

## **Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf**

*Compiled and reviewed by Hayden Peake*

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### **CURRENT TOPICS**

***The Assault On Intelligence: American National Security in An Age of Lies***, by Michael V. Hayden

***The Skripal Files: The Life and Near Death of a Russian Spy***, by Mark Urban

### **HISTORICAL**

***Before Intelligence Failed: British Secret Intelligence on Chemical and Biological Weapons in the Soviet Union, South Africa and Libya***, by Mark Wilkinson

***Beirut Rules: The Murder of a CIA Station Chief and Hezbollah's War Against America***, by Fred Burton and Samuel Katz

***Best of Enemies: The Last Great Spy Story of the Cold War***, by Gus Russo & Eric Dezenhall

***Bureau of Spies: The Secret Connection Between Espionage and Journalism in Washington***, by Steven T. Usdin

***Cold War Spymaster: The Legacy of Guy Liddell Deputy Director of MI5***, by Nigel West

***Double Agent Victoire: Mathilde Carré and the Interallié Network***, by David Tremain

***Hitler's British Traitors: The Secret History of Spies, Saboteurs and Fifth Columnists***, by Tim Tate

***Kings and Presidents: Saudi Arabia and the United States since FDR***, by Bruce Riedel

***Section D for Destruction Forerunner of SOE: The Story of Section D of the Secret Intelligence Service***, by Malcolm Atkin

***The Spy and The Traitor: The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War***, by Ben MacIntyre

***The Spy Who Changed History: The Untold Story of How the Soviet Union Won the Race for America's Secrets***, by Svetlana Lokhova

***The Woman Who Fought An Empire: Sarah Aaronsohn and Her NILI Spy Ring***, by Gregory J. Wallace



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## CURRENT

***The Assault on Intelligence: American National Security in An Age of Lies*, by Michael V. Hayden. (Penguin Press, 2018) 292, endnotes, index.**

Following the precedent set by William Colby's book, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA* (Simon & Schuster, 1978), several former CIA directors have written memoirs that included their service in the Intelligence Community. Richard Helms, Robert Gates, George Tenet, Leon Panetta, and Michael Hayden come quickly to mind. Colby added a second volume that focused on intelligence in the Vietnam War. These accounts offered firsthand perspectives on the intelligence profession; the always challenging, often controversial operations undertaken; and the relationships with other government agencies. In at least three respects *The Assault on Intelligence* departs from that tradition.

First and most important is General Hayden's deep concern "with the question of truth," (3) not within the Intelligence Community (he assumes with good reason that truth is not a casualty within the profession), but from without. In a hint of what is coming, General Hayden invokes the *Oxford English Dictionary* word of the year for 2016, "post-truth," defined as "Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." (3)

The second departure, following directly from the first, is the broad perspective of Hayden's outlook. *The Assault on Intelligence* is about "global and domestic developments and the role that American intelligence plays in identifying and responding to them." (4) The developments to which the general refers are not those concerned with collection methods or privacy issues though they remain important factors. He is worried

that decisions may be based on intuition even when the decisionmaker is presented with objective truth. The third departure is Hayden's inclusion of the influence of the media and the views of many other senior former intelligence officials who share his anxieties.<sup>a</sup>

The substance of the general's narrative is topically chronological, consistently critical, and at times even philosophical. Beginning with the 2016 presidential campaign, he cites instances he sees as potentially damaging to the relationship between the intelligence profession and its mission to "speak truth to power." Along the way he includes insightful observations from colleagues, for example former deputy CIA director John McLaughlin's observations on the four phases of a president's relationship with the Intelligence Community. (80, 254–55)

Hayden does not find all presidential decisions wanting. The general gives the administration good marks on cyber security, (240) the selection of Mike Pompeo, and the appointment of Gina Haspel—"an inspired choice" (90). Nevertheless, his criticisms on many of the president's comments on national security matters that conflict with the Intelligence Community consensus strike at the risks they pose to a positive relationship with intelligence generally and with the professionals specifically.

In the end, General Hayden writes that "American intelligence remains steadfast . . . in its commitment to objective truth" in an often contentious atmosphere. (257) *The Assault on Intelligence* documents one of the strangest periods in American intelligence history, while stressing adherence to the basics of the profession.

a. Some of these perspectives are discussed in Peter Usowski, "On the Record: Former CIA Officers Writings about Intelligence Policy and Politics, 2016–17" in *Studies in Intelligence* 62, no. 3 (September 2018).

*The Skripal Files: The Life and Near Death of a Russian Spy*, by Mark Urban. (Henry Holt, 2018) 310, index.

On 4 March 2018, retired GRU Colonel Sergei Viktorovich Skripal, 66, and his daughter Yulia, 33, were found semiconscious on a park bench in the British town of Salisbury. Doctors soon realized they had been poisoned and placed the two in induced comas while they searched for a curative therapy. With government help, the poison was identified as a rare nerve agent, Novichok, known to have been developed in Russia. At this point, the potential of a Russian role was discussed in Parliament and with the Russian government.

Meanwhile, both patients slowly improved. On 9 April 2018, Yulia was released from the hospital; her father remained until 18 May. Long before their release, the media had reported that Sergei was a former MI6 agent given citizenship in the United Kingdom as part of Operation Ghost Stories which had exchanged 10 Russian illegals in the United States for four Russians, two of whom went to England. At the same time, writers speculated about why the Skripals were targeted, how and by whom the poison was administered, the nature of government involvement on both sides, and what the future held for the Skripals.

BBC diplomatic and defense editor and author of a book on British intelligence, Mark Urban was one of those in the media monitoring the Skripal poisoning—but he had an edge. He had been interviewing Sergei Skripal during 2017 for a book. Thus, Urban already had answers to many of the pre-poisoning questions and the first part of *The Skripal Files* covers Skripal's 1996 recruitment in Madrid by MI6. Then he flashes back to Skripal's origins, his steady advancement within the GRU, and his service as an MI6 agent. Urban reveals a dedicated officer and family man—no extramarital affairs or casual encounters in this story—who gradually became disillusioned with the Soviet system. MI6 handled him carefully; he was its first penetration of the GRU since Oleg Penkovsky. Between 1996 and his arrest in December 2004, Skripal met with his MI6 case officer directly when serving in the West. While stationed at GRU headquarters in Moscow, he sent reports

in secret writing via his unsuspecting wife, when she traveled on vacation. His experience with GRU illegals, and the knowledge gained while head of the personnel department provided MI6 with valuable intelligence even after retirement in 1999 when he started a consulting business and traveled to the West to meet MI6 himself.

