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Soviet Strategic Deception

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PROFESSIONAL READING



“The fact that the Soviet Union routinely falsifies published economic statistics, proposes ‘compromises’ with the West that further Soviet military advantages, and masks its nuclear weapons production under ‘medium machinery building’ is considered indicative of the deception that permeates Soviet society.”

Lieutenant Sam J. Tangredi, U.S. Navy

Dailey, Brian D. and Parker, Patrick J., eds. *Soviet Strategic Deception*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books and Hoover Institution Press, 1987. 560pp. \$49

The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) never has been considered to be in the forefront of research on strategy and defense. This is due to a variety of factors: its distance from Washington; the relative youthfulness of its National Security programs (established 1975); and its continuous export of talented faculty, to name but a few. However, one area of politico-military research in which it has made steady and increasingly significant progress is the study of strategic deception. *Soviet Strategic Deception*, the second major effort of this kind to be published, is a collection of papers originally presented at an NPS-sponsored conference held 26-28 September 1985. Without exception, it is the best compendium on Soviet deception to be found in the open literature.

Collections from academic conferences usually contain chapters that vary wildly in theme and quality. In contrast, *Soviet Strategic Deception* seems remarkably balanced and organized. It starts with a description of the Soviet organizational structure for deception and disinformation; identifies the ideological, cultural, and historical motivations that prompt this organization; and then focuses on four specific target areas for Soviet deception: arms control negotiation and verification; the masking of Soviet military planning; regional conflicts; and the manipulation of U.S. strategic planning. The contributors represent a blend of academicians, policy analysts, policymakers, and intelligence officers, all of whom have sound scholarly credentials. Yet, despite the diversity, each chapter does a superb

job in complementing the next. Each analyzes a small piece of the shadowy mosaic that creates what contributor John Dziak has called the ultimate "counter-intelligence state." It reveals the enormous scope of Soviet efforts to deceive all who attempt to estimate their capabilities or intentions.

This is not to say that the contributors agree on what properly constitutes "deception." The collection uncovers subtle, but analytically significant disagreement between the career members of the U.S. intelligence community and the outside specialists. As is made evident in the contributions of Richards Heuer, U.S. intelligence officers utilize a narrow definition of "deception" that distinguishes between "cover" or the denial of information, and "active measures" or deliberate efforts by the Soviets to deceive foreign decision makers and intelligence services. Under the second category, a further distinction is made between what the editors term "perceptions management" (propaganda and disinformation directed towards political leaders and the general public) and "intelligence deception" (double agents, false telemetry, and other covert counterintelligence practices). Needless to say, intelligence agencies concentrate on detecting the latter and tend to assume the former is routine.

In contrast, many outside specialists consider "perceptions management" as the most effective means of Soviet deception since it has a direct impact on the public debate that drives American policy-making. The fact that the Soviet Union routinely falsifies published economic statistics, proposes "compromises" with the West that further Soviet military advantages, and masks its nuclear weapons production under "medium machinery building" is considered indicative of the deception that permeates Soviet society. As Robert Bathurst and Robert Conquest, in studies of Soviet ideology and linguistics, and Kerry Kartchner, in his survey of pre-World World II Soviet diplomacy, point out, Soviet leaders have frequently boasted of their abilities at fooling the bourgeoisie. Just as often, leaders of the bourgeoisie do not, or pretend not, to hear.

The overall themes of the Soviet deception and disinformation effort, that is, what the Soviets *want* the bourgeois West to hear, are effectively summarized by John Lenczowski. The list reads like the media speculation it is meant to foster: "communist ideology is dead," "the Kremlin is divided between Hawks and Doves," "the Soviet Union has changed," "Soviet military doctrine is defensive-oriented," "the Soviets have a self-interest in mutual arms control," etc.

Perhaps even more disturbing is the Soviet scientific research effort in "reflexive control," which is documented in a chapter by Clifford Reid. Reid has analyzed the writing of Russian psychologist Vladimir Lefebvre concerning Soviet military efforts to develop a mathematical algorithm of perception management. According to Lefebvre, who conducted a portion of this research but later emigrated to the West, the objective was to utilize

psychological methods to modify or interfere with Western decision-making practices. Like Pavlov's dogs, the Western decision makers were to be conditioned to make particular responses to Soviet actions. Lefebvre maintains such research is continuing.

