



A Colder War

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Paul Wallinger, MI6's most senior officer in the Middle East, is killed when the small plane he is piloting crashes into the Adriatic. It looks like a tragic accident, but in the world of the secret service, nothing is ever as it seems. Rogue spy Thomas Kell has been working off the books for Amelia Levene, head of MI6. She dispatches Kell to Turkey to investigate the incident and to find out why sensitive MI6 operations in the region keep getting blown. What he discovers is a shocking secret about America's intelligence community which could have seismic repercussions in London and Washington.

A Colder War Details

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From Reader Review A Colder War for online ebook

Jonathan says

Another excellent outing for SIS spy Thomas Kell, which this time finds him sent to Istanbul after the death of the local head of station. As before Tom is helped along by his team of operatives, but this time he finds himself having to work alongside the American CIA man who had previously caused his fall from grace. Not an ideal situation, but then things start to get more out of hand, and the story tears along at breakneck speed towards its denouement. Romance for Tom, a mole in the service and a series of inconvenient deaths all contribute to proving yet again that Charles Cumming writes the best thrillers around.

Nick Brett says

A proper old fashioned spy story which is not only well written but captures a realistic view of the intelligence services.

My first book by the author and I was impressed. A spy novel not beset by gun toting types but more by an intelligent and thoughtful approach. Here spying is more about investigation and data gathering as a disgraced SIS agent is pulled back into the fold to look into the death of another agent. It might be innocent or it might be that he was a mole in the organisation. Set mainly in Turkey and Greece this provides a view of the bleak and shadowy world of the intelligence services and is very much in the vein of Le Carré.

Danuta says

A new novel by Charles Cumming is always a matter for celebration among fans of thrillers and spy fiction. Cumming's thrillers are traditional, fast-moving and marked by a depth of characterisation and by humour that move them beyond the mass of standard page-turners that crowd the shelves in airport book stores. He is a worthy follower of the tradition of John Le Carre.

His latest book, *A COLDER WAR*, is a sequel to his previous novel, *A FOREIGN COUNTRY* (2012) and follows the career of disgraced spy Thomas Kell. Kell's life has fallen apart. He is approaching middle-age, his marriage is over and he is facing the end of his career, a scapegoat for the misdemeanours of other people and other organisations. Cumming gives a brief but vivid picture of what life means to Kell now that he has lost his job. He is trapped in the rut of the same pubs, the same drinks and the same brand of cigarettes. It is a bleak depiction of an empty life.

The book opens with the apparently unconnected deaths or arrests of an Iranian defector, a Turkish journalist and an Iranian scientist – unconnected, except that each of these people was recently recruited by western intelligence agencies. Then Paul Wallinger, MI6's most senior agent in Turkey and long-time colleague of Kell's, is killed in a plane crash. Amelia Levene chief of the Secret Intelligence Service, suspects there may be a traitor in the centre of western intelligence in the Middle East.

She and Kell have a professional history. In their previous encounter, Kell discovered the secret of Levene's long-lost son. In *A COLDER WAR*, Levene's secret is this: she and the dead Wallinger were lovers. Kell, out in the cold and desperate for rehabilitation is the man she decides she can trust. She asks him to investigate.

Kell finds he will be working with CIA officer Jim Chater, the man who was responsible for the destruction of Kell's career. Will Kell act for the good of the operation, or will he use the opportunity to take his revenge – and what does Levene expect, or even want him to do?

This is a book about secrets. Nothing is guaranteed to be what it seems, and Cumming is the master of plot twists and double crosses. He explores the ambiguity between conflicting ideologies and the people who are on different sides of current issues: the invasion of Iraq, the assassination of Bin Laden, the motivations of Edward Snowden; and those who will exploit this. This is the world of spying as a high-stakes game, in which some of those working for the intelligence services see their operatives as expendable as pawns on the chess board. As Kell says, 'the rest was just a game between spies.'

Charles Cumming's great skill is the authenticity he brings to his writing. Is this the real world of the 21st century spy? Who knows? The point is, Cumming presents it in a believable and realistic way and the book itself is set firmly in the real world with references and signposts that readers will instantly identify.

