TITLE: Book Review: The Soviet Secret Police

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STUDIES IN INTELLIGENCE

A collection of articles on the historical, operational, doctrinal, and theoretical aspects of intelligence.

THE SOVIET SECRET POLICE. By *Simon Wolin* [1] and *Robert M. Slusser.* [2] (New York: F. A. Praeger. 1957. Pp. 408.)

It should not be necessary by now to come to the defense of that rather forlorn figure, the outsider who has the temerity to write on intelligence. With a decade of experience and reflection behind us and the work of our predecessors to draw upon, we should by now have achieved breadth of view sufficient to appreciate the contribution that the amateur or the independent scholar — the man who does not earn his living at intelligence work — can make to our discipline. Instead, I fear, we have grown nearsighted from looking down our noses at those who invade our field without benefit of classified data.

The word "professional" recently has gained a prominent place in our vocabulary. It reflects, I believe, a growing self-consciousness, a developing tradition, an understanding that in its broadest sense intelligence is an intellectual discipline. Intelligence, however, is a Trappist-like profession. Those who enter it take vows of silence. All of us understand the peculiar need for a limitation upon our right to professional self-expression and freely accept it, but this barrier also can bring frustration and an unconscious rejection of the contribution made by amateurs who are not thus hampered. Perhaps the best works on intelligence are written by these same amateurs simply because our rules of the game do not permit the professional to compete.

"Professionalism" easily becomes a refuge for the professional intelligence man. He falls back on his (he believes) superior knowledge of tradecraft and techniques or on his training; he is proud that he is really "witting." He manages

[1] Simon Wolin is the brother of David J. Dallin, the author of *Soviet Espionage*. Now in his sixties, Wolin was educated in Russian and European universities. For a time he was associate editor of the *New Leader*, and later did research for US government agencies. At the present time he is a free lance writer.

[2] Robert M. Slusser attended the University of Chicago and the Russian Institute at Columbia. He served a short time as Associate Director of the Research Program on the USSR, an affiliate of the East European Fund, Inc., which was financed by the Ford Foundation. Slusser is now employed at the Hoover Library for War, Peace and Revolution. He has edited *Soviet Economic Policy in Post-War Germany*, a collection of papers by former Soviet officials.

to forget that a professional worth his salt must pause occasionally to gain a broad and detached view of his discipline.

It is precisely this detached view, unclouded by our day-to-day problems, that the amateur or scholar sometimes can give us.

Every work on contemporary intelligence and/or for security organizations, be it amateur or scholarly, is vulnerable to professional criticism — at least on the narrow ground of scope and accuracy of data. With rare exceptions the outside writer is hobbled by limitations that are the converse of our own: he is denied access to information. Even when the outsider relies on the personal experiences of former members and victims of the service, as Wolin and Slusser have largely done, the professional will often judge his work to be superficial, out of date, or lacking in precision. The professional who loses himself in the maze of daily problems and decisions will soon discover, however, that classified information is his only remaining stock in trade! He has lost the ability to measure the broad sweep of his subject.

If he is wise, the amateur does not compete with the professional on the latter's home ground. Instead, he escapes to a wider field where he can more than hold his own — broad and basic questions of philosophy and policy or the presentation of a service in terms of its historical development.

This, I believe, is what Wolin and Slusser seek to do, at least in part, in their collection of essays on Soviet state security. The fact that their success is less than complete does not invalidate my thesis. Their work is significant, indeed, to the extent that it interprets the historical development and defines the philosophical bases of Soviet state security.

Wolin and Slusser have drawn together in one volume separate studies on Soviet state security, earlier prepared by defectors from its ranks and by its victims for the now-defunct Research Program on the USSR. Their historical survey of Soviet security organizations from the Cheka to the KGB introduces and gives unity to these essays, which deal primarily with the internal repressive and counterintelligence roles of state security. External espionage activity receives only superficial and generalized treatment.

