Intelligence and spies
in facts and fiction

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## Editorial

National defence and adventures of the mind

"[T]he chief ideological difference between the spy and counterspy genres", writes Thomas Hitchner in his article for this journal, was "the role of sport". Significantly, defending the national realm could fall upon gifted amateurs and hide-and-seek, yet it could also rest on draconial legislation and military defence.

This ambiguous view of national security - in part reflecting pure sportsmanship, in part involving austere restrictions - may also say something about the British approach to great power politics in general. The country priding itself of a foreign policy based on "floating easily downstream" and joyful adventurers also ruled an empire resting on military force and exploitation. And a governing apparatus where the ideal of the gifted amateur prevailed was also one where brutality and suppression hid beneath the surface.

The topic of intelligence and spies touches upon widely different aspects of British society, ranging from terrorism and the Troubles in Northern Ireland to popular portrayals of James Bond. In this issue, we have invited contributors from widely different sources to address the topic at hand. Two articles, covering the Troubles (Paul Dixon) and the present-day counter-terrorism challenges (Tina Soria) relate classical concerns within secret intelligence to the changing circumstances of the present-day UK. Other contributions look at historical aspects of intelligence work, such as Chris Murphy's article on intelligence and the Special Operations Executive during the Second World War.

Clearly, there are aspects to the role of spy that bridge politics, culture and fiction. Erin G. Carlston relates the role of the spy to dominant attitudes to sexuality and lifestyle (and the possibility to deviate from these), organised around the so-called Cambridge spies supportive of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, politics and society are also mirrored in spy fiction. Thomas Hitchner's article takes us a century back to discuss how these elements - political and cultural trends as portrayed in spy novels - were visible in the early 1900s.

Blending facts and fiction is a daring exercise, but espionage is one of those topics where disentangling the two if often difficult. We hope the various approaches to spies and intelligence - in fiction and in real life - included in this volume will make readers if not shaken, then hopefully stirred by new and interesting perspectives.

Øivind Bratberg and Kristin M. Haugevik, editors

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Perpetual concubinage: the pervasive myth of the female spy

By Tammy M. Proctor

In our twenty-first century world in which national security depends heavily on solid, specific intelligence, the organisations that gather and analyse information about internal and external threats are crucial actors on the global scene. The personnel within these agencies work under extreme secrecy and often face the dual challenge of processing vast amounts of information under time-sensitive demands. While women comprise between forty and fifty per cent of the workforce in intelligence services such as Britain’s MI5 and Australia’s Secret Intelligence Service, they still often find themselves confined to desks, working in clerical occupations, or otherwise stuck in low-paid positions within the organisations.

Such roles for women were established alongside the development of the first permanent modern intelligence services before and during the First World War, and the recruiting of women's labour for the vast clerical work of information gathering has continued. Also still present is the pervasive myth, represented by the enduring image of Mata Hari, that women do serve as active intelligence agents rely on their sexuality to gain access to secrets. Ian Fleming, in *Moonraker* (1955), elaborated on this idea, suggesting that women in intelligence work placed themselves in “perpetual concubinage to King and Country.” This myth, of the sexualised female spy, replicates long-held assumptions about women’s unreliability and their need to resort to feminine wiles in order to prise secrets from weak men. Both stereotypes—the clerk and the seductress—should be nuanced.

From the origins of MI5 and MI6 nearly a hundred years ago, women have played a role in the gathering and analysis of the nation’s vital intelligence. Nearly 800 women staffed the first card registry that recorded and tracked subversive activity in Britain during World War I, and unusual women such as Gertrude Bell even served as officers in British intelligence, in Bell’s case as an important player in the Arab Bureau (founded 1916) alongside such well-known figures as T. E. Lawrence and David Hogarth. Female searchers worked at British ports to try to identify women passengers who might have something to hide from wartime authorities. Finally, women gathered intelligence behind enemy lines in World War I, often proving that they could be more successful if they blended into crowds—ordinary and inconspicuous.

Meanwhile, the best female spies were not glamorous seductresses but instead they were shopkeepers, teachers, housewives, students—the more invisible they were, the better able they were to hide their roles as spies. Certainly there were female agents working for British intelligence who were prostitutes, and there are records of women who were paid in cash or drugs for information, especially in garrison and border towns near frontlines and occupied zones. However, these women’s lives were typically far from glamorous, and their willingness to spy for the British was often a signal of their desperation. The best known spy-seductress, Mata Hari, was an exotic dancer and courtesan in the pre-war period who agreed to spy for both France and Germany during the war, but she was by no means successful, again giving lie to the idea that women spies could only be useful if gathering information in intimate settings. Another complicating factor in matters of female loyalty was British nationality law that tied women’s citizenship to that of their husbands until 1948. Women, then, were doubly suspect as both sexual beings and accidental citizens, tied to the state only through the nationality of the men with whom they were intimate.

Since the First World War, many of these early assumptions about female intelligence work have remained in place, but perhaps things are beginning to change in the world of intelligence. Scholarly work on the agents of Britain’s Special Operations Executive in the Second World War chronicles the bravery of female field agents who worked behind enemy lines to organise resistance to the Nazis; many of them sacrificed their lives for this work. Their chief, Vera Atkins, survived the war to bear witness to the role of women as foot soldiers and directors of intelligence work in occupied Europe. More recent examples of successful female intelligence agents have also emerged in the media and in popular imagination, eroding some of the stereotypes of the past.

Dame Stella Rimington, the first female director of MI5, demonstrated through her career that women could succeed in active careers in the field and in managerial positions in the Security Services. In her book *Civilians in a World at War, 1914-1918* (NYU Press, 2010), she mentions the pervasive culture of gender discrimination in the agency. In a nod to this real-life spy chief, the James Bond franchise has replaced its “chief” with a female, in the form of Dame Judi Dench, who physically resembles Rimington. Finally, the unmasking of Melita Norwood, the “granny spy” of the atomic age in Britain, has also called into question assumptions about female spies as “vamps”. Norwood, an ordinary secretary living in the London environs, was exposed in 1988 as an MI6 agent working for the Soviets. Over her 40-year espionage career, she easily passed technical atomic secrets to the USSR and was not caught until well after the end of the Cold War when she was in her eighties.

