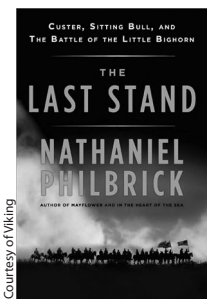
John Erickson, the only historian whose work approaches Glantz in comprehensiveness and rigor, calls the Smolensk battles "massive upheavals" which "drew no less than six Soviet armies into the Smolensk and [El'nia] whirlpools. . . . Almost a dozen Soviet armies . . . were flung into these fiery mazes of attack and defense" (*The Road to Stalingrad*). Certainly the Eastern Front deserves more attention; it's not clear Smolensk in particular has been slighted.

Next, it is quite possible the Soviets did themselves more harm than good by their fruitless battering of German lines in hasty counteroffensives. The Smolensk pocket trapped and destroyed three Soviet armies; the most successful Soviet counterattack (by Konev's 19th Army) succeeded in damaging a German infantry division. No Soviet counterattack at Smolensk ever succeeded in the breakthrough and encirclement by which the Germans routinely wiped out Soviet units wholesale. Although Glantz endorses Zhukov's view that "In fierce combat, it is far better to suffer losses and achieve your mission than not to achieve any sort of aims and suffer losses every day by marking time in place from day to day under enemy fire," in many cases the Soviets suffered losses and did not achieve their aims. As Chief of Staff Franz Halder remarked on the battering the Germans were taking in the El'nia bridgehead, "No matter how badly off our troops are, it is even worse for the enemy." It may be that the Soviet soldiers and material lost in disjointed counterattacks left the Soviets vulnerable to the disastrous Vyazma encirclement which immediately followed. Soviet counterattacks certainly shook Hitler's confidence, and Glantz may be right that they fatally weakened Army Group Center. More analysis is needed to prove it, though; perhaps the second volume will provide that.



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The Last Stand: Custer, Sitting Bull, and the Battle of the Little Bighorn

by Nathaniel Philbrick

Reviewed by Jim Shufelt, COL (USA Retired), Center for Strategic Leadership, US Army War College

The combination of a troubled presidential administration, an unclear national strategy, an army equipped with inadequate doctrine and inappropriate materiel, and a skilled tribally organized foe describes situations that the United States has faced in recent conflicts; however, Nathanial Philbrick's account is about a battle that occurred on the Western Plains of America over one hundred and thirty-five years ago, the Battle of the Little Bighorn, popularly known as the Custer Massacre. While a virtual book-writing machine has thrived over the last century examining every aspect of this event, resulting in thousands of documents, Philbrick has successfully combined insight from first-hand accounts, official histories, campaign studies, personality studies,

and other sources to provide a new account that coherently presents a plausible explanation for the 7th Cavalry's tragic defeat.

While *The Last Stand* is more than just the story of George Armstrong Custer and the 7th Cavalry Regiment, Sitting Bull, and the Sioux and Cheyenne tribes; there is little coverage of the campaign plan, details on national strategy, history of American policy for its native people, or similar topics in Philbrick's history. Those details are found in numerous other sources, as explained by the detailed endnotes and extensive bibliography in this book. Despite the presence of so many sources, Philbrick notes that a truly accurate account of the battle remains difficult, if not impossible, due to the complete loss of Custer's battalion, the intentional manipulation of history by surviving participants, and the challenge of understanding accounts muddied by bad memory, culture misunderstanding, and poorly skilled interpreters.

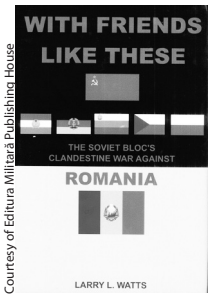
Philbrick's methodology in explaining the Little Bighorn battle is primarily chronologic, as he reviews the preparation, conduct, and aftermath of the battle, interspersed with brief historical vignettes that illuminate important aspects of the key leaders. Throughout this account, the author notes the importance of personal relationships. The interpersonal dynamics between Custer and his two key subordinates, Major Reno and Captain Benteen, significantly shaped the conduct of the fight, directly contributing to Custer's decision to split his force prior to the battle and influencing Reno and Benteen's actions when they were unclear about the status of Custer and his battalion. Similarly, Custer's complex relationship with his Commander, General Terry, resulted in orders that are still debated today.

