

Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf

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CURRENT TOPICS

A *Higher Loyalty: Truth, Lies, and Leadership*, by James Comey. (Flatiron Books, 2018) 290, index.

Four of the seven former FBI directors “wrote” books. J. Edgar Hoover’s *Masters of Deceit* (Henry Holt, 1958), written in the third person by staff colleagues, described the seriousness of the communist threat. The memoirs of Clarence Kelley and Louis Freeh had co-authors; their books covered their backgrounds plus key FBI cases of the time. James Comey’s *A Higher Loyalty*—no co-author or ghost writers—is a first-person narrative that culminates in a series of unique personal confrontations with the president.

Comey establishes his approach to life and leadership with a discussion of his upbringing, his decision to become a lawyer rather than a doctor, and his first job in the legal profession—under Rudy Giuliani, whom he eventually succeeded. His learning experiences involved the Mafia, insider-trading violations, and most prominently, the Martha Stewart lying-under-oath case.

His strict application of the law in the Stewart case didn’t endear him to the public at large and his analysis of the legal rationale probably won’t change any minds. But among other effects, it raised his profile in the attorney general’s office, and he was offered (and accepted) the position of deputy attorney general in 2003.

In Washington, Comey explains, he learned law at the presidential level. The Valerie Plame and Scooter Libby cases are examples. But the most challenging battles concerned the legal aspects of the CIA’s enhanced interrogation program and issues relating to NSA’s surveillance program. Comey concluded the earlier authorizations were not, in fact, legal and proposed adjustments. Op-

position from the White House and then-Vice President Cheney, and the well-known encounter with White House lawyers in the attorney general’s hospital room, make interesting reading. Comey deals with these issues at length, leaving little doubt as to his position relative to those who disagreed. In the end, he didn’t win the day—but he gained respect.

In 2005, Comey left the Justice Department for industry and in early March 2013, joined the faculty at Columbia Law School. It was there, a few weeks later, that Attorney General Eric Holder surprised him with an offer to interview for the FBI director position. The final third of *A Higher Loyalty* is devoted to his FBI service.

Assuming the mantle of Bob Mueller was an awesome task. But it occurred at a time when many others were retiring, new staff and special agents were joining, and diversity was changing decades old FBI policies and traditions. Comey explains how he dealt with these issues by applying the leadership and ethical concepts that he describes throughout the book.

The national and international events that consumed Comey’s time as director will be familiar to anyone who watches TV or has a Twitter or Facebook account. And while they are treated at some length, Comey adds details about his relationship with colleagues and members of Congress, and his one-on-one conversations with Presidents Obama and Trump he has not discussed before.

A Higher Loyalty is at once a memoir of a devoted family man and a dedicated public servant. Its respectful candor and many insights are a valuable legacy.

T *The Perfect Weapon: War, Sabotage, and Fear in the Cyber Age*, by David E. Sanger. (Crown Books, 2018) 357, endnotes, index.

The annual threat assessment prepared by the Pentagon for Congress now places cyber threats first on its list of threats. (xii) The first-strike contingencies that worry the Pentagon most no longer concern nuclear warfare: they are cyberspace related—offensive and defensive. Offensive cyberwar refers to paralyzing cyberattacks against

the adversary to prevent an attack that would “fry power grids, stop trains, silence cell phones . . . overwhelm the internet,” and create national chaos. (xii) Defensive cyberwar is concerned with monitoring potential adversaries’ actions and acting to protect domestic targets—government owned and commercial—wherever located.

It is generally agreed that the United States possesses the capability to conduct both types of cyberwar at varying levels of intensity. But questions remain, writes *New York Times* national security correspondent David Sanger: “What constitutes appropriate actions?”; “How will these actions influence adversary retaliation?”; “What is the role of commercial entities?”; “Who makes the decisions?”; and perhaps most importantly, “What is the strategy for success and the doctrine for action?”. *The Perfect Weapon* is a clarion call highlighting the need for a public discussion of these issues.

By public discussion, Sanger implies congressional, think-tank, and media involvement, that would create an understanding of the threats and would result in the funding and passage of legislation necessary to protect the nation. At the same time, a doctrine of success should be articulated, he suggests, that will be accepted, as was massive nuclear retaliation during the Cold War.

To justify this position, *The Perfect Weapon* demonstrates the seriousness of the cyber threat by offering examples; some are familiar, others less so. The North Korean hacking of Sony Studios shows how a then-relatively low-tech nation achieved very damaging results before most had realized what they had done.^a The Stuxnet attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities illustrates sophisticated capability and how very simple errors can create compli-

a. North Korea’s engagement on the world wide web is not a new phenomenon, however. See Stephen C. Mercado, “North Korea and the Internet: Hermit Surfers of P’yongyang” in *Studies in Intelligence* 48, No. 1 (March 2004). Available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol48no1/pdf/v48i1a04p.pdf>

cations. The story of how the Russians penetrated classified Pentagon files is attention-getting, as is the method that was used to do it. (20)

Sanger also discusses the Snowden leaks, their influence on the privacy debate, and the damage they caused. Of even greater concern, he suggests, was another NSA breach by a group called the Shadow Brokers. They were posting NSA code on the internet “designed to exploit vulnerabilities in Microsoft systems.” (229) Sanger explains what happened.

Part of Sanger’s approach to these and the other cyber security problems he describes, including the Russian meddling in the 2016 elections, is a concomitant discussion of how various elements of the bureaucracy—political, military, and industrial—react when alerted to the threats and actual attacks. Those that emphasize the “folly of going on the offense unless we have a good defense” risk ignoring that “the best way to deter attack—and counterattack—is deterrence by denial.”^b Equally important, he argues, is the recognition that the government can’t do it all: private institutions have a major role. Sorting out the roles and responsibilities, Sanger concludes, “will take presidential leadership.” (302)

The Perfect Weapon is a persuasive wake-up call that must be answered.

b. “Deterrence by denial” theory applies to any capability that can deny an enemy success in achieving his objectives. It is distinguished from “deterrence by dissuasion,” which involves responding punitively to an enemy’s malicious actions. Source: David S. Yost, “From Kosovo to Kabul and Beyond: Debating Security Strategies” *NATO Review* online, Winter 2003, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2003/issue4/english/art4.html>.

The Selling of the CIA: Public Relations and the Culture of Secrecy, by David Shamus McCarthy. (University Press of Kansas, 2018) 215, endnotes, bibliography, index.

I met Elvis once—when he was alive. Only a few weeks out of the Army, he was making *GI Blues* (Paramount Studios, 1960) in Hollywood. The storyline paralleled his own service in the Third Armored Division, West Germany, and he was in the uniform of a sergeant—the rank he achieved on active duty. The Army, in which I then also served, provided technical assistance to the film that included assuring correct terminology, uniforms, and, in this case, some tanks with crews filmed on location.

