

Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf—March 2023

Compiled and reviewed by Hayden Peake and others.

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Intelligence and Policy: Covert Action

The Third Option: Covert Action and American Foreign Policy, by Loch K. Johnson (Oxford University Press, 2022), 388 pages, endnotes, bibliography, appendices, index.

In his 1981 book, *The Third Option: An American View of Counterinsurgency Operations*, former CIA operations officer Ted Shackley took a narrow view of the diplomatic alternative commonly called covert action. Concentrating on counterinsurgency driven by executive policy, he gave scant attention to the paramilitary or propaganda forms of covert action.

After noting that “no one is currently able to write a definitive analysis of America’s covert actions because so many of the detailed operational records remain classified,” (xv) retired University of Georgia professor Loch Johnson nonetheless presents a wide-ranging treatment of covert action in his version of *The Third Option*. His account views covert action as a promising and, in theory, quicker though often problematic alternative for dealing with diplomatic problems overseas. (6)

Johnson draws on more than his academic credentials for this book. He served as a senior staffer on congressional oversight committees in the mid-1970s and the Aspin-Brown Intelligence Commission on the Roles and Missions of Intelligence. Throughout his career Johnson has written books and articles on various aspects of intelligence, several of which earned him awards from professional societies and one from this journal.^a He was also senior editor of the journal *Intelligence and National Security* for 17 years and a member of the advisory board of the *Journal of Intelligence History*.

Because Johnson has no direct experience conducting covert action operations, *The Third Option* is not in any sense a “how to” book. It is in every sense an account of how covert action appears to the non-practitioner because Johnson has interpreted the accounts of former participants and journalists relying on secondary sources. Thus, readers are advised to exercise caution because some are notoriously unreliable, like works by Victor Marchetti, Miles Copeland, and Tim Weiner (see bibliography) and do not in many cases convey an objective view of events.

Johnson considers the third option as one of the “three major instruments that guide this nation’s activities abroad: the Treaty Power, the War Power, the Spy Power.” And he uses covert action and spy power synonymously. Perhaps a more accurate expression would be “intelligence power” since the word ‘spy’ has a great deal of fictional baggage. (xi)

The Third Option divides covert actions directed against nations, groups, and individuals into four categories: propaganda, political, economic, and paramilitary operations. (19) And then, because all covert actions are not equal in intent, risk, resources, or outcome, he presents a detailed “ladder of clandestine escalation” with rungs that ascend from modest, low-risk attempts at media manipulations “to the widespread killing of civilians at the top.” Examples of the latter include the covert actions in Cuba after the Bay of Pigs disaster, which led to repression of civilians, or in the aftermath of the 1973 overthrow of Chilean President Salvador Allende by Gen. Augusto Pinochet, whose dictatorship brutalized thousands. In climbing the ladder, Johnson describes the trade-offs a nation faces when considering “increasingly serious intrusions into the sovereignty of other nations accompanied by breaches of international law and other widely recognized moral ‘bright lines.’” (42)

The Third Option narrative presents a series of capsule histories or case studies of covert actions that address the substantive issues with which Johnson is concerned. In question form they include: how and where the various covert actions techniques have been employed “and toward what purposes?” Have they achieved their objectives? What are the legal foundations and bureaucratic paths to be followed in the United States binding the third option? How is accountability achieved and how well are these operations supervised by the White House and the Congress? And what methods should be considered unacceptable for the United States? It is here in particular that Johnson is careful to integrate the views of the “practitioners of the Third Option themselves.” (252)

a. Loch K. Johnson, “The Aspin-Brown Intelligence Inquiry: Behind the Closed Doors of a Blue Ribbon Commission,” *Studies In Intelligence* 48, No. 3 (2004), 1–20. Among Johnson’s recent books are *National Security Intelligence: Secret Operations in Defense of the Democracies*, Second Edition, (Polity, 2017) and *Spy Watching: Intelligence Accountability in the United States* (Oxford, 2018)

The discussion and analysis of specific covert actions is confined to two periods: 1947–75 and 1975–2020. In the first period, authority for covert actions is found in the National Security Act of 1947, with its recognition that the CIA must sometimes engage in “functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct.” (13–14). Examples include low-risk propaganda activities, morally questionable assassination plots, and high-risk paramilitary operations.

The second period is a consequence of the Hughes-Ryan Act of December 30, 1974, largely enacted in reaction to the events in Chile. This law increased congressional oversight and placed more specific accountability requirements on the executive branch. The result complicated planning and reporting on covert actions for the CIA but has been generally accepted as a prudent change. (117)

The final part of *The Third Option* presents an overall assessment of the book's arguments by considering whether the covert action should remain an instrument of US foreign policy, and if so, what safeguards should ensure its proper conduct. Johnson's judgment is that far too many covert actions “have proven feckless or, more alarming still, harmful to the global standing of the United States—and truly devastating to target nations.” (272) Some have been “morally mottled” because ethical considerations seem to have been disregarded. Johnson stresses that a moral component should distinguish the covert actions performed by Western democracies from those undertaken by autocratic regimes, like Russia and China. (223–4)

Toward that end, Johnson offers a “fourth option” for conducting United States foreign policy: “the virtue of leading by example... doing the right thing that others,

at home and abroad, will respect and admire, acting with a dignity and patience that befits the world's oldest and strongest democracy.” (275) An alternative, not stated, is that this option is inherent under the current rules for properly conducted covert actions.

The Third Option is the most thorough, thoughtful, provocative, and extensively documented contribution to the literature of covert action as an element of the intelligence profession. But even Johnson has not eluded the maxim that “errors are an enemy no author has defeated.”