Similarly with the characters. Amelia, and the dead Wallinger come vividly alive on the page.

Rachel Wallinger, the daughter of the dead MI6 agent and the romantic interest is perhaps the least well drawn of the characters, but her developing relationship with Kell has genuine power. Kell himself could be no more than the standard disaffected maverick, but Cumming explores the ways in which betrayal and loss can change and can warp a person. Kell is a powerful creation and Cumming leaves him well set up for the next story.

The audio book is read by Jot Davis, who was the narrator of *A FOREIGN COUNTRY*, the first Thomas Kell book. Davis is an excellent reader who seems to understand that audio books are readings, not performances, and an audio adaptation is not the same as an adaptation for visual media. Once a book is cast for film or TV, the actor will take over the character to the point where the reader must either accept this interpretation or avoid the adaptation. An audio book allows the reader's imagination to work and Davis is aware of this. He reads with clarity, but allows Cumming's text speak for itself.

The audio adaptation uses the rather odd convention in which languages other than English are represented by characters speaking with heavy foreign accents (a practice common, sadly, to most audio books) which can be a bit distracting and leave the listener wondering briefly if they have stepped into the world of Inspector Clouseau.

Despite this flaw, the audio book presents Cumming's world and his characters with a tension and authority that does justice to the original book.

Speesh says

I couldn't have enjoyed this book any more if I'd tried. Believe me. If you've ever been a fan of, or even ever heard someone say they've been a fan of the classic Spy Fiction writers, then this is for you - and them.

I'll admit I wasn't totally taken by 'A Spy By Nature,' though I thought 'A Foreign Country' was much more like it, if not entirely there. However, with 'A Colder War,' in my Charles Cumming experiences so far, the cover blurb does actually seem to have been written about the book contained within the dust jacket. This is bang up to date in themes and story line, but is clearly rooted in the proud tradition of the old spy-school of writing. I don't think I'm doing CC a disfavour there, as this stands up to the comparisons incredibly well and takes his writing - for me at least - into exciting, new can't put it down, can't get over how good it is compared to the previous ones, can't wait for the next one, territory. I can see now, that they were leading up to this tour de force. CC has taken the best bits from the previous Thomas Kell outings, pulled the strings taut, cut out the fat and flannel, added in 'Moscow Rules' and shaken it all up with modern technology and a healthy dose of 'NOW.' And out comes 'A Colder War.' Maybe the title is a reflection of

his self-confidence, in calling it 'Colder' as to what his aims for the book are/were? To out-do the Cold War classic novels of le Carré and such like? It's probably more an indication of the re-shaped spy landscape there is out there, modern terrorists are not playing nice, like the old-school fellows of the past...but, as here, the protagonists in the background, are still the old school - UK, USA, Russia.

I don't know about that, but I do know it stands shoulder to shoulder with the best of them and head and shoulders above the trashy, flashy American versions of spy novels there are so many of. Only Edward Wilson's 'The Whitehall Mandarin' is in the same ball-park at the moment for me this year. Oh yeah, I thought Tim Steven's excellent 'Ratcatcher' and central figure of John Purkiss, was operating in something of the same area as Cumming's Thomas Kell. Look, I seriously doubt I'll read a better, more entertaining, more tense, more satisfying spy novel/thriller, in a long, long time.

