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## Organization and methods of the O.G.P.U: Two British Documents from 1933

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**Abstract.** On March 27th, 1933 a British MI5 officer Oswald Allen Harker received a report on the inter-relation of the Comintern, GPU and Department IV of the Staff of the Red Army. The source of this report was a Jewish communist. Another report received by Harker, on the same day, was the OGPU method of investigation. He informed his superiors that the source of this document was the first-hand source. This article presents these documents because they are relevant to the level of knowledge of MI5 about Russian Espionage and subversive activity at that moment.

**Keywords.** OGPU, Komintern, Hotel Lux, Department IV

### 1. Introduction

On March 27th, 1933 a British MI5 officer Oswald Allen Harker [1] received a report on the interrelation of the Comintern, GPU and Department IV of the Staff of the Red Army. The source of this report was a Jewish communist. This source wrote: "I before entering into details I would remark that I must of necessity make mention on matters which are already known as they are of importance I the scheme as a whole. The general political organization is already known but I shall consider to following organization separately and their connection with each other" A Komintern [2]; B OGPU [3]; Department IV of the Staff of the Red Army [4].

### 2. Komintern

The various sections of the Komintern are organized in a special country group from the geographic and language point of view. The Anglo-American secretariat is under the political leadership of Manuilsky [5] a member of the Executive Committee and head of the Russian Delegation within the Komintern. The technical administration is conducted by two secretaries Kehrling and Winston [6]. The former is Lithuanian, was formerly head of the Scandinavian Secretariat and leaves in the Lux Hotel.[7] (Room 31). He frequently makes trips abroad. The latter is an American and is more concerned of organization. In addition, there is the representative of the English Party who is changed every year. In most cases, these Party representatives are members of the Central Committee who have been quasi banned on account of weak work.

Every year several High Officials of the party are given instruction in the Secretariat as probationers. Such instructions have no connection with the Lenin School or University of East The next most important Secretariat is the Eastern Secretariat which deals with all questions connected with the Colonies and countries in the Near and Far East. The political and technical administration is in the hands of Mif [8]. Indian question is dealt with by an Indian named Ali [9] who lives in the Hotel Lux (Room no 156 or 157). He is married to a Yugoslav woman and travels frequently. I was frequently able to ascertain that he is in correspondence with India.

The most important department is the OMS which deals with International Liaison. The head of this department is Ossip Piatnizky, who is Secretary of the Organization and a member of the Executive Committee. He published a book concerning his activities as an illegal worker for the old Bolshevik, which as far as I remember, appears in English (Memoire Library of the Mopr). The head of the Technical side is Abramov [10], who is also known as der Alte (The old man). He is the Komintern liaison man with the OGPU, but this does not ment the OMS and the GPU are one and the same aparat. The OMS [11] is a completely independent Aparat with its own technical organization, which instruct it's personal with its own people in its own schools.

The OMS is the illegal Aparat of the Komintern. It forms liaison in all countries creates supporting points. In all sections and prepares illegal Apparatus in all sections of the Komintern. The connection between Moscow and the individual section and between sections themselves is maintained by a courier service. The couriers are all old Party members and are chiefly members. I know most of them personally but there is no point in giving names since for each journey a specially prepared passport is made cut. Between themselves, they are only known by Christian names. When they come to Moscow they are kept segregated and they live in a special Komintern house. They are fetched a man named Tarasov whose it is to lock after then. He is not a member of the Party. Couriers are not allowed to mix with official Komintern people but this center is frequently avoided and they are continually the guests of several of the inhabitants of the Hotel Lux. It was in this hotel that I got to know most of them I lived there for three years.

The duties of couriers are of a purely technical nature, such as the character of money, literature, etc. This courier system has nothing to do without the political representatives who are sent out by the political representation. The political representatives are high political officials belonging to the Comintern political Aparat and represent the Komintern within the Party in a country issue the political direction and supervise the Party in the correct carrying out of these directions. In addition, the instructor is sent out who is a specialist in various fields, such as agitation, propaganda, organization, etc. In the case of complicated political instruction so-called Brigades are composed of specialists in particular fields, such as organization, agitation, economics, and politics. Such instructors are usually men who have passed through the Lenin School and men who have been probationers in the National Secretariats.

