

SECRETS OF
MODERN
SPYING

by
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CHAPTER I

THE RULES OF THE GAME

According to Nuttall's Standard Dictionary a spy is a person sent into an enemy's camp to watch and report what is going on. To accomplish such missions he must set out in a disguise that conceals his identity and nationality.

The word 'spy' has an unpleasant sound in many ears; to his profession is attached a stigma that often causes him to be despised by the masters he serves. For instance, Napoleon steadfastly refused to honour his famous spy, Schulmeister, with any order or distinction, although he paid him a princely salary.

This is a wrong attitude of mind; the spy who goes alone into the enemy's camp, where the mispronunciation of a word or ignorance of some trivial custom may betray him, deserves as well of his country as the soldier who serves it in the field. But the prejudice exists, and in official circles the spy is generally designated by some more euphemistic term, such as an 'Intelligence Agent,' and when he is sent abroad, he undertakes a 'secret mission.'

He is, therefore, part and parcel of a select corps known as the 'Intelligence Service' (French: Deuxième Bureau de l'Etat-Major; German: Nachrichtendienst), which exists for the purpose of gaining information likely to be serviceable in time of war.

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All spying is Intelligence, but not all Intelligence is spying. If the French or German Admiralty buys a copy of "Jane's Fighting Ships," the annual publication that gives much information concerning the fleets of every country, it procures 'Intelligence.' Some time before the war certain newspapers professed alarm concerning the activities of German spies supposed to be travelling up and down the Eastern Counties, noting the lie of the roads, the sites of bridges, the names and addresses of provision merchants, horse-dealers, etc., in short procuring information that might be of service to a German army invading Britain. A German officer of high rank on a visit to this country was asked by a journalist to give his views on the matter.

"If we need that sort of information," he replied, "we don't send spies to get it. We can buy a Kelly's directory and a motoring map." Much information, therefore, which the public imagines to be procured by spies, is available to anyone purchasing the handbooks that contain it. During the siege of Paris in the Franco-German war of 1870, an irate crowd hailed to a police station an unfortunate military officer accused of selling to the Prussians the plans of the city's fortifications. In their unreasoning fury, begotten of panic, one and all ignored the fact that these plans were published in a booklet on sale at every bookseller's shop in Paris.

To the embassies of most countries are appointed military and naval attachés, who may be described as legitimate spies, for the attaché's duty is to acquire all possible information about the fighting forces of the country to which he is accredited. Much of this is gleaned from available publications; also, every autumn, the military attaché attends the army manoeuvres of the country in question. Along with

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other attachés he is entertained by an officer of the home forces, whose duty it is to prevent his charges seeing more than they are allowed to see. If a military attaché succeeds in obtaining hidden information, he scores a point; if he is effectively headed off, the honours remain with his host. This is a game perfectly understood by both sides.

Sometimes the attaché exceeds his official instructions. Colonel Bassaroff, the Russian military attaché at Berlin before the war, was discovered to be involved in a case of espionage where several German warrant officers were bribed to procure the plans of frontier fortresses. In such cases the injured party makes representations which lead to the prompt recall of the offender; from his chiefs he receives a public rebuke for excess of zeal and a private hint that promotion awaits him as soon as the trouble has blown over.

In times of peace consuls are under instruction to gather information about the commercial and economic affairs of the country in which they work. Most of it they procure from openly published handbooks of statistics, but on occasion a consul acquires valuable titbits of news that are not supposed to become public property. If it subsequently leaks out that he has used undue influence to gain them, he is likewise recalled, and receives with his official reproof the hint that his faithful services will be duly rewarded.

Official personages may, therefore, spy in time of peace to their hearts' content. They are indeed expected to do so, and the only penalty for detection is removal to another (and usually more lucrative) post.

In war there is also much Intelligence work that is not spying. The officer conducting a reconnaissance or occupying a listening post acquires Intelligence of

the enemy's movements, but he does not spy. Neither does the aviator who photographs the enemy's positions from the air.