The CIA chief historian has identified several mistakes: former DCI William Casey was never a corporate law professor (123); former DCI John McCone left CIA in 1965 not 1963 (231); the DCIs after Dulles were not “mostly military men,” only four so qualified (175); Radio Liberty was established in 1953 not 1951 (26); Johnson does not acknowledge that chief of station Larry Devlin slow-rolled and did not implement the CIA's order to assassinate Patrice Lumumba (94–5);^a the assertion that more CIA officers were killed in Laos than any other covert action program is incorrect (Afghanistan has that distinction) (106); the CIA abandonment of the Hmong occurred in 1975, not 1968, and resulted from the US withdrawal from South Vietnam (107); no mention is made of KGB support to Allende in Chile although the article by Kristian Gustafson and Christopher Andrew describing it is cited in the bibliography (110); and the clandestine service was never called the Psychological Strategy Board (181).

With the qualifications noted, *The Third Option* is an excellent source for the study of covert action as a factor in US foreign policy. It will add greatly to the reader's knowledge of the topic while providing a good test of their fact-checking skills. An important contribution.

a. See Paul Long's review of *White Malice*, by Susan Williams, elsewhere in this edition.

History

Covert Legions: U.S. Army Intelligence in Germany, 1944–1949, by Thomas Boghardt. (Center for Military History, United States Army, 2022) 546 pages, footnotes, bibliography, photos, maps, glossary, index.

With the help of British and Canadian troops, American soldiers conducted combat operations that defeated Germany in the West and then served as occupation forces until 1949. The role of intelligence in these events through Victory in Europe Day (May 8, 1945) has received extensive attention from historians, but the contribution of US Army intelligence during the occupation has been neglected. Thomas Boghardt, a senior historian at the US Army Center for Military History and contributor to *Studies in Intelligence*, corrects that omission in his new book *Covert Legions*.

The first part of this three-part work discusses the army's wartime intelligence organizations and the general nature of the operations undertaken. The second part "examines the administrative structure of Army Intelligence in occupied Germany and gives an overview of the various headquarters organizations, the principal field agencies, and key personnel" (10) in addition to the relationships established with Allied intelligence services that continue to this day. Boghardt also discusses the difficulties acquiring and keeping qualified officers due to the prevailing reputation that military intelligence (MI) assignments hindered career advancement. Part three describes typical army intelligence operations and to some extent those of Allied services, civilian and military, in the occupation.

Covert Legions refers to the numerous intelligence organizations working in the occupation zone, the two primary US Army ones being the Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) and the Army Security Agency (ASA). From time to time, mention is made of tactical MI units concerned with mail, telegram, and telephone censorship, and the stateside elements with which they interacted.

Covert Legions emphasizes how the intelligence missions during the occupation varied from those conducted during the war. Examples include denazification, the arrest of war crimes suspects, identifying capturing and interviewing German intelligence personnel and scientists and collecting relevant records and hardware. In addition, within two months of the war's end there were more than 70,000 POWs in US-run detention camps, with many awaiting interrogation. The magnitude of the problem

would later increase significantly with the influx of Soviet defectors—both deserters and former German POWs.

Those who performed these tasks included a number of German-speaking draftees and volunteers, many of whom were Jewish, called "the Ritchie Boys" because they received their training at Ft. Ritchie, Maryland. (3) They included some well-known names, including future Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger; Klaus Mann, novelist and son of famed German author Thomas Mann; African American classical singer William C. Warfield; and Stefan Heym, pseudonym of the socialist German writer Helmut Flieg, who resided in East Germany after the war. Several others later joined the new Central Intelligence Agency, including Henry D. Hecksher, Howard C. Bowman, and Capt. Henry P. Schardt. (29)

Boghardt presents an impressive range of operations undertaken during the occupation by various intelligence elements. Examples include neutralizing the putative German Werwolf stay-behind army, and later the recruitment of Willy Brandt as a CIC informant in 1948. (10) Before the occupation ended, many other senior German officials followed his example. (380) That same year the army collected aerial and agent intelligence during the Berlin Airlift.

Covert Legions also tells how the army dealt with civilian intelligence agencies, principally the OSS, MI6, and later the CIA. The OSS relationship was complicated during the war when MI6 discovered that the codes Allen Dulles was using were compromised by the Germans and he refused to stop using them. The dissolution of OSS after the war and the creation of the Strategic Services Unit as a cover name for continued clandestine operations resulted in another problem for the army in Germany: the name was not "army" enough. So the commanding general approved a new name: the War Department Detachment. When a *New York Times* story blew this cover in late 1947, the outed spies assumed the name Department of the Army Detachment, or DAD. In December, it assumed the designation Berlin Operations Base. (131)

And then there was the strange controversy over Hitler's death. Allied headquarters had little reason to doubt Hitler's suicide in his Berlin bunker, but they wanted to be sure and ordered Army Intelligence to investigate. The Red Army on May 9, 1945, had identified the burial site and secured the charred remains of Hitler, Goebbels, and their wives. "Hitler's skull," one Soviet intelligence officer marveled, "was almost intact, as were the cranium and the upper and lower jaws." Nevertheless, on 6 June, Joseph Stalin told Harry L. Hopkins, the top US representative in Moscow, that Hitler was alive. (189)

Boghardt also deals in detail with the Allied agreement that divided Berlin into American, British, French, and

Soviet zones and the challenging relationships that resulted. Operation Rusty, the treatment of the remnants of the Vlasov Army of Soviet POWs who agreed to fight for Hitler during the war, is one example. Although the Allies agreed to return them to Soviet Union, some ended up at the interrogation center in Fort Hunt, Virginia.

Covert Legions is an impressively documented thorough account that fills an important gap in Army intelligence history that will be of great value to those studying the subject. Although not available from bookstores or popular online book sources, it can be acquired from the US Army Center of Military History.

The Island of Extraordinary Captives: A Painter, a Poet, an Heiress, and a Spy in a World War II British Internment Camp, by Simon Parkin (Scribner, 2022), 432 pages.

Tens of thousands of Germans fled to Great Britain in the late 1930s, a mix of Jews, anti-Nazi activists, and artists and intellectuals purged from the universities and other institutions. If they did not always receive a warm reception in the United Kingdom, at least they were tolerated and no longer had to fear being dragged off to a concentration camp, or worse.

