Spying in America: Espionage from the Revolutionary War to the Dawn of the Cold War

Michael J. Sulick (Georgetown University Press, 2012), 320 pp.

American Spies: Espionage against the United States from the Cold War to the Present

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Reviewed by Clayton Laurie

Faced with teaching courses on intelligence history without adequate textbooks, Michael J. Sulick decided to write his own—two, in fact. And unlike many who claim to have written authoritative accounts of what intelligence agencies do or have done, Sulick—a retired 28-year veteran of the Central Intelligence Agency who had served as its chief of counterintelligence and director of the National Clandestine Service—is, in fact, an authority. In these books, he has examined a broad expanse of espionage history as one who has been involved in modern cases, many of which bear striking resemblances to episodes of the past. Together, these two volumes provide a wonderful survey of the history of spying as practiced by the United States, penned by an engaging author who knows of what he writes.

Spying in America covers the 180 years from the Revolutionary War to the early years of the Cold War, ending around the time of CIA's founding in 1947. It treats some 40 cases, "based on importance…or relevance to a host of issues regarding espionage in American history." (ix) A*merican Spies* describes 60 cases between the early Cold War and the Wikileaks exposures of 2010. Although Sulick recognizes that these works "can serve as little more than an introduction to the history of espionage," (xi) his selections cover all eras and the most notorious spy cases in each—and some more obscure episodes as well.

Sulick's treatment of the 100 cases in both books will leave readers with the disturbing realization that espionage against the United States—by friend and foe alike—has always occurred and will always remain, whether in war or in peace. Indeed, as he notes near the end of *American Spies*, some 20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, an estimated 140 foreign intelligence services still spy on the United States.

All of the names familiar to intelligence historians are here. In the first volume are Arnold and Andre; Pinkerton, Van Lew, and Greenhow; Hiss and Chambers; and Bentley, Coplon, Philby, and Rosenberg. The Walkers, Montes, Ames, and Hanssen appear in the second. Lesser-known spies and traitors covered are long-forgotten individuals like Karl Boy-Ed, Franz von Papen, Tyler Kent, Sarah Emma Edmonds, and William Sebold. Also treated are spies in private firms, military enlisted men, and intelligence officers who committed treason during the Cold War on behalf of the USSR and Eastern Bloc services. Throughout, Sulick shows that every military service and intelligence agency in each era has fallen victim to spies of both sexes.

Sulick has done more than just compile vignettes. He has used these histories to explore and categorize motives for treason: money, ego, revenge, romance, ideological sympathy, dual loyalties, or just simple thrill. In each story, Sulick identifies the key elements: nationality of spy and sponsor, motivations, recruitment and handling, secrets stolen, damage done, and exposure and punishment.

Sulick demonstrates that prime motivations for spying have changed over time. During the "Golden Age" of Soviet espionage in America in the 1930s and 1940s, for example, many spies committed treason for ideological reasons, seeing the USSR as a true worker's paradise and communism as the wave of the future. Spies so motivated seem to be harder to detect, as was the case with a more modern example of this type, Ana Montes of the Defense Intelligence Agency, who evaded detection for a long time because, Sulick maintains, she accepted no money for the secrets she divulged to Cuba. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, most Americans spied simply for money—John Walker laughed at his Soviet handler when he explained that his treachery would help advance world communism for the betterment of mankind and world peace. Indeed, while greed and venality seem to mark most Cold War cases, the spies for Cuba—Montes, as well as the State Department's Kendall Myers and his wife, Gwendolyn —demonstrate that ideology still motivates.

Sulick shows that Americans have always been vulnerable to recruitment and targeting, even though most consider committing espionage distasteful to a democracy and alien to the values of the New World. Worse, Americans tend to assume that others share their views. Sulick makes this point by quoting former CIA counterintelligence officer Paul Redmond, who has asserted that Americans seem to have a "national capacity for naiveté" (1:2) towards espionage whether it occurred two centuries ago or is ongoing today.

One effect of such attitudes, Sulick suggests, is that stealing secrets in an open society has always been easy because espionage threats are recognized too late. In the vast majority of the cases Sulick recounts, political and military leaders and former coworkers of spies are typically as surprised as the public and react in utter disbelief when known and trusted individuals turn out to be traitors. Sulick shows, however, that in each case, "red flags" were present. Also contributing to the surprise is the feast-or-famine nature of threats, which has led to leaders and counterintelligence officials taking their "eyes off the ball" until a war or crisis erupts or treason is exposed.

Sulick suggests another contributor to this innate lack of public awareness: geography. Unlike the old world the colonists left, the United States remained an isolated continental power until the early 20th century, secured by vast oceans.

Sulick also believes that Americans are vulnerable due to the very qualities that make them unique—they enjoy and expect a high degree of personal liberty and view themselves and their place in the world much differently from any other people. Foreign stereotyping of Americans as open, trusting, unassuming, gregarious, and prone to view all as potential friends rather than foes, Sulick maintains, makes Americans attractive to those hoping to exploit them. The openness and independence Americans enjoy not only make them targets, Sulick explains, but also make them slow to recognize or act against dangers in their midst. Traditionally distrustful of measures that threaten personal liberty, privacy, and freedom, Americans, Sulick suggests, frequently react negatively to government moves against those deemed potentially disloyal or to perceived heavy-handedness or intrusiveness in uncovering conspiracies. He makes his case by pointing to such reactions in almost all periods between the American Revolution and the Vietnam War.