The scout who creeps into the enemy's lines in quest of information is not a spy if he wears his military uniform. In short, any soldier may adopt what methods he pleases to gain information and still be entitled to the treatment of a prisoner of war if captured, provided that he wears his regular uniform. In the wars of the Napoleonic and earlier periods, when armies were composed of contingents from many lands, coats of all colours were to be found in every camp; this gave the skilled gleaner of information a real advantage, for on occasions he could march boldly into the enemy's camp, and the odds were ten to one that somewhere in the opposing forces there was a regiment with a uniform not unlike his own. If he could pass himself off as belonging to it, he was perfectly entitled to do so and still be treated as a prisoner of war.

This similarity of uniform often led to confusion on the battlefield. The French plans at the battle of Fuentes-de-Onoro in the Peninsular War suffered a severe check at a critical moment because a red-coated Hannoverian regiment in French service was mistaken by other French troops for a British regiment. The French General in command of a forward position thought he was surrounded and retreated, and the mistake proved irretrievable.

But to-day the soldier fights in a sober garb which is nevertheless distinctive; the wearer of a field-grey uniform would have no chance of escaping recognition in British lines. The seeker after information in the enemy's camp must therefore don the enemy's uniform or civilian clothes, and if caught in them he is liable to be shot as a spy. On the other hand

the dark blue uniforms worn by the naval forces of all countries still remain alike to the unobservant layman. If during the recent war a British naval officer had ventured into Kiel or Wilhelmshaven in his own uniform, the chances are that German civilians would have taken him for a member of their own naval forces. If detected, he would have been immune from the death penalty meted out to a spy.

The civilian in country occupied by the enemy is also liable by the laws of war to be shot as a spy if he attempts to observe the invader's movements and transmit Intelligence of them to his own side. "Thou shalt not serve thy country in times of war by word or deed unless thou wearest her uniform" is the ruling that seals the detected spy's doom.

In peace-time the spy caught in a foreign country is not executed, but receives a long term of imprisonment. Until a few years before the war he was even immune from this penalty in England, because there was no law on the Statute Book to deal with his case. After several spies were detected, the "Official Secrets Act" was passed, under which any spy taken red-handed duly finds his way to prison, where he receives exactly the same treatment as all other offenders against the country's laws. In Germany, on the contrary, an elaborate code existed for many years before the war, which meted out penal servitude to the traitor or the spy seeking information for his own gain, but allowed honorable imprisonment in a fortress to a foreign officer executing a secret mission in his country's service. This milder form of captivity was accorded to Captain Trench and Lieutenant Brandon, two British officers, who spied in Germany about four or five years before the war.

But theoretically no nation spies on another in times of peace. Should one of its Intelligence Agents be

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caught, a statement is issued to the effect that the culprit was not employed in any official capacity, and some governments even go so far as to assert that they possess no Intelligence Services. In the case of a detected naval or military officer, the correct formula states that he undertook the act of espionage on his own responsibility while on leave and will be dismissed as soon as he returns home after his imprisonment. These polite disavowals deceive no one.

In war all detected spies are liable to the death penalty, and by a strange irony of fate the patriotic spy, acting from the best motives, comes off worst, for, mindful of his country's interests, he refuses to answer all questions put to him by his captors. The spy who is merely out for profit often has a chance to save his life by giving information that betrays his associates and employers. He may even regain his liberty by entering the service of the country that holds him prisoner, as did several Russian spies captured by the Germans.

The German spy, Armgard Karl Graves, who was sentenced to eighteen months hard labour at Edinburgh in 1912, obtained release after serving a few weeks of his sentence by volunteering his services to Britain. On the other hand the German ex-naval officer, Hans Lody, the first spy executed in London during the war, made no other defence at his court-martial than that he had undertaken his dangerous mission to serve his country. The death-sentence was passed reluctantly, and still more reluctantly executed.

For sentimental reasons most governments are averse to the execution of women spies, though several were shot by both sides during the recent war. When a group of spies is captured, their judges usually make a distinction between the ringleaders and subordinates, as some of the latter are often dupes or tools, with

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little realisation of the gravity of their offence. They therefore escape with sentences of imprisonment in order to spare their captors the necessity of the *exécution en masse* which always had a revolting effect.

