



Official and Confidential, The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover, by Anthony Summers, © 1993 Anthony Summers, G.P.U. Putnam Sons, New York, 1993.

p. 126-8

After the run-in with Edgar, Popov turned for help to a senior member of the British intelligence team in New York., Charles Ellis. The Director of the FBI, Ellis observed, pulled tantrums every day. He would ask Stephenson to intervene. Stephenson tried and got nowhere.⁶ So did an emissary sent from London by MI-6 chief Colonel Menzies. Menzies' concern was that Edgar's obduracy would destroy all the painstaking work that had gone into making Popov a star double-agent.

⁶ Sir William Stephenson confirmed before his death that he did discuss Popov with Hoover. (Response to author's question, 1988.)

So well regarded was Popov that the British eventually gave him the honorary rank of colonel, British citizenship, the Order of the British Empire, the Distinguished Service Medal and a Modigliani painting – a gift from the royal family. He was godfather to the nieces MI-6 Chief Stewart Menzies.

FBI files contain no written record of a meeting between Edgar and Popov, but that proves nothing. Edgar made an art form of concealing information in alternate file systems, or simply non recording it at all. Edgar's office records, released in 1991, show that he was indeed in New York in late September 1941, the approximate time of the meeting alleged by Popov – a fact Popov could not have known when he wrote his memoirs.⁸

⁸ Popov's ghostwriter, and his son Marco, say he was initially reluctant to include the anecdote at all, because it was such a bitter memory.

Chloe MacMillan, who worked with British Intelligence in Portugal, met with Popov when he eventually returned there. "He did see Hoover, I'm sure," said MacMillan, "and he did give them his warning about Pearl Harbor before it happened. When I saw him months later, he was still so depressed about what had happened." Other cotemporaries had similar memories.⁹

⁹ The widows of two other British officers who worked with Popov, Ewen Montagu and Bill Luke, said in 1990 their husbands had no doubt Popov saw Hoover. Popov also discussed the episode with a friend, the Yugoslav author Branko Bokun, in 1946. "He told me then, and many times afterwards," Bokun recalled, "there are some things in life that shock so much they never leave you. It marked him for the rest of his life." (Ints. Iris Montagu, Anne Luke and Branko Bokun, 1990.) The official files neither support nor impugn Popov's account. The British do not release intelligence records. One of the official histories of wartime intelligence, co-authored by former MI-5 Deputy Director Charles Simkins, says there is nothing in MI-5 or MI-6 files about Popov's talks with Jebesen, nor about his confrontation with Hoover. It may be significant that, as official accounts admit, there were frequent turf battles between the foreign and domestic arms of British Intelligence. John Pepper, who worked with William Stephenson and who arrived in New York with Popov, said in 1990, "We didn't tell MI-5 anything about the case." MI-5, which had handled Popov's early European operations, lost effective control and contact once his American mission began. Popov's US sojourn may have been covered by the files of British Security Coordination – William Stephenson's organization – but their contents remain an unknown quantity. (British Intelligence in the Second World War, vol. 5, by Michael Howard, London, HMSO, 1990, and British Intelligence in the Second World War, vol. 4, by F.H. Hinsley and C.A. Simkins, London HMSO, 1990, [turf battles] *ibid.*, p. 181, ints. Pepper, 1988, 1990.)

p. 130

“Hoover had shown his total incompetence for sophisticated wartime intelligence early on. His handling of the ‘Popov Affair’ might well have been a tip-off for his future legendary secretiveness and over-simplified way of thinking.” *William Casey, CIA Director*

pp. 296-7

There were eight separate investigations of the Pearl Harbor disaster. Neither the Japanese questionnaire nor the name Dusko Popov was mentioned in any of them.††

†† The existence of the Japanese questionnaire and its full text, was not made public until December 1972, seven months after J. Edgar Hoover’s death, with the publication of J.C. Masterman’s *The Double-Cross System in the War of 1939 to 1945*. Popov’s own memoirs, *Spy Counter-Spy*, were not published until two years later and then only after FBI agents tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade his publisher, Grosset & Dunlap, that Popov’s story was a bogus.

Had they been, there is little doubt, J. Edgar Hoover’s long tenure as director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation would have come to an abrupt end. Instead, the US Navy and, to a lesser extent, the Army, became the scapegoats. Following the FBI director’s testimony at the last of these hearings, Representative Bertrand Gearhart of California observed, ‘If the Army and Navy had been aware of the situation as Mr. Hoover was, there probably would have been no necessity for this investigation at this time.’”

As far as the FBI’s role was concerned, the Pearl Harbor cover-up was completely successful, with one important exception.

The British Knew. That both Popov and his handlers in British intelligence were bound by great Britain’s Official Secret Act was no consolation to Hoover. If it suited their purposes, the officials of MI-6 were quite capable of leaking the most highly classified information, as Mr. Hoover well knew, having often been the recipient of such disclosures.

The British knew. And just the possession of that knowledge, even if never revealed, was a subtle form of blackmail. No one had to explain the rules of the game to J. Edgar Hoover.