intelligence officer's bookshelf

Compiled and reviewed by Hayden Peake unless otherwise noted.

General

Backroom Deals in Our Backyard: How Government Secrecy Harms Our Communities and the Local Heroes Fighting Back
By Miranda S. Spivack
(The New Press, 2025) 221 pages, notes, index.

"This book is about secrecy but also about power," Miranda Spivack declares in the concluding chapter of her new book, *Backroom Deals in Our Backyard: How Government Secrecy Harms Our Communities and the Local Heroes Fighting Back*. (151) An accomplished journalist and former Fulbright Scholar who specializes in government accountability and secrecy, Spivak offers up a brisk, well-told account of five "accidental activists" who for a variety of reasons find themselves try to prise information from local governments and vested interests. Spivack puts their challenge down to the perils of secrecy: "meeting in secret; failing to announce their agendas ahead of time; refusing to respond to requests from the public for information about what they are doing and the documents they are using; ignoring public concerns about issues involving health and safety; and violating individual civil rights by failing to address their constituents' concerns about the dangers they may be fostering by keeping secrets." (xxvii) Well, yes and no.

The justness of their efforts and the personal sacrifices of these accidental activists are not in question. Michael Hickey uncovers how industrial waste has poisoned the water of Hoosick Falls, New York. Richard Boltuck of Bethesda, Maryland, discovers what traffic planners and road builders knew about a notoriously dangerous intersection. Diane Cotter faces down firefighter union and trade groups in Massachusetts to expose the carcinogens in the gear meant to keep firefighters safe. In Alabama, Ben Eaton takes on powerful government and industry alliances to try to clean up his town's noxious, antiquated sewage system, while in New York, Glenn Rodriguez battles against the "new blue wall" of algorithms keeping him in prison. Each of Spivak's protagonists encounter a welter of laws, practices, and conflicts of interests that cloud transparency and stymie change. Moreover, we're reminded that activism, however admirable from afar, sunders personal and professional relationships, empties bank accounts, and saps enormous amounts of time and energy.

Whether Spivack's framing of the challenges that her local heroes face as principally a problem of secrecy, not other factors of which secrecy is derivative, is more contestable. *Backroom Deals*, with its engaging narrative arc, moves the reader along swiftly from one case to the other. But there's little time to consider alternative viewpoints, interrogate assumptions, or engage the substantial body of academic literature on secrets and secrecy that has appeared in *Studies in Intelligence*, *Teaching Secrecy,* and *Intelligence and National Security*, among other journals. Secrets can conceal malfeasance, but they can also enable sharing among trusted communities of practice (like the Intelligence Community and its customers, or city planners and their contractors) and preserve freedom of action (to conduct covert operations, or to select a site for a new corporate headquarters). The issues that activists encounter in their backyards might be systemic and institutional, but they might also be individual results of people trying, and failing, to balance between two rights. Their stories earn *Backroom Deals in Our Backyard* a place on the ethics bookshelf of intelligence practitioners, but it ought to be joined with works like Georg Simmel's *The Sociology of Secrecy and Secret Societies*, Sissela Boks' *Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation*, and Cécile Fabre's *Spying Through a Glass Darkly: The Ethics of Espionage and Counter-Intelligence* that provide a foundational understanding of secrecy in civic life.

The reviewer: Joseph Gartin is the managing editor of *Studies in Intelligence*. ■

Creating Mission Impact: Essential Tradecraft for Innovators at CIA and Beyond
By Joe Keogh, Joe Ball, and Greg Moore
(Amazon, 2024), 264 pages, endnotes, appendix, photos.

Facebook's "Like" button and 3M's Post-it Notes are the result of innovation, an endeavor desired in most enterprises, though its attributes are not always understood. *Creating Mission Impact* was written to help overcome that problem in the intelligence world, and its three authors are, according to James C. Lawler, retired CIA operations officer and "Trailblazer," "among the most innovative CIA officers of the last several decades."

The authors acknowledge that although many books and articles have been written about innovation *Creating Mission Impact* is justified because its focus is different: It is primarily intended for rank-and-file members of the CIA and draws on decades of historical examples to which intelligence officers can easily relate. The result is an enlightening account of an often puzzling concept.

The narrative begins by recognizing that "innovation fundamentally means change, and change means pain and disruption, as well as winners and losers, and many will resist it." Therefore, the authors define innovation —especially for mission driven organizations—as "change that has a positive mission impact." (5) A more intuitive view of innovation is that it often follows the thought that "there has to be a better way." (18) *Creating Mission Impact* conveys its message using real-world case studies from CIA, military, and civilian organizations. The first chapter provides basic illustrative examples in each of these areas. One describes how the Navy solved the problem of gunnery accuracy in rolling seas. Another tells how the Air Force learned to retrieve film from an orbiting satellite. A third example deals with the improvement of methods to disguise humans in denied areas by Tony Mendez.

Succeeding chapters discuss issues concerned with the internet, secret writing, repurposing of existing products, and methods of agent communication in hostile environments. These topics are supplemented with important and detailed commentary on briefing new concepts, the difficulties of dealing with bureaucracies, the need to persevere when confronting "we've always done it this way" opposition, the key role of assumptions and the wording of the problem, the recognition that failure often precedes success, and the role of managers in achieving an atmosphere that foster innovation. *Creating Mission Impact* is an innovative book about a much-advocated, less-realized concept. Well written and thought provoking, it is a very important contribution.■

Decolonizing Global Intelligence: Emerging Intelligence Trends and the Practice of Inclusive Statecraft
By Pak Nung Wong
(Routledge, 2025) 251 pages, end of chapter notes, index.

