

Psywar in Intelligence Operations

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Interlocking aspects of the intelligence and psychological warfare functions.

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The intelligence operator, whether collector or analyst, in any Western nation engaged in a defense effort against the Sino-Soviet bloc and the world Communist movement has at least four major reasons to take an active interest in psychological warfare. First, much of the information he collects or analyzes is of value primarily for psywar purposes. Second, psywar may, and does, influence his operational environment and so affects the availability of information to him. Third, intelligence operations have an intrinsic psywar significance, immediate or latent, intentional or unintentional. Fourth, psywar operations, under the specific condition of cold war with the Sino-Soviet bloc and the world Communist movement, require effective clandestine support, which can be provided best by intelligence personnel knowledgeable in the requirements of covert activity.

Psywar as Intelligence Customer

The intelligence officer is not inspired by the purpose of merely collecting and evaluating information or making analytic studies. His mission is not an end in itself, but a means to an end -- a contribution to the defense and foreign policy objectives of his country. His work is therefore meaningful only to the extent that the information he provides is utilized through appropriate action. The individual operator's performance, to be sure, does not lose merit if significant information which he acquired in due time and reported to proper

authority is not acted upon; but the intelligence organization as a whole has failed to function effectively if the information it produces does not lead to some kind of policy determination or action.

In some fields the relationship of an item of information to a course of action is simple and obvious. Data on a new enemy weapon, for instance, transmitted to the armed services, will enable them to develop a similar innovation, to devise a defense against it, or at least to alert combat troops to the new hazard it represents. Or intelligence about another country's plans for tactics at a diplomatic conference will enable the collecting country's diplomats to adjust their own preparations accordingly.

Less self-evident are the customer to be informed and the appropriate actions to be taken on some of the widely variegated types of information which can be generally classed as "of psywar value." Traditional political and economic reporting, in addition to its importance for policy agencies, often has relevance to psywar operations; a shift in Soviet production from military hardware to consumer goods interests not only diplomats and military planners but also propagandists. Psywar needs sociological and psychological data which can be obtained by overt research, for example the relative influence of established religion and atheist indoctrination on the populations of Communist countries. Operational data may be of psywar significance, such as the covert Communist control of ostensibly non-Communist mass communications media or Communist influence on political parties and other power factors in the non-Communist world.

It is not enough that the intelligence operator should recognize the psywar value of his information and transmit it to a customer authorized to act on it. In the field of psychological warfare, as in any other segment of intelligence collection, the customer's requirements determine what is to be collected, the priority assigned it, and whether only information on the national, policy-making level or also particularized data on lower levels is to be sought. These requirements of the customer depend in turn upon his plans and capabilities for action. The relationship between intelligence collector and customer in the psywar field must therefore be a mutual one. Support and guidance must flow both ways.

The Communist intelligence officer has no problem in getting his information acted upon: the Party takes action either through its own organization, usually the Agitprop or Foreign Relations department of its Central Secretariat, or indirectly, through the government intelligence services or the front organizations it controls, on all intelligence of psywar value. The Western nations have no organs with functions even remotely comparable to those of a Communist party, especially one in power; they have to take action on psywar intelligence primarily through a government agency.

Psywar as Intelligence Aid

The intelligence operator's chances of success or failure depend not only upon the determination, skill, professional equipment, and other assets that he and his organization bring to bear, but also upon the environment in which he is operating. Some elements of this environment are in a sense objective: he must travel and communicate over certain distances, he must avoid certain controls, he must counter the opposition. Other elements, however, are psychological -- the extent and intensity of friendliness or hostility with which his and the opposition's course are viewed by actual or potential agents, or by any persons in a position to help or hinder their activities; the apparent superiority of one side or the other in the eyes of those in between; morale and loyalty in the opposition's ranks; and so forth.

These psychological elements in the operational climate can be of decisive importance. The operations of Hitler's Gestapo against the outlawed German Communist Party were greatly assisted by the effectiveness of Nazi propaganda in mobilizing the active support of large parts of the population for this work. When the same Gestapo was later sent into France and other Nazi-occupied countries to cope with the Communist underground there, it was far less successful. It must have been largely the change in operational climate, not any deterioration in the professional skill of Hitler's security and intelligence services, which led from the effective liquidation of the German Communist underground to the Nazis' failure to suppress the Communists in the countries their armies had effectively occupied.

Five years ago the West surfaced Khrushchev's secret speech at the 20th CPSU Congress and gave the text world-wide publicity. The impact of this revelation of Stalin's crimes upon Communists and non-Communists alike benefited Western intelligence operations in many ways: it induced defections, it lowered morale in Communist ranks, it increased people's readiness to assist the West and thereby markedly improved the operational climate.

Intelligence operators need not wait for windfalls to improve the operational climate upon which so much depends in their work. They can contribute actively to Psywar operations which, either as their main objective or as a by-product, will modify the operational climate in the desired direction. Intelligence collection and Psywar objectives coincide in this aspect of operations.

Psywar as Intelligence Product

Some intelligence operations, especially ones of a tactical and technical

nature, carry, whether incidentally or by main intent, a significant Psywar impact. A psychological purpose is central to deception operations that mislead the opposition by playing false information into its hands or staging ostensible operations against a false target. The incidental psychological effect of other intelligence operations may influence not only the opposition but other groups and populations at large.

