

# Coexistence and Covert Collection

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**SECRET**

*An intelligence officer surveys his new opportunities and problems in a coexisting world.*

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The collection of intelligence information is greatly influenced in its purposes and methods by the state of international affairs; changes in the world situation can create or improve certain opportunities for collection and diminish or even deny others, while shifts in world opinion may seriously affect the advisability of undertaking particular types of intelligence activities. The present time is one of rapid change in world affairs; in general it provides expanding opportunities for collection operations abroad, but at the same time it renders the exposure of these operations by the opposition more damaging than before to our national interest.

In the five years since the death of Stalin the strategy and tactics of the USSR in international relations have changed radically; the old rigidity has made way for a more supple, varied, and resourceful approach; threats are interlarded with promises, and even the customary propaganda blasts at the United States are now mixed with occasional praise. The Soviets themselves have invented the name "competitive coexistence" for their new approach. They have come a long way since they and their Satellites sulked behind the Iron Curtain; the deep distrust which they formerly exhibited and which they in turn inspired has considerably lessened, and their protean behavior makes the

contest for world opinion generally more difficult for the West.

In this world of competitive coexistence our diplomats, our propaganda specialists, and our intelligence officers must suit their methods to the changing opportunities and obstacles of the moment. One of the present opportunities for intelligence collection lies in the increase of contact between Soviet and American citizens. Restrictions on travel to and within the United States have always been few, whereas such restrictions have been numerous in the Communist states, so that the present changes gradually reduce our relative disadvantage. But an obstacle is also hidden in the fact that East and West, and particularly the Soviet Union and the United States, have adopted a less antagonistic posture on the world stage: we are compelled to exercise greater restraint in the conduct of activities which could be publicized by the Soviets as instances of unprovoked hostility. One would expect the Soviets, incidentally, to feel constrained in the same way, but apparently they do not; their intelligence activities have become more blatant and offensive at the very time they profess a desire to improve the political atmosphere.

## **The Opportunities of Coexistence**

The most obvious opportunity for collection is of course that afforded by the increase in travel to and within the USSR. The flow of travel has risen steadily since the exchange of agricultural delegations made the first notable breach in the Iron Curtain in 1955. The most recent development in this field is the agreement signed by the United States and the USSR on 27 January 1958, which provides for "a large number of technical, scientific, and cultural exchanges, including an exchange of radio and television broadcasts." This agreement may be a prelude to further understandings; President Eisenhower's reply in February to a Bulganin letter proposed that other Soviet citizens come to the United States, not in search of technical knowledge but to meet the American people and see for themselves that we want peace. Soviet Ambassador Mikhail Menshikov has expressed a desire to visit California, and this may be an indication of the Soviet Union's willingness to negotiate with the United States the easing of travel restrictions imposed on each other's representatives. Furthermore, it is probable that the Satellite

countries of Europe will follow the example of the USSR in developing exchanges with the United States. The expansion of private travel and contact is a trend that governments find easy to encourage but difficult to reverse, and every new increase lends impetus to further popular demands for expansion.

As the volume of travel has increased in recent years, travelers into the Soviet Orbit have brought back more and more information. An intelligent traveler can collect valuable information without once discarding his ostensible role as a traveler if he has had competent briefing on specific requirements and on local conditions and is subjected to detailed debriefing on the information acquired and on the various circumstances in which it was obtained. The value of the take is cumulative, as new information complements, corrects, or confirms the earlier. Sometimes it supplies the last missing piece of a puzzle: one well-briefed traveler gave such an accurate description of the power-line characteristics of a certain area that analysts were able to determine the type and capacity of a strategic installation. Another alert and well-prepared traveler, making the most of an unexpected opportunity, obtained without incident the best photograph available on a priority military target while his plane was in flight between two principal cities of the Soviet Union.

One very productive traveler is the tourist, the curious, talkative, uninhibited American tourist, with camera attached, who has become familiar in most parts of the world. His nerve and persistence are often rewarded: one tourist overcame a guard's initial objections at an airfield and was allowed to photograph a new plane from every angle; in fact, he even obtained the dimensions of the airfield. Suspicion and resistance vary in different regions and with individuals; they are generally much reduced in the outlying areas. The traveler who is a specialist in subjects of priority interest can be particularly valuable, but his effectiveness is greatly reduced when he travels in a group, as often happens, and is given a guided tour organized by the host government; furthermore, many of these specialists fail to notice what lies outside their professional interests. The persons who will go to the USSR by virtue of the new cultural agreement will be such specialists, and they will probably be chaperoned much of the time; however, any increase in travel to and within the USSR is useful because it aids those travelers who are active in collection by making them less conspicuous.

