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Anatoliy Golitsyn's Epistemological Disinformation

Daniel Reznikov
Binghamton University--SUNY

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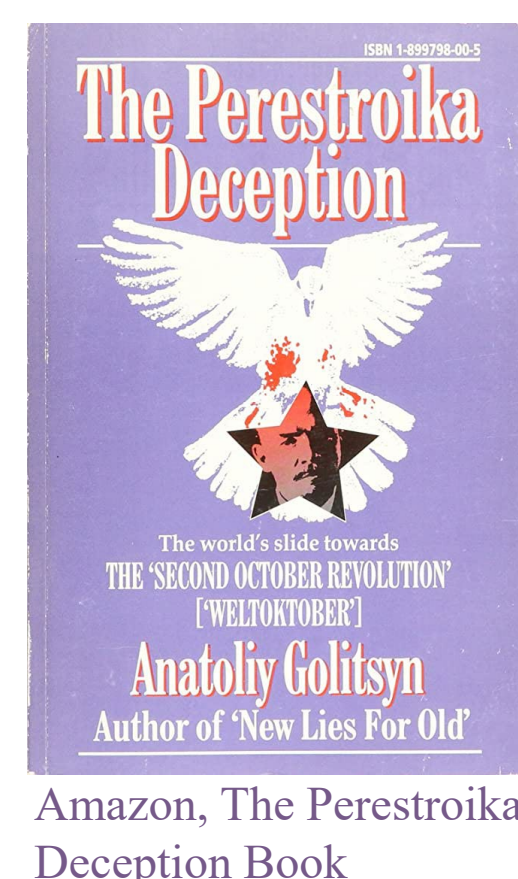
Central To Intelligence: Anatoliy Golitsyn

Daniel Reznikov

Binghamton University - Source Project: Disinformation and Naïveté

INTRODUCTION

Through Golitsyn's multiple memoranda to the CIA and the interactions held between them, Golitsyn displays an epistemological case named the Gettier Case, in which information could be true, but from your point of view and the information that you have obtained, that truth is based on nothing more than intuition since the information in question has no justified reasoning behind it. (Steup) This leads to an interesting discussion in disinformation since the information told could not be distinguished between falsity and validity. Since the goal of disinformation is to spread false ideas with the intent of causing harm, Golitsyn's statements cause harm since no one can know if they are true or not, therefore any actions done with regard to his statements have the likely chance of causing harm since the decision of the government will be met with scrutiny by either side. Ultimately this leads to a wedge being driven between people in both our country and government, serving the function of disinformation without ever truly being known as false information.

GOLITSYN'S IDEAS ABOUT FUTURE DEFECTORS

Golitsyn tried to convince the CIA that the credibility of any and all future Soviet defectors should be questioned. He argued that the CIA should treat these defectors as agents of disinformation since their information would directly oppose Golitsyn's information on the Soviet long-range strategy. "These services are no longer able to distinguish true sources from KGB plants, or true defectors from false defectors" (Golitsyn 39). Since a distinction cannot be made, the Gettier case, already existent within intelligence/defector interactions, is reinforced. The CIA cannot distinguish between the validity of Golitsyn's information and that of a future defector, forcing information from both sources to be unreliable, serving the function of disinformation

THE FBI/CIA CONFLICT

After Golitsyn's arrival in the US, he began speaking with the CIA about possible moles in the CIA and the FBI. His reports concerned the CIA enough to begin investigations within their own organization, which resulted in diverting resources from other possible concerns. However, the FBI was skeptical of Golitsyn's credibility (Riebling 192-193)While the CIA accepted Golitsyn's reports as credible, the FBI did not, and this interagency conflict complicated American responses to Soviet intelligence campaigns.

GOLITSYN'S TRUE INTENT

Through the Memoranda of Anatoliy Golitsyn, we may begin to draw some comparisons between what his image and intention may have been viewed as, or in other words his motives he acted for, and the function that his actions served to fulfill. While Golitsyn may have exposed his public view through statements badgering the USSR and its deception tactics (Golitsyn 211), he is himself fulfilling the desires of Soviet disinformation through his actions in expressing a lack of authenticity in future defectors as well as those with the FBI/CIA.

ANALYSIS THROUGH THE GETTIER CASE

The Gettier Case, or the Gettier Problem, refers to a situation in which people need to choose to believe something to be true not based on justified reasoning, but rather luck (Steaup). Golitsyn's statements, specifically about defectors that would follow Golitsyn, moles in the CIA/FBI already, and double agents working for the US in the KGB refer to the Gettier case specifically since his anecdote along with them tell different tales. Since neither possessed any credibility to begin with, the decisionmaker in each scenario, likely a US intelligence organization cannot make a decision based on justified reasoning or evidence of a more likely scenario, and they must simply choose and hope to get lucky with believing the most truthful story and acting accordingly.

RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS SIMILAR TO GOLITSYN

Operation "Denver" was a Soviet disinformation operation that promoted the conspiracy theory that AIDS was a biological weapon developed by the US military to use against gay and black communities in the US (Selvage 2019). Like the barn facades in the Gettier Case, this version of events was difficult for the average person to disprove since average people don't have access to KGB secret documents or Fort Detrick, the US military base implicated by the conspiracy theory. The disinformation thus creates a scenario in which people have to choose between a "real barn" and a "barn facade" that seems plausibly real. Since they have no access to the hard data, this decision can only be made based on other factors, like trust in the US government and military.

At a time of tension between the countries of Ukraine and Russia in 2017, passenger plane MH17 was shot down by a missile under the belief that the plane could have been dangerous. Regardless of the miscommunication that occurred, someone was to blame for the actions that transpired. Once the event caught wind in televised media, both the Ukrainian and Russian sides gave arguments blaming the other for the attack. Shortly after, physical evidence of Russia being responsible for the missile was discovered. But disinformation was still being spread by Russian media in order to confuse and convince others of their lack in the tragedy (Toal & O'Loughlin, 7). Just like Fort Detrick, the average person wouldn't have access to the actual crash site or the knowledge of knowing which rocket was shot, leaving them to choose between plausibly real "barn facades" once more and decide which country they should consider responsible.

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Morley, James Angleton, former chief of counterintelligence in the CIA.

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