

## books today

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## A look behind the shadowy cloak of intelligence

## The Shadow Warriors

OSS and the Origins of the CIA

By BRADLEY F. SMITH  
Basic Books, \$20.75

Reviewed by ALBERT PARRY

This is a needed book on an important historical subject, but its subtitle's second part is misleading. My guess is that "the Origins of the CIA," was the publisher's ploy, not the author's intent. Books on the CIA sell better than those on the OSS.

It may well be that the average American does not even know what the letters "OSS" meant. Nor does he know that the Office of Strategic Services, "Wild Bill" Donovan's creation, did not win World War II but that it did help; and that long before the war's end Donovan tried his wily best to assure for his vital intelligence and dirty-tricks edifice a post-bellum continuation but failed. Only in his work's last few pages does Smith properly tackle the question of the extent to which the OSS, abolished by President Harry S. Truman in September 1945, was restored in the July 1947 establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency. Otherwise, throughout some 400 pages of the book's bulk, the reader has to search for the answer by implication rather than in Smith's outright discussion.

SURELY, many of the OSS motives and methods inevitably survived in the CIA. But as a Bronx friend of mine used to say (on another theme), the OSS was "a horse from a different garage." Donovan, along with his staunch admirer President Franklin D. Roosevelt, early and late firmly believed that the Nazis' persistent successes were due to their fifth-column tactics no less than to their naked military fist and that we had to fight this insidious fire with similar flames. At the war's close Donovan, together with many others, believed that the defeated Nazis would duck underground, and not in Germany's ruins alone, but the world over. So the OSS would have to struggle on and on for years to come. Its above-the-ground branch, the splendid Research and Analysis report writers, mostly academics, also had to be perpetuated.

But with the Nazis done for decisively, the Cold War brought forth a different enemy, craftier and truly more global. Our allies were less united, less stout-hearted. The whole world was different, difficult, not with us. Still, Donovan thought his weapons, with but a few alterations, would do as well against Stalin as they had done against the Axis. Many in the West shared his belief, even though some realized more intelligently than he did the new vast odds and the need

for new and better methods of struggle.

IN LIGHT OF his belief and this support, how come he failed as his curtain descended in September 1945? The reasons were:

Even before FDR's death that fateful April, the president and the shadow-warrior-in-chief had not been as close as before. Still friendly, yes, but with no such ready access for Wild Bill to the Oval Office as before. In 1944-45 Roosevelt was tired, ailing, preoccupied, with no more sparkle in his eye for his friend's dreams and schemes. Too, by then the White House had no stomach to counter the anti-Donovan storms raised by the jealous J. Edgar Hoover and such extreme right-wingers as Col. Robert R. McCormick and his *Chicago Tribune*, who only pretended that they no longer loved Hitler. These never forgave the glamor and the achievements of Wild Bill, this maverick fellow Republican. And FDR, the supreme politician, keenly sensed the rising tide of power of both the FBI head and the isolationist colonel.

Add to this the sharp competitiveness mounted by the traditional intelligence cadres of the armed forces and the State Department, who from the OSS's very start deeply resented the daring, innovative rival so amply proving their own sturdiness. And all through the war there was the mighty enmity from Gen. Douglas MacArthur and Adm. Chester Nimitz, who, with a few reluctant exceptions, would not allow OSS projects and operatives into their Pacific Ocean bailiwicks. MacArthur in particular feared the OSS as a possible long arm of Washington and FDR (also, at the war's finale, of Truman) interfering with his theater.

Conversely, Gens. Dwight Eisenhower in Europe and Albert Wedemeyer in Southeast Asia were enthusiastic about Donovan and his OSS and urged their postwar retention. This proved to be not enough. Of course, what really finished the famed wartime intelligence-and-sabotage phenomenon was Roosevelt's death. Had he lived, he would have most likely, with a few hems and haws and caveats, reaffirmed his favorite at the helm.

BUT TRUMAN was quite contrary about it all. Not only did he dislike any unsolicited memorandums, so beloved by both FDR and Donovan as their way of instant communication, but he also intensely disliked Wild Bill.

Smith omits this, but Anthony Cave Brown in his recent book *The Last Hero: Wild Bill Donovan* brings out that Donovan and Truman were



"Wild Bill" Donovan, creator of the OSS, vainly sought to have his intelligence organization live on after the end of World War II.

on the outs ever since October 1918, when Wild Bill accused Capt. Truman of not bolstering with his Missouri artillery Donovan's celebrated Fighting Irish in the 69th New York Regiment in their attack against the Kaiser's troops. The Irish won the battle, but their losses were heavy, and Wild Bill openly faulted Truman. The new president must have remembered this well when on Sept. 20, 1945 he signed the order to dissolve the OSS, to quote Smith, "without hesitation or discussion."

