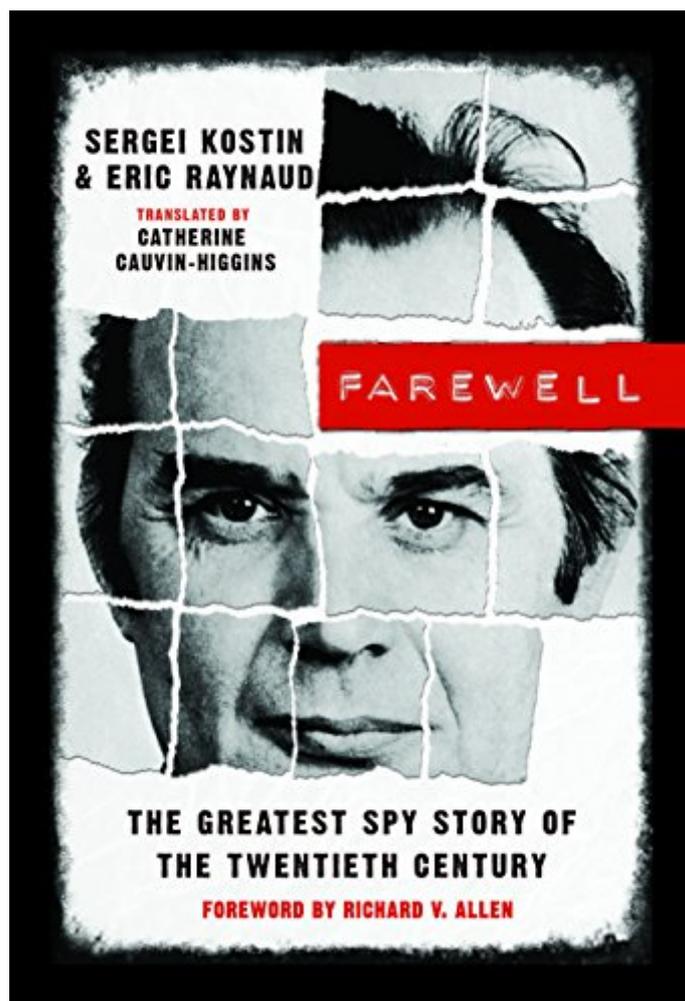


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Farewell: The Greatest Spy Story Of The Twentieth Century



Synopsis

1981. Ronald Reagan and François Mitterrand are sworn in as presidents of the United States and France, respectively. The tension due to Mitterrand's French Communist support, however, is immediately defused when he gives Reagan the Farewell Dossier, a file he would later call "one of the greatest spy cases of the twentieth century." Vladimir Ippolitovitch Vetrov, a promising technical student, joins the KGB to work as a spy. Following a couple of murky incidents, however, Vetrov is removed from the field and placed at a desk as an analyst. Soon, burdened by a troubled marriage and frustrated at a flailing career, Vetrov turns to alcohol. Desperate and needing redemption, he offers his services to the DST. Thus Agent Farewell is born. He uses his post within the KGB to steal and photocopy files of the USSR's plans for the West—all under Brezhnev's nose. Probing further into Vetrov's psychological profile than ever before, Kostin and Raynaud provide groundbreaking insight into the man whose life helped hasten the fall of the Soviet Regime.