Book titles usually provide clues to the subject matter between the coverds. *Decolonizing Global Intelligence* is an exception, raising the question: "What does the title mean?" Author and University of Bath political scientist Pak Nung Wong never provides a direct answer.

He does say that the present world situation requires a "new intelligence practice that he calls 'decolonizing global intelligence.'" (4) Or, as he also writes, for the "Global South and Global North to "decolonize global intelligence" means to bring the hegemonic state-building project back into future intelligence analyses in order to anticipate how this pattern of perpetual geopolitical conflicts will unfold." (5)

He goes on to state, in order "to remedy the global intelligence community from this 'coloniality of power,' this book proposes to decolonize global intelligence and put forward a new intelligence practice of 'inclusive statecraft,' which aims to achieve global security intelligence resolutions for the world of perpetual conflicts featured by geo-economic fragmentation and great power decoupling and superpower geopolitical rivalry in the European and Asian rimland." (247) The methods for achieving these aims are not specified. (247)

While lacking specifics, he notes that "this book will not just add new knowledge to the larger field of security and intelligence studies, but will also pioneer the relatively underdeveloped fields of comparative intelligence cultures and interstellar intelligence/cultural studies. It will be indispensable for policymakers, bureaucrats and government officials." (1) Although he goes on to examine current foreign relations conflicts, their link to decolonization remains muddled, lacking even intuitive meaning. The term "interstellar intelligence" is never defined or mentioned again.

The substance of *Decolonizing Global Intelligence* discusses what Wong labels as "Western and non-West-

ern political, cultural and professional intelligence issues." His perspective is unusual, even esoteric. For example, consider the response to the questions: "What are the persistent trends of human intelligence development in the U.K. and U.S.? What is the key intelligence culture in the U.K. and U.S.?" The answers can be found, he writes, "by analyzing Western human intelligence culture in light of Western political realism … through the realist lens of Thomas Hobbes and Niccolo Machiavelli for a more integrative edifice of realism for contemporary intelligence practice in the West. The first goal of this comparative theoretical examination is to identify the theological and human nature assumptions shared by the two Western political realists in the 'realist liberation' of human intelligence operations. I will argue that the enduring Christian concept of 'human fallibility' constitutes the bedrock for realist covert human intelligence operations among such Western powers as the U.K. and the U.S." (103)

Not all of the topics Wong covers have the same degree of clarity. His chapters on China's penetration of US universities and its worldwide intelligence ambitions are straightforward, although they do not mention decolonization, Hobbes, or Machiavelli.

Decolonizing Global Intelligence is not an introductory text. Future editions should include definitions of terms and less political science jargon. ■

Problematising Intelligence Studies: Towards a New Research Agenda

Edited by Hager Ben Jaffel and Sebastian Larsson (Routledge, 2022), 266 pages, end of chapter notes, index.

The contributors to *Problematising Intelligence Studies* are academics from France, England, Sweden, and New Zealand. All have extensive backgrounds in the social sciences and international relations, which they apply to the problems of modern intelligence.[a]

A central theme of the study is that post-Cold War "intelligence has undergone social, political, and technical changes, and has become an inescapable dimension of the everyday ... activities carried out by professionals of intelligence" and experienced in our everyday lives. The changes are the result of the introduction of cell phones, encrypted communications, facial recognition devices, surveillance techniques, algorithms to detect specific behavioral patterns, the admonition to report anyone or anything "suspicious," our leisure activities, "indeed even the colour of our skin." (3) Consequently the post-Cold War intelligence process requires modification.

The articles in this volume attempt to "open up a new research agenda on contemporary intelligence … which problematises IS [intelligence services] by placing the social relations and practices of intelligence at the heart of the analysis." In language that is not always intuitively clear, the editors suggest this can be accomplished by "departing from the social and the practical and adopting a transdisciplinary mindset, it becomes impossible to accept the IS' tendencies towards Anglo-American-centrism and its long history of favouring and (re) producing functionalist and performance-focused research questions." (252)

That this assessment means that aspects of Anglo-American intelligence should be revised to include the influence of sociological factors is supported by the inclusion of this approach in each chapter. In some cases examples of what needs to be done are merely discussed before recommendations are made. In others, e.g. "US and Swedish intelligence" services cooperation, they "are far closer socio-politically and more interdependent practically and technologically than existing IS scholarship indicates." (247)

Problematising Intelligence Studies is not an easy read. The contributors sociological background is evident in the vocabulary they use. The social-science term "problematises," for example, is never defined. We can infer the authors mean dealing with aspects of the intelligence process new to the writer's experience. And statements like "'How everything became intelligence and intelligence became the everyday' neatly sums up the transformations of intelligence in a post-Cold War and post-11 September 2001 context," will remain ambiguous to some. (3) Nevertheless, in addition to the suggestions offered, what is valuable about this book is that these scholars have expressed a serious, thought-provoking interest in the intelligence profession as it affects society. ■

a. Editors Hager Ben Jaffel and Sebastian Larrson contributed to "Collective Discussion: Toward Critical Approaches to Intelligence as a Social Phenomenon," *International Political Sociology* 14 (2020), reviewed by Joseph Gartin, Studies in Intelligence 66, No. 3 (September 2022).

Treason, Terrorism, and Betrayal: Why Individuals Cross the Line
William Costanza
(Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2025) 279 pages, acronyms and abbreviations, endnotes, bibliography, index.

