

Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf

Compiled and reviewed by Hayden Peake

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Man of War: The Secret Life of Captain Alan Hillgarth Officer, Adventurer, Agent, by Duff Hart-Davis.

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The Secret Listeners: How the Wartime Y Service Intercepted the Secret German Codes for Bletchley Park, by Sinclair McKay.

The Watchers: A Secret History of the Reign of Elizabeth I, by Stephen Alford.

Memoir

The Formative Years of an African-American Spy: A Memoir, by Odell Bennett Lee.

Intelligence Services Abroad

Classified: Secrecy and the State in Modern Britain, by Christopher Moran.

MOSSAD: The Greatest Missions of the Israeli Secret Service, by Michael Bar-Zohar and Nissim Mishal.

Other People's Wars: New Zealand in Afghanistan, Iraq and the War on Terror, by Nicky Hager.

Russia and the Cult of State Security: The Chekist Tradition, from Lenin to Putin, by Julie Fedor.

All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed in this article are those of the author. Nothing in the article should be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations.

Current Topics

The Finish: The Killing of Osama Bin Laden, by Mark Bowden. (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2012) 265 pp., no index.

Readers of *Black Hawk Down* and *Guests of the Aya-tollah* have learned that author Mark Bowden is a skillful storyteller. *The Finish* follows that precedent and establishes it as essential reading on the subject of Osama bin Laden's killing. In this book, Bowden adds to the well-known basics of the story background and texture about the principal characters and operational circumstances that have not been provided in other accounts. To do this, he consulted the materials captured at Bin Laden's compound and now held at West Point; interviewed President Obama, reporting his views on key aspects of the operation; and conducted interviews with many of the principals, although not all are named.

The Finish sets the stage by reviewing the pre-9/11 mindsets of key players and reveals some interesting pre-conceptions. President Obama, for instance, had, until 9/11, imagined terrorists shaped by "ignorance and poverty," (23) a view he would soon revise. Bowden also lays the groundwork for a gradual convergence of views with Obama's predecessor on certain areas of the war on terror. A short summary of Bin Laden's evolution into Islamic terrorism shows how, ironically, he used modern Western communication techniques to attract dedicated fanatics to join a "backward looking movement with forward looking tactics." (52)

The balance of the book tracks the search for Bin Laden from the early frustrated attempts by CIA's Alec Station, through the revitalization of efforts after 9/11, and persistent analysis of information that began to lead to the clues to his whereabouts. On this point, Bowden counters the claim "that torture played no role in tracking down Bin Laden," when he notes that "in the first

two important steps down the trail, that claim crumbles." (113)

Bowden interrupts the story of the search from time to time and turns to what Bin Laden is doing and thinking as the end nears. He quotes letters to his subordinates that lay out his concepts for more terror, while showing concern for the families whose men were killed by drones, and for the excessive killing of Muslims.

By late 2010, Bin Laden's compound had been discovered. From that point on, Bowden concentrates on the players who worked to convince the president that the al-Qaeda leader was very likely to be there, the evidence they developed, and several options advanced for killing him. Bowden does a fine job of conveying a sense of the pressure that dominated the planning and the controversies that resulted before the final decision was made. Some accounts held that the president, after the last planning session, said he wanted to think about the decision overnight. Bowden reports that the president told him "he had all but made up his mind when he left the Thursday meeting." (206)

Bowden treats in detail SEAL Team 6 planning, the importance of the president's insistence that they be prepared to fight their way out, insistence on adding appropriate backup support and, of course, the successful mission itself. He admits that some of the details he provides conflict with other accounts published since his book went to press and comments that future editions of the book will reflect the differences.

The Finish holds your attention from page 1. It is an impressive, finely honed story of a gutsy call and an operation professionally executed.

Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon: Cyber Peace Activist, Spook, Attacker, by Timothy L. Thomas. (Foreign Military Studies Office, 2012) 373 pp., footnotes, appendices, photos, maps, no index.

Using Chinese open sources, author Timothy Thomas, a senior analyst with the Foreign Military Studies Office at Ft. Leavenworth, concludes that China is "implicated in the theft of digital information from countries across the globe via a combination of traditional

and creative oriental methods." (xi) These thefts, he suggests, are conducted by civilian and military agencies, and are part of a three component threat—cyber soft power, cyber reconnaissance, and cyber attack: *The Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon*.

The three chapters on soft power variations echo Sun Tzu—“win without fighting; win the victory before the first battle.” (xiv) One technique uses the internet to influence public opinion with high tech media—a Chinese CNN in New York—and discusses methods to deter attacks and control information. Cyber deterrence is another soft power technique. Thomas indicates that China considers it in terms comparable to nuclear deterrence and is working to find the best organization to do this, and thus make the cyber option as powerful as the nuclear. While the focus is on Chinese concepts and initiatives, Thomas compares them with US methods and ideas and notes the concerns US cyber officers have with China’s rapid progress.

The next three chapters discuss China’s cyber activist operations against the United States and other Western nations. There is a section on the PLA’s SIGINT and cyber reconnaissance infrastructure and a discussion of two recent cases: Night Dragon and Shady Rat. The former targeted oil, gas, and petrochemical companies. The latter examines stolen national secrets, source codes, e-mail archives, document stores, among other targets. There is also a section on the role of China’s cy-

ber militia and a case study on how Google dealt with a cyber attack.

Part three of the book deals with a series of Chinese books and articles concerning offensive vs. defensive “informatization theory.” (143ff) One part deals with resources needed to create forces that think and act in terms of the operation of digital weapons against an enemy. The book ends with a chapter comparing Chinese and Russian cyber concepts.

Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon concludes with some alarming thoughts on what this means to the West. Thomas’s emphasis is on China’s attempts to “persuade other nations of [its] peaceful intent” (258) while it continues to refine its capabilities aimed at gaining and maintaining strategic superiority through ‘system sabotage’ and application of means and methods to deceive, bewilder, and control a network control center....” (265) This is an important introductory treatment of a vital subject that provides a comprehensive idea of just how serious the Chinese are when it comes to the future of cyberspace.

General

Counterintelligence Theory and Practice, by Hank Prunckun. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2012) 237 pp., end of chapter notes, appendices, photos, index.

Dr. Hank Prunckun is an associate professor of intelligence analysis at the Australian Graduate School of Policing and Security at Charles Stuart University in Sydney. During a 28-year career in Australia’s criminal justice system, he has served in strategic and tactical intelligence positions and has authored several books on intelligence.¹ He explains in the preface to *Counterintelligence Theory and Practice* that he wrote the book to suggest “new remedies” to meet the “new evils” facing “security of classified information and secret operations.” (xi)

Prunckun acknowledges that counterintelligence (CI) practice has been the subject of many other books,

among them William R. Johnson’s, *Thwarting Enemies At Home and Abroad*.² But none, he suggests, provide “advanced understanding of the underlying theory” of CI, and that is the focus of the present work.

