

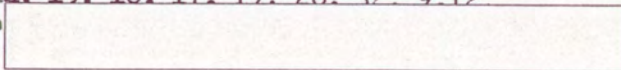
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Info and excerpts from Soviet Defector Interrogation  
Reports (SPONGE 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 26, 32, 9, 12  
22, 24, 25, - also



3.5(c)

FORM NO. 35-31  
SEPT. 1949

ABSTRACT FILE SLIP



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Appeal  
Authority NLE-2016-34 #22  
By MMK NLDDE Date 8/22/17



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Information and Excerpts from

SOVIET DEFECTOR INTERROGATION REPORT (SPONGE NO. 14, )

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Source

The source of this report is a former lieutenant colonel in the Soviet Army who defected to American authorities in Berlin in 1949. He was born in the Ukraine in 1909 of moderately prosperous peasant folk. He is relatively well educated. Almost all his working life was spent in the Red Army. He has traveled quite extensively throughout the Soviet Union and satellite areas.

Interpretation

The source was most difficult to talk to, extremely reticent in his discussion - a most opaque personality. The interrogator thought him an intelligent man with considerable powers of analysis. However, certain inconsistencies in his comments together with his reticent and complex personality raise some question as to his reliability.

Commentary

1. "One sociological phenomenon to which reference has been made by previous sources and which the colonel also mentioned was the sad plight of repatriates to the USSR. He felt that their situation had become particularly hard after 1947. Although they were in a bad situation in the Soviet Zone, they were even worse off when they returned home. They were screened in special camps by the MGB. If they were found not guilty of any action considered criminal, they were assigned to construction projects. Otherwise, they were in many cases sent to concentration camps. Asked why nothing was published in the press regarding the existence of this group of citizens, the respondent pointed out they were so numerous that it would be embarrassing to report their cases in the press. If there had been only a few of them, they could have been singled out as evil examples, but the Soviet rulers feared the impression of injustice which would be created by reporting the imprisonment of exiling of thousands of people for actions resulting from circumstances beyond their control." (pp. 30)

2. "The only nationality problem that the source seemed to consider important or at least concerning which he seemed to have knowledge was anti-semitism. Jews, he said, are definitely disliked in the USSR. The reason for this is that Jews hold so many important positions. Another factor is the widespread belief that the Jews had not played their full part in the war and in many cases had obtained profitable jobs. The respondent thought there was quite an interesting difference between the Soviet government's attitude toward the Jews before the war and after the war. Before the war, anti-semitism had been a crime. It was not so regarded after the war. An indication of the Ukrainian peasants' attitude toward the Jews was furnished by the source's remark that before the war the peasants had called goats "Jewish cows" because so many Jews owned goats." (pp. 34)... "Regarding the role of anti-semitism in the

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"cosmopolitan' purge, he said that this campaign was not directed entirely against the Jews but the Jews had been the first sufferers because they held so many important literary positions. However, it was important to remember that the printing of the culprits' real names in parentheses was not a measure aimed solely at the Jews. There were quite a few non-Jews who were also so treated. The source had noticed no change in army personnel policy regarding Jewish people, and he recalled that during his service in Germany as chief of staff of a brigade his first assistant had been Jewish. Most Soviet Jews, he felt, wanted to be considered Russians." (pp. 35)

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Information and Excerpts from

SOVIET DEFFECTOR INTERROGATION REPORT (SPONCE NO. 15, )

3.5(c)

Source

The source is a former Soviet industrial worker who defected from the Red Army in Austria in 1950 after approximately a year's duty as a soldier. The source was born in Tashkert in 1928, and lived in a number of central Asian localities prior to coming to Moscow in 1949. He was a member in the USSR of a religious sect known as the Subbotniks, which maintains anti-regime views. He has had six years of schooling.

Interpretation

The salient peculiarity of this source's testimony is the religious interpretation he gives to the situation within the USSR. In his adherence to the religion of the Subbotnik sect, he can only be described as a zealot. Despite his lack of education, he is natively intelligent and mentally alert. The interrogator regards the source's testimony as of a rather high order of reliability.

Commentary

1. "According to the source, the Soviet Government has ruthlessly persecuted the Subbotniks but some are still alive and active, especially in Kazakhstan and Kirghizia. (page 2)

"... In 1940, all of the source's immediate family except himself were arrested by the secret police. During the course of the interviews the source modified this account somewhat. It developed that his mother's arrest took place subsequent to those of other members of the family. Most of the arrests were the result of a police campaign to eliminate the Subbotnik sect, whose members oppose the Soviet regime and do not believe in bearing arms. His mother was arrested because she had torn down and trampled on the portrait of Stalin hanging in the building of the village Soviet in the collective farm to which she belonged." (pages 4-5)

2. "He considers that Stalin's system rules mainly by fear and hunger. If the people of the Soviet Union were well fed, they would become more critical and would be harder to control. The system is an absolute dictatorship, completely dominated by Stalin and his close assistants, who manipulate the populace at their will. They maintain their power despite the fact that the people are deeply dissatisfied. The fact that Stalin is obviously afraid to circulate among the people reflects his knowledge of their hatred of him. There are many Russians who would be glad to kill Stalin.

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. . . "The Government demands absolute submission and threatens dissenters or even merely passive supporters with the dreaded accusation 'you are an anti-Soviet' or 'you are not a Soviet person' ('ty ne Sevetski chelevek'). The regime controls numerous chains of command, each link of which is responsible for all lower links of its particular chain.

"One outstanding characteristic of the system is its ruthless exploitation of Russian workers and peasants. They are paid much less than they earn, and with the portion of their earnings which is expropriated by the government an army of propagandists and secret agents is supported.

"Asked whether Stalin knew of the misdeeds sometimes committed by his officials, the source replied that he not only knew of them but that he inspired them in order to make people fear him. Stalin is well aware of the people's sufferings, although sometimes he attempts to shift the blame to subordinates." (page 19)

3. "The group which was arrested in 1940 was seized at night by a man in civilian clothes accompanied by police armed with swords. They arrived in a black prison van (chernaya vorona). They conducted a minute search, even digging in cellars and gardens. As a result, they found the religious books for which they were looking and the arrests took place immediately thereafter. The arrest of the source's mother apparently took place in 1941. She was not at home when the above arrests occurred. She was imprisoned for a time, and was later put in a mental institution. According to the source, she lost her mind because of harsh treatment in prison. The only one of the source's arrested relatives other than his mother (whom he was allowed to visit once, apparently in 1947) who was allowed to communicate with persons outside of prison was his grandmother. (The grandmother was the mother of the source's real father. She died in 1945.) She was allowed to write letters once every three months.

"In addition to the above, and to other material regarding the police system noted throughout this report, the source furnished the following miscellaneous data. He said that the authorities' interpretation of a person's attitude was the most important factor in determining the seriousness of an offense and the nature of punishment therefor. The source remarked ironically that anyone who looked 'sideways' (kosvenno) at the Soviet system would be arrested.

"He emphasized the omnipresence of police informers. As a rule, Soviet citizens do not know the identity of these informers. If an informer becomes known, he is immediately transferred. Informers are everywhere, even in shopping queues. Sometimes they are persons who turn over to the police an individual who makes a remark which seems to be politically suspect. Such public places as markets, railroad stations, trains, restaurants, etc. are infested with informers. The source remembered an incident which occurred in his own place of work in Moscow. Two strangers suddenly appeared in the blacksmith shop and asked his boss and himself what they had just been talking about. The source was sure they were police informers. Constant surveillance, he said, is one of the worst features of Soviet life." (page 23)

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"The source furnished the following bits of information regarding the methods of operation and attitude toward the populace of the police. He knew one man who had once gotten on a train without a ticket because it was impossible to purchase one. About a year later, a police agent came to him with a document noting this misdemeanor which the man was forced to sign. He was fined 25 per cent of his earnings for a period of four months and narrowly escaped imprisonment.