The next important department is Department "M". As a matter of fact, this department has no name but I called it "M" for the sake of clarity. This department deals with Military and Mutiny questions. It is men called Alfred [12] called who are a Finn and a son in law of Kuusinen [13]. He is a member of the Executive Committee has a high Military office (two grenades) and is the liaison officer with Department IV of the Red Army. He is the author of a brochure entitled "The Theory and Technique of Armed Uprising" which appears in Zurich under the name of Alfred Langner. The personnel of this department consists of men who have served a course in the so-called "M" school (Military School). Up to the present three school courses have taken place. The length of the course is ten months to one year. These pupils are recruited from old Party members, Germans forming the majority, then Poles, French, and citizens of the Border States. The first course took place in 1924, the second in 1929/1930 and the third in 1931/1932 The best of the pupils are picked out and sent as instructors to various countries. The course consists chiefly in practical military instruction, the theory and practice of mutiny, and in sabotage work in case of a war. The teachers are members of the General Staff (serving officers). Petrenko is the head of the Explosives Department. He had an arm blown off whilst practicing with a self-made bomb. The head of the school was one named Alex, a Lithuanian. He is now with a group of pupils in China and Manchuria. Jonny de Graaf [14] mentioned by me already attended the 1930/1931 course. He is considered to be very able and industrious. The courses are held in Moscow in the barracks in the Pokrowka. For the news service, there are pupils under the OMS. Here coding and deciphering are taught and people trained for technical Aparat.

At Pushkin, near Moscow, there is a special wireless school. The instructors consist exclusively of German who have received very exceptional training. Of these instructors, some twenty in number, the majority are known to me. I am unable to state whether further courses have taken place in the meantime.

Of the GPU I know the head of the Foreign Department (NHO) one named Gorr [15] and Otto Steinbrueck [16], I also know a number of the foreign agents; these have false names. In conclusion, I would make a certain observation of a general nature. I, the course of six years I have come into touch with the greater part of the Apparatus workers of the Komintern. I know then by appearance very well. Names no come into question, as, in any case, they are changed from time to time I also know a number of the foreign agents of the GPU and the Department IV [17].

### **3. OGPU method of investigation**

In the same day (March 27<sup>th</sup> 1933) MI5 produced report OGPU method of investigation I Departments. The OGPU was divided into various departments:

- a) K.R.O. =KRO (KONTRA Raswetka Odtel) Counter Espionage Departments) the head of this Departments used to be Artusow [18] (S2 2000) a Jew, but I don't know if he still is) the head of Anglo –American Department was Roller (RL 450-40) a Lithuanian or Pole. The address of the Department was Liubianka no. 5 5th floor. The head of the department's desk was close beside the lift on the 5th floor. Up to 1931, the head of the Leningrad Department was Salin, a Lithuanian who is now the chief of the OGPU in the Urals. The following still working in the Leningrad "KRO" Anglo-American Department: Koschebinkow (a Russian) Osolin [19] (Jew), Weinschrot (Austrian Jew). "KRO" has agents in an administrative department in every commissariat at all frontier stations, in all factories, in all foreign missions of the Union of Soviet Republics, trade delegations, embassies, and consulates.
- b) EKO="Eko" (Ekonomicheskaja odtel, Department for economic Supervision).All matters of importance are passed over by this Department to the "KRO", especially if they have to do with a foreign country.
- c) Sekro. This is a secret department for the combating of internal counter-revolution movements. It has a special sub-department for the liquidation of opposition within the Party.

Feldjagerski Odtel. Uniformed GPU for the transmission of all secret posts of the state, party, trades union and economic departments within the territory of the Union of Soviet Republics.

Military Department. About 15 Regiments. Two each in Leningrad and Moscow. So-called liaison troops. (Now being used as convoys for banned persons and prisoners.

F Frontier Controls (Programitschui O.G.P.U.). O.G.P.U.) Stationed at the frontiers. It has a special sub-department known as:

PMKP (Proposknoje morskoje kontrollny Punkt-Control station for sea traffic). Such controls are in every port and frontier waters and are assisted by the Navy.

OGPU transport.Railway and railway station control.

Passportisation. This is an entirely new and independent department and no details concerning it are known to me. It was formerly an administrative department.

