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INFORMATION IN THE SOVIET
SECURITY APPARATUS

BY

ROMAN MEYEROVICH

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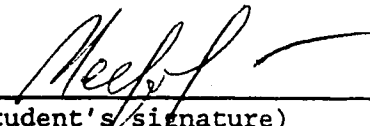
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TO MY PARENTS

Abstract

This thesis is about the problems in the flow of information in the Soviet security apparatus. Structurally, it is divided into four chapters.

The presentation in Chapter one begins with the description of the theory of information and its application to the study of communication in the Soviet Union. Specifically, it is proposed that the Soviet security police, the KGB, acts as an essential link in the communication system of the USSR.

In Chapter two an attempt is made to trace the origins of the KGB and to show its position in the Soviet political system. It is argued that the KGB's widespread penetration of Soviet society at all levels uniquely positions the organization to serve as a feedback communication network. Its purpose is to provide the Communist party leadership with the information about Soviet society and the outside world.

On the other hand, Chapter three argues that despite its ideal position to provide valuable information in the most efficient manner, the KGB is riddled with inefficiencies. This results in distortion of information and leads to failures of the security apparatus in the fulfillment of its task as an information gatherer.

An example of how such failures lead to setbacks in the ability of the Party to comprehend reality is presented in Chapter four. The KGB's communication failure prior to the Six Day War in the Middle East in 1967 led to a grave setback for Soviet foreign policy. In other words, this chapter underscores the problems that are faced by the KGB as an information gatherer.

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I. The Soviet Union, Communication and the KGB

As the Soviet Union of Michael Gorbachev attempts to reform its economic and social systems, the central authorities often find themselves without relevant information on which to make rational decisions. And the "poor information [which is available, usually] leads to infeasible plans."[1] It must be said that every society, indeed every organization, in order to function, needs information about its environment to make the proper decisions, and it needs information on how the decisions are implemented. And it is probable that every society and organization at times is affected by a deficiency in information. The Soviet Union then, is not different from other societies or organizations. Buy what is unique about the USSR appears to be the magnitude of the communication failure. The Soviet leaders, perhaps more than anyone else in the world, are concerned with communication.[2] This should not be at all surprising. In order to maintain its control over the society, the Communist Party, which is the only legitimate independent organization in the USSR, requires information on just about every activity of the other organizations and individuals. But why is the society which is so concerned with communication so prone to its failures?

To answer this question it is first necessary to outline the basic requirements for an efficient communication network. In doing so some of the key issues will be discussed. Does the provision of a greater amount of information eliminate the "information starvation"? It will be argued

[1]Ed. A Hewett, Reforming the Soviet Economy: Equality versus Efficiency (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1988), 154, 187.

[2]Ithiel De Sola Pool, "Communication in Totalitarian Societies", in Handbook of Communication, ed. Ithiel de Sola Pool and others (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing, 1973), 465.

that quantity does not solve the problem and paradoxically, it may be partly responsible for the problem. The second issue is the cause of distortion in information; this too will be discussed.

When our attention turns to the Soviet Union, possible reasons for failure in the Soviet communication network will be suggested. Issues such as vertical communication and lack of feedback will be mentioned. Special attention will be focused on the security and intelligence apparatus as a communication channel. Indeed, this gigantic apparatus can be regarded as a feedback system. It should be mentioned, however, that the intent of this chapter is to present a general discussion of the Soviet communication network and its failures. An in-depth analysis will be provided in subsequent chapters.

When we turn to the theory of communication, it is important to note that the theory is an extension into the social sciences of the science of cybernetics. "Cybernetics is the study of communications and control in all types of organizations, from machines to large-scale social organizations." It is the "science of maintaining order in a system whether that system is natural or artificial."[3] There are several key concepts around which the theories of cybernetics and communications are articulated. For the purposes of our discussion the most important concepts are information, feedback, and distortion.

Information is the most important concept in the analysis of a communication network. It is information that "flows through the channels of communication, is received, analyzed, [and] reacted to." Carl Deutsch

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[3]Alan C. Issak, Scope and Methods of Political Science, rev.ed. (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey press, 1975), 230; Jeremy Campbell, Grammatical Man (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 22-3.

defined information as a "patterned relationships between events."[4]

Whenever governments set goals in their domestic or foreign policies, they must have information on how far their developing position is from a desired goal. Since goals are not usually achieved immediately after they are set, a new kind of information is then required to indicate where the system's actions have taken it in relation to the goal. Was the action successful in bringing the system closer to the goal, or was it not? This kind of information is called feedback.[5] A well functioning feedback mechanism allows the governments to learn what kinds of actions bring satisfactory results and which policies do not work. Since the environment in which the political system operates is dynamic rather than static, the new information for the new policy would ideally incorporate the feedback information on how the old policy worked. It is to the extent that the feedback information is not available that the system finds itself in the "dark" as to whether a particular policy should be maintained, changed or abandoned altogether.

Without minimizing the importance of feedback, it should be noted that the feedback only captures the environment's reaction to the past action. But as an old saying reminds us, the life of a nation can only be understood backwards, yet must be lived forwards. No matter how much knowledge is available regarding the past or present policies, there is always uncertainty regarding the future. Hence, there is always a need for new information. And the more dynamic is the environment, the greater is the level of uncertainty with respect to the attainability of one's goals.

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[4] Karl W. Deutsch, The Nerves of Government (New York: The Free Press, 1963), 82.

[5] Ibid., 88.

"And the greater the uncertainty, the larger the amount of information" needed to resolve that uncertainty.[6]

Decision-makers (at all levels of an organization) often do not understand that simply a greater quantity of messages is not necessarily equivalent to a larger amount of information. It is often not appreciated that what is required to resolve the uncertainty is the extent of meaning that the messages contain, not just the number of the messages. The message itself can carry both the information (i.e. meanings) and the noise (irrelevant information). More raw information (messages) does not lead necessarily to a greater clarity of the original event. On the contrary, the greater the splintering of information, the harder it becomes to see what the original state of affairs was. The following example should help clarify the above ideas.

Imagine yourself being told that upon entering a specific room, you will see two objects which, if put together, will create one subject. You have not been told that the two objects are, in fact, two halves of a table. Nevertheless, when you enter the room and see the two objects you quickly realize that they are, indeed, two halves of the table. Based on prior learning, you will recognize the parts of a familiar whole. Now, imagine yourself in a similar situation, except for one thing: when you enter the room you see a hundred (as opposed to two) pieces of a disassembled table. Without having been told that this was a table, and without a sketch, you may never realize that what you are seeing are the parts of a table.

The case with the information is similar. Simply having more "facts" would not lead to a greater comprehension of the events taking

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[6]Campbell, Grammatical Man, 68.

place, but may instead lead to information overload. As Richard Fagen pointed out: "Too much information, arriving too fast and too 'raw', can immobilize an individual or an organization"[7] and -- we might add -- a nation. Overload leaves a communication network clogged with irrelevant information.

The information overload is, in fact, one of the forms of distortions in communication flow. Distortion is usually defined as "the changes that take place in information between the time it is received and the time it is reacted to." And if too much distortion is allowed, the decision-makers may be in trouble, for they are "not reacting to the actual situation, but a distorted impression of it."[8] It is not difficult to see that a vast quantity of raw, unprocessed information can distort reality, since valuable information can be "drowned" in a great number of irrelevant messages (noise).

Unfortunately, information overload is not the only possible source of distortions in a communication network. The process of communicating "involves a source generating a message which travels through a channel to an audience."[9] The distortion of information and the subsequent policy failure may be the result of a malfunction at any one or all stages of the communication process.

Turning now to the communication channel, the goal of the communication network is to transmit information with as few distortions or losses of information as possible, and if that cannot be done, there may be

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[7]Richard R. Fagen, Politics and Communication (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), 91.

[8]Issak, Scope and Methods, 232.

[9]Fagen, Politics and Communication, 17.

several causes of failure. One cause can be broadly defined as structural. To be more precise, different organizational constructions of the channel may affect the efficiency of the specific channel. In fact, a great deal of research has centered on organization theory and the way organizational structures affect information collection, processing and transmission. In complex social systems, the structural problems that are usually identified with communication failures are secrecy, specialization, centralization, and hierarchy.[10] And while a more detailed discussion of different effects that organizational structure has on information collection will be taken up in chapter 3, it may be said here that communication distortion will always take place. The network can be made more efficient but it will never eliminate all possible distortions. This is due to the fact that organizations and governments are made up of people.

It is people who collect, translate, condense, or block the passage of information. In other words, it is people who _communicate_. As a result the failure can occur at the source, in the channel, or with the audience. When it comes to people involved in communication there are two possible sources of distortions of the process. One is an unconscious distortion of information. In other words, it is a perceptual distortion of reality which is done quite unintentionally when an individual's cognitive process is influenced by the political culture of his society, the level of his education, his life experience, or other possible factors. And while the education and the greater exposure to other cultures may lessen the ethnocentricity of one's views, the person is unlikely to escape the effects of his socialization process. This fact is true in the case of

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[10]Harold L. Wilensky. _Organizational Intelligence: Knowledge and Policy in Government and Industry_ (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1967), 42.

both the <u>rulers</u> and the ruled, and it influences the type of information that the rulers deem essential and also how they interpret it.

As far as conscious distortion of information is concerned, it usually has to do with the personal considerations of the individual. Whatever is concerned with the individual's advancement of his condition in life would fall into this category. Let us take <u>power</u> relation as an example. Several researchers have observed that information is a scarce resource which indicated status and influences careers. To possess the essential information is to possess power.[11] It would not be at all surprising then if individuals "hoard" information which is relevant to <u>their</u> career advancement. This kind of distortion often affects the transmission of information.

It is interesting to note that the conscious distortion of information is closely connected with the <u>structural</u> design of the communication network, and, in fact, is likely to be influenced by the organization arrangements. Depending on structural design, some conscious distortions will either be encouraged or discouraged. It is only natural for people who are positioned closer to the source of information (often middle-level, and even lower level employees), to "have a near monopoly of insight into feasible alternatives."[12] As a result, they act as "gatekeepers" of information. Whether this information does or does not get channeled to the upper-level personnel depends on the structural arrangement of rewards and punishments in the organization.

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[11]Wilensky, <u>Organizational Intelligence</u>, 43; Stephen P. Robins, <u>Organization Theory: The Structure and Design of Organizations</u> (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983), 78.

[12]Wilensky, <u>Organizational Intelligence</u>, 43; Deutsch, <u>Nerves of Government</u>, 154-55.

Centralization, secrecy, hierarchy, specialization all affect conscious decisions of the personnel on what to do with the information in their hands. Again, a more detailed discussion of this issue will take place in chapter 3.

In considering the problem of communications distortion, it is worth noting that different political systems, in order to survive, permit different boundaries in the amount of lost and distorted information about its environment. In a democratic country such as Canada proportionally more information distortion can be allowed and still permit the political system to survive. If the government does not have important information on which to make decisions or if it does not act on the information which it does have, it is likely to lose power in the next elections for failing to keep in contact with the environment within which it operates. Yet the political system of the state will remain intact.

In the Soviet context, the Communist Party claims "that it, and it alone, clearly and correctly understands... truths about human society [and] laws of development..." When in power, such a party "envelopes the state and attempts to penetrate its fiber to the last individual."[13] In such a system there is no clear delineation between the environment and the state. The Communist Party tries to establish and maintain total control over the society.[14] Since the Communist party sees itself as responsible

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[13]Ronald J. Hill and Peter Frank, The Soviet Communist Party, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 5; George Schwab, ed., Ideology and Foreign Policy (New York: Cyrco Press, Inc., Publishers, 1978),3.

[14]Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 17.

for everything, it needs information about everything. The government cannot take a chance in not knowing something that may turn out to be important for its control of the society. For it is obvious that if once removed from power, there would not likely be a second chance for the party to gain power. If it were to lose power, a complete change in the political system would probably take place. The government is driven to acquire as much information about the society as possible. It cannot afford distortions and losses of information to the same extent that democratic systems can, because its political life is at stake.

An obsession with information in the USSR is evidenced by the elaborate system of information gathering and control. In addition to the Communist party itself performing the function of a communication channel, a big role in communications is allotted to the security and intelligence apparatus, the main structural unit of which is the KGB (Committee for State Security).

It is customary to see the KGB as an instrument for espionage and repression, which it no doubt is. It seems that whatever serious research is done on the activities of the organization tends to overlook a very important function of the KGB as an information gatherer and controller. But as we shall see in chapter 2, the KGB from the inception of the Soviet state in 1917 has spread its tentacles virtually into every corner of the society. Its enormous network of officers and informers acts as giant "ears" for the leaderships. It serves simultaneously as a feedback communications network, providing the party with the information on the reactions of society to the leadership policies and as a primary source of information which originates in the environment (internal and external) and is not directly connected to the specific policies of the government.

Yet, in spite of the enormity of its efforts, the KGB is very inefficient in its collection, processing, and transmission of information. A great deal of valuable information is distorted or lost, while the vast amounts of irrelevant or "raw" information are transmitted to the top.

The reasons behind the KGB inefficiency as an information gatherer are many and will be discussed in Chapter 3. It can be said here, however, that the all-pervasive secrecy, strict hierarchical chain of command, rigid specialization and compartmentalization, and centralization which is so common to the Soviet system of organization, are major structural causes of distortion and blockage of information.

Since both the KGB and its competitors for information are answerable to the Communist Party, the result is rivalry and an indiscriminate chase after more information to give to the leadership, so as to secure the party favor. But, when one realizes that there are no information gatherers independent of the Communist Party, it becomes clear that the rivalry is for quantity of information, not for quality. This leads to inundation of the top leadership with poor, irrelevant information.

The leadership itself is responsible for the distortion or omission of valuable information of the KGB. As the evidence in Chapter 3 shows, the Soviet leaders have a certain view of the world, conditioned by their prior experience and the Communist ideology. These factors act as a screen against information which is not consistent with their beliefs. The KGB operatives are quite aware of the leadership mind set and, as a result, feed it the information which supports the party leaders preconceptions and biases. In the end, the Soviet leaders receive what they want to hear as opposed to what they need in order to make proper decisions.

Similarly, a great deal of information is distorted by the KGB personnel because of their own mind set. When the KGB is studied as an organization, it is often overlooked that the security police is a Soviet institution. Its personnel are Soviet citizens. They go to the same schools, they read the same books and newspapers as the other Soviet citizens do. They learn what can be said and what cannot be said. They internalize the same biases and preconceptions which are part of the Soviet political culture. In sum, the KGB operatives cannot give the party what it needs in order to see domestic and foreign situations accurately, because they themselves see it in the same light as the leaders. Distortion is pervasive and unavoidable.

Indeed, the failure of the Soviet intelligence and subsequently the Soviet policy in the Middle East in 1967, which is examined in Chapter 4, can be traced to the above discussed problems that KGB faces in gathering information. The Soviets failed both to anticipate the course of events which led to the Six Day War as well as the outcome of that war. They grossly underrated Israel's capability and overrated that of the Arab states.

From the above it is not difficult to see the answer to the question posed in the introduction of this chapter: "Why is the Soviet Union, which is so concerned with communication, so prone to communications failure?" By approaching this as an issue in information, it is possible to see that the entire Soviet cybernetic mechanism is inefficient. It is a system which favors quantity of information at the expense of quality. It is rigid and highly centralized. This produces distortions and blockage of information. The human factor is influenced by the organizational problems and renders operatives unwilling to provide the appropriate information,

and the Soviet socialization process makes them incapable of doing so.

Unfortunately for the Soviet Union, the KGB is supposed to provide accurate and relevant information to the decision-makers, but because it is a Soviet institution, it cannot escape the maladies of Soviet society at large.

Whatever its failures, the KGB remains the third largest Soviet organization, and an important player on the domestic and international scenes. And in order to understand fully the role that the KGB plays in the Soviet information net, it is necessary to take a look at the history and evolution of this unique Soviet institution.

II. The KGB, The Communist Party, And the Soviet Society -
A Historical Background

The Soviet political police organization -- KGB -- has undergone many reorganizations since its inception and at different times it has been known to different generations under different names. Yet, practically for all citizens of the USSR, at all times, this permanent element of Soviet power helped define the boundaries between permissible and non-permissible behavior - from what to read and say or think, to what to do.

This particular chapter will discuss three issues, namely: a) origins of the political police, b) and how it expanded its interests in the affairs of the Soviet state, and c) the intricate relations of the KGB with and its subordination to the Party throughout the entire length of Soviet history.

Since we cannot completely understand what happens today without, at least, some knowledge of what took place in the past, we have to look back into the Soviet history for help in comprehending the present reality. And since this presentation will focus on the all-pervasiveness of the political police, the Communist Party control of it, and above all, the continuity of the established patterns from the Vecheka to the KGB, it seems imperative that before we look at the security police of today's Soviet Union, we would be well advised to note how and why did it come into existence some seventy years ago.

The Soviet secret police -the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage (known as Vecheka or Cheka)- was created by the Bolshevik government under Lenin on December 20, 1917 (under the old Julian calendar)- only six weeks after the

October revolution[1] At the time, its creation should have not come as a surprise to any observer of the Russian political scene. Two main reasons are usually suggested. First, the creation of the security police was directly related to the balance, or perhaps the imbalance, of socio-political forces which existed immediately after the Bolsheviks seized power. As evidenced by the elections to the Constituent Assembly — held on November 12, 1917 -- the Bolsheviks were soundly defeated, with three-quarters of the voters casting their ballots against the Party. And since the Bolsheviks had no intentions of either relinquishing the power or sharing it with other political parties, the resort to repression was rather a "natural one." As Leonard Schapiro observed, the Cheka came into existence in response to the conditions that arise when a minority is determined to rule alone.[2]

The other impetus for the establishment of the political police -- the motive which existed independently of "objective" political reality — originated with the deeply held view on the part of the leading Bolsheviks that terror and repression are not a regrettable by-product of the disintegration of the old political order, but rather a necessary and even desirable condition for the establishment of a new, socialist,

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[1] George Leggett, The Cheka: Lenin's Political Police (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1981), xxi.

