

World War, Cold War and the House of Dulles

DULLES: A Biography of Eleanor, Allen and John Foster Dulles and Their Family Network.
Dial/James Wade. 530 pp. \$12.95

By DANIEL YERGIN

FITHER John Foster Dulles did not make himself clear, or was deliberately misleading—or an emotionally overwrought Anthony Eden misunderstood. Whatever the case, Eden was, on August 2, 1956, so grateful to Dulles that he told him that he would go down in history as a great foreign minister.

"You know, nobody knows and nobody's going to know really for at least twenty-five years, the reason being that all the returns aren't in," Dulles said afterwards. "And for this same reason, nobody knows whether I'm doing a good job or a bad job."

Shortly after, of course, Eden came to believe that Dulles was a very bad foreign minister indeed. For he had thought Dulles had promised American support to the Anglo-French Suez expedition. Instead, the United States led the condemnation in the United Nations—after having set in motion the events that had led Nasser to seize the Suez Canal in the first place. But now more than a quarter century has passed since Dulles became secretary

DANIEL YERGIN is the author of *Shattered Peace: The Origins of The Cold War and The National Security State*.

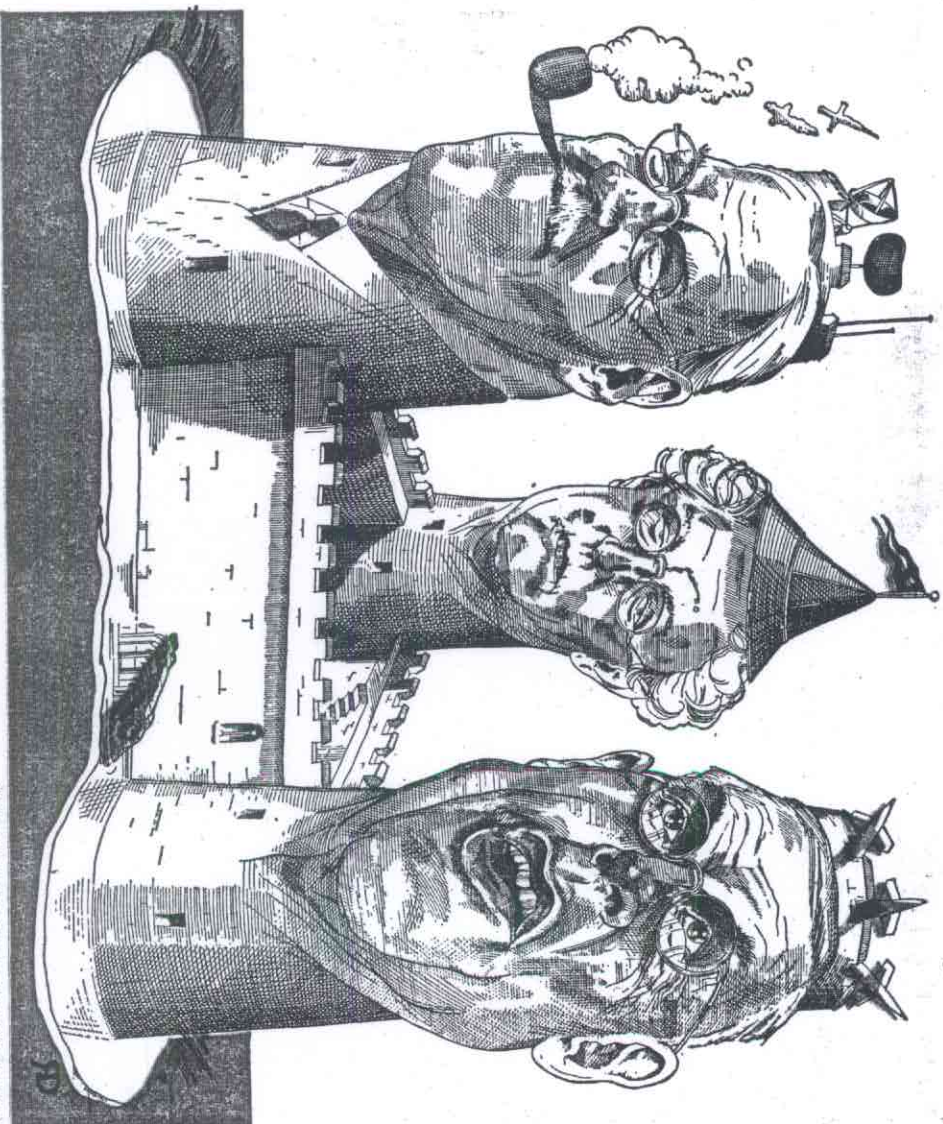


Illustration by Ray Driver for The Washington Post

of state, and some perspective is possible. Leonard Mosley undertakes to provide it in the form of a joint biography of Foster with his brother Allen and

sister Eleanor. His analysis and judgments, such as they are, are embedded in his fast-moving narrative. But this is an enjoyable book that one reads primarily for the story and the character.

Mosley, the author of 25 or so books, is a fluent writer. In *Dulles*, he offers a social history, really a family history, of American foreign policy from the First World War into the

1960s, with a goodly offering of the kind of gossip that is conventionally described as spicy.

Mosley's real skills are as a narrator. As in a novel, characters appear and reappear. One is Noel Field, first introduced at age 12, when Allen Dulles met him in Switzerland. When Dulles asked the boy about his ambition, Field replied, "Bring peace to the world." A world war later, back in Switzerland, Field, by then a secret communist, managed to insinuate himself with and use Dulles, who was the OSS station chief. Revenge came in 1949, when the CIA managed to pass the word eastward that Field was a CIA agent (which he was not), and so set in motion the great Stalinist purges in Eastern Europe.

