

Moskovskiy Komsomolets 21 February 1997

“TASS is Authorized to Announce – 20 Years Later”



Moskovski Komsomolets 21 February 1997, Friday



Photo of Alexander Izotov, movie producer; photo reproductions by Valery VINOGRADOV, from FSB archives

“ТАСС УПОЛНОМОЧЕН ЗАЯВИТЬ” Двадцать лет спустя

Author: Aleksandr Khinsteyn (Alexander Hinstine)



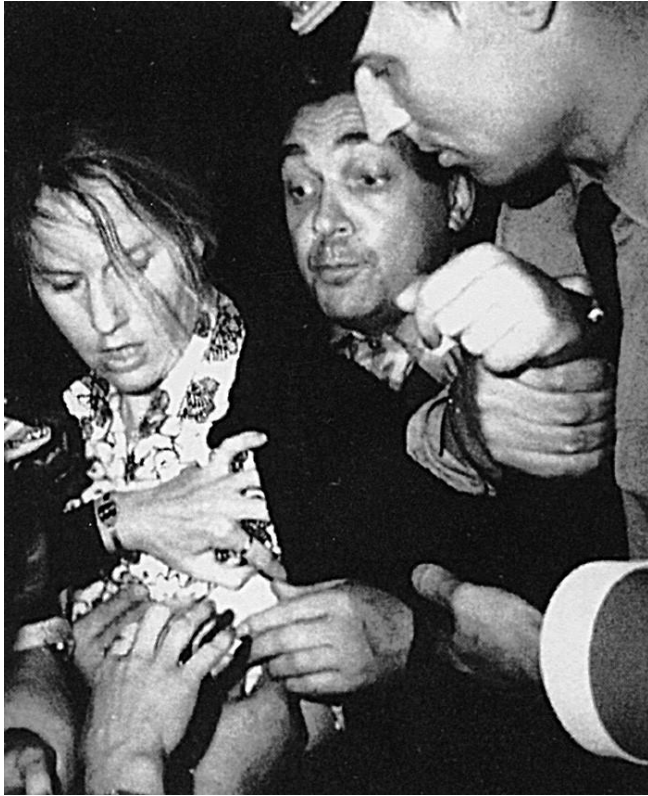
Julian Semyonov



Signed copy of Moskovskiy Komsomolets article 21 February 1997 "TASS is Authorized to Announce - 20 Years Later," given by "Colonel" Viktor Sharovатов to CIA officer Jack Platt. Copy from personal file of Martha Peterson.

Signature is V. Sokolov (pseudonym?)

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(Better quality photo)

SHORTLY BEFORE HIS ARREST, CIA AGENT AGRONOM PROPOSED TO THE DAUGHTER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE CPSU KONSTANTIN RUSAKOV. HIS DEATH PUT A CRIMP IN THEIR WEDDING...

When this film was shown on television, the Soviet lands simply froze. No one can dispute the popularity of the TV series “TASS is authorized to announce.” Based on the novel by Yulian Semyonov with the same title, the picture had vast success. The “literary KGB Chekist” Semyonov perceived people’s expectations perfectly. A solid political mystery story skillfully matched here with the smell of inaccessible foreign life, where neon signs gleamed and beautiful spy ladies drank whiskey and soda from crystal tumblers. The Soviet film art has trained people not to believe a single word coming from the screen. However, in the case of “TASS...” the situation is different. Few people know that the basis of the film’s plot was an actual Soviet counterintelligence operation.

The KGB related the “Trianon case” with absolute success. It is not surprising that Semyonov grabbed it with both hands: even in its “pure

form” this brilliant operation, which has no analogies, is perceived as an interwoven detective story.

What is even stranger is that for the past 20 years no one has tried even once to give a true accounting of this case.

My interlocutor, former First Deputy Chief of the Second Chief Directorate of the KGB (counterintelligence), Lieutenant General [Vitaliy Konstantinovich Boyarov](#), has for the first time decided to talk about the events of twenty years ago. It was this man who led the entire operation: he was introduced by Semyonov under the name of General Konstantinov (as you remember, he was portrayed by Vyacheslav Tikhonov).



Vitaliy Konstantinovich Boyarov

From the dossier "MK:"

Vitaliy Konstantinovich Boyarov was born in 1928. He has been in state security agencies since 1945. He completed partisan radio operator courses and after the Victory he served as a direction finder operator in radio counterintelligence of the Ministry of State Security (MGB) of Ukraine. Until 1962, in the counterintelligence service of the MGB-KGB of Ukraine (here he received his first combat order for exposing eight CIA agents), and in the duties of department chief he was sent into foreign intelligence. He was the Deputy to the KGB Resident in the London Residence. In 1965 he was declared “persona non grata.” He worked in the Center, in the Service (later Directorate) of Foreign Counterintelligence of the First Chief Directorate. Beginning in the 70s, he was the Deputy Chief of the Second Chief Directorate of the KGB of the USSR (subsequently its First Deputy). For leadership of the Ogorodnik operation he was awarded the order of the Red Banner. From 1986 he was the First Deputy and from 1987 the Chief of the Main Directorate of State Customs Control under the Council of Ministers of the USSR. In the spring of 1991 he retired as a Lieutenant

General. He has 32 governmental awards: the Order of the Red Banner, three Orders of the Red Banner of Labor, two Orders of the Red Star, and orders and medals of foreign countries.

