

HISTORY:

Pre-20th Century Espionage

Secret intelligence history books as, for example, Peter Hopkirk's *The Great Game*, that focus on early 20th century and all the pre-20th centuries of espionage are, in many ways, more enriching and more interesting than the cold war spy history books that are overly popular.

There is Venice for example. Ioanna Iordanou, in her book called *Venice's Secret Service*, tells the untold story of the world's earliest centrally-organised state intelligence service. Even the British historians admit that the entire British intelligence tradition is basically an extension of the Venetian school of espionage. Housed in the imposing Doge's Palace and under the direction of the Council of Ten, the notorious governmental committee that acted as Venice's spy chiefs, this 'proto-modern' organisation served prominent intelligence functions including operations (intelligence and covert action), analysis, cryptography and steganography, cryptanalysis, and even the development of lethal substances.

Then there are the schools of espionage of the Hashashins (still taught in some spy academies today), the Japanese ninjas, the Vatican and its Jesuit international spy

network, that is sometimes called 'Information Collection Bureau for God', European secret societies and so on... The realm of secret intelligence is richer, wider and more multifaceted than its conventionally accepted contours would make you believe. There are, and always has been, informal spy networks, non-state actors with agents of influence, supranational spy rings functioning as a shadow government beyond geopolitics. In other words, there is so much more than just the Cold War if one truly has an interest in the very notion of secret intelligence.

There are hidden teachings on secret intelligence even in the history of mythology if one knows how to decipher or decrypt them right. The myth of Prometheus is one of them. Few people would admit it but Prometheus is basically a typical spy who steals valuable intelligence from the gods and leaks it humanity for a certain agenda. Moreover, the name 'Prometheus' means forethought, or foreknowledge. The name in and of itself reminds us the teaching that the finest secret intelligence work (or spy op) is the one that is either pro-active or preventive. The key to the future of spy ops is hidden in the pre-20th century spy ops.