An Inside Look at Soviet Counterintelligence in the mid-1950s

By Filip Kovacevic, May 2023

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SPECIAL WORKING PAPERS SERIES

An Inside Look at Soviet Counterintelligence in the mid-1950s

Filip Kovacevic

More than 30 years have passed since the fall of the Soviet Union and the formal dissolution of the KGB, but the functioning of the KGB counterintelligence branch known as the Second Chief Directorate (SCD) remains very much a mystery.

In a recently published book titled *The Fourth Man: The Hunt for a KGB Spy at the Top of the CIA and the Rise of Putin's Russia* (2022), CIA veteran Robert Baer wrote that the SCD "represented the CIA's most tenacious and opaque opponent."[1] During the Cold War, there were relatively few defectors from the SCD compared to the First Chief Directorate of the KGB (foreign intelligence) and the GRU (Soviet military intelligence). In addition, in the present-day Russian national security archives, most documents related to the SCD remain heavily classified. There is, however, some proverbial light at the end of the tunnel: the former KGB archives in the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) and Ukraine.

My research on the activities of the SCD began with the in-depth study of the professional career of General Oleg Gribanov, one of the most enigmatic and controversial KGB generals, who was the head of the SCD from 1956 to 1964. This research was published as an article in the *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* in August 2022.[2] It was during the acquisition of the Gribanov-related archival documents from the Lithuanian Special Archives that I came across a **remarkable document** that sheds light on the internal workings of the SCD in the mid-1950s.

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[1] Robert Baer. *The Fourth Man: The Hunt for a KGB Spy at the Top of the CIA and the Rise of Putin's Russia.* New York: Hachette, 2022, p. 33.

[2] Filip Kovacevic, "'An Ominous Talent:' Oleg Gribanov and KGB Counterintelligence," https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08850607.2022.2095545, published online on August 5, 2020.

The document is a 61-page transcript of the meeting of the SCD leadership held in Moscow on Saturday, July 30, 1955.[3] The ostensible purpose of the meeting was to discuss the progress report of the regional counterintelligence branch in the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic (the Second Department of the KGB of the Latvian SSR). However, the meeting went beyond the Latvian case and focused on the discussion of the overall deficiencies of Soviet counterintelligence at that time and the ways to deal with them. As I will show in more detail below, all SCD leadership figures, including Gribanov (who was the principal deputy head of the SCD at that time), took part in an open, frank, and revealing discussion. Their statements, captured in a detailed transcription of the meeting, give us a chance to play the role of a metaphorical fly on the wall and to discern what issues kept Soviet counterintelligence awake at night (and alert during the day) in the first decade of the Cold War.

The Context

The Committee for State Security attached to the Council of Ministers of the USSR (the full name of the KGB) was formally founded on March 13, 1954.[4] As the declassified draft notes of a top-ranking Communist official Vladimir Malin show, the discussion about the formation of the KGB took place in the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party on February 8, 1954, and was far from being monolithic.[5] Having

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[3] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 2-62, *Lithuanian Special Archives (LYA)*, Vilnius. This document has been translated in full and can be accessed in the Wilson Center's Digital Archive. It has never been declassified by the KGB's Russian successors, the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). Hence in Russia this document still has the status of a state secret.

[4] *Указ Президиума Верховного Совета СССР, No. 137/40 [Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, No. 137/40]*, March 13, 1954. The detailed regulations regarding the KGB structure, personnel, and activities were formally adopted only five years later, on January 9, 1959. "Выписка из протокола No. 200 заседания Президиума ЦК КПСС с утверждением проекта Положения о КГБ при СМ СССР [Extract from Protocol No. 200 of the Meeting of the Presidium of the CC CPSS with the approval of the project Regulation about the KGB attached to the CM of the USSR] in A. N. Yakovlev, Ed., A. I. Kokurin and N. V. Petrov (authors-compilers), *Лубянка: Органы ВЧК-ОГПУ-НКВД-НКГБ-МГБ-МВД-КГБ, 1917-1991 [Lubyanka: State Security Institutions VChK-OGPU-NKVD-NKGB-MGB-MVD-KGB. 1917-1991]*, Moscow: MFD, 2003, pp. 693-698. Original document: RGANI, F. 4, op. 13, d. 45, l.75-88.

[5] "Из протокольной записи заседания Президиума ЦК КПСС по вопросу образования Комитета государственной безопасности, Протокол No. 50, Заседание 8 февраля 1954 г. [From the Minutes of the Meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU on the Question of the Formation of the Committee for State Security, Minutes No. 50, Meeting of February 8, 1954]" in Nikita Petrov. *Первый*

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fresh memories of what they saw as the former Minister of Internal Affairs Lavrenty Beria's attempt to seize power using state security resources just a year earlier, the Communist Party leadership wanted to make sure that no state security personnel could ever threaten their hold on power again.

That is why the appointment of a long-time high ranking state security officer Ivan Serov to chair the new state security service did not receive unequivocal support. For instance, according to Malin's notes, during the discussion, Central Committee member Nikolai Shatalin said: "I would not vote for Serov. Among the rank and file, the feedback is negative. Party-orientation weak, career-oriented. Turning the way the wind blows. Took stuff from Germany."[6] Along the same lines, veteran Bolshevik Lazar Kaganovich warned Serov that he must be a loyal Party soldier like the first Soviet state security chief Felix Dzerzhinsky: "Dzerzhinsky had high Party and political culture. Serov must acquire such a culture," while another veteran, former Defense Minister Kliment Voroshilov wistfully reminisced: "How Dzerzhinsky worked! How he could catch the enemy, set up the organization! With the assistance of the Central Committee, [Serov] could [do it] as well."[7] They both insisted that the new state security service be placed under strict supervision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

In the end, it was Nikita Khrushchev's close collaboration with Serov in the period from 1939 to 1941 (when Khrushchev was the First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party and Serov, the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs in Ukraine) that propelled the nomination forward. Yet even Khrushchev seems to have had some misgivings about Serov's loyalties. According to Malin's notes, he stated that "In Ukraine, [Serov] did well. But sometimes [there seemed to be] two Serovs. Sometimes I'd find out about a

председатель КГБ Иван Серов [*The First Chairman of the KGB Ivan Serov*]. Moscow: Materik, 2005, pp. 306-311. First published in A. A. Fursenko et al., eds. *Президиум ЦК КПСС. 1954-1964. Черновые протокольные записи заседаний. Стенограммы. Постановления. [Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU. Draft minutes of the meetings. Transcripts. Resolutions].* Volume 1. Moscow, 2003, pp. 19-24. Original document: RGANI. F. 3, op. 8, d. 388. l. 1-11.
[6] Ibid., p. 311.
[7] Ibid., pp. 308-309.

document from Moscow (from Beria's report). There was no Party discipline."[8] Subsequent events showed, however, that Khrushchev made the right choice. Serov turned out to be more loyal to Khrushchev than the Party's own top young cadre, Aleksandr Shelepin, who replaced Serov as the chairman of the KGB in 1959 and Shelepin's successor Vladimir Semichastny, another young Party bureaucrat, who actively participated in Khrushchev's removal in 1964.

