



Operation Fortitude

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Operation Fortitude was the ingenious web of deception spun by the Allies to mislead the Nazis as to how and where the D-Day landings were to be mounted.

'One of the most creative intelligence operations of all time' – Kim Philby

The story of how this web was woven is one of intrigue, personal drama, ground-breaking techniques, internal resistance, and good fortune. It is a tale of double agents, black radio broadcasts, phantom armies, 'Ultra' decrypts, and dummy parachute drops. These diverse tactics were intended to come together to create a single narrative so compelling that it would convince Adolf Hitler of its authenticity.

Operation Fortitude was intended to create the false impression that the Normandy landings were merely a feint to disguise a massive forthcoming invasion by this American force in the Pas de Calais. In other words, the success of D-Day – the beginning of the end of the Second World War – was made possible by the efforts of men and women who were not present on the Normandy beaches.

Men such as Juan Pujol, a Spanish double-agent (code-name GARBO) who sent hundreds of wireless messages from London to Madrid in the build-up to D-Day relaying supposed intelligence from his fictitious spy network. This allowed the enemy to conclude that the number of Allied divisions preparing to invade was twice the actual number.

Men such as R.V Jones, the head of British Scientific Intelligence, who masterminded the dropping of tinfoil confetti from the bomb-bay doors of Lancaster bombers, creating a false impression that a flotilla of Allied ships was heading in the opposite direction to the genuine invasion fleet.

Using first hand sources from a wide range of archives, government documents, letters and memos Operation Fortitude builds a picture of what wartime Britain was like, as well as the immense pressure these men and women were working under and insure D-Day succeeded.

Operation Fortitude Details

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From Reader Review Operation Fortitude for online ebook

Tim Inglisi says

This book adds some pieces to the jigsaw of events that make up the Second World War. It covers the double cross system in detail, and explains its origins. The character sketches are an enjoyable aspect of this account of Op Fortitude. However, it has a few notable weaknesses. It is big on strategy, but provides little of substance regarding tactical outcomes. I guess there are some operational details that are considered too secret to disclose even now..

Jon says

Really enjoyed this and found it quite fascinating and almost unbelievable too. Well worth reading.

Ann says

This book describes the various deceptions performed by the Allies during the buildup to D-day. The double-cross system of having captured German spies and double agents send concocted messages back to Germany is explained in some detail. There are references to various other deceptions, such as the creation of fake boats, harbors and airfields, or the impersonation of General Montgomery by an actor.

So the book is a good general introduction to this topic, but it wasn't particularly memorable or original. I felt it read too much like the author was conscientiously going through a checklist of possible deceptions, rather than weaving it all together in one coherent narrative.

Mark says

The history of WW2 is littered with so many amazing stories it is hard to know which one to read next. Luckily this choice was made for me by my mother-in-law as a birthday present.

While I had heard and read a little about Operation Fortitude and the deception efforts while reading other books I had never gone into any depth.

This book takes you through the early stages of the start of the deception strategies through the first use of them in different theatres during the war and finishing with the running of the full operation Fortitude deceptions that backed up the D-Day landings.

The main item I enjoyed in this book was to get to know the people behind the scenes of the deception strategies and the difficulties and risks that they took to achieve the goals.

While we will never exactly know whether the deceptions actually made real difference to the outcome of D-Day, I personally think that it did force Hitler's and Rommel's hands in keeping a number of battalions away

from the main battlefields and saved many, many lives during the first days and weeks of the landings.

Recommended if you have read the main books on WW2 and the main campaign elements and want to broaden your understanding of WW2 and other elements that contributed to the overall allied victory.

Chris says

I have a couple of complaints about this book - which may make the 4 stars seem odd - firstly, the title "Operation Fortitude" I found that less than half the book is actually about "Fortitude" and secondly, when it does move on to "Fortitude" it isn't about the entire deception, it is only about the "Double Cross" aspect of it, this would have probably been better off being extended into a history of either "Double Cross" or should have been "Operation Fortitude: How Double Cross fooled the Germans" or something similar.

However, the book is very good. It's very engaging, and reads very well, it's not a 'heavy' history book and the writing style is very easy to get into. History books can be very hit or miss depending on how well (or badly) they have been written, but this is written extremely well.

I will admit that I am disappointed that the book wasn't about the whole of "Operation Fortitude" as I was hoping to read about the inflatable tanks and the physical deception of how we made fake armies and armoured divisions in the south of England to fool German reconnaissance into thinking we were attacking other areas of France too. There were only a few pages on this and if I am honest, that was what I wanted to read about most and was disappointed with the lack of words and pages devoted to this.