One of the strengths of Philbrick's story is his discussion of the battlefield terrain. Anyone who has ever visited the battlefield can corroborate the impact of the complex rolling terrain on the bluffs above the Little Bighorn River. As Philbrick notes numerous times, the aspect of terrain clearly was not immediately understood by the 7th Cavalry Regiment, yet was known and successfully utilized by the native warriors. Because of the nature of the terrain, Custer could not fully comprehend the size of the native village until he reached a point in time and space where it was too late to abort his attack and was thus unable to avert his unit's defeat, if not utter destruction, at the hands of a much larger opposing force.

Philbrick addresses two other long-standing issues with respect to the tactical fight: Reno's personal decisionmaking and the actions of Custer's battalion during the time period between its last confirmed report and its final demise on the battlefield. Philbrick cites numerous accounts of Reno's intoxication before, during, and after the battle, and demonstrates that he believes that this had a direct impact on the timing and quality of Reno's tactical decisionmaking. Whether or not this was the single cause, the evidence is clear that Reno made many poor decisions throughout the battle. Similarly, Philbrick develops a plausible theory for the final actions of Custer's force, based on native accounts, the experiences of 7th Cavalry survivors, and archeological discoveries after

the 1983 battlefield fire which gave greater clarity to locations of the fighting positions held by Custer's battalion and by native warriors.

This book is highly recommended for contemporary strategic leaders. Both an entertaining and educational read, it highlights the complex nature of the battlefield, the impact of personality and personal relationships, and the numerous challenges of fighting a native tribal foe. Poignantly, Philbrick notes that there is plenty of evidence that both leaders, Custer and Sitting Bull, would have preferred a peaceful resolution to conflict. When the evolving situation placed their forces into direct conflict, any chance of success for Custer was tied to his personal vision on how the tactical fight would progress and the ability of his subordinates to execute in accordance with that vision, especially once he split his force prior to the battle. Unfortunately, Custer's vision was flawed, he failed to adequately relay it to his subordinates, and Reno and Benteen were, even if given clear guidance, ill-equipped to make the appropriate tactical decisions. As many historians will argue, the Army was lucky it did not lose the entire 7th Cavalry Regiment during this fight.



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With Friends Like These: The Soviet Bloc's Clandestine War Against Romania, Volume I

by Larry L. Watts

Reviewed by Colonel Charles W. Van Bebber, Ph.D., Director of National Security Policy and Strategy, US Army War College

During the Cold War, American diplomats, intelligence specialists, and scholars viewed Romania under the leadership of Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu as something of a paradox. On one hand, it was a harsh, Stalinist regime that clearly fell within the Soviet orbit. On the other hand, it behaved internationally as a maverick state that often defied the foreign policy positions of Moscow and even withdrew from the Warsaw Pact command structure after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Conventional wisdom asserted that such defiance could be tolerated by Moscow because Ceausescu's firm Stalinist control over the country gave the Soviets no expectation that Romania would deviate from communism. With the defection in 1978 of Romanian intelligence chief Ion Mihai Pacepa, the idea that Romania's autonomous foreign and security policy was actually a Moscow-orchestrated conspiracy to deceive the West (known as Red Horizon) became widely circulated and accepted by many. In fact, the idea that Bucharest was not a Warsaw Pact maverick but rather a "Trojan Horse" would become a contentious issue within the US policy community in the 1980s. In 1987, former US ambassador to Romania David Funderburk asserted in his book *Pinstripes and Reds* that the US Department of State had been deceived into giving Romania Most-Favored-Nation status