

Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf

Compiled and reviewed by Hayden Peake

CURRENT TOPICS—Special: A Spectrum of Views on the Use of Drones

Drone Wars: Transforming Conflict, Law and Policy, edited by Peter Bergen and Daniel Rothenberg

Kill Chain: The Rise of the High-Tech Assassins, by Andrew Cockburn

Lords Of Secrecy: The National Security Elite and America's Stealth Warfare, by Scott Horton

PREDATOR: The Secret Origins of The Drone Revolution, by Richard Whittle

Sudden Justice: America's Secret Drone Wars, by Chris Woods

A Theory of the Drone, by Grégoire Chamayou

Unmanned: Drones, Data, and the Illusion of Perfect Warfare, by William M. Arkin

GENERAL

Avoiding Armageddon: America, India, and Pakistan to the Brink and Back, by Bruce Riedel

National Intelligence and Science: Beyond the Great Divide in Analysis and Policy, by Wilhelm Agrell and Gregory Treverton

The New Spymasters: Inside Espionage from the Cold War to Global Terror, by Stephen Grey

The NSA Report: Liberty and Security in a Changing World, by Richard A. Clarke, Michael J. Morell, Geoffrey R. Stone, Cass R. Sunstein and Peter Swire

Open Source Intelligence in the Twenty-First Century: New Approaches and Opportunities, edited by Christopher Hobbs, Matthew Moran, and Daniel Salisbury

HISTORICAL

Back Channel To Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations Between Washington and Havana, by William M. LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh

Enemy Amongst Trojans: A Soviet Spy at USC, by Mike Gruntman

The Forgotten Spy: The Untold Story of Stalin's First British Mole, by Nick Barratt

Hayek: A Collaborative Biography—Part III Fraud, Fascism, and Free Market Religion, by Robert Leeson

Historical Dictionary of International Intelligence, second edition, by Nigel West

Observer: The Colonel George Trofimoff Story—The Tale of America's Highest-ranking Military Officer Convicted of Spying, by Glen Aaron

Sharing The Secret: A History of the Intelligence Corps 1940-2010, by Nick Van Der Bijl

Spies, Scouts, and Secrets in the Gettysburg Campaign: How the Critical Role of Intelligence Impacted the Outcome of Lee's Invasion of the North, June-July, 1863, by Thomas Ryan

A Very Dangerous Woman: The Lives, Loves and Lies of Russia's Most Seductive Spy, by Deborah McDonald and Jeremy Dronfield

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CURRENT TOPICS

Drone Wars: Transforming Conflict, Law and Policy, edited by Peter L. Bergen and Daniel Rothenberg. (Cambridge University Press, 2015) 478 pp., end of chapter notes, index.

Kill Chain: The Rise of the High-Tech Assassins, by Andrew Cockburn. (Henry Holt and Company, 2015) 309 pp., endnotes, index.

Lords of Secrecy: The National Security Elite and America's Stealth Warfare, by Scott Horton. (Nation Books, 2015) 260 pp., endnotes, index.

PREDATOR: The Secret Origins of The Drone Revolution, by Richard Whittle. (Henry Holt and Company, 2014) 353 pp., endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

Sudden Justice: America's Secret Drone Wars, by Chris Woods. (Oxford University Press) 386 pp., endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

A Theory of the Drone, by Grégoire Chamayou. (The New Press, 2015) 292 pp., endnotes, photos, index.

Unmanned: Drones, Data, and the Illusion of Perfect Warfare, by William M. Arkin. (Little Brown and Company, 2015) 391 pp., endnotes, photos, index.

The seven books reviewed as part of this installment's "Current Topics" section focus on the use of drones to combat terrorism and terrorists. They are mostly documented by a combination of anonymous interviews and secondary sources, a factor worth keeping in mind.

The goal of minimizing casualties while inflicting maximum damage on the adversary is an accepted principle of war. With the invention of artillery, close combat warfare began a gradual decline. Tanks, airplanes, battleships, submarines, and ballistic missiles that targeted an unseen enemy each allowed the projection of lethal force while reducing human vulnerability. With the introduction of armed, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or drones, this concept no longer applies, in the view of French philosopher Grégoire Chamayou. In *A Theory of the Drone*, he argues that the "projection of power... without projecting vulnerability implies that the only vulnerability will be that of the enemy, reduced to the status of mere target." (12) Just so, a military commander might respond. But Chamayou says the use of drones is a form of "Warfare without risk . . . [that] critically undermines the meta-legal principles that underpin the right

to kill in war." In short, he concludes, drones "accommodate the right to targeted assassination . . ." and that in turn risks the possibility that the "subjects of a drone-state" may become that "states own population." (18)

With this background, Chamayou reviews the genealogy of the Predator UAV, its claimed uses for surveillance, and its lethal applications aimed at "the legitimization of drone homicide." He also examines the psychological stress on those in the target area and "the psychic agony of drone operators" while dismissing the "PlayStation mentality" argument expressed by some pilots to explain their risk-free combat immunity. (106) There is also a chapter on drone precision, in which Chamayou quotes former CIA Director Leon Panetta: "It was very precise and is very limited in terms of collateral damage." In response, after making a comparison with the Dresden bombing and Hiroshima in WWII, he dismisses the analogy without elaboration as an "erroneous commonplace . . . a veritable nest of conceptual confusions." (140)

Although *A Theory of the Drone* never postulates a specific theory, it does consider the philosophical implica-

tions of armed drones, invoking Hegel, Hobbs, and Sartre in complex arguments. These envision a future where this weapon may remove humans from supervision and create “a situation in which robots are capable of exerting lethal force without human control or intervention.” (207) It is also clear that Chamayou finds drone warfare unethical while accepting other weapons of war that bomb targets with much less precision, entail greater civilian casualties and pilot risk, and incur higher system costs. His theory of drones leaves this dilemma to other philosophers.

The only theory found in Richard Whittle’s, *PREDATOR: The Secret Origins of The Drone Revolution* is associated with the aeronautics of unmanned remotely controlled aerial vehicles. And while the book doesn’t contain any secrets, it does chronicle the evolution of the Predator and its predecessors, especially the Gnat 750.

