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Note: The following pages have been excerpted from a stenographic report in Russian of the proceedings at a three-day conference of NKVD Record and Dossier Sections held in Moscow in March, 1940. Problems of administrative and intelligence interest were discussed, with the keynote of the conference the desire of the Moscow NKVD Headquarters to improve the efficiency and accuracy of the work of the record sections.

Present at the conference were chiefs of and key workers in record sections (1st Spetsotdels) attached to the NKVD directorates for CE in transport (DTO), for CE in the Red Army (OO), for CE in Soviet industry (GEU), for prisons (GTU) and for State Security (GUGB), as well as representatives from the 1st Spetsotdel Center in Moscow. Speakers from this last organization gave the pitch for the choir; the president of the conference and a speaker who gave the conference a final going-over at the last meeting were also from Moscow Headquarters.

Although the report is primarily of counterespionage value, it has definite political interest for its detailed description of a small but significant segment of Soviet bureaucracy at work. Its detailed presentation of administrative discussions throws a revealing light on the procedures, the efficiency, and the professional motivation within a highly important division of one of the key Soviet ministries.

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STENOGRAPHIC REPORT ON THE FIRST REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHIEFS OF THE 1st SPETSOTDELS, et al.

15 - 17 March 1940

First Regional Operational Conference of chiefs of 1st Spetsotdels, NKVD-UNKVD; workers of the statistics group of the DTO (Dorozhno-Transportni Otdel - Railroad and Transportation Section); Special Sections (Osobenny Otdel); representatives of the cities of Moscow, Leningrad, Orel, Kalinin, Gorky, Rzhev, Kaluga, Vologda, Yaroslav, Arkhangelski, Murmansk, Petrozavodsk, Ivanov, Kursk, Kirov, Ryazin, Tula; supervisors of Dossier Groups of sections of GUGB (Glavnoye Upravleniye Gosuderstvennoi Besopasnosti - Central Directorate of State Security), GEU (Glavnoye Ekonomicheskoye Upravleniye - Central Economic Directorate), and GTU (Glavnoye Tyuremnoye Upravleniye - Central Prison Directorate), 15-16-17 March, 1940.

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GERTSOVSKI:

The plan, approved by BERIYA, Lavrenti P., aims to fulfill the order of the People's Commissariat #00788-1938, which orders the reorganization of the 1st Spetsotdel. Discussion on the improvement of 1st Spetsotdel work will be held.

Report of TITOV, Chief 1st Spetsotdel, Moscow Oblast:

In March 1939, the condition of agent-informer-net dossiers was as follows: no centralization of these dossiers, some card files were located in the UNKVD, a general card file did not exist. Under this system it was impossible to know whether or not there was a dossier on an agent. Upon checking, it was discovered that sections and regional divisions did not know who all their own informers were.

Anti-Soviet dossiers brought to light through exploitation of official observation files (delo-formulyar) are incorrect.

The Investigation dossiers (uchet sledstvennix del) connected with the mass arrests of 1937-38 were found in very bad condition. Dossiers of those arrested were not kept up daily and on the strength of this information, periodic corrections were instituted by sections, regional sub-sections, and prisons. The names of some persons who had been convicted in the distant past were included, and we found that names of other persons arrested had not been entered and so were not mentioned at all.

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The general information card file (obshche-spravochnaya kartoteka) in UNKVD Moscow Oblast has become one of the worst bottlenecks. Around this leading section is organized all the work of the 1st Spetsotdel, and the work is in bad condition.

Thirty thousand cards on those convicted in 1937-38 by the high Troika of UNKVD/MO lay in cupboards and on tables, and were not included in the card files. Two hundred thousand communications from prisons and camps about arrivals, deaths and run-aways were not recorded on cards. Seven thousand five hundred cases in the archives of the 1st Spetsotdel NKVD/USSR were never recorded in the operational information card files (operativno-spravochnaya kartoteka). In regard to searches, matters were in poor shape. Until 1939 the 1st Spetsotdel was practically uninterested in searches and some 4,000 communications about searches were left lying idle.

