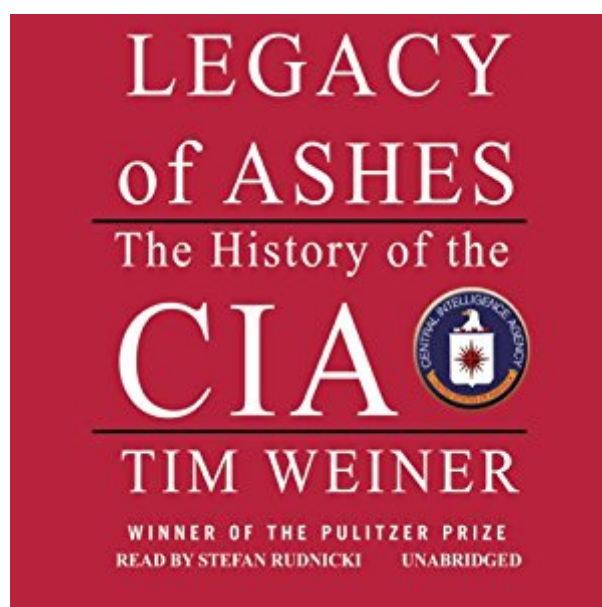


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Legacy Of Ashes: The History Of The CIA



Synopsis

This is the book the CIA does not want you to read. For the last sixty years, the CIA has maintained a formidable reputation in spite of its terrible record, never disclosing its blunders to the American public. It spun its own truth to the nation while reality lay buried in classified archives. Now, Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times reporter Tim Weiner offers a stunning indictment of the CIA, a deeply flawed organization that has never deserved America's confidence. *Legacy of Ashes* is based on more than 50,000 documents, primarily from the archives of the CIA. Everything is on the record. There are no anonymous sources, no blind quotations. With shocking revelations that will make headlines, Tim Weiner gets at the truth and tells how the CIA's failures have profoundly jeopardized our national security. --This text refers to the MP3 CD edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As Tim Weiner makes clear in the first pages of this book, the driving force for the creation of CIA was to establish a clearing house where all intelligence information available to the U.S. could collated, vetted, and organized into coherent knowledge. And as he also makes clear this mission was subverted and overshadowed from the start by the culture of the veterans of the WWII Office of Strategic Services (OSS) who dominated the early CIA. These veterans were far more comfortable with covert action and clandestine collection of intelligence than desk bound intelligence analysis. So from the time of its creation to the present, the Directorate of Intelligence (analytic shop) has existed in the shadow of the Directorate of Operations (DO). Virtually every CIA Director from the

beginning has focused on one or all of the following: initiating DO operations; cleaning up messes left by DO operations; or reorganizing the DO to do a better job. This book is a case in point. Although ostensibly about CIA as an institution, the book really focuses on DO and its alleged failures. This fascination with the DO by journalists, Presidents, and CIA Directors has allowed the analytic arm of CIA to atrophy from almost the very first. Yet the many failures and embarrassments that Weiner has chosen to chronicle in this book are as much the fault of DI as DO. Now this book is essentially a massive and well written critique of CIA and especially the DO. For the most part it is pretty accurate, but as CIA has pointed out in a rather pitiful rebuttal of the book, it is not entirely fair and balanced. For example, in 1998 India exploded a nuclear weapon to the utter surprise and amazement of the entire U.S. Intelligence Community (IC).

The incident which gives this book its title reveals something essential about its tone and direction. At the end of his two - terms of office President Eisenhower called into his office, the former legendary OSS officer and director of the CIA Allen Dulles, and said to him point- blank. " After eight years you have left me , a "legacy of ashes." In other words the institution whose task it was to provide vital intelligence to the U.S. Executive on world - affairs had not done its job. Eisenhower was concerned about what legacy would be handed on to his successor, President Kennedy. And surely enough some months later 'The Bay of Pigs' fiasco occurred in great part because of the faulty plan and information provided by the CIA's Richard Bissell. Bissell believed an infiltrating semi- Army of 1600 would easily defeat Castro's sixty- thousand troops. The result was the Kennedy Administration's first major disaster. The two - sides of Intelligence work, the gathering of information, and the undertaking of covert operations are generously surveyed in this work. Weiner a long- time reporter for the NY Times devoted twenty- years to this book, and in the course of it read through fifty- thousand declassified CIA Intelligence documents. He also interviewed ten former directors of the CIA. He points out errors made all along the way. Frank Wisner at the beginning ignored 'intelligence gathering' and sent during the Korean War thousands of hired agents to suicidal behind- the- enemy- lines operations. In the Bay of Pigs fiasco and in numerous other operations the CIA instead of providing hard, truthful contradictory analysis essentially worked to politically support a prior decision of the Executive branch. Speaking 'truth to power' has not been its essential strong point.

As a conservative I picked this book up expecting another liberal hit piece against the people who keep us safe. Surprisingly enough I was impressed by the appearance of objectivity of the author.

Using primary sources and countless interviews from former employees and CIA directors the author tells a story of the CIA that is quite alarming. As the title indicates this is about the failures of the CIA since its inception following WWII. What we learn is that right from the beginning the CIA deviated from its intended mission: collecting accurate intelligence to aid policy makers and the president. Instead the CIA began on a track of attempting to be a cloak and dagger agency; getting involved with political assassination, swinging foreign elections, aiding coups, and sabotage. Though the original minds and spies at the CIA were bold and wanted to penetrate the USSR and subvert the global spread of communism, their track record of success is pitiful. In the business of national security good intentions can be deadly. Results preserve peace and the CIA did not deliver when it mattered. The book is a chronology of its failed missions and almost criminal negligence in its expenditure of men and money. The CIA was created to stop another Pearl Harbor and 9/11 and it failed...miserably. This book explains how. Sure there were some successes but they were few and far between and this book explains them well. Some of book between Korea and Vietnam were a tad long winded but it's important for the book. Some key points of interest were how the CIA interpreted the JFK assassination (not to spoil it) but it's obvious they weren't involved; they weren't that good! George H.W. Bush is still regarded as a CIA favorite director despite not really doing too much.

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