Appointing Serov as the chair of the KGB meant that many of his long-time associates in the Soviet state security hierarchy would also get to keep their high-ranking positions, notwithstanding their involvement in the purges and persecutions under Stalin. Such was the case with the convener of the July 30, 1955 meeting in Moscow, the head of the SCD Pyotr Fedotov.

Fedotov had a much longer experience in state security than Serov, having begun his career in Chechnya in the early 1920s.[9] In the 1930s, Fedotov allied himself with a group of high-ranking Chekists from the North Caucasus who rose to prominence during the bloodiest period in the history of Soviet state security known as "Yezhovshchina."[10] Evidently, Fedotov's physical appearance of a young bespectacled intellectual was a perfect disguise for the behavior of a brutal interrogator and a remorseless forger.

Later, when almost all of the protagonists of "Yezhovshchina" were executed in a purge by the new NKVD chief Beria, Fedotov not only survived but also advanced in his career. He was put in charge of Soviet counterintelligence, the position he held during World War Two. In the immediate post-war period, from September 1946 to May 1947, Fedotov was in charge of Soviet foreign intelligence, and then had a long stint in the so-called Committee for Information, Stalin's failed attempt to combine all segments of Soviet intelligence, including military intelligence, under one institutional roof. In 1953,

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[8] Ibid., p. 309. At the time, Beria was the head of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) and hence Serov's state security boss.

[9] N. V. Petrov and K. V. Skorkin. *Кто руководил НКВД, 1934-1941: Справочник [Those Who Led the NKVD, 1934-1941: A Reference Guide],* Moscow: Memorial, 1999, pp. 499-500.

[10] Derived from the last name of Nikolai Yezhov who was the head of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) from September 1936 until November 1938. For more biographical information on Fedotov, see Vadim Abramov. *Контрразведка. Щить и мячь против Абвер и ЦРУ [Counterintelligence. Shield and Sword against Abwehr and CIA].* Moscow: Eksmo, 2006 (the e-book), pp. 123-156.

Fedotov was transferred to counterintelligence, first, within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), and then, when the KGB was established in March 1954, he was named the head of the SCD.

Thanks to Serov's protection, Fedotov made a smooth transition to the upper echelons of the KGB, although he had countless "skeletons" in his closet. Nonetheless, a few years later, when the political rehabilitation of those unjustly accused, imprisoned, and shot under Stalin was in full swing, the old crimes finally caught up with Fedotov. He was fired from the KGB, stripped of his general's rank, and expelled from the Communist Party in 1959 for the "violations of Socialist legality during the Stalin period."[11]

However, all this was still far into the future and quite distant from Fedotov's immediate concerns when he opened the meeting of his closest subordinates with the delegation of the Latvian KGB officers at the Lubyanka headquarters on a Saturday at the end of July 1955.

The Meeting

The meeting at the Lubyanka must have lasted for several hours because the transcript includes the lengthy speeches of 12 speakers. Below I summarize and analyze the remarks of each of these individuals.

The First Speaker: Pyotr Fedotov, the Head of the SCD

Fedotov's opening speech was straightforward and concise. He did not mince words. He stated that the SCD leadership chose to review the work of the counterintelligence branch of the Latvian KGB - the Second Department (SD)[12] - because it contained all "basic orientations" of Soviet counterintelligence work, except, obviously, the surveillance and targeting of foreign diplomatic missions which were located in

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[11] Petrov, *Кто руководил НКВД, 1934-1941,* p. 499. For a discussion of the scandal which led to Fedotov being removed from the position of the head of the SCD and his replacement by Gribanov, see Kovacevic, "'An Ominous Talent'": Oleg Gribanov and KGB Counterintelligence." The elements of this scandal became public only in the early 1990s.
[12] For the sake of brevity, the acronym SD will be used as a shorthand for the Second Department of the KGB attached to the Council of Ministers of the Latvian Socialist Soviet Republic.

Moscow.[13] This meant that the challenges which the SD encountered in the course of its daily activities were likely to be similar to the challenges encountered by other regional KGB counterintelligence branches across the Soviet Union in the mid-1950s. At the same time, the problems or "deficiencies," as Fedotov called them, were also likely to be similar. As a result, Fedotov announced that, in contrast to the regular practice, the discussion at this particular meeting will be transcribed and sent as a top secret transcript to all regional counterintelligence branches for their edification and improvement.[14]

Then, Fedotov addressed the institutional and policy changes brought about by the formation of the KGB in March 1954, especially stressing the importance of the implementation of the KGB decree No. 00729.[15] This decree sought to clarify and codify all aspects of counterintelligence activities, including operational work with agents and use of operational equipment. Fedotov mentioned that the SCD had organized numerous meetings and seminars for senior counterintelligence officers in Moscow and Minsk in order to bring them up to speed regarding new regulations and methodologies. Nonetheless, his conclusion was pessimistic and deserves to be quoted at length:

> Can we conclude from all of this that everything is going well and that we can relax? No, by no means. If we take a look at the situation as a whole, we can conclude that, despite [some] positive steps forward in the work of counterintelligence, they are still very much at an initial stage, and, as a whole, counterintelligence work remains unsatisfactory.[16]

Remarkably, the chief of Soviet counterintelligence admitted in front of his subordinates that they were failing in their basic mission: to defend the Soviet Union from external and internal enemies. In other words, notwithstanding the image of

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[13] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 2.

[14] Fedotov's demand was quickly implemented in practice and a copy of the transcript was sent to the Second Department of the Lithuanian KGB, which is how it ended up in the Lithuanian Special Archives and ultimately came to my attention.

[15] Note that the number of zeros preceding the KGB decree number indicated the level of classification. No zeros indicated that the decree was not classified, one zero that the decree was secret, two zeros (as in this case) that the decree was top secret, and three zeros that it involved a matter of "special importance." Interestingly, Russian national security and defense institutions still use the same classification system today. See "Формы допуска секретности, запрещающие выезд за границу [The Levels of Classification For Which Travel Abroad Is Prohibited]," August 17, 2022, https://visasam.ru/samotur/rules/formy-sekretnosti-vyezd-za-granicu.html. Accessed on August 21, 2022.

[16] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 3.

omnipotence that Soviet state security in the mid-1950s tried to project externally to disinform its political opponents, Western governments and intelligence services, internally, as Fedotov explicitly indicated, it had a lot of significant problems to contend with.

