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Australia Filling In Pieces of Soviet Spy Picture

By Charles Meeking

A veteran Australian journalist, Mr. Meeking has contributed several articles to this newspaper.

CANBERRA—Slowly but relentlessly, the evidence given to the Royal Commission on Espionage in Australia is building up, in jig-saw fashion, the picture of Russian spying here since World War II and of MVD methods in general use in non-Communist countries. It is still incomplete, because the Commission will sit for another two or three months, but the broad outline is clear.

Pieces of the jig-saw already in place show how agents were recruited and informers were paid, the activities of Red Army officers, the spying by Tass journalists, the threatening visits to Russian immigrants settled in Australia.

The Commission's proceedings, although mostly open to the press, are not televised, photographed or broadcast.

Consequently, many Australians still seem rather unimpressed with the extent and significance of the disclosures. Australia has never had a political assassination, and so there was no stir even when it was stated that Russia had a directorate for training saboteurs for foreign duty—one of their tasks being to kill leaders of anti-Soviet organizations abroad.

Actual Leaks Are Few

BUT THE EVIDENCE is being assessed elsewhere. In Djakarta, capital of Indonesia, an Indonesian official recently told me, "We're watching closely Petrov's evidence on the activities of the Russian embassy people in Australia. Russia is about to establish an embassy here, and Communist China has one here already."

There has been little indication so far of much actual leakage of military or atomic secrets or confidential documents, but the system for getting them was in full operation, even if it proved inefficient in some aspects.

Evidence has been given mainly by the two former employes of the Russian Embassy who sought sanctuary here several months ago, and more has yet to be given.

Vladimir Petrov, unknown to his embassy colleagues, was a highly paid agent of the MVD, and his wife, Evdokia Alexeevna Petrova, was a trusted code

clerk. They have produced documents and have described the intricacies of the Russian espionage abroad.

Some of Petrov's information, not concerning Australia but described as "important and interesting . . . to the whole free world," will not be given to the Commission but has been sent elsewhere.

Petrov gave a detailed outline on MVD (formerly the NKVD) organization, especially the information committee, which was concerned chiefly with foreign political policies.

Functions of Agencies

THE MVD was organized into seven directorates, Petrov said. The first dealt with Anglo-American countries. Headed by a former counselor of the Russian Embassy in London, he continued, it "had not been working recently." The second and third dealt respectively with the European continent and the Middle and Far East.

The function of the fourth directorate was to arrange entry into foreign countries of trained agents, and the fifth collated information and controlled all MVD agents and secret organizations inside Russia.

Atomic research espionage, technical advances and new inventions, such as



VLADIMIR PETROV
... at Royal Commission hearing.

guided missiles, was the responsibility of the sixth directorate in MVD, while the seventh served to safeguard high government and Communist Party leaders in Russia.

Petrov was also the chief in Australia of the MGB (Russian Ministry of State Security), which he said was first consolidated in 1948. One of his tasks in this capacity had been to watch embassy employes and Russian immigrants in Australia.

The Russian head of the section concerned with emigrants, especially White Russian "traitors," had been a Colonel Gukasov, Petrov said, but as he had been a friend of Beria, "something may have happened to him since 1951."

The Soviet, he stated, planted agents among Russian emigrants to Australia and to other countries. This had helped in recruiting agents among those who had been anti-Communist but later changed their minds. One former Russian is still being questioned by the Commission on his alleged activities after he had been contacted by Petrov.

Newsmen Implicated

PETROV TESTIFIED that Tass news agency men were ordered to represent themselves as "ordinary journalists," to mix with journalists in Canberra and elsewhere (the parliamentary press gallery has been mentioned frequently during the hearings), and to glean information that might be of use to the Soviet Union.

The Commission's chairman, Mr. Justice Owen, asked Petrov whether it was the usual practice for Tass men in foreign countries to be MVD officers. Petrov replied, "Yes. If a Tass man is not a cadre worker, he is invariably called in to do that type of work." He said Tass men "in every country" were members of the MVD.

It was disclosed that the last Tass reporter in Australia (who left with the embassy staff) had received and obeyed specific instructions in 1952.

The instructions received by Petrov were: "Advise Antonov (the Tass man) to continue to extend his contacts in the first place among political correspondents and among Members of Parliament, ignoring any embarrassment through technical difficulties in the spoken language."

Another letter from Moscow men-

tioned the names of many correspondents in the press gallery, adding that some of the information, said to have been provided by Fergan O'Sullivan, suggested that two of them were connected with Australian counterintelligence.

O'Sullivan until recently was press secretary to the opposition leader, Dr. H. V. Evatt. He has admitted that, while he was a press gallery reporter in 1951, he wrote for a member of the Russian Embassy staff a document purporting to describe the beliefs, interests and behavior of his colleagues. Naturally, Moscow found O'Sullivan in his post with Dr. Evatt a person worth cultivating.

In Case of War

THERE also has been considerable evidence on the work of GRU (Russian military intelligence). There were two GRU men in the Russian Embassy in Canberra while Petrov was there, but they had their own private code, to which he hadn't the key. Under close questioning, Petrov said the men had an easy time. He did not know if they were experts on guided missiles, or if they had even visited South Australia (where the Woomera rocket range is situated).

