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# U.S. DEMOCRACY: THE TARGET OF RUSSIAN SPECIAL FORCES

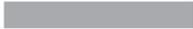
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**WARSAW  
INSTITUTE**

— SPECIAL REPORT —

SOURCE: FLICKR

# Part I



## **Soviet Means for Intervening in Election Campaign and Vote in the United States During the Cold War<sup>1</sup>**

- **Decisions to possibly interfere in U.S. elections were made essentially by members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in partnership with the Foreign Ministry. This is contradictory to what some columnists say, implying that Russian special forces enjoyed some independence in carrying out measures.**
- **In the Cold War era, Soviet special agencies meddled in U.S. elections through what they labeled active measures. The term “active measure” was used to distinguish influence operations and espionage from counterintelligence. This yet involved more than just intelligence agencies. Soviet active measures were found in basically all parts of the Soviet Communist Party and state structures, as an inherent addition to traditional diplomacy.**
- **In many cases, Soviet outlets sought to compromise or corrupt candidates uncomfortable for the Kremlin. Those that planned, prepared, and conducted operations were KGB divisions in charge of political intelligence.**
- **Targets include also congressmen and other officials, reached through front organizations, agents of influence, and members of the Communist Party of the United States.**
- **In the 1980s, Service A set its priority in intervening in U.S. elections to prevent Ronald Reagan from being re-elected as U.S. president.**

# Introduction

Modern democracies have their top feature of that political decisions are made by the entire body of qualified citizens and elections make a fundamental contribution to democratic governance. It is a periodic procedure in which citizens are guaranteed to choose freely among candidates. By voting, people are actively choosing whether to re-elect state authorities or to change them. Elections are when candidates compete with each other and, in consequence, as some win power, others lose it and turn into opposition. Delegating power in this manner exerts a direct influence on state policy both at home and abroad. Thus through foreign electoral interventions, it is possible to win a real influence on the policy of countries, a tool for advancing geopolitical interests of a third state<sup>2</sup>. Electoral intervention is attempts by governments or non-state actors, covertly or overtly, to influence elections in another country to reap benefits<sup>3</sup>.

In its resolution on foreign electoral interference and disinformation in national and European democratic processes (October 10, 2019), the European Parliament officially recognized attempts by state and non-state actors to exert influence on decision-making in the European Union (EU) and its member states. EU lawmakers expressed deep concern about the fact that evidence of interference is continuously coming to light, often with indications of foreign influence, in the run-up to all major national and European elections. According to the resolution, foreign electoral interference from the Russian Federation or other states constitutes a major challenge as it poses serious risks for European democratic societies and institutions, fundamental rights and freedoms, the rule of law, security, economic wellbeing, and, ultimately, Europe's sovereignty. The European Parliament also stated

that such interference by other states constitutes a violation of international law and undermines the right of people to have their say in the governance of their country. Election meddling is also a threat to European sovereignty as it benefits anti-EU, right-wing extremist, and populist candidates aiming to undermine trust in democratic societies. Thus, awareness needs to be raised about Russia's disinformation campaigns as they present a serious challenge to democratic institutions throughout Europe<sup>4</sup>.

As the European Parliament recommends launching awareness-raising campaigns on threats to democratic institutions, this study aims to outline how Russian methods and means for foreign electoral intervention evolved in the United States. This report consists of two parts. This chapter refers to the Soviet theoretical and practical approach to electoral interventions in the United States in the Cold War era. The second one to be published soon will describe Russian means and methods to influence U.S. elections since the end of the Cold War era till now, in particular the 2016 and 2020 votes. Notably, U.S. citizens see elections as the major event in their country's political life. In addition to elections where U.S. citizens vote for executive (U.S. president, state governor) and legislative (U.S. Congress, State Legislatures) branches, they also elect judges, prosecutors, and candidates to fill 519,000 vacant seats in local governments<sup>5</sup>. Over the past ninety years, the United States has turned into the top target of the imperial policy of the Kremlin. Soviet security agencies labeled the United States its "main enemy<sup>6</sup>." Although the Cold War ended long ago, nothing has changed ever since. One example is the *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation*, signed into law by Russian President Vladimir Putin

on December 31, 2015. According to the paper, the United States and its allies are the top threat to Russia's policies at home and abroad<sup>7</sup>. In this, Russian efforts to meddle in U.S. elections should come as an attempt to implement one assumption of the country's long-term strategy to destabilize the United States, a step towards enfeebling NATO and smashing transatlantic ties between Washington and Brussels.

The intention of the author is to draw attention to the role of special forces in such operations. Special agencies are a key tool for putting into practice the Kremlin's foreign policy across the globe. Russian intelligence outlets have not changed their core operations consisting in gathering political, economic, scientific, technical, and military intelligence and influencing foreign policies through active measures. From the 1960s now the growing scale of operations promoted the Soviet and Russian agencies to gradually transform the KGB and the military intelligence branch GRU into globally reaching structures. Now Russia's intelligence agencies, which are the Foreign Intelligence Service, the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, and the Federal Security

Service, also involved in executing intelligence missions, are the main heir to Soviet outlets as far as their traditions, purpose, and types of activities are concerned<sup>8</sup>.