Fedotov briefly listed some of these problems but did not dwell on the specifics. This he left to his subordinates who spoke later. He emphasized that Soviet counterintelligence must be more successful in dangling its agents to foreign intelligence services and anti-Soviet organizations abroad, infiltrating them in this manner, and disrupting their work from the inside.[17] Fedotov was not as explicit as his principal deputy Gribanov who, speaking last and concluding the meeting, said that this aspect of counterintelligence activity (training double agents, fake defectors, and the like) should be the priority number one of Soviet counterintelligence efforts, but he definitely agreed with it.[18] He criticized the level of preparation and expertise of the SD operatives, sarcastically asserting that it seemed to him that they had planned most of their operations as if their adversaries were "dim-witted people." However, according to Fedotov, Soviet adversaries were all but that: they were "smart, cunning, and not easily fooled."[19] Therefore, the SD staff must "show more concern" and "push themselves" much more than in the past, or else their jobs (if not their heads, as under Stalin) would be on the line. On this matter as well, Gribanov was more explicit. He said that "it is necessary to review the characteristics of all [current] operatives and get rid of those people who are not capable of working with agents, and [then] fill the organization with better people."[20]

With this stark warning still ringing in everybody's ears, Fedotov gave the floor to Mikhail Laryutin, the head of the SD, to present his full report on the "state of Chekist work" in his Department.

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[17] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 4.
[18] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 61.
[19] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 4.
[20] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 62.

The Second Speaker: Mikhail Laryutin, the Head of the Second Department of the Latvian KGB

Laryutin divided his report into five sections and sought to address all aspects of counterintelligence work performed by operatives under his control.[21] He began by describing the main features of the operational environment in Latvia, both historically and at present.[22] He stated, for instance, that Latvia's earlier international status as an independent state with the "capitalist" foreign missions located in Riga prior to 1940, and the period of German occupation during World War Two, made it likely that there could still be a number of undiscovered former Western intelligence agents on the Latvian soil eager to re-engage in espionage and subversion activities. In addition, Laryutin pointed out that since the early 1950s, U.S. and British intelligence agencies had increased their attempts to illegally penetrate Latvian borders with their agents. Moreover, he emphasized that out of approximately 100,000 Latvian immigrants in the West, most of whom are post-war refugees, many are being recruited by Western intelligence services and the émigré organizations of Latvian "nationalists" to take part in anti-Soviet activities, including covert subversive actions in Latvia.

In order to deal with these and similar challenges, Laryutin informed the assembled colleagues that the Latvian SD has organized its counterintelligence work in three general directions:

1. The exposure and elimination of the active agents of capitalist intelligence services on the territory of the Latvian SSR, planted both before and during the war, and also of those sent through the repatriation channel and the illegal channel.

2. The seizure of the channels for sending enemy agents into the republic through the dangling of our agents and their infiltration into the intelligence services of the adversary.

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[21] I could not locate much information about Laryutin except that he was a Lieutenant Colonel at the time of the meeting and that he remained the head of the SD until July 1957. "The Second Department of the Latvian KGB," https://shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/kgb5491/terr_org/respublik/latvia/2.htm. Accessed on August 27, 2022. This means that Laryutin was not removed from his leadership position after the meeting despite a number of serious problems raised by the meeting's participants.

[22] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 5.

3. The exposure and cultivation of intelligence officers among the sailors of foreign ships, docked in the ports of Riga and Ventspils, and of their contacts suspected of espionage in Latvia.[23]

However, Lartyutin acknowledged - and many speakers will keep returning to this topic, offering a variety of instructive examples - that there were serious shortcomings and flaws in the way that the SD went about performing its tasks and accomplishing its mission.[24] First of all, Laryutin admitted that the measures implemented to uncover potential foreign agents dispatched into the Latvian territory and capture their contacts and means of communication remained limited in reach and were, as a whole, inadequate. Second, the cultivation [*razrabotka*][25] of suspects was, in Laryutin's own words, often "of a primitive character," which, as can be seen from the statements of other speakers, meant that there was no attempt to entrap suspects by dangling access to classified information. Third, work with agents turned out to be a real Achilles' heel of the SD. The number of their existing agents was below the standard set by the KGB decrees, and the SD operatives appeared not to make much effort to recruit more. And, last but not least, before the inspection visits by the SCD teams from Moscow in December 1954 and July 1955, the SD seemed almost to have abandoned their local branches in Latvian regions and municipalities to their own devices and did little to spur, or even check on, their counterintelligence activities.

Though Laryutin's report may have sounded like an exemplary case of frank self-criticism, the later speakers, especially the ones who were members of the SCD inspection teams, were not very enthused. They claimed that Laryutin failed to tell a complete story, that his report was too general and "vague," and that the specific details of bungled operations and misguided operational moves needed to be addressed. As we will see,

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[23] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 6.

[24] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 7.

[25] There is no exact English-language equivalent for this term. It is typically translated as "cultivation," although, in some contexts, this translation may sound awkward. KGB's own counterintelligence lexicon published in the 1970s defines разработка as "the process of the all-round covert study of the persons, groups, organizations and institutions of the adversary, which are of interest to state security services." See *Контрразведывательный словарь [Counterintelligence Lexicon]*, Moscow: The Felix Dzerzhinsky Higher School of the KGB, 1972, p. 274.

their speeches offered a much more nuanced and revealing picture of the internal functioning of the Latvian SD in particular and Soviet counterintelligence in general.

In his report, Laryutin presented the organizational structure of the SD as consisting of five Sections: the 1st Section focused on the U.S. and Israeli intelligence operations, personnel, and agents, the 2nd Section on the British, the 3rd Section on the German, the French, and the Scandinavian, the 4th Section on anti-Soviet organizations, such as the NTS[26] as well as the Latvian émigré organizations, and the 5th Section on the search for state criminals and fugitives.[27] This structure mirrored the structure of the SCD in many ways, but not completely, and the work of each Section of the SD was analyzed and commented on by the corresponding Department head at the Lubyanka headquarters. However, before they took the floor, two members of the SCD inspection teams gave their overview of the situation in Latvia.

The Third Speaker: Sheremetyev, the Deputy Head of a Section of the Second Department of the SCD

Sheremetyev was sent to Latvia to gather information about the work of the SD on two occasions: in December 1954 and in July 1955. He represented the 2nd Department of the SCD which meant that his specific focus was on the operations of British intelligence.[28] However, his area of inspection in Latvia included the work of both the 1st and the 2nd Sections of the SD. He noted that there was some improvement in the quality of counterintelligence work of these two Sections in the 7-month period between his two visits. In his words, however, this was "just a start and the comrades still have a long way to go."[29]

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[26] The acronym NTS stood for the National Alliance of Russian Solidarists, a major anti-communist political organization of Russian emigrants and the critics of the Soviet regime founded in 1930 which was very active during the entire Cold War period. For more information in Russian, see http://ntsrs.ru/. Accessed August 19, 2022.

[27] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 8.

[28] I was not able to find any publicly available information on Sheremetyev, including his first name. It is likely that this is the first mention of his KGB activities in the public domain.