"While the source was living in a dormitory in Moscow, a local policeman (militzioner) used to make regular visits. Occasionally, he recruited some of the boys who lived in the dormitory to assist him in such jobs as breaking up shopping lines. The respondent said that this militia man told him that he was expected to fulfill a "plan" of arrests. The source said that the militia are more likely to arrest law-abiding people than thieves, for the latter do not hesitate to kill policemen. The militia, he said, allow their relatives and friends to remain in bread lines, but drive away other people. This statement by the source appeared to the interrogator to be an interesting illustration of the way in which the harshness of the struggle for existence in the USSR extends into the details of everyday life.

"The source waved his hand in disgust when asked if the courts in the USSR functioned legally. He said that they function only "for the benefit of the communists". Illustrating this remark, the source recalled a case which occurred in Chm. Two locomotive engineers were placed on trial for going to sleep while at work. The source said that he felt sorry for them, because they were so overworked that it was not surprising that this had happened. They were sentenced to three years in a labor camp by a railway court. Their fellow workers were forced to attend the trial 'to terrify them'. Thus the court was utilized as a propaganda instrument." (page 23)

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Information and Excerpts from  
SOVIET DEFECTOR INTERROGATION REPORT (SPONGE NO. 16, )

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Source

The source of this report was born in 1925 in the Chkalov Oblast (European Urals). In the latter part of the war he served as an artillery lieutenant with the Red Army. In 1948 he became a lieutenant in the MGB. He defected to the American Sector of Berlin in 1949 from an artillery brigade in the Soviet Zone to which he was assigned as an assistant to the MGB representative. He was not a Party member, although his position in Soviet society was a relatively privileged and responsible one.

Interpretation

The source is interesting in that he is representative of the group in the USSR from which the regime derives much of its power: brought up and educated under the Soviets, untouched by Soviet persecutions and great economic hardship, unacquainted with the world outside the USSR, and given positions of privilege in the Soviet society. His testimony is somewhat contradictory in parts, and the interrogator had the impression that this may have been the result of the source's efforts to say what he thought his American questioners wanted to hear.

Commentary

1. "The source says that he knows of only one secret order from Moscow of a general nature. In 1948, regional and provincial Party committees and all MVD and MGB units were informed that all collective farm workers not fulfilling their work quotas were to be deported to Siberia. The families were given the choice of following those deported or of remaining on the kolkhoz. In Crachovsk four peasants were arrested and deported at that time. The source assumes that the decisions regarding the ones to be deported were made by the Party and that the details of the deportation were handled by the MVD. The respondent is positive that the abolition of the death penalty in the USSR was accomplished in name only. He interprets the cent announcement of the re-imposition of capital punishment as a threat designed to keep those discontented with the regime from organizing themselves and taking more active measures to express their opposition." (pp. 20).

2. "Stalin's nationality policy has tended to reduce the hostility among the various Soviet peoples and, thanks to this policy, the situation in this regard is a good deal better than it was under the Tsars. There is only one

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racial group toward which the Russians today feel any real hostility and that is the Jews. It is true that some Russians feel that Ukrainians occupy a large number of good government jobs, but resentment against them on this score is mild in comparison to the resentment and dislike of the Jews-- despite official propaganda and laws against anti-semitism. This feeling is caused by the fact that 'the Russians hold the Jews responsible for the revolution' and because the Jews held so many of the highest positions in the government and the Party. During the war the Jews lived better than the Russians and occupied a disproportionate number of non-combat jobs in the army. The source felt that the Jews living in Moscow had left precipitately at the time of the German advance and that they had selfishly tried to monopolize available transport in their flight. These factors also tended to make the Russians dislike the Jews. Since the war the government has taken some steps to cut down the number of Jews in important positions. The campaign against 'homeless cosmopolitans' was partly directed against the Jews, many of whom occupied good jobs in the literary, theatrical and other fields in which western ideas were being attacked. There are fewer Jews than before the war among army and police officers. The source observes that the latter had formerly been almost exclusively Jewish. The source says that it has been made harder for Jews to get commissions in the army and that many formerly holding them have been dismissed. Most of the Jewish army officers were included among those demobilized after the war. Jewish police officers dismissed from their jobs 'were probably sent somewhere in Siberia'. (pp. 35)



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Excerpts and Information from

SOVIET DEFECTOR INTERROGATION REPORT (SPONGE NO. 17, )

3.5(c)

Source

The source is highly educated and was a very successful agriculturist in the USSR. He was born in the city of Voronezh in the RSFSR in 1899, into a bourgeois family of some distinction. Although he is partially Jewish, he has never listed himself as such in the USSR. He defected to American authorities in Berlin in 1949 from the Soviet Administration of Agriculture in Germany. He was not a member of the Communist Party while in the USSR.

Interpretation

The source is highly intelligent and very knowledgeable on many aspects of Soviet life. He furnished the information sought of him willingly, as well as systematically and professionally. There was no evidence of duplicity in his comments to the interrogator, rather he reflected honesty and sincerity.

Commentary

1. "The source and his family have at various times been victims of Soviet police persecution. In 1918 his father's newly constructed two-story home was confiscated by the Bolsheviks. This act greatly embittered the entire family. One of his uncles, a former colonel in the Tsarist Army, disappeared under the Yeshov regime of terror in 1935. While working in Tbilisi the colonel had made a public speech criticizing the Soviet authorities for exporting galoshes. He argued that they should be retained for the Russians. He died in prison somewhere in Siberia. Another uncle, who is now chief engineer in a factory in Leningrad, was arrested by the police in 1930 but was released after a month. The source himself was arrested in 1941. In conversations with neighbors he had criticized the lack of food and the improper defense of the city of Leningrad. One of them reported him and he was imprisoned and interrogated for three weeks, and then released. The police terror of the late 1930's and his own imprisonment were 'horrors' which were difficult for him to tolerate." (pp. 7).

2. "As noted above, the source was confined in prison for three weeks in November 1941 for criticizing the lack of food and the inadequate defense of the city of Leningrad. One of his neighbors had reported him to the police. The source was arrested by NKVD agents who showed him an arrest warrant signed by several people including the prosecutor. The source was then subjected to a physical search and was obliged to surrender all articles of value including

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a gold watch. The agents also searched the room and confiscated all letters, photographs and papers. The items taken were written down on a list and both the source and the agents signed the report. The room was sealed and the source was taken away to Nizhnegorodskaya Prison where he was photographed and his fingerprints taken. He was locked up for the night in a room with other arrestees, among them engineers, a professor, a bookkeeper, soldiers, sailors and workers. The next day he was ordered to take off his clothes and was issued prison clothes without buttons or hooks and was taken to a cell. His cell contained two narrow metal beds with rough mattresses and thin blankets, a table fastened to the wall, two chairs and a toilet bowl. There was central heating. The source was fed three times a day. Breakfast consisted of black bread and hot water; lunch of a glass of soup, salted fish and oatmeal porridge; for supper, the source was fed the same amount of porridge as he received at noon. He was allowed to rest and sleep during the day and permitted to smoke provided he furnished his own tobacco. Interrogations took place in the late evening and early morning in a special room. The room was cold and the only other occupant was the interrogator who sat behind the table in a corner opposite the source. The source was asked whether he had criticized the Soviet regime, to which he replied in the negative. He was also asked to relate his personal history, occupation and to name his friends among the intelligentsia in Leningrad. After one week he was taken to another NKVD prison in Leningrad. Prison discipline here was stricter here than in the first jail. He was confined in a practically unheated room with two other prisoners. The quantity of food served him was less and the prisoners were not allowed to lie in bed during the day. One of his roommates was in prison for picking up a German leaflet dropped by an airplane. Interrogations were carried on at night beginning at about 2300 and ending early in the morning. He was questioned by various people, including one man with the rank of general. In the course of the third interrogation he was beaten by the questioner, who used special rubber gloves, in an attempt to compel the source to sign a confession stating that he was opposed to the Soviet regime. The source refused. As a result, he was not allowed to sleep during the day, his food rations were diminished and each evening he received regular beatings. Finally, he could not stand it any longer and after the eleventh day he signed the confession. The following day he was offered a job as a secret agent of the NKVD with the understanding that he would be allowed to work at his former post. He had to sign a statement that he would work voluntarily and that he would maintain strict secrecy. Penalty for violation was death before a firing squad. He was then permitted to go home." (pp. 15-16)

