intelligence officer's bookshelf

Compiled and reviewed by Hayden Peake and other contributors

History

The federal Bureau of Investigation Before Hoover: Volume II, the fBI and American Neutrality, 1914–1917
By Heribert von Feilitzsch and Charles H. Harris III
(Henselstone Verlag, 2024) 436 pages, index.

When New Mexico State University professor Charles Harris examined the Bureau of Investigation files he requested from the National Archives (NARA) about bureau operations prior to the Hoover era, he received two surprises. The first was the high volume of material he received; the second was the scarcity of law enforcement coverage and the large amount on intelligence and counterintelligence operations, some previously unreported. With the help of historian Heribert von Feilitzsch, he decided to present the material in four volumes, covering the period 1908–1924 and focusing on intelligence and counterintelligence matters. Volume I covering 1908–1914 appeared in 2023.[a] To emphasize that they are dealing with the bureau before it actually became the FBI in 1935, the authors adopted the designation fBI to discuss a federal agency called the Bureau of Investigation (BI).

Volume II deals with the period of US neutrality before it entered WWI, 1914-1917, in which "agents of Germany, Great Britain, France, and Russia first competed with each other on US soil, then dragged the US into the conflict." (xi)

The authors first address early the staffing problems and the managers that resolved them. Then they discuss how the BI worked to improve its SIGINT, HUMINT, collection, analysis, and counterintelligence capabilities throughout the country. At the same time they examine many of the events the BI dealt with, some seldom mentioned and others prominent in news accounts or memoirs, all documented in Volume II with primary sources.

The bombing in 1915 of the Vanceboro Bridge that connected Canada (in New Brunswick) and the United States (in Maine) is an example of a little known case. Carried out by German agent Werner Horn, the authors show that in the controversy that followed the BI sided with Horn "over British demands." (70ff) An example of a well-publicized case involved Horst von der Goltz, who published his undocumented memoir in 1917.[b]

Not all operations listed in Volume II were successful. Among those discussed is the bombing of the Black Tom munitions depot in New Jersey. The perpetrators remain unknown to this day, though the authors suggest some suspects.

Although Volume II tells of instances in which the bureau lost its focus or overextended its resources to the detriment of counterintelligence operations, the case of Emilio Kosterlitzky, a multilingual Russian BI informant illustrates its overall tradecraft development in counterintelligence.

The period of US neutrality also included the Mexican War, the Mexican revolution, efforts by Britishish intelligence to get America into the war, and the German attempt to have Mexico invade the United States expressed in the famous Zimmermann telegram incident. The authors portrays the role intelligence played in these and related events of the period.

a. *The fBI and The Mexican Revolutionists 1908-1914*, by Heribert von Feilitzsch and Charles H. Harris III. (Henselstone Verlag, LLC 2023). It was reviewed in *Studies* 68, No. 1 (March 2024).
b. Horst von der Goltz, *My Adventures As A German Secret Agent (NY: McBride, 1917).*

By the time the United States entered WWI, the BI had established its importance and was working with the intelligence arms of the Departments of State and War. The Bureau's main missions were "monitoring the southern border, arresting German agents, interning enemy aliens, rounding up slackers (draft-dodgers), and managing an explosion of human resources through the informants of the American Protective League" a group of civilians working independently. (346)

The fBI and American Neutrality provides a portal though which the BI can be seen as a fully functioning intelligence service before the Hoover era. ■

The Hidden Cost of Freedom: The Untold Story of the CIA's Secret Funding System, 1941–1962
By Brad L. Fisher
(University Press of Kansas, 2024) 341 pages, index.

While going through his late grandfather's papers, Brad Fisher, a senior research scientist at Science Systems, Inc., was surprised to discover a letter of appreciation signed by Allen Dulles, the director of central intelligence (DCI) and CIA's third head. It "had been presented to my grandfather [Lyle Fisher] on October 16, 1958," (13) shortly after his retirement from the Government Accounting Office (GAO), by "Allen Dulles personally at a private luncheon, held at the old CIA headquarters at 2430 E Street NW in Foggy Bottom." (18)

Brad Fisher had known nothing of his grandfather's relationship with the CIA and he was curious to learn the reason for the honor. To satisfy his curiosity, Fisher began a search of pertinent archives. Progress was slow "until key documents linking my grandfather to the CIA—the "family jewels" of my collection—were serendipitously declassified several years after I began this research." (18)