[2] Leonard Schapiro, 1917 The Russian Revolutions and the Origins of Present Day Communism (London: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd., Penguin Books, 1984), 147, 185.

order.[3] Trotsky echoed the sentiment by claiming that "[i]ntimidation is a powerful weapon of policy...."[4] In his report to the Council of Peoples' Commissars on the eve of Vecheka creation, F. Dzerzhinskii, the official mentor and the head of Vecheka collegium, made it clear what the goal of the new organization was to be:

> Do not think that I seek forms of revolutionary justice; we are not now in need of justice. It is war now -- face to face, a fight to the finish. Life or death![5]

To the above should be added the fact that many Bolsheviks had spent the greater part of their lives trying to outwit the tsarist political police, the Okhrana, and, in turn, being outwitted by it. Dzerzhinskii, for instance, spent twenty years of his life in the underground, in prison, or in Siberian exile.[6] Why then should it be surprising that the Bolshevik leadership did not feel repulsion at the idea of having their own secret police? After all, they had often witnessed its effectiveness. And now, the Bolsheviks were in control, being in position of having their own police apparatus, which would serve instead of hounding them. And they were all serving a grand mission.

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[3]V.I. Lenin, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, 5th ed., [Collected works] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1962), 35:192.

[4]Leon Trotsky, The Defence Terrorism, with a Preface by H.N. Brailsford (London: The Labour Publishing Company, 1921; George Allen & Unwin, 1921), 55.

[5]Leggett, The Cheka, 17.

[6]Ibid., 167.

But, however easy it is to create an organization of repression, it is difficult to define the object, nature, and the limits of its operations. This vagueness of definition played a major role in the development of the Soviet security police, and the vagueness appears to have been deliberate.

Thus, for instance, an accusation of engaging in "counter-revolutionary" activity or sabotage was a very powerful indictment, insofar as the severity of punishment and overall subjective (psychological) stigmatization of an individual were concerned. The problem lay in that the definition of a counter-revolutionary activity was extremely vague and, as a result, provided guidance neither for the people nor the Vecheka. To quote the minutes of the meeting of the Sovnarkom (Council of Peoples Commissars) during which it was decided to establish the Vecheka, the Commission's tasks were

> To suppress and liquidate all attempts and acts
> of counter-revolution and sabotage throughout
> Russia, from whatever quarters (emphasis
> added).[7]

The above statement about "counter-revolution from whatever quarter," when needed, can easily mean "counter revolution from every quarter." That this interpretation was (and is) not only a theoretical possibility, but was applied in practice is evidenced by statements of Dzerzhinskii -- the head of the Cheka, the first (and only) head of its successor, GPU, and the first director of OGPU. As early as 1919 he did claim that there were enemies in almost all state institutions.[8] Another example of

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[7]Ibid., 17.

[8]F.E. Dzerzhinskii, Izbrannye proizvedeniia [selected works] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1957), 1:275.

fluidity of the definition of the "enemy quarter" and the "enemy behavior" came again as a declaration by Dzerzhinskii in which he stated that even <u>attitudes</u> and not only overt behavior could get one into trouble with the political police. The full severity of the law was to be applied to the attitudes such as lack of discipline (presumably at work) and evil intention.[9]

The Vecheka was just as arbitrary in the methods it used to suppress dissent as it was in deciding what constituted dissension itself. The aforementioned decision of the <u>Sovnarkom</u> outlined what the <u>Vecheka</u> was to do. It was to carry preliminary investigation into alleged transgressions and "to hand over for trial by revolutionary tribunal all saboteurs and counter-revolutionaries."[10] Thus, the Vecheka was to be an administrative organ. However, only nine days after it was created, the Vecheka was granted powers of arrest, and on February 21, 1918, it received a mandate to carry out the death penalty. For the infringement of labor discipline, the Commission had the right to commit any individual to a forced labor camp.[11] All of the above powers were granted to the Vecheka in a peacemeal fashion, while rarely mentioning the secret police itself. These orders, decrees, and decisions almost invariably referred to <u>all</u> law and order enforcement agencies — terms vague enough to include the political police without having to mention them by name.[12] Alternatively, proclamations such as Lenin's "Socialist

[9]Ibid., 288.

[10]Leggett, <u>The Cheka</u>, 17.

[11]Ibid., 18, 110, 147.

[12]Ibid., 129.

Fatherland in Danger," with its bombastic announcement that the "enemies of the people" would be shot on the scene of the crime,[13] had the same effect; without mentioning the organization, it enhanced the Vecheka's authority by virtue of the fact that the organization was, indeed, created to "deal" with the enemies of the people.

This was the way in which an institution with extensive powers, potentially affecting every individual, came into existence. In the beginning it did not even have any legal basis for its existence (since the Vecheka was established by a decision of the Sovnarkom) and the decision was never published as a decree.[14] It was an extra-legal body whose presence was beginning to be felt throughout the country, but whose authority one was powerless to resist.

To be sure, the attempts to limit the police power were made but failure was their usual outcome. The most persistent (albeit unsuccessful) opposition to the growing powers of the Vecheka came from the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) and the NKIu (People's Commissariat for Justice) - the two institutions that were officially entrusted with the safeguarding of law, order, and justice.

As far as the People's Commissariat for Justice was concerned, it proposed to take away from the Vecheka its extra-judicial powers and to subordinate them to the Revolutionary Tribunals of the NKIu.[15] And while for a short period of time the Chekists were deprived of the right

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[13] Lenin (5) Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, 35:355

[14] Leggett, The Cheka, 18.

[15] Ibid., 141.

to pass sentence, the Extraordinary Commissions retained their right to confine those arrested in concentration camps. Furthermore, as Leggett pointed out "it became Vecheka practice to circumvent the statute's restrictions by transferring prisoners earmarked for execution to localities where martial law applied."[16] But the real victory of the secret police over the NKIu came with the decision to let members of the Cheka become members of the Revolutionary Tribunals, the arm of the Commissariat of Justice responsible for conducting trials and passing sentences.[17] Thus, by being invested with the power to conduct investigations (with the obvious discretion as to whom, when, and how to investigate), the Vecheka, having obtained seats on Revolutionary Tribunals, had regained the ability to oversee cases from the beginning to the end.

Hence, the conflict between the Vecheka and the People's Commissariat for Justice was resolved not by subordinating the former to the rule of law supposedly enforced by the latter, but in the opposite fashion -- the infiltration of the Commissariat for Justice by the security police, thereby effectively negating any restraining influence that NKIU could have exercised. Having failed, the attempt to restrain the Vecheka eventually led to the superior-subordinate relationship between the security apparatus and the machinery of justice, the relationship that exists up to the present day.

Now it should be pointed out that the clash of the Vecheka with the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) took place not because

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[16]Ibid., 145.

[17]Ibid., 146.

of the opposition of the latter to the **actions** (such as arrests, executions, sentencing to labor camps) of the former, but rather over who should take credit for them. The main bone of contention here was the desire of the NKVD to subordinate the local Cheka units to the Soviets to which Cheka units were **formally** attached, but who in **practice** took orders from and reported to the Vecheka in Moscow.[18] The dispute was resolved in the same manner as it was done in the case of the conflict between the Vecheka and NKIu -the security police taking over its antagonist - the NKVD. As was mentioned above (page 4) on March 30, 1919, Dzerzhinskii - the head of the Vecheka - was appointed to head the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs.[19] Again, an attempt to limit the influence of political police resulted in just the opposite.

In fact, the scope of the Vecheka's activities was widening very quickly. In order to ensure the army's allegiance to the Soviet regime, Special Departments were organized within the Vecheka for the purposes of combatting espionage and checking any possibility of dissension in the military. These departments were empowered to initiate investigations, and in the process they reserved the right to conduct searches, monitor all mail, and arrest suspected individuals. In order to undertake the above described actions, the political police needed only the orders of the Special Departments of the Extraordinary Commission.[20] Essentially this

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[18]Ibid., 116.

[19]Dzerzhinskii, Izbrannye proizvedeniia, 1:548.

[20]G.A. Belov and others, eds. Iz istorii Vserossiiskoi Chrezvychainoi Kommissii, 1917-1921 [From the History of the All-Union Extraordinary Commission, 1917-1921.] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1958), 259-60.

meant that the military itself had no say whatsoever in either who (and why) was being investigated, or the kind of punitive actions which were sanctioned against its members. It is of interest to note here that espionage abroad also began at this time (early 1919), since the Vecheka through its Special Department (in Moscow) was to direct "the work of the local Special Departments, control their activities, [as well as] organize and manage the operations of the intelligence network abroad...."[21] (emphasis added).

At about the same time (i.e., early 1919), railroad Extraordinary Commissions were organized under the control of the Vecheka. Their purpose was maintenance (with the help from the regular militia forces) of law and order with no interference into day-to-day management of the railways.[22] Yet, when one reads orders, directives, and speeches of Dzerzhinskii, who eventually became the Commissar for Transport (in 1921) while retaining his positions in the Vecheka and NKVD, it becomes obvious that the definition of order was interpreted rather broadly. Among other things, it included the fight against corruption and theft, as well as a concern about the levels of education among the workers of transport.[23] So much for the decree prohibiting the Vecheka and NKVD from interfering with administrative aspects of management of the railways.[24]

Indeed, the list of responsibilities and "interests" of the Vecheka was astonishing. Thus, the Committee for combating fires was created

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[21]Ibid., 260.

[22]Ibid., 261.

[23]Dzerzhinskii, Izbrannye proizvedeniia, 1:552.

[24]Belov, Iz istorii VchK, 261.

with representatives from Vecheka, NKVD, and the People's Commissariat of Labor. The Committee for improvement of the workers living conditions also included members of the security police. So did the body responsible for improvement of children's well-being. As a reuslt of the Civil War there were thousands of orphaned and homeless children. At about the same time (in 1921), it was decided to create troops of the Vecheka, whose responsibility included guarding the borders of the USSR. The Vecheka also expressed interest in creating Chekist groups within the Trade Unions.[25] And when Dzerzhinskii became chairman of the Supreme Council of the National Economy (VSNKh), responsible for supervision of Soviet industry, he allowed the members of the political police to take top VSNKh positions, thereby inviting police involvement in the economic life of the state.[26]

The influence of the political police in foreign affairs also dates back to this early period. Here, just as in the case of the domestic environment, the Vecheka was counted upon to supply the Bolshevik leaders with information about external events. This information helped to shape the leader's views of the world and indicated the Soviet position in that world. And, quite obviously, the information played an essential role in the Soviet attempts to influence the world events. As was mentioned above, the first organized effort at espionage abroad coincided with the creation of the Special Department (Osobyi Otdel) within the Vecheka in 1919, whose responsibility among other things included management of an

[25]Ibid., 436, 485-6.

[26]Amy W. Knight, The KGB: Police and Politics in the Soviet Union (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd, 1988), 17.

intelligence network in foreign countries. In 1920, the Foreign Department (Inostrannyi otdel) was formed within the Vecheka with the specific and only aim of organizing espionage work abroad.[27] From the existing evidence it is impossible to determine whether the Foreign Department was a subdivision of the Special Department, or whether it was created as a separate unit within the Vecheka to handle an increased volume of foreign clandestine operations. But, whatever the case might be, the mere existence of such department (whether independent or not) shows the lively interest that the Vecheka displayed in operating abroad.

There is also evidence to suggest that the secret police used the Comintern (the Communist International) as a conduit for its operations abroad. In addition to the fact that Dzerzhinskii represented the Russian and Polish Communist Parties at Comintern Congresses, Chekists worked to establish Comintern Bases in different countries, as well as to keep an eye on some leading foreign Communists and collect information on Russian emigre groups.[27]

One division of the Comintern, the International Liaison Section (OMS), was totally submerged in clandestine activities -- it ran the underground courier service, smuggled propaganda, men, money, and forged passports.[29] It is doubtful that in undertaking these operations the OMS could do without the "expert" help of the Vecheka, or that the

[27]A.V. Tishkov, Pervyi Chekist [he First Chekist] (Moscow: Voennoe izdatel'stvo ministerstva oborony SSSR, 1986), 100.

[28]Leggett, The Cheka, 300.

[29]Barton Whaley, Soviet Clndestine Communications Net (Cambridge Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1969 MIT, C/67-10), 73.

secret police would neglect such a "fertile" ground in which to act. It is significant that Aino Kuusinen, who worked as an agent of the Soviet Military Intelligence (GRU), and whose husband -Otto Kuusinen- was a leading Comintern official (and by 1962 a member of the Presidium of the Communist Party and Secretary of the Central Committee of CPSU)[30], claimed that "the OMS was ...the link between the Comintern...and the [Soviet] secret police..."[31]

The full extent of the Vecheka involvement in the affairs (both domestic and foreign) of the Soviet state was appreciated by senior police officials. Though, it should be noted that some of them did not fully comprehend the role of the Vecheka as an instrument of steering and control of the Soviet society. Hence, they complained about ever growing interests and influence of the security police. According to one of these officials, Dzerzhinskii's assistant, Latsis, there was hardly any sphere of activities of the state in which the Vecheka did not operate. He noted that "[a]ll of this led to [the situation] in which Vladimir Il'ich[Lenin] started to give com[rade] Dzerzhinskii directives, which in no way were appropriate to the [original mandate of the Vecheka]."[32]

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[30]Jerry F. Hough and Merle Fainsod, How the Soviet Union is Governed (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 230.

[31]Aino Kuusinen, Before and after Stalin, trans. Paul Stevenson (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1974), 40.

[32]N. Zubov, F.E. Dzerzhinskii: Biografiia [F.E. Dzerzhinskii: biography] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1963), 205.

In the beginning of 1922 the Vecheka was abolished and in its place came into existence the GPU, the State Political Directorate under the People's Commissariat of the Interior, the NKVD. And while the name of the political police had changed -- very little was altered in the way of its structure, mandate, or method of operations.[33] Being in control of both the Vecheka and the NKVD, Dzerzhinskii was able to facilitate a very close cooperation between the two. And when the GPU of the NKVD was established, Dzerzhinskii remained as chief of both the People's Commissariat of the Interior and the State Political Directorate, thereby ensuring the continuity between the Vecheka and the GPU and the close relationship of the latter with the Commissariat for Interior.[34] One year later, the GPU, was renamed the OGPU- Unified State Political Directorate, again with Dzerzhinskii at its helm.[35]

Some Soviet authors (Tishkov, Belov) tend to suggest that reorganizations of Cheka resulted in narrowing of the scope of secret police operations. But even a cursory examination of responsibilities that were given to the GPU-OGPU shows anything but reduction in secret police activities. It is quite clear that the Vecheka-OGPU role in the society was as great as ever, if not greater.[36]

After studying Smolensk Archives, which fell into German hands in 1941, Merle Fainsod aptly observed that since "classification embraced a large part of Soviet life, the tentacles of the security organs [by 1941]

[33]Leggett, The Cheka, 345-46.

[34]Belov, Iz istorii VchK, 471-72.

[35]Leonard Schapiro, The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 2nd ed., rev. and enl. (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1971), 269.

stretched out into virtually every office and enterprise of the Soviet Union." The list of the "top-secret" topics -- taken from Smolensk files -- is quite instructive. Anyone who was "lax in handling secret documents" was liable to punishment by extra-legal means, which were granted to the OGPU by a special decree of the Central Executive Committee on May 26, 1927.[37]

Obviously, the political police could have not achieved such status and power in the country had it not been allowed by the Bolshevik Party. It is not suprising then that the discussion of the role of the secret police in Soviet Society would be pointless if its relationship with the Communist Party were not considered. Until now, these ties have been implicitly assumed and briefly alluded to. However, the Cheka was created to safeguard the rule of the Party, because Lenin was convinced "that the workers' [e.g. communist] power could not survive without some organization like the Vecheka."[38] Therefore, this symbiotic Party-police relationship merits closer investigation.

The Cheka was a Communist party creation. And lest there were any doubts as to Party's role, its Central Committee stated in 1919: "[Cheka units] were established, exist, and operate solely as the direct organs of the Party under its directives and its control"[39] (emphasis added). Lenin himself displayed unceasing interest in the functions of the

[36]Tishkov, Pervyi Chekist, 114; Belov, Iz Istorii VChK, 471-72.

[37]Merle Fainsod, Smolensk under Soviet Rule (New York: Random House, Vintage Boos, 1963), 163-65.

[38]Schapiro, The Communist Party, 268.

[39]Belov, Iz Istorii VChK, 249-50.

political police. According to Leggett, Dzerzhinskii was one of only two

men (Sverdlov, as secretary of the party, being the other one) who

"enjoyed unlimited access to Lenin." The Bolshevik leader visited

Vecheka headquarters where he and Dzerzhinskii would discuss current

problems, after which Lenin

> could take vital decisions affecting the
> Vecheka in his capacity, as undisputed
> Party leader, and could then see to
> their practical implementation in his
> other capacity, as Chairman of the
> Sovnarkom, to which the Vecheka was
> formally subordinated.[40]

To keep the Party abreast of what Special Departments of the Vecheka

were doing, a representative of the Central Special Department

conducted weekly briefings at the Orgburo (responsible for Party

personnel postings-nomenklatura) of the Central Committee. Dzerzhinskii

himself has been a member of the Central Committee from the very

beginning of the Bolshevik rule. In 1920 he became a candidate member of

the Orgburo of the Central Committee.[41] In the same year the head of the

Vecheka entered the Central Control Commission which had a mandate to

screen all members for the violation of Party discipline.[42] Then, in

1922, he became a full member of the Orgburo.[43]

From the Party side, an official of its Politburo sat on the

Vecheka Collegium retaining the right to veto any Vecheka decisions. In

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[40]Leggett, The Cheka, 167.