Today, intelligence agencies have begun slowly to reconsider their need for women's work in all aspects of intelligence gathering and analysis. A good example of the changing world of espionage is a speech in July 2012 by Nick Warner, head of Australia’s Secret Intelligence Service. Warner noted that nearly half of his agency’s spies were women, many of them with skills in multiple languages and from mixed ethnic backgrounds. This year CIA Director David Petraeus began a “zero-tolerance” policy in regard to sexual harassment in the U.S. agency, and in the last two decades, women have won lawsuits against the CIA for discriminatory practices. These changes, while slow in coming, point to a new world where women in intelligence work no longer will be stereotyped as concubines or courtesans, but as valuable national security assets.

Myth of seduction. Mata Hari, exotic dancer and courtesan in Paris, was executed in 1917 for alleged espionage for Germany during the First World War.
Did the British Intelligence and Security services defeat the IRA?

By Paul Dixon

The Good Friday Agreement in April 1998 was intended to lead to a powersharing settlement based on the moderate unionist, Ulster Unionist Party, led by David Trimble and John Hume’s nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party. By 2003 there had been only a limited period of devolved government and the moderate parties had been defeated in the Assembly elections. Powersharing between Sinn Féin, the political wing of the IRA, and Ian Paisley’s Democratic Unionist Party since 2007 was the fortuitous and widely unexpected outcome of further negotiations. After 2007 it became clear that the IRA was not about to win the war and so some decided that it must have been defeated.

The orthodox view of the peace process is that the British government and the IRA fought each other to a stalemate and that a powersharing government thus resulted from negotiations with “terrorists”. More recently, Neoconservatives and some in the security forces have begun to claim that the IRA was “defeated” by the British Intelligence and Security Forces in the early nineties and that the peace process was a matter of negotiating their surrender. The global lesson is claimed to be that “terrorists” should not be talked to until they have been defeated. So did the British state defeat the IRA?

According to the orthodox view, Republicans looked for a way out of their armed struggle and entered into secret contacts with the British government. The result of these talks was a negotiated peace process and the Good Friday Agreement which represented a compromise accommodation between unionist and nationalist. The lesson drawn from Northern Ireland, therefore, emphasises the triumph of non-violent democratic politics and negotiations with paramilitaries.

Since 2007 there has been relatively stable devolved government and it has become increasingly clear that Sinn Féin’s involvement in the peace process and government was not a tactical ploy, designed to undermine the Union and achieve a united Ireland, but an acceptance of a compromise accommodation.

Prior to 2007 conservatives, unionists and the security forces were more likely to claim that the IRA was winning the war through unarmed struggle. Since 2007, however, there have been claims that the IRA was defeated by the British Intelligence and Security Forces in the early nineties and the peace process was a matter of negotiating their surrender. According to this view, the IRA surrendered because of the effectiveness of the British “dirty war” against them. The dirty war consisted of a “shoot to kill” policy against the IRA, collusion between the security forces and loyalist paramilitaries in the targeting of Republicans, and the penetration of the IRA by informers at the highest levels.

These British agents are alleged to include Freddie “Scap” Scappaticci who was in charge of the IRA’s internal security department, the so-called ‘nuttng squad’, which tortured and killed those claimed to have been informers. Denis Donaldson is a leading informer who was close to the Sinn Féin leadership and became their key administrator in the Northern Ireland parliament. Roy McShane, one of a pool of drivers for leading Republicans, including Gerry Adams, is also alleged to have been a British agent. There are persistent rumours of other British informers prominent in Sinn Féin. Remarkably Martin McGuinness, Sinn Féin’s Deputy First Minister, felt he had to publicly deny being a British agent.

The advocates of the IRA defeat thesis are British Neoconservatives, members of the security forces and Republican Dissidents, who have generally been united in their opposition to the peace process. The most ambitious articulation of the “IRA defeat” thesis comes from British Neoconservatives, most particularly in John Bew, Martin Frampont and Inigo Gurruchaga’s book Talking to Terrorists (2009). Neoconservatives are anxious to draw the counterintuitive lesson from Northern Ireland that negotiating with “terrorists” is counterproductive unless they are first defeated by “dirty war”. In this morality tale, bad policy leads to bad results and they warn against talking to Hamas, Hezbollah, the Taliban or Al Qaeda.

From a different quarter, some members of the security forces in Britain and Northern Ireland advocate the defeat thesis which may be motivated by a desire to bolster their credibility and power. They also inflame the threat from Republican Dissidents to demand more repressive security powers. British soldiers state that their defeat of the IRA enhances the army’s claim to be able to deal successfully with counterinsurgency. Champions of the old Royal Ulster Constabulary claim success for the tougher tactics employed by the RUC, an implicit criticism of the new, reformed Police Service of Northern Ireland.

On the Republican side, there are also Dissidents opposed to the peace process. These have attacked the Republican leadership for betraying the IRA volunteers who were killed during the conflict and the cause of Irish unity. They criticise the Sinn Féin leadership for their deceptions and compromises with the British and Irish governments. Dissidents claim that the British so effectively penetrated the IRA and Sinn Féin leadership that the Republican movement effectively became controlled by the British state. Paradoxically, therefore, the militarist unionist Neoconservatives and Republican Dissidents echo and reinforce each other’s critique of the Sinn Féin leadership and claim that the IRA were defeated.

The point of criticising the thesis that the IRA was defeated is that, based on the available evidence and arguments, it is an inaccurate description of the peace process. And, therefore, inaccurate militarist “lessons” are drawn from this account. The security forces certainly played their role in containing the Republican threat but it was the important role played by politicians and others involved in complex and morally difficult political negotiations and diplomacy that more convincingly explains the success of the peace process. This is why the peace process did not represent the IRA’s surrender but involved tortuous negotiations, morally difficult compromises and a high degree of uncertainty as to the intentions of the Republican leadership and its ability to deliver their movement.

