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they are unable to articulate why. They do, however, understand that "nation-time" really means "Jesse Jackson time."

His personal power has come from his oratory, bordering on eloquence at times, as shown at the 1984 Democratic convention before a national television audience. This was perhaps Jackson's greatest moment to date. As a black populist politician, disguised as a man of the cloth for effect, he finds power and strength in the spoken word. But, as the authors imply and one might observe independently, Jackson would increase his worth to all concerned if he were more open and consistent, talked less, and shed his anti-Semitism.

The grand scope of this unforgettable book encompasses not only the poignant

tale of the ambiguous and ambitious, often deceptive, always-the-politician Jesse Jackson, but also the deepest feelings of many African American people and our never-ending quest for equality before the law, which is now nearly attained. More important, however, is *liberty*—which is not equality, but freedom. Apparently, Jesse Jackson and thousands have not made the distinction and therefore don't know the difference.

It is an absorbing, compelling book of a secretive man with a strange mission. It is a stunning peek at a brilliant and troubled man, a book hard to put down and certain to linger in the reader's mind. Using the time-honored cliché of book reviewers... this book must be read.

Richard Boddie is a public speaker and writer.

Looking in on Our Spies

By Jonathan Marshall

A World of Secrets: The Uses and Limits of Intelligence, by Walter Laqueur
New York: Basic Books, 404 pages, \$21.95

Don't look for *A World of Secrets* in the potboiler paperback section of your local newsstand; try the textbook section of a university bookstore. Its hero isn't James Bond; it's the anonymous analyst who sifts a myriad of clues to estimate the size of the next Soviet wheat harvest and its impact on world gold prices.

Walter Laqueur, a professor of modern history at Georgetown University, doesn't aim to capture the headlines with scandalous new revelations. He is neither a crusader, a muckraker, nor an insider. As a scholar, instead, he tries to illuminate the complex relationship between intelligence and policy, knowledge and action. Though he emphasizes the pathologies of intelligence—when and why it fails, and when and why policymakers fail to heed it—his sympathies remain always with the obscure men and women who labor to predict the future and make sense of the present.

But his weighty tone and scholarly apparatus disguise too many important oversights and unjustified ideological pronouncements masquerading as factual conclusions. Though often well documented and cogently argued, Laqueur's work may mislead readers unfamiliar with the terrain.

His first aim is to demythologize agencies of the government that sensation-

alist exposés have turned into mysterious citadels of power. "Far from being an invisible government," Laqueur writes, "far even from wielding great influence in the councils of state, intelligence has frequently been disregarded or ignored by decision makers." Thus Stalin was taken utterly by surprise when Hitler's armies invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, despite dozens of reports predicting the coming onslaught. Israeli leaders, convinced of their superiority, simply rejected intelligence warnings of an impending Egyptian attack in 1973. And when CIA director Richard Helms tried to alert the White House in 1968 to the imminent Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, "he was dismissed as an alarmist."

Why do governments pay billions of dollars for intelligence analysis, only to let the process fail? Laqueur points accusingly to bureaucratic sloth, administrative flux, too much compartmentalization of information on a "need-to-know" basis, an overabundance of data, the desire of decisionmakers to interpret raw data themselves, and political pressure to shape conclusions to fit existing policy or views. Policymakers hear what they want and disregard the rest.

Laqueur mentions only in passing what could have been his best illustration of the distortion of intelligence to suit

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bureaucratic imperatives: the corruption of military intelligence during the Vietnam War. At the 1985 Westmoreland-CBS libel trial, for example, the senior officer charged with estimating enemy strength in 1967 testified that his superiors ordered him to conform to "ridiculously low" official figures. General Westmoreland's reaction to contrary estimates, he declared, "included statements like 'What will I tell the president? What will I tell the Congress? What will be the reaction of the press to these high figures?'" That deception had a profound impact on the course of the war. Though the Tet offensive in Vietnam ended in a Communist defeat, it took the American public, conditioned by optimistic military estimates, by surprise and opened the credibility gap too wide to close.

More serious than any omissions in Laqueur's account, however, are the distortions in his analysis of intelligence breakdowns. Sometimes he even fails to convince that any such breakdown took place. He asserts that "American intelligence in general, and the CIA in particular, had underestimated Soviet ICBM deployment from 1962 onward." His evidence shows no such thing; rather, they underestimated long-range future deployments. The difference is important. His statement implies, quite wrongly, the CIA's inability to count existing Soviet ICBM forces—a capability critical to the success of any future arms-control agreement.

