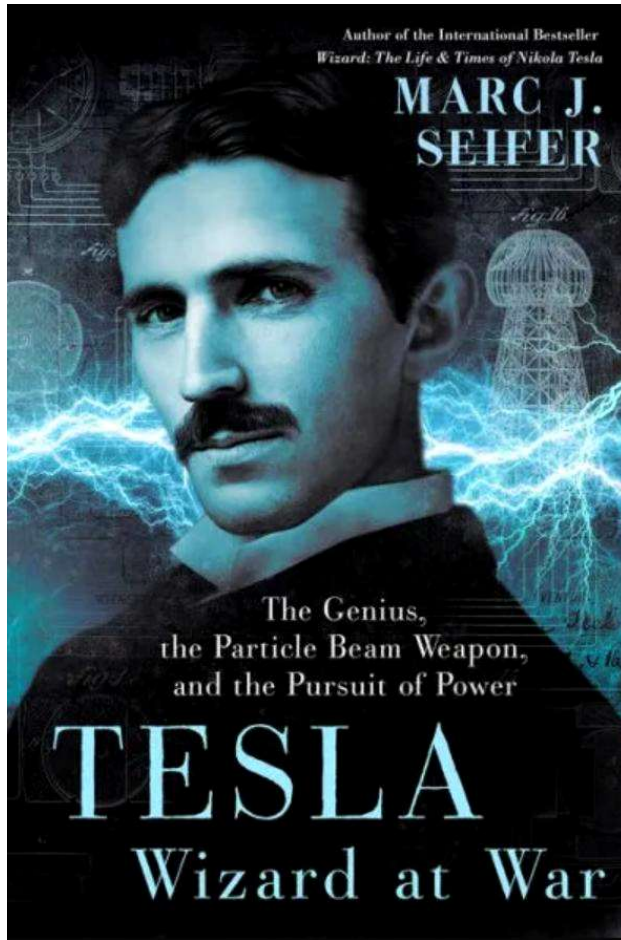


'Tesla' gives a mesmerizing look at pursuit of dangerous weapon

Posted: Sunday, December 25, 2022

"Tesla, Wizard at War: The Genius, the Particle Beam Weapon, and the Pursuit of Power" by Marc J. Seifer. New York, NY: Kensington Publishing, 2022, 384 pages, \$28.00 (hardcover).



"It was the height of World War II," Marc J. Seifer explains near the beginning of *"Tesla, Wizard at War: The Genius, the Particle Beam Weapon, and the Pursuit of Power,"* his mesmerizing new foray into one man's little-known quest to develop a frightening new weapon. "Ignoring yet another treaty, the Germans had invaded Vichy France. In retaliation, D-Day was imminent, U.S. troops were impinging, and Berlin and much of Germany were being bombed with impunity; on the Eastern Front, the Battle of Stalingrad was in full swing."

"Having already perfected their death-dealing V-2 rockets, Germany was getting closer to manufacturing jet planes, the actor Ronald Reagan was protecting America in the movies with his death ray, and way off in Illinois at the University of Chicago, below the bleachers at Stagg Field, a team led by Enrico Fermi initiated the first nuclear chain reaction," Seifer continues. "President Roosevelt was now considering two separate kinds of superweapons, a nuclear bomb suggested by Albert Einstein and a death ray suggested by Nikola Tesla."

"Had he listened just to Tesla, the president would have never considered the bomb, because Tesla had no belief whatsoever in Einstein's theories," the author adds. "It would be, by far, the inventor's greatest theoretical blunder."

So begins a fascinating journey into an episode of our collective history that remains somewhat obscure for most Americans. Even if you are relatively familiar with Tesla and his immense contributions to the development of our modern electricity-driven world, I am convinced Seifer has plenty of insights into both the man as well as his ideas that will expand your knowledge and appreciation exponentially. Drawing on previously unavailable sources (many restricted by the government for decades), the manuscript makes a convincing case that Tesla really does deserve a higher ranking in the pantheon of humanity's all-time greatest thinkers.