After reviewing why CI is needed, Prunckun describes its “taxonomic categories” in terms of “defense and offense” (24) and the various functions in each category. Then he looks at “counterintelligence topology” using the United States Intelligence Community (IC) as an example. This amounts to listing the intelligence agencies involved and noting that each deals with counterintelligence in different ways while also working collaboratively. (25)

¹ See for example: Hank Prunckun, *Handbook of Scientific Methods of Inquiry for Intelligence Analysis* (Scarecrow Press, 2010); *Special Access Required: A Practitioner’s Guide to Law Enforcement Intelligence Literature* (Scarecrow Press, 1990).

² William R. Johnson, *Thwarting Enemies At Home and Abroad: How To Be A Counterintelligence Officer* (Georgetown University Press, 2009)

Turning to CI theory, Prunckun develops a theoretical model for both the defensive and offensive functions. With a theory of how a system should work, he argues, a practitioner should be able to develop a hypothesis, and test whether the system functions as theory suggests.

The balance of the book is devoted to defensive and offensive CI considerations. With respect to the former, he discusses risk, physical barriers, security, background investigation, personnel security, classification, code names, communication issues, to name a few. Concerning offensive topics, he addresses data collec-

tion, deception, counterespionage, double agents and dangles.

At this point the reader might expect specific examples of the application of CI theory in practice, but none are provided. Thus, while the book is intellectually provocative, it is operationally empty. One is left wondering whether a theory is even necessary, as present practices are well established and tested, if not always applied properly, as Prunckun himself acknowledges. (40) If a CI theory is needed, *Counterintelligence Theory and Practice* fails to make the case.

Intelligence Analyst Guide: A Digest for Junior Intelligence Analysts, edited by Ionel Nițu. (Bucharest: National Intelligence Academy, Mihai Viteazul Publishing, 2012) 118 pp., appendix, color illustrations, no index.

Romanian intelligence analyst, Ionel Nițu (pronounced neat tzu), has assembled a collection of brief articles on aspects of intelligence analysis written by 20 experienced analysts from the National Intelligence Academy in Bucharest and other elements of the Romanian intelligence community.

Written for junior-level analysts, the contributions are presented in five chapters. The first discusses the role of analysis at the national level. The second chapter looks at three kinds of analysis—strategic, tactical, and operational—factors affecting analysis, and the psychological profiles of analysts he believes are most suited to each type of analysis. Chapter 3 describes methodologies and theories of analysis. These range from the scientific to the more common, experiential approaches. None of the contributions give examples of techniques applied in practice. Nor do the authors recommend one over another, leaving that to analysts to decide based on the circumstances of their situations. The fourth chapter considers the role of dissemination and its importance in a successful intelligence cycle. Chapter 5 examines the need for integrated—all source—analysis in light of modern technological developments and the vastly increased volumes of data available in today's information society. (93)

Nițu recognizes the need for reform in certain cases, and discusses, in some detail, three areas—process,

product, personnel—that should be given close consideration, while recognizing each agency will have unique needs. The five appendices present a summary of the characteristics of analysts, requirements and related capabilities in table form for easy reference. In general, each of the concepts discussed is augmented by well-designed graphics.

The *Intelligence Analyst Guide* is interesting for several reasons. It indicates how much Romanian thinking about intelligence has changed since the fall of its communist government. The book also reflects the considerable influence of the West in the methods it treats and in the sources it cites in the footnotes and the bibliography.

In his afterword, editor Nițu implies this was the result of either operational common sense or the universality of the concepts of good analysis. Nițu does not say why an English edition of this work was published, although Romanian intelligence agencies have been sponsoring English-language works for several years now. Whatever their reasons, publication in English facilitates cooperation and understanding. Finally, a more fundamental message is conveyed: the National Intelligence Academy has freed itself from Cold War shackles. It is a welcome contribution to the literature of intelligence.

Intelligence Collection: How To Plan and Execute Intelligence Collection in Complex Environments by Wayne Michael Hall and Gary Citrenbaum. (Praeger) 505 pp., endnotes, bibliography, index.

In an earlier book, BGen. Wayne Hall (US Army-Ret.) and Gary Citrenbaum made a case for advanced intelligence analysis.³ The current work, intended for experienced officers, is “about metacognition (thinking about thinking) that forms the basis for how we think about intelligence collection operations.” (1) It makes a case for an advanced collection system that requires changes to existing practices “so as to perform the deep thinking about collection and the execution of collection plans.” (7)

The authors define advanced intelligence collection as: “the creative design and use of technical, cyber, human, and open-source collectors in all domains—air, ground, sea, space, information, and cyber—in pursuit of discrete, subtle, nuanced, and often fleeting observables, indicators and signatures...” to support “military and nonmilitary actions, particularly in dense urban OEs” (operational environments). (6) Put another way, one might say that it is a comprehensive look at all-source intelligence.

The first eight chapters discuss aspects of what they consider to be advanced intelligence. Chapter 9 deals with the basics of “advanced intelligence collection,” followed by chapters on performance requirements, “point persistent surveillance” (P2S), critical thinking, and necessary tools.

In their discussion of advanced intelligence collection, the authors suggest some novel concepts. For example, they suggest something they describe as “IW ISR [irregular warfare and intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance] must be treated as a weapons system. The data, information, and knowledge that intelligence collection produces and the subsequent thinking and machine work that go into producing knowledge for

making decisions and understanding the complex OE are, in effect weapons the commander uses to create outcomes.... Now they must bring together the great capabilities of advanced collection and advanced analysis and mass them where and when appropriate and disband or demassify their created assemblages where and when appropriate. This notion suggests a change in commanders’ thinking, as this powerful idea can provide them with the intellectual power, machine power, organizational processes and organizational knowledge to perform these important C2 functions.” (69) Just how thinking of intelligence as a weapons system enhances a commander’s decisionmaking ability is never made clear. Nor do they provide examples of this concept in practice.

A second concept the authors find critical is “point persistent surveillance” which they define as “the ability of a sensing system (or combination of systems) to provide high confidence that event occurrences of interest do not go undetected.” Implementation of this concept involves the use of drones, technical monitors, or human surveillance with communication links, 24/7.

The final chapter presents some closing thoughts that are the most articulate in the book. Readers might well start with Chapter 15 to get an idea of what is coming.

