained and sent off in small groups by Dick to scout for Japanese, now retreating in large numbers from Slim's advance down the valley, as they fled into the surrounding jungle in order to avoid the ambushes and the air attacks. Tracks were easy to follow as the Japanese split toe shoe prints were easy to spot.

The objective of Richard's team was to report on all Japanese troop movements in order to call in air strikes; contact and arm the local Burman Defence Army Resistance; and prepare a local drop zone for arms. On April 10th they called in the first bombing raid on Japanese targets at Kayanzatkan; on the 11th, six Japanese were killed in 3 encounters and the HQ moved to Gwegyi. On April 13th at 1700 hrs., the first drop of arms was successfully completed and the Dropping Zone (DZ) cleared within 12 minutes! On April 14th a group of 25 fighters ambushed and killed 13 Japanese and captured arms and documents on the road to Myola-Gwegyi (parallel to the Rangoon-Mandalay road) down which the Japanese were retreating in quite large numbers. On April 15th, five more Japanese were killed at Kyatchaung; within 10 days Richard's men had ambushed, captured and killed as many as 48 Japanese, including at Kyatchaung on April 10th, a Major-General and his staff [29] of six senior officers (4 captains and 2 lieutenants) and 11 others (mostly NCO's); a large amount of documents were also captured and sent rapidly by runner to Slim's forces to the north, and handed to Major Boyt who was the 5th Indian Division's liaison with SOE. The report on this coup got back to London and had a profound effect on policy towards increasing support for Force 136 and SOE and the Burmese Resistance in general.

When the Japanese were in small groups, they ambushed them directly; when they came across larger concentrations and targets such as stores and buildings, they simply radioed for air strikes. It was rarely possible to take prisoners and in any case this was not the wish of the Burmese who were doing the fighting; any Japanese left alive after the first bursts of fire often blew themselves up with grenades.

On 16th April, more Japanese were killed and on the 17th two POW's taken but shot trying to escape. Several other successful ambushes were made and in all, around Pinyinana and later further south in Toungoo (see below), they inflicted over 400 casualties on the enemy.

On April 17th, Richard went to make contact with the Burmese Defence Force (or Burmese National Army), leaving the local guerrillas to fight on. With 20 men, and 2 elephants to carry their kit, they covered only 30 miles in 3 days due to the need to lie up to avoid the Japanese en route. Even then, they made contact and on the night of the 17th/18th killed 10 Japanese at Kyatchaung. On arrival on April 20th, at the BDF H.Q. at Thindwindaung, they were put in comfortable huts and able to wash each day from well water, wearing cotton sarongs – the climate being considerably hotter here. Richard was able to perfect the skill of bucket filling from a well and also enjoyed the local green tea, taken without milk whilst sucking a stick of

brown sugar! On the first night the Japanese attacked the HQ but were beaten off. Richard's team were given the assistance of a 14 year old boy who had been a cadet officer with the BDF and when they had gone over to the Allies, they killed their Japanese instructors and reported to the guerrillas. On April 21st Richard was called to meet with Boyt on the road [30], and wearing a sarong, disguised as a Burmese, he was taken by a guide for a meeting - much to the amusement and wolf-whistles of the Tommies who saw him! He was then ordered back to continue his campaign, taking a large tin of jam for his team as a gift from the local quartermaster. He got back to his guerrillas on April 24th, having again to lie-up on occasion to avoid Japanese patrols.

For three weeks they worked together with the BDF though there was some tension with a few of the Japanese trained officers. At Thindwindaung, they were attacked on April 23/24th by the Japanese with little result, but on the 25th a Japanese officer was killed. Other groups in the area reporting to Richard killed 15 more of the enemy on April 25th and 26th, also taking one POW. On May 4th Richard visited Gwegyi to coordinate further operations and collect two POW's caught on the 20th, one of whom was wounded - and brought them back for evacuation. On May 5th, ten more Japanese were killed and on May 8th seven more. It was then decided that the area was free of the enemy and orders came to Richard to withdraw.

At this point Richard had to conduct delicate political negotiations with the various Burmese Resistance factions to achieve peaceful disarmament. By May 12th he had then moved his HQ back to Pinyinana and on the 14th to Gwegyi again. On May 18th he organised another supply drop. On May 21st Ken Brown was taken ill and Richard acted as WO till his return on 23rd.

After the usual goodbyes (but decidedly no pay, as the BDF was determined to be independent of the British) and thanksgiving, Richard re-joined his guerrilla group and his team were ordered south 70 miles, on May 30th, to the river crossing near Toungoo, where it was expected the Japs would try to break across and flee further into Thailand. Here they were to meet another team, code name Reindeer, and put themselves at their disposal. Trucks from the Army first arrived and as agreed beforehand, took back the British arms from the Burmese, but Richard turned a blind eye and allowed them to keep the Japanese weapons they had captured.

