

KGB Colonel Aleksey Kulak

From KGB Colonel Igor Peretrukhin's *AGENT COVERNAME - TRIANON* - Chapter 3



Aleksey Isidorovich Kulak [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fedora_\(KGB_agent\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fedora_(KGB_agent))

Кулак, Алексей Исидорович - Материал из Википедии

Pete Earley's *Confessions of a Spy* also tells of another person who is still a mystery to us. This is a former officer of the First Chief Directorate, Hero of the Soviet Union Colonel Aleksey Isidorovich Kulak.

Back in 1978, unexpectedly, the American writer E. [Edward Jay] Epstein named in the open press the alias of an agent of American intelligence services "FEDORA" and said that there was a KGB officer under this name working at the United Nations who was collecting scientific and technical intelligence. This caused an unimaginable hubbub in Washington. It was absolutely clear to everyone that such a blatant leak of information would allow Russian counterintelligence to identify and neutralize quickly and with little difficulty the traitor who had gotten himself into spying. Thunder, as they say, thundered, but apparently nothing seemed to change.

Quite a bit later a book by David Wise came out in the US in which he wrote about known traitors and defectors from the KGB. The author, being a great connoisseur of all the most incredible behind-the-scenes stories, devoted several pages of his book to a mysterious agent of American

intelligence services who was acting under the somewhat unusual alias of FEDORA. Wise quite definitely claimed that none other than a senior KGB scientific and technical intelligence officer was operating under this alias. He had provided valuable information to the Americans for more than sixteen years and said that he could not be exposed until his death. FEDORA was highly valued by the CIA leadership, and for the information received from him, allegedly they paid him over one hundred thousand dollars. David Wise quite openly gives his name – Aleksey Isidorovich Kulak.

The author of the book, strangely enough, does not state this with all finality, leaving himself a way of possible retreat and referring every now and then to the former head of the CIA counterintelligence service James Jesus Angleton [Translator comment: spelled “Egleton in original], known for his maniacal "witch hunter" suspiciousness and whose image was captured in the novel of his compatriot Norman Mailer *Harlot's Ghost*. Angleton did not believe anyone; he saw setups - "decoy ducks" of the treacherous KGB everywhere. Nor did he believe FEDORA, whom he suspected of having actually been the executor of one of the most ingenious and long-lasting Russian tricks.

According to David Wise, in late 1961 Soviet intelligence assigned the thirty-nine-year-old Aleksey Kulak to New York to obtain scientific and technical information. He worked under cover of the UN [Scientific] Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation. As he writes, Kulak was a short, stocky man, externally justifying his name [Translator: “(rich) peasant”]. Kulak, according to the author, in the spring of 1962 opened the office door of a US intelligence agency in the western part of Manhattan and there offered his services. Acting contrary to the rules, violating all stereotypes, he immediately confused all analysts and permanently placed doubt in their minds. Who was he in reality? Is this a traitor or a subtle and devious setup? The discussion on this subject, according to the author, continues to the present day.

One of the veterans of the CIA headquarters in Langley, praising FEDORA in his book, wrote that he was a very valuable source of intelligence who was always very willing to pass on information about other KGB officers known to him, although usually in such cases even recruited agents do not always like to give such information. In the most detailed manner he listed

everything Moscow was interested in regarding American scientific and technical secrets and gave out everything that he knew about plans of the USSR for developing nuclear weapons. Kulak was always very attentive to ensuring his security. Each time after meeting with a CIA officer, he took the most careful measures to check himself for external surveillance. The Americans also took care of this. An entire system of regular transmission to him of classified information of interest to Soviet intelligence was created. His value was such that it was necessary to sacrifice something. Laying out dollars, the Americans, undoubtedly, received super-high dividends totaling millions! Kulak not only remained above all suspicion, but also quickly advanced in his career. His meetings with Americans, as a rule, were recorded on videotape. During their conversations, the hospitable hosts generously treated him to Scotch whiskey, of which their Russian friend was a big fan. This went on for many years.