(Many years later, similar technical assistance from the Department of Defense was given to the movie, *Bridge of Spies*.) While neither film elicited media or congressional charges that government cooperation was provided only to enhance its public image, others have not fared as well.

For example, in 1971, a CBS documentary entitled *The Selling of the Pentagon*, based in part on a book by Senator J. William Fulbright, *The Pentagon Propaganda*

Machine, charged that the Pentagon's public relations activities used tax payer dollars to influence public opinion in favor of the military. More recently, Texas Christian University professor Tricia Jenkins pursued a parallel tack in her book, *The CIA In Hollywood*, asserting—though not proving—that, among other pungent criticisms, “the CIA is trying to circulate whitewashed images of itself through popular media” intending that viewers will accept them as truth unaware they “are partially constructed and manipulated by the government.”^a

And now David McCarthy, a historian at Richard Bland College of William and Mary, extends the argument in *Selling the CIA: Public Relations and the Culture of Secrecy*. His thesis is straightforward: “the CIA has implemented a public relations strategy that directly threatens American democracy.” (8)

In support of his position, McCarthy reviews the CIA's public relations policies from its creation to the present. He argues that the congressional hearings in the 1970s, “badly damaged the CIA's mystique, which had been assiduously cultivated since the Agency's inception in 1947.” (7) Then, after acknowledging subsequent improvement in the agency's public image, he suggests that any progress was due to less-than-forthright CIA public relations schemes. To support this position, he quotes former CIA officer Victor Marchetti: “by suppressing historical fact, and by manufacturing historical fiction, the CIA with its obsessive secrecy and its vast resources has posed a particular threat to the right of Americans to be informed for the present and future by objective knowledge of the past. As long as the CIA continues to manipulate history, historians of its activities must be revisionist.” (7–8) *Selling the CIA*, writes McCarthy, “confirms Marchetti's accusations . . . serves as an important corrective to existing scholarship,” and creates a “poisonous relationship between public relations and secrecy.” (8–9)

These are serious allegations, but McCarthy doesn't address them directly and some of the cases he does discuss have no obvious connection to public relations and secrecy. For example, McCarthy's claim that the Supreme Court decision in the Frank Snepp case “was an undeniable victory for the ‘culture of secrecy’” (48) challenges credulity since the court merely affirmed that he had violated his secrecy agreement by not submitting his book

for security review. Secrecy itself was not at issue in his case.

McCarthy does discuss secrecy agreement cases in which classified data was at issue and then goes on to allege that these agreements were not enforced equally. His prime example is that of then-DCI Stansfield Turner for not punishing former DCI William Colby when he failed to submit the French version of his memoir for review before publication. That Colby “received no punishment” (48) is incorrect; he was fined \$10,000. Error aside, this instance and the others presented are not examples of a poisonous relationship between public relations or an attempt to manipulate history; they are administrative issues.

With three significant exceptions, *Selling the CIA* argues that operations the agency portrayed as successes were mostly not, that its openness programs were less than open, and that it fought FOIA legislation on secrecy grounds. He does acknowledge that the FOIA release that became the CREST files at the National Archives was a positive contribution for researchers, but he suggests that the initiative came from the White House—not the CIA. Whether the CIA's behavior in these matters was a blind application of its “culture of secrecy,” as McCarthy asserts, or the legitimately occasionally flawed implementation of its mandate to protect sources and methods is a judgment the reader must decide.

The first exception concerns McCarthy's commentary on the movie *Three Days of the Condor* (Paramount Pictures, 1975). The plot involves the murder of six CIA employees by a renegade CIA hit squad. The six had stumbled on to a rogue plan to invade the Middle East and are assassinated to maintain secrecy. The hero, played by Robert Redford, figures out the scheme and leaks it all to the *New York Times*, but the deputy director of CIA calmly informs him that CIA will have the story spiked. McCarthy implies this is a justifiable characterization of the CIA, since it had once engaged journalists in its work and had been involved in assassinations. (21) What he doesn't grasp is that the film was Hollywood, not CIA-, generated fiction, though less colorful than James Bond. The CIA contributed nothing.

The other exceptions are more important to McCarthy's thesis. One involves congressional oversight of the CIA's so-called black site detention program. The other deals with the agency's role in the movie *Zero Dark*

a. Tricia Jenkins, *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television* (University of Texas Press, 2012), 137.

Thirty (Columbia Pictures, 2012). In the former instance, McCarthy views CIA efforts to present the facts of the program correctly and counter media misconceptions when they occurred as self-serving manipulation of reality to the CIA's benefit, guided by the "culture of secrecy." No evidence is provided.

In the case of *Zero Dark Thirty*, McCarthy sees CIA's extensive cooperation with the production as a means to influence public opinion, in particular, to reinforce the view that enhanced interrogation contributed to finding Usama Bin Laden. That any Hollywood production would permit such a precedent is whimsical: Hollywood presents its own version of history, as Oliver Stone can attest.

The Spy Chronicles: RAW, ISI and the Illusion of Peace, by A. S. Dulat, Asad Durrani, and Aditya Sinha. (Harper-Collins India, 2018) 321, endnotes, photos, index.

Amarjit Dulat was secretary (chief) of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the Indian foreign intelligence agency, during 1999–2000. General Asad Durrani was director-general of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate during 1990–1991. Aditya Sinha is a journalist who co-authored an earlier book with Secretary Dulat. This book was Dulat's idea, and he convinced Durrani to participate. At the suggestion of the publisher, he employed a dialogue format to tell the story. Peter Jones of the University of Ottawa's Center for International Policy Studies hosted a series of meetings of the two principals outside India and Pakistan, during which a number of topics were discussed. Sinha edited the exchanges. *The Spy Chronicles* is the result.

The initial exchanges explain that they met after their active service at a conference in Bangkok that was part of the Track II, or backchannel diplomacy, program. Track II permits non-governmental, informal, and unofficial contacts and activities between private citizens or groups of individuals. They then jointly authored two papers, before deciding on this book.

The topics covered in the exchanges include the intelligence profession and the "deep state," their very forthright views on each other's former agencies, other services they worked with or against, the Kashmir quandary, terrorism, political leaders around the world, and their hopes for the future. Of special interest are their

In the end, McCarthy writes that "this study contends that the Office of Public Affairs has helped to maintain the CIA's image even during crisis situations. By focusing on the positive and diverting the public attention from the negative, CIA officials have protected both covert operations and the 'culture of secrecy.'" (129) The idea that the CIA has the power to "divert public opinion" is deeply flawed. The "culture of secrecy"—a term the author never defines—is better seen as a foundation principle of the best intelligence organizations.