[41]Belov, Is Istorii VChK, 481.

[42]Dzerzhinskii, Izbrannye proizvedeniia, 1:545, 549.

[43]Leggett, The Cheka, 355.

addition, from time to time, small commissions consisting of top

Bolshevik leaders were created to review operations of the political

police.[44] And, still further to ensure obedience to the Party's will,

there was continuous effort to draw "trusted Party members" into the

Cheka.[45]

It is clear then that the Communist Party took care to keep the

security police under its control. However, it would be too simplistic

to describe the Party -police relationship as that of the superior and

the subordinate. The key to identification of the role of the police in

the Soviet Union lies in understanding the complementary nature of the

relationship between the Party and the secret police - they cannot exist

without each other. Lenin claimed that "a good Communist is at the same

time a good Chekist."[46] Behind this statement is the realization that

the Party needs the political police to stay in power; and the political

police would surely cease to exist as an omnipotent and omnipresent force

in the society if the Communist Party were ever to loose control. There

might be a certain hierarchy of needs -- those of the Party more important

than those of the police -- but, again, it is almost axiomatic that the

former needs the latter to maintain an overall control of the society,

and in the pursuit of this goal, the police has to make sure that the

Party is strong and being threatened neither from the outside, nor the

inside of its ranks.

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[44]Ibid., 162-64, 341.

[45]Ibid., 160.

[46]V.I. Lenin, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, 4th ed., [Collected
Works.] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury,
1955), 30:450.

Quite naturally, ensuring the Party strength from "within" is a
very sensitive issue. And it is usually at this point -the question of
conduct of the Soviet security police with respect to the Party ranks-
that the argument is often made that there was an enormous qualitative
change in the status of the OGPU and NKVD under Stalin as compared to
that under Lenin. It is being argued that under Lenin, the political
police remained under the party's control, whereas under Stalin the
police's political importance was greater than that of the Party.[47]
Thus, it was no longer NKVD at work against "them" -non-party counter-
revolutionaries and saboteurs (Mensheviks, SRs, etc.)- but the security
police against "us" -party members. In support of this argument the
statistics are cited on the number of Party members purged, as well as
on the destruction (political and physical) of the leading Bolsheviks.

Nevertheless, on closer examination of the available data, it does
appear that, from the very early on, the secret police began to turn its
attention towards the activities of the members of the Communist Party
itself.

So, for instance, as early as February 1919, Dzerzhinskii warned

> We know that in almost all of our institutions
> there are enemies...[w]e have to find the threads
> and catch the enemies...,and in this sense methods of
> struggle, surveillance, and search must be completely
> different.[48] (emphasis mine)

The "hint" is rather a transparent one and it does not appear from the
statement that the Party institutions were excluded from Dzerzhinskii's

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[47]Knight, The KGB: Police and Politics, 36.

[48]Dzerzhinskii, Izbrannye proizvedeniia, 275.

list. A year later, in 1920, Latsis was more specific in his description of the Vecheka aims. Leggett quotes him as writing:

> Counter-revolution has developed everywhere, in all spheres of our life, manifesting itself in the most diverse forms... And that means that there is no sphere of life exempt from Vecheka coverage. The Vecheka must look after everything...[49] (emphasis mine)

That the Party was not immune from the harassment by the secret police was evident from a statement by another high Vecheka official, Peters, contending that the Cheka had to deal with a foe, who by holding Communist Party cards, "had infiltrated the Soviet government."[50] G. Zinoviev, the head of the Leningrad's Party organization, in mid-October 1918, complained that one Cheka unit "had actually debated the question whether, if the need arose, it was entitled to arrest the Sovnarkom."[51] According to Leonard Schapiro, in 1923, the leading Tatar communist -Sultan Galiev- was still a member of the Party when he was arrested as a result of damaging evidence provided against him by the GPU.[52] And in that same year, Dzerzhinskii, in his capacity as the OGPU chief and a member of the Central Committee suggested that the best way of dealing with the oppositionists in the Party was to make Party members disclose to the security police any information that they might have on various factions.[53] In fact, the OGPU was given complete

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[50]Ibid., 143.

[51]Leggett, The Cheka, 127.

[52]Schapiro, The Communist Party, 353.

[53]Ibid., 283.

freedom of action in dealing with the members of Party factions who still were members of the Communist Party.[54] It is significant that Yagoda, the deputy head of the OGPU (and later the head of the Unified NKVD and the chief organizer of the first bloody purge of 1934-1936), took part in the Bolshevik Party leadership struggle and was among senior Party members who supported N. Bukharin in his fight against Stalin.[55] To this, it may be added that from at least early 20's, there has been a practice of naming secret policemen as assistants to the leading figures of the State.[56] All of this shows that security organs were quite adept at intra-party affairs.

In light of the above evidence on involvement of the political police in the internal matters of the Party well before the great purges of the 1930s, it is rather surprising that some scholars see a transformation in the Party-police relationship during the 1930s. For instance, Stephen Cohen is quite emphatic in his claim that under Stalin, the party's position was below that of the police.[57]

First of all, it must be made clear that there is no purpose in denying the fact that the magnitude of the terror in the 1930s was much greater than it was in the 1920s, and that great many Party members were executed by the political police, and in this sense there is a difference

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[54]Tishkov, Pervyi Chekist, 121-22.

[55]Shapiro, The Communist Party, 370.

[56]Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, Knowledge and Power: The Role of Stalin's Secret Chancellery in the Soviet System of Government (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1978), 96, 100-101.

[57]Stephen F. Cohen, Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 341.

between the 1920's and 1930's. But at no time did the NKVD, (which by then included the successor of the GPU — the Main Administration of State Security — GUGB), do something which it was not <u>ordered</u> to do by the Politburo, even if the "Politburo", at least from the mid-1930s, really meant Stalin. Ezhov — the most feared head of the NKVD in 1937-38, started his career in Stalin's "personal" secretariat. He was a member of the Central Committee <u>long</u> before he became chief of the police.[58] He was always a Party man, and in this capacity as the head of the NKVD, he served Stalin — the Communist Party General Secretary. The Soviet historian Roy Medvedev, claims that <u>Stalin</u> personally signed the lists containing the names of 44,000 people confirming the sentence of shooting. Furthermore, according to Medvedev, sometimes, Stalin even gave orders about the kind of torture that "was to be used on one or another Party official."[59] The very fact that someone (for that matter, <u>anyone</u>) other than the NKVD could give orders to arrest or not to arrest people disputes the contention that the police power reigned supreme.

Just because the dictatorship of the collective leadership (under Lenin and "early" Stalin) was substituted by the dictatorship of one man, it cannot be claimed that the control of the forces of terror was diminished or became <u>less legitimate</u>. Absolutely everything was done in the name of the people and the Party. After all, the Bolshevik Party claimed to rule in the name of the people and Stalin ruled in the name of the Party. It was Lenin who wrote that

[58]Rosenfeldt, <u>Knowledge and Power</u>, 131-32, 144, 174, 150.

[59]Roy Medvedev, <u>Let History Judge</u> (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Ltd., 1971), 294, 296.

> Soviet socialist democracy is not in the least
> incompatible <u>with individual rule and dictatorship</u>.
> The will of a class may sometimes be carried out by a
> dictator who can sometimes do more all by himself
> and who is frequently more essential.[60]

<u>After the fact</u>, one cannot disavow the personal dictatorship of Stalin

just because the dictator happened to be Stalin. <u>His</u> rule was quite

legitimate and he <u>was</u> in control.

It also should not be forgotten that both Yagoda and Ezhov -- two

chiefs of the NKVD who where most intimately associated with the police

terror of the 1930s -- were liquidated together with many of their

subordinates. This fact alone does not bespeak of the supreme police

authority. And whatever honors were bestowed on Ezhov's successor, Beria

(and, indeed, like in the case of Lenin's Dzerzhinskii, there were many),

·it is more than likely that he would have suffered the same fate as his

predecessors, had Stalin not died in March of 1953.[61] Beria was a

mere spectator when his "police empire" kept being broken and reassembled

time and again by Stalin.

Nevertheless, for a <u>very</u> short period of time -- March 5 (the death

of Stalin) to June, 1953 (arrest of Beria) -- there were, indeed, signs

that the traditional Party -secret police relationship was changing as

Beria -- now the chief of the integrated Interior and Security Ministry,

the MVD- moved to take over the Special Sector of the Secret Department

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[60]Lenin (5), <u>Polnoe sobranie sochinenii</u>, 40: 272.

[61]Rosenfeldt, <u>Knowledge and Power</u>, 193; Knight, <u>KGB: Police and
Politics</u>, 37.

of the Central Committee.[62]

According to Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, it was the Special Sector, with its secret Party archives, which was the real control centre over all affairs of the Party and the secret police. It appears that some key officials in the police apparatus were, in fact, "Special Sector people, among these being MGB's cadre administration chief"[63] (emphasis added).

Inevitably, such people would be listed as members of the secret police, while in practice being the "eyes and ears" of the Party in the security organs. This would help support the assertion that the NKVD never had an upper hand over the Party, since, as Rosenfeldt claims, the Special Sector "had been the institutional expression for the fusion between Party and police organs."[64]

And if, indeed, Beria did try to place the Special Sector under the control of the MVD, then the accusations leveled against him that he had "tried to place the MVD above the Party and the government" were not without foundation.[65]

However, the elimination of Beria and reversion of the political police, (the KGB, Committee of State Security, as it was called from 1954 onwards) back under Party control did not alter the main characteristic of the security organization — a very close, special relationship with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

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[62]Rosenfeldt, Knowledge and Power, 198.

[63]Ibid., 104, 139.

[64]Ibid., 198.

[65]Knight, KGB: Police and Politics, 48.

It is significant that at least two out of three contenders for the top Party post immediately after Beria's arrest, G.M. Malenkov and N.A. Bulganin, were at one time or another, associated either with the political police itself or the Party control mechanism of it. Bulganin, according to Leggett, headed the local Cheka detachment in Nizhnii Novgorod, back in 1918.[66] And, if Rosenfeldt is correct, Malenkov played an important role in the Special Sector of the Central Committee, the Sector that supervised the secret police.[67]

In addition, the pattern of appointing trusted Party officials to the sensitive jobs in the security service continued. For instance, K.F. Lunev, a former official in the Moscow City Party Committee, became a deputy chairman of the KGB in 1954. At the same time another Moscow Party official, V.I. Ustinov, was appointed a KGB deputy Chairman, as well as, the head of the Ninth Directorate of the KGB which was (and still is) responsible for the security of Kremlin's officials. The appointment of A. Shelepin to head the KGB in 1958 reaffirmed the tradition. Shelepin was a member of the Central Committee and a former Komsomol official when his posting to the security police was made public. Likewise, the man who suceeded Shelepin as the KGB chief, Vladimir Semichastnyi, was also a former official of the Komsomol with no prior background in the secret police. The same was true of Iurii Andropov -the next chief of the KGB. Prior to his posting at the KGB, Andropov headed the Central Committee Department for Liaison with

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[66]Leggett, The Cheka, 104.

[67]Rosenfeldt, Knowledge and Power, 133-4.

Socialist Countries.[68] And, although Seweryn Bialer claims that Viktor Chebrikov (who suceeded Andropov at the KGB) was a police professional by virtue of the fact he was promoted from within the organization,[69], the biography of Chebrikov makes it clear that he was a Party professional "looking after" the KGB. His career prior to the appointment as the head of the KGB was unmistakenly that of a Party apparatchik, and his first appointment, in 1967, to head the KGB Personnel Department fits an established pattern of Party's oversight of senior appointments in all of the Soviet institutions, including that of secret police.[70] Finally, the new head of the KGB — Vladimir Kriuchkov, before embarking on the career in the security organs, "served under Andropov in the Soviet Embassy in Hungary." Then, Kriuchkov followed Andropov into the Central Committee Department for Liason with ruling Communist Parties. He moved to the KGB again with Andropov in 1967, in the same year in which Chebrikov headed the KGB Personnel Department[71].

Within the Party apparatus itself, the mechanism of control of the security organs appears to have been decentralized. But there is no indication that the Party authority over the KGB has decreased since Stalin's days. The institutional link between the Party and the KGB is believed to be provided by the Administrative Organs Department of the

[68]Knight, KGB: Police and Politics, 52, 54, 64-5, 81.

[69]Severyn Bialer, The Soviet Paradox: External Expansion, Internal Decline (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1987), 86.

[70]Knight, KGB: Police and Politics, 82.

[71]Ibid., 280.

Central Committee, with its General Department (which, apparently, is responsible for Party's archives) "lending a hand".[72] There is also some evidence that the Administrative Organs Department is a part of some larger, unnamed Central Committee Department which probably acts as both the operational and administrative control centre of the security organs. M. Voslensky offers the view that the Administrative Organs Department is directed by the Central Committee secretaries in charge of organizational work.[73] Amy Knight goes as far as suggesting that those who became General Secretaries of the CPSU supervised, somewhere along their career paths, the Administrative Organs Department in their capacities as senior Secretaries.[74] At this point, there is no firm evidence to support Knight's assertion. Nevertheless, it does seem clear that the relationship between the Party and the KGB is as close as ever, with mutual interpenetration as extensive as it was in Lenin's time.

And just as before, to ensure that the rule of the Communist Party is not threatened, the KGB blankets the country (as well as many places outside of the Soviet borders) with the most extensive security net the world has ever known. According to different sources, the number of KGB personnel is estimated to be anywhere from the "conservative" number of 500,000 people (100,000 career officers and another 400,000 clerks,

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[72]Whaley, Soviety Clandestine Communication, 67; Knight, KGB: Police and Politics, 139.

[73]Mikhail Voslensky, Nomenklatura: The Ruling Class in the Soviet Union, with a preface by Milovan Djilas (London: Overseas Publications Interchange Ltd., 1985), 373.

[74]Knight, KGB: Police and Politics, 140-141.

technicians, special troops, and security and border guards) up to 1.75 million employees, of which 250,000 are deployed abroad and 1.5 million "KGB officers, agents, and informants working within the country."[75] Whichever estimate is correct, one thing stands out - as an institution, the KGB, in its scope of operations and resources (with the annual budget anywhere from $6 billion to $12 billion[76]), is without parallel anywhere in the Soviet Union (if one does not consider the Army) or outside of it.

A quick look at the structure of the KGB would serve as a good representation of the range of activities of this institution. It should be noted, though, that the Committee for State Security undergoes periodic reorganizations, and most of the information on its structure comes from KGB defectors and from western intelligence. The consensus, however, is that the KGB is divided into five Chief Directorates, six independent Directorates, and six independent Departments. Almost all of the above main Directorates and Departments are further subdivided into various smaller specialized (both geographically and functionally) Departments, Desks, Services, and Directions.[77] Since the following is going to be a general outline of the organizational sturcture, our concern will be primarily with the KGB Directorates.

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[75]John E. Carlson, "The KGB," in The Soviet Union Today: an Interpretive Guide, 2nd ed., ed. James Cracraft (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 78.

[76]Ibid. 78.

[77]John Barron, KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents (Reader's Digest Press, 1974), 74-75; Carlson, The KGB, 80.

Table I
Simplified Diagram of KGB Organization
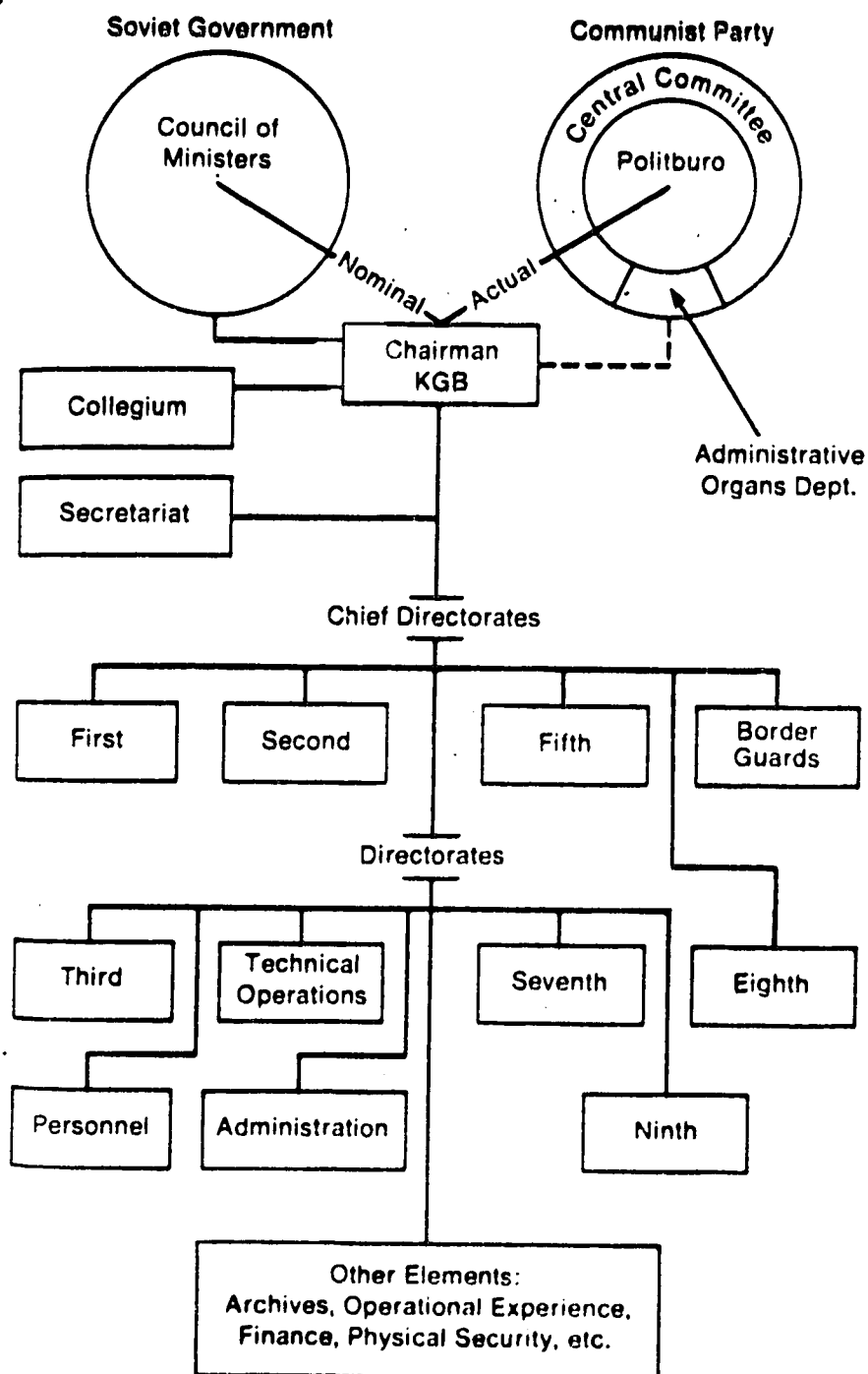
Sources: John Barron, KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents
(London: Reader's Digest Press, 1974), 75; idem, KGB Today: The
Hidden Hand (New York: Berkley Books, 1985), 376-386.