I was also disappointed that the first almost 200 pages were about how the "Double Cross" agents were 'collected' and how they turned German agents into British agents. Whilst I found it interesting, I did find it a bit tedious after a while and thought that this could maybe have taken only 3 or 4 chapters, and not 200 pages. There was too much history on how "Double Cross" started too, again multiple chapters that should possibly have only had a couple at the most so the majority of the book could have been focused on "Fortitude" and included more about the physical deception that was played out.

It seems like I have more complaints about the book than I have positives, which I possibly do, but that doesn't change the fact that I really did enjoy the book despite the negatives, and I found it a very interesting read and am thankful that my friend picked this out to read out of the dozens of books that I have untouched on my bookcase. What I think I found most interesting in the book though, was that the Germans had no clue what-so-ever that we were deceiving them and that the German Intelligence Service was, unusually for them, completely inept and some heads and handlers didn't care if their agents were under British control. And that even after the end of the war, they had no idea that we had made up the reports of further invasions coming soon after D-Day in the Pas de Calais, and that they truly believed that there were dozens of regiments and divisions on stand by to attack them.

I will be looking out for more Joshua Levine, only next time, I hope that the title will be more accurate and that what is written in the book, focuses more on that, than on events that lead up to why I buy the book...

Graeme Shimmin says

A very readable and engaging retelling of the story of the British run espionage network known as the Double-Cross system.

Much if not all of the story has been told before as it emerged in the 1970s and 80's (and in parts earlier). Many operations are mentioned only briefly, such as Operation Mincemeat, subject of several books, but given only a couple of pages here. This then is a 'popular history' concentrating on telling the story in an engaging and entertaining manner.

The heart of the book concerns Operation Fortitude South, which aimed to convince the German High Command that the Anglo-American-Canadian invasion of Europe would be in the Pas de Calais - largely through allowing German intelligence to 'discover' a much inflated order-of-battle for the Allied forces and persuading them that much of that force was situated across the channel from Calais and ready to strike the German forces engaged in Normandy in the rear. The purpose of this was to fix powerful German forces in the Pas-de-Calais, away from the real invasion.

The agent who comes out of the book as having the most success is Spaniard, Juan Pujo Garcia, more commonly known as 'Garbo', who was thought by the Germans to be their best spy in Britain and to have a huge network of informers, but was in reality a double-agent working under British control (see <http://graemeshimmin.com/double-cross...>) for an overview of that case.

As a 'popular history' *Operation Fortitude*'s human interest stories and readability are in contrast to more in-depth, but drier, history books such as *The Defence of the Realm The Authorized History of MI5*.

The author retains a certain amount of scepticism about the Double-Cross system, pointing out failures, such as Operation Fortitude North (which created a fictitious threat to Norway that went almost unnoticed by Germany) and the human costs for the many agents 'burnt' or even killed, but concludes that the core Fortitude South operation was a success and in fact remained undetected by the Germans even after the war's conclusion.

In summary: a very readable overview of the Double-Cross system in general and Operation Fortitude in particular, with enough information for the casual reader and pointers for those seeking more in depth information.

Raving Redcoat says

A fascinating look at the mysterious world of double agents, and how these strange characters did their bit to win the Invasion of Normandy.

Dr Arthur N Cooper says

Interesting

This is an interesting book. I already knew the broad outline of the story but not the individual characters. Too many names that are not worth remembering made it somewhat dull

Larry Loftis says

I agree with Ann (prior review) that the book is a general overview book and not "particularly memorable." There are no end notes and I didn't see any seminal research. It seems to be short summaries of other books.

Geevee says

Joshua Levine's book is a very enjoyable read and he has done well to tell the story of Operation Fortitude simply but with enough detail for most readers. I say this as I once tried to read Roger Hesketh's *Fortitude*, which was written in 1947, but I found it too heavy and stilted as it is in essence an official after action report to Intelligence commanders.

There has clearly been much research done by Mr Levine as can be seen by the acknowledgements, sources and bibliography. I found the stories of the principle agents and their recruitment alongside the development of both the Double Cross organisation and the evolution of various deception plans including of course the *Fortitude* operation itself intriguing (no pun intended).

I shall now plan to read volume 5 of the official history on the UK Intelligence Services' roles in WWII by Sir Michael Howard, which the author recommends.

Ian says

A very clear and detailed account of some fascinating, rarely told events that may or may not have helped steer the course of WW2

Pete says

This is a very interesting account of British deception plans leading up to the D-Day invasion. A varied and intriguing cast of characters. Readers might also be interested in accounts of Operation Mincemeat which was another bit of deception used earlier in the war to confuse the Germans.
