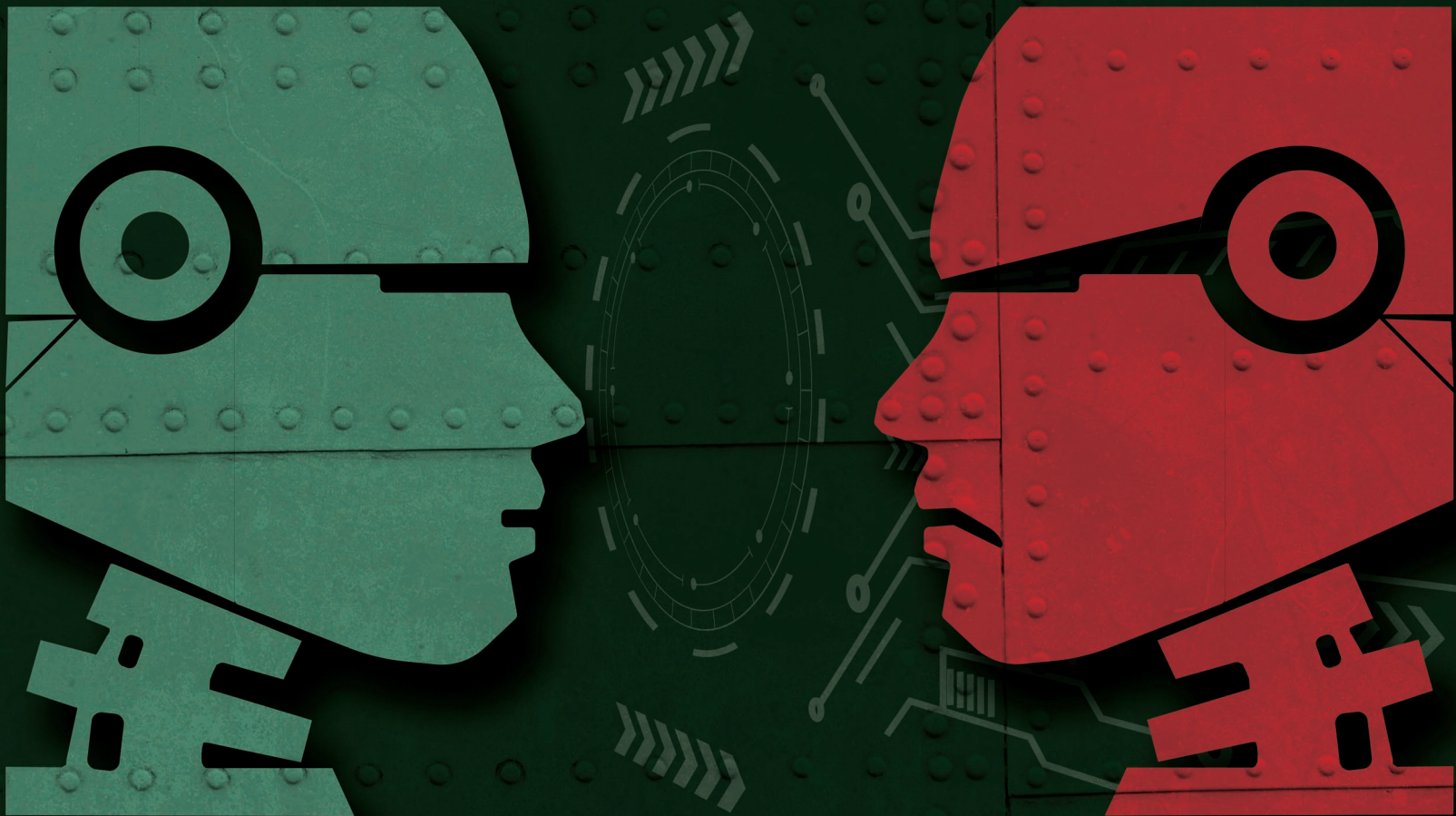


# STUDIES

IN INTELLIGENCE | Vol. 68, No. 1 (March 2024)



## **Promise and Peril of AI**

Counterintelligence Revisited

British Propaganda Coup

**Intelligence in Public Media**

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The Sherman Kent Award of \$3,500 is offered annually for the most significant contribution to the literature of intelligence submitted for publication in *Studies*. The prize may be divided if two or more articles are judged to be of equal merit, or it may be withheld if no article is deemed sufficiently outstanding.

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# Studies in Intelligence

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### *In Memoriam* *Paul Arnold (1933–2023)*

With sadness we note the sudden death on November 16, 2023 of Paul Arnold in the retirement home in Winchester, Virginia, that he shared with his wife of 63 years, Jane. Paul had been a long-serving (1988–2001) managing editor of *Studies*.

Paul began his nearly fifty-year career as an intelligence officer after his graduation in 1954 from Kansas State University. He was commissioned through the university's Army ROTC program as a US Army military intelligence officer and was posted to the National Security Agency. In 1955, he applied for a position in CIA. In the personal history statement accompanying his application in 1955, Paul observed that, for lack of knowledge, he really could not say what he would want to do in CIA. He could imagine being an "intelligence analyst" or a "covert agent" in the field. Given a choice, he would choose the agent route. His career would, in fact, take both paths.

After entering on duty in CIA in August 1957, he would begin the operational side of his life, focused on the conflicts in Southeast Asia. His assignments covered Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam and included field and headquarters positions. In 1969, ready for a major shift, he sought and was given the opportunity to transfer to CIA's analytical directorate to bring field experience to CIA analysis of Southeast Asian issues. He would shift in 1975 to an editorial capacity in the production of current intelligence products for senior US policymakers. These included the *President's Intelligence Checklist*, the *National Intelligence Daily*, and the *President's Daily Brief*.

These assignments would prepare him for a second career after retirement with *Studies in Intelligence*. During his years of stewardship, Paul brought unclassified portions of the journal into the public domain and to the internet and updated its production. At *Studies*, as elsewhere in his career, Paul lived up to the observation of a senior manager, who noted in presenting Paul a Meritorious Intelligence Medal for Sustained Excellence in performance of his duties as managing editor of the *National Intelligence Daily*: "[Paul] is one of those professionals on whom this office and directorate rely, more than they are often aware." Folks who worked with Paul on *Studies* and CIA current intelligence products knew well his contributions to quality CIA writing.—Andres Vaart

# Contributors

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## “The Incalculable Element”: The Promise and Peril of Artificial Intelligence

Zachery Tyson Brown

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**For the Intelligence Community, questions of how swiftly and how thoroughly GenAI should be integrated into its distributed collection and analysis architecture are being hotly debated just as they are in other sectors, only with far more at stake.**

*But the incalculable element in the future exercises the widest influence, and is the most treacherous.*

– Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*

Recent advances in generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) have prompted tremendous excitement and significant trepidation while renewing a vigorous public debate about just what the growing capabilities of these systems portend for the future of work and society. There is another, parallel conversation going on, though, and this one is being held largely behind closed doors. For the Intelligence Community, questions of how swiftly and how thoroughly GenAI should be integrated into its distributed collection and analysis architecture are being hotly debated just as they are in other sectors, only with far more at stake.

GenAI is a subset within the larger field of AI research that uses transformer neural networks (this is what the ‘t’ in GPT stands for) in conjunction with so-called large language models (LLMs, a euphemism for volumes of semantic data sourced from the internet).<sup>1</sup> Narrower models of AI based on convolutional or recurrent neural networks are often relatively good within a particular field (such as medicine or law) but otherwise prove comically helpless. They are also

limited by the need for vast amounts of labeled data, which makes the process of ‘training’ them expensive and time consuming.

Now, with the combination of the transformer foundation—which enables the AI to mathematically examine the relationships between sequential data like the words in this sentence all at once—and a hefty LLM corpus to draw upon, the new breed of conversational AI applications such as OpenAI’s ChatGPT, Google’s PaLM, Anthropic’s Claude, and Meta’s LLaMA, among others, can respond to a wide variety of user queries, generating sophisticated media output in forms that are useful to humans—such as texts, images, videos, or even music.<sup>2</sup> They can, for instance, satisfactorily deconstruct or summarize complicated financial contracts and technical manuals, create surreal artwork, and even pass the bar exam.<sup>3</sup>

The IC’s interest in AI isn’t new.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, some intelligence components have pursued AI solutions for decades.<sup>5</sup> Historical efforts focused primarily on using rudimentary machine learning and computer vision to process and mine voluminous sets of data gathered from technical intelligence collection systems, to identify patterns and spot irregularities in overhead surveillance, and to automate certain time-consuming,

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***Looking past both the hype and the histrionics, we find that the reality of GenAI is neither quite so wondrous nor quite so bleak as either the proselytizers or the doomsayers would have us believe.***

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routine processes.<sup>6</sup> When it comes to intelligence analysis, however, the pursuit of algorithmic solutions to what are essentially fundamental problems of analytic uncertainty has met with mostly uninspiring results—until now.

The advent of AI applications that can rapidly ingest large datasets and from them “generate” useful content has convinced the IC’s AI proponents that we are at the onset of a new, revolutionary era of intelligence.<sup>7</sup> This new era, they say, will be characterized by how well intelligence services leverage AI to collect, process, and analyze massive global data streams, and the United States will pay dearly if it falls behind rival nations in this new realm of competition.<sup>8</sup> AI’s advocates can sound almost evangelical at times in their fervor, with some even going so far as to claim that generative AI will spell the end of intelligence analysis as a human activity altogether.<sup>9</sup>

Skeptics (like me), naturally, disagree, finding both the declarations of revolution and the dire warnings of necessity to be premature, and find the apparent drive to integrate generative AI applications into our most sensitive systems and processes to be irresponsible, at best. A more judicious approach would recognize the potential time-saving benefits of GenAI while keeping in mind the risks of relying over-much on what remain brittle, untested, and untrustworthy applications whose inner workings not even their designers can entirely explain.<sup>10</sup> The revolutionary new era that AI’s proponents portend

might instead turn out to be one that is defined by which agencies make themselves overly dependent upon it—and therefore vulnerable.

Looking past both the hype and the histrionics, we find that the reality of GenAI is neither quite so wondrous nor quite so bleak as either the proselytizers or the doomsayers would have us believe. To be clear, transformer models are a genuinely remarkable achievement in the pursuit of artificial intelligence and have certain utility to the craft of analysis. The devil, however, is as always in the details—and there are ample reasons for us to be cautious about just how swiftly and how thoroughly we integrate these tools into our community’s most important work.

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***Will AI Revolutionize the Craft of Intelligence Analysis?***

If you’ll forgive the use of a deservedly reviled analytic trope—it depends. It depends on what you mean by “AI” and on what you mean by “intelligence analysis.” As Alice Borene has argued, much routine issue updating and summarization of fragmented reporting that currently absorbs much of an analyst’s valuable time might feasibly be trusted to generative applications (albeit with humans in the loop to check their work).<sup>11</sup> But while generative AI can save time with instant summaries, those summaries can also be full of lies.<sup>12</sup> While generative AI can serve as a powerful tool to help analysts identify correlations and even to help spark new insights, it can also serve

to diminish the ability of analysts to think for themselves, becoming less of a prosthetic and more of a crutch.<sup>13</sup> And while the IC faces many of the same challenges as the private sector, which AI can help address, it also faces many other challenges that are unique to the field of intelligence that AI might just make worse.

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***Intelligence is Uncertain***

Even with the ability to swiftly parse volumes of material, GenAI still relies upon a wellspring of reliable data to be most effective. With certain and ample sources to pull from, GenAI applications can produce passable generalizations and even derive useful, if rudimentary, conclusions. The problem is that any issue worth being the subject of intelligence analysis is fundamentally uncertain, characterized by incomplete, ambiguous, and often contradictory snippets of partial, unreliable information.

Former NSA and CIA Director Michael Hayden once put it like this: “If it were a fact, it wouldn’t be intelligence.”<sup>14</sup> What he meant was that because of the inherently uncertain nature of intelligence work, intelligence analysts do not, primarily, operate in the black-and-white world of facts. Intelligence analysis instead seeks to illuminate the gray spaces of the world that lie somewhere in between truth and fiction and that are rife with various and often conflicting sets of claims, assumptions, and inferences. These are not the sorts of issues that generative AIs, who already have problems telling the truth, are well suited for.

Only the most rudimentary of intelligence questions can be reduced

to a simple, binary answer of “yes” or “no” (did an event occur? Is a thing located in a place?). More frequent and more important intelligence questions concern intangibles like “will” and “intent” and the fundamentally unpredictable interactions of complex dynamic systems—the sorts of questions former National Intelligence Council Chair Gregory Treverton referred to as “mysteries.”<sup>15</sup>

Here we should recall Clausewitz’s timeless tenet: “A great part of information obtained in war is contradictory, a still greater part is false, and by far the greatest part is somewhat doubtful. What is required of an officer in this case is a certain power of discrimination.” Just as Clausewitz warned against attempting to reduce warfare to a crude “algebra of action,” we should resist all attempts to reduce intelligence to formulaic calculation.

Intelligence is, at its heart, about risk, contingency, and surprise. It is not concerned with averages, but rather with exceptions to the average. The truth is that, no matter how large your model may be, it will never encompass the world; that there is no amount of data that will permit the forecasting of novel events in an increasingly complex competitive environment wherein innumerable threads, material and immaterial, sympathetic and antagonistic, are all wound together in a Gordian knot of causality. In other words, while GenAI may be incredibly useful in comparatively tame, bounded fields such as advertising, customer service, medical sales, or even management consulting precisely because they excel at arranging and correlating regularities, the real world has no

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***It is impossible to fill every so-called intelligence gap. Missing knowledge is instead far more often mitigated by the insight, experience, and judgment of expert human analysts.***

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boundaries, and it is the irregularities that drive intelligence failures.

It is impossible to fill every so-called intelligence gap. Missing knowledge is instead far more often mitigated by the insight, experience, and judgment of expert human analysts. While informed by data where possible and appropriate, intelligence analysts are more concerned with nuance, judgment, and yes, with hunches—or what we might call tacit or implicit knowledge if you prefer a more scientific term.<sup>16</sup>

“Tacit” comes from a Latin word meaning silent. “Implicit” means folded in, referring to the fact that implicit knowledge is complex and layered. Implicit knowledge, then, is an emergent phenomenon that we sometimes call intuition or a “gut feeling.” It is something that arises from experience, knowledge of multiple domains, and the complexity of the human brain. In short, tacit knowledge emerges from the uniquely human synthesis of explicit knowledge, and this is what makes it incredibly difficult to quantify in terms a synthetic intelligence can parse. As polymath Michael Polanyi once put it, “we know more than we can tell.”<sup>17</sup>

Many of these issues derive ultimately from a deceptively seductive desire to make the world legible, and perhaps even to render it predictable, through the sheer accumulation of data. This fallacy is rooted in a misguided conflation of the social and natural sciences, in faith that the tools and methods of the former can

be made applicable to the latter, with a few tweaks. It posits a simplification of the inherently complex by forfeiting context, attempting to make the abstract straightforward and the messy machine-readable. Just as the military-technical revolution proponents mistakenly conflated sensing and targeting with strategy, the IC’s AI proponents can often appear to conflate data and information with intelligence.<sup>18</sup> Both are examples of mistaking the tactical for the strategic, the finite for the infinite.<sup>19</sup>

As long centuries of history have demonstrated, however, reality is different. There is a fundamental and perhaps unbridgeable gap between the physical and natural and the social and political—and intelligence, strategy, and foreign policy are all primarily political (which is to say, adversarial) subjects.

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### ***Intelligence Is Adversarial***

Intelligence analysis is not a neutral field of academic research—intelligence is a deeply adversarial political activity undertaken by, and directed primarily against, rival states. Because of its inherently antagonistic nature, intelligence is a discipline mired in lies. This aspect is not tangential; it is fundamental.

All intelligence is vulnerable to deliberate and at times elaborate deceptive measures undertaken by hostile foreign intelligence services, who have diverse and effective ways of concealing, distorting, and poisoning the information that intelligence

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### ***Intelligence analysis is not a neutral field of academic research—intelligence is a deeply adversarial political activity undertaken by, and directed primarily against, rival states.***

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services strive to acquire from them. Any means of intelligence collection is vulnerable to deception, from purportedly secret documents passed by recruited human sources to the ethereal streams of technical data gathered by billion-dollar satellites.

Because of these competitive aspects, intelligence work is most often not at all like data science—despite many attempts in recent years to make it so. In data analytics, the right piece of information can usually be found if the researcher designs their study well. Intelligence analysis is usually more like the old trope about putting together a jigsaw puzzle, only with someone else constantly trying to steal your pieces while also placing pieces of an entirely different puzzle into the pile you're working with. In a future competitive environment that is inundated with AI-generated content, this problem will only become worse, making it both easier to deceive and harder for analysts to accurately judge the capabilities and intentions of adversaries.<sup>20</sup>

As a result, intelligence analysts are less like data scientists and more like judges. Both practice a sort of impartiality, as both are obligated by conscience and their sense of professionalism to adhere as closely to the facts as possible. Yet while the academic scientist can call their task complete once a topic is accurately observed and explained, the analyst (like the judge) must go further—she must pass judgment. She must pass judgment on many things: on which sources to consider reliable, on which to discount or cast aside, on how

much material a customer can feasibly make use of, on just how explicit to make their suppositions, inferences, and uncertainties. Intelligence analysts are also not completely impartial—they should, after all, want their own side to “win,” or at least to make better decisions in the face of uncertainty than their rivals, approaching something like truth in the outcome. The same cannot be said for GenAIs, which are currently challenged by the very notion of truth—because truth, at least so far as concerns humanity, is an ontological problem, not a mathematical one.

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#### ***Promise and Peril***

The truth is that no one knows what the future holds in store with AI, nor that future's implications for the world, let alone the IC. The engineers designing AI systems themselves do not know all of the potential uses (and hidden limitations) of what they are building, let alone how progressively variant iterations of those applications will be used ten, twenty, or fifty years from now.<sup>21</sup> While we can catch glimpses of potential AI futures here in the present, these are fleeting, incomplete, and often illusory—much like intelligence work.

On the one hand, AI is already remarkably well suited to perform routine and time-intensive tasks that often make humans bored and thus prone to error. In the foreseeable future, analysts will be able to use AI to analyze handwriting collected by human agents, identify targets of interest from ubiquitous and persistent

space-based and air-breathing overhead surveillance platforms, and identify micro-expressions that may serve as tells during source interviews or interrogations. Researchers at Microsoft, for instance, have written a lengthy treatise that lists many other surprising ways in which computer vision applications can be used, for instance, reading an operating manual to learn how to pilot a machine or diagnose a patient.<sup>22</sup> AIs will, for some tasks such as geolocation, make today's best open-source analysts look like amateurs. AI will be critical in fields such as cybersecurity, where the digital conversation between attacker and defender is incessant. We will require security applications that evolve at the speed of AI in a future where AIs develop and deploy cyber-weapons autonomously.<sup>23</sup>

People, on the other hand, excel at higher-order critical, creative, imaginative, and innovative thinking under novel, unstructured, or ambiguous conditions. They are empathetic, imaginative, and capable of authentic emotional engagement with others. Empathy is key—both for the foreign adversaries that intelligence analysts seek to understand and anticipate, and, crucially, for the users of intelligence they exist to serve—because intelligence is at its core a characteristically human endeavor that is ultimately and essentially about the perspectives, thoughts, fears, desires, and behaviors of human beings.

More specifically, intelligence is most concerned with a relatively small number of individual human beings—the foreign political and military leaders and other decision-makers who inform the decisions to invest in a weapons program or a new hospital, to ally with or bandwagon

against, to wage war, or to sue for peace. While we can sometimes estimate the average behavior of groups of humans, the behavior and decisions of individuals are famously difficult, if not impossible, to predict. Expert intelligence analysts immerse themselves in the histories, languages, and cultures of foreign places to better adopt the perspective of those who live there, with all the inherent biases and preferences of their fears, internal contradictions, and other irrationalities that are the sum of personal experience and acculturation.

Fortunately, there is no shortage of both types of work in the intelligence world, which potentially makes for a match made in heaven. As the Director of CIA's Open-Source Enterprise Randy Nixon has said, "AI is a starting point."<sup>24</sup> If the IC applies AI smartly, it will lead to an empowerment of the human, not a loss of agency to the machines. AIs will soon be able to see, hear, listen, and speak to us, in real time, across multiple platforms. This means analysts will be able to have real conversations with seemingly intelligent digital assistants. Our AI assistants will generate our travel reports, draft our emails, and offer editorial corrections. They will serve as encyclopedia, thesaurus, and search engine all in one, all while managing our inboxes, deconflicting our meeting calendars, monitoring our favorite newsfeeds, and even offering advice or chiding us against bias creeping into our writing. A compelling vision of this future was sketched out by Joseph Gartin not so long ago in these very pages.<sup>25</sup>

At the same time, intelligence services must be cognizant and cautious of the very real risks incurred by the

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***Expert intelligence analysts immerse themselves in the histories, languages, and cultures of foreign places to better adopt the perspective of those who live there, with all the inherent biases and preferences of their fears, internal contradictions, and other irrationalities that are the sum of personal experience and enculturation.***

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too-rapid or the too-comprehensive integration of AI into their collection and analysis enterprises, a sampling of which follows.

GenAIs are not pure search engines trained to find and source facts. They are instead a sort of voluble calculator, whose transformer modules mathematically predict the next likeliest word to appear in a string of text based on the corpus available to it. Thanks to the way this calculation works, generative AIs are famously susceptible to "hallucinations," that is, generating imaginary facts, figures, reports, quotes, and citations.<sup>26</sup> In one particularly egregious case, GenAI even fabricated a slew of legal opinions and judicial precedents when an attorney preparing a case asked for a brief.<sup>27</sup> It's important to understand that the LLMs are not lying to us. They're simply doing what they are told, which is giving users what they ask for—for better and worse. If the bulk of an LLM corpus suggests a citation should exist, the AI will generate it even if it doesn't. Generative AI will find what we tell it to find.<sup>28</sup> But, of course, the problem in finding what we're looking for is that we are often surprised when the things we're not looking for find us instead.

Another issue that should give the leaders of the intelligence community pause is the pernicious effects AI has on human reasoning. There are troubling (but perhaps, unsurprising) indications that extensive use of AI can render humans less

capable, not more. One study found that humans using a high-quality AI application became lazy and careless over time, letting the AI take over instead of using it as just another tool. The author, Harvard researcher Fabrizio Dell'Acqua, refers to this as users "falling asleep at the wheel"—which is one thing when it happens to recruiters, but quite another if it happens to intelligence officers responsible for informing strategic decisions.<sup>29</sup>

A great amount of time and effort is spent training intelligence analysts to identify and mitigate the effects of bias, but bias is quite literally built into generative AI models. GenAI reflects the values, frames, and biases of the models they are built around and trained upon, regardless of how large they are. One of the chief restraints of at least the current slate of GenAI is the fact that all of these LLMs aren't quite as large as we might imagine. They represent only a narrow slice of the online world, and a slice that's predominantly white, male, and anglophone at that—which is to say, not exactly the most useful corpus for intelligence purposes (except maybe those of foreign intelligence services). Even more worrisome than AI making its users careless, perhaps, is another study that demonstrates human users of AI "absorbing" the system's built-in biases. Worse, these users were shown to retain those biases even after they stopped using the AI tool.<sup>30</sup>

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### ***Like any tool, AI is, at its best, a prosthetic for authentic intelligence, which, if aptly applied, will help human intelligence analysts to better serve the users of intelligence.***

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Eventually, in a world where AIs are both generating and consuming content, over time everything might start to sound alike. Some AI researchers have even suggested that AIs trained on AI-generated content would eventually collapse under the recursive weight of semantic saturation, losing their ability to form coherent sentences altogether.<sup>31</sup>

In conclusion, intelligence leaders must remember that for all its seeming sapience, AI is, again, just a tool, and one for which there is no user manual. For some tasks, generative

AI can achieve remarkable results (although usually with significant prompting from a human user). For others, it outright fails, either gracefully or spectacularly, and the ability to distinguish between these outcomes beforehand is not always obvious. Like any tool, AI is, at its best, a prosthetic for authentic intelligence, which, if aptly applied, will help human intelligence analysts to better serve the users of intelligence. It will augment our understanding, reasoning, and yes, even our creativity.<sup>32</sup>

AI holds promise and peril for the craft of intelligence analysis, and the ways IC leaders choose to employ it will make all the difference. If intelligence officials are seduced by the characteristically American conceit that the world can be made legible through technical means alone, they will be frustrated when the algorithms inevitably break in the face of nuance or novelty. Alternatively, if they choose instead to adopt a more cautious and judicial approach to use AI as primarily an aid to human analysis, harnessing its potential to augment the natural ingenuity and empathy of our community's analytic cadre, the IC—and more importantly, the nation—will benefit.



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### ***Endnotes***

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## What Are We Talking About *Now*, When We Talk About Counterintelligence?

John Ehrman

*No better lesson than the Dreyfus Affair will ever be shown to the people; they have to make the effort to distinguish between liars and truthful men. They have to read, question, compare, verify, think.—Georges Clemenceau<sup>1</sup>*

“This essay is only a start for the work of developing a robust theory of counterintelligence,” I wrote at the end of “What Are We Talking About When We Talk About Counterintelligence?” in the June 2009 issue (Vol. 53, No. 2) of this journal. Almost as soon as the article appeared, however, I began to have doubts about it. Was it a weaker starting point to understanding counterintelligence (CI) than I had hoped? What might I have gotten wrong or ought to have said differently? But, I decided, what’s done is done. I went on with other projects and didn’t think about the article again for years.

### ***What is Different in CI Today?***

The CI world is not static, however, and around 2020 I began to wonder how it might have changed since 2009. Much remains the same, but the social, technological, and political contexts in which CI is situated—the understanding of which I argued is critical to the work—was by then going through a series of changes as great as any in the past. Simultaneously, legal and geostrategic shifts, the spread of collection methods hitherto available only to the services of major powers, the rise of

### ***What were we talking about when we talked about counterintelligence in 2009?***

My goal in “What Are We Talking About When We Talk About Counterintelligence?” was to help plug a gap—the absence of a common understanding of what CI is—that I viewed as greatly reducing the effectiveness of US counterintelligence efforts. I started with a definition of CI, calling it the study of the organization and behavior of intelligence services. I went on to describe the different types of intelligence services we considered at the time. I emphasized that counterintelligence is almost always an analytical task that requires a deep understanding of the culture, operations, and structure of a target service. I further described these elements in four main points.

- To understand a service means knowing its history and the political and legal frameworks in which it operates, as those define its missions.
- Intelligence services are subject to political forces in their nations, but they are not passive. While acted upon, they also work to protect and advance their interests and are thus involved in complex political maneuvering.
- Services are insular and conservative, and they are often badly managed. They generally do not learn from their mistakes, leading to predictable behaviors.
- CI operations are more than just spy hunting. They can become exceptionally complex, and when they do, CI analysts especially need know the histories and behavioral patterns of the subject service or services.

social media, introduction of ubiquitous private and public surveillance systems, privatization of intelligence work, and the dependence of state services on new generations of employees with outlooks vastly different than those of their predecessors were driving profound shifts in counterintelligence.

It is with these developments in mind that I believe the time has come

to look at the original article and ask, 15 years on, what are we talking about *now*, when we talk about counterintelligence?

### ***The Original Article and Its Impact***

“What Are We Talking About” began to take shape around 2007 as a few handwritten notes I had

The views, opinions, and findings of the author expressed in this article should not be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations or representing the official positions of any component of the United States government.

penned to myself. Essentially, these were observations on the work my colleagues and I in Central Eurasia Division and the Counterintelligence Center of CIA carried out daily at the time. After a while I copied them to a whiteboard and discussed them with people who came by my office. Some months went by, and I started to think of turning them into a *Studies* article. After several more months of research and writing, I sent the draft to the managing editor at the time, who presented it to the *Studies* Editorial Board for approval, which it granted. Some members, however, were reluctant to approve it. “It might be too much of a primer,” “not sophisticated enough” were the concerns.

Primer or not, “What Are We Talking About” seems to have filled a niche. Soon after publication, it began to find its way into the syllabi of intelligence courses, first internally at CIA and then into university classes. It also found its way into anthologies; I was once told the article soon became the most reproduced *Studies* article ever. More important, it seems to have succeeded in its goal of stimulating further academic and theoretical discussions of CI, especially in the context of nonstate actors, cybersecurity, and comparative studies. (See text box.)

Some of these works can be long and abstract—what, exactly, is a “syncretic spy” or a “counterintelligence threat ontology”?<sup>2</sup>—but they have done much to expand CI studies beyond the traditional focus on the United States, Britain, Russia, and China. I certainly can’t claim credit for this surge in CI research, but I like to think that “What Are We Talking About” had something to do with it.

### **An Extended and Elevated Discussion**

Academic writings on aspects of counterintelligence theory, both general and specific, seem to have taken off around 2010. Below is a small sample of articles and longer works, broken down by category.

