

The War in the Ether :

The Russian Radio Agent Service in 1942

~~(Confidential)~~

Translated from original German materials By
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Frequent mention has been made of the employment of Russian radio agents, and their work has been adequately described. We shall now sum up this chapter, and show the extent which this work assumed during the Second World War.

Bolshevist Russia was the first country to tackle the principle of radiocontrolled espionage and to put it into effect on a large scale. The beginnings go back to approximately the year 1931, that is, to the time when it became clear that National Socialism was beginning to gain ground in Germany, and thus a collision with the Soviet Union entered the realm of possibility. This might have resulted sooner or later but it was unavoidable if National Socialism seized power. The utmost watchfulness was necessary. Therefore the Soviet Union began setting up a widespread shortwave radio net with the control station in Moscow and a full dozen subordinate stations distributed all over Europe. At that time the German intercept service did not succeed in gaining any insight into the content of the messages exchanged; it was assumed in Germany that this was merely a control net created by the Communist Internationale which served to guide Communist propaganda and agitation throughout the world. How mistaken they were appeared only during the course of the Second World War when the German radio defense was able to get extensive insight into the work of the Russian intelligence service.

After the outbreak of the war between Germany and the Soviet Union it turned out that the famed "Comintern Net" - which was really a net of the Russian intelligence service - constituted only a very small portion of the Russian spy net. Much greater was the net of agent radiostations which had been set up all over Europe long

before the war but had remained silent until the war began. This now appeared in an all the more dangerous form. Already in 1940 the number of Russian agent stations in Europe had increased sharply. In May 1941 there were already some 25 radio stations.

In June 1941 the radio traffic on the Russian WNA Net-as the Germans called it after the call sign of the control station in Moscow - grew to 78 radio circuits. Shortly before the outbreak of the German-Russian War the exchange of telegrams in this net increased enormously. In August 1941 the German intercept service copied not less than 600 radiograms on this net.

The aims of the Russian secret service were:

1. Seeking information in all fields connected with the armed forces and armed strength of all European countries, of the U.S.A., of Japan, and of a few other states.
2. Seeking information in all fields of industry and economics in these countries.
3. Seeking information on all political occurrences in these countries which might have any reaction on the political life of the Soviet Union.
4. Infiltration into the centers of the secret service of those countries, and gathering information regarding any measures planned against the Soviet Union.

By using its diplomatic and commercial representatives or by employing special radio agents the Soviet Union organized an

intelligence net which worked splendidly. In the various branches of this net agents of all branches of the Russian secret service had been injected: officers of the General Staff, agents of the Peoples Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), Party functionaries, diplomats, etc. The procurement of information on the military, political, and economic developments in foreign countries was carried out on a grand scale and by all possible means. The central offices set up abroad, the branch offices, and individual agents were equipped with special shortwave sets and were in direct contact with Moscow.

THE "ROTE DREI"

In the course of the Second World War there was a goodly number of very dangerous groups of agents. Many groups the Germans were able to render innocuous, many they could not. But I think it was the most dangerous group of all which they did not succeed in rendering harmless. This group could only be cleared up in small measure, and that much too late.

Since June 1941 the German intercept service observed three radio circuits running from Switzerland to Moscow. In Switzerland in the vicinity of Lake Geneva, were located three radio stations which stood in communication with Moscow. It was soon recognized that these were agents' stations, and that they belonged to the Russian military espionage system. Beyond that no essential information was possible, especially since the cryptographic systems employed were not broken. Month by month the Germans watched this traffic, took down the messages, and tried to break the cryptographic system. They gave this agents' net the name "Die Rote Drei." This "Rote Drei" caused many a headache to a great many people, also in Switzerland, but the more they worried about it the less clever they became.

It was not until December 1942 after the arrest of the agent Kent ("Rote Kapelle" case) that the Germans got any clue for breaking into the net of "Rote Drei." Kent had stated that in the summer 1940 he brought a cryptographic system to Geneva, and delivered it in Rue de Lausanne. Now the Swiss Central Office of the Comintern was located in the Rue de Lausanne. The transmitter's position had been fixed as

close to the French border. Through Confidential agents in Switzerland and the German counterintelligence office in Dijon, France, an attempt was made to get at this organization, above all to get some clue which would make it possible to break into the cryptographic system so as to be able to read the tremendous volume of traffic over this network.

