Confidence Men
The Mediterranean Double-Cross System, 1941-45

by

Brett Edward Lintott

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Department of History, in the University of Toronto

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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy
Department of History
University of Toronto, 2015

This dissertation provides an analysis of the Mediterranean double-cross system of the Second World War, which was composed of a number of double agents who were turned by the Allies and operated against their ostensible German spymasters. Utilizing many freshly released archival materials, this study assesses how the double-cross system was constructed, why it was an effective instrument, and how it contributed to Allied success in two areas: security and counter-intelligence, and military deception. The focus is thus on both organization and operations.

The chapters cover three chronological periods. In the first — 1941-42 — the initial operational usage of a double agent is assessed, along with the development of early organizational structures to manage and operate individual cases as components of a team of spies. The second section, covering 1943, assesses three issues: major organizational innovations made early that year; the subsequent use of the double agent system to deceive the Germans regarding the planned invasion of Sicily in July; and the ongoing effort to utilize double agents to ensure a stable security and counter-intelligence environment in the Mediterranean theatre. The third and final section analyzes events in 1944, with a focus on double-cross deception in Italy and France, and on the emergence of more systematic security and counter-intelligence double-cross operations in Italy and the Middle East.
The dissertation demonstrates both the strengths and weaknesses of this double agent network, and its contribution to Allied success in the Mediterranean. It also establishes the double-cross system’s position as an integral component of the larger Allied intelligence victory in the Second World War, by analyzing its relationship with cryptanalysis, with the broader intelligence imperatives of MI5 and MI6, and with the German intelligence officers who were essential, if unwitting, collaborators in the system which allowed the Allies to control a substantial segment of the German spy network in the Mediterranean.
Acknowledgements

In Robert Graves’s retelling of classical history, the young Claudius, future Roman Emperor, is introduced to the historian Livy by his tutor, Athenodorus. Claudius, who is fascinated by history, and Livy’s works in particular, is taken aback when the legendary historian suggests that the young man should become an historian himself. It had never occurred to Claudius that he could write the very history which he absorbed so eagerly.

As a young boy, deeply fascinated by peoples who lived hundreds and thousands of years ago, I tried to imagine what personality lay behind the granite images of Egyptian pharaohs and within painted portraits of famous and legendary people. It never occurred to me that I could write history myself, and certainly not original, meaningful historical scholarship. Even in my initial years as an undergraduate the thought of becoming an historian did not seem possible. Luckily, I had several Livys and Athenodoruses who encouraged, advised, and pushed me to explore my interests and abilities. I would like to take this chance to acknowledge them, and the others who have made this thesis possible.

My thesis supervisor, Denis Smyth, was a model mentor and guide. His continual devotion to me and this topic helped make the thesis what it is. His rigour and attention to detail greatly improved the writing and quality of the argument as successive draft chapters crossed his desk. It was an honour to work with him and I will always remember our time together fondly.

Lori Loeb and Wesley Wark served as valued members of my supervisory committee and, from my comprehensive exams and on through the thesis process, they both provided important advice and guidance which improved my work. I thank both of them for their dedication.

I am also grateful to the three people who agreed to review my thesis and act as external examiners at my defence. John Ferris of the University of Calgary offered important suggestions and did so from a position of great knowledge and authority. It was an honour to have someone of Professor Ferris’s stature review my work and take part of the defence. Similarly, it was a privilege to have Margaret MacMillan of the University of Toronto and the University of Oxford as a reviewer. I have admired her historical scholarship for many years. Finally, it was a pleasure to work with Jim Retallack of the University of Toronto. Ever since I met Jim in my first year at U of T he has taken a sincere interest in my work, and I have gained much from our relationship over the years.

Many other members of the U of T History Department Faculty have been valued colleagues and teachers, including Carol Chin, Doris Bergen, Vasilis Dimitriadis, Eric Jennings, Kenneth Mills, and Ronald Pruessen.
Several other people contributed, in various ways, to the research and writing of this thesis. I thank the staff of the United Kingdom’s National Archives, who provided such an efficient and immensely valuable archival experience. Similarly, the staff at the United States’s National Archives at College Park were very helpful in providing navigation through their more complex system of record retrieval. The staff of the Imperial War Museum branches in London and Duxford were excellent resources. I thank in particular Stephen Walton of the Duxford branch, who on two occasions was good enough to drive me to and from the train station, and also provided me with a comfortable research space at their facility.

During my trips to London I stayed in the very fine accommodations provided by the Victoria League for Commonwealth Friendship. I thank Trudi Camilleri for providing such a friendly and welcoming place to live in a far off city.

Before I came to the U of T I spent several fruitful years at McMaster University. Martin Horn, Pamela Swett, Wayne Thorpe, and Marshal Beier were all important teachers, and did much to encourage and challenge my abilities.

There are many friends who made the last 8 years especially enjoyable ones: Amanda Brooks, Nathan Cardon, Stephanie Cavanaugh, Chris Chambers, Madeleine Chartrand, Arielle Cheifetz, Veronique Church-Duplessis, Dagomar Degroot, Geoffrey Hamm, Stacy Hushion, Michael Llewellin, Jonathan McQuarrie, Bradley Meredith, Andrew Robinson, Daniel Rosenthal, Elizabeth Shaw, David Stiles, Michael Wilcox and others.

Special thanks go to everyone at the Wednesday Night History Hockey Game, which has been an integral part of my life since I first joined in 2008. Every week during this thesis (except when in another country) I looked forward to playing with or against Michael Wayne, John Marshall, Oliver Sutherns, and others who are mentioned above.

Finally, my parents Patricia and Barton Lintott have always been strong, if somewhat bemused, supporters. I thank them along with my sister, Margaret. My mother and father-in-law, Joan and Michael Achong were willing to have their daughter marry a 27 year old student, and have been more enthusiastic supporters than I would have hoped. Their daughter Marissa, deserves the greatest appreciation. We met while I was still an undergraduate, and since then she has been a constant companion who has shown unflagging interest in my occasionally esoteric historical ventures. I dedicate the thesis to Marissa because, while the past is interesting, I have to live in the present, and she makes this world a much better one.

Brett Lintott

Hamilton, Ontario
May 2015
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### Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AAI</strong></td>
<td>Allied Armies in Italy. The Allied army group in Italy from March to December 1944.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AFHQ</strong></td>
<td>Allied Force Headquarters. Allied command covering the central and western Mediterranean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘A’ Force</strong></td>
<td>British military organization responsible for planning and implementing deception in the Mediterranean theatre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abt I / II / III</strong></td>
<td>Abteilung. Each a section of the Abwehr responsible for espionage, sabotage, and counter-espionage, respectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abwehr</strong></td>
<td>Amt Ausland/Abwehr im Oberkommando der Wehrmacht. The espionage service of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amt VI</strong></td>
<td>Foreign intelligence office of the RSHA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ast</strong></td>
<td>Abwehrstelle. A main Abwehr station in home or occupied territory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B Branch / B Division</strong></td>
<td>The counter-intelligence section of MI5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B1A</strong></td>
<td>Double agent section of MI5 B Division.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B1B</strong></td>
<td>ISOS analysis section of MI5 B Division.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B Section</strong></td>
<td>Counter-intelligence section of ISLD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>The head of MI6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chicken feed</strong></td>
<td>True information passed to the enemy in an effort to build up the credibility of a double agent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CICI</strong></td>
<td>Combined Intelligence Centre Iraq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DMI</strong></td>
<td>Director of Military Intelligence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DMO</strong></td>
<td>Director of Military Operations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DSO  Defence Security Office / Officer. MI5 representatives in British overseas possessions, and some neutral states.

FAK  Frontaufklärungskommando. Mobile Abwehr field units attached to army groups or armies.

FAT  Frontaufklärungstrupp. Mobile Abwehr field units subordinate to a FAK.

FHO  Fremde Heere Ost (Foreign Armies East). Intelligence analysis section of the General Staff of the German Army, with responsibility for the Eastern Front.

FHW  Fremde Heere West (Foreign Armies West). Intelligence analysis section of the General Staff of the German Army, with responsibility for all European fronts other than the Eastern Front.

Galveston  Codename for Dudley Clarke, head of ‘A’ Force. Sometimes used to denote the organization as a whole.

GHQ  General Headquarters, Middle East. Based in Cairo.

Ic  German staff officer responsible for intelligence.

IH / IL / IM  Sections of Abwehr Abteilung I responsible for army, air force, and naval intelligence, respectively.

ISLD  Inter-Services Liaison Department. The local guise of MI6 in the Mediterranean and Middle East.

ISSB  Inter-Services Security Board.

ISK  Intelligence Service Knox. Named after Dillwyn Knox, the intelligence product derived from breaking Abwehr machine ciphers.

ISOS  Intelligence Service Oliver Strachey. Intelligence product derived from breaking Abwehr hand ciphers.

JIC  Joint Intelligence Committee. British cabinet sub-committee.

JPS  Joint Planning Staff.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>KO</td>
<td>Kriegsorganisation. A main Abwehr station in a neutral state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCS</td>
<td>London Controlling Section. Responsible for planning and coordinating all strategic deception in the European theatre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MI5</td>
<td>The Security Service. Responsible for security and counter-intelligence in Britain and in British overseas possessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MI6</td>
<td>The Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). Responsible for foreign intelligence and counter-intelligence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notional</td>
<td>Activities, units, etc, presented to the enemy as being real but which are, in fact, fake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OKW</td>
<td>Oberkommando der Wehrmacht. High Command of the German Armed Forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSS</td>
<td>Office of Strategic Services. American wartime intelligence agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penetration Agent</td>
<td>In the parlance of Mediterranean double-cross, a penetration case was a double agent run for counter-intelligence rather than deception purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPF</td>
<td>Parti Populaire Français. French fascist and collaborationist party, headed by Jacques Doriot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAB</td>
<td>Radio Analysis Bureau, also known as Section Vw. Responsible for analyzing the Abwehr radio network and decrypted Abwehr communications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIS</td>
<td>Radio Intelligence Service. Successor agency with the same functions as RAB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSHA</td>
<td>Reichsicherheitshauptamt. Reich Security Head Office, founded in 1939 and encompassing a number of organizations, such as the Gestapo and the SD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCI</td>
<td>Special Counter-Intelligence Units. MI6 field units attached to the armies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Sicherheitsdienst. The intelligence service of the SS and the Nazi Party. Part of the RSHA after 1939.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section V</td>
<td>MI6 counter-intelligence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHAEF</td>
<td>Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force. Command of Allied forces in North-West Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SID</td>
<td>Security Intelligence Department of the Gibraltar Defence Security Office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIM</td>
<td>Servizio Informazioni Militari. Italian military intelligence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIME</td>
<td>Security Intelligence Middle East. Responsible for security and counter-intelligence in the zone under the command of General Headquarters, Middle East.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKL</td>
<td>Seekriegsleitung. Operational command of the Germany Navy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOE</td>
<td>Special Operations Executive. British organization designed to engage in espionage and sabotage in occupied Europe, and to aid resistance groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Agent</td>
<td>In the Thirty Committee system, the term used for the top rank of the double agents, who were used for deception operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Section</td>
<td>Double agent section of SIME.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirty Committees</td>
<td>Joint committees responsible for managing double agents in a specified geographical area of the Mediterranean theatre. Each committee was given a number, and they were drawn from the range between 30 and 60.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty (XX) Committee</td>
<td>A joint committee responsible for clearing information and managing the affairs of the double agents based in Britain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultra</td>
<td>Codename for the intelligence product derived from breaking German machine ciphers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFSt</td>
<td>Wehrmachtführungstab. The operational arm of the OKW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-2</td>
<td>Counter-intelligence section of the OSS.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Codenames of Military Operations and Deception Plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codename</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anvil</strong></td>
<td>Planned operation for an Allied invasion of the south coast of France. Name changed to <em>Dragoon</em> before the assault.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barclay</strong></td>
<td>1943 Mediterranean strategic deception covering the invasion of Sicily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boardman</strong></td>
<td>Late summer 1943 deception plan covering the Allied invasion of mainland Italy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bodyguard</strong></td>
<td>Codename for the overall, European-wide deception plan for the Normandy landings in June 1944.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cascade</strong></td>
<td>The overall order of battle deception plan for the Mediterranean theatre. Initiated in March 1942 and expanded in March 1943. Replaced by plan <em>Wantage</em> in February 1944.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collect</strong></td>
<td>Deception plan in support of the November 1941 <em>Crusader</em> offensive in the Western Desert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compass</strong></td>
<td>December 1940 British offensive against Italian forces in the Western Desert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crusader</strong></td>
<td>November 1941 British offensive against Axis forces in the Western Desert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diadem</strong></td>
<td>May 1944 Allied offensive against German positions south of Rome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dragoon</strong></td>
<td>August 1944 Allied invasion of southern France.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ferdinand</strong></td>
<td>Summer 1944 deception designed to draw German attention away from August invasion of southern France by posing a threat to Liguria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foynes</strong></td>
<td>Late 1943 deception plan designed to mask the number of troops and landing craft returning to Britain from the Mediterranean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Husky</strong></td>
<td>The invasion of Sicily in July 1943.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lightfoot</strong></td>
<td>British offensive at El Alamein in October 1942.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mincemeat</strong></td>
<td>April 1943 operation, in support of <em>Barclay</em>, that planted fake documents on the Germans, via a corpse floated off the coast of Spain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nunton</strong></td>
<td>May 1944 deception plan in support of Operation <em>Diadem</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Olive</strong></td>
<td>August 1944 Allied offensive in Italy, designed to breakthrough the Gothic Line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ottrington</strong></td>
<td>Initial deception plan for Allied August 1944 offensive against the Gothic Line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overlord</strong></td>
<td>Anglo-American-Canadian invasion of Normandy in June 1944.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Torch</strong></td>
<td>Anglo-American landings in French North Africa in November 1942.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ulster</strong></td>
<td>Revised deception plan for Allied August 1944 offensive against the Gothic Line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vendetta</strong></td>
<td>Spring 1944 deception plan which projected an Allied invasion of the south coast of France.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wantage</strong></td>
<td>Mediterranean order of battle deception plan. Begun in February 1944 as a replacement for <em>Cascade</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zeppelin</strong></td>
<td>Overall name for the Mediterranean components of <em>Bodyguard</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Note on References and Sources

All archival references provided in the footnotes refer to records from the UK National Archives at Kew, unless otherwise noted. Below are the Kew records series utilized:

AIR - Royal Air Force and Air Ministry
ADM - Admiralty
CAB - Cabinet Office
HS - Special Operations Executive
HW - Government Code and Cipher School
KV - The Security Service (MI5)
WO - War Office

Documents found in other archives are denoted in footnotes by the following:

HP - Thaddeus Holt Papers, US Army War College Library, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA.
IWM - Imperial War Museum, London
IWM Duxford - Imperial War Museum, Duxford
NARA - United States National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.
See here, Dick. How do we want to treat the Boche? Why, to fill him up with all the
cunningest lies and get him to act on them. Now here is Moxon Ivery, who has always given
them good information. They trust him absolutely, and we would be fools to spoil their
confidence. Only, if we can find out Moxon’s methods, we can arrange to use them ourselves
and send noos in his name which isn’t quite so genooine. Every word he dispatches goes
straight to the Grand High Secret General Staff, and old Hindenburg and Ludendorff put
towels round their heads and cipher it out. We want to encourage them to go on doing it.
We’ll arrange to send true stuff that don’t matter, so as they’ll continue to trust him, and a
few selected falsehoods that’ll matter like hell. It’s a game you can’t play for ever, but with
luck I propose to play it long enough to confuse Fritz’s little plans.

- from *Mr. Standfast*, by John Buchan.¹

After learning of this plan proposed by his American friend and colleague John Blenkiron,
Richard Hannay, the hero of John Buchan’s First World War spy thriller, set out to discover
the methods of Ivery, the German master spy. He did discover a secret German meeting place
in Scotland, but soon after realized that Ivery was a fake name and a clever disguise for the
same powerful German spy he had tangled with in 1914, as had been recounted in Buchan’s
previous novel *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. It transpired that Ivery knew his cover was blown, so
Blenkiron’s plan to pass false information through his channels back to the Germans was no
longer possible. Instead, his rivals sought to capture Ivery and bring him to justice. However,
what Buchan’s fictional 1919 fantasy described was turned into reality by British intelligence
authorities during the Second World War. Although the double agents amassed during the
latter war were not “unconscious” instruments, passing bad information unwittingly as Ivery
was meant to, the Allies did use German spies to do exactly what Buchan had envisaged: by
controlling German sources of information, they were able to send, within an admixture of

true information, vital pieces of false intelligence meant to deceive the Germans regarding Allied capabilities and intentions. It is, thus, ironic that the Germans referred to their spies as Vertrauensmänner, which can be translated in several ways, including the following: men of trust, trustworthy men, confidential agents, and confidence men.

In Britain, the security and intelligence authorities achieved this level of deception by capturing virtually every German spy in the country, and turning a number of them into double agents. What their “doubling” entailed was that, whether by letter, wireless, or personal meetings, the spies maintained contact with their German controllers under the pretence that they were loyal and productive agents. In reality, they provided just the information that was approved by the British, who not only controlled the German intelligence apparatus — thus achieving a major security and counter-intelligence victory — but ultimately could use those channels to feed deceptive information to the enemy. The “double-cross system” in Britain did eventually manage to deceive the Germans on a grand scale, and it has been rightly celebrated for its contribution to the successful prosecution of the war.

Another double-cross system — a much less well-known one — existed in the Mediterranean theatre of the war. It emerged first in Egypt in 1941 and, by 1944, had spread to all points around the Middle Sea and its hinterland, from Gibraltar to Tehran. Like the system in Britain, which was managed separately and by different authorities, it became a vehicle to enhance security and undertake counter-intelligence operations, as well as to support Allied forces with deception plans that grew in scope and complexity as the war continued. The network was composed of a large number of German spies who, after either
voluntary surrender or capture, agreed to work for Allied intelligence, in some cases for many years, and in others for shorter stretches of time. They were organized and operated by a number of security and intelligence organizations which managed and coordinated their affairs through a committee system.

The intent of this study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Mediterranean double-cross system, assessing how it developed, how successful it was as a security and counter-intelligence system, and what it achieved as a deception apparatus. The dissertation looks at both the organizational and the operational aspects of Mediterranean double-cross, and how each aspect influenced the other. I ask why and how the system developed as it did, and how successfully that organization was engaged in clandestine operations. The appraisals of the organization and its operations are based on a large body of diverse archival sources. Such a critical and evidence-based approach to double-cross is important, since deception and double-cross in World War II have become legendary; and, as John Ferris states, “legend makes for bad history.”

The operational aspect is further sub-divided into two categories: security and counter-intelligence, and deception. There are two chapters devoted to each topic, and it is worth defining them in the context of this dissertation. Security and counter-intelligence are similar concepts, in that they each aim to thwart the efforts of the enemy intelligence services, but the methods are different. In the words of Allen Dulles, a wartime American intelligence officer and later head of the Central Intelligence Agency,

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although the purpose of counterespionage is defensive, its methods are essentially offensive. Its ideal goal is to discover hostile intelligence plans in their earliest stages rather than after they have begun to do their damage. To do this, it tries to penetrate the inner circles of hostile services at the highest possible level where the plans are made and the agents selected and trained and, if the job can be managed, to bring over to its side “insiders” from the other camp.\(^3\)

A double agent could be used actively in counter-intelligence operations by investigating the enemy service and their plans, ingratiating him or herself with the enemy further and consequently, as Dulles points out, help break up enemy plots, or turn enemy agents, well before any spy reached the edge of Allied territory.

Security, in terms of double-cross operations, is not as offensively-oriented, and involves setting up what could be termed a “perimeter defence” against hostile intelligence incursions, meant to keep the enemy out, and important information inside the perimeter. A double-cross system could aid security in at least two ways. One possibility is that the controlled agents could provide the British, through their contact with the enemy, with “security intelligence” on plans, incoming agents, or agents already in place, allowing British security officials to monitor and, potentially, arrest the operatives. A second possibility is that a functioning double-cross system could convince an enemy service that their espionage needs are being met, dissuading them from sending further spies and, thus, enhancing the security of Allied territory. In the parlance of Mediterranean double-cross, agents devoted to security and counter-intelligence work were known as “penetration agents.”

Deception was also composed of two types, at least in the context of this dissertation: operational and strategic. Michael Howard defined strategic deception as “the deception of the enemy High Command as distinct from his forces in the field.”\(^4\) Such deception was meant to fool the Axis about Allied grand strategy, such as the 1943 Mediterranean deception plan which sought to convince them that the Allies intended to invade Greece and France rather than Sicily. Thus, deception was not just about concealing a real plan through security, but foisting a fake plan on the enemy. Operational deception, often referred to as “tactical” deception by ‘A’ Force, the Mediterranean deception unit, worked, logically, at the operational level, attempting to deceive the Germans at roughly the Army Group, Army, and Corps level. However, since Hitler was often involved in operational decision-making, to a much greater extent than would be typical for a supreme commander, operational deception was also aimed at high-level decision-makers in the German military. The most pertinent example of operational deception, which appears in chapter six, is the May 1944 attempt to deceive the German command in Italy regarding the Allied plan to capture Rome by crushing the German defences south of the city. The double agents who worked in deception, separately from their penetration colleagues, were known in the Mediterranean as “special agents.”\(^5\)

The Mediterranean deceptions, and the role of double-cross therein, are fairly well-known, but the specific actions of the double agents, and exactly how they did, or did not, influence German thinking has never been analyzed in depth. Discussion of the security and

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\(^5\) An explanation of the “penetration” and “special” terminology for agents is found in R.J. Maunsell, “Notes on Special Agents,” 17 September 1942, KV 4/197, p.1
counter-intelligence aspect of double-cross is even more rare in the current literature. The lack of a detailed analysis of the Mediterranean double-cross system is a noticeable gap in the history of intelligence and of the Second World War, as it was a highly-evolved and sophisticated intelligence operation; and, in a war where the British had many intelligence achievements, it was among their finest. The neglect of the Mediterranean system is displayed even more starkly when contrasted with the relatively lavish attention given to the UK-based double-cross network. Consequently, this dissertation provides the first full assessment of the Mediterranean system, and also questions seriously the claims that have been made about its organization and operations in the few studies that address it. It is

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6 There is another aspect of double-cross operations, not analyzed in this dissertation, which is intelligence collection. There is no doubt that double agents played a positive role in collecting intelligence on German military planning and operations, but how important they were, and how frequent their contributions were, are unclear. There is very little information on this matter in the secondary literature, and hardly anything of note in the archival papers. According to F.H. Hinsley and C.A.G. Simkins, and referring to the UK double agent system, “any information from the double agents about the enemy’s policy, strategy or military operations, as distinct from the activities of his Secret Services, was an uncovenanted bonus.” It was rare for the UK double-crossers to seek specific information through their agents, although they did make positive efforts to learn about the V-weapons through their agents *Tricycle* and *Garbo*. Otherwise, they would more typically find themselves in possession of useful intelligence via the questions asked of them by German intelligence. In many cases, however, the intelligence value of certain questions posed to the double agents only became apparent after the fact, with the most well-known case being the infamous Pearl Harbor questionnaire given to *Tricycle* in mid-1941. See Hinsley and Simkins, *British Intelligence IV*, p.235; J.C. Masterman, *The Double-Cross System in the War of 1939 to 1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), pp.79-81.

The double-cross system in the Mediterranean, being more closely integrated into the military command than the system in Britain, had a more active but poorly documented role in intelligence collection and assessment. In Cairo Brig. Dudley Clarke, the head of the ‘A’ Force deception unit, which utilized double agents extensively, was involved regularly in planning meetings, where his knowledge of German thinking was highly valuable. At Allied Force Headquarters in Algeria, and later in Italy, there was a more arms-length intelligence sharing relationship. According to the ‘A’ Force war diary, “it became the practice later to report in writing weekly to the Directors of Army and Air Intelligence, and to the head of the Security Service, the points of interest on which the enemy was seeking information. The material came invariably from the questionnaires addressed to the secret channels by their control stations, which reflected well the state of mind of the opposing intelligence staff.” Documentation in the ‘A’ Force papers on this matter is sparse. There survives just one example of the summaries sent to the intelligence directors at AFHQ: covering 5 - 11 March 1945, it features the questions asked of four Italian double agents by the Abwehr. Dudley Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1945, CAB 154/5, p.25; “Summary of Enemy Questionnaires to Agents in Italy,” 19 March 1945, WO 169/24878.
important to note, however, that much of the neglect, and sometimes questionable judgements in earlier sources, were the result of a dearth of official sources, a problem that has only recently been overcome.

The secrecy and hidden features of the Mediterranean double-cross system was once true of most wartime intelligence, and the broader historiographical trends of the intelligence war are necessary to contextualize the history of double-cross. Intelligence, particularly signals intelligence, was the missing element of our understanding of the Second World War until 1974, when the existence and importance of Ultra, the result of the breaking of the German Enigma machine cipher, was revealed in *The Ultra Secret* by F.W. Winterbotham.⁷

As quickly became apparent, but had always been known to those privy to the secret, signals intelligence had been so influential on the outcome of the Second World War that the the first thirty years of historical study had to be reconsidered and rewritten. Indeed, many histories had been knowingly and purposely written to hide the existence of Ultra and strategic deception, such as the histories of the land and sea campaigns undertaken by officially appointed British historians.⁸ Similarly, Winston Churchill’s memoirs masked the role of Ultra and, in some cases, information he mentions, which had been derived from that secret source, was purported to have come from somewhere else.⁹ Official secrecy meant that a major element necessary to an adequate understanding of the course and outcome of the war

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was missing. In the words of Michael Howard, it “was like writing *Hamlet* without the
Ghost.”

The British government would have preferred to avoid the revelations of Ultra and
other top secret intelligence operations, but they eventually resigned themselves to the fact
that the information would get out, and it was best if there was official management of the
release. Consequently, an official history of British intelligence in the war, under
consideration since the late 1960s, was commenced under the authorial leadership of F.H.
Hinsley. Hinsley had worked at Bletchley Park during the war and subsequently became a
highly-esteemed Professor of International Relations at the University of Cambridge. Ultra
documents also began to make their way into the British Public Record Office, beginning a
process of secret file releases that continues to this day. Meanwhile, the official intelligence
history series, which ultimately came to five volumes in six books, was published between
1979 and 1990. They are still essential texts on intelligence, and Ultra in particular. The
intelligence war is now very much a part of our understanding of the Second World War, and
the continued release of documents to the UK National Archives means the story is still
unfolding.

So, both the opportunity and need for new studies into the secret war persist, with
double-cross being one example. The majority of the documents cited in this dissertation
have only come into the public record in the last fifteen years, and many much more recently

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than that. A full study of the Mediterranean double-cross system has been lacking to date because, without these documents, it was impossible to write a proper analysis of the subject. The lack of readily accessible documentation has meant that the Mediterranean system has little coverage, and that which exists is superficial. As with much in the history of intelligence, the initial books on the topic were written by some of the historical actors themselves. The very idea that a double-cross system had existed, at least in Britain, was revealed in 1972 when J.C. Masterman published *The Double-Cross System in the War of 1939 to 1945*, which was, with some alterations, originally a top-secret report he had written in 1945.\(^\text{12}\)

Although there were some brief allusions to it in Anthony Cave Brown’s 1975 book *Bodyguard of Lies*,\(^\text{13}\) the Mediterranean network got its first airing in two books by David Mure, who had been an officer in ‘A’ Force, the Mediterranean deception unit. *Practice to Deceive* (1977) and *Master of Deception* (1980) recount his own experiences and the history of ‘A’ Force and its leader, Dudley Clarke.\(^\text{14}\) They were not based on any original documentation but, instead, on Mure’s personal recollections and interviews with some of his former colleagues. His information, however, is often unreliable whenever it strays into areas in which he was not involved personally. Mure also put forward claims that the German Abwehr was an entirely traitorous organization and a willing, if silent, partner in the double-


cross system. That claim has never been substantiated and is, quite frankly, an overly facile explanation for a much more complicated phenomenon.

Other figures, with more personal distance from the topic, began to address it as well. Charles Cruickshank touched on Mediterranean double-cross briefly in his 1979 book on deception in World War II.\textsuperscript{15} H.O. Dovey wrote an article on the double agent \textit{Cheese} (based in Cairo from 1941-1945) in 1990.\textsuperscript{16} In it he tried to parse what Mure had written about the case, but was hindered by a lack of documents.

That same year, however, volumes four (security and counter-intelligence) and five (strategic deception) of the official history of British intelligence in World War II were released.\textsuperscript{17} They offered the first, documentary-based description and assessment of the double-cross system in the Mediterranean. However, as each book covers the entire war, and the entire European theatre, their treatment of the Mediterranean theatre of the Second World War is necessarily brief and offers only general conclusions.

Further details came out in dribs and drabs through the 1990s. H.O. Dovey continued his prolific work and published an article based on the personal papers of Mure and R.J. Maunsell, the head of security in the Middle East from 1939-1944. In it he confirmed that Mure had been mistaken about many aspects of double-cross.\textsuperscript{18} Dovey also took advantage of the release of the ‘A’ Force papers in the mid-1990s to write two articles based on the ‘A’ Force narrative war diary, which was an in-house history written by Dudley Clarke in 1945.

\textsuperscript{16} H.O. Dovey, “Cheese,” \textit{Intelligence and National Security} 5, no. 3 (1990): pp.176-83.
\textsuperscript{17} Hinsley & Simkins, \textit{British Intelligence IV}; Howard, \textit{Strategic Deception}.
These two articles, which are not much more than a summary of the war diary, did, at least, bring more of the fundamental information about double-cross into publication.\textsuperscript{19}

The most recent and most substantial study that features the Mediterranean double agents is Thaddeus Holt’s \textit{The Deceivers} (2004). It is a massive and comprehensive book on Allied military deception in World War II. However, while Mediterranean double-cross is prominent in the book, Holt discusses it entirely through the lens of deception, and relies heavily on Clarke’s own narrative war diary (the problems with that approach are discussed below). Holt’s work, however, does utilize some of the newly released MI5 papers.\textsuperscript{20} Since then, other important books on intelligence have been released, such as Christopher Andrew’s official history of MI5 (2009) and Keith Jeffery’s officially sanctioned history of MI6 (2010), but very little else has appeared on this topic.\textsuperscript{21}

So, notwithstanding these historiographical developments, this dissertation is the first substantial history of the double-cross system in the Mediterranean, and seeks to offer many new insights into the use of the agents, the structure of the double-cross system, and the operations of both British and German intelligence in the theatre.

These new analytical insights are apparent in five major themes, which develop throughout the body of the dissertation. The first and most fundamental theme is the concept of a “double-cross system” itself: what made it a “system,” and how did it develop? The


initial step necessary to make it a system was the existence of multiple agents run simultaneously. That was not an easy achievement, and there were often substantial periods of time when the Allies were, for a variety of reasons, not able recruit a stable of double agents in different parts of the Mediterranean.

However, what made it a system was not just that there were multiple agents, but that they were coordinated and operated as a team, not as individuals or small groups of agents. Furthermore, they were utilized with long-term intentions, and not just for single, one-off plans. In each aspect, they key element was the management structure developed by the British, which ensured coordination, and which was able to cultivate agents and operate them for several years. Overall, what made such a “system” possible was a unique combination of the following: a large number of viable agents; a flexible, efficient, and innovative organization to manage the agents; high-value signals intelligence to inform the operations of the agents; and a gullible enemy intelligence service which was not able to discern that a major element of its spy network had been turned. How these factors came together and meshed to create a double-cross system is a primary focus of the dissertation.22

The second theme is the interaction between the UK and Mediterranean systems and, more broadly, between British metropolitan authorities and those based in the colonial Middle East. The relationship between the two, while it fluctuated in intimacy and intensity, was vital to the development of Mediterranean double-cross, which blended its own indigenous developments with information imparted by some of the luminaries who created

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22 As Christopher Andrew described the British system, it “depended not on one individual but on a series of turned Germans agents as well as on the co-operation of the whole intelligence community to provide a mixture of information and disinformation capable of both impressing and deceiving the enemy.” Andrew, The Defence of the Realm, p. 69.
the UK network. The interaction between London and Cairo over double-cross was much deeper than it would appear, based on the current historical literature, and the analysis of this relationship adds much to our understanding of how each system evolved. The relationship also provides a good case study on the development of British security and intelligence in general during the war: in its interactions with the Middle East, we see an expanding MI5 which sought to consolidate its position as the pre-eminent security and intelligence agency throughout the Empire.

The relationship between London and Cairo was also a vital one in the realm of signals intelligence which, in the form of decrypts of German wireless communications, was the lifeblood of both double-cross systems. It was so important because the decrypts revealed German attitudes and reactions without them knowing it, and laid bare whether or not they truly believed their agents in British territory were loyal spies. However, as most decryption was done in Britain, and the distribution of the subsequent product was controlled by people the Mediterranean authorities had little sway over, the double-crossers in Cairo were heavily dependent on developments in Britain for the decrypts they needed to run their agents; and, too often, Cairo suffered because of inter-agency politics back home. Consequently, signals intelligence was always, potentially, the weakest link within the Mediterranean double-cross system.

A third theme is the starring, through largely unwitting, role played by the German intelligence system in double-cross, and the Abwehr in particular (the Abwehr was the espionage service of the High Command of the German military). As will become perfectly clear, the Abwehr was a poorly organized and managed agency, and the broader German
intelligence system was also deeply flawed. This state of affairs was essential to the functioning of the double-cross system, as a more efficient and astute opponent might not have been duped for the entire length of the war. Indeed, as John Ferris notes, such an advanced network of double agents was dependent on a “combination of German incompetence and British skill (and luck)”.

The relationship with German intelligence was, however, a complicated and contradictory one: their basic incompetence allowed the double-cross system to exist and thrive, but the German influence on double-cross operations was not always so positive. The systemic flaws on the German side limited deception operations in particular. British deception efforts were subtle and the Abwehr, and some others on the German side, were often too obtuse and disorganized to pick up on those subtleties and respond to them exactly as the British wanted. A clear instance of this phenomenon came during the deception designed to draw German attention away from the invasion of Sicily in the summer of 1943, an example analyzed in chapter four. Thus, an appreciation of the “other” side of the double-cross system is central to understanding how it operated and how successful it could be.

It should be noted that the “other” side was, virtually always, German, and not Italian. Except for two cases — and those were highly unusual ones involving attempted triple-crossovers — every double agent operated as part of the Mediterranean double-cross system was played back to Abwehr and, in some cases, to the foreign intelligence service of the SS. Italian military intelligence was, throughout the conflict, superior to their German

counterparts, demonstrated by the stark imbalance in their respective “contributions” to the
double-cross system.

A fourth theme is the importance of both organizational structures and individual
personalities. As Adam Shelley aptly notes in his dissertation on British intelligence in the
wartime Middle East, there are opposing views on the matter: historian and CIA analyst
Sherman Kent said “intelligence is organisation”; Sir Maurice Oldfield, a wartime
intelligence officer in the Middle East and later head of MI6, argued that “intelligence is
about people and the study of people.”24 Indeed, Oldfield was critical of the British official
history series on intelligence, complaining that it was “written by a committee, about
committees, for committees.”25 That is not an entirely fair assessment, for, as Richard Aldrich
points out, a high degree of anonymity was a requirement for the secret services to agree to
the publication of an official history.26

Of course, this dissertation has a lot to say about committees as well, and a major
component of its argument is that organization mattered a great deal. However, those
organizations were created by people, staffed by people, and the decisions taken about
double-cross were ultimately those of a relatively small and close-knit group of officers.
Organization formalized and regularized aspects of their interactions, but the double-cross
system often ran on personal relationships. As R.V. Jones (a leader in scientific intelligence
during the war) said in 1947 during a lecture to the Royal United Services Institution,

24 Sherman Kent, Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton
University Press, 1949), pp.69-77; Richard Deacon, C: A Biography of Sir Maurice Oldfield, Head of
MI6 (London: Futura, 1985), p.189. Both are quoted in Adam Shelley, “British Intelligence in the

25 Peter Hennessy, “Ultra’s Shadowy Secrets Emerge,” The Times, 9 September 1981, p.5. Quoted in
Moran, Classified, p.324.

“Intelligence depends more than anything else on individual minds and on individual courage, and your organization should only provide a smooth background on which these can operate.”

So, while organization is a prominent factor that cannot be taken out of the equation, this dissertation also takes into account the recent work of P.R.J. Winter who, in an article on the career of Hugh Trevor-Roper, argues that a fruitful approach to intelligence history is to analyze the role of the individual. Accordingly, individuals of importance are prominent in this study. The relationship between Dudley Clarke, the head of the ‘A’ Force deception unit in the Mediterranean, and R.J. Maunsell, the security chief in the Middle East, is one such example of two important people and their personal association with each other. The wartime career of D.J. Scherr, who ran a series of counter-sabotage agents in Gibraltar virtually single-handedly, is another prominent example. Abwehr officers are also important and, within their institutional context, the careers of relevant figures are laid out, as well.

The people who have the smallest part are the spies themselves. With rare exceptions, they make few appearances in any guise other than as a cipher for the British authorities; but the exceptions, when they happen, are important ones. While many of the original spies were interesting and colourful people, once they became double agents the persona presented to the Germans over the wireless or through correspondence was strictly controlled by the British. In this sense, the Mediterranean agents were different from those in Britain, some of whom, because of their personalities and important contributions, have received considerable

popular attention. They injected much of their own personality into their double agents roles and, especially in the case of Garbo, became close collaborators with their case officers.29

The Mediterranean double-crossers preferred the original agent to have as little to do with the case as possible. The authorities in that theatre of war had a much more tightly scripted play, and there was little room for improvisation, as there sometimes was in Britain. Consequently, and somewhat ironically, the original spies themselves, once they entered the system, were often the least important part of the double-cross network. Instead, they found themselves in safe houses or internment camps, with very little to keep them occupied.30

The fifth theme is the occasionally complementary, but most often contradictory, relationship between security and counter-intelligence, on the one hand, and deception operations on the other. Although they were both acknowledged and official purposes of Mediterranean double-cross, they always sat uneasily with each other. The deception authorities, who had led the development of double-cross and felt, naturally, a level of ownership over the system, were eager to keep agents set aside just for deception. They feared that having the spies entangled in counter-intelligence plots could blow the cases before they had the chance to contribute to important Allied military operations. Consequently, many double agents were not allowed to participate in “penetration”

29 Garbo’s working relationship with his case officer, Tomás Harris, is described in Mark Seaman’s introduction to Garbo: the Spy Who Saved D-Day (Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2004), pp.19-29.

30 Of course, even spies kept in safe houses can produce interesting stories. One case involved the two Syrian double agents Quicksilver and Pessimist, who were kept in a house on the road between Beirut and Damascus, known as “Q and P Hall.” They did have to be kept entertained and, on one occasion, Maurice Oldfield, a security officer in Syria who would later become the head of MI6, reported on the results of one of the liaisons between Q and P and the women provided for them. Apparently, the would-be spies were enraged that the women demanded that the men use contraception, leading to a terrible argument which the British officers had to settle. The story is recounted in Deacon, ‘C’A Biography of Sir Maurice Oldfield, p.57.
operations, sometimes to the chagrin of security and counter-intelligence men who saw that they were being denied a powerful weapon. Indeed, the husbanding of agents for deception cut across more classical methods of intelligence, in which the double agent was regarded as a key and “most characteristic tool of counterespionage operations.”\textsuperscript{31} Thus, the conflict between deception and penetration was an ongoing one, and the subject of much debate.

The preference for deception over counter-intelligence was a partial consequence of the sixth and final theme: the central importance of the operational environment. The UK, where double-cross blended counter-intelligence and deception much more easily, was not an active zone of military operations (except in the air). On the other hand, the Mediterranean and Middle East were active zones and, consequently, the double agents were developed, first and foremost, to aid the British military with deception during 1941 and 1942, years when they faced dark days in the Desert War.

The importance of the operational environment was not restricted to just the military conditions. The security and counter-intelligence environment mattered as well. If the British authorities generally had the upper hand over enemy intelligence, as they did in the Middle East by 1943, then double agents were not needed desperately to perform counter-intelligence tasks. In Italy, however, the security situation was chaotic, the counter-intelligence authorities lacked resources and a strong organization, and there was no way to avoid double agents becoming involved in those efforts, even though that annoyed the deception men to no end.

\textsuperscript{31} Dulles, \textit{The Craft of Intelligence}, p.121.
These new conclusions, and the analysis that has led to them, are based largely on recently released documents, and it is worth commenting on their value and the approach that I took in utilizing them. The main repository of relevant documents on this topic is the UK National Archives at Kew. One of the most important groups of documents is the KV series, which contains the papers of the Security Service (MI5). The KV series has files on some individual double agents, extensive documentation on the organization of security and counter-intelligence in the Middle East, and also substantial documentation on the Abwehr. As it was within MI5’s bailiwick to prosecute the war against German intelligence both at home and within Britain’s colonial possessions, they maintained a large number of files on individual Abwehr officers, their activities, and their organization. These papers, when combined papers on the Abwehr in the WO series and US National Archives, are genuinely revelatory, and provide a great deal of important information on the “other” side of the double-cross system.

One of the most useful single documents in the KV series is the diary of Guy Liddell, the director of MI5’s B Division (counter-intelligence) for the length of the war.32 His detailed diary, which covers a wide array of topics from the perspective of someone at the heart of British intelligence, is, in the words of Eunan O’Halpin, “an extraordinary source.”33 If used with O’Halpin’s cautionary counsel in mind — that the relevant volumes must be read through entirely, as the index is incomplete and not entirely reliable — they provide

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32 The wartime diaries run from KV 4/185-196. Liddell’s diaries from June 1946 to May 1953, released more recently, run from KV 4/466-475.
vital information.\textsuperscript{34} There are many occasions throughout this dissertation where Liddell’s commentary has filled in the gaps and silences in the official documentation.

One of the best examples of the value of the diary to this work is a small one, but important nonetheless. It relates to the circulation of analytical reports on Abwehr wireless traffic, which were produced in Britain, and the circulation of which was controlled by MI6’s Section V (counter-intelligence). The reports were essential tools for understanding the Abwehr, but it was unclear to me whether or not those reports were sent to the security and counter-intelligence men in the Middle East. I was not able to resolve this uncertainty until I came across an entry by Liddell from the summer of 1943. In it, he described a conversation with Gilbert Ryle, one of the authors of those Abwehr reports, who told him that the papers were not sent to the Middle East. That was a key piece of information which allowed me to complete an important analytical point in chapter two. The Liddell diary is, thus, a vital source for this study, and its importance for the study of intelligence in general is substantial.

It should also be noted, however, that the KV files are incomplete and often contain fragmentary information. Indeed, in many cases the original papers no longer exist, and the files are nothing more than printouts of crude microfilms taken of the originals by MI5 before their destruction. In other cases, there are clearly still files that remain secret, and an unknown number were destroyed and have been lost completely since 1945. Those released to the archives still contain a great deal of information, though, and, when combined with papers from other series and, in some cases, from other archives, they are still a

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p.671.
methodologically sound source. Archival work on this topic has required the casting of a wide net to catch as many relevant papers as possible.

A good example of how it is possible to construct a reasonable historical picture from fragmentary information is in the wartime career of Abwehr officer Kurt von Rabe, most often referred to by his alias Clemens Rossetti. Rossetti was a officer drawn from civilian life, rather than from the military and, thus, held the rank of Sonderführer. Originally based in Italy, where he was involved in sending the soon-to-be double agent Renato Levi to Cairo, he later moved his operations to Greece, then to Turkey, and finally back to Italy in late 1943, where he worked until his capture by Allied forces in May 1945.

Unlike other Abwehr officers, Rossetti does not have a personal file in the KV series, although it is apparent that MI5 held one at some point, as papers in other files are sometimes cross-referenced to a Rossetti file. However, there is a good amount of fragmentary information on Rossetti in other places in the UK Archives. In the KV series the interrogations of his Abwehr colleagues often contain references to him, which are not usually flattering. From the HW 19 series, which contains decrypts of Abwehr wireless communications, it is possible to learn about Rossetti’s activities and relationships with other Abwehr officers. A report on the double agent Cheese, found in both the MI5 and ‘A’ Force papers, is another important source, as it contains a sketch of Rossetti’s known activities, at least up to spring 1943. So, many small scraps of information were collected and collated to create a reasonable composite picture of this officer and his actions.

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Those fragments ended up being important even after I stumbled across, through a combination of luck and persistence, a postwar interrogation report on Rossetti in the US National Archives.\textsuperscript{36} While it contains important details on his pre-war life that had remained unknown to me, I found that it was not as informative as the material scattered across the British papers. One might draw an important lesson, perhaps, from this experience: when used with the necessary caution, the fragmentary sources can be more useful and provide a more true-to-life picture than postwar interrogations.\textsuperscript{37}

Other files series beyond the KV papers are also of central importance, one of which is WO 169, containing the papers of ‘A’ Force. While the KV series contains papers that are mostly about organization and help contextualize the double-cross system, WO 169 is the home of papers on the double agents themselves, and their operations. It contains individual files on all the agents, some of which also contain narrative case histories in addition to many contemporary documents (such as correspondence, administrative orders, etc) relating to each agent. Most of the agent files also contain records of their correspondence with the Germans, whether conducted over the wireless or through some written means.

WO 169 also contains the ‘A’ Force narrative war diary (a second copy is held in CAB 154) which, as written by Dudley Clarke, details in five volumes the organizational and

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{36} "Interrogation Report on Hauptmann RABE Kurt Clemens," 19 July 1945, RG 226, Entry 174, Box 26. NARA.

\end{quote}
operational history of deception in the Mediterranean. It has been a main source for Michael Howard, H.O. Dovey, and Thaddeus Holt in their descriptions and assessments of the Mediterranean double-cross system — although Howard recognized certain deficiencies within the valuable information that it presented, particularly in Clarke’s assessments of the German reactions to his deception plans. While it is an important source, it should not be relied upon too heavily. In fact, I have often used it only as a source to corroborate evidence gleaned from other documents.

The main reason for this decision is that the diary is very much Dudley Clarke’s view on double-cross, written in the glow of victory in 1945. Naturally, it focusses on deception entirely, and says nothing at all about security and counter-intelligence operations. This is a gaping whole in the history of Mediterranean double-cross, and important agents like Blackguard, featured in chapter five, who were never involved in deception are not mentioned at all. Furthermore, the involvement of MI5 officers from Britain in the development of Mediterranean double-cross is ignored in Clarke’s treatment, even though top ranking Security Service officers visited Cairo in both 1942 and 1943 to impart their wisdom and experience with double agent organization. The narrative war diary makes the system seem much more locally developed than it actually was, and not until the opening of the KV papers could that bias be rectified.

The HW file series is also filled with useful information related to double-cross, as it details the records of the Government Code and Cypher School. Of particular value is HW 19, containing decrypts and analyses of Abwehr communications. The entire series of

38 WO 169/24847-51; CAB 154/1-5.
39 Michael Howard to Nöel Wild, 2 February 1979, Papers of D.W. Clarke, 99/1/1, Folder 10. IWM.
Abwehr decrypts runs to more than 100,000 individual messages, and using those to get some kind of representative picture could make them an intelligence history equivalent of clearing out the Augean Stables. However, with their knack for organization, the officials at the time were good enough to file separately any message referring to a British agent or double agent, within a sub-series known as Intelligence Service British Agents (ISBA). The papers are still filed in that manner in the archives, and I was consequently able to discover, in one relatively small section of the HW 19 papers, many hundreds of decrypts referring to Mediterranean double agents. These revealing items are indispensable sources for my studies of deception in chapters four and six.\(^{40}\) Also present in HW 19 are the reports of Hugh Trevor-Roper’s organization which analyzed Abwehr communications, known initially as the Radio Analysis Bureau and, after May 1943, as the Radio Intelligence Service. They provide considerable insight into British intelligence’s evolving understanding of the Abwehr, its personalities, and its operations.\(^{41}\)

While KV 2-4, WO 169, and HW 19 are core file series for this dissertation, a very wide array of other papers are also cited, including other parts of the WO and HW series, as well as files emanating from the Cabinet Office (CAB), the Admiralty (ADM), the Air Ministry and Royal Air Force (AIR), and the Special Operations Executive (HS).

This dissertation also draws on records from the United States National Archives at College Park, Maryland. These papers are valuable sources, but most are not of the same importance as the British papers. In most cases they are useful at filling in gaps in the latter documentation. By way of an example, the papers of the Office of Strategic Services contain

\(^{40}\) ISBA runs from HW 19/252-259.

\(^{41}\) The RAB reports are in HW 19/331-3. The RIS papers are in HW 19/347.
useful information on Anglo-American cooperation regarding the double-cross system in Italy in 1944 and 1945. As the Americans also have a tendency to place non-documentary artifacts into their archives, some boxes contained the personal effects of double agents, including notebooks, identity cards, etc. While they do not add much to the analysis herein, they provided a remarkably tangible connection to the topic.

Where the US archives are most valuable, in tandem with the holdings of the Imperial War Museum in Duxford, UK, is in their large collection of captured German documents. I have tried to utilize German papers to a greater extent than has been done in other studies of double-cross in World War II, primarily for methodological reasons. Those reasons relate to a perennial challenge of intelligence history, which is to show that information actually had a demonstrable effect on military operations. For deception, the challenge is to show, with the clearest evidence possible, that deceptive information passed through the double agents to the Germans was actually circulated within the German intelligence system, was recognized as important by operational and strategic commanders, and influenced decision-makers to act in a manner conducive to the attainment of the Allies’ real military goals.

The difficulty in proving the effectiveness of deception was the feature of a debate which emerged in the late 1980s, started by Klaus-Jürgen Müller. Müller claimed that studies of deception, many of which, at that point, had been written by former practitioners, gave it far too much credit for influencing the course of the German war effort. He argued that these studies were based on an argumentative fallacy, in which the following faulty logic was used: Hitler did something; that is what the Allies wanted Hitler to do; therefore the deception
influenced Hitler and was successful.\textsuperscript{42} This is indeed an inappropriate approach to deception but, as John Ferris pointed out soon after, Müller’s criticism did not take into account the fact that deception was tailored to encourage the Germans further in fears they held already and, actually, depended for success upon knowledge of, and deliberate intent to exploit, such pre-existing and misplaced anxieties.\textsuperscript{43}

Since Allied deception was meant to encourage the Germans to do something they were inclined to already, discerning to what extent deception was responsible for German actions is difficult to do with exactitude. However, German sources can be utilized to show substantial Allied influence over German operational and strategic decision-making, and I have looked specifically at how double agents managed to get their false information integrated into German intelligence assessments. To do so, I have utilized the war diaries of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (Armed Forces High Command), the Seekriegsleitung (Naval Operational Command), and the papers of Fremde Heere West (Foreign Armies West), which was tasked with analyzing intelligence from zones other than the Eastern Front. All were high level organizations which took a broad strategic view of the war, but also, in the case of OKW and SKL, regularly became involved in the operational details of subordinate commands.

The most fruitful sources, however, are the papers of the relevant German army groups, armies, and corps in Greece, Italy, and France from 1943 and 1944. They provide


fresh and persuasive information regarding the influence that double agents had on their view of the war and subsequent decisions. Consequently, they are essential sources for the arguments in chapters four and six.

The dissertation that has developed on the basis of these documentary sources is composed of six chapters. The first begins in the pre-war years and continues to the virtually simultaneous British offensive at El Alamein and Anglo-American landing in French North Africa in autumn 1942. The chapter assesses the early development of both the UK and Mediterranean double-cross systems, particularly the initial agents, the first organizational attempts, and the first exchanges of know-how between the London and Cairo. During the period covered by chapter one, however, there was no “double-cross system” in the Middle East, as the authorities there maintained very few agents, had a rudimentary organization, and had limited access to Abwehr signals intelligence.

Whereas chapter one is a mix of administrative history and early operations, chapter two is only about organization. It seeks to understand how the random efforts of 1941-2 emerged into a genuine double agent system in early 1943 by analyzing the following aspects: improvements in the agents themselves, the structures that managed them, the signals intelligence that provided key information, and how these factors on the British side meshed with the chronic problems that plagued their Abwehr opponents. An essential point of this chapter is that London’s contribution, drawing on its growing experience in double-cross, was crucial in the development of the Cairo-based system.

Chapter three assesses security and counter-intelligence in the year from October 1942 to September 1943 — or from the turn of the tide in North Africa to the Allied return to
the European mainland with the invasion of Italy. The chapter discusses the organization of counter-intelligence, and provides analyses of the operations undertaken. It then moves on to assess the double-cross system that emerged in Gibraltar, and which was absorbed into the broader Mediterranean system in late 1943. Before its absorption, however, it operated as a powerful counter-sabotage network.

The fourth chapter covers a topic that has been discussed extensively in other sources: the deception mounted in support of the Allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943. It is, except for the deception operation that covered the invasion of Normandy in June 1944, the best known and most discussed deception of the war. The importance of double-cross in the Sicilian operation, however, has rarely been approached critically enough, and with a view to understanding precisely how the double-cross system and German intelligence interacted in the months before the invasion. Consequently, this chapter provides a new perspective on how effective double agents were as a conduit for deception in 1943.

Chapter five returns to security and counter-intelligence, but studies the period from October 1943 to the end of the war in Europe in May 1945. Some important archival discoveries, which serve as the foundation of this chapter, show that security and counter-intelligence became more important purposes of the double-cross system, at least during that period of the war, than the deception-centric literature would lead one to believe. How that development occurred, and with what practical consequences, are the primary questions addressed in the chapter.

Finally, chapter six looks at deception in the spring and summer of 1944. While chapter four analyzed a grand, strategic deception, those studied in chapter six were smaller,
operational plans, or strategic plans of a relatively narrow scope. The focus is on the importance of double-cross before the Allies’ May 1944 offensive in Italy, and in the run-up to the landings on the south coast of France in August. Each case study, combined with the one in chapter four, provides further evidence and analysis of how deception via double-cross, while successful, was limited in how much it could achieve in the Mediterranean theatre. However, they also underline the invaluable services rendered to the Allied war in the Mediterranean theatre by a double-cross system which combined active deception efforts with the steady management of double agents for security and counter-intelligence purposes.
Chapter One

The End of the Beginning

Double Agent Operations from the Outbreak of War to November 1942

The British faced many dark and desperate days during the Second World War. From July to October 1940 they fought a pitched strategic air battle, and feared a possible German invasion of their Home Island. The invasion never came, but British troops did have to fight in North Africa after the Italian entry into the war in June 1940, the latter aided by German forces under General Erwin Rommel, which arrived in Libya in March 1941. From then, until the victory at El Alamein and the successful amphibious landings in French North Africa in November 1942, Britain fought for survival in the Mediterranean. A failure there would have substantially weakened Britain’s hold over its vast territories across the world and, inevitably, dented its best efforts to use its global resources, like Middle East oil, for the fight against the fascist powers.

Although Britain’s military efforts suffered setbacks in these years, they built an advantage in intelligence which would serve them in good stead until the successful conclusion of the war. Attacks on German machine ciphers were already yielding the vital intelligence codenamed “Ultra.” It was also during these difficult times that security and counter-intelligence authorities, both in Britain and Egypt, began utilizing double agents to investigate German intelligence activities and, experimentally, to deceive the enemy with false information. These British and Mediterranean systems, separate but with considerable interaction between them, eventually flourished and became important features of the covert war against Germany.
The two systems did, however, develop distinctly and at different speeds. The Mediterranean double-cross system, based on the criteria for a “system” laid out in the introduction, was not complete until the late spring of 1943. From 1941 until late 1942, the period covered in this chapter, there were not enough agents, only an ad hoc organization, and insufficient signals decrypts for double-cross to be anything more than a local and small-scale activity.

The key to understanding the particular development of Mediterranean double-cross in this initial period is its fluctuating association with similar developments in Britain. Throughout 1941 the double-cross authorities in Cairo had little contact with London, and began employing double agents in response to their own operational environment which, unlike Britain, was an active zone of military operations. That environment led naturally to a greater focus on the military uses of double-cross, rather than its security and counter-intelligence applications. In 1942, however, MI5 in London took more notice of developments in Egypt and, in an effort to reestablish its control of security in British overseas territories, began to intervene. The Security Service shaped the emerging Mediterranean system through tours of inspection by officers with intimate knowledge of British double-cross, in both 1942 and 1943.

It is this sporadic association with MI5 that provides a primary explanation for how Mediterranean double-cross developed before 1943, although it has barely been acknowledged in the existing literature. In contrast, Field Marshal Sir Archibald Wavell and Brigadier Dudley Clarke, the pioneers of deception in Egypt, have been duly recognized for their contribution to the development of deception and double-cross in Britain. Wavell has
been given particular prominence, and has been described by Michael Howard as having “one of the most fertile minds ever possessed by a British senior officer.”

This chapter, then, will look at the twin development of the British and Mediterranean double-cross systems, as the comparisons and contrasts do much to show both their common and unique features. Essentially, the UK network started as, and always remained, a security and counter-intelligence system that grew to incorporate deception in a substantial manner; the Mediterranean system, created in the midst of the Desert War, was a deception system meant to provide practical assistance to military operations. Unlike its UK counterpart, it was not able to smoothly integrate security and counter-intelligence and deception into one, efficient system.

I

The UK and Mediterranean systems were each built, initially, on single double agents, each of whom allowed their controllers to experiment with the theory and practice of running a double agent. The UK network was founded upon a case that MI6 had been operating prior to the outbreak of war in September 1939. The spy, codenamed Snow, and whose real name was Arthur Owens, was an agent of MI6 from 1936. As an electrical engineer who travelled often to Germany on business, he was debriefed for intelligence upon each return, and MI6 soon discovered that he had also been in contact with German intelligence. Owens agreed to continue contact with the Germans but pledged his true allegiance to Britain, making him a double agent operating on behalf of the Secret Intelligence Service. His value increased when

1 Howard, *Strategic Deception*, p.32.
he was named the head agent of the Abwehr — the German military’s espionage service — in Britain and received a German wireless set in early 1939 to aid his work. Upon the outbreak of war he agreed to operate the set under the control of MI5’s B Branch, which was responsible for domestic counter-intelligence. *Snow* also continued to meet his Abwehr controllers in person in the still-neutral Low Countries, and had also added two more double agents to MI5’s stable: one was provided by MI5 itself to act as a recruit of *Snow*’s, and the other was a German-provided contact in Liverpool who agreed to turn against the Germans as well.2

Such an accumulation of agents was vital for MI5, as their knowledge of the Abwehr and its espionage directed against Britain was limited. It would remain so until the full break into the Abwehr hand cipher in December 1940 and, more importantly, that of the the Abwehr Enigma, one year later. In the interim, details provided by *Snow* and his cohorts were invaluable as a source of information on Abwehr personalities, organization, and intentions.

Two incidents demonstrate this contribution. In the first, wireless contact between *Snow* and an Abwehr ship in the North Sea allowed the British to intercept signals emanating from the ship and, subsequently, make the very first break into the hand cipher in early 1940.3 In the second, *Snow* provided the Abwehr, upon its request, with information and numbers for fake British identity cards. Many of the spies caught during the Abwehr’s autumn 1940 offensive against Britain were identified positively as spies based upon the

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information on their forged identification. This security success furnished further double agents, and more than ten were operational by July 1941.

The large number of agents in Britain led to the emergence of a double-cross system before the authorities in Egypt had even a single double agent. What would become the Mediterranean double-cross system finally got its start on 19 February 1941, when a man named Renato Levi arrived in Cairo. The channel to the Germans that he initiated, known as Cheese, was similar in importance to Snow: both cases were proving grounds for the art of managing an ongoing, and potentially long-term, double-cross case; and both Owens and Levi maintained personal contact with their Abwehr controllers which, as we will see, created difficulties for each agent. The Cheese case, however, was of much less security and counter-intelligence value, a point that will be developed in this chapter and in chapter three.

Levi, like Owens, had deep roots in espionage and intrigue. He was born in 1902 in Split, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to Italian Jewish parents. He spent time abroad in India, Switzerland, and Australia before settling in Genoa, Italy in 1937. Two years later, in November 1939, he was approached by Dr. Hans Travaglio, an officer of the Abwehr’s air intelligence section, and was recruited as a spy. Following that meeting, Levi informed the British Consul in Genoa that he had been recruited by the Germans and was being sent to France, and the Consul, apparently, encouraged him to take up the German offer. The Consulate then passed word to the Foreign Office which, in turn, informed the MI6 station in Paris. Once in France Levi made contact with French intelligence, who ran his case, thus turning into a double agent against the Germans and specifically against Travaglio.

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4 Hinsley & Simkins, *British Intelligence IV*, pp.87-8
5 Ibid., pp.92-3; Masterman, *The Double-Cross System*, pp.190-195.
who, by that time, was operating out of the occupied Netherlands. There is little information available on Levi’s time in France, and British papers state only that “the French are said to have mishandled his case, but detailed information is lacking.” Upon the collapse of France in June he returned to Genoa.6

After his return, Levi was set on the path that would lead him to Cairo. Sometime in the summer of 1940 he was approached again by Travaglio and was introduced to two other Abwehr officers: Lt.-Col. Otto Helfferich, the Abwehr liaison to the Italian Servizio Informazioni Militari (SIM), and Sonderführer Clemens Rossetti, who operated an Italian-based military espionage ring aimed at the Middle East. Helfferich and Rossetti proposed a plan to Levi, according to which he would travel to Egypt with a wireless operator, and report back from that British-occupied territory as a member of Rossetti’s organization.7

Very soon after, during a visit to Belgrade in September, Levi repeated his actions of early 1940 by contacting the British Embassy and informing them of his new mission. His motives for doing so are not clear, but they did seem to spring from sympathy for the Allies and, perhaps more strongly, a streak of daring and adventure that was clear in his personality. However, as British authorities later noted, “he showed no particular dislike for the Germans or the Italians; in fact he often described the good times the Germans had given him, and how friendly he was with Travaglio.”8 In any case, he had once again turned on the Germans. He returned to Italy in November, where he met his wireless operator in Rome and received further instructions from the Abwehr. They began their journey to Egypt via Belgrade, Sofia,

and Istanbul on 7 December 1940 but, on the way, were detained by Turkish authorities on charges of counterfeiting, as Levi had been found in possession of £200 in forged £5 notes. Through the intercession of local British intelligence, who were aware of Levi’s arrival, he was released but his wireless operator, who was not part of Levi’s double-cross scheme, was left in Turkish custody. After leaving Istanbul by ship, Levi set foot in Cairo on 19 February.⁹

He was received by and put under the control of Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME), the primary security authority in the Middle Eastern military command. SIME had intended to use the case to open a channel to the Axis ever since they learned that Levi would be traveling to Cairo but, without his wireless set and operator, still in Istanbul, there seemed to be no plausible way to do so.¹⁰ In a vain effort to overcome these difficulties, SIME allowed Levi to meet two contacts provided to him by Count Carlo Scirimbo, a SIM officer familiar to Helfferich and Rossetti, but neither were of any help. Indeed, one of the two, a Mme. Vigoretti-Antoniada, was “unintelligent and quite unresponsive to [Levi’s] hints and suggestions.”¹¹ SIME and Levi found themselves at a potential impasse. As would happen with future potential double-cross cases, it was possible that Levi’s would fizzle out due to his inability to contact the Germans.