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3. "If crimes are of a political nature and are serious enough to send a victim to a labor camp for more than ten years it is likely that the family will also be imprisoned, or at least compelled to move out of the city in which they reside. For betrayal of the State, the family of the prisoner will certainly be subject to reprisal. However, if a Russian is caught relating an anecdote against Stalin, he may get as much as five years but his relatives would not be imprisoned. For murder or robbery, crimes of a non-political character, the family would not be taken." (pp. 17)

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Excerpts and Information from

SOVIET DEFECTOR INTERROGATION REPORT (SPONGE NO. 19, )

3.5(c)

Source

A former captain in the Soviet Air Force is the source of this report. Born in a farm village in Belorussia in 1920, he attended school in Smolensk, then worked in an aircraft repair company until his induction into the Air Force in 1939. He is the son of a former medical officer in the Tsar's Army who has refused to be intimidated into reversing his opposition to many practices of the Soviet regime. The source defected to American authorities in Berlin from a Red Air Force fighter division stationed in East Germany.

Interpretation

The informant impressed the interrogator as being a good, steady worker of highly developed intelligence in a narrow field. He seemed to have little imagination and apparently was not particularly observant regarding matters outside the field of his immediate interests. From his remarks, the impression is given that opportunism is a dominant factor in his personality. He was very cooperative in giving of his information to his interrogators.

Commentary

"The source's younger sister was sentenced to ten years in a concentration camp for alleged involvement in the loss of 26,000 rubles while working at the Central post office in Vladimir in August 1943. The source had no detailed information concerning the manner in which his sister had been tried since he had been at the front at the time. However, it was his understanding that, since the authorities had been unable to fix direct responsibility for the loss of the money, all people in the office concerned had been arrested. About ten people were apprehended. His sister was confined in one of the camps of the group near the town of Stantsia Sukhobezvodni on the Gorki railroad. She was first held in a stockade in Gorki for three days, during which period she was fed only once. She was then transferred to a prison in the same city, where she remained for a month. Following this, the sister was sent to the concentration camp. It was located in a wooded region approximately twenty-two kilometers from Sukhobezvodni at a railroad stop named Postei. According to the source, who visited his sister at this camp, both men and women were confined there in approximately equal numbers. The able-bodied men worked in the woods for the most part and the women worked in factories maintained by the camp. Military uniforms were produced in one of these factories and rubber-coated material was produced in another." (pp. 31-32)

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"The informant, as soon as he learned of his sister's imprisonment, immediately undertook steps to free her. He offered to pay the full amount which she was accused of stealing. This offer was rejected. Finally, in December 1946, the source decided to try to see Kalinin personally in Moscow regarding his sister's case. As the source put it, he had no chance to see Kalinin, but was lucky to see 'the tenth of his assistants'. This man said that Kalinin was ill, that SHVERNIK was in charge of the Presidium's work, but that he unfortunately would not be able to see him. The secretary stated that he knew of the source's letters and that he understood his concern. An investigation was being conducted regarding the affair, but he advised the source to be patient, since an investigation 'took a long time'. The secretary was most polite but the source left feeling that nothing whatever was being done on his request. He therefore determined to go directly to his sister's camp to ascertain if anything could be done there. He went to the headquarters of Unzhlag at Sukhobezvodni, where he saw the assistant to the commandant of the camps and explained that he desired to see his sister while on leave from the front. He was in his uniform as a lieutenant in the air force and he thought that this probably influenced the camp official to consider his request favorably. The deputy commandant informed him that his sister was working in the office of the camp veterinarian, just outside the camp enclosure." (pp. 32-33)... "Arriving at the camp, the source went directly to the veterinary's office. He found that his sister was very ill and was being treated during the day by the veterinary, although she had to return to the unheated camp barracks at night. In talking with the veterinarian, the source learned that he had been imprisoned at the time of collectivization in the thirties. He had been condemned to ten years and, following his release, had remained to work as veterinarian and doctor in the camp. The source was convinced that it was only thanks to his help that the sister was still alive in 1947. The source was able to make a deal with the veterinarian to report to the camp authorities that his sister should be released from imprisonment because of illness. He gave the doctor 1,500 rubles for arranging this and left clothes and additional money with the veterinarian for his sister. Shortly after this visit, the source's sister was freed on medical grounds from the camp. She was sent to Moscow with a nurse and then proceeded unaccompanied on an express train to her home in Dmidevka. At about the same time as her arrival at home, a letter was received from the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet stating that no favorable action could be taken in connection with the source's request for a review of his sister's case. This letter, he said, was the crowning touch in the whole episode and merely served to reemphasize to him how little the top officials of the Soviet Union knew or cared about 'unimportant' citizens." (pp. 33-34).

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## Information and Excerpts from

SOVIET DEFECTOR INTERROGATION REPORT (SPONGE NO. 26, )

3.5(c)

Source

The source was a member of the Soviet intelligentsia. He is a former captain in the Red Army Medical Corps, and a Jew whose father was arrested in 1937 for Bukharinite activities. He was born in 1919 and raised in the environs of Moscow, the son of a high railroad official and Party member. He defected in 1949 to US authorities in Berlin.

Interpretation

The source is extremely intelligent, with a keen analytical mind. He apparently strives to reflect a democratic outlook, but he evidences, nevertheless, an attraction to the forms and trappings of tyranny. By his own admission, he defected not because he strongly repudiated the Soviet regime, but because he felt he was in personal danger because of his race and the fact that his father had been condemned as an enemy of the regime. Nevertheless, he willingly furnished information of value to US authorities.