The Gnat 175, writes Whittle, was the first UAV the CIA used to collect intelligence. In 1993, the then-newly confirmed CIA director, James Woolsey, held a meeting to discuss how to obtain aerial coverage of fighting in Bosnia. Satellites were too often blinded by cloud cover and the Serbs were careful to operate at night and at other times when satellites weren’t overhead. Woolsey asked his staff: “What about UAVs?” (70) The agency had been experimenting with the Gnat 750—a drone with minimum reconnaissance capability. Woolsey sent Deputy Director of Operations Thomas Twetten to California to see whether the Gnat 750 could loiter over a target below the clouds; it could, and after some modifications, it did. About the same time, at the urging of then-Pentagon procurement czar John Deutch, the Air Force signed a contract for an “endurance UAV” (80) reconnaissance version of the Predator. For reasons of time, not all contractors had been allowed to bid; TRW, in a cameo appearance by TRW executive and former CIA officer Robert Kohler, complained, but Deutch overcame Kohler’s objections. In the end, while the results from both systems were impressive and warranted further development, the Predator prevailed.

PREDATOR describes the Air Force program that gradually improved the Predator’s capabilities. Located at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, the program office—nicknamed Big Safari—would develop laser target designator and infrared electro-optical capabili-

ties, and later communications links that would eventually allow real-time target monitoring in the United States.

Whittle writes that CIA began using the Predator after Charlie Allen, then-assistant director for collection, raised the idea with Richard Clarke, Clinton’s White House advisor. Clarke then suggested in a memo to senior Pentagon and CIA personnel that the “CIA fly the Predator to search for bin Laden.” Whittle writes that, although the option was opposed by those who preferred airplanes with pilots and by others who favored HUMINT, Clarke and Allen won the toss. (147) Whittle’s account of how a Predator found and imaged bin Laden but couldn’t get White House permission to conduct an air strike (the Predator was unarmed at that time) makes frustrating reading.

The obvious next step was to arm the Predator and make the system operable from the United States. Whittle tells this part of the story in detail. He includes descriptions of the Air Force crews trained to pilot the Predator remotely, the group at CIA who fed them target data, and the proof-of-concept attack that killed al-Qa’ida leader Mohammed Atef.

The revolution in drone capabilities continued with more technological improvements, new drones, and greatly increased targeted killings, writes Whittle, “that raised a set of profound moral, legal, political, and practical questions.” (302) He concludes that drones are here to stay, and “society needs to figure out how to cope with [the] implications.” (305)

For those interested in how the drone program became an essential component of the war on terror, *PREDATOR* is a good source.

Andrew Cockburn’s *Kill Chain: The Rise of the High-Tech Assassins* focuses on failed defense department and so-called CIA high-value target (HVT) armed drone operations that Cockburn labels targeted killings or assassinations; no theory here. To add perspective, he reviews the CIA’s failed attempts at assassination in the early Cold War and mistakenly includes the Phoenix program during Vietnam in the same category. Then he describes the origins of the military drone and the gradual improvements in technology and operational

concepts that led to current capabilities. As to “targeted killings,” he includes a chapter on how they failed when applied to the post-Cold War “war on drugs.”

Kill Chain also discusses the CIA CounterTerrorism Center and its links to the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC). But the bulk of his story concentrates on the evolution of drone operations and the practical problems encountered in their unsuccessful efforts to eliminate HVTs. A key factor here is the reduction of “kill time”—from target acquisition to execution—which minimizes civilian casualties. Cockburn includes example after example where problems arose—in Afghanistan and Pakistan—to support his conclusion that drones are counterproductive, expensive, and immoral. (204, 221)

Kill Chain concludes with a discussion of “super-drones” in the planning stage and their susceptibility to Iranian or Chinese interference with the electronic command links. He notes that the solution to this problem is the “autonomous” drone, capable of conducting missions without human intervention that may “be just around the corner.” (257) But he suggests that even these systems could be defeated by the same simple measures terrorists employ today to avoid drones.

While Cockburn acknowledges that armed drone warfare makes US personnel less vulnerable, he suggests their use is somehow “sinful.” A better solution, he proposes, is that drones be used for reconnaissance only.

In *Sudden Justice: America’s Secret Drone Wars*, British investigative journalist Chris Woods takes a broader and more balanced view of drones that collect intelligence and execute armed missions. That is not to say that Woods avoids the controversies publicly associated with the armed Predator—“the world’s first airborne sniper rifle”—and its successor, the Reaper; he does not. (xii) But, reflecting on their performance, he acknowledges that “controversial though civilian casualties were, they were still fewer in number when compared to previous conflicts. The relative precision of armed drones . . . means that noncombatants were likely to be at less risk of death or injury than from most other weapon systems.”

As collection systems, drones became “key assets . . . crucial to the intelligence revolution now taking place in warfighting.” (xv) Surprisingly, Woods reports, “despite the fearsome reputation of armed drones, their lethal use on the battlefield was at first uncommon . . . even in 2014 their focus still remained mostly on intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR).” (2) And even when not armed, “drones helped facilitate attacks from other air assets.” (3) Thus, in the war on terror that followed 9/11, Woods contends, “US foreign policy would increasingly shape itself to the Predator’s unique selling point—its effectiveness as an assassination tool.” (27) *Sudden Justice* explains how this occurred despite domestic interagency mission conflicts and friction with the governments of the various countries where the targets were located.

Wood describes how the path that ended with an effective drone program began in the mid 1970s with an Israeli engineer, Abe Karem—“the Moses of modern drones”—who designed the Predator prototype in his Los Angeles garage. When the US government learned of Karem’s work, a “black” development contract was arranged through the Pentagon and later merged with a CIA program. (33) By 1986, two prototypes had flown. At first, only reconnaissance capabilities were considered; these capabilities were used after 9/11 over Afghanistan. Woods describes the decision to arm the Predator with Hellfire missiles and the successful tests in mid-2001. Then he covers their routine use in targeted killings of al-Qa’ida leaders in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and eventually Yemen.

Of course these operations often resulted in public controversy—in some cases with the governments of the countries where the attacks occurred; in others, the issue was civilian casualties. Woods gives examples of these and deals at length with what he terms “prolonged virtual combat stress” (187) that affected the drone pilots during a targeted killing operation, especially when target identity was in doubt or involved a US citizen.

Sudden Justice concludes with a reminder that many countries already have their own armed drones and that terrorist groups are likely to acquire them. The challenge ahead, he suggests, lies in convincing others “not to follow

Washington's own rule book." (288) His warning is well documented; a path to his solution remains problematical.

