

The Psychology of a Spy: Cicero (Elyesa Bazna, 1904-1970)

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ABSTRACT

Cicero was one of the most important spies of World War II. As valet to the British Ambassador to neutral Turkey, he was able to photograph many Top Secret documents, including detailed plans for the Allied D Day Landing in France, and sell them to the Germans. Using his autobiography and the published account of his handler, it is possible to note that Cicero did not display symptoms of psychiatric disorder, but his personality and character were complicated and in conformity with a model of the psychology of the spy that has been proposed. In over all assessment, Cicero's spying activities brought little benefit to the Germans as they did not accept as genuine what was being presented to them, and no benefit to Cicero himself as he was mainly paid in counterfeit bank notes.

Keywords: Bazna, Cicero, Espionage, Moyzisch, Psychology of Spying

Published Online: March 4, 2022

ISSN: 2736-5522

DOI: 10.24018/ejsocial.2022.2.2.217

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I. INTRODUCTION

Turkey is a country with 95 per cent of its territory in Asia and 5 per cent in Europe, a geographical situation with considerable implication over the ages. In its earlier form as the Ottoman Empire, it had in the First World War joined the Central Powers of mainly Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in conflict against the Allied Powers of Britain, France, the USA (after 1917) and other smaller powers, whereupon it was defeated.

When World War II broke out in 1939, the newly founded state of Turkey decided to remain neutral, for understandable reasons, despite the entreaties of the Allied Powers who saw Turkey as an entry to the Balkans, and the Axis power who also saw the risk of access to the Balkans and who also depended on Turkey as an essential supply of chromium, a position that still existed in 1943. During this time, Turkey's capital of Ankara had become a hotbed of diplomatic intrigue and espionage activity, and in fact the Ambassadors of Britain and Germany were personally well-known to each other (Wires, 1999). The British Ambassador, Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, was an experienced senior diplomat with the confidence of the British Foreign Office, while the German Ambassador, Franz Von Papen, had been a former Chancellor of Germany but was a controversial figure later known to be in serious conflict with his Foreign Minister, Von Ribbentrop, and other senior figures in Berlin (Schellenberg, 2000).

In 1943, Turkey was successfully maintaining its neutrality, and the British and German Ambassadors were respectively charged with the responsibility of gaining Turkey's involvement in the war on their respective sides, or at least maintaining neutrality. At that stage, Germany's and the Axis's certainty of ultimate victory was becoming increasingly doubtful, particularly after the involvement of the USA after November 1941 and then the defeat of Germany at Stalingrad in February 1943. The immanent invasion of mainland Europe was now a certainty, but where would the invasion be landed? The answer to this question and many others was revealed to Hitler and German High Command and Foreign Office in Berlin by a spy in Ankara.

From October 1943 until March 1944, the British Embassy in Ankara was the source of photographed copies of Most Secret documents that were potentially disastrous for the Allied political workings and military operations in World War Two. They included the summarised proceedings of the Allied conferences at Cairo and Tehran, attempts to get Turkey into World War II on the Allied side, and references to Operation Overlord, the code name for the forthcoming D Day Landing in France.

The source of this leaked information was Elyesa Bazna (1962), an ethnic Albanian born in Pristina of Turkish citizenship and Muslim religion, who was valet to Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, the British Ambassador. While Sir Hugh was sleeping or taking his twice daily bath, his valet was able to photograph a large number of important and top-secret documents. Under the pseudonym of "Pierre", Bazna was able to meet an official of the German Embassy, Ludwig Carl Moyzisch, and offer the first film of the documents for the extremely high price of 20,000 English Pounds (U.K.F.A.C., 2008). After inspecting the documents, the German Ambassador, Franz von Papen, gave the valet the cover name "Cicero", in reference to the

eloquence of the original Cicero (Von Papen, 1952), though Cicero the spy was unaware of his code name until near the end of his period of spying. Despite concentrated effort, neither Von Papen or the spy's handler Ludwig Carl Moyzisch were aware of Cicero's real name until after the period of spying was over.