The “IRA were defeated” thesis can be countered by at least seven distinct arguments:

First, none of the key actors involved in the peace process (the British and Irish governments, leading political parties in Northern Ireland and the US government), claim that the IRA was defeated. Significantly, claims that the IRA was defeated have tended to increase only after 2007, when it became more obvious that the IRA had not won.
Second, security force claims that the enemy had been defeated or was on the verge of defeat have been used as a rhetorical device to pressure politicians into adopting the military’s prescriptions. The security forces claimed that if only the government followed its advice the IRA could have been defeated in 1971/72 and 1975/76. This controversial, rhetorical ploy has also been used in Afghanistan to shift blame from the military to politicians for the lack of success.

Third, there is evidence that the peace process was emerging from a situation of stalemate rather than defeat. There is strong evidence that Gerry Adams was beginning to seek a way out of the armed struggle from the early to mid-eighties and approached Irish nationalists and the British government to find a way out of the bloody impasse.

Fourth, the Republican movement has always been penetrated by informers. The IRA have adopted counter-measures and penetration has not prevented the IRA force running a highly effective military campaign. The IRA declared amnesties for informers in August 1974 and March 1982, in order to reduce the threat to their organisation. The IRA reorganised into a cellular structure in the late seventies to inhibit its penetration by informers. In spite of this, by the early eighties the IRA had been so penetrated that a member was as likely to be killed by their own organisation as they were by the British. The ‘Supergrass Trials’ of the early eighties may well have provided the security forces with further knowledge about the IRA. At least 450 people were charged on the basis of their evidence and, reportedly, the IRA leadership were brought ‘close to panic’.

Fifth, there is a lack of contemporaneous evidence that the British Army or the RUC believed that the IRA had been defeated. In 1978 a secret army report frankly described the effectiveness of the IRA and was doubtful that they would be defeated. After retiring from the army in the late eighties Glover argued that Gerry Adams was “a man with whom we can do business” and argued, “In no way can or will the Provisional IRA ever be defeated militarily. The Army’s role has been new for some time... to help create the conditions whereby a full democratic, peaceful, political solution can be achieved”.

In November 1991 security chiefs (both military and RUC) were reported to believe that the security situation was “dire” and the “...defeat of the IRA is not on the horizon while current security policies are maintained”. The IRA would ultimately be defeated but this could take over 10 years to achieve. A “high-level military source” stated:

“The IRA terrorists are better equipped, better resourced, better led, bolder and more secure against our penetration than at any time before. They are absolutely a formidable enemy. The essential attributes of their leaders are better than ever before. Some of their operations are brilliant, in terrorist terms. If we don’t intern it, it’s a long haul.”

After the IRA ceasefire in 1994, the military were critical of the British government’s attempts to demilitarise Northern Ireland during the peace process. This was because the military did not believe that the IRA had been defeated and that they, along with the Real IRA, still posed a threat. Indeed in February 2000, a “senior British security source” told The Times that the IRA’s terrorist capability had increased “significantly” since the Good Friday Agreement. There is little contemporary evidence that either senior officers in the RUC or MI5 considered the IRA to have been defeated.

Sixth, the IRA’s bombing campaign during the 1990s suggested that the IRA wasn’t so penetrated that it couldn’t operate effectively. These attacks included: bombing 10 Downing Street and almost killing the Prime Minister and the cabinet in February 1991; the bombing of the Baltic Exchange in the City of London in April 1992; the Bishopsgate bombing in the City of London 1993; the bombing of Canary Wharf, London 1996 and Manchester, 1996. It seems implausible that the British Intelligence and Security Services would allow such attacks to go ahead in order to protect the identity of their agents. The economic and political impact of these attacks is difficult to measure because the British authorities deliberately played them down in order not to give a propaganda victory to the IRA. There have been estimates that these attacks cost over £2 billion and there was concern at the impact of the bombings on confidence in London as a world financial centre. This gave the IRA leverage in subsequent negotiations.

Seventh, it has been incorrectly argued that Danny Morrison, a leading figure within the Republican movement and confidante of Gerry Adams, believed that the IRA was defeated. What Morrison did argue in his diaries, then the walls came down (1999), which cover his time serving in the army during the early nineties, was that the IRA “could fight on forever without necessarily winning”. If the IRA escalated its campaign, however, and was defeated it would not then be in a position to negotiate. Morrison’s concern seemed to be that if the IRA entered a peace process, “People would have to feel that a settlement was just and that their opponents were making compromises also.” He could not see a weak IRA ever halting the campaign but Republicans could “cash in the chips in return for substantial changes”.

Proponents of the defeat thesis try to defend their claim by arguing that a “draw” or “stalemate” in the conflict between the British state and the IRA represents the “effective defeat” of the IRA because the IRA did not achieve their objective – a united Ireland. If this is the case then, arguably, all the parties to the Good Friday Agreement were “defeated”, because they did not achieve their objectives (unionists hardly wanted “terrorists in government”, for example).

Defining compromise and stalemate as defeat is unlikely to encourage warring parties to negotiate a peaceful end to conflict. In a peace process it may be important to present any compromise as a “victory” for all the participants in order to help them sell the deal to their supporters. Indeed, the defeat thesis tends to be advocated by militarists who believe that in war the only choice is between defeat and victory and, therefore, encourage the escalation of violence to achieve it.
The art of fine balance: counter-terrorism challenges in the UK

By Tina Soria

A changing threat landscape. Between 2001 and 2010, terrorism activity in the UK appeared to be largely consistent; twenty significant terrorist plots came to light, only one of which – the 7 July 2005 suicide bombings – successful. The reveals plots were all quite ambitious and sophisticated, with the majority sharing some degree of operational, logistical or technical connection with Al Qaida (AQ) core organisation.

