

“A Game of Human Chess”: The Double Cross System and MI-5’s Supremacy in World War II

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History Departmental Undergraduate Honors Thesis
University of Colorado at Boulder

April 7, 2015

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Abstract

World War II featured monumental battles, such as the Normandy invasions, the Battle of the Bulge, Stalingrad, Iwo Jima, El Alamein, and Kursk. While historical scholarship of the World War II generally focuses on the war's grand military engagements, it is imperative to note that Allied and Axis intelligence units battled for supremacy in a war of deception. The Double Cross system employed by the British military intelligence division (MI-5) was, virtually from the war's onset, successful in overwhelming its German opponent, the Abwehr by turning its agents into supportive double agents. Traditional historiography follows the classic spy narrative and credits the success of MI-5 to its daring agents, brilliant creators, or stalwart handlers who used wit and guile to deceive their German adversary. In this thesis I will argue that the success of the Double Cross system should be attributed to more than solely the actions of the Double Cross team. Though the operatives played an invaluable role, the existence of an overriding, well-structured system determined their success. By examining the uniqueness of the Double Cross system, this thesis will seek to illustrate that the victorious outcome of the British in the intelligence war was due to their tireless effort to perfect a system of counterespionage. In addition to the prewar foundations of British espionage, I will examine their success in terms of its comparative ideological advantage over their German adversaries. This thesis evaluates the glamourizing myth of individual performance that plagues all of today's World War II scholarship and rejects its premises in favor of a modified approach that holds the systemic advantage of the Double Cross system as being of equal importance as the achievements of its personnel. By examining the system not only will the myth of individual supremacy be overturned, but also the system's lasting legacies can be evaluated. The importance of the Double Cross system lies with the success MI-5 had during World War Two and its use as the blueprint for intelligence services moving forward after 1945.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Thomas Zeiler for being my thesis advisor and mentor throughout my time as a student at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Without his instruction, this thesis would not have taken the form it did.

I would also like to thank Dr. Fred Anderson for teaching me not only the intricacies of attempting and completing such vast project, but also teaching me how to become a better student, historian, and person.

In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Thomas Metcalf for agreeing to sit on my defense board and for teaching me how to think with a philosophical mindset instead of solely relying on a historical one.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow honors history students. Not only did they weather the storm of the prerequisite courses and research alongside me, but they also provided support and encouragement.

My hand may have written the following document but without the help of all the above people, I would not be able to call it a thesis. To those who have helped me, I am truly grateful.

“Tangle within tangle, plot and counter plot, ruse and treachery, cross and double-cross, true agent, false agent, double agent, gold and steel, the bomb, the dagger and firing party, were interwoven in many a texture so intricate as to be incredible and yet true.”¹

-Winston Churchill

¹ Winston Churchill Quoted in: Ben Macintyre, *Double Cross: The True Story of the D-day Spies* (New York: Crown, 2012), Cover Page.

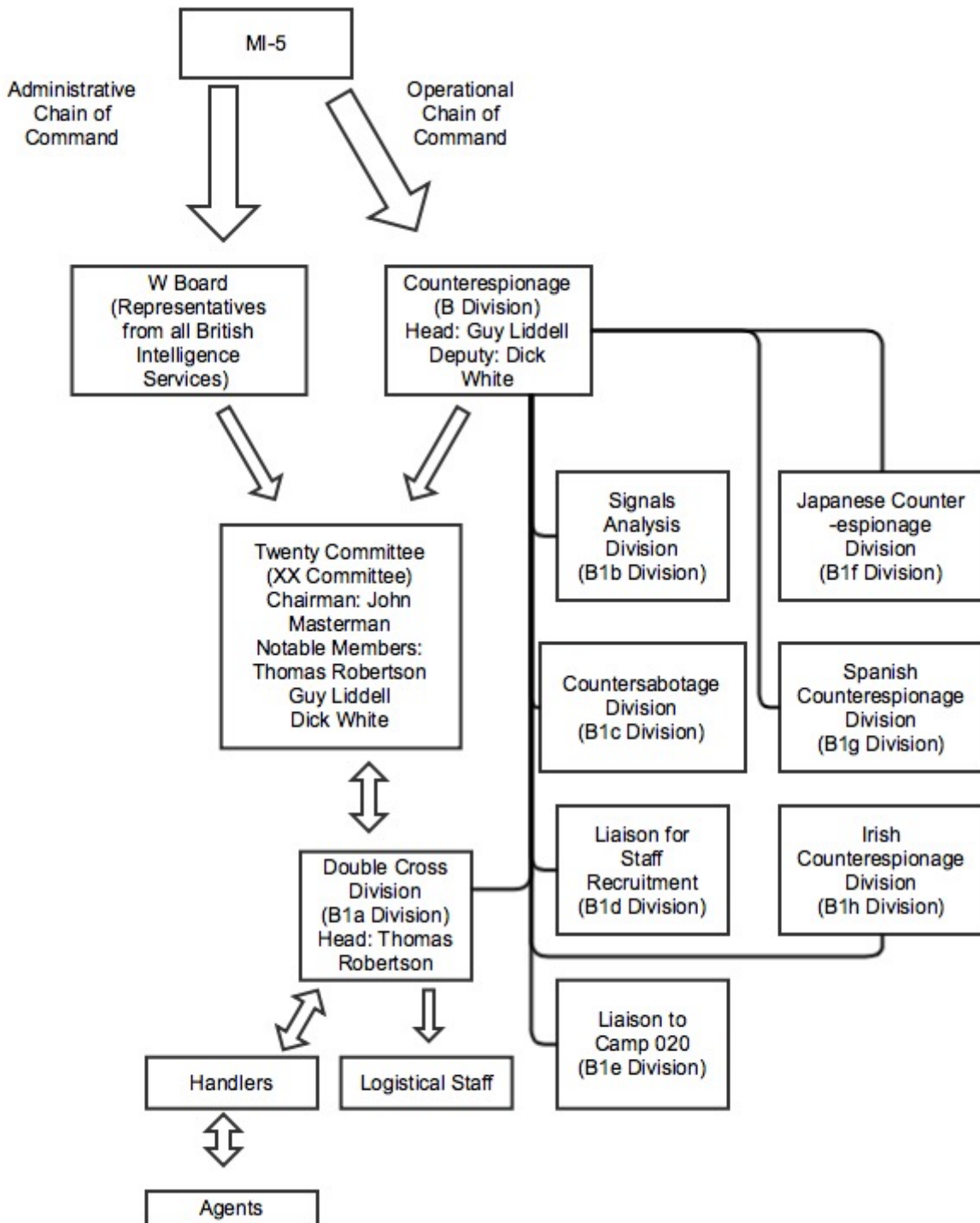
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The Double Cross System



Abwehr Code broken by Double Cross

Baseword: CONSTANTINOPL E

Give the baseword a numerical position within the alphabet and multiply by the date in which a transmission is intended (The Eighth will be used for this example):

C	O	N	S	T	A	N	T	I	N	O	P	L	E
2	9	6	12	13	1	7	14	4	8	10	11	5	3
													8

23 6 8 97 05 3 7 15 8 4 80 92 2 4

Write the alphabet giving each letter its number 1-26

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Transmission Requested: "I Have Arrived in Good Health"

Auxiliary Notes: First five letters are 'F' which denotes the agent is operating on his own free will, if pressured the F's were to be omitted.

Method to Code:

Add 'F' (the sixth letter in the alphabet) to the two above it, making 8, and selecting the 8th letter in the alphabet (H). In the second instance 'F' again added to 3, making 9, which is denoted by 'I'. The method is continued and signed with the name of the agent (in this case Fritz which is Agent Zigzag).

The groups of five are then read horizontally

2 3 6 8 9 7 0 5 3 7 1 5 8 4 8 0 9 2 2 4

f	f	f	f	f	I	H	A	V	E	x	A	R	R	I	V	E	D	A	N
h	i	l	n	o	p	h	f	y	l	y	f	z	v	q	v	n	f	c	r
D	I	N	G	O	O	D	H	E	A	L	T	H	x	F	R	I	T	Z	x
f	l	t	o	x	v	d	m	h	h	m	y	p	b	n	r	r	v	b	b

Thus: HILNO PHFYL YFZVQ VNFQR FLTOX VDMHH MYPBN RRVBB

This is the example of the code that Double Cross received from the interrogation of Edward Chapman, Codenamed: Agent Zigzag.²

² Found in Macintyre, *Zigzag*, introduction but taken from KV 2/455, Interrogation of Edward Chapman. KV stands for the file location within the British National Archives. Intelligence Files of the Double Cross System are coded with KV.

INTRODUCTION

“What is significant in the Double Cross system is the system itself. In a philosophical sense it is the “game” which counts. Certainly it was what counted for the soldier who splashed ashore on Sicily or in Normandy. Yet in the end there was an enemy to be induced down the wrong path, wrong for them but right for us. Fortunately they went.”³
- Norman Homes Pearson

During World War II, the Allied and Axis powers engaged in a war of espionage that forever cemented the need for counterintelligence and espionage units in a country’s arsenal. Organizations such as MI-5 (Britain’s domestic military intelligence agency), MI-6 (Britain’s foreign military intelligence agency), the Abwehr (German military intelligence), the Special Operations Executive (Britain’s special operations and covert force), and the Office of Strategic Services (America’s special operations and covert force) carried out clandestine operations that greatly affected the outcome of the war. Deception proved to be the greatest asset of the Allied and Axis intelligence organizations. Spies who could gather information and in turn, if the circumstances called for it, give misinformation were highly valued. Within the context of counterintelligence, the Abwehr and MI-5 battled for supremacy in the war for deception. It is important to note that these organizations had sufficient help from other intelligence divisions during the war, but the task of counterintelligence fell to MI-5 and the Abwehr.

To send misinformation to the enemy, a spy had to be turned. Double agents became the focus of MI-5, and through their Double Cross system, the Abwehr suffered defeat after defeat. The Abwehr focused on espionage, unaware that the entirety of their spy network in Britain had been compromised. What the British were able to accomplish was a near impossible feat. John Masterman, head of the XX committee and architect of the Double Cross system boasted: “We

³ Norman Homes Pearson Quoted in: J. C. Masterman, *The Double-Cross System: The Incredible True Story of How Nazi Spies Were Turned into Double Agents* (New York: Lyons Press, 2000), 12.

actively ran and controlled the German espionage system in [Britain].”⁴ After the Germans turned over their intelligence records at the conclusion of the war, it was clear that Masterman’s account was far from propaganda as the Double Cross system had positively tracked and neutralized all but four of the Abwehr agents.⁵ The Double Cross system became a filter that separated spies willing to shift allegiance from stalwart fanatics that valued the Nazi cause over their own lives. The Double Cross system became the paramount achievement of any counterintelligence unit in World War II.

The results of the Double Cross system are even more impressive, culminating in the successful deception of the Führer in Operation Fortitude and the D-Day landings in Normandy and Sicily. Modern day scholarship and historiography puts the success of the Double Cross system in the hands of the operatives and the creators of the system who walked a fine line between life and death in a game of deception. The agents’ heroics and creators’ genius were indeed parts of the reason MI-5 found success in the shadow war, but it is a fallacy to contribute the victory of the British to the very people whose trade was, quite literally, treachery. There is a far more rational explanation for the success of the Double Cross system and the associated success of MI-5 and the Allied forces.

By first reviewing the state of the intelligence war leading up to World War II’s outbreak, this thesis will reveal that the foundation laid by MI-5 in the early years of the war was fundamental to the Double Cross system’s success. Modern war’s need for deception, the cracking of the enigma code, and Britain’s pilot double agent, Agent Snow, all provided the necessary components for the Double Cross system to flourish. Furthermore, this thesis will

⁴ J. C. Masterman, *The Double-Cross System: The Incredible True Story of How Nazi Spies Were Turned into Double Agents* (New York: Lyons Press, 2000), 3.

⁵ Terry Crowley, *Deceiving Hitler: Double Cross and Deception in World War II* (Oxford: Osprey, 2008), 77.

demonstrate that the system was established in two phases: the first phase being Agent Snow, and the second being all of the following agents who were subjected to the lessons MI-5 learned as a result of Agent Snow. Next, the thesis will outline MI-5's operation of the Double Cross system to illuminate the importance of its structure. Finally, by looking at MI-5's need to perfect a system of intelligence and the failures of German espionage, it will be clear that more than spies contributed to victory. In doing so, the evidence will show that the prewar foundations established by MI-5 in the counterintelligence field, the structure of the Double Cross system, and German failures led not only to the success of the Double Cross system, but also to the success of British intelligence in the espionage war of World War II. There is no question that the men and women of Double Cross are important, but so is the system itself.

Confirmation of this thesis' claims will come through the examination of primary sources containing firsthand accounts from MI-5 officers, agents, and auxiliary staff. The primary sources that are used throughout the thesis are MI-5 files that are comprised of operative interrogations, missions, and communications. They will be used to show how the Double Cross system handled and employed each agent. The files reveal that the Double Cross system plays more of a key role in the success of MI-5 than current scholarship claims. Many secondary sources have organized their research of the primary sources that I intend to use. The difference between this thesis and the current secondary sources is the conclusions that are drawn from the sources. In sum, the structure of the system, not only the operatives, was the key to success. Popular historiography is correct in assuming the agents, handlers, and officers of Double Cross were necessary for success, but it only accounts for half of the story. These sources contain agent files and mission reports, which will be used to show the success individual agents contributed to the larger war effort. The primary sources have been used in many of the secondary sources that

this thesis utilizes. The difference with the primary sources is that instead of providing a history of what an agent accomplished, which is the case in many of the works on Double Cross, they are used to show how the agent was benefited by the standardization of the Double Cross system. Secondary sources will be used to create a framework to understand the primary sources. In conclusion, this thesis will prove that the classic spy myth intertwined in narratives of the Double Cross system is inaccurate in assuming that victory came only at the hands of daring agents or brilliant handlers who were trained in the art of deception. In reality, the spies and handlers were only part of the story. The well-founded, systematic campaign of deception on behalf of the British and the failure of German intelligence created the perfect conditions for Double Cross and British intelligence to achieve victory in the shadow war of World War II.

FOUNDATIONS OF DOUBLE CROSS

The narratives that encompass a majority of scholarship on World War II force many to fall for a romanticized version of the war. The conflict was not the good war many people perceive it to be. It was a ruthless war of annihilation that destroyed Europe. Like the perception of the war, many things were not as they seemed. The Double Cross system and the deception campaign run by MI-5 were deemed successful in the hands of the people who created, ran, or worked within the system. This narrative is only partially true. The people who made Double Cross run are indeed worthy of credit. Part of the success of Double Cross, however, was founded on external factors. The wisdom gained from counterintelligence operations from 1909 to 1939 gave the World War II era MI-5 a strong understanding of what was needed to conduct counterespionage operations. Furthermore, the test case for the Double Cross system, Agent Snow, was invaluable in educating MI-5 to wartime demands of running double agents despite Agent Snow's operation ending in shambles. Finally, the work of decoding the German cipher known as Enigma, or Ultron, by the brilliant men and women at Bletchley Park gave MI-5 the ability to exploit every German agent operating on English soil. These three prewar external factors, along with the structure of the Double Cross system, and German failures, coupled with the people of the system, contributed to the victory of MI-5 over their Abwehr enemies. Without the prewar events to prompt a strong foundation, the Double Cross system would not have been as effective as it was. Again, the personnel of Double Cross were undoubtedly important, but so was the system.

The Classic Spy Narrative: Double Cross' Historiography

*"In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies."*⁶
-Winston Churchill

The scholarship on World War II is some of the most in-depth and extensive knowledge on any war to date. The Double Cross system is no different. Agents, handlers, MI-5 brass, and historians have written about the greatest counterintelligence coup of the war. Juan Pujol wrote his daring spy memoir entitled *Operation Garbo: The Personal Story of the Most Successful Spy of World War II*. John Masterman published a personal account of the system and its operations from 1940-1945 in the book *The Double Cross system: The Incredible Story of How Nazi Spies were Turned into Double Agents*. Ben Macintyre romanticized the system and its spies in works like *Double Cross: The True Story of the D-Day Spies* and *Agent Zigzag: A True Story of Nazi Espionage, Love, and Betrayal*. Terry Crowley captured the important moments of the intelligence war in *Deceiving Hitler: Double Cross and Deception in World War II*. In addition to these colorful accounts, Guy Liddell, MI-5's B Division Head, published his personal diaries. These extensive works all show the problems, schemes, and triumphs of the Double Cross system through the glamorized description that plagues World War II scholarship. Each speaks to the brilliance of the agents, the handlers, or the men who created Double Cross.

Therein lies the problem with the existing scholarship on Double Cross. Were the British really successful solely because of their daring operatives and ingenuity, or was there more at play? There is no doubt that the agents, regardless of how unconventional they may have been, as well as the masterminds of the Double Cross system who spun a web of lies that caught the Germans during the war, are due with some credit. They were important parts of a system that helped win the espionage war. Current scholarship neglects the importance of the structure of the

⁶ Winston Churchill Quoted in: Thaddeus Holt, *The Deceivers: Allied Military Deception in the Second World War* (New York: Scribners, 2004), 504.

Double Cross system and the pre-war intelligence victories won by MI-5. Without these invaluable events aided through German failure, the victory would have never been great, regardless of how daring the spies or brilliant the creators were.

The lack of inquiry into the source of Double Cross' success can be found in the perception of the war. Today, we perceive World War II as a good war that was fought by good men. No one exemplifies these notions more than the British and their ostensibly gentlemanly style of warfare. Historians simply credited the success of the British intelligence service to innovation and patriotism. Espionage in World War II was conducted through uncharted territory and British domination was not because of MI-5's unparalleled excellence.

Juan Pujol, codenamed Agent Garbo, published a book of his wartime exploits called *Operation Garbo: The Personal Story of the Most Successful Spy of World War II*. This memoir is one of the few written by a double agent who is arguably the most important Double Cross agent in the war. Garbo's memoir, packed full of bold stories of his spy days, places the success of the Double Cross system and Operation Bodyguard in the hands of agents. Garbo continually reminisces of all that he did, operationally, to contribute to the success of Operation Bodyguard from his initial deception of the Abwehr to creating his vast, fictional intelligence network. Garbo did play an instrumental part in Operation Bodyguard, but was not the biggest reason for success. Garbo reminisces, "My main pride and satisfaction, now I look back, has been the knowledge that I greatly contributed to the reduction of casualties among the thousands – the tens of thousands – of servicemen fighting to hold the Normandy beaches."⁷ Garbo's work must be looked at through his personal bias that placed success at the hands of agents. Agents made the system work, but were not the basis for Double Cross' success.

