

Counter intelligence

accept valuable information from other countries we must expect to have to pay for it. Usually, in the field of espionage and security, this will be done by providing the donor countries with equally valuable information or by actively assisting their counter-espionage and counter-terrorist operations.

If on occasion one is unable or unwilling to reciprocate, that is unlikely to affect the relationship adversely. Every country has difficulties in cooperating in these matters from time to time. However, if the association becomes one-sided or a pattern develops whereby a country consistently refuses information or assistance, the relationship is likely to wither. Gradually the kind of information a security service needs to do its job no longer is obtainable.

That Canadians do not believe themselves threatened by espionage and international terrorism can be attributed, in part, to their perceptions of these activities, the relatively sheltered existence enjoyed in North America and reluctance to learn from past experience. Many Canadians apparently are unwilling to believe that anyone would wish to carry out unfriendly activities against them. We tend to think that we are universally liked and that others perceive us as we see ourselves — peace loving, honest brokers filled with good-will towards everyone. In addition, Canadians have the habit of denigrating Canada's importance as a nation and hence, cannot understand how anyone would wish to make us targets for espionage and disinformation operations. "What secrets do we possess that could possibly interest the Russians or anyone else?" a senior and influential Cabinet Minister argued some years ago with genuine conviction. It may be a comforting philosophical argument for politicians but it is quickly forgotten when, as sometimes happens, they find themselves personally or professionally affected.

In fact, Canada is an important nation. Not only important but, in relative terms, powerful. We have been for many years, and we still are inextricably allied with the United States and a number of European nations in various defence and other arrangements. This alone makes us an obvious espionage target. In addition, the three thousand mile frontier with the United States makes Canada an attractive launching point for intelligence and terrorist operations against our powerful neighbour.

Soviet threat

Despite continuing economic problems Canada remains a strong post-industrial nation with the capacity to develop and to produce sophisticated technology and equipment. In recent years the Soviet Union, using all the considerable means at its disposal, and especially the KGB and the GRU, has mounted a massive world-wide collection effort to gain access, by hook or by crook, to Western technology.

For example, in the past ten years the Russians have been successful in building an impressive microelectronic industry with design and production line technology acquired in the West. More than anything else this has accounted for the greatly increased sophistication of their various weapons systems. By methods ranging from fully licensed sales to illegal diversions (sometimes arranged through Canada) and outright espionage and theft, they

have acquired technology in areas such as robotics, computers, radar, inertial guidance systems, lasers, metallurgy, integrated circuits and electronic quality silicones. These efforts have been skillfully complemented and assisted by disinformation themes which sought to play upon the Western belief in the 1970s that expanded East-West trade and technology transfers somehow would achieve benign results, and upon Western failure fully to appreciate the true nature of Soviet objectives.

In addition to these considerations, there is the third one mentioned: the inability of the government to make effective use of information and knowledge derived from intelligence and security sources in the formulation of various policies.

This is illustrated by our attitude to Soviet bloc espionage activities in Canada which are seldom considered and dealt with in a sufficiently broad framework. Intelligence activities rarely are taken into account at the official and Ministerial level when policies and strategies are being formulated for the conduct of other relationships with the Soviet Union. Indeed, sometimes the Government seems, almost deliberately to shun the notion that there is or could be any direct relationship between the Soviet Union's espionage activities and their attitudes and policies in other areas. This is not a peculiarly Canadian failing. Many Western governments seem unable or unwilling to recognize that Soviet espionage activities are an integral and important part of the general strategy and goals of the Soviet Union.

Indeed, to put it more strongly, a tendency has developed over the years to regard the Soviet government's espionage activities as being apart from its other activities. It is true that such activities are seen as being unacceptable and there is agreement that they must be countered, but those who consider themselves politically sophisticated tend to regard that as a price which must be paid for doing business with the Russians. Those "sophisticates" hold that Soviet espionage activities, no matter how reprehensible, should not be permitted to impede the cultivation of Canada's relationships with the Soviet Union.

Such an approach is a form of political astigmatism; as dangerous as it is naive. However, this is not to accept the thesis advanced from time to time that our society is riddled with KGB agents and that there is a red under every bed. That is a nonsensical, exaggerated claim which, in its way, is almost as harmful as believing that Soviet espionage activities are a mere aberration which need not be taken into account when assessing relations with the Russians.

There is another side to this coin. There are, indeed occasions when counter-espionage operations are of secondary importance to other, broader Canadian interests. These, however, should be the exception rather than the rule. Over time the balance seems steadily to have tipped in favour of those who argue that tough counter-espionage measures, and particularly giving publicity to exposed espionage activities, could adversely affect Canadian-Soviet relations or some particular negotiation or event.

The judgements involved sometimes are difficult to make and, since invariably they are taken in secret they seldom are open to public scrutiny. Successive Canadian governments appear to have erred on the side of caution, although there is little evidence to support the theory that a