As mentioned above, 'A Colder War' reunites us with Thomas Kell, the hero of the previous Charles Cummings novel I read: 'Another Country.' He is a 'disgraced ex-agent' he's been "cold shouldered by the Secret Intelligence Service eighteen months earlier, (and) been in a state of suspended animation ever since." With a foot in two camps (in and out) kind of, this gives Kell an amount of outsider perspective to the fun and games going on inside British Intelligence. However, Kell does desperately wants to be back 'in.' In favour, back in the 'game,' in from The Cold. His wife has become his ex-wife and his local boozer is becoming his home, when a call from his ex-boss Amelia Levine, brings him crashing back into The Warm. Again. As it was Kell she called on previously, when she was having a little trouble on the family front, you may recall, in 'A Foreign Country.' There is a cynicism, or a realism, despite Kell's longing to be back and while he tells himself: "You're back in the game...This is what you wanted. But the buzz had gone." The 'buzz' soon comes back as well. Wallinger, the British Head of Station in Turkey, has died in a plane crash and Levine wants it investigated - the (possible) catastrophe explained and contained. Kell is sent to Turkey, uncovers doubts surrounding the crash, with tentacles reaching out into the whole of MI6's operations in the region. Then suspicions arise ('Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy'-like, given there are four candidates in the frame), that there is a leak. But, is it a British or American mole? That's the question Kell and colleagues need answering fast, before the Russians come in and clear up. People aren't who they say they are, don't do what they say, don't say what they do or who they work for. Ah yes, it's just like the old days, hoorah! Haven't said: "Oops! You shouldn't have told them THAT!" out loud in a long time.

Thomas Kell has developed into a thoroughly believable lead character. I'm not going to say admirable, or likeable or sympathetic even, but he is believable. His background, his reasons and reasoning, his actions and his thoughts, all are rock-solid believable. Nothing stretches the imagination, nothing makes you think 'ok, I'm not gonna go along with that being his motive, but let's see where it goes before we pass the salt around.' Nope, he is refreshingly and objectively jaundiced, if that's even possible. He's been right royally shafted by the The Service in the past, but still desperately wants to be back inside, though that doesn't mean he has to like himself, or them, for it.

From there on, the story goes every place you would wish it to, though without ever being predictable. The writing is economical and effective and I was held hanging the whole time - constantly trying to guess what was next. I was (nearly) always wrong. It's a read it a little bit more, read it propped open with the jam jar at breakfast, read it on the bus and miss your stop, think about it all day, try to explain your theories underway, in Danish, to your Danish colleagues, good. Really. This is gonna be a hard act to follow and no mistake. But I think, on the evidence of this (and I have my own idea of how he can do it), Charles Cummings is the man to do it.

Anything else of this genre I read from now on, will have to stand comparison to 'A Colder War.'

Eva says

"αγορ? αεροδρομ?ου".

Spying is waiting . Κατασκοπευτικ? μυστ?ριο επηρεασμ?νο απ? τον ΛεΚαρ? και ?χι τον Λ?ντλαμ (ο Ρ?σος κατ?σκοπος ε?ναι γνωστ?ς ως Carl, τερ?στιο χαμ?γελο στο ομ?ζ). Φυσικ? δεν συγκρ?νεται με τον δ?σκαλ? του και την πολιτικ? nuanced π?να του ?μως ?χει στρωτ? πλοκ?, αγων?α ?που κι ?σο χρει?ζεται, ανατροπ?ς, δεν χ?νει ρυθμ?. Αξιοπρεπ?στατο, ειδικ? συγκρ?νοντ?ς το με μυθιστορ?ματα τ?που Ο Προσκυνητ?ς με το οπο?ο θεωρητικ? αν?κει στο ?διο genre. Η μ?ρα με τη ν?χτα.

Bayneeta says

Flawed hero in the middle book of three. Lots of action and suspense along with what the author calls "trade craft"--how spies go about their business. Personally had a problem with Kell's sudden and obsessive romance with a younger woman, but perhaps that's just part of his flawed character. That and his relationship with Amelia, his manipulative boss.

Oh, and Jot Davies is high on my list of narrators I enjoy.

Judy says

This is the second book with Thomas Kell, a British spy who was out of service for awhile, and is taking assignments trying to prove that he can take full appointment. In the first book he helps his boss, Amelia, with whom he has a good friendship. This book stands alone without have read the first, but the relationship between Kell and Amelia has more meaning when you know that background. Kell is sent to Istanbul to investigate the suspicious death of an operative in Ankara. Prior to that death there are several other deaths in the service. The plot moves quickly as Kell travels throughout the mid-east pitting his wits against those in the CIA and Russian intelligence. There is love, action and suspense—what you expect in a spy novel.

Dan Flanagan says

It starts out slow but in the end, a fun read.

