

Intelligence in Public Literature

With Friends Like These...The Soviet Bloc's Clandestine War Against Romania (Volume I).

Larry L. Watts (Editura Militara/Military Publishing House, 2010), 733 pp., maps, appendices.

Extorting Peace: Romania, The Clash Within the Warsaw Pact and The End of the Cold War (Volume 2).

Larry L. Watts (RAO Publishing House, 2013), 765 pp.

Reviewed by Christopher D. Jones

Since 1989, a very rich literature, including memoirs and histories by political figures turned historians, has emerged around the Cold War, a historical period like no other. To the best of my knowledge and in my view, no such study yet published matches the achievement of Larry Watts's two-volume study of Romania's relations with the major players of the Cold War. It is a fair, balanced, accurate, and compelling revisionist history of Soviet bloc policy based on a meticulous study of the creation and collapse of communist Romania, a saga whose full historical significance Watts has made visible.

Because Watts brings to light new documents and fresh interpretations, everything about it will be controversial. The evidence for these volumes comes from recently available archives from Western and Warsaw Pact intelligence and diplomatic bureaucracies. His carefully parsed interpretations of these documents rests on his encyclopedic familiarity with the fine details of Romanian history since the late 19th century — details he has presented in earlier publications in Romanian and English. Volume I covers the period from 1878 to 1978, and Volume II, the period from 1979 to 1989. Watts plans a third volume covering Romania's reentry into Europe after 1989.

These volumes appear to have already proved their utility for intelligence professionals. During a conversation with Watts in the summer of 2013, I learned that he teaches a course in Romania on intelligence and the Cold War in a program jointly run by Romania's intelligence service and Bucharest University. Like the two volumes reviewed here, parts of Watts's course focus on problems and pitfalls of intelligence analysis—where it tends to go wrong, what analysts tend not to observe or understand, and why. In addition, his books are used as texts at Roma-

nia's National Intelligence Institute and National Defense University as well as the major Romanian civilian universities.

The detailed case studies in both volumes are also used in denial and deception courses at the US National Intelligence University (NIU). Watts recently held a seminar with the NIU teaching staff at the Defense Intelligence Agency on Soviet denial and deception operations against Romania. In a fact-checking exchange with Watts, I also learned that NIU and DIA is involved in the training provided by NATO's HUMINT Center of Excellence located in Romania.

Watts's texts proceed along three parallel tracks. One is an analytical challenge to the prevailing conventional wisdom on Romanian foreign policy and security during the Cold War. These views of Romania are held by most officials in the American and European intelligence agencies and foreign ministries, and by most Western academic specialists. Watts argues that Romania, nominally a member of Soviet bloc institutions, in fact pursued independent domestic and international policies that were, from the standpoint of bloc cohesion, even more subversive than those of Yugoslavia and Albania. Yugoslavia stopped participating in bloc activity after 1948, and Albania ceased its participation in the Warsaw Pact and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) in the early 1960s. But Romania used its membership in these institutions to challenge specific Soviet policies and the Soviet claim to leadership within the bloc.

Demonstrating Romanian independence is more analytically difficult than the Yugoslav and Albanian cases because officials in Bucharest were eager to pose for photographs at Warsaw Pact diplomatic conclaves and,

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like Yugoslavia, maintained carefully managed economic ties with COMECON. But after 1964, Romania did not attend or host joint Warsaw Pact exercises and stopped coordinating educational and political indoctrination programs with Moscow. Bucharest refused to participate in and publicly condemned the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and even mobilized Romanian resistance to a possible Pact intervention against the Ceausescu regime. In the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars, Romania refused to cooperate with the Soviet bloc's anti-Israeli policies.

The second track is an argument based on Watts's extensive—if not overwhelming—archival evidence that Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Central Committee "Secret Department" (for liaison with ruling communist parties abroad) and the Soviet intelligence agencies achieved what could be the most remarkable maskirovka (deception) of the Cold War: convincing Western observers that the Soviets orchestrated for their own purposes the entire gamut of Romanian policies that diverged from Soviet bloc programs for the states of the Warsaw Pact, COMECON, and the international communist movement.