Archives were no more than an unsystematic heap of all types of materials: the records were hopelessly involved and controls for the distribution and movement of work were missing. The archives were in very bad condition. Arrangements for dealing with the property of arrested persons have not improved. Depositions and complaints from those convicted and their relatives as of March, 1939, amounted to about 10,000. Not until February, 1939, did the 1st Spetsotdel finally start to work on them.

The 1st Spetsotdel had no liaison with operational sections and regional sub-sections. They came to the 1st Spetsotdel only to get certificates when sanctions for arrest were needed.

In eliminating neglect and chaos, the following was done: weak places were strengthened by the transfer to them of able workers. More attention was paid to persons being investigated and persons arrested. Facilities were organized for studying the work in the prosecutor's office and the courts. Before this the 1st Spetsotdel knew nothing about the prosecutor's office or courts. As a result, the courts and prosecutor's office began to give an accounting of their work.

Through the party organization, MK VKP (b) (Moscow Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party - Bolshevik), public prosecutors were informed of the necessity of speeding up the work of investigation and arrest through the courts and prosecutor's offices. The 1st Spetsotdel already had only hundreds instead of thousands of cases for the public prosecutors.

The next problem was that of improving the work of the operational information card file. Thirty-five thousand cards were made out on persons judged by the Troika, 4,000 cards were

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transmitted from the 2nd sections, 3,500 cards were changed by the entry of deaths of prisoners in prisons and camps, and 3,500 cards were made out on persons on whom dossiers had not been made out by OSK*.

In 1939 1,034,000 inquiries were checked.

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Our present staff is not bad. The workers are generally young, good, desire to work. Those who worked poorly were removed. In March, 1939, they used to say: "In the 1st Spetsotdel there is no work--the work is in the operational sections. To work in the operational section is a pleasure.

The role of the Party Organization in fulfilling Order #00788-1938:

After the investigation of the 1st Spetsotdel on March 6, 1939, the party organization paid particular attention to this section, and assumed a larger part in running it. Comrade SHUMSKAYA, who has worked eight years as "operational authority" (Operupolnomochenny) was promoted to vice-chief of a sub-section and handles her work well. Comrade KUDRYAVTSEV was promoted to senior operational authority and handles his work in the search department very well. Comrade FILIMONOV was promoted to chief of a sub-section and was mentioned in an order of BERIYA for his work in fulfilling order #00858. Eight persons were promoted to leading positions, and twenty-six were promoted to other positions.

The administration now pays a great deal of attention to the leadership of the 1st Spetsotdel, which was not the case a few months ago. All information or facts used by operational conferences come from the 1st Spetsotdel. Section chiefs could not move a step without the 1st Spetsotdel.

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PROSKORYAKOV (1st Spetsotdel Center):

The 1st Spetsotdel center at the end of 1938 and the beginning of 1939 was in such a state of neglect that in our central organization we did not know who were members of agent nets in operational sections. We were in no position to give true information to operational workers.

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*unknown; possibly statistical card-file section.

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After issuance of order #00788, the 1st Spetsotdel began instruction on dossiers of agent nets and anti-Soviet elements. The problem was to organize the dossiers under a unified system within all units of the NKVD, not just to put in order the dossiers in the central organization...

Twenty-four Spetsotdels did not communicate with us on fulfilling order #01223. Those present who have not completed the order are: White Russian SSR, Georgian SSR, Ukrainian SSR, and Rostov Oblast. Chitin Oblast has informed us that completion of the order is not possible until they receive "good enough quality" paper from A.Kh.U. (Administrativno-Khozyaistvennoye Upravleniye--Administrative and Supply Directorate) NKVD/USSR. The chief of the Rostov Oblast has written nothing (in explanation) ...

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KRIVITSKI (Ryazan Oblast):

Out of chaos clear, legible card files were set up where any information could be found at any time. Archives were put in order in spite of lack of space. White officers (officers of the old army) are carried on dossiers in the 2nd section, but operationally they are handled in the 3rd section. The War-Commissariat also handles such dossiers. This problem must be cleared up as to who should handle them operationally and in which section, 2nd or 3rd, their dossiers should be.

KREMEN (1st Spetsotdel Center NKVD/USSR):

The 5th subsection of the 1st Spetsotdel works on questions of operational statistics, and of statistical materials.