Who was Aleksey Kulak? I knew him from the time we studied together at the 101st School from the fall of 1958. This educational institution of the KGB was located at the twenty-fifth kilometer from Moscow along the Gorky Highway, on the outskirts of the city of Balashikha, Moscow Region. During the Great Patriotic War, our intelligence officers were trained here to work in the enemy's rear. In everyday life it was called "Twenty-Fifth Kilometer" or simply "The Woods" (*Les*). In the pine forest, behind a tall green fence, there were several wooden buildings in which classrooms, dormitories, a dining room, a garage, and administration were located, and in 1959 a four-story building including the new training complex was added. The basics of the intelligence profession were mastered here and foreign languages were studied, practiced, and perfected. In our spare time we played hockey, tennis, volleyball, and other sports. In our program, difficult but unknown training and mastery of a new, clandestine sector of work lay ahead of us. The task of the students was not only to "hit the books" in the classroom, but also to spend a lot of time in the "field," that is, in any locality or in Moscow where so-called practical urban exercises (PGZ) were held. We had to learn how to detect external surveillance, to shake it, to make drops, to conduct instant transmissions with an "agent" in general, all that every intelligence officer should be able to do. But all this was yet to come.

In 1947, the Moscow Institute of Chemistry and Technology established a secret school for the training of personnel of the then emerging nuclear industry. The best students were selected from the many elite higher education institutions in the country. The most stringent requirements were made in addition to their quality: that both their heads be bright and their personal background data impeccable. Aleksey Kulak, who was transferred there from the Institute of Food Industry, fit in in all respects. Even then he was promised a great future in science, and according to his biographical data he was a unique student: a Hero of the Soviet Union with four medals and many other awards. He was distinguished by exceptional modesty, he never exploited his service at the front, and many of the teachers who graded his examinations did not know that the man who stood before them was a highly decorated man and a Hero of the Soviet Union. He wore his "Gold Star" only on the big holidays, and then only when the party committee followed the command "Everyone is to be at the parade!" He did not like to go to theaters, did not show interest in the novelties of fiction, and did not waste time on idle chatter and jokes in the smoking rooms. He treated all classes with enviable thoroughness. And it was not surprising that he became a Stalin fellowship student, and after he received his diploma was enrolled in graduate school.

Judging by the stories of those who studied with him, Kulak was a man of a very peculiar sort. For many, he was rude and not sociable enough: he rarely spoke on his own initiative, was not known for diplomacy, and did not mince words. In his speeches at party meetings, if he could take the floor, he could shoot down in flames the rector of the institute and other leaders quite severely if they deserved it. He also did not learn how to spend free time. One of his fellow students at the institute, A. A. Pushkov, said that in his entire life Aleksey agreed on a trip to a sanatorium only two or three times. Once he was dragged to Valday in the midst of summer. The weather was beautiful, but they could not persuade Aleksey to go swimming. He preferred the gloominess of a billiard room, where he spent most of his free time, to everything. After a brilliantly defended dissertation on such a pressing topic as "Radioactive Analysis of Rare Metals," bright prospects opened up for the young scientist and the career of a highly promising scientific worker awaited him.

However, everything began to develop in a completely different way. Suddenly, he was invited to the personnel department of the institute, where in a private conversation a State Security officer in civilian clothes made him an offer to continue his education at an educational institution of a completely different type, promising afterward interesting work abroad. It is impossible to say with complete certainty whether Kulak hesitated for a long time after receiving such a proposal, only that in the autumn of 1958 he was among the students at Intelligence School Number 101.

Despite certain rules concerning the students and, according to known reasons, significantly restricting the dissemination of biographical information about each of us, everyone soon enough happened to learn that Aleksey Kulak was a Hero of the Soviet Union and a Ph.D., although not everyone knew exactly which ones. Naturally, we did not know his real name, since everyone had then a "school name." Very soon after the beginning of the educational process he was known as a responsible person, seriously applying himself to study and duties assigned to him. He impressed everyone with his independence and as a convinced fighter for truth and justice. At that time, it marked him very distinctly from all others. According to witnesses who communicated with him more closely, and my personal observations, he did not spare opportunists, no matter what positions they held. He was not afraid to speak out openly about this or that leader, even so harshly that it would make you "sweat but not lose control of your bowels!"