The First Chief Directorate has responsibility for all Soviet operations abroad. One of its major activities is intelligence gathering. The Directorate is subdivided functionally into services such as management of covert agents, technological espionage, the analysis of .ntelligence, "active measures" (e.g. sabotage, assassinations). It is also divided geographically, with various departments responsible for different parts of the world. The officers of this Directorate also "look after" Soviet citizens abroad.[78]

A very prominent role in the Soviet clandestine operations abroad is played by the Disinformation Department (Department A) of the First Chief Directorate. This department is called upon to plan and co-ordinate Soviet propaganda and disinformation operations. Barron claimes that "the Disinformation Department has emerged as one of the most important in the entire KGB."[79] A good indication of its importance is the fact that about a half of the personnel of this entire Chief Directorate -- some 10,000 people -- work for the Disinformation Department.[80]

The Second Chief Directorate deals with internal control and supervision of the Soviet citizens and foreigners stationed or living in the USSR. Agents of its numbered departments try to subvert foreign diplomats, students, and correspondents. Counter-intelligence and internal security are the other two major concerns of this Directorate,

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[78]Knight, KGB: Police and Politics, 122.

[79]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 78.

[80]Knight, KGB: The Police and Politics, 122.

with the Industrial Security Directorate safeguarding critical production and research centers.[81]

The Fifth Chief Directorate was created at the end of the 1960s and charged with elimination of political dissent.[82] This Directorate's special departments and services deal with ethnic minorities, the intelligentsia, censorship of literature - in cooperation with Glavlit they compile the censor's Index of nonpublishable information [83] — in an attempt to stamp out any manifestations of dissent. It is this Direcotrate which is responsible for using psychiatry for political purposes.[84]

The Chief Border Troops Directorate, numbered some 300,000 troops, guards the frontiers of the Soviet Union, trying to prevent unauthorized border crossings both by the foreigners and Soviet citizens alike. Just as they did in the past, the border troops are expected to forestall any real or imaginary enemy military advance until the regular army can be moved to the area of conflict.[85]

The Eighth Chief Directorate (the Communcations Directorate) is responsible for providing technical systems, preparing the ciphers for use by other KGB departments and government agencies. This Directorate

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[81]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 81-2, 83; Carlson, The KGB, 80.

[82]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 84.

[83]Lilita Dzirkals, Thane Gustafson, and A. Ross Johnson, The Media and Intra Elite Communication in the USSR (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 1982, Rand, R-2869,), 35.

[84]Knight, KGB: Police and Politics, 123.

[85]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 85.

makes Soviet communication equipment and also attempts to decipher foreign communications.[86]

The Independent Directorates include the Armed Forces Directorate (Third Directorate), Technical Operations Directorate, Administration and Personnel Directorates, Surveillance (the Seventh) Directorate, and the Guards Directorate (Ninth).

The Armed Forces Directorate's history dates back to the time of the Vecheka, which established the so-called Special Departments to ensure the political reliability of the armed forces. Today, this Directorate of Special Departments is organized both functionally and according to the service. KGB "Special Departments" exist in all military and military-related institutions and installations, all military districts, groups of forces, armies, corps, divisions, and brigades. The Third Directorate is responsible for protection of all state and military secrets, as well as counterintelligence and counterespionage in the armed forces -- tasks which are performed through surveillance of the military at all levels.[87]

The Technical Operations Directorate constructs various kinds of technical devices (listening, special cameras, etc.) and other material for the "Executive Actions" department of the First Chief Directorate.[88]

Administration Directorate acquires and manages property for the KGB, although, its budget is allocated to it by a separate department.[89]

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[86]Ibid., 87-88.

[87]Knight, KGB: Police and Policits, 260, 262-63.

[88]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 86.

[89]Ibid.

The Personnel Directorate, as the name suggests, is responsible for staffing in the entire KGB. As we have seen, the head of the KGB personnel is, more often than not, appointed through Party nomenklatura system. John Barron aptly dubbed the Directorate "a nerve centre of the KGB" which "is strictly controlled by the Administrative Organs Department of the Party's Central Committee.[90]

Surveillance Directorate (Seventh Directorate), perhaps more than anything else, represents the true nature of the Soviet regime — secretiveness, isolationism from the threatening outside world, and all-pervading suspicion of foe and "friend" alike. The thousands of people who work in this Directorate do nothing but follow people. They follow foreigners, watch the militia guards who themselves look after foreign embassies. They watch parks, museums, theaters, stores, and stadiums; and if need be, conduct the surveillance of "a ranking member of the oligarchy..."[91]

The last, but not least important, of independent Directorates is the Ninth (Guards) Directorate. It guards the Kremlin and the main offices of the Communist Party. The officers of the Directorate are probably the only people in the USSR who carry weapons near senior Party officials.[92]

To make sure that its policies are implemented throughout the Soviet Union, the KGB, is highly centralized with all of its regional

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid., 87.

[92] Ibid., 88.

branches subordinated strictly to the KGB hierarchy rather than the local Soviets. The KGB is a union-republic state committee which operates through state committees of the same name in all republics.[93] Such an arrangement allows the Party, which makes appointments of the key KGB personnel in Moscow, to control the operations of all the Directorates and Departments of the political police all the way down to the district level. This is similar to the pattern for the Party nomenklatures.[94]

Although this issue will be taken up in the next chapter, it is important to note the fact that the above arrangement represents an established communication network consisting of the omnipresent security organization and the highest levels of Soviet officialdom which created this powerful instrument of societal control. And to help facilitate the transfer of important information, the head of the KGB, in addition to being invariably a "Party" man, is a member of the Council of Ministers, usually at least a candidate member of the Politburo (as is the case with the present head of the KGB), and possibly is a member of the Defence Council.[95]

At this point, it seems that we have come full circle. We started off by showing that from its beginning the political police -- the Vecheka -- spread its tentacles into virtually every corner of the

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[93]Knight, KGB: Police and Politics, 120-121.

[94]Bohdan Harasymiw, Political Elite Recruitment in the Soviet Union (London: Macmillan Press in Association with St. Anthony's College, Oxford, 1984), 40.

[95]Dmitri K. Simes, "The Politics of Defence in the Soviet Union: Brezhnev's Era," in Soviet Decisionmaking for National Security, ed. Jiri Valenta and William C. Potter (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 77-8.

country; that it was created by the Party and for the Party; and finally through its evolution, the Vecheka-KGB, under strict Party supervision, remained a faithful instrument of political control -- an organization without which -- as Lenin stressed -- the workers' power could not survive.

For, as was pointed out earlier, the Soviet political police never was, nor is simply an instrument of political violence and repression. By virtue of its widespread penetration of the Soviet society and its extensive intelligence network abroad, the KGB serves as an essential component of the Soviet Union's communication network. It provides the Soviet leaders both within information which enables them to make important decisions and with the feedback on how the environment responds to these decisions. And, indeed, if the KGB were ever to disappear, the Communist Party's control of the Soviet society would not survive for long.

III.   KGB as a Communications Network

The previous chapter described widespread penetration by the KGB of all spheres of life in the Soviet Union, and now a legitimate question can be raised: what role does the omnipresence of the political police play in the Soviet power structure? One answer seems to be obvious - the KGB serves as an instrument of control of society by the CPSU. Coercion of course plays a big part in maintaining control, and this function is fulfilled both by seeing to it that the directives of the Politburo of the Party are carried out at home and abroad and by making sure that this body gets the relevant information it needs in order to make proper decisions.

Our purpose is to show how such information is distorted within the system and its institutions of information. In pursuing this aim, the discussion will proceed in three stages.

First, the Communist Party itself must be analyzed as a communication network. It appears that the Communist Party structure is designed in such a way as to enable it to disseminate information practically to all corners of Soviet society as well as to collect information about nearly everything.

In fact, in order to understand the necessity for the KGB, it becomes imperative for us first to consider how the CPSU itself copes with the problem of communication. In doing so, it will be shown that the Party on its own fails in its mission to "know" what is going on in society at large, just as it will be shown that it fails in controlling the implementation of its own decisions.

Secondly, it will be argued that there are intra-organizational distortions in the KGB of the type that occur inside most large

organizations, namely: a) compartmentalization, secretivness, centralization of information gathering and processing, b) inter-organizational distortions of information such as inter-service rivalry as well as the often divergent goals of the intelligence producers (i.e. the KGB, GRU, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc.), and c) faults in usage of information by intelligence consumers (i.e. policy makers) such as the Communist Party decision-makers.

In the third stage of our discussion we will ask: Why should the political police be able to escape the problems faced by the Party? If, as George Schwab claims, it is true that "once in power a totalitarian movement envelops the state and attempts to penetrate its fiber to the last individual,"[1] then, what makes the KGB individuals immune from this process?
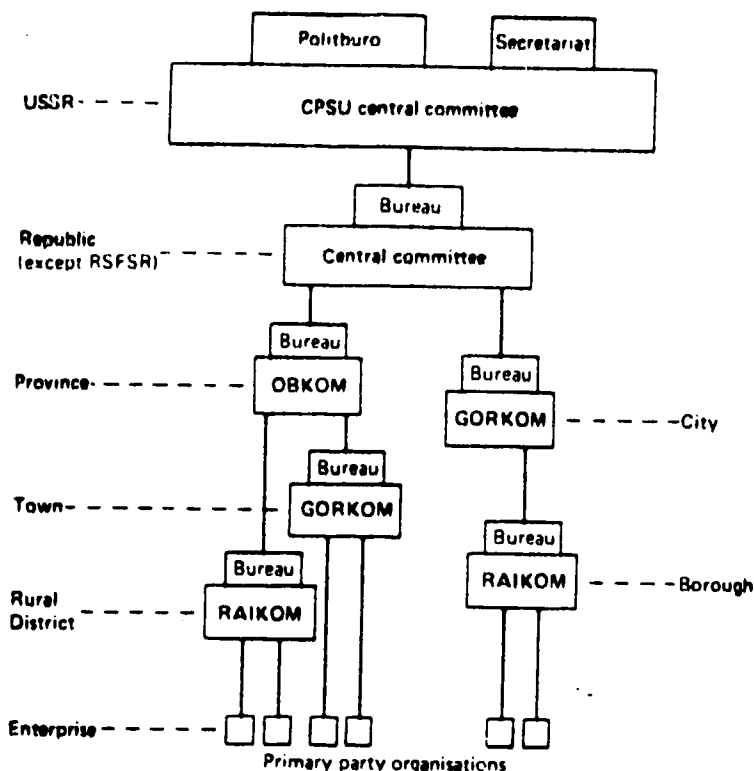
It will be shown that KGB personnel are in fact not immune. The same biases that affect the Party's information gathering and processing affect the security organization's communications both at home and abroad.

Let us turn our attention first to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. A cursory look at the Party produces an impression of a monolith, one whose structure is ideal for the efficient transfer of information up and down the hierarchy. Theoretically, "a centralized hierarchy of control and authority, supported by branches situated at the very point where policy is applied, is a very effective means of getting things done."[2] This is best illustrated in table 2.

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[1] George Schwab, ed., Ideology and Foreign Policy (New York: Cyrco press, Inc., Publishers, 1978), 3.

[2] Ronald J. Hill and Peter Frank, The Soviet Communist Party, 2d ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 48.

Table II
Simplified hierarchical structure of CPSU organs

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                        Politburo        Secretariat
USSR - - -          CPSU central committee

                            Bureau
Republic
(except RSFSR) - - - - -   Central committee

                    Bureau
Province - - - - - -  OBKOM
                                        Bureau
                                        GORKOM  - - - - -City
                        Bureau
Town - - - - - - -     GORKOM
                                            Bureau
                Bureau                      RAIKOM  - - - -Borough
Rural
District - - - - -  RAIKOM

Enterprise - - - - - □ □ □ □      □ □
                    Primary party organisations
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Source: Ronald J. Hill and Peter Frank, The Soviet Communist
Party, 2d ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 47.

The Primary Party Organization (PPO) exists everywhere - in factories,

institutes, army, state institutions etc. In fact, each and every one of

some 18 million members of the Communist Party must belong to a Primary

Party Organization.[3] The PPOs monitor the institutions within which they

function.[4] It is only logical that the Primary Party Organization should

simultaneously play a role in implementation of the Party policy and serve

as a starting point for collection of information to be passed upwards.

[3]Ibid. 46.

[4]Darrell P. Hammer, The USSR: The Politics of Oligarchy,
2d. ed., rev. and upd. (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1986), 83.

Darrel P. Hammer argues that the processing of information is a primary task of the Party apparatus. Daily, the apparatus studies and summarizes hundreds of reports from the Party organizations at all levels of Soviet society. Furthermore, "[t]he regime is deeply interested in knowing what the public thinks, and the central party office compiles regular reports for the leadership on the mood of the population."[5] The interlocking positions between the CPSU and the state institutions (see Table 3.) place the Party in a unique position "to be in the know."

Table III
Scheme of interlocking membership between top party and state bodies.
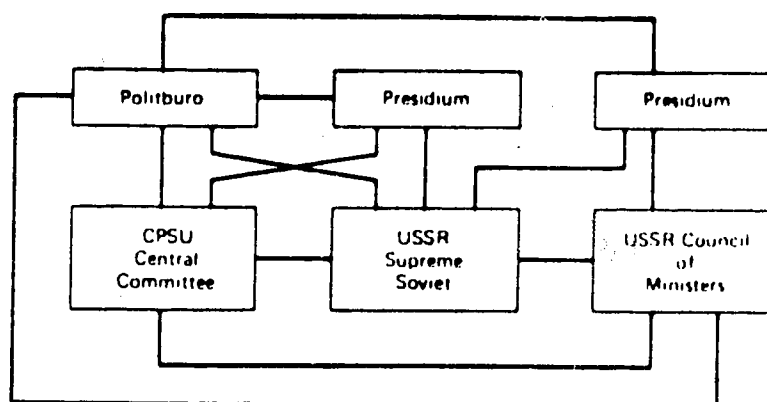
Source: Ronald J. Hill and Peter Frank, The Soviet Communist
Party, 116.

To further facilitate the party's ability to control the flow of events and information, every position of responsibility all the way down to the secretary of the primary party organization and the editors of wall newspapers in the factories is staffed by the Party through the

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[5]Ibid., 54,89.

nomenklatura principle with its single pool of reliable party members.[6]

Thus, it would seem that the CPSU would have no problems in having its directives carried out and relevant information collected to enable it to issue these directives. However, the exact opposite seems to be the case. The information that the Party rulers receive is often distorted and not infrequently entirely falsified. As for the directives from above, however inappropriate they may be due to the lack of proper inputs and feedback, they are often sabotaged by officials at lower levels. Such a state of affairs is a consequence of two interrelated problems.

Firstly, there is a distortion of communication which results from the fact that there is a fundamental incompatibility between the official role of the Communist Party in the Soviet society and its ability to accurately analyze messages from the environment and effectively transmit messages which express reactions. The Soviet system is supposed to receive the information, translate and interpret it, and then decide how to react.[7] As Hill and Frank aptly observed, Marxism - Leninism is supposed to represent the scientific truths about human society. And in the name of Marxism - Leninism "the CPSU claims that it, and it alone, clearly and correctly understands those truths."[8] This belief in the infallibility of the Party cannot avoid leading the Party leaders to identify criticism of its policies with disloyalty towards the communist ideals. As a consequence, one would not expect a great deal of interest

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[6]Hill and Frank, The Soviet Communist Party, 86, 128.

[7]Alan C. Issak, Scope and Methods of Political Science, rev. ed. (Homewood, Ill: The Dorsey Press, 1975), 231.