The order for establishing operational accounts is clearly formulated in orders #00931, 001223, 00249, 00137, in the text-book on operational dossiers, and in directives to 1st Spetsotdels. These directives clearly explained how to make out monthly statistical accounts on all four of the forms.

Operational statistics must indicate exactly the numbers of enemies of the people, their associates, the type of criminal action, the political coloring, grouping, etc. These general materials must as soon as possible be deposited with leaders in the central directorate of NKVD/USSR. Our suggestions to 1st Spetsotdels in each oblast are:

1. Liquidate waste in composing the monthly accounts of operational-investigating work of organs of the NKVD which inform us of activities regarding dossiers and agent net files.

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2. Statistical accounts must be presented exactly on schedule.

3. You must strengthen the workers in your sections (uchastka) regarding statistics, not wasting the abilities of your cadres.

MOROZOV (Georgian SSR):

Where are we to send released prisoners? The 1st Spetsotdel in Georgia has no right to decide this...

When I was ordered to put all dossiers in metal safes, I had trouble getting safes...

Lack of paper hampers our work in Georgia--the quality of the paper is very poor.

GAVRIKOV (Ivanov Oblast):

We in the Ivanov Oblast asked the 1st Spetsotdel center about rules for keeping certain archives or for destroying them. To this day we have received no answer. We also asked them about an inventory of archives and we still have no answer. There is no concrete operational help forthcoming from the 1st Spetsotdel center for the outlying sections.

One example of this was very disagreeable for me. Comrade BARINOV came from the 1st Spetsotdel center to check our work and help us. What happened was that Comrade BARINOV so arranged it that he checked our work in the course of a day and a half and wrote a report, but we received no help at all from him. He did not find it necessary to call a meeting of the section workers to enlighten them as to how they could repair the mistakes they had made and which he had mentioned in his report:

TSVETKOV (UNKVD/Leningrad Oblast):

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Comrade TITOV mentioned an agreement between Moscow and Leningrad for having a socialist competition. This competition between the two of us had increased and improved our operational work tremendously...

The 1st Spetsotdel Center was chosen as arbitrator for this competition but did not move a finger. We pleaded for someone to take an interest, but no one did, and eventually the operational workers became dissatisfied. On the part of the center, this was a grave omission.

KONDRATEV (DFO/Road-Transportation Section, Gorky RR):

.....

Shortcomings in the work of our Dossier-Statistics Groups are:

1) operational sections do not enter in the dossiers the agents' liaisons, and in recruiting agents do not send control cards to USG (Uchetno-Statiticheskaya Gruppy--Dossier-Statistics Group) as was ordered in order #00858.

2) We do not analyze the work of agent nets; operational workers frequently do not meet with agents for three or four months; we do not inform leaders of NKVD and DFO about this. In this three to four month period, the agent objects and quits.

3) In the "okrask" (probably identical with "pink") form there is a category of spies and saboteurs with a breakdown according to country (gosudarstvo). Why is there not an individual column just for saboteurs? It is possible for the most ordinary kulak to practice sabotage along the railroad lines and in no way be an agent of the English, German or other intelligence services. I propose that the forms for accounting carry an extra section for saboteurs.

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KOROLEV (1st Spetsotdel Center):

The general information card files are very important. By use of them we can know where our enemies are, who they are and where they operate. The files must contain all anti-Soviet and enemy elements discovered through the twenty-two years' work of organs of V. CH. K. (Cheka)-OGPU-NKVD with full factual information about the persons, what disposition was made of them, and the whereabouts of all data on such persons.

Almost without exception, the card files throughout the country have five to ten cards about one person, with many of the cards containing only the name of the person, and failing to mention the decision. A great many cards are not even alphabetized, or are put in the wrong place. Misspelling, through typing, etc., accounts for not being able to locate some of the cards.

Sometimes the outer districts send in cards which do not include the date of birth, profession, and reason for arrest. It is not even possible to tell sometimes in which oblast the arrest took place.

Cards are made out in various sizes and on different thicknesses of paper; there is no standardization.

If these conditions existed with small files, it wouldn't be so bad, but if such information is sent to the central files of NKVD, then it becomes impossible to locate information when needed.

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MESHCHERYAKOV (Arkhangelski Oblast):

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In our files, we have over 100,000 dossiers in alphabetical order which have not been carded. You know how much time it takes to make out 100,000 cards. Some of this has been done, but the archive number has not been entered; this makes it difficult to locate the dossiers.

