

Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf—March 2020

Compiled and reviewed by Hayden Peake

HISTORICAL

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Cold War Spy Stories from Eastern Europe, edited by Valentina Glajar, Alison Lewis, and Corina L. Petrescu

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Historical

Agent Moliere: The Life of John Cairncross, the Fifth Man of the Cambridge Spy Circle, by Geoff Andrews (I. B. Tauris, 2020) 302, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky in their 1990 book, *KGB: The Inside Story*, named John Cairncross as “the fifth man” of the Cambridge spy group. Although Cairncross disputed the charge “at length in a statement for the BBC,” (xvi) he soon began an autobiography to present his side of the events: *The Enigma Spy*, which was published posthumously in 1997. Although he quibbled about being called the “fifth man,” Cairncross did admit he was a KGB agent. (90)

During the following 20 years, the British released a number of declassified documents that provided new details about Cairncross’s KGB contributions. Thus it was not surprising when a new biography, *The Last Cambridge Spy*, by British historian Chris Smith, was published in 2019. It contained nothing that hadn’t been reported by others, though he did provide a source proving Cairncross gave the KGB “information regarding atomic weapons”^a a charge Cairncross always denied. But beyond that, had Smith left any more to be said?

The appearance of *Agent Moliere* suggests an affirmative answer. Reading it suggests otherwise, at least as far as Cairncross’s role as a KGB agent is concerned. In fact, this account of Cairncross’s espionage activities adds nothing new, omits some key points, and misinterprets others. As to the omissions, there is no mention of Cairncross’s role in Britain’s atomic program. As to the latter, Andrews misunderstand Cairncross’s assertion that he was not the fifth man because he “was unaware of the other four.” But that is how it should have been; that the other four knew each other was the error. Yet, in the end, Andrews acknowledges that “it is clear that John Cairncross was a very significant spy for the Soviets and generally held in high regard by Moscow Centre.” (251)

What then is Andrews’s approach to his subject? It soon becomes clear that his focus is on “unanswered questions” about Cairncross’s motivation and on correcting the

impression given by others that he was “wrongly caricatured as a class-conscious working class agitator at odds with capitalist rulers” and that his scholarly contributions had not been sufficiently recognized. (5)

To convey the non-KGB personality of John Cairncross, Andrews has gained the cooperation of Cairncross’s widow, his brother, and various members of his family. He also draws on the Cairncross papers in the Cambridge and Glasgow University archives. These furnish material on his academic life in the United States and Italy. Andrews also comments on Cairncross’s extensive writings on Moliere (the KGB gave him that codename for a reason) for which he was justifiably well known.

There are better sources on John Cairncross’s espionage career. For his other life, read *Agent Moliere*.

Cold War Exiles and the CIA: Plotting to Free Russia, by Benjamin Tromly. (Oxford University Press, 2019) 329, footnotes, bibliography, index.

In 1950, William Sloan Coffin, the anti-Vietnam War activist of the 1960s, was a Russian-speaking CIA case officer tasked with recruiting former Soviets in Germany to participate in a CIA covert-action program intended to free Soviet citizens from communist rule. One version of the program is described by Hugh Wilford in his book *The Mighty Wurlitzer*. *Cold War Exiles and the CIA* takes a different approach.

University of Puget Sound history professor Benjamin Tromly analyzes the CIA relationship to the former Soviet citizens and émigré groups that comprised the anticommunists mainly in West Germany and the tourist centers of Western Europe. These included those who had collaborated with the Nazis, Ukrainians who sought independence from the Soviet Union, former POWs avoiding repatriation, displaced persons (DPs) from Eastern Europe, and Russian exiles. He places particular emphasis on the conflicting politics of those involved and “the activities of the clashing intelligence services in Cold War Europe.” (10)

After a review of the various anticommunist groups that the CIA and its predecessor action organization, the Office of Policy Coordination at the State Department, sought

a. Chris Smith, *The Last Cambridge Spy: John Cairncross, Bletchley Codebreaker and Soviet Double Agent* (2019), 81. Of course, he was not a double agent, just a KGB agent.

