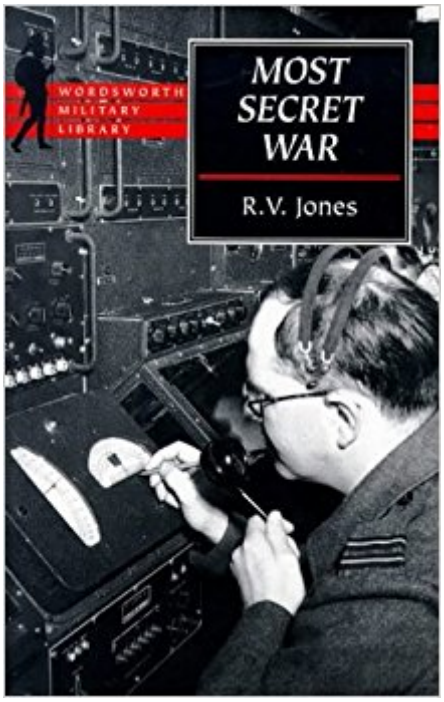
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Most Secret War (Wordsworth Military Library)



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Synopsis

This text is Jones's account of his part in British Scientific Intelligence between 1939 and 1949. It was his responsibility to anticipate German applications of science to warfare, so that their new weapons could be countered before they were used. Much of his work had to do with radio navigation, as in the Battle of the Beams, with radar, as in the Allied Bomber Offensive and in the preparations for D-Day and in the war at sea. He was also in charge of intelligence against the V-1 (flying bomb) and the V-2 (rocket) retaliation weapons and, although the Germans were some distance behind from success, against their nuclear developments.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I enjoyed this book much better than I thought I would. (I know that's a backhanded compliment, but I was expecting it to be at least pretty good.)I had read the free preview and a few of the reviews, and I was steeling myself to wade through ponderous and self-indulgent exposition to get to the "good stuff." Thankfully, I think this book is much better than most memoirs-- even some of those considered "classics." Jones manages to be entertaining from a storytelling point of view, and informative from an historical one. Also, I think it deserves emphasis that, given the subject matter, he manages to keep the tone relatively light-hearted. (I'm thinking, in contrast, of two works about other national crises I *tried* to read recently-- the 9/11 Commission Report and Stress Test by Timothy Geithner-- the former I had to put down for being too depressing, and the latter for being too stressful.)Naturally, I tended to read it with an eye toward applicability to my own life. So, for me,

this was a book above all else about bureaucracies, and how to navigate them. I found it very interesting to hear about the different cliques of military intelligence, and I think Jones illustrates very well how the line between "objectivity" and "advocacy" can get blurred, especially when one has to make decisions on limited information. In other words, it seemed like there were many instances in the book where, in the absence of the ability to "prove" that a certain course of action is best, people basically reverted to intuition or feeling or whatever to choose which course of action to support. To me, this is an important lesson in bureaucracy: expect decisions to be made by the leadership, even if those decisions are not good ones!

I have probably read this book half-a-dozen times. I am buying a hardback copy, because I have worn my paperback version out. It is truly one of the most impressive books on WW II ever written, especially one written before the release of ULTRA.Dr. Jones was head of scientific intelligence for the RAF from before the war until the end of the conflict. In his role, he primarily was concerned with the German developments in radar, radar countermeasures, radar assisted bombing, and flying bomb (V-1 and V-2) developments. With his knowledge of science, Dr. Jones and his meager staff were able to predict the capabilities and weaknesses of many German scientific innovations during the war, and then to suggest countermeasures. For example, on the V-1 and V-2, Dr. Jones was able to determine ALL of their performance capabilities, payload, etc., generally within a few percent of the actual data, from a few scraps of information obtained by spies and radio intercepts. Others, looking at the same information, missed the mark, sometimes factors of 3-5 times the correct information!The book makes a great argument for the inclusion of scientists in intelligence gathering, especially on a full-time basis. Dr. Jones ended up as the highest ranking civilian in the RAF, a testament to his value.And to top it off, Dr. Jones is a very good writer, much better than most scientists, in addition to being first-rate physicist.In short, If you have an interest in WW II history, this book should be number one on your list of books to read. If you like scientific history, this book should be your number one book to read if you have not already done so.I cannot recommend this book highly enough. If I could, I would give it a 10.

R.V. Jones is a legendary figure in British scientific intelligence. One can argue that without him, Britain might have lost the air war in the early parts of WWII.Most Secret War is his account of his scientific training and then how he used that during the war to defeat virtually ever weapon systems the Germans employed including directional radio beams for bombers, radar, the V1 and V2 missile programs, and Hitler’s efforts to build an atomic bomb, which turn out to have been further along

than most people realize. All of this is really interesting and told with the right amount of narrative detail to hold the interest of most any reader.What really makes the book stand apart from most historical accounts of WWII is the insight of Jones into British military and intelligence organizations, as well as his anecdotes of life during the war. It's very unusual to encounter what feels like a fairly objective view of critical historical moments while also getting many many glimpses of day time life during the war in Britain. Jones, despite his scientific training, could have been a well read observer of the social scene, which is surprising for someone who would not have been insulted to be called a scientific boffin.The book is liberally illustrated with maps, drawings, and photographs that makes his points come through all the better for them. Although 500 pages in length, Jones's rapid narrative makes the pages fly and I read this book in a day and a half, and was hungry for more.Highly, highly recommended!

Having read all 6 volumes of Churchill's Second World War series (twice), I found this book to be a great companion piece told by R.V. Jones, a very young yet innovative and assertive physicist. Dr. Jones came to the attention of Winston Churchill through his association with Prof. Lindeman - Churchill's principal scientific adviser - but through his inventive deductions of the German means of navigating their bombers he rapidly gained the respect of the much more senior war staff. Written in a fairly self-effacing manner, his initiative and inventive skills show through this book. A thoroughly enjoyable read, especially for scientists and engineers who will be able to appreciate how Dr. Jones deduced his answers from a limited set of information.

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