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Burn before Reading: Presidents, CIA Directors, and Central Intelligence

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find a single plan laid out in such complete detail.

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Turner, Stansfield. *Burn before Reading: Presidents, CIA Directors, and Central Intelligence*. New York: Hyperion, 2005. 319pp. \$23.95

Presumably Stansfield Turner did not devise the nonsensical title of this history of the DCI's (Director, Central Intelligence) relationship with the president of the United States.

In twelve chapters on chief executives from Franklin D. Roosevelt through George W. Bush, Turner discusses the nineteen men who headed America's intelligence organization. "Within six months of Pearl Harbor, FDR's enthusiasm for 'Wild Bill' [Donovan's] 'innovative thinking' had evaporated," Turner writes, noting that Donovan was never given access to the ULTRA/MAGIC code-breaking program, and he regularly lost struggles with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and J. Edgar Hoover.

In January 1946, Harry Truman created the Central Intelligence Group and appointed Sidney Souers as the first director of central intelligence, with simple expectations: "to keep him personally well-informed of all that was going on in the outside world." By September 1949, however, the CIA had not been privy to Atomic Energy Commission information, so the day after Truman learned that the Soviet Union had exploded its first atomic bomb, he read Intelligence Memorandum 225: "The earliest possible date by which the USSR might be

expected to produce an atomic bomb is mid-1950 and the most probable date is mid-1953."

Turner recounts subsequent intelligence failures, but because the manuscript was submitted to the CIA for security review, few readers should be surprised by this history.

While most facts are familiar, Turner's thesis is that the director of Central Intelligence serves the president in two capacities: leading the CIA in providing unbiased intelligence; and heading the intelligence community, "fifteen federal agencies, offices, and bureaus within the executive branch." Turner evaluates the eighteen DCIs before Porter Goss on how each performed both tasks, including his own service under Jimmy Carter.

If Turner is frank about errors he made, he excoriates his successor, Bill Casey. "Overall, I found this transition group to be as unbalanced, opinionated, and unwilling to listen as any group I have ever encountered. They came to their task with their minds made up, and no facts were going to change their conclusions." Fifteen blistering pages recount Casey's politicization of the agency and obsession with covert actions, culminating in his leading Ollie North to undertake "two highly illegal operations—selling arms to Iran and funneling the money to the contras in Nicaragua."

Turner devotes the final chapter to reflections on the 2005 Intelligence Reform Act. "The big question, then, is whether President Bush will line up with the presidents since FDR who have favored giving more authority to the DCI or whether he will give in to the Defense Department's persistent efforts to keep the DCI's authority limited." Noting that "the CIA's reputation in the country is at

a nadir today,” Turner calls for “the dissolution of the CIA” as part of “a bold transformation” of U.S. intelligence.

The 444 endnotes citing interviews, NARA files, articles, and many books prove that Turner has maintained a scholar’s interest in the field he once practiced. A surprise may be that no endnote cites John Ranelagh’s *The Agency* or any book written by Jeffrey Richelson—or perhaps Langley’s reviewers extirpated every one of them.

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Herrick, Robert Waring. *Soviet Naval Doctrine and Policy 1956–1986*. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 2003. 3 vols., 1,415 pp. \$129.95, \$129.95, \$139.95

It is no accident that each volume in this set comes with Fleet Admiral Sergei Gorshkov’s picture on the cover. In fact, the time period encompassed by this trilogy coincides precisely with the Gorshkov era—the central figure in all of the strategic and doctrinal debates of this study. This massive series is the capstone achievement of Robert Waring Herrick, a former U.S. naval attaché to the Soviet Union and an experienced student of Soviet navy development. The subject, the Soviet navy’s growth from a small coastal force into a balanced force capable of contesting the United States for command of the seas, is similarly the capstone achievement of Admiral Gorshkov, who played a key role in its development. Appointed chief of the Soviet navy in 1956, he took the job surrounded by an army-oriented general staff and the political leadership of Nikita Khrushchev, who

was obsessed with missiles and nuclear weaponry. Over his thirty-year tenure Gorshkov brought the Soviet navy “into the world ocean” and seriously challenged American-led Western supremacy at sea. From the official Soviet perspective, this work dissects the smaller debates that attended this growth: coastal versus oceangoing; offensive versus defensive; submarines versus balanced fleet; navy nuclear first strike versus strategic reserve.

If one follows the maxim that “budgets are strategy,” Gorshkov comes out the clear winner in his competition within the Soviet bureaucracy, ultimately building not only a bigger navy, but also a “balanced” blue-water force. In fact, the book would offer additional insights if it managed to relate official pronouncements with actual building programs. This would lay to rest the speculation made throughout the book that some of these official pronouncements were unvarnished reality while others were exaggerations or Aesopian fables in which the Navy lobbied for forces as projections of Western successes.

The most useful contributions this study offers are found as Gorshkov evaluates and assesses the effect of the growing U.S. Navy during the Reagan administration. Most notably, Herrick shows that Western practices were the foundation upon which Gorshkov built his navy. The Lehman “Oceanic Strategy” of the early 1980s gave a second wind to Moscow’s shipbuilding program. Herrick also reveals the complete disutility of using “dissuasion” as part of a deterrence strategy with the Soviets. Could a nation ever build a navy so large that the nearest competitor simply was dissuaded from trying to keep up? Reflecting classical balance of power