Selling the CIA: Public Relations and the Culture of Secrecy is an interesting book about an imperfect agency. But it does not demonstrate that CIA "has implemented a public relations strategy that directly threatens American democracy."

comments in the chapter entitled, "The Deal for Osama bin Laden."

The level of candor is robust, if not always on point. For example, when asked whether the ISI is a deep state, general Durrani replies that "many intelligence agencies have been called the Deep State." He then adds, "The Deep State in America can even scuttle presidential policy. . . . The CIA, State Department, Pentagon, and the military industrial complex make the political leadership helpless." (23) Returning to the topic later, Durrani notes "I never rated CIA assessments highly. Never." (54)

On the subject of a Bin Laden deal, Dulat says, "I felt Pakistan cooperated in some way." In Durrani's lengthy response, he comments, "I don't know, but I think Pakistan cooperated." Then, replying to press accounts that he said Pakistan was "harbouring bin Laden," he added that he had said only that "we probably found out at some stage and cooperated." (230)

The Spy Chronicles makes clear that India and Pakistan, at least from the perspective of two former intelligence chiefs, understand their many long unsolved problems and agree on what should be done, though not how. Concerning the United States, they share a rather cynical view of its motives and are uncertain about its current foreign policy. While it is impossible to know whether they reflect the views of those now in power in

their respective countries, the book provides an interesting informed outlook well worth considering.

GENERAL

Intelligence and the Function of Government, edited by Daniel Baldino and Rhys Crawley. (Melbourne University Press, 2018) 295, end of chapter notes, index.

In the final volume of *The Official History of the Australian Security and Intelligence Organization (ASIO) 1975–1989* (Allen & Unwin, 2016), historians John Blaxland and Rhys Crawley barely mention the relatively recent concept of an Australian Intelligence Community (AIC). In their contribution to *Intelligence and the Function of Government*, however, they provide a detailed history. This is just one of the 12 informative articles assembled by editors and written by academics and practitioners.

The book aims to explain how the AIC functions at home, abroad, and as a member of the Five Eyes partnership. It begins with a review of intelligence studies in Australia. To establish a baseline of intelligence studies available, it presents an interesting content analysis of articles found in two journals—one private, one US-government sponsored: *The Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* and *Studies in Intelligence*. As a practical matter, it recognizes that academia resists granting equivalent value for courses in intelligence—a problem common to most Five Eyes countries.

Other topics discussed include Australian military intelligence, open source intelligence, and issues involv-

ing dissemination. Of particular interest is the article on FININT [financial intelligence] and the case for structural and legislative reform, by Ashton Robinson, an honorary fellow at the University of Melbourne University. Robinson makes a strong case for increased use of FININT by the AIC.

On the subject of secret friends, intelligence scholar Siobhán Martin and Carl Ungerer, a former visiting scholar at Georgetown University and senior analyst in the Australian Office of National Assessments, respectively, present a sobering assessment of Five Eyes cooperation. This is followed with contributions on leadership development and comparative lessons in risk management in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. The two final articles deal with metadata issues and cyber warfare threats, cyber space, and the internet. Both examine how Australian intelligence views these issues and what needs to be done in preparation and risk mitigation.

For those interested in intelligence in general and Australian intelligence in particular, *Intelligence and the Function of Government* will be a positive addition to your library.

Principled Spying: The Ethics of Secret Intelligence, by David Omand and Mark Phythian. (Georgetown University Press, 2018) 285, endnotes, bibliography, index.

Intelligence officers know the regulations, rules, and legal limits within which they must function. They are also aware of the dilemmas that arise when the methods necessary to acquire intelligence challenge the ethical norms that apply in a democratic society. *Principled Spying* presents a thoughtful discussion of these dilemmas as they are influenced by “norms of right conduct for intelligence activity.” (4) The result is guidance that officers can apply when seeking to obtain essential intelligence while complying with all the constraints.

Both authors have already made impressive contributions to the intelligence literature. Sir David Omand, a former director of GCHQ and the first Permanent Secretary and Security and Intelligence Coordinator in the Cabinet Office, is the author of *Securing the State* (Columbia University Press, 2010), an imaginative account of the relationship between national security and civil liberties. He is also well known for his puckish wit. When asked by the BBC for his views on the relationship between GCHQ and NSA, he replied, “We have the brains. They have

the money. It's a collaboration that's worked very well."^a Mark Phythian is a professor of politics at the University of Leicester, the co-editor of the journal *Intelligence and National Security*, and co-author of a number of valuable books, including one on intelligence theory.^b

Principled Spying employs a debate format. Each of the seven chapters addresses an aspect of intelligence and ethics within which the authors exchange views. The first chapter examines the relationships among intelligence, the state, the citizen, and the "tensions between ethics and intelligence." (6) Subsequent chapters explore legal constraints, the application of Just War theory, the ethical challenges unique to human intelligence, the ethical issues associated with obtaining intelligence from digital data, the tensions that arise when considering how intelligence is used, and the importance of oversight and accountability.

To varying degrees, each chapter establishes historical precedent for the issues under consideration. For example, Omand begins his commentary on ethics and the law with a discussion of how Sir Francis Walsingham dealt with the conspiracies surrounding Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots and, among other things, the use of torture, a common 16th century practice. Phythian then comments, in an allusion to more recent events, on how the law is applied today to protect interrogators from future risk and explores the ethical qualms associated with adapting the law to justify what interrogators want to do. (62–63)

Similarly, the chapter on human intelligence reviews the evolution of espionage from ancient to modern times. At one point, Phythian discusses "the necessity to depart from strict ethical standards" in certain situations, and invokes Immanuel Kant's comment on the "authority to use coercion," then adds that Kant "regarded spying as intrinsically despicable." (113) Omand responds by ana-

lyzing the application of Just War principles—developed in an earlier chapter—to such matters. (122)

In general, *Principled Spying* recognizes that intelligence practices are a necessary part of international relations; the book does not find spying or espionage, per se, unethical. It is concerned with the quandaries that arise in practical implementation. These include how to deal with penetration of terrorist groups, in which members are required to commit illegal acts; whether agents should be recruited through coercion and blackmail or for ideological reasons; the importance of honoring the commitments made to agents; and the obligations analysts and managers have to "speak truth to power."

In a separate chapter, the authors address digital data collection. While in this area there are no technical historical precedents, ethical choices remain relevant, due to tensions between the public's desire for near-absolute protection of personal data and the need intelligence agencies have to acquire the data necessary to protect those very citizens. While stipulating that there is no easy answer, the authors discuss how secrecy, oversight, and leaks—with some disagreement on the latter—influence public awareness and raise important legal issues. Their exchanges regarding the ethical issues posed by the Dark Net are of particular interest.

