

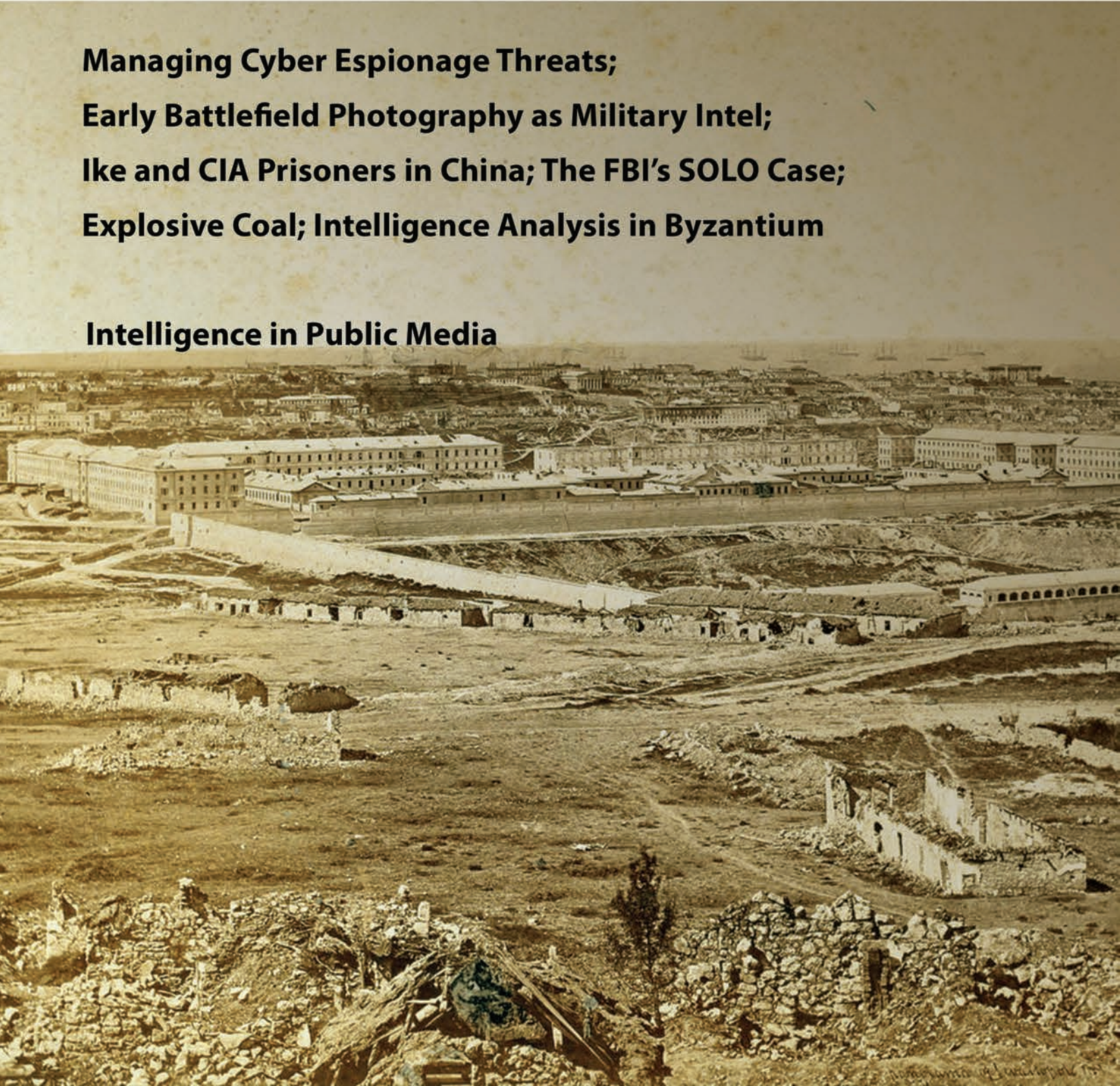
# Studies in Intelligence

Vol. 66, No. 1 (Extracts, March 2022)

Journal of the American Intelligence Professional

**Managing Cyber Espionage Threats;  
Early Battlefield Photography as Military Intel;  
Ike and CIA Prisoners in China; The FBI's SOLO Case;  
Explosive Coal; Intelligence Analysis in Byzantium**

**Intelligence in Public Media**



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# Studies in Intelligence

Vol. 66, No. 1 (Extracts, March 2022)

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## Shape or Deter? Managing Cyber-Espionage Threats to National Security Interests

Lester Godefrey

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**Opting out of cyber espionage places modern intelligence collection organizations at a strategic disadvantage; by not participating, they would inevitably miss out on intelligence that is difficult if not impossible to collect using existing traditional means.**

*In this article, the first of its kind in Studies, a UK government analyst argues that cyber espionage is the natural evolution of intelligence gathering statecraft in the 21st century. He explores whether deterrence by denial or punishment is likely to be successful in significantly reducing or preventing cyber espionage against national security interests. Using open-source materials for his case study, he considers whether US efforts to counter cyber espionage by China have achieved deterrence or reduced activity.*

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### Introduction

Espionage is a fundamental tool of statecraft. In existence since the formation of organized societies, the modern era of nation states has codified and institutionalized the profession and tasked it with the theft of secrets at industrial scale.<sup>1</sup> As societies move overwhelming to storing data digitally in networked environments, cyber espionage is a natural evolution for intelligence agencies required to steal secrets. For intelligence agencies to deliver the supply

of intelligence that their governments demand, spies must conduct cyber espionage.

Furthermore, the cost of standing up new cyber espionage capabilities is rapidly decreasing due to the proliferation of tooling and expertise in both licit and illicit marketplaces. Opting out of cyber espionage places modern intelligence collection organizations at a strategic disadvantage; by not participating, they would inevitably miss out on intelligence that is difficult if not impossible to collect using existing traditional means such as signals intelligence (SIGINT) or human intelligence (HUMINT).

Abstaining from cyber espionage also reduces intelligence agencies' visibility and ability to counter-detect foreign espionage against their own interests. As intelligence agencies develop and mature in the 21st century, cyber espionage is highly likely to be (if not already) an operational necessity. Intelligence agencies cannot be deterred into opting out without risking their ability to fulfill their mandate. The norms and behaviors of cyber espionage can, however, be shaped by government action. Counterintelligence theorists and practitioners have long advocated shaping operations toward hostile espionage operations by disregarding the pretense that espionage can be significantly reduced or wholly

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***Incorporating diplomatic engagement into shaping operations also provides governments with the ability to signal clear expectations of norms and behavior when conducting cyber espionage.***

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deterred. Instead, their goals are to detect and manipulate espionage activities through a range of overt and clandestine measures.<sup>2</sup>

Using shaping operations to apply operational pressure to competitors and adversaries carrying out cyber intrusions is highly complementary to the strategy of “persistent engagement,” a doctrinal concept defined by US Cyber Command as “continuously engaging and contesting adversaries and causing them uncertainty wherever they maneuver.”<sup>3</sup> Identifying hostile cyber-espionage operations and degrading their technical and operational capabilities through exposure, deception, and disruption are entirely consistent with existing counterintelligence approaches and practices.

Incorporating diplomatic engagement with competitor and adversary nations into shaping operations also provides governments with the ability to signal clear expectations of norms and behavior when conducting cyber espionage. For example, a cyber-espionage operation against a government’s military network could be signaled as undesirable but expected, whereas an espionage operation against a virology lab to steal test data could be communicated as intolerable and an escalation trigger.

It is highly unlikely that cyber espionage as a practice will end before networked societies end. As a result,

counter-cyber-espionage programs must settle in for the long haul.

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***Definitions and Challenges***

One of the biggest challenges in the academic study of cyber operations is the difficulty in agreeing on definitions, making it essential to spell them out. This article utilizes the *Oxford Bibliographies* definition of cyber espionage as “the exploitation of cyberspace for the purpose of accessing and collecting confidential data”.<sup>4</sup>

Cyber espionage is typically carried out either by state organizations, such as intelligence agencies, or by non-state actors tasked or co-opted by states; these can include contractors, cyber criminals, and private companies. Threat actors involved in cyber espionage can use a range of computer network exploitation (CNE) techniques to gain access to networks and devices, including spear phishing, vulnerability exploitation, and supply chain compromise.<sup>5</sup>

A challenge for network defenders is distinguishing the intent of threat actors; for example, a threat actor gaining access to a defense manufacturer’s network may be attempting to steal data for espionage purposes. Alternatively, they may be attempting to create offensive cyber technical effects on defense platforms (computer network attack, or CNA), or creating access for future offensive exploitation (operational preparation of the

environment, or OPE).<sup>6</sup> Assessing threat-actor intent is a continuous challenge for defenders who will always have imperfect insights.

The challenge of distinguishing intent also contributes to the frequent equivocation of cyber espionage with cyber attacks, i.e., incidents where devices, data, or networks are subject to disruption, denial, degradation, or destruction effects.<sup>7</sup> However, this term is often stretched to include any intrusion or data theft.

This conflation is especially common in public policy. For example, the compromise in 2015 of the US Office for Personnel Management (OPM)’s security clearance database was widely described by policymakers as a cyber attack, despite US intelligence officials publicly identifying the intrusion as espionage by threat actors intent on stealing personal identifiable information (PII) of security-cleared personnel.<sup>8 9</sup>

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***Espionage Norms***

Espionage is largely uncodified in international law. Instead, it is governed by explicit and implicit norms within the international system.<sup>8</sup> It is an expected and largely accepted aspect of international relations; while there is a lack of consensus amongst international law scholars over whether espionage between states is lawful, there is no dispute that it is a major feature of the system.<sup>10</sup> Espionage typically violates the domestic law of the country being targeted, while states that engage in espionage will also often (although

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a. Borrowing from just war theory and the criteria of *jus in bello*, or right conduct in war, some ethics scholars argue intelligence is principally an epistemic activity governed by the principles of discrimination, necessity, proportionality, and reciprocity.

not always) enact statutes that legalize and codifies its practice.

States largely accept and acknowledge that the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations is routinely utilized by countries to place intelligence officers in their embassies under diplomatic official cover. Intelligence officers can also use non-official cover to infiltrate countries under false pretences, thus violating domestic immigration laws. States can shape intelligence activities by expelling spies working under diplomatic cover by declaring them *persona non grata*, often with the expectation of proportional retaliation. Similarly, intelligence officers and agents that are caught and imprisoned can be exchanged between countries in “spy swaps,” as in the reported exchange of alleged Russian, US, and British intelligence agents and officers in 2010.<sup>11</sup>

There is a lack, however, of publicly avowed diplomatic treaties and agreements between states on espionage, meaning normative concepts are blurry at best. Attempted assassinations of spies are a significant point of dispute. The attempted murder in 2018 of Sergei Skripal by GRU officers using a chemical weapon in the UK violated the UN Charter and Russia’s obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.<sup>12</sup> It is much less clear as to whether the attempted assassination was a violation of an implicit convention in espionage not to kill defectors exchanged in spy swaps.<sup>13 14</sup>

The fluidity and opacity of norms in international espionage, combined with lack of international legal

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***The fluidity and opacity of norms in international espionage and lack of international legal frameworks make it a challenge to influence state behavior.***

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frameworks and oversight, make it a challenge to influence state behavior. States largely regard espionage as a vital tool of statecraft and often only attempt to constrain it in line with national policy objectives. To prohibit, for instance, the intercept of heads of states’ private emails would most likely require an international treaty outlawing the process and a mandated dispute-resolution process, with meaningful penalties for noncompliance.

The creation of such mechanisms, however, is extremely unlikely. Just as states have historically shown little desire to limit the means by which they pursue intelligence, so too have they thus far shown little appetite to constrain their cyber capabilities, and there remains widespread disagreement as to how international law applies to cyberspace.<sup>15</sup> The *Tallinn Manual 2.0 on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations*<sup>a</sup> concludes that cyber espionage as a practice generally does not violate international law, though the methods used in cyber espionage might rise to unlawful under certain conditions.<sup>16</sup>

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***Deterrence or Shaping?***

Policy documents and academia tend to blur the distinctions of deterrence and shaping activities. The UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) *Joint Doctrine Note 1/19* defines deterrence as “the aim to dissuade a course of action.” Restrictive deterrence defines acts that take place against UK interests that are “undesirable”

that the UK “wishes to deter” but cannot realistically do so without imposing unacceptable costs on the UK. *Note 1/19* signposts espionage and cyber attacks as potential examples of this, while noting that certain acts may necessitate “absolute deterrence: deterring something so completely unacceptable that it cannot be allowed to happen under any circumstances.”<sup>17</sup>

Alex Orleans, an analyst at cybersecurity provider CrowdStrike, argues that when policy advocates invoke deterrence in contemporary national security policymaking, they often do so with a connotation of that “absolute deterrence”—especially via punishment—and that connotation itself arising from the manner in which nuclear deterrence was discussed during the Cold War. As such, when officials talk of deterring cyber intrusions, including those for the purposes of espionage, it can create a false impression that cyber-espionage activity can be reduced or eliminated entirely through deterrence.<sup>18</sup>

Lithuanian defense adviser Vytautas Keršanskas provides a useful model for defining response thresholds for deterring “hybrid threats,” such as influence operations and covert action. In his proposal, “tolerable hostile activities” that do not rise to the threshold of intolerable are best countered with deterrence by denying the benefits of hostile activities to adversaries and increasing defenders’ overall resilience.

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a. The *Tallinn Manual* is produced by the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence and is widely regarded as the definitive reference work on how international law applies to cyber operations.

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**Using the model for cyber espionage risks treating intelligence collection and influence operations on a sliding scale when their very purposes are different by design.**

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Once activities tip into intolerable means or levels, then differentiated responses can be engaged that focus on deterrence by punishment. Keršanskas also advises not to give adversaries exact details on tolerance thresholds for hostile activities, for fear that they may exploit these boundaries to minimize pushback.<sup>19</sup> This, however, raises a fundamental contradiction: how can we expect to deter cyber intrusions when we cannot communicate to our adversaries clear thresholds for their activities, and our proportionate response? While this model offers obvious benefits for quantifying threshold hostile activities and the relative weight of countermeasures, it is designed for measure blended clandestine, covert and overt state activities designed to project geopolitical power, not “passive” intelligence collection.

Using the model for cyber espionage risks treating intelligence collection and influence operations on a sliding scale when their very purposes are different by design. Distinguishing intelligence collection activities in cyberspace, i.e., cyber espionage, from influence operations or covert action is challenging but should be a key objective of any analytical framework designed to influence hostile cyber operations.

Instead, cyber-espionage activities are ideal candidates for “shaping operations.” In UK *Allied Joint Doctrine Publication 5-00*, shaping is defined as “the manipulation of the operational environment to the acting organisation’s advantage and to the disadvantage of an adversary.” Shaping includes identifying areas

where the defender’s strengths can be exploited while seeking to minimize the adversary’s strengths.<sup>20</sup>

Although *5-00* calls out deterrence as a potential positive effect, it is not the ultimate objective of shaping operations; instead, shaping seeks to give defenders advantages and competitors disadvantages. If we take the view that cyber espionage is a natural and inevitable component of intelligence gathering in networked societies, our methods must reflect this. Deterrence should be reserved for preventing the intolerable, while shaping focused on the undesirable but inevitable. In this regard, shaping operations represent a uniquely suitable approach to degrading adversary cyber operations in keeping with both traditional counterintelligence theory and the particular dynamics of cyber intrusions.

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**Case Study: US Response to China’s State-Sponsored Cyber Espionage, 2000–20**

In 2005, US media reported that a cyber-espionage intrusion set known as *Titan Rain* targeting the US government and defense industrial base had been attributed to the People’s Liberation Army (PLA).<sup>21 22</sup> US government identification and response to PRC-attributed cyber-espionage campaigns remained largely nonpublic until the identification of the Operation *Aurora* campaign, which primarily targeted the US high-tech and defense sectors. Many of the campaign’s publicly reported goals remained consistent with intelligence gathering, including

the purported targeting of Gmail’s lawful-intercept monitoring system to identify which accounts were subject to US FISA warrants.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to classic intelligence collection, the theft of commercially sensitive intellectual property (IP) from companies targeted in Operation *Aurora*, including proprietary source code used in commercial programs, heightened policymaker scrutiny of China’s cyber espionage. *Aurora* correlated with existing lawmaker concerns that Beijing’s cyber-espionage campaigns were stealing IP for the commercial benefit of Chinese companies. In October 2011, the US Director of National Intelligence (DNI) said in an unclassified report to Congress that cyber espionage originating from China resulting in IP theft was a growing problem.<sup>24</sup>

The public evidence indicates that after Operation *Aurora*, the Obama administration began a policy of public and private engagement with Beijing to shape, rather than deter, PRC cyber-espionage activities. The purpose of the strategy was to persuade PRC leadership that ongoing cyber-espionage activities against the US were unpleasant but tolerable, while Chinese cyber-espionage units stealing IP for the benefit of Chinese commerce was intolerable and would damage bilateral relations. This engagement culminated in 2015 with the US-China Cyber Agreement, which included a pledge not to engage in cyber espionage for the purposes of commercial gain.<sup>25</sup>

In February 2013, the cybersecurity firm Mandiant publicly released a report which attributed the APT1 cyber espionage group to PLA Unit 61398 with high confidence. The

report alleged that the group steals “broad categories of intellectual property” for the likely benefit of Chinese industries.<sup>26</sup> More than a year later, The US Department of Justice (DOJ) followed suit with criminal charges against several Unit 61398 personnel for both computer theft and economic espionage, naming several US private firms as victims.

The US strategy seemed clearly aimed at dissuading the PRC government from engaging in IP theft using cyber means first and foremost, rather than intelligence gathering using cyber means. Then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey commented publicly in 2013 that he was engaging with PLA leaders “establish some rules of the road” in cyber operations, specifically touching on IP theft.<sup>27</sup>

#### **Partial Success**

Judged solely on publicly available information, this strategy of public-private engagement and coercion is likely to have been only partly successful. While private-sector data indicate that PRC cyber-espionage campaigns against the private sector dipped significantly before and after the signing of the 2015 Obama-Xi agreement, this probably reflects a publicly reported reorganization and rationalization of PRC cyber-espionage units drawn from the PLA and the Ministry of State Security (MSS).<sup>28 29</sup>

China’s cyber-enabled economic espionage has continued, although it can now be viewed at least partially through the lens of industrial strategy goals like the “Made in China 2025” 10-year plan. The strategy calls on both state and private sector entities to rapidly acquire and develop key

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### **Beijing’s strategy calls on both state and private sector entities to rapidly acquire and develop key technologies critical for China’s economic development.**

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technologies critical for China’s economic growth, such as semiconductor fabrication and aviation turbofans.<sup>30</sup>

One interpretation that might explain PRC leadership directing the continuation of economic espionage while claiming not to renege on the Xi-Obama agreement is directives like “Made in China 2025” are for national benefit, rather than the private financial benefit of commerce. This case study demonstrates how strategies of engagement are never guaranteed to lead to mutual understanding in international relations.

Beyond the agreement, the US government has been inconsistent in its public statements directed toward the PRC on the issue of cyber espionage. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) had personnel records for at least 4 million federal employees stolen in 2014 by a cyber espionage group allegedly based in China.<sup>31</sup> Top US intelligence officials publicly indicated the gravity of the intrusion for US national security interests but played down the incident as a hostile action by China. DNI James Clapper went as far to say that “you have to kind of salute the Chinese for what they did... If we had the opportunity to do that [to them], I don’t think we’d hesitate for a minute.”<sup>32</sup>

Then director of the National Security Agency, Adm. Mike Rogers, testified to Congress that the intrusion was not a cyber attack, reinforcing Clapper’s definition of the breach as “passive intelligence collection activity—just as we do.”<sup>33</sup> As part of a deliberate shaping strategy, this could

be interpreted as a signal to PRC officials as the tacit acceptance of legitimate, if undesirable, cyber espionage for the purposes of intelligence collection, especially in contrast to strong US denunciations of cyber-enabled IP theft.

In comparison, White House officials and many elected members of Congress often refused to acknowledge this distinction, calling for direct reprisals against Beijing to deter breaches of this scale.<sup>34</sup> This surely undermined the consistency of the message heard by PRC leadership that their activities were unwelcome but within the scope of intelligence norms.

#### **Blurred Lines**

Post-2015 US criminal indictments of hackers allegedly employed by PRC intelligence have also potentially blurred previously made distinctions that cyber espionage for traditional intelligence gathering is legitimate but economic espionage against private businesses is not. Breaches of US financial services, health care, and hospitality firms that US intelligence agencies publicly assessed were “passive intelligence collection activity” of PII were condemned by US government officials as unacceptable breaches of US citizens’ privacy, for which PRC hackers would be found criminally culpable.

Several hackers allegedly employed by the PLA were indicted in 2020 for their purported theft of PII pertaining to 145 million Americans from Equifax credit services in 2017. Journalist Zach Dorfman reported that bulk PII collection by PRC

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***Conflating economic crime and intelligence gathering in criminal charges brought against PRC-sponsored hackers has muddied the waters.***

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intelligence units may have been for the purposes of counterintelligence, in order to identify US intelligence officers and security-cleared personnel.<sup>35</sup>

Public statements by then Attorney General William Barr indicated that the indictment was in response to “the disturbing and unacceptable pattern of state-sponsored computer intrusions and thefts by China and its citizens that have targeted personally identifiable information, trade secrets, and other confidential information.”<sup>36</sup> The US government now appeared to be signaling to the Chinese government that PII belonging to US citizens was now similarly off limits, as well as IP.

Indictments now began to criminalize Chinese hackers for their involvement in conventional espionage as well. In 2018, the DOJ unsealed charges against two hackers associated with APT10, a contractor group allegedly employed by the MSS. The indictment charged the hackers with breaking into a US Navy personnel database, in addition to IP theft campaigns against the private sector.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in 2020 APT41 were indicted for cyber-espionage operations against several foreign governments, including the United Kingdom.<sup>38</sup>

The DOJ policy shift from targeting criminal indictments primarily against Chinese hackers associated with IP theft to espionage and cybercrimes more broadly may be explainable as consistent with the Trump administration’s promise to “get tough on China” and issue more indictments against PRC intelligence.

In a 2018 speech on Chinese economic espionage, Attorney General Jeff Sessions alleged that between 2013 and 2016 the Obama administration “did not charge anyone with spying for China,” while the DOJ under his leadership had charged three people for espionage in the first year of the Trump administration.<sup>39</sup>

Criminal indictments can be used to disrupt activities as much as to criminally sanction perpetrators, and publicly attributing responsibility can force changes in tactics, techniques, and procedures. Conflating economic crime and intelligence gathering in criminal charges brought against PRC-sponsored hackers, however, has muddied the waters. Does the US seek to deter cyber espionage by the PRC government as a whole or shape it to prevent the most egregious and disruptive behaviors? Beijing could counter that Washington does not accept its right to carry out cyber espionage as part of legitimate statecraft, and so all previous attempts at signaling can be dismissed as insincere bluster.

While the combination of economic sanctions, criminal indictments and diplomatic engagement are likely to have influenced targeting and operational security decisions by PRC intelligence actors, we lack data to argue that these engagements can meet any known criteria of preventing espionage. Indeed, it is unclear to an outsider what US policy goals of deterrence were at all due to the lack of continuity over the decade.

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***Shaping Operations in Cyber Espionage***

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The frequent difficulty in differentiating between deterrence and shaping activities toward cyber espionage—what activities are undesirable but acceptable, versus those which are intolerable—has led to opacity in both communicating expectations to adversaries and setting national objectives toward adversary cyber espionage. These tensions were visible in the joint Five Eyes statement in April 2021 that attributed the SolarWinds supply chain compromise to APT29, a threat group linked in open sources to Russia’s foreign intelligence agency, the SVR.

Both the UK and US publicly issued intelligence assessments that the SolarWinds initial compromise and follow-on intrusion activities were most likely for the purpose of intelligence collection, rather than CNA or OPE. At the same time, the decision to make the attribution public was justified as a response to the scale of the Russian cyber operation against SolarWinds customers, packaged with both additional denouncement of Russian electoral interference activities and targeted sanctions against Russian government and private sector entities.

A US Treasury press release stated the “scope and scale of this compromise combined with Russia’s history of carrying out reckless and disruptive cyber operations makes it a national security concern.”<sup>40</sup> The UK Foreign Office’s official statement on SolarWinds characterized the cyber espionage campaign as “malign behavior” that was part of a wider pattern of “election interference and aggressive behavior.”<sup>41</sup>

Condemnation of SolarWinds as malign leaves Five Eyes members open to charges of hypocrisy. Thomas Rid, an expert on cyber and information operations practices, argues that the sanctions package did not resolve “how was SolarWinds different from high-end Five Eyes intelligence operations?”<sup>42</sup> Former CIA intelligence officer Paul Kolbe concurred, arguing that the US is “engaged in the same type of operations at an even grander scale.”<sup>43</sup>

J. Michael Daniel, president of the Cyber Threat Alliance and a former White House official, suggests the scale and disproportionality of the SolarWinds initial access campaign made it worth singling out as a violation of cyber-espionage norms worthy of economic sanctions. This, however, raises the same questions as the White House’s reported response to the OPM breach, which called for retaliation on grounds of scale (or in *jus in bello* terms, proportionality). As such, it does not appear that scale of operations has been a useful rubric for determining deterrence thresholds. The justifications for diplomatic denunciations and sanctions could be much clearer in distinguishing the SolarWinds campaign and why it demands an escalatory response.<sup>44</sup>

Public attribution of APT29 has tangible benefits for national cyber defense through imposing costs on adversaries and increasing private sector awareness of cyber-espionage threats. Characterizing hostile cyber operations by adversaries on the one hand as intelligence collection and on the other as “undermining democracy” risks confusing both defenders and adversaries. The UK has clearly distinguished in previous cases that it does differentiate between hostile

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***In today’s networked societies and economies, cyber espionage is the natural evolution of modern intelligence practices.***

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intelligence operations against the UK and egregiously harmful covert actions against UK interests, such as electoral interference and attempted assassinations. The blurred lines of cyber operations have at times made distinguishing these activities harder.

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***Essential Statecraft***

I have argued that it is not realistic to expect that nation-states can deter cyber-espionage activities against its national interests; intelligence collection is too established as part of the framework of modern statecraft and no tools exist that can reliably prevent it, although counterintelligence as a discipline is intended to at least frustrate it. In today’s networked societies and economies, cyber espionage is the natural evolution of modern intelligence practices. So far as the social conditions exist, states will seek to utilize it.

Shaping cyber espionage by creating friction, imposing costs, and signaling is a much more accurate reflection of both existing counterintelligence practices and achievable goals. Framing disruption activities against cyber espionage as shaping operations also helps suggest potential strategies with realistic goals. We cannot prevent it, but we can make it harder and less successful.

Some potential policy goals derived from a shaping framework include:

- Identifying and preventing IP theft carried out by state intelligence agencies for private commercial gain;
  - Preventing cyber-espionage operations that are most likely to damage critical national infrastructure (for instance, electricity generation or water treatment facilities);
  - Prioritizing overt disruption, such as legal sanctions regimes, for cyber-espionage activities that are assessed to violate espionage norms.
- Under this framework, governments could consider a variety of options. These include developing a government-wide matrix of unacceptable behaviors by cyber-espionage actors that would trigger an elevated counterintelligence/disruption response. States could use public and private communication channels to signal acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Similarly, states could use offensive (destructive) cyber capabilities to disrupt an adversary’s intelligence operations and infrastructure.
- Several of these recommendations are likely to be highly challenging and would require extensive policy development before utilization. For example, developing hard categorizations of unacceptable behaviors in cyber operations and communicating them to adversaries can create opportunities for threat actors to operate just under escalation thresholds. Perri Adams and others have suggested several aspirational norms for “responsible offensive cyber operations”
- A focus on identifying the behaviors in cyber-espionage activities most likely to cause inadvertent or uncontrolled escalation;

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***Clarifying goals to shape, rather than deter, foreign cyber espionage would help define realistic expectations of what nation-states and their allies can achieve.***

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(such as avoiding indiscriminate targeting and predeployment testing of CNE capabilities), rather than negative norms to score against when violations are identified.<sup>45</sup>

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***Conclusion***

More public research is required on which behaviors in cyber operations are the most likely to trigger escalation when identified by a defender. For example, observers can right now only speculate as to what the response might be from a detected intrusion into US strategic nuclear

command and control networks by a cyber-threat actor, especially if the intent of the operation is vague. However, these recommendations offer the opportunity to influence and mitigate the negative consequences of one of the greatest expansions in intelligence collection since the invention of the telegraph. We cannot stop or reverse cyber espionage and we would be foolish to try; however, we must not cede our responsibilities to influence and govern it for the benefit of Five Eyes national security.

There are distinct benefits of adopting a strategy that provides

partners and adversaries clear direction on how we can influence cyber-espionage norms and behaviors. Clarifying goals to shape, rather than deter, foreign cyber espionage against national interests would help define realistic expectations of what nation-states and their allies can achieve against competitors and adversaries, while helping to prevent inadvertent escalation in international relations. In sum, while there is little to gain and significant costs in seeking to deter cyber espionage, seeking to shape it offers both a much more grounded view of what can be achieved within existing operational constraints and helps expand our viewpoint of what is possible.



*The author:* Lester Godefrey is the pen name of a UK government analyst.



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## President Eisenhower and CIA Prisoners in China

Nicholas Dujmović

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***There is much that remains to be told, including the Eisenhower administration's handling of the unexpected revelation that Jack Downey and Dick Fecteau were in the hands of PRC authorities.***

Anyone with an interest in CIA history or in Sino-US relations should learn the story of John “Jack” Downey and Richard “Dick” Fecteau. These two young CIA paramilitary officers were on a covert flight into northeast China in November 1952 to pick up an agent when their aircraft was shot down. The pilots died in the crash, but Jack Downey and Dick Fecteau survived and spent the next two decades in captivity. Released in large part through President Nixon’s historic opening toward China in the early 1970s, they were in surprisingly good physical, mental, and emotional shape. Downey and Fecteau picked up their lives with their families, started rewarding careers (Jack as a judge, Dick as a university athletic official), and insisted that their story was not very interesting and certainly not heroic. Others disagreed, especially at CIA, which showered them with awards despite their protestations.

As the staff historian who became the CIA’s expert on the case, I had the privilege of writing about Downey and Fecteau for this journal and subsequently assisted in the making of an internal CIA documentary film. The 2006 *Studies in Intelligence* article was unclassified, and the 2010 film *Extraordinary Fidelity* was eventually released to the public,<sup>a</sup> making

their story available to a global audience.

Those accounts centered on Downey and Fecteau and the challenges they faced enduring their capture, arrest and trial, the privations of extended captivity, and CIA’s efforts to take responsibility for the men’s financial and family matters. However, there is much about their story that remains to be told, including the Eisenhower administration’s handling of the unexpected revelation that Downey and Fecteau were in the hands of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). That the men were even alive was a late discovery; the Eisenhower administration assumed they were lost after their airplane failed to return. After a year with no indication they had survived—and knowing that Beijing typically trotted out prisoners for propaganda purposes—CIA had declared them dead in late 1953.

In late 1954, however, Beijing announced that it held Downey and Fecteau and had tried and sentenced them, along with the surviving 11 members of the crew of a US Air Force B-29 bomber shot down in January 1953. The US personnel, Air Force and CIA alike, had been convicted of espionage. The Eisenhower administration had known of the US

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a. Nicholas Dujmović, “Two Prisoners in China, 1952–1973,” *Studies in Intelligence* 50, no. 4 (December 2006): 21–36. *Extraordinary Fidelity* is available on CIA’s YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0Mh7EiXRJI>

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***The Eisenhower administration had known of the US airmen and had been seeking their release, but Beijing's announcement about Downey and Fecteau, presumed dead, was a surprise.***

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airmen and had been seeking their release, but Beijing's announcement about Downey and Fecteau, presumed dead, was a surprise.

Washington's immediate reaction to China's announcement was to forcefully insist that all 13 be released without delay. Then, quietly, and to the consternation of Fecteau's and Downey's families, the administration changed its stance. After a few days, US officials began to distinguish between the 11 USAF men and the two CIA officers. "The 13" became "the 11" in the administration's rhetoric, and the two CIA men faded in priority. Beijing released the US airmen after two years; Downey and Fecteau remained in captivity for the rest of Eisenhower's two terms, the entirety of the Kennedy and Johnson presidencies, and into the Nixon administration.

In summer 2018, I spent some time at the Eisenhower Library researching this mystery of a US policy change that seemed to prolong the captivity of the CIA men *because they were CIA*. Why did this change happen? Who made the policy decision? And finally, might it have turned out differently?

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***Containment, Rollback, and the "Third Force"***

Dwight Eisenhower won the presidential election of November 1952 in part because the voters judged him, rather than his Democratic opponent

Adlai Stevenson, as best suited to deal with the perceived threat from international communism.

During the campaign, John Foster Dulles, who later became Eisenhower's Secretary of State, had publicly criticized the Truman administration for laxity in dealing with the global communist threat. Democratic policies, he argued, were too content with "containment" instead of working to remove this peril.<sup>1</sup> Dulles and other Republicans argued for "rollback" rather than "containment."

It was an unfair charge, as CIA had worked many operations under President Truman to not only contain, but to "roll back" communist gains. Contrary to the Republicans' campaign rhetoric in 1952, the Truman administration had undertaken offensive operations against the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, including an attempted "rollback" of the communist regime of Albania. Elsewhere—including the Baltics, Bulgaria, China, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine—the CIA attempted to insert paramilitary assets and to establish and support resistance to communist rule. To be sure, none of these efforts succeeded—an official CIA assessment called the entire campaign a "disaster"—and so no "rollback" victories could be touted.<sup>2</sup>

An important aspect of this offensive covert paramilitary effort was aimed at the new PRC, proclaimed by Mao Zedong in October 1949. The

Truman administration initiated two separate major CIA paramilitary projects against China; both were under way when Eisenhower became president. As described in the memoirs of CIA participants,<sup>3</sup> one involved working with the Nationalists on Taiwan against the mainland, usually by supporting Nationalist commando raids on PRC-held offshore islands and coastal facilities. The other was the "Third Force" program that endeavored to infiltrate small teams of CIA-trained ethnic Chinese agents into China to establish a foothold for democratically minded leaders who were neither communist nor Nationalist.<sup>4</sup>

Downey and Fecteau were on a Third Force mission when their Civil Air Transport plane (CAT was a CIA proprietary company) left K-16 airfield<sup>4</sup> near Seoul, South Korea, on the evening of November 29, 1952, bound for a pick-up zone in Manchuria. The team in their unmarked C-47 was attempting to extract a CIA-trained Chinese courier who, unknown to CIA, had betrayed the mission. Antiaircraft gunners shot down the aircraft, killing CAT pilots Norman Schwartz and Bob Snoddy. Fecteau and Downey survived the crash and were taken into custody.

After three days of searching the likely sea and land corridors, CIA and CAT decided on a cover story that the flight was a regular CAT transport flight from Seoul to Japan, with two Department of the Army civilians—Downey and Fecteau—on board. Apparently, no one remembered that the CIA men had been told to say they were CAT employees.