⁷ Juan Pujol and Nigel West, *Operation Garbo: The Personal Story of the Most Successful Spy of World War II* (London: Biteback, 2011), Amazon Kindle E-Book Location 3333 of 4703.

John Masterman, head of the Twenty Committee tasked with running the Double Cross system, recorded the system's wartime exploits in *The Double Cross system: The Incredible Story of How Nazi Spies were Turned into Double Agents*. Masterman provides an overview of the Double Cross system from its theory, to its practice all the way through to the Double Cross' operations in the last year of the war. The account is invaluable because it comes from the man who was not only present during the Double Cross operations, but the person tasked with the system's oversight. As any author writing about his own exploits would, Masterman places the success of the system with the men who ran it stating, "It was the professional officers of MI-5 who were responsible for the plans . . . to the professionals, therefore, the credit for the success of double-cross work should go."⁸ Although Masterman does not focus on the agents as his associates do, he still places success with one aspect of Double Cross. Masterman's theory is not wrong, but it is also far from complete. The information Masterman provides on Double Cross is vital as long as his bias is accounted for. Nonetheless, it is a stellar piece of Double Cross history.

Ben Macintyre's *Double Cross: The True Story of the D-Day Spies* and *Agent Zigzag: A True Story of Nazi Espionage, Love, and Betrayal* are examples of books that do not show the Double Cross agents as the legendary spies that other authors claim them as. These two books still romanticize the agents and emphasize their heroics as a sizeable part of Double Cross' success. Macintyre uses these two books to create, much like Masterman, a thorough history of the Double Cross system, its operations, and its agents. Macintyre claims "The D-Day spies were not traditional warriors. None carried weapons, yet the soldiers who did owed the spies a huge and unconscious debt."⁹ Macintyre, like Masterman, is not wrong, just not completely right.

⁸ Masterman, *The Double-Cross System*, XV.

⁹ Ben Macintyre, *Double Cross: The True Story of the D-day Spies* (New York: Crown, 2012), 6.

These two books provide the most in depth view at what specific agents contributed to the war effort, and when reconciled with the other biased sources, act as important pieces of counterespionage history.

Terry Crowley is the last prominent author on the subject of the deception of Hitler. *Deceiving Hitler: Double Cross and Deception in World War II* is another overview of the Double Cross system and the victories it achieved. Crowley, much like his cohorts, falls victim to idealizing the agents and their operations. By acknowledging these biases and their effects on the author's recommendation of who should receive the credit for Double Cross' victory, it is clear that the source of success is spread between multiple factors. The agents, their handlers, and Double Cross' creators all played important roles in the campaign of deception. The answer lies, however, in the examination of not only the agents, but also on the battlefield where Double Cross can be evaluated and analyzed. British agents led assaults on Nazi ideology and undertook missions that most men would not. Heroics are worthy of partial credit, but there is a much deeper catalyst for success, one part German failure and one part British structure. The triumphs lie not solely with men, but with the system, the intelligence foundation before the war, and the ideological values running rampant in World War II.

Swapping Bullets for Daggers: The Evolution of British Intelligence from 1909-1939

“All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when we are able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must appear inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near.”
-Sun Tzu¹⁰

The masterminds behind British intelligence set themselves up for success before World War II began by engaging in counterintelligence. Counterintelligence is a necessity in any country’s arsenal. Espionage tells us our enemies’ secrets and plots, but what of are own? This is where misinformation through counterintelligence becomes necessary. In the early 1900’s the balance of power throughout Europe was shifting. Germany was acquiring power at a rapid rate, which set up its inevitable clash with other European powers, namely the British. The British still were the dominant Naval power, and in a strong economic position within Europe. Due to the concern of a potentially worthy foe, England quickly established a system in 1909 to evaluate the threat of foreign espionage within its borders.

The Committee for Imperial Defense activated a subcommittee to discover the possibility of a German espionage ring operating within England. On July 24, 1909, the subcommittee reported, “the evidence which was produced left no doubt in the minds of the subcommittee that an extensive system of German espionage exists in this country and that we have no organization for keeping in touch with that espionage and for accurately determining its extent or objective.”¹¹ The committee’s response for this harrowing conclusion was to create the Secret Service Bureau, which was restructured to form MI-5 to deal with domestic issues, and MI-6 to deal with foreign issues.¹²

¹⁰ Sun-tzu and Samuel B. Griffith, *The Art of War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 6.

¹¹ Christopher M. Andrew, *Defend the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 28.

Help with reporting cases of German espionage came from unusual sources within England. William Le Queux, the author of *The Invasion of 1910* and *Spies of the Kaiser: Plotting the Downfall of England*, is responsible for awakening the British public to the threat of a German invasion, which subconsciously helped pave the way for counterespionage in the Great War, the interwar period, and World War II. Le Queux and five other men banded together and formed a voluntary spy hunter organization that paid its own expenses to gather information on alleged German agents.¹³ *The Daily Mail* serialized Le Queux's two works of fiction into a mass circulation newspaper that had special maps in each issue to denote what province the Germans would be invading that day.¹⁴ The paranoia led to rival authors who wanted to cash in at the expense of German militarism, which only exposed more people to the idea, no matter how seemingly fictitious that German spies were operating in England.

The public's response to the alleged German espionage ring was substantial. In researching the potential German spy ring, the subcommittee of 1909 was told that five cases of German espionage were reported to the War Office in 1907, forty-seven were reported in 1908, and twenty-four in the first months of 1909 with only one report uncovering an actual enemy agent.¹⁵ German files verified that Paul Brodtmann, reported in 1909, was sent to England to report on British battleships in London. Although the majority of reports were false, the uncovering of Brodtmann proved that there were German spies operating in England.

By the beginning of World War I, MI-5 had grown in power and was better financed than it ever had been. In 1914, spy mania led to the Defense of the Realm Act, which gave the government powers resembling martial law. These precautions led MI-5 to set up a registry of suspected persons that was kept continually up to date. By 1917, the registry included 250,000

¹³ Ibid., Location 495 of 24391.

¹⁴ Ibid., Location 510 of 24391.

¹⁵ Ibid., Location 651 of 24391.

cards with 27,000 personal files of suspected agents.¹⁶ In addition to the registry, MI-5 was able to open mail and intercept cables of suspected agents, adding even more tools to track and control enemy spies.

Up until the winter of 1914, German spies were exclusively run through Nachrichten-Abteilung, but as the war progressed the German Intelligence division, Sektion IIIb, started deploying spies from their spy school in occupied Antwerp.¹⁷ Because MI-5 could open mail, three arrests were made in 1915 including one man named Karl Müller.¹⁸ Müller's arrest went unknown to his German handlers, which gave MI-5 their first opening to impersonate him and send false operation reports and exaggerated funding requests. The success MI-5 had in the beginning of the Great War minimized the German espionage threat in the latter half the conflict. The success actually diverted manpower and resources from MI-5 to aid in domestic and foreign subversion because no one feared German espionage.

As with any military drawdown after a war, personnel and budgets are slashed. MI-5's budget was cut nearly a third of its size and went from a wartime staff of 844 officers to 35 in 1920.¹⁹ MI-5's necessary secrecy and lack of political acumen left them in a low position on politicians' lists of necessary agencies. However, MI-5 uncovered Soviet agents within the British government in 1929, which proved their necessity in the defense of the realm. In 1931, MI-5 was converted from a military organization to a fully civilian staffed one.²⁰ The thought of German espionage only arose again to MI-5 in 1927.

¹⁶ Ibid., Location 1549 of 24391.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.,67.

¹⁹ Ibid., 117.

²⁰ Ibid., 130.

The British SIS (security service) developed a German translator and administrative assistant that supplied a list with nearly 70 German agents operating in Britain.²¹ MI-5 kept the Germans on their radar, but it was not until the future head of MI-5's B Division (counterespionage division), Guy Liddell visited Germany in 1933 that the threat of Nazism became concerning. Though Liddell incorrectly assumed the internment he witnessed at Dachau was a passing phase of Hitler's political agenda, MI-5 took the Nazi party's takeover of Germany more seriously. In 1937, the first double agent since World War I was put into action.

Major Christopher 'Mad Major' Draper was a World War I pilot who in 1933, was approached by a German representative asking if he could supply intelligence on the RAF.²² Draper revealed the proposal to the Security Service, which activated him as a double agent. Unfortunately MI-5 did not have the ability to efficiently assemble the scripted information for Draper to give the Abwehr. By 1937, unimpressed with the quality of information, the Abwehr ceased communications with Draper.

MI-5 was short staffed and unprepared to handle the rigors of controlling double agents. MI-5 wanted to replicate its success in World War I, no matter how initially haphazard, but its weak infrastructure proved to be too big of challenge to overcome. What MI-5 did have was the knowledge of the steps needed to accurately track and control German agents from its experiences in World War I. Without knowing it, MI-5 created a strong understanding and foundation of how to conduct counterespionage. All it needed now was the resources, manpower, and something that could get MI-5 a jumpstart on tracking enemy Abwehr agents. When War came, so did the funding and manpower, but the jumpstart ended up being an agent named Snow

²¹ National Archives, TNA KV 2/1116.

²² Andrew, *Defend*, Location 4856 of 24391.

An Undesirable Affair: Agent Snow

“The deceiver by stratagem leaves it to the person himself whom he is deceiving to commit the errors of understanding which at last, flowing into one result suddenly change the nature of things in his eyes.”²³
-Carl Von Clausewitz

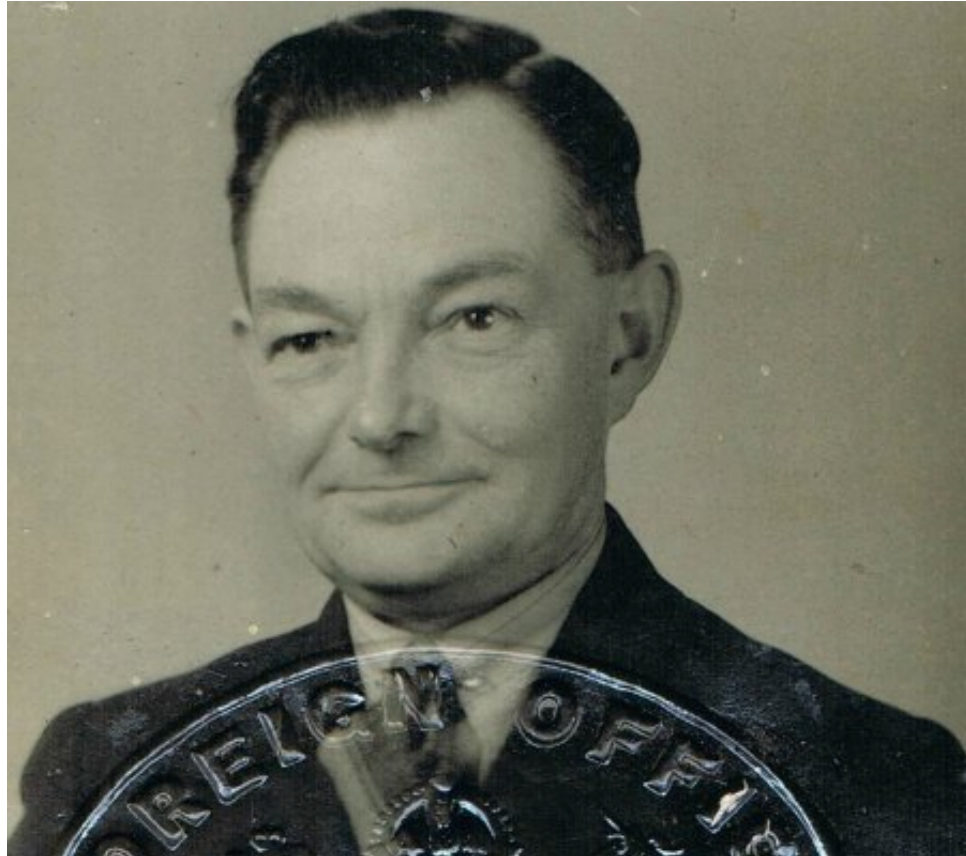


Figure 1 ²⁴

Agent Snow was, by all means, a peculiar and unconventional spy. Arthur George Owens was a “shifty-looking, short, bony-faced, Welshman.”²⁵ Owens represented the first phase of the Double Cross system and was the only agent to be recruited within a structure similar to the prewar system. By the end of his tenure, although a mediocre deceiver, his case aided Bletchley

²³ Carl Von Clausewitz, Michael Howard, and Peter Paret, *On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 274.

²⁴ KV 2/444, Photo of Arthur Owens, downloaded from the National Archives.

²⁵ Crowdy, *Deceiving Hitler*, 14. The description of Agent Snow is quoted from Crowdy’s work but also found in his security file KV 2/444.

Park code breakers in cracking the Abwehr Enigma and set MI-5 on the right track for success. Owens' career ended in dismissal from MI-5, but not before providing important lessons to his handler Thomas "Tar" Robertson on the troublesome nature of double agency and according to the head of MI-5's B division deputy Dick White, "Saved us from absolute darkness on the subject of German espionage."²⁶ Owens' story is as important to the success of Double Cross as the cracking of the Enigma or MI-5's prewar work with counterespionage. Snow's case shows the human aspect of the Double Cross system was necessary, but how the system was changed after Snow's departure shows how important the structure of Double Cross was.

Owens was born in 1899, emigrated from Britain to Canada, and returned back to Britain in 1933.²⁷ He was constantly moving, always unsettled, and was employed as an electrical engineer and a travelling salesman. Owens, despite his shortcomings, was a masterful engineer. He patented an electric storage cell, which made him a client of the Admiralty and the German Navy, the Kriegsmarine.²⁸ The limits on U-boat production, along with many other restrictions on German military power required by the Treaty of Versailles, were broken by Hitler's regime. By 1935, this relaxation of the terms resulted in an increase in U-boat production. To monitor the building of the U-boats, the Admiralty needed a third party, one who regularly travelled to Baltic States for business. Owens often travelled to Hamburg and Kiel to sell his patented batteries that could extend the life of a U-boat.²⁹ Furthermore, Owens had passed information to the Admiralty of what he witnessed on his trips, and in 1936, Owens began to profit from this information; it was at this moment when Agent Snow was born.³⁰

²⁶ Macintyre, *Double Cross*, 38.

²⁷ Crowdy, *Deceiving Hitler*, 14

²⁸ Nigel West and Madoc Roberts, *The Double Life of a World War II Spy* (London: Biteback, 2011), 1.

²⁹ West and Madoc, *The Double Life*, 3.

³⁰ From this point on Arthur Owens will be referred to as Snow.

Snow always had an identity problem. He did not view himself as British, but as a radical Welshman. Snow and his initial case officer did not get along, and this difficulty pushed him toward betraying England in 1936 “in revenge for centuries of abuse against his homeland [Wales].”³¹ Snow had an impeccable resume that qualified him for double agency. He had contacts in the Admiralty, MI-5, and made trips to RAF stations regularly. German intelligence, as expected, received Snow’s request with expediency and excitement. The Abwehr immediately set him up with an address in Hamburg, Postfach 629, to mail his findings in code.³² Unfortunately for the Germans, Christopher Draper, the pilot who became an interwar spy, had compromised the address in favor of the British.³³ MI-5 immediately knew of Snow’s attempted treachery, and declared him an espionage suspect.

In November 1936, the Security Service terminated his tenure as an agent because of the lackluster results he brought to his British handlers and his unforthcoming nature of his relationship with the Germans.³⁴ In the following month, German agents approached Snow. They not only introduced him to fellow spies in England, but also offered to solve his financial woes (which had been a source of his spotty intelligence work) if he spied on the RAF. In late December 1936, Snow decided to tell MI-5 of his pending offer with German intelligence. Snow’s questionnaire from the Abwehr instructed him to acquire samples of RAF technology learn about the Sperry auto pilot system, RAF organization, deployment patterns, ammo and fuel dumps, and take pictures of the electronic height finders used by RAF squadrons.³⁵ The British decided to reenlist Snow as an agent, which came at the perfect time because Snow’s German handler had changed.

³¹ Crowdy, *Deceiving Hitler*, 14.

³² West and Madoc, *The Double Life*, 5.

³³ Masterman, *Double Cross*, 37.

³⁴ West and Madoc, *The Double Life*, 7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

In the summer of 1937, Snow met his new handler, named “Dr. Rantzau,” a director of an import-export business in Germany. Rantzau, however, was a fictitious cover. He was actually Captain Nikolas Ritter, Chief of Air Intelligence in the Abwehr espionage department.³⁶ MI-5’s reemployment of Snow came with certain conditions. MI-5 did not trust Snow, and rightfully so. Snow eventually came clean to MI-5 about his German ties, albeit with a fraction of truth. The flirtatious relationship Snow had with the truth was a grave lesson for the future of the Double Cross system. From then on MI-5 had to tail Snow wherever he went. This was an inconvenience and a strain on the manpower of MI-5, but it did yield important information. Snow, surprisingly, never informed Ritter of his reemployment, and during his visits to Germany, Snow reported learning espionage skills on each visit, like operating wireless transmitters.³⁷ Before the war started, in his own account, Snow boasted that the Germans had set him up with his own wireless operator.³⁸ Snow also claimed that he had pieced together an espionage network of 15 informants and agents.³⁹ At the outbreak of the war, MI-5 had a double agent, although somewhat untrustworthy, who gave MI-5 a decent head start over their Abwehr counterpart.

It is important to note that Snow never helped one side out of clear allegiance or patriotism. For Snow, it was clearly a money game; there is evidence of him selling secrets to both sides. Snow sold secrets because MI-5 would allow him to have a longer leash, and the Abwehr also paid him a hefty sum for his troubles. In 1939, Snow gave MI-5 the names of the last three German agents operating in England.⁴⁰ Snow also aided in the deciphering of

³⁶ KV 2/444. Shows numerous postages sent to a ‘Dr. Rantzau’ and reports given to MI-5 about German activities.

³⁷ West and Madoc, *The Double Life*, 17.

³⁸ F. H. Hinsley and Michael Howard, *British Intelligence in the Second World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 41.

³⁹ Crowdy, *Deceiving Hitler*, 17.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

Abwehr's Enigma code. Snow's wireless set offered an enormous opportunity for the decoders at Bletchley Park.