The best type of Intelligence Service only employs its own nationals for regular work. These are picked men and women, whose characters are above suspicion, and who may be counted on to resist bribes from the other side. Some are military and naval officers whose technical knowledge plus a gift for languages and a talent for acquiring information causes them to be withdrawn from their normal employment and lent to Intelligence. Others are civilians who drift into their hazardous profession by devious routes. All are on a regular salary list, as the "payment by results" principle must necessarily lead to exaggerated and untrue reports from agents anxious to increase their earnings.

On the other hand the governments of all nations are liable to be approached by "free lances" with information to sell to the highest bidder. If it is considered worth purchase, a lump sum down is paid, but such transactions are often the cause of subsequent disappointment to the buyer.

Valuable information is often to be had from deserters, who sell military and naval information to gain enough money to start new lives in the country of their refuge. Before the war the iron discipline and severe conditions of German military service was the cause of many desertions, and the fugitives generally made their way into France. The French Intelligence Service made a point of getting in touch with these deserters. German-speaking officers were detailed to interview them, and if any showed signs of being able to impart information of a particularly interesting nature, he was sent to the French War Office and

subjected to an exhaustive interrogation, after which he received a payment commensurate with the value of his statements. Occasionally such payment was coupled with an offer of regular employment in the French Intelligence Service.

Some free lances offer their exclusive services to a particular country for a term of years, but, however efficient this type of 'international spy' may be, he frequently does more harm than good to his employer, for when caught he has no patriotic motives to restrain his tongue. He makes the best bargain he can with his captors, whose service he sometimes enters. In such cases the news of his capture is suppressed, and he is supplied with false information to pass on to his original masters, whose secrets he must then ferret out. The international spy finds this procedure peculiarly agreeable, as it enables him to draw pay from both parties; he thus becomes a 'double spy.'

In the spy game the rule that no man can serve two masters therefore finds its exception, and many international spies engage in double spying when under no compulsion to do so. A typical example of this variety was Karl Zievert, a Russian subject of German origin, who was employed in the Russian Okhrana (Secret Political Police) and rose to a high position in their censorship bureau at Kieff. He was in receipt of salaries from the German and Austrian Intelligence Services as a secret agent and enlisted the assistance of many of his subordinates, who likewise figured on the pay-rolls of the two Foreign Powers. If, as sometimes occurred, they attempted to blackmail him, he denounced them to his Russian superiors, with the result that they invariably ended their careers in Siberian prisons. His achievements were equalled by the Serbian, Krivosh, who was at one time attached to General Brusiloff's Intelligence Staff and used the

opportunities of his position to convey secret information to the German and Austrian military authorities. The international spy can never be trusted, and the best Intelligence Services do not engage foreigners in times of peace, though necessity often compels them to use them in war.

The unfortunate individual known as the 'fool-spy' often escapes the death penalty, as is only just. The fool-spy is a person whose talents are insufficient for his vocation or whose loyalty becomes suspected; he is therefore sent on a mission where detection is inevitable and capture certain. Meanwhile, unknown to him, a skilled and trusted spy undertakes a mission in the same locality, the theory being that the enemy's counterspies will be put off the scent by the capture of the fool-spy so that the genuine agent can pursue his operations unmolested. Such a type was Joseph Marks, a business man of Aachen, who was enlisted in the German Intelligence Service in the recent war and sent to England. He was so clumsy that he betrayed himself almost as soon as he landed and, to his great relief, was sent to spend the rest of the war in an internment camp.

A 'letter-box' is a person who receives the reports of agents residing in a foreign country and forwards them to headquarters. On August 5th, 1914, the British police arrested Karl Gustav Ernst, a barber of German origin, but born in London, who collected reports from twenty-two German agents in England and despatched them to Berlin. The German Intelligence Service had been in the habit of sending Ernst the instructions for these spies in packets, leaving it to him to forward the individual letters to the proper recipients.

