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The Spies Who

By Alfred Friendly

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THE BRITISH did better than merely blind the wartime German intelligence system in their country. They ran it.

From the middle of 1940 to the end of the war they composed, painted and obligingly transmitted to Hitler the picture they chose for him to see of the military situation in Britain.

The cream of the jest was that Hitler paid for it. The money the Germans sent to support and pay what they thought were their spies sufficed to run the British operation that managed them. It came to around 85,000 pounds—about \$340,000 at wartime rates.

The history of how a special branch of M.I. 5 (analogous to the FBI) controlled and operated every German spy without exception in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is laid out in a new book to be published simultaneously in Britain and America on Feb. 16 by the Yale University Press.

Its climax is the sensational deception that convinced the Germans that the main force of the D-Day landings would be in the Pas de Calais, not Normandy, and sustained that fatal delusion—on which Allied success may well have depended—until weeks after the event itself.

That there was in fact no "uncontrolled" German agent in Britain from shortly after the fall of France has been common gossip in British intelligence circles. But only now has the British government permitted publication of the proof and of how the job was done.

The account is given in "The Double-Cross System in the War of 1939 to 1945," by Sir John Masterman. Now 80, Masterman was an Oxford don who chaired the "Twenty Committee," composed of representatives from the several British—and later American—military, diplomatic, security and intelligence agencies concerned. So named because the Roman numeral for 20—XX—symbolized the double-cross, it was the inventive, operative, policy and

administrative organ that staged the drama.

Masterman wrote the account at the end of the war in Europe, from July to September, 1945, when the facts, his memory and the records were current and immediate. It took the form of a secret report, for the guidance of intel-

ligence officials of the future. It reads better than any spy novel—not merely because fact is stranger than fiction but because what was British fiction became German fact.

It is a story of superb deftness of execution, outrageously bold invention, hairbreadth escapes from exposure and devastating triumph. The volume is largely exegesis on the central text: If you control an enemy agent you not only prevent him from sending out information that injures you but you can use him to transmit misinformation to hurt the enemy.

The Importance of Snow

THE STORY BEGINS as early as 1936 with an ambiguous character with the code-name Snow (a condition for the publication of Masterman's book was that no current identifications be made). A Canadian electrical engineer with business connections in Germany, he worked for the *Abwehr* (German secret service) and at the same time told British intelligence officers something of what he was doing. Just after the war began, he returned to Britain from a cross-Channel trip and reported himself to the British authorities.

He was briefly interned but soon established his bona fides (more or less, for his doings were from time to time suspect) and was set to work—initially even from his prison cell—transmitting on a wireless set the Germans had given him.

Remarkably, his spy-master in Germany, Dr. Rantzau (alias Maj. Ritter, famous in many intelligence episodes) soon considered Snow the linchpin of German espionage in Britain. By consequence, he became the linchpin of British counter-espionage for the first

year of the war.

He was allowed to make several trips to the Continent to rendezvous with his spy-masters. Within months, other German spies already in Britain or sent there later were instructed to work with him—and so were neatly picked up. One, Charlie, a loyal Briton impressed into German service by threats against his family in Europe, at once became a double agent.

As was to be the case with many agents who followed, Snow came back from one of his trips with a German cipher immensely valuable to British intelligence. Indeed, the code material the supposed German spies brought to Britain was one of their most significant services to the whole Allied war effort.

Instructed by the Germans to recruit other agents, Snow (with the help of the Twenty Committee) proved to be diligence itself. His network soon included G.W., supposedly a Welsh nationalist trained in sabotage but actually a retired police inspector; Biscuit, a reformed petty criminal and subsequent police informant; and Cel-

ery; billed as a disgruntled air force officer unfairly denied promotion. A good amateur sleuth, Celery actually had trailed Snow and the head of M.I. 5 counter-intelligence, thinking them German spies, before the true state of affairs was made known to him.

Celery himself ultimately went to Germany and withstood the most

gruelling cross-examination by the *Abwehr* without ever being detected for what he was. And long after Snow's network had to be liquidated—Snow seems finally to have cracked under the prolonged strain—G.W. was able to continue to masquerade as an agent, transmitting masses of deceptive information through the Spanish embassy in London.