The largest breakthrough acquired from Snow was the manipulation of agent codes. The codes given to Snow were used by code breakers to decrypt other German spies' cyphers. Once Bletchley Park had deciphered a code, MI-5 arrested the corresponding agent. This game of cat and mouse continued well on into the war, and provided an extensive pool of candidates for the Double Cross system. Without Snow's codes, the code breakers would have not had a 'ground zero' to begin reconstructing the Abwehr codes. Despite all of Snow's contributions to Double Cross and the war effort, his machinations spiraled out of control and ended in the latter months of 1940.

Snow's undoing was his lust for lying. On 16 March 1940, Snow met a man named Walter Dicketts, who he tried to recruit as a British agent. Over the course of the night after the two had met at a pub, Snow told Dicketts wild stories of his life as a diamond trader and tried to befriend the ex-intelligence officer from World War I. Dicketts, however, believed that Snow was a German agent, and in the following weeks tailed him, hoping to acquire his job since his post war life had been anything but spectacular. After reporting that possibility of a German spy in England, Dicketts was recruited as an agent with the codename "Celery," after being sent by MI-5 to meet Robertson.⁴¹ Robertson, distrustful of Snow, sent Celery along on his trip to Lisbon to meet Dr. Randzau. Celery played the part of an RAF technician, so Snow could easily sell his worth to his German handler. Celery secretly had two missions: the first was to corroborate the loyalty of Snow and the second was to "penetrate the Abwehr as far as possible and get into Germany."⁴² What happened after their arrival is a tale of two different stories.

⁴¹ From now on Dicketts will be referred to as 'Celery'.

⁴² Crowdy, *Deceiving Hitler*, 81.

During debriefing, Snow informed Robertson that he had indeed met Randzau and he had been accused of being in league with the British, to which he replied: “That’s perfectly true”, and then was given 10,000 £, and concealed explosives.⁴³ It was clear, as usual, that Snow was lying about the events that actually took place and since he was still in employment of the Abwehr, he most likely had not been compromised. Once again, Snow proved the double agent game was extremely volatile and unpredictable.

Celery had an extremely different take on the event of the pair’s Lisbon trip. Celery described meeting Randzau in a bar with Snow where Randzau propositioned him to come to Germany to be debriefed about the RAF without the accompaniment of Snow. Celery spent three and a half weeks in Germany with Randzau, being interrogated on his knowledge of the RAF. He told Robertson that the state of Germany was quite good and that civilian morale was still high despite the allied bombing campaigns.⁴⁴ Celery also learned many things about the German intelligence service’s state and German invasion plans, which planned to neutralize the Navy with mines and assured that the RAF were mediocre bombers.⁴⁵ Celery proved to be a better source of information than Snow, which marked the end of Snow’s career.

Snow was a constant liar and on multiple occasions, put Celery’s life in danger out of spite. By this time there were more agents that had been recruited to Double Cross, foreshadowing the end of Snow’s services. In 1941, Masterman, Robertson, Liddell, and White sat down and decided on the termination of Snow’s services because he had failed to warn Celery prior to his arrival in Lisbon that he had told Randzau of their betrayal.⁴⁶ True to form, Snow tried to spin a web of lies to force MI-5 to keep him as an agent. The excerpt below from

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 84.

⁴⁶ Guy Maynard Liddell and Nigel West, *The Guy Liddell Diaries: MI5's Director of Counter-espionage in World War II*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2005), Entry from April 10, 1940.

the conversation with Snow shows just how dealing with double agents proved to be an immense task:

Robertson: You did not tell Celery that the game was blown before he went into Germany.

Snow: Well, I did tell him before he went to Germany.

Robertson: You definitely sent a man on a dangerous mission.

Snow: That's a lie.

Robertson: You sent him knowingly, I maintain, to put the worst construction on it, to his death probably.

Snow: I did not. I did nothing of the kind,

Robertson: But I gathered that this exchange of confidences between Celery and you took place, according to you before you went to the meeting?

Snow: What confidences do you mean?

Robertson: Informing him the game was up.

Snow: I believe I told him in the room.

Robertson: In which room?

Snow: But I know I told him in front of the Doctor, definitely. In the room there.

Masterman: Doesn't it seem to you that it was a very treacherous act, to say the least of it, not to tell him before he got to the Doctor?

Snow: I am positive I told him before he went to the Doctor?

Masterman: Positive you told him before he went to the Doctor?

Snow: Yes.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ This interview can be found in the file KV 2/444 and in Crowdy, *Deceiving Hitler*, 88. A mention of the planned interview can be found in Volume One of the Liddell Diaries on 10 April 1941.

Snow sealed his fate. A wireless message was sent back over his radio set stating that Snow had given up the espionage game and was gravely ill. The Germans replied that they would continue to await his transmissions when he recovered. Snow was interned at Dartmoor Prison until the end of the conflict, when he emigrated to Canada.⁴⁸

Even though his spy days were over, Snow was an invaluable asset to the success of Double Cross. He helped crack the Abwehr code, provided information on enemy agents in England, and taught MI-5 and Robertson, the future handler of Double Cross, the essentials of running a double agent. Without his contributions, Double Cross may have never gotten the start that it did and MI-5 may have never learned what it needed to run a counterespionage system. The worth of Snow is in how he changed the Double Cross system. After his departure the structure shifted and without that change all the future double agents could have gone to ruin just as Snow did. To see how important the structure is, it necessary to examine the people that shaped its creation. For all his faults, Snow is a valuable piece of counterespionage history. He alone is the first phase of Double Cross. His end came at the hands of his best asset, lying. He showed that the mythmaking historiography is somewhat justified because he was an individual who shaped the spy game. But with Snow's contributions added to the foundations of counter espionage dating back to 1909, MI-5 was well on its way to creating a system that dominated the war of deception. MI-5 received another invaluable tool to wage war against the Germans. That was the cracking of the Enigma Code, the greatest secret of the war.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

A PhD's Game: Breaking the Enigma Code

"The breaking of the Enigma, the German cipher machine, was the most important intelligence triumph of this or any other war."⁴⁹

-Ben Macintyre

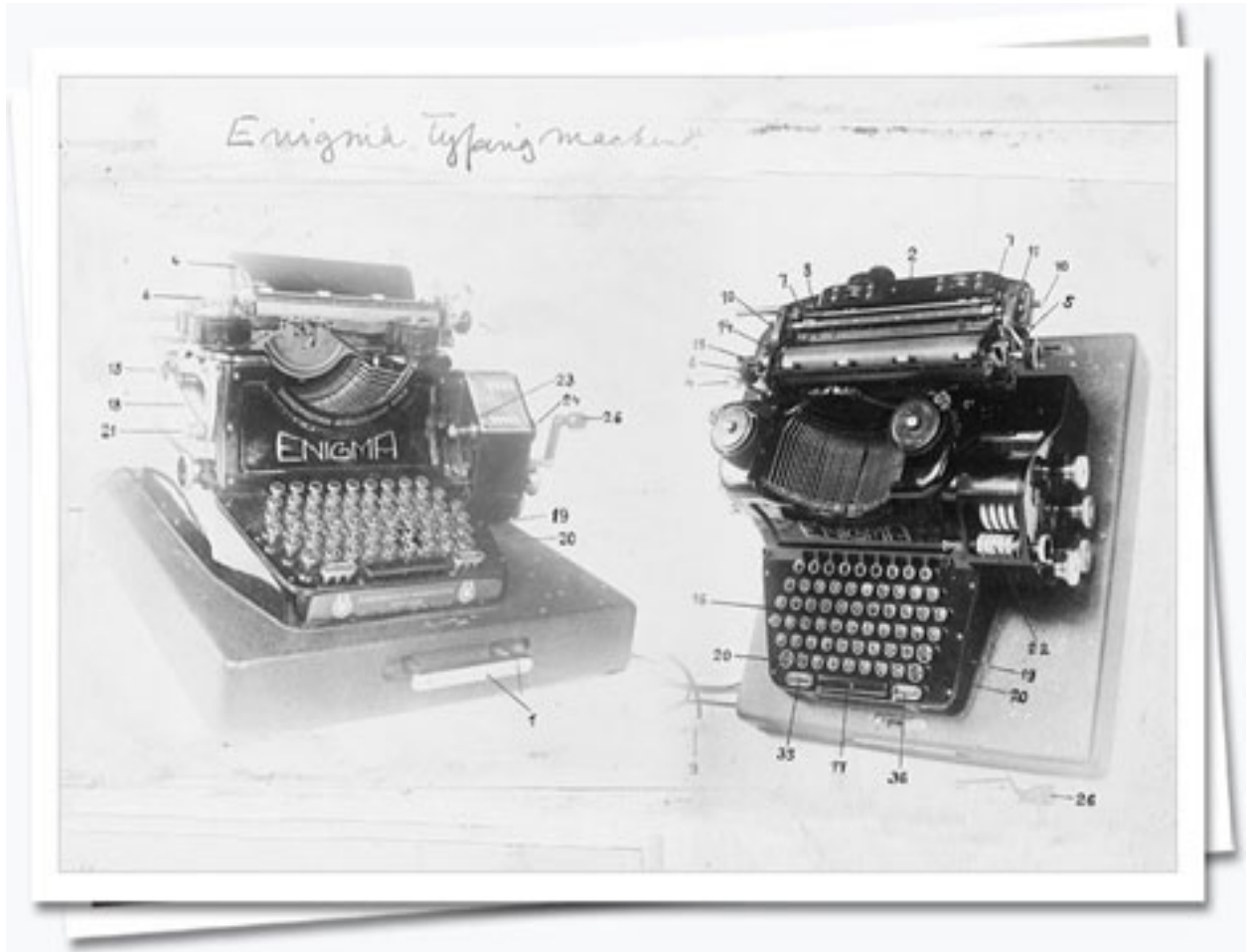


Figure 2⁵⁰

Tracking of enemy spies is inherently difficult because in order to begin the hunt for an agent, one needs a starting point. No tracking can begin unless some clue points the hunter in the right direction. The methods that allowed the tracking of enemy agents in World War I was not

⁴⁹ Macintyre, *Double Cross*, 35.

⁵⁰ HW 25/6, Photo of the Enigma machine,

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/worldwar2/theatres-of-war/atlantic/investigation/battle-of-the-atlantic/sources/photos/2/>

conducive to the new era of warfare. Opening letters and receiving tips from paranoid citizens who might have read too many spy novels would not catch the men under the control of Hitler's spymaster, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris. But much like its World War I predecessors, MI-5 received help in tracking agents from an external source. The breaking of Enigma code was not only one of the greatest intelligence victories and closely guarded secret of World War II, but it also gave MI-5 the upper hand over the Abwehr.

Britain knew that if it could decode the method that the Germans and the rest of the Axis powers used to communicate, the course of the war could be altered. The British had set up listening posts along the English coastline in an effort to intercept and decode "every signal from every captain, commander, military division, battleship, and U-boat."⁵¹ With the greatest minds working on outwitting the German coding machine, it was only a matter of time until one side outwitted the other. The head of the Enigma project, Commander Edward Travis compartmentalized the Enigma project to ensure efficiency in uncovering German secrets. The codes were pushed through a sort of assembly line: Code breakers' sole job was to break the code, the machine room was responsible for using decrypted keys of rigged Enigma machines to type the messages in German, the translators were responsible for the translation of the message, and the Watch would organize and distribute the message to the necessary channels.⁵² A fifty-five year old cryptographer, Dilly Knox arrived at Bletchley Park in 1939 and was eventually credited with the decryption of the Abwehr codes in the final months of 1940. His work was important because the Abwehr code used a slightly different configuration than the more basic Axis codes.

⁵¹ Macintyre, *Double Cross*, 35.

⁵² Macintyre, *Double Cross*, 75.

When Knox broke the Abwehr codes, a multitude of possible courses of action could be taken. MI-5 decided to monitor and apprehend the agents for the possibility of double-crossing their German handlers. When an agent became compromised and was detained, he or she was given a choice to join MI-5 or die at the hands of a firing squad. Most chose life over the defense of Nazi ideology.⁵³ The misinformation that the first compromised agent sent back to his handler was tracked through the Abwehr network and provided the key for the decryption of their modified cypher.⁵⁴ Once the codes were cracked, MI-5 knew all of the operational agents within Britain and could uncover what the Abwehr did and did not know about the Allied war effort. The Abwehr codes and “decrypted messages were to prove to the security services that the success of an audacious operation known as the Double Cross system was possible.”⁵⁵

In the first months after the Abwehr codes were broken, the tracking of enemy agents was shown to be completely effective. Between 3 September and 12 November of 1940, twenty-five agents were sent to England from Germany. One committed suicide, five were executed, fifteen were sent to detention facilities, and four became double agents.⁵⁶ The success of Double Cross clearly started with the decrypting of the Abwehr codes.

Although the Enigma code is well known today, its contributions to the Allied campaign are endless. Sinclair McKay, author of the *Secret Lives of Codebreakers*, stated: “From the beginning, the desperate need to break the Enigma codes was about much more than simple tactical intelligence. It was about survival. To unlock the secrets of Enigma would mean penetrating the heart of the enemy’s campaign; . . . the code breakers at Bletchley Park aimed at reading the enemy’s every message and, in doing so, potentially trying to anticipate his every

⁵³ Many of the agents who refused, unless deemed fanatics, were not even executed. Many were interned at prisoners for the duration of the war.

⁵⁴ Macintyre, *Double Cross*, 175.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Macintyre, *Double Cross*, 36.

move.”⁵⁷ Because of the efforts of the men and women at Bletchley Park, MI-5 knew all of the foreign agents operating on British soil and could track them. The groundwork from World War I, Agent Snow’s contributions, and the Enigma set up the foundation for Double Cross to succeed. Like Snow, the code breakers gave MI-5 the means to alter the structure of the Double Cross system for the better. As current historiography states, the people are important to the success of Double Cross. It is true that without the code breakers, MI-5 would not be able to boast that they ran the German espionage system within England. Without a system, however, to put the work that the men and women of MI-5 produced into action, MI-5 would not be able to say they controlled espionage in England. Both parts are needed and the importance of the system is constantly forgotten.

⁵⁷ McKay, *The Secret Lives of Code Breakers*, 5-6.

SHADOW WAR

MI-5's prewar triumphs in building a strong counterespionage foundation and breaking the Enigma code were only enhanced by the lessons learned from the first Double Cross agent, Snow. He provided a wealth of information, not only in wartime operations, but also lessons in human nature. Despite Snow's spotty service, MI-5 and the War Department knew that counterespionage could be a viable source of covert attack. With the German spy network compromised, it was only a matter of time before MI-5 controlled all the agents, either by detainment or as double agents. With Snow out of the picture and new spies emerging, notably Agent Tate, MI-5 got the opportunity to prove the relevance of deception to Allied commanders. But, as Snow proved, humans are hard to control. MI-5, after all, was battling Germany's brilliant spymaster, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris.

But there was more to the Double Cross than just this personality. Clearly, the counterespionage division of MI-5 faced an overextended Abwehr. The compartmentalized structure of MI-5 was the key to focusing and maximizing the effectiveness of counterespionage operations. Finally, the formation of the Twenty Committee (XX committee) provided hierarchical context for how the men who ran Double Cross were arranged. The structure of the enemy and MI-5 explains why the execution of Double Cross was much more reliant on factors beyond the direct control of MI-5

Radios and Parachutes: Counterespionage's Rise to Relevance

“Chinese philosopher general Sun Tzu advised that ‘Knowledge of the enemy can only be obtained by other men.’ If this is the case, and history suggests it is, the study of espionage must come out of the shadows. One should always know one’s enemy. More so if it is an enemy within.”⁵⁸

Agent Snow gave MI-5 the ability to prove its relevance. MI-5 realized that double agents could give them an advantage in the war. Indeed, it did so through the Normandy landings, but without the constant success of Double Cross agents the program may have never come to fruition. Counterespionage is chiefly a defensive mechanism used in a time of war. The British did indeed use its double agents to find information about Germany, but they were mainly sent to spread disinformation and to track the German war machine. The difference between British and German intelligence is that the British were systematic. Hitler did little to merge his multitude of code breaking agencies into a single entity, and did not require dramatic results from the Abwehr.⁵⁹ Hitler’s offensive nature did not rely on intelligence to react, and thus the German war machine kept pushing toward the Atlantic Ocean seemingly without worry. It was not until Hitler found himself on the defensive that the lack of a German intelligence foundation revealed itself, to his great disadvantage. MI-5 started making a case for itself to once again be the tip of the spear.

MI-5 had 36 officers in July 1939, a number that rose to 102 by January 1940.⁶⁰ At the outbreak of the war, MI-5 had only been used to dealing with enemy aliens rather than finding German agents. In September 1939, MI-5 identified 71,600 enemy aliens and another 400 suspects that should be interned at the start of the war. MI-5 was tasked to interview each person

⁵⁸ Crowdy, *The Enemy Within*, 14.

⁵⁹ David Kahn, "The Rise of Intelligence," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 5 (September 2006): 132, accessed October 8, 2014.

⁶⁰ Andrew, *Defend the Real*, Location 5082 of 24,391.

on the list, vet him or her, and place him or her in a category of A, B, or C. Those in the A were to be detained, the B group was allowed to travel with restrictions and permits, and the C group was free to go as they pleased.⁶¹

Liddell estimated fourth-fifths of MI-5's time was spent dealing with alien residents, rendering them incapable to handle the important job of counterespionage.⁶² Even Winston Churchill complained, “. . . the witch-finding activities of MI-5 are becoming an actual impediment to the more important work.”⁶³ If MI-5 was to lead the war effort and uncover enemy agents, something had to change. An audit of MI-5 in 1941 further demonstrated that MI-5 experienced organizational and communicative breakdowns that led it to be ill prepared to handle the wartime rigors of intelligence. The report documented that B division, the counterespionage division of MI-5 under Guy Liddell, had grown to 133 officers, but they were spread out in 29 sections, and further put into 70 to 80 subsections.⁶⁴ MI-5 was consequently put under new leadership and restructured. Counterespionage operations fell to the men of B Division: Liddell, White, Robertson, and Masterman.

B division came to realize an essential truth about double agents: they valued survival over fanaticism. Some spies were drawn to deception through their lust for adventure. Others served either side equally, and some were killed as soon as they were arrested and detained. Before the XX committee of MI-5 created the Double Cross system in 1941, Liddell, White, Robertson, and Masterman started unwittingly creating an espionage empire.

⁶¹ The information in this Paragraph on Detention of Aliens was taken from Nigel West, *MI5: British Security Service Operations, 1909-1945* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), 137-140. It is also found in Crowdy, *Deceiving Hitler*, 19.

⁶² Liddell and West, *The Guy Liddell Diaries*, 17 December 1939.

⁶³ TNA PREM 4/39/3, National Archives, Churchill memo to Foreign and Home Secretaries 25 January 1941.