On arrival at Taungoo on June 3rd, Richard discovered within minutes from a runner that Reindeer's commander, Major Dave Britton [31] - also from Milton Hall - had ventured out with his fighters on that very day against their advice, and being tall had been killed by a sniper whilst scouting along the Sittang river bank. Richard thus stayed with Reindeer (together with radio man Sgt. R Brierley) in place of Dave Britton, on the west side of the Sittang river, and Dick Livingston re-formed Chimp with Ken Brown to operate on the eastern river bank and allied the team with Reindeer's.

Richard's job now was to report to the Army all intelligence on the Japanese attempts to cross the Sittang, in order to set up attacks on them by air and artillery, and wherever possible actually engage with them if they tried to retreat across the river.

During a period of two months, Richard's force reported on all Japanese forces - two Divisions - as they concentrated for the breakout across the Sittang. They also were expertly ambushing and killing dozens of Japanese, at one time capturing the order of battle for the breakout [32]. So successful were they that Richard began to question the kills reported by his Burmese force, but on inspection found them to be all true! The proof came in the form of his being delivered of a lot of small green leaf packages, which on opening were revealed to contain dozens of Japanese amputated right ears.

Another ruse was to give the Burmese villagers a device which shot coloured flares. Whenever the Japanese broke into a village looking for food, this would be activated and then British artillery could be directed onto the village, even though the Burmese knew it may cause their own people casualties if they had not got away in time. Such was their hatred, by then, of the Japanese.

In addition to all this Richard's force guarded villages from foraging Japanese stragglers, stored rice in safe caches for local Burmese, and supplied them with food and medical supplies. They patrolled constantly,

allowing British troops to rest after their exhausting advance south, and received cheerful recognition from Tommies whenever they returned with Japanese prisoners that it was now possible to take.

By June, the British had a trap prepared along a twenty mile front of the river and road, waiting for the 10-15,000 strong Japanese force to make their move to cross. Meanwhile, Richard's two teams had removed all boats from the river to deny any ferry transport to the enemy. When the battle came, it lasted for a week and the Japanese were annihilated; bodies littered the river and its banks and the stench of death was everywhere. In one instance, a large country boat was left deliberately at a mooring and as the Japanese got in they were ambushed at point blank range. The boat was then re-moored to await the next group. Richard's estimate in his report was that up to 2500 Japanese were killed by his group of 1000 fighters, alone, as well as taking over 200 prisoners. Eventually the Japanese surrendered

Skirmishing continued until August/September 1945 and the dropping of the Atomic Bombs; Richard's men were then leaving leaflets in the jungle for scattered Japanese telling them to surrender. Until early October 1945, Richard was then collecting up arms from the Burmese and was back and forth to Rangoon in Stimson light aircraft to give reports to SOE forward HQ on his progress.

Finally he was back in Horuna, Ceylon, where he and Dick Livingston parted, but to remain friends for many years. Richard then volunteered to be parachuted into POW camps with doctors to relieve the misery among the British and Allied prisoners. But he was told he had done more than his share of dangerous work and was sent instead to Calcutta to organise the reception and care of agents coming out of the field for rest and recovery. Many had to be extracted from deep inside Malaya, Indo-China and Indonesia, for example, and this would take months. Danger still abounded and British troops, encouraging Japanese surrender, were still being killed. Richard prides himself on meeting every SOE group that came out of the field and taking care of them in a safe house with the cover name of "The School of Eastern Interpreters". He encouraged the local detachments of FANY [33] to spend time with these men and accompany them at bar-b-q's, bonfire parties and generally help them have fun and re-adapt to normal life – all of course strictly above board. Indeed some agents had already got to know some FANY's at a distance when they occasionally – and against orders – inserted frivolous messages at the end of wireless transmissions from behind the lines. The result of this socialising in the house was even sometimes marriage between the participants! Even General Gubbins (SOE Commander) attended some of the parties and thoroughly enjoyed himself.

For his work in Burma Richard was awarded the Military Cross. The citation read:

'Major Rubinstein was landed by parachute behind the enemy lines in January 1945 and by his initiative, determination and efficiency, contributed materially to the effectiveness of the guerrilla forces then operating in the Kutkai area (of Burma). On returning in March 1945, he immediately volunteered for further operations, and early in April 1945 was dropped by parachute near Pyinmana. Here, in an area through which large numbers of Japanese troops were passing daily, he quickly organised the local Burmese resistance forces with such success that ten days after landing, he and his forces ambushed a party of the enemy, killing one major-General, six officers and seventeen other ranks, the majority of whom were NCO's. From the period 8th April to 8th June Major Rubinstein's party of guerrillas, operating firstly in the Pyinmana area and later south of Toungoo, inflicted over 400 casualties on the enemy.