The main importance of the Snow apparatus was that it served as the Ju-

gas-goat for the German spies to come. In one way or another, those sent to Britain in the summer of 1940 by parachute or U-boat were instructed to use Snow or others of his bogus net as contacts, "lifelines" in case of need, or pay-masters. The newcomers, in turn, were listed as contacts for still others. It was essentially this process that enabled the British to catch and control every last man (except one who, his money having run out, committed suicide before even becoming operative).

"A Pearl Among Agents"

ONE PARACHUTIST whose arrival had been expected by the British, thanks to information from an agent captured earlier, was Tate. He was almost immediately "turned around" by the skilled case officers of the Twenty Committee and became one of the longest lasting and most valuable double agents in history. He communicated with his German spy-master in Hamburg steadily from October, 1940, until May, 1945, a few hours before the fall of the city.

His story is a classic. Early in his new career he picked up an imaginary friend supposedly aboard one of the principal British mine-laying submarines. The "friend's" false information about fictional British minefields, dutifully sent by Tate's transmitter, successfully barred to German U-boats a total of 3,600 square miles of ocean. Later in the war, Tate's messages on the probable embarkation ports of the Allied invasion force — all pointing to landings near Calais — were considered so valuable by the Germans that, the British later learned, one *Abwehr* official thought that they "may even decide the outcome of the war." As will

be related below, they may well have, but not in the way the *Abwehr* man believed.

As late as 1945, the Germans called Tate "a pearl among agents." Apparently not a German national, he was given citizenship by wireless in order

to be able to receive the Iron Cross, First and Second Class.

He was so trusted by the Germans that, paradoxically, his life became difficult for the British. At one point, the Germans made him their nominee to receive 20,000 pounds in a hilariously fraudulent financial hoax (dreamed up by the Twenty Committee). The money was supposed to finance him so that he could circulate in important circles and move about widely in strategic areas. Had he done so, he would obviously have been expected to pass over a great deal more information — true information, if his credibility was to be retained in German eyes — which would have revealed far too much. The solution was a story that his (fictitious) employer owned a remote farm and had assigned him to work there. When necessary, though, as was the case in reporting on the invasion embarkation ports, the solicitous "employer" would give him holidays, to visit spots the British wished to be (mis)reported on, and to make "friends," all wondrously well informed, who just happened to be at

... Never Were

the right places with the right connections when, in the future, the British needed to have them (mis)observed.

Mutt and Jeff, Saboteurs

MOST GERMAN AGENTS flown or ferried to Britain who did not fall at once into the Snow trap carried such palpably fraudulent documents and so little money — the expectation was that they would be relieved in a few weeks when the German invasion of Britain took place — that they were picked up at once. They were so badly equipped that it is probable that none could have established radio communication with Germany with the sets they had without the kindly help of the Twenty Committee.

Many other agents simply surrendered themselves on landing. One such pair, who came by submarine and went on to have a splendid history as double agents, were Mutt and Jeff, assigned to do sabotage. Jeff proved difficult and had to be imprisoned, a process that in no way prevented the British from using his radio transmitter to send thrilling reports of his activities for

thrilling reports of his activities for the rest of the war. Between daring feats of fictitious sabotage, Mutt and Jeff were used by the British to persuade the Germans of no less than three prospective landings in Norway.

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Another great "saboteur" was Zigzag, a gifted safe-cracker and confidence man whom the German captured in Jersey and whose suckers they became — for, whatever his offenses against British law in the past, he was not going to offend against his king and country at war.

The Germans gave him extensive training and parachuted him into Ely. His arrival had long been anticipated and prepared for, thanks to what Masterman refers to as "secret sources" (one may guess that the Twenty Committee made good use of the *Abwehr* ciphers earlier agents had brought with them). Zigzag was under orders to blow up one of the de Havilland factories making fighting planes and then make his way as fast as he could to Lisbon.