Perhaps as long as there have been groups of people living and working together, and surely as long as there have been recorded accounts, the harshest penalties have been reserved for individuals who violate the bonds of political communities through betrayal and violence. Emperor Constantine VII's *De Administrando Imperio*, a kind of advice manual written in 948–952 CE for his son and successor Romanus II, recounts the fate of one military governor who revealed the workings of a fearsome secret weapon known as Greek fire:

> *And it happened once, as wickedness will still find room, that one of our military governors, who had been most heavily bribed by certain foreigners, handed over some of this fire to them; and since God could not endure to leave unavenged this transgression, as he was about to enter the holy church of God, fire came down out of heaven and devoured and consumed him utterly. And thereafter mighty dread and terror were implanted in the hearts of all men, and never since then has anyone, whether emperor, or noble, or private citizen, or military man, or any man of any sort whatever, ventured to think of such a thing, far less to attempt to do it or bring it to pass.*

Alas, the fear of gruesome punishment, divine or earthly, has never been enough to deter everyone all the time. But why? What makes people turn their backs on their own communities or attack others without regard to justice? And why do intelligence communities worldwide—with their intensive personnel vetting and monitoring processes and expansive collection capabilities that would awe emperors past—sometimes fail to anticipate, detect, and prevent attacks, with catastrophic effects?

William Costanza, an intelligence scholar and former CIA operations officer, tackles these questions and more in his ambitious, well-sourced, and eminently useful *Treason, Terrorism, and Betrayal: Why Individuals Cross the Line*. At the outset, Constanza acknowledges that he is addressing three distinct kinds of threats: counterintelligence threats posed by foreign governments that seek to obtain classified information from US governmental institutions and private-sector partners; violent extremism, foreign or domestic; and the unauthorized disclosure of classified information. (3) A reader might justifiably object that these disparate phenomena (involving state and individual actors, in particular) cannot easily be bound together, but Costanza defends his approach by arguing that all involve "crossing the line," which we can generally understand in a national security context as making a c*onscious decision* that will ultimately pose a threat to US national security and then *taking an action.* (5, emphasis in original)

Taking a behavioralist approach to understanding his subjects, backed up by his thorough review of the literature and drawing in part on work by some notable *Studies in Intelligence* contributors like Dr. Ursula Wilder and Randy Burkett, Costanza presents well-documented case studies beginning with "Spying for the Enemy" (Chapter 3) through "Insiders Who Crossed the Line" (Chapter 7). Along the way, familiar names emerge from the sorry annals of espionage and violence—Robert Hanssen, Larry Chin, Jonathan Pollard, Nidal Hasan, Timothy McVeigh, Chelsea Manning, Ana Montes, and Richard Snowden—along with more recent entries like would-be presidential assassins Thomas Crooks and Ryan Routh or Cuban penetration Victor Manual Rocha. Costanza eschews the casually drawn and often biased portraits of these individuals that often appear in popular accounts of espionage and counterterrorism; instead, he backs up his judgments with considerable research and thoughtfulness. For anyone hoping for easy preventatives, Costanza notes that emerging research "suggests that the process of crossing the line is driven by emotion to satisfy a psychological need, and that a deep-rooted belief system is not necessarily the determining factor in influencing an individual's decision…." (140)

Treason, Terrorism, and Betrayal is a unique and important contribution to the study of an enduring problem. Anyone responsible for building a trusted workforce or safeguarding the United States from foreign or insider threats will find it an essential reference.

The reviewer: Joseph Gartin is the managing editor of *Studies in Intelligence*. ■

US Intelligence Failure and Knowledge Creation: Improving Intelligence Analysis
By Carl W. Ford, Jr. and Kathleen M. Vogel
(Routledge, 2025) 181 pages, end notes.

"The central problem constituting US intelligence failure is the lack of research within US intelligence."(2)

In *US Intelligence Failure and Knowledge Creation*, authors Carl Ford and Kathleen Vogel present a well-written, thoroughly documented account in support of their hypothesis.

The book draws heavily on Ford's intelligence experience, which began as a military intelligence officer in Vietnam, followed by service in both the DIA and CIA as a military analyst on China. He then took various high-level positions, including as head of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR). He is currently a consultant on intelligence analysis issues. Co-author Vogel is a professor at Arizona State University in the School for Future of Innovation in Society. She met Ford while conducting research concerning intelligence failures before the 2003 Iraq War.

Expanding on their initial premise, the authors state: "Although it might come as a shock to hear, the US intelligence community does not have a research capability that combines multi-year analyses and focused studies with multiple datasets, different types of information, and expertise, to provide a holistic understanding of security threats and the security environment facing the United States." (2) They argue that despite multiple efforts to reform the IC, this remains the principal reason CIA and DIA were wrong about 9/11, the Iraq War in 2003, and the strengths and weaknesses of the Russian military and the Ukrainian people before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. They do not discuss potential contributing reasons such as procedural failures.

The authors draw on Ford's wide experience to provide examples of what basic research data is, how it is collected, and how it is used to strengthen the intelligence product. They argue that the only organization in the IC that routinely employed this method and whose estimates were more accurate as a result was INR.

In the event other IC organizations need to follow that precedent, *US Intelligence Failure and Knowledge Creation* makes recommendations for rebuilding research capabilities Ford and Vogel suggest will increase the quality of intelligence analysis in the IC. (150) In doing so, they discuss the impact of the contemporary problems posed by AI and politicalization and note that all these issues are fundamental and thus apply to Five Eyes intelligence nations.

A thought-provoking, immensely valuable contribution to the profession. ■

History

Admiral Canaris: How Hitler's Chief of Intelligence Betrayed the Nazis

By David Alan Johnson
(Prometheus Books, 2024) 254 pages, endnotes, photos, index.

The military-intelligence service in the German army from 1920 to 1944—the Reichswehr and later the Wehrmacht—was called the Abwehr. It was responsible for foreign espionage and sabotage in addition to Army security and counterintelligence. Its chief from 1935 to 1944 was Adm. Wilhelm Canaris, the subject of several WWII studies.

