The Okhrana's Female Agents: Part I: Russian Women

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Some anti-revolutionary operations of the imperial Russian political police.

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Part 1: Russian Women

In a memorandum of 31 January 1911 addressed to the Police Department in Petersburg, the imperial MVD gave a description of Anna Gregoriyeva Serebryakova, the ideal of female agents:

"She had completed 25 years of continuous and very useful service for Moscow Okhrana. As a secret [penetration] agent she had connections with the leaders of many subversive organizations but was not attached anywhere as a regular or active member. Her motivation for hard agent work came from her strong personal convictions. She hated sedition in all forms and performed her assignments against subversives as an idealist, having little interest in monetary remuneration ...

"She kept her secrets even from her family. Accepting the job of clandestine employment against the revolutionaries, she had to reconcile herself to exposing her own children to revolutionary propaganda by holding meetings of subversives in her home ... Despite the emotional and spiritual conflicts she had to suppress unshared with anyone, her devotion to duty never failed."

The memorandum goes on to declare that Serebryakova, now ill, blind, and

deserted by her family after Burtzev, chief of the revolutionaries' counterintelligence, exposed her in 1909 as an Okhrana agent, was to receive an annual pension of 1200 rubles in gratitude for her long and devoted service.

Personnel Practices

The Okhrana depended heavily on female agents, particularly in foreign operations, and Serebryakova came to be held up and frequently pointed to as a model. The best of the female operatives, the records show, did have their paramount motivation in patriotism and devotion to the anti-revolutionary cause. But as in any intelligence service some were attracted by the danger and glamor of clandestine life, some were blackmailed into intelligence work, and many, especially those that were not Russian, had strictly mercenary motives. Later we shall trace some individual agent careers of all these kinds.

The records show that a number of Russian deep-cover agents were drawn into the service by some form of conversion after conviction as revolutionaries. Kovalskaya, "Gramm" (true name not recorded), Borovskaya, and Romanova are some of the ex-revolutionary women on the agent lists. After having served part of their terms in prisons or in exile, they were persuaded to work for the Okhrana, freed on some legal pretext, and normally helped to escape abroad to begin their agent activity. Although some of these converts in time became proficient and trusted employees, they were seldom accorded the same confidence as agents without prior leftist records.

Wives, mistresses, and sisters of male Okhrana agents were often a convenient source of recruits, particularly for operations abroad. When director Lopukhin sent Lev Beitner to Paris in 1905 with the assignment of collecting the intelligence required to control arms smuggling on the part of the revolutionaries, the agent took with him his wife and sister in order to engage in simultaneous operations in the capitals and ports of France, England, and the Low Countries. The three received their pay separately, but Beitner did the planning and gave the women their assignments. The operation was successful in uncovering every major shipment of arms in the Baltic and Black Seas.

"Julietta," Beitner's sister, in addition to her immense contribution in spotting clandestine arms sales, supply dumps, and cargo craft and crews, distinguished herself later by discovering and infiltrating the shop where Robert Loewenthal, an emigre from Russia, counterfeited Russian banknotes to finance the revolutionaries. She became Loewenthal's partner in the shop

by giving 1000 francs, ostensibly from her savings but supplied by the Okhrana, for the purchase of some special printing equipment. She met daily with her case officer for the operation, an Okhrana staff agent, and they worked out a detailed plan whereby the entire ring of producers and distributors could be taken red-handed.

Agent Brontman's mistress Eropkina played a similar role. Like Beitner, Brontman had served many successful years in Russia. When the Okhrana decided to send him abroad, it hired his mistress and sent her along with him. The two worked for a number of years as penetration agents, he in the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries, she with the Social Democrats (Bolsheviks).

It appears that the salaries of women agents were for the most part equal to those of men, and frequently they were even higher. Their code names and pseudonyms were usually male (while male agents were at times given female first names or nicknames -- Katia, Lucy, Belle, and the like).