And yet, Donovan proved to be right. Despite all the backbitings and, above all, the suspicions that America would get a "permanent Gestapo," the need for a centralized, sophisticated intelligence service was clear once the Cold War heated up. Thus the emergence of the CIA in July 1947, blessed by the very same Truman.

Granting that the foe was different and far more difficult to wrestle, and noting that the old era was over, thousands of academics, lawyers, businessmen and other former civilians were leaving their shadow-warrior posts "in droves" (Smith's words) already in the months of May to August 1945, returning to their campuses, law offices, banks, factories and

farms. From 1947 on, the mass of the CIA personnel, both in Washington and in the field, were a completely new crop.

ONLY AT the very top, were such former sub-chiefs as Allen Dulles, Richard Helms and William J. Casey kept on at the CIA with at least some of the policies and methods of Wild Bill's legendary years.

For more than a decade, till his final illness and death (Feb. 8, 1959, at 76), Donovan was honored, consulted, sent on sundry missions (largely meaningless), and lauded by even some of his old ill-wishers — no longer was he a rival and a menace to them. Even Smith (who, unlike Brown, views Donovan as no hero) calls Wild Bill "brilliant" though "impulsive," also "a prophetic observer" with a "fertile and perceptive mind," even if a poor administrator.

This last, in my opinion based on my personal experience in the service, is entirely unwarranted. With his undoubted charisma, his men's and women's phenomenal loyalty to him and to the OSS, Donovan knew how to let his mammoth staff do their duty quite untrammelled. Smith praises these thousands, calling them "in-

spired amateurs . . . overwhelmingly idealistic," who "believed in what they were doing, and were confident in their ability to do it . . . not an organization of doubters or nay-sayers but something more akin to a cross between a Rotary Club and Moral Rearmament." To my mind, in choosing them or trusting his closest aides to choose them from among the numerous volunteers, and then letting them do their stint, Wild Bill showed himself an excellent administrator indeed.

Smith has his reservations for Donovan but hardly any for FDR. And yet, it was Donovan whom Roosevelt summoned to the White House right after the news of Pearl Harbor had thundered — that very day! — and supported him and his OSS all through the war. And if FDR, so infallible in Smith's appraisal, thus picked Donovan, we must conclude that Wild Bill and the OSS were after all a bit of all right.

ONE OF THE book's weaknesses is that Smith pooch-pooches the FDR-Donovan fear of the Nazi fifth-column work behind our lines. My own experience convinces me that there was no Trojan Horse activity in our country even before Pearl Harbor — this was the aid to Hitler rendered by such demagogues and organizations as Father Coughlin, the Silver Shirts, the America Firsters and the Nazi Bund.

Another misjudgment by Smith is blaming the British, and partly Donovan, for "provoking" the Nazi 1941 drive into Yugoslavia and Greece, thus hurling those countries into "four years of hell." Smith somehow forgets that this Hitler move forced him to postpone his Barbarossa blow against the Soviet Union from May to late June, the month's delay exposing his troops near Moscow to the rigors and disasters of their first Russian winter. The move into the Balkans also stretched Hitler's hordes unduly for four long years, nailed down by the Yugoslav and Greek guerrillas, so that the Nazis' panzer and other divisions could not be shifted West when sorely needed, especially to Normandy in the crucial summer of 1944.

Chronologically, Smith's book is

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extremely well organized, but this is marred early in the narrative by excessive space given to the 1940 fall of France, also to the endless bureaucratic bickering between the Americans and the British, and among the Americans themselves, all through the war. While the author pays deserved tribute to the idealism, ingenuity and valor of the OSS personnel in general, he gives no accounts of the individual missions behind the Nazi lines, be they successes or failures. Entirely omitted is the tragic story of our team sent to help the Slovak uprising in 1944 when our men (among them a close friend of mine) and some British were captured by the Nazis, and tortured and executed by the Gestapo despite their military uniforms. For this tale, also for the OSS feats with the Italian and Greek resistance, you have to turn to Brown's book.

LAST BUT not least, in Smith's telling, Donovan himself does not emerge to his full height or depth. Thus his extraordinary bravery in the field is barely mentioned (on one occasion of near-capture he was about to swallow the poison capsule held between his lower lip and teeth). His wife and family, his pre-1939 years are not included. For these we must go to Brown who (unlike Smith) had access to many personal Donovan letters, diaries and other such intimate papers.

These failings are somewhat recouped by Smith's remarkable epic of the work of the OSS Research and Analysis branch, headed by Walter Langer, one of Donovan's ablest experts, a service universally acclaimed and still surviving in today's CIA. Also, intricate wartime relations between Donovan and his opposite numbers in the Soviet ally's secret police and intelligence, the dreaded NKVD, are related by Smith well and fairly, certainly better than in any other book on the subject.

And then there are Smith's final pages, in which he argues that "from OSS to the present, shadow warfare . . . is no substitute for basic military and economic strength" of any nation. Would that the author had given more space to this weighty thought!