In their conclusions, the authors assert the expectation "that sound ethical thinking and good intelligence practice are not contradictory concepts, (215) despite inevitable tensions. As a test of relevance in any particular case, they recommend applying a slightly modified version of DCI Turner's measure of acceptability: "whether those approving them feel they could defend their decisions before the public if the actions became public . . ." Any convincing ethical justification, the authors' modification asserts, "genuinely has to include the sentiment, it was the *right* thing to do." (emphasis in original, 226)

Principled Spying is a thoughtful, provocative, and valuable contribution to the intelligence literature.

a. "UK intelligence work defends freedom, say spy chiefs," BBC, 7 November 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-24847399>.

b. *Intelligence Theory: Key Questions and Debates*, Peter Gill, Stephen Marrin, and Mark Phythian, eds. (Routledge, 2009).

HISTORICAL

A *Brotherhood of Spies: The U-2 and the CIA's Secret War*, by Monte Reel. (Doubleday, 2018) 342, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

The Soviet shootdown of the U-2 piloted by Gary Powers on 1 May 1960 is a story so well known that one immediately wonders what another book about the event can possibly contribute. The short answer is “very little,” and *A Brotherhood of Spies* meets that expectation. But for those looking for answers to questions like, “Who conceived the U-2 in the first place?”; “Why was it a CIA—not an Air Force—program?”; “Who were the key players and what happened to them after the shoot-down?”; and, “Was it a political as well as a technical success?”, author Monte Reel provides a good overview.

Of the key players discussed, the contributions from the innovative Edwin Land—the inventor of Polaroid photography—are the most impressive and least well known. It was Land who suggested the U-2, putting cameras in satellites, and creating the National Reconnaissance Office to manage the program. The role of Richard Bissell, the U-2 program manager is well told, as is his later conduct as CIA director of operations and his responsibility for the Bay of Pigs disaster. The contributions of the dynamic Kelly Johnson, designer and builder

of the U-2 and its follow-on, the A-12 (forerunner of the SR71), were critical to the program’s success.^a

A Brotherhood of Spies—a questionable title since none of those involved in the U-2 program—including Powers—viewed themselves as spies—also covers the role of President Eisenhower and his scientific advisory team as they created the bureaucratic structure necessary for success. Those actions included dealing with a skeptical Air Force, and an initially reluctant Allen Dulles and Congress. Reel also includes an equally valuable discussion of Eisenhower’s admission of responsibility for the U-2 shootdown following his public recounting of the cover story that he acknowledged was untrue.

Thus for a good review of the U-2 program, its impact on the intelligence operations of the time, and its influence on subsequent operations, read *A Brotherhood of Spies*.

a. The story of the A-12 is told by CIA’s Chief Historian David Robarge in *Archangel: CIA’s Supersonic A-12 Reconnaissance Aircraft* (Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2012). Available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/a-12/index.html>.

T *The London Cage: The Secret History of Britain’s World War II Interrogation Centre*, by Helen Fry. (Yale University Press, 2017) 244, endnotes, photos, index.

A clandestine interrogation center where prisoners who refused cooperation after routine questioning were subjected to “special intelligence treatment” is not a post 9/11 phenomenon. (1) During World War II, there was the so-called London Cage, where harsh interrogation methods were used. (1) Its commander, Lt. Col. Alexander Scotland, published a book with that title in 1957. A review by former CIA officer George Constantinides commented that “for those interested in interrogating methods used to acquire intelligence . . . the book will prove disappointing.^b An accurate assessment—but it

wasn’t Scotland’s fault. The new version of *The London Cage* explains why.

Scotland’s original manuscript was confiscated by MI5 in 1954, but the prospective publisher kept a copy. The book “described life inside the secret wartime interrogation centre” that functioned until 1948. (2) The 72-year-old Scotland, a nephew of George Bernard Shaw, dismissed the government’s argument that “Methods of interrogation by British intelligence in any theater of war could not be disclosed because the same techniques might be used in a current conflict.” (3) Scotland threatened to publish in America unless, at the very least, a redacted version was allowed. MI5 capitulated; the published

b. George Constantinides, *Intelligence and Espionage: An Analytical Bibliography* (Westview Press, 1983), 401.

version omitted names and techniques. Nevertheless, “rumours continued to surface about irregularities at the London Cage.” (7)

Some of the London Cage files were released recently by the British National Archives and intelligence historian Helen Fry acquired a copy of the unredacted Scotland manuscript plus related memoranda and reports. She then pieced together a more accurate account of what took place in the London Cage.

The purpose of the London Cage itself was secret until “complaints of ill-treatment emerged at the end of the war, from Nazi war criminals held there.” (22) While Scotland wrote that “No physical force was ever used during interrogations to obtain information, no cold water treatment, no third degrees, nor any other refinement,” (207) Fry cites two sources that refute that contention. One was Scotland himself, who wrote elsewhere admitting that, provoked, he had used “violence against a prisoner” on two occasions. (83) In one instance, the violence was inflicted on Wulf Schmidt, who later became the Double Cross agent, TATE. Scotland also proposed the use of a truth drug on TATE, though there is no evidence that he succeeded. (87)

For reasons not clear, Fry later digresses to the subject of truth drugs, in which she discusses their contemplated use by the military, MI6, OSS, and even the CIA. At the end, she adds that “Scotland had no qualms about us-

ing drugs on prisoners being interrogated at the London Cage” but once again provides no examples. (100)

The second source concerning harsh treatment at the London Cage was a War Office memo which Fry quotes: “the basement [of London Cage] became the domain of physical torture and threats of torture.” The techniques employed included “physical abuse . . . forcing a prisoner to stand naked for up to eight hours, sometimes chained or handcuffed to a chair or a pole, [and] making him perch for long period of time on a three-legged stool.” Though she also found several references to the use of “secret control gear; i.e., electrical shock equipment and other torture apparatus,” no specific examples are provided. (81)

The most difficult situations arose with suspected German war criminals, and Fry does provide examples of their harsh treatment in the London Cage. (129) But in no case does she mention any intelligence obtained.

The London Cage concludes that “the rumours surrounding it will forever cast a shadow on British intelligence.” (221) A fair judgment with broader implications.^a

a. See also J.R. Seeger review in *Studies in Intelligence* 62, No. 1 (March 2018). Available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol-62-no-1/london-cage.html>

Misdefending the Realm: How MI5's Incompetence Enabled Communist Subversion of Britain's Institutions during the Nazi-Soviet Pact, by Antony Percy. (University of Buckingham Press, 2017) 363, end of chapter notes, bibliography, appendices, index.