Commentary

1. "In the meantime, however, his father's arrest had more immediate ramifications on the family. First, the source was expelled from the Komsomol, which immediately served to cut him off from his friends. Next, in September 1937, his mother was arrested in a round-up of wives of officials who were already under detention. Confined to the Butyrskaya prison in Moscow, she was called in for questioning within a few days. She was informed that her husband was 'an enemy of the people' and asked what she could tell about him. Upon stating that she knew nothing of his activities, she was sent back to her cell. Within two weeks, however, she was informed that she had been sentenced to eight years in exile. There was no pretense that she had been engaged in counter-revolutionary activities, but simply that she was the wife of an enemy of the people. She was shipped out to Yaya in the Kemerov Oblast of Siberia and was not able to get word back to the family about her welfare and disposition until February of the next year." (page 5) . . . "As previously noted, the source's mother was arrested in 1937 shortly after her husband's arrest on charges of Bukharinite activities. No charges were brought against her, no trial was held, and no means provided for appeal of the sentence. After several days of confinement in the Butyrskaya Prison in Moscow, she was taken before an official who had her husband's dossier on the desk before him. She was told that her husband was 'an enemy of the people' and was asked if she had anything to say about him. She replied in the negative and was sent back to her cell. Two weeks later she was informed that she had been sentenced to eight years in a labor camp. The source's mother was moved to a women's camp near the small village of Yaya in the Kemerov Oblast, in the southern Siberian portion of the RSFSR. Yaya is on a railway line. After several years of hard labor, the source's mother was allowed to move to Yaya and to work in a



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tailor shop. In 1945 she was released, but with the restriction that she could not reside in Moscow or in any of the union capitals of the USSR." (page 23)

2. "The source also believed that discipline was an important factor in any consideration of morale. He was singularly impressed by two cases which occurred within his military unit. One was that of a soldier who had been taken out of a labor colony and put in uniform. He had suffered a slight wound and had reported to the dispensary for dressing. After this was completed he continued to loiter, evidently dreading to go back to his station. His actions attracted the attention of an officer who happened to be at the dressing station at the time. The officer, after inquiring what the man was doing there, ordered that he be placed under arrest, taken a short distance away, and shot." (page 18)

3. "Returning to the subject of Semitism, the source noted that the Jewish colony has been drawn closer together by post-war events, both on the internal and international fronts. There are no concrete manifestations of this feeling, but in talks with other people he had sensed that this was taking place. The very fact that the synagogue was open and permitted people of one religion to congregate there went far to drawing the Jewish community together. But the state also realizes this and care is taken not to let this feeling of solidarity be carried too far. This new-found community of interests and awareness of nationalism was probably one of the reasons why the Soviet authorities have found it necessary to move against the Jews in the past few years. The singling out of the Jews by the authorities has only aggravated the situation and served to solidify the Jewish community. He felt that this form of anti-Semitism emanates from the top rather than from the bottom, as was the case in pre-revolutionary Russia, but given encouragement it easily is taken up by the base of society, where anti-Semitism is latent. This feeling revealed itself during the war when the Germans were attacking and there was turmoil throughout the city. For instance, one of the assistants who was working under his uncle in an apothecary in Moscow several times remarked that 'if the city is ever endangered by the Germans the Russians will "show" the Jews'. This threat of a pogrom under conditions of a national emergency, however, never materialized, nor did the source know of isolated cases where it was carried out.

"Probably the most concrete evidence of governmental attitude reflecting anti-Semitism was the closing of the Hebrew-language newspaper and publishing house Der Emes in 1948. A young friend of the source's who worked in Der Emes once related how trucks had suddenly pulled up before the building and the plant was closed on the spot. The friend, who was a Russian, had to find other employment but he was otherwise not molested. He did not know if the Jewish members of the staff had been arrested.



"The Universal Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was dissolved about the same time as the closing of Der Emes. During the Arab-Jewish fighting in 1948 several thousand young Jews volunteered to fight in Palestine. The MGB indicated that it would approve the project, but once the names of the volunteers was submitted they were all arrested and sent to labor camps.

"The source related another incident which had come to his attention in 1948. His brother-in-law, who works in the Cadres Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, wanted to employ a Jew who had an excellent academic record and practical experience. The brother-in-law had to get clearance from Deputy Minister VORISOV, who, however, turned the application down with the comment: 'Do you want to make a synagogue out of the Ministry of Agriculture? No more Jews are to be employed in the Ministry.' The source's brother-in-law also noted that the same rule applied to the Ministry of Foreign Trade and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Some Jews were already on the staffs of those ministries and were not to be molested; the exclusion rule was to apply only to new employees. Preference was to be given to Great Russians, Belorussians and Ukrainians.

"There were persistent rumors in the USSR during 1948 that there is in operation a 'percentage norm' for Jews to be admitted to universities and colleges. Such a quota system existed under the Tsarist regime. There has been no official announcement of such a ruling, and on the other hand no measures had been taken to refute the rumors. There also seems to be an unofficial rule against the admission of Jews to teaching positions. . . .

"When he was asked if any particular Soviet leaders are associated with anti-Semitic policies, the source replied that KHRUSHCHEV and MALENKOV have come to be regarded as anti-Semitic, although he personally did not know on what basis this reputation had been established. He had, however, heard that Malenkov's daughter in Moscow wanted to marry a Jew but that the couple had divorced in 1948 after two years of marriage."  
(Page 51 - 53)



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Information and Excerpts from

SOVIET DEFECTOR INTERROGATION REPORT (SPONGE NO. 32, )

3.5(c)

Source

The source of this report is a former Red Army artillery sergeant who defected to French authorities in Berlin in 1951. He was born in 1930 of a peasant family in a small farming village about 100 miles from Moscow. Although his parents were opposed to the Soviet regime (in thought, not deed), he was indoctrinated in favor of it in school. Shortly after his graduation from trade school as a tool maker in 1947, he was arrested and sentenced to six years in a labor camp for stealing potatoes. He was pardoned in 1948 and entered the Army shortly thereafter.

Interpretation

The source is of average intelligence and seems to be fairly alert. However, he demonstrates marked psychological peculiarities, and his interrogator found him most difficult to understand. He seems to show little or no concern for accuracy of statement. This fact, together with his peculiar personality traits, forced his interrogator to place no confidence in the validity of the data obtained from the source.

Commentary

1. "One day in 1944, he and another boy went out to some fields near Moscow and dug some potatoes, which they carried away under their coats. On their way back to Moscow they were accosted by two plainclothes policemen, who questioned them about the potatoes and then took them to the police station. At first the boys claimed they had bought the potatoes. Later, when ordered to tell the truth, they confessed, being young and naive. They did not think that taking the potatoes was a serious crime. The boys were brought to trial and the source was sentenced to six years of corrective labor. Such severe punishment for a slight offense shocked his sense of justice -- 'Six years for six kilograms of potatoes!' He attributes his bitterness toward the Soviet regime in large part to this injustice." (pp. 8)

2. "The source says that the police did not beat him during his interrogation, although it is customary for the policy to beat suspects. He explains his good luck as due to the fact that he had not stolen very much. Weaklings confess under beatings, but the strong do not. In some cases the police use a sort of shirt which they put on suspects as a means of torture to make them confess. The source does not know the details concerning this shirt, but he is under the impression that if a man on whom it is used does not confess he will die in 15 minutes." (pp. 31)... "After the preliminary



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## Security Information

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ogation, the informant was sent to the Prison in Moscow, where he was for three months awaiting trial. The trial was delayed because someone had fallen sick at the prison and so the prisoners were kept there during a quarantine period. At the time there were over 20,000 prisoners in this prison, although it was designed to accommodate only about one-fourth of that number. Among the inmates there were 5,000 prisoners less than 18 years old (maloletnye). Prisoners were kept 50 to a room. Inmates were not subjected to political instruction. In the prison no one spoke favorably of the regime. Almost all the prisoners were anti-regime. When the trial finally took place, it lasted only about an hour. There was a judge, two co-judges and a defender. The prosecutor was not present. The defendants were quickly sentenced, and the informant was sent back to the Prison, where he stayed one day more. Then he was transferred to another prison, and finally sent to the labor camp." (pp. 31)

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Security Information



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Information and Excerpts From  
 SOVIET DEFECTOR INTERROGATION REPORT (SPONGE NO. 9, [ ])

3.5(c)

Submitted by HICOG, 12 April 1950

Source

A former Soviet Lieutenant, Tank Corps, who defected at the Russo-Iranian border. He was born in Kuibishev on the Volga, 22 October 1924, and has lived in many parts of the USSR. He fought during WW II on the first Ukrainian front as an anti-tank gunner, and was commissioned as a junior lieutenant in 1945.