Unfortunately, the absence of practical examples of their ideas, and a turgid narrative that borders on the aggressively boring, does not work to their advantage. Readers are left wondering just what “advanced intelligence collection” really is and how it differs from current practice. A strong case can be made, however, that *Intelligence Collection* is an arcane restatement of the basics: get it right and on time.

Intelligence Tradecraft: Secrets of Spy Warfare, by Maloy Krishna Dhar. (New Delhi: Manas Publications, 2011) 248 pp., end of chapter, glossary, index.

After a nearly 30-year career in the Intelligence Bureau—the Indian internal security service—where he specialized in counterintelligence, Maloy Dhar turned to writing about the lessons he learned in his professional life. In his book, *Open Secrets*,⁴ Dhar compared

India’s intelligence services with those of other democratic nations, suggesting there was some catching up to do. In the present work, he draws on his experience as assistant director for training to fill a gap he found in

³ Wayne Michael Hall and Gary Citrenbaum, *Intelligence Analysis: How to Think in Complex Environments* (ABC Clío, 2009)

⁴ Maloy Dhar, *Open Secrets: India’s Intelligence Unveiled* (MANAS, 2012)

training literature that did not discuss the basics of intelligence tradecraft.

The 14 chapters of *Intelligence Tradecraft* begin with a discussion of intelligence as presented by Kautilya in Chapters 11–16 of the *Arthashastra*, the ancient Indian treatise that assesses the institution of spies. He emphasizes the difficulty of establishing a single definition of intelligence and reviews some of the western attempts to do so, including what has become a standard point of departure in the literature, Michael Warner’s article, “Wanted: A Definition of Intelligence.”⁵

The balance of the book treats the tradecraft of each of the basic functions of intelligence as practiced by the various Indian services and their officers. He is careful to note differences in terminology where they occur. For example, the Indian services use the term “handling officer” where “case officer” is used by the CIA and other Western services; the duties discussed are essentially the same. (23ff) Two other terms not found elsewhere are the “sub-conscious” and “unconscious” agents. The former are potential agents that are indis-

crete in discussion and become vulnerable to recruitment. The latter are sources asked to collect seemingly innocuous information valuable to the handling officer. (79–80)

Other topics covered include the prerequisites for a good intelligence officer, the training required, the type of operations, communication and the technical aspects, collection and analysis, CI, legal aspects, open source intelligence, interrogation techniques, and agent handling. There is a chapter on deception, disinformation, and propaganda as part of psychological warfare, which Dhar notes, regretfully, is not yet part of any standard organization or officer training, and the duties are left to the desk officer. (236)

Despite his title, Dhar has included some historical background and candid comments on what he perceives are the strengths and weaknesses of the Indian intelligence services. But in the main, *Intelligence Tradecraft* sticks to tradecraft and is thus one of the few books to treat it in such depth. It is interesting and informative, well worth attention.

Introduction to Intelligence Studies, by Carl J. Jensen, III, David H. McElreath, and Melissa Graves. (CRC Press, 2013) 352 pp., end of chapter references, photos, index.

While preparing an undergraduate introductory course at the University of Mississippi on intelligence in America, the authors of this book could not find a text that met their needs. Drawing on their extensive backgrounds—military, FBI, law enforcement, consulting, and legal—they wrote this *Introduction to Intelligence Studies*.

The 15 chapters summarize the basic topics: what intelligence is, its history, the intelligence community’s organization, the intelligence cycle, the principal functions, oversight, writing, current threats, and some comments on the future. There is also a chapter that looks specifically at law-enforcement intelligence and another that considers what the authors term a “barrier to analysis,” for example, security issues and policymaker interactions.

Now, most of these topics are covered by Mark Lowenthal in his book *Intelligence from Secrets to Policy*.⁶ But the similarity stops there. *Introduction to Intel-*

Intelligence Studies assumes its readers will have less knowledge of the topic than readers of Lowenthal’s book. Each chapter, therefore, includes discussion topics, a list of key terms, and references for further reading. They do not include source notes, however, so students have every right to ask how the authors know what they assert.

In their preface, the authors encourage readers—and hopefully reviewers—to comment on flaws, an opportunity that should not be overlooked. Three are worth mentioning here. First, the intelligence provided by civil war spies Belle Boyd and Rose Greenhow was not *crucial* to any Confederate victories; it was marginal at best. Second, Pinkerton did not “go on to guard Lincoln throughout the Civil War”; (19) his service ended in 1862 (see Edwin Fishel’s *The Secret War for the Union* for details). Third, Operation Ajax was a joint US-UK endeavor, as Kermit Roosevelt—the CIA man on the scene—pointed out in his memoir.

⁵ Michael Warner, “Wanted: A Definition of Intelligence,” *Studies in Intelligence* 46, No. 3 (September, 2002): 15–23.

⁶ Mark Lowenthal, *Intelligence from Secrets to Policy* (CQ Press, 2009)

Overall, however, the *Introduction to Intelligence Studies* is a very good primer indeed.

The US Intelligence Community—6th Edition, by Jeffrey T. Richelson. (Westview Press, 2012) 603 pp., end of chapter notes, photos, charts, index.

In 1977, Tyrus G. Fain compiled and edited *The Intelligence Community*, a book of 1,036 pages.⁷ It contained a collection of contemporary documents having to do with foreign intelligence and associated organizations, with an introduction by Senator Frank Church. While it was a useful resource at the time, it was soon out of date.

It was not until 1985, with the publication of the first edition of Jeffrey Richelson's *The US Intelligence Community*—with 358 pages—that more up-to-date material was available. The current edition reflects many recent changes in the community and is the best single book on the subject. The content of each edition includes descriptions and organization charts of the member agencies introduced by essays describing their historical background and functions they now perform. Unlike the Fain book, however, there are no transcripts of congressional testimony or reports. In fact, the sub-

ject of oversight is not included. There are three chapters on managing the community.

As might be expected, some changes are not included, even in this edition. For example, the definition of counterintelligence given in Executive Order 12333 (1981) does not reflect the three amended versions, but the current version is available on the web. One other area not included is the US Cyber Command, though the topics of cyber threat and warfare are mentioned. Since this edition is not available in the Kindle format, perhaps these updates will appear there before the 7th edition is published.

But for anyone wishing to get a sound overall grasp of the Intelligence Community today, this is by far the best place to start. It is thoroughly documented, well written, and generally comprehensive.

Historical

Boots on the Ground: The Fight to Liberate Afghanistan from Al-Qaeda and the Taliban 2001–2002, by Dick Camp. (Zenith Press, 2011) 312 pp., bibliography, photos, chronology, maps, index.

