

Soviet High-Tech Spying Detailed in France

Soviet documents published in the French press describe an elaborate system for gathering and distributing technical information from the West

Paris. Exactly 2 years ago, the French socialist government surprised not only its conservative opposition but also many of its Western allies by demanding the swift expulsion of 47 Soviet diplomats, almost all of whom—with little formal protest—left the country within 24 hours.

At the time, no explanation was given by the government of its action. Last week, however, documents published in the daily newspaper *Le Monde* and widely believed to have been leaked by the French secret service revealed that the principal reason for the expulsion was detailed evidence obtained by the service of a coordinated campaign of technological espionage orchestrated from Moscow and operating in the West.

The particular document excerpted at length in the French newspaper is claimed to be an internal report on the various ways in which the Soviet aeronautics industry had benefited from information contained in technical documents obtained abroad through "special channels." Such information ranged from the results of wind-tunnel experiments on aircraft design to detailed improvements in high-speed inflight computers.

The document states explicitly that 156 technical "samples" and 3896 technical documents were collected in 1979, of which 87 samples and 346 documents "have been used in a practical way in research projects and in the development of new weapons systems and new military materials, as well as in the improvement of weapons systems in current use."

In addition, the newspaper published for the first time a complete list of the names and responsibilities of the 47 individuals who were expelled in 1983. This contained not only several members of the science and technology section of the Soviet Embassy in Paris but, in a potentially embarrassing revelation, nine members of the USSR's permanent mission to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), and three full-time members of the agency's staff.

In a separate article, again generally believed to be based on information provided by the secret services, the newspaper describes the highly elaborate machinery which has been set up in Mos-

cow to coordinate the collection of scientific and technical data in foreign countries, and channel it to those parts of the Soviet administration where it is needed.

It claims that 12 separate ministries—nine of which are directly interested in different forms of military technology—address their specific research and technical needs to a special committee of the presidium of the council of ministers responsible for military industry, the Voenno-Promyshlennaya Kommissia (VPK).

Their requests are sorted out according to subject, 244 priority targets being said to have been selected in 1979. Requests are then channeled to one of five different organizations, each of which has its different network for gathering information.

Sixty-one percent of the information gathered by the Soviets in 1979 came from the United States.

Almost three-quarters of the collecting work is carried out by the special technical services of the secret police (KGB) and of the military information services. Other queries are dealt with by the foreign relations department of the State Committee for Science and Technology; by the foreign relations section of the Academy of Sciences; and by the Ministry of Foreign Commerce (although it appears that the latter, at least, is only responsible for collecting information published in the open technical literature).

The results are subsequently collated and redistributed to the ministries which initially made the request by the State Institute for Interdepartmental Information, in close collaboration with VPK.

According to the information obtained by the French secret service, the two sectors which have benefited most from this information gathering have been electronics and the aeronautics industry. As for information contained in documents and technological objects obtained through "special channels," 61

percent is said in 1979 to have come from the United States, 10.5 percent from West Germany, 8 percent from France, 7.5 percent from Britain, and 3 percent from Japan.

The Soviet documents estimate that the total savings in research costs to the aeronautics industry in 1979, both in terms of providing technical answers to specific questions and in providing a general overview of scientific advances with potential military applications, was approximately \$150 million.

There is uncertainty in diplomatic circles in Paris over why the documentary evidence, the production of which is said to have cut short any protests from the Soviet Union over the expulsion of its diplomats in 1983, should have been made publicly available at this particular time by the French secret services.

The disclosures in *Le Monde*, for example, came at an embarrassing time for the Minister of Foreign Commerce, Edith Cresson, coinciding with a meeting with her Soviet counterpart designed to explore ways in which France might reduce its current annual trade deficit of \$500 million with the Soviet Union.

One explanation is that the release was timed to coincide with the visit to Paris of U.S. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and a desire of the French to convince him that any skepticism toward current U.S. military policy—in particular the Strategic Defense Initiative—is not the result of any pro-Soviet sympathies.

U.S. officials, although claiming previous ignorance of the contents of the documents obtained by the French, have been quick to point out that they reinforce the Reagan Administration's efforts to tighten up on the Soviet Union's access to Western high technology, whether obtained legally or illegally.

The only official commentary in Paris, however, has come from the Minister of Research and Technology, Hubert Curien. Asked about the disclosures in a television interview, he replied that while "espionage in pure research does not mean anything" since all results are openly published, in the field of technology transfer "we have very strict rules, and have a number of agreements with our allies which forbid us from doing certain things."—**DAVID DICKSON**