Urban describes the circumstances that led to Skripal's arrest by the FSB and identifies the likely source of the betrayal, although he acknowledges that uncertainties remain. After two years of periodic interrogations—no physical force—in Moscow's Lefortovo prison, Skripal is tried and sentenced to 13 years in a Siberian penal colony. While Skripal was there, Alexander Litvinenko was poisoned in London. Urban describes the uproar that ensued while using the Litvinenko case to establish the Putin regime's precedent-setting policy for dealing with traitors; he gives several other examples. He also speculates about why Skripal had been spared the ultimate penalty at trial and what caused a change of mind.

In June 2010, four years into Skripal's sentence, Operation Ghost Stories erupted in New York City. Urban recounts these events and tells how they led to Skripal's selection as part of the exchange handled by the CIA. By July 2010, Skripal was undergoing a friendly interrogation by MI6. He was eventually resettled in Salisbury, under his own name. Surprisingly to some, he was allowed visits from his children with whom he communicated via the internet. To others, Urban suggests, the relaxed policy benefited Russian counterintelligence (FSB) more than it did Skripal.

*The Skripal Files* ends when Sergei and Yulia are resettled after the poisoning in another home under guard and the British government has formally named the Russian as the perpetrators. Numerous Russian diplomats were expelled, but those responsible have yet to be identified.

Urban does not provide source notes, although he does name some of his sources, besides Skripal

himself whom he did not interview after the

poisoning. It is a fascinating story, well told, that leaves readers wondering if there is more to come.

## **HISTORICAL**

***Before Intelligence Failed: British Secret Intelligence on Chemical and Biological Weapons in the Soviet Union, South Africa and Libya***, by Mark Wilkinson. (C. Hurst & Co., 2018) 229, endnotes, index.

Mark Wilkinson, a former British Army officer, is now an independent consultant on security matters. In *Before Intelligence Failed* he examines the relationship between intelligence that is provided decisionmakers and the resultant foreign policy that justified the United Kingdom's decision to participate in the Iraq War in 2003. He assumes from the outset that the Blair government made its judgments on the basis of flawed intelligence; then he asks whether that was because the intelligence services shaped their product to agree with the government's desires or whether it was merely the result of poor analysis following established methodology.

To answer these questions, Wilkinson first examines the "controversy surrounding the use of intelligence by the Blair government in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq War." (9) Here he draws on the reports of several official investigations that addressed the subject. In successive chapters he analyzes case studies involving chemical and biological warfare (CBW) programs in the Soviet Union, South Africa, and Libya. Then he considers whether the UK intelligence-foreign policy interface applied in those cases was different from what occurred during the build-up to the Iraq War. It is no surprise that he identifies differences, the time to gather CBW intelligence being a principal one. This is a somewhat artificial result, however, since it was known from the start and did not emerge from comparative analysis (i.e., the time constraints for the

Iraq War decisionmaking were shorter than the case study situations where the imminence of war was not present).

In the end, the case studies are informative and make the book worth reading, especially the South African study. And Wilkinson's analysis of them shows that British intelligence was not capable of providing the required CBW data in time to contribute to the pre-Iraq intelligence take. One is left with the impression that what was provided was, at least in part, "intelligence-to-please."

In an effort to assure that readers lacking intelligence background will grasp his message, Wilkinson provides a discussion of what intelligence is and how it is intended to function. Toward this end, he reviews various definitions of intelligence and other basic concepts. But in the process he raises questions about his own understanding of the subject. For example, when discussing the official UK definition of intelligence, he notes surprisingly, that "Perhaps most significantly, it omits to mention that intelligence by definition is not secret." (12) Later, when discussing intelligence obtained from human sources (HUMINT), he adds, astonishingly, that HUMINT "does not always require corroboration from other sources." (169)

*Before Intelligence Failed* is an interesting study of the important relationship between intelligence and policymaking that confronts all nations. But it should be accepted as a challenge for further study, not as gospel.

***Beirut Rules: The Murder of a CIA Station Chief and Hezbollah's War Against America***, by Fred Burton and Samuel M. Katz. (Berkley, 2018) 390, endnotes, photos, index.

A blurb is a comment written for promotional purposes and is customarily found on the dust jacket. Unvaryingly positive, blurbs are easily overlooked by prospective readers. Those found on *Beirut Rules* are an exception. The highly regarded former chief of CIA counterintelligence, James Olson, compliments the quality of writing and research while praising the authors for telling an important story. Retired CIA case officer Milt Bearden echoes those thoughts while commending its depth of coverage and its value as a historical document. The late President George H. W. Bush added that the book will “show a new generation the value of a life well lived in the service of country.”

The subject of their praise is William Francis Buckley. Kidnapped by Hezbollah on 16 March 1984, while serving as chief of station Beirut, “he died in a south Beirut dungeon, alone, tortured, savaged, and neglected” 444 days later on 3 June 1985. (185) *Beirut Rules* portrays the life stories of Buckley and his principal terrorist kidnapper as they are influenced by competing factions and intelligence services, in the turbulent Middle East.

William Buckley began his unusual government service career by enlisting in the Army, attending officer candidate school, and serving in Korea, where he earned a Silver Star. He then left the Army and attended Boston University. Graduating in 1955 with a degree in government and proficient in French, German and Russian, he was accepted soon after by the CIA. His initial assignments have not been revealed, but after a short period he left the agency to take a job as a librarian and pursue his interest in Revolutionary War history. He would later become a private investigator for F. Lee Bailey, before returning to the Army, where he joined the Special Forces and did a combat tour in Vietnam. There he received a second Silver Star. In 1965, he rejoined the CIA, while remaining in Vietnam until 1972.

