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## The Art of Deception: Dueling Intelligence Organizations in World War II

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
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THE ART OF DECEPTION:  
DUELING INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATIONS IN WORLD  
WAR II

By

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## ABSTRACT

Historical works analyzing the cause of Germany's defeat, or the Allies' success, in World War II are certainly abundant. Although it is impossible to say that the use of intelligence led to an Allied victory, it is nonetheless a fact that it greatly *contributed* to that victory. From the Allies' superior use of cryptology, to their masterful employment of double agents, the Allies managed to outwit the Germans. This work analyzes the development, implementation, and performance of the double-cross system in World War II. It is argued here that the Allies, and specifically MI5 along with the combined forces of the British military, government, and intelligence services, succeeded in outwitting the Germans. Their success was not the result of German incompetence, but was due to the superior quality of the British system.

The first chapter explores the development of British deception and proves that those early campaigns laid a solid foundation for the grand deception scheme of June 1944 (Operation Bodyguard). The second chapter discusses the development of the double-cross system under the control of MI5. Chapter Three analyzes the evolution and operations of MI5's German counterpart, the Abwehr. The final chapter is a case study focusing on the career of Juan Pujol – the Abwehr's most trusted and influential spy (ARABEL) and MI5's most effective double agent (GARBO). The study of Pujol demonstrates MI5's superior qualities as an intelligence organization; correspondingly, it also proves that the Abwehr was simply outwitted by the British, not incompetent.

## INTRODUCTION

World War II is undoubtedly recognized as one of the most profound events of the twentieth century. Its outcome changed not only the nations involved, but it can be reasonably argued that it changed the entire world. Many historians point to single events, battles, or circumstances as overwhelmingly responsible for the Allied success.<sup>1</sup> While these assertions may certainly contain a degree of merit, it would be mistaken to claim that one person, action, or event ultimately secured that victory.

In his comprehensive work on World War II, *Why the Allies Won*, Richard Overy argues that no single cause alone produced the Allied victory. It was instead a combination of various factors. Overy contends that the Allies defeated the Axis because they improved their methods of training, leadership, overall strategy, quality of materiel, level of production, and battle techniques while the Germans maintained the same standards with which they entered the war.<sup>2</sup> Like a jigsaw puzzle, each factor represents a unique piece of the puzzle. No one piece alone can provide the complete picture.

Although Overy devotes little attention to the subject, he does mention another arena in which the Allies excelled: deception.<sup>3</sup> Charles Cruickshank describes deception as “the art of misleading the enemy into doing something, or not doing something, so that his strategic or tactical position will be weakened.”<sup>4</sup> Deception was vitally important to the British because it gave them a clear advantage over the enemy. From the defensive standpoint, it provided England’s war organization with at least a degree of protection. During the Battle of Britain, for example, the deception planners used misinformation to

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see John Ellis, *Brute Force: Allied Strategy and Tactics in the Second World War* (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1990). Ellis argues that the Allies won the war by relying on their economic superiority and use of sheer force, not as a result of tactical and strategic outmaneuvering.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 150-3.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Cruickshank, *Deception in World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), xi.

lure the Luftwaffe (the German Air Force) into bombing targets of little strategic value.<sup>5</sup> Used offensively, deception was equally invaluable to the Allied cause. It allowed the deception planners to mislead the Germans as to the Allies' strategy with the aim of forcing Germany into action or inaction contrary to its military goals. That program of deliberate deception successfully influenced Germany's military plans in a manner that was greatly beneficial to the Allies. Operation Bodyguard, which will be discussed at length later, was the prime example of the Allies' ability to manipulate the German's strategy through deception.<sup>6</sup>

Many factors contributed to the Allied victory, but the world of deception stands out for its many heroic efforts, undying determination, stories of grandeur and intrigue, and the undisputable contribution it made to the Allies' success. Indeed, the extensive use of deception - and specifically MI5's double-cross system - played a crucial role in the planning, execution, and success of the Allied invasion of Normandy.

The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast the two competing intelligence organizations of World War II: MI5 (Military Intelligence 5) and the Abwehr. While both organizations performed multiple tasks and functions, we will restrict our discussion to MI5's double-cross network and the Abwehr's espionage program in England. We will see how the Allies, relying heavily on the double-cross system, defeated the Germans by means of strategic deception. Within that context, we will examine the deception campaign waged by the British in an effort to deceive the Germans as to Allied intentions specifically regarding the 1944 invasion of Normandy. It is not argued that the Allied success resulted from the Abwehr's inefficiency as an organization, which has been the claim of numerous historians. To the contrary, the Allied success was due to a superior system of deception that included the close cooperation between MI5, SHAEF's Ops B, the London Controlling Section, and the various departments of the armed forces. Through the extraordinary effort and determination of the British, and specifically MI5, the Allies simply outwitted the Germans.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>6</sup> See Roger Hesketh, *Fortitude: The D-Day Deception Campaign* (Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> This work, which is largely written from the Allied perspective, is intended as an introduction to a more in depth study of the Allied double-cross campaign as it was experienced by the Germans.



The remainder of this study proceeds as follows. Chapter one discusses England's early deception campaigns. Those campaigns, both offensive and defensive in nature, undeniably helped to pave the way for future deceptions and to strengthen the reputation of the double agents in the eyes of their German controllers. The experience gained from those campaigns was especially crucial for the grand deception of 1944 – Operation Bodyguard.

Chapter Two explores the creation of the double-cross network and the use of the double agents as part of a rather impressive system of strategic deception under the direct control of MI5. Unlike the Abwehr, MI5 emerged victorious because they ran their double agents with great attention to detail and went to considerable lengths to ensure the security and vitality of their deception campaigns. For example, the double-cross planners continued to enforce extreme caution at all times even when it was obvious that such measures were unnecessary. Although not without flaws, MI5's dynamic leadership, well-defined goals, extraordinarily efficient organization, and unprecedented cooperation between departments did much to guarantee its success. Additionally, MI5 had a tremendous advantage that undeniably served to tip the balance in favor of the British in the battle for intelligence with regard to the double agent system – "home field advantage."<sup>8</sup> The result was an undisputable Allied victory.

The third chapter examines the role of the Abwehr in the game of deception and analyzes its failures. Like many historians, Heinz Höhne argues that the Abwehr failed because it was an inefficient organization.<sup>9</sup> David Kahn, on the other hand, blames its failure on the ineptitude of the Abwehr's chief, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris.<sup>10</sup> While both historians are correct on many points, it is not accurate to blame the wartime failure exclusively on either the organization or its leader.

This work demonstrates that the Abwehr failed first and foremost because it was outwitted by a superior British intelligence system. Another explanation for the failure was the nature of its mission – sending hastily trained foreign agents to Great Britain where

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<sup>8</sup> J.C. Masterman, *The Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 187-8.

<sup>9</sup> Heinz Höhne, *Canaris* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> David Kahn, *Hitler's Spies: German Military Intelligence in World War II* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1978).

any newcomer was naturally viewed with suspicion. In addition, the Abwehr was ill-prepared to assume the responsibility of running a large scale system of espionage in a hostile country. Inadequate preparation, however, was not entirely the fault of the Abwehr. Prior to World War II, Germany did not view England as an enemy and therefore did not consider it a priority to build a large-scale spy network in the United Kingdom.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, when the Abwehr was given the task of placing spies in England, the organization was poorly funded and not given time to complete its mission with efficiency. Therefore, the failure of the Abwehr was not exclusive to the intelligence organization itself, but shared by the German High Command. Finally, the Abwehr faced a number of internal trials that hampered its overall effectiveness. Despite the German intelligence organization's shortcomings, it functioned remarkably well on the European continent.<sup>12</sup> However, it simply was not able to defeat the British on their territory.

The fourth chapter specifically examines Germany's most trusted spy in England, and Britain's most effective double agent: Juan Pujol (code named ARABEL by the Germans and GARBO by the Allies). The GARBO case serves as an excellent standard by which to compare the tactics and efficiency of both MI5 and the Abwehr. It demonstrates that the GARBO case was a prime example of both MI5's success and the Abwehr's defeat in the war for intelligence.

The GARBO case was one of unmistakable fascination, intrigue, and remarkable triumph. Likewise, the case was undoubtedly one of London's most successful wartime deceptions. Even decades after the war was over, the Germans still considered Pujol to be a genuine German agent.

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<sup>11</sup> Laurant Paine, *German Military Intelligence in World War II: The Abwehr* (New York: Stein and Day, 1984), 73.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

## CHAPTER ONE

### EARLY BRITISH DECEPTION

During the interwar period, the British had “neglected the art of deception.”<sup>13</sup> With the outbreak of war, however, deception became an integral part of England’s wartime strategy and played a significant role in the Allies’ success. British deception had two distinct aspects: offensive and defensive. Defensive deception, for example, encouraged the enemy who was planning an attack to focus its assault where one was the most prepared and would incur the least damage by disguising that site as a vulnerable position. In the case of England, the British used defensive deception to lure the German Air Force, the Luftwaffe, into bombing dummy targets instead of genuine airfields, fortifications, etc.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, defensive deception was used primarily to protect the homeland or troops in the field from the enemy’s powerful thrust.

One of the greatest weapons in war is the ability to deceive the enemy about one’s true intent. Offensive deception, therefore, was designed to mislead the Germans as to the Allied plans and preparations; it “induces a false sense of security by disguising the preparations for a real attack, so that when it comes the enemy will be taken by surprise.”<sup>15</sup> This task was carried out in a variety of inventive ways. From the creation of imaginary formations complete with simulated radio traffic, to the staging of bomb damage using painted canvases and carefully placed debris, to the misleading transmissions of the trusted double agents, the British intelligence planners, including the London Controlling Section, SHAEF’s Ops B, the armed forces, and MI5, employed every possible method to deceive the Germans regarding the Allies’ true strategy.

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<sup>13</sup> Cruickshank, *Deception in World War II*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

That deception served three purposes. The first was to provide protection for England's homeland defenses and fortifications. The second was to save the lives of the Allied soldiers whose task it was to carry out missions and participate in battles in enemy territory. The final purpose was to persuade the Germans to either alter their strategy, or create an entirely new one, that would ultimately be fatal to their war effort.

Before the outbreak of World War II, England was in a unique strategic position; Adolf Hitler sought control of Europe, yet England was not one of his initial objectives. In fact, Hitler saw England as an ally against the Bolsheviks, not as a potential enemy. To that end, in the summer of 1935, he ordered the German Military Intelligence organization, the Abwehr, not to establish any networks in Great Britain so as to not offend the British.<sup>16</sup> Hitler's plans towards England would change drastically in a matter of only three years.

On September 1, 1939, the German Army invaded Poland, prompting France and England to declare war on Germany. Hitler was undoubtedly thrown off guard by this move, given that the two nations had previously attempted to avoid war at all cost. On May 10, 1940, Germany invaded France and conquered it in a matter of weeks. Hitler, who saw no reason for the British to fight with France already out of the war, hoped that the French defeat would persuade England to accept peace. However, he underestimated the English - they were determined to fight.

When England refused to succumb to the Germans, the Nazi leader ordered preparations for an invasion of the island. Operation Sea Lion, as the proposed invasion was to be known, would be a daring cross-Channel assault of which the outcome was anything but certain. Hitler and his generals agreed that an invasion of England would not be possible unless Germany first defeated the British Air Force (RAF).<sup>17</sup> Therefore, England was subjected to a brutal air war. In the late summer of 1940, in what became known as the Battle of Britain, and later the Blitz, the Luftwaffe unleashed a fury of bombing on England for which the country was hardly prepared.

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<sup>16</sup> Kahn, *Hitler's Spies*, 346.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Overy, *The Battle of Britain: The Myth and the Reality* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 51.

Terribly ill-equipped for war, and at times on the brink of collapse, the British enjoyed one significant advantage over the Germans – Ultra (the decoded German wireless transmissions). Even prior to the outbreak of war, British intelligence learned that the Germans had devised a new method of transmitting military and diplomatic messages via radio signals. The machine responsible for those transmissions was called Enigma. Thanks to the Poles, many of whom worked in the factories that made the new device and were able to recreate the model themselves, England’s intelligence officials finally obtained one of the Enigma decipher machines. Because of its complex system of encryption, the Germans considered the Enigma machine unbreakable. Wladyslaw Kozaczuk explains how the machine functioned;

With every stroke of a key, one or more rotors revolved. At the same time, a glowlamp beneath the panel lit up, illuminating the letter in the window above it. The machine was so designed that when one struck the keys, ‘typing’ a plain text, the letters of the cipher text lit in the appropriate windows and, conversely, when one tapped out a cipher text, the letters illuminated in turn spelled out the plain text. In order to conduct a secret dialog, both parties had to have identical devices set, using various knobs and levers, to the same cipher key.<sup>18</sup>

In other words, the complex system allowed the person transmitting to type in a message that was then scrambled and could only be read by the receiver who knew the correct code. That code was changed almost daily.<sup>19</sup>

At Bletchley Park, approximately fifty miles north of London, a team of scientists set out to crack the Enigma machine. Alan Turing, a brilliant and rather eccentric mathematician, along with another mathematical genius, Gordon Welchman, led the way in the effort to break the code. By April 1940, the unthinkable was accomplished. Unbeknownst to the Germans, their secret communications were no longer secret. Consequently, the messages decoded by the British, known as Ultra, would be the Allies’ most reliable source of intelligence throughout the entire war. According to the historian Hervie Haufler, “the tremendous advantage given to the Allies by the codebreakers was

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<sup>18</sup> Wladyslaw Kozaczuk, *Enigma: How the German Machine Cipher Was Broken, and How It Was Read by the Allies in World War Two*, ed. and trans. Christopher Kasparek (University Publications of America, Inc., 1985), 13.

<sup>19</sup> William B. Breuer, *The Secret War With Germany: Deception, Espionage, and Dirty Tricks 1939-1945* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988), 27.

no less than the decisive factor tipping the scales in the war.”<sup>20</sup> The Allies seized an advantage that clearly helped to defeat the Germans.

The wealth of information gained from Ultra was an incredible victory for the British. The insight into the German war machine allowed the British to know “about the German’s plans, their order of battle and the equipment they would hurl against Britain.”<sup>21</sup> It was through Ultra that the British first learned of Hitler’s plans to invade England. F.W. Winterbotham describes an intercepted signal sent by Reichmarshall Hermann Goering to the Luftwaffe generals:

In his signal he stated that despite her hopeless military situation, England showed no signs of willingness to make peace. Hitler had therefore decided to prepare and, if necessary, to carry out a landing operation against her. The aim of the operation was to eliminate England as a base from which war against Germany could be continued and, if necessary, to occupy it completely. The operation was to be called Sea Lion.<sup>22</sup>

Armed with such foreknowledge, England could prepare a defense strategy. Of course, preparation had its limits; just because British authorities knew that an attack was coming did not mean that they could prevent it. Hitler’s brutal air campaign against England was a prime example. From August to October of 1940 alone, the Luftwaffe sent 17,000 planes that dropped 17, 831 tons of explosives as well as 13,472 incendiary bombs on Great Britain.<sup>23</sup> The British could not prevent those attacks, but they could divert them to areas where the damage would have minimal consequences.

During the Battle of Britain and the Blitz, armed in many cases with the invaluable intelligence gained from Ultra, the British made their first attempts at employing deception. More specifically, England set out on a course of defensive deception. For strategic purposes, the Luftwaffe intended to attack the British airfields, naval bases and industrial sites. To protect those areas, the British, with the help of the film industry, erected dummy aerodromes, naval fortifications, and industries.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, they created an intricate lighting system in open fields to simulate military or industrial

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<sup>20</sup> Hervie Haufler, *Codebreakers’ Victory: How the Allied Cryptographers Won World War II* (New York: New American Library, 2003), 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>22</sup> F.W. Winterbotham, *The Ultra Secret* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), 41.

<sup>23</sup> Ladislav Farago, *The Game of Foxes: The Untold Story of German Espionage in the United States and Great Britain During world War II* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1971), 632.

<sup>24</sup> Breuer, *Secret War With Germany*, 68.

activity. In conjunction with the decoys, they set out on an elaborate program to camouflage the genuine military and industrial sites.

The deception campaign achieved many successes. The Luftwaffe was often deceived into bombing the dummy sites, which left the actual facilities undamaged. To display the supposed bomb damage inflicted on the intended targets for the benefit of German aerial reconnaissance, the British spread debris about the site and set tires on fire to show that the target was still burning. Another inventive measure is described by the historian William B. Breuer. He explains that in an effort to convince the Luftwaffe that their bombs hit the target, “artists were put to work painting crater likenesses on hundreds of large pieces of canvas. After the Luftwaffe had paid a night visit to an airfield, a number of these painted craters would be fastened to runways. From the air the simulated damage appeared so realistic that on occasion a passing RAF pilot would report that a certain airfield’s runways had been heavily bombed and were useless.”<sup>25</sup> These deceptive tactics led the Germans to waste many bombs on nonexistent targets, gave them a false sense of success, and provided at least of degree of protection for England’s industrial and military sites. Although the deception did succeed in luring the Luftwaffe to attack non-existent targets, it certainly did not spare England completely. In truth, the German’s bombing campaign against Great Britain was a devastating disaster for the beleaguered island. Approximately 40,000 British civilians perished between the summer of 1940 and the spring of 1941.<sup>26</sup>

After learning of Hitler’s plans to invade England, the British used dummy fortifications and equipment, reports from the double agents, and other methods of deception, to persuade Hitler that the island was considerably more prepared and fortified than was truly the case.<sup>27</sup> At one point, the German’s planned a hoax to deceive the British as to the location of the attack. Operation *Herbstreise* sought to convince England that the assault would come on the east coast where Prime Minister Winston Churchill expected it. Because of Ultra, however, the British knew of the hoax.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>26</sup> Overy, *Battle of Britain*, 109.

