

LIVEJOURNAL



Operation "SETUN-2:" KGB versus a Female CIA Agent



Martha "Marti" Peterson) - now just retiree from North Carolina (USA), but on June 13, 1978 she woke up world-famous – a photograph of her interrogation in Lubyanka, published in Izvestia, appeared on the front page of the Washington Post.

Peterson became the first female CIA agent in Moscow. It was she who handed over the fountain pen with poison to the Foreign Ministry spy Alexander Ogorodnik - he poisoned himself at the time of his arrest.



(Martha Peterson's Drivers' license)

The 30-year-old vice-consul of the American embassy in Moscow flew to work in the CIA Station in 1975, having studied at Langley and learned the Russian language. The motive for her service was the death of her husband, a CIA employee in Vietnam, who died in a helicopter crash. Recalling her time in Moscow, Martha says she was very upset because of the constant atmosphere of suspicion and surveillance: many of her colleagues died of cancer, probably due to radiation of the embassy by officers of Soviet intelligence.

In addition, it was cold in Moscow and there was not enough food - sometimes Martha could only buy cabbage for dinner, the former intelligence officer complains in her book *The Widow Spy*. Meanwhile, while working at the embassy in Moscow, Martha met her future husband, Stephen Shogi, a diplomat and employee of the US State Department.



(Martha Peterson in Tbilisi in 1976. She's not starving ...)

Since there had been no female intelligence officers in Moscow before, Martha's activities did not attract the attention of the KGB. At night she made dead drops in various parts of the city for the first CIA spy recruited in Moscow, diplomat Alexander Ogorodnik. With the help of a camera hidden in a large fountain pen, he took pictures of secret documents of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Martha passed him money, instructions, and contact lenses with solution that Ogorodnik had liked since his time in Latin America.

On July 15, 1977, the next transfer was to take place on the Luzhnetsk bridge. Martha left a large piece of asphalt there, in which a camera pen, contact lenses and money were hidden. A miniature transmitter was hidden on Martha's body.

Three KGB officers grabbed Martha, including "Alpha" veteran Gennady Zaitsev:



(Vladimir Zaitsev during his work as an assistant to the head of the Russian government)

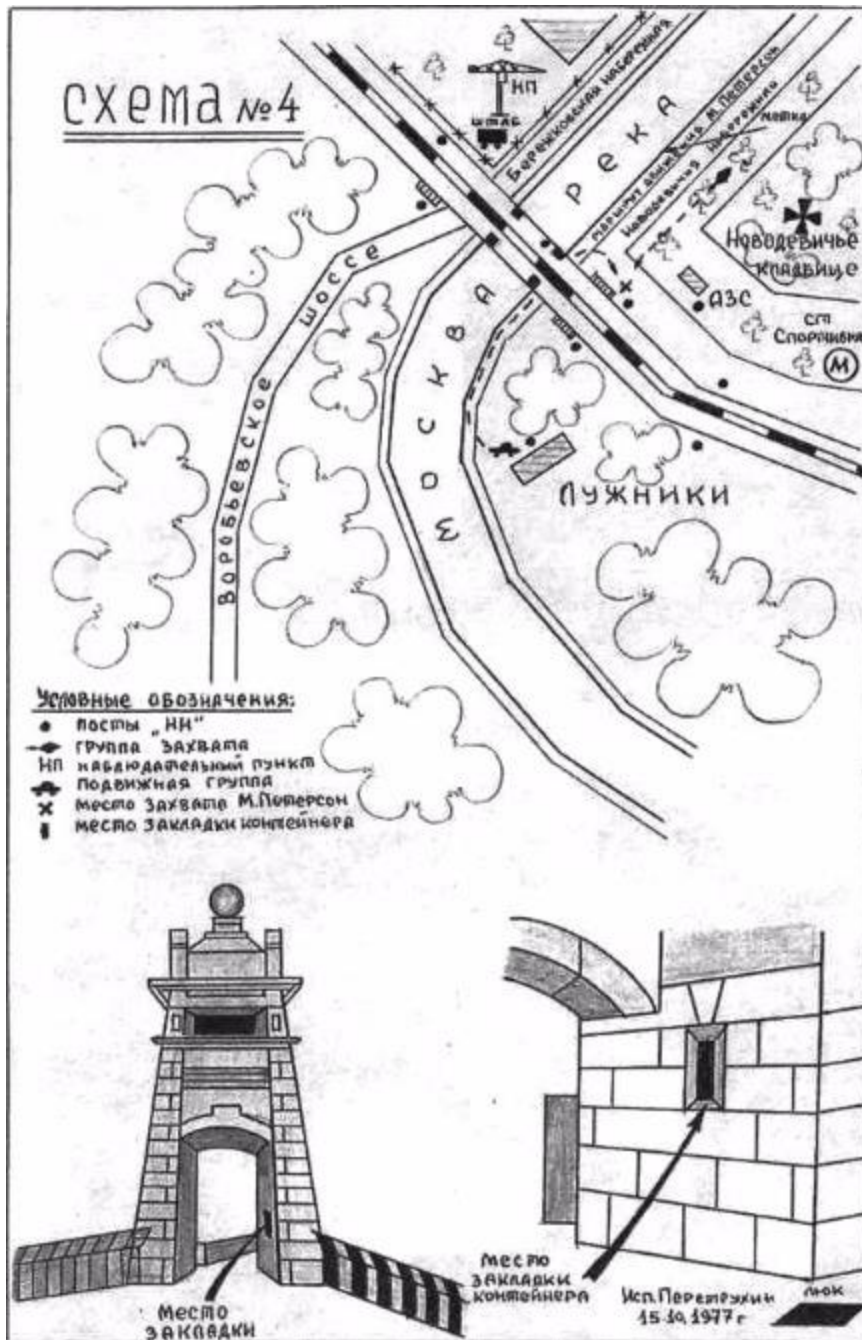
"We followed her from the embassy, but she managed to change clothes and radically change her appearance.

