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Schild en zwaard van de Oktoberrevolutie. De memoires van Sovjet inlichtingenofficieren 1953-1991

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BIJLAGE VII

English Summary

Shield and Sword of the October Revolution: The Memoirs of Soviet Intelligence Officers 1953-1991

1 Introduction

The memoirs of Soviet intelligence officers are the subject of this dissertation. The central question is what kind of insights these memoirs give into the history, structure and working methods of the KGB and the military intelligence service GRU. Where possible certain versions of events which are given in different memoirs are compared to each other and contradictions and conflicts between different versions are analyzed and presented. To the extent possible different aspects of these memoirs are compared to archival material which had been released after 1991 in Russia, often in the press. The writers of memoirs are in most cases KGB officers, only a tiny minority among them are from the GRU. This dissertation deals mainly with the period 1953-1991, 1953 being of course the year of Stalin's death and 1991 the year of the end of the USSR. Basically only memoirs which cover this period, or, in most cases, part of it, are discussed here. Other well-known and important memoirs from an earlier period, like those by Walter Krivitsky, are only mentioned in passing.

2 The memoirs of Soviet intelligence officers

This chapter discusses several general aspects of Soviet intelligence memoirs, more specific topics are treated in later chapters. The memoirs discussed here can be divided in two important categories: those written by defectors and those written in Russia, mainly after the end of the USSR in 1991, by intelligence officers who basically have always remained loyal to the Soviet Union. Defectors are intelligence officers who fled to the West and had their memoirs published there. For obvious reasons, these officers tend to be anti-communists and often justify their break with Soviet communism by emphasizing the negative sides of it. Mostly, they have no problems writing down what they knew and offer many interesting glimpses of the organization in which they worked and the system which it served. Non-defectors who stayed in the USSR usually write from a totally different perspective. Many of them display an outspoken anti-western slant in their writing and they generally tend to have a positive judgment on the KGB. They sometimes see the demise of the USSR as having been caused at least in part by the machinations of the West, in particular of its intelligence services. Several non-defectors have a very positive opinion on important KGB figures such as Yuri Andropov whom they often knew personally. Non-defectors generally were much higher in rank within the KGB and GRU than defectors; there are several former generals among them. These people know quite a lot about the organization in which they worked, but because of their loyalty towards the USSR they keep silent about many aspects of it. They tend to completely ignore or deny the distasteful aspects of the work of the KGB such as the abuse of psychiatry and persecution of dissidents or the penetration of all segments of Soviet society by a network of KGB informers. Still, in their memoirs they cannot avoid saying at least a few interesting things about their careers and experiences within the KGB.

It should be emphasized that these memoirs offer a very incomplete picture of the KGB. When put together they obviously do not make a proper history of the organization, in which much of what is said would be supported by documentary evidence. Soviet intelligence memoirs are almost by definition fragmentary and incomplete, as are many other memoirs generally, and many of the statements they contain cannot be confirmed by archives or other

evidence. This applies to these memoirs more than to memoirs of western politicians, for instance, where other material is often available.

Still, in many defectors' accounts aspects of the KGB and occasionally the GRU are discussed about which otherwise little is known. It is mainly defectors who write, for instance, about the very strict control and observation which was exercised by the KGB with respect to practically all activities of Soviet citizens and foreigners in the Soviet Union alike. Other interesting pieces of information to be found in memoirs relate to the prohibition which supposedly existed since the end of the 1940s to recruit foreign communists abroad. It must be said, however, that many things remain unclear about this point, as memoirs have different and contradictory things to say on this topic. Former intelligence officers in Russia after 1991 in their reticence tend to follow the present Russian government in the way it very selectively reports on the history of the KGB. Stalin's purges and the repression and murder by the then NKVD are treated in publications in present day Russia, but many other unsavory aspects of more recent KGB history are kept from the spotlights. Very little has yet been said, for instance, about the persecution of dissidents under communism after 1953. Few documents on this topic have been released from the KGB archives, while well-known intelligence triumphs in the West from the 1930s and 1940s, for example, have been described elaborately, often in joint projects with western publishers. This refusal to deal with certain aspects of the past showed clearly in the way the Russian 'special services' reacted to the publication in the West in autumn 1999 of *The Mitrokhin Archive*, which contained many new details, largely of a rather negative kind, about KGB practices in the past, mainly abroad but also in the Soviet Union. Initially there was silence from Moscow but when a few Russian intelligence officials reacted to Mitrokhin's publication they did so in the familiar 'Soviet' way, namely by discrediting him and not going into the factual details of what he has written.