Instead, SIME went to a Sergeant Shears from the Royal Corps of Signals, and had him construct a wireless set, suitable for contacting Levi’s German controllers, from spare parts.¹² Lt.-Col. William Kenyon-Jones, the deputy head of SIME, was put in charge of the

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⁹ “A.D. Cheese,” KV 2/1133.
¹⁰ “Security and Counter-Intelligence in the Middle East in the Second World War (to September 1943),” WO 204/12907, Appendix A.
agent and his new wireless set. In order to explain this development, SIME had to construct a plausible “notional” story that Levi could tell the Germans about how he got to Cairo after his arrest, how he managed to shelter and feed himself, and how he happened upon a working wireless. According to the invented story, he bought the set from an Italian who had been hiding it since the outbreak of war; he had obtained a flat in Heliopolis where he had erected the radio antenna, and where the set was operated by a man named Paul Nicosoff. The story portrayed him as a sympathetic co-conspirator whom Levi had met in Cairo. In fact, he was an entirely fictional character and the set was operated by Sergeant Shears.

With this story in hand, SIME asked Levi to return to Italy and explain the situation to the Germans, leaving “Nicosoff” in charge of the set. Levi accepted the mission and, with a “cooked” passport showing Egyptian entry and exit visas, left Haifa on 19 April 1941. After that day neither SIME nor anyone else in the Middle East heard from Levi again until 17 October 1943, when he was found in a newly-liberated prison in San Severo, Italy.

SIME, aware only much later of the ill fortune that had befallen Levi, carried on with the case and managed to contact Levi’s control station at Bari, Italy on 14 July 1941. Subsequent contact the following week established Nicossof as the Abwehr’s man in Cairo, as well as a sub-source that he claimed to have picked up named Piet, who allegedly was a South African clerk on the Operations Staff at General Headquarters, Middle East (GHQ). He was entirely notional as well. With this set-up in place, the Cheese channel, known to the

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13 “Report on ‘Cheese’,” KV 2/1133, p.3.
15 “Report on ‘Cheese’,” KV 2/1133, pp.4-5.
Germans as their agent Roberto, was put into action and survived as a viable double agent until February 1945, when it was shut down voluntarily by SIME. It even survived Levi’s arrest in Italy in the summer of 1941, a matter discussed at length in chapter two.

Snow met a different fate, and his case was closed in early 1941. It unravelled after Owens returned from a meeting with his Abwehr controller in Lisbon: he confessed to MI5 that, during the meeting, he had revealed all his duplicitous activities to the German. It was a confusing situation, as it contradicted the story of events given by Snow’s travel partner, the double agent Celery, and also did not fit with the fact that his controller had just given him £10,000 and sabotage materials to take back to Britain. MI5’s conclusion was that Snow probably invented the story in order to escape from his work which, perhaps, was placing too much strain on him. Whatever the case, he was imprisoned and the Snow channel, along with several agents associated with it, were shut down via a message to the Germans in which Owens claimed to be seriously ill and, consequently, unable to continue his clandestine work.\(^\text{17}\) The loss of Snow, however, was more than made up for by the stable of agents MI5 amassed in late 1940 and early 1941.

Thanks to the cases of Snow and Cheese, by mid-1941 there was an emerging double-cross system in Britain, and the potential for one in Egypt. However, with just one agent, and no sign of others on the horizon, it is not surprising that the construction of the double-cross system in the Mediterranean took until early 1943 to complete, while most elements of the British system were in place by 1941 (see section II below). Moreover, these two cases were used for different ends. Snow, and many of the other early double agents, were used for

\(^{17}\) Masterman, *The Double-Cross System*, pp.91-2.
security and counter-intelligence work. The idea of using these agents for deception only emerged in late 1940 and, even then, it took until 1942 to convince the armed services that the double-cross system could have tremendous value in a future strategic deception, and was worth sustaining for that purpose.

The opposite situation prevailed in the Middle East. Cheese was, within a few months, used in the deception scheme that covered the November 1941 Crusader offensive. This distinction between London and Cairo came down, primarily, to the different strategic and operational realities of those theatres. Cheese was at the centre of the only active fighting on land in which the British were engaged, and he was controlled with military needs in mind, especially as the type of operational deception practiced in 1941 and 1942 was a feasible endeavor, relative to the trickier business of strategic deception, which was developing in the minds of UK authorities as a future possibility. In the interim, though, with Britain isolated from the continent and with military intervention against Germany impossible for the foreseeable future, their double-cross system was turned into a powerful tool for security and counter-intelligence. These differing realities meant that the structures for managing and exploiting double agents evolved distinctly in each theatre. However, interaction between the two in 1941 and 1942 was vital in ensuring some common standards of operation. This exchange was especially important as, in 1943 and 1944, each system would operate as component parts of European-wide strategic deception plans.

18 Hinsley & Simkins, *British Intelligence IV*, p.229.
II

The structures developed in Britain and the Mediterranean, along with the availability of Abwehr signals decrypts after 1941, are what make the use of double agents in the Second World War unique. The mere fact that double agents existed, even in large numbers, was not peculiar. They are an ancient tool of espionage, and MI5 itself had used them in a rudimentary fashion in the First World War. Members of MI6 had also received a lecture in May 1939 from Col. Paul Paillolé, a French counter-intelligence officer, who advocated the use of double agents for counter-intelligence purposes.19

The double-cross institutions of the 1940s, however, were of a greater ambition. In this case, “institutions” meant joint committees and sections which brought together multiple organizations, all with an interest in double-cross, in a more or less formalized manner. They were crucial in managing relationships between the various parties and, most importantly, in coordinating a large number of agents who operated simultaneously. The institutions created the opportunity for sustained agents, rather than ones who were used for individual missions and short-term goals. They also allowed for the quick absorption of new recruits, spurring growth that was, at times, exponential. Most importantly, they went beyond merely sustaining the agents and allowed them to flourish as tools for security, counter-intelligence, intelligence gathering, and deception. No part of this double-cross organization, however,

19 Wilson, “The War in the Dark,” pp.117-8. According to Christopher Andrew, the use of double agents in the First World War never developed into a “Double-Cross System” because of government pressure to bring captured spies to trial, and also because of “War Office nervousness” over utilizing the few agents who were doubled. For details on the First World War cases, see Andrew, The Defence of the Realm, pp.65-73. However, John Ferris, using both MI5 documents and private papers, such as those of Admiral William Reginald “Blinker” Hall, argues that there were notable examples of deception through controlled sources in the First World War. See Ferris, “FORTITUDE’ in Context,” pp.118-120.
was present before the war started and, once the British were presented with these potentially valuable intelligence resources, the structures to manage and exploit them had to be worked out “on the fly.” Moreover, the process of organizing double-cross in the Middle East happened in fits and starts, and was only complete in early 1943, or two years after the arrival of Renato Levi.

The complete double-cross system in Britain was achieved earlier — by mid-1942 — and its primary components were in place in 1941. The core of the system was MI5’s B Division, headed by Capt. Guy Liddell, and specifically the double agent sub-section B1A, run by Maj. T.A. “Tar” Robertson. All double agents who operated within Britain were under the control of B1A, and its roster swelled quickly as waves of spies arrived and were captured, from September-November 1940 and onward. It became apparent quickly to MI5 that, if the the new double agents were to be of any use, they had to gain credibility with their German masters by actually reporting back with apparently significant intelligence; otherwise they would simply die on the vine, as their Abwehr controllers abandoned seemingly unproductive cases. MI5 had already discussed this issue with the Director of Military Intelligence in September 1940, since many of the doubled Abwehr spies had been given missions to report on British defences in preparation for a potential German invasion. Some information had to be sent back to the Abwehr to sustain the double agents, and the result in early October was the formation of the W Committee, a high-level body formed to supervise “the dissemination of false information.”

\[20\] Hinsley & Simkins, *British Intelligence IV*, p.98.
The creation of the committee was only the necessary first move to create viable agents; but, as early as 18 November, MI5 had set out a lofty agenda for what those agents could achieve if the Germans were convinced that they were actually loyal spies operating in Britain. They felt that, at its most basic, the functions of the W Committee should be the following: to sustain the agents with a flow of information; to control as many agents as possible; and to use the agents to show the Germans that they did not need to send any further spies to Britain, as their espionage needs were already being met. More ambitiously, MI5 argued that, if sustained and developed, the double agents could “mislead the enemy on a big scale at the appropriate moment.” Whether or not the deceptive potential of double-cross would ever come to fruition was unclear, but the new committee structure for managing double agent information was firmly in place and expanded when the W Committee was renamed the W Board, confirming its status a high-level policy group. Managing the flow of information back to the Germans became the purview of the new Twenty (XX) Committee, working under the W Board which, as a high-level group, was incapable of handling the heavy day-to-day work of a growing double agent network.

From its first meeting on 2 January 1941, the role of the Twenty Committee was to approve agent traffic on behalf of the W Board, discuss plans for the agents, and deal with questionnaires that had been addressed to the agents by the Abwehr. Furthermore, the committee developed to the point that it handled much of the day-to-day management of the agents themselves, along with B1A and MI6, the latter running agents based in foreign

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21 Ibid.
states.\textsuperscript{23} The committee also had representatives from the three armed services, who liaised between it and the army, navy, and air force to determine what was acceptable information to pass to the Germans. By bringing all interested parties together, the Twenty Committee thus became the central piece of the double agent organization in Britain.

Although designed to handle the daily work of running a double agent network, even the Twenty Committee could not keep pace with the rapid rate of agent operations. Hugh Astor, an MI5 case officer, noted that he was often in contact with the Germans a few times a day and, as the committee only met weekly, he sought out approval from individual committee members for his daily traffic. He would subsequently report his weekly activities to the committee when it next met.\textsuperscript{24}

The committee’s position as the keystone of the system is apparent in its role in clearing intelligence for transmission to the Germans, performed during both the informal meetings described by Astor, and the formal weekly assemblies. In order to maintain the fiction in the Abwehr’s mind that they had a reliable network of agents in Britain, the information they received not only had to the steady and plentiful, but largely accurate as well. Only after 1943, when Allied air superiority was virtually total, was the Luftwaffe prevented from making reconnaissance flights over Britain. Until then, double agent reports could not contradict what the Germans could glean from overflights and other intelligence sources.

\textsuperscript{23} Hinsley & Simkins, \textit{British Intelligence IV}, pp.98-9; Masterman, \textit{The Double-Cross System}, p.65.

Still, even with an organizational framework in place, the notion of handing over valuable information to the enemy did not sit well with the armed services and, throughout 1941 and early 1942, there was a struggle to maintain the supply of accurate “chicken feed,” as it was known. Since any direct benefit to the armed services, probably in the form of deception, was still only a future possibility, the services had to be led by MI5 to take the longer view, and accept that passing accurate information in the present was a necessary first step to passing false information in the future.25 Only in 1942, as the Allies took the offensive in North Africa, did the military viewpoint change substantially as to the operational value of the double agents. Before then double-cross and deception in Britain muddled along without much direction from above.26

The eventual change in London also came about, in part, because of the efforts of one soldier in Cairo: Lieutenant-Colonel (later Colonel, then Brigadier) Dudley Clarke, who was the central figure in Mediterranean double-cross and deception operations. He had been named officer in charge of deception (and also escape and evasion) at General Headquarters, Middle East by General Wavell in December 1940, and, in the following year, created the ‘A’ Force machinery of strategic and operational deception which prospered until May 1945.27 The course that Clarke had taken, however, was in contrast to MI5’s in Britain. Double-cross in the latter started before the war and with the primary aim of security and counter-intelligence; deception was only a future possibility. In the Middle East, organized military deception was already in operation well before Cheese went on the air in July 1941.

27 Holt, The Deceivers, p.18.
The opposite areas of experience led to an exchange of knowledge in late 1941 and early 1942: Clarke went to London to report to the Chiefs of Staff about his experiments in deception; Tar Robertson of MI5 went to Cairo and assisted SIME in creating an organization for double-cross along the lines of what already existed in Britain. Clarke ensured that deception would become a central component of the British double-cross system, while Robertson brought attention to the hitherto neglected role that double-cross could play in Middle Eastern security and counter-intelligence.

There were three organizations that Robertson encountered in the Middle East in early 1942, and they formed the basis of what would become the double-cross system in 1943. The agencies concerned were Security Intelligence Middle East, ‘A’ Force, and the Inter-Services Liaison Department (ISLD). Thanks to both good relations among their leaders and the organizational innovations discussed below and in chapter two, the three formed an effective and efficient team which, due to their position within the military hierarchy, allowed for a more streamlined approach to double-cross than in Britain. They also collaborated with a military that, in 1940 and 1941, had a greater understanding of deception than the commanders back in Britain, who had a simplistic view of the practice.28

This happy outcome was based entirely on wartime developments. As in the UK, the British in the Middle East knew little about the Axis intelligence services at the outbreak of war. Although, as Martin Thomas has argued, British and French colonial regimes in the Arab world used “intelligence gathering as a primary weapon” to maintain their power in the interwar years, these efforts were aimed almost exclusively at the indigenous populations.

28 Ferris, “‘FORTITUDE’ in Context,” p.130.
Thus, the British “intelligence states,” as Thomas terms them, were ignorant of the activities of hostile European intelligence services in the region, a problem that also stemmed from low funding and little central control of intelligence operations against the Axis in the Eastern Mediterranean.29

The colonial administrations also faced a multitude of other problems that gave the initial advantage to the Axis in the intelligence war: the local populations were often, at best, indifferent to their masters’ plight and, at worst, active supporters of the Axis; their frontiers were porous and, at least initially, any hope of achieving security as airtight as that in Britain was forlorn. All security operations were difficult in these circumstances, so much so that, as Michael Howard has written, “the region might be described as an intelligence officer’s paradise and a security officer’s hell.”30

The security officer selected to descend into that hell was Lt.-Col. R.J. Maunsell, who had been MI5’s Defence Security Officer (DSO) in Cairo since November 1937. In December 1939 the post of DSO was superseded by Security Intelligence Middle East, a new, theatre-wide security organization, which worked directly for the military headquarters. This was an idea first proposed by General Wavell in September. Maunsell was concerned about the reaction in London, but MI5 was more than happy to pass the burden of Middle East security to the military.31 Their desire to shed this responsibility is not surprising, as the Security Service had entered the war in a state of confusion and was on the verge of

30 Howard, Strategic Deception, p.31.
breakdown from too much expansion with too little central direction. After Sir Vernon Kell, the founder of the Service in 1909, was fired in June 1940, MI5 went through several months of turmoil and restructuring that did not end until David Petrie was named the Director-General in February 1941.\footnote{Andrew, \textit{The Defence of the Realm}, pp.227-9, 236.}

The results for the development of double-cross in the Middle East were substantial. SIME, as a military organization, developed without any guiding influence from MI5 until 1942. Indeed, despite the continued existence of a DSO in Cairo, and the establishment of new ones in Istanbul (December 1940) and Beirut (October 1941), they were largely under the control of SIME and took little direction from MI5 in London, which had not developed into a fully Imperial organization before the outbreak of war.\footnote{Calder Walton, \textit{Empire of Secrets: British Intelligence, the Cold War and the Twilight of Empire} (New York: The Overlook Press, 2013), pp.24-5.} Contributing to this murky chain of command was the unclear relationship between SIME and MI5 themselves. Only in 1943 was it formalized, when SIME was named the representative of the Security Service in the region.\footnote{Curry, \textit{The Security Service}, pp.270-1.} Double-cross was thus well underway in the Middle East, and already adapting to the specific circumstances of that theatre, before MI5, with their growing experience, had any opportunity to provide advice to SIME.

Nevertheless, SIME ended up with a position in Mediterranean double-cross similar to that of MI5 in Britain. As the main security authority, SIME interrogated captured spies and turned the ones who could be convinced to operate as double agents. SIME was then responsible for providing case officers, accommodations, and other necessities for the double-cross cases that developed. MI5 performed these housekeeping tasks as well, but they
also utilized the agents for their own purposes, charged as they were with countering the
German intelligence threat to Britain. SIME, theoretically, was also able to use double agents
to penetrate enemy intelligence but, at least until late 1943, they never did so with much
persistence.

This fundamental difference between SIME and MI5 came down to their relationship
with the military. Whereas, as we have seen above, MI5 dealt with armed services which
were unsure of the real value of their involvement in double-cross and the Twenty
Committee, SIME faced the opposite situation. The Middle Eastern command was actually
fighting in the field, and was eager to use any means at its disposal to defeat the Axis. As
organized deception had been in place since December 1940 in the theatre, Cheese was used
immediately for deception, quite the opposite of Snow, who remained an exclusively security
and counter-intelligence channel.

The organization which utilized Cheese, and the other double agents that SIME
provided, for deception was ‘A’ Force. Dudley Clarke’s outfit began its life on 18 December
1940, directed by a summons from General Wavell to form “a special section of intelligence
for deception of the enemy.”35 It was, as Clarke later described to an American counterpart,
an ad hoc creation, typical of a British Army that is “not a very logically minded
institution.”36 Clarke, who would wield extensive influence over deception as a result of this
looser attitude towards the chain of command in the British Army, arrived in Cairo in the
midst of the very first deception plan: Wavell, who had seen Middle East deception in action

35 Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1940-41, CAB 154/1, p.2.
36 Dudley Clarke, “Some Notes on the Organisation of Deception in the Unites States Forces,” RG
319, Entry 101, Box 4, Folder 76. NARA.
in the First World War while serving under General Edmund Allenby, had mounted an effort to mislead the Italians prior to his December 1940 *Compass* offensive that soon drove his opponents deep into Libya.\(^{37}\)

Clarke’s early days saw him working alone, but he gradually expanded the power and size of his organization and became the dominant figure in deception and double-cross. At first, his tools were “rumourmongering” and “physical implementation” of deception with dummy trucks, aircraft, tanks, etc.\(^{38}\) Both of these remained components of the ‘A’ Force arsenal, but double agents would play a prominent and, indeed, dominant role as they grew in number and as ‘A’ Force schemes became more grandiose and audacious. ‘A’ Force was also the only organization involved in double agent operations throughout the Mediterranean theatre. SIME was only present in the Middle East, and different security organizations operated double agents in North Africa and Italy. ‘A’ Force was the only deception unit though, and their involvement at all points in the theatre ensured that there was just one double-cross system throughout the Mediterranean, and not various regional, uncoordinated, and potentially competing organizations.

The third organization that, along with SIME and ‘A’ Force, formed the foundation for an organized double-cross system in the Mediterranean was the Inter-Services Liaison Department, the Middle Eastern guise of MI6. The Secret Intelligence Service had been active in the region before the war but, given the military situation, attempted some reform of their stations, and ISLD was the result. It was founded by David Petrie, the future head of


\(^{38}\) Ibid., pp.21-3.
MI5, and John Shelley in May 1940. ISLD, as a component of General Headquarters, Middle East, was part of a trend in MI6 where responsibility devolved to “semi-autonomous agencies” attached to theatre commands. Prior to the war, MI6 stations around the world had operated with close reference to central control in London. In this way ISLD was similar to SIME, and both ran their own double agents who would, eventually, be coordinated through the double-cross structures that emerged in 1942 and 1943.

We can see, then, that the participants in the UK and Mediterranean double-cross networks were similar: MI5 / SIME, MI6 / ISLD, and the armed services; but ‘A’ Force stands out, and, even after a deception planning organization was created in London in 1942, there was never anything quite like it in Britain. Moreover, the two systems operated differently, despite the relative similarities of the participants. The Mediterranean outfit worked more efficiently, was better integrated, and saw only one major, albeit brief, “debate” among SIME, ‘A’ Force, and ISLD over the general policy of how control of double agents should be allotted among them. Nor was there any opposition to the need to pass accurate “chicken feed” to the enemy, since, as mentioned, the military was a supportive of deception and double-cross.

The fundamental reason for this difference was that, in the Middle East, all aspects of double-cross were integrated into the military command. SIME was part of the theatre command staff, and Maunsell was ultimately answerable to the Commander-in-Chief. ISLD was in a similar position. The opposite situation prevailed in Britain as, despite the enduring

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39 Jeffery, MI6, pp.421-23.
popularity of the terms, MI5 and MI6 were not — and are not — part of the armed forces. Both were separate from the military hierarchy and dealt with it as independent agencies. ‘A’ Force was also a military operation, run by a long-serving professional soldier, and Clarke had direct access to the theatre commander, the DMOs and DMIs, and the field commanders.\textsuperscript{42} He worked with them closely, creating deception plans in conjunction with their operational planning, and concocted the information that should be fed to the enemy. Mediterranean double-cross, therefore, was more centralized, even before coordinating institutions were built in 1942 and 1943, which only concentrated it further. There was, in particular, a lot of power placed in Clarke’s own hands. Double-cross in Britain tended to be much more diffuse and structured around individual organizations, which had long-standing rivalries and entrenched interests.

The ability to get things done with relative ease in Mediterranean double-cross, besides the key factor of centralization, also came down to the fact that the Middle East was an active theatre and the UK was not. The military in Cairo, fighting for survival against the Germans after their arrival in Tripoli in spring 1941, were very willing to work with Clarke to craft realistic messages for double agents, if it could give them a military advantage. This is not to say, however, the ‘A’ Force got to say whatever they wanted to the Abwehr. In October 1942, as an example, the Persia and Iraq Command rejected plans that Clarke had proposed for a false order of battle in Iraq. The specific difficulty was the creation of a fake

\textsuperscript{42} Howard, \textit{Strategic Deception}, pp.32-3. ‘A’ Force’s integration was greater at British GHQ than at the Anglo-American Allied Forces Headquarters, based first at Algiers and then at Caserta, Italy. AFHQ was built on the American staff system and did not afford the same ease of access to “deceptioneers” within its more rigid framework. See Holt, \textit{The Deceivers}, p.68.
American unit, which contradicted the Commander-in-Chief’s order that information about American forces should be as vague as possible.43

Nevertheless, the concentration of power in Clarke’s hands, and his ability to work from within the military establishment, made the process of negotiation highly efficient. The contrasting division of powers in London was summarized by Tar Robertson after his visit to Egypt in spring 1942. He wrote that Clarke was “the Ds of I, the W Board, the I.S.S.B., the XX Committee, and the department run by Col. Stanley, all rolled into one.”44 Although Clarke did not, and probably could not, retain such personal control as the number of double agents grew dramatically in late 1942 and early 1943, the Thirty Committee structure — similar but with key differences from the Twenty Committee — that developed in 1943 remained largely under his sway.

However, just because Mediterranean double-cross was more efficient and streamlined than that in Britain, it did not mean that such a centralized system could have been repeated at home. The organizations in Britain were of a different nature, particularly as MI5 and MI6, being non-military, did not have the kind of direct access that Clarke had as a professional officer on the military staff. The organizations in London were, as mentioned above, also much more entrenched and prone to the kinds of infighting endemic in the heart of government in London. Although the resulting double-cross structure ended up involving a large number of people and organizations, leading to what ‘A’ Force officer David Mure uncharitably called a “superfluity of brains,” the Twenty Committee system did admirably

44 T.A. Robertson, “Report on Visit to Egypt,” 20 March-17 April 1942, KV 4/234, p.7. “Ds of I” refers to the Directors of Intelligence. ISSB was the Inter-Services Security Board, and Col. Stanley’s Department was the London Controlling Section. Both are discussed below.
well at harnessing the centrifugal forces of rival organizations and keeping turf wars manageable. Moreover, even with fewer interested parties, the Mediterranean was not completely free from conflict either, as is described in chapter two.

Thus, by mid-1941 there were diverging paths for British and Mediterranean double-cross: the UK system was well-organized and extremely valuable for counter-intelligence, but unable to get the armed services on board completely; in the Mediterranean the military was monopolizing the potential utility of double-cross and the organization was less well-developed, leaving SIME without much room to utilize potential channels for their own security and counter-intelligence duties.

Their paths, however, began to converge between October 1941 and April 1942, during the first substantial exchange of personnel and ideas between London and Cairo. Clarke, with control of deception firmly in hand, went to London to discuss his innovations with the relevant authorities. MI5, now reorganized and with David Petrie as a steady hand on the wheel, sent Tar Robertson to consult with SIME and write a report on the security situation in the Middle East. Robertson’s mission was especially crucial, and can been seen as a genuine turning point in the history of Mediterranean double-cross. It was the first step towards an organized system that gave SIME and ISLD the potential to exert real power over the agents, as opposed to going along with an ad hoc operation dominated by ‘A’ Force.

The first visit took place in autumn 1941 when Dudley Clarke arrived in London. At that time, deception in Britain was not clearly organized, a state of affairs which contributed to the inability of MI5 and the Twenty Committee to gain the outright support of the armed

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45 Mure, Master of Deception, p.148.
services. There was, as an example, no ‘A’ Force-type unit that planned and implemented deception schemes. The closest thing was the Inter-Services Security Board, which was charged with preventing leakages and misleading the enemy, but it had no deception “policy.”46 However, as the Twenty Committee amassed agents, they did have to be used in order to maintain them. The result was a series of “experimental plans” that are described by J.C. Masterman in his post-war report on double-cross, most of which had limited success.47 It is worth noting, though, that London still had much longer experience with double agents than Clarke did, the latter having only acquired Cheese a few months earlier.

Still, Clarke’s visit initiated a reorganization of deception that affected how British double agents were used. On 2 October he attended the Twenty Committee, and also attended meetings of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) and the Joint Planning Staff (JPS). At all meetings he made his views and experience of deception known. On 7 October he met with the Chiefs of Staff, and stressed the importance of strategic guidance from London, so that Middle East deceptions would not clash with any real operational planning in Britain.48 In accordance with his information and recommendations, on 8 October the JPS recommended to the Chiefs that they create a deception organization along the lines of ‘A’ Force. The proposal was approved and the result was the London Controlling Section (LCS), a deception planning agency that, unlike ‘A’ Force, did not also implement its plans.49 As LCS gained strength after some uneasy early months, it did help bring more focus on deception in the Twenty Committee, which made a priority of maintaining its agents for the primary purpose

46 Howard, *Strategic Deception*, p.22.
48 Minutes of the 344th Meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, 7 October 1941, CAB 79/14, p.2.
of aiding LCS’s deception plans. Consequently, for the middle years of the war, deception gradually overtook counter-intelligence as the focus of UK double-cross.\textsuperscript{50}

Events moved in the opposite direction in Cairo after the visit of Tar Robertson in March and April 1942. The purpose of his mission was to report on SIME’s organization and activities but, while there, Robertson helped substantially in organizing double-cross. He was eminently suitable to work on double-cross, as he ran the double agent section of MI5, was regarded as “one of the Security Service’s ablest agent-runners” and was a supremely charismatic and talented leader.\textsuperscript{51} His contribution to a series of meetings that took place with representatives from SIME, ISLD, and ‘A’ Force, led to the creation of a joint SIME / ISLD Special Section. Its purpose was to coordinate the overlapping operations of ISLD and SIME, as their territorial boundaries were coextensive. In particular, it was decided that the Special Section would run all double agents, whether or not they originated from SIME or ISLD sources.\textsuperscript{52} The ultimate goal of the section was to aid in the “practical development of counter-espionage by specialised methods, the main one being the running of double agents.”\textsuperscript{53} Despite this wording, ‘A’ Force was given a priority position in all double cross cases, thus maintaining the preeminence of deception. ISLD and their espionage needs, as well as SIME’s counter-intelligence goals, were considered to be of secondary importance.\textsuperscript{54}

Beyond providing the first formal framework for managing the roles of SIME, ISLD, and ‘A’ Force, and despite the continued focus on deception, Robertson did create a position

\textsuperscript{50} Masterman, \textit{The Double-Cross System}, pp.107.
\textsuperscript{51} Andrew, \textit{The Defence of the Realm}, p.249.
\textsuperscript{53} “Notes on Special Section Methods,” KV 4/197.
\textsuperscript{54} Minutes of Meeting, 30 March 1942, KV 4/197.
for counter-intelligence operations in the new Special Section. Its potential was under-utilized until 1943, but Robertson’s intervention helped ensure that SIME, which had legitimate interests in double agent operations, did not become merely the handmaiden of ‘A’ Force. Indeed, the formation of the Section was inspired, in part, by Robertson’s criticisms of the SIME staff’s knowledge of security work: he felt that, beyond Maunsell himself, there was not much practical experience present.

As important as Robertson’s visit was, indigenous developments in the Middle East helped ‘A’ Force solidify its control over deception and, as a result, double-cross. In the first instance, Clarke managed to fend off an attempt to take tactical deception out of his hands and give it to a new unit under Col. Ralph Bagnold, the founder of the Long Range Desert Group, which would have left the rump of ‘A’ Force to deal with just strategic deception projects. Clarke, who believed that all deception was integrally related and must be under the control of one mind, found this move intolerable. By late February 1942, after complaints to the DMI and DMO, the Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Claude Auchinleck, intervened and returned all deception efforts to Clarke’s control. However, “The Auk” placed ‘A’ Force under GHQ Operations rather than Intelligence, where it had been before. Clarke was satisfied with the change as, in his view, operations was the “customer” of deception plans and those plans had to be closely integrated with real operational planning.

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55 Curry, The Security Service, p.273. Thaddeus Holt does not mention the involvement of Robertson, who is otherwise prominent in his book, in the creation of the Special Section. He does cite in his bibliography the KV 4/197 file, which contains minutes of the meetings in Cairo that Robertson attended. However, KV 4/234, which contains Robertson’s report to the Director-General on his trip, was not opened until 2004, the same year Holt’s book was published, and therefore would not have been available to him during its composition. Holt, The Deceivers, p.149.


The firm establishment of Clarke’s authority, along with a substantial expansion of his staff in early 1942, allowed for another new development that further centralized his authority: the drafting and dissemination of the ‘A’ Force documents known as the “Special Instructions and Strategic Addendum.” As he now had officers in Cyprus and Syria, and attached to field commands, Clarke needed some method of ensuring that all of his subordinates were operating in unison. The Special Instructions, first issued and circulated to ‘A’ Force officers on 16 March 1942, were largely concerned with administrative and policy matters. The Strategic Addenda were of much greater importance and sensitivity. They laid out what the current deception policy was, the progress of ongoing plans, and provided both factual and fake information that should be passed to the enemy. Clarke wrote each Addendum himself, drawing on his consultations with the planning and operations staff. They grew to be quite lengthy, as ‘A’ Force expanded further in 1943 and 1944.\(^{58}\)

The Strategic Addenda were also vital because of a new, ambitious innovation that came about in March 1942, called plan *Cascade*. It was an order of battle deception which sought to inflate the German estimate of British strength in the Middle East by thirty-three percent. Besides discouraging German attacks, it was meant to serve as the foundation for future deception plans by creating a long-term pool of false units that, if accepted as real by the Germans, could be used to mount false invasion threats, as they were in 1943 and 1944.\(^{59}\) It was to become an elaborate plan that stretched across the entire theatre, requiring the kind of centralized coordination that the Strategic Addenda provided.

\(^{58}\) Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1942, CAB 154/2, pp.45-8.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., pp.34-41.
We can see, then, that some of the components of a double-cross system were coming into place by early 1942: there were some viable agents, and there was a nascent organization. Both, however, still needed considerable growth and refinement in order to function properly, and neither occurred before the end of 1942. The element of the future double-cross system that was still missing, in its entirety, was adequate access to intelligence on the double agents and their German controllers. Before 1942 the Middle East had no reliable access to signals decrypts, and throughout 1942, when such sources became available, they only provided insufficient and unrepresentative pictures of German intelligence activities. Better access to these revealing decrypts would be crucial if any system was to develop.

Intelligence, along with security, was an essential foundation of double-cross.\(^{60}\) Without the feats of cryptanalysis achieved by the British, it is hard to imagine any double agent system operating on the scale that they did during the Second World War. Such operations relied on two products of the code-breaking effort at Bletchley Park: one was the decrypted signals of the German military, which were used by ‘A’ Force to ascertain the apprehensions of the enemy, to tailor deception plans to those concerns, and to track their progress; the second was decrypted Abwehr signals, known as ISOS (hand cipher) and ISK (Enigma machine cipher).\(^{61}\) These provided a window into the minds of the German agent controllers, and allowed the Special Section to assess whether or not the Abwehr thought their spies were reliable. Aggressive deception operations were impossible without those

\(^{60}\) Howard, *Strategic Deception*, p.xi.

\(^{61}\) Following the precedent set by Hinsley & Simkins, ISOS will be used as a short-hand for both ISOS and ISK decrypts in this text. ISK will only be used when the distinction between the hand and machine ciphers is important. See Hinsley & Simkins, *British Intelligence IV*, p.44, note ‡.
decrypts because, in the event that the Germans did not believe some of their “agents” and saw their information as an attempt at deception, they might be able to discern the real operational targets of the Allies. ISOS first became available in December 1940, and ISK one year later.\textsuperscript{62} They were both invaluable intelligence coups, and the ISK decrypts in particular were jealously guarded and access to them was fought over fiercely in London. Those battles meant that the Special Section in Cairo did not receive adequate decrypts, leaving substantial holes in their knowledge of the Abwehr and its operations in the Middle East.

The problem, specifically, was the control that MI6 exerted over the circulation of decrypts through Section V, its counter-intelligence unit headed by Capt. Felix Cowgill. He had gained control over the decrypts through administrative changes in late 1940, and difficulties arose almost immediately thereafter. Cowgill operated on a “need to know” basis, and was highly restrictive in his view of who needed to know. He also followed the letter of the division between MI5 and MI6: the former operated within the three-mile limit around Britain and its overseas possessions, the latter outside that limit, and Cowgill did not believe that MI5 needed to see any information not directly related to their own zone. MI5, however, argued that their work, especially double-cross, rendered that limit impractical, and they needed a much wider selection of decrypts.\textsuperscript{63} Cowgill proved time and again to be recalcitrant on this matter, withholding individual decrypts and also considerably limiting the circulation of analytical reports from the Radio Analysis Bureau. This group, also known as Section Vw, was headed by Hugh Trevor-Roper and wrote frequent papers which related


\textsuperscript{63} Hinsley & Simkins, \textit{British Intelligence IV}, pp.72-3, 131-2.
their ongoing analyses of the Abwehr radio network. Cowgill, however, severely restricted the readership of these illuminating surveys and it took months for them to reach a relatively wide audience.\textsuperscript{64} However, Cowgill’s stinginess with his decrypts and reports did not completely stop the flow of information, as members of the Twenty Committee worked illicitly, and often successfully, to go behind Cowgill’s back and gather decrypts from the officers of Section V.\textsuperscript{65}

The Middle East suffered from Section V policy as well, but also from code-breaking problems that developed indigenously in the Middle East. Although there were local signals intelligence units attached to the armed services in the Desert campaign, all high-level code-breaking occurred at Bletchley Park. Thus, signals intercepted in the Middle East were sent to Bletchley, broken, and then passed back to the Middle East. When the war with Italy started in June 1940 this method proved too cumbersome and could not keep up with the increased rate and volume of communications. Despite pressure from Cairo for a substantial portion of the Bletchley staff to move to Egypt, this idea was rejected by authorities in Britain, who wanted to maintain Bletchley Park as the centralized cryptanalysis facility. Instead, a joint initiative of the armed forces signals intelligence efforts was formed, known as Combined Bureau Middle East. This body did begin to decrypt ISOS locally, starting in June 1941 with the hand cipher used by the Abwehr in Turkey.\textsuperscript{66} However, the Combined Bureau apparently did not decrypt ISK. Thus, Middle Eastern authorities relied upon Section

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V to send them relevant ISK intelligence, as locally decrypted ISOS alone would cause them to miss the most sensitive Abwehr communications. Moreover, Middle Eastern authorities did not decrypt the same volume of hand cipher (ISOS) messages as Bletchley Park did, so Section V would also have to send that, along with ISK, for SIME and others to get the full benefit of Britain’s code-breaking achievements.

Unfortunately, access to those decrypts remained minimal during the first year of Cowgill’s regime. Not until November 1941 was there even a system of distributing ISOS in the Middle East: only then did Section V, which had started the war with a severe staff shortage, send Maj. Rodney Dennys as their representative in Cairo. His role was to command all SIS counter-intelligence operations and distribute the ISOS that Cowgill permitted to leave Britain. Two problems flowed from this state of affairs: one was that Dennys was powerless to squeeze more decrypts out of his superior, thereby disappointing SIME’s hope that he would solve their signals intelligence problem; the second was that Dennys’s appointment stepped on the toes of Maunsell and SIME, who were already in charge of counter-intelligence in the theatre.67

The jurisdiction issue was solved, in part, by the establishment of the Special Section. Dennys was made its head, while the double agent sub-section was run by SIME’s Capt. J.C. Robertson. An ‘A’ Force officer acted as a liaison between Clarke and the Section, but was not an official member of the latter.68 In general, though, problems between ISLD and SIME were overcome because Cuthbert Bowlby, the head of ISLD, and Maunsell were good

67 Maunsell (SIME) to Petrie (MI5), 19 November 1941, KV 2/1133; Maunsell (SIME) to Petrie (MI5), 4 July 1942, KV 4/307.

68 Minutes of Meeting, 30 March 1942, KV 4/197.
personal friends, and matters in the Middle East tended to be dealt with less formally than in London.69

Although Dennys had been quickly integrated into the existing SIME / ISLD relationship through the Special Section, there remained the important problem of the lack of Abwehr decrypts. Access to ISOS was also still an ongoing problem for MI5 in London, and their battle with Section V came to a head in the spring of 1942. They discovered that Cowgill had been withholding decrypts about their agent *Tricycle*, who had been working in the US with the FBI; he had also been holding back messages regarding a hitherto unknown agent (soon to be known as *Garbo*) with whom SIS had been in touch in Lisbon, but who, in his reports by letter to the Germans in Madrid, claimed he was in Britain. The *Garbo* case, in particular, enraged MI5, especially when Cowgill decided it would be best if he stayed in Lisbon, whereas MI5 wanted him brought to England, since the Germans believed he was already there. Liddell met with Cowgill to discuss the matter, and wrote the following in his diary: “fundamentally his attitude is ‘I do not see why I should get agents and then have them pinched by you.’” Liddell felt “the whole thing is so narrow and petty that it really makes me furious.”70

MI5’s ire was raised further in April 1942 when Herbert Hart, of MI5’s ISOS analysis section B1B, discovered that there was an entire series of withheld decrypts known as “Intelligence Service British Agents” (ISBA). ISBA contained decrypts which referred to, or even potentially alluded to, MI6 agents and Cowgill, hewing as ever to his literal interpretation of the three-mile limit, did not allow any ISBA decrypt to circulate beyond

70 Liddell diaries, entry for 26 March 1942, KV 4/189, p.41.
MI6, even though decrypts relating to MI5 cases could end up in ISBA as well.\(^{71}\) This was too much for MI5, and by June, after pressure from Petrie, ‘C’ ordered Cowgill to release all ISOS to MI5.\(^{72}\) Furthermore, Cowgill was replaced as the MI6 representative on the Twenty Committee by Frank Foley, who had served as MI6 head of station in Berlin in the 1920s and 30s. His arrival was felt immediately, and the committee’s operations were much smoother, even though Cowgill would still show up at the Twenty Committee fairly frequently, as evidenced in the committee minutes.\(^{73}\)

These issues between MI5 and Section V spilled over to the Middle East, before they were resolved by ‘C’ in June 1942. During that time, one consequence of Section V’s mastery of the decrypts was that MI5, which had an arms length but still official relationship with SIME, was not allowed to send any ISOS to the Middle East; all had to come directly from Section V. What SIME did receive was paraphrased, as it was sent over wireless, which also restricted its volume. MI5 was also not allowed to see what ISOS was passed to the Middle East until Hart complained in April 1942, at which time Cowgill relented and gave him access to the series of message that had been relayed to Cairo. Hart, who had a broad knowledge of the decrypts, knew that the volume of information going to SIME was insufficient and left them with an unrepresentative view of what ISOS actually said about German intelligence activities in the theatre.\(^{74}\) Even with the resolution of the MI5/MI6 difficulties in June 1942, the problems afflicting the Middle East, as identified by Hart, were

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\(^{74}\) Hart (B1B) to A.D.B.1, 9 April 1942, KV 4/217.
not solved until spring 1943. In the interim, the lack of good signals intelligence continued to be a major stumbling block in the development of a double-cross system in the Mediterranean theatre.

Intelligence improvements would be vital by that time because, in late 1942, the double-cross network in that theatre finally began a substantial expansion, which added high-value wireless agents to work alongside Cheese who, until that time, had been the only agent of note for over a year. During that year, however, Cheese’s case had served as an important laboratory for double agents operations and deception schemes. While the development of structures to manage double-cross in 1942 and 1943 was vital, the actual living experience of running an agent was most important of all. The exploits of Cheese in 1941 and 1942, and the successes and failures which resulted, were an apprenticeship before the full Mediterranean double-cross system emerged in early 1943.

III

We have seen above that Renato Levi, once he returned to Italy after helping to create the Cheese link, was not heard from again until late 1943. Before then, officials in Cairo were aware, through ISOS, that he had been arrested and imprisoned, but the precise circumstances of his apprehension and incarceration, and whether or not he had broken under interrogation, were unknown. In the end, and for reasons that will be analyzed in chapter two, this threat to the credibility of Cheese never materialized. The Germans continued to believe in the reliability of “Nicosoff” and, in the late summer of 1941, his control station was moved from Bari to a permanent home in Athens. It must be stressed that, once Levi disappeared,
the double agent case was entirely notional. Nicosoff did not exist, his sub-source Piet was also fake, and the channel was nothing more than a wireless set operated by SIME.

Using notional reports from Piet and Nicosoff’s own alleged observations, the channel was built up with chicken feed in the weeks following the initial contact made on 17 July 1941. Very soon after, Cheese was used to support a deception plan, codenamed Collect. It was meant to mislead the Germans about General Sir Claude Auchinleck’s Crusader offensive, due to open on 18 November. An important plan in its own right, Collect is central in the history of the double-cross system: it was the first plan in which a major British military operation was covered by the deceptive reports of a double agent, and the lessons learned, positive and negative, did much to shape the practice of double-cross in 1942 and beyond.

Cheese was thrown into the fray so quickly because the military situation seemed so desperate. The arrival of German troops in North Africa under General Erwin Rommel in March 1941, and their subsequent offensive, had reversed all the gains made against the Italians after December 1940. General Wavell’s counter-offensive in mid-June, called Battleaxe, had been a failure and he was replaced as Commander-in-Chief Middle East by Auchinleck. The new commander wanted to renew the offensive, but did not think anything could be done before November.\(^7\) It fell to ‘A’ Force to devise and implement a deception plan that would keep the Germans from launching an offensive while Auchinleck prepared his own, and would also ensure the Germans themselves were unprepared when the blow was finally struck. The success of this offensive was of the utmost importance, especially to

Prime Minister Churchill. As he later wrote, “the Desert flank was the peg on which all else hung.” Given these circumstances, Cheese could not be husbanded for some future offensive, as the UK-based double agents were. If Crusader failed, it was possible that there might not be any other offensive to which Cheese could contribute.

Cheese was therefore used to pass substantial deceptive information to the Abwehr station in Athens, all of which supported the theme of Collect. According to the plan, a series of dates for the offensive would be intimated, and then postponed. By the time the real offensive was due, Rommel would think that it was another false alarm. Ideally, this would also keep him on the defensive and discourage any German activity that might disrupt British preparations. Dudley Clarke was present for the early implementation of this plan, but he was away in London for the later stages, leaving Maunsell and the DMI of the Middle East Command, Brig. John Shearer, in charge. In fact, as John Ferris points out, Shearer holds the signal position of being the first British officer in the Second World War to employ double-cross in an operational deception.

All knew the importance of the operation, and they were willing to sacrifice the future credibility of the Cheese link in order to give as much help as possible to Crusader. Consequently, Cheese was used to counter rumours, actually leaked by SIME, about an upcoming offensive, by reporting that nothing would happen before the end of December. When the offensive came, and the Germans realized how wrong their agent had been, they

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77 Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1940-41, CAB 154/1, p.40-1.
78 Ferris, “‘FORTITUDE’ in Context,” p.144.
would be unlikely to ever trust him in the future.\textsuperscript{80} Again, the military circumstances encouraged this decision. It was also the result of the fact that there was no network of agents that could be brought down along with \textit{Cheese} should the agent be discredited. Conversely, the Twenty Committee had to be very careful in how they used any agent, lest their entire network fall apart because of one agent being handled too audaciously.

Luckily for the British, their efforts with \textit{Cheese} do not seem to have been in vain. There is reasonable evidence that the channel was trusted by Athens and by Rommel himself, which was even more important. A good view of the intelligence situation at Rommel’s headquarters comes from Hans-Otto Behrendt, an officer on the intelligence staff, in his memoir-cum-history of German intelligence in North Africa. As he relates, one of their main problems was the difficulty of infiltrating agents into British zones. Running agents in the Western Desert itself was impossible, and they never had any success inserting agents by land or air beyond the desert into the British military heart in the Nile Delta and Suez. Further problems came in October 1941 when a British air attack killed two intelligence officers and a number of others contracted malaria.\textsuperscript{81}

These German difficulties proved to be a boon to \textit{Cheese} and \textit{Collect}. Rommel’s headquarters turned to the Abwehr station in Athens to help solve their intelligence problems, and the head of the intelligence staff, Maj. Friedrich von Mellenthin, attended a conference on this matter in Berlin from 20-30 October. The result was that Mellenthin travelled to

\textsuperscript{80} Ferris, “‘FORTITUDE’ in Context,” p.144.

Athens, met with the Abwehr officials there, and, upon his return to HQ, sent a wireless operator to Athens to establish a radio link between the army and the Abwehr.\textsuperscript{82}

That direct link was important to the \textit{Cheese} case. There is no doubt, as we can see from ISOS, that \textit{Cheese} reports on British activity and preparations were sent directly from Athens to Rommel’s headquarters in the days prior to 18 November. There was a correlation between German thinking and the theme of \textit{Collect} even before the direct link was created: Behrendt recounts that Fremde Heere West, the army General Staff’s intelligence evaluation unit which also served the armed forces High Command (OKW), expected an attack in early October, an assessment in line with \textit{Collect}. Once that time passed without incident, the staff at Rommel’s headquarters were aware of enemy activity and were expecting something to happen but, right up to 18 November, “nobody thought it would be a decisive offensive.”\textsuperscript{83} However, while the Germans were confused, the deception did not cause them substantial difficulties in responding to the British offensive. Their forces were still disposed so as to effectively counter the British attack and, in fact, the British forces were too widely dispersed, a result of the \textit{Collect} deception plan which had sought to avoid obvious concentrations of troops that would draw Axis attention.\textsuperscript{84}

Although \textit{Crusader} was, ultimately, not a decisive offensive despite the achievement of surprise and early successes, \textit{Cheese} had done all it was required to do; but, in doing so, the Germans became highly suspicious of the channel. The first evidence came three days after the offensive opened, in a radio message sent from Athens to Berlin describing the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{82} Ibid., p.96.
  \item \textsuperscript{83} Ibid., p.99.
  \item \textsuperscript{84} Ferris, “‘FORTITUDE’ in Context,” pp.144-5.
\end{itemize}
failure of their agent. Athens had arranged for the agent to report on 11, 13, and 17 November, but on none of these occasions did they make contact, although they did on other days in that period. Furthermore, on the 20th, two days after the offensive was launched, Cheese submitted a report claiming that the 50th Division was heading to the Caucasus, whereas the Germans had battlefield intelligence showing that the 50th was actually in Egypt. Athens found his apparent misinformation, and lack of reporting on the assigned dates, to be “very striking.” They further promised that “the ROBERTO AFFAIR will therefore in future be examined most critically,” and that the intelligence staff at Rommel’s headquarters had been alerted. 

However, although they certainly felt their agent had let them down, there is no evidence that the Abwehr in Athens believed it was a controlled channel. Even so, SIME thought that, while Cheese had been successful in putting over Collect, potential German concern about the spy placed the “future utility” of the case in doubt. Still, Capt. Evan John Simpson, who wrote the wireless messages sent over the Cheese link, was convinced it could be rehabilitated. He was given permission to try and began his work in late 1941.

There was some reason for Simpson’s hopes: German intelligence efforts in the Middle East had been largely unsuccessful, despite the very difficult security environment that the region presented to SIME and ISLD. Maunsell, in assessing this situation in September 1941, argued that “considering the excellent opportunities which exist for

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85 Roberto ISOS Summary, 21 November 1941, KV 2/1133. ROBERTO was the German code name for the “Nicosoff” case.

86 Maunsell (SIME) to Petrie (MI5), 6 January 1942, KV 2/1133.

87 Holt, The Deceivers, p.40.
espionage, the enemy has been exceedingly badly served.\textsuperscript{88} The reasons for this will be discussed in chapters two and three but it is clear that, while the Abwehr were unsure about their spy in Cairo, they were not going to cut ties with him completely while their human intelligence efforts continued to fail.

Working in the hope that German faith could be renewed, Simpson sent some chicken feed to Athens during the early months of 1942.\textsuperscript{89} He also had Cheese argue that he had been led astray by Piet. This was one aspect of the Cheese case that definitely worked in the favour of Simpson’s efforts, and the notional sub-source became a standard scapegoat in both Mediterranean and UK double-cross upon which the primary agent could deflect blame, once their intelligence was shown to be incorrect in enemy eyes, or at least not entirely true.\textsuperscript{90}

Still, the revival of Cheese did not come quickly, because the Germans in North Africa had access to excellent intelligence from non-Abwehr sources. The most important was called Gute Quelle (Good Source) by Rommel. The source was Col. Bonner Fellers, the American Military Attaché in Cairo who, by transmitting in a compromised State Department code, unwittingly provided the Germans with copious amounts of sensitive military information. Fellers was privy to all information on the Eighth Army, and reported regularly to Washington on everything from the British supply situation to their order of battle and upcoming operations.\textsuperscript{91} Rommel thus had a source of intelligence that was virtually as good

\textsuperscript{88} Maunsell (SIME) to Petrie (M15), 18 September 1941, KV 4/306, p.2
\textsuperscript{89} “Report on ‘Cheese’,” KV 2/1133, pp.8-9
\textsuperscript{90} Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1942, CAB 154/2, p.73.
as Ultra was to the British, and Behrendt notes that it was vital to the May-June 1942 offensive that captured Tobruk and took the Germans as deep into Egypt as they ever got.\(^\text{92}\)

Bletchley Park became aware of the leak through their own code-breaking, which demonstrated that Rommel was receiving excellent intelligence from a source in Cairo. By 4 June 1942 the nature of the material led MI6 to think that it was an American official, and by the 16th ‘C’ was convinced that Fellers was the culprit. President Roosevelt was informed by Prime Minister Churchill himself, who was in Washington at the time, and, once the Americans changed the code in question, Rommel’s “Good Source” disappeared completely after 29 June.\(^\text{93}\)

Rommel also had access to excellent tactical field intelligence via the Third Radio Intercept Company under Capt. Alfred Seebohm, which had considerable success against British radio transmissions, largely due to the complete lack of security on the British side. Soon after “Good Source” went off the air, however, Seebohm’s unit was caught in an attack while operating too close to the front. The unit was overrun, and a trove of captured documents encouraged the British to tighten further their tactical signals security, a process underway since late 1941. Indeed, Seebohm’s unit had already seen diminishing returns for its efforts by summer 1942.\(^\text{94}\)

German efforts to insert spies into the Egyptian heartland also failed in the first half of 1942. One case, that of an Egyptian lawyer from France named Sobhy Hanna, saw the spy

\(^{92}\) Behrendt, *Rommel’s Intelligence*, p.166.
captured in Tanganyika en route to Egypt. A more significant effort was the Kondor mission which, under the direction of desert explorer Count László Almásy, attempted to infiltrate Heinrich Gerd Sanstede and Johann Eppler into Egypt as spies. They set out across the desert on 12 May 1942 and made it to Asyut, about 350 kilometers south of Cairo. From Asyut they were to travel to Cairo and transmit by wireless back to the Abwehr field section attached to Rommel’s headquarters.

Their mission had, however, suffered a major setback even before they headed north from Asyut. Their designated contact in the Abwehr field unit had been captured in a British attack, and Sandstede and Eppler were never able to make radio contact once they got to Cairo. They also had money troubles, as the vast majority of their money was in pounds sterling, which was not legal tender in Egypt, and possession of which could lead to arrest. By 25 July, their efforts to find a black market money changer, to get a new radio (since they thought their set was malfunctioning), and, in the end, find some way back to headquarters after failing to make contact with the new radio, had led to their arrest.

It was in the middle of the Kondor fiasco that Cheese came back to life suddenly. Part of the credit does have to go to Simpson. He worked to keep the case going, and did much to create a consistent persona for Nicosoff, which presented the agent as a nervous and fragile character, prone to rapid changes in mood, and often impecunious in his lifestyle. By June, however, this effort had not been enough to increase German interest in their agent, and there was no sign that they planned to send payment for his ongoing work. Simpson then

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went a step further when Rommel crossed the frontier into Egypt and threatened to reach the Suez Canal: the Cheese messages became more lively, and began to give more full and detailed information on British military activity. Even then, this was not enough to actually draw the Germans back into the case fully.

Indeed, it seems that, right up to July, the Abwehr station in Athens and the German command in North Africa did not hold Cheese in high regard. After all, if they thought they already had an agent in place, why go to the lengths required to get Kondor into Egypt? Such an agent infiltration would only be attempted if they felt a need for human intelligence that Nicosoff, or at least Nicosoff on his own, could not provide reliably. However, once Kondor failed, and “Good Source” disappeared, their spy in Cairo was all the Germans had left.

Simpson’s efforts in sustaining the case until July 1942 were important, but it is hard to think that Athens and Rommel’s headquarters would have taken such renewed interest in it, if their other intelligence ventures had continued successfully. Part of the revival of this case also came, most likely, from the intelligence environment in Nazi Germany. It was competitive and cut-throat, and providing any information was necessary to maintain credibility and power. Indeed, intelligence was wielded more as a political tool rather than employed as a means of making balanced assessments of enemy capabilities and intentions. Cheese was thus the only thing giving the Abwehrstelle Athens the credibility they needed to stand out in Germany’s internecine intelligence “community.”

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97 Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1942, CAB 154/2, p.74.
100 Howard, Strategic Deception, p.52.
Whatever the case, the turnaround in the German opinion of *Cheese* was rapid. On 3 July Ast Athens contacted Abwehr HQ in Berlin, stating that the “reliability of the agent not yet fully proved.” Yet, the very next day Athens went on the air again and argued that the reports from Cairo were of such importance that a wireless link with the army in North Africa was “considered ... to be urgently necessary.”

Direct wireless communications were re-established between Athens and the *Panzerarmee* headquarters very soon after and, as of 9 July, ISOS showed that *Cheese* was considered “trustworthy” by the Abwehr. Afterward his reports were increasingly noted as being “credible.” The result was that, on a nearly daily basis, *Cheese* reports on troop movements around Cairo and the Suez area were sent to Rommel’s intelligence staff. Indeed, Rommel was most insistent that the Abwehr relay the reports to him as soon as possible after Athens received them.

The revival of the case was complete, and it would soon employed to cover the planned British offensive at El Alamein. However, during that deception, *Cheese* was not used as recklessly as in 1941. Indeed, the year 1942 had witnessed major advances in the practice of double-cross, and, with schemes like plan *Cascade*, ‘A’ Force was now considering the establishment of a sustained network of double agents, rather than using them for immediate tactical and operational needs without thought to the future.

This inclination was enhanced by the emergence of the London Controlling Section as a legitimate force in deception operations in Britain. Under its initial head, Col. Oliver

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101 Roberto ISOS Summary, 3 & 4 July 1942, KV 2/1133.
102 Record of *Cheese* Traffic, WO 169/24894, p.3.
103 Howard, *Strategic Deception*, p.63. The reports can been seen in Roberto ISOS Summary entries for July and August 1942, KV 2/1133.
104 Ferris, “‘FORTITUDE’ in Context,” p.150.
Stanley, it had written some minor plans but had not done much else, and Stanley did not seem to have much clout. As a result, he asked to be relieved of his position so he could return to active politics as an MP, and not long after he was named Secretary of State for the Colonies.\textsuperscript{105} Then, on 21 May, an old Middle Eastern hand intervened to promote deception, like Clarke had in 1941. General Wavell, now the Commander-in-Chief India, sent a personal message to the Prime Minister, arguing that deception of the enemy was a worthwhile pursuit, but individual operations could “have local and ephemeral effect only, unless they are part of a general deception plan on a wide scale.” He further contended that “this can only be provided from the place where the main strategical policy is decided and the principal intelligence center is located.” Wavell concluded that “a coherent and long-term policy of deception must be centered there.”\textsuperscript{106} That same day Lt.-Col. John Bevan was named as the new Controlling Officer of the LCS, and was given broader powers and the authority to prepare global deception plans. He also had full knowledge of the double agents in Britain, information to which Stanley was never privy.\textsuperscript{107}

All interested parties, including Dudley Clarke, were now thinking of deception in grander terms, but they had to win in the Desert first, a possibility that seemed less likely as Rommel captured Tobruk and advanced towards the Nile. In an effort to hold the front, ‘A’ Force developed plan \textit{Rayon}, on 23 July, to deter German reinforcements by posing the threat of a British attack on Crete through the display of dummy craft in the Nile Delta and false intelligence reports from \textit{Cheese}, which amplified that notional threat.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{105} Holt, \textit{The Deceivers}, p.180.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., p.182.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., pp.152, 189.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p.238.
presented by *Rayon* is important in the history of deception and double-cross, as the threat to the Aegean and Greece was maintained consistently to the end of 1944.\textsuperscript{109}

Whatever the role of ‘A’ Force deception in the late summer of 1942, and it is not clear exactly how important it was, General Montgomery did manage to blunt the German advance at Alam Halfa between 30 August and 5 September.\textsuperscript{110} *Cheese* was involved in the subsequent deceptions before El Alamein and the *Torch* landings in French North Africa, but double-cross in the Mediterranean had bigger things ahead of it: the initiation of new cases and the development of more advanced structures for managing them created, for the first time, a double-cross system. However, it was not in place until the spring of 1943.\textsuperscript{111}

The time from February 1941 to November 1942 had seen considerable advances that led to the innovations of 1943. The central feature in the development of Mediterranean double-cross in this period was the evolving relationship between Cairo and London. During 1941 the distance between the two was most pronounced: the subordination of double-cross to operational needs in the Middle East, which would have developed even with close contact with London, became entrenched more deeply because of SIME’s distance from their parent organization. However, the six months from October 1941 to April 1942 saw something of a convergence, first apparent in the creation of the Special Section.

The Special Section was the first step to a double-cross system. It eliminated double agent overlap and competition between SIME and ISLD by centralizing all operations in the

\textsuperscript{109} The threat had first been raised in April 1942, to distract from the assault on Madagascar. At that time the Germans were fed the story that the invasion convoy was bound for the Dodecanese. See Howard, *Strategic Deception*, p.42.

\textsuperscript{110} Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1942, CAB 154/2, pp.79-82.

\textsuperscript{111} For details on the deceptions before El Alamein and *Torch*, see Holt, *The Deceivers*, pp.239-45, 249-73, and p.266 specifically for *Cheese*. 
jointly run Section. It was also meant to encourage the use of double agents for counter-intelligence, and not just for deception, even though the travails of Cheese in deception had brought valuable experience about how to manage the career of an agent for more than short-term goals. Finally, the Section was the official forum for ISOS distribution and analysis in double agent operations, formalizing access to that crucial intelligence.

What the Special Section created, however, was not a complex, multi-faceted double-cross system: there was still only one substantial double agent case; ‘A’ Force and deception were still dominant; access to ISOS remained a problem into mid-1943; and, although an important step, the establishment of the Special Section resulted only in a provisional double-cross organization. Before 1942 was over there were calls for a more formal organization, and London, once again, became involved. The renewed discussion of how ‘A’ Force, SIME, and ISLD should relate to each other, and what the purpose(s) of double agents should be, finally led to the creation of a truly functioning double-cross system in early 1943.
Chapter Two

Rule by Committee

The Development of the Mediterranean Double-Cross System

By mid-1943 the Allies had, in the words of Winston Churchill, turned “the hinge of fate”: the Axis had been cleared from North Africa; the invasion of Sicily struck the first offensive blow against Axis home soil; and the Soviets began their unstoppable march to Berlin with their victory at the Battle of Kursk. Amidst these genuinely monumental developments, the Mediterranean double-cross system finally emerged in its complete form, ready to aid the Allied advance against the allegedly “soft underbelly” of Hitler’s Festung Europa.

The first six months of 1943 was the crucial period when a series of changes and improvements created the system that grew and prospered until the German surrender in May 1945. Four inter-connected conditions were required for its development: the existence of multiple, viable agents; the creation of a flexible and integrative organization; regular access to ISOS decrypts; and an enemy intelligence service which was both gullible and susceptible to being manipulated. Of these, the initial viability of captured agents and the nature of the opposing intelligence service were beyond the control of the Allies. They did have the ability to shape organizational structures and control the distribution of signals decrypts, and substantial improvements were made to both by the summer of 1943.

As in 1942, these advances were the result of a relative convergence between double-cross in Britain and in the Middle East. The role of MI5 was decisive in how the system

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eventually turned out, particularly in its encouragement of SIME to continue diversifying double agent operations beyond deception. The discussions that resulted in the new network of double-cross bodies, known as the Thirty Committees, were an evolution from 1942, as opposed to a revolutionary change; but, they still heralded the beginning of a sustained and comprehensive double-cross system in the Mediterranean.

I

The most fundamental problem that had hampered the development of a system of double-cross before 1943 was the lack of viable agents. *Cheese* was always available after July 1941 but, as seen in chapter one, the case was stagnant between November 1941 and July 1942. There were also a few other relatively minor agents who met with the Germans in person in Turkey. Among them were *Baroness*, a Swedish businessman who travelled between Turkey and the Levant, and *Doleful*, a sleeping car attendant on the Taurus Express, which operated from Istanbul to Baghdad and on a branch line in Syria. Both agents were given espionage assignments by the Germans, which the British helped them to “fulfill.” The real core of an effective network, though, were wireless agents, as they could be used more frequently and at shorter notice than traveling agents, who were often out of contact for weeks at a time.