#### **General**

- Miron Varouhakis, “An Institution-Level Theoretical Approach for Counterintelligence,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence (IJIC)* 24, no. 3 (2011);
- Henry Prunckun, “Extending the Theoretical Structure of Intelligence to Counterintelligence,” *Salus Journal* 2, no. 2 (2014).

#### **CI and nonstate actors**

- Gaetano Joe Ilardi, “Irish Republican Army Counterintelligence,” *IJIC* 23, no. 1 (2010);
- Carl Wege, “Hizbollah’s Counterintelligence Apparatus,” *IJIC* 25, no. 4 (2012);
- John Gentry, “Toward a Theory of Non–State Actors’ Intelligence,” *Intelligence and National Security* 34, no. 4 (2019);
- Blake Mobley and Carl Wege, “Counterintelligence Vetting Techniques Compared Across Multiple Domains,” *IJIC* 34, no. 4 (2021).

#### **CI and Cybersecurity**

- Daniel Boawn, “Cyber Counterintelligence, Defending the United States’ Information Technology and Communications Critical Infrastructure from Chinese Threats,” Utica College, Master’s Thesis, 2014;
- John Gaitan, “Strategic Counterintelligence: An Approach to Engaging Security Threats to American Security,” Johns Hopkins University, Master’s Thesis, 2017;
- Neil Ashdown, “How Commercial cyber threat intelligence practitioners talk about intelligence and counterintelligence,” [https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/40090891/CTI\\_and\\_Counterintelligence\\_Ashdown\\_Aug20.pdf](https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/40090891/CTI_and_Counterintelligence_Ashdown_Aug20.pdf) (2020).
- John Gentry, “Cyber Intelligence: Strategic Warning is Possible,” *IJIC* 36, no. 3 (2023);

#### **Comparative Studies**

- Philip Davies and Kristian Gustafson, eds., *Intelligence Elsewhere* (Georgetown University Press, 2013);
- Ryan Shaffer, ed., *The Handbook of Asian Intelligence Cultures* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022);
- Shaffer, ed., *The Handbook of African Intelligence Cultures* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022).

### **What I might Have Said Differently**

Reading the article today, I am more than satisfied with how it has held up. The definition of CI that I offered—“the study of the organization

and behavior of the intelligence services of foreign states and entities and the application of the resulting knowledge”—may be a little awkward, but it captures the need for a broad view of CI, one that includes asset vetting, spy-hunting, penetration

of hostile services, reporting, and likely a dozen or more additional functions. It also makes clear the centrality of analysis in CI work—operations, to be sure, are vital, but analysis is critical.

#### ***Preparation for a CI position.***

Consistent with this, I focused on a point that, in retrospect, I ought to have emphasized even more. Generalized CI training for new CIA operational and analytical officers, I argued, is useful but inadequate for people expected to staff CI positions effectively. In the long run, CI officers will require a great deal more depth and breadth of expertise to be successful.

An officer's expertise needs to start with an understanding of his target country's CI history—that is, the record of its services' operations and methods as well as where they fit in the country's or entity's political and social history. After all, can anyone do effective CI work on Russia without knowing of Moscow's long record—from the Okhrana in the 1880s to the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) today—of deception and misinformation, illegals and provocations, or how Dzerzhinskiy set up the Cheka and ran its operations against anti-Bolshevik exiles? Can an analyst understand the behavior of German intelligence in 2023 without knowing the histories of the Gestapo and Stasi? Whether it is Russia, Germany, Israel, Hizbollah, or any other entity, only with an understanding of such backgrounds is an analyst or collector in a position to work on a given CI account.

#### ***Challenges of Filling CI Positions***

Stemming from this is another point I made and to which I ought to have paid more attention, the

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### ***Staffing, in fact may be the most difficult problem in CI.***

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difficulty of finding people to do counterintelligence work. Staffing, in fact may be the most difficult problem in CI. When intelligence services need to hire area experts, economists, engineers, or any number of other specialists, they can turn to universities or other government departments to find pools of candidates. But few schools, especially among the prominent universities where intelligence services focus their hiring efforts, teach intelligence as a discipline and, even within these programs, CI is usually but one or two class sessions in a general course on intelligence. Services are left to look for CI candidates within the general hiring pool or among current staff officers, and then teach them the specialized skills they will need.

Learning the craft of counterintelligence takes a long time, however. I believe aspiring CI officers must first learn the practical work of intelligence, which takes several years of job experience, before starting in counterintelligence. In my observation, new hires assigned directly to CI tend to become overwhelmed and soon transfer to work in the areas of their academic training. Once in a CI position, it takes anywhere from one to five years, depending on the specialty, to achieve a working knowledge. Even then, CI officers must be conscious of how much they still do not know and the need to continue learning.

The difficulty of staffing CI units often forces services, including CIA, to assign nonspecialists to CI positions. This practice has some benefits, including giving officers experience in CI work while providing much-needed manpower to CI components;

these officers then can apply their newly learned skills in future assignments. Unfortunately, however, we depend too much on short-term assignees, thus leaving a lot of the day-to-day CI work in the hands of inexperienced people who will not be in their CI jobs long enough to develop depth on their accounts.

This practice has had serious real-world consequences. I have been involved in dozens of cases during the past two decades, reviewed many more, and have seen the operational failure—some of which have made it into the press—that result from this system. Indeed, the losses of the past decade have been serious enough that both CIA Director Burns and the Deputy Director for Operations have acknowledged the compromises and the need to rebuild human operations.<sup>3</sup> The damage could have been prevented or, at the least lessened, had experienced CI officers been integrated into case management.

If this point does not sound convincing, consider the contrary example of Ghost Stories, the operation against Russian illegals in the United States. This operation spanned more than a decade and ended with a stunning success—the arrests of all the SVR illegals in the United States and their subsequent swap for US and British assets imprisoned in Russia. British author Gordon Corera has described how, over a period of years, US intelligence officers managed a Russian asset, acquired details of the illegals, and then eventually exfiltrated him from Russia.<sup>4</sup> From the start, moreover, CI analysts with years or, in some cases, decades of experience on Russia were completely integrated into the operation. These

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**Counterintelligence may not change, but the landscape on which it is situated certainly does.**

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analysts processed incoming information, generated reports and follow-up requirements, and participated in operational planning meetings where they informed the debates on the way forward. Toward the end, their deep knowledge of Russian intelligence and the case enabled them to write memos for senior leaders and policymakers that accurately predicted Moscow's reaction to the arrests and helped guide the swap negotiations.<sup>5</sup> It was a textbook example of the contribution CI analysis can make to operational success.

Anyone who sees this call for deep expertise as a US- or CIA-centric view of the role of CI analysis, or simply reflecting my own experiences, might consider the view from the other side. Each of the services that have outfoxed us was able to do so in large part because they had a core group of long-serving officers dedicated to the US target. You can be sure that these officers knew the history of our operations against their countries, had carefully studied our methods and the results of their own operations against us, and then drew appropriate lessons. They won their rounds not because they were naturally superior to us, but because they did the painstaking work of basic counterintelligence.

If I understated the importance of some points, there was one that I got totally wrong. "Double agents and dangles usually do not provide enough information about the target service to justify the effort" required for such an operation, I wrote. I was told early in my career that CIA's job is to collect information, not give it away, and therefore double-agent operations were a waste and to be

avoided. For 30 years I failed to question this bit of received wisdom. Since 2009, however, I've looked at enough double-agent cases, many with CIA as the victim, to know that a well-conceived and executed double or dangle operation can be devastating to the target service. The best I can say on this is that you're never too old to learn.<sup>6</sup>

Other than these points, I would not make any changes to "What Are We Talking About." The descriptions of service types remain accurate, the principles and tasks I outlined are timeless, and I believe that what I said about the nature of intelligence politics and the nuts and bolts of the work still stands.<sup>7</sup>

That said, the world moves on. Counterintelligence may not change, but the landscape on which it is situated certainly does. This means that the way we do CI—and the way we talk about it—needs to keep up with the times, and it is to that challenge that I now turn.

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***The Changed Landscape***

***New CI focus after the Cold War***

In retrospect, we can see that the landscape began to change in the mid-1990s, with the passage of the Economic Espionage Act of 1996. The law, which for the first time criminalized industrial espionage, has had an unhappy life. From the start it was criticized as too vague, which left the legislation vulnerable to the charge that it was passed more to give spies something to do after the Cold War than to protect US industry from nebulous threats.<sup>8</sup> No one was tried for violating the Act until 2009, suggesting that the law, which was passed

during a period of unquestioned US technological and economic dominance, reflected anxieties more than real threats. Indeed, the economic espionage threats of 1996 were seen to stem from France and Japan, which hardly turned out to be the case. Moreover, the law was written at the very dawn of the internet age and so has been ineffective against the cyber threats that have emerged since; nor, for that matter, does it seem to have done much to stop China's industrial spying and technology theft.<sup>9</sup>

Toward the end of the Clinton administration, the US took another, more consequential, step to expand the scope and reach of US counterintelligence programs. President Clinton's last Decision Directive, PDD-75, in January 2001 established the National Counterintelligence Executive (NCIX, now the National Counterintelligence and Security Center [NCSC]), and mandated that it produce annual threat assessments and counterintelligence strategies. Subsequently, the Counterintelligence Enhancement Act of 2002 codified the Executive as the "head of national counterintelligence for the United States Government."<sup>10</sup>

NCSC has found no end of CI threats, many of them shifting to reflect the worries of the times. The first National Counterintelligence Strategy (2005) emphasized terrorist and economic threats, along with such ambitious goals as ensuring that "counterintelligence analytic products are available to the President...to inform decisions."<sup>11</sup> By the time the 2020-22 strategy was published, terrorism had largely fallen off the list of CI threats, replaced by "increasingly aggressive and complex threats" from a large and growing variety of state,

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**NCSC is right about one thing: the proliferation of new intelligence actors is real.**

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nonstate, and private threat actors targeting critical infrastructure, technology, supply chains, and the US political system. “It is essential that we engage and mobilize all elements of United States society” to combat the foreign threats, wrote NCSC Director William Evanina.<sup>12</sup>

I believe such a strategy is doomed to a well-deserved failure. It places more and more issues under CI protection but makes no effort to prioritize threats or what is to be protected. In effect, China, Cuba, and Hizbollah are equally threatening, while university, military, technological, and industrial targets all must be protected. The strategy gives no indication of how all this is to be accomplished or where the people to do it will be found. Indeed, Evanina and one of his predecessors, Michelle Van Cleave, acknowledged in a Senate hearing in 2022 that NCIX is an ineffective entity and that US counterintelligence remains fragmented and disorganized, addressing threats in a “Whack-A-Mole through different organizations.”<sup>13</sup> Even worse, in scoping threats so broadly and demanding the mobilization of our entire society, the strategy moves in the direction of creating a counterintelligence state, one in which even the most mundane information is deemed sensitive and surveillance and informing become pervasive. This was how the Soviet Union operated and how China defines espionage threats today.<sup>14</sup> It is hardly where we want to go.

***Rise of Private Intelligence Entities***

NCSC is right about one thing: the proliferation of new intelligence actors is real. “What Are We Talking About” described three types of intelligence services—external, internal,

and unitary—and discussed the differences among them. I included in this typology both state and nonstate services, thinking of the latter as mostly belonging to terrorist groups, criminal gangs, and other nefarious actors who, at the time, generally lacked the high-end technical capabilities of government services. During the past 15 years, however, a fourth type of service has emerged, one that is controlled by private parties and has a range of capabilities that formerly were found only in traditional state services.

Private intelligence outfits are not new, of course. Retired intelligence officers and academics for decades have offered political risk analysis and risk management services to international corporations or entities with specialized interests. Their products, however, relied on publicly available information or narrow source bases, such as old contacts of the former officers. Consequently, the results were hit-or-miss and vulnerable to manipulation—one need only look to the role of Fusion GPS, a relic of that system, in the 2016 US presidential election for an unfortunate example.

Starting in the 1990s, however, the types of information available to private services began to broaden and improve. Round-the-clock cable television news enabled private parties to monitor events at the same time as government services. Soon after, high-resolution commercial satellite imagery became available and enabled entities outside of governments to carry out analysis that hitherto had required resources available only to the largest, best-funded services. As the *New York Times* reported in 1997,

the first commercial satellite photos were “expected to be used for civilian spying on military targets, which could include battlefields, bases, arms factories and missile fields ... to monitor arms control treaties and to police the world’s intelligence services.”<sup>15</sup> The *Times*’ prediction was spot on. Today constellations of privately launched mini-satellites provide continuous imagery coverage, which appears in the media within hours of events, be they wars or earthquakes, to help inform the public.<sup>16</sup>

Private capabilities in the 1990s, however, could not yet go beyond the immediately visible. The explosive growth of social media in the 2010s eliminated that limitation, making it possible for private entities to start replicating even more capabilities of major governments. The pathfinder was Bellingcat, founded not by an intelligence veteran or academic specialist but by Eliot Higgins, an amateur whose skill and passion was the exploitation of open-source, internet-based resources to monitor current events and provide accurate, independent analysis to the public.<sup>17</sup> Working at first as an informal network of like-minded internet sleuths, Bellingcat collected video, blog, and social media posts to produce near real-time analysis and, as its methods became more sophisticated, added the targeting and recruiting of human sources to enable longer-term investigations. Following the 2020 poisoning of Russian oppositionist Aleksey Navalny, Bellingcat, “by exploiting Russia’s corruption,” the *Financial Times* reported, “got hold of flight manifests, intelligence agency-issued fake passports, and open-source data

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***It is hardly a bold prediction to say that continuing advances in technology will enable private intelligence entities to duplicate more and more state-level capabilities.***

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to prove that Navalny had been poisoned with Novichok.”<sup>18</sup>

Others have followed Bellingcat’s lead. *Politico* has used internet searches of corporate and customs records to document Chinese military shipments to Russia, for example, and a company in France that supplies data to institutional investors has begun using satellite monitoring of atmospheric pollutants to estimate the impact of sanctions on Russian industrial output. Most recently, the *New York Times* has used intercepted Russian phone calls for stories on the war in Ukraine, and commercial radar tracking data to create a graphic illustrating how the US was using drones over Gaza to look for hostages held by Hamas. These methods, I suspect, are little different from those used by the US Intelligence Community.<sup>19</sup>

While the US lead in advanced collection technologies has eroded, the work of Bellingcat and similar organizations to date has been a net positive for the United States. Traditional media outlets—notably the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post*—several years ago adopted its methods for their web-based stories. Since early 2022 they have integrated these into their coverage of the Ukraine war, providing readers with the types of detailed interactive coverage and background explanations until then reserved for government intelligence consumers.<sup>20</sup> Their work plays an important role in providing independent corroboration of official statements, exposing disinformation, and giving

readers deeper insights and analysis of events.<sup>21</sup>

It is hardly a bold prediction to say that continuing advances in technology will enable private intelligence entities to duplicate more and more state-level capabilities. In particular, I expect Bellingcat or a similar organization will soon start sophisticated cyber operations, perhaps tunneling into what its targets believe are their secure computer and communications networks. Whoever does this will then have developed capabilities almost indistinguishable from those of traditional state intelligence services, though without the expenditure of tens of billions of dollars per year. With the coming of artificial intelligence (AI), of course, we likely will see developments as yet undreamed of.

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***The Downsides of Private Capabilities***

Even if the Bellingcat ethos is compatible with US interests, the future likely belongs to outfits with far fewer scruples. Two intelligence firms, Israel’s NSO Group Technologies and the United Arab Emirate’s quasi-governmental Dark Matter (the latter staffed largely by former US intelligence officers), have been happy to sell their advanced collection capabilities to anyone, no matter how unsavory, with money to pay.<sup>22</sup>

The problem of unsavory actors is only going to become worse. In the United States, the demand for contractor support at the intelligence agencies has led to the creation of

numerous small companies providing various services, and it is only a matter of time until private equity firms start to buy contractors with the goal of combining them to create full-service outfits. If—when—this happens, I believe it will be an exceptionally dangerous development. Higgins and his associates operate from an ideological commitment to uncovering objective truth, as generally do traditional media outlets. In contrast, private equity firms are committed to profit and probably will have few reservations about who they take on as customers and what their clients’ purposes may be.

The end of government monopolies on imagery, signals, and human collection already is raising another significant question for the traditional intelligence world. If such information now is easily obtained from commercial sources or social media analysis, then what is secret anymore? Information from well-placed agents and exotic technical systems that amateurs and the private sector cannot yet match, certainly, but this likely is only a declining fraction of overall intelligence gathering.

In the future, perhaps the only truly secret intelligence will be that which focuses on a small number of the most critical problems, such as decisionmaking at the very top of the tightest authoritarian states. Another question will be what advantages state services such as CIA will be able to claim in covering other issues; it may be that, in a world where advanced intelligence analysis is easily obtained, the IC’s competitive advantage will be a reputation for objective, policy-neutral analysis. This, to say the least, will be difficult to maintain.

As the sphere of true secrecy continues to contract, governments are likely to feel they can be much more liberal in releasing information that until now has been tightly held. This, in fact, has already started to happen. In late 2021 and early 2022, as part of their effort to dissuade Russia from invading Ukraine, the US and UK governments released such detailed information on Moscow's preparations as to make it clear that their collection reached deep inside the Russian state, an action previously unthinkable.<sup>23</sup>

While the disclosures failed to deter Putin's invasion, as a political strategy the intelligence releases were a success—the accuracy of the predictions boosted the credibility of US and UK intelligence which, in turn, made it much easier for Washington and London to rally and maintain their own and other nations' popular support for Ukraine.<sup>24</sup> It also provides a template for future crises. Setting aside Chinese skill in deception, should the United States detect Chinese preparations for hostilities with Taiwan, Washington no doubt will be quick to release detailed intelligence and assessments.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Changing Character of the IC Workforce***

Another type of change, reflecting broader social trends, is creating additional problems for traditional state intelligence services. In "What Are We Talking About," I pointed out the importance of understanding not only the social contexts of services but also the socio-economic backgrounds of their employees, as both have great influence on service behavior.<sup>26</sup> Simply put, services

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### ***The United States is no different. The IC's new hires have come of age in an era of rapid technological change and increasing political turmoil.***

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reflect the societies in which they are situated—spend any time at all with the UK's SIS and you will quickly see it is a microcosm of the British class system, just as Moscow's services exemplify Russia's endemic corruption.

The United States is no different. The IC's newest employees have come of age in an era of rapid technological change and increasing political turmoil. To make a sweeping generalization, they are the products of a society in which education standards have slipped badly during the past several decades, especially in the liberal arts, and that places much less emphasis on the traditional ideas of truth and national loyalty that lie at the heart of intelligence work.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, many in this cohort—stereotypically male, somewhat immature and socially awkward—are attracted to the atomized, nihilistic world of the internet, where they are vulnerable to misinformation, recruitment by traditional state services, and the appeal of violent political movements.<sup>28</sup>

These changes do much to explain the past decade's shift in the nature of insider threats. The vast increase in cyber operations and the drive to use the data in real time for counterterrorism and targeting operations has required services to hire large numbers of young, computer-savvy people, with all the risks that come with them. Those who already tend toward pathological behavior, notes counterintelligence psychologist Ursula Wilder, "will find on the internet remarkably easy ways to reach outlets for their addictions or compulsions"

and the more such an individual's "online life becomes the center of his or her consciousness and motivation, the more real-life stabilizing commitments ... will weaken and attenuate," creating a heightened risk of falling into espionage or other behaviors damaging to national security.<sup>29</sup>

Wilder's point is not just theoretical. Starting with Edward Snowden and Bradley Manning, and now through Joshua Schulte (Vault 7) and the accused Discord leaker, a wave of young people have used their accesses to disclose enormous amounts of data to the media or directly to hostile governments. Unlike the spies we are used to dealing with—if not ideologically committed, like Ana Montes, then usually middle-aged men unhappy with their lives and careers, disillusioned, or simply broke, like Aldrich Ames—these individuals seem to act for reasons that even they do not always seem to understand.<sup>30</sup> As the continuing expansion of cyber operations increases services' dependence on young computer specialists, it is virtually certain that this problem too will only get worse.

Compounding this problem is that the frequency of disclosures, both official and unauthorized, is turning them into nonevents. With so much having been revealed in the past decade, it is hardly news when yet another collection program, sensitive capability, or batch of highly classified documents becomes public.<sup>31</sup> It would not be surprising if, in the years to come, prosecutors have to settle for lesser charges or lighter sentences than in the past, as leakers argue to indifferent juries that, given

the shrinking sphere of secret information and the accumulation of prior disclosures, their acts have done little or no additional harm.

The US IC understands these issues and has taken steps to address them. Under the umbrella term of “insider threat,” it has instituted such defensive measures as continuous vetting, zero-trust architecture, and beefed-up internal monitoring. But the scale of the problem—tens of thousands of clearance holders working in multiple agencies and spread around the world—means that implementation of the rules will be, at best, uneven. Because of the inevitable wide variations in local conditions, staff training, leadership, and adherence to procedures, rules are bent or unevenly enforced, leaving numerous gaps for bad actors to exploit.

That laxity, according to the Air Force Inspector General’s report, is precisely what happened in the case of the accused Discord leaker. People in his chain of command were aware of his problematic behaviors but did not report them, his commanders were “not vigilant in inspecting the conduct” of their subordinates, and his unit had a “culture of complacency” regarding security.<sup>32</sup>

Taken together, all these changes—the loss of government monopolies on collection, the rise of private services, changing views of what information is sensitive and who may disclose it, and the relentless growth of cyber operations—indicate that CI will become an even more complicated endeavor than it is already. But complicated does not mean hopeless. Some of the problems confronting

counterintelligence can also help it—AI, for example, may become a vital tool for analyzing enormous data sets. Nonetheless, AI will by no means be a silver bullet as growing CI challenges will create a requirement for more CI people, who will not become any easier to recruit and train. US and allied intelligence services would be well advised to start working on this now.

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### ***The Good News: A Growing Body of Quality Literature***

Given all of this, is there any good news in the world of counterintelligence? The answer, perhaps surprisingly, is yes. At the end of “What Are We Talking About,” I noted the need for research into the politics, sociology, and economics of intelligence services, as well as for comparative studies. Each of these, as the examples in the textbox on page 10 and other citations throughout this article indicate, have become fruitful areas for academic study. Reading these papers may at times be hard going, but we know a lot more about the behavior of intelligence services than we did 15 years ago, let alone during the Cold War period, and many more people are addressing the issues than ever before.

Most useful for those tasked to work on specific services is the unprecedented quantity of publications produced by intelligence historians during the past two decades. Indeed, we are in a golden age of intelligence history. A generation ago, an interested reader could digest most serious books on counterintelligence in a few months. For CI students, there were:

- J.C. Masterman’s *The Double-Cross System in the War of 1939–1945* (1972);
- David Martin’s *Wilderness of Mirrors* (1980);
- Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievskiy’s *KGB* (1990);
- Thomas Mangold’s biography of James Jesus Angleton, *Cold Warrior* (1992); and
- not many more.<sup>a</sup>

Since the mid-1990s, the declassification of the Venona documents, opening of Cold War archives, additional releases (whether authorized or not), and memoirs have led to an explosion of histories that have greatly improved public understanding of intelligence and counterintelligence. (The number of book reviews in each issue of *Studies* has roughly doubled in the past 15 years.) This does not include, moreover, the contributions of articles in *Studies* and prominent academic journals on intelligence including, *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, *Intelligence and National Security*, and the *Journal of Intelligence History*.

Many intelligence books are aimed at popular audiences, but nonetheless provide valuable insights into the eternal questions of counterintelligence. To start with two obvious examples, The Venona operation and the materials brought out by the Soviet defector Vasilii Mitrokhin provided an enormous body of primary source information on Soviet intelligence operations that, supplemented by additional research

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a. For an overview of the literature at the end of the Cold War period, see Cleveland Cram, *Of Moles and Molehunters: A Review of Counterintelligence Literature, 1977–92* (Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1993).



by other authors, has helped rewrite the history of Moscow's services and their Cold War competition with the West. (See textbox.)

Historians have written valuable accounts of the Warsaw Pact services, filling gaps in a literature that has traditionally focused on the US, British, and Soviet services. When it comes to writing on deception and betrayal, moreover, it is hard to name a writer who has contributed more than Ben Macintyre, with his updated histories of Britain's World War II deception operations, and the Philby and Gordievskiy cases. Dozens of additional examples are easy to find.

### ***Where to Start?***

With so much now available, where does a new CI practitioner start to read? Before diving into specific readings for a particular country or issue, I suggest any new US counterintelligence officer become familiar with the following three topics.

#### ***Dreyfus Affair***

I wrote in these pages in 2011 that the Alfred Dreyfus Affair was the first modern CI case and also the first modern CI disaster, as it exploded from an apparently straightforward investigation into a political and cultural whirlwind that still affects French public life.<sup>a</sup> Jean-Denis Bredin's account, *The Affair: The Case of Alfred Dreyfus* (George Braziller, Inc., 1986), is still the best English-language history of the case and is essential to understanding what can happen when counterintelligence goes wrong.

a. Alfred Dreyfus was a French artillery officer of Jewish ancestry tried and convicted of treason in 1894 and exonerated in 1906. See "The Dreyfus Affair: Enduring CI Lessons," *Studies in Intelligence* 55, no. 1 (March 2011).

### ***Suggested Readings for the New CI Analyst***

Though aimed at popular audiences, below is a sampling of the work that nevertheless provides valuable historical insights into adversary intelligence services.

#### ***Archival Material***

- Robert Louis Benson and Michael Warner (eds.) *Venona: Soviet Espionage and The American Response, 1939–1957—Selected Documents and Messages* (NSA-CIA, August 1996) at <https://www.cia.gov/resources/csi/books-monographs/venona/>
- Woodrow Wilson Center Digital Archive at <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/topics/mitrokhin-archive>

#### ***Cold War Histories***

- John Earl Haynes, Harvey Klehr, and Alexander Vassiliev, *Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America* (Yale University Press, 2009)
- Catherine Belton, *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took on the West* (William Collins, 2020)
- Gordon Corera, *Russians Among Us: Sleeper Cells, Ghost Stories, and the Hunt for Putin's Spies* (William Collins, 2020)
- Thomas Rid, *Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020)
- David Shimer, *Rigged: America and Russia and One Hundred Years of Covert Electoral Interference* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2020)
- Calder Walton, *Spies: The Epic Intelligence War Between East and West* (Simon & Schuster, 2023)

#### ***Warsaw Pact Services***

- Kristie Macrakis, *Seduced by Secrets: Inside the Stasi's Spy-Tech World* (Cambridge University Press, 2008)
- Katherine Verdery, *My Life as a Spy: Investigations in a Secret Police File* (Duke University Press, 2018)

#### ***Deception and Betrayal: Ben Macintyre's Work***

- *Agent Zigzag: A True Story of Nazi Espionage and Betrayal* (Harmony, 2007)
- *Operation Mincemeat: How a Dead Man and a Bizarre Plan Fooled the Nazis and Assured an Allied Victory* (Harmony, 2010)
- *A Spy Among Friends: Kim Philby and the Great Betrayal* (Crown, 2014)
- *The Spy and the Traitor: The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War* (Crown, 2018)

#### ***Hiss and Rosenberg***

Similar to Dreyfus, the Alger Hiss and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg cases affected US society and political culture for decades. They are critically important examples of how the

Soviets penetrated the US government at the highest levels and did much to shape how Americans view espionage as well as how the FBI and CIA carry out their counterintelligence work today. Allan Weinstein,

*Perjury: The Hiss Chambers Case* (Knopf, 1978, and Hoover Press, 2013), and Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton, *The Rosenberg File: A Search for the Truth* (Henry Holt and Co., 1983, and *The Rosenberg File, Second Edition*, Yale University Press, 1997) are the standard accounts.

### 2008 Financial Crisis

What does an economic meltdown have to do with counterintelligence? Plenty, is the answer. Analytic rigor and skepticism of conventional wisdom are vital for CI and, in this vein, Michael Lewis, *The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine* (Norton, 2010 or, if you are pressed for time, the 2015 movie), and Gregory Zuckerman, *The Greatest Trade Ever: How One Man Bet Against the Markets and Made \$20 Billion* (Penguin Books, 2010), recount how outsiders asked uncomfortable questions, went out of their way to check the facts, and endured ridicule from counterparts. They turned out to be right in their forecasts of a catastrophic failure and their experiences are valuable reading for officers whose job it is to make unpopular judgments.

### Spy Fiction

Thoughtful spy novels too, are important reading for counterintelligence officers. They explore human frailties, motives, and loyalties and

weaknesses, as well as how intelligence officers view their profession, and they give readers much to ponder. The Cold War era gave us many great espionage tales and the best of Graham Greene, John le Carré, Len Deighton, and W. T. Tyler remain well worth reading.<sup>a</sup> Occasionally, too, bad espionage fiction is worth reading: Julian Semyonov's *Tass is Authorized to Announce* (Riverrun Press, 1979) gives the Soviet view of the spy world, albeit in almost unreadable prose.

