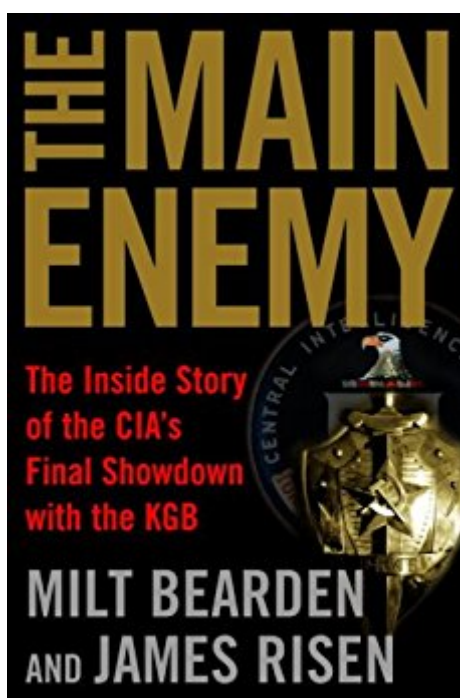


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The Main Enemy: The Inside Story Of The CIA's Final Showdown With The KGB



Synopsis

A landmark collaboration between a thirty-year veteran of the CIA and a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, *The Main Enemy* is the dramatic inside story of the CIA-KGB spy wars, told through the actions of the men who fought them. Based on hundreds of interviews with operatives from both sides, *The Main Enemy* puts us inside the heads of CIA officers as they dodge surveillance and walk into violent ambushes in Moscow. This is the story of the generation of spies who came of age in the shadow of the Cuban missile crisis and rose through the ranks to run the CIA and KGB in the last days of the Cold War. The clandestine operations they masterminded took them from the sewers of Moscow to the back streets of Baghdad, from Cairo and Havana to Prague and Berlin, but the action centers on Washington, starting in the infamous "Year of the Spy"--when, one by one, the CIA's agents in Moscow began to be killed, up through to the very last man. Behind the scenes with the CIA's covert operations in Afghanistan, Milt Bearden led America to victory in the secret war against the Soviets, and for the first time he reveals here what he did and whom America backed, and why. Bearden was called back to Washington after the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan and was made chief of the Soviet/East European Division just in time to witness the fall of the Berlin Wall, the revolutions that swept across Eastern Europe, and the implosion of the Soviet Union. Laced with startling revelations--about fail-safe top-secret back channels between the CIA and KGB, double and triple agents, covert operations in Berlin and Prague, and the fateful autumn of 1989--*The Main Enemy* is history at its action-packed best. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

At 536 pages, this reads like a novel covering the years 1985-1992, from CIA spy-versus-KGB spy, to Berlin Wall removal and USSR breakup, which dissolves the KGB. With Bearden as the CIA inside man and Risen as the journalist filling in gaps and KGB insiders filling in on the Russian side this book is difficult to put down. Traitors defect from both sides until there is little accomplished and both sides are tuning into CNN to get updates to the Russian collapse in early 1990's. Describing the 9 year Russian debacle in Afghanistan, along with US and Pakistan involvement is a major part of the book and also a major reason for Russia's bankruptcy. Bearden describes in some detail with real names how the CIA and KGB ran spies, dead drops, recruitment of opposing agents and a lot of other detail in the spy game. The biggest disappointment is how long it took to find the three main US traitors, Aldrich Ames, Robert Hanssen and Edward Howard with a fourth possible still unknown.

I do understand that this book had to be vetted by the CIA and so therefore it probably omits things that are still considered to be classified. That being said, I found it to be thoroughly interesting. If nothing else I came away with the impression that the CIA and KGB were like opposing football teams that beat the bejeezus out of each other on the field and yet have great respect for each other. I was also surprised to see how much communication there could be between the two. While they might have seen each other as mortal enemies, they also behaved with each other on the basis of professionalism. Whether or not it really was that way, I don't know. But that's the impression this book left with me. All-in-all, I recommend this book to anyone who wants a glimpse into how the CIA really operated. I give it 4 stars instead of 5 simply because I suspect that some things need be left unsaid.

Rarely can an autobiographic author get out of their own way and accept some help. It is also rare that a co-author, even a knowledgeable one can preserve the authenticity of the stories participants. The authors were able to accomplish both in this story. They used good judgement as to the right

level of detail to promote understanding without becoming tedious. I am not in the intelligence field, but I was able to appreciate the characters and stories. The authors seemed to resist the urge to sensationalize, be too proud or too humble in a way that would reduce their credibility. If the topic is of interest, I highly recommend this book. I would liken it to a Michael Shaara work in the sense that it is factual, but reads like a novel.

This is an excellent work...almost too good! It seems that at the end of the Cold War, CIA rather naively agreed to the publishing of this book - which features operational details which had they been written about only 5 years earlier, would have earned a jail sentence. I couldn't help thinking as I turned its pages that the SVR/FSB also really enjoyed reading this book - heck, they even allowed Bearden to use the digraph/crypts of the assets! like GTTophat, etc. Apparently Bearden was one of those officers who sort of "lost it" at the end of the Cold War - a professional, Russian speaking officer that suddenly became a polyanna type the minute the Cold War ended.....The Russians were going to be our friends, kumbaya.....I guess he kind of ignored about 1000 years of Russian history. And now, of course, we have seen the reversion to the mean with good old Russia.....

This is what appears to be an extremely authentic and insightful look at the last decades of the struggle between Russian and American intelligence. The author writes with authority and conviction in an engaging manner that makes this book a very enjoyable read. Overall, one comes away from this one with the impression that the KGB somewhat edged out the CIA in terms of competence, but that the CIA, as the author says, at the end of the day was "good enough" to protect America until the Soviet system imploded. Both agencies penetrated the other at various times, but the KGB, with Aldrich Ames within the CIA and Robert Hanssen within the FBI, appears to have gotten the better of the CIA. Nonetheless the CIA was not without its victories, although many "KGB turncoats" turned out to be double agents who fed the CIA disinformation. The author is particularly engaging when writing about the US effort to subvert the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, and the final days of the Soviet Union. In Afghanistan the Soviets learned in full why that country has been termed "the graveyard of Empires." (A lesson America is learning today.) We learn that when the East Bloc and Soviet systems came to their abrupt ends that American intelligence did not see it coming and neither did the Soviets. The Soviet system was apparently appallingly weak economically and no longer able to bear the burdens of a corrupt inefficient economy, aid to Soviet satellite states, and irrationally high military expenditures. The CIA should doubtless have understood this better but did not. One ominous conclusion of the author is that

Hanssen and Ames were not the only Russian moles within American intelligence. He believes that there were others who were never found and thus may be in place today. I deprived this excellent piece of one star because of its chaotic organization. It jumps from event to event in abrupt style, switching between first and third person in an occasionally confusing manner. Nonetheless, this is a good read that those interested in international espionage should not miss. Recommended. RJB.

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