Throughout 1941 and most of 1942 neither SIME nor ISLD had any success in creating a new wireless double agent to supplement *Cheese*, despite several attempts to do so. An example of their difficulties is the case of Paul Fackenheim, a spy who landed by parachute in Palestine on the night of 9 October 1941. He offered his services as a double
agent to the British, but then made statements under interrogation which convinced his captors that he was intent on becoming a triple-cross agent for the Germans.\(^2\) Later, in 1942, SIME also considered turning Johann Eppler and Gerd Sandstede of the *Kondor* mission into double agents, and they were given the codename *Fleshpots*. Unfortunately, wide public knowledge of their arrest ruled them out as a potential channel to the Germans. In both cases the raw human material provided to SIME was unsuitable for double-cross, and the lack of viable agents remained a chronic problem until late 1942.\(^3\)

The Special Section made efforts to overcome the hurdle by attempting to turn nothing into something with the case of *The Pyramids*. They were a gang of Egyptians who planned to build a transmitter, contact German intelligence, and offer their services as spies. One of their number informed the Egyptian authorities and, after they were captured, SIME tried to contact the Budapest Abwehr station with their radio. However, the Special Section never made satisfactory contact and the case was finally dropped in 1943.\(^4\) The story of *The Pyramids* was a sign of desperation in the Special Section: they hoped, rather ambitiously, that they could turn a channel the Abwehr had never heard of into a viable double agent case. It was actually quite hard to foist an agent onto the Abwehr, and it was preferable to turn a spy they had sent themselves. As *Cheese* demonstrated, once a case was established, the double-crossers could be daring and inventive, even rehabilitating a seemingly blown case. Getting the agent off the ground in the first place was the hard part.

\(^2\) “Ernst Paul FACKENHEIM,” KV 2/1163. His case has also been referred to recently in Walton, *Empire of Secrets*, pp.48-9.
\(^3\) Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1942, CAB 154/2, p.119.
\(^4\) Ibid.
By late 1942, however, circumstances finally began to favour the Special Section and ‘A’ Force when, for the first time since February 1941, they were presented with two credible wireless spies captured on Allied territory. A number of necessary factors came together in both cases: the agents were apprehended and detained without publicity; they agreed to act as double agents voluntarily; their circumstances allowed for the creation of plausible “notional” stories of their spying activities; and they were able to make reliable radio contact with the Abwehr, a necessary requirement, but not always an easy one.

The first new channel to the Germans was comprised of three people: Quicksilver, the leader, Rio, and Gala. The leader of the party, George Liossis, was a Greek Air Force officer from a prominent family and a “fanatical royalist,” recruited by the Abwehr in Athens and given the codename Laos. His team travelled to Syria by caique, where they landed on 20 August 1942. They turned themselves in and claimed they had volunteered as spies so as to escape the German occupation of Greece. Seeing the potential in this case, SIME put Quicksilver up in a house outside Beirut. Gala, a female who was meant to act as an interpreter, was actually held in custody in an internment camp in Jaffa, but notionally roamed Beirut gathering information through her “contacts” with military men. Rio, a seaman, was also held in detention but was notionally called up into the Greek Army and, then, allegedly transferred to the navy, where he served on the Pindos, a real Greek destroyer. He notionally wrote letters to Quicksilver containing information gathered on his travels. Quicksilver would report all of this material in his regular wireless contact with Athens, which was first made on 16 October. Neither Gala or Rio were afforded even the relative

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5 “Supplementary Interrogation of Quicksilver,” 29 September 1942, WO 169/24892.
6 Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1942, CAB 154/2, pp.119-20.
luxury of house arrest, as their leader was, because both were considered unpleasant and unreliable characters. Gala, as an example, had caroused with Italian officials in Greece, to the point that, by the time she left for Syria, she had attracted the potentially sinister attention of the OVRA, Fascist Italy’s secret police service.\(^7\)

A second party of three spies landed by caique on the Syrian coast on 20 October, only four days after Quicksilver went on the air. The Pessimists — Costa to the Abwehr — were arrested by French security and handed over to SIME. Pessimist X was the leader, but Pessimist Y was the focus of the case, as he agreed to operate their wireless set on behalf of SIME, and they first made contact with Ast Athens on 14 November. The team ostensibly gathered information from the Syrian coastal area and, later, Damascus. Pessimists Z was given a notional job for a transport company that took him into Iraq, where he collected further intelligence; he also gathered news from a notional contact in Palestine.\(^8\)

So, in about two months the Special Section and ‘A’ Force had witnessed a sea change in their fortunes. They now had three major wireless double agents whose notional activities covered most of the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean Sea. The importance of this change led swiftly to renewed efforts to develop a robust double-cross system that could coordinate the intricate mix of truthful, false, and deceptive information that these spies passed back to the Germans. Such administrative reforms were also important to settle who, precisely, would exert control over these valuable tools and for what purposes would they be used.

\(^7\) Holt, *The Deceivers*, p.234.
\(^8\) Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1942, CAB 154/2, p.122.
II

The arrival of new agents required, at least, the strengthening of the Special Section and, possibly, the creation of entirely new structures. ‘A’ Force’s Dudley Clarke, who only liaised with the Special Section, led the movement for a more advanced organization and urged that double-cross be brought entirely under the control of ‘A’ Force. The result of the process he initiated were the Thirty Committees, which officially replaced the Special Section in March 1943. The committees did enhance the management and exploitation of double agents, and they have been presented as a positive creation with a benign period of gestation, which was a natural result of the good relations among SIME, ISLD, and ‘A’ Force. While the result was positive, the process that preceded the establishment of the committees was actually more fractious. Clarke’s proposal for the committees was, in fact, a bold effort to gain total control of double-cross and to reduce SIME to administering of a system geared entirely for deception.

Clarke’s opening gambit was made on 31 December 1942, in a memorandum addressed to Maunsell, ISLD’s Cuthbert Bowlby, and Brig. T.S. Airey, the Director of Military Intelligence. The basic premises that he presented were sound: the Special Section had worked well, but the arrival of new agents meant a more formal framework was required; he conceded that the “unfailing goodwill of its members” had allowed the informal structures to work, but personalities were likely to change eventually. To head off these potential issues, Clarke wanted to formalize the Special Activities Meetings, held in Cairo since summer 1942

9 Thaddeus Holt uses the ‘A’ Force War Diary as his only source for the formation of the committees, and thus presents Clarke’s relatively sanitized view. Hinsley & Simkins mention the controversial nature of the reorganization, although their treatment lacks details. See Holt, The Deceivers, pp. 149-50; Hinsley & Simkins, British Intelligence IV, pp.189-90.
to discuss double agent cases. He proposed the creation of a new joint committee to serve as the central agency for managing all double-cross cases.¹⁰

Clarke’s diagnosis of the Special Section’s shortcomings would have been difficult to dispute, but his prescription was more controversial. The new joint committee he proposed would be dominated by ‘A’ Force, and Clarke would have the sole authority to decide whether an agent would be used for deception or counter-intelligence. In Clarke’s opinion the Special Section had been formed to serve his needs — although as noted in chapter 1 this was not the case explicitly when it was created — and, therefore, his proposal would merely formalize the de facto situation. Accordingly, ‘A’ Force would chair the committee, write the text of all messages sent through the agents, and control policy decisions. SIME would provide case officers and advise on the reliability of the channels. ISLD was to provide communications, codes, finance, and run agents in hostile and neutral territories. If either SIME or ISLD wanted to “influence the work of one of the Committees” — i.e. use an agent for their own purposes — they would have to ask Clarke for permission. In case of a dispute the issue would be referred to a member of the Middle East Joint Intelligence Committee — composed of the intelligence directors from the armed services — for a decision.¹¹

By late 1942 it was already standard practice, based on Dudley Clarke’s rationale, that deception agents should not perform counter-intelligence operations, and vice versa. The new committee structure would have allowed him to extend his control of the double agents even further, leaving little room at all for counter-intelligence. This was not, certainly, the situation that T.A. Robertson had envisioned when he helped create the Special Section in

¹¹ Ibid.
March 1942. Indeed, there was a fundamental clash between how Robertson and Clarke viewed security and counter-intelligence: MI5 saw it as an end in itself, and an important one; ‘A’ Force viewed deception as the ultimate goal of double-cross, with security and counter-intelligence applications being a potential side attraction.\(^\text{12}\)

Although ISLD was largely in agreement with Clarke’s proposal, SIME was not won over so easily. Indeed, in the weeks before Clarke’s New Year’s Eve memorandum, SIME’s Capt. James Robertson, head of the Special Section, wrote a paper full of concern over the direction that the latter body had taken since its formation eight months previously. In it, he noted that, despite the initial purpose of the Section, it had not led to developments in double-cross counter-intelligence. Instead, it had become a virtual proxy of ‘A’ Force and ISLD, and maintained only limited working contact with the main SIME organization. The Section was, in Robertson’s opinion, working well for deception, but not for any other purposes. He hoped that an accommodation could be reached, which might mean that the Section would detach itself partially from ‘A’ Force and work more closely with SIME.\(^\text{13}\)

Just one month later, however, Clarke produced his vision of the future, which showed that he was not inclined to accommodate critics of ‘A’ Force’s domination of Mediterranean double-cross.

\(^{12}\) Walton, *Empire of Secrets*, p.43. The particular set-up of Middle Eastern double-cross, which placed so much power in Clarke’s hands, was criticized in the post-war years as well. In a May 1948 report by Brig. William Magan, the deputy head of SIME, he called the control of all double agent activities by the head of deception “dangerous and should not be tolerated.” In his view, it only worked because Clarke was “a man of exceptional qualities.” Magan did have some experience, as he had run the double agent *Silver* in India during the war. Magan (SIME) to B2, 18 May 1948, KV 4/197. Information of Magan’s career is available in “Obituary: Brigadier Bill Magan,” *The Telegraph*, 22 January 2010. Accessed 10 December 2013. [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/military-obituaries/army-obituaries/7055321/Brigadier-Bill-Magan.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/military-obituaries/army-obituaries/7055321/Brigadier-Bill-Magan.html)

\(^{13}\) J.C. Robertson, “Future Policy,” 1 December 1942, WO 169/24891.
Given Clarke’s proposals, SIME’s position was unenviable in the new year of 1943. They had made valuable contributions to deception through their management of Cheese, but their ability to exploit double agents for their own purposes of security and counter-intelligence was circumscribed. Maunsell did manage to salvage something from Clarke’s 31 December proposal, though, as the final charter of the Thirty Committee contains a small but vital alteration from the ‘A’ Force chief’s original proposal: it gave the head of SIME the sole right to determine whether a case would be used primarily for deception or penetration, a policy that mirrored the similar powers exercised by MI5 on the Twenty Committee.\(^\text{14}\) That qualification was an important one, even though the new committees did end up being ultimately responsible to ‘A’ Force.

Although the Thirty Committees themselves became, primarily, a vehicle for the exploitation of agents for deception, the intervention of MI5 in early 1943 expanded the scope of double-cross to ensure that the new system would encompass both deception and penetration (the latter was the Special Section term for security and counter-intelligence operations). The January-February 1943 tour by MI5’s Dick White that led to these changes was “ostensibly a method of management consultancy,” but also “an MI5 seal of approval” for SIME,\(^\text{15}\) as the resultant SIME charter formalized the London-Cairo relationship and made Security Intelligence Middle East the official regional representative of the Security Service for the first time.\(^\text{16}\) White’s trip was also intended to improve the flow of ISOS from London to Cairo, an issue that had, in fact, prompted his visit to the Middle East in the first


\(^{15}\) Shelley, “British Intelligence in the Middle East 1939-1946,” pp.150-1.

\(^{16}\) Hinsley & Simkins, \textit{British Intelligence IV}, p.189.
place. When White got to Egypt, however, he saw that there were also problems with double-cross: he recognized that SIME had been put in a weak position and had allowed ‘A’ Force to commandeer the Special Section. White was not happy about the result, and he voiced a series of criticisms regarding SIME’s security and counter-intelligence performance. As the Assistant Director of B Division, and a man many considered to have a bright future when he joined MI5 in 1935, he was able to speak from a position of knowledge and authority.¹⁷

Even so, some of his criticisms were, with historical hindsight, unfair. One was his concern over SIME’s inability to locate and eliminate multiple sources of apparent information leakage to the enemy from the Middle East by agents named *Moritz, Ibis, Anker,* and *Pascha,* all of whom had appeared in ISOS decrypts. The first three agents were allegedly run by Richard Klatt, an Abwehr operative in Sofia who also received reports from agent *Max* in the Soviet Union. *Max* may well have been an elaborate Soviet double-cross, but the exact origin of the reports from the various Middle Eastern agents is unclear. They may have been part of a Soviet scheme, or complete fabrications by Klatt himself. Whatever the case, none of the agents actually existed, and that was why SIME was never able to track the source of the reports.¹⁸

The precise nature of Klatt’s agents was not apparent at the time, and White’s criticism of SIME in that regard also brought him to look more closely at double-cross operations in the Middle East. In Britain, where White was closely involved with the MI5

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¹⁷ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm,* pp.135-6, 237. White did fulfill those early expectations, later rising to become not only the Director-General of MI5 but, subsequently, also the Chief of MI6.

¹⁸ The British investigation of the origins on Klatt’s reports dragged on throughout the war and for several years after it ended, but the precise nature of Klatt’s sources was never resolved conclusively. The very lengthy record of the wartime and postwar investigation can be found in KV 2/1495-99. See also Hinsley & Simkins, *British Intelligence IV,* pp.198-9.
agent network, double agents were used heavily to investigate German intelligence operations. Such penetration operations in the Middle East were relatively rare and, more concerning, entirely unsystematic. Part of the reason for that, White argued, was because SIME had conceded too much to ‘A’ Force, so that the Special Section had “been of scarcely any C.E. [counter-espionage] value at all.”\footnote{Dick White, “Report on Visit to the Middle East (January 26th to February 28th, 1943) Part II,” KV 4/240, Part II.} Opinion among other key figures in London was the same. Guy Liddell, White’s boss at B Division of MI5, found the entire Middle Eastern double agent situation troubling, and felt that by starting Cheese as a deception agent they “began the wrong way round.”\footnote{Liddell Diaries, 21 June 1943, KV 4/191, p.302.} Such concerns were seemingly confirmed when White’s report from Cairo began to circulate in London, and other MI5 figures reported on their impressions of the SIME set-up. Upon receiving these reports, Liddell considered SIME to be lucky that the Abwehr was so badly managed: otherwise there could have been serious trouble in the Middle East.\footnote{Ibid., 23 July 1943, KV 4/192, pp.56-7.}

However, Maunsell had a chance to explain himself at a meeting among White and all the Defence Security Officers held in Beirut on 12 - 13 February 1943. He admitted that he had allowed ‘A’ Force to husband “special agents” for themselves; but he pointed out that in his recent negotiations with Clarke and Bowlby he had managed to retain the right to classify agents as penetration or deception channels, which still left him with considerable power over the future of double-cross.\footnote{“Minutes and Notes of the Meeting of S.I.M.E. Representatives held at Beirut 12-13 Feb. 1943,” KV 4/240, p.5.}
The significance of White’s intervention was that it took the last point — the foothold that Maunsell had managed to retain — and expanded upon it. While the Mediterranean double agents would always be used primarily for the purposes of deception, the collaboration between MI5 and SIME ensured that counter-intelligence, which London considered an important aspect of double-cross, would finally be an accepted goal of the new system, and would form part of a general improvement in counter-intelligence at SIME.

White took several steps to achieve this reform. Upon his return a team was sent from London to Cairo to help SIME streamline their counter-intelligence operations and improve ISOS usage. A “Penetration Committee” was created as a parallel to the Thirty Committee, and was a forum for the discussion of double-cross counter-intelligence operations.23 In April, a Middle East section was created under Alex Kellar in MI5’s B Division to monitor SIME’s activities and ensure a steady flow of ISOS to Cairo.24 In June, James Robertson of SIME was summoned to London to witness their double agent practices in person. While there he grew “very anxious to use double-cross channels for counter-espionage purposes,” a function MI5 considered to be “the true doctrine.”25 Finally, the Special Section was discontinued as an inter-agency body and became SIME’s double agent section, while the Thirty Committee replaced it as the joint organization.

Consequently, Dick White had a substantial effect with this list of initiatives and changes. In terms of double-cross, the drift of the Special Section away from SIME, and the possibility that it would be exclusively a deception system, had been halted. As a result, by

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23 Ibid.
24 Minute from White (MI5) to Petrie (MI5), 29 March 1943, KV 4/240.
25 Haylor (MI5) to Petrie (MI5), 5 August 1943, KV 4/234.
the end of 1943, Mediterranean double-cross was a genuinely complex and multi-faceted enterprise that served the needs of multiple organizations simultaneously. While it always remained different from the London system in structure and direction, White had brought the convergence between them to its apogee.

Although not an uncontroversial process, the negotiations that led to the establishment of the Thirty Committee system, which included the Penetration Committee, created the structure required for a genuine double-cross system to function. The Thirty Committee Charter was issued on 5 March 1943 and a series of sub-committees soon came into being. The first creation was the 30 Committee in Cairo, followed by the the 31 Committee in Beirut, which handled *Quicksilver* and *The Pessimists*, and a number of traveling agents under the control of ISLD’s Michael Ionides. Baghdad was home to the 32 Committee under David Mure, who later commanded the Beirut organization. Number 36 was assigned to Cyprus after the opening of the case of *The Lemons* on 16 May 1943.

These committees were an essential organizational foundation for several reasons. One was that they ended up being efficient instruments for coordinating both deception and penetration efforts. The minutes of the 30 Committee regularly referred to the Penetration Committee, which almost certainly had an overlapping membership. Therefore, it seems that Cairo divided the work done by the Twenty Committee in the UK into two separate organizations — a rare instance of Cairo being less centralized than London — but the 30 Committee / Penetration Committee combination really comprised two sides of the same

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26 Unfortunately, while there are complete and very informative minutes of the 30 Committee, the Penetration Committee minutes are unavailable. They certainly existed at one point, as the 30 Committee minutes often reference them. They may have been destroyed, or have not been released to the National Archives, but my inquiries did not result in a definitive answer.
coin, and their work was highly integrated. The level of integration was high because penetration agents needed chicken feed to draw on for their reports to the Abwehr, just as deception agents did, and that chicken feed had to be coordinated with what the deception agents were passing to the Germans. Moreover, the advent of a separate Penetration Committee only took place in Cairo, and other committees in North Africa and, later, Italy, eschewed it in favour of a single committee that tackled both deception and penetration operations.

The committee structure also allowed for different interested parties to have a hand in the system, while limiting those who could participate. It brought SIME, ISLD, and ‘A’ Force into a clear and formal arrangement with delineated areas of focus for each organization, all based upon the original structure proposed by Clarke in late 1942. In this sense the committees were integrative, but they were also exclusionary. The charter, as approved by the Middle East DMI, specified that any double-cross work was the preserve of the Thirty Committees. Separate efforts were eliminated, a process that had begun in late 1942 when the Special Section halted the operation of Khaki, a Special Operations Executive double agent in Turkey.27 Such a tight circle of control was in keeping with Cairo’s ethos of centralization in double-cross. That said, there was still liaison with other groups when, in Cairo and

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Algiers, the Special Activities Committee occasionally brought together all the clandestine and special operations groups to discuss ongoing issues.\footnote{ISLD Memorandum, 20 July 1943, HS 3/59. SOE did offer substantial collaboration through blown agents who were being operated as double agents by the Axis. In these scenarios, ‘A’ Force used the channel to send back false information to the enemy controllers, who, it was assumed, were not aware that the British knew the spies had been captured and doubled. The Moselle case in Sardinia was one example. Similar arrangements were made between SOE and the double-crossers in London. See Minutes of 37 Committee Meeting, 7 May 1943, WO 169/24888; Christopher J. Murphy, *Security and Special Operations: SOE and MI5 During the Second World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.171.}

Thirdly, the committee organization was successful as a means of expanding double-cross geographically into French North Africa and Italy, where American, French, and Italian officers were brought into double agent operations. This expansion also owed a lot to Dudley Clarke himself, who ensured that a plan to have a separate, American-led deception unit at Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ) in Algiers was scotched. Originally headed by Lt.-Col. Carl Goldbranson, Clarke first ensured that the American’s outfit came under the overall control of ‘A’ Force, and then made clear that Clarke’s deputy, Lt.-Col. Michael Crichton, was really in charge in Algiers.\footnote{Holt, *The Deceivers*, pp.339-40.} Clarke proceeded to pressure Goldbranson, complaining of his lack of aggression, poor training, etc. Despite his pleas that Clarke was being unfair—a complaint that was justified, especially given how Clarke derided the American’s midwestern accent behind his back — Goldbranson was sent back to the United States, where he took up a new position in Washington in August 1943.\footnote{Goldbranson (AFHQ) to Roderick (AFHQ), 28 June 1943; Summary of Conversation with Colonel Dudley W. Clarke, Commander of ‘A’ Force,” 28 June 1943. HP. Holt, *The Deceivers*, p. 431.} ‘A’ Force had thus taken over the entire Mediterranean and Middle Eastern theatres completely by June 1943, thus ensuring a single deception organization and a unified double-cross system.\footnote{Holt, *The Deceivers*, pp.332, 340, 354; Dudley Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1943, CAB 154/3, pp.49, 52.}
Although ‘A’ Force expanded its area of operations, and MI6 was also present in French North Africa, SIME was restricted to territories east of Tunisia. This meant the Forty Committees, as the network based out of Algiers was known, had to integrate an agency that could not be eliminated as the Americans had been: the French security and counter-intelligence service. It was also vital to include them because they had a network of operational double agents who needed to be organized and coordinated immediately, lest the Germans suspect or abandon the cases.

The man responsible for those spies was Col. Paul Paillole, the former head of the Section de Centralisation du Renseignement, which had been dissolved by the Vichy government in 1940. While still working for the Vichy regime, Paillole had secretly led a clandestine organization which continued the French art of doubling German intelligence agents in order to penetrate the vast Abwehr and SD networks that operated in occupied and unoccupied France and North Africa.32 Despite the anti-German and, indeed, anti-Vichy tone of Paillole’s memoirs, recent research by Simon Kitson has shown that counter-intelligence officers like Paillole were more equivocal at the time. Vichy policy was, in fact, to operate against both Allied and German penetration of their territory, the latter as part of a general policy to avoid becoming a vassal state of Nazi Germany.33

Whatever their earlier ambivalence, Paillole and his men threw their lot in with the Allies sincerely after the Torch landings. Their complete dedication was vital, as admitting an outside intelligence agency into the world of Allied double-cross was possible only if they

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32 Holt, The Deceivers, p.137.

were absolutely discreet and guaranteed not to permit any information leakage to the enemy. Indeed, in late 1942 Dudley Clarke, in response to concerns that some members of the Turkish Secret Service were unreliable and pro-Axis, had reduced cooperation with that outfit substantially.\(^{34}\)

The French were not just reliable: they also had important assets which helped expand double-cross into North Africa immediately. Paillolle’s men had several double agents in Algiers, including \textit{Ram}, who transmitted to Paris via a wireless set and notionally worked at French Army headquarters. \textit{Whiskers} was another French-controlled Algerian agent, but he worked through the Spanish Vice-Consul, who passed the reports to the Abwehr in Spanish Morocco. Other agents arrived later in 1943 and were controlled by the 40 Committee, which contained a triumvirate of representatives from ‘A’ Force, MI6, and French security. In keeping with the practice in Cairo, the French retained the same right as SIME to decide whether an agent should be used for deception or penetration.\(^{35}\)

As with the 30 Committee, the 40 Committee had a number of sub-organizations. Fruitful double-cross cases developed at Oran (41 Committee), Casablanca (42), and Tunis (43). ‘A’ Force’s Arne Ekstrom controlled both Oran and Casablanca, where his agents included \textit{Arthur}, \textit{El Gitano}, \textit{Le Petit}, \textit{Cher Bébé}, \textit{Cupid}, and \textit{Davil}. None of the North African cases, however, could compare with \textit{Gilbert} in Tunis, the \textit{Cheese} of the central Mediterranean.

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\(^{34}\) Minutes of Special Activities Meeting, 16 December 1942, WO 169/24887.

Named André Latham, he was a veteran of the Great War who, after serving again in 1940, fell in with the far right Légion Tricolore, a group associated with Jacques Doriot’s Parti Populaire Français (PPF). Although he intended to fight on the Eastern Front, he was instead selected to lead a joint PPF / Abwehr intelligence team to Tunisia. By the time he landed in Tunis in late March 1943, he had decided to turn himself in to the Allies, which he did the day after Tunis fell. He was taken on by French security, given the rank of major, and placed on the local French Army staff, which would plausibly give him access to high-level French secrets.³⁶ ‘A’ Force was quick to appreciate Latham’s potential, and created the 43 Committee under Maj. Pierre Grandguillot to manage Gilbert and any future cases that might develop in Tunis.³⁷

A final reason for the success of the Thirty Committees was the manner in which they guided the relationship between the main committees at Cairo and Algiers, and each main committee’s subordinate outstation committees. Each outstation was well designed to receive and utilize central directives, but also given a considerable amount of room to control their own operations, in accordance with local conditions. As already described in chapter one, the central control came from Clarke’s Strategic Addenda, which informed each committee of ongoing deception plans, their progress, and provided a digest of real and deceptive information that should be sent via the double agents. The job of the Thirty Committees was to decide what channels would be most suited for what information, and to fashion the material into transmittable message that fit the method and style of each agent.

The central control was required primarily for deceptive information. For chicken feed, the true information needed to gain credibility for each case, the Addenda were not sufficient, so each committee had to compile and utilize local news to supplement the more general topics that Clarke highlighted in the Addenda. As a result, each committee was in close, but more informal, touch with their local military authorities in the same way that Clarke was in Cairo. Some committees also made more detailed arrangements: the 40 Committee, as an example, asked the port authorities in North Africa to report twice weekly with the information that an agent could have gleaned from observing shipping activity in each harbour.38

The Thirty Committee system was thus the height of double-cross organization in the Mediterranean, and was the result of considerable interaction between London and Cairo. The relationships among the various double-cross parties was formalized for the first time, and the intervention of MI5 ensured that ‘A’ Force would not totally dominate double-cross, at least in the Middle East; it would be different in areas newly occupied by the Allies, like Italy, where MI5 had no real sway. The new Thirty Committees continued the trend of concentrated power, most of which was in the hands of Dudley Clarke, while also accepting the fact that local conditions required a substantial measure of autonomy for each committee. The strong organization at the top, combined flexibility for the sub-committees, allowed the incorporation of many new agents in 1943, and ensured that they would be used in a reasonably unified and coordinated manner. For that reason, the committees were crucial to the development of a double-cross system.

38 “Memorandum on Deception Organisation and Methods,” 15 December 1942, WO 169/24871; Hill-Dillon (AFHQ) to Assistant Chief of Staff G-2 (AFHQ), 1 June 1944, WO 204/835.
III

With an influx of viable agents, and the development of a coherent organization to manage and coordinate them, the level of ambition in Mediterranean double-cross reached new heights. The lifeblood of that ambition was signals decrypts in the form of ISOS. These Abwehr decrypts were an essential element of the new double-cross system: without them, the Thirty Committees would be ignorant of the reliability of their agents, of their credibility in the eyes of the enemy, and of the broader activities of the Abwehr.\(^{39}\) However, access to those decrypts had been difficult to gain in 1942, and remained so in early 1943. The new system would be starved of information vital to its operation if that problem was not solved.

There were problems of access to ISK, in particular, in the Middle East for a number of reasons. Several were logistical: only Cairo and Beirut had facilities to receive the decrypts; the messages were sent by radio, which meant they were scrambled and paraphrased to protect their source; and that method of transmission also limited the volume of decrypts which Cairo and Beirut could receive. While these problems contributed to the relative lack of ISK and, to a lesser extent, the ISOS hand cipher material, personality and organizational issues were a more severe impediment. Felix Cowgill of Section V was still tight-fisted and restricted the flow of decrypts to the Middle East. SIME itself was not blameless either, as it lacked the organizational capacity to take full advantage of the intelligence they received.\(^{40}\)

The ISOS complications in the Middle East were well-known to MI5 in London, and it was on this issue that the Security Service had its most substantial effect on Mediterranean

\(^{39}\) Howard, *Strategic Deception*, p.41.

\(^{40}\) Curry, *The Security Service*, p.211.
double-cross. Their involvement had started in April 1942, when Herbert Hart of B1B, MI5’s ISOS analysis section, worked to improve the flow of decrypts to SIME. He and Dick White followed up on the problem in November and December 1942, when they undertook a major study of the ISOS that had been sent to the Middle East to that point. Although the volume of decrypts was greater in the aftermath of Hart’s complaints the previous spring, and the decryption of some ISOS locally in Egypt eased part of the problem, the new MI5 study found that the ISOS and ISK sent to the Middle East (Abwehr Enigma traffic could not be decrypted locally) was still an inadequate and unrepresentative amount of intelligence.41

Besides a deficient supply of raw decrypts, SIME also lacked synoptic analyses of what ISOS told the reader about the organization and activities of the Abwehr. According to Gilbert Ryle, a member of Hugh Trevor-Roper’s Radio Intelligence Service, their expert reports on the Abwehr were never sent to the Middle East. The latter items’ limited circulation was a major problem for, as Guy Liddell noted, they were “essential working tools for anybody trying to study ISOS and ISK material intelligently.”42

Cowgill’s extreme reluctance to share signals intelligence, and analyses thereon, certainly hurt double-cross in the Middle East. But Maunsell had done little to improve his own decrypt usage, as SIME did not have an organization dedicated to studying and assessing the implications of the ISOS that they did receive. Given these difficulties, which straddled both Cairo and London, on 10 December 1942 the MI5 Director-General decided

41 Liddell diaries, 8 December 1942, KV 4/191, p.20.
that White had to travel to Egypt to rectify the problems in SIME, the organizational results of which were discussed above in the analysis of the formation of the Thirty Committees.43

Sure enough, White’s investigation in Cairo uncovered the practical problems plaguing SIME because of their ISOS deficiency and misusage. The clearest example was that the Special Section did not know Cheese was being played back against the Abwehr. Their fundamental misunderstanding came to light in a report written by the Section and given by White to B1A for review. In it, the SIME officers argued that Levi had been recruited jointly by the Abwehr and the Italian SIM. They went as far as to write that “perhaps the whole case is being handled by the Italians and handled with a laziness and carelessness the Germans would not have tolerated.” It was concerning that SIME did not actually know with whom they were communicating, and a reply from B1A amassed considerable evidence from ISOS to show that the case was German entirely. All of Levi’s contacts — Travaglio, Rossetti, and Helfferich — were Abwehr officers; and, while there had been some minimal involvement from the SIM officer Count Carlo Scirimbo, Levi had been recruited, trained, and was controlled by the Abwehr. B1A also corrected the Special Section’s opinion on the relative abilities of the SIM and the Abwehr. Their own experience and use of ISOS showed that the Abwehr was “fully capable of the degree of incompetence

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shown in the CHEESE case.”\textsuperscript{44} MI5 had once made similar assumptions about the Abwehr but, by 1943, they had long discarded the myth of Teutonic efficiency and determination in German intelligence.

\textsuperscript{44} “The Case of CHEESE @ LAMBERT,” 30 March 1943, WO 169/24893. The confusion over the issue of Cheese’s Axis provenance is also present in much of the historical literature. New file releases, particularly the Security Service file on Cheese and Otto Helfferich’s interrogation records, mean that the case as a whole, and the Axis side of it, are elucidated here more fully than in other secondary sources. Indeed, the history of this double agent has gone through many incarnations. The initial versions were presented by David Mure in his books Practice to Deceive (1977) and Master of Deception (1980). Mure was an ‘A’ Force officer in Baghdad and then Beirut, but he had nothing to do with the deception outfit while Cheese was being developed. In his first book, he claims that the original spy, being Levi, was sent by the Germans to Cairo in July 1940, and that he was part of a secret Zionist society that helped him on his travels. The channel was then allegedly used for the deception surrounding Wavell’s December 1940 offensive. None of this matches the extensive records on Levi and the Cheese channel. Ironically, Mure incorrectly argues that the link was used in December 1940, but has nothing to say about the actual role played by Cheese in the November 1941 ‘Crusader’ offensive. In Master of Deception the story is expanded, and Mure cites recollections from SIME’s W.J. Kenyon-Jones, Middle East DMI John Shearer, and ‘A’ Force’s Noel Wild as sources. Mure still claims that Levi arrived in Cairo in 1940, but he does correct his erroneous assertion about the Zionist society. In this second book Mure refers to the agent as Moses, a name that is never attached to the case in any documentary sources (there was a minor agent run by SIME with this codename in 1942). Furthermore, Mure claims that Moses returned to Italy, and actually ended up being the controller at Bari of the radio set he had left behind. Then, based on information from Shearer, the former ‘A’ Force officer maintains that there were two other agents in Cairo. One was the so-called Gauleiter of Mannheim, the other was called Stephan. Mure claims that Cheese was the collective codename for all three of these Cairo agents who were all in contact with Bari until it was captured by the Eighth Army in late 1943. See Mure, Practice to Deceive, pp.19-25, 40; Master of Deception, pp.67-78.

Although there are scraps of truth in this version of events, virtually all of Mure’s account is incorrect. But he was the only source on Cheese until other documentation became available. In 1990 H.O. Dovey published an article that sought to parse the known story of Cheese. He notes that Mure, who says that the agent was recruited by SIM, is unclear on when it became an Abwehr case, or at least how the Germans got information from it. Dovey realized that most of Mure’s account was speculation, this despite the pedigree of his sources for his second book. See Dovey, “Cheese,” pp.176-83.

1990 also saw the publication of Hinsley & Simkins Vol. IV and Howard’s Vol. V of the official history of British intelligence in the war. They provided the first accurate view of Cheese based on official documentation, and relegated Mure’s accounts to the status of inaccurate oddities. However, even these eminent authors are unclear on important elements. Vol. IV states that, while recruited by the Abwehr in France, Levi was transferred to SIM. It only became a German case after ‘Crusader’ when the Italians no longer trusted the link - this last point has been perpetuated more recently by Terry Crowdy but is contradicted by the postwar testimony of Walter Sensburg, who stated that Roberto became an Athenian channel in summer 1941 when Rossetti arrived there as an officer. Based on the well-documented discussion in this chapter and chapter 1, it seems highly likely that Levi was recruited by the Germans and that Cheese was always an Abwehr channel. See Hinsley & Simkins, pp.165-7; Howard, pp. 36-7; Crowdy, p.169; “CI Re-Interrogation Report (CI-RIR) No. 5,” 25 March 1946, KV 2/977, p.12.

Dovey returned to the topic in 1993 and tried to figure out what, if anything, was accurate in Mure’s two books, particularly regarding the Gauleiter of Mannheim and Stephan. He quite rightly shows that the former is entirely fictional. As for the latter, Dovey can not disprove his existence, but is highly suspicious since there is no mention in any other sources. At this point, with the release of many more extensive files of Cheese and double cross, it is safe to say that Stephan is also a fictitious creation. See Dovey, “Maunsell and Mure,” pp. 67-70.

More recently Thaddeus Holt has provided a good overview of the Cheese case that utilizes both the War Office and Security Service files. Although not definitive on that aspect of the case, Holt is also more clear about Levi being a German recruit. See Holt, The Deceivers, pp.36-40.
The disarray in the method of transmitting ISOS to Cairo also created confusion regarding the double agent *Doleful*. His reports from Syria appeared regularly in ISOS under the name *Arthur*, which was his German codename. Between November 1942 and May 1943 several of these decrypts had been sent to the Middle East, but it was never made clear that they all referred to the same agent. As Liddell wrote, “clearly this makes analysis in Cairo extremely difficult.” It is worth noting as well that, considering how Liddell discussed the case, it seems that he thought *Arthur* was an uncontrolled Abwehr agent, when in fact he was controlled by SIME. Like-wise, as late as October 1942 Trevor-Roper’s team did not know that *Roberto* (i.e. *Cheese*) was a double agent, and they referred to him as a genuine German spy in the Middle East. Each of these cases laid bare the weak communication between London and Cairo. Occasional visits from MI5 officers were not enough to fix it.

However, improvements to ISOS transmission came, albeit slowly. The volume and quality of the decrypts seems to have increased and improved as Section V expanded after a shaky start to the war. The occupation of French North Africa, in particular, led to better facilities for transmitting ISOS to counter-intelligence officers in the field overseas. This arrangement did create a better organization for getting ISOS to North Africa and the Middle East.

Yet, even in the summer of 1943, SIME still only received abbreviated selections of decrypts. The sheer number of intercepted and decrypted Abwehr messages meant that

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45 Liddell diaries, 20 August 1943, KV 4/192, pp.150-1.
47 The improvement is apparent from a series of files in HW 19/288-310 which compile all the ISOS messages sent overseas by Section V. See also “Use of ISOS by Section V During the War,” HW 19/321, pp.30-2.
London could only transmit a fraction of them, and important information was either delayed or not sent. In one such case in July, James Robertson of the Special Section was able to inform that 30 Committee that, as revealed in ISOS, they now knew that Athens regarded Cheese as a “tested” agent, rather than just the “reliable” case he had been to that point. However, Robertson had only learned this critical intelligence after a personal trip to London where he was shown the relevant decrypt.48

Of course, ISOS could also arrive quickly and accurately, such as in the spring of 1943 when there was considerable concern in the 30 Committee about the failure of the Abwehr to send payment to Nicossof in Cairo, a transaction they considered essential if the case was to survive. Continual delays stoked fears that the Germans did not actually trust their agent, but ISOS soon demonstrated that the tardiness was actually due to incompetence. Decrypts showed that Clemens Rossetti, formerly of Ast Athens but now in Istanbul, was supposed to send the money. He failed to do so and, on 10 May, Walter Sensburg, the head of Ast Athens, sent a message of concern to Rossetti and his superior in Istanbul, Paul Leverkühn. He wrote as follows:

According to ROBERTO no money has been delivered. He requests inquiry to what address money was delivered. As there is a danger of complete worsening ROBERTO’s confidence immediate report is necessary of when and where money was delivered.49

This message was discussed at the 26 May 30 Committee and did much to set their minds at ease. Further confirmation came at the 15 June meeting when they reviewed another decrypt in which Sensburg berated Rossetti for failing to pay The Pessimists: in it he compared this

48 Minutes of 30 Committee Meeting, 21 July 1943, WO 169/24887.
49 Athens to Istanbul, 10 May 1943, HW 19/120.
case of negligence to that shown in the *Cheese* case a month previously.\textsuperscript{50} Given the speed of the receipt of ISOS in these important cases, and the slowness at other times, it appears that intermittency and inconsistency remained concerns in 1943, but the overall ISOS situation had improved vastly since early 1942.

The supply of decrypts, then, had been more or less solved, but analysis and usage were also concerns that had to be addressed. Dick White helped SIME in this regard by dispatching Joe Stephenson of MI5 to be the permanent ISOS officer at SIME, where he would devote himself to analyzing and utilizing decrypts in a manner similar to B1B in London.\textsuperscript{51} The real experts on the Abwehr and ISOS, however, were Hugh Trevor-Roper and his analysts. White recommended that Trevor-Roper himself travel to Cairo and create an equivalent organization there.\textsuperscript{52} He was, however, locked in an organizational wrangle with Felix Cowgill, and did not want to leave, fearing his section would be broken up in his absence.\textsuperscript{53}

Trevor-Roper’s personal involvement in Cairo would have been valuable in the wake of White’s reforms to SIME, but double-cross in the Middle East received the next best thing: beginning in August 1943, the most important and relevant analytical reports on the Abwehr were sent in full to Cairo and Algiers. Trevor-Roper, in May 1943, had finally won his protracted struggle with Cowgill through the intervention of ‘C’ and gained total control over

\textsuperscript{50} Minutes of 30 Committee Meetings, 26 May and 15 June 1943, WO 169/24887.
\textsuperscript{52} White (MI5) to Liddell (MI5), 14 March 1943, KV 4/217
\textsuperscript{53} Liddell diaries, 12 April 1943, KV 4/191, p.215. Trevor-Roper did make a tour of Algiers, Cairo, and Delhi in 1944 and, while in the Middle East, was shown the *Quicksilver* and *Pessimists* operation in Beirut. Beirut Outstation War Diary, 1 April 1944, WO 169/24859.
his team, now called the Radio Intelligence Service.\textsuperscript{54} The first RIS report sent, addressed to Dudley Clarke and his Algiers deputy Michael Crichton, was entitled “Abwehr Incompetence.” A \textit{tour de force} of intelligence analysis, it laid out the crisis of the Abwehr after its failure to predict \textit{Torch} and the invasion of Sicily. It also discussed how Abwehr intelligence product flowed through the German intelligence cycle and what sources they relied upon, all vital information for double-cross, and deception in particular. It was exactly the kind of large-scale assessment that had been missing from double-cross, and Middle East counter-intelligence in general, since the flow of ISOS began in November 1941.\textsuperscript{55} Signals intelligence had thus, finally, become a fully operational component of the the double-cross system by mid-1943.

IV

The addition of full access to raw decrypts and analytical reports was the third component of the double-cross system, and its improvements, even as early as spring 1943, meant that there was a proper, functioning system similar to that in Britain for the first time. Of the four necessary conditions for a system outlined above, reliable signals intelligence and the administrative arrangements necessary to manage double agents were, by 1943, largely within the power of the Allies to create and manipulate. The initial viability of the cases was not completely under their control. They could ruin a good case through carelessness, but

\textsuperscript{54} ‘C’ - Sir Stewart Menzies - moved Trevor-Roper from Section V on 13 May 1943 and made the RIS directly responsible to himself. See Harrison, “British Radio Security and Intelligence, 1939-43,” p.87.

\textsuperscript{55} The original report is “R.I.S. 11 Abwehr Incompetence,” 4 August 1943, HW 19/347. The version sent over wireless is “R.I.S. 11 Abwehr Incompetence,” 4 August 1943, HW 19/289.
could not turn a bad case into a successful one. The Allies were therefore dependent upon the types of agents that the Germans sent into their territory. Those spies were often so badly prepared and incompetent that they were not appropriate to play any role in double-cross, even as notional cases. Still, while the Germans almost never sent a spy who was actually highly capable and well-trained, the Allies did manage to turn and run a series of double agents in late 1942 and early 1943.

Their success relied, in a large part, upon the ongoing credulity of the ostensible controllers of the spies: the German Abwehr. The Abwehr, as is now very apparent, was riddled with double-cross agents, had no reliable wireless spies in the Mediterranean who were not double agents, and continuously pumped all the information they received, whether true or false, into the German military intelligence system. Given their deficiencies, it is clear that the organization and operations of the Abwehr are just as important in explaining how double-cross became a viable system as the efforts of the British are.

The fact that the Abwehr accepted, and even lauded, the contributions from what were actually vast Allied-controlled double agent systems can seem genuinely puzzling. In an effort to solve this puzzle, theories have been advanced which allege that the entire Abwehr was an anti-Nazi body that knowingly colluded in the Allied game in order to hasten the defeat and downfall of Hitler. The theory emerged during the war itself when, in the aftermath of the July 1944 attempt on Hitler’s life and the realization that they had been duped about a second invasion after the Normandy landings, members of the SS believed that traitors in German intelligence had colluded with the Allies in the grand D-Day deception.56

Although individual members of the Abwehr and the broader intelligence apparatus were traitorous to the Third Reich and paid with their lives after the failed July 1944 bomb plot, the concept of a grand conspiracy is baseless.\textsuperscript{57} Certainly, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, the head of the Abwehr from 1935 to 1944, is still an enigmatic figure who, during his time in power, was “a professional obfuscater.”\textsuperscript{58} In 1968 the Regius Professor of Modern History Hugh Trevor-Roper argued that Canaris, while an opponent of the more vulgar elements of the regime, merely watched the “conservative revolt” from the sidelines, ultimately remaining “a psychological case” and “the Hamlet of conservative Germany.”\textsuperscript{59}

While not actively traitorous, there is no doubt that he was a bad intelligence chief. The then Major Trevor-Roper, writing at the end of the Second World War in 1945, argued the following about Canaris: “[he] was firstly, a bad judge of men and secondly, himself a professional intrigant rather than an organiser.” As a result of the former, “he chose worthless officers; and in consequence of the second, he gave them practical independence.”\textsuperscript{60} The general disorganization of the Abwehr and the types of men that it recruited do provide a logical explanation for its failure, without resorting to the appealing, yet erroneous, notion of a conspiracy.

The explanation for the Abwehr’s poor performance is, at its deepest, rooted in the power dynamics and style of governance of the Nazi state. Hitler’s Germany was not a “well-
oiled super state,” but a “polyocracy” in which rival power centres competed for Hitler’s favour.61 Hitler was the ultimate authority, and his implementation of the “Führer Principle” in the 1920s meant that the Nazi Party and, later, the Nazi State, did not develop any “collective decision-making processes.”62 With competition for Hitler’s favour the primary engine for developing and implementing policy, the state became a cockpit of fierce rivalries. It was inherently fractious, a situation that Hitler preferred and in which he intervened only rarely. The state ran on a collection of temporary alliances and agreements which were, in the end, ineffective at eliminating the duplication of effort and bitter conflict that this unusual system created.63 Not surprisingly, such a world of intrigue and self-aggrandizement did not make for a system in which honesty and efficiency were rewarded. Instead, success, or the appearance of success, however achieved, was the means of accruing power.

The intelligence “community” was involved in this power dynamic as deeply as any other component of Nazi Germany. Indeed, as Michael Geyer has argued, “intelligence was an integral element in the continuous internal conflict that shaped policy and action in the Third Reich.”64 Thus, while the Abwehr, as discussed below, was inefficient and corrupt, its behaviour was not illogical in this context. Intelligence became a tool of “political leverage” rather than a means to make professional assessments.65 Given that failure could have severe, and even life-threatening, consequences in Nazi Germany, it is not surprising that Canaris

63 Ibid., 171, 173.
65 Ibid., p.325.
preferred to cover up his organization’s deficiencies whenever possible and, in general, never ask too many questions about how his officers got their information. To him, the credibility of the information was less important than demonstrating that the Abwehr controlled a vast network of intelligence sources, an image that gave him considerable power. These characteristics did not encourage intelligence cooperation, which is essential to a professional intelligence system, but which was a foreign concept in Nazi Germany. The objectively bad performance of the Abwehr was thus both caused and compounded by the power dynamics of Nazi Germany, where “truth” was, at best, a secondary concern in intelligence gathering and analysis.

The Abwehr incentive to obfuscate came from its own tenuous position within the German intelligence world. It was only one of many intelligence collection agencies, and was eventually overtaken and absorbed by its main rival, Amt VI of the Reichsicherheitshauptamt (RSHA), the SS foreign espionage service which was created when the Sicherheitsdienst (SD) merged with the newly created RSHA in 1939. The Abwehr and the SD had been at odds since the latter was given power to collect foreign political intelligence in 1936, even though a line of demarcation with military intelligence was agreed to between Canaris and SD chief Reinhard Heydrich in 1935. It was the type of private and temporary agreement, as discussed above, that kept the polycratic system on a nearly-even keel before the war and, indeed, Canaris and Heydrich were close personally at that time. Nevertheless, the Admiral

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66 Ibid., 338, 340.
recognized in the former naval officer Heydrich a ruthless ambition.\textsuperscript{70} The model Nazi expanded his power under the umbrella of the SS empire that his superior Heinrich Himmler was building and, by 1942, Canaris had been so battered by the intrigue and the remorseless spread of the RSHA that he began to drift away from his work and travelled incessantly.\textsuperscript{71}

While Heydrich operated out of the SS, which eventually spread into virtually all aspects of the state, Canaris led a strictly military organization subordinate to the OKW in Berlin. It was divided into three Abteilungen: I was espionage, II was sabotage and subversion, and III was counter-intelligence. The main stations in occupied territories outside Berlin were called Abwehrstellen (Asts), while those in neutral states were known as Kriegsorganisationen (KOs). Abt. I was divided into Army, Navy, and Air sections (IH, IM, IL), and this division was replicated at each Ast and KO. Most importantly, Abt. I at each Ast and KO, and also at Berlin headquarters, did not analyze any of the intelligence they collected. It was merely a collection agency, and one that focussed exclusively on military intelligence.\textsuperscript{72}

Military intelligence analysis was carried out by units within the army, navy, and air force commands. The army had Fremde Heere West — which also served OKW — and Fremde Heere Ost (FHW and FHO). Naval intelligence analysis was the preserve of 3/SKL, a division of the naval operational command known as the Seekriegsleitung. Finally, air intelligence was analyzed by the Fifth Bureau of the Luftwaffführungsstab. In each case, the

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relevant Abt. I unit acted as a go-between through which the military would request information, and through which the resulting intelligence would be sent back to FHW, etc., for evaluation. However, since Abt. I made no effort to assess and filter the reports they received, the hapless intelligence analysts would have to make sense of mountains of indiscriminate reports.\textsuperscript{73}

The men on the evaluation side were well-aware of the problems within the Abwehr and did not think very highly of the organization. Wilhelm Kuebert is one such example. A professional army staff officer, he was attached to IH in Berlin in July 1943 to assist with the voluminous material it received from its Asts and KOs. Kuebert knew beforehand that the Abwehr had weaknesses, but “the little I expected proved through my personal experiences to be far too much.” In his final assessment, “the Abwehr was for me the most sad and disappointing military organisation which I have known as a soldier.”\textsuperscript{74}

The organizational problems at Abwehr headquarters were replicated among the Asts responsible for the Mediterranean, where each merely took information and forwarded it to Berlin and to local military commands. From 1941, the centres of offensive espionage against the Middle East were the following: KO Bulgaria under Otto Wagner and based in Sofia; Ast Athens, commanded by Walter Sensburg; and the KO Near East in Istanbul under Paul Leverkühn. The primary stations operating against North Africa were Ast Paris, where Oskar Reile managed the \textit{Gilbert} case; Ast Dijon; and the Abwehr stations in Spanish Morocco. The latter were among the most important in the Western Mediterranean, becoming the front line


\textsuperscript{74} untitled document, KV 2/410, pp.xxx, xxxiv.
after the Allied capture of French North Africa by May 1943. The head station was Tetuán, under Johann Recke, with Tangier (Hans Kruger) and Melilla (Rolf Kraemer) as sub-stations directed against French Morocco and Algeria.75

The Balkan Abwehr stations, which had focussed on aiding a German advance into the Middle East during 1941 and 1942, changed their posture as the tide of battle turned against the Wehrmacht in autumn 1942: they began seeking information that would help defend the Balkan flank against an invasion as the Allies seized the strategic initiative in the theatre.76 Each Balkan station had its own agents in the Middle East to aid this effort, or so they thought. Athens “controlled” Cheese, Quicksilver, The Pessimists, The Lemons, and The Savages, while Istanbul had a series of traveling agents who maintained personal contact, including Doleful and Baroness.

The duplication of effort and lack of coordination among the Asts and KOs were typical of the nature of German intelligence. As an example, a leading Abwehr official in Istanbul, Erich Vermehren, was unaware of any of the agents that Athens and Sofia ran in the Middle East. When he received reports on the Allied order of battle in the Middle East, it was apparent to him that they were based on sources of information of which he had no knowledge.77 His ignorance is particularly remarkable when we realize that Clemens Rossetti, formerly of Athens and the one-time controller of two Athenian double agents, was working in Turkey in 1943 in the same section — IH — as Vermehren.

Besides failing to exchange information among themselves, each station also had poor communication with, and received little guidance from, headquarters in Berlin. Leverkühn lamented that, other than generic directives to reconnoitre the Near and Middle East, he never received more specific orders. Nor did Berlin actually exert much direct control over the stations. The head of each Ast was virtually a law unto himself, and his personnel were responsible to him rather than Berlin. As an example, the head of IH in Athens answered to Sensburg, not the head of all IH activities in Berlin. The weak communications and hazy chain of command were the precise opposite of the Amt VI organization. Their reports were sent directly to the RSHA offices and Himmler, and could be at Hitler’s headquarters within twenty-four hours of transmission. Abwehr reports went through a maze of Byzantine bureaucratic channels before there was any possibility of them reaching the highest levels and, even then, the vast majority never made it very far.

The Abwehr, then, was, as Trevor-Roper noted in 1945, an organization in which the individual officers had tremendous independence and took very little central direction from Berlin. The result was a lack of coordination and little concentration of effort and resources. There was certainly no major effort from Berlin to collate reports and judge the reliability of human intelligence sources. This was, again, left up to each Ast where, as we will discuss below, there was little incentive to admit if an agent had gone bad.

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81 Ibid.
We do see occasional efforts from Berlin to assess the credibility of agents, or at least ask local Asts to do so. In June 1943, as an example, Berlin directed Athens to check other agent reports against those of The Pessimists. Such assessments, however, were rare and never systematic. As Paul Leverkühn argued after the war, this lack of an evaluation system was “the greatest weakness of the whole German intelligence system.” While his analysis is surely correct, Leverkühn was not nearly as perceptive when he claimed that, given the lack of evaluation and organization, “it speaks volumes for the devotion and efficiency of Abwehr officers and General Staff officers alike, that German Intelligence functioned as well as it did.”

In fact, a distinguishing feature of the Abwehr was the low quality of the men who worked for it. There was a chronic inability to recruit efficient officers, since it was seen as a dead-end career. It was thus, in Vermehren’s opinion, “the Cinderella of the OKW.” In practice, this meant that the Abwehr in Turkey was “ludicrously understaffed” and outclassed by the British and American secret services. So, while some Abwehr officers were certainly corrupt and deceitful, a large number were simply inept and incapable of performing their job adequately.

Given such weak human raw material, the Abwehr made little effort to mould them with even the most elementary training. Sensburg, head of Ast Athens, noted after the war that they had great difficulty recruiting reliable and talented spies because the recruiting

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82 Minutes of 30 Committee for 8 June 1943, WO 169/24887.
83 Leverkühn, *German Military Intelligence*, pp.69, 72.
officers themselves had never received professional training in intelligence work.\textsuperscript{86} This negligence was symptomatic of a German General Staff system which assumed any staff officer could perform any staff position competently, without special or supplementary training. Thus, high-level Abwehr officers like Georg Hansen, who headed Abt. I from 1943, and his deputy Wilhelm Kuebert were considered interchangeable with their predecessors, despite having no training or experience in intelligence work.\textsuperscript{87}

At the local level, poor officer training led, as Sensburg commented, to badly trained and unreliable spies. In Athens the situation was even worse for the Abwehr: the population was generally pro-Allied, and it was often difficult to acquire dollars, pounds, or gold to pay the agents.\textsuperscript{88} Nevertheless, recruit agents they had to since, in the internecine intelligence environment of Nazi Germany, the appearance of activity and the collection of any information were vital. Their recruitment net thus brought up the dregs of society who were willing to take any payment, or people who were just looking to get out of Nazi-occupied Europe.\textsuperscript{89} They also, bizarrely, blackmailed and coerced people into service, such as Walter “Vassilios” Furst, a Greek-speaking Austrian Jew who worked as a recruiter and interpreter for IM in Athens. He came into his position after threats against his family if he did not help the Abwehr.\textsuperscript{90}

These practices, which brought in criminals, drunks, and people who were essentially forced labourers, did not ever yield effective results. Indeed, the spies that the Abwehr sent

\textsuperscript{87} “Artist,” 14-18 November 1943, HW 19/325, p.1.
\textsuperscript{88} Sensburg Interrogation, KV 2/977, pp.3-4.
\textsuperscript{89} Wilson, “The War in the Dark,” p.105.
\textsuperscript{90} “Statement by Vassilios Furst @ Koenig,” 28 September 1945, KV 2/1325, p.1.
out into Allied territory were often farcically unprepared and incompetent. The Lemons, who became a double-cross case in Cyprus in May 1943, are one such example. After only superficial training and explanation of their mission they set off by boat from Greece to Syria. During the journey the two spies did nothing but quarrel with their third member, the navigator who was on board with the sole intention of beaching the ship at the first opportunity and stealing the agents’ money. He was described later by Dudley Clarke as “vulgar and debased, a modern Caliban with much low cunning but no wit.” In the end they sailed to Cyprus when they became too scared to enter the heavily-patrolled waters closer to Syria.\textsuperscript{91}

In light of the defects and deficiencies evident at every level of the German intelligence system, and within the Abwehr in particular, it should come as no surprise that these characteristics had a substantial influence on the creation and ongoing operations of the Mediterranean double-cross system. Indeed, many spies were played back for years without arousing German suspicion, or at least eliciting any negative German reaction, as some examples from the Mediterranean theatre demonstrate.

There were several categories of Abwehr officers who unwittingly helped the double-cross system. The first was those who genuinely did not realize that their spies had been turned, and did not betray any suspicions as to their true activities. The officers of KO Istanbul seem to fit this category. Erich Vermehren told his British interrogators in 1944 that his office had a series of reliable agents in the Levant and Iraq, and that those sources of information would have made Allied attempts at deception through other channels difficult.

\textsuperscript{91} Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1943, CAB 154/3, pp.136-7.
Little did Vermehren know that his “reliable” agents were, in fact, controlled by the Allies. The one that he mentioned by name was a notional sub-source of Doleful in Palestine.\(^92\)

His colleagues at the KO were similarly credulous. Walter Hinz and Erich Lochner, the officers in charge of the Taurus Express agents, were the stars of the Turkish station because their agents provided the only steady flow of intelligence on the Allied-controlled Middle East.\(^93\) Their top man, a spy known alternately as Arthur or Gold, was, in fact, the British double agent Doleful who had worked for ISLD and SIME since 1942.\(^94\) Neither Vermehren or Hinz had reason to lie about their success in these cases after they were in Allied custody, especially since Vermehren was an anti-Nazi defector. It is very likely that they genuinely believed in their agents. Still, there is not enough documentation available on their assessment of their agents, and whether or not they missed clues as to the real loyalties of the spies they sent forth into Allied territory.

The second category are those officers who had suspicions about cases, but never did anything to establish the truth one way or the other. One was Walter Sensburg, the head of Ast Athens. He told his interrogators that Roberto / Cheese’s allegiances were suspect during one period because he never had radio problems, while apparently better equipped stations often reported interference. The suspicions were shared widely in Athens, but there was never any conclusive proof and nothing was done to investigate the issue.\(^95\)

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\(^92\) “German Intelligence directed by K.O.N.O.,” KV 2/168, p.1.

\(^93\) “The German...in Turkey,” April 1944, KV 2/970, p.5. Title is partially missing due to torn page.


\(^95\) Sensburg Interrogation, KV 2/977, p.13.
This episode was merely one small part of Sensburg’s trail of futility that led back to his time at Ast Brussels in 1940. While there, he oversaw the dispatch of waves of inept agents to Britain, all of whom were captured and many were doubled. Indeed, within the Abwehr poor and badly trained recruits were known as Sensburgleute. Sensburg appears to have just been a negligent and incompetent officer, and unwittingly ran, throughout his wartime career, double-cross cases while he was stationed in Brussels, Athens, and Belgrade.

While Sensburg was merely negligent, other officers avoided investigating their suspicions for more personal reasons. In one case, Otto Helfferich, a leading Abwehr officer in Italy, said after the war that he came to suspect that his star agent in Rome — known as Armour to the Allies — was possibly under control because his information was often too good; but he never acted upon that suspicion. Helfferich’s attitude at that point was clearly linked to his position within the Abwehr and the takeover by the RSHA in 1944. He was “a military man of the old type and a great admirer of Adm. CANARIS.” He had “always steered clear of the Nazis for whom he has the greatest loathing and contempt.” Most importantly, Helfferich had run afoul of the RSHA in late 1944, and was accused of being an “Italophile,” “pro-Jewish,” and under the influence of the Catholic Church. Although he managed to avoid punishment at the hands the SS, he obviously could not admit that he had been running an agent of dubious loyalties for many months.

The most interesting case in this category — officers who had suspicions but did not seem to have any concrete evidence that their agents were controlled — is Oskar Reile of Ast

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98 Ibid., p.11.
Paris. He was, along with Albert Beugras of the PPF, the controller of *Gilbert*. He was also one of the few Abwehr officers — perhaps the only one — who had agents in both the Mediterranean and British double-cross system simultaneously (his agent *Brutus* is one of the best known of the double agents in England).\(^{99}\) Many years after the war Paul Paillol wrote to Reile to ask whether or not he knew that *Gilbert* had been turned. The German answered affirmatively in January 1974: “I understood they had been turned about four or five months after the radio operator had started broadcasting,” which would have been October or November 1943.\(^{100}\) However, in Reile’s own books he makes no definitive claims about the veracity of the *Atlas* network, as the Germans called it. He does note that he became suspicious in late summer 1943, when a Luftwaffe plane, flying supplies to the group, found that the drop zone provided by *Gilbert* was dangerously close to an Allied encampment. Reile began to check the spy’s radio reports more closely but, after a period of verification, it was agreed that the channel was still reliable, a testament to the importance of chicken feed. In his postwar accounts Reile claims that he only became aware that the channel was doubled while he was in French custody in 1948.\(^{101}\)

The discrepancy between Reile’s letter to Paillol and his own books has recently caught the attention of author Olivier Pigoreau. He concludes that Reile did know the channel had gone bad, but said nothing and continued feeding the bad information to the military as part of the brewing resistance movement among German officers inside and outside of the Abwehr. Indeed, Pigoreau concludes that deception on the scale practiced by


\(^{100}\) Paillol, *Fighting the Nazis*, p.395.

the Allies is too hard to carry out over the long term when dealing with intelligence professionals on the other end. However, this claim does ignore the fact that the vast majority of those who controlled spies in the Abwehr were far from “professionals,” although Reile is an exception. Furthermore, Pigoreau claims that Reile could have lied with little consequence for, if he was found out, the worst that could happen is that he would be labelled an incompetent by his superiors.102

This conclusion, however, does not take into account the intrusion of the RSHA into France, a process initiated by the appointment of Carl Albrecht Oberg as the Higher SS and Police Leader in spring 1942.103 Indeed, there is strong evidence that this development caused considerable worry at Ast Paris. Erich Pfeiffer, the head of the Ast during the early period of SS encroachment, noted his great discomfort at this turn of events, and the “mutual dislike” between the two agencies.104 To him, all efforts seemed to cut out the Abwehr and leave the RSHA in total control of intelligence activities. Reile also appears to have been just as displeased about the RSHA: Pfeiffer claims that, after he had been appointed to IM in Berlin, Reile, still in Paris, smuggled Sten guns to his former superior, in case the SS became “unfriendly.”105

Thus, in the cases of Helfferich and Reile, we see evidence for how the rivalry between the Abwehr and the RSHA affected actual intelligence work. Although there is no evidence that either man actually knew their agent was controlled — and it is improbable that

105 Ibid., p.74.
they actually did know for sure — the ongoing encroachment of the SS meant that neither
man, and others of their ilk, could be completely forthright about their suspicions of their
agents.