Spies residing in a foreign country often work on the principle known in France as the 'closed cell'

(*cellule cloisonnée*), according to which no agent knows the identity or scope of operations of his colleagues, so that he is unable to betray them if caught. But the names and addresses of all are known by their letter-box, so that when a residential spy is 'spotted,' it often proves advisable to refrain from arresting him for a while. By shadowing his movements the police can trace him to his letter-box, with the satisfactory result that a whole group of spies are ultimately captured. It may surprise some readers to learn that many spies never go into the enemy's land during war, as their missions can be conveniently performed from neutral countries. Before the war the Intelligence Services of all Great Powers established outposts in countries which they expected to remain neutral in the event of a European conflagration. Thus France watched Germany from Intelligence Bureaus in Geneva, Luxemburg and Brussels, while Britain pushed out tentacles from London to Spa, Brussels, Rotterdam and Copenhagen. During the war Britain and Germany made much use of Norway and Denmark as vantage points to spy on each other's movements, while Germany and Russia watched one another from Sweden.

Prior to 1914 the military and naval movements of the potential enemy were the chief objects of survey, but the geographical positions of the belligerents rendered the British blockade one of the decisive factors of the war. The Central Powers, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, formed a compact block almost entirely surrounded by a ring of foes and were therefore in the position of a besieged garrison that might be defeated by either starvation or direct assault. The neutral countries, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, and, for a time, Italy, Greece and

Rumania, were outlets through which the beleaguered Central Powers might procure food and raw materials or improve their finances by trading such goods as the exigencies of war permitted them to manufacture. Consequently commercial Intelligence came to be almost as important as naval and military Intelligence, and Britain employed many agents whose entire vigilance was devoted to surveying the commercial activities of our opponents and transmitting information that would lead to a tightening of the stranglehold of the blockade. It was also due to the skill of these agents that Britain acquired the secret processes by which Germany's aniline dyes and optical glasses were manufactured, information which proved extremely valuable to the conduct of the war.

The commercial spy's work must inevitably be performed in neutral countries which the enemy intends to use as a passage for his imports and exports, but a large amount of military and naval spying also takes place in them. Their citizens visit the enemy's country for business and other reasons, so that useful information can be gained from them by judicious 'pumping.' The enemy's embassies and legations in neutral lands must also be objects of intensive espionage.

During the war enemy subjects visiting neutral countries were naturally potential sources of information for an alert agent. In such cases the spy often posed as a pacifist who had taken refuge in a neutral land to avoid conscription; if he found his subject was not too ardent a patriot he could win his heart and set his tongue flowing by preaching internationalism and universal brotherhood. If, however, the subject was convinced of his own country's good cause, the agent often found it good policy to let himself be converted, whereupon the subject, pleased to have won over a member of an enemy race, began

to boast of his country's prowess and resources, and thus let fall much interesting information.

Another good pose for a spy was that of a member of a subjected and oppressed race. Germany, Austria and Russia all made much use of Poles for spying, because the fact that Poland was then partitioned between those three powers made it feasible for a Pole to regard any one of them as his main oppressor. It was easy for a Russian Pole to persuade Germans that he was yearning for delivery from the Tsarist yoke, while an inhabitant of Posen found no difficulty in convincing Russians that he writhed beneath the heel of the Prussian jack-boot. Several German spies established themselves securely in France by posing as Alsatians, and one of Britain's cleverest spies was a Hindu. This gentleman played the part of a champion of Home-rule for India so successfully that he obtained permission to reside in Berlin during the war, where he was made much of. Coming into contact with many prominent personages who were anxious to learn his views on the situation in India and the possibilities of fomenting rebellion there, he contrived to transmit much useful information, but eventually fell under suspicion and made his way into a neutral country a few hours before a warrant for his arrest was issued.

