

YOUR KINDLE NOTES FOR:

Roosevelt's Secret War: FDR and World War II Espionage

Joseph E. Persico

Last accessed on Sunday, February 21, 2021

42 Highlights | 0 Notes

Yellow highlight | Location: 363

> Vincent Astor had reentered Roosevelt's life as a result of the disaster that struck in 1921, FDR's crippling attack of polio. With Franklin rendered near helpless by the disease, his brother, James, went to Astor for a favor. Swimming had become part of Franklin's long, painful, largely unsuccessful rehabilitation. Ferncliff, the thousand-acre Astor estate near Hyde Park, had an indoor heated pool. Vincent readily agreed to let Franklin use it. Astor now saw an FDR cruelly reduced from the suave charmer, the tall, confidently striding naval official, the avid golfer, and skilled sailor who had raced boats off Campobello Island. As Roosevelt began using the Astor pool, what previously had been mere acquaintance with Vincent ripened into deep friendship. After FDR had made a partial recovery from the near death of body and soul, and reentered politics, Astor came even more closely into his life. While the political views of the liberal Demo-crat and the multimillionaire real estate magnate, publisher, and sportsman were not always in alignment, Astor nevertheless generously backed FDR's successful bids for governor of New York in 1928 and 1930 and made a then substantial $25,000 contribution to FDR's 1932 presidential campaign.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 376

> Doubtless the friendship also worked because, like FDR, Astor was not consumed wholly by the pleasures of his class. Along with his yacht, plane, clubs, and café society pursuits, the man had a social conscience. Astor backed reform movements, underwrote scientific explorations, and stayed atop world affairs. It was this last passion of Astor's that was to shape Roosevelt's early involvement in espionage in the years before World War II.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 380

> As far back as 1927, Astor and a circle of friends had rented a nondescript apartment at 34 East Sixty-second Street in New York where they set up a mail drop and installed an unlisted telephone. The group met monthly in secret and traded gossip and informal intelligence. They had a name for their tight little society, The Room. Astor's fellow

members included Theodore Roosevelt's son Kermit; Winthrop W. Aldrich, banker; David K. E. Bruce, sometime diplomat; Nelson Doubleday, publisher; William Rhinelander Stewart, philanthropist; Marshall Field, journalist; and fewer than a dozen other eminences. Astor, a man with a large, square, roughly handsome head, his resemblance to an aging pug relieved only by his upper-class speech, presided over The Room. On returning from their frequent globe-trotting, over dinner, members reported the world leaders they had met with and what they had learned that was not to be found in newspapers. Distinguished figures were invited to speak to them, the polar explorer Commander Richard E. Byrd on one occasion, Somerset Maugham on another, not so much for his prominence as a novelist and playwright, but because Maugham had been a secret agent in World War I, a role for which The Room members felt a keen affinity. With their love of secrecy, shared confidences, and clandestine trappings, The Room might easily be dismissed as dilettante amateurs, grown men enjoying boys' games of secret codes and invisible inks. To an extent this impression was accurate. Yet, their elevated professional and social positions did place valuable intelligence at their fingertips.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 391

With the inauguration of FDR as president on March 4, 1933, The Room now had a friend at the top and an eager consumer for its insider information. While Roosevelt was never formally a member of The Room, he knew them all through the Groton, Harvard, society, and professional fraternity. They were his people. For as much as FDR, in his public life, associated with the crusty, the earthy, the humbly born—political cronies like a Louis Howe, a Jim Farley, or an Ed Flynn—when the moment was purely social, he chose to spend it with his fellow patricians. Intelligent, trusted, patriotic friends like Vincent Astor could straddle both spheres, hence the dispatching of the Nourmahal on a secret mission to the Pacific. By

