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A Preliminary Report**

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Victor J. Yasmann and Vladislav M. Zubok

A Preliminary Report

by

Victor J. Yasmann

Summary

This report addresses the first stage of our project, and deals with the basic component of our documentary collection, the USSR KGB Review; the progress made in our research and creation of a public database, as well as with our preliminary factual findings and their implications for completion of the project.

The USSR KGB Review

As the central part of our collection of KGB documents, we selected Sbornik KGB USSR-"Sb KGB USSR" (The USSR KGB Review), which will be, as we planned, the basic element of our publicly available KGB database within the National Security Archives. We focused our analysis on this publication because the "Sb KGB USSR" occupies a special place among the enormous quantity of classified KGB documents at our disposal.

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For more than a quarter of a century, it was the flagship of the KGB internal periodicals and a mouthpiece of the KGB central leadership in Moscow. It began publishing in April 1959 and continued until December 1991, i.e. the date of the official disbanding of the KGB.

The publisher of "Sb KGB USSR" was the F. E. Dzerzhinskiy Red Banner Higher School of the Committee of State Security, the principal educational and training institute for the entire KGB system. In reality, the Dzerzhinskiy Higher School was much more than the main methodological center of the KGB and the cradle of its cadres. It was, indeed, kind of an academy of "Chekist sciences and practice", a collective bearer of "esprit de corps," and the bulwark of a distinct totalitarian ideology known to the specialists as "Chekism".

The Nature of the Publication

The bi-monthly magazine (monthly since 1988) was designed to be a consolidated tribune for over a dozen functional agencies, over a hundred territorial-regional organizations (UKGBs), the investigative branch (SO), and other elements incorporated into the KGB empire. The editorial board of the "Sb KGB USSR" included several KGB generals-veterans, represented all branches of KGB activity, and was headed by Lieutenant General Sergei Tolkunov, the chief of the notorious KGB Inspectorate dubbed the "KGB in KGB".

The top secret publication had three functions: to convey the guidelines and directives of the central KGB leadership to the regional KGB chiefs and mid-level personnel; to disseminate operative experience and techniques among KGB agents; and to provide a forum for rank-and-file officers for discussion and to propose changes to the KGB agenda and policies. In the first capacity, the magazine published:

- closed addresses of Communist Party leaders to the Chekist audience;
- speeches of members of the KGB top administrative body, the Collegium;
- documents of the KGB Party organization and the KGB Inspectorate.

In its second and third capacities the magazine regularly covered the activities of:

- the KGB Second Main Directorate for General Counterintelligence and Counter-espionage;
- the KGB Third Chief Directorate for Military Counterintelligence, responsible for control of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Interior Affairs and all paramilitary organizations in the country;
- the Fourth Directorate for Transportation in charge of the national highways, subways, railroads, civil aviation and the trade fleet;
 - the KGB Fifth Directorate for Ideological Counterintelligence, responsible for political surveillance of mass media, culture, the church, education, national minorities, trade unions, and public and nongovernmental organizations;
- the KGB Sixth Directorate for Economic Counterintelligence, responsible for foreign and domestic trade, industry, and science;
- the KGB Seventh Directorate for Internal Intelligence, Security and Special Operations (including the KGB special troops, the anti-terror task force "Alfa," and the Service of External Surveillance);
- the KGB Investigative Department, in charge of law-enforcement of the so-called "specially dangerous state crimes." (All in all, there were 22 articles of the Soviet Criminal Code that were under the KGB purview. They ranged from treason, anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda

to mass disorders, divulgence of state secrets, smuggling, and violation of currency transaction rules.

Methodologically, all materials of the magazine can be divided into two groups: those which show the “status of the KGB”, i.e. its organizational structure, overt and covert statutory prerogatives, and its place in the Soviet political system; and those which reflect the “dynamics of the KGB”, i.e. participation in concrete political, economic, and social developments as well as exerting influence on the historical march of events.

The full set of the "Sborbik KGB USSR" 1980-1990 consists of 90 issues of the magazine (circa 8000 pages); Our project has access to 30 issues, of which selected articles will be placed in the database (circa 500 pages).

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

1. Foreign Intelligence

Although the documents of the KGB First Main Directorate for Foreign Intelligence (PGU) are only occasionally present in the publication, it is well represented by documents from the “domestic” Directorates, which were also involved in foreign intelligence and counterintelligence. This fact was not well-known in open sources and deserves special attention.

As is revealed by numerous documents of the "Sb KGB USSR," the domestic Directorates listed above had their own separate networks of secret agents and informers abroad, which were recruited both from Soviet and foreign citizens. Moreover, not only the central apparatus of the corresponding Directorates, but also their regional territorial organs (UKGBs) were involved in espionage and foreign intelligence gathering.²

Understandably, most of the “domestic intelligence” of the KGB was directed against the “main enemy” - the USA and its real or imagined spies, or simply citizens who were considered appropriate for recruiting or manipulation³

² See for example, colonel Yu. Brayzgalov, lieutenant colonel V. Stegnii, “Razoblachaem ukhishcheniya spetssluzhb FRG na kanale innostrannogo turizma”, Sb KGB USSR, No.105, 1985; major V. Chogovadze, “Uspeshnaya operatsiya”, Sb KGB USSR, No.115, 1986; V. Chogovadze, “Aktivno ispolzuya agenturu, poluchaem razvedyvatelnuyu informatsiyu”, Sb KGB USSR, No. 130, 1989; colonels V. Barsukov, V. Gorbatko, I. Samarskii “Zashchishchat interesy strany - nash dolg”, Sb KGB USSR, No. 135, 1989