Of course, there is always the question of how he proposed his theories be used. There are legitimate reasons why many of his papers were confiscated immediately after his death and withheld from the public for over forty years. Unfortunately, the application of new technologies to our darker nature always seems to tarnish the innovative potential of many discoveries. Certainly, this was the case with Tesla, as Seifer conclusively illustrates through his meticulous analysis of documents that were recently declassified and subsequently obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

As alluded to previously, “Wizard at War” is a virtual treasure-trove of information and insights about Tesla that have not previously been revealed. For example, for the first time ever, Seifer describes an intense disagreement within the U.S. government regarding the importance of his work. Apparently, there was one camp, led by John G. Trump (the former president’s uncle), that held Tesla’s work to be insignificant and inconsequential. The opposing camp, led by Brigadier General L.C. Craigie (the first military pilot to fly a top-secret jet plane), vehemently wanted Tesla’s papers kept as far away from the president as possible. The arguments on both sides of this debate – which was much more volatile than most of us realized – are outlined in captivating detail in the fourteenth chapter, “The Trump Report.”

As has been the case with most of Seifer’s nonfiction catalog, the book is extensively researched, with 35 pages of source notes as well as additional references including a “Frequently Cited Sources by or about Nikola Tesla” section, a “Bibliography,” and a “List of Abbreviations” that I found particularly helpful (honestly, did you know “IRE” is the Institute of Radio Engineers or that “OAP” was the Office of Alien Property Custodian?). Structurally, the text consists of 19 chapters arranged in five major sections: “High Life,” the first four chapters; “Wardenclyffe,” the next two chapters; “Wireless,” chapters 7 through 12; “Death Ray,” chapters 13 through 16; and “God Particle,” the final three chapters.

One of Seifer’s primary points, resonating throughout the book, is that Tesla has been overlooked - especially by the physics community - as one of the most astute, creative and imaginative thinkers who ever lived. Moreover, he contends that the reasons for this slight remain, for the most part, shrouded in mystery. Consider the following from “Tesla’s Dynamic Theory of Gravity,” the eighteenth chapter and one of my personal favorites:

“Once one begins to study and unravel Tesla’s dynamic theory of gravity, profound new insights concerning particle spin, zero point energy, the fundamental structure of matter and space, the constancy of light speed, and the link between gravity and electromagnetism begin to emerge. According to this theory, the ether exists. It is a primary substance, most likely AC, oscillating at a tachyonic rate, and it is a substance that is constantly flowing into what we call the physical universe, a universe made up of atoms, which in turn are made from elementary particles. For these particles (e.g., electrons) to generate electromagnetic energy, they are, according to Goudsmit and Uhlenbeck as reported by Gamow, spinning faster than the speed of light.

A graduate of the University of Chicago and Saybrook University, Marc J. Seifer is a retired psychology teacher from Roger Williams University. His articles have appeared in *Wired*, *Civilization*, *The Historian*, *Psychiatric Clinics of North America* and *Cerebrum* and his work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist* and *Scientific American*. His previous books include the novels “Rasputin’s Nephew,” “Doppelgänger,” “Crystal Night,” and “Fate Line,” and the non-fiction “Transcending the Speed of Light,” “The Definitive Book of Handwriting Analysis,” “Framed! Murder, Corruption & a Death Sentence in Florida,” and “Wizard: The Life & Times of Nikola Tesla,” which has been translated into nine languages including Serbian, Russian and Chinese.

In case you are a little slow on the uptake, I loved “Tesla, Wizard at War.” Full disclosure, I have been a fan of Tesla’s work for most of my life, going back to the first time I saw that iconic photo of him sitting under a massive Tesla coil (I’m sure you’ve seen it; and even though it was a double exposure, it still left an indelible impression on me as a child). My sense is that this one would one appeal to a wide audience. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, University Distinguished Professor, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University.