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R. Gerald Hughes, Peter Jackson, and Len Scott, eds.. *Exploring Intelligence Archives: Enquiries into the Secret State*. London: Routledge, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-415-34972-7. \$29.00.

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Review by **Mark Stout, Institute for Defense Analyses, Arlington, VA**

In the introduction and first chapter of this book, Peter Jackson, R. Gerald Hughes, and Len Scott observe that the examination of archival sources lies at the heart of historical inquiries. For too long, this simple fact meant that intelligence historians operated at a severe disadvantage compared to their colleagues; fifteen years ago, a leading scholar “asked in exasperation, ‘where are these records?’” (p. 14) Now, however, many intelligence scholars must grapple with voluminous archival source material. Increased access to documents is making it ever easier to study the less dramatic activities of intelligence services. It has become possible to learn how they conducted their day-to-day activities and thus to understand more fully how they relate to the governments and societies of which they are a part. Increased access to documents is also pushing front and center not only all the normal problems of historical methodology associated with archival materials, but a whole set of questions specific to intelligence records. Thus, this volume aims to take a document-centric approach to exploring the various ways in which scholars can study intelligence. It developed from the research project, “Journeys in Shadows,” run for several years by the Centre for Intelligence and International Security Studies at the University of Wales Aberystwyth.

The chapter by Hughes and Scott usefully reviews the ways in which scholars gain access to intelligence documents: “freedom of information” laws; the publication of official histories; broad-gauge declassification programs; the action of leakers and renegades such as David Shayler; and releases by third parties, most often intelligence partners but also adversaries. It is interesting to observe that both the United Kingdom and Russia have facilitated the access of scholars to documents obtained through espionage against the other side by such men as Oleg Gordievsky, Vasili Mitrokhin, Kim Philby and Anthony Blunt. (Hughes and Scott inexplicably neglect to mention the availability of large collections of intelligence documents captured in wartime.)

Each chapter centers on one or more intelligence documents and related commentary on them by such leading scholars such as John Ferris, Loch Johnson and many others. It is particularly rewarding to see in this volume prominent scholars such as David Holloway and Robert Jervis, who are not normally thought of as intelligence specialists, as well as a few scholar/practitioners. The volume focuses predominantly on documents from the United Kingdom and to a lesser extent the United States. Cases include, among others, the creation of the XX Committee; the interrogation of Klaus Fuchs; the handling of Oleg Penkovsky; an interesting comparison of American and British intelligence assessments of Vietnam in 1963; and a British assessment of the Arab-Israeli military balance as of 1965.

The chapters discussing documents from France, Vietnam, and East Germany are especially welcome. That said, the editors might have included more than just one document from the former communist countries of eastern Europe, as a number of them have taken exemplary steps in opening their archives. Nevertheless, the chapters on French assessments in the wake of the reoccupation of the Rhineland; the creation of Vietnamese intelligence services, 1945-1950; and a KGB speech (filtered through a Stasi notetaker) on the Western intelligence threat to the Soviet Bloc in 1983 are all valuable contributions, each in its own way providing penetrating glimpses into the intelligence cultures of the country in question. For instance, Pribbenow explains the enormous breadth of the mandate of the Vietnamese services with reference to the fact that “all crimes and all acts of social disruption, whether or not the motive is political, are considered ‘crimes against the state.’” It is a powerful insight. (p. 119)

This book raises important questions about what can and cannot be learned from intelligence archives and how this learning might occur. In the first case study, on British signals intelligence collection on the London Naval Conference of 1930, John Ferris usefully draws attention to a fact that can all too easily elude a researcher not accustomed to working with intelligence materials: that intelligence time does not unfold with the same speed as historical time, or even, always in the same order. There is always a lag between the event and the report of it arriving on the desk of an analyst or a decisionmaker. Sometimes these lags are predictable in duration, other times highly erratic. By highlighting two Japanese strategy cables intercepted by the British but for which the decryption time varied widely, Ferris demonstrates that it is easy to write a simple linear history about the influence of intelligence on the negotiations that would be quite at variance with what the participants actually experienced.

Peter Jackson’s introduction raises other such issues, but he sometimes seems more pessimistic about the utility of intelligence archives than the chapters that follow. He notes that archives can lie and that methodological and epistemological questions suffuse much of the book. Indeed, this is true. He also maintains that intelligence documents produce special challenges because they are particularly likely to contain lies, given that the daily practices of intelligence agencies often include deceit, manipulation and deception.

First, from the point of view of the historian, lying is not necessarily a bad thing. What intelligence officers choose to lie about can tell one a great deal about the country and the political culture in question. Second, Jackson is on shaky ground asserting that intelligence officers or intelligence archives lie more than other government officials or archives. (p. 3) The documents in this collection do not bear out his point. For instance, in his commentary on an oral history interview with William Colby (itself a little out of place in this book), Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones suggests that Colby may have lied to himself about his reason for being willing to criticize some of the CIA's past excesses. However, the reason that Jeffreys-Jones adduces—that Colby was assuaging his guilt over the untimely death of his daughter who had opposed operation Phoenix—scarcely suggests a pathology disproportionately concentrated in intelligence officers. It is true that intelligence officials lie, but the record, even in this book, makes clear that so do policy officials, whether these are unconscious lies to themselves, or whoppers told to their superiors or the public.

Christopher Andrew has suggested elsewhere that a primary purpose of the intelligence service in a totalitarian regime is to reinforce the world view of the leadership, i.e. to lie to it whenever necessary. Certainly we see this in the Soviet/East German document presented here. Similarly, in a chapter on the famous Butler Report, Jackson rightly raises the concern that “the British system of [intelligence] assessment is particularly vulnerable to political distortion because the assessment machinery of the [Joint Intelligence Committee] is so firmly embedded within the government's decision-making apparatus.” But, in such circumstances, where is the locus of the lying? Is it in the intelligence service or in the service's political masters? Perhaps the lying in intelligence archives is only of a different kind or even merely referred to with different terminology.

Jackson's introduction also addresses the question of whether archival materials on intelligence are constructed to provide a congenial picture to future researchers and to obliterate the written record, Winston Smith-style, of inconvenient historical facts. (p. 7) The answer is, of course, that they are. But, again, this scarcely sets intelligence archives apart. Most bureaucrats and leaders have opportunities for mis-, mal-, or non-feasance and have a motivation to cover these things up when they take place. Most would also like to be remembered as sagacious and thus take some steps to see that that happens. Winston Churchill's comment that “history will be kind to me for I intend to write it,” springs to mind as an extreme example of this tendency. Jackson, Hughes, and Scott suggest handling this problem by playing intelligence archives off against each other and indeed the chapter on Vietnam's services contains three documents, one published by the Vietnamese and two obtained by the French and available in French translation at the archives in Vincennes. The proposal raises some intriguing possibilities. For instance, might it now be possible to write, perhaps under collective authorship, a ground-breaking history of the Central Intelligence Agency by delving not only into American archives, but also the archives of its partners and adversaries?

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This volume contains many fascinating standalone chapters. Taken together, however, they raise many important questions for the field. At the end, one is left with an optimistic sense of what is now, at long last, becoming possible in the field of intelligence studies.

Mark Stout is a member of the research staff at the Institute for Defense Analyses and teaches intelligence at Johns Hopkins University's Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts and Sciences. He has previously held intelligence positions in the Central Intelligence Agency and the Departments of State and Defense. He is author of *The Terrorist Perspectives Project: Strategic And Operational Views Of Al Qaida And Associated Movements* and is working on a study of American intelligence during World War I.

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