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 882

Why should the President not have appreciated his federal police chief? Hoover appeared to be doing a splendid job, particularly at spy catching. German intelligence agents in the United States had been communicating with the Abwehr through a shortwave radio station on Long Island. Hoover's men uncovered the operation and, instead of shutting it down, took it over. Their informant had been William Sebold, a German-born naturalized American citizen. During a visit to Germany, Sebold had been contacted by Abwehr agents who threatened the lives of his family still living in Germany if he did not spy for them. He agreed, but immediately upon his return to the United States reported the contact to the FBI, which took him on as a double agent at fifty dollars per week. He was to pretend to be working loyally for the Fatherland by

radioing intelligence via the Long Island station. Sebold's phony messages were exploited by the Departments of State, War, and Navy to feed false information to the Nazi regime. The flow of traffic coming from Germany tipped off the FBI to Abwehr intelligence targets and revealed new agents who had been recruited in America.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 890

So complete was the President's confidence in Hoover that the relationship began to move into areas testing legitimacy. Earlier on the day that he had attended the White House Correspondents dinner, FDR had addressed a joint session of Congress hammering at his pet theme, "the treacherous use of the fifth column" and the necessity for America to strengthen its national defense. The speech was blatantly interventionist, and its isolationist critics were swift in counterattacking. Two days after addressing Congress, FDR brandished a sheaf of telegrams before his press secretary, Steve Early. The senders, he told Early, were opponents of a strong national defense. He wanted Early to give the telegrams to J. Edgar Hoover to "go over" the names and addresses. Whatever "go over" meant, Hoover had the senders checked against the FBI's dossiers and promptly reported his findings back to the President. Three days later, Roosevelt sent Early another batch with a note reading, "Here are some more telegrams to send to Edgar Hoover." By the end of May, Hoover had checked out 131 of the President's critics, including two senators, Burton K. Wheeler and Gerald Nye, and America's aviator hero, Charles Lindbergh.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 928

The President's actions in employing his chief spy catcher against enemy agents and potential saboteurs were legitimate. His siccing Hoover on what he saw as opponents of military preparedness was, if less defensible, at least politically explainable. But the next use to which FDR put Hoover clearly breached an ethical wall. On June 25, 1940, Vincent Astor, conducting another off-the-books operation in New York, gave FDR some curious political intelligence.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 931

Wendell Willkie, liberal businessman and political neophyte, had been nominated as the Republican presidential candidate that month in Philadelphia. "Within the last few days," Astor wrote, "Wendell Willkie has asked J. Edgar Hoover to run on his Vice Presidential ticket. Hoover's reply to this was that, in view of the many fine things that you had done for him and the FBI, he would consider anything of the sort an act of great disloyalty to you, and therefore would not entertain any such proposition." Encouraged by Hoover's fealty, FDR had a little matter that he wanted the director to

tend to, keeping an administration skeleton securely in the closet. Vice President Henry Wallace, possessed of an interest in mysticism and the occult, had corresponded with a White Russian spiritualist with whom he traded utopian plans for world peace. Wallace's handwritten letters to the Russian also supposedly contained disparaging observations about FDR. Wallace claimed that the correspondence was false. Nevertheless, the treasurer of the Republican National Committee had managed to obtain copies, and the RNC had a press release prepared to make public Wallace's indiscreet comments. Hoover was able to obtain the correspondence and the Republican release, which he showed to FDR, and which indeed brimmed with potential embarrassment for the President.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 940

How Roosevelt handled the potential threat is now known because of the discovery in recent years of a secret device he had concealed in his office. Inside a drawer of FDR's desk was a panel with buttons reading Record, Pause, Rewind, Idle, and Playback. They controlled a recording system in place since August 1940. The year before, FDR had been badly burned…

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 943

Word had leaked out that the President had said America's defense perimeter began at the Rhine. The implication was that the United States would go to war if German troops crossed their own river. A White House stenographer, Henry Kannee, subsequently came up with a solution to avoid repetitions of such distortions—a secret record of what exactly was said inside the Oval Office. Kannee took the technical challenge to the RCA Corporation. Several months later, J. Ripley Kiel, an RCA inventor, found himself in the Oval Office while the President was away vacationing in New England. Under the scrutiny of Secret Service agents, Kiel drilled holes through the President's desk drawer and through the floor to a basement storage area. He concealed a small microphone in a lamp on…

