

## THE DOUBLE-CROSS SYSTEM IN THE WAR OF 1939 TO 1945

by J. C. Masterman

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*Reviewed by Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, Jr.*

■ After more than a quarter of a century the British Government has permitted the publication of a report prepared by Sir John Masterman in 1945 describing the most important intelligence operation in World War II. What has been suspected and hinted at for some time is now documented: from 1939 to 1945 London exercised complete control over all German espionage operations conducted within the British Isles (excluding Ireland, of course). Further, in what must be the most skillful use of double agents in the history of spying, the British not only succeeded in preventing the Germans from suspecting that their spies were under control, but used the system to feed false information to Hitler and the Nazi military leadership as to the time and place of the massive Allied landing in Europe.

During the course of the Second World War there were, to be sure, many great espionage coups: the United States broke Japanese codes; Russian agents in 1941 warned Moscow of the impending German attack; Allen Dulles had an agent placed near the top of the Nazi hierarchy, from whom he obtained thousands of top-secret documents. But the fact that the British were able to discover, apprehend, and then direct every German agent in Great Britain outranks these successes to stand in a class by itself.

Sir John Masterson is eminently qualified to tell this story. As a member of Military Intelligence 5, or the Se-

curity Service, he spent four years working to frustrate the efforts of the German intelligence service. Happily, Masterman was permitted to write his report on the double-cross directly following the conclusion of hostilities, when he left the Service on terminal leave. As he points out in his preface, that was the ideal time to write this account because he was uninhibited by official restrictions and still intimately aware of the details and difficulties of the operation.

It is necessary to glance back to the years preceding the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 to pick up the first traces of the double-cross system. The most effective intelligence networks are those that are dug in well before their wartime services are required, and M.I. 5 had long been on the alert for German attempts to place spies in Great Britain. "Snow" (Sir John prudently uses pseudonyms when referring to agents) became the base of the system in 1936. A British-born Canadian who had returned to England, where he worked as an electrical engineer for a firm that had a number of Admiralty contracts, Snow frequently traveled to Germany on business. He advised British Intelligence, or M.I. 6, of his contacts in Germany but, when a letter he mailed to a post-office box in Hamburg that was known to the British as a German "cover address" was intercepted, it became clear that Snow was acting as a double agent. In January 1939 the Germans provided Snow, whose activities were being discreetly checked up on by the British, with a wireless transmitter. By then he had convinced his bosses in Hamburg that he had ten or fifteen agents working for him. "It is probable, though not certain," writes Masterson, "that all these persons existed only in Snow's imagination." In September 1939, when

Snow returned from a visit to Rotterdam, he was arrested. The war had begun and he had been in contact with the enemy. The first message he sent off to Germany was from Wandsworth Prison, where his transmitter had been set up for him by M.I. 6 so that he could re-establish contact.

By the start of the war the Germans had developed sufficient confidence in Snow to provide him considerable material of value to the British Security Service. He was put in touch with other German agents in England and given a code—later used by the British to break other German intelligence messages—and he was asked to recruit additional agents, a task that Security promptly took over for him. Released from Wandsworth after a brief stay, Snow—together with a Welsh national whom the Germans thought reliable (he was actually a retired Welsh police inspector provided by Security)—was allowed to return to Rotterdam to meet his German contact. Thus Snow's work went on, and his network continued to expand.

In 1940 the Germans intensified their efforts to get agents into the British Isles. Six of them tried to enter England through Ireland. From September to November some twenty-five others were either air-dropped or attempted to land by boat. Tate, for example, parachuted in in September 1940 and was in radio contact with Germany (under British supervision) from October of that year until May 1945. Other agents arrived in the guise of neutral businessmen or refugees.

One factor which expedited the roundup of parachuted German agents was that their identity documents had been constructed on information supplied by the Snow organization. German spies arriving in England by different means usually contacted other spies who were already being controlled by the British and thus gave themselves away. Once caught, and confronted with the alternative of dying for Nazi Germany or working for the British, the overwhelming majority of these men chose to live and work (and to earn at least a percentage of the wages paid them by their German employers) under the tutelage of a "case officer." However, Masterson writes, "some had to perish, both to satisfy the public that the security of the country was being maintained and also to convince the Germans that the others were working properly and were not under control. It would have taxed even German credulity if *all* their agents had apparently overcome the hazards of their landing."