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a. See my review of Roger Jeans, *The CIA and Third Force Movements in China during the Early Cold War* (Lexington Books, 2018) in "Covert Action to Promote Democracy in China During the Cold War," *Studies in Intelligence* 64, no. 4 (December 2020): 31–35.

To bolster the new cover story, another CAT C-47, re-marked with the registration number of the missing C-47, openly took off from the K-16 airfield late on December 3rd. The flight was ostensibly bound for Japan, according to the official flight manifest, which listed the missing Schwarz and Snoddy as the pilots of this flight, with Downey and Fecteau as passengers. The actual pilot, CAT veteran Hugh Marsh, was alone, and he returned the C-47 under cover of darkness.<sup>5</sup> Thus CIA's cover story was set.

Coincidentally, President-elect Eisenhower was beginning his first full day of visiting the Korean Peninsula, the fighting then at a hard-won stalemate, as he fulfilled his campaign pledge to "go to Korea." For Downey and Fecteau, it was also the first day of what would be months of interrogations, first in Shenyang (then known as Mukden) and later in Beijing. Sessions would last four to 24 hours. Although never physically tortured, the men were subjected to sleep deprivation, poor diet, Spartan conditions in a cold cell, and the constant wearing of leg irons.

Despite the fact that their agent had betrayed the CIA mission, Downey and Fecteau initially stuck to their story that they were CAT employees. This proved untenable after CAT announced that one of its aircraft, a C-47 on a transport flight from Seoul to Japan, was missing, because Downey and Fecteau were publicly identified as civilian employees of the US Army. This contradiction led to more intensive, confrontational, and lengthier interrogations. Both men confessed their CIA affiliation within weeks. The interrogations stopped and both expected a trial

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***Beijing's announcement included the news that, in addition to the 11 US airmen, "CIA spies" John Downey and Richard Fecteau were convicted of espionage and of making war on the Chinese people.***

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to take place, but almost two years passed before Downey and Fecteau faced the formalities of justice.

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***Surprise Announcement***

On November 23, 1954, an official radio broadcast from Beijing announced a military tribunal had tried and sentenced 13 Americans for espionage against China. Eleven were the surviving crew members of a US Air Force B-29 bomber shot down by PRC forces on January 13, 1953—a week before Eisenhower's inauguration—while engaged in a leaflet-dropping mission (sponsored by CIA) near the China-North Korea border. They were sentenced to prison terms of four to 10 years.<sup>6</sup>

Beijing's announcement included the news that, in addition to the 11 US airmen, "CIA spies" John Downey and Richard Fecteau were convicted of espionage and of making war on the Chinese people. Downey, called the "chief culprit" at the trial, was sentenced to life; Fecteau, the "assistant chief culprit," was sentenced to 20 years in prison. Moreover, the nine surviving Chinese agents trained by CIA and inserted into Manchuria were also tried and sentenced, four of them receiving the death penalty.

CIA was almost certainly the first US government agency to know of the PRC announcement that two of its own, long believed dead, were alive and in Beijing's hands. The Foreign Broadcast Information Service, part of CIA since the passage of the

National Security Act of 1947, routinely monitored and translated such broadcasts. According to memorandums of the calls, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles called his brother and Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles on November 23, 1954, to discuss a speech Foster Dulles was to give on Communism in Europe. At the end of the conversation, Allen brought up the matter of the Americans "sentenced in Red China" that day, turning over the details to one of his assistants. The White House press secretary was shortly asking Secretary Dulles for a statement about the "13 Americans."<sup>7</sup>

After another discussion that day between the Dulles brothers, the State Department issued a statement that the United States, through its consul general in Geneva, was strongly protesting to the PRC that the sentencing and "wrongful detention" of both the 11 American airmen and the two civilians "employed by the Department of the Army in Japan"—a reference to Downey and Fecteau.<sup>8</sup> State noted that the United States had pressed for the airmen's release for almost two years and that their continued custody was a violation of the terms of the Korean Armistice Agreement.

As for Downey and Fecteau, the "broadcast of today is the first word we have had that they are held by the Chinese Communists" as they were believed to have died when their flight to Japan went down "in November 1952" (note the inconsistency with the cover flight, which purportedly left on December 3).

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***Initially at least, the Eisenhower administration treated all 13 Americans as a group, making no distinction between them other than the fact that 11 were US military and two were civilians.***

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The imprisonment and sentencing of Downey and Fecteau on “trumped up” espionage charges, the State Department declared, is “a most flagrant violation of justice.”

The next morning, Eisenhower had far more important CIA business to consider. He met with his top advisers on the problem of collecting intelligence on the Soviet Union. Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson, Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, Air Force Secretary Harold Talbot, and science advisers Dr. James Killian and Edwin Land were there to discuss the U-2 reconnaissance aircraft that Lockheed was building for CIA.<sup>9</sup> It was not recorded whether the Dulles brothers also mentioned the issue of CIA prisoners held in China, although it seems likely. The president and First Lady Mamie Eisenhower then left the White House for Thanksgiving vacation in Augusta, Georgia.

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***Eleven Plus Two Equals 13***

From Augusta, on November 25, 1954, Eisenhower sent telegrams to the families of all 13 men named in China’s broadcast two days before.<sup>10</sup> After assuring the recipient of his distress that “your husband” or “your son” was held in China, Eisenhower noted that “he was serving his country when taken prisoner” and that “this nation is grateful for that service.” The telegram closed with the president’s assurance that the government was “using every feasible means” to free them and to ensure

their proper treatment and that these efforts would continue “resolutely and tirelessly.” Initially at least, the Eisenhower administration treated all 13 Americans as a group, making no distinction between them other than the fact that 11 were US military and two were civilians.

Other US government responses likewise did not distinguish between the imprisoned USAF personnel and the CIA men in the first days after the PRC announcement. On November 26, the State Department announced new protests to Beijing through the British Foreign Office, in which the US government maintained that all the Americans recently sentenced had been in aircraft that were attacked either over the “recognized combat zone in Korea or over international waters.”<sup>11</sup>

The US prisoners were collectively described as “unjustly detained American nationals.” Likewise, an intelligence summary issued by the Operations Coordinating Board referred to “the 13 US citizens imprisoned in China.”<sup>a</sup>

The US public and press certainly conflated these Americans—military and civilian—into one group. The public, of course, knew nothing of Downey and Fecteau’s CIA mission nor of the propaganda mission of the USAF B-29, except for what the PRC had announced, and it was widely regarded that all such broadcasts were lies. The White House received many letters and telegrams from

US citizens, generally either highly supportive or highly critical of the administration, that referred to the prisoners collectively as airmen, flyers, or air force personnel. A typical editorial was that of the *Evening Outlook* of Santa Monica, California, which urged the president to take firm action in the form of a naval or air blockade against China until the “13 American airmen” are released. Letters to the White House from retired and current military members and from American Legion posts, however, were more measured and focused on the 11 military prisoners.<sup>12</sup>

At least one senior CIA official foresaw trouble. The agency’s senior representative in the Far East cabled DCI Dulles on November 27, noting that despite the inconsistencies in the cover story, CIA was stuck with it. He recommended that the US government stress that “whether in or out of uniform, these were all Americans engaged in hazardous duty during a war and in a war zone.” The CIA representative, recognizing “the temptation to separate uniformed prisoners from civilians in order to get special treatment for uniformed men,” warned that “it would be serious error to enhance chances of one group at expense of others.”<sup>13</sup>

On November 29, 1954 (two years exactly from the crash), Allen Dulles briefed the president on the CIA mission that had led to Downey and Fecteau’s capture. Dulles told the president that Beijing’s statements were accurate in many details and explained the cover story. In preparing for his briefing, Dulles had been warned by his chief of Far East operations that the cover for the CIA

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a. Reporting to the National Security Council, the OCB was responsible for coordinating national security policies, including covert action. See “Daily Intelligence Abstracts” no. 271, November 29, 1954, Eisenhower Library.

men was so thin that any “determined investigation by either the press or Congress” would breach it.

Secretary of the Army Robert Stevens was concerned that no Army personnel or background files existed for the CIA men. At the same time, the CIA personnel office reported that senior officials from the Defense Department and the Army wanted to maintain the cover story. Eisenhower’s reaction was not recorded, but Foster Dulles was sufficiently interested to call Frank Wisner, chief of the CIA’s operations directorate, for details the following day.<sup>14</sup>

The president, at least for the moment, wanted action regarding all 13 prisoners, and he made clear to Foster Dulles that the United States should “push this matter vigorously” in the United Nations, possibly on the basis that the men were supporting the UN effort in Korea. Because the UN General Assembly (UNGA) was about to adjourn, Foster Dulles and US Ambassador to the UN Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., agreed to propose a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution on the prisoners, whom Eisenhower and Dulles were referring to collectively as “our flyers.”<sup>15</sup>

Even so, both Eisenhower and Foster Dulles were concerned that others would draw unwelcome distinctions, and they struggled with a respond. Before his press conference on December 1, Foster Dulles called his brother at CIA, wondering what to say if asked about the two civilians: “Do we say they were part of the UN operation?”

Allen Dulles reminded his brother that the story from the outset was that they were “civilian members of the

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***A measure of clarity was provided by the State Department’s legal adviser who influenced subsequent policy deliberations and, ultimately, the fate of the two CIA men.***

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Dept. of Defense” and that “we have stuck to it” while referring inquiries to the Pentagon. Foster Dulles replied that Eisenhower had told Defense Secretary Wilson the day before to refer inquiries to the State Department. Allen Dulles said it would be hard to avoid details about these two civilians but that was the best path, as “it is difficult to change stories now.”<sup>16</sup>

Fortunately for Foster Dulles, the issue of the two civilians did not arise at his December 1 press conference, but he called the president to warn him that the question would probably come up at his own press conference the next day. Both expressed concern that Eisenhower would be asked the “exact status” of all the prisoners. Referring obliquely to the CIA mission, they agreed that one plane was problematic as it “landed under such conditions” that the men would not be “prisoners of war” as they were “not in uniform nor in Korea.”

Eisenhower told Foster Dulles he would do his best if reporters asked about them and would stick to the statement that “actual circumstances were a matter of record” with the Defense Department but also that he “would not say anything that would make liars out of our people.” The essential thing, they agreed, was that Beijing had agreed under the terms of the armistice to return all prisoners of war and had supposedly provided all names through the ambassadorial-level talks in Geneva but had deceitfully omitted the names of the civilian prisoners.<sup>17</sup>

They did not discuss the obvious contradiction that “prisoners of war”

did not apply to civilian personnel, especially CIA, on a covert mission in the territory of a country with which the United States was not formally at war.

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***“Forget about the Two, Talk About the 11”***

While the president, secretary of state, and DCI were flailing for a coherent response, a measure of clarity was provided by the State Department’s legal adviser, who influenced subsequent policy deliberations and, ultimately, the fate of the two CIA men. Herman Phleger was a prominent attorney from San Francisco who had met John Foster Dulles at the founding conference of the UN in 1945 and then had advised the US military government in Germany.

Foster Dulles had mentioned the overall prisoner dilemma to Phleger shortly after the PRC broadcast on November 23, and Phleger went to New York City to advise Ambassador Lodge. On the morning of December 2, Foster Dulles called Phleger in New York to discuss next steps with the UNSC.

The plan was for Lodge to introduce a short resolution on the issue in a special session of the UNSC before going to the General Assembly. The resolution would call on the PRC to release and deliver the 11 USAF personnel—on the basis that they were serving as UN soldiers on a UN mission—as well as “other captured personnel.”

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**Regarding the CIA men, Phleger told Foster Dulles on the telephone that “we ought to forget about the two and talk about the 11.”**

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Regarding the CIA men, Phleger told Foster Dulles on the telephone that “we ought to forget about the two and talk about the 11.” Phleger had zeroed in on the problem—it was hard under the circumstances of their mission to argue for their release as prisoners of war under the terms of the armistice, and doing so might jeopardize the release of the US airmen.<sup>18</sup>

It is not recorded whether Phleger’s recommendation to “forget” about the two CIA prisoners was communicated to Eisenhower before his press conference later that day. In any case, Eisenhower himself switched the issue from the 13 to the 11. He took the initiative in bringing up the “13 American prisoners” in the context of the “ideological struggle” of the Cold War and dismissed calls for a retaliatory blockade because it would constitute an act of war.

The president then raised “one thought that I must express: at least 11 of these soldiers, by the Communists’ own propaganda and testimony made public, were in uniform. They were soldiers captured in the Korean War.” Consequently, he emphasized, they must be treated as prisoners of war under the terms of the armistice and, because they were serving “in conformity with” UN actions in Korea, the UN had some responsibility for acting and needed to do so to “retain its self-respect.”<sup>19</sup> The distinction Eisenhower was making implicitly suggested that the two civilians had not been serving the UN

and did not come under the terms of the armistice.

The subsequent question-and-answer session reflected confusion among the press corps regarding the 11 or the 13. Responding to a reporter’s question on what kind of action the president wanted the UN to take “on behalf of the 13 prisoners,” Eisenhower affected not to “prejudge” the UN and reiterated his earlier points that it was obliged to do something. Another reporter, conflating the two planes into one, asked whether the case of these prisoners was comparable to the case of a US RB-29 reconnaissance plane shot down by Soviet fighters near the Kurile Islands the previous month.

Eisenhower said the Soviets were quick to respond to perceived incursions but that “this last case, to my mind, with respect to the 11 uniformed soldiers, was completely indefensible, and they should be home right now.” Another reporter asked whether the United States intended “to take up the matter of the 13 prisoners” with the UN, to which Eisenhower said that was being handled by the State Department.

Finally, John Hightower of the Associated Press, who had recently won the Pulitzer Prize for international reporting, got to the central issue: “Is there anything you can say, sir, about the status of the other two men, in addition to the 11 men who were in uniform?” Eisenhower demurred, saying, “Well, it is cloudy,

and I couldn’t discuss it in detail.”<sup>20</sup> The reporters dropped the matter.

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***Focusing on the Eleven***

Immediately after Eisenhower’s press conference, Lodge and Phleger met with UN representatives of the 15 nations that, in addition to the United States, had sent military forces to participate under the UN Command in Korea (excluding South Korea, which joined the UN in 1991).<sup>a</sup> Lodge read the president’s recent comments about the UN’s responsibilities; Phleger spoke of the need to uphold the terms of the armistice. Lodge and Phleger reported to Foster Dulles that all 15 nations were concerned “that the men are UN men.” All of these points, of course, applied only to the 11 airmen, not Downey and Fecteau.

That the Eisenhower administration had, at this point, sidelined Downey and Fecteau in its diplomatic efforts at the UN is underscored by a December 3 conversation between Foster Dulles and Krishna Menon, India’s UN representative, who had offered to help mediate with China. The discussion made no mention of the two civilians and focused only on 11 airmen, including the US contention that their B-29 was south of the Yalu River when forced down.

Dulles rejected Menon’s suggestion that the airmen were spies, stating that “this imprisonment of the uniformed members of the armed services for wholly fictitious grounds was something that no nation could accept without reaction” and that the UN had “strong responsibility in the

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a. Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, UK, and the US.



matter since these men were serving the United Nations.” Dulles, probably assuming Menon would so inform the Chinese, stressed that the UN’s failure to act would force the United States “to take its own measures to seek relief.”<sup>21</sup>

### ***CIA Objects, and Loses***

Realizing that US diplomatic efforts were omitting Downey and Fecteau, CIA officers tried to intervene. Frank Wisner, chief of CIA’s operational directorate, supported a proposed statement from the Defense Department that would cover Downey and Fecteau while papering over discrepancies in their cover employment. Wisner read it to Allen Dulles in New York over the telephone on the evening of December 3. No text of the proposal appears to have survived, but an internal CIA memo suggests that the Army wanted to address the lack of backstopping documentation on Downey and Fecteau by announcing that a records search had revealed that Downey and Fecteau were not actually Army civilian employees but were locally hired contractors providing services for the Army in the Far East.

Conceivably Wisner believed this solution would preserve cover while making Downey and Fecteau eligible for inclusion in any prisoner release by connecting them, through the US Army, to the UN Command. In any case, the reaction was negative. Walter Robertson, assistant secretary of state for East Asia and the Pacific, got wind of it and told Wisner that Dulles would not like it and that Wisner should “do nothing” with the proposal until Robertson could confer with the secretary of state.

### ***The shift in focus did not escape the attention of Mary Downey, Jack’s mother, who called her contact in CIA’s personnel office on December 5.***

When Foster Dulles learned of the proposal the next day, he opposed it as well. CIA apparently dropped this approach.<sup>22</sup>

The proposed UNGA resolution presented by Ambassador Lodge to the group of UN member states comprising the UN Command specified only the 11 airmen and their mission under the UN Command. It mentioned them three times—once as members of the US armed forces, twice as members of the UN Command—in declaring that their imprisonment was a violation of Article 3 of the armistice regarding the repatriation of prisoners of war. It also condemned the detention of “all other captured personnel of the United Nations Command” and requested the UN Secretary-General to seek the release of the 11 and these “other captured personnel.”

During the ensuing UNGA discussion on this matter, Communist bloc representatives emphasized the 13 Americans collectively as “convicted spies” serving US rather than UN interests, while representatives of the allied powers focused on the 11 airmen and their UN connections. Soviet representative Yakov Malik asked Lodge how the United States would react if two aircraft were shot down over US territory with a total of 13 PRC citizens sent to do what the 13 US citizens were sent to accomplish in China. Those spies, he said, would be treated as Beijing was treating the US spies.

Likewise, the Czechoslovakian representative emphasized the “13 American nationals” constituted

a convicted “group of spies.” By contrast, the British representative, Anthony Nutting castigated the PRC for sentencing and imprisoning “the 11 American airmen” who had served in uniform “on behalf of the United Nations during the Korean hostilities.” Nutting mentioned “the 11” eight times and referred to these “airmen” and “prisoners of war” many more times, referencing only the B-29 mission. He asked rhetorically, “Are we to believe that 11 American airmen, packed into a single aeroplane and wearing their national uniform, were about to descend upon Chinese territory to conduct espionage? The idea is so fantastic that it is hard to understand how grown men can advance it as a serious charge.” He did not mention the CIA mission.<sup>23</sup>

The shift in focus did not escape the attention of Mary Downey, Jack’s mother, who called her contact in CIA’s personnel office on December 5. She was very upset, “on the verge of hysteria,” because she had been following all the developments in the newspapers and on the radio and saw that the focus was on the 11 but “nothing seemed to be in process for her boy.” Mrs. Downey went to visit her congressman, Rep. Thomas Dodd, that evening (and so she was not home when DCI Dulles tried to call to reassure her that the government was not forgetting her son), Dodd then called Allen Dulles to complain that US diplomats at the UN “had so completely dropped from consideration the two civilians.”

DCI Dulles met with both Mrs. Downey and Representative Dodd on December 10. He warned them that

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***The degree to which Downey and Fecteau were sidelined is evident from the administration's response to inquiries from Capitol Hill.***

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discretion was important but assured them that “everything possible was being done for the ‘two’ and they had not been forgotten by the government.”<sup>24</sup>

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***More Complications***

US diplomatic efforts regarding USAF personnel held in China expanded from 11 to 15 as a result of a State Department recapitulation. Foster Dulles was informed by Assistant Secretary Robertson on December 7, 1954, that there were 15 servicemen in custody—the 11 sentenced on November 23 plus four US fighter pilots shot down and captured by PRC forces but who were as yet untried. Beijing’s propaganda and reports from US repatriates indicated their continued imprisonment, and PRC diplomats admitted it during talks in Geneva. Robertson also told Secretary Dulles that, all told, 28 US civilians “including Messrs. Downey and Fecteau” were in jail in China.

Ignoring the issue of the civilian detainees, Robertson recommended that the cases of the four additional US pilots “be pressed on the same basis as the 11 Air Force personnel who have been sentenced to prison terms.” The lack of a recommendation regarding any of the 28 civilians, including Downey and Fecteau, indicates that the US was settling on an approach involving only its military personnel. Secretary Dulles informed the White House of the four others added to the list.<sup>25</sup>

US diplomats faced a dilemma. The proposed UNGA resolution approved by the other 15 nations of

the UN military command focused on the 11 airmen already sentenced by the Chinese—to change it to 15 airmen would require another meeting and consensus, and Foster Dulles and Ambassador Lodge were eager to press forward. Fortunately, however, the text of the draft resolution mentioned “other captured personnel of the United Nations Command.”

In his lengthy statement introducing the resolution to the General Assembly, Lodge detailed the story of the 11 and their leaflet-dropping mission over North Korea, which he defended as a legitimate UN military mission. He then told the stories of the additional four US fighter pilots. After relating the specific provisions of the Korean armistice regarding China’s obligations about prisoners of war, as well as Beijing’s admissions regarding all 15 prisoners, he introduced the resolution on behalf of the 16 nations of the UN Command in Korea.<sup>26</sup>

Lodge’s argument, then, was that “other captured personnel,” a category that Frank Wisner wanted to include Downey and Fecteau, actually referred to the other four USAF pilots, which effectively left out Downey and Fecteau from consideration. This was underscored by C. D. Jackson, an adviser to Eisenhower on propaganda and psychological warfare, who served as a US delegate to UNGA.

Jackson specified the illegal detention, mock trial, conviction, and imprisonment of “11 American airmen” on “fabricated charges of espionage”; no mention was made of Downey

and Fecteau. An important point stressed by the US representatives that apparently swayed a few nations was that the espionage charges were ridiculous because the men were in uniform at the time of their capture, a point conceded by Soviet representative Malik.<sup>27</sup>

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***Politicians Weigh In***

The degree to which Downey and Fecteau were sidelined is evident from the administration’s response to inquiries from Capitol Hill. Dodd wrote Eisenhower on November 30 that he had pledged to the people of his district and to Downey’s mother that he would do everything in his power to bring about Downey’s release. Dodd urged the president to press China to release Downey and the 12 other Americans. There was no response from the president or a senior adviser.

Dodd’s letter was acknowledged by a White House functionary and turned over to the State Department for action. The response came from the assistant secretary for congressional relations, who thanked Dodd for his concern and outlined the measures already taken regarding the prisoners.

Later that month, Sen. John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts called Assistant Secretary Robertson “about the two civilians”—Fecteau was his constituent—seeking more information. Robertson and Foster Dulles agreed “to play everything down” because putting out more information would “raise more problems than it would solve.” By contrast, when the wife of Colonel John K. Arnold, the senior member of the B-29 crew, wrote to Eisenhower, that letter was

answered at length by Sherman Adams, the president's chief of staff.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Getting the UN Involved***

Foster Dulles was pleased to report to the president a diplomatic victory when the resolution, submitted by all 16 powers of the UN Command in Korea, passed the General Assembly on December 10.<sup>29</sup> Of the 60 member nations, 45 voted in favor, five against, and 10 either absent or abstained. The resolution's request that UN Secretary-General (UNSYG) Dag Hammarskjöld seek the release of the prisoners, together with Lodge's personal emphasis to Hammarskjöld that Eisenhower strongly believed the UNSYG had a great responsibility in this matter, convinced Hammarskjöld that he should go to Beijing and negotiate personally.

Hammarskjöld immediately sent a cable to Beijing requesting direct talks, receiving a reply on December 17 that the PRC officials would receive him. Foster Dulles and Lodge agreed that briefings should be set up to prepare Hammarskjöld to deal with potential legal questions, and that these briefings would involve Herman Phleger.<sup>30</sup>

On December 19, Hammarskjöld went to Stockholm to meet with the PRC ambassador there to make arrangements. Before he left, Phleger spent most of a day briefing him on the B-29 crew's mission, showing him the documentary evidence that they were not spying on China but had strayed close to the border by accident on account of weather.<sup>31</sup> Hammarskjöld would be in Beijing from late December to mid-January.<sup>32</sup>

### ***Foster Dulles called his brother at CIA and "asked if he had any brilliant ideas of what we should do if this mission fails."***

While he was gone, US officials maintained a deliberate silence on the matter outwardly—suspending public criticism of China—while they debated their next steps. Lodge, reacting to an idea of Phleger's, suggested to Foster Dulles that the US should press for an UNGA resolution to authorize a UN blockade of China. Dulles called his brother at CIA and "asked if he had any brilliant ideas of what we should do if this mission fails." Allen Dulles, with no mention of his imprisoned CIA employees, told his brother he would get "his boys on it."<sup>33</sup>

Frank Wisner was one of those boys, and once again he tried to influence US diplomatic efforts. As chief of the operations directorate, Wisner was responsible for Downey and Fecteau. He learned that Hammarskjöld in Beijing sent a question back to the State Department regarding what Downey and Fecteau were wearing when they were shot down and captured. Writing directly to Foster Dulles, Wisner asserted that "they were wearing a type of uniform commonly used by the troops and also worn by some civilians in the theater of operations at the time," specifically a "denim fatigue uniform" without military insignia.

Wisner pointedly argued "it can be truthfully and accurately stated that they were wearing uniforms of a sort," disingenuously adding that this was "clearly not the sort of clothing which would be affected by persons attempting to appear as civilians or otherwise to disguise themselves." Wisner proposed that the Hammarskjöld mission be

informed that Downey and Fecteau were wearing uniforms at the time of their capture, or at least "uniforms of a United States military type." In addition, Wisner and his deputy, Richard Helms, prepared materials for inclusion in the State Department briefing package for Hammarskjöld that "specifically indicated that these two individuals were on a UN mission."<sup>34</sup>

Wisner's intervention had zero effect. In Beijing, Hammarskjöld sought assurances as to the health and well-being of all the 13 detained Americans, and Beijing agreed to photograph and provide health information on the 11 of the B-29 Arnold group plus Downey and Fecteau, all of whom were temporarily quartering together so that they could be photographed and filmed under relatively benevolent conditions. PRC officials, however, would talk only about the imprisoned US military members, not about Downey and Fecteau.

### ***Starting a Process***

As CIA had predicted, Hammarskjöld returned without an immediate release of any prisoners, but he emphasized a process had been started. Beijing, for example, released photographs of the prisoners, agreed to allow family visits, and said it would begin to allow the exchange of mail—all of which, he suggested to Lodge, meant that while the situation was "delicate," their release would come in "a matter of months." The Eisenhower administration expressed its disappointment but also its confidence in a favorable outcome.

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***US diplomats had engaged in sporadic talks with PRC representatives on the status of all US citizens detained or imprisoned in China.***

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Statements from Hammarskjöld, Lodge, and the White House focused solely on the US military personnel being held (the 11 or the 15).<sup>35</sup>

Efforts to free the US military personnel eventually paid off. On May 31, 1955, Beijing deported the four fighter pilots who had not been tried and sentenced. On August 1, Beijing announced that the 11 airmen would be released; they arrived in Hong Kong on August 4.<sup>36</sup> Both groups of airmen were released at the Lowu Bridge on the PRC side of the border with Hong Kong, and they walked across into the then British colony. Fecteau would not retrace that crossing until December 1971, Downey not until March 1973.

All the foregoing is not to say that Downey and Fecteau were completely forgotten by their government, even if they were tactically sidelined during the efforts to secure the release of the US military personnel. I have written elsewhere about how CIA continued to care about their fate and about their families.<sup>37</sup> Since June 1954, during the Geneva Convention on the Korean war, US diplomats had engaged in sporadic consular-level talks with PRC representatives on the status of all US citizens detained or imprisoned in China. PRC ambassador Wang Bingnan maintained that all US citizens were free to leave China if they were not involved in civil or criminal cases. The State Department issued press releases on these talks, mentioning Downey and Fecteau by name (but not their true affiliation).<sup>38</sup>

In August 1955, these became regularized as ambassador-level

talks between U. Alexis Johnson, the US ambassador in Prague, and Ambassador Wang. In his instructions to Johnson, Foster Dulles stated that the “agreed purpose” of the talks was primarily to help settle “the matter of repatriation of civilians who desire to return to their respective countries” and secondarily to facilitate further discussions on other issues of concern to both sides.<sup>39</sup>

These talks carried on until 1957, when they were suspended, and resumed in Warsaw in 1958.<sup>40</sup> The US side typically pressed at each of these meetings for Downey and Fecteau’s release but never acknowledged they were CIA officers. For its part, Beijing did release other US civilians, beginning with 10 in September 1955, but it maintained Downey and Fecteau were special cases and were not “civilians.” They had been convicted of crimes against China and therefore they were ineligible for release; the United States should not demand that China change its legal system.<sup>41</sup>

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***Trouble with Cover***

In retrospect, it is evident the Eisenhower administration, in its diplomatic efforts during 1954–55 to free the larger group of US military personnel held in China, had no choice but to treat the imprisoned CIA officers differently. As intelligence officers under cover, Downey and Fecteau had a far more tenuous legal status than uniformed combatants. In that respect, notwithstanding the pair’s enormous personal sacrifice, the episode established norms

with the new PRC government and drew a distinction between espionage, a game with few rules, and armed conflict bound by international law and custom. In particular, the agreement in principle on exchanges of prisoners of war and detainees would come into play again years later, for example, when a US EP-3 reconnaissance plane crash-landed on Hainan Island in April 2001.

Might Downey and Fecteau’s ordeal have ended sooner? The point of departure for an alternative history of Downey and Fecteau is not that the Eisenhower administration would never waver from insisting on including the CIA officers with the US airmen. The evidence suggests Beijing would have done nothing different and perhaps would have delayed releasing the military prisoners.

The weakness of Downey and Fecteau’s cover compounded the difficulty of securing their release. Cover, to be effective, needs to be credible, consistent, and coordinated. Downey and Fecteau’s CAT cover was none of those things; their interrogations quickly revealed they knew nothing about the airline. Like many of CIA’s Third Force schemes, it was poorly conceived and poorly executed.

PRC officials knew beyond any doubt, even before the C-47 was shot down, that those on board were CIA. Under intense interrogation, Downey and Fecteau had also admitted it. More important, everyone at the highest levels of the US government—at the White House, State Department, the Pentagon, and CIA—knew that China’s leaders knew. Downey and Fecteau had no cover to preserve.

What the US government was trying to preserve, in my view, was the

use of cover in current and future CIA missions and the ability to sustain cover to protect past operations. The audience for the cover story was not just PRC officials, but the rest of the world and the US public. For Beijing, knowing the truth was mere prelude to having the truth admitted, as both Downey and Fecteau finally did after weeks of denying it.

Should the US government have admitted their CIA status and mission, much as Eisenhower would do in 1960 after Francis Gary Powers's U-2 was shot down over the Soviet Union?<sup>42</sup> Perhaps, but the two cases differed in important ways, not least because Powers was piloting an unarmed reconnaissance aircraft, while Downey and Fecteau were attempting to foment a guerrilla war.

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### ***Should the US government have admitted their CIA status and mission, much as Eisenhower would do in 1960 after Francis Gary Powers's U-2 was shot down over the Soviet Union?***

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The difference would not have been lost on PRC leaders. Announcing the start of ambassador-level talks in 1955, Premier Zhou Enlai mentioned the focus on repatriating civilians, noting, "The number of American civilians in China is small, and the question can be easily settled." However, Zhou said that China demanded that "the foreign countries concerned put an end to the subversive activities against China and to the dispatching of saboteurs into China to carry out activities in violation of Chinese law."<sup>43</sup>

What seems certain is that, as far as Beijing was concerned, early

release was impossible without such statements. In contrast, for US decisionmakers of the mid-1950s grappling with the early Cold War struggle with communism—including the aftermath of the Korean War and the collapse of the Third Force covert action program—such a promise might well have been impossible. This impasse, clearly, doomed the CIA men to many years of captivity, ending only with President Nixon's opening to China and his administration's admission, after all these years, that Downey and Fecteau had been CIA officers all along.



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**Editor's note:** Printed versions of this article contained an erroneous set of Endnotes. The notes that follow this page have been corrected. (April 15, 2022)

### Endnotes

1. John Foster Dulles, "A Policy of Boldness," *Life*, May 19, 1952, 146–57.
2. Nicholas Dujmović, "Drastic Actions Short of War: The Origins and Application of CIA's Covert Paramilitary Function in the Early Cold War," *Journal of Military History* 76 (July 2012), 790–94.
3. Frank Holober, *Raiders of the China Coast: CIA Covert Operations during the Korean War* (Naval Institute Press, 1999); James Lilley, *China Hands: Nine Decades of Adventure, Espionage, and Diplomacy in Asia* (Public Affairs, 2004). See also William Leary, *Perilous Missions: Civil Air Transport and CIA Covert Operations in Asia* (University of Alabama Press, 1984) and Dujmović, "Two CIA Prisoners in China," 22.
4. The US Air Force at the time had some 50 "K Bases" in Korea. See list and map at <https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/196394/k-bases-in-korea/>.
5. A copy of the flight manifest is in the author's records, courtesy of Erik Kirzinger, nephew of CAT pilot Norman Schwarz. See also the declassified CIA internal history by the former president of CAT, CIA officer Alfred T. Cox, *Civil Air Transport: A Proprietary Airline, 1946–1955*, vol. III, CIA Clandestine Services Historical Paper no. 87, May 1969, 130; <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CAT%20VOL%203.pdf>.
6. A good summary of the B-29 crew's story was published in August 1998 by Associated Press reporter Robert Burns and syndicated under various titles; the *Los Angeles Times* version is <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1998-sep-13-mn-22205-story.html>.
7. "Telephone call to Mr. Allen Dulles," 5:48 p.m., November 23, 1954, in Eisenhower Library, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversation Series, Box 3, folder 3. "Telephone call to Mr. Hagerty," 6:22 p.m., November 23, 1954, in *ibid.*, Box 10, folder 2. Eisenhower's weekly press conference was held that morning, before the Chinese announcement.
8. State Department statement, no. 666, November 23, 1954, Eisenhower Library, JF Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 11, Wang-Johnson Talks, folder 6.
9. Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower, November 24, 1954, document 199 in *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Intelligence Community, 1950–1955*, (GPO, 2007), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950-55Intel/d199>. Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 227–228. See also Gregory Pedlow and Donald Welzenbach, *The Central Intelligence Agency and Overhead Reconnaissance* (CIA History Staff, 1992), 36–37.
10. Text of the White House press release on the telegrams, copies of the telegrams themselves, and the names of addresses of the recipients are in Eisenhower Library, White House Central Files, Official File, Box 686, OF 154-H-3, POWs—13 Americans Imprisoned by Chinese Communists, folder 2.
11. State Department press statement, no. 673, November 26, 1954, in Eisenhower Library, JF Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 11, Wang-Johnson Talks, folder 6.
12. This analysis is based on my review of the contents of two thick files of public correspondence to the president on this matter, in Eisenhower Library, White House Central Files, General Files, Box 938, 125-U-1 13 Americans Imprisoned by Chinese Communists, folders 1 and 2. Editorial "Mr. President, Please Act," *Evening Outlook* (Santa Monica, California), November 30, 1954, in *ibid.*
13. Author's notes on this CIA cable dated November 27, 1954.
14. "Telephone Call to Mr. Wisner," November 30, 1954, in Eisenhower Library, JF Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations – General, Box 3, Nov–Dec '54, folder 3. Allen Dulles called his brother on 2 December to relate the information he used to brief the President; "Telephone Call from Allen Dulles," December 2, 1954, in *ibid.* Richard Bissell that morning told DCI Dulles that the army secretary was nervous about the lack of documentation. Author's notes on November 29, 1954, memos to DCI Dulles from Office of Personnel and from Chief, Far East division; and on CIA Deputies' Meeting of December 2, 1954.
15. "Memorandum of Conversation with Ambassador Lodge," November 30, 1954, in *ibid.* "Telephone Call from the President," November 30, 1954, in JF Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations—White House, Box 10, Nov 54–Feb 55, folder 2. "Memorandum of Luncheon Conversation with the President," December 1, 1954, in JF Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series, Box 1, Meetings with the President, folder 1. Eisenhower mentioned to Foster Dulles the telegram he had received from publisher William Hearst, urging UN action on the basis that "our servicemen" had been serving UN efforts; see Eisenhower Library, Presidential Records, White House Central Files, Confidential File, Subject Series, Box 61, POWs (13 Held By Chinese Communists).
16. "Telephone Call to Allen Dulles," December 1, 1954, JF Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations—General, Box 3, Nov–Dec '54, folder 3.
17. "Telephone Call to the President," December 1, 1954, in JF Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations – White House, Box 10, Nov 54–Feb 55, folder 21; and DDE Presidential Papers (Ann Whitman Files), DDE Diary Series, Box 7, Phone Calls June–Dec 1954, folder 1.
18. "Telephone Call from the President," November 30, 1954, JF Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations – White House, Box 10, Nov 54 – Feb 55, folder 2. The "ought to forget" statement is in "Telephone Call to Mr. Phleger in NY," December 2, 1954, in JF Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations—General, Box 3, Nov–Dec 1954, folder 3.

