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From the Shadows

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eleven-year Marxist dictatorship. Kagan's richly textured account is not about the "inevitable" fall of the Sandinistas but rather of the multiple, unpredictable, and frequently conflicting forces that influenced U.S.-Nicaraguan relations. Contrary to the received wisdom, which regards the rise of the Somoza dynasty as the direct by-product of American occupation early in the century, Kagan argues that the United States did not put, or keep, Somoza in power but rather contributed to the evolution of Nicaraguan politics through its vacillating, inconsistent policy of endless cycles of intervention and withdrawal. Kagan writes, "Indifference and noninterference had been all Somoza required in 1936; it was enough for the next 40 years."

While President Reagan came to office deeply committed to halting the advance of communism in Central America, he wanted to challenge Marxism in the least violent manner. The least controversial way of doing so was to support covertly the Contras, in what was known as the "lowball option." According to the author, this decision was made not so much to foster pluralism in Nicaragua as to challenge the Sandinistas' support of El Salvador's insurgency.

Kagan argues that the regional peace process, which culminated in the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas, was not governed by any single development or policy initiative but was the by-product of many different circumstances and policies. Nevertheless, Kagan shows, convincingly, I believe, that the principal force that moderated the Sandinistas' behavior was the Contras, for they alone could provide a "threat capable of forcing moderation on the Sandinistas."

This is a significant book that provides an impressively detailed account of U.S.-Nicaraguan politics during the last decade of the Cold War. Although Kagan served as a Department of State official during the mid-1980s, this work is not an insider's account of American diplomacy but a scholarly, dispassionate study based on documented sources. With more than 731 pages of narrative and 162 pages of notes, this book is not for the fainthearted. However, anyone concerned with American foreign policy making, Cold War geopolitics, or the evolution of American-Nicaraguan relations will find this well written study an invaluable resource.

MARK R. AMSTUTZ
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Gates, Robert M. *From the Shadows.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996. 604pp. $30

The dust jacket of Bob Gates's book describes him as the "ultimate insider." While this description contains a touch of hyperbole designed to sell books, it is not far from the mark. Gates came to the Central Intelligence Agency in the late 1960s as an analyst. He served under six presidents and worked in the White House for four of them. His intervening years in the Agency included duties as the Executive Assistant to the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), as Deputy Director for Intelligence (head of analysis), and Deputy DCI; he ended his career with tours as the Deputy National Security Advisor and then as DCI. Gates observes that no one other than Franklin Roosevelt spent more years in the White House. Whether or not this makes him

the "ultimate insider," it surely provides him with a unique perspective on the history of the last two decades of the Cold War, how U.S. policy was derived during that period, and what role the CIA and intelligence played. Gates was able to witness history from the perspective both of an intelligence officer supporting decision making, and of a decision maker requiring that intelligence support.

He also had the advantage of being a Soviet scholar in the center of events that brought down the Soviet Union. Gates was therefore uniquely qualified to chronicle how the crush of history, the flow of world events, the actions of the United States government, and just plain happenstance contributed to its demise. In Gates's view, the inherent bankruptcy—moral and ideological even more than economic—of the communist system made its ultimate collapse inevitable, and the remarkable miscalculations of Mikhail Gorbachev were the precipitants that brought it crashing down by Christmas Day, 1991, the day Gorbachev resigned.

For over forty-five years the actions of the U.S. government had been designed with this ultimate end in mind, but Gates relegates most of these to secondary importance, with the single exception, perhaps, of President Ronald Reagan's clarity of vision and constancy of purpose in building U.S. military might and confronting Soviet initiatives around the world. Happening at a time of economic and political crisis inside the USSR, these initiatives escalated the economic collapse and forced accommodations that snowballed out of control under Gorbachev's ill-starred tenure.

Bob Gates was either the most meticulous keeper of diaries and notes or one of the most thorough and painstaking researchers ever to set about writing his memoirs. Probably he was both. He documents his points with quotes from high-level government memoranda and records of conversations, sprinkling them liberally with excerpts from hitherto highly classified CIA documents and national intelligence estimates. His success in getting these released and in obtaining permission to declassify details of CIA covert operations makes this book particularly valuable to historians and simply fascinating to those of us who served in intelligence billets during the period but saw only the one-fifth of the iceberg that was visible—even to those who were "highly cleared."

Not unexpectedly, the book contains an element of apologetics on behalf of the CIA, as well as a challenge to some of the anti-CIA bias found in George Shultz's memoirs. On the whole, however, this is much more a reference book on Cold War history and the workings of the U.S. government than a treatise on the CIA or intelligence.

A unique aspect of Gates's treatment is his detailed description of the personalities and abilities of the presidents, DCIs, cabinet officers, and other senior government officials with whom he served and whom he observed either attempting to shape history, react to opportunities, or simply cope with events. He is very candid in his assessments, and not all who find themselves characterized in his book will be happy with the way they are portrayed.