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 950

On August 22, with the President back from his vacation, the hidden recording system was tested during a press conference in the Oval Office. As soon as the conference ended and the last reporter had filed out, the President asked a new staffer, Lowell Mellet, a former newspaperman himself, to close the door. FDR knew that his opponent Willkie, still married, was rumored to be involved with another woman, Irita Van Doren, a prominent literary critic in New York. Roosevelt began to speak in a conspiratorial

tone, either forgetting or not caring that the recorder was running. “Ah, Lowell,” he began, “now, I agree with you that there is, so far as the old…

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 956

(Raps desk for emphasis.) I mean the Congress speakers and state speakers, and so forth. They can use your material to determine the fact that Willkie left his old . . . (inaudible whisper). All right. So long as it’s none of us people at the top. Now, all right, if people try to play dirty politics on me, I’m willing to try it on other people. Now, you’d be amazed at how this story about the gal is spreading around the country.” The President mentioned a parallel, New York’s former mayor Jimmy Walker, who, Roosevelt said, had an “extremely attractive little tart” but hired his estranged wife, for $10,000, to appear at his side during a corruption trial. “Now,…

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 963

As it turned out, the Republicans never issued the release about Wallace and the potentially damaging letters. Willkie may have been too principled to stoop to base tactics, or as has been suggested, a deal was struck—no mention of the Wallace correspondence by the Republicans in exchange for no mention of…

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 1,000

What J. Edgar Hoover knew, but was not about to reveal to the President, was that the United States faced no serious threat of internal subversion. Adolf Hitler had specifically ordered Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, chief of the Abwehr, not to conduct sabotage against the United States. No cargoes in American ships bound for Britain and no British properties in the United States were to be attacked, even though Britain was Germany’s enemy. Hitler wanted no Black Tom provocations. The objective of German diplomacy in 1940 was to keep America out of the war. Hoover knew this and at one point noted that Germany “today relies far more on propaganda than on espionage and uses the mails and cables little for the latter purpose.” Even the spying that Germany thought it was carrying out in America was largely under Hoover’s control through double agents. But if the President’s belief that America faced sabotage and internal subversion would cause him to depend increasingly on Hoover, the director was all too willing to indulge the presidential prejudices.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 1,127

Two days later, Astor was back to the President with what he regarded as an intelligence opportunity presented on a silver platter. The Japanese ambassador to the United States had recently called a member of The Club, Winthrop Aldrich, chairman of the Chase National Bank, and assured him that “his government was preparing to liquidate the Chinese war as rapidly as adequate policing arrangements could be made.” At that point, the ambassador claimed, the Japanese could start paying more attention to their domestic economy. They wanted the Chase bank to send a commission to Japan to advise them. Here was a chance to penetrate Japanese intentions far more deeply than having the Nourmahal poke around remote Pacific atolls. Astor told the President, “It seems to me that such a commission might be of great value to us in obtaining valuable information, provided that certain individual members were wisely chosen and adequately educated in advance as to what to look for.” At this point, FDR was preoccupied with what he could do to keep a beleaguered Britain afloat. What he did not want was to do anything that might provoke the already wary Japanese into darker suspicions of U.S. intentions. He turned Astor down.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 1,259

Carter made his pitch to the President for the informal White House intelligence ring and found FDR receptive. Roosevelt was aware that during World War I President Wilson had been secretly advised by a body called The Inquiry. At its peak, The Inquiry numbered 126 scholars, scientists, and literary figures, including the historian Samuel Eliot Morison and the journalist Walter Lippmann, currently writing for The New Republic. Its members worked out of anonymous quarters in Manhattan and prepared confidential peace terms and redrawn maps of Europe for Wilson to pursue in the postwar era. To FDR, what Carter was proposing had the ring of The Inquiry. The man seemed to know everybody—officials, diplomats, the entire press corps domestic and foreign, and corporate executives all over the globe. He also had access to the National Broadcasting Company’s worldwide shortwave network. And FDR grasped that Carter’s profession offered the perfect cover for delivering intelligence, a Washington journalist coming to the White House occasionally to interview the President.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 1,458

