Eric Clifford Ambler OBE (28 June 1909 – 22 October 1998) was an influential British author of thrillers, in particular spy novels who introduced a new realism to the genre. He also worked as a screenwriter. Ambler also used the pseudonym Eliot Reed for books co-written with Charles Rodda.

**LIFE**

Ambler was born in London into a family of entertainers who ran a puppet show, with which he helped in his early years. Both parents also worked as music hall artists. Later he studied engineering at Northampton Polytechnic in Islington (now City University, London), and served a traineeship with an engineering company. However, his upbringing as an entertainer proved dominant and he soon moved to writing plays and other works. By the early 1930s he was a copywriter at an advertising agency in London. After resigning he moved to Paris, where he met and married Louise Crombie, an American fashion correspondent.

At that time, Ambler was politically a staunch Anti-Fascist and like many others tended to regard the Soviet Union as the only

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real counterweight to fascist aggression – which was reflected in the fact that some of his early books include Soviet agents depicted positively and as sympathetic characters, the undoubted allies of the main protagonist. Like numerous like-minded people in different countries, Ambler was shocked and disillusioned by the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939. His post-war anti-Communist novel Judgment on Deltchev (1951), based on the Stalinist purge-trials in Eastern Europe, caused him to be reviled by many former Communist Party and other progressive associates.

When World War II broke out, Ambler entered the army as a private soldier. He was commissioned into the Royal Artillery in 1941. He was soon reassigned to photographic units. He ended the war as a Lieutenant-Colonel and assistant director of the army film unit. After the war, he worked in the civilian film industry as a screen-writer, receiving an Academy Award nomination in 1953 for his work on the film The Cruel Sea, adapted from the novel by Nicholas Monsarrat. He did not resume writing under his own name until 1951, entering the second of the two distinct periods in his writing. Five of his six early works are regarded as classic thrillers. He created the 1960 American detective TV series Checkmate.


In 2008, his estate transferred all of Ambler's copyrights and other legal and commercial rights to Owatonna Media. Owatonna Media sold these copyrights on to Coolabi Plc in 2009, but retained a master licence in radio and audio rights. These rights are commercially licensed in the UK and abroad.

WRITING CAREER

Ambler's best known works are probably The Mask of Dimitrios (1939) (published in the US under the title A Coffin for Dimitrios), which was made into a film in 1944, and The Light of Day (1962), filmed in 1964 as Topkapi. He was also a successful screenwriter and lived in Los Angeles in his later years.

Amongst other classic movies based on his work are Journey into Fear (1943), starring Joseph Cotten, and an original screenplay, The October Man (1947). He wrote the screenplay for A Night to Remember about the sinking of the Titanic, along with many other screenplays, particularly those concerning stories and adventures at sea. He published his autobiography in 1985, Here Lies Eric Ambler.

A recurring theme in Ambler's books is the amateur who finds himself unwillingly in the company of hardened criminals or spies. Typically, the protagonist is out of his depth and often seems for much of the book a bumbling anti-hero, yet eventually manages to surprise himself as well as the professionals by a decisive action that outwits his far more experienced opponents. This plot is used, for example, in Journey into Fear, Epitaph for a Spy, The Mask of Dimitrios, Passage of Arms, The Light of Day and Dirty Story. In Ambler's books, unlike in most other spy novels, the protagonist is rarely a professional spy, or a policeman or counter-intelligence operative.

A number of Ambler's characters feature in more than one novel: Andreas Zaleshoff and his sister Tamara in Uncommon Danger and Cause for Alarm, Charles Latimer in The Mask of Dimitrios and The Intercom Conspiracy, Arthur Abdel Simpson in The Light of Day and Dirty Story, and Zia Haki appears as a Colonel Haki of the Turkish secret police in The Mask of Dimitrios and Journey Into Fear and is mentioned as a General Haki in The Light of Day.