Interpretation

The subject seemed to have a genuine aversion to Communist rule. Although he professed great admiration for the United States, he also evidenced a personal belief in the superiority of the Russians over such peoples as the Germans and, in some ways, the Americans. From this one might conclude that the source is representative of the new, completely Soviet officers' corps, which in turn is part of an elite discontented with its own government but by no means entirely deferential in its attitude toward foreign systems.

Commentary

1. "His father was always critical of the Soviet system. His father's father was shot by the Bolsheviks during the period of the civil war. In 1943, his father was arrested. Critical remarks which he made regarding Soviet life while drinking with a group of friends were overheard and reported by an eavesdropper and the entire group of eight people involved were sentenced to long terms in concentration camps. . . . His observations of Soviet life, particularly after the war when things became worse instead of better, contrary to popular expectation, tended to embitter him against the Soviet authorities. He had, for example, visited some relatives on a collective farm near Kuibyshev and found that they were living 'like savages.' Even worse was the situation on the sovkhos where his mother worked. He seemed to be under genuine emotional stress in describing the miserable conditions in which his mother and the other workers of this sovkhos lived." (pp. 12-13)

2. "He made the general observation that there are no firm laws in the Soviet Union, and in particular, no laws for the defense of the rights of individuals. Consequently, the whole country lives in fear."

3. ". . . The operations of both the ordinary and political police inflict great hardship and suffering on the Soviet people. Arrests are extremely numerous. About one-tenth of the local soldiers stationed around Grozny were in prison. There is a prison near the tank battalion where he last served. It was frightfully crowded with as many as 100 persons to a room. In general, conditions in Soviet prisons are very bad. He described



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the extreme crowding in the prison to which he himself had been sent in the winter of 1941 after the knife fight in which he was involved. This prison was located in the oblast center Namangan, Uzbekistan. The food was extremely bad and consisted mostly of watery soup and poor quality bread supplemented by a little smelly fish.

"Individuals who proved recalcitrant were placed in a dungeon where they had to stand in a very narrow space.

"Concentration camps were worse than prisons and the mortality in them, he thought, was about 12 percent a year.

"The ordinary and political police both took a hard-boiled attitude toward citizens. A minor example of this was the fact that the police often relieved individuals, who fell into their hands while inebriated, of their money and personal possessions." (p.27)

3. "Regarding the Soviet nationality policy, in general, the source said that it had been proven to be a 'farce' because of the forced deportations of whole nationalities." (p. 39)





## Information and Excerpts From

SOVIET DEFECTOR INTERROGATION REPORT (SPONGE NO. 12 )

3.5(c)

Submitted by HICOG, 1 May 1950

Source

A 43-year old Soviet major of peasant origin from the Lake Baikal region who graduated from the Technical Institute at Leningrad in 1938 with the rank of engineer. He is widely traveled and has broad employment experience. The source was a member of the Communist Party in Russia.

Interpretation

Source does not seem to have become a "Soviet man", but rather may be characterized as a product of the old order. Despite his strong animosity to the Soviet regime, his comments were evaluated as presenting a "reasonably accurate" picture.

Commentary

1. "The source first learned the complete story of the Soviet concentration camps from the Voice of America in 1946. The Soviet authorities were able to conceal effectively the existence of slave labor camps from the Russian population, with the exception of those who lived in the vicinity of the camps. It was known that arrests were carried out by the police. The fate of the prisoners was unknown and it was believed that they were either put in prison or sent into the woods on lumber brigades. During the war, however, soldiers travelling across the Soviet Union and into Germany learned of the existence of the camps. (The source has never met anyone who has been in a labor camp).

While in Leningrad, he knew of the construction of Stalin's White Sea Canal but he had no idea that it was being built 'on the bones of Russians'. He was also unaware that slave labor was used in the building of the Volga Canal in Moscow. However, the Russians in Leningrad know of the Solovki prison camp situated on an island near Archangel. Through the press, the Soviet authorities kept the Russian people well informed about Hitler's concentration camps.

"The source's family received its share of persecution from the Soviet Government. His brother was jailed by the police in 1921. His uncle and several cousins were arrested for political reasons and disappeared. His father, a church elder, was persecuted because of his strong religious beliefs." (p. 15)



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2. "Soviet propaganda today is at least partially directed toward contradicting the favorable impression that life abroad has made on the Russians. The people are being told that Western life is deteriorating. The reinstatement of the death penalty is intended in part to serve as a warning to people who talk of high living standards in the West or who express dissatisfaction with conditions at home. 'Fear' is what the Soviet leaders wish to instill in the people's minds. This may be difficult to achieve because Russian morale is very low." (p. 18)

3. "Although the government says that churches are being reopened in the Soviet Union, the source saw only broken-down unused churches all the way across Russia in 1949. In Ulan-Ude, there is one Orthodox church open which is attended by the older generation. The youth are afraid to go to church." (p. 38)

4. "Anti-semitism still exists among the Russians, both in the army and among those living in the Buryat Mongolian Autonomous Republic. The source could not understand why the 'Russian gets into trouble' when he makes an anti-semitic remark and the Buryat does not. At the present time there are very few Jews in Ulan-Ude because most of them went to Odessa or Leningrad in the early thirties." (p. 39)





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Information and Excerpts from  
 SOVIET DEFECTOR INTERROGATION REPORT (SPONGE NO. 22, )

3.5(c)

Submitted by HICOG, 1 February 1951

Source

He was born 6 August 1953 in Bessarabia, Rumania (the Moldavian SSR since annexed by the USSR). While attempting to flee from the Soviet forces which entered Bessarabia in 1940, he was apprehended and sent to the USSR as a laborer. He remained in the USSR until 1948. At this time he was returned to his home, from whence he was prompted to flee, shortly thereafter, by the threat of imminent military service. He escaped to western Germany after the arduous flight through Rumania and Czechoslovakia.

Interpretation

The source is an intelligent and courteous descendant of a genteel family, somewhat broken in health and bitter in mind and heart from his experience with the Soviets. "His story reveals the ruthlessness of the Soviets in handling a youngster who did not respond to their attempts to win him over to communism, and illustrates their success in turning him into a dull drudge afraid to oppose them."

Commentary

1. The source was denounced to the Soviets as a "bourgeois" after the latter marched into Bessarabia in 1940. Arrested, he was placed on a prison train bound for the Soviet Union, which arrived at its destination after a nightmare journey of three weeks. After some six months of hostile interrogations and temporary assignments, he was sent to a champagne plant as a laborer. He remained at this plant for nearly eight years, finding life very hard and drab, and steadily losing his health. After being freed by a general amnesty in 1948, he returned to his home in Bessarabia. Almost immediately, he became seriously ill with tuberculosis. Unable to obtain adequate medical attention, he nearly died. In 1950, desperate after being ordered to report for army service, he successfully effected an escape to west Germany after crossing through Rumania and Czechoslovakia. "His happy life was rudely shattered when the Soviets took over Bessarabia in May, 1940. All Rumanians were given twenty-four hours in which to leave the country. Great confusion ensued. Means of transport were so jammed that it was impossible even for some Rumanian officials to get out in time. The source wished to flee, but the best he could do was to make his way to a farm about twenty-five miles away, where he hid. He worked in the fields for the farmer for about a month.