During the two days that Donovan had the President’s ear, they pursued FDR’s favored pastimes, long drives through glorious foliage and frequent stops for roadside picnics. Donovan continued to tell the President what he wanted to hear, reversing the gloom and doom prophecies of Kennedy. He had a recommendation as well: that the United States start collaborating with British intelligence by creating its own centralized espionage service. Donovan

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 1,469

Ambassador Kennedy had sought to torpedo Donovan's mission and failed. In the marketplace of FDR's esteem, Donovan's fortunes were on the rise and Kennedy's stalemated. The ambassador longed to quit the Court of Saint James's because he could not believe in the policies he had been sent there to represent—Roosevelt's strategies to prop up Britain. The President shrank from firing anybody, but Kennedy had long been skating on thin ice. His womanizing was flagrant, including an open affair with the movie star Gloria Swanson. His slanderous private comments about the President leaked to the media. His blaming the war on "the Jewish conspiracy" was disgraceful. James Reston, the New York Times London correspondent, said of Kennedy, "He couldn't keep his mouth shut or his pants on." Still, FDR did not want the ambassador to leave his post yet. He feared having Kennedy shooting off his mouth in the United States during an election year. In the end, Kennedy broke the stalemate; he simply announced his retirement and headed home on October 23, 1940. Two years and nine months of the impetuous Irishman's outrages had ended for FDR.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 3,291

The man who pressed these ideas is perhaps best understood in the way he went about recruiting a New England chemist and businessman, Stanley Lovell, to run COI's Research and Development branch. Lovell, then age fifty-two, was heading his own Lovell Chemical Company when he was persuaded to go to Washington early in 1942 to talk to Colonel Donovan. Upon their meeting, Donovan told Lovell, "Professor Moriarty is the man I want. . . . I think you're it." What Donovan had in mind, he said, was a laboratory of dirty tricks. Lovell left to think over whether or not he wanted to pattern his life after the evil genius of the Sherlock Holmes stories. A few days later, he returned to Donovan's home and pointed out: "Dirty tricks are simply not tolerated in the American code of ethics." "Don't be so goddamn naive, Lovell," Donovan responded. "If you think America won't rise in applause to what is so easily called 'un-American' you're not my man." Lovell signed on and caught on. He was soon exploring schemes, including one to inject Hitler's vegetarian diet with female hormones that would cause his mustache to fall out and his voice to turn soprano.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 3,348

President, with intelligence from his three major sources, Donovan, Hoover, and Carter, telling him that Japanese residents posed no credible threat, nevertheless ordered their internment. Reaching back to the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, he issued Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, "to apprehend, restrain, secure and remove" presumably dangerous persons. As a consequence, over 114,000 men, women, and children of

Japanese ancestry were uprooted and kept under armed guard in remote, barren locations that FDR himself described as “concentration

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 3,553

Young Nelson Rockefeller, age thirty-two, Roosevelt’s coordinator of inter-American affairs, had already elbowed Donovan out of radio propaganda in Latin America. Rockefeller was no silver spoon idler. Ruggedly handsome, bounding with energy, and aggressive, he saw the lands from the Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego as his territory. He did not want Bill Donovan there in any role. Otherwise, he told the President, he would have to resign. Granted, J. Edgar Hoover had his Special Intelligence Service operating in Latin America, but Hoover was not a rampart that Rockefeller was about to storm. Instead, he became Hoover’s ally in excluding Donovan from the region. Hoover refused even to share with the nation’s supposed intelligence coordinator what his spies learned south of the border. Hoover and Rockefeller had another ally. Adolf Berle warned the President, “Bill Donovan wants to take over the FBI work in South America. At least he does not say so, but he wants to put his own man in. He does not even say that, but you can never pin him down to saying what he really wants to do.”