Okhrana staff officers were always men. Staff agents abroad, who did spotting, recruiting, and liaison work, controlled operations, and handled agents, were likewise always men. The archives of the Okhrana abroad have no record of a woman in the capacity of case officer. Women could be the most valuable of agents, engaged in extremely dangerous or sensitive operations, but they never held positions entailing any kind of supervisory function. The Okhrana offices at home likewise had no females on the staff except in clerical capacities; women served otherwise as agents only.

In this respect the Okhrana's practice contrasts sharply with that in revolutionary ranks. Lenin's wife Krupskaya, as the heavy Okhrana folders of her intercepted mail indicate, could be considered the de facto intelligence director for the Social Democratic Party (Bolshevik) and, in part, the Jewish Bundists. Much of her correspondence with fellow conspirators all over Europe and the Russian Empire was in secret writing; this was of many types and often complex. For years she was busy gathering information for the party and the revolution, sending out instructions, designing codes for communications, receiving and dispatching couriers, and acting as an informal but competent intelligence center.

The Okhrana's women were different from their counterparts among the revolutionaries in various other ways. They were :predominantly Christian, i.e., Greek Orthodox when of Russian origin, while the revolutionary women, like most of the men, either were Jewish or belonged to some minority group of the Empire such as the Poles, Armenians, or Latvians.[2] The only Jewish female agents sent abroad by the Okhrana seem to be those who accompanied their male partners to form operational teams like those of Beitner and Brontman mentioned above. But the Okhrana's male deep-cover agents abroad tended to be predominantly Jewish like the revolutionaries.

The files contain no record of any special training for the women sent abroad. All the outstanding ones, however, are shown to have spent some preparatory time in close association with the very top operators in Petersburg and Moscow. That time was presumably devoted to some kind of training, at least briefing on targets and methods of operation abroad. There is no indication of any other than strictly operational relationship between the bosses in Russia and the female agents. Abroad, the propaganda of the revolutionaries accused exposed female agents of being prostitutes or mistresses of their case officers, but the records give no reason to believe that the accusations were anything but convenient propaganda.

Some of the women agents were instructed to communicate directly, upon arrival in the field, with the chiefs at headquarters in Petersburg or at Moscow Okhrana; accommodation addresses were supplied at both ends. In all cases, however, it soon became the practice to channel communications through the field office in Paris or Berlin. The field offices then ultimately assigned case officers and exercised direct control over the agents.

Following are case histories of some of the individual Okhrana women, selected as typifying the operations and methods of the time. First come the stories of three Russian agents, then those of some indigenous recruits.[3]

Francesco

Dr. Nikolai Sergeyevich Zhuchenko, a physician of excellent professional reputation and high standing in the Moscow society of 1913, made a discreet inquiry at the police department concerning the whereabouts of his wife Zinaida. She had left him full fifteen years ago to go into hiding from the police, and she had not been heard from again. The doctor, being a good and law-abiding citizen, had never approved of her revolutionary associations during their five years of married life together, and for that reason her disappearance had not unduly upset him. Now he had decided that fifteen years was long enough to wait; he wanted to know whether she was dead or alive. In fact, he wanted to remarry.

As was usual with such inquiries, this found its way to the Okhrana identity section in Moscow. Zinaida's name was there, but the card contained only a reference to another set of identity records kept at Okhrana headquarters. In Petersburg Zinaida's card and voluminous operational dossier were located under the name "Francesco."

Matters under this operational code name were of utmost importance and sensitive enough to require the personal attention of the chief. Police Director

Aleksei Vassiliyev wrote to Paris, instructing Paris Okhrana chief Krassilnikov to have a talk with agent Francesco, Mme. Zhuchenko. The Okhrana chiefs were just as anxious as the parties concerned to avoid a divorce suit in the open courts. The lady turned out to be agreeable to a quiet divorce. She asked that the doctor be told she was no longer in hiding but in Paris and still active as a revolutionary. He should be given her Paris address in order to simplify negotiation on the divorce.[1]

Paris Okhrana files contain many references to Francesco, but the bulk of her operational dossier was probably removed to Petersburg after she was exposed by revolutionary intelligence and denounced as an Okhrana agent. It is possible also that a revolutionary commission which came to Paris in 1917 to search the Okhrana records removed some of the papers on her. This account of her career is therefore sketchy and drawn in part from general histories of the Okhrana. All early writers about the service devote considerable space to her position among the revolutionaries and her accomplishments against them.