Another ominous character who moves through these pages is Kim Philby, who as the Washington liaison between British and American intelligence in the late 1940s proved to be one of the Soviet Union's most useful spies ever. Philby, now living in Moscow on a KGB stipend, has the last word, of a sort, in a 1976-1977 correspondence with Mosley, published as an extensive appendix. Philby is really quite condescending in his judgments on America's former foremost spy, describing Allen Dulles as "bumbling," "lazy," and guilty of "compulsive resort to cliché." That impression, Mosley argues, was a deliberate act, for Dulles was actually on to Philby's tricks, and came close to nabbing him. (Philby's correspondence is interesting not only for what he says, but also for the tone—ironic, self-satisfied, smug, and filled with a scorn for Americans that may well cloak a resentment which partly explains his treachery.)

Indeed, Mosley's book is so structured and so populated with vivid personalities that any television mogul with a minimum degree of intelligence would recognize the potential here for a superb 10-part mini-series, a sort of *Upstairs, Upstairs*.

But what of the protagonists themselves? The Dulles siblings came from a family of missionaries and diplomats. A grandfather and uncle had both been secretaries of state, and Foster seemed predestined himself for the job. He served with Keynes and Monnet on the reparations commission at Versailles, then went back to New York and corporate law at Sullivan and Cromwell. In the late 1930s, bored and restless, with legal success, he turned his attention back to international politics, and began maneuvering in such a way that he was soon the Republicans' chief foreign policy spokesman. But it was not until he was 65 that he became secretary of state.

Of Dulles' two great achievements in foreign policy, one predated his secretary of stateship. This was his central role in shaping the Japanese peace treaty, which laid the basis for America's close relation with modern Japan. Equally important was his role after becoming secretary in cementing American relations with the Federal Republic of Germany.

