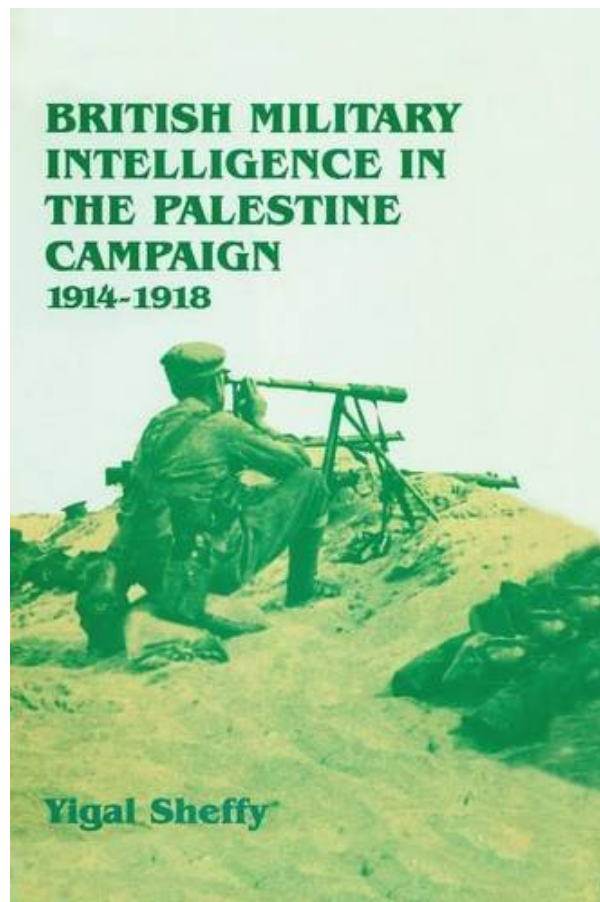


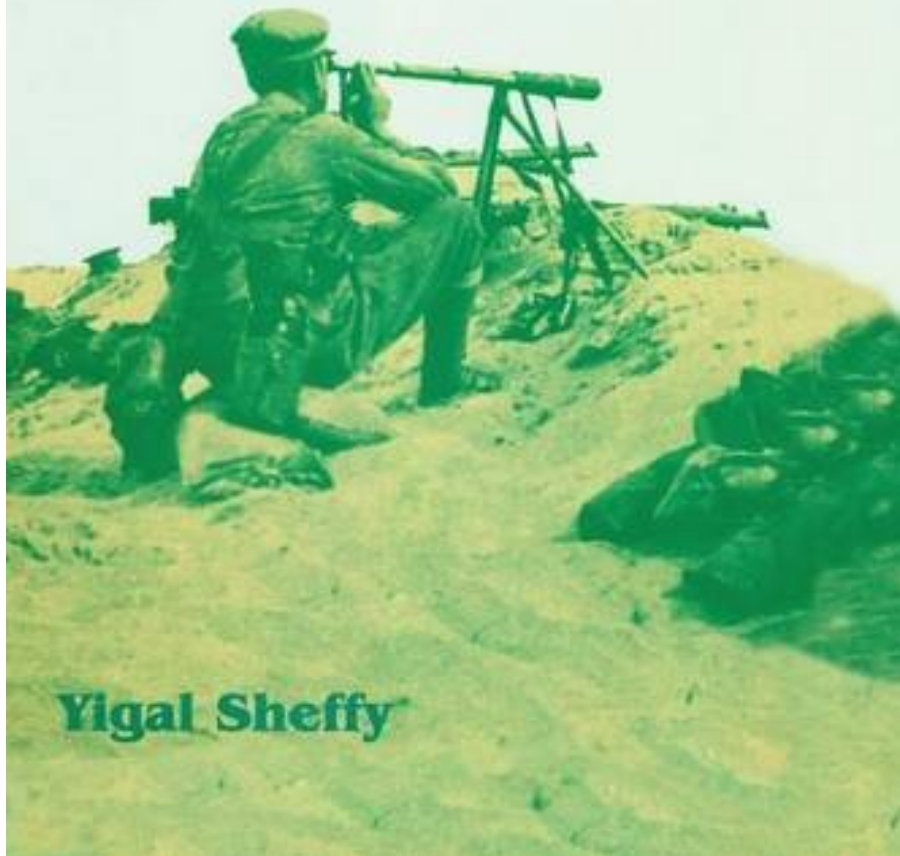
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Shortly after the end of the First World War, General Sir George Macdonagh, wartime director of British Military Intelligence, revealed that Lord Allenby's victory in Palestine had never been in doubt because of the success of his intelligence service. Seventy-five years later this book explains Macdonagh's statement. Sheffy also adopts a novel approach to traditional heroes of the campaign such as T E Lawrence.