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 3,748

Carter’s potential catch was Ernst Franz Sedgwick Hanfstaengl, born in Munich to a wealthy father in the art reproduction business and an American mother, Catherine Sedgwick, of an old New England family. Though he grew to a portly six feet four, Hanfstaengl had been tagged by a governess with the nickname Putzi, from which he never escaped. By upbringing, Hanfstaengl was almost as American as German. He had been sent off to Harvard in 1905, where he mingled socially with T. S. Eliot, Walter Lippmann, Theodore Roosevelt Jr., and the budding Communist John Reed. Putzi was a gifted pianist, and young Teddy invited him to the White House, where he performed for President Theodore Roosevelt’s family. After Harvard, Hanfstaengl remained in the United States, marrying an American woman and managing his father’s branch art shop on Fifth Avenue in New York. There, he sat out World War I while one of his brothers was killed fighting for the kaiser.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 3,755

By 1921, Putzi had returned to Munich. One day, a U.S. military attaché told him that he had met an impressive political newcomer who was going to be speaking at a beer hall that night. The two men went together to hear the speaker, who looked to Putzi like “a waiter in a railroad restaurant.” Then the man began to talk, and Hanfstaengl was smitten on the spot by Adolf Hitler. He introduced himself to the fledging leader of

the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, the National Socialist German Workers Party, and they soon became fast friends, especially since the wealthy Hanfstaengl helped bankroll Hitler's party newspaper, the Völkischer Beobachter. When Hitler fled Munich after his beer hall putsch failed in 1923, he took refuge in Putzi's country estate at Uffing, thirty-five miles from the city. While there, Hitler fell into a suicidal depression. Only the comforting of Hanfstaengl's wife, to whom the sexually ambivalent Hitler was attracted, stopped him from taking his life, surely a turning point in world history. Hitler was subsequently caught and arrested at the Hanfstaengl estate. But after his release from Landsberg prison, Putzi was there with his touring car waiting to pick him up. After coming to power in 1933, Hitler made Hanfstaengl, with his flair for languages and cosmopolitan suavity, the Reich's foreign press chief. In the evening, Putzi entertained the Führer and his coterie with renditions of Wagner, and Harvard football marches and pep songs. But Putzi apparently had too much flair for the political henchmen around Hitler. He sensed their jealousy and feared they were plotting to kill him. He fled Germany for Britain, taking with him his young son, Egon. Hanfstaengl was interned when the war broke out and subsequently sent to a Canadian POW camp in Kingston, Ontario.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 3,768

John Franklin Carter had known Putzi in the latter's Nazi heyday. Carter had been in Germany working as a freelance journalist in the mid-thirties, trying to get a line on the Hitler regime. A friend told him that the man to see was Putzi Hanfstaengl. Carter looked up Hanfstaengl in Munich and the chemistry was instantaneous. They came from the same crowd. Putzi's mother was the daughter of Ellery Sedgwick, a close friend of Carter's father. Putzi tried to get Carter an interview with Hitler…

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 3,781

Carter went to see the President about bringing Hanfstaengl to America. Roosevelt airily claimed that he had known Hanfstaengl at college, though it is doubtful since he had left Harvard six years before the German. "What do you think on earth he could do?" FDR asked Carter. Carter pointed out that Hanfstaengl "actually knows all these people in the Nazi government; he might be able to tell you what makes them tick." "Yes. Go ahead," the President said, and then added something that impressed Carter with his sense of the enemy's culture. "You can tell [Hanfstaengl] that there's no reason on God's earth why the Germans shouldn't again become the kind of nation they were under Bismarck. Not militaristic. They were productive; they were peaceful, they were a great part of Europe. And that's the kind of Germany I would like to see. If he would like to work on that basis, fine."