This pattern began to tail off from 2010. Official government statistics showed a steady decline in the number of people arrested for terrorism offences in 2009/2010 and even more markedly in 2010/2011, when it stood at 121, considerably below the annual average of 206 registered since April 2002. In fact, forty-five suspects were formally charged, of which only nineteen for terrorism-related offences.

Meanwhile, a significant qualitative shift in the terrorist threat has also occurred over the past decade - from centralised movements to disparate networks, and now to lone wolves, inspired and aided by the Internet. The change can be ascribed to a combination of factors. Perhaps most essential is the steady pressure that has been exerted on the AQ core. Squeezed out of its safe havens and decimated by an effective campaign of sustained drone strikes along the Afghan-Pakistan border, the organisation has increasingly struggled - even before the demise of Bin Laden in May 2011 – to provide the kind of training which was instrumental in the execution of more sophisticated plots in the past. Thus, the increasing decentralisation of the jihadist terrorist threat witnessed in the past few years – with places like Yemen and Somalia emerging as alternative hubs for training and inspiration for would-be terrorists – has mainly been determined by such remarkable successes in counter terrorism (CT) operations in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.

At the same time, huge investment in CT capabilities and a substantial boost for police and intelligence agencies' resources have allowed for an optimisation of the whole UK CT machine. This has contributed to create a successful model of intelligence-led CT policing which has proven very effective in intercepting and penetrating plots of AQ inspiration.

Furthermore, a significant domestic debate has been encouraged, both in relation to the direction of UK foreign policy and in connection with the Government's efforts to address the sense of alienation and poor integration of particular individuals within British society who were likely to be at risk of radicalisation and violent extremism. 7/7, in particular, showed how problematic and challenging these issues could become: the shocking attacks therefore incentivised a more focused debate about the origins of, and proper reaction to, terrorism – especially the home-grown type that had taken hold in the country.

Towards a “balanced” counter-terrorism strategy. The overall response to the terrorist threat has been articulated on three complementary levels: the overarching policy, the legal, and the operational. Over the last decade, all have undergone considerable changes and reformulation, as they not only had to adapt to an incredibly flexible threat but also had to reflect, and be measured against, a changing threat perception within public opinion, a factor which over time has increasingly determined what was acceptable to sacrifice in the name of national security. In this vein, the assertive reaction prompted by the tragic events of 9/11 and, even more, 7/7 resulted in some hasty policy and legislation, only partially fit for purpose. Yet, a progressive recalibration has later taken place, aiming to reassess the tools and intensity of the response. This involves safeguarding civil liberties while also striving to maintain an assertive stance in the overall CT approach. Essentially, consecutive governments have therefore been faced with the challenge of striking the right balance between what is operationally necessary, what is legally justified and what is politically acceptable.

The so called CONTEST strategy represented a significant example of this search for a balanced approach. It was initially formulated in 2003, first published in 2006, and renewed twice, in 2009 and 2011. Three of the four strands – Pursue, Protect and Prepare – have been substantially effective, and the successful prosecution of more experienced, skilful and influential jihadists is proof of the progress made in this regard. On the other hand, the Prevent strand – aimed at preventing individuals from becoming radicalised and turning to terrorism – has arguably been more problematic. Before the Coalition Government’s overhaul last year, most of the criticism had been directed towards the strategy’s inability to distinguish between counter radicalisation efforts on one hand and initiatives aimed at fostering community cohesion and integration on the other. The confusion that resulted brought many to view Prevent as a spying device designed to target specific communities. A genuine attempt to recalibrate the policy has been made but government-led policies in this field are inherently limited in their effectiveness and it will remain hard for the UK’s case to prove different.

Substantive challenges also emerged from the outset at the legal level. Legislation was passed in December 2001 which granted the security services the power to ask public bodies to disclose personal records during terrorism and criminal investigations. It also enabled communication service providers to retain data that could be accessed by law agencies investigating terrorism activities. Controversially, the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001 also envisaged the power of indefinite detention, without charge or trial, of suspected foreign terrorists who could not be deported to their countries of origin because of human rights concerns.
This was later ruled unlawful and in 2005 new legislation was approved introducing “control orders”, a regime of restrictions that could be imposed against individuals suspected of involvement in terrorism but who could not be deported or put on trial. During their existence, approximately fifty of them were issued.

Control Orders, although less contentious than the “detention without trial” legislation which they replaced, continued to cause controversy and debate and, following a major review of CT legislation initiated by the Coalition Government in 2010, they were scrapped and replaced with a less stringent regime of surveillance of terrorism suspects, the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (TPIMs). TPIMs would change the nature of the old Control Orders by imposing close human surveillance upon suspects, rather than limiting the latter’s freedom of movement and communication.

The review also brought to a tightening of the power of stop and search; its extensive use had indeed been blamed for alienating certain ethnic and religious groups who felt specifically targeted and discriminated against. There was also a redefinition of the so-called Regulatory and Investigatory Power Act 2000 – which, it was argued, had been misused for unjustified surveillance activity.

Meanwhile, the multifaceted strategy to fight terrorism defined in CONTEST also entailed a substantial restructuring of CT policing which greatly improved operational effectiveness and efficiency. In the period 2001-2010, there was a 250 percent increase in CT spending, from £1 billion in 2001 to £2.5 billion in 2010. Such increases were more substantial in the wake of the 2005 bombings, with police receiving a 30 percent boost in CT budget over the three years following the attacks. This translated into the employment of 3,000 extra CT officers, and, more significantly, the establishment of regional CT units and CT intelligence units.

Increased funding allowed for the development of a national CT network effectively embedded into the territory, and, in turn, led to the emergence of what has been defined as a “golden thread”, linking frontline police officers with the national coordinator for CT through regional CT hubs. The significance of this cannot be overlooked, especially in light of what 7/7 signalled, namely a shift in the nature and direction of the threat, now coming from within. It was partly because of the absence of a regional presence – both of CT policing and security services assets – that an adequate appreciation was lacking in relation to the kind of extremist Islamist culture that had been taking roots in various cities around the country.

