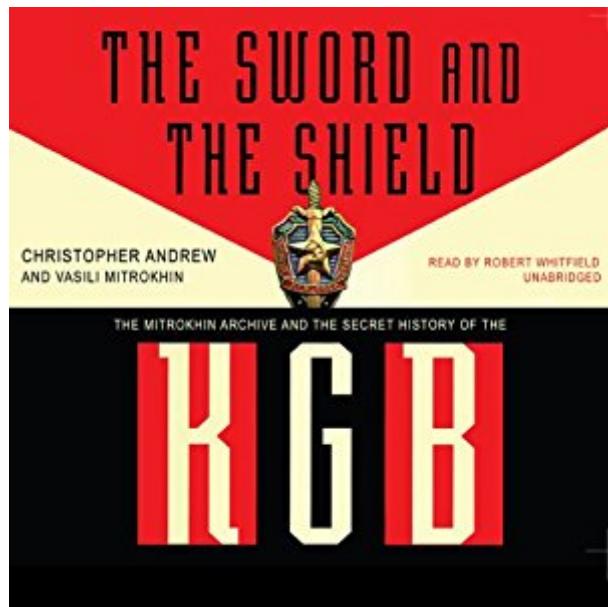


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The Sword And The Shield



Synopsis

This book reveals the most complete picture ever of the KGB and its operations in the United States and Europe. It is based on an extremely top secret archive, which details the full extent of its worldwide network. Christopher Andrew is professor of modern and contemporary history and chair of the history department at Cambridge University, a former visiting professor of national security at Harvard, a frequent guest lecturer at other United States universities, and a regular host of BBC radio and TV programs. His books - which include Her Majesty's Secret Service; KGB: The Inside Story (with Oleg Gordievsky); and For the President's Eyes Only - have established him as one of the world's leading authorities on intelligence history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a large body of work containing an enormous amount of information. The reason for the 4 stars is that I just don't feel that all the information from the KGB files can be taken without any skepticism at all. This is not really harsh criticism just an acknowledgement that with the flood of documents coming from the former Soviet Union and its Republics, some prudent skepticism is called for. It also is not a comment on Mr. Mitrokhin, truth versus deception, disinformation, and lies, was part of the daily life in the Soviet Union. It is possible all his information is uncorrupted, but a bit of a jaundiced view is reasonably called for. The book is interesting and loaded with information. I don't suggest this as a first book about the KGB because it reads more like a textbook; it is very meticulous to the point tedious in detail at times. If the subject is one you have some familiarity with, this volume could serve as an excellent reference work. If this were the first book you were to read

on the topic, reaching the end would be challenging. Vasily Nikitich Mitrokhin oversaw 300,000 files on an exhaustive list of prominent names in American History. If there was a person who had access to a library of information, Mr. Mitrokhin certainly qualifies. His willingness to remove information on a daily basis for years on end is both a testament to his courage, and an amazing period of luck. The work is excellent in depth and breadth of material covered. It is not light reading as the subjects that are covered, or sometimes mentioned briefly, have been the topic of entire books. If you are willing to make the effort and devote the time, your knowledge of this particular man's cache of information will greatly expand your knowledge of what some of the KGB's activities were. With the passing of time a more complete picture will emerge of this opponent of The Cold War. It certainly is not the final word on the matter, but an excellent piece of the story. Well worth reading if given the time.

From this book we learn of one of the most incredible stories to yet emerge from the history of the Cold War; the tale of this Russian defector who had laboriously hand-scribed an astonishing archive detailing the history of hundreds of thousands of secret KGB files. One is breathlessly swept along by two elements in this true story; first, by the tale of the defector himself, who calmly, deliberately and systematically copied the records of so many cases of surveillance, mistreatment, harassment, torture, and murder by KGB agents over the decades at great personal risk to himself and his family, and second, by the tales of horror these files contain. The defector himself worked for decades as the chief archivist for the foreign intelligence division of the KGB. Part of his duties was to extensively check and then seal each of the hundreds of thousands of cases on file, which gave him unhindered access to all of the secrets of the decades of KGB activity. Of course, one has to ask oneself the most important question; why? Apparently the defector had long ago become badly disillusioned by the nature of the Soviet government and its ritualistic suppression of human rights, especially by its record of systematic silencing of both domestic and international dissidents. Faced with a series of decisions about what to do, he eventually drifted into copying the records as a quiet act of protest, soon the records, smuggled out in his clothing, pockets, inside his socks, shoes, or his underwear, soon grew to fantastic proportions. The tales of KGB abuse and excess are horrifying to read about, staggering the imagination both in terms of the extent they reached, and also in terms of the absolute lunacy of much of it. It extended from assassination attempts to infiltration of civil rights leader's entourages, from tales of murder and mayhem in the days of the Bolsheviks to stories of deep-cover agents still active when the book was published, from secretly booby-trapped arm caches to hate mail and bomb campaigns in the United States. As amazing as the laundry list of

misdeeds may be, what is so incredible is that most of it was so singularly unsuccessful in both conception and execution, illustrating just how culturally inept the KGB was, and how badly misconceived most of this mayhem was. This is a fascinating book, written in a very readable and entertaining fashion. The difficulties in writing it and the risks associated with smuggling it out of the Soviet Union read like something out of a John LeCarre novel. Yet because of its considerable length and its subject matter, it is a slow and time-consuming read. I enjoyed reading it, and recommend it for anyone interested in just how energetic and devilishly inspired yet motley cast of KGB characters were over a period of almost eighty years.

While not everything in the book is news, the fact that virtually ALL the names (minor and major), dates and actions since 1917 are present makes this book a very valuable treasure indeed. Yes, folks, it's all true - the Rosenbergs were in fact guilty of espionage, Alger Hiss was in fact a Communist agent, the vicious innuendos that have been launched against J. Edgar Hoover since his death did in fact have their origin in Moscow - and the Soviet archives made public since 1991 back it all up. Andrew does sometimes go into tedious detail, but this may be necessary for those without a rudimentary understanding of the history of Soviet espionage. (The section on the Cambridge Five is especially illuminating - I would also recommend "Degenerate Moderns" by E. Michael Jones to anyone who wishes to further study that subject.) I especially agreed with Andrew's conclusion in that the collapse of the Soviet empire has revealed the traditional faultline between East and West that has existed since the division of the Roman Empire in the fourth century A.D., which culminated in 1054 with the Eastern Schism that shattered the unity of the Christian Church. The cultural and political differences between East and West have been almost 1700 years in the making and sadly will not disappear overnight. My only complaint about the book is the surprisingly large number of typographical errors, particularly in regard to foreign names; however, this is of minor importance and does not diminish the book's effectiveness. Hopefully that minor problem will be corrected in subsequent printings.

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