As every neutral country must be regarded as a potential belligerent that circumstances may force to side with one or other party, its military and naval forces are also objects of espionage. There is also the danger of its neutrality being so benevolent towards one side that it allows it secret facilities that it does not grant to the other. The minor harbours and sheltered bays of neutrals showing undue friendship to Germany were carefully watched by Entente agents for this reason, as a neutral land that gave secret shelter to German submarines in search of quiet bases

where they could replenish their stores might naturally prove the indirect cause of untold damage to Allied shipping.

Switzerland, Holland, Spain and the Scandinavian countries passed laws which enabled them to affix with severe terms of imprisonment any agent of either party found prying into the secrets of their defences. Neutral countries also penalised spies exercising their profession in favour of any one belligerent against any other, but did not always mete out full punishment to the culprits they caught. Often they were content to expel them from their territories.

A 'counter-spy' is an Intelligence Agent detailed to keep watch on the movement of enemy spies. His activities are mainly confined to his own country, though sometimes circumstances take him to the enemy's land, where, if caught, he suffers the same fate as a spy. In neutral countries he finds many opportunities, and though liable to penalties if detected, he is often secretly tolerated as at any moment he may render a service to the land in which he is working. **The German spy, Kohr, who was convicted in Switzerland and sentenced to imprisonment, owed his downfall mainly to the work done by Entente agents watching him, for while endeavouring to trace the scope of his operations in France, they incidentally stumbled on the discovery that he had tried to procure plans of the Gotthard defences. This information they passed on to the Swiss authorities, with the result that Kohr was speedily laid by the heels.**

During the war the French Intelligence service established a clever counter-spy as a passport official on the German frontier at Basel. Within a few hours of their arrival from Germany, the names and descriptions of all persons who entered Switzerland at his post were forwarded to the French Intelligence

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Bureau at Geneva, and several spies were arrested at Annemasse when they attempted to enter France, as a result of his vigilance. On the whole counter-espionage demands even more skill than actual spying, for whereas the spy scores his main successes against unsuspecting victims the counterspy is engaged in a ceaseless struggle against opponents who are constantly on the alert and only to be unmasked by superior skill.

The counter-spy must also suspect the people with whom he works, as any of them may be enemy spies. The spy who can worm his way into the opposite side's counter-espionage service has a wonderful opportunity, though readers may wonder how he can contrive to earn the reputation of smartness and yet take care to shield his own country's spies from capture. This difficulty is not, however, so great as it superficially appears, for his headquarters will arrange to throw a few fool-spies in his way, and he can also run down any of his own side's men whom he finds guilty of treachery or double spying, thus saving his military authorities the cost of powder and shot to execute them. A few such captures will build him up a reputation that cannot easily be impaired. But sometimes a really Gilbertian situation occurs, for the faked counterspy receives orders to track down a mysterious and very effective spy who has baffled the resources of all his colleagues. He is, in fact, ordered to catch himself, and must contrive to fail without losing prestige. This actually occurred several times during the war, and in each case the pseudo-counterspy emerged from the ordeal with his reputation unscathed.

It must, however, be urged in favour of the spy that when he goes into the enemy's camp, he usually plays a lone hand, whereas the counterspy, working mainly in his own or an allied country, can count on valuable

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assistance from the police. When this implies the co-operation of forces such as the C.I.D. of Scotland Yard or the French Sûreté, it is help that even the cleverest agent cannot afford to despise.

When a spy is captured, the arrest is effected by the police, civilian or military, as the case may be. In occupied Belgium the Germans established a service of military police to deal with the Belgian spies, but Lody and other German spies taken in England were arrested by the local police at the instance of Scotland Yard acting on evidence furnished by counter-spies. They were then handed over to the military authorities for trial by courtmartial.

The *métiers* of espionage and counter-espionage are often interchanged, for an expert in one branch benefits by gaining experience of the other. A spy returning from a mission abroad is usually put on counter-espionage work for a period if there is reason to believe that the other side are on his tracks; he thus has an opportunity of keeping his hand in while lying low until such time as he can safely venture forth once more.

These are roughly the rules and customs of the spy-game, a knowledge of which will enable the reader to fully appreciate the movements of the dark pieces on the vast chess-board of the recent war and the new board set out after the Treaty of Versailles.