⁶⁴ TNA KV 4/88, National Archives, Petrie Report, 13 February 1941.

In 1939, Snow's case started to produce results. Liddell stated in his diary on 27 October 1939: "The Snow case is looking promising. Snow and his Welsh friend are to do a course in Germany on intelligence and sabotage. It is understood that the Germans are sending messages on the back of stamps. Snow brought back with him some instructions on the under side of a postage stamp."⁶⁵ These small victories afforded MI-5 the insight that the German intelligence machine and the Germans could be controlled. On 31 October 1939, Liddell wrote that MI-5 had recovered microphotographs of Snow's questionnaire that was to be turned into a man named Eschborn.⁶⁶ Eschborn was enrolled as a double agent codenamed Dragonfly later that year. The failure of Operation Sea Lion (the invasion of Britain) and the Blitz of London finally cemented the need for counterespionage agents.

The Enigma machine provided England with the knowledge that Hitler planned to invade in Operation Sea Lion. The code breakers at Bletchley Park intercepted a message stating that because England refused to surrender, the Führer decided to obliterate England to prevent it being used as a base of operations against the Reich.⁶⁷ The ensuing blitz was devastating as the Luftwaffe, in a three-month span, dropped 17,831 tons of explosives and more than 13,000 incendiary bombs on English targets.⁶⁸ The British avoided complete destruction, but parts of Britain were decimated. MI-5 used the aerial raids to their advantage by letting their double agents report where the Luftwaffe had done considerable damage, which proved their creditability to their German handlers. The spies were supposed to give as accurate information as possible about the air raids to bolster their credibility and set them up for later and more

⁶⁵ Ibid., 27 October 1939.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 31 October 1939.

⁶⁷ F. W. Winterbotham, *The Ultra Secret* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 41.

⁶⁸ Ladislav Farago, *The Game of the Foxes: The Untold Story of German Espionage in the United States and Great Britain during World War II* (New York, NY: D. McKay, 1972), 632.

important deception operations.⁶⁹ The job done by MI-5, in league with the code breakers at Bletchley Park, showed how double agents were as vital to England's survival as the RAF.

The rise to relevance for MI-5 and its B division was not an easy one. For the first time MI-5 was used, but for the wrong purpose. After trying to balance too many jobs, B division, under the restructured MI-5, refocused its efforts on counterespionage. The deception campaign surrounding the Blitz and Snow's contributions to B division made a strong case for its importance to the war effort. After the termination of Snow's services, the structure of Double Cross began to come together under Masterman, White, Liddell, and Robertson. B division built Double Cross around its enemy, the Abwehr and Hitler's spymaster, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris.

⁶⁹ Masterman, *Double Cross*, 134.

der Feind: Admiral Wilhelm Canaris and the Abwehr

“From our mistakes we reap the richest harvest. Seen against the reality, they show who we were and why.”⁷⁰

-Henrich Mann



Figure 3⁷¹

Admiral Canaris was as integral to the success of double crossing the Germans as the agents. Canaris was a brilliant strategist and spymaster for the Germans in World War II. Unfortunately, his work does not reflect his brilliance, as the Abwehr continually fell short in the

⁷⁰ Heinrich Mann and Hans Bach, *Zur Zeit Von Winston Churchill* (Frankfurt Am Main: S. Fischer, 2004), XIII. Also quoted in *Canaris: The Life and Death of Hitler's Spymaster*

⁷¹ Michael Mueller, *Canaris: The Life and Death of Hitler's Spymaster* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007), 209.

covert war against MI-5. It was not because of incompetence that the Abwehr failed, it was due to Canaris' morality. Canaris died a traitor to the Führer because his opposition to the Nazi regime cemented his place as a silent hero to the Allied cause. By using the Abwehr to sabotage Hitler's war effort, the Double Cross system and British intelligence were able to defeat their Abwehr enemies and deceive Hitler. Canaris' biography shows how he played a significant role in the British intelligence victory. MI-5 could have never won without an adversary; luckily their adversary shared the same enemy as MI-5.

Canaris was a German patriot from birth. In 1905, at the age of 18, he joined the German Navy, deploying aboard the *Dresden* as an officer at the outbreak of World War I.⁷² It was in World War I where Canaris found his love for espionage. Canaris was sent to Madrid as a German Naval Attaché whose job was to recruit seamen along the docks to supply information on neutral nations. Canaris eventually created a network of spies. Showing an aptitude for clandestine operations, he used the name Reed Rosas and frequently travelled from private residence to hotels, used disguises, and contacted informants using codes and dead drops.⁷³ World War I supplied him with the knowledge and grit to operate in the shadows for the German cause. During the interwar years, Canaris continued to rise in Naval intelligence. As Germany continued to radicalize, Canaris adopted a unique definition for what German patriotism really meant to him.

Canaris thought the future of Germany lay in freedom from the Versailles Treaty and freedom from war, believing in the preservation of Germany through peace in the world and never betrayed this ideal. From the beginning of his tenure as leader of the Abwehr, he worked to counteract Hitler's nationalist agenda. Captain Franz Leideig confessed after the war that "the

⁷² Lauran Paine, *German Military Intelligence in World War II: The Abwehr* (New York: Stein and Day, 1984), 21.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 24.

Canaris group within the Abwehr was the first united military clique working against Hitler with any semblance of a planned programme . . . rebellion existed for many years before the war; it actually began in 1934 when Admiral Canaris was put in charge of the Abwehr.”⁷⁴ Throughout 1934-1939, Canaris and his network worked to unseat Hitler. In 1939, Canaris came close to achieving his goal of German security and prosperity with an attempt to arrest of Hitler. Unfortunately for him and his cohorts, their attempt was the last chance they had to avert war from within.

Hitler ordered the invasion of Poland on 24 August 1939. Canaris and his associates knew that something had to be done. The invasion orders were postponed which gave them extra time to prevent war. Later that evening, Hitler gave orders to abort the mission to invade Poland. Since the invasion order was not agreed to by the Reich cabinet and was deemed unconstitutional, Canaris and the conspirators tried to overthrow Hitler by pressuring the police to arrest him.⁷⁵ This request was not carried out, and Hitler, none the wiser, still sat at the head of the Reich. Despite this failure, Canaris continued to block Hitler’s war machine for the rest of the war.

By the time the war began, Canaris knew of Nazi war plans, but also knew that to challenge Hitler was suicide. Canaris undermined Hitler where he could in order to prevent the war from lasting longer than it had to. When Canaris witnessed the atrocities of the Nazis, he worked even harder to undermine Hitler’s war efforts. Hitler disgusted Canaris when he received reports from Abwehr agents of mass murders in Poland and witnessed the war crimes of the SS during his time at the front. Canaris informed Wehrmacht General Wilhelm Keitel, “I have information that mass executions are being planned in Poland, and that members of the Polish

⁷⁴ Ibid., 29, 76.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 154.

nobility and the Roman Catholic bishops and priests have been singled out for extermination.”⁷⁶

The General politely informed Canaris that Hitler ordered the extermination himself. The atrocities in Poland were the turning point for Canaris. He worked to undermine the Nazis while still conducting successful intelligence operations to avoid suspicion of his treachery.

The Abwehr itself contained only a small number of dissenters. Of the 13,000 personnel in 1939, only 50 were active conspirators.⁷⁷ Canaris was in control, however, and strategically worked to undermine Hitler. Canaris still made improvements to the Abwehr organization. Once Canaris took control of the Abwehr, he faced many problems similar to the ones MI-5 dealt with at the beginning of the war. The service swelled rapidly when Hitler expanded the army in 1934. Canaris also had to reconcile the multiple missions the Abwehr was tasked to provide. Before taking control, the Abwehr dealt with all intelligence needs of Germany. After some time as the head of the Abwehr, Canaris restructured it to deal solely with espionage.

Before his changes were accomplished, the Abwehr was made up of six groups. Group one was army espionage, group two the cipher center, group three was counterespionage, group four dealt with sabotage and uprisings, group five-handled naval intelligence, and group six was air force espionage. After the reorganization, it was clear Canaris was focused on espionage. The military espionage groups were renamed as Abwehr One, or sabotage, and uprisings became Abwehr Two, while counterespionage became Abwehr Three. Canaris also created a central section dealing with administration and a foreign branch dealing with the German foreign ministry. Section One had 63 officers and was further broken down into group One Army East, One Army West, One Army Technical, One Marine, One Luftwaffe, One Luftwaffe Technical, and One Economy. Section One coordinated for the field units, known as Abwehrstelle or Ast.

⁷⁶ Martin Gilbert, *The Second World War: A Complete History* (New York: H. Holt, 1989), 8.

⁷⁷ Heinz Höhne, *Canaris: Hitler's Master Spy* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 1999), 407.

The spying was conducted out of these posts, and each post was accountable to Abwehr headquarters on the mission directive. Yet they were free to choose how they would accomplish the mission. This lack of oversight by Canaris ended up harming the intelligence capabilities of each Ast because there were no standards to follow. Through the new reorganization, Canaris had centralized authority to serve his ambitions.⁷⁸ The restructuring also allowed Canaris to strategically select his new department heads.

Part of Canaris' longevity as the German Abwehr chief, despite being anti-Hitler, was his ability to handpick his staff. He chose his department heads from German officers who did not believe in the ardent Nazism of the times. Canaris also sent the well-qualified Nazi believers to posts in Germany that were detached from his main operation. This was how Canaris employed pro-Nazis while still carrying out an anti-Nazi campaign. Canaris employed Major Hans Oster to head the central division. Oster deplored the Nazis and "had a high sense of honor, abhorred corruption, was contemptuous of politicians and, when Nazi excesses became . . . government policy, Oster . . . denounced them."⁷⁹ Chief of Abwehr section one was Colonel Pikenbrock who, like Oster, masked a deep hatred for the Nazis. Together with his department heads, Canaris could effectively carry out a covert campaign to undermine the Nazis.

Because Canaris focused on placing anti-Nazi officers as the heads of the Abwehr, his recruiting of operational positions tended to be more pro-Nazi, but of a less stable character. Canaris' one fault in recruitment was failing to fill the operational rungs of the Abwehr with competent anti-Nazis, and instead drew from men who "were physically capable but were temperamentally unsuitable."⁸⁰ Each Ast, with its autonomy, could select agents for specific

⁷⁸ All information on Abwehr restructuring in this paragraph was taken from David Kahn, *Hitler's Spies: German Military Intelligence in World War II* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 232-243.

⁷⁹ Paine, *German Military Intelligence*, 35.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

missions that were not military officers or trained in the art of intelligence. This also led to the subpar work of Canaris' Abwehr because the operational agents were not always properly trained or devoted to a cause that ensured their unwavering loyalty. This particular flaw was one that the Double Cross system would exploit throughout the war.

Canaris restructured the Abwehr in order to uphold his ideal of what Germany should be. His disdain for the Nazis allowed British intelligence to exploit his spy network during the war. The structure of the Abwehr and the beliefs of Canaris were important aspects of the success of the Double Cross system. The missions that Canaris ran and their failures are even more telling of how MI-5 was able to route the Germans with such ease.

Most notably, Canaris betrayed Operation Sealion. Winston Churchill received information that Operation Sealion was to take place. Air reconnaissance and ground observers did not have a hand in informing Churchill of the impending Nazi attack, nor did the Enigma machine, which had yet to break significant strategic codes.⁸¹ Canaris knew that the operation could still be carried out if he informed the British, but the enemy would have more time to prepare. Canaris also reported British defenses as much stronger than they really were: "The area from Tunbridge Wells to Beachy Head and also St. Leonard's is distinguished by a special labyrinth of defenses. These defenses, however, are so well camouflaged that a superficial observer on the sand hills would not discover anything extraordinary."⁸² In reality, these defenses were exaggerated by Canaris to dissuade Hitler from invading. Canaris warned more than just England. From May 1 to May 7, Canaris sent messages to Switzerland to prepare for an invasion by Hitler though his contact known as the "Viking Line".⁸³

⁸¹ Richard Bassett, *Hitler's Spy Chief* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2012), 198.

⁸² Ian Goodhope Colvin, *Chief of Intelligence*. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1951), 117.

⁸³ Ian Goodhope Colvin, *Master Spy, the Incredible Story of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, Who, While Hitler's Chief of Intelligence, Was a Secret Ally of the British* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952), 132.

The Abwehr did find early success in Operation Nordpol. The British SOE supported the Dutch network of resistance during the invasion and occupation of Norway. In November 1941, the Head of Netherland Abwehr Operations, Hermann Giskes, captured a Dutch radio transmitter and kept it active using codes the Germans had obtained. Nordpol, kept active until 1944 by Giskes, resulted in the capture and execution of 50 Dutch and SOE agents.⁸⁴ Giskes provided Canaris with SOE movements in Northern Europe and impeded other spies from entering the area for fear of capture and execution. Operation Nordpol was an operation that showed the brilliance of Canaris and his Netherland division. Although profoundly successful, Operation Nordpol was one of the few accomplishments the Abwehr produced during the war.

One of the largest failures of the Abwehr was the inaccurate assessment of Russian military strength. This failure, seemingly insignificant, proves just how many things the Abwehr were responsible for. The Abwehr estimated that the Red Army was weak, and did not possess the will to fight. By its re-calculation in 1941, the Abwehr declared that the Red Army was 25% larger than the initial reports.⁸⁵ Canaris and the Abwehr contributed to the arrogance of the Wehrmacht, and were detrimental to Nazi war plans because more resources had to be sent to the eastern front. The Abwehr were not only entrenched in an espionage war, but Canaris' centralized hierarchy made it hard to delegate. Canaris attempted to control every aspect of the intelligence arsenal. The Abwehr were preoccupied with so many operations that the amount of time spent on perfecting espionage in Britain was not nearly enough.

The German operations in Ireland would also provide insight into the flaws of the Abwehr. The Abwehr in Ireland had confusing objectives, flawed political information, poor

⁸⁴ Jefferson Adams, *Historical Dictionary of German Intelligence* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 323.

⁸⁵ Matthew Cooper, *The German Army, 1933-1945: Its Political and Military Failure* (New York: Stein and Day, 1978), 283.

selection in recruits, and faulty execution.⁸⁶ The problems that faced the Abwehr in Ireland were comparable to the flaws of the organization as a whole. The Abwehr, as any good enemy of England would, believed that the IRA would provide an advantage in spying on the British. The Abwehr misjudged the IRA's capabilities, as they were "amateurs, poorly financed, ill-led, and devoted to uncoordinated acts of terrorism and mayhem."⁸⁷ Another mistake was the poor choice of recruits. For example, the Abwehr's first Irish agent was a sixty-years-old Irish man who was "arthritic, not too bright, and spoke passible English."⁸⁸ The agent was chosen for his ability to have a cover in Ireland, much like many other Abwehr agents that were employed for their ability to have a cover rather than demonstrating an aptitude for espionage. The unfit agents were employed by the Ast stations because of the leeway they had in mission planning and execution. The final failure of the Abwehr in Ireland, representative of the Abwehr as a whole, was the incompetent execution of their objectives. Many of the agents were not trained in spycraft, especially the ones sent to Ireland because the Abwehr believed the Irish would be sympathetic to their cause. The last Abwehr agent to be captured in Ireland called the German minister directly trying to report on espionage activities and was apprehended twenty minutes later by Irish police. In his belongings were a date of military convoys and a Dublin map marked with German legislation sites on it.⁸⁹ These untrained agents who made terrible operational mistakes led to the downfall of the Abwehr in Ireland and in the rest of the countries where the Abwehr operated. Ireland serves as an example of Abwehr incompetence that is representative of the

⁸⁶ Mark M. Hull, "The Irish Interlude: German Intelligence in Ireland, 1939-1943," *The Journal of Military History* 66, no. 3 (2002): 2, doi:10.2307/3093356.

⁸⁷ Robert Fisk, *In Time of War: Ireland, Ulster, and the Price of Neutrality, 1939-45* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 86.

⁸⁸ Hull, "The Irish Interlude", 6.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

organization as a whole. These shortcomings certainly aided the British in their domination of German intelligence throughout the war.

The final act of Canaris that resulted in failure of his agents was the insertion of his spies into England. German agents were placed into other countries more efficiently because there were Abwehr posts already onsite. A detailed map shows main Abwehr stations in Oslo, Helsinki, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Berlin, Brussels, Paris, Madrid, Lisbon, Bern, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, Salonika, Istanbul, and Athens.⁹⁰ These stations were the forward operating bases for the spies. As for England, there were no such amenities for agents who were sent to infiltrate the British, leaving them alone without help. The first German agents that Canaris employed were two radical Nazis from the Danish border. Hans Schmidt and Jorgen Björnson, a mechanic and electrician respectively, each spoke German and fair English.⁹¹ After their preliminary interviews with Dr. Randzau, they learned Morse codes, how to operate Abwehr radios, and received classes on parachuting and identification of British airplanes. Schmidt and Björnson practiced their cover stories as Danish refugees running from the Nazi occupation of their home and gathered their radios, 400 £, and documents.⁹² Their drop failed as Björnson injured his leg and could not walk on it. The Abwehr was worried that the two spies were compromised and decided to send Snow (Arthur Owens), whom the Germans codenamed Johnny, to help the two spies. What the Abwehr did not realize was that Johnny also had another name, Agent Snow. Snow and Schmidt left Björnson, who was eventually caught and interned by the British. Peculiarly, Snow kept Schmidt a secret, and he remained one of the most valued spies throughout the war. This loyalty was not common and because Snow was in British hands,

⁹⁰ The map of Abwehr stations can be found in Crowdy, *Deceiving Hitler*, 25.

⁹¹ Charles Wighton and Günter Peis, *Hitler's Spies and Saboteurs; Based on the German Secret Service War Diary of General Lahousen* (New York: Holt, 1958), 126.

⁹² Wighton and Peis, *Hitler's Spies and Saboteurs*, 128.

every Abwehr agent that entered Britain was identified by MI-5. Canaris' inability to control Snow and realize his treachery doomed the Abwehr agents from the onset.

