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*A suggestion about the
information explosion.*

THE EXPLOITATION OF FOREIGN OPEN SOURCES

Herman L. Croom

Everyone is by now aware that a virtual tidal wave of publicly printed paper threatens to swamp almost all enterprises of intellectual research. The problem manifests two principal aspects relative to intelligence. The first is the absolute growth in the volume of material of interest to us. The second is the proliferation of our means of obtaining and processing it. Our purpose here is to review what has happened and to suggest a possible course of action. The matter is far from hypothetical.

Where, for example, might the intelligence search begin to determine whether a foreign state suspected of having embarked on a nuclear weapons program had in fact done so? Experience has shown that the logical first step in any such enterprise is to survey the open literature.

In 1963 [redacted] then Deputy Director (AE Intelligence), JIB (London), endorsed the use of open source materials in approaching just this problem: "It is a fact that no country has yet developed a nuclear weapons program in complete secrecy."¹ Mr. Potts pointed out that a nuclear weapons program is a major commitment that is almost certain to be reflected in many other activities. Even a minimum program for producing a small number of nuclear weapons would cost over \$100 million at today's prices and would take at least five years to accomplish. The requirements for critical commodities and personnel would strain the resources of even the richest of the non-nuclear countries. Thus, a survey of the industrial and economic conditions and the natural and scientific resources of a country should indicate the feasibility of nuclear weapons development.

¹[redacted] "Nuclear Military Power in the Hands of a Small Country," *Proceedings of the Second Conference on Intelligence Methods*, 15-19 October 1962, CIA, Washington, D.C., March 1963 (S). [redacted] is now Director of Scientific and Technical Intelligence, Defense Intelligence Staff, United Kingdom.

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Open Sources

A study of the suspected country's import lists might be rewarding in such a situation, according to ██████████ who stated that analysts looking back over the years recalled that at the beginning of the Soviet atomic program, the USSR imported a great deal of prospecting and mining equipment as well as specialized instruments from the United States and the United Kingdom. The implications of these purchases were not fully appreciated until several years later, after other sources had revealed the existence and large scope of the Soviet program.

The value of open source information in intelligence is by no means limited to the detection of large, long-range, multi-million dollar projects. The foreign press in particular plays a major role in providing news of current intelligence value on political, military and economic developments. In the controlled Communist press, editorials and statements by party and government leaders are often indicators of major actions or policy developments. Foreign books and journals are major sources of basic intelligence and assist in current intelligence analysis by providing meaningful background information. Scientific and technical journals frequently furnish the first indications of research and development accomplishments of long-range military or industrial significance.

It goes without saying that the foreign press is often controlled and cannot necessarily be taken at face value. The need for competent analysis is ever present. Thus, Hungarian literary and trade union journals provided significant insights into the controversies over economic reform and individual freedom going on behind the bland facade presented by the official Hungarian press prior to the revolt in 1956. Such insights often display themselves only in the light of classified information. This, of course, is the rationale behind the established principle that the reliability of intelligence analysis is in part a function of the number and quality of sources consulted.

Intense scrutiny of the North Vietnamese press and radio has been an essential intelligence element in support of US effort in the current conflict. Among the many intelligence tasks has been the continuing study of Hanoi's propaganda claims regarding civilian casualties from air strikes as a reflection both of the impact of the strikes and of the extent and nature of the case Hanoi may be building up against the captured members of the US forces.²

² CIA. *FBIS Press Monitoring Program*, FBIS, Directorate of Intelligence, 6 May 1968.

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The intelligence community has benefitted from the early recognition of the value of open source information, and the steps taken to organize the acquisition and exploitation of such information. This program has been expanded and improved from time to time to meet changing conditions. It provides the primary input to some intelligence efforts and significant support to many others. Compared with the more traditional or esoteric intelligence techniques, it is often faster, more economical, more prolific, or more authoritative. It was estimated in 1957 that roughly 75 to 90 percent of CIA's total economic, scientific, and geographical knowledge of the Soviet Bloc was based on analysis of open source material.³ Electronic and photographic techniques probably have reduced the percentages, especially in the last two categories, but the contribution, actual and potential, from open sources is still rather overwhelming.

The amount of foreign open source material available for intelligence exploitation is increasing as would be expected. Formerly, because of restrictions imposed during the Stalin era, relatively few Bloc scientific-technical journals were available in the West.⁴ However, receipts of foreign scientific-technical titles rose from 1,900 to 8,500 per year between 1950 and 1960 and will probably reach nearly 11,000 annually by 1970. Foreign sociological titles more than doubled between 1950 and 1960 and may reach 22,000 annually by 1970.