Not until the summer of 1944 was Germany able to read those messages which had been going out for a long time. What they now saw was enough to take many a person's breath away.

During the whole period of the eastern campaign, during the first German offensive in 1941, in the preliminary stages of the campaign of 1942, in the most critical period on the eastern front, at the time of the battles around Stalingrad and in the Caucasus, and then later in the spring, summer, and autumn of 1943, in those decisive days when the German armies in the southern and central sectors of the eastern front were being swept back, in those days when one expected that somewhere, perhaps on the Dnieper, they would be able to make a stand, check the onrushing tide of the Russian armies, and build a new firm front, precisely in those days, weeks and months the most secret information regarding the German military situation on the eastern front, regarding troop units, strength, assembly areas, intentions, etc., was passing currently through Switzerland to Moscow. These were exclusively matters which must have come from the highest level of German military command.

The sender always signed "Dora"; the sources were designated as "Werther," "Sissy," "Teddy," "Fernand," "Taylor," "Lucie," "Pacho," "Maud," "Eduard," "Alfred," "Jim," "Salter," etc. The man who directed the work by radio from Moscow signed "Direktor."

By direction finding it had been established by the Germans that two of the transmitters were in Geneva, the third in Lausanne. Now the work of the German agents in Switzerland began.

They soon found out the points at which the transmitters were located and the organization they served. In Geneva, at Number 113 Rue de Lausanne, sat as chief of the organization a certain Rado who was officially director of the Geo-Presse in Geneva.

Alexander Rado was a private scholar and a citizen of Hungary. He had lived in Berlin until March 1933 and had then gone first to Hungary, and from there in 1934 to Paris where he was active on behalf of the Soviet Union in cartographic work. He was a fanatic adherent of the Communist idea. In 1926 he had gone from Berlin to Moscow for nine months, and then returned to Berlin. He was a member of the KPD and of the Association for the Study of the Soviet Planned Economy. After 30 January 1933 he was again active for the KPD and had placed his dwelling at the disposal of their central office.

His wife had been secretary of the Communist women's movement and was the sister of the well-known Communist, Gustel Jansen; for a time she had worked at the Soviet embassy in Berlin under Joffe; later she spent some time in the Soviet Union.

It is certain that Rado was already active as an agent for the Soviet Union in 1939. In Paris he must have been in contact with Gilbert. When Rado came to Switzerland is uncertain; probably it was early in 1940, possibly even earlier. In Geneva he had two transmitters at his direct disposal, one of them in Rue de Sol-leure Number 5.

The Lausanne transmitter was in the house at Number 2 Chemin Longera. Occupant of the house was A.A. Foote who appeared under the cover name John. He did the cipher work himself, sent the reports, and also had an intelligence organization of his own which worked independently of Rado. The Swiss authorities knew nothing about this.

In the course of time the Germans were able to clear up many things regarding "Rote Drei." One knew who the "Direktor" was, who Rado was; they knew all the operators. In the end they were able to read all the messages. But, for all that, the principal matter remained concealed. Who were those informers whose connections reached into the Fuehrer's Headquarters, into the OKW, into the Air Ministry, into all industrial plants, etc.? Who were all these people who knew how to secure the most important information with such masterful skill? Who above all were the final sources from which they drew their information?

The Germans tried by all means to get behind this great secret. Hundreds of people were watched. In December 1943 in the grounds of the Fuehrer's Headquarters, of OKH, of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and other offices special detachments of Nahfeldsuchtrupps (troops charged with policing the area close to the line) were introduced who came from all directions and all distances. It was all in vain. Not a bit of this secret was ever revealed. It was and remained the most fateful secret of the Second World War.

