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The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence

Victor Marchetti, John D. Marks

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What is the CIA really up to? What does it do and why? No other element of the U.S. government is so lapped in mystery, no other is quite so plainly self-willed and independently powerful. And in the end, no other represents quite such a threat to our long-treasured democratic principles. Never before had there been a book about the CIA that laid bare the facts so explicitly and with such absolute anthority. Victor Marchetti spent 14 years in the CIA, much of the time as a high-ranking officer. Co-author John Marks learned about the agency and intelligence procedures while working in the State Department. Their experience and knowledge give this book its authenticity and make incontestable its basic thesis: that an obsession with clandestine operations - illegal, even immoral interference in the internal affairs of other countries (and in some cases our own) - has largely supplanted the agency's original and proper mission of supervising, coordinating, and processing of intelligence. Many of the details reported for the first time in this book will surprise and probably shock. What surprises remain hidden in the sections censored out? Nevertheless, the real significance of The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence lies not in these startling revelations, but in the wholly convincing picture it gives of a giant, costly organization running wild, altogether free from supervision and accountability. Soberly, comprehensively, the authors anatomize the Agency - its structure, its huge budgets, its functions and personnel - and show how it has, shielded by self-serving (and frequently self-invented) rules of secrecy, built for itself a covert empire capable of stifling, with depressing efficiency, every serious attempt at outside control: by Congress, by various Presidents (who admittedly found the agency useful as a kind of private army, and still do), and by the press. There can be only one reason why the CIA tried to censor this book: it tells the truth about the CIA.

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