

PERSPECTIVE

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WASHINGTON — In many ways, big and small, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti (KGB), the Soviet Union's committee for state security, are mirror images of each other.

In 1961, according to a report late last year by the Senate Intelligence Committee, the CIA established an Executive Action unit to coordinate its many assassination projects.

In 1969, according to information provided by two Soviet defectors and officially leaked by the CIA, the KGB renamed its assassination unit the Executive Action Department.

It might seem improbable, even bizarre, that the two most powerful intelligence organizations in the world should independently settle upon the same euphemism for their most nefarious practice. But, to the degree that they can be accurately perceived from the outside, the CIA and the KGB are strikingly similar in size, structure, method of operation and frame of mind.

Soviet intelligence has been in the assassination business at least since the 30s. Dozens of emigre Russians, defectors, Eastern European socialists and other opponents of the Soviet regime were killed before and after World War II, including Leon Trotsky and Walter Krivitsky, former head of the GRU in Western Europe.

The assassination bureau in the KGB has operated under a succession of official titles — special bureau, the 9th department, the 11th department, department V, Executive Action — but it has always been referred to by insiders as "mokryye dala" or the department of wet (that is blood wet) affairs.

Oleg Lyalin, a wet-affairs specialist who defected in 1971, said assassination was curtailed in 1959 as part of the post-Stalin reform. But another director, Yuri Hosenko, said he believes a decision was made in the early 60s to revive the practice, in the manner of the CIA's involvement with the late Chicago gang boss Sam Giancana, by hiring "foreign criminals and illegal agents of other nationalities who could not easily be linked to the Soviet Union."

Much is known about Soviet Intelligence, thanks to a steady stream of defectors from the KGB and the GRU, the military intelligence apparatus, roughly equivalent to the Defense Intelligence Agency.

On the other hand, very little is known about Chinese intelligence because as a society of first generation Communists and true believers, it has produced few defectors. When Liao Ho-shu, the Chinese charge d'affaires in the Netherlands, defected in 1969, the CIA at first thought it had a master spy in its hands.

It soon discovered Liao was an insignificantly, emotionally disturbed middle-echelon diplomat and he was eventually allowed to return to China.

The testimony of defectors must be treated with skepticism, because they are sometimes double agents and often self-serving. Similarly, leaks from the CIA must be handled cautiously.

Nevertheless, from sources within the U.S. intelligence community and Congress and from extensive independent inquiry, it has been possible to piece together a picture of the Soviet and Chinese intelligence organizations.

With about 450,000 employees, the KGB is the largest intelligence organization in the world. Because it is responsible for both foreign intelligence and domestic security, combining the functions of the CIA and the FBI, the bulk of its manpower is assigned to tasks inside the Soviet Union.

Where wet means murder

About 10,000 KGB officers are involved in foreign operations, a fourth of whom are stationed abroad. By contrast, the CIA, focused exclusively on foreign intelligence, has about 10,000 employees, 4,000 of them abroad.

The CIA and British, French and West German intelligence suspect there may be a connection between the KGB and "Carlos," the shadowy South American believed to have taken part in a number of terrorist activities, including the kidnaping of the oil ministers in Vienna last month.

It has been determined that Carlos is, in fact, Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, the son of a wealthy, pro-Communist, Venezuelan lawyer who gave each of his three sons one of Lenin's names: Ilich, Vladimir and Lenin.

Carlos was a student at Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow, a training center for young revolutionaries from the Third World, and in 1969 was "expelled," a common KGB technique for developing extra cover.

If suspicions about Carlos are correct, it would indicate that the KGB has shifted its focus from individual assassination for political purposes to group terror for psychological purposes. In response, the CIA has let it be known that it, too, has decided to give prime emphasis to the problem of terrorism.

The ominous prospect is that the secret war between the two titans of intelligence may soon escalate into dangerous new dimensions of terror, counter terror and counter-counter terror.

The KGB is headed by Yuri Andropov, ambassador to Hungary at the time of the uprising there in 1956 and the first head of Soviet intelligence to sit on the Politburo. He is thought to be a respectable member of the pro privileged New Class, unlike many of his predecessors who were orgiasts and sadists.

In the effort to rehabilitate the KGB after the excesses of the Stalin era, Andropov has been pictured in the Soviet press as a normal bureaucrat running a normal bureaucracy.

