



Spymistress: The True Story of the Greatest Female Secret Agent of World War II

William Stevenson

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She was beautiful. She was ruthless. She had a steel trap for a mind and a will of iron. Born Vera Maria Rosenberg in Bucharest, she became Vera Atkins, legendary spy and holder of the Legion of Honor. Recruited by William Stevenson—the spymaster who would later come to be known as “Intrepid”—when she was only twenty-three, Vera spent much of the 1930s running countless perilous espionage missions. When war was declared in 1939, her fierce intelligence, blunt manner, personal courage, and knowledge of several languages quickly propelled her to the leadership echelon of the highly secretive Special Operations Executive (SOE), a covert intelligence agency formed by, and reporting to, Winston Churchill. She recruited and trained several hundred agents, including dozens of women, whose objectives were to penetrate deep behind enemy lines.

The stirring exploits and the exemplary courage of the SOE agents and the French Resistance fighters—who in the words of General Dwight D. Eisenhower together “shortened the war by many months”—are justly celebrated. But the central role of Vera Atkins has until now been cloaked in silence. William Stevenson was the only person she trusted to record her life; he kept his promise that he would not publish her story until after her death. Here is the extraordinary account of the woman whose intelligence, beauty, and unflagging dedication proved key in turning the tide of World War II.

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