The success of the operation was entirely due to Major Rubinstein's initiative, determination and personal courage'. [34]

(London Gazette 7/11/46; his award is also recorded in the Jewish Chronicle of November 29th, page 11, 1946 and in the Hampstead and Highgate Gazette).

Despite all the danger Richard says he always felt safe because his Burmese comrades were constantly with him day and night, guarding and patrolling their camps and trails; he pays great tribute to their simple courage and excellent behaviour.

Afterwards

SOE sent Richard home in January 1946, arriving on February 9th in London [35]. His parents home had been destroyed by bombing but in a small wardrobe, his school blazer and grey flannel trousers had survived! He was sent to take charge of 404 POW camp in Devon, from April to August, till his demob. A Sergeant Major Rice (a former POW himself of the Japanese) happily agreed to take full responsibility for running of the camp, so long as Richard attended various parades, leaving him free to study his text books in order to prepare for University. With the constant support and encouragement of wife Gay, he gained entry to Imperial College in the October for two years, winning the student of the year medal! He also re-joined the Territorial Army Anti-Aircraft Regiment (604) in May 1947. On graduating, it was very difficult to find work in the aeronautical industry, however, and so he joined ICI on Merseyside as a senior workshop manager. In April 1949 he was appointed to command a company of the 13th Bat. Lancashire Parachute Regiment (TA), using his parachute skills gained with SOE, and various TA Staff appointments until 1956. Later, with their two sons, he moved to a more engineering based post with De Havilland/Hawker Siddeley in Hatfield, with whom he stayed until retirement. He retired from the TA in 1971.

Richard still attends special Jedburgh Team reunions (which have been in London, Washington and Paris over the years) and also with the French Resistance and American OSS [36] veterans; he has been a senior and active member of the Special Forces Club since the War and on its Benevolent Fund Committee. The last large formal Jedburgh reunion was in St Malo in France for the 50th Anniversary of D Day in 1994. He would have loved also, to visit comrades in Burma but political problems there have made this impossible.

In one article, Richard wrote on the 40th Anniversary reunion in Paris, “the tears flowed and we remembered....I am proud to have been of that number then and I was proud to be of them again in Paris 40 years on [37]”.

In May 1996, a memorial to all the Jedburghs Killed in Action was unveiled in Peterborough Cathedral, and Richard had a large part to play in organising this. [38]

Richard's Decorations are the MC, 1939-45, France and Germany and Burma Stars, Defence and War Medals, Mention in Despatches, Territorial Decoration (London Gazette 19/3/52) and Croix de Guerre [39].

Though not practising in any way, Richard is very proud of his Jewish name and roots as are his sons who have not changed their surname! Even Gay – who comes from Wellington in Somerset - has a Lazarus in her family tree and this could conceivably be from the same family as his Exeter grandmother!

Like all brave men, Richard is extremely modest and if truth be told did not even want this article to be written. But it is the duty, and for me a great honour, of those who come after such people and so enjoy the liberties that they fought to preserve from the evils of Fascism, to ensure that what they did is carefully and accurately reported and preserved. They were ordinary people who did extraordinary things in extraordinary times – thank goodness. The Jewish and wider community can be justly proud of Major Richard Rubinstein. I know I am.



Acknowledgements

I could not have completed this article without the untiring help of Richard and Gay Rubinstein, on whose time I imposed. The staff of the Imperial War Museum Reading Room were of course of inestimable help, and my thanks as well to the AJEX HQ staff who first put me in contact with Dick Rubinstein when they met him at a Duxford reunion in 2002. Howard Davies of the Acquisitions Section of the PRO [now the National Archives] was also very kind in arranging for me to have unique access to Richard's file, once permission was granted.

[1] Some of the section of this paper set in France is drawn from a personal long interview with Richard conducted by the author, at his home in Hendon in October 2002. Much of the Burma section is drawn from the R. Rubinstein/Jedburgh file at the Imperial War Museum Department of Documents (henceforth DofD) as well as the interview.

[2] Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force

[3] Jedburgh team website.

[4] PRO HS9/1289/2 – Richard's personal SOE file – henceforth HS9. He was in Section C, Company 1, under a Lt Bank.

[5] HS9

[6] Now in the Imperial War Museum

[7] Odd days – 0830, 1500; Even days 1000, 1700; and Nights 2200, 0200.

[8] The Special Operations USAAF Squadrons which inserted agents were called "Carpetbaggers" – Jedburgh teams website.

[9] Jean was a patriotic regular infantry officer who had been wounded fighting the Germans in 1940 and saw participation in SOE as the only way to help liberate France.