Andropov's agents have become the omnipresent heroes of magazines, novels, plays, movies and television series. The process began in earnest in 1964 when the Hero of the Soviet Union award was posthumously conferred upon Richard Sorge, a fabled spy in World War II Japan, and a movie was made about him.

As Hollywood celebrates the spy as anti-hero and the CIA becomes an increasing target of ridicule in the United States, the KGB has been officially sanctified in the Soviet Union as the defender of the good against evil foreign plots.

The complicated truth is better symbolized by KGB headquarters itself — two buildings covered by a facade to make them appear as one. One building houses the KGB administrative offices, the other the KGB prison where Alexander Solzhenitsyn and thousands of other dissenters began their journey into the Gulag Archipelago.

KGB headquarters — Lubianka — is located near the Kremlin on Dzerzhinsky Square. It stands imposing and mustard-colored across from Moscow's largest department store. All Moscow knows what it is but no one will mention the name to a foreigner.

By contrast, the headquarters of Chinese intelligence seems to be unknown to native and stranger alike. In fact, the formal title of the Chinese intelligence organization is unknown outside the inner circle of leadership. In the late 60s it was believed to be operating under the bland cover name of the Social Affairs Department.

The overt intelligence offices are the Ministry of Public Affairs, in charge of domestic security, and the United Front Workers department and the International Liaison Department, which conduct foreign operations.

The Ministry of Public Affairs, which has responsibility for Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan in addition to the mainland employs about 250,000 members of the armed police, roughly one for every 3,100 citizens. The police, in turn, organize "voluntary committees" of housewives and other private citizens at the local level, providing an all-pervasive network of informers and street wardens.

The United Front Workers department acts as the principal link with the 15 million ethnic Chinese who are permanent residents of other countries. It seeks to align them in support of Peking's line, to recruit them for espionage and occasionally, as in Malaya in the 50s, to organize them for military insurgency.

Until his death late last year, K'ang Sheng had been the chief of Chinese intelligence from the inception of Communist rule in 1949. As No. 4 man in the Politburo, he was the highest ranking intelligence chief in the world.

K'ang's successor is believed to be Hur Kuo-feng, head of the Ministry of Public Affairs. He, too, is a member of the Politburo, though of lesser rank, and his rise is being watched as a sign of whether intelligence will retain its relative power.

Perhaps because of limited resources, China has never mounted foreign intelligence operations on the large scale of the CIA's Bay of Pigs or the Soviet's Angola intervention. But Peking has been aggressively active on a lesser scale.

Where it has normal diplomatic relations, China uses its embassy to provide diplomatic cover for espionage. Where it is unable to operate an embassy, it seeks to establish a trade mission to act as a front for clandestine activity.

In the 60s, before the accommodation with the United States, China made a major effort to penetrate the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. Guerrilla warfare schools instructed recruits from close to 20

Russia's KGB is very similar to CIA, but its agents are portrayed as heroes. China's spy agency is very active, but little is known about its leaders at HQ.

African countries as well as Cuba, Colombia, Equador and Peru.

There have been no indications that the Chinese have used the United Nations or their diplomatic mission in Washington as a base for espionage. The Soviets, on the other hand, have always operated aggressively out of both the United Nations and their Washington embassy.

The Soviets now maintain more than a thousand diplomatic and trade officials in the United States, twice the number they had 10 years ago. The FBI and the CIA estimate that 40 per cent are involved in intelligence full-time. In other countries, as many as 75 per cent of the Soviet representatives may be intelligence agents.

The Soviets operate under a variety of covers, as diplomats, journalists, trade representatives and academics. And the KGB, like the CIA, places many of its agents under cover at embassies.

In addition to Angola, the KGB has provided support for guerrillas in other African countries, Latin America and the Persian Gulf. It has supplied arms to the Palestine Liberation Organization and some Soviet weapons have been traced to the Irish Republican Army.

The KGB is also believed to have been behind the attempt to overthrow President Anwar Sadat in Egypt in 1971 and a plot against the military regime in the Sudan the same year.

At home, KGB agents and informers have infiltrated every sphere and every level of Soviet life. So pervasive is their presence that many Russians — projecting their system onto that of the United States — have concluded that the current congressional investigations of the CIA and the FBI portend a radical transformation of our form of government.

It would be unthinkable in the Soviet Union for any parliamentary group or any organ of the press to challenge the KGB or the morality of anything it does — and that includes assassination.