



Mi6: Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service

Stephen Dorril

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M16, Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, is one of the great information-gathering organizations of the world, internationally renowned as the employer of the mythical but emblematic James Bond. Yet it has remained one of the nation's most elusive organizations. Its head, Richard Dearlove, is virtually unknown -- a contemporary photograph has never appeared in the press -- and even its true budget is not made public. There is no legal "right to know" what is undertaken abroad in the name of Britain's security, what it costs or how it is run. In the past, any dissident reports of its operations were effectively quashed. To write about M16 risks harassment and prosecution, as former members and current commentators know to their cost, and the organization has remained veiled from scrutiny. Its inside story has never been told. Until now. Stephen Dorril, a meticulous observer and chronicler of the security services, provides a full fifty-year history for the first time, offering the most complete portrait ever of M16's motives and character and, crucially, what it has done and where it has been most influential. At the beginning of the Cold War, Britain was a global power literally dividing up the world. By 1992, influence abroad had been lost in the Middle East, most of Africa and large swathes of Asia. Even in Europe, Britain seemed exiled and isolated. What had M16 been doing? M16's postwar activities were mired in prewar attitudes and practices, at home in the exclusive clubs of Pall Mall but poorly suited to a retreating post-imperial power. Britain's management of the Cold War was in the itching hands of a mixture of frustrated former members of the wartime Special Operations Executive, desperate for active military engagements, anxious reactionaries and a few socialist devotees for whom communism was the future and spying the career of choice.

This is the first operational history of M16, the first look at the organization in action. With a level of detail unparalleled in the annals of British intelligence, Dorril chronicles the fascinating history from 1949 to the current day. Replete with tales of its most spectacular failures, stirring successes, unsavory plots and bizarre missions, the real-life cloak-and-dagger world is exposed. From the grisly truth about Operation Stalin, which exploited the Russian dictator's paranoia and led to the execution of thousands, to the tunnel M16 dug beneath the Berlin wall to the recruitment methods, training programs and space-age gadgetry of the modern spy, this definitive history has it all.

M16 is a vital, essential arm of the British state. It is Britain's player at the chessboard of international intelligence-gathering and a key partner to America's superpower status. Dorril's is a searching story of the characters and situations in which the games have been played, from the back streets of Aden to the Brandenburg Gate, the mountains of Albania to the shores of the Black Sea. This is a discreet and riveting history of half a century of international political intriguing, spying and thuggery -- all in the name of intelligence.

Mi6: Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service Details

Date : Published June 8th 2000 by Free Press (first published May 2000)

ISBN : 9780743203791

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Format : Hardcover 880 pages

Genre : Spy Thriller, Espionage, History, Nonfiction, Reference, Research

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Mister Responsible says

Fascinating. I hadn't read much about espionage before, and this book was a very interesting view into how it all worked in past situations.

Tone says

Can't wait until I'm done. It's not very exciting to read and I'm already past the halfway mark. I assumed it would be really fascinating but so far, it's a dud. I'll be offloading this at the local Goodwill when I'm done.

Clayton Brannon says

Comprehensive book well worth the time to read. After reading I look forward to finding more of his works that will continue the story into the 21st century. Should be fascinating to read how he explains events like September 11th 2001 attacks on World Trade Centers and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq along with general deterioration and instability in the Middle East.

Dave says

A heavy book this rich with facts, names and dates. It feels like a text-book, which it probably is. I found it pretty well impenetrable and to be honest gave up reading it about half way.
