Examination Period 3: 2016/17

Module Title: Secret State: British Intelligence, 1558-1945
Level: Six
Time Allowed: One hour and thirty minutes

Instructions to students:

- Enter your student number not your name on all answer books.
- Answer two questions: one from Section A and comment on one question from Section B.
- The same material should not constitute a substantial part of more than one question.
- Section A carries 67% of the overall marks.
  Section B carries 33% of the overall marks.
- Begin each question in a separate answer book; label each answer book clearly with the number of the question you are answering.
- Neither books nor notes may be taken into the examination.

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Section A

Answer one question.

1. How significant for Britain’s security was the foundation of the Secret Service Bureau in 1909?

2. In the interwar period, what did British intelligence do well, what did it do badly, and why did that matter?

3. Explain how COMINT contributed to Allied victory in the Second World War.

End of Section A
Section B follows overleaf
Section B

Comment on the content and context of one of the following extracts:


In 1980, intelligence barely ranked as a topic worth academic study; new work was written in a vacuum, almost without the benefit of scholarship, while the relevant primary documents in the public domain were limited and often hidden. Now, studies of intelligence are common, revisionist works are possible, and specialists are swamped in primary documents [...] Intelligence can be incorporated into history.

When doing so, certain fallacies of evidence and argument should be avoided. The most common is [...] the focus on anecdote instead of analysis. The most dangerous is the assumption (as against the proof) of influence, the idea that because secret intelligence was available to the decision maker, it must have affected his decisions, and in a significant and simple way; or that intelligence was key to policy and hence its records must transform our understanding of events. Such arguments are not necessarily wrong but simply unproven, and therefore of limited use even if accurate. What really matters about intelligence is not what it is but what it does.
5. **Henry Landau, *All’s Fair: The Story of British Secret Service behind the German Lines* (1934).**

I knew him as the Dane [...] He was a marine engineer of exceptional quality; he was a man without nerves, always cool and collected; nothing escaped his austerely competent eye; and he was possessed of an astounding memory for the minutest detail of marine construction. I read his reports and marveled at them. In my opinion, he was undoubtedly by far the most valuable agent the Allies ever had working in Germany. To the chief in England belonged the credit of finding him; at least, I believe so. He became the solitary agent in Germany that our Naval section in Holland possessed, but he was all they needed [...] With his extraordinary memory, he was able to sit down, when in Holland, and write out page after page of reports, giving exact description of the ships which were under construction or repair [...] The greatest danger the Dane ran was in his contact with us, as he never carried any incriminating materials whatever – notes, lists, letters, even special papers or inks – when he was in Germany.