The release of the Cicero Papers by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2005 showed that it was not until after the war that the British Security authorities were able to establish the identity of Cicero and the British secret service MI5 was able to give a full account of the affair (U.K.F.A.C., 2008). This was obtained from the interrogation of several Germans involved with Cicero including Moyzisch, his case officer in the German Embassy, and other German officials. Initially the British authorities tried to cover up news of the major security breach, but the publication in 1950 of Moyzisch's book *Operation Cicero* caused a sensation and led to the asking of a question in the House of Commons as to the soundness of British security. Foreign Office papers also reveal that when British security authorities were made aware that there was a leakage, they went to elaborate lengths to trap the spy, including planting a forged War Cabinet paper, without the Foreign Secretary's knowledge, in the Embassy in late January 1944. Cicero was in fact interviewed as a suspect in a security operation conducted by Sir John Dashwood but was cleared on the grounds that he did not speak English and was "too stupid", though Dashwood reportedly wrote a "withering condemnation" of the leaky security conditions Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen had allowed to develop in his Embassy at Ankara (Wires, 1999, pp. 133-136). In reality, Bazna, now known as Cicero, had a good knowledge of English and was certainly not stupid, as later was to become clear.

Another potential area of damage concerned the possibility that the Cicero information enabled Franz von Papen, in his capacity as German Ambassador to Turkey, (and himself the subject of a Soviet assassination attempt), to cause the Turkish Government to delay a declaration of war by Turkey on the Anglo-American side. On 4 February 1944, all Allied military supplies to Turkey were cut off and the military negotiating team returned to Cairo. Knatchbull-Hugessen was told to avoid official contact to the best of his ability and by that time the Cicero leakage had been ceased with the departure of Cicero from employment, though the implication of this was not accepted. It is now known that some of Knatchbull-Hugessen's reports to the Foreign Office on the state of the negotiations with the Turkish Foreign Ministry were passed on to the Germans; however, it was also known that the Turkish Foreign Minister was himself keeping a number of diplomatic missions informed on the progress of negotiations and there was no reason to suppose that he did not discuss the matter equally freely with von Papen. It is interesting to note that some of Cicero's photos showed two fingers clearly not his own. It was believed therefore by the Germans that Cicero had an assistant in the Embassy, and in his own account, Cicero tells of having two female accomplices.

In so doing, Cicero took an enormous risk, as the uncovering of his identity would have meant his certain liquidation. The identity of the first of these accomplices was later established, but not that of the second.

Before considering Cicero's personality and character, it is important to make a distinction between psychiatry, the branch of medicine dealing with mental disorder, either of thought or mood, and psychology, the science investigating behaviour, experience and the normal functioning of the mind (Puri *et al.*, 1996).

II. CICERO IN THE VIEW OF PSYCHIATRY

The standard psychiatric diagnostic procedure for psychiatric diagnosis is the Mental State Examination (MSE). Though not rigidly structured, it is generally agreed to consist of an assessment of the following components: 1) Appearance and Behaviour, covering physical appearance and presentation, physical distance separation, eye contact, facial expression, familiarity, or defiance. 2) Speech: from talkative to mute, including volume, tone, and fluency. 3) Mood: predominant emotion, for example, euthymic, dysphoric, apathetic, angry, or explosive. 4) Affect: current observed and expressed emotional state, ranging from constricted to labile, and appropriateness of affect. 5) Thought: a thought stream, as either racing or restricted, the form of thought as goal directed and disordered. 6) Perception: this could be by depersonalisation, derealisation, or other delusion. 7) Cognition: firstly, the level of consciousness, such as alert or stupefied, awareness or confusion; memory, as immediate, short term, or long term, with ability to recall. 8) Insight and judgement: ability to identify and classify events; ability to make judgements as to likely outcomes of actions (Puri *et al.*, 1996).

A consideration of Cicero from a psychiatric perspective must be based on literature, specifically his autobiography *I Was Cicero*, (written in conjunction with Hans Nogly) (Bazna, 1962). and the account of him given by his handler, Moyzisch, *Operation Cicero* (Moyzisch, 1969). Both accounts would appear to be reliable factually and without self-aggrandisement, with the latter work confirmed as such by Moyzisch's employer, the former ambassador Von Papen.