Apprenticeship

Zinaida, daughter of a government official named Guerngross and graduate of the Smolny Institute in Petersburg, was still a student at Moscow University when she made three vows, all at about the same time. She took the marriage vow with young Doctor Zhuchenko; she took oath with a group of university students conspiring to kill the Czar; and she swore to serve faithfully as an Okhrana agent. From the beginning, her career shows that she took only the last of these seriously. Even during her five years of married life she could not settle down to relatively prosperous ease as a housewife; to her husband's distress she associated with revolutionaries and malcontents of all brands.

Her refusal to single out any one subversive group and become a member may have been due to her husband's protest, but it was more likely in conformity with the Okhrana's doctrine that the most dependable agent is one who succeeds in developing access to all revolutionary groups without belonging to any.[2] In her later operations, as she forged the reputation of being one of the two most important of all Okhrana agents at home and abroad,[3] she adhered strictly to this doctrine. The other of the two, Evno Azev, contrastingly, forever strove to attain top positions among the revolutionaries, frequently by means of betraying his rivals to the Okhrana.

Zinaida, according to a case officer's description of her as a student at the fashionable Smolny Institute, was thoroughly opposed to revolutionary

activities but had a love for adventure and challenging risks. Even at this time, before her recruitment, she expressed her conviction that the revolutionaries had a corrupting and demoralizing effect upon students and the people in general. An eager recruit, she followed instructions with enthusiasm and was perspicacious and adventurous enough to penetrate subversive groups and bands of conspirators beyond her assigned targets. Her case officers " first required reports on individuals, groups, activities, and plans. Much of her year or so under her Moscow case officer, Zubatov, must have been devoted to training and some to a cooling-off period. But by 1895 she had already attained the distinction, though probably known then only to Zubatov, of having saved the life of Czar Nicolas II.

In the spring of that year Moscow students worked out a plan to kill the Czar. One of them was assigned to throw a bomb from a steeple of the Church of Ivan the Terrible down on the imperial cortege as it passed below. The chemists in the conspiracy fashioned the device and it was delivered to a nearby monastery. Zinaida waited until the preparations were finished and the conspirators were all in place, and then gave the word. All were arrested, including Zinaida, and deported to Siberia. There it was arranged that she, along with several others as a screen, could make good an escape.

Trial by Terror

Zinaida thus went abroad as an escaped Siberian exile and began operations under Arkadi Harting, chief of the Okhrana's Berlin outpost, who assigned her tasks in Berlin and Leipzig. She was soon called to other European countries, but her principal target became the Socialist Revolutionaries and their Fighting Unit (Boyevaya druzhina) which carried out assassinations and other kinds of terror in Russia.

Paralleling Zubatov in Moscow, Harting was the counter-intelligence planner par excellence abroad. His successes as a provocation agent in Paris in 1590 had launched him on an intelligence career that took him to the very top of the Okhrana ladder. In Berlin he relied heavily upon Zinaida's work, not only as her case officer but as chief of operations in Germany. The two worked together as the most successful team of the period. When Harting left Berlin to take charge of the integrated Okhrana station in Paris, Francesco, to use her code name, remained in Heidelberg with instructions to concentrate on the Socialist Revolutionaries through active participation in their Fighting Unit for purposes of control.