Counterintelligence specialists have always known that a delicate balance exists between security measures and civil liberties. They also know they will always face disbelievers, even long after a traitor is exposed, prosecuted, and convicted. Indeed, Sulick shows how recent scholarship has proven that many of those whose guilt has been hotly debated were, in fact, guilty and the evidence so compelling that only the most obtuse or ideologically biased could continue to question the allegations. The USSR did indeed enlist Alger Hiss, the Rosenbergs, Harry Dexter White, Harry Gold, and many others to spy on the United States. The Communist Party USA, in spite of leader Gus Hall's repeated denials, did receive funds directly from the Soviet Union. Yet as Sulick claims, the post-World War I Palmer raids, which became synonymous in the minds of many with political and racial persecution, were the reason it took until 1939 for President Franklin D. Roosevelt to assign counterespionage activities to the FBI—160 years after the nation's founding. Later Cold War efforts to act against those deemed a threat encountered similar naysayers and political opposition.

The 60 cases since 1947 covered in *American Spies* seem dark and sinister in comparison to the quaint epi-

sodes covered in *Spying in America*. This is perhaps attributable to the fact that the cases in *American Spies* were all Americans, most of whom had utterly venal motives and long careers in espionage at the behest of still-existent nations and regimes. Former KGB officer Oleg Kalugin's observation that the Cold War was not just an espionage war, but a deadly struggle of irreconcilable ideologies, makes the revelation that Americans betrayed their country in pay of those seeking to destroy it all the more chilling and detestable. American traitors such as the Walker ring that compromised US Navy codes and secrets for 18 years, and NSA's Ronald Pelton and the Army's Clyde Conrad, who divulged NATO secrets, endangered all Americans, especially those in the military, had a war broken out with the USSR.

Although not revealing defense secrets, CIA turncoats Edward Lee Howard and Aldrich Ames destroyed the Agency's clandestine networks in the Soviet Union, blinding American intelligence services and the policymakers they served—and those two were outdone by Robert Hanssen of the FBI. As much damage as they did, Sulick notes, most spies during this era fell victim to their own greed, sloppy tradecraft, and carelessness—often talking too much to the wrong people—or were betrayed by our spies in the communist world. Before his exposure and execution by the Soviets, the GRU's Dmitri Polyakov exposed four US military spies, while later Soviet defectors Yuriy Nosenko and Vitaly Yurchenko revealed four more several years later.

Written exclusively from published and easily accessible online sources—as one would hope and expect for a textbook aimed at undergraduates— both volumes contain large and good bibliographies. Given the large number of works listed, however, Sulick confines his cited research to only a few selected and overworked sources, especially in *American Spies*.

The bibliography and notes in *American Spies* do include references to many publicly available court indictments and documents that many will find interesting and good supplements to more established works. Sulick's information-laden discursive endnotes are particularly interesting and helpful to those wanting more detail on the episodes he describes.

As is usual in such works, some minor editorial errors (1:139, 2:93, and 2:349) exist that Georgetown University Press should have caught before going to print. Factual errors exist, too, and while perhaps unnoticed by the general reader—and not too serious in a survey history—professional historians will quibble. In the chapter on Civil War espionage, for example, Ambrose Burnside replaced George McClellan as the commander of the Army of the Potomac in November 1862, not Joseph Hooker (1: 73), who replaced Burnside in January 1863 as correctly implied later (1:96). The last Civil War battlefield use of balloons by the US Army took place at Fredericksburg in November 1862, and Hooker's intelligence chief, George C. Sharpe, did not use this technology at all in 1863 or later—the North's chief aeronaut, Thaddeus Lowe had resigned in disgust that April, and the corps itself disbanded that August.

In the chapter on Japanese espionage during World War II, Sulick correctly states that cryptologist William Friedman broke Japanese diplomatic and naval codes in 1940 (the latter but briefly), but neither he nor any other American had a role in breaking "Nazi codes with the help of Polish allies," (1:161) a feat accomplished under deep secrecy by the British. The author refers several times to the post-1969 government of North Vietnam as "Ho Chi Minh's government" even though the leader was deceased by then, and readers will note that the 1975 takeover of South Vietnam resulted from a military campaign by the Communist North Vietnamese Army, not by "Ho Chi Minh's forces." Spy Andrew Dalton Lee's father may well have been a decorated World War II pilot, (2:78) but he was not flying a B-52, an aircraft that did not appear until at least seven years beyond V-J Day. Early reconnaissance satellites dropped film capsules or "buckets," not their cameras. (2:85) Israeli intelligence services apprehended Nazi Adolf Eichmann in 1961, not 1971, and in a small village some 12 miles north of Buenos Aires, not in the city itself. (2:213)

Such errors do not significantly detract from the overall quality of the history described, and Sulick's *Spying in America* and *American Spies* are very readable books that are highly recommended for every intelligence officer and student of intelligence studies. It is this historian's hope that Sulick's books will become standard in all university intelligence courses.