The spy novel fell on hard times after the Soviet Union collapsed and authors lost their standard plots, but in the past decade the genre has recovered. Russian villains are back, along with Chinese, but more interesting has been the emergence of a new generation of authors and how they are changing the genre. Women, in particular, are changing a form that has been almost entirely dominated by male authors. Their novels not only feature women protagonists, but also offer new perspectives on identity, sexuality, and family, and how these topics intersect with intelligence work. Notably, two of these authors, Karen Cleveland and Alma Katsu, bring CIA experience to their stories.<sup>b</sup>

The spy novel's renaissance, moreover, has not been limited to the United States and the United Kingdom. Sergei Lebedev's

*Untraceable* (Apollo, 2021) shows what Russian authors can do when freed from ideological conformity, and Leonardo Padura's *The Man Who Loved Dogs* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2015) is extraordinary not only for its literary quality but for how it pushes the limits of the permissible in Cuba.

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### Final Thoughts

I will close with a final, personal observation. I spent the first half of my intelligence career, almost 20 years, as a political-military analyst. During that time, I often heard CI officers say how different their work was from other intelligence disciplines. I always dismissed this as the puffery of people trying to use the mystery of counterintelligence to make themselves seem important. But now, having worked since 2000 at home and abroad in CI analysis, operations, counterespionage, and management, I have to say that they were right. CI is a different world, one of unending doubt and ambiguity, where questions may not be answered for decades, if ever. It certainly is not for everyone but, for the right people, it is an endlessly fascinating and rewarding occupation.

I am grateful to Ean Forsythe and his students, Tim Ray, and Diane Parsont for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.



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a. For example, Greene, *The Confidential Agent* (1939) and *The Human Factor* (1978); le Carré, *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* (1964) and *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1974); Deighton, *Berlin Game*, *Mexico Set*, and *London Match* (1984–85); and Tyler, *The Spy Who Lost the War* (1980).

b. See Kate Atkinson, *Transcription* (2018); Karen Cleveland, *Need to Know* (2019); Lara Prescott, *The Secrets We Kept* (2019); and Alma Katsu, *Red Widow* (2021).

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## Endnotes

1. Quoted in Deborah Bauer, *Marianne is Watching* (University of Nebraska Press, 2021), 93.
2. The “syncretic spy” appears in the concluding essay of Davies and Gustafson, *Intelligence Elsewhere*, 294, and “counterintelligence threat ontology” is in Dries Putter and Sascha-Dominik Dov Bachmann, “Scoping the Future Counterintelligence Focus,” *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* [hereafter *IJIC*] 36, no. 2 (2023).
3. “US Struggles to Spy on China, Its Leading Espionage Priority,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 27, 2023; DCIA Fireside Chat with William Burns: Aspen Security Forum 2023, July 20, 2023, [https://www.cia.gov/static/598a62b34629a8120fb16d68e440aa15/Director\\_Burns\\_Aspen\\_Security\\_Forum\\_Transcript\\_07202023](https://www.cia.gov/static/598a62b34629a8120fb16d68e440aa15/Director_Burns_Aspen_Security_Forum_Transcript_07202023).
4. The best publicly available account of the operation is Gordon Corera, *Russians Among Us: Sleeper Cells, Ghost Stories, and the Hunt for Putin’s Spies* (William Collins, 2020).
5. On the role of CI analysis in the negotiations, see Leon Panetta, *Worthy Fights* (Penguin, 2014), 281–84.
6. See Eleni Braat and Ben de Jong, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Precarious State of a Double Agent during the Cold War,” *IJIC* 36, no. 1 (2023).
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11. Office of the National Counterintelligence Executive, *The National Counterintelligence Strategy of the United States*, March 2005, 7.
12. National Counterintelligence and Security Center, *National Counterintelligence Strategy of the United States of America, 2020–2022*, January 2020, iii.
13. “On Protecting American Innovation: Industry, Academia, and the National Counterintelligence and Security Center,” Hearing before the Select Committee on Intelligence of the United States Senate, September 21, 2022, 12–74.
14. On the Soviet counterintelligence state, see John Dziak, *Chekisty* (Lexington Books, 1987). For China’s current CI campaign, see “China to its People: Spies are Everywhere. Help us Catch Them,” *New York Times*, September 3, 2023, and “No Laughing Matter,” *Economist*, January 13, 2024.
15. “First Civilian Spy Satellite Soars Into Space, Launched in Russia by a U.S. Company,” *New York Times*, Dec. 25, 1997. For an extended discussion of the development of these capabilities, see Amy Zegart, *Spies, Lies, and Algorithms*, (Princeton University Press, 2022), chap. 9.
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20. See “Caught on Camera, Traced by Phone: The Russian Military Unit That Killed Dozens in Bucha,” *New York Times*, December 22, 2022; “‘Putin is a Fool’: Intercepted Calls Reveal Russian Army in Disarray,” *New York Times*, September 28, 2022; “US Drones are Flying Over Gaza to Aid in Hostage Recovery, Officials Say,” *New York Times*, November 2, 2023. For examples of similar coverage, see “How We Know Russia is Using Iranian Drones in Ukraine,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 11, 2022; and “A Web of Trenches Shows Russia Fears Losing Crimea,” *Washington Post*, April 3, 2023.
21. See <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/2023/03/29/how-online-investigators-proved-video-of-ukrainian-soldiers-harassing-woman-was-staged/>.
22. See “Ex-US Intelligence Officers Admit to Hacking Crimes in Work for Emiratis,” *New York Times*, September 14, 2021; “Pegasus Spyware Used to Hack US diplomats Working Abroad,” *Washington Post*, December 3, 2021; “In a First, Spyware is Found on Phone of Prominent Russian Journalist,” *Washington Post*, September 13, 2023. See also Ronald Deibert, “Subversion Inc: The Age of Private Espionage,” *Journal of Democracy* 33, no. 2 (2022).

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24. See Serge Schmemmann, “Why Secrets Lost Their Sizzle,” *New York Times*, June 11, 2023.
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26. See Hager Ben Jaffel and Sebastian Larsson, “Why do We Need a New Research Agenda for the Study of Intelligence?” *IJIC*, Posted July 6, 2023, and John Gentry, “Demographic Diversity in U.S. Intelligence Personnel: Is It Functionally Useful?” *IJIC* 36, no. 2 (2023).
27. See Margaret Marangione, “Millennials: Truth-tellers or Threats?” *IJIC* 32, no. 2 (2019).
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## The Albert Briefcase Affair: A 100-Year Cover-up of a British Propaganda Coup

*Heribert von Feilitzsch and Charles H. Harris, III*

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German Commercial Attaché Heinrich F. Albert was the central figure in a counter-intelligence case that gripped America in 1915. (Library of Congress)

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Arguably the most publicized “counterintelligence coup” of World War I occurred in mid-August 1915, when the contents of German Commercial Attaché Heinrich F. Albert’s stolen briefcase found their way into the editing rooms of the *New York World*. A sensational exposé of German intrigue in the neutral United States ran August 15–18, supplanting news of a devastating hurricane in Texas. Banner headlines blared, “HOW GERMANY HAS WORKED IN U.S. TO SHAPE OPINION, BLOCK THE ALLIES AND GET MUNITIONS FOR HERSELF, TOLD IN SECRET AGENTS’ LETTERS”; “NO DENIAL OF WORLD EXPOSURES BY AGENTS OF GERMANY”; and “NATION-WIDE SENSATION OVER SECRET ACTIVITY OF GERMANY.”<sup>1</sup>

Years later the former US Secret Service (USSS) Chief William J. Flynn and his former boss, Treasury Secretary William Gibbs McAdoo, credited Secret Service agent Frank Burke with the daring feat, billed as the most successful US counterintelligence operation of the Great War.<sup>2</sup> Upon thorough scrutiny of available archival documentation, the story of Albert’s briefcase theft was not a “counterintelligence” coup after all, at least not one to be credited to US intelligence organizations. It rather

appears to have been one of the most successful, long-lasting, and elaborate cover-ups of a British propaganda plot.

The theft of Albert’s papers and the sensationalist revelations had far-reaching immediate, medium, and longterm effects. When Albert noticed his briefcase missing on Saturday, July 24, 1915, around 4:00 p.m., the German commercial attaché and his colleagues scrambled to find the culprit and recover the briefcase. At the time Albert did not know who had taken it. Paul König of the German secret service investigated. König located a “former British detective,” possibly a member of the William J. Burns International Detective Agency working for Great Britain in the United States, who had information about the theft. The informant told König that a certain “independent newspaper writer” had proffered a selection of the papers to the *New York World* on August 2, a week after the theft.<sup>3</sup> According to König’s source, the “writer” had shadowed Albert for several weeks, indicating that he may not have been a mere reporter.<sup>4</sup>

While a small chance existed that a common thief had just been looking for valuables and may have discarded the “worthless” papers, it was unlikely. Still, on Monday, July 27, König placed an ad in the

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petition eliminated!  
World Has No Real Competitor!  
682 Separate World Ads.  
7,539 More Than the Herald!

**The** **World.**  
"Circulation Books Open to All!"

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, AUGUST 13, 1917. 88 PAGES. PRICE FIVE CENTS.

**NO INTERVENTION HINTED AT IN THE PAN-AMERICA PLEA TO THE MEXICANS**

**HOW GERMANY HAS WORKED IN U. S. TO SHAPE OPINION, BLOCK THE ALLIES AND GET MUNITIONS FOR HERSELF, TOLD IN SECRET AGENTS' LETTERS.**

**LETTERS MR. VIERECK AND DR. ALBERT WROTE TO EACH OTHER**

**SHUCKS HIS CLOTHING ON TELEGRAPH POLE**

**WIFE AND GIRL FIND HIM SLAIN IN HOME**

**Dr. Albert Demands Control of the Fatherland's Policy**

**Chancellor, Ambassador, Financial Agent and Bankers Chief in Vast Scheme Revealed in Documents Obtained by the World—Fatherland Financed, Author Fox's Expenses Paid, Plans Laid to Buy Press Association and Otherwise Control News of the War.**

**COST PUT AT \$2,000,000 A WEEK; BERNSTORFF DRAFT \$1,100,000.**

**Big Arms Plant and Powder Works, Which Outwardly Dicker With Allies, Secretly Owned by Germany and Preparing to Deliver Munitions Sept. 1—Edison's Supply of Carboic Acid Taken Over for Shipments—Poisoned Gas Supply of Allies Gripped—Strikes in Munitions Plants Fomented.**

**MEN HIGHER UP IN THE SCHEDULES.**

**Count Johann von Bernstorff, the German ambassador at Washington;**  
**Capt. Franz von Papen, the Military Attaché of the German Government in this country;**  
**Herr Hugo Schmidt, Western representative of the Deutsche Bank of Berlin;**  
**Herr Schweitzer, a German-American banker;**  
**S. Sulzberger, a banker in Frankfurt, Germany;**  
**Herr Wastdorf, trade representative of the German Government in this country.**

**Agents of the German Bureau of Information (Secret Service), and various other agents who are not officially identified, in the public view, with the German Government in this country.**

**The financial features of the undertakings in Germany in this country are shown to have been cared for by the Deutsche Bank of Berlin, S. Sulzberger & Sons Company of Frankfurt, Germany, the Guaranty Trust Company of New York, Heinrich F. Albert, Hugo Schmidt and Hugo Schweitzer. The magnitude of some of the transactions suggests expenditure of a very large sum of the resources of the German Government in this country of \$2,000,000.**

**The disclosure contained in the correspondence, the authenticity of which has been clearly established, shows that the German propaganda had for its purpose the involving of the United States in the complications of its European war; that the plans devised to accomplish this purpose were carefully and deliberately projected, efficiently supervised and adequately financed.**

**Every move made in furtherance of the German propaganda and of specific undertakings is shown to have**

The New York World broke the news of the Albert documents with above-the-fold headlines. (Wikimedia Commons; lines on image from microfilm reader.)



*New York Tribune*, in case someone found the bag: “Lost on Saturday. On 3:30 Harlem Elevated Train, at 50th St. Station, Brown Leather Bag, Containing Documents. Deliver to G. H. Hoffman, 5 E. 47th St., Against \$20 Reward.”<sup>5</sup> Hoffman was Albert’s servant. The briefcase did not turn up.

### The New York World Connection

With the briefcase and the compromising papers at large, and with König having accurately traced the papers to the editing rooms of the *New York World*, Ambassador Count Bernstorff, Albert, German naval attaché Karl Boy-Ed, and military attaché Franz von Papen went into overdrive to determine the contents and assess the potential damage that disclosure would cause. The group concluded that most of the information was of a financial nature: embarrassing yes, but not necessarily illegal. The papers revealed the German ownership of a shell company in Connecticut, the purchase and storage of arms and munitions, industrial market-cornering efforts, financing of labor unrest, as well as investments in newspapers, most notably the *New York Evening News*, which Albert had purchased in the spring of 1915.

The documents also detailed bribes to US politicians, links of the Deutsche Bank to the German clandestine operations, and payments to a wide range of editors, most notably to George Sylvester Viereck and his English language weekly, the *Fatherland*. Nonetheless, the publication of the Albert papers would be disastrous, both with respect to the US public’s perception of Germany, and ongoing clandestine activities. The group decided to try to convince the US government to intervene and stop the publication.

As soon as König had traced the papers to the *New York World* on August 2, Ambassador Bernstorff sent prominent New York lawyer Samuel Untermyer to intercede on his behalf with the *World*’s influential editor-in-chief Frank Cobb to prevent publication. Untermyer had worked with Albert on several legal cases surrounding Albert’s attempts to circumvent the British blockade and the purchase of the *New York Evening News*.<sup>6</sup> The emergency meeting with Cobb on August 2 yielded no results.<sup>7</sup>

Untermyer also worked as an official adviser to the Treasury Department at the time. Bernstorff now decided to use Untermyer’s connections to Treasury Secretary William G. McAdoo and get the lawyer to speak directly with President Wilson the next day. McAdoo, who was Wilson’s son-in-law and who, according to the president, had “a very warm feeling of friendship” for Untermyer, indeed organized a meeting the next day, August 3.<sup>8</sup> Wilson’s papers dealing with the meeting suggest that neither Wilson nor McAdoo had any prior knowledge of the briefcase and its contents.<sup>a</sup> The president seemed favorably inclined to look into the issue. It is at this juncture, that McAdoo likely asked USSS Chief Flynn to procure the papers from the *New York World*.<sup>9</sup>

Wilson delegated the briefcase matter to his confidante, Colonel Edward M. House. House, together with McAdoo and Secretary of State

a. Wilson considered Untermyer’s request to prevent the publication of Albert’s papers in the *New York World* “not a matter of general interest at all, but one in which he [McAdoo] thought we might do Mr. Untermyer a good turn.” Arthur S. Link, the prominent historian and editor of Wilson’s papers wrote that McAdoo informed Wilson that a Secret Service agent had taken Albert’s briefcase. It seems that Link failed to see the connection of Untermyer as a German emissary to get help on the briefcase issue. The secret service matter, Wilson mentioned in the letter to Galt, did not consist of McAdoo telling the president about the briefcase. More likely the “matter” was the directive to McAdoo to use the USSS to get the briefcase. Link made an assumption in this case, using the commonly accepted turn of events after 1918, rather than actual notes or evidence.

### **Foreign Intelligence Operations in the United States**

At the beginning World War I, German, British, French, Russian, and Austrian buying agents, spies, and saboteurs entered the United States and roamed the country largely untouched. During the Neutrality Period (1914–17) the legal framework for limiting and controlling foreign intelligence operations in the United States was woefully inadequate. Agents of foreign governments did not have to register, nor were activities such as spying on US industry, sabotaging agents of enemy countries, and engaging in propaganda illegal. US law enforcement agents could shadow foreign agents and investigate their activities but could only intervene in cases of violation of US neutrality laws (making it illegal for an American to wage war against any country at peace with the US) or other criminal statutes.

Robert Lansing, but without including Attorney General Thomas Watt Gregory, reviewed the contents of the briefcase after Flynn had secured them the week after Untermeyer's entreaty.<sup>10</sup> The daily report by New York USSS agent-in-charge John McHenry on August 5 documented that agent Frank Burke worked on a "special investigation" directed by Flynn.<sup>11</sup> He may have been sent to recover the Albert papers from the *World* that day.

The *New York Tribune*, in a well-researched exposé in November 1918, spoke to the fact that the attorney general was not involved in the efforts to locate the papers or in decisions about what to do with them: "...it was perfectly possible—even one might imagine, advisable—for Secretaries Lansing and McAdoo to inform the Attorney General. Yet, as a matter of fact, a representative of the Department of Justice was sent to the 'New York World' to say that the Albert documents seemed too serious and important to remain in private hands, and to request the paper to turn its 'discoveries' over to the Attorney General."<sup>12</sup> If the *Tribune's* reporting is accurate, the Bureau independently

tried to prevent the publication of Albert's papers around the same time that Untermeyer made his requests to Frank Cobb.<sup>13</sup>

### **Sabotage of German War Strategy in the US**

The theory that the Justice Department would have sought to prevent the publication makes perfect sense: There were dozens of active investigations under way in July and August 1915, from the prosecution of falsified shipping manifests, to the attacks on Canadian railroads, to the discovery of the schooner *Annie Larsen* with German-owned arms for the Indian resistance.<sup>a</sup> Without analyzing the Albert papers, and the chance to withhold information that may affect these and other active investigations, the work of the BI could be severely damaged, and arguably it was, as the Albert organization quickly shuttered propaganda and industry-cornering efforts. Frank Cobb not only refused the German entreaties but also must have denied the request of the Bureau if it was ever made.

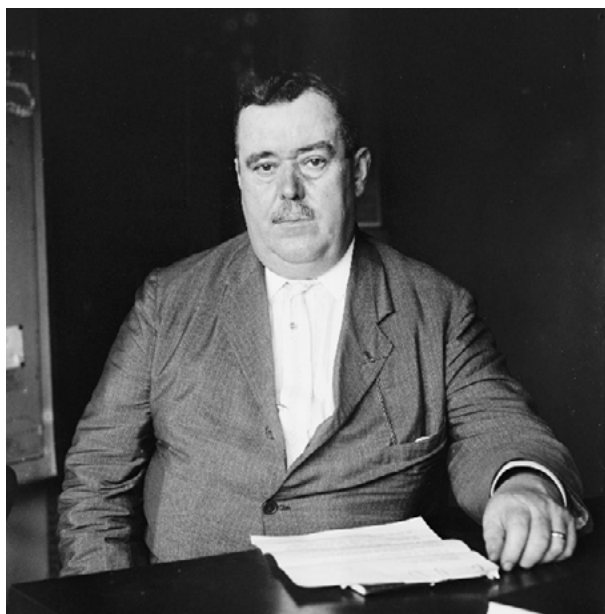
Colonel House notified President Wilson on August 10 that the group recommended to not intercede on behalf of the German government and let the *New York World* proceed. House also reported in the same letter that two editors of the British propaganda outlet, the *Providence Journal*, had lunched with him: "You know, of course the work they are doing," indicating that the President was aware of known British propagandists in close contact with his confidante during the deliberations.<sup>14</sup> It also implies Wilson's tacit approval of such contacts.<sup>15</sup>

The *New York World* officially notified Albert and House on August 13, that the papers in their possession would be published shortly. In a last-minute effort, the German embassy sent Untermeyer and Hermann Prinz Hatzfeld zu Trachenberg (the second counselor in Washington, a member of the royal aristocracy of Prussia, and former member of the German parliament) to speak with Secretary of State Robert Lansing. The secretary was unwilling to assist the German delegation.<sup>16</sup>

The revelations published August 15–18, 1915, in the *New York World* and, as expected, were devastating for the German war strategy in the US. Using American cut-outs, Albert had indeed succeeded in securing contracts from Dupont's Aetna division to buy one year's worth of smokeless powder, severely hampering production of munitions. The monthly deliveries were stored in the Bridgeport factory, and subsequently sold off to the Spanish government.<sup>17</sup> The Thomas A. Edison Corporation

a. The *Annie Larson* affair was a convoluted scheme involving India's Ghadar Party, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and the German Foreign Office to supply arms to the Indian independence movement as a way to damage the British war effort. The plot was uncovered and became the subject of long and costly proceedings in San Francisco that became known as the Hindu-German Conspiracy Trial.





Former Chief of the US Secret Service, William J. Flynn, published a “novelized” autobiography of his exploits during World War I. He claimed until his death in 1928 to have the Albert briefcase. (Library of Congress)

had also agreed with the CEO of the Bayer Corporation in the United States (a German military intelligence agent) to sell the entire annual phenol production to the German concern. Phenol was vital in the production of aspirin but also the main ingredient in picric acid, a compound used for explosives.

These contracts came under public scrutiny and, in the case of Edison, abruptly ended. Other companies, such as hydraulic press manufacturers who sold their production capacities of vital presses to produce cartridges and artillery shells to Albert’s cut-outs, now realized who they were really dealing with and canceled their contracts. The German propaganda efforts, already in shambles after the RMS *Lusitania* sinking by a German U-boat on May 7, 1915, collapsed with the news of the clandestine

German ownership of the *New York Evening News*.<sup>a</sup> Readership caved and the paper was sold at a huge loss a few months later.

### ***Bovine Stupidity***

Albert personally suffered the consequences of his carelessness. Not only should he not have carried such sensitive and classified documents, he would have done well to have stayed awake on the train that fateful Saturday afternoon. A New York paper called Albert’s briefcase theft

a case of “bovine stupidity,” a description Albert admitted to his wife a few months later was “not so entirely unjustified.”<sup>18</sup>

Earlier in June, worried about potential criminal liability for Albert, Amb. Bernstorff had elevated Albert’s status from financial adviser to commercial attaché without approval of the Imperial Foreign Service.<sup>19</sup> After the briefcase scandal in August, the German chancellor now personally demanded Albert’s recall.<sup>20</sup> Albert in fact wanted to return to Germany to personally defend himself (and, according to a letter to his superior, he also wanted to return home to his family after two years on the “stressful” US assignment).<sup>21</sup> However, Bernstorff’s blunder of giving Albert diplomatic status without registering with the German foreign office

prompted London to refuse safe passage. Without an alternative, Albert stayed. The public embarrassment faded over the next few years, a new German chancellor even supported a defamation lawsuit against Albert’s detractors in 1917 (which he won in 1918), and his career propelled him all the way to secretary of treasury in 1922, albeit being publicly ridiculed as “Minister without Portfolio.”<sup>22</sup> Ironically, the British government had arguably salvaged Albert’s job in 1915 and promoted his career.

Just who stole the papers remained shrouded in mystery until 1918, when former USSS Chief William J. Flynn, published a “novelized” autobiography of his exploits during the war, which became a movie a year later.<sup>23</sup> In it, he intimated that one of his agents (not the experienced career agent Frank Burke who was later credited, but rather unflatteringly an amateurish skinny boy named “Jimmy”) had snatched the satchel.<sup>24</sup> To support his claim, Flynn included a photograph of the purported briefcase with a USSS evidence tag attached, albeit looking black rather than brown as the text and Albert’s advertisement claimed. The evidence tag reads, “Portfolio taken from H.F. Albert July 24, 1915, at 5:30 pm, containing documents relating to German intrigue [illegible], W. J. Flynn.”<sup>25</sup> Flynn claimed until his death in 1928 to have the briefcase in his possession.

By 1917, Attorney General Thomas Gregory could no longer stomach Flynn’s public grandstanding and interference with BI investigations in New York. As a result of Gregory’s pressure, Flynn was

a. On May 7, 1915, a German U-boat sank the RMS *Lusitania* off Kinsale, Ireland. Among the 1,199 passengers and crew who died were 128 Americans.

forced out. To supplement his income and feed his ego, he started to write adventure, detective, and spy stories that were widely published in New York papers. Within a year Flynn had completed a novelized memoir, *The Eagle's Eye: A True Story of the Imperial German Government's Spies and Intrigues in America from Facts Furnished by William J. Flynn, Recently Retired Chief of the U.S. Secret Service*, and was promoting it. The book became successful enough to be adapted into a movie in 1919.<sup>26</sup>

Probably as part of Flynn's publicity campaign, Frank Burke was first named the agent who pulled off the Albert briefcase feat in New York papers in November 1918.<sup>27</sup> Burke and Flynn's careers continued to blossom when Flynn became chief of the Bureau of Investigation (BI, forerunner to the Federal Bureau of Investigation) in 1920. Flynn took Burke, now a fellow counterintelligence legend, with him to become assistant chief.

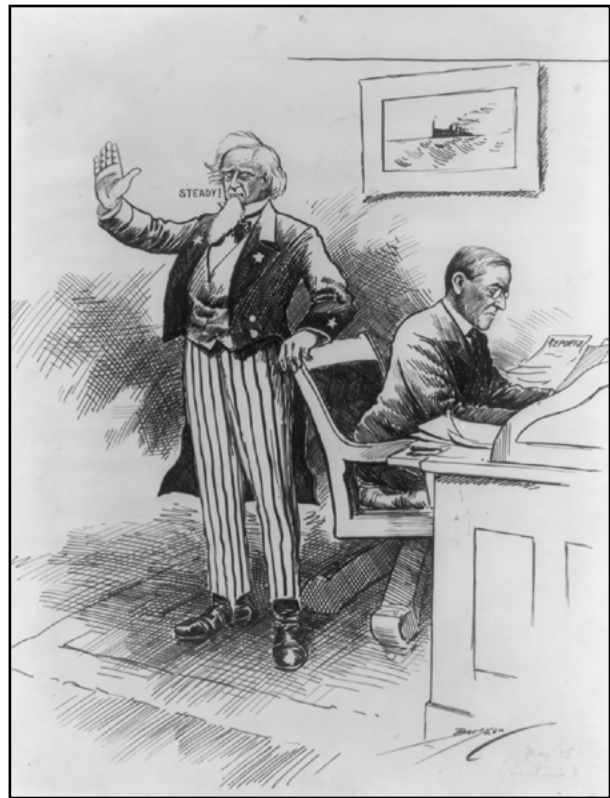
Former Treasury Secretary William G. McAdoo's biography, *Crowded Years*, which appeared in 1931, cemented the Flynn and Burke story to become the official and authoritative version of what happened. According to the memoirs, McAdoo received authorization to surveil German diplomats from President Wilson on May 14, 1915, one week after the sinking of the ocean liner RMS *Lusitania*, in the form of an executive order. In his book, McAdoo quoted Burke's account. Burke described that together with another agent they shadowed the German-American propagandist George Sylvester Viereck and Heinrich F. Albert on the 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue elevated train going uptown on the afternoon

of July 24, 1915. Burke's partner exited the train staying with Viereck after a few stops. Burke remained on the train, seated behind the German commercial attaché. Albert fell asleep, woke up in a panic when the train stopped, and left the train forgetting his satchel. Burke saw an opportunity, grabbed the portfolio, and evaded an irate Albert.

According to Burke, Albert had noticed him and pursued him down the platform. Burke jumped on a streetcar and told the conductor to speed up as a crazy person was after him. At a stop a few streets down, Burke phoned Flynn who "came up in his machine [automobile] and we drove to the office."<sup>28</sup> After looking through the contents of the briefcase with Burke, Flynn took the papers to McAdoo's vacation home in Maine the next day. The treasury secretary then claimed that he unilaterally decided to give the papers to the *New York World* for publication.<sup>29</sup>

### **Separating Legend from Fact**

Burke received widely reported recognition for his daring counterintelligence success upon retirement in 1942.<sup>30</sup> President Roosevelt gave him a signed photograph, "To my friend, Frank Burke, Franklin D.



Public outrage after a German U-boat sank the RMS *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915, was significant but supporters of continued US neutrality counseled against US involvement in Europe's war, as in this editorial cartoon showing Uncle Sam urging President Wilson to be steady in his response. (Library of Congress)

Roosevelt."<sup>31</sup> Countless historians have adopted this version at face value.<sup>32</sup> The USSS website not only recounts this feat by one of their own but also bases the birth of the service's counterintelligence mission on the Albert briefcase affair. Yet the story told in Flynn's books and McAdoo's memoirs, quoting Burke's recall of the event, probably never happened.

