

The Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf

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Current

Gary Berntsen, *Human Intelligence, Counterterrorism, and National Leadership: A Practical Guide* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2008), 136 pp., footnotes, bibliography, glossary, index.

A Practical Guide was written for “incoming presidents and White House staffs so they can master the subject of human intelligence and counterterrorism operations in order to deal with this twenty-first century world.”(xvi) This top down aim point is necessary, writes former CIA operations officer Gary Berntsen, because the still uncorrected leadership blunders that contributed to the Intelligence Community’s “failure to *collect* the dots” (xi) before 9/11 can only be put right at that level.

In 19 short chapters, Berntsen examines the operational and policy issues that need attention. His principal focus is on what is now called the National Clandestine Service—human intelligence—and its relationship with counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. He discusses covert action, personnel restrictions, language skills, interrogation, WMD, state-sponsored terrorism, terrorist finances, and military special operations forces. Also included is a recommendation for a new “Freedom Corps” made up of Arabic specialists.

Each chapter concludes with a series of “critical points” that recommend presidential action. For example, a chapter on personnel states, “The president must make it a priority to understand the size and capabilities of the clandestine service on taking office and address any problems immediately.” (22) Similarly, a chapter on the polygraph contends the president and the Congress do not understand that the current polygraph policy does more harm than good. Berntsen makes a strong case that it should be used only for certain sensitive positions. (28) In the chapter on language skills, Berntsen suggests creating a new organization for the promotion of language study and a mandatory requirement that students at the military academies study a Middle Eastern language for four years. (50) On the policy front, he recommends, inter alia, that the United States “sponsor an Iranian government in exile.” (96)

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Human Intelligence, Counterterrorism, and National Leadership relies heavily on the author's years of experience in the field and does not provide detailed analysis or supporting data. Whether he really expects a new president to act personally to make the changes he suggests is unclear. He does not discuss an alternative—giving the DNI the appropriate marching orders. In any case, Berntsen is convinced that “when it comes to intelligence and counterterrorism, presidential competence counts,” and that high level involvement is directly proportional to the success of his national security policies. (110)

Historical

Andrew Meier, *The Lost Spy: An American in Stalin's Secret Service* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 402 pp., endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

In 2000, while researching a book on Stalin's gulag, *Moscow Time Magazine* correspondent Andrew Meier routinely asked former inmates whether they had encountered any American prisoners. The only one who did mentioned a man called “the American professor.” (10) From that clue emerged the story of Isaiah [Cy] Oggins, *The Lost Spy*.

Meier sees Oggins as a member of “the generation of intellectuals betrayed by ‘the God that failed.’” With the same facts, however, Oggins can also be characterized as a dedicated communist agent for most of his 49 years, though little is known about just what he did.

Born in Willimantic, Connecticut, Oggins attended Columbia University. He married another communist named Nerma Berman. After they formally joined the US Communist Party sometime in the 1920s, their offer of services to the USSR was accepted and they were sent abroad. Meier writes that Oggins lived first in Berlin under cover as an art dealer. Later they served in Paris, Shanghai, and Manchuria. By 1939, Nerma had returned to the United States, and Oggins was arrested in Moscow. During the eight years he spent in the gulag, Oggins met with American diplomats but declined to tell them the whole truth. (181) In 1947 he was sent to Moscow, where he was executed by lethal injection. Unfortunately, little more is known about Cy Oggins and the sketchy details Meier provides are not new.¹

It was not for lack of trying that Meier did little to resolve the mystery of Oggins's life as a spy. Meier located Oggins's 70-year-old son, who last saw his father when he was seven, but learned nothing about Oggins senior as a Soviet agent. The FSB (the KGB's successor service) gave Meier 39 pages of redacted files, about a quarter of the entire file. They apparently discussed Oggins's party membership, but Meier does not make clear just what they revealed. The same is true of the few FBI files Meier mentioned. Nerma Oggins

¹ Oggins career were first reported in Pavel Sudoplatov's memoirs but those were the recollections of an 85-year-old former KGB officer. Meier takes issue with some of Sudoplatov's account (pages 181–82) but cannot prove his case. See, Pavel Sudoplatov and Anatoli Sudoplatov with Jerrold L. and Leona P. Schechter, *Special Tasks: The Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness—A Soviet Spymaster* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), 281–82.

released some photos and letters that dealt with her efforts to secure her husband's release. Meier also cites files covering the State Department's efforts in that regard.

In short, the book is a mix of speculation—"might have," "could have," "probably did"—about Oggins' life as a spy and historical filler about the KGB and the Communist Party in various countries. These weaknesses are best illustrated in Meier's intimate account of Oggins' arrest (3–5) for which no documents or eye witness testimony is cited. Peter Pringle wrote in the *Washington Post*, "*The Lost Spy* is a valiant effort, a well-written and rewarding romp through the international communist movement of the 1920s and '30s."² Nonetheless, he too observed that it is filled with surmises. The book's dust jacket claimed that Meier's effort would "rewrite the history of Soviet intelligence in the West," a gross and unsupported exaggeration.

Nigel West, *Historical Dictionary of Sexspionage* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 368 pp., bibliography, chronology, index.

The prerequisites for writing a non-fiction book about sex and espionage might at first glance seem obvious. But two of the three books-in-English devoted to the subject were written by journalists. The first, *Sexpionage: The Exploitation of Sex by Soviet Intelligence*³ is narrow in scope and out of date. The second, *Sex Espionage*,⁴ tells a few stories from biblical times to the late 1980s, including a bizarre chapter on "Watergate: A Sex Cover-up." Neither is documented and both contain many unforced errors.

