

David E. Murphy, Sergi A. Kondrashev, George Bailey.. *Battleground Berlin: CIA vs KGB in the Cold War*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997. xxv + 672 pp. \$30.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-300-07233-4.



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The wealth of archival material available from Eastern Europe continues to make the Cold War a fertile topic of examination for historians. The latest works on the Cold War based on new archival sources tend to have an immediate impact on Cold War historiography by virtue of the details they provide on events which had been poorly illuminated. There is, of course, a considerable range in the scholarly treatment of the new material. *Battleground Berlin* has virtually no counterpart in the historiography, although in terms of intriguing revelations one is inclined to compare it with Oleg Gordievsky and Christopher Andrew's *KGB: The Inside Story* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990). *Battleground Berlin* represents the first time in the post-Cold War era that former CIA and KGB officers have come together to write about the history of American and Soviet intelligence operations in Berlin from the end of the war until the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. The work is not simply the memoirs of David Murphy, former chief of the CIA's Berlin Operations Base (BOB), and Sergei Kondrashev, former head of the KGB's German department and active measures department, but relies to a considerable

extent on a vast array of sources from both Soviet and American archives. To be sure, much of the story is based on the recollections of the co-authors, but these are tempered by supporting evidence.

In this work, the reader is treated to a sober and balanced account of major Cold War events in Germany as interpreted by the American and Soviet intelligence services. The authors' smooth narrative touches on the primary events that will be familiar to most historians of post-war Europe: the Berlin Blockade, the Korean War and its effect on Germany, the 17 June 1953 uprising in East Germany, the Otto John case, the Berlin Tunnel, and the Berlin crisis of 1958-1961 which culminated in the building of the Berlin Wall.

The authors portray in an interesting manner the intelligence organizations in Germany in the initial postwar years. The view put forth is one that has long been accepted but not documented to the extent it is in this work: The fledgling CIA was naive and unprepared compared to the seasoned opponent in the KGB. The authors point out, for example, that BOB did not receive its first

Russian speaker until 1947 (p. 23). In contrast, the Soviets in Germany were preparing for intelligence operations in the West "as the fronts advanced into Germany (p. 33)." The authors attribute this position to the deep-seated paranoia which characterized Soviet Russia (p. 26), as personified in Joseph Stalin. Institutionalized suspicion in the Soviet Union is becoming one of the more intriguing revelations of the post-Cold War era, as accounted masterfully in Vojtech Mastny's *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Battleground Berlin sets out to describe in detail the major Cold War events in Germany, and specifically Berlin, as they related to intelligence. The account of the Berlin Blockade makes clear that the Soviets had reliable information on the position of the Western governments, but that this information was not translated into useful knowledge because the Soviet leaders rejected intelligence that did not conform to their preconceptions. As a result, Soviet intelligence officers often "appropriately" adjusted negative intelligence before distributing it to higher levels of the Communist Party, or simply did not distribute discouraging intelligence. On the other hand, the authors argue, the West opted to continue the Airlift in part because of reassurance by BOB reports that the Soviets did not intend to take military action against the West for continuing the Airlift (p. 62). This analysis of the effect of BOB intelligence on American policy during the Berlin Airlift is provocative, but the evidence to support it is disappointing. The authors cite an interview with Gordon Stewart, the head of the German mission in Heidelberg, as their primary evidence that "senior policymakers in Germany and Washington" were making extensive use of BOB reporting (p. 62). This is insufficient evidence to support the authors' contention: "Information obtained by CIA's Berlin Operations Base had a significant and immediate effect on US decisions about West Berlin and West Germany (p. 78)." Furthermore, the reader might have expected mention of the West-

ern counter-blockade as contributing to the Soviet decision to lift the Berlin Blockade.