Active participation soon meant trouble for Francesco. The revolutionaries had reason to suspect treachery in their ranks: too many conspirators sent to

Russia to commit atrocities were being apprehended. Francesco was among those who had knowledge of all of these, and the central committee of the party may have had other grounds for suspecting her in particular. Now the customary means of testing the loyalty of a member under suspicion was to assign acts of terror to him. Francesco was accordingly, in 1905, made leader of one of three assassination teams to be dispatched simultaneously to Russia. She personally was to carry out her team's assignment, the assassination of General Kurlov, governor of Minsk.

This assignment posed a veritable dilemma before the Okhrana. If it wanted Francesco to remain in the Fighting Unit and continue her good work, she would have to carry out the assassination. A solution was worked out by Colonel Klimovich of Moscow Okhrana. Francesco consented to carry out the assassination as instructed. She met with her team of assistants and planned the details of the action -- how, when, and where she would throw the bomb. But from her lodgings she took the bomb to an Okhrana safe house, where an expert disarmed the detonator and made it a dud. When it was thrown at General Kurlov nothing happened.

In the meantime the other two teams had been successful in their assassinations. Mme. Zhuchenko, Francesco, had given ample warnings of them, but there had been a slip-up somewhere in Colonel Klimovich's plans to prevent them. In the course of investigating these acts of terror, Kurlov turned up the name Zhuchenko, and his pursuit of this lead was eventually to cause the exposure of her agent work. Not knowing that she had actually saved his life, the governor made so much fuss about her that her true status had to be made known to certain Okhrana personnel that did not otherwise need to know. Among these was a Leonid Menshchikov, who in 1910 defected to the revolutionary intelligence service and betrayed her.

Successful and Sought After

Before that eventuality, however, Francesco had five more years of continuous, prolific service. Now the conspirators fully trusted her, after she had personally participated in the triple assassination, two-thirds successful; they could not hold her responsible that her bomb turned out to be a dud. Terrorist groups were liquidated by the authorities one after another, thanks in considerable measure to her reports and forewarnings. Large-scale bank and other robberies, euphemistically called "expropriations" by the revolutionaries, failed after her alert.

These extraordinary achievements gained Francesco a name as Okhrana's ace agent at home and abroad. The top leaders at headquarters, in Moscow, and

in Paris, the only ones supposed to know her identity, vied for her services. A set of cables and letters in a folder labeled Mikheyev -- this was her pseudonym for interoffice correspondence -- shows a tug-of-war for her between Harting in Paris and Colonel Klimovich in Moscow. Klimovich's demands for her transfer finally ceased after Harting sent the following cable. (The French words were carried in clear text among the encoded Russian, here translated to English.)

"Veuillez stop asking for Mikheyev. Semblables procédés impossibles. I shall never approve transfer ... I consider such attitudes among colleagues in the same service unpardonable ... Stealing agents from each other only makes more difficulties for our intelligence efforts ...

By 1906 Mme. Zhuchenko's monthly pay had been raised to 500 rubles, ample to let her move about as a fairly well-to-do lady. In addition there were liberal presents for Christmas and Easter; bonuses for major exposures of assassination and burglary projects, and allowances for travel and other operational expense. She had a son, her only personal responsibility, whom she kept in Berlin even when on prolonged assignments in Moscow. Her home was in Berlin's western suburb of Charlottenburg.

The End

That is where she was when exposed by the defector Menshchikov. Burtzev, chief of counterintelligence for the revolutionaries, solemnly called on her. He explained in his methodical and unexcited way that his intelligence penetration of the Okhrana made it completely clear to him that she was an Okhrana agent, that the central committee had already sentenced her to death, and that he would personally guarantee her life if she would come clean, confess, and thenceforth help him in the fight against the Okhrana. She refused, and reported promptly to her case officer, Colonel von Kotten.

Soon all the revolutionary press published her name as one of the most vicious agents-provocateurs ever exposed. The Berlin police provided the necessary protection for her, but she had to be pensioned off-at pay higher than her active wages had been. Resigned to her retirement, she said to Von Kotten, "In this profession no one can be safe from traitors and betrayals. The fall of my life has come after rich and active labors in the spring and summer." But Zavarzin, Vassiliyev, and other authors have written that she still continued to make useful reports on the revolutionaries. None of them knew what finally became of her.

