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From Russia, With Traditionalism

Third of a Series

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MOSCOW—Across Dzerzhinsky Square from Moscow's largest children's store, a short walk from the Kremlin, stands an imposing seven-story building with a newly renovated mustard-colored facade. There are no special markings outside — but none are necessary.

As the main headquarters for the Soviet Union's Committee of State Security — known universally by its initials in Russian, KGB — that building is a seat of enormous power in this country, second only perhaps to the Kremlin itself.

The KGB is successor to the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combatting Counterrevolution, Speculation and Sabotage founded after the Bolshevik

Other Cloaks, Other Daggers---III

Revolution as the Communist Party's secret political police — the dreaded "Cheka" that became the agent for Stalin's domestic terror in the 1930s.

The Cheka was hardly a unique institution in Russian history. The Bolshevik secret police was the lineal descendant of the Czarist Okhrana, the feared hunter of revolutionary elements that had penetrated every major political opposition group. Czarist agents turned deliberate provocation to commit illegal acts into a fine art. The Bolshevik Cheka recruited skilled personnel from the middle levels of the Okhrana.

Today, the KGB has been developed into the world's largest and maybe also its most formidable single

security and espionage agency, combining the functions of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation with its original — and still primary — responsibility for maintaining internal political control.

The KGB's chairman is an urbane, white-haired 61-year-old named Yuri Andropov who was elevated to full membership in the ruling Politburo in 1973. As a longtime backer and friend of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, he is thought to have a strong voice in all policy decisions — possibly even outstripping Premier Alexei Kosygin.

From his spacious mahogany-paneled office off the third floor of the KGB building (that belonged to an

insurance company before the revolution), Andropov presides over some 500,000 employees, not counting an incalculable number of parttime informers and spies.

Included are said to be nearly 100,000 "staff officers" bearing military-style rank from lieutenant to general. The majority, working in the 2d and 5th Chief Directorates are assigned mainly to domestic duties: monitoring and suppressing all forms of political dissent (there is a special department for Jews); keeping track of all foreigners in the country; compiling detailed dossiers on "vital events" in defense, technology and other fields for the Politburo; and supervising vital communications and code systems.

There is also a separate

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SPY, From A1

army of uniformed KGB border guards — a sign of how important the Soviets regard frontier security, even along Eastern European borders.

Foreign operations fall under the agency's 1st Chief Directorate (there are no 3d and 4th Directorates) which Western experts say number around 10,000 agents of whom a quarter are thought to be abroad at any time. Among intelligence specialists, it is widely assumed that a large proportion of Soviets sent out of the country — estimates range from a third to three-quarters — perform some kind of espionage role.

Over the past 15 years, according to Western sources, nearly 400 Soviets have been expelled from posts in 40 countries for spying. Many were working as diplomats, trade representatives, journalists and academics. In the latest case, the young press spokesman in West Berlin for Intourist, the Soviet travel agency, was abruptly withdrawn this fall when he was identified as a spy-team leader.

A few weeks ago, the Australian government discovered that all three members of a Soviet scientific delegation about to arrive there had been previously identified as KGB agents. Their visas were promptly canceled.

Some KGB operatives abroad are described as

"agents of influence" assigned to get information on strategic and political subjects, recruit possible sympathizers and put out Moscow's propaganda line, including fabricated "disinformation." Others perform the dirty work of espionage — "mokrie dela" (wet affairs in Russian) — subversion, sabotage and in the past, at least, political assassinations.

In 1971, Oleg Lyalin, an agent from the KGB's department "V" which specialized in that sort of tactics, defected to Britain. He named 105 Soviet agents who were then immediately expelled. Among his other disclosures was the fact that although assassinations of Trotskyites, Eastern European Socialists, emigre

Russians — and other nationalists had been common under Stalin, the practice was curtailed after the dictator's death in 1953.

Another defector, Yuri Nosenko, has told American author John Barrow, however, that he believes a decision was made in the early 1960s to assign assassinations to "hired foreign criminals and illegal agents of other nationalities who could not easily be linked to the Soviet Union." Neither version is confirmable.

As for KGB involvement in foreign political upheavals — the sort of activity attributed to the CIA in Chile, the Dominican Republic, Indochina and the Congo — Moscow has often been accused by Western intelligence analysts of funneling funds to

Communist parties, supporting guerrillas throughout the world and participating in coups and other plots.