Author David Alan Johnson provides another account of Canaris, which argues that in addition to his intelligence duties, "he saved the lives of several hundred Jewish refugees and other racial and political 'undesirables' by rescuing them from Nazi Germany and other Nazi-occupied countries." (7) Johnson documents how Canaris helped a rabbi from Warsaw, Yitzhak Yosef Schneerson, escape the Nazis, but he provides no direct evidence that he helped hundreds of others.

Johnson suggests two reasons for this, one specific, the other implied. The first is his recognition that "[N]o records exist that give the exact number of Jews and other refugees whom Admiral Canaris helped to escape the Nazis," (8) The second reason is illustrated by the following example: Johnson writes that "[I]n March 1941, the head of the Abwehr section in The Hague approached Canaris with an idea for rescuing hundreds of Jewish residents in the Netherlands. Admiral Canaris approved the plan, and the transporting of about five hundred Jews began in May." (8) But he does not cite a source. This pattern is repeated throughout the book with one variation: When an endnote are provided, none speak directly to Canaris or the Abwehr saving the lives of anybody.

To better understand Canaris the man, Johnson reviews the admiral's career, including his early support and later opposition to Hitler, his professional conflicts with the Gestapo and the SS that led to his arrest and execution, and his cautious cooperation with allied intelligence during the war.

Johnson concludes that Adm. Wilhelm Canaris's role in rescuing Jews has largely been overlooked, in spite of the fact that his rescue campaign was highly effective. If true, he needs to provide the evidence in the next edition.■

Lincoln's Lady Spymaster: The Untold Story of the Abolitionist Southern Belle Who Helped Win the Civil War
By Gerri Willis
(Harper, 2025), 266 pages, endnotes.

Gerri Willis is a Fox Business correspondent and TV anchor. While reading during the Covid lockdown she came upon the name Elizabeth Van Lew, a Richmond woman who spied for the Union during the Civil War because she thought slavery was wrong.

Intrigued, Willis made inquiries and decided to write her own version of Van Lew's story. The result, *Lincoln's Lady Spymaster: The Untold Story of the Abolitionist Southern Belle Who Helped Win the Civil War* is untrue in an important respect: Van Lew's story was not "untold." Willis' source notes cite several other biographies of Van Lew that tell her story well, and Willis adds nothing new, at least none that are sourced. In fact, she includes much unattributed, speculative commentary about Van Lew.

Willis describes Van Lew's personal life and tells how she became a Union intelligence source. In addition, she describes how Van Lew developed and handled agents, the initiative demonstrated in hiding soldiers, and how she communicated intelligence to the North. *Lincoln's Lady Spymaster* also provides historical context by discussing the contribution of other agents, male and female of both sides, to the Civil War. She describes events and personalities of the day, including John Brown, John Wilkes Booth, Allan Pinkerton, Belle Boyd, Rose Greenhow, and Harriet Tubman.

There are many unsourced comments in the book that beg the question: How does she know this? For instance, Willis writes that "Supreme Court Justice John Marshall was a guest [of Van Lew's], as were Swedish opera star Jenny Lind and Edgar Allan Poe, who thrilled guests by reading 'The Raven' aloud in the Van Lew parlor." (14) No source is cited.

Willis gives a good account of Van Lew's life after the war, when she experienced difficulties supporting herself and her family. She was eventually given a government clerkship in Washington, but that didn't go well and she returned to Richmond in 1887 where she endured the disdain of her neighbors even in her final days. Elizabeth Van Lew died on September 25, 1900, at the age of 81. (237)

The book contains a fine epilogue, which tells what happened to the many characters mentioned in Van Lew's story. ■

The Spy Archive: Hidden Lives, Secret Missions, and the History of Espionage
By Dexter Ingram
(IN Network, 2025) 216 pages, references, photos, no index.

After service as a naval flight officer, Dexter Ingram joined the State Department where he held a number of high-level counterterrorism-related positions at home and abroad during his career. In retirement, he founded the "IN Network, a nonprofit dedicated to mentoring promising young minds of all backgrounds interested in careers in national security." (216) *The Spy Archive* is intended to support that goal by going beyond the "sanitized history textbooks to uncover the buried stories and the real reasons nations went to war, made peace, or betrayed allies." (2) Some self-inflicted difficulties diminish the degree of success he achieved.

Unlike many archives, Ingram's is not based on primary sources, although occasional secondary sources are cited. Instead, it is a collection of anecdotes, mostly undocumented entries that reflect his impressions, some describing impossible conditions. For instance, he asks: "What if I told you history's biggest turning points weren't decided by the generals whose statues fill our parks, but by people whose names we'll never know?" [emphasis added] (1) No examples are provided.

In another case, he suggests espionage is "the decoder for today's headlines. Many of those global hotspots burning on your news feed started with some spy's report filed decades ago. Once you understand these old games, today's baffling politics suddenly make a weird kind of sense." (2) None of the events discussed exemplify this view.

Another feature of the book is Ingram's frequent use of speculative commentary. How can he possibly have known that "Machiavelli knew something most politicians today still haven't figured out: Information beats money, armies, or fancy titles every time"? (45)

These cautionary remarks are intended to stimulate reader awareness that what they are about to read does not "uncover the buried stories and the real reasons nations went to war," as Ingram suggests. But for those new to the subject, *The Spy Archive* presents an impressive introductory account of espionage from pre-biblical times to the present. Some stories do not appear often in the literature. Examples include, Genghis Khan's spy empire, Japan's Shinobi "geniuses at setting up massive intelligence networks," (34) and the American Revolution spy James Armitage Lafayette. More recent topics include wartime intelligence, the varied contributions of women, espionage technology, post-World War II agents (often incorrectly called "double agents"), espionage ethics, intelligence in the information age including AI, and the international Five Eyes intelligence network. (172) Ingram also discusses spy fiction, although not all will agree with his assessment that John le Carré's masterpiece was *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* and not *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*.