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 3,803

> Putzi soon appeared to demonstrate his use to his new keepers. During a visit to an Army base, he and Carter were studying a wall map when Hanfstaengl suddenly put his finger on Casablanca. “Of course, there’s where you ought to land,” he said. Army officials were stunned. He had pinpointed a major target of Operation Torch, the pending invasion of North Africa, which was to be America’s first campaign on the Atlantic side of the war. Army officials feared there had to have been a leak. An investigation was ordered. The investigators concluded that the closely guarded German could not have learned of Torch. “It was just Hanfstaengl using his brain,” Carter assured the

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 3,807

> Army. All the effort and trust the President had invested in bringing Hanfstaengl to America, Carter was now convinced, had been justified. This man would earn his way.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 4,213

> Since it was impossible for FDR not to know what was happening to the Jews of Europe, the pertinent question is how he and his circle dealt with this knowledge. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, a Jew, was as close to the President as any figure in the administration, and had been something of a one-man recruiting agency for the New Deal. Frankfurter was all too familiar with the historic odyssey of the Jews. His parents had left Austria when Felix was twelve and settled on the Lower East Side of New York. Reared in poverty, the boy nevertheless displayed his brilliance, graduating from City College at age nineteen and going on to Harvard Law School, where he subsequently joined the faculty. His devotion to FDR was total. He had even braved the disfavor of his colleagues to support the President’s high-handed 1937 attempt to pack the Supreme Court. The Frankfurters still had relatives in Austria. In 1938, the year before Roosevelt elevated him to the Court, Frankfurter received word that his eighty-two-year-old uncle, Solomon Frankfurter, a distinguished Viennese scholar, had been hauled from his bed at 3 A.M. and jailed by the Nazis. Frankfurter’s first impulse had been to reach for the phone and call the President. But on second thought, he held back. Suppose the press got wind of the story and blew it out of proportion? Roosevelt was already attacked by his enemies as a tool of the Jews, even a Jew himself. Bigots parodied his New Deal as the “Jew Deal.” Frankfurter decided instead to turn to the State Department to help win his uncle’s release. He had chosen a poor ally. State’s visa division was notoriously unsympathetic toward Jews. Frankfurter was advised that intervention was impossible. In desperation, he appealed to the American-born Lady Nancy Astor in London. In that period, before war broke out, her Cliveden set favored appeasing Hitler, and this stance gave her some influence

with the German ambassador to England, who did arrange for Solomon Frankfurter's release. Roosevelt was never involved.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 5,006

Fuchs was admirably suited for the role of spy. He was inconspicuous in appearance. More important, he possessed imagination and self-reliance, had no need for the approval of others, and exhibited the rare ability to live a split life. When he learned in 1943 that he was going to America, he informed his Soviet controller, whom he knew only as Sonya. She was, in fact, Ruth Kuczynski, a German refugee Communist herself, dark-haired and sultry, who shared her sexual favors with other party faithful but apparently not with the monastic Fuchs. Sonya explained to Fuchs how to establish contact on his arrival in New York with an American controller, known only as Raymond. Thus, Fuchs, in a scene out of pulp fiction, found himself on a crisp Saturday afternoon early in 1944 strolling down Manhattan's Lower East Side clutching a tennis ball in his left hand. A pudgy, pasty-faced, bespectacled man in his mid-thirties, wearing one pair of gloves and carrying another, came up to Fuchs and asked, "Can you tell me the way to Grand Central Station?" Fuchs had connected with Raymond. His new controller was actually Harry Gold, also the contact for two other Americans enlisted in Soviet espionage, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Gold, a chemist by profession, had been passing industrial secrets to the Russians since 1936.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 5,036

After his guests left, Berle, more tired than ever after the bizarre three-hour visit, did not go directly to bed. He remained in his study and began to jot down Karl's charges. He headed his notes "Underground Espionage Agent." Among the names Karl had mentioned were Alger Hiss, then with the State Department and described as "Member of the Underground Com.—Active," Hiss's wife, Priscilla, and brother, Donald. Also mentioned by Chambers were Laurence Duggan, another official at State, a "Mr. White," and, most surprising to Berle, Lauchlin Currie, a valued member of FDR's personal White House staff alongside whose name he added Karl's description, "Fellow Traveler —helped various Communists—never went the whole way."