He was so inept at farm work that he believes someone must have suggested that he was a 'bourgeois' fugitive and denounced him. One day a Soviet

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soldier and a policeman came to the farm and asked to see his documents. He had none, so they took him to a nearby country police station. After he had been cursed as a 'bourgeois' and struck a few times on the face at the station, he was sent by train. At the prison there they questioned him briefly and took away his good clothes, giving him old garments in exchange. After two or three days, he was put on a prison train together with hundreds of other prisoners.

The train was made up of freight and cattle cars, with forty or fifty people crammed into each. Women were kept in separate cars from men. Children were sometimes separated from parents. No food or water was provided for long periods, nor were there any toilet facilities. Every three or four days soldiers were brought up to stand guard while cars were cleaned of people and cleaned out.

The prisoners begged passers-by for water, but in Rumania groups of people, instead of giving them water, often jeered or stoned or spit at them and called them 'bourgeois'. After the train reached the Soviet Union the passers-by did not do these things.

After a nightmare journey of about three weeks, the source reached Shakhty, a mining town in the Denbass region. Here he was questioned for two or three hours by a secret police officer. The examination took place in a room with a door which was padded so that sound would not escape. On the table in front of the officer was a pistol. The officer shouted and threatened to shoot the boy. The latter broke down and cried during this interrogation.

'How many Jews have you killed?', demanded the officer. 'How much blood have you drunk?'

'Do you love the Soviet state?' asked the interrogator. 'Yes', said the boy, afraid of being shot if he said anything else.

The boy told the officer the truth about his life history, saying that he had been a student. This drew down the wrath of the inquisitor. 'You have lived long enough on the shoulders of the workers... Now it is time for you to work!' He told the boy that he would be sent to school to learn a trade. After extolling the equality which prevailed in the Soviet Union, the officer said that if the boy behaved well he would be like all Soviet citizens. 'We need young workers', he said.

The source was assigned to work in the mines. However, when he underwent a physical examination, the doctor declared him to be physically unfit for such work. Men even less fit than he were being passed, but the respondent thought that perhaps the doctor had taken pity on his youth and slender build and realized that he possessed an education which fitted him for more intellectual pursuits.

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Finally, in 1948, after he had become almost too ill and weak to work, the order came that he was to be freed in connection with the amnesties customarily granted each year on the anniversary of the October Revolution. The manager called him in to tell him the good news and drank some wine with him to celebrate. The source did not feel glad or grateful for the amnesty. Inwardly he was bitter, because he felt that the Soviets had taken many of the best years of his life and were releasing him only because he was no longer fit to work. He did not know whether his family was still living or what he would find when he returned home--he had not received a letter from Kishinev during the whole time that he had been away.

Some weeks later he was taken to the MVD office at Thilial, where he was fingerprinted and photographed. From there he was escorted to Kishinev, via, Baku, Rostov, Kharkov, Kiev, and Lvov. He remembers little of the trip, he was ill and almost in a daze. His guards gave him cigarettes and were not unkind to him, though little was said.

He arrived at Kishinev (his native city) on January 1, 1949, and was turned over to the police, who kept him about two days, while they took photographs and fingerprints. Then he received new identity documents and was given \$6,000 rubles as recompense for his eight years service in the U.S.S.R. A room in a dormitory was assigned to him. Because of the housing shortage he was forced to live there.

He dragged out a wretched existence in his room until in July 1949 when the health authorities insisted that he go to the Kishinev central hospital for special treatment as a tuberculosis patient. The informant received moderately good care at the hospital. With the help of his faithful friends he finally recovered, after being near death.

He was released from the hospital in March 1950. A small allowance of 150 rubles a month was to be paid to him for six months while he convalesced. However, he received this allowance for only one month, after which it was cut off without any clear explanation of the reasons therefor.

A doctor had warned him that he should not work for six months or a year, but he decided to go to work as soon as possible. He feared that if he waited until autumn it would be more difficult to find work and knew that by then his money would be nearly all spent.

He had considerable difficulty finding work, but in April he finally obtained a job doing railway maintenance. The work was largely in the open air and was not too heavy for him. Having learned his lesson from bitter experiences, he took no interest in politics and avoided talk, at the same time being careful to do his work satisfactorily. He hoped that after three months probation he might be given permanent status, in spite of the fact that his police dossier probably indicated that he had undergone punishment.


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In July 1950 he was ordered to report for army service. Desperate, he decided to try to escape. Using a forged travel authorization, he set out on July 21, for Rumania. He succeeded in crossing into Rumania and from there, after many vicissitudes, made his way via Czechoslovakia to the American Zone of Germany, arriving at Munich August 15, 1950." (pp. 4-8)

2. "He saw no signs of improvement in the position of the religious sects after the war. Soviet claims to that effect are just propaganda. The government exercises strict control over the Orthodox church and 'even the priest serves the secret police'.!.."On his return, he found that a considerable number of people still went to church in spite of the element of risk. Many people still prayed at home, though they kept their ikons hidden. The source did not go to church services, fearing that he would get into trouble, especially since he had just returned from corrective labor in the Caucasus."..."He found that some churches in his city had been closed. Only a few priests were left, many priests and monks having been sent to Siberia. The communists had stolen all the gold and silver from the churches. The churches were in disrepair because government aid had been cut off and people no longer donated private funds. The seminaries had been closed and the buildings taken over by Soviet Army units or used for non-sectarian schools. Anti-religious propaganda appeared constantly in the press, and there were anti-religious agitators who held meetings. There was an anti-religious journal in the Rumanian language called The Atheist." (all pp. 35)... "The baptists were more severely persecuted by the Soviets than other sects. Their organizations were broken up and their pastors deported, as were many lay members. However, there are still many baptists left at Kishinev who secretly carry on the work of the churches. They believe strongly in their religion and would carry on even if they were in danger of death by execution." (pp. 36).





Excerpts and Information from

SOVIET DEFECTOR INTERROGATION REPORT (SPONGE NO. 24, )  
Submitted by HICOG, 19 June 1951

3.5(c)

Source

The source is a former Soviet sergeant who defected from the occupation forces in Eastern Germany in 1949. He was born in 1924 in the Cherkess Autonomous Region (in the Caucasus) to relatively prosperous farming folk. His father was imprisoned during the course of the Soviet drive for collectivization of land as an "anti-Soviet element." The source worked in a Soviet labor camp (not forced labor) before entering the Army in 1943.

Interpretation

The source, though relatively uneducated and unintelligent, appears to be deeply sincere in his antipathy to Soviet communism and in his desire to cooperate with anti-Soviet forces. An additional reason for his defection was his connection with a German girl. This, and the fact that he is of a highly emotional nature, should not be overlooked in evaluating his remarks.

Commentary

1. The source talked at some length concerning the difficult situation which confronted the children orphaned by the Soviet purges of the 'thirties. He related one story in particular of a family of small orphans of his acquaintance who were forced to live like animals in their struggle to survive after losing their parents. They all died from exposure and malnutrition except one. The source said he believed it was the deliberate policy of the regime to increase the number of orphans, for most such children, deprived of parental guidance, are placed in government institutions and raised according to the dictates of the regime. (p.15)

2. The source commented in some detail on the conditions attendant on the influx of Ukrainians into the northern Caucasus during the famine of 1933. He told of the efforts of the peasants of the area to aid these thousands of starving people, but had the following to say regarding the attitude of the local authorities to the Ukrainians:

"The informant stated that the local authorities had been resolutely opposed to giving aid to the Ukrainians coming to the area, despite the fact that there were adequate supplies of grain in the Caucasus. Instead of making this grain available to the starving people, the source



said that the government ordered that it should be converted into a kind of insecticide mash to be spread on the fields as part of the campaign for control of insects and rodents. It seems that the insecticide produced, while extremely lethal in effect, still retained some properties of food. The first time this poison was used on the fields around Khabes, hundreds of starving people attempted to eat the insecticide. The poison worked very quickly and almost all of the people who tasted the insecticide died very soon thereafter. The source said he remembered driving into town one day with his father and seeing a whole field covered with people who had died because of eating this poison.