Besides this, we have twenty years of cancelled correspondence in the archives--tens of thousands of dossiers. What are we to do with them? We never receive inquiries about them.

GERTSOVSKI:

They must be kept.

MESHCHERYAKOV:

How long? I request that a definite term be set for the keeping of archive materials...

The Arkhangelski Oblast is a special oblast--we have several NKVD prisons and several forced labor colonies, in numbers more than any other oblast represented here has. For this reason we have a large amount of work on operational dossiers in entering information on all anti-Soviet elements in all our camps.

GERTSOVSKI:

Why enter them all on operational dossiers?

MESHCHERYAKOV:

I follow order #00149.

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GERTSOVSKI:

Orders 001223 and 00858 say that dossiers in the 1st Spetsotdel will be kept only on those persons who are willing to work for us in the prison camps. This question was decided in circular #114, 28 April 1940.

MESHCHERYAKOV:

The 1st Spetsotdel has been inefficient in answering our requests for information. Our inability to fulfill the NKVD orders is due to dumping by the 1st Spetsotdel center of thousands of cards on us; these cards were not in any kind of order.

Voice from the seats: Make stickers.

MESHCHERYAKOV:

That would be more expensive.

Voice from the seats: No, that would be cheaper.

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There is still another question which must be cleared up by the 1st Spetsotdel NKVD. Our operational section still carries dossiers on those who have defected while out of the country; if there was any correspondence with remaining relatives, the dossiers could be used to check on them.

Order #001223 states that official files are not to be kept in three instances: 1) death, 2) exit from the USSR, and 3) after rehabilitation. Therefore should we keep in operational information card files those persons who have emigrated abroad?

GERTSOVSKI:

The question of Comrade MESHCHERYAKOV is not completely clear. What is the matter here?

There is no point in carrying on official files those emigrants who have left Soviet territory. If you have entered on dossiers those who have run from Russia, you have done wrong. For the operational dossiers, we are more interested in the relatives of those who have run away.

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SMIRNOV (Special Section--00--Leningrad Military District):

The 1st Spetsotdel has not as yet given practical help and furnished live leadership to such as us and the DTO. The 1st Spetsotdel has not helped with the present questions.

GERTSOVSKI:

We know about that and the question has been put before the Special Section NKVD/USSR.

SMIRNOV:

The representative of the Byelorussian SSR is here. Ask him about what a poor job the 1st Spetsotdel did in helping him during the war.

GERTSOVSKI:

Speak concretely. You throw out accusations that the 1st Spetsotdel gave you no leadership at all and I want you to explain all this.

SMIRNOV:

I'll answer concretely. The 1st Spetsotdel was tardy in answering requests, gave us no instructions when needed, and there were not enough supplies from 1st Spetsotdel. As to fulfillment orders #00858 and 001223, we fulfilled #00858 in my district and in the subordinate special sections. #001223 caught us in wartime. We did as much as we could as fast as possible, but it was impossible to fulfill the order.

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The 1st Spetsotdels of UNKVD/MO and UNKVD/LO wrote up a Socialist agreement. I was angry; why were dossier groups, DTO and Special Sections forgotten? In order to fulfill his Socialist agreement, TSVETKOV took care of the sections in his own territory, but when a Special Section came to him with a request, he said, "Wait, we have written up an agreement, we must fulfill it and then we can take care of you."

TSVETKOV:

I didn't say that.

SMIRNOV:

That's what happened. Is this normal procedure? No! All should be supplied.

TSVETKOV:

You were supplied.

SMIRNOV:

We were put in such a position that regarding dossiers of agents we were not able to provide our subordinate organs with all the forms and cards needed. We had to use old forms which we had stamped over.

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SMIRNOV (Ukrainian SSR):

In the Ukraine, due to the stresses of war, the files were in poor condition. The archives were very large and were in such bad shape when we received them that much material still can't be found. Alphabetization was incorrect, material was misfiled.

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An important chief of the sixth subsection of the 1st Spetsotdel of the People's Kommissariat of the Center offered us a "lesson", I can not call it anything else, on how to cut out our weak spots--we did not listen to him.

