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This Issue[Previous Article](#)[Next Article](#)[Contents](#)

Cold War Archives

Joint Conference Concludes 'Open House Project'

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**Library of Congress
Information Bulletin
Index Page**

On June 28 and 29, the Library of Congress and the Department of Defense co-sponsored the conference "Cold War Archives in the Decade of Openness," the culmination of a four-year project, known as the "Open House Project," that brought microfilm of formerly classified records from the military archives of Hungary, Poland and Romania to the Library of Congress.

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The conference, held at the Library, explored the contents of the microfilm, the state of the Central European archives represented at the conference and the activities of archives in the United States that focus exclusively on Cold War topics or have significant collections dealing with the Cold War. [Click here for a report on the keynote address by Walter Slocombe.](#)

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The first session on June 28 was devoted to descriptions and analyses of the microfilm that the Library has already received from the three Central European archives. The chair of the session, Alfred Goldberg, the historian of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, welcomed those in attendance, and briefly introduced the session and its speakers. Ronald Bachman, Polish area specialist in the Library's European Division, described the microfilm from the Polish Central Military Archives, a collection comprising 88 reels covering the period 1939- 1968. Nearly 40 percent of the material dates from the World War II years and includes detailed reports on the early fighting throughout Poland, the regrouping of military forces in the East under Soviet control and the relationship of those forces to the Polish underground Home Army, especially during the Warsaw Uprising. About half of the collection covers the early postwar period through the mid- 1950s, while about 10 percent concerns the years 1956- 1968, including the tactical and logistical aspects of Poland's role in the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Also of interest are nine reels of inventories-finding aids included in the collection.

This writer, a reference librarian in the European Division, described the collection received from the War History Archives, in Budapest. The 173 reels acquired so far cover the period 1948 through 1954, or the early years of the Cold War. This material mirrors the turbulent developments within the Hungarian People's Army during that time, namely its rapid expansion and Sovietization, its complete refitting

with Soviet-made equipment and the imposition of party control of the military. Of particular note are establishment tables for various years that show the structure, personnel and equipment within each unit of the army, as well as inventories and costs of armaments acquired from the Soviet Union. Not only are official documents from the high command represented, such as orders issued by the Ministry of Defense, but also reports generated by political officers within the ranks that show conditions experienced by the average soldier.

Grant Harris, reference specialist in the European Division, presented the final paper of the session, regarding the 642 reels received from the Romanian Military Archives. Most of this collection consists of the complete archives of the Romanian Commission for the Implementation of the Armistice, 1944-47, which was created to ensure Romanian compliance with the demands of the Allied Soviet High Commission. These archives detail restitution to the Soviet Union of its citizens, equipment and property, as well as territory; and they chronicle Soviet abuses, such as the illegal seizing of property and the transfer of Romanian, Hungarian, German and other non-Soviet citizens to the U.S.S.R. A smaller set (62 reels) of documents originates from the intelligence archives of the Romanian Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1944-1948. These report the activities of foreign embassies and missions in Romania, as well as accounts of interrogations of American airmen whose aircraft had been shot down. Another group of records (65 reels) documents the Soviet drive to bring the Romanian armed forces under its control.

Brig. Gen. John Sloan Brown, director of the U.S. Army Center of Military History, chaired the first session of the second day, "Central European Military Archives in the Decade of Openness." This session featured Col. Andrzej Bartnik, director of Poland's Central Military Archives (Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe); Jolán Szijj, director of the Hungarian War History Archives (Hadtörténelmi Levéltár); and Col. Alexandru Osca, chief of the Romanian Military Archives (Archivele Militare ale Ministerului Apararii Nationale).

Col. Bartnik briefly described the activity of the Polish Central Military Archives (CMA) and set it against the background of Polish political and military history since the end of the Second World War. He enumerated themes in Cold War history that have emerged in research based on materials in the CMA -- Soviet officers in the Polish army, political repression in the army during the postwar period, the economic burden on Polish society resulting from membership in the Warsaw Pact and the uses of the army in domestic interventions and in Czechoslovakia in 1968. He also listed the military agencies whose documents are to be found in the archives, including the National Defense Committee, which set military policy and oversaw its implementation. He admitted that the military documentation on the 1981 declaration of martial law is still

protected by current secrecy restrictions, but noted that current efforts to liberalize the law on archives may expand access to materials from the 1970s and 1980s.

Ms. Szijj prefaced her remarks about issues currently facing the Hungarian War History Archives (WHA) by setting out a detailed history of the archives, noting that the institution's oldest document dates back to the 13th century. She then outlined the legislation affecting archival access today, including privacy restrictions that limit access to documents containing personal data. Ms. Szijj observed that although the number of researchers using the WHA is continually increasing, less than half are involved with research since 1945 -- the period of the Cold War -- and most of these are working with military court records. In fact, she noted, the WHA receives many official requests from military courts or other organizations that deal with rehabilitation processes or actions for damages. Ms. Szijj also provided the titles of some of the WHA's recent publications over the past several years and spoke about the WHA's links with similar institutions in Austria, Romania and Slovakia.

