

FARAGO

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Secrets of the Spies

THE GAME OF THE FOXES. By Ladislav Farago. 696 pages. McKay. \$11.95.

In 1967, poking in a dark loft of Washington's National Archives for some research material for a book, spy aficionado Ladislav Farago stumbled onto a cloak-and-dagger treasure trove: an unknown cache of microfilms in a dusty metal footlocker that turned out to be captured Abwehr documents from the German spy organization's headquarters in Bremen and Hamburg. The films yielded a staggering 18 million pages of secret flimflam—straight, so to speak, from the fox's muzzle. With painstaking research that included globe-hopping and personal interviews, Farago pieced together a fascinating chronology of Nazi spying inside and outside the U.S. and England between 1920 and 1945, from the nondescript dock watcher in Brooklyn to the Norwegian-American oil tycoon, Torkild (Cap) Rieber, who was welcome in President Roosevelt's office.

Tapped: Among Farago's startling disclosures: the Nazis poured millions into the 1940 elections, hoping to defeat FDR's third-term bid (Göring personally coughed up \$5 million from his private slush funds and promised much more); the Göring money was funneled into the U.S. by oil magnate and Abwehr agent William Rhodes Davis, and so eager was his friend, labor czar John L. Lewis, to unseat FDR and keep the U.S. out of the war that he became, says Farago, a "foil and confederate" for Davis in the Nazi attempt to prevent the re-election of FDR. Vice President Henry Wallace laid a pipeline to the President's inner councils by discussing Cabinet meetings with his Swiss brother-in-law, whose diplomatic reports home were tapped by an Abwehr agent in Bern and sent

to Germany. FDR reportedly merely shrugged off this information when told in January 1944, but Wallace was no longer his running mate in the election campaign that year.

The canny bureau of Abwehr "foxes" headed by Adm. Wilhelm Canaris, who had to contend with rivalry from Himmler's Gestapo and Heydrich's *Sicherheitsdienst*, also succeeded in marrying off an agent to Churchill's cousin (he "disappeared" after his discovery and incarceration) and appeared to have penetrated the White House through a stamp-collecting agent, Louis A. Matzhold, who professed to having philatelic tête-à-têtes with FDR in the Oval Office, once giving him some European stamps (from a liquidated Jew's collection) in an Abwehr envelope. With an often droll narration that also touches on U.S. and British counterespionage efforts, Farago describes not only the Abwehr coups but its many windfalls—such as the incident in which an Army captain, three days before Pearl Harbor, stole the entire "Victory Program" for a U.S. invasion of Europe and funneled it to FDR's political opposition, which leaked it to the press—proving the Nazi suspicions about the dubious nature of America's professed neutrality.

Some of the episodes are amazing. From only bits of spy reports, German technicians figured out the workings of the supercritical Norden bombsight—even before the device was fully assembled by its creators here. But the story of the greatest technical coup takes a bit of backtracking: through the "indiscretions" of Tyler Gatewood Kent, a young Foreign Service officer in the U.S.'s London embassy (who later was sentenced to seven years in jail), the Germans by 1939 had cracked the top-secret "Gray Code" by which FDR and Churchill were conducting private talks. The leak remained unknown until the eve of

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France's fall, and its discovery caused a top-level communications blackout at that worst possible time—but not before the Germans had heard Churchill's urgent plea for ships, which resulted in the historic destroyer deal.

By March 1942, however, the Germans had solved the ultimate Allied "code": electronic wizards had succeeded in tapping the transatlantic cable and had invented (almost by pure induction) a descrambler that could ungarble the topnotch telephone traffic between a roster of callers that reads, says Farago, "like a Who's Who of the Anglo-American war effort." This security break proved disastrous. Listening to Churchill and Roosevelt chuckling over Mussolini's ouster and the imminent surrender of Italy, Hitler sent twenty German divisions over the Alps into Italy.

Snafus: Reciting the careers and capers of individual agents and superspooks, Farago shows that the Abwehr had its share of snafus. It failed to pinpoint the location of the Allied North African landings or the European invasion site. In spite of 10,000 agents in Italy, it failed entirely to anticipate Mussolini's fall. And its information sector could be found miserably wanting: when General von Falkenhorst was to occupy Norway, he had to buy a Baedeker to familiarize himself with the country's topography.

But my favorite tale concerns the young hotshot Walter Schellenberg, who later succeeded Canaris as Abwehr chief. This schemer was so busy doctoring and puffing up simple intelligence to make himself look cagey that he once insisted on "decoding" a straightforward cable that Churchill and FDR were meeting in "CASABLANCA." Noting this was a risky combat zone, he polished his Spanish and informed Hitler that, according to his unimpeachable sources, the two Allied leaders were conferring in the White House, Washington, D.C. The Führer was not pleased.

—S. K. OBERBECK