Supreme Administration. A small and large Council. Small Council 3-to 6 chiefs. The names of the present chiefs are unknown to me. There is in addition, a representative of the CKKRKI. Central Control Commission of Workers and Peasants) and of the General Procurator.

The large Council in addition to a member of GPU itself also has a representative of each of the different Commissariats. In all about 30 members. Its competence is the same as that of the small Council. All sensational cases, which are specially worked for this purpose, come before the Court or Tribunal. There are also small councils in all Governments (Oblast), whose judgments are subjects to confirmation by the Moscow Council.

### **4. Methods of arrests and investigation**

For the greater part, arrests are made when the person is out of the door or travelling. He simply disappears. In few cases are the arrests made at the person's home. A search of the house, which usually takes place and in these the relatives only learn of the arrests months later. In the OGPU prisons there are with the sole exception of the Wuntreny Turma (Liublianka B) always three departments:

Secret Departments: Solitary confinement; no work; no newspapers; no exercise. No visiting allowed; no parcels allowed. The food is somewhat better than in the other two departments.

Departments: Exercise. Cells contain 2 to 3 people. Newspapers, parcels, and visits allowed.

3rd Departments: Sentences up to ten years. The period between sentence and removal. Compulsory work and bad food. Parcels and letters allowed. Interrogation almost invariably takes place at night, the first usually after one or two week's detention. The prisoner is taken out of the main building, which surrounds the courtyard, across the courtyard to the Wuntreny Turma which is situated in the centre. He is first taken to the commandment on the 5th floor.

Here he has to strip completely and his body and clothes are thoroughly examined. He is taken to a cell on one of the floors or other; there are four floors with cells. The bath is in the cellar.

On the 5th floor are the commandant, barber doctor dentist, and warder rooms. On each floor, there are three cells for 12 men each and some 20-25 single cells but these very often contain two or three men. In all, there are two or three men. There are 300 prisoners in the whole building. Each corridor is closed at the staircase end with an iron door and in front of each door, an armed guard is on the stairs. An armed guard is only stationed on the stairs and in the courtyard.

In each corridor, there are four unarmed men in uniform. These only have the key to the cell door and not to the corridor door; keys to the latter's only carried by the armed guard on the stairs. All members of the GPU on duty in the secret prison of OGPU have officer's rank. The senior rank in each corridor wears a badge.

Heating is undertaken by the means of warm air being forced into the cells through a ventilation pipe over the cell doors. Everything is absolutely silent. The cells have parquet floors but in the corridors, there are thick carpets, it is possible to remain in a cell for a year without knowing who is on the right or left.

In each cell, there is a sanitary bucket and twice a day the occupant is made to go and empty it without coming into contact with any other prisoner. The prisoners in the Wutreny Turma are the most important State prisoners and each is visited by the Commandant and the doctor.

Electric light burns day and night in the cells. In my time the food was good and sufficient and for smokers, there were 13 cigarettes per day.

If any prisoners are wanted for interrogation, the examining GPU official telephones from the main buildings to the prison commandant. Here a convoy of GPU officials of officer's rank is given a written order which they take to the corridor in question and hand to the guard in front of the door. The guard knocks on the door and the warder on duty in the corridor opens a small flap through which he can read the order. When the corridor is free he brings the prisoner out of the cell to the corridor door and after the convoy has signed a receipt for the prisoner, the door is opened and the convoy takes over the prisoner.

The prisoner is taken to the main building up and down any stairs, along any corridors with the intention of making him nervous and excited. By the time he has reached the room of the Sledowatel (examining officer), he is always in exciting condition. The convoy hands over the prisoner to the examining officer against a receipt. Very often the prisoner is lead to the cellars, dark passages in which the convoy has always their revolvers in their hand. (All prisoners know that the cellars are the place where shooting takes place).

At the first examination, every prisoner is confronted with some facts or others. In some way or another, he is told of what he is accused of. All kinds of indignities are employed in interrogation. The examining officer is relieved every eight hours. And it is natural that the prisoner gradually weakened. After the interrogation, he usually signs the protocol and incriminates any other people unknowingly. Bodily mishandling often takes place-but less with prisoners in the Wuntreny Turma. In most cases, the prisoners are subjected to psychic torture. The prisoner is for example, told, that his wife and children are to be incarcerated -until he confesses everything. Or he is left without interrogation for 3-4 months but is informed that he may write a farewell letter to his wife. The prisoner, expected to be shot, waits every night fearing to be fetched. Most prisoners have a nervous breakdown. Then after a long time, he is taking to the examining officer. During my last 14 days of imprisonment, when I was in a large cell in the Wuntreny Turma, I often saw men, big and strong,

weeping like small children, when they came back from an interrogation. Attempts to commit suicide are common but, in most cases, they are prevented. Prisoners generally attempt to open an artery.