"At the same time, government representatives visited the local farms looking for hidden stores of grain which had been withheld from the official collectors. These squads were equipped with metal rods about two meters in length which they used to poke into haystacks, wells and other places looking for caches of grain. If any grain was found, the owner was immediately arrested and shot. The source said that Cherkess were being killed '24 hours a day' during this period and that there were so many executed that they were buried in common graves. The source's parents had hidden grain in deep holes in the ground in a dense forest located on the hillside in back of their farm. These stores were never found by the police." (p. 16)

3. The informant gave eloquent testimony to the desperate condition of the people in the Cherkess area during the period of a grave food shortage in 1938. Although the harvest was fairly good that year, there was very little grain left for the peasants because the government confiscated most of it to prevent the people of the area supply any to the resistance forces in the mountains. As a result, the people of Cherkess lived on the verge of starvation for a year. According to the source, these harsh measures were not employed against the Great Russian people in the area but only against those of his nationality. (pp. 19-20)

4. The source described graphically the methods employed by the authorities to collect the so-called "voluntary loans" from the collective farm workers. All the peasants would be exhorted while at a group meeting called for such a purpose by Party representatives to sign a pledge to "loan" the money to the state. This was presented as a "patriotic duty". Those who had resisted the efforts of the authorities at these initial meetings were later called up individually before the town soviet and pressure was applied to them until they acquiesced. Virtually none of the farmers were able to maintain the periodic payments demanded to fulfill their pledges. When they fell behind the authorities made up the difference by confiscating the payment in kind that the worker earned for his farm labor. It would thus happen that the farmers were almost constantly in debt to the officials of the collective farm. (pp. 23-24)



5. "The source's father resisted the drive for collectivization, which began in the early 'thirties, and was forced to live in hiding for a brief period because of his resistance activities. He was finally compelled, because of the stringent taxes imposed on all farmers who refused to join the collective farms, to join the last kolkhoz which was formed near Khabez in 1935 or 1936. Before the father gave in, all of his cattle and livestock, with the exception of one sick cow, had been taken by gangs led by the local police. All of the farm machinery and the wagon were also taken. The 'plenipotentiary' (upolnomocheni) of the Khabez Soviet threatened to label the father a 'kulak' and to exile him to Krasnoyarsk if he persisted in his refusal to go along with collectivization. The father therefore agreed and was permitted to keep his house after joining the kolkhoz.

"The source's father was arrested in 1937 on charges of being 'politically unreliable'.

"...Furthermore, they said he had been active in helping the 'anti-Soviet elements' operating in the neighborhood.

"The father refused to sign a confession to this effect and was immediately placed in jail.

"In the months that followed his father's arrest, the source's mother tried in every way to obtain the father's release. She spent all of her money and energy in this effort but for some time was not even successful in finding out where the father was imprisoned. Finally, the family learned indirectly that he was being held in the new prison in Cherkessk, the capital of the Cherkess Autonomous Oblast. According to the source, the new prison in Cherkessk is used exclusively for political prisoners and the old prison is occupied by common criminals. The source and his mother walked to Cherkessk, a distance of approximately 40 kilometers, in order to give a package of food and clothing to the father. They were unable to find him, however.

"In late 1938 or early 1939, a year after his arrest, the father was returned to Khabez to stand trial. The informant said he recalled vividly how shocked he was on seeing his father on this occasion. The older man, once erect and black-haired, was now gray, stopped and toothless. He seemed to lack any spirit of resistance and signed a confession of all the charges against him after the presiding officer at the trial threatened to have his family deported if he did not do so. His original sentence was ten years of imprisonment with two years' deprivation of freedom. This sentence was reduced, in view of the size of the family, to a period of five years' imprisonment with two years' deprivation of freedom." (pp. 5-7)

6. "Commenting on the general characteristics of the population in and around Khabez, the informant stated that the large majority of the



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people were men. He thought that the reason for their preponderance over men was the toll of life which the punitive measures of the Soviet regime had exacted among the male residents. He emphasized that this had been not only in the form of executions but also included exile to concentration camps, where many men died or from which they returned broken in health. The respondent stated on several occasions that, with one or two exceptions, there was not a man between the ages of 25 and 40 in the Phabez area who had not been at one time or another in a concentration camp. One result of the disparity in numbers between men and women was that women did most of the work on the local farms."(p.14)

7. "It was the source's observation that a kind of corrosive fear is all-pervasive in the Soviet Union as a result of the widespread network of secret-police informers and agents. One is forced to distrust even close friends and it is almost impossible to develop any kind of group loyalty or cooperation. In general, the source was strongly of the opinion that the majority of the people in the Soviet Union are hostile to the regime and look forward to a war as the only means of liberation from communist tyranny." (p.33)



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Information and Excerpts from  
SOVIET DEFECTOR INTERROGATION REPORT (SPONGE No. 25, )

3.5(c)

Submitted by HICOG, 18 July 1951

Source

A Kuban Cossack from Krasnodarski Krai, in the Caucasus. He was born in 1927 of humble peasant stock. He served in the Russian army as a private. Fearing arrest for having escaped from a disciplinary labor camp in 1944, he fled to Turkey in 1949.

Interpretation

The subject, while of humble origin and meager education, seems to be possessed of a most unusual native intelligence. His interrogators believe him to be sincere in his hatred of communism. His importance may be that he is representative of many millions of ordinary Soviet citizens. In evaluating his comments, however, it may be well to remember that he is, by his own admission, an extremely talented liar.

Commentary

1. At the age of sixteen, the informant was sentenced to two years of imprisonment for helping some starving peasants steal grain. The story of his arrest and conviction are probably a good example of Soviet methods of justice in rural regions. The informant's account of this episode indicates that he was given virtually no opportunity to defend himself at his trial, which resulted for him in a two year prison sentence. His account further describes in some detail life in Soviet prisons and labor camps. This chronicle of the brutal facts of life for a prisoner of the Soviet state does not differ materially from the accounts of others in terms of conditions within the camps and prisons, but as the boy tells it, this story seems to possess a simplicity and realism that substantially adds to its total effect.

Specifically, this account of Soviet justice deals with: (pp. 7-29)

- a. Police investigative methods.
- b. Court makeup and proceedings.
- c. Food in the prisons and labor camps.
- d. Sanitation conditions in the prisons and labor camps.
- e. The favored position of the criminal elements among the prisoners.
- f. General living conditions as a prisoner.
- g. Medical facilities and attentions available to prisoners.
- h. Prison discipline.



2. "Numerous relatives had been imprisoned, one of his father's cousins having died in a labor camp.

"Many relatives and neighbors of the informant were arrested at the time of the purges in 1937-1938. One of his most vivid childhood memories is of seeing a crowd of townspeople being herded along, handcuffed and under guard. About 800 people were taken from his village in one night, and many more later. He heard that a cache of guns had been found in a cellar, and thinks that there may really have been a plot against the government. Of those taken, very few returned--about one in ten.

"A favorite uncle had spent many years in prison camps. This uncle had been sentenced to ten years because he got drunk in a restaurant, threw a piece of bread at Stalin's picture and cursed the "great leader". Following his release, the uncle again talked indiscreetly and was sentenced to three years more. Finally, old and broken before his time, he was allowed to return home. Though he had learned discretion in a hard school, he often talked to his young nephew in confidence, telling him of the terrible conditions in Siberian camps." (p.5)

3. "At Rustavi there were about 25,000 prisoners, including German, Rumanian, and Magyar POW's, as well as Soviet political prisoners. There were five camps for POW's and two camps for Soviet prisoners. They were largely engaged in building houses and plant buildings for the huge new Rustavi Metallurgical Plant. The whole city was built largely with forced labor.

