

Soviet Communications Journals as Sources of Intelligence

BY

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~~Secret Kimbo~~

The collection of foreign intelligence is accomplished in a variety of ways, not all of them mysterious.

—Allen Dulles, *The Craft of Intelligence*

“Sputnik will contain two transmitters, with frequencies of about 20 and 40 mc; radiated power will be about one watt. . . . Sputnik’s signals will be c.w. dashes .05 to 0.7 second long. The transmitters will operate alternately, the mark of one corresponding to the space of the other.”

This announcement, published in the June 1957 issue of the Soviet magazine *Radio*, was intended to acquaint Russian radio amateurs with the signal characteristics of Sputnik I so that they would be prepared to monitor the signals once the satellite was launched. The next two issues of *Radio* contained additional details of Sputnik’s transmissions.

If we Americans had been reading *Radio* as carefully as the Russians were, we might have been better prepared to receive Sputnik’s signals when it was launched a few months later. We would have known, for example, that the transmissions were to be on 20 and 40 mc instead of on 108 mc, as had been agreed upon in the IGY satellite program. Our failure to act upon—perhaps even to notice—the announced change in frequencies meant

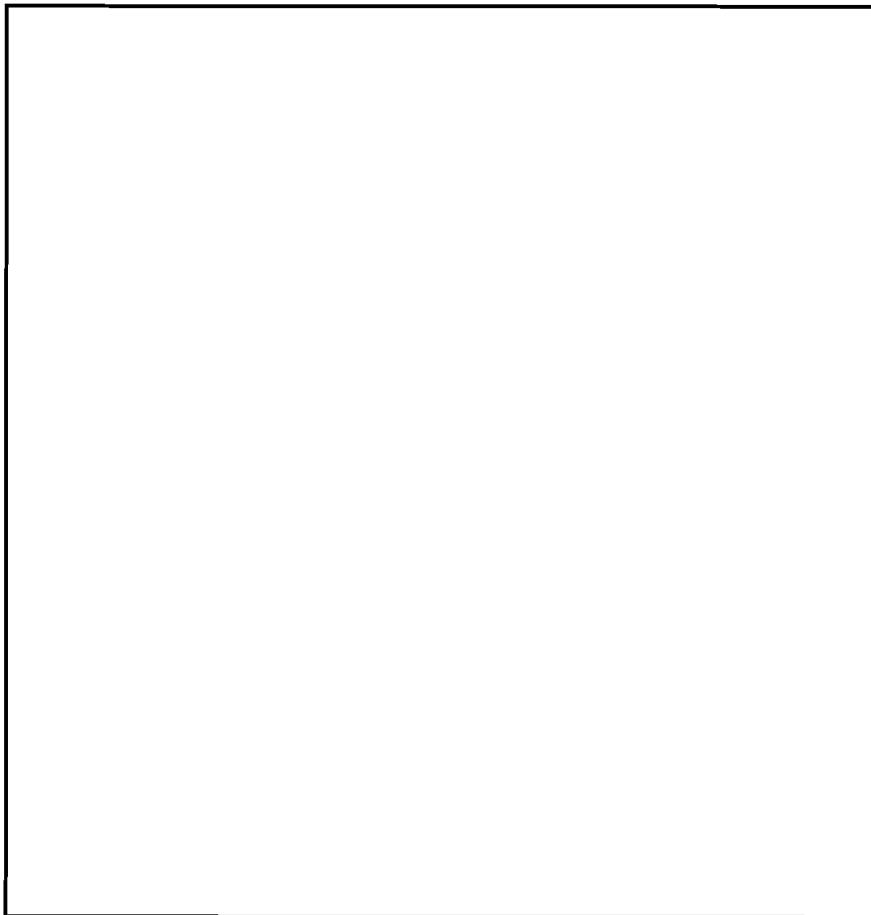
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(b) (3) - P.L. 86-36

The example of Sputnik illustrates rather dramatically the value of Soviet technical journals as sources of intelligence. If we learned nothing else from Sputnik, we learned that what the Russians write in their technical publications is worth reading. If these journals were little read in the West before Sputnik, today they are read widely and carefully.

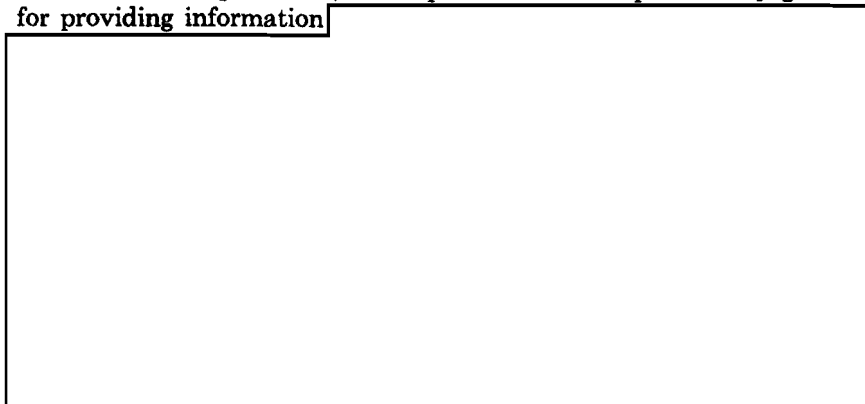
Using [Redacted] as an example, let’s see how useful Soviet communications journals are as sources of intelligence at NSA.

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(b) (3)-P.L. 86-36

As these examples show, the "open sources" are particularly good for providing information



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Which are the good sources?

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Pravda and *Izvestiya* sometimes provide miscellaneous items of interest—

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Except for a few old issues which are available, copies of this magazine unfortunately seem to be almost impossible for foreigners in the USSR to buy, borrow or steal.

The Russians are prolific publishers of books and pamphlets which are sold widely at very low cost. While some of those in the communications-electronics field are written in a popular science vein, there are also serious works, and these are worth looking at. Those which we have used range from booklets

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As guides to what the Russians are publishing in our field, we use the various periodical indexes and book catalogs published in both English and Russian.

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A considerable amount of Soviet scientific and technical information is now available in translation. In the communications field, complete translations of the magazine *Elektrosvyaz'*, *Radiotekhnika*, *Radiotekhnika i Elektronika*, and *Vestnik Svyazi* are available in

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(b) (3) - P.L. 86-36

English. Individual articles, pamphlets and books are also translated by various government and private organizations, notably by the Joint Publications Research Service. Many of the news items from *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* are published in CIA's daily *Foreign Broadcast Information Service* reports. Abstracts of articles from Russian electronics journals are prepared by an Air Force unit at the Library of Congress. Others are published by commercial translation services in digests such as *Electronics Express*.

Finally, how reliable are the Russian sources? Since they are written by communicators and are intended to impart information to other communicators, there seems to be little reason for willful distortion. If allowance is made for a small "bragging factor," the sources can generally be considered reliable. We consider them not only reliable but valuable.