The British obliged, the factory was "sabotaged" with a fine rash of newspaper stories for the Germans later to read, and Zigzag was then sent to Portugal as a seaman on a British merchant ship. While the ship was still in harbor, Zigzag asked the congratulatory Germans waiting for him to give him some gelignite, painted and formed

to resemble coal, which he would leave in the ship's bunkers. He received what he asked for and, as a parting gift, presented it to the ship's captain for safekeeping.

The Germans feted and honored him tangibly, to the tune of 10,000 marks—and coddled him in officers messes in *Abwehr* posts. He was parachuted back into England two years later but unfortunately he was given to talking too much and the British had to put an end to his sterling services. Masterman permits himself a word of regret on the point, noting admiringly that Zigzag was a gifted and ingenious criminal.

"The Man Who Never Was"

DIMLY, ALMOST UNWILLING to believe it themselves despite the clear and mounting evidence, the British realized by the beginning of 1941 that they controlled and were operating the totality of the enemy espionage system in Britain. The Twenty Committee knew also that they must cherish it, not jeopardize it for immediate, short-term gains, but build its reliability in German eyes for a final, climactic deception, some day to come.

The history of the double-cross system during the next three years was principally one of denying the Germans valuable information that a good espionage operation would have given them, but supplying enough of what was true and would be proved true to establish complete and utter trust in their agents.

Thus, the achievement of 1941-43 was the traditional one of counter-espionage: denial of information to the enemy. The proof of it was brilliantly demonstrated in the absolute surprise realized in both the North African and the Sicily landings.

But although the blinding of the Germans was accomplished primarily by blocking the flow of what would have been revelatory information, there was plenty of deception to help matters along.

Thus, for the North African landings, no less than eight double agents, including Mutt, Jeff and Tate, were involved in passing on indications that the Allies were contemplating invasions of Norway, France and even Dakar.

No double agents were used to deceive the Germans on the Sicilian inva-

sion, but it is worth noting that the single most imaginative and thrilling hoax of the war was dreamed up for that event by two members of the Twenty Committee. This was the floating ashore in Spain of a corpse—"The Man Who Never Was"—carrying bogus "secret" papers indicating that the landings would be made in Greece. The story has been told in two books about the episode; here it need only be recalled that the Germans fell for the deception hook, line and sinker.

There were other gains as well from the operations of the Twenty Committee in the period between the Battle of Britain and D-Day:

In the first place, the Germans were left anxious and uncertain of future Allied moves. Their supposed spies had put too much chaff in the wind for the German high command to know which way it was blowing.

Second, the converse was true for the Allies. The instructions and questionnaires the Germans sent their agents were magnificent clues—when it was learned how to interpret them—of what the Germans were worried about and what they were planning by way of defense. Still, the Americans were slow to get the point and apparently missed the clear indications in the German instructions to the double agent Tricycle that an attack on Pearl Harbor was being planned as early as June, 1941.

The Normandy Deception

BY THE BEGINNING of 1944, the Twenty Committee had forged a magnificent weapon of war whose full potential still remained to be used. The opportunity, of course, came with preparations for Operation Overlord, the Normandy landings. But before summarizing the story Masterman tells of that greatest deception since the Trojan Horse, it is necessary to introduce Garbo, the principal double agent in the enterprise.

A fiercely patriotic, anti-Fascist Spaniard, Garbo offered his services to the British early in the war but was rebuffed. Undismayed, he calculated that if he insinuated himself into the German intelligence apparatus he would thereby become so valuable to the Allies that ultimately they would make use of him.

The plan worked. The *Abwehr* offices in Spain picked him up in 1940 and ordered him to England the next year. Garbo left Madrid, but not for England. Instead, he went to Portugal and for nine months flooded his masters with brilliant intelligence about what he and a growing network of entirely fictitious agents were discovering

in the heart of Britain. His tools were old guidebooks, railroad timetables, maps and an incredibly fertile imagination. His knowledge of English was minimal and his knowledge of England nil; his mistakes were egregious but the Germans never tumbled.

