

A MAN
CALLED
INTREPID

THE SECRET WAR

A MAN CALLED INTREPID

THE SECRET WAR

William Stevenson

BALLANTINE BOOKS • NEW YORK

A MAN CALLED INTERPID

Copyright © 1976 by William Stevenson

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Published in the United States by Ballantine Books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York, and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 75-30730

ISBN 0-345-31023-3

This edition published by arrangement with
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

Manufactured in the United States of America

First Ballantine Books Edition: January 1977
Twenty-fifth Printing: July 1990

First Canadian Printing: April 1977
Third Canadian Printing: September 1978

**A TORRENT OF PRAISE
FOR THE MAN—FROM HIS PEERS**

"Perhaps no single man did so much to swing American support behind British secret warfare in the horrifying two years when the United States remained officially neutral and Europe lay at Hitler's feet."

General William J. Donovan, OSS

"When the full story can be told, I am quite certain that your contribution will be among the foremost in having brought victory."

J. Edgar Hoover, in a letter to
Sir William Stephenson

"It was—the greatest Anglo-American intelligence enterprise in history. Stephenson's personal contacts were such that he got the willing services of talented men and women from every field of human endeavor, of every nationality."

Sir Noel Coward

"Stephenson and Donovan carried out the single outstanding intelligence coup of the Second World War when they delayed the Nazi invasion of Russia."

Winston Churchill, in a private
message to Franklin D. Roosevelt

[REDACTED]

...AND THE BOOK!

"FASCINATING... GRIPPING... Tells of the sinking of the *Bismarck*, the U-boat war, troubles with Latin America, guerrilla operations like the assassination of Heydrich, the development of the A-bomb, North Africa, Dieppe, D-Day—in fact, the entire course of the war seen from a different slant: that of the undercover man."

[REDACTED] **Boston Sunday Globe**

"The histories of World War II will have to be revised in light of the remarkable revelations made in this book... the narrative is crammed with astonishing stories. Can you imagine Leslie Howard, Greta Garbo and Noel Coward as secret agents. All of them—and others equally surprising—served their cause silently."

[REDACTED] **Cincinnati Post**

"DETAILED AND PRECISELY DOCUMENTED... an intriguing story of secret actions against the backdrop of great events."

[REDACTED] **The Washington Post**

"A SPLENDID BOOK. RICH IN INFORMATION... PROFOUND IN ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY."

[REDACTED] **San Francisco Chronicle**

"A MAN CALLED INTREPID IS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT BOOKS OF OUR TIME... the detailed story of men and women—many who occupy unmarked graves in Europe—who enlisted in a cold and lonely cause, often dropped by aircraft into enemy territories, and who built an intelligence network that saved the free world... a book which kept me immobile until dawn-light... I THINK I SHALL NEVER FORGET MUCH OF IT."

Los Angeles Herald-Examiner

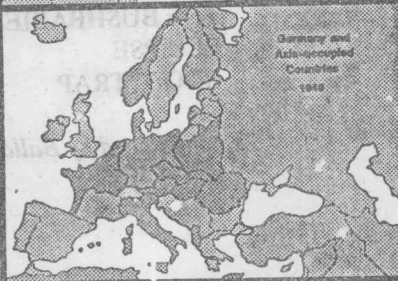
"A book masterfully coordinated and filled with fascinating detail... a pulsing portrait of an unusually fascinating character... thank God he was there when we needed him."