Unmanned: Drones, Data, and the Illusion of Perfect Warfare begins with a review of the current state of remotely controlled weapon systems. At the time of 9/11, author William Arkin writes, there were "fewer than 200 unmanned aerial vehicles—drones." Today, the military possesses "in addition to the some 500 in the Predator class . . . well over 11,000 other kinds of drones." (4) There are also numerous unmanned systems—land and sea—controlled by each of the military services. Arkin points out, "the United States is not the sole owner of unmanned vehicles: 88 other nations also operate drones, and 54 nations manufacture their own." (5) As a consequence, he suggests, many nonmilitary observers foresee a "nightmare of spying, and killer robots and autonomous decisionmakers." In his judgment, this explains why the term "drone" has become "a sizzling curse word for some that invokes ethical failure and lawlessness." (6) In response to these critics, he points out that drone systems provide less risk and "ubiquitous surveillance and targeted killing that are necessary for security but also legal." Do the critics, he asks, "really want more risk . . . less precision . . . and more casualties?" (7)

Then, astonishingly, Arkin shoots down his own argument as "totally off the mark." (8) The real problem is with "drones and the Data Machine they serve." They are "the greatest threat to our national security, our safety, and our way of life." (18) *Unmanned* attempts to explain these views in a first-person narrative that is alternatively informative and quirky. The quirkiness derives from Arkin's insistence that "to understand drones you have to understand Gilgamesh," the main character in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, a 5,000-year-old literary work. Arkin devotes a chapter to the topic and then returns to it from time to time throughout the book. The connections remain obscure, however, and the story he tells of the life of the drone program is not enhanced by his references to *Gilgamesh*.

In the substantive parts of the book, Arkin tracks the development of drones and related unmanned vehicles that preceded the first operational remotely controlled

system, the Predator. He explains their characteristics in detail and provides many examples of their use in the Middle East against high-value targets—not all successful—and some not presented in the other books reviewed here. He also describes the high-level politics involved and the interservice turf battles as, for example, the fight between the Air Force and the Army for "absolute control of the drone program." The Army won and got what it needed—"intelligence." (161) But the theme of *Unmanned* that underlies all the factual and bureaucratic detail is the systemic automation involved, what Arkin calls the Data Machine, with "its vast collection of intelligence" and black boxes. This is the vital long-range threat, as he sees it, to the United States's entire system of national security that is becoming autonomous and unmanned; "even our foreign policy itself is unmanned." (254)

Whether *Unmanned's* forecast of an excessively automated future, as implied in the final chapter of the science fiction example, is a dilemma left to the reader. The facts of the drone program presented, however, are worth attention.

"There is something about drones that makes people crazy. Some demonize drones, denouncing them for causing civilian deaths or enabling long-distance killing even as they ignore that fact that the same (or worse) could be said of many other weapons delivery systems." (230) "For many Americans, drones make all the sense in the world." (42) These observations from two articles in *Drone Wars* hint at the range of public views on the topic. Editors and contributors Peter Bergen, of the New America Foundation, and University of Arizona professor Daniel Rothenberg point out that "drones are the iconic military technology of the current conflicts in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen." But while their unique characteristics and appearance "have captured the public imagination" they have also resulted in divisive debates. (1) The well written, thoughtful articles in *Drone Wars* weigh the military and civilian perspectives—American and foreign—on four of the principal categories associated with those debates: ground applications and consequences, legality and ethics, national security policy, and the future use of drones.

The impact of drones on civilians is a topic that pervades each category. A poignant account by “Adam Kahn” (a pseudonym), a Pakistani merchant in North Waziristan, conveys the effect drones have on the civilians who possess no direct connection to terrorism. At the other end of the civilian perspective spectrum, David Rohde, a former captive of Haqqani terrorists, records that, “My guards absolutely feared drones.” In a more general account of this issue, Sarah Holwinski discusses why civilians need to know more about the impact of drones on themselves. (42ff)

The topics of “targeted killings” and “assassination”—equally controversial issues—are addressed at length by William Banks, with an emphasis on their legality. Among other aspects discussed, in an attempt to remove ad hominem attacks from the debate, he suggests that the term “assassination” be applied to “unlawful killing” while reserving the term “targeted killing” for “premeditated acts of an individual by a government or its agents—which may, in fact, be permitted under US law.” (137)

Other important topics found in *Drone Wars* include a history of drone technology with implications for the future of warfare, a review of “The Decade of the Drone” with a chronology, a chapter on the misconceptions about drones and their uses, “the Predator effect,” and the drone dilemmas of modern warfare with the emergence of data-driven warfare.

Those seeking a balanced overview of this sensitive topic should read *Drone Wars*.

Despite the appearance of a Predator drone on the cover and the implications its subtitle, Scott Horton’s *Lords Of Secrecy: The National Security Elite and America’s Stealth Warfare* is a not book about drones. Its central theme is excessive secrecy in the executive branch, in general, and the CIA and NSA, in particular. The expression “lords of secrecy”—used throughout, to annoying excess—is Horton’s catchphrase for the government leaders who uphold and perpetuate unjustifiable secrecy practices. This is not to say that Horton, a human rights lawyer, opposes secrecy in general: he does acknowl-

edge “a legitimate, though limited, role for secrecy” in three areas—“advanced weapons sensitive systems . . . critical signals intelligence and cryptography . . . and the identity of covert and foreign informants.” (179)

Horton strives to establish a basis for his positions by invoking Athenian precedents, the views of several German philosophers, and references to former US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The practical issues Horton discusses include the CIA conflict with the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence over the rendition and enhanced interrogation programs, NSA and the Snowden leaks; the “conflict between whistleblowers and the lords of secrecy” and the growth “of authority and control of the lords of secrecy”; and the threat that drones “may trigger broader and more sustained warfare.” (24–5)

In his chapter on drones, Horton contends that “the lords of secrecy have chosen a favorite weapon that helps identify and define their power. It is the Predator drone.” The one attribute of the drone that makes this possible is that “it is a consummately secret weapon.” (110) “Who doesn’t know about drone warfare? The people of the United States.” (122) This assertion may surprise those who have read some of the books reviewed above.

