

0. WAS THERE a SPY in HUT 8? - Story Preface
1. WHAT is ENIGMA?
2. HOW DOES ENIGMA WORK?
3. FIRST ENIGMA DECIPHERS
4. BLETCHLEY PARK and STATION X
5. DOLPHIN - UNBREAKABLE GERMAN NAVAL CODE
6. HUT 8 and ITS CODE BREAKERS
7. ALAN TURING TACKLES DOLPHIN - GERMANY'S NAVAL ENIGMA CODE
8. TURING and the BIGRAM TABLES from U-110
9. ENIGMA CODE BOOKS at STATION X
10. TURING'S BOMBE CALLED VICTORY
- 11. WAS THERE a SPY in HUT 8?**
12. STATION X CODE BREAKERS SHORTEN the WAR



In this image we see John Cairncross as he appeared during his student days at Cambridge University. Photo online via Spartacus Educational website.

Alan Turing was not a spy, and there is no evidence he covered-up any knowledge that John Cairncross was a spy.

Played by Allen Leech, in "The Imitation Game," Cairncross was not a member of Turing's cryptography team, and he never worked in Hut 8.

Andrew Hodges, whose book about Turing is the source for "The Imitation Game," has commented on the film's spy angle. It is "ludicrous," he says, to even imagine the scenario.

Further, because security at Bletchley Park was so tight, it is highly unlikely that Turing ever met Cairncross.

What does Cairncross, an admitted Soviet spy, have to say about it?

Although he died in 1995, Cairncross wrote an autobiography - *The Enigma Spy* - which was published two years after his death. In it [he writes](#):

The rigid separation of the different units made contact with other staff members almost impossible, so I never got to know anyone apart from my direct operational colleagues.

There is no evidence that Alan Turing was one of Cairncross' "direct operational colleagues."

Cairncross never considered himself a traitor, even though he was a spy. First arriving at Bletchley Park, in 1941, he believed his work was helping an ally - the Soviet Union - to win its own battles against Germany.

At page 20, of his book, Cairncross defends his actions:

I can undoubtedly be accused of recklessness, arrogance and naiveté for finally deciding, in the light of Britain's wartime plight, to deliver secret ENIGMA intelligence [ie, decoded German communications] to the Russians. But there is no way this can be called treason.

Passing Enigma secrets to the Soviets, Cairncross did make a difference in the outcome of the Soviet-German battle at Kursk. In *The Independent's* obituary, following Cairncross' death in 1995, Tom Bower tells us [more about it](#):

...his value to the Soviets was proven in February 1943 when he handed to his Soviet contact the original flimsy papers of the intercepts, containing the full details of the Wehrmacht's summer offensive along a 1,200 km front which would climax at the battle of Kursk.

Initially, the Soviets undertook a series of pre-emptive air strikes but simultaneously used Cairncross's information to develop a new anti-tank shell to penetrate the new, thick German tank armour.

In recognition of his critical assistance, Cairncross was awarded the Order of the Red Banner.

Cairncross' role as a spy came out in 1951. He made a deal with the government, however, so he was never prosecuted for his actions.

Much later, in the early-to-mid 1990s, he was called the "Fifth Man" of the "Cambridge Spy Ring" (which Cairncross, who was still alive at the time, denied).

Whatever role Cairncross played as a spy for the Soviets, his actions did not negatively impact the speed of progress Turing and his code breakers were making at Bletchley Park. Something else *helped* the speed of that progress, however.

On the 21st of October, 1941, Turing and three of his high-level-Station-X colleagues wrote a secret letter to Winston Churchill. On the heels of the Prime Minister's recent visit to Bletchley Park, the men appealed to him for more resources.

Wasting no time in his response, Churchill issued an order which begins with these words:

ACTION THIS DAY

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WAS-THERE-a-SPY-in-HUT-8-The-Imitation-Game)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WAS-THERE-a-SPY-in-HUT-8-The-Imitation-Game>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WAS-THERE-a-SPY-in-HUT-8-The-Imitation-Game)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WAS-THERE-a-SPY-in-HUT-8-The-Imitation-Game>

Questions 2 Ponder

Do Film Makers Have an Obligation not to Besmirch a Person's Reputation?