There was much else that was questionable—the failure to respond positively to the opportunity provided by Stalin's death in 1953, and the confusion and mishaps involved in the entire Suez affair. One cannot help but wonder what difference it would have made had the 1956 Hungarian Revolu-

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tion not occurred at the same time as Suez. Perhaps the real truth about Dulles' years as secretary were that they were an anticlimax, that despite the rhetoric, and the partisan differences, they pretty much continued where Acheson and Co. had left off. Dulles himself seemed to recognize this. "You know, Paul," Mosley quotes him as saying to Paul Nitze, "I really don't disagree at all with the Acheson policies. . . I'm in general agreement." The real balance of forces and interests, not rhetoric about rollback and liberation, determined U.S. foreign policy.

While Foster is the dominating presence in the book, just as he apparently dominated his siblings, Allen and Eleanor emerge from the book as more human characters. For Allen, the craft of intelligence was a passion, and this charming, engaging, manipulative person brought even more energy to it than (according to Mosley) he did to his energetic pursuit of attractive women. Allen's story is really the story of the development of America's intelligence apparatus. As we continue to learn today, there is considerable uncertainty about the relations of intelligence and covert activities to our sort of political system. It was Henry Stimson who, decades ago, opposed counterespionage on the grounds that gentlemen do not read other gentlemen's mail. At the time of the planning for the Bay of Pigs, Dean Rusk had a certain distrust for Allen Dulles for that very reason—because he had discovered that the CIA had taken to opening the private mail of the Rockefeller Foundation during the period that Rusk was at its head. Yet it is also true that nations do compete with each other, and, it can hardly be in a nation's long-term interests to pretend otherwise.

Allen did more than anybody else to shape the CIA into a powerful, formidable, broad-ranging, independent organization. And for a time, he himself was riding high, very high. He protected the CIA against McCarthyism much more effectively than his brother did for the State Department. All doors were open. The overriding sense of national purpose and interna-

tional danger diffused any troublesome questions about the CIA's power and role and independence. But the organization probably grew too fast and in too many directions so that Allen, never a particularly good administrator, had increasing difficulty in maintaining control.

If Foster's career culminated in anticlimax, then Allen's ended in humiliation, in the form of two episodes of overreaching that brought him down. The first was the U-2 affair; the second, the Bay of Pigs, in which, Mosley suggests, Allen and the CIA were made the scapegoats for other's failures. But as a nation, we still have no clear consensus on the question that was central to Allen's public life, the role of the intelligence community in a democratic society.

Eleanor's story is somewhat different. Early on, Mosley declares: "During all but the final months of the Eisenhower era it was the Dulles family which managed and manipulated the foreign affairs of the United States, and, in consequence, decisively influenced the rest of the world"—Foster at State, Allen at the CIA, Eleanor on the Berlin desk in State. But this, it seems, is somewhat misleading. Allen and Foster were certainly a team—their only major disagreement being in the late 1930s on the dangers posed by Hitler (Foster was complacent).

Even so, the book does not really develop their relationship. Not at all clear is how they interacted with each other, nor what the significance was of this sibling suzerainty at State and the CIA. Mosley's psychologizing about the effects on Allen of being born with a club foot (corrected while he was still an infant) is not particularly convincing.

The relationship of Eleanor to her two brothers is even murkier. It is very hard to understand how her life intersected with theirs. What seems to have characterized Eleanor was her resolute independence. She does not appear to have been part of the Dulles team. Hers is the story of a very intelligent, intellectual, capable, forthright woman, trying to find her own path and shape her own life at a time when such efforts by women were highly unorthodox. Some recognized her talents. After she published a book called *The French Franc* in the 1920s,

John Maynard Keynes wrote her, "Yours is the best book on monetary inflation that I know." She was penalized for being a woman, and she was penalized for, as much as helped by, being a Dulles. She had more adversity to overcome than either of her brothers. Her marriage to a melancholy Jewish scholar ended in much personal and family grief.