Joe says

A Colder War marks the return of Thomas Kell, a disgraced British spy, who when his boss, "C", finds herself in trouble and in need of an off the books clandestine operation pulls him – somewhat willingly – back into the game. Kell is assigned the thankless task of pulling his boss' chestnuts from the fire and saving the reputation of MI6 – with no "official" recognition. This worked very well in the previous book, A Foreign Country. Here, although entertaining, the plot/storyline does founder at times, becoming both predictable and at times even "clichéd".

The precipitating event in *A Colder War* is the death – in a plane crash - of the lead British spy in Turkey. This deadly event coinciding with several blown ops and “C” smells a rat/mole. (The late head of station in Turkey was also “C’s” lover, so there is a personal exposure she needs to cover much like in *A Foreign Country*.) So our hero is called in to investigate; he connects the dots and the mole hunt begins.

Along the way Kell does some globe-trotting, goes “under-cover”, meets his CIA nemesis, smokes many a cigarette and falls in love with a much younger woman – who happens to be the above dead spy’s daughter. (This last bit at times stretching credibility.) He’s also manipulated constantly by “C” – mostly by keeping him in the dark – each and every step of the way. This is so pervasive that the unpredictability becomes predictable less than halfway through the book. And Kell’s continuous Charlie Brown gullibility – through two books now – when it comes to his boss – somewhat of a head scratcher.

The good news here is that when Kell is on the case – which is much of the time - *A Colder War* is an enjoyable and engaging read. The down side is that the story-line does wander; for instance both the intro/set-up and conclusion are too long – and especially with Kell’s “personal” life.

Lastly – and without spoiling anything - the conclusion here is somewhat of a conundrum if this series is to continue. “C’s” manipulation/inability to tell the whole story – pathological at best - has dire results here and hits very close to home for Kell – putting his return to the fold - and “C” keeping her job - in question.

Cynthia says

“A Colder War” is another fun installment in Cumming’s Tom Kell series. The first, “*A Foreign Country*” was a rip roaring page turner of a book and “*A Colder War*” is good as well though the former grabbed readers from the first page the later takes longer to become involved with because the pacing is slower. About a third of the way through it takes off. Cumming’s characters, especially Kell, are engaging and well characterized and he brings back some former favorites like Amelia, Kell’s boss, who’s also referred to in time honored SIS fashion as “C”. There are some great new characters too and as always the settings are exotic and exciting with this one alternating mostly between England and Turkey. Unusually for this point in history Cumming’s throws in some Soviet cold war action along with Mid East issues. Best of all is his ability to portray what it’s like to live as an operative.

Thank you to the publishers for providing an ARC.

Robert Intrago says

Much better than the first installment in the series. It has everything that a good espionage novel should have: romance, intrigue, double crossings and great characters. The novel deals with the discovery of a mole in the spy community of Ankara, Turkey, and the process that MI6 follows to flush the traitor out. Agent Kell of MI6 is brought back from a hiatus imposed on him by Emilia Levine, head of MI6, to discover why the head of MI6 Ankara died in an airplane accident. The story takes off from there and the plot thickens as it goes along through all kinds of surveillance, wiretapping and honey traps. This is a thinking man’s tale of espionage since it has very little violence but lots of meticulous espionage trade-craft. Based on the end of the novel I expect book number 3.

Asha KRISHNA says

A spy thriller with a slow paced plot.

I was excited to receive this book as part of goodreads giveaway. I had heard a lot about its prequel A foreign country and was eager to get started on this one. The slow placed plot was a major disappointment, aren't spy stories supposed to be racy from the word go? Thomas Kell as a character who is a disgraced spy is good and intriguing. Although slow to begin with the last 150 pages is where the action lies and is a reader's delight from that point.

Gist:

Thomas Kell, an out of favour secret service agent is called in by his boss to investigate the suspicious circumstances of a close friend's death. The idea is that there is a mole who has been sniffing out secrets and passing them on to the enemy and Kell has to identify and nail the guy to clear his friend's name and the reason his death.