There is also the third category of Abwehr officer, although a much rarer one: the
officer who knew for certain that his agent was doubled, or at least had contact with the
enemy, but did nothing about it. This scenario is most apparent in the *Cheese* case, in the
period after Renato Levi returned to Italy from Egypt in summer 1941. Although he was
received rapturously by Helfferich in Rome and congratulated for his successful mission, a
subsequent meeting with Clemens Rossetti in Naples on 16-17 June did not go as well. The
Abwehr man had heard reports about Levi’s contact with the British Embassy in Belgrade in
late 1940, which is when the latter first informed the British that he was being sent to Egypt.
Levi demonstrated his “injured innocence” and claimed he could not work while under
suspicion, at which point Rossetti protested that Levi still had his support.

Levi, however, ran into more trouble in Venice while on vacation with Hans
Travaglio. His past as a double agent in France came back to haunt him when an unidentified
Abwehr officer visited to ask Levi about an agent named *Jean*. Levi admitted that he knew
the man, but claimed that he never knew he was a double agent operated by the French. He
also denied strongly that he was himself a double agent, as claimed by *Jean*. Travaglio
defended Levi before his fellow officer, but the double agent was rightly worried. The
Abwehr had amassed considerable, and worryingly accurate, material showing his collusion
with the Allies.106

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106 J.C. Robertson, “Cheese: The History of Mr. Rose from June 1941 to March 1944,” 4 April 1944,
KV 2/1133, pp.1-3.
The Germans did not act but, even if they had intended to, they were preempted by their Italian allies. Levi was arrested on the orders of Italian military intelligence on 2 August. They, apparently, had separate suspicions about his activities, and they also, allegedly, had no fondness for Helfferich and the Abwehr, leaving the strong possibility that there was an element of spite in the arrest of Levi.\textsuperscript{107} The spy never broke under interrogation, but the Italians, eager to keep him in prison, tried and convicted him on the trumped up charge of “anti-national activity,” for which the only mark against him was his Jewish heritage. On that basis he was imprisoned for being “socially dangerous.”\textsuperscript{108} The Abwehr officers close to Levi did nothing to help him get out of prison, despite several letters from him pleading for assistance. One reason may be that Rossetti and Travaglio were involved in a black market currency racket with Levi and, thus, were not unhappy to see a witness to their activities safely in an Italian prison.\textsuperscript{109}

Furthermore, there is solid evidence that, while no one knew for sure that Levi’s operation in Egypt had been “doubled”—although the contact in Belgrade was highly suspicious—Travaglio must have known by 1941 that Levi had operated as a double agent for the French in 1940. Ultimately, it was clear that he “was sufficiently scared of the Gestapo or the Russian Front to keep his views to himself.”\textsuperscript{110} Thus, “Nicosoff” was able to continue his program of misinformation from his Cairo base until late 1944. In any

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p.15.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., pp.16, 22.

\textsuperscript{110} J.C. Robertson, “Conversation with (Renato Levi) 3rd March 1944,” 6 March 1944, WO 169/24893, p.3.
professional and skeptical intelligence service, the mountain of evidence against Levi would have completely compromised any intelligence operation that he had touched.

Finally, there are officers like Rossetti, who do not fit into any of these categories. While, like Travaglio, he had solid evidence that Levi was disloyal, he also did nothing about it. Unlike Travaglio and any of the other officers discussed above, there is suggestion in both British and German sources that he was an Italian plant within the Abwehr. We see this notion in SIME papers on the Cheese case.\(^{111}\) The suggestion seems to be based on an intercepted and decrypted report from Herbert Kappler, the SD chief in Rome, sent to Berlin in September 1943. It stated that Helfferich had long been misled by the Italians, and that both “Rossini and Annabella Tabo” had been planted on Helfferich by the Italians. Annabella Tabo was Rossetti’s secretary, and Rossini could only be Rossetti himself.\(^{112}\) Circumstantial evidence comes from Thomas Ludwig, a colleague of Rossetti’s in Istanbul, who noted that he “employed Italian sources almost exclusively.”\(^{113}\) However, what little we know about Rossetti’s history, which is based on his own account during his May 1945 interrogation, contradicts the idea that he was an Italian mole inside the Abwehr, not least because he makes no mention of it despite his self-satisfied demeanour during that questioning.\(^{114}\)

Whatever the case, Rossetti was an eminently bad officer who ended up running further double-cross cases when recalled to Italy in late 1943.

The attitudes of these officers regarding the possibility of being double-crossed can not be explained away by citing ignorance of deception and double-agents. Although

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\(^{111}\) T.A. Robertson (MI5) to J.C. Robertson (SIME), 3 June 1944, KV 2/1133.

\(^{112}\) “Summary Report No. 416,” 9 September 1943, HW 13/170.

\(^{113}\) “Statement by Thomas LUDWIG,” 13 June 1945, KV 2/2652, Section VII.

\(^{114}\) “Interrogation Report on Hauptmann RABE Kurt Clemens,” RG 226, Entry 174, Box 26. NARA.
certainly more rudimentary than what the Allies developed, the Abwehr, and particularly Abt. III, used double agents regularly, although their method of deception was inefficient and too highly centralized in section IID. Emily Jane Wilson argues that the Abwehr knew the British were using double agents, but never understood that it was an extensive and systematic activity. This is a likely explanation, although it was not beyond the realm of the German imagination to run an elaborate double-cross network: from March 1942 until November 1943 the SD and Abt. III conducted Operation *North Pole*, during which many MI6 and SOE agents were caught in the Netherlands, and many were played back against their controllers, eliciting further captures. Although never used for military deception, it was a highly successful counter-intelligence operation. While this so-called *Englandspiel* was exceptional in its size and complexity, many officers, such as Reile himself, operated small-scale *Spielen* against the SOE in particular.

We return, then, to Trevor-Roper’s basic conclusion about the Abwehr: it was a weak organization that gave inexperienced and sometimes corrupt officers room to operate with impunity. As Michael Howard writes, “the Abwehr increasingly came to show the weaknesses which beset all clandestine services unless they are continually and rigorously

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supervised.”118 It devolved into “a racket,”119 and a place where dissidents, malingerers, and shirkers looking to avoid real military service found work.120

It is also essential to note that, by the the time the Mediterranean double-cross system really got underway in early 1943, the Abwehr had reached a point of no return. It had, during the first two years of the war, “been borne along, a happy parasite, on the success of the German Army,” but, as the Allies took the offensive in 1942, it could not bear the demands placed on it, and its position within the regime began to disintegrate.121 Thus, when the Abwehr failed disastrously to provide warning of the Torch landings in North Africa in November 1942, the RSHA began to move forcefully into human military intelligence, to that point the exclusive preserve of Canaris’s organization. Already, in early 1942, Heydrich had revised in his favour the 1936 division of powers between the SD and the Abwehr and, with the subsequent creation of an SD unit for military intelligence, the writing was on the wall.122 The assassination of Heydrich in June 1942 led to his eventual replacement by Ernst Kaltenbrunner, a man who shared none of his predecessor's lingering affection for Canaris, and who was determined to crush the Abwehr.123 Thus, with every passing day, Abwehr officers who felt the RSHA breathing down their neck, like Helfferich and Reile, were less

118 Howard, Strategic Deception, p.48.
120 Kahn, Hitler’s Spies, p.236.
and less likely to do anything about their suspicions, lest they provide their rivals with more ammunition on the ongoing RSHA / Abwehr struggle.

The Abwehr’s reaction to their mounting failures only worsened their core problems. Beginning in 1943 it decentralized even further, and began passing more and more information to operational commands directly, bypassing Berlin and the high-level military evaluation units. The RIS, which noted this trend in August 1943, judged that “from being a somewhat shapeless organisation controlled from, and routing through, Berlin, the Abwehr is becoming a number of decentralised groups each controlled more and more by the local service commanders.” The centralized evaluation system, such as it was, now fell into a state of terminal decay. It was a response typical of the Abwehr and of Nazi Germany: as the RIS noted, rather than improve their sources, the Abwehr merely sought to increase the distribution of bad information.\textsuperscript{124}

Nor was there any superior body that would, or could, take the Abwehr in hand. The German Army was never much interested in strategic intelligence, a bias towards the operational and tactical that was only enhanced after the victories of 1940.\textsuperscript{125} None of the military intelligence evaluation units were able to give synoptic assessments, and in this sense they were just as scattered, decentralized, and incapable of judging sources as the Abwehr was.

The Abwehr, and German intelligence as a whole, had been weak since the beginning of the war, but only in 1943 was a Mediterranean double-cross system in place to take

\textsuperscript{124} “Abwehr Incompetence,” HW 19/347, p.5.

advantage of it. Until October 1942 there were only a few double agents, and before spring 1943 there was an insufficient organization and lack of signals intelligence to inform the workings of a systematic double-cross operation throughout the theatre. By April 1943 all of these components were in place. The influx of new agents was organized within the Thirty Committee system while overlapping structures, such as the reformed SIME Special Section and the Penetration Committee, brought the running of double agents more into line with that in Britain by providing some balance between counter-intelligence and deception operations. The creation of the Mediterranean double-cross system in 1943 was the final result of the convergence between UK practices and those in the former theatre, a trend that began in late 1941. MI5 in London was essential to this convergence, especially by ensuring that adequate signals intelligence reached Cairo. This result came just in time as, starting immediately after their formation in March 1943, the Thirty Committees turned all their resources to drawing German attention away from Sicily, the target of Operation Husky in July.
Chapter Three

The Fake Siege of Gibraltar

Security and Counter-Intelligence to September 1943

The first six months of 1943 was the pivotal time in Mediterranean double-cross. By March, the Thirty Committee system was in place across the entirety of North Africa and the Middle East, and the double agents were ready to deceive the Germans about Allied intentions to invade Sicily in early July. The invasion of the “soft underbelly” of Sicily and, in September, of mainland Italy are rightly viewed as the high points in Mediterranean deception operations, as the Allied strategic focus shifted decisively to northwestern France in 1944. As we saw in chapter two, though, the development of the Thirty Committees also created a framework for parallel “penetration” agents (largely kept separate from the deception “special agents”) which SIME and ISLD could use in their battle against German intelligence.

However, the development of penetration double-cross did not meet the hopes invested in it by SIME and, in particular, Dick White and MI5. It continued to progress at a slow rate and in a relatively piecemeal fashion, while deception advanced by leaps and bounds. It is not surprising that this was the case, because penetration had only been institutionalized, and recognized officially as an aspect of the new system, in March of 1943. The period before the invasion of Italy in September would thus be a period of testing and consolidation in an area which SIME officers had little experience. Compounding their inexperience was the unwillingness of both SIME and ‘A’ Force to advance counter-
intelligence concerns at the expense of deception. Furthermore, the security and counter-
intelligence situation in the Middle East and North Africa was not so dire that double agents
had to be employed immediately to solve pressing problems.

There was one place in the Mediterranean, however, where double-cross operations
were not only important, but vital to the safety of Allied territory: it was in Gibraltar,
beginning in late 1942, that British-controlled double agents parried the thrusts of Axis
saboteurs. They were, in the words of MI5’s Guy Liddell, “the only barrier between German
saboteurs and our ships.”¹ In comparing the use of penetration agents in Gibraltar with points
elsewhere in the Mediterranean, we can see again how important the operational environment
and geography were in determining the purpose of double agents. Even though operational
factors militated against the heavy development of penetration in areas dominated by ‘A’
Force, the period from October 1942 to December 1943 was still an important one for the
building of a more systematic and advanced counter-intelligence operations in 1944.

I

The slow development of the counter-intelligence possibilities presented by Dick
White in early 1943 was not for a lack of initiative on the part of SIME and MI5. Both were
keen to develop double-cross into something more akin to that in Britain, where deception
and counter-intelligence were equally important and intertwined objectives of the system.
MI5 contributed by sending a team of officers to help SIME in July 1943; upon receiving
them, SIME showed “an almost embarrassing willingness” to learn from the experience of

¹ Liddell diaries, 23 June 1943, KV 4/191, p.310.
the Security Service. At that time, SIME had already sent James Robertson, the head of the Special Section, to London in June to consult with T.A. Robertson and study B1A’s methods in person.

Despite the cooperation on both sides, SIME faced a number of difficulties which hindered its progress in developing penetration double agents. The basic inexperience of SIME officers took time to overcome, even in top figures like the Syrian Defence Security Officer Douglas Roberts who, according to White, was energetic but had “little knowledge of C.E. [counter-espionage] technique.”

SIME also suffered from its placement on the military staff, a position that had once been advantageous in the early days of double-cross and deception. But, by early 1943, the strict personnel establishment of the army had constricted SIME’s ability to expand its staff, and their need for additional manpower led them to greater cooperation with ISLD, which was free from “red tape” and “rigid establishments.”

However, reliance on ISLD did not necessarily solve SIME’s officer shortage. By September 1943 ISLD was already planning for operations in the Balkans and, while they assured Raymond Maunsell — the head of SIME — that they wanted to continue their collaboration, the resources necessary to do so were being redirected elsewhere. The result was an official policy, proposed by ISLD’s Rodney Dennys and agreed to by SIME’s James Robertson, which acted as a substantial drag on the development of penetration channels: less

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2 Haylor (MI5) to Petrie (MI5), 24 July 1943, KV 4/234, p.1.
3 Liddell diaries, 19 June 1943, KV 4/191, p.298.
4 Dick White, “Report on Visit to the Middle East (January 26th to February 28th, 1943),” KV 4/240, p.3.
5 “Minutes and Notes on the Meeting of S.I.M.E. Representatives held at Beirut 12-13 Feb. 43,” KV 4/240, pp.4-5.
6 Dennys (ISLD) to Kirk (SIME), 4 October 1943, KV 4/197.
priority would be given to recruiting new double agents and, if a new agent was recruited, they would be built up as slowly as was plausible. This decision was a direct contrast with an earlier policy which called for the swift development of new channels. In effect, the new arrangement created an idling security and counter-intelligence system, not going anywhere but working just enough to keep the Abwehr content and not overtax ISLD’s resources.⁷ Although not official until October, the “idling” policy had been developing since January 1943, when ISLD began to slow their double-cross efforts as resources were stretched.⁸ Consequently, there was no flood of new agents available to work under the supervision the Penetration Committee, founded in March 1943.

Inexperience and limited resources were both important obstacles, but neither posed the severe impediment to penetration double agents that ‘A’ Force did. Despite the establishment of the Penetration Committee, separate from the ‘A’ Force-dominated 30 Committee in Cairo, the best agents were still all set aside for deception and, thus, unavailable for use by SIME and ISLD. The separate committee for counter-intelligence, which was unique to Cairo, showed plainly the different attitude that ‘A’ Force had towards double agents. In Britain there was no real division between counter-intelligence and deception while, in the Middle East, Clarke enforced a strict separation between the two: deception agents should never take part in counter-intelligence operations. Furthermore, the basic operating principles implemented by Clarke worked against the cultivation of penetration agents: no agent working on deception was ever allowed to meet their controller

⁸ Minutes of 30 Committee Meeting, 13 January 1943, WO 169/24887.
in person, and the vast majority were kept under lock and key, if they were not notional entirely.9

These rules meant, without question, that the counter-intelligence value of many agents was never exploited. Cheese was one channel that SIME had not used at all to gather information about who was on the other end. Indeed, as discussed in chapter two, as late as spring 1943 SIME did not even know for certain that it was an Abwehr case. The ability to use a channel to the enemy to learn more about their personalities and methods was a core component of double-cross in Britain, and the seeming Middle Eastern ignorance of that important aspect of double-cross troubled B1A when they analyzed the Cheese case in spring 1943. In their subsequent report, B1A pointed out how useful Snow had been as a counter-intelligence agent: he made regular contact with his controller in person, making six visits to the continent until the case was closed in 1941. Of course, B1A neglected to mention how Snow ran into difficulties because of his ongoing personal visits that led to the closing of his case.10

Even without knowledge of the dark side of the Snow case, Dudley Clarke was against his agents doing “double duty” in this way. No doubt he, and everyone else involved, had no desire to repeat what had happened when they asked Renato Levi to return to Italy in 1941, a trip that led to his arrest and which posed a potential threat to the viability of the channel in Cairo. It is understandable, after that example, that Clarke would require internment for, or a very close guard on, all deception channels. David Mure, one of Clarke’s acolytes and an ‘A’ Force officer in Baghdad and Beirut, was of the same opinion. He argued

10 “The Case of CHEESE @ LAMBERT,” 30 March 1943, WO 169/24893, pp.4-5.
that the incessant travels of the UK double agent *Tricycle* and his contacts with his Abwehr controller “Johnny” Jebsen — himself eventually recruited as a British agent named *Artist* — nearly destroyed the double-cross system when Jebsen was arrested in Portugal and taken back to Germany in April 1944. The timing of the arrest could not have been worse, coming just at the moment when the double agents were implementing the deception before *Overlord*. This fiasco was, according to Mure, due to London’s “continuing and fatal confusion of penetration with deception.”

There was no similar “confusion” in the Middle East, where penetration agents were definitely a separate group. Furthermore, it is clear that they were perceived as a second-tier collection. The language used to describe the various cases shows that penetration status was regarded as a way station on the road to deception, for those who were good enough. We see this view in the instance of agent *Monkey*, who was described in April 1943 as “still in the Penetration stage.” Similarly, *Cher Bébé* in Oran was, in May, being run as a penetration agent until he gained the confidence of the Abwehr.

Penetration agents and low-level deception agents were also left to scrape the bottom of the barrel for chicken feed, the true, verifiable, but trivial information used to build up an agent’s credibility in the estimation of the enemy service. Hoarding the best chicken feed for the top-level deception agents meant that, in both North Africa and the Middle East, good counter-intelligence agents withered away because ‘A’ Force was stingy with intelligence. In some cases committees would not even bother to recruit more agents, since they knew there

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13 Minutes of 37 Committee, 7 May 1943, WO 169/24888.
was no way to sustain them. This decision was taken by the Oran 41 Committee in March 1943, when they were presented with an opportunity to extend their control over the German spy network based in Spanish Morocco. The chance came to light when the Germans asked *El Gitano* and *Le Petit*, both double agents, to recruit more spies to work under them. Their case officer noted, however, that there was no point in pursuing it, as they did not have enough chicken feed to sustain their existing penetration agents.\(^{14}\)

Thus, in many ways, the entire Mediterranean double-cross system, both in principle and in practice, was rigged in favour of deception and against penetration. In terms of principle, the evolution of the Thirty Committees led to the formalization of most of Clarke’s preferences: agents were not to perform penetration and deception simultaneously; the committees were ultimately responsible to ‘A’ Force; and the best agents were saved for the deception side. In practice, the preference for deception went even further: the entire language surrounding the agents shows that deception was the purpose of the system; and most chicken feed was kept for the deception agents, even though that had never been explicit in the discussions of the Thirty Committee / Penetration Committee structure.

‘A’ Force was able to maintain its preeminence because the SIME leadership bought into Clarke’s ideals, even though they did show a genuine interest in the methods of B1A and wanted to replicate them. Some mid-level SIME officers were less enamored with the preference for deception, but they were unable to change policy. One of their number was Dugald Malcolm, the DSO Cyprus, who complained in August 1943 about his inability to use special agent channels for counter-intelligence. James Robertson, the head of the Special

\(^{14}\) T.B. to T.D., 24 March 1943, WO 169/24897.
Section, responded in a manner that demonstrated how fully he and Maunsell had sided with ‘A’ Force. Regarding the rules laid down by the Thirty Committees, he did admit they could seem frustrating:

Admittedly — and I am sure neither GALVESTON [i.e. Dudley Clarke] nor Major Hamer will take exception to this remark — this GALVESTONIAN rule has from time to time proved a little irksome to us on those occasions when we have wished to use channels (which inevitably, when we have created them, we tend to regard with a paternal fondness), for contre-espionage purposes which conflict, or may conflict, with those of GALVESTON.

However, although sympathetic, Robertson supported the existing system, despite his own positive impression after seeing B1A in practice in June 1943. In the end, he told Malcolm that, as the head of the Special Section, he had the best view of both ‘A’ Force and SIME, and he felt that the Thirty Committee rules ensured “the smooth running” of all double agent cases.15

SIME’s willingness to subordinate itself to ‘A’ Force is also clear in a report they submitted to Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ) in September 1943. In it, SIME argued that deception channels were of primary importance, since operational necessities took “precedence of the narrower aims of counter-intelligence.”16 SIME admitted, quite openly, that its own job was less important than ‘A’ Force’s. The subjugation of SIME’s prerogatives to ‘A’ Force’s was apparent even earlier when, in late summer 1942, the Quicksilver party landed in Syria. Initially, because the group appeared to have substantial contacts with Axis sympathizers in Syria, the channel was considered for counter-intelligence uses. By the end

15 J.C. Robertson (SIME) to Malcolm (SIME), 23 August 1943, WO 169/24886.
of October, however, French and British officers met and decided that it was more important to use the case for ‘A’ Force purposes.\footnote{J.C. Robertson, “Quicksilver,” 18 July 1944, WO 169/24892, p.2.}

SIM\^E’s sense of complacency regarding counter-espionage and double-cross was apparent to MI\^5, and was reported to Director-General David Petrie by the head of the MI\^5 mission to Cairo in August.\footnote{Haylor (MI\^5) to Petrie (MI\^5), 5 August 1943, KV 4/234, p.1.} The concerns of the Security Service, and their belief that SIME was complacent, flowed from two sources: one was that, after having such success with their own double-cross system, they naturally felt it was a model for the Middle East, and MI\^5 was probably not as attuned to the drastically different operational environment in the Mediterranean as they should have been; secondly, MI\^5 still felt that SIME was not assertive enough in tackling the counter-intelligence task that faced them, and the unsystematic use of penetration agents was just one symptom of their slipshod approach.

SIM\^E may well have been somewhat complacent, but the security and counter-intelligence situation in the Middle East was better than MI\^5 thought. The environment was still one that favoured the spy over the counter-spy, but the Axis, and the Germans in particular, had never taken advantage of the opportunities presented to them in the Middle East.

The German failure meant that, by 1943, the security danger that the porous borders and restive populations of the Middle East posed to Britain never really materialized. Egypt had seen large-scale internments of enemy aliens at the beginning of the war,\footnote{Dovey, “Maunsell and Mure,” p.61.} and pro-German activity in Syria and Iraq had been repressed heavily by 1942.\footnote{Playfair, \textit{The Mediterranean and the Middle East II}, pp.201-205.} The major area of concern was neutral Turkey, which was crawling with spies and intelligence agents from all
the belligerent and neutral powers. It was also the only land-crossing for Axis agents attempting to infiltrate the Middle East from Europe.

The attitude of the Turks themselves was thus of considerable importance. The government of President İnönü managed “one of the major feats of diplomatic tightrope walking in the annals of recent international relations” by refusing to join either side and still avoid alienating either the Axis or the Allies.21 The Turkish Secret Service, however, tended to lean more to the Allies, and offered useful collaboration with SIME and ISLD to restrict the flow of Axis agents into the Middle East. The heart of the cooperation was the Anglo-Turkish Security Bureau, which Dick White called “the most useful piece of C.E. [counter-espionage] machinery available to S.I.M.E. in the whole area.”22 The most important aspect of this Turkish collaboration for the British was that it was genuine, whereas Turkish help to the Germans tended to be bogus.23

The Turkish “efforts” with the Germans appear to have been extensive, particularly in anti-British sabotage operations. It is worth quoting a Section V paper at length on this matter:

An entertaining example of such Turco-German ‘collaboration’ was a partly fictitious sabotage organisation controlled by the Turks which was meant to deliver German weapons and sabotage material to Syria. The material was in fact intercepted by the Turks who gave us samples. The Turks even supplied lists of sabotage actions supposed to have been committed by this organisation in Syria. These lists appeared in ISOS traffic and were interesting because the Turks themselves did not generally confide in us the details of their deceptive enterprises.24

22 White, “Report on Visit to the Middle East,” KV 4/240, p.3.
23 “Use of ISOS by Section V During the War,” HW 19/321, p.25.
24 Ibid., p.25.
The British helped by “supplying accounts of accidental fires and explosions which could be passed off as acts of sabotage by the notional organisation in Syria” and, on one occasion in 1944, staging a fake sabotage in Lebanon.25 Thus, it appears that the Turks did much of SIME’s counter-intelligence and counter-sabotage work for them, a fact which SIME acknowledged in September 1943.26

Consequently, Turkey was far from a springboard for German intelligence operations against the Middle East: instead, it was a vital choke point that did much to control and reduce the tide of Axis infiltration. The effectiveness of Anglo-Turkish security and counter-intelligence measures is evidenced by the fact that the Axis often sent agents into Syria by sea or air, and not through the heavily monitored frontier with Turkey. Indeed, Maunsell later recollected that entry by air or sea was the only viable method for the Axis after 1941.27 So, even though the Middle East was not like Britain — a “water-walled bulwark, still secure and confident from foreign purposes,” as Shakespeare’s Duke of Austria put it — Axis spies were not able to cross into the region with impunity.28 For those who did get through, diligent security work ensured that they were not at large for long.29 ISOS also occasionally gave forewarning of impending spies. So, while the Middle East certainly did see much more leakage of information than Britain did, the security situation there was handled very well by the time the double-cross system got going. With the Turks operating their own double

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26 “Security and Counter-Intelligence,” WO 204/12907, pp.7-9. The role of the Turks was elaborated further in a report by Dick White after his December 1945 visit to the Middle East. “Paper No. 19: Security Intelligence Middle East (S.I.M.E.),” KV 4/383.
27 Papers of Brigadier R.J. Maunsell, 80/30/1, p.8. IWM.
agents, there was no pressing need for SIME to expand their penetration agents at the expense of ‘A’ Force.

The Algiers-based branch of the double-cross system operated in a different security environment. Security forces there relied heavily on the existing French counter-intelligence system, which had done well to round up many German agents, even before the Allied landings in November 1942.³⁰ The Germans felt this French success keenly, as Oskar Reile, an Abwehr officer at Ast Paris, later admitted. The Abwehr could not meet the demands placed on them in North Africa, and Abt. I had very little success there. This was why Reile, who was actually an counter-intelligence officer of Abt. III, was asked to infiltrate agents into Tunisia, a process that resulted in the *Gilbert* case.³¹ Algiers, like Cairo, also had a neutral country to deal with but, unlike Turkey, Spanish Morocco was a haven for the Abwehr.

Even with support from the Spanish that was more substantial, and far less deceptive, than that provided by the Turks, German intelligence operations launched from Spanish Morocco were not particularly successful either. The region also remained an active zone of military operations until the Axis surrender in Tunisia on 13 May 1943 and, after that, was a vital zone as the launching pad for many troops bound for Sicily in July. Consequently, because of Abwehr failure and military operational imperatives, the double agents controlled by the Forty Committees were deception-oriented and were not used as counter-intelligence channels, at least during 1943. Security in North Africa remained quite good, even without the substantial use of penetration double agents: a study of ISOS in June 1943 showed that, while there was a lot of uncontrolled leakage of information from the AFHQ zone, only about

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10% was true, the rest being little more than nonsense. The 40 Committee thus concluded that “uncontrolled sources are no real threat to security and that all they do is to build up controlled sources.”

Of course, it would have been a counter-intelligence boon had a top rank agent like Ram in Algiers, or Quicksilver in Beirut, been allowed to travel to Paris or Athens and report back on German personalities and operations. But, after the experience of Renato Levi, no one involved in Britain’s covert war in the Mediterranean, least of all Dudley Clarke, was going to allow that at the pivotal time in the struggle for the Middle Sea. Importantly, SIME agreed with the general outline of ‘A’ Force double-cross policy. The result was that, while there was an official counter-intelligence dimension of the Thirty Committee system after March 1943, it was not used systematically before the end of the year.

II

Still, even if unsystematic in nature, there were penetration operations both before and after the double-cross system was finalized in March 1943, and they were of some security and counter-intelligence value. At the most basic level, the fact that most penetration agents met with their controllers in person provided Allied counter-intelligence with regular updates on the activities of German, Italian, and Spanish intelligence in Turkey and Spanish Morocco. In this way the agents formed a useful supplement to ISOS, which was never completely comprehensive and which could not reveal much local detail. One particularly

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32 Minutes of 40 Committee Meeting, 25 June 1943, WO 169/24888. Although uncontrolled sources may not have represented genuine leakages on information, they were a menace to Allied deception measures, as discussed in chapter four.
valuable agent in this regard was *Whiskers*, an Oran-based spy who worked for Vierna, the Spanish Consul in that city. He reported regularly to his Allied controllers on the pro-Axis activities of Spanish officials, who often used diplomatic cover to operate espionage rings.\textsuperscript{33} SIME maintained similar contact with the Abwehr in Turkey. However, it is notable that all of the agents controlled from Athens were deception channels and, consequently, SIME had no agent who could maintain personal contact with that important Abwehr station.

A more advanced method of using counter-intelligence agents than simply collecting information was to involve them directly in enemy intelligence operations. Such an “insider” agent was more valuable than one who acted independent of a larger network. However, managing an agent’s interactions with other, uncontrolled spies was tricky work, and required careful handling by the case officer and the relevant Thirty Committee. The challenges of this method meant that some opportunities were passed over, so as not to endanger an ongoing double agent. Such was the case with *Cheese*. B1A noted that the channel had presented many counter-intelligence opportunities, not least of which was using it to investigate Abwehr smuggling pipelines used to get payment for their agents from Turkey to Cairo. The smuggling routes had, of course, not been investigated because of ‘A’ Force’s fear of alerting the Germans and compromising *Cheese* as a deception channel.\textsuperscript{34}

Sometimes, however, ‘A’ Force channels were forced into contact with other Abwehr agents. On one occasion in February 1943, *The Pessimists* were asked by Athens to write two letters — the contents of which are unclear — and deliver them to two men in Beirut, both of whom were known to SIME as associates of pro-Axis groups. The Beirut committee did not

\textsuperscript{33} Minutes of 40 Committee Meeting, 9 July 1943, WO 169/24888.

\textsuperscript{34} “The Case of CHEESE,” 30 March 1943, KV 2/1133, pp.6-7.
feel they could refuse without casting doubt on the agent, and on 6 February one of The Pessimists himself went into Beirut to deliver the letters. He could only find one of the men, and the recipient was completely puzzled by the letter. To avoid such unwelcome tasks in the future, The Pessimists reported after the mission to the Abwehr “masters” that security was tight in Syria, two Axis spies had recently been executed, and that they did not want any further missions that could compromise their cover. Furthermore, SIME was unable to fully investigate the recipients of the letter for fear of compromising The Pessimists.35

SIME did allow other, less important agents to become entangled in German schemes, and they proved useful to counter-intelligence and security. Doleful provides a good, pre-Thirty Committee example of an agent who was inserted into an existing enemy plan in order to investigate and unravel it. The opportunity came when, in November 1942, the Abwehr in Istanbul asked Doleful if, on his next trip to Iraq on the Taurus Express, he would smuggle a wireless set and hand it over to a specified man when the train stopped in Mosul. If the exchange failed, he was to take the set to Baghdad and leave it at a pre-arranged address.36 SIME decided to pursue the opportunity and, although it was slowed by train delays and a derailment at the Syrian frontier in December, the set eventually made it to Baghdad.

In the meantime, thanks to the revelation that there was an existing organization in Mosul which Doleful was meant to contact, officers of the Combined Intelligence Centre Iraq (CICI) were able to uncover a large espionage and subversion organization, consisting of

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36 Thomson (SIME) to Maunsell (SIME), 5 November 1942, WO 169/24895.
anti-British Iraqis. Doleful also made contact with the organization in Baghdad, and CICI decided to monitor those men with the hope of uncovering further spies. The subversives were, however, so incompetent that they never managed to make radio contact with Istanbul. CICI reached the end of their patience by September 1943 and arrested the members of the group. Despite the failure of the mission, the Abwehr in Istanbul was convinced that Doleful had done his job to perfection, and tried to get further agents to Baghdad to operate the wireless set. None of them ever made it successfully. The entire affair is one of the earliest examples of a successful double-cross penetration plan, although it remained a one-off scheme that was not part of a systematic use of penetration agents.

Penetration operations therefore had reasonable, if intermittent and unsystematic, successes in late 1942 and 1943. There was, however, one element of double-cross that has often been viewed as having higher security value, in particular, and it is an aspect that relied on deception agents in addition to penetration cases. Adam Shelley, a student of British intelligence in the Middle East, summarized it in the following manner:

the relationship between double cross agents, whether for deception or penetration, and counter-intelligence should be regarded as mutually advantageous rather than antagonistic, since if the enemy trusted the loyalty of agents who were under Allied control, there was less chance he would replace them with agents who would remain loyal to him.

This concept, which can be termed “deceptive security,” since it secured Allied territory by deceiving the Germans into thinking they had a functioning spy apparatus, is a largely

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37 Minutes of 30 Committee Meetings, 1, 8, 15 December 1942, WO 169/24887.
40 Shelley, “British Intelligence in the Middle East, 1939-1946,” p.139.
unquestioned one.\textsuperscript{41} Officials both in the UK and Mediterranean systems assumed it was a functional and successful concept,\textsuperscript{42} and Shelley cites a SIME paper on the subject to buttress his point.\textsuperscript{43} Another example of this assumption came in November 1942: the double-crossers in Beirut argued that, through their mere existence and supposed activities, the agents *Quicksilver, The Pessimists, Crude, Smooth,* and *Nasty* provided “a contra-espionage operation by substitution, which could have effects out of all proportion to the resources involved on our side.”\textsuperscript{44} Deceptive security was thus seen as a cheaply bought benefit of the double-cross system that greatly enhanced regional security.

However, it is worth questioning whether deceptive security was actually so effective, at least in 1943, the period referred to in the SIME report. In fact, the evidence suggests that it was not all it was purported to be. Hinsley and Simkins support this conclusion, as they are equivocal about the value of Mediterranean double-cross as a form of deceptive security. They write that, although the “effectiveness [of the Mediterranean agents] as a counter-intelligence measure could not be so great” as in the UK, “they perhaps went some way towards persuading the Abwehr that its requirements were being met in Egypt and north Africa.”\textsuperscript{45} This is hardly a ringing endorsement of the effectiveness of double-cross in this regard. Of course, it is impossible to know if the Germans would have sent further spies had

\textsuperscript{41} The use of the term “deceptive security” to describe this concept is found in an ‘A’ Force report from 1945. Although the term does not appear elsewhere, it is the best and most succinct description of the phenomenon, and has been adopted in this dissertation. The same report uses the term “positive deception” to describe when agents were used actively to deceive the Germans about Allied military operations. See “Report on the Activities of No2 Tac HQ ‘A’ Force Sixth Army Group, Part One,” RG 319, Entry 101, Box 4, Folder 79, pp.66-7. NARA.


\textsuperscript{43} Shelley cites “Security and Counter-Intelligence,” WO 204/12907.

\textsuperscript{44} “Report for week Nov. 6th - 12th, 1942,” WO 169/24886.

\textsuperscript{45} Hinsley & Simkins, *British Intelligence IV,* p.229.
the double-cross system been less extensive. Perhaps they diminished their efforts slightly, but throughout 1943 there was no clear let-up in the number of spies and saboteurs who were captured trying to enter Allied territory.

One explanation, and it forms part of Hinsley’s and Simkins’s point, is that the region was much more porous than the island fortress of the United Kingdom; but this explanation is not fully persuasive in itself. As has been discussed, the frontier with Turkey was monitored closely, and active Turkish operations against German intelligence did much to staunch the flow of agents. Border security was tight enough to persuade the Germans and Italians frequently to try and land agents in Syria by air and sea, a situation similar to that in the UK. Thus, although a contributing factor to the practical weakness of the “deceptive security” concept, the geography of the region is not a sufficient explanation for the problems with deceptive security.

A more compelling explanation for the Germans’ continuing efforts to send more spies throughout 1943, despite having apparently quality agents in place, was the downturn in their military fortunes after late 1942. The destruction of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad, the collapse in North Africa, and the invasion of Sicily all led the Abwehr to insert as many agents as possible across the Mediterranean, lest they lose their forward espionage bases in the Balkans, which was apparently threatened thanks to Allied deception measures which convinced the Germans that an invasion of Greece was imminent. The fear of invasion as a motivating factor can be seen in SIME’s monthly reports on the number of agents captured. The greatest number of spies attempted to infiltrate the Middle East in June-July 1943, just
before the invasion of Sicily, and in September, during the invasion of mainland Italy.\footnote{DSO Syria, “Summary No. 14, for period 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943,”; “Summary No. 15, for period 1 Aug. 43 to 30 Sept 43,” WO 208/3091.}

Mid-1943 also saw the German military relying more heavily on the Abwehr’s intelligence as other sources (aerial reconnaissance, wireless interception, etc.) became less regular and reliable, especially when they had no contact on land between May and July 1943, leading to a further need for human intelligence.

Another reason why deceptive security was a chimera in 1943, and it is probably the most important one, is the nature of the Abwehr organization and the manner in which it recruited agents. As noted in chapter two, the most prominent feature of the organization was its lack of centralization, where each Ast and KO operated without reference to or direction from Berlin. Their disorganization reduced the effectiveness of deceptive security, which was based on the notion that the spies controlled by the Allies represented the German espionage network in the region. In reality, there was no guiding brain of German intelligence that monitored and assessed all espionage efforts.

Consequently, there were overlapping, uncoordinated, and competing networks throughout the Mediterranean. Operating against the Middle East were Abwehr stations in Sofia, Athens, Salonika, Istanbul, Ankara, and Adana. As if that were not enough, Abwehrstellen in Italy and as far away as France would occasionally send agents into the region; and none of the Asts, as we saw in chapter two, was aware of the specific agents that the others were running. Even had they known, the competitive nature of the Abwehr and the Nazi regime itself meant that each recruiter wanted his own star agents, no matter what
overlap and inefficiency that might cause.\textsuperscript{47} The situation was even more complex in North Africa, where the Spanish often acted as proxies for the Abwehr stations in Spanish Morocco, and where multiple Asts from France sent their own agents. Double-cross counter-intelligence operations in 1943 were thus valuable only in an intermittent and unsystematic manner. Deceptive security could not function effectively when the enemy intelligence effort was so fragmented. But, even though the Germans kept sending spies, actual Allied and Turkish security was good enough to stop any danger they might have posed.

III

German sabotage in the Middle East was similarly disorganized and presented no real threat to Allied territory: in March 1943, SIME concluded “that the Axis are much dissatisfied with the results of their efforts to provide arms and sabotage materials for Syria via Turkey.”\textsuperscript{48} Security on the Turco-Syrian frontier was tight enough that, as with their spies, the Germans turned to landing arms and matériel on the coast by submarine, although such efforts were rudimentary and had no appreciable effect.\textsuperscript{49} In North Africa the threat was virtually non-existent, as Admiral Canaris, the head of the Abwehr, had ordered that no operations be launched from Spanish Morocco in order to protect its ostensible neutrality.\textsuperscript{50} Thus, despite the vast area to protect and the real potential for successful Axis sabotage, there was no severe danger and double-cross was never required to help penetrate and foil the

\textsuperscript{47} Maunsell Papers, pp.27-29. IWM.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid; DSO Syria, Summaries No. 9, 10, 11, 16, WO 208/3091.
\textsuperscript{50} Curry, “1944 Supplement,” KV 3/5, p.78.
plans of the Abwehr’s Abt. II. Indeed, SIME did not even have a dedicated counter-sabotage section until June 1943, at which point they were prodded to create one by Victor Rothschild, the MI5 expert on the subject.\textsuperscript{51}

In some cases the British actively avoided opportunities for their agents to infiltrate the German sabotage world. In February 1943 there was such an chance, when the German controller of *The Pessimists* tried to link them up with local saboteurs in Syria. Although the 30 Committee did not expect anything to actually happen, they decided that under no circumstances should *The Pessimists* be used to investigate and uncover a sabotage network. They did not want any contact with uncontrolled German agents, and the committee stressed “that the greatest precautions should be taken not to embroil the PESSIMISTS in any sabotage organisation which may exist in SYRIA.” The DSO Syria was, however, directed to undertake an investigation, as long as it did not involve or affect the double agent.\textsuperscript{52} Of course, the 30 Committee could afford to shun such an opportunity to curtail Nazi sabotage in the region because, as noted above, the Turks were already containing the German sabotage effort.

In Gibraltar, however, the security authorities did not have the luxury of having someone else do their work for them. Double agents were not only needed for counter-sabotage, but were the primary line of defence against such attacks. At first it may seem counter-intuitive that Gibraltar was more vulnerable than the Middle East, as it is a very small place with a single narrow frontier with Spain. There were, however, peculiar security problems that left the Rock vulnerable to sabotage, and they required an active and

\textsuperscript{51} Liddell diaries, 13 July 1943, KV 4/192, p.34.

\textsuperscript{52} Minutes of 30 Committee Meetings, 2 and 10 February 1943, WO 169/24887.
innovative defence against individual infiltrators. That innovative effort — the use of double agents — was successful because it was tailored to take advantage of the substantial flaws in the German-led sabotage effort.\(^{53}\)

The double-cross system in Gibraltar is an important contrasting example with the Thirty Committee system, although the former was eventually absorbed into the Thirty Committee network in late 1943. Just as we saw in the contrasts between London and Cairo, the operational environment and geography largely determined how double-cross developed and to what purposes it was turned. The specific circumstances of Gibraltar created a powerful counter-intelligence double-cross system which, until late 1943, had no involvement in ‘A’ Force deceptions and the broader double-cross system headquartered in Cairo and Algiers.

Gibraltar, at only two square miles in size in 1939, was tiny in area but large in strategic significance.\(^{54}\) A British possession since 1713, it was a vital point that allowed the Royal Navy to control access to the Mediterranean from the west, and, with its deep harbour,

\(^{53}\) Until very recently the only source which discussed Gibraltar double-cross was Hinsley & Simkins’ brief treatment in the fourth volume of the intelligence official history. In 2007 Megan E. Cokely studied some of the agents, but her focus was on how they helped investigations by the British of Spanish breaches of neutrality. A 2009 book by Gareth Stockey has used a number of the same MI5 files as this chapter, but it does not reference D.J. Scherr’s comprehensive postwar report (KV 4/259-60), and Stockey’s discussion of double agents is based on references from Hinsley & Simkins. The most substantial source is *Spooks*, a history of MI5 which was released around the same time as Christopher Andrew’s official history. The final chapter of the volume on World War II is about Gibraltar double-cross. It is, however, mostly a dense narrative and does not systematically analyze the development of the system, nor how it fit into the broader use of double-cross in World War II. See Hinsley & Simkins, *British Intelligence IV*, pp.160, 204-5; Megan E. Cokely, “British counter-intelligence in Gibraltar: Deciphering Spanish ‘neutrality’ during the Second World War,” *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 20, no. 2 (2007): pp.129-153; Gareth Stockey, *Gibraltar: ‘A Dagger in the Spine of Spain?’* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), p.153; Thomas Hennessey & Claire Thomas, *Spooks: The Unofficial History of MI5 from Agent ZIGZAG to the D-Day Deception 1939-45* (Stroud, U.K.: Amberley, 2010), pp.455-83.

extended their reach much further into the Atlantic. Although the location of Gibraltar made it a strategic pillar of the British war effort, geography had a negative side as well. The problem was Spain, of which Gibraltar is a very small appendage, attached to the province of Cádiz, and surrounded by either water or Spanish territory, on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar. The real concern was the attitude of the Spanish government, led by the far-right General Francisco Franco, who sympathized with the Axis and coveted the Rock. There was much diplomatic wrangling in 1940 as the British tried to keep Spain neutral, and Franco wanted to get as much territory and aid as possible from the Third Reich, while doing as little actual fighting as possible on the Axis side in return.\textsuperscript{55}

Although the efforts of the British Ambassador, Sir Samuel Hoare, were influential in keeping Spain at least a non-belligerent, Franco ultimately stayed out of the war because Germany was not willing to pay the price that he demanded. Germany rebuffed Spain’s demands even though, by late 1940, Hitler very much wanted to conquer Gibraltar, along with other points in the British Empire, to force his last belligerent enemy out of the war and prop up Italy’s already sagging war effort in North Africa and Greece.\textsuperscript{56} Hitler, however, balked at providing the massive swathes of French North Africa and large amounts of financial and military aid that Franco wanted.\textsuperscript{57} By December, when Hitler, through Admiral Canaris, sought final approval for German troops to pass through Spain for Operation Felix,

the capture of Gibraltar, Franco refused. The Caudillo made abundantly clear the sundry issues, including everything from Spain’s poor infrastructure to its weakened military, that inhibited any belligerent action. Hitler cancelled the operation as, without Spanish support, he was unwilling to invade Spain and fight his way to Gibraltar, creating a distraction from the upcoming invasion of the Soviet Union (this is one instance, at least, where Hitler did not repeat one of Napoleon’s mistakes). Hitler tried one more time in early 1941, but was again rebuffed when Franco cited another litany of crippling problems which apparently rendered Spain incapable of belligerency.58

Although the danger of a seizure of Gibraltar receded, and never really returned, there were still substantial threats to the British outpost. Spain remained pro-Axis and its territory was rife with intelligence agents, many of whom had their sights trained on the Rock. That would have been bad enough. Even worse, and this is what made security at Gibraltar especially difficult, was the influx of some 8000 Spanish labourers who crossed over the frontier with Spain daily. They were essential to the operation of the British enclave, particularly the all-important dock facilities. However, among their number Axis money found many who were willing to act as spies and saboteurs.59

The security authorities thus faced a real dilemma, a fact they recognized clearly. D.J. Scherr, the officer who ran the double agents, later wrote the following about their situation: “the most assiduous and ingeniously contrived security precautions cannot adequately counteract geographical reality.”60 Thus, he and his colleagues accepted that basic espionage

60 Ibid., p.17.
was impossible to stop: the sheer number of potential spies who crossed the frontier daily, along with the German observation posts on either side of the Strait, were difficult to overcome — although British protests to Spain eventually led to the dismantling of the Abwehr’s infra-red ship observation system at the Strait in late 1942, while German visual observations posts continued to operate on Spanish territory into 1944.\(^\text{61}\) Saboteurs, however, could, concealed in the crush of 8000 workers, enter the fortress with a good chance of smuggling in an explosive device. That meant they had potential to disrupt the vital operations of Gibraltar, as Spanish workers had access to the naval and commercial anchorages, the airfield, the oil and petroleum stores, the ammunition storage tunnels in the Rock, and other places where even a small bomb could cause major damage. So, unlike espionage, sabotage could not be accepted as a cost of doing business on the Rock. A simple perimeter defence, however, would never work. Prevention had to be based on an active defence and the penetration of the enemy network.\(^\text{62}\) Double agents became the primary means of doing so.

The man in charge of foiling any sabotage attempt was the Defence Security Officer, Maj. H.C. “Tito” Medlam, who had been in his position since late 1940.\(^\text{63}\) The office itself had only been in existence since 1936.\(^\text{64}\) The Abwehr-led sabotage organization that he faced was expansive but, as was typical of the German secret services, it lacked clear central

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\(^\text{62}\) Kirby-Green (DSO Gibraltar) to Petrie (MI5), October 1945, KV 4/259.

\(^\text{63}\) “History of S.I.D.,” p.84.

\(^\text{64}\) “Report on the Operations of Overseas Control in Connection with the Establishment of D.S.O.’s in the British Colonies and Liaison with Security Authorities in the Dominions during 1939-1945,” KV 4/18, Section X.
direction and authority. The ostensible master was Abteilung II of the Abwehr, led by Sonderführer Hans Krueger at KO Spain in Madrid. His subordinate in charge of Gibraltar and the surrounding area was Friedrich Wolfgang Blaum.\textsuperscript{65} They relied on Spanish sympathizers to act as recruiters and agents, with their primary associate being Lt.-Col. Eleuterio Sánchez Rubio y Davila of the Spanish Army, a man the DSO had been monitoring since April 1936.\textsuperscript{66} By early 1942 he was known to MI5 as “one of the most dangerous members of the enemy sabotage organisation in Southern Spain.”\textsuperscript{67} Under Sánchez Rubio was Emilio Plazas Tejera, the leader of the sabotage gang proper until late 1942.\textsuperscript{68}

Besides the poor organization of the saboteurs, which we will see below, the German effort had a critical weakness which left it vulnerable to British penetration. That weakness was rooted in a summer 1942 edict from the head of Abt. II in Berlin, Erwin von Lahousen, who ordered that no German nationals could engage personally in acts of sabotage in Spain. Thus, for attacks against Gibraltar, Spanish nationals would have to be recruited if any sabotage were to take place.\textsuperscript{69} Abt. II did so, and they saw the Spanish labourers commuting to and from the Rock on a daily basis as a likely pool of agents who were ideally placed to carry out such destructive missions. While, theoretically, the German scheme was excellent, in practice it suffered from the complete unreliability of most of the Spanish workers they dealt with, as MI5 concluded in 1944:

\textsuperscript{66} Extract from SIS file, 15 April 1936, KV 2/3001.
\textsuperscript{67} Extract from B.5 Note to B.1.c. 24 March 1942, KV 2/3001.
\textsuperscript{69} Extract of B.I.B. report, 15 March 1943, KV 2/3014.
the Spaniards employed by Madrid as sabotage agents in most cases show no loyalty to their German masters, whom they have continued to double-cross during these two years. They are solely interested in the amount of money they can make out of the Germans with the minimum of risk and trouble to themselves, and are not averse from playing a game with them.70

The supposed saboteurs thus acted rather like their Caudillo, Francisco Franco, in their mercenary attitude towards their German associates. In contrast, the Italian sabotage effort was much more effective, based as it was upon professional Italian frogmen who daringly swam, and later piloted human torpedoes, into the anchorage at Gibraltar on a number of occasions.

Still, given Gibraltar’s unending thirst for Spanish labour, even a badly-run organization had tremendous opportunities to smuggle bombs into the colony and create havoc, and they did have some early success: an explosion in the North Tunnel in February 1941 killed a number of people, and in April a bomb camouflaged as a lunch box would have destroyed Royal Air Force facilities at the airfield had it not been inadvertently moved prior to detonation. When it did explode it only destroyed a small hut.71 The lunch box bomb in particular was a sign of the inherent weakness of the British position. The sheer number of workers meant that all 8000 could not be searched daily, and bombs were going to get through unless the DSO had more powerful tools at its disposal.

The fortunes of the DSO began to change in the autumn of 1941, when a better tool did present itself in the person of Sundae, the first counter-sabotage double-cross case in Gibraltar. He was a reserve officer in the Spanish Army who had been recruited by the Plazas Gang. When he first entered Gibraltar with a bomb he immediately turned himself into a

70 Curry, “1944 Supplement,” p.47.
friend who worked for the Security Police. Medlam was informed and he sent Sundae back as a double agent, to maintain contact with the gang. It turned out to be a worthwhile move, as on two further occasions Sundae was given sabotage missions, and each time he handed the bombs over to the DSO.72 Sundae also provided Medlam with his first informed view of the operations of the Plazas gang which, by December 1941, had accumulated a sizable number of agents.73

Sundae alone could not fully protect Gibraltar, however, and the Plazas gang continued to be a major concern for MI5 in London.74 Their agitation only grew as further bombs made their way into the colony in early 1942, the most damaging of which struck the trawler Erin on 18 January. The ship was destroyed, a number of surrounding vessels were damaged, and several people were killed.75 The destruction of the Erin, in particular, showed that more extensive penetration of the Plazas gang was necessary, whether through double agents or some other means. Broader operations became urgently necessary when Sundae was arrested by Spanish police in April 1942, thanks to German pressure for the capture of possibly pro-British agents. It seemed that his failure to inflict obvious damage with the three bombs he had been given had cast doubt on his loyalty.76

Medlam got a lucky break when another double agent came to his attention after the Erin bombing. Known as Stuff, he had turned himself into the DSO, along with the explosives given to him by members of Plazas’s organization. Like Sundae, he was sent back

72 Ibid.
73 Ibid., p.172.
as a double agent to maintain contact with the gang, from which he gathered valuable intelligence. In one case he reported on a meeting he attended in Madrid where Sánchez Rubio, Plazas, and others discussed plans to sabotage British ships in Spanish ports. Based on that information, the DSO was able to take “suitable counter-measures.” Stuff was supplemented by some counter-espionage double-cross cases, called Fruities, who became involved in the Plazas gang in early 1942; while said to be effective, their success was temporary. Most importantly, Stuff was briefly left in charge of the gang in the summer of 1942, providing Medlam with a very good view of the personalities of the group. Unfortunately, the case ended not long after when Stuff suffered a nervous breakdown. He was found babbling in the streets about his work as an agent, just coherently enough to give real cause for concern to the DSO. He was quickly institutionalized and later sent to Britain.

Of course, not all of the agents that Medlam came into contact with in 1942 were as sincere and reliable as Sundae and Stuff seemed to be. A contrasting example was Cock, who, it appears, was actually one of the bombers of the Erin. Soon after that attack he approached a policeman on the Gibraltar docks and offered intelligence in return for a reward. He was subsequently contacted by the DSO, and he did provide information that led to the discovery

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77 “History of S.I.D.,” p.130.
78 Ibid., p.116.
79 Ibid., pp.129-30. Stuff also provided information on a July 1942 attack by Italian divers which damaged four ships. Another figure, less a double agent than an informant, was the Queen of Hearts. She reported in the Italian base of operations and stated that some Spanish officials knew about the attack ahead of time. Nevertheless, the DSO did not manage to penetrate the Italian sabotage effort. The British never knew until after the fact that an abandoned tanker - the Olterra - lying in the harbour at Algeciras was the base of Italian operations. Through an underwater hatch, human torpedo teams launched several water borne attacks. The Italian personnel were trained, discreet naval professionals, in contrast to the rabble that the Germans recruited. “History of S.I.D.,” pp.144-69.
of a cache of explosives. In June 1942, however, he conned the DSO into paying him for explosives that were, upon closer inspection, merely filled with water. He was kept at arms-length thereafter, but remained in the British orbit.\textsuperscript{80}

The early phase of double agent operations in Gibraltar, represented by \textit{Sundae} and \textit{Stuff}, had similarities to those developing simultaneously in Cairo during late 1941 and 1942. The cases were meant for very different purposes, of course, but both were in the early stage of development and on the cusp of something bigger, if only they could recruit more agents and develop an organization to manage them. Some improvement was crucial in Gibraltar, as continued efforts by German-inspired agents, combined with the separate depredations of the Italians, left the Crown Colony exposed. The Rock was also similar to Cairo in its relationship with London. While MI5 had kept a closer connection with Gibraltar than they had with Egypt, they made a more substantial intervention in late 1941 and early 1942, the same time that they sent Tar Robertson to the Middle East to consult on security and counter-intelligence.

While the Cairo trip was an effort to get SIME up to speed and into line with MI5, their involvement with the Gibraltar Defence Security Office in early 1942 was more disciplinary in nature. MI5 was responding to reports, received in late 1941 and the first months of 1942, of lax security at Gibraltar. The blame fell squarely on Medlam and, by March 1942, Guy Liddell was convinced that change was needed. He wrote the following in his diary:

\begin{quote}
there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that some drastic clean-up is necessary. Medlam is disliked and superficial in his work and with few exceptions the same can
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{80}“History of S.I.D.,” pp.130-1.
be said of the remainder of those engaged on intelligence or security work [at Gibraltar]...A man of presence, drive and almost ruthlessness is needed.\textsuperscript{81}

Medlam was summoned to London to defend himself in April, and a replacement was lined up if he felt compelled, or was forced, to resign.

Medlam did go through some grueling meetings with Director-General David Petrie and Liddell, but the DSO emerged with his position intact. In fact, he had made a positive impression on Liddell with a detailed analysis of his efforts with double agents.\textsuperscript{82} Medlam argued that he could execute his role properly, but he needed more staff to do so.\textsuperscript{83} In response, MI5 sent Philip Kirby-Green as the Assistant DSO, and he arrived prepared for his mission with extensive counter-sabotage training.\textsuperscript{84} MI6 helped out as well, at MI5’s request, by sending Desmond Bristow to monitor activity in the Spanish towns across the frontier.\textsuperscript{85}

The most important addition was D.J. Scherr, a fluent Spanish speaker appointed in September 1942 as head of the DSO’s Security Intelligence Department, after being recruited from his position in a Field Security Section on the Rock.\textsuperscript{86} Scherr is a pivotal figure, since he was the one who made the double-cross system in Gibraltar a going concern.

Scherr built upon the results of the year prior to his promotion, which had seen some security and counter-sabotage successes, but had left the German saboteurs far from defeated. \textit{Sundae} and \textit{Stuff} had helped neutralize many explosives and provided valuable information,

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{81} Liddell diaries, 18 March 1942, KV 4/189, pp.430-1.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid, 20 April 1942, KV 4/189, p.499.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 22 April 1942, KV 4/189, p.507.
\textsuperscript{86} Hennessey & Thomas, \textit{Spooks}, p.462.
\end{footnotesize}
and the rise in British success against his gang, for reasons that were not completely apparent to him, caused Plazas to flee the area in autumn 1942, leaving Carlos Calvo to emerge as leader in his stead.\textsuperscript{87} The interruption came at a vital time, as Gibraltar was a hive of activity in October 1942, filled with ships, aircraft, and men preparing for the invasion of French North Africa in November. They remained unmolested by sabotage, and some credit for this achievement should go to Medlam and the disruptions caused by his double agents.

Medlam’s successes, however, were inherently short-term and unsystematic. He only operated one major counter-sabotage agent at a time, which was no way to gain control of a sabotage network as large and ill-defined as the German one; his use of single agents left gaps, such as that through which the \textit{Erin} bombers got through in early 1942. Medlam also lacked the foresight to sustain the agents and cultivate them, which was the only way to amass multiple cases. Instead, he used them in a piecemeal and short-term manner. The result for \textit{Sundae} was that Plazas and the Germans lost faith in him, and Medlam thus lost his only counter-sabotage double agent. Of course, Medlam could have done something to help \textit{Sundae}, such as staging a fake sabotage to show the Germans that the bombs he was given had not gone to waste. However, Medlam apparently lacked the imagination or willingness to take such active measures to protect the credibility of his double agents. The inability to build-up agents (or perhaps it was ignorance) was a root cause for why a system of double-cross did not develop before 1943.

\textsuperscript{87} “History of S.I.D.,” pp.135-6.
IV

So, it fell to Scherr to turn the situation around, and he developed a double-cross system that was very similar to those in London and Cairo. Like those outfits, it rested on four fundamental bases: viable long-term agents, a method or organization for coordinating them, intelligence to inform their use, and a gullible opponent. Within a few months he had a growing network of agents that provided real security for Gibraltar.

In recruiting more agents, Scherr had some luck on his side, but he also made the best of what was presented to him. He came into his position just as the Germans, following the orders of a new, dynamic head of Abt. II in Madrid, pressured Sánchez Rubio and the Spaniards to increase recruitment and begin intensive sabotage attacks against Gibraltar.88 The Spanish recruiters, never too particular about who they brought into the sabotage organization, did indeed seek out new agents from among the Gibraltar workers. In one important example, Cock, still working for the Germans, approached a man in La Línea, the town across the frontier from Gibraltar, and suggested that working for the Germans was a lucrative possibility. The man agreed in September 1942 and, when Cock went to Seville to report to the Germans, the new agent, known as Frog, immediately contacted the Gibraltar security authorities to tell them about his recruitment. Scherr met with the man and agreed to operate him and his brother—known as Bull—as double agents within the sabotage gang. They were the first of the double agents who would soon become known to the DSO as the Crazy Gang. Starting with them, and taking advantage of the increasing German efforts at

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recruitment, Scherr struck a rich vein of double agents by preying on the treachery and petty jealousies of the Spanish workers.\textsuperscript{89}

They were a motley crew, many of whom were untrustworthy and possessed a criminal record. Scherr later considered that, given the dangerous nature of these men, calling them the \textit{Crazy Gang} might have been overly flippant. However, as he wrote after the war, the cloak-and-dagger tactics, the incompetence, bravado, stupidity, mutual suspicion and internecine rivalry displayed by many members of the gang make it easy to understand why an exasperated D.S.O., reading the writer’s complicated counter-sabotage reports, could hardly have failed to choose that name for the group.\textsuperscript{90}

By May 1943 the gang had more than ten members and, while they did not represent the entire German sabotage effort, it was a substantial proportion of it. And, of course, none of the agents knew that many of their colleagues were also part of a grand double-cross scheme\textsuperscript{91}

Scherr, therefore, had better luck in his timing than Medlam had, as he came into his position just as the opportunities for double-cross increased. What Scherr did, however, was to ensure that, instead of resigning himself constant turnover of his penetration agents, he maintained them for as long as possible. Medlam had not sustained his cases, which was why he was never able to operate more than one major agent at a time. What made the difference was Scherr’s method of operating the agents, which relied heavily on building up their

\textsuperscript{89} “History of S.I.D.,” pp.131-2.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., p.132. “The Crazy Gang” was a contemporary cultural reference to the British stage and film troupe of the same name, which was widely popular in Britain and active from the 1930s until the 1960s.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., pp.130-43. The Crazy Gang was only one component of the large number of double agents who were operated by the Gibraltar authorities throughout the war. Many were counter-espionage agents, others were counter-sabotage, and many were of very dubious loyalty to the British. In total, including the most short-term and minor cases, there were around 200 such agents. Hennessey & Thomas, \textit{Spooks}, p.458.
reputations with their ostensible controllers, a method very similar to that in Britain and the Middle East. His “chicken feed,” however, was more difficult to supply to the enemy, as it was not just information sent over a wireless transmitter. Instead, the only way to build up the credibility of a sabotage double-agent was to make the enemy believe that a sabotage had taken place.

