

Master Spy: The Incredible Story of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, Who, While Hitler's Chief of Intelligence, Was a Secret Ally of the British

By Ian Colvin



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Master Spy, first published in 1952, recounts the career of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, who served as Hitler's Chief of Intelligence for nine years, but who was also a quiet supporter of the German resistance to Hitler and the ruling Nazi Party. Charming, exacting, mistrustful, and soft-spoken, Canaris became an Admiral during the first World War, but officially entered the Abwehr (Security Service) in 1935 of which he was later to become head. The book details the military and diplomatic interchanges in which he took part, including the incidents in which Canaris sabotaged and betrayed German plans, from the Munich pact to the proposed invasion of England and throughout the war, until his deposition by Hitler in 1944, and his execution in 1945. Perhaps most importantly, Canaris personally talked General Franco out of entering the war on Germany's side, arguing that he would be aligning himself with the wrong side. This prevented any assault on Gibraltar and kept the Mediterranean open for allied shipping. Without Canaris, the allies would have had significant difficulty in launching their North African, Sicilian or Italian campaigns.

After Stauffenberg's July 20, 1944 bomb plot against Hitler, the Canaris group was implicated, arrested and transferred to various concentration camps. In September 1944, incriminating documents were found in the safe of Abwehr officer Werner Schrader following that officer's July 28, 1944 suicide. Later, Canaris' complete personal diary was found in another safe at Zossen. The diaries made clear that Canaris had been playing a double game against the Nazis since before the war, enraging Hitler. On April 9, 1945, Canaris and several other members of the Abwehr resistance circle were put on trial in an SS kangaroo court and were hung at KZ Flossenburg on Hitler's direct orders.

Author Ian Colvin, a correspondent of the London *News Chronicle*, had worked in pre-war Berlin where he made secret contacts with anti-Nazis. He was later expelled from Germany.

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