What works:

Thomas Kell as a character is great and Cumming provides sufficient background to acquaint and endear the reader to him

The whole idea of spy world sounds very authentic. It reminded me of the BBC drama Spooks, the concept of duplicity and secrecy that goes with it and this story is full of it.

The writing style is in keeping with the kind of story: Simple, straightforward manner even when it comes to drawing out the complexities of the characters.

The love-hate relationship between the MI-6 and CIA is an interesting dimension. Cumming knows his stuff well.

What doesn't:

The plot is too slow for a spy story. Cumming spends a lot of time explaining the background perhaps for the benefit of those who have not read A foreign country. This however, does not help the story much and the reader (who has not read the prequel) feels a bit trapped with so much background info when all she wants to do is get on with the story.

Too much time spent in the heads of characters which delays the action. Though it helps in setting out the story, it restrains the story from flowing on.

However, action really picks up in the second half and the reader is in for a treat as Kell chases the mole down and nails him. The story also has an open ending paving way for the third book in the trilogy.

In a nutshell:

A good read. However, this writer demands patience on the part of the reader. The back of the cover indicates the possibility of a film in future. Will be looking forward to watching it on screen. Perhaps in this case, the movie will be better than the book.

Jim says

A cold, calculated mission without any graphic violence. It read very much as I'd imagine real spies work. Kind of boring from an action standpoint, but the characters & their feelings, calculations, strengths & weaknesses took up the slack. It's an ugly job, but someone has to do it. Well done, but I won't want to read another for some time. I didn't care much for the people. They were too real with no hyperbole, just normal feelings like wanting to keep their jobs even though the system dirtied them all too often. Not really my cup of tea.

Liz Barnsley says

A top-ranking Iranian military official is blown up while trying to defect to the West. An investigative journalist is arrested and imprisoned for writing an article critical of the Turkish government. An Iranian nuclear scientist is assassinated on the streets of Tehran. These three incidents, seemingly unrelated, have one crucial link. Each of the three had been recently recruited by Western intelligence, before being removed or killed.

Again I feel the need to remind you that spy thrillers are not my thing. Well unless they are written by Charles Cumming it seems as this is the third of his novels I have read and I loved every minute of it. For a start, Thomas Kell was back. I have a major book crush on Thomas - the thinking man's spy and more than that he is also a reader. What more could a girl want?

In this instalment he is sent to discover the truth behind the death of a colleague in a plane crash and as is obviously usual for him, nothing is straightforward. He finds himself on the trail of a mole and involved once again with the man that destroyed his career. What follows is an intriguing, page turning, brilliant adventure that will keep you on your toes and guessing all the way.

Absolutely enthralling - a bit of a love interest for our Mr Kell, the authors trademark sense of humour kept throughout along with some rather tense moments all add up to one heck of a fun involving read. It all feels very authentic, there are no dull moments and at the end I was so in it that it took me a while to return to the real world. As a reader, what more could you possibly want? Nothing that's what.

More please

Happy Reading Folks!

Elizabeth Moffat says

Okay, confession time. Espionage novels really aren't my thing, but I was prepared to give this one a shot,

firstly because I've never read any of the authors work before and secondly because it was chosen for the Richard and Judy Spring Book Club this year. I follow their recommendations religiously and 9 out of 10 times they get it right for my personal reading interests. Unfortunately this time, I was sorely disappointed. As the story begins, the chief of MI6, Amelia Levene, also known as "C," is having a terrible time. A few agents abroad in Greece, Turkey and the Middle East that have defected to working for the West have been killed and rumours are flying around that there is a mole within the service. To add to this, one of her British agents Paul Wallinger (whom she was having a long-standing affair with) has been killed in a light aircraft crash yet the manner of his death is arousing her suspicions.

Enter former agent Thomas Kell who is not actively working in the service after an enquiry into events that happened in the authors previous novel, Foreign Country. Amelia is not only Thomas's boss but a good friend and she asks him to find out all he can about Wallinger's fatal "accident." There are a lot of mysteries to be solved that Thomas is keen to get to the bottom of including why Wallinger, a notorious womaniser, was doing in Greece in the first place. As Thomas begins to unravel all the messy details of Wallinger's life and last movements he begins to realise that he has become embroiled in something a lot bigger than just a plane crash. Furthermore, when he becomes romantically involved with Wallinger's beautiful daughter Rachel he finds it difficult to separate his emotions from the job he has to do which could prevent him from achieving the results he needs.

