

Book review of Handbook of Intelligence and Guerrilla Warfare by Alexander Orlov

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM

RELEASE IN FULL

HANDBOOK OF INTELLIGENCE AND GUERRILLA WARFARE. By Alexander Orlov. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 1963. 187 pp. \$4.)

Any observant layman who follows the details of Soviet intelligence operations in the press soon finds that they all have one common factor. Each Soviet operation, wherever mounted and whatever its target, has a single goal--obtaining classified documents from the files of other governments.

The Soviet Government wants documents. It has little interest in opinion, although it will accept the considered judgment of experts who are its agents. It does collect overt information in great quantity also. But its principal interest remains the classified files of other governments. The Soviet regime puts first things first.

Alexander Orlov, a ranking officer of Soviet State Security who commanded the NKVD in Spain until his defection in 1938, drives this point home. It is the principal theme of his book. It is a fact that the American intelligence officer should never forget.

Orlov declares that the purpose of his book is to recreate an espionage handbook that he composed for the Soviets back in 1936. Fortunately for us, however, he has done no such thing. Instead, he has made a survey of Soviet intelligence practice, especially as it relates to the role of the "illegal" or deep-cover agent, using his wide past experience to analyze current Soviet techniques. Could his understanding of the illegal's fears and difficulties in foreign parts derive from his own personal experience? The result is in any case of the greatest value to the layman and quite useful to the intelligence expert. The central theme of Soviet preoccupation with documents, however, remains Orlov's most significant contribution.

This Soviet preoccupation must be impressed on the American intelligence officer, who, in all likelihood, has been overtrained in the relative insignificance of covert information. American students of intelligence work--usually they are scholars and therefore committed to research--take pleasure in stressing that clandestine collection of information plays a rather minor role in the aggregate activity. The finished intelligence product, they say, usually contains not more than ten per cent of clandestine data. Then they try to smooth the

clandestine operator's ruffled feelings by admitting that it is an "important ten per cent" just the same.

In Orlov's opinion, this Western reliance on overt information often leads to unprovable hypotheses and at the worst to wild leaps into the unknown. In contrast to the ten per cent maximum of clandestine intelligence in the American end product, he declares that the Soviet military intelligence service, which does use some overt materials, puts 80 per cent of its effort into secret operations, while Soviet State Security relies entirely on clandestine techniques. Orlov clearly does not approve of American intelligence practices.

Although the book is a contribution to our literature, the intelligence officer will read it with some regret. Few officers who have left the Soviet service can match Orlov's knowledge of its operations, techniques, and personalities. His knowledge of its history and development up to the late thirties is unsurpassed. Because of Stalin's purges and of losses in the war, few men like him who grew up with Soviet intelligence remain. It is unfortunate, therefore, that he avoids giving his American audience any insight into the service during the campaign against Trotskiy and the great purges. His detailed comments on it and its leading personalities during these fateful years would be invaluable. Sensational accounts such as his own *History of Stalin's Secret Crimes* cannot meet this need. The reader will put down the book with the hope that some day Orlov will tell his own experiences and give us the story of Soviet intelligence as he knows it.

The weakest section of this book is the final chapter on guerrilla warfare; here the dated quality of Orlov's information is most clearly shown. His elementary generalizations on guerrilla activity are drawn from personal experience limited to the Russian and Spanish Civil Wars. Soviet guerrilla experience in World War II, which importantly influenced present-day guerrilla doctrine, is covered in only a page or two. Postwar guerrilla activities are not mentioned.

Regrettably the Handbook has neither index nor bibliography.

THE SOVIET HIGH COMMAND: A Military-Political History, 1918-41. By John Erickson. (New York: St. Martin's Press. 1962. 889 pp. \$15.)

When he submitted his manuscript for publication, the author of this

book could not know that approaching events would give it a unique timeliness. One of his principal themes is the basic and continuing conflict between the Soviet armed services and the power complex centering on the state security service. This struggle first developed in the days of Trotsky. It reached dramatic intensity when Marshal Tukhachevskiy fell. Since the second World War the rise and fall of military personalities has revealed discontent in the armed services. Now the treason of Lieutenant Colonel Oleg Penkovskiy has thrown an embarrassing light on the struggle between these forces. Erickson's book permits intelligence officers to study the background and development of this conflict.

The author, who did his research while a Fellow of St. Anthony's College, Oxford, discusses the history of the Soviet army between the outbreak of the Revolution and the German invasion of 1941. This is not a history of Soviet military institutions, but rather a discussion of the impact on the Soviet armed forces of internal politics, international developments, and leading Soviet personalities. Two lengthy chapters are devoted to the military purges of 1937, their immediate causes, and their complex effects on Soviet and world affairs. Indeed, the theme of the purges, their origins, and their effect on Soviet military policy are a major element of the book. Although he cannot fully explain the military holocaust (no one can in the present state of our knowledge), Erickson performs a useful service in summarizing the events of 1937-1938, stripping away some of the more improbable interpretations of events, and placing the purge in the perspective of its time. This perspective helps us to understand the developments of the Penkovskiy affair.

Posted: May 08, 2007 07:54 AM