3 The KGB and the CPSU

When Soviet officials in their public speeches would describe the relationship between the KGB and the CPSU, terms such as 'shield and sword of the party' were ritually and routinely used to characterize the intelligence and security service. This characterization, of course, implies a very clear notion of the KGB as an instrument of defense and attack in the hands of the CPSU and its leadership. The characterization is, in fact, rather apt if one takes into account what has become known, especially after 1991, about the inner workings of the Soviet system. Control by the CPSU of the KGB mainly took place at the top of both organizations. Defectors' accounts and memoirs by non-defectors generally tend to confirm this view, often though without offering many specifics of the way the relationship between the two worked in practice. Defectors were generally not close enough to the top of the KGB to provide many details about the relationship with the CPSU in practice and in the case of non-defectors, this tended to be one of the subjects on which they kept largely silent. The relationship between the two organizations was among the topics they usually would not discuss in great detail. Still, the little information they offered on the subject tended to confirm the view expressed in the ritual formulation mentioned above.

The KGB, in the period discussed here, functioned mainly as a political instrument in the hands of the leadership of the CPSU, especially its Politbureau. The possible exception to the rule was the failed coup of August 1991, in which KGB chairman Vladimir Kryuchkov played a leading role. In hindsight, the Soviet Union in that fateful month was already in its death throes and party control over the KGB had ceased to function properly. The subservience of the KGB to the party in the period after 1953 was realized in several ways which are also mentioned in KGB memoirs. Major personnel appointments and policy proposals by the KGB were submitted for approval to the party leadership, which in practice meant either to one of the departments of the Central Committee of the CPSU or directly to

the Politbureau and/or Secretariat. In Soviet parlance, the KGB leadership submitted its proposals to the 'Central Committee' which in practice meant any one of the party organs just mentioned or a combination of those. Another important mechanism to ensure party control was the placement of party officials in leading positions within the KGB, its long-time chairman Yuri Andropov being a prime example. Andropov, as is well known, had a significant diplomatic and party career behind him when he became chairman in 1967. On other levels as well, below the position of chairman, former party officials could be found. The fact that these people often joined the KGB in relatively high positions, which could only be reached by professional KGB officers after many years in the organization, often led to some irritation among other personnel. This is mentioned in several KGB memoirs and is not surprising. According to some defectors' accounts, during the Brezhnev period there were sometimes 'representatives of the Central Committee' stationed at Soviet embassies abroad who clearly had a position superior in stature to the residents of the KGB and GRU at the embassy. These representatives were apparently from the International Department of the Central Committee. Another phenomenon which confirms the primacy of the CPSU over the KGB is the fact that full time party officials could not be touched by KGB investigations, let alone be arrested, without explicit permission from the highest party authorities. This is also mentioned in several memoirs and other sources. Another example concerns the delivery of financial support to foreign communist parties who were sympathetic to the Soviet cause. It was not for the KGB to make decisions in these matters. As becomes clear from memoirs and other sources, the decisions were made by the party leadership after which the money was usually delivered abroad by officers of the First Chief Directorate (the intelligence service) of the KGB. One gets the impression from memoirs that the Politbureau definitely wanted to be kept informed and to be asked approval about matters of an important political nature which were within the authority of the KGB, even though occasionally a former intelligence officer complains in his memoirs that the party leadership was not sufficiently interested in the work of the First Chief Directorate.