The end of the Abwehr came in 1944 when it was dissolved into the RSHA, the Reichssicherheitshauptamt, whose duty was to defend Germany from all enemies, foreign and domestic. The Abwehr needed organizational leadership and managerial efficiency to succeed in its role of defending the Reich. Canaris needed to battle other organizations to fill his ranks with the brightest men and women, not purposefully hire anti-Nazis to advance his own agenda. The Abwehr overlapped targets, failed to organize the Asts in a geographical manner, and did not improve ciphers or limit radio transmission to protect its agents. Canaris did not care to ensure his agents were not compromised. Canaris failed in all of these areas and allowed the Abwehr to be overrun by the SS intelligence branch that continually tried to prove Canaris' unfaithfulness to the Hitler. Thankfully, Canaris did all of these things, and he inevitably saved the lives of many with his courage.⁹³

Canaris and the Abwehr did many things for the British. Canaris constantly fed information to the Allies, including Operation Sealion and the planned invasion of Switzerland. He also set up the Abwehr with a centralized structure to efficiently keep his cover as an anti-Nazi and slowly undermine Hitler's regime. Abwehr agents were given a large amount of freedom in mission planning and execution, which led to failure. The British did work well in their campaign against the Abwehr, but the state of the organization and its leader led to the Abwehr not attaining its full potential. Without Canaris, the Abwehr that fought the British may have been much more effective. With the foundations and breakthroughs of the prewar era and

⁹³ What the Abwehr needed and the specific failures of the Abwehr in this paragraph were taken from Kahn's book: David Kahn, *Hitler's Spies: German Military Intelligence in World War II* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 236.

coupled with the problems with the Abwehr, it is clear that MI-5 was not fighting an enemy fully invested in the Nazi cause.

Death by Hanging: The Fall of Canaris and the Black Orchestra

"The blood of martyrs might once again be demanded, but this blood, if we really have the courage and loyalty to shed it, will not be innocent, shining like that of the first witnesses for the faith. On our blood lies heavy guilt, the guilt of the unprofitable servant who is cast into outer darkness."⁹⁴

-Sermon of anti-Nazi Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Figure 4⁹⁵

Canaris and his well-placed chiefs of the Abwehr fought in many instances, covertly, against the Nazis. The unraveling of the Abwehr started in 1943, and concluded in the early months of 1944, when Canaris was ousted from his position as Hitler's spymaster. Canaris' unraveling was due to multiple complications that led his enemies to exploit the waning confidence Hitler had in Canaris. The final event that led to the execution of Canaris was the July

⁹⁴ Eberhard Bethge and Victoria Barnett, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 155.

⁹⁵ "Bundesarchiv Bild 146-1972-025-10, Hitler-Attentat, 20. Juli 1944" by Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1972-025-10 / CC-BY-SA.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/20_July_plot#mediaviewer/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_146-1972-025-10,_Hitler-Attentat,_20._Juli_1944.jpg

20, 1944 plot that failed to assassinate Hitler. The events foreshadowing the fall of Canaris and the failed July 20 plot add to the notion of German failure in the context of the success of Double Cross. Because Canaris actively undermined the Nazis and with his attention and resources elsewhere, the British were able to easily route the Abwehr.

The Allied landings in North Africa were used to prove Canaris' incompetence and fueled the belief that he may be a traitor. The Abwehr suffered during the Allied landings in Operation Torch. Abwehr officers could not predict the Allied assault and a few officers were captured during the landings and provided the British with information. This was significant because the British now had information on every important Abwehr operation until its dismantling.⁹⁶ With North Africa lost, due to the incompetence of the Abwehr stations not providing accurate warning of an impending invasion, many believed Canaris was through. As Stalingrad was lost and North Africa was soon to be in Allied hands, Canaris warned Hitler that the German were in no place to handle a mainland invasion by the Allies. Showing his lack of confidence in Canaris, he grabbed him by his service coat and yelled, "Are you trying to tell me that I am going to lose this war?"⁹⁷ Canaris was immediately escorted from the room. Hitler's patience for Canaris' disregard for fanaticism was exhausted, and with the events that followed, Canaris fell from Hitler's good graces.

The defection of an Abwehr couple to the British added to Canaris' woes. The Vermehrens operated in Turkey before their disappearance. Although they were not trained Abwehr agents, they had knowledge of the structure and procedures of the Abwehr. In addition to their defection, they took an Abwehr agent, codenamed Hamburger, and another couple, the Kleczkowskis, with them. The SS intelligence branch, which was now investigating the Abwehr,

⁹⁶ KV 3/8, Report of German Intelligence Services: Abwehr, UK National Archives.

⁹⁷ Colvin, *Masterspy*, 230.

called in twelve embassy staff and three Abwehr agents in connection with the defection, and barred all Abwehr activities from continuing in Turkey until the matter was resolved.⁹⁸ Hitler was given the report on the events in Turkey that fingered the potential source of infidelity as Canaris. This opened Canaris and the Abwehr up to scrutiny by their SS competitors, the very men who had been suspicious of Canaris from the outbreak of the war.

The next major blow to Canaris' popularity was the uncovering of a German spy ring in Argentina, which cut diplomatic ties with Germany, and forced Hitler to question Canaris' ability to conduct covert operations in neutral countries. By this time, Italy had defected from the Axis powers, and the British were using Spanish ports as shipping locations. The Abwehr Two section was constantly sabotaging British and Italian ships, which mangled ties between Franco and Hitler. Madrid's German Ambassador, Herr Dieckhoff, brother-in-law of Ribbentrop (the man who was trying to oust Canaris) stated,

“All Abwehr posts should be removed from the service buildings of embassies and consulates, as soon as possible, so that in a given case we can give the assurances with some credibility that we have no knowledge of Abwehr activities . . . everything must be done to ensure that in future the remaining Abwehr staff receive only operations that are outwardly defensive.”⁹⁹

Dieckhoff got even more than he wanted when Himmler issued orders that all sabotage in Axis and neutral countries were ending, and that the Abwehr was slowly going to be dismantled.¹⁰⁰

Ribbentrop wanted to eliminate Canaris out of suspicion that Canaris was unfaithful to the Nazi cause. With the instructions from Himmler, he finally had an opportunity.

⁹⁸ Muller, *Canaris*, 237. Retrieved from German archives: Letter, von Papen, Ankara, 22 February 1944, Re: Cabled Instr.no 216, 9 February 1944, PA/AA, R 101883, folios 311749-311751.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* Taken from Letter, Ribbentrop, 2 February 1944, PA/AA, R 27815, folio 359219.

Canaris' enemies sealed his fate by pointing to the incompetence of the Abwehr. The Torch Landings in North Africa were botched, the defection of Abwehr operatives in Turkey were blamed on Canaris, and the Spanish affair showed the unpopularity of Canaris in the echelons of the high ranking officers of the Reich. Hitler's patience for failure was gone. He removed Canaris from his position as the head of the Abwehr, ordered a unified German secret service to be created from the remnants of the Abwehr, and demanded that the faithful SS intelligence branch, headed by the Reichsführer-SS, work in compliance with the head of the Wehrmacht for the good of the Nazi party.¹⁰¹ With the July 20 plot, Canaris' fate was sealed.

Canaris could have made the Abwehr into a successful organization. His intellect and espionage capabilities were unquestionable. These attributes, however, were inferior to his love of Germany. The belief that Hitler was destroying Germany led Canaris to betray his Führer. Canaris' betrayal only eased the task that MI-5 had in defeating German intelligence. Without Canaris and his contributions against Hitler, MI-5 and the Double Cross would have battled a more invested opponent and their success would have been nowhere near the caliber it was.

¹⁰¹ Höhne, *Canaris*, 528. Taken from German Archives: Hitler's order for the creation of a unified German secret Intelligence service, 12 February 1944, BA-MA, RH 2/1929.

Defending the Realm: MI-5 and Division B1A

*“Regnum Defende- Defend the Realm”
-MI-5 Organizational Motto*

MI-5 operatives quickly found out that no matter how ineffective the Abwehr proved to be because of their inner conflicts, they would need to be adequately structured and be able to work in tandem with their counterpart, MI-6. Where the Double Cross system succeeded was through its structuring. Once war broke out, MI-5 changed to new leadership. Tasked to run MI-5, David Petrie organized each part of his mission with a specific division. This policy of compartmentalization was forever entrenched in MI-5. Specific to the Double Cross system, MI-5's counterespionage division emerged from Petrie's lead.

MI-5 began the war as a small agency, comprised of military and civilian members, that was vastly unprepared for one double agent let alone the nearly 120 that they ran through Double Cross by the end of the war. But unlike the Abwehr, the agency adapted. MI-5 personnel carried the added benefit of believing in a cause and trusting their fellow workers. MI-5 divisions were “a team of congenial people who worked together harmoniously and unselfishly, and among whom rank counted for little and character counted for much.”¹⁰²

MI-5 and MI-6 shared overlapping areas of influences within missions. MI-5 gathered the information that MI-6 needed and vice versa. At the beginning of the war these two organizations struggled to find harmony. MI-5 dealt with any threats to the homeland and MI-6 had jurisdiction outside of three miles from the British coastline. It was not until 1941 that these two organizations needed to be aware of everything the other was doing, to avoid compromising MI-5's double agents and MI-6's agents. In July 1940, a section of MI-5 called W Branch, the predecessor to B division, was established to coordinate the dissemination of false information to

¹⁰² J. C. Masterman, *On the Chariot Wheel: An Autobiography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 212. Also Quoted in Andrew, *Defend the Realm*.

the enemy.¹⁰³ The W Board consisted of high-level officers drawn from other parts of the agency that could not focus on the day-to-day tasking of counterespionage. To control counterespionage, B1a Division was created. This division reported to a subcommittee of the W Board, the Twenty Committee (also denoted XX). The Double Cross system derives its name from the XX in the Twenty Committee's title.

The W board spent the early years of the war exercising its centralized control in a way the Canaris did with the Abwehr. The W board personally authorized Snow to travel to Lisbon in 1941, and for Celery to travel there for a second time. In September 1941, it authorized sabotage to be carried out. By December of 1941, it mandated that all misinformation to the enemy would be provided by the W board and it decided who would be considered for double agency. But as the Twenty Committee continually produced successful operations, the W board left more and more authority to Masterman and his cohorts to discern what would be acceptable for the double agents to do and the misinformation they could send.¹⁰⁴

The important men of the Double Cross system were Liddell, White, Robertson, and Masterman. Guy Liddell was the director of counterespionage, head of B division. Dick White was Liddell's deputy head of B1a division. Thomas "Tar" Robertson was the head of B1a and tasked with the direct oversight of the Double Cross system and its agents. John Masterman was the chairman of the Twenty Committee. As the Twenty Committee received more power of the implementation of the Double Cross system, MI-5 began to live up to Masterman's claim of completely running the German espionage system within England.

¹⁰³ Masterman, *Double Cross*, 63.

¹⁰⁴ The initial micromanagement of the counterespionage program by the W board is documented in Masterman, *Double Cross*, 65.

The Twenty Committee met every week from January of 1941 to May of 1945, holding 226 meetings.¹⁰⁵ It retained a strict hold over every double agent operation. This oversight led to meticulous planning and careful orchestration of all the double agents operating within the Double Cross system. The Twenty Committee served as the final authority on all matters of misinformation that was passed to the Germans, but it also served as a liaison to other agencies. MI-6 and other departmental intelligence agencies sent liaison officers to ensure that the double agents and their own personnel would work together to prevent either from being compromised. The central planning of the Twenty Committee eliminated interservice rivalry by sharing information with the other intelligence agencies. This cooperation allowed the Twenty Committee to track the knowledge of British intelligence officials outside of the Double Cross system to limit the possibility of harming the secrecy that Double Cross needed to run effectively. An excerpt from Liddell's diary on January 23, 1941 details the kind of misinformation that the Twenty Committee tried to send Germany:

“I attended a meeting of the Twenty Committee today when various schemes were discussed. We are to go ahead with Plan I, which is a scheme for getting the Germans to bomb a wood on the assumption that it is full of ammunition. We also discussed Stringer's plan for telling the Germans that all our troops are going to have some special identification mark in the event of invasion. The idea is that the Germans should use this identification made and that we should not. This is known as the Blue Boot Plan as Stringer's suggestion by way of illustrating his meaning had been to tell the Germans that all our troops would have their right boot painted blue and that our troops should be issued with tins of blue paint to

¹⁰⁵ Guy Liddell, *The Guy Liddell Diaries (vol. 1)*, January 23, 1941.

add conviction to the story.”¹⁰⁶

Plans like the Blue Boot Plan were discussed regularly at meetings in an attempt to share the information with the necessary sources and decide what exactly would be sent to the Germans by way of Double Agents. By discussing these plans in one central location, every agency would be informed at the same level to avert any mistakes made by not having all of the pertinent information. Unlike Abwehr practices, MI-5’s ability to trust in a standardized system that gave power to smaller groups that could focus on a particular mission. Thus, the system made the Double Cross successful.

The Twenty Committee’s ability to break down into subcommittees also provided stability in the execution of Double Cross. Masterman explains,

“ For example, when the time came to discuss getting rid of some of the agents, an ‘Execution Subcommittee’ was appointed by the Twenty Committee which dealt with this particular subject. What the execution committee in fact did was to discuss carefully with the head of B1a the cases of half a dozen agents . . . an agreed list was then produced . . . and since everyone was working for the same ends, no one troubled to decide the academic point whether MI-5 or MI-6 could get rid of one or more agents without the approval of the Committee or of the W Board.”¹⁰⁷

These subcommittees had the confidence of the director of B1a and the W Board, which allowed decisions to be made at a smaller level and increased efficiency and timeliness of decisions.

The Twenty Committee worked closely with B1a division to construct an effective system of espionage. Robertson was the head of B1a division and one of the most capable officers MI-5 produced during the war. He was adept at picking handlers for his agents.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Masterman, *Double Cross*, 68.

Surprisingly, many of these handlers had no previous experience in espionage or counterespionage.¹⁰⁸ Robertson's control over the B1a division yielded good results. Operation Sealion forced the Abwehr to insert enemy agents in haste with faulty ID cards and travel papers. With the help of the B1b division, in charge of reading and organizing Abwehr intercepts, Robertson and B1a were able to capture all 25 agents and turn four of them into double agents. With tongue in cheek, Robertson claimed that he was in charge of the Abwehr and not Admiral Canaris. In July 1942, Robertson sent a memo to the Twenty Committee revealing "the only network of agents possessed by the Germans in this country is that which is now under the control of the Security Service . . . The combined General Staff in this country have, in MI-5 double agents, a powerful means of exercising influence over the OKW."¹⁰⁹ It is because of the compartmentalization and the oversight that Robertson received that the Double Cross system had so much success.

The Double Cross system was kept secret from the public and other British agencies to ensure its continued success in the war. Even Prime Minister Winston Churchill had little information on the covert war that raged within his homeland. In 1943, Liddell decided that the system was stable enough to let Churchill in on the basic operations of the Double Cross system. After all, Churchill had received word years before from Canaris of the potential invasion of England in Operation Sealion and had earned the right to at least know what Double Cross accomplished on a basic level. A memo sent to him stating, "In all 126 spies have fallen into our hands. Of these, twenty-four have been found amenable and are now being used as Double Cross agents. In addition twelve real, and seven imaginary persons have been foisted

¹⁰⁸ Holt, *The Deceivers*, 131. Also quoted in Andrew, *Defend the Realm*.

¹⁰⁹ KV 4/70, Memo to Twenty Committee from Robertson, July 1942. OKW stands for Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, the commander of German Armed Forces.

upon the enemy as Double Cross spies. Thirteen spies have been executed.”¹¹⁰ In simple terms, Double Cross acted as a filter. The system separated the defective from the seriously defective and used agents that were somewhat controllable. The thirteen spies that were executed were deemed too dangerous to be kept living. They were fanatics that became double agents because they truly believed in the Nazi cause over their own personal benefits. MI-5 used these radicals as an example to all other captured spies. When incarcerated in the wartime camps, rumors of the ill-fated extremists spread among the recently captured and proved that in wartime, MI-5 could be as ruthless as they wanted. The remaining ninety spies that were not executed and did not turn for the enemy were kept for the duration of the war in prison camps, forced out of honor to not betray their allegiance but also kept by fear from adhering to fanaticism that only proved to place someone at the end of a rope. Many of them provided bits of information that were somewhat useful and showed that they were worthy of not being executed. The Double Cross system filtered the opportunists from the spies and fanatics.

¹¹⁰ KV 4/83. Report to Churchill from Liddell. March 1943.

THE ALLIED LIARS

The preceding sections have explained external factors that set Double Cross up for success. The final contributions to the success of Double Cross arose from the structure of the system that successfully deceived the Nazis. The carefully placed pieces Robertson used to create the Double Cross pipeline and the initial turning of the agents at Camp 020, led the agents to operate in a system that was conducive to deception, culminating in the grand deception of Hitler during Operation Overlord. Double Cross used these small aforementioned parts, of equal importance, to combat the Germans in the war of deception that ran parallel to the famous battles of World War II. These small parts of the system must be credited for the success of Double Cross and not the current, popular narrative that places success in the hands of Double Cross' creators and agents.

Double Cross: The Structure

“The Double Agent System was like an orchestra, with ‘first violins’ playing the main theme, ‘second violins’ supporting them, and the conductor – in this case, J.C. Masterman, head of the XX Committee – blending the dissonant chords of sabotage, political disinformation, rumors and physical deception into a single symphony that was then broadcast to the Germans.”¹¹¹

The Double Cross system was predicated on the belief that enemy spies valued their lives more than their master’s ideology. This assumption proved to be correct. MI-5 possessed the power to lie to Hitler and control the movements of its enemies. The power came in the form of double agents. The use of traitors to advance a cause is ancient. Sun Tzu proclaimed, “It is essential to seek out enemy agents who have come to conduct espionage against you and bribe them to serve you. Give them the instructions and care for them. Thus double agents are recruited and used.”¹¹² The double agents proved helpful to the Allied cause, but it was the structure that remained paramount to their effectiveness.

The structure of Double Cross formed around the simple truth that liars lie and traitors betray. The majority of spies were bound to their own self-preservation rather than an intangible ideology. This was the case for the Double Cross system. Spies were used to obtain a singular objective or became long-term operatives. This allowed MI-5 to use their spies for strategic operations that inflicted the most damage upon the enemy. To commit long-term deception, a system was needed to control and document the flow of information, and misinformation. The structure allowed for the accomplishment of multiple tasks. These included the control of any German agents operating in England, manipulation of compromised agents, recruitment of new spies, collection of data on the enemy’s weaknesses and intentions, but above all, deception.

¹¹¹ Stephan Talty, *Agent Garbo: The Brilliant, Eccentric Secret Agent Who Tricked Hitler and Saved D-Day* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 81.

¹¹² Sun Tzu, *Art of War*, 32.

While the Twenty Committee decided what information could be sent out to enemy agents, it also shielded Double Cross from the bureaucracy within MI-5. Double Cross also had the support of an entire division, B1a, devoted to its every need. B1a supplied an agent with a case officer, wireless operators to receive an agent's messages, two guards to follow him, and cover identification that allowed him to freely operate as a double agent without arousing suspicion.¹¹³ This division had the benefit of secrecy, something that if ruined, would expose the delicate operation of Double Cross.