There is no evidence that Alan Turing was a spy or that he was manipulated by a spy during World War II. What obligations, if any, do film makers have to be true to history on such topics like a person's reputation?

People tend to believe what they see on the screen. If film viewers see an untruth, and then believe that untruth, do film makers bear a moral responsibility for causing people to believe the misrepresentation?

If a film were made about you, and that film misrepresented key facts about your life and your actions, how would you react?

If the defamed person is dead, when the accusation or untruth starts to circulate, what obligation do the rest of us have to call it out?

When Is a Spy a Spy but not a Traitor?

John Cairncross believed he was not a traitor because he was helping an ally (the Soviet Union) of his country (Britain). Do you agree / disagree with Cairncross? Explain your position.

Was Cairncross making excuses for himself or do you think he really believed he wasn't a spy?

Media Stream

Turing's Letter to Churchill Produces "Action This Day"

By February of 1941, Alastair Denniston was no longer head of Britain's GCCS (Government Code & Cypher School). Commander Edward W. Travis had replaced Denniston.

Later, in 1941, Alan Turing and some of his colleagues (Gordon Welchman, Hugh Alexander and Stuart Milner-Barry) decided to write a "secret and confidential" letter directly to Churchill. The men, wanting to raise the Prime Minister's awareness of GCCS funding needs, used these words (among others) to address the issue:

Some weeks ago you paid us the honour of a visit, and we believe that you regard our work as important. You will have seen that, thanks largely to the energy and foresight of Commander Travis, we have been well supplied with the 'bombes' for the breaking of the German Enigma codes.

We think, however, that you ought to know that this work is being held up, and in some cases is not being done at all, principally because we cannot get sufficient staff to deal with it. Our reason for writing to you direct is that for months we have done everything that we possibly can through the normal channels, and that we despair of any early improvement without your intervention. Thinking Churchill might need some assurance that the men were acting on their own, and not being prompted by someone higher-up, they also included these sentences in their October 21, 1941 letter:

We have written this letter entirely on our own initiative. We do not know who or what is responsible for our difficulties, and most emphatically we do not want to be taken as criticising Commander Travis who has all along done his utmost to help us in every possible way.

*But if we are to do our job as well as it could and should be done it is absolutely vital that our wants, small as they are, should be promptly attended to. We have felt that we should be failing in our duty if we did not draw your attention to the facts and to the effects which they are having and must continue to have on our work, unless immediate action is taken. (Quoted by Hugh Sebag-Montefiore in his book *Enigma: The Battle for the Code*, at [page 160](#).)*

Churchill not only took the men at their word, he gave them what they needed. To use the words of Andrew Hodges, Turing's biographer, the letter had "an electric effect."

The Prime Minister's first words, to General Hastings Ismay (his principal staff officer), were these: ACTION THIS DAY

Then Churchill added this direction:

*Make sure they have all they want on extreme priority and report to me that this has been done. (See Andrew Hodges, *Alan Turing: the Enigma*, at [page 279](#).)*

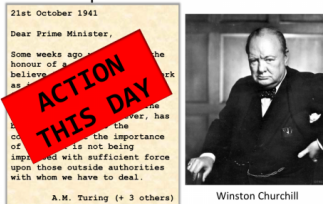
The letter, and Churchill's response, is a piece of evidence we can use to assess how important the work at Bletchley Park was to Britain's Prime Minister. Before long, Station X had thousands of workers—including WRNS (pronounced "Wrens," short for "Women's Royal Navy Service")—who helped to run the bombes.

Quotations from the 29 October 1941 letter to Churchill, and the Prime Minister's response, online via referenced books (noted above).

[View this asset at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Turing-s-Letter-to-Churchill-Produces-Action-This-Day->

Most Important Decision of WWII?



WAS THERE a SPY in HUT 8?

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/>