Voice from the seats: Has he a doctorate?

SMIRNOV:

I think that he has a doctorate and is a specialist in this field and will be able to clarify this question.

Voice from the seats: He needs to have an extension of time for that.

SMIRNOV:

It goes without saying that when new leadership arrived with orders, directives, etc., our work was put on the right track.

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In the Western oblasts there are thousands of people who have not been entered on dossiers, especially those persons living in the border regions.

Not long ago, a comrade came from the Center to Lvov, worked there a month without the Ukrainian SSR knowing anything about it. When he left, he left the files all messed up. You people would like to draw conclusions about the work of the Lvov Oblast 1st Spetsotdel, when ever we knew nothing about it.

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SIIRNOV:

Many directorate chiefs write their documents from the reports of their workers, oftentimes poorly qualified; this leads to mistakes and the misuse of terms.

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PRAVIKOV (1st Spetsotdel Center NKVD/USSR):

NKVD circular #206 of 23 October 1938 deals with imprisoned foreigners. Every 1st Spetsotdel and dossier group must know all about this circular. Forty-eight hours after the arrest of an alien, the following documents must be sent to 1st Spetsotdel NKVD/USSR: two dossier cards--form #1, photographs, national passport, disposition of his case.

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In all of the talks today I have heard nothing about dossiers of imprisoned foreigners. The NKVD organs in the outlying districts are completely lacking in dossiers on imprisoned foreigners. The 1st Spetsotdel and dossier groups of DTO and OO paid no attention to the problems of making dossiers on foreigners. All of you present know that the 1st Spetsotdels of NKVD-UNKVD are charged with a large and responsible problem in organizing and setting up dossiers on imprisoned foreigners.

All of you comrades sitting here should know that Narkom (Narodni Kommissar-Peoples' Commissar) and his assistant almost daily request from the 1st Spetsotdel NKVD/USSR documents on foreigners whose citizenship is proved by their national documents. Many chiefs of 1st Spetsotdels NKVD/UNKVD have made and are making serious mistakes in regard to the problems of dossiers of foreigners and aliens.

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GERTSOVSKI:

Comrade TSVETKOV has some proposals to make.

TSVETKOV:

Socialist competition is one of our best means of improving work, and fulfilling NKVD orders.

A worker does six hundred records and goes home. Another worker at the end of the day has done less and realizes it. The latter will work overtime in order to do more than six hundred so her work does not trail.

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Socialist competitions must fulfill the following points:

1. Improve our operational dossiers.
2. Raise the qualifications of "Chekhist" work in relationship to the technique of doing our operational work.
3. Raise our true (Communist) political level.
4. Raise the general cultural level of our co-workers.
5. Improve our war preparations.

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SOLOVEV (Special Section (00) Center):

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The dossier group of the Special Section has two card files of agents: one by family name and one by pseudonym. If one were to ask how many agents were in any special group, division, etc., there would be no answer as the files were not kept according to groups.

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We have two basic complaints against the 1st Spetsotdel: 1) they try to get our archive to do some of their work; 2) the 1st Spetsotdel always seizes all the forms and blanks first.

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Morning Session: 16 March 1940.

DENISOV (1st Spetsotdel Center):

The purpose of this conference is to improve our work.

I would like to talk about the All-Union Search Section. Order #00310 for 1939 places on the 1st Spetsotdel the responsibility for sending bulletins to the All-Union Search Section about especially important government criminals not located by the courts.

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Much work is involved here as there are many very dangerous counter-revolutionary elements to this day on Soviet territory. However, the issuance of bulletins (man-wanted notices) has been poorly handled. Failure on the part of 1st Spetsotdel to check data regarding the person wanted has resulted in sending out bulletins on persons dead or already in prison. Matters regarding search should be referred to the 3rd Spetsotdel, not the 1st.

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It is very important to complete all NKVD orders. Comrade STALIN, in his historic speech at the eighteenth Party Congress, said: "Do not forget capitalistic encirclement; remember that foreign intelligence systems will send spies to our country; remember this and strengthen our intelligence; help to destroy and uproot the enemies of our people."