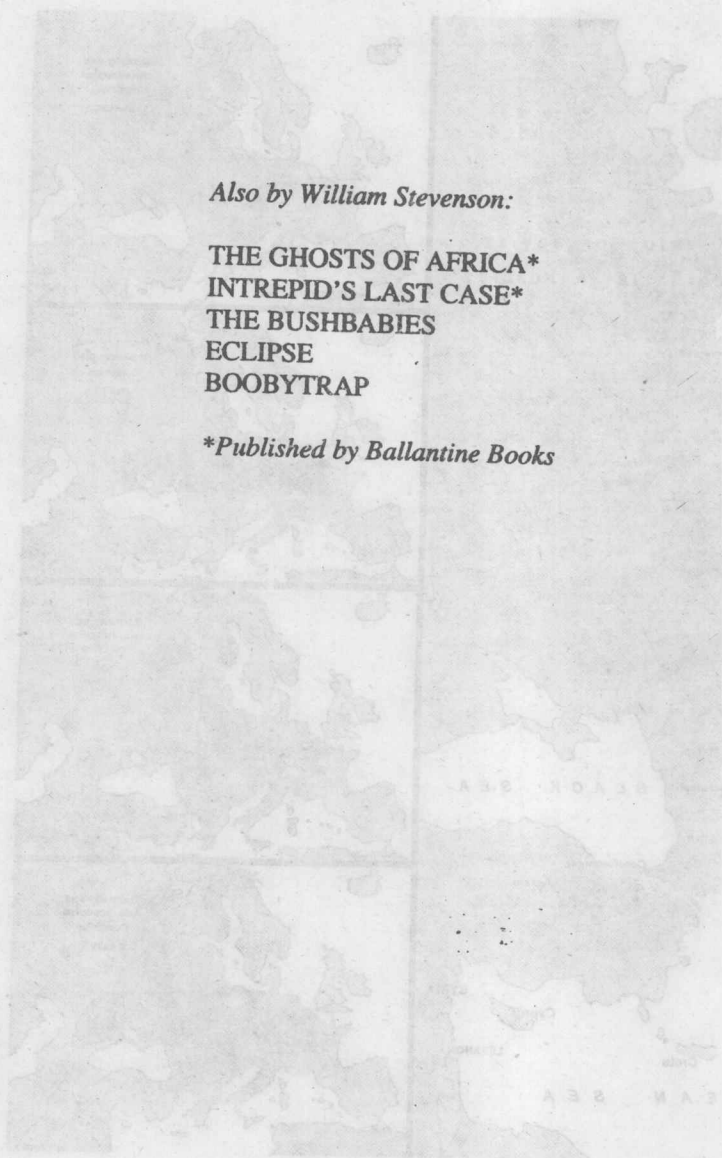
Hartford Courant

"The heroes and villains of the piece are every bit as heroic and villainous as those created fictionally, from the bloody Reinhard Heydrich, the butcher of Prague, to the woman code-named Cynthia, who exploited her beauty and sexual attraction with breathtaking results... AN ADVENTURE STORY OF MONUMENTAL PROPORTIONS... A HISTORICAL DOCUMENT OF MAJOR SIGNIFICANCE."

NBC News and Information Service







Also by William Stevenson:

**THE GHOSTS OF AFRICA*
INTREPID'S LAST CASE*
THE BUSHBABIES
ECLIPSE
BOOBYTRAP**

**Published by Ballantine Books*

With love and admiration for
Mary French Simmons,
of Springfield, Tennessee,
in recognition of her
courage and devotion,
and who, as Lady Stephenson,
made Intrepid possible

POINT OF DEPARTURE

A FOREWORD BY INTREPID

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN DELANO Roosevelt supported a secret war against tyranny for two years when the United States was formally at peace. Then, attacked without warning, the United States replaced the staid costume of diplomacy for the combat fatigues of war. The enemy—Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, Fascist Italy, and their puppets—was at last out in the open. But the secret war continued in secrecy.

For cogent reasons, the fundamental facts of that hidden activity have never been fully revealed. The complete facts have been known to few; some have not been committed to any documents; the written records have been totally inaccessible; and for thirty-five years they were under the rigid restraint of Britain's Official Secrets Act. Even now, a few matters must remain undisclosed for reasons that, of course, will *not* be obvious. But in terms of history—what really happened and why—nothing significant need now be concealed.

In 1940, supplied all but daily with evidence that Hitler's scheme of world domination by terror, deceit, and conquest was undeniably underway, Roosevelt

recognized that the defeat of embattled Britain would be prologue to an ultimate attack upon the United States. Intelligence was given to him by me or through me as Winston Churchill's secret envoy and as chief of British Security Coordination. BSC, the innocuous-sounding organization with headquarters in New York, was, in fact, the hub for all branches of British intelligence. Roosevelt was acutely aware that America, psychologically isolated since World War I and relying wistfully upon geographical insularity, was woefully unprepared to meet or counter the onslaught of newly developed military, propaganda, and espionage techniques. He desperately needed time to alert his nation and to arm it without plummeting into war. Churchill was in far more desperate need of arms and supplies to grant severely battered Britain even a modest hope of resistance and a slim chance of survival. Only a leader who could extend his vision of national self-interest to the belief that a union of free people was the real defense against totalitarian aggressors would wager on Britain at such unattractive odds. Roosevelt was such a rare gambler.

With Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and, within a few days, Hitler's declaration of war against the United States, all diplomatic sham abruptly ceased. Military and naval operations, however covert their planning and launching, became dramatically public upon execution, frequently reported in eyewitness accounts by daring war correspondents. But the secret war, burgeoning in intricacy to immense proportion and purpose, remained by its very nature obscure and unknown. With few exceptions, the crucial events have remained so.

After all these years, why tell about them now? In my view, there are compelling arguments for disclosure.

In the most personal sense, I consider this account a tribute to the gallant women and men of many nations who volunteered to fight in unconventional ways. They assumed frightful risks, had no protection or privilege of uniform, carried the responsibility of countless lives in the solitary missions they accepted on trust, and often were forced to make lonely deci-

sions that could mean merciless death to their families and countrymen. Many of these agents and resistance fighters lie in unmarked or unknown graves. Relatively few have gained recognition beyond mention in confidential archives. Most of those who survived returned to peaceful pursuits, unable to receive honors or rewards. Those who are named in this narrative are but a few of the vast hidden army to whom the free world owes a debt that cannot be repaid.

But there are less personal, more acute reasons for these disclosures.

With the surrender of the shattered Axis Powers in 1945, BSC dismantled its labyrinthine apparatus and silently passed out of existence. Its furious life had seen the tide of battle turn from near-fatal defeat to overwhelming victory. The Grand Alliance had prevailed in a fiery test. The Holocaust provided eleven million ghastly voices deafeningly raised against the malignancy of modern barbarism. The wreckage of London, Berlin, Hiroshima, and other landmarks of civilization stood as massive reminder of the monstrosity of the new concept of war that recognized no non-combatants, neither the infant, the infirm, nor the helpless. Yet the incipient United Nations promised an international commitment to comity and reason. And the imminent ordeal of Nuremberg seemed to signal the long-sought awakening of world conscience and the recognition of responsibility for crimes against humanity. We looked with yearning upon a planet in the springtime of safe coexistence.

The weapon of secret warfare, so terrifyingly effective, forged out of necessity in the crucible of combat, had no place in the pastures of peace. To my profound relief, INTREPID ceased to be the code name for the chief of an intelligence network. I closed the books on BSC, never, I hoped, to open them again.

Perhaps it was foolhardy to suppose that in real life we could undo what had been done, cancel our knowledge of evil, uninvent our weapons, stow away what remained in some safe hiding place. With the devastation of World War II still grimly visible, its stench hardly gone from the air, the community of

nations started to fragment, its members splitting into factions, resorting to threats and, finally, to violence and to war. The certainty of peace had proved little more than a fragile dream. "And so the great democracies triumphed," Sir Winston Churchill wrote later. "And so were able to resume the follies that had nearly cost them their life."

Prophetic as he was, Churchill did not foresee the awesome extremes to which these follies would extend: diplomacy negotiated within a balance of nuclear terror; resistance tactics translated into guidelines for fanatics and terrorists; intelligence agencies evolving technologically to a level where they could threaten the very principles of the nations they were created to defend. One way or another, such dragon's teeth were sown in the secret activities of World War II. Questions of utmost gravity emerged: Were crucial events being maneuvered by elite secret power groups? Were self-aggrandizing careerists cynically displacing principle among those entrusted with the stewardship of intelligence? What had happened over three decades to an altruistic force that had played so pivotal a role in saving a free world from annihilation or slavery? In the name of sanity, the past now had to be seen clearly. The time had come to open the books.

Barriers stood in the way of so simple-appearing a task. A treasury of misinformation had already been gathered and widely distributed in the decades since the war. Much of this came from commercial exploiters who sought popularity at the expense of any semblance of truth. But many serious efforts, backed by exhausting (although hardly exhaustive) research, produced incomplete, thus unintentionally inaccurate reportage. Zealously preserved secrecy naturally thwarted the most dedicated investigator. And, ironically, some of the deliberately false concoctions we created to mislead our adversaries were still generally accepted as genuine. (If truth was not served by that, vanity surely was!) Adventure and sensationalism frequently were fictively injected into accounts that, were the real facts known, would have been infinitely more intriguing. Enforced silence prevented the

correction of or even mild comment on these misrepresentations. Could these entrenched misconceptions and undenied speculations now be exploded?

The BSC Papers cover an enormous and complex sweep of events. The writer and historian Cornelius Ryan had been asked to consider a chronicle of the secret war and had consulted the papers of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services, the American equivalent of BSC. Ryan reported in the *New York Times* of September 17, 1972: "Stepping even briefly into that mysterious world was enough to convince me of the awesome task awaiting the historian. . . . Because of the many faces of intelligence itself, to reach the truth, to separate fact from fiction, the historian might well need as many trained researchers as there were operatives in the OSS."