- Sales Rank: #4553299 in Books
- Published on: 2015-04-02
- Original language: English
- Dimensions: 9.21" h x .84" w x 6.14" l, 1.35 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 400 pages

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How British Intelligence evolved into a war-winning tool

By R. A Forczyk

This is a well-documented history of British intelligence in the First World War, that grew out of a PhD dissertation written by a former Israeli military intelligence officer. When the war began, British forces in Egypt had little reliable information on Turkish forces or intentions. At first, the British underestimated the ability of the Turks to attack the Suez Canal, but after a minor raid they grossly overestimated their capability. Throughout the war, British intelligence in the Mideast was hindered by both cultural bias against the Turks combined with an Anglo-Centric view that the Palestine front was a major front for the Ottoman Empire (which actually regarded the Caucasus and the Russians as the main theater of war). Several noted figures appear in the text, such as T E Lawrence (AKA "Lawrence of Arabia"), and their true roles and participation in the war are depicted without the usual colorful embellishments. Sheffy concludes that overall human intelligence (HUMINT) made little contribution to the British victory because the information provided was generally too little, too late. The one effective spy ring, the "Nili Organization" of Jews in occupied Palestine, was quickly broken up by the Turks in 1917. The only worthwhile human information came from prisoners and defectors. Sheffy claims convincingly that the most significant intelligence development brought by the war was the shift from dependence on human sources to reliance on technical means. Indeed, the British made very effective use of early imagery intelligence from aircraft and radio intercepts. By the end of the war the British had honed intelligence to the point that it could greatly contribute to the final operational campaign. Sheffy's book is well-written, if a bit dry at times, and benefits from the insights of an intelligence professional. This is a good addition to any well-rounded First World War library collection.

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British Military Intelligence in the Palestine Campaign

By Daniel Pipes, Middle East Forum, Philadelphia

In 1921, just three years after the end of World War I, Great Britain's director of Military Intelligence made the astounding statement that General Allenby had won in Palestine because he "knew from his intelligence every disposition and movement of the enemy. Every one of his opponents' cards was known to him, and he was consequently able to play his own hand with the most perfect assurance. In those circumstances victory was certain." Sheffy's precise and far-ranging research pieces together in masterly fashion just how Allenby benefited from such extraordinary information about his foes. In the process, he shows not only how a key military campaign was fought and won, but also how the modern intelligence service took shape in a spontaneous and amorphous fashion. Along the way, Sheffy demonstrates the near-uselessness of human intelligence (spies, travelers, prisoners of war, et al.), dismissing the whole lot with a quote from the time: "What can agents find out about the intentions of Governments that have no notion what their own intentions are?" In contrast, technical means (air reconnaissance, radio interceptions) proved highly valuable. He establishes how the latter gave the British a much better idea of tactics than of grand strategy, and how they paid heavily for their wrong guesses about the latter. Despite their fair share of mistakes, the British intelligence operatives made a very credible start at bringing a "hitherto hidden dimension . . . into the forefront of modern warfare."

Middle East Quarterly, March 1999

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