One of the foundational claims for the USSS having captured Heinrich Albert's documents is the supposed existence of an executive order, dated May 14, 1915, which authorized the Treasury agents to shadow German diplomats.<sup>33</sup> This



Joseph Murphy (left) and Frank Burke, 1942. (Burke Personnel file, NARA)

order is crucial since the mission of the USSS since May 1908 consisted only of presidential protection and counterfeiting investigations.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, the mission of the Bureau of Investigation was to enforce federal laws on a national level. Since 1908, BI agents had investigated land fraud, Mann Act crimes, and violations of the neutrality laws. German intrigue, such as supplying the German fleet from US harbors using false manifests, sending reservists with false passports to Germany, and mounting attacks on Canada from US soil clearly fell under potential violations of the neutrality laws. As a consequence, and despite Flynn's frequent and public claims to the opposite, the USSS had no authorized role in these investigations until the purported executive order.<sup>35</sup>

The presidential authorization of sweeping investigative powers for the USSS in May 1915 would have marked not only a surprising departure from previous departmental separation of responsibilities. It

also would have likely triggered congressional scrutiny as the founding of the BI was the result of an express congressional ban on using Secret Service agents in the enforcement of federal law other than counterfeiting.

The literature covering the briefcase affair includes the current official USSS, FBI, and Homeland Security website and well over a hundred books and peer-reviewed articles.<sup>36</sup> The main justification, also

listed on the USSS website as the historical beginning of that agency's counterintelligence mission, is that "Before President Wilson signed an executive order on May 14, 1915, authorizing surveillance of German Embassy personnel in the United States, the Secret Service was limited to watching clerks, technicians and errand boys for the Germans." The USSS site adds, "During World War I, President Woodrow Wilson directed the Secretary of the Treasury to have the Secret Service investigate possible espionage inside the United States. He wanted the Service to uncover and disrupt a German sabotage network that was believed to be plotting against France, England, and the United States. To do this, an 11-man counterespionage unit was established in New York City. Their most publicized investigation concerned the activities of Dr. Heinrich Albert and his infamous briefcase."<sup>38</sup> According to the site, Burke was the leader of this unit.

One reason there never was a congressional inquiry or investigation into the use of the Secret Service for counterespionage during World War I is that there neither was an executive order from the president on May 14, 1915, nor was there a Secret Service counterintelligence unit in New York under Burke's leadership. President Wilson issued 40 executive orders in 1915, two of them in May. He did not issue a numbered and registered executive order on May 14, 1915. None of the known executive orders in 1915 pertains to the Secret Service or investigations of German subjects in the United States.

To be sure, a registered executive order does not account for all presidential directives. A president can also issue a memorandum, directive, or sign a departmental memorandum thus authorizing its content. A thorough scan of the papers of Woodrow Wilson, Robert Lansing, William J. Bryan, Edward M. House, and William G. McAdoo reveal no such alternative. Most importantly, President Wilson's papers do not contain any written interaction with Secretary McAdoo between May 7 (*Lusitania* sinking) and August 3 (when McAdoo and Untermyer informed the president).<sup>39</sup>

Could Wilson have given an oral directive to McAdoo without any documentation, counsel of other cabinet members, or legal advice, which counteracted a 1908 congressional law? Considering the far-reaching legal implications, it does not seem plausible. Moreover, such an oral directive would certainly have triggered inner-departmental memorandums within the Treasury and the Justice Departments; none has come to light.

***There is no evidence in the daily reports that a counterespionage task force existed, or that Frank Burke shadowed George Sylvester Viereck and Heinrich Albert on July 24, or that Burke indeed stole Albert's briefcase.***

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Absent authorization, the ambitious Flynn and McAdoo could have taken the liberty to mount a rogue operation against German agents in summer 1915. However, USSS agents' daily reports dispel the purported existence of a counterintelligence unit in New York for the weeks or months of related shadowing of German agents and diplomats before and after the briefcase affair.

***A Question of Capability***

Before considering further detail, the USSS in summer 1915 also lacked the manpower and resources to mount such an operation. The complexity and necessary resources of such shadowing operations is well documented in the declassified files of the Bureau of Investigation.<sup>40</sup> Although the BI employed 219 agents in a dozen field offices in 1915, not including special employees and informants, the USSS staff in 1915 amounted to 50 men, including the presidential protection detail and counterfeiting investigators on a national scale.<sup>41</sup>

In New York in July 1915, the USSS employed 12 agents, one of whom was permanently detailed to Boston, another to Buffalo, and a third to presidential protection at Wilson's summer retreat in Cornish, New Hampshire.<sup>42</sup> The agent whom Burke mentioned as his Secret Service companion on July 24 was not attached to the New York field office. He was a member of the presidential protection detail in Washington, DC, and was not in New York in July 1915. With only nine

agents available, it is inconceivable that there was any organized and regular surveillance of German and Austrian diplomats and officials in New York. Agents would have had to shadow not only the German and Austrian diplomats, but also their main staff members, amounting to more than two dozen potential targets.

The nine USSS agents working in the New York office during the time of Albert's briefcase theft also did not dedicate their time to shadowing Germans. All agents worked on non-connected cases. Rather than shadowing Germans in the week before the briefcase theft, Burke worked in Boston on a counterfeiting investigation.<sup>43</sup> He briefly returned to New York to investigate a case in Albany, NY, on July 19.<sup>44</sup> Another agent worked on a counterfeiting investigation in Bradley Beach, New Jersey, in July 20–24.<sup>45</sup> A letter threatening the president arrived on July 18, and three agents of the New York office were investigating this threat.<sup>46</sup>

On July 23, the day before Burke allegedly snatched the briefcase, he worked on a counterfeiting case on "special assignment" from Chief Flynn. The investigation took him to Ashbury Park, Ocean Grove, and Allenhurst, New Jersey, where he tried to locate a suspect. Burke returned to New York from Allenhurst at 6 p.m., July 23, and went home.<sup>47</sup>

The next day, the New York office's daily reports show activity in several counterfeiting investigations. Burke reported, "At the office at 9 a.m. and balance of the day I was

engaged on special investigation under directions of the Chief." This special investigation probably referred to the case he had investigated the day before. According to Burke's account in McAdoo's memoirs, the agent had planned to take the afternoon off after a long week on the road.<sup>48</sup>

According to the ad König placed in the papers, Albert's briefcase disappeared on the 3:30 p.m. train on July 24. The agent in charge of New York's Secret Service field office was present when Burke and Flynn supposedly arrived with the briefcase, but went home at 5 p.m., only to be roused an hour later when the New York Customs House reported the arrest of a counterfeiting suspect. Had Burke and Flynn brought the Albert briefcase to the field office as Burke claimed in McAdoo's memoirs, it does not seem plausible that the agent in charge went home and later preoccupied himself with a counterfeiting investigation.

Rather than going to the "office," as Burke had written, he could have brought the briefcase to Flynn's home. There is a potential problem with this theory: in the agents' daily reports for that week, messages to Chief Flynn are addressed to Washington, DC.<sup>49</sup> He may not even have been in New York at the time. In any case, Burke clearly recalled coming to the office with Flynn in the chief's "machine" (automobile).

On July 25, Sunday, Burke came into the office at 10:00 a.m. and left at 2:00 p.m. He was working on an unspecified special investigation under the direction of Flynn. The "special investigation" continued through August 5, when another agent joined Burke.<sup>50</sup> August 17, a third agent



Born in Australia in 1869, Guy Gaunt served in Washington, DC, as the Royal Navy attaché and liaison officer during World War I. He played a major role in guiding the United States into the war. (Guy Gaunt, *The Yield of the Years*)

joined in Burke's special investigation. The investigation may have come to a close that day, because Burke and the other agents worked at the office on August 18 without specifying a "special investigation."<sup>51</sup> In September Agent Burke once more is detailed to a "special investigation." The agent who had supposedly joined Burke on the elevated train in July, and who at that time was not even attached to the New York field office, appears only briefly in the agent's daily reports in August. He is also mentioned in the *Sunday Telegram* a few months later as a member of a counterfeiting arrest in Washington, DC, led by Chief Flynn. He was then still assigned to the DC office.<sup>52</sup>

The sporadic assignments of agents to special investigations seem to have consisted of investigations in jurisdictions other than the New York field office, as with Burke's trips to Boston and Allenhurst in the week before the briefcase affair. They also

included investigations where the agents reported directly to Flynn and not to the agent in charge of the field office. However, the sporadic nature and the lack of assigned resources does support the assumption that Burke and his colleagues worked on counterfeiting investigations, as well as investigating threats to the president, rather than shadow German subjects. Burke, for example, worked on counterfeiting cases in the months and weeks before the Albert affair, and also in the weeks and months after.

There is no evidence in the daily reports that a counterespionage task force existed, or that Frank Burke shadowed George Sylvester Viereck and Heinrich Albert on July 24, or that Burke indeed stole Albert's briefcase.

### ***Alliance of the "Little People"***

The collection of declassified Bureau of Investigation files shows that the BI had nothing to do with the theft of Albert's briefcase. And if the USSS did not have the manpower or authority to follow German officials in New York in 1915, who did? In the fall of 1914, the British naval attaché Captain Guy Gaunt had received an offer from the leader of the Bohemian National Alliance, Victor Emanuel Voska, to provide intelligence and manpower to the British government. Gaunt lovingly referred to Voska's organization as the Alliance of the "Little People," referring to the small European countries such as Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Bosnia, and Serbia they originated from.<sup>53</sup> Most interesting for Gaunt was the ability of Voska's people, many of them working class, to infiltrate

German and Austro-Hungarian consulates and businesses. For example, the first Czech consul in the US after World War I was one of Voska's key men in the Austro-Hungarian consulate in New York during the war.<sup>54</sup>

Revelations of Austrian efforts to foment strikes, falsify passports, and hamper US munitions factories led to the expulsion of the Austrian ambassador on September 9, 1915. The most devastating information about the Austrian plots came from Voska's discovery of an American journalist carrying papers for the German government to Berlin. The journalist was arrested at Falmouth, England, in August 1915, and the papers taken. Once again, the British government turned the documents over to the *New York World*. The resulting scandal in the beginning of September rivaled that of Albert's exposé. Among the discovered letters was one that von Papen had written to his wife, referring to Americans as "idiotic Yankees."<sup>55</sup> It was a propaganda bloodbath.

Compared to the resources of the BI and the USSS, Voska had a virtual army of agents in New York of 84 men and women.<sup>56</sup> These volunteers had been carefully filtered from the Slavic organizations that existed in many of the Eastern and Midwestern states. Altogether, Voska claimed to have had 320,000 members nationwide in 1917.<sup>57</sup>

Voska provided the manpower for most clandestine operations of the British Naval Intelligence in the US during the Neutrality Period (1914–17), providing intelligence, shadowing German operatives, and sabotaging German propaganda efforts. John R. Rathom, editor of the *Providence*

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*Journal*, became Gaunt's main propaganda agent in September 1914, and was paid by the admiralty for his services.<sup>58</sup> For the next two years, in a propaganda "triangle" Voska and his organization retrieved intelligence from their various sources, submitted them to Gaunt for analysis, who then released selected parts for Rathom to publish.

Rathom, with frequent first scoops on German scandals, also contacted the *New York Times* and *New York World* with information. These papers prefaced their reports with "the *Providence Journal* will say to-morrow morning..." and published British propaganda unchecked.<sup>59</sup> Not being allowed to divulge the identity of his sources, Rathom claimed that he ran his own intelligence network. This and many falsehoods he published over the years became exposed in February 1918, when Attorney General Gregory forced the editor to issue a sworn statement as to his being an utter fraud.<sup>60</sup>

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### ***The Case for a British Influence Campaign***

Voska's story of how the briefcase came into his hands seems embellished.<sup>a</sup> Supposedly, his men had an identical portfolio made, with Albert's inscription "HA" on the lock.<sup>63</sup> This does not match the Flynn photograph. The Voska shadow then followed Albert on the train

and switched the briefcase when the latter dozed off.<sup>64</sup> According to Voska, Albert had not noticed the switch and went home with a briefcase full of newspapers. Upon realizing that his papers were missing, Albert, according to Voska, called the police. There is no record in Albert's papers that he called the police. Given his official position and the sensitive contents of the satchel, that would have been a highly unlikely move.

That said, Voska had the resources, motivation, and connections to steal the briefcase and make it available to British intelligence. The theft occurred on July 24 and the papers arrived at the *New York World* on August 2. In a week's time, Gaunt and his superiors could easily have analyzed the contents, translated the parts they wanted published, and prepare one of the greatest propaganda coups of the war.<sup>65</sup> With Untermeyer alerting the US government to the existence of the papers, Gaunt did not even have to hand the documents to the Wilson administration. Not knowing where they had come from and obviously assuming the veracity and completeness of the information, Wilson, House, McAdoo, and Lansing went along with the British coup.

Other than Voska, who else believed that British agents were responsible for the briefcase theft? Albert, Bernstorff, von Papen, Boy-Ed, and König all believed British intelligence was culpable.

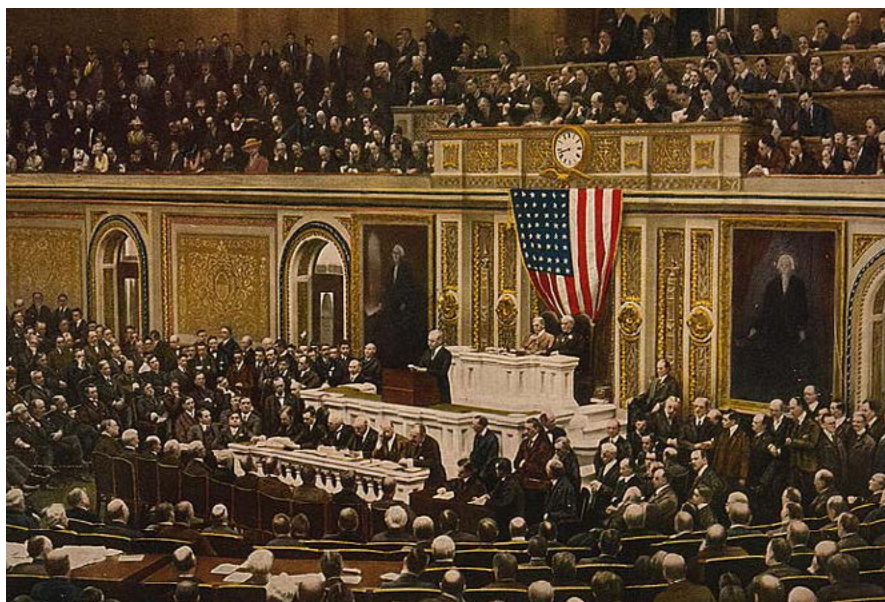
Guy Gaunt, somewhat sheepishly, wrote in his memoir, "Suggestions appeared in the pro-German press that agents of mine had robbed him. Quite untrue, however; the Doktor's papers were in the possession of the secret police and my friend, Captain Flynn, kindly returned them to their owner – after they had been carefully photographed."<sup>66</sup>

Gaunt's explanation is telling. It is true that "his agents" had not robbed Albert. The Czechs were unpaid and technically not his agents. The papers also were in the possession of the USSS at some point. The more interesting part would, of course, be how and when "his friend, Captain Flynn" came into possession of the papers. Gaunt did not elaborate on that point. That the papers were dutifully returned is not true. The Albert papers in the US National Archives, captured in 1917 by the Bureau, do not contain the contents of the briefcase. It was not only the German-friendly press who suspected the British were behind the theft. Most US papers agreed with the suspicion, at least until 1918.<sup>67</sup>

Most telling, however, is a comment in a collection of Major General Ralph H. Van Deman's papers, *The Final Memoranda*, written on June 5, 1950, long after McAdoo's memoirs appeared with the Burke and Flynn storyline dominating the historiography. Van Deman, often dubbed the father of US military intelligence, was closely working with the Bureau to identify German intelligence operations in 1915. Voska cooperated with Van Deman just like he did with the Bureau during the neutrality years

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a. One of the curious claims Voska made in his memoir is that his 17-year-old daughter Villa worked in Albert's office in 1915 as a stenographer and "rummaged discreetly in his files." The assertion is plausible but cannot be verified because Albert's accounts do not list his administrative staff.



On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson addressed a joint session of Congress to request a declaration of war against Germany. (Half-tone image, NARA)

and became a MID agent in 1917. The two men had a close working relationship. In his recall of events during the World War I, Van Deman wrote: “He [Voska] worked for the British Intelligence in 1914–15 and 16 and did some exceedingly clever work... It was Voska who got the handbag from Dr. Albert.”<sup>68</sup> He should have known.

The revelation of the Albert papers in the *New York World* and other dailies in summer 1915 coincided with a massive effort of the British government to capitalize on the US public’s outcry over the sinking of the *Lusitania*. A thorough reading of the front pages showcasing the contents of Albert’s briefcase reveal a clever sprinkling of more scandalous—and untrue—news on the same pages: “EVIDENCE IS GIVEN TO DANIELS ABOUT GERMANY’S

SPYING: Providence, R.I., Aug 17. – The *Providence Journal* will say to-morrow morning...” Also, “GERMANY CHARGED WITH HAVING SPIES IN OFFICES OF U.S.: The *Providence Journal* in its issue to-morrow will make the following charges...”<sup>69</sup>

The British propaganda campaign did not rest there. Embarrassing revelations of captured German papers in September 1915 caused another huge scandal. The entire campaign yielded great success: The German propaganda chief had to leave the country in the end of May 1915. The Austrian ambassador was expelled in September. The German military and naval attachés followed in December. Albert remained the lone accredited German attaché in New York.

None of the revelations showed “sufficient criminal evidence” on his part, and Secretary of State Lansing thought Albert too important for trade than to send him packing. President Wilson admitted to Secretary Lansing, “Albert has been able, and willing, to tender our trade in many particulars.”<sup>70</sup> However, after the scandal the discredited attaché sequestered himself in a suite at the Astor Hotel and rarely ventured out in public. His work lay in shambles. The German propaganda operation, blockade running, and efforts to find a *modus vivendi* with the Wilson administration faded.

### *The Gloves Come off*

Instead, a lower cadre of German operatives took charge of clandestine efforts and concentrated on new deadly ways to stop the US support of the Allies.<sup>71</sup> Dozens of ships, factories, and logistics installations burned throughout fall 1915.<sup>a</sup> In March 1916, Pancho Villa attacked Columbus, New Mexico, causing virtually the entire US Army and reserves to be stationed in Mexico or along the border. Fomenting a US military intervention in Mexico had been personally authorized by the German chancellor. A few months later, in July 1916, a huge explosion ripped through the Allied loading terminals in the New York Harbor, causing an earthquake that could be felt as far as Baltimore, where the responsible German agents toasted their success.<sup>b</sup> The Zimmermann Telegram and resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917 sealed the

a. See von Feilitzsch, *The Secret War on the United States in 1915: A Tale of Sabotage, Labor Unrest, and Border Troubles* (Henselstone Verlag, 2015).

b. See Michael Warner, “Protecting the Homeland the First Time Around: The Kaiser Sows Destruction,” *Studies in Intelligence* 46, no 1 (s00s) See David Welker, “Explosive Coal: Bombs Hiding in Plain Sight,” *Studies in Intelligence* 66, no. 1 (March 2022).

## An Early Influence Operation

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fate of America's fragile neutrality.  
The United States officially joined

the war on the side of the Allies on

April 6, 1917, finally fulfilling Great  
Britain's greatest desire.



*The authors:* Heribert von Feilitzsch is a writer and historian with degrees from the University of Arizona and Wake Forest University. He has written several books on the German Secret Service in North America in 1908–18, including *In Plain Sight; The Secret War Council; The Secret War on the United States in 1915;* and *Felix A. Sommerfeld and the Mexican Front in the Great War*. Charles H. Harris, III, is professor emeritus of history at New Mexico State University, Las Cruces. He has written and co-authored 10 books, including *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution; The Secret War in El Paso; The Plan de San Diego; The Archaeologist was a Spy;* and *The Great Call-Up*.



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### Endnotes

1. *New York World*, August 15–18, 1915.
2. See for example, Philip H. Melanson, Peter F. Stevens, *The Secret Service: The Hidden History of an Enigmatic Agency* (Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2002), 38.
3. Albert Papers, Box 23, König to Albert, undated memorandum, RG 65, NARA. It is reasonable to assume that König found out within a week of July 24, that the *World* had the papers, because the lawyer hired by Albert met with President Wilson on August 3, 1915.
4. Albert Papers, Box 23, Memorandum Paul König to Albert, undated (August 1915), RG 65, NARA.
5. For example, *New York Evening Telegram*, July 27, 1915.
6. Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee of the US Senate, *Testimony of Samuel Untermyer, Brewing and Liquor Interests and German and Bolshevik Propaganda*, vol. 2 (Government Printing Office, 1919), 1835ff.
7. *Ibid.*, 1866, 1936–37. Untermyer saw Wilson on August 3. According to Paul König, the *World* did not have the papers until August 2. The first Untermyer meeting must have occurred on that date.
8. Arthur S. Link, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 33, WW to Edith Bolling Galt, August 3, 1915.
9. *Ibid.* US Senate, Testimony of Samuel Untermyer, 1867. Untermyer allows for the “possibility” that he had known about Albert’s briefcase before the publication and “could” have been hired to prevent its publication. Although there is no available record that proves Flynn’s involvement at this juncture, it seems reasonable for McAdoo to have asked Flynn to get the papers. Another possibility would be that Flynn received the papers from the *World* without asking after the McAdoo-Wilson meeting.
10. While Lansing is not mentioned specifically by House, Lansing later told tHatzfeld that he had advance notice of the existence of the briefcase.
11. Daily Report of Agent, August 5, 1915, New York: Volumes 46–48 February 1, 1915–November 30, 1915, RG 87 US Secret Service, NARA.
12. *New York Tribune*, November 8, 1918.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Link, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 33, House to Wilson, August 10, 1915.
15. Link, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 33, House to Wilson, Aug 13, 1915; Albert Papers, Box 23, Letter to Wife Ida, August 14, 1915, RG 65, NARA; Memorandum Paul König to Albert, undated (August 1915), RG 65, NARA.
16. Albert Papers, Box 23, Memorandum Paul König to Albert, undated (August 1915), RG 65, NARA.
17. Albert Papers, Box 5, Memorandum from Carl Heynen, Bridgeport Projectile Company, June 30, 1915, RG 65, NARA.
18. Albert Papers, Box 23, Letter to Wife Ida, January 17, 1916, RG 65, NARA.
19. Albert Papers, Box 24, Count Bernstorff to Robert Lansing, June 22, 1915, RG 65, NARA; Albert Personnel File, Foreign Office to Bernstorff, October 13, 1915, GFM 33-4186, British National Archives, Kew, UK.
20. Albert Personnel File, von Jagow to Count Bernstorff, October 13, 1915, GFM 33-4186, British National Archives, Kew, UK.
21. Albert Papers, Albert to Secretary Trautmann, December 5, 1915, RG 65, NARA.
22. Albert Personnel File, Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg to Hamburg District Court, July 24, 1917, GFM 33-4186, British National Archives, Kew, UK.
23. *New York Sun*, February 16, 1919.
24. William F. Flynn, Courtney Riley Cooper, *The Eagle's Eye: A True Story of the Imperial German Government's Spies and Intrigues in America from Facts Furnished by William J. Flynn, Recently Retired Chief of the U.S. Secret Service* (Prospect Press, 1919), 133–47.



25. Ibid., 133–47.
26. Ibid; *New York Tribune*, January 5, 1918.
27. *New York Tribune*, November 8, 1918.
28. William Gibbs McAdoo, *Crowded Years: The Reminiscences of William G. McAdoo* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931), 327.
29. Ibid., 327–28.
30. Personnel File of Frank Burke, newspaper clippings, NARA St. Louis.
31. *Washington Evening Star*, June 3, 1942.
32. James D. Robenault, *The Harding Affair: Love and Espionage during the Great War* (St. Martin's Press, 2009), 150; Chad R. Fulwider, *German Propaganda and U.S. Neutrality in World War I* (University of Missouri Press, 2017), 223; Richard A. Hawkins, *Progressive Politics in the Democratic Party: Samuel Untermyer and the Jewish Anti-Nazi Boycott Campaign* (I.B. Tauris, 2022), 89; Edward Mickolus, *The Counterintelligence Chronology: Spying By and Against* (McFarland and Company, 2015), 24; Kathleen Hill, Gerald N. Hill, *Encyclopedia of Federal Agencies and Commissions* (Facts on File, 2014), 196; Marcia Roberts, *Moments in History: Department of Treasury United States Secret Service* (PU Books, 1990), 12; Barbara Tuchman, *The Zimmerman Telegram* (Ballentine, 1958), 74; Arthur S. Link, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Vol. 33 (Princeton University Press, 1966–1994); Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: The Struggle for Neutrality, 1914–1915* (Princeton University Press, 1960), 554–5.
33. See for example, Philip H. Melanson, Peter F. Stevens, *The Secret Service*, 36.
34. William M. Oliver, *The Birth of the FBI: Teddy Roosevelt, the Secret Service, and the Fight over America's Premier Law Enforcement Agency* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2019), 166.
35. Flynn fashioned himself as the German spy hunter of 1916–17, when Attorney General Gregory forced his firing. See *New York Evening World*, October 28, 1915, November 1, 1915, and October 24, 1917.
36. A few are Frank J. Rafalko, ed., *A Counterintelligence Reader, Volume I: American Revolution to World War II* (Military Bookshop, 2011); James D. Robenault, *The Harding Affair: Love and Espionage during the Great War* (St. Martin's Press, 2009), 150; Chad R. Fulwider, *German Propaganda and U.S. Neutrality in World War I* (University of Missouri Press, 2017), 223; Jamie Bisher, *The Intelligence War in Latin America, 1914–1922* (McFarland and Company, 2016), 366; Richard A. Hawkins, *Progressive Politics in the Democratic Party: Samuel Untermyer and the Jewish Anti-Nazi Boycott Campaign* (I.B. Tauris, 2022), 89; Edward Mickolus, *The Counterintelligence Chronology: Spying By and Against* (McFarland and Company, 2015), 24; Kathleen Hill and Gerald N. Hill, *Encyclopedia of Federal Agencies and Commissions* (Facts on File, 2014), 196; Marcia Roberts, *Moments in History: Department of Treasury United States Secret Service* (PU Books, 1990), 12; Barbara Tuchman, *The Zimmerman Telegram* (Ballentine, 1958), 74.
37. <https://www.secretservice.gov/about/history/timeline>, viewed March 21, 2023.
38. <https://www.secretservice.gov/history-espionage>, viewed March 21, 2023.
39. Link, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 33; AP Dispatches, May 1915, Library of Congress; Library of Congress Digital Collections: Robert Lansing Papers, April to August 1915; US Department of State, *Documents Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States*, vol. 2 (Government Printing Office, 1919); Robert Lansing Papers: Private Memoranda, 1915-1922; Originals: 1915–1917, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, mss29454, box 63, reel 1; William Gibbs McAdoo: A Register of His Papers in the Library of Congress, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 1959); Charles Seymour, *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*. 2 vols. (Houghton Mifflin, 1926), 2:339; Edward Mandell House Papers, Correspondence and Letters, 1915, Yale University Archives, call number MS 466.
40. For example: the disappearance of Bernardo Reyes in 1914, Victoriano Huerta and Pascual Orozco in spring 1915.
41. Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The FBI: A History* (Yale University Press, 2007), 62; John F. Fox, Jr., “Bureaucratic Wrangling over Counterintelligence, 1917-18,” *Studies in Intelligence* 49, no. 1 (2005), 15, n.2;
42. The agents were John J. Henry, Agent in Charge; Agents Burke, Savage, Kavanaugh, Schlamm (who resigned on July 25 and was replaced by James Carvey), Merillat, McCahill, Rubano, Howell, Manasse (Boston), Connolly (Buffalo), and Rich (Cornish, New Hampshire, presidential detail); New York: Volumes 46–48 — February 1, 1915–November 30, 1915, Daily Reports of Agents, RG 87, NARA.
43. New York: Volumes 46-48 - February 1, 1915-November 30, 1915, Daily Reports of Agents, RG 87, NARA.
44. Daily Report, July 20, 1915.
45. Daily Report, July 24, 1915.
46. Daily Report, July 24, 1915.
47. Ibid.
48. McAdoo, *Crowded Years*, 325.
49. For example, Daily Report, July 22, “At 7 a m sent the following telegrams: W. J. Flynn, Washington D.C. Leave at 7 a m for Marion. Address care postmaster. (signed) Burke.”
50. Daily Report, August 5, 1915.
51. Daily Report, September 5, 1915.
52. *Sunday Telegram*, October 24, 1915.
53. Sir Guy Gaunt, *The Yield of the Years: A Story of Adventure Afloat and Ashore* (Hutchinson and Co, 1940), 67. Voska's organization comprised the small Slavic countries of Europe, hence the tease.

