

The Symbiotic Connection

By Harrison E. Salisbury



At about 9 P.M. on Sept. 1, 1911, in the great Opera House of Kiev in the presence of Czar Nicholas II a young man named Bogrov drew a revolver and, firing at point-blank range, fatally wounded Premier Pyotr Arkadevich Stolypin.

Bogrov was on the payroll of the Czar's gendarmerie. He was a petty informer for the Russian equivalent of our Federal Bureau of Investigation. He had come to the secret police with the story of a plot by radicals to assassinate Stolypin. But he neglected to tell them

that he was the man who would be the assassin. The police carried out a desultory investigation, decided the story was rather farfetched and actually gave Bogrov a ticket of admission to the Opera House.

Bogrov was only one of a number of assassins or would-be assassins in the failing days of the Romanov era who were informers for the Czar's secret police. The Czar's uncle, the Grand Duke Sergei, was assassinated in Moscow in 1906 in a plot organized by a police informer. So was Interior Minister Pleve and a few others.

Boris Azef, the man who directed Pleve's assassination, was an agent of Pleve's own secret police. The police found Azef very useful. He was diligent in giving them names of radical plotters—after a terrorist operation had been carried out.

The police-informer system was not confined to terrorism. The Czar's agents thoroughly infiltrated all the

radical organizations. The leading member of the Bolshevik party in the Russian Parliament on the eve of World War I was a man named Roman Malinovsky. Lenin trusted Malinovsky implicitly and defended him against all criticism. But actually Malinovsky was Operative "X" of the secret police.

When Malinovsky spoke in the Duma his remarks had been edited on the one hand by Lenin and on the other by the deputy chief of secret police S. P. Beletsky from whom "X" took his orders.

Years before the Russian Revolution a symbiotic connection was fully developed between the various police agencies and the various radical revolutionary groups. Neither side was totally aware of the extent of this symbiosis but honest men among both the police and the revolutionaries could not but feel the corrupting effect of the process.

Most of all it corrupted Russian society as a whole. The Janus-faced Azef who plotted assassinations and then turned his comrades over to the police became a kind of folk hero—the Charles Manson of his day.

Honest police functionaries turned cynical about their own role and about the social system they were sworn to protect. How could it be otherwise when they knew that today's bomb-thrower tomorrow could be closeted with their superior, selling the story of his "plot"?

So far as the Russian radicals were concerned, the demoralization was equally profound. Paranoid distrust of all elements of society became common and the way was opened for the rise of Lenin with his extremism, his insistence on mindless discipline, and his limitless distrust not only of opponents but of associates.

It is not too much to say that it is

from this poisoned soil that so luxuriantly grew the Stalinist world with its secret police, institutionalized paranoia, prison camps and total terrorization.

The parallels with contemporary America are too close for comfort. I do not suggest that our society is treading the fateful path of Nicholas's Russia. Our society is still strong and vibrant, but no one can read the daily headlines about our secret security agencies like the F.B.I. and the Central Intelligence Agency without recognizing the similarity of symptoms.

Violence inevitably stems from a police system that recruits (and educates) secret informers and provocateurs within a radical movement. The recruited agent almost by definition is an unstable, psychotic or psychopathic individual. His temptation to improve his status by engaging in or encouraging violence is almost irresistible. This is what touches off the fatal chain reaction. Violence feeds on violence and the question of who is informer, who is terrorist, becomes confused beyond comprehension even by the individuals involved.

There is another danger. In the Russia of 1911 some police officials saw eye-to-eye with Lenin in the philosophy of "the worse the better." The suspicion is still alive today that in some manner the police themselves had a hand in Stolypin's murder (and other terrorist acts).

If events in California (and Washington) have not spelled out the peril of police-informer-radical symbiosis, the Russian precedent should. What we are confronted with is not merely violation of the law and deep confusion of roles—it is evidence of serious decay within the structure of our social and political system.

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In addition to Abraham Lincoln, the persons shown above are Premier Pyotr Arkadevich Stolypin; Sara Jane Moore, accused of attempting to assassinate President Ford; and John F. Kennedy.



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