Intelligence historian Nigel West has overcome some of these discrepancies in his effort. His bibliographic essay deals with the notorious fabricators in this field and the more than 300 entries provide excellent coverage showing how these two callings can interact. The most obvious example is the *romeo spy* (241) where seduction is used to obtain secrets. West also includes instances in which the intimate relationships involved are incidental to the espionage. Some are well known, Mata Hari and Kim Philby, for example. Others, are relatively obscure: Linda Hernandez, Florentino Aspillaga, and Hildegard Broda (175), to name three. Broda, the wife of suspected Soviet agent Engelbert Broda, later married convicted Soviet spy Allan Nunn May, and is named here for the first time. Several entries only hint at a link to sexspionage specifics: Herbert Norman, Josephine Baker, and Edward Lee Howard are examples.

This leads to another group of entries in which the person named was not directly involved in any form of sexspionage but was in a management position responsible for a compromised operation, lawsuit, or security violation. Former DCI John Deutch is one example. Finally there are a few entries dealing with organizations, fictional characters—James Bond being the best known—technical matters, and behavioral issues as they related to espionage.

² Peter Pringle, *Washington Post Book World*, 24 August 2008, 4.

³ David Lewis (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976).

⁴ Donald E. Bower (Bloomington, IN: Knightsbridge Pub. Co., 1990)

There is one discrepancy *Sexspionage* shares with the other works on the subject: not a single entry is documented. For a dictionary that is more like an encyclopedia, this is not helpful and reduces its educational usefulness. There are also some simple errors that fact-checking by the publisher should have caught: Elizabeth Bentley was originally from New Milford, CT, not Rochester, NY; John Deutch is the correct spelling, not “Deutsch.”

Nevertheless, *Sexspionage*, while providing the most comprehensive coverage of the topic to date, confirms the conventional wisdom that sex and espionage are linked in the real world as well as in fiction. It does not, however, comment on its value as a tool of the profession—that judgment is left to others.

General Intelligence

William R. Johnson, ***Thwarting Enemies at Home and Abroad: How to Be A Counterintelligence Officer*** (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009, 2nd edition), 222 pp., index. Foreword by William Hood.

Classics in any branch of the arts are less easily defined than recognized. When it comes to books on intelligence, one of the first that comes to mind is Sherman Kent's *Strategic Intelligence*. David Kahn's *The Codebreakers* is another. Both have a timeless, definitive quality and are strongly endorsed by respected professionals in their fields. *Thwarting Enemies* has earned classic status for the same reasons.

In his foreword to the book, former CIA officer William Hood summarizes Bill Johnson's long career in military and CIA counterintelligence (CI). In the 18 chapters that follow, Johnson begins by discussing what counterintelligence is and how it differs from counterespionage. He goes on to cover the traits of a CI officer, the support apparatus needed to do the job, the role of the polygraph, and how foreign counterintelligence is conducted when the officer doesn't have arrest powers. The chapter on interrogation stresses the futility of torture as a CI practice and the techniques that do work. There are two chapters on surveillance: one covering managing human surveillance, the other describing the use of technical means—wire taps, photography, and the like. Of special importance are a series of chapters on double agents—“no term is more misused” (91); moles, “your best weapon” (135); and defectors, “your second best weapon” (154). The final chapters cover working with other intelligence services or liaison, the importance of files, the analysis of the data collected, and the important role of deception.

Originally published in 1987 and long out of print, *Thwarting Enemies* has been used as a text in various introductory CI courses including those at the National Defense Intelligence College. With his characteristic bumper sticker simplicity, Johnson provides short case studies to illustrate his points with a sense of humor that is evident throughout. Georgetown University Press has reproduced the original text and some outdated terminology—as for example “defector-in-place”—remains. But for those interested

in what counterintelligence is and the essential tradecraft that gets the job done, *Thwarting Enemies* has no competition—a genuine classic.

Intelligence Abroad

Anuj Dhar, *CIA's Eye on South Asia* (New Delhi: Manas Publications, 2008), 492 pp., index.

The CIA is an evergreen topic, and the three letters in a book's title always attract attention. Indian journalist Anuj Dhar has capitalized on this phenomenon in his three-part book, which purports to reveal CIA activities in South Asia since 1951. But the 20-page first part discusses only Agency declassification policies and history, in that curious order. Part three, called the *Annexure* (402–62), is titled, *How CIA Tilted the Scales in the Bangladesh War: An unnamed India Cabinet minister's leaks saved Pakistan from annihilation in 1971*. Based almost entirely on American sources, it contains some author commentary, little analysis, and no conclusions.

The majority of the book—some 360 pages—consists of 72 declassified CIA assessments dealing with various policies and events in South Asia between 1951 and 2007. Topics covered include US aid to Pakistan, country surveys, India's internal politics, the Kashmir crisis, India-Pakistan relations, and nuclear proliferation. This part has three surprising features. First, the assessments have been “censored” or “redacted”—both terms are used. And though the redacted sections are indicated in the narrative, Dhar gives no description of what he left out. Second, the author provides no introductory analysis to explain why an assessment was selected, how it relates to what follows, and in some cases who wrote it. For example, in a memorandum discussing the “implications of an Indian victory over Pakistan,” the source agency is not mentioned, nor does Dhar provide any analysis as to whether the memo got it right. (216–21) Finally, there is no summary to address the significance of the articles presented—individually or collectively.

In the end, readers are left to make what sense they can from this collection of documents that at best provides a less than comprehensive glimpse of some potentially formative factors in US policy toward South Asia.