[8]Hill and Frank, The Soviet Communist Party, 5.

on behalf of the lower party and state workers in providing the communist authorities with the information which contradicts (and thus challenges) the elite expectations. And, indeed, even the Soviet scholars (as quoted by Hill and Frank) complained that "over the years, criticism from below has been at best frowned upon and disregarded, and critics often persecuted," and that "officials at the intermediate and higher levels disapproved of unpalatable information coming up from below, and instead encouraged their inferiors to 'prettify' the true position."[9] The authors claim that reporting is done on the basis of what it is believed "the centre would like to hear."[10] A former Czechoslovak communist Party official, Karel Kaplan, claims that at the level of PPO, most of the Party members keep quiet out of "fear of saying something wrong and being criticized." This process of self-censorship goes on at every level:

> The information gets sifted. This process
> already begins in the districts, where
> anything that is too negative, expressing
> disagreement with measures or resolutions of
> the party and government , is modified or
> completely left out... . And then, it
> goes through another screen at the
> regional level. Apparatchiks at central
> headquarters know the limits of criticism
> acceptable to high officials and also know
> what kind of report they like.[11]

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[9] Ibid., p.72.

[10] Ibid., p.82.

[11] Karel Kaplan, The Communist Party in Power: A Profile of Party Politics in Czechoslovakia, Westview Special Studies on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, trans. and ed. Fred Eidlin (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1987), 158.

But this (very much) incomplete information, according to Kaplan, plays an active role in forming the party elite's notions of social reality.[12] And since the data obtained along the Party channels come exclusively from party members and functionaries, Hill and Frank are correct to state that "the [party] centre has no rational basis on which to make decisions."[13]

Another source of inability by the top party officials to construct a reality which is more in tune with the actual state of affairs in the country is the gulf which exists between the life and the value systems of the ordinary citizens as well as lower party officials and those of the Party elite which comprise, according to Voslensky, about 100,000 people.[14] To come back, for a moment, to the statements made above that the elite gets to hear what it wants as opposed to what it needs, it should not be forgotten that the distorted information which comes from below is as much the making of the party officials at the top as it is a doing of the lower echelons. For it is the elite which decides what it wants. And what it wants most of all is to be confirmed in its own beliefs about how the society should function as opposed to how does it function.

Arthur J. Alexander suggests that in order to overcome the dependency on the formal, hierarchical channels, high-level officials make "forays into the field to check things out for [themselves]" - they

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[12]Ibid., 157

[13]Hill and Frank, The Soviet Communist Party, 83.

[14]Mikhail Voslensky, Nomenklatura: The Ruling Class in the Soviet Union, with a preface by Milovan Djilas (London: Overseas Publications Interchange Ltd., 1985), 180.

visit factories and institutes.[15] But one must consider the real possibility that many of these field trips are not made to collect-on-the-spot information, but are staged appearances designed to "prove" to the leadership that their policies and decrees in the field of economics, education, etc., work just as the leaders wanted them to work. In other words, in the Soviet system as in others, people are predisposed to see what they should see, and prove what is necessary to prove.

Potentially, there is another source of information that can be of use to the top decision-makers, the media.[16] It would seem logical that, for instance, letters to the editor would or could provide some information on what the general public thinks about specific policies of the government, or that these letters would bring up the short-comings of the society. However, it appears that the truth is somewhat different. As Thane Gustafson suggested in his study of the Soviet media, "letters to the editor as they appear in the Soviet press...are usually solicited in support of a carefully orchestrated public campaign, designed to create the appearance of a ground swell of public support for some measure or another."[17] Thus, it is quite plausible that the large number of letters that do appear in the newspapers are

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[15]Arthur J. Alexander, "Modeling Soviet Defence Decisionmaking," in Soviet Decisionmaking for National Security, ed. Jiri Valenta and William C. Potter (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 15.

[16]Ibid., 15.

[17]Lilita Dzirkals, Thane Gustafson, and A. Ross Johnson, The Media and Intra-Elite Communication in the USSR Rand R-2869, (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 1982,), 66.

either fakes, or are written for the reasons other than informing the higher authorities. But the major cause of citizens not writing what they think is rooted in the same tradition of self-censorship, which was described above: criticism from below is not appreciated and critics themselves are often persecuted. Everyone who writes anything in the USSR practices self-censorship.[18] It follows that if there is no 'uncontaminated' reporting in the USSR, accuracy is ipso facto ruled out as a possibility. All of this points to inability of the media and letters to the editors to serve as a source of information for elite.

Since the Party apparatus, "fact finding" missions in the field, and the media in general do not function as unbiased channels of communication between the Party authorities and society as well as lower party echelons, the only alternative channel of control and communication which is left for the CPSU to use is the secret police - the KGB.

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, the KGB has over the years spread its tentacles virtually into every corner of the Soviet society.[19] Through its vast army of professional officers and informers, this organization is well positioned both to see that the Party resolutions are carried out, and that the mood of the population, (and information on the functioning of different organizations) is

[18]Martin Dewhirst and Robert Farrell, eds. The Soviet Censorship (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. in cooperation with radio Liberty Committee and The Institute for the Study of the USSR, 1972), 35; Kaplan, The Communist Party in Power, 158.

[19]Merle Fainsod, Smolensk Under Soviet Rule (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1963), 163.

properly collected and transmitted "upwards." And yet, with Gorbachev coming to power, one is struck by the complaints: "we did not know" - this complaint is coming almost from every quarter of the Soviet Union, from the ordinary population and from the elite alike. Is it possible then that some of the problems which beset the Communist Party exist within the KGB?

To analyze what can potentially be wrong with the KGB as a provider of information, let us first turn to the KGB functioning abroad. Again, as was already mentioned in the previous chapter, the First Main Directorate of the secret police is the subdivision which is responsible for the operations abroad.[20] One of the main responsibilities of this directorate is to provide the Politburo with reliable economic, political and military information about foes and friends alike.

However, the KGB is not the only organization which provides intelligence data to the Politburo and Central Committee. Its major rivals are the military intelligence (GRU), and today's equivalent of the former Central Committee's International Department (ID) and the Department for Liaison with Communist and Workers' Parties of Socialist States. The ID officially dealt with the Communist parties of capitalist and developing countries as well as a number of national liberation movements. The Department for Liaison with Communist and Workers' Parties of Socialist States linked the CPSU to the ruling Communist Parties.[21]

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[20]John Barron, KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents (London: Reader's Digest Press, 1974), 80.

It should be noted here that on the 30 of September 1988, the XIX All-Union Party conference reorganized the apparatus of the Central Committee. Instead of twenty six departments, the CC is now organized into six broad Commissions.[22] And while neither of the above mentioned departments remain formally under their old names, there is some evidence to suggest that their functions were taken over by some of the new Commissions. So, for instance, V. Medvedev, the head of the Ideological Commission, in the interview with the journal Kommunist, stated that his Commission is composed of three previous CC Departments - propaganda, culture, science and educational institutions.[23] It is not unreasonable to suggest that both the International Department and the Department for Liaison with Communist and Workers' Parties of Socialist States still exist as parts of as yet unidentified Commission(s). The most logical choice would be the Commission on the Issues of International Policies, headed by A. Yakovlev, the former Soviet Ambassador to Canada.[24]

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[21]Walter Laqueur, A World of Secrets: The Uses and Limits of Intelligence (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers for the Twentieth Century Fund, 1985), 240.

[22]The Central Committee of the CPSU, "Ob obrazovanii Komissii TSK KPSS i reorganizatsii apparata TsK KPSS v svete Reshenii XIX Vsesouznoi Partiinoi Konferentsii, "[On creation of the commissions of the CC of the CPSU and the reorganization of the apparatus of the CC of the CPSU in light of decision made on the XIX all-union party conference] Kommunist 15 (October 1988):3-4.

[23]Vadim Medvedev, "K poznaniu sotsializma. Otvety na vopzosy zhurnala 'Kommunist' [Towards understanding of Socialism. Answers to the questions of the journal 'Kommunist'] Kommunist 17 (November 1988): 4.

[24]Ob obrazovanii Komissii, Kommunist 15 (October 1988):3-4.

To put it simply, organizational charts change, but units and functions tends to be more stable and long lived.

But whatever is t.... name of the supraorganization which is comprised of the former Departments, those Departments together with the GRU constitute sources of information that rival the KGB. This interdepartmental rivalry is brought up again and again by both the defectors from the KGB and the GRU. It is difficult to assess the claim of the GRU defector, Victor Suvorov, that the GRU and the KGB are ready at any moment to destroy each other.[25] But, on the other hand, Stanislav Levchenko, a former KGB major in Japan and recent defector, cites an anti-KGB mood among the GRU officers which he himself has been a witness to in his original training with the GRU.[26] In fact, such an intense competition between various Soviet bureaucracies, points out that the Soviet "system of power [is] founded on the institutionaliza-tion of mutual suspicion.[27] Still, whatever the intensity of dislike of competing organizations, the fact is that competition, while probably intended to provide alternative sources of information for the leadership, actually produces negative effects on information flow.

As the former Soviet diplomat at the United Nations and a confidant of the former Soviet foreign minister, Arkady Shevchenko points out the

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[25]Victor Suvorov, Inside Soviet Military Intelligence (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984), 47.

[26]Stanislav Levchenko, On the Wrong Side: My Life in the KGB (Mclean, VA: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defence Publishers, Inc., 1988), 56.

[27]Merle Fainsod, How Russia is Ruled, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 388.

KGB has to justify "the expense of maintaining a huge spy network overseas." It thus tries to overwhelm the amount of data supplied by the Foreign Ministry and by the GRU. The result, according to Shevchenko, was quantity of information at the expense of quality. So, for instance, "U.S. Communist Party sources were quoted as authoritative analysts of American political developments."[28] Stanislav Levchenko in his account also points to the need by the KGB to earn its existence. After KGB officers had stolen the entire technological processes of a chemical plant in Japan, the official evaluation of the operation, when it came back from Moscow notified the KGB chief in Tokyo that "this single act of stealth had covered twelve years of expenses for the Tokyo residency."[29] Again, this system of earning one's existence cannot help but influence the quality of information that the Soviet leadership receives from its intelligence gatherers abroad.[30] The question is: to what extent do the enormous amounts of information sent to Moscow compromise their quality? On the surface it may seem that the old principle "the more, the better" would apply here as well. However, the evidence supplied by Shevchenko on the number of reports that the foreign Ministry used to send to Politburo plus the Politburo tendency to consider during its meetings questions "of the most pressing import down to very minor matters suggests that the Party elite cannot seriously consider all of the information that it gets."[31] There is an

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[28]Arkady N. Shevchenko, Breaking with Moscow (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 244.

[29]Levchenko, On the Wrong Side, 104.

[30]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 74.

[31]Shevchenko, Breaking With Moscow, 177.

obvious information overload.

The full extent of the overload is evidenced by the fact that the central apparatus processes up to 100 billion documents each year. On average, more than ninety percent of the "annual 'turnover' of docuemnts" in a medium-sized organization are "superfluous pieces of paper."[32] The inefficiency of the Soviet information management is staggering, indeed. And there is no reason to believe that the KGB is immune from this problem. Consequently, it would not be at all surprising if valuable information is lost in the sea of "noise."

The task of agents abroad is not made easier by the fact that the Soviet leaders' demand raw reports, wishing to make the interpretations of the intelligence themselves.[33] To be sure, both the KGB and GRU have an Information Service and an Information Directorate within their respective organizations, but neither possesses a body of professional analysts (such as one which exists within, for instance, the CIA) who try to distill the meaning from intelligence as well as separate what is important from what is noise in the information flow. Consequently, while the intent might have been to get information "untinged by bureaucratic analysis and manipulation,"[34] the effect was (and is) an information network clogged with superfluous information, the interpretation of which is left to the Soviet leader. But in the words

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[32]Gyula Jozsa, "Bureaucracy in Party and State," in From Brezhnev to Gorbachev: Domestic Affairs and Soviet Foreign Policy, ed. Hans-Joachim Veen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 323.

[33]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 76-77.

[34]Laqueur, A World of Secrets, 240

of John Barron, these are "men who have matured in the narrow,

intellectually cramped confines of the Party, whose views have been

partially shaped by their own propaganda and who, with few exceptions,

have little personal understandings of foreign countries."[35] This may

help to explain the poor quality, noted above, of the information sent

by the KGB - the Centre will not know the difference.

The problem of information vs. noise outlined above is similar to

that faced by the internal Party communication network - the leadership

is given what it wants as opposed to what it needs. Thus, the KGB

operatives abroad are ·· ·are of Kremlin biases (as mentioned above by

Barron) and the fact that there is no independent body of analysts, and

as a result "transmit information tailored to reflect Kremlin

perceptions of the world." And since, as Ladislav Bittman aptly points

out, "messengers of good news are more likely to be promoted than

messengers of unsavory or contradictory news..., the self-serving

tendency of the intelligence apparatus isolates Soviet leaders from

reality." And "in the end, the decision-making elite becomes a victim

of its own game, unable to distinguish truth from [its own]

disinformation."[36]

At this point It is worthwhile to draw an _interim_ conclusion. In

the introduction of this chapter it was asserted that the same problems

that plague the CPSU communications network also affect the security

organization's own communication channels with the party and within the

[35]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 77.

[36]Ladislav Bittman, The KGB and Soviet Disinformation:
An Insider's View, with a Foreword by Roy Godson (Mclean, VA:
Pergamon Brassey's International Defence Publishers, Inc.,
1985), 76-77.

KGB itself. In the exposition above we saw that there are reasons to believe that the quality of information the KGB supplies to the leadership is not higher than the information that the Party collects through its own channels. We saw that inter-organizational rivalry (among the KGB, GRU, CPSU) seriously distorts the information flows. So as far as information from abroad is concerned, the party appears to get what it wants rather than what it needs. But what about the KGB communication's network within the USSR?

It has been mentioned, repeatedly, that the KGB presence is felt throughout the Soviet Union. Its internal communications network centers around three Directorates - the Second Chief Directorate, the Fifth Chief Directorate, and the Third Directorate (Armed Forces Directorate).[37] These Directorates share the responsibility of both controlling the Soviet population and supplying the leadership with information regarding the mood of the population, and particularly with reactions of its different segments to various Party policies and decrees. A network of special departments exists in all major Soviet institutions and factories. They ensure security regulations and monitor political views of employees.[38] But in spite of a broadly spread internal intelligence net, several problems with this network can be identified, problems which one would expect to contribute to the inefficiency in the flow of information.

Firstly, the internal structure of the KGB may cause distortions similar to the distortions caused by the rivalry (and the resultant need

[37]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 80-85.

[38]Amy W. Knight, The KGB: Police and Politics in the Soviet Union (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1988), 120.

to prove the necessity of one's existence) between the KGB and other intelligence gatherers. That is, the rivalry within the KGB may lead again to the "need to create" information by the competing KGB directorates.

It should be noted that organization theory suggests that with divisional structure, there is little incentive to encourage cooperation among divisions and that the duplication of activities and resources which is a customary result in the absence of cooperation lead to increased organizational costs and reduced efficiency.[39] And in fact, as we turn our attention to the KGB, we can see that both the theoretical literature on information distortions within organizations and the information from Soviet defectors converge to show that problems are built into the KGB's communication network.

So, for instance, Second and Fifth Chief Directorates do many of the same things. The Political Security Service of the Second Chief Directorate runs most of the informant networks in the country and its first four Directions supervise investigations throughout the USSR. And the 11th Direction reports on discontent and dissidence.[40] It is difficult to imagine that the operations of the above subunits of the Second Chief Directorate do not duplicate a great number of activities of the Fifth Chief Directorate. The latter Directorate was created out of the former with specific mission to obliterate dissent.[41] But how

[39]Stephen P. Robbins, Organization Theory: The Structure and Design of Organizations (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1983), 234-35.

[40]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 83.

[41]Ibid., 84.

can this mission be fulfilled without an extensive network of its own
informers who may compete with those working for their Second Chief
Directorate? After all, they all have to report to their respective
bosses who are autonomous in their decision-making and resource
allocation. In similar ways officers of the Industrial Security
Directorate of the Second Chief Directorate probably encroach upon the
territory of the Third Chief Directorate which also looks after the
security of production and research centers.[42] In such circumstances the
competition is likely to produce a great deal of identical information;
at least some of it may be misleading.

But, it might be asked: what if, in spite of the prediction of the
general organization theory, there is cooperation between different
directorates of the KGB? If this indeed were the case, then the problem
of duplication and making -up of information would at least be partially
solved. And yet, the quota system in which officers' careers depend on
number of informers recruited and cases handled,[43] plus a strictly
hierarchical chain of command within the divisions of the KGB, in which
subordinates are asked to transmit information that can be used to
evaluate their performance, make the cooperation between the officers of
different directorates "unprofitable" from the point of view of these
officers.

In addition to what may be described as "out-of-necessity, no ill
feelings" competition, there is actual dislike of each other between the

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[42]Ibid., 83; Knight, KGB: Police and Politics, 120.

[43]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 73-74.

directorates, within the KGB. Stanislav Levchenko, who before defecting in Japan, worked in both the Second Chief Directorate and the First Chief Directorate, is quite emphatic in his description of the ill-will that exists between the divisions. His testimony confirms that the different directorates, for all practical purposes, are different specialized organizations. After several years of successful service with the Second Chief Directorate, he was not just transferred to the First; he went through entirely new hiring process, complete with an interview, filling out several dozen forms, and eight months waiting period.[44]

The above underscores the potentially information distorting nature of specialization and rivalry. While specialization is necessary to the efficient command of knowledge, its advantages can be secured only if the specialists in the field are rotated and can arrange to meet in some way that encourages them to see the bigger picture. If this does not happen, the result is parochialism. Each division "becomes a guardian of its own mission, standards, and skills." The information produced is often misleading or irrelevant. "The professionally biased producer of intelligence remains too distant from the intelligence user, too ignorant of policy needs, and is forced to compete with other producers for the support and guidance of the user."[45] Now, given the intense rivalry and mutual dislike of different KGB divisions, distortion of information is more than likely. Since, and as was mentioned above, the

[44]Levchenko, On The Wrong Side, 56, 68, 69, 75.

