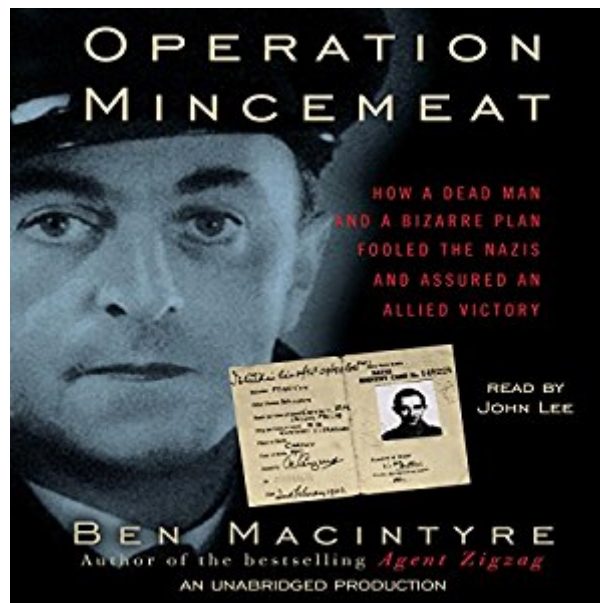


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Operation Mincemeat: How A Dead Man And A Bizarre Plan Fooled The Nazis And Assured An Allied Victory



Synopsis

The masterminds of Operation Mincemeat dreamed up the most unlikely series of events, rendered them credible, and sent them off to war. They changed reality through lateral thinking, and proved that it is possible to win a battle fought in the mind, from behind a desk, and from beyond the grave. Operation Mincemeat was pure make-believe; and it made Hitler believe a lie that changed the course of history...Ben Macintyre weaves together private documents, photographs, memories, letters and diaries, as well as newly released material from the intelligence files of MI5 and Naval Intelligence, to tell for the first time the full story of Operation Mincemeat. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

So I'm biased, or more properly hooked on Macintyre! His writing captures the essence of everything to come within the early paragraphs in almost every one of his books I have read. Mincemeat is no exception. You get the idea very soon which way this story is going to go but you cannot anticipate very far ahead because there is always a new character or some unexpected wrinkle proving "the best laid plans of mice and men..." Even with the twists and quirks, the scheme has a happy ending unless you were rooting for the Third Reich. It's a great story told by a great storyteller.

Macintyre does a good job putting the reader right into the action. I was reminded while reading this book that non-fiction can differ from fiction in the number of characters the reader must keep

straight. I commend Macintyre's efforts to help in that task by often using the real name alongside the alias. Nevertheless, it could still get a little confusing especially when double agents were involved. That said, I must add how much I enjoyed reading a bit of history that gets swept under the broad-brush treatment we normally get in viewing world events. It brings to mind the saying of the stage: there's no such thing as small parts, only small actors. Macintyre admits that the Sicily invasion could have been done without this one piece of deception and that no one can prove it had an impact. However, he makes a very strong case for the importance of it. I found how detailed they were in faking their ruse very fascinating. Watching how committed the Germans were to believing the ruse simply because they wanted to surpass the work that went into creating the lie. Operation Mincemeat was like reading a mystery that let you know the who the perpetrator was at the beginning and let you accompany him as he developed the intrigue and misleading clues. It's entertaining, astounding, and enlightening. I am now wondering where to go to get to the truth of what is happening in world, national, and even local events.

Operation Mincemeat by Ben Macintyre (Harmony Books, New York: 2010) is an interesting story told brilliantly. Indeed, this is a great book and the way history should be written. It is well researched--Macintyre spent three years reviewing documents and conducting interviews but the writing is anything but dry, Macintyre tells the tale with relish. It works on several levels. While focused on but one intelligence operation during World War II--a misdirection of invasion plans served up to the Nazi war machine, the book really captures the essence of war time espionage and intelligence activity more generally because Macintyre follows all the leads and provides insights beyond the mere operation that is the subject of his book. This is must reading for the intelligence practitioner --and the policymaker alike. One of the obvious lessons is the potential for intelligence collectors, analysts, and policymakers to be had. I am not giving anything away by providing the gist of the plot which was the subject of a much earlier book and film (both treated in the Mincemeat)--a dead body with bogus letters discussing a military invasion (away from the actual landing in Sicily) is positioned in the sea so as to fall into German hands. In intelligence parlance the acquisition of the letters by the German Defense Intelligence Service amounted to "documentary material," rather than quoting a living HUMINT source. And accordingly, the analytical mechanism focused on the documents rather than conducting a full analysis of the provenance of the materials. Now the letters were not crafted in a vacuum--the British knew well the potential for self-deception within the Nazi war machine because independent thought that might question the Nazi leaders perceptions was a risky business. Indeed, while reading this it was eerily familiar: in the run-up to the Iraq war there

was a similar potential for self-deception within the analytical and policymaking apparatus--the President's advisors and the President himself were determined to remove Saddam Hussein through military action, intelligence that was not corroborated was seized upon as the rationale for the invasion. The inclination to be supportive of the policy goals, to be team players, was counter to the equal need to be skeptical of uncorroborated information upon which important decisions will be made. In the intelligence collection activity, there is a constant tension among all involved in the process in terms evaluating the bone fides of the intelligence acquired while still being supportive to all involved in the mission--and while being responsive to policy needs. The tension is necessary and helpful to the process and it can save lives and embarrassment--the opposite is true when the process is corrupted. Another key factor jumped out to me in the reading of this fine book. You could have the most ingenious intelligence plan in the world but it boils down to execution by people--and while there were certainly a cast of characters involved in Operation Mincemeat--the success of the mission was the result of the performance of just a handful of people, quality people. All of the key factors of the intelligence craft are on display in Operation Mincemeat: the personal antagonisms, petty arguments and disagreements within bureaucracies (even the wonderfully small ones that the British had then and still do) , the unpredictability of human behavior, the long hours of work, the requirement for secrecy as well as the need for the occasional "white lie" to protect sources and methods, the potential for self-delusion as I have indicated earlier, as well as the potential to achieve significant goals on the cheap.

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