These documents revealed that Lyle Fisher "had been the GAO's sole liaison" since 1946, first to CIA's predecessor, the Central Intelligence Group (CIG) and then after September 1947 to CIA. It was for this work that the agency formally recognized him for two contributions. The first was "the formative role in the establishment of CIA's special financial system for handling unvouchered funds" used for secret intelligence operations that were subject only to DCI control. (21) The second concerned his influence in advising the comptroller general to remain neutral on the CIA Act of 1949 that provided the statutory foundation for the clandestine funding system of the CIA while reducing GAO's role. (24) These results only enhanced Fisher's curiosity as to the specifics of what his grandfather had done. This required that he understand the clandestine funding system of the early days of central intelligence.

The Hidden Cost of Freedom presents the results of his research. Fisher examined the clandestine funding mechanisms used by OSS during WWII and their post-war evolution under the CIG and early CIA. He also includes the impact of their directors often difficult relationship with Congress. Particular attention is given to operations in the 1950s that did not go well and how Dulles showed his reluctance to provide details to Congress. This discovery led Fisher to conclude: "I now firmly believe that my grandfather had begun to seriously question the agency's good faith near the end of his career." (373) Fisher hints that the luncheon and letter were a subtle attempt to ensure Lyle's silence, especially to Congress, concerning funding accountability during difficult operational years in the 1950s. (371)

While Fisher found no direct evidence to support his suspicions, and acknowledged his grandfather took his secrets to his grave, *The Hidden Cost of Freedom* is a unique, well-documented account of early CIA's clandestine funding. ■

Policing Show Business: J. Edgar Hoover, the Hollywood Blacklist, and Cold War Movies
By Francis MacDonnell
(University Press of Kansas, 2024) 308 pages, index.
Reviewed by John Ehrman.

The era of blacklists, when Hollywood writers, actors, and directors were not allowed work for years during the late 1940s and 1950s because of their ties—real or imagined—to communism or subversion, largely has slipped from popular memory. This is unfortunate, but in *Policing Show Business*, retired historian Francis MacDonnell gives us a thoroughly researched and detailed account of the role of the FBI and, in particular, J. Edgar Hoover had in monitoring the movie industry and helping develop the blacklists.

MacDonnell's account is a good reminder of what can happen when one person exercises almost total control of a domestic intelligence service and uses it to pursue his obsessions. The FBI's investigations came well after Communist influence in Hollywood, which never was

that great, had waned and were driven more by Hoover's subordinates' efforts to please their star-struck boss than by the discovery of any national security threat. Long-running investigations of such figures as Yip Harburg, who wrote the lyrics for *The Wizard of Oz*, and Dore Schary, a writer and studio executive who produced a number of classic films, says MacDonnell, serve to highlight the "slapdash quality of the analysis found in the bureau's anti-Communist counterintelligence work during the 1940s and 1950s." (128) This judgment is a little too broad—the FBI did solid work against real Soviet spies during this time—but is an accurate assessment of its Hollywood effort.

This is a book for specialists, aimed at film and cultural historians rather than intelligence readers. For its intended audience, the wealth of information about how actors, directors, and studio executives navigated a world of informers and G-men will no doubt be of great interest. Although MacDonnell makes good points along the way, the long chapters filled with dense paragraphs that assume the reader has a background in film and Hollywood history—today's general readers likely are unfamiliar with many of the characters in her tale—make for hard going. *Policing Show Business* is a fine volume for reference and researchers, but reading it from start to finish takes a level of dedication that few of us have. ■

Soviet and Nazi Defectors: Counter-Intelligence in WW2, The Cold War

By Nigel West
(Frontline Books, 2024) 264 pages, index.

After WWI, the British Security Service (MI5) and its counterpart services on the continent struggled to deal with Soviet espionage. In *Soviet and Nazi Defectors*, intelligence historian Nigel West provides an introduction to the problem and a major contribution to its solution, defectors. The breakthrough defection of Walter Krivitsky in 1937, a former GRU illegal rezident in The Hague, and those that soon followed played important roles in identifying Soviet agents operating in the West.

