

## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction



Although “open secrets” seems a self-contradictory phrase, it seems also to be good English. My usage is, I think, less subject to criticism than most. In this essay, I will be dealing with some areas in American foreign policy in which the conventional wisdom is not only wrong, but can be disproved from open sources like newspapers. In some cases I will bring in from open sources things that will surprise the “usually well-informed” people, although I will criticize ignorance rather than error.

Like most people, I have been reading about the abysmal historic ignorance of the products of our educational system. Indeed, I have a good example. I wanted to send a letter to Lord Bauer and told my secretary she could send it to the House of Lords. She asked for its address, and somewhat surprised, I said “London” would do. She wanted a Zip and a little further conversation revealed that she had never heard of the institution.

Still, the fact that newspapers carry stories in which they report ignorant answers to historical questions under the apparent impression that most, or at least many, of their readers will know the correct answer is good evidence that the history of our country is not totally a closed book

to many citizens. Although the bulk of this collection deals with foreign policy, in some cases it will deal with domestic matters. Thus, there should be a lot of “well-informed” people who will realize there are holes in their information when they read the further chapters.

I should say that I think these “revelations” have some political relevance, but not much. There will be people who lower their opinion of certain historic figures, but I do not imagine this will shift many votes. Its effect on history books might be somewhat larger, but even there it is merely further revision in periods that have been subject to many revisions. Altogether, I think the main value of this study, like that of most historical writing, is entertainment. Since I enjoy history and read a lot of it, I do not regard that as a criticism.

As far as sources are concerned, except where I have noted otherwise, the reader can confirm my factual information from contemporary newspapers. Where it is drawn from more obscure sources, I have footnoted them. Mainly, however, I suggest the reader trust me or consult the *New York Times Index*. Nothing contained herein will bring the world, or even a political party, to destruction.