Historian Antony Percy read German and Russian at Christ Church, Oxford. *Misdefending the Realm* is based on his PhD dissertation at the University of Buckingham. It has a clear but flawed objective: “to show that, even though Soviet espionage was more penetrating and more patient than has traditionally been portrayed, MI5 failed to counter it because of severe flaws in policy, organization, and leadership.” (13) It is hard to conceive of any aspect of British espionage history that has been more thoroughly analyzed in the intelligence literature than its penetration by Soviet intelligence. Nothing more need be said on that point here.

That both MI5 and MI6 failed to identify most of the penetrations is also well documented. And contrary to the subtitle, they went undiscovered well beyond the period of the Nazi-Soviet pact. The only remaining question is whether the reasons given for the failure by Percy are correct.

Percy asserts that MI5 “misjudged the intentions of those British citizens it regarded as ‘harmless’ intellectual communists, making reckless decisions between the theory of communism and its destructive practice . . . and allowed the fact that Stalin was a temporary ally to blind it to the dictator’s permanent objectives . . . and allowed

itself to be swayed by so-called ‘agents of influence.’” And even after “senior officers belatedly discovered their negligence, they adopted a strategy of cover-up and dissimulation that attempted to bury their misdemeanors, a deception that has influenced official, authorized, and independent histories of British intelligence ever since.” (13) Except this one, he implies.

This harsh judgement is not the only interpretation suggested by the evidence provided in the more than 300 pages that follow. During the period of interest, the British priorities were focused on the Nazi aggression and the possibility the Germans would invade Britain itself. It is indeed true that the Soviet penetrations were not discovered until after the war and even then not because MI5 or MI6 discovered them. It is equally true that the services were not forthcoming with details. But after the Burgess and Maclean defections, journalists and historians gradually discovered the basics and reported them, though with minimal government cooperation. Percy concludes this was a cover-up; protecting sources and methods is an alternative explanation.

Complicating matters while containing many interesting details, *Misdefending the Realm* also has too many

Playfair: The True Story of the British Secret Agent Who Changed How We See The World, by Bruce Berkowitz. (George Mason University Press, 2018) 477, endnotes, photos, appendices, index.

The pie chart, bar chart, graphs of statistical data, and trend lines so common today were invented by William Playfair. His book, *The Commercial and Political Atlas of 1776* was the first to contain statistical charts. *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Playfair summarizes his life as inventor, businessman, banker, economist, writer, land speculator, and serial failed entrepreneur—in a single page. The handful of other writers who have written about Playfair have described him in less charitable terms: “fraudster, extortionist.” (7) None of these, however, mention that he was a secret agent for the British government. Former CI analyst Bruce Berkowitz has remedied that in *Playfair*.

It was while conducting research into Playfair—the “statistician with a roguish reputation” (239)—that Berkowitz found documentary indications of Playfair’s espionage for the crown in the form of memos and reports submitted while traveling in France. (180–81) But the most important discovery was that Playfair had coun-

needless errors of fact, weakly supported judgments, and pervasive speculation. For example, the source given for the Modin quotation on page 39, endnote #93, doesn’t contain the quote. In another instance, Percy states that the proposed visit to Moscow by Guy Burgess and Isaiah Berlin “has been ignored for some reason by all historians.” (81) In fact, Berlin’s biographer, and historians Andrew Lownie and John Costello, each mentioned the story.^{a, b} The discussion of Philby’s recruitment—location and person—with comments like “could surely have” are typical of Percy’s speculative analysis.

For those interested in British counterespionage in the Cambridge Five era, *Misdefending the Realm* offers alternative propositions that conflict with other historical explanations of the events discussed. It is a revisionist account that deserves attention but also fact checking. Caveat lector.

a. Michael Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (Henry Holt, 1998), 96–8.

b. John Costello, *Mask of Treachery: Spies, Lies, Buggery & Betrayal* (William Morrow, 1988), 378; Andrew Lownie, *Stalin’s Englishman: The Lives of Guy Burgess* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2015), 108.

terfeited French assignats, the paper money used during the French Revolution to pay for its war with England. In a once secret memorandum that Berkowitz eventually found, Playfair proposed (and the British government sanctioned) the operation to wreck the French economy. In modern terms, this covert action was an early, if not the first, example of economic warfare. While evidence for the counterfeiting is solid, the question of success is circumstantial, as Berkowitz shows using a graph depicting the collapse of the assignat during the period concerned. (197)

To convey how all of this came about, *Playfair* tells the life story of its protagonist, beginning with his Scottish upbringing. Berkowitz shows how Playfair’s apprenticeship with the Boulton & Watt firm—half owned by James Watt—that produced steam engines, led to his involvement in the French revolution on both sides, and the many disastrous business ventures he concocted to sustain his livelihood. A prime example of the latter is

his role in the Scioto Affair of 1790 that, with the innocent support of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton among other founding fathers, sold phony deeds to land in the Scioto Valley in Ohio to would-be French settlers in France, sight-unseen. Only when the prospective settlers landed in Alexandria, Virginia, did the scheme start to unravel. The ultimate result for Playfair was his narrow escape to England to avoid a French prison.

In England, Playfair turned to writing for a living. Bookshops were the publishers of the time, and Playfair worked with Stockdale's Bookshop on Piccadilly. Berkowitz reviews Playfair's writings on business and economics, both pamphlets and books, and hints that some were government-backed, though remuneration was

poor. (214) To overcome the deficiency, Playfair started his own bank that, after a brief period of success, failed and he went to prison, the first of several times. He would die penniless in London's red light district (what is now the fashionable Covent Garden), in 1823.

The life of William Playfair is at once a tribute to an innovative thinker, and an object lesson in the futility of dodgy business practices and poor judgment in entrepreneurial endeavors. Except for his creation of statistical graphics, about which he wrote at length, his only success was a covert action for the government—about which he never wrote a word. Only after Bruce Berkowitz's extensive archival research is his story finally told.

A most unexpected and unusual contribution to the intelligence literature.

A *Political Family: The Kuczynskis, Fascism, Espionage and the Cold War*, by John Green. (Routledge, 2017) 355, end of chapter notes, bibliography, photos, index.

Agatha Christie once lived there. So did Philby's recruiter, Arnold Deutsch, and Soviet agent Edith Tudor-Hart. George Orwell visited friends there. The Lawn Road Flats apartments were also home to many of the Kuczynski family (parents, one boy, five girls) after they emigrated to Britain to escape Nazi Germany before World War II. All but one of the family joined the Communist Party and at least two were active Soviet agents before, during, and after the war. *A Political Family* is a politically sympathetic family biography that gets their espionage story mostly right.