The developing international situation has brought new open foreign materials under scrutiny, including those from Africa, Latin America and Cuba, and South and East Asia. Communist Chinese open materials increased steadily in availability from 1949 to 1966. In that year, due to the Cultural Revolution, most open materials disappeared other than radio broadcasts and the voluminous propaganda literature. Both are of course indispensable to the intelligence analyst.

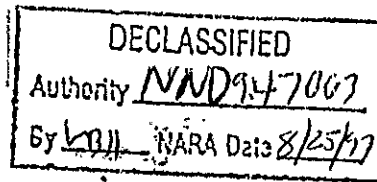
The Machinery

National Security Council Intelligence Directive No. 2 on the Coordination of Collection Activities, revised 18 January 1961, provides that the Department of State shall have primary responsibility

³ Joseph Becker, "Comparative Survey of Soviet and US Access to Published Information," *Studies* I 4, p. 35 ff.

⁴ J. J. Bagnall, "The Exploitation of Russian Scientific Literature for Intelligence Purposes," *Studies* II 3, p. 45 ff.

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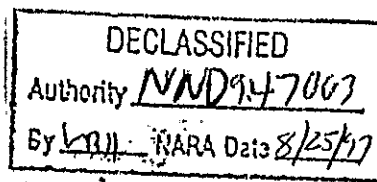
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Open Sources

for, and shall perform as a service of common concern, the collection abroad (outside the United States and its possessions) of political, sociological, economic, scientific and technical information, and that the Central Intelligence Agency shall conduct, as a service of common concern, monitoring of foreign radio and television propaganda and press broadcasts required for the collection of intelligence information to meet the needs of all departments and agencies which have an authorized interest therein. The directive also provides that the Central Intelligence Agency shall conduct the exploitation of foreign language publications for intelligence purposes, as appropriate, as a service of common concern, and that the Director of Central Intelligence shall coordinate similar activities maintained by other departments and agencies to satisfy their own requirements.

Newspapers, magazines, books, and foreign broadcasts comprise the greatest volume of open source materials. In accordance with the NSC directive, the State Department Publication Procurement Officer system, with guidance from CIA, operates through US embassies in various parts of the world in the purchase of books and journals. The most productive effort is in the Soviet Union. New books obtained through this program are announced in the *Russian Book List* (unclassified), prepared by the CIA Central Reference Service, and published by the Department of State.

Of an estimated 50,000-plus new book titles published annually in the USSR, about 12,000 are purchased selectively and shipped to CIA, where an average of nearly 1,000 a year are found worthy of partial or full translation, and intelligence exploitation. In addition, CIA receives regularly and monitors about 42 Soviet newspapers and 630 Soviet journals. The newspapers which contain highly perishable information, are obtained when possible through airmail subscription. From numerous sources, CIA also receives or purchases a wide variety of other publications including monographs, brochures, and pamphlets. After exploitation, most of the books and journals are forwarded to the Library of Congress for the use of the general public and the scholarly community. Soviet books and periodicals received in this manner and from numerous other sources by the Library of Congress and many cooperating libraries throughout the country are announced in the very useful *Monthly List of Russian Accessions*, published by the Library of Congress.



Open Sources

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CIA's Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) has the key role in monitoring foreign broadcasts and, since 1 May 1967, has had responsibility for press monitoring and translation coordination, previously functions of the Foreign Documents Division of the Office of Central Reference. In these programs, FBIS designates priority topics in accordance with requirements by various CIA components and from other intelligence services.

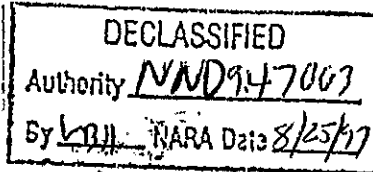
The extensive radio broadcast monitoring program results in the unclassified FBIS *Daily Report* series of separate reports (issued five times weekly) for the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Communist China, Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and Africa, and Latin America and Western Europe. The contents include a variety of fully translated texts in English, excerpts, summaries, and abstracts, mainly from radio broadcasts and press agency transmissions. These reports alert the intelligence community to important developments and statements by foreign officials and other key personalities.

The FBIS press monitoring and translation program issues nearly 80 periodicals and occasional publications for the use of intelligence and other governmental analysts. Most of the serial publications are unclassified and available to the public. There are five concerned with Communist China, and with other Asian and Pacific nations, also five. No less than 38 deal with the USSR, and 23 with Eastern Europe. Four are concerned with Latin America or Western Europe, and three with the Middle East and Africa. These publications are tailored to meet various intelligence needs, and embrace political, economic, sociological, military and scientific categories of information.

Most of the FBIS translations and unclassified serial publications are actually produced by the Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS), an organization established in 1957.