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54. Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Making of a State: Memories and Observations, 1914-1918* (Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1927), 259; Emanuel Victor Voska and Will Irwin, *Spy and Counterspy* (George Harrap and Co. Ltd., 1941), 38.
55. Franz von Papen, *Memoirs* (E.P. Dutton and Company, 1953), 50.
56. Voska, *Spy and Counterspy*, 34.
57. *Ibid.*, 33.
58. . Case 8000-80773, John R. Rathom, undated memorandum, RG 65, BI, NARA. “At the beginning of the War... Rathom met in Washington, D.C. a member of the British Government, at which time it was alleged a fund was set aside by the British Government, guaranteeing the “Providence Journal” against loss through publishing articles exposing German propaganda...” Gaunt, *The Yield of the Years*, 138.
59. *New York World*, August 17, 1915.
60. Case 8000-80773, John R. Rathom, Signed and witnessed statement of John R. Rathom, February 6, 1918, RG 65, BI, NARA.
61. Voska, *Spy and Counterspy*, 42, 92–95.
62. Voska, *Spy and Counterspy*, 96.
63. *Ibid.*, 97.
64. *Ibid.*, 98–99.
65. The contents of Albert’s briefcase appear to be lost. Extensive searches of the British Admiralty records and US Treasury, State, and Justice archives have not yielded the “smoking gun.”
66. Gaunt, *The Yield of the Years*, 147.
67. For example, *Seattle Star*, March 14, 1917; *Tacoma Times*, March 19, 1917.
68. Ralph E. Weber, ed., *The Final Memoranda: Major General Ralph H. Van Deman, USA Ret. 1865–1952, Father of U.S. Military Intelligence* (Scholarly Resources Inc., 1988), 54.
69. *New York World*, August 17, 1915.
70. *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 35, President Wilson to Robert Lansing, December 5, 1915.
71. Without knowing exactly what was originally in the briefcase, the names of several lower-tier agents appear in Albert and von Papen’s papers that were taken in 1917: Carl Heynen, Hans Tauscher, Paul König, Frederico Stallforth, Felix A. Sommerfeld, Walter Scheele, Hans Walter Luigi Böhm, and Paul G. Hilken.



## Intelligence in Public Media

### **Perspectives on The Sisterhood: The Secret History of Women at the CIA**

Liza Mundy (Crown, 2023), 452 pages, illustrations, index.

#### **Reviewed by Brent Geary and Linda Weissgold**

*In this article, we offer two perspectives by veteran intelligence officers on Lisa Mundy's best-selling *The Sisterhood*. The first is by Brent Geary, a historian in the Center for the Study of Intelligence, which publishes this journal; the second is by Linda Weissgold, a former director of analysis at CIA. As always, we welcome readers' comments.*

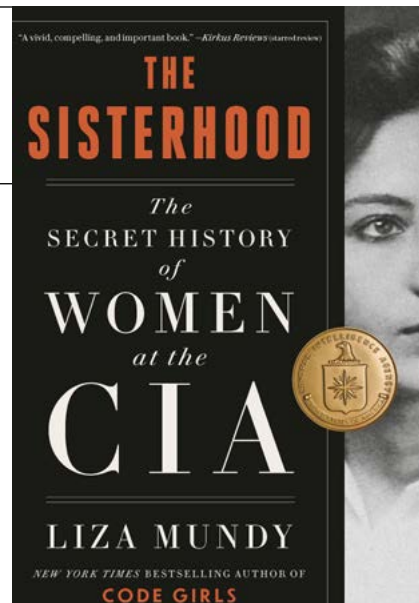
Women have always played vital roles at CIA. They were present at its creation, have served in every capacity, and have done so with distinction. With her new book, *The Sisterhood*, journalist Liza Mundy sheds light on how those women fought for better jobs, better pay, more responsibility, and more respect from an organization long dominated by men. It is a compelling, honest attempt to capture the nuances of an important slice of CIA history as told primarily through interviews with women and men who served there in the past and a few who serve there still. While *The Sisterhood* is flawed in places, Mundy clearly wanted to get the story right and to accurately portray the things she was told—down to fine details that will leave CIA veterans nodding along or sighing at the memories of mistakes made and injustices witnessed or suffered. If there was a driving theme to Mundy's work, it was that CIA women are not “better or more virtuous or more upstanding,” but that they have been part of CIA successes and failures alike and that their rise to prominence has been a hard, slow fight. (xvii)

Less a comprehensive history than a compilation of many women's individual stories, *The Sisterhood* is nevertheless uniquely valuable and timely. In some ways, it picks up where Ann Todd's *OSS Operation Black Mail* (2017), and Elizabeth McIntosh's *Sisterhood of Spies* (1998) left off, as both focused on remarkable work done by women in the Office of Strategic Services—CIA's most direct predecessor—during World War II. It is obviously also a follow-on of sorts to her own excellent earlier book, *Code Girls* (2017), which described the contributions of women in breaking Axis and Soviet codes during the same war. *The Sisterhood* brings the story of women in US intelligence from the agency's founding in 1947 to

the present day, at a time when—just recently—CIA featured its first female director and, concurrently, female directors of all five CIA directorates.

Mundy divides her book into three main parts: operations, analysis, and counterterrorism targeting—or “manhunting.” In each, she focuses on the experiences of a handful of women while providing rich details about their work and struggles. In the section on operations, she tells the story of Heidi August, a CIA clerk who—over many years and a variety of assignments and overseas postings—develops a reputation as a capable, effective operator who rose to become a case officer and station chief. Another key player is Lisa Manfull Harper, the daughter of a diplomat and herself a talented linguist who passed up a doctoral fellowship to Yale to join CIA, only to have her dream of becoming a case officer deferred for years because of sexist managers and superiors. Eventually, she became a highly successful case officer and the first female division chief in the Directorate of Operations (DO), but even then, she was treated poorly by her fellow chiefs—or “barons”—and retired early for health reasons. Thankfully, Harper appears again during the hunt for al-Qa'ida.

Mundy also describes in detail the litany of indignities routinely inflicted on women across CIA from the 1950s to the 2000s, from casual sexual harassment by colleagues and superiors to the uniquely CIA activity of sending attractive women to personally deliver cables for coordination—in the pre-email days—among many offices so the men there could ogle them in the process. “I didn't dare say anything” about the practice, said frequent victim Harper, lest they view her as being too aggressively



All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed in this article are those of the author. Nothing in the article should be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations.

feminist. She and others were openly denied jobs and training courses and promotions if they got married or became pregnant; male colleagues assumed they would leave CIA for domestic life. One man even screamed at Harper that she should refund the cost of her DO training program when she announced she was engaged. (83) “There were men who were allies and others who were predators ... and the former did not rein in the latter, in part because they did not realize how far things went,” Mundy writes. At a meeting with women DO officers in the 1980s, Dick Stolz, the head of the clandestine service, asked those in attendance to raise their hands if they had ever been sexually harassed. “Every hand went up.” (81)

Mundy also describes how the wives of case officers often worked (without pay) in supporting roles in operations. This was not unique to CIA. Soviet spy Oleg Penkovsky—famous for his role in the Cuban Missile Crisis—frequently met in Moscow with Janet Chisholm, the wife of his British handler. But for women who aspired to become case officers, this arrangement posed yet another hurdle to their advancement because agency wives were doing the work for free and male station chiefs used that as an excuse for not bringing in more women to conduct operations. Here Mundy also details two lawsuits, one a class-action representing dozens of DO women in the 1990s claiming sexual discrimination. CIA eventually settled, but that resulted in pervasive retaliation against those who sued. “They won, but they really didn’t,” said one observer. “They promoted some of them, but they never really got very far.” (166)

The second two sections are closely related in that they describe the evolution of women who worked in secured vaults as classified record keepers—so called “sneaker ladies” because they were on their feet all day retrieving files—to the founding mothers of not one but two new intelligence disciplines: leadership analysis and targeting. Behind-the-scenes jobs such as record-keeping and counterintelligence tended to feature large numbers of women, and Mundy describes in fascinating detail how these “vault women” emerged in the 1980s and 1990s to more prominent roles. Her recounting of the creation of the Office of Leadership Analysis (LDA)—headed by a woman, Helene Boatner—and the challenges its officers

faceted shows that the Directorate of Intelligence (DI) was no better than the DO in its systemic mistreatment and underestimation of women. LDA, Mundy accurately reports, was often referred to derisively by CIA men as “Ladies Doing Analysis.”<sup>a</sup> (184)

The third and final section focuses on the roles women played in identifying Usama bin Ladin and al-Qa‘ida as serious threats to the United States and in bringing about their destruction. Counterterrorism pathfinders such as Cindy Storer, Gina Bennett, and Barbara Sude feature prominently, as do others like Jennifer Matthews and Alfreda Bikowski. Mundy describes in painstaking and frustrating detail how first Bennett and Storer, then others, tried largely in vain to convince US officials of the threat Bin Ladin posed, the creation of a dedicated team at CIA focused entirely on him and al-Qa‘ida, and the events leading up to 9/11 and the days that followed. The Bin Ladin unit, named Alec Station after the son of its founding director, Michael Scheuer, represented an uncomfortable merger between operations and analysis, and targeting—manhunting—was then something that the CIA had little experience with. It did not help that Scheuer—an ally and advocate for the women on his team—was himself an analyst, leading a DO team staffed largely by women.

To Mundy, who accurately describes some differences in the cultures of the DO and DI at that time, it was a situation that appears in retrospect almost to have been designed to fail. She is not wrong. Although Scheuer’s team located bin Ladin on a few occasions, it struggled for years to convince policymakers and CIA leaders of the unique threat al-Qa‘ida posed, likely due—in part, at least—to the absence of male operations officers who would have stood better chances of being heard. Mundy’s interviewees recount, however, that after 9/11, CIA completely reconfigured itself to focus on counterterrorism, how the prominence of women rose with it, and how divisions over the proper conduct of what became known as the global war on terrorism—especially the ethics of enhanced interrogations—divided even that closely knit group of officers, men and women alike.

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a. (U//FOUO) LDA was less a new “creation” or new “discipline” than a renaming of a CIA function—maintenance of biographical records and providing reports and information on foreign leaders and figures of US interest, especially diplomatic interest—that had existed for decades. The new name, in effect, elevated the function from a supporting role to one of equal standing with the other Directorate of Intelligence analytical offices. With overlapping interests in country leaders, bureaucratic friction and some animosity was inevitable.

One criticism of Mundy’s approach is she too often makes strong assertions based on the opinions of a few interviewees. Trailblazers like Eloise Page and Helene Boatner, most notably, are accused of being at best unhelpful and at worst intentionally harsh toward the women who looked to them for mentorship. It is disappointing that Mundy did not seem to allow for the possibility that others may have had a more positive view of Page, Boatner, and a few other named officers whose reputations will now be forever tarnished based on their portrayals in this book. This tendency to give perhaps too much credence to the views of a few appears in other places. For example, no doubt some CIA veteran told Mundy that the Office of Central Reference—the a component of which would become LDA—was staffed mostly by women “or men who had dead-ended and washed up there.” (183) While true that women generally outnumbered men in OCR, it was hardly a wasteland populated by lesser lights. In fact, many noteworthy analysts—women and men—started out in OCR while learning their craft, including future DCI and Defense Secretary Robert Gates. Oral histories, while incredibly useful if deployed well, become cloudy with the passage of time and provide only one person’s point of view. Mundy should have

included more caveats that reflect this limitation to her research.

Another weakness of the book is that it focuses almost entirely on the women in CIA operations and analysis. While those two intelligence specialties tend to garner more public attention, the practical omission of agency women who served in vital support roles—logisticians and administrators, for example—or as groundbreaking scientists and engineers developing generations of technical wonders is disappointing and renders the book less complete as a result.

But these inaccuracies and omissions, while unfortunate, are but small parts of the larger story that Mundy gets mostly right about the evolution of women’s roles at CIA. There is much more to praise here than to fault, with many other engaging stories not described in this review, each with valuable lessons to impart. Because of those strengths, *The Sisterhood* deserves and demands a wide audience both within the intelligence profession and beyond, and this reviewer hopes there are others like it on the way.

*The reviewer:* Brent Geary is a former CIA analyst now serving on CIA’s History Staff.



The women and men of CIA work in anonymity by design, with the American public rarely hearing about their expertise, dedication, and ingenuity. So, first and foremost I offer my gratitude to Liza Mundy for sharing the tales of CIA officers in *The Sisterhood*. Telling those stories primarily through the prism of women offers unique insights into both CIA and our society. Women have contributed to CIA’s mission from the start. Jane Wallis Burrell has the distinction of being the first officer to die in the CIA’s service, only 110 days after the organization was officially established.<sup>a</sup> The important duties entrusted to women in the early days of CIA often flew in the face of societal expectations that limited employment opportunities across our country and abroad.

Having had the honor of leading the Directorate of Analysis during the tenure of the first female Director of CIA, and a time when all five CIA Directorates were led by women, I am keenly aware that we stood on the

shoulders of unsung giantesses. Mundy focused largely on the clandestine and analytic counterterrorism mission of CIA, but there are similar stories of pioneers and “sisterhoods” in every directorate. Personally, my path to CIA started with an encounter in 1985 with a person teaching classes on women in leadership at the CIA, and I was fortunate that from the time I joined I could see female role models at every level of management. But, *The Sisterhood* and my own sporadic experiences with chauvinism show that there was, and still is, room to improve on CIA’s gender dynamics.

Good analytic tradecraft requires weighing contradictory and incomplete information and vigorously testing arguments, so I am particularly sympathetic to the challenge Mundy faced sourcing her book primarily through first person narratives. In the interest of full disclosure, I participated in one of Mundy’s interviews with officers involved in the hunt for Usama bin Ladin. I am honored

a. See <https://www.cia.gov/stories/story/the-mystery-of-jane-wallis-burrell-the-first-cia-officer-to-die-in-the-agencys-service/>

to say that I worked with many of the women included in the book, and I have great respect for the contributions they made to keeping Americans safe. Nevertheless, my recollection of events was at times at odds with those Mundy recounts. Evaluating personal recollections and perspectives is difficult under any circumstance, but in a classified environment with purposeful compartmentation, one's personal truth may not be informed by a fuller picture.

Most prominently, I take issue with the premise that warnings about the threat posed by al-Qa'ida were ignored because women were ringing the bell. CIA Director George Tenet's well-documented efforts to get policymakers to act belies claims that the analysts' warnings went unheeded. In hindsight, policymakers may not have made the wisest decisions, but they made informed choices. In my own experience, which includes decades

working on the Middle East and counterterrorism, as well as serving as a presidential briefer, I found that it is difficult to get decisionmakers to pay attention, let alone take risks, on issues that are not part of their policy objectives or contradict preconceived notions, regardless of gender.

Telling the story of CIA's amazing workforce through individuals' perspectives is also a significant strength of Mundy's book. The personal touch makes *The Sisterhood* an engaging and inspirational read. It illustrates the passion that CIA officers have for their mission despite the pressures that they face on a regular basis. It highlights the contributions that individuals can make to shaping history. Finally, it shows that CIA, like the rest of society, must continue to ensure that no demographic is excluded from contributing if we are to address successfully a mounting array of threats.

*The reviewer:* Linda Weissgold served as the Deputy Director of CIA for Analysis from February 2020 until April 2023. A recipient of the CIA's Distinguished Intelligence Medal, she retired after a 37-year career at CIA in June 2023.



## Intelligence in Public Media

### Getting Russia Right

Thomas Graham (Polity Press, Council on Foreign Relations, 2023), 259 pages, acknowledgments, preface, epilogue, notes, index.

### Reviewed by Sarah

After Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, there has been no shortage of analysis on why Putin chose to invade and whether it could have been avoided. While Presidents George H.W. Bush and Boris Yelstin spoke of friendship and partnership, events over the last three decades—NATO expansion, Allied intervention in Kosovo, the global war on terrorism, color revolutions in former Soviet states—ultimately shifted the bilateral relationship to a different, and far more adversarial, path. In *Getting Russia Right*, Graham argues that it didn't have to be this way.

Having worked on Soviet and then Russian affairs in the US Embassy in Moscow, the State Department, Defense Department, and the National Security Council staff, Graham has significant experience with and a deep understanding of the US-Russia relationship. Graham does not seek to defend or justify US policy toward Russia in his book, but rather to understand what drove US policy and why it ultimately did not achieve the desired objectives. His critiques focus on Western policy and actions, but he is clear that Putin's "burgeoning ambitions and messianic delusions" was ultimately responsible for shaping the trajectory that led to the total rupture with the United States. (174) Graham hopes that identifying misunderstandings and shortcomings in previous US strategies for Russia will guide the development of a more constructive rivalry with Russia moving forward.

Graham deftly weaves the evolution of the US-Russia relationship over the last 30 years with insights into the Russian mindset. In *Getting Russia Right*, Graham has two central arguments: the goal of integrating Russia into the Euro-Atlantic community failed because of diverging geopolitical and ideological ambitions, and the US must treat Russia as a great power to manage competition. A core element of Russia's national identity is that Russia is a great power, but Graham argues that US administrations over the last three decades have been guided by a belief that Russia is weak and will ultimately yield to US policy preferences. (67) At the same time, Washington

had adopted a largely binary view of Russia that disregarded the potential for Russia to become an acceptable partner while falling somewhere short of full integration into the West: "if Russia was not going to become a free-market democracy, then it would inevitably revert to being an authoritarian, imperial state and implacable foe." (161)

A more pragmatic middle ground, wherein Washington is "unsentimental, unblinkered, and non-ideological in its assessment of Russia" (216), is the path Graham advocates for the future. It is unclear what a post-conflict Russia will look like and what role it will play on the global stage, and the uncertainty will complicate the creation of coherent short-term strategies to deal with Russia in Europe and a longer-term strategy to manage the relationship. However, Russia's central role in strategic stability and European security and ability to influence developments in the Middle East and Indo-Pacific means "even a Russia in decline should matter to the United States. Its opposition can complicate, and its cooperation facilitate, the United States' achievement of its goals." (187) Graham argues that while the US may have a preference for a free and democratic Russia, that is not the Russia that exists. A policy of strategic patience that accumulates small victories over time to ultimately drive developments in favor of US interests will be essential to success with Russia.

The final chapter of the book looks at what can be done to deal with Russia, and Graham's discussion of the longterm relationship is somewhat more satisfying than his proposals to deal with European security and Ukraine

GETTING  
RUSSIA  
RIGHT

THOMAS GRAHAM

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in the near term. Proposals like maintaining dual tracks of supporting Ukraine's military and maintaining diplomatic pressure on Russia, messaging Russian elites that the US is prepared to deal with Russian security concerns once the war ends, new arms control and confidence building measures to ensure European security will fall flat with many as recent efforts along these lines have so far not achieved the desired end states. One wonders if the relationship has deteriorated to a point that these are no longer even feasible starting points, and if there is anything more to be done outside of strategic patience and a hope that Moscow will eventually return to a more realpolitik approach.

The comprehensive analysis of how and why the US-Russia relationship has been in a downward spiral in the post-Soviet era will be most useful to people new to Russia, but even experienced Russia hands will appreciate the approach of looking at US policy through a lens of Russian identity and strategy. Graham concludes the book by noting that none of his recommendations is "particularly novel [and], much is simply commonsensical." I agree. But his blunt and straight-forward framework for building a constructive relationship with Russia in the future invites the reader to really think through the concepts and how they might be implemented in a future policy, and in that way, *Getting Russia Right* does exactly what it set out to do.



*The reviewer:* Sarah is a CIA senior analyst focused on Russia.



## Intelligence in Public Media

### ***The Lumumba Plot: The Secret History of the CIA and a Cold War Assassination***

Stuart A. Reid (Alfred A. Knopf, 2023), 618 pages, index.

#### **Reviewed by Paul Kepp**

It is one of the iconic images of the Cold War. Arms bound, stripped of his signature eyeglasses and bowtie, surrounded by a jeering, abusive crowd, Patrice Lumumba, onetime leader of Africa's largest country, confronts what he must have known would be his death. It is an arresting and troubling picture. The photographs (actually taken from film footage shot in December 1960 by a journalist on the scene) contribute to the enduring hold Lumumba has on the imagination.

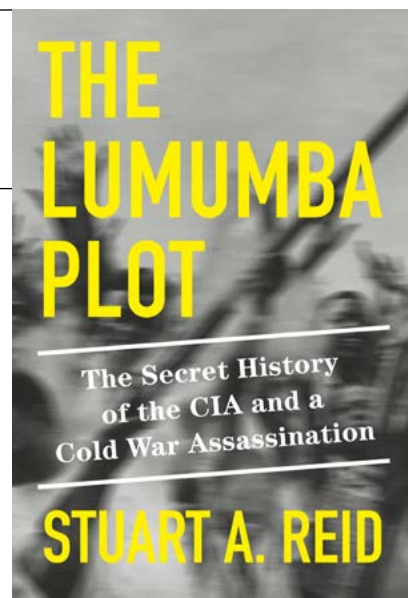
Stuart A. Reid's *The Lumumba Plot: The Secret History of the CIA and a Cold War Assassination* tells the story behind the photos. Reid, a senior editor at *Foreign Affairs* magazine, has done a superb job documenting the Congo's independence, which took place amidst a wave of decolonization surging across Africa, at the height of the Cold War in 1960. The title, however, is incomplete. The CIA was indeed involved, and there was a plot (many of them in fact) but there is more to the story: The United Nations and the Congo's former colonial power, Belgium, played equally important roles in the drama. If the subtitle does not capture everything, fortunately Reid's book does. Thoroughly researched, well organized, and engagingly written, *The Lumumba Plot* is the best account available in English on Patrice Lumumba and the events surrounding the Congo's independence.

Lumumba was born around 1925 (the records are not clear) in Onalua, a hamlet in the center of Belgium's vast African colony, and was educated by US missionaries. Intelligent and widely read, fluent in French, Lumumba was an *évolué*, the term used at the time for Europeanized subjects, destined for low-level administrative positions in the colonial apparatus (the post office, in Lumumba's case). Such a fate was far too small for this restless intellectual, however. Lumumba's political consciousness developed rapidly, influenced by travel to Europe and other African countries which, like his homeland, were emerging from the shadow of colonialism. He became a leader in the nascent Congolese independence movement and, in a rushed and confused transition, was elected the country's first prime minister. He took office on June 30,

1960. Almost immediately, the country spiraled into chaos: The Congolese army mutinied, and as politicians jockeyed for influence in the capital, rebellion spread in the provinces. One of those provinces, Katanga, seceded and its unrecognized government was to play a key role in the Lumumba story.

The crisis generated profound concern in Washington. The Cold War was at its zenith. Cuba was in Fidel Castro's hands. Two months before the events described in *The Lumumba Plot*, Francis Gary Powers was shot down in his U-2 over the Soviet Union, plunging US-Soviet relations into the deep freeze. There was a burgeoning insurgency in Southeast Asia. Although Reid's book is mostly silent on how these wider events influenced US policy toward the Congo, they surely must have mattered, and Washington spared little effort to ensure the country did not gravitate toward the Eastern Bloc. To achieve this goal, the United States exercised diplomatic pressure (including using its influence in the United Nations) but it would be CIA and its indefatigable station chief in Leopoldville, Lawrence Devlin, who played the decisive role for the United States.

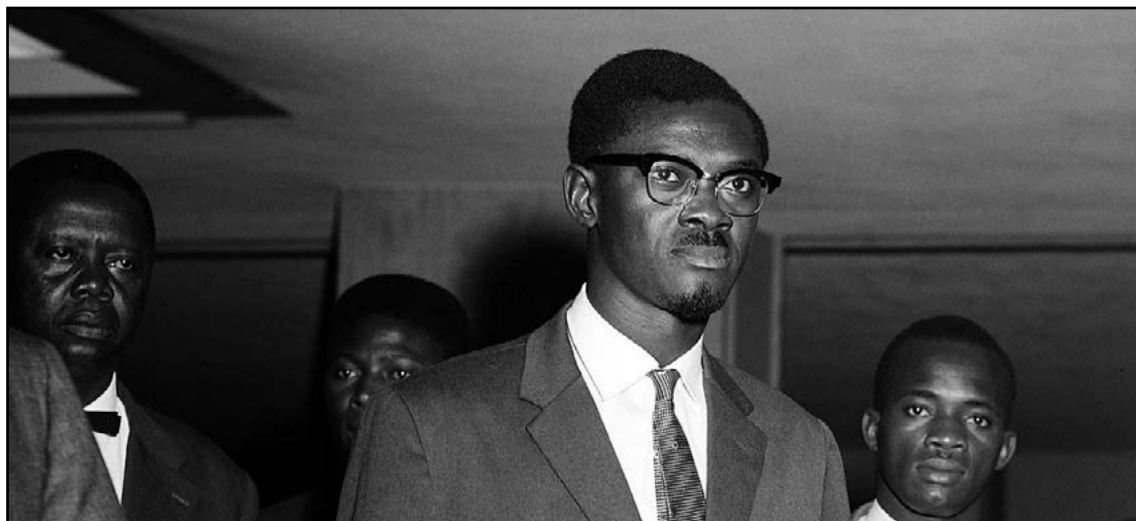
Like many Westerners, Devlin did not initially write off Lumumba. At one point, Devlin saved Lumumba's life in the face of an angry mob when the two were traveling together in the interior. Devlin would do the same later for a then obscure Congolese army colonel, Joseph Mobutu. But Devlin, again like others, soured on Lumumba. The reasons for this are important since they explain why Lumumba failed and Mobutu triumphed. This, and not assassination plots, is the significance of Reid's book. While remaining broadly sympathetic to



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Prime Minister of the Congo Patrice Lumumba and members of his delegation at the United Nations to meet with UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, July 24, 1960. (UN)

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Lumumba, Reid dissects the mystique and the reality objectively and masterfully.

Lumumba was an inspiring, eloquent speaker and a visionary. But he was also impulsive, sometimes paranoid, and had a pronounced tendency to alienate individuals and constituencies, foreign and Congolese alike, he needed to make his government work. He often told people what they wanted to hear, eroding trust even in those who were inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt, like the US statesman Ralph Bunche, the United Nations representative in the Congo at the time. Lumumba's credibility was further damaged by the fact that once he became prime minister, his fledgling government barely functioned. It was chaotic, undisciplined and riven by ethnic and political infighting.

Without the United Nations to help him, Lumumba's tenure as prime minister, brief as it was, probably would have been even shorter. In fairness, Lumumba was not wholly or even mostly to blame for this. It was Belgium's avowed policy to withhold from the Congolese any training, education, or positions of responsibility in preparation for their independence. This shortsighted and cynical strategy deprived the country of the human capital it desperately needed, leaving the Congo and its new prime minister unprepared for the trials they were about to face.<sup>a</sup> The three main external parties—the United

Nations, the United States, and Belgium—contributed to the problem by stoking divisions as they sought outcomes that would best protect their interests. Lumumba's soaring rhetoric and inspired vision of an independent and free Congo could not overcome these obstacles. As Reid puts it, Lumumba "was his country's greatest politician and perhaps its worst statesman."

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### ***Mobutu's Pivotal Role***

Mobutu emerges as the key anti-Lumumbist leader, and in the pages of Reid's book he appears, in contrast to Lumumba, almost competent, cleaning up after Lumumba's messes, all the while growing more and more frustrated with his mercurial prime minister. Devlin was a shrewd judge of character, and he knew everyone in Leopoldville. He saw potential in Mobutu, whose status as a military officer was also an advantage: Devlin recognized that, then as now, the army would be a pivotal political factor in the Congo. When the time came, and with the support of CIA, Mobutu made his move. And so we see Colonel Mobutu (no field marshals in the Congo, yet) appearing in the fateful newsreel with Lumumba, arms crossed, tinted glasses glinting, presiding over the operation that would dispatch his rival, thereby taking the first steps along the path to his 32-year reign as the undisputed dictator of the Congo.

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a. For an account of the Congolese independence crisis and the death of Lumumba from the Belgian perspective, see *The Assassination of Lumumba* by Ludo De Witte (Verso, 2001).

Reid demonstrates how much Mobutu needed Devlin, and not just for CIA's checkbook. Lumumba was not killed immediately after his arrest. Mobutu was paralyzed about what to do with his prisoner and at times seemed on the edge of a nervous breakdown (he was just 30 years old at the time). Lumumba was enormously popular in parts of the Congo and had lost none of his power to mesmerize a crowd. The United Nations was having second thoughts about its previous anti-Lumumba stance, and some newly independent African nations, as well as the Soviet Union, were agitating for Lumumba's freedom. In addition, according to Reid, Mobutu possessed a curious sense of residual respect, even fear, toward Lumumba. Devlin had no such scruples.

Perhaps recalling the axiom that if you shoot at the king you had better kill him, the CIA chief was in constant touch with Mobutu's inner circle about the Lumumba problem. There was no need for poisoned toothpaste or sniper rifles now. Another solution was at hand: to send Lumumba to the breakaway province of Katanga, whose leader, Moïse Tshombe, despised Lumumba and where the Belgians still had influence. The former prime minister and two of his aides were bundled onto an airplane and flown south. Hours later, they were executed. By all accounts, Lumumba faced his death with dignity.<sup>a</sup>

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### ***CIA Involvement***

No book about Lumumba would be complete without mention of the CIA's role in Lumumba's death and whether Washington actually ordered it. *The Lumumba Plot* addresses the question but keeps it perspective as one element of a larger story. Reid concludes that that in a meeting in August 1960, Eisenhower did in fact direct that Lumumba be removed. Eisenhower's language was ambiguous, but his intent was not. He wanted Lumumba out of the way and the president "was not too fussy about how," in the words of Richard Bissell, the CIA's deputy director for plans at the time. CIA headquarters advised Devlin of this decision and dispatched the infamous vials of poison to Leopoldville, in addition to providing

the station with funds for the purpose of eliminating the prime minister, to be used at Devlin's discretion. The poison was never employed because events on the ground, as well as Devlin's operational instincts, suggested to the Leopoldville station chief that a different course of action might be best.