There is some evidence of Russian repeated interventions in U.S. presidential elections in a number of reports, papers, and analyses from U.S. government bodies, media outlets, universities, and public benefit institutions. Russian efforts to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election prompted U.S. federal authorities to open an investigation. Detailed findings from the probe conducted between May 17, 2017, and March 22, 2019, were published in a U.S. Department of Justice report. The special counsel was put in place to oversee the investigation; it was Robert Mueller, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 2001–2013, after whom the report was named<sup>9</sup>. Then efforts were made to confront the source materials with Soviet documents and studies elaborated by Russian experts having links to state power ministries (including intelligence agencies) or diplomatic bodies. These sources are vital as they reflect the practical use of active measures. The issue will be addressed in the second part of the report.

## Historical background

The Soviet Union made its first attempt to meddle in U.S. elections in the 1960s. In February 1956, Soviet officials adopted at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union a new foreign policy scheme named *peaceful coexistence*. The doctrine was intended to systematically enfeeble and destabilize Western nations through economic, political, racial, and historical antago-

nisms. *Peaceful coexistence* triggered some changes in all institutions of Soviet-bloc countries<sup>10</sup>. These occurred notably in intelligence agencies as they got a new job to put into practice some new assumptions of foreign policy. The person who delivered a list of guidelines for KGB officers was Aleksandr Shelepin (1918–1994), a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of

the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Chairman of the KGB from December 1958 to November 1961. These were:

- the “main enemies” of the Soviet Union were the United States, Britain, France, West Germany, Japan, and all other countries of NATO and other Western-supported military alliances.
- the security and intelligence services of the whole bloc were to be mobilized to influence international relations in directions required by the new long-range policy and, in effect, to destabilize the “main enemies” and weaken the alliances between them.
- in doing so, in July 1959, the First Main Directorate of the KGB (foreign intelligence agency) set up Department D, transformed in October 1966 into Service A, an outlet tasked with active measures (*активные мероприятия*)<sup>11</sup>.

The most reliable and detailed definition of active measures as an inherent part of Soviet intelligence activities was included in training materials for officers of the First Main Directorate of the KGB. The document was titled *The main directions and targets of foreign intelligence actives* and had a circulation of just fifty. Its authors defined active measures, named also operational means for influencing some aspects of capitalist states, as “espionage-operational activities, aimed at exerting influence on the foreign policy and domestic political situations of the countries that are the object of those activities, carried out in the interests of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries; undermining the political, military, economic, and ideological positions of capitalism; torpedoing its aggressive plans in order to create favorable conditions for the successful implementation of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union.” Active measures include programs such as:

- inspiration, or offering aid to political parties, organizations, and media outlets to use them for advancing “interests of socialist states,”

- disorganizing work of any groups, organizations, and political parties being a hurdle for the Soviet Union and other communist nations to pursue their foreign policy,
- compromising groups, organizations, political parties, and any public figures,
- exposing “anti-democratic activity and plans of the forces” and counter-propaganda schemes,
- disinformation, or disseminating forged information to deceive the government, general staffs, and hostile intelligence agencies, to derange their activities and fuel any contradictions both within and between them<sup>12</sup>.

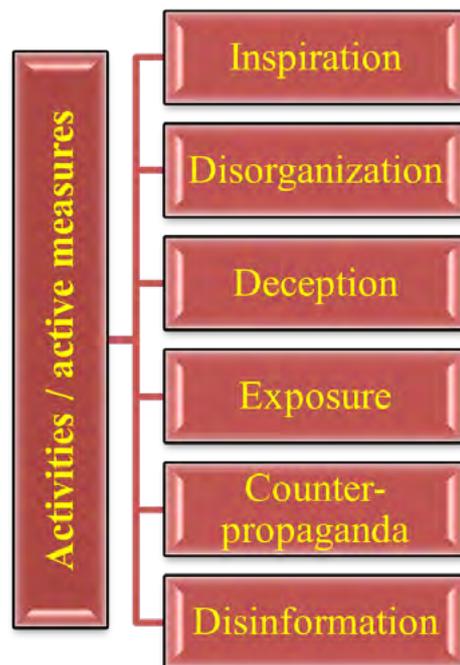


Fig. 1. Active measures of The First Main Directorate of the Committee for State Security under the USSR Council of Ministers.

Source: author’s study based on the KGB training materials: Первое главное управление КГБ СССР. Основные направления и объекты разведывательной работы за границей. Учебное пособие КГБ, Москва 1970, pp. 51–53, 54–77, В.М. Владимирова, Ю.А. Бондаренко, Политическая разведка с территории СССР. Учебное пособие КГБ, Москва 1989, Краснознаменный институт КГБ им. Ю.В. Андропова, p. 86.

Major Stanislav Levchenko, a GRU officer who worked for Service A since 1966, provided a detailed overview of active measures and their role in Soviet intelligence<sup>13</sup>. He claims the term “active measures” first appeared in the 1950s, though Soviet leaders had conducted such operations since the Soviet Union was founded. These include overt and covert methods for eliciting from states particular activities and behavior patterns. Active measures were used to undermine confidence in political leaders, destroy the credibility of the government or the nation, and sow discord between states. They also served to manipulate how some events were seen and what they meant for the public. Active measures were either overt or covert. Levchenko argued that an outstanding example of the former measures were state-sponsored exchange schemes for students and members of cultural groups, serving propaganda purposes. Covert active measures were disinformation, forgery, political, business, and media infiltration, sabotage, and others. Levchenko saw Service A as one of the most important services within the KGB. It worked closely with the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. While Levchenko served in the KGB, the term “active measure” was used to tell the difference between influence operations and espionage on the one hand and counterintelligence on the other. This yet included more than just intelligence agencies. Soviet active measures were found in basically all parts of the Soviet Communist Party and state structures. They were seen as a salient addition to traditional diplomacy<sup>14</sup>. Major General Oleg Kalugin, a KGB operative in New York (1960–1964), deputy resident for political intelligence in Washington residence (1965–1970), and a Radio Moscow correspondent, seems to agree with Levchenko<sup>15</sup>. In January 1998, Kalugin told U.S. news broadcaster CNN:

*The chief mission of the intelligence, as defined by the Soviet leadership, was to forewarn the Soviet*

*leadership of impending military crises. As you know, the Soviet leadership was paranoid about a potential Western attack against the U.S.S.R., and for that reason the intelligence [agencies were] given all they wanted [in order] to provide the leadership with an advance warning about forthcoming events. On the other hand—and this is the other side of the Soviet intelligence, very important: perhaps I would describe it as the heart and soul of the Soviet intelligence—was subversion. Not intelligence collection, but subversion: active measures to weaken the West, to drive wedges in the Western community alliances of all sorts, particularly NATO, to sow discord among allies, to weaken the United States in the eyes of the people of Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and thus to prepare the ground in case the war really occurs. To make America more vulnerable to the anger and distrust of other peoples. In that sense, the Soviet intelligence [was] really unparalleled. The [KGB] programs—which would run all sorts of congresses, peace congresses, youth congresses, festivals, women’s movements, trade union movements, campaigns against U.S. missiles in Europe, campaigns against neutron weapons, allegations that AIDS was invented by the CIA, all sorts of forgeries and faked material—[were] targeted at politicians, the academic community, at [the] public at large. It was really a worldwide campaign, often not only sponsored and funded, but conducted and manipulated by the KGB. And this was again part and parcel of this campaign to weaken [the] military, economic, and psychological climate in the West<sup>16</sup>.*

This perception of the role of active measures in intelligence is part of the “Russian–Soviet” strategic culture. Its features were constant efforts to guarantee national security while ignoring that of other countries, legitimizing the regime by channeling Russian domestic tensions into alleged enemies abroad, claiming that politics is a permanent struggle for power while war and peace are two distinct phases of the same process, painting offensive measures as defensive, imposing an ideological vision of the world and advancing a confrontational approach to the

world, reluctance to make concessions even in response to those from other states, attempts to perpetuate the besieged fortress syndrome, authoritarian fear of social revolt, isolation, the passivity of citizens constantly incited to act by the regime, a permanent belief that war is always possible, and a rule that the military slips out of civilian control in case of armed conflict, seeking a total war<sup>17</sup>.

A highly developed, industrialized, and polarized U.S. society that the United States then was left a fertile ground for such missions. The core of this problem found its reflection in an analysis by Edward Bernays (1891–1995), a business consultant widely regarded as “the father of public relations.”