"The Germans whom the informant guarded generally worked from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m., at hard manual labor. Sometimes they worked even longer. Generally the work was directed by German foremen. While overall supervision was exercised by Soviet engineers, the German specialists were quite competent. The prisoners' rations were so scanty that they became thin and weak. The informant did not know what they ate for breakfast or supper, but for lunch he saw them get some poor soup, like that which he had received in prison, and 500 or 600 grams of black bread. A few specialists, such as machine operators, received 700 grams of bread."

"At night the prisoners slept on plank beds in barracks inside guarded enclosures.

"The policy seemed to be to work the prisoners to death. Each day some died and were buried in the cemetery outside town." (p.31)

"The guards were instructed to be strict with the prisoners. The soldiers acted on these orders in different ways. Some treated them humanely, regarding the prisoners as human beings like themselves. The source was one of these. He did not blame the Germans for what they had done--it had been their government's fault. But some of the Soviet guards beat prisoners and cursed them because Germans had killed their relatives.



"The guards knew that if they killed or wounded their prisoners they would be upheld by their officers, even if they were in the wrong. For instance in 1947 when the informant was stationed near Tbilisi, a member of his detachment got drunk and shot six or seven Germans, killing several. The survivors accused him with an unjust attack, but he claimed that they had tried to seize his gun and escape. His officers upheld him, though they knew that his story was false. The soldier was subsequently transferred to another place. There were many other such occurrences where the guard was backed up by his superiors. The motive for such a policy was to keep the prisoners intimidated. Even one step taken out of line was held to be justification for shooting a prisoner.

"Many of the guards had become hard and calloused. They had had a hard life themselves in the past and when they were given a good uniform, good food, a weapon, and authority over prisoners, they showed little human feeling. They thought only of themselves. 'Even if their own relatives were under their guns, they would think only of themselves,' the informant said. It was such 'blockheads' who beat or shot prisoners." (p.32)

4. "He knew that now he was approaching the most dangerous part of his flight. If he had been caught further back, he might have pleaded that he was merely paying a visit to some old friends. But there could be no excuse if he were detected trying to cross the last few yards to the border. He was likely to be shot on sight, or if captured he would probably be tortured and then executed. At the very least he would be imprisoned for 25 years. His father would be expelled from the Party and his family sent to Siberia. Even his former commander in the border guards might be demoted, his career ruined. The source's friends would also be under suspicion." (P.76)

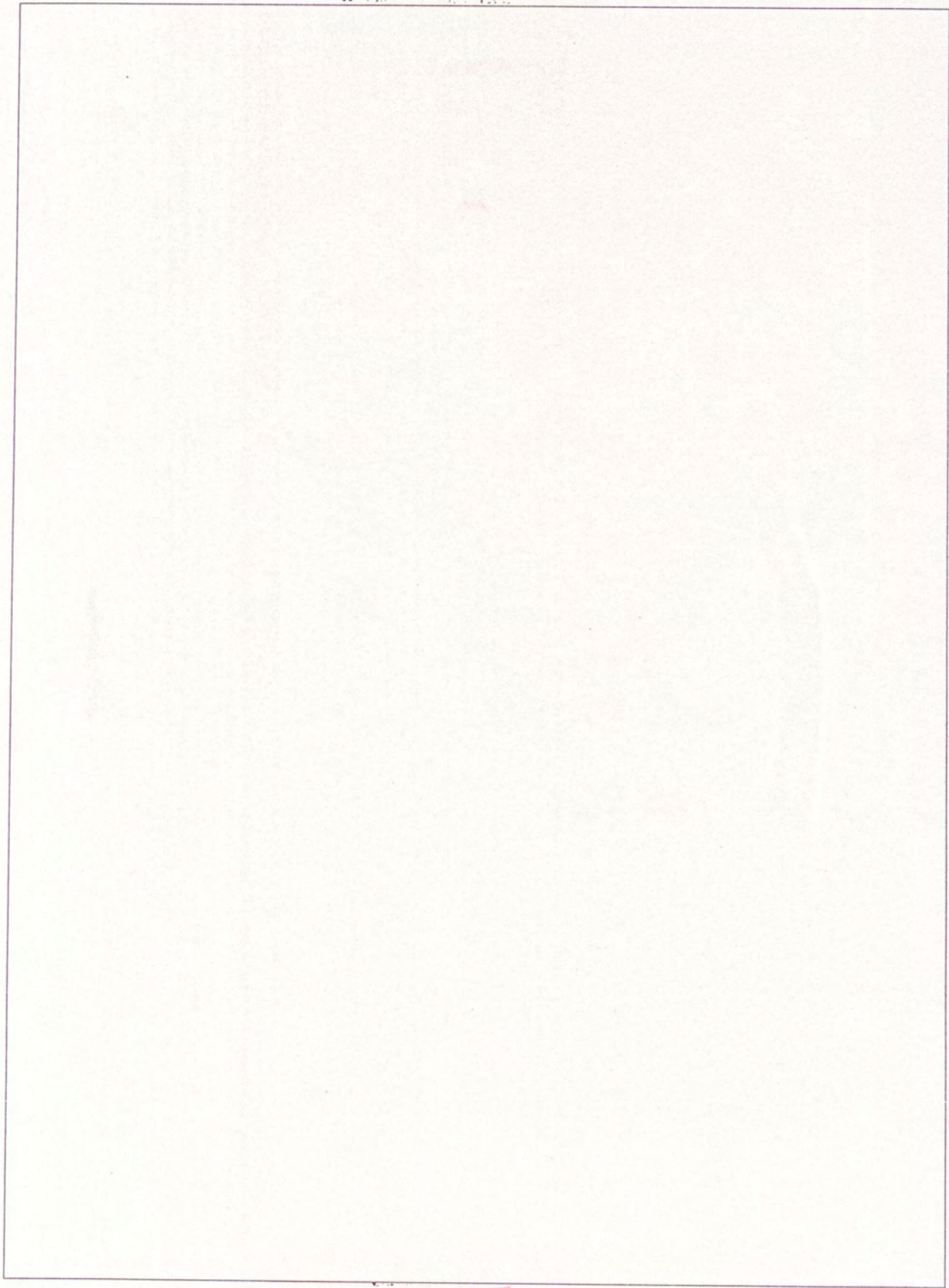
5. "Assuming that his stories are true, they give interesting sidelights on some peculiarities of the Soviet mentality. One is the great importance attached to obtaining confessions. Time after time the informant was able to escape severe punishment by stoutly denying his guilt. For instance, his story of what happened when an officer found him asleep on guard indicates that even the 'party word of honor' of an officer was not enough to lead to his conviction when opposed to the informant's denial of guilt, even though the regimental commander must have been certain that he was lying.

"This implies that the Russian idea of justice has certain standards, probably deeply rooted in old customs. Judging by the informant's stories of his escapes from punishment, such concepts of justice appear to be remarkably humane and at variance with the usual western conception of Soviet justice as being peremptory and brutal to the extent of condoning the suffering of ten innocent men rather than let one guilty man escape. In fact, this ruthless aspect of Soviet 'justice' probably does violence to deep-rooted Russian folk-ideas which have persisted despite centuries of tyranny, and may represent a weak point in the Soviet system at which American propaganda can hammer." (p.113-4)



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