

## **Lubyanka, 3rd Floor**

**Evidence from Vladimir Semichastny,**

**Head of the KGB 1961-1967, as told to Tomas Sniegon**

Early Years

### **The Sixties Begin**

My years in Central Asia made me look at the policies of Moscow's central authorities from the outside, from a different angle.

As early as in Baku I noted the first signs of discontent with some of the methods used by Khrushchev's government. Lower level functionaries disliked Khrushchev's long and frequent speeches, in the course of which he would improvise in his own special way. More than once it was left to these functionaries to spend some difficult moments working out how to put these high-flown ideas of their First Secretary into practice. Hardly had one order landed on them from Moscow than another touched down. Lower-level organisations had little chance even to discuss new issues, let alone analyse them and adapt them to the given conditions.

The word "reform" kept cropping up in management of the economy during this time. "Reforms" were called for, "reforms" were prepared, "reforms" were carried out, "reforms" were criticised.

Khrushchev's priority was agriculture, and the need for agricultural reforms was never far away the whole time. Under Stalin the villages were literally robbed; they were wrung dry of everything conceivable, without anything in the way of resources being returned to them. The disastrous situation in agriculture had a negative effect on the whole economy.

At the turn of the 1950s and 1960s Khrushchev did achieve some positive results for the development of agriculture. He changed the system of payment, raised investment, altered the approach to planning, and improved the personnel situation. There were naturally some failures as well. The campaign to develop the cultivation of maize as cattle food was not a success because because under pressure from the centre, agricultural workers were forced to provide the best land for that maize, and consequently other crops were undernourished.

The situation in industry was not so very different. In 1957 we astounded the world by launching the first satellite, the Sputnik, into space, and had similar surprises in preparation in the shape of Yuri Gagarin's flight. However, carrying scientific research over into practice

caused no small difficulties in the management of the economy. Khrushchev really did try to weaken the power of the centre and to strengthen the authority of local organs and enterprises. However, such a lot of supplementary instructions had subsequently to be accepted that every newly-born initiative was soon stifled by bureaucracy.

New political experiments intended to reduce central control and the bureaucratic method of managing the economy were not achieved. The Supreme Soviet worked in a very formal way without discussion: if some discussion did take place, all the participants gave a hearing to whatever was necessary, but meanwhile the plan, independent of any objections, had been approved or negotiated in advance and without critical comments.

The Cold War and the problems of everyday life discouraged us from any complex or systematic considerations. It is understandable that now, after the passage of time, I look at many things quite differently. At that time I kept strictly to the Party line. It was not just a question of how to set aside old obstacles, but also how to provide substitutes for them without at the same time destroying the concept of how the state should function, and without limiting the power of the Party.

The XXII Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union took place in Moscow in the second half of October 1961. Shortly before it opened I underwent an appendix operation, but I was myself again by the time of the Congress.

One of the main events, thanks to which this Congress entered history, was the burial of Stalin's body.

None knew about it beforehand. Up to that time Stalin had been lying at Lenin's side in the mausoleum on Red Square in Moscow. The burial had been discussed only by an inner group of the Soviet leadership, and was approved by the delegates to the Congress.

It was not at all obvious why Khrushchev had reopened such a sensitive scar and made sure it got publicity in the world press and on the internal political scene. Wouldn't it have been better to leave everything as it was and simply forget about Stalin?

More and more people were returning from the camps where they had been sent during Stalin's times. New facts increasingly pointed to Stalin's circle, especially to members of the anti-Party groups, to Voroshilov, who was ever more active as a highly placed functionary. The question of how Stalin's body could remain alongside the remains of the leader of the Revolution, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, became an increasingly important issue in political circles.

The reactions of the public were somewhat conflicting. The more dirty linen saw the light of day, the more a part of the nation began to doubt whether, in the light of Stalin's war efforts, further revelations were necessary or appropriate. Khrushchev himself added to such

doubts; he spoke of things about which in my opinion it would have been better to keep quiet. Part of his criticism was directed at very intimate details of Stalin's life, whilst some other uncompromising rebukes again cast further doubt on the level of Stalin's surroundings and showed not only the leader himself in a bad light but others as well.

Suddenly nothing good remained of Stalin at all, and people began to feel sorry for him.

Stalin's remains were buried at night, in the light of a few floodlights and without ostentation. Everything was carefully planned in advance.

Red Square was closed to visitors. In no time at all everything was rearranged as though Stalin had never lain in the mausoleum: the sign "Lenin-Stalin" above the entrance to the mausoleum was removed and only Lenin's name remained. Inside, in the middle of the space through which a dividing line had previously run between the two coffins, there lay only one coffin.

There was no public reaction in the morning, just an increase in the numbers of the curious who hurried to the Square to take a look. In spite of this, one couldn't say that Stalin's burial passed by the nation without notice.

A lot of letters came in saying that Stalin had achieved wartime victories, whereas Lenin had never fought in battle. The religious temperament of the Russian people recorded the burial as a double blasphemy. However many debates raged in the market place, at work or at home, they never made their way back to official discussion.

Stalin lay by the wall with many others. At first the grave was indicated just by a slab; the bust was not added until later. For a long time no one wanted to take the responsibility for issuing a hint that the long-prepared bust should be added to the grave.

However, for many years flowers decorated Stalin's last resting place. Fresh flowers daily.

Shelepin was voted the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party at the XXII Congress. This was a higher post than he had previously held at the head of the KGB. As a conscientious person concentrating on order and discipline he was entrusted with the leadership of the Party Committee and state controls, and was moreover named deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers.

After the end of the Congress I went off to the Barvichy sanatorium to recuperate after my operation. I was looking forward to having a breathing space at last. In vain. Owing to completely unforeseen events my whole stay was shortened to just one day.

The night after my arrival Shelepin telephoned me: "Get yourself ready and be in Moscow early tomorrow with everything you have with you."

Disappointed, I pointed out that I had only just unpacked.

"Then get packed again, fast," he advised me.

That was all he said. He evaded all my questions as to what it meant, or answered with a joke. He said I would find out everything in the morning, at Comrade Kozlov's in Moscow. Frol Romanovich Kozlov was Number Two in the Party after Khrushchev.

Surprised and, to tell the truth, a little frightened, the next morning I knocked on the door of Kozlov's office in Moscow. I'd spent the rest of the preceding night wondering what it was all about; my curiosity was enormous. It soon turned out to be nothing unpleasant. Kozlov spoke with me in a very friendly way. We didn't know each other very well and I still hadn't forgotten our inconsequential conversation before I was recalled to Azerbaijan. He overlooked nothing. He immediately began to use the familiar form of "you" and came straight to the point.

"As you know, Shelepin has moved to the Central Committee. The Presidium of the Central Committee recommends that you be appointed to the Head of the KGB in his place."

I gasped.

"No objections," he added, preventing my attempts to protest. "Essentially, everything is already decided. At 4 o'clock this afternoon you have to visit Nikita Sergeevich."

With that he left me.

I had been prepared for anything but this. The KGB did not correspond to anything in my preceding political life.

Immediately I hurried to Shelepin. He was busy and we did not have the chance to say very much. We drank tea, I joked about his conspiracy and pointed out that the next step in my life was also in his footsteps.

There was no time to weigh up any details. "Don't be afraid of anything," he told me. "I felt just the same as you did. It's not easy work, but there is nothing terrifying about it. It's just a political function."

At 4 o'clock I stood before Khrushchev in his Kremlin study. I was thirty-seven years old; he was thirty years older. He shook my hand and said: "I told you that you had to work in a Party Committee in a region or Republic and not until then take on any important state function."

"Such a grand position is dangerous for me," I explained, "I can't imagine what I will do there."

"It's where Shelepin began, you're just following him."

"But I'm not a professional, not a specialist," I objected again.

"We thought of that too," he replied. "There are more than enough professionals. We've burned our fingers with them more than once. We need politicians there. People who will carry out the Party line. Honest, conscientious people the Party can rely on, be sure they won't lead it into complicated labyrinths as happened before. I'm not going to give you any instruction or concrete advice; Shelepin knows that better than I do and will tell you everything himself. The question is solved. I advise you to agree. The Presidium of the Central Committee supported your appointment unanimously."

At home my wife was waiting in curiosity, together with my brother and sister who also lived in Moscow.

"What's the news?" they demanded impatiently as soon as I opened the door, my sister most of all.

"I've been appointed Head of the KGB."

There was a ghastly silence.

"You're joking?!" my sister exclaimed in disbelief.

"No," I assured her, "I'm perfectly serious."

The others just sat without knowing what to say.

My sister shook her head and repeated in a faint voice: "Beria's post... is that possible? In Beria's post? Beria's exact position? How is it possible?"

If I'd known at that time, I'd gladly have told her.

## II. My Years in the KGB

A cool head,  
A burning heart,  
and utterly clean hands.

Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky  
Founder of the VChK (predecessor of the KGB)

### **Finger Prints on the Hot Seat**

The thought that my predecessors included not only Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria, but also Genrikh Grigoryevich Yagoda, Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov and suchlike made it difficult for me to sleep at first.

I kept thinking about everything they'd done. I felt more and more conscious that by entering the office where they once held sway I was in the eyes of the general public aligning myself with the guilty works which each in his own time had committed in the name of the KGB.

Some of their deeds were already revealed. I was not responsible for their guilt; after Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's personality cult the Party had taken a completely different course. But it did weigh on me that in my new work I did not understand enough yet to make me sure of avoiding a repetition of anything similar. I swore to myself I would never let myself commit any of the practices of Stalinist times.

If I can say that I looked for guidance in the work of any of my predecessors - understandably apart from Shelepin - then it was the two founders of the Soviet security organs: Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky and Vyacheslav Rudolfovich Menzhinsky. Dzerzhinsky, whose statute stands right in front of the window of my study on the vast square that bears his name, belonged to the important leaders of the Great October Socialist Revolution. From 1917 he led the Vsherusky Extraordinary Committee for the fight against counter-revolution and sabotage. The short form of its full name "ChK" is still used today to describe employees of the state security organs as "Chekists".

In December 1922 under Dzerzhinsky's leadership the Cheka turned into the GPU, the State Political Directorate, and later still into the United State Political Directorate, the OGPU. Menzhinsky took over the leadership of the OGPU in 1926 and directed it until 1934, when it changed into the NKVD, the People's Commissariat of the Interior.

Even in Dzerzhinsky's work many inadequacies can be found; violence took place under him as well. But it is very difficult to judge what was repression in his time. Civil war was raging all round, and western countries had decided to intervene. It was vitally necessary to renew an independent state and the essential organs for ensuring its inseparable functions.

It was Dzerzhinsky's task as a Party member to set up the Soviet secret services. As head of the Cheka he showed that he had the ability to solve inadequacies across the whole of society.

For example, Dzerzhinsky and his Chekists contributed in a positive way to getting rid of child deprivation. It's among my earliest memories what the problems were in this country with child deprivation. There were numerous children whose parents had died during the First World War or during foreign invasions. They were left without relations and without ties to any particular place. They wandered across the Soviet Union, and who knows what romantic ideas set them on their travels. But they followed them, and led an empty life - without education and without any sense of society's rules.

They fed themselves as they could. Bands of children attacked people, plundered, robbed and killed. Thousands of children slept on railway stations, hung around town centres and watched out for victims.

Dzerzhinsky and his colleagues decided to resolve this painful question once and for all. On the suggestion of the well-known educator Anton Semyonovich Makarenko they began to look for these deprived children and gathered them together. They devised a system of working and educational colonies for children and let the children govern themselves. The work filled the emptiness in their childish minds. The level of criminality fell. One of the colonies at Kharkov began to turn out the FED camera, another devoted itself to shoe production.

The system of self-government through which the ten to fourteen year-olds looked after themselves is described in Makarenko's Poem of a Pedagogue. One of the first Soviet sound films, Journey to Life, was made on the same theme.

In contrast with this, the most salutary case in the history of the Soviet secret services was that of Lavrenti Beria. He led the organisation which preceded the KGB from 1938 to

1942 and again between March and June 1953. It was no accident my sister referred to him; when I entered the KGB the things he'd done were still in living memory.

Beria's fall from power in 1953 and his subsequent execution was carried out with such haste by his opponents that it did not allow a calm and sober judgement of the epoch linked with Beria's name. They even described the former head of Soviet security as an imperialist spy - without any of them providing concrete and convincing proof. It was this very haste which in the course of today's renewed judgement opened up space for speculations which could in principle only assist Beria. After the fall of the Soviet Union there were attempts to describe Beria as a progressive politician and reformer, if not even a philanthropist.

Certainly, there are documents existing with Beria's signature which are perfectly proper. These concern decision-making directed towards the structure of the security organs, concerning secure management and taking material care, political steps relating to the educational system. Not everything the chairman signed came out of his head alone. Foundations for conclusions of a specialist nature were created by an apparatus of educated people - lawyers, technologists, professors.

And they were not the same lawyers as those who shared in the origin of the legendary "troyka", the three people having in their hand all judicial power during individual trials and simultaneously carrying out the roles of accuser, defence, judges and witnesses; the trojka which had on its conscience the falsification of court investigations, interrogations and evidence.

Not even the fact that there were circumstances here and there which "helped", even negatively, does anything to cleanse Beria of his crimes.

We can attribute some positive services to Lavrenti Beria as far as the development of the nuclear and fuel sources of energy of the Soviet Union are concerned. He is said to have been a good organiser. However, few of those making similar reassessments thought over what price had to be paid. The crude orders and brutal administrative system of labour camps for mining important minerals - such working methods were also used by him in the forestry industry and other areas.

I will come to the atomic industry and Soviet nuclear research later; in the years when Beria, as a member of the inner ruling circle of this field, was in charge, the private interests of Joseph Stalin played no small part. Beria's concerns were chiefly discipline, the fulfilment of the plans, and maintaining predetermined deadlines.



His steps were consciously calculated conjunctural moves. His priority was to increase his personal influence and achieve ever greater power.

At the time when Beria was responsible for security, he raged for example over the struggle of the Ukraine against nationalists. The Benderovists stalked the western part of the republic, killing those who had helped to build the the power of the Soviets hundreds at a time.

After Stalin's death Beria suddenly criticised the Ukrainian Party authorities in his letters for having too harsh an attitude. He looked in a similar "condescending" and "liberal" way on the struggle with nationalism in Belorus and the Baltic countries: apparently the local government suppressed national rights and behaved in too cruel a way. He also wrote about the too great rustification of the native inhabitant, about neglect and insensitivity towards the original culture and language.

Does this mean he was a democrat? Did he perhaps operate by this, that the Soviet Union renounced control over the situation in the German Democratic Republic, to the peacemakers. Or to the internationalists? Under what circumstances was he overpainting and sprucing up his own image? He was understandably trying to indicate that he himself was innocent. When for no reason at all he swung round round quickly, a new wind was already blowing in Moscow. And what once everyone found out how Beria behaved towards the Germans from Povolzhe, to the nations of the northern Caucasus, to the Chechens, the Ingushes, the Turks or the Kalmyks? When under his oversight they expelled the Crimean Tartars, they did not take into consideration even the regional committes of the Communist Party, even their secretaries, even the war heroes of the Soviet Union, if they were members of one of the above-mentioned nations. I am rock-sure that Beria was a ruthless careerist devoid of character. At the same time he wasn't so stupid he didn't realise that he would some time be called to account. However, what would have followed if the "liberal" Beria had gained ultimate power is not hard to imagine.

After Beria's execution his wife reverted to her family name of Gegechkori, as did their son. He devoted himself to radio electronics and was a doctor of science, director of an institute and a colonel. When they shot his father he and his mother had to move to Sverdlovsk.

For a long time the shade of Lavrenti Beria accompanied my thoughts at work. One day in the late 1960s when Leonid Brezhnev was already First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, they called me into the visitors' room at the secretariat of the head of the KGB. Apparently the young Beria, Gegechkori, was sitting in the antechamber, asking for an audience. He said it was a personal matter.

I agreed to see him. Children are not responsible for the sins of their father, and he was moreover a talented and capable scientist.

He complained about the difficult circumstances he was living in in Sverdlovsk and their negative effect on his mother's health.

They had stripped him of his titles of doctor and candidate of science and of the rank of colonel, making him a regular scientist and ordinary citizen. He didn't know where and to whom else to turn. "Once they know whose son I am they won't take me anywhere without your intervention," he complained.

He spoke openly, as one who had no more to lose. Everything he said I had checked. He told me he had completed and defended his candidate work himself, that they had helped him with his doctor's defence. They made him a colonel, the institute he headed had been created on his father's initiative.

"As far as my father is concerned," he continued, "I lived with my mother in a cottage outside the city and we had no idea about many things."

He wanted to be registered in another city so that he could carry on the same work as before, and where his mother would get decent health care. Similar institutes existed in Charkov and Kiev.

I told Brezhnev about the meeting and obtained his opinion; it seemed to me possible for him to be moved. Brezhnev agreed. Very soon Beria's wife and son moved to Kiev where they were given a new apartment.

When I decided to see Sergei Lavrentevich Beria-Gegechkori for the first time, I thought to myself as well that he wanted to tell me something about his father. However, it appeared his difficulties didn't end with the solving of one problem.

During a conversation in the Lubyanka Sergei complained about the prejudice in behaviour around towards his own family. Relations between him and his wife were greatly complicated by this, and even his daughter, after investigations into her family, was even not accepted into the Komsomol.

I began to be interested in the case; my professional interest changed into purely human understanding. It surprised me not a little - as a former Komsomol functionary I knew very well that such whims were not usual. Even in my times we accepted the children of noblemen and landowners, just like the sons and daughters of oppressed kulaks. Origin did not play a deciding role - all the young people had been born in the age of Soviet power. On the contrary, we felt a certain pride in accepting the children of former enemy circles into the organisation for Communist youth.

So I picked up the telephone and called the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the VLKSM, Sergei Pavlov. I didn't go straight to the point, but took a roundabout route. I asked how it was that in Sverdlovsk they had refused to accept into the Komsomol the great-granddaughter of the outstanding Soviet Communist writer Maxim Gorky. He didn't understand at all and was a little frightened.

"What's the matter?" he asked nervously.

I explained to him that as far as I knew, the Sverdlovsk Komsomol organisation had refused a request to accept the daughter of Beria's son, the granddaughter of Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria himself. Since Sergei was married to Gorky's granddaughter, this made his daughter the great-granddaughter of the writer. The wedding did not take place until after Gorky's death, so he himself had no idea what family his daughter was marrying into, not the slightest. Nevertheless, that was what had happened.

Sergei Pavlov only laughed and put the matter right.

I thought that by now my contact with Beria's family had come to an end. It hadn't. Sergei Lavrentevich was roused by his successful interventions.

He got in touch with me again after I had left the KGB and moved to Kiev. He told me he had separated from his first wife. His two daughters lived with their mother; his third child, a son, had stayed with him in Kiev.

This time it was over problems with his apartment. Everything I had arranged whilst I was in the KGB was still in order, but Sergei was in a second unhappy marriage, with his second wife asking for a divorce and division of the property.

"You should have thought of that before you got married," I said, but I didn't refuse to help him. He had a particular way of acting, very urgent and unhappy. As though he was about to burst into tears at any moment.

Again I used my contacts and influence and in the end the apartment was not divided. I was glad that I had at least in a small way contributed to the fact that Beria's family had no cause to turn on the Soviet powers. Especially since the help did not involve breaking the law and apart from a few telephone calls caused me no great trouble.

However, even that was not the end of it. After a silence there was another telephone call and another request to be received. Even then I didn't refuse. There were more difficulties with Sergei's son. He had been accepted at university but under present conditions had opted for Georgia rather than Kyjev. His family roots were in Georgia and it was easier for him to be accepted at university.

Sergei the father described how his son had surrounded himself with strange people. They led him into bad ways and during careless advancement they might even use the names of his son's forbears for anti-soviet activities. The solution was to move his son back to Kiev.

A step like this needed the agreement of quite a few different people, and in the given time it was not easy to obtain their agreement. However, even that I managed. And three years later I helped Sergei again to transfer from one Kiev institute to another, because he asked me that as well. But that time I had no reason to be displeased.

My occasional contacts with him were spread over about ten years. Sergei Lavrenti is still alive, and when today I go through the texts he has written and published I feel really bewildered. I don't feel they are by one and the same person. I can't understand why today all of a sudden he is again proud to use his father's name, although I suspect he does it purely for reasons of publicity.

He enjoyed the freedom to say and write anything he liked without such evidence being underpinned by credible facts and by a certain moral responsibility. Today he even justifies his father in every way possible and repaints his image in false colours. He doesn't hesitate to present deceptive evidence about the fact that they allegedly executed Beria on the spot and only ran through the court case with a substitute. I think though he knows very well what falsehoods and lies he is quite consciously spreading.

I last saw Sergei in the second half of the 1970s. He's not a stupid person. But it's a pity that whilst he's expressing his bitterness over an occasionally wronged past he doesn't remember the bitterness of those on whom his father brought real suffering which can never be wiped out. And there are more than a few such cases.

I would like to mention two more salutary examples from the period of repression: Genrikh Grigoryevich Yagoda and Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov.

Yagoda was head of the KGB - at that time still the NKVD, the National Commissariat for the Interior - from 1934 to 1936, Yezhov straight after him to 1938. Without their names any mention of the "triangle of horror" heading the security structures would not be complete.

In comparison with Yagoda and Yezhov, Beria was more experienced, more powerful. He was schooled by Caucasus region and was thus closer to Stalin the Georgian - at the very least that was the impression he created. Yagoda was a timid and primitive person; I think he was named by Stalin unexpectedly and more or less by chance. For me the choice of Yezhov is still less comprehensible. He was in the Central Committee of the Party, but never distinguished himself in any way. Before he took over the highest post in the NKVD he never held any leading function. And suddenly Stalin chose him on the grounds that he caught the

people in his spikes, that it was "in Yezhov's (Hedgehog's) gloved hands". Yezhov showed that he knew how to deal with the "enemy of the people" in accordance with the leader's wishes.

It is not true that the KGB was the organ of horror all through the existence of the Soviet state. The period of real terror lasted with intervals from the mid-1930s to the beginning of the 1950s. From Yagoda to Beria. What we learnt from this period can serve as a salutary warning to future generations.

Some of the heads of the KGB held their function for several years. Viktor Semjonovich Abakumov in the five years from 1946 to 1951. Ivan Alexandrovich Serov from 1954-1958. Sergei Nikiforovich Kruglov, who stepped in directly after Beria, last for two years. Alexandr Shelepin was head of the KGB from 1958-1961. Each of them was different and each one wrote himself into the history of the organisation in his own way.

Sergei Ivanovich Ogolcov had oversight of the secret services only for a few months: from August to December 1951. However, in such a short time it was possible to take only a fleeting look at the immeasurably broad extent of the work of the security elements.

If a new head of the KGB wanted to shape something, to change conditions, he needed a reasonable amount of time. It was the same whether the changes were for good or ill. Unconsidered manoeuvres threatened internal stability as well as the security of our agents at home and abroad.

The hand of the new leadership showed itself first of all in domestic counter-espionage. This area relied more than the others on the political leadership of the Communist Party. The new chief also knew much more about domestic events than he did about international relationships.

Foreign espionage obviously changed the least in the different epochs of Soviet history. The techniques of espionage are approximately the same the world over: to find contacts, to get as close as possible to the sources, to enlist the best agents possible, to reward them according to need, to try everything again and again with ever greater precision and courage. Whatever the circumstances, every secret service has an interest in every piece of important information inadequately guarded by its adversary.

## **The Internal Structure of the KGB**

From the formal point of view the Committee for State Security was subordinate to the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union and its head stood officially at the same level as the other ministers. Nevertheless, my immediate and, in effect, only chief was the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. From 1961-64 this was Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, afterwards Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev.

It was the same at the lower levels. The highest competent Party functionary of the Republic, region, district or place was superior to the leading employee of the corresponding organ of the KGB.

In the Soviet system the Communist Party had the final word, and the personality of the First (later, General) Secretary of the Party stood at the summit of the pyramid of power. In the Soviet Union the Party was really the state structure and concerned itself with everything. Everything we did by means of political espionage and analysis of the situation in the country was in the Party's interest. It didn't matter too much in the course of our work; to have only one chief was usually all to the good.

On occasions when I did not stick to the hierarchy of superiority - which happened only very, very rarely - Nikita Khrushchev read me a lesson. Not long after I entered the KGB it chanced that I passed on some important information to the Party number two, Kirichenko, before giving it to Khrushchev himself. Nikita Sergeevich got to know and during a meeting he made sure I was seriously rebuked: "So now you go behind my back?" he raged. "Now, when all the sparrows in the roof are talking about it?" It appeared that over lunch Kirichenko had bragged, with some other information, about this important secret.

"Bear in mind that based on the division of functions in the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the KGB is subordinate to me. And I decide who shall know what. Every cricket has its own territory," Khrushchev reminded me emphatically.

The secret services functioned just like a military organisation, and that included the fact that the more complicated the structure of its relationship, the lower its practical effectiveness, the more unlikely it was things could be kept secret, and the more difficult to carry out its tasks rapidly. An organisation with such a mission simply couldn't allow consultation about secret actions to take place openly, publicising whether orders from above should be carried out or not. Moreover, at the moment the intended effect did not take place and was exposed, or even caused possible complications in international relations, everyone

involved in the ramified decision-making process would be asked whether they did not bear responsibility for improper procedures as well.

It will be impossible for historians to determine in detail which of the deeds of the KGB were carried out on the suggestion of the First Secretary and which were the work of the chief in the Lubyanka. The orders which instigated actions were only verbal for the most part and it was not always clear whether the ideas were really as they were later carried out. Generally however from the time of the Great October Revolution the head of security was chosen by the First Secretary and absolute trust was invested in him. As soon as he proved a disappointment he was replaced.

The Central Committee of the Party and its inner leadership - the Politburo and the First Secretary himself - were involved especially in the creation of the complex plans and tasks for the work of the KGB, to ensure its place in Soviet society and in solving questions of personnel.

The Politburo confirmed basic instructions and directions for our work, which was carried out in harmony with the constitution of the Soviet Union and the conclusions of the Communist Party Congresses. The technique and technology realising the tasks - apart from other illegal methods - were already the concern of the apparatus of the KGB.

Decision-making about daily operative questions was the responsibility of myself, my deputies, and in a number of cases the heads of individual directorates. I referred to Khrushchev only the really key issues, whose impact on the policies of the country could have been tremendous. If the situation required immediate action, there was no time for immediate consultation. Nor was it appropriate to hide behind someone else. Procrastination could lead to the loss of information or even of its source. From this point of view I was aware of my responsibility the whole time.

I rarely prepared information for the leadership of the country personally. It was worked out first by the relevant department and directorate. If necessary the secretariat or I myself would refine the prepared text. I had to be fully conversant with the content of all communications. The supreme representatives - especially Nikita Khrushchev - could ask me any number of supplementary questions.

It is understandable that I was not immune from making mistakes in the course of independent decision-making. For example, one major mistake was the leadership's approach in connection with the arrest of an American, Professor Barghoorn, to which I gave my consent.

In the second half of 1963 one of our intelligence officers was held in the United States. He was set up; he was caught during a meeting with an agent, and had material planted on him to be used as evidence against him. We had to put our heads together how to get him out of the hands of the Americans.

Where two mutual espionage systems existed the old Caucasian methods still held: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. So we decided to make a stand based on the same methods. One provocation deserved another.

We looked around for a suitable target who could be detained. The idea was that the next step should be mutual forgiveness for the transgressions and the release of those held. However, the whole action was precipitate. Its unfolding turned out to be inadequate and carried out too clumsily.

It turned out that President John F. Kennedy himself had a personal interest in the case. It all ended in diplomatic complications.

Khrushchev, who was not in fact in Moscow at that time, was close to fury on his return. I wasn't punished, but our efforts brought us nothing but embarrassment.

It is essential to have a clear and uncomplicated structure not only in carrying out reconnaissance missions, but in their organisation as a whole. On the other hand however, a vertical structure like this makes things transparent to the enemy. We tried to eliminate this and similar dangers by as far as possible isolating individual directorates and departments from each other. Look after your own business and don't poke your nose where it doesn't belong. Everyone should know only his own part of the work. We cut out every non-essential consultation and meeting. Who would benefit from such a meeting? Generally speaking, one loses time. Where it's a matter of concrete information, not everyone ought to be in the know. Every bit of superfluous information can be betrayed. Unnecessary information will always find a way out. That's how it was in the Kirichenko case mentioned above.

I was very impressed by the security system practised by the British. I often advised the KGB to learn from the British example. Every member of the British secret service had his or her own service number. This allowed working relationships to exist without personal data being released. For example, if an agent went to the accounts office to hand in his accounts for a working visit, all he had to do was stick his hand through the hatch without showing his face. Similarly, he himself never knew who was handling his documents.

Mentions of events at which the head of the KGB was present often appeared in the Party media, without it being at all necessary. The names of the heads of the British secret



services were never unnecessarily revealed in the press. They understood better than us that popularising the work of these people was never an advantage.

A general ordinance prevailed throughout the KGB, that everyone else had to keep to a minimum their meetings with intelligence - especially in the time before it was moved from the Lubyanka. The intelligence officers themselves were not allowed to talk of their work. In common sanatoria and holiday homes no one had the right to pride himself on his membership of his unit. He was a Chekist and no more questions were asked. However, it was understandably difficult to isolate all those who worked in the same building.

There were only numbers on the doors of individual offices in the Lubyanka. Even for working relationships a department was given numbers or letters of the alphabet. Some of the inner circle knew, for example, what department D dealt with. There were not even any names on my doors or the offices of my deputies.

Even within individual directorates, colleagues maintained a distance between themselves. For example, we thought it was superfluous for counter-intelligence agents to know about the plans and tasks of counter-intelligence agents in Central Asia or the Ukraine, and vice versa.

Restriction and confidentiality in all the work of the KGB did not exist only at the upper levels.

The KGB was divided into the main directorates, directorates and departments according to the content of the work. Espionage, counter-espionage, military counter-espionage, border police, internal observation, interrogation, operative technology, enciphering and deciphering, government security, management, personnel. Then there were some independent departments that didn't belong to any of the above-mentioned formations. These included the secretariat, the management section, the department for government relations, the KGB inspectorate, and also the department for relations with the secret services of the other socialist countries. Other departments and services existed within the individual chief directorates and directorates.

Under Shelepin and later under my career with the KGB there were always three or four deputy heads. Each of them was in charge of several directorates and departments. At the beginning the First Deputy was Pyotr Ivanovich Ivashutin. Later, when Ivashutin moved to the office of head of the general staff of the Soviet Army and chief of the military espionage GRU, his place in the KGB was taken by Nikolai Stepanovich Zacharov.

It was not until later that I asked for permission for a fourth deputy. The Central Committee of the Party granted my wishes and I raised to that new function the head of

counter-espionage at that time, Sergei Grigoryevich Bannikov. Just for comparison - Andropov had more than ten deputies. I wouldn't know how to handle such a situation. I don't know how it is possible to act quickly and effectively in such conditions without someone meddling in the competence of someone else. However, I think that Brezhnev reliably limited and controlled Andropov's steps by a similar method. But more of that later.

Much has already been written and discussed in the international press and more recently in the Russian press about the KGB's unlimited possibilities. Unending supplies of money. Technology beyond the most inventive imagination, capable of listening to every telephone in the Soviet Union. The scribblers went so far as to affirm that the KGB had ways of controlling people's thoughts. And who knows what else.

However, the real KGB was not the organisation of the same name known from the famous spy novels of the Cold War. In those fear often had big eyes, and ignorance of the reality had to be substituted by invention which would send a chill down the spine of the reader and attract them at the same time.

I can't say exactly what per cent of the Soviet budget was annually spent on KGB activities. I don't even know how much it was in absolute numbers. I have never believed in statistics and still don't believe in them today - if they were really exact the work of many organs from the tax office to the secret services would be essentially more simple. At that time the rouble had a completely different value from today; after the passage of so many years I would never dare to try and sketch the situation in such a way that it came close to the truth.

The largest part of the means earmarked for the KGB were set aside for the defence of the state frontiers. Tens of thousands of soldiers served in the border police, which defended almost sixty thousand kilometres of the border. This is how the legend grew of the huge number of employees of the KGB and of course of its financial expenditure. It was necessary to allocate roughly half our entire budget to the defence of the border. Other means can be assigned to expenses on operational work.

Before my arrival almost every Soviet republic had its own border fence. I decided to decrease the number of fences. A single border fence was sufficient for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Another served for the Baltic republics - Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. The borders of Belarus and Ukraine were protected by another unified fence. The decrease in the number of fences created substantial financial savings which allowed us to form a special department to defend the border along the Arctic Ocean. The reason for creating this department was the appearance of uninvited guests on our northern shores. It was no problem

for nuclear submarines to sail under crust of the Arctic Ocean as far as our territory. Whereas our borders to the east, south and west were meticulously guarded, thousands of miles of the Soviet Union to the north were completely open.

From time to time members of the military units, local offices and geological expeditions discovered tin cans, bottles and other items which clearly had not been manufactured in the Soviet Union. Nor did these discoveries float in on the waves of the Arctic Ocean; everything pointed to the fact that they were evidence of excessive curiosity on the part of the enemy. It was unthinkable that we could allow these uninvited guests a gate several thousand miles wide through which they could reach our military instalations and even top-secret sites.

And so even the West understood the reason for the creation of the Arctic border department. They appreciated the fact that the Soviet Union was no longer going to neglect the defence of its northern frontier.

## **What morality is there to espionage?**

The identification of agents who would work in the West on our behalf could not be dictated by stereotypes and rigid features. In some cases we were successful in surprising an important person in an amorous situation, or even assisting him into it, and organising a wealth of compromising material. In other cases contact with the agent developed from chance meetings and personal rapport. A third group consisted of people with that down-to-earth human weakness - love of money. And then there were those fellow-travellers who cooperated with our country and its political system without regard to what or how much they were paid for their information. As for us, we called such an attitude: "ideological harmony".

If it was a question of making a deliberate foray into western nuclear secrets or into ministries and institutions which made decisions about the political future, we set ourselves some specific task and tried to approach it in a conscious way on every front: through conscientious study, observation, analysis, and cooperation between residents on the spot and the espionage leadership; in important cases even the leadership of the whole Committee.

The recruitment of agents for internal counter-espionage was much simpler, since it did not require such long screening and relationships. If it was unsuccessful, another attempt could always be made. Spies abroad, however, had very restricted opportunities and their blunders led to much greater financial and political losses.

The operating of a specific object abroad was always entrusted just to one of our men. If others assisted him, they did not have any precise idea of the aim of the whole operation and its main connections.

A spy's number of contacts depended on the importance of the sources. If in counter-espionage one Chekist was capable of directing roughly fifteen domestic agents, in the case of our workers in the West the number was considerably fewer. During very important contacts the directing organ may be in contact with only one person, so that any eventual suspicion in second-level cases did not threaten the security of the main action.

For example, in France we had not to be as cautious as in the United States. In African countries or in the Philippines there was more breathing space.

Most of the suggestions as to how cases were to be handled was given by the head of espionage or one of his five deputies. The resident regularly passed to Moscow all the details and waited for their evaluation; to harbour information at the embassy itself would, with a view to the risks of attack or betrayal, be a pointless hazard. Higher authority after

consultation with the resident would put them into practice, and developed the own initiative for their improvement.

Payment for services varied considerably. Fees for ordinary political details which later appeared in the daily press did not reach very high figures, whereas the reward for important information could be four or five times as much. As a rule individual agents never knew about each other, so they were unable to compare each other's pay and use it to judge their comparative importance. Moreover, the agent was not paid simply on the precise amount of work submitted, but with a view to prospective personal growth and other assumptions. More than once it happened that an ordinary politician, recruited whilst still in the second division or even lower, advanced to a Minister's chair. Considerable experience was needed to tutor an intelligence officer in the art of estimating an agent's abilities and even, to some extent, prophesying his future, just as his conviction about the potential success of his cooperation with us.

It was an advantage if we could delay payment for a longer period in cases where various agents tried to foist on us some political or technological rubbish instead of important information. Then, before handing over the money, we had time for experts to analyse the material in detail for its real value. However, such advantageous conditions were not always available, and it happened from time to time that we ended up empty-handed.

The payment of regular informers came under the competence of the resident in the given country. The greater the importance of the source, the higher the level in the hierarchy the KGB for the right to decide his assessment. Not even the deputies knew the pay or the real names of the most important agents of the KGB abroad, let alone people belonging to other state authorities. Individual industrial ministries financed the expenses of technological espionage. The effectiveness of our work was judged according to how far we showed ourselves able to satisfy their requirements.

The moral aspects of the work of agents are more sensitive than that in any other field. Our attitude towards those citizens of other countries who opened the way to us to highly confidential secrets, was never to consider them as traitors but rather as heroes in the struggle for progress (the West, naturally, took that attitude towards those who betrayed Soviet interests), sooner or later their struggle with their personal conscience came on the scene.

The ideal agent - the fellow-traveller on the grounds of ideological harmony - did not entirely lose his human dignity in his own eyes. He was fighting for principles of which he was deeply convinced. He was assisting those who most strongly asserted them. He was not a mere trader, did not lower himself to the role of provocateur or exploiter.

However, such a person as Penkovsky for instance never had such ideals about the West. He dictated his own terms and his main interest was what he could make out of it. He was simply a sponger on whoever was his superior authority. His attitude could easily turn dangerous: if you don't hand over what I want, then I'll betray your people as well.

George Blake, on the other hand, never looked after his own interests. Kim Philby was different again, but even in his case personal ambition did not play a deciding role. He gave help to our country during very difficult periods of insecurity and extreme international isolation.

If we ever sensed that the agents found themselves in a moral dilemma, we tried with all our strength to help the waverer overcome it. We indicated through our words and deeds that if it came down to it, we would not leave anyone in the lurch. We would help him, even if it damaged our name in the eyes of the public.

Without regard to his motives for cooperation, each agent had, in the case of extreme need, a plan prepared for flight to safety. Even if the plan failed and the person in question ended in prison, our care for him did not come to an end. In the most appropriate case he could be exchanged for his counterpart. If, like George Blake, he seized an opportunity to escape punishment, it was enough for him to contact us from wherever he ended up in the world.

A plan for emigration to the Soviet Union was worked out even for Penkovsky, even for Western agents who in the face of justice fled from our country to a place of safety.

It was a principle never just to squeeze someone dry and then throw them aside. If other potential co-workers saw us take such an attitude, then they would never decide to move into such a sensitive area as the secret service.

An agent whose conscience was unduly corroded showed an increased inclination for finding an office where he could confess, or emigrating before he was threatened by any danger and when his disappearance was premature.

Someone with a split personality came closer to acting precipitately and could spoil things both for himself and us. At the point his conscience grew more troubled than he could bear, he might carelessly confide something to his friends or easily betray himself.

He was not allowed to confide anything even to his wife or family without our agreement - it did happen from time to time in some positive cases that they both began to work for us, but if all was not in order at home, this could lead to tragedy.

In spite of all our efforts to help and provide strength, even the greatest generosity on our part had its limits (it was no different in the case of any other secret services). Part of the burden had to be carried by the one who helped us, in the end him alone. And one must not

forget that even with all the best efforts, oversight and humanism, an intelligence officer's calling was some distance removed from that of the assistance of organisations such as the International Red Cross.

If the danger of betrayal became so great that it was inappropriate for an agent to remain in his own country or in the country where he was working, and if it was possible for him to emigrate to us immediately, we accepted everyone with gratitude. No one had to worry about their material existence. Care of their personal security was also 100% assured. Approaches to a former agent were from the beginning very restricted and carefully monitored.

However, a person like that could not take up active work immediately. A certain amount of time had to elapse first. After that he could make himself useful in the preparation of espionage cadres and in analytical work. However, people like that appeared only very rarely in the actual apparatus of the KGB.

Building on mutual trust required patience. To begin again in similar circumstances was never easy.

In one regard many Soviet defectors to the West differed considerably from defectors from the West to us. The Soviet Union, unlike the NATO countries, did not insist that agent-emigrés under its protection had, in their books and public appearances, to spit on the people of their own countries, had to hurl mud without distinction. Meanwhile, people like Oleg Gordievsky, a traitor from the KGB in the 1980s, or the military defector Viktor Suvorov, published half-truths and deliberate lies in the West, in the full awareness of how unfair they were being.

Kim Philby and George Blake also published their memoirs and reflections. They wrote about their path from birth to their arrival in Moscow, and the motives which had led to their cooperation.

The KGB naturally read the manuscripts and expunged all the references that were too specific and which could have complicated our operations or opened the eyes of the counter-espionage in the West to what had previously been hidden from them.

But the publications were never issued as evidence of scorn for their own nation in the British Isles, as an indictment of the whole capitalist world. Nor did they name dozens of others, their former friends and colleagues, with the intention of shaming them in the eyes of the world, since that would have complicated their private and family life. Information of this nature is still kept only in the appropriate Moscow archives.

We worked as professionals and we remained professionals. We provided a platform from which the defecting intelligence agent could save face.



## **The Focal Point Of Strategy: Europe**

The preponderant tendencies of post-1945 Soviet foreign policy and its related military strategies were determined by the outcome of the Second World War and the subsequent division of the world into two major military blocks - one to the east, the other to the west of the Iron Curtain.

The capitalist world, in its struggle against the adherents of Communist ideology, gradually tried to fix the division all the more firmly. The primary result of this was the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in 1949. The socialist countries reacted by taking a similar step; goaded in particular by the acceptance into NATO in 1955 of the western zone of Germany, they created their own military organisation, the Warsaw Pact. The place where the boundaries of these alliances came into direct contact was the very centre of the old continent.

Much of the unease amongst the Soviet leadership concerned especially the stationing in Europe of American divisions. The undercurrents which came with the anti-Hitler alliance between the USA and the USSR, concerning the complications and secrets connected with the development of nuclear weapons and the admonitory effect not only for the Japanese but also for the Soviet Union of their first use on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, were well known. The presence of American troops in Europe increased the danger of global conflict, in the same way as the accelerated combination of western countries into a compact military unit.

Both alliances, NATO and the Warsaw Pact, said of themselves that they were defensive, not aggressive organisations. The ideology of both was directed towards annihilating the adversary - not so much by military means, but by a political route. In light of the fact that the time of peaceful coexistence was far distant, conversations between Moscow and Washington were conducted exclusively from a position of power. Whoever was the stronger was the more secure.

After the death of Stalin, Soviet foreign policy changed much more slowly than its domestic policies. The aim of showing up the cult of Stalin's personality was not an expression of goodwill towards world capitalism, but above all a return to the principles of building a freer socialist society. Whilst new people gradually appeared in the politburo, the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remained a conservatively-inclined diplomat. From 1957 it was the former First Deputy to Molotov, Andrei Andreevich Gromyko.

Gromyko's appointment as head of Soviet diplomacy had many advantages for Nikita Khrushchev. They gradually found a common language. Khrushchev was not strong in this field, but Gromyko guaranteed the stability of the whole concept and the maintenance of professional personnel. At the same time, Gromyko knew his place and did not threaten Khrushchev's position in any way. Andrei Andreevich was not a member of the politburo and did not express any possible disagreement through opposition on principle.

He established his authority in the context of international organisations and on the international scene. As early as the conference in Yalta, Gromyko sat next to Stalin - not yet as a Minister, but as one of his closest advisers. After the war he served his country as the Ambassador of the USSR in the USA, after 1946 he was the permanent representative in the Security Council of the UN, and later Ambassador to Great Britain. The press as well as his foreign colleagues gave him the nickname "Gospodin NYET", Mr. NO, for his consistent intractability. However, everyone agreed that Andrei Gromyko was the right man in the right job for our country.

Despite the slowness of the thaw one cannot say that we would have wanted the world to stay as closed as formerly. The thaw was clearly felt. A mere four years after Stalin's death, Moscow organised a global festival of youth, an event which under Stalin would have been unthinkable. To invite several thousand young people from all over the world to our country would previously have been beyond the wildest fantasies. Gradually we came to the view that the world was not as terrible as Stalin had described to us, and part of the international public accepted a similar view concerning us. But this essentially had little influence on the duel between the two political systems at an official level.

The achievement of an approximate balance of military strength helped the Soviet Union to ensure stalemate during the whole period of the Cold War. However, this could not be shown purely arithmetically, for as far as global destructive powers were concerned, we were much weaker. The balance meant the creation of a situation where every wrong step taken by the opponent was a step into a threatened field.

All the time western propaganda kept describing our country as a monster. It artificially exaggerated everything we did. The general public had the feeling that we were a bloodthirsty tiger which roared and hungrily sought any opportunity to deal them a mortal blow. They vilified us so much they began to be frightened of their own horrible descriptions.

However, there was no truth in this catastrophic scenario. Even though we might have pounded on the table from time to time at international conferences and threatened aggressive action, we knew very well that we were walking on very thin ice.

Right up to the 1970s, when I was no longer head of the KGB, the USA and NATO were much more heavily armed with nuclear weapons than the Warsaw Pact. They could blast the huge Soviet Union from the Atlantic, the Arctic Ocean and the Pacific with their advanced nuclear submarines. Additional power was given by their air bases on battleships, of which we had none at all. Even in the case of heavy weaponry the USA was at an advantage, and the count by no means ends here. To defend the territory of one sixth of the world under the attack of advanced western armies would be an almost superhuman task. No one in the whole world was such an easy target for nuclear rockets as the foremost state of the workers and farmers.

However, the Soviet Union did have certain advantages at its disposition. Being able to advance in Europe on dry land enabled the Red Army to move conventional forces more rapidly than the troops of the USA. And as early as the period of the victorious campaign against Hitler, the chief European strategical trend was determined by the Moscow-Warsaw-Paris-Berlin axis. And there we held a significant superiority ourselves.

There were not only domestic armies stationed in all the satellite countries of eastern Europe, but, with the exception up to 1968 of Czechoslovakia - that is, the German Democratic Republic, Poland and Hungary - armed Soviet units as well. Soviet nuclear rockets could also be stationed in countries with Soviet garrisons.

Should other countries of the world not take this into consideration, we could with our superiority effectively have attacked Europe and reached as far as Portugal.

The principle of the balance was - expressed in the very simplest terms - the following: if NATO should decide on a nuclear attack against the Soviet Union or any other country of the Warsaw Pact, they would run the risk of an attack on western Europe from eastern armed forces. From this point of view the western European countries were our hostages.

If the Soviet Union were the first to decide to attack, it would in fact risk far more than the USA. It would be our own country which would disappear under rocket explosions. It is already clear from this that if we only thought about aggressive military plans, we would have no more influence than cutting off the branch on which we sat.

I can reliably say that in all my years in high functions on the Soviet political ladder - and I was kept informed the whole time about high strategic aims in Soviet policy as early as the end of the Great Patriotic War - I did not hear of even one plan by the supreme Soviet leadership directed at the military occupation of western Europe, or even one western country which suffered in a war unleashed by us. Still less then could something similar concern the United States. On the contrary, I came across many instances where our diplomats were striving for disarmament at an international level only to have their opinions rejected.

The method still in existence today, showing only such glimpses from the global context as have as their aim the vilification of the Soviet Union, cannot act as an objective statement. In the second half of the 20th century distances are much shorter than ever before and the possibilities of technology sometimes terrifying. Sensationalist news about whether we want to attack in one place or another will be investigated by ever more complex historical proofs.

It is understandable that well-prepared general staffs of armies consider every possible solution, including the most extreme. The role of the soldier is to fight and defend his country, once he receives the appropriate order. An army is not created for the purpose of picking potatoes in the fields. An army exists for wartime, not for peace, and any other assertion is claptrap. The more armies there are, the greater the potential for conflict, and the more talks intensify from a position of power. But what is conclusive are the words and actions of politicians. It is they who decide how to establish an army and how to deploy it. They determine the international political context into which the power of the army is organically integrated. And every time politicians begin to refer to the generals, it's a sign that something is not well. Poor argumentation, poor judgement.

The first strike by the Soviet Union against the west in one part of the world could have been planned only as a response to the fact that we had been attacked elsewhere. That was also the opinion of many propaganda speeches about the final victory of Communism in any possible conflict. We knew that we could not begin the conflict. But if it did begin, we obviously wanted to win.

It is of course important to see the context at the same time. We were not interested in gaining new territory, at one time we even refused to accept Bulgaria, when quite seriously it wished to become the sixteenth republic of the Soviet Union. Our internal problems were enormous and our resources limited. Whatever would we want to wage a war for?

Both in the West and in our country there were people who understood the exchange of strong words and threats as it was primarily intended: as an effort to frighten the other out of an unconsidered action. I confess that as well as these there was also a minority of blinded and unrealistically thinking fanatics. People who for the most part only knew part of the facts. These however never - either in our country nor in NATO - gained control.

I must however note that as head of the KGB I had very little say in the whole creation of military strategy. Therefore I don't want, and in fact I can't, go into too much detail. As far as the army was concerned my task was to secure the counterespionage work within their units, to prevent the penetration of enemy agents into our secrets, and generally to enable the

fighting capacity of our troops to reach its potential, and to oversee the personnel composition of the officer corps. This was the extent of my capacities. Otherwise it was a matter for the Ministry of Defence and the supreme leader of the Soviet armed forces - the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

## **Why The KGB Did Not Assassinate President Kennedy**

We were well aware how low the standards of living were for Soviet citizens compared with those of Western countries. More than once in the Soviet Union we have had to rebuild from the ashes of war, and when socialism first began here, the capitalist world already had several centuries of development behind it. And so even those people from the West who sympathised with us did not travel to Moscow to fulfil their dreams of a consumer way of life, but above all to search for the ideals of a socially just society. However, in the overriding majority of cases they subsequently returned home.

The fanatical and paranoid anti-Communism of Senator McCarthy in the USA, which led to a number of completely innocent people being imprisoned merely for having read Marxist literature, was already on the way out in the late 1950s. Western Communists no longer lived in fear of direct threats and their parties existed as part of their parliamentary democratic systems.

The emigration of citizens from advanced capitalist states, especially the USA, was an extremely unusual phenomenon. When it did happen, it set our alarm bells ringing. What did a person like that have in mind? Had he been a failure in the West and wanted a second chance with us? Or had he been tutored and assigned to some specific tasks? The atmosphere of mistrust inclined us towards the second variant.

The other socialist countries had similar experiences.

I can't remember now how many such people were then living in the Soviet Union. There were no cases of a wave or campaign of five or ten people at the same time. There is only one I can be sure of.

The first person to inform me that there was an American by name of Lee Harvey Oswald living in our country was the head of counter-espionage Oleg Mikhailovich Gribanov. In November 1961, straight after my appointment, he filled me in about his sector of work. In the state of unknown and sometimes very surprising information I was unable to overlook Oswald's name.

He arrived in 1959, when Alexander Shelepin was still head of the KGB, and requested political exile. At that time he was twenty years old - he did not speak Russian, and had very little knowledge of the military, in which he had served up to then.

He did not seem to have any achievements behind him which one could attribute to firmness of character, ambition, tenaciousness and ability to overcome problems. From the start the impression he made was not impressive.

Most of the speculation around him today derives from the later circumstances whereby Oswald allegedly murdered the President of the USA, John F. Kennedy. Quite a lot of researchers automatically assume that Oswald had the intention to assassinate written on his forehead virtually from birth, and that in that case the KGB already knew from the turn of 1950s as much as they know today. However, they forget that history is written chronologically and we cannot make assumptions from hindsight about what was known.

Very well. What secrets was Oswald able to provide after his arrival in the Soviet Union? In my opinion this point was not and is not doubted by the researchers who followed and still follow Oswald's tracks in Russia with the same amount of useful mistrust as many others.

Oswald's career took him first into the army and later to an American base in Japan where he worked as a radar operator. In the light just of this one fact it is assumed almost automatically by many that Oswald knew every detail about the U-2 spy planes which were located on the base, and that he had access to their most confidential data. He knew nothing, and had no access. He knew nothing which could not be known from other sources, chiefly our agents. Oswald had no share in the Soviet Union's shooting down of Gary Powers in 1960. He was just a young radar operator, not in any way a design engineer or a pilot.

If Oswald had known and described at least a few secrets, we would have behaved quite differently towards him later on.

If for example he had known the real technological and tactical data of the aeroplane, the shooting down of Powers would not have caused us so many worries and problems and we would not have let him almost reach the end of a flight of several hours over Soviet territory.

The speculation that Oswald and Powers could even have met on Soviet territory is ridiculous and completely unfounded. Powers was in prison and as soon as he came out was exchanged for Rudolf Abel. And why would we even think of such a thing?

I deduced the following from Gribanov's information. Oswald had not divulged any secrets during introductory interrogations and talks with KGB personnel. He behaved in a strange and inexpressive way, without hope of future progress and penetration to information. From this point of view he was useless for purposes of espionage.

He did not come to Moscow because he was convinced of the qualities of Marxism, but mainly because conditions in the USA allegedly did not appeal to him. He said that in our

country they were building friendship, but conveyed the impression that he didn't really know what it was about.

The formal question as to whether political asylum would or would not be provided for him was conveyed not in the first place by the Chekists but by the appropriate office of the Ministry of the Interior (known as the OVIR) for the issue of passports and permission for travel abroad, and for the arrival of foreigners in our country. After consideration and consultation with the KGB Oswald's application for political asylum was refused.

I would like at this point to raise a number of objections as to whether Oswald could have worked for us before he ever arrived in Moscow. He had allegedly been seen at the base in Japan with a camera round his neck. If he had worked with us we would never have refused him asylum. Judge for yourselves whether the fact that he had a camera round his neck is reliable proof that he worked for the KGB. However, in view of further developments something else occurs to me: is it possible that Oswald himself wanted someone to see and note that he was in the military campus with a camera round his neck? That he was the one who spread the rumour?

He reacted to the refusal of asylum in an American way which cast even more doubt on him: he cut his wrists. He did it in such a way that one could not be sure whether it was a serious attempt, or just a theatrical performance. The accompanying circumstances indicated the latter alternative. The incident was entered in our records as an "attempt to cut his wrists", not as an unsuccessful suicide.

When the KGB chose an agent, it had to be convinced that he would not disappoint and fail at the most vital moment. To recruit someone who showed from the start - whether consciously or subconsciously - an incomprehensible nervous instability would have led sooner or later to serious problems. Not even a beginner Chekist would have considered recruiting someone of Oswald's type.

In the end the drama did satisfy Oswald's wishes. The Supreme Soviet awarded him political asylum. Intercession with the Central Committee of the Party played its part - I think, through one of its members, a Comrade Furtseva, on whose sympathies he worked. Both the Foreign Ministry and ourselves shared the opposite opinion, but we waved our hands and said, so be it, let him stay.

However, even then our new political emigré was not satisfied. He had obviously counted on settling in Moscow. Such a desire was beyond his power.

Shelepin, at that time head of the KGB, and his subordinate Gribanov judged very correctly that it was a risk to let a person like that loose in the capital city with all its central



offices and diplomatic missions. One could not rule out the possibility of provocation; at best he might start visiting the central offices and make more and more requests.

It would have been better to send Oswald to the Baltic region. Conditions in the European part of the Soviet Union would at least have given him a better chance to acclimatise, and his unwanted appearance in Moscow would have been virtually ruled out.

However, the American refused. He chose rather to go to Minsk, the capital of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. His new employment played the main role in this alternative.

The whole case was handed over to the leadership of the Belorussian counter-espionage. The Minsk Chekists responsible gave the operational personnel who looked after American affairs only occasional reports.

However, it was not difficult to understand why he remained under counter-espionage control. Agents of a secret service could be dropped into the terrain and activated after five or ten years. From the very beginning there was no reason to have infinite trust in Oswald.

Taking into account his preceding knowledge in the field of radio technology, Oswald was set to work in a factory manufacturing radio and television receivers. He was not given highly-qualified work - how could he be, when he did not yet know Russian - nor a good wage; however, I wouldn't say that comparison of his conditions with other Soviet workers should have given him any cause for dissatisfaction.

It is time also to overturn another "mystery"; which turns on doubt as to whether an unreliable American could work in a factory where there was a top secret department for the research and development of technology for the space programme. Secret sectors working for the defence industry existed in many major enterprises involved in the manufacture of technology useful to the military. However, access to them was very tightly controlled and an ordinary worker would hardly be likely to penetrate their activities.

Not every American who visits the White House looks over the shoulder of the President of the United States. There were enough opportunities for us to isolate Oswald and similar from important secrets.

Oswald showed no interest in improving his qualifications and none at all in the study of Marxism. He became a grey person, interesting only by virtue of being American. He spent his spare time going to dances and parties with girls. He joined the hunting set and surprised everyone by the fact that, as a soldier, he had a very poor aim. Even details like these were mentioned in our reports.

At one of these parties he got to know a girl called Marina. Allegedly he wasn't the first foreigner with whom she'd had something going, and everyone was surprised by their sudden wedding. There is no way in which his "bride was chosen by the KGB", as some publications asserted. Why should she be, since none at that time had any idea how quickly the foreigner was going to fall out of sympathy with our country and decide he wanted to go home? There was no need for an agent as his wife as far as his control in Minsk was concerned.

With hindsight I have had the growing opinion that even marriage with a Russian girl interested in foreigners might have been part of a preconceived plan. If Oswald had already known then that he wanted to return to the USA, a girl of Marina's type would already be grateful to him for taking her with him. Even if he had left her after fulfilling her aim, she would not make too great demands on him. Someone who was sure he was staying here would be much more careful about choosing a partner for a long-term relationship.

Oswald spent approximately two and a half years in Minsk. By the time he had decided he wanted to cross the ocean again, I had taken Shelepin's seat at the head of the KGB.

Oswald had been dissatisfied with his stay with us. He didn't like his employment, having expected something different from how it turned out.

When Gribanov referred to me Oswald's request to return home, I didn't hesitate for a second: let him go and make sure you have no further contact. Wash your hands of him and keep him at a distance. If he wants to take his wife with him, let him. Not "au revoir", but "good-bye". That was my decision.

Immediately I informed the praesidium of the Supreme Soviet; it was they who had awarded Oswald Soviet citizenship, it was they who had to change their decision. The formal act did not last long. We had the complete support of the Foreign Ministry. Oswald was an American once more and could go home.

If we had not allowed Marina to go with him, an eccentric of Oswald's type would have stirred up a fuss in the newspapers and provoked public opinion against us. Moreover, we had no reason not to let her go - she had absolutely no knowledge of any sort of secrets, and had rushed into marriage at such a speed, she could get what was coming to her.

From that moment on Lee Harvey Oswald had no further link with the Soviet Union. He could announce with a quiet heart and clean conscience that the KGB had never tried to recruit or otherwise use either him or his wife to its own advantage.

In spite of this, the supposed murderer of Kennedy still tried to approach our offices. After some time he appeared at the Soviet Embassy in Mexico. He even turned up on the Cubans' doorstep; the impression he was trying to create had a very strange effect. However, all was soon explained. He was trying to give the impression that his contact with the Russians had not ended when he left the Soviet Union.

On the 22nd November 1963 a shocked world heard news of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas in Texas. We at the KGB were more than a little surprised to hear that the murderer was Lee Harvey Oswald. It immediately roused considerable doubts which are still with me today.

The uncompromising speculation that the Soviet Union stood behind the assassination was not seriously considered even just after the murder. It clearly lacked motivation. Kennedy in his time was one of the most principled politicians, with a sound understanding of our country and at the same time a sense responsibility towards upholding peace. We were to some extent grateful for the more or less successful solution to the Cuban crisis; in spite of noises from the side of extremists in high American circles concerning his allegedly soft approach to Castro's Cuba, Kennedy knew how to put through what he wanted, which could not be said with the same conviction of his Deputy, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson.

No murder plan is ever guaranteed 100% success. I really cannot imagine that any of the Soviet authorities would take responsibility for the death of the supreme head of the American state and for all the catastrophic results which would follow should such an action be connected with us. And what would we gain by it? Nothing more than the shameful disposal of a politician with whom we could negotiate better than anyone else. A man against whom we may have waged a propaganda war, but whom at the same time we valued more than any of his competitors.

We would not show our strength to the American public by assassinating their highest representative, only our own stupidity and the heartlessness of a system which since 1956 had put emphasis on the humanity of life. In every way this would have rebounded on us.

Many American journalists were aware of such connections and although they did not completely rule us out of the circle of suspects, the serious media did not harp on this anti-Soviet note. The reporters of the major American dailies, the influential journals and above all the television stations did not in fact attack the KGB directly; the majority contented themselves with quotations of accusatory extracts taken from lesser periodicals and sources of second-rate importance.

As far as I have been informed, for the whole period of the Cold War there was not one actual case noted when the CIA or another American organisation tried to assassinate the highest representative of the Soviet government or the Communist Party. If such a plan had existed, even long before my arrival in the Lubyanka, I would unquestionably have known about it. Nothing existed.

In the complicated situation which arose after the tragedy we first of all oriented ourselves through the American press and other media. Two days after Dallas the chaos increased when Lee Harvey Oswald was murdered by Jack Ruby.

We carefully examined every scrap of our knowledge and tried to give the mosaic some sort of framework. Was it normal for the police to allow the owner of a night club, Jack Ruby, to get close to the assumed murderer of the highest representative of the state with a pistol in his pocket? Ruby, who was not Oswald's accomplice because he did not fire at the policeman, but at Oswald. What danger could Oswald betray during the investigation and the trial?

I gave an order that all the material from Minsk should be got together and delivered to us at the central office. Oswald's operational file, a collection of notes and photographs, was not so large. The relatively thin item contained nothing special.

We never issued any order, as has been alleged, for people in Minsk not to speak of Oswald's stay there. I don't rule out that such an order may have existed, especially on the initiative of the local authorities in Belorussia: that people should remain silent as long as things were unclear. If you start talking to speculating journalists, you may find yourself guilty of involvement in a conspiracy - in other words, an order.

The first information about Oswald reached Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev from the KGB. Our country gave its official viewpoint very early and all the information in it was perfectly true. TASS, the press agency of the Soviet Union, issued its press statement, and the Soviet Embassy in Washington received copies of the material. Foreign Minister Gromyko also gave information to the Soviet diplomatic corps around the world based on our material, so that employees had a firm foundation for the spate of questions.

Before his departure to America, First Deputy of the Council of Ministers of the USSR Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan, who as head of the Soviet delegation attended Kennedy's funeral, obtained from me two pages of information about Oswald's relationship with us and ours with him. I had no reason to hide any essential details. On the contrary - that would only have strengthened suspicion.

We examined the development of events more than once with the head of espionage Sacharovsky. Oswald's way of life, in retrospect, gave us the impression that the eccentric American had carefully prepared the misleading legend. I even read that he allegedly kept a diary (that may have been later, I never knew of anything like that when I was in the KGB.)

We did not believe that he thought everything up for himself. The alleged Communist, the would-be pro-Cuban, at least at the time when he saw the West. The Russian wife, the stay in the Soviet Union. Did he have any idea what purpose they wanted him for? It's unlikely.

Further analysis led us to the view that the murder could not be put at the door either of the CIA or the KGB. It could have been the work of a powerful circle connected with the Texas oilmen, or one of those who felt that Kennedy was standing in his way. For such a person Dallas would have been the ideal place for the realisation of his plan. Such people had already had one success in the silent duel with Kennedy: in 1960, during the electoral campaign, they had pushed through Lyndon Baines Johnson for the democratic Vice President. We have been informed by our agents that if Kennedy had been able to choose for himself, Johnson would never have reached the position of Vice President, the second most powerful position in the United States.

I am still convinced that Kennedy was shot by someone other than Lee Oswald. In my opinion Oswald was cold-bloodedly offered as a sacrificial lamb, silenced at the moment there was a risk he might speak.

An extremely professional, very carefully planned and executed action took place behind his back, aimed at the physical liquidation of the head of state. The way it was done, based on perfect synchronicity, effectively ruled out the idea of a dominant role being played by foreigners. Just like the Cuban emigrés who took offence at Kennedy's too great scrupulousness towards the Castro regime, someone else without a thorough knowledge of the terrain and without an adequate background would find it difficult to devise such clockwork timing, still less to make it work.

I would never even consider the theory of a lone murderer as being trustworthy. Nor did my former colleagues in the KGB, with whom I exchanged views at the end of 1963 take it seriously. However, the Soviet security authorities never worked through the extensive official analysis of possible causes of Kennedy's murder. What use would it have been, when it took place thousands of miles away, and our access to information was very restricted? The espionage department dealing with America came to certain partial conclusions for itself, as

did each one of us, partly from curiosity and from amazement that such a thing could even be possible.

In 1968, when another brother, Robert Kennedy, was murdered, I was no longer at the head of the committee and followed it without contact with the KGB, and from Ukraine. However, my distrust was only confirmed by the theory of another lone assassin, this time an eccentric Arab.

The murderers of John F. Kennedy would never have allowed his brother Robert Francis to become President. As a capable and decisive man, a former Minister of Justice, he would have done everything in his power for the real perpetrators of the crime in Dallas to be uncovered and justly punished.

## Major Preparations for a Major Event

The official information we passed on to the First Secretary through the KGB about what was going on in the country only to a limited extent reflected disquiet from below. We did not make any special effort to gather complaints, and in any case the authorities at a local level were afraid of passing complaints on to a higher level.

Nevertheless it cannot be said that Khrushchev was isolated from reality. He was given one clear signal for example in Murmansk, where workers expressed their opposition quite openly during a speech. More than a few angry words were exchanged.

It happened more often than not that stones as well as flowers were thrown at his car while he was travelling. These weren't just isolated occasions. And Khrushchev wasn't so blind he didn't know what they meant.

When there was a rise in the price of meat and I passed on to him news of unrest, he lost control and burst out: "And what did you imagine? That they're all going to shout hooray? Obviously they're upset."

Towards the end of 1963 and the beginning of 1964 the grumbles and protests reached their peak. Not so much that Khrushchev heard them, but they weren't behind closed doors as they had been.

Their authors were responsible for turning the head of the Party and the head of state more and more from the path of wisdom. He was no longer as attentive as he had been. He grew proud.

The same people who in the early days of his taking office had helped him enthusiastically and spread his fame, now put the brake on his initiatives. And they were no longer afraid to speak aloud even in my presence.

The second man in the Party, Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, and the Secretary of the Central Committee, Nikolai Viktorovich Podgorny, were the first members of the Politburo to put their heads together. No more Khrushchev they said, tolling the knell. However, it was still a long time before they could put this into effect.

Both of them began by surveying the terrain. As experienced experts in relationships they understood that if they did not get the KGB on their side to start with, they would never succeed in their intention to change the head of state and of the Communist Party.

One day when I entered Brezhnev's office I noticed that Leonid Ilyich was more unsure than usual. He invited me, appealed to me to sit down, and started speaking at great length, very carefully and with unusual delicacy.

"As you must understand, feel and see, the situation in this country is difficult," he began tentatively. "We haven't been looking after ordinary people properly, people active in the Party, and there are many expressions of discontent," he uttered selfcritically.

The relationships between us at that time were not unfriendly, but too much on an official level to allow him to come straight to the point. He ended by telling me to think it over. He outlined to me the possibility of calling a plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Party and voting Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev out of the supreme office.

I reacted in the way I thought proper at that point. I did not give him the OK immediately. I replied that I needed to think it over, examine the possibilities and take advice, and not until then come to a final decision. With that we said good bye.

However, I didn't need a lot of time. I understood what it was all about, and in my inner self I agreed with the need to make a change. It was not about trying to return to Stalinist routines, but about representing and deepening the collective forms of decision making. Any return to lawlessness was unthinkable.

My next discussion with Brezhnev took place with the participation of more members of the Politburo: Podgorny and Shelepin. The theme was much more concrete: we talked above all about the practical questions of how to safeguard the action on the part of the KGB.

In accordance with what had been decided during preceding conversations, the proposal for change made by those who were the main actors and, at the same time, the highest authorities in the anti-Khrushchev opposition, Brezhnev and Podgorny, had to find significant support among the members of the Central Committee and the praesidium itself.

There remained only two issues: to determine the time, place and method, and to win the Minister of Defence Rodion Yakovlevich Malinovsky over to the plan. No one wanted to end up like Molotov, Malenkov or Kaganovich. Khrushchev was the supreme commander of the armed forces and even if an open conflict with him seemed highly improbable, it could not be ruled out until the last moment.

I did not have a completely exact idea about the concrete agreements between the politicians, although through the ninth directorate - protection of government members - I was informed about most of their meetings. But I wasn't a member of the Politburo, and so I did not actively intervene in the forming of the opposition.



In the spring of 1964 the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev celebrated his seventieth birthday. All the leading representatives of the Soviets congratulated him. Dozens of congratulations arrived in Moscow from other countries of the socialist camp, from Party leaders, and from many statesmen from other corners of the world.

Numerous toasts and celebratory speeches praised and extolled Khrushchev's contribution. Why shouldn't they - the celebration of an important birthday is not the proper occasion for a deep, objective analysis, nor for a scrutiny of moments of political conflict.

Very few people knew at that time that Khrushchev's seventieth birthday was the last he would celebrate whilst holding the supreme office. I was amongst that group. I listened to the odes and eulogies and at the same time tried to read people's faces. I was coming to terms with my own conscience.

It was true that Khrushchev had done very much to help me in my career. I did not intend to forget anything he had done for me. However, I was by that time thoroughly unhappy about his political development, and felt he deserved this opposition and dismissal. No one intended to liquidate him as a person.

The circle of the initiated gradually grew; however, there was still no concrete plan with a unified strategy. The uncertainty of what, and above all what next, tormented Brezhnev several times a day.

He called me again and asked me to visit him. Apparently he wanted to discuss some practical matter. I was in his office in no time.

Nikita Khrushchev was just at that time preparing for a trip to Sweden, where he was planning, as was his wont, to go with his family. By train to Leningrad, from there by sea. And back by the same route.

Brezhnev made a very plain suggestion: what if the KGB held up Khrushchev's train on its return trip from Leningrad somewhere near Zavidovo and isolated the First Secretary? Then the succession of the new leader of the Party could be carried out in complete safety.

Conceivably at that time Leonid Ilyich as the Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union realised that it would be he who would replace Khrushchev. However, he knew his own limitations and as the decisive step grew nearer his fear of Nikita Sergeevich was growing.

Brezhnev's proposal gave me an unpleasant surprise. Even if a group in the praesidium eventually accepted a similar variant (and I was far from convinced of that) our action would be unlawful and would arouse antagonism throughout world.

I quickly evaluated all the pros and cons and replied that I did not agree. Brezhnev could not understand why. He unbridled his fantasy even more. The conversation turned to the possibility of physically liquidating Khrushchev.

"We would never accede to that," I stopped him angrily.

How would we go about it? Where would we look for people who would lend themselves to such a transgression? I would never do it with my own hands, and neither would Brezhnev, so who would? One of that circle with whom Khrushchev had worked for many years? One of his body guards? Someone preparing his food? A conspiracy? An assassination? Out of the question.

"You told me originally you were going to call a plenary session of the Central Committee and let them decide the matter. In my view this is the only possible solution," I reminded Brezhnev.

He asked no more questions. He only thought about how, during the exchange with Khrushchev, he must avoid looking him in the eyes. He wanted it to be all done for him. From this point of view I still didn't know and didn't suspect what I myself could expect from him in the future.

I wanted to believe that Brezhnev was only intending to test my reaction. Again and again I ran his proposals through my memory and repeatedly doubted them.

But I would lie if I said that at that time I already realised that Brezhnev would, in view of his character, be a bad First Secretary.

The chain of events had been set in motion and was not to be stopped. Straight after the meeting I picked up the telephone and called Shelepin.

"Listen," I said, "they're taking us in a different direction. They want to carry out a criminal action through someone else and then- who knows, what then."

He agreed with me. He too was categorically against any such solution.

One more matter could still unpleasantly shuffle the cards. The preparations for Khrushchev's dismissal were betrayed. According to the latest evidence from Khrushchev's son Sergei, the source of the leak was a former member of the KGB - a bodyguard of a former member of the politburo and after 1961 the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers Nikolai Grigoryevich Ignatov.

My view is that Ignatov made sure he had a back door for any eventuality, so that whatever happened - whether Khrushchev survived or whether he was dismissed - he could claim the right to a place on the Politburo. On the one hand he appeared to be on Brezhnev's

side and on the other, apparently, he sent his former bodyguard with a warning to Sergei Khrushchev and thus to his father, Nikita Sergeevich .

When, however, Khrushchev learnt that Alexander Shelepin and Vladimir Semichastny were also involved in the action against him, he announced that he couldn't believe in such a rumour. The possibility that we might have turned against him simply didn't occur to him.

The man who received from the First Secretary the task of verifying Job's tidings was another member of the Politburo, Khrushchev's long-time friend and ally Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan. So he was forced to make a firm decision about which side he was on. Mikoyan was in many ways the closest to Khrushchev, but had never showed himself to be trustworthy in times of real need.. One of the Party insider jokes about him to some extent captures him true to life: From Ilyich to Ilyich, without heart attack or stroke. In other words - from the times of Lenin to those of Brezhnev, a comfortable life free of conflict.

In the course of verifying the facts Mikoyan discovered that the rumours were founded on the truth. He was therefore challenged to decide on the spot to which side he belonged.

Standing again in front of a curious First Secretary, he denied the reliability of all the rumours.

However, Khrushchev - warned by his own son - was neither naive nor stupid. He had enough experience to sense the change in mood for himself without any prompting from outside.

Brezhnev's hesitation began to be dangerous. How would Khrushchev react if there were any more leaks to confirm his suspicions? Would Malinovsky help him, to whom no one had yet confided anything, just as seven years earlier Zhukov had helped him? How then would Khrushchev behave towards me and Shelepin? And how would we get on with Brezhnev and Podgorny? Would we be conspirators? Enemies? It wasn't usual for people to stay in their positions after an unsuccessful action. Failure would lead to free fall. There was too much in the balance.

So it was no accident that during my next meeting with Brezhnev in his office I urged him: "Your indecision puts me and all of us in great danger."

And then I uttered the words which finally gave him courage:

"Remember", I said, "that if Khrushchev learns the truth, then his first orders will be to tell me to arrest you as an anti-Party group. And, Leonid Ilyich, I will be forced to do it."

## The Short Road to Free Fall

I was originally invited to the sitting of the praesidium in connection with other questions. A commission had been created (Kirilenko, Pelshe, Mazurov, Andropov, Semichastny) for the purpose of transferring office to the newly-appointed head of the KGB. Everything appeared to be normal, but it turned out that this step had a hidden meaning.

No one made any official submission of any accusation against me at the sitting. During the assessment (more precisely during the exchange of short rejoinders, for there was not really any deeper analysis) Brezhnev said that the reason for appointing Andropov was the need for the KGB to be closer to the Central Committee of the Party. Mzhavanadze then threw in a reference to the fact that someone must carry responsibility for the flight of Stalin's daughter, Svetlana. Brezhnev successfully spread word through the Party apparatus that I had been dismissed because of my responsibility for the Alliluyeva.

I left for my office straight after the end of the discussion and summoned the Deputies. The First Deputy, Zacharov, was not present, as he was on a working trip to Leningrad. Pankratov and Bannikov came immediately. I laid before them the content of the discussion in the Politburo.

They were just as surprised as me. We ordered tea and continued our speculation. We talked for about half an hour, when all at once we were interrupted by my secretary, who announced:

"Comrade general! There are members of the Politburo in the building." He was agitated and his voice failed a little.

"Which members of the Politburo?" It was not clear to me. "And how many of them?"

"I don't know, but a lot," he replied.

I suggested he show them in.

The first to appear was Kirilenko. Pelshe, Mazurov and Andropov came in behind him. I welcomed them, offered them tea, and asked what they had come about.

"We're here to work, didn't you hear that in the Politburo?" explained Kirilenko.

"So quickly?" I marvelled. "Are you afraid I'm going to create an uprising overnight?"

"Why are you talking to us like this?" Apparently he didn't like my question.

"I'm talking to you like you're talking to me," I said and tried to keep calm. "As yet I haven't received any decree from the praesidium of the Supreme Soviet about my dismissal."

However, my amazement wasn't to end yet. The praesidium of the Supreme Soviet included the heads of the Soviets of all fifteen federated republics; it wasn't possible to ring around all of them in half an hour, let alone to collect their signatures.

Within another thirty minutes they brought the parcel which contained the praesidium of the Supreme Soviet's decree concerning my dismissal and Andropov's appointment. I gaped with dumb amazement. Kirilenko could hardly conceal a victorious smile.

I read the decree and then asked the members of the commission how they intended to continue.

"We have to present the new chairman."

"To whom?" I deliberately dragged everything out. It's gone eight in the evening, at this time everyone's gone home or to their dachas outside the town."

"Then you'll have to summon them," said Kirilenko without blinking an eyelid. "Send cars for them."

We decided who should be summoned, how to collect them and by what means to share out work. It involved members of the collegium, heads of the directorates and heads of independent departments. I issued the appropriate instructions to the head of the secretariat.

"Of course, Tsinev has to be here," Andropov emphasised in particular.

"Tsinev has to be here as head of a directorate," I shot in his direction. "The problem is that a few days ago he went into hospital for a small operation and I don't know if he's over it yet."

"They haven't operated on him yet," slipped in the new head.

Then I got angry.

"Yuri Vladimirovich," I said raising my voice sharply, "since you've come with a list ready prepared of those without whom my funeral will not be complete, put your cards on the table. We'll fetch whoever you want. Including Tsinev."

Those who were in Moscow got there quickly. It took almost another two hours to collect those who lived outside the city. The head of the secretariat kept us up to date. Everyone present heard his announcements.

The gathering was almost complete. We were just waiting for Tsinev.

"Come on, Vladimir Yefimovich, let's start without him," suggested Arvid Pelshe from behind the table.

"Absolutely not," I said spitefully, "if orders were that we should hold the meeting with Tsinev here, then we'll wait for him."

We waited another fifteen minutes and carried with our caustic and unimportant exchanges. What really annoyed me was that Brezhnev hadn't hesitated to serve notice on me before the sitting of the Politburo. This I also made a point of mentioning during our drawn-out exchanges.

"We discussed it with you in the Politburo," said Kirilenko, in a stupid attempt to explain it.

"The General Secretary is personally responsible for the work of the KGB. That was why he had to speak to me. It is up to you to decide about the head of the KGB, but whilst deciding about my future work it's your duty at least to ask for my opinion. I have a son and a daughter at home, both of them members of the Komsomol, and what am I going to say to them? What is the reason for my dismissal?"

"And how am I to explain why I've been moved from secretary of the Central Committee to head of the KGB?" Andropov suddenly interrupted.

"They'll soon understand that you've been entrusted with responsible work," I returned.

Apart from anything else Kirilenko proposed that the heads of the KGB in the regions, districts and republics should also know about the change in the leadership of the KGB and that a coded telegram with the same information should be sent to resident intelligence agents abroad. What was more, he wanted me to write it myself. Do you want me to write my own obituary? Certainly not! Let the new head of the KGB write it.

"He doesn't know how to do it yet," said Kirilenko.

"The organisation here is such that they know everything even without a head."

My deputies later told me that I had never spoken with them as sharply as I did that day. You never forced me to speak like that, I told them.

Mazurov stood at the window the whole time, looking out in silence, the statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky behind him.

In the end Tsinev turned up and we could start. Kirilenko opened proceedings and quickly handed over to Pelshe. The previously-prepared plan began to work. Pelshe had even been hurriedly summoned from Czechoslovakia where he was on a visit with a parliamentary delegation. The authors of the plan thought that his presence would make an impression on everyone gathered at the Lubyanka. Tsinev was there in case of need; if anyone had any doubts he would speak in support of the Politburo's decision.

Pelshe repeated what had been said in the Politburo: "We have no objections to Vladimir Yefimovich. We are simply moving him to different work, as he has already held office for a long time." Not a word about Svetlana. At the headquarters of the secret service everyone only smiled a little. There was no mention either of the distancing between the KGB and the Central Committee. The whole speech lasted no more than two minutes. No one else said anything. So I asked to speak. Kirilenko behaved as though he hadn't heard.

"Can I say something?" I repeated more emphatically. Mazurov, sitting next to me, tried to stop me getting up. I stood up and began without permission.

"I'm leaving the KGB and would like to say a few words in conclusion. I thank all those present for their convivial and cooperative work and for the help I received from all of you, especially at the beginning. All of you without exception behaved very well towards me and did everything possible for me to get into the job as quickly as possible. I would like to ask you all to welcome the new head in the same way." I finished speaking and sat down.

"You're a good fellow," whispered Mazurov.

"Did you think I was going to start casting doubts in front of everyone and criticising the decision of the Politburo?" I marvelled. "We're all members of the same Party - why would I sound the battle cry? It's much better for us to trust in one another."

After the meeting we went back to my office. Kirilenko suggested that I gave the keys to my desk and safes to the new head.

I grew angry. "This is my second home. Apart from everything else, over six years I've gathered a lot of books, papers and other personal effects. I have to go through it all, hand over the confidential material and take my personal things home."

They wriggled about for a long time without agreeing. It was obvious that in this particular they had been given strict orders. When Brezhnev later learnt that eventually they had left me in the office alone, he gave Kirilenko a hearty dressing down. He obviously thought I really was concealing some conspiratorial plan.

The "funeral brigade" left shortly before midnight. I was alone with the head of the secretariat and my assistants. The work that followed was not easy. I left the Lubyanka at four in the morning.

Around ten o'clock I rang the head of the secretariat. He told me that Andropov was already there. I went to see him and gave him the keys to my desk and the safes.

He received me with icy calm. He asked me nothing about anything, was not interested in one question about work or the staff. However, I didn't leave without making one point:

"You know, Yuri Vladimirovich, you won't be in charge here. It will be Tsinev who will be managing things." I didn't yet know about Tsvigun.

"That's no business of yours any more," he cut me off brusquely.

"We'll wait and see," I murmured eventually.

He took the keys in silence, then muttered something unintelligible and I left. We never saw each other again.

There was still another little epilogue to be played in the farewell performance. Two or three days later I called the Lubyanka to make an arrangement with the head of the secretariat about handing in my identity card and some other papers, and for my name to be removed from the Party list.

"Don't come in by the front door," the head of the secretariat requested.

"What's that? A new order?"

"Yes. And they want you to hand your identity card in as soon as possible."

"Understood," I murmured, and I realised that the order had come from Andropov.

They were not in such a hurry to cut off the telephone in my study at home. A few days later it rang and I heard the voice of the head of my secretariat again. He told me that they had summoned Tsvigun to Moscow from Azerbaijan.

"Heaven help him. And what do they want from him?" I wondered.

"You'll never guess."

They had appointed Tsvigun as a Deputy.

It wasn't long before Tsinev became Deputy as well. And before long they were both made First Deputies. That was merely the start of their lightning rise. The fruits were not long in coming.

I was bitter enough when I heard the news. But at the same time I had other things to worry about.