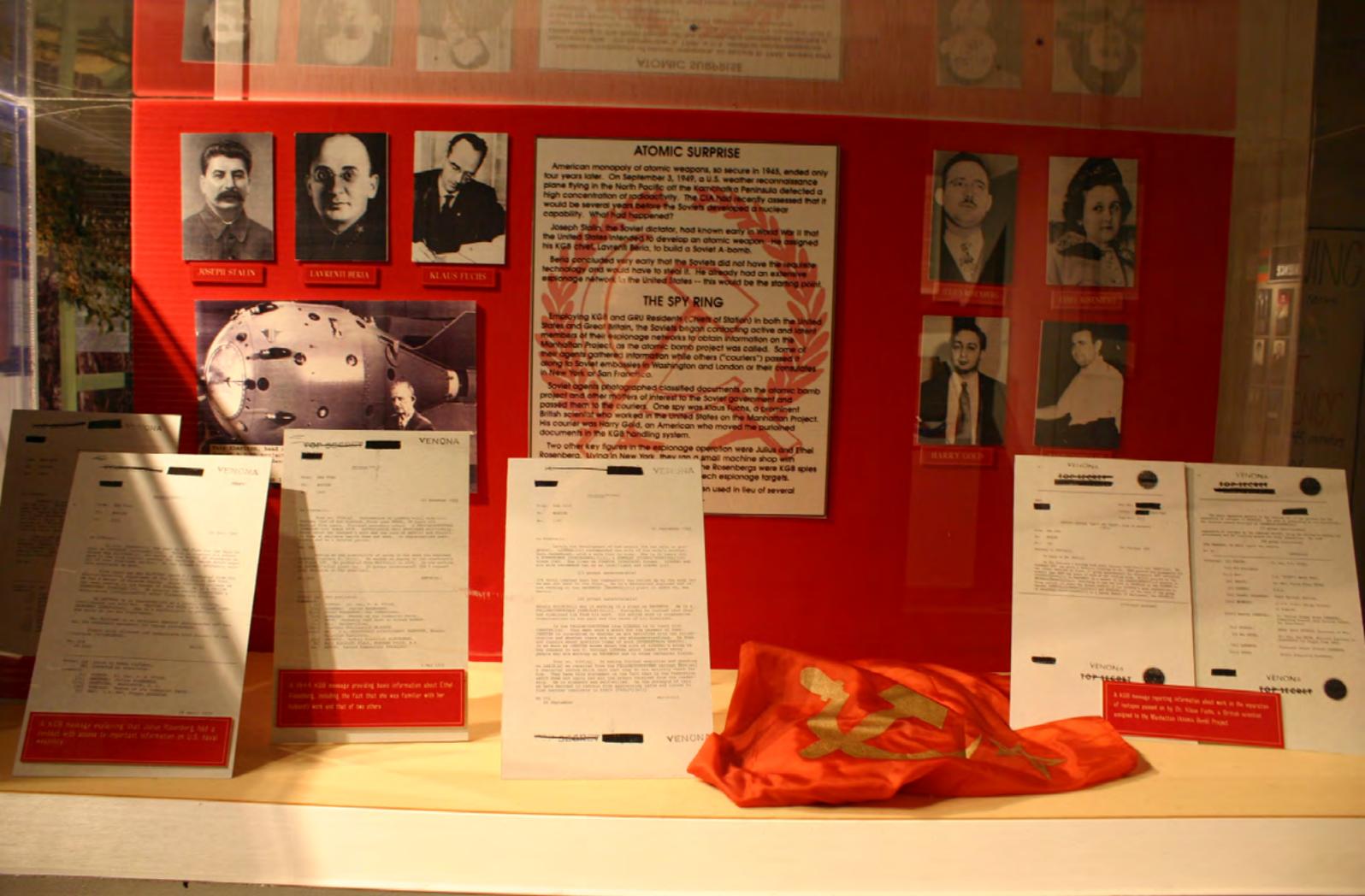
*It is extremely difficult to realize how many and diverse are these cleavages in our society. They may be social, political, economic, racial, religious, or ethical, with hundreds of subdivisions of each. In the World Almanac, for example, the following groups are listed under the A's: The League to Abolish Capital Punishment; Association to Abolish War; American Institute of Accountants; Actors' Equity Association; Actuarial Association of America; International Advertising Association; National Aeronautic Association; Albany Institute of History and Art; Amen Corner; American Academy in Rome; American Antiquarian Society; League for American Citizenship; American Federation of Labor; Amorc (Rosicrucian Order); Andiron Club; American-Irish Historical Association; Anti-Cigarette League; Anti-Profanity League; Archeological Association of America; National Archery Association; Arion Singing Society; American Astronomical Association; Ayrshire Breeders' Association; Aztec Club 1847. There are many more under the "A" section of this very limited list. The American Newspaper Annual and Directory for 1928 lists 22,128 periodical publications in America. I have selected at random the N's published in Chicago. They are: Narod (Bohemian daily newspaper); Narod-Polski (Polish monthly); N.A.R.D. (pharmaceutical); National Corporation Reporter; National Culinary Progress (for hotel*

*chefs); National Dog Journal; National Drug Clerk; National Engineer; National Grocer; National Hotel Reporter; National Income Tax Magazine; National Jeweler; National Journal of Chiropractic; National Live Stock Producer; National Miller; National Nut News; National Poultry, Butter and Egg Bulletin; National Provisioner (for meat packers); National Real Estate Journal; National Retail Clothier; National Retail Lumber Dealer; National Safety News; National Spiritualist; National Underwriter; The Nation's Health; Naujienos (Lithuanian daily newspaper); New Comer (Republican weekly for Italians); Daily News; The New World (Catholic weekly); North American Banker; North American Veterinarian. The circulation of some of these publications is astonishing. The National Live Stock Producer has a sworn circulation of 155,978; The National Engineer, of 20,328; The New World, an estimated circulation of 67,000. The greater number of the periodicals listed—chosen at random from among 22,128—have a circulation in excess of 10,000. The diversity of these publications is evident at a glance. Yet they can only faintly suggest the multitude of cleavages which exist in our society, and along which flow information and opinion carrying authority to the individual groups. [...] This invisible, intertwining structure of groupings and associations is the mechanism by which democracy has organized its group mind and simplified its mass thinking. To deplore the existence of such a mechanism is to ask for a society such as never was and never will be. To admit that it exists, but expect that it shall not be used, is unreasonable<sup>18</sup>.*

An excellent example of using active measures to control the mechanism as described above by Bernays and influence election campaigns were activities of Communist intelligence agencies to change the course of campaigns. Soviet officers made efforts to prevent the victory of candidates seen as uncomfortable for the Kremlin by compromising or corrupting them. Those that planned, prepared, and conducted operations were KGB divisions in charge of political intelligence (политическая разведка)<sup>19</sup>. These took

place either legally or illegally, to identify main political countries in the country (parties, social institutions, government officials, and others), gather open and classified intelligence on their domestic and foreign policy, and to cripple their morale and political potential<sup>20</sup>. Back in the 1960s, the KGB installed what is then referred to as PR lines in its legal residencies, or bases of operations for resident spies. Officers who served there looked for political, economic, and strategic military information and staged operations using active measures. PR line was the biggest resident branch. Notably, it included a U.S. espionage parlance known as the “main enemy group.” Its officers had a top task to recruit U.S. nationals. The group for active measures consisted of operatives who inspired provocative press articles and disseminated disinformation content prepared by the KGB headquarters in Moscow. In addition, they got into contact with local communist parties and commissioned tasks to agents of influence<sup>21</sup>. In their studies titled *Political intelligence activities in the U.S.S.R. territory*, a read recommended by the First Main Directorate of the KGB for students of the Yuri Andropov Red Banner Institute (now the Academy of Foreign Intelligence) studying intelligence (codenamed special discipline number one) and foreign intelligence operatives, efforts to compromise a target sought to inflict on them the biggest political and moral damage by undermining the authority and enfeebling state institutions, political, social, and religious organizations, anti-Soviet immigration centers, and some persons in capitalist countries. Bringing an election candidate into disrepute was an operation that entailed a slew of entities that seemingly had nothing to do with the initiating center by exposing materials (Russian: компромат) to compromise the candidate and their political milieu to exert a direct influence on voters. These consisted mainly of disinformation materials—documents, films, or audio recordings—fabricated by special forces yet attributed to either fictitious or real institutions and media outlets in the targeted country<sup>22</sup>.