So, for example, while bathing in the banya in the presence of a large group of students, he could - I myself heard it - say publicly, for all to hear, about one of the economic leaders of the school of high military rank, that "he has brains in his head like those I have in my rectum!" Of course, no one else would be allowed this. "Well," his close friends used to say in similar cases, "Aleksey really got away with that one!"

And here's what our classmate, retired Lieutenant General, Doctor of Historical Sciences N. S. Leonov, recalls about Aleksey Kulak:

"Of course, all of us wanted to know how he won so many medals in the war! Aleksey usually kept his mouth shut and, only after a lot of persuasion agreed to talk about his battles. But even then, his stories were not at all like the tales people wrote down. Here is one of the stories I heard from him. After the end of the accelerated course of the artillery school, Junior

Lieutenant Kulak was sent to serve in one of the hottest sectors of the front, in my opinion, to the area of the Kursk Salient. And he got there right on the eve of the hottest battles. The twenty-year-old was ordered to take charge of the battery. But in the morning before the first fight, the already whiskered sergeants had called him aside and said: 'Listen here, Butter-bar¹. The German tanks are about to trample us. So, you have to get away from this hell here and don't think of commanding us. We're forced to live by hunting, and we'll manage for ourselves, understand? You have a trench over there in the rear: sit in it and keep your head down. And if you start to get jumpy, blame yourself. We'll beat them.

The tanks came. The commander looked through his binoculars from his trench and bit his lips: why do his guns not fire? Tanks crawled right into the battery position. The guns were silent. When it seemed to him that it was all lost, the volley dropped. And immediately four tanks turned into torches. The second volley - three more burned. In a few minutes a dozen tanks were blazing in front of his battery. At this time, a powerful general flew over the battlefield. 'Whose battery?' – 'Junior Lieutenant Kulak.' – 'Commander - the Order of Alexander Nevsky, everyone else - the Red Star.' When this order was passed to the battery, Kulak broke down to explain that he had nothing to do with it, it was an undeserved reward. But the sergeants held him back strongly and rudely: 'Relax, take it easy, Lieutenant. It's all business. You will earn this medal later!' And until the very last day of the war to Berlin, Aleksey proved to everyone around him, and above all to himself, that the reward he received was not for nothing. He climbed into the worst hell, was wounded six times, began to command the battalion (*divizion*), and in '45, for battles on the River Oder, was submitted for Hero of the Soviet Union."

And all this then, many years later, to become a traitor and an American spy?

It would not be a big exaggeration or secret if we say that after the publication of the book by David Wise, where the alias FEDORA was first mentioned, our foreign counterintelligence service, or more precisely, Directorate "K," did not deal in earnest with this issue.

¹ "Letyokha" - slang for "lieutenant." [somewhat like US military "Butter Bar"]

As is known in part from foreign sources of information, Directorate "T," in whose organization Aleksey Kulak worked for many years, was engaged in finding out scientific and technical secrets and achieved significant successes in this direction. Many of the latest technologies and technical developments, when they first appeared abroad, immediately became the prey of our agents, or, more simply, the employees of our illegal agents. Intelligent heads worked in this Directorate, representing all branches of technical and natural sciences who knew their stuff. These people did not eat their bread for free.

According to the information given in the book by the English researcher and the leading Western theorist of intelligence questions, Christopher Andrew, and the traitor from the KGB Oleg Gordievsky *KGB, The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 1999), about 150 Soviet weapons systems are based on technologies stolen in the West. This may not be the case, but it can be confidently asserted that the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and the Intelligence Service of the General Staff [GRU] got most of its sources of information from experts of leading research centers and industrial firms. The cost of remuneration for the information presented was not cheap, since it is well known that it is much better to pay hundred-or-so dollars for some technology or drawings than to spend millions of dollars to implement their own programs.