Masterman used the first meeting of the Twenty Committee to outline the importance of the Double Cross system. The double agent system, argues Masterman, "enables us to gain insight into the personnel, methods, and means of communication of the German espionage organization within this country." By building the system, it was clear that MI-5 had the ability to control enemy espionage. Masterman argued that the double agent system was a source of numerous German cyphers that can easily be broken and used against the enemy in any future campaigns. He also noted that the questionnaires supplied by the Abwehr let MI-5 know what the Nazis were planning to attack within England. Masterman alluded to the prospect of the culmination of Double Cross ends in a final, large deception of the enemy. To accomplish this, double agents must be turned and given hierarchical importance based on how they communicate with the enemy.

Masterman outlined twelve cardinal rules that Double Cross must adhere to ensure success. These were 1) no information was to be sent to the enemy without a final approving authority, in this case the Twenty Committee. As noted before, the Committee's function was to keep MI-5 and its fellow organizations up-to-date on ongoing operations to preserve the cover of its agents; 2) double agent cases, if proven to promising, can be used but they should never be

¹¹³ Masterman, *Double Cross*, 17.

created. An opportunity should be exploited and not created. Agents should also be controlled centrally to avoid a focus of resources on one agent; 3) a double agent should live the life he or she would have as an enemy agent. Agents should have actually experienced what they claim to have done. A lie will only be believed if it has some trace of truth; 4) a case officer must be assigned to every double agent that knew the day-to-day workings of his agents operations; 5) perform a careful psychological examination of each agent. This provides some predictability of an agent in their rather unpredictable line of work. A psychological examination also provides information on the best way to turn an agent into a double agent; 6) financial incentives are necessary to prevent a double agent from becoming a triple agent; 7) decisiveness is crucial when operating double agents to prevent suspicion on behalf of the enemy that he may have been compromised. A long time between transmissions from an agent to a handler signals potential for an agent to be compromised; 8) spies are caught through patience and the study of tangible records; 9) agents must be kept separate from each other in most cases. Snow and Celery proved this corollary when Snow, out of jealousy, compromised the cover of Celery; 10) there is no standard amount of risk an agent should take. Each agent is unique and can only operate successfully within specific amounts of risk; 11) Recruitment of double agents follows the rule of quality over quantity; 12) imaginary agents are preferable to real agents because MI-5 officers were able to directly transmit to the Abwehr. The Double Cross system proved to be successful because of these rules.¹¹⁴

Tar Robertson, whose sole job was to run the Double Cross system, controlled the B1a division. Below Robertson were the case officers of the agents. Robertson's most important rule was to pick case officers who could delve as deeply into the deception as the agents. Over the

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 18-35. The Cardinal rules of Double Cross in this paragraph are explained by Masterman and taken from the aforementioned pages.

course of the war there were an average of five case officers at any time who were charged with the agents and their needs. These officers ran the payments, housing, maintenance, and guarding of an agent.¹¹⁵ The case officers were so invested within their agents' case that the Twenty Committee relied on them to suggest the best methods to continue their deception and extract every ounce of potential each agent had. They were the ones who knew if an agent had reached the maximum level of use to MI-5. Case officers, as opposed to agents, had to be aware of what the other was doing. Each day, Dick White, the deputy director of B division under Guy Liddell, organized a meeting of Division B1a case officers to insure no overlapping operations could compromise the agents.¹¹⁶

With the case officers adequately organized, the agents also required transmission specialists. The wireless transmitting officers were the next important piece in the structure of Double Cross. The wireless officer was the technical specialist who ensured the approved information that was sent to the Germans was done so in the correct code. With a small misstep by the wireless transmitters, the Double Cross system could easily have been lost. The wireless officer was strictly concerned with transmissions. The information coming back from the Abwehr was transmitted to an additional two officers who organized it and submitted it to the Twenty Committee. Another officer was in charge of organizing and creating a reference for all information coming from the Abwehr to the Double Cross agents. This allowed any new reports from other sources of information to help ascertain the validity of the information gathered through Double Cross. The organization of all transmission to and from an agent to their Abwehr handlers helped maintain consistency in their cover and explained why so many agents were able

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 68.

¹¹⁶ Crowdy, *Deceiving Hitler*, 71.

to secure their cover over a span of years rather than months. In addition to the wireless operator and case agent, the double agent required more administrative support.

The agents lived two lives. Their true life was the one they were living as an exposed, and turned, spy. Their false life was the life that their initial enlists believed they were living. For instance, the German handlers believed their spies to have civilian jobs and were blended in with society. MI-5 would create records transferring them to areas of England that would correspond with the information they fed to their German handlers. By solidifying a paper trail, the agents could feel comfortable with telling their notional story that had tangible evidence they were telling the truth. Masterman states, “If, for example, our agent was told by his German masters to inspect and report on factories in Wolverhampton, we arranged, if it was possible, that he should visit the place himself before he replied.”¹¹⁷ To aid the spy in delineating between the two, the Double Cross system had to employ a rigid structure and an abundance of documented information to ensure that each spy could refer back to their previous actions. MI-5 also had to set the spy up with a life within England in a way that would not arouse suspicion as to the nature of his work. MI-5 employed security agents who constantly watched the double agents. They were given drivers in case of emergency and housekeepers to look after their true lives so that they could focus on their false ones.

The agents and handlers were supplied with clear instructions on what each was to do. The auxiliary personnel tapped to aid the agents administratively were also instructed on the scope of their jobs. All of these pieces operated in a clear, synchronized fashion, as well as in secret. The result was an extraordinary result: the deception of Hitler by the turning of a double agent.

¹¹⁷ Masterman, *Double Cross*, 19.

The Monocle Man: The Art of Breaking A Human

"The high-souled fanatic may repudiate even the suggestion that he would be capable of giving way to pressure and of acting as a double agent, but the majority of spies are not of this Spartan breed."¹¹⁸

-John Masterman



Figure 5¹¹⁹

The turning of a double agent began with the initial interrogation. MI-5 found how useful the spy could be and what method would be best to insure his or her cooperation. Whether it was due to fear, money, or the instinct to survive, Colonel 'Tin Eye' Stephens broke the spies down and insured they become traitors. His interrogation techniques and camps occupy a small section in the current scholarship on Double Cross; he is portrayed as playing only a tiny part in the process of turning a spy into a double

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 1.

¹¹⁹ Ian Cobain, "How Britain Tortured Nazi PoWs: The Horrifying Interrogation Methods That Belie Our Proud Boast That We Fought a Clean War," Mail Online, October 26, 2012, section goes here, accessed January 27, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2223831/How-Britain-tortured-Nazi-PoWs-The-horrifying-interrogation-methods-belie-proud-boast-fought-clean-war.html>.

agent. Stephens' contributions were much more substantial, however. All agents went to him, and if he made a mistake, Double Cross would be doomed to failure. Stephens was as important to Double Cross as its foundations and structures.

Camp 020, located in West London, was the interrogation center used to turn the majority of double agents in World War II. Stephens also ran operations at the London Cage, part of the Kensington Palace Gardens. These interrogation camps used unique methods, including torture, to get the double agents to turn. The British fervently deny the use of torture at any of their interrogation camps, but in the last two decades, stories have surfaced about the wretched conditions inmates faced at the camps. Whether moral or not, Stephens used every method to add agents to Double Cross. Stephens' greatest weapon was the ability to judge a spy's character in regard to his prejudices of Europeans. Stephens disliked most of Europe and claimed that "Italians were undersized, 'posturing folks', and Belgians overweight, 'weeping and romantic', the French corrupt, Polish Jews 'shifty', and Icelanders were 'unintelligent'."¹²⁰ These preconceptions led Stephens to hold no empathy for his captives and cemented his belief that "the interrogator must treat each spy as a very individual case . . . a very personal enemy."¹²¹ Stephens also proclaimed that "there must be certain inherent qualities: an implacable hatred of the enemy, a certain ingressive approach, a disinclination to believe, and above all a relentless determination to break down the spy, however hopeless the odds, however many the difficulties, however long the process may take."¹²² The cold demeanor guided him to produce double agents.

When the spies were dropped off at Camp 020, they were immediately pressed through interrogations. Stephens used the initial evaluation and interrogation to determine whether the spy would potentially betray Germany. The spies who were deemed unable to be turned were either detained for the remainder of the war or executed. Stephens then offered the suitable spies the opportunity to become double agents against Germany or face death. "You have forfeited your life, but there is a way of saving

¹²⁰ Andrew, *Defend the Realm*, Location 5704.

¹²¹ Ben Macintyre, *Agent Zigzag: A True Story of Nazi Espionage, Love, and Betrayal* (New York, NY: Broadway Paperbacks, 2007), 113. Also in Andrew, *Defend the Realm*, Location 5704

¹²² R. W. G. Stephens and Oliver Hoare, *Camp 020: MI5 and the Nazi Spies: The Official History of MI5's Wartime Interrogation Centre* (Richmond: Public Record Office, 2000), 107.

your life,” he told them.¹²³ Whether out of fear, self-preservation, or both, some of the agents took the offer to commit treachery. Out of the 25 spies in England in 1940, four became Double Cross agents. Two of those agents, Wulf Schmidt (codenamed Tate) and Gösta Caroli (codenamed Summer), initiated the Double Cross system.

The Abwehr trained the two Scandinavians, captured two weeks apart, together in Hamburg. Summer suffered a concussion on impact after parachuting out of a plane over the Northampton Countryside because of his inability to follow directions and place his gear in a separate parachute to avoid being too heavy during his static line jump.¹²⁴ He was found the next day carrying a radio, pistol, and large denominations of English pounds. Stephens realized that Summer was a fanatical Nazi and instead of coercing him through fear or death, neither of which would have yielded results, he offered the life of his comrade Tate in exchange for Summer’s promise to be a double agent. Stephens’ genius led him to exploit the bond of friendship between Summer and Tate. His ability to recognize each spy as an individual led to the initial success in Summer case. Summer, however, became erratic and after trying to kill his MI-5 security detail and attempting to escape, was imprisoned for the rest of the war. Despite this setback, Stephens’ ability to turn agents became a reliable foundation of Double Cross.

Tate proved to be a bigger challenge to Stephens than Summer. After being detained, Tate stuck to his story of being a refugee. Stephens prodded Tate with repeated questions, and inevitably caught him in a lie. He then notified Tate that his friend Summer had compromised him. Stephens smartly left out the part that explained Summer sought to protect Tate. Feeling betrayed, Tate divulged everything to Stephens who then blamed Tate’s situation on the inability of the Abwehr to properly train their field agents. The very next day Liddell was informed that Tate had agreed to work with MI-5.¹²⁵ Tate had notified Stephens of his network, mission, Abwehr contacts, transmission codes, and the spies who were

¹²³ Macintyre, *Double Cross*, 36.

¹²⁴ Crowdy, *Deceiving Hitler*, 42. The inexperienced and idiotic actions of many spies led to their capture, proving that spies are not always as debonair as one may think.

¹²⁵ Guy Liddell, *The Guy Liddell Diaries (vol. 1)*, 22 September, 1940.

to enter Britain in the coming months.¹²⁶ Stephens had correctly manipulated Tate into working as a double agent, the longest lasting one of the war.

Stephens also turned Eddie, codenamed Agent Zigzag. Stephens preferred to raise tension in the interrogation room, demanding “no gossip. No cigarettes . . . a spy in war should be at the point of a bayonet. It is a question of atmosphere. The room is like a court and he is made to stand up and answer questions as before a judge.”¹²⁷ For Zigzag, the atmosphere was more than enough to force a full confession. Chapman divulged everything to Stephens – from his early life, his incarceration in a Jersey prison, the Abwehr recruitment and training he received in Nantes and Berlin, his method of infiltration into England including the type of plane, its maneuvering, the strict instructions, and even the pilots names. Zigzag offered the codes he knew, his sabotage techniques and targets, how to communicate in code, and the wireless frequencies. He went further and offered the description of his contacts in the Abwehr and the names of all the agents that he knew were operating in England.

Stephens: Now will you tell me when you were first contacted by the German Secret Service?

Zigzag: It was definitely in January. There was an Oberleutnant Thomas. He asked me – he said that he was very interested in me and would I be prepared to work for the Germans.

Stephens: yes. Well now, as quickly as you can you give me the gist of that?

Zigzag: He said the German authorities had accepted my offer, my proposal and was I prepared to be trained by the German Secret Service, in sabotage and such like and to learn Radio Telegraphy. The whole thing came out and I said I was quite prepared to carry it out and what about my friend Farmius and he said that unfortunately they could not accept his offer. Then there was a sort of half-threat, meaning that in times of war we must be careful and one of you must stay here so

¹²⁶ KV 2/61. Intelligence File on Wulf Schmidt, Codenamed: Tate. The Schmidt interrogation notes are included and show the information given in Schmidt’s confession.

¹²⁷ Stephens, *Camp 020*, 17. Also quoted in Macintyre, *Agent Zigzag*, 108.

that was all there was to be said.

Stephens: Did he go into detail now – did he say that – what did he offer you?

Zigzag: He told me that first of all I would be taken out of the camp. They just wanted me to train. I was taken to Paris in a separate compartment and then I was taken to Nantes.¹²⁸

There was not a single stone left unturned by Stephens. Even with Zigzag's honesty, Stephens still decided to dismantle his psyche. Stephens used the trick of turning the suspect against their German handlers and blaming the lack of preparation by the Abwehr for the present situation.

Stephens: Your cash was wrapped in German bands. It would have cost you your neck if spotted. The man, who was supposed to search you, proceeds to identify your currency with a German label?

Zigzag: That's the fault of Thomas; in excitement he probable forgot to take it off.¹²⁹

Stephens disassociated Chapman from his Abwehr handlers and once there was enough space, Stephens left the room and sent in someone with a more cheery attitude. It was his way of rewarding Chapman for his honesty. Chapman had just given MI-5 the entire Abwehr operation in France, its training network, and key ways to identify other enemy agents in England. This was due to Stephens ability to not rush, to judge character, and to ask the right questions. Stephens also allowed Chapman to begin transmitting right away with his German counterparts to throw off suspicion that Chapman was compromised. Without Stephens' ability to quickly extract information and the Double Cross systems efficient organization, this decision would have taken too long, potentially exposing Chapman and losing Britain its longest serving double agent.

Stephens was able to produce double agents who were unusually loyal to MI-5. It was a unique skill he possessed that allowed him to stabilize the Double Cross system's conversion of agents. The

¹²⁸ KV 2/455. Interrogation File of Edward Chapman.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

system worked better because of the initial ground work done by Stephens. This loyalty was because of his ability to turn individual spies and not apply a single technique, say fear, to turn all enemy agents. Without Stephens' contributions to Double Cross, the system's agents may have not been as loyal. Without the strong foundation Stephens built for MI-5 in interrogations, the double agents may have lacked the conviction they possessed for the Allied cause. Recognizing each weakness and exploiting it with a ruthless attitude, Stephens supplied Double Cross with not only adequate spies, but also priceless and organized information on the Abwehr.

Two-Faced: The Agents of Double Cross and their Successes

“This weapon – unique in its power and unlimited in its range – was quite different from any built before or since. It was so shrouded in secrecy that its inventors were, for some time, unaware that they possessed it and unsure how to use it. This weapon did not kill or maim. It did not rely on science, engineering, or force. It did not destroy cities, sink U-boats, or pierce the armor of panzers. It did something far more subtle. Instead of killing the enemy, it could make the Nazis think what the British wanted them to think, and therefore do what the British wanted them to do. The British Security Service had built a weapon that could lie to Hitler.”¹³⁰

- Ben Macintyre

Although all of the variables were critical to the success of double-cross, agents were still needed to do their jobs. The exploits of agents like Johann Jebesen, Dusan Popov, Wulf Schmidt, Edward Chapman, Renato Levi, and Juan Garcia show that when given the right structure to operate in, success was assured. Thus, the system merged with the mythology, joining my argument with the traditional historiography of intelligence and the double-cross process.

¹³⁰ Macintyre, *Double Cross*, 1.

Johann Jebsen

MI-5 Codename: Artist

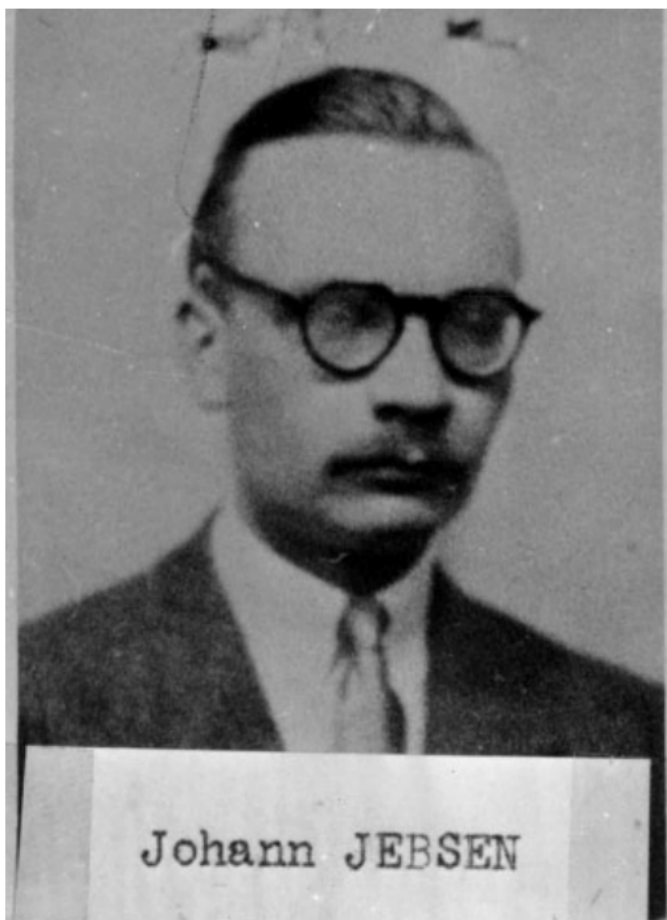


Figure 6

Dusan Popov

MI-5 Codename: Tricycle



Figure 7 ¹³¹

One night in 1936, Johann “Johnny” Jebsen raced his supercharged Mercedes 540K convertible through the streets of Freiburg alongside his friend’s BMW. Dusan Popov and Jebsen attend university together and their friendship revolved around material pursuits. As an orphaned heir to a shipping empire and student studying economics at the University of Freiburg, Jebsen built a reputation as a playboy through an “excesses of money, cars, parties, and women.” Popov,

¹³¹ KV 2/845-847, Intelligence File on Dusan Popov and Johann Jebsen provided the photograph of Jebsen. Popov’s photograph was taken from the photograph section in Macintyre, *Double Cross* but was originally from a private collection.

a law student, had the same reputation as Jebsen. The two spent their university days living extravagantly instead of studying. After college the two inevitably parted ways, but their friendship from the university days became one of the most profound bonds in the Double Cross system of World War II.¹³²

Jebsen was calculated, intelligent, and knew how to win the affection of just about anyone. Ironically in the years leading to the Second World War, he felt a stranger amidst the pro-Nazi propaganda streaming through Germany. It appeared as if Jebsen would follow in the privileged and guided footsteps of any wealthy heir predestined for success. However!!, instead of following an easy path he became a dedicated double agent who resisted the temptation of Nazi torture in order to save his friend from his college days, Popov, and the work that he did for the Double Cross system. At the start of the war, Jebsen joined the Abwehr but secretly gave his loyalties to MI-5. Jebsen, codenamed “Artist” by British intelligence, was an important spy for MI-5 and was an incomparable cog in the methodical Double Cross system.

