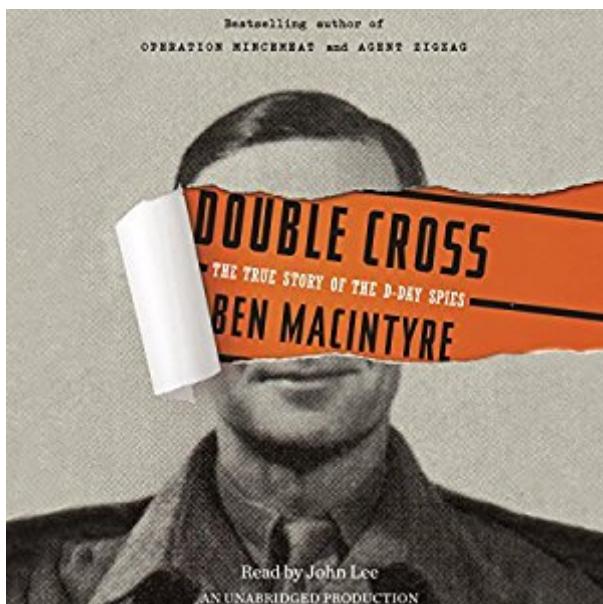


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Double Cross: The True Story Of The D-Day Spies



Synopsis

In his celebrated best sellers Agent Zigzag and Operation Mincemeat, Ben Macintyre told the dazzling true stories of a remarkable WWII double agent and of how the Allies employed a corpse to fool the Nazis and assure a decisive victory. In Double Cross, Macintyre returns with the untold story of the grand final deception of the war and of the extraordinary spies who achieved it. On June 6, 1944, 150,000 Allied troops landed on the beaches of Normandy and suffered an astonishingly low rate of casualties. D-Day was a stunning military accomplishment, but it was also a masterpiece of trickery. Operation Fortitude, which protected and enabled the invasion, and the Double Cross system, which specialized in turning German spies into double agents, deceived the Nazis into believing that the Allies would attack at Calais and Norway rather than Normandy. It was the most sophisticated and successful deception operation ever carried out, ensuring that Hitler kept an entire army awaiting a fake invasion, saving thousands of lives, and securing an Allied victory at the most critical juncture in the war. The story of D-Day has been told from the point of view of the soldiers who fought in it, the tacticians who planned it, and the generals who led it. But this epic event in world history has never before been told from the perspectives of the key individuals in the Double Cross System. These include its director (a brilliant, urbane intelligence officer), a colorful assortment of MI5 handlers (as well as their counterparts in Nazi intelligence), and the five spies who formed Double Cross's nucleus: a dashing Serbian playboy, a Polish fighter-pilot, a bisexual Peruvian party girl, a deeply eccentric Spaniard with a diploma in chicken farming and a volatile Frenchwoman, whose obsessive love for her pet dog very nearly wrecked the entire plan. The D-Day spies were, without question, one of the oddest military units ever assembled, and their success depended on the delicate, dubious relationship between spy and spymaster, both German and British. Their enterprise was saved from catastrophe by a shadowy sixth spy whose heroic sacrifice is revealed here for the first time. With the same depth of research, eye for the absurd and masterful storytelling that have made Ben Macintyre an international bestseller, Double Cross is a captivating narrative of the spies who wove a web so intricate it ensnared Hitler's army and carried thousands of D-Day troops across the Channel in safety.

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Customer Reviews

Before you begin reading this book, take a look at the map at the very front. It's a map of northern France and southern England. Notice how close the cities of Dover and Calais are; the sea distance is about 21 miles. Meanwhile, continue west to the widest gap between France and England which is about 100 miles. That's the distance between Portsmouth, England and the five Normandy beaches. Those 100 miles were crossed by the American, British, and Canadian forces on June 6, 1944 - D-Day. Why the Allied forces chose to set the invasion on this particular plot of land in France, reachable after an all-night trip from England, is the topic of many other books about WW2. This book, "Double Cross: The True Story of the D-Day Spies" by Ben MacIntyre, is the story of how British intelligence worked to make the Germans think the imminent invasion would occur at Calais, rather than Normandy. By 1942 the smart money in Germany was on an invasion on the European continent in France or Scandinavia by Allied forces. It was thought to be both inevitable and somewhat imminent. The time factor was based on many things, including build-up of invasion forces, the war effort in other European theater sites, and, of course, the geography of France. Just looking at a map shows the shortest distance was from Dover in Kent to Calais - as I wrote before, about 21 miles. Hitler and the German High Command were expecting the invasion in that area, and had mined the beaches and inner area in preparation for repelling an invasion. There were many troops stationed in the area, too. But, the Germans also mined and prepared the Normandy beaches with the same mines and hill top fortifications, though not as many as in Calais and they also had fewer troops stationed in Normandy.

Anyone who has read anything by Ben Macintyre before, including the excellent Operation Mincemeat and Agent Zigzag will know that they are in for a treat. He is a wonderful storyteller and, in this book, he is on territory he seems to understand brilliantly and relish. The Allied military

planners were working on the the great assault on Nazi Occupied Europe - the D-Day invasion would decide the outcome of the war. In order to convince the Germans that the invasion was coming where it was not actually coming, and not coming in the place where it was actually coming, a huge amount of effort was expended. There were dummy planes, tanks and even dummy armies in place to fool the Germans. There were even pigeons masquerading as German carrier pigeons (lots more on pigeons in the book - they play a larger part than you might imagine!). There were impersonators to convince the Germans that military leaders were elsewhere. Counterfeit generals led non-existent armies. Radio operators created a barrage of fake signals. Finally, there were spies. The Allies had a harder task than it appears in hindsight, knowing that it succeeded, as the target range for a cross-Channel invasion was small. There were only a handful of suitable spots for a massed landing and it was important that the entire might of the German forces were not waiting when the Allies landed. Tar Robertson created a bodyguard of liars - the "Double Cross System" coordinated by the Twenty (XX) Committee.

I used to think all those spy novels and movies were wildly exaggerated and that crazy stunts and bizarrely convoluted plotting didn't go on in real life. That was before I started reading Ben Macintyre's histories of espionage performed by the British during World War II, including Agent Zigzag and Operation Mincemeat among others. Double Cross: The True Story of the D-Day Spies, is Macintyre's latest offering and his best yet. Just imagine the most implausible twists and turns in a spy novel, then rest assured that something much weirder actually did take place during the World War II years. In the early 1940s Britain's situation looked pretty desperate as she faced a triumphant Third Reich. Fortunately, along with all the pluck and perseverance we know the British people showed in "their finest hour" they also had a team of highly intelligent, extremely imaginative and creative, not to mention downright devious, men and women hard at work in MI5 and MI6. Their job was to identify German spies within Great Britain, turn them if possible into double agents, and then use them to mislead the Germans as to Allied intentions. The stories Macintyre relates are fascinating. At one point the British actually had the Abwehr (German military intelligence) funding British efforts to undermine Germany's spy networks! Some of Germany's most trusted and apparently reliable spies in Britain were actually feeding disinformation to them! Eventually the British efforts spread to the US, where the FBI's anti-espionage efforts were laughably feeble in comparison.

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