What Communist intelligence did to meddle in the U.S. presidential elections in 1964 was one example of putting this model into practice. The Democratic candidate Lyndon B. Johnson (1908–1993) ran for re-election while his top challenger was the Republican nominee Barry Goldwater (1909–1998). In his election agenda Goldwater, a wealthy chain store owner and an Air Force General, vowed to reduce the influence of the federal government. He also called to win “a total victory” in the fight against Communism worldwide. Through a transparent political agenda, he hoped to “wake up” millions of conservative voters who had not decided for whom to cast the ballot<sup>23</sup>. Not surprisingly, he was a threat to the Soviet expansionist policy. Operatives in Moscow devised a plan to kick Goldwater out of the presidential run-up. Details are found file 02670/GS in the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History<sup>24</sup>. It was made on September 3, 1964, and signed by Vasili Kuznetsov (1901–1990), first deputy minister of foreign affairs, and Vladimir Semichastny (1924–2001), the Chairman of the KGB from November 1961 to May 1967. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was asked to approve the action plan to put through a series of active measures to take up a hostile activity against the Republican nominee in some political milieux by using secret channels of communication in foreign press outlets to publish articles fuelling a negative attitude of some towards Goldwater<sup>25</sup>. This was not a tough task as Goldwater ran an aggressive campaign that polarized U.S. society. The candidate disheartened elderly voters with his negative stance on social assistance schemes while more moderate voters felt intimidated by the suggestion to use nuclear weapons to target Vietnam<sup>26</sup>. The memo signed by Kuznetsov and Semichastny urged officers to forge content painting a negative image of Goldwater so that it could be intercepted by the Democrats to help them build a better reputation in the campaign. These narratives should look as follows:



SOURCE: RYAN SOMMA / FLICKR

- Goldwater's electoral win alongside the pursuits to implement his foreign policy agenda will compromise the authority of the United States for its allies and neutral states, a move that leads to the American political isolation in Asia, Africa, and Latin America,
- the potential victory of the Republican candidate, combined with his "extremist" views, is conducive to stronger ties between the United States and its NATO allies,
- if Goldwater had been in office as a candidate overtly backing foreign interventions in domestic affairs of other, notably socialist, states, this would have further destroyed U.S.-Soviet relations, ultimately leading to a nuclear war.

According to file 02670/GS, alongside efforts to spread the critique of Goldwater's political agenda, there was also a plan to use active measures to ill

repute the candidate. It was ordered to fabricate papers to confirm his alleged involvement in a purported conspiracy to kill President John F. Kennedy. The memo was to be leaked as soon as possible before the vote so as Goldwater and his campaigners would have no time to undermine its credibility. The purpose was to slander Goldwater by inspiring some to publish reports depicting the politician as a maniac and a drug addict. There is some evidence that these plans were indeed implemented. Thus the KGB asked the intelligence service from Czechoslovakia to run a propaganda campaign. Ladislav Bittman (1931–2018), a Czech intelligence officer at the First Directorate of the Czechoslovak Security Service (*Státní bezpečnost*, StB) in 1954–1968, wrote that the most important objective was to disgrace Barry Goldwater by orchestrating a disinformation campaign labeling Goldwater as a racist. Intelligence agencies produced and distributed printed material in the United States and

overseas through diplomatic mail. The material contained some content from U.S. dailies and books to which forged information was added and then mailed to government agencies, newspapers, and public figures<sup>27</sup>. Also, KGB officers used a publishing house that belonged to LeRoy Wolins and David S. Canter, members of the Communist Party of the United States who remained under the direct influence of the Kremlin, to distribute printed material that featured a plot involving Goldwater. It was allegedly staged by the Republican nominee conspiring with the John Birch Society to mount a coup and spark a bloody uprising allowing far-right radicals to take power in the United States. Still Goldwater lost the November presidential election campaign in a landslide to Lyndon Johnson who won 61 percent of the popular vote. Goldwater carried just six states, including his home state Arizona. It is a challenge to assess to what extent KGB and other Eastern intelligence service stood behind Goldwater's election disaster<sup>28</sup>. It is worth

quoting what Dr. Georgy Filatov, a researcher at the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, who delivered the following comment on file 02670/GS:

the document above outlines the Soviet plan to intervene in the 1964 U.S. vote when Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater and Democratic nominee Lyndon Johnson stood for election. In early October, the Politburo approved measures to defame the Republican nominee. These included disseminated fake information that he suffered from mental disorders, was a maniac and drug addict. It was planned to forge a memo purportedly showing Goldwater's involvement in assassinating Kennedy. In addition, the note should have been published right before the vote so as Goldwater would have no time to respond. Johnson carried 44 states, winning the vote. Was that a coincidence? I don't think so. And this was well before the time of Facebook and Twitter<sup>29</sup>.