Other chapters concentrate on how the Soviets attempted to use or may have used deception in international politics. The section on arms control is particularly strong; the chapter by William R. Harris of the Rand Corporation contains the most comprehensive list on Soviet violation of arms control agreements yet published, combining information from all the official reports. A section on regional deception discusses how the Soviets have covered their involvement in the European anti-INF campaign, in Nicaragua, and in the Mid-East conflict.

Another section reviews Soviet doctrine on *maskirovka* (masking by means of denial and deception) in military operations. Particular attention is directed towards the covert use of chemical and biological warfare agents.

But of all the topics, the section on U.S. strategic planning has greatest impact. Leon Sloss, a primary architect of President Carter's 1980 Presidential Directive 59 concerning strategic targeting policy, details how deception has led American decision makers to downgrade the possibility of Soviet strategic advantages and assume ample strategic warning in the event of strategic attack. William Van Cleave analyzes the question of strategic warning in detail and concludes that, given the institutionalized Soviet deception program, the possibility of a surprise strategic attack cannot be discarded. Angelo Codevilla explains the ways that our satellite sensors—which we rely upon for strategic warning—could be deceived, particularly if the United States does not develop a counter-deception doctrine. Thomas Rona, on what may seem a less glamorous topic, the formulation of national intelligence estimates, provides even more thought-provoking fare. During a long tenure as a Defense Department consultant, Rona has been impressed by the fact that American intelligence officials and decision makers frequently discount or misinterpret intelligence data when it conflicts with previous assessments of Soviet behavior that are reinforced by open sources. General impressions, such as the existence of a missile gap or Soviet acceptance of mutual assured destruction, develop a life of their own within the minds of decision makers despite a lack of hard evidence. To a considerable extent, this reinforces the view that “perception management” is the most effective form of Soviet deception.

Perhaps the volume's major weakness is too much information—much more than can be summed up in a succinct concluding chapter. No one can state unequivocally what all of it means, and it is impossible for any one person to trace each individual crack. However, like most large mosaics, the image becomes clearer when one takes a step backwards. The reader comes away with one definitive conclusion: not only do the Soviets have

a propensity for deception, they are superbly organized, bureaucratically and ideologically, to carry it out.

However, two areas for further research are readily apparent. First, there is ample evidence that self-deception is an American characteristic and has more to do with U.S. policy blunders than with Soviet active measures. The book does not explore the linkage between latent misbeliefs and Soviet reinforcement in detail. Second, with the exception of one reference to fake SSBNs, there is no mention of the use of deception in Soviet naval operations. This is a grievous fault in a book from the Naval Postgraduate School.

Everyone who studies the formation of U.S. defense policy or American-Soviet relations should read this book. Unfortunately, at the publisher's price, I suspect that few will. A less expensive executive summary is definitely in order.

Graham, Loren. *Science, Philosophy, and Human Behavior in the Soviet Union*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1987. 565pp. \$45

This important book is a major revision and expansion of the author's earlier work, *Science and Philosophy in the Soviet Union* (New York, 1972). So thoroughly has Loren Graham recast and enlarged his earlier work that the result is virtually a new book.

The underlying structure of the present volume remains that of Graham's earlier work: description and analysis of the relationship between Soviet science and the philosophy of dialectical materialism. The period that interests him most follows the end of the Second World War, although he does not neglect earlier work by Soviet scientists. Against a background of the history of Soviet science and philosophy, Graham describes scientific research in the U.S.S.R. as well

as philosophical controversies over various aspects of research in the fields of genetics, physiology, biology, cybernetics, chemistry, quantum mechanics, relativity physics, and cosmology.

Graham, a professor of Soviet studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, enjoys complete command of the Russian language as well as a record of long periods of research residence in the Soviet Union. The trip described in his recent *NOVA* telecast "How Good is Soviet Science?" was his 15th visit to the Soviet Union. For the most part, Graham's visits have been welcomed by Soviet academicians, particularly those of the Academy of Science of the U.S.S.R.

Graham's earlier book carried his detailed examination of Soviet science and philosophy up to 1970. The present work takes the reader through mid-1985. Two new chapters on Soviet research and studies on