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The Adventures of Martha Peterson in the USSR. A Spy caught red-handed

45 years ago, on July 15, 1977, while performing a dead drop on the Krasnoluzhsky Bridge in Moscow, American intelligence officer Martha Peterson was detained red-handed.

The operation was not without surprises. The spy put up fierce resistance, in addition, **he** turned out to be a **woman**, which the Soviet special services did not expect. The container was intended for a CIA agent, Soviet diplomat Alexandr Ogorodnik, arrested on June 21, 1977.

The Moscow spy story of the mid-1970s turned out to be action-packed. She became widely known thanks to the novel by Julian Semenov "TASS is Authorized to Announce..." and a multi-part feature film based on it.

First, it involves the Soviet diplomat Alexandr Ogorodnik, recruited by the CIA in Colombia under the threat of publishing incriminating photographs about his intimate relationship. Love rendezvous were recorded on film and shown to Ogorodnik during a recruitment pitch. For fear of ruining his career, he agreed to cooperate and became an agent for *Trianon*. A good plot for the future of the film series.

After returning to Moscow, for two and a half years Ogorodnik was an mole for the CIA station. But no matter how far the rope twists, the end will come. A covert search was conducted in Ogorodnik's apartment, during which containers with among other items photographic films, instructions and a radio were found. On the evening of June 21, 1977, the spy was arrested at the entrance to his own apartment in the House No. 2/1 on Krasnopresnenskaya Embankment. There, when testifying, he became ill. An ambulance was called, but it was not possible to save him. There are two versions about the causes of death: a heart attack or taking poison hidden in a fountain pen. Another bright episode for the script.

A vice-consul of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, Martha Peterson, flew in to work at the station in 1975, after studying at Langley and learning Russian. In terms of espionage activities, Peterson was the direct contact with Alexandr Ogorodnik, keeping in touch through dead drops (*zakladki*). After the arrest of Ogorodnik, the Soviet Chekists became aware of the date and place of placing the spy container on the Krasnoluzhsky Railway Bridge. It remained to wait for the agent.

To capture the spy red-handed, according to some reports, about 100 officers of Soviet special services [intelligence agencies] were involved. First of all, the movement of employees of the American Embassy was monitored. Some of the employees of the Soviet special services, reliably camouflaged, were waiting for the enemy agent near the already agreed-upon cache on the bridge across the Moskva River.

Finally, a good denouement for the script of the film was the detention of an agent - with a fight on the bridge. As soon as Martha Peterson approached the cache, special forces soldiers jumped out of hiding. The agent was delicately asked to go along with them. In response, the spy lightning-fast kicked one commando in the shin, the other fighter received a fist blow to the groin. A fight ensued that lasted about a minute. Martha successfully defended, struck and shouted using Russian curse words. Later it turned out that the 32-year-old "CIA lady (*TsRU-shnitsa*") had mastered martial arts techniques and had a green taekwondo belt.

Martha Peterson became the first female CIA agent in Moscow. She did not arouse suspicions among the Soviet special services since she had a reputation as a loose and drink-loving lady. As it turned out, such an image was developed for as cover for her espionage activities in Moscow. The agent was declared persona non grata and expelled from the USSR. At the same time, despite her exposure the tour in Moscow turned out to be happy for her. The episode with the fight on the bridge was widely replicated by the press, creating a heroic halo for her. In addition, in Moscow, Martha met Stephen Shogi, a diplomat and employee of the US State Department, whom she later married.

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