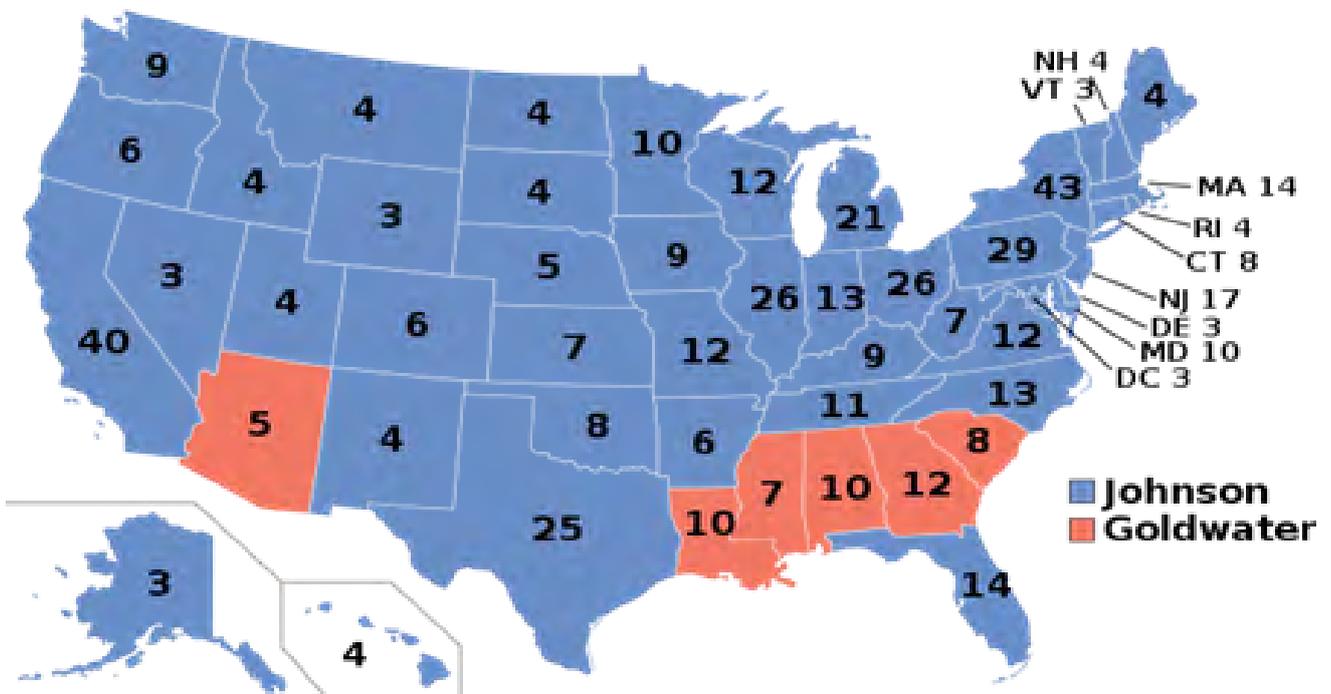


Fig. 2. 1964 United States Election Map. The number on the map stands for the number of state representatives in the Electoral College.

Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ElectoralCollege1964.svg>



SOURCE: 1968 - TỔNG THỐNG LYNDON B. JOHNSON / FLICKR

Another Soviet attempt to meddle in the U.S. elections was in 1968 when the Soviet leadership and the KGB strongly opposed the anti-Communist Richard Nixon (1913–1994) and secretly offered to subsidize the campaign of Hubert Humphrey (1911–1978), the Democratic nominee. In his memoirs, Anatoly Dobrynin (1919–2010), a former USSR ambassador to the United States (1962–1986), disclosed some details on the Soviet actions in the United States.

During a diplomatic reception in the White House on April 23 Hubert Humphrey told me privately that he was inclined to try his luck at the presidential election and was going to announce his candidacy soon. Humphrey said he had always considered U.S.-Soviet relations as a major factor influencing the prospects for war and peace and that he had always tried to improve them [...] To Moscow, Humphrey certainly was preferable to Richard Nixon, who had founded and built his

career on opposing communism and was considered profoundly anti-Soviet. Our leadership was growing seriously concerned that he might win the election. As a result the top Soviet leaders took an extraordinary step, unprecedented in the history of Soviet-American relations, by secretly offering Humphrey any conceivable help in his election campaign—including financial aid. I received a top-secret instruction from Gromyko personally and did my utmost to dissuade him from embarking on such a dangerous venture, which if discovered certainly would have backfired and ensured Humphrey's defeat, to say nothing of the real trouble it would have caused for Soviet-American relations. Gromyko answered laconically, "There is a decision, you carry it out." Shortly afterward, I happened to be at breakfast at Humphrey's home. Naturally, we talked about the election campaign, so I tried to take advantage of that to carry out my instructions as tactfully as possible. I asked him how

his campaign was going, and then I moved the conversation diplomatically to the state of his campaign finances. Humphrey, I must say, was not only a very intelligent but also a very clever man. He knew at once what was going on. He told me that it was more than enough for him to have Moscow's good wishes which he highly appreciated [...] The Politburo always watched American presidential elections closely for their potential effect on Soviet-American relations and usually had a preference but rarely expressed it or took sides by offering diplomatic or other help.<sup>30</sup>