Horton argues that while drones seem to offer the possibility of “zero-casualty war” their use may in fact “create a slippery slope leading to continual or wider wars.” Moreover, there is the risk of civilian casualties or as Horton puts it, “the devaluation of noncombatants.” (112) From a legal perspective, he writes, “drones open the prospect for a new kind of war that includes targeted killings” that he categorizes as “extrajudicial,” far away from “ground or naval forces.” Other disadvantages include political difficulties with nations like Pakistan and the possibility that other nations will acquire similar capabilities. But, he asserts, the “most disquieting aspect of the drone program has to do with [the] secrecy” surrounding the drone program, especially in the case of “individual attacks” (114) and the CIA’s putatively covert role in the post-9/11 warfare. Without suggesting any alternatives to current practices (beyond more transparency), he concludes, “the only real explanation that emerges is

that the use of drone for sustained covert military activity serves the interests of the lords of secrecy.” (128)

While *Lords Of Secrecy* raises some genuine concerns regarding government secrecy, readers may well question Horton’s grasp of the drone program.

GENERAL

Avoiding Armageddon: America, India, and Pakistan to the Brink and Back, by Bruce Riedel. (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2013) 230 pp., endnotes, index.

India and Pakistan have fought four wars with each other and came close to another after the Pakistani attack on Mumbai in November 2011. Both are nuclear powers. In *Avoiding Armageddon*, Bruce Riedel, a former senior CIA analyst and South Asia advisor to four presidents, discusses the origins and evolution of the complex Indian-Pakistani relationship and the sometimes less than harmonious association of the United States with both nations.

Riedel begins by examining the attack on Mumbai on 26–29 November 2008 by the Pakistani terrorist group, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) that was manipulated by al-Qa’ida in hopes of provoking a war that would disrupt “the US campaign to defeat al-Qa’ida.” (13) This was not the only plan bin Ladin had in mind that stirred US interests. Riedel cites documents captured during the raid that killed bin Ladin, which CIA analysis revealed contained “plans to assassinate President Obama.” (14) Thus the Mumbai attack created circumstances that required increased US attention to the Pakistani-Indian relationship.

Drawing on his own extensive experience with both countries, Riedel discusses the obsessive concerns Pakistan—the more provocative of the two—has about India and the political consequences of these concerns.

He reviews the successive Pakistani dictatorships from the end of WW II to the present and their often difficult interactions—diplomatic, military, and eventually the drone program—with each US administration, especially during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the subsequent US post-9/11 operations there. He also describes the ever-increasing tensions created by both countries due to their nuclear weapons programs and the controversy over Kashmir. These, in turn, created problems with other players in South Asia, the Middle East, and even China and Saudi Arabia.

Looking to the future, Riedel sees some hope. US relations with India have improved, in part due to the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement. (162ff) Pakistan now has an elected government, and the “Pakistanis themselves are increasingly fed up with political gridlock.” (184) The United States, Riedel suggests, can help by using diplomacy to assist in resolving the central conflict over Kashmir, and he offers some recommendations toward this end.

Avoiding Armageddon is a forceful examination of a serious world problem that has not received adequate attention. Riedel makes a strong case that the potential for nuclear catastrophe justifies forceful action.

National Intelligence and Science: Beyond the Great Divide in Analysis and Policy, by Wilhelm Agrell and Gregory Treverton. (Oxford University Press, 2015) 219 pp., footnotes, bibliography, index.

Wilhelm Agrell served with Swedish intelligence in the Middle East and is now a professor of intelligence analysis at Lund University, Sweden. Gregory Treverton, formerly with RAND Corporation, is a visiting scholar at

the Swedish National Defense College and also Chairman of the National Intelligence Council in the United States. In *National Intelligence and Science* the authors discuss a factor common to intelligence and science—“remarkably

similar and interlinked domains”—knowledge production. This is not to say the two domains have identical objectives. Scientists seek knowledge for knowledge’s sake without considering practical applications. Intelligence analysts, on the other hand, pursue knowledge to answer questions relating to global threats. Yet both function in an atmosphere of uncertainty, balancing constant demands for transparency while working to minimize failures and gain public confidence. However, the authors suggest that academia and intelligence are also “separated by a deep political, cultural, and epistemological divide . . . and another problematical divide . . . caused by overstated uncertainty and loss of trust”; (3) these are considered in detail.

Put another way, while many forces stimulating scientists and analysts in the production of knowledge differ, those methods employed by the scientist are worth considering for use by the analyst. The authors, therefore, look beyond the traditional intelligence model and investigate analysis “as one of several modes of knowledge production for action, modes not limited to intelligence but increasingly transcending other fields including . . . the public role of science.” Following this path, they suggest, may lead “far beyond traditional boundaries and defini-

tions . . . to the discovery of approaches and methods” that could fundamentally “alter the existing security intelligence domain.” (4) The authors envision “a less distinct dividing line between collection and analysis” and even a possibility in which “collection becomes analysis and separate roles cease to have any meaning.” (5)

In less elevated rhetoric, the authors explain the “aim of the book is how the concepts of relevance and uncertainty in intelligence and science to policy have developed and converged.” (9) They see intelligence analysis as a system in transition; the book’s subsequent chapters deal with examples in intelligence analysis and various scientific disciplines that indicate that a process of convergence is occurring. These include the role of social media, and the problems of failures, uncertainty, client relations, and politicization. Looking to the future, they foresee “the need for the development of hybrid organizations” where experts “interact on a more continuous and integrated basis.” (197)

National Intelligence and Science is an intellectual challenge. It offers new thinking for those concerned with how analysis needs to evolve while meeting the demands of the present.

The New Spymasters: Inside Espionage from the Cold War to Global Terror, by Stephen Grey. (St. Martin’s Press, 2015) 349 pp., endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

British journalist Stephen Grey’s investigations of spies and secret agents have uncovered some new truths about an old profession—at least that is the message he seeks to convey in *The New Spymasters*. The book begins with a summary of the CIA catastrophe in Khost, Afghanistan, where a double agent suicide bomber killed seven CIA officers, a Jordanian intelligence officer, and an Afghan driver. It was, writes Grey, “a proof-of-life signal” that “the spy game was not over.” (2) Returning to this theme later, he writes, “The secret agent is not dead—far from it. For all his faults, attempts to write off the agent were misguided and misinformed. As will become clear, the nature of spies and the value of human intelligence, had [sic] been misunderstood from the beginning. First rule of intelligence: forget everything

you know.” (16) Contemplating these pronouncements one might reasonably ask, “Who said ‘the spy game was over’, the ‘secret agent was dead’, and where did the ‘first rule’ come from?” Grey doesn’t elaborate, but he does use the term “spymasters” frequently as if it were part of the professional lexicon, which it is not.