unsuccessfully to unify, it becomes clear why efforts to infiltrate any Soviet Bloc countries failed. The creation of front organizations like the American Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia, known as AmComLib, (96) intended to unite various factions only served to teach the exiles how to stimulate the flow of dollars from their generous if naïve patron. With one exception, AmComLib produced little of substance. The exception was Radio Free Europe. (144ff)

Another group of note was the People's Labor Alliance of Russian Solidarists (NTS). Created before WWII, in the postwar era it sought, with CIA help, to undermine the Soviet Union by forming cells and distributing propaganda. Tromly mentions that the results were disappointing, and the CIA decided not to try and use it as "an instrument of psychological warfare" when it became obvious that the group wanted only to maximize CIA funding. (170–71) Operations to "infiltrate NTS members into the USSR ended in fiasco." (292)

Dissident émigré groups were not the only source the CIA sought to penetrate the Soviet Bloc. After Stalin's death, Tromly writes, "the CIA increasingly focused its human-intelligence operations on the exploitation of different forms of cross-border movement such as tourism, travel by official delegations, and academic exchanges." (289) None of these approaches produced the results anticipated.

Professor Tromly concludes that the CIA gradually learned from its mistakes, "especially the illegal infiltration of agents into Soviet territory. In their place, the United States adopted a more gradual and less inflammatory strategy of cultural infiltration." (295) Overall, *Cold War Exiles and the CIA* makes a strong case against covert action programs conducted by inexperienced intelligence officers and supervised by managers overseen by politicians, all seeking outcomes not supported by operational reality.

Cold War Spy Stories from Eastern Europe, edited by Valentina Glajar, Alison Lewis, and Corina L. Petrescu. (Potomac Books, 2019) 384, end of chapter notes, photos, index.

In their introductory essay, the editors describe how the post-Cold War era has influenced stories about espionage. While each is a professor of German at a different

university; Texas State, the University of Melbourne, and the University of Mississippi, respectively, none professes direct experience in the field of intelligence. Thus, a comment like, "We can read Cold War modes of storytelling—remaining attentive to the fictional subtexts in factual spy narratives" (1) raises a question about their grasp of the topic. Yet, whatever that statement means, the 10 contributions to the book are worthy of attention for several reasons.

First, the cases discussed, with one exception, involve services and operations not included in other collections. For example, Axel Hildebrandt, Moravian College, contributes a tale of the Stasi penetrating plans of two East Germans to escape via Poland that ends up in a successful airplane hijacking. Jennifer Miller, Southern Illinois University, examines collaboration between East Germans and Turkish nationals. And Corina Petrescu analyzes the factors that made French Romanian writer, Ana Novac, "a Securitate target." (17) The exception is the article on Markus Wolf, former head of the East German foreign intelligence service (HVA), whose story is well known.

The second reason for attention is that the contributions are well documented and written. The concluding section on "Spies On Screen" will be of interest to those intrigued by that genre.

Examples of particular interest include "The File Story of the Securitate Officer Samuel Feld," by Valentina Glajar. After acknowledging Feld is a pseudonym, Glajar presents the story of Major Feld formerly of the "Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs, Region Stalin," where he served as chief of counterespionage and interrogation services. (29) His case is of interest because so little has been written about Securitate operations during the Stalin period and because of Feld's unusual career, which led to his dismissal.

Another informative contribution probes the now well-known practice of the East German Stasi to recruit informers of every description. Alison Lewis provides a fine example of the custom in her article "The Stasi's Secret War on Books." After noting that the Stasi employed writers, reviewers, and editors in an attempt to control what was published, Lewis turns to the case of the late poet and novelist Uwe Berger, a one-time Stasi informer "responsible for writing classified book reviews." (100) Her assessment of Berger's career leads her to conclude he took pride in his role, though she points out that his website "made no mention of working for the Stasi." (99)

A final example, the book title notwithstanding, is Julie Fedor's account of the one-time popular dissident Orthodox priest, Father Dimitri Dudko, who, among other issues, opposed KGB infiltration of the church. Six months after his arrest by the KGB for anti-Soviet activities, he publicly confessed to charges that included maintaining "a criminal link with representatives of foreign anti-Soviet organizations." (167) Fedor uses the case to analyze the "functioning, development and culture" of the KGB then and now. (164) The extent of Dudko's subsequent "conversion" is illustrated in his later writings, advocating, inter alia, that "the role played by the Soviet secret police in Russian history be radically reassessed in a positive light . . . and the profound culpability of Soviet dissidents in the Soviet collapse." (177) Fedor argues at length how these and other views are "part of the ongoing process of forging a new historical narrative about the Soviet past.