For me, this novel proved quite tricky to read, especially in the beginning where I found the pace excruciatingly slow and didn't really understand what was going on. I did get used to the writing style eventually but it took a good third of the book for the action to pick up and for me to get a handle on the plot. It's obvious that Charles Cumming is a talented author who can write well but it felt like the reader had to be a bit of an expert on spy lingo and procedures which I definitely fall flat on! The characters were interesting enough - I would have liked a bit more focus on the Chief of MI6, Amelia who seemed like the most intriguing character and I would have been curious to learn more about her mindset as a strong, intelligent woman who although married, had recently lost her lover in hazy circumstances. I do think that many people will enjoy this novel, especially if you enjoy a good spy read. Personally, I'm sorry to say it wasn't my cup of tea.

For my full review please see my blog at <http://www.bibliobeth.com>

Tim says

Agonizingly slow, tedious, boring, redundant. Did I say boring? Yes, yes I did. 0 of 10 stars

Jeffrey says

Russia is flexing its muscles. It has annexed Crimea and is now putting the screws to the Ukraine. At the same time, Putin has again charged another billionaire industrialist with crimes, in a power play to probably get his company. The world may be on the brink of a new cold war. It is fertile ground for a top notch spy novelist.

Charles Cummings latest Thomas Kell spy novel (his second Kell spy book since A Foreign Country in 2012) is centered on Kell's investigation of the death of Paul Wallinger, A M16 agent, who died in a single

pilot plane crash.

Kell, who has been in disgrace since the events in "A Foreign Country" is asked by Amelia Levane, the new head of M16, to take a look at Wallinger's death to see if there is more to it. As Kell uncovers the last days of Wallinger's life, he runs into and starts a torrid affair with Rachel Wallinger, Wallinger's beautiful young daughter. Kell soon finds evidence that Wallinger, a noted womanizer, was in Turkey seeing a restaurateur. There are photos. Levane, who also was involved with Wallinger, suggests that there may be more going on.

Levane, has noticed a curious pattern of blown spy missions involving England and the cousins. A nuclear scientist in Iran and other operations have been blown. Levane suspects a mole, and we are soon immersed in a classic cat and mouse game as Kell tries to find the mole. Levane has a list of suspects and Kell is to focus on one such agent.

But the enemy is not going to go quietly, and soon there is a high body count.

Kell puts together a sting mission, but the price will be very high.

This is a classic spy novel.

Manray9 says

I've read this before – about fifty times. Three of the jacket blurbs compared Cumming to le Carré. Not by a long shot.

Geevee says

A enjoyable and well constructed spy thriller from Charles Cumming with the story and action nicely paced but never too fast or loose to make it unbelievable.

The main character is Thomas Kell, who has appeared before in the author's A Foreign Country and is an experienced and well regarded but tainted SIS senior operative, who is languishing outside the service on unpaid leave and trying to find a return route to his profession after some adventures in the aforementioned book.

His relationship with "C" is central to this plot as before and sees him deployed on a mission to investigate a light plane crash which soon spreads to involve various agencies in a post-cold war Europe and Mediterranean.

The book is good on suggesting real spycraft and technique plus the use or failings with technology and retains both characters and circumstances that are products of a far more complex and dangerous post-Soviet world as the plot/s move from Turkey to Berlin to London and elsewhere.

A book that will serve you well on your holidays, dark winter evenings or even the dull commute on the 07:10 sitting next to a fashionably dressed young man or woman buried in their IPAD or free newspaper who might just be working for the SIS.

Hpnyknits says

Page turner delightful spooks story with lots of criticism of the process and integrity of the intelligence forces whoever they are. Great details of the mind games spooks play. The romantic relationship, clearly needed to set the story, didn't ring true, although they were both adults. It irked me from the start. and of course it sets us up for book 3.
