

Operation Rollback: America's Secret War Behind the Iron Curtain

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Author: Frank Bourgholtzer
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Operation Rollback: America's Secret War Behind the Iron Curtain By Peter Grose Houghton Mifflin, 2000 320 pages; \$25.00

Seven little words in the July 1947 edition of Foreign Affairs described the basic concept of a proposal for a U.S. foreign policy initiative to roll back the "Iron Curtain."

Curiously, the true meaning of the proposal was misunderstood by almost everyone who read the article--both on the hawkish right and the New Deal left--and the initiative was history by the time the American people became aware that it had even existed.

Peter Grose, a former New York Times correspondent and editor of Foreign Affairs, has carefully assembled all the elements, pro and con, good and bad, of the endeavor that came to be nicknamed "Operation Rollback." To write his book, Grose made use of both Russian and American declassified documents, interviews with participants, and the many books and articles that had already been written on the subject.

The 1947 Foreign Affairs article carried the byline "X." But it was common knowledge that "X" was the State Department expert on Soviet affairs, George Frost Kennan, who was about to become head of the newly created "Policy and Planning Staff."

Kennan wrote that U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union "must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies." He went on to specify how this policy could be achieved: "Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western world is something that can be contained by"--and here are the vital seven little words--"the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force." This "counter-force," he added, should be applied "at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points."

It doesn't take a Shakespearean scholar to understand that "counter-force" means meeting force with force. But that concept went right over the heads of New Deal liberals, who hailed "containment" as a sensible *modus vivendi* with a former ally, and right-wing conservatives, who railed against what they called "pantywaist diplomacy"--accusing containment of failing to do what Kennan's policy...

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Operation Rollback: America's Secret War Behind the Iron Curtain. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000. ix + 256 pp. \$25 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-395-51606-5. Grose argues that President Truman had apparently been implementing covert operations behind the Iron Curtain long before the terms "rollback" and "liberation" came into vogue under Eisenhower and the Republicans (pp 193-195). In a dilemma somewhat similar to Richard Nixon's in his television debates with John F. Kennedy in 1960, Truman Administration officials could not adequately defend themselves when accused by the Republicans in the 1952 election campaign of being too soft on communism by advocating "mere" containment. To do so would mean revealing class Operation Rollback: America's Secret War behind the Iron Curtain. By Peter Grose. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000). Undermining the Kremlin: America's Strategy to Subvert the Soviet Bloc, 1947-1956. By Gregory Mitrovich. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000). Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. By Arch Puddington. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000). Read the full article here. Kevin J. McNamara. Kevin J. McNamara, an FPRI Associate Scholar, is a former journalist for Calkins Media Inc. and a former aide to U.S. Congressman R. Operation Rollback America's Secret War Behind the Iron Curtain By PETER GROSE Houghton Mifflin. Read the Review. Overture: The Vexing "Mr. X". Forrestal asked him for a further memo clarifying what the thoughts of the Long Telegram meant for America's long-term strategy. Sitting in a northwest corner room at Washington's Fort McNair, hacking away at a typewriter (as he later pictured himself), Kennan churned out a new essay, which, with Forrestal's permission, he submitted to the prestigious New York journal Foreign Affairs. In his latest book, Operation Rollback: America's Secret War Behind the Iron Curtain, Peter Grose recounts the genesis and demise of U.S. counterforce policies in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He is also the author of Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles, a former diplomatic correspondent for the New York Times, and executive editor of Foreign Affairs. Although the book ostensibly covers both the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations up to 1956, it focuses primarily on the 1940s. Grose argues that President Truman had apparently been implementing covert operations behind the Iron