

28 Book REVIEW

NEW YORK TIMES
17 February 1985

Tricks, Dirty Tricks and Blunders

MIG

British Secret Intelligence Service Operations 1909-45.
By Nigel West.
Illustrated. 266 pp. New York:
Random House. \$16.95.

TOO SECRET TOO LONG

By Chapman Pincher.
Illustrated. 638 pp. New York:
St. Martin's Press. \$19.95.

By Harry Rositzke

HISTORIES of Western secret services by outsiders range from methodical bureaucratic analysis to sensational exposés of their incompetence and immorality. "MI6" and "Too Secret Too Long," both written by British journalist-historians who have devoted their careers to systematic investigation of British intelligence, mark the two ends of the spectrum.

Between them Nigel West and Chapman Pincher have written nine books on a subject that appears to have an irresistible appeal to the British appetite — and with good reason. The wartime and postwar history of both the domestic Security Service (M.I.5) and the Secret Intelligence Service (M.I.6) are filled with dramatic episodes involving agents and double agents, treachery in high places and sensational exposures and cover-ups far exceeding the meager Federal Bureau of Investigation and Central Intelligence Agency malpractices recorded in Senate investigations in the mid-1970's. Nigel West has taken on the

Harry Rositzke, a former operations officer for the Central Intelligence Agency, has written numerous books, including the recent "Managing Moscow: Games or Goods?"

modest job of sketching the history of M.I.6 up to the end of World War II. Sparely written, his book is a straightforward presentation of the organization's changing structure, leadership and relations with both Conservative and Labor governments. He analyzes its headquarters sections and its field stations, describing functions and giving organizational charts and the names and assignments of officers, each with a capsule biography. Assisted by many old hands who were willing to fill the author in on events some 40 years or more in the past, he has done a meticulous job of research.

There is, however, little here for the spy buff. The well-known cases are only briefly treated — Sidney Reilly's plots against Lenin; the kidnapping of two M.I.6 officers by the Germans at Venlo, the Netherlands, in 1939; the Soviet networks operating against Hitler in Switzerland; and Cicero, code name for Elyesa Bazna, the valet who was paid by the Germans (in forged pounds) for stealing documents from his master, the British Ambassador to Ankara. There are cameo appearances by Somerset Maugham and Graham Greene.

M.I.6 began the war with an odd disregard for counterespionage work, and the German services were able to penetrate some of its overseas operations. Yet it not only came to grips with the German security forces in the course of the war, but displayed real foresight in the summer of 1944 by establishing a special section to deal with Soviet espionage and subversion. Unhappily, Kim Philby, a long-term Soviet agent, was placed in charge.

Men like Kim Philby and his colleagues, Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean and Anthony Blunt, play a key role as well in Chapman Pincher's "Too Secret, Too Long," which deals with the history of M.I.5. One of the service's tasks is to protect the security of M.I.6, and Mr. Pincher's thesis is

that Sir Roger Hollis, an M.I.5 officer who served as chief of the organization for the nine years up to 1965 and who died in 1973, was a long-term Soviet agent.

Mr. Pincher's 30-year career of investigative reporting on the British services reaches its climax here. In over 60 episodic chapters, he presents a circumstantial case based on the thesis that M.I.5 could not have performed so miserably over the years without a "protective hand" in its ranks working for the Russians. This mole would have tipped off the K.G.B. on current investigations of Soviet agents in the British establishment, purposely bungled the interrogation of Soviet intelligence defectors from Igor Gouzenko (a code clerk for the Soviet military attaché in Ottawa who defected in 1945), to Yuri Nosenko (a K.G.B. officer who turned himself over to the Americans in Switzerland in 1964), and throttled investigative actions against suspect members of both M.I.5 and M.I.6.

MR. PINCHER builds up his case by ascribing each instance of M.I.5's ineptitude to Hollis's personal intervention. Almost every Soviet "success" is a British "failure"; every case of British bungling, a Soviet contrivance; every coincidence, evidence of conspiracy. Mr. Pincher's indictment is built on coincidences of time and place ranging from China in the late 1920's to the Oxford suburbs in the 1940's, on actual and possible personal associations, and on a generous approach to probabilities — his analysis is replete with hypotheticals like "may have been" or "could have been."

