



Stealing Secrets, Telling Lies: How Spies and Codebreakers Helped Shape the Twentieth Century

James Gannon

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While most of the stories here are already well known the deciphering of the German Enigma machine's code, for example, or the penetration of British intelligence by the Soviet-controlled Cambridge Five spy ring Gannon, a former documentary producer and self-described "reporter with a nose for a good story," retells them with aplomb, positioning them nicely to fit his theme. The familiar story of undercover German spy Richard Sorge, who worked against Hitler as a member of the Nazi Party, takes on both pathos and suspense. In Gannon's hands, the unraveling Sorge, weakened by alcoholism and despair, goes to his fate anew; his execution comes as a sad surprise, even though it really isn't news to anyone. The tale of another WWII secret agent, Rudolf Roessler (code-named "Lucy"), takes on a fresh aura of mystery although "...more than half a century since Roessler breathed the neutral Swiss air in war-torn Europe, nobody knows the truth." Gannon's basic strength is in depicting the delicate balance of espionage and showing how a nation's fate can hinge on the concealment or discovery of vital information. Overall, this is an entertaining survey that successfully plants the subliminal question: What if?

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