Until the summer of 1940, that is. In the wake of the fall of France, Britain was swept by a spy mania and fear that enemy aliens—as Germans in the UK were defined, regardless of why they were there—would form a fifth column during what looked like an imminent invasion. Following Winston Churchill's instruction to "collar the lot," the refugees were rounded up and deposited in internment camps. The blanket decision sent some 25,000 people, including a smattering of actual Nazis and German POWs, to bleak, hastily prepared camps where they waited to be shipped to Canada or Australia, or to an unknown fate. The British government soon realized the mistakes it had made and, with the invasion threat waning in the fall of 1940, began to release the internees. Still, it took a couple of years before everything was sorted out; after they were released, many of the internees joined the British armed forces and intelligence services, where they made impressive contributions to the fight against Hitler.^a

British journalist Simon Parkin tells the internees' history by focusing on one refugee, an orphaned Jewish

teenager and budding artist named Peter Fleischmann, who had arrived alone in December 1938 on a *Kindertransport*. The story of his initial experiences in England was largely one of neglect, until he was locked up in Hutchinson, a camp for 1,200 men on the Isle of Man. There Fleischmann's luck turned, as he fell into what had become a community of writers, intellectuals, and artists who had organized to turn the camp into a combination artists' colony, literary circle, and university-in-exile. The artists soon recognized Peter's talent, took him under their wing, and ultimately were able to help him get released to go to an art school. He studied until 1943, when he was old enough to be drafted into the army, serving as an interpreter first for POW interrogations and then at the Nuremberg Trials. Under the name Peter Midgley, Fleischmann became a well-known artist in postwar Britain.

Parkin's account of camp life is detailed, including both the good and the bad, and his telling of how the internees coped with their situations is often moving. The ironies jump off the page—these were people who had fled from a totalitarian state to a free country only to be locked up, and most of them wanted nothing more than to contribute to Britain's war effort in whatever way they could. Parkin's prose makes the internees' sense of frustration palpable.

a. For the story of the refugees who joined the fight, see Helen Fry, *Churchill's German Army* (History Press, 2010).

As it turned out, there was one actual spy among the Hutchinson internees. It's a strange and pathetic tale, more of a sideshow than anything else, though Parkin skillfully weaves it into his main narrative. Intelligence readers may draw a few lessons from it, but the primary value of *The*

Island of Extraordinary Captives is that it reminds us of the human cost of spy manias and panic.

The reviewer: J.E. Leonardson is the pen name of a CIA analyst and regular *Studies* contributor.

Prisoners of the Castle: An Epic Story of Survival and Escape from Colditz, the Nazis' Fortress Prison, by Ben Macintyre. (Crown, 2022) 342 pages, bibliography, photos, appendix, index.

Colditz castle is a Renaissance-era edifice in the German state of Saxony. During World War II it was a high-security POW camp designated by the Germans as Oflag IV-C. After the war several books and at least one movie characterized the Colditz captives as "prisoners of war, with mustaches firmly set on stiff upper lips, defying the Nazis by tunneling out of a grim Gothic castle on a German hilltop, fighting the war by other means." Journalist Ben Macintyre writes that "like all legends, that tale contains only a part of the truth." (ix) *Prisoners of the Castle* tells quite a different story.

There were more escape attempts from Colditz than any other camp. One of the qualifications for internment there was previous failed escape attempts from other camps. High rank and family connections also played a role. For example, Giles Romilly, a journalist and communist, was confined to Colditz because his mother was the younger sister of Clementine Churchill, Winston Churchill's wife. (70) Similarly, Florimond Joseph Du Sossait Duke, an OSS officer of high American social standing, was the first American prisoner in Colditz. Macintyre characterizes him as one of the least successful secret agents of the war after telling of a rather courageous though unsuccessful effort to conduct an operation in Hungary. (217–8)

Prisoners of the Castle also includes stories about both successes and failures in planning and execution, while providing biographical details on those involved, including the German guards who were members of the Wehrmacht not the Nazi party. Still, not all prisoners were keen to risk German retaliation by participating in or supporting escape attempts. Most, in fact, were content to wait out the war to gain freedom. A few cooperated with the Germans and met with British justice. Others had access to some "important (or at least interesting) intelligence" acquired from new arrivals and they developed a

method of coded communication with Britain. (100–101) Details of the code are given in the appendix. (315ff)

Airey Neave, a future aide to Margaret Thatcher, had failed to escape from a prison in Poland and would fail again after reaching Colditz. But he persisted and with a colleague, after a harrowing experience vividly related by Macintyre, became the first Englishman to escape from Colditz.

The most impressive escape attempts were made by "Michael Sinclair, a twenty-five-year-old British lieutenant who had already escaped twice from Colditz before being caught and brought back. Sinclair was fluent in German, a talented amateur actor." (4) He came close to success when he impersonated German Sergeant Major Gustav Rothenberger. The story is mentioned in other books but not in such detail.^a

In addition to tunneling and impersonation attempts, a small group of men were hard at work on an ingenious escape plan to fly away in a glider they built in a room at the top of the castle. The operation was terminated on April 14, 1945, when control of Colditz passed from the guards to the prisoners. (272) Macintyre includes the only known photo of the glider taken by Lee Carson, who married a CIA officer after the war. (305)

While *Prisoners of the Castle* lists the many primary sources consulted, it does not include source notes, thus diminishing the book's scholarly value. But it is an enjoyable read and contains material not found in other accounts.

a. S. P. MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth: British and Commonwealth Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

Sidney Reilly: Master Spy, by Benny Morris (Yale University Press, 2022), 190 pages, bibliographical note, index, and ***The Greatest Spy: The True Story of the Secret Agent Who Inspired James Bond 007***, by John Harte (Cune Press, 2022), 271 pages, bibliography, photos, index.