After 9/11, the first American boots on the ground in Afghanistan arrived on 19 September 2001. They were worn by members of a CIA team. Their story was told by Gary Schroen in his book *First In*.⁸ A month later, two Special Forces teams arrived to coordinate the military support for the Northern Alliance forces about to attack the Taliban. *Boots on the Ground* tells their story.

While the author, retired Marine Colonel Dick Camp, mentions the CIA and its bureaucratic battles with the Department of Defense to get the mission going, his book is more an account of the subsequent cooperative efforts of CIA and the military. First, he begins with an account of the events that led to 9/11. He covers the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the actions that led to their withdrawal, the eventual takeover by the Taliban, and

the occupation of Afghanistan by al-Qaeda. With those as background, he deals with the post 9/11 operations of the CIA and Special Forces elements that resulted in the expulsion of the Taliban and the attempts to find Bin Laden.

Camp follows with detailed descriptions of extensive joint military operations in Afghanistan, including the battle for Tora Bora, where CIA officer Gary Berntsen thought Bin Laden was hiding. *Boots on the Ground* concludes with a description of Operation Anaconda. He describes the actions of the Special Forces, SEAL teams, Army Rangers, the 10th Mountain Division, and various Pashtun elements in the final effort to crush al-Qaeda and the Taliban before American forces began to be reassigned to prepare for the war in Iraq. When the

⁷ Tyrus G. Fain, et al. (eds.), *The Intelligence Community: History, Organization, and Issues* (R. R. Bowker Company, 1977).

⁸ Gary C. Schroen, *First In: An Insider's Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan* (Ballantine Books, 2005), 33–34.

redeployment became evident, Camp explains, “The Taliban regrouped in Pakistan and prepared to start round two in the fight for Afghanistan.” (292)

Camp tells an important story well and adds essential perspective to the current situation in Afghanistan.

A Brilliant Little Operation: The Cockleshell Heroes and the Most Courageous Raid of WW II, by Paddy Ashdown. (London: Aurum Press, 2012) 420 pp., endnotes, bibliography, appendices, photos, index.

Before becoming a member of Parliament in 1976, Jeremy John Durham Ashdown, now Lord Paddy Ashdown, served in the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) and was a swimmer canoeist in the Special Boat Service (SBS) of the Royal Marines. In 1965, while returning by train from a canoe race, he occupied a compartment with one other passenger, who guessed by Ashdown’s uniform that he was in the SBS and inquired about his duties. Ashdown was tired and gave a “gratuitously rude” (xxiv) reply to the effect that his duties were confidential and he could not discuss them, ending the exchange.

was some 60 miles up the treacherous and well-guarded Gironde River from the French west coast and more than 100 miles from the point at which their canoes were launched from a submarine on 7 December 1942. The mission’s aim was to place magnetic limpet mines on the sides of the ships. The plan included an overland escape to Spain with help from the French resistance.

Ashdown deals at length with the bureaucratic battles waged by Admiral Mountbatten, the overall commander, to gain approval for the mission—many of his peers thought the mission too risky. He also discusses crew selection, training, planning, and execution.

On disembarking, Ashdown learned, to his everlasting embarrassment, from colleagues who saw the two sitting together that the inquisitive passenger was Blondie Hasler, the much decorated former SBS canoeist who had led a team of commandoes paddling two-man canoes—Cockle models—on Operation Frankton, the subject of this book. After their mission, that team was commonly referred to as the Cockleshell Heroes. Hasler was one of two survivors.

In the end Ashdown candidly addresses the factors that caused the Frankton mission to fail and the compromise of an effort by Britain’s Special Operations Executive (SOE) to accomplish the same objective. The main reason for Frankton’s failure was that, although two ships were successfully mined, the team did not know they were empty and, with the tide out during the attack, they were later easily refloated, repaired, and returned to duty. Ironically, the SOE team, codenamed Scientist, was already on the docks, protected by the French resistance and waiting for the arrival of loaded ships. The SOE had independently planned its operation, and neither team was aware of the other’s presence. The Frankton attack forced Scientist to withdraw.

The story of the raid has been told before, both in a book and a movie titled *The Cockleshell Heroes*.⁹ Based in part on Hasler’s recollections, the two works were made without access to official British or French accounts. After his retirement from political life, Lord Ashdown decided to write the full story. *A Brilliant Little Operation* is the result of his extensive research among the descendants of the participants and new documents released by national archives in England and France.

Nevertheless Mountbatten chose to call Operation Frankton a “brilliant little operation.” (xxv) It did provide experience and lessons that were applied later in the war, among them the importance of coordination.

Operation Frankton’s objective was the destruction of two enemy blockade runners that were supplying Germany with much-needed materiel from its Japanese ally through the French inland port of Bordeaux. The target

Ashdown tells an exciting story, and very well indeed. Together with its extensive documentation, this book is an impressive contribution to WW II history. Bondie Hasler would have been well satisfied.

⁹ C.E. Lucas Phillips, *Cockleshell Heroes* (London: Heinemann, 1976); *The Cockleshell Heroes* (Sony Pictures Release, 1956).

Ian Fleming and SOE's Operation Postmaster: The Untold Top Secret Story Behind 007, by Brian Lett. (South Yorkshire, UK: Pen and Sword Books, 2012) 255 pp., photos, appendices, index.

In early 1942, Britain's *Special Operations Executive* (SOE), created to support resistance and sabotage in occupied Axis countries, launched Operation Postmaster. An SOE team aboard a converted trawler named *Maid Honor* was to capture two Italian ships—one a freighter, the other a small support ship—that had taken refuge in the port of Santa Isabel—now Malabo—on an island off the coast of what is now Equatorial Guinea. Serving as the command post, the *Maid Honor* was to sail into the harbor accompanied by two tug boats. An SOE agent ashore had arranged an on-shore party for the crews of the targeted ships, thus leaving them unmanned. Teams from the *Maid Honor* would then board the ships, free them from their moorings and have the tugs tow them into international waters, where Royal Navy warships would seize them. The captured ships had no operational value—their capture was merely intended to embarrass the Axis powers—and in this they succeeded, though no official complaints resulted. *Ian Fleming and SOE's Operation Postmaster* describes the origin of the operation, the personnel involved, the planning phase, the numerous obstacles encountered, and how they were overcome.