The oldest child, Jurgen, studied in Berlin and Heidelberg, where he completed his doctorate in economics by age 20. He then continued his studies in the United States at the Brookings Institution, where he became friends with Oliver Wendell Holmes and circulated among leftist labor leaders of the late 1920s. It was also at Brookings that he met and married Marguerite Steinfeld, also from Germany and studying at Brookings. They returned to Germany in 1929 and worked there until 1936, when they began their exile in Britain.

An open communist, Jurgen worked for the British government as an economist during the war. He also became a source if not an agent of Soviet military intelligence, the GRU. It was Jurgen who put Klaus Fuchs—later a convicted “atomic spy”—in contact with the

GRU. (183) In 1944, OSS recruited Jurgen to assist with selecting personnel for missions behind German lines. After the war—with Moscow's approval—he worked for the United States Strategic Bombing Survey alongside Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith. Green writes that he was hired as a lieutenant colonel (LTC), but more likely it was as a civilian contractor at an LTC's equivalent pay grade. (194)

Jurgen's sister, Ursula, also served the GRU before and after the war, where she was known as Sonja. Green reviews her career from recruitment in China while working with Richard Sorge, to her assignments with the Red Orchestra network in Switzerland, and to Britain where she handled Fuchs during and after the war. Ursula also serviced another so-called “atomic spy,” Melita Norwood—though for reasons not mentioned, Green does not discuss the case.

The activities of Jurgen, Ursula, and to a lesser extent, their sister Brigitte, did not go unobserved by MI5. They were known and active communists but no prosecutable evidence of espionage was ever collected. Green devotes a chapter to MI5's monitoring efforts that mentions Ursula's identification by a defector. Her subsequent interview by MI5 was inconclusive but it precipitated her departure to East Germany. Throughout the book Green comments on books written about the family, mainly Jurgen and

Ursula, and points out many inaccuracies. Ursula would publish her memoir—*Sonjas Rapport* (meaning “Sonja’s Report”) in retirement in East Germany.

A Political Family is an interesting account of a communist family whose safe-exile in Britain was repaid by loyalty to the Soviet Union at their host’s expense. Green finds that difficult to understand.

In Secrecy’s Shadow: The OSS and CIA in Hollywood Cinema 1941–1979, by Simon Willmetts. (Edinburgh University Press, 2016) 307, end of chapter notes, bibliography, photos, index.

Simon Willmetts is a cultural historian of the United States at the University of Hull. His book, *In Secrecy’s Shadow*, argues that the cinematic depiction of American intelligence, especially of the CIA, from the end of World War II to the present (the subtitle notwithstanding) is the reason “American citizens stopped trusting their government.” (6) This transformation of opinion can be seen, he suggests, in the changes in public perception that occurred between the production of the films *13 Rue Madeleine* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1947) and Oliver Stone’s *JFK* (Warner Bros., 1991). He characterizes the former—a fictionalized story about OSS—as the “authoritative and unified vision of America’s past” although he admits former OSS director William Donovan was so displeased with the script’s departure from the facts that he refused to allow OSS to be mentioned in the final version. The *JFK* film, he suggests, “is sullied by the debilitating effects of classification upon the authority of the national historical record”—the National Archives. (4) Put another way, its secrecy limits “Americans’ understanding of their history.” (6)

From *U.N.C.L.E.*, the James Bond films, *Mission Impossible*, tragic realism (Le Carré) and thrillers (*Three Days of the Condor*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Scorpio*). After dismissing the realism examples since they were mostly British, his attention devolves to the fictional cinematic and TV portrayals of espionage and covert action; his list of titles is two pages long. It is this that forms the substantiation of his assertion that public disapproval of American intelligence is ever increasing.

Along the way, Willmetts does mention the Church Committee hearings, congressional oversight, CIA Office of Public Affairs, FBI, and related international events that no doubt influenced public opinion. But it is the fictional stories that he attempts to correlate with the deterioration of American public opinion, trust in government, and excessive secrecy. For many with knowledge of the era concerned, it will be a hard-sell. While the appearance of the fictional movies and TV series may correlate closely in time with various public events, he fails to make the case that there is a cause-and-effect relationship.

To develop his position, Willmetts discusses the influence of four categories of films: semi-documentary (*13 Rue Madeleine*), ironic romance (*Get Smart*, *The Man*

In Secrecy’s Shadow may be fairly characterized as an academic account that is not easy reading; that is not to say it is not worth reading. It is a fine example of persistent misconceptions.

Secret Pigeon Service: Operation Columba, Resistance and the Struggle to Liberate Europe, by Gordon Corera. (William Collins, 2018) endnotes, photos, index.

A pigeon with a small camera strapped to its chest often surprises visitors to the CIA’s online museum. An internet search for the phrase “Operation Columba” provides some detail about the use of pigeons for intelligence purposes in World War II. BBC journalist Gordon Corera, the author of several fine books on intelligence, encountered Operation Columba in an entirely different way. He was assigned to cover a story about a dead pigeon’s leg found in a chimney. Attached to it was a small canister

containing a coded message GCHQ was unable to break. Curious about the origin of the message, he consulted the British National Archives, and among the unexpectedly large volume of pigeon files he found there, Corera noticed one marked “‘SECRET’ Columba” (Columba is short for *Columba livia* or rock dove, the formal name for pigeon). Its detailed contents clearly documented an operation, and he wanted to know the details. *Secret Pigeon Service* is the result.

The Columba file contained original written reports folded into the size of postage stamps. One, message #37, contained 12 pages of data—including hand-drawn maps from Belgium that identified locations of German army units and orders of battle. No names revealed the sender, but it was signed with the codename *Leopold Vindictive*. Armed with the country clue and the codeword, Corera went to Belgium and gradually discovered the answers in archives and from surviving relatives of those involved.

The files in the British archives indicated that there was a military organization working with *Leopold Vindictive* in Britain. Corera learned it was the Pigeon Service, which was subordinated to the Royal Corps of Signals.

The story that emerges in *Secret Pigeon Service* is not a simple one. Corera explains how the service was formed, the difficulties it had establishing resistance contacts in Europe and Britain, and how the German military intelligence worked to shut down the operation while protecting its own pigeon service. *Leopold Vindictive* eventu-

ally made contact with other resistance groups and they provided much intelligence before the *Leopold* network was penetrated, and some involved paid with their lives.