[45]Harold L. Wilensky, Organizational Intelligence (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishes, 1967), 48-50.

Politburo likes raw information (not the summarized reports of the specialists), the Directorate which produces "more" information wins, even if most of this information is "noise" (irrelevant information).

The problem is exacerbated by the all-pervading secrecy which the KGB is responsible in maintaining throughout the Soviet Union. And it would be astonishing, indeed, if the organization which enforces secretiveness was not shrouded in secrecy itself -- it is the first victim. As John Barron observed, "the passion for secrecy has resulted in rigid and extreme compartmentalization. Officers are locked into niches in a vertical chain of command, dependent upon what their superiors choose to tell them and say about them." He further claims that "because information is often pigeonholed, rather than disseminated to those who need to know about it, the KGB sometimes mounts operations to obtain information already in its files."[46]

Wilensky, in his analysis of organizational intelligence, noted the distorting effects of secrecy which is "felt both in the type of personnel attracted to secret operations and in the peculiar conditions for intellectual work that secrecy imposes."[47] Maurer, Tunstall, and Keagle further assert that the compartmentalization within an intelligence organization such as the KGB (and its autonomous directorates) leads to the situation where

> one organization often is not privy to the
> information held by another, an arrangement
> that may bring about failures to act,

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[46]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 74.

[47]Harold L. Wilensky, Organizational Intelligence, 67.

> duplication of effort, or the inadvertent
> interference of one agency in the operations
> of another ... Furthermore, <u>valuable</u>
> <u>information may not be used to the</u>
> <u>fullest possible extent.</u> (Emphasis added).[48]

It appears that under glasnost, the KGB is publicly   recognizing some of the costs of secrecy. Recently, V. Rubanov, head of one of the KGB's Research Institutes, attacked the cult of secrecy in an article in the <u>Kommunist.</u> According to Rubanov, "information is a vital commodity" and obsessive secretiveness distorts information by giving rise to myths and gossips. Because everything is compartmentalized, the Soviet researchers have to turn to foreign sources for information on various facets of Soviet life. Finally, Rubanov stresses the effect of secretiveness on quality and innovation by quoting a Soviet scientist, Gleby, as saying that "getting a project [you have done] classified as secret is the best way of concealing its shoddiness from colleagues."[49]

Such an admission by a KGB official — that a poor quality of information passes through the different levels of the KGB — points to an inability of the organization to serve a a reliable communications network for the Soviet regime. Hence, a call has gone out from the new KGB chief, Vladimir Kriuchkov, to overcome parochialism, and to see the

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[49]Alfred C. Maurer, Marion D. Tunstall, and James M. Keagle, eds., <u>Intelligence: Policy and Process</u> (Boulder: Westview Pass, Inc., 1985), 264-65.

[49]V. Rubanov, "Ot Kul' ta sekretnosti k informatsionnoi kulture," [From a 'Cult of Secrecy' to an Information Culture] <u>Kommunist</u> 13 (September 1988): 24-36. Quotations are from pp. 24 and 35, respectively.

world in all of its complexity. And, obviously, to be able to do so one needs more sophisticated analysis. [50]

But, are KGB personnel capable of a more sophisticated analysis? Can such an organization change its perception of the world (both the internal Soviet and outside "worlds")?

Usually, when the KGB is mentioned, the customary reaction of a Soviet citizen is to think of that organization as an all-powerful body which knows everything and is beyond all inefficiency, corruption, and parochialism - the customary hallmarks of the Soviet society as a whole.[51] It is legitimate to ask: is the KGB really different from other governmental agencies?

It can be shown that it is not — the KGB is as inefficient as are other Soviet institutions. To do so, one might first take a closer look at the people who work for the KGB, since, ultimately, it is the individuals who communicate within and between organizations. And it is important to try to establish what identifies them with other Soviet people and what does not. In other words, is the individual working for the KGB a completely different person from other Soviet individuals - is he more efficient, motivated, incorruptible, is he capable of seeing things through the "smokescreen" of ideological rhetoric and propaganda? If it can be shown that he is not all of the above things, then the organization of the KGB individuals should be as inefficient as other Soviet organizations.

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[50] Paul Quinn - Judge, "'It's easier to create enemies than win friends,' says new KGB chief", The Christian Science Monitor, October 31 - November 6, 1988.

[51] Voslensky, Nomenklatura, 385.

But in order to answer the above questions, one first has to answer the prior question - to what extent does an _average_ Soviet citizen accept the Soviet system? It seems that this question is often confused with another question - to what extent does an average citizen accept the _Marxist-Leninist_ ideology? However, conceptually the two are not the same. It is possible to accept (unconsciously) the Soviet system without accepting (consciously) Marxist-Leninist ideology. An average person in the USSR (just like his counterpart in the West) lives his or her life as it comes without asking any questions about the philosophical underpinnings of his or her social "reality." Few people in the West bother to ask (themselves) _why_ society functions the way it does.[52] Rather they accept it _as_ is - they have been socialized to accept it. Values have been internalized and by and large are unquestioned. In a similar fashion, the Soviet citizen may internalize some values of the system without consciously defining them as Marxist-Leninist. There is no contradiction in the findings of Stephen White that the "Soviet authorities have so far failed to bring about a [conscious] commitment to Marxist-Leninist values among their populations, on the one hand, or on the other hand, Alfred Meyer's argument that "Soviet citizenship training has succeeded and the basic tenets of the ideology have been internalized [i.e. unconsciously]." White himself acknowledged that the "main outlines of the system...enjoy the support of popular consensus.[53] It is a moot point whether this

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[52]Stephen White, _Political Culture and Soviet Politics_ (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979), 141.

[53]Ibid, 114, 104.

acceptance is a result of what a Moscow journalist claimed to be the fact that "[Russian] Communism" [is] the expression of the national character of the Russian people,"[54] or is a consequence of political indoctrination.

As far as this political indoctrination in the Soviet Union is concerned, it continues for as long as the individual is a part of the system. Numerous methods are employed: there is dissemination of the official information, word-of-mouth propaganda, and there is suppression of the unofficial sources of information.[55] The goal, as stated in the beginning of this chapter, is to envelope the state in the totalitarian ideology and "penetrate its fiber to the last individual."[56] And as Inkeles and Bauer found in their study of the former Soviet citizens, widespread indoctrination had a "profound influence on the 'basic thought processes' of the individual and even the defectors "continued to use the language of the party line and to accept many of the values of the official ideology."[57]

All this suggests that every citizen's perceptions at least to some extent are influenced and shaped by what the party "preaches." Then why should it be expected that the individuals who join the KGB are different from any other Soviet citizens? If the Soviet system strives to reach everyone, why should the KGB personnel be able to escape its clutches? After all they, together with all Soviet people, go through

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[54]Ibid., 105.

[55]Hammer, The USSR, 53; Dzirkals and other.., 37.

[56]Schwab. Ideology, 3; see above, pp. 1-2.

[57]Hammer, The USSR, 54.

the same socialization process. They are exposed on the average to the same amount of propaganda in the press, movies, broadcasts and even the amount of rumors and unofficial (forbidden) news from abroad that makes its way into the country. Would the KGB uniform at a lower and middle level of the organization transform a man? It would, insofar as he acquires a sense of power. But the transformation will not take place as far as the officer's perception of domestic and foreign realities is concerned. Given the cult of secrecy in Soviet society in general and the KGB in particular, and the extreme compartmentalization of information, a KGB officer would not even have access to foreign press (as an alternative source of information) unless he happened to be working on the case which requires knowledge of foreign material. And given a very strict "need-to-know" policy, such an officer would be unlikely to discuss new ideas with an officer who is not privy to this information. The same would happen to those officers who track down dissident literature - even if they themselves were exposed to it, they would not share either the information, nor their own thoughts on the subject.

Even if an officer happened to agree that some particular criticism is valid, he is perfectly aware that the regime has a great difficulty distinguishing valid criticism from sedition. Consequently, the officer, mindful of his career (just like any other Soviet citizen), would, in his report, likely emphasize the seditious nature of criticism so as, in the words of Wilensky, to "play it safe."[58] In this way the

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[58]Wilensky, Organizational Intelligence, 43.

KGB personnel are no different from party personnel (of which most KGB officers are members). Rather, they are the mirror image of the party apparatchiks. As it has been shown in the beginning of the chapter, the party channels tend to report "good news." the same is true in the case of the KGB, but in reverse. Its "good" news constitutes the negative phenomena in society. The quota system means a given number of "signs of anti-state activity" must be uncovered. Only then can the KGB prove the need for its existence to the party. The organization was created for the purposes of control of society. Its mission is to supply "bad" news - true or _false._ In doing so, the KGB again gives Soviet leaders what they want to hear, and not what they need in order to make proper decisions.

Should one be surprised at such state of affairs? Not really. The Soviets are the victim of an old dictum which the creator of the USSR, Lenin, left the present generations of the Soviet rulers and followers to think about as they contemplate making the system more efficient. Lenin asserted that one cannot live in a society and be free from society.[59]

And the KGB is not outside of Soviet society. Rather, in the words of Michael Voslensky.

> The KGB - is the Soviet institution. It has
> a plan and [must] report on [its being]
> carried out, [there is] complex hierarchy of
> superiors, rewards and punishments ..., party
> and Komsomol meetings, - there is everything
> that can be found in the Soviet institution..
> There are successes and failures in [its] work...

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[59]V.I. Lenin, "Agrarnaia Programma Liberalov"
[The agrarian program of the liberals] in Polnoe sobranie
sochinenii, [Collected works], 5th ed. (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe
izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1960), 10:48.

But most importantly, "[t]here is no lack of sins, errors, [there is no] fairy tale lucidity." One can find in the KGB, like everywhere in the USSR, successes and failures, passivity, intrigue, bureaucratic stupidity, and a basic inertia of thought.[60]

In light of the above discussion, what conclusion can be drawn? Taking specific issues in turn, it is quite clear that the Communist Party, in spite of a theoretically ideal structure designed to avoid information pathologies, cannot serve as an efficient communications channel. Centralization, hierarchy, careerism make it impossible for the information to move up and down undistorted. The use of media and such things as "field trips" described above do not alter the situation to any appreciable degree.

But far more important is the fact that the KGB, whose presence is felt throughout the USSR, cannot serve as undistorted communication system either. The problem lies partly in the fact that the KGB's very mission is to provide negative information on society. But mostly, the institution suffers from the same distorting influences of centralization, strict hierarchy, and corruption, which plague the party bureaucracy. The system of quotas and extreme compartmentalization of information make matters that much worse. And above all the KGB man remains a Soviet man.

At the same time, it should be kept in mind that the scope of the KGB operations is vast, its resources are so enormous that in spite of all the problems that have been discussed in this chapter, the secret police of the Soviet Union is still one of most powerful institutions in

[60]Voslensky, Nomenklatura, 386.

the world, counting many successes in both its operations and intelligence gathering. Sheer quantity at times works too. As John Barron mentioned, "[t]he KGB overcomes its problems largely because the Party endows it with vast resources and authorizes it to persevere, regardless of the casualties suffered."[61]

Thus far, the purpose of the discussion has not been to downplay the role of the KGB in the Soviet Union and abroad. Rather, the purpose is to show that there is a definite correlation between inefficiency and the quality of information. The more distorted the information, the greater the inefficiency of the system.

What the Soviet system is lacking is an adequate feedback system to its decisions (which requires minimum distortion of information up and down channels). The party and the KGB, having failed in providing the system with an adequate feedback mechanism, have arrived at the point where the system, according to Karl Deutsch, begins "hunting over a cyclical or widening range of tentative and 'incorrect' responses, ending in a breakdown of the mechanism."[62]

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[61]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 74.

[62]Karl W. Deutsch, The Nerves of Government (New York: The Free Press, 1963), 89.

IV. A Case Study in intelligence failure: The Six Day War of 1967

On June 5, 1967 the war erupted in the Middle East. In six short days Israel defeated the combined armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan and occupied significant portions of those countries' territories. The war seemed to have taken everyone by surprise, with Israeli victory being the greatest surprise of all.

The outcome of fighting was a major blow not only to the Arabs, but also to their patron, the Soviet Union. Whatever policy the Soviets were pursuing in the Middle East on June 10, 1967 - it lay in ruins. It seems that the USSR failed both in its evaluation of the political events which led to the Israeli attack and in its estimates of Israel's military capability to deliver a blow against the Arab forces.

This incident provides material for our study of the KGB and information in the USSR. As was observed in the previous chapters, it is the responsibility of the KGB, and the GRU (military intelligence) and to a lesser degree the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to provide the bulk of political and military intelligence to the Soviet leadership. Consequently, the failure of Soviet foreign policy can, by any reasonable standard, be blamed on the failure of the Soviet intelligence network.

It is the intent of this chapter to examine possible reasons behind the failures of the KGB and the GRU to predict the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East in 1967 and their outcome. Several explanations will be looked at. However, since a great deal of information on the Soviet intelligence efforts is inaccessible, only informed conjectures will be made. Under the circumstances no definitive single answer can possibly be given.

In so far as the information is available, the argument will be presented in two, occasionally overlapping, stages. First, it is necessary to try to establish what Soviet policy in the Middle East was in 1967. It will be argued that the policy of the USSR was to shore up the leftist regime in Syria. Fearing that Israel might try to topple the government in Damascus, the Soviet Union pressured Egypt into taking some action in Sinai to draw Israel's attention southwards - away from Syria. However, at a certain point, they lost control of the situation and refused to accept the indications of an impending war.

It should be pointed out, though, that in the discussion of the Soviet goals it is often impossible to separate out the elements of simultaneous events. And once the Soviet goals have been discussed, it becomes necessary to discuss the role of the Soviet intelligence network in events leading to the outbreak of the war. In a complex, dynamic situation it is extremely important that the leadership should be provided with proper intelligence. Did the network fail to predict the course of events? In answering this question an attempt will be made to show that the Soviet intelligence organizations were inefficient and short sighted.

But before we turn to the failures of the Soviet intelligence, we must first try to establish what the policy goals of the Soviet government were towards the Middle East prior to the 1967 war.

In general, the Soviets tried to reduce the influence of the West in the region, without at the same time causing a major conflict. From the mid-1950's, both Syria and Egypt were major allies of the Soviet Union in the area because the regimes in both countries were the most anti-western. Obviously, it was in the interests of the USSR to preserve and strengthen the pro-Soviet regimes of Syria and Egypt.

However, the governments of these states were not very stable. Particularly unstable was Syria. Up until 1966, Syria had "experienced more military coups in its brief history than any other Arab state."[1] In February 1966, yet another coup brought to power the left wing of Ba'ath (Renaissance) party, and the communists began to play a prominent role in Syrian politics.[2] The new leaders were extremely radical in their attitude towards Israel and increased their support for Palestinian raids into Israel[3]. Given the instability of a new regime in Damascus, the Soviets were concerned that Israel might retaliate against the repeated Palestinian attacks and thus bring down the weak Syrian government. The USSR went so far as to accuse Arafat's al-Fatah of terrorism, and viewed them as agents of Western intelligence. The Soviets also "refused a request by the PLO to open an office in Moscow in 1966."[4] The Soviet fears of the instability of the Syrian government were at least partly justified. In September of 1966 there was as yet another attempted coup in Damascus and at the same time, Israel's Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin declared that his country might try to bring down the Syrian government by attacking Syria[5]. However, the coup was put down and Israel did not attack.

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[1]Walter Laqueur, The Road to Jerusalem: The Origins of the Arab Israeli Conflict in 1967 (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1968), 36.

[2]Ibid., 42; Arthur Jay Klinghoffer and Judith Apter, Israel and the Soviet Union: Alienation or Reconciliation? (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1985), 43.

[3]Karen Dawisha, Soviet Foreign Policy Towards Egypt (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1979), 38.

[4]Richard H. Schultz, Jr., The Soviet Union and Revolutionary Warfare (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1988), 79; Klinghoffer, Israel and the Soviet Union, 42.

[5]Klinghoffer and Apter, Israel and the Soviet Union, 45.

In an attempt to buttress the Syrian regime, Moscow finally succeeded on November 4, 1966 in convincing President Nasser of Egypt to sign a Mutual Defence Pact with Syria which stated that "armed aggression against one of them [would be seen] as aggression against both."[6] All sides appear to have been temporarily satisfied. The Syrians were now more secure and self-confident, and Egypt saw the treaty as an opportunity to re-establish her leadership in the Arab world.

Nevertheless, tensions on the Syrian-Israel border continued to mount. In the winter of 1966-67, clashes occurred almost daily.[8]

The Soviet Union's reaction to the clashes was more or less standard. From mid-1966 to mid-1967 there had been a constant stream of public warnings, both in the Soviet press as well as in official notes by the Soviet Government, claiming that Israel planned to overthrow the Syrian government and that Israeli troops were massing on the Syrian border[9]. The Soviets claimed that "Syria was a particular object of Western hostility because of the 'progressive character' of its regime. Yet in spite of continued border confrontations, which involved artillery duels, air dog-fights, and even a mobilization of Israeli troops in March of 1967, most observers agree that there were "no signs that a full-scale war was imminent."[10]

[6]Dawisha, Soviet Policy Towards Egypt, 38; Michael Brecher, Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 356.

[7]Laqueur, Road to Jerusalem, 49.

[8]Ibid., 47.

[9]Ibid., 74.

[10]Surendra Bhutani, Israeli Soviet Cold War (New Delhi: Parnassus Publishers, 1975), 136; Klinghoffer and Apter, Israel and the Soviet Union, 49; Laqueur, Road to Jerusalem, 74.