Jebsen eventually recruited Popov, and after realizing that both would rather uphold the Allied cause versus the Axis one, they began a calculated campaign to undermine the Nazis from within. Jebsen and Popov were playboys who were easily influenced by their vices: women, cars, and parties. They are not the typical spies, yet they did so much for MI-5. Without the structure that Double Cross provided, Jebsen and Popov would not have been able to inflict as much damage to the Abwehr. Because the system was organized and took care of its agents by making their deceptions conceivable to the Germans, men like Jebsen and Popov were able to leave a lasting mark on history.

Jebsen recruited Popov in an odd manner. In 1940, Jebsen informed Popov that he had joined the Abwehr to escape being a soldier in World War II for the Nazis. Jebsen then set a

¹³² All information in this paragraph was taken from Macintyre, *Double Cross*, 7.

meeting with a senior Abwehr official who asked Popov to join the Abwehr to help facilitate the Nazi invasion in Operation Sealion. Popov, in his time apart from Jebesen, created a large law firm in Serbia that would allow Popov to move freely about Europe without arousing suspicion. The official boasted to Popov, “we [the Abwehr] have many agents in England, quite a number of them excellent. But your connections would open many doors. You could render us a great service. And we could do the same for you. The Reich knows how to show its appreciation.”¹³³ Popov accepted the offer and covertly notified the British secretary at the embassy in Belgrade that an Abwehr officer tried to recruit him. The secretary immediately notified MI-6 and told the Popov to continue the relationship. Days later, Jebesen informed Popov that he would travel to England through Portugal and pose as a businessmen exporting raw materials.¹³⁴ Popov would take notes on whatever the Abwehr deemed important and then communicate his findings back to the Abwehr station in Portugal. The questionnaire he was given by Jebesen was immediately turned over to MI-5. The structure that the system imposed forced the questionnaire to the Twenty Committee who decided what information could be sent back by Popov. It was at this moment when Popov became “Agent Tricycle”.

Tricycle’s major contribution to the allied cause was in proving that the Germans could be made to believe what the men of Double Cross wanted them to. Tricycle was sent to America to set up a system comparable to Double Cross with the aid of the FBI. Unfortunately he was not treated as well as he was accustomed to because the FBI kept him at a distance.

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover believed he was merely a criminal, and although the FBI rounded up thirty-three German spies with the help of Tricycle, the importance of double agents was lost on the Americans. Hoover believed that the round up proved that a spy was only good to catch

¹³³ Dusko Popov, *Spy/counterspy: the Autobiography of Dusko Popov* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1974), 23.

¹³⁴ Macintyre, *Double Cross*, 30.

other spies.¹³⁵ Popov was being underutilized even though he provided his German questionnaire that had tasked him to research the American's atomic energy, military preparations, convoys, industrial production, politics, and civilian morale.¹³⁶ Popov, under the direction of the FBI, sent letters back to his handlers, but to no avail. Unlike MI-5, which realized the potential in providing misinformation and required some actual, unimportant intelligence to be sent to the enemies, the FBI refused to give any worthwhile information for Tricycle to pass on to his handlers. Tricycle's inability to provide actionable intelligence led to a loss of faith by his German handlers. In 1942, a message was intercepted by the code breakers at Bletchley indicating "Berlin suspected Popov of working both sides and recommended extreme caution in dealing with him."¹³⁷

Tricycle had to convince the Germans that he was still valuable. With the lack of FBI cooperation, he created information that he received from people to whom he never had spoken. The lie was thin, but with Tricycle's knack for deception, it was possible to convince the Germans that head not been compromised by MI-5. Tricycle met his handler in Portugal in 1942 and his story was not questioned. The Abwehr officers were eager to believe everything Tricycle said, to the astonishment of MI-5. Robertson was sure that Tricycle's cover was blown and believed that it could unravel the entire network if Tricycle was interrogated. Despite the lack of interrogation, Tricycle's case officer reported back to Berlin that after "intense interrogation", Popov was uncompromised and still could be used as a spy.¹³⁸ Tricycle was free of suspicion and unearthed the fact that the Abwehr were not as unified as MI-5 believed. Tricycle was tasked

¹³⁵ Ibid., 92.

¹³⁶ Masterman, *Double Cross*, 82.

¹³⁷ Macintyre, *Double Cross*, 95. Taken from KV 2/860

¹³⁸ Ibid., 100. After the war it was discovered that Tricycle's handler, Jebson, and another Abwehr officer were skimming the funds dedicated to the Tricycle case and repurposing it to their own salaries. This is believed to be the reason why no one questioned the loyalty of Tricycle.

with acquiring as much information as possible about the Allied invasion plan. It was in 1942 that Robertson realized the most important use for Double Cross: to make the Germans think what MI-5 wanted. Without MI-5's faith in its agents and the Abwehr embezzlement, Double Cross would not have realized the ability to influence German thinking. It was in part due to the personality of Tricycle, but the majority of the realization was because of Abwehr failures.

Jebsen, codenamed Artist, routinely helped the Allied cause. He aided Tricycle's network and helped orchestrate the Garbo network. He was an invaluable link in Double Cross because he was an agent and also a recruiter. Artist received far more information in this unique position than any other German agents. Artist was captured and tortured in 1944, but the SS interrogators failed to extract any information. Artist kept quiet, even though he knew the most intimate secrets of Double Cross. With the help of the Artist and Tricycle cases, Robertson and B1a division discovered exactly how much power they possessed over the Abwehr through their campaign of misinformation. The triumphs of Artist and Tricycle would not have been possible without the system to adequately manage and oversee each of the unique cases. The unfaithful Abwehr case officers who protected themselves and their embezzling aided Double Cross unknowingly. If the Abwehr officers in charge of Tricycle had been faithful to their organization, Double Cross would have inevitably disintegrated. The agents played a key part, especially Artist and his ability to resist torture, but would have faltered without the external variables of structure and Abwehr failure aiding them. These external variables helped MI-5 discover the greatest asset of the Double Cross system; the ability to lead the Germans down whatever path the Allies wanted.

John Moe

Tor Glad

MI-5 Codename: Mutt

MI-5 Codename: Jeff



Figure 8¹³⁹

John Moe and Tor Glad were not unique to the Double Cross system. They, as Snow, Zigzag, and Tricycle before them, willingly turned themselves in to British authorities upon their arrival. They were both some of the more insignificant agents and their deceptions were not as grandiose as Garbo's would be. Yet they provide a perfect example of how the calculated structure of Double Cross and German failure laid the groundwork for success. The ability for the Twenty Committee to intern Glad because of unreliability and the lack of proper recruitment by the Abwehr were the reasons why the Mutt and Jeff case succeeded.

¹³⁹ KV 2/1067-1068 provided the photograph of Mutt and Jeff

The duo's recruitment is shrouded in unreliable testimony from Glad. In his initial interrogation by Stephens, Glad declares that his German handler approached him with an offer to work for the Abwehr. In the second interrogation the following day, Glad said that he approached his future Abwehr handle and offered to become an agent.¹⁴⁰ Either way, it was Glad who brought his friend and fellow Norwegian Moe into the Abwehr service. Both were hastily screened by the Abwehr and sent to training to become sabotage agents.¹⁴¹ Mutt and Jeff were trained in Norway and by February 1941 had completed their Morse, wireless transmission, incendiary and explosive mixtures, and sabotage instruction. They were sent to Britain on April 7th with terribly made ID and ration cards and immediately gave themselves up as agents.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ KV 2/1067-1068, Case File for Moe and Glad. The codenames for each agent were picked by Robertson and were ones that reflected who they were. For instance, Snow was a partial anagram of Arthur Owens. There was no standard way the agents were named.

¹⁴¹ The haste in their recruitment in 1940 was due to the fact that Germany believed an invasion of England was going to happen within the coming years. Because of the importance of the planned invasion, Hitler needed as many Abwehr agents to penetrate the isle as possible to secure the upper hand in an invasion. This haste led not only to poor recruitment, but also to poor training. The combination of both turned many agents into double agents because Stephens continually used his interrogations to show his detainee's that it was the Abwehr's lack of care for their safety that led them into the interrogation chambers at Camp O20. In reality, many agents, despite their lack of training, were incredibly careless and too incompetent to handle the long-term deception or espionage they were tasked with. Double Cross

¹⁴² KV 2/1067-1068. Ration cards were used by Stephens to create distance between the Abwehr and its captured agents because the Abwehr constructed careless ration cards that would never pass scrutiny.



Figure 9¹⁴³

After the initial interrogation, Mutt was deemed employable by B1a division because it was clear that he held no deep sympathy for the Nazis. Jeff's case was completely different than Mutt's. The interrogation revealed that Jeff harbored sympathy for the Nazis who occupied his homeland and that he performed his Abwehr duties more than he admitted. Unlike Mutt, Jeff worked for the Abwehr before the invasion of Norway. Because Jeff was considered a potential danger, he was watched very closely in the initial stages of the Double Cross work.

Mutt and Jeff made contact with the Abwehr after they were set up in a Double Cross safe house. The Abwehr immediately responded asking: if Mutt and Jeff were interrogated; if so what they had been asked; what the status of the bombardment was on the towns; and if could they meet other agents entering the country in the coming days.¹⁴⁴ Because the Twenty Committee oversaw the case so rigidly, there was ample opportunity to exploit Mutt and Jeff's case. The Twenty Committee used the opportunity to decide what information the Germans had on the status of their bombardments. They also decided that Mutt and

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., Initial Transmission from Abwehr to Mutt and Jeff.

Jeff could be used to trap other agents that were entering England. Because of the system that the Twenty Committee established, Mutt and Jeff's case fit into the larger framework of the deception campaign that centered on convincing the Germans where an Allied attack on Europe was imminent. The Twenty Committee used Mutt and Jeff to convince the Germans a landing in Norway was a real possibility. The structure that created and categorized the information provided the needed efficiency for success. The structure also was involved enough in the observation of Mutt and Jeff to deem Jeff unsuitable for continual service to Double Cross. B1a division eventually detained him to prevent the Double Cross system from being compromised. If the case were to be kept alive, a sabotage attack would have to be committed to preserve Mutt's cover. The Twenty Committee then decided on a fake sabotage operation that Mutt would carry out. The concentrated effort by B1a division with their established structure allowed the Mutt and Jeff case to marginally succeed. Without the structure in place to guide Mutt into giving the specific information that the Committee deemed necessary, the case would have not yielded any results.

The turning of Mutt and Jeff was also telling. The fact that these two Abwehr agents immediately defied their German orders and alerted local police of their identities and presence revealed a trend within Abwehr recruitment. The problems of recruitment have been explained, but the infidelity of agents is a tangible manifestation of the problem. Like many other agents, these two turned themselves in because of a misalignment between their values and the Abwehr's. Without these problems, it is improbable that MI-5 would have been presented with the multitude of opportunities from 1939-1944.

Wulf Schmidt

MI-5 Codename: Tate



Figure 10¹⁴⁵

Tate's enlistment in Double Cross, spurred by his fellow agent's betrayal, was the beginning of the career of Double Cross' longest serving agent.¹⁴⁶ Tate accomplished much through his tenure as a double agent and served MI-5 loyally until the end of the war. His accomplishments were only made possible by the structure of the Double Cross system. It allowed Tate to be used strategically, as all the other agents were, to accomplish a grandiose deception. Specifically, Tate was able to keep the Germans interested in his help because of the information the Twenty Committee created for him to send to

¹⁴⁵ Tommy Jonason and Simon Olsson, *Agent Tate: The True Wartime Story of Harry Williamson* (Stroud: Amberley, 2011), Back Cover.

¹⁴⁶ Agent Tate's case and its importance to Double Cross will be further discussed in this section.

Germany and the financial rouse that MI-5 helped orchestrate. Without the system to help Tate create a cover that could withstand scrutiny, Tate would have been compromised much sooner. The cover that Double Cross helped Tate form was trusted by the German forces so much that Tate was awarded the First and Second Class Iron Cross.

Tate was able to keep the Abwehr's faith by continually needing money. The plan, put together through the Double Cross system's network, denied Tate adequate funding so he continually had to plea to the Abwehr for payment. The constant plea for money forced the Abwehr to send one of its officers to hand-deliver Tate's payment. Of course, the officer was captured as soon as he set foot onto English soil. Tate continued his ruse, under the direction of the Twenty Committee, and received £20,000 from the Abwehr for his financial troubles.¹⁴⁷ This proved to his handlers that he was indeed trusted and in good standing with the Abwehr. The Double Cross network even created a fictional farm that Tate worked on in order to provide him with an excuse for why he was unable to recruit agents or transmit as frequently as he should to the Abwehr. The Committee also created situations that naturally forced Tate and high military and intelligence officials to meet, giving him real people he could use to predicate his lies to the Abwehr.¹⁴⁸ The structure of Double Cross, in the case of Tate, is important because when he fell ill and could no longer transmit to the Germans, his officer was able to take over the case and transmit on his behalf.

Tate's fictional farm work also aided in the D-Day deception campaign. Because Tate's farm was located near the fictional First United States Army Group headquarters, he could report on troop movements and invasion timetables. The Committee routinely cleared information to be sent to Germany detailing the movements of the fictional Army group, which earned Tate a special amount of trust from his Abwehr handlers.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Masterman, *Double Cross*, 96.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 166.

Tate's case was important for the Double Cross system because it was the longest active case in the system and it proved Double Cross' capabilities. Tate proved that not only with careful structure and compartmentalization could the life of an agent be constructed and seem credible, but it also that the compartmentalization and rigid structure allowed for anyone to take the place if the original double agent was unable to continue his work. Tate could have compromised himself Tate is strong evidence that the structure of Double Cross was more integral to an agent's success than the agents themselves.

Edward Chapman

MI-5 Codename: Zigzag



Figure 11¹⁵⁰

Zigzag's triumphs of the war revolve around relaying misinformation to the Germans about their bombardment campaigns. Zigzag was able to keep his cover, much like Tate was, due to the fact that MI-5 was able to orchestrate a successful deception. The de Havilland factory sabotage and the deception of the Germans regarding the V-1 rockets were successful because of the organization and not Zigzag himself.

In January 1943, Zigzag was tasked with sabotaging the Mosquito bomber at the de Havilland factory in Britain.¹⁵¹ The Mosquito planes continually proved to be a problem to the Abwehr and the Luftwaffe. This mission that was given to Zigzag was to ensure that not only would the air war favor the Luftwaffe, but to also verify that Zigzag was of value to the Abwehr. Zigzag brought the mission to the attention of his handler and B1a division. The Twenty Committee devised a fake sabotage operation on the factory to satisfy the Abwehr and coerce them into thinking that the Luftwaffe would be able to finally

¹⁵⁰ KV 2/458, Intelligence File on Edward Chapman.

¹⁵¹ Macintyre, *Zigzag*, 79.

have an advantage in the air. This operation was a success and the Germans believed the factory was damaged. The trap set by Double Cross paid off as the Germans, impressed with the ability to complete tough missions, promised Zigzag a special operation in America.¹⁵² The penetration of Zigzag into the Abwehr's circle of trusted agents was made possible by structural oversight, and not Zigzag's competence as an agent.

MI-5 also succeeded in using Zigzag to misinform the Germans about where their V-1 rockets were striking. It was a seemingly easier operation than the de Havilland factory but it was still important. In the closing months of 1944, 660 V-1 rockets had struck London and the Germans wanted to continue the onslaught.¹⁵³ The Germans lacked sufficient information and the Twenty Committee viewed this as an opportunity to misinform the Abwehr. Over the course of a month, Zigzag lied to the Germans about the rockets' placement and effectiveness. The Twenty Committee provided Zigzag with fake weather reports and photographs of the damage in London.¹⁵⁴ With the Twenty Committee feeding the information to the Abwehr through Zigzag, the Germans never corrected their aim and continually struck in the suburbs and the south of London. It was only possible to sustain the deception because of the carefully coordinated planned that was promulgated from the interconnected structure of the Twenty Committee.

Without the constant control exerted by the Double Cross system and the Twenty Committee, these spies would have not have been as effective and would have easily compromised the whole system. The way the system was structured proved to be the only protection against the entire system becoming compromised. In addition to the rigid and hierarchical structure of Double Cross, the German failures also predisposed MI-5 to success. The agents, especially in the case of Tate, were pieces that could be easily copied and replaced. The real value stemmed from the compartmentalized system and its organization. And so, MI-5 succeeded. But the ultimate victory and the final grand gesture of deception still awaited.

¹⁵² KV 2/455. Interrogation of Edward Chapman.

¹⁵³ Macintyre, *Zigzag*, 264.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 265.

The Art of Perfection: Garbo and The D-Day Landings

“Let your plans be as dark and impenetrable as the night, and when you move, fall like a thunderbolt. The spot where we intend to fight must not be made known; for then the enemy will have to prepare against a possible attack at several different points; and his forces being thus distributed in many directions, the numbers we shall have to face at any given point will be proportionately few.”¹⁵⁵
- Sun Tzu



Figure 12¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Sun-tzu and Samuel B. Griffith, *The Art of War*, 145.