[29] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 20.

Sheremetyev's major concern was that the operatives of the 1st and 2nd Sections did not follow the newly promulgated KGB regulations, such as the KGB decree No. 00729, in their day-to-day operations. Already mentioned by Fedotov, this decree called on the KGB operatives to "skillfully combine the use of agents with the use of operational equipment and external surveillance."[30] However, Sheremetyev reported that operational equipment was used poorly by the Latvian SD and that there were frequent failures. In his words, "when an important conversation is being conducted by the object or we position our agent in his apartment, instead of the [recorded] conversation, we only get noise."[31]

External surveillance performed by the 1st and 2nd Sections also left much to be desired. According to Sheremetyev, in the 1st Section's operation codenamed ZION, which targeted a group of alleged Jewish "nationalists" and suspected informers of Israeli intelligence, no less than 4 suspects became aware of surveillance. Furthermore, one of them, when traveling from Riga to Moscow to meet other members of the alleged group, was able to warn his associates beforehand and, as a result, their meeting did not take place.[32] Considering that the SCD had planned to get them all arrested at this meeting in Moscow, the fact that they did not show up caused a significant ire of the Lubyanka headquarters.[33]

In addition, Sheremetyev found a serious fault in the inability of the 1st and 2nd Sections to organize any "offensive measures" targeting those suspected of espionage on behalf of U.S. and British intelligence.[34] Such measures typically involved dangling trusted agents or classified information or both. According to Sheremetyev, the major reason for this was that these two Sections had very few trained agents who could successfully pull off such an "operational game"[35] while, at the same time, they kept many agents whose

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[30] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 25.
[31] Ibid.
[32] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 26.
[33] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 33.
[34] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 23.
[35] KGB's *Counterintelligence Lexicon* defines operational game as "a system of counterintelligence operations and measures in which a state security agency systematically feeds the enemy various kinds of disinformation and agent reports containing information backed up with robust cover. The agency achieves

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productivity and usefulness were minimal to non-existent. For instance, Sheremetyev referred to the cases of Agent STABINŠ, who was "barely literate," and Agent RIMSKIY, who was chronically ill.[36] He also noted that there were times when agents were assigned "improper and intrusive" tasks which led to their being suspected by those they were supposed to inform on.[37] He even listed the last names of particular officers who were making the most egregious mistakes. It is possible that after their names were mentioned in this context, their KGB careers were over.

Sheremetyev's speech was followed by the speech of another officer who was also a member of the SCD inspection team in Latvia.

The Fourth Speaker: Kopytov, the Deputy Head of a Section of the Fourth Department of the SCD

Kopytov was a representative of the 4th Department of the SCD whose activities were directed against French intelligence and the intelligence of the Scandinavian countries.[38] He reported that the work of the 4th Section of the SD, which covered these issues in Latvia, had the same shortcomings already enumerated by Sheremetyev regarding the 1st and the 2nd Sections.

Kopytov also commented on the work of the 3rd Section of the SD and their operations targeting West German sailors in Latvian ports Riga and Ventspils. He pointed out that in 1955, the 3rd Section was successful in recruiting two agents among foreign sailors. Before any regional counterintelligence department could proceed with the recruitment of a foreign citizen as an agent, they had to gain the approval of the SCD. Kopytov informed his audience that the SD received the approval of the SCD for the

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this by operating in the name of and with the participation of one of its own agents, posing as a member of the enemy agent apparatus." Vasiliy Mitrokhin, ed. *KGB Lexicon: The Soviet Intelligence Officer's Handbook*, London: Frank Cass, 2006, p. 214. See also *Контрразведывательный словарь*, p. 114.

[36] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 21.

[37] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 22.

[38] Just like in the case of Sheremetyev, I was not able to find any publicly available information on Kopytov, including his first name. It is likely that this is the first mention of his KGB activities in the public domain.

recruitment of three foreign citizens, which meant that one more foreigner was recruited by another Section of the SD.[39]

While Kopytov did not provide any specifics on the identities of the recruited agents, he noted that one of them was trained to be dangled to U.S. intelligence (he was most likely recruited by the 1st Section), while the other two would be dangled to West German intelligence (they were most likely the two sailors mentioned above as recruited by the 3rd Section).[40] Kopytov also stressed the need for the "systematic checks on the agents recruited with the use of compromising materials," which may be a hint that this was the method used by the SD to recruit at least some of the foreign sailors.[41] Using sexual blackmail as means of recruitment was one of the most frequently used tactics in the repertoire of Soviet counterintelligence during the Cold War.[42]

Kopytov's speech was significantly shorter than Sheremetyev's, which may be an indication that the SCD inspection team sent to Latvia perceived the work of the 1st and 2nd Sections of the SD as more important for the overall mission of Soviet counterintelligence than the work of other Sections. That this indeed was the view of the SCD was confirmed by the next speaker whose rank was much higher than Kopytov's.

The Fifth Speaker: Aleksei Gorbatenko, the Head of the 1st Department of the SCD.

After Fedotov and Gribanov, Gorbatenko was the third highest ranking KGB officer to participate in the meeting. Already in the second half of the 1940s, he became one of the top Soviet counterintelligence officers targeting U.S. intelligence personnel and

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[39] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 28.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] See, for instance, the U.S. Senate testimony of Soviet defector Yuri Krotkov aka George Karlin who, as an agent of KGB counterintelligence, took part in such operations in Moscow. "Testimony of George Karlin," *Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary of the United State Senate, 91st Congress, 1st Session, Parts 1-3.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970. Also, memorably described by John Barron in *KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents.* New York: Bantam Books, 1974, pp. 170-192 as applied to the French ambassador to the Soviet Union, Maurice Dejean.

activities.[43] With the founding of the KGB in March 1954, he was appointed the head of the 1st Department of the SCD focusing on U.S. and Israeli intelligence activities.

