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Warriors of the Night: Spies, Soldiers and American Intelligence

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But both hold value for those sectors. Where Lind seeks to challenge conventional thinking, Kross seeks only to put forth the questions. The need continues for a book able to do both.

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Volkman, Ernest. *Warriors of the Night: Spies, Soldiers and American Intelligence*. New York: Morrow, 1985. 443pp. \$17.45

There is no reliable history of the American intelligence community. Without a solid factual baseline we cannot judge the plethora of books which feed an all too poorly guided public interest. Books are usually of two types. Either they call for reform, or they market sensation. Volkman makes the conventional nod to the need for change, but basically his book is traffic in tales.

As an indictment of American secret intelligence it is not convincing. As a call for reform it is fatuous. Even the author's conviction seems sometimes to flag. This is not just because the stories Volkman tells are familiar and well digested. In fact, he tells them well. It is not just that the opinions he rehashes are conventional and stylish. The problem lies deeper. The essential weakness of this book, and the others like it, is that it begins from imperfect standards for judgment. Volkman, like most commentators, does not have a clear idea of what American intelligence operations should be because he has only a partial grasp of what American

intelligence operations have been. Hence, he can only guess at the institutional development of the various organizations in the community and must base his narrative on personalities and anecdotes.

A delphic sentiment opens and closes his book: "American intelligence has been operating in a flawed democracy, and one of the costs of that democracy may be that its intelligence is equally flawed." Apparently this mysterious statement means that Americans respect "facts" more than evaluation; technology more than wisdom. Volkman says we must restore the human dimension to the mountains of data generated by machines, both through human sources in the field and in terms of manageable analysis. No doubt this is true enough, but it is tepid tea, all the weaker as Volkman shows plenty of examples of solid, useful evaluation. In his own illustrations political masters ignore, misuse, or abuse the products of their intelligence services. But is this natural political behavior somehow a "flaw" in the democracy? It is hard to understand the point. The record of nondemocratic states is no better. That America has not pursued human espionage as systematically and as ruthlessly as the Soviet Union is less a "flaw" of our culture than a professional decision. Humint is an appropriate and successful method for the Soviets in America, but does the reverse so equally apply?

Volkman's laments seem to stem from a platonic position that perfect knowledge, invariably accurate assess-

ments, sound utilization, and approvable behavior are the norms. Such idealism which expects everything is perpetually disappointed by reality. It is profoundly unhistorical. Hence, it is an impossible standard for critical judgment, or reliable narrative.

In short, what is missing is deep sociological and institutional understanding of the fundamental interactions of our society and its intelligence operations. There are in fact many ways to this. For instance, Harry Howe Ransom has explained the wild swings between permissiveness and public accountability, between acceptability and denial, in terms of a dichotomy in American thinking between war and peace. When relations with the Soviet Union are hostile, secret intelligence operations are unleashed. When things appear calm, when we move into a peace compartment, the rein is pulled. On the question of what facts are available and relevant to commentators, until we have comprehensive institutional histories, we are left with tales of episodes and personalities. To make enlightened judgments about secret intelligence and its place in the American democracy we need better tools of information and insight than we are given here.

A favorite model of mine is Professor Harry Hinsley's official history of British intelligence in the Second World War. When the first volumes appeared, the English establishment gasped in dismay. It was a history without names. Men and women who had waited for decades for their wartime achievements to be

confirmed by Her Majesty's Stationery Office found their work described in terms of an organizational process. Brilliant exploits disappeared in a faceless bureaucratic record. Yet once the shock passed, Sir Hinsley's message was clear. In the story of the organization of intelligence it is the intelligence of the organization that is decisive. So well were matters ordered, so well was a great pool of talent channeled, that in the course of the war even should the quality of command diminish the quality of intelligence would improve. With this record, and helped by this perspective, serious analysis of British intelligence in the period begins.

Here, until the agencies give us more to go on, commentary on the American way of spying will remain fragmented and impressionistic. Public oversight and professional planning will lack the wisdom, and perspective, of what the French call "the long wave." And the intelligence communities themselves will have to accept the public impressions of incompetence that Volkman reflects. They will have to suffer (or even perhaps benefit) from periodic demands for change. Outside the curtain we will all remain, with Volkman, critics in the night.

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Shultz, Richard H., and Godson, Roy. *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy*. Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1984. 211pp. \$19.95 paper \$12.95