The third track is an effort to explain why and how various Western bureaucracies (including intelligence services) and academic experts used erroneous analytical frameworks in dealing with the challenges posed by Bucharest. The Watts volumes claim that Western observers, both inside and outside government, sometimes also dismissed defections and challenges to Soviet hegemony posed by the ruling parties in Belgrade and Tirana, just as they were slow to accept the split between the CPSU and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

In a plot line related to the third track, Watts also addresses a perennial intelligence question: How much does intelligence analysis really drive White House behavior? Watts argues that Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter appeared to dismiss the views of intelligence and academic experts to engage in their own closely-held discussions with Romanian officials on a range of issues—especially China, the Warsaw Pact, the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

In pursuing the three tracks identified above Watts opens every chapter with a series of striking citations from various archives. His citations prepare readers for extensive discussion of key sources and for his challenges to the prevailing wisdom. I offer two examples.

The first—perhaps Watts's most significant and controversial contribution to Cold War historiography—is an account of the Soviet–Romanian struggle over the Warsaw Pact Statute proposed in 1978. In the end, Romania refused to sign. The six remaining members, led by the USSR, adopted the statute in 1980. In other words, for all practical purposes Ceausescu had withdrawn Romania from the Warsaw Pact at the dawn of the "New Cold War" of the early 1980s. And the West took as much notice as it did when Albania formally withdrew from the Warsaw Pact in 1968—none at all.

Watts also makes a well-documented and plausible argument that Ceausescu had long advocated programs of arms control and détente that anticipated the treaties signed around the end of the Cold War—INF, CFE, and START I. However, Watts does not claim that the Western states involved in those treaties paid any serious attention to the Ceausescu agenda, even as they moved along its trajectory. But he makes a case in chapters 11 and 12 of the second volume that Moscow drew on Romanian concepts to develop the Soviet arms control agenda, despite irritation at Bucharest's effrontery. The argument is one of several instances in which Watts reveals a respect for Ceausescu's diplomacy.

How readers assess and interpret the documents Watts uses will depend on where they stand on various issues. That is, perspectives will differ among agencies and experts in Washington, Moscow, Bucharest and other national capitals—e.g., Beijing, Pyongyang, and Hanoi—invested in affirming their own narratives of the Cold War.

If as Watts suggests, Soviet, Romanian, Warsaw Pact, Chinese, and Western actors were engaged in complex strategies of mutual deception, usually involving agents, double agents, and witting and unwitting agents of influence, all parties involved went to great lengths to lend credibility to their public positions and to establish plausible deniability for clandestine actions. Hence we are likely to witness endless arguments over who was deceiving whom.

Such arguments have already broken out in Romania, where the Watts books were published in English and Romanian. It will be intriguing to see if similar disputes play out in Russia, China, North Korea, and Vietnam. Perhaps the most interesting responses will come from survivors and successors of the KGB and other commanding heights of the Soviet era. Given the contemporary impli-

cations of the Watts studies, perhaps they will default to a Russian mindset identified by David Satter in his 2013 study, *It Was a Long Time Ago, and It Never Happened Anyway: Russia and the Communist Past*.a

If the analytical communities in Beijing, Hanoi and Pyongyang take note of Watts's arguments, will complications arise in the delicate duets Beijing and Moscow are performing on the stages of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization? What does Watts say about the fact that most of the people who lived under communist regimes in 1989 continue to live under ruling communist parties today? Can Watts offer insights into why the CCP prospered on

its national road to socialism while Romania, Yugoslavia, and Albania hit a dead end on theirs?

In my judgment as a teacher in this field, the three volumes will constitute a trilogy that should be required reading not only for historians of modern Romania but for any historian, political scientist, or intelligence analyst seeking to understand the internal Cold War dynamics of the Warsaw Pact and COMECON. I leave it to Intelligence Community readers to judge the heuristic value of the Watts oeuvre to tradecraft and to consider why the intelligence and policy communities may have made the errors that Watts sees. For my part, I accept Watts's overall conclusions.

