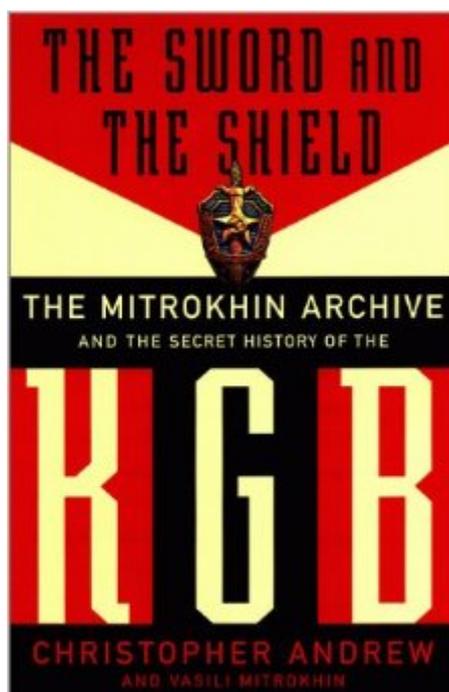


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The Sword And The Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive And The Secret History Of The KGB



Synopsis

The Sword and the Shield is based on one of the most extraordinary intelligence coups of recent times: a secret archive of top-level KGB documents smuggled out of the Soviet Union which the FBI has described, after close examination, as the "most complete and extensive intelligence ever received from any source." Its presence in the West represents a catastrophic hemorrhage of the KGB's secrets and reveals for the first time the full extent of its worldwide network. Vasili Mitrokhin, a secret dissident who worked in the KGB archive, smuggled out copies of its most highly classified files every day for twelve years. In 1992, a U.S. ally succeeded in exfiltrating the KGB officer and his entire archive out of Moscow. The archive covers the entire period from the Bolshevik Revolution to the 1980s and includes revelations concerning almost every country in the world. But the KGB's main target, of course, was the United States. Though there is top-secret material on almost every country in the world, the United States is at the top of the list. As well as containing many fascinating revelations, this is a major contribution to the secret history of the twentieth century. Among the topics and revelations explored are: The KGB's covert operations in the United States and throughout the West, some of which remain dangerous today. KGB files on Oswald and the JFK assassination that Boris Yeltsin almost certainly has no intention of showing President Clinton. The KGB's attempts to discredit civil rights leader in the 1960s, including its infiltration of the inner circle of a key leader. The KGB's use of radio intercept posts in New York and Washington, D.C., in the 1970s to intercept high-level U.S. government communications. The KGB's attempts to steal technological secrets from major U.S. aerospace and technology corporations. KGB covert operations against former President Ronald Reagan, which began five years before he became president. KGB spies who successfully posed as U.S. citizens under a series of ingenious disguises, including several who attained access to the upper echelons of New York society.

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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.

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.

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