

# The deception game;: Czechoslovak intelligence in Soviet political warfare

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THE DECEPTION GAME: CZECHOSLOVAK INTELLIGENCE IN SOVIET POLITICAL WARFARE. By *Ladislav Bittman*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Research Corporation, 1972. xxv, 246 pp. \$9.95.

The profession of spying, one of the oldest vocations, has lost much of its mystery and excitement. Its most important task, collecting secret information, is now performed to a considerable extent by sophisticated electronic devices and depth research. However, its other dimension, dissemination of false materials calculated to weaken the enemy (or victim, as the adversary is called in the intelligence parlance), has assumed a new significance in the psychological warfare of the divided world. Letters and documents are forged and sent to prominent persons or mass media, with the intention of compromising, creating panic, and spreading suspicion among friends and allies. This activity is called "disinformation" or "active intelligence."

The author is fully qualified to impart his knowledge of Czechoslovak and Soviet intelligence work. He served in the Czechoslovak branch for fourteen years, part of them in a high position in D-Department (Department of Disinformation). All activities were closely supervised, and those of special importance were directed by the Soviet Intelligence. Czechoslovaks were probably more engaged than the other Soviet allies. Their network, though mainly spread over West Germany, extended the world over—focused as it was on unmasking such American political designs as overthrow of a left-wing government in Indonesia, support of reactionaries in Brazil, and intrigues in the Congo. It was, indeed, a demanding challenge for a small country with limited financial means, and it was correspondingly valued in Moscow. Together with similar assistance from the other East European services, it represented, in Mr. Bittman's estimation, some 50 percent of the total Soviet intelligence work. Bittman took a leading role in some of these disinformation undertakings. His matter-of-fact, unsensational style in describing them lends credibility to the stories; but then the nature of his activities was not sensational either. The measure of success was the ability to keep forgery undetected. Bittman admits that such cases were rare.

The book throws interesting light on the qualities and qualifications of Czechoslovak agents. The older generation was dogmatic and uneducated; the younger agents were somewhat freer ("liberal") and well trained. Most of those in both groups were tainted with Svejksism and endowed with a sense of humor. Their Soviet counterparts were, in contrast, boringly serious.

The Czechoslovak Spring of 1968 had its effect on the intelligence service. Bittman says that he fully supported the liberalization program. He submitted a proposal for its reorganization, wishing to turn it into an instrument that would serve Czechoslovak national interests and not Moscow's policy. However, the Soviet invasion came, and with it the Soviet Intelligence turned Czechoslovakia into a "victim" country, an object of Soviet-initiated disinformation. Luckily, Bittman was in Vienna during the invasion and escaped to the United States. The American reader is now the beneficiary of his deception-game experiences.

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