19. "The President's News Conference of December 2, 1954," document 345 in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower: 1954: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to December 31, 1954 (GPO, 1960), 1073–9; also available through the University of Michigan at <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/ppot-pus/4728402.1954.001/1123?page=root;size=100;view=image>.
20. Ibid, 1079–83.
21. "Telephone Call from Amb. Lodge," December 2, 1954, in JF Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations—General, Box 3, Nov–Dec 1954, folder 3. "Memorandum of Conversation with Krishna Menon," December 3, 1954, in JF Dulles Papers, Special Assistants Chronological Series, Box 7, O'Connor-Hanes Chronology, Dec 1954, folder 5.
22. Author's notes on CIA personnel officer George Cary memorandum for the record, December 2, 1954. "Telephone Call to Mr. Robertson," December 4, 1954, in JF Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations—General, Box 3, Nov–Dec 1954, folder 3.
23. Transcript of discussion, no date but probably December 6, 1954, Eisenhower Library, C.D. Jackson Papers, Box 107, UN Misc—9th Gen. Assembly, 1954, folder 3.
24. CIA Office of Personnel memoranda for the record of December 6–7, 1954, and DCI Dulles meeting with deputies on December 13, 1954 (author's notes).
25. Walter Robertson memorandums to Secretary Dulles of December 7, 1954: "Americans Detained in Communist China Since 1951" and "Facts Concerning Additional Air Force Personnel in Communist China" as well as the Edwin Martin memorandum of December 6, 1954, "Comment on Attached Lists of American Military Personnel," all in JF Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 11, Wang-Johnson Talks '55, folder 6. "Telephone Call From Mr. Hagerty," December 8, 1954, in JF Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations—White House, Box 10, Nov 54–Feb 55, folder 2.
26. United States Delegation to the General Assembly, press release 2069, December 8, 1954, in Eisenhower Library, White House Central Files, Official File, Box 686, OF 154-H-3, POWs—13 Americans Imprisoned by Chinese Communists, folder 1.
27. U.S. Delegation to the Ninth UN General Assembly, press release 2072, December 9, 1954, in Eisenhower Library, C.D. Jackson Papers, Box 106, UN Misc. 9th Gen. Assembly, folder 1.
28. Thomas J. Dodd letter to President Eisenhower, November 30, 1954, along with White House acknowledgment and State's response, in White House Central Files, Official File, Box 686, OF 154-H-3, POWs—13 Americans Imprisoned by Chinese Communists, folder 3. "Telephone Call from Mr. Robertson," December 27, 1954, in JF Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations—General, Box 3, Nov–Dec 1954, folder 1. Sherman Adams letter to Mrs. John K. Arnold, July 22, 1955, in Eisenhower Library, White House Central Files, Official File, Box 686, OF 154-H-3, POWs—13 Americans imprisoned by Communist Chinese, folder 1.
29. Resolution 906 of the 9th UN General Assembly, "Complaint of detention and imprisonment of United Nations military personnel in violation of the Korean Armistice Agreement," December 10, 1954. <https://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/dag/docs/ares906e.pdf>
30. "Telephone Call to the President," 8 December 1954, in JF Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations – White House, Box 10, Nov 54–Feb 1955, folder 2. Lodge letter to President Eisenhower, December 11, 1954, in JF Dulles Papers, Subject Series, box 11, Wang-Johnson Talks 1955, folder 5. "Telephone Conversation with Mr. Robertson," December 11, 1954, in JF Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations—General, Box 3, Nov–Dec 1954, folder 2. See also Hammarskjöld's interim report to the UNGA of December 30, 1954 at <https://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/dag/docs/a2891e.pdf>. The cables between the UNSG and Beijing are reproduced at <https://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/dag/docs/a2888e.pdf>.
31. Phleger, "Sixty Years," 246; <https://archive.org/details/sixtyyrsinlawpub00phlerich/page/246>. Reflecting on the matter in his 1977 oral history, Phleger spoke only of the 11 airmen of the B-29, even though at the time of his interview they had been released (Fecteau in 1971, Downey in 1973) and their CIA affiliation had been publicly acknowledged. Phleger praised Hammarskjöld for negotiating personally with Beijing and securing the release of the 11 airmen. Phleger opined that "we would never have been able to get those men out, but Hammarskjöld did."
32. A summary of the mission is at <https://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/dag/time1955.htm>.
33. See the telephone calls of Secretary of State Dulles with Ambassador Lodge and with CIA director Dulles on January 6–7, 1955, in JF Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations—General, Box 3, 3 Jan–18 Feb 1955, folder 4.
34. Memorandum for Secretary Dulles from Frank Wisner, "Dress Worn by Messrs. Downey and Fecteau at the time of capture," January 8, 1955, in JF Dulles Papers, Personnel Series, Box 1, Name File D – F. That the FGW signature at the bottom of this memo is Wisner's is confirmed by comparison with a 1952 CIA document <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP-P80R01731R003300180051-5.pdf>. Author's notes on Helms memorandum to State Department's China desk, 28 February 1955.
35. CIA "Critical Situations" item, "Door May Be Open for Deal on US Airmen," December 16, 1954, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79T00975A001800400001-7.pdf>. "Telephone Call from Amb. Lodge," January 17, 1955, in JF Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations – General, Box 3, 3 Jan–18 Feb 1955, folder 3. See various press releases and memorandums in JF Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 11, Wang-Johnson Talks 1955, folder 5.
36. UN General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General, September 9, 1955; available at <https://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/dag/docs/a2954e.pdf>
37. Dujmović, "Two Prisoners."

38. For example, State Department press release no. 112, "Representations in Geneva Regarding United States Prisoners in Communist China, March 1, 1955, in JF Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 11, Wang-Johnson Talks, folder 4. At that time, 26 American civilians were imprisoned, three more under house arrest, but Downey and Fecteau were named.
39. Secretary of State Dulles letter of instructions to Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, July 29, 1955; in JF Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 11, Wang-Johnson Talks, folder 2.
40. Before the talks were regularized at the ambassadorial level in August 1955, Foster Dulles briefly considered having Herman Phleger (who held the rank of assistant secretary) serve as the US representative to Beijing in the hope that more authoritative representation might have a positive effect in getting US citizens released. See Secretary of State Dulles memorandum to Hoover, Murphy, Robertson, Phleger, and MacArthur, July 3, 1955 and his memo to Assistant Secretary Walter Robertson, July 5, 1955, both in JF Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 11, Wang-Johnson Talks, folder 4.
41. State Department press release no. 539 of September 10, 1955, Ambassador Johnson's statement at Geneva on the impending release of 10 US citizens, in *ibid*, POWs 1955, folder 1. See also Calvin Mehlert, State Department memo, "Analysis of the Question Whether or Not the Agreed Announcement of September 10, 1955, Applies to Americans Imprisoned in Communist China," n.d., Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, reproduced in Declassified Documents Reference System, doc. no. CK3100119939.
42. Michael Beschloss, *Mayday: Eisenhower, Khrushchev, and the U-2 Affair* (Harper and Row, 1986), 265, 307–9 *passim*.
43. *Ibid.*, 265, 307–309.





## Running SOLO: FBI's Case of Morris and Jack Childs, 1952–77

*Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes*

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*Operation SOLO was a long-running FBI program to infiltrate the Communist Party of the United States and gather intelligence about its relationship to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, China, and other communist nations. It officially began in 1958 and ended in 1977, although Morris and Jack Childs, two of the principal agents in the operation, had been involved with the Bureau for several years prior. The files range from March 1958 to April 1966.*

—Description of Operation SOLO given in <https://vault.fbi.gov/SOLO/>

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In the early 1950s, the FBI instituted a program dubbed TOPLEV, in which FBI agents discreetly approached mid- and senior-level members of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) seeking informants who could provide information about the reasons people joined and the ways the party operated. Frequently, the bureau received rude and obscene rejections. However, some members, among them Jack and Morris Childs, responded positively. In relatively short order the brothers would become the most fruitful CPUSA informants the FBI ever recruited.

During the more than 20 years of the brothers' association with the FBI, the Bureau spent enormous amounts of time, money, and manpower to oversee and supervise their activities in the operation named SOLO.

- Two FBI offices assigned dedicated agents to handle logistics, covers, and interrogations—Chicago for Morris (agent number CG 5824-S) and New York for Jack (agent number NY 694-S).
- Between 1958 and 1977 the Childs brothers made nearly 60

trips to communist countries as CPUSA emissaries and met with leaders ranging from Fidel Castro to Leonid Brezhnev to Mao Zedong.

- After each trip they underwent extensive FBI debriefings. The Bureau tracked more than \$28 million in cash that Jack received from KGB couriers for CPUSA coffers and monitored his regular communications with the KGB via coded radio messages from New York.
- The FBI's files on Jack and Morris, including the SOLO file and its main files on the two exceed more than a million pages of which the material released in 2011 and 2012 under the Freedom of Information Act represents a significant part. The FBI has state that material from after 1965 is still being processed.

In scope and difficulty, SOLO rivaled the Soviet Cheka's brilliant and successful creation of a fake opposition network, the "Trust," in the Soviet Union from 1921 to 1929. Bamboozling foreign intelligence organizations and Russian dissidents

in the West, the Cheka fed false information to its enemies, closely monitored intelligence operations launched from abroad, and killed or otherwise neutralized spies dispatched to the Soviet Union. For all its successes, however, the Trust operated for less than a decade. SOLO lasted nearly three times as long.<sup>1</sup>

Although a full description of SOLO must await further releases, enough is available to allow a preliminary account of the multiple obstacles the FBI confronted in running a counterintelligence operation of this scope. They included:

- Managing Morris Childs' precarious health.
- Providing for the expenses of an otherwise destitute Morris without tipping off the source of the money, the FBI.
- Addressing the security risks posed by knowledge or suspicions of friends and family.
- Dealing with other US government agencies, e.g., the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that threatened legal

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**I. BACKGROUND DATA REGARDING DEVELOPMENT OF CG 5824-S AS FBI INFORMANT AND HIS SUBSEQUENT ADVANCEMENT TO NATIONAL LEADERSHIP POSITION IN COMMUNIST PARTY, USA:**

**A. BACKGROUND OF INFORMANT:**

CG 5824-S was born in Chadorkow, Russia, on June 10, 1902. He entered the United States in New York City on December 28, 1911, and was subsequently granted citizenship on October 18, 1927, at Chicago, Illinois. He is a charter member of the Communist Party, USA, and attended the Lenin School in Moscow from 1929-1932. During the period 1933 to 1935, he was a leading functionary of the Party in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 1935, he returned to the Chicago area where he remained a leading functionary of the Party's Illinois District until 1945. In December, 1945, he was appointed as editor of "The Worker" and the now defunct "Daily Worker." In June, 1947, he was removed from this position due to ill health.

During the period 1947-1952, due to the precarious condition of his health, he discontinued his Party activities and returned to Chicago, Illinois. In April, 1952, he was contacted by an Agent of our Chicago Office and agreed to attempt to reactivate himself in the higher echelons of the Party where he would operate as an informant of this Bureau. Since that time he has gradually worked himself back into a position where he is once again recognized as one of the leading Party functionaries on a national and international scale.

Morris Childs in an FBI file photo (left). Morris was the older of the two brothers. Above, a portion of a March 1959 FBI backgrounder on CG 5824-S addressed to J. Edgar Hoover. In 17 pages, the memorandum detailed two trips Morris Childs had taken abroad in 1958 and 1959—to the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. See page 35 for a portion of the report from the CPSU party congress.

action over immigration or tax status.

- Adjusting standard FBI surveillance practices to protect the Childs against exposure.

### ***The Beginnings of CG 5824-S and NY 694-S***

Morris Childs joined the US Communist Party in 1921, when he was 19 years old and just 10 years after arriving in the United States from Kiev. By the mid-1920s he was a protege of Earl Browder, a rising figure in the CPUSA. In 1929, Childs received an appointment to the Comintern's International Lenin School in Moscow. He returned to the United States in 1932 and served in increasingly important party positions in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Illinois. In 1946, Eugene Dennis, Browder's successor, picked Morris to become editor of the *Daily Worker*, the party's chief newspaper.

Jack Childs followed his older brother into the CPUSA in the 1920s. He, too, became a Browder protege and was appointed business manager of the Young Communist League. In 1932, he went to Moscow but not for the ideological and leadership training that Morris had received at the Lenin School. Jack got technical instruction in short-wave radio operations and clandestine courier work. He undertook two undercover trips for the Comintern, both to Berlin to deliver money to the German Communist Party. When he returned to the United States, Browder assigned him to a variety of jobs at CPUSA headquarters, including acting as Browder's chauffeur and bodyguard. He also handled tasks connected to the party's secret apparatus.

In March 1947, Morris Childs became the first CPUSA emissary sent to Moscow to reestablish direct contact with the Soviets—contact that had been lost during World War

II. He brought back cautious guidance about the political direction the CPUSA should take in the 1948 US presidential election. Then, in September 1947, Moscow organized the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) which promoted a harsh, anti-Western line. CPUSA leaders regarded the Cominform as a signal to adopt an aggressive policy hostile to the Truman administration and the Democratic Party in 1948. They further concluded that Childs had misinterpreted Moscow's advice and fired him as editor of the *Daily Worker*. Childs then suffered a severe heart attack in 1949, which left him a home-bound invalid for several years. To Jack's dismay, the CPUSA declined to help with Morris's medical and financial needs. Jack, meanwhile, quietly dropped out of party employment and activity. He supported himself with a small business, and paid his brother's medical bills.<sup>2</sup>

In the course of the TOPLEV program, the FBI first approached Jack

Concerning the request of Chicago as to the step the New York Office has taken and contemplates taking toward the reactivation of NY 694-S, the Bureau was advised by letter dated February 19, 1952 under the caption "NY 694-S" that NY 694-S has stated that he has completely divorced himself from the Communist Party and that he is now trying to lead a normal life for himself and his family. Further, that the informant divorced himself from the Party in the early part of 1946 and one of the main reasons he divorced himself was due to the treatment which the informant's brother (CG 5824-S) received from the Party from 1947 to date, this situation being that the informant's brother was removed as editor of the "Daily Worker" by JOHN GATES at the time GATES and the younger element took over the control of the Communist Party. Since that time the Communist Party has done nothing for the informant's brother and eventually he was pushed out of any Communist Party activities.

Further, that since the informant's brother has been seriously ill the Party has done nothing for him and has contacted him in no way. NY 694-S advised that in view of this ill treatment by the Communist Party of his brother, he (NY 694-S) also has an ill feeling toward the Communist Party.



Jack Childs passport photo (right), ca. 1932. Courtesy of Childs' son Philip. Above, a portion of May 1959 New York office memorandum to Bureau headquarters concerning the possibility of recruiting Jack Childs, who expressed bitterness at the treatment of his ailing brother by the CPUSA. At the same time, the report recounted Jack's reluctance to reengage with CPUSA in the service of TOPLEV.

in September 1951. Deeply disenchanted with the CPUSA's treatment of his brother, he was ready to cooperate, and he persuaded Morris to hear the Bureau out. The FBI picked a talented counterintelligence agent, one well-versed in Marxism, to make the approach. He succeeded: in April 1952 Morris also agreed to cooperate.

At the time, the CPUSA was in a deep crisis and facing a severe shortage of cadres. In 1951 in *Dennis v. United States*, the US Supreme Court had upheld the convictions of 11 top party leaders for violations of the Alien Registration Act of 1940 (aka the Smith Act).<sup>3</sup> In response, several jumped bail and went into hiding. Hundreds of party cadres were ordered to leave their jobs and homes and go underground. Dozens of party leaders in a number of states were indicted under the Smith Act. Others were sent abroad.

#### *How to Use Morris?*

The question of how Morris was to be used was important. He was reassured the FBI was not primarily interested in his becoming a witness against his former comrades. The possibility of his reactivation in the CPUSA and use as an informant was predicated on his physical recovery and whether party leaders heard of his private disaffection. Morris waffled on the issue and worried about his security, but he finally agreed to try and warned that it would have to be a slow process.<sup>4</sup>

The odds that both would be believable to CPUSA members was improved by the fact that neither Morris nor Jack had been caught up in the post-WWII government dragnet against the CPUSA and neither had publicly broken with the CPUSA—and could reasonably be presumed to have gone underground with others. Thus, the Childs's potential value was far greater than just the information they

could provide from their decades within the movement.

By late 1953, the Childs brothers had become founts of information. Morris had provided details about more than 500 top American communists, including Comintern agents, underground workers, and Lenin School attendees. Jack had supplied information about the CPUSA's ring of wealthy donors and financial operations, including the key role of Stanley Levison, information later to become politically explosive, when Levison emerged as a key adviser to Martin Luther King Jr.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Cover and Money Concerns*

When he agreed to assist the FBI, Morris was living in Chicago with Sonny Schlossberg, who later became his second wife. Still largely bed-ridden, he was visited frequently at Schlossberg's residence by FBI agent Carl Freyman, who quickly established a rapport. In meetings always

### ***In 1953, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) had begun to prepare a denaturalization case against Morris, which the Bureau discretely managed to end.***

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prearranged over the telephone, discussions often lasted for hours. In 1954, the Chicago office contacted Morris by phone twice a day and held at least one face-to-face meeting a week.<sup>6</sup>

At first, the FBI's national office was reluctant to spend too much money on its new assets. Morris's health prevented him from using a streetcar, so the Chicago office sought permission to buy him a car, but Washington refused, suggesting he use taxis. It also balked at Morris's request for \$10 a week to buy CPUSA literature; it finally authorizing \$20 a month for expenses. In turn, Morris complained that the Bureau lacked trust in him and pressured it to allow him to buy a car and party literature without nitpicking.<sup>7</sup>

By August 1952, as Morris's value became apparent, the FBI provided him with \$800 a month to be used at his discretion. While delighted by the intelligence the brothers provided, the FBI nonetheless remained cautious. It secretly installed a microphone in Jack's New York office without informing him in 1958 and periodically monitored telephone conversations between the brothers.<sup>8</sup>

The first and most serious issue the FBI had to confront was Morris's serious coronary illness. While the FBI was willing to consider paying for advanced medical care, it needed a plausible explanation of where the money had come from and how to deal with his current doctor, who was a party member. Jack Childs suggested that, to explain funding sources, he would inform some

friends in the CPUSA that he was raising money for Morris's medical treatment while the FBI furnished Jack the money to pay Morris's expenses. The FBI approved this plan.<sup>9</sup>

Within a few weeks of Jack's leaking this news, a party leader who had gone underground contacted Morris. The leader indicated that the party was interested in helping. By July 1952, he had an appointment at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and the FBI had advanced money to pay for his consultation. Morris underwent testing there in August.<sup>10</sup>

Doctors at the Mayo Clinic diagnosed coronary sclerosis with angina pectoris. He was placed on a low-fat diet, regular nitroglycerin doses, urged to reduce his work levels, and told there was no cure or medication that would reverse his condition. Nonetheless, Morris would conduct an exhausting and nerve-racking series of trips and missions for the FBI over the next two decades. Although he tired frequently, his health held up. He died in 1991, just five days short of his 89th birthday.<sup>11</sup>

#### ***Keeping the Secret From Friends and Family***

For several years after Morris's 1949 heart attack, both he and Jack had virtually no contact with the CPUSA. While they were still friendly with individual communists, friends and acquaintances and even some relatives assumed they were no longer committed party members. The more people who knew the real reason for their reattachment to the CPUSA, the greater the danger that

a chance comment or an indiscreet remark would endanger the operation.

By 1952, Sonny Schlossberg had become ardently anti-Communist, and while she encouraged Morris to cooperate with the FBI, she was reluctant to reengage herself with the CPUSA. She had become a naturalized citizen in 1942 after quitting the party and feared that rejoining would open her up to deportation. Her fear was not unreasonable: in 1953, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) had begun to prepare a denaturalization case against Morris, which the Bureau discretely managed to end. Moreover, her brother, a US Army officer, was already facing difficulties because of her past communist ties, causing her to worry that he would be further endangered if she rejoined.<sup>12</sup>

Morris also was concerned about his wife, Helen, and son. He had separated from Helen in 1938 and they were divorced in 1952. By then, she lived in Florida with their son, Bill, whom Morris had seen only intermittently for more than a decade. Bill was in college and enrolled in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps. The FBI paid to enable Morris to travel to Miami to visit and tell his son about his communist past and explain that he was now doing his patriotic duty.<sup>13</sup>

Although there is no explicit indication that he also told Helen, Bill told Morris that an old communist acquaintance had been in touch with his mother, and she wanted to know if she should be friendly. This information sparked concerns that the CPUSA was vetting Morris as his reactivation was under way. That she would ask also suggested that she had at least an inkling of what

Morris was doing. In May 1960, Morris visited Bill, who by then had a son, in California and with the FBI's permission read him a letter of appreciation from Hoover "under secure conditions."<sup>14</sup>

Jack had been inactive in CPUSA affairs for several years before the FBI recruited him in 1951. But his family was even more firmly embedded in the communist milieu than Morris's. Jack's wife, Rosalyn, had worked as a secretary in the Comintern in the 1930s. She had left the CPUSA around 1940. While she was unaware of Jack's having reestablished his party ties—and did not learn about his FBI connections



Jack Childs on a fishing excursion, possibly with CPUSA leader Gus Hall. 1967 photo courtesy of Jack's son Philip.

until 1964—she knew that Morris had become an important party member in the 1950s and she accepted Jack's trips to the Soviet Union as a favor for his brother. Neither of Jack's sons knew anything about their father's activities, only that he read communist publications and in the 1960s was

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***The money the FBI had been providing Morris since he agreed to provide information helped Morris out of utter destitution, but the payments created problems of their own, particularly in the first few years of the 1950s.***

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friends with party leader Gus Hall, with whom he often went fishing.<sup>15</sup>

#### ***The Surveillance Conundrum***

To reestablish ties with the CPUSA required cultivating party leaders with whom Morris and Jack had been close in the past. It also meant relaxing FBI surveillance and targeting of those leaders. William Weiner, who lived near Jack and had long been friendly with him, had overseen party finances for many years. Morris had concluded that his support was crucial to getting back into the party's good graces. But Weiner, who also had a serious heart condition, was under an INS parole and prohibited from engaging in party activities.<sup>16</sup>

Too much FBI pressure or surveillance of Weiner might persuade party leaders that it was too risky to use him as a contact with the Childs brothers and thus complicate Morris's efforts. Morris also urged the FBI not to arrest or harass his other high-level CPUSA contacts, Phil Bart, Jack Kling, or Bill Sennett. When CPUSA General Secretary Gene Dennis got out of prison after his Smith Act conviction, Morris urged the Bureau not to harass him. When Morris was informed that he was to meet a leading figure in the party underground to discuss his reactivation, the FBI suspended

surveillance of Morris lest it alert the CPUSA, which had obtained the license plate numbers of FBI cars. When it turned out the secret contact was Phil Bart—and Morris met with him for 20 hours in a Chicago area hotel—the FBI did not aggressively seek to locate and arrest Bart even though there was a standing order to arrest him on sight.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, one of Morris's old friends, Lena Scherer, became an excellent source of information on inner-party factionalism and maneuvering, unknowingly giving the FBI valuable information. She too was facing arrest on immigration charges, and the FBI had to persuade the INS to put her case on hold and to consult with the FBI before initiating anymore investigations of her and her husband.<sup>18</sup>

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#### ***More about Money—and the IRS***

The money the FBI had been providing Morris since he agreed to provide information helped Morris out of utter destitution, but the payments created problems of their own, particularly in the first few years of the 1950s. The money was Morris's only income, and he worried that if he filed income tax returns under his real name, indicating his sources of income, the information might come to the attention of the CPUSA via a leak from within the IRS. Jack had been supporting Morris financially and claimed him as a dependent on his own tax returns.<sup>19</sup>

### **The FBI's investment in time and money began to pay off almost immediately after the two reconnected with the CPUSA. Jack Childs quickly was enlisted to serve as a liaison with the Communist Party of Canada (CPC).**

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Nor did that end the financial complications. Jack's wife, who had access to his finances, might become curious about how Morris's new income was derived. Morris's marriage to Sonny in 1952 after his divorce from Helen further complicated his situation. Since Sonny was privately employed, their cover story was that she was his sole support; if they filed a joint return, she would be compelled to list his income. The FBI's solution was to have Morris file his income tax under an alias, using the address of an FBI agent in the Washington, DC, area. His FBI payments would be listed under "Other Income," not under Schedule C. Sonny, meanwhile, would file under her maiden name.<sup>20</sup>

The question of how to account for Morris's income from the FBI remained a problem. One solution was to have Jack's company, Aristo Grid Lamp Products, hire Morris as its Chicago representative. Jack would tell his partner that the purpose would be to aid Morris in his physical recovery and that he would personally pay him out of his share of the firm's income. Morris, in turn, would endorse the business checks and return them to Jack, who would report this as income. This ploy would also give Morris an excuse to travel to New York to meet with CPUSA higher-ups under the guise of conducting business.<sup>21</sup>

While Jack's partner was amenable, this solution created yet other problems; for one, how to handle social security payments. Since Morris was going to file income taxes

under a fictitious name, how would he account for this income coming in under his real name? While a temporary solution, this arrangement was unsustainable. Hoover was skeptical, worried that all these transfers would come under the scrutiny of New York and Federal tax officials.<sup>22</sup>

In any event, this plan foundered as Jack's company, Aristo, ran into financial difficulties in 1954 and was forced to dissolve. Its income had plummeted from \$100,000 in 1951 to \$65,000 in 1952 and \$50,000 in 1953. The majority partner had supervised manufacturing while Jack oversaw sales. But his efforts on behalf of the FBI had reduced the time he had available for business. With both Morris and Jack at loose ends, the FBI had to provide a cover business for the two of them.<sup>23</sup>

If Morris were forced to find another job in Chicago, it would reduce the time he could devote to his FBI work. Jack suggested he set up a small office in Manhattan as a sales agency for manufacturing companies but doubted he could qualify for a bank loan. That meant that to continue the charade that Jack was a successful businessman, the FBI would have to provide start-up money—which it did.<sup>24</sup>

The cover business was never successful, but it was hardly intended to make a profit. While the FBI reminded Jack that if it did start making money, the FBI would have to be repaid, he spent barely two hours a day on it, and it limped along. Morris was employed as Chicago representative

of the Manhattan agency, although the company did little business in the city. In 1958, it made a \$400 profit. Jack drew a nominal salary of \$150 a month and the FBI provided a yearly subsidy of between \$8,000 and \$9,000 to enable the company to function. The virtue of this scheme was that it provided a plausible cover for the Childs brothers' seeming business acumen and incomes, which, in fact, depended almost entirely on what they were paid by the FBI.<sup>25</sup>

By 1959 both were receiving \$1,000 a month plus expenses. Over the years, their salaries continued to rise, reaching \$2,500 a month by 1975. As of 1991, Morris had been paid a total of \$1,099,240, about two thirds for his services and the remainder for expenses. The Bureau also paid for office space in New York and Chicago.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to the expenses noted above, the Bureau had to foot the bill for many of the SOLO trips to Moscow, which the FBI encouraged Morris to have the CPUSA fund. Morris was reluctant to do so, arguing that both Gene Dennis and Gus Hall (who succeeded Dennis as General Secretary in 1959) believed the Childs were well-to-do businessmen, easily able to afford paying their own way. So, the FBI encouraged Morris to draw on the Soviet subsidies that he kept in safe-deposit boxes for Dennis and Hall and for which there was little accounting.<sup>27</sup>

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### **The Payoff in Investment**

The FBI's investment in time and money began to pay off almost immediately after the two reconnected with the CPUSA. Jack Childs quickly was enlisted to serve as a liaison with the

Communist Party of Canada (CPC). For years in the 1930s and 1940, he had worked with leading figures in that party in cross-border clandestine activities. Since Jack was co-owner of an apparently successful lighting business, he had plausible business reasons for traveling to Canada. Jack established a liaison with Elizabeth Mascolo, the long-time girlfriend of CPC leader Tim Buck, through which she acted as a courier for Soviet funds transferred to the CPUSA.<sup>28</sup>

Jack's frequent visits to Canada to meet prominent communists, however, caught the attention of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which queried the FBI about him. In 1961 Hoover prohibited the Childs's travel to Canada without prior Bureau approval; there was some indication that the RCMP suspected Jack was an FBI informant.<sup>29</sup>

The more important the tasks Jack and Morris were assigned by the CPUSA, the greater the likelihood that they would come to the attention of the Canadian and US governments. And that created a dilemma; if government agencies paid too much attention to them, it would reduce their effectiveness in carrying out their communist tasks. If it paid too little attention to them, it might make their communist superiors suspicious. No issue highlighted this dilemma like the question of passports for travel abroad.

When Gene Dennis designated Morris to serve as the CPUSA's contact with the Soviet Union in July 1957, the FBI was ecstatic; the "type of intelligence and evidence" he could get "would be invaluable." But a significant problem quickly arose. Morris would have to obtain

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***Morris's intelligence was a bureaucratic coup for the FBI. In 10 years, Morris would produce more than 7,000 reports, without anyone in the CPUSA becoming aware of his activity.***

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a passport; as a prominent, known communist for many years, his application was sure to be flagged by the US Passport Office. If the FBI pulled strings to push its approval, the Soviets would undoubtedly be suspicious about how he could travel under his real name at a time when communists faced significant difficulties in obtaining passports. Complicating the issue, Sonny was scheduled to travel with him on his first mission. The solution was to obtain false passports under the names of Martin and Sylvia Camp.<sup>30</sup>

The two left on April 24, 1958. During their three months abroad, Morris met with the head of the International Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), members of the Party Secretariat, and traveled to China where he spoke with Mao Zedong and other prominent Chinese communist leaders. His report on the trip was sent to the White House, Central Intelligence Agency Director Allen Dulles, and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Even though it had violated the law by obtaining false passports, the FBI felt "the value of this operation and intelligence to be gained makes this procedure a worthwhile undertaking."<sup>31</sup>

Less than two years later Dennis tapped Morris to attend the 21st Soviet Communist Party Congress as an American delegate. He specifically ordered him to travel under his real name, so Morris obtained a valid passport. James Jackson, a prominent black communist, and Alexander

Trachtenberg, head of International Publishers, were also going to the USSR for the same conference. Normally, the FBI would have alerted the State Department, but it did not want to identify Morris and felt that providing the other two names but not his, would raise red flags. So, it kept all three names secret. This ploy backfired when the Soviets publicly listed Morris as a delegate and his name was published in the *Chicago Daily News* on January 26, 1959. The FBI quietly contacted U.S. Customs and, claiming they had an investigative interest in Morris, arranged to have him pass quickly through Customs without publicity or confiscation of the vast amount of material he had brought with him. Ultimately Morris would frequently travel under an alias with false documentation.<sup>32</sup>

Jack faced passport issues as well, especially after the Soviets had accepted him to serve as the recipient of their money transfers to the CPUSA. He had traveled to the USSR on a false passport in 1932, which had come to the attention of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HCUA) in 1950. Thus, obtaining a new passport under his real name would present difficulties. The FBI eventually decided to have him travel on a false passport, because the Soviets also might be aware of his earlier passport issues. Jack traveled in late 1959 as Joseph Brooks, using a fake driver's license and birth certificate to obtain a passport.<sup>33</sup>

As discussed above, the FBI had to balance the need to pretend an

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### ***The Bureau also worried that CPUSA hunts for informants within its ranks could expose either Jack or Morris. The scariest moment for the SOLO operation came in 1964.***

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interest in Morris as a prominent communist and avoid so publicizing him that it spooked the Russians. When the HCUA pondered subpoenaing the American delegates to the CPSU party congress, the FBI was unable to intervene but became very anxious. While any publicity about Morris in the US media was worrisome, keeping his identity secret from other branches of the US government was also a priority. In 1965, the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee asked the FBI for the names of three CPUSA observers mentioned in press reports as attending a recent Moscow conference. Morris, in fact, had been the fourth, but had traveled under a false passport. The FBI declined to provide the information, fearing it might endanger him.<sup>34</sup>

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#### ***Exceptional Reporting, Exceptional Security***

Morris's intelligence was a bureaucratic coup for the FBI. In 10 years, Morris would produce more than 7,000 reports, without anyone in the CPUSA becoming aware of his activity.<sup>35</sup> His output enhanced FBI's status in the Intelligence Community and the State Department and the White House, where its summaries of his reports on the thinking of high-ranking Soviet officials on relations with the United States and the Sino-Soviet rivalry were eagerly read. For example, in 1963 Morris was in Moscow when President Kennedy was assassinated and his description of the reaction of Soviet leaders was crucial in convincing the US

government that Lee Harvey Oswald was not a Soviet agent.

Naturally, the officials who received these reports wanted to know their author. The Bureau had to fend off such queries from both the State Department and CIA. John Foster Dulles wanted his name, hoping to be able to plant information on the Soviets, but "State is being furnished absolutely nothing which would indicate the identity of this source." Allen Dulles called the source "simply incredible and amazing." While there is no written evidence CIA knew Morris's name, it is likely that his public naming in 1959 and frequent trips to communist countries, albeit using false passports, enabled its analysts to at least guess his status.<sup>36</sup>

To guard against any internal leaks, the FBI carefully compartmentalized SOLO material. All files on Morris, Jack, and SOLO were moved to a Special Mail Room in the Records and Communication Division, isolated from the rest of the files. Any request to review the files had to be approved by designated supervisors.