Events in the Soviet orbit during late 1956 and the discovery of new documentary material after the book went to press

presented serious problems of organization to the editors. They solved these difficulties, not entirely to the reader's satisfaction, by hurriedly tacking on a "postscript" and "addenda" in the form of notes. Constant reference must be made to this added material if the text is to be brought into any order.

The success of any collective work is dependent, in the main, upon two things: the competence of the individual authors and the skill of the editor in distilling unity of purpose from divergent minds. For several reasons, Wolin and Slusser were unable to achieve this editorial standard. Philip Moseley, a former director of the Research Program, earlier commented on the serious editorial problem that plagued the Program because former Soviet scholars often could not meet the criteria of American research. Many times the work of such men had to be torn apart and completely recast. Evidence at hand indicates that some 16 research papers were used, wholly or in part, in preparing the 9 published essays. It is unlikely that all these papers were originally written under the American editors' supervision. Their editorial work, which was probably done late in the life of the Research Program when financial resources were low or nonexistent, is not of the highest standard.

Wolin and Slusser themselves have written the most valuable essay. Their historical survey of Soviet state security is the finest short summary of this subject published in English. Its value is enhanced by extensive footnotes which are detailed comments rather than mere source references. Here we can see the genesis of policies that came to full and bloody flower in the thirties: strict party control of state security, the growth of state security's right to arrest party members for opposition to dicta of the leaders, and the beginnings of Soviet espionage work abroad. (In his essay, Konstantin Shtepa [1] also discusses certain early state security policies from a different point of

[1] Konstantin Shtepa was educated in history and philology at Russian universities before the revolution. He fought with the White armies, then made his peace with the Communists, and continued his academic career at the University of Kiev until his arrest in 1938. Shtepa cast his lot with the German invaders and was later evacuated by them. His scholarly work in emigration has been disturbed by political conflicts with Ukrainian refugees in the west. He presently resides in the US. Using the pen name W. Godin, he collaborated with F. Beck on the volume, *Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession* (New York, 1951).

view.) Wolin and Slusser touch on, although they do not discuss, Stalin's own early experience in the Cheka. In the light of later developments, Stalin's personal participation in Cheka work is significant. This introductory historical essay is easily the best of the book. It is required reading for all students of Soviet state security.

Konstantin Shtepa has written on Feliks Edmundovich Dzerzhinskiy, first chief of the Cheka, and on Chekism, the doctrine of organized terror. Possibly because most source materials are in Russian, the West has done little work on the personality and career of Dzerzhinskiy. Like Stalin and Mikoyan, Dzerzhinskiy once intended to enter the priesthood. Instead, he became an idealist of revolution, the "saint of Bolshevism," whose influence on the state security apparatus is still visible today.

Dzerzhinskiy was the greatest director of Soviet state security and the only true innovator among this motley crew. His successors have been dilettantes (Menzhinskiy), mere executive officers (Yagoda and Yezhov), ambitious politicians (Beriya), or bureaucrats of terror (Ignat'yev and Serov). Under Dzerzhinskiy the Cheka developed characteristics that came to full growth in successor organizations. Even before the Cheka was created, and immediately upon the success of the October uprising, Dzerzhinskiy became commandant of Smolny, the headquarters of the new regime in Petrograd. He thus personally assumed responsibility for the lives of the leaders, a function that later passed to the Cheka and its successors. Early in the new regime, state security became interested in internal party developments. It was Dzerzhinskiy who first proposed that party members must notify state security of opposition groups or tendencies within the party. When the collective heirs of Stalin strove to loosen state security's grip on the party they were simply trying to reverse an early Dzerzhinskiy policy. Time will show just how successful they were.

The doctrine known as Chekism was first formulated in Dzerzhinskiy's time. It is a witches' brew of prerevolutionary Bolshevik theory, operational doctrine, and technique (inherited in part from the tsarist *Okhrana*), the traditional Russian view of secret police functions within the state, a cynical belief that the human being is the Soviet state's cheapest natural resource, and the Chekists' own knowledge that they form a

special privileged caste. Chekism is the doctrine of an elite created to defend a secular religion. We court disaster if we fail to understand it.