Cold War Spy Stories is a good example of what professional historians can contribute to the literature of intelligence.

"Lee is Trapped and Must be Taken": Eleven Fateful Days After Gettysburg, July 4–14, 1863, by Thomas J. Ryan and Richard R. Schaus. (Savas Beatie, 2019) 342 footnotes, bibliography, appendices, photos, index.

Civil War historian Thomas Ryan ended his earlier book, *Spies, Scouts, and Secrets in the Gettysburg Campaign* (reviewed in *Studies in Intelligence* 59, no. 4), with Robert E. Lee's successful retreat and escape into Virginia. Many historians have wondered why the Union Army, headed by Gen. George Meade, didn't draw Lee into a decisive war-ending battle before he could get across the Potomac.^a Among the reasons suggested for the failure were logistics, manpower, as well as command and communications difficulties. One of the lingering mysteries not examined was the role intelligence played during the 11 days of opportunity after the battle. *Lee is Trapped and Must be Taken* fills that gap.

Ryan begins by describing the general situation facing the Union after the battle. Meade had been in command of the Army of the Potomac for only three days before the battle—a battle that was won by defensive operations.

The post-Gettysburg situation reversed these conditions and required offensive action in pursuit of a retreating army he considered still very dangerous. Meade had encountered these circumstances before when others were in command. On this point Ryan cites Meade's fluctuating support of General McClellan for failing to pursue Lee after Antietam. At first he agreed "the country ought to let us have time to reorganize and get into shape our new lines, and then advance." Only after Gettysburg did he observe that McClellan erred "on the side of prudence and caution, and that a little more rashness on his part would improve his generalship." (xxv)

But in the end, Meade would imitate the hesitant, not the rash, McClellan. Even the telegram he received from Secretary of War Stanton on 6 July 1863, warning "that Lee is trapped and must be taken," did not move Meade, an inaction that symbolizes the ever increasing frustration reflected in each succeeding chapter. (75)

Ryan devotes a chapter to each day of the period. On the first day of Lee's retreat, he tells how Meade was concerned about a potential counteroffensive, while some of his subordinate commanders recommended an immediate attack on Lee's vulnerable and long escape line. Meade demurred. To guide his decisions, Meade had the services of the Bureau of Military Information (BMI) headed by Col. George Sharpe, that had functioned well before and during the Gettysburg battle but, Ryan notes, there is no evidence that Meade ever even asked about the "strength of Lee's forces." (17)

In succeeding days, the objective of cutting off Lee's retreat was obvious to all, even Meade. Yet, although he employed his cavalry on reconnaissance missions and engaged in minor skirmishes, he found excuse after excuse not to undertake a decisive battle. For example, when Meade's scouts reported Lee was sending wagons across the Potomac at Harper's Ferry he failed to order action to disrupt the crossing or hinder Lee's logistical chain. And when Washington told Meade "troops were crossing the river," Meade replied that he "not did not agree" with that intelligence and took no action even when informed that "the President is urgent and anxious that he should move against him [Lee] by forced marches." (105)

Variations of these excuses continued and on the ninth day (12 July 1863), before the majority of Lee's forces had crossed the river and when Meade had a sizable advantage in troop strength, Meade told his chief of staff that he "intended to move forward and feel the enemy."

a. See for example, Stephen W. Sears, *Gettysburg* (Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 480ff.