The Washington headquarters also closely monitored the way the Chicago and New York offices handled their assets. While the Chicago office was extraordinarily protective of Morris, FBI headquarters often bristled at some of his demands. For example, when Morris pushed back about the FBI's demands for regular meetings, Chicago recommended giving him the authority to decide dates of meetings. Hoover was less accommodating: "I want to make it

specifically clear that [Morris] is not running this operation."<sup>37</sup>

By 1961 the FBI had also tightened its procedures for meeting with Morris in Chicago. Personal encounters were held to a minimum, lest a chance sighting might expose him. When necessary, an FBI agent would rent a room in one of the Loop's largest and most respectable hotels, no more than an hour before the meeting. Morris would call the agent from a pay phone and get the room number, while the hotel would be identified by a code. Both the agent and Morris would take circuitous routes to the hotel. Morris would call the room by house phone to make sure it was safe to come up. All material he provided was oral, so he had no written material in his possession and did not have to take time to write out his report. The agent wrote it all down. After the meeting Morris would leave alone.<sup>38</sup>

Most contact with Morris was by phone. A devoted unlisted telephone line he used went directly to an agent and not through the Chicago FBI's office. Sometimes Morris would mail documentary material to a Post Office box. Other times, he would park his car in an underground garage and give the location in a phone message. An agent with a duplicate set of keys would remove the material. When in Chicago, Morris was often in touch with the FBI several times a day. His residence and phone were regularly swept for taps. In 1961 he moved into a new multi-apartment building, the address of which was not known to the Chicago Communist Party. His younger brother Benjamin would stop by his office when Morris was out of town to collect mail and fill orders. Bewildered by his older brother's



connections to the CPUSA, he cooperated out of family loyalty even as Morris declined to explain.<sup>39</sup>

The Bureau also worried that CPUSA hunts for informants within its ranks could expose either Jack or Morris. The scariest moment for the SOLO operation came in 1964 while Jack was in Moscow. Victor Riesel, a prominent New York newspaper columnist, published a column claiming that the FBI was aware of the channels by which Soviet money flowed to the CPUSA. A scheduled meeting for Jack with a KGB representative was suddenly canceled. Jack was “shocked and stunned,” believing that “the lives of my wife and myself were at stake.” Although Jack was ultimately able to convince the Soviets that Riesel’s information was unreliable, he and Morris were deeply worried that the leak might have come from within the FBI and concerned that Jack would be under intense Soviet and CPUSA surveillance for months.<sup>40</sup>

To direct possible attention away from the Childs, the Bureau decided to invent an informant. It set out to frame William Albertson, head of the New York Communist Party. It fabricated a hand-written letter seemingly addressed to an FBI agent, and planted it in a car driven by a Party official ferrying Albertson to a meeting. When the driver discovered it under the car seat, he turned it over to Party leaders. It led to a frantic effort by the CPUSA to authenticate the letter. Hall arranged for both Morris and Jack to participate in that effort, enabling the FBI to monitor the chaos it had unleashed. Albertson was eventually expelled from the party, and the Childs escaped unscathed. There would be other scares, but, largely

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***Jack and Morris knew the risks they had undertaken as SOLO developed. As Morris transformed from a source within the CPUSA to the liaison between the CPUSA and the USSR, the pressure on him intensified, and he began to fear for his life.***

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thanks to FBI caution and attention to security tradecraft SOLO’s good fortune held out to the natural end of the operation.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Growing Pressure on SOLO***

Jack and Morris knew the risks they had undertaken as SOLO developed. As Morris transformed from a source within the CPUSA to the liaison between the CPUSA and the USSR, the pressure on him intensified, and he began to fear for his life. His new role as a courier meant that if the Soviets uncovered him, they would “hound him to the ends of the world” and not shrink from assassination.<sup>42</sup>

In December 1960, while he was in Moscow, Morris caught a finger in a door. It became infected and Soviet doctors wanted to operate. He refused anesthetic, afraid that he might blurt out something incriminating. The injury then brought on a slight heart attack. In July 1961, during a month-long trip to Moscow for training in using microfilms, invisible inks, ciphers and codes, Jack was informed that his return to the United States was being postponed. Fearing he was in trouble; he flushed his notes down a drain. A few years later, during the imbroglio over the Riesel column, Jack once again faced suspicions from the KGB.<sup>43</sup>

The added pressure especially took a toll on Morris. After his return to Chicago in March 1959, the

Chicago office wrote that “we should not be inhuman and push him for additional information at this time.” It worried that “we have never seen this couple [Morris and Sonny] in worse physical condition. . . . he’s on the ragged edge.” The FBI authorized paying for a vacation and a visit to the Mayo Clinic. Additionally, Hoover wrote a glowing letter to Morris, praising his patriotism and referring to the FBI as his “associates.” Morris was visibly moved.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, Sonny’s death in 1960 left Morris isolated and depressed. His desire to find another wife naturally caused the FBI to worry. He told the Bureau that he had to find an “anti-Communist communist woman.” He succeeded. Eva Lieb had been a relatively inactive Party member from 1940 to 1956, but she had gradually drifted away. A widow for eight years, and a member of a wealthy family, working as a caseworker for the Cook County Department of Welfare, she was indoctrinated into SOLO after the FBI vetted her, including tapping her telephone. She even agreed to rejoin the CPUSA after marrying Morris in 1962.<sup>45</sup>

### ***Beginning of the End***

Issues related to SOLO’s handling of Soviet funding of the CPUSA began to create new concerns that FBI leaders feared could not be circumvented. As the deliveries accumulated (see textbox) party leader Hall pushed Morris to invest some of the funds rather than leave them sitting

idle in safe deposit boxes. Morris did, but the decision backfired when he bought stock in an Illinois bank owned by his new wife's relatives. When the bank became ensnared in an SEC investigation that led to criminal charges, Morris, Eva, and Jack were all publicly named as unindicted coconspirators. Although Morris and Jack appealed to the FBI to intervene, Hoover ordered that "nothing be done to forestall any prosecution." As to Hall, if he learned about the case, he did not lose his faith in the brothers.<sup>46</sup>

As if involvement in financial fraud was not worrisome enough, the FBI also fretted that Hall was skimming Soviet money to assist his children and brothers, prompting Hoover to express a rare note of sympathy for members of the CPUSA: Hall's "purpose is to provide financial security for his loved ones, regardless of the cost to the Communist Party, USA, or any individual members thereof." He was, however, more concerned when the IRS launched several investigations of Hall for tax evasion, since that threatened to expose the Childs for funneling Soviet money to the party leader. Nothing in the files thus far released indicates if the FBI intervened with the IRS, but Hall was never indicted.<sup>47</sup>

The FBI fretted that by acting as a middleman, it could plausibly be accused of funding the CPUSA. If, however, the Childs abandoned possession of the money or the procedures for receiving it, Hall might lose confidence in them and give the job to someone else, leaving the FBI in the dark about the subsidies, and having lost a valuable intelligence tool. "Our position," the Bureau concluded, "is sound."<sup>48</sup>

### Following the Money

One of the biggest headaches the FBI faced as SOLO matured was how to handle the increasingly large amounts of money being funneled to the CPUSA by the Soviet Union. SOLO's role in moving cash to the CPUSA caused the Bureau to worry that it was laundering Soviet money.

Between September 1958 and May 1959, Jack received some \$166,000 in cash, which he put into a safe-deposit box at in a New York bank; he later gave some to Morris, who also put it in a safe-deposit box in a Chicago bank.

In April 1959, the spigot quickly opened. The USSR's UN-based courier, Vladimir Barkovsky, had shown up at Jack's office and handed over \$50,000 in \$20 bills; he returned in June with another \$21,000. By the end of September 1960, \$519,885 had come in from the Soviets and another \$50,000 from the Chinese Communists. Of that, \$326,044 had been disbursed, while Jack held \$130,396 and Morris had \$113,445. By September 1963, \$1,641,385 had been received and nearly \$300,000 was stashed in various locations. By mid-1965 \$3,257,463 had been received. Through April 1968, the total reached \$5.78 million.

For a while, the FBI recorded every serial number of every bill, hoping to trace their sources and later use. As that became impractical with the torrent of small bills, it recorded the first and last serial numbers of each stack.<sup>a</sup>

The FBI knew more about the CPUSA's money than the CPUSA itself. Jack, who distributed the money to Hall when asked, did not have to offer any accounting to either the party leader or to the Soviets. Hall frequently appealed to the USSR for more money, claiming penury even with more than a million dollars stashed in safe-deposit boxes.<sup>b</sup>

a. Memo SOLO Funds (September, 1958–June 30, 1965), September 1965, SOLO-94, 3–26; F. J. Baumgardner to A.H. Belmont, June 29, 1959, SOLO-13, 9; F. J. Baumgardner to A.H. Belmont, June 4, 1959, SOLO-12, 1. SAC New York to Director FBI, June 16, 1959, SOLO-13, 1.

b. SAC New York to Director FBI, January 24, 1966, SOLO-98, 104; SAC New York to Director FBI, July 1, 1966, SOLO-107, 243–44.

One solution, briefly considered, was to invest the Soviet money in US Government bonds. When the operation terminated, public disclosure would place the CPUSA and USSR "in the untenable position of having contributed to U.S. Government operations and thereby endorsed U.S. action in Vietnam, the prosecution of the CPUSA, and other matters deemed by the international communist movement to be utterly repulsive. You can well imagine the reaction of Communist China to such a revelation."<sup>49</sup>

### Planning a Transition

Whether or not the timing was precipitated by the Childs

involvement with a bank and securities scandal, in June 1967, Hoover urged the Chicago office to develop concrete proposals for finding a replacement for Morris. Not only was he "plagued by problems of ill health and advancing age," but key FBI personnel who had handled the case beginning in 1952 were nearing retirement. Moreover, "we squarely face the unavoidable conclusion that external factors over which we have no control can kill the present SOLO operation at any time."<sup>50</sup>

A conference in Washington that month assessed what to do if either Morris or Jack suddenly died. The money they controlled was largely

B. IMPRESSIONS, COMMENTS AND OPINIONS OF CG 5824-S ON THE  
AIMS, PURPOSES AND RESULTS OF THE 21ST CONGRESS OF THE  
COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION:

While the ostensible purpose of the 21st Congress was to discuss the Soviet Seven-Year Plan, it was also utilized as a means to mobilize the entire communist movement throughout the world to give moral support to the Russians; to get the aims of the Seven-Year Plan propagandized throughout the world; and to prepare for concrete struggle on a world-wide scale in order to keep the imperialists off guard. It was the most international gathering in the history of the communist movement.

The Soviets placed considerable stress upon the participation of foreign delegates at the congress. In so doing, the Soviets accomplished a twofold purpose. First, they showed the Russian people they have friends and allies in all parts of the world. Second, the foreign delegates were afforded a personal opportunity to observe and enjoy the luxuries of life under communism.

In attempting to accomplish this second objective, the Soviets furnished the foreign delegates every possible convenience. Once in Russia they were placed in luxurious living quarters, and were given servants, attendants, chauffeurs, clothing, lavish gifts and medical care. Special theater performances included a ballet by Ullnova, the outstanding Russian ballerina. None of the foreign delegates had to spend any money. They could get anything they wanted free of charge. They were also given thousands of rubles to purchase such items as souvenirs and could obtain more money for the asking. All transportation was furnished free of charge to the delegates. This included transportation to any place in the Soviet Union by means of jet planes or the most luxurious trains. It also included the availability of a car and chauffeur at all times.

Needless to say, the foreign delegates began to feel that this luxurious living is possible only because the Communist Party rules the Soviet Union. This type of treatment at the hands of the Soviets also made some of these foreign delegates feel that they are now obligated to the Russians for these favors. Those foreign delegates from backward countries, especially if their social status is low in their particular country, feel that if they can overthrow their present social system, they can live like they lived in Moscow all the time.

The Soviets also utilized the 21st Congress to go into the affairs of the various foreign communist parties. Prior to the Congress, various communist parties sent representatives to the Soviet Union where their difficulties were presented to the

A page from Tolson's account to Hoover of Morris Childs (CG 5824-S) attendance at the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. (April 1959)

in safe-deposit boxes rented under assumed names; the FBI had to be ready to seize the funds. The investments ordered by Hall had to be “misdirected” to “reduce gain to CPUSA.” And, the FBI had to “neutralize” logical SOLO replacements, particularly James Jackson, who was not under FBI control. Hoover approved a plan to leak information revealing Jackson’s frequent contacts with the Soviets and suggesting he was trying to bypass Gus Hall. Published in the *New York Sunday News* in November 1967 as “Two Battle to Rule US Red Party,” the article upset the Soviets and, despite Hall’s suspicions it was an FBI provocation, fed his hostility toward Jackson.<sup>51</sup>

There were numerous obstacles to securing replacements for Morris and Jack, particularly the former. Morris had for decades operated at the highest levels of the CPUSA and he was respected within the CPUSA for his theoretical acumen and in the international Communist movement as an elder statesman. His training at the Lenin School with men who had gone on to positions of leadership in Communist parties around the globe gave him a gravitas it would not be easy to replicate. Jack’s skills in coding, radio transmission, and courier work were far easier to duplicate.

Neither Jack nor Morris were particularly helpful in searching for replacements. The more people who knew about their activities, the greater the potential danger to them if those replacements were exposed. The FBI also felt they did not want to develop other informants who might compete with them. If it looked as if the SOLO operation would end with Morris and Jack, Hoover opined in

January 1968, the FBI should consider closing it down and publicizing its accomplishments, suggesting that such an option might spur the Childs brothers to search for replacements more energetically.<sup>52</sup>

The Chicago office was philosophical, noting that even if a suitable replacement for him could be identified, that person would of necessity have to come from New York, where the leading party figures who could duplicate Morris’s advantages were located. Moreover, the flow of political information and international political intelligence that Morris had offered, was now of less interest and value. The real value of SOLO now came from the increasingly insistent requests from the KGB for information about potential US assets it could use—requests that were largely funneled through Jack in New York.<sup>53</sup>

The FBI’s frustration was only partially justified. It did find someone who might serve as a replacement for Jack. Albert (Al) Freeman had been trained in radio work and had undertaken courier and various clandestine tasks for the Comintern in the 1930s and for the CPUSA in the late 1940s and 1950s. He came to the attention of the FBI through TOPLEV in 1959 and agreed to assist the FBI in 1963. As Jack’s health deteriorated in the late 1960s, Freeman was groomed by the FBI and Jack as Jack’s assistant and replacement. In 1969 he went to the USSR for two weeks of training in KGB radio procedures. However, the FBI has released few files on Freeman’s activities in the 1970s or if his role became untenable after the Childs brothers were exposed as FBI informants in 1981.<sup>54</sup>

FBI files released as of 2019 contain tantalizing hints about people being considered for recruitment and extant informers being inserted into the SOLO apparatus, but, with one exception, no indication of how successful these gambits were or how far they developed. Schroeder Boulton, a wealthy Wall Street investment banker, had contributed money to the CPUSA in the 1930s. Recruited by the FBI sometime in the late 1950s, he was slowly inserted into communist circles by Jack beginning in 1961. High-ranking communists like Gus Hall and others in the Soviet Union regarded him “as an important specialist . . . in the financial-economic field of activity . . . [and] available for other high level special activity.”<sup>55</sup>

### *The Last Mission*

Morris’s last mission to Moscow took place at the end of 1977. Earlier in the year, marking his 75th birthday, he had been guest of honor at a dinner at the Kremlin attended by Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, Mikhail Suslov, and other Soviet leaders, at which he received the Order of the Red Banner. In 1978, FBI Director Clarence Kelley traveled to Chicago to thank Morris and Eva personally. But SOLO’s days were numbered.<sup>56</sup>

The Senate Select Committee to Study Government Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (better known as the Church Committee), set up in January 1975 to investigate alleged intelligence agency abuses, demanded FBI records on its investigations of Martin Luther King Jr. By reporting about Stanley Levison, the key King adviser who had worked with both Morris and Jack on communist party finances and money laundering for years, the Childs brothers had inadvertently set

in motion FBI surveillance of King that had included wiretapping and taping of sexual encounters.

While top FBI executives secretly briefed Church about SOLO, and he and key staff cooperated in preventing any mention of it from appearing in the files, the circle of people in the know had expanded well beyond the FBI. More congressional investigations in 1978 threatened to punish FBI agents who had committed a variety of felonies over the years of running SOLO, ranging from procuring false passports to filing false tax returns to laundering large amounts of money illegally brought to the United States. Attorney General Griffin Bell signed a blanket grant of immunity from prosecution for any illegal acts committed during SOLO.<sup>57</sup>

As more and more people heard hints of SOLO and as both Morris and Jack's health declined, the dangers increased. Further trips abroad were prohibited. Jack died in August 1980. That same year Morris transferred to Gus Hall the remainder of SOLO funds in his possession. The dam finally burst in 1981. David

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***As more and more people heard hints of SOLO and as both Morris and Jack's health declined, the dangers increased. Further trips abroad were prohibited.***

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Garrow, an academic writing a book on King, heard stories about what had prompted the FBI's interest in Levison, and learned about a pair of unnamed brothers who had worked as FBI informants within the CPUSA with a few biographical details, including their FBI case numbers. He consulted historian Harvey Klehr who was able to put names to numbers.

Armed with that information, Garrow received confirmation from FBI sources that Morris and Jack Childs had bamboozled the CPUSA, KGB, and the USSR for nearly 30 years, and investigative reporter Charles Babcock published the story on the front page of the *Washington Post* on September 17, 1981. When Gus Hall learned of the news, he became ashen according to a friend who was with him at the time.<sup>58</sup>

For years, the CPUSA refused to discuss the issue or admit what had happened. Soviet authorities apparently have never commented. By the time SOLO became public,

the FBI had quietly relocated Morris and his wife to a residence in Miami. In 1987 Morris and Eva received the Presidential Medal of Freedom for Intelligence—Jack received the award posthumously. Morris died in 1991, having lived long enough to see the communist movement in the USSR that had consumed his life near its own end.<sup>59</sup>

Operation SOLO required a huge expenditure of FBI time, money, and ingenuity. The agency had to cut ethical and legal corners, deceive other government agencies, and even facilitate the operations of the CPUSA by transferring Soviet money that enabled the US party to pay its fulltime staff, publish its newspapers, and subsidize travel overseas by its cadres. But, the operation provided the FBI access to the innermost secrets of the US subsidiary of the USSR and vital information about the tactics of the Soviet Union and the secret activities of its intelligence agencies in the United States. It was a remarkable bargain.



*The authors:* Professor Harvey Klehr is retired from Emory University where he taught for more than 40 years. He is the author of multiple works on American communism and Soviet espionage, many in collaboration with the co-author of this article, historian John Earl Haynes. Dr. Haynes served as a specialist in 20th century political history in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress and is author or coauthor of numerous other publications on US communism and anticommunism. After the fall of the Soviet Union, he worked with former Soviet archivists to acquire once sensitive documents for use by scholars around the world.

### Endnotes

1. Raymond Rocca, "The Trust," Center for Intelligence Studies, 1990, republished 2015, <http://www.centerforintelligencestudies.org/the-trust.html>
2. Special Agent in Charge (hereafter SAC) New York to Director and Asst. Director FBI, 9 May 1952, Morris Childs FOIA FBI Chicago file part 1 (hereafter Morris Childs-Chicago-part#), 45 [reference to page number(s)]. This is the main FBI file on Morris Childs. Large portions of it have been posted on the Internet Archive: [archive.org/details/foia\\_Childs\\_Morris\\_Childs-Chicago](http://archive.org/details/foia_Childs_Morris_Childs-Chicago). Major portions of the FBI's main files on Jack can be found at: [archive.org/details/foia\\_Childs\\_Jack\\_Childs-NYC](http://archive.org/details/foia_Childs_Jack_Childs-NYC).
3. In the *Dennis v. United States* case, the Supreme Court ruled that the First Amendment did not protect the speech rights of a group that advocated violent overthrow of the US government. A lower court had found 11 top CPUSA leaders guilty of violating provisions of an act that prohibited organization, assembly, and speech advocating overthrow of the US government. The ruling would be over-turned in 1969.
4. O'Connor FBI Chicago to Director FBI ATTN: A. H. Belmont, April 21, 1952, 11–12; O'Connor FBI Chicago to Director FBI ATTN: A. H. Belmont and SAC NY, May 6, 1952, Morris Childs-Chicago-1, 34–36; Scheidt FBI NY to Director FBI ATTN: A. H. Belmont and SAC Chicago, May 9, 1952, Morris Childs-Chicago-1, 42.
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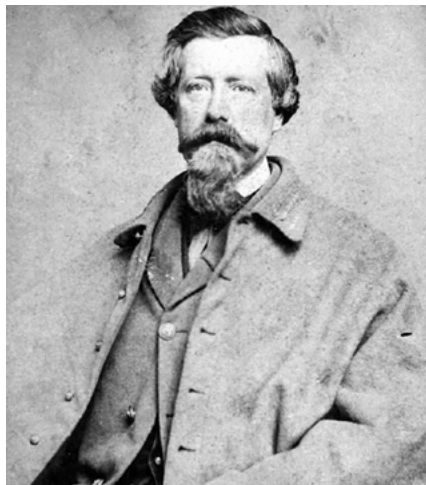




## Explosive Coal: Bombs Hiding in Plain Sight

*David Welker*

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Thomas Courtenay, Irish-born Confederate officer and inventor of the coal bomb, 1864.

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National intelligence agencies, military forces, insurgent subversives, and criminals have long worked to create covert sabotage devices to achieve their ends. Some of these are clumsy and nearly overt—like throwing a Molotov cocktail or similar explosive hidden chiefly by darkness—while others are often ingenious, such as the diverse items CIA developed that remain highly classified or that the OSS used during World War II. In that vein, one of history’s most ingenious, yet disarmingly simple covert sabotage explosives was similarly developed right here in the US: explosive coal.

Coal has been used as an energy source for thousands of years, but it was not until the late 18th century and the invention of the coal-fired steam engine that coal became a main driver of industry and transportation. By the early 19th century, coal fueled homes, factories, ships, railroads, and other vital machines around the globe. The pervasiveness of coal as an essential, common fuel persisted well into the 20th century, and even today coal provides about 25 percent of global energy requirements.

Coal was often stored openly in huge piles or bins with no security protecting it. Each lump was roughly the same size and color so that in bins or from a short distance, one lump looked like a thousand others. At the same time, each lump’s uniquely

individual nature—particularly its rough and irregular shape, resulting from the mining and processing that broke deposits into a transportable, useable form—ensured that no two pieces were exactly alike.

These attributes make finding a particular lump in a bin literally like finding a needle in a haystack and enable concealing any single lump in even a small coal bin or hopper. What might be surprising is not that someone sought to exploit it as an instrument of violence and war, but rather that it took so long to develop a bomb disguised as a lump of coal.

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### *Idea Born of War*

With the advent of the US Civil War on April 21, 1861, the secessionist Confederate States of America quickly established its own military forces, governing bodies, and laws—in part to demonstrate it was a legitimate political entity and would abide by the “civilized rules of warfare.” In May 1861, the Confederacy approved issuing letters of marque—legitimizing piracy—and in April 1862, Confederate Major General Sterling Price assigned “destructionists” to sabotage Federal river boats and property in the war’s western theater.

On April 21, 1862, the Confederate Congress called for the invention of “any new machine or engine, or . . . any new method for

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**Thomas Edgeworth Courtenay—who emigrated from Belfast, Ireland, to Baltimore, Maryland, in 1842—first conceived an explosive disguised as coal.**

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destroying the armed vessels of the enemy,” promising that the inventor would receive half the value of any vessel destroyed. With the Union ironclad USS *Monitor* valued at \$250,000, it was clear that anyone able to do so stood to become very wealthy.<sup>1</sup>

Spurred by this incentive, Thomas Edgeworth Courtenay—who emigrated from Belfast, Ireland, to Baltimore, Maryland, in 1842—first conceived an explosive disguised as coal. Serving on General Price’s staff in 1863, Courtenay might have been inspired by accounts of Union steamboats destroyed by explosives hidden in firewood. In early November 1863, Courtenay arrived in Richmond, Virginia, to pitch his “coal torpedo”—a variety of explosive devices were then termed “torpedoes”—to Confederate officials.<sup>2</sup>

Confederate President Jefferson Davis was favorably impressed, and his Secretary of War, James A. Seddon, though skeptical, approved constructing and testing Courtenay’s explosive on December 4, 1863. One month later Courtenay wrote a friend: “The castings have all been completed...and the coal is so perfect that the most critical eye could not detect it. The President thinks them perfect, but Mr. Seddon will do nothing without Congressional action.” As a subsequent account in the *Times* (London) detailed, the device was produced by the Tredegar Foundry in Richmond:

*The castings were three-eighths-inch thick with a reinforced threaded hole to accommodate*

*a fuse or plug. Patterns were fashioned from random pieces of coal and sized so that they would not require trimming by a fireman before shoveling into the furnace. After the shell body was filled with powder and plugged, it was dipped into a boiling mixture of coal tar, resin or beeswax, leaving a final product resembling a lump of coal in weight, smell, and general appearance.*<sup>3</sup>

Final hurdles to the device’s field use were crossed when testing was completed by January 20, 1864, at City Point, east of Richmond, and formal legal approval came soon after on 17 February. Final operational questions were resolved in late February when Davis appropriated \$5 million for secret service activities, similarly authorizing Courtenay to construct several coal torpedoes and recruit 25 men to deploy them against Union military targets.<sup>4</sup>

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**First Field Use**

Although Courtenay quickly recruited a team familiar with ships and ports to deploy his coal bombs, by February 9, 1864, the Union acquired intelligence of the devices’ existence. When a refugee who had worked on Courtenay’s devices, Joseph Leuty, was picked up by the crew of the USS *Jacob Bell*, he readily declared:

*I am an Englishman by birth, a molder by trade; have lived in the South for the last four years; for the last eight months I have been working in the artillery shop of Seventh Street,*

*Richmond, where they are now making a shell which looks exactly like a piece of coal, pieces of which were taken from a coal pile as patterns to imitate. I have made these shells myself. I believe they have power enough to burst any boiler. After they were thrown in a coal pile, I could not tell the difference between them and coal myself.*<sup>5</sup>

Corroboration came in mid-March 1864 when the gunboat USS *Signal* captured mail bearing Courtenay’s letter describing the coal bombs in detail. These twin intelligence finds prompted Rear Admiral David Porter to advise Washington on 20 March of the explosive coal and other “devilish devices.”

The coal bomb’s first impact was in tying up Union manpower to guard previously ignored coal stocks when Porter issued General Order No. 184 to his Mississippi Squadron, which also threatened with death anyone caught placing a coal bomb. Further complicating Courtenay’s sabotage efforts were newspaper accounts first carried in the *Chicago Tribune*, on April 12, 1864, that described the coal bomb, intended targets, and named him as the inventor.<sup>6</sup>

Explosive coal’s first operational use might have occurred on April 15, 1864, when the gunboat USS *Chenango*’s boiler burst during her maiden voyage in New York City, killing 33 sailors, scalding several more, and forcing the vessel out of action. Although the incident was officially blamed on a faulty boiler, Thomas Courtenay nonetheless wrote on May 21, 1864, that “My work is beginning to tell on the Yankees—a short time since the *Chenango* U.S.

gunboat was blown up at Brooklyn by one of my coal torpedoes...”<sup>7</sup>

### ***Sinking the Greyhound***

The first definite explosive coal attack occurred on November 27, 1864, after a meeting of top Union leaders near Richmond, Virginia, when an explosion shattered Major General Benjamin Butler’s personal steamer *Greyhound*. On board with Butler was Admiral Porter, commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron; Brigadier General Robert Schenck; and several staff officers. They quickly boarded a lifeboat while the crew and others jumped into the chilly James River.

Within minutes, burning coal scattered by the explosion set *Greyhound* afire, and it quickly burned to the waterline. Eyewitness accounts of the unexpected explosion and *Greyhound*’s recent coaling while docked near Richmond pointed to a coal bomb having unknowingly been put into the furnace. Although only the ship and several horses were lost, the death or serious injury of these three senior leaders by the coal bomb certainly could have altered the Civil War’s closing months.<sup>8</sup>

While Courtenay stepped up operations in Virginia, several devices were shipped to Toronto, Canada, where Confederate Commissioner Jacob Thompson was running sabotage and other operations harassing the Union war effort in mid-1864. Along with hatching plots to burn New York City, raid into Vermont, and free Confederate prisoners on Ohio’s Johnson Island, Thompson directed the sabotage of Massachusetts’ Springfield Arsenal, the North’s main small arms manufacturer.

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### ***Seeking a fresh start, Thomas Courtenay returned to England and marketed his coal bomb to various nations potentially interested in the novel weapon.***

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On December 1, 1864, a watchman discovered a piece of coal on a stairway landing between floors. It proved to be a bomb, and a sheet of paper was found connecting it to Canada. Other such attacks were probably planned because on April 7, 1865, Canadian police searching the Montreal home of suspected Confederate agents found several boxes containing explosive coal and other sabotage devices.<sup>9</sup>

Another attack might have occurred on December 11, 1864, when the steamboat *Maria* suddenly exploded while docked on the Mississippi River at Carondelet, Missouri, near a Union ironclad shipyard. Like Butler’s ship, *Maria*’s furnace suddenly exploded after coaling, and burning lumps spread across the deck.

Explosive coal also was suspected in the explosion and fire aboard the steamboat *Sultana* on the April 27, 1865, which claimed some 1,700 lives, including many men just released from Confederate prisoner-of-war camps. Although poor steam-plant maintenance was officially blamed for the disaster, several newspapers of the day claimed a coal bomb was responsible, fueling suspicions that persist today.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps reflecting the significance of Courtenay’s “coal torpedo,” when Union troops entered Confederate President Jefferson Davis’ office after Richmond’s fall in April 1865, they found an inert coal bomb on his writing desk. Although with the war over explosive coal’s role might have

seemed to close, it was in fact taking on a new form.<sup>11</sup>

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### ***Courtenay’s Device Lives On***

Seeking a fresh start by the war’s close, Thomas Courtenay returned to England and marketed his coal bomb to various nations potentially interested in the novel weapon. In spring 1866, he pitched his weapon to British Royal Navy officials, who reportedly called it “the greatest invention of the age.” Courtenay apparently had several inert samples made in England about that time. The move soon backfired when in early 1866, metalworker George Sanders, who had worked on Courtenay’s new models, built and sold his own coal bombs despite pleas to keep the process secret.<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime, Courtenay cast his commercial net increasingly widely. When British interest waned, he reached out to Chile, Austria, Prussia, Italy, and Turkey, the latter interested because Greece already reportedly possessed explosive coal of its own. By 1870, Courtenay was back in England marketing his coal bomb to a new round of British officials, this time possibly including an improved version that employed flammable liquids or other more powerful explosives. Regardless, no nation offered Courtenay a contract.<sup>13</sup>

In July 1868, Courtney offered 10 kegs of coal bombs to the Fenian Brotherhood, the US-based Irish Republican group that in 1866–71 staged a series of ineffectual raids on Canada. This, too, failed to generate a sale. Thomas Courtenay died on

September 1, 1875, after returning to the United States, never having sold his invention to any potential clients. Courtenay's idea, however, lived on.<sup>14</sup>

Coal bombs soon reappeared in the schemes of insurance fraudsters, where they could be used to sink over-insured ships at sea. France's former Marine Minister Admiral Pothman warned insurance agents of the coal bomb's potential use in a June 9, 1873 newspaper article, and the following month a New York journal warned of an American offering coal bombs to "destroy over-insured steamers with impunity."<sup>15</sup>

Coal bombs featured in the 1873–76 conflict between British ship owners and Parliament when Samuel Plimsoll advanced legislation to monitor and prevent dangerously overloading vessels. Standing to lose considerable sums, ship owners and merchants turned to violence, and in 1875 an unnamed person—perhaps George Sanders, who had built several coal bombs for Courtenay in 1866—offered to sell several such devices to a coal supplier caught up in the fight.<sup>16</sup>

### *That Little Square Box*

Details of explosive coal's design and manufacture spread widely as the century drew to a close. Retired Admiral Porter wrote an extensive account of the *Greyhound* explosion and Courtenay's device, while newspapers periodically featured explosive coal's past uses and detailed descriptions of its design and presumed methods of manufacture.

Publications also became interested in coal bombs; an 1869 journal included the first accurate

technical cutaway drawings of Courtenay's bomb, while an 1877 publication added updated details of the weapons's design, construction, and prospective applications.<sup>17</sup> Explosive coal became a plot twist in Arthur Conan Doyle's short story "That Little Square Box." Published in December 1881, the characters discuss the real-life sinking of the HMS *Dotterel* on April 26, 1881:

*"Excuse me," returned Flannigan, "but is there not some room for doubt yet as to the fate of the Dotterel? I have met men in America who asserted from their own personal knowledge that there was a coal torpedo aboard that vessel."*

*"Then they lied," said the Captain. "It was proved conclusively at the court-martial to have arisen from an explosion of coal-gas."*<sup>18</sup>

### *World War I Sabotage*

The Civil War-era coal bomb seems quaint in comparison to many of the battlefield weapons used in the "war to end all wars," but its covert nature and utility still made it attractive for sabotage. Every nation involved in World War I was highly dependent on coal for energy, transportation, and manufacturing, including armaments. Germany, in particular, employed a wide range of covert explosive devices throughout the war, such as booby traps left in abandoned trenches, as depicted in the recent film *1917*.<sup>20</sup>

Weak federal law enforcement and intelligence capabilities had left the US vulnerable to sabotage even before President Wilson finally declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917. German saboteurs caused a massive explosion at the Black Tom Island munitions depot in New York Harbor on July 30, 1916, killing four and causing \$480 million in damages



File card showing damage to the Black Tom Island munitions depot, New York Harbor. (Source: National Archives and Records Administration.)

in today's dollars.<sup>a</sup> (The perpetrators were not caught until after the war.) In March 1917, explosive coal was discovered aboard a steamer leaving New York for Buenos Aires. In June 1917, eight more were found aboard the Norwegian freighter *Olderney*, bound for New York.

The following year, in March 1918, a coal bomb was discovered in a load of coal being delivered to Michigan's Con Edison Del Ray coal-fired power plant. News reports at the time speculated that an explosion could have severely damaged the plant and affected war materials production in most plants west of Detroit.<sup>21</sup> German agents were suspected in each of these operations, although no one was implicated by subsequent investigations.

### ***World War II Innovations***

Most major combatants in World War II developed bombs disguised as coal for use in covert sabotage operations. Perhaps the most significant change in the coal bombs was the use of newly improved moldable ("plastic") explosives in place of black powder, which increased each device's explosive power while eliminating the need for an iron casing. This single change also simplified production and decreased the weight of each device, making it more useful for sabotage operations.

Similarly, new types of fuses—such as timed and remotely detonated—made the coal bomb potentially more useful, enabling for the first time its use in specifically

a. See Michael Warner, "The Kaiser Sows Destruction," *Studies in Intelligence* 46, no. 1 (2002), 3–9.

## ***Most major combatants in World War II developed bombs disguised as coal for use in covert sabotage operations.***

targeted and timed attacks. No longer was the coal bomb solely a random weapon, dependent on the unwitting assistance of someone shoveling it into a boiler.

Perhaps the most famous appearance of coal bombs during this period was in Nazi Germany's Operation *Pastorius*, under which the Abwehr II (German military intelligence's sabotage organization) landed eight saboteurs from U-boats on beaches in New York and Florida on June 12–17, 1942. Once ashore, the two teams buried boxes of explosives, weapons, money, and other equipment. Compromised shortly after landing when the New York team's leader revealed their plans to the FBI and police, all eight men were arrested before any sabotage occurred.