Sidney Reilly is one of the most well-known names in espionage literature. British author Robin Lockhart called him the “Ace of Spies.”^a A very successful and fanciful television series starring Sam Neal appeared in 1983. Many books have included his spying exploits in China before World War I and his interwar experiences in New York, London, and Moscow, plus his flying lessons in Canada. Most accounts have dwelled on his role in the failed Lockhart Plot to overthrow the Bolshevik government, his post-war actions in Southern Russia, and his links to the Soviet Trust operation that led to his capture and demise. Andrew Cook’s contribution covered these topics and documented them with detailed endnotes and a bibliography.^b

The new contributions by Israeli historian Benny Morris and investigative journalist John Harte tell much the same story without providing specific citations. Both include bibliographical notes. Morris’s are excellent and include MI5 primary-source file designations, but the files are not linked to the narrative. For example, Morris writes that “In the first half of the twentieth century, and perhaps during the second half as well, Reilly was regarded in the English-speaking world as the gold standard of

espionage” without citing a source. (1) He doesn’t say by whom.

Harte resurrects the fairytale that Reilly was the basis for Ian Fleming’s James Bond novels as “shown by his secret Admiralty intelligence files” (262) but offers no documentation. He does mention some participants not included in Morris or Cook and he analyzes some of the accounts by other authors, but nothing is sourced and thus doesn’t indicate why his comments should be accepted. He also adds some new material from letters written by Reilly’s wife, but it has little impact the basic story. The dominant weakness of the book is that the frequent quoted dialog is unsourced.

There is little doubt that Sidney Reilly used his fluency in four languages and his ingenuity deal-ing with people to aide various intelligence services, and both Morris and Harte convey that message. But their methodology fails to confirm that Reilly was either “the greatest spy” or a “master spy.”

These books provide a useful introduction to the Sidney Reilly legend, but Cook provides a more solid foundation.

The Venlo Sting: MI6’s Deadly Fiasco, by Norman Ridley (Casement Publishers, 2022), 207 pages, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

In November 1939, British Major Richard Henry Stevens, the MI6 Passport Control Officer in the Netherlands, and his colleague Sigismund (Sigi) Payne Best, an agent of MI6 officer Claude Dansey, traveled, with approval of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to the Dutch city of Venlo on the border with Germany. They had been ordered to rendezvous with the dissident aristocratic Prussian General Gustav Anton von Wietersheim, to discuss possible terms of an armistice if the Nazi regime could be toppled from within. Upon arrival, their German contact—who unbeknown to them was SS officer Walter Schellenberg—escorted them from the Dutch to the German side of the border where they were captured. Interrogation was followed by five years of captivity. The

story came to be known as the Venlo Incident and was later the subject of several books.

In *The Venlo Sting*, author Norman Ridley repeats the story while adding historical background. He also suggests that the operation was undertaken at least in part in response to Hitler’s belief that the British Secret Intelligence Service had been responsible for a recent attempt on his life at the Bürgerbräukeller in Munich. (177–8) Although Ridley does not cite a specific source, the story is supported by other accounts. But Ridley’s claim that either Payne or Best had “upon his person a list of active British agents working in the Netherlands” is not substantiated.

a. Robin Lockhart, *Reilly Ace of Spies* (Stein & Day, 1968).

b. Andrew Cook, *On His Majesty’s Secret Service: The True Story of Sidney Reilly Ace of Spies* (Tempus Publishing, 2002).

Ridley does document the assertion that under Gestapo questioning both Best and Stevens told all they knew about British intelligence operations in the Netherlands, although much of it was already known thanks to German infiltration of the Dutch operations before Venlo and contributions from British intelligence officer and German agent Charles Ellis. (47)

The final chapter on the aftermath of the incident discusses its impact on the Foreign Office, but is not sourced at all. An appendix, based on Imperial War Museum records, discusses how Payne and Best corresponded while in concentration camps and after the war and mentions some disagreements, but no specific sources are identified. (239) A decent review of a well-known operation with little new.

Intelligence Abroad

The Handbook of Asian Intelligence Cultures, by Ryan Shaffer (ed.) (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), 458 pages, end-of-chapter notes, index.

The WorldCat is an online database linking thousands of libraries that users can use to determine what books and related media exist in selected collections on a subject of interest. For example, a search of libraries in India—the world's largest democracy—for items on intelligence “reveals about 250 English and non-English books, articles, videos, and other media.” For comparison, a search for the just “Central Intelligence Agency” returns more than 15,300 items. (xiv)

might be expected, Pyongyang's domestic service largely mirrors the governing elite's brutal efforts to subjugate the country's population and neutralize the regime's domestic enemies. Its foreign intelligence elements on the other hand have a long and well-chronicled history of recognizing—and quickly responding to—international challenges, with a degree of astuteness that many Western intelligence services envy. (241)

Similar differences in varying degrees exist for the 30 intelligence services discussed in *The Handbook of Asian Intelligence Cultures*.^a Intelligence culture is a phrase the authors use to indicate that intelligence services are influenced by the history, forms of government, politics, economics, militaries, and societal conditions in the countries under consideration.

The chapter on Turkmenistan focuses on its intelligence history that reflects a mixture of residual KGB influences and local culture. (383) The discussion of India's intelligence services deals with their long-established services, the Intelligence Bureau (the domestic intelligence agency) and the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), the external intelligence service.

After introductory comments that discuss Sun Tzu's *Art of War* and Kautilya's treatise the *Arthashastra* to establish that intelligence has roots in Asia, each of the 30 chapters provide an overview of the often little known contemporary intelligence services and the cultures of which they are a part in Central, East, South, and Southeast Asia.

