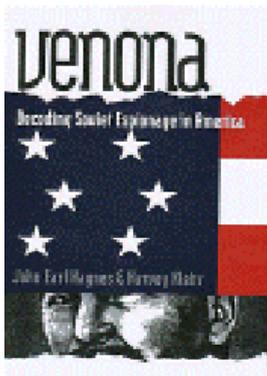


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**Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America** by John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr (1999), 485 pages.



If you were a KGB spy in Washington in 1943, how did you inform your Moscow-superiors that information about atomic rockets is in your possession? Your message was: "Pilot delivered report about the rockets", which translated into 5 four-number words 7934 2157 1139 3872 2166. You then did some crypto acrobatics too complicated to explain here, and your cable read UETWZ UREEO xZTTTU ETPEP TRART. In Moscow the experts used a "one-time pad" to decipher the cable, and soon Joe Stalin knew that the spy whose assumed name was "Pilot" delivered his material which, via the diplomatic pouch, was en route to the Soviet Union. This book describes how American cryptographers broke the Soviet code. It was possible because the Soviet intelligence ran out of the secure "one-time pad" system and were experimenting with faster but less secure "two-time" method. Their success reminds us of the ENIGMA code system, with the important contribution of the Polish counter-intelligence service, which enabled the Allies to decipher German Army telegrams.

The VENONA project began with Col. (subsequently general) Carter Clarke who "did not trust Joe Stalin." Clarke was a member of the U.S. War Department Intelligence Division in 1943. At that time, scores of Soviet ships were in U.S. ports, loading immense quantities of supplies including some 400,000 trucks. Along with thousands of seamen, an avalanche of KGB officers descended on these shores and immediately began to spy on their friendly ally. VENONA recorded 6,000 Soviet telegrams. The interception and decoding was slow at the start, but after the breaking of the Soviet codes about half of the messages were understood and promptly translated into English.

This Book does not offer us any startling revelations, but in many specific instances it confirms through its own diligent analysis what the American public has suspected all along, i.e. that indeed, there was a brazen conspiracy of many individuals to relay U.S. government secrets and other confidential information to Moscow. The 50 pages of appendices list the names of persons who were involved to different degrees. There are only a few Polish names, such as Oskar Lange or Father Stanisław Orlemaski, but these people were principally fellow travelers rather than spies.

If you are interested in this well documented book, it is on our shelves.

***George Suboczewski***