In a secondary but important theme, author Brian Lett attempts to link events in the operation to Fleming's fictional spy hero James Bond. For example, throughout the narrative Lett inserts comments like "James Bond would have agreed with every word," (13) or when a

character visits a casino, Lett notes "it may be pure coincidence that Ian Fleming set much of the plot of his first book in a casino." (147) Double agent Dusko Popov also made this claim, with greater though never proved validity. Other examples occur when Lett identified the SOE officer controlling the operation—Colin Gubbins—as "M," the head of a "secret service." Fleming, Lett contends, borrowed the "codename" for "M" in the Bond books. (18) But there is no evidence for any of this. In the Gubbins case, he didn't head a secret service; he was deputy for operations during Postmaster. The more likely candidate for the "M" title was Stuart Menzies, the head of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, of which Bond was fictionally a part.

Lett goes on to make the sweeping claim that for Fleming, Operation Postmaster "was clearly inspirational. He stored it away in his mind and eventually used these men to create James Bond, the perfect Secret Agent." (190) Returning to the subject toward the end of the book, he concludes that "the true inspiration for the James Bond character, however, can only have come from the real 'M's' secret service, and from the *Maid Honor* force and their exploits." All just speculation.

The successful Operation Postmaster is a small but significant part of SOE history, and Lett tells that story well. The frequent allusions to James Bond are only distractions.

An Intriguing Life: A Memoir of War, Washington, and Marriage to an American Spymaster, by Cynthia Helms with Chris Black. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013) 199 pp., photos, index.

In his book, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets*, Thomas Powers concentrated on Richard Helms as the professionals' intelligence officer—the secrets keeper. Helms's wife, Cynthia, was mentioned briefly only three times and listed in the index under "Helms, Mrs. Richard." Readers learned more from her 1981 book, *An Ambassador's Wife in Iran*.¹⁰ And now, in *An Intriguing Life*, she tells how she became a DCI's wife and the adventures they shared. It is an extraordinary story.

Cynthia Ratcliff was born in Britain, the youngest of six children in a family that was "land rich and cash

poor." (18) During WW II, her brother Len was a pilot who flew more than 70 missions for the Special Operations Executive (SOE). The war interrupted her education, and, "to do her part," she joined the Wrens (Women's Royal Naval Service—WRNS) and learned to pilot boats that carried crews from ship to shore. Her most important passenger was Queen Elizabeth (later the Queen Mother). It was during the war that she married her first husband, a Royal Navy doctor. After the war they moved to the United States, where he continued his studies. Twenty four years and four children later, she divorced her husband to marry Richard Helms.

¹⁰ Cynthia Helms, *An Ambassador's Wife in Iran* (Dodd, Mead, 1981).

Most of *An Intriguing Life* is devoted to her life with Helms. At the time of their marriage, finances were tight and Cynthia satisfied a long-time ambition and went to work for the first time—Helms was CIA’s deputy director for plans, but he lacked independent wealth and they had to rent a house. She writes easily about her relationship with Dick and their social life. Though she says she doesn’t like to be thought of as part of the “Georgetown set”—they didn’t live in Georgetown—they certainly were in terms of their party going and friends. She tells anecdotes about many, including Sandra Day O’Connor, the Alsop brothers, Katharine Graham, Frank and Polly Wisner, Robert McNamara, and Pamela Harriman, to name a few. Her comments about Dick are sometimes surprising: “He had 11 toes and his shoe size was eight; he was utterly useless around the house... and an absolutely terrible automobile driver.... We would sometimes read spy stories to one another... he found le Carré too dark and cynical.” (96–97) When he finally decided to write his memoir, he “worked on the book everyday,” dictating at first then writing in longhand. (183) It was published just after he died in October 2002. Helms had read the final draft.

Man of War: The Secret Life of Captain Alan Hillgarth Officer, Adventurer, Agent, by Duff Hart-Davis. (London: Random House Century) 433 pp., endnotes, appendix, photos, index.

Shortly after British author Duff Hart-Davis and his wife moved to Ireland in 1978, they began hearing stories about a Captain Alan Hillgarth, who had lived nearby but died before they could meet him. Hillgarth, the talk went, had been a confidant of Churchill, a spy, an explorer for gold, and a Royal Navy officer. Intrigued, Huff-Davis made contact with Hillgarth’s children and gained access to his papers. The biography, *Man of War*, is the result.

Huff-Davis learned that “Hillgarth” was an assumed name. His subject was born George Hugh Jocelyn Evans in London on 7 June 1899. While Evans was attending the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth, WW I erupted, and he was activated. He saw action at Gallipoli and was later wounded during a patrol off Turkey. Evans left the navy in 1922, and without explanation—then or ever—he changed his name to Alan Hugh Hillgarth. After trying his luck at writing novels, he fell for a scam and went searching for gold in Bolivia. By 1932, married and with children, he was living in Majorca, writing novels and serving as acting UK vice consul at

On the professional side, she covers Helms’s conflicts as director of central intelligence with the Nixon White House, and how he became ambassador to Iran—Nixon had suggested the Soviet Union. It was while in Iran that he was investigated for the Senate testimony that led to his “badge of honor” conviction, a story she tells at length, pointing out the untenable position into which Senator Stuart Symington, who they considered a friend, had placed Helms.

The Helms’s post-Iran years were spent in Washington at their Garfield Avenue home, where they entertained interesting people ranging from the Reagans to a KGB defector (unidentified) who, in answer to Dick’s question, acknowledged that Alger Hiss was a Soviet agent. (172)

An Intriguing Life concludes with some comments on Cynthia’s active, current life in Washington. She attends the annual briefing at CIA headquarters for “former directors and their spouses,” where she visits the Director’s Gallery to view the portrait of “Dick Helms, my one true love.” (186) Cynthia Helms has given us and her grandchildren a fascinating look into the life of a very private man and the wife he adored.

Palma. In 1938, Winston Churchill visited, and Hillgarth made a positive impression. During the Spanish Civil War, Hillgarth helped British subjects and others threatened by Franco’s German and Italian allies to escape Spain. Later he met Captain John Godfrey, who would become “C,” the head of MI6.

By the outbreak of World War II, Hillgarth was recalled to active duty as a captain and appointed naval attaché in Madrid. Although opposed in general to attachés, becoming involved in clandestine operations, the MI6 station was weak at the beginning of the war, and Hillgarth developed a network of contacts among the Spaniards that proved valuable in monitoring German spies. He also corresponded directly with Godfrey and Churchill, sending them summaries of what both the Spaniards and Germans were doing. Kim Philby, then head of the Iberian counterintelligence section in MI6, was irritated when Hillgarth bypassed him. He would comment in his memoirs that Hillgarth had “illusions of grandeur.” (219)

Hillgarth also played a prominent role in Operation Mincemeat, “the man who never was,” convincing Spanish authorities not to ask too many questions about the corpse. Later, he was the officer who rescued Lt. Col. Dudley Clarke, the Army officer in charge of Middle East deception operations, from a Spanish jail. The Spanish police had arrested Clarke, dressed as a woman—heels, bra, silk stockings and all in a circumstance never adequately explained. (220) In December 1943, with the MI6 station up and running, Hillgarth was posted to India, where he served as chief of intelligence on Lord Mountbatten’s staff.