The chapter on Taiwan's intelligence agencies considers reputation for active operations in the Indo-Pacific region and related covert actions that led to the 2020 modification of its National Intelligence Service Law (NISL), governing the conduct and the responsibility of Taiwan's modern intelligence organizations

The Handbook of Asian Intelligence Cultures makes clear that there is no single “Asian intelligence culture,” but rather there are many intelligence cultures and little-known services. Some like North Korea have two. As

These examples are indicative of what *The Handbook of Asian Intelligence Cultures* has to offer. The entries are well written and documented, comprising a very worthwhile contribution to the intelligence literature.^b

a. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

b. Ryan Shaffer, who has contributed to *Studies* several times, also edited *African Intelligence Services: Early Post-colonial and Contemporary Challenges* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021). See Charles Long's review in *Studies* 66, No. 2 (June 2022).

Canadian Military Intelligence: Operations and Evolution from the October Crisis to the War in Afghanistan, by David A. Charters (Georgetown University Press, 2022), 334 pages, end of chapter notes, bibliography, index.

In October 5–December 28, 1970, terrorists from the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) kidnapped a British diplomat and killed a provincial cabinet minister in a period known as the October Crisis. The Canadian military, supported by military intelligence, made an important contribution to reestablishing order that until now has not been told. (177) Years later, on December 1, 2011, Ottawa withdrew its forces from Kandahar, Afghanistan, a decade after the first Canadian troops arrived there. Military intelligence played a little-known essential role in this operation, too.

Because with few exceptions, Canadian military intelligence has received little study, the non-government Canadian Military Intelligence Association (CMIA) commissioned military historian David Charters, senior fellow at the Brigadier Milton F. Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society at the University of New Brunswick to write a history of intelligence support to these and related Canadian Armed Forces matters that took place in 1970–2010. (19–20) An additional objective, writes Charters, was to provide a basis for comparison with their British, American and Russian counterparts that “receive a disproportionate attention to the operations of secret foreign intelligence services—particularly the US Central

Intelligence Agency, Britain’s Secret Intelligence Service, and the Soviet KGB.” (21–22) Of course, there may be a good reason for that.

Canadian Military Intelligence is presented in two parts preceded by introductory summary of the literature to date. The first part provides historical background from 1939 to 1970. It discusses the evolution of administrative, organizational, technical, and training functions at both the strategic and tactical levels. Of particular interest is the creation of Canada’s post-war SIGINT service and its place in the Five Eyes intelligence alliance.

Part two examines intelligence support to a selection of domestic and foreign Canadian Armed Forces operations from 1970 to 2010. Included are the 1990–91 Persian Gulf War; United Nations peacekeeping in the Balkans, 1992–95; supporting NATO in Bosnia 1996–2004; peace enforcement operations in Kosovo, 1999–2000; and the counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan.

What emerges from *Canadian Military Intelligence* is a well-documented story of its evolution from a marginal to a professional modern military and defense activity.^a

Memoir

Spy Daughter, Queer Girl: A Memoir In Search of Truth and Acceptance in a Family of Secrets, by Leslie Absher (Latah Books, 2022), 229 pages.

During the early years of the late Kenneth Michael (Mike) Absher’s CIA career, he kept his employer’s identity secret from his daughter Leslie. She grew up thinking her amateur magician dad he was with the US Army. As Leslie matured, she decided to keep her lesbianism secret from her dad, fearing his reaction. *Spy Daughter, Queer Girl* is a memoir that reveals how each learned the truth about the other and of their bumpy path to understanding and reconciliation.

It was Leslie’s mother who finally insisted that Mike tell his children where he worked and when he hesitated, she revealed the reality. Leslie was shocked. Her dad wasn’t anything like James Bond’s conception of a spy. Moreover, what little she knew about the CIA was negative. Thus she concluded: “Everything wrong in our lives was because of his job—our constant moving, Mom’s unhappiness, my hiding who I was” was the CIA’s fault. (43)

Leslie’s secondary reaction was to read all she could about the CIA, and at first this disturbed her even more.

a. See also reviews by Joseph Gartin of *Top Secret Canada: Understanding the Canadian Intelligence and National Security Community*, by Stephanie Carvin, Thomas Juneau, and Craig Forcese (eds.), in *Studies* 65, No. 3 (September 2021), and *Intelligence Analysis and Policy Making: The Canadian Experience*, by Thomas Juneau and Stephanie Carvin, in *Studies* 66, No. 1 (March 2022).

At one point she asked her father, "Have you ever killed anyone?" At another she wondered if he was involved with harsh interrogations in Vietnam. Later she linked his service in Greece to the political turmoil there. Then she began collecting data for a book on the subject. (134) She would learn that the Greek security police and military police were the ones doing the torturing there, not the CIA. (148) Eventually she was convinced that the CIA officers serving there were not directly involved in any form of torture. (237)

Mike Absher learned his daughter's secret in a letter from her. "Dad called the day he received it. 'I can't accept this. It's not natural,' he said. 'But there's no reason for us to lose contact,' he added. Nevertheless, Dad and I

grew more and more apart. I convinced myself this was how it had to be." (108)

But the break wasn't total. Mike would later visit Leslie and her "whole lesbian tribe... how else would he know me if he didn't meet people who were important to me.... It wasn't a perfect gathering but at least it had happened. I could tell how uncomfortable it made Dad." (116)

Leslie and her father kept in touch. He told her about the book he was writing and they talked while he was in the hospital shortly before his death in 2012. *Spy Daughter, Queer Girl* is a candid expression of the difficulties some children of CIA officers experience with implicit suggestions for how they can be overcome.^a

The Yank: A True Story of a Former US Marine in the Irish Republican Army, by John Crawley (Melville House, 2022), 270 pages, prologue, photographs.

The title of John Crawley's intriguing if ultimately unsatisfying memoir might be all the summary that is needed. Crawley, whose parents were Irish, recounts his journey growing up in America, moving to the Republic of Ireland in 1972 to attend high school, and, upon his return to the United States in 1975, enlisting in the US Marine Corps. His goal: serve his tour, hone his military skills, and join the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA, commonly IRA). In May 1979, after what seems to be an accomplished stint with an elite Marine recon unit, Crawley headed back to Dublin to find the IRA.