When the British—presumably again through "secret sources"—discovered a huge German naval preparation to intercept a convoy bound for Malta—a convoy that did not exist—they traced this neat bit of making the enemy play an expensive fool's game to Garbo, busy as a beaver in Portugal. They realized they were onto a genius.

They brought him to Britain in April, 1942, and gave him less crude tools to work with. By the spring of 1944 he (and the Twenty Committee) operated for the Germans a network of 14 active agents and 11 contacts, all created out of thin air.

Masterman writes: "The Garbo case

went from strength to strength. The one-man band of Lisbon developed into an orchestra, and an orchestra which played a more and more ambitious program. Garbo... was the master of a facile and lurid style in writing; he showed great industry and ingenuity coupled with a passionate and quixotic zeal for his task. Throughout the year he worked on an average six to eight hours a day drafting secret letters, enciphering, composing cover texts, planning for the future."

By the end of the war, there were 50 volumes in his Twenty Committee file. In all, he transmitted to the Germans 400 letters (as with all other agents, in secret ink or microdots to foreign letter drops) and 2,000 radio messages. In December, 1944, the Germans awarded him the Iron Cross; the same month the British gave him the M.B.E. (Member of the British Empire).

Tate, Brutus—a heroic Pole who worked secretly in France after its fall and whom the Germans wrongly thought to have converted into one of their agents—and several other double agents helped in the Overlord deception plan. But it was principally Garbo and his dream-world network that did the lion's share of passing the misinformation that persuaded the Germans that the invasion of Europe would come in the Calais area rather than in Normandy.

This greatest and most crucial deception of the war was to convince the Germans that the invasion force was encamped in and would be embarked

from southeast England, from which—as a glance at the map will show—the target would have to be the Pas de Calais.

A huge radio communications net was set up and operated—for the benefit of German monitors, direction finders and wireless traffic analysts—as if it were carrying the traffic of the units and headquarters of whole armies and army groups. Besides appearing like the communications of real forces known to the Germans (which were actually in southwest England) it also purported to carry the traffic of entirely imaginary units such as, for instance, First U.S. Army Group.

(Other deception devices, not noted in Masterman's book, for they did not involve double agents, included the dropping of twice the weight of bombs on the Calais area as on the Normandy peninsula in the six weeks before D-Day and, to confuse the Germans on the prospective date of the invasion, the circulation just before D-Day in Gibraltar and Algiers—with just enough security breaches for the Germans to find out—of a British soldier who was a dead ringer for Gen. Montgomery and was suitably dressed and escorted for the role.)

How brilliantly the deception succeeded need not be detailed here. German maps and documents captured after the war are testimony enough of how firmly the Germans had in mind the false Allied order of battle that was created for them (down to the identification patches, in German recognition handbooks, of the nonexistent units, all on information supplied by the double agents).

Suffice it to say that the Germans not only stationed their main defense force 100 miles northeast of Normandy, but held it there—despite frantic appeals from the embattled commanders behind the beachheads—for days and even weeks after the landings themselves, still absolutely convinced that the Normandy operation was a feint and that the main thrust was still to come on the Pas de Calais.

As it was, the Normandy landings were touch-and-go; had the Germans placed or committed their main strength there, there is much reason to believe the story might have ended very differently.

Misdirecting the Rockets

BEFORE THE WAR ENDED and before John Masterman could return to Oxford and his "gifted amateurs" on the Twenty Committee could shut up shop, there was a final piece of deception for Garbo and the other agents to carry out.

It had to do with the "flying bombs,"

the Germans' V-1 and V-2 rockets. The purpose of the exercise was to cause the Germans to keep correcting—wrongly—their aim so that the weapons fell not on London but on less populated areas.

Obviously, the German "agents" were in a position to report locations of the bomb landings and could not fake their reports too grossly because

the Germans had some means—not least, the London press—of independent observation.

The Germans could calculate exactly the arrival time, although not the place, for each rocket. Accordingly, the reports of each hit had to be linked to an arrival time. The deception was to report hits west of London as of the time when other bombs landed in the city or to the east. The result was that the Germans kept correcting their aim, thinking they were overshooting, so that the mean point of impact was moved eastward about 2 miles every week, and ended up well outside the London area.