¹⁵⁶ The fictional landing zones used to deceive Hitler’s army. "The History Press Blog - Double Agent Garbo and the Success of Operation Fortitude," The History Press Blog - Double Agent Garbo and the

Operation Fortitude was the culminating deception by the Allied forces. Double Cross employed its agents in a smaller operation, Operation Bodyguard, which used multiple double agents collectively to deceive Hitler and his armies. The most famous of the agents was Juan Garcia, codenamed Garbo, with his extensive network of spies. Garbo was a brilliant spy but like every other agent, the Double Cross structure he operated in was the catalyst for success. Without Double Cross' contribution to the allied cause in Operation Fortitude, the allied landing forces would have encountered more resistance during the Normandy landings.¹⁵⁷

Operation Bodyguard encompassed the current agents being run in European deceptions but also the future regional deceptions brought about by specific units operating in Europe. Operation Bodyguard was a facet of the larger deception operation, Operation Fortitude, which itself was divided into two parts, Fortitude North and South. Fortitude North was a planned invasion of Norway, which was aimed to make the Germans suspect a heavy invasion of forces in Northern Europe away from France. The allies were to open up a supply line through Norway into Sweden to supply a full-scale march toward Germany. Fortitude South was to take place forty-five days before the actual D-Day and was designed to attack Pas de Calais, capture Antwerp, and support the push from Scandinavia planned in Fortitude North. The goals were to reduce the rate and weight of reinforcements of the target area, induce Hitler to expend all effort on fortifications in areas other than the Normandy, divert attention away from France and the Neptune forces, and force the Wehrmacht away from the Neptune landing zone before, during,

Success of Operation Fortitude, section goes here, accessed February 04, 2015, <http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/index.php/updates/the-spy-with-29-names/>.

¹⁵⁷ It is important to note the place of Operation Bodyguard within the Allied invasion of Europe. Operation Bodyguard was the fictional plan for the invasion of France. Operation Bodyguard was a subset within Operation Fortitude. Operation Fortitude was the alternate plan of Operation Neptune used to deceive the Germans. Operation Neptune was the landing phase of Operation Overlord. From tactical to strategic operation: Operation Bodyguard – Operation Fortitude (Fictional Version Operation Neptune) – Operation Overlord.

and after the invasion.¹⁵⁸ The largest problem the Allies had was to prevent the plans from being leaked to Hitler and his forces.

To accomplish a large-scale deception, the Double Cross agents were tasked with spreading misinformation. B1a division had Agents Brutus, Tricycle, Garbo, Tate, Mutt and Jeff, Gelatine, Bronx, and Treasure available to report misinformation to Germany about the Allies invasion plans. Of these nine agents, seven had wireless transmitting capabilities. MI-5 centered their resources on Garbo and his network of fictional agents. With such an extensive case, the Twenty Committee believed Garbo provided the best chance at deception.

¹⁵⁸ Roger Fleetwood Hesketh, *Fortitude: The D-Day Deception Campaign* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2000), 19.

Juan Pujol Garcia

MI-5 Codename: Garbo



Figure 13¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ KV 2/40, Intelligence File on Juan Pujol Garcia, Codenamed: Garbo.

Garbo's Network by February 1944

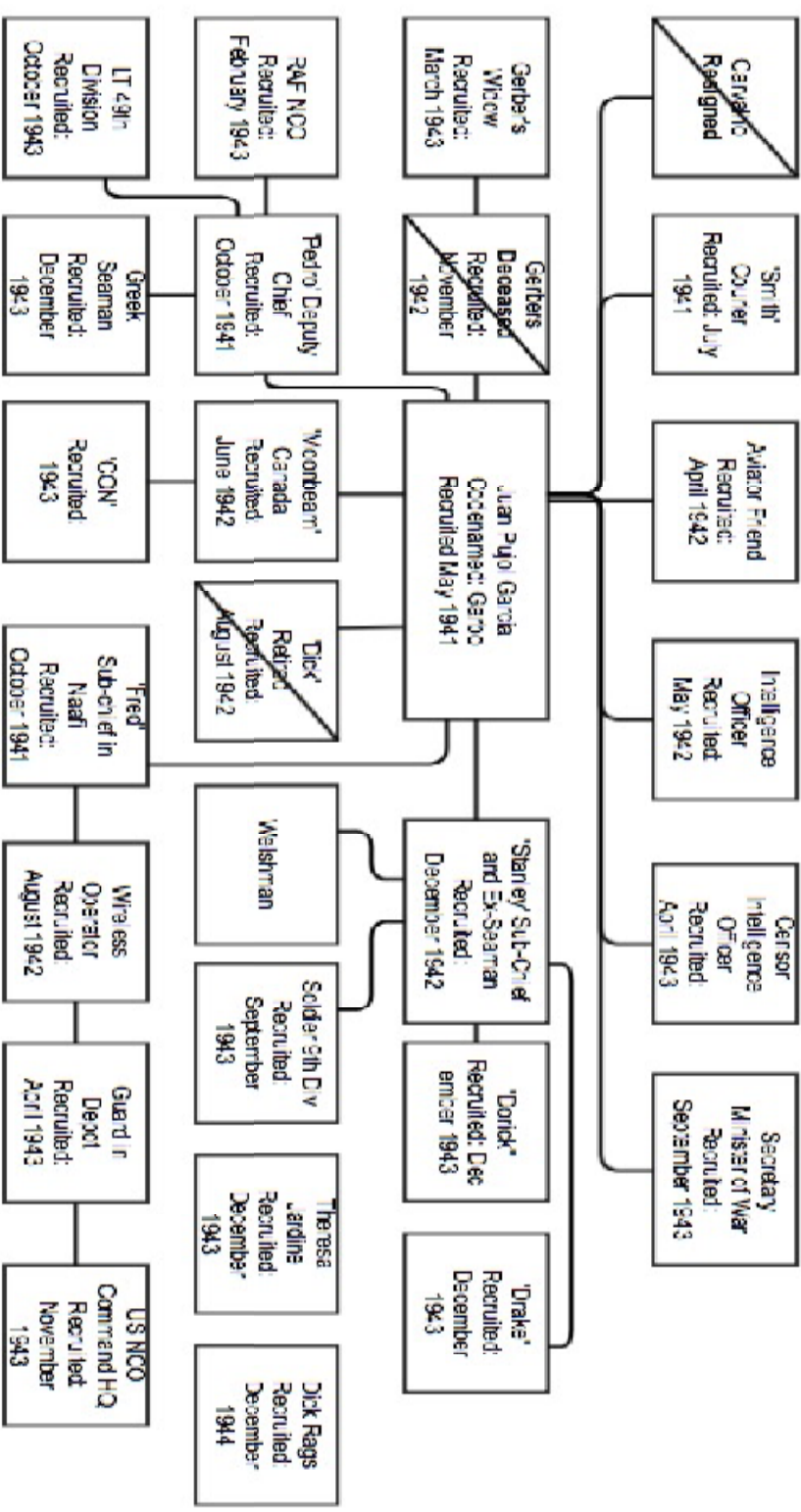


Figure 14¹⁶⁰

Juan Pujol Garcia was the son of a wealthy industrialist who received a Catholic education in Spain until he was fifteen. Garcia then ventured into the manufacturing business with his brother after the death of his father. Another turn of events left Garcia forced to enlist in the Republican Army after the Spanish Civil War erupted. The Civil War was an important political influence on Garcia. The heavy communist influence pushed Garcia into a more conservative lifestyle. Garcia opposed the Republican Army because it committed atrocities against his fellow Spaniards and disregarded the Spanish constitution. Garcia's dislike for the Army led him to go into hiding, avoiding routine searches for nearly two years until he was arrested and held for nineteen days before making a daring escape. Garcia then obtained a new identity and re-enlisted in the Republican Army with the plan to defect to Franco's forces once

¹⁶⁰ The Garbo Network is in every book on the Double Cross System. This list is original but its information came Crowdy, *Deceiving Hitler*, 310.

on the front line. Garcia was trained in a communications company and then defected to Franco's forces as soon as his company reported to the front line. He endured hours of interrogation over the course of a few months in Franco's detention facility before being enlisted into Franco's forces.

Garcia came to the realization that the radical right was just as intolerable as the radical left, and thus departed Spain for good. Garcia tried to convince the British he would be useful as a spy but he was rejected at the embassy in Madrid. At this juncture, he was determined to prove to the British that the Germans would have use for him in their intelligence division. After many attempts, the Germans finally accepted him and sent him to England to gather as much intelligence as possible and recruit sub-agents. Garcia then disclosed to the British his status as a German agent and willingly offered to work for them. The British gladly accepted; agent Garbo was born.¹⁶¹

Without the Enigma machine to check German reactions to Garbo's information, the Garbo case would have been deemed dangerous to handle and the British would not have exploited it to the extent that they did.¹⁶² With certainty from Enigma intercepts and a strong foundation of trust built up with Garbo, MI-5 began his carefully constructed exploitation of the Abwehr. B1a division had four goals with respect to Garbo: the notional organization of his life in England, gaining intelligence through Garbo's transmissions, misinforming the Germans through Garbo's transmissions, and serving as the mechanism to initiate deception plans.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ All information on Garcia's early life up to his enlistment by the British was taken from Tomás Harris, *Garbo: The Spy Who Saved D-Day* (Richmond, Surrey: Public Record Office, 2000), 42-51. From now on Juan Garcia will be referred to as Garbo.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 72. Harris argues that without the certainty of Garbo's claims, MI-5 began his case with little faith that how he came into German service was true.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 79.

The first objective for Garbo was to find out in which areas of England the Germans were interested. MI-5 offered the Germans, through Garbo, specific areas of England where they should send any sub-agents. The first response from Germany was to send them to the Newcastle area.¹⁶⁴ Over the next couple of years Garbo continually built his network, under the watchful eye of Double Cross, with small-scale tactics such as the one mentioned above. The result was a vast system of sub-agents and personnel from whom Garbo would acquire his information. Garbo was brilliant in his preparations and cultivations of sources but it was the oversight by MI-5, which carefully tracked his case's progress, which allowed Garbo to succeed.

The Garbo network was an immense task to cultivate, let alone run. Small details that could potentially warn the Germans of Garbo's treachery had to be debated over and over until Garbo possessed authorized information that he could give to the Germans. For example, the courier system Garbo used to send information was carefully tracked. The fictional system the Abwehr believed he used, which in reality was controlled by MI-5, had to plan the drop and pick up dates of letters carefully for Garbo to avoid tipping of the Germans. The problem using MI-5's system was that the fictional courier could never be in two places at once. The date a letter was mailed to Lisbon meant that Garbo's courier was there as well. For example, "if the courier established himself as having been in Lisbon on the 20th of the month, and the Germans from their records knew that they had delivered money for Garbo at the courier's Lisbon address, on the 19th of the month, it was inevitable that he should have collected the incoming letter."¹⁶⁵ Reconciling these problems with coordination from all units within the B division and the Twenty Committee is the reason why agents had so much success. Because of the compartmentalization, information was streamed together with fluidity, thus preventing small

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 84.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 89.

mistakes from giving away a double agent's intentions. The courier problem was a small facet of a large network, proving that the system set the agents up for success.

Operation Fortitude stands as an important part of Double Cross' success. Garbo, his network, and the other agents that Double Cross used to complete its large-scale deception did so in Operation Bodyguard, and by extension Operation Fortitude. The focal point for the fake invasion would take place in Pas de Calais. The subset plan in Bodyguard and Fortitude that involved Pas de Calais was named Quicksilver. The Quicksilver Plan relied on agents like Garbo, in addition to other deception forces, to feed important information to the Germans through the Abwehr. Quicksilver was then broken into six parts and labeled 1-6.¹⁶⁶ Quicksilver 1 dealt with informing that two Army groups, Twenty-first Army Group and the First United States Army Group (FUSAG), were at the disposal of the Allied command. After D-Day FUSAG was tasked with striking the Pas de Calais and the Twenty-first group was to stretch German reinforcements down toward Normandy. Quicksilver 2 encompassed the wireless deception of the Germans. Quicksilver 3 involved placing dummy landing craft to satisfy German aerial reconnaissance. Quicksilver 4 made Allied air campaigns focus evenly between the actual landing area in Normandy and the fictional landing areas in Operation Fortitude. Quicksilver 5 increased activity in Dover to make the Germans believe that wireless stations were to be erected. Quicksilver 6 installed decoy night-lights to simulate hard targets for German bombers and reconnaissance plans. These areas were passed through agents like Garbo and supplemented by the work of the Allied deception staffs. Quicksilver was another instance where structure and communication formulated the deception that was merely transmitted by the agents.

With Operation Fortitude approaching Garbo was ordered to report on operations being carried out in Wales. Garbo sent information received from his sub-agents on troop build-ups

¹⁶⁶ The summary of the six steps of Plan Quicksilver is taken from Crowdy, *Deceiving Hitler*, 243-244.

and reported that it looked as if the regiments stationed there were gearing for an assault. MI-5 then moved troops to support Garbo's claims and began stepping up bombing raids on Calais. Garbo continually satisfied German demands and MI-5 realized his potential. Garbo was given an office around the corner from MI-5 with a hard line into MI-5. As a final gesture of trust, Garbo was let in on the finalized plans for Operation Fortitude to ensure that he could accurately deceive his Abwehr handlers. Garbo routinely sent messages stating the invasion would take place in Pas de Calais. For instance, he wrote that "after personal consultation with my agents . . . I am of the opinion, in view of the strong troop concentrations in S.E. and E. England which are not taking part in the present operations, that these operations are diversionary maneuvers designed to draw off enemy reserves in order to make a decisive attack in another place . . . it may take place in the Pas de Calais area."¹⁶⁷

Even after the D-day invasions, the Germans kept forces around, on Garbo's word, to defend Calais. The Abwehr had so much faith in Garbo, even after it was clear no one would invade Calais, that they sent this message between Abwehr officials: "The report is credible. The reports received last week from Arabel (Garbo) undertaking have been confirmed without exception and are to be described as especially valuable. The main line of investigation in future is to be the enemy group of forces southeastern and eastern England. It would also be especially valuable to learn in good time when the formations which are at present assembled in Western Scottish ports put to sea and what their destination is."¹⁶⁸ The trust is testament to the brilliance of the operation and its structural foundations. Because of the Double Cross system, the men who waded ashore on D-day encountered less German resistance because of the information men like Garbo sent to the Germans.

¹⁶⁷ Garbo to Madrid, CAB 154/ 101, GARBO's June 9, 1944 message to Madrid

¹⁶⁸ Harris, *Garbo*, 74. Arabel is the German word for Garbo.

CONCLUSION

The Double Cross system was an unprecedented espionage operation that achieved a success never before seen in the world of covert operations. It lied to Hitler and controlled German espionage within Britain. Many have argued that Double Cross' success comes from the human aspects of the system. Whether it was the agents themselves, like the brilliant Garbo, the devoted handlers, or the ingenious men who controlled the information that passed through the system, like Masterman, Liddell, White, or Robertson, the people involved in Double Cross were invaluable. Without them, Double Cross would never have made it out of the conceptual stage. But I believe there is more to the story than just the people. Double Cross succeeded because of external reasons that allowed the members of Double Cross to reach new heights in the arena of espionage and counterespionage.

Double Cross relied on a multitude of factors. The foundations that Double Cross laid upon from 1939-1945 were an important part of its success. From World War I through the interwar period, MI-5 went through growing stages where it took its lessons learned in espionage

from 1914-1917 and applied it to the needs of an ever-changing intelligence system in World War II. With its prewar foundation MI-5 undertook its first agent, Agent Snow, and conducted what is classified as the first phase of the Double Cross system. Then, without the code breakers at Bletchley Park it is arguable whether or not MI-5 would have been successful at neutralizing enemy agents at all. The breakthroughs in Enigma count for the largest success of Double Cross.

MI-5 needed an enemy in order to exercise the power of Double Cross. In the early years of the war, it was clear that total war had revitalized intelligence agencies' roles in warfare. More importantly, without the failures of the Abwehr and its leader, Admiral Canaris' undermining of Nazism, Double Cross would have had to face an invested and worthy adversary. Because the Abwehr was not united with their Nazi leaders, Double Cross had a much easier time exploiting the German intelligence apparatus.

The structure and formation of MI-5 was the final key to Double Cross system. The founders of Double Cross slowly realized, through its continued use, that the compartmentalization of the system was critical. The Twenty Committee authorized all information, making it easy for MI-5 to keep track of all the aspects of the agents' cases. Equally important to the structure was the initial start each agent had within Double Cross system. Without the expertise in turning agents from Colonel Stephens, the agents of Double Cross would have not started their careers so successfully. All of the agents operated well because of the system. They had resources, were well taken care of, and had the support of their case officers. There are many things that made Double Cross successful. The men and women associated with the system were a part. More importantly, the foundations, the enemy, and structure of Double Cross led the allies to success in the war of deception for the free world.

The legacies left by the Double Cross system are of equal importance. There is a practical and ethical legacy to consider. Practically, the Double Cross system was a near perfect tool that succeeded in a time where intelligence was just becoming important. Because of its success, the system became a blueprint that many countries followed through the Cold War. Handling spies and misinformation now became easier with the blueprint that MI-5 provided in the war. All that needed changing was the enemy. With the end of World War II, for instance, America copied the system and exchanged Communism for Nazism as the enemy. What no one cared to consider was that the Double Cross system worked so well because of the conditions that it operated in. The entire world was at war against a clear enemy that wore uniforms. The system worked because MI-5 could make decisions, no matter how unethical, because the extinction of the state was at risk. Even ethical conduct in war is disregarded in favor of national survival. The postwar era in which the Americans picked up the torch from the British lacked the conditions that World War II provided. Most importantly, in World War II there was a clear enemy. Americans, although, believed that there was far more on the line in the Cold War than in World War Two but lacked a tangible enemy. An opponent who maliciously employed armies, naval, and airpower was swapped for an enemy that had military power but did not employ it. Reactionary warfare was replaced by the possibility of preemptive warfare.

The ethical side of Double Cross' legacy is embroiled in America's cold war counterespionage policies. The Cold War, as history illustrates, was fought in proxy wars against people who did not wear uniforms and did not abide by just conduct in war. Just as spy mania gripped England preceding the war, America believed communist spies infiltrated its intelligence services and country. The Double Cross system shaped more than just the structure of intelligence agencies and agendas in the postwar era; it shaped culture as well. The success of

Double Cross in wartime was used to justify ethics in peacetime and the culture of an entire nation. The importance of the Double Cross system and this thesis is not just in showing who is to credit for the success of MI-5 in World War II. By explaining the system and its success, it also implies a legacy that was used to build, shape, and run the most powerful intelligence agencies from the end of the World War II to today. The importance of intelligence was built on the back of the Double Cross system and its personnel. More importantly, a precedent of trading ethical conduct for national security was set. That precedent is still very visible in the intelligence services of the modern day.

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