Yet some emerge as truly unsung heroes. President Bush is depicted as a thoughtful, knowledgeable, caring,

extremely competent leader, who was served by perhaps the best and most cohesive staff and advisors since Truman. Brent Scowcroft, Bush's National Security Advisor, comes across not only as one of the most effective men to hold that office but also as a unifying factor, ensuring that all Bush's advisors worked harmoniously and effectively.

While Jimmy Carter perhaps gets the lowest grades, all the presidents are portrayed as decent, hardworking, dedicated men. Gates takes some pains to point out that the military buildup credited to Reagan actually began under Carter and that there is a remarkable consistency and continuity of policy across six presidents whose politics could scarcely have been more diverse.

Another unique aspect of this book is the amount of space Gates has dedicated to CIA covert operations in support of national policy—everything from the ill-fated Contra support to the very successful Afghanistan operation, and many important operations now forgotten (does anyone remember Jonas Savimbi and UNITA?). He reveals many covert operations which have been hitherto classified and illustrates that most covert action is not the stuff of dime novels but rather mundane operations, like providing printing presses to Solidarity.

Today, no book by an "insider" would be complete without detailed treatment of Bill Casey, arguably the most colorful and controversial DCI in the history of the office. Casey emerges as a very complex figure. He was dedicated to waging war against the "evil empire" and to doing so using many of the tactics he learned from "Wild Bill" Donovan. A man who perhaps loved not wisely but too well, Casey knew about arms to Iran and about covert support to the Contras, but he almost surely did not know of the Ollie North–led diversion of money from one to another. It is not at all apparent that history will judge Casey as harshly as has the press of today.

Gates characterizes 1983 as the high-water mark for Soviet adventurism. Eight years later the Soviet Union ceased to exist. Watching the 1989–1991 final demise of the Warsaw Pact and the USSR is aptly described as "shooting the rapids of history." Beginning in 1989, the CIA predicted the ultimate demise of the communist system but no one (most particularly Gorbachev) could have predicted how rapidly and completely it crumbled. Gates portrays the period and the players with extraordinary skill, but it is perhaps Henry Kissinger who captures the irony best, when he says of Gorbachev, "If you were setting out to destroy the Soviet Union, would you do it any differently?"

In sum, *From the Shadows* is a well organized, well written, well documented history of three decades of the Cold War and of the workings of the senior levels of the U.S. government bureaucracy in fighting it. Its most important contribution, however, is the remarkable insights into the last five years of the decline and fall of the Evil Empire and the men, on both sides, who were major players in that drama. Bob Gates had a unique vantage point from which to view them. His book makes fascinating reading for those of us who watched the drama unfold, and it will serve future scholars and historians well.

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Gleason, Abbot. *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995. 307pp. $25

Powers, Richard Gid. *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism*. New York: The Free Press, 1995. 554pp. $30

"Shooting wars" are marked by battle lines, exploding ordnance, and movements of armies and navies. The Cold War, by contrast, was a contest between contrasting ways of life, fought with ideas on the battleground of the minds and hearts of men. It opened with an April 1945 prediction by a French communist close to the Kremlin that relations between the United States and the Soviet Union would worsen. It ended effectively in February 1990, when the Communist Party of the USSR formally abandoned its monopoly over Soviet politics and consigned itself, as Ronald Reagan had predicted, to the dustbin of history.

The intervening forty-five years had seen a conflict protracted beyond any other in U.S. history; complex beyond any simple explanations for its existence; and massively expensive in terms of resources spent and lives lost in its peripheral flashpoints, such as Vietnam. The Cold War was a defining phenomenon for U.S. global leadership in this century, and its history continues to affect our relations with much of the world. It also profoundly divided American society. These reasons make it important to have as complete an understanding of the Cold War as possible, with all its complexities, and with all its heroes and villains.

These two works, the first by Brown University professor of history Abbott Gleason, the second by Richard Gid Powers of the City University of New York, shed light on the subject precisely because each of these talented historians is more interested in truth than in grinding a particular axe. These books are not in themselves comprehensive Cold War histories, but each is an exceptional addition to the story. Each helps our understanding by demonstrating that the Cold War was primarily an ideological struggle, fought with ideas; that these ideas mattered; and that the holders of the ultimately triumphant idea—that communism as a practiced political and economic doctrine is evil—often maintained this conviction in the face of scorn, disbelief, and ridicule.

In *Totalitarianism*, Abbott Gleason investigates the evolution and use of "the great mobilizing and unifying concept of the Cold War." Simply put, the totalitarian idea is that the twentieth century has seen the development of a qualitatively new kind of state that attempts to transform human nature itself in accordance with its revolutionary, messianic ideology. There is more to totalitarianism than that, of course, but its central role in the history of the Cold War stems from Gleason's core assertion that the two states that most closely followed the totalitarian model were Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, the latter especially during Stalin's lifetime. This alleged affinity was an immensely controversial idea during the Cold War—though it is such a commonplace today that even the