Laqueur would also have us believe that the CIA gullibly believed Soviet ICBMs in the 1960s "were neither accurate nor reliable enough to threaten the hardened silos in which the Minuteman and Titan II forces were deployed." The reader looks in vain for any evidence that the CIA was substantially wrong. The most-recent Air Force and CIA estimates indicate that even late-model SS-18 and SS-19 missiles, far more accurate than the SS-9s of that era, cannot pull off a high-confidence attack against our land-based silos.

When Laqueur does cite evidence, it doesn't always support the intended conclusion. In 1975, he notes, the CIA found reason to double its ruble estimate of Soviet military spending. "This new information made it clear that the Soviet aim was not parity but superiority," he claims. Yet elsewhere he admits that the new estimate "did not affect its appraisal on the size or capabilities of Soviet military forces." In fact, the CIA concluded

that Soviet military production was much less efficient than formerly believed. In total spending, moreover, the Warsaw Pact has always lagged behind NATO—hardly a case of Soviet "superiority." (Of course, the Soviets do have some geostrategic and organizational advantages that make them a serious potential threat to Western Europe.)

Ideology rather than sound scholarship seems to influence many of Laqueur's conclusions. How else can one account for his claim that "the more intelligent [Soviet] young men and women—those of character and integrity—will look for a career outside the KGB, and usually as far away from politics as humanly possible"? You don't have to admire the thuggish and unscrupulous KGB to believe that it is not staffed only by dolts. Since when are character and integrity synonymous with brains, anyway?

Similar ideological dispositions may explain his exclusive focus on bureaucratic foibles to discredit the notion of an invisible government. "I will examine intelligence analysis," he announces, "not covert action, counterintelligence, propaganda, disinformation, or other such topics." Yet those are the very functions that gave rise to the popular term "invisible government" in the first place.

From Laqueur's sanitized account, you'd never know that the CIA sent mercenaries into the Congo, bought journalists and news agencies, directed suicide missions in Cuba, consorted with mobsters, and parachuted SS veterans trained as guerrilla warriors into the Soviet Union. When he does allude to such sensational activities, his account deceives by omission. His glancing mention of "CIA ventures into the field of pharmacology" takes no note of the Technical Service Division's involvement in developing undetectable poisons (including one introduced unsuccessfully into the Congo to kill Patrice Lumumba) and mind-altering drugs (which led to the death of at least one unwitting subject) and in exploring the potential for using "Manchurian candidate"-like assassins, with unwitting dupes drugged by secret agents and then instructed to carry out assassinations.

Such activities are relevant even to Laqueur's narrow focus. No full analysis of bureaucratic influence on intelligence gathering can fail to note the potential conflict of interest posed by the CIA's dual missions of intelligence and covert action. Did not the CIA's commitment to overthrowing Fidel Castro affect its perception of his domestic unpopularity

at the time of the Bay of Pigs invasion? Of the link between the two, Laqueur acknowledges only that the shortage of "talented personnel" in intelligence may stem from "the effort (that) had gone into training operators, rather than analysts."

Instead of exposing "a world of secrets," Laqueur illuminates one corner of the espionage community. His account may have value as a balance to the CIA-as-the-source-of-all-evil literature. As a scholarly analysis, however, it lacks sufficient breadth or objectivity to rise above the pack.

Jonathan Marshall is editorial pages editor of the Oakland Tribune and a long-time follower of intelligence matters.

■ **A Country Such As This**, by James Webb, New York: Doubleday (hardcover); Bantam Books, 588 pages, \$3.95 (paper). Born in the mid-'50s, I have many childhood and adolescent memories tinged by images of the Vietnam era—nightly scenes of combat and body counts on the evening news, student protests, funerals for local boys not much older than myself, and many more. On my 18th birthday, I dutifully registered for both the right to vote and the draft, although the selective service system had sent out its last notices two years before. Perhaps as a result of being so close to the turbulence without actually being a part of it, I have always had difficulty in forming a clear understanding of the forces and events that strained the ties of American society more than any time since the Civil War. I suspect that there are many others—probably both older and younger than I—who share the problem.

James Webb's recent novel, *A Country Such As This*, goes a long way toward making sense of the Vietnam-era maelstrom. Webb, currently assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs, was one of America's most-decorated Vietnam veterans—earning the Navy Cross, the Silver Star, two Bronze medals for valor, and two Purple Hearts—before returning to graduate from Georgetown University's law school and write his first book, the Pulitzer-nominated *Fields of Fire*.

In *A Country Such As This*, Webb explores the 25 years between 1951 and 1976 through the lives of four graduates of the US Naval Academy (from which