Before it was put into operation, the scheme was presented to the British Cabinet, where a great row ensued. Herbert Morrison, minister of home security, was shocked and furious, as the British intelligence agent and journalist, Sefton Delmer, has reported. Morrison declared that the government could not play God and, by directing the German bombs, determine that citizens of Kent and Essex would be killed while those of London were spared.

But it was obvious that far fewer deaths would be caused by bombs falling on the countryside than in the city. The Twenty Committee received ambiguous directions from the Cabinet, and did the sensible thing, without reporting with too much exactitude to the abstract moralists above them.

Once, it would seem, the double-crossers had to deceive their friends as well as their enemies.

OXFORD — The publication of "The Double-Cross System" has been a victory of perseverance for the author, Sir John Masterman, head of the British intelligence organization that succeeded in "controlling" every German espionage agent in Britain during the war.

Now 80 and in retirement here, Masterman wrote the book at the end of the war as a report "for a very limited audience," i.e. future British intelligence officers.

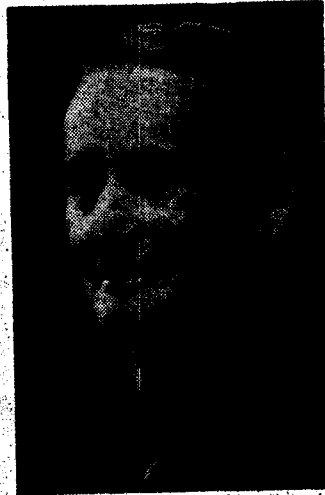
"It never crossed my mind," he explained in a recent interview, "that it would ever be published, but as the years passed it became clear that the objections to issuing it diminished whilst the reasons for it increased.

"First, historical truth in itself ought to be made known.

"Second, a spate of inaccurate accounts was beginning to come out.

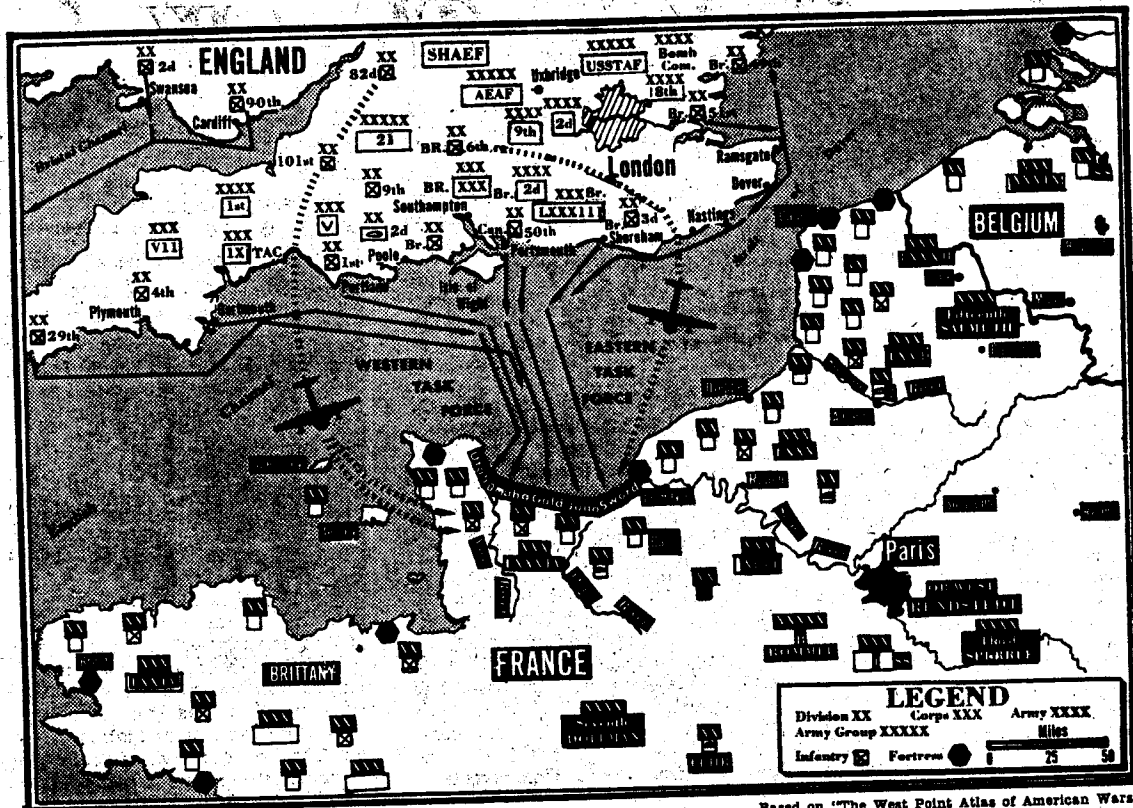
"Third, and most important, the 'image' of our Secret Service was falling. People were always talking about what went wrong and the result was lost confidence. You must in time let people know some of the successes, if you're to restore confidence in our secret intelligence, and not just the failures: the messes of the 1950s and 1960s, the Philbys, Burgesses and MacLeans, and so forth."