He is now the president of the International Association for Legal and Tax Issues 'I.L.T.S'." He heads the All-Russian Council of Veterans of the Customs Service.

“Agronom” bit the capsule and began to slowly slide to the floor

“Vitaliy Konstantinovich, what actually started this entire matter?”

“In the beginning of 1977, intelligence, we received information of interest from foreign intelligence. One of the KGB sources, an employee of Colombian intelligence services, reported that he was approached by American intelligence to secure their meetings technically with some Russian in a room of the Hilton Hotel. The agent didn't know anything else. The only thing he was able to overhear was the conversation concerned some kind of automobile accident. Either the Russian ran into somebody or somebody ran into him...

“These were all the facts: an unknown Russian, an automobile accident and the time of the meeting.

“Of course, we did not know if this man had been recruited by the Americans, but in the intelligence services it is always the custom to assume the worst.

“This is how the usual painstaking work of counterintelligence officers began. We analyzed the facts known to us and gathered material. In sum, 9 or 11 employees of Soviet establishments in Colombia – I don't remember exactly – fell into our field of vision. Moreover, until the very last moment, right up to the arrest of the real spy, four people were still under suspicion.”

“How were you able to find the agent?”

“Many sincerely believe that the KGB can groundlessly start monitoring telephones or follow whomever they want. In reality, in order to carry out *special measures*, it was necessary to get approval. And without any evidence, you understand, no one would give approval.

“But we were lucky. That same Colombian source told us that the Russian the Americans recruited met at the Hilton with the wife of one of the workers of the Soviet Trade Mission in Bogota. The search was narrowed significantly.

“Quickly we were able to establish that a second secretary at the embassy of the USSR in Colombia, Aleksandr Ogorodnik, maintained “informal” relations with the spouse of a worker of the Soviet Trade Mission. Subsequently Semyonov would name her Olga Vinter, the wife of the engineer Zotov.

“True, when we came upon Ogorodnik, “Vinter” was already dead.”

“According to Semyonov, being afraid of exposure, Dubov-Ogorodnik himself poisoned her. And how was it in reality?”

“It is difficult to say. We exhumed the body but found no evidence of this. Even though we got verification that the CIA supplied Ogorodnik with poison. In his last spy container there were deadly ampules...

“...Our suspicions were also strengthened by the fact that Ogorodnik really had a car accident in Bogota.

“In addition his behavior seemed very strange to us. They offered him graduate work at MGIMO, but he preferred to go to the Department of Strategic Analysis and Planning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (sic) where obviously he took a pay cut and did had no prospects for growth. In the directorate, by the way, unlike all “normal” people, he never refused night duty.

“Later we learned that during his duty hours he took pictures of all the cipher correspondence that came to the Foreign Ministry with a miniature camera. He gave particular preference to telegrams from the United States. That is, everything that Ambassador Dobrynin wrote from Washington ended up in the hands of the CIA.

“And so, you came upon Ogorodnik...”

“When suspicions about Ogorodnik finally strengthened, Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov gave us permission to carry out *special measures*.

“A surveillance camera was installed in Ogorodnik’s home: a so-called “Vizir”. Soon, an employee who was sitting on the “Vizir” on the floor above recorded how Ogorodnik deciphered radiograms received from the Center.

“Strictly speaking, that was enough. By the next day we conducted a secret search of his apartment. The items found completely exposed him as a spy. There was microfilm with cipher pads inside the batteries hidden in a flashlight, specific assignments of the CIA, and instructions for communication. That very evening, Ogorodnik was arrested...”

“And how did that go?”

“Around 10-11:00 in the evening, our officers detained “Agronom” (that is what we called Ogorodnik while in operational development) at the entrance of his apartment and suggested that we go inside. The cache was opened before his eyes.

“Ogorodnik couldn’t disappear anywhere and he agreed to write a statement. They gave him paper, he sat behind the table, took a pen and wrote: “I, Ogorodnik, Aleksandr Dmitriyevich, want to declare the following:

“Suddenly, with a sharp movement, he grasped this pen in his teeth, bit on the capsule and slowly began to slide to the floor. It all happened so fast, that at first no one was able to figure out what he did. They simply went numb. Of course, we tried to do something before the doctors’ arrived: unclenched his teeth with a ruler, and revived him, but it was too late. On the way to the hospital, Ogorodnik died without regaining consciousness.”

