

Security Intelligence Services in New Democracies: The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania

Intelligence in Recent Public Literature

By Kieran Williams and Dennis Deletant. London: Palgrave, in association with the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London, 2001. 291 pages.

Reviewed by John A. Wiant

In the early 1990s, following the collapse of communism, US policy concentrated on promoting the democratization of the new governments that emerged. There was keen concern with how these successor regimes could control and redirect their intelligence services, since these very services had been the *sine qua non* of totalitarian rule. Kiernan Williams and Dennis Deletant provide one of the first in-depth looks at the progress that the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Romania have made in establishing democratic control and accountability for their security services. This is serious scholarship, rich in the theories of democratization and with a well-considered framework for comparative analysis of the progress that

the new governments have made.

The authors provide excellent, brief histories of the security services, and detail the unique circumstances that have characterized the development of each one. Williams and Deletant argue that all three governments have institutionalized some legislative oversight and executive control over the security services, but that they have followed quite different courses toward these objectives. The Czech and Romanian services now have less autonomy than the Slovakian service. Overall, however, legislative scrutiny remains relatively weak in all three countries. Nonetheless, each has a growing numbers of parliamentarians experienced in security matters and the authors are optimistic that oversight will strengthen in the future.

At the present, the wide-open and spirited press, living off leaks from within the services, is the most effective watchdog over these organizations. This loose information environment has been a boon to the authors' research effort, allowing them access to useful data on the internal operations of the services. While this leak-fed media attention has greatly limited the excesses for which these services were known and reviled in the past, it also erodes their necessary roles as security services. Williams and Deletant conclude: "We will know that East European institutions are generating a more cohesive corporate culture, the trauma of communism is softening, and the revolution is over when it becomes more difficult to write books like this one."

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