<sup>27</sup> Breuer, *Secret War With Germany*, 37

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 62.

Despite a brutal air campaign, the Luftwaffe was unable to defeat the Royal Air Force. Consequently, Hitler postponed, and eventually cancelled, his plans to invade the island. However, when the Germans abandoned plans for Sea Lion, “Hitler ordered his forces to maintain the appearance of an invasion threat in order to keep up ‘political and military pressure on England’.”<sup>29</sup> Again, however, Ultra exposed the deception.

The Battle of Britain may have been a military disaster for the British, but it provided the deception planners with valuable training for future endeavors. It enabled the British to test and perfect their use of camouflage, the staging of dummy equipment and fortifications, and the utilization of simulated war damage. The experiences gained from the deception allowed similar ruses to be used in forthcoming military campaigns, including the massive D-Day preparations.

The aerial assault reaped another reward. The British could not thwart the Luftwaffe assaults, but they could use them to their advantage. The Battle of Britain came at an early stage in the double-cross campaign. As the agents were building their reputation with their German controllers, the attacks provided them with genuine and valuable information that they could report, which could then be verified by means of aerial reconnaissance, subsequently strengthening their credibility. According to John Cecil (J.C.) Masterman, renowned historian and one of MI5’s deception coordinators, MI5 was “required to pass as much accurate information as possible for as many agents as possible, with a view to building them up for later deception or cover.”<sup>30</sup>

In addition to providing genuine intelligence, the agents also passed on false information to support the deception strategy. They gave the Germans the locations and functions of completely notional facilities in the hope that the Luftwaffe would be lured into attacking those targets – which they did in vain. As a result, while the Luftwaffe’s merciless campaign was disastrous for England, it was nevertheless an early triumph for the double-cross system.

Up until then, deception planners in England employed only defensive deception. Cruickshank explains that, “In Britain, defensive deception – camouflage, fake airfields, artificial fires, and dummy lighting, designed to protect civilians and the armed forces

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<sup>29</sup> Overy, *Battle of Britain*, 97.

<sup>30</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-194*, 103.



from enemy attack – had played its part; but deception in support of offensive plans was not yet possible.”<sup>31</sup> That, however, soon changed.

On May 10, 1940, the same day that Hitler launched his powerful blitz attack on France, Great Britain changed its leadership – Winston Churchill succeeded Neville Chamberlain as prime minister. Intrigued with the prospect of deception, Churchill saw that it could potentially be used as a decisive strategic weapon. In April of 1941, the new prime minister established the London Controlling Section (LCS) under the leadership of Oliver Stanley to coordinate a deception strategy for England.<sup>32</sup>

In 1942, under the direction of LCS, the British employed offensive deception for the first time in the Middle East. Stephen Budiansky explains that British General Archibald Wavell “brought in Lieutenant Colonel Dudley Clark to blaze a trail that would lead in time to the massive and successful deception operations in support of the Allied landing at Normandy on D-Day.”<sup>33</sup> At the very end of 1941, the British launched Operation Crusader in an effort to push the German and Italian forces away from the Egyptian border. Under the command of Clark and his unit known as “A Force,” the British utilized tactical deception to confuse the Axis forces as to the location of the assault. At Siwa and Jarabub, regions much further south than the actual invasion site, imaginary forces were established. Along with the erection of buildings, latrines, and placement of dummy materiel, a number of steps were to be taken to make the notional camps appear to function as genuine facilities.<sup>34</sup>

Britain’s first attempt at offensive deception was a success. It is impossible to know if it altered the outcome of the battle in any way, but it is known from German reports that the Germans believed the camps to contain “one infantry brigade, two or three armoured car units, and the Egyptian Camel Corps.”<sup>35</sup> The inclusion of the Camel Corps was curious given that not a single camel was employed in the deception campaign. Regardless, while the deception was considered a success, the British nevertheless learned from it ways to make deception a more effective weapon for the future.

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<sup>31</sup> Cruickshank, *Deception in World War II*, 19.

<sup>32</sup> Nigel West, *MI5: British Security Service Operations 1909-1945* (London: The Bodley Head Ltd, 1981), 183.

<sup>33</sup> Stephen Budiansky, *Battle of Wits: The Complete Story of Codebreaking in World War II* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), 272.

<sup>34</sup> Cruickshank, *Deception in World War II*, 22-23.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

According to Criuckshank, the British learned “that a deception could not succeed unless it was planned with the same degree of thoroughness as a genuine operation – a lesson which had to be learned again before the critical deceptions of 1944 were launched.”<sup>36</sup>

Another successful attempt at offensive deception, and another learning experience, corresponded with the British Eighth Army’s attack at El Alamein in October of 1942. Bertram, the code name given to the deception plan, was intended to hide the fact that General Bernard Montgomery’s forces intended to take the offensive, and likewise to conceal the date and location of that attack. Because the assault would come from the north, the British took great measures to conceal all signs of their preparations. On the other hand, they constructed camps in the south to deceive the Germans into believing that the attack was coming from that direction. To make such an attempt believable, pipelines were constructed, buildings erected, dummy vehicles and guns displayed, and false radio traffic was generated.<sup>37</sup>

In the end, Bertram was a success. The northern offensive caught the Germans by complete surprise. In addition, because they were deceived into believing that the attack would come from the south, they held two armored divisions there for a number of days following the offensive. Cruickshank concludes that the “deceptive measures at El Alamein had the effect of shifting the balance of forces in favour of the British; and in doing so there can be no doubt that they contributed significantly to the Eighth Army’s famous victory.”<sup>38</sup>

The British deception planners managed to coordinate a number of successful offensive deception campaigns in the field - and without doubt some not so successful. From their experiences, they learned that tactical deception was a complex undertaking. The obvious problem facing the deception planners was that the opposing forces remained at such close proximity to each other. It became extremely difficult to move genuine invasion forces, equipment, and supplies to the front without the enemy noticing the build up. Additionally, the deception forces could not appear too obvious in their construction of the fake formations. Therefore, the British took measures to make it appear to the enemy that they were actively trying to conceal the build up of the notional

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid..

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 26-33.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 33.

forces. For example, the buildings were camouflaged, but not thoroughly enough to completely conceal their existence from aerial reconnaissance.<sup>39</sup> Though the British were successful in the employment of their offensive deception campaigns, and even more so as they learned from each experience, it was nonetheless an extremely difficult task. Its success, however, proved that deception could be an extraordinarily powerful weapon on the battlefield.

Another successful hoax, and by far one of the most intriguing of the British deception measures, was Operation Mincemeat. After the British forced the Axis powers out of Northern Africa, Sicily appeared to be the logical target for the next Allied offensive. In reality, that was the intention of the Allies. It was thus extremely important to persuade the Germans and Italians that the next assault would focus on a different location. As a result, the deception planners conceived of the unorthodox Operation Mincemeat.

The goal of Mincemeat was to allow the Germans to conveniently discover a high-ranking British corpse, supposedly the victim of an airplane crash, who possessed top secret military documents outlining an upcoming invasion. To do this they needed a body; more specifically, the body of a man of around thirty years who had died of pneumonia so that it would appear as if he died as a result of drowning. After obtaining a body and dubbing him Major William Martin of the Royal Marines, the body was supplied with meticulously forged documents that detailed the Allied plans to invade Sardinia and Greece instead of Sicily. As J. C. Masterman explains, to add authenticity to the deception, the “final touch was the placing in Major Martin’s pocket before he left of the dated counterfoil ticket stubs of two theatre tickets for the night of 22 April, so as to indicate that had been in London too late to have left England and drifted ashore at Huelva unless he had travelled by air.”<sup>40</sup>

On April 30, 1943, Martin was released from the submarine *Seraph* in the Gulf of Cadiz just off of the coast of Huelva, Spain. That location was purposely chosen, for a known Abwehr agent was stationed in that city. As expected, the body was found by local fishermen and the German spy promptly notified. Martin was examined by a

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>40</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939 to 1945*, 136.

Spanish physician who concluded that he died of drowning as the result of a plane crash. His documents were immediately copied and sent to Berlin where they were studied and erroneously determined to be authentic.<sup>41</sup>

The efforts of the deceivers were rewarded in the operation's success. According to Breuer, "Adolf Hitler promptly began shifting forces to strengthen Sardinia and the Balkans, including pulling out troops from the Russian front, where he desperately needed every soldier."<sup>42</sup> The Germans still took measures to fortify Sicily in the event of an unforeseen invasion, but they were not on the scale that they would have been if Operation Mincemeat had failed to convince the Germans of the threat to Sardinia and the Balkans.

Up to this point we have examined various deceptions that all achieved at least some degree of success. For the sake of fairness, it is necessary to draw attention to one of its failures – Operation Cockade. According to MI5 case officer Tomás Harris, "Operation Cockade had been planned with the object of containing Axis forces on the Western seaboard of Europe to prevent them from reinforcing either the Russian or the Mediterranean theatres of war."<sup>43</sup> Cockade consisted of three plans: Operations Wadham, Tindall, and Starkey. It was Starkey that stood out for its failure. Breuer writes that Starkey "was designed to mask Allied weakness in Great Britain, to lure the Luftwaffe into a battle of attrition with the RAF and the U.S. Army Air Corps and to suggest that preparations were underway for a cross-Channel assault that fall, thereby preventing Hitler from shifting divisions from the West to the Russian front..."<sup>44</sup>

As part of the deception, which was in part passed on by the double agents, the invasion date was deliberately let slip. Additionally, the combined air forces subjected the Pas de Calais to 2, 936 attacks in a span of three weeks.<sup>45</sup> To the Germans, however, the Allied efforts appeared too obvious – so obvious that they were deemed to be a hoax. The Allied efforts thus failed to lure the Luftwaffe into battle. In truth, the entire deception fell flat. Breuer concludes that "Starkey had collapsed like a punctured balloon. In fact, the operation may have dramatized to Hitler the Allied weaknesses in England. During

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<sup>41</sup> Breuer, *Secret War With Germany*, 210.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Tomás Harris, *GARBO: The Spy Who Saved D-Day* (Richmond: Public Record Office, 2000), 138.

<sup>44</sup> Breuer, *Secret War With Germany*, 220.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 221.

the last half of 1943, the fuhrer pulled out twenty-seven of the thirty-six divisions in the West to fight on other fronts...<sup>46</sup> In other words, Starkey achieved the exact opposite of its intention.

Starkey was not a complete disaster though. To the contrary, it provided excellent training for the D-Day deception preparations. Although the hoax failed to accomplish its goal, it demonstrated to the planners that the next deception would have to be carried out with more finesse as the Germans were instinctively on the alert for signs of deception. It would therefore require more thorough planning and would necessitate that the British employ all means of deception at their disposal.

With the exception of Starkey, the above noted offensive deceptions all had the same goal – to protect the British forces and civilians and to mislead the Germans as to Allied intentions. It was finally time to raise the stakes and go a step further with deception. Britain decided to make deception an even more productive weapon by using it to influence the Germans so that they would alter their strategy in a manner that would be counterproductive to their military goals. Operation Starkey was the first attempt at such a hoax. As shown, however, Starkey failed to persuade the Germans that the Allies were planning a cross-Channel assault in late 1943. Likewise, the ruse did not prevent Hitler from reinforcing the Eastern front.

The first major attempt at manipulating the German's war plans was a terrible failure, yet the British were not deterred. Already in late 1943, Allied leaders were drawing up plans for Operation Overlord, which was intended to be the decisive cross-Channel assault that would ultimately force the German armed forces out of France. The deception planners had a major task on their hands. To pull off such a tremendous feat would require Britain to employ its most valuable strategic deception weapon - MI5's double agents. The double agent system functioned in England from the beginning of the war; but by 1943 the system was much larger, considerably more organized, and consisted of double agents who had taken advantage of every opportunity to prove themselves time and time again to the Germans; therefore, they enjoyed the German's trust.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

The results achieved by the British deception planners by 1943 ranged from counterproductive to reasonably successful. The hoaxes attempted up to that point, however, were largely preparations for the major deception campaign of 1944. Richard Overy explains that the British first used deception “extensively in the Middle East, with mounting success, and it was their growing experience in the techniques and tactics of deception that persuaded them, and eventually their skeptical American allies, that it could be used on a grand scale for Overlord.”<sup>47</sup>

The deception campaigns thus far discussed served various purposes. First of all, they provided England with a degree of protection during the Battle of Britain and the Blitz. Once the British took the offensive, the deceptions gave them a clear advantage on the battlefield. By misleading the Germans as to their military intentions, the British enjoyed the element of surprise and gained the momentum over the Axis forces.

Additionally, the deception campaigns served as preparations for two organizations: the British Armed Forces and the double-cross system. It was imperative that both the military departments and double agents have such valuable deception experience given that the large-scale deception that would be necessary to launch a successful cross-Channel invasion of France called for the close cooperation between the two organizations. Therefore, the experience gained from all previous deceptions was invaluable. It enabled British forces to perfect their ability to hide genuine invasion formations and to create completely notional ones without the enemy detecting the ruse. The double agents successfully used the experiences to both pass on genuine intelligence information, therefore strengthening their standing with the Germans, and to practice passing on false information in direct support of LCS’ deception campaigns.

Thus far we have discussed a number of deceptions, but we have not adequately assessed the use of the double agents. To evaluate the preparations for the greatest deception of all time, Operation Bodyguard, and the invaluable contribution of the double-cross network, it is necessary to focus our attention on the dueling intelligence agencies, MI5 and the Abwehr, and the establishment of the double-cross system in England.

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<sup>47</sup> Overy, *Battle of Britain*, 150.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MI5 AND THE ORIGINS OF THE DOUBLE-CROSS SYSTEM

In the period between the two world wars, MI5 was under-staffed, under funded, and consequently unprepared for the events to come. Formed in 1909, MI5 was England's home section of the British Imperial Intelligence Service.<sup>48</sup> From 1909 to 1940, MI5 was under the direction of Vernon Kell. An intelligent man who spoke German, Polish, Italian, French, and some Russian, Kell oversaw the growth of MI5 from its humble origins to the complex organization it flourished into by 1939. During World War I, MI5 was responsible for seeking out enemy subversives in England. All together, eleven German spies were executed in Britain during that war.<sup>49</sup>

In the interwar period, MI5 did not focus on German activity in the United Kingdom; instead, the British regarded the Soviets as the more immediate threat. Similarly, the Germans seemingly took little interest in England. David Kahn explains that Hitler "regarded England as racially akin to Germany and hoped to ally his great land power with her great sea power to dominate the world. In particular, he wanted her to cover his back while he completed his historical work of destroying communism and opening the east to German expansion."<sup>50</sup> Therefore, Hitler ordered the Abwehr not to form a network in Britain as early as the summer of 1935.<sup>51</sup>

To serve as reinforcement for the lack of interest in German subversives, the British did not uncover an unusually large number of cases of German espionage that would alert

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<sup>48</sup> West, *MI5*, 40. According to the author, MI5 was known as MO5 until 1916 when its name was changed to MI5.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>50</sup> Kahn, *Hitler's Spies*, 346.

<sup>51</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 81.

them to an organized threat. In between the world wars, British authorities did prosecute a small number of German spies, but did not find that they had an extensive or highly organized network within Great Britain.<sup>52</sup> Captured Abwehr records show, however, that the German intelligence organization was indeed very active in the United Kingdom between World War I and World War II. The Abwehr realized the benefits of establishing a strong pro-Nazi network in the United Kingdom. To that end, the Germans sought to encourage pro-German organizations and issued pro-Nazi propaganda to help build that support.<sup>53</sup>

Despite Hitler's ban, the Abwehr already had spies who were actively gathering intelligence in Great Britain. Nigel West explains that "Factories, mines, airfields, ports, harbour defences and military establishments throughout the British Isles had been surveyed, photographed and filed with meticulous attention to detail."<sup>54</sup> The incredible efficiency of the German spies had a devastating effect on England when the two nations faced each other in the Battle of Britain. Ladislav Farago explains that the "long-range implication of this surveillance was apocalyptic. It produced the raw material that went into the uncannily accurate selection of strategic targets the Luftwaffe attacked during the air blitz of 1940-41."<sup>55</sup>

With the capture of Major Richard Stevens and Captain Sigismund Best, the Abwehr was additionally able to uncover a wealth of information on the leadership, organization, and activities of MI6 (SIS), the security section responsible for counter-espionage intelligence abroad.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, the Germans knew little about MI5. The impenetrable wall of secrecy that surrounded MI5's organizational structure prevented Abwehr spies from penetrating its shell. The mystery surrounding MI5 was so powerful that those who worked in the higher echelon were required to maintain such secrecy that often their own family members were unaware of the true nature of their employment. West concludes that "To the Germans MI5 remained an unknown quantity."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> For information on the activities of those spies and their trials, see Nigel West, *MI5: British Security Service Operations 1909-1945*.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>55</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 153.