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Some comrades are not clear as to what problems may be used for work by a Socialist competition. Here are some problems decided on by the Party meetings (partsobraniya) or Party office (partburo) as basic problems for concluding a Socialist agreement:

1) There was a daily contest for fulfilling the monthly operational plans for each section. Work was systematized; for each two hours of work, the workers received ten minutes' rest.

To raise the cultural level of workers in the operational "Chekhist" section, every fifth evening was spent on general cultural study and two hours of "Chekhist" study; during the day, several comrades took courses in foreign languages.

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2) There was a contest against waste. Many workers were dismissed for mistakes. Young workers were helped. If there are questions, come and see how we worked out our problems and did away with disorder in the 1st Spetsotdel.

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IVANOV:

Regarding dossiers on agent nets, we, the 1st Spetsotdel of UNKVD in Tula Oblast, have the following proposal: Organize the dossiers of agent nets according to installation (school, factory, etc.) and place of residence.

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DOROFYEV (Gorky Oblast):

The 1st Spetsotdel UNKVD of the Gorky Oblast did not establish the special card file on street dossiers. This was taken from the DTO of the Gorky Railroad and continued. If the operational section requests information on some person living on some certain street, we can look and see that an agent lives on that street. We order him to make contact with the suspect if possible.

TITOV:

We have done away with the street dossier as we found it took up much time and had little value.

GERTSOVSKI:

This problem is interesting and important; however, keeping dossiers according to locale and street is good only when the educational level of the workers is high. As yet this has not been achieved. A change to alphabetical dossiers will be made.

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IVANOV:

Comrade MARKUSHEV has a proposal to abolish the practice of marking in the log book the movement of work from one section to another, the assignment of work to the archives, etc.

PROSKORYAKOV:

The log book is a fundamental document. By use of this document, it is always possible to know where and when a document was sent. Cards are destroyed when no longer needed, but the log book is more permanent.

The document log is always to be kept. Cards and documents are to be kept for a limited time. Cards are easily destroyed. A book will always show where documents were sent.

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IVANOV:

A group of comrades from the Kirov Oblast and DTO propose to carry a unified dossier of anti-Soviet elements who are listed in alphabetical records.

ZHURIN (DFO Kalnin RR):

Order #001223 clearly says that persons listed in such records will not be carried on a unified dossier. However, the book on operational dossiers says they will be. I think they should be.

ZASLAVSKI (Moscow Oblast):

I disagree with Zhurin as his suggestion would cause an overload of work.

GERTSOVSKI:

We of the 1st Spetsotdel Center feel the need to unify mass dossiers.

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I feel this question must be turned over to a commission. For Special and Transport Sections this problem can definitely be decided immediately. Regarding UNKVD, we will wait half a year and will send comrades to Ryazan and Moscow Oblasts, check results and disseminate the results of their experiences to all UNKVD organs.

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IVANOV:

Comrade KOZOKHOTSKI proposes introducing a quarterly accounting of 1st Spetsotdel of NKVD-UNKVD before 1st Spetsotdel of NKVD/USSR about work on operational dossiers.

KOZOKHOTSKI (Kalinin Oblast):

I have a second proposal: All chief of 1st Spetsotdels must present to their supervisors summaries from time to time about conditions of the operational dossiers.

TITOV (Moscow Oblast):

We have already done it and since no one is prohibited from doing it, there is no point in getting directive approval.

GERTSOVSKI:

Comrade TITOV is absolutely right.

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IVANOV:

TITOV proposes that when 1st Spetsotdel NKVD/USSR requests records for inspection, they should not be allowed to keep them in their central archives.

MALTSEV:

I agree with TITOV.

BOKUCHAVA (DFO Trans-Caucasian RR):

I think the 1st Spetsotdel should keep records.

GERTSOVSKI:

This problem must go to a Commission for decision.

IVANOV:

There is a proposal to organize within the 1st Spetsotdel an organizational-instruction subsection, and a second proposal from the Moscow Oblast that all rational proposals on techniques of working with dossiers be transmitted to the outlying districts.

GERTSOVSKI:

An organizational-instruction subsection has already been formed. The second proposal must be adopted.

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Evening meeting: 16 March 1940. Discussion on instructions in archive work.

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As regards the system of keeping materials in our archives, it differs from that of the government archives, such as archives of the Revolution, October Revolution, archives of war history, Red Army, etc. We cannot use the instruction their workers receive as it is written in such technical, difficult terms that our workers could not absorb it should we completely take over their system.

