

Information on China's Environmental Policies in United States and British Government Monitoring Serials

Saturday 9 December 2006, by [CALKINS Laura M.](#) (Date first published: June 1994).

The infusion of market signals into China's economy since the mid-1970s has been accompanied by a growing realization on the part of the Chinese leadership that its strategy for accelerating the pace of economic growth will directly affect environmental quality. Beginning in the late 1980s, Premier Li Peng, a nuclear engineer by training, issued statements underscoring the government's commitment to giving attention to environmental protection in its formulation and implementation of economic development policy. Unfortunately for researchers interested in examining either the historical landscape of China's modern environmental experience or its recent record on environmental policy issues, gaining access to authoritative information from the People's Republic of China is not an easy task. Despite the availability in China of modern telecommunications equipment and a proliferation of China's points of contact with outside businesses, scholars, and government agencies, the Chinese Communist Party's media and information management organs have retained a virtual monopoly on authoritative reportage about domestic Chinese affairs, including administrative policy and practice and environmental problems and issues. For non-China specialists, the task of uncovering material relevant for the study of China's environmental conditions and policies is made more complicated by the fact that there are few English-language (or other non-Chinese language) outlets for the official media's coverage. However, there are important sources of topical information from official Chinese agencies available in the openly-published output of the United States government's foreign media monitoring agencies, the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), and the Joint Publications Research Services (JPRS).

Most scholars and librarians concerned with contemporary international political issues are familiar with the FBIS and JPRS series, now published in microfiche format and distributed by the Superintendent of Documents to United States government publications libraries, as well as to other subscribers. The sheer volume of these agencies' output, however, together with the irregular classification systems and fragmented indexes introduced over the past twenty years, can prove daunting for even the most persistent researcher. Nonetheless, these serials and their British counterparts (published for the United Kingdom government by the British Broadcasting Corporation) provide unique access to the Chinese media's reportage on environmental affairs. These sources are especially useful for analysts interested in the period before the Chinese authorities publicly accepted environmental preservation as a policy priority in the mid-1970s. Students of the unintended environmental consequences of China's economic development programs of the 1950s and 1960s will find much that is useful in these serials. This Note seeks to outline how the monitored output is organized and how it can be used as a research tool for obtaining information on China's modern environmental experience and related policy history. While the Chinese case is especially instructive in demonstrating the utility of these serials because of the paucity of information on contemporary Chinese domestic affairs available elsewhere, this introduction to the structure of the various overseas media monitoring series may also be useful for those working on other countries and regions.

The United States government's monitoring of open foreign radio broadcasts began in earnest during World War II for security reasons. Following the War, its efforts were reorganized according to the terms of a secret United States-United Kingdom signals intelligence treaty concluded in 1947. The treaty divided responsibility for monitoring the world's open broadcasts between the two countries: the United Kingdom bore the primary burden for listening to and recording transmissions from the Soviet Union, Africa, and parts of the Middle and Far East, while the United States covered all other regions; there was apparently some "double coverage" of open radio broadcasts emanating from mainland China.¹ One outcome of this division of labor was a rapid expansion of the existing monitoring and translation services funded and administered by the United States and British governments and a reorganization of their unclassified publication programs for monitored broadcast data. In 1947 the Monitoring Service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which was funded by the British Foreign Office, broadened the scope of its existing monitored overseas broadcast serial, *Digest of World Broadcasts* (1939-47), and changed its title to *Summary of World Broadcasts* (SWB), which is still in publication. In the United States, the limited-distribution *Daily Report of the FBIS*, an affiliate of the Central Intelligence Agency, first appeared in 1947, replacing earlier classified monitoring serials compiled by the Federal Communications Commission, the United States General Staff's Military Intelligence Division, and the CIA's predecessor, the Central Intelligence Group.

Of the two series, the BBC's SWB included more material on China during the 1950s and 1960s, even though the United States FBIS was also actively monitoring Chinese broadcasts. Researchers on Chinese environmental affairs will find the SWB's strong coverage of agricultural and rural development policies during these decades enormously useful: detailed official statistics on everything from average rainfall to regional cultivation and irrigation patterns to the number and type of "backyard furnaces" constructed during the rapid mobilization of the rural economy in the Great Leap Forward are available here. SWB reports were issued several times a week in geographically- defined sub-series, of which "The Far East" component contains reportage from mainland China. Minor changes in the organization of "The Far East" sub-series are detailed in chart 1.1 below. The SWB reports were not indexed except within individual issues; as a result, readers must rely upon patient excavation of the actual reports themselves. The SWB series is available on microfilm at some research libraries in the United States; the entire series is also available for consultation at the British Library in London.

