

**2004****The Mitrokin Archive - A Note on Sources****Citation:**

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**Summary:**

A note on sources contextualizing the Mitrokhin Archive. Please read this first in order to understand the nature of the material.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Transcript - English

Translation - English

In 2001, Vasili Mitrokhin, a former KGB archivist who had defected to the United Kingdom after the fall of the Soviet Union, approached the Cold War International History Project about making available to the general historical community the materials he had collected.

Most of these materials consist of notes which Mitrokhin had copiously assembled while he worked in the archives of the KGB First Chief Directorate in Yasenevo, outside Moscow. Mitrokhin had moved from the operational side of the FCD to its archives in late 1956, where it was his job to respond to requests by other departments. Influenced by the bloody suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968 and the dissident movement--all of which he could follow through the files he administered as well as Western records--Mitrokhin became increasingly disaffected with the KGB. By the early seventies he had decided to compile his own account of the KGB's foreign operations, a project that became feasible when he was put in charge in 1972 of the movement of the FCD archives from the KGB's headquarters at Lubyanka in central Moscow to Yasenevo southwest of the capital Moscow.

The materials are being made available by the Cold War International History Project for publication in its "Vasili Mitrokhin Archive," integrated in CWIHP's Virtual Archive at <http://www.cwihp.org>.

Vasili Mitrokhin would be the first to point out that his notes captured only a small part of the totality of documents; his decade-long work in the archive was a "massive filtering exercise," with a flood of documents coming through his hands on a daily basis. The documents he saw were mostly informational cables from the First Directorate to the Politburo and Foreign Ministry, a copy of which went to the archives after a month. By no means are the materials therefore a complete record. Moreover, while striving to stick to the facts, Mitrokhin has stated that "I wrote it in a hurry, and as a result certain notes which I wrote to accompany my account took on an emotional tone, creating a rather unbalanced narrative." This, the author explains, was "a way of expressing my personal perception of events and my rejection of the criminal intentions, calumnies and deeds of the Soviet nomenklatura."

All the Archive material is ultimately derived from contemporaneous manuscript notes made by Mitrokhin as KGB documents passed through his hands in the Archive Department of the KGB First Chief Directorate (Foreign Intelligence) -- the FCD.

The source material falls into three broad categories:

- p Secret FCD and Directorate S ("Illegals") files;
- . Secret background papers and manuals held in the restricted-access FCD Operational Library;
- . Articles taken from the Sbornik KGB, the secret KGB in-house quarterly journal containing (sanitized) case histories and success stories for the edification of the staff.

□□

After his retirement in 1984, Mitrokhin organized his manuscript fragments (initially roughly sorted in dozens of brown envelopes) to compile a series of volumes dealing with KGB activities in various key area of the world: Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, India and subsequently the USA and the UK. All these volumes were typed out by Mitrokhin himself in the Soviet Union (and eventually brought out by him to London in 1992).

As each volume was completed, the underlying manuscript notes were systematically destroyed by Mitrokhin, primarily for security reasons, but also to avoid inadvertent duplication.

In London, the 8 geographical volumes were rapidly scanned and roughly translated, to provide raw reports and pointers for more detailed investigation. The present English rendering is provisional, unedited and contains passages which may have to be withheld for legal reasons. Any cuts eventually made in the English text will equally have to be made in the Russian original.

Besides the geographical volumes, Mitrokhin produced 2 volumes of case histories, also typed by him in the Soviet Union (and subsequently incorporated in the "Chekisms" Anthology).

He also brought over 27 large envelopes crammed with manuscript fragments covering aspects of the KGB's work which could not be fitted in the Moscow-typed volumes.

Much (but not all) of this manuscript material was typed out by Mitrokhin in London, and subsequently translated and analysed. It has extensively been used as source material for the Penguin Mitrokhin Archive Volumes I and II<sup>[1]</sup> and may also appear in the "Chekisms" Anthology, now in preparation.

<sup>[1]</sup> See Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); and Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

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