(208) But he failed to inform his Corps commanders and instead called a council of war that Ryan notes, confirms Napoleon’s “disparaging maxim” that such councils were excuses for inaction; and so it was again in this case. (270)

By the 11th day, Meade was again ready to strike, but it was too late. Lee was safe in Virginia—an outcome that intelligence had foretold but only the commanding general had refused to accept. Ryan tells how the situation was clear to Lincoln, who exclaimed, “We had them within our grasp . . . nothing I could say or do could make the army move.” (269)

“*Lee is Trapped and Must be Taken*” leaves the reader exasperated—no fault of the author. Why General Meade behaved as he did is difficult to understand. But Ryan makes clear it was not because he lacked solid intelligence.

The Nuclear Spies: America’s Atomic Intelligence Operations against Hitler and Stalin, by Vince Houghton. (Cornell University Press, 2019) 239, endnotes, bibliography, index.

Why was the United States surprised when the Soviet Union exploded an atomic bomb in 1949? Historian Vince Houghton asserts that it was because “the US government was unable to create an effective atomic intelligence apparatus to monitor Soviet scientific and nuclear capabilities.” (179) *The Nuclear Spies* makes his case.

The first five chapters of this six chapter book are devoted to the extensive efforts the US government made during WWII to determine whether Germany had an atomic bomb program. It did not, and Houghton provides a good review of this well-known history. Chapter 6, titled “The U.S. (Mis)Perceptions of the Soviet Nuclear Program,” offers a new interpretation of the reason(s) for the surprise.

Quoting physicist Herbert York’s description of the Soviet Union in the late 1940s as “a basically backward country” (151)—as indeed it was—Houghton shows that many nonscientists in the US government found it hard to accept that Soviet scientists were capable and sought other explanations after the surprise. These included publication of information useful to the Soviets and the

espionage of Klaus Fuchs and the Rosenbergs, among others. Juxtaposed against these arguments, Houghton acknowledges that some American atomic scientists were aware of Soviet scientific prowess. But he suggests, the postwar intelligence agencies were not centralized or working together, and those concerned with atomic science did not foresee Soviet atomic progress.

The one factor not included as a possible explanation is the failure of the United States to have a wartime intelligence service that conducted espionage against the Soviet Union and a domestic counterespionage service that monitored Soviet intelligence officers and resident communists. Whether or not knowledge of their activities would have alerted US scientists to Soviet interest sooner and stimulated an early start to a scientific intelligence program is arguable, though likely.

The Nuclear Spies concludes that the United States was surprised when the Soviets exploded their atomic bomb because it lacked a scientific intelligence capability. Another explanation is that had the United States paid the same attention to the Soviets as it gave the Germans, there might not have been a surprise at all.^a

Return to the Reich: A Holocaust Refugee’s Secret Mission to Defeat the Nazis, by Eric Lichtblau. (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019) 288, endnotes, photos, index.

Followers of OSS history will remember the 1979 groundbreaking book by Joseph Persico, *Piercing The Reich*, that first told the story of William Casey and his efforts to place OSS agents behind Nazis lines. Several chapters in the book were devoted to Freddy Mayer and his operations in Austria. These operations were unusual for at least two reasons. First they succeeded, where many others operations did not. Second, he wasn’t even dropped into Austria until late February 1945. In *Return to the Reich*, historian Eric Lichtblau takes a new look at Mayer’s story based in part on interviews with Mayer himself and some of his former colleagues.

a. Two prominent researchers on Soviet espionage against the US nuclear program, Harvey Klehr and John Earle Haynes discovered still another Soviet spy in the Los Alamos complex. See Klehr and Haynes, “Project SOLO and the Seborers: On the Trail of a Fourth Soviet Spy at Los Alamos” in *Studies in Intelligence* 63, no. 3 (September 2019). The article led to follow-on stories in the *New York Times* by senior science writer William Broad, 24 November 2019 and 28 January 2020.

The narrative is chronological and begins in 1933 Freiburg, Germany. Mayer was 11 and just beginning to experience Nazi anti-Semitism that his father, a WWI veteran with an Iron Cross, didn't expect to last. Lichtblau describes the circumstances that proved the father wrong. In 1938, 16-year-old Freddy, with high school English and French, and trained to repair diesel engines, left with his brother, mother, and father for Brooklyn, New York. They found an apartment near Ebbetts Field, and Freddy went to work as a mechanic.

