



0. The Imitation Game - Story Preface

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At its production peak, during World War II, Bletchley Park (also known as "Station X") employed around 10,000 people. In this image, from the Bletchley Park Trust / SSPL, we see code-breaking personnel during 1943.

*The geese who laid the golden eggs
and never cackled.*

Winston Churchill

on the
Bletchley Park Code Breakers

On a Friday afternoon, in late 1928 or early 1929, someone in Warsaw's railway customs office received an urgent phone call. At the other end of the line was a German-speaking person demanding the release of a package.

Claiming the item was for German diplomats in Warsaw, the caller was agitated. He demanded that Polish customs officials immediately clear the package for release, before it was inspected.

Someone in Berlin had apparently made a mistake. Instead of sending the package via diplomatic pouch, it had traveled to Warsaw by ordinary freight.

The high anxiety, displayed by the German caller, aroused the suspicions of Polish customs officers. Telling the caller the package had not-yet arrived and, in any event, the office was about to close for the weekend, the matter would have to wait until Monday morning.

What could be in that package? The item, which had actually arrived at the rail station, included a customs declaration stating that it contained radio equipment. Customs officials alerted Poland's Cipher Bureau whose employees were always interested in learning about new radio equipment.

Polish officials made good use of the weekend. Unwrapping the package, intended for the German legation, they not only inspected it ... they took it apart.

Before Monday morning, when the machine was reassembled and repackaged, the Polish Cipher Bureau had learned all about the equipment inside the package.

It was a brand-new military Enigma machine.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/The-Imitation-Game>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/The-Imitation-Game>

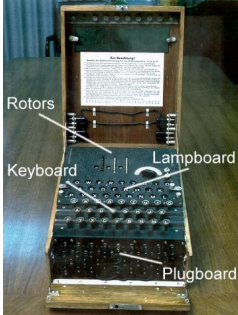
Questions 2 Ponder

What Distinguishes Spying from Defending a Country's National Interests?

What circumstances would justify the post office of one country opening a confidential package being sent to diplomats of another country?

Countries spy on each other. Was the opening of the package containing the new Enigma Machine part of spying—or—was it part of Poland's need to defend herself against an aggressive neighbor?

Media Stream



Enigma Encryption Machine

Photo Online, Courtesy CIA website.

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The Imitation Game

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Historical Footage - The U-Boat Peril

On the 10th of May, 1940, people around the world woke-up to very distressing news. Hitler's forces had invaded Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and France. Although not part of the continent, Britain would surely be next if Hitler could mount a successful invasion. Since it was obvious no one could meaningfully negotiate with Hitler, King George VI summoned Winston Churchill to Buckingham Palace on the same day as the *Blitzkrieg* ("lightning war") was overwhelming Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland and France. The King asked Churchill to form a government, thereby confirming Winston as Britain's new Prime Minister. This image, online via the Imperial War Museum, depicts Churchill on the day he became Prime Minister.



As former "First Lord of the Admiralty," Churchill knew something about a country's need to protect itself at sea. That knowledge was key for both Churchill and Britain when Winston assumed his new duties.

For example ... beyond invading Britain, Hitler and his military might had another way to cripple Britain and force the country's surrender. German U-boats could attack and destroy all the supply ships on which the United Kingdom depended. Admiral Karl Doenitz, Germany's head of the U-boats, began to employ that very strategy against Britain.

German U-boats, especially during the early years of WW II, were very effective in preventing the Allies from shipping supplies to Britain. Churchill referred to their use as "the U-boat peril."

In fact, Churchill was so concerned about the damage the U-boats were causing during the "Battle of the Atlantic" that he wrote these words in his book, *Their Finest Hour*:

The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril. (See Their Finest Hour - The Second World War, Volume II, at page 259.)



Damage caused by attacking groups of U-boats, on convoys bound for Britain, was so substantial between the start of the war (in September of 1939) and May of 1941, that people in Britain were in danger of starving if the supply ships could not make it safely to the United Kingdom. Desperate to stop the U-boats from crippling or destroying ships traveling in the North Atlantic, Churchill needed a team of people to break the codes the U-boat crews were obviously using to communicate with each other.

As it happened, the *Kriegsmarine* (the German name for the country's Navy during the war) had a sophisticated encryption system which appeared unbreakable. All branches of the military depended on a machine, called "Enigma," which made decoding German messages nearly impossible.

Until ... a group of highly intelligent individuals began to gather at an old English country house located at Bletchley Park (around 50 miles, or so, from London). Churchill would later refer to these people as "the geese who laid the golden eggs and never cackled."

British and German historical newsreels, compiled by Celeon999A and placed online through YouTube.

Quoted reference is from Churchill's book *Their Finest Hour - The Second World War, Volume II*, at page 259. The full quote is: "The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril."

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