However history judges US policy toward the Congo, Devlin comes across in the pages of Reid's book as competent and effective. Salacious stories about exotic toxins and the broader debate about assassination as a policy tool have tended to overshadow Devlin's qualities as a chief of station. Energetic, independent, and decisive, Devlin developed a wide range of contacts in the Congo, established a close relationship with the US ambassador in Leopoldville, Clare Timberlake, and was able to translate guidance from Washington, which was often vague and dilatory, into action on the ground. It helped that Devlin had access to substantial sums of money (by the standards of the day), consistent with the Congo's status as a front-burner foreign policy issue at the time. Devlin was not one to be deterred by challenges. On one occasion, faced with the need to pay off Congolese politicians who had been sequestered by the UN in a building outside Leopoldville, he found a sewage tunnel into the compound and transferred the cash that way. Devlin would return five years later for a second stint as COS Leopoldville, a tour that would be almost as eventful as his first.<sup>b</sup>

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### ***What If?***

In his afterword, Reid speculates about what might have been if Lumumba had survived. He argues that Lumumba was neither viscerally anti-American nor an ideological Marxist. This conclusion is credible and in hindsight probably a more accurate assessment of him than the CIA, many in the UN, and certainly the Belgians, held at the time. Had he lived, according to Reid, Lumumba may well have ended up presiding over a left-leaning but moderate and independent regime. Perhaps.

Predicting what might have been in the Congo case is especially difficult because Lumumba's trajectory across

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a. Less so his captors. Lumumba was hastily buried, exhumed, and reburied. Eventually his dismembered remains were destroyed with acid. In 2022, the Belgian government repatriated Lumumba's gold tooth, which had been wrenched from his jaw as a trophy by Belgian police commissioner Gerard Soete. See Damian Zane, "Patrice Lumumba: Why Belgium is returning a Congolese hero's golden tooth," BBC News, June 20, 2022.

b. An analysis of the CIA's covert action programs in the Congo can be found in "CIA's Covert Operations in the Congo, 1960–1968: Insights from Newly Declassified Documents," by David Robarge, *Studies in Intelligence* 58, no. 3 (September 2014).

the firmament of African politics was exceptionally short: the main events described in this 600-page book took place over the course of less than a year. There were other possible outcomes. There is a whiff of the demagogue about Lumumba, and readers of *The Lumumba Plot* would do well to keep in mind Albert Camus' observation: "Every revolutionary ends up by becoming either an oppressor, or a heretic." Laurent-Desiré Kabila, who took power after Mobutu, was as autocratic and sinister a leader as the Congo has ever seen; while it would be unfair to equate Lumumba and Kabila it is worth remembering that the latter styled himself as Lumumba's political heir. (They shared another connection: Kabila died 40 years to the day after Lumumba's death, shot by one of his own bodyguards.)

But the afterword does not detract from the book. Reid's scholarship is impressive, and his narrative refreshingly free of polemic, allowing the reader to judge: an achievement in its own right given the enduring controversy about Lumumba and the fact that he was appropriated as a symbol almost immediately after his death, and remains one to this day. (Exactly what he symbolized depends on who you talk to.) If Reid indulges in a little

speculation at the end of the book, he does so judiciously and appropriately.

In 1997, Mobutu's regime, rotting from within after decades of corruption, unable to cope with the changes brought about by the end of the Cold War, collapsed. Mobutu himself escaped his predecessor's fate. He fled into exile in Morocco, where he died of cancer months later. Mobutu's fall would precipitate a crisis far more catastrophic for the people of Zaire, as it was then known, than anything they experienced at independence.

This might explain a curious fact: The Lumumba story resonates more widely outside the Congo than in it. There is no Patrice Lumumba People's Friendship University in Kinshasa, only in Moscow (its European accreditation was suspended after the Russian invasion of Ukraine). An award-winning film about Lumumba's life was produced and directed by a Haitian.<sup>a</sup> No statue of Lumumba presides over Kinshasa's main thoroughfare, Boulevard 30 juin, even though no one had a bigger role than Lumumba in making that date meaningful in the nation's history. He has no namesakes in major cities or airports and his name is rarely evoked by Kinshasa's political leaders today. Lumumba is a symbol, but, preoccupied with the daily challenges of survival, not for most Congolese.



*The reviewer:* Paul Kepp is a retired CIA operations officer who traveled many of the same roads as Larry Devlin.

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a. In Raoul Peck's film *Lumumba* (2000), Lumumba is played by a French actor.

## Intelligence in Public Media

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### ***The Padre: The True Story of the Irish Priest Who Armed the IRA with Gaddafi's Money***

Jennifer O'Leary (Merrion Press, 2023), 254 pages, photos, epilogue, endnotes, acknowledgments.

### ***Stakeknife's Dirty War: The Inside Story of Scappaticci, the IRA's Nutting Squad, and the British Spooks Who Ran the War***

Richard O'Rawe (Merrion Press, 2023), 253 pages, epilogue, endnotes, acknowledgments.

### ***There Will Be Fire: Margaret Thatcher, the IRA, and the Two Minutes That Changed History***

Rory Carroll (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2023), 397 pages, prologue, photos, epilogue, endnotes, acknowledgments.

## Reviewed by Joseph Gartin

*Suddenly as the riot squad moved in, it was raining  
exclamation marks,  
Nuts, bolts, nails, car-keys. A fount of broken type.  
And the explosion  
Itself—an asterisk on the map.*

—*Belfast Confetti*, Ciaran Carson

Twenty-five years since the Good Friday Agreement drew an uneasy close to the Troubles, new scholarship, memoirs, oral histories, and documentaries are shedding light on the war that wracked Northern Ireland from the late 1960s to the mid-1990s. The additions to the literature are welcome because the Troubles defy simple explanation, and intelligence in its myriad forms played important roles that are only now coming into view. Three recent books focus on different aspects of the conflict, but in the claustrophobic world of the Troubles these stories inevitably intersect.

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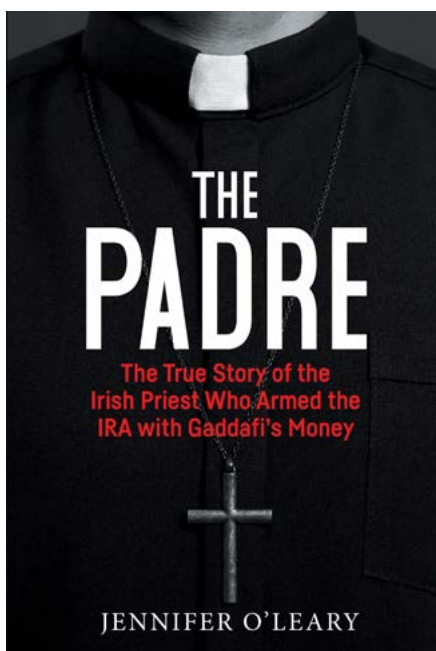
### ***The Padre*, by Jennifer O'Leary**

In *The Padre*, Jennifer O'Leary, an investigative journalist for BBC Northern Ireland, tells one part of the Troubles story in her fascinating account of Patrick Joseph Ryan, an Irish Catholic priest whose true devotion, it turned out, would be to the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA, more commonly the IRA or the Provos). Ryan was educated as a child in the 1940s at a Christian Brothers school in Thurles, County

Tipperary, in the Republic of Ireland. Catholicism and Irish nationalism ran deep in Thurles in those days, but O'Leary's account makes clear that after ordination in June 1954, Fr. Ryan set his sights on adventure in Africa, not saving souls in Ireland. Assigned to a diocese in British-ruled central Tanganyika (now part of Tanzania), Ryan busied himself building schools, digging wells, and becoming a pilot. The catechism came second.

This pattern repeated itself when Ryan returned to Tipperary in 1964, seemingly unaware of an emerging civil rights movement to confront omnipresent, systemic anti-Catholic discrimination in Northern Ireland. "Whatever was going on in the North at the time was not something I was aware of," he told O'Leary. (55) A brief return to Africa was followed by an unloved posting

to Barking Parish in East London, where there were no clinics to build or planes to fly. By 1969, he was back in Ireland, an itinerant priest traveling the countryside collecting money from Catholic donation boxes—diverting much of it to IRA bank accounts. In the North, meanwhile, "the Troubles were set alight" by a volatile mix of activists, paramilitaries, police, soldiers, and spies. (64) Ryan's access to untraceable cash, ability as a clergyman to move unhindered across borders, unwavering commitment to the Republican movement, and technical bent combined to make him a formidable supporter of the IRA's armed struggle. It also eventually put him on British intelligence's most-wanted list.



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O’Leary does a good job situating Ryan on the arc of the Troubles, based on her interviews with him and other key actors along with considerable research. It was Ryan who, while in Geneva (where he was stashing money that Muammar Gaddafi’s regime was funneling to the IRA), happened across a device in 1975 that would vastly improve the IRA’s bombmaking abilities. Ryan would eventually buy hundreds of Memo Park timers, a simple mechanical gadget that in the pre-cell-phone era helped drivers remember when parking meters would expire. The IRA would adapt them as time power units (TPUs), allowing it to more safely build and plant bombs that would explode hours or even days later. In 1976, with British intelligence closing in, Ryan was arrested and expelled from Switzerland. O’Leary observes that Europe’s

poor intelligence sharing and weak counterterrorism laws at the time helped him avoid permanent detention. (156) Politics, too, would help; various European capitals viewed Britain’s tactics in Northern Ireland with disdain and refused to cooperate in extraditions or arrests.

Despite O’Leary’s laudable efforts to wring the most from her subject, Ryan dissembles and conceals, government sources are contradictory and often self-aggrandizing, and the reader is left with the sense some secrets will remain hidden for a long time to come. Others will go to the grave with Ryan. In the end, the greatest cipher might be Ryan himself: a man who turned his back on his religious vows, devoted himself to helping the IRA and its Libyan backers, and regretted only that he didn’t kill more.



*Stakeknife’s Dirty War*,  
by Richard O’Rawe

We can be certain that Frank Scappaticci, IRA counter-espionage enforcer and prized British intelligence penetration who died in 2023, took some of his secrets to the grave, but Richard O’Rawe’s *Stakeknife’s Dirty War* tries mightily to exhume the details. Even in broad brushstrokes, Scappaticci’s story is desultory. A Belfast tough turned IRA volunteer early in the Troubles, Scappaticci was jailed in August 1971 as part of London’s strategy of internment, was released in January 1974, and rejoined the IRA by the end of 1976. He flipped to become a British source for reasons that are murky, eventually headed the IRA’s counterintelligence Internal Security Unit (informally the Nutting Squad of the book’s subtitle), and in O’Rawe’s accounting had a hand in the torture and murder of at least 18 British citizens with the cognizance if not the direct approval of his British intelligence handlers.

O’Rawe does not approach his subject with an academic’s reserve. A former IRA volunteer and inmate of



**STAKEKNIFE'S  
DIRTY WAR**  
RICHARD O'RAWE

THE INSIDE STORY OF  
SCAPPATICCI, THE IRA'S  
NUTTING SQUAD, AND  
THE BRITISH SPOOKS  
WHO RAN THE WAR

Her Majesty’s Prison Maze (aka Long Kesh) himself in the 1970s, O’Rawe has written extensively on the Troubles, including the bestselling *Blanketmen* about his experiences in prison and *In the Name of the Son*, an account of the coerced confessions, doctored evidence, and wrongful imprisonment of four men convicted of a bombing in 1974. *Stakeknife’s Dirty War* opens dramatically:

*I knew Freddie Scappaticci. Fortunately, I didn’t know him well. I first encountered him in the early 1970s when he and I had been interned without trial in the cages of Long Kesh prison. He was housed in Cage 5 and I was in Cage 3. Occasionally, as we*

*walked around the perimeters of our respective cages, we would have nodded to each other. (xiii)*

O’Rawe draws on interviews with IRA veterans, police, and intelligence officials, along with prior reporting from James Harkin and others, to explore how such a betrayal was possible and the damage that was wrought.<sup>a</sup> The *how* boils down to two factors. One was the relentless

a. See James Harkin, “Unmasking Stakeknife: the most notorious double agent in British history,” *British GQ*, November 1, 2020. It should

efforts by British police, army, and intelligence to penetrate and defeat the Republican paramilitary movement.<sup>a</sup> The second was the IRA's critical blindspot in its own counterintelligence efforts:

*It is indisputable that the Provisional IRA underestimated the forces arrayed against them. Many former republican activists believed that if they had grown up with and known someone all their lives, then that person could never become an informer. Even more naively, most IRA people thought that the ultimate test of loyalty was killing or executing someone for the cause: this was seen as commitment par excellence. The fatal flaw in this thinking was the erroneous, if unspoken, belief that the security forces occupied the high moral ground and would never allow one of their informers to willingly take a life. But at least one informer did. (59)*

O'Rawe shines in his sketches of Stakeknife cases, weaving together multiple sources to provide clarity

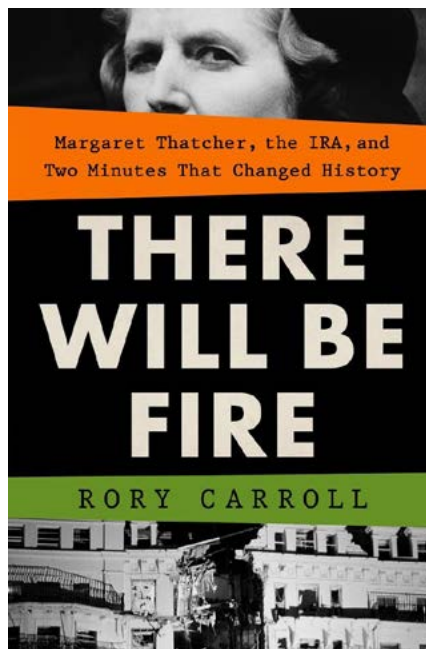
where he can about Scappaticci's collaboration with British intelligence. As often with intelligence histories, gaps and contradictions remain; the key players have scores to settle or reputations to burnish, rumors and insinuations abound, and government records have disappeared. O'Rawe fills in the gaps where he can but sometimes falls back on speculation. On the interrogation and murder of Stakeknife's first victim—suspected IRA informer Michael Kearney in 1979—for example, O'Rawe tries to untangle British culpability and IRA ruthlessness with a series of if, then, perhaps, conceivably, and could statements. (67)

*Stakeknife's Dirty War* succeeds nonetheless as an important contribution to understanding the spy-vs-spy war that played out in Northern Ireland and beyond for three decades. In the epilogue, O'Rawe ruefully concludes of Scappaticci's victims, "they were human beings who were used, abused and tortured, and each of the warring parties had dirty hands when it came to their deaths." (236)



***There Will Be Fire*,  
by Rory Carroll**

As formidable as British intelligence could be it was far from perfect, as the IRA's ability to strike in Northern Ireland, England, and continental Europe repeatedly demonstrated. Among headline-grabbing IRA attacks during the Troubles, the bombing of the Grand Hotel in Brighton during a Tory leadership conference on October 12, 1984, surely ranks very high. Journalist and Dubliner Rory Carroll has delivered a riveting account of the planning and execution of the IRA's audacious attempt to kill Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in *There Will Be Fire*.



At the heart of Carroll's story is IRA volunteer and expert bombmaker Joseph Patrick Magee, an intense, soft-spoken Belfast native born in 1951 to a Catholic family that felt the daily discrimination and hardship of Loyalist-ruled Northern Ireland. Like *The Padre's* Patrick Ryan or *The Dirty War's* Frank Scappaticci, Magee would be swept up into the violence that eventually engulfed the north, and yet the three men's paths differed. Carroll observes, "Some people sailed into the IRA as if born to it, bidden by fate. Patrick Joseph Magee edged in like a crab who easily could have been washed into a different shore." (47) An aimless teenager with a knack for petty crime, Magee may well have spent his life on the margins of

be noted that the subtitle is incorrect: Scappaticci was a British penetration, not a double agent.

a. Loyalist paramilitary violence was a much lesser concern to the British. See my review of Aaron Edwards' comprehensive *Agents of Influence: Britain's Secret Intelligence War against the IRA* in *Studies* 64, no. 4 (December 2021).

Northern Irish society. But the Troubles intervened, and by 1972 he was on active duty as an IRA volunteer and eventually a skilled bombmaker. To British intelligence and police, he would become known as the Chancer for his willingness to take risks.

Magee could not know it then, but he was on a collision course with Carroll's other protagonist: Margaret Thatcher. For the Iron Lady who came into office on May 4, 1979, looking to remake the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland was an unwelcome diversion from her economic and political agenda, but Thatcher couldn't ignore it any more than her predecessors. In late 1921, given responsibility for securing the treaty that would divide Ireland in two and end the Irish War of Independence, Winston Churchill told the House of Commons, "How is it [Ireland] has forced generation after generation to stop the whole traffic of the British Empire in order to debate her domestic affairs?" (41) Thatcher's approach was to intensify the criminalization strategy articulated by the previous Labour government. Rather than treating the IRA as enemy combatants, London would leverage its considerable law-enforcement capabilities and expansive authorities to surveil, arrest, and intern real or suspected IRA supporters.

Thatcher stuck to her guns, even when IRA prisoners turned from protests to hunger strikes in 1980–81 in an effort to reclaim their status as political prisoners. Ten men would die in 1981, beginning with Bobby Sands. Thatcher did not budge: "Crime is crime is crime. It's not political." Her hardline stance made her a hero in some quarters and a pariah in others; for the IRA, Thatcher became a prime if elusive target. The IRA's bombing of Lord Mountbatten's boat off the coast of Mullaghmore, County Sligo, in the Republic of Ireland, killing him and three others, on August 27, 1979, had shown the IRA could hit British leaders who let their guard down.

Such would be the case in Brighton. It's not as if British intelligence and police weren't focused on threats to Thatcher. In a warning that feels eerily similar to the August 6, 2001, President's Daily Briefing article warning that al-Qa'ida was determined to strike the United States, the Metropolitan Police one day before Patrick Magee's bomb shattered the Grand Hotel warned presciently but vaguely that a "brief campaign on the mainland [by the

IRA] cannot be discounted. It is our assessment that potential military and political targets should be given special attention." (194) In terms that might be drawn from many security or intelligence failures, Carroll observes:

*Britain's alphabet soup of security services had networks of informers, spies, and electronic surveillance. They had battery-pulse detectors and radios to sweep for bombs, they had files on virtually every IRA suspect, including Patrick Magee...but there were no whispers of any operation in Brighton, and nobody remembered the Ministry of Defense's prophetic 1979 assessment about long-delay timers. (196)*

The IRA's plan was audacious—hit Thatcher far from 10 Downing—and enabled by advances in IRA bomb-making (the digital progeny of Ryan's Memo Park TPUs), Magee's ability to elude British intelligence and police, and haphazard British security procedures. IRA counterintelligence practices also scored a victory; rather than warn volunteers of a coming major attack (which would have tipped off British sources like Scappaticci), the Brighton operation was tightly held.

Remarkably, even with the omnipresent risk from the IRA and others, British authorities eschewed the kind of intense Secret Service protection that had bemused them during President Ronald Reagan's visit to London a few months before. (126–7) Checking into the Grand as "Roy Walsh"—in those analog days, no identification was needed—Magee patiently built and installed a bomb in the bathroom of room 629 and set it to explode a month later. At 2:54 a.m. on October 12, the bomb shattered the facade of the Grand. Margaret Thatcher and her husband Denis improbably survived, but five were killed and three dozen were injured. By then, Magee was 600 miles away in Cork.<sup>a</sup>

Carroll does a superb job telling the story of British efforts to find the bomber through exacting and patient police work that required sifting through rubble for the smallest of clues. A separate anti-terrorist unit's seizure of IRA long-delay timers helped narrow the search window, and detectives were eventually able to connect Magee to the fictitious Roy Walsh after finding a palm print on his hotel registration card that astonishingly had survived

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a. Carroll refers to the "IRA envoy to Tripoli," presumably Fr. Ryan, and notes the attack had impressed Gaddafi, who was considering sending the IRA "enough explosives for a thousand Brightons." (250)



the bombing. The next challenge became finding Magee. “The identification of Patrick Magee became one of the government’s most closely guarded secrets,” Carroll notes, and bringing him to justice would be no simple matter. (245) The final efforts to locate and arrest Magee in a Glasgow safe house are thrillingly told, like scenes from a real-life John le Carré novel.

Compared to the tighter apertures of *The Padre* and *Stakeknife’s Dirty War*, Carroll offers the reader a more thorough history, although none of the books makes good

on their subtitles’ promises. Carroll spends a few pages at the end musing about the road from Brighton to Brexit, O’Rawe overreaches in his claim that “British spooks” were running the war, and O’Leary cannot pierce the secrecy around the IRA-Libya connection. All the books are well sourced but frustratingly none has an index. Yet with their complementary accounts and interwoven cast of characters, they deserve places on the shelf for anyone seeking to understand the role of intelligence during the Troubles. Clearly there is much more to uncover.



*The reviewer:* Joseph Gartin is the managing editor of *Studies*.



## Intelligence in Public Media

### ***The Routledge Handbook of Disinformation and National Security***

Rubén Arcos, Irena Chiru, and Christina Ivan eds., (Routledge, 2024), 452 pages.

#### **Reviewed by Michael J. Ard**

While trying to assess information operations in our so-called post-truth era, intelligence and security professionals will value *The Routledge Handbook of Disinformation and National Security*. The book springs from the initiative of Spanish and Romanian scholars, but includes well-known contributors to US intelligence studies such as James Wirtz, Jan Goldman, and the late Randolph Pherson.

The book makes a useful contribution to the discussion on the complex and vexing subject of disinformation—“false information that is knowingly distributed” (283)—and similar malign government efforts to deceive. With thirty-two entries, it certainly strives to cover all the bases. Fittingly, “The Routledge Handbook” focuses on Russian disinformation activities, but this lends to some repetition. Some articles shy away from a careful analysis of the impact of these disinformation campaigns, which might have presented a fuller picture of their danger. Still, we can infer from several entries that, although disinformation and its associate campaign make for a significant challenge, the impact might fall somewhat short of perpetrators’ expectations.

As intelligence agencies move to counter the threat of foreign-backed disinformation, it is critical for them to understand the nature of these campaigns. “From an intelligence point of view,” writes contributor Veli-Pekka Kivimäki, “the interesting question may not be whether a piece of information is true or not, but why the disinformation exists in the first place.... Does it link to a broader narrative, or fit a longer-term pattern? Questions like these help us better understand the *raison d’être* of a disinformation activity.” (291)

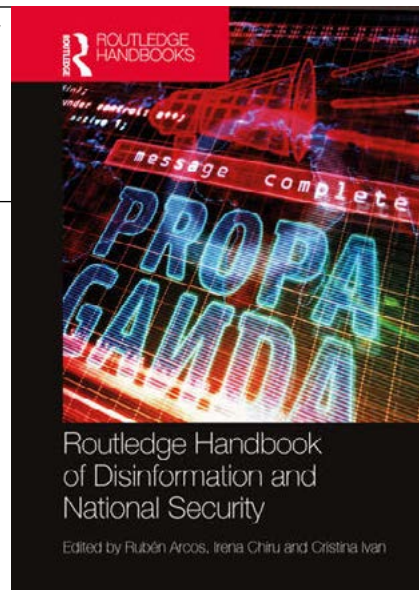
Authoritarian states regard disinformation campaigns as a means of leveling the playing field against the West. Russia’s so-called Gerasimov doctrine in 2013 placed information operations on the same level with kinetic action. “The very rules of war have changed” Gen. Valery Gerasimov wrote enthusiastically. “The role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has

grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness.” (426)

However, Gerasimov may have been making virtue of a necessity. Analysts James Pamment and Björn Palmertz argue that successful military deterrence by NATO forced Russia to shift to “the lesser harm of information influence.” (24) Nevertheless, they acknowledge that uninhibited information campaigns could become the critical vulnerability for democratic societies. “Resilience against information influence must now be considered among the highest priorities for democratic societies battling hybrid threats.” (26)

The 2016 US presidential election stands as the key inflection point for disinformation campaigns. Fear of these disinformation attacks might have even greater impact than the material effects. Writing about this Russian disinformation operation, scholar Josephine Lukito opines that “Regardless of whether Russia’s attempts were actually successful, actors in the U.S. media system (citizens, journalists, public figures and politicians) inadvertently played into the goals of the IRA’s [Internet Research Agency] active measures tactics.” (127). As Hamlet might have put it, disinformation might be effective or not, “but thinking makes it so.”

Notwithstanding Gerasimov’s optimism, other Russia’s disinformation efforts have delivered indifferent results. Goldman argues that the Russian use of the malware NotPetya in 2017 to disrupt the Ukrainian power grid—which led to widespread contamination of networks in Europe and the United States—was a result of its failed earlier information warfare campaign. (84) Author Adrian



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Tudorache judges that “its political warfare failed on many fronts. Against the expectation of fueling disunity in the West, Russia encountered coherence and unity and the West finally recognized the importance of having a more realist approach regarding Russia.” (52–53)

For instance, Pherson and his collaborators Deanna Labriny and Abby DiOrio believed that the experience in the United States and the United Kingdom during the Brexit voting raised French awareness and helped them mitigate the impact during France’s 2017 presidential election. The poor quality of Russia’s voluminous information, they claim, had little impact on skeptical French voters. (77) This offers a new perspective on the effectiveness of disinformation campaigns. Kivimäki offers this important caveat from deception expert Barton Whaley, that “highly sophisticated deception is rare.” It is more common to encounter cruder and easier-to-detect deception activities. (289)

Simply put, the law of diminishing returns might be having their effect on disinformation campaigns. Since 2016, the United States has had three more federal elections, and the US intelligence community has assessed the foreign influence in each. Reviewing the declassified version of the reports, it appears these persistent disinformation campaigns have fallen well short of their initial impact.

Moreover, governments engaging in information operations against other states risk their own reputation and credibility. Looking back at the history of Soviet active measures, Wirtz notes in 1987 when Gorbachev embarked on his “New Thinking” campaign to present a better image to the West, he suspended the disinformation campaign that HIV was manufactured by US biowarfare specialists. (52) Putin might learn something from his Soviet predecessor. Global attitudes toward Russia are negative for almost three quarters of the respondents, according to one poll. (228) In a backlash probably unforeseen by Moscow, Russian speakers in the Baltic states have become more sympathetic to Ukraine’s plight. (346)

*Disinformation and National Security* might have included more case studies of recent disinformation campaigns. The Saudi and Emirati disinformation and cyber-attacks on Qatar in 2017 receive only passing mention. China’s role in disinformation was covered in one chapter, and this focused on Beijing’s self-aggrandizing assessment of its own response during the COVID-19

pandemic, not its persistent disinformation campaigns against Taiwan. Likewise, it would have been instructive had the editors added an assessment of the enormous amount of disinformation associated globally with COVID-19, probably the biggest disinformation event in history with much of it perpetuated by authoritarian governments.

Another area that might have been addressed more thoroughly is the periodic difficulty in determining what is disinformation. The definition rests on the intent of the perpetrator to deceive and the facts may be inconclusive. Pherson and two co-authors analyze the alleged Russian disinformation campaign associated with the 2010 crash of the Polish president’s aircraft in Smolensk. (64) But an official inquest ruled the crash an accident, and Poles remain divided on what actually happened. Even habitual purveyors of disinformation may be telling the truth, at least sometimes.

A few articles rely too much speculation. The chapter on deep fakes leans heavily on what impact this malicious technology might be, rather than what it has done so far. “At the international level,” the author warns, “deep fakes can threaten the survival and existence of states and state systems, as well the relations between states.” (181) Certainly deep fakes have been a pernicious nuisance, but so far, we haven’t seen enough to justify this level of alarm.

The contributors offer various measures to counter disinformation. Rubén Arcos and Cristina M. Arribas list the many challenges, among them the speed of dissemination, the fragmentation of the information environment, and political polarization. (401) Probably the best remedy for disinformation is simply more true information. The work of the US Department of State’s Global Engagement Center and the use of “strategic declassification” in the Ukraine conflict is one such example. Kivimäki highlights how open source information countered disinformation in Russia’s 2022 offensive into Ukraine, with its military closely tracked by social media and open commercial imagery. (285)

The role of fact-checkers likewise is important, but as Cris Matei notes, they suffer from limited resources and short response times, to say nothing about those who question their own objectivity. (370). The same holds for mainstream media outlets. “The polls show the erosion of credibility they are suffering. According to the Ipsos

Global Trustworthiness Monitor 2022 only 19% believe the media is trustworthy.” (239) A “whole of society” approach to counter disinformation will need to include more professional journalistic standards.

