Examination Period 3: 2018/19

HIS302719N

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
- Section A carries 67% of the overall marks; Section B carries 33% of the overall marks.
- Answer 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.
- The same material should not constitute a substantial part of more than one question.

No. of Pages 4
No. of Questions 5

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Section A

Answer one question from this section.

1. What are the key strengths and limitations of the ‘authorised histories’ of Britain’s intelligence organisations?

2. To what extent did intelligence contribute to British victory in the First World War?

3. Which were the most significant successes and failures of British intelligence in the interwar period? Justify your answer with reference to at least two intelligence organisations.
Section B

Comment on the content and context of one of the extracts.


‘The best and principall means for a Commander to avoid divers inconveniences and to effect many worthy designes, are, First, to be sure to keep his own deliberations and resolutions secret. Secondly, to penetrate the designes and intentions of the enemy. For which purpose it behoveth him to have good spies, which must be exceeding well rewarded, that so they may be the readier to expose themselves to all dangers. The best and most assured spies are ones own souldiers, which (feigning some discontent for want of pay, or otherwise) enter into the enemies service, and get themselves into the Cavallry, as having best opportunity (whether in the field or in garrison) to give information [...]’

There might also divers souldiers be daily sent disguised, under severall pretences, to observe what is done in the enemies leaguer, when it is near. The boors use also to serve for spies, aswell women as men, which, being not much regarded nor suspected, may have the freer accesse: but these are not always to be trusted, neither are they so well able to judge of or to pierce into businesse, and the lesse assurance and information to be had by their relations.’

Section B continues overleaf

'I went to see [Group Captain] Blandy [Head of the RAF ‘Y’ Service]; and as I sat down he slowly pulled open a drawer of his desk and produced a scrap of paper and handed it to me saying, “Does this mean anything to you? It doesn’t seem to mean much to anybody here.” On the paper I read:

KNICKEBEIN, KLEVE, 1ST AUF PUNKT 53 GRAD 24 MINUTEN NORD UND EIN GRAD WEST ENGERICHTET.

[...] I quickly recognized that it was a decoded message, because I knew that during the preceding two months Bletchley had begun to be successful in decoding some of the Enigma messages. This particular one had been sent by the Chief Signals Officer of Flieger Korps IV at 1455 hours on [5 June], and had been decoded four days later. By this time a stream of decodes was coming in from Bletchley into Winterbotham’s office; somehow this one had been missed but then had been spotted by an air-minded cryptographer [...] and sent up to Blandy. I told the latter how the message had confirmed my previous thoughts and how I proposed to follow it up.'