Most of the extra resources allocated to the security services were invested in technological improvements, aimed at boosting operational capability. These were also necessary to keep up with the pace of technological advancements that have been so skilfully exploited by terrorists. However, such tangible modernisation in resources has required a parallel extension of legal powers for intelligence agencies to maintain their “competitive edge” in their detection of terrorist plots. Despite being at the moment in a better position to intercept such activities, UK security services have nonetheless noticed a reduction in the effectiveness of the disruptive tools at their disposal. This has been due to a partial mismatch between the operational and the legal framework of UK CT effort.

There are many examples of the tension between operational and legal instruments in this area. A better understanding of the threat has enabled early disruption of plots, but this part of the strategy has not always been accompanied by successful prosecution of terror suspects, due to the difficulties of gathering enough evidence as well as the obstacles to reveal sensitive or secret evidence in court.

A new range of CT legislation has therefore been announced by the Coalition Government last May which is in part designed to “bridge the gap” between operational requirements and legal boundaries to security agencies’ powers. The most significant, and controversial, bit remains the so called “Communications Bill”, aimed at redefining the extent to which police and security services will be able to access communications data judged to be relevant in the context of a CT investigation. Although previous legislation in the field existed that already granted these agencies access to phone calls data, that framework did not equally provide for electronic communication exchanges, which are now prevalent. At the moment, there is no guarantee that this will change; the Bill has already been criticised for envisaging an unjustified erosion of privacy. The process illustrates neatly the significance of a public opinion where civil liberties are valued highly. Against the current backdrop of what is perceived as a receding terrorist threat, the public is also less likely to be convinced about the need to tighten legislation.

Managing the risk while increasing social resilience. On their part, UK security officials are not inclined to share the assessment of a receding threat; for them the challenge of homegrown terrorism in particular remains a generational one. If this is the case, then all that legal, intelligence and law enforcement tools can do for the time being is to mitigate the risk, while more focused solutions will have to be found to effectively address the underlying conditions that still fuel radicalisation and violent extremism. In practical terms, it means that in this new phase of terrorist activity – characterised by a less organised, skilful yet more dispersed and thus more unpredictable enemy – the real measure of success will not necessarily lie in the absence of terrorist attacks, rather in the ability to prevent lone and isolated acts of terror from becoming part of a structural phenomenon and a continuous source of inspiration for others.

While addressing the fundamental causes of radicalisation will remain paramount, the prevention of terrorist plots by police and security services will continue to be regarded as a worthwhile investment in risk management in the UK; not often visibly tangible yet vital to ensure that ordinary citizens “can go about their lives freely and with confidence”.

\[\text{Thames House, London, headquarters of the Security Service, commonly known as the MI5. As the UK’s internal counter-intelligence and security agency, the MI5 operates alongside the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS/MI6, focusing on foreign threats) and Defence Intelligence (DI) under the direction of the Joint Intelligence Committee.}\]

“This new phase of terrorist activity [is] characterised by a less organised, skilful yet more dispersed and thus more unpredictable enemy...”
The Cambridge spies, intelligence and sexual profiling

By Erin G. Carlston

On May 25, 1951, British diplomats Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean vanished from England just as the Security Service, better known as MI5, was about to bring them in for questioning. They were suspected—correctly—of being spies for the Soviet Union, but for four years after their disappearance nothing was known for certain of their whereabouts. In 1955, Moscow finally revealed as a double agent when he fled to the USSR in 1963. Then in 1979, Anthony Blunt was publicly denounced as another member of the spy ring by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher but was never prosecuted, because of an immunity agreement secretly arranged in the 1960s. All four of these men were recruited at Cambridge University in the early 1930s, and are thus known as the "Cambridge spies."

In the years following the disappearance of Burgess and Maclean, government agencies, the media, and intelligence services focused obsessively on the sexuality of the Cambridge spies, three of whom were homosexual or bisexual. I argue here that this strange preoccupation reflects the anxiety provoked by the difficulty of identifying Communist spies, and the consequent desire to publish a usable system of what we now call profiling, in order to ferret out potential traitors before they could breach the security barrier.

In addition to having publicly espoused Communist views when they were undergraduates, Blunt was known by most acquaintances to be homosexual and Burgess was overtly and outrageously so, in addition to being a heavy drinker. Maclean seems to have been conditionally bisexual, or perhaps simply a repressed, and alcoholic, homosexual. Yet despite the fact that neither British society at large, nor British intelligence agencies, were particularly hospitable to what were then called "sex deviants," in the 1930s and early 40s all three men managed to obtain sensitive diplomatic and intelligence jobs in government offices including MI5, MI6, and the Foreign Office. The Soviets may actually have sought out homosexual recruits—not, as has often been surmised, because they could be easily blackmailed, but on the contrary because the Soviets thought their sexuality would open doors to them among the British elites they believed to be predominantly homosexual. However dubious this theory, it appears that in one way the Soviets were right to think that homosexuality might be an asset in a spy, because sexuality could create confusion about the causes of deception and illicit behavior.

For example, when Donald Maclean went out for unexplained assignations at night, his wife Melinda supposedly worried that the men he met were his lovers, but it seems equally likely that they were NKVD agents. Guy Burgess relied on his legendary flamboyance to divert any suspicion that he could be involved in something so serious as treason. In a kind of "purloined letter" approach to espionage, Burgess announced from time to time that he was working for the Comintern, blithely spilled confidential information, and on one occasion interrupted a luncheon to put secret documents in an NKVD drop box in full view of his companions, who assumed he was leaving a note for a boyfriend. Burgess being Burgess, no one ever paid attention. It is hard to imagine a better alibi.