Upon uncovering their caches, the FBI and police found several coal bombs and related fuses. George Dasch, the New York team leader, later told the FBI that the coal bombs were to be thrown into US railroad coal cars as part of Abwehr plans to damage US transportation networks and other industrial targets assigned to the group.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Agent Zigzag***

The Abwehr also provided Eddie Chapman—a criminal and volunteer spy, doubled by Britain and named "Agent Zigzag"—with coal bombs to sabotage the British merchant ship *City of Lancaster* in March 1943. Although the Abwehr had instructed Chapman during his initial training in France to construct coal bombs by drilling holes in real lumps of coal

and then filling them with explosives and a detonator, for this plot Chapman was provided with two German-manufactured coal bombs.

Chapman, now a *Lancaster* crewman to enable him to travel to and from neutral Portugal, had proposed to his German handlers using coal bombs to destroy the ship, but he compromised the plan shortly after leaving Lisbon. With the coal bombs safely locked in the captain's safe, the *Lancaster* arrived in Glasgow where alerted British officials staged a furious search of the ship's coal bunkers before emerging with two purported coal bombs, part of efforts to protect the double agent Chapman.<sup>23</sup>

### ***OSS***

The Allies also designed coal bombs during World War II. Stanley P. Lovell's Research and Development Branch in the Office of Strategic Services sometime before 1944 developed a coal bomb similar to Thomas Courtenay's device. Described as "high explosive (60-40 Pentolite) cast into molds formed originally from actual lumps of coal. The coal is...reinforced against breakage by black enameled scrim. Once the igniter of lead styphnate is sealed in the end...with waterproofing material, and when coated with plastic cement containing lampblack, is well concealed while at the same time being readily ignited."

Place clandestinely in unguarded coal storage bins, eventually the bomb would be shoveled unknowingly into a railroad or ship boiler before exploding. The OSS device came

with a camouflage kit that enabled agents in the field to match the coal bomb to the hue of local coal stocks, which could vary widely throughout the diverse Nazi-occupied areas. Unlike Courtenay, however, the OSS freely shared its coal bomb with its British Special Operations Executive (SOE) partners.<sup>24</sup>

Field tests showed that the OSS coal bomb could destroy a railroad engine firebox, noting that had the tested boiler been under pressure, “it would have been exploded,” causing additional damage. Another test in a building’s fireplace revealed the bomb exploded, “lifting the roof and blowing out several windows. An examination showed that the interior partitions were broken down, one

exterior wall shattered, the ceiling shattered, and sagging, the porch was loosened from the house by about 3 in., and the fireplace was damaged.”<sup>25</sup>

How widely the OSS bomb was used during the war remains difficult to determine. However, Yugoslav Home Guards probably used a coal bomb to sabotage a railroad coal car and damage coal barges on the Danube River. OSS officer Elizabeth Peet McIntosh recounted delivering coal bombs to OSS agents in China, and coal bombs might also have been behind various unexplained German railroad and ship explosions that occurred during the war.<sup>26</sup>

Japan developed a coal bomb that combined elements of Courtenay’s

original design with modern improvements. The Japanese version featured a ceramic shell painted with black bitumen paint and filled with RDX high explosive. Like most explosive coal devices of World War II, it remains unclear if any of these were used in the field.<sup>27</sup>

A better inventor than entrepreneur, Courtenay probably never imagined that his weapon would still be used nearly a century later. Indeed, given the importance of coal to economies on both sides of the Iron Curtain, future historians may need to explore how explosive coal featured in the covert struggles of the Cold War.



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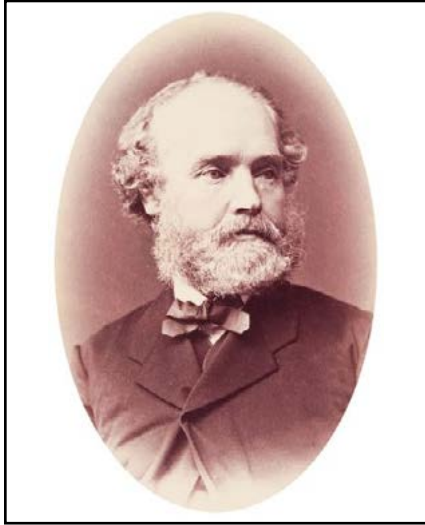






## Battlefield Photography as Military Intelligence

Cory M. Pfarr



The work of pioneering English photographer James Robertson, who with his partners captured iconic scenes of the Crimean War, drew the attention of US army officers eager to understand military trends in Europe.

Many readers will have seen the stark images of the aftermath of Civil War battles like Antietam and Gettysburg. Despite the limitations of this still new technology, photographs by Matthew Brady, James Gibson, and others of dead soldiers sprawled on the ground or propped against stone walls, along with more prosaic scenes of camp life, battlements, and field hospitals, shaped how Americans perceived the war then and now.

Less well understood, even among today's intelligence practitioners, is how these images had their antecedents in the imperial wars of the mid-19th century that coincided with the growing popularity of photography worldwide and rapid advances in technology and technique in the 1840s and 1850s in continental Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States. One result was the first US effort to use photographs of Crimean War (1853–56) battlefields as a source of military intelligence.

### *Photographing Wars of Empire*

The first known wartime scenes reproduced from a negative were taken by British army surgeon John McCosh during the Second Burmese War (1852–53). McCosh had also served in the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848–49) and had taken photographs—many the first of their kind—of Sikh leaders, British army

officers, architecture, and landscapes. In March–June 1855, commissioned by a Manchester publishing house and encouraged by the British government, English artist and photographer Roger Fenton produced a collection of 360 negatives of Crimea for reproduction and public display. However, none these showed battle scenes or documented the war's destruction.

The work of still another pioneering photographer, James Robertson, would draw the attention of US military planners. Robertson, an engraver at the Imperial Ottoman Mint in Constantinople, wanted to pursue the new field of photography. Robertson, 22, joined Italian-British photographer Felice Beato in 1853 to form a business partnership and set up a portrait studio.<sup>a</sup> (The two were also related; Robertson was married to Beato's sister.)

In 1855, Robertson, Beato, and several other contemporaries made their way to the Crimean Peninsula, then engulfed in a war between Russia and the "Allied Forces" of the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain, France, and Piedmont-Sardinia. The

a. Felice Beato also photographed the aftermath of the Indian Rebellion (1857) and the Anglo-French expeditionary force during the Second Opium War (1860). He would later work extensively in Japan. His brother Antonio was also an accomplished photographer, and the two collaborated together and with Robertson on various projects.

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origins of the war are complex—control over sites in the Holy Land, Russo-British competition, French imperial ambitions, religious animosity, Russian expansionism—but its breadth and ferocity would prefigure the world wars to come.

In late 1855, Robertson and Beato traveled to Balaklava and began photographing the closing scenes of the war, arriving not long after Roger Fenton had departed. The two photographers moved eastward to Sevastopol, a Russian stronghold that had finally fallen to the Allied Forces on September 9, 1855, after a 337-day siege. They produced a series of photographs that would be of importance to another group of men who arrived in Crimea the next month.



Robertson photograph of the interior of the Great Redan (Salient) in Sevastopol, 1855. (Source: Luminous-Lint)

### ***US Military Commission***

Majors Richard Delafield and Alfred Mordecai, along with Capt. George B. McClellan, had traveled to Crimea as part of a US military commission<sup>a</sup> sanctioned by Jefferson Davis (of later Civil War infamy), then secretary of war under President Franklin Pierce. The commission was tasked with examining the modernization of European warfare, war-making equipment, and strategy, ranging from the latest and greatest in arms, ammunition, and clothing, to fortifications, siege tactics, and transportation (including “the use of camels...and their adaption to cold and mountainous countries”).

a. (U) The commission also visited Great Britain, France, Prussia, Poland, Russia, Austria, and Italy—in some cases multiple times—to examine fortifications, naval and land defenses, and military armaments and equipment.

Davis needed information to modernize US military equipment, strategy, and tactics at a time when the country was rapidly expanding in physical territory but hamstrung with an army numbering just 10,400 men in 1853, most scattered in forts across the frontier. Davis was looking for ideas and opportunities to improve the quality and preparedness of the army, recognizing that in a republic still wedded to the Jeffersonian principles of limited government and a suspicion of large standing armies, significantly increasing the size of that fighting force was out of the question.

Delafield, Mordecai, and McClellan had engineering backgrounds and had graduated first or second in their West Point classes (1818, 1823, and 1846, respectively). They examined everything they could while in Balaklava and Sevastopol,

especially rifle arms, ammunition, ordnance, field artillery, gun emplacements, and fortifications.

Apparently, the French commander balked at the US officers’ presence and would not allow the commissioners to see anything in the French camps. As a result, according to Delafield, “The Commission confined its examinations to the camps, depots, parks, workshops, etc., of the English, Sardinian, and Turkish armies, never entering the French camps in the Crimea, except on visits of courtesy.”

The gun emplacements and fortifications at Sevastopol were of particular interest to the commissioners, perhaps especially for Maj. Mordecai, then serving in the Ordnance Corps and commandant of the Washington Arsenal. Mordecai was considered the US Army’s foremost expert in



Robertson panorama of Sevastopol, taken from the Malakoff Redoubt, 1855. (Source: Luminous-Lint)

artillery at the time and had published his book, *Arsenal for the Land Service of the United States*, in 1841.

Of all the reports submitted by the group, Mordecai's contained some of the most interesting special sections out of any of officer's separate reports. He provided a complete listing of "specimens of arms and equipment," books, drawings, maps, and photographs the commission brought back from Crimea. These included "Photographs of Sebastopol [sic]...31 sheets," a reference to Robertson's images after the fall of Sevastopol. Even today they are haunting images of an epic, 11-month siege that left 128,000 dead on the Allied side and caused over 100,000 Russian casualties.

Delafield also drew attention to Robertson's photographs in his report, which included woodcut copies

of some of the images, while making laudatory reference throughout to the photographs' ability to facilitate accurate documentation. Delafield wrote, "No language can give greater accuracy of detail than these photographic views taken on the spot." In yet another case, he maintained that through "photographic art, reliance can be placed in the most minute accuracy of details, as representing the condition of things at a particular moment," before admitting he could "offer no language to convey to the mind a more perfect description."

The commission's use of Robertson's photographs to analyze the gun emplacements at Sevastopol marked the first instance of the US Army employing photographs as military intelligence.

### Lessons Not Learned

Unfortunately, the commission's insights would not be shared, at least in written form, until the US was on the brink of civil war. McClellan's report was not published until 1857, Mordecai's not until 1860. Delafield's *Report on the Art of War in Europe* was not published until just before South Carolina militia fired on the US Army's Fort Sumter in April 1861, and it was suppressed during the war to conceal details of fortifications from the Confederate army. Davis, who as secretary of war had championed the commission, had left to become a US senator in 1857 before throwing his support behind succession.

Delafield, who served three stints and a total of 12 years as superintendent of the US States Military Academy at West Point, predicted this result in his own report: "...Yet with blind indifference, professing at the same time to be all powerful, our people neglect the many calls and statements of those they appoint to study this subject, leaving us at the mercy, in the first years of a conflict, of either of the naval and military powers of the Old World." Delafield's thoughts were prescient; despite advances in war-making equipment in the run-up to the Civil War, "Old World" Napoleonic tactics continued to dominate, only gradually falling out of favor in the last two years of the conflict.

As for James Robertson, an exhibition of his Sevastopol work was held in London in December 1855. Finally, a month after the peace treaty was signed in March 1856 and before public interest in the conflict waned, Robertson and Roger Fenton held a joint exhibition

of their Crimea photographs. Some of Robertson's photographs were reproduced as woodcuts and printed in the *Illustrated London News*. Robertson,

together with Felice Benato, would later document the British Army in India in 1857, but he appears to have given up photography and returned to

the Imperial Mint in the 1860s until he retired in 1881. Robertson died in Japan on April 13, 1888.



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## **Intelligence Analysis in 10th Century Byzantium**

*Andrew Skitt Gilmour*

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***Ancient empires needed information on their enemies and rivals and worked to acquire it through networks of spies and to communicate it rapidly back to palaces—including with fire signaling. The assessment . . . is presumed to have taken place among individuals but without an institutional basis and without being written.***

US Intelligence Community analysts address the capabilities and intentions of foreign actors, a basic national security function of the modern nation state. Intelligence analysts attempt to manage uncertainty and complexity for policymakers, who must make decisions to advance their nations' security interests. State-sponsored intelligence analysis in the modern era is designed to produce a range of finished products including foundational reference works, immediate tactical and threat information, and longer-term strategic assessments.

Such analysis relies principally on individuals schooled in analytic reasoning who are able to communicate their analytic judgments derived from collected, often secret, information. Analysts must also discern the truthfulness and accuracy of such information amid attempts at deception by foreign actors.

The history of all-source national intelligence analysis in the United States usually begins with World War II and the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which demonstrated the strategic consequences of failing to systematically collect, centralize, and assess intelligence information. The establishment in 1947 of the Central Intelligence Agency and the subsequent institutionalization of a national intelligence analysis mission have cast the history of such intelligence

analysis as beginning *de novo* in the modern era. This contrasts with the broad recognition—in government and in the scholarly community—that the collection of intelligence against rivals and enemies dates to ancient times and cultures.

Scholarship on the ancient practice of intelligence collection has largely not included investigations of the beginnings of the analytic part of the intelligence mission. For example, in his discussion of Egyptian, Hittite, and subsequent Assyrian, Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman intelligence activities, Francis Dvornik focused on intelligence collection—especially tactical military information—not analysis. Ancient empires needed information on their enemies and rivals and worked to acquire it through networks of spies and to communicate it rapidly back to palaces—including with fire signaling.<sup>1</sup> The assessment and interpretation of the collected information in the context of a state's security objectives are presumed to have taken place among individuals but without an institutional basis and without being written.

The modern scholarly emphasis on ancient intelligence as a collection mission is consistent with how ancient historians understood intelligence. The sixth century Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea, for example, writing about Byzantium's

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**Scholarly reception of *De Administrando Imperio* has overlooked elements of the text's content and purpose, which suggest the beginnings of state-sponsored all-source intelligence analysis in Byzantium.**

strategic rival Persia, makes clear that intelligence from ancient times was focused on the collection of information:

*Τὰ δὲ τῶν κατασκόπων τοιαυτὰ ἐστίν. ἄνδρες πολλοὶ ἐν δημοσίῳ τὸ ἀνέκαθεν ἐστιζόντο, οἱ δὴ ἐς τοὺς πολέμους ἰόντες ἐν τε τοῖς Περσῶν βασιλείοις γινόμενοι ἢ ἐμπορίας ὀνόματι ἢ τρόπῳ ἑτέρῳ, ἕς τε τὸ ἀκριβῆς διερευνώμενοι ἕκαστα, ἐπανήκοντες ἐς Ῥωμαίων τὴν γῆν πάντα τοῖς ἄρχουσιν ἐπαγγέλλειν ἠδύναντο τὰ τῶν πολέμιων ἀπόρητα.<sup>2</sup>*

*And the matter of spies is as such. Many men from the beginning of time were sustained in state service, men who went to the enemy and were in the palaces of the Persians, either with the pretense of commerce or in another way, who after investigating each thing precisely and upon returning to Roman territory were able to announce to those ruling all the secrets of the enemy.*

Four centuries later, around 950, written sources attest to the advent of intelligence activities that are more than the collection of information. Amid a broadly ascendant Middle Byzantine state, the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII took the first halting steps toward developing all-source, secret intelligence analysis in the service of a state's security interests and objectives. His groundbreaking, though flawed, effort comes down to us in a manual

*De Administrando Imperio*<sup>3</sup> (*On the Management of the Empire*<sup>4</sup>), which Constantine VII addressed to his son and heir Romanus II.

I believe that scholarly reception of *De Administrando Imperio*—though extensive and diverse—has overlooked elements of the text's content and purpose, which suggest the beginnings of state-sponsored all-source intelligence analysis in Byzantium. This development in the wider history of intelligence is especially plausible because the middle of the 10th century in Byzantium saw the convergence of state security needs, cultural trends, state capacity, and the rise to power of a bookish emperor to enable this first shift to written intelligence analysis in *De Administrando Imperio*.

**Scholarly Reception of *De Administrando Imperio***

*De Administrando Imperio*, was composed in Constantinople between 948 and 952.<sup>5</sup> It comprises an introduction, 53 chapters, and nearly 40,000 words. What Constantine VII wrote, dictated, had written by others, or included from earlier material has fueled scholarly debate over the text's authorship.<sup>6</sup> In its initial chapters, the text mostly provides instructions on the conduct of the empire's foreign policy—with an emphasis on managing relations with a nomadic Turkic people of the Steppe, the Pechenegs (οἱ Πατζινακῖται), who are strategically situated along Byzantium's northern border on the Black Sea.

Addressing Romanus II in the introduction, Constantine VII makes explicit that the work's purpose is to instruct.

*Διδάχθητι, ἃ χρή σε πρὸ πάντων εἶδέναι, καὶ βουλευσῶς τῶν τῆς βασιλείας οἰάκων ἀντιλαβοῦ.<sup>7</sup>*

*Be instructed with respect to things which are necessary for you to know before all things, and receive in turn the helms of rule wisely.*

This practical approach to knowledge for the sake of statecraft defines the work at the outset as more than another link in the chain of Byzantine and classical historiography. As Warren Treadgold notes, *De Administrando Imperio* “cannot really be called” a history, though it contains “much information of historical interest.”<sup>8</sup> Confirming the text's outlier status, Constantine VII omits from his introduction stylistic tropes about preserving the deeds of men that classicizing Byzantine historians such as Agathias (c. 530–594) and Leo the Deacon (949–991) used to echo Thucydides and Herodotus.

The bulk of the work is more primer and background information than policy proscription. Chapters 14–42 are almost certainly drawn from an earlier geographic and ethnographic work of Constantine VII, the *Περὶ ἐθνῶν* (*Concerning Peoples*).<sup>9</sup> Romilly Jenkins notes that these sections of *De Administrando Imperio* “told the traditional, sometimes legendary stories of how the territories surrounding the empire came . . . to be occupied by their present inhabitants.”<sup>10</sup> Anthony Kaldellis has argued that this narrative style is typical of Byzantine texts written “between the seventh and the twelfth centuries,”

which document the movements of different peoples from their “original” homelands.<sup>11</sup>

These chapters provide detailed geographical and historical information on the peoples, lands, and states that mattered to the national security interests of the Middle Byzantine state, including the Arab lands, the religion of Islam, as well the Balkans, Italy, Caucasus, the Rus, and the Turkic peoples of the Steppe. The tour d’horizon Constantine provides would be familiar in scope to the annual global threat survey US intelligence officials provide to members of Congress. The ability of Constantine VII to draw upon state archives of an earlier work also anticipates, in early medieval form, the centralization and retrieval of information that would be essential to modern intelligence analysis.

The role of intelligence collection has also been prominent in scholarly reception of the work. For example, Dvornik argues that *De Administrando Imperio* “illustrates more than anything else the importance the Byzantines attached to the collection of intelligence on foreign peoples and how they utilized it in the administration of state affairs.”<sup>12</sup> The broad geographic and ethnographic scope of the work also prompted Arnold Toynbee to observe: “The vast alien world outside the East Roman Empire’s frontiers excited Constantine’s curiosity, and, the more remote the country, the greater his zest.”<sup>13</sup> Such intense intellectual curiosity almost certainly fueled—and was driven by—extensive intelligence collection by Constantine VII.

The diplomatic directives Constantine VII provides in *De*

***The middle Byzantine state’s bureaucratic structures not only centralized information to support Constantine VII’s encyclopedic writings, but also provided the foundation for dissemination of an analytic written product.***

*Administrando Imperio* have also led to the reception of the work as a founding document of diplomatic history. Dvornik, for example, argued that the diplomatic and policy focus of the work meant it is “the first attempt at the writing of diplomatic history, thus inaugurating a new genre of historical literature.”<sup>14</sup> The secrecy of this diplomacy, however, also places the text in the wider realm of intelligence activity, because such sensitive policy concerns could not have existed apart from collected intelligence information. Paul Stephenson observes that *De Administrando Imperio* “was a work of the greatest secrecy, intended only for the eyes of the emperors Constantine VII and Romanus II, and their closest advisors.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly Jenkins argues that the text’s secrecy is confirmed “by its manuscript history and by circumstances that later writers betray no knowledge of it.”<sup>16</sup> Diplomatic action and intelligence collection appear intertwined in the work.

The clandestine sources used in *De Administrando Imperio* collected from individuals tied directly or indirectly to the Byzantine state situates the text again firmly in the area of intelligence activity. For example, Dvornik argues that background information on the Pechenegs in chapter 37 “could only come from Pecheneg sources” debriefed by Byzantine sources.<sup>17</sup> Confidential diplomatic contacts with Constantine VII’s court were also important sources of information. For example, information on the Magyars in chapters 38–40, according to Dvornik, “must have been gathered at the imperial court from Hungarian sources” amid frequent exchanges of embassies.<sup>18</sup>

Information in chapter 9 on how the Rus were able to navigate the riparian dangers of the Dneiper as well as attacks by Pechenegs to make their way south to the Black Sea for trade with Constantinople is probably derived from Byzantine contacts with



A scene from the 12th century manuscript *The Chronicle of John Skylitzes*. The history was written in the 11th century, but the image is from a 12th century illuminated manuscript. The picture shows a Pecheneg band ambushing a ruler from Kiev who had purportedly signed a treaty with Rome. Image: Madrid Skylitzes, Folio 173ra.

***The clandestine sources used in De Administrando Imperio collected from individuals tied directly or indirectly to the Byzantine state situates the text again firmly in the area of intelligence activity.***

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Russian envoys sent to negotiate a peace treaty with Constantine VII.<sup>19</sup>

The scholarly reception of *De Administrando Imperio*, despite these acknowledgements of the intelligence activity underpinning the work, has emphasized much more its value as a source of historical information, even if not a formal work of history. Robert Browning, for example, sees the text as “a major source for the history of central and eastern Europe and southwestern Asia in the high middle ages,”<sup>20</sup> and D. M. Lang argues that “the book’s historical value derives to a large extent from the fact that it includes exhaustive information on many little-known . . . nations by which the Byzantine Empire was ringed about.”<sup>21</sup>

A text that stands apart from the main categories of Byzantine historiography and which has defied a single interpretation, however, offers the possibility that *De Administrando Imperio* can also be understood as the beginning of a new genre of intelligence analysis in the West. As Anthony Kaldellis observes, scholarship on *De Administrando Imperio* has “focused narrowly on specific passages or even single words,” without considering “the overall structure, purpose, and meaning of the work.”<sup>22</sup> To see Constantine VII’s work as an inaugural attempt at state-sponsored all-source intelligence analysis can address this deficit.

***De Administrando Imperio as Proto Intelligence Analysis***

Intelligence analysis requires not only the collection of information relevant to national security, but also its centralization within the state. At the time of the writing of *De Administrando Imperio* in the middle of the tenth century, Byzantium under Constantine VII was at the peak of a literary and cultural trend of organizing information in all fields into encyclopedic works, according to Paul Lemerle.<sup>23</sup> In addition to *De Administrando Imperio*, Constantine VII produced manuals of value to intelligence analysis on court ceremonies (*De Cerimoniis*)—including the reception of foreign officials and leaders—and historical geography (*De Thematis*).<sup>24</sup> The ability to maintain what modern intelligence analysis would consider a repository of all-source information pertaining to the national security interests of the Middle Byzantine state suggests that the court of Constantine VII met a key precondition for an early attempt at intelligence analysis in *De Administrando Imperio*.

Constantine VII was central to this effort at centralization. He collected books, organized their information, and composed new works to fill in gaps in knowledge. According to Jenkins, “Documents from the files from every branch of the administration, from the foreign ministry, the treasury, the offices of ceremonial [functions] were scrutinized and abstracted.”<sup>25</sup> In much the same manner of producing raw intelligence reports as the foundation for modern

intelligence analysis, Constantine VII had “the tide of information . . . coordinated and written down.”<sup>26</sup>

The information-driven, bookish character of Constantine VII was similar to that of modern-day intelligence analysts. Analysts always want more information and have, for the most part, assumed contrasting identities with the operationally minded collectors of information. Constantine VII’s “belief in the practical value of learning and education”<sup>27</sup> also anticipated what, in the vernacular of modern-day intelligence analysis, is called “policy relevance.” Knowledge, and especially intelligence information, must matter to the state’s interests to merit analysis. This was true in *De Administrando Imperio* and is an essential characteristic of today’s national-level intelligence analysis.

The Middle Byzantine state’s bureaucratic structures not only centralized information to support Constantine VII’s encyclopedic writings, but also provided the foundation for dissemination of an analytic written product. Philip Davies notes that the Byzantines “maintained bureaucratically organized security structures . . . that ensured a constant flow of information about the external and internal enemies of the state.”<sup>28</sup> Luttwak adds, “However ill-informed they may have been by modern standards, the Byzantines still knew much more than most other contemporary rulers.”<sup>29</sup>

These security structures did not include a formal intelligence department or ministry and there is no evidence that the palace disseminated analytic product to other parts of the imperial administration.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, the limited distribution





A modern depiction of Byzantium’s strategic environment, showing frequency of conflicts between Byzantium and the expanding Muslim world between the seventh and 11th centuries in lands and sea along the coast of the central and eastern Mediterranean Sea. Map by Cplakidas from Wiki Commons: Byzantine-Arab naval struggle.png

of *De Administrando Imperio* to Constantine VII’s heir and a small inner sanctum of court officials is an early demonstration of the dissemination of a finished analytic product—a key element of modern-day national-level intelligence analysis. The empire’s existing security structures made this finished product and its dissemination possible.

The centralization of information, the presence of an analytically minded emperor, and a bureaucratic organization that could be used to disseminate a finished analytic product allow for the consideration of *De*

*Administrando Imperio* as an early attempt at state-sponsored all-source intelligence analysis. Additionally, the complexity of the security challenges facing Constantinople in the mid-10th century joined with these conditions to make such an early attempt at intelligence analysis by Constantine VII inevitable.

The strategic environment confronting Constantine VII was analytically complex and often constraining of Byzantine power. Well into a recovery from Arab conquests and the internal strife of the Byzantine Dark Age, the Middle Byzantine

state still faced threats from peoples of the Steppe to the north, Bulgars to the west, and Arabs to the south and east, including from Arab naval forces. As Toynbee has observed, Constantine VII

*was aware that the Roman Empire had been transformed in a fundamental way. He recognized that it had ceased to be a world-state and had become one local state among a number of others.*<sup>31</sup>

In this environment, intelligence analysis could efficiently support policies

***This circumstantial case that De Admininstrando Imperio represents a prototype of what would become state-sponsored, all-source intelligence analysis in the modern era is buttressed by the analytic language in the text itself.***

that secured Byzantine interests and leverage Byzantine power to maximum effects.

This circumstantial case that *De Admininstrando Imperio* represents a Byzantine prototype of what would become state-sponsored all-source intelligence analysis in the modern era is buttressed by the analytic language in the text itself. Amid the policy proscriptions, practical advice on dealing with foreign peoples, and dense historical information that make up most of *De Admininstrando Imperio*, Constantine VII demonstrates analytic reasoning in service of Byzantine security interests. In a faint foreshadowing of far better organized and reasoned modern products of all-source intelligence analysis, Constantine VII manages to make analytic judgments and to demonstrate he is thinking analytically about Byzantine security.

In his first chapter, for example, Constantine VII explains at the outset his underlying reason for his detailed treatment of the Pechenegs: their location is strategically significant.

*Ὅτι γειτνιάζει τὸ τοιοῦτον ἔθνος τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν τῷ μέρει τῆς Χερσῶνος, καὶ εἰ μὴ φιλίως ἔχουσι πρὸς ἡμᾶς, δύνανται κατὰ τῆς Χερσῶνος ἐξέρχεσθαι καὶ κουρσεύειν καὶ ληΐζεσθαι αὐτήν τε τὴν Χερσῶνα καὶ τὰ λεγόμενα κλίματα.<sup>32</sup>*

*Because this nation of the Pechenegs is neighboring to the district of Cherson, and if they are not friendly toward*

*us, they are able to march out against Cherson and ravage and plunder Cherson itself and the so-called districts.*

In chapter 4, he also provides an analytic explanation of the military implications for Byzantium of maintaining good relations with the Pechenegs.

*Ὅτι τοῦ βασιλέως Ῥωμαίων μετὰ τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν εἰρηνεύοντος, οὔτε οἱ Ῥῶς πολέμου νόμῳ κατὰ τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἐπικρατείας, οὔτε οἱ Τοῦρκοι δύνανται ἐπελθεῖν. . .<sup>33</sup>*

*When it is the case that the Emperor of the Romans is at peace with the Pechenegs, neither the Rus nor the Turks are able to attack by practice of war against the realm of the Romans. . .*

This complex analytic judgment is similar to Constantine's simple analytic judgment in chapter 2 on the strategic intent of the Rus:

*Ὅτι καὶ οἱ Ῥῶς διὰ σπουδῆς ἔχουσιν εἰρήνην ἔχειν μετὰ τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν.<sup>34</sup>*

*And the Russians are zealous to have peace with the Pechenegs.*

Constantine VII also explains how history and geography are part of his analytic method. For example, at the beginning of eight chapters providing background information and a history of Arab lands, peoples, and the religion of Islam, he articulates an analytic view that an understanding of history and geography provides

practical advantages to Byzantine security. Constantine VII urges his son to know that:

*Τὰ δὲ ἐστὶν περὶ διαφορᾶς πάλιν ἐτέρων ἔθνων, γενεαλογίας τε αὐτῶν καὶ ἔθων καὶ βίου διαγωγῆς καὶ θέσεως καὶ κράσεως τῆς παρ' αὐτῶν κατοικουμένης γῆς καὶ περιηγήσεως αὐτῆς καὶ σταδιασμοῦ, καθὼς ἐξῆς πλατύτερον διηρμήνεται.<sup>35</sup>*

*The matters are again about differences of each of the peoples, of their origins, habits, and way of life and of the setting and climate of the territory inhabited by them and about a geographic description and measurement of it, as how next is explained more extensively.*

Constantine VII also shows analytic skill in identifying facts for the reader that matter for assessing the resource base and power of peoples in the regions near the Crimean Peninsula in the vicinity of Byzantium's borders on the Black Sea. For example, in chapter 53 he assesses the Byzantine protectorate and trading center of Cherson.

*Ὅτι ἐὰν οὐ ταξιδεύσωσιν οἱ Χερσωνῖται εἰς Ῥωμανίαν, καὶ πιπράσκωσι τὰ βυρσάρια καὶ τὰ κηρία, ἅπερ ἀπὸ τῶν Πατζινακιτῶν πραγματεύονται, οὐ δύνανται ζῆσαι. Ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ ἀπὸ Ἀμισσοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ Παφλαγονίας καὶ τῶν Βουκελλαρίων καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν πλαγίων τῶν ρμενιάκων περάσωσι γεννήματα, οὐ δύνανται ζῆσαι οἱ Χερσωνῖται.<sup>36</sup>*

*If ever the Chersonites do not travel to Romania and sell the*

skins and wax candles, which they take in hand from the Pechenegs, they are not able to live. And if ever products do not pass over from Aminsos and Paphlagonia and from the Boukellarioi, and from both sides of the Armenians, the Chersonites are not able to live.

Also in chapter 53, he includes an extensive survey of petroleum deposits in the Caucasus and Armenia. For example:

Ἰστέον, ὅτι ἔξω τοῦ  
κάστρου Ταμάταρχα πολλὰ  
πηγαὶ ὑπάρχουσιν ἄφθαν  
ἀναδιδοῦσαι.<sup>37</sup>

There exist outside the stronghold of Tamatarcha many springs yielding oil.

### Reconsidering the Origins of Modern Intelligence Analysis?

Intelligence analysis that uses secrets, reasoning, and writing to address a state's national security policy priorities is an essential part of national power. By modern standards, *De Administrando* falls short of the full sensemaking of modern, all-source intelligence analysis. Nonetheless, this 10th century text is precedent setting for the future development of intelligence analysis by demonstrating for the first time the beginnings of its key constituent parts. *De Administrando Imperio* is written to support a state's national security, it is written using a

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**As much as modern historians in the West look to Thucydides and Herodotus to provide the conceptual frameworks, it is possible now for intelligence analysts and scholars to look to a medieval Byzantine emperor.**

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centralized information base, it is secret, and it reveals analytic reasoning and judgment. As such, it is groundbreaking.

As much as modern historians in the West look to Thucydides and Herodotus to provide the conceptual frameworks for writing history, it is possible now for intelligence analysts and scholars to look to a medieval Byzantine emperor who undertook the first, albeit limited, attempt at national, all-source intelligence analysis.

In doing so, we can reconsider whether the establishment in 1947 of an all-source intelligence analysis capability in the United States is a unique moment of genesis or a recapitulation of a rubric innovated a thousand years earlier. The circulation since the 17th century of *De Administrando Imperio* in the West as the European state system was emerging also spurs questions about if and how this text was received as the craft of intelligence analysis began to emerge in Europe.

Perhaps the most fundamental consequence of linking modern intelligence analysis to this text would be to gain deeper understanding of the roots of such policy-relevant writing in the works of Aristotle. Constantine VII in his introduction admonishes his son:



Νῦν οὖν ἄκουσόν μου, υἱέ, καὶ  
τήνδε μεμαθηκῶς τὴν διδασχὴν  
ἔση σοφὸς παρὰ φρονίμοις,  
καὶ φρόνιμος παρὰ σοφοῖς  
λογισθήσῃ.<sup>38</sup>

Now hear me, son, and having learned the following teaching you will be wise among the prudent (those having practical wisdom), and reckoned prudent among the wise.

In this passage Constantine has summoned a famous passage from book VI of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Ἡ δὲ φρόνησις περὶ τὰ  
ἀνθρώπινα καὶ περὶ ὧν ἔστι  
βουλευσασθαι.<sup>39</sup>

Practical wisdom concerns itself with human affairs and is about things that are deliberated.

As a result, modern intelligence analysis should be considered not only as an evolving craft of information management and analytic reasoning but also as the expression of a practical—not purely theoretical—knowledge first articulated by Aristotle. Like much of the Greek corpus whose transmission we owe to Byzantium, we can also thank a 10th century Byzantine emperor not only for his intelligence analysis innovations but also for reminding us that intelligence analysts do their work in the shadow of Aristotle.

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**Review Essay: The True Story Behind the Movie “*The Courier*”**

Directed by Dominic Cooke, screenplay by Tom O’Connor, 2020, 112 min.

**Reviewed by Randy P. Burkett**

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The spy thriller *The Courier*, starring Benedict Cumberbatch as English businessman Greville Wynne and Merab Ninidze as Oleg Penkovskiy, Soviet military intelligence (GRU) officer turned spy for the West in the 1960s, is an enjoyable film that should have the caveat “based on true events” continuously running at the bottom of the screen. The two leading actors do a wonderful job of portraying their real-life characters, and Cumberbatch is particularly outstanding in capturing the slightly sleazy traveling salesman Wynne, who becomes embroiled in one of the most important espionage stories of the 20th century.