Gorbatenko began his speech by pointing out that "the most important line [orientation] in the work of all our local counterintelligence branches is the fight against the subversive activities of American foreign intelligence service."[44] This was consistent with the perception of the U.S. as the "main adversary" that dominated Soviet foreign policy thinking from the end of World War Two. According to Gorbatenko, the second most important orientation of Soviet counterintelligence was Israeli intelligence, the orientation which, he stressed, was "particularly [important] for Latvia" considering the number of Jews living there at that time. He mentioned the SD operation against the alleged Jewish "nationalists" codenamed ZION described by Sheremetyev but did not add any significant new details.[45]

Gorbatenko also did not elaborate on any specific operations against U.S. intelligence but noted that the ongoing activities of the SD enabled the SCD to obtain valuable information about what U.S. intelligence was interested in and how it communicated with its agents on the ground. He also said that these efforts led to the SCD being able to successfully "disinform American foreign intelligence service on certain questions" but did not provide any examples. [46]

At the same time, Gorbatenko revealed that a major institutional antagonism was seriously hampering the work of KGB counterintelligence in Latvia. His statement in this respect is perhaps one of the most interesting insights into the work of Soviet counterintelligence in the mid-1950s found in the transcript. Namely, Gorbatenko confirmed the existence of another secretive counterintelligence branch in Latvia that

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[43] Gorbatenko was the head of the 1st Department until January 1957. His highest position in the KGB, which he held from August 1967 until June 1968, was that of a deputy head of the entire SCD. At that time, he was also promoted to major general. Soon afterwards, he transitioned to the position of a senior consultant to the chairman of the KGB. Nikita Petrov. *Кто руководил органами госбезопасности, 1941-1954: Справочник [Those Who Led State Security Service, 1941-1954: A Reference Guide].* Moscow: Memorial, 2010, p. 297.
[44] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 29.
[45] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 33.
[46] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 30.

operated parallel with the SD. He referred to it as the 2nd Covert [2-N] Department and implied that it dealt with sending and receiving KGB agents from abroad while being under the direct supervision of the SCD.[47] Gorbatenko informed his audience that the communication between the SD and its clandestine "shadow" almost completely broke down and that their respective heads stopped exchanging operational information with each other. Not unexpectedly, he faulted Laryutin, the head of the SD, for not taking an extra step forward and reaching out to his counterpart. He demanded that both the SCD leadership and the Latvian KGB leadership take a quick and firm action to bring the two Departments together "considering that they are aimed at common objectives."[48]

Gorbatenko's speech seems to have been one of those rare occasions when "deeper" and heavily classified KGB entities received mention in the documents sent out beyond the confines of the Lubyanka. During the entire meeting, the existence of the 2-N Department was mentioned only by three speakers. I suspect that the method of constructing parallel, shadow entities not fully reflected in the formal organizational chart in order to deal with special, compartmented tasks may have been one of KGB's preferred operational practices, but the archival evidence is, for obvious reasons, extremely difficult to come by.

Lastly, Gorbatenko addressed the slack attitude toward work that some operatives of the 1st Section of the SD seemed to have displayed. He noted that there was substantial psychological and professional inertia to do the things in the "old way," which rewarded quantity over quality, the mere number of agents rather than the value of the information they obtained. He complained that some operatives seemed to be content to work on the cases which were ten years old and based on "insufficient grounds" - the euphemism for trumped-up charges - rather than learn and apply sophisticated methods and techniques to catch actual spies trained by Soviet adversaries

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[47] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 31. "N" stood for covert or clandestine [негласный]. The FSB-affiliated historian Oleg Mozokhin provides just one sentence description of the 2-N activities: the "fight against the "nationalist" underground." See "The 2-N Department,"
https://shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/nkgb4353/terr_org/respublik/latvia/structure/2n.htm. Accessed on August 27, 2022.
[48] Ibid.

and dispatched to Latvia in recent years.[49] In other words, to Gorbatenko, these Latvian counterintelligence officers seemed stuck in the Stalinist past whereas Soviet political leadership in the mid-1950s was intent on forging a very different framework for the KGB, the framework that would make it into an instrument of efficient and selective, not mass social repression. It comes as no surprise then that Gorbatenko concluded that the work of the 1st Section was "unsatisfactory and below standards required by the Central Committee of the Party and the decrees of the Chairman of the KGB."[50] No subsequent speaker disputed his conclusion. They only added more evidence from their particular professional perspective to substantiate it.

The Sixth Speaker: Vladimir Kondrashin, the Head of the 2nd Department of the SCD

Vladimir Kondrashin was another high-ranking officer of Soviet counterintelligence. Almost the same age as Gorbatenko, his operational experience was just as long. As the head of the 2nd Department of the SCD, he was in charge of targeting British intelligence operations and personnel and was the immediate supervisor of Sheremetyev, a member of the SCD inspection team who spoke earlier.[51]

Kondrashin was explicit in voicing his dissatisfaction with the work of the SD: "During the last 2-3 years, the SD did not expose a single British spy."[52] He pointed out that even in the ongoing cases against suspected British intelligence agents in Latvia, the officers of the 2nd Section were making avoidable mistakes, failing to use technical equipment and external surveillance in a proper way, and ultimately risking exposure and operational failure.

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[49] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 32.

[50] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 34.

[51] Kondrashin was active in counterintelligence operations against British intelligence since 1946. He remained the head of the 2nd Department until May 1956 when he was sent to China as the deputy head of the KGB mission there. He ended his professional career teaching at the Higher School of the KGB in Moscow. Nikita Petrov. *Кто руководил органами госбезопасности, 1941-1954: Справочник [Those Who Led State Security Service, 1941-1954: A Reference Guide].* Moscow: Memorial, 2010, p. 482.

[52] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 34.

As an illustration, Kondrashin described their work against a Latvian journalist identified only with the initial TS.[53] TS lived in Switzerland during World War Two and was suspected of contacts with British intelligence which he allegedly continued upon his return to Latvia. According to Kondrashin, the information about the existence of these contacts came from TANKIST, a KGB agent abroad who knew TS personally. For this reason, TANKIST was recalled to Latvia to begin cultivating TS, but the cultivation was unnecessarily delayed due to what Kondrashin called the "sluggishness" of the head of the 2nd Section.

During the same time period, an agent informed the 2nd Section that TS rented an apartment which he used for drinking parties with friends. However, even after 7 days of following TS around Riga, the SD officers in charge of external surveillance could not establish the location of the apartment. Neither were they successful in installing eavesdropping equipment in TS's family apartment.

In the end, since TS expressed an interest in the naval activities of the Soviet fleet based in Riga, the SD decided to dangle to him a naval officer who was a KGB informer. However, the method of infiltrating the officer into TS's household was awkward: he was told to sign up for English language lessons from TS's wife. As a result, it was likely to take him weeks, if not months, to get into TS's confidence.

This lack of the sense of urgency coupled with the absence of bold initiatives among the operatives of the 2nd Section frustrated Kondrashin. He called on the SD to take "all necessary measures to increase the level and quality of [their] Chekist work" immediately.[54] Not making thorough changes in the SD work practices was professionally unacceptable.

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[53] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 35-37.
[54] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 39.

The Seventh Speaker: Tikhon Beskrovniy, the Head of the 3rd Department of the SCD

As the head of the 3rd Department of the SCD, Tikhon Beskrovniy was in charge of targeting West German intelligence operations and personnel.[55] He began his speech by stressing that the activities of West German intelligence against the Soviet Union had intensified in recent years because "German imperialism cannot tolerate and already does not tolerate the second-class position in the common front of the aggressive Western Bloc."[56] Therefore regional counterintelligence branches needed to start paying much more attention to West German intelligence activities than in the past. According to Beskrovniy, this was of particular importance for the Latvian SD because German foreign intelligence had been very active on the Latvian territory both prior and during World War Two.