The Spy Archive is an interesting but weakly documented summary that too often screams for an answer to the question: "How do you know that?" ■

The Spy Who Helped the Soviets Win Stalingrad and Kursk: Alexander Foote and the Lucy Spy Ring

By Chris Jones
(Pen & Sword Books, Ltd., 2025) 206 pages, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

The Rote Kapelle (Red Orchestra) was a name assigned to a number of clandestine radio networks in Switzerland transmitting information to Soviet military intelligence early in WWII. Chris Jones is a retired academic in Liverpool, United Kingdom. The author of a history of brain surgery and neurology, he has a parallel interests in the psychology of spying. When he read V.E. Tarrant's, *The Red Orchestra* and learned about Alexander Alan Foote, the Liverpool native and WWII Soviet agent, Jones was surprised; he had never heard of Foote and decided to make his own inquiries.

Jones soon found other books, articles, and reports about Foote's exploits including a CIA study, which he does not identify, recently released MI5 files and Foote's memoir, *Handbook for Spies*, which he discovered was actually written by an MI5 officer with Foote's permission. MI5 clearly shaped Foote's account. The principal constraints were that it not mention, or hint, at his connection to the Security Service and that his book end after he left the Russian Zone in Berlin for the West.

The Spy Who Helped the Soviets Win Stalingrad and Kursk is a more complete and critical account of how Foote came to be in Berlin and what happened to him afterward.

Born into a middle class family in 1905, Foote held odd jobs after finishing school and encountered leftist views. In 1935, he enlisted for six years in the Royal Air Force. Less than a year later he deserted to join the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War. Returning to London in 1938, Foote was recruited first by the Communist Party of Great Britain and then by Soviet intelligence.

Jones deals with Foote's subsequent espionage activities in some detail. Beginning in 1939, he was sent to Switzerland to work under Ursula Kuczynski (Sonya) and trained as a radio operator. Early in the war, Foote became one of the three radio operators in the Rote Drei (Red Three) network under Sandor Rado that produced valuable intelligence for the Soviets. (41)

By November 1943, Swiss intelligence had identified the Rote Drei transmitting sources and Foote was arrested. He was bailed out and fled to Moscow via Paris. After lengthy debriefings, the Soviets sent him to Germany to continue his work. He arrived in Berlin in March 1947, promptly defected to the British and returned to London in August 1947.

Jones adds personal details—featuring appreciation for good food and pretty women— and operataional facts about Foote and those with whom he worked. He discusses many contraditions or undocumented assertions in previously cited sources and adds some corrections from MI5 files. For instance, authors Read and Fisher claimed in their 1980 book *Operation Lucy*, another Rote Drei network, that Foote had been recruited to British intelligence before going to Spain and was a British agent throughout his time in Switzerland. Jones writes that there is little in the National Archives to support this view. (109) Jones offers no explanation for the apparent decision not to prosecute Foote for his desertion from the RAF to go fight in Spain. After his memoir was published, he became a low-grade civil servant in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. He died in 1956.

Jones provides no direct evidence to support his contention that "It is no exaggeration to say that the activities of Alexander Allan Foote ('Jime') may have altered the course of the war on the Eastern Front, in favour of our ally at the time, the USSR," although he clearly did his part. (5)

The book fills some gaps, corrects some errors, but tells little about his Soviet debriefings. A compete biography of Alexander Foote remains to be written. ■

Vigilance is Not Enough: A History of US Intelligence
By Mark M Lowenthal
(Yale University Press, 2025) 832 pages, notes, bibliography, index.

A historian has choices in how material will be presented. They range from the chronological to the thematic and everything in between. History, after all, is just story telling and can be heavy and didactic or lighter and more approachable. This massive book tells a single story over a time period from roughly 1753 to nearly yesterday. The structure is chronological; the subject is the birth and maturation of US intelligence. The material and time period covered necessitate a large book to allow the author to cover the subject, and this book is large, with 642 pages of text.

The style of presentation is one that both the expert and the amateur can easily understand and follow. It flows quickly and logically and covers the essentials without getting bogged down in too much detail. It is easy to read and an excellent account which should be read and retained by anyone who wants a ready reference to how US intelligence developed, who its important players were, and the events that gave birth to or accelerated the development of the US approach to this important subject and where we are today. Documentation in the form of a hundred pages of notes and a 50-page bibliography provide ample substantiation of the events and a rich trove of raw material for further exploration of individual incidents.

The author, who played a role at a significant level in some of the more recent events, does not try to force feed readers with his own views but rather simply says what happened and what decisions were made and by whom. Unlike Europe, the United States did not inherit a philosophy or system of intelligence from a royalist background. We stumbled forward based on pragmatic decisions made by military or political leaders faced with specific challenges. We never even had an organization devoted to intelligence but made it up as we felt the need. It is clear, however, that our system has had the same challenges throughout history and that they continue to exist. Bureaucratic jealousy and infighting, the reluctance of some parts of the government to accept the role of other organizations, and the indifference or even hostility of some major policymakers. These problems come through loud and clear to the careful reader. Some of these issues date from the creation of agencies including the OSS and CIA and remain unresolved today.

A general history covering a lengthy period must be judicious in the choice of what to include and exclude and how much detail can be covered. This work made excellent choices in this regard. Having lived and worked through many of the more recent incidents, I would have welcomed more detail, but I understand why the author made his choices.