“Evidently, after such a failure, appropriate negative consequences followed. Was there any punishment?”



Grigory Fyodorovich Grigorenko

“The Chief of the Second Main Directorate of the KGB, [Grigorenko](#), got Andropov out of bed at 7:00 in the morning. At 9:00 all officers who were present at the search were already in the chairman’s office.

“Certainly, we were terribly upset. Including Andropov. But we didn’t lose heart. I told Yuri Vladimirovich everything that happened, saying ‘if you authorize the further conduct of the operation, I guarantee that we will see it through to the end and thwart the plans of the Americans.’”

“I will remember,” he sadly joked, “as if it is from your mouth to God’s ears.”

“But he did sanction it. That was the 20th of June. But by the 14th of July 1977 we had caught the professional CIA officer Martha Peterson red-handed.”



“Don’t grab my breast” shouted the female spy”

“Are you aware of how Ogorodnik became an agent of the CIA?”

“They recruited him like many other traitors: “through a woman.” While he was working in Bogota, the Americans dangled their agent in front of him at the Colombian Institute of Culture... actually not an agent, but a covert employee.



Pilar and Ogorodnik

“An incredibly beautiful Spanish woman: Pilar Suarez Barcala (Semyonov portrayed her under her real name). The CIA used this Pilar for the development of many people, moreover not only Soviet citizens. But in Ogorodnik’s case they brought her in especially from Spain to Colombia.

“Further – the plan was simple. Their meetings (by the way, they met at the same Hilton hotel every time) were photographed. Playing on Ogorodnik’s ambitions, blackmailing him with the “lovers” materials, the Americans persuaded him to cooperate.”

“What kind of man was Ogorodnik?”

“Well, what can I tell you... He was overly ambitious. A poseur. Very greedy and petty - this was noted by many acquaintances. But at the same time, women liked him: his naval bearing was effective (he finished Leningrad Higher Naval School), he had an interesting appearance, and youth – he was around 30. It is not surprising that he was able to start a relationship no less ... with the daughter of the Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee [Rusakov](#).”

“Holy Jesus!”

“Yes. Imagine what would have happened if an agent of the CIA became the son-in-law of a Secretary and chief of a department of the Central

Committee. And events there developed rapidly. By the time of his exposure, Ogorodnik had already proposed and seemed to have received consent. The Americans grabbed this unprecedented opportunity with both hands and feet. In the radiograms that we were able to decipher, they regularly inquired about his possible spouse, in every way emphasizing the importance of this moment.”

“Of course, the story of the daughter of a Secretary of the Central Committee was not reflected either in the novel or in the film.”

“Naturally. In the plot she was replaced by some stupid girl, whom I tried to convince in every possible way to help us.

“We were not even allowed to interrogate the fiancée. Andropov undertook to talk with Rusakov himself as a member of the Central Committee with another member of the Central Committee.”

“But let’s return to the operation itself.”

“After the death of Ogorodnik, we were left with ciphers in our hands and the last radiogram from the spy center. And in fact KGB radio counterintelligence recorded all enemy messages. Using their cipher pad, we were able to read everything that was addressed to Ogorodnik.

“They explained that he should place the next container with information collected at Park Pobedy (Victory Park). There was nothing more concrete.

“But on the other hand, we knew when and where another, later dead drop operation would take place.”

“The film and the book show how you painstakingly found out the site of the operation in Victory Park and even cordoned off the entire territory.”

“That is how it was. Before contact Ogorodnik had to give a prearranged signal: to leave his "Volga" in a parking spot. But the question was, which one?

“We began to calculate. Since the American intelligence officers were constantly being followed by surveillance, we had a rough idea of the usual

routes of their movement. And we knew the Ogorodnik's path not long before his death, after we started to follow him closely.

“Through trial and error, we concluded that there could be three such parking spots – in the area of MGIMO near Culture Park, at the main entrance to the Central Park of Culture and Leisure and not far from the Foreign Ministry building. For each of these parking spots employees parked a specially made up Volga with Ogorodnik's license plate.



Two Volgas with the same license plate

“However, it was not possible to establish whether the Americans picked up the password signal. All three targets were located on the Sadovoye (Garden) Ring Road, that is, on the usual routes of the Americans (their embassy was also located on the Garden Ring).

“One way or another a decision was made to conduct the operation in the park. In order not to frighten off the CIA officers, on that day “external surveillance” was removed. We cordoned off the entire Victory Park. Capture groups were placed in spots most likely for dead drops. But, alas, the Americans did not come into contact.”

[Aleksandr Khinshtein](#) / [Александр Хинштейн](#) (very detailed bio and recent activities)

Website: <https://hinshtein.ru/>

Part two follows

