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The K.G.B. Goes on the Offensive And the West Begins Striking Back

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BONN, July 23 — The Soviet intelligence and security agency, the K.G.B., has entered a phase of aggressiveness in its activities in the West, according to allied officials. The upsurge is cited as the principal cause of a series of expulsions of Soviet agents from countries around the world since the start of 1983.

The number of Russians expelled for illegal intelligence-gathering so far this year has reached 90, according to the United States State Department. Six

Tracking the K.G.B.

First of three articles.

others, identified as spies, left on their own. The total for all of 1982, according to United States Government records was 49; in 1981, it was 27.

Technology and Missiles

The increased number of expulsions, including the French decision to order the departure of 47 Russians in April, is widely described as a function of the stepped-up K.G.B. effort, but not a result of a coordinated Western campaign.

Although there were varying views on the degree of increase in the K.G.B.'s activities, intelligence analysts, government officials, and active and former counterespionage officers interviewed in six European countries and the United States agreed that the areas of Soviet concentration were the acquisition of advanced Western technology, and an attempt to block, through political-influence operations, NATO's deployment at the end of the year of new nuclear missiles in Western Europe.

During the first half of this year every North Atlantic Treaty Organization member in Europe with the exception of Luxembourg and Portugal expelled or arrested men described as Soviet agents.

The latest of the Russians to be expelled was Vladislav Istomin, a Vice Consul in Geneva, who was told to leave Switzerland early this month after he was described as a spy specializing in the collection of technological and economic information.

Switzerland, a neutral, also closed the Bern bureau of the Novosti press agency, citing its attempts to influence disarmament groups calling themselves the peace movement, and threw out a Soviet journalist and a diplomat described as his K.G.B. superior.

Denmark expelled Yevgeny Motorov, head of Line X for the K.G.B. in Copenhagen. Line X is the field section for science and technology.

Danish counterespionage sources said he tried not only to obtain microelectronic equipment on NATO's embargoed lists, but also to interest a Dane, a potential agent, in joining the country's Fulbright Scholarship Committee.

A Prized Target

In Belgium, Yevgeny Mikhailov, director general of a Soviet-Belgian company interested in computers, was thrown out, just as his predecessor was seven years ago.

These expulsions have counterparts in Thailand, Australia and Japan, a particularly prized target for its technological innovations. Even the Iran of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini sent home 18 Russians described as K.G.B. agents, denouncing their "treachery."

If Soviet efforts to acquire technology in Japan are regarded by United States officials as particularly intense, it is in Western Europe that counterintelligence officials have been most forthcoming in discussing K.G.B. activities.

"We see a multiplication and an intensification in the technology sector that must reflect unusual pressure to perform," a West German counterespionage official said. "It just wasn't there before in the same degree. They've become very aggressive."

Another West German expert spoke of a coordinated, intense campaign to mobilize Western opinion against the new NATO missiles.

'Abusive' and 'Outrageous'

In Paris, aides to President François Mitterrand used the words "abusive" and "outrageous" in describing the K.G.B. activities that led to the expulsions there.

An American who surveys Soviet espionage activities dated the buildup back two and a half to three years.

The onset of détente in the late 60's led to a general upswing in efforts by the K.G.B., he said, "but their plans appear to have been pushed forward. If you look at the behavior, you cannot reach another conclusion."

"The people work overtly were usual streets,"

He found in a Soviet leaving his "hustling" to make an ill capital.

The start coming to power of Yuri V. Andropov, the Communist Party chief who headed the K.G.B. and its half-million or more agents for 15 years.

But it developed under him — and with it the K.G.B.'s reputation as a highly skilled, professional organization, hampered by bureaucracy, corruption and internal rivalries, yet unquestionably respected, or reviled, as a leading international instrument of Soviet power.

A Division of Labor

In addition to the K.G.B.'s assertiveness, there are reports of its increased use of Eastern European intelligence services in coordinated operations.

A West German expert, one of those in Western Europe who see relatively limited changes in the tempo of Soviet espionage, insisted that its overall effectiveness had grown because of better division of labor — giving tasks formerly accomplished by K.G.B. officers to the so-called "satellite agencies."

Documents turned over to the Swiss authorities after the occupation of the Polish Embassy in Bern by dissidents showed unusual coordination between the East bloc embassies there in amassing information on military matters.

Some evidence exists that East Germany, after having achieved remarkable penetration in West Germany, is increasing its espionage effort in Scandinavia, notably in Denmark.

The Czechoslovaks are strongly present in Austria — the West European country widely described as the least resistant to Soviet-led espionage — and the Bulgarians in Italy, Greece, and Turkey.

A United States Government document, assessing a decade of Western technology collection by the Soviet intelligence agencies and their East European counterparts, found last year that it had saved the Warsaw Pact "hundreds of millions of dollars" and "years in development time."

The acquisitions, the report said, have permitted the modernization of the pact's weapons industry, greater weapons performance, and the ability to build in countermeasures "to Western weapons early in the development of their own weapons programs."

General notions of the extent of the K.G.B.'s activities have been reinforced as well.

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