The obvious success of an intelligence operation may impress both friend and foe. At one stage in World War II, Allied aircraft attacked a new underground headquarters of the German Supreme Command within 24 hours after it had been put into service; and years after the war the inhabitants of the area were still discussing with awe the efficiency of Western espionage. It does not matter whether that air attack was really the product of espionage, the result of aerial reconnaissance, or merely a lucky accident: whatever the historic truth, the depth of the psychological impact for a long time after the event was startling.

Although most intelligence operations are carried out with the knowledge of only a very limited number of persons, a large-scale psychological effect is often produced when they are later exposed and publicized by the originating service or by the opposition. The results do not always coincide with the intentions of the side that provides the publicity. Several years ago, for instance, the Soviets in Berlin discovered that a Western service had tapped their communication lines by means of a tunnel dug under the sector border. They decided to give this perfidious trick as much publicity as they could, and they brought busloads of correspondents, domestic and foreign, to the site. The ensuing publicity, however, was for the most part quite different from what they expected: many people in Germany and throughout Western Europe were impressed by the feat and reassured by this evidence that the West was capable of matching wits with the Soviets.

Intelligence officers ought to give careful consideration to the potential of proposed operations for psychological flap or psychological advantage in event of exposure. Further, they should examine the possibilities for intentional psywar use of operations of their own or of the opposition.

Psywar as Covert Operation

In the cold war, the United States and her allies find themselves mostly on the defensive, which means, among other things, that their antagonists have the first choice of weapons, battlefields, and timetables. The Communists have chosen primarily political weapons -- agitation and propaganda, mass organizations, subversion. Although they do not eschew the use of more orthodox means in the international arena -- armed forces, economic warfare, diplomacy -- these are subordinated to the political bias of the controlling

Communist Party.

The cold war is therefore being fought mainly with the weapons of psychological warfare, taken in its broadest meaning to denote the whole range of manifestations from propaganda and various kinds of national penetration to the political-psychological effects of the respective antagonists' achievement in orthodox activities -- military power, economic strength, social stability, national morale, and so forth. There are other reasons for this hegemony of the psychological, too, among them the reluctance of governments to risk nuclear war in pursuit of their national objectives, the extraordinary new efficiency, range, and speed of mass communications, and the rapid rise of literacy rates in all parts of the world.

On the Communist side, these weapons are wielded mainly by ostensibly non-government agencies, the Communist parties and their innumerable fronts and auxiliary organizations. This setup enables a Communist government to disclaim formally the responsibility for whatever these groups may be doing in another country. It also provides a huge, specialized apparatus devoted largely to the conduct of the cold war, endowed with enormous manpower reserves - - the 85 Communist parties alone have more than 30 million card-carrying members, of whom several hundred thousand are full-time activists -- and backed by the massive financial and technical resources of twelve totalitarian dictatorships.

The mass organizations of the non-Communist world -- political parties, labor unions, veterans' associations, and the like -- though capable of playing a significant role in the cold war, are by themselves no match for the world-wide Communist machine. Most of them exist for some strictly limited purpose such as getting their representatives elected to parliament or obtaining better working conditions for their members; they cannot compete with a movement whose central and pervasive purpose is to bring all mankind under the dictatorship of the proletariat and thus decisively to change the course of history. In countries where the Communist movement is comparatively weak, political groups, however anti-Communist in their basic attitudes, naturally spend a far greater amount of their energies in competing with each other than in fighting the cold war. But even in countries like Italy, France, India, or Japan, where the Communists are strong and well organized, the spontaneous anti-Communist efforts of political parties and other mass organizations are inadequate, being limited to opposing the local Communists at the polls and in shop steward elections and similar contests, without mounting any effective counteroffensive against world Communism beyond their borders.

These private efforts can make a successful contribution in the cold war only if they are all coordinated, supported, and supplemented by government action. But since the psywar weapon chosen by the Communists involves activities which, when not entirely clandestine, must have their government sponsorship disguised, the regular agencies of a democratic government in

peace time (and the cold war, for all that its outcome will be of more decisive significance for mankind than that of a good many shooting wars in earlier phases of history, is technically considered a state of peace) would find it difficult to meet the Communist drive on the scale and with the militancy required.

The conduct of the West's psywar effort is therefore inextricably bound up with the intelligence function. This phase of national defense has to be carried out by clandestine means not attributable to the sponsoring government. It has to depend on intelligence techniques such as cover, foreign agents, the penetration of hostile organizations, and third-country operations, as well as utilize information obtained by clandestine collection. Organizationally, however, responsibility for psywar may be assigned in any of three ways--to the same organization and the same personnel that collect intelligence; to the same organization which collects intelligence but to separate units and different personnel; or to an independent organization, connected only through liaison arrangements with the collecting service.

The decision as to which of these three ways should be chosen in a given country and at a given time has to be made at top level and will be governed by a variety of considerations. Regardless which organizational form is selected for psywar, however, the intimate relationships with intelligence outlined above will remain. We are faced with three alternatives in the cold war -- to surrender peacefully ("better red than dead," as the pacifists say); to leave the decision to World War III; or to fight world Communism at least to a standstill, forcing it by means short of general war, i.e., by successful psychological warfare, to abandon its world drive. Taking cognizance that this is the choice, everyone in the intelligence community, whatever his specific function, ought to give psywar operations his unstinting support.

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