In 1910 she was about 45 years old but looked younger. Zavarzin described her

then as a tall, slender blonde, wearing glasses with round gold frames on a small nose under her large forehead, in short not particularly. attractive and far from beautiful. But her speech, he said, was most pleasant, firm, and precise, usually serious and giving an impression of extraordinary character and intelligence.

Reminiscing about the long line of conspiracies broken up by her reporting, her eyes were animated as she described subterfuges she had used to escape from difficult situations.

She knew that reforms were needed in Russia but was convinced that a better life could not be achieved through the Communists' proletarian revolution or the Socialist Revolutionaries' terror and agrarian revolt. For herself she had only one real aim in life, to bring up her son properly. Music was her main recreation, and she attended the opera frequently. Knowing society well and feeling at home among all classes of people, from monarchists and aristocrats to underground subversives of all colors and morals, she was well equipped for her dedicated work.

Ulyanova

The Okhrana had recruited Roman Vatslavovich Malinovski, a Communist and personal friend of Lenin, in March 1910. Within a few months it selected him for all-out clandestine support as candidate for the Imperial Duma. He was active in the Metal Workers Union and a good orator. Some behind-the-scenes campaigning, the obedient good will of the gendarmes, and a supply of money from the Okhrana overcame all handicaps, even his prohibitive court record of having been jailed for common thievery. The Okhrana just had to have a penetration among the dozen or so Socialist and Communist deputies. That little fraction was numerically insignificant in the unwieldy Duma, but it was the only body of deputies who knew what they wanted and how to plan their action. And Okhrana agent "Ulyanova," who had been reporting on them profusely and religiously, had been terminated on 14 June.

Letter from a Lady

Ulyanova's true name was Julia Orestova Serova. In signing her reports she used another alias -- Pravdivy, Truthful. She was an educated and rather

literary woman, a member of the Social Democratic Workers Party (Bolshevik) who had never taken a very active part in its affairs. She had probably joined it to please her husband, who was a militant Bolshevik, committee member, archivist of the party, and its first deputy in the Duma.

The Okhrana's record of Ulyanova's life and work is replete with contradictions. She was described as a weak character, yet her steady and painstaking contributions to the service reveal a hard and conscientious worker. She loved her husband and was a faithful wife, but she betrayed him daily with reports on his political activities. She was described as frugal and a good housewife, yet it was need for money that recruited her and she was hungry for bonuses and awards on top of her regular monthly pay. Among the party affiliates she was spoken of as a saint and a quiet devotee, she who probably had no equal in betraying their trust and causing their arrest in groups.

She first made contact with the Okhrana in 1905, a write-in. In a letter dated 1 March she offered, for 1000 rubles, to give the underground locations where the committee of the Social Democratic Workers Party could be found. She was invited to come to the Fontanka, Okhrana headquarters in Petersburg, under secure arrangements. She did not obtain 1000 rubles, but half that sum was also considerable in the days when an average bourgeois family could live on it for six months. Soon thereafter the entire committee of the party was under arrest.

Ulyanova appears not to have expected this single betrayal to lead to any regular connections with the Okhrana. She needed the money at the moment but was not interested in continued employment thereafter. But Okhrana headquarters, quite pleased with the first transaction, was inclined otherwise. A case officer saw her. He knew about the clerical work she did for the party; how simple it would be for her to bring him information from the underground office. By collaborating she would be freed of fear of being watched herself. No one would suspect her. And it would give her a regular income. She refused.