<sup>56</sup> Nigel West, *MI6: British Secret Intelligence Operations 1909-45*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), 75.

<sup>57</sup> West, *MI5*, 107.



When the British declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939, MI5 was ill-prepared for the intelligence war to come. In the years preceding the outbreak of war, MI5 consolidated its power among the various British intelligence organizations, recruited new agents, and managed to establish relatively good relations with the other internal intelligence agencies in England. The principal problem facing the Security Service was its dearth of qualified personnel. MI5 desperately needed to increase its staff and recruit specialists to deal with the new threat. As director general of MI5, Kell recruited only men and women from his own social circle. When he was replaced in 1940, however, his replacement, Sir David Petrie, actively recruited young and rather colorful characters to fill the ranks. Unlike those appointed during Kell's tenure, the new recruits were "bright, shrewd, erudite, eager people from the universities and the professions, with an adventurous, imaginative turn of mind and a hankering for melodrama."<sup>58</sup> Petrie's improvements were successful given that the new recruits provided fresh ideas, and although their methods were often viewed as unconventional, they nevertheless worked.

With the outbreak of war, one of the most urgent measures required to strengthen MI5's power, as well as the security of England, was to immediately shut down the entire Abwehr network on the island. To that end, Kell had a powerful weapon at his disposal – the Aliens Registration Act. The act allowed immigration officials to decide who could or could not enter England. Additionally, it required all foreigners to register their whereabouts with the authorities. Because of that system, Kell had the ability to keep track of all suspect foreigners in Great Britain. All together the registry identified 71,600 people. Every one of the 71,600 had to be interviewed and were subsequently organized into one of three categories: those labeled 'A' were considered a serious threat and were immediately detained; those in category 'B' received various restrictions to their freedom; the majority, group 'C', were released without any restrictions.<sup>59</sup> The result of the round up and the identification of those in group 'A' was that Kell successfully crushed the entire Abwehr network in England.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 222.

<sup>59</sup> West, *MI5*, 114-5.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

Kell tested his success through a man named Arthur Owens who served as a double-agent for the British since 1936. Code-named SNOW, he confirmed that all German agents in England were indeed under British control. The names of contacts provided to SNOW by the Abwehr were either the names of people already in British custody, or simply led MI5 straight to new German agents entering the country.<sup>61</sup> By 1940, MI5 was kept rather busy trying to cope with the influx of Abwehr agents entering the country.

When Hitler began preparations for Operation Sea Lion, Hitler's chief of staff, General Alfred Jodl, ordered Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the Abwehr, to establish an extensive intelligence network in Great Britain to support the invasion. Canaris did not admit to Jodl that the British had already detained every one of his agents on the island. Jodl gave Canaris only thirty days to have the new network up and running. It was virtually impossible to complete a task that normally took years in only one month. As a result, the poorly trained Abwehr agents sent to England were easily apprehended by the British. J.C. Masterman describes the arrival in the summer of 1940 of six parachute agents whose hasty training left them utterly unprepared.

As a rule they fell an easy prey to the Security Service, for they were imperfectly trained and equipped for their missions. Usually that had wireless sets, but in almost all cases they would have been unable to make contact without our assistance, either because of lack of technical knowledge or because of defects in the instruments themselves. An agent was generally given £200, clearly on the assumption that he would only have to maintain himself for a month or two until the invasion took place; and his clothing, identity documents, and the like showed insufficient attention to detail and all the indications of haste and improvisation. Incidentally, the identity documents themselves were constructed on information given by the SNOW organization, and therefore gave us clear evidence for the apprehension of the newcomers.<sup>62</sup>

Furthermore, Masterman explains that “attempted when it was it led only to the establishment of a German intelligence service in Great Britain controlled by the British—in fact, to the permanent and extensive building up of the double-cross system.”<sup>63</sup> It was the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW), however, and not the Abwehr, that doomed the German spy ring in Britain in 1940. If the Abwehr was not given such an impossible

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945*, 49.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 48.

task as to develop an extensive system in only thirty days, the intelligence service would have had more time to train and equip their agents properly.

Despite inadequate preparations, many German agents reached British soil during 1940, forcing MI5 to deal with the influx. Thomas A. Robertson, who was one of MI5's most valuable officers, proposed that the organization use the captured German agents to form a network of double agents. To him it made more sense to use the captured spies as a weapon against Germany than to merely lock them away in prison or execute them. At first, Robertson's request was ignored. However, circumstances changed in May of 1940 when Winston Churchill became prime minister. One of Churchill's first decisions, and a personal one at that, was to remove Kell from the head of MI5. A.W.A. Harker, the current director of 'B' division, succeeded Kell as acting director general of MI5. Guy Liddell stepped in to fill Harker's shoes as the new director of 'B' division. With Liddell in control of 'B' division, Robertson's vision was finally realized.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, in only a matter of time the double-cross system was born. Robertson became the head of MI5's B1(a) section, the section directly responsible for running the double agents. The goals of the new double-cross organization were:

1. To control the enemy system, or as much of it as we could get our hands on
2. To catch fresh spies when they appeared
3. To gain knowledge of the personalities and methods of the German Secret Service
4. To obtain information about the code and cypher work of the German service
5. To get evidence of enemy plans and intentions from the questions asked by them
6. To influence enemy plans by the answers sent to the enemy
7. To deceive the enemy about our own plans and intentions<sup>65</sup>

The formation of the double-cross network was one thing; running it was an entirely different matter. It proved to be an extremely difficult task. MI5 was deemed the best organization to run the double-cross system for three reasons. First, MI5 was already responsible for all counterespionage activity in England, so it seemed a natural extension of their duties to include the double agent network. Second, MI5, through B1(b), already knew and understood the German intelligence organization. Finally, MI5 enjoyed good

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<sup>64</sup> West, *MI5*, 156.

<sup>65</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945*, 58.

working relations with the other departments and organizations in England, which was a necessity, and remained impartial to any one view. If the Navy ran the double-cross system, for example, it would tend to view naval matters as more pressing than others. MI5 was able to offer direction without favoring any particular branch of service or organization.<sup>66</sup>

One of the first questions MI5 faced was who could be a double agent. Masterman explains that if a “person offered himself and could satisfy us that he had in fact been approached and recruited by the Germans, he could probably be used with advantage.”<sup>67</sup> Although the British initially attempted to create agents and place them in neutral countries with the hope that the Germans would recruit them, the endeavor failed. Masterman recalls: “In point of fact, such a bait was rarely taken... Though they would not take a first-rate article from us, the Germans showed themselves more than willing to push a second-rate article of their own.”<sup>68</sup> Therefore, MI5 adopted a policy of only accepting those spies sent to England by the Germans – they did not create agents.<sup>69</sup>

With the growing number of German agents entering England, MI5 had a tremendous task at hand. The first step was to determine which of the spies could be successfully turned and therefore take part in the double-cross program. The captured German spies were taken to Latchmere House, also known as 020, a Victorian mansion in Surrey turned into an interrogation camp. The camp’s ‘B’ Wing was reserved for those brought in by MI5.<sup>70</sup>

The prisoners at 020 were generally treated well. Upon their arrival they were greeted warmly at a party-like reception, the interrogators laid out their case against them, and then the foreign agent was offered the opportunity to comply with the British.<sup>71</sup> The interrogators paid special attention to the spies’ mental conditions and did not resort to physical force. West explains that “To have used obvious torture would have undermined the stability of those experiencing the turning process, and, indeed affected the confidence of the individual case officers, who... would have resented the use of

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>70</sup> West, *MI5*, 147.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 148.

violence on persons for whom they later had to take responsibility...<sup>72</sup> In general, the techniques employed at O20 were a success. MI5's greatest success was in the turning of TATE.<sup>73</sup> TATE came as an ardent Nazi, but was quickly persuaded by the kindness and generosity of the British. West asserts that "Within three weeks of entering the O20 compound as a determined Nazi, TATE was sending bogus messages to his Abwehr controllers—with genuine enthusiasm."<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, the German's still considered him to be one of their most trusted agents in England. His reputation with his German controllers was so secure that he was one of only five double agents chosen to play a pivotal role in the D-Day deceptions. Like TATE, the German spies were relieved to be treated fairly and most came to realize that it was more beneficial to cooperate.<sup>75</sup>

As the interrogators at O20 met with continual success, the double-cross system grew into an impressive organization. However, an organization of that size needed clearly defined guidelines. Masterman identified a total of twelve principles necessary for the successful running of the agents.<sup>76</sup>

One of those guidelines stated that no agent could send a message without the prior approval of his case officer.<sup>77</sup> Because the loyalties and motivations of the agents were not always very clear - they were, after all, German agents first - MI5 could not risk being betrayed by a disgruntled or disloyal agent. Consequently, the case officers had to carefully inspect every message sent to ensure that their agents were not sending a distress code to the Abwehr informing them of their capture. This precaution was all the more important given the delicate nature of the double-cross system. The various agents did not necessarily know each other, yet their cases were very much connected to one another. When each agent arrived in England, he was given the name and address of a contact in case of emergencies. Furthermore, the Germans sent money to certain agents for them to distribute to the rest. Unbeknownst to the Germans, all of their agents were under British control. If even one case was discovered to be a fraud, the entire double-

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>73</sup> TATE's real name is not certain. He is listed as Hans Hansen, Hans Schmidt, and Wulf Schmidt in various sources.

<sup>74</sup> West, *MI5*, 148.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945*, 17-33.

<sup>77</sup> Not all double agents were male; in fact, MI5 employed number of female agents. For the sake of simplicity, however, we will refer to them in the masculine in this text.

cross network could possibly be exposed. Therefore, it was of the utmost importance that the messages sent to the Germans were carefully screened for any sign of mischievousness on the part of the turned agent.<sup>78</sup>

As mentioned earlier, agents were not to be “created.” Experience proved that the Germans were highly suspicious of any agent who suddenly just appeared on the scene. Creating agents tended to be a waste of time, money, and resources. MI5 was exceptionally successful at turning the agents that the Germans sent to England and using them to their advantage. Likewise, the Germans generally did not express a mistrust of their own agents.<sup>79</sup>

The only instance where the creation of an agent was viewed as favorable was with the invention of notional agents. Notional spies were typically “recruited” by a genuine agent and subsequently worked as their sub-agents. From the depths of his boundless imagination, GARBO invented a total of twenty-seven notional sub-agents and collaborators.<sup>80</sup> The benefits of such an invention were astounding. It allowed MI5 to have imaginary double agents strategically placed throughout the country where they were in an ideal position to make observations that coincided with the deception strategy. Additionally, if the Germans discovered that they received misleading or entirely false intelligence, the British simply blamed the notional agent who could be easily ‘removed’ from the service. Roger Hesketh, whose wartime undertakings were instrumental in the creation and execution of the Overlord deception cover plan, further describes the benefits of the notional agent:

The imaginary sub-agent has some decided advantages in the world of deception. He can be created at will in any guise to suit any requirement. In building his character, one is not tied by the enemy’s knowledge of his previous life and circumstances. If the sub-agent turns out to be wrong, the agent himself can blame the former’s stupidity and so exonerate himself.<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, GARBO’s impressive sub-agent network proved invaluable to the D-Day deception campaign and allowed MI5 a degree of freedom to use the system without being overly concerned that GARBO’s reputation might be compromised.

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<sup>78</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945*, 17.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 40.

<sup>81</sup> Hesketh, *Fortitude*: 47.

An additional principle required to ensure the successful running of the double-cross program concerned the actions of the agents. Masterman explains that for the agents and their reports to appear credible to the Germans, it was necessary that the agent live the life of a genuine spy to the best of his ability. If he was supposed to report on naval fortifications, it was best for the agent to actually go to the specified site and conduct his activities undercover as he would if he were truly on an intelligence mission. Consequently, he could report his findings with confidence, thus rendering them more believable. The other benefit was that the agent was less likely to be tripped up by the Germans if questioned about his activities.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, it was just as important for the case officer to live the life of the agent, and keep meticulous records, so that he could fill in or take over the agent's case if necessary.<sup>83</sup>

The psychological well-being of the agents was an additional principle that MI5 had to confront. For the agents to continue to work voluntarily for the British against the Germans, they had to be happy. For that reason, MI5 evaluated the needs and personality of each agent, and took great measures to ensure their happiness. The agents were given some financial incentives and allowed leisure time. Additionally, as Farago explains, the agents "were all housed in such comfort at various shelters around London, and even flats in London itself. It was correctly assumed that the men and women performing this intricate task would cooperate more willingly when treated so generously."<sup>84</sup> The agents were also kept busy so that they would not have too much spare time on their hands to contemplate their position.

A further guideline stipulated that the agents be kept apart from each other. Conveniently, the Abwehr adhered to the same principle. It was generally safer for the spies to work alone so that they would not compromise one another in the event that one of the agent's cover was betrayed.<sup>85</sup>

The guidelines prepared for the double agents were effective and the system flourished. Yet as the double-cross system grew in number, MI5 had to be extremely careful to not inadvertently expose the duplicity. To ensure the safety of each case, every

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<sup>82</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945*, 19-20.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-21.

<sup>84</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 303.

<sup>85</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945*, 28-9.

agent was assigned a personal case officer. The job of that officer was to get to know his agent thoroughly. If for any reason the agent was out of commission either temporarily or permanently, the case officer needed to be able to continue corresponding with the Germans in place of the agent. Such a task required that the case officer know the agent's writing style down to every minute detail because any discrepancy in style would immediately betray the change in author. Likewise, if the Germans asked 'their' agent a personal question, either as a test or for straightforward reasons, the officer would have to be able to answer correctly. As a result, the case officers invested considerable time and energy into the running of their agent(s).<sup>86</sup>

While each agent had his own case officer to oversee his project, the entire double-cross operation needed to be organized under a single governing body to keep it running smoothly as a whole unit. The reasons for this were many. For one, the multitude of double agent cases needed monitoring so that one case did not expose another as a fraud. For example, the Germans regularly sent questionnaires to the agents asking for very specific information on everything from military fortifications to the morale of the people. If one agent reported that a certain military installation was highly fortified, and yet another agent denied its very existence, the standing of at least one of the agents would be irreparably harmed. Therefore, there was the need for a single organization that could monitor the reports of each agent to ensure that none compromised another.

An additional reason that merited the formation of an oversight committee revolved around the nature of the use of the double agents. The agents were specifically used as weapons in a war of strategic deception. For such deceptions, especially on the scale of Bodyguard – the deception campaign aimed at misleading the Germans as to the time and location of the impending cross-Channel assault – MI5 was forced to combine its efforts with those other agencies, including the armed forces. What made the double agents appear to be so credible to the Germans was that they made a point of providing the Abwehr with genuine intelligence information. They could not, however, reveal information that would in any way compromise the military's deception cover plans. That precaution was especially relevant as the British military was responsible for implementing the offensive deception component of Bodyguard. That deception, which

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 27-8.



will be discussed at greater length later, consisted of the large-scale creation of notional formations and the concealment of the genuine invasion forces. Given the delicate circumstances, MI5 could not provide the Germans with factual reports of troop movements that were not supposed to exist. Likewise, MI5 had to be in a position to report sightings of the notional formations. Consequently, “it cannot be too strongly stressed that the running of double agents in wartime demands the close cooperation of many departments, and complete confidence between them...”<sup>87</sup> That cooperation was absolutely essential in order to guarantee the success of Bodyguard.

The organization established to coordinate the double-cross network was the Wireless Branch or W. Board. The W. Board had the responsibility of running the double agents and called for close cooperation between MI5 and MI6, who controlled all wireless activities. It was essential that MI5 could directly transmit their messages to the Abwehr, as well as have access to all German transmissions that dealt with their agents and which provided information that could aid the deception strategy in any way. The W. Board was not, however, designed to deal with the everyday activities of the double-cross system.<sup>88</sup>

The Twenty Committee (XX) was formed as a sub-committee of the Wireless Branch in January of 1941.<sup>89</sup> Altogether, XX met 226 times from its formation until May 1945. It contained representatives from various branches including MI5, MI6, the War Office, Naval Intelligence Department (NID), Home Defense Executive (HDE), Air Ministry Intelligence, GHQ Home Forces, and the Air Ministry Deception.<sup>90</sup> J.C. Masterman, who was the chairman of the Twenty Committee, describes its functions as follows:

The essential purpose of the Committee was to decide what information could safely be allowed to pass to the Germans, and what could not – in other words to assess the probable gain of a proposed release against the loss involved in supplying a particular piece of information to the enemy. Secondly, the Committee acted as a clearing-house where the work of the various agents could be compared and kept within a reasonable measure of consistency. Obviously contradictions in traffic of too glaring a nature had to be avoided.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>88</sup> West, *MI5*, 169.

<sup>89</sup> The name of the Twenty Committee came from the roman numerals XX which form a double cross.

<sup>90</sup> West, *MI5*, 170.

<sup>91</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945*, 10.

To illustrate what a complex task XX had on its hands, the double-cross system ran at various times approximately 120 agents, a few of whom, GARBO for example, sent thousands of transmissions during their tenure.<sup>92</sup>

With the proper leadership, case officers, and turned agents, the double agent network proved to be exceptionally successful. From the outbreak of war, and as early as 1936 in the case of SNOW, the double agents were actively working in England. In conjunction with the deception campaigns discussed in the previous chapter, the agents gained invaluable experience in both passing on legitimate information in an effort to reinforce their standing with the Abwehr and in providing Germany with utterly false information in support of the Allies' deception campaigns. All along, however, MI5 intended to build the agents up over time so that they could be used as Britain's most effective secret weapon in the grand deception to come. MI5's patience and dedication was finally rewarded in 1943 when plans for Operation Overlord were drawn up and accepted by the Allied leaders.