In the "Woods", as the suburban complex of buildings of our foreign intelligence mentioned previously is called in everyday life, the staff of Directorate "T" looked at others somewhat condescendingly. It is said that their successes are in full view, but what you are doing there still needs to be verified. Of course, if such statements were made, then they were just in the form of a joke, not condemnation. That Directorate has indeed been the most productive for many years. At operational meetings, the authorities did not miss an opportunity to quote excerpts from foreign newspapers or magazines like this: "Soviet spies have managed to purchase military technical documentation worth three million dollars for several hundred dollars." In all this there is nothing surprising, especially since we are not the only ones engaged in industrial espionage. This kind of epidemic, widespread all over the world, is incurable, and it has existed since time

immemorial. Let us recall the story in our rather distant past that the secret of an armor-piercing artillery shell for the Russian Navy, invented by our illustrious compatriot S. O. Makarov long before the war with Japan. After his first test at one of the training areas near St. Petersburg it immediately became known to the intelligence of the German General Staff and was soon launched into mass production.

Speaking about the achievements of Directorate "T" officers, it is also fair to say that, to our great regret, much of what is being obtained with such incredible labor and risk both in the West and in the East, for one reason way or another remains unclaimed at home and does not bring us any practical benefit. But this, as they say, is information for reflection.

But the main thing is that Hero of the Soviet Union, PhD Candidate of Chemical and Technological Sciences Aleksey Kulak, was sent here, to Directorate "T."

Behind him were three years spent at war fronts, study at the institute, postgraduate studies, defense of his thesis, and the successful completion of the KGB Intelligence School. Life took him to the next and no less significant orbit.

In Directorate "T" of the FCD, the newly appointed operations officer met him, as expected, with honor and respect for his former merits and began to actively prepare him for work in the New York Rezidentura. Regardless of this, he continued to work intensively on improving his English language that was so necessary to work overseas.

In late 1961, under the cover of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, after a short internship in one of the departments of the ministry, he was sent to the United States to work at the United Nations. His wife went along with him. As a UN employee he received an apartment, got a car and visited various diplomatic receptions regularly. He was given the opportunity to properly look around, make useful acquaintances and master English even more confidently. This went on for about a year, and then he was not completely tactfully reminded of the real purpose of his stay in the country: where are the results of his efforts and the intelligence obtained? And Aleksey Kulak had to move aside his ambitions and his heroic glory, roll up his sleeves, and plunge into the hard every day and severe life of the officers of the KGB Rezidentura.

In that little time off from work he led a closed life, he did not like visiting people, and always found some excuses for refusing, referring to work or some other reasons, and he did not invite anyone home either. As his old friend at the institute, A. Pushkov, recalls, when he came to New York on a business trip, Aleksey, as expected, met him at John F. Kennedy Airport, drove around the city, showed him some sights, and treated him to lunch at a good restaurant, but to his surprise did not invite him to his home as a guest. "He was shy about something. There was a secret there." But what kind?

Major General B. A. Solomatin, who at that time headed the New York Rezidentura, a man rather harsh and not always diplomatic in his relations with his subordinates, somehow admitted that they were all at one time fascinated by the heroic title of the case officer who had arrived at their station and forgave him a lot of things that others would never get away with. Kulak could, for example, calmly tell his boss that after lunch he likes to drink, and then go to the nearest bar. On his return in the evening, he breathed hard on his colleagues with a deep fume without any restraint. Would someone else do that?

Everyone knew about these "quirks." Some even referred to this "with understanding": they say, in our work, at times stresses are such that without alcohol there is no way. And Aleksey "partook" almost every day, and it no longer flattered him as an officer of our foreign Rezidentura, and especially in such an important country for us as the United States. In the evenings, he spent a lot of time in the Rezidentura, studying open sources of information, numerous newspapers and magazines. And maybe, even then he listened attentively to the conversations of his colleagues and recorded them with the help of special equipment? Later, one of the intelligence officers said in this connection: "If this is indeed so, then the US security services for many years knew perfectly well what was happening there. . . It turns out that all our operations in New York were doomed in advance?" All or not all, but the number of our failures overseas was amazingly large. There was not a year without scandals, arrests and announcements of Soviet "diplomats" declared persona non-grata widely advertised in the mass media. And this despite the fact that American counterintelligence never disclosed all of its cards and did

not rush to exploit fully the information available to them so as not to reveal the sources from which it was obtained.

In February 1963 Aleksey Kulak was transferred from the UN Secretariat to the Soviet Mission within that organization. From 1967 to 1971, he was in Moscow, where he worked in his Directorate, and then was sent to New York's Rezidentura again under the cover of a science attaché in our Mission, where he safely stayed for almost seven years until 1978.

