BOOK REVIEW

Dark Invasion — 1915: Germany's Secret War and the Hunt for the First Terrorist Cell in America

Review by COL (Ret) Warner "Rocky" D. Farr, MD, MPH

So, I imagine you think that homeland security started after 9/11? Except for those posters of mounted Apache warriors captioned, "Homeland Security: fighting terrorism since 1492" (http://www.magicprose.com/guide/index.html)! The other American government group with previous homeland defense experience turns out to be the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and the "bad guys" that they chased were from Imperial Germany during World War I.
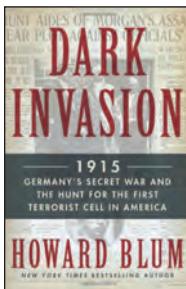
This book is a true-life tale of Imperial German espionage, its terror campaign on American soil during World War I, and the NYPD inspector who helped uncover the plot. The "neutral" United States became a staunch trading partner of the Allies early in World War I, all led by industrialist JP Morgan because selling equipment for war was good for business. Because of that Anglo American trade, the Germans implemented a secret plan to strike back at America. A team of saboteurs was deployed to devise a series of "mysterious accidents" using explosives and biological weapons to bring down vital targets such as ships, factories, livestock, and even captains of industry, such as Morgan.

Inspector Tom Tunney was the head of the NYPD's Bomb Squad and was subsequently assigned the new and difficult mission of stopping these foreign agents in a country still at peace and without any real national laws on secrecy or acts of espionage. In 1915, the United States lacked any federal law enforcement organization. J Edgar Hoover's FBI was more than a decade from creation. The duty to investigate and combat German clandestine activity fell on local law enforcement agencies. Because most of the illegal activities focused on the port areas of New York and New Jersey, the NYPD became the law enforcement organization destined to battle the German spy network. Tunney assembled a team of operatives, and the Irish cop hunted for the conspirators among a New York City population of more than 8 million, a majority of them of German extraction.

German ambassador Count Johann Heinrich von Bernstorff (who left Germany for good when Hitler took power in 1933) was the point man for a vast intelligence organization known as Abteilung IIIB. The organization recruited and trained agents, male and female, across Europe. It then expanded operations to America. It was critical that America be kept out of the war and that the Allies be prevented from receiving shipments of American munitions, arms, and food. Von Bernstorff was called back to Berlin and directed to recruit and develop a network of intelligence agents in America. He was authorized to use any means necessary to accomplish this sabotage objective. What to Tunney at first looked like pure attempts at sabotage of ships and other war materials in New York's harbor soon deepened into more deception, as he discovered that the enemy's plan was far more complex and dangerous than he suspected. It ranged from plots such as that of a Harvard professor who murdered his wife, escaped with a new identity to become yet another college professor, ultimately bombed the U.S. Capitol, and nearly killing JP Morgan (whose financiering was saving the Allies) to gadgets such as a clever chemical cigar firebomb that sunk numerous transport ships set by non-German, anti-British, Irish allies. Cigar bombs with delayed fuses were placed in ships bound for Europe. A rudder bomb was designed, also with a delayed fuse, to destroy shipping. Another operative arrived, by way of the trans-Siberian railroad, fresh from the German Military Veterinary Academy with a suitcase of ganders, anthrax, and meningitis. He ultimately staged a largely unknown anthrax attack designed to kill horses and that appeared also to have killed quite a few people. Horses, a valuable commodity in the war, were poisoned by German agents. Germany also plotted with Mexican nationals to open a front against the United States. The ultimate goal was a war by Germany and Mexico to separate the southwestern United States.

Although many books are coming out to mark the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I, *Dark Invasion* covers a niche that has largely been ignored: the covert operations of Germany against the United States before 1917. Despite having the largest spy network in the world, 1914 Imperial Germany had only one agent in the United States at the start of the war. Through a crash course of recruiting, the German government cobbled together a network remarkably able to create havoc well beyond their weight class during the next 2 years. One of the first German agent leaders was Captain Franz von Papen of the Imperial German Navy. He ultimately became Chancellor of Germany directly before Adolph Hitler and later, during World War II, ambassador to Austria and then Turkey. During his World War I activities in America, he was accused of planning the mining of American railroads and of plotting to blow up the Welland Canal, which connects Lake Ontario to Lake Erie.

This early homeland security work is remarkable, especially given the jurisdictional limitations that faced the NYPD, the unhelpfulness of the federal government, and a disinterest on the part of President Wilson. Wilson was made well aware of the intelligence regarding the German spy network, but he did not appear to factor it into any of his decisions. Eventually, the totality of these actions (especially the plot with Mexico) would lead Wilson to abandon neutrality and bring America into the war.