³ See, for example, colonel V. Tretyakov, Major V. Cherkesov, lieutenant colonel, A. Zvyaginskii, “Agent dvukh razvedok”, Sb KGB USSR, No. 109; major generals, V. Epifantsev, V. Shironin, “Novyi faktor operativnoi obstanovki”, KGB USSR, No.136, 1989; colonels I. Laptev, A. Andreev, “Vokrug inspektorov iz SShA”, Sb KGB USSR, No. 138, 1989

An unexpectedly large amount of material, however, deals with the Chinese secret services and the recruitment of Chinese citizens. Many of the KGB evaluations of the Chinese national character and people are clearly xenophobic, if not racist in character⁴

2. The KGB and Reforms

Over 25 percent of the publications in "Sb KGB USSR" are devoted to problems of the economic and political reforms unleashed by Gorbachev's leadership, and the KGB's own "modus operandi" in the changing socio-political conditions. Until recently, the role of the KGB in perestroika has been seen through the prism of two popular myths: the first depicted the KGB as "an initiator of perestroika," and the second sees the KGB as the "mortal enemy of the reforms."

It appears from the published materials that neither myth reflects the KGB approach to Gorbachev's reforms, or its own institutional interests and agenda. First, the KGB held that gradual, controlled modernization was the way of "salvation of socialism," as well as of the Soviet system and its own place in it, and saw its own organization as the decisive vehicle of measured reforms. Second, the KGB had its own vested interest in a new atmosphere of openness and increasing contacts with the West. It understood the process of liberalization as new opportunities and channels for penetration into influential, Western institutions and NGOs. This tactic was called "conquest by new intelligence positions." In short, the KGB continuously viewed the reforms as the medium for increasing its own weight and indispensability in the eyes of the top Soviet leadership. On the other side, the KGB was so confident of its might and institutional infallibility that it never even thought about the possibility of global failure.

3. Signs of KGB Degradation

While the general Soviet ideological cliché and the then-prevailing ideological standards of the Party remained a "must" for the rank-and-file Chekists, in practical service and life they were driven by much more prosaic, if not cynical, norms. In this context, the materials of the Sbornik deal a severe blow to the myth of "incorruptible," glorious Chekists. Rather, it shows that the process of moral decay and decomposition gripped the KGB's ranks in the same way that it encompassed the whole Soviet bureaucracy and large segments of society. In this context, abuse of office, misappropriation of funds, falsification of intelligence data, and unbridled careerism was inherent in the KGB just as in any other Soviet organization.

⁴ Lieutenant colonel Yu. Kedrov, "Nekotorye v psikhologii kitaiskikh grazhdan i ikh uchet v chekistskoi rabote", Sb KGB USSR, No.108, 1985; See also, lieutenant general, K. Grigoriev, the Chief of USSR UKGB for Primorskii Krai, Counter Admiral, N. Egorkin, the Chief of the USSR KGB Special Department for Pacific Fleet, "Ukreplyaem vzaimodeistvie", Sb KGB USSR, No.136, 1989; colonel V. Shlyk, " V tsentre vnimaniya rabochei vstrchi - dalnevostochnye problemy", Sb KGB USSR, No.139/140, 1990.

One account, for example, reports an incident, unheard of in the history of the agency, that occurred in 1984 when a self-made explosive device was discovered in the headquarters of the Leningrad KGB Directorate. To investigate the incident the KGB activated all of its impressive arsenal: secret informer networks, brigades of external surveillance, criminological and expert laboratories, and the best investigators. Initially, the KGB suspected that the possible perpetrator came from so-called "Anti-Soviets elements", a rogue youth gang, or was simply a mentally ill person. Soon, however, the KGB easily established that all of the possible suspects had been unable to plant the explosive because they were, in any case, under permanent surveillance. Eventually, the KGB investigators came to the right conclusion: the explosive device had been planted by the same KGB officer who had "discovered" it. As it turned out, he had staged a "terrorist act" in order to get a promotion.⁵

SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE PROJECT

The revelations of the "Sbornik KGB USSR" have importance for several reasons. First, as the events preceding the demise of the Soviet Union are becoming more remote with each passing day, more and more of the top KGB officers and former Soviet politicians are going public with their memoirs. In particular, in the last five years, about 20 former KGB chiefs have published books offering their own interpretations of the historical cataclysm and their role in it. The "Sbornik KGB USSR" sheds light on the authentic positions and activities of the KGB in the events that occurred and will help to restore the genuine truth in its historical context.

Second, in comparison with the other sets of KGB documents, "Sbornik KGB USSR" provides a more panoramic view of various aspects of KGB activities in the political-social crisis encompassing the Soviet Union in the 1980s. The topics published and discussed in the Chekist magazine include: Soviet-American, Sino-Soviet and Soviet-West European relations; disarmament and weapons control talks; ethnic disturbances in the Soviet republics; Gorbachev's reforms of the Soviet political system; the process of democratization of Soviet society; and religious, cultural and national renewal. Another block of topics covered by the publication deals with the work of KGB intelligence and counterintelligence vis-a-vis its Western counterparts and China. Finally, the magazine provides interesting insights into the history of the KGB and its many operations during WW II and the Cold War.

Third, the "Sbornik KGB USSR" gives valuable factual and reference materials for the decade of the 1980s, filling up "blank spots" and supplementing the information available from open

⁵ V. Egorov, "V noch na 20 dekabrya", Sb KGB USSR, No. 115, 198

sources. In many instances, the materials of "Sbornik KGB USSR" depict the hidden background of events and developments familiar to researchers and the general public.