Fortunately, BSC historians had consolidated their own papers to provide a summary "to be consulted," I wrote at the time, "if future need should arise for secret activities of this kind." These papers consisted of many thick volumes and exhibits, covering five years of intense activity and thousands of operations across the world.

While this summary eased somewhat the task that fell to William Stevenson, my friend and former colleague, it did not lift from his shoulders the staggering burdens of investigation and selection from such vast records. He is a painstaking researcher and drew on many other sources. Our shared interests made it inevitable that he should produce this chronicle. Yet he is too strong-willed and independent to borrow my views. (Despite the similarity of our names, we are not related.) I played no part in his selection of the material. I have read the manuscript and vouch for its authenticity. I willingly answered all the author's many and probing questions, for they are part of the larger question that must be answered now and in the future: *Will the democracies consent to their own survival?*

We failed to face that critical question prior to 1939. Not one of the democracies honestly confronted the obvious threats to its survival. They would not

unite, rearm, or consider sacrifices for individual or collective security. There were those who argued that the sacrifices were not necessary. Today, parallel arguments are heard, similar responses given.

We are rightly repelled by secrecy; it is a potential threat to democratic principle and free government. Yet we would delude ourselves if we should forget that secrecy was for a time virtually our only defense. It served not only to achieve victory, but also to save lives in that perilous pursuit.

The weapons of secrecy have no place in an ideal world. But we live in a world of undeclared hostilities in which such weapons are constantly used against us and could, unless countered, leave us unprepared again, this time for an onslaught of magnitude that staggers the imagination. And while it may seem unnecessary to stress so obvious a point, the weapons of secrecy are rendered ineffective if we remove the secrecy. One of the conditions of democracy is freedom of information. It would be infinitely preferable to know exactly how our intelligence agencies function, and why, and where. But this information, once made public, disarms us.

So there is the conundrum: How can we wield the weapons of secrecy without damage to ourselves? How can we preserve secrecy without endangering constitutional law and individual guarantees of freedom?

Perhaps the story of BSC can help. It is common knowledge now that enemy codes were broken; that secret cadres were created within the enemy camps; that new technology was put at the service of agents and guerrillas. Equally true but possibly not so evident, is an important characteristic of BSC—it consisted of volunteer civilians convinced that individual liberty lies at the root of human progress. We were amateurs steeped in the traditions of freethinking individuals. Sometimes I wonder how we managed to win, considering the conflicts of opinion within our ranks. And then I conclude that success was possible because we were of sound but independent mind. Harsh decisions were made in agony; Roosevelt

surely killed himself in the process, and isolated agents had to weigh singlehanded actions against the reprisals that would be taken against their kinsmen. Battles were won because we had advance knowledge of enemy plans, could influence those plans, and could anticipate enemy actions by methods heretofore concealed. Other struggles, no less decisive, were finally won by the resistance armies, a name for the people in occupied lands who loved freedom and, quite simply, were willing to fight for it against any odds.

When the history of World War II is revised in the light of the secret war, this may be the most striking element: the great engines of destruction did not determine the outcome. The invincibility of free people and the ingenuity of free minds did. I believe this as I believe today that the spirit of human resistance refuses to be crushed by mere technology.

Perhaps a day will dawn when tyrants can no longer threaten the liberty of any people, when the function of all nations, however varied their ideologies, will be to enhance life, not to control it. If such a condition is possible, it is in a future too far distant to foresee. Until that safer, better day, the democracies will avoid disaster, and possibly total destruction, only by maintaining their defenses.

Among the increasingly intricate arsenals across the world, intelligence is an essential weapon, perhaps the most important. But it is, being secret, the most dangerous. Safeguards to prevent its abuse must be devised, revised, and rigidly applied. But, as in all enterprise, the character and wisdom of those to whom it is entrusted will be decisive. In the integrity of that guardianship lies the hope of free people to endure and prevail.

It has been claimed that human progress depends on challenge, that individuals and nations have the need to believe in causes and struggle for them. Some theorists have extended this application of instinctual behavior to account for the periodic wholesale slaughters we call "war." The merit of such concepts is a matter for study by psychologists and historians. What seems poignantly evident to me is that humankind already has awesome enemies to engage—pov-