Surprisingly enough, this turned out to be less difficult than one might expect for an outlawed organization that in Ireland faced hostility from the government and police and in Northern Ireland (or the North of Ireland, as Crawley insists) encountered the full weight of British intelligence, military, and police might, not to mention Loyalist paramilitaries and IRA counterintelligence. Before long, though, Crawley is a sworn IRA member, assigned to a unit just over the border in the North.

Fresh from his military service and primed to offer his expertise to the cause, Crawley finds an organization by turns lethal and amateurish, hamstrung by haphazard training, poor planning, and a motley assortment of

small arms from farmhouse closets and long-ago wars. Notwithstanding the carnage it inflicted, from bomb-making to ambushes the IRA was uneven in its abilities. Crawley observes there was not "one IRA but a dozen different IRAs depending on the area and the calibre of the local commander," and ruefully recalls that his "first operation was what the Marine Corps would call a complete clusterf*** from beginning to end." (55) Crawley recounts in painfully stilted dialogue his efforts to school his fellow volunteers and leaders, evidently including senior IRA commander and future politician Martin McGuinness, on the finer points of tactics, ballistics, and weapons.

One imagines McGuinness (who died in 2017) was glad to see the back of him when in 1983 Crawley is dispatched on a mission: go to Boston and buy guns. Not surprisingly, buying guns in America was easy, but buying military-grade weapons in volume required a network, cash, and muscle. Enter notorious Irish-American gangster James "Whitey" Bulger. Crawley's telling of his time in South Boston with the dangerous and mercurial Bulger and his crew, including gangster Pat Nee, makes up the book's most suspenseful chapters. It all went sideways eventually, because not long after they had transferred their load of guns and gear from their trawler *Valhalla* onto the smaller

a. Kenneth Michael Absher's work appeared several times in *Studies*. He was also the author of *Privileged and Confidential: A Secret History of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board* and *Mind-Sets and Missiles: A First-Hand Account of the Cuban Missile Crisis*.

Marita Ann off the coast of Ireland, the gig was up. Seized by the Irish Navy as the *Marita Ann* approached the coast on September 29, 1984, Crawley would spend a decade as a guest of the Crown in Portlaoise Prison.

It seems likely that the endeavor was compromised by several sources. At a minimum, Sean O'Callaghan—an IRA member, police informant, and probably MI5 source—alerted authorities. (164–65) *Valhalla* crewman John McIntyre was suspected by Bulger of spilling the beans to Boston police after arriving back in the United States; Bulger and his crew later tortured and murdered him. Crawley offers, “I later learned that the British played a major role in directing the operation against us, including the provision of air and submarine surveillance assets. British intelligence was able to inform their government before the Irish government knew of it.” (155)

Released on September 10, 1994, Crawley promptly reports back to the IRA, eager for a new mission. His passion evidently outweighing sound counterintelligence practices, by mid-1996 he and a handful of compatriots were in England planning a bomb attack on London's power grid. MI5, Scotland Yard's Special Branch, and the Metropolitan Police were all over them. (236) Captured and convicted, Crawley and five others in July 1997 are sentenced to 35 years in prison. (247) Not long after, Crawley is approached by two US Embassy officials (one

of whom he surmises was a CIA officer), with an offer of repatriation to the United States in exchange for information. (250) Crawley declined. Sent to an Irish prison months later and released on May 22, 2000, under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, Crawley remains a steadfast defender of the IRA's goals and a critic of its leadership.

Crawley pads his account with discursive lessons on Irish republicanism and British perfidy over the past few centuries. The effect calls to mind lines from the song “The Body of an American” by The Pogues: “But fifteen minutes later we had our first taste of whiskey/there was uncles giving lectures on ancient Irish history.” Crawley obfuscates selectively, leaving out names and other details when convenient, to this reader's frustration, and there is no index to help with fact-checking. He offers little reflection on his role in the fearsome toll the Troubles took on all sides. The most you can say is Crawley was no barstool soldier stuffing a few dollars into the Northern Irish Aid jar in a South Boston pub. At the same time, *The Yank* is a reminder for intelligence and law enforcement that taking up arms need not always be the culmination of a complex pathway of radicalization. Instead, Crawley seems to have simply decided it was a good idea at the time, and he has not changed his mind 40 years on.^a —
The reviewer: Joseph Gartin is managing editor of Studies.

Fiction

The Able Archers: Based On Real Events, by Brian J. Morra (Koehlerbooks, 2021), 270 pages, appendices.

Former intelligence officer and retired senior aerospace executive Brian J. Morra has supplied a novel piece of historical fiction with *Able Archers*, a crisp read of approximately 250 pages chock-full of Cold War paranoia and nuclear brinkmanship. In particular, Morra focuses his sights on two fictional protagonists, one from both the American and Soviet sides. Both men describe in the first person their backdoor diplomacy to avert Armageddon against the backdrop of NATO's Able Archer 83 exercises in November 1983. Much of the novel feels eerily biographical and with good reason: Morra worked directly

on the Japanese-US intelligence investigation of Russia's downing of Korean Airlines Flight 007 (KAL 007) on September 1, 1983, and his obvious expertise on geopolitics shines throughout the novel. Ultimately, *Able Archers* trades persuasively on its author's subject-matter knowledge to overcome sometimes clunky dialogue and dubious plot twists.