West initially provides an overview of defectors and their contributions. He gives particular credit to former intelligence officer Gordon Brook-Shepherd for his early writings based on personal interviews with the defectors in many cases. West also documents errors, many unforced, in the public defector literature. The persistent mischaracterization of the Volkov letter involved in the Philby saga is a good example.

This is followed in the basic narrative of the book by eight case histories of defectors [E. Vermehren, G. Tokaev, Y. Rastvorov, Vladimir and Evdokia Petrov, A. Golitsyn, O. Lyalin, A. Shevchenko, Y. Yurcenko] from four different countries. Most names will be familiar but West adds new information from recently declassified files, not all operationally valuable but interesting. For example, after reviewing the case of Vladimir Kuzichkin, who defected to Britain, he notes that Kuzichkin "became one of London's most popular acupuncturists–with actor Alec Guinness as a patient." (xviii) The case of Anatoli Golitsyn who defected to CIA adds little new operational detail but does contribute some career and personal details from Golitsyn's unpublished multi-volume memoir. Of particular value in each case history are West's comments on related espionage cases. The three appendices composed of recently released official studies written in 1944 and 1948 by MI5 and MI6 include more than 10 additional defector cases.

Soviet and Nazi Defectors is a valuable introduction to the role of defectors in counterintelligence operations and a fine contribution to intelligence literature. ■

Non-US Intelligence

Iran's Ministry of Intelligence: A Concise History

By Steven R. Ward
(Georgetown University Press, 2024) 197 pages, index.

In 1978 and 1979, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a component of Iran's armed forces, gained world attention for its role in what became known as the Iranian Hostage Crisis. But the IGRC was not responsible for Iran's domestic security and foreign intelligence requirements. Those functions would be assigned in 1984 to the recently created Ministry of Intelligence (MOIS). In *Iran's Ministry of Intelligence*, West Point graduate and retired CIA senior analyst covering Middle Eastern and South Asian nations, Steven Ward, presents an informative account of Iran's little known intelligence service.

After presenting a broad and valuable perspective in a chronology, Ward discusses MOIS's origins and its links to SAVAK (its predecessor under the shah), before

turning to its leadership, organization, and culture. Ward then describes MOIS operations and tradecraft in its domestic security role and overseas activities.

Although MOIS was initially Iran's primary intelligence agency, the "fist of the regime," (159) Ward concludes its current status has declined somewhat due to competition from the "sixteen to twenty-one formal members" of Iran's intelligence community. Though not all are identified, he notes that the IRGC and MOIS have had bureaucratic conflicts. (85)

Ward finds that MOIS human intelligence operations follow the standard practices of spotting, recruiting, vetting, tasking, and running agents. They achieve generally positive results dealing with the challenges from foreign intelligence services, violent domestic separatists, and Sunni terrorist organizations. He cites MOIS claims that among its most notable successes was that it infiltrated and broke CIA espionage networks directed against Iran. (88) When dealing with internal threats which include the activities of independent journalists, human rights advocates, labor unions, and even environmentalists, he notes "that they have abused suspects and detainees while being careful to act within Iranian laws." (85)

When writing about the intelligence services of closed societies, documentation is particularly important. Ward acknowledges that he had no access to Iran's archives, but he did gain access to hundreds of secret cables and reports written in 2014 and 2015 by MOIS officers serving in Iraq that had been obtained, verified, summarized, and published by two US news organizations in 2019. (84)

Iran's Ministry of Intelligence is the first and most complete, even though concise, history of this important agency. An enormously valuable contribution to the intelligence literature. ■

Pakistan's ISI: A Concise History of the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate

By Julian Richards
(Georgetown University Press, 2024) 185 pages, index.

Unlike many modern nations, Pakistan had no military or intelligence services when it achieved independence in 1947. What became the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), had to be created based on experience gained from the British Indian Army. (6) Formally part of the armed forces of Pakistan, the ISI has become an important element in Pakistan's government, with powerful influence on its leaders. In *Pakistan's ISI*, former British intelligence officer and current director of the Centre for Security and Intelligence Studies at the University of Buckingham, Julian Richards, summarizes ISI's history from its creation "to the reinstatement of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2021." (2)