Eleanor's is the strongest voice in the book, the most interesting character and at least in my reading, the real hero. "Born two generations later," Mosley writes in his notes, "what a mark she would have made in this age of sexual equality." That she gave considerable interview time to Mosley is obvious, as it is equally obvious now that she regrets it. For a controversy has erupted between her and Mosley over the book's accuracy. She charges that much of the information she gave Mosley in the interviews was misinterpreted or misstated, and that the book is laced with errors. It appears to me that Mosley has done alone a good deal of interview and archival research, especially for a book aimed at a popular audience. How well-digested that research is and how careful he has been is another question. The informed reader will notice a number of mistakes that might easily have been caught. Dean Rusk, for example, was never a lawyer.

But more important, Mosley misconstrues and really misses the fascinating development of Foster's attitude toward the Soviet Union. As late as February 1945, Dulles could write privately to a *Reader's Digest* editor, "The very fact that millions of Americans share your view that we should distrust the Russians is, I think, a reason why Russia should distrust us. . . . A task of the future will be to clear up such mistrust." But a year later, in 1946, he was already warning readers of *Life* in a two-part article against the Kremlin's plans for a *Pax Sovietica* and advising Americans to maintain a strong military establishment and go to church more often. But Mosley suggests that Dulles only decided there was "something baleful" about Stalinism in 1949! Similarly, Mosley misses the essence of Dulles' post-war clash with General Lucius Clay—the former championing France; the latter, the three western zones of Germany.

Many points of contention in the Dulles/Mosely controversy have less to do with this kind of substance. While I am puzzled about the accuracy question, I have no doubt that even a few extra weeks of checking could have eliminated a certain avoidable sloppiness. □

The Dulles Dilemma

THE CASE of Dulles: A Biography of Leonard, Allen and John Foster Dulles and Their Family Network by Leonard Mosley is not yet a "case" in the legal sense, and might never become one, since James O. Wade, publisher of The Dial Press/James Wade Books, is understandably reluctant at this point to discuss the possibility of litigation. But Jim Wade tells me he'd like to see "at least one or two" of the alleged 900 instances of inaccuracy that Eleanor Dulles, sister of Allen and John Foster Dulles, has charged the book with. So far, they've received no such list of errors, only the press release issued by Universal Public Relations of 441 Lexington Avenue in New York, headlined "Eleanor Dulles Comments on New Book About Dulles Family." In the press release, Ms. Dulles is quoted as commenting, "When fiction masquerades as history, the reader should be given some warning," and the press release goes on to say that she "has compiled a list of errors nearly as long as the book itself. On most pages where she is quoted, a correct quotation is followed by a number of incorrect quotations. She has conveyed this information to the author with the hope that the publisher will correct the many errors should further printings be planned."

In a Q & A interview in *The Washington Star*, Eleanor Dulles specified that the errors were "hundreds. Counting the inconsequential ones, perhaps as many as

900."

Jim Wade now steps into the fray. "We can not stand by and ignore the alleged 900 'errors' that E. L. Dulles claims are in the book, nor can we ignore the allegations of errors by Professor Richard Ullman and John Bartlow Martin in their respective reviews in the *New York Times Book Review* (2/26/78) and the *Chicago Tribune Book World* (2/26/78)." Wade also points out that a *New York Times* piece by Herbert Mitgang (3/9) says that Mosley describes the former C.I.A. director as a "libertine." That word is never used in the book.

Eleanor Dulles' allegation (in the press release) states that "the fiction continues throughout the book to the final pages, when the author describes a conference which supposedly took place between Foster Dulles and the President in 1960 about the Bay of Pigs project—one year after Foster's death." Mosley actually wrote that the Foster Dulles-Eisenhower conversation took place in 1959 (when Foster was still alive), but that Allen revealed the conversation to Richard Bissell in 1960. As to the rebuttal of the book reviews, publishers and authors are always writing letters to the editors, and will no doubt go on doing so, but in the case of *Dulles: A Biography*, a full selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club, and therefore a heavy-money book for a political biography, the defense is rather more defensive than usual. □

—Leonore Fleischer