After the war, Hillgarth retired to Ireland to continue his writing and travels. But he also kept in touch with Churchill and visited him at his Chartwell home. In one letter, he noted, to the annoyance of MI5, that the Soviet staff in London outnumbered the British staff in London and that the MI5 was not staffed to perform the necessary surveillance.

Duff Hart-Davis’s fine biography has recorded for history the unusual career of an inadvertent but effective intelligence officer. A life adventure worth reading.

Operation SNOW: How A Soviet Mole in FDR’s White House Triggered Pearl Harbor, by John Koster. (Regnery Publishing, Inc. 2012) 250 pp., bibliography, photos, index.

“Why another book about Pearl Harbor?” asks author John Koster in his introduction to *Operation SNOW*. His answer, “because none of the other books got it right.” (xvii) Koster goes on to assert that it was the Soviet agent Harry Deter White, guided by NKVD officer Vitalii Pavlov, who influenced President Roosevelt’s decision not to cooperate with sincere Japanese efforts to avoid war, thus making the attack on Pearl Harbor inevitable. From the Soviet point of view, the operation accomplished its objective: the elimination of the two-front war threat.

Just how he gained this intimate insight, Koster does not explain. The only evidence he cites of Japanese intentions to attack Pearl Harbor is the questionnaire produced by British double agent, Dusko Popov (TRICYCLE) “that clearly indicated that Pearl Harbor was the key target” of the Japanese. (121)

Operation SNOW quotes conversations between Pavlov, White, and many of other agents and key figures to explain how the plan was conceived and implemented. Koster goes on to write that Harry Dexter White “sat down at his typewriter in May 1941 to change the course of history,” first by influencing Secretary of State Cordell Hull and ultimately the president. (37–39)

At first glance, Koster makes a plausible case. But on closer examination his arguments leave room for considerable doubt. For example, his interpretation of the Popov questionnaire is wrong.¹¹ Moreover, Koster relies heavily on Pavlov’s book, *Operation SNOW*, which has never been validated. Furthermore, though some of the anecdotes and myriad conversations he includes are mentioned in his note on sources, (219ff) his interpretation of their significance is little more than speculation. In sum, before *Operation SNOW* can be accepted as serious history it requires serious documentation. Case not made.

The Secret Listeners: How the Wartime Y Service Intercepted the Secret German Codes for Bletchley Park, by Sinclair McKay. (London: Aurum Press, 2012) 354 pp., endnotes, photos, index.

The ULTRA Secret was the first of many books to describe the breaking of German codes during WW II.¹² Each of them mentions that the messages decrypted came from a system of world-wide radio intercept stations. They do not, however, explain much about how the stations were established, the functions each performed, what the personnel were like, or the bureaucrat-

ic and organizational problems they overcame. *The Secret Listeners* fills the gap.

British author Sinclair McKay tells the WW II intercept side of story of what came to be called the Y Service—the term comes from pronouncing the abbreviation WI for wireless-intercept. Intercepting German radio traffic originated during WW I as a

¹¹ See Thomas F. Troy, “The British Assault on J. Edgar Hoover: The Tricycle Case,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 3, No. 2: 169–210.

¹² Frederick Winterbotham, *The ULTRA Secret* (Dell, 1975).

source for the British Room 40 and the Government Code and Cypher School responsible for breaking German codes. At the start of WW II, MI5 created the Radio Security Service (RSS), which was intended to detect German agents operating from England. When it turned out there weren't any such agents, the intercept operators began tracking any German encrypted messages they could hear and sent them to Bletchley Park in case that might be of interest. When their efforts were dismissed as unnecessary, since that was not the RSS mission, Hugh Trevor-Roper and a colleague decided to try decrypting them themselves. They were successful and discovered that the traffic was from the Abwehr, the German military security service. When this was pointed out to Bletchley, Trevor-Roper was rebuked again for butting in, but his point had been made. The RSS was quickly subsumed under MI6, joining the Y Service, which took over the mission.

The Watchers: A Secret History of the Reign of Elizabeth I, by Stephen Alford. (London: Allen Lane, 2012) 398 pp., endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

The reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the daughter of Henry VIII and the last of the Tudor monarchs, began in 1558 and ended with her death of natural causes in 1603. Hers was a time of renaissance in the arts—Shakespeare, Marlow, Milton. It was also a time of constant religious conspiracies aimed at ending the Church of England, restoring Catholicism, and of constant threats of military invasion. Throughout her reign, Elizabeth was the target of conspiracies to seize her crown, and she assembled a group of men—the “watchers”—to protect her and the state: William Cecil (later Lord Burghley), his son Robert Cecil, Robert Devereux (Earl of Essex), and the most well known today, Sir Francis Walsingham. And then there was Thomas Phelippes, Walsingham's principal agent and cryptographer.

Together, these watchers used spies, codes and secret writing, deception, double agents, and torture to uncover conspiracies and to bring supposed plotters to Elizabethan justice. The most famous conspiracy, a plan to assassinate the Queen—disrupted by Walsingham and his agents—was the Babington plot in which Mary Queen of Scots and her cohorts lost their heads for their

The Secret Listeners doesn't dwell on the operational side of the Y Service activities. Instead, McKay describes the personnel involved and their selection criteria, their often unrelentingly tedious working conditions, and some of the clever techniques they employed. In the latter category he tells about the “Ghost Voices.” When operators became proficient in monitoring instructions to German pilots, they began interrupting instructions from German aviation control and giving pilots spurious orders to misdirect them and, in some cases, causing them to run out of fuel en route to a bogus target.

Although some of the names McKay mentions will be familiar to readers of WW II codebreaking history, most will not, and he uses their letters and reminiscences to give them long overdue recognition. *The Secret Listeners* is a story too long untold, and it is a valuable contribution to the intelligence literature.

troubles. The best known military attempt against Elizabeth and England was by the Spanish Armada. This too failed, in part, thanks to Walsingham.

This is a story that has been told many times before, in 11 books since 2001. As the latest, it does a good job, although it is different from the others in three respects. Author Stephen Alford covers a somewhat wider period of time than the others—he also includes some details on Henry VIII's reign—and he adds some characters not mentioned and data on those only slightly mentioned elsewhere. The third, and somewhat annoying new feature, is his occasional digression into counterfactual history, for example speculation on what might have followed had Mary Queen of Scots been successful.