In January of 1943 Churchill and U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt met at Casablanca. There the two leaders agreed to begin the build-up of forces for a cross-Channel invasion tentatively set for the late spring/early summer of 1944. In November at the Tehran Conference, where the three Allied leaders met for the first time, Roosevelt, and Churchill rather reluctantly, promised Soviet leader Josef Stalin that a second front would be opened in the late spring of 1944. The Western Allies previously embarked on operations in North Africa and Italy, yet none were large enough to pull significant German forces out of Russia. The beleaguered Russian forces were desperate for America and Britain to launch a massive second front. Operation Overlord would be just that.

Writing up plans for the largest invasion ever attempted was one thing; actually pulling it off was an entirely different matter. Because Lieutenant Colonel Clark's "A Force" conducted numerous successful deception campaigns in the Middle East, the D-Day deception planners carefully studied his techniques while laying the groundwork for

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 142.

their own preparations.<sup>93</sup> Clark established two factors essential to the success of any deception campaign. The first stated that “for deception to be successful it was necessary to know what the enemy was already inclined to believe. The easiest way to mislead was not with a total fabrication but instead by building on a preexisting ‘foundation of fear’ supplied by the enemy himself.”<sup>94</sup> The second principle stated that the goal of deception was to plant bogus information with the specific goal of producing action on the part of the enemy.<sup>95</sup> The deception planners followed Clark’s example with precision.

One major problem facing the Allies was concealing their preparations from the Germans. First of all, the Germans expected a cross-Channel assault as early as 1942. In addition, it was nearly impossible to hide such large-scale preparations from aerial reconnaissance. The Allies realized that they would have to mislead the Germans regarding the exact time and location of the attack if it were to succeed. The deception effort took the name Bodyguard.

Hesketh, who helped plan and carry out the deception while working for Ops B, the deception sector of SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces), recalls the three main goals of the Bodyguard cover plan as defined by COSSAC<sup>96</sup>:

- (a) To induce the German Command to believe that the main assault and follow-up will be in or east of the Pas de Calais area, thereby encouraging the enemy to maintain or increase the strength of his air and ground forces and his fortifications there at the expense of other areas, particularly of the Caen area.
- (b) To keep the enemy in doubt as to the date and the time of the actual assault.
- (c) During and after the main assault to contain the largest possible German land and air forces in or east of the Pas de Calais for at least fourteen days.<sup>97</sup>

To convince the Germans that the invasion could not be carried out until at least July, the double agents sent messages reporting that the Allied formations were incomplete, the American forces were represented as numerically weaker than was truly the case and poorly trained for combat, and that there was an extreme shortage of landing craft

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<sup>93</sup> Hesketh, *Fortitude*, 28.

<sup>94</sup> Budiansky, *Battle of Wits*, 274.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> COSSAC (Chief of Staff, Supreme Allied Command) was the name for Lieutenant-General Sir F.E. Morgan’s deception staff which was absorbed into SHAEF and Ops B in January of 1944.

<sup>97</sup> Hesketh, *Fortitude*, 12.

necessary for such an invasion. The Allies sought to deceive the enemy as to the location of the assault, thereby limiting Germany's reinforcement of formations in and around the Normandy area, by means of two deception campaigns: Fortitude North and Fortitude South.<sup>98</sup>

Fortitude North was designed to make it appear as if the Allies intended to launch an assault against Norway. Hitler demonstrated a preoccupation with Norway from the very beginning of the conflict, making it a logical target for the Allies to present a threat. Donal Sexton purports that "Each phase of the Scandinavian deception war was played out against the background of Hitler's acute sensitivity to threats involving Germany's northern flank."<sup>99</sup> Hitler had reason for concern. Allied control of Norway would likely induce the Swedes to abandon neutrality in favor of the Allies.<sup>100</sup> As Germany obtained seventy-three percent of their iron ore supply from the Swedes, the abandonment of neutrality would spell disaster for Germany.<sup>101</sup> In addition, the German naval commanders considered the Nordic fjords essential to a naval war against the British.<sup>102</sup> Finally, the capture of Norway would provide the Allies with relatively easy access to Germany via Denmark. Such threats would force Hitler to go out of his way to ensure that Norway did not fall under Allied control.<sup>103</sup>

The purpose of the Norway threat was to ensure that Hitler would keep his forces stationed in the north. More specifically, the object was to make sure that the Normandy area was not reinforced. The deception planners employed a number of measures to make certain that the Germans would take the bait. First of all, they created imaginary forces that were notionally stationed in Scotland as that would be the logical launching ground for an assault on Norway. Such was the case of the imaginary British Fourth Army stationed in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Iceland.<sup>104</sup> To reinforce the ruse, the British

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>99</sup> Donal J. Sexton, "Phantoms of the North: British Deceptions in Scandinavia, 1941-1944," *Military Affairs* 47, no. 3, (October 1983), 109-114.

<sup>100</sup> Cruickshank, *Deception in World War II*, 99.

<sup>101</sup> Sexton, "Phantoms of the North," 109.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>104</sup> Cruickshank, *Deception in World War II*, 101-2. Some of the formations attached to the Fourth Army were indeed genuine. However, they were not located in Scotland. Most were American divisions that were supposed to be attached to the Fourth, but they were still stationed in the United States.

erected a limited number of visual deceptions. Unlike most other deception campaigns, visual deception was kept at a minimum in Scotland. Hesketh explains the deviation:

In view of our limited resources and of the fact that Scotland's geographical position would make intensive reconnaissance by enemy aircraft difficult, it was agreed that elaborate visual misdirection, which was regarded as essential in the case of FORTITUDE SOUTH, would not here be necessary. Apart from one naval operation, the concentration of shipping in the Fifth and Fourth, and the display of a few dummy aircraft on Scottish airfields, FORTITUDE NORTH was executed by wireless and Special Means alone.<sup>105</sup>

As Hesketh recalls, the large-scale program of artificial wireless traffic was considered vital to the deception. The simulated wireless communications, known as Operation Skye, were no small feat.<sup>106</sup> The authorities studied the transmissions of genuine formations in order to replicate the activity with accuracy. Likewise, the transmitters could not send gibberish for fear that the Germans had the ability to decipher the codes. Cruickshank further explains:

The enemy listened to every message passed on the air and knew quite well that there was the possibility that he was being taken for a ride. Security therefore had to be perfect. A single careless mistake in operation, or careless talk with those who were not in on the secret, could give away the whole deception.<sup>107</sup>

Therefore, the messages sent were constructed with considerable attention to detail and contained information expected from such an operation.

The second medium employed to pass on the Fortitude North deception, as described by Hesketh, was "Special Means," the name given to any channel used to impart misleading or outright false information to the Germans.<sup>108</sup> In the case of Fortitude North, the double agents were given the task of passing the deception on to the Germans as reality. Agents, both real and notional, who were stationed in the region, reported the activities, strength, training, and movements of the imaginary formations.<sup>109</sup>

Another interesting element to Fortitude North was Plan Graffam. Initiated in November of 1943, Graffam called for the opening of diplomatic negotiations with

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<sup>105</sup> Hesketh, *Fortitude*, 63.

<sup>106</sup> Cruickshank, *Deception in World War II*, 104-106.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>108</sup> Hesketh, *Fortitude*, 39.

<sup>109</sup> For more information see Roger Hesketh, *Fortitude: The D-Day Deception Campaign* and Juan Pujol, *GARBO: The Personal Story of the Most Successful Double Agent Ever*.

Sweden in the hope of gaining certain concessions. Those concessions consisted of the right to refuel aircraft that made emergency landings in Sweden, the ability to use the Swedes' repair facilities, the right to use Sweden's military airfields for Allied landings, and permission to conduct reconnaissance missions over Swedish territory.<sup>110</sup> The Allies certainly hoped that Sweden would grant them their wishes, but they acknowledged that it was not very likely. Nevertheless, the Allies knew that the supposedly confidential negotiations with the Swedes would reach German ears in no time. That, deviously enough, was the plan. The Allies hoped that the Germans would learn of the negotiations and deduce amongst themselves that the Allies intended to invade Norway.<sup>111</sup> It is unknown if the Germans were greatly influenced by the charade; however, if they were even marginally persuaded then it would have added credence to the Fortitude North deception.

In general, Fortitude North was a success. Sexton concludes:

...the deception planners combined guile with imagination to exploit the economic, military, and political imperatives that had led Hitler to secure Norway in 1940: the vulnerability of the Narvik ore route to interdiction, the strategic importance of Norway and the Baltic to Germany's military posture, and German mistrust of the Swedish Government.<sup>112</sup>

Prior to the launching of the deception, there were 18 divisions stationed in Scandinavia, 12 in Norway, and another 6 in Denmark.<sup>113</sup> Denmark was later reduced to five. However, after Fortitude North, Norway was reinforced and existing formations were elevated to combat status. Consequently, the deception was a success, even if it was not a major triumph.

Unlike Fortitude North, Fortitude South was an undisputed victory of grand proportions. The goal of Fortitude South was to convince the Germans that the landings at Normandy were nothing more than a diversion. According to the deception, the real attack would come at the Pas de Calais six weeks after the commencement of the Normandy invasion.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Cruickshank, *Deception in World War II*, 126.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-6

<sup>112</sup> Sexton, "Phantoms of the North," 113.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

The deception campaign was vitally important to the success of the Allied cross-Channel assault. First of all, it was highly difficult to conceal the massive build up of invasion forces and the location of those forces would naturally lead the Germans to assume that Normandy was the targeted area. Therefore, the Allies hoped to divert attention away from the Normandy build up by portraying it as a planned diversion. The deception was important for another reason as well. When the Allies landed in France, they would be numerically inferior and vulnerable until they established a firm beachhead. It was of the utmost importance to prevent the Germans from immediately sending reinforcements. Of the most concern to the Allied commanders was the German 15<sup>th</sup> Army stationed at the Pas de Calais. As a result, the insistence that Normandy was a diversion with the real attack coming at the Pas de Calais was absolutely vital to the success of Overlord.

A number of steps were taken to support the deception. As with most deceptions employed by the British, visual deception, including dummy materiel and fortifications, was a key element. Similarly, Ops B, through David Strangeways and Roger Hesketh, coordinated a massive program of troops movements, both real and notional, to support the charade. It must be remembered that the British were never one hundred percent certain that they controlled every German spy in England (although they did). Similarly, they could not be entirely confident that additional German spies would not enter the country undetected before the commencement of the invasion and witness the preparations of the genuine forces. Therefore, the British went to the extreme to mislead both German aerial reconnaissance and enemy agents on the ground. As they learned from previous deception campaigns, Allied planners had to devote as much time and attention to the deception as they did to the actual invasion preparations.<sup>115</sup>

The most effective invention of the entire war, and one that played a vital role in the success of Fortitude South, was that of FUSAG (First United States Army Group). FUSAG was a largely imaginary force stationed in England and chosen to be the driving force of the Pas de Calais invasion. To make FUSAG and the threat to the Pas de Calais believable, it had to be commanded by a general of exceptional standing who the Germans would consider a worthy opponent. General George S. Patton was chosen as the

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 23.

commander of FUSAG.<sup>116</sup> Although Patton coveted a position in the field, his role in the deception gave FUSAG the credibility that it desperately needed. Like all other notional formations, the FUSAG hoax was substantiated by means of inadequately camouflaged buildings, massive simulated wireless traffic, and various other visual deceptions courtesy of the film industry's Shepperton Studios.<sup>117</sup>

To pass off a deception of such a magnificent size required employing every available means of deception. Likewise, no one venue was sufficient on its own to accomplish the goal. Many organizations were involved in one matter or another including MI5, MI6, SHAEF via Ops B, and the armed services among others. Information from the various deception agencies was organized by and channeled through the London Controlling Section under the direction of Lieutenant-Colonel John Bevan.<sup>118</sup>

By 1944 Luftwaffe reconnaissance missions over England were few and far between. Therefore, unbeknownst to the Allies, the visual deceptions meticulously designed by the British were practically useless.<sup>119</sup> It was discovered in captured German documents, however, that the many messages from the double agents made their way to Hitler himself. Judging from intercepted wireless communications, in which the information MI5 fed to the enemy was often included, it was obvious that the agents succeeded in influencing Germany's grand military strategy. As a result, the double-cross system became the backbone of the D-Day deception campaign.<sup>120</sup>

The double agents, who MI5 painstakingly built up for years for just this occasion, finally faced their ultimate test. Their reports of troop movements, positions, training, insignia, origins, and supposed destinations were of particular interest to the Germans. The agents were able to either fail to observe or make light of the existence of the genuine invasion forces while they gave detailed telling reports of the notional units,

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<sup>116</sup> Hesketh, *Fortitude*, 181.

<sup>117</sup> Breuer, *Secret War With Germany*, 234.

<sup>118</sup> Hesketh, *Fortitude*, xvi.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.



specifically FUSAG. The agents also created the impression that the Allied forces would not be ready to invade until the late summer of 1944 at the earliest.<sup>121</sup>

The task of reporting a mixture of genuine and false information was no simple undertaking. As mentioned previously, it called for extreme coordination and cooperation of all agencies involved. Another difficult aspect was the need to ensure that the Germans received the information in small pieces that they could put together themselves. The deception planners learned from Operation Starkey that if information came too easily to the Germans, they naturally suspected a trick. Therefore, the agents involved had to provide the Germans with only small tidbits of information at a time. Cruickshank further explains:

The perfect deception plan is like a jigsaw puzzle. Pieces of information are allowed to reach the enemy in such a way as to convince him that he has discovered them by accident. If he puts them together himself he is far more likely to believe that the intended picture is a true one.<sup>122</sup>

The high number of detailed transmissions from the agents did indeed allow the Germans to eventually put the puzzle together on their own.

The entire double-cross system was involved in the Overlord deception campaign; yet only five agents were chosen by MI5 to lead the operation. The five were selected based on their high degree of credibility with the Germans. They were each tried time and time again and managed to reassure the Germans of their loyalty and usefulness. The chosen five were TATE, BRUTUS, GARBO, TREASURE (the only female in the group) and TRICYCLE. GARBO and BRUTUS, however, stood out as the major figures in the deception.<sup>123</sup>

TATE was an intriguing twenty-six year old man from Denmark. An ardent Nazi, he was chosen by the Abwehr to be a part of the Lena Team – the group of agents sent to England in preparation for Operation Sea Lion. On September 6, 1940, TATE was parachuted into England. Upon his landing he broke his ankle and was forced to make contact with a fellow Abwehr agent already established in Great Britain. That agent was “Johnny,” known to MI5 as SNOW. SNOW agreed to meet TATE who was subsequently

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>122</sup> Cruickshank, *Deception in World War II*, xi.

<sup>123</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 718.

arrested. At Latchmere house TATE saw the benefit of working for the British and became one of MI5's most reliable double agents.<sup>124</sup>

Overall, TATE sent over one thousand messages to the Abwehr in his career. He was so highly regarded by the Germans that he received the Iron Cross First and Second Class. TATE was initially considered to be one of Germany's best agents, but did not play as significant a role in the D-Day deception plan as MI5 intended. Roger Hesketh states that "hardly any of his messages found their way into the German Intelligence summaries."<sup>125</sup> Oddly enough, only eleven of his messages made it to the top. For some unexplainable reason, the Abwehr did not regard TATE's D-Day deception transmissions with as much importance as MI5 hoped.<sup>126</sup>

BRUTUS, on the other hand, played a major part in the deception with ninety-one of his reports making their way into the intelligence summaries. BRUTUS, named Roman Garby-Czerniawski, was a Pole who, after fleeing war-torn Poland, served as head of an underground organization in France. Arrested by the Germans, he spent eight and one half harsh months in prison before deciding to "work" for the Germans. It was a decision based on survival as opposed to loyalty. BRUTUS arrived in England in October of 1942 and immediately turned himself in to British authorities.<sup>127</sup>

MI5 did not instantly trust BRUTUS and the W. Board initially turned his case down. The British worried that his true loyalties lay with Germany. Likewise, the fact that he was a Pole led to a number of diplomatic issues where Russia was concerned. Nevertheless, BRUTUS was eventually accepted into MI5 under the condition that he would not be used for "operational deception."<sup>128</sup> In spite of that, BRUTUS was in a perfect position to report on military matters and ended up playing an extremely important role in the D-Day deception campaign.

Neither TRICYCLE nor TREASURE were as established in the double-cross program as BRUTUS, GARBO, and TATE; therefore, the role they played was considerably less important to the deception. TRICYCLE, a Yugoslav by the name of Dusko Popov, made his contribution to Bodyguard in February of 1944 with his delivery

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<sup>124</sup> West, *MI5*, 148.

<sup>125</sup> Hesketh, *Fortitude*, xviii

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.

<sup>127</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945*, 140.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

of the British order of battle to his German case officer in Lisbon. There were doubts that the Germans would accept the information as legitimate, but they swallowed every word. Hesketh recalls, “Everyone at the time, TRICYCLE included, felt some doubt about the value which the German General Staff would place on the Lisbon report. In fact that deception far exceeded our hopes.”<sup>129</sup> Indeed, the Germans used the order to fill in the gaps on their operation map.