No outsider can measure the truth of the Hollis case, but after a series of investigations the official British verdict appears to be "not guilty, not innocent," a frustrating judgment for any coun-

terintelligence officer but one that will probably stand unless hard evidence is found from the decoding of old cable traffic or a new Soviet defector.

Mr. Pincher pays lip service to the professional acumen of the Soviet services in recruiting an impressive roster of spies, but finds the secret of their success in the "rot" within the British services themselves. His recommendation for the ills of British intelligence is simple: oversight. He appends to many of his case discussions long footnotes on what any oversight body outside the services might have contributed to avoid the failures he cites, and closes his book with a chapter on "The Outlook for Oversight."

He should perhaps have given Soviet competence at least equal credit; and he might also have asked, for purposes of comparison, why the American services have been immune to this rot.

During the interwar years Britain was Moscow's main enemy, and its secret services a major target. The Central Intelligence Agency did not come into being until 1947, and the intensity of American postwar anti-Communism, unique among the Allies, had emotional and patriotic overtones that motivated many of its recruits, creating a climate in which trading with the enemy was unequivocally treasonable. The C.I.A. started off in the Truman "loyalty" years with a rigorous weeding out of Communists and homosexuals from its ranks. Communism in the 1930's thrived at Oxford and Cambridge, not at Harvard or Yale. Homosexuality was considered an invitation to blackmail in Washington, not in London.

Both books naturally deal with the American connection, with Chapman Pincher emphasizing the steady loss of C.I.A. and F.B.I. confidence in their scandal-ridden British cousins. Nigel West's brief analysis of the Office of Strategic Services-British relationship highlights one factor that was to play a crucial role in the evolution of the C.I.A. Churchill's decision to "set Europe ablaze" by unconventional means (mainly sabotage) led to the creation of the Special Operations Executive as an instrument for covert action separate from

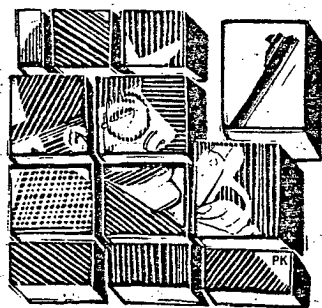
M.I.6. The O.S.S. became a junior partner.

Though both the British and American "special operations" folded with the end of the war, a separate unit for action operations was re-created in 1948 under the aegis of the State Department and formally integrated into the C.I.A. structure four years later. This combination of secret intelligence and covert action under one roof is unique among major services to the C.I.A. and the K.G.B.

MR. PINCHER'S faith in the potential effect of an outside committee on espionage and counterespionage operations is far too sanguine. Congressional oversight, as in Washington, can deal more or less effectively with such covert action operations as

support for rebel groups in Angola or Nicaragua, but no outside body can handle with competence the far more secret and highly complex issues raised by the handling of Western agents in a Communist regime, by the proper exploitation of a Soviet defector, or by the search for a mole. Operations like these are the core of any Western service, and even leakproof outsiders are in no position to judge the professional competence of their personnel. They will make their mistakes, as all professionals do, but even in a suspicious society they must, like war planners and missile researchers, be left to do their job as well as they can. □

Disaster in the Netherlands



Unfortunately, the very first joint SIS/Dutch operation attempted went badly wrong. A young Royal Netherlands Navy officer, Lieutenant Lodo van Hamel, was parachuted into occupied Holland near Leyden on 28 August 1940 with a transmitter and instructions to link up with one of the developing Dutch resistance organizations. Van Hamel arrived safely and proceeded to create no less than four local rings, each equipped with home-made transmitters. However, two months later, when he was summoned to his rendezvous with a seaplane on the North Sea coast for his flight back to England, he was denounced to the Germans and arrested near Zurig. The Germans also managed to arrest three of his travelling companions, all of whom were connected to an embryonic Dutch resistance cell. Professor Becking, one of the leaders of the Orde Dienst resistance group, survived the ordeal, as did his two couriers, but van Hamel was tried by court-martial and executed the following June.

This disaster served to confirm to the Dutch that the British were thoroughly unreliable, and relations went from bad to worse. By December 1941 Rabagliati and van t'Sant had infiltrated five agents into occupied Holland, but only one, Aart Alblas, was left at liberty. He too was soon to be arrested and executed at Mauthausen in 1944.

— From "MI6."