The turning point came soon after Frog and Bull were adopted. They had handed over bombs meant for the Commercial Anchorage and for the dry docks but, upon turning them in, Frog told Scherr that Cock demanded a fake sabotage to keep up their appearances with the Germans. His concern was genuine, since the observation posts in Algeciras and across the frontier in La Línea, known popularly as “Spy Row,” gave the Germans a total view of the colony, and they would be aware if an explosion took place.92

Medlam, as narrow-minded as ever, was content to have the bombs and wanted to dismiss the brazen request. Scherr thought it was worthwhile to attempt it and maintain his agents. He received permission to do so and successfully mounted a staged explosion on a disused trawler in the Commercial Anchorage in January 1943.93 News of the explosion appeared in ISOS and showed that the Germans were pleased with their agents. Fake

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93 “History of S.I.D.,” p.135. Masterman’s study of the U.K. XX system notes some instances when fake sabotages were staged in Britain. One - plan Guy Fawkes - took place at a Ministry of Food dump in Wealdstone in November 1941. On 29 January 1943 a large camouflage set-up was erected to give the impression from the air that an explosion had taken place at a de Havilland facility to build up the agent Zigzag, Mutt and Jeff, a pair of Norwegian double agents in Scotland, were also provided with fake sabotage when asked by the Abwehr to bomb a generating station. Masterman concluded that “double-cross sabotage...is highly complicated and excessively difficult to conduct successfully.” Masterman, The Double-Cross System, pp.87-88, 122-23, 131-3.
sabotage quickly became a standard procedure, and by May 1943 there were six agents who received this ongoing support from Scherr.\textsuperscript{94}

So, it was Scherr’s efforts to sustain his agents which created the double-cross system in Gibraltar. In contrast with the piecemeal use of \textit{Sundae}, who had been quickly eliminated by the Germans because Medlam did not build him up, Scherr managed to operate many agents simultaneously. This method had two primary benefits. The most basic was that, as he accumulated more cases which operated on a longer-term basis, Scherr collected and analyzed more and more intelligence on what the Germans and their Spanish colleagues were up to in their daily operations. Secondly, and most importantly, making his agents appear successful meant that they would be given more missions in the future. Consequently, his own agents were more likely to be given explosives than uncontrolled and apparently less “productive” agents. Thus, in the case of Gibraltar, the concept of deceptive security, which was not effective in the Middle East in 1943, proved very successful on the Rock, thanks to the comparatively concentrated German effort.

While Scherr’s methods were parallel with those in London and Cairo, his organization was much smaller. Indeed, he ran the system largely on his own, and his role in its success was well known at MI5, where Liddell noted that he had “a real aptitude for the job.”\textsuperscript{95} Scherr did have the skills necessary for the work, which were quite varied in nature. Running all of his agents, who, unlike double agents in the rest of the Mediterranean, roamed freely, required keen attention to detail to keep all of their activities straight. Such diligence was especially important since many did not help him for altruistic reasons. They were eager

\textsuperscript{94}“History of S.I.D.,” pp.98, 135-7.

\textsuperscript{95}Liddell diaries, 23 June 1943, KV 4/191, p.310.
to make money from both sides, and threatened to carry out real attacks if they were not compensated well enough. The demands of the job were such that he was provided with a deputy in May 1943.96

The job also required considerable inter-personal skills, and emotional understanding. As Scherr described it, “our days and nights were long and very full,” and “the inexorable mechanics of contacting secret agents soon studded the passing hours with urgent interviews with queer people and rendezvous in peculiar places.” At these meetings, Scherr and Lance Corporal Bush, his deputy, took possession of the bombs handed over by their double agents, gave advice, and often provided emotional support to agents who, understandably, felt considerable stress and anxiety.97

While there are similarities in method with the other double-cross systems, the use of intelligence was very different, and not as reliant upon signals decrypts. Gibraltar did have access to ISOS through Section V, but it was not a decisive weapon against sabotage, when much of the planning and operations were localized in La Línea and Algeciras, and most communication took place not over the radio, but during personal trips to Seville and Madrid.98 The gang had a stock of sabotage material in the area, and it was largely up to them as to when and where to use it. The key intelligence was thus human intelligence, drawn from Scherr’s agents themselves.

Just like London and Cairo, however, Scherr was reliant upon serious flaws in the Abwehr — although it should be noted that Medlam had that same advantage and had not

97 Ibid.
98 “ISOS,” ADM 223/298, p.4.
achieved similar success. Abt. II in Spain was poorly controlled and left much of the power in the hands of the saboteurs themselves. The Abwehr occasionally held their agents to account, such as when *Sundae* was arrested, but their operatives could also act with impunity. Much like the rest of the Abwehr, where activity and a large network were more important than actual success, Abt. II was, in the words of one of its officers, “characterized by a marked tendency to claim tremendous successes and to report constant activity, even when nothing was going on.” Scherr’s fake sabotage, which appeared to be real successes, ensured that his double agents became the stars of the enemy network, a situation very much to his benefit.

Thus, the operations of the double-cross system were highly successful in the first half of 1943. The most basic function was to neutralize as much as possible of the dangerous stock of explosives that the Germans maintained, which Scherr managed to do effectively. Among the many times he received bombs, *Frog* turned over explosives meant for the dry docks in late 1942, while the agents *Nag* and *Ogg* each handed in bombs meant for the minelayer HMS *Manxman*. *Nag* was especially prolific, handing over six bombs and dismantling others himself. There were many other cases of such devices being turned over into British custody: between November 1942 and June 1943 Scherr received at least twenty separate devices, not including those disposed of by the agents themselves, and there was not a single successful German sabotage during that time. Scherr did not control all the saboteurs, however, even though his fake sabotage helped ensure that most missions were given to his agents. Nevertheless, rogue cases existed,

100 “History of S.I.D., pp.72-4.
and he used his controlled agents to discredit them with the Germans, further increasing the likelihood that German efforts would be canalized through his channels. One of those uncontrolled agents was a man named Alfonso Olmo Rodriguez, who had been given a German mission but had not actually placed the bomb, claiming that a man named Ernesto Cozas had done it on his behalf. The Germans paid him despite the lack of evidence of an explosion in Gibraltar. Cozas was, of course, an invented character and the bomb had never been used. Based on Scherr’s instructions, the British double agent Gon confronted Olmo at a subsequent meeting of the gang, and demanded to see “Cozas.” Although a man was brought in by Olmo to play the role, the fake “Cozas” himself soon contacted Scherr and became a genuine double agent. Having exposed Olmo, Gon then wrote to the Germans to tell them that “Cozas” was not a real person, leading to Olmo’s removal from the group and the elimination of an uncontrolled threat to Gibraltar.\(^\text{101}\)

The most remarkable operational successes of the Gibraltar system were the occasions when a double agent actually became the leading member of the enemy sabotage gang, thereby allowing Scherr tremendous control over the activities of his enemies. The first time this situation occurred was before the system proper began, when Stuff was in charge during a period when Plazas was absent in summer 1942. In the second instance, Plazas’s successor as leader, Carlos Calvo Chozas, came to the British and offered to act as a double agent in early 1943. After ingratiating himself to Scherr by providing good intelligence, he was taken on and codenamed Brie. Calvo was, however, an ineffective leader and the rest of the gang did not actually coalesce around him.\(^\text{102}\)

\(^{101}\) Ibid., pp.190-5.

\(^{102}\) Ibid., pp.135-8.
Indeed, by early 1943 the gang was being pulled apart by its members’ rivalries and plots. As Scherr later noted, the lack of clear leadership for the gang must have caused confusion for the Germans who ostensibly led these agents, and they needed someone better than Calvo to replace Plazas.\textsuperscript{103} Scherr needed a better leader as well because, in the absence of some central direction, gang members were more likely to go their own way and act alone, negating his chances of neutralizing most of the group. He finally cut Calvo adrift when he learned through other channels that the latter was trying to triple-cross the British, and instead attempted to maneuver a better candidate into the leadership of the old Plazas gang. Accordingly, at a meeting in spring 1943 the agent Gon managed to get the rest of the saboteurs to accept his leadership and, for several months thereafter, Scherr exercised considerable control over the gang, gaining an encyclopedic knowledge of their members and activities.\textsuperscript{104}

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The Gibraltar double-cross system, being well-constructed and ably managed, neutralized the German sabotage effort at the time of its maximum potential intensity. The complete lack of German success from September 1942 to July 1943, during which there was not a single real sabotage, might make it appear that the danger was not so severe. In reality, the relative tranquility was very much due to Scherr’s extensive control of the enemy network. The vital nature of his work was demonstrated when one agent did get through and caused major damage: on 30 June 1943 José Martín Muñoz smuggled a bomb into Gibraltar

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p.137.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., pp.137-8.
and blew up the oil and gasoline stores on Coaling Island, destroying £7000 worth of stocks and seriously damaging the storage facilities.\textsuperscript{105} Without the double-cross system, there could very well have been many other individuals like Martín Muñoz.

He managed to slip through, in part, because Scherr was a victim of his own success. Many saboteurs whom he did not control had been legally excluded from Gibraltar thanks to his double-cross intelligence. Consequently, the Germans pressured their Spanish contacts to recruit new saboteurs.\textsuperscript{106} Martín Muñoz was one of those new recruits, and the bombing was carried out so quickly that Scherr knew nothing about the new agent before the explosion, although he did have some knowledge that a plot was brewing: the agent Nag had heard that Coaling Island was targeted. Scherr made the following explanation for his failure after the war:

> On 29 June NAG made his daily verbal report to the writer, who did not consider that the information constituted an immediate threat. This was a mistake. However neither NAG nor any other XX agent had any idea that GONZALEZ and MATEOS had in fact already recruited their new agent, nor that this agent was going to strike at once. In the course of obtaining counter-sabotage information from XX agents one continually received hair-raising stories of impending sabotage. In order not to do harm by causing an excessive number of false alarms, one tried always to assess the degree of probability and urgency in each case before passing it on.\textsuperscript{107}

In this situation, ISOS was of no use, as all the recruitment and planning was done locally, without any radio transmission of the plans to Madrid during the vital period just before the attack. However, events had moved so quickly that Scherr’s human intelligence channels were not useful either, especially as he was getting so much intelligence “noise,” as he

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., p.74
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., pp.185-6.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., p.199. In the investigation of the incident it was agreed that Nag’s information was too vague and therefore Scherr was not blamed personally for the successful attack. See Telegram to DSO Gibraltar, 23 July 1943 and Report to Deputy Director-General, KV 2/1162.
alluded to above. Scherr therefore, as he later admitted, decided that the threat was too vague to act upon.108

Although the saboteur was successful, Scherr moved swiftly to track down the culprit and capture him. *Nag* became his primary means of doing so, and the double agent spent weeks in and around La Línea, piecing together information about who had committed the act and how it had happened. He learned that the bomber had smuggled the explosive by tying it to his leg, and had gotten past the Coaling Island gate by claiming that he had a message from the wife of a worker within the complex. He then placed the bomb on an oil tank, set a two and a half hour delay, and crossed the frontier back into Spain. As *Nag* learned more, such as the news that the bomber had a crippled foot, Martin Muñoz became the prime suspect.109

However, Scherr needed more evidence relating to the culprit and a solid identification of the suspect, so he staged a fake sabotage to move *Nag* further up the ranks of the gang.110 *Nag* did learn more as a result and, on 14 July, met Martin Muñoz himself, who was introduced as "*El de la Isla*." *Nag* lost track of him that night, as they were out carousing with prostitutes in La Línea, but on 22 July he brought Scherr solid and disturbing intelligence: Martin Muñoz was preparing another attack, this time on the dockyard power station. With that information, Scherr had the saboteur arrested when he tried to cross the frontier on 29 July and, under interrogation, he revealed that the bomb was hidden in the cellar of a cafe in Gibraltar.111 At the same time Scherr managed to arrest Luis López.

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108 Telegram from DSO Gibraltar, 30 June 1943, KV 2/1162.
110 Liddell diaries, 4 August 1943, KV 4/192, p.98.
Córdon-Cuenca, who he had learned was a dispenser of sabotage devices within the colony.\textsuperscript{112}

The tale of Martín Muñoz is instructive because his spectacular success, ironically, shows how valuable Scherr’s system was. Here was a man of below average capacities, who was described by Scherr as “a sullen, headstrong and depraved oaf.”\textsuperscript{113} He was not highly trained or motivated, and yet he had done major damage to a vital facility. It showed that the danger of sabotage was ever present when “a callow youth like José Martín Muñoz (a stupid oaf if there ever was one...) can slip into Gibraltar with a bomb and, in a matter of minutes, leave it where it will destroy £7000 worth of oil and seriously impede the war effort for a considerable time.”\textsuperscript{114} To return to the fundamental reason why double-cross was essential in Gibraltar, the geographic and labour situation meant that frontier controls, no matter how rigorous, could not prevent acts of sabotage. If Scherr had not controlled a large portion of the gang at the height of the German effort, the damage would likely have been much more severe, even with the evident corruption and incompetence of the the German-led agents. If Martín Muñoz could get through, anyone could have.

The Martín Muñoz case, though, did have one unexpected and beneficial result. The bombing, his arrest, and that of Córdon-Cuenca, led to serious British diplomatic pressure on

\textsuperscript{112} “Official Statement,” KV 2/2114. Cordon-Cuenca’s Empire Fruit Shop was a dispensary for the Perales gang, mentioned above. On 23 June their planned explosion in an ammunition tunnel was frustrated by a British agent who had penetrated the gang. Scherr’s report lists that on 22 June a bomb meant for the dockyard armaments tunnel was handed in by the double agent Eno. The result was that, alongside the investigation of the Plazas gang, Perales and his co-conspirators were arrested by Spanish authorities. The man charged with the investigation was none other than Sánchez Rubio and all but Perales, who was expelled from the area, returned to their old army positions. Sánchez Rubio’s investigation was a whitewash which blamed the Italians - by that point on the Allied side - for everything. See Ros Agudo, \textit{La guerra secreta}, pp.234-5.

\textsuperscript{113} “History of S.I.D.,” p.197.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p.57b.
Spain to do something about the German activity around Gibraltar. In response, Spain, which was now more prepared to appease the Allies, as the fortunes of war turned against the Axis, arrested a number of the saboteurs in August 1943. They were jailed until November, when an aptly named German operative, Johann Dollar, paid for their release. The men all left the area for Madrid and steered clear of Gibraltar thereafter. Then, on 11 January 1944, Martín Muñoz and Córdon-Cuenca were executed by hanging.115

Saboteurs still operated in the area after 1943, but they were never a severe problem. The reduced threat was noted by the British Joint Intelligence Committee in October, when it assessed that with Italy out of the war, and Spanish support for the belligerent acts of the Germans decreasing, sabotage against the Rock would become a less pressing concern.116 Their assessment was justified when, in early February 1944, Admiral Canaris ordered that sabotage operations in Spain cease until further notice.117

By that time ‘A’ Force had extended its reach into Gibraltar, turning what had been a purely counter-sabotage system into part of its deception network. Although Clarke realized that the agents would not be the highest grade deception channels, he wanted a presence at Gibraltar and obtained the agreement of the Governor to create an ‘A’ Force outstation. Clarke was most interested as, with troops leaving the theatre en masse to return to England and prepare for the invasion of France, he wanted to mask just how many troops were exiting through the Strait. With his arrival in Gibraltar, Clarke now had a hand in all double-cross

116 “Scale of Attack on Gibraltar, Report by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee,” 6 October 1943, CAB 81/118.
117 Liddell diaries, 5 February 1944, KV 4/193, p.152.
operations from Gibraltar to Iraq. ‘A’ Force was the only single organization that could make that claim.\(^{118}\)

The year from October 1942 to September 1943 had witnessed parallel developments in the Middle East and in Gibraltar. Similar double-cross systems emerged in each, but they were directed towards entirely different purposes. The Cairo-based network was meant for deception. For a variety of reasons, including the relatively stable security situation and the preferences of the SIME leadership, counter-intelligence and counter-sabotage remained unsystematic double-cross practices in 1943. In Gibraltar, however, the double agents were central to counter-sabotage, and the difference between the two systems was driven by geography and the operational environment. Gibraltar’s location, physically adjoined to Spain, and its labour requirements made its security authorities reliant on double agents until the Spanish government cracked down on German sabotage activity against Gibraltar in late 1943. In the Middle East and North Africa military operations were ongoing, and double-cross was harnessed to advance Allied success in the field. The next chapter will discuss the deception plans of 1943, and whether the double-cross focus on deception over penetration had worthwhile results.

Chapter Four

“Anybody but a damn’ fool would know it is Sicily”

Strategic Deception and the 1943 Mediterranean Strategy

Despite Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s statement above, regarding the Axis powers’ probable knowledge of Allied offensive intentions in 1943, the multinational troops of the Fifteenth Army Group encountered minimal resistance when they hit the beaches of southeastern Sicily during the small hours of 10 July 1943.\(^1\) Operation *Husky* had caught German and Italian forces on the island by surprise, but they rallied and fought a tough campaign that, nevertheless, ended in retreat when they evacuated just over 100,000 troops across the Strait of Messina. The evacuation was complete by 17 August, giving the Allies dominance over the entire island. Despite their strong resistance, the Germans and Italians had missed their chance to throw the Allies back into the sea on 10 July: although an obvious potential Allied target, Sicily had not been reinforced strongly prior to Operation *Husky*, which helps explain the capture and quick expansion of a beachhead on D-Day. The Germans had, instead, directed significant reinforcements into the Balkan peninsula.

Many factors contributed to these developments, such as the political considerations which weighed heavily on Hitler’s mind. Although he maintained great personal faith in the *Duce*, Hitler worried that the King of Italy and his scheming court faction would undermine Mussolini and bring Italy out of the war. The German military prepared plan *Alarich* —later

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renamed Achse — to deal with that contingency. If it were ever implemented, German forces would take control of Italy and Italian-occupied territory, and either integrate into their own military or disarm the Italian forces.² In preparation, Germany moved more troops into the Balkans and Italy in the late spring of 1943, ready to act immediately in case of an Italian collapse or withdrawal. Conversely, Hitler was not inclined to reinforce Sicily heavily, fearing that his forces would be trapped there should Italian resistance fail.³ The Führer had no desire to repeat the recent disaster in Tunisia, where 275,000 Axis troops had been captured — which, of course, was largely Hitler’s own fault after pouring troops into the theatre after Operation Torch, and then refusing to evacuate the bulk of his forces and abandon North Africa to the Allies, who were bound to triumph there.⁴

Another critical factor that drove Germany’s focus on the Balkans were Allied deception operations. Deceptions were transmitted to the Axis through a variety of means, such as displays of dummy equipment and vehicles, phony radio traffic, and even fake documents planted on a corpse; but the central method within the Mediterranean theatre was the double-cross system. Indeed, deception was, from the start of the Cheese case in 1941, the purpose of the Mediterranean double agent network.

However, the Mediterranean double-cross system had only been finalized in March 1943, just as the main deception plan for Husky was getting underway. Thus, the new system of Thirty Committees and their agents were quickly thrown into the fray of their first major strategic deception plan. The deception, called Barclay, was certainly grand in its scale, but

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³ Howard, Strategic Deception, p.92.
⁴ Weinberg, A World At Arms, p.446.
its ambitions were stoked by prior success in operational deception when, in November 1941 and October 1942, *Cheese* had provided considerable help to the Allied offensives in the Western Desert.

In 1943, though, the demands placed on double-cross were much higher than in the two years prior, and the double agents had to convince the Germans to believe a story about Allied strategic intentions that was entirely false. Although the requirements were more taxing, the double-crossers had more tools at their disposal to meet them: unlike in 1941-42, ‘A’ Force had a wide array of double agents across the entire southern and eastern rims of the Mediterranean. Many of these agents, particularly the foundational cases in the Middle East, remained highly trusted by the Abwehr — indeed, many would remain so into 1945.

Deceiving the Abwehr, however, was not sufficient. Instead, it was only the necessary first step of deception. The real goal was to deceive the German operational and strategic decision-makers, from the army level all the way up to Hitler himself.

As a whole, the deception project was successful. It was composed, primarily, of plans *Barclay*, *Cascade*, and *Mincemeat*. Double-cross was the principal means of transmission for the first two, which were ‘A’ Force plans, while the latter was a plan developed and implemented from London by Ewen Montagu and Charles Cholmondeley, naval and air force representatives, respectively, on the Twenty Committee. However, the specific contribution of the Mediterranean double-cross system, dedicated to deception as it was, was not a clear-cut success. As Michael Howard concludes, while ‘A’ Force “succeeded in so thoroughly confusing enemy intelligence that the German High Command was never able at any subsequent stage in the war to develop any clear picture of Allied intentions in the
Mediterranean,” Dudley Clarke’s team was “never quite able to convince the enemy of the unambiguous truth of the notional stories with which it so assiduously fed him.”5 ‘A’ Force did have considerable trouble getting their story heard above the racket of all the other, uncontrolled German intelligence reports, and the confusion that resulted was not their intention. Instead, Clarke’s agents fed the enemy a consistent and plausible story. They had intended to deceive the Germans in a precise manner and elicit a specific response.

The limited success of double-cross in plan Barclay, designed to draw German attention away from Sicily, was the result of a convergence of several factors: an ambitious deception plan; bad luck with a number of double-cross cases; ‘A’ Force’s decision to save some channels for the decisive battles to come in 1944 and, consequently, not use them to their utmost in 1943; the porous and difficult intelligence environment of the Mediterranean; and, most importantly, the peculiar relationship between the dysfunctional German intelligence system and Dudley Clarke’s conservative incremental method of feeding it deceptive material. Clarke was dependent on the Germans to connect the dots he gave them and discount the uncontrolled dots but, ultimately, his subtle method was lost on his opponents, as they were never able to sort the wheat from the chaff in their intelligence analysis. Although, as discussed in chapter two, this very feature of the German intelligence system was essential for the existence of the double-cross system, those same dysfunctions, ironically, limited what the system could achieve in the field of deception.

5 Howard, Strategic Deception, p.84.
The potential for what double-cross could achieve depended on what the double agents would be asked to do. Their marching orders for 1943 were contained within plans *Barclay* and *Cascade*, the two primary deception plans prior to Operation *Husky*. The latter was an order of battle deception, which inflated the German perception of the number of Allied units in the Mediterranean. *Barclay* was a specific strategic deception designed to trick the Axis regarding the Allies’ offensive intentions in 1943, by projecting threats against the south coast of France, Sardinia, Corsica, and Greece.

The true point of attack was Sicily, a decision reached at the Casablanca Conference between Prime Minister Churchill, President Roosevelt, and their military staffs in January 1943. Allied planning undertaken after Casablanca assumed that not only the Germans but the Italians, who hardly constituted a potent military force to that point, would mount a strong resistance when fighting on Axis home soil for the first time. That resistance would be overwhelming if the Germans reinforced the island strongly prior to the Allied landings, so it was vital to divert those troops into France and the Balkans.

The effort to influence German troop movements was based upon one of Dudley Clarke’s founding principles of deception: a successful deception should not not seek to change the strategic or operational inclinations of the enemy but, instead, should prey upon their existing fears. The revelations from Ultra provided an unparalleled view of German worries, and deception plans were tailored to take advantage of them. Based on such insights, the London Controlling Section (LCS) and ‘A’ Force knew that Hitler engaged in “endless

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fretting” over the Balkans. ‘A’ Force, long aware of Hitler’s Balkan concerns, had been using the peninsula to distract the Axis since early 1942, and the threat had been maintained, with varying levels of intensity, ever since.

Because of Hitler’s anxiety, the Balkans were also a vital area of concern for the Allies, even if they did not intend a full-scale invasion. As Dudley Clarke put it,

should BERLIN discover that the EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN was never intended to become a major battlefield again, vast numbers of German Divisions might well have been released from GREECE, ALBANIA and YUGO-SLAVIA to bolster up the fronts in EASTERN or WESTERN EUROPE, or even to embark on new offensive adventures in SPAIN or TURKEY.

Barclay was, therefore, about much more than Sicily and the Mediterranean: it was a strategic deception in the broadest sense, seeking to fool the Germans in a way that could affect the troop deployments and German strategy across the entire European theatre.

The most recent Balkan deception had been developed during the autumn 1942 offensive in Egypt. On 6 November, as the Eighth Army lumbered westward after their breakthrough at El Alamein, Clarke met with General Sir Harold Alexander to discuss ways of keeping the Axis from reinforcing Libya and halting the advance. To achieve this aim, Alexander asked Clarke to continue the threat against Greece and Crete. In response, ‘A’ Force developed plan Warehouse, with the aim of keeping Axis forces dispersed in the eastern Mediterranean. Initially designed to pose a threat to Sicily as well, the plan was altered after the Casablanca decisions in January 1943. The revised deception plan went into effect, now in support of the planned Sicilian landing, on 11 March, with the following

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7 Holt, The Deceivers, p.57.
message for the Germans: the Allies intended to land in force in the Peloponnese and Crete, gaining a foothold on the continent and, hopefully, drawing Turkey into the war as an ally.9

Although the Allied operation that Clarke presented in Warehouse was purely notional, German fears of an Allied operation against the Greek islands and/or the Balkan mainland were not entirely unfounded. The Allies understood that the peninsula, rich in strategic raw materials and an essential bulwark against the Red Army, was vital if the German war machine were to continue operating. So important was the region that, in April 1943, Allied deception planners concluded that “the defence of the Balkans is more vital to Germany for her own defence than is the defence of Italy.”10 The Balkan deceptions were plausible, therefore, not just because the Germans feared an attack there, but because the British saw the area as a strategically vital and legitimate potential theatre of operations.

Indeed, they never intended for the Balkans to become a backwater in the war, although that was the ultimate outcome. Instead, political issues, such as American opposition to Churchill’s “empire-building” in the east, and military problems, like the limited air power that the Allies could project over the Balkans to cover an amphibious landing in 1943, pushed a Greek landing far down the list of options in the Allied grand strategy.11 Nevertheless, in the spring of 1943 General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, while ‘A’ Force was implementing a notional threat against the Balkans, called unsuccessfully for a

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10 “Deception Policy 1943 Covering Germany and Italy,” 1 April 1943, RG 218, Entry UD1, Box 368, Folder CCS 385, p.3. NARA.

real operation against the Dodecanese, followed by a landing in Thrace and a drive up the Danube.\textsuperscript{12}

Hitler understood the importance of the Balkans, and his own tenuous power there, as clearly as his opponents did. His fears became acute in September 1942, when he suffered his first “great Crete scare,” which was merely the start of “an anxiety that was to beset him at intervals for years.”\textsuperscript{13} The ebb and flow of his concern was manifested in his meetings and directives in late 1942: at a military conference on 12 December, he agreed with a spy report, presented to him by Colonel-General Alfred Jodl, which argued that there would not be an attack on Crete in early 1943, and that rumours to the contrary were meant to distract German attention from North Africa.\textsuperscript{14} However, just over two weeks later, Hitler issued his Directive No. 47, which argued that “the situation in the Mediterranean makes it possible that an attack may be made, in the foreseeable future, on Crete and on German and Italian bases in the Aegean Sea and the Balkan peninsula.”\textsuperscript{15}

German anxiety continued in early 1943. The operational arm of the German High Command, the Wehrmachtführungstab (WFSt), estimated in February that the Allies had the


\textsuperscript{14} “Midday Situation Conference December 12, 1942, in the Wolfsschanze,” in \textit{Hitler and His Generals: Military Conferences 1942-1945}, eds. Helmut Heiber & David M. Glantz, Trans. Roland Winter, Krista Smith, and Mary Beth Friedrich (New York: Enigma Books, 2003), pp.51-2. This discussion between Hitler and Jodl is of particular interest, as it is the only time that a specific report on the Mediterranean from a spy is discussed at one of Hitler’s military conferences between September 1942 and September 1943. It is clearly not an ‘A’ Force channel, since it contradicts the threat to Crete and argues that such a threat is a deception.

capability to carry out two possible operations in the east: one was an attack on the western coast of Greece with a possible secondary assault against Dalmatia; the other was an assault in the Aegean and against Thrace, potentially with the support of Turkey — a prescient forecast, since the latter was the very operation proposed by General Wilson three months later. Of course, like Wilson, the Germans did not take into account the problem of Allied air cover in their estimate.\(^\text{16}\)

Given that the Germans foresaw these dangers, it is not surprising that, ironically, they began implementing their own deceptions, meant to convince the Allies that the Balkan peninsula was more heavily guarded than it truly was.\(^\text{17}\) ISOS decrypts in early 1943 laid bare these deceptive operations. One such decrypt, from 23 January 1943, showed Berlin directing the planting of false information from Athens:

The following material is to be released for most rapid passing-on to EGYPT through 3006: The forces in occupation of CRETE have been steadily increased during the past 3 months. Transports bring very heavy artillery which is being set up all along the coast. Recently fairly strong motorised units have been transferred to CRETE, transfers continue. Very lively constructional activity, particularly of block-houses, obstacles and armoured walls [Panzermauern]. Information comes from German soldiers who were in ATHENS and came from CRETE whither they had only now been transferred. After planting of report AST is to report time of passing on, to whom, through whom, and give exact text.\(^\text{18}\)

Similar messages littered the daily output of ISOS, showing the depths of German concern about the region.\(^\text{19}\)

\(^\text{16}\) “Studie über die mögliche Durchführung einer angelsächsischen Operation nach dem Balkan in Verbindung mit der Türkei,” 12 February 1943, AL 1456. IWM Duxford.

\(^\text{17}\) Smyth, *Deathly Deception*, p.71.

\(^\text{18}\) Berlin to Athens, 23 January 1943, HW 19/110.

\(^\text{19}\) “Addendum to V.E. Sub-Section Fortnightly Report No. 6. Period Ending Friday, 5th February, 1943,” 7 February 1943, HW 19/326, p.2.
Despite the German Balkan fears, Dudley Clarke, after the Casablanca Conference and a subsequent meeting with General Eisenhower in Algiers, decided that \textit{Warehouse} would not be sufficient to aid the attack on Sicily: a more comprehensive plan, threatening areas beyond the Balkans, was needed. The result was \textit{Barclay}, first drafted on 21 March. \textit{Warehouse} was absorbed as the eastern component of the larger plan, which also sought to convince the Axis that there were serious Allied designs on Corsica, Sardinia, and southern France. The plan recognized that Sicily could not be eliminated as a possibility entirely, but \textit{Barclay} was meant to impress upon the Germans that it was lower on the Allied list of priorities.\textsuperscript{20}

In its final form, \textit{Barclay} was divided into three phases: the first, running from late March until late May 1943, was to put across the story that the Allies would invade Greece at the end of May, and France, Corsica, and Sardinia one week later; phase two was to begin on 20 May with the alleged “postponement” of the invasions for one month; the final phase would start on 20 June with a further one month delay. The first two phases sought to convince the Germans to reinforce France and the Balkans but, by phase three, ‘A’ Force did not think it would be possible to hide the obvious Allied preparations for imminent action against Sicily. At that point the two postponements would become central factors: given the consistent story, fed to the Germans via double-cross, that the Allies preferred the dark moon

\textsuperscript{20} Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1943, CAB 154/3, pp.57-8, 63-7.
period at the end of each month, the Axis would not be expecting an attack in Sicily before
the end of July. Of course, the actual date was the night of 9-10 July.21

It was an ambitious plan, and using double-cross to convince the Germans of Allied
attacks at two disparate points in the Mediterranean was a tall order. Of the two targets, the
eastern component was easier for the double agents to “sell,” thanks to Hitler’s preexisting
fears. An attack against France, however, was more difficult to work with. The Germans
never had the same, continuously acute concern for France in 1943 as they did for the
Balkans, and expecting double-cross to draw German attention there was to hand the agents a
challenging task.

Furthermore, Barclay was only a plan to sell a story about Allied intentions. It did not
have any component detailing Allied capabilities but, if it were to be successful, the Germans
had to believe that the Allies had sufficient forces in the correct dispositions to carry out full-
scale attacks in both the eastern and western Mediterranean. In reality, Allied forces were far
from adequate, especially in the east, to carry out the invasions projected in Barclay. That
plan on its own was insufficient and, hence, order of battle deception was the real foundation
of the 1943 strategic deception, as it was of all ‘A’ Force plans.22

Underlying everything ‘A’ Force had done since spring 1942 was plan Cascade, an
extensive order of battle deception which relied heavily on double agents for its transmission
to the enemy. First developed in March 1942, Cascade had been implemented continuously

21 Ibid., p.73. There was also a broad deception plan in Great Britain, called Cockade, which was
designed to tie down German forces in northern France and Norway, through component plans called
Starkey, Wadham, and Tindall, and based upon LCS’s Dundas and Larkhill order of battle plans.
However, as Michael Howard argues, the Germans were well aware that the Allies’s strategic blow in
1943 would fall in the Mediterranean, and never viewed the activities associated with Cockade with
much gravity. Howard, Strategic Deception, pp.75-82.

in the year after, largely because of defensive necessity: as the Germans loomed over the 
Caucasus and threatened to enter Turkey, Persia, and Iraq, ‘A’ Force inflated Allied strength 
by thirty-three percent to discourage a German move south. Four notional armoured brigades 
and the equivalent of five notional infantry divisions were created, and their existence was 
transmitted to the Germans through double agents, fake unit insignia, and fake administrative 
orders. By late summer 1942, captured German documents showed that three of the 
armoured and four of the infantry units had been identified and accepted.23

Cascade also began to inform German operational forecasts. The WFSt estimate 
mentioned above was based on the premise that there were reserves of Allied troops in the 
Middle East which could undertake offensive action, when that was certainly not the case. 
However, their view was not too skewed at that point in early 1943, as they did not consider 
the Allies strong enough to advance beyond Thrace and deep into the Balkans.24

That particular German estimate of Allied strength — strong enough to launch an 
invasion, but not strong enough to gain more than a foothold — was not enough for Barclay 
to work. The Allies had gained the strategic initiative after November 1942, and the Germans 
had to be convinced that they had so many troops that a major invasion of the Balkans was 
possible. Cascade, therefore, was given a new, offensive orientation that exaggerated Allied 
strength by fifty percent. It created a bogus force in Egypt (the “Twelfth Army”) composed of 
fake units, as well as several real ones that would actually be part of the Eastern Task Force 
of Husky. Cascade 1943 also created a large “defensive” force, a reserve held ostensibly

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23 “‘Cascade (1943)’ Order of Battle Plan,” 12 March 1943, WO 169/24926, pp.1-2; Clarke, ‘A’ Force 
Narrative War Diary 1942, CAB 154/2, pp.34-5.
24 ‘Studie’, 12 February 1943, AL 1456. IWM Duxford.
throughout the Middle East. The plan was to be implemented principally through double agents, who would systematically transmit order of battle information to their Abwehr controllers. The controllers would, ‘A’ Force hoped, then pass that material to the German intelligence evaluators in Berlin and at various field headquarters, who would use the information when constructing their assessment of the Allied order of battle.\textsuperscript{25}

These, then, were the parameters within which double-cross had to work: \textit{Cascade}, which had already been implemented for a year, had to be reinvented with a fresh vigour, and would stretch German credulity even further; the double agents also had to put over \textit{Barclay}, impressing upon their German masters that the units created by \textit{Cascade} would not sit idly in the Middle East. It was a duo of deception plans that, even in the best of circumstances, would have been difficult for the Thirty Committees to implement. Unfortunately, in the spring of 1943, the circumstances were far from ideal.

\section{II}

The first problem that the double-crossers came upon can only be described as bad luck. During the precise period when the first two phases of \textit{Barclay} were to be implemented (April to 20 June), a series of events rendered numerous double agents either inoperative, or operational at a much diminished capacity. The most severe examples were in Algeria and Morocco, where ‘A’ Force had recently set up shop alongside Col. Paul Paillole’s French counter-intelligence officers. The key agents there were \textit{Ram, Jewel, Whiskers, Le Petit}, and \textit{El Gitano} (\textit{Gilbert}, who would become a star agent, did not go on the air until June).

\footnote{\textsuperscript{25} “Order of Battle Plan,” WO 169/24926, pp.1-3; Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1942, CAB 154/2, p.137.}
Although *Jewel*, *Whiskers*, and *Ram* were considered primary channels for transmitting deceptive information, none had much opportunity to do so. *Jewel*, just when he was being prepared to pass specific *Barclay* material, found that he could not contact his controller, who was apparently absent from Ast Dijon for some length of time.\(^{26}\) *Whiskers* encountered the same problem when his contact, the Spanish Consul in Oran — who had passed his reports to the Germans in Spanish Morocco — left the city in late May, rendering another channel of no use.\(^{27}\)

Then, on 21 May, came news from London, derived from ISOS, that *Ram* had been compromised. The news, bad in any case, was particularly galling, as ‘A’ Force’s Algiers contingent had invested time and effort in the case. Earlier, in April, the local ‘A’ Force officer, after complaining that *Ram* had “done damn little to help plan BARCLAY,” formed a sub-committee to improve the case;\(^{28}\) but, just as he was being primed to pass key deceptive material, Algiers learned that the case was blown.\(^{29}\)

However, the 40 Committee, rather than immediately shutting down the case, wondered about the exact wording of the Abwehr decrypt that, supposedly, proved the Germans had discovered *Ram*’s true allegiance. At first, they could do nothing more than wonder, as their access to ISOS was slow. Indeed, the flow of signals decrypts was so bad that, at the end of May and with no further information about *Ram* in hand, the committee minutes noted that “the question of communications with LONDON is so unsatisfactory that

\(^{26}\) Minutes of 37 Committee Meeting, 23 April 1943, WO 169/24888.
\(^{27}\) Minutes of 37 Committee Meeting, 21 May 1943, WO 169/24888.
\(^{28}\) “Plan BARCLAY,” 28 April 1943, WO 169/24897.
\(^{29}\) Minutes of 37 Committee Meeting, 21 May 1943, WO 169/24888.
it is considered by this Committee to be becoming a menace to GALVESTON [‘A’ Force] activities.”

A paraphrase of the original decrypt finally arrived on 2 June. It did speak of the agent as working for the enemy, but it was unclear whose opinion that was, and whether his Abwehr controller shared it. The paraphrase was also worded in such a way that the “enemy” could actually mean the Germans themselves. As the issue was still unresolved, the 40 Committee kept Ram alive, but only to pass chicken feed. It was too dangerous to let him transmit deceptive material, and the case was of no use for Barclay.

Ram was only the most dramatic of the obstacles that faced the North African committees and their agents in June. Jewel, recently revived after his controller returned to Dijon, was also reduced to passing only chicken feed when one of his associates escaped from Allied custody. Until the latter was captured, and it was confirmed that he had not revealed the true nature of the Jewel case to anybody, it was impossible to use the channel for deception. Meanwhile, Whiskers was still useless, as the Spanish Consul remained absent from Oran. So widespread were these problems that the majority of the North African

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30 Minutes of 37 Committee Meeting, 29 May 1943, WO 169/24888.

31 VAR/PK 140, 2 June 1943, HW 19/288.

32 Minutes of 40 Committee Meeting, 18 June 1943, WO 169/24888. The precise circumstances of what happened on the German end of the Ram case are unclear. ‘A’ Force thought it was a message passed by Ram in support of plan Cowper - a tactical plan supporting the capture of Tunis - which tipped off the Germans that he was controlled. Another possibility involves the arrest of one of Paul Paillole’s agents in spring 1943. The man, codenamed Hengen, was discovered as Ast Paris sought to clear out the agents that had penetrated their network within France. Hengen had acted as a recruiter for Asts Paris and Bordeaux. Many of his agents in France were subsequently arrested, and some North African channels were blown. As Ram was an agent of Ast Paris, it is possible that the Hengen affair cast doubt on his bona fides. See Crichton (‘A’ Force) to Clarke (‘A’ Force), 10 May 1943, WO 169/24897; Paillole, Fighting the Nazis, pp.387-8.
channels did not pass any deceptive material in June, which was the vital time if ‘A’ Force was going to firmly attract German attention to the west of Sicily.\footnote{“Progress Report on Plan ‘Barclay’ As of midnight June 6th 1943,” RG 319, Entry 101, Box 7, p.1. NARA.}

The failure of the ‘A’ Force channels in North Africa prior to 10 July was probably part of the reason for why the Germans showed relatively minimal interest in the western element of *Barclay*. However, even had they been operating at full deceptive capacity, it was questionable whether the threats to France, Sardinia, and Corsica would have really made the Germans worry. After all, they did not play on one of Hitler’s rawest nerves, like the Balkan deception did.

Further operations, like the famous *Mincemeat* plan, reinforced the focus on the east. That operation saw the planting of fake documents on the corpse of a homeless man, dressed up as a Royal Marine on a supposed courier mission whose plane had apparently crashed off the coast of Spain. The body, which was actually floated from a British submarine, was found on 30 April, with letters that disclosed the Allies’ apparent intention to invade Greece and, although stated more obliquely, Sardinia. The documents made their way into German hands and had a powerful influence, including on Hitler himself.\footnote{The most recent and comprehensive history of *Mincemeat* is Smyth, *Deathly Deception*.} Of course, *Mincemeat*, like all deceptions, depended upon the false order of battle, a matter that will be addressed further below. Still, ‘A’ Force was lucky to have *Mincemeat* to boost the eastern component of *Barclay*, which is where it had its greatest influence. As in French North Africa, their agents in Egypt and the Levant fell on many difficulties in the spring of 1943, and *Mincemeat* did much to mitigate those problems.
The key agents in the deceptive scheme in the east were the wireless channels: *Cheese, Quicksilver,* and *The Pessimists.* The traveling Turkish agents, who met in person with their Abwehr controllers and, as we will see below, were so useful for *Cascade,* were not viable for *Barclay.* The latter deception had tight and specific timelines, and required the up-to-the-minute contact provided by wireless. The traveling agents could be out of contact with their Abwehr controllers, their Allied masters, or both, for weeks at a time.

In April and early May, however, *Cheese* and *Quicksilver* were virtually out of commission. Both suffered from the Abwehr’s chronic inability to get money to them, without which the cases could not plausibly continue at full capacity and, if the problem persisted, would have to be shut down entirely. *Cheese* had another obstacle as well: in late March a cryptic message from Athens warned him to be very careful, and contact throughout April was minimal while the 30 Committee tried to ascertain what the problem was. They never got to the bottom of what the Germans meant, but *Cheese* did return to a normal rate of transmission in May. *Quicksilver* also increased his rate of transmission and the quality of his deceptive output as well, but, during the period of trouble, each case was able to pass only minimal amounts of deceptive information.35

Compounding the problems ‘A’ Force faced with their agents was the difficult environment that the Mediterranean presented to a specific deception like *Barclay.* It was a theatre in which a plethora of intelligence sources provided information to the Abwehr, only a portion of which were controlled by the Thirty Committees. Of the uncontrolled sources, the vast majority were unnamed informers in Iberia, Turkey, and other European neutrals.

Some, though, were prominent and relied upon heavily by the Germans. One such case was Ostro, the supposed head of a spy network who operated out of Portugal. In fact, his reports were completely fraudulent. Nevertheless, intelligence from this individual, who would later cause much grief for the Twenty Committee in 1944, appeared regularly in the war diary of the Seekriegsleitung (SKL), the operational command of the German Navy. Although reports from both Cheese and Quicksilver were also mentioned from time to time in that diary, Ostro appears most frequently, and his are the only reports where the agent’s name is noted.36

Similarly, information from the agents Moritz and Ibis was well regarded, particularly those of the former, which were sent directly to the headquarters of Field Marshal Kesselring in Italy. Moritz reports began appearing in ISOS on 5 December 1941 and, up to January 1943, he had transmitted 502 reports, providing information on the area between Libya and Persia. Ibis first appeared in ISOS on 28 March 1942, and had reported at least 143 times up to January 1943. Ibis dealt mostly with the British-controlled Middle East and Turkey.37

Of course, neither Ostro, who was a real person operating freelance, nor Moritz / Ibis, who were fake agents “run” by Richard Klatt in Sofia, provided much useful information.38 In the case of Moritz, the first serious study of his intelligence by the British, undertaken in early 1943, revealed how bad it was: at most, twenty percent of the information was accurate, a ratio so skewed that the Radio Security Service considered it a double-cross operation by an unknown perpetrator. ISLD and SIME held their own, separate investigation in Cairo and came to the same conclusion: in June and July 1943 Moritz sent forty-nine reports, of which

38 See chapter two, p.94 for details on Klatt.
only five had any value, thirty-three were completely useless, and eleven had not been
checked in the course of the investigation.\textsuperscript{39} The reports were typically very vague, speaking
of generic units moving in general directions, without any specific information.\textsuperscript{40}

As a result of their investigations into the various suspected leakages that had
appeared in ISOS, the British concluded that the many uncontrolled channels of intelligence
to the Germans were uniformly inadequate and inaccurate, were not due to a lack of Allied
security, and did not pose a threat to that security. The 40 Committee reached that very
conclusion after reviewing torrents of uncontrolled but wildly inaccurate information that
they saw in the ISOS decrypts they were given. The committee went even further in its
assessment of the situation, arguing that all of the bad intelligence the Germans received
would have a positive effect in ensuring that their controlled double agents, who passed a
good deal of true information in their chicken feed, were especially valued as reliable sources
by the enemy intelligence system.\textsuperscript{41}

That assumption was derived from Dudley Clarke’s method of deception, which
consisted in an “incrementalist approach.”\textsuperscript{42} In his method, double agents would feed the
enemy small amounts of information — some true, some deceptive — which he would
would then piece together over a period of time, assembling the false picture that Clarke
intended to pass to them. The incrementalist approach, as developed by ‘A’ Force, was based
on two beliefs: the enemy was more likely to believe something if they had to make the effort

\textsuperscript{39} Hinsley & Simkins, \textit{British Intelligence IV}, p.199; “Addendum to V.E. Sub-Section Fortnightly

\textsuperscript{40} Representative examples of \textit{Moritz} and \textit{Ibis} reports can be found in Berlin to Rome, 6 February
1943, HW 19/115; and Berlin to Rome, 8 April 1943, HW 19/117.

\textsuperscript{41} Minutes of 40 Committee Meeting, 25 June 1943, WO 169/24888.

\textsuperscript{42} Smyth, \textit{Deathly Deception}, p.68
to piece it together themselves; and the Germans would be suspicious of agents who
broadcast Allied intentions too blatantly, an assumption born in the days before the British
realized how inept and corrupt the German intelligence system was.\(^\text{43}\)

However, the incrementalist approach remained an article of faith, even as it became
clear that the German intelligence system, and the Abwehr in particular, was a shambles
masquerading as a professional organization. This approach, and the conclusions reached by
the British about the limited threat that uncontrolled German sources posed, dangerously
underestimated how disorganized German intelligence was and, thus, the resultant threat that
uncontrolled information posed to the neatly packaged story that ‘A’ Force tried to put across
in Barclay. The entire ‘A’ Force program was based on the expectation that German
intelligence could discern between the objectively bad reports of uncontrolled agents and
those of ‘A’ Force channels, which were moulded to provide a lot of tantalizing truthful
information to cover the deceptive elements. Such intelligence analysis was, however,
beyond the capabilities of the German organization. Consequently, the combination of the
porous intelligence environment of the Mediterranean, the chronic problems of German
intelligence, and Clarke’s approach to deception explains why the double-cross
implementation of Barclay had only limited success, and might have fared worse but for the
extraordinary help of Mincemeat.

III

Certainly, the state of German intelligence was a substantial determining factor in how effective double-cross deception could be. During the first half of 1942, as an example, Rommel’s army in North Africa had access to excellent signals intelligence: his signals units read British tactical signals regularly, and he received top quality information via Col. Bonner Fellers, the American Military Attaché in Cairo, who unwittingly aided the Germans by transmitting in a compromised code until mid-1942. During that time, Cheese, the only major double-cross case in the theatre, did not attract much attention from his German masters in Athens. As noted in chapter one, only after Rommel suffered a number of intelligence setbacks, such as when Fellers’s code was changed in June 1942, did enemy interest in the Cheese case revive. Suddenly, the Abwehr in Athens and Rommel’s intelligence staff were much more eager to get his intelligence. Thus, double-cross suffered when the Germans had access to other, reliable sources of intelligence.

In 1943, however, the German military did not have top quality sources of secret intelligence, and were more reliant on information gleaned from reconnaissance observations. Thus, they gathered intelligence through their operational contact with the Allied forces on the sea, in the air, and on land — although the last of those sources vanished during the vital time between the fall of Tunis and the invasion of Sicily.44 Aerial reconnaissance could be a useful source for the Axis forces, when their planes managed to penetrate Allied air cover. Axis air power would thus probably be able to detect the strong concentration of Husky forces in Tunisia but, happily for ‘A’ Force, its reconnaissance aircraft

44 “Historical Record of Deception,” CAB 154/100, pp.6-7.
did not have the range to penetrate deeply into the Middle East where the *Cascade* forces were notionally located. Moreover, while aerial reconnaissance could detect shipping and troop concentrations, it could not help construct a specific Allied order of battle.\textsuperscript{45} The Germans also suffered because, despite possessing high-quality aerial photography technology, their photographic interpretation skills lagged behind those of the British.\textsuperscript{46}

In addition, pictures and observations, especially without adequate interpretation, could not say what, precisely, troops, ships, and aircraft were going to do. As a result of that gap in their information, the Germans, if they were to make any sense of what they saw, would need further intelligence to explain what could be observed from the skies. Unfortunately for the Germans, their sources of signals intelligence (radio interception, traffic analysis, and both lower and higher level codebreaking) operated at a diminished capacity in 1943. Their best signals units had been lost in Tunisia, crippling German interception of Allied radio traffic in North Africa. While that loss hurt their ability to intercept, break, and read tactical codes, German cryptanalysts had never had much success against high-level codes: the British Army and the Royal Air Force used the secure Typex machine, which was never broken; the B-Dienst, the codebreaking outfit of the German

\textsuperscript{45} F.H. Hinsley argues that, in the summer of 1943, the German and Italian air forces had “entirely thorough” coverage of the Mediterranean. Michael Handel suggests that, as the Luftwaffe was forced to transfer air power to the Eastern and Home fronts in 1943, Axis air reconnaissance over the Mediterranean was a “sporadic rather than extensive and systematic activity.” Handel provides no source for his claim, while Hinsley bases his assessment on an naval intelligence report on the German Air Force and *Husky*. F.H. Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War, Vol. III Part I: Its Influence on Strategy and Operations* (London: HMSO, 1984), p.77; Handel, “Introduction,” p. 29.

Navy, had success against Royal Navy codes earlier in the war, but their efforts had dwindled and ultimately ended in June 1943.47

In early May, Fremde Heere West (FHW) had assessed these problems and suggested that all signals units in the Mediterranean be reinforced, and new air bases constructed further south for extended reconnaissance.48 Later, on 24 May, a general call did go out to all German intelligence stations ordering increased exploitation of agents, the renewal of wireless interception, and the increased use of Spanish sources in North Africa to ascertain Allied dispositions and intentions.49

However, German signals intelligence did not improve substantially and, after May, the Germans were reliant upon human intelligence sources to fill in the general framework provided by aerial reconnaissance. Of the human sources, military attachés were useful as collectors of intelligence from their perches in neutral states like Turkey, but they were far from a panacea. There were also no recent prisoners of war who could provide up-to-date information. The intelligence void left reports from Abwehr agents, long the black sheep of the German intelligence world, as the primary means of determining the Allied order of battle and ascertaining their offensive intentions. This situation should have favoured double-cross and, to some extent, it did. However, the German intelligence network of agents and informers spread well beyond those controlled by ‘A’ Force. Given that the Abwehr and their intelligence customers had a congenital inability to assess the credibility and reliability of

48 Oskar Reile, Der Deutsche Geheimdienst, pp.274-5.
agents, Dudley Clarke’s controlled spies were going to have a difficult time cutting through
the intelligence noise that the Germans experienced in 1943.

German intelligence evaluation and assessment of sources were at the root of
difficulties experienced by the Mediterranean double-cross system during the implementation
of Barclay. Of the three German armed services, the navy was known to have the worst
intelligence evaluation unit: SKL/3, or the Foreign Navies Branch. It did not evaluate B-
Dienst intelligence and SKL/1, in charge of operations, actually took it upon itself to do
much of its own intelligence analysis. 50 The results of this disorderly situation are apparent in
the SKL war diary: agent reports are simply reprinted, often without commentary of any
kind; synthetic analysis of multiple sources is usually absent. Army evaluation, while not as
disastrous, was still weak. At the apex was Fremde Heere West, led from early 1943 by Lt.-
Col. Alexis Baron von Roenne. His organization had a consistent tendency to inflate the
Allied order of battle, which ended up making Cascade even more effective. FHW would
accept new units readily and often on thin evidence. Once those units were included in the
official estimates of the Allies’ order of battle, they were unlikely to be removed. 51

Reports from spies, besides going to the high-level evaluation units, also went
directly to intelligence staffs at operational headquarters. There, the staff Ic officer, charged
with intelligence duties, would review the reports and utilize them as he saw fit. However,
intelligence work was not highly valued in a force that prized, above all else, men of daring

50 David Kahn, Hitler’s Spies, pp.387-90.
51 Roenne, it has been claimed, deliberately exacerbated this inflation, with one explanation being that
FHW, and commands in the west in general, were eager to keep their forces from following those that
had already been sucked into the mire of the Russian front. So, they exaggerated the number of
Anglo-American forces in the west, which would give Hitler and OKW pause before transferring
even more troops to the east. Holt, The Deceivers, pp.100-1.
and action. Thus, the Ic was not a powerful officer in most cases: he was subordinate to the
commander, and also to the operations section of the staff. The intelligence officers did
perform important tasks, though, such as assembling the local order of battle of the enemy.
Staff intelligence officers based their order of battle on information received from FHW and
FHO, in addition to intelligence sent to them directly by Abwehrstellen.52

Indeed, in 1943 the intelligence staffs at operational headquarters were inundated
with material directly from the Abwehrstellen, which began sending more and more
information to operational commands, rather than routing it through Berlin first.53 A good
example of this phenomenon can be seen in how Ast Athens distributed its intelligence:
besides sending its material to Abwehr headquarters, it sent raw intelligence directly to the
military commander in Greece, the Navy’s Southern Command and the Admiral of the
Aegean, the commander of the garrison on Crete, and the commander of Fliegerkorps X.54

In this confused intelligence environment, the volume of information overwhelmed
any potential for discrimination. Thus, rumour and hearsay were given wide distribution.55

An example is seen in the following British decrypt, found in Churchill’s Ultra box on 5 June
1943:

THE GERMAN EMBASSY LEARNED VIA ITALIAN EMBASSY FROM A
SOURCE IN MOROCCO WHICH HAS SO FAR BEEN GOOD, THAT THERE
WILL BE LANDINGS ON THE 17TH OF THIS MONTH ON CORSICA, SICILY,
IN SOUTH FRANCE AND IN SALONICA. IT HAS BEEN LEARNED FROM
THE SAME SOURCE THAT MINORCA AND/OR THE BALEARICS ARE TO BE
OCCUPIED.

52 Kahn, Hitler’s Spies, pp.399-409.
53 “Abwehr Incompetence,” 4 August 1943, HW 19/347, pp.4-5.
55 Howard, Strategic Deception, p.143.
Although nothing more than third-hand gossip, which proposed absurdly that the Allies were capable of simultaneous landings at these many disparate points (and which, interestingly, conflates and confuses some of the Allied deception plans circulating at the time), the Abwehr distributed the report to the proper intelligence recipients. FHW, Ast Paris, Ast Salonica, and SKL/3, as well SKL/1 and the Commanders-in-Chief South, South-East, and West received the raw intelligence directly and unfiltered.\textsuperscript{56}

Mediterranean double-cross, with its incremental approach, was designed to work on an opposing intelligence system by inducing it to discount gossip and random, uncorroborated reports in favour of the well-crafted intelligence developed by ‘A’ Force. In the German intelligence system, however, the sheer volume of information collected by a poorly organized and badly run system, lacking critical evaluators, meant that good information often did not rise to the top. Instead, a mishmash of the truth, Allied deception plans, and other falsehoods were often the result.

The problem of quantity over quality in the Abwehr had become severe in 1943: after their utter failure to predict the Torch landings in November 1942, Canaris’s organization, rather than improve its collection and assessment of information, began flooding even more dubious intelligence to Berlin and, increasingly, directly to operational commands. Centralized intelligence evaluation, which had barely existed prior to 1943, was disappeared as the Abwehr worked increasingly to the regional commands, rather than to Berlin.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{56} CX/MSS/2696/T21, 5 June 1943, HW 1/1723.

\textsuperscript{57} “Abwehr Incompetence,” 4 August 1943, HW 19/347, p.8.
Although it is apparent mostly in retrospect, Clarke’s cautious use of his agents, and the incremental approach that he took, gave too much credit to the Abwehr and the broader German intelligence system. The subtlety and nuance with which he and the Thirty Committees operated the agents were often lost on their German opponents. Clarke’s method required the German intelligence evaluators to, as Thaddeus Holt has put it, connect the dots which Clarke scattered in front of them. However, since the Germans were also using dots from a large number of uncontrolled sources, the end result was a confused and occasionally contradictory jumble, rather than the clear, deceptive picture that ‘A’ Force intended. The problem of dealing with a confused enemy was, in fact, an obstacle that hindered the very first Middle East deception, implemented for the Compass offensive in late 1940; and, as John Ferris argues, Clarke, despite good evidence at the time that the Italians were prepared to swallow more aggressively inflated Allied order of battle deceptions, remained cautious in his planning and implementation.

Better circulation of intelligence analyses from London to Cairo could have helped ‘A’ Force tailor their methods to overcome this problem. Access to the Radio Analysis

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58 Peter Fleming noticed a similar phenomenon when he operated deceptions against the Japanese in Burma. In order for the Japanese to notice and interpret the information to the satisfaction of the British, it had to be more than obvious. Fleming found that they never had difficulty getting the misinformation through to the Japanese, but so poor was their analysis that, no matter how plainly the information was served to them, it would be “garbled or distorted” by the Japanese. Holt, *The Deceivers*, p.116.

59 Ibid., p.78.

60 Even if ‘A’ Force only achieved confusion rather than outright deception, it may still have had a positive effect. Hinsley notes that on 4 July the Italian High Command, based on their assessments of convoy movements and naval concentrations, predicted a landing on the east coast of Sicily on 10 July, which was completely accurate. Charles Cruickshank, in his history of deception, suggests that such valuable and accurate intelligence was undermined by the falsities spread by ‘A’ Force. Hinsley, *British Intelligence III / I*, p.79; Cruickshank, *Deception in World War II*, p.60.

Bureau / Radio Intelligence Service reports of Hugh Trevor-Roper and his team of analysts would have laid bare to ‘A’ Force the chronic problems and gullibility of the Abwehr, as well as their particular methods of circulating intelligence. Unfortunately, ‘A’ Force only began receiving the reports in August 1943, too late to help in their major efforts of that year. In the absence of such analysis, the double-crossers operated under many misapprehensions. One of the most important was that Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME), responsible for the *Cheese* case, believed that their agent was run by the Italians, as the Germans were too good to manage a case so shabbily (an issue discussed in chapter two). The timing of that incorrect assessment is important, as it was made in the late winter of 1943, just as plan *Barclay* was about to be initiated, and when exact knowledge of the circumstances of each case would be vital for the success of the deception.

There were also limitations on double-cross because of Clarke’s cautious use of the agents, of which the incremental approach was only one manifestation. His cases, unlike some of those run from Britain by B1A, were not allowed to travel and meet their Abwehr controllers in person; but, as Guy Liddell remarked in June 1943, the extensive travel and personal contacts of agents like *Tricycle* had “established a position where our word was likely to carry more weight with the enemy rather than that of another agent who might be outside the ring.” Indeed, B1A sent agents on trips at key moments to further build their credibility: *Tricycle* went to Portugal to see his controllers in November 1943, in an effort to

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63 See chapter two, pp.105-7.
64 Liddell Diaries, 4 June 1943, KV 4/191, p.254.
further entrench his position as a top agent before the expected strategic deceptions of 1944.\footnote{Macintyre, Double-Cross, p.212.}

‘A’ Force did have, at its disposal, double agents who were at large and who met with their controllers, usually in Turkey. However, for that very reason they were not trusted for deception. Instead, ‘A’ Force relied on the wireless cases, none of whom were ever allowed — with the important exception of Renato Levi — to see their German masters again. Indeed, they were not even allowed to roam within British or Allied controlled territory in most cases. That ‘A’ Force rule was in direct contrast to standard practice in Britain: there, as J.C. Masterman noted, the agents, as much as possible, led the life that they claimed to lead in their reports to the Germans;\footnote{Masterman, The Double-Cross System, p.19.} in the Mediterranean ‘A’ Force policy was that agents should, as much as possible, \textit{not} lead the life presented to the enemy.\footnote{Mure, Practice to Deceive, p.14.} Thus, the agents could try to distinguish themselves with good intelligence sent over the radio, but not by impressing the Germans in person.

Even over the radio, they tended to lack personality. Unlike double agents in Britain such as \textit{Garbo}, who was known for his long and florid communications with the Germans, the wireless reports sent by ‘A’ Force agents were factual and terse.\footnote{Holt, The Deceivers, pp.142-3.} Such wireless interaction was part and parcel of Clarke’s conservative approach to double-cross, and was very different than what happened in Britain. Indeed, \textit{Garbo}, in making his expansive points to his German controllers, could sometimes stay on the air for as long as two hours. His frequency of transmission was also intense: he sent a total of 1300 messages from March
1943 to May 1945. As both Ralph Bennett and John P. Campbell have noted, these wireless transmission practices should have prompted German suspicions, since British authorities were bound to detect and investigate them. However, even if the Abwehr had suspicions, they never questioned their agent’s credibility.69 ‘A’ Force, which was definitely more security conscious than B1A, never took those kinds of risks with their double agents.

The incremental approach was another manifestation of the ‘A’ Force preference for caution. The approach was central to their goal of maintaining the double agents after the invasion of Sicily, a policy rooted in the experience of Cheese prior to the November 1941 offensive launched against Rommel. In that case, the double agent had pushed the deceptive story as hard as possible, so much so that, when the Germans found themselves surprised by the British attack, they became deeply suspicious of their spy in Cairo. However, at the time the British were willing to blow the channel in a desperate attempt to save their position in Egypt. So, Cheese was not used incrementally and, notably, the deception was successful.70

In 1943, however, the stakes were different: Clarke now had a large and integrated system of double agents and, realizing that the 1943 offensives were not going to be the decisive events of the war, he was unwilling to use them as forcefully as they had been in 1941.

Consequently, the first two phases of Barclay, as implemented by the double-cross system, were not particularly successful. The three Middle Eastern wireless agents did transmit Barclay material and, while the Abwehr dutifully forwarded it to headquarters in

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70 See chapter one, pp.72-6.
Berlin, FHW, and relevant operational commands, most of it did not elicit any specific reaction, or even appear in German intelligence reviews and assessments.

The reports of the double agents tended to focus on specific units, with intimations regarding where those units would be utilized by the Allies. One prominent feature in the reportage of the spies was the III Corps, which was real but said to be part of the Twelfth Army, which was fake. On 6 May Athens informed General Alexander Löhr’s Salonica headquarters of a *Pessimist* report which claimed that the III Corps, recently arrived in Syria, was returning to Egypt. The Abwehr officer who sent the report added the comment that it confirmed a report from *Cheese* on 29 April. On 15 May Athens contacted Berlin with word that, according to *The Pessimists*, troops were moving from Damascus to join a large army assembling in Egypt; the rumour among the troops on the move was that the invasion of Europe was imminent. While the original spy report identified no specific units, the Abwehr officer, in his missive to Berlin, added his own note, commenting that it could be the III Corps on its way to Egypt. *Cheese* fleshed out the story further on 14 May, by disclosing the movement of a Greek division from Syria to Alexandria for an apparent attack on Greece. All of these reports were deceptive and, while they worked their way up to FHW and some operational commands, there is no clear evidence that they had any profound effect.