The determinant event in Buckley's CIA career was the 1983 bombing of the US embassy in Beirut where many of the 63 dead were CIA officers. A new chief of station was required. Buckley, then serving as deputy to Richard Holm, first chief of the Counter Terrorism Group, was selected, after securing Holm's recommendation.

The risks associated with the assignment were well known, and *Beirut Rules* deals with them in depth. The authors also devote considerable space to acquainting the reader with the modus operandi of the terrorists, especially the Iranian backed Hezbollah and the Islamic Jihad, led by Imad Mughniyeh. By the time of the kidnapping, efforts to track down Mughniyeh had been under way for years by various actors in the region including the Israelis. At the same time, other hostages held by Hezbollah placed demands on the same agencies.

In February 1985, the Hostage Location Task Force (HLTF) was formed under the auspices of the CIA's now-Counterterrorism Center (CTC) with members from the FBI and DIA. Its sole mission was to find William Buckley, and it debriefed other hostages when released, looking for clues. Co-author Fred Burton, then serving in the State Department Diplomatic Security Service (DSS), was a member. But the terrorists' security was effective and the former hostages could only confirm Buckley's torture and eventual death, but not the location of his grave.

Then on 5 October 1985, the Islamic Jihad publicly announced Buckley's death, but nothing more. It was not until December 1991, when the Islamic Jihad for its own reasons decided to cooperate, that his body was finally recovered and returned for burial in Arlington National Cemetery.

*Beirut Rules* describes the hunt for Imad Mughniyeh and his eventual assassination by unnamed forces, an event that may have brought closure to some, but was only a catalyst for continued terrorism for others.

William Buckley was honored with the 51st star on the Memorial Wall at CIA Headquarters.

***Best of Enemies: The Last Great Spy Story of the Cold War***, by Gus Russo and Eric Dezenhall. (Twelve, 2018) 342, bibliography, photos, index.

The epilogue to the 2003 book, *The Main Enemy: The Inside Story of the CIA's Final Showdown with the KGB*, co-authored by retired CIA operations officer Milt Bearden and James Risen (Random House, 2003), comments on events in the careers of officers with whom Bearden served. These include CIA case officer Jack Platt and his friend, KGB colonel Gennady Vasilenko, both having retired in the late 1980s. Platt became “a partner in an international security company and works closely with his old adversaries assisting American businesses in Moscow.” Vasilenko, having “survived his interrogation at Lefortovo prison . . . was reduced in rank and fired without pension for misconduct in his association with Jack Platt . . . and now works on private security investigations in Moscow, when he is not hunting in Russia’s birch forests.”<sup>a</sup>

As can be inferred from their retirement occupations, their relationship did not end there. *Best of Enemies* begins when Platt learns in 2005 that Gennady has been rearrested and, write co-authors Russo and Dezenhall, “it was Jack’s fault again.” (14) The authors return to that perplexing statement and the unusual relationship between Platt and Vasilenko that began in 1979 in Washington, DC. It was there that Platt—known as “cowboy,” in part because he always wore cowboy boots—first met Vasilenko with the aim of recruiting him to spy for the CIA. (16) Based mainly on interviews with those involved (no source notes are provided), *Best of Enemies* presents an account of the careers of both colorful, competent, bureaucracy-abhorring intelligence officers that explains why neither recruited the other and how they became friends instead.

After their first meeting, Platt concluded there was no possibility of a “coerced recruitment.” (62) Thus a long term approach ensued that included the FBI since the two were functioning in the United States. For several years, despite frequent meetings and veiled suggestions to Gennady that he would be happy if he stayed in America, Gennady was not interested. But the KGB began to think otherwise, and in 1988, he was sent back to Moscow and interrogated in Lefortovo prison for the first time. Platt wondered then whether he had somehow been responsible; Gennady wondered the same thing. (171) And, despite having no evidence and ignoring the outspoken support from his KGB colleagues, Gennady was cashiered without a pension and started his security business. Platt, on the other hand retired voluntarily and returned as a contractor to train officers in field operations and consult with actor Robert De Niro—with whom he became friends—on De Niro’s film *The Good Shepherd*.<sup>b</sup>

The period of prolonged attempted recruitment had coincided with some momentous counterintelligence operations—Edward Howard’s defection, the Ames and Hanssen betrayals, the Yurchenko revelations—in which Platt and Vasilenko were involved to varying degrees even after retirement. *Best of Enemies* discusses the impact of these cases on both men. In Vasilenko’s case, one—he had handled Ronald Pelton, the former NSA officer—contributed to his second arrest and his being sentenced to the Gulag for “helping the CIA.” (261)

Whether Jack Platt bore any responsibility for Gennady’s second imprisonment would not be resolved until 2010, when they met again in Washington. This remarkable event followed a counterintelligence

a. Milton Bearden and James Risen, *The Main Enemy: The Inside Story of the CIA's Final Showdown with the KGB* (Random House, 2003), 534–36.

b. A team of historians reviewed the movie in some detail in this journal. See David Robarge et al., “The Good Shepherd” in *Studies in Intelligence* 51 no. 1 (March 2007).

investigation that led to the exposure of 10 Russian illegals living in the United States. *Best of Enemies* tells how Operation Ghost Stories, conducted by the FBI and CIA, resulted in the exchange of the illegals for four Russians, one of whom was Gennady Vasilenko.

*Best of Enemies* is a tribute to both men and their families and a story well told, with one exception. From time to time the authors begin chapters with Gennady's

recollections while undergoing interrogation in 2005 and then flash back to previous events. This can be confusing but the reader is encouraged to persevere.

Jack Platt and Gennady Vasilenko remained friends until Jack's death from esophageal cancer in January 2017. Gennady lives in Virginia and has "made clear his wish to be buried beside Jack someday." (312)

***Bureau of Spies: The Secret Connection Between Espionage and Journalism in Washington***, by Steven T. Usdin. (Prometheus Books, 2018) 360, endnotes, photos, index.