Lily Sergueiev was a twenty-six year old French woman with Russian roots. Her service in England as TREASURE, which was the result of her voluntary manipulation of the Germans, proved invaluable to the D-Day deception. TREASURE was stationed in Bristol where the invasion forces for Normandy, if they existed, would easily be spotted. TREASURE, who was greatly trusted by the Germans, reported no activity in the region. That omission undeniably helped to divert the Germans’ attention away from the Caen area. Farago concludes that “In the eyes of the Abwehr no agent was more important, none more deserving of their trust. That was what made Lily invaluable to the British, and she became the most important cog in the elaborate ruse distracting the Germans’ attention from Normandy.”<sup>130</sup>

The greatest of the D-Day double agents was without a doubt Juan Pujol – GARBO. The specifics of the GARBO case will be discussed at length in the following chapter, but it can be said here that GARBO’s participation, and the unequalled trust and admiration that he inspired in the Abwehr, contributed significantly to the Allied victory in France. GARBO not only helped to pass on the D-Day deception, but continued the task even after the Allies landed. GARBO was single-handedly credited with saving the D-Day operation by ensuring that the 15<sup>th</sup> German Army remained at the Pas de Calais. On June 9<sup>th</sup> (D+3), GARBO sent an urgent message to his case officer in Madrid stating that FUSAG remained stationary in England and was preparing for an invasion of the Pas de Calais. The result was that “Hitler pronounced: the movement of panzer and infantry divisions from the Pas de Calais to Normandy must not only be stopped, the 15th Army

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<sup>129</sup> Hesketh, *Fortitude*, 174.

<sup>130</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 722.

must also be strengthened.”<sup>131</sup> Allied leaders agreed that the failure to release the 15<sup>th</sup> Army to Normandy was directly responsible for the success of the invasion.<sup>132</sup>

Similarly, German leaders agreed that the decision to withhold the 15<sup>th</sup> Army destroyed Germany’s chance to win the war. Brown describes the reactions of Rommel and Rundstedt to the news that the 15<sup>th</sup> Army would not assist the Normandy defense: “The orders were with Rundstedt and Rommel during the night; and they brought both field marshals to the brink of resignation. For they recognized that with these divisions they might win the Battle of Normandy; without them they stood no chance of victory.”<sup>133</sup> Additionally, Jodl called Hitler’s decision “fatal.”<sup>134</sup>

The deception operations from the very beginning of the war served to prepare the Allies for the major deception campaign by which the fate of the war would lie. The failure to mislead the Germans would have led to an unmitigated disaster for the Allied forces. Success would, and did, contribute to shortening the war. The D-Day deception campaign included various techniques of deception, but the double agents were undoubtedly the vital link. Without the double-cross system, the Allies would have been robbed of their most effective means of misleading the Germans. Farago contends that “it is no exaggeration to say that—by befuddling the enemy and compelling him to make the wrong dispositions—Robertson’s B.I.A. made a historic contribution to the success of the invasion, and saved the lives of thousands of soldiers.”<sup>135</sup> Similarly, in a letter to the head of MI6, Stewart Menzies, General Dwight D. Eisenhower praised Britain’s use of deception: “It has simplified my task as a commander enormously. It has saved thousands of British and American lives, and in no small way, contributed to the speed with which the enemy was routed and eventually forced to surrender.”<sup>136</sup> Therefore, because of MI5’s extreme hard work and the fact that the Germans put so much trust in “their” agents, rarely questioning their loyalty, the deception succeeded. It was a tremendous victory for MI5. The years of work building each agent up for the final pay off was not in

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<sup>131</sup> Anthony Cave Brown, *Bodyguard of Lies* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.), 686.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 687.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 686-7.

<sup>134</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 39.

<sup>135</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 717.

<sup>136</sup> Eisenhower to Menzies, Eisenhower library, Abilene, Kansas, quoted in Stephen E. Ambrose, “Eisenhower and the Intelligence Community in World War II,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, no. 1, The Second World War: Part 1, (January 1981): 153-66.

vain. MI5's astonishing success, however, begs the question: why was the Abwehr so taken in by the Allied deception campaign?

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE ABWEHR

The Abwehr was formed as Germany's Military Intelligence organization on September 21, 1919. The newly formed Abwehr was directly attached to the OKW. Initially commanded by Colonel Friedrich Gempp and then Captain Konrad Patzig with the arrival of the Nazis, Captain (later Admiral) Wilhelm Canaris took over as Chief of the Abwehr on January 1, 1935.<sup>137</sup>

In the navy, Canaris received nothing but extremely favorable reviews for his hard work, innate ability, and determination. He also demonstrated a natural proficiency for covert intelligence work early on in his career. Despite Canaris' small stature and perhaps deceiving looks, described by Höhne as "colourless and impersonal," Canaris was extremely intelligent and had the keen ability to see beyond mere appearances.<sup>138</sup>

Farago asserts that "When Captain Canaris appeared on the scene, all of a sudden the moribund Abwehr came to life."<sup>139</sup> Indeed, the new chief completely transformed the organization to make it include three divisions. The first was Group I, which was responsible for intelligence gathering and espionage missions. Group II conducted sabotage, encouraged insurrections, and organized propaganda projects. The third and final section, Group III, was directly responsible for counterespionage.<sup>140</sup>

Designed to serve as a defense organization, the Abwehr was initially attached to the Ministry of Defense in Berlin. According to Lauran Paine, the "Abwehr was particularly suitable to the situation of post World War I Germany, a nation which was not to be

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<sup>137</sup> Höhne, *Canaris*, 166.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>139</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 10.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

allowed to think again in terms of offence, only in terms of defence...”<sup>141</sup> With the emergence of the Nazi government, and the subsequent re-militarization of Germany, however, the Abwehr was forced to think and function offensively.

The Abwehr was initially charged with conducting intelligence operations to the east, specifically Poland, but its focus subsequently shifted to the west along with Hitler’s war ambitions. In the game of counterespionage, the Abwehr excelled. It was able to capture nearly every British agent sent to Western Europe.<sup>142</sup>

One of the Abwehr’s most outstanding triumphs came at the The Hague. Commander Traugott Protze was sent by Canaris to The Hague to investigate British activity in the region. Protze immediately detected that he was being followed and had the spy “arrested.” The snoop was Folfert Arie Van Koutrick, a paid British informant. Van Koutrick was not particularly loyal to the British and readily agreed to work for Protze for more money. Van Koutrick was able to identify the British SIS (MI6) agents functioning in The Hague. Through the negotiations with only that one informant, one who was not even a member of MI6, the Abwehr succeeded in bringing down the entire British network in The Hague. Farago describes the coup:

The two of them bought one of the flat-bottomed barges that cruise indolently up and down the gray canals of The Hague, put a movie camera on it, and anchored it on the *gracht* on which the passport office fronted, barely thirty yards from its entrance. Everyone who entered or left the building was filmed, and then, in nocturnal *Treffs*, the pictures were shown to Van Koutrik to identify the subjects for Protze.<sup>143</sup>

In that manner, the Germans identified, and in due time captured, all existing and incoming British agents.

With the outbreak of war, Captain Best was ordered to move his organization to the The Hague where Major Stevens was stationed. The move was made for security purposes, but it was an utter disaster for SIS. After a number of meetings with the Abwehr’s Herman Giskes, Best and Stevens were arrested by Walter Schellenberg of the SD (Sicherheitsdienst – the Nazi party intelligence organization). The arrest of Best and

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<sup>141</sup> Paine, *German Military Intelligence in World War II*, 6.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 16; Farago, *The Game of Foxes*, 129 & 136.

<sup>143</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 127.

Stevens brought about the collapse of the British's elaborate "Z" organization and allowed the Abwehr to obtain rather detailed information on MI6.<sup>144</sup>

The Abwehr also succeeded in capturing a number of British agents who parachuted into Western Europe, and like the British, used the spies as double agents. Paine explains that "Many Allied agents were 'turned around' simply by having explained to them the alternative to co-operation with Military Intelligence – being handed over to the Gestapo."<sup>145</sup> The Germans were about as efficient as the British when it came to capturing foreign agents, but they did not use the "turned" agents to the degree that they could have. "These double agents fed false information to the Allies, encouraged air-dropping additional secret agents into France where Germans were waiting, and extorted large sums of money, tons of armaments and the latest, most sophisticated wireless equipment for German use."<sup>146</sup> The Abwehr apparently used the agents to capture new spies entering the country and obtain funds, but did not attempt to establish an elaborate system of strategic deception in an effort to deliberately mislead the British as to German intentions.

As we have seen, the Abwehr excelled at counterespionage, but it failed miserably when it came to sending its own agents across the English Channel. Because the Abwehr was created as a defensive organization, it was not prepared to act offensively. Canaris did have agents in Britain in the mid-1930s whose task it was to circulate pro-German propaganda and encourage the formation of similar organizations. Germany also stationed agents in England who were able to identify and map out Britain's military installations with great efficiency.<sup>147</sup>

In an effort to secure England as an ally against communism, Hitler prohibited the Abwehr from sending spies to England in 1935. Even though the Abwehr never withdrew its agents from Great Britain, they were again officially allowed to conduct intelligence operations in 1937. When war was declared on September 3, 1939, however, MI5

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<sup>144</sup> West, *MI6*, 74.

<sup>145</sup> Paine, *German Military Intelligence in World War II*, 16.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 152.



rounded up all foreigners for interrogation and subsequently succeeded in shutting down the entire Abwehr operation.<sup>148</sup>

In 1940, in conjunction with Hitler's plans to launch a cross-Channel attack of England, the Abwehr was given the impossible task of assembling an intelligence force to be operational in only thirty days. The result was that the agents were hastily and poorly trained, inadequately equipped, and doomed to failure. Therefore, as seen in the previous section, every Abwehr agent sent to England was apprehended.<sup>149</sup>

All blame should not fall on the Abwehr's shoulders. Because the Abwehr was initially designed to be a defensive organization, it had not received the funding or support to transform it into an efficient offensive network. Paine argues that "If the Abwehr had a weakness in those early years, it was where foreign nations were concerned. The Germans could create adequate internal security, but because their foreign intelligence services had not received support or full recognition, when war arrived in 1939 they had at best fragmentary and poorly organized Foreign Intelligence Organizations..."<sup>150</sup> Consequently, it was terribly unprepared for the role in which it was thrust. Additionally, it is feasible that if they had more time to train their agents, the Abwehr may have achieved more favorable results. The German Command did not understand the intricacies involved in such operations and therefore gave the Abwehr a task that could not possibly succeed within such a limited time frame.

Nevertheless, the Abwehr thought it had achieved success. Until the Operation Sea Lion agents were sent across the Channel, the Abwehr had only one agent operating in England – "Johnny" (SNOW). The crowning success of the Sea Lion drop was that of Hans Hansen (TATE), one of the Abwehr's most favored and trusted agents. Farago contends that "As far as the Abwehr was concerned, he was their pet, their pride, their miracle man."<sup>151</sup> In the German view, Hansen served faithfully, providing the Germans with invaluable intelligence information. He was temperamental and demanding, but despite his many personality quirks, or perhaps because of them, the Germans continued

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<sup>148</sup> West, *MI5*, 114.

<sup>149</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945*, 6.

<sup>150</sup> Paine, *German Military Intelligence in World War II*, 14.

<sup>151</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 299.

to view him as one of their most reliable agents. Hansen's career as a British double agent was not revealed until decades after the war was over.

Hansen was not alone. All in all, approximately one hundred and twenty Abwehr agents ended up participating in the British double-cross system and none were exposed in their duplicity during the war.<sup>152</sup> Juan Pujol (GARBO) was the German's most trusted agent in England; similarly, he did the most to help bring about an end to the brutal war.

It is curious that the Germans were so completely taken in by the British deception. It is not, however, because they were never suspicious. They often found some agents' stories just a little too convenient or trouble-free; but MI5, with the cooperation of the other British services, did an incredible job to corroborate the messages sent by their double agents. Therefore, the agents' reports were confirmed by the Germans and their stories subsequently taken to be factual and reliable.

A prime example of MI5's handiwork involves a British criminal named Eddie Chapman, who was known to the Abwehr as "Fritz". Dropped in Great Britain on December 20, 1942 with an assignment to blow up Hatfield's Havilland aircraft works, "Fritz" radioed Germany on January 27<sup>th</sup> to say that he would attempt the sabotage mission that night. Later that same night he radioed to report that his mission was a success. The Germans were skeptical to say the least. To confirm the attack, the Luftwaffe flew a reconnaissance mission over the site. Farago reports that the "photographs showed gaping holes in the roof of the powerhouse through which could be seen pieces of generators strewn around. The damage seemed extensive."<sup>153</sup> "Seemed" was the operative word. "Fritz" was British double agent ZIGZAG, and the bomb damage was the result of a painted canvas draped over the building complete with concrete blocks, bricks, and broken furniture strewn about the site.<sup>154</sup> The Germans did all that they could do to confirm "Fritz's" report. It was not that the Abwehr was negligent so much as that it was simply outwitted by MI5.

One of the Abwehr's consistent problems was the result of its system of organization. For one thing, the Abwehr on the whole was a massive organization

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<sup>152</sup> Many more agents were sent to England, but only the 120 were chosen to participate in the double-cross system. The others were either imprisoned or executed. Their fate was generally known to the Abwehr.

<sup>153</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 326.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

totaling approximately fifteen thousand employees.<sup>155</sup> Secondly, although the main Abwehr headquarters was stationed in Berlin, the system was made up of a multitude of out-stations (*Stellen*) located all throughout the world that were only loosely controlled by Berlin. Therefore, the Abwehr sub-units functioned as complete self-sufficient networks. Kahn argues that “The organization of the Abwehr posts and of the subposts reproduced that of the Abwehr headquarters,” and that the “inability of any one man to effectively supervise 33 widely scattered units, and Canaris’s disinclination to do so, virtually left the posts on their own.”<sup>156</sup> However, the system of organization was perhaps beneficial in that the various out-stations were not influenced or hindered by the each other. Nevertheless, it lead to serious oversights where the British espionage program was concerned because the stations did not compare notes regarding their agents.

Most of the German agents sent to England in the early part of the war originated from the Hamburg *Stelle*. However, as the war raged on, the Bremen, Wiesbaden, Paris, Brussels, Madrid, Lisbon, and Berne stations also sent agents to Great Britain.<sup>157</sup> The result was an appallingly unorganized espionage system. The agents’ cases were not reviewed and compared by a central authority, which invariably contributed to MI5’s success. If the Abwehr dedicated as much time and attention to the running of their agents under the control of a central authority as MI5 did on the receiving end, the result of the WWII intelligence duel may have been very different.

An additional problem resulted from the relationship between the German agents and their case officers. Because the entire espionage system was not centralized, each case officer was directly and solely responsible for his agent. Accordingly, that officer’s reputation and success became intertwined with the agent’s success or failure. Masterman contends that the Abwehr officer was “governed by *personal* considerations; he was making money out of the agent or gaining prestige from him or even only making his post in some comfortable neutral haven secure, and in consequence he could not and would not judge the agent and the agents’ work, dispassionately or even honestly.”<sup>158</sup> Consequently, officer’s tended to not advertise their agent’s failures and often overlooked

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<sup>155</sup> Paine, *German Military Intelligence in World War II*, 14.

<sup>156</sup> Kahn, *Hitler’s Spies*, 239.

<sup>157</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 706.

<sup>158</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945*, 187.

certain inconsistencies. It is impossible to say with certainty, but a closer evaluation of the agents very well may have exposed the duplicity.

One of the Abwehr's most persistent difficulties was the constant infighting between the various intelligence organizations within Germany all vying for ultimate power. The major players were the Abwehr, Heinrich Himmler's Gestapo, and the SD under the ever-conniving Reinhard Heydrich. Each of the three organizations took turns spying on each other looking for anything that would help them gain the momentum in the power struggle.<sup>159</sup>

Correspondingly, there was one particularly damning secret that Canaris was keeping. Canaris was not only the head of the German Military Intelligence network, he was also the founder of the *Schwarze Kapelle* – the highly secret anti-Nazi movement. Canaris was an ardent German nationalist, but he loathed Hitler and his policies. Paine concludes that “He would be loyal to the nation, its armed forces, its people and its historic institutions while working as best he could against the Austrian corporal and his sycophant intimates.”<sup>160</sup> Canaris attempted on more than one occasion to make contact with the British in an effort to bring the war to an end. Canaris hoped that the British would make peace if the Germans could overthrow Hitler. It was, however, impossible to oust the dictator without the support of the German generals. Many of the generals shared Canaris' anti-Hitler sentiments, but they were not willing to betray the oath that they swore to the leader.<sup>161</sup> Therefore, Canaris' hopes of overthrowing Hitler were never realized. Nevertheless, Canaris continued to actively work to undermine Hitler, but to no avail.