However, intelligence practitioners will wonder at some of the choices the writer and director made when they decided to explore the relationship between Wynne and Penkovskiy, especially in light of the numerous books and films that have more accurately told Penkovskiy’s story, including his interactions with CIA and MI6 handlers in Moscow.<sup>a</sup>

Another bit of artistic license was creating CIA officer Emily Donovan, played by an energetic Rachel Brosnahan. Donovan is fast-talking, confident CIA officer who bears more than a passing resemblance to Brosnahan’s Miriam “Midge” Maisel on Amazon Prime’s hit series *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, as if Donovan had been plucked from doing stand-up comedy and made into a CIA officer. Both Maisel and Donovan are set in the early 1960s; one might wonder if Brosnahan brought her wardrobe and hairstylist directly from one set to the other.

The Donovan character adds some contemporary sparkle to the cast, which otherwise would be mostly male and mostly drab. The only other women introduced in the film are Wynne’s wife Sheila (Jessie Buckley) and Penkovskiy’s wife Vera (Mariya Mironova). However, in creating Donovan, filmwriter Tom O’Connor and director Dominic Cooke doom to obscurity a real-life intelligence operative who played a vital role in the Penkovskiy case:

Janet Chisholm, wife of the British head of station (HOS, akin to a CIA chief of station) in Moscow.

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***Handling Penkovskiy***

As Donovan and her MI6 counterpart Dickie Franks (played by Angus Wright) deftly explain when recruiting Wynne, Penkovskiy must have a means of getting his information out of the Soviet Union and someone who can resupply him with espionage gear, such as film for his Minox camera, so that he can keep producing vital intelligence. Janet Chisolm, not Greville Wynne, filled that role.

Starting on July 2, 1961, Janet Chisholm was the smiling, reassuring face for Penkovskiy inside Moscow who received his exposed film and passed him new supplies; she was the one who listened to his hopes and complaints in brief meetings in apartment vestibules in October–December of that year; and she is the person Penkovskiy confided in when he told her on May 31, 1962, that he needed to defect soon. This meeting, which took place inside the British Embassy at an event to honor the Queen’s birthday, was the last time Janet and Penkovskiy would see each other.

The Chisolms left Moscow on July 14, 1962, after Penkovskiy had been met by his new CIA handler Rodney Carlson. Carlson wore a unique tie-pin as a recognition signal for Penkovskiy, an act portrayed in the movie as a way for Penkovskiy to understand Wynne is connected to Western intelligence. No explanation is given as to who picked the design or came up with the signal plan. Perhaps the writers, director, and producer thought that including Janet Chisolm would muddy the story.

Cumberbatch’s depiction of Wynne being pitched to help MI6 and CIA and his range of emotions—from excitement and exhilaration to fear and despair—are some of the highlights of the film. Some of these reactions were probably accurate, but the shock of the spy world being

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a. Details in this review are drawn from *The Penkovskiy Case* and *The Penkovskiy Papers*. See the final section, Further Readings, for more information.

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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.

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completely new to Wynne and his importance as the case unfolds are highly exaggerated.

In reality, Penkovskiy had decided he and his family would defect from the Soviet Union as early as January 1959, and he started then to collect Soviet intelligence information that he would trade for a new life in the West. He spotted two US students, Eldon Ray Cox and Henry Lee Cobb, on a train in Moscow on August 9, 1960, and decided to approach them with some of the materials he had stolen. He saw Cox and Cobb again, crossing the Moskvoretsky Bridge three days later, not in the Moscow subway as imagined in *The Courier*.

Penkovskiy asked them to take two envelopes to the US embassy. One provided information on the shoot-downs of the U-2 spy plane piloted by Francis Gary Powers and another US military aircraft. The second had his letter volunteering to spy for the West, information on dead drops and signal sites around Moscow, and a clipped photograph of himself with US Army Col. Charles Peeke, a military attaché whom Penkovskiy had met in Turkey in 1956. It also detailed the names and assignments of the GRU class members who would complete their training in 1963.

The movie shows Penkovskiy as a successful officer with at least a nodding acquaintance with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. In real life, Penkovskiy's career had a promising start but was already on shaky ground when he made the decision to approach the US students. He had been a highly respected and decorated artillery officer in the Red Army during World War II and had made connections with key Soviet officials, including future Col. Gen. Sergey Sergeevich Varentsov, who in 1961 became Chief Marshal of Artillery and Commander of the Soviet Artillery Rocket Forces.

Promoted to lieutenant colonel, Penkovskiy, 26, married Vera, 17, daughter of Lt. Gen. Dmitriy Gapanovich in 1945. She moved into his Moscow apartment which he had shared with his mother since 1941. The following year, they had a daughter named Galina, the inspiration for the movie character Nina (Emma Penzia).

Penkovskiy attended the famed Frunze Military Academy and after graduation was offered the chance to go directly to the GRU Military Diplomatic Academy (MDA), although he first served for a year with troops as

his father-in-law had advised. He began his GRU career working as the Egypt desk officer after graduating in 1953.

In July 1955, Penkovskiy went to Ankara, Turkey, as assistant military attaché and GRU deputy resident (akin to deputy COS). He was elevated to acting military attaché and acting resident for six months after he arrived, but he was then replaced in both positions by KGB officers.

Penkovskiy had frequent conflicts with his new KGB colleagues, made worse by an alleged affair with the deputy resident's wife. His friction with the KGB came to a head when Penkovskiy anonymously alerted the Turkish authorities to one of the KGB officer's activities and the officer was detained. This resulted in Penkovskiy's recall to Moscow in November 1956, although there was no proof Penkovskiy sabotaged the KGB officer. His career was in limbo for the next two years until Colonel General Varentsov arranged for him to become a student at the artillery academy in Moscow, where students of artillery and rocket/missile forces were trained.

By that point, Penkovskiy was disgruntled and determined to defect with his family if he got the chance. He used his eight months at the academy to transcribe 1,500 pages of data on Soviet rockets and missiles, which he hid at his uncle's dacha. This technical data, coupled with the thousands of photographs of Soviet military manuals he would later take, comprised the bulk of the information the United States would need to have an upper hand in the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962.

Penkovskiy returned to GRU duties in May 1959 and was assigned to be an instructor at the MDA, which gave him access to the details on Soviet military intelligence officers in training that he passed to Cox and Cobb. Penkovskiy was unhappy babysitting MDA trainees, however, and arranged a transfer to the State Scientific and Technical Committee in November 1960. He was supposed to handle Western delegations coming to the USSR and obtain scientific and technical secrets. This assignment would allow him some opportunities to travel outside the Soviet Union, although he would still be barred from being posted overseas with his family.

Penkovskiy first met Greville Wynne the following month. Wynne was not the innocent neophyte depicted in the film. He was already an MI6 contact, had provided reports to the British service based on his business contacts,

and like all visiting Westerners had been watched by the KGB on his many previous visits.

*The Courier* suggests all spy business is conducted in regular restaurants over lunch. But it was Penkovskiy who approached Wynne to be his go-between with the Western intelligence services in April 1961. Penkovskiy convinced a reluctant Wynne to carry a large package of papers back to the British Embassy for him. Wynne hesitated. He knew it was one thing to share information with MI6 that he picked up in the normal course of business but that it much more dangerous to get caught carrying Soviet secrets. However, Penkovskiy was persuasive and Wynne was drawn further into the operation.

Wynne not only brought the Penkovskiy papers to the British, he also let them know Penkovskiy would be coming to England with a Soviet delegation very soon. CIA and MI6 officials met to discuss how to contact the elusive Penkovskiy, who had reached out to each organization more than once through Western businessmen and students when the papers arrived on April 13, 1961. They decided to handle the case jointly.

Wynne acted as the host for Penkovskiy's and his delegation when they arrived in London on April 20, 1961. CIA and MI6 booked rooms in the Mount Royal Hotel where the group was housed. Penkovskiy finally met the CIA and MI6 professionals he had been trying to contact for eight months: CIA officers George Kisevalter and Joe Bulik and MI6 officers Michael Stokes and Harold Shergold.

The group would meet 17 times during this trip for a total of 52 hours. Penkovskiy showed up with several pounds of documents copied from the Dzerzhinsky academy, information about the GRU (including the identities of two GRU officers in London), details of military targets, locations of KGB installations, and other data. He also brought a large shopping list for his family and friends. This shopping list was filled by other CIA support officers while the operational meetings were conducted, providing Penkovskiy a cover story for his absences. In addition to being debriefed, Penkovskiy was trained on the Minox camera and other tradecraft and was given a communications plan.

After the debriefings, he would return to his room late at night with his large shopping bags full of decadent Western consumer goods. Penkovskiy could not carry all

the items he had purchased, which gave Wynne an excuse to deliver some on his trips to Russia and Penkovskiy a reason to have Wynne waved past the customs inspectors.

Penkovskiy would use these gifts to meet with his senior friends and listen to their complaints about Khrushchev. *The Courier* omits this important aspect of the case and invents Penkovskiy having direct access to senior Soviet leaders and secrets.

Wynne was not involved in Penkovskiy's debriefing, but he continued to play a vital role. He made another trip to Moscow in May 1961, carrying some more of Penkovskiy's shopping with him along with a second Minox camera, 60 rolls of film, and instructions for contacting Janet Chisholm at a playground near the Chisholms' apartment. He brought photographs of Janet and her three children and a candy box for passing film.

KGB agents photographed Wynne entering the Chisholm's apartment, and they were well aware of Roderick's position as MI6 HOS because George Blake, a KGB spy inside MI6, had compromised him years before. The KGB might have brought these photos to the GRU's attention but they were assured that Penkovskiy had recruited Wynne to get Western industrial information; Wynne was his spy.

Regardless, the KGB missed the first meeting between Janet Chisholm and Penkovskiy at the playground on July 2, 1961, where he passed her seven rolls of film—350 photos in all—and two typed pages of notes. Three weeks later, Penkovskiy was back in London. This time he was leading another Soviet trade delegation and playing tour guide for the wife and daughter of his boss, Gen. Ivan Servov, head of the GRU. He met with his handlers 14 times during this trip for a total of 47 hours.

*The Courier* alludes to his productivity by showing more and more CIA employees at work translating documents and transcribing tapes. Penkovskiy provided the first photographs of the top secret version of the journal *Voyennaya Mysl'* (*Military Thought*) and other documents from the GRU classified library during these meetings. He did not risk trying to bring the paper copies of these documents, as shown in the movie, because they were closely controlled.

*The Courier* adds dramatic tension by showing Penkovskiy moving among library racks, snapping photos

of various documents. In reality, each document had to be requested from the librarian and then signed out by Penkovskiy, who fortuitously still had access as a student and writer. He would photograph the documents in one of several small offices and return them to the librarian.

Wynne returned to Moscow in late August 1961, lugging more of Penkovskiy's purchases, and was photographed by the KGB returning his suitcase on the steps of the Ukraina Hotel. Apparently, this did not worry the KGB too much, and Penkovskiy was allowed to travel to Paris the following month. He was officially met by Wynne and covertly debriefed by the CIA and MI6 team on a dozen occasions. During this trip, the team made plans to cut Wynne out entirely and rely only on Janet for brief encounters every other week, alternating between two locations until a CIA officer was in place.

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### ***Growing Suspicions***

Around this same time, Penkovskiy's material was starting to draw dangerous attention. In September 1961, *Washington Post* writer Joseph Alsop reported the United States was drastically lowering its estimates of Soviet ICBMs. Lots of loose talk circulated at State, CIA, and the Pentagon about a hot new Russian source, and, adding to the danger, the Soviets had a their own penetration at the National Security Agency—Jack Dunlap—who saw some of the material Penkovskiy had provided.<sup>a</sup>

Wynne was not yet cut out, and he remained a vital contact for Penkovskiy. However, the strain of living a double life was clear when the pair next met on July 3, 1962. Penkovskiy knew Wynne's hotel room at the Ukraina Hotel was bugged and tried to take some precautions, as shown in the movie, by turning on the radio, but he then broke down, distraught over his fear of being caught. Evidently, the KGB officers listening in were either not fooled by the radio or might have even been alerted by this tactic.

Either way, the KGB searched Wynne's room that night and photographed a shaving cream can with a false bottom (in *The Courier* the concealment device is a large can of cleaning supplies in a public bathroom). Wynne was shaken by the encounter and met with Roderick Chisholm the same day.

Penkovskiy was right to be scared. He and Wynne agreed to have dinner at the Peking Hotel on July 5, but Penkovskiy spotted surveillance, brought Wynne into an alley, and told him to leave Moscow as soon as he could.

Penkovskiy had now lost both Janet and Wynne, but he did have his new CIA contact, Rodney Carlson. Penkovskiy's final intelligence contribution occurred on August 27, 1962. He passed material to Carlson in a bathroom at a party for a US tobacco delegation, including 600 pages of photographed documents, and received a false internal passport that he would need to move himself and his family to a location where they could be exfiltrated.

Contrary to the *The Courier* version, Wynne was not involved, and CIA made no real attempt to get the family out. Scenes of visiting CIA officer Donovan, with no experience in Moscow, preparing to ferry Penkovskiy and his family in a van across hundreds of miles through the Warsaw Pact to safety in the West are absurd.

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### ***KGB Closes In***

Penkovskiy was out of time. He attended a final event at the British Embassy on September 6, 1962. The new MI6 HOS, Gervaise Cowell, attended wearing the recognition tieclip. His wife, Pamela, was supposed to replace Janet as an additional inside contact. Penkovskiy met both Gervaise and Pamela, but no operational exchanges occurred. That was the last time Penkovskiy was seen before his trial.

The KGB had been suspicious for some time but had held off in arresting Penkovskiy to determine if he was working alone or if higher ranking officers, such as Gen. Servov, were involved. The KGB poisoned Penkovskiy on September 7, 1962, took him to hospital, and searched his apartment. They found his camera and internal passport in a special drawer in his desk, as shown in the movie. He was arrested soon after and interrogated.

Penkovskiy revealed the details of his deaddrop arrangements, and the KGB set up an ambush. Carlson, however, was not available because he was with his wife, who had recently had a baby, so CIA officer Richard Carl Jacob went to service the dead drop. The KGB ambushed him at the site.

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a. Joseph Alsop, "Facts About the Missile Balance," *Washington Post*, September 25, 1961.



On the same day, Wynne was arrested in Budapest by the Hungarians, not by the Soviets as portrayed in *The Courier*, and packed off to Moscow. Wynne and Penkovskiy were tried together in early May 1963, but they never had the touching scene where Wynne could tell Penkovskiy he had prevented a nuclear war. Penkovskiy was sentenced to death and executed on May 16, 1963. Wynne was given eight years in prison but was exchanged on April 22, 1964, for Konon Molody, better known as Gordon Lonsdale, a Soviet illegal imprisoned in England.

### ***Cuban Missile Crisis***

*The Courier* alters Penkovskiy's timeline to use the Cuban Missile Crisis to increase the suspense surrounding this case. However, Penkovskiy was arrested and imprisoned before this crisis broke in October 1962. He did not turn over the locations of the missiles, nor did he have the direct relationship with Khrushchev as the film depicts. Penkovskiy's access to leadership plans and intentions only came through his network of people like Servov and Varentsov.

Still, Penkovskiy can legitimately be considered as the spy who saved the world from nuclear war. On December 23, 1961, Penkovskiy passed Janet Chisholm important information about the threats Khrushchev had made to President Kennedy over Berlin during their summit in Vienna on June 4, 1961. Tensions were high over the construction of the Berlin Wall that had begun in August, but Penkovskiy reported Khrushchev was not nearly as confident as he tried to appear and was not ready to go to war with the West. This reporting made its way to Kennedy.

In 1962, after reports from human agents and aerial reconnaissance indicated the Soviets were fielding nuclear missiles in Cuba, Kennedy decided to allow U-2 overflights of Cuba to resume. The resulting imagery was then combined with Penkovskiy's intelligence trove to enable US analysts say with certainty what weapons were being installed and when the missiles would be operational. Kennedy's trust in Penkovskiy's reporting, the analysts, and the U-2 imagery gave him the confidence to order a

blockade of Cuba rather than launching airstrikes or an invasion and risking escalation.

Like many films about espionage, *The Courier* takes dramatic license and gets many of the details wrong, but it gets the most important point right: Oleg Penkovskiy, with the help of his CIA and MI6 handlers, might well have prevented Armageddon.

### ***Further Reading***

In 1964, CIA offices created *The Penkovskiy Memoirs* using tapes of all 45 meetings with Oleg Penkovskiy. The first draft was written in Russian by Peter Deryabin with the assistance of the case officers and other CIA employees who ran Penkovskiy and translated the tapes of his meetings. *Memoirs* was published as *The Penkovskiy Papers* credited to Oleg Penkovskiy. Frank Gibney, who wrote for *Time* and *Life* magazines, provided extensive commentary, and Peter Deriabin [sic] was listed as the "translator."

The reported origins as Penkovskiy's diary was a cover story—he never kept any kind of diary—but the substance was true. CIA officials expected the Soviets would claim it was a provocative fabrication and decided to stay wholly with the information that Penkovskiy provided, even when he was in error about some facts.

In April 1976, during congressional investigation of CIA activities, the CIA admitted it had produced the book; it publicly revealed its role in 1992. For background, see David Murphy, Memorandum for Deputy Director (Plans), "Request Approval to Publish the Penkovskiy Memoirs," November 6, 1964, and "Foreign and Military Intelligence, Book 1, Final Report of the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with respect to Intelligence Activities," United States Senate, April 14, 1976, declassified on March 2, 2011.

Leonard McCoy, who was actively involved in the operation, wrote *The Penkovskiy Case*; it was approved for release on September 20, 2014. Penkovskiy's story has figured in several other books, including Wynne's account, *Contact on Gorky Street*; *CIA Spymaster*, by Clarence Ashley; *Codename Hero*, by Jeremy Duns; and *The Spy Who Saved the World*, by Jerrold Schecter.



The reviewer Randy Burkett is a member of CIA's History Staff and a longtime student of the Penkovskiy case.



**First Casualty: The Untold Story of the CIA Mission to Avenge 9/11**

Tony Harnden (Little, Brown and Company), 412 pages, bibliography, notes, index, photos

**Reviewed by Mike R.**

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Toby Harnden, a veteran foreign correspondent and author specializing in conflict zones, has written a powerful book about one of the first allied insertions behind enemy lines in Afghanistan after the events of September 11, 2001. A captivating account of a recent chapter in history of great intelligence, military, and foreign policy consequence, *First Casualty* is an impressive addition to the literature of America's "longest war."

The title refers to the initial victim of what would become a nearly 20-year-long war: Johnny Micheal (Mike) Spann, a 32-year-old CIA paramilitary officer recently arrived at Langley by way of service in the Marine Corps. Spann was killed on November 25, 2001, during an attack by several hundred ostensible al-Qa'ida prisoners at the Qala-I Jangi fort outside Mazar-e Sharif, in northern Balkh Province. Although often referred to as a prisoner uprising, the events at Qala-i Jangi were part of a more complex undertaking. It would gradually transpire that these fighters' presence at the fort had been a feigned surrender, one element of a broader plan to launch a coordinated counterassault on the CIA's Afghan allies throughout the sector, even though it did not end up playing out exactly as expected.

Spann and CIA colleague David Tyson, unaware of these plans, were there that day to conduct the first interrogations of al-Qa'ida personnel in the new global war on terror, a heady undertaking urged on by top CIA management at a time when it was believed additional al-Qa'ida attacks could be coming at any moment. Spann in particular was eager to take part, although everyone realized the risks. Security was being left in the hands of Afghan partners, who were vastly outnumbered, and not all of the prisoners had been thoroughly searched for weapons. The uprising and US casualty would be seared into the world's consciousness through contemporary reporting from the scene, and frequently paired with the revelation from the same event of the capture of US citizen John Walker

Lindh, the "American Taliban," a misnomer given his al-Qa'ida affiliation, but an epithet that has remained to this day nonetheless.

Although titled *First Casualty*, the book is not about Spann's death *per se*. His story provides the emotional core, but the circumstances of his death occupy only a few pages. If one could say there were a protagonist, that role would probably be accorded to Tyson, with whom the author begins and ends his tale, but *First Casualty* is far more a collective story than that of any one individual. The central characters in Harnden's book are the eight members of "Team Alpha"—Tyson, Spann, and six other individuals—part of an alphabet soup of small CIA elements representing the initial US response to 9/11. Led by officers with a mix of operational, linguistic, and paramilitary skills, supplemented with military detailees, their mission was essentially three-fold. They were sent in to secure the cooperation of Afghan resistance elements; to acquire intelligence on al-Qa'ida and on local enemy dispositions; and to support military action to uproot the terrorists and topple their Taliban hosts, who had provided safe haven to Usama bin Ladin. Team Alpha would for a while be tied at the hip with a counterpart Special Forces unit that followed it into Afghanistan two days later, in a pattern of close CIA-military partnership echoed across the country.

Team Alpha was not the first CIA unit to deploy to Afghanistan; "Jawbreaker," which had occasionally ventured into the country over the previous several years, was inserted just 15 days after 9/11 into the sliver of land northeast of Kabul held by the Northern Alliance faction. Jawbreaker's exploits were famously recounted in memoirs by its initial leaders, Gary Schroen and Gary Berntsen, in *First In: An Insider's Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan* and *Jawbreaker: The Attack on Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda: A Personal Account by the CIA's Key Field Commander*,

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respectively.<sup>a</sup> Yet for a brief period these two CIA teams were a study in contrasts—Jawbreaker making slow progress mobilizing the forces whose charismatic leader Ahmad Shah Massoud was assassinated by al-Qa’ida two days before 9/11, while Team Alpha was actively advancing, rallying tribal support and taking the fight to the enemy. Harnden takes some digs at Jawbreaker in what could be seen as favoritism toward the stars of his story, but, in the end, all of these teams played vital roles and any criticisms pale by comparison to their accomplishments.

*First Casualty* concentrates on the initial deployment of forces into Taliban-controlled territory, telling it in day-by-day fashion. It follows Team Alpha’s formation through its insertion on Day One, October 17, 2001, to Spann’s death during Thanksgiving week on Day 40, and culminates in the days afterward with the eventual termination of hostilities at the prison fort and the recovery and return of Spann’s body to the US in early December. Although Harnden primarily sees events from the perspective of Team Alpha, he captures the vantage point of many other key cast members as well. These include not just other CIA officers in the region and at CIA headquarters in Virginia, but a range of US and UK military actors and Afghan personalities.

As a dual US-UK citizen with a military background, and an award-winning book on a different aspect of the Afghan war under his belt, the author is well suited to the task. Capitalizing on his British background, one of the most impressive stories he tells is the support provided by the UK’s Special Boat Service (SBS) and its impact on the SBS legacy going forward. He also conveys action from the highest levels of state to the most junior ranks in the field. Dozens of pages of author’s notes and source descriptions attest to the extensive effort behind this, and his cultivation of sources pays remarkable dividends in terms of the extent to which many individuals open up to him, including the provision of unparalleled photos.

That rare find of a non-fiction book that reads as if fiction, *First Casualty* draws you in and takes hold of you. The opening chapters introducing the main characters are reminiscent of watching a Hollywood action film where the disparate members of the team come together. Harnden’s style of writing conveys the action visually

to drive the message home. He has a knack for choosing just the right reference, even if some of them may be a bit over the top. Historical comparisons run from the Team Alpha leader fearing he was in a modern-day “Rorke’s Drift, the 1879 battle in which a British force of 150 had to defend itself against 4,000 Zulus,” to the euphoria over the Taliban’s dispersal from Mazar-e Sharif as “akin to the 1945 liberation of Europe.”

The book’s images are full of contrasts, laced with humor and irony. Amid scenes of carnage, he speaks of Northern Alliance fighters taking a break on the sidelines eating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and smoking hashish. Elsewhere, a witness describes watching a taxi cab pull up at the fort and several fully armed soldiers hopping out to go to war. Pop culture references run from the Beatles to *Apocalypse Now*. There is even room for a classic fairy tale: in the immediate aftermath of Spann’s death, while forces are scrambling for survival, “two Hazaras tossed over their purple-and-green plaid turbans to use as climbing ropes. The major felt he was in some Afghan adaptation of ‘Rapunzel.’ He grabbed the turban with both hands, leaned back, and walked up the side of the fort to the top.”

The author has a chameleon-like ability to adapt the narrative style to the purpose at hand. At times, the book feels as if Tom Clancy has taken over, inserting his predilection for techno-military jargon. In other instances, he channels his inner Bob Woodward, recreating a fly-on-the-wall approach to high-level policy meetings. One such interaction takes place at a National Security Council meeting two days after 9/11 between President George W. Bush and Cofer Black, director of CIA’s Counterterrorism Center (CTC), about to be handed the lead in the US government’s fight in Afghanistan:

... Bush asked [Black] how long it would take for the Taliban regime to fall. ‘Once we’re fully deployed on the ground, it should go in weeks,’ he replied. There was silence in the room. Even [CIA Director George] Tenet thought the timeline ambitious. Bush stared, unblinking, at the wall at the far end of the Situation Room for more than ten seconds, perhaps fifteen. It seemed like a lifetime to Black, who began to wonder if he had overdone it. (47)

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a. See reviews by J. Daniel Moore, *Studies in Intelligence* 49, No 4 (2005), and Hayden Peake, “The Intelligence Officer’s Bookshelf,” *Studies in Intelligence* 50, No. 3 (September 2006).

While *First Casualty* is an in-the-weeds account of the successes and failures of a small group of men operating on the other side of the world, it is at the same time a microcosm for the larger conflict. Harnden uses the drama of Team Alpha's deployment to frame strategic issues that would have enormous import at the time and in the years to come. He drives home, for example, the tug-of-war between actors at multiple levels. The Pentagon and CIA battle over who would be first in and who would call the shots in the initial response in Afghanistan. Opinion is divided between and within multiple agencies over the role that should be accorded the country's most prominent warlord, Abdul Rashid Dostum. Internal CIA factions competed over primacy of approach, whether to favor an assemblage of minority groups from the north or to rely on a predominantly Pashtun force with strong Pakistani ties as the country is taken back from the Taliban.

*First Casualty* celebrates the wide array of individuals and experiences thrown together in the post-9/11 melting pot. Spann himself is a walking contradiction to his profession: according to a classmate during CIA training, Mike was "very black-and-white[.] He wasn't traditional case-officer material. Case officers live in a world of nuance and gray." Tyson's background, meanwhile, made him perhaps the unlikeliest of Team Alpha's contingent—an academic with a knack for languages among warriors and operators, a Central Eurasia specialist among CTC and Near East adherents. It is also a tale of strange bedfellows. Citing the improvised team that rallied together at the fort after Spann's death, "It was a unique group: a Green Beret, a CIA officer, an SBS commando, a Navy SEAL, and an Afghan commander." That diversity underpins this very human and poignant tale. It takes all types, and the author captures this with a grace and inclusiveness not easily matched. Harnden concludes the book with what became of most of the individuals in the years afterward. We learn that many in Team Alpha went on to have long and successful careers, rising to the highest

ranks before retiring, though this is counterbalanced by news that another member of the team perished in the field a few years ago.

Harnden does not put everyone on a pedestal. He is evenhanded, calling them like he sees them, unstinting in his praise, yet not shying away from criticism. All is situationally dependent; there are no purely good or bad characters. The book contains less-than-flattering scenes of Tyson, who would go on to receive the CIA's highest award for valor, while showcasing impressive military and leadership actions on the part of Dostum, frequently described as an opportunist changing sides at the drop of a hat. In an Author's Note, Harnden writes:

*First Casualty does not seek to pass judgment on those who, to use Theodore Roosevelt's phrase, were 'in the arena...marred by dust and sweat and blood.' War is chaotic and terrifying and, by its nature, replete with mistakes. Bravery coexists with fear, selflessness with the instinct for self-preservation. Every person who chose to put themselves in harm's way in Afghanistan after 9/11 has my admiration for that act of courage and patriotism. (339)*

With the distance of time, 20 years since 9/11, the author provides a perspective not so easily afforded to more contemporaneous accounts. And *First Casualty* could not have emerged at a more timely moment, capturing the war's trajectory, in terms both geopolitical and personal, for an audience highly attuned once again to developments nine and a half time zones away from Washington. Harnden's last chronological reference is to President Biden's announcement in April 2021 of the planned US withdrawal. Months later, it would be a denouement replete with its own tales of tragedy and heroism that we can only hope will one day furnish the materials for another book of this same caliber.



*The reviewer:* Mike R. is a member of CIA's History Staff.



## Intelligence in Public Media

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### Intelligence Analysis and Policy Making: The Canadian Experience

Thomas Juneau and Stephanie Carvin (Stanford University Press, 2021), 223 pages, bibliography, notes, index.

#### Reviewed by Joseph W. Gartin

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Thomas Juneau and Stephanie Carvin are on a roll. Juneau, an associate professor at the University of Ottawa, and Carvin, associate professor at Carleton University, collaborated on *Top Secret Canada: Understanding the Canadian Intelligence and National Security Community* (2021), a superb primer on the Canadian intelligence community.<sup>a</sup> Carvin is also the author of the recent *Stand on Guard: Reassessing Threats to Canada's National Security* (2021). In their latest effort, *Intelligence Analysis and Policy Making: The Canadian Experience*, they look specifically at intelligence analysis in the Canadian system. Influenced by the US experience and approach, but with significant differences in customer engagement, capacity, personnel, and oversight, Canada can seem to the US intelligence practitioner both familiar and remote.

Much of the strength of *Intelligence Analysis and Policy Making* lies in the extensive use of interviews with current and former intelligence officials, which adds texture to what might otherwise be a familiar academic discussion about the intelligence-policy relationship. (5) Some readers might recognize Juneau's and Carvin's observations about Ottawa's standing within the Five Eyes (31–2), its efforts to add value in an inevitably imbalanced partnership (“Canada is a net importer of intelligence,” [101]), and the gap between policy and intelligence that can undermine any intelligence service (“intelligence analysts are policy blind to the point of being detrimental” [82]).

Juneau and Carvin open with a discussion of governance, focusing particularly on five key factors that shape how Ottawa manages its intelligence community: institutions, personalities, mandates, capabilities, and accountabilities. In all these areas, the small size of the Canadian community both in relative terms (dwarfed by the US but also many other counterparts or adversaries) and absolute terms is central to understanding the Canadian IC. To be

sure, there is a counterargument to be made about agility and focus, but as Juneau and Carvin make clear, the net effect is a community whose impact is constrained on multiple fronts.

They argue, for example, that the Privy Council Office (PCO, which acts as adviser to the prime minister) “lacks clout in its relations with policy and operationally focused line departments throughout the security and intelligence community. Its role is not to direct their work but to bring people together and coax them into coordinating policies and operations. Its main asset is its proximity to the prime minister, but it lacks the size and authority to play a more forceful coordinating role.” (15) Consider that in 2018, the latest figures available to them, the National Security and Intelligence Advisor had only about 90 people on staff. A certain level of resignation seems hangs over the issue: Juneau and Carvin acknowledge that their interviewees diverged over whether there was a need for a strong center, with a minority of views arguing that the situation is not perfect but is “more or less the best that can be hoped for.” (15)

The limited authorities of the PCO are mirrored by an over-reliance on the personal interest of the prime minister to drive engagement. (19) Here too there are echoes of the US system, where a president's appetite for intelligence might vary. Yet even when a US president has been ambivalent or even hostile toward the IC, the vast national security architecture in the US creates its own demand, like the relationship between mass and gravity.<sup>b</sup> As Juneau and Carvin note, because institutions are “relatively underdeveloped in Canada's intelligence community, changes in leadership have a greater impact than in other contexts in which institutions are more mature.” (19)

Juneau and Carvin explore what Canada's lack of a human intelligence (HUMINT) agency means for analysis. Canada is “one of the few Western countries and the

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a. Reviewed in *Studies in Intelligence – Extracts* 65, no. 3 (September 2021), 47–8.

b. See John L. Helgerson, *Getting to Know the President: Intelligence Briefings of Presidential Candidates and Presidents-Elect, 1952-2016*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2021).

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only G7 country to not have a foreign human intelligence service.” (29) Instead, Canadian HUMINT is focused almost exclusively on domestic security intelligence, i.e., threats from terrorism, espionage, and organized crime. Whether Canada should have its own HUMINT service seems to be an unsettled question, judging from their interviews, and the hurdles to doing so from scratch seem formidable. To the extent this gap affects analysis, the focus of their book, Juneau and Carvin frame it within the construct of providing more to the overall Five Eyes intelligence effort.

*Intelligence Analysis and Policymaking* offers a helpful perspective on oversight in a Westminster context. They note that traditionally, “the oversight and review of the Canadian intelligence and national security community has focused almost exclusively on assessing operations and legal compliance rather than the functioning of analytical units.” (34) In that sense, they acknowledge, it might not have a direct impact on intelligence analysis in the Canadian system. They observe that oversight and review in Ottawa has evolved rapidly in recent years, including the creation of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians; the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, an independent body with the authority to review the use of intelligence; and the Intelligence Commissioner, a “quasi-judicial role” with oversight and review powers. Juneau and Carvin conclude that resources, time, and trust will be required for these bodies to be effective. (35) The US experience beginning in the 1970s through the creation of the

Director of National Intelligence in 2004 certainly echo that observation.

Ottawa’s principal national-level, all-source analytic organization—PCO’s Intelligence Assessments Secretariat—in recent years has put substantial energy behind treating the policymaker (or other intelligence recipient) as a client to be supported. Similar efforts have paid dividends for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the Communications Security Establishment, with Client Relations Officers embedded throughout the government. (91–4) Beyond such institutional efforts, much comes down to the personalities of both the policy customer (especially in the prime minister’s office) and leaders of the intelligence components.

The need to hire, develop, and retain a trusted, high-caliber, diverse workforce presents challenges for any intelligence community. As Juneau and Carvin make clear, Ottawa is constrained by lack of hiring, limited career paths, and turnover. Nonetheless, over the past several years the Canadian IC has made notable investments in training, often in collaboration with its Five Eye partners, and career development, including seconding officers with internal and external partners. (66–70)

For these and other topics, *Intelligence Analysis and Policy Making* is an essential reference for anyone who wants to know about how the analyst-policymaker relationship works, and doesn’t, in Ottawa.



*The reviewer:* Joseph Gartin is managing editor of *Studies*.



## Intelligence in Public Media

### **Japanese Foreign Intelligence and Grand Strategy: From the Cold War to the Abe Era**

Brad Williams (Georgetown University Press, 2021), 279 pages, bibliography, tables, figures, index.

Reviewed by W. Lee Radcliffe

In scholarship as in intelligence, sound sourcing and well-scoped context are critical elements that underpin cogent assessments. If either is incomplete, mischaracterized, or misrepresented, scholars and intelligence officers alike will quickly lose the trust of their respective audiences. While *Japanese Foreign Intelligence and Grand Strategy* features commendable portions, in too many instances readers will encounter problems with misrepresented sourcing and the lack of critical context that negatively impact the work overall.