Use Google to search the phrase "national press building" to get a view of the modern edifice that is home to the National Press Club at 14th and F Streets, in Washington, DC. Although a much modified version of the original building built in 1925, the Club still serves journalists from around the world. In *Bureau of Spies*, Steven Usdin records its origins and the role of some of some Club members as agents or proxies of foreign and domestic espionage organizations—and in one case of the White House itself.

Few were ever household names. The first Soviet agent to operate out of the Press Building for the OGPU (a KGB predecessor) in the 1930s was Robert S. Allen (codenamed Sh/147). A gregarious risk taker, he served the Soviets for money (22ff), as did many of his successors. These would include radical journalists Louis Wolf, Ellen Ray, and William Schaap (who was also a lawyer), all of whom worked Press Building offices. They produced *CounterSpy* and its successor, the *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, in cooperation with CIA defector and KGB agent Philip Agee. These periodicals contained anti-CIA tirades and lists of serving CIA officers. They also mentioned the location of their offices in the National "Press Building . . . to bolster [claims] to protection under the First Amendment." (294)

Not all of the espionage was conducted for foreign entities. The case of J. Franklin Carter is exemplary. Working out of the National Press Building, he was

hired by and worked directly for President Roosevelt, who financed Carter's operations from a slush fund. Carter had no experience with espionage though he had written fictional accounts of the *Bureau of Current Political Intelligence (CPI)* that received favorable attention. "FDR kept Carter and his agents immensely busy . . . in the months before Pearl Harbor," writes Usdin. (88) Often the missions assigned focused on his political opponents, Charles Lindbergh being a prime example. Another task concerned the possible threat from indigenous Japanese; Carter concluded there was little to fear and that most were loyal Americans. (98)

Before and after World War II began, British intelligence employed volunteer journalists based at the National Press Building to write articles that "infused American newspapers and radio programs with fake news" aimed at shaping American public opinion. In some cases the news was legitimate though exaggerated, as with the coverage of William Donovan's trips to Britain for the president prior to the war. (109)

It will not surprise readers to learn *Bureau of Spies* discusses NKVD (another predecessor of the KGB) espionage operations in the Press Club during World War II and the Cold War. Vladimir Pravdin (true name: Roland Abbiate), who had paid his NKVD dues as an assassin, is just one of the interesting characters mentioned; others include I. F. Stone and Oleg Kalugin. Usdin tells how Pravdin transformed "the TASS bureau

in the Press Building from a news-gathering organization that did some spying on the side into an intelligence organization that used journalism as a cover.” (204)

Not far from the TASS offices in the Press Building, journalists with the Continental Press Service worked against world communism in conjunction with overseas correspondents. Unfortunately, its operations were exposed as a CIA front, according to Usdin, by E. Howard Hunt during the Watergate

investigations. Congress soon made such relationships illegal, though that hasn’t stopped some intelligence services from suspecting journalists are spies. (258)

*Bureau of Spies* concludes with the comment that the National Press Club is no longer a center for international and domestic espionage; the building just isn’t big enough, and news services today have their own facilities. But the stories about its espionage heyday make good reading, and Usdin tells them well.

***Cold War Spymaster: The Legacy of Guy Liddell, Deputy Director of MI5***, by Nigel West. (Frontline Books, 2018) 262, endnotes, bibliography, index.

WALLFLOWER is the codename given to the 12 volumes of documents comprising the dictated diaries of former MI5 officer Guy Liddell. Begun in September 1939, when he was director of B Division (counterespionage), they provide a nearly continuous account of MI5 operations and bureaucratic matters through May of 1953, when he retired as deputy-director general. Two edited volumes of the wartime chronological diary entries were published in 2005.<sup>a</sup> The present volume departs from that format in two respects. First, the entries included are concerned with postwar events. Second, they deal with six specific cases, with background material added by author Nigel West. In varying degrees, each case had links to US military or civilian intelligence agencies.

The first chapter discusses MI5’s role in the recovery from captured German files of compromising prewar correspondence between the Nazis and the Duke of Windsor. Under the Four Power Agreement, copies should have been provided to France and the Soviet Union. The diaries explain why Britain and the United States agreed to keep their copies secret and not inform their allies.

Subsequent chapters discuss Gouzenko (CORBY), Klaus Fuchs, Konstantin Volkov, Burgess and Maclean, and Philby cases. Gouzenko revealed the Manhattan Project had been penetrated by the Soviets, and

mentioned a British penetration named ELLI—never identified, who, according to Liddell, was thought by the FBI to have been Philby. The VENONA decrypts led to the exposure of Fuchs and Liddell, and deals with the exposure of other Soviet agents that surfaced during the subsequent investigation.

The Volkov case (the NKGB officer in Istanbul who offered to defect to the British and reveal penetrations) is of particular interest, since it has so often been misinterpreted in the literature. Liddell explains Philby’s role and the official response to the offer. Then West identifies the errors made by previous authors, and for the first time reproduces the letter from Volkov to the British that resulted in various published misconceptions.

The chapter on Burgess (BARCLAY), whom Liddell knew well both socially and professionally, and Maclean (CURZON), whom Liddell had met only once in Washington, tells what MI5 knew about each before he defected. The diary entries also track the MI5 and MI6 efforts to identify a Soviet penetration of the British embassy in Washington indicated in a VENONA decrypt. Burgess is never suspected. As the search narrows, Philby contributes suggestions that, in retrospect, some thought pointed to Maclean in an effort to protect himself. Once Maclean becomes the primary suspect, negotiation to interrogate him settled on a date in June 1951. Burgess and Philby, as he wrote in his memoir, assumed the date

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a. Nigel West, ed., *The Guy Liddell Diaries: Volume I, 1939–1942; Volume II 1942–1945* (Routledge, 2005).

was 28 May and Burgess and Maclean defected on the 25th. Most authors accepted Philby's judgment, expressed in his memoir, and only now Liddell has made it clear that they did not have to hurry. As Liddell attempted to locate the missing diplomats, he consulted his former personal assistant, Anthony Blunt, whose involvement was substantial—but he played innocent and Liddell doesn't suspect his complicity. Finally, in the aftermath of the defections the diaries record the inevitable bureaucratic turmoil that resulted and led inexorably to Philby's recall.