WORKS

SCREENPLAYS

The Way Ahead (1944)
The October Man (1947)
The Passionate Friends (1949)
Highly Dangerous (1950)
The Clouded Yellow (1951)
The Magic Box (1951)
Encore (1951)
The Promoter also known as The Card (1952)
The Cruel Sea (1953)
Shoot First also known as Rough Shoot (1953)
The Purple Plain (1954)
Lease of Life (1954)
Yangtse Incident: The Story of HMS Amethyst (1957)
A Night to Remember (1958)
The Wreck of the Mary Deare (1959)
Alfred Hitchcock Presents: Act of Faith (1962), TV episode
Love Hate Love (1970), TV movie

NOVELS

The Dark Frontier (1936)
Uncommon Danger (1937), US title: Background to Danger
Epitaph for a Spy (1938)
Cause for Alarm (1938)
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The Mask of Dimitrios
(1939), US title:
A Coffin for Dimitrios

Journey into Fear
(1940)

Judgment on Deltchev
(1952)

The Schirmer Inheritance
(1953)

The Night-Comers
(1956), also published as
State of Siege

Passage of Arms
(1959); Gold Dagger
Award

The Light of Day
(1962), also published as
Topkapi;
Edgar Award for Best Novel, 1964

A Kind of Anger
(1964)

Dirty Story
(1967)

The Intercom Conspiracy
(1969), also published as
The Quiet Conspiracy

The Levanter
(1972); Gold Dagger
Award

Doctor Frigo
(1974)

Send No More Roses
(1977), US title:
The Siege of the Villa Lipp

The Care of Time
(1981)

SHORT STORIES AND NON-FICTION

The Ability to Kill: and Other Pieces
(1963). Published with a chapter on John Bodkin Adams removed because of libel concerns.

To Catch A Spy (1964). An anthology of stories.

Here Lies: An Autobiography

Waiting for Orders
(1991). Contains eight stories mostly written in 1939–40 while Ambler awaited his call to military duty:

"The Intrusions of Dr. Czissar". Six ingenious detective stories featuring Dr Jan Czissar, a refugee Czech detective formerly of the Prague police.

"The Army of the Shadows". A suspense story about an English surgeon travelling in the Swiss Alps who becomes entangled in the intrigues of pre-war anti-Nazis.

"The Blood Bargain". A suspense story about a Latin American dictator who cleverly gains his release from insurgents but then finds exile extremely dangerous.

The Story so Far: Memories and Other Fictions

SHORT STORIES (FIRST PUBLICATION)

"The Army of the Shadows" (1939) in The Queen's Book of the Red Cross

AS ELIOT REED (WITH CHARLES RODDA)

Skytip
(1950)

Tender to Danger
(1951), also published as Tender to Moonlight

The Maras Affair
(1953)

Charter to Danger
(1954)

Passport to Panic
(1958)

LITERATURE


EXTERNAL LINKS

Eric Ambler at the Internet Movie Database
Tuesday, October 24th marks United Nations Day and the 72nd anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Charter in 1945. With the ratification of this founding document by most of its signatories, including the five permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), the United Nations was established.
Eric Ambler, Writer: The Purple Plain. Eric Ambler was born on June 28, 1909 in London, England as Eric Clifford Ambler. He was a writer and producer, known for The Purple Plain (1954), A Night to Remember (1958) and The Cruel Sea (1953). He was married to Joan Harrison and Louise Smith Crombie. He died on October 22, 1998 in London. Eric Clifford Ambler OBE was an influential British author of thrillers, in particular spy novels who introduced a new realism to the genre. He also worked as a screenwriter. Ambler used the pseudonym Eliot Reed for books co-written with Charles Rodda. Source: Wikipedia. Eric Ambler is generally credited with having raised the thriller to the level of literature. He brought intellectual substance to the genre at a time when it often suffered from shortages of surprise, maturity, verisimilitude and literary skill. Now, Eric Ambler is synonymous with novels of suspense, action, adventure and intrigue in foreign lands. His books became models for generations of other writers. "It is not absolutely necessary that one listens to the words. Sometimes the music that comes through is enough."