### Conclusion

On March 27th, 1933 a British MI5 officer Oswald Allen Harker received a report on the inter-relation of the Comintern, GPU and Department IV of the Staff of the Red Army. The source of this report was:

(a) Jewish communist. Another report received by Harker, on the same day, was the OGPU method of investigation. He informed his superiors that the source of this document was the first-hand source. The OGPU was divided into various departments:

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(b) EKO="Eko" (Ekonomicheskaja odtel, Department for economic Supervision).All matters of importance are passed over by this Department to the "KRO", especially if they have to do with a foreign country.

(c) Sekro. This is a secret department for the combating of internal counter-revolution movements. It has a special sub-department for the liquidation of opposition within the Party. The activity of the OGPU was to suppress any political opposition to the USSR from the USSR and from foreign countries.

### References

- [1] Oswald Allen Harker was born in Cirencester in 1886, the son of James Allen Harker, a professor at Royal College College and his wife Lizzie Allen Harker. Harker joined the Indian Police in 1905 and served as Deputy Commissioner of Police in Bombay during the First World War. He joined MI5 in 1920, after being disqualified from India last year. Harker served as Deputy General Manager prior to his promotion. He was promoted to interim general manager of MI5 in June 1940, when Major-General Sir Vernon Kell was removed. When Sir David Petrie was appointed new general manager in April 1941, Harker resigned as deputy general manager again. <http://www.statesecrets.co.uk/who/index-h.shtml>
- [2] The Communist International (Komintern), also known as the Third International (1919-1943), was an international organization that advocated for world communism. The Comintern decided at the Second Congress to "fight with all available means, including the armed forces, for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and the creation of an international Soviet republic as a transitional step towards the complete abolition of the state". The Comintern was preceded by the dissolution of the second international in 1916. The Comintern organized seven World Congresses in Moscow between 1919 and 1935. During that period, it also organized thirteen extensive Plenary Sessions of the Executive Committee, which had the same function as the slightly larger and bigger congresses. Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union dissolved the Comintern in 1943 to avoid antagonizing his allies in the last years of World War II, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Fisher, Harold Henry (1955). *The Communist Revolution: An Outline of Strategy and Tactics*. Stanford UP. p. 13.
- [3] The state political administration was the political police of the RSFS and the Soviet Union until 1934. The following CEKA of 6 February 1922 was initially known with the abbreviation in Russian of the title Gosudarstvennoe politiceskoe upravlenie. Kindermann, Karl Gustav, *In the Toils of the O.G.P.U.*, Translated by Gerald Griffin; Hurst & Blackett, 1933 Digitized Dec 5, 2007, p. 149.
- [4] In September 1926, the Intelligence Directorate of the Red Army Headquarters renamed the IV Office of the Red Army Headquarters. In August 1934, the 4th Office of the Red Army Headquarters renamed the Information and Statistical Office of the Red Army, which in turn was renamed the Intelligence Directorate of the Red Army in November 1934 (directly subordinated to the People's Commissar of Defense). History of the Main Intelligence