One of the most interesting disclosures in the diaries is MI5's report that addressed suspicions about Philby. (152–54) The report was based in part on three interviews with Philby and at least two statements he submitted, mentioned here for the first time. It also reviewed indications of his guilt from Soviet defectors to which he could be linked and which had been disregarded. Although there was no evidence that would support a prosecution, Liddell records the decision was made to present the case to Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

Churchill ordered a formal interrogation, which was conducted by the MI5 lawyer Helenus Milmo. Though Milmo did not secure a confession, he agreed with most MI5 officers, as the lengthy quotation from his report attests. Liddell stated that the CIA and the FBI thought Philby was guilty. Curiously, the new chief of MI6 stood in strong opposition to those views, and the diaries document the extraordinary extent to which he continued to protect Philby. In the end, as is well known, MI6 prevailed, and the foreign minister exonerated Philby in Parliament in 1955.

By that time, Liddell had taken early retirement, as his close links to Burgess and Blunt had prevented his advancement to director-general.

*Cold War Spymaster* adds significant detail to the Cambridge Five cases and, in the process, records how MI5 resolved questions about many others who had been Soviet agents. Guy Liddell's diaries contain a valuable legacy of answers.

***Double Agent Victoire: Mathilde Carré and the Interallié Network***, by David Tremain. (The History Press, 2018) 488, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

In his fine 1987 book on the basics of counterintelligence, former CIA officer William Johnson wrote, "No term is more misused by amateurs and greenhorns than 'double agent.'"<sup>a</sup> Most journalists and authors writing since then have done nothing to cast doubt on the truth of that statement; "Gordievsky was a double agent . . ." is a recent example.<sup>b</sup> But independent researcher David Tremain has got it right—Mathilde Carré, codename *Victoire*, was that—and then some. M. R. D. Foot, said she was a "treble agent."<sup>c</sup>

*Double Agent Victoire* tells the story of an ambitious, well-educated young woman with "degrees in science, mathematics, philosophy, and law" from the Sorbonne. (27) When the war started, she volunteered as a nurse in Paris and it was there that she met Roman Garby-Czerniawski (WALLENTY), a Polish intelligence officer who was setting up a resistance network named *Interallié*. He recruited Mathilde as his personal assistant and gave her the nickname, *La Chatte* (the cat) by which she was known throughout the network. At the same time, through *Interallié* contacts with the *Deuxième Bureau*, she agreed to work for them also.

By mid-1941, *Interallié* had become a large, effective operation and was in contact with both the Polish exile government and Special Operations Executive (SOE) in London. Mathilde learned the

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a. William H. Johnson, *Thwarting Enemies At Home And Abroad: How To Be A Counterintelligence Officer* (Stone Trail Press, 1987), 77.

b. Ben Macintyre, *The Spy and the Traitor: The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War* (Crown, 2018), 162.

c. M. R. D. Foot, *SOE in France* (Frank Cass, 2004), 171.

names of most of the key members as she encoded their reports for transmission to London.

In November 1941, things began to fall apart. The Abwehr had penetrated *Interallié*, and Mathilde along with many others was arrested. During her interrogation by Hugo Bleicher, an Abwehr NCO posing as a colonel, she betrayed her colleagues in return for her life while continuing to report to London false information supplied by the Abwehr. She also betrayed the *Autogiro* network whose leader, Pierre de Vomécourt (LUCAS), after his arrest, came to suspect she was working for the Germans. After feigning cooperation with Bleicher, de Vomécourt convinced Mathilde she should join him in a proposal to deceive the Abwehr. Amazingly, he then persuaded Bleicher to send both him and Mathilde to London where they would work as Abwehr double agents.

When they arrived in London, de Vomécourt explained the truth to MI5 and both were run against the Abwehr; it was at this point that Foot branded her a triple agent. SOE gave Mathilde the codename *Victoire*. After a time the Abwehr began to suspect the truth and MI5 found she was still cooperating with the Germans, *Victoire* was arrested and jailed until the end of the war. She was then deported to France where she stood trial and was sentenced to death. Her sentence was commuted for health reasons, and she was released in 1954. After publishing her memoir—written in jail and denying all guilt—and giving some interviews, she found religion, changed her name, and died in obscurity in 2007, “aged 98 and eleven months.” (385)

**H***itler's British Traitors: The Secret History of Spies, Saboteurs and Fifth Columnists*, by Tim Tate. (Icon Books Ltd., 2018) 454, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

At the start of World War II, questions were raised in the London press and Parliament about the potential threat from British fascists spying for the Nazis and making preparations to support them in the event they invaded Britain. Historians F. H. Hinsley and C. A. G.

Several books about *La Chatte* appeared after her very public trial. Garby-Czerniawski's *The Big Network* was a firsthand account but without documentation. Journalist Gordon Young wrote her biography and he was the only one to interview her.<sup>a</sup> Others published fanciful variations of her story based on secondary sources. In each case, none had access to official records until Tremain found them in the British, French, Polish, and US archives. And that is both the strength and the weakness of *Double Agent Victoire*. Its strength is in the extensive quotations that clarify issues about which others could only speculate. Examples include how operations were conducted in France and England, the MI5 and MI6 officers involved, and the Abwehr counterintelligence techniques employed. In addition, agent communications and personal relationships are clarified, the consequences of inadequate training and lax security procedures are noted, and the names of agents *La Chatte* compromised are included. Finally, Tremain comments on what happened to the principal characters. The book's weakness is that the amount of detail provided borders on overkill; some of the content could have been more effectively consigned to the source notes.

Beyond its value to history, *Double Agent Victoire* offers some useful lessons on the risks and practices associated with agent recruitment and handling. Still, a valuable contribution to the literature.

a. Gordon Young, *The Cat With Two Faces* (New York: Cowan-McCann, Inc., 1957).

Simkins addressed the issue in the fourth volume of *British Intelligence in the Second World War*,<sup>b</sup> noting that “interrogations and other intensive investigations carried out . . . produced no evidence of any preparations

b. F. H. Hinsley and C. A. G. Simkins, *British Intelligence in the Second World War—Volume 4* (HMSO, 1990), 59.

for sabotage by Fifth Column elements, let alone the existence of, an organized Fifth Column movement.”