Richard Nixon resigned on August 9, 1974, in the wake of the Watergate scandal<sup>31</sup>. The KGB wrote in its reports that the key figure to win in the U.S. election in 1976 as the Democratic nominee was Senator Henry Martin "Scoop" Jackson (1912–1983). The liberal Democrat, Jackson was in favor of anti-Soviet policy and urged to increase U.S. involvement in fighting communism and other totalitarian ideologies. He was also a proponent of spending more on the army, social welfare schemes, and trade unions. Jackson thus posed a threat to the geopolitical interests of the Kremlin. To exclude Jackson from the presidential run-up, Soviet officials decided to carry out active measures to dishonor the U.S. politician. According to Boris Solomatin, a KGB New York resident in 1971–1975<sup>32</sup>, Jackson appeared to be in a strong position for the presidential primaries as earlier he had won in Massachusetts and New York. Solomatin reported to the Center that Jackson's strong point is the fact that he had never been involved in any sort of political or personal scandal, which made it difficult for the KGB to damage the reputation of the Democrats candidate. So, as Solomatin wrote, it was decided to find some stains on the Senator's biography and use them to carry out an active measure. As Jackson's parents came from Norway, in 1974 the Oslo residency was ordered to make a detailed investigation of his Norwegian relatives. Furthermore, plans were to ask members of the Communist Party of the United States which methods and means could be used to target

Jackson. When the KGB started an extraordinarily wide-ranging search for compromising information, its leadership concluded that Jackson's reticence about his private life possibly indicated some sexual problems he purportedly had faced. Jackson's file recorded that his marriage at the age of forty-nine amazed many of his colleagues and friends; also, for many years Jackson had shared an apartment in Washington with a male childhood friend. The KGB stated that Jackson was a closet gay. It decided to fabricate it in an active measure codenamed operation "Porok" (*Prophet*). In 1976, Service A forged an FBI memorandum, dated June 20, 1940, in which John Edgar Hoover reported to the Assistant Secretary of Justice that Jackson was a homosexual. Photocopies of the forgery were sent to *the Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Topeka Capital*, and James Carter's campaign headquarters. Service A also sought to exploit a number of incidents during the 1976 primary campaign. After an argument with a gay rights activist at a press conference in March, Jackson told him that he did not want his vote. During a television appearance in April, Jackson declared: "homosexuality leads to the destruction of the family." The KGB used sources in opinion-forming U.S. media to send statements, together with bogus documents purporting to show that Jackson and Richard Pearle, his assistant, were members of a gay sex club to Senator Edward Kennedy, and the columnist Jack Anderson. These activities had the purpose to discredit Jackson in the eyes of U.S. conservatives and depict him as a closet gay who hypocritically attacked homosexuality in public for his own political advantage. The KGB continued its operation long after Jackson had failed to gain the Democratic nomination. In early May 1977, a KGB officer sent a forged document reporting that Jackson had been an active homosexual while working as a state prosecutor in Snohomish County to the magazine *Gay Times*. The purpose of the campaign was to incite the gay press and the far left into attacking Jackson<sup>33</sup>.

In the 1980s, Service A had the top task of ensuring that Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) did not serve a second term. The U.S. president said he would run in elections on January 29, 1984. At the Dallas convention on August 20–23, 1984, he was officially nominated for reelection. He faced the Democratic Party’s nominee Walter Mondale. On February 25, 1983, the KGB headquarters instructed agents in the United States to start planning activities to defeat Reagan in the presidential election. Headquarters requested that KGB agents establish contacts on the staff of every presidential candidate and the Communist Party of the United States alongside its front organizations: the United States Peace Council and the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship. Front groups, known also as “transmission belts” and “mass organizations, as Communists named them, were controlled, directly or indirectly, by communist parties. To what extent the Soviet Union utilized such groups shows a list of “transmission belts” of the Kremlin, compiled by French researcher Thierry Wolton. Some of them included: the World Peace Council, a body bringing together 135 institutions across the globe, the World Federation of Trade Unions (90), the Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organisation (91), the World Federation of Democratic Youth (210), the International Union of Students (118), the International Union of Journalists (114), the Women’s International Democratic Federation (129), the Christian Peace Federation (86), the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (64), the World Federation of Scientists (33), and others. They acted in the interest of Moscow and got financial aid from it. Among them the World Peace Council was particularly appreciated by the Kremlin; it was revealed in the 1990s that it had 90 percent of its funds from the Soviet Union and the countries of the Socialist Bloc<sup>34</sup>. The Soviet Union started using such structures already for the Third International (1919–1943). Back then it became popular to establish “democratic” organizations that had no formal

ties to the Kremlin or the Communist ideology but indeed aligned with Communist interests. Otto Kuusinen described this as an effort to set up somewhat like a “solar system” consisting of smaller entities and committees orbiting around the Communist party and serving the role of a “transmission belt” for the Kremlin and its geopolitical agenda<sup>35</sup>. Front groups unlocked mass groups by disseminating views consistent with Communist propaganda among its members. The Communist Party and the KGB named this practice “special positive influence” (*специальное позитивное воздействие*)<sup>36</sup>. The Soviets utilized their front organizations and publications to attempt to convince the U.S. public that the reelection of President Reagan would be a grave mistake and would have significant political and economic ramifications. Using front groups, pro-Soviet journalists, and agents of influence, the KGB campaign painted Reagan as a politician discriminating against minorities and an unpredictable war hawk who was engineering an arms race and catapulting mankind toward nuclear Armageddon. The KGB active measures campaign alleged that the Reagan administration was corrupt and that he was too closely tied to the military-industrial complex<sup>37</sup>. In 1988 FBI exposed forgery designed in January 1984 to discredit President Ronald Reagan. According to a bogus paper from the KGB, in 1947 Reagan was allegedly in cahoots with the FBI, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and the Senate Committee on Homeland Security to infiltrate the Hollywood-based U.S. film industry. FBI officers said the Soviets forged the paper to paint Reagan as a supporter of McCarthyism, or the practice of utilizing ruthless investigative methods and spreading fear to fight against an inflated threat from the outside. By doing so, KGB officers sought to compromise the president in the eye of the U.S. public to decline his popularity ratings before the vote as Americans saw and will continue to see McCarthyism as highly unpopular<sup>38</sup>.