Taking the criteria of the MSE, Cicero's appearance was unremarkable and consistent with a valet in a British Embassy of the period. His speech was normal and while at work in the Embassy he used French in which he was fluent, and he chose to conceal his true level of English, this decision later becoming his

cover once major investigations of leakages began. His moods were variable and consistent with circumstances so that for example bipolar disorder could not be considered, with affect maintained at a manageable level. His thought stream was deep and far ranging (as will be discussed) and generally well-grounded but not disordered. His perception of his own situation and the repercussions of his actions was rational and realistic. In general, it could be said that Cicero was an unusually talented individual who did not present, either in his autobiography or the account of his handler, as having any psychiatric disorder. The compulsion to play a major role in the history of espionage could thus come from his complex and powerful personality and character.

III. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CICERO

The functioning of the mind over time can be described as personality, personal characteristics or character, which can range over the infinite gamut of human experience and can only separately include a moral element on the spectrum of good to evil. In a 2017 article, Wilder proposes a psychological model of the decision to spy: 1) an individual will be predisposed by an underlying personality dysfunction, 2) a state of crisis can arise, and 3) an opportunity can present itself. Wilder also made a distinction between two types of spy: that motivated by self-interest and that motivated by heroism (Wilder, 2017).

Applying this model on the basis of his autobiography (with Nogly) as a major source, with the additional help of the account of his handler Moyzisch, it becomes clear that Cicero's personality did operate dysfunctionally, firstly with regard to the issue of status. Cicero constantly referred to himself as a *kavass*, a Turkish word to describe a person of Turkish ethnicity working in the service of a foreign master. As he wrote "... a *kavass* is an insignificant nobody, and I have always hated being a nobody" (Bazna, 1962, p.14). Among his accomplishments, Cicero was a talented classical singer and dreamed of operatic stardom, a dream which was never to be realised. While Sir Hughe was courteous and considerate in his dealings with Cicero, Lady Knatchebull-Hughessen was, in Cicero's view, less than courteous, having the habit of passing Cicero in the corridor without acknowledgement (Bazna, 1962, p.75).

Cicero freely admitted to greed as a major motivation, and his initial demand for his first film of secret documents was, as noted, 20,000 English Pounds, a very high sum. Over time, proceeds from his sale of documents to the Germans totalled 300,000 English Pounds, most of which turned out to be counterfeit, expertly prepared by the prisoner counterfeiters enforced to work by the Germans. Moyzisch's handling of Cicero could very easily have been disastrous for Cicero, and ultimately for Moyzisch himself, but for Moyzisch's astuteness, empathy and courtesy. As Moyzisch wrote about Cicero after a meeting early in their dealings "Perhaps there was a motive more noble than mere greed for money. For the first time, and for a few minutes only, I had a fleeting sympathy for the man behind me" (Moyzisch, 1969, p.5). Despite the huge pressure from Berlin to ascertain details of Cicero's identity and background in order to ascertain whether or not he was a British plant, Moyzisch maintained a respectful distance and did not attempt to negotiate downwards the enormous sums of money demanded by Cicero in exchange for documents. Cicero admitted to a desire to grow rich, but also expressed a desire to maintain the neutrality of his adopted country of Turkey (Bazna, 1962, p.165).

From a psychological perspective, Moyzisch, as he recounts Operation Cicero, does not find evidence in Cicero of disorder of mood or thought. Moyzisch saw Cicero as a complex figure, motivated by a range of considerations as well as greed, and that on one occasion, he was "...nothing if not a gentleman..." (Moyzisch, 1969). However, Moyzisch was aware of Cicero's extreme feelings of class and status resentment, noting at another time that his motives were "obscure", possibly referring to his complicated ethnic background. It is probable that Cicero's minority status as an ethnic Albanian in the Ottoman Empire and later Yugoslavia, born in Pristina, (now the capital of Kosovo), and of Turkish ethnicity, may have led to identity confusion and an identity insecurity. It is interesting to note that his languages, as claimed by himself, were Turkish, French, Serbo-Croatian (now officially two separate languages), a little Greek and a smattering of German, and with an ability to read and understand English but only to speak with difficulty (Bazna, 1962, p.18). It is not clear to what extent if any, he was competent in the Albanian language, as he did not mention this in *I Was Cicero*. In his pretence to have little knowledge of English, the investigators sent from Britain to uncover Cicero, believed him. They also concluded that Bazna was of limited intelligence as well as English language skill and could therefore be ruled out as the spy whose identity they have been sent to uncover (Baxter, 2008).