A European historian, onetime provost of his old Oxford college, Worcester, and vice chancellor



(president) of Oxford itself, Masterman spent World War I interned in a German prison camp. There as a student, he was picked up when hostilities began. It was, he says, a "dreary" experience but probably accounts for the fact that he is alive today. In 1914, the life expectancy of a 23-year-old prospective army officer was not high.

Fine-featured, very tall but now stooped and walking gingerly, Masterman agitated for years for publication of his report, and is joyous at the final victory.



By Joseph Mastrangelo—The Washington Post

Based on "The West Point Atlas of American Wars"

The D-Day lineup: The Germans were certain the invasion would be aimed at the Calais area.

A Comedy of Errors

THE ELABORATE CARE the British intelligence organization took to prevent the Germans realizing that all their wartime spies in the United Kingdom were "controlled" may have been an exercise in overcautiousness, Sir John Masterman suggests in his book, "The Double-Cross System."

The German spy-masters, it turned out, were both incredibly dense and incredibly proprietary about "their" agents—the ones they had discovered, trained and employed and who, to the last man, were "turned around" to work for the Allies.

A couple of hilarious episodes illustrate the point:

● Scruffy was a Belgian seaman whom the Germans infiltrated into Britain as a spy and the British promptly picked up. As he was apparently too clumsy to be converted into a real double agent, the British decided to "run" him so crudely and grossly that the Germans would tumble to the fact and conclude therefrom that the British were incompetent at such trick-

ery and that their attempts along that line could be easily spotted. Thus, the British thought, their real work in controlling agents would be undetected. But despite the most blatant errors, the Germans' faith in Scruffy was unshakable.

● The British intelligence service controlled all the German agents in Britain, to be sure, but they could not control the frauds operating elsewhere. One was Ostro, on the evidence a brilliant con man, working in the Iberian Peninsula. He insinuated himself with the Germans and supplied them with a massive flow of "intelligence" from an entirely imaginary set of agents in England — and presumably picked up a nice piece of cash for his trouble.

From the British point of view, however, he was dangerous. By luck or skill, his imaginings might be entirely too close to the truth, and his fraudulent reports on the location of the landings of the "flying bombs" in 1944 tended to foul up an intricate British plan to cause the Germans to mis-aim them. Brit-

ish counter-espionage officials at times considered the idea of "eliminating" him but Ostro continued to cause anxiety until the end of the war.

What finally caused the British the greatest worry over exposing their double agents was, ironically, attempted defections by German *Abwehr* officers. Anti-Hitler, or seeing the writing on the wall, many proposed to come over to the British side, thinking they would be welcomed with open arms for revealing the existence of the spies they assumed were working for them in Britain.

That was the last thing the British wanted. The minute an *Abwehr* man defected, the agents he knew about and "betrayed" would have to be "captured" by the British and silenced, whereas the Allied interest was to keep them transmitting misinformation until the last shot was fired.

As it happened, German defections necessitated the shutdown of one or two of the most useful British double-agent networks.