The Germans apparently had little knowledge of the problems of clandestine infiltration of agents. Those parachuted into Scotland usually were



*"Remember all those things we thought, thank God, we wouldn't live to see? We're going to live to see them."*

quickly apprehended. Strangers in sparsely populated areas attracted attention. Those with muddy trousers, foreign-made clothes, and suitcases were even more conspicuous. The Home Guard watched for such individuals. Agents coming by sea fared little better. They had to move from the coast to urban areas. Some boarded trains at rural stations where the usual travelers were well known to the local stationmaster and constable; their questions about the time and direction of trains were sure to be noted. In a post-Dunkirk Britain, with the Germans across the Channel singing "We're sailing against England . . .," everyone was on the watch.

"After June 1940," Masterson writes, "entry was only possible, except by illegitimate routes, through Sweden or Portugal, and the narrowness of the bottlenecks made it comparatively easy to exclude unwanted visitors or to find a concealed goat among the sheep." With the agent network controlled, and neutral travel blocked, the British had only four other sources to worry about: data the Germans had acquired before 1940, reports from neutral embassies and legations in England, information divulged by British prisoners under interrogation, and intercepted radio and telephone messages. By 1944 the threat posed by the first of these was inconsequential; and the other three could be, and were, controlled or used.

According to Masterman, the British Security Service was long skeptical about the extent of its success—a prudent attitude on the part of any counterintelligence organization. Convinced that the German intelligence against Great Britain must be both larger and more effective than in fact it was, the Service believed that it had uncovered only a portion of it. As time passed, however, the accumulation of evidence made M.I. 5 more and more certain that "our agents had no competitors in this country," and "the haunting fear that the enemy might have accurate and detailed knowledge of some intended operation" was replaced by a precise awareness of just how much the Germans did or did not know about such operations.

Maintaining this elaborate double-cross system for four and a half years, without ever arousing the enemy's suspicion that the information they were being fed was controlled by the British, was a phenomenal accomplishment that required unusual management. Sir John appropriately devotes a portion of his report to the organization that was developed to accomplish this task. A special section of M.I. 5—cryptically titled B.I.A.—was set up to deal exclusively with the double-cross scheme's day-to-day operations, while an upper-

echelon interdepartmental committee—the XX or Twenty Committee, created in January 1941—decided what could and could not be passed to the Germans and insured consistency in the information transmitted to the enemy. A few statistics cited by Masterman illustrate the magnitude of the work involved. At the beginning of 1944 there were twenty channels of agent communications operating to the Germans, nine of these by means of radio. By August 1944 one agent, Garbo, had dispatched 400 secret letters and 2,000 radio messages. At the end of the war the Snow file consisted of thirty-five volumes of papers.

This is the very stuff of which deception is made. First comes the cautious conversion of German-employed spies into British-controlled agents and the careful testing to see whether their Nazi masters are satisfied; then the gradual expansion of the net (Garbo convinced the Germans that he had fourteen active subagents, plus eleven contacts—all comforting fabrications dreamed up by the British); next, the gradual, painstaking development of increasingly bold deceptions; and, finally, the great deception.

Double-crossing spies were not the sole method used for deceiving the Nazis, nor could they be employed without reference to other information the Germans might obtain. Radio and telephone traffic, which the Germans could intercept, was used to spread inaccurate information or give false impressions. Dummy tanks, trucks, and landing craft were emplaced to be spotted by German aerial reconnaissance. Complicated subterfuges—including, in one case, the floating of a document-laden corpse to a well-chosen spot on the Spanish coast where a German consul-spy would be sure to hear of its arrival—were concocted to