In all, this is an excellent and well-documented one-volume history. It should be required reading for any college level course on US intelligence and deserves a spot on the bookshelves of everyone who follows this subject.

The reviewer: William D. Murray is a retired senior operations officer. ■

Women of Espionage: Inspiring True Stories of Four SOE Agents Instrumental in Altering the Outcome of WWII and Their Harrowing Capture by the Nazis
By Camille Fox
(Self-published, 2023) 189 pages, references, photos, no index.

The British Special Operations Executive (SOE) was created in WWII to conduct irregular warfare—sabotage, subversion and espionage—in Nazi-occupied Europe. One of its cover names was The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare, a gross misnomer since it employed several thousand women. And, tough less conspicuous, they performed some tasks better than men, with 40 serving in occupied France. Author Camille Fox heard about them from her father, who served in the army in Germany and knew about some who had been held in concentration camps. In *Women of Espionage,* she tells the story of four.

In her introduction, Fox briefly discusses the popularity of spy stories, citing the "notorious double agents like Aldrich Ames [and] Mata Hari," (1) neither of whom was a double agent. But on her chosen subject, she presents a well documented summary of SOE's history and the stories of the women agents: Yvonne Jeanne de Vibraye Baseden (Odette); Eileen Nearne (Rose); Odette Sansom (Lisa) and Noor Inayat Khan (Madeleine).

Since the British armed forces initially had no provision for female members, two organizations were created for them during WWII. The first was called the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY), and the second was the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). For administrative reasons the four subjects of this book served in each organization. Trained as radio operators or couriers, their duties in France sometimes expanded to include agent handling and network management when the men in those position were compromised. Fox tells their stories well.

After varying degrees of operational success, each of the four women were betrayed, captured, and sent to concentration camps by the Nazis. Only three survived their ordeals. Noor Inayat Khan died in Dachau. Fox's account of their horrific experiences displays their extraordinary cunning and courage.

The stories told in *Women of Espionage* have been told before either individually or as part of a more comprehensive account.[a] Fox provides a very good version of four important cases. Though her claim that that these women altered the outcome of the war is doubtful, their bravery is not. ■

Memoir/Biography

Superspy: Hans Tofte: Intelligence Officer for SOE, OSS, and CIA

By David Foy
(Casemate Publishers, 2025) 213 pages, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

Historian and former intelligence officer David Foy became interested in Hans Tofte while he was writing a biography of Maj. Gen. Charles Willoughby, MacArthur's controversial G-2.[b] His research in English sources revealed occasional references to Tofte, who was born in Denmark. The only biography of Tofte until then had been written by Danish author Henrik Kruger in 2005.[c] It dealt mainly with his life through World War II and was not translated into English. With the help of Google, Foy overcame that obstacle and found recently released material about Tofte's intelligence career in the National Archives. In *Superspy*, Foy integrates these sources to tell the story of one of CIA's most controversial case officers.

Born on April 4, 1911, in Copenhagen, Hans Vilhelm Tofte had by 1940 lived in California; attended the University of Copenhagen; left his studies in 1930 for military service in the Danish Navy; learned Chinese Mandarin, Japanese, Russian, and Korean; and was a member of the Danish underground. Forced to escape Denmark with forged papers, Tofte flew to New York City and contacted William Stephenson, then head of the British Security Coordination Office (BSC), who helped him enlist in the British Army. Initially stationed in Australia, after Pearl Harbor Tofte enlisted as a private in the US Army. By February 18, 1943, he was transferred to OSS and on May 11, 1943, he was given commissioned as an officer.

Foy reviews Tofte's wartime OSS service that led to Yugoslavia, where he worked to supply Tito's forces. Foy explains that in Yugoslavia he showed a trait that would get him in trouble: he did not take well to those who disagreed with him. In Yugoslavia that led him into a major disagreement, which, in turn, led to his involuntary return to the United States. Strongly supported by his OSS colleagues, he nevertheless went on to head the Danish desk in London to supervise operations in Europe, for which he received very good marks.

After the war, Tofte, married by then, experienced civilian life until the Korean War. Initially resistant, he was recalled by his wartime colleague Frank Wisner, then head of the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC, formally part of CIA), for covert action duty in Japan and Korea. In his discussion of these events, Foy incorrectly notes hat "Major" Helms was Wisner's deputy. Helms was never a major—he was a naval officer— and he was chief of operations under Wisner. A later reference to Helms claims he directed "Lyman" Fitzgerald to dismiss an officer, whereas the correct name is Desmond FitzGerald. (159)

Tofte worked to train agents and guerrillas, mostly North Korean refugees, and infiltrate them into North

a. See for example, Sarah Helm, *A Life in Secret: Vera Atkins and the Missing Agents of WWII* (Alfred Knopf, 2007).
b. Dr. David Foy, *Loyalty First: The Life and Times of Charles A Willoughby, MacArthur's Chief Intelligence Officer* (Casemate Publishers, 2023). See the review by Stephen C. Mercado in *Studies in Intelligence* 67, no. 4 (December 2023).
c. Henrik Kruger, *Den danske krigshelt, der kom til tops i CIA* (The Danish War Hero Who Rose to the Top of the CIA), (Henrik Kruger and Lindhart and Ringhof Forlag, 2005).

Korea and the China region. During this period, he once again had difficulties with fellow officers and especially with MacArthur's G-2, MG Willoughby. Foy adds that Tofte also underestimated the North Koreans and exaggerated claims about his would-be penetration agents that led to his return to CIA Headquarters, where he confessed to deceiving "his superi-ors." (92) Only his operational successes saved his career.

