

How the CIA Got Involved In Politics

By Jim Wood

If you ever wondered what the American Establishment did during World War II, the answer's easy: It served gallantly if often not very effectively with the OSS.

The cast of characters in "OSS, the Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency" reads like a Boston debutante's dream of heaven.

The names range from Al-sop and Bundy to Evelle Younger. There are more entries for Harvard than for the Nazi Party. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., John Birch, David Bruce, Arthur Goldberg, Walt Rostow — even Herbert Marcuse — are among the talented amateurs who engaged in OSS activities during World War II.

Wild Bill

The OSS, of course for those who don't watch World War II movies on the late show, was the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency.

It was led by Gen. William "Wild Bill" Donovan who recruited many of his staff members from Wall Street law offices, Ivy League colleges and the Social Register. He seemed also to have had a preference for brains, and the later activities of OSS officers read like gossip columns in Fortune Magazine.

The book's publication was announced yesterday by the University of California Press. It was written by R. Harris Smith, a lecturer in political science at UC Extension and a former research analyst for CIA.

Enemies

The book spends little time describing the heroic, often futile, exploits of OSS operatives. It concentrates

instead on the inter-agency relations of OSS with other intelligence-gathering networks. As with many World War histories, one point seems to be that with Allies like the British, enemies were not needed.

It was Donovan's idea that the OSS take an activist role in politics of foreign nations as well as gather intelligence. This concept has continued with the CIA, and Smith suggests it is a policy that has had wide ramifications and insufficient consideration by U.S. leaders. (The Bay of Pigs, insurgency in Guatemala, the Vietnam pacification programs are only a few of the spin-offs from this early Donovan policy).

Pragmatic

Donovan also was a pragmatist. His agents included monarchists and Communists and those in between — whoever could do the job. This policy of political toleration continued after the war and was revived when the CIA was formed. As a result, CIA became a safe house for those with unpopular political views during the McCarthy era.

The book includes some fascinating if brief descriptions of intelligence capers during World War II: A plan to air drop pornography to Hitler to drive him insane (the plan literally never got off the ground), a British plot to topple Franco, the present Pope Paul's role as a gatherer of intelligence in Tokyo.

Friendly Ho

Smith also details the extensive OSS contacts with Ho Chi Minh. Its agents found Ho charismatic, gentle, effective and sophisticated. They also learned he



LATE GEN. DONOVAN
Leader of the OSS

could be tough when he wanted. So close became the relations between Ho and the OSS that the French questioned whether the Allies weren't more of a danger to French colonialism than the Japanese.

Smith's style reflects, perhaps, his CIA training. The bibliography would keep a World War II buff busy for years. Almost every paragraph contains a direct quote from some source ranging from "under-cover girl" to official histories and general's memoirs.

In the last chapter, Smith spells out how CIA liberals have been questioning the Vietnam War for years. Since other CIA officials, including those who played a leading role in OSS activities, also have been directing the war, the book points to a seriously split agency.