The first part of Col. Osca's presentation dealt with two groups of individuals- -those who use the Romanian Military Archives, many of whom were victims of the former communist regime but yet attempt to write objectively about that era; and Romanian archivists, who endeavor to better understand and adapt to their new role in a democratic society. Openness, he observed, was assisted by Law 16 for the National Archives of 1996, which declared archives to be not merely places of storage but rather centers that support research, and gave the Ministry of National Defense the right to operate its archives without outside interference. Col. Osca believed it was in the best interest of all archives, including military archives, not only to make material available to researchers, but also to process it and create finding aids. He mentioned that legislation is being considered that would permit release of any unclassified document regardless of the 30-year rule that currently restricts access to such material.

The audience at the afternoon session witnessed a panel discussion "Cold War Documentation Programs," chaired by Robert S. Litwak, director of the Division of International Studies at the Woodrow Wilson Center. Panelists were Mark Kramer, director of the Harvard Project on Cold War Studies at Harvard University; James G. Hershberg, associate professor of history and international affairs for the Elliot School of International Affairs at George Washington University; Vojtech Mastny, coordinator of the Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact; Christian Ostermann, director of the Cold War International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson Center; and John E. Haynes, 20th century political historian in the Manuscript Division.

Opening the discussion, Mark Kramer pointed out that the Harvard

Project aimed not to collect archival documents but to sponsor scholarly publications based on documents held elsewhere. This the Harvard Project did through its publication *Journal of Cold War Studies* and various book series. In connection with the theme of the conference, and later echoed by other participants, he observed that much material about the Soviet military could be found in archives of the former non-Russian republics of the Soviet Union. For example, archives in Ukraine yield much documentation about the Warsaw Pact's 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. The same held true for archival material held in the Baltic states concerning the 1980-81 crisis in Poland.

Vojtech Mastny told those assembled that the military aspect of the Cold War was little known as, until recently, military archives have been mostly inaccessible. He described the Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact, which actively seeks to locate, collect, analyze and interpret the growing numbers of recently declassified documents from NATO, the Warsaw Pact and their respective member states. Founded in 1996, the project represents a cooperative effort of institutes and archives in the United States and Europe. Concerning one category of documents, those of the Warsaw Pact, Mr. Mastny pointed out that although the foreign ministers of the member states signed an agreement in February 1991 to keep Pact documents inaccessible, one could actually examine these documents in Germany, the Czech Republic or Bulgaria, and that the other former Pact countries ought to declassify them as well.

Christian Ostermann spoke about the Cold War International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson Center. Begun in 1991, this project aims to integrate new information based on previously inaccessible sources from the former Communist world with Western historiography of the Cold War, a literature traditionally based only on Western sources and what Sovietology could glean. Through its *Bulletin* and other publications, conferences and its encyclopedic Web site, the Project publicizes new findings concerning Cold War history. One such conference, cosponsored in November 1997 with the National Security Archive, and the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, brought together Poles, Americans and Russians who participated in the 1980-81 Solidarity crisis in Poland. Mr. Ostermann announced that upcoming conferences will consider the origins of détente and Latin America in the Cold War.

John Haynes spoke about the Library of Congress's recent and continuing acquisitions of Cold War-related archival material. This includes the papers of former Soviet general Dmitrii Volkogonov and a microfilm edition of the papers of the Communist Party of the United States, consisting of about 500,000 pages, from the beginnings of the movement until 1944. An acquisition of particular note is the Comintern database and digital archive, which is being produced by the International Committee for the Computerization of

the Comintern Archive (INCOMKA), of which the Library of Congress is a member, along with the national archival services of Germany, France, Spain and Switzerland, the Federal Archives Service of Russia and the International Council on Archives. The project will create a database for the entire Comintern archives (estimated at more than 20 million pages), and 1 million digital images of the most important and interesting documents in the archive.

James G. Hershberg spoke about the National Security Archive at George Washington University. This archive, which is not affiliated with the U.S. Government, contains declassified U.S. documents on national security that have been obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. According to Mr. Hershberg, the archive's interest and extensive publishing activity focus on many areas of the world and its collections include comprehensive microfiche on the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 and the Berlin crisis of 1958-1962. The archive, together with Chadwyk-Healey, has created the Digital National Security Archive, a database of more than 35,000 documents central to U.S. foreign and military policy since 1945.

Lively discussions concluded all three sessions on subjects such as the possibility of documents in the Hungarian, Polish and Romanian military archives dealing with the Greek Civil War, American POWs in Korea and Vietnam and defense attaché reporting from these two countries, the Soviet withdrawal from Central Europe in the early 1990s, and current access to documents in these archives.

The papers presented at the conference will be published in the book *The Open House Collection: Documents from the Military Archives of Former Soviet Warsaw Pact Countries* in the Library of Congress, edited by Frank N. Schubert, Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; with a foreword by John Van Oudenaren, chief of the European Division.

Indexes to the microfilm that the Library has already received from the Hungarian, Polish and Romanian military archives can be found at the European Division on the Library's Web site, www.loc.gov/rr/european/specproj.html.

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[Previous Article](#) | [Next Article](#) | [Contents](#)
[Top of Page](#) | [Information Bulletin Home](#) | [LC Home](#)

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