But the case officer had her signature on a receipt for 500 rubles. Resorting to simple blackmail, he pointed out that what she had already done might easily become known, and she would lose her husband and family. Or she might land in the Fortress of Peter and Paul where those whom she had betrayed were prisoners, and they might find out that the new prisoner was the one who had reported on them. Faced with these consequences of refusal, Ulyanova agreed to continue. She submitted irregular reports until September 1907, when, having by now become a willing and even enthusiastic agent, she signed a regular contract providing compensation at 25 rubles a month, which eventually grew to 150 a month.

In the Spirit of Service

Although her assignment required her to report only on the Petersburg Bolsheviks' internal affairs, she soon extended her purview to several other subversive groups. Her husband had many connections. Serov felt completely safe in his own home. He had a good, taciturn wife with political views identical to his own, and it would not have occurred to him not to introduce her to visiting fellow conspirators.

Numerous arrests were made in Petersburg and other cities as a result of Ulyanova's disclosures. In May 1907 her reports made possible the capture of an entire revolutionary band which, operating out of Vilna, was about to perform a set of "expropriations" from banks and the state treasury. In the same city they led to the discovery of a load of forbidden literature, including brochures and leaflets calling for an armed uprising. For this she got a 300-ruble special award. In September her information provided legal grounds for the arrest of Sergei Saltykov, a Duma deputy. Her reward of 500 rubles for this was paid on the day she signed on as a regular contract agent.

Through 1908 Ulyanova kept the Okhrana informed on all meetings of the Bolshevik central committee, the composition and structure of the organization, and the personnel of many local committees. In April of that year her information led to the arrest of four militants, among them Trotzky's brother-in-law Kamenev, in May to the capture of an entire underground gathering, and in September to the apprehension of Dubrovski, another member of the central committee. In February 1909 she brought about the exposure and liquidation of a revolutionary printshop in Petersburg and one for counterfeiting passports. Later that year the Bolsheviks sent her abroad to attend a conference, and in this connection she made a report on Aleksei Rykov.

These are just the recorded highlights of Ulyanova's work of disruption among the Bolsheviks. Her sources were always authentic, derived from her attendance at underground meetings, where she frequently served as recorder and general administrative assistant, and from activities in her own home, where her husband handled party matters and received fellow conspirators. She was an avid correspondent, and among the many letters she wrote to friends there were interspersed, sometimes daily, reports for delivery to the Okhrana.

Her sizable salary and awards would probably have led her to disaster sooner or later, for she began to spend far beyond her legitimate means. Some gossip about this had reached her husband, but he remained trustful and never doubted her explanation that she got money from her family, who were not

poor. Her undoing came from her own carelessness. As her zeal and practice in the work increased, she became slack in her precautions, often copying from her husband's papers right at his desk. One spring day in 1910, coming home unexpectedly, he caught her copying his confidential record of a meeting held with his Bolshevik deputy colleagues the preceding night.

Outcast

Serova tried to make a confused explanation, but he grabbed all the papers and saw that she had done the copying in the form of a letter to a friend. "Who is the friend?" Persistently evasive answers to his questions brought him to the point of violence. After giving her a thorough beating on the spot, he chased her out of the house, forbidding her ever to return. She took their two small children with her, and she never did return. On 10 June Serov ran a notice in the Petersburg newspaper to the effect that he no longer considered Julia Orestova his wife.

Okhrana director Beletzky fully understood what this announcement meant. Four days after it was published a memorandum was added to Ulyanova's dossier recording that her name had been deleted from the roster of secret agents. A copy of this memorandum came to the attention of the Minister of Interior, who was acquainted with Ulyanova's record. He demanded an explanation from Beletzky. Why should such an extraordinarily productive and frequently rewarded agent be subject to sudden termination? The explanation, of course, was convincing.

From then on hounded by her husband, without friends, and without income, Ulyanova from time to time contacted her Okhrana bosses. In August 1912 she pleaded urgently for help: "My two children, one only five years old, are without clothes, and we have no food. I have sold everything, even furniture; I have no work, and if you do not help me I will end as a suicide." She was given 150 rubles. Other letters followed, sometimes pressing and desperate, not seldom threatening suicide. All of them elicited some amount or other, 50, 100, 200 rubles, until they totaled 1800 rubles at the end of 1912. One last letter after that brought her 300 rubles and an order to leave Petersburg for good. She was given transportation for herself and children to any place she wanted to go.

