

<https://espionagehistoryarchive.com/2015/07/24/aleksandr-ogorodnik-cia-kgb/> Marc Hackard

<http://tayni.info/2923/> /no longer found /

http://loveread.me/read_book.php?id=43977&p=49 [Онлайн книга «История КГБ»](#)

Страница 49 /Pages 49-51/



Espionage History Archive



[SKIP TO CONTENT](#)



TRANSLATIONS

THE DEATH OF TRIGON

JULY 24, 2015 MARK HACKARD 5 COMMENTS

Aleksandr Ogorodnik, known as “Trigon” by his CIA handlers, was a Soviet diplomat who was lured into spying for Washington through sexual compromise – a honey trap. Historian Aleksandr Sever provides the inside story of how the KGB Second Chief Directorate ([Counterintelligence](#)) tracked and captured Ogorodnik, as well as speculation on his mysterious demise.

Among the CIA agents unmasked by the KGB, Aleksandr Ogorodnik occupies a special place. It was this man who became the main antagonist in a ten-part Soviet television series. The story of Aleksandr Ogorodnik, as shown on TV screens, was close to what happened in real life. The plot of the TV movie *TASS is Authorized to Announce* was written on the basis of investigation materials, and Chekists [KGB officers], active participants in the operation to expose the American spy, functioned as consultants. It’s understandable that in the picture the action occurred in a made-up foreign state and the traitor was a nondescript individual, while the basic attention of the viewers was focused on the main positive and negative personages – KGB and CIA officers. Behind the scenes, there remained a multitude of important details of this “noisy” affair.

We will tell of the genuine plot of this spy story. In Bogota, capital of Colombia, the CIA recruited the second secretary of the Soviet embassy – Aleksandr Ogorodnik. Ogorodnik was a doctoral candidate of economics, an athlete, erudite, etc. Here is how the personnel service of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) characterized him:

During the years of his work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he has shown himself as a disciplined, effective employee and an educated specialist who enjoys the trust and respect of the collective. He is politically literate, ideologically mature, and morally firm.

Alongside this the “exemplary” diplomat had three Achilles’ heels: an immoderate attraction to the weaker sex (he was simultaneously romantically involved with the wives of several colleagues, and one of those affairs received publicity and destroyed the family of an influential official at the MFA), suspicious financial operations (he obtained, for example, a foreign car at the beginning of his tour and then sold it in the USSR – the Foreign Ministry’s leadership found out, and our “businessman” had to return his profit of \$800 to the state), and unsatisfied ambitions.

The Americans knew about these and other sins committed by the “Agronomist” (the nickname assigned him by KGB counterintelligence officers). They “matched him up” with a woman – Pilar Suarez Barcala, an employee of the Colombian Institute of Culture and US intelligence agent. Then they blackmailed him with photographs of the romantic romps – a classic honey trap.

Here’s what kind of note Aleksandr Ogorodnik made in his diary soon after his recruitment by the CIA:

I have the character of a fighter, a strong will, honesty, and devotion to the ideals of freedom. Finally, I have extraordinary professional training and a life rare in its wealth of the most complex events. I am a man who decided long ago that I won't die decrepit in my bed...[\[i\]](#)

Returning to the Motherland, Ogorodnik began work as the second secretary in the American department of the MFA Directorate for Foreign Policy Planning. In this division were gathered the yearly reports of ambassadors and the conclusive analytical materials of MFA directorates and departments – generally everything that presented an interest to the leadership of the United States. And Ogorodnik was also planning on marrying the daughter of CPSU Central Committee Secretary Konstantin Rusakov.

According to one version, it was precisely during this period that he came under observation of Soviet counterintelligence. The fact of the matter is that the KGB possessed information that one of the employees of the Soviet embassy in Colombia had been recruited by US intelligence. During official business trips around the country Ogorodnik committed several mistakes. He had, for example, contacts with foreign delegations that went unsanctioned by the MFA leadership, he took notes on his notepad after meetings with high-level officials at the republican level, and he also traveled with several special self-defense weapons of West German manufacture (such as a pistol concealed in a pen).



Map supplied by the

CIA to Trigon (Aleksandr Ogorodnik) for dead drops in Moscow.

Western experts claim that Ogorodnik was exposed by the Czech intelligence illegal Karl Koecher, who together with his wife Hanna was able to “break through the Iron Curtain” in 1965, ending up in the United States. Representing himself as a fervent anti-communist and fluent in Russian, French, English, and Czech, in 1973 Koecher was accepted for work in the CIA’s Soviet Division as a translator. The pair was only arrested in 1984 and then exchanged for Soviet dissident Anatoly Shcharansky.

But Ogorodnik made his main mistake in Moscow when he began to regularly visit Victory Park. During those journeys he always left his car in a visible place set along American diplomats’ traditional route of travel. At Lubyanka they justifiably assumed that the MFA official’s goal was to carry out sessions of impersonal communications. In other words, loading and unloading the contents of a dead drop.

The KGB established visual control over the apartment where “Agronomist” lived. The Chekists were able to record the fact that secret writing had been used on a piece of paper, and they also found out the location of the dead drop, within which were kept the CIA’s instructions to their agent.

Yet the opinions of KGB veterans diverge further in the story. Some asserted that the traitor was indeed a valued agent whose exposure was a success for the Second Chief Directorate (the leader of the operation received an Order of the Red Banner).^[ii] Others, to the contrary, think that the Americans helped to “liquidate” their man according to three reasons: his connections with the family of a member of the Central Committee (the KGB regularly vetted the people surrounding high-level party functionaries); the low value of the information to which he had access in

Moscow; and the CIA needed to divert the attention of Soviet counterintelligence away from more valuable sources in the “tower” at Smolensk Square (where Ministry of Foreign Affairs was located).^[iii]

Independent of what point of view is correct, the finale of this story was Ogorodnik’s arrest on the evening of June 21st, 1977, by the door of his own apartment in Building No.2/1 on the Krasnopresnenskaya Embankment in Moscow. After that comes the screenplay scene from the film *TASS is Authorized to Announce*. Let’s “watch” it again, turning our attention to details.

We will begin from the fact that for some reason there was no prosecutor sanction for the arrest, while in those years the Chekists tried to observe the codex of criminal procedure. Moreover, they were taking down not a simple dissident, but someone with connections in the Communist Party Central Committee. Either this means that decision to interdict the espionage activity was taken unexpectedly, or that the outcome of the counterintelligence officers’ visit was determined in advance. Everyone who’s watched this film remembers well the scene when, after continual declarations of his non-complicity in the charges presented him, “Trianon” agreed to expound his confession on paper. Due to a lapse by the KGB during their frisk of Ogorodnik, he used his own Parker pen equipped with a special poison compartment, ending his life by suicide.

Participants in the events have attested that there was only one witness to what transpired – the interrogator who asked all the remaining members of the special group, of which a general from the KGB Seventh Directorate was part, no less, to excuse themselves from the room. Was *bon vivant* Aleksandr Ogorodnik prepared for such a step? Moreover, he still had the chance to save his own life if he was included in an operational game to expose his overseas controllers. Otherwise, why would the KGB subsequently need to search out a body double for Agronomist in order to catch CIA officer Martha Peterson red-handed?

The version exists that Ogorodnik was liquidated for the preservation of Yuri Andropov’s stable position as chairman of the KGB.^[iv] Let every reader independently determine the degree of Chekist participation in this procedure. There can be variants ranging from professional error (when counterintelligence officers didn’t frisk the detainee) to the forcible ingestion of poison in imitation of suicide. What’s important is another factor: everyone was interested in Agronomist’s death except KGB counterintelligence officers themselves. After all, they still had to undertake an operational game with the CIA, and to realize that with a dead agent would be significantly more complicated than with a live one. The chief of the KGB Second Chief Directorate, General Grigory Grigoriev, who carried out many similar measures during the Second World War when serving in Smersh’s Third Department, understood that perfectly well.

If Aleksandr Ogorodnik was alive, there would doubtless have to have been an “open” trial. And his ties to the daughter of a Central Committee secretary would surface there. Politburo members who treated the KGB chairman so coldly would obtain an excellent excuse to bring their wrath upon him. Such a trial would also ruinously reflect on Andropov’s relationship with top Soviet diplomat Andrei Gromyko. The process would be a most powerful blow to the pride and reputation of the latter. The foreign minister always claimed that he had no spies. And then it would be suddenly discovered that an official in the MFA central apparatus was working for the CIA.



Soviet Foreign

Minister Andrei Gromyko and KGB Chairman Yuri Andropov, 1982.

In KGB Maj. Gen. Vyacheslav Kevorkov’s opinion, here’s the kind of discussion that might have taken place between these major state figures:

Andropov would most likely call first. Of course, he couldn’t begin immediately with the death of the traitor:

– Good morning, Andrei. Tell me, have you read the report by the International Department regarding the Liberation Army?

– I read it. And honestly, Yura, I was surprised how the International Department set the question. Naturally, these guys are waging a noble struggle for their liberation, but they’re using methods of terror. I think we need to distance themselves from them. In any case, no help with weapons.

– *There can be no question of it.*

Then they'd go over one or two routine subjects. And only at the very end of the conversation:

– *Yes, Andrei, do you remember how I told you about our diplomat who was working for the Americans?*

At this point Andropov would have paused to turn up the heat in their dialogue and let Gromyko worry a bit with regard to the unpleasant matter that was unexpectedly raised. Gromyko was silent – that meant he understood.

– *So then, late tonight (Andropov continued, in no rush) my guys came to arrest him. And what do you know...*

Gromyko didn't know, but he waited for what kind of denouement would follow. Finally, after another pause, Andropov took pity on him and continued.

– *Well, out of fear the spy took the poison capsule the Americans had sent him.*

Now Gromyko needed a pause to not betray the gladness and relief in his voice and to think up a suitable answer.

– *Well, then, Yura, traitors have their logic and their inglorious end as always.*

Again silence. Then Andropov heartily concluded:

– *So, Andrei, we can say that we're of one opinion on the International Department's note.*

Gromyko readily confirmed:

– *Naturally, it couldn't be any other way.*

We can confidently say that both men stayed satisfied with the outcome of the conversation, and what's more important, the outcome of the affair. [\[v\]](#)

[i] Уваров О. «Тринон оказался огородником.» Российские вести, 2003 год, 26 февраля.

[ii] Кеворков, В.Е. *Генерал Бояров*. М.: 2003. С. 59.

[iii] Котов, О. О чем не был уполномочен заявить ТАСС. Независимое военное обозрение, 2003 года, 5 марта.

[iv] Там же.

[v] Кеворков, В.Е. *Генерал Бояров*. М.: 2003. С. 77-78.

Work Translated: Север А. История КГБ. Москва: Алгоритм, 2008. – Щит и меч. К 90-летию ВЧК.

Translated by Mark Hackard

Post navigation

[PREVIOUS POST](#) [Russian Intelligence vs. Napoleon](#) [NEXT POST](#) [Soviet Intelligence in World War II](#)
5 THOUGHTS ON “THE DEATH OF TRIGON”

1.  [jay008](#)

[JULY 25, 2015 AT 4:43 PM](#)

[REPLY](#)

[APRIL 15, 2016 AT 6:54 AM](#)

IT IS A TRAGEDY ABOUT TRIGON AS HE WAS PROBABLY A GREAT AGENT WAS HE MARRIED OR HAD CHILDREN

Like

[REPLY](#)

2.  [quibuslicet](#)

[JUNE 22, 2016 AT 12:14 AM](#)

Saw the first episode of Declassified, a new CNN series. It was about Trigon. CIA said he was caught, interrogated, and while under the pretense of writing a full confession he bit down on a pen that had a suicide pill in it and died on the spot. They showed a photograph of people carrying his casket.

[Blog at WordPress.com.](#)