After his Korean service, Tofte returned to civilian life. Because of business contacts, he be-came the subject of an FBI investigation for offenses, including murder, financial fraud, and treason. When recalled to CIA in 1956, he learned that the Office of Security was concerned about his loyalty and even considered the possibility that be was a Soviet agent.

Foy tells how, with the support of colleagues, Tofte resolved these challenges and was assigned to covert operations in Central and South America, which are discussed in some detail. Tofte performed well and return to Headquarters duty in December 1964. Unfortunately, he was again investigated by the FBI and reprimanded by CIA when a single classified document was found at Tofte's former residence. That act forecast the most controversial chapter of Tofte's career.

In 1966, the Toftes decided to sell or rent their Georgetown home. One of the prospective tenants was also a CIA officer. While inspecting the house, he discovered classified documents in Tofte's study and notified the Office of Security. Tofte, by then a GS-16 supergrade, was furious and said that it was common practice for officers at his level to take classified material home while working on projects. CIA did not agree. Refusing any in-house reprimand, Tofte went public, countercharging that those inspecting the documents at his home had stolen his wife's jewels in the process. After a long battle Tofte was dismissed but was allowed to keep his pension. In retirement Tofte, long divorced, traveled, attended retiree events from time to time, and found other feminine companionship. He died on August 24, 1987.

Foy's assessment of Tofte's professional legacy acknowledges his exceptional talent for paramilitary and intelligence operations and his many qualifications as an intelligence officer. But whether he warrants the title "Superspy" is questionable. A valuable contribution with an important contemporary lesson. ■

Fiction

A Sting in Her Tale

By Mark Ezra
(No Exit Press, 2025).

Maybe it's because the baby boomer readers are aging, but stories about retired women spies seem to be having a moment. First it was Tess Gerritsen's *The Spy Coast* (2023), and now comes film maker and screenwriter Mark Ezra's debut novel, *A Sting in Her Tale*.

The story is told by seventy-something Felicity Jardine (that's what she calls herself, but we never learn her true name or age) and opens as she, tired of life, is about to drown herself in a river in West Sussex. Sliding down the river bank, however, she spots a baby's car seat drifting toward her. Felicity grabs it and rescues the infant occupant. Soon enough, there is a murder and thugs show up in Felicity's village, hunting for the baby.

Felicity, of course, is no ordinary little old English lady. She's retired SIS and in flashbacks alternating with the current story, tells of an operation in Bonn in the 1970s gone bad. There's plenty of gunplay then and now, and Felicity's skills may be a little rusty but she's resourceful enough to escape a few cliffhangers. In the end, past and present come together and it's all wrapped up neatly, albeit with a couple of twists.

A Sting in Her Tale is good fun. Felicity has seen it all and is happy to give a trenchant opinion on just about anything, while Ezra keeps the action moving right along. The only negative is that the explicit sex, which ends with Felicity grateful for an "animalistic passion I had never experienced before or, regrettably, since," is male fantasizing at its most cliched. Perhaps in his next novel Ezra will ask a woman to advise him on that part.

The reviewer: John Ehrman is a retired CIA officer.■

Rediscovered

The Great Game: Memoirs of the Spy Hitler Couldn't Silence

By Leopold Trepper
(McGraw-Hill, 1977) 442 pages, index, appendices.

How did we miss this one? Leopold Trepper, one of the most significant figures in 20th century espionage, published his memoir in France in 1975 and it appeared in a US edition two years later. *Studies in Intelligence*, for whatever reason, did not review it. Now, some 50 years later, *The Great Game* not only has earned the status of a classic but also ought to be mandatory reading for anyone working in human espionage operations.

Trepper's biography is a microcosm of modern European history. He was a Polish Jew, born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1904, who turned to socialism in the hard years after World War I. On the run from the Polish authorities, he went to Palestine in 1924, where he joined the Palestinian Communist Party and was jailed by the British. In 1929, Trepper was thrown out of Palestine and went to France, where he continued political work until 1932, when he went to Moscow for formal ideological training.

Trepper was in Moscow until 1938, through the years of the purges and terror. He saw friends and fellow students taken away, and witnessed the show trials; much of his account is the story of his disillusion with the reality of the Soviet revolution. Nonetheless, Trepper explains his decision to stick with Moscow and then join Soviet military intelligence—he was recruited by Gen. Jan Berzin, who also recruited Richard Sorge—as the only realistic path. War loomed in Europe, he points out, and only the Soviets were standing firm (at that point, at least) against the Nazis.

In 1937, Trepper proposed a plan to Berzin that was straightforward and audacious. He would build espionage networks across Europe, composed of Communists and dedicated anti-Fascists, that would remain dormant until the war started. Only then would the networks come to life, collecting and transmitting to Moscow "accurate and verified information" from contacts in the "German high command, and in governmental, political, and economic institutions." (89) To establish the networks, Trepper would start an import-export business in Belgium and then expand it to other countries. The branches would run by actual businessmen, unwitting of their roles, thus funding the operation and giving him cover to travel and meet contacts around Europe. After months of preparation—during which Berzin was arrested and executed—Trepper left Moscow in the fall of 1938. (He relates bitterly how the talented Berzin was replaced by incompetent Stalinist hacks.) Now an illegal, documented as Canadian industrialist Adam Mikler, he went to Brussels and founded the Foreign Excellent Trenchcoat Company.[a]

Trepper's plan succeeded brilliantly. He began setting up his branches and Moscow sent agents and specialists to supplement the local Communists. All was in place in the spring of 1940, when the Germans swept through Western Europe. Trepper proudly recounts how his networks quickly began sending Moscow large quantities of high-quality information on German plans, troop movements, and military production. Even better, unexpected opportunities fell into his lap: two companies he had set up to help finance the operation, Simex and Simexco, won contracts with the Todt Organization, which oversaw German military construction projects. Todt provided passes that allowed Simex and Simexco executives to travel freely, and Trepper's networks by 1941 had access to a wide range of talkative Nazi officials.