Reinhard Heydrich, who never stopped scheming or investigating, was fast on Canaris' trail. Canaris was saved by Heydrich's murder in Czechoslovakia on May 27, 1942. Nonetheless, the Abwehr continued to fight an uphill battle. Heydrich was no longer a threat, but Himmler remained suspicious of Canaris and detested having competition. Canaris was eventually relieved of his post on February 19, 1944. In the spring, with the war deteriorating for Germany and the Abwehr's intelligence failures glaringly obvious, the organization was absorbed by Himmler's RSHA (Reichssicher-

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<sup>159</sup> Paine, *German Military Intelligence in World War II*, 93-4.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

heitshauptamt).<sup>162</sup> With that, the “independent Abwehr was dead and its chief overthrown.”<sup>163</sup> Yet that was not the end for Canaris. He was later arrested for high treason, tried, and convicted. The following day, April 9, 1945, less than a month before Germany’s capitulation, he was hung by piano wire.<sup>164</sup>

One might readily jump to the conclusion that Canaris’ affiliations were the inherent cause of the Abwehr’s failure. Such a conclusion would be hasty and erroneous. Paine explains that “One of the most bizarre characteristics of Spionage Abwehr was the way it successfully functioned as an Intelligence service, providing the OKW with information about the nation’s enemies, while under the directorship of a man who by 1936, and perhaps earlier, had become more than simply a passive anti-Nazi.”<sup>165</sup> Because of the Abwehr’s decentralization, Canaris’ sentiments did not influence the functions of the various *stellen*.

The final reason for the Abwehr’s failure resulted from the preconceived notions held by the German Command and Canaris’ successor as head of the Abwehr. The British invested considerable time and effort into the Fortitude North and South deception campaigns. In one regard the deception campaigns were based on practical considerations. However, in following the example of Clark’s “A Force,” the deception planners were also attempting to play into Hitler’s preconceived notions. It was known, via wireless intercepts, that Hitler assumed the cross-Channel assault would take place at the Pas de Calais, the most obvious choice given its close proximity to England and direct path to Germany. Therefore, the British designed their deception strategy around Hitler’s views. Others additionally believed the assault would come at the Pas de Calais. Colonel Alexis von Roenne, Canaris’ replacement as chief of the Abwehr, also thought that the invasion would come at Calais and continued to press the issue.<sup>166</sup>

While the Abwehr experienced many setbacks and difficulties during the war, it is nevertheless not factual to state that it failed to defeat the British as the result of inefficiency. Kahn places the blame directly on Canaris. He claims that the chief’s

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<sup>162</sup> Kahn, *Hitler’s Spies*, 270.

<sup>163</sup> Höhne, *Canaris*, 553-4.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 596.

<sup>165</sup> Paine, *German Military Intelligence in World War II*, 31.

<sup>166</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 713.

ineptitude ultimately led to the Abwehr's inefficiency. Kahn states that "his paralysis destroyed his organization," and that "What the Abwehr needed for success were forceful leadership and managerial flare...Canaris did none of these...instead he let his agency drift."<sup>167</sup> While it may be true that Canaris lacked the qualities inherent in a leader, it is unfair to blame the Abwehr's failure on his shortcomings. Because of the Abwehr's system of decentralization, the out-stations controlled Germany's spies in England – not Berlin. Therefore, the immediate blame for their failure falls on the sub-stations, not Canaris.

Höhne, on the other hand, contributes the Abwehr's lack of success to an overall inefficiency of the organization. He contends that "Many setbacks demonstrated that, despite isolated achievements of outstanding merit, the Abwehr was inefficient."<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, he states that "They did not know, for example, that the whole of the Abwehr's British network had long ago been detected and 'turned' by British counterintelligence."<sup>169</sup> The Abwehr's ability to shut down the entire British intelligence organization in Western Europe was in itself evidence that the Abwehr was not entirely inefficient. In addition, the Abwehr's inability to realize that its agents were working for MI5 was not the result of the organization's inefficiency; security measures were imposed and the Abwehr did everything within its means to verify the agent's reports. Because of MI5's superiority in the game of deception, however, the Abwehr was unable to detect the ruse.

In short, the Abwehr was not prepared to run a complex espionage system in enemy territory. It may have performed better if given more time for preparation by the German High Command and had a more functional system of organization that was specifically geared for offensive intelligence gathering. However, it was fighting a losing battle purely based on the nature of its mission.

No matter how efficient the organization, conducting espionage in enemy territory rarely succeeds. Masterman contends that perhaps the reason why "the double-cross system succeeded and the German espionage system in the U.K. failed might be found in the simple proposition that in time of war espionage in an enemy country is doomed to

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<sup>167</sup> Kahn, *Hitler's Spies*, 236

<sup>168</sup> Höhne, *Canaris*, 490.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

failure because the dice are hopelessly loaded against the spy.”<sup>170</sup> Similarly, Kahn states that “the immediate answer is simply that the cards are stacked against the spy in wartime.”<sup>171</sup> The spies, many of whom either did not know English or spoke only broken English, had to enter England and try to function normally without attracting the suspicions of both the authorities and the citizens. Farago purports that “It was not so much the vigilance of the authorities as the suspicions of people themselves, who, alerted by sensationalized stories of widespread ‘Nazi espionage’ elsewhere, viewed every German as a potential spy.”<sup>172</sup> Likewise, the poor training of the agents, which often manifested itself in a lack of understanding of the British money and transportation systems, easily betrayed the spies.

As a result of the many obstacles, the Abwehr was unable to create a German espionage network in England – though they thought that they had. The Abwehr’s failure, however, was not unique to the German organization. Just as the Abwehr failed at espionage, so did MI6. The SIS spies had the same odds stacked against them, and consequently suffered the same fate.

The Abwehr began the war unprepared for offensive intelligence gathering, but unlike MI5, it never overcame its shortcomings. Its system of organization was not conducive to running an espionage program of that proportion. The Abwehr was not completely at fault, however. The German High Command imposed unreasonable deadlines on the program and Canaris was constantly hounded by internal enemies such as Himmler and Heydrich. In truth, the Abwehr did the best that it could with the means at its disposal. Furthermore, the Germans, by means of aerial reconnaissance and other means of intelligence, did everything within their power to confirm the stories of their agents, and in the absence of any solid evidence to the contrary, they led to the inevitable, yet erroneous, conclusion that the agents were genuine. Tomas Harris, who served as GARBO’s MI5 case officer, purports the following:

If the case of a controlled agent is handled, in time of war, with infinite care for detail and is assisted by good planning, protected by maximum security, facilitated by the Service Departments, carefully co-ordinated with parallel or similar activities and presented to the opposition with courage, initiative, and imagination,

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<sup>170</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945*, 187.

<sup>171</sup> Kahn, *Hitler’s Spies*, 369.

<sup>172</sup> Farago, *Game of Foxes*, 159.

it is, in our opinion, impossible for the opponents to discover that the agent thus operated, is controlled and that they are therefore being deceived.<sup>173</sup>

In other words, the Abwehr was simply outwitted by MI5.

When all aspects are taken together, MI5 was simply the better organization. Both MI5 and the Abwehr began the war unprepared, but MI5 successfully elevated itself to the status of a first class organization. They formed new committees, the W. Board and Twenty Committee for example, whose specific functions were to run the double-cross network. MI5 dedicated every waking moment to running the double agents with complete efficiency. The double-cross planners imposed security measures that were never loosened regardless of circumstances. They were extremely thorough in their mission and it paid off. Because of the double-cross system, the largest amphibious invasion in the history of the world, backed by the most elaborate deception ever attempted, was an astounding success.

The GARBO case is the perfect example to demonstrate MI5's success and the Abwehr's failure. The case enables one to compare the techniques and efficiency of the two intelligence organizations. The Twenty Committee dedicated more time and effort to the GARBO case than any other. Similarly, the Abwehr's Madrid station, the station responsible for running the GARBO network, was overwhelmed by the volume of intelligence reports received from their ace agent. Both agencies trusted the imaginative spy immensely. It is interesting that the war for deception was ultimately won by MI5, and lost by the Abwehr, because of one single message sent by GARBO. It was, after all, his June 9<sup>th</sup> report to his controllers that led to the cancellation of the 15<sup>th</sup> Army's reinforcement of Normandy. For that, the British credit GARBO with saving D-Day. The GARBO case is the subject of the following chapter.

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<sup>173</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 289.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### GARBO

Juan Pujol was born on February 14, 1912 in Barcelona, Spain, the third of four children. His parents, both of Catalan decent, were devout Roman Catholics. His father was the owner of a successful dye factory that provided the family with financial security. As a child, Pujol was greatly influenced by his father. It was, after all, his father who instilled in him the values which later led him to offer his services to the British during World War II. Pujol explains:

My father deserves a very special mention...for to write about him is to understand my subsequent actions. He was my progenitor, the head of the family; he saw to my everyday needs and to my moral upbringing, and he instilled in me, by instruction and advice, the attitudes and ideas, the very spirit that made me.<sup>174</sup>

At age seven, Pujol and his older brother were sent to the Valldèmia boarding school outside of Barcelona. Their father faithfully visited every Sunday. During those visits, Pujol's father spoke openly to his young boys about his beliefs and convictions. He was apolitical. He loved freedom and hated any form of oppression; therefore, he abhorred war and tyrants.<sup>175</sup> Pujol later adopted his father's sentiments.

At fifteen, Pujol quit school. After a temporary job as an apprentice, which he found rather unsatisfactory, Pujol went to school to become a poultry farmer. In 1932, after completing his program and training, he was required to fulfill his obligatory service to Spain and report for military duty. He was assigned to the Seventh Regiment of Light Artillery – a cavalry regiment. Pujol recalls that the “captain who taught us was extremely harsh so that I returned to barracks more than once with my buttocks on fire.

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<sup>174</sup> Juan Pujol and Nigel West, *GARBO: The Personal Story of the Most Successful Double Agent Ever...* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), 9.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

The accepted cure for this was to apply a cloth to the raw part which had been soaked in vinegar and sprinkled with salt; when I did this, it made me see all the stars in the firmament.”<sup>176</sup> Needless to say, Pujol was relieved when his service ended.

By 1936, Pujol managed a poultry farm north of Barcelona. His peaceful life was drastically changed, however, when the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936. In response to the crisis, Spain’s pre-war government, the Republicans, called in their reservists. Pujol was obligated to report for duty, “but I was loath to take sides in such a fratricidal fight; I had no desire to participate in a struggle whose passions and hatred were so far removed from my own ideals.”<sup>177</sup> Instead, Pujol went into hiding.

Pujol hid in his girlfriend’s house for months until he was discovered in December. After a week in prison, Pujol was released by a secret organization known as *Socorro Blanco*.<sup>178</sup> He again went into hiding. He spent the next year living in complete isolation in the home of a taxi driver. Pujol explains that “I became so depressed and withdrawn, so utterly miserable, that I lost over twenty kilos. I began to look like a decrepit old man of forty although I was only twenty-five.”<sup>179</sup> He eventually left his hiding place and obtained work at a poultry farm in northern Catalonia. He initially hoped to flee across the French border which was approximately twenty miles from the farm, but increased military patrols prohibited his escape.

The poultry farm where he was employed was mismanaged and consequently failed. In 1938, with all other options exhausted, Pujol finally reported for duty with the idea that he would defect to the Nationalist side where “I would be left alone to live my own life.”<sup>180</sup> Following a brief period of training, Pujol was sent to the front. After struggling to survive on the front lines, with little or nothing to eat, Pujol decided it was time to escape to the Nationalist side. He and two others successfully reached the Nationalist camp. Pujol concludes: “Looking back now I would never take such a hazardous risk again. To cross from Republican to Nationalist lines was the craziest act I ever did in my long and adventurous existence.”<sup>181</sup> Once in the Nationalist camp, he spent two whole

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 27.

days eating and sleeping before he was questioned and subsequently detained at a concentration camp in the Basque region of Spain.<sup>182</sup>

Pujol was eventually sent to the front again, this time a member of General Francisco Franco's forces, but his time there was short. In the early months of 1939, the civil war came to an end. Pujol proudly exclaims that "I had managed not to fire a single bullet for either side by the time Madrid fell..."<sup>183</sup> Spain, however, was left in ruins and the complete devastation had a lasting effect on the young Spaniard.

While life was extremely difficult in Madrid following the war, Pujol eventually found employment as a hotel manager. The job was not very rewarding and certainly lacked adventure. The only highlight of the job was a business trip he took to Portugal to buy Scotch whiskey for the hotel clientele since it was not available in Madrid. Because it was a business trip, Pujol was able to obtain a passport. That was a significant accomplishment given that passports were not readily issued at the time. Likewise, Pujol's passport, even though it only allowed him to travel to Portugal, would play an important role in his future freelance double-cross work.<sup>184</sup>

Pujol's life was drastically and forever altered on September 3, 1939 when England declared war on Germany. News from Germany, specifically relating to the treatment of the Jews, convinced Pujol that Hitler was an evil tyrant. Pujol's father explains:

In Spain few knew of those horrors. But despite censorship, word eventually spread about the horrifying deeds perpetrated by those butchers who carried out the orders of their superior officers in Himmler's SS...My humanist convictions would not allow me to turn a blind eye to the enormous suffering that was being unleashed by this psychopath Hitler and his band of acolytes...<sup>185</sup>

Although Pujol felt passionately that something must be done, what could he possibly do to stop Hitler? While he was not sure himself, he was nevertheless determined to try and do something.

Because of Pujol's disdain for war, he was convinced that he could help without resulting to violence. He writes:

Despite all this fighting and dying, it is my firm belief that no liberating changes

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 38-9.

occur until and unless men use their brains, teach, argue and produce practical solutions for regaining the freedom that has been lost...For it is not enough to fight with weapons of destruction and annihilation; it is essential to fight with ideas: powerful arguments can destroy whole empires, dominions and tyrannies. History is full of examples showing that the pen is indeed mightier than the sword. I too believe this sincerely and absolutely.<sup>186</sup>

Therefore, the young Spaniard determined to use his keen intellect and limitless imagination to assist the Allies and devised a plan to offer his services to the British. By his own admission, his plans were “fairly confused”; however, he hoped that he could provide the Allies with political or military intelligence information.<sup>187</sup> On January 1, 1941, Pujol presented himself to the British embassy in Madrid and offered to supply the Allies intelligence information.<sup>188</sup> To his surprise, the British rejected his proposal.

Pujol realized that he would have to be more prepared before he approached the British again. Likewise, as Harris explains, Pujol “decided that he would at least show us that if we were not willing to engage in espionage against the Germans, the Germans did not feel the same way about us.”<sup>189</sup> Therefore, he called the German embassy and expressed his desire to work for the German cause. They arranged a meeting between him and an Abwehr agent called Federico (Friedrich Knappe-Ratey). At the meeting the following day, Pujol presented himself as an ardent Nazi, one who fought for Franco during the Spanish Civil War, who was eager to help the Germans defeat the Allies. “I began to use my gift of gab and ranted away as befitted a staunch Nazi and Francoist.”<sup>190</sup>

Pujol made a favorable impression on Federico and a second meeting was arranged. Federico informed Pujol that the Germans were not interested in any of his propositions, but the Abwehr could use him in the field of intelligence gathering. At that, Pujol proposed that he could travel to England as a foreign correspondent to a Spanish newspaper. Federico promised to consider the offer and get back to him.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>188</sup> GARBO’s case officer, Tomás Harris claims that it was Pujol’s wife, and not Pujol, who made that initial contact. Pujol may have omitted that information to either protect his wife or as a result of their estrangement.

<sup>189</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 43.

<sup>190</sup> Pujol and West, *GARBO*, 41.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

After his meeting with Federico, Pujol concocted a scheme to go to Portugal. Claiming that his father had assets in a bank in Portugal, Pujol managed to acquire an exit visa from the Spanish government; he already had a passport from his days as a hotel manager. The entire point of his visit to Lisbon was to have himself registered as a permanent resident of Portugal. In that way, Pujol could then travel freely between the two countries with ease in the future.<sup>192</sup>

Upon his return to Madrid, Pujol contacted Federico and arranged another meeting where he described his recent undertakings. Federico was undoubtedly impressed with Pujol's progress and ingenuity. Pujol recalls that "Federico seemed to be utterly convinced by my Portugal stories, so I decided to explore this seam in greater depth."<sup>193</sup>

Pujol realized that his plan to travel to England under the guise of a Spanish correspondent was simply not feasible. He therefore invented another scheme. At the time, because of Spain's severe financial problems, it was not uncommon for people to involve themselves in questionable currency practices.<sup>194</sup> Therefore, Pujol told Federico that he had volunteered to travel to England to investigate dubious financial transactions for a friend of his who worked for the Bank of Spain. Harris explains that Pujol informed the Germans that he had been in contact with a member of the Portuguese secret police, a man by the name of Varela, who was investigating the "contraband currency transactions."<sup>195</sup> According to Harris, the Germans did not completely believe Pujol's story and wanted further proof.