This is the way it happened. On the evening of July 15, having parked an official car [Trans.: sic] at the Rossiya cinema, she entered the hall. The film "Red and Black" was shown based on the novel of the same name by Stendhal, and the last session had already begun. Foot and vehicle surveillance was conducted from afar, since the spy had a white dress with large flowers, easily distinguishable from a distance.

The "Woman in White" sat in a chair at the emergency exit and for ten minutes pretended to be watching what was happening on the screen. Making sure everything around was calm, Peterson pulled on black trousers and a jacket of the same color over her dress, fastened tightly, and loosened her bunched hair.

However, she prudently did not return to the car, but first got on the bus, then rode the trolleybus and metro - "checked". Only after that she caught a taxi and came to the Krasnoluzhsky bridge. Although at this late hour the place looked completely deserted, in fact, there were about a hundred operational officers from various subunits at different locations - they secretly watched everything that was happening.

When Peterson climbed the stairs leading to the railway track, we — it was happening at night — could not understand just who had come — in trousers Martha looked like a man. Well, in our group there were specialists who knew the gait of all the employees of the American embassy. These experts established that it was Peterson who came to lay the cache.



(Schematic of the final stage of Operation Setun-2) [Trans. This schematic was drawn up 15 October 1977 by Col. Igor Peretrukhin, who was assigned to the special KGB counterintelligence unit tasked with uncovering the Soviet agent and his U.S. contact]

She had to go through the arches built into the huge supports of the bridge. At this time, she disappeared from sight. In one of the arches, she lingered more than necessary. We concluded that she left the package there. When Peterson turned around in the middle of the bridge and went back, she began to walk down the stairs - she was caught red-handed. So that she understood that these were not hooligans, but representatives of the authorities, they dressed me in the uniform of a police officer.

Madame Peterson courageously fought back from our officers, who were looking for a small reconnaissance receiver mounted on her body, and at the same time she screamed loudly - warning the agent who was supposed to pick up the package.

Seeing that the arrest was somehow dragging on, I helped the guys, firmly took her hand, squeezed her wrist. At the same time, the bracelet of her watch was broken, in which, as it turned out, there was a microphone connected to a recording device on her body. While riding in the car I repaired the bracelet, but, nevertheless, the US Embassy sent a note to our Foreign Ministry regarding the broken watch and bruises on her hands.