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 5,041

Did Berle keep his promise and lay Karl's allegations before FDR? Isaac Don Levine later claimed that Berle did so, as did the radio gossip columnist Walter Winchell, who also heard Karl's recital and claimed to have informed FDR himself.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 5,043

> The President was reported to have scoffed at the idea of Soviet spies penetrating his administration. After all, Berle had checked with respected figures such as Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter and Dean Acheson, then assistant secretary of state, about the Hiss brothers. According to Berle, Acheson claimed he had known them since they were boys "and he could vouch for them absolutely." Felix Frankfurter gave the Hisses an equally clean bill of health. Oddly, however, Berle, the President's chief advisor on internal security, did not make these inquiries until 1941, almost two years after Karl's disclosures to him. And Berle's otherwise detailed diaries make no mention of briefing FDR on the Karl matter. Whether informed or not, Roosevelt would have had trouble accepting the accusations of an obscure, unappealing, and anonymous informant. The people Karl had denounced were FDR's kind of people, and vouched for by FDR's kind.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 5,050

> Berle's foot-dragging may have two explanations. First, like the President, he was bound to wonder about charges brought by so seedy a figure as Karl against solid members of the New Deal establishment. Further, by the time Berle got around, in 1943, to answering the FBI's request for the notes he had taken that odd September night four years before, the Soviet Union was America's ally and few in FDR's circle were looking to make waves that might swamp this fragile alliance.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 5,082

> Documents released following the collapse of the Soviet Union reveal that between nine thousand and fifteen thousand Polish military officers, government officials, intellectuals, and landowners were murdered in the Katyn forest on Stalin's orders in April 1940 as "hardened and uncompromising enemies of Soviet authority."

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 5,085

> The hypocrisy of the Soviet government during the Katyn affair was egregious even by Stalin's standards. But Churchill and Roosevelt were prepared to swallow it. That they knew all along the cynical game Stalin was playing is obvious in a long dispatch the Prime Minister sent to FDR on August 13, 1943.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 5,087

More than two months before, Owen O'Malley, British representative to the Polish government-in-exile, had provided to Churchill's foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, twenty-four detailed points describing where and when the murdered Poles had been found, the climate and clothing worn at the time of their execution, the past use of the Katyn forest by the Reds to execute its czarist enemies, and the contradicting explanations the Soviets had given for the disappearance of the Poles. Most damning, letters the prisoners had been sending to their families ceased after April 1940, while the Katyn forest was still in Russian hands. O'Malley made clear his own conclusion that "in light of all the evidence" the Soviets had murdered the Poles. The Briton, torn between the case for pragmatism and his humane impulses, accepted the necessity of the…

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 5,094

But O'Malley could not resist adding the price of turning a blind eye to evil. "If," his message ended, "we, for however valid reasons, have been obliged to behave as if the deed was not theirs, may it not be that we now stand in danger . . . of falling under St. Paul's curse on those who can see cruelty 'and not burn.'" Churchill was prepared to risk Saint Paul's curse. In his note forwarding O'Malley's report to FDR, he concluded that it was too convincing to suit their policy of not antagonizing Stalin. What O'Malley had revealed "is a grim, well written story, but perhaps a little too well written," the Prime Minister wrote. "Nevertheless, should you have time to read it, it would repay the trouble. I should like to have it back when you have finished with it as we…

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 5,102

The President never made a public statement accusing the Russians of Katyn. Nor did Hitler, after his initial propaganda barrage attempting to bring the Soviets to his moral level. With the stunning defeat at Stalingrad, with the Russian steppes littered with German corpses and the burnt-out hulks of Wehrmacht tanks, and with no major offensive feasible for 1943, Hitler began considering a way out of the Soviet morass. A Magic decrypt picked up between a Japanese diplomat and Tokyo noted, on June 7: "All the fierce anti-Soviet propaganda that Germany started about Soviet soldiers mass murdering a group of Polish officers at Katyn has calmed down and is now scarcely a whisper. This is regarded as being done on Hitler's own secret orders and that the Chancellor in his own heart is trying to…