Pearl Harbor changed everything. Freddy volunteered for service in the Army immediately. He was rejected as an enemy alien. When Army personnel demands changed and his brother was drafted, Freddy worked a deal to take his place. In 1943 under wartime regulations, Freddy became a US citizen. When he broke the rules and captured a general during a field exercise, the general recommended he join OSS—he did.

Lichtblau tells how after training at the Congressional Country Club, Freddy and a fellow officer Hans—his radio officer—were posted to Europe. There, one mission after another was canceled until they learned of the plan to drop agents behind enemy lines in Austria. All that was needed was one more member for the team, preferably one familiar with Austria. Freddy, posing as a German POW in a POW camp, recruited just the man; an Austrian POW defector—Franz Weber, a member from the Wehrmacht. After a scary, almost fatal, attempt to launch the mission, the team succeeded on the second try. Although neither Freddy nor Franz had jumped before—Freddy didn't tell Franz—all three parachuted safely from a B-24 onto a glacier near Innsbruck on 25 February 1945—seven years after Freddy had fled from Germany.

Return To The Reich goes on to tell how Freddy accomplished his mission to determine and report the local situation. The team reported on train movements, and Freddy, posing as a wounded German officer, determined the location of Hitler's bunker in Berlin. Then they started an underground newspaper and recruited couriers to help.

In April 1945 Freddy, disguised as a French laborer, got a job in a German aircraft factory that was making jet fighters and sent details to OSS headquarters. And then, after a series of mishaps during a resupply mission, the Gestapo learned of Freddy, and he was arrested. Lichtblau describes his confinement and torture, a confinement that surprisingly ended with Freddy convincing his captors to surrender the Tyrolian part of Austria to

oncoming American troops. This extraordinary result took place only after, with great difficulty, Freddy convinced the troop leaders that the offer was genuine.

Of the many unusual aspects of Freddy's OSS service, its short duration and astonishing successes stand out. After the war, he was offered a job in intelligence but declined the honor. He returned to the scene of his adventures once in 1993 for a reunion with his former teammates. Lichtblau describes his postwar life, adding that his one wish was that people would realize that "refugees that got a haven in the US did their best to repay."

Venice's Secret Service: Organizing Intelligence in the Renaissance, by Ioanna Iordanou. (Oxford University Press, 2019) 263, footnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

Inside the Scuola Grande di San Rocco in Venice, one can see a wood carving of the first known image of a spy wearing a cloak.^a But that is not the only intelligence-related first associated with Renaissance Venice as readers of *Venice's Secret Service* soon discover. The central thesis of this impressive book is that 15th century Venice established the first centralized intelligence service that monitored and assisted in controlling its widespread mercantile empire while becoming "emblematic of good government and governance." (122)

Headquartered in the Doge's Palace on St. Mark's Square—the doge was the head of government—the intelligence service didn't have a name and was administered by the Council of Ten. Its functions included espionage operations, collection, analysis, covert action, cryptography, steganography, and "the development of lethal substances." (3) Like the vaunted Venetian diplomatic corps, its intelligence organization was a branch of the civil service.

After a comparative summary of other Renaissance intelligence services in Europe and the Ottoman empire, historian Ioanna Iordanou, Oxford Brookes University, describes Venice's intelligence organization and principal functions. The latter include the use of secret agents—amateur and professional—with operational examples, and the application of "extraordinary" (191) counterintelligence measures. Application of these measures was accompanied by extensive state secrecy policies and special

a. See illustration #19, Christopher Andrew, *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

archives for storing documents. “Eighty to one hundred professional state servants were responsible for transcribing, indexing, and archiving all documents.” (109)

Particular attention was paid to secure means of communication in correspondence. Toward this end, the Department of Cryptography produced “a hand-lettered cryptology manual” for use by princes, ambassadors, priests, intellectuals “and even lovers.” (129) The department was responsible for breaking enemy ciphers and for training “Venetian state cryptologists.” (132) The seeds of professionalism that eventually characterized the cryptographic service were planted by Giovanni Soro, the “official cipher secretary in 1505.” Little is known about him beyond his ability “to break multilingual ciphers” and that even the Pope sought his assistance. (140)

