
FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency

From Washington to Bush.

By Christopher Andrew.

Illustrated. 660 pp. New York:

HarperCollins Publishers. \$30.

By Robert Dallek

FOR many Americans the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Security Agency and the National Security Council are synonymous with skulduggery in high places. These are the secret agencies of Government that have supposedly plotted assassinations of foreign enemies, indiscriminately wiretapped American citizens and abused the public trust by questionable expenditures of billions of dollars in the name of national security.

Most of the country's recent Presidents are seen as largely responsible for these abuses of power. Franklin Roosevelt is said to have lied the country into World War II by allowing it to be surprised at Pearl Harbor; Harry Truman to have built the apparatus of an American police state; Dwight Eisenhower to have used that apparatus to topple regimes in Iran and Guatemala; John Kennedy to have tried to do the same in Cuba; Lyndon Johnson to have deceived the press and public about what he was doing in the Dominican Republic and Vietnam; Richard Nixon to have toppled Salvador Allende in Chile, and then to have toppled himself through Watergate; and Ronald Reagan to have continued the pattern of hidden, illegal foreign actions in the Iran-contra scandal.

Presidents and the intelligence agencies serving them are not without sin; many complaints about secret government are justified. But many are not. Moreover,

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RAY BARTKUF

too little has been said about the successes of United States intelligence, both during and after World War II. What we have needed in this post-cold-war era is an objective assessment of the country's intelligence agencies and Presidential performance in dealing with them.

*Michael?
Pearl
Hartman?*

Christopher Andrew is a professor of history at Cambridge University and the author of numerous books on intelligence operations, including "Her Majesty's Secret Service." He believes that "whether Presidents have used intelligence and the intelligence community well or badly, how they have used it is an essential — though frequently neglected — part of the history of every Administration since the Second World War." Though "much of the story still remains officially secret," enough of it is open for Mr. Andrew to have written a thoughtful, judicious book.

MOST of "For the President's Eyes Only" is devoted to the 10 men who occupied the White House from Franklin Roosevelt to George Bush and their handling of American intelligence operations. Mr. Andrew critically assesses the performance of both the Presidents and the agencies, particularly the C.I.A., about which far more is known than about the National Security Agency. His book is as objective an account as seems possible on so controversial a subject. There are no heroes and villains here — only fallible Presidents and military and civilian officials struggling to make sense of a complicated and dangerous world.

As often as not, in Mr. Andrew's view, the Presidents and intelligence chiefs failed to find realistic answers to the questions before them. Of the recent Presidents, only Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy and George Bush showed any "real flair for intelligence," though even they were far from perfect. Kennedy, for example, performed poorly in the planning for the Bay of Pigs invasion. Because he was too accepting of wildly exaggerated C.I.A. estimates of the chances for overthrowing Fidel Castro, he suffered a major setback at the start of his Presidency.

As Mr. Andrew sees it, at least Kennedy learned from his error (as in the Cuban missile crisis). Most of his predecessors and successors compiled less success-

Continued on next page.

Feb 26-95

No Heroes, No Villains

Continued from preceding page



UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL/BETTMANN

President Ronald Reagan and his first Director of Central Intelligence, William J. Casey.

ful records in using the intelligence data generated for them (principally by cryptographers deciphering diplomatic and military signals). Roosevelt, for instance, failed to give priority to breaking Japanese naval codes in 1940-41. Had he done so, Mr. Andrew says, United States naval intelligence would have had clear indications that Tokyo was planning an attack on Pearl Harbor. Truman, likewise, neglected to put sufficient resources into cryptographic analysis to have advance warnings of a North Korean attack on South Korea. And even when decoded messages indicated that the Chinese were going to cross the Yalu River and enter the war, Truman and his principal advisers, moved by false convictions about the Chinese Communists, neglected to heed the warnings. Johnson's antagonism to the C.I.A. and his conviction that American power would force a North Vietnamese surrender made him resistant to the agency's more realistic assessments of American prospects in Vietnam, thus leading the United States to a disaster in Southeast Asia.

Mr. Andrew is critical of America's intelligence agencies as well. Their bureaucratic rivalries (like the conflict within the C.I.A. between the operations and intelligence divisions), as well as their madcap assassination plots and their blind prejudice, caused them to be less successful than they might have been. Still, even if these problems were eliminated, Mr. Andrew would have no illusions about the perfectibility of intelligence operations. "Good intelligence," he says, "diminishes surprise, but even the best cannot possibly prevent it altogether. Human behavior is not, and probably never will be, fully predictable." Nevertheless, Mr. Andrew predicts, "The Presidents of the 21st century, like their cold war predecessors, will continue to find an enormously expensive global intelligence system both fallible and indispensable." □

Handwritten notes: FBI, National Security Council, CIA, State Dept.

Those Clowns in Langley

Since the missile crisis . . . Presidents have tended, more often than not, to take for granted their daily diet of all-source global intelligence. Indeed, they have frequently seemed disappointed by it. All remember international crises that took them by surprise, and most are inclined to treat the surprises as intelligence failures. "What the hell do those clowns do out there in Langley?" Nixon demanded after the unexpected overthrow of the Cambodian leader Prince Sihanouk in 1970. Eight years later Carter asked much the same question, more politely phrased, when he was suddenly informed that the Shah of Iran was in danger of losing his throne.

The intelligence community has had its fair share of failures. Presidents' recurrent disappointment with the intelligence they receive, however, has derived, at least in part, from their own exaggerated expectations.

From "For the President's Eyes Only."

*Petty his students + those who depend
on his writing*