With one exception the other essays are lower in quality than the first two. All reflect the basic weakness of any volume on contemporary Soviet state security — the lack of access to timely information. Early in his essay on the organization and function of state security, Ye. A. Andreyevich [4] makes it clear that the exact structure at the time he wrote was not known to him. He attempts, in compensation, to describe the hybrid created by Beriya in 1953 when he merged MGB and MVD. Much of Andreyevich's information was already out of date when he used it.

Little would be accomplished by a close review of Andreyevich's errors. The nomenclature and numerical designations he assigns to MVD components in 1953 cannot be trusted. He deprives the Foreign Intelligence Directorate of any responsibility for Satellite security/intelligence services. (Andreyevich does not discuss the adviser system in the Satellites.) His description of legal and illegal intelligence networks abroad is confusing and, in fact, inaccurate. Andreyevich's essay, however, does show the impact of the security machine on the average Soviet citizen.

Two essays on Soviet state security organizations since World War II (actually a discussion of state security after the creation of KGB), written by V. P. Artem'yev [5] and G. S. Burlutskiy,[6] must be used with discretion. The first, which is devoted to postwar organizational structure, contains numerous errors and distortions of fact.

It is regrettable that a disproportionate amount of space is given to the border guards and other armed forces of state

[4] Ye. A. Andreyevich is one of many aliases and pen names used by Yevgeniy A. Karpovich, an electrical engineer of Soviet origin. Following exile to Siberia, he was released for military service and ultimately was sent to Germany to assist in dismantling industrial plants. He defected to the British in early 1946.

[5] Col. Vyacheslav P. Artem'yev, alias Vasiliy Chomenko, formerly of the NKVD, was at one time employed as lecturer at the US Army school in Regensberg. He is the author of *Corrective Labor Camps* (in Russian), (Munich, 1956).

[6] Lt. Col. G. S. Burlutskiy served with Soviet frontier troops until his defection.

security. Artem'yev and Burlutskiy describe the protection of Soviet frontiers in almost painful detail. Much of their information bears the stamp of truth, although I am not certain that either man is equipped to discuss the higher echelons of this directorate. Only incidental attention is paid to state security espionage activities abroad. Artem'yev and Burlutskiy, whose competence to handle this subject I question, have written a short and inadequate essay on espionage in Western Europe. It contains errors of fact, interpretations, and emphasis. The authors, for example, deny the elementary fact that Moscow closely supervises all foreign residencies and networks. Their failure to consider in any detail the espionage role of Military Intelligence (RU) robs their paper of depth.

The best essay by a former Soviet citizen is A. Grigor'yev's[1] paper on investigative methods. Grigor'yev himself has felt the knout of state security. Although frankly based on experience in the thirties, this essay has much value for the present-day student. Grigor'yev injects the flavor of Soviet life into his description of the recruitment and handling of secret informants; the preparation of cases against suspects; and the procedures of arrest, interrogation, and extraction of confession.

Perhaps because of the nature of their material, all essays by former Soviet citizens, except Shtepa's paper on Dzerzhinskiy, are sparsely footnoted.

Students of Soviet security/espionage organs will welcome the editors' reading list. Although it is poorly organized, this list is perhaps the best available compilation of source and secondary materials in Russian and the principal Western languages on Soviet state security. It is an indispensable tool for the specialist.

The Soviet Secret Police, is, then, a book of uneven quality. Its essays range from the indispensable to the superficial. It is poorly organized. It contains some errors of fact and interpretation. Yet it is a book that you, the professional intelligence man, should read.

Here you can find at times something of that broad view I mentioned earlier. So put aside for awhile your problems

[1] It has not been possible to identify A. Grigor'yev.

and decisions, shove back the papers on your desk, and take a close look at the face of the enemy.

Yes, this is a book that you should read. Read it selectively, and with care to be sure — but read it.

JOHN RONDEAU