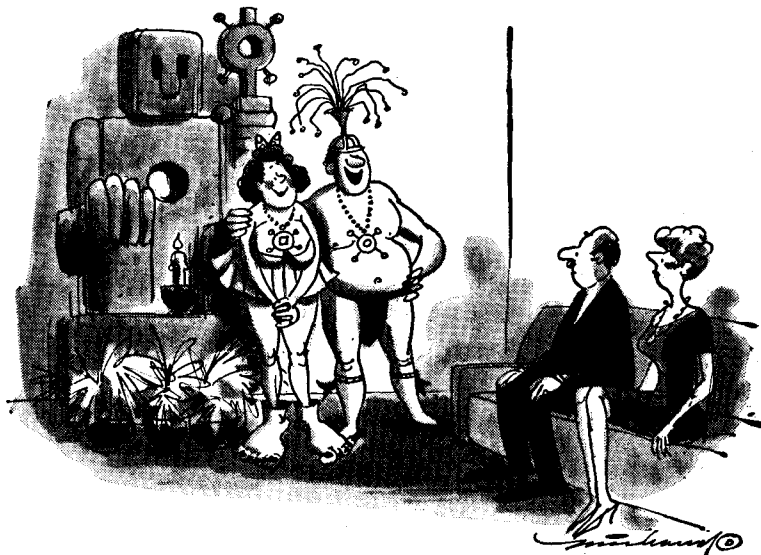
let false information fall into German hands.

Before the great deception relating to where the Allies would stage their landing on the Atlantic Coast in 1944, a number of experimental ruses were carried out. One drew German bomber attacks to airfields in England and away from the cities. (The British reasoned that the airfields could protect themselves better than could the urban areas.) Another persuaded the Germans that the de Havilland works at Hatfield, where light bombers were made, had been blown up. A third misled the Germans as to the destination of the Allied armada headed for Africa in 1942.

By 1943, when the detailed planning for OVERLORD, the Allied landing in Normandy, was proceeding apace, the XX operation was ready to play a key role. Sir John Masterman now reveals just how large that role was.

The task of landing armies on the coast of Europe was a hazardous undertaking, as the raid on the Channel port of Dieppe in August 1942 by a primarily Canadian commando force had clearly indicated. In 1943 and 1944 each passing day increased the odds against a successful landing, for Hitler had assigned Field Marshal Erwin Rommel to Western Europe, and Rommel, convinced that the Allied landing must be stopped on the beaches or the Germans could be defeated, was strengthening Nazi defenses all along the coast. Thousands of underwater obstacles were placed along the shores. Vast minefields were laid in the beaches. Millions of tons of concrete were poured into new gun emplacements and roadblocks. Hundreds of mined stakes were set up to obstruct potential landing fields for airborne troops.

Allied success depended on surprise.



*"We started out as Methodists. Then we switched to Ethical Culture. Then we met this couple in a bar . . ."*



It was known that the landing would take place in the spring or summer of 1944. But the exact time, as well as its precise location, must be kept secret from the enemy. Potential landing areas were available from southern Norway to the Pyrenees. The most obvious site, however, was the Pas de Calais—the closest region on the far side of the Channel that afforded good beaches and ports and would permit continual air cover. Here the Germans built their strongest defenses and stationed their most powerful army within Western Europe.

The deception plan centered on assuring the Germans that the main landing would indeed be made on the Pas de Calais. It was hoped that they would then treat the Normandy landing as merely a diversion and thus delay committing their main units in France to the battle. A fictitious First United States Army Group was created to conjure up the image of a potent force that would be unleashed after the “diversionary” Normandy attack. Furthermore, false information concerning the battle order of the Allied forces in England was leaked to the enemy. Whereas the actual forces destined for Normandy were located in the Midlands and in west and southwest England, the Germans were persuaded that these armies were in Scotland and east and southeast England: logical mobilization places for an attack on the Pas de Calais.

These ruses, together with a host of subsidiary deceptions, worked. The weather helped; a storm that churned up the Channel in the days preceding the invasion convinced the Germans that the Allies would postpone their landing. Moreover, even after Omaha Beach had been established, the agents’ reports, plus radio traffic between notional units, persuaded the enemy that the main attack was yet to come. The Third Reich’s Fifteenth Army was held in Pas de Calais for nearly six weeks, then to be committed to battle and ground up as the Allied steamroller swiftly advanced across France.