The reluctance on the part of Soviet intelligence officers to pass on intelligence that ran counter to Stalin's expectations is a theme that runs through the discussion on the Korean War. The reader is astounded by the degree of Soviet penetration of Western governments, and by the high-grade intelligence which the Soviets possessed. The Soviet foreign intelligence agency, the Committee of Intelligence (KI), for example, possessed detailed accounts of a conversation between the first West German chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, and the French High Commissioner Andre Francois-Poncet on the subject of rearmament. As a rule, KI reports on West German rearmament did not reach Stalin, for the simple reason that the rearmament programme had been prompted by Stalin's decision to support the North's invasion of South Korea. Such reports would have been unacceptable to Stalin, because they would have exposed his Korean initiative for what it was--a disaster for Soviet policy in Germany (p. 89). The internal politics of Stalin's Soviet Union meant that raw intelligence was generally not translated into a useful product.

Operation Gold, the joint American/British Berlin Tunnel operation also receives prominent consideration in *Battleground Berlin*. The tunnel, built in 1955, ran from the American sector in southern Berlin into the Soviet sector, allowing the CIA to tap Soviet military communications. The authors do not attempt to dispute the fact that the Soviets knew about the Tunnel at an early stage through George Blake, the British intelligence officer who was working for the KGB (Blake was handled by co-author Kondrashev). The authors do seem intent, however, on dispelling the myth that the Soviets sent disinformation across the lines and that, therefore, the West received no intelligence of value from the tapped lines. They provide a list of valuable intelligence which was transmitted in the course of the 443,000 conversa-

tions recorded during the Berlin Tunnel's 11 months in operation (Appendix 5).

Battleground Berlin provides the greatest detail presently available on American and Soviet intelligence organizations during a number of significant Cold War events. It successfully untangles the numerous Soviet bureaucratic agencies and departments involved in foreign espionage from one another. Its main strength, however, lies in its portrayal of the inner workings of the Soviet system which effectively hindered reliable intelligence from becoming a useful product in policy-making. Stalin's Soviet Union by its very nature broke the intelligence cycle.

The weaknesses of this work, however, detract from its overall contribution to the field. Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of this work is that it falls short of its billing in the introduction: "The great story of this book is how information becomes knowledge and how this knowledge gets transmuted into political policy (p. xxv)." As mentioned above, the account of the Soviet side shows precisely how information does not become political policy. This, at least, is an important conclusion. The same cannot be said for the American side. There is little evidence of the ultimate effect of BOB information on American policymaking regarding Berlin and Germany during the Cold War. The authors provide suggestions of such an effect in the discussion of the Berlin Blockade and of the Berlin Wall, but certainly not sufficient evidence to support the claim in the introduction.

The work also contains a number of errors or omissions. The authors discuss the role of the Eastern Bureaus of the CDU and SPD, but curiously omit the FDP's Eastern Bureau (pp. 112-113). The authors' portrayal of the vote held by the SPD in Berlin in 1946 on fusion with the Communist Party is misleading (p. 13). SPD members rejected immediate fusion with the KPD, and voted overwhelmingly to continue to work closely with the Communists, neither of which the authors mention. The general pro-American stance of the work

suggests that this omission may not have been entirely due to negligence. It is striking, for example, that the East German secret police, the Ministry for State Security (MfS) (chapter six, chapter fifteen) receives considerable attention, but the creature of the CIA, the Gehlen Org and its successor the BND do not. The authors do not provide a citation for the claim that the Americans did not employ ex-Gestapo or SS officers in their intelligence services, but say that the "Soviet services were never so constrained (p. 19)." Although this may well be the case, recent evidence on the MfS suggests that the East German police, which was ultimately run by the Soviets, did not employ Nazi intelligence officers on the permanent rolls. Stylistically, it is odd that crucial analysis would be relegated to appendices, rather than incorporated into the main text, as is the case in the discussion of the Berlin Tunnel. Lastly, the repeated explicit references to the novelty of the material in the form of phrases like "never before revealed" (pp. 38, 40, 49, 51, 65, 79, 87, 103, 113, etc.) is tiresome.

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