As a first step to make things clear and establish what spies do, Grey reviews some classic MI6, MI5, and CIA espionage cases from the Bolshevik Revolution to the end of the Cold War. He includes the exploits of Sidney Reilly; Cambridge spies—incorrectly calling Philby and Blunt double agents; the ‘Steak Knife’ [sic] (actually STAKEKNIFE) case against the IRA; an operation in Cyprus; and some exemplars from Marks Wolf’s East

German foreign intelligence agency. He suggests that these cases and others indicate that “the nature of the spy business is frequently portrayed wrongly [and] so, too, is the character of the Cold War’s real warriors—the intelligence officers at the heart of the business.” (49) Just what Grey meant by “character of the Cold War warrior” is never made clear. As an example of the incorrect portrayal of the nature of the business, he considers the recruitment process often depicted in memoirs and novels as the slow, careful development of potential agents until they consent to cooperate. Citing former CIA officer Milt Bearden, Grey argues that since most agents were walk-ins (though he does cite some exceptions), “The heart of the business was not recruiting, but rather running spies the handling of active agents. . . to securely handle people in Moscow under the noses” of the KGB. (53) Few would argue with Bearden’s assessment, but Grey’s conclusion that it constitutes a real change in “the nature of the spy business” is questionable and unsubstantiated.

With this pre-9/11 background, *The New Spymasters* takes a look at the post-9/11 world of espionage. He discusses the difficulties associated with recruiting and handling terrorist agents, and what happens when one is a fabricator, as in the CURVEBALL case. He also adds a more detailed account of the Khost incident, and then comments on the controversial rendition and drone programs, pointing out how technology has influenced the war on terror.

By way of comparison, he mentions the improvements in technical intelligence since WW II. Before the digital age, he writes, “over several decades, the CIA were sent a copy of every telegram in and out of the United States. All overseas phone lines were at one point tapped.” (259) With modern technology, he suggests, this is no longer necessary. This out-of-the-blue, unsourced allegation suggests his comprehension of CIA’s mission and capabilities needs some major fine tuning. This is not the only questionable, if not inaccurate, statement in the

book. For example, William Donovan did not “found the CIA”—though he did propose such an agency. (35) Then Grey’s quote of what was said about Kim Philby at St. Ermin’s Hotel; it is at best literary license, since there is no evidence that it happened. (38) Also the statement that Blunt was spying on MI5 for the Soviets in the 1930s is inaccurate; he didn’t join MI5 until June 1940. (44) And MI5 officer Michael Bettany never tried “to sell secrets to the Soviet embassy in London.” He offered the secrets for free, as Gordievsky explained. (68)

In general uncertain sourcing is a problem throughout *The New Spymasters*. Grey frequently cites anonymous intelligence officers, some making astounding claims. For example, the “former CIA chief of station” who told Grey that “before the Yom Kipper War of 1973, an agent had obtained for him all of Egypt and Syria’s invasion plans” but his superiors refused to accept the report, though after the war he was proved correct. (42)

The New Spymasters concludes with some rambling observations on why “spies and spymasters had to become a different breed, because the world is changing.” (276) Just what he means by this is unclear, though it invokes globalization, greater cultural understanding, technology, social diversity, and universal values as considerations. While these factors may influence how the intelligence officer does his job, Grey does not seem to understand that these factors are not new and the fundamentals of the business remain unchanged. Sometimes Grey’s observations amount to non sequiturs: “When intelligence is absent, spying and spies are the last thing you need.” (289) He adds, “If spying is the only way to get a secret, what secrets are really worth stealing?” (292)

For those seeking one man’s introductory perspective on intelligence in today’s world, *The New Spymasters* meets that need. But it should be treated as the first, not the last, word.

The NSA Report: Liberty and Security in a Changing World, by Richard A. Clarke, Michael J. Morell, Geoffrey R. Stone, Cass R. Sunstein, and Peter Swire. (Princeton University Press, 2014) 239 pp., appendices, glossary, index.

On 27 August 2013, in response to the furor created by the unauthorized release of NSA documents by Edward Snowden, President Barack Obama announced the formation of the Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technologies. The group's mission was to recommend actions that would permit the Intelligence Community to meet its national security obligations while protecting the public's privacy concerns. The group was made up of Richard Clarke, a former White House national security advisor; Michael Morell, the former deputy director of CIA; Edward Levi, a law professor at the University of Chicago; Cass Sunstein, a professor at Harvard University; and Peter Swire, a professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Following the precedent of most government documents, *The NSA Report* is something of a literary brick. Nevertheless, it presents a succinct summary of the country's national security threats—terrorism, WMD proliferation, cyber espionage, and warfare—and NSA's role in dealing with them while simultaneously protecting public privacy

and civil liberties. On the latter point, the report assumes that these “fundamental values have at times been eroded by excessive intelligence collection” (xv) and makes 46 recommendations intended to correct the problem. The recommendations cover personal surveillance, organizational reform, global security issues, the collection and protection of data, and managing the associated risks.

For those wanting a quick look at the recommendations, there is a section listing each one without any analysis of the justification involved. This is followed by a chapter summarizing the historical lessons that led to the collection of communications data, and the impact of 9/11. The balance of the report repeats each recommendation and adds the supporting rationale. For example, they explain the reasons for recommending that communications data be held by private firms.

The NSA Report recommends many changes intended to protect national security and personal privacy. Whether they will accomplish both must await another report.

Open Source Intelligence in the Twenty-First Century: New Approaches and Opportunities, edited by Christopher Hobbs, Matthew Moran, and Daniel Salisbury. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 191 pp., end of chapter notes, index.

Open source intelligence or OSINT is commonly thought of as all information in the public domain. Allen Dulles contributed to this view in his 1947 Senate testimony when he said the “proper analysis of intelligence obtainable by these overt, normal, and aboveboard means would supply us with over 80 percent, I should estimate, of the information required for the guidance of our national policy.”^a A more accurate formulation would have reversed the terms “intelligence” and “information.” *Open Source Intelligence in the Twenty-First Century* deals with many

aspects of OSINT in a four-part study with nine contributions by academics and former intelligence officers.