On the British side, the Pigeon Service was staffed with a mix of military and civilian pigeon fanciers (that is how pigeon owners addressed themselves). Corera found records of frequent and intense controversy over resources and personnel. The RAF wasn't always ready to help drop pigeons where and when desired, and the fanciers fought over authority and recognition among themselves and their superiors. The recipients of the intelligence the pigeons helped to produce—Churchill, R. V. Jones, and military intelligence among them—thought the effort worthwhile. By war's end, 16,000 pigeons had been dispatched; only one in 10 returned.

Secret Pigeon Service is an interesting and unique account of long unrecognized war service; the book fills a gap in the history of intelligence, and is a treat for pigeon fanciers.

Three Books on Intelligence During World War I by Heribert von Feilitzsch:

Felix A. Sommerfeld and The Mexican Front in The Great War (Henselstone Verlag LLC, 2014) 346, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

The Secret War Council: The German Fight Against the Entente in America in 1914 (Henselstone Verlag LLC, 2015) 299, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

The Secret War on The United States in 1915: A Tale of Sabotage, Labor Unrest, and Border Troubles (Henselstone Verlag LLC, 2014) 354, endnotes, bibliography, appendix, photos, index.

Historian Mark Benbow's review of *In Plain Sight: Felix A. Sommerfeld, Spymaster in Mexico 1908–1914* by Heribert von Feilitzsch, appeared in *Studies in Intelligence*.^a The book covered the early exploits of the little known German spy, Felix Sommerfeld. Subsequently, von Feilitzsch published three additional books about Sommerfeld and his fellow spies that discussed their activities during various periods prior to World War I.

The first, *Felix A. Sommerfeld and The Mexican Front in The Great War*, deals with German efforts to keep the United States out of the European war by “fomenting troubles along the Mexican-American border” (xx) that would result in military intervention in Mexico. If successful, the Germans reasoned, the US army would be tied down and forced to expend arms and materials that would otherwise be sent to its allies.

In what was called “the Punitive Expedition,” commanded by Brig. Gen. John Pershing, US forces did invade Mexico, from March 1916 to February 1917. The precipitating event was the attack on Columbus, New

a. Mark Benbow, “Hiding in Plain Sight: Felix A. Sommerfeld, Spymaster in Mexico, 1908 to 1914,” *Studies in Intelligence* 57, no. 3 (September 2013): 77–8.

Mexico, by Francisco “Pancho” Villa, with whom Sommerfeld had a very complex arms-dealing relationship. But Pershing was not sufficiently tied down to prevent US entry into the war. In this book, von Feilitzsch examines whether Sommerfeld manipulated Villa’s attack or whether the expedition was the result of internal political conflicts within Mexico—or some combination of both.

Felix Sommerfeld was no ordinary secret agent. He had emigrated to New York, served in the US Army, deserted, and went to China on Germany’s behalf. There he was involved in the Boxer Rebellion. Returning to the United States, he somehow avoided arrest, and by 1910, at the start of the Mexican Revolution, he had been recruited by the German secret service and was working undercover as a reporter for the Associated Press in Mexico. At the same time, he was recruited by the US Bureau of Investigation and reporting to it and his German masters. By 1915, he had established contact with Pancho Villa and was Villa’s primary arms broker, while also serving the German Naval and Military attachés in Washington as an agent. For most of the period under consideration in this book, he was based in the elegant Hotel Astor in New York City. Well known as an arms dealer, he had made many high level friends in Washington, including the Army chief of staff, the secretary of war, and several senators. None of his American friends suspected his true allegiance.

Von Feilitzsch describes these relationships and shows the role they played in Sommerfeld’s operations. Strategically, he views Sommerfeld’s dealings in Mexico as an action arm of Germany’s initial efforts to keep America out of the war, an effort that would only end with the Zimmermann telegram in 1917. He provides details of German efforts—financial, political, and economic—plus Sommerfeld’s skillful maneuvering in Mexico’s revolutionary politics and his complicated relationship with Villa. The evidence that he influenced Villa’s Columbus attack is circumstantial but persuasive.

In the end, Sommerfeld and the other German agents on American soil were arrested by the Bureau of Investigation. Sommerfeld was detained for less than a year and eventually returned to work in Mexico. In 1942, at age 63, he volunteered for the US Army, but von Feilitzsch found no details concerning his duties or his ultimate end.

The Secret War Council: The German Fight Against the Entente in America in 1914 is an account of a semise-

cret German agency in the United States during the early years of World War I. The Council’s overt mission was to coordinate blockade running, handle financial matters, and promote trade and propaganda while Washington was putatively neutral. Its secret mission was to organize clandestine activities throughout the United States and Canada that would limit support to their European allies. Council members included diplomats, businessmen, and secret agents. The Council was headed by Heinrich F. Albert, who limited the future effectiveness of the council in July 1915, when he left his briefcase on an elevated train in New York and it was recovered by a secret service agent. Others took over Albert’s secret duties, and operations continued, the most well-known being the ammunition explosion at Black Tom Island the following year.

In *The Secret War Council*, von Feilitzsch describes the intelligence collection and related activities of the military attachés—and some of their agents—noting that at the time they were not illegal since the Espionage Act would not be passed until 1917. Their efforts to blow up the Welland Canal in Canada, however, were acts of war, but they failed and the perpetrators were not caught. Von Feilitzsch concludes that, overall, these efforts “had virtually no impact on the war effort.” (206)

Equal emphasis is devoted to the administrative problems dealing with Germany and logistical issues associated with attempts to corner the market on ammunition—Sommerfeld’s idea—and other items needed at home. It was during this time that initial contacts were made with Pancho Villa, and von Feilitzsch discusses the agents and relationships involved in efforts to keep America out of the war.

Some of the agents mentioned in the book wrote memoirs—usually undocumented—after the war, and von Feilitzsch assesses several. Most receive poor marks due a tendency to embellish—he gives examples—for publication value.

The Secret War Council is the most detailed and well documented account of the early clandestine and public efforts by German agents in America to date.

The Secret War on the United States In 1915: A Tale of Sabotage, Labor Unrest, and Border Troubles continues the rough chronology begun in the previous volume, but the focus here is on the sabotage operations undertaken to slow the shipment of supplies (mainly munitions) and the

steps taken to obtain critical commodities for the homeland and to assist German citizens stranded in the Americas at the start of the war.

The best-known sabotage operation involved the use of “cigar” or “pencil” bombs placed by agents aboard 35 ships bound for Europe from east and west coast ports. Von Feilitzsch adds new details about their design and implementation. An appendix lists each ship and the nature of the damage caused. Less well known was an attempt to produce bombs designed to be attached to ship’s rudders; that project never got off the ground, and those involved were arrested by the secret service. (151ff)

These operations were not confined to the United States. The Secret War Council received orders to sabotage “oil production in Mexico,” but they were never implemented. (188) Instead, the German naval attaché, Franz Rintelen, became involved with a series of complex and unsuccessful plots to stabilize the Mexican revolutionary government. Sommerfeld was involved here, informing both the Germans and the US Bureau of Investigation.