Serova found another husband during the war. Just before the first revolution of 1917, she addressed a final letter to headquarters in Petersburg:

"I would like you to recall my good and loyal services. On the eve of great events that we all feel are coming, it hurts me to stay inactive and unable to

be useful. My second husband is an excellent man and worthy of your confidence. It would not be difficult for me to have him join the Bolsheviks and guide him in the procurement of intelligence. You must realize that that party has to be watched very closely now in the interest of all -- our Czar, our Empire, and our armies."

The letter was never answered. She and her husband both perished in the revolution.

Sharzh, Sharni, Sharli, Charlie, Shalnoi

The Okhrana used these code names for Mme. Zagorskaya, who had a remarkably long record of continuous service as an agent and was the highest paid of them all. Her targets were the top leaders among the Socialist Revolutionaries, the terrorists, and the Anarchists. She worked under the direct supervision of three successive chiefs of Paris Okhrana, beginning with Ratayev in 1903, then Harting, and finally Krassilnikov until February 1917.

Because she was handled by the chief rather than staff agents who would have to report in detail to the chief, Paris Okhrana files are rather meager concerning her activities and stages of growth as an agent. Her full name was Maria Alekseyevna Zagorskaya, nee Andreyevna. She was married to Peter Frantsevich Zagorski, another Okhrana agent, who was a Catholic and originally came from Croatia in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At times the couple worked as a team, but she scored her major achievements in her singleton operations.

Socialite Couple

Zagorski had begun his agent work in 1901, having been hired by the Okhrana's staff agent Manusevich-Manuilov in Rome and given the task of reporting on Polish and Catholic emigres from Russia. His wife-to-be was recruited not long after by Ratayev, as head of the Okhrana personnel section in Petersburg just before his departure to become chief of the Paris station. The two new agents met at Petersburg when Manuilov brought the young Croat to headquarters for training.

The Okhrana files contain no record of the married life of the couple. They

were assigned abroad in early 1903 to work with Ratayev, but there the record of Zagorski himself stops for several years. He is described as unusually well qualified, having encyclopedic knowledge of geography, economics, arts, people, etc. He was therefore not used for ordinary anti-revolutionary operations but frequently assigned to missions involving travel as an Austrian subject, on which he would report directly to the police directorate. At one time he associated with Pilsudski and other Polish and Russian rebels and top Anarchists.

Later Zagorski changed his Austrian citizenship to French, and the couple established a home in Paris. When the revolutionaries, after Azev's exposure, started a vigorous campaign to uncover all the Okhrana's penetrations, the Zagorskis came under considerable suspicion. Both of them were apparently without employment of any kind, yet they lived in lordly luxury and gave sumptuous parties. Zagorskaya, however, casually let slip food for gossip about their family wealth, and her parents were soon spoken of as rich merchants while he became known as a great landowner in Croatia. This tactic was successful and suspicion subsided, especially since it was widely understood that they distributed a good deal of their wealth in donations to various subversive causes.

Zagorskaya's chief task in all her fifteen years of service was to penetrate the leading groups of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries and its Fighting Unit at home and abroad. To this end she had joined the party in Petersburg and won the confidence of the underground as a capable member who could do much for the cause abroad. She had no difficulty making herself useful not only in the central committee of the party headquarters in Paris but among the leaders of the terrorist Fighting Unit. For years she was a close friend and associate of the mistress of Boris Savinkov, leader of the Fighting Unit, and she maintained a steady correspondence with Russian terrorists in France, Italy, and England.