Pujol had a friend in Lisbon by the name of Dionicio Fernandez. Pujol told his friend that he was having an affair with a lady in Lisbon, but could not visit her because his wife was suspicious. Therefore, Pujol asked if Fernandez would send him a telegram making it appear that Pujol was traveling to Portugal for business purposes. Pujol dictated the telegram which read: "You must come here urgently. The affair has been arranged. Signed: VARELA"<sup>196</sup>

When he met with Federico again, Pujol produced the telegram as evidence of his negotiations. He explained that he was in a hurry because he was on his way to Lisbon

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 44.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 47- 8.

where he was to pick up his passport and exit visa for England. He asked Federico to mail the following telegram to Varela for him because he was in too much of a hurry to do it himself: “In a few days I will leave for Lisbon. Signed: Juan.”<sup>197</sup> Pujol then hurried off where he had a car and escort waiting for him. According to Pujol, “Federico swallowed the story, hook, line, and sinker.”<sup>198</sup> Similarly, Harris concludes that “Any doubts which the Germans might have had in GARBO had now been for ever dispelled and their sole anxiety was to give GARBO some sort of rapid training so as to be able to take advantage of his visit to England under diplomatic cover.”<sup>199</sup> Before he left Spain for Portugal, Federico supplied Pujol (code-named ARABEL) with invisible ink and \$3,000 for his trip.<sup>200</sup> Pujol’s German case officer, Karl Eric Kuehlenthal, was also there to see Pujol off.<sup>201</sup>

Pujol promptly returned to Lisbon. With evidence of his employment with the Germans, namely his secret ink, he approached the British embassy in Lisbon in the late summer of 1941. To his utter dismay, the British turned him down yet again.<sup>202</sup>

Pujol found himself in a predicament. He assumed that with proof of his collaboration with the Germans, the British would be anxious to use him as a double agent. When that failed to transpire, Pujol was stuck in Lisbon and had an obligation to send the Germans intelligence reports – supposedly from England. He had never traveled to Great Britain, so he purchased a tourist guide, train time-table and a map of England in an effort to fabricate his reports.<sup>203</sup>

A major problem facing Pujol was how to make his mail appear to have originated from England when he was still in Portugal. He came up with an ingenious solution. He explained to the Germans that he befriended the pilot on his way to England, and that the pilot agreed to bring his mail from Britain to the Espirito Bank in Lisbon for him in the future. Pujol provided the Germans with a key to the deposit box so they could pick up

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>198</sup> Pujol and West, *GARBO*, 48.

<sup>199</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 49.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Report on Kuehlenthal, KV 2/102, PRO. Kuehlenthal’s work for the Germans was curious given that he was forced to flee Germany as a result of his Jewish ancestry. His job as the head of the Madrid *Stelle* was only secured when the Germans, at the insistence of Canaris, had him legally declared an Aryan despite the protests of some members of the Nazi party.

<sup>202</sup> Pujol and West, *GARBO*, 48-9.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 63.

the letters. The pilot was obviously not informed of the true nature of GARBO's correspondence. Instead, he told the pilot that he was a Catalan in exile and his letters were to his family and friends at home. He promised to leave them unsealed so that the pilot could reassure himself that he was not transporting illegal material. Pujol, therefore, wrote the cover letters in plain ink and the message for the Germans in secret ink between the lines. In that way, Pujol provided a sufficient explanation for why his letters were not post-marked from England.<sup>204</sup>

Pujol then confronted the difficult task of writing imaginary intelligence reports when he had no true knowledge of England. In order to protect himself in case his reports were found to be incorrect, he created a network of three sub-agents. That way, "If an item were one day found to be false he could blame the agent responsible and liquidate him..."<sup>205</sup> A number of his reports did contain some rather noticeable mistakes. For example, he states that "There are men here (in Glasgow) who would do anything for a litre of wine"; the British, unbeknownst to Pujol, did not share the same fondness of wine as the Spaniards.<sup>206</sup> He also had trouble understanding the British system of currency, which was reflected in his reports of financial transactions. West claims that "In spite of these glaring errors, ARABEL's fraudulent messages sometimes prompted considerable military undertakings by the Germans, and it was also true that ARABEL sometimes hit on the truth or came uncomfortably close to it."<sup>207</sup> Therefore, it must be assumed that his errors either went unnoticed by the Germans, or were not significant enough for them to suspect his duplicity. If anything, they probably just assumed that he was mistaken.

Pujol's third message to the Germans, coincidentally enough, came close to the truth and caused a major stir in London. The British intercepted the following wireless transmission from Madrid to Berlin on April 2, 1942:

2.4.42 Madrid-Berlin & Paris. Agent 372 of Stelle FELIPE reports from Liverpool on 26/3 the sailing from Liverpool of a convoy of 15 ships including 9 freighters, course Gibraltar and probably going on to Malta, possible intermediate port Lisbon...<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 63-4.

<sup>205</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 53.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>207</sup> Pujol and West, *GARBO*, 77.

<sup>208</sup> Felipe organization signals, KV 2/102, PRO.

While the facts of the convoy were not entirely accurate, they were similar to those of a genuine convoy. More alarming to the British, however, was the fact that there was an uncontrolled agent operating in England. By 1942, MI5 was relatively positive it that controlled every enemy agent on British soil. If the report was truly from an uncontrolled German agent in England, the entire double-cross system might be in serious jeopardy.<sup>209</sup>

From the intercepted reports, however, it was obvious that the agent's intelligence observations were fabrications. Therefore, after carefully studying the intercepted wireless messages, MI5 came to the conclusion that ARABEL must be the same man who had approached the British embassies in Madrid and Lisbon. They also concluded that he was more than likely still on the continent, not in Great Britain. The problem then facing MI5 was how to deal with the agent at large.<sup>210</sup>

Members of the Security Service did not agree on how to approach the situation. West explains the dilemma: "If Pujol was what he appeared, then MI5's domination of the Abwehr would be confirmed and could be exploited further. If, on the other hand, he turned out to be a deliberate plant, the entire double-cross system might be placed in danger."<sup>211</sup> One of the benefits of accepting Pujol was that he already enjoyed the German's trust. His Malta convoy message, for example, resulted in the Germans taking extensive military action.<sup>212</sup> After a lengthy debate, MI5 finally decided to bring the Spaniard to London.

In Lisbon, Pujol contemplated taking flight to Brazil. He had failed to persuade the British that he could work for them and he was not convinced that he could keep the charade going with the Germans. As a last-ditch effort, he approached the American embassy in Lisbon where was granted a meeting with a Lieutenant Demorest. Pujol openly revealed his endeavors up to that point. Demorest expressed interest in Pujol's story and said that he would consult the British. The British, who were searching for the freelance agent, were relieved that Pujol had made another appearance. He was promptly put in touch with MI6's Gene Risso-Gill.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Pujol and West, *GARBO*, 71.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-6.



Gill made arrangements for Pujol to travel to London. On April 4, 1942, he was smuggled out of Portugal in a merchant ship and taken to Gibraltar. After a temporary stay in Gibraltar, he was flown to London. He arrived in the United Kingdom on April 24<sup>th</sup> and was met by Cyril Mills and his future case officer and confidant, Tomás (Tommy) Harris.<sup>214</sup>

Once in London, Pujol was brought to a safe house where he was interrogated from April 26<sup>th</sup> to May 11<sup>th</sup>. After the lengthy interrogation period, MI5 was finally satisfied that Pujol was not a German plant. He was initially assigned the code-name BOVRIL, but after hearing his story, Cyril Mills suggested they change it to GARBO as Pujol was ““the best actor in the world.””<sup>215</sup>

The benefits of adding GARBO to the double-cross network were enormous. First of all, he was highly regarded by his German controllers before he even arrived in England. Masterman recalls that “He came to us therefore a fully fledged double agent with all his growing pains over – we had only to operate and develop the system which he had already built up.”<sup>216</sup> That “system” consisted of three notional sub-agents who the Germans also trusted and could be used for further deceptions. Finally, because the Germans considered GARBO’s work invaluable to their cause, they supplied him with their best quality secret ink and most advanced cipher equipment and codes. Those codes aided GC & CS (Government Code & Cypher School) in their effort to continually crack Enigma. Harris remarks that it was ironic that “the Germans, on sending this new cipher to GARBO, sent him special instructions to guard it conscientiously and ensure that under no circumstances should it be allowed to fall into the hands of the British.”<sup>217</sup> The mere fact that they sent the cipher and codes to him demonstrated their level of confidence in him.

The British always intended to build up the double-cross network in the eyes of the Abwehr, keeping in mind that it would be vital for the future. From intercepted signals, however, the British realized that the German High Command did not view the Abwehr

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 84-5.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>216</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945*, 115.

<sup>217</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 73.

with much confidence. The constant infighting between the various intelligence services had taken its toll on the Abwehr. Harris realized that he needed to build up the Abwehr in the eyes of the OKW if the GARBO network was to have any chance of future success. Harris concludes that “If the OKW could be made to trust and rely on Abwehr reports, then it was inevitable that the GARBO network would provide an invaluable channel through which he would be able to deceive the enemy.”<sup>218</sup> Consequently, Harris and GARBO set out to supply the Abwehr with valuable intelligence reports in an effort to make the OKW rely on the Abwehr for “accurate” intelligence.

During his time with MI5, GARBO and his network participated in multiple deception campaigns. Operation Torch was an important campaign that helped to increase GARBO’s standing with the Germans. When the Allies launched Torch, GARBO sent advance warning to the Germans. His reports contained the observations of his sub-agents as well as information obtained from GARBO’s friend at the Ministry of Information (unconscious collaborator J(3)). The message did not arrive in time for the Germans to act on the information, but it boosted GARBO’s reputation and proved to the Abwehr that he remained dedicated the German cause. The Germans responded to GARBO: ““Your last reports are all are magnificent but we are sorry they arrived late, especially those relating to the Anglo-Yankee disembarkation in Africa. ....You must stay in London and continue investigations with your Ministry friends.””<sup>219</sup> This response demonstrates that the Germans continued to hold GARBO in high esteem and did not suspect the ruse. Likewise, it proved that they considered his “contact” in the Ministry of Information to be an extremely valuable source of information that could be exploited in the future.

GARBO and his growing network also played a leading role in the ill-fated Operation Starkey. MI5 feared that Starkey’s miserable failure might have seriously damaged GARBO’s reputation. The solution was to blame the sub-agents:

The chief victims were Agents ONE and SIX: One was required to resign in November and was heard no more of; Agent SIX, an NCO in the Field Security Police, was reported transferred and then killed in North Africa. By making these two sub-agents take the blame for STARKEY, GARBO himself survived intact,

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 104

ready to take on a more important role.<sup>220</sup>

GARBO's standing with the Germans remained undamaged and the benefit of employing notional sub-agents was reaffirmed. If GARBO's reports were found to be false, the notional agent could take the fall. Additionally, the failure of his sub-agents made GARBO appear even more credible in the eyes of the Germans. It would be impossible for him to have a perfect sub-agent network that never encountered any problems or setbacks. By showing them that the GARBO network was vulnerable to failure, it proved to the Germans that GARBO was legitimate.<sup>221</sup>

GARBO's main accomplishment of the entire war came with his role in the Operation Bodyguard deception and its aftermath. When the Allies drafted the plans for Operation Overlord, the double-cross system was given the tremendous task of passing on the deception. Although the double agents were not the only means of deception employed, they were the most influential element of the deception plan.<sup>222</sup> Because of his considerable reputation with the Germans, GARBO was one of only five agents chosen to participate in the campaign. GARBO and his network, however, eventually assumed the leading role. In the end, he proved to be Great Britain's "star" agent.<sup>223</sup>

One of the key elements of the deception was to mislead the Germans as to the time of the impending attack. A message simply stating that facilities were still under construction would indicate that the Allies were not yet prepared to launch the offensive. One message states:

Part of the aerodrome is still under construction. They have various establishments there for radio training and there is also a large unit belonging to the Red Cross.

(A) 2 miles north east of the village of Dunkerswell there is another aerodrome which is under construction. I did not see any aeroplane, or R.A.F., or American personnel there.

(B) The workmen say that it is going to be occupied by Americans<sup>224</sup>

This message sent by a GARBO sub-agent, and numerous others like it, clearly demonstrated to the Germans that the invasion was not an immediate threat.

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<sup>220</sup> Pujol and West, *GARBO*, 98-9.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>222</sup> Hesketh, *Fortitude*, 352.

<sup>223</sup> Budiansky, *Battle of Wits*, 316.

<sup>224</sup> GARBO to Madrid, KV 2/68, April 19, 1944, PRO.

By April, however, the Germans feared that the Allied cross-Channel invasion was imminent. GARBO, in his typical “facile and lurid style of writing,” responded to their fears with reassurance and rebuke.<sup>225</sup>

I have been surprised to hear through the German radio the news which leaves one unsettled, of the nervousness which exists in official circles with regard to the Allied offensive which has been the subject of so much cackling and I am very surprised more so after the continuous reports of my agents which I have for some while past been transmitting, telling you that only preparations but no indicative action of concentration is noted. This does not make me fail to appreciate that the Second Front may become a reality in the future but what I am able to guarantee is that for the moment our strict vigilance has not noted any fact from which we can stress to you the danger of the supposed action. I know perfectly well the bluff which the English are entangling us but I conserve my calmness and I do not allow myself to be cheated by them in spite of the draconian methods which they are taking which can be summed up as unique in the history of this country. I recommend therefore once again calm and confidence in our work. The Allies have used tricks to date and it is deplorable that those in Germany should give credence to the great majority of them.<sup>226</sup>

The message was intended to persuade the Germans to let their guard down and to put their complete trust in “their” agents. Additionally, experience proved that the Germans responded favorably when GARBO was angry. Harris recalls that GARBO’s German case officer, Kuehlenthal, “was encouraged to regard GARBO as a quixotic, temperamental genius, whom he learned not to offend.”<sup>227</sup>

As D-Day approached, MI5 devised a plan to strengthen GARBO’s standing. Because GARBO’s early warning of the Torch invasion was a success, Harris suggested that GARBO provide the Germans with early warning of the D-Day invasion as well. According to West, “Both GARBO and Harris were adamant that the network’s credibility would be greatly enhanced if it could send the message to Madrid in time.”<sup>228</sup> Furthering GARBO’s credibility was especially important because the deception planners assigned him the great task of convincing the Germans that the Normandy invasion was merely a diversion. If he were able to provide advanced warning of the invasion, it would

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<sup>225</sup> Masterman, *Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-1945*, 142.

<sup>226</sup> GARBO to Madrid, KV 2/68, April 22, 1944, PRO.

<sup>227</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 70.

<sup>228</sup> Pujol and West, *GARBO*, 119.

significantly increase his standing with the Abwehr and, more importantly, with the OKW.

Yet providing the Germans with information that could potentially endanger the invasion was not a simple matter:

Naturally this extraordinary proposal got a mixed reception from the Services responsible for conveying the troops across the Channel safely. Some thought that what Harris was suggesting was uncomfortably close to treachery. After lengthy negotiations with General Eisenhower's staff, the Supreme Commander eventually gave his consent for a transmission to be made on condition that it should go out no more than three and half hours ahead of the attack."<sup>229</sup>

Because the first Allied invasion forces were scheduled to land at 6:30 in the morning, GARBO could not transmit his message until 3:00 am. That presented a problem for MI5 because Madrid's radio operators went off the air between 11:00 pm and 7:00 am. A plan was therefore devised to persuade them to listen at night as well.

In April, GARBO relayed a message from Agent No. 4 stating that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division located to the west of Otterbourne was prepared to embark. Although the agent turned out to be mistaken, GARBO used the opportunity to send the following message to Madrid: "As a precautionary measure I advise you to listen 24 hours a day in case I receive something urgent to communicate. During these extremely urgent times I want your radio service to be completely at my disposition."<sup>230</sup> The Germans promptly responded that they would listen throughout the night for "special or urgent messages."<sup>231</sup>

At the end of May, GARBO renewed his efforts to ensure that the Germans would listen to the radio during the night hours. He reported that Agent 3(3), who was keeping the invasion fleet stationed in the Clyde under surveillance, had just arrived in London. GARBO interpreted the news of his arrival as a matter of urgency. As it turned out, the agent had simply made the foolish mistake of traveling to London to give his report as he had forgotten the code he was instructed to use. Despite the misunderstanding, GARBO used the opportunity to remind the Germans to listen at night for any urgent news. West explains that "To MI5's delight, the Abwehr agreed, and the scene was set for a secret

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> GARBO to Madrid, KV 2/68, April 30, 1944, PRO.

