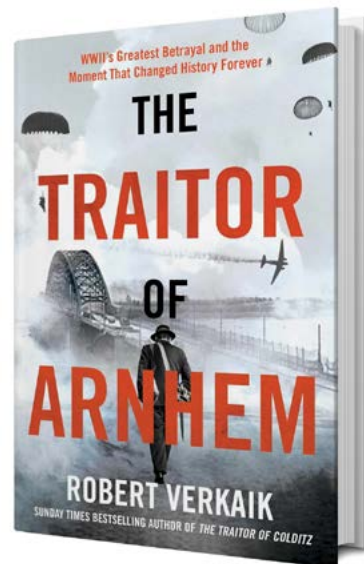


intelligence in public media

The Traitor of Arnhem *WWII's Greatest Betrayal* *and the Moment That* *Changed History Forever*

Reviewed by Kevin McCall

Author: Robert Verkaik
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Reviewer: The reviewer is a CIA historian.



Journalist Robert Verkaik offers the best description of his book *The Traitor of Arnhem*:

This book is not a military history, there are much better-qualified historians for that job. The Traitor of Arnhem is a spy story, an 80-year-old cold case review of thousands of primary source documents, many of them written and signed by the traitors.” (x)

Verkaik does not disappoint. The title of the cold case, is in fact, a misnomer. There was not “a” traitor of Arnhem. Verkaik hypothesizes that there were, in fact, two men who betrayed Operation Market Garden, the ambitious plan to create an invasion corridor through then German-occupied Netherlands. The two, independent of each other, helped stall the drive of the Allied armies

to end the war before Christmas 1944. In doing so, they thwarted the largest airborne assault up to that time and caused the deaths of more paratroopers than at any time before in history. In Verkaik’s book you get two traitors for the price of one.

The author admits a personal interest in the narrative: One of his relatives, Eddy Verkaik, was shot by a German officer who had faked his surrender to the Dutch resistance during Market Garden. Before he was wounded, Eddy informed British paratroopers of a Dutch double-agent, code-named King Kong (aka Christiaan Lindeman), who betrayed invasion plans to the Germans. Although King Kong’s betrayal was publicly revealed after the war, and he committed suicide in prison, the author convincingly demonstrates that the level of detail about the invasion that the Germans possessed far exceeded

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The Traitor of Arnhem

that in Lindeman's possession. The precise and timely German response allowed them to foil the Allied seizure of the bridge at Arnhem—famously referred to by military historian Cornelius Ryan as “a bridge too far” in his 1974 volume by that title.

Verkaik's supposition is that a second, better informed, and therefore more devastating betrayal was that of none other than Anthony Blunt, later revealed as a Soviet spy and member of the “Cambridge Five” spy ring recruited by the Russians in the 1930s. Despite Blunt's 1964 confession, according to the author, no one looked carefully into Blunt's espionage during World War II. Verkaik posits that Blunt (under the codename Josephine) deliberately leaked the Market Garden plans to the Germans to stall the Allied advance into Germany and allow the Soviets to take Berlin.

The author lays out his very compelling case in a detailed appendix. If Verkaik is right, not only was Blunt responsible for the disaster at Arnhem, but also for prolonging the war and allowing the Soviets to conquer most of Eastern Europe. According to the Verkaik: “What we can say if Blunt was Josephine—

and at the very least there are reasonable grounds for suspecting he was—then Blunt can be argued to be the most devastatingly successful and destructive spy in history.” (319)

In this well-written and thoroughly researched volume, Verkaik makes extensive use of the Dutch National Archives in The Hague; the British National Archives in London; the US National Archives at College Park, Maryland; as well as military archives in Amsterdam, the German Bundesarchiv, the Russian Federation Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense, and the Archive of Foreign Intelligence in Moscow. Verkaik unearthed documents he contends were either unexamined as being formerly of little interest or deliberately suppressed after the war. He adroitly weaves together a compelling narrative encompassing the effects of two separate espionage efforts used effectively against the Allies in Europe.

The Traitor of Arnhem should resonate with present-day counterintelligence officers who must address multiple layers of perfidy and complexity in their duties as well as students of the intelligence battle in Europe during World War II. ■