Belittled by New Boss

Her pay was high enough to let her live in grand style. Her income from her agent work was 3500 French francs a month, about that of cabinet ministers of the period. It was higher than Krassilnikov's salary when he became chief of Paris Okhrana in 1910. He did not particularly relish this situation, and he wrote headquarters that her accomplishments were not worth the amounts paid her in salary and operational expenses. He not only wanted her salary lowered but recommended that he stop handling her directly and turn her over to his principal staff agent, Lt. Col. Erhardt.

It was generally agreed that her services were now less valuable than under Ratayev and Harting, from 1903 to 1909, and so her salary and expense allowance was cut to 2500 francs a month. But Krassilnikov did not succeed in transferring her to the staff agent. She enjoyed considerable protection at headquarters, and Okhrana director Vissarionov himself saw to it that her wishes about who should direct her work were honored.

But Krassilnikov persisted. In 1912 he decided to transfer Zagorskaya to staff agent Erhardt regardless of what attitude headquarters might take about it. Then she wrote, in her own typescript, directly to Vissarionov:

Esteemed Sergei Evlampiyevich:

A. A. [Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Krassilnikov] told me he received orders to discontinue contact with me and transfer me to a different person. He has been proposing this transfer for some time, but I have always refused to be transferred and I still insist on refusing. The reasons A. A. gives for this transfer are not valid, and the transfer would cause an unnecessary change in my life. A. A. is known by name and address to many as an official representative, but he maintains no open contact with the person to whom he wants to assign me. I find that dealing with this new man would be inconvenient and even dangerous. (I do not need to go into particulars, you can see for yourself why it would be dangerous for me.) Dealing with A. A. directly would assure me that our contact will remain strictly clandestine and dependable. A. A. is well known and I can maintain contact with him, like so many others, without fear for my security.

Please consider this aspect -- the psychological effect of transferring an agent from one case officer to another. One does not have to be subtle to comprehend the feelings of an agent transferred to a new case officer. You recall our work together, and you can understand that my work is bound to suffer severely from the change ...

The lengthy letter begged that Krassilnikov be ordered to continue handling her. Headquarters, after some vacillation, complied, and there was no change in case officer.

To the End

Zagorskaya remained in Okhrana employ until the revolution of February 1917. Her husband, however, after joining the French army in 1914, was released to fight with the Yugoslav volunteer army on the Salonica front. Agafonov, writing about the Okhrana and its agents from the revolutionary point of view, claims

that Zagorski was exposed as an Austrian agent by the Serbs at Salonica. Considering, however, that it was normal Serbian practice to hang all suspects, one may suppose that this allegation was only added coloring to paint the agent still more despicable in the eyes of the Russian revolutionaries.

After the war the Zagorski couple lived quietly in retirement on the French Riviera.

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1 Most of the information in this article is derived from the collection Zagranichnaya Okhrana (The Okhrana Abroad) at the Hoover Institution, Stanford, California, consisting principally of the complete archives of the Okhrana station in Paris. For the story of operations within Russia, however, it has been necessary to use secondary sources -- Agafonov, Vassiliyev, Zavarzin, and others.

2 Paris Okhrana files contain about 75,000 cards on some 20,000 Russian exiles abroad. These operational records cover known and suspected revolutionaries, members of Anarchist, terrorist, Socialist, and similar groups. The names and personal descriptions reveal that over 75 percent of them were Jewish and about 10 percent were from other minority groups, leaving less than 15 percent Russian. The card Me of Okhrana secret operatives abroad shows an even greater proportion of Jewish agents.

3 These latter in Part II, to appear in a future issue.

1 Paris Okhrana files, Incoming Dispatches, 1913, No. 1465.

2 Pavel P. Zavarzine, Souvenirs d'un Chef de l'Okhrana, p. 21.

3 Boris Nikolaevsky, Aseff: the Russian Judas, p. 158.

4 Her case officer in Petersburg in 1893 was Colonel Semyakin, who introduced her in 1894 to the chief organizer of the Okhrana's penetration service, Zubatov. The latter, as chief of operations in Moscow, remained her case officer until her removal in 1895.

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