Occasionally, however, some report of the alleged upcoming invasion of Greece did get a response from the higher reaches of the German intelligence system. One such case

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71 Athens to Salonica, 6 May 1943, HW 19/120.
72 Athens to Berlin, 15 May 1943, HW 19/120.
73 *Cheese* outward message No. 209, 14 May 1943, WO 169/24894.
occurred on 2 May when Gala, the female member of the Quicksilver group in Beirut, reported that Greek troops in Baalbek, in the Lebanese interior, were being replaced by British troops, all of whom allegedly had, or were undergoing, training in mountain warfare.\textsuperscript{74} The news intrigued FHW enough that they asked for further information on 12 May, with the following message to the Balkan Abwehrstellen and KOs: “Abt. Fremde Heere West requests that the V-Leute working in that region be exhorted to [make] more detailed investigations especially as regards strength, and nationality of these troops and the formations to which they belong.”\textsuperscript{75} That same day, Quicksilver’s German control asked him to “try by any means in your power to find out precise details concerning imminent expedition of invasion into Europe.”\textsuperscript{76}

Not long after, however, the first notional postponement was implemented, and the double agents tried to build up pressure towards the new notional invasion date in late June. On 10 June, Cheese reported unverified rumours about a late June expedition. Two days later he provided more detail: the Twelfth Army headquarters had been established, and he had seen vehicles sporting the insignia of a seal balancing a globe on its snout. The Athenian Abwehr officer who circulated the report added a note suggesting that the insignia was probably for the Twelfth Army.\textsuperscript{77} Similarly, on 13 June Quicksilver told Athens that all leave for Greek and English soldiers was to end that same day, and talk among the soldiers was of

\textsuperscript{74} Quicksilver outward message No. 213, 2 May 1943, WO 169/24892.
\textsuperscript{75} Berlin to Salonica, 12 May 1943, HW 19/120. V-Leute is “Vertrauensleute,” which was the Abwehr term for spies.
\textsuperscript{76} Quicksilver inward message No. 223, 12 May 1943, WO 169/24892.
\textsuperscript{77} Cheese outward messages Nos. 222 & 223, 10 & 12 June 1943, WO 169/24894.
an impending expedition.\textsuperscript{78} Again, these reports received wide circulation, but they entered the morass of German intelligence and do not appear to have had any profound influence on enemy actions or decisions, even when the combination of the reports are taken as a whole.

The interaction between double-cross and the peculiar German intelligence system is apparent in the latter’s view of Cyprus, and their resultant opinion of its role in Allied operations. The issue arose in a meeting between Hitler and Alfred Jodl on 4 March 1943. Jodl remarked that more and more reports had been forecasting imminent action in the eastern Mediterranean; but, “they come back again and again to the same point: They speak of huge concentrations in Cyprus that certainly don’t exist.” ‘A’ Force, while it had inflated the garrison on the island, did not want to tempt aerial reconnaissnance, and never spoke of “huge concentrations,” so these reports had obviously emanated from uncontrolled sources. Nevertheless, Jodl still expected some action in the eastern Mediterranean, citing the presence British 8th Armoured Division in the Middle East — a \textit{Cascade}-created unit — as a definite sign of Allied preparations.\textsuperscript{79}

Still, most evidence pointed to relative quiet on the Cypriot front. The Abwehr station in Ankara, in a show of unusual lucidity, reported correctly to Berlin on 3 May that reports of activity on Cyprus were “contradictory and exaggerated,” and that there was little possibility of operations being launched from the island, or from Syria, in the near future.\textsuperscript{80} Corroborating evidence came from aerial reconnaissance: the OKW and SKL war diaries

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Quicksilver} outward message No. 251, 13 June 1943, WO 169/24892.


\textsuperscript{80} Ankara to Berlin, 3 May 1943, HW 19/119.
show consistently, throughout May and June, that there was very little observable activity on land and in the Cypriot ports.\(^81\)

However, reports from uncontrolled agents of military activity on the island never stopped. As an example, both Moritz and Ibis contributed intelligence in May, alleging that the Americans had taken over command of Cyprus, and that there was a transfer of landing craft to the Cypriot ports, in addition to increases in the number of troops on the island.\(^82\) Such was the state of German intelligence evaluation that, despite the fact that such reports blatantly contradicted Axis aerial reconnaissance, they were accepted and formed part of the German appreciation of the potential threat from Cyprus. Indeed, OKW was worried enough to undertake an investigation of Cyprus’s suitability as an invasion base.\(^83\)

The “news” from the uncontrolled agents did not necessarily contradict the general theme of Barclay, but it did contradict the specific role allotted to Cyprus in ‘A’ Force’s plan. It also demonstrated that the Germans were prepared to swallow big stories on pretty thin, and often contradictory, evidence. In response, ‘A’ Force tried to deflate German estimates of the island’s role in the upcoming operations. When The Pessimists were asked by the Abwehr about the transfer of Greek troops to the island, they denied that it had happened. Similarly, when a new case, called The Lemons, opened on Cyprus in May, it was used to stress that the island was relatively quiet and there were no invasion preparations taking place.\(^84\) Overall,

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\(^82\) Vienna to Salonica, 14 May 1943; Vienna to Salonica, 18 May 1943, HW 19/120.

\(^83\) “The OKW and Allied Intentions,” 31 May 1943, CAB 154/96.

however, the combination of uncontrolled reports, ‘A’ Force material, and Axis aerial reconnaissances created insecurity and confusion in the German mind about the danger that Allied efforts from Cyprus might pose to their power in the Balkans.

Ultimately, according to a postwar British assessment, “the German command was oppressed by the fear of the unknown, and its actions were to some extent governed by it.”[^85]

Double-cross was never quite able to get the Germans to dispel their fear of the unknown by piecing together, and believing, the specific deceptive story being presented by ‘A’ Force. *Barclay* and *Cascade* certainly made the Germans worry about the Balkans, and drew in reinforcements, but they never managed to get the Germans to exclude other possible targets, or to abandon their worry of Allied action at any point from Spain to the Black Sea. The problem was captured well in Joseph Goebbels’s succinct response to a 25 June statement by Hitler on the imminence of Allied action: ”Wo, das ist die Frage.”[^86]

The fear of the unknown was stoked by reports from agents and sources across Europe which pointed to Allied action at all points across the Mediterranean. ‘A’ Force’s efforts to draw large-scale German reinforcements into the Balkans and France, and not into Italy and Sicily, were hampered by this confusion. What saved the deception project, and made the Balkan deception in particular a real success, was Operation *Mincemeat*, and the subsequent Operation *Animals*. *Mincemeat* was an apparently spectacular intelligence coup for the Germans which, as was noted at the time, was “swallowed whole” by Hitler himself. The Führer was certainly taken with the dead courier’s documents, referring to them


specifically at a meeting with Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz on 14 May, and in a teletype sent to Mussolini on the 19th.\(^7\) Hitler also showed considerable worry about the need to reinforce the Balkans at his military conferences on 19 and 20 May.\(^8\) As a result of *Mincemeat*, during May Hitler and his generals were worried about the Balkans and moved substantial forces into the region, most notably the 1st Panzer Division.\(^9\)

*Mincemeat* worked, in part, because it was not incremental. Instead, it was a dramatic operation that sought to communicate a direct threat in one fell swoop, with the hope that the Germans would find, disseminate, and believe letters found on a dead courier which apparently revealed the Allies’ offensive intentions. Something of that magnitude cut through the intelligence noise that affected the Germans. No report from a double agent ever had that same influence in 1943 and, given the nature of German intelligence and ‘A’ Force’s methods, they never could have.

However, *Mincemeat*, and the entire 1943 deception program, was based on *Cascade*, and in that plan double-cross was decisive and successful. Double agents were the vital medium through which the fake units entered the German mind and, soon after, their order of battle estimates. In the early days of 1943, before *Barclay* started, much of *Cascade* was relayed to Berlin by KO Istanbul, which received copious reports from its agents who travelled into the Middle East on the Taurus Express train. Most of those agents were British-
controlled, like *Doleful*. To take one of the many reports filtered to the Germans in support of *Cascade*, on 26 January *Doleful* reported to Istanbul that the 10th Armoured Division was in Syria (this was true information) but, in addition, claimed that the 29th and 31st US Infantry Divisions were in Syria as well. In fact, the 29th Division was in England, and the 31st was not deployed until 1944, and even then it was in the Pacific, not the Middle East.\(^90\) Such order of battle intelligence was prized by the Abwehr: Wilhelm Hamburger, an Abwehr officer in Istanbul until his defection in 1944, told his British interrogators how his colleagues had been able to calculate the Allied order of battle on the basis of regular reports from their agent *Arthur*. *Arthur* was, in fact, *Doleful*.\(^91\)

The Abwehr also sent intelligence to FHW from unnamed agents which, nonetheless, can be pinpointed as ‘A’ Force material, given the close correspondence between the information and the Strategic Addenda, the regularly issued compilations of material passed to the enemy. Thus, we can see further *Cascade* material making its way to FHW on 5 January, when an “apparently reliable” agent reported that the 6th and 7th US Infantry Divisions had arrived in Basra, Iraq, while the 7th and 25th British Infantry Divisions were undertaking landing manoeuvres on Cyprus. Like *Doleful’s* report, this intelligence is another prime example of *Cascade*: the 6th and 7th divisions were in the Pacific, while the 7th and 25th were entirely fictitious.\(^92\) FHW took all of this information on board, along with chicken feed that ‘A’ Force fed them regularly about real troops movements.\(^93\) In this incrementalist

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90 Istanbul to Berlin, 26 January 1943, HW 19/110.
91 Untitled SIME Report on Wilhelm Hamburger, 6 April 1944, KV 2/959, p.2
93 Lagebericht West Nr. 885, 6 March 1943, MI 14, Box 258. IWM Duxford.
fashion, *Cascade* warped both the Abwehr’s and FHW’s understanding of Allied capabilities, providing a foundation for the flawed strategic decisions that ‘A’ Force tried to provoke.

It is intriguing that *Cascade* worked as an incremental deception, while *Barclay* was less successful. The reason is, again, rooted in the relationship between the incremental method and the German intelligence system: *Barclay*, a deception regarding specific Allied strategic intentions in 1943, was often negated by other uncontrolled sources of intelligence; or, at least, it was subsumed into a swirl of information in which Allied attacks were allegedly possible all over the Mediterranean. The result, at best, was confusion on the German side. *Cascade*, however, was an order of battle deception and, even with uncontrolled sources reporting their own information on Allied forces and their dispositions, the effect was cumulative rather than contradictory. Consequently, the incremental method worked for *Cascade* because ‘A’ Force material coalesced with the uncontrolled sources, rather than getting confused by them. ISOS and Ultra intelligence from the German military were also important in this regard, as it allowed ‘A’ Force to create a false order of battle that blended in with German preconceptions, and with what uncontrolled sources were reporting.

Furthermore, the Germans were particularly susceptible to a false order of battle. Given how the Axis used manpower, with very large armies, they expected that the Allies, with comparably vast manpower reserves, would have much larger armies than they actually did. Of course, the Germans did not consider that the Allies had a much longer “tail” of people reaching from the factory shop floor to the logistical troops in Europe. The Allies also had large air forces and navies. As John Ferris argues, when the Germans considered the

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potential manpower of the Allies through the filter of their own habits of marshaling human resources, they would have expected the Allies to have 100 percent more divisions than they actually did. Thus, it was very easy for them to believe the inflated order of battle.95

So, even though double-cross had only an incomplete success with Barclay, the double agents had a profound influence on German thinking through their work on Cascade, an effect that reached the highest levels of the German command. An example of Cascade’s influence at the highest level of German decision-making came on 4 March 1943, when Jodl and Hitler discussed a recent influx of reports which forecast enemy action in the eastern Mediterranean — the same discussion mentioned above, with reference to Cyprus. As we saw, Jodl was confused as aerial reconnaissance showed that spy reports about major activity on Cyprus were not accurate. However, Jodl still expected an attack in the east, and largely because of Cascade: he mentioned a number of the units available for an assault, and noted the specific presence of the 8th British Armoured Division, which was a Cascade formation. He also remarked on the presence in the Middle East of an unnamed South African division, which may have been the 7th Infantry, a part of Cascade, or the 6th Armoured, which was a real unit in Egypt.96 This example shows that Cascade information, even though it said nothing about Allied intentions, could help push the agenda of Barclay. However, the latter was supposed to provoke specific German actions, such as an incorrect deployment of forces to meet what was, in reality, a phony threat, whereas all Cascade could provide was a imprecise concern in the German military mind. Nor could order of battle deception convince the Germans that the Allies would not attack Sicily.

95 Ferris, “‘FORTITUDE’ in Context,” pp.141, 149.
The above example is just a small one, as the order of battle deception permeated the estimates that the German military made about the forces arrayed against them. Consequently, their basic assumptions of what the Allies were capable of were fundamentally flawed. The Middle Eastern double agents were indispensable in creating this scenario, as seen in the case of *The Pessimists*. Based in Damascus, they were one of the main conduits for the assertive 1943 version of *Cascade*, which induced such flawed thinking. They frequently transmitted intelligence on the “presence” of Indian troops in Syria, of which the 5th Indian Division was prominent. It is one of the best single examples of a *Cascade* formation having an appreciable effect on German expectations.

The 5th Indian Division had fought as part of the Eighth Army but, after the Battle of Alam Halfa in August 1942, was withdrawn to Iraq and then, in mid-1943, sent to Burma. In late 1942 a specific *5th Indian Division Plan*, a sub-plan of *Cascade*, was implemented via *The Pessimists* to cover the movement of the formation to Iraq, by stating that it was in Syria. Clarke reasoned that, since the Germans knew the British in India were desperate for troops to help stifle the Japanese advance, if they were convinced that the 5th was still in Syria, the Germans must conclude that it could only be there as part of an imminent Allied operation.  

The scheme worked because, on 21 July 1943, when the division was heading for Burma, General Löhr’s Ic in Greece reported that the 5th and 6th Indian Divisions were in Palestine and ready for action, probably against the Aegean islands (it must also be noted that the 6th was not in Palestine either, but part of the Tenth Army in Persia and Iraq).  

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97 Mure, *Practice to Deceive*, pp.85-86. An example the implementation of the plan can be seen in *The Pessimists* outward message No. 127, 12 April 1943, WO 169/24892.

98 MI14 Report, 11 August 1943, HW 5/762.
were also key in “moving” other units into Syria that summer, such as the alleged 7th Polish Division.

*Cheese* was the other important order of battle agent in the Middle East. His consistent reports on the fictional Twelfth Army did much to convince the Germans that it existed. It first appeared in his intelligence reports on 14 May 1943, when he stated that he had seen a letter addressed to the Twelfth Army, the first time he had heard or seen any reference to that force.\(^99\)

*Cascade*, therefore, went a long way to achieving its purpose of becoming the basis of Germany’s understanding of the balance of forces in the Mediterranean. Whether or not Roenne and FHW purposely inflated the Allied order of battle by accepting all units that came their way on thin evidence is beside the point. For decision-makers like Jodl and Löhr, these units were a fact of life that had to be taken into account. In that sense, double-cross and the incremental method had a major success.

*Barclay*, meanwhile, finally started to gain traction in June. Although, as Michael Howard argues, they were never able to convince the Germans unambiguously about the target of an Allied invasion, ‘A’ Force did have some favourable reaction to their two phony, and subsequently postponed, invasion dates in late May and late June. Both postponements were mentioned in the SKL war diary, and in each case the German intelligence was based specifically on the report of an ‘A’ Force double agent. On 16 May *Quicksilver* reported that there were no landing preparations evident in Beirut, a clear sign that no offensive action was

imminent.\textsuperscript{100} When, on 22 May, Athens radioed Berlin to reiterate that both \textit{Quicksilver} and \textit{Gala} were certain that the harbour had been quiet for two weeks, the report was noted in the SKL war diary.\textsuperscript{101} The second, June postponement also appeared in that diary, that time based on a \textit{Cheese} report. The original message was transmitted from Cairo to Athens on 19 June, which Athens forwarded to its usual recipients the next day. The intelligence, which noted that \textit{Cheese's} friend Marie had learned of the postponement from a naval officer, appeared in the SKL war diary on 26 June.\textsuperscript{102}

The June postponement, in particular, was important, alongside Operation \textit{Animals} (see below), in throwing the Germans off the trail that was, throughout June, leading ever more surely to an attack on Sicily. Prior to mid-June, the Abwehr had been unsure about the place and date of the invasion but, as the end of the month approached, they were confident that the Allies would invade Sicily. That forecast was the closest the Abwehr ever came to correctly assessing Allied strategic intentions. When nothing happened and, indeed, the Allies were said to have postponed the invasion, the Abwehr “retreated even from that limited degree of confidence” and, in a panic, began to report on imminent landings everywhere from Sicily to Romania.\textsuperscript{103}

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{100} \textit{Quicksilver} outward message No. 227, 16 May 1943, WO 169/24892; Sofia to Athens, 17 May 1943, HW 19/121.
  \item \textsuperscript{101} Athens to Berlin, 22 May 1943, HW 19/121; Entry for 24 May 1943, in \textit{Kriegstagebuch der Seekriegsleitung 1939-1945, Teil A, Band 45: Mai 1943} (Herford & Bonn: Verlag E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1993), p.426.
  \item \textsuperscript{102} \textit{Cheese} Outward Message No. 227, 19 June 1943, WO 169/24894; Entry for 26 June 1943, SKL \textit{KTB Juni 1943}, p.458.
  \item \textsuperscript{103} “Abwehr Incompetence,” 4 August 1943, HW 19/347, p.1.
\end{itemize}
IV

From early May until mid-June, the incremental approach had not worked well for Barclay. As the example of Cyprus shows, German intelligence was not astute enough to sort the ‘A’ Force “wheat” from the uncontrolled “chaff,” even with blatant visual evidence staring them in the face. The postponements seem to have been more effective, although they were one-time reports rather than incremental stories. Cascade worked well because its incremental nature accumulated along with the uncontrolled sources, rather than getting confused by them. Barclay, though, was saved by Mincemeat, which was dependent on Cascade. Consequently, German eyes seemed to be cast on either side of Sicily: on 6 June OKW received reports from the Commander-in-Chief South which noted increased landings capabilities further west at Oran and Arzew, as well as concentrations between Gabes and Benghazi which seemed to be preparing for an assault on the Peloponnese.¹⁰⁴

However, only days later even Mincemeat was running out of steam as genuine Allied preparations made it impossible to ignore that Sicily was the likely objective of an invasion. Allied bombing demonstrated this fact to the Germans, so much so that ‘A’ Force was compelled to ask for greater dispersal in aerial attacks. Most obvious, though, was the 10 June capture of Pantelleria, an operation that made no sense, except as a preparation to invade Sicily. That very same day the Germans proposed to move the Hermann Göring Division to Sicily, and the movement began on 20 June. By early July the division was assembled with 18 000 men, ninety-six guns, and fifty-three tanks.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Entry for 6 June 1943, OKW KTB, pp.603-4.
Although it was not possible to stop the Göring Division from reinforcing Sicily, other events intervened to draw German attention back to Greece, giving new life to the Allied deceptions. In particular, it was Operation *Animals* which forced the Nazis to reconsider their position in the Balkans. Implemented by the British Military Mission to Greece — headed by Lt.-Col. E.C. Myers and Capt. C.M. Woodhouse — the operation saw Greek guerrillas and British Special Operations Executive personnel fan out across the mountainous region of central Greece and attack German transport and communications links in late June and early July. *Animals* opened on 21 June when a British SOE team destroyed the Asopos railway bridge in spectacular fashion, a feat which also managed to eliminate the only route by which the 1st Panzer could leave Greece. The operation immediately attracted German attention, and stoked fears that the attacks were a prelude to an Allied invasion.106

Although more by accident than by design, phase three of *Barclay* opened the same day as the Asopos attack, with the Middle Eastern agents still trying to impress upon the Germans that Greece was the Allied objective. They also continued to press the notion that the Allies preferred the end of the month for an attack, when the real date for *Husky* was 10 July. The renewed German worry about Greece seemed to have a positive affect on ‘A’ Force’s efforts, which can be seen in German reaction to a *Quicksilver* report on 5 July. He claimed to have learned that the King of Greece had sent Prince Peter to speak to troops in Lebanon, all of whom were allegedly disgruntled at their return to Greece being continually delayed. The Prince told the men, in confidence, that the invasion would take place at the end of the month.

of July and, this time, there would be no postponement. This precise intelligence was quoted in the SKL war diary on 9 July. SKL then added its own commentary, remarking that the forthcoming Allied operation must be aimed at Greece. At this late stage SKL, in particular, seems to have taken a greater interest in ‘A’ Force intelligence. It was a heartening sign that, thanks to Cascade, Mincemeat, and Animals, Clarke’s agents were finally starting push Barclay through the intelligence noise surrounding the Germans.

Even the foundering North African agent Jewe was able to make some contribution, albeit one that was too little and too late. A 26 June reported he submitted on the presence of the 1st US Armoured Division in Rabat (this was true information) was noted in the 28 June FHW Lagebericht. Two days later, Jewe passed deceptive material when he commented on the creation of an invasion headquarters under General Alexander at Oran, a location that suggested action west of Sicily. By that point, however, it was impossible to hide the major build-up that was occurring in the central Mediterranean.

Accordingly, in the last days before Husky, ‘A’ Force turned its attention to saving the credibility of their agents when the blow fell on Sicily, and to sustaining threats to other places in the hope that the Axis would consider Husky a diversion or preliminary assault. The former — saving the agents for another day — meant that the double agents hedged their bets in the days prior to the Allied operation, and did not make a full effort to divert German attention to Greece in the same way that Garbo would later draw German attention to the Pas

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107 Quicksilver outward message No. 270, 5 July 1943, WO 169/24892.
109 Jewe outward message No. 94, 26 June 1943, WO 169/24897; Lagebericht West Nr. 963, 28 June 1943, MI 14, Box 258, p.2. IWM Duxford.
110 Jewe outward message No. 96, 28 June 1943, WO 169/24897.
de Calais after the Allies landed in Normandy. It was very logical for ‘A’ Force to protect their agents in this manner, as the invasion of Sicily was not going to be the decisive moment of the war. Only in 1944, as the Allies prepared to invade France, would the double-crossers be willing to use their agents to the limit and, if necessary, blow their credibility. Thus, in 1943, the double agents were used in a half-hearted manner as Husky drew near.

The agent that Clarke most wanted to protect and develop for the future was Gilbert, a channel that started operation in Tunis in May 1943. Given his potential to be a high-grade deception agent (he was actually a French officer in Tunis), Clarke had to balance the fact that Gilbert would obviously be aware of invasion preparations with the need to maintain the deception. So, since he appeared to be developing into a top channel, Gilbert was used to send a report which was meant to give him credibility while not giving away the invasion of Sicily. He sent the following to Paris over wireless on 7 July:

Large scale preparations in whole of N. AFRICA, including quite a number of exercises in coordination and landing; French troops taking part.

Landing operation probably July, possibly full moon, but impossible to know for certain: secret carefully guarded and information unreliable.

Possible destinations: SARDINIA, CORSICA, SICILY perhaps South of FRANCE for Algerian troops.111

The message had some resonance with the Germans. A month later, on 12 August, the SKL war diary mentioned a report from an agent which forecast an attack on the south of France at the end of the month. They considered the report reliable because it had come from the same agent — i.e. Gilbert — who had reported on the Sicilian invasion on 7 July.112 His

111 Gilbert outward message, 7 July 1943, WO 169/24899.
report on the 7th was also singled out for particular praise by Albert Beu gras, one of his Axis controllers, in his interrogation after the war.\textsuperscript{113}

The addition of Sicily in the message, and the comment that the attack could potentially take place during the full moon period (the real timing of \textit{Husky}) were both elements that, apparently, helped secure \textit{Gilbert's} credibility. However, it is a further sign of the weakness of German intelligence analysis that such an imprecise report would be given lavish attention and praise, when it only appears prescient in retrospect and, even then, it is not a really confident or very precise forecast. The imprecision of the message was the responsibility of General Eisenhower, who vetoed an ‘A’ Force plan to have some important agents transmit specific warnings just too late to be of any use to the Germans.\textsuperscript{114}

Consequently, \textit{Gilbert} transmitted the vague report on the 7th, and a generic warning about an imminent landing sent on 9 July.\textsuperscript{115} These vague reports, however, were enough to maintain \textit{Gilbert's} credibility with his controllers, and even allowed him to command the respect of the Germans.

\textit{Barclay} ended when Allied troops hit the beaches on the night of 9-10 July, but ‘A’ Force carried on with \textit{Cascade} and, although there was no strategic deception plan to cover the contingency, continued trying to attract German attention to the Balkans, Corsica, and Sardinia. Soon after, in late July, plan \textit{Boardman} was developed to draw German attention away from the west coast of Italy, where the Allies intended to land at Salerno in early September. The new strategic plan, which was largely a continuation of \textit{Barclay}, pretended

\textsuperscript{114} Minutes of 40 Committee Meeting, 9 July 1943, WO 169/24888; Holt, \textit{The Deceivers}, pp.381-2.
\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Gilbert} outward and inward messages, 9 & 14 July, WO 169/24899. The 14 July inward message was a congratulatory one, based on his intelligence on the 9th.
that the Twelfth Army had not been committed to action because of a late stage decision to
invade Sicily before the Balkans, and plans for the latter had been pushed back to late
September. Boardman also launched notional threats against Corsica, Sardinia, and the heel of Italy.\textsuperscript{116}

Interestingly, double-cross material is more prominent in German intelligence papers
from the period after \textit{Husky} than before. It is possible that this development was based on the
changing whims of German intelligence, but also because, now that the Allies had struck
Sicily, the Balkan operation, in the German mind, had to be coming. Indeed, Field Marshal
Keitel, just before \textit{Husky}, signaled the Mediterranean commanders and ordered them to
prepare for an upcoming Allied invasion of Greece. He cited forty Allied divisions as being
available for offensive action in the theatre, which was double the actual number.\textsuperscript{117}

In addition, double-cross material probably had a stronger effect after 10 July than
before because German intelligence was more reliant on human sources. Indeed, if anything,
German intelligence was even more confused about Allied intentions — although, it should
be noted, the Allies themselves were not sure what their next step would be while the battle
of Sicily was getting underway. Thus, on the 10th, FHW admitted that they had no clue
regarding future enemy plans, although shipping capacity and strong reserves meant that an
attack on Sardinia and the Aegean were both possible. Chronic gaps in aerial reconnaissance
furthered the problem, leaving FHW to complain on 12 July it lacked the information
necessary to assess Allied activity in the Suez Canal, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the

\textsuperscript{116} Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1943, CAB 154/3, pp.113, 141-3.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., pp.110-1.
North African ports.\textsuperscript{118} OKW echoed that sentiment, admitting on 5 August that, due to incomplete aerial reconnaissance, their knowledge of the enemy position was fragmentary.\textsuperscript{119}

Perhaps as a result, intelligence emanating from ‘A’ Force agents received greater attention than prior to 9 July, although that did not necessarily mean there was substantially less confusion on the German side. \textit{Cheese}, who continued to report on the notional activity of the Twelfth Army and other fake units in Egypt, caught the attention of SKL with his news that a secret meeting had taken place in Cairo among the King of Greece, Lord Moyne, General Wilson, Air Marshal Douglas, General Brooke, and Admiral Cunningham. The report was printed in the 23 July SKL war diary entry.\textsuperscript{120} Corroborating evidence that there was to be imminent action in the eastern Mediterranean was provided by \textit{The Pessimists}. As noted above, their information on the 5th and 6th Indian divisions, along with the fake 7th Polish Division, was passed to General Löhr’s Salonica headquarters in July, and had a substantial impact on their view of Allied intentions.\textsuperscript{121}

General forecasts, of the type that had been absorbed in the avalanche of Abwehr material prior to \textit{Husky}, also received greater attention after the Sicilian landings, possibly because they matched the German fear that Sicily could only be a preliminary attack, leading to a full-scale invasion of the Balkans. \textit{Cheese} (on 11 July), \textit{The Pessimists} (17 July), an unnamed Turkish ‘A’ Force channel (17 July) and \textit{Quicksilver} (23 July) all reported that the

\textsuperscript{118} Kurze Feindbeurteilung Mittelmeer, 12 July 1943, MI 14, Box 259. IWM Duxford
\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Cheese} outward message No. 245, 22 July 1943, WO 169/24894; Entry for 23 July 1943, SKL KTB, p.468.
\textsuperscript{121} Athens to Vienna via Salonika, 15 July 1943; Athens to Berlin, 7 August 1943, HW 19/252.
Sicilian operation was only a prelude to the invasion of Greece. The Turkish intelligence appeared in the SKL war diary on 19 July, while both OKW and FHW, without naming specific agents, noted on 17 and 19 July, respectively, that there were ongoing reports from the Abwehr of an invasion of Greece; but, without corroboration, the reports could not be verified.

Similarly, Gilbert continued his ascent to the top rank of the Mediterranean double-cross system. As an apparently highly-placed agent on the French Army staff in Tunis, he was very well regarded by both the Abwehr and his real Allied controllers. Even more importantly, he seems to have become a valued source at the headquarters of Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, the German Commander-in-Chief South who was based in Italy. In August, Gilbert’s intelligence began appearing frequently in the daily intelligence summaries issued by Kesselring’s staff. In one case, his chicken feed of 2 August — news that the British 1st Armoured Division was moving from Libya to Tunis — appeared in the 5 August Ic summary. An important deceptive report that featured in an Ic summary came on 19 August: it predicted an upcoming Allied attack on Sardinia and Corsica.

In each case, we see the Abwehr’s preference for the speed of intelligence reporting above all else. The deceptive report of the 19th went from Tunis, to Paris, to the Abwehr office in Rome, and on to Kesselring’s staff in less than a day, and ended up being placed in a document that formed the basis of German intelligence in the Mediterranean theatre.


123 Entry for 19 July 1943, SKL KTB, p.394; Entry for 17 July 1943, OKW KTB, p.801; Kurze Feindbeurteilung Mittelmeer, 19 July 1943, MI 14, Box 259. IWM Duxford.

The result of these double-cross efforts to keep German eyes distracted from the battle in Sicily and the impending invasion of the Italian mainland was mixed but, on the whole, positive for the Allies. On 25 July FHW concluded that, despite the Mincemeat documents, the Allies appeared to have abandoned, at least for the moment, the planned attack against Greece. Consequently, the invasion of Sicily was not a diversionary or preliminary offensive.\textsuperscript{125} Hitler, however, still saw all roads as leading to Greece and, on 23 July, he sent Rommel to make a report on the conditions there. The Desert Fox arrived in Salonica two days later to confer with General Löhr. However, that very night Rommel was recalled to Führer headquarters, upon the news that Mussolini had been removed from power in Italy.\textsuperscript{126}

The tumultuous situation in Italy did not, however, take Hitler’s attention away from Greece. On 26 July he issued his Directive No. 48, which argued that “the enemy’s measures in the Eastern Mediterranean, in conjunction with the attack on Sicily, indicate that he will shortly begin landing operations against our strong line in the Aegean, Peloponnese-Crete-Rhodes, and against the west coast of Greece with off-shore Ionian islands.” Even if the Allies attacked mainland Italy, Hitler reasoned, that was a possible route of invasion of the Balkans, a view shared by Admiral Dönitz.\textsuperscript{127} In preparation, Hitler ordered increased defensive measures on the east coast, destruction of “bandit gangs” in the region, and for the new C-in-C South-East, Field Marshal Maximilian von Weichs, to take command of the

\textsuperscript{125} Kurze Feindbeurteiling Mittelmeer, 25 July 1943, MI 14, Box 259. IWM Duxford; Howard, \textit{British Intelligence V}, p.92.


\textsuperscript{127} “Minutes Taken When the C.-in-C. Navy, Visited the Fuehrer on July 26 to 28, 1943,” \textit{Fuehrer Naval Conferences}, p.348.
Italian Eleventh Army. 128 This directive, inspired as it was by perceived “enemy measures in the Eastern Mediterranean,” showed a deeply flawed understanding of the Allies’ true capabilities in the region, which were actually quite minimal.

‘A’ Force, therefore, did succeed with its incremental method in keeping the Germans worried about the Balkans, although it was never the latter’s sole concern. A more ambitious deception might have produced better results, but only once in 1943 did Clarke’s team attempt a big all-or-nothing play to deceive the Germans. It happened in September when ‘A’ Force used the agent Guinea in Tangier to sell the Germans what he alleged to be plans for a imminent Allied invasion of Italy. Although not as audacious or complex as Mincemeat, it was based on the same principle: to present the Germans with such an apparent intelligence coup that they would find it impossible to resist — if they believed it. Unfortunately, Guinea was used in a ham-handed manner.

The agent, whose real name was James Ponsonby, was an SOE operative based in Tangier. He was known in the city as a drunk and debt-ridden person, albeit a good-natured one. Through the offices of MI6, a plan was developed in conjunction with LCS to use Ponsonby’s reputation to ‘A’ Force’s advantage. In accordance with the plan, Ponsonby went around drinking and carousing with the British Military Attaché in Tangier, in a manner that the local Germans would be sure to notice. He then went to see Goeritz, the local Abwehr representative, to offer information on Allied plans in return for money to help solve his

debts. The channel was offered to ‘A’ Force, which decided to use it as a means of diverting German attention from the Salerno landings, planned for 9 September 1943.\(^{129}\)

The timelines, however, were too tight. Clarke held it as an article of faith that a deception could only work if it was given time to develop. *Mincemeat*, as an example, took place months before the Sicily landings, allowing a decent interval for the information to be digested by the Germans, and giving them a sporting chance of acting upon it. Ponsonby, however, only made contact with Goeritz in late August, when he offered to sell the plans which foretold the exact date, place, and strength of the Allied operation. When they met again on 3 September, *Guinea* stated that the plans in his possession might have been altered as a result of the Quebec Conference, and he would need three days to confirm his original revelations.

Goeritz was clearly interested and, it seems, the German military was as well: the payment for the plans, which amounted to 2.5 million Moroccan francs, was split between the Abwehr office in Spanish Morocco and the German Military Attaché in Tangier, the latter’s involvement suggesting that OKH, which would have to approve such a large outlay, were keen to get the plans. The two men met again on 8 September, the day before the Allied attack, and *Guinea* passed the plans to Goeritz at that time. According to the intelligence, the Allies intended to attack Sardinia and Corsica on 12 September and, following the occupation of the latter, would leapfrog to the mainland at Leghorn.\(^{130}\)


\(^{130}\) Abwehr Operational Material Nos. 929, 1039, 1059, and 1086. 25 August, 3, 2, 8 September 1943. CAB 154 / 21. The specific payment figure is found in Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1943, CAB 154/3, p.147.
However, even the Abwehr was suspicious, as Allied preparations for action against
the Italian mainland further south were obvious. By that late date, when KO Spain in Madrid
received the information from Goeritz, they passed it to Paris and Berlin for forwarding to
Rome “with the comment that it is invalidated by events [i.e. the Salerno landings] and seems
to be deception as it contradicts all detailed reports of troop movements.” Goeritz, though,
did not believe that Guinea had been a conscious part of the deception.\(^{131}\) Of course, he had a
vested interest in saying so, as it was his source who had provided the intelligence, and lot of
money had been wasted for bad information. The German doubts about Guinea and his
information were compounded when news emerged that the Italians had, in fact, intended to
sign an armistice from 3 September, casting further suspicion on whether the “plans” had
genuinely leaked out from AFHQ, where Guinea claimed he got them.\(^ {132}\)

In the aftermath of the episode, a series of accusations and recriminations flew back
and forth between LCS and ‘A’ Force, with London accusing the latter of clumsily blowing
the channel. In response, Clarke claimed that his deputy Michael Crichton, who, after 2
September, was in charge of the case in collaboration with Tangier officials, had decided it
was worth blowing Guinea for one big deception, and then to extricate him from Tangier.
Clarke summed up the confusion after 9 September as the consequence of ignorance and
interference from the authorities in London, who “did not appreciate the local ... military
situation which during the past ten days became virtually a neck and neck race in which any
fleeting opportunity of gaining a place had to be seized with both hands without much
thought of the future.” Furthermore, he argued that the material passed on 8 September was

\(^{131}\) Abwehr Operational Material No. 1086, 8 September 1943, CAB 154 / 21.

\(^{132}\) Tangier to London, 9 September 1943, WO 169/24902.
meant to gain “a quick advantage at the psychological moment.”\footnote{Clarke (‘A’ Force) to Bevan (LCS), 19 September 1943, CAB 154/21.} The ‘A’ Force commander claimed that Guinea’s information had an “important effect upon Germans during the vital first three days on SALERNO bridgeheads.”\footnote{Crichton (‘A’ Force) to Thompson, 14 September 1943, WO 169/24902.} Clarke does not provide specific evidence for his conclusion, however, and, judging by the immediate German reaction to the “plans,” the deception was finished virtually as soon as it started. If a channel like Guinea had been available earlier, however, it might have played a more prominent and successful part in the Salerno deception.

Although the record of double-cross in the 1943 deceptions is mixed, the sum total of all the deception schemes launched in the Mediterranean theatre of war amounted to a success, and German attention was drawn ever more acutely to the Balkans. As early as January 1943 the Abwehr was preparing to evacuate the peninsula and set-up stay-behind organizations. Although similar plans were developed in Spain and Italy, Canaris took great interest in the Balkan developments, personally visiting Sofia, Vienna, and Salonica in May to oversee the withdrawal plans.\footnote{Holt, \textit{The Deceivers}, p.379; “The Abwehr and Allied Intentions May 1943,” CAB 154/96, pp.1-2.} Evidence also emerged in 1943 that, as part of those plans, the Abwehr was preparing to move the management of many spies from Athens to Sofia. Indeed, in early September 1943 the control of all Athenian channels, which included a large proportion of ‘A’ Force cases, did move to Sofia when Athens and other southern Abwehrstellen were dissolved and replaced with mobile units controlled from Belgrade.\footnote{Minutes of 30 Committee Meetings, 22 June & 8 September 1943, WO 169/24887; “Axis Intelligence Activities in Greece, Crete and the Greek Islands,” January 1944, WO 204/12897, pp. 27-8.}

The German military also allocated their reinforcements in line with what the British wanted:
on 9 March there were eight German divisions in the Balkans and, by 10 July, there were 
eighteen.  

Ultimately, double-cross was successful with its incremental implementation of 
Cascade, without which none of the strategic and operational deception plans would have 
been possible. As for those latter plans, ‘A’ Force certainly succeeded in the first necessary 
step, which was to get their information circulated within the German military. It is apparent 
from German documents that FHW and staff intelligence officers in the field regularly 
received information from double agents that was sent via the Abwehr. ‘A’ Force was less 
successful in the second necessary step for a deception, which required the Germans to 
ignore alternate sources of intelligence and deduce an intelligence picture from the individual 
pieces of information that Dudley Clarke wanted them to have. The Mediterranean was a 
noisy intelligence environment in any case, but the chronic problems of German intelligence, 
combined with Clarke’s cautious methods, meant that the enemy mixed in too many pieces of 
contrary and confusing information. Consequently, the picture that Clarke intended to give to 
the Germans was never completed in line with ‘A’ Force’s intentions. Ironically, the double-
cross system could not have existed on the scale that it did against a more formidable 
intelligence opponent, but those very same problems on the German side also limited the 
effectiveness that double agents could have as a vehicle for strategic deception.

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137 Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1943, CAB 154/3, p.110.
Chapter Five

Caught in a Web of Spies

Security and Counter-Intelligence in Italy and the Middle East, September 1943 - May 1945

When, on 3 September 1943, troops under General Bernard Montgomery crossed the Strait of Messina from Sicily to Calabria, the focus of the Mediterranean theatre shifted decisively to Italy. North Africa and the Middle East were now far away from the front lines, and the Balkans, even after the British occupation of Greece in October 1944, would remain a secondary theatre. ‘A’ Force, the Mediterranean deception outfit, which always needed to be close to the military action, now allocated more men and resources to Italy, where they hoped that operational deception would support the Allied slog north against stout German resistance and forbidding terrain. Accordingly, a new branch of the double-cross system was developed in Italy, while the existing agents continued their work in North Africa and the Middle East. Although deception remained central to all of these branches of the system, security and counter-intelligence also emerged as an important function after September 1943.

The new prevalence of security and counter-intelligence in the Middle East was a consequence of ‘A’ Force’s focus on Italy, but it was also a logical culmination of the developments undertaken since the creation of the Special Section in 1942. Thus, when, in late 1943 and 1944, Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME) was presented with opportunities to penetrate German intelligence through their double agents, they were well
prepared to take advantage of them and systematically undermine the already tottering German spy network based in Turkey.

Counter-intelligence, or “penetration,” operations were also prominent in Italian double-cross, although that is the opposite of what one might expect. After all, Italy was an operational zone and, ever since 1941, ‘A’ Force had dominated operational zones and insisted on the subordination of all penetration activities to deception. Such was the case in the Middle East and North Africa from 1941-43: with adequate security in those zones, ‘A’ Force was able to achieve their aim of keeping double-cross largely free of counter-intelligence operations that could compromise deception plans. War-torn Italy, however, was a far more complex and fluid security environment, and relations between ‘A’ Force and the MI6 Special Counter-Intelligence Units — which performed the same double-cross functions as SIME — were never as smooth as they were between ‘A’ Force and SIME in the Middle East. Counter-intelligence, therefore, became a priority of double-cross in Italy and the Middle East, but for opposite reasons: in the Middle East it was because of a good regional double-cross organization and a logical evolution of the system; in Italy, the root cause was a weak local double-cross organization, which was developed quickly and thrown into the fray of a challenging security environment.

I

The manner in which double-cross emerged in Italy, and how it was organized, are thus important factors in understanding how deception and penetration operations on the peninsula developed and, in some ways, competed with each other. The central feature which
shaped the Italian system was the operational environment, as it was in the Middle East and Gibraltar. Italy was an active military front, but was it was also a unique security environment: the Allied forces on the peninsula faced an onslaught of enemy intelligence operations which began in December 1943 and did not cease until the German surrender in May 1945. So expansive were German activities that Allied security concluded the Germans “made use of agents on a scale far exceeding that experienced in any other theatre either in this war or in the last.”¹ The peak came in the last months of the war: on the Fifth Army front, as an example, almost 200 trained agents were captured between October 1944 and April 1945.² Whether they were line-crossers, parachute agents, or sea-borne spies, the Allies caught an average of one spy a day between December 1943 and August 1944.³

Given this situation, there should have been a surplus of potential double agent channels. However, between September 1943 and February 1944 there were no cases, and only two were developed by the time Rome fell on 4 June 1944. The lack of cases caused much consternation within ‘A’ Force, which expected better results. One reason for their concern was that, during their prior expansion into French North Africa, they had been spoiled by French counter-intelligence, who already had an array of operational double agents that they offered to Dudley Clarke, the ‘A’ Force commander. No such ready-made agents were present in Italy.

¹ “Counter-Intelligence in Italy: A Year’s Survey,” 25 August 1944, WO 106/3977a, p.1
The dearth of viable agents was also caused by the lack of case officers to develop them. Thus, Clarke, who was “very worried at the lack of opportunities” opening to him in Italy, sent his long-time collaborator and head of SIME, R.J. Maunsell, on 20 January 1944, a request for extra manpower. In response, Maunsell agreed to send two officers from the Special Section who had extensive experience in double-cross: Keith Francis and Russell Eadie had worked on the *Cheese* case, and Eadie had set-up the *Llama* channel in Libya. They soon made their way to Italy and came under the command of Col. S.S. Hill-Dillon, the chief security officer at Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ).

Francis was put to work quickly on the first promising double-cross case in Italy. The agent, codenamed *Primo*, was an Italian recruit of the Abwehr in Rome who, with a team of spies, had landed by boat north of Naples on 15 January 1944. After the party was captured, *Primo* agreed to act as a double agent, and went on the air on 25 February. One further case was added in May, when *Apprentice* landed by parachute in Lecce. He surrendered, asked to join the Allies as a pilot, and only agreed grudgingly to act as a double agent in Bari instead.

Although the Abwehr had not created a large stay-behind network south of Cassino — another reason for the lack of double agents in the first nine months of the campaign — the Allies did come across major concentrations of agents closer to Rome and in the Eternal City itself. In the words of James Angleton, an American counter-intelligence officer, “it was like rolling over a rotten log to view the teeming life beneath.” Many of the agents were captured thanks to the efforts of S Force, a special “Intelligence assault force” which entered

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4 Clarke (‘A’ Force) to Maunsell (SIME), 20 January 1944, KV 4/197.
5 Maunsell (SIME) to Clarke (‘A’ Force), 29 January 1944, KV 4/197.
7 Angleton (X-2) to Murphy (X-2), 12 October 1944, RG 226, Entry 214, Box 1, NARA.
Rome in June 1944 with the leading troops to capture key documents and work with ‘A’ Force to set up potential double agents quickly. This process yielded several cases, including the ‘A’ Force channels Addict, Arbiter, and Armour. The capture of Florence in August 1944 added, among others, Axe and Loyal.

Of these agents, the most valuable was Armour, whose real name was Luigi Alessi. A former Italian Air Force officer, he had operated as an agent of the Servizio Informazioni Militare (SIM) during the war and was utilized by the Italian service to penetrate the Abwehr organization in Italy. He did so from 1940 to 1944, and became a close friend of Otto Helfferich, the Abwehr liaison to the SIM. Helfferich subsequently left Alessi behind in Rome in spring 1944 to act as a spy under his own control. However, the most fascinating part of Alessi’s story is his connection with Clemens Rossetti, another Abwehr officer, and Renato Levi, the original Cheese. According to Rossetti’s secretary, who was an agent runner in her own right, Levi had recruited Alessi in 1941, after which the latter began working for Rossetti; and, in a bizarre twist, Alessi was an agent provocateur sent in August 1941 to investigate Levi’s fidelity to the Axis cause after his return from Egypt (see chapter two). Obviously a man few real loyalties, Alessi agreed to become an Allied double agent based in Rome, and operated as a high-grade channel until the end of the war.

This collection of double agents in Naples, Bari, Rome, and Florence constituted the Italian branch of the double-cross system, and they required some form of organization to

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8 K.W.D. Strong, memorandum on creation of ‘S’ Force, 12 December 1943, WO 204/789.
9 Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1944, CAB 154/4, pp.100-2.
12 Clarke, ‘A’ Force Narrative War Diary 1944, CAB 154/4, pp.100-1.
manage and coordinate them. To meet that need, the Thirty Committee network was extended into Italy with the founding of the 44 Committee in Naples on 16 February 1944. Charged with operating *Primo*, it was composed of officers from ‘A’ Force and Special Counter-Intelligence, along with Keith Francis of the Special Section. It operated with the same division of authority and labour as the other committees: ‘A’ Force chaired and supplied deceptive material; SCI managed the relevant ISOS, arranged for case officers, and handled communications; and Francis acted as an advisor by studying the agent and ensuring that his transmissions matched his personal traits.\(^{13}\)

Further committees were created as agents became available in other locations. The 42 Committee formed in Bari in June to handle *Apprentice*, while the 45 Committee opened in Rome in July. The 44 Committee in Naples later moved to Florence. In addition to the committees, Francis and Eadie hoped to create an equivalent of the Special Section, in which they had learned their craft in Cairo. It would act as a centralized organization for case officers and handle the day-to-day running of all double-cross cases on the peninsula. Their hopes, however, never came to fruition, and the Special Section concept was not imported from Cairo, largely because of reluctance from Hill-Dillon.\(^{14}\)

Furthermore, the Thirty Committee system in Italy did not recreate the smooth and orderly relationship that existed among ‘A’ Force, SIME, and ISLD in the Middle East. It was, instead, a far more ramshackle affair. The difficulties were due partially to the unstable security conditions, but they were also the responsibility of SCI. Unlike SIME, which was a stalwart participant in Middle Eastern double-cross, the SCI units in Italy were ill-prepared,

\(^{13}\) “Establishment of a 44 Committee in Italy,” 16 February 1944, KV 4/197.

\(^{14}\) K.W. Jones (SIME) to J.C. Robertson (SIME), 21 February 1944, KV 4/197.
under-manned, and poorly equipped to carry out their task of specialized counter-intelligence operations, among which was running double agents.

Consequently, the SCI units, which were mobile MI6 teams in the field, were at the root of some of the difficulties faced by double-cross in Italy. They had little experience with double agents prior to their arrival in Italy. The units were “scraped together, had never worked as a team before they arrived in the field, and had had no contact with the people with whom they were to work.”\(^{15}\) Furthermore, in the early months of the campaign they were burdened with standard field security work, which took them away from their main tasks, including the penetration of the Abwehr and the SD.\(^ {16}\)

With SCI in disarray, Dudley Clarke was worried that, unlike SIME, it would not be a solid foundation for double-cross. As a result, he pressured Hill-Dillon in December 1943 to improve the SCI efforts in turning captured agents, but the latter claimed that his men, being thrown into routine security work to thwart the German intelligence offensive, were stretched too thin.\(^ {17}\) Although this lack of SCI case officers remained a problem in the first half of 1944, the work of Francis and Eadie, and the experience they brought from Cairo, mitigated some of the damage caused by SCI’s lack of experience and resources.\(^ {18}\)

In addition to the general unpreparedness of SCI, it is noteworthy that one of its units was American, and its role in double-cross marked the introduction of US officers into the

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\(^{15}\) “Lecture by Major Bruman-White [sic],” 12 May 1944, RG 226, Entry 190, Box 371, p.1. NARA.


\(^{18}\) “Report by Major Freeman-Thomas on his trip to Bari and Naples,” WO 169/24885, p.2; Eadie (SIME) to Berding (X-2), 22 June 1944, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 278. NARA.
British-dominated system. The officers in question were members of X-2, the counter-
intelligence arm of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Founded in June 1943, X-2
worked closely with Section V in Britain and had access to ISOS. The officer in London
responsible for Italy was James Angleton, who was transferred to Rome in 1944. While in
London he collaborated closely with Richard Brooman-White, the head of Section V’s Italian
desk, who allowed Angleton to observe and contribute to the London end of the _Primo_ case.
In Naples, Major Hooten, the head of the local British SCI unit, afforded X-2’s Andrew
Berding the same privilege. However, X-2 did not run their own case until pressure from
Brooman-White led to them handling an agent named Umberto Seri and, more importantly,
the ‘A’ Force channel _Arbiter_ in Rome.\(^{19}\) Italy was thus the most international of all the
branches of the double-cross system, featuring officers from the British, American, French
secret services, and even an occasional Italian from the reconstituted SIM.\(^{20}\) It was, however,
inevitably difficult to manage and coordinate the activities of the various parties involved.

Still, by mid-1944 the first two of the four necessary foundations for a double-cross
system were in place in Italy: there were a number of viable agents and the organization,
while not especially strong, was at least present in the field. The third foundation —
intelligence to inform agent operations — was, as ever, a problem and contributed to the
difficult counter-intelligence environment. As discussed at length in chapters one and two,
signals intelligence, in the form of ISOS, was vital to the daily management of double agents.
Access to decrypts had not always been easy, but there were improvements in 1943 and the

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\(^{20}\) Gibson (AFHQ) memorandum on SIM/CS, 7 August 1944, WO 204/11988.
double-crossers, right across the Mediterranean, had steady access to ISOS by the end of that year.

In 1944, however, the problem facing the Thirty Committees was not poor circulation, as it had been before, but problems with codebreaking itself. The Abwehr made changes to their hand cipher in 1943 and, when changes to the machine cipher were introduced in January 1944, there was a consequent decline in Bletchley Park’s success in breaking them. It was a problem felt throughout the European theatre, with Abwehr decrypts from the Balkans being affected most heavily.\(^{21}\)

The results of the decryption slowdown did not affect all in the Mediterranean equally, at least initially: in June 1944 Maunsell noted that the ISOS flow to Cairo had “dried up for the last few months,”\(^ {22}\) but Abwehr traffic in Italy was read more consistently until late summer 1944. Then, decryption slowed and ultimately ended when further changes to the Enigma led to a blackout of all Abwehr traffic in Italy until the end of the war.\(^ {23}\) The effects, even before the decrypts stopped entirely, were noticed by the Thirty Committees: the double-crossers in Rome noted in October that the lack of decrypts left them dangerously unaware of enemy reactions to their agents, and also ignorant of the activities of uncontrolled German spies. Their requests to SCI for improvements were of little use, as it was a difficulty that went much deeper than the circulation of decrypts, and SCI themselves were not getting sufficient information from the codebreakers.\(^ {24}\) The problem was mitigated to some extent by

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\(^{22}\) Maunsell (SIME) to Petrie (MI5), 7 June 1944, KV 4/223.

\(^{23}\) “Use of ISOS by Section V During the War,” HW 19/321, pp.32-3; Liddell Diaries, 22 January 1944, KV 4/193, pp.111-2.

\(^{24}\) Minutes of 40 Committee Meetings, 25 and 31 October 1944, WO 169/24888.
the double agents themselves, who provided ongoing intelligence about the activities of the enemy service, but the lack of ISOS was a serious concern.25

Thus, it is apparent that Italy presented the most challenging environment for double-cross in the Second World War. The security conditions were never stable, SCI was unprepared to deal with its role in double-cross properly, and signals decrypts declined until they disappeared entirely. So, while we can say that a “double-cross system” existed in Italy, it was the most unstable of the various branches developed since 1941. Consequently, the neat division between deception and penetration that Dudley Clarke and R.J. Maunsell enforced in the Middle East was not possible in Italy, for two reasons: one was that SCI was not always willing to subordinate themselves to ‘A’ Force; and the second, related reason was that SCI faced a highly volatile security environment, the likes of which SIME never saw in the Middle East. SCI felt, with some justification, that they needed double agents to counter German intelligence as much as ‘A’ Force needed them to deceive the German military. The operational consequences of this clash are discussed further below.

Aggravating the difficulties in Italian double-cross was a problem that had the potential to damage every double agent case from Scotland to Persia: the collapse of the Abwehr and its absorption by the RSHA. Since the chronic problems of the Abwehr were vital to the success of double-cross, a matter discussed at length in chapter two, the possibility that it would be reformed substantially by the RSHA was not a welcome development. By 1944, the officers who ran the British and Mediterranean double-cross

system were aware their their success depended on the peculiarities and weaknesses of the German intelligence system, and of the Abwehr in particular.

Still, the collapse of the Abwehr was not an unexpected event. The decline of Admiral Canaris’s organization had begun in earnest after its failure to predict the Torch landings in November 1942. Subsequent failures to warn of the invasion of Sicily, the fall of Mussolini, and the invasion of Italy left the Abwehr on very thin ice. The British were aware of Canaris’s problems from an early date: in November 1942, just after the invasion of North Africa, MI6’s Radio Analysis Bureau (RAB) issued a report arguing that the SD was encroaching heavily in military human intelligence, supposedly the exclusive preserve of the Abwehr. The Radio Intelligence Service, successor agency of the RAB, reported in March 1944 that Canaris had been dismissed, which was a timely and accurate assessment.26 Canaris had made attempts to reform the Abwehr, or at least give the impression of reform, but to little effect. Cosmetic changes were made by the replacement of the heads of Abteilungen I and II in early 1943, but more substantial changes failed. The Abwehr continued to stumble along without major changes.

Then, in early 1944, a series of events led to the dismissal of Canaris and the end of the Abwehr. The first was the move of Spain from pro-German “non-belligerency” to neutrality. Canaris, who had maintained his standing with Hitler thanks to his contacts in the Franco regime, found himself unwelcome in Madrid, and suffered a consequent decline in the Führer’s estimation of his value.27 Next, in February 1944, a number of defections from the Abwehr station in Istanbul caused his final ouster. The first defector was Erich Vermehren, a

26 Sisman, An Honourable Englishman, pp.120-1, 126.
Catholic convert and anti-Nazi who, through contacts with MI6 in Istanbul, made his way to Cairo, where he was followed quickly by Karl von Kleckowski and Wilhelm Hamburger.\textsuperscript{28} Paul Leverkühn, the Abwehr chief in Istanbul, was recalled to Berlin and, soon after, the Führer ordered the RSHA to absorb the Abwehr, a decision “made in a fashion typical of Hitler’s impulsiveness.”\textsuperscript{29}

The RSHA and the broader SS organization, always seeking to gain power and further dominate the Nazi state, were happy to take an opportunity to devour another rival. This was particularly true of Walter Schellenberg, the head of RSHA Amt VI, in charge of foreign intelligence collection. His ultimate desire was to create a unified German foreign intelligence service based on the model of MI6, or at least what he perceived to be the British model, a fantasy creation of which he was “a despairing admirer.”\textsuperscript{30}

Although double-cross depended on the credulity and corruption of the Abwehr, the possibility of Amt VI absorbing it was not necessarily bad for the double-crossers. Despite mythic notions of SS efficiency, Amt VI was not much more effective than the Abwehr and, while it was better organized and controlled, it suffered from similar problems of incompetence and corruption. In the words of David Kahn, Amt VI’s “youthful inexperience and know-it-all superciliousness, as well as their administrative training and background, often led ... to dilettantism and inadequacy in SD foreign intelligence.”\textsuperscript{31} Schellenberg, one of the few genuinely dynamic figures in German intelligence, tried to clean up these problems when he became the head of Amt VI in 1942. Standing in his way, however, was factionalism

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} Hinsley & Simkins, \textit{British Intelligence IV}, 212; Jeffery, \textit{MI6}, pp.504-5.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Black, \textit{Ernst Kaltenbrunner}, p.194.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Trevor-Roper, \textit{The Last Days of Hitler}, p.77.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Kahn, \textit{Hitler’s Spies}, p.254.
\end{itemize}
within the RSHA itself. Neither Ernst Kaltenbrunner, the RSHA head from early 1943, nor Heinrich Müller, Schellenberg’s old boss in Amt IV, supported him, and he actually ended up working to keep the remnants of the Abwehr under his own control and out of the grasp of the RSHA.32

Proof that the SD did not typically produce better results in foreign intelligence than the Abwehr can be seen in Italy: their own stay-behind network in Rome was just as poorly organized and, along with the Abwehr network, was quickly penetrated and eliminated by Allied security, which gained an SD double agent called Apostle. Signals intelligence had been particularly important in undermining the SD in Italy as, since September 1943, the British had been reading their wireless traffic between Rome and Berlin.33

The RSHA and the entire SS were, however, eager self-promoters, and what success they did have was used to enhance their position with Hitler. A prime example was the Cicero case, through which Amt VI in Turkey successfully penetrated the British Ambassador’s residence and captured sensitive diplomatic documents.34 Their stock had also risen with Operation Eiche, the 12 September 1943 raid on Gran Sasso which rescued the imprisoned Mussolini, and had depended upon RSHA intelligence in its planning stages. The RSHA also benefitted from the status within the Nazi regime of Heinrich Himmler, who was among

33 “Counter-Intelligence in Italy: A Year’s Survey,” WO 106/3977a, p.4; “Use of ISOS,” HW 19/321, p.32.
34 Hinsley & Simkins, British Intelligence IV, pp.213-4.
Hitler’s intimates and held tremendous power after many years of loyal service to his Führer.\textsuperscript{35}

Despite their own problems, Amt VI was thus well-positioned to take over the Abwehr after the order from Hitler in February 1944. Schellenberg, however, did not think his relatively small office could absorb the Abwehr in its entirety.\textsuperscript{36} The ultimate result, announced by Himmler at a meeting in Salzburg in May, was the creation of the Militärisches Amt (Mil. Amt), a parallel organization that maintained much of the old Abwehr, but brought it under the RSHA umbrella. Importantly, under the agreement struck by Himmler and Field Marshal Keitel, the Wehrmacht retained control over the mobile Abwehr field units, a provision that had considerable importance for double-cross in Italy, as all of the cases were played back to either Frontaufklärungskommando (FAK) 150, the main army Abwehr unit, the air force’s FAK 190, or Frontaufklärungstrupp (FAT) 173 in Albania.\textsuperscript{37} Schellenberg only gained control over the FAKs and FATs in February 1945, at which point it was too late to make any substantial changes in personnel or policy.\textsuperscript{38} He had, however, taken greater control over the bulk of the Abwehr after the July 1944 bomb plot against Hitler.

The practical consequences of the changes to the Abwehr were potentially profound. In Britain, this danger was driven home to MI5 and the Twenty Committee in late 1943 by Johann “Johnny” Jebsen, aka \textit{Artist}. Jebsen, an Abwehr officer, was eager to work for the

\textsuperscript{35} Trevor-Roper, “German Intelligence Service,” CAB 154/105, p.9.
\textsuperscript{36} Doerries, \textit{Hitler’s Last Chief}, p.137.
\textsuperscript{38} Gurrey, \textit{Across the Lines}, p.136.
British and made contact with their representatives in Portugal. However, his actions had the potential to bring down the network of agents in Britain.  

As J.C. Masterman recounted after the war, the danger was that officers like Jebsen would flee the sinking ship of the Abwehr and the entire German war effort. If they did so, the Germans would expect the agents they controlled to be exposed and arrested. If the agents continued on the air, their credibility would be destroyed, as would that of the entire double-cross system built so carefully since 1940. In Jebsen’s case, he was the Abwehr controller of Tricycle and also knew about the German side of Garbo, and his potential defection threatened the future of both channels. Jebsen’s later arrest and removal to Berlin led the Twenty Committee to windup the Tricycle channel, so as to limit the fallout from this development.  

However, as it turned out, none of the Abwehr defectors in Istanbul were controllers of agents who were actually part of the double-cross system. Although Vermehren, as Leverkühn’s personal assistant, was aware of the Abwehr’s sources of information in the Middle East, he did not control any of them personally and did not seem to have enough knowledge to compromise them. The 30 Committee, initially nervous of damage from his defection, instructed their Turkish double agents to investigate the matter by asking their German contacts if the defection, which was public knowledge, threatened them. They were assured that it did not.

39 Liddell Diaries, 8 December 1943, KV 4/193, p.25.
41 Minutes of 30 Committee Meeting, 7 March 1944, WO 169/24887.
Nor did the ostensible RSHA takeover in Turkey have much effect. The new head of the Turkish station, the former head of Ast Paris Erich Pfeiffer, did intend to run a tighter ship and began disciplinary action against some members of the station. However, he had little time to act before Turkey broke diplomatic relations with Germany and he, along with all of the Abwehr staff who operated under diplomatic cover, were interned in the German Embassy in August 1944.42

So, the reform of the Abwehr, in the end, did not actually mean much for the Mediterranean double-cross system. Indeed, it meant less than the problems caused by the inadequate supply of German intelligence signals decrypts and, in Italy specifically, the weaker double-cross organization and difficult security circumstances. What is most striking is actually the remarkable continuity in the German side of double-cross, where the same core group of officers unknowingly contributed to the most elaborate system of double agents ever assembled. The primary three were Otto Helfferich, Clemens Rossetti, and Walter Sensburg, and all of them had been closely involved with the double-cross system since the advent of Cheese in 1941.

