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A Genius for Deception: How Cunning Helped the British Win Two World Wars

Nicholas Rankin

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In February 1942, intelligence officer Victor Jones erected 150 tents behind British lines in North Africa. "Hiding tanks in Bedouin tents was an old British trick," writes Nicholas Rankin. German general Erwin Rommel not only knew of the ploy, but had copied it himself. Jones knew that Rommel knew. In fact, he counted on it?for these tents were empty. With the deception that he was carrying out a deception, Jones made a weak point look like a trap. In *A Genius for Deception*, Nicholas Rankin offers a lively and comprehensive history of how Britain bluffed, tricked, and spied its way to victory in two world wars. As Rankin shows, a coherent program of strategic deception emerged in World War I, resting on the pillars of camouflage, propaganda, secret intelligence, and special forces. All forms of deception found an avid sponsor in Winston Churchill, who carried his enthusiasm for deceiving the enemy into World War II.

Rankin vividly recounts such little-known episodes as the invention of camouflage by two French artist-soldiers, the creation of dummy airfields for the Germans to bomb during the Blitz, and the fabrication of an army that would supposedly invade Greece. Strategic deception would be key to a number of WWII battles, culminating in the massive misdirection that proved critical to the success of the D-Day invasion in 1944. Deeply researched and written with an eye for telling detail, *A Genius for Deception* shows how the British used craft and cunning to help win the most devastating wars in human history.

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