Morra builds his narrative around three key events constituting perhaps the most risk-laden period of the entire Cold War, none of whose wider significance was

a. See also my review of Aaron Edwards' well-researched *Agents of Influence: Britain's Secret Intelligence War against the IRA* (Merrion Press, 2021) in *Studies in Intelligence* 65, no. 4 (December 2021). Robert Dover and Michael S. Goodman provide a wealth of original materials on London's struggle to make sense of the Troubles in *Learning from the Secret Past: Cases in British Intelligence History* (Georgetown University Press, 2011). See also Anne Cadwallader's damning *Lethal Allies: British Collusion in Ireland* (Mercier Press, 2013). Among the best general histories is *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* by Richard English (Macmillan, 2003).

understood at the time outside a small group of military leaders on both sides of the divide. With a professional's grasp of the subtleties, he lays out the finer details of the KAL 007 shootdown that include, for example, the key personalities and details on radar, aircraft, and Soviet air command. The book then moves logically to an episode later that month when Soviet Lt. Stanislav Petrov refused orders to fire Russian ballistic missiles at the United States, despite warnings from Soviet radar that a US strike was incoming. Finally, the book's apex arrives as the two protagonists struggle to broker a standdown of their respective sides during Able Archer 83 inside a cramped East Berlin meeting room. Armchair Cold War historians already know the outcomes, but Morra's prose does credible work bringing the human element alive, particularly where it highlights the finer points of the intelligence and military elements in the equation.

Morra's chosen profession was intelligence and geopolitics, not novel writing, and this lack of experience occasionally makes for bumpy reading. Not once but twice, Morra inserts profanity-laden insults into the mouth of a key protagonist that seem out of character and not essential to the overall plot. Morra makes infrequent use

of facial expressions, thoughts, or atmosphere to relate plot progression, instead choosing stencil-kit dialogue that reads like a scripted situation report designed to convey information to the reader. Rarely are the actions and behavior of characters three-dimensional. Even the main protagonists serve Morra's preferred approach of communicating information and tension like rote actors. As for the plot, it flows but sometimes feels too fortuitous. Lost loves are reunited randomly across years and continents. The Russian protagonist succeeds in extracting an American from Soviet captivity in mere minutes using threats and bluff. His American counterpart then persuades both Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher to change their wardrobes as a sign of their peaceful intentions.

Taken together, these less artful elements might doom another, more sprawling tome. *Able Archers*, however, succeeds despite them because of its brevity and authenticity. Its author asks us to revisit well-worn events and does so persuasively. His approach allows us to feel the real, razor-sharp tension surrounding them again, and paradoxically, for the first time.^a—*The reviewer*: Graham Alexander is the pen name of a CIA operations officer.

The Bucharest Dossier: A Novel, by William Maz (Oceanview Publishing, 2022), 376 pages.

Rare, indeed, is the spy thriller that saves its biggest surprises for the author's note. William Maz manages this feat in his debut novel, *The Bucharest Dossier*. In his note he writes that his work "provides a plausible scenario" to explain the Romanian Revolution of December 1989. Maz's startling claim comes at the conclusion of a story so full of conspiracy theories that it distorts the historical record beyond any fair measure of credulity. In it, CIA secretly hires Arab snipers, smuggles them into Romania, and has them shoot demonstrators from the rooftops of Timisoara, a city in western Romania.

The logic behind this move, it transpires, is to forestall a peaceful transition of power by stoking popular fury against Romania's odious, long-tenured dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu. This sensational and completely implausible scenario is indicative of the novel's fatal flaw. Namely,

digressions from the historical record or even realistic depictions of intelligence work are often forgivable provided the plot remains plausible and suspenseful. Regrettably, Maz bends and finally breaks this commandment after piling one too many canards onto a once promising premise.

Maz's work actually starts with punch and intrigue. There is a mysterious murder and a secret mission that requires CIA officer Bill Hefflin, to deploy to Bucharest in December 1989. Maz seems to lack even the most rudimentary understanding of how CIA recruits personnel, handles assets, or manages foreign operations though this at first seems forgivable because of his obvious familiarity with Romanian culture. Hefflin, we learn, is a Romanian-American who left his home at a young age and later entered Harvard University. This mirrors Maz's own background and his portrayal of Hefflin's feelings toward

a. Those driven to read non-fictional treatments of the Able Archer episode should visit the following *Studies* reviews of two books on the subject and read a monograph published by the Center for the Study of Intelligence: Douglas Garthoff review of Taylor Downing, *Reagan, Andropov, and a World on the Brink* (Da Capo Press, 2018) in *Studies* 62, No. 3 (*Extracts*, September 2018); David A. Foy review of Marc Ambinder, *The Brink: President Reagan and the Nuclear War Scare of 1983* (Simon & Schuster, in *Studies* 62, No. 4 (*Extracts*, December 2018); Benjamin B. Fischer, *A Cold War Conundrum: The 1983 Soviet War Scare* (Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1997). All are available at <https://www.cia.gov>.

his homeland has a ring of authenticity lacking in other plot points or characters.

Bucharest under Ceausescu was notorious for its concrete monstrosity and police-state-induced torpor. Maz paints an accurate portrait of this grim reality but nonetheless manages to tease out the bittersweet feelings of affection that many Romanian emigrés harbored for their country. Hefflin arrives in Bucharest for his mission and the hopeful reader accompanies him believing that, at the least, Maz's story will weave compellingly into the well-known drama of Ceausescu's ouster and execution.

A strong opening, however, is no guarantee for a compelling plot. The novel's third act contains a series of events and coincidences so incredible that *The Bucharest Dossier* becomes less an espionage tale than a piece of absurdist art. A few plot points may help to illustrate: working as an analyst on official travel to Bucharest, Hefflin is nonetheless the officer allowed to meet CIA's top Soviet asset, which he does in a restaurant the asset selects in central Bucharest. Romanian surveillance trails Hefflin to the meeting, but both he and the asset escape unscathed. They continue to meet using phones to signal meetings, one of which takes place at the asset's residence in Bucharest.

The Wayward Spy—*A Novel* by Susan Ouellette (CamCat Publishing, 2021), 307 pages, author's note.

