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KGB: Multinational Corporation of Espionage

The New KGB: Engine of Soviet Power

By William R. Corson and
Robert T. Crowley
Morrow \$19.95 560 pages

Reviewed by
Arnold Beichman

The theme of this latest book on the Soviet secret police by two former officers in U.S. intelligence is stated in the introduction:

"[T]here can be no rational analysis of the Soviet state that omits consideration of the overwhelming authority of the Soviet secret police — the secret that drives the engine of Soviet power."

If proof is needed of that opinion, one need but remember that the head of the Soviet KGB for 15 years, Yuri V. Andropov, became in 1982 head of the Soviet Communist Party and then head of the Soviet state, an event until then without precedent in Soviet history.

Stalin used to eat his secret police chiefs for breakfast, and it wasn't much different in the post-Stalin era. Lavrenti Beria was assassinated by his Politburo colleagues, and several of his successors were ousted in disgrace. With Mr. Andropov's accession to the top spot in the KGB, all that changed.

Every institution in the U.S.S.R. serves Soviet intelligence, whether foreign or domestic. And that goes as well for the Soviet Institute for the Study of the United States and Canada, whose head, the ineffable "disinformationist" Georgi Arbatov, is so admired by leading American foreign policy academicians.

The KGB (and its predecessors) was feared by Stalin because of the

possibility that, like the Red Army, it might become an *imperium in imperio*, a state within a state. Today the KGB is the *imperium*. It makes totalitarianism work at home and prepares the way for Soviet conquest abroad. And if anything, the KGB will be strengthened by the selection of Mikhail Gorbachev as Soviet party leader.

Much in this book can be found in earlier studies of the KGB and its precursors, from the volume by David Dallin to the continuously updated work by John Barron. However, it does no harm to have the story repeated at a time when:

- There have never been so many Americans awaiting trial for espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union.
- Some 4 million people are handling classified information.
- The number of Soviet agents in the United States, both legal and illegal, both active and "sleepers," has never been greater.
- The United States government's counter-intelligence services are still suffering from the blitzkrieg directed against them in the mid-1970s by the Church and Pike Committees.

Read for sheer pleasure, "The New KGB" contains some excellent stories. Those about Isaac Don Levine, a journalist who became one of the best-informed probers into Soviet intelligence, especially come to mind, as does the summary of how former West German

Chancellor Willy Brandt was suborned by an agent of the KGB-run East German secret police.

There is a first-rate analysis of a phenomenon only now being recognized by students of intelligence: the use by the KGB of surrogate intelligence services. In fact, say the authors, the KGB might be regarded as a kind of multinational corporation, because it has incorporated the East European intelligence agencies, as branch plants, into its worldwide espionage network. Satellite police agencies, each specializing in a particular espionage task, are now routinely entrusted with KGB missions.

Whether this operational doctrine could prove a weakness to the KGB has yet to be determined. However, continued study of what has been called "the orchestration of Soviet proxy assets" is essential in learning how to confront the KGB, undoubtedly the most powerful and most dangerous intelligence agency in the world today.

Arnold Beichman, visiting scholar at the Hoover Institution, recently participated in a Washington conference on Soviet surrogate intelligence operations. He is a founding member of the Consortium for the Study of Intelligence.