In conclusion, *Venice’s Secret Service* draws several lessons. The principal one is that “centrally organized intelligence existed long before conventional wisdom dictates.” (223) Another concerns “intelligence from below,” (224) a reference to the awareness of the public to the needs of the Council of Ten as exemplified by a “whistle blower” policy. The council promoted this policy by the anonymous use of “lion’s-mouth letter boxes in which citizens were encouraged to post the names of those who subverted authority” (v) and an official policy of spying on others. (74–75) Finally, it is apparent that the basic functions, though not the technology, of Venetian state intelligence are similar to those in use today.

Fascinating history, well documented and presented.

INTELLIGENCE ABROAD

Turkish Intelligence & The Cold War: The Turkish Secret Service, The US and The UK, by Egemen Bezci. (I. B. Tauris, 2020) 291, end of chapter notes, bibliography, photos, index.

After completing his PhD at the University of Nottingham, Egemen Bezci wrote this book at the Stockholm University Institute of Turkish Studies, before joining the Institute of Political Science at the National Sun Yat-Sen University, Taiwan. Bezci’s book mainly concerns the early Cold War period, when the United States and the United Kingdom exercised relatively greater influence in world affairs generally and over Turkey in particular than they do today.

Following a discussion of Turkey’s historical background during the Ottoman Empire and the republican government formed after WWI, Bezci compares the intelligence services of the three countries involved, those of the United States, the UK, and Turkey. Of special interest here is his description of the Turkish intelligence services, a topic that has not received much attention in the literature.

Prior to WWI, domestic security and paramilitary matters were handled by “the gendarmerie forces” until the army created a military intelligence unit that also took over “counterespionage.” After the war, the country’s founding leader, Mustafa Kemal, widely known as Atatürk, “ordered the foundation of a civilian and centralized secret intelligence agency” called “the National Security Service (MAH) in January 1926. The principal targets included Soviet Russia, the Kurds, Armenians, the Greeks and the domestic communists.” (42–43) The Syrians would soon be added to the list.

At the outset, Germany’s WWI military intelligence chief, Walter Nicolai, provided instruction in German to the new service. After 1927, however, the MAH developed on its own, reporting to the prime minister and focusing on counterespionage. Bezci gives a short description of its initial organization, its sources of personnel, its links to the Foreign Ministry, and its sometimes controversial relationship with the military and domestic police services.

Before discussing Turkey’s Cold War role, Bezci explains why Turkey remained neutral for most of WWII while tacitly cooperating with the Allies. (63ff) Then he focuses on the heart of the book, how the Turkish intelligence services worked with the United States, the UK, and NATO against the Soviet Union and Turkey’s traditional regional and domestic enemies. This includes general descriptions of intelligence operations and what he calls “intelligence diplomacy,” a term he coins to indicate that Turkey used its intelligence services as well as its diplomats to conduct foreign affairs, especially its bilateral relations with Washington and London. Examples include the establishment of relationships concerning “anti-subversion, military intelligence, and covert action early in the Cold War.” (102)

As Turkish confidence grew, cooperation was extended to HUMINT operations run from Turkey by the MAH and MI6 against the Soviets. While Bezci gives some examples of the former, he offers no measures of success.

The MI6 operations were run and compromised by Kim Philby. In these areas Turkey was the junior partner but used its geographic position well in order to leverage support and enhance its security, even if that meant exaggerating threats. (262)

While Bezi draws on many Western sources, he also includes some in Turkish, though he does not document all his facts. Several errors are worth noting, however.

First, the initial Corona photo satellite mission was in 1961, not 1958. (15) Second, Philby served in Turkey from 1947 to 1949, not 1946. (141) And last, the National Security Agency was formed during the Truman not the Eisenhower administration. (152)

Turkish Intelligence & The Cold War will broaden many readers knowledge of Turkish intelligence. A worthwhile contribution to the literature.



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