In Susan Ouellette's debut novel *The Wayward Spy*, a young woman, reeling from the news of the sudden death of her fiancé overseas under murky circumstances, embarks on an odyssey to learn the truth. Both of the engaged individuals have an intelligence nexus. Maggie works in Washington, DC, for the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) and is a former CIA analyst. The recently deceased Steve was a CIA operative posted abroad in Georgia. Action alternates between Washington and this former Soviet state, where an apparent terrorist bombing has just taken the husband-to-be's life. Maggie must sort out whom to trust among a mix of US intelligence and legislative officials, Georgian government personnel, and Chechen militants. Not only does she learn that Steve was the likely target of the attack, but allegations quickly surface that he was a traitor, supplying intelligence to the Russians. The first event alone could easily have set the plot in motion; the second throws Maggie into overdrive.

Once the Arab snipers have fired in Timosoara, Hefflin stumbles across his lost love from a decade before and frees her from Romanian captivity after impersonating a Securitate officer. Hefflin then finds himself in a fistfight with his station chief in Bucharest who, in turn, is assassinated by a CIA-funded hitman after threatening to reveal the CIA's role in the Timosoara shootings. Hefflin emerges unscathed from the chaos, but only after he murders a senior agency official with poisoned whiskey after the officer attempts to blackmail him into silence.

None of these plot points even touches upon the preposterous denouement, as Maz ties up the narrative using a main character with seemingly omnipotent powers designed to manufacture the happiest possible ending for Maz's alter ego. It is an ironic point that actually makes *The Bucharest Dossier* a worthwhile read for an unintended audience. Whatever its flaws, Maz's work does offer the chance for readers to observe firsthand an Eastern Bloc mentality, which assumes intelligence agencies are both nefarious and all powerful and where "the official line" of any history is never the accepted truth. This allowed, readers seeking a plausible, realistic espionage thriller should look elsewhere.—*The reviewer*: Graham Alexander is the pen name of a CIA operations officer.

In some respects, Maggie is a variant of Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan. In *The Hunt for Red October*, the Russia expert Ryan tells the national security advisor he's "only an analyst" before being thrust in over his head. One sees echoes of Ryan when Maggie introduces herself as "just a lowly intelligence analyst" (48); she likewise has a Russian background and quickly becomes embroiled in a crisis not of her making. And as Ryan's military background fleshes him out to be something more than he seemed at first blush, one learns that Maggie has received a bit of operational training at CIA's legendary facility for recruits, which she puts to use to free herself when taken captive. Yet the parallel only goes so far. Ryan's mission was directed from the White House; Maggie's is self-assigned and far more personal.

Ouellette, a former HPSCI staffer and CIA analyst, notes in a postscript that "*The Wayward Spy* addresses a lesser-known dynamic in the Intelligence Community—the place where politics and intelligence collide. That's where Maggie comes in." Yet she fails to make the most of this;

one can't help feeling that there is untapped potential here. Maggie's intelligence background is ancillary, a supporting role at best; the book revolves far more around the intelligence ties of the fiancé and others. And while it demonstrates a political nexus in the end, this aspect, too, receives lesser billing throughout most of the story.

The plot could have benefited from some decluttering; simpler is often better. For one thing, a few too many back-and-forths between a character appearing either good or bad leaves one's head spinning, and ultimate explanations can fall short. Coincidences abound: two key individuals just happen to have been college classmates with a grudge and the same villain just happens to keep showing up in different guises. Some scenes come across as over the top. We are to believe that a mysterious caller with a "thick" accent is the head of Russian intelligence, phoning Maggie out of the blue to say that her fiancé was a Russian collaborator. (12–13) Would the CIA's chief of counterintelligence really steal a document from a top US government official? "I'm like the invisible woman during these meetings. While they were trading golf stories, I slipped a copy of the cable out of the FBI Director's folder." (83) And in a flashback to Maggie and Steve's first encounter at a party of mostly CIA employees, in the space of a few sentences the author employs some of the oldest clichés in the business and invites comparisons to a Harlequin Romance:

"Are you one of them?" she nodded toward the crowd in the living room.

"If I told you, I'd have to kill you."

"The way the party's going, you'd be doing me a favor."

He laughed and extended his right hand. "Steve Ryder."

The warmth from his touch spread up her arm and across her chest and face. In the presence of this real-life American James Bond, she suddenly forgot how to speak. Good Lord, he was gorgeous. (48)

The novel is set in November 2003 but little is made of Georgia's "Rose Revolution" occurring then; the author seems to have chosen the date purposely but then forgot about it. Other real-life backdrops might have been better leveraged. The death a decade earlier of CIA officer Freddie Woodruff, killed by a hail of bullets while a passenger in a vehicle in the Georgian countryside—the motivation a subject of debate to this day—is one possibility. Another is the Boston Marathon bombing, combining the novel's strands of terrorism and Chechnya. A sharper blue pencil also would have caught some distractions. Repeated references to the "Axis of Evil" do not seem to be channeling President George W. Bush's invocation of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea; their meaning never becomes clear. Versions of Maggie's backstory conflict, and HPSCI offices are variously located in the Capitol's attic and crypt.

Despite these shortcomings, Ouellette deserves credit for portraying Maggie as far from one-dimensional. Most notably, she is courageous; when her life is in danger at the hands of an assassin, Maggie is no damsel in distress, but attempts to break free multiple times, exhibiting strength and quickness of thought. The most prominent intelligence figure in the story, a senior official at CIA Headquarters, is similarly not just a caricature. In addition, she evokes the challenges of life in the intelligence arena. When Maggie is conflicted about how to judge an action of this same CIA official, "It was impossible to measure sincerity in a person whose profession is based on deception." (41)

In an author's note, Ouellette writes, "I show that CIA is comprised of every kind of human, including the heroic, the cowardly, the conniving, and the honest. It is a complicated organization filled with complicated people." So, too, is *The Wayward Spy* a complicated endeavor. But if Ouellette takes her writing to the next level, it would not be hard to see Maggie return as a recurring character uncovering intelligence intrigue through a series of congressional oversight investigations—a niche field in espionage literature that is open for exploitation.—*The reviewer:* Mike R. is a member of CIA's History Staff.