For his two tours abroad, he received the Orders of the Red Banner and the Red Star based on the results of his work. At that time that was a lot, since for most officers in overseas Rezidenturas at that time, even the Medal for Military Merit was considered an almost impossible dream. The bosses, miserly with praise and stingy with awards, apparently believed that the very fact of being on an overseas tour was a great honor for officers. Such awards could be given, according to Decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, for very significant results on the job and obtaining information of enormous national importance, or the recruitment of some extremely valuable agents. Did it turn out that Aleksey Kulak really achieved any stunning results?

Having returned home with the high rank of colonel, unexpectedly for many Kulak lost all interest in work, began to drink more often and as a result was sent from the "Woods" to his native Chemical Technology Institute as an Officer of the Active Reserve, and then completely dismissed. He, as it was evident, did not particularly worry about this and did not complain about his fate. In the mornings he came to work in the institute invariably and on time, where he worked as a department head in the research section. At lunch he drank a traditional and quite decent dose of cognac and in essence did nothing more. And in general, he showed not the slightest interest in fulfilling his duty either in science or technology. He lived with his wife in a modest two-room apartment on the Sadovoye Ring and still never invited any of his few friends home.

In 1983, he suddenly fell ill and soon died of cancer. At the funeral in the cemetery, in the presence of high officials from the Central Committee of the CPSU and the leadership of the KGB, a lot of kind and sincere word. On the pillows of red velvet lay the Hero of the Soviet Union Star, six military orders, and two dozen medals. At that time no one knew that they were all crying

over the grave of a CIA agent, and that an early death had miraculously saved him from terrible shame, an imminent trial, and, quite possibly, an inevitable execution.

But someone already knew at that time that a target of a complex, deep, and long investigation carried out by Directorate "K" was being buried in that prestigious Troyekurovsky Cemetery. In this rather secret Directorate only one person had been entrusted to hold in his hands all the threads of this critical case. Subsequently, he brought in four more people into the investigation, including two senior officials of Directorate "T." And no other living soul knew that a great hunt had begun for FEDORA. The investigation was surrounded by strict secrecy, not because they were afraid to frighten away the game, but because about a hundred people had entered the circle of suspects within a short time, information about which corresponded in some way to the meager data obtained from the article by E. Epstein in an American newspaper. It was necessary to subject each of them to a careful investigation, but only in such a way that the shadow of suspicion did not then accompany the lives of innocent people in any way. Only one of them in the end should be denied confidence.

During this effort it was necessary to analyze in the most careful way all the materials on the failures in the America branch that had taken place in the last decades and what preceded them, the agency reports, the personal affairs of the resident staff, the performance appraisals ... Gradually, the circle of suspects narrowed to ten people. By 1980, attention was drawn to one interesting pattern: several valuable agents in the United States worked very unevenly. They were distinguished by high activity, and then they seemed to fall into a deep and inexplicable hibernation. A natural question arose: to whom did these agents come? Logic prompted: one of the remaining ten. And the inexplicable failures in the activity of "sources" were precisely at the time of his absence in the United States. As if someone wanted to work with him and with no one else. This circumstance was a specific clue to solving the mystery. The attention of experienced counterintelligence experts was drawn to the character of information Aleksey Kulak received from his American source. It turned out to be really valuable and was highly appreciated by experts who represented the military-industrial complex. But only with one, but very substantial caveat.

All this information was related to those types of articles which, with our backward technology at the time, were practically impossible to create: it would take at least about twenty years! Thus, by transferring this genuinely valuable information to us through Kulak the Americans did not risk anything: their science did not stand still, and for twenty years they had a real opportunity to advance in the appropriate direction even further. These conclusions were extremely important and did not raise any doubts about their logical reliability.

