

## Article REVIEW

**Igor Lukes.** “The Czechoslovak Special Services and Their American Adversary during the Cold War.” *The Journal of Cold War Studies* 9.1 (Winter 2007): 3-28. doi: 10.1162/jcws.2007.9.1.3. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/jcws.2007.9.1.3>.<sup>1</sup>

Reviewed by **Peter Bridges**, former U.S. Ambassador to Somalia  
*Published by H-Diplo on 27 June 2007*

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**P**rofessor Igor Lukes of Boston University has offered convincing evidence, based on thoroughgoing research in Prague archives (and on published Czech sources, many of them probably otherwise unknown in America), for his thesis that at the time of the Communist takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1948, and in the succeeding years, there were serious deficiencies in the Czechoslovak intelligence agencies—and equally serious deficiencies in the American intelligence apparatus that worked against them in the Prague embassy.

I would, however, not agree that, as Lukes seems to suggest, it was because of the future of the American-managed intelligence networks that “the United States retreated from Czechoslovakia, largely abandoning it to the Soviet Union” (6). The U.S. position in Czechoslovakia in and after 1945 was never as strong as the Soviet one, even though, as Lukes notes, many ranking Czechoslovak officials were happy to provide information to the Americans and British in 1945-48. (5) Although, as he again points out, both the United States and the Soviet Union withdrew their military forces from Czechoslovakia at the end of 1945, the postwar Czechoslovak government, while still not Communist, was from the outset under Soviet influence pressure—and after the 1946 elections the Communist party was the major political force in the country. Nor, I think, did the United States ever seriously consider contesting Moscow there, except in the intelligence field.

Lukes makes clear the ineptitude of the American military intelligence officers in the Prague embassy, while saying relatively little about the civilian, i.e. CIA, intelligence officers. One wishes he had written a little more about the CIA side. One wonders whether the failure of the military intelligence people may have been due to their lack of training in clandestine work. (This was clearly a main factor in a case publicized in Italy in the 1970s.) There were also pathetic lapses in security, from Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt on down.

This article focuses on American officials, and Czechoslovak agencies, in Prague. As Lukes brought out some time ago in a lecture at the Woodrow Wilson International

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<sup>1</sup> An additional H-Diplo review of this article by Johann Smula is available at <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/reviews/PDF/Smula-Lukes.pdf>

Center for Scholars in Washington, there were also operations outside Czechoslovakia targeted at the Czechs, including a group of former Czechoslovak intelligence officers based in West Germany and funded, but not well supervised, by CIA. Lukes does not discuss here British or French intelligence operations either in or targeted at Czechoslovakia, or the extent of U.S.-U.K.-French cooperation in this field in the postwar years.

I doubt that any other American has done as much research as Lukes has in both prewar and postwar Czechoslovak archives. His book *Czechoslovakia between Stalin and Hitler* (Oxford, 1996) is, I continue to think, not only the best-grounded work on Masaryk's and Benes's republic but one of the best overall on that subject. I understand that Lukes plans a new book on post-1945 Czechoslovakia, and this article indicates that it may be as good as his earlier one.

Incidentally, Lukes mentions in a footnote (n. 5, pp. 4-5) a case in which the Polish intelligence service hoodwinked the CIA in Poland after the war, and cites as his source a book by Harry Rositzke published by Reader's Digest Press. It might usefully be added that Rositzke knew well of what he wrote; he was not a journalist but a senior CIA officer who is said to have retired as chief of the agency's international communism unit.

**Peter Bridges** served as a career U.S. Foreign Service officer from 1957 to 1986, with postings to Panama, Washington, Moscow, Prague, and Rome. His first book, *Safirka: An American Envoy* (2004) describes his experiences as American ambassador to Somalia in 1984-86.

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