It was too good to last, of course. The networks were too large and, as a result, their members were hastily recruited and only partially trained and vetted. A breakdown in compartmentation was only a matter of time. The Germans realized in the summer of 1941 that the large numbers of transmissions to Moscow they were intercepting were related. They formed a special counterintelligence unit, a *sonderkommando*, to hunt for what they had christened the *Rote Kapelle* (Red Orchestra). The sonderkommando got its first break that December, rolling up a network in Brussels. Despite Nazi torture, almost none of the arrested members talked; some committed suicide rather than risk breaking. But, inevitably, a few gave in or were turned, and the sonderkommando made steady progress against the networks. In November 1942, they captured Trepper—the "Big Chief"—in Paris.

If this first third of *The Great Game* is an excellent primer on how, and how not, to set up and run a wartime espionage network, then any evaluation of the middle chapters of the book will be more ambiguous. Trepper

a. The firm is usually rendered in English as the Foreign Excellent Raincoat Company, though Trepper gives it as trenchcoat..Consistent with Trepper's operational plan, it was a subsidiary of a legitimate preexisting company called Le Roi du Caoutchouc (The Raincoat King).

relates a complex tale of strategic deception that starts with his captors telling him how they were already using captured agents and their radios to transmit large amounts of true, and truly valuable, information to Moscow to pave the way for planting false information in future messages. (Anyone who ever doubts an intelligence service will give up high-quality information in a double agent operation needs to read this part.) The Gestapo gave Trepper a simple choice: join their operation, the titular Great Game, or else. In the weeks that followed, Trepper went along with the Germans and steadily gained their confidence until, in January 1943, he was able to slip a warning message to one of the remaining free agents. The alert soon arrived in Moscow, letting the Soviets know of the arrests and German deception.

Trepper continued to play his double (or was it triple?) Great Game until September 1943, when, again taking advantage of the relationships he had developed with his captors, he managed to escape. For the next eleven months he eluded the Germans, crisscrossing France and going from one hideout to the next, with several narrow escapes. He eventually made his way back to Paris, where he hid until Allied forces arrived in August 1944; in November, he returned to Moscow.

Trepper was not looking for a hero's welcome, but only a chance to rest and reunite with his wife and sons. Instead, because of his association with Gen. Berzin, he was soon arrested and spent the next 10 years imprisoned in Lubyanka and other Soviet jails. Trepper by now was familiar with imprisonment, but his understated account of his captivity and interrogations still is harrowing. Eventually he was sentenced to 15 years and then was more or less left alone. His accounts of other prisoners he met, including Vasiliy Stalin's psychiatrist, a former Japanese official who filled him in on what happened to Sorge, and the anti-Bolshevik Russian nationalist historian Vasiliy Shulgin, have a ghoulish fascination.

Trepper was released in 1954 and, finally reunited with his family, returned to Poland. He became prominent in the small remaining Jewish community and, with the publication of Gilles Perrault's history of the Red Orchestra in 1967, achieved recognition for his wartime intelligence work.[a] Unfortunately, however, 1967 was also the year of Israel's lightning victory in the Six-Day War, which led the Polish government to unleash an anti-Semitic campaign that caused most remaining Polish Jews to emigrate. Trepper's family was allowed to leave but he was kept in Poland for six years, subject to constant surveillance and harassment, until an international campaign achieved his release. After all this, Trepper remained loyal, if not to Soviet communism, then to his socialist ideals. He died in Jerusalem in 1982.

The question looming over Trepper's book, as with most espionage memoirs, is whether the account is accurate. The basics seem to be, as CIA's postwar history of the Red Orchestra corroborates Trepper's story. But illegals are not always the most reliable memoirists, and they often leave incomplete accounts or drop material from their original manuscripts when overseeing translations or new editions. In particular, Sorge's biographer, Owen Matthews, calls Trepper an "unreliable narrator," and it is by no means out of the question that Trepper exaggerated, obfuscated, or deleted details of his career, whether out of self-promotion, to protect himself or others, or for ideological reasons. There is, for example, the lingering question of whether Trepper cooperated with the Gestapo more than he admits. Also, Trepper's description of his "American friend, Georgie de Winter," discreetly leaves out the detail that they were lovers and he likely fathered her son, Patrick. (The *Studies* review of Perrault also notes a first wife and family, who make no appearance here.) The reader needs to be alert to the shading of detail and the virtual impossibility of confirming all the details of Trepper's actions while in German custody.

Whatever the accuracy of the small details, this is still a book for anyone with a professional or personal interest in espionage. The lessons about preparation and compartmentation are timeless, as is the unstated point about the need to look skeptically at everything that's going on. On top of that, Trepper (and his ghostwriter or translator) knew how to tell a thrilling story. The spare prose and short chapters keep things moving along and, even if the complex details are sometimes hard to follow, it's not easy to put down. The appendices, where Trepper lists the fates of Orchestra members arrested by the Nazis and reprints farewell letters written by several before their executions, bring home the dedication and bravery of his agents.

Studies overlooked *The Great Game* 50 years ago, but you should not.

The reviewer: John Ehrman is a retired CIA officer.■

a. It should be noted that the review of Perrault's book in *Studies* was savage. See review of *L'Orchestre Rouge* by Gilles Perrault (Fayard, 1967) in *Studies in Intelligence* 12, No. 4 (1968), 100–104.