In his autobiography, Cicero was quite frank about his mental and nervous state. Cicero admitted to having a nervous condition which was relieved by his dangerous procedure of borrowing documents: "My impudence grew from day to day. Photographing secret documents in the British Embassy became a form of nervous stimulation for me, a kind of drug that I required to enable me to go quietly to sleep" (Bazna, 1962, p.68).

Cicero also perceived a problematical lack of status and recognition which he resolved by becoming a statesman by proxy. By day he was a kavass, by night he was dealing as an equal with Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin and others: "In my room in the servants' quarters I engaged in imaginary conversations with the world's great men" (Bazna, 1962, p.74).

Cicero admitted to a need for nervous stimulation besides the obsession with status. This can explain his characteristic love of risk-taking. In regard to this he stated: "What I find so stimulating about this work is the danger" (Bazna, 1962, p.37).. At another time he stated: "For me, nothing existed but my obsessional greed for money, my compulsive craving for the daily thrill---and my fear. Now I realised that, in my confidence that I should never be found out, I had been putting my head in the noose daily for three months" (Bazna, 1962, p.95).

There can be no doubt that Cicero was aware of the likely consequences of his daily risk taking if caught: simply liquidation, with or without trial. Cicero had several risky situations with the Ambassador, but he also took enormous risks in boasting of his activities to his mistresses, of whom he acknowledges that there were successively three.

The area of greatest risk was the trust placed by Cicero in his handler, Moyzisch, who in turn held Cicero in a relationship of trust. Had Moyzisch acceded to the unceasingly insistent demands for background information on Cicero by his masters in Berlin, the knowledge of the identity of the likely source of this leakage would have found its way much quicker to the Western Allies. This would have been so because the United States had a spy in Berlin, Fritz Kolbe or "George Wood", who had reported to his handlers the existence of a serious leakage coming from the British Embassy in Ankara (Wires, 1999, pp.130-137).

Lastly, it could be said that Cicero displayed a high degree of intelligence in various capacities: of keeping the confidence of the Ambassador, in dealing with complex documents in a language that he had only limited knowledge (though much more than British investigators believed), in his technical skills in photography, and in his maintenance of the continued discretion with his German handler, Moyzisch. Later, Moyzisch became aware that his personal assistant, Cornelia Kapp, was actually herself a spy, working for the United States, and therefore a huge source of danger to Cicero (Wires, 1999, p.91). In contrast to his intelligence, Cicero showed a significant amount of naivete, culminating in his unsuspecting assumption that Nazi Germany would act in good faith and honour their side of the transaction with genuine bank notes to a total value of 300,000 English Pounds.

The authenticity of the stolen documental information has been questioned, with the claim sometimes made that the British substituted false information. On this, the view of the historian Wires is that the documents were "fully genuine in origin and in text" (Wires, 1999, p.203). Their genuineness notwithstanding, the documents were ultimately of little benefit to German High Command because of infighting, internal rivalry and suspicion, and with very little or no value being placed upon them by Hitler.

The ethics of Cicero's spying activity could be discussed at length but are beyond the realm of psychology, except to say that master-servant relations are traditionally seen as requiring respect on both sides. In a context of war, there is an expectation that the normal protocols will be ignored, and Cicero saw his activity as promoting Turkish neutrality.

IV. CONCLUSION

Although an assessment of Cicero's impact on the progression of World War II remains controversial, it is important to understand his psychology. Relying upon his autobiography, it is clear that Cicero did not display any of the symptoms of a major psychiatric disorder. However, turning to his personality and character, there is evidence of abnormal characteristics. It can be helpful to here apply Wilder's model of the psychology of the spy. Firstly, there is evidence of an underlying personality abnormality in the form of an obsessive need to overcome a perceived deficit of status and recognition and a related greed as he tried to assuage that obsessive need. In this connection, an insecurity about ethnic identity may have been a contributing factor. A state of crisis was present in that his adopted country of Turkey was under pressure to end its neutrality in World War II, and lastly, an opportunity arose when Cicero was able to observe the British Ambassador's slack practices of security.

To this model must be added the element of luck, materialising in the person of his handler in the German Embassy, Moyzisch, who displayed an ever-present professionalism and discretion in his dealings with Cicero and his superior in Berlin, enabling one of the greatest spying coups of the period to take place. The fact that advantage was not taken of this by the German High Command was a result of the chaos and disorder in that body and its leader. The non-payment of Cicero due to the use of counterfeit currency is a lasting historical irony.

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