British investigative journalist Tim Tate challenges that conclusion and similar claims by other historians. One argued that “the Fifth Column was a ‘myth’” and “became a means by which MI5 came to justify its growth, existence, and importance.”<sup>a</sup> Another, the authorized history of MI5, stated that, “None of the reports sent to MI5 led to the discovery of any real fifth column or the detection of a single enemy agent.”<sup>b</sup> *Hitler’s British Traitors* presents substantial evidence that contradicts these views.

Citing recently released MI5 files found in the National Archives—presumably not available to earlier historians—Tate writes that “between 1939 and 1945 more than 70 British men and women were convicted . . . of working to help Germany win the war.” (xx) Some were executed, George Armstrong being a case in point. (270) Others, for example, Dorothy O’Grady, who acted

on their own initiative, served years in prison. (276) Still others, including several members of Parliament, were briefly interned and then released to resume their seats. Members of the upper class who exhibited fascist views openly, were allowed to resume their normal lives even when that included plotting in support of the Nazis. In every case, Tate provides a detailed account of their actions that documents what they did and at the same time leaves the impression that they were never considered by the government to be serious threats to national security.

On the subject of organized movements supporting the Nazis, Tate discusses the British Union of Fascists and the Right Club, among similar organizations, citing MI5 files that describe their plans (and how MI5 learned of them) to cooperate with the Nazis before and after an invasion. In most cases, Tate argues, the Home Office and the committee established to recommend action declined to recommend prosecution. Tate describes at length the bureaucratic tensions that resulted with MI5 and its supervisory elements from this approach.

*Hitler’s British Traitors* refutes previous scholarship on the subject of a British Fifth Column myth and thus fills an historical gap. But it leaves unanswered the question of whether the British fascists were ever a serious threat.

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a. Richard Thurlow, “The Evolution of the Mythical British Fifth Column,” *Twentieth Century History*, (HMSO), chapter 3, 477–98.  
b. Christopher Andrew, *The Defense of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (Allen Lane, 2009), 224.

***Kings and Presidents: Saudi Arabia and the United States since FDR***, by Bruce Riedel. (Brookings Institution Press, 2017) 251, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

Not since 9/11 has Saudi Arabia been so frequent a topic of media attention as it was after the disappearance of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. The talking heads asked their guest pundits why the United States, a superpower democracy, considered Saudi Arabia—an absolute monarchy and a theocracy—an important ally? In *Kings and Presidents*, a “prescient” former CIA officer and presidential adviser on Middle East matters, Bruce Riedel, answers that question and

provides essential historical context—notwithstanding that his book was published a year ago.<sup>c</sup>

Riedel tells the story of a “conflicted partnership” that began with a meeting between President Roosevelt “and King Abdul Aziz al Saud, the founder of Saudi Arabia, on Valentine’s Day 1945.” That meeting, aboard the cruiser USS *Quincy*, “forged the American-Saudi entente” in

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c. See in this issue on page 15 Bruce Riedel, “The Perils of Covert Action—Ricochet: When a Covert Operation Goes Bad,” which relates the story of a Saudi-abetted coup attempt in Syria that inadvertently implicated the United States and complicated its relationships in the region.

the sense of an understanding between the two leaders, despite obvious political and religious differences. (xiv) FDR advocated “the creation of a Jewish state,” a position the king “adamantly opposed.” Still, “they established a personal bond” that resulted in a relationship based on security assistance from the United States in exchange for access to Saudi oil, an arrangement that exists to this day. Roosevelt also promised not to take any “action harmful to the Arabs,” which he later backed up in writing. (26) *Kings and Presidents* recounts how the relationship, with its inherent tensions, has been managed by succeeding presidents and Saudi monarchs.

After a discussion of the Kingdom’s origins, its founding relationship with Wahhabism, and the succession of its kings until Ibn Saud—the king who met Roosevelt—Riedel turns to contacts with American presidents beginning with Truman. The latter did not go well, from the Saudis’ perspective: Truman’s decision to support the creation of Israel was viewed as a violation of Roosevelt’s written commitment. But reality politics prevailed, since “they were too dependent on America to do anything about it” beyond beginning active support for the Palestinians. (26)

With each succeeding king and president, the mutual dependency remained although varying in degrees depending on military, economic, geopolitical and even social factors. Sometimes a president made a difference, as when Kennedy succeeded in persuading Saud’s successor, Feisal, to abolish slavery. But reforms were resisted internally; Feisal himself was later assassinated after introducing television.

But the rule, as Riedel explains, was continual diplomatic tension as the Kingdom struggled to modernize and develop relationships with its Arab

neighbors while supporting the Palestinians. At the same time, the presidents sought to bring peace to the region and mediate the Palestinian-Israeli wars that erupted from time to time. Thus, when President Nixon, the first president to visit Saudi Arabia, requested the king’s help in finding a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli problem, the Saudi response merely stressed the need to restore Arab sovereignty in Palestine. King “Faisal was confident that the oil weapon gave him leverage for the first time to achieve these goals.” (54)

Riedel describes the sometimes cooperative, sometimes contentious relationships that resulted with succeeding administrations during the continual Middle East strife. The Iraq-Iran War, the Iraqi invasion Kuwait, the wars in Afghanistan, the horrors of terrorism, and Iran’s support of anti-Saudi interests in Syria and Yemen are just a few examples. He also includes instances of Saudi quiet interaction with Israel. (192)

Throughout much of the period covered in the book, Riedel participated in many of the events discussed. His firsthand insights greatly strengthen his account, particularly when analyzing the implicit ironies of Saudi religious, social, and political life. Bound to Wahhabism, the kingdom employs Western technology—the clerics have popular Twitter accounts, is slowly expanding the rights of women, and works closely with Christian nations. Yet it remains a “police state that allows little or no dissent” (199) while it seeks to ensure the survival of the absolute monarchy.