And now, finally, it was time to summarize the results of such a thorough investigation. All participants of the completed work came to the unanimous conclusion that the only remaining suspect on the list was Aleksey I. Kulak². However, they did not rush with the final decision of the issue. Then Kulak, unexpectedly for many, was transferred to the Active Reserve, and the leadership of the KGB authorized conducting his secret verification as an American spy. However, a thorough check, to the great surprise of the hunters, did not bring any results. Kulak led a closed way of life, did not throw around money and showed no interest in classified materials. If he worked for American intelligence, it was then but not now. There was quite enough indirect evidence, but not any serious evidence from which the investigators and the participants in the subsequent trial could begin their work. While painfully reflecting on what to do in this situation, Aleksey Kulak suddenly died. Perhaps, for him it was the best option.

They buried him with all military officer's honors and an arms salute, but soon a stand dedicated to him was dismantled in the FCD Museum. In the past, they led generations of young intelligence officers to the portrait of the front-line soldier and Hero of the Soviet Union, one of the most respected foreign intelligence officers who was used as an example and called an exemplary model of courage and loyalty to his duty.

All his awards, along with the "Gold Star" Hero of the Soviet Union were withdrawn from the museum and returned to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.

² Just as in the case of Ogorodnik

In the late eighties, the then head of the FCD, L. V. Shebarshin, speaking to intelligence officers, for the first time publicly admitted the fact of betrayal, although Kulak had long been dead.

If you strictly adhere to the legal point of view, the use of the terms "traitor" or "CIA agent" in relation to Aleksey Kulak is not entirely legal, to put it mildly, by law this is permissible only after the court passes a relevant decision. However, intelligence itself, without regard for formalities, has pronounced a verdict on the former hero, and furthermore it is severe and nobody dared to appeal it!

But there was an amazing thing: almost everyone who knew him from joint study and work spoke of him with undisguised sympathy, even knowing about the "verdict" pronounced on him. The former party office secretary of our class, who at that time used Gagarin as a school alias, could not until the very end believe that this could happen to a man whom he seemed to know well and was confident in him in all respects. Perhaps, the cause of sympathy for him was the attributes of a purely external character: clearly manifested independence of views, behavior, and statements about high-ranking superiors. Or perhaps this attitude toward him was explained by the fact that even though he had a complex and even harsh character, he nevertheless never harmed the people around him, his comrades?

The clear majority of those who knew him right off the bat reject the theory that at the heart of his betrayal lay some political or material considerations. It cannot be ruled out that the Americans, after a thorough study, caught him in his ambition. Hero of the Soviet Union, a promising scientist, addicted always and everywhere to be first, and suddenly it turned out that despite his best efforts it was not possible to achieve the desired results. You cannot reaffirm what has long been a habit: you just want it - and success is assured! The dish with a blue border, as Ostap Bender said, was not there. The resulting deadlock situation pushed to find a way out of the situation that had been created. The one with whom he came into contact took on the role of a valuable informer who supplied him with supposedly extremely important information. Kulak was drawn into this game deeper and deeper. In the eyes of the leadership of the Rezidentura and the Center, as it should be, logically, he became a successful intelligence officer. How could it be otherwise?

At that time, he still had the full opportunity to report to the Rezident about the setup and, resorting to the help of others, somehow get out of the situation. Of course, there would be trouble, but it would not become public. It would have been necessary, perhaps, to interrupt his tour and return to Moscow, and after "serving his term" to leave again to a different country. But he preferred that the noose around his neck tighten more and more tightly. And in the end the moment came when the situation became irreversible. And then there are high government awards, a booth in the museum of the FCD dedicated to him, glory. The way back was gone!

If we return again to the very beginning of this whole story of an alias, it should be noted that he himself pointed out that its possessor in no way reflects people of ordinary, pedestrian thinking, which would be enough for such names as Lavrov, Sidorov or, finally, Hamlet. Such gray prose could not suit Aleksey Kulak with his inherent features of character. He, as an extraordinary person, needed something special, not like this ordinary life. And he drew attention to the image from the Russian folk tale, so popular during our childhood, *Fedorino Gore (Fedora's Grief)*. Namely on Fedora with her, speaking in a modern way, problems and difficulties: after all, he had grief - the grief of a man who was in a trapped situation. He drove himself into a corner, as mentioned above, not for some political reasons or because of material considerations. The whole blame was slighted selfishness and several other factors, conditioned mainly by the peculiarities of his character.

Now you already know the story of this man, to which I have nothing to add.

