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The Chinese Black Chamber: An Adventure in Espionage

Herbert O. Yardley, Edna Ramsaier Yardley

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The Chinese Black Chamber: An Adventure in Espionage Herbert O. Yardley, Edna Ramsaier Yardley Herbert O. Yardley is one of the legendary figures in the history of espionage. He founded and directed the famous 'American Black Chamber' in World War I and thereafter. When Secretary of State Stimson in 1929 issued the infamous directive 'Gentlemen do not read each other's mail,' he destroyed the Black Chamber and with it much of America's intelligence capability. Yardley, then out of a job, turned to the typewriter and produced a book called 'The American Black Chamber,' which told the story of our successful codebreaking operations... to the anger and dismay of the State Department.

In 1938, Chiang Kai-shek, fighting his desperate, retreating war against the Japanese, sent a message to Yardley to come to Chungking to set up a Chinese version of the signals intelligence operation that Yardley had headed in Paris and New York. Yardley accpeted. Until June 1940, he worked in the remote, bomb-torn capital of Chungking. This book is the account of his intelligence exploits and, as well, a vivid description of a strange, mixed society under fire... a world where nobody was exactly what he or she pretended to be. European traders, generals' mistresses, Japanese spies, journalists, politicians, and many other types peopled the city where Chiang Kai-shek ruled.

Because of State Department disapproval, this manuscript laid hidden for forty-two years. It is brought to light with a memoir by Mrs. Edna Yardley, and an introduction by James Bamford, author of the best-selling 'Puzzle Palace.'

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