Robert Conquest, a prominent British political scientist who is strongly critical of the Soviets generally, has compiled a list of what he considers were Soviet-inspired plots in the early 1970s. Among them are Egyptian Deputy Premier Ali Sabry's attempt to overthrow President Anwar Sadat in 1971; a plot against Gen. Jaafar Nimeri in the Sudan that year; and encouragement for several anti-Tito groups in Yugoslavia that have been officially dismissed by the Kremlin as "Stalinist" elements.

The KGB is also said to have provided support for guerrillas in Angola, Latin America and the Persian Gulf. Some arms sent to the Irish Republican Army have also been traced back to Moscow. The actual training of guerrillas is believed to be carried out by the GRU — the Soviet military intelligence service, which works closely with the KGB.

There are also ample allegations of Soviet efforts at subversion of Westerners and wholesale plans for sabotage. According to one recent U.S. intelligence report, there have been more than 800 attempts to enlist Americans for espionage in the past decade — mostly outside the country.

In a celebrated case, now almost 20 years ago, the KGB went to extraordinary lengths



LAVRENTI BERIA



YURI ANDROPOV

... Soviet spy chiefs: old look, new look



KGB headquarters on Moscow's Dzerzhinsky Square also houses Lubyanka Prison. Cheka occupied it in 1918.

to trap Maurice Dejean, French ambassador in Moscow, in a web of seduction and blackmail that would eventually force him to collaborate as an "agent of influence" close to French President Charles de Gaulle. Dejean did not succumb to sexual blackmail, but his career was ruined.

More recently, Jan Sejna, a Czechoslovak general who fled to the United States in 1968, asserted that the Soviets and their allies in the Warsaw Pact (who work closely together on espionage) had placed a number of potential saboteurs throughout Western Europe and North America "to destroy vital installations at the outset of a war." He also said — and Lyalin, the Russian defector apparently confirmed — that there were plans for blowing up the London subway in the event "of serious political difficulties."

The accuracy of all this is impossible for an outsider to judge, certainly not without access to first-hand information. But anyone who has lived in the Soviet Union can attest to the prominence of the KGB's position. The

agency is not just another instrument of the state — as the CIA and FBI clearly are — it is an integral part of the way the country is run.

There are KGB agents or informers in every sphere of Soviet life. There are known operatives at top levels of the foreign and trade ministries, for example, and every Western diplomat who deals with them is aware of it. Important factories and research institutes have "special" KGB departments. One leading official of the Writer's Union is a KGB general.

To prepare operatives for their tasks, particularly those who might go abroad, the KGB assures the best education available at institutes and universities and uses the finest equipment Soviet and foreign technology can supply. KGB staff officers are said to earn five to six times as much as their counterparts in the armed forces.

"The KGB is our elite," said one Russian who claims to know the organization well. "They are the sharpest, smartest cadres we can find — and don't you Americans

forget that for one minute."

So pervasive is the KGB influence that many Russians are convinced that the current congressional investigations of the CIA and FBI must be far more of an upheaval for the United States than the Watergate affair, which merely toppled a president.

Were the KGB to be publicly assailed here for excesses in the way the CIA and FBI are being treated now in the United States, they say, the implications would be nothing less than a complete overhaul of the Soviet system as devised by Lenin and pursued by his successors.

In a sense, however, something approaching that did happen once. After Stalin died, the new leadership, fearful themselves of the ruthless police apparatus he had created, which was answerable only to him, moved decisively to downgrade it. Lavrenti Beria, Stalin's last police chief and principal hatchetman, was executed and the MVD, as the agency was then called, became the KGB.

The new agency was designated a state committee instead of a ministry as it had been, and its operations were

placed under the control of the party and Politburo. Instead of veteran leaders of Stalin's terror campaigns, career Communist bureaucrats like Andropov were placed at the helm.

Until Andropov became a full Politburo member two years ago, the KGB was not formally represented at that very highest level of the party.

But those changes seem to have reflected more the Soviet leadership's new sophistication and conservatism — compared to the revolutionary and brutal Stalin — than a shift away from a Soviet police state.

Today, the KGB is doubtless better trained, better organized and better funded than in the uncertain past, when its own ranks and the party's were subject to frequent purges. The largely successful containment of political dissident activities testifies to the KGB's effectiveness at home.

Abroad, the KGB is from all accounts an essential element of Soviet strategy — like the CIA is in the United States — but without the limitations of public accountability.

NEXT: How the French spy



Associated Press

KGB leader Yuri Andropov, back row center, votes along with other Politburo members during meeting of Soviet Parliament in December.