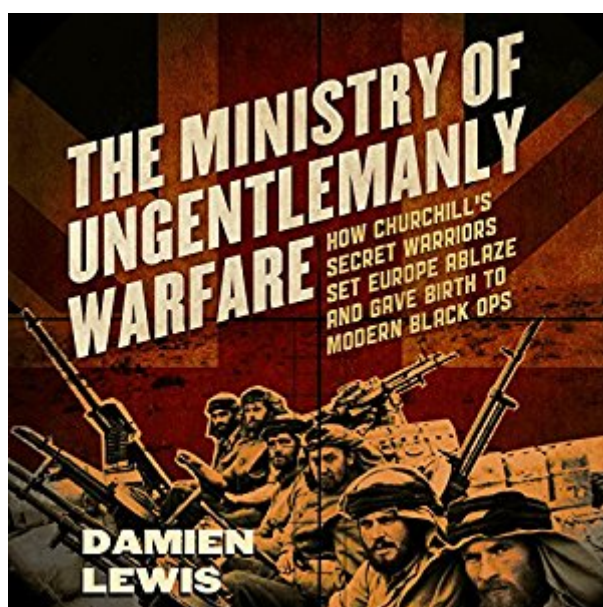


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The Ministry Of Ungentlemanly Warfare: How Churchill's Secret Warriors Set Europe Ablaze And Gave Birth To Modern Black Ops



Synopsis

From award-winning historian, war reporter, and author Damien Lewis (Zero Six Bravo, Judy) comes the incredible true story of the top-secret "butcher-and-bolt" black ops units Prime Minister Winston Churchill assigned the task of stopping the unstoppable German war machine. Criminals, rogues, and survivalists, the brutal tactics and grit of these "deniables" would define a military unit the likes of which the world had never seen. When France fell to the Nazis in spring 1940, Churchill declared that Britain would resist the advance of the German army - alone if necessary. Churchill commanded the Special Operations Executive to secretly develop a very special kind of military unit that would operate on their own initiative deep behind enemy lines. The units would be licensed to kill, fully deniable by the British government, and a ruthless force to meet the advancing Germans. The very first of these butcher-and-bolt units - the innocuously named Maid Honour Force - was led by Gus March-Phillipps, a wild British eccentric of high birth; and an aristocratic, handsome, and bloodthirsty young Danish warrior, Anders Lassen. Amped up on amphetamines, these assorted renegades and sociopaths undertook the very first of Churchill's special operations - a top-secret, high-stakes mission to seize Nazi shipping in the far-distant port of Fernando Po in West Africa. Though few of these early desperadoes survived WWII, they took part in a series of fascinating, daring missions that changed the course of the war. It was the first stirrings of the modern special ops team, and all of the men involved would be declared war heroes when it was all over. The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare focuses on a dozen of these extraordinary men, weaving their stories of brotherhood and comradeship and elite soldiering into a gripping narrative yarn, from the earliest missions to Anders Lassen's tragic death just weeks before the end of the war.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I don't read military history that often, but the title of this book was too good to pass up, and let's face it, the shenanigans of unconventional units during World War II remain irresistible even some seventy years later. Like a lot of popular military history, the action described is fascinating and the writing is not the best. This is the story of how British created a "deniable" special force under the Special Operations Executive to run the equivalent of black ops during World War II. It's not entirely clear, but this unit functioned kind of like the Special Boat Service, as far as I can tell (not being well-versed in all the intricacies of the various units). In any event, this history is pegged to a larger-than-life soldier who was in at the formation of the first unit, present for its greatest triumphs, and was killed in action near the end of the war. The book is very much the story of Anders Lassen (VC, MC), a Danish volunteer who had all the bearing of a modern-day pirate. Through him, the reader is taken through the first mission at Fernando Po (aka Bioko) off the coast of present-day Cameroon, then some dirty work in the Channel Islands, before moving to a wide range of raids across the Greek islands (including a particularly spectacular airfield raid in Crete), and then finally a calamitous mission as part of the Allied push up Italy. The exploits are very engaging, the bravery astonishing, the personalities colorful -- perhaps all best summed up by the kind of nonstandard after action reports Larsen would file: "Landed, killed Germans, f****d off." Solidly entertaining read for WWII buffs. Note: This book was published under a slightly different title in the UK: Churchill's Secret Warriors: The Explosive True Story of the Special Forces Desperadoes of WWII

This is an outstanding story about the early development of Spec Ops in WWII. The author had interviewed the few members of the SOE who were still alive and got some of his material directly from them. The book follows some of their missions and I haven't read more exciting adventures written in fiction in a long time. What these guys accomplished was amazing. In some cases they worked alongside local partisans and in other cases, stole in during the night and created terror amongst the German soldiers. Hitler was made aware of their activities and gave special orders for their torture and death if/when they were captured. This is one of the many fine smaller stories about what men did in WWII that are finally being told. I have read at least 50 books on WWII and this one is in the top 10%!

While "The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare" isn't as broad a look at British World War II special

operations as the title suggests, it is a worthy account of the branch of the Special Operations Executive that became the Special Boat Services. Almost all of the operations detailed in the book pertain to commando-style raids launched from small vessels, starting with the first successful effort that entailed the hijacking of several Axis ships that were holed up in a neutral port on a Spanish-owned island in the Atlantic. Much of the narrative centers on one of the top special operators in the boat service throughout the war, a Dane named Anders Lassen who had a score to settle with the Germans occupying his home country. Lassen was a key player in crucial British raids in the war, ranging from Channel Islands, to a devastating raid against a German airfield on Crete and, finally, his final assault on swampy lake in northern Italy in 1945 that earned him a posthumous Victoria Cross. Author Damien Lewis gives a detailed look at all the operations and many of the tactics employed by the seaborne operators, including the fates of many of the most successful warriors.

This book is amazing....but one of the best things I can say is that it is very well written. The author gives the details without smothering the reader with minutiae -----unlike many of the books out about this topic of guerrilla warfare where the story gets lost in bad writing and too much verbiage. But, of course, the story of these amazing young men is what makes this book a page turner. I apologize for getting political but here we are decades after the horrific, world-wide war in which the indomitable British singlehandedly pushed the invaders back into the sea; won the Battle of Britain and the Battle of the Atlantic and with Churchill's stirring words still resounding, "We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender..." What stuff the people of the Island nation were made of! The young men in this book epitomize the plucky Englishmen who helped save the world from Hitler. I would give the book 100 stars if for no other reason than to acknowledge their sacrifices as told in this book.

I like reading about history, with a focus on military action. This account about the forerunner of modern black ops units was exactly what I was wanting to add to my literary diet. Putting this book down is next to impossible. It's something I'd gladly share with friends, in exchange for something out of their library.

This book chronicles the beginnings of special operations forces in the British army during World War 2. They are backed by Winston Churchill but are set up so that the British government could disavow their actions if they are caught. These men fought with different rules than the rest of the British army. One man stood out in this book --- a Dane named Andres Larson who joined the British army and is featured in most of the groups actions. This book would be of great interest to anyone captivated by military history.

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