The trend towards increased contacts between Soviet and American

representatives in non-Communist countries is also continuing, and there are indications that the cultural agreement between the United States and the USSR will be the occasion for an intensification of the Soviet campaign, under way for many years, for the development of such contacts; a Soviet press secretary shortly thereafter made a specific reference to the January agreement when he approached his American counterpart with a proposal for social contact. Here again we expect to gain by reciprocating, and the position of the United States Government in favor of such contacts has been laid down in Department of State instructions in December 1954, March 1955, and January 1956. There are certain countries, of course, where contacts between Soviet and US representatives would, because of local conditions, be detrimental to our national interest, and the US ambassador can restrict or forbid such contacts.

So far we have derived a considerable amount of information from social contacts with Soviet officials, although we must concede that the Soviets themselves have received corresponding benefits. The best of the information is that which has helped us identify Soviet intelligence personnel, monitor their activities and determine their targets and methods. We have obtained a lesser amount of political and economic information; the political information has been particularly valuable when it has helped explain sudden changes in the leadership of the USSR. Social contacts also prepare avenues of defection for Soviet Orbit nationals who may some day choose to remain in the West.

The Soviets must of course be aware of the opportunities afforded our intelligence effort every time they lift the Iron Curtain a little higher and must have chosen to accept this risk in the course of a strategy of peaceful gestures designed to win over the neutrals and neutralize our allies. We can expect more vigorous wooing of both neutrals and allies in the future, and another opportunity for intelligence collection is presented in the Soviet cultivation of these people in their own countries and invitations to view recent achievements in the USSR. The intelligence services and other government agencies of friendly countries can be of great use in helping us monitor Soviet overtures and in giving us an opportunity to guide the responses. Individual nationals of neutral countries can be particularly useful when they cooperate with us, because the Soviets can be expected to speak more frankly with them and allow them more freedom of movement within the USSR.

These are, in brief, the principal advantages we derive from coexistence

-more freedom of movement for Americans and their friends to look around the USSR, and a better opportunity to elicit information from Soviets abroad, both directly and through local sources.

## **The Hazards of Coexistence**

The Soviets hope that their new policy of easing tension will release among the neutrals and our allies those forces which, for different reasons and in varying degrees, press for closer relations with the Communist countries. It will therefore be more important than ever that we be informed of any changes in the attitudes of friendly and neutral governments as they occur; our liaison contacts can be very valuable in this respect. We will have to develop greater effectiveness in countering Soviet efforts at persuasion, subversion, and penetration in other countries, because these efforts will be exercised in a more relaxed and therefore more favorable atmosphere in the future.

While coexistence has opened new avenues into the USSR, it has also created a political atmosphere that will force us to exercise greater restraint in the conduct of certain types of operations, and in some cases to abstain altogether. At the height of the cold war, which was also the time of the hot war in Korea, we could use normally objectionable methods like the violation of a target country's air space without worrying too much about hurting its feelings. We became more careful at the first thawing of the Soviet attitude, and we will probably have to exercise even more caution and restraint in the future.

The agreement of 27 January is an expression of good intentions on both sides. The Soviets will probably not be inhibited in their future behavior: at the very time when Bulganin was trying to persuade the nations of Western Europe of the purity of Soviet motives, three Soviet service attaches were expelled from Holland for espionage. We value our reputation more highly, and it will be important to us not to appear, in the eyes of a watching world, to violate our professed good faith. More than ever, we will have to examine all that we do in terms of the damage it may cause our reputation among the various nations of the world in the present international atmosphere.

The political climate of coexistence has had a restricting effect on illegal

cross-border operations. This type of operation has always been difficult; the internal controls in the Communist police states make the maintenance of an illegal agent for any length of time extremely precarious, and there are no indications that these controls will be relaxed. Now, in addition, there are stronger political objections to certain methods of agent infiltration, and we may have to forego some operations because the repercussions in the event of exposure would be more serious than formerly. In illegal operations conducted jointly with friendly services, the problem is compounded by the fact that the friendly government may have political reasons of its own for vetoing the proposed operation. Nevertheless, illegal operations will be undertaken when the information desired is important enough to justify the risk, when agents suitable for the job are available, when the reliability of the reporting can be checked, and when the same information cannot better be acquired through other means.

These are in general terms the prospects for covert collection in the new age of coexistence. The present conditions may change at any time, in which case our methods would probably have to be revised to suit the new circumstances. It seems, however, that the trend towards more normal relations with the USSR, and therefore towards less hostile techniques of intelligence gathering, will continue for some time to come.

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