Beskrovniy warned that former German agents and, in some cases, even former intelligence officers, might be ready and willing to get reactivated to do harm to the Soviet way of life once again. This is why he insisted that their detection and capture must be seen as the primary task by the 3rd Section of the SD. He stated that the present number of 24 agents working for the 3rd Section was inadequate and advised that more recruitment needed to be done among those individuals who could offer credible information about the whereabouts of the former German intelligence "rezidents, smugglers, [and] owners of safe houses."[57]

Beskrovniy even called on Laryutin, the head of the SD, to get personally involved in the process of recruitment. He was not the only high-ranking SCD officer at the meeting to emphasize that without the hands-on involvement of the leadership, it would not be possible to make a positive impact on motivation and enthusiasm for operational work among the rank and file officers. As will be discussed later, this perspective was most

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[55] In contrast to Gorbatenko and Kondrashin, I was not able to find any publicly available information on Beskrovniy except his first name.
[56] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 40.
[57] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 42.

succinctly articulated by Gribanov who was an avid participant in the field operations of Soviet counterintelligence even when he became the head of the SCD.

The Eighth Speaker: Povarov, the Head of the 4th Department of the SCD

Povarov's counterintelligence activities targeted the operations of French intelligence and the operations of the intelligence agencies of Scandinavian countries.[58] Povarov informed his audience that just as in the case of Germany, France had also developed an extensive network of agents in Latvia prior to World War Two. According to him, the 4th Section of the SD was able to identify 26 suspected former French agents in Latvia.[59] However, he reported that the search for them was organized "poorly" and conducted "very slowly and often by incorrect methods." It was marked by haste, by lack of planning and agent training, and by what Povarov described as "counting on the effect, on the quick result."[60] Hence it was not surprising that the ultimate results were unsatisfactory: cultivations failed and agents were exposed.

In addition, Povarov criticized the operations of the 4th Section directed at Scandinavian countries. He stressed that the main priority of the 4th Section in this regard was to be on the offensive, to be active in sending their agents abroad to infiltrate Scandinavian intelligence agencies and Latvian émigré organizations based in Scandinavia, particularly in Sweden. He gave the operatives of the 4th Section several specific instructions: dangle agents to foreign sailors visiting Latvian ports, cultivate the family and other contacts of Latvian "nationalists" living in Scandinavia, and recruit sailors

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[58] Just as in the case of Beskrovniy, I was not able to find any publicly available information on Povarov, not even his first name. It is likely that this is the first mention of his KGB activities in the public domain. The FSB-affiliated historian Oleg Mozokhin is mistaken in listing the main function of the 4th Department of the SCD in the mid-1950s as targeting the countries of the East (Middle East, Asia). See "The 4th Department of the SCD," https://shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/kgb5491/structure/2GU/4.htm. Accessed on August 27, 2022.

[59] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 43.

[60] Ibid.

in the Soviet commercial and fishing fleets who have frequent interactions with Scandinavian counterparts.[61]

Povarov also urged the reconsideration of the "termination of the cultivation of individuals who have influential connections in the Scandinavian countries," but did not specify who they were and what political and social positions in Latvia and/or Scandinavia they occupied.[62]

The Ninth Speaker: Akhmed Meretukov, the Head of the 6th Department of the SCD

The 6th Department of the SCD focused on subverting the activities of "anti-Soviet" émigré organizations, ranging from the White Russian monarchists and the already-mentioned NTS to the Baltic and Ukrainian "nationalists." The head of the Department Meretukov had a long experience in planning and running such operations. He held top ranking positions in the anti-émigré activities of the earlier incarnations of Soviet state security, the Ministry of State Security (MGB) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD).[63] He was the head of the 6th Department until February 1957 when he was transferred to a higher post, that of an assistant to the head of the SCD.

Meretukov's speech at the meeting made it clear that KGB counterintelligence had sources in the upper ranks of certain anti-Soviet émigré organizations abroad. For instance, he informed his audience that the 6th Department was able to infiltrate the channels that Vladimir Poremsky, the head of the NTS, used to obtain information on anti-

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[61] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 44.

[62] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 45.

[63] Already in June 1946, Meretukov was appointed the head of a counterintelligence section combating "nationalist underground" organizations in the Baltics, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova. When many members of these "underground"organizations migrated to the West, Meretukov organized subversion measures against their activities abroad. He was sent to the GDR (East Germany) in 1960 and stayed for seven years, retiring from the KGB after his return in 1967. There were very few members of ethnic minorities in the upper management of the KGB but Meretukov was one of them: he was an ethnic Circassian. Nikita Petrov. *Кто руководил органами госбезопасности, 1941-1954: Справочник [Those Who Led State Security Service, 1941-1954: A Reference Guide].* Moscow: Memorial, 2010, pp. 45, 48-49, 602.

Soviet Latvians.[64] However, he was not pleased with the operations that the Latvian SD was running against similar targets. He stated that the SD's approach lacked sophistication and that the two "promising" cultivations of Latvian individuals with links to the NTS that they were tasked for did provide as much valuable information as they could have, had they been conducted in a different manner.[65] He also criticized the SD for not recruiting a single new agent for anti-émigré counterintelligence operations in the 8 months preceding the July meeting.[66]

The second issue Meretukov raised at the meeting had to do with the operations of the so-called "Committee For Return to the Homeland" founded by a group of former Soviet prisoners in the Nazi German camps in Berlin in 1955 to influence other Soviet citizens displaced by World War Two to come back to the Soviet Union.[67] In fact, one of the key revelations of the transcript is the extent of logistical and financial support that the Committee was provided by Soviet counterintelligence. Meretukov's speech shows that KGB counterintelligence was deeply involved in even the day-to-day operations of the Committee, having to do with publishing a newspaper and operating a radio station. Furthermore, it appears that at least some of the major active measures abroad, which have mostly been associated with the operations of the First Chief Directorate of the KGB (foreign intelligence) and its Department D, later renamed Service A,[68] were in the mid-1950s directed by a Department within the SCD.

In his speech, Meretukov chastised the SD for not doing much to try to persuade Latvian refugees to return to Soviet Latvia. "It is difficult to explain," Meretukov said to

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[64] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 45. For more information on Poremsky, see "Biography of Vladimir Poremsky," https://tinyurl.com/ye2ak55u. Accessed on August 26, 2022. Poremsky was a target of an assassination plot organized by Soviet intelligence in Frankfurt in April 1956. See "Vladimir Poremsky Sitting at His Desk," https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/dr-vladimir-polemsky-chairman-of-the-anti-communist-russian-news-photo/517474516. Accessed on August 26, 2022.

[65] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 46.

[66] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 47.