The Watchers appears to be well documented, but the system of endnotes is awkward and difficult to use. If one is trying to get as complete a story as possible of Elizabethan intelligence activities, the book shouldn't be overlooked. But it has not displaced Conyers Read's three volume history of Walsingham as the place to start.¹³

¹³ Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth* (London: Clock and Rose Press, 2003).

Memoir

The Formative Years of an African-American Spy: A Memoir, by Odell Bennett Lee. (Author published, 2012) 241pp., appendix, no index.

The story of Odell Lee reads like the fiction of Horatio Alger. Born out of wedlock and raised in a dysfunctional family, Lee dropped out of high school in California at 16 and joined the US Navy. In the early 1960s, he left the Navy and lived with his birth father for a time. He held a number of odd jobs, including one at a state psychiatric hospital and another with the post office, before going back to high school to get his diploma.

This time, education agreed with Lee, and he steadily worked his way up and through graduate school at Johns Hopkins University, after which he went to work in Singapore. After several years there, he joined an international petroleum company, where he was working when CIA contacted him and offered him a job that would take advantage of the French and Spanish Lee had learned along the way. He accepted and the family moved to Washington, where the usual processing was completed. Lee's wife Nora found a position with CBS in Washington, on Dan Rather's staff.

Lee devotes only a single chapter to his CIA career in the Clandestine Service. As with the rest of the book he doesn't supply any dates, a somewhat annoying feature that might well have been avoided. But he does discuss his duties in general terms, including some experiences on the job with a double agent, another servicing dead drops, and the difficulties of living under cover. He ends with a short and informative essay on race and spying, concluding that relations have gradually improved.

Throughout *The Formative Years of an African-American Spy*, Lee reflects on the many friends who helped him at important stages in his life. The result is a complete picture of a man who worked hard and made it on his own. His story should serve as a role model for those with similar drive and ambition to find a rewarding career.

Intelligence Abroad

Classified: Secrecy and the State in Modern Britain, by Christopher Moran. (Cambridge University Press, 2013) 464 pp., endnotes, bibliography, index.

In 1911, the British Official Secrets Act (OSA) was amended. Section 2 made unauthorized communication or receipt of official information by civil servants, politicians, authors, and journalists a felony. Moreover, the burden of proof rested with the defense. Recognizing that difficulties controlling official information would be greatest with authors and journalists, the government in 1912 established the Admiralty's War Office and Press Committee—called the D Notice Committee. Its function was to supplement the OSA and implement an unofficial gentleman's agreement with the press that would operate on the honor system. When classified or other official information came to, or might have come to, the attention of the press—newspapers, book publishers, and the like—which the government did not want made public, the D-Notice Committee could be consulted for a recommendation on whether or not the

item should be published. Alternatively, when the committee wished to keep information secret, it could issue a "D-Notice" suggesting restraint. But the final decision rested with the press. This informal system was put to its first test during WW I, and precedents were set that would apply after WW II. University of Warwick post-doctoral fellow Christopher Moran's *Classified: Secrecy and the State in Modern Britain* is a study of how the system worked until the early 21st century, when Section 2 of the OSA was repealed and a Freedom of Information Act was enacted in 2005.

The early, post WW I, tests of the 1911 OSA in effect created a double standard. Moran tells how Prime Minister Lloyd George ignored the rules and decided for himself what official documents could be used for his memoir. Winston Churchill did the same for his six vol-

ume study, *The World Crisis, 1911–1918*. Likewise, Field Marshall Sir John French and Admiral John Jellicoe produced memoirs based in part on official documents, the latter mentioning the Government Code and Cypher School. (57) None had official approval; all escaped legal action.

Author Compton Mackenzie, on the other hand, was prosecuted for his book *Greek Memories*, which mentioned the still not officially acknowledged Secret Intelligence Service, identified its chief by name, and noted he was called “C.” The government persuaded him to plead guilty—thus preventing further revelations in court—and copies of the book were recalled—although not all were confiscated. Mackenzie escaped jail time but was fined £100.

Moran describes the bureaucratic skirmishes created by these and other episodes through the end of the Cold War before going on to even more complex attempts to control secrecy and the press. He uses the experiences of Chapman Pincher, “Fleet Street’s greatest scope-merchant,” (99) and other authors to explore the intricacies of the D-Notice system. One case, although based

on open sources, involved the failed attempt to suppress mention of NSA and then little known GCHQ. The journalists involved were deported, but the political fallout was severe. Another concerned former CIA officer Philip Agee, who was deported after publishing his memoir *Inside The Company* in Britain. (190)

The chapters concerning the battles to publish intelligence histories and memoirs perhaps will be the most interesting to intelligence professionals. They include descriptions of the clashes preceding exposure of the “double-cross secret” and Operation Mincemeat—“the man who never was.” Later, encounters followed over official histories, for example, M.R.D. Foot’s *SOE in France*, the six-volume history of British intelligence in WW II and Peter Wright’s unofficial exposé, *Spy-catcher*.

Classified concludes with a discussion of what Moran terms “a retreat from secrecy” (329) on a surprising scale in Britain today despite the threat of WikiLeaks and the implications of cyber communications. It is a superbly documented study and a fine contribution to the literature.

MOSSAD: The Greatest Missions of the Israeli Secret Service, by Michael Bar-Zohar and Nissim Mishal. (HarperCollins, 2012) 388 pp., bibliography, photos, index.

The Mossad is Israel’s foreign intelligence service. A Mossad team captured Adolf Eichmann in Buenos Aires. Another recruited an Iraqi pilot and convinced him to fly a MiG-21 to Israel. And its officers assassinated Imad Mughniyeh, the Hezbollah terrorist who planned the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut in 1982. It is also credited with attacks on Iranian nuclear scientists and cyber operations intended to slow Iran’s nuclear program. Authors Michael Bar-Zohar and Nissim Mishal discuss these and many other incidents in their new book *MOSSAD*.

The authors don’t just write about successful operations. There is a chapter on the botched attempt in Amman, Jordan, to assassinate Hezbollah leader Khaled Mash’al by injecting a poison into his ear. The King of Jordan was so incensed that he threatened to break diplomatic relations with Israel and to keep the captured assassins unless Prime Minister Netanyahu sent an antidote: he did.

Other cases included in this anthology of espionage have elements of both success and failure. The best

known success concerns Mordechai Vanunu, who stole atomic secrets and was later captured in a text-book honey trap. More recently, a failure, after the assassination of Hamas leader Mahmoud Adbel Rauf Al-Mabhouh in Dubai, the assassination team was exposed because it had not avoided closed circuit television and, the authors suggest, their fake passports didn’t stand up to scrutiny.

