

1988

"C" — The Secret Life of Sir Stewart Graham Menzies, Spymaster to Winston Churchill

Lane C. Kendall
U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)

Anthony Cave Brown

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Kendall, Lane C. and Brown, Anthony Cave (1988) "'C"—The Secret Life of Sir Stewart Graham Menzies, Spymaster to Winston Churchill," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 41 : No. 4 , Article 15.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol41/iss4/15>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

There are problems with accountability in an endeavor that seeks to avoid accountability. There are thorny issues with regard to oversight and there are ways to be more effective than we are.

Covert action is a difficult undertaking, and the operations are sensitive in the extreme. Nonetheless, in a world in which one out of every four countries is engaged in some form of conflict, the United States can ill afford to eschew this option. Mr. Treverton's book should be factored into an agenda for improving, not discarding, our covert action capability.

R. LYNN RYLANDER
Department of Defense

Brown, Anthony Cave. "C"—*The Secret Life of Sir Stewart Graham Menzies, Spymaster to Winston Churchill*. New York: Macmillan, 1987. 830pp. \$25

How strategic intelligence is woven into decisions which move armies is described in revealing detail in this well-written, carefully researched, and thoroughly documented book. Told in terms of the life and accomplishments of Sir Stewart Graham Menzies, decorated British soldier and long-time (1939-1952) chief of England's Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), the story reaches into the highest echelons of government in England and the United States and includes material that has become available only in this decade.

Menzies (pronounced Ming-iss) was born in 1890, graduated in 1909 from Eton College, and commissioned into the Second Life Guard's Regiment. In the first part of World War I, he endured 13 months of bitter combat in Belgium, winning two medals for heroism. As 1915 ended, Menzies transferred from line to staff, and thus began 37 years devoted to strategic intelligence.

Anthony Cave Brown points out that when Menzies was appointed to head the SIS in 1939, this office had become one of the most powerful in the British Government. The chief of SIS directed all espionage, counter-espionage, sabotage, and much of the political warfare outside the British empire. Concurrently, he was the principal advisor to the government in matters of foreign intelligence.

Step-by-step, the reader accompanies Menzies the chief, as he learns about the evolution of code-breaking capabilities (which began as early as 1933) and is party to the excitement surrounding the penetration of the most secret codes used by the German high command. This achievement gave the Allied commanders precise and timely knowledge of enemy intentions. The reader also shares Menzies' unceasing concern for the security of the Ultra secret.

Of special interest is Brown's revelation of Churchill's systematic efforts to "drag the United States" into the war. Playing upon the sympathies of President Roosevelt, Churchill followed a deliberate policy to influence American sentiment toward entering the conflict.

Once the United States was committed to combat, the diverse aims of the leaders became evident. Roosevelt hoped to end colonialism throughout the world, whereas Churchill was dedicated to preserving the British empire.

The considerable friction which existed between the SIS and the American Office of Strategic Services is carefully and impartially analyzed and explained by the author.

After the fighting stopped in 1945, the SIS became involved in the cold war. Scandal rocked the British Government when the treacheries of Burgess, Maclean, and Philby were revealed. Menzies retired to private life, unscarred, and did not consider it necessary to defend himself. It is likely the problem could have been avoided had the signs of potential treachery, which were quite evident, been evaluated properly by those in authority, including Menzies.

This attention-holding book is more an institutional history than a biography. There are many exciting chapters and a number of surprising disclosures of interpersonal and intergovernmental relations. The reader must be alert at all times because high drama unfolds without warning and often involves almost forgotten characters.

The index and bibliography are adequate, as is the list of persons who shared their memories of events, great and small. An inexcusably large number of proofreader's errors mar the scholarly tone of this

important study of a little-known aspect of modern history.

LANE C. KENDALL
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)

Allen, Thomas B. and Polmar, Norman. *Merchants of Treason: America's Secrets for Sale, from the Pueblo to the Present*. New York: Delacorte, 1988. 384pp. \$19.95

This book is the latest attempt to develop some generalized "lesson learned" from the recent rash of highly publicized American espionage cases, with special emphasis on three Navy cases of interest: the Walker spy ring, the Pollard spy operation, and the U.S. Embassy Marine guards in Moscow. It examines the espionage threat and the U.S. organization for dealing with this threat, using recent spy cases as case studies and providing details of certain cases not yet available from other public sources. For that reason alone, *Merchants of Treason* is worth reading.

The author's basic tenets hold that there is a considerable threat to our security from foreign espionage activity, that we are poorly organized for the prevention and detection of espionage, and that there is a need for a new government agency whose sole purpose would be to direct U.S. counterintelligence activities. While most professional intelligence or security officers would agree with the first two points, the third is a highly debatable conclusion that is not well supported in this book. As