A few authors dissent from the notion that an educated, critical thinking public might be able to counter disinformation. From a postmodern perspective, communications theorists Hamilton Bean and Bryan C. Taylor doubt “personal vigilance,” as advocated by US federal agencies, will do much to reduce the impact of disinformation. (162) They argue that people spreading “socially mediated disinformation” simply “seek to affirm and perform their social, cultural, and political identities.” (171) Volume co-editor Cristina Ivan raises her own qualms, rhetorically asking “How many of the scholars that produce research on disinformation can actually claim to match the ideal prototype of the informed and responsible citizen?!” (297)

In the end, most authors look to governments to take the lead on the potential solutions. “Government has a responsibility to work with the private sector, universities, think tanks, NGOs, and journalists,” write Pamment and Palmertz, “to improve the public’s media literacy, to provide fact-checking where appropriate, and to inoculate in areas such as public health where disinformation can be countered proactively.” (28) Still, we must consider that some cures to counter disinformation might be worse than the disease. “The consequences of any legislative action,” write Pammert and Palmertz, “must be considered with great care to ensure that they do not violate the values of the democratic society they are implemented to protect.” (104) For his part, Jan Goldman adds that, as intelligence agencies are pressed to enact to enforcement measures, “stakeholders should clarify what constitutes problematic behavior.” (91)



*The reviewer:* Michael J. Ard is a former CIA officer, He is now a professor at Johns Hopkins University, where he directs the graduate program in intelligence analysis.



## Intelligence in Public Media

### **Red Line: The Unraveling of Syria and America's Race to Destroy the Most Dangerous Arsenal in the World**

Joby Warrick (Doubleday, 2021) 346 pages, illustrations, maps, notes, index, list of principal characters.

**Reviewed by David A. Welker**

Joby Warrick provides a highly readable, troubling account of Syrian President Assad's use of chemical warfare (CW) against his own people and the US response. Focusing chiefly on the ebb and flow these major events, Warrick unfortunately but understandably offers readers only a general glimpse into the important role played by the US Intelligence Community.

Warrick begins in a series of flashbacks explaining how Assad obtained chemical weapons and why he may have chosen to use them as he did. Most significantly for intelligence officers, the prologue begins in 1988 with a CIA asset whom Warrick calls "the chemist" or "Ayman," the US-educated scientist heading Syria's expanding CW program. Highlighting the asset's contribution by describing passing CIA a sample of his program's latest nerve agent, this foundational account ends with the asset's arrest during a corruption investigation and panicked confession of spying for the United States, resulting in his execution in 2001. Following the "how," Warrick moves on to the "why" of Assad's CW use: presumed retaliation for the bombing of a Syrian Ministry of Defense building on May 10, 2012, by domestic oppositionists emboldened in part by the domestic chaos unleashed during the 2011 Arab Spring political uprisings.

From there, *Red Line* launches into the first of its three sections: a series of CW strikes by Assad's regime against cities harboring opposition forces. Warrick's prose and writing is strongest here, a page-turning, heart-wrenching account of these attacks in which innocent civilians are painfully targeted and killed. Although sometimes hard to read, Warrick clearly wants readers to confront the reality of these weapons, what they do to the human body, because understanding the horrific way they kill is key to readers understanding what motivates US and international organizations (IO) officials, chiefly the UN and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), to act as they do.

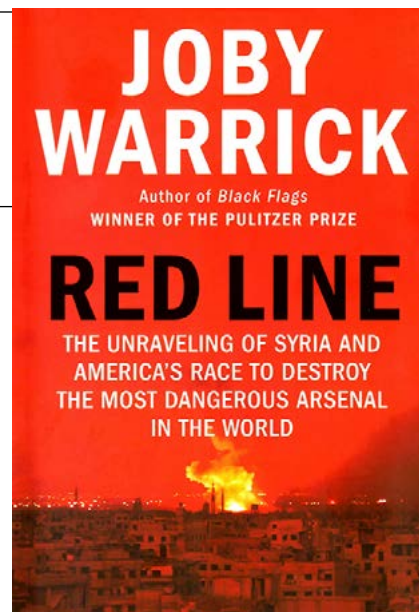
Warrick does a nice job tackling these issues in the next section, describing in comprehensible detail how

these US and IO officials and organizations rise to face this challenge, using not military force but rather diplomacy and technology to confront Syria's CW use and eliminate these dangerous weapons of war in 2014. Pivoting from the Obama

White House, to the United Nations, to the OPCW's Netherlands headquarters, to two different CW use investigation teams on the ground in Syria, Warrick adroitly recounts the leadership and diplomatic story that led to Syria willingly giving up the most threatening of its CW arsenal. Warrick's accounts of the on-the-ground teams' harrowing experiences similarly is page-turning stuff, benefiting from having interviewed the actual participants.

Paralleling this is the technology story, moving from Defense Department laboratories in Edgewood, Maryland, to the converted cargo ship *Cape Ray* in port and at sea, to partly cooperative Syrian officials preparing their stockpile for destruction. Through skillful narrative writing, Warrick brings this complex and potentially confusing material to life, keeping the reader mostly engaged alongside the more easily told and understood diplomatic account. Still, some portions of this section drag a bit and readers will sympathize with the *Cape Ray* crew's anticipation while waiting at sea for approval to "get on with it."

The book's final section turns to the easily overlooked subtitle element—"the unraveling of Syria"—recounting the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS) and its efforts to develop chemical weapons. If the previous two sections seemed a bit triumphantly positive to readers, a story of good overcoming evil, this concluding section undoes all



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that, particularly the author's slow-motion demonstration that these developments largely negated the well-meaning US and IO efforts recounted to this point. Warrick further describes Iran's malign, selfish motives that enabled and exploited this chaos and Russia's similarly self-serving turn from partner in eliminating Assad's CW stocks to becoming the means of Assad's 2017 sarin strike that proved the US and IOs had been fooled in 2014.

In the end, in Warrick's account no one emerges in a positive light from the systemic failure that is Syria in the early 21st century: not two US administrations, not the international community, not other powerful nations or nominal regional US allies, and certainly not Syria's self-serving, failed leaders. In fact, if Assad and ISIS are

the villains of Warrick's depressing account, then unfocused, distracted, well-meaning Western leaders are their unwitting enablers. The only "heroes" in *Red Line* are the common folks trying to survive and confront Assad's CW terror, whether victims in Syria, activists alerting the world, or civil servants doing their best to stop future chemical attacks.

*Red Line* is an engaging, terrifying story of what happens when leaders so little value human life that they are willing to indiscriminately kill innocents and enemies alike as if they were insects. It is an episode every intelligence officer should study, and Warrick's book is a good first stop on that journey.



*The reviewer:* David A. Welker is a member of CSI's History Staff.



## ***Intelligence in Public Media***

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### ***Beyond the Wall: A History of East Germany***

Katja Hoyer (Basic Books, 2023), 496 pages, bibliography, endnotes, photos, index.

### ***Retracing the Iron Curtain: A 3,000-Mile Journey Through the End and Afterlife of the Cold War***

Timothy Phillips (The Experiment, 2023) 464 pages, bibliography, endnotes, photos, index.

### ***Reviewed by Graham Alexander***

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Katja Hoyer and Timothy Phillips have compiled separate Cold War histories that invite new interpretations of the decades-long conflict. Only children when the Soviet Union disintegrated, both recount memories of protests and sinister border crossings during the 1980s as the catalysts for lifelong fascination in a struggle traditionally framed as the showdown between market-oriented democracy and socialist dictatorship. Both Hoyer and Phillips have obviously combed through the available literature, but as thirty-something Europeans whose most formative years came after the fall of the Berlin Wall, their accounts wander wide from the ideological paradigms that often characterized the histories of previous generations. Terrorism, sectarian conflict, mass migration, demographic shifts, artificial intelligence, and new authoritarianism since 1989 all have laid to rest the proposition that the collapse of the Eastern Bloc also implied the end of history. Both volumes are a welcome harbinger of new historical perspectives on the last era of global conflict, and perhaps a means of understanding the next one.

Hoyer's *Behind the Wall* shines because of its willingness to reexamine many events long familiar to even amateur historians of Cold War and Eastern bloc history. Hoyer does not soft-pedal the grim realities of the Red Army's mass rapes, its use of former Nazi concentration camps for political prisoners, forced collectivization, mass emigration, and ubiquitous surveillance courtesy of the Ministerium for State Security (the Stasi). She is, however, not content to portray the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as an unremittingly bleak Orwellian hellscape. East Germany's leadership may have been the product of Stalinist paranoia and, until Mikhail Gorbachev arrived, shamelessly beholden to the Kremlin's dictates. Hoyer argues, however, that these men wanted prosperity and believed that socialism would supply it while sidestepping the cauldron of depression and war that had been their formative experience.

East Germany's living standards never outpaced those present in West Germany but many citizens lived well in comparison to the 1914–49 era: basic commodities were cheap, employment was guaranteed, and vacations to the Baltic and Black Seas were affordable. The collapse finally arrived not because of a mass movement that embraced abstract ideas such as freedom, justice, or liberty. Hoyer argues instead that the GDR's people abandoned the socialist experiment because they craved more tangible items like automobiles, Beatles records, and blue jeans visible on West German television or across the ramparts of East Berlin.

Phillips treads similar ground in *Retracing the Iron Curtain*, a kind of travelogue in which he journeys north to south across the former boundaries of Cold War Europe all the way from Kirkenes, Norway, to Nakhichevan, Azerbaijan. Along the way, he conducts revealing interviews with numerous eyewitnesses, all of whom recount fascinating Cold War vignettes not often mentioned in more boilerplate histories. There is, for example, a white-knuckle account of how 4,000 Soviet soldiers marched to the border in Kirkenes in 1968 as part of a feigned invasion to intimidate the Norwegian government. There is the 1961 defection of a submarine captain on the Swedish island of Gotland served as the inspiration for Tom Clancy's *The Hunt for Red October*. Readers are also treated to the tale of how an Italian countess lobbied successfully to move the border so it would keep her estate inside Gorizia, Italy, and outside of Communist Yugoslavia. Occupying authorities benevolently agreed to transfer just beyond her back door.

These and other stories are the selling point of *Retracing the Iron Curtain*, which falters only in the regrettably prevalent occasions when Phillips uses his experiences to segue into political sermons reflecting his often predictable, occasionally trite, perspectives. This is not to say that Phillips's desire to make the Cold War contemporary is mistaken, only that the places and people

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that populate his work are the best tools for this task. Each anecdote is part of a mosaic that captures an important truth also present in Hoyer's work: that history keeps moving at the behest of forces often difficult to define

with any ideological model but inevitably predicated upon the countless dreams, desires, and decisions of individual human beings.<sup>a</sup>



*The reviewer:* Graham Alexander is the pen name of a CIA operations officer.

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a. See also Lea Ypi, *Free: A Child and a Country at the End of History* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2021), reviewed in *Studies* 66, no. 2 (June 2022).

## Intelligence in Public Media

### **Subversion: The Strategic Weaponization of Narratives**

Andreas Krieg (Georgetown University Press, 2023), 240 pages.

#### **Reviewed by JR Seeger**

In *Subversion*, Andreas Krieg offers a discussion of the importance of what he calls “weaponized narratives.” He supports his discussion with three case studies focused on key US adversaries and a country that most Americans would see as an ally (or at the very least a neutral). In all three cases, he walks the reader through a discussion of the importance of influence operations in today’s networked world.

Krieg is a professor at King’s College, London, and a prolific writer, including five books and multiple articles. He is also the working owner of a political risk firm in London. The book reads like a series of lectures on a single theme: the importance of strategic influence operations—what he describes as subversion—in modern warfare. Krieg provides a very specific definition of subversion for the purposes of his discussion:

*Subversion is thus a twenty-first century activity that exploits vulnerabilities in the information environment to achieve strategic objectives below the threshold of war with plausible deniability and discretion.* (6)

Subversion is not a new topic. In summer 1940, with Europe at war, President Roosevelt dispatched a prominent Republican lawyer—William J. Donovan, future leader of the Office of Strategic Services—to London to assess the United Kingdom’s chances against Nazi Germany.<sup>a</sup> Donovan understood one reason for the Nazi successes in Europe was their effective use of propaganda and what he referred to as fifth-column activities in which Nazi allies worked from within the target countries.<sup>b</sup>

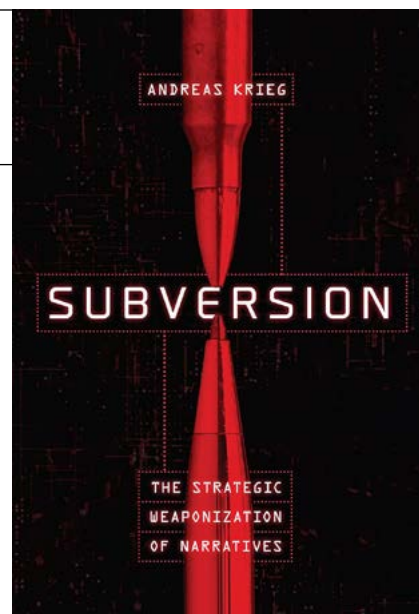
The war report of the OSS noted that in 1941 Donovan argued,

*The Germans were exploiting the psychological and political elements. They were making the fullest use of*

*threats and promises, of subversion and sabotage, and of special intelligence. They sowed dissension, confusion and despair among their victims and aggravated any lack of faith and hope.<sup>c</sup>*

Throughout the Cold War, the USSR conducted subversion operations through worldwide KGB active measures, and the United States responded in kind initially through a CIA effort known as the Office of Policy Coordination and, later in the Directorate of Operations. According to Krieg, the key difference in today’s world is the integrated nature of communications, or as he calls it, the twenty-first century “mediatization” of the information environment. By that he means the diverse, high-speed media platforms citizens and leaders use to receive and share data. This new environment means that subversion is transmitted by multiple means and, more importantly, can be transmitted to specific, targeted audiences. While another of Krieg’s books, *Surrogate Warfare*, focuses on the purely kinetic aspects of warfare, in this book Krieg argues for the centrality of subversion in modern warfare:

*[S]ubversion constitutes a means of warfare that, despite its primary effect not being kinetically or physically violent, can and does generate spillover effects that should be considered physically violent. When weaponized narratives mobilize people to take action in the physical domain through protest, sabotage, or riot, then the secondary or tertiary effect of changing peoples’ will is violent.* (9)



a. See JR Seeger’s review of *Need to Know: World War II and the Rise of American Intelligence*, by Nicholas Reynolds, in *Studies* 67, no. 1 (March 2023).

b. The first use of “fifth column” is usually credited to General Emilio Mola Vidal, Nationalist coup leader during the Spanish Civil War.

c. Strategic Services Unit, Office of the Assistant Secretary of War 1947, *War Report of the O.S.S.* (Walker and Co., 1976), 6–7

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The early chapters of *Subversion* focus on what the author calls the “sociopsychological” aspects of influence operations. Krieg’s discussion considers the interaction between behavior and how individuals and groups see the world. Most US social scientists would call this a discussion of culture rather than “sociopsychology.” This is a small and relatively unimportant academic distinction. In sum, Krieg views how the target audience sees the world and sees itself as central to the way an audience will respond to a message. When an adversary designs a subversive message, a successful message must operate within the “sociopsychological” environment with two specific goals in mind: to influence decisionmaking in a specific direction or to create sufficient doubt/unrest to make decisionmaking nearly impossible.

The subsequent chapters look at three different case studies: Russia, China, and the United Arab Emirates. In each, Krieg reviews subversion operations from a six-step process: orientation, identification, formulation, dissemination, verification, and implementation. Orientation is the process of determining the objective of the subversion operation. Identification and formulation address the design of the message based on both the goal and the sociopsychology of the target. Dissemination can be through different methods, but the method(s) must be consistent

with the target audience. Verification involves the techniques designed to measure of the level of influence. When the previous five steps are completed, implementation can begin.

While Krieg’s research might resonate with some intelligence practitioners, one important detail stands out. In his review of the three target countries, he found that along with a familiar effort on news media, social media, and front companies, all three states have worked hard to influence modern US and European think tanks that serve as informal but critical advisers to policymakers. This is especially the case with the UAE lobbying efforts in Washington with the goal of framing UAE’s regional policies post-9/11 as “counterterrorism” when, in fact, they were more about regional rivalries.

*Subversion* is essential for any member of the Intelligence Community. Krieg’s case studies are backed with extensive research, and his discussion of the specific details of how a subversion operation takes place is useful, both to those defending against adversary efforts and those who design influence operations in support of US foreign policy. While subversion is by no means a new idea in great power conflict, the complex fusion of media and modern psychology as Krieg describes it makes for disturbing but important reading.



*The reviewer:* J.R. Seeger is a former CIA operations officer.

## Intelligence in Public Media

### Central Park West (A Novel)

James Comey (The Mysterious Press, 2023), 329 pages.

#### Reviewed by Mike R.

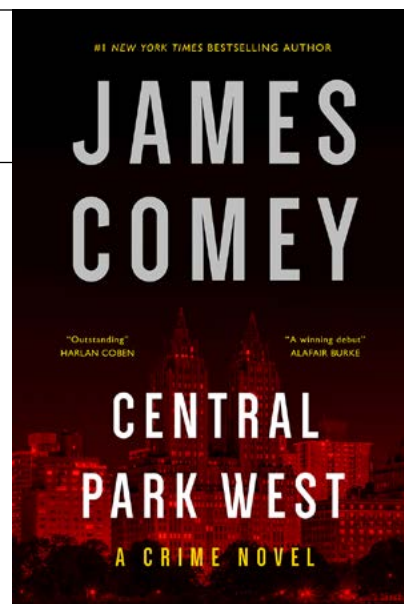
Former FBI Director and Deputy Attorney General James Comey, author of the memoir *A Higher Loyalty: Truth Lies, and Leadership* (2018) and the follow-up *Saving Justice* (2021), has taken a stab at writing fiction. *Central Park West*, a courtroom and investigative whodunit set in New York City, will have difficulty standing out from other mysteries on the shelves. It ultimately shows itself to be a solidly written novel, although one must overcome a formulaic feeling and a shaky start in which the central crime in the prologue—the murder of a former New York governor in a staged suicide—will be seen as implausibly conceived by those familiar with the chronic health condition used to cover it up. Yet the book recovers to a degree from these initial impressions, the plot is sound, and the action decently paced even if Comey lacks in that ability of great writers to completely absorb the reader in its pages.

The author smartly avoids a tale of Washington intrigue. The nation’s capital is not the most welcoming of venues in today’s political climate and Comey’s polarizing profile could have served as a distraction in such a scenario. Instead, to set the story in a different element altogether he harkens to his early days as an assistant US attorney (AUSA) for the Southern District of New York (SDNY) in 1987–93. He headed the office during 2002–2003.

Comey’s protagonist, Nora Carleton, is a Southern District AUSA on the violent and organized crime unit. Comey cut his teeth on this same beat and was a key prosecutor of John Gambino, head of one of the Five Families controlling the New York underworld. Comey’s descriptions of La Cosa Nostra and references to Salvatore “Sammy the Bull” Gravano ring authentic. He layers on Empire State politics and “Me Too” movement sexual predators a la Harvey Weinstein to create a tale at once classic and up to date with current headlines.

The best character by far is Benny Dugan, a US Attorney’s Office investigator and former New York Police Department detective. Benny is a stand-in for the late Kenneth McCabe, chronicled in Comey’s previous

work and heralded as “the greatest organized crime investigator this country has ever seen,” whose forte is put to good use in this saga. Larger than life and portrayed with a mixture of bravado, charm, intelligence, and humor, he steals every scene he is in.



Succeeding on the strength of a supporting cast member is a tall order, though. Try as Comey might to inject his actual protagonist with verve, she can’t hold a candle to Benny. Even efforts to flesh out her personal life fall flat. Referring to her and a mate as the “Nick and Nora” duo only raises false hope of a comparison to Nick and Nora Charles, Dashiell Hammett’s famous sleuthing couple of the 1930s; the allusion is that much more painful for its absence.

Comey mines an intimate knowledge of his old stomping ground in Manhattan, in particular the several-block area encompassing the SDNY, the FBI New York Field Office, NYPD headquarters, courthouses, and jail. He thoroughly establishes his geographic bona fides, reciting building histories, architecture, and the physical routes between them. But he doesn’t know when enough is enough; belaboring the number of stairs at one location versus another, for example, is a level of detail too far.

He also interjects numerous explications of legal, law enforcement, and criminal terms and concepts, including through awkward insertions in the dialogue. For generations of Americans steeped in crime shows and mystery novels, some of this might be overkill. And in light of a longstanding public fascination with organized crime, does a canary stuffed in the mouth of an assassinated mob informant not speak for itself?

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Although concerned more with law enforcement and prosecution than intelligence, the novel treats of this latter aspect as well, albeit more mutedly. The heavy investigative focus is largely intelligence by another name. Benny's stock in trade especially points up the value of methodical collection and analysis. Benny Dugan/Kenneth McCabe was famous for building up over decades a repository of information about La Cosa Nostra through painstaking photographic documentation of attendees at key organized crime social rituals such as funerals, creating a primitive sort of "link analysis." Although seen by some as a waste of time, these detailed observational records would prove invaluable in showing otherwise unapparent connections and helping to make a case.

Comey also embeds some interesting tidbits about FBI surveillance squads as the novel's investigation kicks into high gear. The Special Surveillance Group and Special Operations Group, he writes, comprise "one of the FBI's

least-known and most-hallowed capabilities—critical to following foreign spies and sophisticated criminals." Whether on foot or in vehicles, these surveillance experts, so-called "ghosts," blend seamlessly into their environment.

Numerous intelligence practitioners have written novels, but Comey is the first FBI director and most high-profile US national security leader to do so (not counting former presidents, in which category both Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton have earned a place). The poster child for such senior figures turning their sights to fiction, however, is found across the ocean. Stella Rimington, a 1990s-era director general of MI5, became the author of the Liz Carlyle series of intelligence novels. Comey is no Rimington, but his foray into fiction is not without reward. For fans of mystery novels and police procedurals, *Central Park West* would make a worthwhile pick from the library shelf or discount rack.



*The reviewer:* Mike R. is a member of CSI's History Staff.

## **Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf—March 2024**

*Compiled and reviewed by Hayden Peake and other contributors*

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### **General**

***National Security Intelligence and Ethics***, edited by Seumas Miller, Mitt Regan, and Patrick F. Walsh  
***Nothing Is Beyond Our Reach: America's Techno-Spy Empire***, by Kristie Macrakis  
***A Short Introduction to Geospatial Intelligence***, by John (Jack) O'Connor

### **Memoir**

***Nothing If Not Eventful: A Memoir of a Life in CIA***, by Thomas L. Ahern, Jr.

### **History**

***The FBI and the Mexican Revolutionists 1908–1914***, by Heribert von Feilitzsch and Charles H. Harris III  
***Lockheed Blackbird: Beyond the Secret Missions—The Missing Chapters***, by Paul F. Crickmore  
***Spy For No Country: The Story of Ted Hall the Teenage Atomic Spy Who May Have Saved the World***,  
by Dave Lindorff  
***SPYING: From the Fall of Jericho to the Fall of the Wall: An Intelligence Primer Based on the Lecture  
Notes of Professor Arthur S. Hulnick***, edited by John D. Woodward, Jr.

### **Intelligence Abroad**

***From Red Terror to Terrorist State: Russia's Intelligence Services and Their Fight for World  
Domination from Felix Dzerzhinsky to Vladimir Putin 1917–2017?***, by Yuri Felshtinsky & Vladimir Popov  
***Targeted as a Spy: The Surveillance of an American Diplomat in Communist Romania***, by Ernest H.  
Latham, Jr. (Reviewed by Graham Alexander and Hayden Peake)

### **Fiction**

***Moscow X: A Novel*** by David McCloskey (Reviewed by Graham Alexander)  
***The Peacock and the Sparrow***, by I. S. Berry (Reviewed by John Ehrman)

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## General

***National Security Intelligence and Ethics***, edited by Seumas Miller, Mitt Regan, and Patrick F. Walsh (Routledge, 2022) 303 pages, end of chapter notes and references, index.

Ethics are specific rules, actions, or behaviors comprising general principles called morals. For example, if loyalty to an organization is a condition of employment, disloyal performance is unethical. Likewise, a dilemma arises in espionage if agent recruitment involves treason, which is immoral; does this make the recruiter's actions unethical?

The 17 chapters in *National Security Intelligence and Ethics* deal with the espionage dilemma (chapter 4), and other familiar topics such as covert action as the third option (chapter 10) and many new digitally related issues—digital sleeper cells—associated with the recent technological changes adopted by the intelligence profession, including GEOINT technologies.

The 21 contributors to this collection come from several countries and are mostly academics, though some, like Sir

David Omand—former director of GCHQ, and the first Security and Intelligence Coordinator—have professional experience. The authors assert that their overall purpose was to develop a “Just Intelligence Model”—analogous to “Just War Theory”—that accounts for the principles of collection, analysis, dissemination, necessity, privacy, proportionality, accountability and reciprocity as applied to national security intelligence and to consider ethical issues related to the acquisition of large data sets and the use of AI by intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

While the purpose of the Just Intelligence Model is described in the early chapters, there is no summary assessment showing how the individual contributions influence the model or if a model is really needed. Many of the techniques discussed are new to the profession, but the basic issues of right and wrong are not.

***Nothing Is Beyond Our Reach: America's Techno-Spy Empire***, by Kristie Macrakis (Georgetown University Press, 2023) 259 pages, end of chapter notes, bibliography, index.

The late Kristie Macrakis earned a PhD in history from Harvard, did post-graduate work in Berlin, where she interviewed Marcus Wolf, and then joined Michigan State University before becoming a professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology. She wrote and contributed to several books about her lifelong interest in espionage and intelligence technology. Her last, *Nothing Is Beyond Our Reach*, was published posthumously.

The title was taken from a 2013 NRO satellite mission logo “depicting an angry octopus latching its tentacles around the globe with a caption that read, Nothing Is beyond Our Reach.” (1) Macrakis wrote that what the NRO viewed as a global achievement provoked public outrage because the mission was close to the controversial Snowden document release. Perhaps, but the logo also roused her intense and often questionable views about intelligence and technology. She quickly established her position: America is creating a dominant global technological empire. The view becomes the central thesis of this book.

Macrakis argued that the growth of the global espionage empire by US technophiles was initially unintentional. She suggested that early photo satellites were not designed to capture the entire earth and that the capability only grew as technology allowed, not because there was a demand for it. She made a similar argument for ELINT satellites. And now that the United States can handle massive data collection, it has spies on land, spies underground, spies in the water, and spies in the mind. In fact she claimed, the United States has the entire planet covered with planes, satellites, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), radios, electronics, tunnels, and submarines; it also uses pharmaceuticals in the service of espionage. (2)

The growth and characteristics of the US global espionage program have unintended consequences that Macrakis warned are further reason for restraint. When a major technological intelligence operation is exposed, she wrote, political backlash results. She cited the Berlin Tunnel in 1956—offering no specific problem because there was general praise then—the U-2 spy plane

shoot-down, Ivy Bells submarine collection program, and armed drones among other examples. She makes no attempt to compare the value of the intelligence collected with circumstance of discovery. In any case, she never established that the United States has become a reckless global espionage superpower.

At one point, Macrakis suggested CIA did not collect the right kind of information. This observation reveals a certain lack of experience: how does one know the right kind of information before analyzing it?

**A** *Short Introduction to Geospatial Intelligence*, by John (Jack) O'Connor (CRC Press, 2024) 172 pages, end of chapter notes, index.

The name National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) does not suggest, even intuitively, the functions performed to acquire data as did the titles of its predecessors, the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) and the National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC). NGA's product, geospatial intelligence (GEOINT), raises the question: what is GEOINT? Former CIA officer and current director of Geospatial Intelligence at Johns Hopkins University, John O'Connor, addresses that question in *A Short Introduction To Geospatial Intelligence*.

O'Connor begins by noting that the origins of the term geospatial intelligence are unknown, but the acronym GEOINT was first spoken in public—as witnessed by Peter Usowski, later the director of the Center for the Study of Intelligence—in the early 21st century at a NIMA offsite. (2–3)

The congressional act that created NGA provided the first definition of geospatial intelligence in law: The term “geospatial intelligence” means the exploitation and analysis of imagery and geospatial information to describe, assess, and visually depict physical features and geographically referenced activities on or about the earth. (3) To some photo interpreters, that may sound like what they have been doing for more than 50 years, but O'Connor has a different view.