Part One begins with an assessment of the role and value of OSINT. It weighs the utility of numerical measures of OSINT's contribution that range from Dulles's 80 percent to a high of 98 percent by other authorities, adding that none explain how intelligence units should be used—articles, bits, time, resources, facts? An alternative qualitative approach to OSINT's contribution that avoids the percentage ambiguity is suggested. But no mention is made of the effort required to validate OSINT. Sometimes public reports on an event or topic differ; analysts must decide which is correct. OSINT is not off-the-shelf intelligence.

a. US Senate Armed Services Committee on Armed Services, Hearings on the National Defense Establishment, 1st Session, 1947, p. 526.

Then comes a much-needed new “INT”: SOC-MINT, or social media intelligence. If fact, this makes sense since social networks and the Internet comprise such a large part of today’s communication options. The methods, legalities, potential benefits, and impact of cyber security are considered.

Other topics include the role of OSINT in proliferation analysis and the potential for illicit trade in nuclear materi-

als, and OSINT’s contribution to humanitarian crises and counterterrorism. The discussion of the latter topic includes the use of social media in monitoring the traffic between militant groups by civilian agencies and the military.

Open Source Intelligence in the Twenty-First Century is well documented and informative. It leaves no doubt that OSINT plays an important role while stressing the futility of seeking to quantitatively measure its contribution.

HISTORICAL

Back Channel To Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations Between Washington and Havana, by William M. LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh. (The University of North Carolina Press, 2014) 524 pp., endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

American University professor William LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh, director of the Cuba documentation project at the National Security Archive, conclude their history of negotiations between Washington and Havana with suggestions for President Obama, should he choose to seek to improve or even normalize relations with the present or a successor government. Whether the president took their advice in doing just that may never be known. What is known, however, is that he is not the first president to consider reaching out to Cuba with better relations in mind. “Every president since Eisenhower has engaged in some form of dialogue with Castro and his representatives . . . [and] has seen some advantage in talking to Cuba.” (2) *Back Channel To Cuba* “presents a comprehensive chronicle of dialogues since 1959,” both secret and public. (3)

While some of the contacts produced tangible results, most did not. Key sticking points on the Cuban side included, inter alia, Cuba’s insistence that the United States lift its economic embargo, its relationship with the Soviet Union, and various Latin America nations, and Castro’s need to blame the United States

for Cuba’s domestic problems. Factors on the US side included the refusal to recognize Cuba’s legitimacy, the impact on domestic politics created by Cuban refugees, human rights issues, and from time to time Cuba’s espionage operations in the United States.

One of the early meetings they discuss occurred during the Eisenhower administration, when Castro met in New York City with CIA representative Gerry Droller (also known as Frank Bender, a later participant in the Bay of Pigs operation). During the Kennedy administration, Britain acted to improve relations and helped arrange talks. (108) In the Nixon administration, Secretary of State Rogers suggested the “US attempt ‘baseball diplomacy’ to advance relations with Cuba.” (135) Most of the many attempts at dialogue presented are more substantive and complicated.

The authors base their work on formerly-classified documents and interviews with participants, including Fidel Castro and President Carter. The result is a rich and timely review of the background to the normalization recently achieved.

Enemy Amongst Trojans: A Soviet Spy at USC, by Mike Gruntman. (Figueroa Press, 2010) 76 pp., endnotes, bibliography, photos, appendix, index.

Shortly after the defection on 5 September 1954 of Igor Gouzenko, a GRU code clerk at the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, Samuel Witzak, an instructor at the University of Southern California, disappeared from a beach in Southern California, never to be seen again. Later his wife disappeared as well. In a 1952 Senate report, he was identified as a Soviet spy; his name had surfaced in the Venona decrypts. The FBI search for Witzak is described in the memoirs of FBI special agent Robert Lamphere. The FBI had learned Witzak had entered the United States from Canada on a false passport and suspected Witzak was not his true name. Later the FBI was able to trace some of

Witzak's former agents, but never learned what happened to him. *Enemy Amongst Trojans* tells the rest of the story.

Recent document releases in Britain and Russia, one showing Kim Philby reported on him, identify Witzak as "Iosif Litvin" and explain what happened to him after returning to the Soviet Union. Litvin's GRU career ended during a purge of Jews, but he survived that, later becoming a translator of American books on intelligence.

Mike Gruntman, an astronautics professor at USC, has written an interesting and succinct account of this case that heretofore escaped the attention of other espionage academics. A nice contribution to the literature.

The Forgotten Spy: The Untold Story of Stalin's First British Mole, by Nick Barratt. (Blink Publishing, 2015) 288 pp., endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

In 2002, the British National Archives (BNA) released the MI5 files on Ernest Holloway Oldham, a one-time Foreign Office code clerk and Soviet agent from August 1929 until his suicide in 1933. Nick Barratt, a BNA historian and teaching fellow at the University of Dundee, was motivated by more than curiosity when he decided to study the case—Oldham was Barratt's great uncle. *The Forgotten Spy* is the most complete account of the case published to date.

The qualifier "most complete" is necessary since Oldham was not, in fact, a forgotten spy. A brief, somewhat garbled account appeared in 1990, followed by an accurate summary in the Mitrokhin

Archive.^{a,b} A still more detailed account by Emil Draitser, that Barratt acknowledges, appeared in 2010.^c

While the previous treatments concentrate on Oldham's espionage, Barratt's story covers his entire life and the historical context in which he lived. In this way, he implicitly addresses the question of motivation. Oldham was a mediocre student who didn't do well in the Foreign Office entrance examinations and was hired in part because of family influence. He nevertheless did well enough to survive. During WW I he served in the trenches as an infantry officer and, at one point, applied for an

a. Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *The KGB: The Inside Story of Its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev* (Harper-Collins, 1990). A lengthy, slightly muddled account had appeared in 1986 but only used Oldham's codename, though his handlers were correctly identified. See Robert Crowley and William Corson, *The New KGB: Engine of Soviet Power* (William Morrow, 1996).

b. Christopher Andrew and Vasli Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (The Penguin Press, 1999).

c. Emil Draitser, *Stalin's Romeo Spy: The Remarkable Rise and Fall of the KGB's Most Daring Operative* (Northwestern University Press, 2010).

intelligence officer assignment but was not selected. He returned to the Foreign Office at the end of hostilities and established a reputation of reliable performance while assigned to duties at the Paris Peace Conference. By now fluent in Spanish, French, Italian, and German, he applied for the consular service, but was rejected with the designation “no sufficient brains” for diplomatic service. (82) But he was accepted into the new communications department that, among other functions, was concerned with codes. He did well and began thinking of “stepping up in the world,” even joining a London club. (110) It was about this time that he married a widow with some money and his lifestyle improved; but after some bad stock investments, in an effort to avoid dismissal, he went to the Soviet embassy in Paris and, identifying himself as “Charlie Scott,” a typesetter in charge of printing copies of deciphered diplomatic dispatches, offered to sell them.