<sup>231</sup> Madrid to GARBO, KV 2/68, May 1, 1944, PRO.

warning to be transmitted in the early hours of 5 June, three and a half hours before the Normandy landings.”<sup>232</sup>

From January 1944 on, the double-cross team diligently worked to pass on the Fortitude North and South deception plans. After six long months, the Allies were in position to launch the decisive cross-Channel assault. GARBO, therefore, prepared to send his message warning the Germans that the invasion had commenced. Beginning at 3:30 am on the morning of June 6, 1944, GARBO relayed the following message concerning Agent No. 4: “He told me that three days ago cold rations and vomit bags had again been distributed to troops of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division and that the division had now left the camp, its place now taken by Americans. There were rumors that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division had now embarked.”<sup>233</sup> Contrary to the plan, the Madrid operators were not listening. MI5 tried to send the message every fifteen minutes for the next five hours. The Germans finally received the message at 8:00 am.<sup>234</sup>

The following evening GARBO sent a message praising Agent No. 4 for his work and expressed his pride that he was able to warn the Germans of the invasion before it began. In his next message, however, GARBO informed Madrid that he had just learned that his message was not received on time because they were not listening to the radio as they promised they would. He chastised them saying “This makes me question your seriousness and your sense of responsibility.”<sup>235</sup> The Abwehr hastily apologized and provided GARBO with a number of excuses to explain away their failure. They concluded with the following praise for GARBO: “Thus I reiterate to you...our total recognition of your perfect and cherished work, and I beg of you to continue with us in the supreme and decisive hours of the struggle for the future of Europe.”<sup>236</sup>

GARBO and his network played a significant role in the Bodyguard deception campaign in preparation for D-Day. GARBO’s most important task, however, occurred after D-Day. The Allies succeeded in misleading the Germans as to the time and location of the invasion, but it was of vital importance to ensure that Normandy was not

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<sup>232</sup> Pujol and West, *GARBO*, 120.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

reinforced before the Allied soldiers established a firm bridgehead. The Allies were specifically concerned about the German 15<sup>th</sup> Army stationed at the Pas de Calais.<sup>237</sup>

Following the invasion, GARBO summoned his sub-agents to London for a conference. On June 8<sup>th</sup>, the agents met and agreed that the invasion could only be a diversion. On June 9<sup>th</sup>, GARBO sent a message to Madrid that had fatal consequences for the Germans and ultimately secured the success of the Allied invasion of France:

This morning agents 7(7) and 7(2) arrived and have been interviewed by Three who obtained the following important information which I transmit. This together with the information of 7(4), gives us a clear idea as to what is taking place. 7(2) reports that the following divisions are to be found in his area, without any indications that they are to embark for the moment...therefore, realising the importance of this report I consider you should immediately check up on it by aerial reconnaissance...From the reports mentioned it is perfectly clear that the present attack is a large scale operation but diversionary in character for the purpose of establishing a strong bridgehead in order to draw the maximum of our reserves to the area of operation to retain them there so as to be able to strike a blow somewhere else with ensured success. I never like to give my opinion unless.....I have strong reasons to justify me assurances. Thus the fact that these concentrations which are in the East and South-East of the Island are now inactive means that they must be held in reserve to be employed in the other large scale operations. The constant aerial bombardment which the area of Pas de Calais has suffered and the strategic disposition of these forces..... give reason to suspect an attack in that region of France, which, at the same time, offers the shortest route for the final objective of their illusions, which is to say, Berlin...I trust you will submit urgently all these reports and studies to our High Command since moments may be ..... decisive in these time and before taking a false step, through lack of knowledge of the necessary facts, they should have in their possession all the present information which I transmit with my opinion which is based on the belief that the whole of the present attack is set up as a trap for the enemy to make us move all our reserves in a hurried strategical disposition which we would later regret.<sup>238</sup>

GARBO's message, which Berlin declared credible, was especially important because it played into the Germans existing beliefs that the decisive cross-Channel attack would come at the Pas de Calais.<sup>239</sup> When they learned that FUSAG was stationary in England, all doubts were brushed aside. The result was that the German 15<sup>th</sup> Army remained at Calais, and those divisions that were previously released to reinforce

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<sup>237</sup> Hesketh, *Fortitude*, xvii.

<sup>238</sup> GARBO to Madrid, June 9, 1944, CAB 154/101, 407-408, PRO.

<sup>239</sup> Hesketh, *Fortitude*, 210.

Normandy were returned.<sup>240</sup> MI5's continual efforts to build GARBO up and strengthen his standing with the Germans were finally rewarded. The only reason the Germans kept the 15<sup>th</sup> Army at the Pas de Calais was because the news of the diversionary nature of the Normandy invasion came from one of their most proven, and therefore reliable, sources of intelligence.<sup>241</sup>

In the early stages of the D-Day deception campaign, the Allied commanders expressed doubt that the deception efforts would significantly influence the enemy. Nevertheless, they concluded that if the measures succeeded in causing even “one Division to hesitate 48 hours,” then it would be a success.<sup>242</sup> The deception campaign, largely thanks to GARBO, maintained the threat to the Pas de Calais until the end of August (D+85).

One might wonder if the Germans ever suspected GARBO's duplicity when the invasion of the Pas de Calais failed to occur. On the contrary, the Germans remained confident in their star agent. Apparently, the Germans realized that the Normandy invasion met with such success that a second attack was rendered unnecessary.<sup>243</sup>

On July 29, 1944, the Abwehr informed GARBO that Hitler had awarded him the Iron Cross for his outstanding service.<sup>244</sup> Throughout his service, the Germans lavished GARBO with constant praise. They never suspected that the eccentric Spaniard had deceived them from the very beginning.

The GARBO case met with such success because of the tremendous time and care that MI5 invested in its development. Additionally, MI5 repeatedly proved their ability to outwit the Germans. Their handling of GARBO's sub-agents, for example, numerous unforeseen crises, and the security of the double-cross system as a whole demonstrated their masterful skill and superiority.

To provide sufficient coverage of the activities taking place in England, GARBO invented a total of twenty-seven notional sub-agents and unconscious collaborators. As far as the sub-agents were concerned, they were each strategically placed where they

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<sup>240</sup> Hesketh, epilogue to *GARBO: The Personal Story of the Most Successful Double Agent Ever...*, 169.

<sup>241</sup> Hesketh, *Fortitude*, 210-11.

<sup>242</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 183.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>244</sup> Pujol and West, *GARBO*, 143.



could best serve the deception plans. As GARBO recruited sub-agents, he sent detailed reports to the Germans to introduce them to the new spy. His imagination was boundless and he put it to excellent use giving each sub-agent special qualifications and a unique history. Likewise, he asked the Germans for their approval before officially accepting the new agents.<sup>245</sup>

While most of GARBO's sub-agents met with considerable success and were subsequently highly regarded by the Germans, they were not all so successful. Agent 7(6) was an example of the fallibility of the sub-agent system. GARBO reported to his controllers: "I received a long letter from 7(6) with reports, the majority of which were stupid. We can therefore discount the ability of this agent as an informant in spite of the repeated instructions given. His usefulness to the Military Information Service is nil."<sup>246</sup> West explains that the "ploy was designed to add some authenticity to GARBO's network. After all, however brilliant an organizer he might be, not all his agents could plausibly be presented as excellent performers...7(6) proved that occasionally GARBO experienced a setback."<sup>247</sup> In other words, because not every agent in the real world of espionage reaped great rewards, the dismissal of 7(6) added credibility to GARBO in the eyes of the Germans

A problem that MI5 occasionally faced was the placement of GARBO's sub-agents. It was important for them to be stationed in areas where they could provide useful information to the Germans. They could not, however, compromise a campaign. One of GARBO's original sub-agents was Mr. Gerbers. Responsible for GARBO's Malta message, Gerbers was stationed in Bootle. In November 1942, the Allies launched Operation Torch. Because the invasion fleet was located in Liverpool, it would have been impossible for Gerbers to miss the build-up. After supposedly not receiving any news from the agent, GARBO went to check on him. He discovered that Gerbers had contracted a serious illness and died. GARBO provided the Germans with a copy of the agent's death notice that was announced in the *Liverpool Daily Post*.<sup>248</sup> The Germans

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<sup>245</sup> Hesketh, *Fortitude*, 47.

<sup>246</sup> GARBO to Madrid, KV 2/68, April 28, 1944, PRO.

<sup>247</sup> Pujol and West, *GARBO*, 117.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

“replied with a message of condolence for the unfortunate widow.”<sup>249</sup> In that way, the British rid themselves of an agent whose failure to observe the massive invasion build-up would have invariably cast doubt on the GARBO network. The Germans, however, never suspected the trick.

As it would have been suspicious if GARBO’s sub-agents never experienced any difficulties or failures, the same was true of GARBO himself. Therefore, in one of MI5’s more interesting charades, MI5 also had GARBO “arrested.” When the Germans’ V-1 rocket program became functional not long after D-Day, the Abwehr asked GARBO to provide them with detailed damage reports. That request put GARBO and MI5 in an awkward position. The German’s asked GARBO to report the specifics of the attacks so that they could judge the accuracy of the V-1 hits. If GARBO gave truthful reports, he might endanger the lives of British citizens. Similarly, he risked being exposed if he falsified his reports, as they could obviously be observed by other means. Harris, therefore, “suggested that GARBO undertake the enemy’s bidding and then get himself arrested.”<sup>250</sup>

According to the story, GARBO was inspecting the damage from a V-1 hit when a police officer noticed that he was acting suspicious. GARBO was detained for questioning. The Germans were greatly distressed when they learned of GARBO’s imprisonment from Agent No. 3. GARBO was released two days later and reported the entire incident to Madrid. He explained that it had all been a misunderstanding and forwarded the official apology letter that he received from the Secretary of State to the Germans. The whole fiasco taught the Germans to not use their best agent for such frivolous enterprises.<sup>251</sup> It also reminded them that GARBO was not invulnerable.

GARBO and MI5 experienced a genuine threat to their security in August, 1944. A Spaniard by the name of Roberto Buenaga approached the British in Lisbon with an offer to give them the name of the Abwehr’s chief agent in England in exchange for financial compensation. MI5 knew that he was referring to GARBO. It would be suspicious if they refused Buenaga’s offer; however, if the informant did provide information on GARBO,

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<sup>249</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 107.

<sup>250</sup> Pujol and West, *GARBO*, 140.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 138-143.

the British would have to investigate the tip to maintain GARBO's cover. MI5 feared that Buenaga's revelation would force them to shut down the GARBO case.<sup>252</sup>

GARBO wrote to the Abwehr and told them that a contact of his warned him that Buenaga was planning to betray him. Therefore, he claimed, he was forced to go into hiding and left Agent No. 3 in charge of the organization. The Germans spoke to Buenaga and reassured GARBO that the informant did not know anything about him. Nevertheless, Buenaga revealed GARBO's identity to the British only days later.<sup>253</sup>

MI5's solution to the crisis was masterful. They had to investigate the matter, so they (notionally) had the police interrogate GARBO's wife about his whereabouts and clandestine activities. In the meantime, "GARBO wrote a series of letters which he sent by courier to the Germans asking them to mail them in order of their advance dating from various regions of Spain. These letters were written by hand by GARBO and addressed to his wife in England. From their context it was made to appear as though GARBO had escaped to Spain and was wandering about the country."<sup>254</sup>

After the British had given the police enough time to investigate the matter, they had the British embassy in Madrid register a "Diplomatic protest at the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs" to have Friedrich Knappe-Ratey, one of GARBO's Abwehr controllers, expelled from Spain<sup>255</sup> It stated:

Fresh information has been received by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom from a former member of his organization that KNAPPE is still actively engaged in espionage in Spain directed against the United Kingdom. The long delay on the part of the Spanish Government in expelling KNAPPE is further believed to have made possible the activities of a certain espionage agent working on KNAPPE's behalf in the United Kingdom...there is reason to think that KNAPPE alone is aware of the precise whereabouts of the above-mentioned agent...<sup>256</sup>

The true purpose of the diplomatic protest was to show the Germans that the British had failed to locate the German agent, who they considered to be a serious threat to national security.

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<sup>252</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 263.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 263-8.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> File on Friedrich Knappe-Ratey, December 14, 1944, KV 2/101, PRO.

Although not orchestrated by MI5, the crisis nevertheless allowed the service to demonstrate that GARBO was not under its control. MI5's ingenious response provided proof to the Germans that GARBO remained uncompromised. Additionally, the Germans felt reassured that GARBO had outwitted the British with his letters to his wife from Spain. Again, MI5's ingenuity provided security for the GARBO case and convinced the Germans that their star agent was still safe and loyal.

Throughout the war, MI5 went to great efforts to ensure the vitality of their agents; however, they exerted just as much effort protecting the double-cross system as a whole. As much as the British trusted GARBO, for example, they never relaxed their security precautions where he was concerned. GARBO was only allowed to transmit his messages, or compose written letters using secret ink, under the direct supervision of his case officer. Likewise, MI5 never allowed GARBO to keep the secret ink. He was never permitted to enter MI5's headquarters; in fact, he was not even informed that he worked for MI5 until the end of the war. In addition, he was not made aware of the other double agents working for the British.<sup>257</sup> Harris concludes, "In spite of the great confidence and trust which we gained in GARBO as time went on, routine security checks were maintained during the entire period of his working for us."<sup>258</sup> In order to provide complete security for the double-cross program, because it would only take one slip to expose the entire system, MI5 never let their guard down – even when it was obvious that such measures were unnecessary.

When one examines the GARBO case, it becomes obvious that the British services and MI5 outwitted the Germans. The British combined ingenuity with meticulous attention to detail to ensure the success of the various deception campaigns and the double-cross system. In addition, whether those at MI5 were responding to circumstances placed before them, or of their own creation, they took advantage of every opportunity to build up the double agents and reassure the Germans of their credibility.

Harris explains why the Germans never suspected the charade: First of all, the British made sure that all information passed to the Germans could be substantiated. Additionally, the information reported by the double agents was plausible and largely

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<sup>257</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 375-7.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

coincided with Hitler's own ideas.<sup>259</sup> Harris concludes that "It is our opinion that, if the German General Staff were able to review their evidence to-day in the light of what has transpired, there is little doubt they would not alter the decisions which they then reached..."<sup>260</sup> Similarly, with regard to the double-cross system, Harris claims that "it may be impossible, even after a careful analysis of the traffic in relation to the events, to prove conclusively that an agent had been under control."<sup>261</sup> Therefore the German defeat resulted not from Abwehr inefficiency, but from Great Britain's and MI5's cleverness. In conclusion, the British Armed Forces, SHAEF's Ops B, London Controlling Section, MI5, and SIS, through their extensive use of deception that was largely passed on by the double-cross agents, accomplished a truly amazing feat that ultimately led to victory in World War II.

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 290.

## CONCLUSION

After the war, despite MI5's insistence that he remain in England, Pujol traveled to South America in search of permanent residence. He could no longer safely reside in Spain because of his wartime activities. He finally decided to make Caracas, Venezuela his home. Before settling down, however, he returned to Spain to see his family once more.

Once in Spain, Pujol looked up Friedrich Knappe-Ratey (Federico) and paid him a surprise visit. Pujol recalls that "Federico was not at all at ease when I met him. He gave me the impression that he was a very frightened man."<sup>262</sup> Because of the Buenaga incident, Knappe-Ratey was singled out and feared retribution from the Allies. He told Pujol that "He feared that the Allies would claim his person in order to take him to Germany or England with the object of subjecting him to interrogation and putting him into a Concentration Camp."<sup>263</sup> The former Abwehr agent predicted doom for his future and was visibly relieved when Pujol left.

After his visit with Federico, Pujol looked up Karl Eric Kuehlenthal, who he knew as Carlos. Kuehlenthal's reaction was much different than Knappe-Ratey's as he "was overcome by emotion when he welcomed GARBO to his sitting room."<sup>264</sup> The two spent hours talking and reminiscing of their experiences. Kuehlenthal confided that "In the matter of Service he thought me almost a God..."<sup>265</sup> Interestingly, Kuehlenthal revealed that Pujol's verbose style of writing reassured the Germans that he being straightforward with them. He explains:

...those letters had in themselves been evidence to him of GARBO's good faith and honesty. He said that they had considered his letters to express the normal

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<sup>262</sup> Pujol and West, *GARBO*, 165.

<sup>263</sup> File on Friedeich Knappe-Ratey, November 10, 1945, KV 2/101, PRO.

<sup>264</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 285.

<sup>265</sup> File on Karl Eric Kuehlenthal, November 10, 1945, KV 2/102, PRO.

psychological reactions of any conscientious person forced to operate alone, in the most difficult circumstances, in the camp of the enemy. It was natural that anyone in these circumstances should have felt an urge to express their personal feelings to the only parties in whom they could confide...<sup>266</sup>

Pujol's meeting with Kuehlenthal confirmed yet again that MI5 had outwitted their opponent.

Pujol eventually returned to Venezuela where he lived in peaceful anonymity for almost four decades. That all changed in 1984. In 1972, Nigel West read J.C. Masterman's account of the double-cross system in World War II and was fascinated by the details of the GARBO case; he consequently set out to learn more about MI5's most successful double agent. West later learned that the spy died in 1959 of Malaria. West was skeptical and decided to further investigate the matter. MI5, however, refused to provide any information on GARBO and thus his true identity remained unknown.<sup>267</sup>

To his great surprise, in 1984 West received a letter from a retired SIS agent who told him that GARBO's name was Juan Pujol. West hired a researcher who called everyone with that last name in Barcelona until he finally succeeded in locating a family member of Pujol's.<sup>268</sup> The relative revealed that Pujol was alive and well in Venezuela. Pujol recalls that "in 1984, when I was least expecting it, Nigel West broke the cover that I had so successfully maintained, and through painstaking research and careful investigation tracked me down."<sup>269</sup> After speaking with West by telephone, Pujol agreed to return to London for the fortieth anniversary of the D-Day landings. There he was personally thanked by the Duke of Edinburgh at Buckingham Palace and reunited with his remaining MI5 colleagues. Sadly, Pujol's case officer and dear friend, Tomás Harris, had died in a car accident in 1964.

The GARBO case was masterfully handled by MI5 which demonstrated its ability to outwit the Germans. The combined ingenuity of Pujol, Harris, and the Twenty Committee, along with the extreme dedication and coordination of the many parties involved, ensured the success of the case. The GARBO case was without doubt the most involved, and successful, of the double-cross network; therefore, it is the prime example

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<sup>266</sup> Harris, *GARBO*, 287.

<sup>267</sup> Pujol and West, *GARBO*, 1

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-5.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

of MI5's success and the Abwehr's failure in World War II. MI5's success, however, extended to each and every one of the double agents. Not a single agent was exposed during the entire war. Likewise, as with GARBO, the agents' duplicity was not revealed until years, even decades, after the conflict ended. The dedication of all who were involved succeeded in ensuring the triumph of England's most successful weapon of deception – the double-cross agents.



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