*Kings and Presidents* doesn’t predict the future of Saudi Arabia but it does provide a solid assessment of the nation as it is today, how it got there and the basis for its actions. A most valuable and timely contribution.

**Section D for Destruction: Forerunner of SOE: The Story of Section D of the Secret Intelligence Service**, by Malcolm Atkin. (Pen & Sword, 2017) 258, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

On 16 July 1940, Prime Minister Winston Churchill “invited” Hugh Dalton, his minister for economic

warfare, “to take charge of the Special Operations Executive” (SOE), or as Churchill called it, the

Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare (MUW). The new organization would not be publicly acknowledged but would undertake sabotage, subversion, and propaganda operations against the Nazis. Having accepted the invitation, Dalton wrote, Churchill famously exhorted him, “And now, set Europe ablaze.”<sup>a</sup>

Before Dalton could execute his marching orders, the new organization had to be created. This was accomplished in part by absorbing “elements of exiting organizations”<sup>b</sup> such as Section D of MI6 that had been undertaking clandestine warfare operations, with mixed results. (Typically, authors have referred to Section D in passing before going on to discuss SOE.)

In *Section D For Destruction Forerunner of SOE*, however, historian Malcolm Atkin looks the other way and presents a reassessment, based on recently released archival material, of Section D’s “impact on the development of irregular warfare.” In the process he also describes “the machinations and rivalries of the British government and its intelligence services in the early years of the war” that led to the creation of SOE. (xii)

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a. Hugh Dalton, *The Fateful Years: Memoirs 1931–1945* (Frederick Muller Ltd., 1957), 366.

b. *Ibid.*

***The Spy and The Traitor: The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War***, by Ben Macintyre. (Crown Publishing Group, 2018) 358, references, bibliography, photos, index.

His father was KGB, so was his brother—and Oleg Gordievsky followed in their footsteps. But his career would end rather differently. *The Spy and The Traitor* tells how he became a British patriot while serving MI6 for 11 years. Ben Macintyre is not the first to tell the story: Gordievsky did so himself in his 1995 memoir, *Next Stop Execution*, that for unknown reasons was never published in the United States. Macintyre draws on many hours of interviews with Gordievsky and his MI6 colleagues to add fascinating details to an extraordinary career.

Section D was created in 1938 under Maj. Lawrence Grand and undertook its first operations in Europe in 1939. Prohibited from collecting intelligence except for its own needs, Section D eventually conducted sabotage and subversion operations in more than 20 countries. (214) These often created difficulties for local diplomats and MI6 officers who considered the Section D ethos or way of doing business, “un-British.” (1)

Atkin summarizes Section D’s track record in Europe, the Balkans, Scandinavia, the Middle East, Britain itself, and even the United States—the latter being largely propaganda designed to develop support for Britain. (196)

Many of the difficulties encountered by Section D were the consequence of an area of operations too large for its capabilities and the use of untrained personnel—there was no precedent for its mission or methodology. These factors were compounded by bureaucratic resistance and personality conflicts that persisted throughout its existence. Atkin covers these topics and discusses their treatment by other historians, adding perspective not previously recognized.

*Section D for Destruction* fills a historical gap in the evolution of irregular warfare that has heretofore placed too much credit with SOE. It is a valuable work and important contribution.

For example, Gordievsky mentions Standa Kaplan, a KGB friend with whom he spent many enjoyable hours before Kaplan defected. Macintyre adds that it was Kaplan who suggested to MI6 that Gordievsky might also be so inclined. But it was Gordievsky who set the events in motion while serving in Denmark by intentionally expressing his displeasure with the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia over an open phone line that led to MI6’s sending an officer to Copenhagen. Macintyre’s account of the resulting recruitment and subsequent handling is instructive.

After his reassignment to Moscow, Gordievsky put his career in administrative jeopardy by divorcing his wife and marrying a Russian comrade he had met in Denmark. Macintyre explains how he survived resulting controversy—the KGB did not favor divorce—all the while angling for another foreign assignment. To the delight of all, he was sent to London. His preparation for the new post included familiarizing himself with current extant cases at the London residency and in other areas, thus, Macintyre writes, acquiring extensive knowledge of KGB operations of possible interest to MI6. Much of this information would later be used in a book co-authored with Christopher Andrew, *KGB: The Inside Story of Its Foreign Intelligence Operations From Lenin to Gorbachev* (HarperCollins, 1990).

At the London residency, Macintyre writes that Gordievsky had professional conflicts with his colleagues and walked a fine operational line as he conveyed Soviet secrets to his handlers. His assessments were so valuable that he briefed Margaret Thatcher on the Soviet positions prior to her meetings with Gorbachev, and then briefed Gorbachev on what he knew about the British. He would later brief President Reagan and explain why the Soviets were convinced the United States was planning a pre-emptive nuclear attack. It was during this time also that a dissident MI5 officer tried to expose Gordievsky, and Macintyre reveals how that was avoided.

Then, suddenly, Gordievsky was called to Moscow to discuss his pending appointment as London

resident. MI6 sensed something was not quite right and recommended he not go. Gordievsky went, and when he arrived in Moscow realized immediately he was under suspicion. After a drugged interrogation that didn't produce the desired confession, he was allowed to return to his Moscow apartment. He quickly activated PIMLICO, an escape plan prudently prepared years previously in case it was needed; it was.

Macintyre discusses the obvious question: how had Gordievsky come under suspicion? It was a question that troubled Gordievsky for years afterward. In Macintyre's view, although Aldrich Ames claimed he had never revealed Gordievsky's name, it appears that he learned enough about the anonymous source sending intelligence to the CIA to alert the KGB of a leak in London.

The successful execution of PIMLICO adds considerable detail to Gordievsky's own account and is a tribute to all involved, despite some unexpected complications. Efforts to reunite him with his family were successful only after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but by then the relationship was beyond repair and divorce was the result.

*The Spy and The Traitor* concludes that Oleg Gordievsky was Britain's most important Cold War agent. Few disagree. In 2007, he was appointed Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG) for his services to the Crown.

At 80, Oleg Gordievsky still lives quietly in England.