Barratt tells how the Soviets discovered his real identity and pressured him into a continuing relationship that soon involved Oldham’s wife, Lucy. When a series of Soviet defectors revealed the existence of “Mr. Scott,” the Foreign Office did its own investigation. Oldham became suspect, and was placed under surveillance, and he was dismissed from the Foreign Office without a pension. Still, the Soviets pressured the now-desperate Oldham to obtain more codes and to recommend a replacement. Oldham made an attempt to satisfy their demands, even breaking into the Foreign Office to obtain the codes. When MI5 learned of his efforts, the pressure increased—but before they could arrest him, Oldham committed suicide.

The Forgotten Spy ranks the Oldham case with the Cambridge spy ring, a judgment that is difficult to accept since Barratt provides no damage assessment. But it is an interesting case, well told, and goes a way toward filling a gap in espionage history.

Hayek: A Collaborative Biography—Part III Fraud, Fascism, and Free Market Religion, by Robert Leeson. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) 302 pp., end of chapter notes, index.

In 1969, British author Donald McCormick began a series of intelligence services histories, all published under the name of Richard Deacon. The first, *A History of the British Secret Service*, was highly recommended by *Los Angeles Times* book critic Robert Kirsh, “for those addicted to spy fiction.”^a Deacon’s 1972 *A History of the Russian Secret Service* contained a number of factual errors, such as the inclusion of a portrait Byzantine Emperor John VIII mislabeled as Ivan the Terrible.^b A lengthy 1975 review, “A History of the Chinese Secret Service” in *Studies in Intelligence* noted that Deacon’s “penchant for hyperbole and even fabrication tends to negate whatever pretensions for authenticity the book might otherwise have had.”^c Despite these hints of unscholarly behavior, Deacon’s works sold well and were frequently cited in books and papers.

And now, in his unwieldy entitled *Hayek: A Collaborative Biography: Part III Fraud, Fascism, and Free Market Religion*, Stanford professor Robert Leeson and eight other contributors have revisited Deacon’s enormous corpus of works, many written under his true name, with a view to putting his reputation straight. They tell a depressing story. Leeson notes that beyond intelligence, the range of “Deacon-McCormick’s” writing includes biographies, a guide to erotic literature, witchcraft, and UFOs. (10)

Although Leeson explains that some of Deacon’s “lies” (11) influenced the writings of economist Friedrich Hayek, six of the 14 articles present a detailed analysis of his intelligence books and the many errors, fabrications, and unjustified assertions they contained. The bottom line is that Deacon was not averse to invention, exaggeration, and fraud; his contributions should not be accepted as reliable sources.

a. *Los Angeles Times*, 8 May 1970.

b. Anonymous, *London Times Literary Review*, 28 July 1972.

c. Stanley Bergman, “Review of *A History of the Chinese Secret Service*,” *Studies in Intelligence* 19, no. 1 (1975): 49–54. Available from the National Archives at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7283906>.

Historical Dictionary of International Intelligence, second edition, by Nigel West. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015) 462 pp., bibliography, index.

While most intelligence operations would seem at first glance to have an international component, intelligence historian Nigel West has chosen cases where the international element is dominant. This new edition of the *Historical Dictionary of International Intelligence* has 130 additional pages that include events that occurred since 2005, when the first edition was published. Examples include the 10 SVR sleeper agents arrested in the United States, the Litvinenko polonium poison case in London, the entry on drones, the raid that killed Usama Bin Ladin, an entry on the Ukraine and its intelligence service, plus a number of entries on terrorism. Many other items have been updated. These include the Peter Lee, Philby, and Pollard cases, and the entries on Northern Ireland, the CIA, Mossad, SVR, and most other intelligence services.

A few errors have crept in. Penkovsky was not “rebuffed as a likely provocation” (19)—the officer sent to make contact just failed. Not all those listed under the heading DCI held that post, and Michael Morrell was the acting D/CIA. And Rufina Philby was the fourth, not third, of Kim Philby’s wives. (269)

As has become a tradition with West’s historical dictionaries, this one has a fine and expanded bibliography preceded by an interesting, updated essay. Despite the publisher’s continued refusal to include source citations, this is a solid point of departure for scholars and interested readers.

Observer: The Colonel George Trofimoff Story, The Tale of America’s Highest-ranking Military Officer Convicted of Spying, by Glen Aaron. (CreateSpace, 2015) 560 pp., bibliography, appendices.

It was no accident that Glen Aaron spent a year as the late George Trofimoff’s cellmate. Trofimoff knew Aaron had been a lawyer before being sent to prison for two years, and he wanted to tell his story to someone with legal experience who might help him get a new trial. Aaron listened, says he believed Trofimoff, tried to help, but failed.

Trofimoff was convicted in June 2001 of spying for the Soviet and the Russian intelligence services, thanks in part to the revelations of Vasili Mitrokhin, a spectacular sting operation by the FBI, and the testimony of former KGB general Oleg Kalugin. Trofi-

moff’s rationalized version of events was that he had been the victim of a set-up and Kalugin’s perjury.

As Aaron ends his account, he mentions that, toward the end of their time together, Trofimoff confessed that in an effort to help his brother—an official of the Russian orthodox church—he had in fact passed a few harmless documents to the KGB: just a gesture of brotherhood.

There is nothing in this undocumented book that contradicts the government’s case or suggests in any way that Trofimoff was not guilty. Don’t be taken in.

Sharing The Secret: A History of the Intelligence Corps 1940-2010, by Nick Van Der Bijl. (Sword & Pen Books, Ltd., 2013) 420 pp., bibliography, appendices, photos, index.

The British Army Intelligence Corps (IC) was created on 18 July 1940, nearly a year after the start of WW II. Previously, although there was a director of military intelligence on the general staff, intelligence units, staffs, and schools had been formed and deployed as needed during a conflict.

Sharing The Secret explains what provoked the change. As background, it provides a chronological history covering the pre-World War II days, and the Corps’ wartime and peacetime missions, concluding with the post-9/11 era.

