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The Venona Secrets: Exposing Soviet Espionage And America's Traitors



Synopsis

Here is one of the last great, untold stories of World War II and the Cold War. In 1995 the Venona documents secret Soviet cable traffic from the 1940s that the United States intercepted and eventually decrypted finally became available to American historians. Now, after spending more than five years researching all the available evidence, espionage experts Herbert Romerstein and Eric Breindel reveal the full, shocking story of the days when Soviet spies ran their fingers through America's atomic-age secrets. Included in *The Venona Secrets* are the details of the spying activities that reached from Harry Hopkins in Franklin Roosevelt's White House to Alger Hiss in the State Department to Harry Dexter White in the Treasury. More than that, *The Venona Secrets* exposes: New information that links Albert Einstein to Soviet intelligence and conclusive evidence showing that J. Robert Oppenheimer gave Moscow our atomic secrets How Soviet espionage reached its height when the United States and the Soviet Union were supposedly allies in World War II The previously unsuspected vast network of Soviet spies in America How the Venona documents confirm the controversial revelations made in the 1940s by former Soviet agents Whittaker Chambers and Elizabeth Bentley The role of the American Communist Party in supporting and directing Soviet agents How Stalin's paranoia had him target Jews (code-named Rats) and Trotskyites even after Trotsky's death How the Soviets penetrated America's own intelligence services *The Venona Secrets* is a masterful compendium of spy versus spy that puts the Venona transcripts in context with secret FBI reports, congressional investigations, and documents recently uncovered in the former Soviet archives. Romerstein and Breindel cast a spotlight on one of the most shadowy episodes in recent American history a past when treason infected Washington and Soviet agents were shielded, either wittingly or unwittingly, by our very own government officials. Herbert Romerstein was head of the Office to Counter Soviet Disinformation at the United States Information Agency from 1983 to 1989. He had previously served as a professional staff member for several congressional committees, including the House Intelligence Committee and the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Now retired, Romerstein continues to write and lecture on the subject of Soviet espionage. Eric Breindel studied at Harvard College, the London School of Economics, and Harvard Law School. Named senior vice president of News Corporation in 1997, he was also a syndicated columnist and the moderator of Fox News Watch, a weekly national public affairs television program. Previously, he had served more than a decade as editorial page editor of the New York Post and worked on the Senate Intelligence Committee. Breindel died in 1998 at the age of forty-two.

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Customer Reviews

The VENONA Secrets offers further analysis of the worldwide WWII KGB/GRU espionage operations described in the encrypted telegrams (called VENONA) decoded after the war by US Army and British codebreakers and made public only in 1995 by NSA. These once top secret messages led to the arrest and conviction of the Rosenbergs and Klaus Fuchs, while providing the basis for shutting down many of the Soviet wartime espionage networks. They also documented the charges of Soviet espionage in America made by former Communist agents Whittaker Chambers, Elizabeth Bentley and a number of others. This book, as opposed to the several others written on the topic, supplies new material in at least three areas. First, author Roemerstein's long experience in the field has allowed him to add documented perspective on the US Communist Party relationship to the Soviet secret services. In at least one case, that of Ruth Olsen, mentioned but unidentified in the VENONA material released, he provides the missing links. He also adds new details obtained from the so-called MAST decrypts that discussed mainly administrative matters between Soviets overseas and Moscow. Second, the authors apply their experience to three cases about which other authors have been more cautious: Harry Dexter White, Robert Oppenheimer, and Harry Hopkins, while discussing new material on Albert Einstein and his trust with a Soviet agent. Many liberal academics and others who continue to make the argument 'that the Rosenbergs and Hiss were innocent victims of lies told by Chambers, Bentley and the FBI', will scramble to find alternative explanations for the analysis that convinces Roemerstein and Breindel that White was a cooperating communist agent before WWII started for America, and that Oppenheimer was the same during the

war. It doesn't stop there. Perhaps most controversial of all conclusions is that Harry Hopkins (FDR's principal personal advisor) was a Communist before and VENONA's Agent 19 serving the Soviets during the war. Few will challenge the validity of evidence presented, though there is likely to be heartburn and skepticism with regard to the authors' analysis and conclusions. The judgment as to who is right is one for the reader. Third, while the focus of the book is mainly on America, the anti-semitic policies of the Soviet Union generally get a chapter based on new material. There are also chapters on the KGB use of journalists as agents, the extensive KGB penetration of the OSS (America's wartime national intelligence service), and an appendix with selected VENONA documents to give the reader an idea of the raw evidence. For the scholar, intelligence historian, and the reader who has long sought to learn the truth and make some sense of the Communist activities in the USA during the period 1920 - 1950, *The VENONA Secrets* is a positive contribution that should be studied carefully.

If you went to school before the Soviet archives & Venona papers were opened up/released (1991-1995), you must read this book. If you don't know what the Venona Project's papers say, then your knowledge on immediate pre and post WWII Soviet espionage is incomplete and, most importantly, probably not accurate. The truth is uncomfortable to some- Alger Hiss was definitely a spy, as were the Rosenbergs, and penetration into New Deal personnel was very deep. Plenty of material for the anti-FDR types, and the "McCarthy was right" folks. I personally feel very uncomfortable with the fact that about 2 out of every 3 names that pop up here as spies were Jewish. Most humiliating. The authors, no anti-semites they, make the irony of Jews spying for the virulent Jew-hater Uncle Joe very clear. Like many peoples, though perhaps more so, Jews have an unfortunate tendency towards self-delusion. The book is a bit of a bumpy read, sometimes flowing smoothly, sometimes reading like its out of Reader's Digest (a bit...lowbrow??), which accounts for the 4 stars, rather than 5. It has photos of many of the spies, but overall the photographs could be much stronger.

Over the years there has been a vast array of books about Soviet espionage and its American helpers: Alger Hiss, the Rosenbergs, Harry Dexter White, Nathan Gregory Silvermaster, and so many more. No matter the evidence, some members of the US press and intelligentsia refused to come to grips with the truth and admit that some of their great liberal heroes were actually agents of Stalin. Herbert Romerstein's book proves once and for all that they were all guilty as charged. During the Second World War the United States intercepted and decoded secret soviet radio transmissions

from Moscow to their agents in America. Using these documents, and materials from Soviet archives, Romerstein narrates the incredible story of just how deeply KGB agents penetrated the American government to its highest levels. Romerstein's encyclopedic knowledge of the subject, based on years of research and study, puts the entire tragic story into historical perspective and makes fascinating reading. If you are going to buy just one book of history this year, this is it!

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