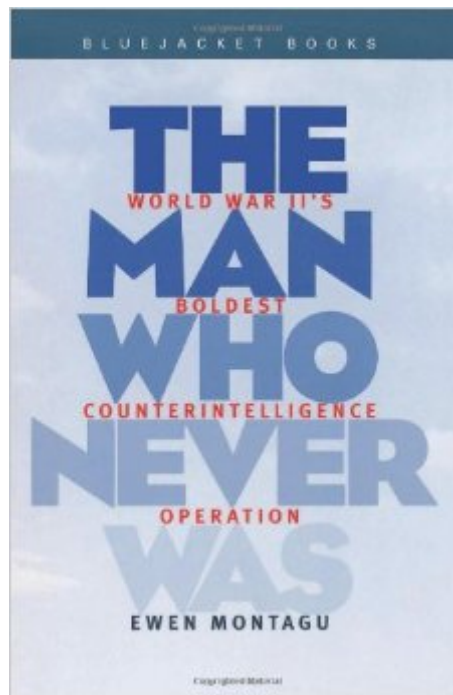


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Man Who Never Was: World War II's Boldest Counterintelligence Operation (Bluejacket Books)



Synopsis

As plans got under way for the Allied invasion of Sicily in June 1943, British counter-intelligence agent Ewen Montagu masterminded a scheme to mislead the Germans into thinking the next landing would occur in Greece. The innovative plot was so successful that the Germans moved some of their forces away from Sicily, and two weeks into the real invasion still expected an attack in Greece. This extraordinary operation called for a dead body, dressed as a Royal Marine officer and carrying false information about a pending Allied invasion of Greece, to wash up on a Spanish shore near the town of a known Nazi agent. Agent Montagu tells the story as only an insider could, offering fascinating details of the difficulties involved--especially in creating a persona for a man who never was--and of his profession as a spy and the risks involved in mounting such a complex operation. Failure could have had devastating results. Success, however, brought a decided change in the course of the war.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Modern novelists would never have thought of this simple yet highly complicated plan to deceive the Germans during World War II. This book is written by Ewen Montagu who actually undertook the whole operation. Due to the fact of its high secrecy it could not first be revealed until the Mid-1950's when the first edition came out. Even then the full story could not be told for one of the other great secrets of WWII (the fact that the British had cracked the German code 'Engima') meant that the progress of the deception was monitored throughout its progress. The deception was simple - dump

a body with highly secret documents in a place where the Germans will be party to the find. Make it so convincing that they will take the bait. This was to mislead the Germans over the true place where the allies wanted to land (Sicily) so getting them to fortify another part of South Eastern Europe instead - the Dodecanese and Sardinia. It was a plan to save lives - as many allied lives as possible by reducing German resistance. And it worked - beautifully. This book by Montagu gives us the absolute inside story with all the twists and turns to how the idea was conceived and how it was implemented. And for such a simple idea it was of course relatively complicated to implement. How to find an appropriately dead body to dump - where to dump it - how to make sure the Germans would find it without being suspicious of the material and so on. All very fascinating stuff and makes for a good, quick and easy read - it is very well-written and if nothing else is such an amazing story it is hard to put down.

The book tells the story how British Intelligence decided to mislead the Nazis in 1943 about where the next landing in the Mediterranean would occur. The original story was that they waited until a young man died of pneumonia, so he would have fluid in the lungs as cause of death. In fact, he was an unclaimed homeless man who died from eating rat poison. A submarine slipped his body into the sea off Spain, making it look like he was a Royal Marine officer and courier, and a victim of an offshore airplane crash. This was done near a town with a known active Nazi agent. The brief case he was carrying falsely showed that the Allies would invade Greece, not Sicily. The Nazi agent was allowed to see his papers which showed a coming landing in Greece. The movie has King George himself meet with the family to convince them to give over the body, missing burial with his family. In reality, the man eventually was buried with military honors in Spain. Since the original book was published, a new edition has appeared (Oxford University Press, 1996). We have learned that the first edition would never have been written had not a novel appeared in 1950 with substantially the same plot. The new (1996) edition reveals approval by the Twenty Committee in charge of these projects (Twenty = XX = double cross). The new introduction also reveals the British monitored the progress of the deception using Ultra. In the original edition, the one who conceived the operation was "George." Now it can be revealed that it was created by a lowly Flight-Lieutenant, Charles Cholmondeley, and carried out by the author, who later became chief judicial officer of the Royal Navy. The deception was a success. The Nazis did move some forces away from Sicily.

This is a fantastic tale whereby the body of a young man was used to deceive the German high command during WW2 into believing a forthcoming Allied offensive would be centred in one

European country and not the real target. Given the somewhat inappropriate codename of 'Operation Mincemeat, the body of a young man was dressed in the uniform of a major in the Royal Marines and furnished with a complete set of false papers. The minute detail which went into those papers included two used cinema ticket stubs plus a photograph and letters from a fictional girlfriend. Handcuffed to his wrist was a briefcase inside which were copies of a supposed invasion plan. His body was then set adrift so that it would be washed up on the coast of Spain in the certain knowledge that all those papers would be handed over to the German authorities in that country. Perhaps one might be forgiven for thinking that obtaining a suitable dead body during WW2 would have been relatively easy but not so. The human body could not be kept in storage for too long before assuming a certain state of unnatural decomposition which would have alerted German doctors that all was not as it seemed. It was also imperative that the body was washed ashore in the right place. After all, it could hardly be parachuted into Berlin!!! Eventually, a man of the right size, condition and age to suit the false persona of Major Martin Royal Marines was found dead in the streets of London and his body used to completely deceive the Germans. The full account of this amazing tale is retold by the person who was placed in charge of the deception. When first published, this book became a best seller. It was intended for the identity of the deceased to have remained a secret forever.

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