However, the situation worsened on April 7. On that day a "routine" skirmish along the border escalated into a major air battle in which six Syrian Migs were shot down[11]. There were calls from the Arab world for Egypt to do something to help the Syrians out. After all, there was a mutual defence treaty between Egypt and Syria. However, for a while the Egyptians did nothing[12].

Interestingly, there was no Soviet reaction for two weeks either. But, on April 25, the Israeli Ambassador in Moscow was handed a written statement in which it was officially claimed that "[t]he Soviet government [was] in possession of information about Israeli troop concentrations on the Israeli - Arab borders at the present time."[13] On April 29 an Egyptian parliamentary delegation headed by Anwar al-Sadat was told in Moscow that Israel was massing forces on the Syrian border, and that the Israelis were planning their attack for the period between May 18 and 22.[14]

At the same time statements were made by leading Israeli political and military leaders to the effect that Israel "had no choice but to adopt suitable counter measure against Syria"[15]. The statement was made on or about May 7. Whether these were connected to Israeli statements or not,

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[11]Dawisha, Soviet Policy Towards Egypt, 38.

[12]Ibid., 39; Laqueur, Road to Jerusalem, 63.

[13]Avigdor Dagan, Moscow and Jerusalem, with an introduction by Abba Eban (New York: Abelard-Schuman Limited, 1970), 203.

[14]Mohamed Heikal, Sphinx and Commissar: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Arab World (London: William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd. 1978), 174; Dawisha, Soviet Policy Towards Egypt, 39.

[15]Bhutani, Israeli Soviet Cold War, 142.

on the same day serious anti-government disturbances erupted in Syria.
The army was patrolling the streets of major cities, and there were
mass demonstrations and arrests. Some army officers were arrested and
Syria accused "Syrian exiles of planning to topple its government",
and that they "were involved in a reactionary-imperialist -
Zionist plot"[16].

Given the threatening statements which were made by Israelis against
Syria, allegations of Israeli troops concentrations and the political
turmoil inside Syria, it is hardly surprising that Nasser of Egypt, being
bound by a defence treaty with Syria, decided that Israel's attention
could be distracted from Syria by moving Egyptian troops into the Sinai.
Accordingly, on the 14th of May the Egyptian army began moving into the
Sinai. In the view of Michael Brecher, the consensus in Israel was that
Nasser was "executing a political stunt." Nevertheless, it was decided to
mobilize a part of military reserves. On the same day [May 16] the
Egyptians asked for the withdrawal of the United Nations troops from the
Sinai. Thus, for the first time since 1956, Egypt was confronting the
Israeli army face to face.[17] The Egyptian troops were now on the shore of
straits of Tiran - a narrow channel which Israeli and foreign ships were
using to get to the Israeli port of Elath.

The Israelis always claimed that "they would consider the closing of
the Straits tantamount to a declaration of war." The attack on Egypt in
1956 had been the consequence of Egyptian closure of the straits in

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[16]Klinghoffer and Apter, Israel and the Soviet Union, 50; Laqueur,
Road to Jerusalem, 79.

[17]Brecher, Decisions in Israel, 361-363.

September 1955[18]. On May 19, 1967 Israel notified major powers that it "will not take action against Egyptian forces at Sharm el-Sheikh - until-or unless they close the Straits of Tiran to free navigation by Israel."[19] Yet on May 22, Nasser announced a blockade of the Straits[20], indicating on a visit to Advanced Air Headquarters that "our armed forces and all our people are ready for war ..."[21]

Thus, by May 23, 1967, the Middle East situation evolved, step by step into a full-blown crisis. At this point it may be asked: what role did the Soviet Union play in the unfolding drama?

As had been shown above, the USSR had initiated the charges of Israeli troop concentrations and plans to attack Syria.[22] The Soviets openly charged the Israelis in their April 25 official note. In addition, a former member of the United State delegation to the UN, Arthur Lall, stated that Soviet diplomats at the UN had admitted that their government had secretly warned the Egyptians that Israel was plotting against Syria... [23] But as evidence shows, this particular Soviet behavior was hardly new. The Soviets warned before of Israeli intentions to attack Syria. On February 3, 1967 the newspaper Izvestiia related that

[18]David Kimche and Dan Bouly, The Sandstorm: The Arab-Israeli War of June 1967: Prelude and Aftermath (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1968), 95; Laqueur, Road to Jerusalem, 94.

[19]Abba Eban, An Autobiography (New York: Random House, 1977), 327.

[20]Brecher, Decisions in Israel, 377.

[21]Laqueur, Road to Jerusalem, 93.

[22]See p. 5.

[23]Arthur Lall, The UN and the Middle East Crisis, 1967 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 30.

> War psychosis is mounting in the state of Israel.
> The country's armed forces are being alerted. All
> leaves have been cancelled and more reservists have
> been called up. <u>Large armed forces have been
> concentrated on the northern border.</u>[24] (emphasis
> added)

Yet, in spite of these warnings, there were no Egyptian troop movements,

no withdrawal of the United Nations troops from Sinai, no closure of the

Straits of Tiran. We may ask then, what was different from April to May?

It can be argued that if the Soviets were concerned about Syria in

late April and early May, then by making Egypt move its troops they

succeeded in shifting the attention of everyone from the Syrian - Israeli

border to Sinai. This is especially so if we recall that the above events

were very similar to an incident that took place seven years before. In

the winter of 1959-60 there had been a sharp escalation of hostile acts on

the Syrian-Israeli border, which led to Israeli reprisals. On February

15, 1960, the Soviet intelligence sources warned Egypt that Israel was

massing troops on the Syrian border. On the February 18, Egyptian troops

started moving into Sinai. Two weeks later, after "convincing" everyone

that Israel was deterred from attacking Syria, Egyptian troops were

withdrawn from Sinai.[25] It is possible that the Soviets thought they

could do the same thing in the spring of 1967, to take the pressure off

Syria without causing a war.

But in 1967 there were differences. On May 16, 1967 Egypt asked the

UN troops to leave and on May 22 the straits of Tiran were closed to

Israeli shipping, creating a clear <u>casus</u> <u>belli</u> in the eyes of the Israeli

leadership. If until then there had been a precedent for peaceful

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[24]Laqueur, <u>Road to Jerusalem</u>, 74.

[25]Brecher, <u>Decisions in Israel</u>, footnote, 356.

resolution of brewing conflict (namely, in 1960), then after the Straits were closed, the only precedent for action which existed was war - the war of 1956. Since the conditions resembled those of 1956 it should have been clear to the Soviets that the Egyptians had overreached themselves.

Most scholars argue that the Soviet Union was consulted neither about the withdrawal of the UN troops, nor about the closure of the Straits of Tiran, something that made the Soviet Union particularly uncomfortable. Allegedly, closing the straits was a bad precedent "considering [the Soviet Union's] dependence on the Bosphorus and Dardanelles."[26]

Yet, the available evidence on the Soviet involvement in an escalation of tensions is somewhat confusing. And while we never know all the facts, there is some information which suggests that the Soviet attitude towards the situation was a hard line one. According to this view the Soviets wanted to increase their influence in the Middle East at the expense of the Americans. The escalation was to their advantage and the Soviets helped it along.

Thus, on April 11, four days after another clash between Syria and Israel, N.G. Yegorychev, first secretary of the Moscow City Party Committee, left for Egypt.[27] And only ten days after his departure for Cairo did the Soviets formally protest against Israel's "dangerous playing with fire . . . in an area near to the borders of the Soviet Union . . ."[28]

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[26]Lall, The UN and the Middle East, 30; Klinghoffer and Apter, Israel and the Soviet Union, 51; Dawisha, Soviet Policy Towards Egypt, 40.

[27]Pravda, 12 April 1967, p. 3.

[28]Dagan, Moscow and Jerusalem, 202.

So, the timing of Yegorychev's trip to Egypt in April 1967 appeared to coincide with the then current Soviet accusation of Israeli troop concentrations, as well as the plan to attack Syria.[29]

It is claimed that the "Soviets desired tensions in order to make Egypt more militarily dependent; the Soviet Union could then more easily acquire bases there."[30] Hannes Adomeit and Alexander Dallin claim that the faction centering around Alexander Shelepin and which included Yegorychev, Semichastny (the head of the KGB), Goryunov (director of Tass) "appeared to have advocated greater commitment and activism abroad in order to cash in on the rise of USSR to approximate strategic parity with the United States."[31] Brezhnev is quoted as saying to Polish and East German communist leaders on April 22, that

> Even our adversaries will have to admit the success of
> our Middle East policy. We have partly succeeded in
> ousting the Americans from the region, and we are about
> to inflict another blow on them - a serious one - in
> the very near future...[32]

On May 12, Chuvakhin, the Soviet Ambassador in Tel Aviv, who was known for his hard line views about the Middle East, refused an invitation from Israel's Foreign Minister to visit Israel's northern border in order to see

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[29]See p. 5.

[30]Klinghoffer and Apter, Israel and the Soviet Union, 56.

[31]Hannes Adomeit, "Consensus Versus Conflict: The Dimension of Foreign Policy", and Alexander Dallin, "The Domestic Sources of Soviet Foreign Policy", in The Domestic Context of Foreign Policy, ed. Seweryn Bialer (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981), 72-3, 367.

[32]Jacques Derogy and Hesi Carmel, The Untold History of Israel (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1979), 213; Ervin Weit, Eyewitness (London: Andre Deutsch, 1973), 139-40.

for himself that there was no concentration of troops.[33] On May 14, the Egyptian army chief of staff, reported from Syria that "no Israeli troop concentrations were in evidence." This was the same day that Egypt began movement of troops into Sinai.[34]

In support of the hard line argument, Walter Laqueur claims that "Nasser met the Soviet ambassador a few hours before he made his statement [about a blockade].[35] In addition, according to the information provided by a former KGB officer stationed in Egypt, Vladimir Sakharov, the intelligence adviser to President Nasser, Sami Sharaf, had been a KGB agent since 1958.[36] Is it possible that the KGB in Moscow did not know what Nasser was going to do — when the man Nasser mostly listened to was a KGB agent? It would seem highly unlikely. Rather, all this supports the argument that the Soviets were aware of the Egyptians move to close the Straits and, at least, were not against this move.

On the other hand, it is possible to argue that the Soviet actions were not the consequence of the hard-line policy goal, but rather a reflection of misunderstandings and mix-ups. More specifically, in the case of Sami Sharaf and the KGB, one can argue that there was lack of precise communications between Sami Sharaf and the KGB. Up to the withdrawal of the UN troops, Egypt apparently did what the Soviets wanted it to do, so Sharaf might have thought that the withdrawal of the UN

[33]Brecher, Decisions in Israel, 362.

[34]Roman Kolkowicz and Paul Jabber, "The Arab-Israeli Wars of 1967 and 1973," in Diplomacy of Power, ed. Stephen S. Kaplan (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1981), 425.

[35]Laqueur, Road to Jerusalem, 93.

[36]John Barron, KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents (London: Reader's Digest Press, 1974), 51-2.

troops would be in line with what the Soviet Union wanted to accomplish in the Middle East (i.e. strengthening the position of the Arabs at the expense of Israelis). Thus, such a step would not require special consultations with the KGB station chief in Cairo. Or, if such a consultation did take place, the station chief might have not seen a great significance in what Egypt was going to do. There is some circumstantial evidence to support the above suppositions.

For instance, Nasser asked the United Nations to withdraw its troops on May 16. On May 17 or 18, the head of the KGB, Semichastny, was dismissed from his post and Yurii Andropov was named to be his successor.[37] On May 29, Sergei Vinogradov was named to replace the Soviet Ambassador to Egypt, D. Pozhidaev. Could it be that these two, Semichastny and Pozhidaev, were held responsible for either not knowing what was going on in Egypt or incorrectly reporting the available information to the Soviet leadership? It is interesting that Pozhidaev, when war broke out, "made claims that the Arabs had achieved great victories" at a time when they were suffering catastrophic defeats.[38] It would not be too presumptuous to suggest that there was miscommunication involved.

Thus, the evidence provided by Laqueur that there was a meeting between Nasser and the Soviet ambassador, plus the circumstantial evidence showing curious coincidence of major events in the Middle East and the involvement of some of the Soviet officials in the events, does not in itself contradict the position of the other scholars who contend that the Soviet Union did not know about and did not wish to see the removal of the UN troops and the blockade of the Straits. In spite of appearing as contradictory, all that this evidence points to is that at least some Soviet officials knew, could have known, or were supposed to know what

Egypt was going to do. It is possible that the leadership removed those officials for failing to keep the Soviet leaders in the know. In support of such a conclusion, Arthur Klinghoffer noted that a "prominent Israeli specialist on intelligence affairs" was quoted as saying that "Gromyko was furious at Soviet ambassador to Egypt Dmitrii Pozhidaev for not knowing about Nasser's plan regarding Tiran."[39]

But, if the Soviet role in the closure of the Straits is uncertain, it is more clear that once the Straits had been closed, and the full-blown crisis had occurred, the Soviets seemed to have become wary of the potential explosiveness of the situation. They told the Egyptians that, "remembering what had happened in 1956," everyone should be on his toes vis-a-vis Israel.[40] In fact, the Soviets did appear apprehensive with respect to both the Arab and Israeli intentions. On May 24, the Egyptian Defence Minister was cautioned by Kosygin: "[Egypt] has achieved its objectives - and by peaceful means. So now the most important thing is to cool things down and not give Israel or the imperialist forces any cause for triggering off an armed conflict." The Foreign Minister, Gromyko, counselled the Egyptian: "The development of events had brought considerable political gains for the UAR [i.e., Egypt], but now was a time for restraint."[41]

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[37]Pravda, 19 May 1967, p.1.

[38]Klinghoffer and Apter, Israel and the Soviet Union, 57.

[39]Ibid., 51.

[40]Heikal, Sphinx and Commissar, 176.

[41]Ibid., 178-79

With respect to Israel, the Soviet Union also tried to preach moderation. On May 26, Kosygin sent a letter to the Israeli Prime Minister. The communication was non - accusatory and in marked contrast with previous Soviet-Israeli diplomatic exchanges. Kosygin wrote that

> Guided by the interests of peace and the aspiration
> to avoid bloodshed, the Soviet Government had
> decided to send you this appeal. We wish to call
> upon you to take all measures in order that a
> military conflict should not be created... We think
> that whatever the position may be in the border
> areas of Israel, Syria, and the UAR, and however
> intricate that problem may be, it is essential to
> find means to settle the conflict by non-military
> means.[42] (emphasis added).

The Soviets also tried to put the pressure on Israel through the United States. The USSR had told the Americans that they had information on Israel's preparations for war. "The Soviet Union had asked the United States to take all measures to ensure that there be no military conflict."[43] The Soviet leaders, in addition, counted upon other western powers to restrain Israel. De Gaulle of France announced that his country "will influence the Soviet Union towards an attitude favourable to peace. Israel must not make war unless she is attacked by others. It would be catastrophic if Israel were to shoot first."[44] On May 28, a letter from the British Prime Minister arrived, also calling for restraint on Israel's part.[45] The Soviets undoubtedly thought that the pressure would help to restrain Israel.

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[42]Eban, An Autobiography, 366.

[43]Ibid., 369.

[44]Brecher, Decisions in Israel, 381.

[45]Ibid., 409.

[46]Laqueur, Road to Jerusalem, 170-71.

> Washington tried to impress on Moscow that this
> would be a serious miscalculation: the campaign for
> holy war against Israel and the growing Arab
> military build-up could force the Israelis to take
> action even before the blockade controversy was
> resolved... The Soviet leaders thought America was
> bluffing; Israel would never dare to go it alone.[46]

Also, the Soviets were led to believe that a united Arab world would act as a deterrent to Israeli attack. Indeed, such a conclusion would seem logical to any outside observer. For on May 30th Jordan and Syria signed a five year Mutual Defence Pact which put Jordanian troops under Egyptian command. Iraq officially signed the pact with Egypt on June 4, its troops having arrived in Jordan the day before. And on June 3, the French announced an arms embargo against Israel.[47] If Israel did not initiate an attack when it faced Egypt alone, what were the chances that it would confront the armies of four Arab states? As Roman Kolkowicz pointed out: "When by the end of May there had been no Israeli military response to the closing of the straits, [the Soviets] may have believed that Israel lacked the will to fight."[48]

The Soviets might have felt that despite a danger of war, it was possible to make the Egyptians "conciliatory about further moves", while not budging "an inch from their [Egyptians'] position" on the Straits.[49] It is quite possible that the situation, while fraught with danger, was perceived by the Russians as a gratuitous success. The longer Israelis hesitated with their actions and the longer western powers

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[47]Brecher, Decisions in Israel, 431.

[48]Roman Kolkowicz, The Arab-Israeli Wars, 432.

[49]Brecher, Decisions in Israel, 417.

counselled Israel against taking any unilateral steps, the more convinced the Soviets were in their belief that they could preserve Arab gains without having to face the uncertainties of war.

As we have seen above (page 14), in the last few days before the war the Soviet "efforts seemed [to have been] directed toward preventing war while seeking a diplomatic solution that would preserve the political gains of the Arab clients."[50] The political gains were impressive, indeed. Disunited only a few days before, "[t]he states and peoples [were] closing ranks for a new battle, under the leadership of Nasser." Nasser's prestige in the Arab world was at its peak. Delegations from Iraq, Syria, Algeria, Kuwait and other Arab states began arriving in Cairo.[51]

A few days before the war started, the Russians were so convinced of their success that "Brezhnev, Kosygin, and Defence Minister Grechko left Moscow for a ceremonial visit to the Soviet fleet in Murmansk and Archangel" for several days and did not arrive back in Moscow until the 4th of June - one day before the war broke out. President Podgorny returned from a state visit to Afghanistan on June 3. Gromyko of the Foreign Ministry stayed in Moscow, and had to contend with the reports from the Soviet ambassador in Tel-Aviv, Chuvakhin, who "allegedly informed Moscow two days before hostilities broke out that war would not take place for at least fifteen days."[52] At the same time "almost all [other] reports about

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[50] Roman Kolkowicz, The Arab Israeli Wars, 426.