Later, when "Rote Drei" had long since ceased to operate, when all traces had been lost, in the summer of 1944 when the shades of the "Rote Drei" were no longer spooking in the east on the Volga and the Don, but were close to the borders of the Reich in the east and in the west, at that time when men of the German military command could no longer reconcile with their conscience the strategic nonsense of a prolongation of the war, at that time when on 20 July 1944 that clumsily organized attempt was made to dispose of the man who had brought all this misfortune on Germany and all Europe --- at that time, the ghost of the dead "Rote Drei" rose once more from the grave. Once more a convulsive search for traitors swept over all Germany. Nahfeldtrupps watched Hitler's Headquarters for weeks. But again no trace was found of any suspicious radio connection. It could not be found, for it had never existed. The information for the "Rote Drei" had gone to Rado by completely different, simpler ways.

(Editor's note: While the nature of the indicated "simpler ways" of conveying this information from Hitler's headquarters is not related in other portions of the manuscript, which can be revealed, it is hinted that the material was brought out directly by certain personnel and was not transmitted by radio.)

PONY EXPRESS

It's older than you think. Marco Polo relates that Genghis Khan, ruler of Chinese Tartary, had a courier service similar to the pony express nearly a thousand years ago. Relay stations were provided about every twenty five miles, and the couriers, by changing mounts at each station, could deliver messages as far as 300 miles away in a single day.

Receiver Tuning for Manual Nets

~~(Confidential)~~

SFC Henry D Pruden

In line with the training program employed by Operational Training, Morse Branch, The Army Security Agency Training Center, Fort Devens, Massachusetts, it has been found that proficiency in copying manual speed Morse stations may be better obtained if nets using two or more stations are used in the training program. The problem encountered was in finding a method of giving the students actual receiver tuning in connection with the copying of manual nets, using procedures other than International Point-to-Point. As the type nets desired for manual copy could not be heard at this station because the power output of the transmitters was too low to carry this far, some method had to be devised to get nets available so that the students would have to tune their receivers prior to copying the traffic. We previously had been able to give them the type nets desired by using TG-10 keyers and inked tape but we only had an audio signal to "patch" to the students' racks. This method gave the students practice in copying manual nets but no practice whatsoever in receiver tuning; in fact, the receiver had to be turned to the "send" position so that very strong signals coming over the air would not block the output of the TG-10 keyer.

Due to the classification of the nets we desired the students to copy, we could not put transmitters on the air and have them actually tune these transmitters in while the instructors sent the traffic because other persons could also tune receivers to the working frequencies. In short, we had to put a transmitter on the air for the benefit of the students and have no output, outside of the immediate vicinity of the Operational Training room.

My idea was to use the TG-10 keyer audio output to key the RF output of the frequency meter and then "patch" this keyed RF signal to the students' racks through

multi-couplers, with no receiving antenna attached. The "make-break" circuit of the TG-10 keyer was not sharp enough to key the frequency meter properly, but by the insertion of a sensitive relay (255A Relay) in the "B" plus circuit of the frequency meter power supply and the audio output of the TG-10 keyer, a sharp "make - break" could be obtained and this RF output "piped" to the students' racks through the multi-coupler with no antenna attached, therefore, giving no RF output except in the Operational Training room. This method worked perfectly and by inserting a switch across the relay the frequency meter could be used to measure frequencies normally when desired.

Using this arrangement, students are given an approximate frequency range to search for nets. The instructor sets the frequency meter to a desired frequency, turns on the TG-10 keyer with the type net desired (inked tape that has been previously made up by the instructor is used in the TG-10 keyer, which method of preparation will be described in detail later), and turns on the relay that is keyed by the audio output of the TG-10 keyer. The instructor then takes the receiving antenna out of the multi-couplers and substitutes the RF output of the frequency meter. The students' racks are then "patched" into these multi-couplers and when the students tune their receivers to the correct frequency, they are able to copy the nets.

By putting the training generator output through the audio line to the students racks, the instructor is able to provide several different types of interference on the nets, thus giving the students simulated field experience.

By using a TG-10 keyer in conjunction with a modified frequency meter as explained above, the students have to tune their