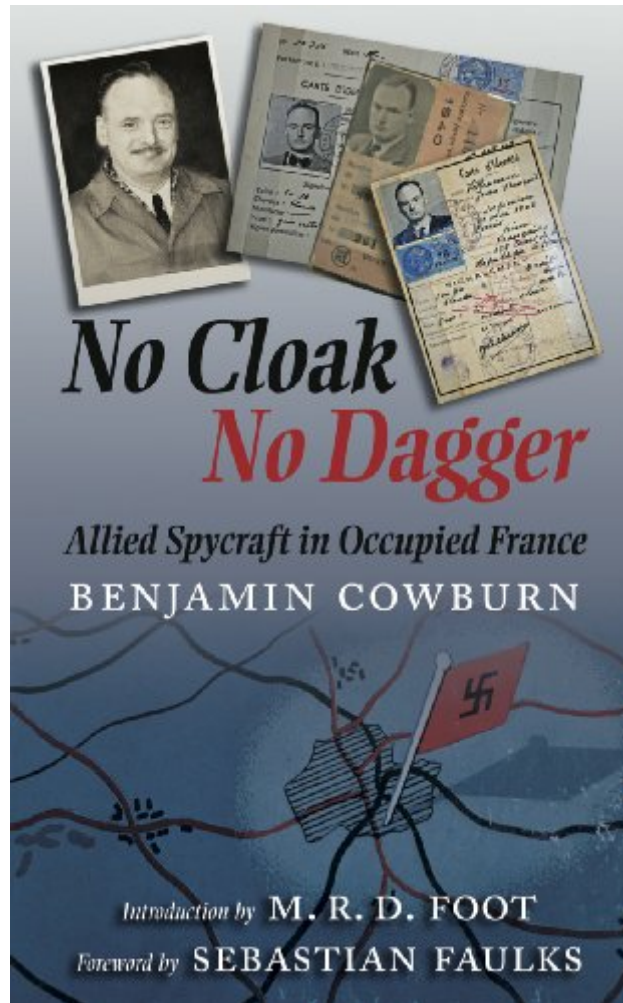


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No Cloak, No Dagger: Allied Spycraft In Occupied France



Synopsis

The memoir of SOE agent Benjamin Cowburn is rightly regarded as a classic of wartime literature. In simple, gripping detail Cowburn explains the methods of special agents who were dropped into France during the war and the ways that agents would set about establishing secure networks with the French Resistance. He also shows how agents were able to travel across France, how they set up transmitters and contacted their British headquarters for orders, and how they arranged airplane pick-ups and deliveries of supplies. His account sheds light on the views of both the Resistance fighters facing torture at the hands of the Gestapo and their besieged French countrymen. He notes the tensions within the different command centres, in particular between the French leader-in-exile Charles de Gaulle and his British counterparts, who were all eager to control the efforts of the Resistance. Cowburn gives fascinating general lessons in the art of spying from establishing a worthy target to executing an operation but also tells the full story of his own sabotage operations, including the effective destruction of cylinders for thirteen locomotives in the dead of night. As in so many operations, mistakes were made which could have led to numerous arrests. In this case, the details of the operation had accidentally been left on a blackboard in the school where they had planned the raid, but were luckily scrubbed out by the headmaster's wife. On another occasion, Cowburn snuck itching powder into the laundry of Luftwaffe agents to cause a disruption. This new edition contains an Introduction by M.R.D Foot and a Foreword by Sebastian Faulks. A top 500 title!!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

SOE Spycraft Benjamin, Cowburn's book "No Cloak, No Dagger" is an accurate and detailed descriptions of Special Operations Executive (SOE) agent activities in occupied and unoccupied France, including details of air drops, line crossing techniques, network communications, and rendezvous techniques. Cowburn was also working the Tinker evasion and escape network lines moving evaders to friendly forces. Well worth the read for insight to WWII special warfare.

I bought this book for several reasons. As an amateur WW2 historian, I was interested in the mechanics of the clandestine Resistance efforts against the Nazis. As a clandestine ham radio operator, I was particularly interested in how the Allied clandestine "pianists" set up and operated their wireless transmitter (W/T). Comparing the chapter "Pianists and Mutes" (pp.154-164) with information gleaned from "Spy Princess", Shrabani Basu's biography on Noor Inayat Khan, it is now evident that SOE "pianists" used both indoor and outdoor stealth antennas to avoid German detection. The book gives a bird's eye view of the SOE effort against the Germans. There are other books that go into greater detail but Cowburn gave a general account from his perspective.

REQUIRED READING.

This story does a very good job of expressing the mix of much hum-drum with a modicum of terror. The unconventional railway rides must have been as frightening as the parachute jumps, but to Mr. Coburn it was all part of the day's work. Those who like military history, or the more factual parts of modern military fiction, will certainly appreciate this account. Well done, Mr. Coburn.

Mr Cowburn tells an unvarnished story of life in un-occupied and occupied France. I enjoyed it immensely and recommend it to those who enjoy reading about amateur espionage as practiced by SOE. They did a magnificent job.

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