Historically, he argues, geospatial intelligence evolved from a government study conducted in 1957 to determine “what could be learned from aerial photography about Soviet Strategic missiles” when considering a

*Nothing Is Beyond Our Reach* looks at the Intelligence Community from its origins until 2013. The author concluded that the metaphor of the IC as a globe-straddling octopus is correct. In her view it had become an evil in and of itself using geopolitics, technology, and intelligence to create a global espionage empire. She presented her case with passion but without substantiation. Read with care.

combination of “imagery, imagery intelligence, and geospatial information;” in other words “its genome, its DNA.” Then he defines and examines the history and development of each of the five intellectual activities that he suggests underpin geospatial intelligence: envisioning, discovery, recording, comprehending, and tracking.

After further comments on variations of the definition, O'Connor turns to the current state of geospatial intelligence with its ever increasing data inputs, which have led to “tension between what human analysts ought to do for geospatial intelligence and what geospatial technology ought to do for human analysts.” (135) He attempts to clarify this point in several ways. In one, he applies the “contexts of faith and science” expressed in “The Dynamo and the Virgin,” that Henry Adams used in his book, *The Education of Henry Adams*, to express the distinction between the human and the technical. One of O'Connor's not so obvious conclusions from this analogy is that increasing amounts of all kinds of data are being imaginatively used to inform geospatial analysis and that has itself transformed human ability to capture changes on the planet. (134) To illustrate his point, he devotes chapters to the analysis of geospatial intelligence to two contemporary intelligence issues: the current war in Ukraine and the impact of climate change on the planet. The topics are well known, his analysis is confusing.

O'Connor clearly hopes that new digital geospatial technology will bring more accuracy to precision measurement from space and more penetrating insights from analytic minds. (145) But his sleep-inducing narrative is

difficult to follow, and he never does explain the need for the term geospatial.

Even so, *A Short Introduction to Geospatial Intelligence* discusses many topics worthy of further discussion and clarification.

## Memoir

***Nothing If Not Eventful: A Memoir of a Life in CIA***, by Thomas L. Ahern, Jr. (Central Intelligence Agency, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2023) 177 pages, photos, no index.

In CIA, operations officers are involved in espionage and in some cases paramilitary activities, among other assignments. Although each career is unique in many respects, there are elements that apply to all, and the sum, when revealed, provides a window into what it can be like to join and serve in CIA. Thomas Ahern's career is a case in point, and *Nothing If Not Eventful* tells his story.

To those who recall the Iran hostage crisis of 1979–82, Ahern's name will ring a bell. He was chief of station in Tehran at the time radical students seized the embassy. That event, including Ahern's story was described in *Prisoners of the Ayatollah*,<sup>a</sup> Mark Bowden's account of the crisis. *Nothing If Not Eventful* adds what Ahern endured and how he reacted. In fact, Ahern opens his otherwise chronological memoir with a summary of the impact of his 444 days in captivity: "The Tehran episode remains the one most vividly embedded in my memory. Being beaten with a rubber hose early in my captivity and subsequently threatened with public execution and other psychological torments throughout my captivity, together with a continuous and oppressive sense of utter helplessness, combined to instill in me an indelible set of recollections." (7)

Ahern provides more detail in a later chapter devoted to that episode, but before then he tells how, as a young man from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, with a liberal arts degree from Notre Dame University and on the recommendation of his faculty adviser was recruited by, and somewhat to his own surprise, accepted by CIA.

During the next 60 years, Ahern would learn other languages and serve in 10 foreign countries, performing both paramilitary and case officer (human intelligence) duties.

He discusses many of his assignments, beginning with military service—then mandatory prior to entry on duty in the Junior Officer Training (JOT) Program in 1954. In retrospect, he characterized the course as weak in "the recruitment and handling of agents.... I remember just one imperative about agent recruitment: 'Rapport.'" (30) But it would serve him well. Overall, he concludes that "the quality of training for the directorate remained a contentious issue for a good many years." (31) Such criticism of weaknesses in agency performance and sometimes agency policies appears as he reflects on each of his assignments.

Before starting the JOT course, Ahern's profile pointed toward a career as an intelligence analyst. But his Army experience had instilled a desire for action-oriented work; he was a member of CIA's clandestine service. After some headquarters duty and an interview with Allen Dulles, he began a series of oversea tours, first in Japan (1957) and then Southeast Asia (1960–65), where he entered the paramilitary world. Here, Ahern notes that CIA provided "no instruction in intercultural communication" (59) leaving those abilities to be acquired on-the-job. Nevertheless, he adapted well and writes of Laos that "no subsequent tour equaled it." (65) On a broader scale, with regard to Vietnam, he writes that he had doubts at the time, about the Pacification Program and the South Vietnamese ability to succeed in the war. (69)

During his Asian tours, Ahern professional capabilities expanded. First, he became a parachutist (in Thailand) and later, with Air America's impetus, acquired a pilot's license. In Vietnam, his private life changed when he met "Gisela Daschkey, a young German embassy employee," who later became his wife of 52 years and, after attaining US citizenship, a CIA officer. (77)

a. Mark Bowden, *Prisoners of the Ayatollah: The Iran Hostage Crisis: The First Battle in America's War with Militant Islam* (Grove Press, 2006).

Returning to Headquarters in 1973, Ahern was offered an assignment as COS of a small station in Africa—becoming a COS in the operational culture of CIA was a prime objective for most officers. After consideration of his options at the time, he declined the honor and instead was assigned as a program officer in the JOTP, when he had had “no experience or training in personnel acquisition.” Once again, he writes, “To my considerable surprise, the job ... developed into a challenging and fruitful experience that kept me absorbed for the next two-and-a-half years.” (113) He worked on assessing the potential of candidates, including “finding the depth of an applicant’s interest in a career in intelligence,” a challenge that has yet to be definitively specified. (115)

On completion of the JOTP tour, the Aherns did go to Africa in 1975. It was here, working against Soviet targets, that he experienced firsthand that “identifying similar or at least compatible interests usually turns out to be a more rewarding approach to winning the cooperation of potential agents than proclaiming their duty to help us save their country—or the world—from what we perceive as an existential threat.” (3)

Returning to the States in 1977, Ahern entered the National War College, noting for the record, that he had never shared the indifference to intellectual endeavor that then dominated CIA. (123) Enriched by the experience, Ahern next found a home in the Directorate of Operations/Near East Division. After serving briefly as a branch chief, he was designated COS, Tehran. Of all his

comments on that experience, the most shocking was that: “I was never debriefed about the circumstances of captivity itself.” (154)

After a period of adjustment and a headquarters assignment, Ahern was sent to Western Europe (1985–88) and a year after returning, he retired to accept a contract with CIA’s History Staff. There he wrote, among other works, (see the book’s bibliography) six volumes on CIA’s various roles in the Second Indochina War.<sup>a</sup>

*Nothing If Not Eventful* concludes with some of Ahern’s observations about the evolution of the “company,” as it was sometimes called by his generation. For example, “I am aware that, at least as recently as 2018, there were pockets of discontent with the quality of Agency management, especially mid-management, and I am not claiming the arrival of some kind of managerial Nirvana. Nevertheless, my access to the record of and participants in recent major covert activity does permit a reasoned comparison of past and present-day operations. My volume on Iraq, which begins with the 2002 run-up to the invasion the following year, records a new (at least to me) CIA disposition to tell truth to power and to acknowledge that some goals may be unattainable at any acceptable price.” (173)

A fine memoir, a valuable contribution to the intelligence literature, and essential reading for those considering or at the beginning of a CIA career.

## **History**

***The FBI and the Mexican Revolutionists 1908–1914***, by Heribert von Feilitzsch and Charles H. Harris III (Henselstone Verlag, LLC 2023) 415 pages, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

In their early research into the history of the FBI, historians Heribert von Feilitzsch and Charles H. Harris II discovered that past authors had dated the origin of the bureau to be 1908 but gave little attention to its activities until 1924, when J. Edgar Hoover became director. To emphasize that they are studying the bureau before Hoover’s era, the authors adopted the designation fBI, since it was officially a federal agency called the Bureau of Investigation.

When Feilitzsch and Harris examined the archival record of 1908–24, they discovered little new about the bureau’s crime-fighting exploits, but they did find a great deal of unreported material about its intelligence and counterintelligence operations. Initially, these involved investigations related to enforcement of neutrality laws. The balance of the material covered the period 1914–17 before the United States entered WWI, the bureau’s WWI operations (1917–18), and the bureau’s postwar decline

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a. Declassified versions of these can be found on cia.gov’s FOIA Reading Room under Historical Collections.

(1919–24). There was too much to cover in a single book, and the authors decided to write a volume for each period. *The fBI and The Mexican Revolutionists 1908–1914* is the first.

In addition to discussing the origins of the bureau and its first directors, the authors review the bureau's actions against its first targets, Mann Act violations (unlawful transportation of women for immoral purposes). Then they turn to the actions of far-left domestic political groups and the numerous Mexican revolutionary factions and personalities vying for the presidency and violations of the law committed at the US southern border. The authors do mention cases of cooperation with the Mexicans, but those did not end well.

In handling these matters, the authors argue that despite chronic underfunding and the lack of professional skills among the agents, the bureau developed investigative

techniques that would become the foundation of its future intelligence capabilities, including the use of mail covers, dictaphones, “black bag” jobs, and above all, human agents. Not all operations went smoothly, especially when the bureau allowed Mexican agents to operate brazenly in the United States. Nevertheless, the experience acquired in legal and political matters—national and international—in addition to the bureaucratic conflicts with other agencies, such as the Secret Service, proved valuable. By the end of the period, the authors conclude, the fBI was an established, effective nationwide organization.

*The fBI and The Mexican Revolutionists* is thoroughly documented—mainly with primary sources—and provides the most comprehensive account of the bureau's earliest days yet available. A most valuable contribution to the literature of intelligence.

***Lockheed Blackbird: Beyond the Secret Missions—The Missing Chapters***, by Paul F. Crickmore (Osprey Publishing, 2023) 528 pages, appendices, photos, index.

While working at the London Air Traffic Control Centre, author Paul Crickmore first saw an SR-71 at the Farnborough Air Show in 1974. It had flown from New York to London in one hour, fifty-four minutes and fifty-six seconds, “a world record that stands to this day.” (10)

Crickmore later wrote articles about the aircraft and eventually, after interviewing many of those who worked in the SR-71 program, he wrote the first in-depth book about the plane. As additional information became available, especially after the SR-71 was decommissioned in January 1990, he wrote more detailed editions. In 2016 after publishing what he thought would be his last book on “the subject—*Lockheed Blackbird: Beyond the Secret Missions, Revised Edition*—the CIA declassified a blizzard of documents that included intelligence details that I was staggered to read.” (10) This necessitated the recent edition of *Lockheed Blackbird* which Crickmore writes is “most definitely my last book about these incredible aircraft programmes.” (11) For reasons not given, he mentions the title of some of his books in the text, but does not include them in the bibliography, and doesn't include a single source note! There are detailed appendices that assist in tracking aircraft characteristics and missions.

*Lady Blackbird* is an oversized, expensive, thoroughly illustrated tome that chronicles the development and evolution of the postwar strategic reconnaissance aircraft programs from the modified B-17 to the CIA originated U-2 and A-12 aircraft, and finally to the SR-71, the latter two designed by Kelly Johnson at the Skunk Works. It is strong on program designations—there are many—aircraft design issues, performance capabilities, bases deployed, and crew requirements but does not present mission results.

For example RAINBOW was a program that attempted to make an operational aircraft “stealthy,” at first the U-2, though nothing more is written about it. The OXCART program produced the A-12. Crickmore discusses its design phases and later testing at Area 51 before examining why it was eventually canceled and replaced by the BLACKBIRD SR-71. Among the reasons given, are the SR-71's many sensors and flexible targeting capability. His undocumented claim that the “quality of ‘the take’ throughout the 1970s and early 1980s was superior to that acquired by satellites,” won't be accepted by all. The long-running discussion of ending one of the two very expensive programs was discussed in detail in CIA Historian David Robarge's monograph, *Archangel: CIA's*

*Supersonic A-12 Reconnaissance Aircraft* (2012). The book contains images of Robarge; unfortunately the captions erroneously provide "Robert" as his given name.

*Lockheed Blackbird* supports Crickmore's conclusion that both the U-2 and the SR-71 have become icons like the Spitfire, the B-17, and the B-52. But with the poor

***Spy For No Country: The Story of Ted Hall the Teenage Atomic Spy Who May Have Saved the World***, by Dave Lindorff (Prometheus Books, 2023) 270 pages, endnotes, appendix, photos, index.

Investigative journalist Dave Lindorff has written a book about the teenage Harvard physicist Ted Hal, who became a Soviet spy while assigned to the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos. It is not a new story, having been told many times in books Lindorff himself mentions. Why then has he told it again? The answer is implied by the title, which contradicts the basic theme of his own narrative. Invoking the "higher-power" argument, Lindorff contends that the 18-year old physicist spied for the Soviets with "the highest of motives: to help break a U.S. monopoly of the deadly weapons." (223)

According to Lindorff, Hall first contemplated helping the Soviets while being interviewed for the Manhattan Project, even "before he knew what the project was, he found himself thinking... about the need for the United States to share with the Soviets whatever secret weapons the country (and he himself) might be working to create." (29)

To help understand how Hall reached this judgment and how it affected the balance of his life, Lindorff reviews Hall's formative days in New York City, his membership in the Young Communist League, (6) how he became a 16-year old physics student at Harvard, and his selection for the Manhattan Project. Lindorff stresses that "there is no evidence that Ted Hall was a Communist as a Harvard student, much less a Party true believer, as some historians of the era have baselessly claimed." (2) He later admits that after the war, Hall and his wife joined the party in the United States and the UK. (183)

quality images the book has used to show the aircraft's performance, one imagines it won't be the last book on the topic. And if Crickmore returns to the subject, one would hope it would be published with a better index than it now has.

Lindorff tells how Hall, once on the job, enlisted the help of a Harvard class mate, Saville Sax, an outspoken communist, in contacting the Soviets in New York. (29) For more than a year, Hall gave the Soviets secrets of the plutonium bomb, and Sax acted as Hall's courier.

For reasons not given, Lindorff notes that Hall lost his atomic clearances toward the end of his Manhattan Project service. After that he started graduate work in Chicago, where he met his wife to be. In the late 1940s, the FBI contacted them and asked about their communist affiliations. It was clear the bureau knew a great deal about his wartime contacts with the Soviets and suspected they continued after the war, but they declined to make official charges when Hall declined to confess. Lindorff is correct in attributing FBI suspicions to the VENONA material—US decryptions of KGB cables some of which mentioned Hall—that at the time could not be made public. But, it must be emphasized, Lindorff's account of the VENONA program is one of the most inaccurate found in the literature and should be disregarded.<sup>a</sup> (70ff)

Eventually, FBI pressure became too great, and the Halls moved to the UK, where he worked for Cambridge University. Shortly before Hall's death in November 1999, Lindorff acknowledged that Hall publicly admitted his espionage for the Soviets and maintained to the end that doing so was for the greater good.

Lindorff does present new material about Hall's brother, who conducted secret work for the US Defense Department, and from Hall's wife, who claimed, inter alia,

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a. For reliable accounts of the VENONA project see, for example: John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *VENONA: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (Yale University Press, 1999) and Nigel West, *VENONA: The Greatest Secret of the Cold War* (HarperCollins, 2000), paperback edition.

that she had dissuaded Hall twice from turning himself in. (205)

But a *Spy For No Country* presents nothing that suggests Ted Hall “may have saved the world” and a great deal showing he was just a teenage traitor and Soviet agent.

***SPYING: From the Fall of Jericho to the Fall of the Wall: An Intelligence Primer Based on the Lecture Notes of Professor Arthur S. Hulnick***, edited by John D. Woodward, Jr. (Waynesburg University Press, 2023) 271 pages, photos, index.

The late Arthur Hulnick graduated from Princeton University in 1957, served in the US Air Force as an intelligence officer, and then joined CIA as an analyst. During his CIA career he also served in the Office of Public Affairs, briefed the attorney general, and wrote speeches for DCI William Webster. In 1989 he became CIA Officer in Residence at Boston University. After he retired from CIA, he joined the university's faculty in the Pardee School of Global Studies.

Professor Hulnick taught two courses on intelligence each semester at BU for more than 25 years. One was on George Washington's intelligence role. The other, “The Evolution of Strategic Intelligence,” forms the basis for this book, which was edited by Art's former BU colleague, John Woodward, himself a retired CIA officer and present teacher of the course. In his introduction, Woodward lists the BLUFs—Bottom Lines Up Front—that Art developed for the course. For those interested in the intelligence profession, these basic concepts are worth committing to memory. (xii–xiii)

In his foreword, BU professor Joe Wippl, also a retired CIA officer, lists the two informative books Art somehow found time to write: *Fixing The Spy Machine*, and *Keeping America Safe*.<sup>a</sup> Wippl notes Hulnick emphasized to his students that the keys to a successful intelligence career applied to other professions: ability, willingness to speak truth to power, and integrity.

Each of the book's 25 chapters is an illustrated summary of Hulnick's lectures. While the work does not deal with tradecraft, it does mention CIA's most important cases. For instance, he discusses several of the so-called atom spies but does not tell how they were caught. Nevertheless, for an introductory course, it certainly stimulates student interest. The book is remarkably error free.

*Spying* can serve as a guide to syllabus preparation and as an introductory source for prospective intelligence officers. And it is a valuable contribution for those curious about the profession.

## ***Intelligence Abroad***

***From Red Terror to Terrorist State: Russia's Intelligence Services and Their Fight for World Domination from Felix Dzerzhinsky to Vladimir Putin 1917–2017?***, by Yuri Felshtinsky & Vladimir Popov. (Gibson Square, 2023) 382 pages, endnotes, index.

No Philby! No Rosenbergs! No Ames! No Vetrov! No Polyakov! No Tolkachev! In fact *From Red Terror to Terrorist State*, a history of the Russian intelligence services, does not mention these or any other espionage cases. It does name three spies: Oleg Lyalin, who defected, and the “disloyal” officer Alexander Litvinenko, who suffered the Trotsky solution, in his case by poisoning,

and Sergei Skripal, who survived a poisoning attempt. What then is the book about?

Co-authors historian Yuri Felshtinsky and former KGB general Vladimir Popov provide a surprising answer in the central argument of their book: From December 1917, when the first state security force was created and called the VChK, to the end of the Soviet Union, the security

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a. Arthur Hulnick, *Fixing The Spy Machine: Preparing American Intelligence for the Twenty-First Century* (Praeger, 1999) and *Keeping Us Safe: Secret Intelligence and Homeland Security* (Praeger Security International, 2004)

services battled the Communist Party for and eventually won control of state power. The story line describes the actions of the early leaders who controlled the VChK-KGB and tried to usurp Kremlin power for decades, sometimes succeeding in destroying party cadres. The party leadership, in turn, won victories over the VChK-KGB and shot or eliminated the top State Security leadership. (358) The changes at the top of party and security services are well known and it is the authors interpretation of their causes and results that is new.

Before presenting their chronological account of events, the authors review the various names of the Soviet/Russian security services mentioned, from the VChK, colloquially referred to as 'Cheka', (8) to the FSB. In what is probably the most complete listing to date, the frequent name changes—some initials remain the same but they stand for different organizations—aid reader comprehension since the authors use the applicable designation at the time in question; that is Cheka. OGPU, NKVD, MGB, etc. For reasons not given, only one organization is not mentioned, the *Komitet Informatsii* (KI) formed by Stalin in 1947, headed by Molotov, and disbanded in 1951.

***Targeted as a Spy: The Surveillance of an American Diplomat in Communist Romania***, by Ernest H. Latham, Jr. (Vita Histeria Publishing, 2023), 278 pages, photos. Reviewed by Graham Alexander.

One top secret Romanian Securitate report from 1987 referred to Ernest Latham as “an espionage specialist” while another called him “CIA Chief for all NATO troops in Europe.” In reality, Latham was a State Department officer tried and true, who served in 1983–87 as the cultural attaché in Bucharest. *Targeted As A Spy* is a curious work comprised mostly of excerpts from Latham's Securitate file with details on his shopping trips and political views. It is nonetheless a fascinating glimpse into security service work under an authoritarian regime. The book is a useful reminder for even seasoned intelligence operations officers that, when evaluating the counterintelligence risks in a given environment, deciphering the paranoiac, often highly process oriented, methods of the home service is of paramount importance.

The book contains a brief foreword from Latham, who summarizes both his career and his experiences working in Bucharest, before it segues into often dry and

In making their case, the authors offer two surprises. The first is their assertion that the most important player in the eventual success of the security services was General Yevgeny Pitovranov. His career is impressive especially after a letter to Stalin secured his release from prison. (108–109)

The authors describe how Pitovranov, working with Yuri Andropov, head of the KGB, formed a special group beyond the view of the Kremlin that gradually usurped the Politburo's power and paved the way for Andropov to become general secretary of the Central Committee and the head of state. The long term goal had been achieved and remains a fact.

The second surprise offered by the authors is that “the true theorist and father of perestroika [restructuring] was KGB Chief and then General Secretary of the CPSU, Yuri Andropov. (118ff) The authors are not totally convincing in their rationale, but they give Gorbachev the major credit.

*From Red Terror to Terrorist State* offers a unique insiders; view of the Soviet/Russian security state and makes an important contribution to intelligence history.

sometimes tedious documents excerpted from his lengthy Securitate dossier. Latham acknowledges his awareness at the time that Securitate officials were monitoring his movements and often pressuring the locals to refrain from contact with him. Some surveillance reports suggest the seasoned diplomat was even teasing his pursuers by, for example, ambling aimlessly through provincial areas or moving to areas such as balconies or near machinery where audio collection against him was not feasible. A strange symbiosis is evident whereby Latham's pursuers developed a grudging but genuine respect for their target as his genuine affinity for Romanian language, culture, and history becomes clear. Numerous informers are tasked with contacting and collecting against Latham, but at no point does Securitate seek information to confirm Latham's intelligence affiliation, knowledge of tradecraft, or interest in development of clandestine sources. Were Securitate officials identifying Latham as a CIA officer because of paranoia or perhaps as a way of justifying



pursuit? Securitate files are full of bureaucratic jargon and minutiae but silent on such central questions.

This silence behind Securitate's motivations is what stops this valuable book from being more accessible and perhaps even a classic of a genre. Latham seems aware that he neglected to undertake the necessary legwork to make *Targeted as a Spy* a more rounded piece of intelligence non-fiction. He states in the opening chapter, for example, that the size of his Securitate file discouraged him from tackling it as part of a book project, a task he ultimately delegated to Romanian historian Vadim Guzun. This is a pity since Latham had an excellent opportunity, one taken by Timothy Garton Ash in *The File: A Personal History* (Random House, 1997), to discuss his findings

with the Securitate sources and officers tasked with monitoring his movements. Meetings with these individuals would have lightened the often leaden prose of Securitate surveillance reports and, most crucially, provided invaluable insight into the often complicated and fascinating motivations that compel cooperation from a grudging populace. Latham might have created a separate volume simply from asking his Romanian friends: What compels those living under authoritarian regimes to promote the longevity of those same regimes through individual acts of acquiescence to their unsavory methods?

*The reviewer:* Graham Alexander is the pen name of a CIA operations officer.

### ***Targeted As a Spy***—Reviewed by Hayden Peake

After his retirement in 1993, foreign service officer Ernest Latham requested a file kept on him during his tour in Bucharest during 1983–85 by the Ceaușescu government's security service, the Securitate. It would, he reasoned, provide an uncensored view of what was reported about him. After considerable time, he received some 3000 pages in five volumes. It was more than he could handle alone so he enlisted the help of a Romanian diplomat and historian, Dr. Vadim Guzun. After his review of the material, Guzun suggested writing a book about it. The result, *Targeted As a Spy*, is not an ordinary book.

The major difference, when compared to other books, is that Latham wrote only the 65-page introduction, which is an account of his life in the Foreign Service. He explains how he came to serve as cultural attaché in Bucharest and his "feelings about the files at that time and since." He notes that his Securitate file contained surveillance reports, photos, wiretap records, and accounts of telephoned harassments.

The remaining 175 pages contain translations of 55 documents from Latham's file, translated and edited by Dr. Guzun. The selections are Latham's. He explains the choices, saying that, with one exception, he picked the documents so as not to give the appearance that the chosen files favored Latham in any way. The exception, is the final document, #55, which contains one of many false assertions that Latham, the cultural attaché, was in fact "C.I.A. chief for all N.A.T.O. troops in Europe and his appointment to Romania was a sort of vacation for him." To Latham that was an illustration of poor fact-checking, among other deficiencies. (259)

It has long been known that security services keep files on foreign diplomats and intelligence officers. *Targeted As a Spy* is the first account that includes some of the documents themselves. It is a valuable contribution for scholars, who will now be curious about the more than 2000 documents not included.

## **Fiction**

***Moscow X: A Novel*** by David McCloskey (W.W. Norton and Company, 2023) 464 pages, afterword. Reviewed by Graham Alexander

Former CIA analyst David McCloskey has followed his debut novel *Damascus Station* (2021) with a sophomore work, *Moscow X*, a worthy and arguably superior sequel. Building on his years of experience inside the agency, McCloskey depicts CIA operations more vividly even

than many non-fiction writers lacking his insider knowledge. Deft writing and a compelling story pull the reader inexorably across its pages all the way to the closing scenes. The discerning critic will occasionally quibble with plot threads and resolution, but *Moscow X* is proof

that McCloskey is a promising writer whom one hopes will continue his work in the espionage genre. The big screen and a growing audience likely beckon.

Moscow X walks the highwire credibly, bending but not breaking the bounds of credulity. The CIA is remarkably nimble, for example, in providing sensitive equipment and authorization for recruitment of an extraordinarily high-risk asset whom it recognizes has drawn irrevocable lines about the kind of information she will provide. A case officer completely omits details of a hostile approach inside Russia in both official cables and during debriefings with her management and suffers no negative repercussions as a result. Readers will also wonder if McCloskey's CIA protagonists understand the irony in planning an operation that deliberately causes the death of several Russians while condemning Moscow's lack of scruples.

McCloskey admits in the afterword that *Moscow X* was the product of rigorous editing and rewriting. Mostly these revisions improve the final product. One main character revels in an anti-Russian rant in opening chapter that could have been culled straight from the pages of *The Atlantic*, but the book wisely uses this to reflect how many CIA officers inside "Russia House" may feel toward the Kremlin. Other perspectives emerge among the main protagonists, some of them Russian, to balance this perspective. The contradictions and motivations of the characters speak for themselves without becoming weighted down by two-dimensional, boilerplate monologues. At the

conclusion, readers are left largely satisfied when the most odious personalities receive their just dues and one meets Vladimir Putin for a memorable, albeit cryptic, conversation. Possibly because of numerous edits, however, some aspects of this section feel rushed. Several hanging plot threads stay unmentioned and are left either for a sequel or the reader's imagination. None of these minor demerits slows *Moscow X*'s increasing momentum and the reader's desire to race toward its literally fiery finale.

McCloskey is adept at throwing in key details that would resonate with insiders. One lead character laments how her failures may condemn her to a retirement drowning her sorrows in Reston Town Center. CIA vaults look like "cubicle farms" with humorous pictures of President Putin pinned near the entrances. One operation is almost scuttled because the key sequence for a clandestine communications laptop was written incorrectly. McCloskey uses these vignettes as building blocks for a narrative in which each of the main protagonists wrestles with danger and real doubt in their victory. Some are more successful than others but even the ultimate victors pay a heavy price. The realistic ambiguity invites questions about morality of dirty tricks and intelligence collection outside the scope of the book but are no less interesting for it. That they represent the novel's most authentic aspect of all is the best evidence that, with *Moscow X*, McCloskey has crafted an impressive and enduring piece of spy fiction.

### ***The Peacock and the Sparrow***, by I. S. Berry (Atria Books, 2023—Kindle Edition)

"If you do not have something to believe in, you have nothing," CIA case officer Shane Collins's asset tells him midway through *The Peacock and the Sparrow*, pseudonymous, former CIA officer I. S. Berry's debut novel. Collins certainly is a man who, other than a serious drinking problem, doesn't have much—he's divorced with a son who won't speak to him, his professional life is on the skids, and he's exhausted from years of espionage and bureaucratic games. It's a grim portrait of a man at the end of a career that he has come to believe was a waste of time. Still, he wants to redeem himself with one last op.

But this is more than just another novel about a burned-out spook on a final mission. Setting her tale in Bahrain in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, Berry writes with an

elegant style that gives a fine sense of place and atmosphere, and her characters (except for the too-young station chief, ambitious to the point of parody) are subtly drawn, with the strengths and weaknesses of real humans. Collins, in particular, is a surprisingly sympathetic figure, trying to do the right thing as he is pulled in different directions. The last few pages are on the implausible side but, until then, the depth of the characters, along with the twists and turns of intrigue, will keep you turning the pages.

Berry is a talented writer with a sharp eye for the dark side of the espionage world. Here's hoping she has many more novels in her. — Reviewed by John Ehrman.



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