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**Ben Macintyre, *Double Cross: The True Story of the D-Day Spies*. New York: Crown, 2012. Pp. xiii, 399. ISBN 978-0-307-88875-4.**

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In the summer of 1943, a genteel and soft-spoken intelligence officer wearing tartan trousers and smoking a pipe put the finishing touches to a secret weapon he had been working on for more than three years. This weapon—unique in its power and unlimited in its range—was quite different from any built before or since. It was so shrouded in secrecy that its inventors were, for some time, unaware that they possessed it and unsure how to use it. This weapon did not kill or maim. It did not rely on science, engineering, or force. It did not destroy cities, sink U-boats, or pierce the armor of panzers. It did something far more subtle. Instead of killing the enemy, it could make the Nazis think what the British wanted them to think, and therefore do what the British wanted them to do. (1)

So begins the complicated story of a group of agents who designed a plan to provide cover for the Allied invasion of Normandy. In his latest book, the prolific British journalist Ben Macintyre spins a web of stories about some of the people who, instead of spying for the Germans, actually double-crossed them.

Books about World War II spies and double agents (an ever-popular genre) fall into several categories: firsthand accounts, exposés, biographies, and historical narratives. Some writers discuss the agents in the broader context of overall espionage operations, others examine their lives and careers as individuals.<sup>1</sup> Some better known operatives have themselves written accounts of their work.<sup>2</sup> Macintyre joins a growing list of authors who have analyzed the contributions that double agents made to a particular battle or war, in the present case, the Normandy invasion.

Over the past two decades, Macintyre has established a reputation as the biographer of subjects as different as the master thief Adam Worth<sup>3</sup> and the Quaker explorer Josiah Harlan.<sup>4</sup> Most recently, he has turned out books on spies and double agents of the Second World War.<sup>5</sup> Scrupulous archival research has assured these works a prominent place in the literature of World War II espionage and intelligence.

In the present book, Macintyre is both following and updating the work of scholars who have analyzed World War II intelligence operatives and operations, though in a wider setting,<sup>6</sup> and particularly of John C. Masterman, who was directly involved in the D-Day spying operations.<sup>7</sup> By highlighting a particular end-game, Macintyre places *Double Cross*, the organization that ran captured German spies as double agents, in the context of British counterintelligence as it sought to influence German decision making. He investigates the operations designed and implemented by Tar Robertson and the group of intelligence officers under his command. “This is a story of war, but it is also about the nuanced qualities of psychology, character, and

1. E.g., William Stevenson, *A Man Called Intrepid: The Secret War* (NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), and Clare Mulley, *The Spy Who Loved: The Secrets and Lives of Christine Granville* (NY: St. Martin's, 2013).

2. E.g., Dusko Popov, *Spy/Counterspy: The Autobiography of Dusko Popov* (NY: Grosset & Dunlap, 1974), Juan Pujol, *Operation GARBO: The Personal Story of the Most Successful Double Agent of World War II* (NY: Random House, 1985), and Lily Sergueiev, *Secret Service Rendered* (1968; rpt. Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1992).

3. *The Napoleon of Crime: The Life and Times of Adam Worth, Master Thief* (NY: FSG, 1997).

4. *The Man Who Would Be King: The First American in Afghanistan* (NY: FSG, 2004).

5. *Agent Zigzag: A True Story of Nazi Espionage, Love, and Betrayal* (NY: Three Rivers Pr, 2007), *For Your Eyes Only: Ian Fleming + James Bond* (NY: Bloomsbury, 2008), and *Operation Mincemeat: How a Dead Man and a Bizarre Plan Fooled the Nazis and Assured an Allied Victory* (NY: Crown, 2010).

6. See, e.g., Anthony Cave Brown, *Bodyguard of Lies* (NY: Harper and Row, 1975), Michael Howard, *Strategic Deception in the Second World War* (1990; rpt. NY: Norton, 1995), and Thaddeus Holt, *The Deceivers: Allied Military Deception in the Second World War* (NY: Scribner, 2004).

7. See his *The Double-Cross System in the War of 1939 to 1945* (New Haven: Yale U Pr, 1972).

personality; the thin line between fidelity and treachery, truth and falsehood; and the strange impulsion of the spy" (5).

The book's stated purpose is to tell the story of five agents, code-named "Bronx, Brutus, Treasure, Tricycle, and Garbo" (6). Its content is thematically and chronologically structured accordingly. Although based on serious historical research, *Double Cross* is written in a fluid, (not surprisingly) journalistic style that will attract a popular, as well as an academic, audience.

Macintyre argues that the D-Day spies made a major contribution to the Allied invasion of Normandy. They did not carry "weapons, yet the soldiers who did owed the spies a huge and unconscious debt as they stormed the beaches of Normandy in June 1944. These secret agents fought exclusively with words, drama, and make-believe. Their tales begin before the outbreak of war but then overlap, interconnect, and finally interlock on D-Day, in the greatest deception operation ever attempted" (6). Macintyre vividly reveals the dangers and complexities of sustaining a double agent's credibility with his German handlers while mounting a large and convincing deception intended to mask an enormous amphibious operation.

As the tone of Macintyre's title hints, he is prone to melodramatic exaggeration of the power of the deception and the role of the deceivers. That *Double Cross* agents aided in Operation Overlord is beyond dispute; the precise extent of their contribution, however, is not. In fact, the Germans were already predisposed to assume an incorrect landing point on the French coast. In summer 1940, they were planning to invade Great Britain in Operation Sea Lion. The Pas de Calais was to be the embarkation point for a crossing of the English Channel at its narrowest and a landing at Dover. Four years later, the Germans presumed that the Allied invasion—moving in the opposite direction—would target the Pas de Calais and the port of Calais itself. The Allies, thanks to Ultra signals intelligence, were well aware of this. The *Double Cross* agents simply *reinforced* what the Germans were already mistakenly thinking. That is, their role was important in an ancillary, not a decisive, way.

Whether or not one agrees with Macintyre's views of the D-Day spies in all particulars, anyone interested in World War II espionage will find in *Double Cross* an engrossing, highly informative starting place for research.