

*Churchill and Secret Service*, by David Stafford. (Woodstock & New York: Overlook Press, 1998. Pp. xiii, 386.)

Winston Churchill--the journalist, soldier, politician, statesman, and war leader-- has been the subject of much scholarship. Why then another book which explores his public life? This book explores another of Churchill's personas, one of espionage advocate, a persona more private and secretive and, therefore, less familiar. For more than sixty years, Churchill was actively involved in the gathering, promotion, and use of secret intelligence, beginning with his own youthful spying for Britain during the Spanish-American War. Little has been written about this aspect of Churchill's life, even by Churchill himself, who has written voluminously on other aspects of his life.

David Stafford uses a great number of sources to explore Churchill's relationship with various British intelligence organizations. Many of the files have been open for a number of years, but only recently has Britain released the files of Ultra, its highly secret World War II code-breaking division. Churchill personally read the decoded enemy messages, the "golden eggs," and scribbled notes on them in red to the commander of the Secret Intelligence Service. Hundreds of files from the Special Operations Executive, created secretly by Churchill in 1940 to "set Europe ablaze" by means of popular resistance, have also been recently released. In addition to these intelligence files, Stafford has utilized the voluminous Churchill papers which were made public after completion of his official biography in 1988. The author also credits the scholarship of the last decade--the research of other historians and the memoirs of other statesmen--for clarifying much of his raw source material.

The story of Churchill's growing respect for espionage and unconventional war tactics is an exciting one, which reaches its climax during the Second World War. As Stafford says, "Churchill stood head and shoulders above his political contemporaries in grasping the importance of intelligence and harnessing it to his cause." The excitement of covert actions and espionage certainly appealed to the boy within him; but more importantly, he realized its value to Britain, whose military power had waned in the last century. Secret intelligence provided Prime Minister Churchill with strategic advantages against Britain's enemies and with leverage over Britain's allies.

Churchill's use of secret intelligence has been the subject of much debate. He was not above using private intelligence to further his own political career, and historians are still questioning whether the town of Coventry and the United States naval port of Pearl Harbor were Churchill's sacrificial lambs in the Second World War. Stafford counters that the

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available surviving documents give no credence to any of these charges; however, he admits that some of the raw intelligence reports were destroyed and that Britain has not released all intelligence files yet.

The American reader of Churchill and the Secret Service may be disappointed at the lack of importance given to Churchill's relationship with Franklin Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, and Dwight Eisenhower; but, after all, this is the story of British, not American, intelligence. Stafford tells this story from the British perspective in clear British English. As a diplomat and historian of espionage, Stafford possesses a great depth of knowledge of his subject; and as a professor, he remembers to place specific events in the proper context for the reader who lacks his sense of history.

This volume uncovers a portion of the secret battle between nations which continues even today in times of peace. As exhilarating as this battle may be for those involved, the reader may question the morality of this battle, which demands double-crosses, threats, and lies. The words of Winston Churchill, borrowed from Stalin, exemplify the unsavoriness of this unholy battle: "In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies."

Helen Hund