[(Colonel) Sharovaton, Captain Vladimir Zaitsev, Marti and unknown officer]



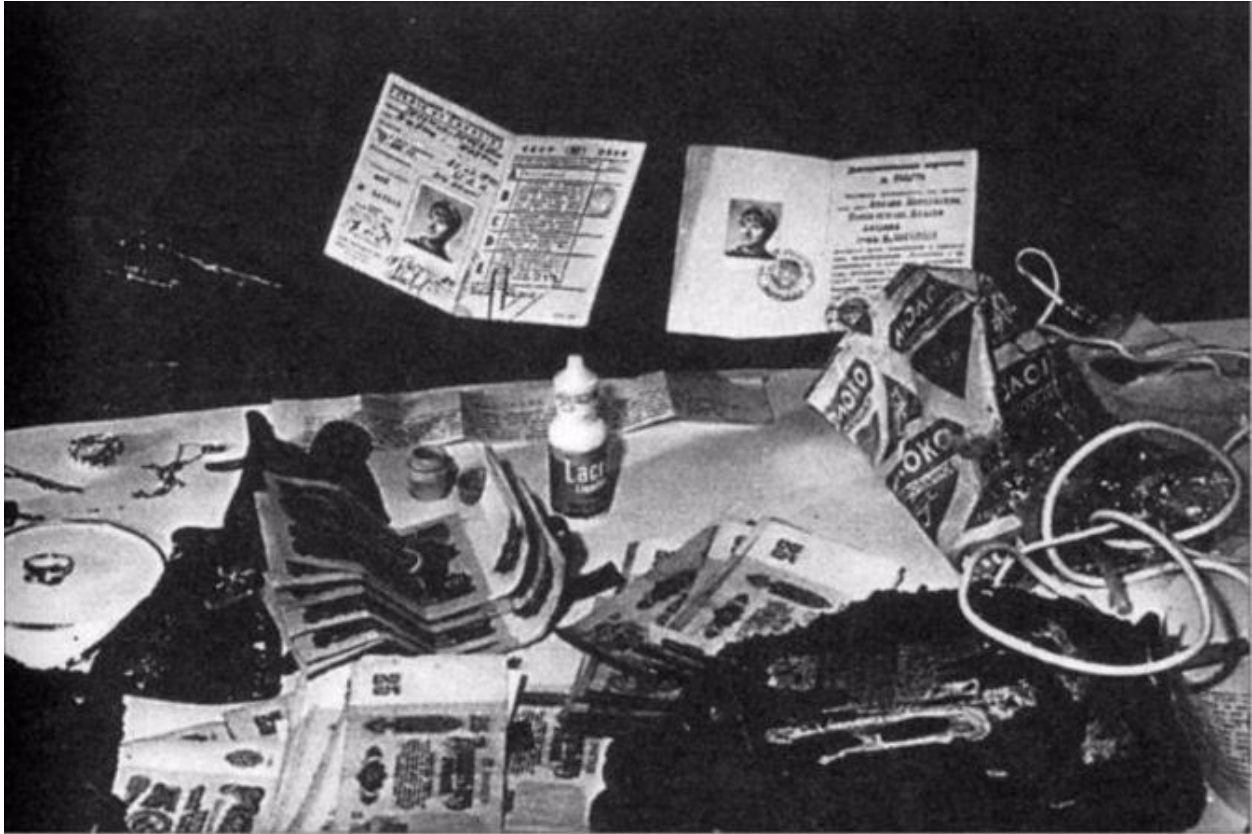
(The actual moment of the capture of Martha Peterson. Right in the police uniform - Vladimir Zaitsev)

What should we have done? After all, during the detention, Madam Vice Consul showed a brilliant command of swearing and karate techniques (she had a "black belt").

Peterson was taken to Lubyanka and summoned a counselor to the American embassy for identification. In his presence, they opened a container camouflaged as a cobblestone. They found instructions, a questionnaire, special photo equipment, gold, money, and two ampules of poison.