SOURCE: RONALD REAGAN / FLICKR

Reagan officials were acutely aware of KGB planning and activities to influence the vote. In one memo, U.S. government officials deplored that in the 1980s the Soviet Union had a bigger ability to influence U.S. voters thanks to its grasp of the U.S. political system, which confirmed that KGB intelligence operations were indeed efficient<sup>39</sup>. The FBI described Soviet planning to influence the 1988 election in the report titled *Soviet Active Measures in the United States, 1986-87* submitted to the U.S. Congress. Soviet intelligence officers have already started to collect information on the 1988 Presidential candidates and their positions on various issues, the document noted. FBI officers said the KGB would take active steps to compromise any political candidates whose political agendas are a threat to the Soviet geopolitical interests. These operations targeted Congressmen and other elected officials by front organizations, agents of influence, Soviet-influenced organizations, and the Communist Party of the United States<sup>40</sup>.

Since the 1990s, Russia has seen new additions to its active measures, including modern tools for information warfare. This is confirmed by Andrzej Grajewski who in 1998 assessed the Russian capabilities in this respect:

*disinformation will for sure remain one of the elements of information warfare. a domain in which Russian intelligence services have been rich in expertise. Alain Sneider, an aide to President Richard Nixon, said that in the 1980s the Soviet Union spent \$3 billion each year while some 70,000 people were involved in conducting information warfare activities. The Soviet Union spent \$100 million just on a campaign against the neutron war. Until 1991 disinformation campaign had been conducted by Service A of the First Main Directorate of the KGB. Although it was disbanded in 1991, new disinformation campaigns show that other Russian intelligence and counterintelligence agencies are skilled in conducting similar tasks<sup>41</sup>.*

Vladimir Volkov, a French intelligence operative and researcher in disinformation and propaganda, shared this view that Soviet operations target U.S. elections and voting preferences. He wrote:

*disinformation is only effective if its target interacts to some extent and if it takes place through mass media outlets. In totalitarian states, the state has an information monopoly, so the population is protected against this type of interference (...) In disinformation, the countries of what is known as a free world are deprived of any opportunities to take offensive action. It is not an easy task for them to defend against disinformation as they strongly cherish the freedom of mass media and nothing could legally prevent the opponent from controlling them. And yet Western states need to develop a set of counter-measures if they seek to maintain both autonomy and standards of living as these two go hand in hand<sup>42</sup>.*

To efficiently tackle Soviet active measures, in 1981 Reagan officials set up the Active Measures Working Group. Representatives of the CIA, FBI, Department of Defense, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Justice, and the United States Information Agency were among the government agencies that served in the group. Although the primary focus of the group's activities was countering Soviet disinformation, it also reported on front groups and other Soviet active measures. The Active Measures Working Group developed an approach that expanded the U.S. Government's monitoring of Soviet disinformation from an activity conducted exclusively by the CIA into an interagency counter-disinformation effort. The group saw some notable successes in challenging Soviet disinformation and delivering counterintelligence prevention schemes in many social groups. Support for the group yet began to deteriorate in the late 1980s because Soviet disinformation seemed less of a threat in light of the slow disintegration of the Soviet Union and the

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Soviets' promise to cease all disinformation operations. The quality of the group's membership declined as both the CIA's and FBI's longest-serving group members distanced themselves and began sending younger, less experienced participants in their place<sup>43</sup>. Yet as early as in the 1990s Russia was violent in smashing both the naive and shortsighted approach of the U.S. administration while Russian intervention in the U.S. elections in 2016 and 2020 proved that the world's biggest superpower saw some major hurdles in neutralizing active measures while being unable to develop efficient countermeasures. This comes as contemporary U.S. strategic studies with their cognitive approach based upon empirical methods do not pay attention to the systematic and critical analysis of the Russian warfare in the past as state special forces are part of it as a distinguished type of weapon. Both their role and the mere idea of intelligence missions dramatically differ from Western procedures. In 1991, Col. David M. Glantz, chief of research at the Soviet Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, noted this tendency, unfavorable for U.S. military analyses.

*By its very nature, Soviet military science differs significantly from what the U.S. construes as a military science. The U.S. has neither a well-developed and focused body of military knowledge nor an analytical process the compares with Soviet military science. The U.S. does not systematically study and critique its past military experiences and the past military experiences of other nations. U.S. military theorists and doctrine developers tend to consider war outside the context of all other human activities<sup>44</sup>.*

As Soviet studies fell somewhat into oblivion past the Cold War while the concept of hybrid warfare was coined essentially about the contemporary security landscape, what D.M. Glantz said some time ago is unfortunately still true.

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