[51] Laqueur, Road to Jerusalem. 96.

[52] Klinghoffer and Apter, Israel and the Soviet Union, 53.

the crisis came from Cairo and other Arab capitals, and all reflected the Arab viewpoint."[53] Just before hostilities began, "the only Soviet cruiser in the Mediterranean and ten other ships of the fleet were sighted lying at anchor one hundred miles north of Crete, some 500 miles away from the shores of Sinai and behind a screen of U.S. Sixth Fleet units south of Crete."[54]

There is very little doubt that the war caught the Soviet leaders by surprise. When it broke out on June 5, 1967, one could sense a certain level of bitterness in Kosygin's message to the Israeli Prime Minister: "The Government of Israel knew that the conflict was avoidable."[55]

From the evidence presented above it may be concluded that in all likelihood the Russians did not want war and were caught by surprise when it erupted, their policy of controlled tensions having failed. The Soviets fell victim to the confusion that pervaded their decision-making. The question that remains to be answered is why there had been any confusion?

It appears that the Soviet perception of the Middle-East situation was not correct. Their preconceived notions about Arabs and Israelis which went unchallenged by timely and balanced intelligence had led to miscalculations and eventual policy failure.

As has been shown in previous chapters, it is the responsibility of the KGB together with the GRU to provide the Soviet leadership with

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[53]Laqueur, Road to Jerusalem, 214.

[54]Roman Kolkowicz, The Arab-Israeli Wars, 427, 432.

[55]Dagan, Moscow and Jerusaleml, 227.

political and military intelligence.[56] It can be shown that prior to the
outbreak of the Six-Day-War in 1967, both agencies failed to provide
adequate information for proper assessment of the situation. It should be
noted, though, that only an indirect inference about some of the problems is
possible since it is almost impossible to do empirical research on the KGB.

Nevertheless, it appears that KGB and the GRU did fail in their
assessment of the military balance between Israel and the Arabs. On paper,
as table 4 clearly shows, the Israeli army was inferior to its Arab
opponents. But guns do not fire by themselves. It is people who drive
tanks or pilot the planes, and as Walter Laqueur aptly observed: "Tanks and
aircraft can be measured, [whereas] the human factor is an unknown
quantity."[57] The Arab quantitative superiority was offset by Israel's
"superior mobilization capability, training, morale, and leadership."[58]
Yet, for some reason, neither the KGB nor the GRU seemed to have given
much credence to the Israeli human factor. Some observers have
attributed this shortsightedness to what Laqueur called "traditional
patterns of thought ('Jews do not fight')."[59] Given the troubled history
of Russian-Jewish relationship, the above explanation is intuitively
appealing. If it is true that familiarity breeds contempt, the Russians
might have thought that, based on their experience with Russian Jews,
they could predict the behavior of Israeli Jews. One must admit that the
possibility of such transference of one's perceptions of people's

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[56]Amy W. Knight, The KGB: Police and Politics in the Soviet Union
(London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1988), 282.

[57]Laqueur, Road to Jerusalem, 70.

[58]Brecher, Decisions in Israel, 324.

[59]Dagan, Moscow and Jerusalem, 242; Laqueur, Road to Jerusalem, 230.

Table IV

ARAB-ISRAEL MILITARY CAPABILITY: MAY 1967

	Forces of Arab States Bordering Israel					Other Arab Forces	Total Arab Forces	Israel
	Egypt	Syria	Jordan	Lebanon	Total			
Regular Army	190,000	65,000	55,000	11,000	321,000	70,000	391,000	71,000
Effective national guard and reserves	20,000	45,000	20,000	-	85,000	18,000	103,000	205,500–230,000
Other reserves	100,000	-	-	-	100,000	-	100,000	-
Tanks (all types)	900	400	300	-	1,645	400	2,045	800
Assault guns	400	100	unknown	unknown	500	420	920	250
Planes (approx.)	430	80	18	18	546	250	796	307
Artillery and Mortars (approx.)	870	unknown	unknown	unknown	870	unknown	870	unknown

Source: Michael Brecher, Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 325.

attitudes on the plane of international relations is not easy to prove.
It does not lend itself to quantification, and often even mentioning
national prejudices evokes negative reactions from scholars and
politicians alike. Yet, few would deny, for instance, that stereotypes
exist and influence behavior. It is thus not inconceivable that the
distorted view of the Middle East balance can, at least partially, be
explained by the contempt in which the Soviets held the Israelis. Arkady
Shevchenko, who was a member of the Soviet Union UN delegation at the
time of the crisis in 1967, claimed to be a witness to the contemptuous
Soviet attitude towards Jews.[60] If such an attitude is reflective of the
Soviet society as a whole, there is no reason why the Soviet intelligence
apparatus should be any different in its own attitudes.

National bias notwithstanding, it is quite possible that the entire
Soviet intelligence gathering effort up until 1967 was skewed in favour of
the Arab world. This could have been the consequence of two
interrelated problems. Firstly, Egypt and other Arab countries were seen
as vast, and thus much more important than tiny Israel. Alone, Egypt's
population was more than ten times that of Israel - 30 million vs. 2.7
million inhabitants.[61] Also, at the time, the United States, while being
sympathetic to Israel, was not Israel's main arms supplier. The latter
was not even assured of the American support in diplomatic sphere.

Therefore, the Soviets were probably convinced that Israel was a small
and unimportant country. According to Laqueur, "Chuvakhin, the Soviet

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[60]Arkady N. Shevchenko, Breaking with Moscow (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 134.

[61]Laqueur, Road to Jerusalem, 67.

ambassador in Israel, made no secret of his conviction that he had been accredited to Lilliput."[62] It has been estimated that up to 50 percent of the Soviet embassy personnel are engaged in intelligence gathering.[63] Is there a reason to believe that these KGB and GRU operatives did not themselves believe that they had been sent to the place that would do nothing for their future careers? Moreover, given the efficiency of the Israeli intelligence services, Israel was undoubtedly a dangerous place to operate for the KGB officers -- once exposed in Israel they would have had great difficulty in the future in gaining entrance into other western countries.

Inside the Soviet Union, in the late 1950's the KGB apparently had difficulties in attracting "well-educated personnel for its foreign operations."[64] The agency needed recruits with a knowledge of foreign languages and countries. Those recruits were most likely to come from the Institute of International Relations in Moscow. According to a former KGB officer who was stationed in the Arab countries in the 1960s, the "Institute was almost exclusively the preserve of the New Class," sons and daughters of political bureaucrats, and Party workers. The main goal of the graduates was to work abroad and make money.[65] According to Arkady Shevchenko, who graduated from the Institute in the 1950s and who worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the most privileged caste was a "group of people who were the 'Germanists,' the 'disarmament boys,' the 'Americanists,' and the 'Europeans' (those dealing with Soviet-French

[62]Ibid., 213.

[63]Knight, KGB: Police and Politics, 281

[64]Ibid., 300, footnote.

[65]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 36.

Here lay the Soviet problem. The reason behind their misjudgment of the situation in Israel was a lack of understanding that "[d]emocratic regimes are permanently in a state of crisis, dictatorships never - officially. That is why democracies always appear weaker than they are, and dictatorships stronger."[68]

It is interesting to note here that the Americans, for whatever reasons, came to an exactly opposite (from the Soviet) estimate of Israel's capability. The Israeli Foreign Minister of the time, Abba Eban, on his trip to Washington, was told by the American defence chiefs that

> [t]heir studies all pointed toward Israeli success
> if there was a war. They thought that this would be
> the case no matter who took the initiative in the
> air. That question would affect the time and the
> size of [Israel's] casualty list, but not the result
> itself.[69]

The Soviet intelligence for their part failed to understand that nothing unites a divided nation better than an external threat. By concentrating on negative phenomena in Israeli life, they did not take into consideration the fact that while Israel's population was ten times smaller than that of Egypt, its GNP was close to that of its main Arab adversary.[70] This fact alone should have alerted the Soviets to the possibility that the balance was not as lopsided in Arab favor as was generally believed. Nor was any note taken of the appraisal of Israeli power given on May 25, 1967 by the leading Israeli military commentator: "...there is no doubt that the qualitative gap in manpower is still in our

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[68]Laqueur, Road to Jerusalem, 231.

[69]Eban, An Autobiography 352.

[70]Laqueur, Road to Jerusalem, 67.

favour. This manifests itself in the standard of the Israeli tank driver...and certainly...of the Israeli pilot."[71] Yet on June 2, 1967, the Soviet ambassador in Tel Aviv still claimed that Israel would be defeated within twenty-four hours.[72]

Also, the Soviets did not appreciate that "Israel could not wait indefinitely for a peaceful resolution of the crisis through external efforts," because the "withdrawal of a quarter of a million men from the labour force brought Israel's economy near to a standstill in production."[63] Indeed, it is difficult to understand how it was that neither the KGB nor the Ministry of Foreign Affairs understood the incongruity between Israel's declarations that the closure of the Straits of Tiran was an act of war to which it would respond, the mounting economic costs of mobilization in the Jewish state, and the reports of the Soviet personnel in Israel that Israel lacked the will to fight. Such contradictory information should have caused cognitive dissonance at least in some quarters in Moscow.

The Soviets must have felt that given the fact that both sides were fully mobilized and threatened to fight, there was little risk of a surprise attack by either side, and that all the tough talk was so much sabre- rattling. Yet, "[e]stimating risks requires an intimate grasp of the culture, capabilities, and political and psychological frame of mind of one's adversaries,"[74] a state of awareness that the Soviets stationed

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[71]Becher, Decision in Israel, 324.

[72]Derogy, The Untold History, 215.

[73]Brecher, Decisions in Israel, 326.

[74]Alfred C. Maurer, Marion D. Tunstall, and James M. Keagle, eds. Intelligence: Policy and Press (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1985), 252.

in Israel failed to achieve. The stronger opponent, "interested in perpetuating a favorable status quo, does not fully comprehend the potential attacker's desperate frame of mind." Moreover,

> Attackers may calculate that because attacking at a certain place or time would involve high costs, their adversaries would rationally conclude that the probability of this choice of strategy is extremely low. Paradoxically, then opting for a high-risk strategy might be less foolhardy than is first assumed.[75]

This was exactly the strategy that Israel opted for in 1967. However, for the Soviets to have appreciated the possibility of such an outcome would require a sophistication which the KGB lacked.[76]

It is quite possible that the KGB was more concerned with giving the leadership what it wanted to hear. It is impossible to surmise that the Soviet leaders believed that they could prevent war from breaking out and were surprised when their efforts failed. "Diplomatic efforts were conducted throughout [the course of events] at the level of heads of states; regular channels of communication were replaced by summit correspondence."[77] In such an atmosphere, in which the leaders of the party and the state have a personal stake in the outcome of the policy, it becomes dangerous for lower echelons to express the views that challenge the prevailing opinion. For, whoever tries to do so would undoubtedly loose his position before the outcome of a given policy might vindicate his stand. And there is in the KGB "the time honored [tradition] toward

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[75]Ibid., 251.

[76]Walter Laqueur, A World of Secrets: The Uses and Limits of Intelligence (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers for the Twentieth Century Fund, 1985), 248.

[77]Brecher, Decision in Israel, 433.

caution and reinsurance, intelligence officials who want to be promoted do not wish to be unpopular with their bosses."[78]

Yet, it has been suggested that in spite of the failure to properly assess the balance of forces in the Middle East, and also a psychological imperative in Israel to respond militarily against the Arab threat, the KGB, nevertheless, did learn about the date of Israel's attack. Such was the claim of the KGB head of the operations in Alexandria, Sbirunov. Even if it is true, Viktor Sbirunov's statement is rather revealing about the general state of confusion in which the Soviet intelligence apparatus found itself on the eve of the Six Day War. According to the KGB officer

> There was information, exact information. [The KGB] learned the exact date of the attack and the hour of the attack. That was sent to the Center. Maybe they did not believe it or doubted the source. Maybe it was just a routine fault at the Centre.[79] (Emphasis added).

The above statement of the KGB station chief serves to underscore "the play it safe" tradition of the KGB. There was so much activity going on in the Middle East that the Soviets found it hard to distinguish noise from information.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the failure of the Soviet policy in the Middle East in 1967 was to a great extent the consequence of having inadequate information from the field. Soviet intelligence failed to provide the leadership with a well-balanced information about the situation. The intelligence apparatus was short sighted and parochial in its approach. The poor quality of the agents played the major role in

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[78]Laqueur, A World of Secrets, 248.

[79]Barron, KGB: The Secret Work, 51.

the inability of the KGB to understand the intricacies of the situation. In addition, insofar as the information is available, it is obvious that the KGB reacted to the events like any other Soviet institution would have - with all the biases and misconceptions which are part of the society as a whole. Its pro-Arab outlook was a result of both the recognition of the importance of the Arab world and the internal Soviet dynam . This perceptual bias influenced the representation of the KGB's Middle-Eastern "reality."

And since in the USSR there are no organizations independent from the party, there is no built-in mechanism that can counterbalance perceptual distortions and parochialism in the KGB. Such a situation led to the kinds of intelligence failures as the one in 1967.

Summary

In this essay an attempt has been made to show that the KGB is not simply an organization of espionage. It is, rather, an essential link in the Soviet control and steering mechanism. As such, its main role is to provide the leadership of the Communist Party with information regarding its domestic and foreign environments. Given the KGB's vast penetration of Soviet society and the organization's extensive network of information gatherers abroad, the KGB has no equal in its potential to provide the leadership with both the information regarding the effect of the specific policies on the environment (i.e. feedback) and the completely new information that is needed to formulate new policies.

Quite obviously, like in any other society, the functioning of Soviet society depends on the proper functioning of its feedback mechanism. The required information must be collected on time, correctly evaluated and acted upon. If any of the above steps are not performed, the system will eventually become progressively more detached from reality and without any rational basis on which to make decisions. If such a state of affairs prevails, the breakdown of the system cannot be ruled out.

It was in order to avoid the possibility of breakdown and to help the Communist party control Soviet society that the KGB from its inception spread its tentacles virtually into every corner of the society. Such an arrangement is designed to provide the party with the information that it needs to control and direct the development of events in the Soviet Union. An extensive intelligence network abroad can also be seen as an attempt by the Soviet leadership to gather information about external events

in order to try to have some modicum of control over the international environment.

However, not everything that is designed to function perfectly in theory does so in real life circumstances. The KGB information gathering apparatus is a good example of such an incongruity. As we have seen, this enormous apparatus is very inefficient in its operations. Quite often, the badly needed information is not collected, or if collected, is either lost or distorted on its way to the Soviet leadership.

There are several reasons for the malfunctioning of this cybernetic mechanism. First of all, the KGB suffers from the same maladies that can distort communication in large, complex organizations everywhere. They are: centralization, hierarchy, interdepartmental rivalry and duplication of activities. And we found that the KGB is highly centralized, strictly hierarchical in the chain of command and is ranked by the intense rivalry of its different directorates. The distorting effects of such an organizational design are exacerbated by the all-pervasive secretiveness of Soviet society and the penchant of Soviet bureaucracy for paper pushing.

In addition, a very negative influence on the information gathering by the KGB is exercised by its personnel. Those working for the KGB are no different from the people working for other Soviet institutions. They are socialized to see and perceive the "reality" in the same way as all other Soviet people are. And they bring to their work the same values, biases and preconceptions which are prevalent in Soviet society as a whole. These preconceptions influence the choice of information to be collected, the amount of attention paid to it and the way the information

is interpreted.

In short, the security apparatus displays some typically Russian features such as an inflated structure, confusion in operation, and inefficiency, all of which lead to the total result that Soviet rulers receive distorted information.

Nowhere did the above problems with the Soviet information gathering and assessment manifest themselves as fully as they did in the events in the Middle East in 1967. There, the Soviets pursued the policy of controlled tensions - trying to preserve the gains made by the Arab countries while at the same time trying to prevent the war from breaking out. Yet, the Soviets were surprised by the outbreak of war and its outcome. Their enormous intelligence apparatus fell victim to the negative stereotype about the Jews -- stereotype prevalent in the Soviet society as a whole. This conditioning of the Soviet agents affected their reporting of the events. Also, most of the reports came from the Arab countries, reflecting the perceived importance of the Arab states vis-a-vis Israel. At the same time, the situation in Israel was poorly presented and generally misunderstood. Overall, the Soviet intelligence services have gravely miscalculated the "correlation of forces" in the area.

And even when the KGB appeared to have learned about the Israeli decision to attack Arab countries, the incident revealed the KGB's organizational problems. Because the KGB is a very cautious organization, with strict hierarchy of command, a very important information was either not transmitted to the Centre or was not believed when sent there. The result -- the Soviet decision-makers were caught by surprise.

This foreign policy incident shows that in spite of the extent, size, and cost of the apparatus, the KGB does not always put the Soviet leaders in reliable touch with the world. Moreover, it turns out that the KGB, which was designed to be a provider of reliable information to the Soviet leadership, is ultimately incapable of performing the assigned task.

And since an inadequate cybernetic mechanism can lead to an eventual breakdown of the entire political system, it is not an exageration to suggest that, in a sense, the current reforms in the USSR can be seen, among other things, as an attempt to overhaul a totally inadequate communications system.

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