As the spies were uncovered over the years, explanations of their treachery tended to suggest that their sexuality was not so much a smokescreen for their espionage as its proximate cause. As soon as the story broke that Burgess and Maclean had disappeared, newspapers raised the spectre of rampant sexual perversion in the Foreign Office and hinted that the two men had run away to have an affair. Intelligence agencies on both sides of the Atlantic also pursued the matter in their researches; indeed, the majority of the documents in the files of both British Intelligence and the FBI describe both men as homosexual, sometimes reiterating the point four or five times in as many pages.

The British government was more reticent about the issue, which frustrated the media. When, in September 1955, it was finally confirmed that Burgess and Maclean had fled to Moscow four years earlier, Whitehall belatedly issued a White Paper to try to account for the lapses in intelligence the men's defection had revealed, but did not comment on their sexual proclivities. British newspapers loudly criticized the report's omissions, the Sunday Pictorial complaining that "This sordid secret of homosexuality—which is one of the keys to the whole scandal of the Missing Diplomats—is ignored by the Government White Paper".

In 1979, the speculation that homosexuality was "the key" to the Cambridge spies' Communism, and thus their treachery, intensified again when journalist Andrew Boyle precipitated Anthony Blunt's exposure by publishing The Climate of Treason, his book about the other three spies. (Boyle did not name the "Fourth Man" in the group but provided so many clues that others immediately identified him as Blunt, a well-respected art historian.) Describing Burgess's adolescent relationship with a boy called David Hedley, Boyle wrote that "Hedley, under his bosom friend's influence, became a homosexual and remained a passionate Communist until his early death." Notice the verbal equivalence established here between homosexuality and Communism—"became homosexual and remained Communist." When Thatcher denounced Blunt in Parliament less than two weeks after Boyle's book was published, the press relentlessly reiterated the idea that Communism and "sexual deviance" are mutually constitutive aberrations that predispose men to treason. The media quoted former acquaintances and colleagues of Blunt's who emphasized his homosexuality and questionable virility, describing him as a "pansy aesthete," a "hopeless officer" and a "treacherous Communist poet."
In addition, investigators publicly speculated about whether Blunt had seduced Burgess into homosexuality and treason, or vice versa, although there is no firm evidence that the two men were ever lovers. In a 1985 interview Dick White—who had headed MI5 in the 1950s and then later directed MI6—argued that the key to understanding the Cambridge spies was “the homosexual subculture”, and especially its sexual promiscuity, incarnate in Burgess, with whom he believing Blunt had been in all been evident to me that Blunt was under the influence of Burgess,” White told the interviewers. “I could not understand why he was besotted by Burgess. But I had no idea at the time about the gay scene and its incredible promiscuity”. Finally, Donald Maclean’s former colleague David Cecil devoted several passages of his 1988 biography of Maclean to expressions of regret that neither he nor anyone else realized earlier that Maclean’s sexual tastes were indicators of his unreliability, but offers the excuse that it was only Maclean and Burgess’s defection that had made the correlation between homosexuality and treason clear.

Clearly, most British commentators on the Cambridge spy scandal, from the 1950s to the 1980s, felt that “treacherous,” “Communist” and “poof” are self-evidently cognate. This belief was so widespread from the 1950s to the 1980s, felt that “treacherous,” “Communist” and “poof” are self-evidently cognate. This belief was so widespread that in 1954, the Admiralty issued orders mandating that officers search sailors for physical evidence of homosexual activity, and the “War Office also introduced new regulations against homosexuality”. The difficulty was that reliably identifying Communist spies as such was impossible. Communists themselves were visually unrecognizable, and anyway, Party affiliation did not overlap neatly with treasonous behavior. Genuine spies often erased their connection to Communism: Burgess, Maclean and Philby all went to considerable lengths to disavow their youthful Communism, even associating themselves with extreme right-wing movements as part of their cover. So not only did Communists look just like non-Communists, but actual Soviet spies might not even be Communists at all.

Viewed in this light, the interest that the Intelligence agencies demonstrated in the sex lives of the Cambridge spies seems neither wholly prurient nor simply paranoid. The hope that such traits might instead be identifiable as “sex deviants” was, in a sense, a fallback position: Intelligence was trying to establish a set of personality traits and behaviors that could, both to monitor Burgess and Maclean’s otherwise inexplicable actions, and help to identify other weaknesses in the security systems of the Western nations. As part of that project the U.K. attempted to adopt security protocols being used in the States: in 1953, Scotland Yard sent one of its top officers to America for three months to consult with the FBI “about the strategy and methods of a homosexual purge”. The result was that for the first time candidates for intelligence and government posts in the U.K. were subjected to vetting intended to screen out homosexuals. Additionally, in 1954, the Admiralty issued orders mandating that officers search sailors for physical evidence of homosexual activity, and the “War Office also introduced new regulations against homosexuality”.

Homosexuality ultimately proved to be as difficult to find and verify as Communism, however, and the effort in the 1950s to develop an accurate profile of the traitor or potential traitor was unsuccessful. Yet from the point of view of the British government, and no doubt of most British citizens, to suggest that there was no way to avoid occasionally placing spies in positions of power, no means of detecting their treachery until after security had already been breached, was intolerable. It was, in other words, both essential and impossible for Intelligence agencies to identify security threats in advance. Despite the massive expansion of the security state in the sixty years since Burgess and Maclean defected, it would be hard to argue that this conundrum has been resolved today.


Notes
5. Ibid., p. 409.
8. Ibid., p. 302; Carter up cit., p. 355-6.
Early spy fiction and the fear of the foreigner

By Thomas Hitchner

The modern spy story was born in Britain in 1895 and 1903. Those are the respective dates of publication of The Great War in England in 1897, by William Le Queux, and The Riddle of the Sands, by Erskine Childers. Let me qualify my claim: although Le Queux’s work seems to have been definitively first, its sole spy character appears in only a handful of scenes in the 330-page book, and by that time Childers’s book was published others had appeared—Oppenheim’s Mysterious Mr. Sabin (1898), Kipling’s Kim (1901)—to deprive it of a true claim to the title. Nevertheless, these two books in particular exemplify the two poles around which the spy genre would rotate before and during World War I.