Initially established to coordinate tactical and strategic intelligence among the armed forces in mainly domestic operations involving India, Kashmir, and the ill-fated East Pakistan, the ISI gradually became "the preeminent intelligence agency" at the very heart of power in Islamabad." (77) Richards describes its ever increasing influence in the Pakistani government that ISI considered to be "flawed and incompetent," though ISI had operational problems of its own. These evolved, Richards notes, as ISI cloaked "itself in an almost mythical status of brutal effectiveness" that in addition to operational ability, included "torture, disappearance, and extrajudicial execution" that Richards concludes is "a long way away from where it needs to be." (164)

Richards comments on the major projects involving ISI in varying degrees. With regard to Pakistan's nuclear program begun in the 1970s, in which "it seems clear that China was a key partner, especially on weaponization technology" he notes that "it is not clear how far the ISI was directly involved in or supportive of this endeavor in the early years" although ISI was concerned about the independent nuclear proliferation activities of the nuclear scientist A. Q. Khan in the 1980s. (118)

As to the question of whether the ISI was fully aware that Osama bin Laden had been living in Pakistan "under the nose of an army" before the United States "neutralized him" in May 2011, Richards presents two hypotheses: "either the ISI leadership knew all along but chose to deny it, or they genuinely did not know and were hoodwinked by lower-level officers." The author favors the latter theory, with qualifications. (46)

Pakistan's ISI also examines the organization's perplexing relationship with the Taliban before and after 9/11. Before then, in Afghanistan ISI "found itself driving the mobilization of resistance against the Soviet incursion…." (25) Richards argues that "In what became one of the final chapters of the Cold War, ISI was instrumental in facing down the Soviet Union's military by organizing

and deploying the Mujahideen forces in Afghanistan." From that point on the ISI was a "full-spectrum agency, akin to the CIA." (77)

Although absent source notes, specific bibliographic references are mentioned in the narrative and Richards is careful to point out where speculation had to be introduced. Pakistan's ISI is an excellent introduction to the ISI and a major contribution to the literature of intelligence. ■

Roots of Counterterrorism: Contemporary Wisdom from Dutch Intelligence
By Constant Willem Hijzen
(Oxford University Press, 2024) 399 pages, index.

Constant Willem Hijzen (pronounced high-zen) is an affiliated researcher in Intelligence Studies at the Institute of Security and Global Affairs, Leiden University, where he studies intelligence practices in the prevention of terrorism. *Roots of Counterterrorism* describes his research and presents his findings.

The events that triggered this study occurred in March 1979, when the British ambassador to the Netherlands, Sir Richard Sykes, and his butler Karel Straub were killed in front of the ambassador's residence in The Hague. (2) As the Dutch security service *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* (BVD) investigated, they learned that the British permanent representative to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization had also been assassinated in Brussels at about the same time. Hijzen asks if the events were related, could they have been prevented, and do the counterterrorism practices in effect at the time need to be modified?

In addressing these questions, Hijzen first provides a thorough review of the role of intelligence in Cold War counterterrorism before the jihadi terrorism of the post-9/11 years. (32) Then he presents five chronological chapters—1968–78—concerning BVD cases that include case summaries—Hijzen calls them Vignettes—that amplify the challenging dynamics of intelligence work in the domain of counterterrorism. For example the chapter on BVD operations in the 1975-78 period is augmented a vignette of "an interview with a former intelligence officer and excerpts from several agent operations in South Moluccan communities [that] shed some light on the BVD's operational work against the violent South Moluccan youth." (237)

With this background Hijzen discusses how and why the core functions of intelligence (requirements, collection, analysis, and disseminate) as applied by the Dutch security service and other Western security services, at the time of the Sykes assassination, "were markedly different in the years between 1968 and 1978." In part, the reasons were that the approach to dealing with the communist threat didn't apply to the terrorist threat. Then he suggests that the corrections implemented created a "paradigm of prevention" that if applied before the Sykes attack, might have prevented it. (319)

Unfortunately, no operational description of the "paradigm of prevention," a key condition of his study, is provided. One element is implied, however, when the lack of an analyst focusing on the past and daily terrorist activities in the early 1970s was identified as a missing factor. Hijzen further suggests that analytic emphasis should be on daily evaluation of input from which preventive actions will follow.

Finally, although the roots of counterterrorism are not identified specifically, they are implicit in this well-documented conceptual treatment of the issues with detailed quotations from other academics. The BVD counterterrorism record is impressive though not well known until the publication of *Roots of Counterterrorism*. Hijzen has contributed a though provoking account and a valuable addition to the literature. ■