

1986

The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider's View

Curtis Carroll Davis
U.S. Army Reserve (Ret.)

Ladislav Bittman

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Davis, Curtis Carroll and Bittman, Ladislav (1986) "The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider's View," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 39 : No. 4 , Article 22.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol39/iss4/22>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

132 Naval War College Review

begin with Mr. Suchlicki's excellent short history.

RAYMOND A. KOMOROWSKI
Captain, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

Bittman, Ladislav. *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider's View*. Washington, D.C.: Pergamon-Brassey, 1985. 226pp. \$16.95

This "insider" is a 54-year-old onetime Czech intelligence officer of relatively high status who defected to the West following Russian invasion of his homeland in 1968. He has also written *The Deception Game* (1972) and figures in Richard H. Shultz' and Roy Godson's *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy* (1984). The present volume has no illustrations or bibliography, a very skimpy index, and is most pedestrianly written. The chapter notes are all from open sources. In sum, the book will have almost nothing to offer the specialist.

Having said all that, let the reviewer also say that, in his humble opinion, too many volumes analyzing with sophistication the Soviet potential for global villainy cannot be put on the market. In defining "active measures" as "clandestine operations designed to extend Soviet influence and power around the world," Mr. Bittman breaks the concept down into component activities; these most definitely including the fostering of terrorism, also assassination: "The hunting season is open all year," and in its pursuit the Bulgarian "is one of the most brutal of all espionage ser-

vices." Militarily the most effective active measure orchestrated by the Kremlin are the "wars of liberation" in developing countries, and the KGB has mastered the techniques thereof "to a degree unparalleled in modern history." Disinformation as a phase of active measures "is a carefully constructed false message leaked into an opponent's information system" and "has clearly malicious intent—it implies deception." Any given theme is aided by utilization of such front groups or liberal think tanks as the well-known International Union of Students, the World Peace Council, and the Institute for Policy Studies or such relatively unknown outfits as the International Information Department, founded at Moscow in 1978.

From the beginning, *i.e.*, 1917, the United States has been an important target, and since the close of World War II has become the main enemy. The Central Intelligence Agency is the most enticing goal for penetration or otherwise sullyng, aided in part by that "contagious disease," the publication of memoirs by disgruntled former employees. (There is an interesting analysis of the motivation driving these scribblers on p. 188.) Since 1975 the Soviets have "substantially increased their efforts on Capitol Hill" and the most sought-after booty is scientific and technical.

This dispiriting recitation could go on and on, and the author's epilogue "What We Must Do," is much too cursorily pondered. Nevertheless Mr. Bittman's opus should find a

useful space on the general reader's bookshelf.

CURTIS CARROLL DAVIS

Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army Reserve (Ret.)

Winslow, W.G. *The Ghost That Died at Sunda Strait*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1984. 184pp. \$21.95

Schultz, Duane. *The Last Battle Station: The Saga of the U.S.S. Houston*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985. 248pp. \$19.95

One of the major and enduring principles of strategy is that, at times, a military force must accept a tactical defeat in order to advance the objectives and interests of national policy, or national or grand strategy. This principle was clearly brought out by the destruction of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet in three months of disaster from December 1941 to March 1942.

As many recent books have pointed out, 1941 was a period of grave anxiety and uncertainty as the U.S. Government strove to support beleaguered Britain and the Soviet Union in Europe and the North Atlantic, and at the same time reinforce our desperately weak Asiatic Fleet and Philippine defenses in anticipation of a Japanese attack.

In 1941 the officers of that fleet were well aware of the danger they faced and the sacrifice that would be expected. But they did, however, feel confident that they could greatly delay any Japanese assault and in so

doing, exact a heavy toll of the attacking forces. This illusion was shattered by a succession of unexpected disasters wholly beyond control of the fleet and its able and respected Commander in Chief Adm. Thomas C. Hart.

Listed briefly these were: the destruction of the Pacific Fleet's ability to support the Asiatic Fleet by the Pearl Harbor attack; the abject failure of the U.S. Army Air Force, whose fighters and bombers were destroyed on the ground nine hours after the word of Pearl Harbor had come; the collapse of the British defence of Malaya and the sinking of the H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* and the H.M.S. *Repulse*; the dismal failure of the torpedoes of the highly trained and ready U.S. submarines to hit and explode; the faulty 5-inch anti-aircraft ammunition loaded in the U.S.S. *Houston*; and finally the grounding and severe damage to the only really modern U.S. ship in the area, the cruiser *Boise*, in Sape Strait.

It is difficult for those who first went to sea in 1943 or later to imagine fighting at night in restricted waters without radar. Yet that was what the Asiatic ships did. They and their planes and their submarines fought on tenaciously until the final climactic night of 28 February when the U.S.S. *Houston* and the H.M.A.S. *Perth* were sunk in Sunda Strait as they battled the Japanese forces moving in to land on Java. That same night, under the same brilliant full moon, four old 4-pipe U.S. destroyers, the last remnants of Dutch Admiral Doorman's striking force in