The Great War in England is one of the invasion stories that thrilled and terrified the British public in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It imagines a French landing in Sussex and destruction and early invasion stories that thrilled and terrified the Great War in England is one of the invasion stories that thrilled and terrified the British public in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It imagines the Royal Navy, aided—Le Queux’s Secret of the Army Airplane” (“’Gott—no!’ cried the German spies in German.”)

But where Le Queux’s works do prove interesting is in their view of the sorry state of the English civilian, and how he must be redeemed. The Great War in England offers almost no characterization of its spy, Count von Beilstein—he is imbedded only with a handful of exotics, including Jewish ancestry—but the book shows much more interest in his first dupe, a Foreign Office clerk named Geoffrey Engleheart. Tricked by Beilstein into revealing national security information, Engleheart inadvertently makes the invasion possible; however, that shameful lapse is really an opportunity to remake himself, through military service. Once the invasion begins, the next appearance of Engleheart—whose name sounds something like “the heart of England”—is not as a gullible clerk, but as a hardened solider:

Dressed in a rough shooting suit, with a deer-stalker hat and an improvised kit strapped upon his back, he was half hidden by the tall bracken. Standing motionless in the deep shadow, with his arms fixed upon the wide stretch of sloping meadows, he waited, ready, at the slightest appearance of the enemy’s scouts, to raise the alarm and call to arms those who were sleeping in the forest after their day’s march.

The reader cannot help but feel that it was worth Engleheart’s exposing his country to invasion and rapine to strike an impressive figure like that. The goal of counterspy literature was to achieve this regenerative effect without the invasion, first by encouraging (or mandating) military service, second by driving foreign or un-British elements—especially immigrants but also Jews, as well as anything effete or cosmopolitan—out of the country.

The fictional foreign spy aided both goals. The presence of the spy put on display the weakness of the populace, and it is significant that the spy in these works is not driven out by outwitting him (since, as we have seen, he is operating in plain sight anyway), but by gaining, through military training, the strength and confidence necessary to confront him directly. Counterspy fiction directly echoed the rhetoric of the pro-conscription movement; for instance, Walter Wood’s proto-fascistic The Enemy in Our Midst (1906), which references Leo Maxse’s bellicose National Review in its preface, sneers at the British Army’s effeminacy, marked by “grotesque head-dress and gaudy gold and silver trappings and ornaments which might have been the product of a musical comedy manager.” The spy was construed to shame readers into toughening up, by force if necessary.
The reason that the spy's foreign identity is so patently in Le Queux's books is that Le Queux wanted it to be: subtlety is no good if your ultimate goal is to drive out foreigners en masse, as Le Queux's was. This account seems hyperbolic until we consider the author's attempts to recruit real-life readers as spy-catchers, with advertisements for Spies of the Kaiser that included solicitations for readers to send in stories of their encounters with German spies for a chance at a 10£ reward. Nor was this a mere marketing ploy; Le Queux dutifully sent in readers' stories—stories which bore a marked resemblance to his own fiction—to government panel on counterespionage. These stories, along with Le Queux's own fiction, were used as evidence to support the founding of the Secret Service Bureau, first code-named MO(t), then MOS(g), and, from 1916 on, MI5. The reason that most counterspy stories now don't work as fiction, in other words, is that they were not primarily intended for that purpose; their purpose was practical, and they succeeded brilliantly at it.

To be sure, the need for military preparation was a key message of literature centred around British spy heroes, as well. For instance, Erskine Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands*, the most famous work in this genre, ends with the demand, "Is it not becoming that the time has come for training all Englishmen systematically either for the sea or for the rifle?" Yet the picture of military service presented in these works is radically different: where the counterspy narrative is grim, relentlessly emphasising the mortal stakes of the conflict, the spy narrative emphasises adventure, even fun. The hero's proposal for homeland defence entails not well-drilled professional soldiers and sailors, but irregulars, "local men, with a pretty free hand to play their own game. And what a splendid game to play!" "Game" is scarcely a metaphor here; the hero, Davies, is an amateur sailor and hunter, an avocation that provides him both his cover story and his means of conducting espionage. The book's vision of national defence is one based on the primacy of sport. Ultimately, this was the chief ideological difference between the spy and counterspy genres: not the role of conscription or immigration, but the role of sport. Counterspy and invasion stories frequently railed against sport's distracting and enervating influence; the England of Wood's *The Enemy in Our Midst* is easy to invade because "sport absorbed the enthusiasm of every class," and William Le Queux, in his introduction to *Spies of the Kaiser* dismissed the idea that Britain's defence could be entrusted to amateur enthusiasts: "Were every able-bodied man in the kingdom to join a rifle-club we should be no nearer the problem of beating the German invaders if once they landed, than if the spectators in all the football matches held in Britain mobilised against a foreign foe." Spy fiction, by contrast, portrayed its spy heroes as sportsmen themselves, and spying as a sport both enjoyable and essential. Witness the introduction of Reggie Ainsworth, the spy-hero of Max Pemberton's *Two Women*: "He played bridge and tennis with distinction, had shot tigers in India and buffaloes in Egypt; but he was aiming at far greater game...Plainly stated, he had become a spy in the service of the British War Office." Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scouts, wrote a book about his intelligence service, *My Adventures as a Spy*, that presented spying as partly based on games like hide-and-seek; one chapter was called "The Sport of Spying."

The difference between condemning and endorsing sport may seem trivial, yet the ideological implications were immense, for one reason: an endorsement of sport implied an endorsement of sportsmanship. In spy fiction Britain and its rivals were striving to best each other, not annihilate each other. The event that gets the plot rolling in *Two Women* is pure sporting folly: when Reggie Ainsworth observes a successful test of the new German anti-aircraft gun, he instinctively calls out "Well hit!" and thus effects his capture. Nor is this sporting appreciation unreciprocated: his German captors treat him honourably, offering him expansive privileges if he will pledge not to attempt escape, an offer he just as honourably declines. Far from being two-faced, the sporting British spy is a model for a human view of the enemy in wartime, and the spy thus became the representative of that humanity. In *The Riddle of the Sands*, Germany's dire plan for England does not drive Davies to calumniate German ambitions generally, as he insists on viewing the matter fairly: "We can't talk about conquest and grabbing. We've collared a fine share of the world, and they've every right to be jealous. Let them hate us, and say so; it'll teach us to buck up, and that's what really matters."

