

State Dept. declassification & release instructions on file 10006-8

SECRET SECURITY INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT OF STATE FACILITIES  
FOR CHINESE TRANSLATION

Three channels for the translation of Chinese documentary materials come under the direction of the Department of State. One is here in Washington, the other two in Taipei and Hong Kong.

1. DIVISION OF LANGUAGE SERVICES (TC)

Within the Department here in Washington, the Division of Language Services (TC) is organized primarily to provide the Department with interpreters and to handle diplomatic documents, letters, and White House mail. It has two Chinese language translators. Translations are made by TC only in response to specific requests. Translations are typed in a limited number of copies and ordinarily do not circulate beyond interested offices in the Department. TC is not equipped or designed for the systematic coverage and translation of published Chinese materials. On occasion, TC has been able to handle translation requests of the Division of Research for Far East (DRF) but only on a limited scale and when the pressure of work is slack. Through TC, DRF also has been able to contact local Chinese for the contract translation of unclassified material, but this procedure has not proved satisfactory. In most cases such contract translations exist as unique copies in our files alone. There are no current plans for an expansion of TC's activities.

2. U.S. EMBASSY, TAIPEI

The second translation service is maintained in Taipei as an adjunct to the operations of the Embassy. Two Chinese there act as a combined research and translation unit, keeping a check on local editorial comment and digging out biographic and organizational data on an ad hoc basis. Whenever pertinent, this material is made available to the Department and other IAC agencies in the form of enclosures to dispatches from the Embassy. Otherwise these translations have received only local circulation until mid-1952 when arrangements were made to have one copy of all those translations of intelligence interest mailed directly to DRF/C.

3. HONG KONG PRESS UNIT

Of a different order is the service from the Hong Kong American Consulate General, which regularly publishes three series of unclassified translations useful for intelligence analysis. This service originated in 1950 as an outgrowth of standard foreign post practice, like that in Taipei. By mid-1950 all US consular posts on mainland China had been closed and Hong Kong became the primary listening post for developments in Communist China. The needs of the post itself led to the creation of what is now known as the Hong Kong Press Monitoring Unit. As presently constituted, the

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Press Unit consists of five translators and one Chinese editor, plus some clerical help, under the supervision of a foreign service officer in the political section of the Consulate General.

The Press Unit systematically processes about twenty newspapers and news agency releases. To date it does not handle periodical literature, although the possibility of its doing so is under consideration, as indicated below. The product of the unit appears in three mimeographed series for general circulation -- two series being devoted to the China mainland and the third, and less important, to Hong Kong itself.

(a) Current Background

The oldest of the Press Unit's publications is the Current Background series, devoted entirely to Communist China. The series was initiated in June 1950 with a view to facilitating general distribution of materials of a documentary nature often not readily or immediately available elsewhere. The series, which now comprises over 260 issues, has dealt with a broad range of political, economic, and social problems. Its coverage has ranged from the reproduction of a single speech or report released by the official New China News Agency (NCNA) in an issue of a few mimeographed pages to a complete assembling of the documentary data dealing with a particular subject or area in an issue running to 60 or 70 pages. Topics of major importance are sometimes brought up to date in a second or third issue devoted to a particular subject. Topics are well selected and reflect the acumen of the Hong Kong mission. In most cases, the topic is introduced by a page or two of comment, setting the scene for the translations which follow. With few exceptions, translations are complete, sources are cited, and editorial comment carefully distinguished from the text. Over half of the material in the Current Background series is locally translated by the Press Unit, the remainder being reproduced from NCNA English releases.

