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Her Majesty's Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community

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the will to use military force, if needed." The writers argue that in the coming decade, the United States will often find itself dealing with the Soviet Union from a position of overall military inferiority. This will force America to struggle primarily by "nonmilitary means" in order to keep the Communist world "off balance, preferably quarrelling internally. Lacking force, deception, coups d'etat, upsetting the enemy's internal councils, and proxy warfare become less options than necessity." Moreover, a small investment of resources and political capital in covert activities "can pay big dividends when such investment is part of a coherent, success-oriented plan pursued not only by the CIA, but by the government as a whole." The writers explain how covert actions could have been used during the Polish crisis in 1980-81 by using "black" propaganda and double-agent operations, withdrawing assets of the Polish government by public defection. Perhaps the greatest usefulness for covert propaganda may be within the U.S.S.R. itself, on behalf of nationalist and religious causes.

Intelligence and Policy is not an easy book to get through. Except for the importance and excitement of the topic, the reader might sink into the prose, never to be heard from again. Nevertheless, books like this make a contribution, especially with respect to a topic about which Americans feel so ambiguous. This country has never felt at home with the tactics that often are necessary for an effective intelligence operation. How can we harmonize such behavior with American democracy in a manner that does the least damage to our values? Bureaucratic euphemisms aside, that is the question studies like this must answer.

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Andrew, Christopher. *Her Majesty's Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community.* New York: Viking, 1985. 604pp. $25

Although Christopher Andrew has not posed the question of why tales of British spies are so much more interesting than tales of American ones, he has provided the answer. British espionage is a branch of romantic literature; American espionage is sordid criminology. The illicit sex, the upper-class connections, the exclusive clubs, the devotion to style (British pomposity creates a delicious setting for the fall of the powerful) seem to create fictional heroes out of British spies. We willingly suspend disbelief. Even the sordid fate of the Oxbridge triumvirate, Philby, Burgess, and Maclean, ending their lives in a tasteless Moscow high-rise without access even to Harrod's, does not seem to dull the fascination with which we await each opening and closing of the door at MI 5, or for a clue to the secrets of the black chamber.

Christopher Andrew has the sense of the drama of the personalities behind the door and their importance in the story. He raises and lowers the

curtain with artistic skill and preserves the excitement which a world trained by British thrillers expects of an often tedious profession.

Is it the British style, a probable attribute of the class system which makes their espionage establishment so much more fascinating than our own? First of all, there are the names. As a historian, what color your work acquires if your characters are named with Dickensian flare, if you have, to work with, Biffy Dunderdale, Admiral Sir Reginald Aylmer Ranfurly Plunket-Ernle-Erle-Drax, Blinker Hall and Sinbad Sinclair.

In contrast, who remembers anything colorful about Benedict Arnold or Jerry Whitworth? How can stories of a fat FBI agent's motel-room affair with a used and demoted KGB reporter create fantasies; what considered advice of William Colby's or solemn warning of Admiral Turner's can compare with the mysterious appearances of the omniscient "C"? Add to that our Senators' and Representatives' habit of using our secrets for their own political advantage, and our espionage establishment appears like a tawdry "Downstairs," envious of the British "Upstairs," where sordid behavior is executed with style.

However, in addition to his delight with expionage as fiction, Christopher Andrew has a very serious story to tell. An observer from Oxbridge himself, senior tutor at Corpus Christi, Cambridge, he has documented what most professional political scientists and historians do not like to confront: that many critical decisions, military victories, and brilliant diplomatic strokes often had as much to do with what was going on behind the black door as with the rational decisions and clear vision of the political actors. For evidence, we do not need to go far. Many of the battles of World War II are now known to have been fought with the code books rather than in the field.

In a very entertaining book, there is a profound message: that political science and military strategy can no longer be properly understood without a knowledge of eavesdropping. (How confidently we spoke of the invulnerability of our submarines while the Walkers were probably telling the Soviets their locations!) Although this truth would appear to be self-evident, much of the book is devoted to the terrible consequences of not paying attention to intelligence information. Stalin's refusal to credit Operation Barbarosa, about which he had ample enough warning to save at least many of the twenty million who—the Soviets claim—died consequently, is one of the more dramatic illustrations of the failure to listen to the spies. There are others. General Haig, who stubbornly presented the flower of British youth as bright targets for German machine guns at the hopeless Battle of the Somme, did not credit contradictory information. Norway and Denmark were easily occupied because Whitehall chose to disregard serious reports of those impending operations. And so the story goes.

Mr. Andrew is not the first to document a world whose leaders often have eyes but do not see and

ears but do not hear. His evidence, more relevant perhaps because more recent, does not differ very much from the lessons we should have learned from the Greeks. The blind Tiresias's prediction of the fall of kings and the prescient Cassandra's vision of the Fall of Troy foretold the pattern: the information is there but its significance is not perceived. It is the old problem of form and content: the detail, isolated because of misconceptions, does not fit into the accepted context or form. Our view of reality holds us in thrall.

This factor—the propensity of statesmen not to use the information which they receive—gives *Her Majesty's Secret Service* some of its drama. Knowing of the terrible events to come, we read with alarm Andrew's accounts of the mundane problems of finding an office, getting extra pounds, putting down rival organizations, sorting the mail, finding someone to read it, and then waiting for the knock on the door.

The reason that intelligence works so well as fiction is that it is the cutting edge of conventional reality. Intelligence deals with the perception of changes. It is a constant attack on conventional wisdom and usually an affront to the establishment. It demands decisions, sometimes of terrifying proportions—would you have wanted the watch on the night of December 7th?—from leaders usually struggling to maintain the *status quo*. That quality sets us up for the Greek tragedy that is history with its many blind Oedipuses slouching toward the oracle at Delphi. In recounting the story, Christopher Andrew does not evoke the thundering fates of Sophocles nor the slapstick of Aristophanes, but there is a hint of both there, enough to amuse and appall.

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Foot, M.R.D. *SOE: The Special Operations Executive 1940-1946*. Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, Inc., 1986. 280pp. $24

By July 1940, Hitler's threatened Nazi domination of the European continent was becoming a horrifying reality. It was evident to the British that drastic measures would be needed to stop Hitler and one measure given serious consideration was unconventional warfare. In 1940 the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) was created for the express purpose of supporting and stimulating resistance in occupied countries. SOE's creators knew their actions could not have a decisive influence on the war's outcome, but their activities would surely play a valuable role through the diversion of Nazi resources.

Foot ably describes the creation and operation of one of several allied clandestine organizations. While the author did not serve in the SOE, his World War II experiences with the SAS brought him in contact with some of SOE's operations and agents. That experience has given him a perspective to write a factual and historical account of a small and