The nature of the relationship between the KGB and the party leadership also becomes clear from several documents from Soviet archives which have been published after 1991, many of them in the Russian press. The content of these documents largely confirms the picture of the relationship as it is painted in both categories of memoirs. The subject matter of the documents varies considerably. Among the topics are: the treatment of important dissidents such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Alexander Sakharov, the destruction of KAL 007 and its aftermath in 1983, arms shipments to the PLO and other Third World guerrilla movements. In most of these documents a KGB official, in many cases the chairman, writes a letter to the party leadership in which a specific proposal concerning a particular matter is outlined. The official in question then asks for approval of the proposal by the Central Committee, i.e. by the Politbureau or another top party organ. Typically, even chairman Andropov, who was a member of the Politbureau as well during most of his time with the KGB, addressed such letters to the top leadership, that is, strictly speaking also to himself. It is clear, therefore, from memoirs and other sources that the relationship between the KGB and the top party leadership was very close. It is no coincidence that on the different administrative levels of the Soviet state, the KGB headquarters in an autonomous republic or oblast was located in the same building as those of the party.

4 The KGB and the GRU

This chapter deals with the relationship between the KGB and the military intelligence service of the Soviet Union, the GRU. Not much has been written about the GRU in Russia or abroad and very few GRU officers have written their memoirs. As opposed to the KGB, very little material from GRU archives has been released after 1991. References to the GRU are not

very common in KGB memoirs; the organization is barely mentioned in non-defector accounts at all. Consequently, the GRU remains a relatively obscure organization, whereas at least some of the gaps in the history of the KGB have been filled during the past decade. From the GRU side, therefore, not much has come into the open about the relationship with the KGB in the field or elsewhere and the information from KGB memoirs tends to be even more fragmentary than is usually the case. The existence of the Committee of Information (1947-1951) is briefly discussed in this chapter, even though it strictly speaking does not belong to the period covered here. The Committee of Information, KI with its Russian acronym, was unique in Soviet intelligence history because it combined the intelligence components of the GRU and the Ministry of State Security (MGB) in one organization. Several KGB officers mention the KI in their memoirs and make a few remarks about the reasons why this organization came into existence and why it ended after such a fairly short period of time.

The American author John Barron in one of his works on the KGB from the 1970s offers a picture of the GRU in one of the appendices according to which the military intelligence service has for all practical purposes ceased to exist as an independent service and is completely dominated by the KGB. Memoirs by KGB officers do not confirm this picture, however, reality being a bit more complicated than this. There is general agreement that the KGB, mainly through the Third Chief Directorate (military counterintelligence), was responsible for counterintelligence within the armed forces and therefore also within the GRU. This meant, for instance, that the KGB recruited informers from within the ranks of the GRU, just as it did in other Soviet military organizations. GRU officers who were unmasked as western agents, such as Oleg Penkovsky in the 1960s and Dmitri Polyakov in the 1980s, were arrested and investigated by the KGB. In Soviet embassies abroad the KGB was responsible for security within the 'Soviet colony', which included the GRU rezidentura. The KGB had several ways to wield considerable power at embassies abroad, one of them being that it could make decisions about cutting short a stay abroad of anyone, including GRU personnel. Indeed, for diplomats or GRU officers to be stationed abroad in the first place, permission had to be given by the KGB. KGB and GRU memoirs such as those by Penkovsky provide several examples of this. Because the KGB generally had more clout within the Soviet system than the GRU, it sometimes tended to throw its weight around a little and tried to get the upper hand, e.g. when both services wanted to recruit a particular person as a full time member. This situation caused considerable friction between the two organizations, but it doesn't mean total domination by the KGB over the GRU. Nearly all authors of memoirs and other sources namely, as far as available, agree that the GRU always had its own intelligence operations independently from the KGB, even though indications are, for instance, that in some cases agents were transferred from one organization to the other or vice versa. As an intelligence service the GRU had its own reporting channels to the party leadership, probably through the general staff of the armed forces. Interestingly, a well known KGB officer, Nikolay Leonov, comments favorably on the quality of GRU reporting to the political leadership.

5 The KGB in Eastern Europe

Non-defectors, with one or two exceptions, discuss the activities of the KGB in Eastern Europe only in very superficial terms, if at all. This is remarkable because quite a few of them held high positions within the organization and at least some non-defectors therefore, must have been quite well informed on the subject. This reticence probably has to do with the loyalty they still feel towards their former colleagues from Eastern Europe, who in part lost their jobs after 1989 and if they didn't, would presumably not appreciate real openness on the subject of their relationship with the KGB during the communist period. Non-defectors are certainly not inclined to discuss openly the identity of agents or other sources of information

the KGB had in Eastern Europe, this being of course one of the most 'sacred' secrets of the service. Some non-defectors are prepared to admit that the relationship between the KGB/MGB and the other bloc services in the early post-World War II period were not as they should have been in the sense that those other services were very much subservient to Moscow, but certainly after Stalin's death, in their view, relations were more or less on a basis of equality. Most defectors are rather reticent on the subject of Eastern Europe as well, possibly because most of them in their KGB careers did not have much to do with Eastern Europe. The one category of intelligence officers which often discusses freely the activities of the KGB in Eastern Europe are defectors from other communist services. They tend to discuss the relationship of the KGB with their own service rather openly and the image they present is often one of a relationship much less equal than non-defectors from the KGB generally suggest. Memoirs from East European intelligence officers have been used in this chapter.

It is well known from historical research done by western scholars and from different types of memoirs that Soviet state security played a very important part in the sovietization of Eastern Europe after the Second World War. Soviet personnel pulled the strings behind the scenes during several notorious show trials throughout the region around 1950 and at least until the mid-1950s Soviet state security officers played a leading role in the establishment of the other services of the Soviet bloc. They were well informed about the operations of the East European services both inside their respective countries and abroad and even led those operations. In most cases, very little is known about these Soviet state security officers, who played such an important part in the early stages of the establishment of communism in Eastern Europe. In a country like Poland until the end of the 1950s, quite a few high military and intelligence officers were Soviet officers in a Polish uniform who spoke better Russian than Polish. Several former Polish intelligence officers who defected to the West mention this in their memoirs. After the mid-1950s the role of these so-called Soviet 'advisers' seems to have lessened in importance. About the level and the kind of cooperation between the KGB and the other services of the bloc, however, relatively little is known, even though some new information has come out since the fall of communism. Very little has been said on this subject by non-defectors.

It has been stated repeatedly by non-defectors in their memoirs that the KGB did not recruit agents in Eastern Europe, that there was an official prohibition to do this from the end of the 1940s which was adhered to by the service until the fall of communism in the region. As far as is known, however, reality was much more complex than this. In order to get information in the broadest sense about political developments in the communist countries of Eastern Europe, the KGB often made use of 'confidential contacts', i.e. individuals who were not agents in the strict sense of the word, but in most cases were willing to share what they knew on the basis of ideological sympathy for the Soviet Union and its cause. The distinction between an agent and a confidential contact is an important one and several defectors, among them Vasili Mitrokhin, go into this in some detail in their publications. An agent is usually much more under the control of an intelligence service than a confidential contact and can, for instance, be asked to go and look for certain information. The agent's contacts with the service are usually kept very secret, while those with a confidential contact can be more or less in the open. Meetings with an agent are often held on a regular basis, according to a very strict schedule, and dead drops are often used. In the case of a confidential contact only very rarely documents are passed over, especially not secret ones. The type of information a confidential contact passes over, technically speaking, does not have to constitute a crime. It can be important information, but not necessarily a state secret.

An important non-defector who discusses working with confidential contacts is Vitali Pavlov, the head of the KGB representation in Poland in 1973-1984. In an interview with a Russian newspaper in 1996 he mentions another important distinction between a confidential

contact and a fully-fledged agent: the former doesn't have a personal file in the archive of the intelligence service and the latter does. It becomes clear from his memoirs that by working with confidential contacts and without formally recruiting agents, the KGB was very well informed about what was going on in the highest circles of the Polish communist party in this period and within Polish society as a whole. Indeed, in the interview mentioned above, Pavlov says it wasn't necessary to recruit Polish communists in high positions formally as agents, as most of them, being friendly towards the Soviet Union, communicated all they knew about Polish affairs to the KGB anyway. Pavlov offers in his memoirs also many examples of cooperation of the KGB and the Polish service against western targets in Poland. The KGB would, for example, provide technical assistance to the Poles when they tried to physically penetrate the premises of a western embassy or other buildings in that country. The KGB also worked together with their Polish colleagues, if anti-Soviet organizations such as NTS or the Ukrainian nationalist OUN attempted to launch operations against the Soviet Union from Polish territory. The Poles would also hand over information which they received from agents in the West, for instance, if they knew it was of importance to the KGB or to the Soviet Union. This applied especially to modern weapon technology. Pavlov's information is most likely incomplete; there is no mention in his memoirs, for instance, of professional conflicts or frictions with his Polish colleagues, which are very unlikely not to have occurred. Still, he offers valuable insights into the relationship of the KGB with the Polish service during the period he was stationed in Warsaw.

Several former high KGB officers, among them former chairman Vladimir Kryuchkov, say in their memoirs that the KGB did not have access to information about the identity of agents who worked for the other services of the communist bloc. However, this is exactly what seems to have been the case in the period up to the mid-1950s, KGB domination of the other services being so overwhelming then that it included access to this type of information. According to the Czechoslovak defector Ladislav Bittman, the KGB had access to this information even as late as the end of the 1960s. At that time, important intelligence information acquired by the Czechoslovak service, according to Bittman, was still routinely sent on to Moscow and the KGB kept detailed files on the intelligence received from Prague. It was not unusual for the KGB and the Czechoslovak service to cooperate in disinformation operations, for instance. Bittman gives a concrete example of this. Several Czechoslovak defectors mention the recruiting of agents by the KGB among the population of Czechoslovakia, especially within the political establishment, including the security service. In their view, this activity increased considerably in the period before the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact in August 1968. To what extent these allegations are true, is of course impossible to say, as the KGB archives are still hermetically closed, at least as far as this type of information is concerned, and will presumably remain so for the foreseeable future.

Non-defectors from the KGB and former officials of the East German Ministry of State Security (MfS) both keep largely silent about essential aspects of the relationship between the two organizations. The former chief of the East German intelligence service HVA, Markus Wolf, offers a good example of this. The amount of information he provides in his memoirs about the relationship of his service with the KGB is minimal. How important the intelligence provided by the MfS, in particular the HVA, to the KGB was for Moscow becomes clear from statements made by several former high KGB officers in their memoirs. Former chairman Kryuchkov, for instance, is of the opinion that 'whole branches of industry and science' in the USSR developed to a large extent thanks to the work of the 'German comrades' in the field of intelligence. The suggestion by Kryuchkov and others is that relations between the two services were generally so good that there were hardly ever any tensions or frictions between them. Recent research, partly based on material from Russian

archives, shows that this impression is not correct and that the East Germans in the beginning of the 1950s, for example, did not look positively on the fact that their Soviet colleagues recruited informers within the MfS. Again, in the second half of the 1980s high officials of East German state security such as Erich Mielke in their meetings with KGB colleagues could barely conceal their dissatisfaction about political developments in the USSR under Mikhail Gorbachev.

It is clear that at least in the GDR the KGB did more than just work with confidential contacts, as has become clear after 1989 when the texts of several cooperation agreements between the two services was found in the archives of the MfS. Those agreements explicitly gave the KGB the right to recruit East German citizens as agents, even if the MfS had to be notified of this. Nothing about such matters is to be found in Markus Wolf's memoirs, of course. Defectors are different in this respect and several of them, from the MfS and the KGB alike, offer interesting glimpses of a complex relationship between the two services which make clear the importance of the GDR and its state security service to the KGB. Significantly, the KGB had its largest rezidentura abroad in East Berlin, which attests to the importance attached by the Soviet service to the strategic position of the GDR and its contacts with East German state security. According to at least one defector's account, it was relatively easy for the KGB to recruit East German citizens as agents, often under a false flag, i.e. without the agent knowing that he was working for the KGB. East Germans could be recruited for defensive purposes, i.e. to unmask western agents in the GDR who had Soviet establishments as their target, or for offensive purposes, i.e. for intelligence operations against the West. According to some defectors, the GDR authorities also made important contributions to the work of the KGB in the field of logistics, for instance, by providing false documentation for KGB illegals, who could then from the GDR and via West Germany easily become active as intelligence officers in the West. According to some accounts, information about citizens of western countries who visited the GDR was routinely shared by the MfS with the KGB.

Vasili Mitrokhin in *The Mitrokhin Archive* offers important new details about the activities of the KGB in Eastern Europe. Among the most interesting ones are operations with illegals, so-called 'Progress Operations' which the KGB staged from the end of the 1960s onwards in certain East European countries, among them Czechoslovakia and Poland, mainly in order to get information on internal developments. Apparently the Kremlin and the KGB considered developments in Eastern Europe to have taken a turn for the worse and to deserve closer attention than had been the case hitherto. Illegal KGB officers, often posing as western tourists or journalists, succeeded in penetrating dissident movements, the Polish church and other hotbeds of discontent. None of the KGB non-defectors in present day Russia mentions these operations, which is a convincing illustration of the incompleteness of their accounts.

6 Conclusion

Defectors' accounts can be very valuable as they often discuss topics which are barely mentioned by non-defectors in their memoirs. One of those topics, apart from the ones mentioned above, is for instance the work of illegals. This has traditionally always been an important activity of Soviet intelligence on which much time and energy was spent. It was, however, largely shrouded in secrecy. Several defectors discuss this type of intelligence tradecraft in some detail and offer interesting new insights, whereas non-defectors like Vadim Kirpichenko mostly keep completely silent, even if they worked in the Illegals Department of the First Chief Directorate for many years during their careers. What then is the value of the accounts of non-defectors if the information they could theoretically offer is often so conspicuously absent? First, they offer valuable information about the world view and way of thinking of their authors. It is often a rather paranoid world view, typical for Soviet officials, which these authors obviously were for most of their life. With this world view often comes

the idea that western intelligence services and their 'agents of influence' played an important part in the downfall of the Soviet system and that nobody in the Soviet Union was ever persecuted for expressing his opinions. Non-defectors often feel much sympathy for the officials who staged the failed coup against then president Gorbachev in August 1991. Second, non-defectors cannot avoid altogether coming up with interesting themes every now and then amid the many pages they often write. One example is Yevg. Grig, who is the only author among defectors and non-defectors alike who discusses the subject of 'officers of the active reserve'. Another example is to be found in the otherwise fairly uninformative memoirs of Vladimir Kryuchkov, when he discusses the alleged betrayal by the Politbureau member Alexander Yakovlev whom he accuses of being a CIA agent. The proof for this accusation may be largely absent which makes it impossible to refute, but the way Kryuchkov tries to take the matter up with the then party leader Gorbachev says rather a lot about the workings of the Soviet system and the position of the KGB within it. Yuri Drozdov is also a typical example of those non-defectors who are not very open about their career within the KGB, but he has interesting things to say about the general failure of KGB intelligence operations against China, which is confirmed by several other accounts. A subject on which most KGB non-defectors keep silent is the relationship with the military intelligence service GRU, even though those formerly in high positions such as Kryuchkov and Kirpichenko must have been well-informed on this point. As has been mentioned above, non-defectors also refrain from going into the activities of the KGB in Eastern Europe, with Vitali Pavlov being among the few exceptions.

Memoirs of Soviet intelligence officers, defectors and non-defectors alike, have many shortcomings, the main one probably being that many of the information therein cannot be properly verified or if at all, with great difficulty. This is undoubtedly one of the main reasons why during the Cold War defectors' accounts, of which there were published quite a few, were rarely used in the scholarly literature on the KGB and the Soviet system. As long as the Russian authorities, however, release material from the KGB archives only selectively, there is in many cases little alternative to intelligence memoirs, even if they have to be handled with great care and circumspection.