Helfferich had, along with Rossetti, planned the mission of Renato Levi in 1940. He had done so in his capacity as the Abwehr liaison to the Italian SIM, a position he kept when he was named head of Ast Italy in 1943. Although he lost his dominant position when the Ast was dissolved in March 1944, he retained control over his stay-behind agent in Rome, who soon after became the British double agent Armour. Helfferich survived to the end of the war, and “controlled” Armour throughout that time, despite being implicated in the resistance plot

that had come to a head with the July 1944 attempt on Hitler’s life. Helfferich was called to
Berlin in January 1945 and was accused by the RSHA of being an Italophile and pro-Jewish.
However, he was never actually placed under arrest and, in the confusion that reigned as the
Red Army approached the capital, he simply left Berlin and returned to Italy. He continued to
operate *Armour* even though, based on his own postwar admission, he suspected the agent
was under Allied control, as his information was often too good. However, given his fractious
relationship with the SS — which, as an old friend and supporter of Admiral Canaris, he had
loathed for years — and the threat of punishment for his real or perceived involvement in the
army resistance, Helfferich had no incentive to end the case or disclose his thoughts on the
reliability of the channel.\(^43\)

Even more remarkable is the persistent career of Clemens Rossetti who, at various
times, controlled *Cheese, The Pessimists, Primo,* and *Addict,* all of whom were double
agents. After operating in Athens and Istanbul from 1941 to 1943, he returned to Italy in
September 1943 and began working for FAK 150, where he was put in charge of the main
espionage training school after December 1943.\(^44\) His appointment as head of the school is
extraordinary, since Rossetti was a known dilettante and had been censured by Abwehr
headquarters and his superiors in Italy on several occasions.\(^45\) His poor work and
lackadaisical approach to espionage could be explained by the theory that he was an Italian
plant inside the Abwehr, a matter discussed at length in chapter two, but there is no reliable

\(^44\) “Interrogation Report on Hauptmann RABE Kurt Clemens,” 19 July 1945, RG 226, Entry 174, Box
26, NARA.
\(^45\) “The Case of CHEESE @ LAMBERT,” 30 March 1943, WO 169/24893, p.5; Rome Area to
Florence, 26 May 1944, HW 19/254.
evidence for his alleged perfidy. Even so, his fellow Abwehr officers held him in low regard: Vermehren commented that he “had the poorest opinion of him”; and Pfeiffer said that, while Rossetti was well regarded in Berlin, he saw nothing to justify that attitude. Nevertheless, despite his persistent failures, Rossetti maintained his position and unknowingly operated many double agents until the end of the war.

Finally, Walter Sensburg, notorious even within the Abwehr for his incompetence and the very poor quality of his recruits, carried on unaffected under the new Mil. Amt regime. His history of futility in the war is long and pathetic. While at Ast Brussels in 1940 he sent many badly-prepared and incompetent spies to Britain, all of whom were captured and many became part of the nascent double-cross system. After his transfer to Ast Athens he oversaw the Cheese, Quicksilver, Pessimists, Lemons, and Savages cases, all of which were being played back against his subordinate officers. In 1944 he operated as the head of FAK 111 in Belgrade, and his subordinate Joseph Matl, of FAT 173 in Albania, ran the turned Apprentice case. Sensburg, as obtuse as ever, believed that Werner, as Apprentice was known to the Germans, was the only agent inserted into Italy from Albania who brought “full satisfaction.”

46 “Schedule of Information Derived from Interrogation of Dr. Erich Vermehren and Wilhelm Hamburger in the Middle East, February 1944,” KV 2/2652, Section A
II

Of the four necessary foundations of double-cross, the firmest in Italy was, ironically, the stability of the Abwehr / Mil. Amt. The viability of the agents, the organization, and the availability of signals decrypts were all in flux; and, when combined with the genuinely difficult security environment in Italy, the double-cross system was never on the same steady footing as it was elsewhere in the Mediterranean. The result was friction between ‘A’ Force and SCI of a kind that never emerged between the deception outfit and SIME. The difficulties arose over the operational usage of agents. ‘A’ Force wanted their best cases reserved strictly for deception, but circumstances militated against them: in some cases, double agents were forced into security and counter-intelligence roles because of the unstable security situation; on other occasions, SCI wanted to use them to make up for their own organizational problems and lack of ISOS. It was these latter cases that annoyed ‘A’ Force. Consequently, and contrary to earlier experience in the Mediterranean, the line between deception and penetration agents was blurred in Italy.

The double agents operated within a security and counter-intelligence system that was based upon two elements: the “backbone,” which was the standard military and civilian security measures that physically restricted line-crossers, protected sensitive sites, etc; and the “brains,” which was the operation of specially trained counter-intelligence personnel who identified and captured enemy agents and penetrated the enemy intelligence system.49 These specialized units also made use of ISOS, when it was available, and those signals were used primarily as a means of understanding the methods, organization, and personalities of

49 Dovey, “The Unknown War,” pp.294, 308. See also Gurrey, Across the Lines, p.27.
German intelligence on the peninsula. ISOS was less useful as a tool for preventing agents making their way into Allied territory.50

The backbone became an effective force as the campaign ground on, but there were persistent problems with the brains, especially the SCI units controlled by Hill-Dillon. As noted above, their problems early in the campaign arose from the army weighing them down with routine security work that over-taxed their resources. Even as late as August 1944 this misuse of the SCI teams was ongoing, and double-cross was seriously affected due to a chronic shortage of dedicated case officers to manage new agents.51

Guy Liddell, back in London but very knowledgeable about affairs on the Continent, placed most of the blame for the state of affairs on Hill-Dillon. Liddell’s diary is replete with criticism of Hill-Dillon, an officer who had worked for MI5 during the First World War and later served with military intelligence in Ireland during the war of independence. Liddell’s anger was most prominent in August 1944, when he wrote that “it is incredible how Hill-Dillon gets away with it.” He had not “the slightest idea of what he is doing since the day he entered N. Africa,” and his operations in Italy were “a shambles.”52 Four days later Liddell complained that “the whole of [Hill-Dillon’s] C.I. activities were conducted in a typically Irish steeple-chase horse-coping atmosphere.”53 Liddell’s overall opinion was that Hill-Dillon was a poor organizer who preferred a policy of improvisation. That had worked well enough in North Africa, where the French had a good security organization in place already, but it

50 “Use of ISOS,” HW 19/321, p.31.
52 Ibid., 26 August 1944, KV 4/194, p.250.
53 Ibid., 30 August 1944, KV 4/194, p.271.
was a disaster in Italy.54 Consequently, standard security measures, which were largely passive, were working reasonably well to halt the German intelligence assault, but active measures to penetrate enemy system were faltering.

By allowing the enemy to come to them, rather than thoroughly penetrating the German service, Allied counter-intelligence operated on a “catch as catch can basis in Italy which has given somewhat indifferent results.”55 Indeed, there were a number of enemy agents who remained undetected and operated behind Allied lines for decent lengths of time: two such agents who had been on the air in Rome since June 1944 were finally arrested in January 1945; other agents were detected but remained at large in Naples and Florence; and in February 1945 there were indications of a German network of agents working in Sicily.56

Ultimately, though, while there was disorganization on the counter-intelligence side, the “backbone” security worked well, and the Germans never gathered much information from agents sent across the lines. German staff intelligence officers complained, under Allied interrogation, that intelligence from agents tended to be “very unsatisfactory.” This is not surprising, given that the vast majority of such cases were short-range line crossers. They were not the type of agents, deep behind the lines, which were operated as double-cross cases

54 Ibid., 19 February 1945, KV 4/196, p.142. It is important to note that this was not just a personal opinion expressed by Liddell in his diary. Other top MI5 officers, such as Dick White and Alex Kellar, also expressed deep concern about the situation in Italy in 1944 and 1945 after witnessing security and counter-espionage measures in action there. Alex Kellar (MI5), “Report of Visit by Mr. A.J. Kellar to the Middle East,” February 1945, KV 4/384, p.22.

55 Ibid., p.140.

56 Ibid., 24 January and 17 February 1945, KV 4/196, pp.65, 132.
by the Allies. At best, the typical Axis spy, if he managed to avoid capture and collect any information, could provide only the most basic and local tactical information.57

The “catch as catch can” approach of SCI, which good security could compensate for, did have profound affects on the double-cross system. SCI did not organize a network of separate “penetration” agents and, when a chance to catch an enemy agent was presented to a deception case, SCI opportunistically sought to follow it up. Such an approach was very much in keeping with the piecemeal approach described by Liddell. That opportunistic use of double agents was, of course, the complete opposite of the prevailing method in the Middle East, where security was good and SIME worked closely with ‘A’ Force to steer deception agents clear of any counter-intelligence entanglements.

The lack of systematic planning, and subsequent ‘A’ Force / SCI disputes over agents, are apparent most clearly in the case of Primo. Throughout the summer of 1944 Primo’s controller, who happened to be Rossetti, promised to send a courier across the lines with payment for the spy in Naples. ‘A’ Force wanted very much to do whatever it took to keep Primo credible, including allowing the courier through the lines and to return safely to enemy territory. The local SCI, however, wanted to arrest the courier: they felt that Primo was, in fact, already blown, although ‘A’ Force saw no evidence of this. Richard Freeman-Thomas, one of Dudley Clarke’s top officers, felt that the local SCI team simply wanted to leave Naples and move on to more exciting action further north, and the end of the Primo case would finally release them to do that. Even if SCI’s intentions were more honourable, Freeman-Thomas felt that any attempt to arrest the courier would be “done for purely C.E.

[counter-espionage] purposes with a complete disregard for the ‘A’ Force channel."

Ultimately, the courier did not arrive and the case was closed down due to the lack of funds and fears that Primo had been blown during the deception before the Salerno landings.59

The whole affair left a bad taste in the mouths of the ‘A’ Force men, especially when they found out that SCI was still operating Primo as a counter-intelligence channel, despite an earlier agreement to close the case entirely. Upon hearing the news, the 44 Committee commented sarcastically that, with Primo now under their exclusive control, SCI did not seem to think the channel was blown anymore.60 The problem was only resolved after Dudley Clarke complained to Hill-Dillon personally about the continued use of the agent, which could prejudice ‘A’ Force plans.61

SCI’s approach to double agents, when compared to SIME’s, is at least understandable: they faced an onslaught of agents unlike anything experienced in the Middle East. However, their own organizational problems contributed to their difficulties, and their recklessness with some cases could have hurt their own operations as well as those of ‘A’ Force. The Primo case demonstrates Liddell’s main point: SCI was caught flat-footed by the Germans and they were scrambling to come to grips with the problem facing them.

SCI’s problematic role in double-cross also extended to their most basic contribution to the system: the housing and care of the turned spies who were the basis of each double-cross channel. On at least two occasions, lax SCI procedure, which may have been related to

58 Freeman-Thomas (‘A’ Force) to Clarke (‘A’ Force), undated memorandum, WO 169/24901.
59 Minutes of 40 Committee Meeting, 20 September 1944, WO 169/24888.
61 Clarke (‘A’ Force) to Hill-Dillon (AFHQ), 3 October 1944; Hill-Dillon (AFHQ) to Clarke (‘A’ Force), 8 October 1944, WO 169/24901.
their manpower problems, led to breaches in security. The most substantial came in December 1944 when the Florentine agent Loyal — an ironic moniker as it turned out — briefly managed to escape from Allied custody in an attempt to get through the lines into German-occupied territory. His actions showed that SCI’s trust in him — so deep that they even wanted to use him as a driver — was misplaced. The attempt to make him a driver was vetoed by ‘A’ Force but, as Freeman-Thomas reported, SCI’s misplaced trust and lax procedures still led to a major security breach:

apparently [Loyal] was allowed about free and had the run of the villa. On the night of the 23rd. Sergeant Major Allen returned with the truck and left it in the yard of the villa, not immobilised. At 0200 LOYAL stole it and disappeared, taking with him a revolver, and adequate pass, food etc. This was not discovered until 0700 hrs. By this time he had got through our lines and was, by a stroke of luck, arrested by the Partisans in No Man’s Land. It transpires that he had always the intention to escape and had skillfully made us put LOYAL “A” in a concentration camp to make his effort easier.

The lesson, which ‘A’ Force tried to impress upon SCI, was that “one cannot trust these blighters at all.”

The Loyal episode was only the most extreme example of a general lack of security consciousness in double agent operations, most apparent earlier in the campaign. Francis and Eadie, the SIME men, were deeply concerned about this situation when they arrived, and they did not feel that emerging double-cross channels were being developed with the necessary secrecy and care. SCI also had further problems with agents other than Loyal, such as when, in early 1945, they left Primo unattended in Naples, a decision that appalled

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62 Freeman-Thomas (‘A’ Force) to Harvie (‘A’ Force), 2 January 1945, WO 169/24856. Loyal ‘A’ refers to another member of his party who, upon capture, was not utilized as part of the double agent channel.

63 K.W. Jones (SIME) to J.C. Robertson (SIME), 21 February 1944, KV 4/197.
‘A’ Force and which none of Hill-Dillon’s blithe responses could explain away. Nor had this been the first breach of security around Primo: in May 1944 one member of the original party briefly escaped from detention; and, later that month, a widely-circulated OSS report provided information on the case to an audience well outside the intimate double-cross circle, which was a gross breach of secrecy.

Although the Primo case was one where ‘A’ Force believed SCI was ignoring their needs and their leading role in the double-cross system, there were other occasions where double agents were forced into counter-intelligence roles, and there was nothing that SCI could do to stop it. The most prominent of these incidents was considered very damaging by ‘A’ Force, but was viewed by the American SCI unit as, in retrospect, a positive development for their counter-intelligence efforts. It began on 23 August 1944 when the 40 Committee reported that Arbiter in Rome had received a disturbing message from the Germans: they were going to send a courier through the lines to Arbiter’s father’s house, where he would drop off spare parts for the spy’s wireless set. As Arbiter had given no word that he needed parts, the Committee was suspicious that the courier was being sent to check on the agent and others in the Rome area. Even if that was not the intention, the courier posed a real problem. In the opinion of the American SCI unit which ran Arbiter, it was a foolish move by the Germans, as they had no idea whether or not Arbiter’s father was reliable and the whole affair could cause the elimination of the case.

64 HQ. ‘A’ Force War Diary, entry for 9 February 1945; Freeman-Thomas (‘A’ Force) to Harvie (‘A’ Force), 16 February 1945, WO 169/24856.
65 Minutes of 40 Committee Meetings, 12 & 26 May 1944, WO 169/24888.
66 Letter to Freeman-Thomas (‘A’ Force), 20 August 1944, WO 169/24901; Minutes of 40 Committee Meetings, 23 and 30 August 1944, WO 169/24888.
67 “Supplementary report on etc,” RG 226, Entry 210, Box 278. NARA.
Two couriers did arrive in Rome, named Giacomo Lalli and Anna Malatto, and made contact with Arbiter’s father on 25 August. Lalli then met the spy himself, and was arrested soon after. SCI and ‘A’ Force felt the arrest was necessary, as they did not think they could allow Lalli to roam freely in the city. Malatto was not arrested at the time, but was later captured in Palermo. Consequently, and in spite of the fact that they did not think Arbiter had been blown by the affair, the 40 Committee deemed it unsafe to use the channel for further deception and the case was closed.

There was, however, a silver lining, at least from SCI’s point of view. For the Americans, still learning the art of counter-intelligence, the German operation of sending agents through the lines to meet Arbiter “was an interesting and useful one,” as it gave them much needed experience in handling the interaction of controlled and uncontrolled agents. Moreover, the capture of Lalli, who was apparently a high-ranking member of Mussolini’s post-1943 Republican Fascist Party, was considered a boon, and his arrest promised “wide ramifications in German-Fascist subversive movements.”

Although the Arbiter case was especially complex, most of the double agents had to deal with couriers at one time or another, and such contact did not necessarily damage every agent and could, in fact, be beneficial. Axe, a deception agent in Florence, received a number of couriers and was in contact with other agents in the city, which made him a particularly

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68 “Report on Activities, X-2 Italy, Month of September, 1944,” 10 October 1944, RG 226, Entry 108a, Box 207, p.3. NARA

69 Minutes of 40 Committee Meeting, 6 September 1944, WO 169/24888.

70 “Report on Activities,” RG 226, Entry 108a, Box 207, p.3. NARA.

71 “Six Months Report, Activities, X-2, Italy,” 1 September 1944, RG 226, Entry 108a, Box 249, p.3. NARA.
valuable security and counter-intelligence agent during his ongoing deception operations.\textsuperscript{72} One of his primary contributions to the former field was the 44 Committee’s creation of his own notional network in Florence, which seemed to satisfy the German desire for information from the city. It may have been particularly effective because his sub-sources were actually real people, including a known Fascist named Orlandini, although their activities were typically fictional. \textit{Axe} and his network were regarded well enough that in January 1945 \textit{Axe} was awarded the Iron Cross. Indeed, SCI felt that many agents, such as \textit{Axe} and \textit{Apprentice}, had made substantial counter-intelligence contributions without prejudicing their deception roles.\textsuperscript{73}

III

Counter-intelligence also emerged as a central goal of Middle Eastern double-cross after September 1943. However, unlike in Italy, that development was the result of good planning, a strong foundation, and a logical evolution of the double agent system. By late 1943 the Middle Eastern agents were far from the military action and, while they were still required for strategic deception plans, SIME and ISLD had more opportunities to use them for counter-intelligence. Those opportunities began to appear with increasing frequency and gave SIME and ISLD the chance to gain control over the activities of the Abwehr in Turkey, the main enemy station operating against the Middle East directly by late 1943.

The serious development of penetration operations after September 1943 was a substantial change from the trends of the prior year. The system, as it developed in late 1942

\textsuperscript{72} Minutes of 40 Committee Meetings, 25 and 31 October, 7 November 1944, WO 169/24888.  
\textsuperscript{73} “C.E.A.’s in Italy in 1944,” undated document, RG 226, Entry 119, Box 23. NARA.
and early 1943, had established an official role for penetration agents, but their usage had
been restricted for a number of reasons: there were organizational problems and a lack of
personnel to take on new cases; the system was dominated by ‘A’ Force and was
consequently focussed on deception; and SIME agreed that deception was more important
than their own counter-intelligence needs. Perhaps most significantly, the security conditions
were stable and there was no pressing need to employ double agents to investigate the
Germans or catch their uncontrolled spies. By 1944, however, the restrictions were loosened:
‘A’ Force was focussed on Italy while SIME, given more freedom to operate, were eager to
take the counter-intelligence fight to the Germans through the double agents.

SIME got their chance because of the confluence of two trends: the declining fortunes
of the Abwehr and the partial withdrawal of ‘A’ Force from the Middle East. Consequently,
they were in a position to attain nearly complete control over German espionage in the
Middle East through the double-cross system, primarily through the practice of “deceptive
security.” As discussed in chapter three, the concept describes a process in which a properly
functioning double agent network satisfies the enemy need for intelligence, discouraging
them from sending further spies and enhancing the security of Allied territory. Deceptive
security was not effective in the Middle East during 1943 because there were overlapping,
uncoordinated, and competing German intelligence networks. In 1944, however, effective
deceptive security was within the realm of possibility in the Middle East: SIME now had
more agents directly at their disposal, and the declining Abwehr was more willing to rely on
agents already in place.
Two factors contributed to this development in Abwehr tactics. The first was the shift of the main front to Italy and the continuing threat of an invasion of the Balkans, stoked by ‘A’ Force, which caused many of the Balkan Abwehrstellen and their sub-stations to abandon their fixed locations and work as mobile units. They no longer tried to insert agents into the Middle East, and the only Abwehr station that was really active against the Middle East after September 1943 was in Turkey. The second factor is that the Istanbul station, after the defections of Vermehren et al. in February 1944, no longer tried to infiltrate new agents into the Middle East. Given their military situation, the Germans abandoned efforts to find the few agents still willing to work for them. Instead, they relied upon their existing agents in the Middle East to recruit spies locally. Since the existing agents were, for the most part, controlled by the Thirty Committees, this development gave the Committees considerable control over Abwehr recruitment in the region. SIME now had the genuine opportunity to turn penetration operations, which had been utilized randomly through most of 1943, into a genuine system like that used for deception.

The German decision in Istanbul to rely on existing agents for recruitment and leadership, an idea that had been brewing even before the defections, was noticeable immediately in the case of the agent Smooth. He had been a low grade channel working to the Abwehr office in the Hatay but, in January 1944, his value increased when the Abwehr asked him to take control of three genuine, uncontrolled German spies who operated in Damascus, Latakia, and Aleppo. The 31 Committee, with the risks of blowing the deception

system diminishing, allowed *Smooth* to take up the opportunity. As a result, the network was
doubled through the agency of *Smooth*, and this was done without arousing suspicion in the
enemy ranks. His network grew further in April when he was asked to recruit agents, and
notional ones were supplied.\(^77\) Similar offers were made to *Crude*: in late winter 1943 his
Abwehr controller asked him to send a wireless agent to Egypt, from where Istanbul
desperately needed information. A notional agent was “sent” there in early June 1944.\(^78\)

When combined with the control exerted by SIME and ISLD over the German spy
network on the Taurus Express train, the extension of the *Crude* and *Smooth* networks
allowed unprecedented British control over German espionage emanating from Turkey.\(^79\)
Importantly, the Germans had faith in these agents and their “success” was impressed upon
Erich Pfeiffer when he arrived as the new head of the Abwehr station in spring 1944.\(^80\) This
trust, and the original German decision to rely on existing channels for recruitment, made
deceptive security a viable concept in the Middle East.

As important as they were, the *Smooth* and *Crude* cases were relatively minor when
compared with the double agent *Blackguard*, the most important penetration agent ever
developed by ISLD and SIME. *Blackguard* was a Persian who had lived in Germany from
1938 to 1942, was an opponent of the Shah, and was a popular Persian-language broadcaster

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\(^77\) Minutes of 30 Committee Meetings, 8 February and 25 April 1944, WO 169/24887.

\(^78\) Minutes of 31 Committee Meeting, 6 April 1944, WO 169/24886; Minutes of 30 Committee
Meetings, 9 March and 23 May 1944, WO 169/24887.

\(^79\) “Kemal Toros. Summary of Case up to 16 May, 1944”; “Comely. Summary of Case up to 16th
May, 1944,” WO 169/24895. Of course, agents were susceptible to normal human frailties. The 30
Committee reported the following about *Crude* in January 1945: “Advance B. Section has reported
that CRUDE is suffering from a particularly severe attack of Haemorrhoids and consequently they are
unable to interest him in any penetration activity at present.” Minutes of 30 Committee Meeting, 3
January 1945, WO 169/24887.

for the German Ministry of Propaganda. As a prominent figure, he was approached by the Abwehr in early 1942 with a proposal to form a Free Persian Corps. Seeing an opportunity to ingratiate himself with the Nazis and gain power in a German-controlled Persia, he agreed and began organizing and training a group of Persian students studying in Germany.\textsuperscript{81} He was later sent to Istanbul, from where he would facilitate the passage of the agents into Persia from their starting points in Europe.

In late 1943, however, he contacted MI6 in Istanbul and volunteered to turn double and work against the Germans. His change of heart was chalked up to opportunism as the war turned against the Axis, but SIME thought he was trustworthy.\textsuperscript{82} He was taken on and, largely through the work of SIME, was remarkably successful until he returned to Europe in the summer of 1944.\textsuperscript{83} Indeed, he was by far SIME’s most effective counter-intelligence double agent, and fits perfectly into this description of counter-intelligence from Allen Dulles, referenced in the introduction above:

Its ideal goal is to discover hostile intelligence plans in their earliest stages rather than after they have begun to do their damage. To do this, it tries to penetrate the inner circles of hostile services at the highest possible level where the plans are made and the agents selected and trained and, if the job can be managed, to bring over to its side “insiders” from the other camp.\textsuperscript{84}

Of all the counter-intelligence double-cross cases that the SIME Special Section operated, \textit{Blackguard} was the only one that penetrated the German service at the “highest possible level.”


\textsuperscript{82} Jones (SIME) to Spencer (CICI), 20 November 1943, KV 2/1284.

\textsuperscript{83} Hinsley & Simkins, \textit{British Intelligence IV}, p.231.

\textsuperscript{84} Dulles, \textit{The Craft of Intelligence}, p.118.
One of Blackguard’s main contributions was a steady stream of intelligence on German activities in Istanbul. He was a part of the Abwehr inner circle and an intimate of many high ranking officers, making him a vital fount of information, especially when ISOS decryption slowed in early 1944. One of his more important reports was on the activities of Thomas Ludwig, the head of Abwehr counter-intelligence in Turkey and one of the few genuinely competent German intelligence officers in the country. In that April 1944 report, Blackguard informed SIME that Ludwig had in his possession a sixty page pamphlet which detailed the British technique of controlling captured wireless sets. This news disturbed SIME, which believed that it was a document sent to Nicholas Elliott of MI6 and Guy Thomson, the DSO Turkey, in 1942. However, it does not appear there were any repercussions, perhaps due to the fact that Ludwig was known to be excessively secretive and rarely disseminated his information to his colleagues.

Blackguard was also an important — and often the sole — source of information on the internal crises of the Abwehr station during the defections, the dismissal of Leverkühn, and the arrival of Pfeiffer. SIME reported the following on his intelligence:

During period defections [Blackguard] gave valuable information on reactions in ISTANBUL describing ‘pandemonium’ in ABWEHR offices, with ZAEHRINGER threatening in private to shoot LEVERKUEHN and LUDWIG in a fury (group corrupt) description in Turkish press as ‘Chief of the Gestapo: [Blackguard] also first source news LEVERKUEHN’s dismissal (group corrupt).
He continued to monitor Pfeiffer’s efforts to revive the station in the summer of 1944, and reported regularly on the new chief’s concern that Turkey’s more pro-Allied stance would inhibit Abwehr work.\textsuperscript{89} Blackguard gained all of this information from personal conversations with Pfeiffer, which were duly reported to SIME officers who, in their turn, tried to corroborate them with ISOS.\textsuperscript{90}

His intelligence was invaluable, but Blackguard’s major contribution to SIME’s new system of penetration agents was through his ability to funnel Abwehr spies and wireless sets into British hands. SIME could then open up new double-cross channels and solidify their control of the Abwehr in Turkey. They had never really been able to do this before the advent of Blackguard because, before him, SIME never had a double agent who was a genuine spy-master, and having a spy-master as a double agent was the most sure way to implement deceptive security.\textsuperscript{91} Blackguard had begun funneling the wireless sets to SIME in late 1943, when Leverkühn had asked him to send the radios through the Persian diplomatic bag. Instead, he gave them to SIME, which had received six sets by early 1944 and learned that one of them was meant for a shadowy Egyptian organization known as ARMEN, about which SIME knew little.\textsuperscript{92}

Blackguard’s activities also allowed SIME to counter and control the ring of Persian students he had organized in Germany in 1942 and 1943. The most important agent, who would become known to the British as Kiss, was a Persian electrical engineering student

\textsuperscript{89} Hamer (‘A’ Force) to Bevan (LCS), 7 July 1944, CAB 154/38

\textsuperscript{90} VAR 1867, June 1944, HW 19/296.


whom *Blackguard* had recruited in Germany in 1942. After failing to get into Persia in early 1943 — when *Blackguard* was not a double agent — *Kiss* was again selected to infiltrate the country in autumn 1943, by which time *Blackguard* was working for the British. He kept SIME up to date on the plans of *Kiss*, as they wanted to capture him and use his wireless set for a double-cross channel. Although *Kiss* wavered and did not actually want to undertake the mission, *Blackguard* encouraged him to travel through Syria to Persia, and the spy was arrested in Aleppo in November 1943. After an interrogation, the British determined that he had no loyalty to the Germans and posed no threat. He was allowed to continue to Tehran, where local security kept an eye on him. Meanwhile, and without the original agent ever knowing, his captured wireless set was operated by SIME in Tehran as the *Kiss* channel, with the wireless operator imitating the Persian’s “incompetent” style of transmission.

SIME operated the set throughout 1944 as a counter-intelligence channel, as ‘A’ Force had eschewed any deception possibilities in favour of using the case to give credibility to *Blackguard*. The need to buttress the latter’s position was pressing for two reasons. First, he was an agent on the “inside” and it was vital to keep him going as ISOS became less reliable. However, by spring 1944 he was losing the Germans’ confidence, and James Robertson of SIME stressed that *Kiss* needed to be built up as a proven channel, since *Blackguard* had “been on rather thin ice recently, and that the KISS link may actively be used by the Abwehr

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94 The danger he posed was non-existent, as he was an apathetic individual. According to SIME, his attitude towards his former employers was best exemplified by his answer to the question of why he was handled by the Abwehr Marine section, when his mission to Persia would be concerned with land forces. His response: “They may well have thought that Persia was an island.” A fitting epitaph for the Abwehr. “S.I.M.E. Report No. 1,” KV 2/1281, p.5.

95 Ibid., pp.1-5; J.C. Robertson, “Plan - KISS,” 8 March 1944, KV 2/1284.
as a means of assessing BLACKGUARD’s good faith.”

A second, related reason for the need to sustain Blackguard was SIME’s desire to penetrate the ARMEN organization, and they considered it a primary object of the Kiss case to bolster Blackguard’s credibility with the Germans until action could be taken against the alleged Egyptian subversives.

Besides the need to support Blackguard, SIME also wanted Kiss as a counter-intelligence channel to enhance their control over German espionage, and they planned to use the case to “canalize” all German espionage in Persia into their own hands. SIME’s plan was to recruit a number of notional sub-agents, provide Kiss with good chicken feed, and have Blackguard encourage Pfeiffer and Werner Schüler, the officer working on the Kiss case, to utilize Kiss as a ringleader in any further intelligence activity in Persia.

The plan, however, was held up by opposition from the DSO Persia and complications with the Soviets. For the DSO, Lt-Col. E.L. Spencer, the problem was his inherent distrust of Blackguard. He was concerned that this individual might be, in fact, a triple-cross agent, and he spent a good deal of time in spring 1944 objecting to the plan developed by Robertson and the Special Section.

The Soviet complications were more serious and added a new, unwelcome aspect to double-cross in the Middle East. The problem developed from of SIME’s desire to improve Kiss’s chicken feed, which required them to respond to German inquiries with some amount of accurate information. However, from May 1944, those inquiries were about Soviet troop

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96 J.C. Robertson (SIME) to Spencer (DSO Tehran), 25 March 1944, KV 2/1284.
97 Telegram from Mideast to Istanbul, Tehran, and Baghdad, 11 November 1943, KV 2/1284.
98 J.C. Robertson (SIME) to E.K. Wood (CICI), 30 June 1944, KV 2/1284.
movements. Although the questions demonstrated considerable German faith in Kiss’s abilities, a good sign for SIME’s plan to make him the ringleader of all German espionage, providing Soviet chicken feed would require Soviet cooperation. After some dithering and discussions with MI5 and the London Controlling Section, SIME decided to approach Soviet security authorities in Tehran who, after months of delays and constant reference to the “Centre” for guidance, offered “full” collaboration in December 1944.

It was a conditional offer, however, and based upon the Soviets getting complete details of the case and the use of the wireless set. In SIME’s view, the “Soviet approach after six months digestion is obviously attempt penetrate British D/A technique.” Of course, the British also took the opportunity to gain information on how the Soviets operated. However, the collaboration did not last very long, and came to an abrupt end in March 1945. According to Guy Liddell, “it seems fairly clear that the Russians decided to discontinue collaborating owing to the final question put by the Germans as to what the Russians were doing in Azerbaijan.” Since the Russians were “up to all sorts of monkey-

100 The Russians had been running their own double agent against the Germans in Persia, named Mohammed Vaziri. When the British undertook an investigation into his sabotage activities, the Russians were forced to come forward and admit he was their agent. See Donal O’Sullivan, Dealing with the Devil: Anglo Soviet Intelligence Cooperation During the Second World War (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2010), pp.204-5. There is also a file on Vaziri in the UK National Archives under reference KV 2/1317.

101 O’Brien to J.C. Robertson (SIME), 24 December 1944, KV 2/1281. Although the British did not know it at the time, the Soviets, thanks to the disloyalty of Anthony Blunt in MI5 and Kim Philby in MI6, were well aware of the U.K. double-cross system and the machinery of strategic deception. Although the Mediterranean double-cross system was not penetrated directly by the Soviets, they were likely aware of it through their agents in Britain. Papers regarding the Mediterranean system were circulated to London constantly, and many figures in London, such as Guy Liddell, were very knowledgeable of developments in the Mediterranean theatre. Blunt was close with Liddell and the latter had full confidence in the loyalty of Blunt. See Campbell, ‘A Retrospective on John Masterman’s The Double-Cross System,” pp.336-9; Nigel West & Oleg Tsarev, The Crown Jewels: The British Secrets at the Heart of the KGB Archives (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), pp. 127-86; Christopher Andrew & Vasili Mitrokhin, The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West (London: Penguin Books, 2000), pp.119, 149, 167.

102 Walton, Empire of Secrets, pp.70-1.
tricks, including propaganda for the inclusion of Persian Azerbaijan in the USSR, the question is clearly an awkward one.”\textsuperscript{103}

Well before this breach in relations, Blackguard had returned to Europe and was operated by MI6 in Switzerland.\textsuperscript{104} Before he left, however, the apparent success of Kiss had burnished his reputation, as SIME had hoped, and Blackguard contributed to two further double-cross cases: both Duck and Father were cases in India to which he funneled wireless sets, ostensibly on behalf of the Germans but, in reality, to give those British double agents wireless capabilities.\textsuperscript{105} Blackguard was, thus, the hub of the new penetration system which SIME developed in 1944. With the substantial support of Crude and Smooth, and the many other double agents run against the Abwehr in Turkey, SIME brought their control of German espionage in the Middle East to its zenith.

However, successful security and counter-intelligence operations were not restricted to just the Turkish double agents, who, other than Doleful, had never played a major role in ‘A’ Force plans. Even the prominent deception channels, like Cheese, began to diversify their activities into security and counter-intelligence, after having made almost no contribution in that sphere for over two years. Cheese’s case was yet another example of the Abwehr, at a later stage of the war, relying on agents already in place to recruit sub-agents, instead of trying to insert a new, independent spy. Thus, in response to the “repeated requests of


\textsuperscript{104} “Notes on D/A Activities in the Middle East,” February 1945, KV 4/197, p.9.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., p.10; Hinsley & Simkins, \textit{British Intelligence IV}, p.231.
CHEESE consumers,” the 30 Committee decided in February 1944 to recruit a notional source in Alexandria for Nicosoff who was, after all, a notional spy himself.106

The possibilities for deception agents to make positive contributions to counter-intelligence only increased after July 1944, when the final theatre-wide ‘A’ Force strategic deception, plan Zeppelin, was coming to an end. Clarke’s plans called for many of the agents to be shut down, and options for winding up their cases ran from simply taking them off the air, with an appropriate explanation to the Germans, to using them for one last strike at the Abwehr. In the latter category was plan Alice, developed by SIME’s James Robertson in August 1944. Essentially an attempt at psychological warfare, the plan called for The Lemons to send a final message to their controller, taunting the Germans with the news that they had been under control for over a year and encouraging them to abandon the Nazi cause. They also considered the possibility that the Germans could be recruited to the Allied side as agents themselves. It is hard to imagine Dudley Clarke approving such an insecure plan at a time when other agents were still operating and, while there is no recorded opinion of the ‘A’ Force chief on the appropriateness of Alice, only two weeks later the plan seems to have been abandoned. The Lemons case was simply shut down on 19 September 1944.107

Other agents who had outlived their usefulness were also shut down, such as Quicksilver, but some channels were turned over to SIME. The Pessimists were one such case, and SIME planned to use the agents to penetrate subversive political movements in

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Syria. Whether or not the plan was effective is not recorded, unfortunately. There were also attempts by SIME to take some of their agents in Turkey, such as Doleful, and turn them from notional agents of the Germans, by that time interned in their embassy, into notional spies for the Japanese in Turkey. A number of them did make contact with Japanese diplomats / intelligence officers, but not with any notable result.

There was also a final, belated attempt to use Cheese in an aggressive counter-intelligence plan. It was meant to follow the Allies’ imminent landing in Greece in October 1944, and the 30 Committee had been planning to send Cheese in, along with the invading troops, since May 1944. After signaling the Abwehr that he would be coming to Greece (Nicosoff claimed to have a job as a translator with the British forces), the Germans made elaborate plans to bury a wireless set and money. At least they claimed they did because, when the Cheese team arrived in Athens on 23 October, they followed their instructions to locate the radio and the cash, but were unable to find them. Although the wireless set in Cairo was still operated under the control of one of Cheese’s notional associates, it was really the end of the channel, which was the first and most successful double-cross case in the Mediterranean. The end of the case was a particular blow to SIME which, in view of Cheese’s long-standing connection to the Abwehr in Greece, had hoped to use the channel to eliminate the German stay-behind network. However, and not surprisingly, the German effort proved to be no threat and, through field security and SCI units, large numbers of German agents were rounded up in short order.

108 Minutes of 30 Committee Meetings, 14 November 1944 and 27 March 1945, WO 169/24887.
109 Minutes of 30 Committee Meeting, 9 January 1945, WO 169/24887.
111 “Use of ISOS,” HW 19/321, p.27.
The loss of *Cheese* and his counter-intelligence potential was also offset by two new agents, named *Pedant* and *Effigy*. The former was a radio operator who had volunteered for Abwehr service, only to turn himself in to the British. *Effigy* was a two-man team recruited by the Abwehr as a wireless operator and saboteur. Both cases were run by ISLD, under the auspices of the 39 Committee created in Athens in October 1944, and each agent provided valuable counter-intelligence. In the case of *Effigy*, he reported that in September 1944, before the Allied landing, he had been asked to contact a man named Anastasiades. ISLD knew about the man, as *Quicksilver* had told them that he was the liaison between the Abwehr’s naval section and the Greek Security Police. Based on *Effigy*’s information, and on the background provided by *Quicksilver*, the ISLD investigation revealed that Anastasiades had access to a radio transmitter and, on 2 November, he was arrested. *Pedant* provided similarly useful information that led to the capture of other Abwehr agents.\(^\text{112}\)

*Pedant* and *Effigy* were also used by ‘A’ Force to transmit deceptive material, mostly order of battle intelligence, despite their ongoing security and counter-intelligence activities. As noted throughout this dissertation, the mixture of deception and penetration was anathema to ‘A’ Force, but the operational environment made all the difference. The dichotomy between the two was possible in the Middle East and in North Africa; but, on the active fronts in Italy, Greece, and the South of France, where enemy agents were at large, and where the front lines were porous, there was no way to quarantine any double agent. This situation was aggravated because many of the agents developed on the active fronts were expected to make contact with other, uncontrolled, channels. Any refusal to do so would have cast serious

\(^{112}\) Minutes of 39 Committee Meetings, 1 and 2 November 1944, WO 169/24886.
doubt on their reliability. The penetration / deception dichotomy was really just an ideal practice for operations developed in the Middle East and, as we saw in Italy, it no longer held once cases were developed on the Continent.

Although Italy was extreme in the operational environment that it posed to double-cross, it was not anomalous. The Greek case presented the same circumstances on a smaller scale, as did the South of France. In the latter region, SCI and Tac. 2, the ‘A’ Force field unit attached to the Sixth Army Group, ran a number of combined deception / penetration agents in the field. One was Forest, who helped track down German agents the the Marseille area. Another was Monoplane, who monitored the movements of a German agent named Georges throughout March 1945. In each case, these agents were simultaneously utilized for deception, particularly in plan Jessica, designed to keep German troops in Italy from reinforcing the front in France.\footnote{Report on the Activities of No2 Tac HQ ‘A’ Force Sixth Army Group: Part One,” RG 319, Entry 101, Box 4, Folder 79, pp.66-8, 91-2. NARA; “W/T Controlled Enemy Agent Cases in France for Fortnight Ending: Wednesday, 3 January 1945”; “Controlled Enemy Agent W/T Cases in France for Fortnight Wednesday 17 January 1945,” RG 319, Entry 101, Box 4, Folder 75. NARA.}

The double-cross system, in all its regional branches, thus played a substantial role in security and counter-intelligence from late 1943 until the end of the war. In the Middle East, it could do so because ‘A’ Force’s attention was elsewhere, and SIME had a solid organization in place. Furthermore, SIME was lucky enough to come in contact with outstanding counter-intelligence agents like Blackguard, who allowed the British to exert nearly total control over German espionage in the Middle East until Abwehr operations ceased with the Turco-German breach of August 1944. In Italy, Greece, and France, penetration double-cross also came to the fore, but only because the operational realities
meant that ‘A’ Force’s model system was impossible to enforce. Clarke and his men accepted it, sometimes grudgingly, as a cost of doing business on active and insecure fronts; but that did not mean that they agreed with SCI’s sometimes brazen attempts to use deception agents to catch uncontrolled German spies. However, although the relations between SCI and ‘A’ Force in Italy could be difficult, and counter-intelligence did prejudice deception agents at certain points, ‘A’ Force managed to implement substantial deception plans on the peninsula, intended to facilitate the Allied advance on Rome and points further north. Their success in doing so is assessed in the next chapter.
Chapter Six

“There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact”

Mediterranean Deceptions in 1944

The words quoted above were spoken by Sherlock Holmes as an admonition to Dr. Watson, after the latter had asserted that the facts of a certain case were so obvious as to make further investigation by Holmes barely worthwhile.¹ The Germans would have been wise to take heed of the sleuth of Baker Street’s warning, since many of the deceptions implemented against them by the Allies were presented as seemingly obvious facts. The deception planners needed the Germans to continue accepting their “obvious facts” in 1944, as their plans and operations reached their peak, both in terms of the ambitious nature of the schemes and their success in aiding military advances, during that year. The primary goal at the strategic level was to utilize a series of interlocking plans to keep German forces tied up in Norway, the Balkans, Italy, and the South of France — or, all points except the Channel coast of France, where Operation Overlord was initially planned to take place in the spring of 1944. The grand strategic deception was known as Bodyguard, and ‘A’ Force was tasked with implementing its Mediterranean components, which fell under the general title of Zeppelin. As always, double-cross was used heavily to implement the deception and the ongoing order of battle plans in the theatre. However, in 1944 the Mediterranean double agents did more than lend a helping hand to the troops destined for the beaches of Normandy: they also had

an important job in aiding Allied military efforts in Italy, primarily during the May 1944 *Diadem* offensive. The Mediterranean double-cross system was also utilized to aid the August 1944 Allied landings on the south coast of France. These examples, both of which demonstrate the influence of the double-cross system in the Mediterranean, are the focus of this chapter.

I

These two deceptions were launched at a time when ‘A’ Force was heavily involved in the broader strategic plan *Bodyguard*, a scheme that was designed to meet “the colossal problem of persuading the Germans to dispose their forces so as to interfere as little as possible with Allied forces in 1944.”\(^2\) Although that grand strategic plan is not the focus of this chapter, it is worth reviewing its implementation in and effect on the Mediterranean theatre, as it was carried out simultaneously with various operational deceptions and the *Cascade* order of battle plan, making ‘A’ Force a very busy organization in the first six months of 1944.

The resources of ‘A’ Force were stretched even further as *Cascade* sprouted sub-plans, such as *Foynes*, which was meant to disguise the return of seven divisions and their attendant landing craft to Britain in late 1943. The scheme was, in the assessment of Michael Howard, “completely successful.”\(^3\) However, although Fremde Heere West (FHW), the main intelligence evaluation unit of the German High Command and Army, did not believe that there had been substantial troop withdrawals from the Mediterranean, there was no doubt in

\(^2\) Bevan (LCS) to Wild (SHAEF) and Robertson (MI5), 19 April 1944, CAB 154/53.

\(^3\) Howard, *Strategic Deception*, p.136.
the German mind, from Hitler on down, that the major Allied effort in 1944 would be in northwestern Europe.4

The primary contribution that double-cross could make to strategic deception in 1944 would be to convince the Germans that supplemental offensives were planned against the Balkans and southern France. As ever, the underlying plan was Cascade, which in 1943 had done much to convince the Germans of the existence of a Twelfth Army in Egypt, allegedly bound for an invasion of Greece. In early 1944, though, Cascade was revised and expanded to the extent that it was given the new name of plan Wantage. Consequently, by July 1944, the cumulative effect of the order of battle deception had a profound influence on German estimations of Allied strength in the Mediterranean. The true strength of the Allies in that theatre was thirty-eight divisions and, while Dudley Clarke had inflated that number to sixty-four, the Germans actually credited them with having seventy-one divisions.5 The bulk of the fake units were supposedly located in the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, as components of the completely notional Twelfth Army, and the skeletal Ninth Army.6

The extent to which order of battle deception infected the entire German view of Allied strength is evident in a map captured from the German Fourteenth Army in Italy. The map, from July 1944, shows German acceptance of many fake units in the “correct” positions that the Allied deception planners had concocted: the fake XXXI Corps is identified as being present in North Africa; in the Middle East the map pinpoints the Twelfth Army, the XVI and XXV Corps, the 6th New Zealand, 7th South African, and the 33rd, 34th, and 5th British

4 Ibid., p.114.
6 Minutes of Commander-in-Chief’s Commander’s Conference, held in Cairo, 7 August 1944, WO 201/2074.
infantry Divisions. All were notional Wantage units. So, order of battle deception proved to be the successful foundation upon which subsequent strategic deceptions were built, such as an alleged landing on Crete and in the Peloponnese.

Even with the support of Wantage, plan Zeppelin, which was the overall Mediterranean scheme for several notional attacks in 1944, did not result in any overwhelming success. By March 1944 FHW was not convinced that a major landing in the eastern Mediterranean was looming. Instead, they saw the forces arrayed in the Middle East as a reserve for operations elsewhere. Similarly, Field Marshal Maximilien von Weichs, the Commander-in-Chief South-East, was never too concerned about an Allied attack on the Balkans, and generally disposed his troops to meet the inland partisan threat rather than a potential coastal landing. As Michael Howard has argued, Zeppelin and Wantage, at best, kept German troops tied up in the Balkans, and ‘A’ Force did not succeed in drawing in heavy reinforcements to their notional sideshow. Nevertheless, the retention of German troops in the region was an achievement.8

While the double agents had only a qualified success with strategic deception in 1944, ‘A’ Force had real triumphs in operational deception. Examples from the central and western Mediterranean show that double-cross could have a substantial effect on German operational decision-making, with the best one being the deception prior to the May 1944 Diadem offensive in Italy.

Operational deception developed to such a high level in Italy, in part, because the Allies faced stiff resistance much further south on the peninsula than they had expected. They

7 “Sudfront,” RG 242, T 312, Roll 491. NARA.
8 Howard, Strategic Deception, pp.145-54.
had assumed that the Germans would retreat north of Rome, and that had indeed been the enemy’s original plan. However, by October 1943, Ultra disclosed that the enemy’s defensive line would be south of Rome. This unwelcome news threw into disarray the Allied schedule for occupying Rome by early November, and Leghorn, Arezzo, and Florence by the end of the month. Indeed, fighting in November and December showed that German resistance would be hard to overcome. Consequently, a plan was developed to land an Allied force behind German lines at Anzio, an operation that was launched on 22 January 1944. However, the offensive on the Cassino front further south ended without a breakthrough in March, leaving the Anzio bridgehead cut off from the main Allied force.

Although not completely successful, the Anzio landing did achieve surprise, and was aided by a deception plan, but there is no evidence that the surprise was the result of the deception. The plan was Oakfield, which was actually an ongoing effort to keep German forces in the north by threatening landings against Genoa and Rimini. For Anzio, the plan was amended slightly to threaten amphibious operations at Pisa and Rimini, whence each force would allegedly fight through to a link-up at Bologna. While the German command did not expect the Anzio operation, there is no evidence that they were worried about a Pisa-Rimini landing instead. The Anzio surprise may have been the result of security, but probably not of deception. Indeed, double-cross was apparently not able to draw German attention to the deception plan: at the time there were no ‘A’ Force double agents in Italy, leaving the task

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9 Hinsley, British Intelligence III / I, pp.173-77.
of implementing the plan to faraway agents in the Middle East and the handful of effective agents in North Africa.\footnote{Howard, Strategic Deception, pp.138-41.}

Although the Allies had achieved surprise — without much help from double-cross and deception — by spring 1944 their advance was stalled once again, not least because of the modest size of the amphibious assault forces which carried out that operation. In response, Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, the commander of the Allied Armies in Italy (AAI), began to develop an offensive plan which would finally break through the Gustav Line, capture Rome, and advance to a new line running from Civitavecchia to Terni. The offensive, soon to be called \textit{Diadem}, focussed on the western side of the Apennines, where Allied troops would make a breakthrough, link up with the forces at Anzio, and advance to Rome.\footnote{C.J.C. Molony, The Mediterranean and the Middle East, Vol. VI, Part I: Victory in the Mediterranean, 1 April to 4 June 1944 (London: HMSO, 1984; Uckfield, UK: Naval and Military Press, 2004), pp.1-5. Citations refer to the 2004 reprint of the original.} The scheduled start date was 11 May and, given the persistent difficulties that the Allies had faced at Monte Cassino and the Anzio bridgehead, Alexander’s plan called for the massing of a very strong force leading up to the opening day of the attack.

However, in keeping with Thomas Hobbes’s dictum, that “Force, and Fraud, are in warre the two Cardinall vertues,” Alexander used the deceptive resources at his disposal to supplement his armed force.\footnote{Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. C.B. Macpherson (London: Penguin Books, 1985), p.188. Originally published in 1651.} The unit available to him was the Tactical Headquarters (Tac HQ) of ‘A’ Force, a unit developed initially in North Africa, but which now operated in Italy under the command of Maj. Sam Hood. Acting upon orders from Alexander and his staff, ‘A’ Force formed plan \textit{Nunton}, which threatened seaborne landings that would compel Field
Marshal Albert Kesselring, the German Commander-in-Chief South-West and commander of Army Group C, to deploy his reserves north of Rome. If the plan succeeded, those reserves would be diverted from the main point of the Allied attack. According to the story of Nunton, an assault force was assembling at Naples and Salerno, from where it would stage a landing at Civitavecchia. The force, allegedly under the command of the Canadian Corps, was composed of four divisions and would prepare for an operation set to open on 15 May, four days after Diadem which, ‘A’ Force hoped, Kesselring would view as a diversion from the alleged amphibious operation.

If Nunton was to be a success, the first foundation was the plan itself. In this case, the deception plan was suited perfectly to the operational requirements of Diadem. The suitability of Nunton, particularly for implementation by double-cross, is in direct contrast to the 1943 plan Barclay, which was designed to draw German attention away from Sicily. As argued in chapter four, Barclay was weakened because, although it was based on real German fears of a Balkan invasion, by early June it was impossible to hide that a large Allied force was preparing for action in the central Mediterranean. Barclay was therefore a difficult message for double agents to broadcast, and they did so with only mixed results.

Nunton, however, was a plan that double-cross could transmit with even more credibility. Most importantly, it played upon Kesselring’s belief that the Allies had both the capacity and the intention to stage another major landing behind German lines, a fact of which the Allies were well aware through Ultra intelligence. Even more importantly, the

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15 “Historical Record of Deception in the War Against Germany & Italy,” CAB 154/101, p.306.
16 Hinsley, *British Intelligence III / I*, p.199.
plan was based on real forces in Naples and Salerno which were being held in reserve for
\textit{Diadem}. Their presence in the ports did much to verify for the Germans that there was a
genuine amphibious force in place.\textsuperscript{17} Again, this situation was the opposite of that in 1943,
when the false Allied intentions were based almost entirely on fictional forces in the Middle
East. Although the Germans had accepted the Twelfth Army and its lower order units, it
remained a relatively unknown formation, the ostensible existence of which was only known
through human intelligence sources, i.e. double agents. \textit{Nunton}, conversely, had a more solid
grounding, featuring real troops movements, visual evidence apparent to any German aircraft
that might get through Allied air cover, phony wireless traffic, and Kesselring’s conviction
that another landing had to be coming.

The result was one of ‘A’ Force’s greatest triumphs. German forces were disposed in a
manner that fit perfectly with what Alexander wanted. On 26 April the Hermann Göring
Division, part of the OKW central reserve, was kept in northern Italy to protect against an
Anzio breakout or a landing north of Rome. At the same time Kesselring, despite the
sanguine view of the Fourteenth Army commander, Colonel-General Eberhard von
Mackensen, was convinced that amphibious operations were imminent. He therefore moved
the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division to the Tiber estuary, and the 29th Panzer Grenadier to the
northwest of Rome.\textsuperscript{18} Kesselring kept these two divisions, and the 26th Panzer, under his
own command as a mobile reserve, and disposed them on the west coast, far from the main
front. Meanwhile, OKW’s Göring Division remained at Livorno.\textsuperscript{19} Only when Canadian

\textsuperscript{17} Howard, \textit{Strategic Deception}, p.161.
\textsuperscript{18} Playfair, \textit{Mediterranean and Middle East VI / I}, pp.48-53.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p.114.
units, previously thought to be part of the seaborne assault force at Naples, were identified south of Rome did Kesselring begin to discount the threat of a landing behind his lines. However, by that point he was reduced to throwing in his reserves piecemeal, and they never managed to staunch the Allied assault.\textsuperscript{20}

That \textit{Nunton} was a success is not a new argument. Michael Howard made the point strongly in 1990, as has John Ferris more recently.\textsuperscript{21} Its achievements were also mentioned — without referring to ‘A’ Force, Ultra, or double-cross — in the British official history of the Mediterranean theatre.\textsuperscript{22} The achievement was also recognized by ‘A’ Force itself in the immediate aftermath of the operation.\textsuperscript{23} However, because of the extremely close correspondence between the plan and what Kesselring was inclined to do anyway, it has never been clear to what extent the deception reinforced his thinking. The lack of clarity on this point is compounded by the hitherto very limited discussion on the role of double-cross in the implementation of \textit{Nunton}. Although earlier conclusions about \textit{Nunton} do not rely on a deep well of evidence, they are essentially correct, and we can prove this though a more in depth study of the effect of double-cross on German intelligence in April and May 1944.

The primary double agent channel through which \textit{Nunton} was implemented was \textit{Primo}, based in Naples. As described in chapter five, \textit{Primo} was one member of a group of German spies who had landed by boat behind Allied lines in January 1944, and were quickly rounded up. One member of the team agreed to operate as a double agent and, in late January, the radio set went on the air and made contact with the Abwehr headquarters in Italy. \textit{Primo} 

\begin{footnotes}
\item[20] Ibid., p.164; Howard, \textit{Strategic Deception}, p.162.
\item[22] Playfair, \textit{Mediterranean and Middle East VI / I}, p.22.
\end{footnotes}
was built up quickly, with his first several weeks worth of reports consisting mostly of chicken feed on Allied airfields and shipping activity around Naples. By mid-March, he had begun to deliver more detailed information on troop movements in southern Italy and, by April, was transmitting a substantial amount of deceptive information. By the end of March Primo was already perceived as a valuable German agent and was jealously guarded by the Abwehr station attached to Kesselring’s headquarters.24

The people whom Primo had to influence were the commanders and top operations and intelligence staff of Army Group C (commanded by Kesselring), the Tenth Army (commanded by Colonel-General Heinrich von Vietinghoff), and the Fourteenth Army (commanded by Mackensen), with the first being the most important figure, as he had the power to deploy the reserves on the peninsula. Information from Primo would reach the commanders and their operations staffs through the following route: the original source in Naples transmitted intelligence to the main Abwehr station in Italy, Frontaufklärungskommando (FAK) 150, which was attached to Kesselring’s headquarters; that information was then relayed to the Army Group’s and Armies’ intelligence staffs (Ic), which proceeded to assess the information and inform the operations staff (Ia) of their intelligence product, in both written intelligence summaries and in personal meetings.25

The written and verbal information provided by the Ic formed the basis of the German intelligence picture in Italy and, while they had sources other than Primo, his information was utilized frequently in their daily intelligence reporting. Early examples are in the Army

24 Rome Area to Florence, 23 March 1944, HW 19/253.
Group C Ic daily summaries of 16 March and 5 April, which record *Primo* reports on the movement of the American 36th Infantry Division into the area of Naples.\(^{26}\) The regular presence of *Primo*’s intelligence in German documentation attests to the effectiveness of *Nunton*, since the 36th was one of the four real divisions that was notionally under the command of the Canadian Corps for an amphibious landing. Importantly, the latter *Primo* report also appeared in the FHW daily summary for 6 April.\(^{27}\) Two weeks later further intelligence provided by *Primo* was noted at Army Group C headquarters, this time concerning the presence of airborne troops near Naples.\(^{28}\) The effect of these reports, even though they were accurate on specific troop movements, was deceptive, since the troops were represented as being elements of an amphibious landing force supported by airborne operations.

By late April *Primo* had moved beyond troop movements to give news about the command structure of the Allied forces at Naples and Salerno, thereby increasing the importance of his deceptive intelligence. One of the important “facts” that he managed to impress upon the Germans was the location of the 1st Canadian Infantry headquarters at Nocera, just outside of Salerno, along with the continued build-up of the 36th near Naples. Specific intelligence from *Primo* on these dispositions was noted by FHW on 1 and 5 May.

\(^{26}\) Ic - Meldung 16 March & 5 April 1944, RG 242, T 311, Roll 282. NARA. Original messages found in ISOS, Morlupo to Berlin, 16 March & 5 April 1944, HW 19/253.

\(^{27}\) Lagebericht West Nr. 1227, 6 April 1944, MI 14, Box 262. IWM Duxford.

\(^{28}\) Ic-Meldung, 18 April 1944, RG 242, T 311, Roll 282. NARA. Original message in ISOS, Murlupo to Berlin, 17 April 1944, HW 19/253.
by Army Group C on 30 April and 15 May, and the 10th Army on 5 May.\textsuperscript{29} The Army Group C intelligence summary for 15 May, which reported that the 1st Canadian was still in Nocera, is particularly revealing of the success attained by this deception. At that time, the unit was already in the field and participating in the main breakthrough operation. However, the Germans did not identify it in the field until the 16th.\textsuperscript{30} Thus, for at least four days into the offensive, Primo intelligence convinced the Germans that amphibious forces were still waiting in readiness to strike a blow north of Rome when, in fact, they were already fighting on the Gustav Line.

Finally, Primo wound down the deception, by providing intelligence on the units that had been reported at Naples before 15 May. After a week or so of the offensive, it was apparent to the Germans that there was not going to be a amphibious operation, so Primo had to explain where the landing units he had identified ended up going. He responded in particular to urgent requests from the Germans for information on the whereabouts of the 36th US Infantry, which was supposedly one of the units meant to land north of Rome. Thus, he reported on 23 May that the 36th Infantry was actually headed for the Anzio bridgehead, which was true information. Both FHW and Army Group C recorded and distributed his report the next day, a fact which proves the espionage channel was still trusted and seen as a

\textsuperscript{29} Lagebericht West Nr. 1252, 1 May 1944, and Lagebericht West Nr. 1256, 5 May 1944, MI 14, Box 262, IWM Duxford; Ic-Meldung, 30 April 1944, and Ic-Meldung 15 May 1944, RG 242, T 311, Roll 282. NARA; Tatigkeitsbericht Monat Mai 1944, RG 242, T 312, Roll 94. NARA. Original Primo reports in VAR 1534, 30 April 1944, HW 19/289 and Morlupo to Berlin, 1 May 1944, HW 19/254.

\textsuperscript{30} Playfair, \textit{Mediterranean and Middle East VI / I}, p.126.
reliable source on Allied activity behind the lines, even after the alleged seaborne operation failed to happen.\textsuperscript{31}

These examples of Primo’s intelligence reporting, which are just some of the examples found in German assessments, show that he was particularly effective at getting the key elements of Nunton into German intelligence reports, which were, in turn, used to inform operational decisions, a matter discussed below. In view of his reports’ consistent appearances in German papers, we can say with confidence that Nunton, through the efforts of Primo, had a discernible effect on German apprehensions regarding an amphibious landing north of Rome. Of course, Kesselring worried about that possibility anyway but, as noted in chapter four, deception could not work unless it reinforced what the enemy already believed. In this case, there is substantial evidence that ‘A’ Force’s efforts to reinforce Kesselring’s worries made their way into the hands of the Field Marshal and his subordinates from March to May 1944.

Indeed, the influence of Primo’s deceptive espionage is apparent in a wide array of German assessments of Allied intentions. The intelligence staff of Army Group C assessed that there was a danger of Allied amphibious landings, such as in a paper from 13 April which suggested a possible landing near the Anzio bridgehead.\textsuperscript{32} The lower formations of the Fourteenth Army also began to ready themselves for an attack behind their front line: in late April, divisional Ic officers began preparing and distributing a planning game for an enemy

\textsuperscript{31} Lagebericht West Nr. 1275, 24 May 1944, MI 14, Box 262. IWM Duxford; Ic-Meldung, 24 May 1944, RG 242, T 311, Roll 282. NARA. Original German request for position of 36th in Rome Area to Florence, 22 May 1944, HW 19/254. Original report containing Primo’s reply in Morlupo to Berlin, 24 May 1944, HW 19/254.

\textsuperscript{32} Paper on the possibility of a landing between Gaeta and the Beachhead, 13 April 1944, RG 242, T 311, Roll 282. NARA.
landing at Civitavecchia.\textsuperscript{33} Even after the Allies’ land offensive (\textit{Diadem}) had started on 11 May, Army Group C still warned on the 16th that an amphibious landing north of Rome was expected on 25 May.\textsuperscript{34} Most importantly, the Fourteenth Army accepted the dispositions as provided by \textit{Primo}: a German map, captured during the battle by Allied troops and provided to ‘A’ Force, showed the Fourteenth Army had a number of mistaken dispositions for the Allied order of battle. One noticeable result of \textit{Primo’s} influence was the placement of the 1st Canadian Division at Nocera which, as noted above, was put over by the double agent as a key element of the deception.\textsuperscript{35}

Of course, German intelligence in Italy was not completely certain that the threat of further amphibious landings was not an enemy deception. Thus, the Fourteenth Army’s staff warned in April 1944 that, in light of recent aerial reconnaissance over Naples, Sardinia, and Corsica, there seemed to be no sign of upcoming amphibious operations, so the enemy could be distracting them in that regard.\textsuperscript{36} However, those dissenting assessments were the exception, and the weight of the German intelligence analyses in May pointed to a forthcoming Allied amphibious action, which they gradually pinpointed as coming to the north of Rome rather than to the south.

