



Hitler's Man in Havana: Heinz Luning and Nazi Espionage in Latin America

Thomas D. Schoonover

University Press of Kentucky (Aug 4, 2008)

Unknown \$29.95 (256pp)

978-0-8131-2501-5

Schoonover tells a hilarious story: the Abwehr sought the best but in Heinz Luning got the worst. It needed an agent in Havana: given naval routes and schedules, U-boats could wreak even greater havoc on ships carrying war materiel eastward to Britain and westward to the Pacific theater. Heinz Luning wanted a comfortable war: espionage in Latin America (he had lived briefly in the Dominican Republic) seemed ideal. The Abwehr had no faith in its agent; Luning had no commitment to his mission. He couldn't build a radio, mix secret ink, or recruit a network.

Identified via British mail intercepts in the Bahamas, Luning was arrested, tried, and executed for his never-made radio con-tacts with U-boats whose never-fired torpedoes caused imaginary Allied deaths. Schoonover demonstrates how everybody (except Luning) benefited; acclaim for UK, US, and Cuban security chiefs; a Cuban—US rapprochement; and boosted morale as the “massive spy network” had been neutralized. Ineptitude and manipulation get no better—but sparked Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana*. Schoonover had to dig deep to find his facts; to prevent widespread embarrassment, a semi-official cover-up still persists.

PETER SKINNER (January 9, 2009)

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