The shift in attitude is seen most clearly in the work of John Buchan. Best known for his 1915 counterspy work *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, Buchan in 1916 published the sequel, *Greenmantle*, in which the hero Richard Hannay is dispatched abroad to investigate German dealings in the Middle East. In *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, contending with murderous German spies, Hannay had no patience for a Liberal politician's suggestion "that, but for the Torries, Germany and Britain would be fellow-workers in peace and reform." But in *Greenmantle*, Hannay's mission leads him to a German woodcutter's cottage, where he looks with humanity and pathos on the toll the war has taken on the family:

*That night I realised the crazy folly of war. When I saw the splintered shell of Ypres and heard hideous tales of German doings, I used to want to see the whole land of the Boche given up to fire and sword... But that woodcutter's cottage cured me of such nightmares. I was for punishing the guilty but letting the innocent go free.*

The absolutism of the earlier book is replaced here by the crucial distinction of culpability. This kind of reflection is not incidental to the novel's spy plot; in effect, it is the spy plot, since Hannay is able to gain access to places and information unavailable to the English wartime reader. Perverse as it seems, the spy—that symbol of deception and betrayal—represented in these stories a hope for communion and understanding through the smoke of war.
heavy water can be bought in the museum shop.

The saboteurs – all Norwegians – had been trained in Britain, through the efforts of SOE – the Special Operations Executive. SOE had been formed as a consequence of acute crisis, in July 1940, following the evacuation from Dunkirk and the fall of France. As Bickham Sweet-Escott, an SOE staff officer, would later recall, SOE was “no more than a hopeful improvisation in a desperate situation”. Initially under the control of Dr Hugh Dalton, Minister of Economic Warfare (later replaced by Lord Selborne), SOE was charged by Churchill, according to an entry in Dalton’s diary, to “set Europe ablaze”. In practice, this involved the organisation in nurturing resistance movements throughout Axis-occupied Europe, alongside carrying out specific, targeted acts of sabotage, for which agents would be trained in the UK. The training process was rigorous, and staggered in order to weed out promising but unsuitable recruits before they found out too much about the organisation to which they had been recruited. It began with an assessment of physical fitness, followed by more explicitly paramilitary training and, ultimately, a course in agent technique at one of SOE’s Finishing Schools at Beaulieu in Hampshire. When the weeding system failed, and recruits were found unsuitable having learned too much about SOE’s work, they would likely spend a period of time at Inverlair Lodge, Inverness-shire; ‘The Cooler’. This facility would later enter the public consciousness – albeit in a highly fictionalised form – in the cult 1960’s television series *The Prisoner*.

Of course, not all of the organisation’s activities were as successful as those of Operation Gunnerside. The “Nordpol”, or “Engelspiel”, affair in the Netherlands marks perhaps the nadir of SOE’s history; the discovery of SOE’s agents there, and the “playing back” of their wireless sets, achieved through the combined effort of Hans Giskes of the Abwehr and Josef Schrieder of the Sicherheitsdienst (SD). Over 50 agents lost their lives as a consequence of SOE London’s failure to realise that something was wrong in the Netherlands. To this day, rumours persist that the sacrifice was deliberate, part of wider Allied machinations in the field of strategic deception. A more sober assessment sees the disaster simply as an extremely effective German counter-espionage operation, in which SOE officers were completely duped. As the late Professor MRD Foot, one of SOE’s official historians wrote in *SOE and the Low Countries*, “the agents were victims of sound police work on the German side, assisted by Anglo-Dutch incompetence in London.”

Within months of VE Day SOE was dissolved, although the “spirit” of the organization lived on with the formation of the Special Forces Club, while a number of former SOE officers proceeded to join the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI6), which developed its own special operations capability. The ultimate value of SOE to the Allied war effort remains open to debate. Some point to the value of resistance in tying down Axis forces, while others, such as the late Sir John Keegan, have been more dismissive. Yet in a less tangible sense there was surely great value to be had in letting the people of occupied Europe know that they were not alone. Occupation, foot observed, resulted in “a sense of shame and desolation: SOE helped to replace these dismal feelings with a regained self-respect, a sense that the nation was now doing something to reverse its earlier defeat, so that its grown-up members could again bear to see their own faces in their shaving mirrors or make-up glasses.”

### Setting Europe ablaze: the Special Operations Executive

*By Christopher J. Murphy*

For the student of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), few places give a better illustration of its successes during the Second World War than the Norsk Hydro factory at Rjukan, where momentous events took place on the night of 27-28 February 1943.

A group of Norwegian saboteurs, codenamed “Gunnersonsled”, led by Joachim Ronneberg and supported by the advance party, codenamed “Grouse” (also known as “Swallow”), led by Jens Poulsson, managed to enter the factory undetected, bypassing the sole narrow bridge that spans the deep valley below in favour of descending into the valley itself. Crossing the river and climbing back up the other side, they followed a disused railway line to make their way to the factory. Inside, the team encountered a sole Norwegian night-watchman, who managed to lose his glance. Having found the saboteurs, the night-watchman lit the thirty-second time fuses on the explosives they had attached to the equipment that produced the heavy water, and fled the building. The resulting explosion destroyed the factory’s stocks of heavy water – deuterium oxide - a vital component in the Nazi quest for the atomic bomb. All of the saboteurs escaped alive, with some staying in the area to monitor the progress of repairs to the factory, which would later necessitate sabotage operations. It was quickly brought to the factory, which would later necessitate sabotage operations. It was quickly brought to

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