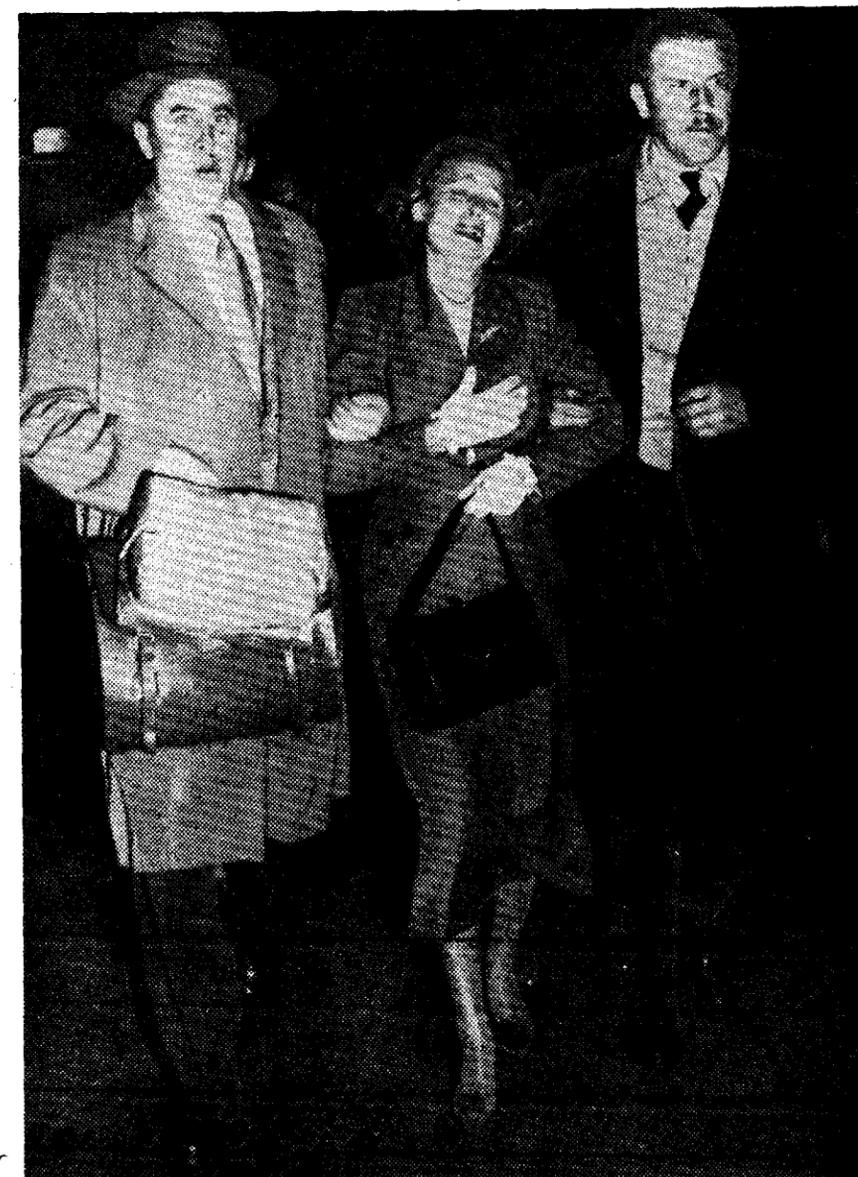
Petrov said that, under his own guidance, the Second Secretary of the embassy, F. V. Kislitsin, had planned "an illegal apparatus to operate in time of war." Continual instructions were received from Moscow by letter and cable.

A Moscow letter in 1952 referred to "an inevitable war in the near future." The full instructions outlined general procedures in recruiting and dealing with agents. It said in part:

"In the event of extraordinary circumstances, each agent should have concrete tasks allotted in advance . . . However, the cadre workers of the MVD section should carry out this work gradually, and in such a manner that, when these or other questions are discussed with agents, no panic should spread among them, and so that they should not interpret our preparations as a sign of inevitable war in the near future."

Evatt's Future at Stake

MOSCOW CONTINUED to instruct up to the last. After Petrov had sought asylum, and while his wife was still in the Russian Embassy's custody, she was told how to reply to a letter



Tearful Mrs. Vladimir Petrov, minus one shoe, was dragged by Russian guards to plane for Moscow in Sydney. Australian officials rescued her a few minutes later.

from him. The Ambassador told her she was to reply: "I cannot meet you because I am afraid of falling into a trap."

Dr. Evatt's personal intervention in the inquiry has made the whole matter a still larger lump of political dynamite. Three members of his own staff were mentioned in the documents, and his appearance before the Commission must have a major impact on his own future as leader of the Labor Party and of the opposition in Parliament.

It may consolidate his position, weakened in his Labor Party and in public esteem by the recent electoral defeat on the plea that "he stuck to his men." But it is more likely to strengthen Liberal Party claims that, although Dr. Evatt himself is not a Communist, his association with Communist causes has been extensive and frequent.

The Labor Party may not be able to afford another attack on this exposure flank, and it may take action against Dr. Evatt accordingly.