[10] Douglas 1 was part of Mission Aloes under the French Colonel Eono and it was to get the French Resistance to work with the SAS under Brig. McLeod, to assist the US 3rd Army advance. The BBC announced their impending arrival on Aug. 2nd with one of the now famous radio messages from London to occupied France – in this case, "Le chapeau de Napoleon est-il toujours a perros gyer" (PRO HS7/18). It

was estimated that the work of Douglas 1 and three other Jedburghs in the area saved the use of one whole Allied Division in Brittany!

[11] PRO HS6/502

[12] The DZ map reference was incorrect and they had to search for 50 minutes during which they were fired upon and hit by German AA whilst the pilot took drastic evasive action which caused chaos in the aircraft ! Confusion was not uncommon; in one report on Aloes, Richard is described as a French Officer (HS6/363).

[13] PRO HS7/19

[14] PRO HS6/502

[15] DofD, Imperial War Museum, file on R Rubinstein contains two manifests dated 24/8/44 for aircraft KG592 (P.O. McLoughlan and 4 crew) dropping at Vannes 90,000 9mm parabellum (stun gun ammunition) , 600 grenades, 50 2” mortar bombs HE and 4 packages of medical supplies for the SAS; another aircraft (KG367 P.O. Wood and 4 crew) dropping 54 packages of .303 bullets and one 1” illuminator (Verrey pistol and cartridges).

[16] PRO HS7/19

[17] Letter from Richard Rubinstein; a report in PRO HS6/502 shows that this wound may have been self-inflicted on Sept. 7th at 0730 and was the subject of an enquiry.

[18] Letter from Richard Rubinstein

[19] Richards AJEX Jewish Chaplain Card – one of 60,000 kept at the museum.

[20] Original with Major Rubinstein, copy at AJEX Jewish Military Museum, Hackney, London.

[21] This scheme came about because the Allies believed that the Germans were preparing to liquidate POW's. The idea was that an SOE/SAS team of about a dozen heavily armed men would go to each camp with information about the Commandant, his staff and conditions in the camp, and warn them that if any POW's were harmed as the Allied armies closed in, the Germans would face War Crimes Trials. Eventually, the plan was more or less abandoned.

[22] “Burmese Experience” by R Rubinstein – report of Jan. 1949 at IWM DofD.

[23] Report on Operation Cheetah, IWM DofD

[24] This was the overall name of the insertion of Jedburghs in Burma at this time; the code name of Richard's specific mission was Operation Cheetah II (telephone interview with Richard Nov. 2002).

[25] Special Forces Club Newsletter Autumn 1996 page 8 – “Lone Survivor” article by Richard Rubinstein. Shan Lone was born in 1910, became a Baptist and went to University, later serving in the Burmese Civil Service. At the outbreak of war he was the first Kachin to be commissioned , won an MC in 1942 fighting the Japanese, and then fought with the Chindits and SOE's Force 136, winning, as a Major, an OBE and MiD. He retired in 1974 and later went to live in the USA; Richard has stayed in touch with him ever since.

[26] Letter from Richard to Gay at IWM DofD.

[27] Chimp and Reindeer were part of Operation Nation (telephone interview with Richard Nov. 2002)

[28] Major R A Rubinstein, RA (RE); Capt. C R Livingston RE; Sgt. K J W Brown, RTC; Ko Thein Aung; Ko Sein Maung – From Secret Report of Operation Chimp 195/375, DofD, IWM.

[29] This general's sword hangs proudly today in Richard's house; the author can testify that it is still razor sharp. The red and gold General's collar tabs were given to the Imperial War Museum

[30] The Burman runner bringing the message had been twice stopped and questioned by the Japanese en route but managed to bluff his way through and that night two HQ guards had been killed by Japanese infiltrators.

[31] Major D J C Britton (Operation Reindeer Secret Report 205/375/40 5th Sept. 1945 – IWM DofD

[32] R Rubinstein papers at the IWM contains a translation from the Japanese of this fascinating document.

[33] The Field Auxiliary Nursing Yeomanry, a womens' corps that did most of SOE's clerical and coding work in various theatres of war, though some were also SOE agents.

[34] Original with Major Rubinstein, copy in the AJEX Jewish Military Museum, Hackney, London.

[35] Some of Richard's exploits are mentioned in a standard work on SOE in Burma, "SOE in the Far East", C Cruickshank, OUP, 1983 London, pp. 35, 184, 186

[36] Office of Strategic Service, American intelligence service similar to the SOE but later to become the CIA

[37] Hawker Siddeley News, undated 1985

[38] Special Forces Club Newsletter Autumn 1996, p4 -5

[39] MoD Records document April 1993

Sources: Martin Sugerman, Reprinted with Permission