***The Spy Who Changed History: The Untold Story of How the Soviet Union Won the Race for America's Secrets***, by Svetlana Lokhova. (WilliamCollins, 2018) 476, endnotes, appendices, photos, index.

After the fall of communism, Svetlana Lokhova moved to England to work in banking. She soon decided to expand her interest in history and was accepted at Cambridge University where she acquired an MPhil and BA (Hons). Studying under Professor Christopher Andrew, she developed an interest in Soviet espionage operations in the West. She is presently a By-Fellow

of Churchill College where she is translating the unpublished portions of the Mitrokhin Archives.

While her web page states that her book, *The Spy Who Changed History*, contains information on a "previously undetected network of Soviet spies that infiltrated American universities in the early 1930s," that is only partially accurate. Several of the principal figures

Lokhova discusses appear in the book *Spies*, by John Earl Haynes, Harvey Klehr, and Alexander Vassiliev (Yale University Press, 2009). Others (for example, the Soviet military intelligence officer, American Raisa (Ray) Bennett) appear in her book for the first time.

*The Spy Who Changed History* seeks to show that Stalin initiated an espionage operation in the early 1930s designed to “learn from scientists and entrepreneurs how to industrialize the American way” with the long range objective of improving Soviet war making capabilities. It was not intended, Lokhova claims, “to undermine its system of government.” (xiv) She does not note that during that period Soviet intelligence had parallel networks of agents that penetrated the American government for subversive purposes.

The principal character in her story, “the spy who changed history,” is Stanislav Shumovsky. While a soldier, he “helped fight off the world’s great powers who sought to strangle communism in the cradle.” After his military service, Shumovsky turned to science and became “the most successful and audacious aviation spy in Soviet history.” (xv) Codenamed BLÉROIT, Shumovsky attended MIT and, through the contacts and recruitments he made there, helped the Soviet Union acquire essential aviation technology. He also paved the way for more than 20 other Soviet intelligence officers to attend the school.

***The Woman Who Fought an Empire: Sarah Aaronsohn and Her NILI Spy Ring***, by Gregory J. Wallance. (Potomac Books, 2018) 293, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

The subtle irony that Mata Hari, “a nude dancer and courtesan who had no espionage achievements,” has come to “define the image of a female spy in the public imagination” is not lost on author Gregory Wallance. It is an image, he writes, “that must be discarded.” (1) *The Woman Who Fought An Empire* makes a strong case that Sarah Aaronsohn is a much more deserving candidate.

Wallance is not the first to tell Aaronsohn’s story, only the most recent. Based on his access to letters and

Some would later be involved in Soviet atomic espionage handled out of New York City. Lokhova asserts that without Shumovsky’s contribution, “there would have been no Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, no Klaus Fuchs.” (8)

In addition to her treatment of the agents recruited and handled, the American aviation firms involved, and the technology they provided, often openly—Russia was, after all, “a friend”—Lokhova adds biographical details and information on how the Soviets selected and prepared personnel for service in America. Of particular interest is the role of Ray Bennett and her unusual links with both the KGB and GRU.

Shumovsky’s major accomplishment, in Lokhova’s view, was his acquisition of design data on the B-29 bomber that enabled the Soviet Union to produce an aircraft capable of delivering an atomic bomb. She acknowledges the fact that the Soviets possessed three B-29s, confiscated after running out of fuel over the Soviet Union during the war. They were, it is assumed in the West, copied in detail. She argues that Shumovsky’s role was critical and that Stalin rewarded his contributions.

*The Spy Who Changed History* cites Soviet sources, though not precisely identified. And what is somewhat troubling is that her means of access is not specified. Nevertheless, it is an interesting account of Soviet industrial espionage that echoes events in today’s world.

other materials not available to his predecessors, his purpose is to convey a more balanced assessment of her espionage contribution to Middle East operations against the Ottoman Empire during World War I and her often stressful yet rewarding personal life.

What came to be called the NILI spy ring (NILI is an acronym from the Hebrew phrase *Netzah Yisrael Lo Yeshaker*, which translates as “the Eternal One of Israel will not lie”) was an ad hoc organization

formed by Sarah's brother, Aaron, and a colleague, Avshalom Feinberg. It operated out of a Jewish settlement in Palestine and learned tradecraft on the job. Its immediate purpose was to provide the British in Egypt with tactical intelligence about the Turkish Army operating in Palestine.<sup>a</sup> Its long term objective, however, was to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine under the British—the unacceptable alternative being Turkish control.

Initial efforts to convince the British that the NILI had something to offer were rebuffed, and it was only after Aaron Aaronsohn, a world-renowned agronomist, met with British officials in Cairo that links were established. Even then difficulties remained. Not all Jews in Palestine supported the decision, and the NILI was forced to operate in secrecy within its own community.

Wallance explains how Sarah came to head the NILI, the difficulties she experienced in an all-male network,

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a. For a discussion of the role of intelligence in the British campaign in the Middle East during WWI, see James Noone, "The Role of Military Intelligence in the Battle for Beersheba in October 1917," in *Studies in Intelligence* 62, no. 1 (March 2018)

and the various communication methods established with the British. It was the need to end nighttime meetings with British ships offshore and turn to relying on homing pigeons that led to NILI's downfall. The Turks intercepted a pigeon, deciphered its message, arrested the ring, and tortured Sarah. She committed suicide before talking.

The glowing though not excessive admiration Sarah receives in *The Woman Who Fought An Empire* was not shared by the Jewish community of the day. Wallance notes that "the NILI spies were regarded as reckless and irresponsible," (241) a reputation that endured well after the state of Israel was created in 1948. Research by British military historians produced a different view and Wallance cites much of their work. Only in 1967, with the help of local Bedouins who had no love for the Turks, was the NILI reputation avowed by Israel. (239–45)

*The Woman Who Fought An Empire* reaffirms with solid documentation Sarah Aaronsohn's espionage contributions in World War I. In this curious world, however, it is unlikely she will replace the iconic Mata Hari in the public's image.



**The reviewer:** Hayden Peake has served in the CIA's Directorates of Operations and Science and Technology. He has been compiling and writing reviews for the "Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf" since December 2002.