[67] For archival information on the work of the Committee, see "Советское общество по культурным связям с соотечественниками за рубежом (общество «Родина»),1955–1992 [Soviet Association for Cultural Contacts with Compatriots Abroad [Association 'Homeland')," 1955-1992], https://guides.rusarchives.ru/funds/6/sovetskoe-obshchestvo-po-kulturnym-svyazyam-s-sootechestvennikami-za-rubezhom-obshchestvo. Accessed on August 26, 2022.

[68] See, for instance, Tennent H. Bagley. *Spymaster: Startling Cold War Revelations of a Soviet KGB Chief.* New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2013, pp. 179-193.

the assembled officers, "why there are no quality articles sent from Latvia for the Committee's newspaper, why to this day there is not a single radio program in Latvian language, and why the publication of the newspaper "For Return to the Homeland" in Latvian language is delayed."[69] He then proceeded to instruct the SD officers on what kinds of reports, articles, and photographs were needed by the Committee. Containing important insights on how the SCD went about producing positive propaganda to shape the hearts and minds of the "displaced persons" in the ways favorable to Soviet interests, Meretukov's instructions deserve to be quoted in full:

> Articles and radio recordings should avoid very detailed descriptions of how the returnee fell into German captivity and the suffering he has endured there. The main attention should be focused on the life and work of the returnee at the present time, on his family, and also on the description of the lives of other returnees familiar to him, on positive changes taking place after the war in his native town or village. At the same time, care should be taken to make the language of articles and radio recordings simple, without empty phraseology, and fit them to the education level of the author.
>
> Articles and recordings should be short, specific, and without the elements of melodrama.
>
> It is desirable to attach high-quality photographs (specially taken for the newspaper) to the articles showing the returnees at work and at home, on vacation, and so on.
>
> At the same time, care should be taken about the external appearance of individuals who are being photographed.
>
> The radio program can include poetry about the homeland, the native region, short reviews about the successes of the republic, the region, the province, the successes in industry, agriculture, science, and culture.[70]

As can be seen, SCD insisted on a positive message made persuasive by its simulated simplicity and clarity combined with an implicit emotional appeal. The stress on the "external appearance of individuals" had to do with the desired projections of prosperity and comfort.

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[69] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 48.
[70] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 49-50.

These SCD propaganda efforts went hand-in-hand with the changes in Soviet laws regarding those Soviet citizens who had known ties to the opposite side during World War Two and feared to return due to possible retaliation. In September 1955, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR eased their concerns considerably by passing an amnesty on their activities.[71] Eventually, the efforts of the Committee were declared a success by the Soviet government and the Committee was renamed and repurposed to include a wider range of active measures and activities targeting Soviet citizens abroad.[72]

The Tenth Speaker: Mikhail Prudnikov, the Head of the 9th Department of the SCD

The 9th Department of the SCD focused on the issues having to do with illegal penetration into the Soviet Union by suspected foreign intelligence agents via land, air, or water. The SD work in these areas was the main theme of the speech given by the head of the 9th Department Prudnikov. He was a veteran state security officer who commanded a partisan unit in the Nazi-occupied Soviet territories during World War Two. His later professional career included top ranking posts in the 7th Directorate of the KGB (external surveillance) and, in the 1970s, the appointment to the position of the assistant to the minister of meat and milk production in the Soviet government.[73]

Prudnikov began his speech by praising the SD for setting up two special groups of six operatives, one of which was sent to the border regions of Latvia while the other engaged in targeting foreign sailors visiting Latvian ports.[74] However, he also said that this

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[71] "Указ Президиума Верховного Совета СССР 'об амнистии советских граждан, сотрудничавших с оккупантами в период Великой Отечественной войны 1941–1945 гг.' [Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 'the amnesty of Soviet citizens collaborating with the occupiers in the period of the Great Fatherland War, 1941-1945]," https://diletant.media/articles/37736483/. Accessed on August 26, 2022. Original document: GARF. F. 7523. op. 72. d. 522. l. 110–112.

[72] On how post-Soviet Russia, and especially Russia under Putin, has tried to influence and shape the perceptions of Russians living abroad, see Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan. *The Compatriots: The Brutal and Chaotic History of Russia's Exiles, Emigres, and Agents Abroad.* New York: Public Affairs, 2019.

[73] Prudnikov also became a member of the Soviet Writers' Union in 1975. See "Biography of Mikhail Prudnikov," https://shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/personnel/2017/prudnikov_m_s.htm. Accessed on August 27, 2022. For some reason, Prudnikov's biographical information was not included in Nikita Petrov's *Кто руководил органами госбезопасности, 1941-1954: Справочник*, which had the biographies of most of the other heads of the SCD's Departments in the 1950s.

[74] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 51.

was not enough. He pointed out that many foreign sailors were still not covered by agent surveillance when they disembarked and that some of their contacts with Soviet citizens went unreported by the SD.[75] He insisted that the SD recruit more agents and better train them for their tasks.

In addition, Prudnikov repeated a critical point made also by several previous speakers that, in its activities, the SD was not offensive enough. For instance, it did not take advantage of foreign sailors' offers to smuggle Soviet citizens abroad to dangle its agents to them.[76] The SD also did not try hard enough to pass to foreign intelligence agencies Soviet identity documents with hidden irregularities which would make it possible to quickly identify and capture their dispatched spies.[77] Another ruse suggested by Prudnikov that the SD seems not to have employed was to recruit agents who lived near the locations of major Soviet defense or industrial facilities in Latvia whose apartments could be dangled to individuals suspected of espionage.[78]

Lastly, Prudnikov noted that the SD must be quicker in reporting to the 9th Department of the SCD the appearance of any suspicious individuals in Latvia, especially if their identities could be connected to those Latvian emigrants who were known to have received instruction and training in what Prudnikov referred to as the "foreign intelligence spy schools" abroad. He claimed that the SD detected about 20 such individuals but that their number was likely to be much larger.[79]

The Eleventh Speaker: Nikolai Limov, the Deputy Head of the 8th Department of the SCD

The main function of the 8th Department of the SCD was to search for those who violated Soviet laws and were on the run within the territory of the Soviet Union.[80] The

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[75] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 52.
[76] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 53.
[77] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 55.
[78] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 54.
[79] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 51, 54.
[80] The FSB-affiliated historian Oleg Mozokhin does not list the function of the 8th Department of the SCD in the organizational chart of the SCD on his website. See "The Second Chief Directorate," https://shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/kgb5491/structure/2GU.htm. Accessed on August 27, 2022. However,

deputy head of the 8th Department Limov was an officer with a long experience in counterintelligence activities, including service in Soviet military counterintelligence SMERSH during World War Two.[81] His speech was one of the shortest at the meeting, perhaps because he was the last speaker before the concluding remarks by Gribanov.