One case at least remains in the uncertain category. A Mossad double agent codenamed ANGEL, in reality Nasser’s son-in-law, died a mysterious death in London. The Egyptians claimed him as their double agent and gave him an official funeral, leaving both sides to wonder if he was really a triple agent and if so, for whom. Some cases border on the bizarre. The supposed Israeli recruitment of the larger-than-life Nazi SS officer, Otto Skorzeny, is the prime example.

As with all unofficial case books of this nature, readers are left wondering how much is true. The authors do provide source notes, but they are all secondary journalistic accounts. On the other hand, some cases, as with

Eichmann and Vanunu, have been officially acknowledged. The Jonathan Pollard case probably falls into the latter category, but the authors dismiss it, only conceding that the Mossad was embarrassed and claiming that all the documents Pollard took were returned.

Bar-Zohar and Mishal have provided an interesting survey of Mossad espionage operations. It is good reading.

Other People's Wars: New Zealand in Afghanistan, Iraq and the War on Terror, by Nicky Hager. (Nelson, NZ: Craig Potton Publishing, 2011) 439 pp., endnotes, appendix, photo, index.

The 10-year war in Afghanistan has been the longest in the histories of both New Zealand and the United States. For New Zealand investigative journalist Nicky Hager, it should never have been fought. The US government “could have taken responsibility and apologized to its citizens for not stopping the hijackings. They could have left the punishment to law enforcement and diplomacy.” (23) When this didn’t happen and despite the CIA led “massacre” to topple the Taliban, (30) New Zealand agreed to participate in the war on terror. At the time, Hager followed events in the press and gradually concluded that his government was intentionally not reporting the full story of Kiwi involvement to its public: “Both the military and intelligence agencies are far more deeply entangled in the controversial aspects of the war on terror than New Zealanders were told.” (9) After 10 years of investigating, he presents his version of the truth in *Other People's Wars*.

and the NZ Security Intelligence Service, but he also addresses New Zealand’s SIGINT elements and military components. He highlights their interactions with US and British counterparts and complains about the controls placed on the media, especially the limits on mentioning the operations of coalition partners. He argues that while NZ forces were nominally under the command of NZ officers, the reality was that Americans were in charge.

Particularly irritating to Hager is the fact that Americans in civilian clothes were stationed in New Zealand outposts and would not discuss their activities: “All evidence points to them being CIA officers.” Even more vexing was the fact that NZ soldiers provided base security and other support services. (250–51) “In the end, it is a choice between being independent and being a loyal ally.” (341) The difficulty of independence in a coalition eludes him. Hager goes on to question the existence of a terrorist threat, the use of drones, “targeted killings,” “CIA-military capture/kill operations,” (237) and the war itself.

Hager claims his book is based mainly on leaks of thousands of pages of “classified military and intelligence documents.” Some were “obtained via Facebook,” (307) and some, as explained in his endnotes, came from “confidential source[s].” Invoking the journalist’s right to decide what should remain declassified, he “ensures that it contains nothing that might genuinely prejudice the defense and security of New Zealand.” (9)

Despite the author’s less than objective opinions, *Other People's Wars* depicts the not insignificant contribution of New Zealand’s intelligence units in joint operations. More generally, it provides an in-depth view of New Zealand’s role in Afghanistan and to a lesser extent Iraq, subjects not dealt with elsewhere. Still, read with caution.

In describing New Zealand’s contribution to the war, Hager emphasizes NZ Special Air Service (SAS) units

Russia and the Cult of State Security: The Chekist Tradition, from Lenin to Putin, by Julie Fedor. (Routledge, 2011) 280 pp., endnotes, bibliography, index.

The KGB (Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti [the Committee for State Security]) was the main security agency for the Soviet Union when it collapsed in 1991. It had evolved from the first Soviet security and intelligence agency, the VCheka (All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for the Struggle with Counter-Revolution and Sabotage) created by Felix Dzerzhinsky on

20 December 1917. Its officers were called Chekists, a term that has endured despite multiple changes in the official name of the organization. So, too, argues Dr. Julie Fedor in *Russia and the Cult of State Security* has the legacy of Dzerzhinsky endured. While the operational histories of Soviet and Russian security and intelligence services have been the subject of many books, Fedor, a

research associate at Cambridge University, takes a different approach. She examines the “Chekist officer” and moral behavior in light of Dzerzhinsky’s legacy and the “mythology woven around” the Russian intelligence service that “continues to shape its popular historical consciousness.” (2)

In the first of this two-part work, Fedor documents the Dzerzhinsky cult from its revolutionary origins to the present day. She asserts that Dzerzhinsky was seen as a humanist, whose moral purity and love of nature and little children explain his sensitivity to human needs and formed the basis for “cardinal Chekist virtues.” These were institutionalized in aphorisms learned by every Chekist: “A Chekist must have a cool head, a warm heart and clean hands.... A Chekist must be more pure and honest than anyone else.... He is not a Chekist whose heart does not engorge with blood and contract with pity at the sight of a man imprisoned in a prison cell.” By applying these and many others like them, says Fedor, the Soviets justified “Chekist violence... as an active moral good, a virtue to be celebrated in its own right.” (17) This moral code formed the basis of the Cheka security mission that somehow reconciled terror and humanism. (18)

Fedor goes on in the first part to show how the Dzerzhinsky cult changed over time. His public image was transformed beginning in the Khrushchev era in mov-

ies—a Soviet James Bond treatment, though without the sex, appeared—and various public relations techniques. For example, the cruel interrogations of the past came to be described as *profilaktika*, a Russian euphemism for “friendly” questioning that could still result in the destruction of one’s career.

Part two of the book deals with the post-Soviet era, which for the security services began with the removal of Dzerzhinsky’s statue from in front of the Lubyanka, the KGB’s titular headquarters. After a period of uncertainty and organizational instability, the intelligence services gradually adopted what Fedor calls “high chekism.” Here the “cult of Andropov”—a milder version of Dzerzhinsky morality that stressed order and discipline—provided a new catechism, but it did not prohibit many of the practices for which the KGB had been so well known.

With the ascension of Vladimir Putin to the presidency of Russia, further changes were introduced, changes that Fedor sees as amounting to a “new Chekist mythology,” which draws heavily on the traditions of the cult of Dzerzhinsky.

Russia and the Cult of State Security is a unique and absorbing look into the history of Russia’s intelligence profession, with some disturbing conclusions about its future. A very valuable contribution.