(b) Survey of the China Mainland Press

Closely related with the Current Background series is the bulkier Survey of the China Mainland Press which reproduces Communist news items and editorials from a dozen or more mainland newspapers and the NCNA news service. Issues run to 25 or more legal size pages, are published every other day, and the 635 numbers that have appeared by August 1953 make a stack over five feet high. Items are usually grouped topically to cover Foreign Relations, National Affairs, Regional Affairs, and Special Topics. Since 1951 each issue has had a table of contents. The source of each item is given and translations by NCNA so indicated at the end of the item. For fuller coverage, the headlines of items of lesser import are listed but not translated. In the interests of greater accuracy, names of less well known persons are often given in Chinese

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characters as well as transcription. Items already reproduced in the Current Background series are referred to but not ordinarily included in the Survey of the Mainland Press. In gross terms, the Survey duplicates a large number of the news items contained in The Far East Daily Report of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS). The Survey, however, has wider coverage, it often gives a domestic and hence different version of broadcast news, and its items are generally more accurately translated.

Both the Current Background series and the SCMP are edited and the stencils cut in Hong Kong. Copies are pulled there and the stencils sent to Washington for reproduction and distribution by the Department. Approximately 45 copies go to government agencies and another 100 copies are mailed on request to universities and scholars throughout the country.

(c) Review of the Hong Kong Chinese Press

The third publication of the Hong Kong Press Unit is its Review of the Hong Kong Chinese Press. The average issue of 5-6 legal size pages has appeared 250 times each year since the beginning of January 1951.

The Review of the Hong Kong Chinese Press consists of two sections -- an Editorial Digest and a News Summary. The Editorial Digest reproduces the more significant editorials appearing in local papers, usually sampling the Communist, pro-Kuomintang, and, sometimes, the independent papers. The News Summaries from all the papers give items of local economic interest as well as some coverage of mainland events, the movement of personages through Hong Kong, and information about overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. In response to Washington requests, the Review has increased its coverage of local politics and is treating Macao in fuller fashion. For other intelligence purposes, the Review of the Hong Kong Chinese Press has proven far less valuable than the other two publications of the Press Unit because of the unreliability of the local newspapers in their mainland reporting.

Guidance for the Press Unit's coverage is provided by sections of the standard Foreign Service Manual and by a Comprehensive Economic Reporting Program, which was coordinated with other IAC agencies before it was issued in early 1953. In addition, the Unit has been responsive to spot requests from the Department. The unit has been keenly aware of the need for full coverage for all conceivable purposes and its policy has been to give as representative a selection of topics as available materials permit.

The chief problems encountered by the Hong Kong Press Unit have been in connection with procurement and staffing. The procurement of mainland newspapers has been a constant problem because of Chinese Communist controls over their circulation. The Press Unit attempts by direct as well as devious means to acquire about a dozen newspapers, ranging from such

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official mouthpieces as the Peking Jenmin Jihpao (People's Daily) to representative regional papers like the Hankow Ch'angchiang Jih-pao (Yangtze Daily). Receipt of papers from such sensitive areas as Northeast China are, of course, intermittent and stoppage may occur at any time. Such was the case with Shanghai papers early this summer when the regime was running a localized purge campaign. Papers from Shanghai did not come through for a period of two months. In consequence of the rarity with which some papers come to hand, the Press Unit has felt it advisable to forward translated items therefrom by dispatch rather than in its mimeographed publications lest such "leaks" be more effectively stopped by the Communist authorities.

The present staff of five translators has been cut from the eight they had last year and the unit has had to abandon maintenance of its local file of biographic information. Reference materials are adequate. Clerical assistance and space have both been short. For budgetary reasons, the local USIS program has been forced to abandon its present exploitation of Communist periodicals for propaganda purposes. The Press Unit is presently suggesting that this exploitation extend to other than propaganda coverage of Communist periodicals. The Press Unit recommends that the two experienced USIS translators be hired to monitor Mainland periodicals as a supplement to the unit's work on newspapers. In view of the above-mentioned Communist restrictions on newspaper circulation plus the lessening flow of reliable foreign informants coming from the mainland, US intelligence needs would seem to justify such a contemplated expansion. The annual cost is estimated at \$5000 for salaries and another \$500 for subscriptions, supplies, reproduction, and distribution.

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