Author Brad Williams is an associate professor in the Department of Asian and International Studies at the City University of Hong Kong, and the research for the book was fully supported by a grant from the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, according to the acknowledgments section.<sup>a</sup>

Problems with sourcing become apparent on page one. The book begins with a description of the September 1983 Soviet downing of Korean Airlines (KAL) Flight 007, in which the author seeks to demonstrate internal strife between Washington and Tokyo over the use of signals intelligence (SIGINT) intercepts of Soviet air-to-ground communications to publicize Soviet culpability. The author asserts: “later National Diet records reveal[ed] that the chief cabinet secretary, Gotōda Masaharu, declared” that Washington’s use of Japan-based intelligence resources “casts doubts over Japan’s status as an independent state.” The assertion as written seems a reasonable, matter-of-fact description of Gotōda’s attitude citing official Diet records.

Taking a closer look, however, the reader finds that the source is a conspiracy-laden diatribe by long-serving leader of the Japan Socialist Party, Seya Hideyuki, given in the House of Councillors in 1998, a full 15 years after the KAL shutdown.<sup>b</sup> In the same statement, Seya declared that the passenger jet might have been “under the command of a certain country’s intelligence agency”—almost certainly a reference to the CIA, as Moscow-linked conspiratorial sources have sometimes claimed since 1984<sup>c</sup>—which “intentionally invaded Soviet airspace for a specific purpose.”<sup>d</sup> Seya’s statement was a series of allegations targeting both the United States and the Liberal Democratic Party, and his invocation of Gotōda’s supposed attitude was made to further a political agenda.

Sourcing issues and mischaracterizations surface in particular in the section titled “Intelligence Sharing to Manipulate a Junior Ally” (107–13), which features a deeply cynical view of Washington’s role in the US-Japan bilateral alliance. Williams, for example, misrepresents US personnel response to a U2 emergency landing at a glider club landing strip in September 1959. According to Williams, the emergency landing made local headlines, mostly because of the conspicuous actions of US security personnel who ordered the growing crowd away at gunpoint (112).

In this case, Williams cites *The CIA and the U-2 Program 1954–1974*, released in 1998. The actual description of the event in the declassified document, however, reads: “The crash did not cause any injuries or serious damage to the aircraft, but it did bring unwanted

a. Williams has also penned opinion pieces for Asian media outlets over the past decade, such as a January 2011 article in the South China Morning Post suggesting that Tokyo “concede” the “Diaoyu Islands”—Japan’s Senkaku Islands—to China. “Japan Should Concede the Diaoyus to China,” *South China Morning Post*, January 24, 2011.

b. In line with the opposition party platform at the time, Seya was vociferously critical of the bilateral alliance, having a year earlier proposed the termination of Tokyo’s budgetary support to US forces within five years (Sagara Yoshinari, *Mainichi Shimbun*, August 2, 1997).

c. In one of several examples, self-described “publicist” Takahashi Akio published disinformation-laden articles and books in Japanese from 1984 claiming US intelligence involvement that were amplified by the Soviet Union’s TASS news agency and other outlets. Novosti Press Agency Publishing House in 1984 published one of Takahashi’s books as *Truth Behind KAL Flight 007*.

d. Seya Hideyuki, “Questions on various issues revealed in the process of investigating the truth of the Korean aircraft incident,” 142nd Session of the Diet, March 13, 1998, <https://www.sangiin.go.jp/japanese/joho1/kousei/syuisyo/142/syuh/s142004.htm>. The source is cited by Williams as endnote 2.

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.

publicity to the U2 program. Much of the publicity resulted from the actions of Detachment C's security unit, whose conspicuous Hawaiian shirts and large pistols drew the attention of Japanese reporters. One reporter even flew over the area in a helicopter, taking pictures of the U-2. These photographs appeared in many Japanese newspapers and magazines.<sup>a</sup> Nowhere is there any mention of US personnel brandishing weapons at any Japanese crowds. Moreover, while the author names an alleged location from which the specific U2 operated citing the document, the declassified document contains no location information. This gives the impression that an official US government source confirms details presented in the book, but it does not.

In his treatment of the MiG-25 incident in September 1976, when defecting Soviet pilot Viktor Belenko landed his state-of-the-art aircraft at Hokkaido's Hakodate Airport, the author incorrectly charges that US intelligence withheld foreknowledge of Belenko's plans to defect "in order to encourage its junior ally to purchase a substantial airborne early-warning capability." The author speculates, for example, that the fact that "US experts flew into Japan only 18 hours" after Belenko's arrival "suggests prior knowledge of the defection" (108), citing a single *Washington Star* article published in 1981.<sup>b</sup>

However, as detailed in a 1980 book on Belenko's defection, the US government in the early 1970s had completely revamped its handling of any defecting

Soviets after a November 1970 incident in which a US Coast Guard cutter returned a defecting Russian seaman to his crewmates, who proceeded to beat the would-be defector on the spot. Within hours of Belenko's landing in Hokkaido on 6 September, watch centers throughout Washington were "crowded with men and women called out of their sleep to study the messages flooding in from the Embassy, the Pentagon, the CIA, the Fifth Air Force in Japan, and the wire services."<sup>c</sup> US personnel immediately prepped to head to the scene in line with US national policy on handling defectors,<sup>d</sup> and with the bonus of getting to examine the MiG-25 in detail.<sup>e</sup> Moscow sent at least four intelligence officers to Hakodate within the first 24 hours as well.<sup>f</sup>

Chapter 2 in its entirety is problematic. Titled "US Covert Action in Japan," it focuses on Washington's purported post-war covert involvement in Japan primarily in the 1950s and 1960s, sourcing some declassified US government files and longer works in both Japanese and English of varying reliability. The chapter seeks to examine US efforts to strengthen "bilateralism" following World War II, which is at best tangential to the primary topic of Japanese intelligence capabilities. The chapter often uses passive voice and ambiguous terminology that insinuates more than warranted (for example, the CIA had "courted Japanese elites" and "maintained a relationship with" various groups), while the reader learns later from quotes of declassified files that the US "had no control

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a. Gregory W. Pedlow and Donald E. Welzenbach, *The CIA and the U-2 Program, 1954–1974* (Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1998), 218–19, <https://www.cia.gov/static/37e56c57ddf41f9c85f357a04900e1e8/CIA-and-U2-Program.pdf>

b. Soviet disinformation probably fed into the May 1981 *Washington Star* article. Moscow has pushed a variety of disinformation regarding the Belenko defection. As recently as September 2021, marking the 45th anniversary of the defection, Russia's MK Online suggested in a bizarre story that Western intelligence had replaced the real Belenko with a "double," and the "fake Belenko" subsequently stole the plane and flew it to Japan. See Aleksandr Dobrovolskiy, "Угон за границу секретного истребителя: вскрылись новые подробности" ["Hijacking a secret fighter overseas: new details revealed"], *MK Online*, <https://www.mk.ru/social/2021/09/05/ugon-za-granicu-sekretno-go-istrebitelya-vskrylis-novye-podrobnosti.html>.

c. John Barron, *MiG Pilot: The Final Escape of Lieutenant Belenko* (McGraw-Hill, 1980), 126–30.

d. Williams also charges that Belenko's passing of a note in English asking for asylum and to speak with US intelligence was another indication of US foreknowledge. Actually, Belenko had waited until after entering Japanese airspace to write out his intentions to defect on a flight notepad first in Russian and then in very limited English using a small pocket dictionary during the flight. He could neither speak nor write Japanese, but he wanted to provide as much information as possible to ensure his safety immediately after landing. Barron, *MiG Pilot*, 108.

e. *Japanese Foreign Intelligence and Grand Strategy* also does not examine Tokyo's failure to adequately identify and track Belenko's MiG-25 as it approached Japan's airspace and the fierce bureaucratic in-fighting over how to handle the defection. See Richard Samuels, *Special Duty: A History of the Japanese Intelligence Community* (Cornell University Press, 2019), 111–2, for a full description. The incident highlighted the failure of Japan's hoppō jūshi or "emphasis on the north" security strategy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and briefly reignited discussion of nascent proposals to consolidate Japan's defense intelligence capabilities. See my *Goraikō: Japan's National Security in an Era of Asymmetric Threats*, 6 and 408, for additional discussion.

f. Barron, *MiG Pilot*, 131.

whatsoever” over some of the subjects profiled earlier in the chapter (80).

There is a lack of important context, too, concerning the broader security environment. Williams states at the outset that his book “does not explicitly examine Japan’s efforts to protect its national secrets and institutions against hostile nations’ or forces’ secret penetration and disruption operations” (2), but the historical vice institutional aspects of counterintelligence is critical context for readers’ understanding of the security environment driving US whole-of-government policy at the time.

After devoting a mere paragraph to Soviet operations in Japan (76), in a bout of hindsight bias the author severely downplays intensive Soviet efforts by focusing solely on low Japanese affinity for Russia because of, for example, “the Soviet Union’s occupation of the Northern Territories” (81). Readers do not learn that Japan was one of the main target countries for KGB operations into the 1980s.<sup>a</sup> Readers never learn of persistent Soviet operations, from planting propaganda and running agents of influence in most media outlets and in various political parties, to espionage and preparing for sabotage operations in Japan. And readers never learn the extent of spying by other Communist countries: the British government in 1983 estimated that in addition to the approximately 100 Soviet intelligence officers in Japan in the early 1980s, 60 intelligence officers from China and 60 more from other Communist countries were operating in Japan. The numbers “far surpass[ed]” comparable allied efforts according to Japanese intelligence expert Kotani Ken.<sup>b</sup>

The periodic misrepresentation of sources and mischaracterization of events are unfortunate, because other portions of the book are interesting in their own right. The book’s introduction after describing the KAL 007 shoot-down provides an accessible overview of Japan’s intelligence structures. Chapter 1, “Japanese Grand Strategy and Embedded Norms,” details Japan’s transition from the post-war “Yoshida Doctrine” to the mid-2010s “Abe Doctrine,” and while it might seem pedantic to some, a deeper understanding of security norms is helpful when considering Japan’s unique post-war experience and current challenges. Chapter 4, on Japan’s foreign economic intelligence efforts, details Japan’s public-private approach to systematically researching and appropriating intellectual property from more-developed countries, with the United States a particular target of post-World War II activity. And the final chapter closes with a discussion of Japanese proposals for a stand-alone “JCIA,” pointing to further transformation of Japan’s intelligence structure in the medium term with the United Kingdom’s MI6 as a “possible model for Japan” (215).

But in the final evaluation, readers must trust that the underlying sourcing is accurately represented and that context is complete throughout the book in order buy into an author’s central narratives. Having uncovered multiple discrepancies in a cursory review of sources, this reviewer finds that trust is challenging to maintain.



*The reviewer:* W. Lee Radcliffe is a member of the Senior Digital Service in the Directorate of Digital Innovation, CIA. He has more than 20 years of experience covering Asia and Eurasia.

a. Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (Basic Books, 2006), 310. Separately, Samuels in *Special Duty* noted Moscow engaged in “‘active measures’...quite successfully in Tokyo” (26).

b. “Communist Intelligence Officers Active in Japan: 1983 UK Report,” *Kyodo*, July 31, 2013.



## ***Intelligence in Public Media***

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### ***Eavesdropping on the Emperor: Interrogators and Codebreakers in Britain's War With Japan***

Peter Kornicki (Oxford University Press, 2021), 402, maps, photographs, bibliography, index.

#### ***Reviewed by Stephen C. Mercado***

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What good is intelligence collection without exploitation? What would be the value in war for an organization to break the enemy's naval code, recover a battlefield document, or interrogate a captured airman if there were no linguists to read the deciphered telegram, translate the recovered document, or interpret the prisoner's answers?

Peter Kornicki, emeritus professor of Japanese at Cambridge University, has written a history of British language officers who, after struggling in wartime crash courses to learn Japanese, applied their hard-won knowledge to Britain's fight against Japan during World War II. His reason for doing so, stated on the book's dedication page, is to bring to light the contributions, "never recognized or rewarded," of those linguists. His book is, in a sense, a sequel to Michael Smith's excellent history of how Britain broke Japanese-language codes.<sup>1</sup> Where Smith's focus was on interception and codebreaking, Kornicki's concern is how linguists translated Japanese, whether from deciphered messages, plain text, or speech, into English for military use.

Kornicki's book is a recent addition to the growing body of intelligence literature in recent years on the war against Imperial Japan.<sup>2</sup> While Britain's Japanese linguists in World War II have received little recognition, US publishers have produced a number of books that highlight the accomplishments of US language officers.<sup>3</sup> Japanese authors have also written of how US and British intelligence organizations met the challenge of the Japanese language.<sup>4</sup>

*Eavesdropping on the Emperor* begins with the author tracing the downward trajectory of Anglo-Japanese relations, from the formal alliance concluded in January 1902 to Imperial Japan's invasion of Britain's East Asia colonies in December 1941,<sup>5</sup> and describing the near total lack of Japanese-language officers at the war's start. Kornicki then recounts the rush to put together short courses to teach enough military Japanese to make language officers

of men and women who, for the most part, had no prior knowledge of what one British instructor termed "perhaps the most soul-destroying and unrewarding of all languages."<sup>6</sup> (85) At the Bedford Japanese School, the School of Oriental and African Studies, and Bletchley Park in Britain, as well as in such far-flung corners of the empire as the School of Japanese Instruction at Simla, a hill station in British India, students struggled through intensive courses of written and spoken Japanese. Unlike the US Army, which recruited from the large pool of first- and second-generation Japanese Americans to train Japanese-language officers, Britain followed a path similar to that of the US Navy in recruiting top-notch students in general and classicists in particular.<sup>7</sup>

British wartime students of Japanese faced the daunting challenge of learning in weeks or months what academic experts asserted would take three years. Many folded under the pressure. One instructor of an 11-week course in oral Japanese for monitoring radio transmissions colorfully explained the stark divide of student failure or success: "After the fifth week they're either carried away screaming or they're nipponified."<sup>a</sup> (91–92) The written language was perhaps an even greater challenge. Student Patrick Field's classroom notes indicated that features of Japanese include the absence of definite and indefinite articles, no clear distinction between singular and plural, the common lack in a sentence of a subject pronoun, and verbs that are found at the end of sentences. As if such challenges were not enough, students would confront deciphered Japanese texts in blocks of Roman letters and struggle to determine by whatever context was available where to divide the blocks into discrete words and what meaning to assign those words in a language with vastly more homophones than English.

British intelligence organizations employed the newly trained language officers across the globe in the war. Bletchley Park, the British estate that housed the

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a. The Japanese-language name for Japan is Nippon or Nihon. From the Meiji Restoration (1868) to the end of World War II, Japan was known as Dai Nippon Teikoku, rendered as the Empire of Greater Japan.

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Government Code and Cipher School (GC&CS), employed some of them. In Africa, other linguists served on Mauritius (then a British colony) and Kilindini, Kenya. In South Asia, linguists came to grips with the language in Ceylon (today Sri Lanka) and British India. Still others worked in Australia or with officers of the British Commonwealth and their US allies in such units as General MacArthur's Allied Translator and Interpreter Service (ATIS). In the field, linguists shouldered their heavy dictionaries in backpacks into Burma (today Myanmar) on the British Army's return to the colony it had lost to the Imperial Japanese Army in early 1942. Some British and Australian linguists even joined in MacArthur's return to the Philippines.

Around the world, with each message translated and each prisoner interrogated, British language officers provided building blocks of intelligence needed to understand the enemy. As Kornicki illustrates, many of those blocks were small, as is often the case with individual intelligence reports, but some proved of major importance. In April 1942, most of the British Eastern Fleet at Trincomalee, Ceylon, escaped an attack from a superior force of the Imperial Japanese Navy, retreating to the safety of Kilindini to fight again another day, after linguists translated in advance an intercepted and decoded Japanese message. (130) In Burma, the translation at one point by linguists far from the front—called “backroom boys” at their corps headquarters—of a message in plain text that pinpointed the movement of Japanese troops enabled Gurkhas of the 33rd Corps to stage a jungle ambush. (145) In the Philippines, a British Commonwealth wireless unit passed on translations of Japanese messages that gave away the position of enemy troop ships bringing reinforcements to the beleaguered Japanese units defending Leyte against MacArthur's forces, resulting in one instance in the destruction on November 11, 1944, of an entire enemy convoy. (226)

At the end of the war, British language officers served as interpreters in the surrender of various Japanese commanders in the field, participated in the search for and trial of war criminals, and performed other tasks. Many left active duty not long after the war's end. Others went to Japan to serve as members of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. Comprising units from Britain, India, Australia, and New Zealand, BCOF was responsible for the occupation of Shikoku (one of the four main islands in the Japanese archipelago) and the southern part of the main island of Honshu from 1946 until Japan regained sovereignty in 1952.<sup>8</sup>

For decades after V-J Day, many of Britain's wartime linguists worked in careers related to Japan or the classics. As was the case among their US counterparts, some British language officers became Japan experts. Others returned to the study of the classics. Sir Hugh Cortazzi, assigned at war's end to a mobile unit of the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Center (CSDIC) in British India, served his country years later as ambassador to Japan. Richard Storry, who withdrew just in time from the besieged fortress at Singapore, fought at the battle for Imphal, participated in the subsequent campaign to retake Burma, and became a professor of Japanese studies at Oxford University. John Chadwick, who at Bletchley Park translated highly technical Japanese documents after serving earlier in the war as an Italian linguist, resumed his prewar classical studies at Cambridge University and became a noted scholar of classical Greek there.<sup>a</sup> (288)

Kornicki's story of Britain's unsung Japanese-language officers, a tale now well told, provides the reader a wealth of information on how Britain trained so many linguists to such great effect in World War II. *Eavesdropping* is an excellent resource, featuring many maps and photographs to supplement the text, complemented by an extensive bibliography and index.



*The reviewer:* Stephen C. Mercado, a retired language officer in the CIA Open Source Enterprise, is a frequent reviewer of books in foreign languages for *Studies* and other journals. He is in his fifth decade of learning Japanese.

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a. At Cambridge, Chadwick worked with a colleague to decipher an early script for Mycenaean Greek, a writing system that preceded the Greek alphabet.

### ***Endnotes***

1. Michael Smith, *The Emperor's Codes: Bletchley Park and the Breaking of Japan's Secret Ciphers* (Bantam, 2000). For my review, see *Intelligence and National Security*, 16:2 (Summer 2001): 166–7.
2. For a broad intelligence history, see Richard J. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge, 2000).
3. For a history of US Army language officers, see James C. McNaughton, *Nisei Linguists: Japanese Americans in the Military Intelligence Service During World War II* (Department of the Army, 2006), which I reviewed for *Studies in Intelligence* 52, no.4 (December 2008). For the US Navy, see Roger Dingman, *Deciphering the Sun: Navy and Marine Corps Codebreakers, Translators, and Interpreters in the Pacific War* (Naval Institute Press, 2009), which I reviewed for *Studies in Intelligence* 54, no. 2 (June 2010).
4. Rikkyo University's Dr. Takeda Kayoko, whose praise for Dr. Kornicki's book is displayed on the rear of his book's dust jacket, covers much the same ground in her own work, *Taiheiyo Senso Nihongo chohosen: Gengokan no katsudo to shiren* [Pacific War, Japanese Intelligence Warfare: Language Officer Activities and Tribulations] (Chikuma Shinsho, 2018).
5. American readers of intelligence history should find refreshing the book's British focus on World War II, in which December 7, 1941, marks not only the Imperial Japanese Navy's raid on Pearl Harbor but the Imperial Japanese Army's landing in Malaya en route to the conquest of Britain's fortress at Singapore.
6. That British instructor was far from the first to note the difficulty of Japanese. Jesuit missionary Lourenço Mexia described in the 16th century the language as "copious," with two alphabets and Chinese "picture-letters" that "are something which one never finishes learning." See Michael Cooper, *They Came to Japan: An Anthology of European Reports on Japan, 1543–1640* (University of California Press, 1965), 176.
7. A senior US naval officer, after determining that a candidate had no knowledge of Japanese and no coursework related to Japan, would still accept him into the language program if he were a member of the elite Phi Beta Kappa student honor society (Dingman, 26). Many of those US Navy recruits were also students of Latin, Greek, and modern European languages. Similarly, recruiters for Britain's Bedford Japanese School favored classicists from Oxford and Cambridge for their general excellence and their particular skill in "decoding" texts (32).
8. The author notes that nearly all the British forces had left Japan by April 1948.







## Intelligence in Public Media

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### ***All the Frequent Troubles of Our Days: The True Story of the American Woman at the Heart of the German Resistance to Hitler***

Rebecca Donner (Little, Brown and Company, 2021), 576 pages, illustrations.

#### **Reviewed by Melissa Jane Taylor**

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In the past several years, a number of notable fiction and nonfiction books on women's resistance during World War II have been published, further enhancing our understanding about the myriad roles women undertook during the war and underlining popular interest in the subject.<sup>a</sup> Understanding these nuanced, and often dangerous, roles undertaken by women on both the home front and abroad is long overdue and has been long under-acknowledged in the historiography of this period.

Rebecca Donner's *All the Frequent Troubles of Our Days* contributes to this expanding understanding of women's roles by shining a light on the story of Mildred Harnack. This is a story of war and resistance, American diplomats and students, politically affluent circles and political neophytes, and espionage. The book, intended for a popular audience, is skillfully written. It reads like an absorbing mystery that is difficult to put down. A unique feature of the book is that it incorporates portions of primary source documents, highlighting the archival repositories around the world that Donner consulted. This technique helps bring the reader closer to the time period.

Mildred Fish was Wisconsin native, who married German-national Arvid Harnack in 1926 and moved with him to Germany after he completed his studies at the University of Wisconsin. The Harnacks became active in the *Rote Kapelle* (Red Orchestra) resistance movement while living in Berlin. Although the Red Orchestra was a relatively small, diffuse network of anti-fascist resisters, its tactics become more daring the longer the Nazis remained in power. The Harnacks' connections read like

a political "who's who" in wartime Berlin. Mildred was an academic and skilled at recruiting her students; Arvid eventually joined the Ministry of Economics and used his position to provide intelligence to the United States and the Soviet Union. Told in parallel with Mildred's story is that of her courier, Donald Heath, Jr., son of a US diplomat posted to Berlin. There is no doubt the story of the Harnacks and Heath deserves to be told, and Donner has told the story well. However, given its originality and the relative paucity of publications previously devoted to Harnack, it is disappointing that Donner's citations make it difficult to reproduce her findings. In several instances where I was familiar with the archival sources cited, the citations were inadequate to replicate the research, and it was only through my own knowledge of the collections that I could determine where the documents were located.<sup>b</sup>

Two other problems mar the work. First, Donner does not always provide adequate context for Harnack's life and work. Historians interested in gender during the Nazi period have argued that women were successful at taking on new and often dangerous roles because it was not expected—they were inconspicuous. Donner fails to make this link between the early historiography on resistance that she cites and the historiography on gender. In a similar vein, there is little contextualization for the Red Orchestra as a resistance movement. Because most of the individuals discussed in the book participated in the resistance, the movement seems larger than its actual membership—about 150 people.<sup>c</sup> Furthermore, many of the members were women, which also cries out for

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a. For example, Anthony Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See* (Scribner, 2014); Kristin Hannah, *The Nightingale: A Novel* (St. Martin's Press, 2015); Judy Batalion, *The Light of Days: The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters in Hitler's Ghettos* (William Morrow, 2021); and Liza Mundy, *Code Girls: The Untold Story of the American Women Code Breakers of World War II* (Hatchett Books, 2017).

b. For example, on page 494, the citation reads: "'With few exceptions': Messersmith to Undersecretary of State Phillips, June 26, 1933, Messersmith papers." No box or folder number is listed. On page 519, the citation reads: "'principally on business': 'Foreign Service Officers,' *American Foreign Service Journal*." The *American Foreign Service Journal* has been published at least 10 times a year since 1918. A date would be necessary to locate this quotation. On page 526, the citation reads: "enciphers intelligence reports: *The Rote Kapelle* (Finck Study), RG 319, 66, NARA." Because Records Group 319 contains more than 15 million items this citation is insufficient.

c. The German Resistance Memorial Center estimates that the Red Orchestra had about 150 members. (See <https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/recess/topics/14-the-red-orchestra/>). The figure provided by the German Resistance Memorial Center seems to only account for the

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additional analysis. Without this type of contextualization, it is difficult to understand the significance of Harnack's actions: as a woman, was she an anomaly in the resistance movement? Was this a huge movement or a relatively small, localized one? Donner uses myriad sources to paint a compelling picture of Harnack, but absent greater context, it is difficult to understand the significance of her story.

Donner also makes some claims for Harnack that require additional explanation. Donner writes briefly that Harnack helped Jews escape Nazi Germany. A claim such as that warrants more than the three paragraphs devoted to it. Donner makes it appear that it was pro forma to be able to help Jews escape by knowing US diplomats who could assist, in this instance Ambassador William Dodd and Consul General George Messersmith. (212) However, historians of the US response to the Holocaust have documented how difficult immigration was, even in the best of circumstances.<sup>a</sup> Harnack's actions, in this instance, deserve to be explored in greater detail so that her efforts, whatever they were, can be appreciated. In one chapter, Donner outlines the transition that Arvid Harnack made in 1941 from anti-fascist informant to spy for the Soviets. (338–45) Here again, Donner is not explicit about the type of intelligence Arvid shared with the Soviets, although it was clear that intelligence was being gathered from a number of Red Orchestra members and it included military intelligence. If Arvid was providing two discreet types of intelligence to the United States and the Soviet Union, that is worthy of teasing out in more detail.

Nearing the end of the book, Donner writes, "Mildred Harnack and her coconspirators are charged with treason." (418) More detail or a stronger argument is needed here. How was a US citizen charged with treason against the German government? There may be adequate

explanations, but a seeming contradiction devoid of any explanation raises a multitude of questions for the reader. Hitler's decision to overturn Mildred's original verdict and order that she be retried, resulting in her execution, heightens the need for explanation.<sup>b</sup> (428)

The second major problem with the book is Donner's lack of familiarity with the history of the US Foreign Service, which leads her to make some inaccurate claims. For example, citing an interview with Heath, Jr., Donner outlines Donald Heath, Sr.'s career in the department. (273–76) Donner writes that the senior Heath "had talked his way into a job with the US State Department as vice-consul." (274) Heath may have been charming, but he was not exempt from the Foreign Service entry requirements, and the department's *Register* makes clear that Heath took and passed the consular exam in 1920.<sup>c</sup> Donner goes on to describe a career that fails to comport with the natural trajectory of a Foreign Service Officer's career, which despite ebbs and flows is governed by the various Foreign Service Acts and policies applicable during his tenure. Donald Heath Jr.'s interview, absent substantiation through Department of State documentation, leaves readers with a mistaken view of Heath's career.

Donner describes Heath's intelligence work at great length, but when considered in the context of the evolution of the department, Heath's career can be given a different interpretation. Donner writes that "Heath would need to devote most of his time to his second job, which was the real, off-the-books reason Heath was being dispatched to Berlin. The second job wasn't within the ranks of the State Department. It didn't even have a name." (276) Heath operated in his informal capacity to provide economic intelligence to Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, thus becoming "Morgenthau's Man." Heath

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members in Berlin. The organization was diffuse and operated in several countries in Europe. For more information, see Norman J.W. Goda, "Tracking the Red Orchestra: Allied Intelligence, Soviet Spies, Nazi Criminals," in *U.S. Intelligence and the Nazis*, eds. Richard Breitman, Norman J.W. Goda, Timothy Naftali, and Robert Wolfe (National Archives Trust Fund Board, National Archives and Records Administration, for the Nazi War Crimes and Japanese Imperial Government Records Interagency Working Group, 2004): 293–316.

a. For the history of America's response to the Holocaust, see Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jews, 1933–1945* (Indiana University Press, 1987); Rebecca Erbelding, *Rescue Board: The Untold Story of America's Efforts to Save the Jews of Europe* (Doubleday, 2018); Melissa Jane Taylor, "Bureaucratic Response to Human Tragedy: American Consuls and the Jewish Plight in Vienna, 1938–1941," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 21:2 (Fall 2007): 243–67; and Barry Trachtenberg, *The United States and the Nazi Holocaust* (Bloomsbury, 2018).

b. See also the German Resistance Memorial Center's biography of Mildred Harnack. [https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/recess/biographies/index\\_of\\_persons/biographie/view-bio/mildred-harnack/?no\\_cache=1](https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/recess/biographies/index_of_persons/biographie/view-bio/mildred-harnack/?no_cache=1) (accessed 26 October 2021)

c. See *Biographic Register of the Department of State, 1922* (Government Printing Office): 131. <https://archive.org/details/registercontaini-1922unit/page/130/mode/2up> (accessed October 25, 2021)

was not the only “Morgenthau Man”; these ranks also included FSOs Merle Cochran in Paris and William W. Butterworth in London. While Donner is not explicit about what type of intelligence work these men were doing, a letter from then Assistant Secretary of State Messersmith explained their assignments: Heath was “to do this financial reporting which is becoming increasingly important and in which Mr. Morgenthau, the Secretary of the Treasury, is personally and deeply interested. By assigning some of our own officers in whom Mr. Morgenthau has confidence to this special work, we have been able to stave off the appointment of financial attaches, which, as you know, is very important.”<sup>a</sup>

Knowledge of the organizational history of the department and the Foreign Service for this period lead me to a different interpretation of the evidence than Donner derived. I read this evidence as an example of the evolution of the Foreign Service toward greater specialization among its officers and to meet the need for a greater focus on economic issues.<sup>b</sup> Before the latter half of the 20th century, no such specializations existed; officers were generalists in the broadest sense. Beginning as early as the

1920s, some senior officers in the department acknowledged a need for economic specialists in the Foreign Service. In reading the evidence from the organizational perspective, I see the need for in-country economic expertise during a period when the Foreign Service had too few officers and was not hiring new ones. Morgenthau’s men were the answer to this dilemma, and these men were some of the first economic officers in the department. Donner characterizes Heath’s work as conducting highly secret intelligence when in reality it was a bureaucratic reorganization as the result of an expanding foreign policy agenda. Donner’s description is broad and imprecise when this topic calls for much greater detail and context.

Readers looking for a great read, whose basic historical arc is factually accurate, are in for a real treat with Donner’s book. Mildred Harnack’s story is fascinating and is finally getting the attention it deserves. The story is well told and enjoyable to read. However, readers looking for precise research and a contextualized story supported by the historiography will be sorely disappointed with this book, which falls short on those counts.



*The reviewer:* Melissa Jane Taylor is a historian in the Office of the Historian, US Department of State. A historian of modern Germany by training, her expertise extends to the history of the US Foreign Service, especially during World War II.

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a. George Messersmith to Raymond Geist, April 5, 1938, Box 9, Folder 61, MSS 0109, George S. Messersmith papers, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware. [https://udspace.udel.edu/bitstream/handle/19716/6950/mss0109\\_0974-00.pdf](https://udspace.udel.edu/bitstream/handle/19716/6950/mss0109_0974-00.pdf) (accessed October 26, 2021). Donner cites a document from Messersmith to Geist dated April 15, 1938. No document with that date was found in the corresponding folder and box. Neither did the subsequent folder contain a document that met the cited criteria.

b. Today, FSO generalists have the option of five specialized tracks they can pursue during their careers—political, economic, management, consular, or public affairs—also known as cones. That system was formally established in the late 1960s and early 1970s.



## ***Intelligence in Public Media***

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### ***The Nazis of Copley Square: The Forgotten Story of the Christian Front***

Charles R. Gallagher (Harvard Univ. Press, 2021), 336 pages, photos, notes, index

#### ***Reviewed by John D. Woodward, Jr.***

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Father Charles Gallagher, an associate professor of history at Boston College, has vividly brought to life a little known, largely shameful, and eminently intriguing episode of American history in his latest book, *The Nazis of Copley Square: The Forgotten Story of the Christian Front*. Gallagher has done groundbreaking work for the field of intelligence studies with this effort. He is the first scholar to document thoroughly the leading role Nazi intelligence and, specifically, SS officer Dr. Herbert Scholz, played in organizing and supporting covert action in Boston. He also casts welcome light on British intelligence operations to counter Nazi efforts in the United States.

As is well documented, many Americans supported the isolationist movement prior to Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hitler's declaration of war against the United States, and the US entry into World War II. Much has been written about the America First Committee, whose founding members in 1940 included several members of Congress and Charles Lindbergh, the famed aviator. In the late 1930s, Father Charles Coughlin, the "radio priest," drew tens of millions of weekly listeners to his broadcasts, which featured a strong isolationist message laced with anti-Semitism.

As part of this effort, Coughlin played an instrumental role in establishing the Christian Front in the United States in 1939. He drew inspiration from the work of Arnold Lunn, a British scholar and journalist who converted to Catholicism in the early 1930s. Lunn was appalled at the atrocities committed against Catholic clergy by the communist-supported Republican forces during the Spanish Civil War. Lunn believed that Christians around the world suffered as a result and that they should join forces to oppose communism.

Coughlin took Lunn's formulation and molded it into his Christian Front—a group opposed to communism with heavy overlays of anti-Semitism. In Coughlin's reshaping, "Judeo-Bolshevism" became the threat to Christianity and Jews became the enablers and implementers of communism. To the Christian Front, Nazi Germany had backed

the Catholics in Spain and thrown military support behind Generalissimo Franco, while the USSR supported "godless priest-killers." The Soviets were the enemy.

What Gallagher exposes with his keen scholarship is how Nazi Germany used the Christian Front to run a large, well-organized covert influence program in Boston to keep the United States from intervening on the side of the United Kingdom, especially critical from June 1940, when it stood alone against the Third Reich. Gallagher recounts how SS officer Herbert Scholz, working from the German consulate on Beacon Street, recruited and then provided resources and guidance to Francis Moran, the Irish-American leader of the Christian Front's Boston chapter.

#### ***Pushing on an Open Door***

The Christian Front found fervent support among many Irish-American Catholics in Boston, a city with pockets of anti-Semitism, racism, and enmity toward the UK government. In Moran, the Nazis found their ideal spy and agent of influence: skilled organizer, devout Catholic, and articulate public speaker who had been educated by German priests and spoke excellent German.

Gallagher reveals that, despite extensive surveillance of the Christian Front and the German consulate by law enforcement, including the FBI, army and navy intelligence units, and Boston police, US authorities never realized Moran was a Nazi agent, nor did they appreciate Scholz's true intelligence mission in Boston. In fact, they seemed to have bought the cover story that "Handsome Herbert" had gotten into trouble while at the German embassy in Washington, DC, and was embarrassingly reassigned to consular duties in Boston.

To the contrary, Scholz was a Nazi on a mission in Boston. In addition to recruiting Moran, Scholz also helped to rein in the anti-Nazi criticisms of Heinrich Bruning, the former German chancellor (1930–32) who was in exile at Harvard. And lest there be any doubt, Gallagher details Scholz's ardent Nazi beliefs. He was too

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young to join the German military during World War I, but as a teenager Scholz joined the Freikorps, a paramilitary group with political ideals aligned with the Nazis. He next joined the Hitler's thuggish Brownshirts and studied for his PhD with Werner Schingnitz, "the top Nazi at the University of Leipzig." Scholz then transferred to the SS as a headquarters aide, where his duties included assisting Deputy Fuhrer Rudolph Hess.