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 6,759

Donovan, though a rock-ribbed Republican of conservative social bent, had shown himself to be flexibly pragmatic in recruiting agents. German Communists were among

the most ardent anti-Nazis who had fled the Gestapo dragnet, many finding refuge in Britain. In seeking to recruit Germans who could pass unnoticed inside the Reich, the OSS's Joseph Gould, a former movie publicist, hung around a left-wing London bookshop where he correctly guessed he would encounter Communist refugees. Through his bookshop contacts, Gould recruited German Reds, some under Gestapo death warrants, who were willing to parachute back into their homeland and spy against the Nazi regime. Aaron Bank, a forty-two-year-old OSS Army captain, trained a company of phony German infantry to be parachuted into the National Redoubt, the rumored stronghold where die-hard Nazis were expected to prolong the war indefinitely. Bank's mission, Iron Cross, was to attempt to seize Hitler and other top Nazis seeking sanctuary in the Redoubt. His recruits were Communists almost to a man.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 6,842

While the military struck from one flank, J. Edgar Hoover attacked Donovan from another. The FBI director had made himself nearly indispensable to the White House. At the President's behest, his FBI had placed Vice President Wallace under surveillance ever since his loose-tongued indiscretions to his brother-in-law had been exposed. While Allen Dulles spied for the OSS in Switzerland, FBI agents spied on his sister, Eleanor, at home, reporting that her affair with a Russian translator had been consummated every Tuesday, Saturday, and Sunday for the previous five years. Even the private life of the President's trusted Harry Hopkins was not out of bounds. The President was furious over leaks of near-verbatim White House conversations that appeared in the antagonistic Washington Times-Herald. The shadow of suspicion fell upon Hopkins's third wife, Louise, a former Paris editor of Harper's Bazaar, a great beauty, and a woman with a past. She reportedly numbered among several wealthy lovers Bernard Baruch and Jock Whitney. After she married Hopkins, Louise moved into her husband's quarters in the White House. In the beginning, the President was smitten by her. Eleanor, however, was less enthralled at having another permanent houseguest, and a charmer to boot. Still, FDR wanted the couple to stay, particularly to keep Hopkins at hand day or night. In December 1944, with his frustration over the newspaper leaks mounting, Roosevelt had the FBI start watching Louise Hopkins. Hoover placed her under "physical and technical surveillance," which meant that she was followed and her phone tapped. Revealing his closeness to FDR, or his distrust of his wife, Hopkins himself made the arrangements for the FBI to spy on her. The investigation came up dry. Louise was neither spilling White House secrets nor betraying her husband.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 6,855

Hoover used his closeness to Hopkins to point out the superiority of his organization in the espionage field. He sent a “Dear Harry” message that he knew Hopkins would forward to FDR and in which he described how a truly professional espionage organization performed. He cited as an example the FBI’s control of the Abwehr’s Long Island shortwave radio station. “The Germans believe that this station is operated by one of the agents whom they dispatched to the United States,” Hoover noted, “but the Bureau has controlled this circuit and operated it for several years.”

Note:

Yellow highlight | Location: 6,860

He added “a rather amusing sidelight on the Bureau’s operations,” quoting a message the Abwehr control post in Hamburg had radioed to the compromised station: “Best wishes for 1945 and many thanks for your very valuable cooperation.” Next, Hoover began pouring poison directly into Donovan’s well. “As of possible interest to you and the President,” he wrote to Hopkins, he had received word from an informant inside the OSS that Donovan was plotting a propaganda blitz. “The well known American writer, John Steinbeck, author of The Moon is Down, Of Mice and Men,” he claimed, “even has been charged with keeping abreast of OSS accomplishments so that he will be in a position to write a book exploiting these experiences when the proper time comes.” Not only was Donovan a publicity hound, Hoover charged, but he was dishonest as well. “OSS intends, according to this source, to represent to the American people that it sends its own members across the lines into enemy territory, although this is not actually the case since, because of many blunders…

Note: