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What TASS was not Authorized to Announce...

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About the author: The author expresses appreciation to veterans of the KGB of the USSR I. K. Peretrukhin and S. V. Lekarev



Agent Ogorodnik, aka AGRONOM. Photo from the book *Lubyanka, 2*

Twenty years ago, for the first time, Soviet television viewers saw the action movie *TASS is Authorized to Announce*, based on the novel of the same name by Yulian Semyonov, which tells the story of the KGB operation to investigate an American agent who was an employee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Alexander Ogorodnik. According to the official version, he committed suicide during his arrest. Since then, the story provided the basis for a variety of articles, books and television programs. One of the TV versions - *Secret of Intelligence (Тайны разведки)*" – was shown last week on NTV. Strictly speaking, no secrets were revealed. As previously unknown details, it was said that Nagonia in Africa was in reality Colombia; during the covert operation a double of Dubov-Ogorodnik was used; Martha Peterson, not a male diplomat, was arrested on Krasnoluzhsky Bridge; and the white Volga vehicle was black. However, testimony of participants and eyewitnesses to the events in the mid-1970s left huge room for reflection about their true motivation. A totally plausible version is that on the one hand, presented as a resounding counterintelligence success, the exposure of a Foreign Ministry official as a traitor primarily was intended to rid a senior party leader of an "undesirable" potential relative, and the KGB leadership – of an inevitable scandal. On the other hand, it was not at all a blunder for the Americans, who most likely intentionally gave Ogorodnik up to cover their more valuable Soviet agents.

THE "i" WAS NOT DOTTED

At the beginning of 1970 Alexander Ogorodnik arrived in Bogota, the capital of Colombia, in the position of 2nd Secretary of the Embassy. He was a little over 30 and a graduate of the Suvorov Military School and the Moscow State University for International Relations (MGIMO), had a PhD in Economics, was a scholar, athlete, led a sober lifestyle, did not smoke, and was careful with his appearance and health. But it would seem, within the positive image of a Soviet diplomat there were interwoven strings, pulling at which foreign intelligence made him "their man" - that is, his inordinate desire for the weaker sex and his unsatisfied ambitions. Although, in general, he was successfully promoted in his job, he complained in his diary about the undervaluation of his professional achievements by the leadership and the total stupidity of others around him. His career motives were an important factor in the choice of life partners – a choice that proved fatal. After his divorce from Aleksandra Arutinyan he poisoned Olga Serova, whom Ogorodnik planned to marry, fearing that she could report "wherever it leads" about her conjectures concerning his connection with foreign

intelligence. And the plans for his marriage to the daughter of a Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Konstantin Rusakov, which had a genuine chance to succeed considering the arrangement which Tamara [Rusakova], the spouse of a Central Committee member, fed to the candidate son-in-law, seems to have led to the grave Ogorodnik himself.

Ogorodnik's recruitment was conducted by the classic scheme of luring him into a "honey trap." The main argument for the consent of "friendship" with the CIA was a film depicting indelicate scenes involving the diplomat and the employee of University of Colombia, Pilar Suarez. A little-known detail – the beautiful Spaniard did not present a certificate of pregnancy to her lover from the Land of the Soviets - it was a phone call from Madrid to Bogota and then a visit to Ogorodnik by Colombian counterintelligence, whom he told that he agreed to work only with their senior partners. Thus, the Americans initially approached the subject through their "younger brothers" by attempting to recruit him "false flag," and only then showed their cards.

The first thing that casts doubt on the version circulated for more than two decades is the source that provided Soviet counterintelligence information about treachery within the diplomatic mission. He was the defector from Czechoslovakia, Karel Koecher, who after appropriate verification procedures, including a polygraph, was enlisted in the CIA Directorate of Analysis. At the end of October 1975, on his own initiative he restored agent communications with Czechoslovak intelligence, through which he passed information on the recruitment of a Soviet diplomat in a Latin American country. Allegedly, this fact became known to Koecher because the scope of his professional duties included analysis reports from the wiretapping of Ogorodnik's phone calls for the purpose of drawing up his psychological profile for further recruitment. But the KGB received only general details from their Czechoslovak colleagues—this background information did not reveal that the Americans had recruited a Soviet diplomat, so as it would not, in turn, give away its source within the US intelligence services.

But KGB veterans believe that this story smacks of a cover story (*legenda prikrytiya*), designed in the bowels of Langley. While we still cannot conclude whose agent Koecher is - embedded in the CIA by the Czechs, or inserted into Czechoslovak Intelligence by American intelligence, or, more likely, a classic "double." In such cases, as they say, 'Look who benefits.' During this period, Americans were working agents of very high rank, who subsequently became

defectors like Oleg Gordievsky and Victor Shevchenko. Their overseas owners could easily dispose of "intelligence trash (*razvedmusor*)" to divert attention of Soviet counterintelligence from the wards they did not want to lose.

The version of the little-useful TRIANON - Ogorodnik got his codename from the Americans - confirms that after returning from his tour abroad to the Soviet Union in December 1974, and until his arrest in June 1977, Ogorodnik did not have access to valuable, in terms of foreign intelligence, information. His position in the American Department of the Directorate of Planning for Foreign Policy Issues (UpVM) of the MFA USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, received not without the protection of the Rusakov family, at first glance was prestigious and important, but it allowed him to familiarize himself with documents far removed from the highest level of importance. His connections with the Rusakovs could serve as an additional basis for the Americans to "make a discard." They were well aware that given the rigid system of Soviet counterintelligence sensitivity, senior officials in this environment are carefully vetted. In addition, the Americans turned a blind eye to the fact that Ogorodnik murdered his fiancée Olga Serova with the help of a special poison they sent him to use for his own self-destruction in case of emergency that was a direct route to decipher.

Another noteworthy detail was that the person who oversaw the operation for developing TRIANON-Ogorodnik was Aldrich Ames, who in the future was Soviet intelligence's "supermole" in Langley, who sent information on 20 American agents. The fact that Ames, the employee of the central apparatus of the CIA who was charged to finalize the recruitment of Ogorodnik, showed that he was highly trustworthy and was testimony to his significance as a professional in the eyes of the CIA. In the future this interfered in many ways with uncovering him as a KGB agent.

The operation received the codename CAYMAN, and the target of development the alias AGRONOM. Subordinates of Generals Grigory Grigorenko(1) and Vitaly Boyarov(2) did a great job of identifying Ogorodnik from among persons who fell within parameters of the image of the agent transferred by the Czechoslovak side. It is worth giving credence to testimony that the implementation of operational materials was delayed more than six months, largely because of intrigues between the leadership of the Foreign Ministry and the KGB, of course. The Chief of the Security Service of the Foreign Ministry, General Kuryshev(3), repeatedly informed Minister Andrei Gromyko about Ogorodnik, whose response was something like this: "There are no traitors in the Foreign Ministry." Yet the degree

of influence in the Soviet hierarchy of the KGB Chairman, Yuri Andropov, seems to have been sufficient to overcome the resistance of the corporate leadership of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was necessary to authorize such operations.



(1) Grigorenko, Grigoriy Fyodorovich, KGB Lieutenant General, Chief of the Second Chief Directorate 1970-1982; Responsible for the overall TRIANON operation.



(2) Boyarov, Vitaliy Konstantinovich, retired KGB Lieutenant General, First Deputy Chief of the SCD. Head of the investigation to catch Ogorodnik.



(3) Colonel or Major-General Kuryshev, Mikhail Ivanovich, Chief of the Security Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (detached from a department of the First Chief Directorate)

THE "PARKER" – MURDER?

Ogorodnik's arrest which, as we know, ended with his death, took place on the evening of June 22, 1977. A "group of friends" met the MFA employee as he came up to the door of his apartment. Attention is drawn to the fact that necessary authorization to detain and search him, according to criminal procedure law, had not been received. However, this suggests that the decision to suppress his espionage was taken suddenly as well as that the outcome of the KGB's visit was predetermined. All who are familiar with this story will remember the textbook scene when, after lengthy professions of innocence of the charges against him, the KGB gave him back his own "Parker" pen that contained a special toxic

compound and committed suicide. But those who participated in the events said that there was only one witness to what actually happened - the investigator who asked other members of the special group (task force) to leave the room, including a general from the KGB 7th Directorate. Was Alexander Ogorodnik, a swinger and a man who was a slave to his own body, capable of taking this step? Especially since he still had a chance to live if he were incorporated into the operational game to expose his overseas managers - or why it was necessary to look for a double for Ogorodnik to arrange Martha Peterson's capture red-handed? Or was TRIANON-AGRONOM eliminated for the sake of the reputation of the KGB Chiefs?

At least from the memoirs of the Deputy Chief of the KGB Second Chief Directorate Vitaly Boyarov, described by Vyacheslav Kevorkov (4) in the book *To Live Honestly and Interestingly*, we learn that the General counterintelligence officer who had been called "on the carpet" to report the failure to Andropov met "no reproach or even discontent." A few days after the operation one of Boyarov's subordinates had a conversation with Makarov, the personal secretary to the Foreign Minister, in which the latter spoke approximately the following sentence: "This time your boss was brilliant – he did not frame our minister; he took over and in one fell swoop eliminated the problem. You did everything in a professional manner, nobody will smell a rat. Their own weapons were turned against them." Whether the death of Ogorodnik was "ordered" or not, it spared Andrei Gromyko and Konstantin Rusakov many unpleasant details that might have emerged during the trial. And Yuriy Andropov not only did not aggravate the difficult relationship with the Foreign Ministry and the Central Committee, but even drew political dividends. Immediately after the expulsion to America of Martha Peterson, who had been caught red-handed and detained, US Ambassador Toon appeared at the Soviet Foreign Ministry with an urgent request not to make the incident public, "which would be highly appreciated by the United States Government."

In any case, the book and the movie *TASS is Authorized to Announce...*, created in the early 1980s, had great propaganda value. Cunning imperialist intelligence was demonstrated to Soviet citizens as well as the great social importance of activities of the "repressive monster" - the KGB. The Americans (we are talking about experts on "Soviet Russia") were reminded of the tough counterintelligence

system established by Dzerzhinsky's heirs, which allowed them to keep every step of foreign intelligence services under the microscope.



Igor Peretrukhin



Stanislav Kevorkov