Although author and former Intelligence Corps member Nick Van Der Bijl writes that the book is not a regimental history, it often reads like one. The book is a profusion of names, unit designations, and assignment details, and it is sometimes hard to understand command-subordination relationships. Thus, the US reader may find the discussions of operational details more valuable. Besides the usual tactical duties, IC units performed a variety of functions that mirrored their civilian counterparts. These included military security, technical intelligence, counterespionage, photointerpretation, wireless interception, support to the Special Operations Executive during WWII, and support to counterterrorist operations in Ireland during what he calls the coalition years in the Middle East.

IC elements have served worldwide and Van Der Bijl describes many in detail. For example, intelligence officers served in Palestine during the British Mandate period and were involved in the provocation that resulted in the Irgun attack on the King David Hotel in Tel Aviv [sic]—actually Jerusalem. (199) A more positive story concerned the British Military Mission (BRIXMIS) that conducted air, land, and photographic operations against the Soviets in East Berlin and East Germany. The efforts of the East German military intelligence service (called Narks) to inhibit collection—sometimes resorting to crashing their cars—proved futile in the long run.

Sharing The Secret has an impressive story to tell and tells it well.

Spies, Scouts, and Secrets in the Gettysburg Campaign: How the Critical Role of Intelligence Impacted the Outcome of Lee's Invasion of the North, June–July, 1863, by Thomas Ryan. (Savas Beatie, LLC) 481 pp., footnotes, bibliography, photos, maps, index.

Most Civil War histories and memoirs that discuss the Battle of Gettysburg are concerned with the strategy and tactics of the battle and its impact on the politics of the war. Some do mention the problems created for General Lee when he lost contact with his cavalry commander, General Jeb Stuart, before the battle began. And some also discuss the role of scouts and the contribution of General Longstreet's personal civilian agent, Henry Harrison.

Spies, Scouts, and Secrets in the Gettysburg Campaign takes a different approach; it focuses on the intelligence aspects of the campaign from the Battle of Chancellorsville to Lee's retreat in defeat, back across the Potomac River.

Civil War historian Thomas Ryan describes how intelligence was organized and employed by the northern and southern generals and the influence it had on the outcome. The north created the Bureau of Military Information (BMI)—the first organization of its kind in the US military—to collect and analyze intelligence for the commander, MG Joseph Hooker, and later General George Meade. The BMI employed agents, the Signal Corps, the Balloon Corps, the US Military Telegraph Service, the Cavalry, and special reconnaissance and sharpshooter units. It

also prescribed mandatory practices to be followed at all levels when interrogating deserters, defectors, and POWs. The South also employed many of these techniques. But, with the exception of its Signal Corps, they were less formalized and depended too heavily on the cavalry for their implementation. General Lee did not create a "BMI" and was, in effect, his own intelligence analyst.

Ryan shows how Lee employed deception to prevent Hooker from realizing he was going to invade the North, and how Hooker, who didn't always accept the intelligence from his BMI, eventually learned what was happening. Both generals had major difficulties from their cavalry commanders. Lee had to revise his original objective—to attack into Pennsylvania—after he lost contact with Stuart, who failed to keep track of the Union Army. Hooker's cavalry commander, BG Alfred Pleasanton, often failed to follow orders and his reports on Lee's Army were frequently erroneous, a factor contributing to Hooker's resignation and the appointment of General Meade as Union commander.

Spies, Scouts, and Secrets in the Gettysburg Campaign illuminates how intelligence was collected and applied in

more detail than any other book on the entire Gettysburg campaign. It is a valuable contribution to Civil War history.

A Very Dangerous Woman: The Lives, Loves and Lies of Russia's Most Seductive Spy, by Deborah McDonald and Jeremy Dronfield. (Oneworld Publications, 2015) 400 pp., endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

In the early days of the Bolshevik Revolution, before Britain had recognized Lenin's government, the Foreign Office dispatched Russian-speaking Robert Bruce Lockhart to head what was called the British Mission in St. Petersburg. Within a year, Lockhart had joined with Sidney Reilly in a failed plot to overthrow the Bolsheviks, only to be arrested and sent to Lubyanka by the Cheka, Lenin's secret police. Initially threatened with death, he was unexpectedly transferred to the Kremlin, where conditions improved, thanks to the efforts of Madam Maria von Benckendorff—known to her friends as Moura, with whom he had been having a passionate affair. Moura had secured his transfer after a private meeting with the deputy head of the Cheka, Yakov Peters, for whom she had been spying on Lockhart. What Peters didn't know was that Lockhart had sent her to Peters in the first place, to offer to spy on Lockhart and thus penetrate the Cheka. When Lockhart was exchanged for the Bolshevik minister to Britain, Moura, now pregnant by Lockhart, had to remain in Moscow and began to plan a reunion in London. *A Very Dangerous Woman* tells the story of her long, crooked path to London and what she found when she arrived.

During Moura's decade-long journey, her husband was mysteriously murdered, she began affairs with Maxim Gorky and H. G. Wells, she continued cooperation with the Cheka, she married Baron Nikolai Budberg, and she had occasional rendezvous with Lockhart. She reached Britain in September 1929, aged 37, with the help of an old MI6 friend, where the

Security Service (MI5) suspected her of being a Soviet agent and monitored her phone calls and mail.

The authors deal with each of her adventures at great length, especially her years in London where her children joined her. She soon became famous for her weekly celebrity salons attended by the elite of society. Anthony Blunt and Guy Burgess were frequent guests, as were publishers, actors, writers, British politicians, and Soviet diplomats who enjoyed her hospitality. At the same time, she made frequent trips to see Gorky until his death in the Soviet Union, where she met Stalin, and thus came under closer MI5 scrutiny. When WW II began, MI5 assigned their Russian-speaking agent, Klop Ustinov—Peter Ustinov's father—to monitor her. Klop would eventually recruit her as an MI5 source. Throughout this period she also continued her affair with Wells—often appearing with him as a hostess at book publishing events—and her meetings with Lockhart, until both died.

Whether Baroness Budberg was the dangerous woman MI5 made out is never fully resolved by the authors. In their well-written biography, based on recently released MI5 records, family letters, and unpublished memoirs, they present a convincing portrait of a talented survivor. Reduced to poverty in her final years, she struggled to maintain her way of life until her death in 1974.

A Very Dangerous Woman reads like a Russian novel, centered on a life whose truth is stranger than fiction.