The drift of German attention north of Rome could also be related to intelligence from \textit{Gilbert}, who tended to provide more allegedly “sensitive” information than \textit{Primo}. In one case, a report transmitted by \textit{Gilbert} on 1 May was sent from Berlin to the German

\textsuperscript{33} Tatigkeitsbericht der Abt. Ic AOK 14, entry for 27 April 1944, RG 242, T 312, Roll 487, p.8. NARA.

\textsuperscript{34} Ic-Meldung, 16 May 1944, RG 242, T 311, Roll 282. NARA.

\textsuperscript{35} “‘A’ Force Instructions No. 34, Appendix A: Allied Security and Enemy Intelligence,” 7 July 1944, WO 169/24860.

\textsuperscript{36} Feindlagebericht, 25 April 1944, AL 1944/6, p.9. IWM Duxford.
command in Italy, containing intelligence to the effect that the Allied commanders had definitely chosen to take Rome from the north rather than the south. While there is no specific reaction recorded in the German military documents, we do know that Gilbert’s reports had been well received at Kesselring’s headquarters since the summer of 1943.\textsuperscript{37}

Intelligence assessments at the higher levels were also falling completely in line with plan \textit{Nunton}. On 16 April 1944 FHW stated that an amphibious force was assembling at Naples, and only on 23 May did it accept that the presence of some of those units on the southern front negated the possibility of a landing behind their lines.\textsuperscript{38} SKL was also drawn in, noting in its war diary on 7 May that there was the possibility of a landing north of Rome, and the fact that there were four enemy divisions in Naples that suggested such a possibility.\textsuperscript{39} The similarity between the information upon which SKL based its judgement, and Primo’s previous reports on the composition of the Allied amphibious force, is striking.

Perhaps just as important as persuading Kesselring to believe the deception plan, ‘A’ Force also managed to convince Hitler and OKW. Nazi Germany’s supreme warlords firmly believed that a “Naples Group” existed and that amphibious operations were imminent in early May. The assessments of OKW and Hitler also follow the pattern seen in Italy. Initially, such as on 13 April, Hitler thought that a landing between Anzio and the southern front, i.e. south of Rome, was possible, an assessment with which Kesselring agreed. However, the attention of Hitler and OKW was drawn north by the end of the month, when OKW noted

\textsuperscript{37} Berlin to Parma Area, 4 May 1944, HW 19/253.

\textsuperscript{38} Kurze Feindbeurteilung West, 16 April 1944; Kurze Feindbeurteilung Italien, 18 May 1944, MI 14, Box 262. IWM Duxford.

that the force in Naples could be bound for an area further up the peninsula.\footnote{Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht, 1944-1945: Teilband I ed. Percy Ernst Schramm (Munich: Bernard & Graefe Verlag, 1982), p.478.} This view remained in place until seven days after Diadem was launched when, finally, Hitler and Jodl accepted that there would be no Allied seaborne operations. The latter commented at their conference that day that “the Naples group is for the most part used up now,” meaning that the supposed landing units had been identified in action on the southern front. Hitler agreed that this was the case.\footnote{“Evening Situation Report, May 18, 1944, at the Berghof,” Hitler and His Generals, p.433.}

The success of Primo and Nunton was, at root, based on the correlation between the deception and Kesselring’s pre-existing beliefs. Even in his postwar memoirs, Kesselring argued that, given Allied shipping and air power, it was entirely reasonable to fear further amphibious landings — he did not succumb to “invasion-phobia,” as his critics had charged.\footnote{Albert Kesselring, The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Kesselring, Trans. Lynton Hudson (London: William Kimber, 1953), p.191.} Within this statement we see a second contributing factor to the outcome of Nunton: the chronic German inability to assess the volume of Allied shipping accurately, and also their failure to grasp how complex and logistically demanding an amphibious landing was.\footnote{Liddell diaries, 17 April 1944, KV 4/193, p.311; Holt, The Deceivers, pp.57-8.} The latter in particular led them to believe that the Allies could undertake further landings with relative ease. As noted above, the Germans never understood exactly how many landing craft had left the theatre in late 1943, and FHW admitted that they had no accurate idea of the number of craft still in the Mediterranean in 1944.\footnote{Howard, Strategic Deception, p.113.}
But the correlation between the deception plan and German fears, even when combined with their deeply flawed picture of Allied amphibious capabilities, is not enough to explain the particularly noticeable effect of Primo’s slanted reporting in spring 1944. After all, the double agents had not had a similar achievement with Barclay in 1943, despite the persistent worries of Hitler, OKW, and the Commander-in-Chief South East, Alexander Löhr, about an invasion of the Balkan peninsula. As shown in chapter four, the underlying problem that ‘A’ Force and their double agents faced in 1943 was the incongruity between Dudley Clarke’s incremental method, and the manner in which German intelligence collected and assessed information.

The incremental method of deception was a hallmark of Dudley Clarke’s strategic schemes. It was based on two, related principles: the first was that if a false story was fed to the enemy in too direct a manner, the opposing intelligence service would see through it; secondly, if the deception was passed in a more piecemeal way, the enemy would piece together the story themselves, and they were more likely to believe something if they thought they had “succeeded” in deducing the overall significance of the piecemeal intelligence themselves. This incremental approach was supposed to be a strength of double-cross, but it could actually be a weakness. German intelligence relied on many sources beyond those controlled by ‘A’ Force, a state of affairs which Clarke recognized. Nevertheless, he thought his good intelligence would rise above the obviously bad intelligence that ‘A’ Force saw from other sources appearing in ISOS decrypts. However, the German intelligence system was not coordinated enough to discriminate critically among all of their sources and sort out the ‘A’ Force “wheat” from the uncontrolled “chaff.” Thus, the enemy’s evaluation agencies
inevitably composed assessments which included many pieces of information beyond those provided by ‘A’ Force, thereby obscuring and distorting the deceptive picture the Clarke was trying to create.

It did not help that Clarke communicated his own story through a wide variety of agents. In spring 1943, as an example, all of the Middle Eastern wireless agents were utilized for Barclay: Cheese reported on the Twelfth Army and the activities of Greek troops in Egypt; Quicksilver sent information on shipping in the Levantine ports; The Pessimists were used to report on troop movements from Iraq to Syria; and sundry other agents in the Middle East and North Africa provided smaller scraps of intelligence. It is thus possible say that the tremendous success that the Thirty Committees had in creating new cases in early 1943 was an embarrassment of riches, and it caused ‘A’ Force to transmit their deceptive story via too many channels. The result may have been that the deception was less easily understood by the Germans than if it had been transmitted more directly by fewer agents. The use of many channels, reporting scraps of intelligence, rendered it more likely that ‘A’ Force material would get mixed in with the uncontrolled intelligence.

Indeed, the success of Nunton can be partially attributed to the lack of reliance upon the “incremental approach” in its implementation, although that was not by any specific design. As an operational deception, it was naturally narrower in implementation than a strategic plan like Barclay, but it was also more focussed because Primo was, along with some help from Gilbert, the only suitably placed agent to implement it. He was, until early June 1944, the only viable double agent in Italy and, based as he was in Naples, there was no
option but to use him as the main conduit for Nunton. The Middle Eastern agents were too far away and could not plausibly have good information on specific operations in Italy, and the ranks of the North African agents in Morocco and Algeria had been thinning in the winter of 1944, largely because they were losing contact with the Germans as their Spanish intermediaries began to abandon their close cooperation with the Axis powers.

Consequently, virtually the entire double-cross aspect of the deception was put across by Primo. That concentration on one agent was better suited to the limited ability of the German intelligence system to master and comprehend a broader array of espionage reports, and to work out their implications.

Such intelligence weaknesses were most apparent at the strategic level in German decision-making, but German operational intelligence in Italy was usually quite strong. Their mistaken appreciations in spring 1944 seem to be an exception rather than the rule. Of their sources beyond human intelligence reports, the Germans in Italy relied most heavily on wireless traffic analysis and decryption, which the Ic officers on the peninsula regarded as being seventy-five percent reliable (although, it should be noted, their understanding of the Allied order of battle before Diadem was still flawed, despite whatever reliable information the Germans thought they got through signals intelligence). The Ic officers admitted, however, that other sources were not very useful: patrols could only provide tactical intelligence of purely local value, and aerial reconnaissance was far from comprehensive.

45 Minutes of 40 Committee Meeting, 7 April 1944, WO 169/24888.
46 Minutes of 40 Committee Meetings, 24 December 1943 & 18 February 1944, WO 169/24888.
German problems in the latter case came down to raw numbers: they had only 700 airplanes against some 4000 Allied aircraft. So weak was their resultant aerial view of Italy that they missed entirely the transfer of the Eighth Army from the Adriatic side to the Cassino front before Diadem. That error also casts doubt on the effectiveness of their signals intelligence in spring 1944. Finally, information was gleaned from prisoners of war, which was often rated highly by German intelligence in Italy. Overall, though, German operational intelligence throughout the Italian campaign was strong, and Nunton was actually a rare example of a completely successful deception on the peninsula.

Nunton had an advantage over other deceptions because the key information came from relatively far behind the lines, and the important troops, and their wireless traffic, were actually located around Naples. The former, in particular, was a benefit to Primo. The situation favoured the channel because the Abwehr had failed to create a stay-behind network of agents in southern Italy before the invasion of September 1943. Thus, Primo was the only apparently regular and reliable human source that the Abwehr had in the vital rear areas of the Allied zone of operations, where German patrols could obviously not penetrate, and where German reconnaissance aircraft could only occasionally reach, thanks to massive Allied air superiority.

Thus, Primo was helped along by weaknesses in German intelligence collection from the rear areas of the Allied positions. This relationship between the effectiveness of double-cross and the quality of other German sources of intelligence has been a theme throughout

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50 “Detailed Interrogation on Intelligence Officers,” WO 204/12408, p.35.
52 See chapter five, p.234.
this dissertation. In chapter one, we saw that Cheese had been highly successful before the
November 1941 Crusader offensive, a time when the Germans lacked any other solid sources
of information on British operational intentions. However, Cheese languished from
November 1941 to July 1942, partially because his actions before Crusader had cast doubt
on his reliability but, primarily, because the Germans now had a much better source: the
steady steam of signals intelligence attained through Gute Quelle, otherwise known as Col.
Bonner Fellers, the American Military Attaché who transmitted to his reports in a
compromised code. Then, when the leak was tracked down and Fellers’ code was changed,
Cheese reappeared with renewed prominence in German intelligence assessments.53 There
was thus a clear, inverse relationship between the success of a double agent and the
availability of other quality sources of German intelligence. Cheese also owed his survival
and revival to the deeply flawed structure of the Abwehr, a matter discussed at length in
chapters one and two.

However, the problems of German intelligence, and the Abwehr specifically, were a
double-edged sword: yes, they ensured that double agents could survive with little genuine
scrutiny from their ostensible German masters, but they also meant that the Abwehr believed
in and relied upon a whole range of agents that ‘A’ Force did not control. This situation
meant that when German aerial reconnaissance and signals intelligence experienced a steep
decline in 1943 — a development that, thanks to the inverse relationship noted above, should
have helped ‘A’ Force — this enemy deficiency did not give an automatic boost to the
double-cross system’s efficacy in practicing deception. In fact, the German reliance on

53 See chapter one, pp.77-8.
human sources was problematic because of the existence of so many uncontrolled channels, and Clarke’s devotion to the incremental method did not help the problem. Thus, attempts at strategic deception via double-cross in 1943 did not completely fool the Germans and lead them in one, specific direction.

During the Italian campaign, however, the relatively high German reliance on human agents in the rear areas of the Allied lines worked well for double-cross. As noted above, the range of German human sources at the operational level was much narrower and, importantly, the relationship between the Abwehr, staff intelligence officers, and the operations staff was much closer than at the strategic level. At the strategic plane, an agent report would be relayed from the controlling Abwehrstelle to Berlin, and also to field commands. As both local commanders and Berlin could receive information from hundreds of human sources, any single double agent report tended to get lost in the shuffle, especially given its deliberately piecemeal and “incremental” nature. Thus, ‘A’ Force’s strategic misinformation usually appeared randomly in German intelligence papers during 1943, interspersed with reports from many uncontrolled sources. If that misinformation was to work completely effectively, though, it needed to be absorbed and integrated by the Germans in a much more regular and systematic manner than it actually was. Consequently, the exact picture that Clarke wanted never got through at the strategic level, and could not have as total an effect on enemy command decisions as ‘A’ Force would have liked.

On the other hand, the operational intelligence cycle in Italy was much tighter, a situation which favoured a deception plan like *Nunton*, especially when it relied on a single agent who was well regarded by the Germans. The old structure of the Abwehr in Italy, based
upon a local Abwehrstelle which operated independently, had been abolished in early 1944
and, instead, the Abwehr officers in Italy worked out of FAK 150, which was attached to
Army Group C headquarters as an espionage unit. FAK 150 received its orders directly from
the Army Group staff and, in turn, the intelligence that it collected was reported directly to
the Army Group Ic and Ia. FAK 150 was thus, at root, the human intelligence service of
Army Group C, which was very different from the pre-1944 scenario, when Ast Italy had
operated as a virtually independent agency with only loose contacts with Berlin and local
commands.

This situation was ideal for Primo: since he was a prized agent of FAK 150, his
intelligence did not have to travel through Byzantine bureaucratic channels. Instead, given
the tight intelligence cycle in Italy, it went directly from FAK 150 to the appropriate
intelligence officers at the army group and army levels.54 Given this situation on the German
side, and combined with ‘A’ Force’s more direct method of passing information, it is no
surprise that we see Primo’s intelligence frequently appearing in the intelligence summaries
of the Army Group. Furthermore, as discussed above, the intelligence assessments and,
ultimately, the perception of commanders from Hitler down to Kesselring, show the influence
of the intelligence about the “Naples Group.” Nunton was thus a definite deceptive success,
and Primo deserves a position along with Cheese and Gilbert at the top rank of the
Mediterranean double agent network.

54 “Detailed Interrogation on Intelligence Officers,” WO 204/12408, p.28.
Diadem had been a success but, repeating a frustrating pattern, the military movement of the Allies on the Italian Peninsula was now checked by another German defensive barrier: the Gothic Line, which ran the width of Italy just north of Florence, a city from which the Germans withdrew on 10 August. Alexander planned to breach the Gothic Line and push into the Po Plain, a feat that could finally break German resistance in Italy. His forces, however, were weakened as a number of units were removed for the planned invasion of southern France. Thus, there were two operations that the double-cross system had to support in August 1944: the Dragoon invasion of France, and the Olive offensive against the Gothic Line. These were separate operations, carried out by different commands. They also had separate deception plans, but with a key overlap between them: a threatened invasion of the Ligurian coast of Italy in the Gulf of Genoa. That threat was meant to tie up German forces in Italy, keeping them out of France, and away from the Gothic Line. Although there was a common feature of the deception plans, this section will focus mostly on the effect of double-cross on German perceptions of Dragoon, as the Olive operation was subject to a major alteration late in the day, due to forces well outside ‘A’ Force’s control. Consequently, the deception plan they developed had to be changed, and the double agents were not able to perform their deceptive task properly as a result.

Deceiving the Germans about the planned invasion of the French Mediterranean coast did pose a difficulty: as an American newspaper stated two days after the landings, the operation was the “‘worst kept secret’ of the war.”\footnote{“Nothing to Hide,” \textit{Washington Evening Star}, 17 August 1944, cited in “Operation ‘ANVIL’,” RG 319, Entry 101, Box 4, Folder 78. NARA.} The operation had been debated
endlessly since 1942, with the Americans in favour and the British, particularly the Prime Minister, opposed. Churchill’s preferred option was to focus instead on Italy and the Balkans, pushing further north to forestall major Soviet advances in the region.\textsuperscript{56} By summer 1944 the British were even more eager to abandon the projected invasion, as Ultra showed that the Gothic Line was weak and could not hold back an all-out offensive by Alexander’s forces.\textsuperscript{57} But the Americans, with their focus on advancing Allied operations in France, got their way, and Dragoon was set in motion, drawing troops away from the Allied Armies in Italy.

An added difficulty was another deception plan, from earlier in 1944, that ran contrary to the story of the Dragoon deception: as part of Bodyguard, the Allies had threatened a landing against the south coast of France in the months before 6 June, and running for several weeks after. The goal of Vendetta, as the deception was known, was to draw German troops into the region or, at least, keep the units already stationed in the south from heading north to try and help repel the Allied invasion forces in Normandy. Certainly, the Germans had shown concern about their French Mediterranean flank and, in February 1944, sent two infantry divisions and the 9th SS Panzer Division to the region. By early March the German High Command, believing that shipping in Algeria was inadequate for an invasion, were more sanguine, but an Abwehr report on 18 March, forecasting a landing against southern France, caused renewed German worry. Col. Friedrich-Adolf Krummacher, the OKW intelligence officer, noted that the report reinforced the concerns about the threat to that region held by the High Command (a group which was obviously never very confident

\textsuperscript{56} Mark A. Stoler, \textit{Allies in War: Britain and American Against the Axis Powers, 1940-1945} (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), pp.147-9.

in its predictions, one way or another). In any case, while further reinforcements were not
sent to the Mediterranean coast, neither were any troops released from the region until July,
meaning that, in the words of Michael Howard, *Vendetta* was a “partial success.” By mid-
July 1944, however, ‘A’ Force had to begin drawing German attention away from the French
Riviera, and instead to the Gulf of Genoa.

‘A’ Force also had to help Field Marshal Alexander’s ongoing operations in Italy,
which amounted to a plan to breach the Gothic Line in its central sector, and advance from
Florence to Bologna. Still facing the American Fifth Army and the British Eighth Army were
the German Tenth and Fourteenth Armies, which had taken up their positions on the Gothic
Line on 5 July. The Tenth was on the Adriatic side, and General Vietinghoff was deeply
cconcerned that the Allies, tired of struggling up the middle of the peninsula, would opt for the
cost on their next offensive.

However, Allied planning did call for the main effort to remain in the middle of the
German line. German troops would be diverted to the north-west through the threat to
Liguria, while another notional attack was created on the Adriatic coast, which was cast as
the main axis of the Allied offensive. Alexander’s planned attack had the potential to be
decisive after a year of frustration in Italy: Hitler himself recognized that if Army Group C
was forced back into the Po Plain, then there would be nothing left but a headlong retreat to

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58 Howard, *Strategic Deception*, p.150.
Uckfield, UK: Naval and Military Press, 2004), pp.59-60, 70. Citations refer to page number in the
2004 reprint of the original.
the Alps — a significant acknowledgement, considering the Führer’s predilection to hold every inch of territory.\textsuperscript{60}

To deceive the Germans about both \textit{Dragoon} and \textit{Olive}, ‘A’ Force developed two interlocking plans: the strategic scheme \textit{Ferdinand} for the former, and the operational plan \textit{Ottrington} for the latter. In their final form, they threatened a landing at the Gulf of Genoa and at Rimini, outflanking the Gothic Line at both ends. The US Seventh Army, actually bound for France, was notionally a reserve for Alexander.\textsuperscript{61} Like \textit{Nunton}, these plans had the advantage of being both relatively narrow in focus and based on real forces. Furthermore, they were in lock-step with German thinking: the Gulf of Genoa was always a point of concern for the High Command and Army Group C and, as mentioned above, Vietinghoff was worried that his weakness on the Adriatic flank would attract Allied attention.

Then, on 4 August, while the deceptions were already underway, Alexander, the commander of the Allied Armies in Italy, met with the British Eighth Army commander General Oliver Leese, who, although it is unclear how, convinced his superior to switch the main axis of the attack from Florence-Bologna to the Adriatic coast. The late-term change of plan threw \textit{Ottrington} into disarray, especially as there were signs that it was already reinforcing German fears about a coastal operation. A new deception plan, called \textit{Ulster}, was implemented, and was “the first and only full-scale double bluff ever mounted by ‘A’

\textsuperscript{60} “Meeting of the Führer with Colonel General Jodl, July 31, 1944, in the Wolfsschanze,” \textit{Hitler and His Generals}, p.449.

\textsuperscript{61} Howard, \textit{Strategic Deception}, p.155; “Historical Record of Deception in the War Against Germany & Italy,” CAB 154/101, pp.294, 309.
The basic point was to continue the Adriatic deception, but in such a ham-handed manner that the Germans would perceive it as a deception and not a real offensive.\textsuperscript{63}

\textit{Ferdinand}, which was not affected by any late stage changes, has been deemed a successful deception: both Michael Howard and Thaddeus Holt consider it the most effective of ‘A’ Force’s strategic plans.\textsuperscript{64} Of course, it was the least demanding of all the strategic deceptions, as it threatened an area only 300 kilometers from the actual target of Operation \textit{Dragoon}, and was thus entirely plausible in view of Allied preparations in Italy and North Africa. Kesselring certainly believed that the landings in Genoa were possible, if not imminent, and sent reinforcements to the area. General Johannes Blaskowitz, commander of Army Group G in southern France, was convinced that he would face the invasion, but Kesselring pointed regularly to his own evidence, such as the pattern of Allied bombing in Liguria.\textsuperscript{65} The Allied bombing was, of course, designed to enhance the deception.\textsuperscript{66} Consequently, the troops of the Allied Sixth Army Group did not face a reinforced German opponent when they landed between Toulon and Nice on 15 August. The \textit{Dragoon} landings were largely unopposed, and the Germans began to withdraw after their counterattacks failed to push the Allies back into the sea.

Operation \textit{Olive}, despite the change of plan, also seems to have caught the Germans off-guard, but it only achieved immediate tactical surprise. The Germans apparently did not

\begin{footnotes}
\item[Holt, \textit{The Deceivers}, p.620.]
\item[“Historical Record of Deception,” CAB 154/101, p.310.]
\item[Howard, \textit{Strategic Deception}, p.159; Holt, \textit{The Deceivers}, p.620.]
\item[Jackson, \textit{Mediterranean and Middle East VI / II}, p.142-3.]
\item[Holt, \textit{The Deceivers}, pp.617-8.]
\end{footnotes}
realize that the bulk of the Eighth Army had moved back into positions on the Adriatic side.\textsuperscript{67} Nor did the Tenth Army seem to be expecting an offensive when it was launched on 25 August.\textsuperscript{68} However, as the deception did not achieve a broader change in German dispositions, reinforcements were moved in quickly and, repeating the now-tired pattern, the offensive ground to a halt and the two sides once again settled down to another winter of static fighting.

Agreement on the success of \textit{Ferdinand} and the mixed results of \textit{Ottrington / Ulster} — which was at least not an outright failure — has long been evident in the literature on deception; but the double-cross contribution to their execution and outcome has not received much attention. Michael Howard does argue that double agents were important in \textit{Ferdinand}, primarily because they had gained a “reliable reputation” by mid-1944, but does not delve far into how they actually implemented the deception and why it worked.\textsuperscript{69}

The implementation of \textit{Ferdinand} through double-cross was effective because it was similar to \textit{Nunton}: it relied heavily on just two agents, \textit{Gilbert} and \textit{Primo}, with the former being the more prominent source of deceptive information. \textit{Ulster}, meanwhile, was put over by the group of agents in Rome, which had been created after the capture of the city on 4 June. ‘A’ Force certainly had confidence in these fresh cases, and the agent \textit{Armour} in particular: the 40 Committee stated in early August that “this agent has now reached a point where he is capable of almost any sort of statement we wish him to make without defying the

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\textsuperscript{67} Bennett, \textit{Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy}, p.304.
\textsuperscript{68} Jackson, \textit{Mediterranean and Middle East VII / II}, p.159.
\textsuperscript{69} Howard, \textit{Strategic Deception}, p.159.
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appearance of likelihood.”\textsuperscript{70} Despite this level of confidence, ‘A’ Force made the well-
considered decision not to utilize all agents for both deceptions but, instead, assigned each
plan to a smaller group of agents who were best placed to implement them.

‘A’ Force was also satisfied that their information was getting into the right hands, as
decrypts of enemy signals showed that their intelligence went directly to Kesselring’s
headquarters, in addition to being sent to Berlin.\textsuperscript{71} There was some concern that the
reorganization of the Abwehr, of which the 40 Committee was aware but about which was
not completely knowledgable, would put \textit{Ferdinand} at risk. However, that turned out to be
unfounded.\textsuperscript{72} Thus, ‘A’ Force had top-flight agents with a direct line to the relevant military
headquarters and, for \textit{Ferdinand}, a plausible notional invasion threat put over by two very
well-established double agents.

\textit{Gilbert} was the leading agent of the two, and had been established in Tunis since May
1943. As a real French staff officer, who also undertook a range of real and notional activities
in the city, he could plausibly provide more detailed information on Allied planning, rather
than just order of battle intelligence that was the core of what lesser agents passed. He had
been used forcefully to push the \textit{Vendetta} element of \textit{Bodyguard}, posing a threat of the South
of France before and after the invasion of Normandy, and his information was regularly
introduced into the German intelligence cycle by the Abwehr during the time before and after

\textsuperscript{70} Minutes of 40 Committee Meeting, 9 August 1944, WO 169/24888. This statement did show a
touch of hubris in the 40 Committee. Otto Helfferich, who was \textit{Armour}’s Abwehr controller, stated
after the war, apparently unprompted, that he suspected the agent was under control, as his
information was often too good. \textit{“First Interrogation Report on Col. Helfferich, Otto,”} 19 May 1945,
WO 204/12217, p.34.

\textsuperscript{71} Tac. HQ ‘A’ Force to Clarke (‘A’ Force), 2 December 1944, WO 169/24857.

\textsuperscript{72} Minutes of 40 Committee Meeting, 2 August 1944, WO 169/24888.
6 June 1944, with a lot of the material being sent directly to the Mediterranean Wehrmacht commanders.73

Of course, now Gilbert and Primo had to reverse that trend, and impress upon the Germans that a landing group was forming in southern Italy which was bound for the Gulf of Genoa. There were real forces in Italy, such as the headquarters of the Seventh Army, which could be “mobilized” on behalf of the deception. There were also a substantial number of Wantage formations which could reinforce the threat. The core fake units were the 40th, 42nd, and 57th Infantry Divisions, which formed the phony XIV Corps.74 These units had to be accepted by the Germans as real, and as being in the locations claimed by the double agents, if Ferdinand were to have an effect.

Thus, Gilbert and Primo set about providing information on the alleged troop concentrations in Italy, and found a receptive German audience for their intelligence. On 25 and 27 July the intelligence staff of the Fourteenth Army, which was on the west side of the line, and closest to the Gulf of Genoa, reported, as a result of intelligence from both double agents, that the headquarters of the Seventh Army had moved from North Africa to Italy.75 Their daily intelligence summaries of 2, 5, and 9 August also show material from Primo, each of which identified the 42nd and 57th Divisions, and the XIV Corps, as all being present in Naples. Of course, all of these formations were fake.76 On the 7th of August, another

73 Examples are found in ISOS, Paris to Parma Area, 5 June and 14 June 1944; and Abwehr I West Berlin to Commander-in-Chief South-West, 1 June 1944, HW 19/254.

74 Holt, The Deceivers, p.914.


76 Kurzemeldung zur Feindlage, 2, 5, & 9 August 1944, RG 242, T 312, Roll 491. NARA. Original Primo reports in Fornovo to Berlin, 1 & 4 August 1944, HW 19/255.
Wantage division, the 5th Airborne, was recorded by the Fourteenth Army as being in Italy.\textsuperscript{77} Once again, double-cross had managed to penetrate German intelligence in Italy and convince them that an entire fake corps was present on the peninsula, preparing for a landing in Liguria.

FHW also showed itself just as susceptible to believing double agent reports as it has been in spring 1944, when it had been taken in by Nunton, and had also been duped by Gilbert-supplied intelligence suggesting an invasion of southern France in June.\textsuperscript{78} Now working to convince FHW of the opposite — that the Allies would not invade southern France — Gilbert had the same success in convincing FHW of the existence of the XIV Corps as Primo and he had with German intelligence in Italy, who also believed that it really existed. Thus, on 21 July the FHW situation report provided intelligence on the XIV Corps and the 42nd and 57th Divisions.\textsuperscript{79} As regards the putative intentions of those units, FHW, citing a Primo report, suggested that they were preparing for amphibious operations.\textsuperscript{80} More intelligence on the XIV Corps from the two double agents appeared in FHW summaries in August, with Primo’s intelligence on the composition of the force and its amphibious intentions being highlighted on 1 and 4 August.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{77} Kurzemeldung zur Feindlage, 7 August 1944, RG 242, T 312, Roll 491. NARA.
\textsuperscript{78} Lagebericht West Nr. 1236, 15 April 1944; Lagebericht West Nr. 1280, 29 May 1944; Lagebericht West Nr. 1287, 5 June 1944, MI 14, Box 262. IWM Duxford. Original Gilbert reports found in Gilbert Outward Messages, 14 April & 2 June 1944, WO 169/24899.
\textsuperscript{79} Kurze Feindbeurteilung West, 21 July 1944, MI 14, Box 262. IWM Duxford.
\textsuperscript{80} Kurze Feindbeurteilung West, 17 July 1944, MI 14, Box 262. IWM Duxford. Original Primo report is in Fornovo to Berlin, 21 July 1944, HW 19/255.
\textsuperscript{81} Lagebericht West Nr. 1344, 1 August 1944; Lagebericht West Nr. 1347, 4 August 1944, MI 14, Box 262. IWM Duxford. Original Primo report is in Fornovo to Berlin, 1 August 1944, HW 19/255.
Gilbert and Primo had a clear influence over German intelligence in July and August 1944, but the Rome-based agents also had an effect on Ferdinand, although they were primarily working to implement the Gothic Line offensive. The considerable sway over German intelligence that all of these agents achieved that summer is apparent in a report circulated by the Abwehr to the Wehrmachtführungstab and Kesselring’s headquarters on 3 August, which was a “summary of evaluated VM reports received here in connection with a possible intended enemy landing operation in the Western MEDITERRANEAN.” Containing ten pieces of specific intelligence related to the Allied order of battle and command structure, it shows particular concern about forces on the west coast of Italy in the area from Naples to Rome, and includes identifications of real units along with the false XIV Corps divisions. The presence of airborne troops in the Rome area, as well as around fifty transport planes, was also reported. Perhaps the most notable aspect of this Abwehr report was that all but two pieces of intelligence had been provided by ‘A’ Force double agents, as proven by the fact that each section notes the provenance of the information provided. Thus, we see that the Roman agent Addict provided intelligence on troops in his area, while Arbiter provided the intelligence on the airborne troops and their aircraft. Primo contributed the most, with several of his reports detailing the order of battle in Naples, the movement of the Seventh Army to Italy, and the ongoing landing exercises in Italy.  

Such a decrypt would have been nothing but good news for ‘A’ Force, except for one small but vital qualification: the very end of the Abwehr analysis draws on a Primo report from 2 June, i.e. two months prior, which stated that the probable objective was France. We

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82 Fornovo to Berlin, 3 August 1944, HW 19/255.
see clearly, then, the problem that ‘A’ Force faced, as their prior deception was still bleeding over into August. Nevertheless, about a week later, on 9 August, the Abwehr circulated further intelligence from Primo which implied that the operation was actually intended for the Ligurian coast.

As for the analyses that the Germans drew from the double-cross intelligence, we see at the operational level that Kesselring and Blaskowitz were strengthened in what they already believed, which probably kept the former from allowing any of his troops to reinforce France and, indeed, led him to reinforce the Ligurian coast instead.

However, at the upper levels of German intelligence and command, there was much more vacillation. FHW certainly took in the information from double-cross and included it in their situation reports, but the subsequent assessments were never decisive in their view of Allied intentions. FHW did accept the fake XIV Corps and its phony divisions, as seen in their report of 4 August. A short analytical paper, written that same day by FHW, noted how significant it was for future operations that these units had just moved from North Africa to Italy. The analysts also argued that, in view of the accumulation of troops in southern Italy, an invasion of France was possible, but activity against northern Italy was more likely. On 7 August FHW again forecast an amphibious operation in the Gulf of Genoa. Two days later, however, FHW was concerned by the presence of the II French Expeditionary Corps in southern Italy, and reverted to the belief that France was the Allied target. Because of that concern, the Abwehr had queried Gilbert on the whereabouts French troops on 29 July, but

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83 Ibid.
84 Fornovo to Berlin, 9 August 1944, HW 19/255.
85 Kurze Feindbeurteilung West, 4 August 1944, MI 14, Box 262. IWM Duxford.
86 Kurze Feindbeurteilung West, 7 August 1944, MI 14, Box 262. IWM Duxford.
the agent responded by saying that the French invasion was just a rumour, and perhaps one that was being circulated deliberately.\textsuperscript{87}

Ultimately, however, there was a fair amount of confusion in the minds of the German intelligence men at FHW, SKL, and other high-level intelligence units. No doubt the lingering effects of Vendetta, noted in the Abwehr report of 3 August, contributed to this confusion, but it was also likely related to the close proximity of the real Dragoon landing beaches and the notionally-targeted beaches in Liguria. The distance between them — only 300 kilometers — was a double-edged sword for the ‘A’ Force: it made it entirely plausible that a landing force meant for France could actually go to Italy; but it also meant that the reverse was just as possible. Even double agent reports which stressed the Genoese option were never able to completely convince the Germans. Once again, we see that in strategic deception double-cross could quite easily impress a fake order of battle upon the Germans, but in the Mediterranean it was always slightly beyond their ability to convince them of Allied intentions beyond any doubt.

Thus, from early June until the time that the landing fleet was actually at sea on 15 August, higher-level German assessments of the Allied target wavered constantly. In early June, while Vendetta was still underway, OKW and FHW were unsure of how events would unfold in the western Mediterranean. One week after the Normandy operations, OKW balked at removing troops from southern France for fear of further landings, although they did consider Liguria to be a more likely target.\textsuperscript{88} Similarly, FHW argued that France was a

\textsuperscript{87} Lagebericht West Nr. 1352, 9 August 1944, MI 14, Box 262. IWM Duxford. Gilbert’s exchange with Abwehr is in Inward Message 29 July 1944, and Gilbert Outward Message, 31 July 1944, WO 169/24899.

\textsuperscript{88} “German Appreciation of Allied Intentions in the West,” 12 June 1944, CAB 154/64.
probable point of attack but, should the fighting in Italy slow down, an outflanking landing north of the Gothic Line was possible.\(^9\)

FHW became more sanguine in early July, and began to discount any imminent offensive in the western Mediterranean. However, a report from the Abwehr brought their attention back to that region: the intelligence referred to a meeting among Henry Stimson and Generals Wilson, Alexander, and Patton, during which they decided to take advantage of the situation in Italy and attack near Genoa. Michael Howard notes that this report was important in supporting the *Ferdinand* deception, and suggests that it might have come from *Gilbert* or *Armour*.\(^0\) ‘A’ Force papers show that it was, indeed, a *Gilbert* report.\(^1\) While OKW did tend to lean to the likelihood of a Genoese landing by late July, they were never absolutely convinced one way or another, and even thought that the Italian operation could be a deception.\(^2\) Even as late as the early morning of 15 August, when the invasion ships were on their way to France, the German Air Force was not able to judge whether they were bound for Italy or France.\(^3\)

High-level confusion was apparent not just at FHW and OKW, but at SKL as well — the organization which should have been most qualified to figure out the Allied capacity and specific plans for an amphibious operation. They did not do so successfully and, in what amounted to a post-mortem submitted to the RSHA in the aftermath of *Dragoon*, SKL

\(^8\) FHW to C-in-C South-West, “Short Appreciation of the Enemy in the West,” 1 June 1944, HW 5/762.
\(^1\) Paris to Berlin, 22 July 1944, HW 19/255.
\(^2\) “German Appreciation of Allied Intentions in the West,” 7 August 1944, CAB 81/124; *Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht, 1944-1945*, pp.510-2, 536.
\(^3\) “German General Staff’s Views on Allied Intentions (Up to 18 August 1944),” 18 August 1944, CAB 154/96, pp.2-3.
complained that the information they received was poor and “confusing in the highest degree.” SKL was aware of its own intelligence weakness even before the enemy landings and, on 8 June, argued that enemy operations in the western Mediterranean were hard to understand, as it was impossible to check “manifold agent reports.” The complaint about the masses of information from agents points to the key difference between the operational and strategic levels of German intelligence: in the former, the number of agents was relatively few and of a more local nature; but, at the strategic level, bodies like SKL took in information from all over Europe, without discrimination, and this hurt a deception like **Ferdinand**, even though it was implemented in a relatively direct manner. So, like other elements of the German command, on the day before **Dragoon**, SKL was still unable to say where the attack would come with any certainty.

SKL’s post-**Dragoon** report showed that they understood their intelligence problems. They argued in their submission to the RSHA that observations from the Strait of Gibraltar were the most important source of intelligence available, but that not enough weight had been given to the information gathered there — even though, as Hinsley notes, the observation posts in 1944 were less effective than they had been in 1941-2. Moreover, they suggested that SKL/3, the intelligence arm of the naval command, and the RSHA had to

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94 NID translation of “An Enquiry into the Value of the R.S.H.A. Information Supplied to Naval War Staff 3rd Division about Enemy Landing Intentions before the Landing in the South of France with Reference to its Suitability for use in Appreciations of the Situation by Naval War Staff Division,” 12 November 1945, ADM 223/478. Date of original SKL report is 22 October 1944.


“collaborate closely in the work of evaluation, so as the hasten if possible the ruthless elimination of those agents who prove of little value, while the sources of information hitherto considered sound should be subjected to continual scrutiny in respect of their quality.” Furthermore, SKL complained that most of the RSHA reports were vague and incorrect, seeming to be based upon whatever rumours were floating around, perhaps reflecting an enemy deception.  

It is an unusually lucid report from SKL, and it contains good practical suggestions on the quality-control of agent reports. However, such self-awareness would have been of much better use if it had been attained a lot earlier in the Second World War.

In part because the Germans did not create a more functional intelligence apparatus earlier in the war, *Nunton* and *Ferdinand* were both considered successful deceptions, and in each case the troops who did the actual fighting achieved their real goals with relative ease. There are clear distinctions between these deceptions and the role of double-cross therein: all phases of *Nunton*, from the original transmission of deceptive information to the decision by Kesselring to place his reserves north of Rome, took place at the operational level, and that relatively tight intelligence cycle proved a boon to *Primo*, whose information had a powerful effect on the German understanding of how the Allied spring offensive would take shape. *Ferdinand*, however, was dependent on both German operational and strategic intelligence. It seemed to reinforce what Kesselring already believed, and the double agents did impress upon FHW and OKW the false order of battle in southern Italy. But, for the reasons discussed above, ‘A’ Force did not succeed in convincing the Germans of the Ligurian operation.

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Luckily for the Allies, the German confusion was to their benefit, as they became frozen with indecisiveness and remained poorly prepared for *Dragoon*.

‘A’ Force was lucky because confusion is not usually the optimum outcome for a deception. Clarke always tried to implant a specific idea in the enemy mind, rather than just an overwhelming array of possible Allied intentions, because, if merely confused, the enemy might accidentally latch onto the true Allied plan, and react in a way detrimental to Allied interests. Since the Mediterranean was such a complex intelligence environment, ‘A’ Force and the double-cross system were not usually able to convince the Germans beyond mere confusion about their strategic intentions, but that was usually enough. The German reaction was typically to try to cover too many possible points of invasion, stretching their forces and ultimately becoming paralyzed with indecision. That is what happened before *Dragoon*, and also before Operation *Torch* in 1942. Efforts to distract German attention by posing threats to northern France and Norway caused German troops there to remain on alert, and efforts in the Mediterranean at that time meant that, even though the huge build-up of forces at Gibraltar was unmistakable, on the day of the invasion itself — 8 November 1942 — the Germans were not able to pinpoint what the Allies strategic intentions were.  

So, ‘A’ Force could be happy with *Ferdinand*, as there was ample evidence that their intelligence had considerable effect on the Germans, at least to the extent of keeping them undecided about the Allies’ specific offensive intentions. And *Nunton*, of course, was a complete victory, and copious evidence from the German side shows how much the deception pervaded their decision-making. Thus, the Mediterranean double agents of 1944,

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who stand in the shadow of their UK double-cross colleagues like Garbo and Brutus, had their own substantial achievements during that year, and demonstrated the value of ‘A’ Force’s continuous efforts to deceive the enemy.
Conclusion

1944 saw the climax of Allied deception operations and, while they continued to the end of the European war in 1945, deceptions were less vital now, and the means to implement them, such as the double-cross system, were wound down after August 1944. Although coming to an end, by late 1944 the Mediterranean double-cross system had several notable achievements. In the realm of operational deception, the Nunton plan, enacted to help break the Gustav Line south of Rome in May 1944, was perhaps the most substantial, but agents such as Cheese had made important contributions to the North African battles from 1941-43.

It is true that, at the strategic level, the result of double-cross deception within the Mediterranean theatre was often German confusion rather than the desired, and incorrect, misdeployment of German forces in such a manner as to facilitate the real Allied objectives. Even so, those deceptions aided many Allied operations, including Torch in 1942, Husky in 1943, and Dragoon in 1944, by at least keeping the Germans from sending major reinforcements to the targeted areas. Although those were somewhat ambiguous successes for double-cross deception, the Mediterranean double-cross system was extraordinarily successful with its order of battle plans, Cascade and Wantage. Indeed, order of battle deception had made what may have been its greatest contribution in 1943 when, combined with Operation Mincemeat, it caused the Germans to send waves of reinforcements to the Balkan peninsula, which was precisely where the Allies wanted them to go, as they proceeded to invade Sicily.

These deceptions show that ‘A’ Force was highly ambitious: they did not seek just to hide their real intentions, or to convince the enemy to remain inactive; instead, Clarke and his
team sought to lure the Germans into activity which would be detrimental to the Axis, and beneficial to the Allies. In this effort, ‘A’ Force and the Mediterranean double-cross system met with considerable success. However, was that just because the Germans were a soft target, with an inefficient, corrupt, and easy-to-mislead intelligence apparatus? Certainly, without the problems on the German side, the double-cross system and deception would not have been as successful. The Allies did, though, take the best advantage possible of the German weakness through their own good organization, and genius in cryptanalysis.

Moreover, what Allied deception achieved in the Mediterranean did not come easily, as the intelligence environment was so noisy and confusing that convincing the Germans of anything was a difficult task. That was why the combination of an incremental deception like *Cascade* and a direct, one-off plan like *Mincemeat* was necessary in 1943.

The Mediterranean double-cross system did rely on German credulity to succeed, but it also made its own success by taking advantage of the inefficiencies of the enemy. Furthermore, when compared to the deception efforts of other powers, the accomplishments of the Mediterranean system are thrown into even sharper relief. The Abwehr also used double agents, but their attempts at passing deceptive information never approached the level of organization shown in the Allied double-cross systems. Although the Germans had been on the leading edge of organized tactical and operational deception during the First World War, and the Abwehr developed a “specific organizational machinery for deception” in the 1930s,¹ that section - Abteilung III D - was not effective for the duration of the Second World War. Oskar Reile, an officer of Abt. III, told his British interrogators in 1945 that III D was

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only important in the 1930s and the early part of the war, after which it fell into decay.

According to Reile, during the war the main purpose of Abwehr deception was to aid their own counter-intelligence efforts: “only very rarely was information passed to foreign intelligence services with the object of giving a false picture of German military developments and plans.”² Such a conclusion was also reached by Hugh Trevor-Roper in 1945. Based on his extensive knowledge of the Abwehr and German intelligence, he noted that the German method of deception in many phases of the war tended to be amateurish, involving the uncoordinated release of information to sustain turned agents, rather than as a method of coordinated, centralized deception.³ Moreover, deception requires, as Michael Howard notes, an ability to get inside the head of the opponent, and truly understand their situation and intentions in order to attune a deception to the enemy’s pre-existing fears.⁴ As has been made clear in this dissertation, German intelligence, particularly when it came to Allied strategic planning, was never able to do that effectively and, thus, could not stage an effective deception.

The German double agents themselves, like German deception, were not usually run systematically. Indeed, as Emily Jane Wilson argues, one of the main reasons the Germans were taken in by the double-cross system in Britain was because they never imagined that the British were running a system of double agents, united into a powerful whole. If the Germans could not imagine such a scheme, then it is no surprise that, with rare exceptions like the

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³ Trevor-Roper, “German Intelligence Services,” CAB 154/105, pp.10-11.
⁴ Howard, Strategic Deception, p.xi.
*Engländspiel* in the Netherlands - which was never used for military deception - they never developed a more advanced double agent network.⁵

The one major German deception which is often cited was the scheme implemented prior to Operation *Barbarossa*, the June 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union. The plan sought to convince both the Soviets and the British of the following: the Germans intended to invade Britain in 1941, and the massive build-up of forces in the east - truly meant for the invasion of the Soviet Union - was portrayed as being designed to deceive the British, lulling them into a false sense of security. It did have some effect as, until fairly late in the day, the British were expecting an attack, and that caused them to retain forces in their home island which would have been better used overseas.⁶

However, the Soviet leadership received torrents of intelligence reports, from highly-placed and reliable sources, which forecast a German invasion of the Soviet Union. Soviet intelligence did an excellent job of collecting and providing to Stalin precise and detailed information on the threat facing his state.⁷ In addition, there was in the months leading up to 22 June incontrovertible evidence of large German troops concentrations and persistent German violations of Soviet airspace with military reconnaissance flights.⁸ It was clear that the Soviet Union faced a severe threat from the German military buildup on their western frontier. Thus, from the beginning of 1941 Stalin frantically tried to get the Red Army into some kind of fighting shape, while also making strong diplomatic moves to appease the

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⁵ Wilson, “The War in the Dark,” pp.176-7. See also chapter two p.128.
⁶ Ferris, “‘FORTITUDE’ in Context,” pp.130-1.
⁸ John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad: Stalin’s War with Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975), pp.65, 73, 82.
Germans and reach a new settlement. Indeed, as Gabriel Gorodetsky demonstrates, Stalin accepted the news from his intelligence operatives which showed huge troop concentrations. What Stalin did not accept, and this was nearly the undoing of the Soviet Union itself, was Hitler’s unswerving determination to invade. The Soviet leader, desperate to find a diplomatic solution, grasped at ambiguities in his intelligence, which pointed to possibilities of a negotiated settlement with Hitler. The German plan did not, therefore, completely fool the Soviets, but some leaked disinformation did have an effect: in June 1941, just before the invasion, reports reached Stalin stating that the Germans would present an ultimatum before any offensive action. Although other, highly-placed Soviets spies contradicted that point, Stalin preferred to believe it, as it fit with his opinion that a diplomatic settlement was within reach.\(^9\) Stalin was not alone in believing the diplomatic option was open, at least up to a certain date: the British Joint Intelligence Committee did not see war in the east as imminent until early June, when they concluded that war was more likely than a peaceful resolution between Germany and the Soviet Union.\(^{10}\)

Indeed, Stalin was, by the last days before the invasion, virtually the only person who refused to accept its imminence. As David Murphy argues, in normal circumstances the sheer number and quality of intelligence reports reaching Stalin would have overtaken any German attempt at deception through the ultimatum idea, even with Stalin’s underlings making efforts to give their “Boss” only the intelligence he wanted to see. In the Soviet world, truth was Comrade Stalin’s truth, even as others in the Soviet political and military leadership became


\(^{10}\) Hinsley, *British Intelligence I*, pp.475-8
desperate to do something in early June, which Stalin refused for fear of provoking the Germans and ruining his chance at a negotiated settlement.\textsuperscript{11} Ultimately, Stalin’s unwillingness to accept an objective reality caught up with him, a worldview which was best expressed in February 1941. At that time, Stalin argued to Georgi Dimitrov of the Comintern that Fillip Golikov, the head of Soviet military intelligence, was too trusting and naive: “an intelligence agent ought to be like the devil: believing no one, not even himself.”\textsuperscript{12} When nobody is deemed trustworthy, the worst fraudster may appear credible to those devoid of any objective criteria for measured judgement.

So, the German plan, which ultimately did not cause Stalin to believe he was not the main target, did not fool anyone in the Soviet Union but Stalin, and it seems that he would have believed what he wanted to believe, no matter what the Germans fed him. Furthermore, the German operation was more a cover plan than a deception. As Thaddeus Holt notes, the distinction is that cover merely seeks to conceal the truth, while deception seeks to make the enemy act in a manner detrimental to their own interests.\textsuperscript{13} The very wording of the original order from 15 February 1941 is telling, as it stated the plan was meant to “\textit{conceal the preparations of Operation BARBAROSSA}.”\textsuperscript{14} Seeking to conceal was not the same as what the Allies attempted in their most ambitious deceptions, in which they sought to make the Germans send their forces to all the wrong locations.\textsuperscript{15} Indeed, whereas the Allies hoped to

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cause the Germans to reinforce the wrong areas, and denude the vital attack zones of troops, the *Barbarossa* plan was not specifically designed to do so. Thus, even though Stalin did not believe there would be a surprise attack, he certainly did not sit idly and wait for the expected German ultimatum: in May and June 1941 the Red Army called up 800 000 reservists, and began moving a substantial number of divisions into the western regions of the country, where a command infrastructure was being built. The Soviets were strengthening and fortifying their frontier against the Germans. German deception did not, then, cause the Soviets to dispose their forces incorrectly. Still, as Geoffrey Roberts argues, Stalin had been lulled into expecting further German diplomatic action, and thus was genuinely surprised and shocked when the assault on 22 June 1941 arrived as a massive, strategic offensive designed to destroy the Soviet Union in one fell swoop.16 Indeed, in preparation for a conflict with Germany, Soviet planners and Stalin beginning in October 1940 intended to deploy much of the Red Army south of the River San: they developed the belief that the Germans would strike south into Ukraine, with the intention of capturing vital economic resources for a war of attrition. Thus, the Soviets misdeployed part of the Red Army, but through a conclusion they had reached themselves about Hitler’s potential war plans, and not because the Germans duped them.17

If there was ever a soft target for deception, it was Stalin in 1941. Even with all their problems, the Germans in the Mediterranean posed a more formidable challenge for double-cross and deception, and the success of ‘A’ Force and the double agents was thus a

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considerable achievement. That success, though, could only last as long as the war. In the flush of Victory in Europe, the members of the 30 Committee assembled on 15 May 1945, at the Cairo headquarters of ISLD’s counter-intelligence section, for one final meeting. The agenda was minimal, as agents had been shut down progressively since August 1944, and few were still operational. Even those agents’ cases were virtually finished, as their German controllers could no longer be found on the assigned radio frequencies. The committee would continue to monitor those frequencies lest someone come on the air again, but it understood that the few remaining double agents had reached the end of their careers. The work of the double-cross system ended on that day with one final sentence in the committee minutes: “as from today the Thirty Committee ceases to exist and no further minutes will be issued.”

The people who ran the double-cross system dispersed. ‘A’ Force personnel met one last time in London on 18 June 1945, and then disbanded. David Mure, the ‘A’ Force officer in Beirut, later opened a carpet business in London and wrote two tendentious books about his wartime experiences. R.J. Maunsell, the first head of SIME and integral member of the double-cross system, had left to become head of security at SHAEF in 1944, and later worked for Unilever. Nicholas Elliott, the MI6 man in Istanbul, remained in the service and later interrogated the traitorous Kim Philby in Beirut in 1963. David Scherr, who ran the Gibraltar double-cross agents, remained with MI5 and returned to the Rock from 1950 to

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18 Minutes of 30 Committee Meeting, 15 May 1945, WO 169/24887.
20 Ibid., p.789. The books are Practise to Deceive (1977) and Master of Deception (1980).
21 Dovey, “Maunsell and Mure,” p.74, note 1.
1955 to serve as Defence Security Officer. James Angleton, the American officer in Rome who was initiated into double-cross by MI6, later became infamous as the alcoholic and paranoid head of counter-intelligence at the Central Intelligence Agency. He was convinced that the US was the victim of a massive Soviet deception plot, which led him to view developments such as the Sino-Soviet split as merely another instance of the Communists’ deceitful grand design. Angleton, who was forced out of the Agency in 1974 during the controversy over domestic spying, was, perhaps, a man who learned the lessons of wartime deception too well — or not well enough.

Whether still in the secret service or as private citizens, all of the people privy to the Mediterranean double-cross system maintained the secret, in keeping with the official policy which drew a curtain around virtually all secret intelligence operations undertaken during the war. The achievements of double-cross remained entirely unknown until the 1970s but, as this dissertation has tried to show, they can now being appreciated, as the officials archives are opened up for scholarly research.

Dudley Clarke, though, was not content with blanket secrecy. In the summer of 1945 he proposed that some British deception efforts be made public knowledge through an official history book and documentary-style film. He was already working on the foundation of the written history in his own narrative account of ‘A’ Force’s history, which, however, would remain classified until the 1990s. Clarke’s rationale was that the British public deserved to know about some of the intelligence achievements of their compatriots, as they tended to perceive their own secret services as less effective than the German and Russian

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equivalents. Moreover, Clarke felt that the secrets would leak out anyway, and it was best for
the government to control how the information was disclosed.\(^{25}\) His proposals were still very
narrow in their scope, though, as he never intended to disclose the Ultra secret or the extent
of the double-cross system. Instead, his proposed public history would focus on one or two
deception plans, with reference to individual double agents.\(^{26}\)

Clarke submitted his proposal to the Joint Intelligence Committee on 23 July 1945.
The idea was digested until mid-August, when it was rejected by the committee, who felt that
it undermined the very concept of “top secret” classifications.\(^{27}\) Clarke’s proposal had no
chance of being accepted in 1945, but the specific reasons for its restriction given by some of
its opponents are interesting. Guy Liddell, strongly against any public disclosure, argued that
it was better if any present or future enemy believed that the British were incompetent in
intelligence, thereby lulling them into a false sense of security.\(^{28}\)

Furthermore, it was clear that Liddell’s was a majority opinion, and that making the
British public feel good about their intelligence men was not worth undermining ongoing
operations. Indeed, it is noteworthy that, judging from some fragmentary evidence, it even
appears that double agent operations continued in the Middle East after the war: SIME ran a
number of agents against the Eastern Bloc intelligence services between 1948 and 1950, with
codenames like \textit{Chausible}, \textit{Aramis}, \textit{Hornet}, and \textit{Mantis}.\(^{29}\)

\(^{25}\) Clarke (‘A’ Force) to Bevan (LCS), 16 September 1944, WO 169/24875.
\(^{26}\) Dudley Clarke, “Historical Records,” 1 July 1945, WO 169/24875.
\(^{27}\) Minutes of the 55th Meeting of the Joint Intelligence Committee, 14 August 1945, WO 169/24875.
\(^{28}\) Liddell diaries, 8 August 1945, KV 4/466, pp.124-5.
\(^{29}\) Details are found in SIME intelligence summaries, KV 4/239.
Dudley Clarke, being a professional soldier and a loyal one, put his idea aside, but never completely gave up on it. In the 1950s he considered writing a book called *The Secret War*. He drew up an outline, but was never able to move forward, again for reasons of official secrecy. He did publish a book called *Seven Assignments*, about his war experiences prior to his arrival in Cairo in December 1940, which alluded to the fact that there was an eighth assignment that he could not write about. His attempt to publish another book, this one about his pre-war experiences as a soldier serving in the Middle East, was not enough to persuade any publisher to take on the project.\(^{30}\)

The existence of the double-cross system, at least in its UK incarnation, was revealed though, thanks to John Masterman, the chair of the Twenty Committee. Masterman had written a report at the end of the war on the history of double-cross “at home,” and had illegally kept a copy in his own possession. In December 1954 he contacted his old colleague Dick White, now Director-General of MI5, and said that he wanted to publish it, although purged of references to Ultra. White refused, as there had already been leakages, such as revelations about Operation *Mincemeat*, and he was not willing to set any further precedent for the breach of official secrecy.\(^{31}\)

Masterman tried again to get official permission in the late 1960s, in the aftermath of the damaging revelations about the “Cambridge Five’s” penetration of the British secret services and government, and Kim Philby’s embarrassing memoir *My Silent War*. Masterman felt that the British intelligence and security services, which were in very bad standing with


\(^{31}\) Moran, *Classified*, p.265; Campbell, “A Retrospective on John Masterman’s The Double-Cross System.”
British public opinion, needed their image burnished, by showing that they had many tremendous successes, all of which had remained secret.\textsuperscript{32} As part of his campaign Masterman also contacted Dudley Clarke, and used the argument that it was in both the public interest and that of the secret services to publish his book. Interestingly, Masterman’s reasons are similar to those Clarke gave in 1945 as to why an official history was necessary.\textsuperscript{33}

When he was refused permission again, Masterman went ahead and published his book anyway through Yale University Press in the United States in 1972. Knowing that a book was in the works, the British government in September 1971 accepted that they could not stop Masterman. That decision came in the midst of a broader debate about the possibility of an official history of British intelligence in World War II, a prospect that then met with approval.\textsuperscript{34} Even with the relaxation of official secrecy at the same time as Masterman’s publication appeared, he was nonetheless seen as a charlatan and a cheat by Clarke’s old colleagues, particularly Nöel Wild, David Mure, and Nicholas Elliott. They felt that Clarke had played by the rules, had never received the recognition he deserved, and had now been completely overshadowed by an academic and amateur intelligence officer, who late in life suddenly became a publicity seeker.\textsuperscript{35} Clarke died not long after, in May 1974, the same year that Ultra would be revealed by F.W. Winterbotham, another old intelligence hand, in his book \textit{The Ultra Secret}.

Whatever Masterman’s mixed motivations might have been, his book was just the first in a flood of material that would emerge on double-cross, Ultra, and all manner of secret\textsuperscript{32} \textsuperscript{33} \textsuperscript{34} \textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p.268.

\textsuperscript{33} Masterman to Clarke, 27 April 1968, Clarke Papers, 99/1/1.

\textsuperscript{34} Moran, \textit{Classified}, pp.269-71.

\textsuperscript{35} Campbell, “A Retrospective on John Masterman’s \textit{The Double-Cross System},” pp.334-5.
intelligence in World War II. The secret war is now firmly part of our understanding of the conduct and outcome of the war. Yet, since official secrecy is still such a stubborn beast, there was much that could not be understood properly until the large amount of material began to be released to the British archives under the auspices of the British Open Government Initiative (OGI) in the 1990s.

Thanks to efforts like the OGI, new studies into the intelligence world, such as this one on the Mediterranean double-cross system, are now possible. What emerges from the many documents now available for scholarly scrutiny is a Mediterranean double-cross that was a highly complex covert operation, and one unique to the context of the Second World War: the confluence of factors that allowed it to exist and thrive — many viable agents, a top-quality organization, high-value signals decrypts, and a weak opponent in the German Abwehr — was an unlikely combination, and one that it is hard to imagine recurring.

Furthermore, the Mediterranean system was not the same as its cousin in the UK, despite exchanges between the two. The agents around the Middle Sea were created, first and foremost, to aid military operations with strategic and operational deception plans. That was the purpose from the start, and remained so until the end. Double agents in Britain were initially used for security and counter-intelligence operations, and were later co-opted for deception work. Security and counter-intelligence operations did emerge in the Mediterranean system, but not without debate and ongoing struggles between their backers and the proponents of the primacy of deception. The ‘A’ Force-dominated network, therefore, was never able to integrate the multiple purposes of the double-cross system seamlessly. The inability, or unwillingness, to create a system that more closely resembled the UK network
was rooted in the operational environment of the Desert War and the broader Mediterranean theatre. It was an active zone of operation and, at many points, was one where British success did not seem imminent or inevitable. The military operational application of double-cross was thus, quite logically, the focal point of the system.

Nevertheless, as recounted in chapters three and five, security and counter-intelligence operations could have real success, even if they were usually less systematic than deception work. By early 1945 SIME felt that double-cross had made a serious contributions to the security of the Middle East, and mentioned Doleful and Blackguard as particularly valuable agents in that regard.\(^{36}\) Double agents also contributed to security and counter-intelligence in Italy, where the front line was porous and security sometimes in a dismal state. Double-cross was never a primary weapon in the security and counter-intelligence arsenal, but it was certainly a useful supplement. The exception was Gibraltar, where double-cross was central to the protection of the Rock.

The role of double-cross in deception, the raison d'être of the system, is a complicated one. As noted in chapter four, the system was not completely successful in its contribution to the Barclay deception before the invasion of Sicily. There were two contributing factors to that lack of outright success: one was that the incremental method of putting over deceptive information was probably too nuanced and subtle for the obtuse German intelligence system to pick up on, especially when they also utilized intelligence from all sorts of uncontrolled sources that fed them information on the Mediterranean theatre; the second reason was that, unlike the famous D-Day deception in 1944, Clarke did not have all of his agents running at

\(^{36}\) Liddell diaries, 29 September 1944, KV 4/195, p.131.
full capacity, and those that were, such as Gilbert, he was eager to sustain for future use. What that did mean, though, was that the double agents were not employed to their full extent for the strategic climax of the Mediterranean campaign, which came between July and September 1943. In that sense, the Mediterranean double-cross system was ultimately not used fully to support the strategic offensives in that theatre. This was partially by choice, but largely due to unavoidable circumstances.

Still, double-cross deception had a powerful influence on the German perception of the Allied order of battle, and that was of inestimable value in tying up German resources and keeping them guessing as to where the next Allied blow would fall. Deception also had some noteworthy success at the operational level, such as during the May 1944 offensive in Italy. Strategic and operational deception, however, were not the panacea postwar reports could sometimes portray them to be. The London Controlling Section argued that deception, as practiced in the war, was a new weapon. There certainly were incredible successes, such as the deception in support of Operation Overlord. Yet, there were many more examples where deception had made only marginal contributions. Understanding that mix of success and failure, however, does not diminish the broad contribution of the double-cross system to security, counter-intelligence, and deception.

Overall, the Mediterranean double-cross system was an expansive operation, both in terms of its ambition and its geographical scope, which covered over 3000 miles from Gibraltar to Tehran. The effort expended to keep the agents going, which was actually quite minimal in terms of manpower, produced results greater than the effort invested in to them.

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37 “Historical Record of Deception in the War Against Germany & Italy,” CAB 154/100, p.1.
The Mediterranean double-crossers never controlled the entire German intelligence network, as the double-crossers did in the UK, but the officers who ran system in that theatre created an intelligence operation that was an admirable feat of organization, and which warped the German understanding of Allied capabilities and intentions from 1941 to 1945. That inability to understand their opponent’s power and purpose was endemic in the otherwise formidable German military machine, and one that would be a major factor in its defeat. Conversely, Allied success, not just in the double-cross system but in their entire war effort, was predicated upon their ability to understand German capabilities, intentions, and concerns. The double-cross system was, thus, but one part of a nearly total intelligence victory, achieved by the Allies over the Axis powers.
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