Limov stated that out of 215 cases of "state criminals" wanted on the territory of the Soviet Union in the mid-1950s, the majority were hiding in Latvia.[82] Even so, the 5th Section of the SD whose responsibility was to search for them did not do a very good job. For instance, according to Limov, in many cases, there was no agent surveillance of the family members of those on the run. However, as pointed out by Limov, this is hardly surprising considering that the number of agents was miniscule compared to the number of cases. Limov cited the case of a senior operative who was assigned 157 search cases but had only 5 agents and only 3 out of the 5 were targeting specific cases.[83]

At the same time, the 5th Section made poor use of the special category of agents known as "agents-identifiers." According to Limov, these agents were generally used only to identify the fugitives based on photographic evidence, whereas they should have been included in the 5th Section's search parties and sent to the locations of the possible hideouts.[84] In addition, there was a severe lack of coordination of the search activities between the central and municipal branches of the SD.[85] This absence of an effective and efficient centralized chain of command based in Riga was also commented on by the previous speakers and was one of the main deficiencies in the work of Latvian KGB counterintelligence in the mid-1950s. Given the level of concern that the SCD leadership expressed on this issue, it is likely that many, if not most, KGB counterintelligence branches across the Soviet Union had the same coordination problems.

the transcript as well as Nikita Petrov's research show that the 8th Department focused on the search for those considered "state criminals."
[81] Nikita Petrov. *Кто руководил органами госбезопасности, 1941-1954: Справочник [Those Who Led State Security Service, 1941-1954: A Reference Guide].* Moscow: Memorial, 2010, pp. 45, 48-49, 545.
[82] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 56.
[83] Ibid.
[84] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 58.
[85] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 57.

The Twelfth Speaker: Oleg Gribanov, the Deputy Head of the SCD

The deputy head of the SCD Oleg Gribanov concluded the meeting on a note that was very critical of the work of the SD. He stated that Laryutin's report was "too relaxed [and] too vague" and that it did not address any of the serious deficiencies uncovered by the SCD inspection teams in a substantive manner.[86] According to Gribanov, Laryutin spoke only about superficial improvements, whereas the point was to make fundamental changes in the way that Latvian KGB counterintelligence was run. In his words, "agent recruitment is done poorly, measures being taken are not serious enough, tasks given to agents are not worked through, that is to say," - one can almost feel Gribanov's voice rising in anger - "everything that we have constantly been talking about, everything that should have been eliminated from our practical work long time ago [is still there]."[87]

Gribanov appears to have been particularly upset that Laryutin could not point even to "a single interesting and noteworthy [operational] combination involving the cultivation of individuals suspected of espionage."[88] He was shocked that some officers apparently "dreaded conducting active measures."[89] He warned his audience that "if the cultivations are performed passively and primitively, then we could hardly hope to unmask the adversary. We must not forget that the adversary is improving his work every day [and] is using sophisticated methods in his subversive activities against us."[90]

Evidently, the Latvian SD and many other regional counterintelligence branches across the Soviet Union still remained mired in old operational methods linked to the past practices of indiscriminate mass repression. Gribanov feared that this baggage of the past

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[86] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 58-59. For a detailed biographical study of Gribanov and his activities, see Filip Kovacevic, "'An Ominous Talent': Oleg Gribanov and KGB counterintelligence."

[87] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 59. It is no wonder that Gribanov's colleague Filipp Bobkov, later the head of the notorious Fifth Directorate of the KGB, described Gribanov in his memoirs as "a consummate professional, a very hardworking individual who did not like laziness." Filipp Bobkov. *КГБ и власть [KGB and Political Power]*. Moscow: Eksmo, 2003, p. 221. (in the e-book).

[88] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 59.

[89] Ibid.

[90] F. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 59-60.

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may push Soviet state security into an increasingly disadvantageous position vis-a-vis more technologically superior and less conceptually rigid Western intelligence services.

Gribanov's solution to prevent this from happening was twofold. First, it was necessary to devise means to inspire the creative impulse among counterintelligence operatives. As he put it pithily: "One can indeed come to work on time, follow all the instructions to the letter, but if an officer does not think creatively, he won't get anywhere."[91] He indicated that this was the aim of recent KGB seminars "organized here [Moscow] and in Minsk."[92]

Secondly, the leadership of the SD needed to get personally involved in running day-to-day operational activities. One could not lead effectively perched on the hill. Gribanov explicitly called on Laryutin and his associates to go down into the operational trenches and get their hands dirty: "You yourselves must take part in running the most active operations, in recruiting agents, in cultivating suspects - that is what the work of the entire operational team will depend on."[93] Only in that way, Gribanov concluded, giving his speech a mandatory political spin at the end, will you be able "to accomplish the tasks required of you by the Central Committee of our Party."[94]

Conclusion

The transcript of the July 1955 meeting of the SCD leadership in Moscow offers a remarkable inside view of the challenges and problems confronting Soviet state security in the mid-1950s. It makes clear that KGB counterintelligence was very far from being an omnipotent, smooth-running institutional machine keeping every aspect of Soviet society under surveillance, the image that it tried so hard to project to the outsiders as well as to regular Soviet citizens in the mid-1950s, sometimes quite effectively.

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[91] K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 62.

[92] K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 60.

[93] Gribanov practiced what he preached. As already pointed out, even when he became the head of the SCD, he was running a network of agents and took part in operational combinations in Moscow and even abroad. For more details, see Filip Kovacevic, "'An Ominous Talent': Oleg Gribanov and KGB Counterintelligence."

[94] K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 62.

In contrast, as the transcript shows, KGB counterintelligence was bogged down by the issues of rigid mentality, fear of novelty, laziness, poor training, and bureaucratic antagonisms. On the whole, it suffered from unimpressive performance. The Latvian SD, for instance, went for months without recruiting a single agent, let alone exposing and catching a real (as opposed to imaginary) Western spy. The same must have been true across the Soviet Union considering Fedotov's decision to make the top secret transcript available to all regional counterintelligence branches.

At the same time, the transcript also shows that KGB counterintelligence leadership made systematic and consistent efforts to learn from past mistakes and correct and improve counterintelligence practices. There were frequent trainings and seminars, regional and central meetings, round-the-year inspections, and an ever-proliferating stream of decrees from the Lubyanka. The spirit of change was in the air.

Furthermore, the transcript reveals that there was one leadership figure who seemed to have decided to ride this new trend all the way to the top. Like some New Age productivity guru, Gribanov exhorted his colleagues to be daring and creative, to think big and do bigger, telling them that if they just come to work to do what they have always done, they would be failing and not only the KGB, but the country and the Party, too. For him, it was the case of "do or die." And, indeed, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, under Gribanov's leadership, KGB counterintelligence ran a string of notable, high-level operations, some of which became the stuff of Cold War espionage lore and still provoke intense controversy.

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[Shortened Transcript of the Meeting held by the 2nd Chief Directorate of the KGB attached to the Council of Ministers of the USSR on July 30, 1955](#)

Lithuanian Special Archives, f. K-41, ap. 1, b. 573, l. 2-62. Contributed and translated by Filip Kovacevic.