

INTO THE BOWELS OF INTELLIGENCE

AN INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS POWERS

by Stuart Schrader

Thomas Powers writes trenchant analyses of a subject many recognize as important but few understand—that enormous realm of government activity defined foremost by its secrecy. Intelligence agencies and their leaders, as well as the relationships between these agencies and presidents, become palpable and comprehensible in his essays and reviews.

Powers' book *Intelligence Wars* is a compilation of his work that is essential reading for anyone interested in the CIA and other intelligence agencies in the United States. Last autumn, I saw him present the essay "The Vanishing Case for War," on the Bush administration's reasons for going to war in Iraq, at the New York Public Library. In the months since its publication, it seems that Mr Powers's findings in this essay have become the conventional wisdom about the flawed and mendacious way President Bush convinced Congress to authorize the war. His most recent review of Richard Perle and David Frum's book *An End to Evil*, called "Tomorrow the World," appears in the March 11, 2004 *New York Review of Books*. I caught up with him over the phone in January.

-Stuart Schrader

Stuart: I would like to start with the topic you discussed at the New York Public Library: the reasons why the Bush administration used faulty intelligence and why the CIA didn't prevent that, or the reasons why the CIA itself was faulty.

Thomas Powers: I think it's pretty clear that the administration determined that it wanted to go to war with Iraq, that it wanted to defeat them militarily, replace Saddam Hussein, occupy the country, and be in charge of establishing the next government. All of those things were part of a determined plan apparently reached early in 2002 by President Bush. In order to do that, they needed a classic cause for war, and the only one that was lying around was the question of weapons of mass destruction, which had been left unresolved when

