

Andrew, Christopher. For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency From Washington to Bush. New York: Harper Collins, 1995.

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Too often ignored, always marginalized, and only recently included in the historical debate, intelligence scholars have faced an uphill climb in their quest for legitimacy within the academic community. In 1989, noted Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis argued that:

We generally assume that the *intelligence revolution* must have played an important role in the coming and subsequent evolution of the Cold War. But we know very little, as yet, about just what that role was. The historian of post war intelligence activities is forced to rely upon a thin thread of evidence spun out in a bewildering array of mostly unverifiable writings and recollections by former officials . . . defectors, journalists, parahistorians and novelists. As the sheer volume — and marketability — of this material suggests, the subject does not lack fascination. What is missing, however, is the basis for solid history.¹

Be that as it may, only six years later, one could argue that we have made remarkable strides in overcoming this problem. This is due, in large part, to the willingness of the Central Intelligence Agency to begin declassifying part of its historical archives, a by-product of the *1991 Gates Commission on Openness*.

For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency From Washington to Bush, is Christopher Andrew's ninth book, and his seventh contribution to the scholarly community since he turned his attention to the study of intelligence. He is probably best-known to the readers of this journal for his acclaimed work on the British Secret Service and his collaborative works with Soviet defector Oleg Gordievsky. His latest addition to the genre, which spans over two hundred years and consists of 660 pages (including notes and index) provides both the intelligence enthusiast and the serious scholar with a much needed survey of American intelligence from George Washington to George Bush. In chapters one through four Andrew discusses the evolution of American intelligence from the nineteenth century to the end of World War II. Although there is little new information included, the author is able to entice the reader with both his dramatic storytelling and a number of interesting vignettes which prevent one from straying too far. It is here that he illustrates the *special relationship* which developed between Washington and London, including William Stephenson's attempt to propel the United States into World War II by fabricating public relations disasters, reminiscent of the Zimmerman Telegram of World War I. In the following nine chapters Andrew turns his attention to the Cold War. And unlike many other monographs of this type he is not content to merely rehash the well trodden exploits of the CIA. Rather he covers all the bases by accentuating the role of the often overlooked National Security Agency and the importance of signals intelligence and imagery. By synthesizing existing schools of thought while simultaneously incorporating some of the new information available, he successfully traces the evolving relationship between the intelligence community and the office of the President of the United States. He concludes that, "over the past two centuries only four presidents — Washington, Eisenhower, Kennedy (briefly) and then Bush — have shown a real flair for intelligence." (p. 537)

While this reviewer applauds Andrew for the immensity of the task he has undertaken, and the degree to which he accomplished his stated objectives, in studies of this scope and magnitude there are inevitably certain subjects which one wishes the author had included. Of the new information available, at the time of publication, the two periods most thoroughly declassified were the Truman and Kennedy administrations. While the author was able to adequately employ some of the new data on the Cuban Missile Crisis, his discussion of the Truman era is a bit more fragmentary given the amount of new documentary evidence available. For example, although the majority of the records of the Psychological Strategy Board have been available at the Truman and Eisenhower Libraries, respectively since 1991, Andrew fails to even mention this all too often overlooked strategic link between the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency.

Although it is impossible to quarrel with Andrew's central argument that ". . . for better, and sometimes for worse . . . intelligence and the intelligence community have been transformed by the presidency of the United States," (p. 3) his contention that this thesis has not been significantly developed in the existing literature is somewhat more problematic, (p. 537) More specifically, this theme was first developed,

in the aftermath of the Church Committee hearings, by Anne Karalekas in her brilliant white paper study of the CIA. It has been incorporated subsequently in a number of prominent intelligence monographs. Within this context, the argument can be made that if intelligence historians are to avoid some of the same pitfalls and internal debates which have characterized the evolution of diplomatic history over the past twenty years, and which have yet to be completely resolved, then we must be willing to look beyond traditional causal forces to explain a given event. In *For the President's Eyes Only*, the author relies too heavily on personalities to explain the history of American intelligence. For example, while this factor clearly played an important part in the way in which both Presidents Johnson and Nixon interacted with the CIA, a theme which Andrew clearly develops, bureaucratic politics, ideology, culture, the domestic political environment and differing perceptions of national security *also* played a critical role in the use and/or misuse of American postwar intelligence, and thus the subsequent evolution of the Cold War. These factors, which dramatically effected the ability of the intelligence community to conduct its mandate successfully, were not taken into account to the degree necessary to alert the reader to the many nuances implicit within the policy-making process.

Furthermore, if one accepts Andrew's thesis without complaint, the central question then becomes, why have personalities played such an important role in the history of the American intelligence community? One possible explanation might accentuate the relatively recent creation of the American intelligence community. More likely, however, its causality runs much deeper to encompass a paradox which hangs like a dark cloud over United States history in general: specifically, the American predilection to try to reconcile a romantic mythology of idealism and moralism with the contemporary necessities of national security. Unfortunately, however, Andrew makes no attempt to come to terms with his rather disturbing conclusion or some of its more salient ramifications.

Despite some of the minor criticisms outlined above, *For the President's Eyes Only* remains the best survey of American intelligence available today. Christopher Andrew illustrates, once again, that the historical debate does not have to end with the study of World War II. Indeed, the spirited determination of scholars like Andrew to shed new light on the murky role of intelligence and covert operations during the Cold War insures that those scholars preoccupied with the *missing dimension* of American history will no longer be relegated to the sidelines of the academic debate.

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Endnotes

1. John Lewis Gaddis, "Intelligence, Espionage, and Cold War Origins," *Diplomatic History*, 12, no. 2 (Spring 1989), p. 192.