In parallel with the sabotage operations, a propaganda campaign was undertaken to “convince the US public of the German righteousness” (121) of its efforts. The campaign also argued “German cultural superiority” and

attempted to justify Germany’s violation of Belgian neutrality. (123) While the message resonated with German Americans, it didn’t convince anyone else, including the British—who responded with a more effective propaganda campaign of their own.

It was also in 1915 that German agents attempted two biological warfare schemes to kill horses being shipped to Europe. The first failed. The effects of the second, conducted by Anton Dilger, a German born American citizen educated at Johns Hopkins University, are uncertain. It was a difficult operation involving the use of anthrax, and von Feilitzsch tells it well.

Throughout the discussion of operations in *The Secret War on the United States*, von Feilitzsch describes the personnel involved and the problems they encountered dealing with local colleagues and headquarters personnel in Germany on both personal and official matters.

As in the previous volumes, von Feilitzsch comments on accounts written by others who did not have archival material available. Overall, the result of these three volumes is a comprehensive, scholarly assessment of German espionage that reflects a high level of effort and complexity and that will be of genuine value to historians.

The Woman Who Smashed Codes: A True Story of Love, Spies, and the Unlikely Heroine Who Outwitted America’s Enemies, by Jason Fagone. (HarperCollins, 2017) 444, endnotes, photos, index.

Herbert Yardley’s “Black Chamber” codebreaking facility in New York City was abolished in 1929 after the probably apocryphal, but now memorable, exclamation by Secretary of State Henry Stimson that “gentlemen do not read each other’s mail.” But that did not end the government’s codebreaking capabilities. In the finest bureaucratic tradition only the location and the cover were changed. The Black Chamber staff (with the exception of Yardley) and records were absorbed by the Signal Intelligence Service (SIS) in Washington. The new commander was William Friedman, a civilian, who was joined by his wife Elizebeth (sic). Both were experienced cryptographers. His salary was \$4,500.00; hers was \$2,200.00, annually, “equal to \$58,000 and \$28,000 in today’s dollars,” Fagone writes. (120) William’s story is well known, Elizebeth’s not so much, but journalist Jason Fagone gives her the long overdue recognition her amazing contribution deserves.

The Woman Who Smashed Codes doesn’t record Elizebeth’s reaction to the salary disparity, but it does tell how the Friedmans met, worked together, and married before World War I at the Riverbank Laboratories outside of Chicago, which were owned and operated by the very eccentric philanthropist George Fabyan. Elizebeth was hired in 1916 at age 23 to verify research that claimed to confirm two theories: (1) that Francis Bacon had written the works commonly attributed to Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Ben Johnson, among other Elizabethan authors; and (2) that Bacon had included secret enciphered messages in the works that she was to help decipher. Fabyan had publicized this research widely and celebrities frequently visited to examine the “nearly conclusive” results.

It was while getting settled in her new job that Elizebeth met William Friedman, Fabyan’s geneticist. He

showed interest in her work and over the succeeding months they discussed the details. Though neither had a background in cryptanalysis—a term William invented—they discovered they had an aptitude for the work. They gradually reached a very unpopular conclusion: “There are no hidden messages in Shakespeare.” (62)

While Fabyan was most displeased, America’s entry in the war intervened. Aware of the government’s lack of codebreakers, Fabyan offered to set up a facility at Riverbank, and the Signal Corps accepted. “For the first eight months of the war [after America joined] . . . William and Elizebeth and their team did all the codebreaking for the US government . . .” They still found time to marry in May, 1917. A year later, William was commissioned in the Army and left for France. Fabyan did not behave himself while William was overseas, though Elizebeth deflected his unwanted advances. (107) They never returned to Riverbank.

The Friedmans entered the postwar world with greatly enhanced reputations as cryptanalysts, and both worked for the nascent Army Signal Intelligence Service in 1921. William remained for the rest of his professional career; Elizebeth left after a year to write books and, as it turned out, to start a family. (126)

By 1925, having hired a nanny, she was receptive when the Coast Guard—then part of the Treasury Department—came calling with a challenge she didn’t refuse. Bootleggers were communicating by radio and encrypting the traffic, and there was a two-year backlog; allowed to work from home, she reduced it to zero in three months. (136) By 1930, the traffic had reached 2,000 messages per month, and Elizebeth was assigned a clerk to help. By 1938, her duties had expanded to support Treasury agents working against smugglers, and she had testified in open court on many occasions. This made her, writes Fagone, “the most famous codebreaker in the world, more famous than Herbert Yardley . . . and her husband.” (169)

But as *The Woman Who Smashed Codes* makes very clear, it was her WWII service (1940–45) when she

contributed the most. She was detailed briefly to “the tall”—he was 5’9”—William Donovan, the Coordinator of Information, to help set up his cryptographic section. (240) Other tasks included monitoring traffic from enemy ships off the coast. That led her, using pencil and paper, to break the output of the commercial version of the Enigma machine. (194ff) Perhaps the most challenging, certainly the longest assignment, was her support of the FBI that followed that agency’s reluctant request for help. (203, passim) Much to the chagrin of J. Edgar Hoover, whose FBI had no codebreaking capability, she and her wartime team broke counterespionage traffic concerned with its most famous wartime cases and at the same time trained its first codebreakers. (205–206) In two then-typical FBI gestures, all traces of non-Bureau organizations were removed from decrypt copies, (232) and after the war, Hoover’s public accounts of FBI exploits never acknowledged non-Bureau support. (339)

Immediately after the war, the Friedmans devoted themselves to writing histories of their wartime service that would remain classified for years. William suffered serious health problems but continued as an advisor to the Army and then NSA. Elizebeth retired from government service for good. They traveled some, and she gave an occasional talk about her pre-war work. Their last encounter with the government occurred when NSA appeared, unannounced, at their home and collected their books and papers concerned with codes, which had been, up until then, unclassified. Elizebeth never forgave them. (328)

William Friedman died on 2 November 1969, having stated computers are “mostly nonsensical . . . nitwit gadgets.” (332) Elizebeth followed him on 31 October 1980, having concluded “computers are a curse.” (338) The NSA auditorium, originally named in honor of William, was renamed the William F. Friedman and Elizebeth S. Friedman Memorial Auditorium.

The Woman Who Smashed Codes finally gives Elizebeth Friedman the recognition she earned and deserves. A valuable contribution.



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