Intelligence and other government analysts can order translations of documents, articles, or books as required. JPRS unclassified publications, including translations, are listed and made available to the general public through US Government Research and Development Reports, a journal published twice monthly by the Clearinghouse for Federal Scientific and Technical Information of the Department of Commerce. As a part of its coordination function, and to prevent duplication of translation, FBIS maintains and publishes monthly the *Consolidated Translation Survey* (Official Use

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Only), listing the completed translations and those in progress of more than 100 participating organizations. In 1968 the index listed more than 400,000 translations.

In addition to the linguistic resources of JPRS, FBIS maintains a staff of intelligence officers with highly developed linguistic abilities and area knowledge, and foreign field bureaus with indigenous press monitors working in 17 languages.

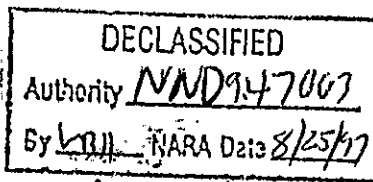
Among the better known of the other translation and open source monitoring services and products available to intelligence analysts are those of the State Department and U.S. Information Service missions throughout the world, which publish summaries or digests relating to the host country. The Aerospace Technology Division (ATD) of the Air Force Systems Command, under the direction of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), scans numerous foreign scientific and technical books and journals as they are received in the Library of Congress or received from Air Force procurement officers. ATD disseminates special studies and English abstracts of foreign books and articles, the latter in very convenient 5 x 8 inch card format widely used by scientific intelligence analysts.⁵ Currently the ATD program is being reorganized. DIA and Army translate several Soviet military journals cover-to-cover on a regular basis. The Atomic Energy Commission publishes *Nuclear Science Abstracts*, an English compilation from worldwide publications relating to nuclear energy.

The non-intelligence (non-USIB) community carries on a large and productive effort to exploit for its own benefit foreign open sources in many cultural areas, producing usually through contract organizations many cover-to-cover and partial translations of Soviet and other foreign language publications. Some of the more notable and extensive of these efforts are those by various professional societies and such government agencies as the National Science Foundation and the National Aeronautics and Space Agency. The non-intelligence effort is of considerable value to intelligence analysts.

Problems and Needs

The history of US exploitation of foreign open sources by both the intelligence and non-intelligence communities shows that the

⁵ George A. Pughe, "The Dust that Isn't There," *Studies* II 2, p. 58 ff.



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programs are expanding as publications have increased (one might almost say that a worldwide "publications explosion" is in progress). As time passes, more programs are initiated and new subjects added.

One of the main problems of the user (analyst), even at present, is the recovery of items whether in the form of abstracts or full translations. If an item of interest is not identified immediately, it is often lost to the potential user because the formats of many of the end products of the various systems do not readily lend themselves to a uniform filing and indexing system. The result is that some users obtain much more benefit than others from open source exploitation. The user with disposable time and the inclination sets up his own files. Others must trust to memory and do without a systematic method of retrieval. As the collection effort expands, this problem will be compounded. The use of machine records methods will be mandatory in the future.

The need for a centralized agency to administer the growing exploitation of all foreign open sources of information is thus already evident to rationalize the numerous efforts, all with similar objectives, going on simultaneously within and outside of the intelligence community.

Such an agency could operate openly, serving the nation as a whole, including the intelligence community. Uncle Sam already is footing most of the bill. Such an agency could be operated with greater net economy and efficiency than the multifarious undertakings of the present, since processing methods could be unified and a single, flexible automatic data processing system could be employed. Such an agency could still take advantage of the use of foreign and domestic field units and could maintain flexibility and comprehensive coverage through the use of contractors. Many linguists might be attracted who would not consider working for an intelligence organization. More promising professional careers could be offered. Arrangements with foreign governments for the exchange of publications could be expanded. NASA already has such arrangements with 80 countries, and the AEC also has an exchange program.

This approach might be especially efficacious with respect to the USSR, where many publications are issued in limited numbers insufficient even for the domestic demand. Some publications, although unclassified, are never placed on public sale apparently because of their priority or sensitive nature. Under an official exchange arrange-

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ment, these publications probably would still be withheld. The proposed agency would permit collection efforts to be focussed on such issuances and on classified publications, rather than on items available to the public.

Another potent argument in favor of a national agency of the type suggested is that it would allow more efficient disposition of intelligence talent and budget. Functions and selected blocs of people could be transferred from CIA and other intelligence organizations to the agency which would be funded directly by Congress. The intelligence community could with good management gain more and better open information from foreign sources under the proposed organization, which could also become a useful instrument of national policy by promoting foreign cooperation through publications and other information exchanges.

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