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In looking through the work which the archives usually handle, we can see that in twenty years the archives have not been revised. It is unknown what materials in the archives are missing, in what number, how important. To this time no one knows this and this must be learned.

There is still another job: the weeding out of material which has completely lost its value. Work will improve after this has been done. The instructions will be in the following form: description of the backlog, how each is formed, how kept and used. General breakdown: keeping of materials, revision and weeding out, order for using materials, intra-archives, inquiry work, etc.

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GERTSOVSKI:

Comrade BASHTAKOV will speak on the problems in the work of 1st Spetsotdels.

BASHTAKOV (Center of 1st Spetsotdel):

First of all, I must excuse myself for being present for such a short time at the conference. This did not occur because I did not want to be present--I had a great desire to be here --but circumstances were such that I could not be here. Concerning the course of this regional operational conference I am able to judge from material with which I have just become acquainted and from impressions of comrades who were present here and who shared their impressions with me...

Above all, it is necessary to say that several comrades were not sufficiently seriously prepared and had not reflected long enough about questions. They might have offered more questions and proposals. This does not concern all comrades and it is not by accident that some of the comrades have taken a sufficiently active part in this operational conference, such as Comrades TSVETKOV, TITOV, KRIVITSKI, SMIRNOV, and others. But another group of comrades sat here and were silent.

As the first of this group we have Comrade MARTINETS. He keeps us in complete ignorance. We have no information on what he is doing there in Rostov. The 1st Spetsotdel in Rostov is a big Spetsotdel and the oblast is very big. He might at least come forward and relate the important details of his work.

Concerning Comrade GROMOV of Vologda matters are very unsatisfactory. We judge this from the protocol of the operational convention. The chief of the directorate said straight out that Comrade GROMOV does not set an example for his co-workers, he is very sluggish in doing his tasks, and he very feebly carries out his work as chief of a section.

Several comrades are not sufficiently self-critical concerning themselves and their work, as, for example, Comrade MOROZOV. He asked very few questions at the regional operational conference, but it is possible that he can ask more serious questions and speak more self-critically concerning himself at an operational conference.

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Chief of UNKVD/LO (Leningrad Oblast in 1939 was GORLIDZE, who made the statement: "The 1st Special Section is my right hand."...

Difficulty has been experienced in teaching younger workers to write and to apply themselves to document work. They must have daily practice in getting used to our techniques and learning to love our work. Every document, whether its source is the top or the outlying districts, is a contribution to the Russian heritage. One letter can play a most important role-- a single piece of carelessness must be paid for later. Card files with errors will fail. Also, it is not only necessary that each worker know his own work, but he must also know that of the whole section. For this purpose a textbook on operational dossiers, orders and instructions has been printed.

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Conversation with BERIYA, as related to the conference by BASHTAKOV:

I must tell you that the People's Kommissar, Lavrenti Pavlovich, pays much attention to the work of the 1st Spetsotdels. From time to time he asks me: "Do you know how many arrests you have made?" I say: "In Moscow, yes". "But in the Moscow Oblast/" "I do not know." "It is necessary," he said, "to know". After several further questions Lavrenti Pavlovich said: "You ought to teach them to work like a chronometer. Do you know what a chronometer is?" I said: "I know." (That is what I keep telling you, comrades, accuracy, exactness, legibility in your work.) "You must," said Lavrenti Pavlovich, "give what information you have within one to two minutes, with exactness and truth so that there may be no misapprehensions. Information that you should give is: 1) when arrested, 2) where arrested, 3) by whom sentenced, 4) for how long sentenced, and 5) where he is."

BASHTAKOV makes his point from the above:

As it is now with us, comrades, this is the way we give information--the man was condemned at some time or other, he is to be found at some place or other, and when we do get around to an examination with any thoroughness, it develops that the man has already died. I tell you this so you will work like a chronometer, quickly and accurately.

At 1645 Comrade GERTSOVSKI closed the first Regional operational conference of the chiefs of the 1st Spetsotdels of NKVD/UNKVD, of workers from the dossier subsections and of groups of the DTO's railways and OO's of military districts and of the Navy.