- Administration (GRU) Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravlenie (GRU)  
<https://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/world/russia/gru-history.htm>
- [5] Dmitriy Manuilsky or Dmytro Zakharovych Manuilsky (3 October 1883 in Sviatets near Kremenets - 22 February 1959 in Kyiv) was an important Bolshevik, who was secretary of the Comintern, the international communist from December 1926 until his dissolution in May 1943.  
<http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CM%5CA%5CManuil%5CskyDmytro.htm>
- [6] William Wenstone (Weinstein) a member of the American Communist Party, a frequent visitor to the USSR. Or maybe Boris Reinstein, (1866-1947), a pharmacist from Buffalo, New York, who was ostensibly a delegate to the Socialist Party of America, had left home for two years and had no official authorization to represent his party. The Communist Party of America (1919-1946): Party Officials," Early American Marxism website, www.marxisthistory.org/ Retrieved June 6, 2011
- [7] Hotel Lux was a hotel in Moscow that, during the early years of the Soviet Union, hosted many exiled communists. During the Nazi period, exiles from all over Europe left there, especially from Germany. Some of them became leading figures in German politics in the post-war era. The hotel's initial reports were very good, although its problem with spies was mentioned as early as 1921. Communists from over 50 countries came for congresses and for training or for work. Until the 1930s, Joseph Stalin regarded the international character of the hotel with suspicion and its occupants as potential spies. Its cleansing created an atmosphere of fear among the occupants, who were confronted with distrust, denunciations and night arrests. Hotel purges reached maximum values between 1936 and 1938. The Germans who fled Hitler for safety in the Soviet Union were interrogated, arrested, tortured and sent to forced labor camps. Most of the 178 renowned German communists who were killed in Stalin's purge were residents of the Lux Hotel. Peter Dittmar, "Der steinerne Zeuge des stalinistischen Terrors" *Die Welt* (October 30, 2007).
- [8] Mif has frequently mentioned in reports of MI5 as connected of Eastern and Far Eastern Affairs In Moscow. PRO Kew Gardens, file KV3/ 143, British report from 6<sup>th</sup> April 1933 Vivian to Harkel.
- [9] Probably Mohammad Ali, Sepassi frequently mentioned in reports from IPI as connected with the Eastern section of Comintern). Ibidem.
- [10] Alexander Lasarewitsch Abramow-Mirow (19 October 1895 in Šiauliai, † 25 November 1937 in Moscow) was a Soviet officer and intelligence officer. Вячеслав Румянцев (*Vyacheslav Rumyantsev editor*). "Александр Лазаревич Абрамов". *Использованы материалы из кн.: Залесский К.А. Империя Сталина. Биографический энциклопедический словарь. Москва, Вече, 2000.* (*Biographical Encyclopedic Dictionary. Moscow*). ХРОНОС (*Chronos*).
- [11] *The OMS* was the *Comintern's* department for the coordination of subversive and conspiratorial activities. McKnight, David (2002). *Espionage and the Roots of the Cold War: The Conspiratorial Heritage*. London: Frank Cass. pp. vii (Rudnik), 52 (Trilisser), 60 (OMS), 61–62 (dissolution), 119–120 (Ducroux, Rudnik).
- [12] Piatnitsky said that Alfred Langer's *The Road to Victory: the Art of Armed Insurrection* was an outstanding manual for functionaries with a Marxist-Leninist training.  
<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3102-how-we-wrote-armed-insurrection>
- [13] Otto Wilhelm (Wille) Kuusinen (Otto Vilgelmovich Kuusinen) (October 4, 1881 - May 17, 1964) was a Finnish politician and later a Soviet literary historian and poet who, after defeating the Reds in the Finnish civil war, fled to the Union. Soviet, where he worked until his death. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Otto-V-Kuusinen>
- [14] A renowned German communist agent and longtime British intelligence Johann Heinrich Amadeus de Graaf (1894-1980), better known as Johnny de Graaf.  
<http://www.psupress.org/books/titles/978-0-271-03569-7.html>

- [15] Identical with Michael Savitch Gors PRO Kew Gardens, file KV3/ 143, British report from 6<sup>th</sup> Aptil 1933 Vivian to Harkel.
- [16] In 1921 this name appeared in a list of recent arrivals in Vienna as captain Steinbrueck alias comrade Otto, organizer of the Red Fighting organization in Hamburg and Altena. Ibidem. British report from 6<sup>th</sup> Aptil 1933 Vivian to Harkel.
- [17] PRO Kew Gardens, file KV3/ 143, Methods of arrests and investigation
- [18] Artur Christianowitsch Frautschi (; \* February 6, February 18, 1837, Government of Moscow, in Toman, in December 1937, Gouvernich of the state in Koman) an officer of intelligence agencies in the Soviet Union and Commissioner. Biography of Artur Artuzov
- [19] Ivan Osolin nume de cod Kraft, NKVD officer. PRO Kew Gardens, file KV3/ 143, British report from 6<sup>th</sup> Aptil 1933 Vivian to Harkel.
- [20] PRO Kew Gardens, file KV3/ 143, DOCUMENT Komintern.