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Customer Reviews

"Farewell: The Greatest Spy Story of the Twentieth Century" is an altogether fascinating look at what is perhaps the most important and devastating espionage case of the Cold War era. Written by Russian journalist and espionage expert Sergei Kostin and French screenwriter Eric Raynaud, "Farewell" tells the story of Vladimir Ippolitovich Vetrov, a mid-level KGB officer who was also a spy for the French intelligence service known as the DST. During the years 1981-82, Vetrov, code-named "Farewell" by his French handlers, gave the DST thousands of pages of highly classified documents containing many of the Soviet Union's most closely guarded secrets. The government of France shared this information with its allies, most notably U.S. President Ronald Reagan. Vetrov's information proved invaluable to the West; it included the names of double agents working on behalf of the Soviets, and provided details on the myriad of technological and military secrets that those agents were able to steal from Western sources. Many analysts believe that the information provided by Vetrov enabled Western leaders to make key policy-making decisions that ultimately led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. I really enjoyed the book "Farewell." Authors Kostin and Raynaud certainly packed a tremendous amount of information into the book's 390-plus pages. They tell Vetrov's story in a pretty straightforward manner - how he went from being a young man of great promise, and how he became, in his later years, a disillusioned alcoholic, a philanderer, a murderer, and a traitor to his country. Kostin and Raynaud do an excellent job of both conveying what Vetrov did, and providing a thoughtful, reasoned analysis of why he did it. "Farewell" was originally written in French, and was expertly translated into English by Catherine Cauvin-Higgins. Kostin and Raynaud's clear, concise, and always elegant prose loses none of its power and authoritativeness in the translation. It remains easy to read and understand, and very enjoyable. Highly recommended.

Since this is history, the authors can and do play a bit with what readers can be reasonably expected to know about the period which is the background of this book. There are some unfortunate moments with the language, but it's reasonable for the most part. The pictures of the people were interesting, but pictures of the buildings not always so. But the story of Farewell is more interesting than any Ian Fleming, Tom Clancy, or John le Carré novel. This is real life, not smoothly worked out plot. Not to diminish in any way the achievements of those three novelists, but real life, if given with a great degree of historical accuracy, is always to me more fascinating. But did Farewell really change the course of Western history? Perhaps only when more documents come to light will we know. It's a bit of a slow read, but the time is well spent.

This is a tragic tale, and it explains much of what went on in our own nation's efforts against the Soviet Block in this era. The details on how one man's fall from grace due to the most deadly of sins, pride, reveals how easily an espionage officer's life can take a turn to the worse in one act. This was the time when we came closest to annihilating the globe, and when the option for the Nuclear Football was contemplated by both sides (yes, Russia has one as well, and it is called Cheget). The background of our Star Wars option and how it eventually brought down the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Empire is illuminated through this book. In the end, we see the terrible consequences that one man's choices can bring out.

This is an historical account of Vladimir Vetrov, a Soviet KGB agent who became embittered by the nepotism and corruption of the KGB and began turning over large volumes of classified material to the French security services. The story is interesting on two levels. Geo-politically, it offers insight into the Soviet paranoia regarding the Western powers during the Brezhnev, Kosygin, and Andropov eras leading to the fall of the USSR. If you have watched "The Americans" on FX (or Video), the book is a great companion. Secondly, the authors also assemble from the historical record, a keen insight into Vetrov's mind and complex motivations.

I'm not sure why this book hasn't gotten significantly more press-- it's a jewel. It has all of the makings of a Hollywood plot-- successful, handsome KGB agent marries attractive and athletic Soviet girl. Marriage, disillusionment, adultery on both sides, followed by betrayal, murder and eventual execution of the KGB agent and central character. Nicely describes things in light of the decline of Soviet Russia and the end of the Cold War-- and well describes what life in Russia was like both then and now. As other reviewers have noted, it takes place towards the end of the Cold War, and yes-- I do believe that the Cold War was potentially shortened due to what transpired. This book saddened me-- it's a clinical look at what took place in Soviet Russia, and from what many have told me, what often times still takes place in "new" Russia. Nicely written, beautifully researched and complete-- in my mind, a five-star book that's worth an addition to your library or electronic library.

The nepotism and corruption of the Soviet state bred resentment among the able but non connected generations of comrade citizens in post WWII years. One of them became a self motivated spy for the French intelligence services in the most round about way imaginable. He flourished as a teller of

Soviet defense secrets which the French happily shared with the Reagan administration. It eventually failed and he lost all. Most U.S right wingers never knew how much they owed the French, and still don't.

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