### ***MI6 Responds***

As Gallagher makes clear, British intelligence launched its own largely successfully covert action to counter the Christian Front in Boston, then regarded as one of the most anti-Semitic cities in the United States. The British provided extensive funding through a cutout to Frances Sweeney. Sweeney was a journalist and devout Irish-American Catholic who fought tirelessly against racism, fascism, and anti-Semitism in Boston, drawing the ire of Boston's Catholic leaders. She self-published the small newspaper *Boston City Reporter* and founded the Irish-American Defense Association, which doggedly campaigned against Moran's Christian Front.

In Gallagher's judgment, Sweeney was not witting of the British intelligence role in bankrolling her efforts. She thought the money came from Americans disgusted with the pro-Nazi, anti-Semitic nature of the Front, a very plausible cover story.

Who was the American cutout? Gallagher, a meticulous researcher, does not identify the person, as he has not yet been able to reach a clear and convincing conclusion. British MI6 records containing the cutout's identity evidently remain classified. But the list of possibilities is probably not long. At a minimum, it would have been someone thoroughly trusted by British intelligence and respected by Sweeney.

The next question is whether the US government was aware of or cooperating with the MI6 covert influence operation? Recall that before becoming President Franklin D. Roosevelt's coordinator of information in 1941, William "Wild Bill" Donovan had been FDR's emissary on sensitive trips to the UK and had met frequently with

William Stephenson, the MI6 chief in New York City known as "Intrepid."

Did British intelligence ask Donovan to provide a trusted cutout? According to Evan Thomas, who has chronicled the CIA's early years, Donovan and Stephenson became so close "they were known as Big Bill and Little Bill."<sup>a</sup> Donovan had no use for isolationists like Amb. Joseph Kennedy, whom he had helped oust from London. Moreover, Donovan strongly supported the Lend Lease Act, which the Christian Front adamantly opposed. Perhaps this mystery will be solved in Gallagher's next book.

As a result of Sweeney's prodding, in January 1942 Boston police raided the Christian Front offices, seized thousands of books and pamphlets, and threatened Moran with arrest for selling unpatriotic publications. This gesture allowed the police chief to claim the patriotic high ground, but Moran emerged unscathed from his police interrogations. Sweeney continued her efforts to combat anti-Semitism until her death on June 19, 1944, age 36, of rheumatic heart failure. When warned that her campaigning would put a strain on her heart, Sweeney had replied, "Well, then, I'll die fighting for what I believe, won't I?"<sup>b</sup>

### ***The War Years***

When FDR closed the German embassy and consulates in summer 1941, Herbert Scholz received a new assignment to the German legation in Hungary and then to northern Italy where he was at war's end.

Interrogated after the war by the US Army Counter Intelligence Corps in Italy, and later by a US Justice Department official in Germany, Scholz stuck to his cover story that he was a diplomat with a bad heart, who only joined the Nazi Party to keep his job. US counterintelligence experts accepted that story, and, in Gallagher's telling, Scholz even outfoxed a young Captain James Jesus Angleton, who went on to become the CIA's counterintelligence chief. Like many former Nazis, Scholz ventured to South America for a period but returned to West Germany, where he applied for and received a German diplomatic pension in 1958.

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a. Evan Thomas, *The Very Best Men* (Simon & Schuster, 1995). See also Michael Thompson, "Thoughts Provoked by *The Very Best Men*," *Studies in Intelligence: Annual Unclassified Edition* 39, no. 5, 1996, 25–34.

b. Isabel Currier, "Frances Sweeney," *The Commonweal*, 427–9, August 18, 1944.

Although the Christian Front continued to spread anti-Semitic propaganda and stoke violent attacks on Boston Jews during the war, it gradually lost momentum. Francis Moran joined the US Army and after the war worked as a reference librarian in Boston.

It is a bromide, but sometimes fact truly is stranger than fiction, especially where espionage is concerned. Charles Gallagher's *Nazis of Copley Square* is a unique and engaging contribution to intelligence studies.



*The reviewer:* John D. Woodward Jr., a former CIA and Defense Department official, is a Professor of the Practice of International Relations at the Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies at Boston University.





## ***Intelligence in Public Media***

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### ***Stars and Spies: Intelligence Operations and the Entertainment Business***

Christopher Andrew and Julius Green (Bodley Head, 2021), 502 pages, photographs, bibliography.

#### ***Reviewed by Kenneth Lasoen***

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One craves the spotlight, the other shuns it at all cost. One is on an actual stage, the other plays (behind) the international stage. And yet, as Christopher Andrew and Julius Green demonstrate in *Stars and Spies*, the entertainment industry and the secret world have rather a lot in common. Both play roles, are seldom what they appear, need scripts and disguises, seduce with eloquently told compelling stories, need a great deal of creativity and imagination, and have either lucrative pitches or crucial data to protect. But this connection has not really been explored before.

*Star and Spies* is written by two Cambridge scholars, famed intelligence historian Christopher Andrew and entertainment historian Julius Green. This illustrious pair set out to explore the affinities between the secret world and the entertainment industry, to prove that the Anglo-Saxon world—British intelligence books always mention UK and US intelligence in the same breath—is the market leader for both entertainment and intelligence.

Spanning five centuries of entertainment and intelligence history, the book commences in Elizabethan times when the foundations of modern drama were established, and follows the many playwrights, poets, and actors who were involved in espionage or covert action at some point in their careers. What is indeed remarkable, and therein lies the book's most important finding, is that most of the greats of premodern Western literature engaged first-hand in intelligence in the service of their country. Some even played pivotal roles in important events, such as when French playwright Pierre de Beaumarchais' American activities contributed to US independence (96–7). The book doesn't really delve much into how their experiences might have influenced their writings, which would have been interesting from a literature studies perspective.

Some chapters have attention for France; Russia is introduced in the sixth chapter but more for its surveillance of artists. The subversiveness of some literature and plays and the theatre as a meeting place of regime opponents provides another dimension of the relationship between

entertainment and intelligence work (117, 125, 143). The book then hits a new theme of how authors' experiences as targets of political police, surveillance, and informers, influenced their negative attitude toward intelligence services. This and censorship pit the two worlds against one another.

The 20th century was a crossroads both with the rise of the spy novel as a popular genre (160), but even more so with the advent of cinema as “the main vehicle for espionage fiction,” (172) with its adventure, glamour, and suspense (224). With it came the alarmism of all-pervasive foreign espionage heralding the World Wars, which once again saw entertainers allied with intelligence. Their imaginative brains were employed in the greatest strategic deception pulled off by Western intelligence, Operation Double Cross, under the inspired direction of historian-author-playwright John Masterman (251). The book demonstrates how the formation of the Special Relationship seems to have been in no small part due to the efforts of British actors and writers—including Roald Dahl and Noël Coward (276)—through an MI6-run influence operation.

Because of the strong role of covert action in the Cold War, the film industry was one of the fronts where this intelligence war was fought. The book's penultimate chapter sees the CIA, taking a page from Hoover's example of boosting the image of the FBI through favorable depictions (288), recruiting Hollywood to produce anti-Communist content (most notably, commissioning the adaptation of *Animal Farm*). This was partly a game of catch-up, because Soviet propaganda films had been closely linked to the Russian secret service since the 1930s (225), which is also when Hollywood and the BBC was infiltrated. Indeed, a remarkable number of successful screenwriters of espionage blockbusters appeared to have been under almost constant surveillance for their suspected Communist sympathies.

Of course, James Bond claims his seat on the throne of spy fiction, but Andrew and Green devote ample attention

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to the many other names that either had something to do, or had a run in with, US or British intelligence. The Cold War was equally a time of instrumentalizing artists for intelligence missions or of suspecting them as subversives (322). Before long, the CIA is faced with the other side of the Hollywood coin: the sensationalist portrayals of the agency “as a deeply sinister organization willing to deceive and murder US citizens, even its own personnel, to achieve its nefarious aims.” (329) This certainly put a damper on the relationship, urged on perhaps by the glum antidote to the glamour and suspense provided by the recently lamented John Le Carré.

Toward the final chapter one gets, however, the feeling that the book is a somewhat haphazard collection of cases that at times have something to do with the media, without there actually being a basis for what was and was not included. This last muddled chapter has Chinese spy entertainment culture suddenly making an appearance, and disparate themes like the Queen’s BAFTA award for jumping out of a helicopter with 007. Stella Rimington is mentioned for bringing MI5 out in public but not for her post-retirement contribution to spy fiction with her Liz Carlyle series. The book ends with the current MI6 chief’s Twitter account promoting diversity within the intelligence community, canceling Bond and Smiley alike.

Richly illustrated and full of amusing and ironic anecdotes, and with a lot of welcome attention to great women in espionage and entertainment, *Stars and Spies* comes with the erudition and extensive bibliography we are used to from Andrew. Still, the book could have done with some deeper analysis of what its contents actually mean. It is also missing a reflection on the tremendous influence of the cinematic representation of intelligence on public perception of what it is capable of, or on the problematic aspects of ideas about intelligence in pop culture. Bond epitomized alcoholism and misogyny; Jack Bauer normalized torture; Sidney Reilly is the ace of frauds rather than of spies (although the immensely popular 1980s series and its impact on viewers is left out of the book). Criticism of how spy fiction distorts the popular view of how intelligence functions, and thus creates both

wrongful perceptions of sinister dealings at the same time as unrealistic expectations of real-life capabilities, is reserved for *Spooks* and *Homeland*. The only praise for realism, rightly so, is extended to *Le bureau des légendes*; if only French intelligence really was that good. But there is a missed opportunity to point out how the habitual public and political outcry following strategic surprise or intelligence failure is the result of the painful confrontation with intelligence reality falling short of fiction.

In the end, while a pleasant and fascinating read, and a successful combination of two perspectives, the only thing new in *Stars and Spies* is how many of the greatest names in literature and theatre had something to do with intelligence one way or another. Everything else could already be read in *The Secret World*. It is more a collection of *faits divers*, more useful to those with antiquarian interests than the intelligence or media studies enthusiast, laced with the chauvinistic UK-US focus that presents intelligence—as a literary device as well as a trade—as a British-American invention.

This leads to some gaps in historical attention. The book ignores that many other trades have shown similar intersections with intelligence operations: painters like Pieter Rubens for instance were also used as spies or for clandestine diplomacy. There is but one mention of a musician (325). Most notably absent are the classics however. That the book starts in Elizabethan times makes sense given Shakespeare’s attention to intelligence, but to call him ‘the first dramatist to dwell on the frustration of policymakers who receive equivocal or uncertain intelligence and on the problems of speaking truth to power’ (24) is a bridge too far. In the Western canon, that distinction goes to Homer, and one finds plenty to say about human or supernatural intelligence in Euripides’ and Sophocles’ tragedies or even the comedies of Plautus and Terentius, whose spying and deception devices were a model for Molière (72–3) and other comedy writers. Indeed, that constant British emphasis on how special the Special Relationship is supposed to be has something of Plautus’s *Miles Gloriosus* about it.



*The reviewer:* Kenneth Lasoen is assistant professor of intelligence at the University of Antwerp.

## Intelligence in Public Media

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### **Captain Shakespear: Desert Exploration, Arabian Intrigue and the Rise of Ibn Sa'ud**

Alan Dillon (Medina Publishing, 2019), 297 pages, photographs, index.

**Reviewed by Daniel P. King, F.R.G.S.**

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*It is a great game, and you are the man for it, no doubt. . . . You are not afraid of danger? Well, in this job you would not be fighting with an army around you, but alone. You are fond of tackling difficulties? Well, I will give you a task which will try all your powers. Have you anything to say?*

*. . . There is a dry wind blowing through the East, and the parched grasses wait the spark. And the wind is blowing towards the Indian border. Whence comes that wind, think you?*

Thus does Sir Walter Bullivant, head of British intelligence, instruct Richard Hannay, the hero of John Buchan's *Greenmantle*, in a British attempt to head off the forces of bolshevism in the Middle East of 1916.<sup>a</sup> British intelligence, perhaps the best in the world at that time, had been fighting an intelligence battle over dominance in the East since 1837. The intrigue and confrontation among Britain, Russia, and China lasted into the 20th century. This lonely and dangerous game involved some famous—T.E. Lawrence—as well as some unremembered: Col. Percy Etherton, Sir Walter Malleon, Col. F.M. Bailey, and Capt. William Henry Irvine Shakespear.

Captain Shakespear died more than 100 years ago while photographing a battle between rival Saudi armies. He was last seen carrying his camera to higher ground to capture battle scenes between 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Abdul Rahman ibn Faisal ibn Turki ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad al Sa'ud, known as Ibn Sa'ud in the West) and his rival contender for Najd, al Rashid. His body was found several days later by his aide, with three gunshot wounds. Dying young at 36, he made his mark: explorer, early photographer of Arab leaders and scenes, including the first known photo of King 'Abd al-'Aziz; mapper of hundreds of miles of uncharted northern Arabia; and notably, writing the first treaty between Britain and Ibn Sa'ud, the earliest recognition of Saudi rule in Arabia.

Shakespear was born in Bombay, India, on October 29, 1878. He grew up speaking both English and Punjabi.

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a. John Buchan, *Greenmantle* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1916).

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After graduating in 1897 from Sandhurst, the Royal Military College, he served in the Devonshire Regiment and the Bengal Lancers of the Indian Army. He became fluent in Urdu, Pushtu, Farsi, and Arabic. Returning to Bombay he became an assistant district officer charged with leading a rat-extermination program that ended a plague outbreak that had killed more than a half-million people. He was noticed by the viceroy, who transferred him to the Indian Political Department, which also oversaw British interests in Persia and the Arab world. He served as consul in Bandar Abbas, on the Strait of Hormuz, becoming at age 25, the youngest consul in the Indian administration.

At this time, he became interested in photography, buying himself a pocket-sized Houghton Ensignette, which had been introduced in 1909. He used this camera to take the bulk of his photographs. He also acquired a No. 1 Panoram Kodak, the most portable panoramic camera of its day. He developed his own films using a Kodak developing tank inside his tent—an arduous task considering the high temperatures, dust and sand, and scarcity of clean, cool water needed for the cellulose-nitrate films of the day. His photographs and field notes are in the archives of the Royal Geographical Society in London.

In 1907, he returned to England for his first leave and then traveled through Persia and Turkey in his new eight-horsepower, single-cylinder Rover motorcar that he had purchased in Karachi. Heading back to the Middle East, he drove his car to his new assignment in Kuwait. He enjoyed falconry and acquired a pack of Saluki sighthounds. Unlike Lawrence of Arabia, he wore his military uniform and pith helmet, only resorting to Arab garb when fearful of attack from Turkish forces or hostile tribesmen. His spare time was spent making field notes, mapping, and taking photographs. He was an accomplished rider of camels and horses and reputedly an expert marksman with a revolver.

He first met 'Abd al-'Aziz following a 1,000-mile horse ride south of Kuwait, and his record of this leader

was the first by a European. Shakespear described him as a “fair, handsome man, considerably above average Arab height with a particularly frank and open face, and after initial reserve . . . of genial and very courteous manner.” ‘Abd al-‘Aziz was evidently impressed by Shakespear’s knowledge of the desert and his grasp of Najdi Arabic; “He offered me a welcome should I ever contemplate a tour so far afield as Riyadh.”<sup>a</sup>

After ‘Abd al-‘Aziz forced the Turks out of al-Hasa and attained control of the eastern gulf, the British took him seriously and treaty negotiations took place at Shakespear’s next meeting with him. Returning to Kuwait, Shakespear planned his next expedition across the Arabian Peninsula. In a note to his immediate superior, Sir Percy Cox, he described his plans to collect mapping and survey details. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz greeted him as he rode into Riyadh and after three days, moved northwest, crossing the Nafud desert to al-Jawf where he met the leader of ‘Anaiza confederation and ally of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz. After 111 days, he reached Cairo, along the way exchanging letters with ‘Abd al-‘Aziz and advising the British foreign office that ‘Abd al-‘Aziz would eventually lead an independent Arabia. His data and surveys provided the British War Office with invaluable information useful for the coming world conflict. The Foreign Office, however, disbelieved his opinion that the Turks were doomed in Arabia.

With the beginning of World War I, Shakespear returned to Kuwait. Britain was now convinced that ‘Abd al-‘Aziz was the key in confronting the Turks in Arabia. They needed Shakespear’s help gaining ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s cooperation to drive the Turks from Basra. This could be accomplished by negotiating a treaty with the king that would recognize him as ruler of Najd. Shakespear found ‘Abd al-‘Aziz near Majma’ah and stayed with him as they moved northward toward Jarab with ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s army of several thousand men, intending to confront the army of Al Rashid in a contest for Najd. Shakespear began negotiation of a treaty. The resulting battle was indecisive.

While he lost his political struggle, he foresaw Ibn Sa’ud becoming the ruler of Arabia. Sir John Glubb

later wrote: “When I was on a mission in 1928 to ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, I heard him say with emphasis that Captain Shakespear was the greatest Englishman he had ever known.”<sup>b</sup> In time, his accomplishments were superseded by other Middle East luminaries such as T.E. Lawrence, Gertrude Bell, and Harry St. John Bridger Philby, each contributors to the British Empire’s expansion.

Then, as now, Middle East diplomacy depended largely on personal connections. Britain’s interest settled on expanding its colonial ambitions and countering Ottoman Turkey. The shortsightedness of British political leadership to recognize the rising power in Arabia led Shakespear to defy explicit orders not to meet with Ibn Sa’ud in 1913. Priorities however changed with the onset of WWI, and Shakespear was dispatched to negotiate a treaty with Ibn Sa’ud. He met with Ibn Sa’ud on December 31, 1914, and remained with Ibn Sa’ud’s Bedouin army, meeting his fate 24 days later at Jarab.

That day, conspicuous in his army uniform and pith helmet, Shakespear refused ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s plea to wear Arab dress. Taking his camera, he sought out some higher ground near a field artillery position. There, according to the gunner, he was killed by enemy small arms fire.

Alan Dillon is the second author to chronicle the life and exploits of the barely remembered, but mightily accomplished, diplomat and explorer. (The first was H.V.F. Winstone in *Captain Shakespear: A Portrait*, London, 1976.) A former diplomat in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Dillon served in Afghanistan, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. His knowledge of the history and geopolitics of the Middle East is extensive and incisive. He understands the Arab mind and brings this knowledge into perspective in this thought-provoking analysis of Captain Shakespear and the British experience. Understanding history is vital in assessing the role of the West in this vital area of the world today. Scholars and diplomats would be well-served by a careful and serious reading of Dillon’s book.



*The reviewer:* Daniel P. King is a retired civil servant and recently retired university and community college professor of government. He is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (UK) and has written extensively on foreign policy and intelligence.

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a. Peter Harrigan, “Captain Shakespear,” *Saudi Aramco World* 53, no. 5 (September/October, 2002): 12–23.

b. H.V.F. Winstone, *Captain Shakespear: A Portrait* (Jonathan Cape, 1976).

## **Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf—March 2022**

*Compiled and reviewed by Hayden Peake\**

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### **GENERAL**

***Spies, Lies, and Algorithms: The History and Future of American Intelligence***, by Amy B. Zegart

### **HISTORICAL**

***Between Five Eyes: 50 Years of Intelligence Sharing***, by Anthony R. Wells

***Checkmate In Berlin: The Cold War Showdown that Shaped the Modern World***, by Giles Milton

***Love and Deception: Philby in Beirut***, by James Hanning

***Spies and Traitors: Kim Philby, James Angleton and the Friendship and Betrayal that Would Shape MI6, the CIA and the Cold War***, by Michael Holzman

***The Writing of the Gods: The Race to Decode the Rosetta Stone***, by Edward Dolnick (reviewed by J. E. Leonardson)

### **MEMOIR**

***The Recruiter: Spying and the Lost Art of American Intelligence***, by Douglas London



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\* Unless otherwise noted at the end of a review, all have been written by Hayden Peake.

## **General**

***Spies, Lies, and Algorithms: The History and Future of American Intelligence***, by Amy B. Zegart. (Princeton University Press, 2022) 405 pages, endnotes, bibliography, index.

Amy Zegart is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and at Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies. Her interest in intelligence was initiated in part by a summer (1993) on the National Security Council staff and continued through contacts in the Intelligence Community (IC) since then. She has written several books on intelligence (391) each identifying weaknesses and advocating various corrective actions. *Spies, Lies, and Algorithms* takes a somewhat different approach by reviewing the history of the subject in light of recent advances in information technology.

The first chapter provides an overview of the book. After discussing the shock of discovering that CIA has a Twitter feed, she identifies the other technological advances such as digital communications, the impact of artificial intelligence, and quantum computing, to name a few, that are contributing to a "moment of reckoning" in the IC. (2) Then she points out that popular understanding of these concepts can be inhibited by "spy-themed entertainment or spytainment" (17) when they serve as primary sources of public knowledge about spying. Her corrective is education to overcome this disparity. Toward that end, she gives a definition of intelligence and reviews the "core missions" of the IC—collection, analysis, and covert action—using the Bin Laden case as an exemplar. (79)

Subsequent, well-documented individual chapters deal with the history of the subject, analytic issues, covert action, counterintelligence, congressional oversight, and the 18 intelligence agencies, including the office of the Director of National Intelligence, in the IC. (73) Topics are illustrated with well known cases.

Counterintelligence, for example, begins with important definitions and then is examined "from the old days to the cyber age" (144) to demonstrate the scope and magnitude of the subject. With one exception it is an accurate review. The exception is the assertion that it "was Philby who taught Angleton the intelligence business." (162) Those who served with Angleton in London have noted that his contacts with Philby were brief and occasional probably due to the great difference in rank.

One topic, open source intelligence (OSINT), appears in several categories, and its value in the internet age, she suggests, warrants "it own agency." (82) Zegart has raised this point before and does not discuss the numerous organizational or practical difficulties such a move would entail in either source. She does devote a chapter to the use of OSINT in the nuclear world, where she acknowledges that the final judgment must rest with the IC experts.

*Spies, Lies, and Algorithms* concludes with a chapter on cyber threats that begins with an intriguing portrayal of recent Russian cyber operations and capabilities in the United States. In Zegart's judgment, "No global threat has been more wide-ranging and faster changing than cyber." (254) It is a battleground like no other. And after explaining how cyber and intelligence are linked, she discusses why "the character of war look[s] entirely different in cyberspace. (259) In dealing with this ever changing world, "intelligence has never been more important or more challenging." (276)

For the general reader and the student, *Spies, Lies, and Algorithms* is an excellent introduction to the subject.

## **Historical**

***Between Five Eyes: 50 Years of Intelligence Sharing***, by Anthony R. Wells. (Casemate Publishers, 2020) 246 pages, endnotes, bibliography, appendix, photos, index.

Anthony Wells studied at Oxford, the Royal Naval College, and the University of London, where he received his doctorate. After joining the Royal Navy, he served both in Washington, DC, and at sea on joint intelligence assignments with the US Navy. Returning to civilian

life, he became a US citizen and worked in the US Intelligence Community with the Department of Defense, the National Reconnaissance Office, the CIA, and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. (ix) Thus, by his own account, he is a rare individual who has worked

for British intelligence as a British citizen and US intelligence as a US citizen. Reading this brief background in the introduction to *Between Five Eyes*, raises questions as to the nature of his various intelligence assignments, and one might reasonably expect answers in the succeeding chapters. If so, disappointment quickly follows.

*Between Five Eyes* is a chronological account of the developing relationships among the Five Eyes nations—the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—as perceived by Wells. He describes the Five Eyes connections as the inevitable consequence of the special relationship between the United States and Britain. Then he tells how they progressed from the end of WWII through the Cold War to the present.

As Wells treats the cultural, political, and structural aspects of the relationship, he weaves in commentary about the intelligence connections between the nations. Perhaps because of his personal background, many of the cases he cites are naval in nature. And he says little about the case details while stressing his role. For example, in a discussion of “The Impact of the Walker Spy Ring,” Wells

implies that he warned US intelligence in the 1970s about what turned out to be Walker’s espionage. After charging the IC with complacency in the matter, Wells notes, “In meetings with my opposite number in Washington during the 1970s and early 1980s, it was difficult to convince them otherwise, notwithstanding the contents of one of our significant British intelligence reports that I led, and it was very limited in distribution.” (74–75)

This quotation illustrates the fundamental problems found in this book. First, comments about his role are not sourced. Second, Wells refers to his “opposite number” without giving any indication of his position, organization, or rank. In fact, Wells never reveals these details about himself in or out of the military.

*Between Five Eyes* has a good bibliography and wide subject coverage, though nothing new beyond Wells’ puffed-up, often ambiguous, descriptions of his role in intelligence. The general reader can learn as much about Five Eyes from a Google search; the scholar has a great deal of fact-checking ahead.

***Checkmate In Berlin: The Cold War Showdown that Shaped the Modern World***, by Giles Milton. (Henry Holt and Company, 2021) 377 pages, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

For many people today, mention of Cold War Berlin calls to mind the CIA’s Berlin Tunnel, the omnipresent East German Stasi, the Wall and John le Carré espionage novels. But before each of these events occurred, beginning in early 1945, the armies of the Western Allies and the Soviet Union spent four years establishing and implementing the occupation’s ground rules. It was a challenging endeavor. *Checkmate In Berlin* tells the story.

British author Giles Milton has chosen US Army Col. Frank “Howlin’ Mad” Howley as the principal protagonist. Howley was a cavalry officer assigned to military government duties after suffering a serious back injury. In 1945 he was chosen to head an American team to establish and operate the American sector in Berlin. His contacts with his Soviet counterparts soon convinced him that they were more enemy than friend. He unflinchingly opposed their persistent efforts to drive the Allies out of Berlin, a position not initially shared by his allied peers. His dealing with the Soviets were from then on a mix of resisting and often successfully opposing their attempts to dominate the occupation.

While Howley’s performance was indeed impressive, his story alone does not a book make. Thus, Milton provides both historical and biographical filler. For example, for background, he begins with a lengthy chapter on the Yalta conference. Later he discusses the defection of Igor Gouzenko in Canada to illustrate true Soviet behavior and intentions. And then there is the interesting account of “Hitler’s teeth” (58–59) and the intelligence help Howley received from one David Murphy, who for some reason Milton does not associate with the CIA Berlin Base. Milton also provides details of his boss, General Lucius Clay, his Allied peers and his Soviet adversaries.

One of Howley’s most effective moves against the Soviets occurred during the Berlin Airlift when Howley, in a counterblockade, closed off Soviet access to reparations food and material that had been passing from West Berlin to the East. Now they began to feel the pinch. For Howley checkmate had been achieved.

*Checkmate In Berlin* never makes Howley’s title clear. It also has him dealing with generals responsible for the other sectors of Berlin for his entire four-year tour, a monumental achievement in itself. Curiously, Milton

makes no mention of Howley's promotion to brigadier general in early 1949, an event recorded in Howley's Wikipedia entry, which includes a photograph of General

Clay pinning brigadier's stars to Howley's uniform. This anomaly aside, Milton has produced a very readable and well-documented account of early Cold War history.

***Love and Deception: Philby in Beirut***, by James Hanning. (Corsair, 2021) 408 pages, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

Kim Philby, the most famous of the so-called Cambridge spies, married his third wife, Eleanor Brewer, in London in 1959. Philby was on leave from his base in Beirut, where he worked for the *Observer* newspaper and the *Economist* magazine, while secretly still serving as an agent for both MI6 and the KGB. His new wife, only recently divorced from *New York Times* reporter, Samuel Pope Brewer, was herself an accomplished journalist. Like many in Beirut, she had heard the rumors of Philby's treachery, but succumbing to his charm, tended to discount them.

At first Eleanor found married life with Kim exhilarating. But gradually for reasons she didn't understand, his drinking became a problem, and in January 1963 he disappeared. Hanning tells how the British government dealt with the loss, and what they did about Eleanor, who was returned to the UK.

Eleanor eventually made her way to Moscow, where she attempted to rekindle her marriage but was unsuccessful. She returned to the United States in 1965 and died in relative obscurity in 1968.

In 1968, she published an autobiography with the help of British author Patrick Seale, which reveals how she learned the truth and what she did about it. Author James Hanning acknowledges he has drawn "unashamedly" from her book, while adding historical background and other events to help complete her story. (2)

*Love and Deception* doesn't end with Eleanor's death. Hanning goes on to tell of Philby's fourth marriage and some of his discussions with KGB officers about his career. One surprising example concerns the case of Konstantine Volkov, a would-be defector to MI6 in 1945 whom Philby thought had been executed by the KGB after Philby exposed him. According to Hanning, KGB general Yuri Kobaladze told Philby that Volkov was still alive. (349)

*Love and Deception* tells how Eleanor, after growing up in Washington state, joined the Office of War Information (OWI) in WWII and remained in Europe after the war. Traveling extensively. She met and married Sam Brewer, and they had a daughter. When they were assigned to Beirut, she met Kim Philby, one of Sam's colleagues. Hanning describes the curious events that led to their affair and marriage.

*Love and Deception* is well documented and written, and it offers some new vignettes about Philby and his thoughts regarding his fellow Cambridge spies. Is it the last book on Philby? Probably not, though one is hard pressed to imagine what else remains to be said.

***Spies and Traitors: Kim Philby, James Angleton and the Friendship and Betrayal that Would Shape MI6, the CIA and the Cold War***, by Michael Holzman. (Pegasus Books, 2021) 342 pages, endnotes, bibliography, index.

With biographies of Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean and James Angleton to his credit, Michael Holzman now turns to Kim Philby and his relationship with James Angleton. Putting aside the title's bizarre assertion that their relationship shaped MI6, the CIA and the Cold War, while allowing that it influenced certain counterintelligence operations in each, *Spies and Traitors* is, with few exceptions, a well written recap of existing accounts of both men.

"counterintelligence tradecraft by Philby." (2) Put another way, he later writes that Angleton "was tutored and for a time in effect supervised in those [CI] matters by Philby." (8) And finally, in his conclusion to the book, Holzman returns to the topic adding, "Having taught the art of counterintelligence to Angleton, Philby had little to fear from him." (264) None of these comments is sourced, and no other reputable author has confirmed the claim, while some have cast well-reasoned doubt on it.

For reasons Holzman never specifies, *Spies and Traitors* perpetuates the myth that Angleton was introduced to



The final chapter in the book discusses the articles Philby wrote while he was living in Beirut and reporting for the *Observer* and the *Economist*. While they do not mention Angleton, Holzman has provided an excellent

summary of Philby's writings on Middle East events of the day in detail not found elsewhere.

For readers new to the Philby and Angleton stories, *Spies and Traitors* provides, with the reservations noted, a useful, single source on the subject.

***The Writing of the Gods: The Race to Decode the Rosetta Stone*** by Edward Dolnick. (Scribner, 2021) 311 pages, notes, illustrations, bibliography, index.

Modern codebreakers, Edward Dolnick tells us, have an important advantage in their work—knowledge of the language of the communications they are trying to decipher. If their decryptations are wrong, the codebreakers see the resulting gibberish and know instantly that they have erred. But what if you are trying to break a code when no one has written or spoken the underlying language for more than a millennium, no one even knows if the language had an alphabet, and data-crunching consists only of the human mind? These were the problems facing generations of scholars who sought to understand the hieroglyphic inscriptions and writings of ancient Egypt.

As every schoolchild learns, the French discovery in 1799 of the Rosetta Stone with its parallel Greek, demotic, and hieroglyphic inscriptions provided the key, and the mysteries of hieroglyphics were soon solved. Would that this version of history were so, however. *Writing of the Gods*, Dolnick's account of the decoding of the stone, details how, even with the plain text in view, it took almost 25 years to break the hieroglyphics.

Dolnick, a journalist specializing in science, is a good storyteller. He focuses on two compelling characters, Thomas Young, an Englishman who made the initial discovery that hieroglyphs represented sounds, and Frenchman Jean-François Champollion, who built on this insight to work out the hieroglyphic alphabet. Champollion then went on to figure out hieroglyphic grammar and the myriad additional characters that indicated gender, explained subtle differences in meaning or, like I♥NY, conveyed a message instantly recognizable to Egyptians but that would not make sense to anyone else. It is a complex story, but Dolnick's explanations of hieroglyphics and the quirks of language are clear and

easy to understand, and his combination of short, focused chapters and concise prose keeps the book moving along. Overall, *Writing of the Gods* is a solid and entertaining popular history.

Dolnick also has much to offer an intelligence audience. At one level, *Writing of the Gods* is a fascinating tale of cryptanalysis. Young and Champollion used the same principles as modern cryptanalysts—the collection of data, searches for patterns and word frequency, and Young's discovery that the Egyptians employed the equivalent of a spell table for foreign names all were echoed in the Venona program—but with no technology more advanced than pen and paper. It is an impressive example of what determination and brainpower can accomplish.

Young and Champollion also made a vital analytical break. Because hieroglyphs had been unreadable, Europeans had over the centuries convinced themselves that they were not just a writing system but must have stood for abstract ideas and concepts, scientific findings, or even mystic truths and cosmic meanings discovered by the ancients and then lost over the centuries. The two men walked away from this and approached the problem afresh and on their own terms. Conventional wisdom is not always wrong, but sometimes when a problem seems unsolvable it helps to forget everything that has been said before.

Readers looking for a fascinating episode in the history of cryptanalysis that has application for today's intelligence work should put *Writing of the Gods* on their list.

*The reviewer:* J. E. Leonardson is the pen name of a CIA Directorate of Analysis officer.

## MEMOIR

***The Recruiter: Spying and the Lost Art of American Intelligence***, by Douglas London (Hachette Books, 2021) 418 pages, index.

The prologue to this memoir by an “inner city Jewish kid from the South Bronx” (90), tells the story of an agent recruitment the author made that epitomizes the operational principles expressed throughout the book. At the same time, applying conditions imposed by CIA classification reviewers that he clearly did not like, London employs mostly pseudonyms, and doesn’t divulge locations, dates, or other descriptive characteristics. Thus, *The Recruiter* is a mix of valuable operating concepts and imprecise circumstantial detail of a more than 34 year career as a CIA operations officer.

London begins his narrative with a description of how he was spotted while attending Manhattanville College, a private school near New York City. Then, after reviewing his recruitment, he describes his training and early assignments at the pre 9/11 CIA Headquarters. But it was during his the post 9/11 service, mostly overseas recruiting agents in Middle East environment, that he found both the professional satisfaction that would dominate his career and the racial discrimination that would tarnish it. Regrettably, the words devoted to the latter taint the tone

of the book, leaving the reader wondering if they also account for his declining a promotion.

London departs from the detail of his own story with criticisms of recent CIA organizational reforms particularly those instituted by former director John Brennan. He views them as advancing bureaucracy while diminishing the importance of the Directorate of Operations. (376ff) Brennan’s successor, Gina Haspel, is only slightly less the recipient of London’s bitterness. (395ff) George Tenet is more favorably treated, though London misspells his name throughout.

The final chapter discusses other CIA functions and attributes that, in his view, need improvement. *The Recruiter* may serve as a useful primer for those not familiar with the differences in the current and pre-9/11 structures of CIA, its workforce, and the agency’s role in the current US Intelligence Community. But while many comments are positive and his operational remarks are constructive, he can’t resist whining about his own treatment, a looming bitterness that is a blemish on the book’s overall value. Read with care.

**Hayden Peake** has served in the CIA’s Directorates of Operations and Science and Technology. He has been compiling and writing reviews for the “Intelligence Officer’s Bookshelf” since December 2002.



**CSI**  
CENTER  
FOR THE  
**STUDY**  
OF  
INTELLIGENCE