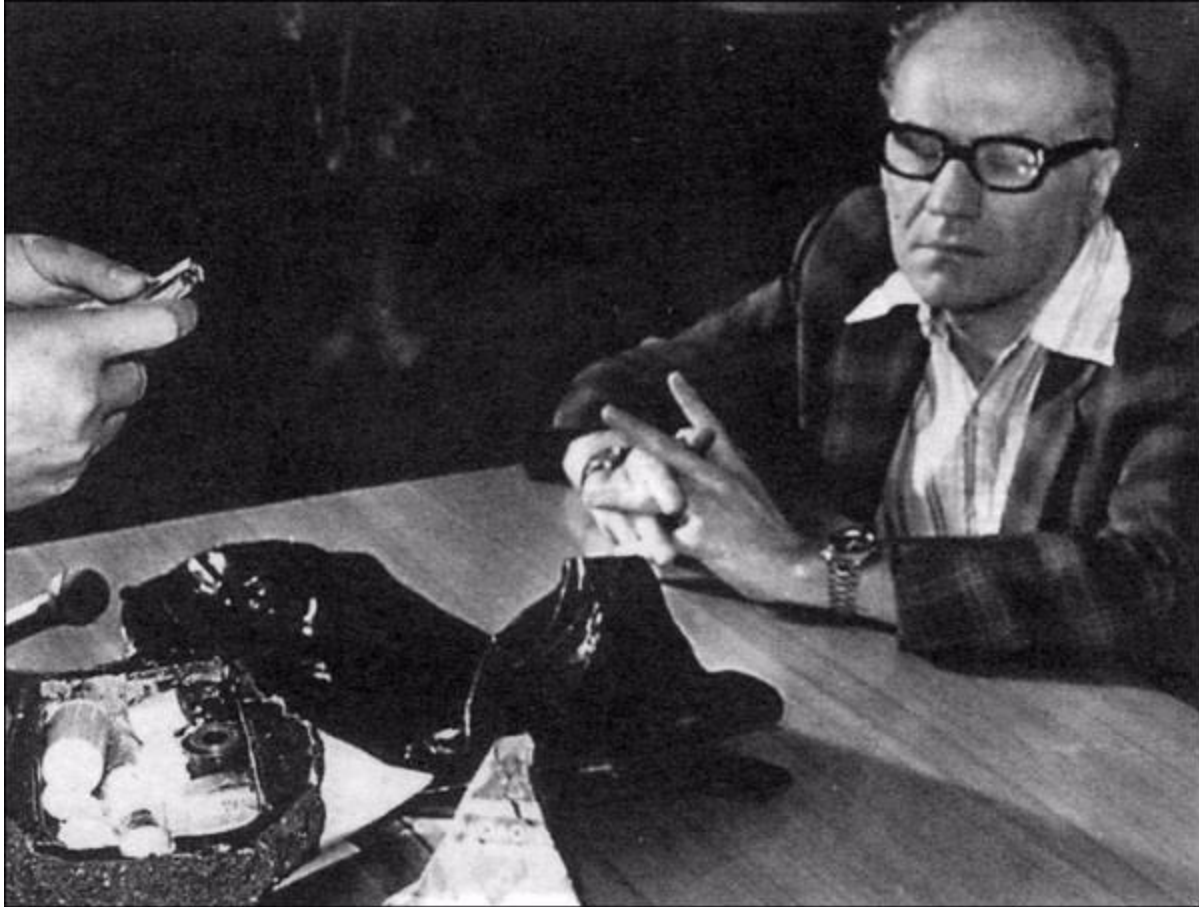


(Peterson at Lubyanka)



(Items seized from Martha Peterson)

American ambassador Toon [Trans.: sic DCM Jack Matlock], who appeared at the Soviet Foreign Ministry immediately after the expulsion of Martha Peterson from the country to America, urged them not to make the incident public, "which would be highly appreciated by the government of the United States of America."



(A KGB representative shows the brick cache to US consul Toon) (sic – Cliff Gross)

They say that my passing acquaintance (we were not introduced to each other) taught at one of the CIA intelligence schools in the following years - taught future intelligence officers all the tricks of behavior during detention based on what she lived through. "

After she returned to the United States, Martha married a Moscow colleague from the embassy, continued to work at the CIA, and did indeed teach Langley the rules for the behavior of agents during detention.



(Judging by the photograph, Martha Peterson is still full of strength and energy)

Not until 17 years later did Martha tell her children she was a spy. Martha also received an award from George W. Bush for his services in the fight against terrorism. In 2016, the 71-year-old intelligence officer published memoirs about her work ...



(Alexander Ogorodnik, aka Agronomist, aka Trianon)

Agent Alexander Ogorodnik, who committed suicide at the time of his arrest before Martha Peterson's arrest, was the first spy recruited by Americans to work in Moscow. However, the CIA's later activity in the Russian capital was marked by a series of major scandals involving foreign agents and traitorous Russians.

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