

APPROVED FOR RELEASE 1994
CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM

18 SEPT 95

TITLE: For a Standard Defector Questionnaire

AUTHOR: Earl D. Englejohn

VOLUME: 7 ISSUE: Summer YEAR: 1963

STUDIES IN INTELLIGENCE



A collection of articles on the historical, operational, doctrinal, and theoretical aspects of intelligence.

All statements of fact, opinion or analysis expressed in Studies in Intelligence are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect official positions or views of the Central Intelligence Agency or any other US Government entity, past or present. Nothing in the contents should be construed as asserting or implying US Government endorsement of an article's factual statements and interpretations.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

*A suggested way to streamline
the handling of raw CI bio-
graphic data.*

FOR A STANDARD DEFECTOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Earl D. Engeljohn

In these days of amazing technological accomplishments we still cling to a horse-and-buggy system for recording and disseminating raw biographic information of counterintelligence significance obtained from defectors and refugees. Nothing could be more routine and unequivocal than name, age, address, occupation, personal description, etc., but we treat this information as an exercise in composition, to be mulled over, polished, revised, and rewritten several times.

An interviewer at a field station, during his questioning of a refugee about acquaintances of CI interest, jots down in note form the biographic data and any significant remarks. He then returns to his office and rewrites the notes as a draft dispatch. This goes to a typist, who puts it into final form. Thus the information is written out three times before it ever leaves the field station; and if the source has to be requestioned still more rewriting may be necessary. When the dispatch arrives at headquarters, it often contains cryptonyms or references to previous correspondence which have to be eliminated or clarified before passing to other agencies: another rewrite here. When the other agencies finally get it, they have their own processing and indexing to do.

Is all this multiple rewriting and handling really necessary? Or could a way be found for the interviewer to record the information in the first place in a form in which it could be used by all agencies that have a counterintelligence responsibility?

Let us look at an example. Suppose that a member of the Cuban clandestine service defects in New York City and, interviewed by a counterintelligence officer, gives biographic information on 50 former colleagues still residing in Cuba, 10 of whom travel abroad on missions for the service. Could not the interviewer, using forms comparable to the Civil Service Form 57 but with adjustments to accommodate the special

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CONFIDENTIAL

Biographic Questionnaire

questions required in CI cases, print on them the source's basic information on these 50 colleagues, filling one form for each? If the usual challenging and cross examination resulted in changes in the data he could make whatever adjustments were necessary by erasing or obliterating his first entries. For any additional significant remarks in narrative form he could attach as many sheets of copy as required, and once he (and his supervisor) deemed the forms complete they could merely be reproduced for immediate distribution to the interested agencies. We have excellent reproduction machines nowadays.

If such a standard procedure for handling biographic information from refugees were adopted in coordination, these would be the benefits:

Economy of labor. The interviewer would have to record the information once only, and he would also be spared the labor of writing repetitively the topical headings "Name," "Date of birth," "Address," "Occupation," "Education," and so on. Perhaps no typing at all would be necessary until the information were actually exploited by a receiving agency, and considerable typing labor would be saved. The forms could be numbered in such a way as to be cited as reference in telegrams, in inter-agency correspondence, and perhaps in reports. Furthermore, one agency could perhaps arrange to produce companion index cards to accompany the form, relieving other agencies of the burden of carding or indexing.

Economy of materials. The elimination of rewrites of the same information would conserve paper and filing space and reduce paper handling.

Speed of distribution. It is far better to get information a day or so after it is recorded than to wait for weeks while it is being rewritten several times and incorporated into a comprehensive report for distribution. If routine biographic information were distributed immediately upon acquisition it could be screened and traced promptly to determine whether any additional action were necessary.

Efficiency in interviewing. Although the CI agencies could agree on the basic biographic data required by all, each agency has particular areas of interest. If the routine questioning is being done by the CIA, for example, the FBI may wish to

Biographic Questionnaire

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

add certain routine questions to be asked of the source. At present the Bureau can do this only through case-by-case requests or by arranging for further questioning by its own interviewer. If a standard questionnaire were adopted it could include questions of particular interest to each agency as well as the questions of common interest.

Other benefits. A completed standard questionnaire on a person is a good beginning for a file on the person. The 50 forms of substantial biographic data from our Cuban defector would each become the nucleus of a dossier. By their very nature, moreover, forms categorize information so that it can conveniently be converted into machine language for automatic manipulation, if such a program is under way.

The use of a standard questionnaire in routine interviews of refugees and defectors has already proved itself in Germany. After years of duplication of effort and delays, CIA and the U.S. Army agreed on a biographic data questionnaire printed in quadruplicate, and this form is used routinely for recording information on staff members of the East German clandestine service. With this successful precedent and the manifest inefficiency of present rewrite methods, it would seem logical for all agencies using biographic information of CI significance to meet and agree on a standard procedure for handling the raw data.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~