1.1 BBC Monitoring Service: Summary of World Broadcasts

Dates	Relevant Titles	Components
27 May 1947-	Part III:	Nos. 1-99
21 April 1949	Western Europe, Middle East, Far East, Latin America and Miscellaneous	.
26 April 1949-	Part V:	.
15 April 1959	The Far East	Nos. 1-862 Economic Supplements
15 April 1959-	Second Series, Part III: Far East	Nos. 1-

The United States government agencies' monitoring and translation series lack some of the organizational continuity of the BBC's published output, but the range and amount of material on the People's Republic of China has been greater, especially since the mid-1970s. In exploring these series, researchers must negotiate a tangled web of changing serial titles, selective indexing, and changing administrative authorship. The FBIS *Daily Report*, for example, retained its semi-classified

“limited distribution” status until 1979, but some research libraries have obtained parts of it; Michigan State University in East Lansing, for example, holds an almost complete run of the series in hard copy from 1947 to 1979. The FBIS Daily Report’s published output on China during this period was sparse; more space was devoted to coverage of South American and Eastern European broadcasts. Another serial source on Chinese domestic affairs is available for the later years in this period: in 1958 the United States Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS) began releasing some of its translated reports from the Communist Chinese official press through the United States Monthly Publications Catalog. Like the SWB, JPRS reports included detailed items on policy programs and actual conditions in China in the 1950s and 1960s that environmental historians and analysts will find unique and invaluable. Beginning in 1980 and 1981, the FBIS Daily Report on radio broadcasts was merged with JPRS reports, and since late 1981 the two services have jointly produced and distributed a range of geographical and topical serial titles; their common link is the origin of their reports in China’s open broadcast and print media. The Chinese media has received increasingly full coverage from the FBIS/JPRS publications since the early 1980s, and substantial attention has been given to material of relevance for environmental policy studies.

The charts below simplify the arrangement of title and area categories within these American monitoring series, focusing on those elements of the monitored output which are of greatest utility for researchers on China and its environmental history and more contemporary environment- related affairs.

1.2 Foreign Broadcast Information Service

Dates	Relevant Titles	Indexes
1947-74	Daily Report	none
1975-78	Daily Report: PRC	NewsBank: provides subject listings for China, sub-listings for “environmental protection”
1979-	China Report: Agriculture, Science and Technology, Political, Sociological and Military Affairs, Economic Affairs	NewsBank: ditto

1.3 Joint Publications Research Service

Dates	Relevant Titles	Indexes
1958-65	individually titled reports	US Government Monthly Publications Catalog (2) see also partial index edited by Richard Sorich (3)
1965-76	Translations on Communist China	none
1976-79	Translations on the People’s Republic of China	Transdex Index UMI, Ann Arbor
1979- (4)	China Serial Reports: Science and Technology, Science and Technology/China: Energy, Agriculture, Worldwide Serial Reports: Environmental Issues Science & Technology Serial , Reports: China, China-Energy, Earth Sciences, Science and Technology Policy	Transdex Index

Two other sources of information from the Chinese media monitored by the United States

government also merit mention here. First, the United States Air Force's Air Systems Command, Foreign Technology Division, at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, has occasionally translated technical research reports and articles from military and industrial journals issued in the Communist countries, as well as unattributed intelligence reports which may be accessed through the annual Corporate Author Index of the Government Reports Announcements. This agency of the United States Air Force reported, for example, the creation by the People's Republic of China in 1975 of a special government bureau for environmental protection, and suggested that the problems associated with China's accelerating urban growth had forced the central government to establish a new bureau to monitor and manage its environmental effects. (5)

For researchers whose interests focus on environment-related issues in the period between the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and its establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States in 1979, the published output of another United States government monitoring organization is likely to be of significance. Beginning in the spring of 1950, the United States Consulate General in Hong Kong initiated a broad-ranging translation program based on the mainland Chinese press and periodical literature; articles from a diverse array of publications were translated by consulate staff and published under a number of serial titles. Selections covered government policies, official reports, and speeches as well as regional and local interest stories, many of them with environmental dimensions. The serial titles produced by the United States Consulate are chiefly organized by the chronological appearance of the articles selected for translation, rather than by topical or geographical categories. There is generally little overlap with the JPRS press translations of the same time period. The Consulate's publishing program was wound down following the 1968 Hong Kong riots, while publication of Chinese press material by the JPRS was gradually expanded. The following chart summarizes key features of the Consulate's publications, which were widely distributed in major research libraries in the United States and Britain:

1.4 US Consulate General in Hong Kong

Dates	Titles	Indexes
13 June 1950-1967	Current Background	included with series
1 Nov 1950-1967	Survey of China Mainland Press	occasional indexes distributed with the series
1962-1968	Extracts from China Mainland Magazines (retitled Selections from China Mainland Magazines in Jan 1962)	occasional indexed distributed with the series

Responsibility for distributing the FBIS/JPRS serial monitoring series still being published (see charts 1.2 and 1.3) rests with the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), a component agency of the United States Department of Commerce. The precursor of the NTIS, the United States Publications Board, was established in 1945 to review scientific and technical documents generated by various government agencies in the course of their wartime research efforts. The Board's role was to evaluate the documents and determine which materials could be publicly released. In 1970 the NTIS was formed with a broader mandate, to act as a collection and distribution point for scientific, technical and engineering information from the United States and abroad. It has since at least 1981 been the distributing agency for the United States government's foreign media monitoring serials. The 1993 NTIS Products and Services Catalog describes the FBIS and JPRS series currently available from the NTIS by subscription. When ordering from NTIS, libraries and other subscribers select from the available serial titles those they wish to receive and pay for on a per-title basis; consequently, most subscribing libraries are likely to have some but not all of the

serial titles relevant for research in the multidisciplinary areas of environmental history and policy. The Library of Congress' Government Publications Reading Room, of course, retains a complete collection.

Researchers seeking material on the 1980s and 1990s would do well to supplement their use of government monitoring serials with searches of on-line and other database services. The on-line service LEXIS/NEXIS, for example, includes a wide range of reportage from Xinhua (New China News Agency), the official press service of the People's Republic of China. LEXIS/NEXIS has an "archive" feature which allows users to access Xinhua reports produced since January 1977. Reports and analyses on environment-related topics from other, non-Chinese press and wire services can also be identified using LEXIS/NEXIS. Additional material of related interest is contained in the United States Department of Commerce National Trade Data Bank (NTDB), a CD-ROM database which includes reports prepared under United States government contracts as well as analyses from commercial information services. These sources, together with the monitored reports and documents available in United States and British government serials, can open new lines of research of both historical and contemporary significance on the links between economic change and environmental quality in China.

Until 1978 a variety of non-serial translations were also produced by the two agencies. Some of these reports were released through the National Technical Information Service, Springfield VA, and were announced in the semi-monthly Government Reports Announcements. They may be accessed using the annual Corporate Author indexes, using FBIS or JPRS as the "author". It should be noted that while the majority of these translations concerned highly technical reports on scientific research results, occasional items of environmental interest were included.

References

The still-classified UKUSA agreement of 1947 on signals intelligence and radio broadcast monitoring is discussed in Leigh, D. 1988. *The Wilson Plot: How the Spycatchers and Their American Allies Tried to Overthrow the British Government*. New York: Pantheon Books, 6-8.

Many JPRS series titles and individual translation reports have been listed in the Monthly Catalog since 1958; they were published as both hard and microprint copy and distributed as non-depository documents.

Sorich, R., ed. 1961. *Contemporary China: A Bibliography of Reports on China* by the US Joint Publications Research Service. New York: Readex Microprint Corp.

In 1981 the arrangement of classification numbers for JPRS serial titles was reordered to assign each title its own number. In 1984 an alphanumeric system was created by adding three-letter series codes to classification numbers. Starting in 1990 all series were joined under one SuDoc number (PrEx 7.13:) followed by the three-letter series code.

United States Air Force, Air Force Systems Command, Foreign Technology Division. Report No. FTD-ID(RS)I-2377-75, "Establishment of Environmental Protection Agency in China."

P.S.

* ELECTRONIC GREEN JOURNAL, ISSN: 1076-7975 vol. 1, issue 1, June 1994:
<http://egj.lib.uidaho.edu/egj01/calki01.html>

* Laura M. Calkins is Visiting Scholar, Dept. of Nuclear Engineering, University of Michigan. Ann

Arbor, Michigan 48109 USA TEL: 313-668-8446.