Sir John Masterman’s book fills a vacant spot on the bookshelf of World War II history. He has described in detail the development and implementation of a double-agent and deception operation that cannot be paralleled. While Masterman alludes to a few spies who were executed in the playing of this deadly game in a war for survival, one can only speculate as to how many thousands of Allied lives the double-cross system saved.

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## **GREEN HELL: Massacre of the Brazilian Indians**

by Lucien Bodard  
translated from the French by  
Jennifer Monaghan

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*Reviewed by Betty J. Meggers*

■ The author of *Green Hell* might have prefaced his book with the standard phrase “The story you are about to read is true; only the names have been changed. . . .” because the events themselves have been repeated countless times during the past several thousand years. Other versions are being enacted today in Vietnam, in Africa, in New Guinea—everywhere that populations possessing cultures of unequal levels of development come into competitive contact. The demise of the Amazonian Indians is not a unique event, even in its cruelty, and this fact should be kept in mind by the reader. *Green Hell* is not an indictment of the Brazilian government or its “civilized” population; it is an indictment of the human race.

Brazil today is going through a period in many respects parallel to the westward expansion of our own frontier, and indeed Brazilians often justify their development program by pointing to the economic consequences of settlement of the land west of the Mississippi. Unfortunately, Amazonia is distinct environmentally from temperate western North America, and the consequences of making it accessible to intensive settlement and agricultural exploitation are viewed by ecologists with grave misgivings. The process, however, brings land-hungry colonists into what has traditionally been Indian territory and, as was the case in the United States, Indian rights are not recognized by “civilized” law. The Indians are obstacles to be removed, and any means that accomplishes this removal may be, and has been, employed. Often nothing more is required than simple contact, because of the lack of immunity to European diseases. Even the common cold may decimate an Indian village; measles, chicken pox, and other minor European sicknesses are also frequently lethal, to say nothing of smallpox, tuberculosis, and more serious infestations.

In presenting his depressing and often horrifying account of the post-European period in Amazonia, Lucien Bodard touches upon the basic incompatibility between the way of life of the Indians and that of the colonists, which reinforced in the latter the view that Indians were at best stupid, un-

cooperative, or unteachable. In reality, the Indians were part of a fabulous and intricately integrated forest community, intimately associated and in harmony with their fellow creatures.

The Europeans in the nineteenth century saw the area as a source of quick profit, with the Indians as a prime commodity in the form of slave labor. Their swift demise in captivity enraged the captors, who retaliated with increasing cruelty. The initial friendliness of the Indians turned to hostility as they learned what to expect from the white man—and they also began to kill. This vicious circle brought depopulation of the more accessible portions of Amazonia, and survivors retreated to remote areas, where they have remained in relative isolation up to the present. Now they are threatened by the new roads traversing their lands, and the cycle of exploitation, cruelty, and death is beginning again.

Recently the Brazilian government, particularly the Indian Service, has been accused in the world press of fomenting this situation. It is true, as the author points out, that some Indian Service agents have been a party to the exploitation and even extinction of indigenous groups under their supervision. This, too, has its parallel in the settling of our own country: in numerous promises broken, treaties ignored, and treachery on the part of authorities charged with enforcing the law. Where salaries are low, temptation is great, and distance from centers of authority permits illegal acts to go unpunished. The kind of temperament required to face the uncertainties surrounding penetration into “virgin” lands seldom incorporates the qualities of tolerance, gentleness, or sympathy. “Shoot first and ask questions later” has always been the best insurance when survival is the primary concern of each individual.

Mr. Bodard, a journalist, tells his story in the vivid language and breathless pace of a reporter. He spans the period from initial European intervention in the 1500s to the present, and speaks from the European (which includes urban Brazilian) point of view. Moreover, he minces no words, with the result that the reader may find himself surfeited with cruelty, bloodshed, treachery, and man’s inhumanity to man long before completing his book. Although the author shares the biases of other foreign observers about the “terrible Amazonian jungle, the most poisonous and pestilential anywhere on the surface of the earth,” there is little doubt that most of what he relates is true. Bodard makes clear there are Brazilians who deplore the situation, who recognize its injustice, but who are helpless to stem the tide. Such individuals have also existed