

# Russia: Death and Resurrection of the KGB

J. MICHAEL WALLER

*We represent in ourselves organized terror—this must be said very clearly.*

—FELIKS DZERZHINSKY, FOUNDER OF THE CHEKA

**T**he roots of all of the most efficient political police systems in modern history can be traced to December 20, 1917. On that day, the new Bolshevik regime in Russia created a political police system so ruthless, skillful, and comprehensive that it became the standard for totalitarian movements around the world. The system was so effective that even the Soviets' fellow totalitarian arch-enemies carefully studied it, emulated it, and refined it to help them seize power, consolidate their control once in power, and ultimately remain in power. By whatever name—Cheka, NKVD, KGB, or the dozen other acronyms used over the years—the Soviet and Russian secret police are the most infamous and enduring of any political enforcement system ever devised. They became the matrix for communist regimes from Poland to Mongolia, Ethiopia to Cuba; for pro-Soviet revolutionary governments in Africa and Nicaragua; for non-communist, one-party states in Libya, Syria, and Iraq; and for the anti-Communist government of the Republic of China, as well as the antithetical People's Republic of China.

All of this would be history, except that despite remarkable economic and political reforms, post-Soviet Russia has preserved and rehabilitated—not repudiated—the entire legacy of the Bolshevik secret police. There was little serious attempt and no strategy to expose excesses and crimes or to prevent such a system from emerging again. The KGB survived as a continuum with the Soviet past. By the 2000 presidential election, being an unrepentant career KGB officer had become a political asset instead of a liability. At present, the former KGB is fully

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institutionalized throughout the Russian government, different from before in style and structure, but in greater control of the instruments of state power than even the Soviets allowed. For an appreciation of the nature of the security apparatus in today's Russia, one first must review what the Cheka was, what it did, what it stood for, and what it begat.

### **Rise of the Cheka**

One of the first Bolshevik acts after seizing power in the communist coup d'état of November 1917 was the creation of a centralized machine to destroy all opposition. The Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counterrevolution, known by its initials VChK or "Cheka," was endowed with the following responsibilities in its founding decree of December 20, 1917:

To persecute and liquidate all attempts and acts of counterrevolution and sabotage all over Russia, no matter what their origin.

To hand over to the Revolutionary Tribunal all counterrevolutionaries and saboteurs and work out measures of struggle against them.

The Commission is to make preliminary investigations only in so far as that may be necessary for suppression. . . . The Commission is to watch the press, sabotage, etc., of the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, saboteurs, and strikers. Sanctions—confiscation, confinement, deprivation of food cards, publications of lists of enemies of the people, etc.<sup>1</sup>

The Cheka began with a rather modest goal: to suppress "former exploiters [who would number] fifty to a hundred financial magnates and bigwigs," and would quickly expand to "several hundred, at most several thousand, in the whole of Russia."<sup>2</sup> The earliest summary executions were of criminal elements outside the Cheka's own ranks. However, the state-sponsored killing quickly spread to include political and military opponents of the Bolshevik party, as well as entirely nonpolitical civilians apprehended while attempting to make a living by engaging in barter or market activity of ordinary goods. By February 1918, the Cheka had publicly instructed local revolutionary councils to hunt down all opposition, both armed and civilian, and kill them on the spot:

Seek out, arrest, and shoot immediately all members . . . connected in one form or another with counterrevolutionary organizations . . . (1) enemy agents and spies, (2) counterrevolutionary agitators, (3) speculators, (4) organizers of revolt . . . against the Soviet government, (5) those going to the Don to join the . . . Kaledin-Kornilov band and the Polish counterrevolutionary legions, (6) buyers and sellers of arms to equip the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie . . . all these are to be shot on the spot . . . when caught red-handed in the act.<sup>3</sup>

The Cheka murdered citizens for the "crimes" of ordinary market activity (termed "speculation"), disrespect toward the Communist government, unauthorized public assembly, and violation of curfew. It operated with total impunity. As the head of the local Kangur, Cheka declared to the Urals Communist Party Central Committee, "We do not need to have proof, examination, suspicions, in order to shoot anybody. We find it necessary to our purpose to execute the person in question,

and we shoot him. That is all!”<sup>4</sup> The Cheka chief in Orel similarly bragged, “I am responsible to no one; my powers are such that I can shoot anybody.”<sup>5</sup> Such expressions were entirely in the context of the Bolsheviks’ power consolidation campaign. Popular opposition to the imposition of Communist rule ran deep and wide across Russian society. The Cheka carried out mass executions as a political tool to retaliate against attacks on party officials. Lenin and the Party leadership immediately directed the Cheka against entire “class enemies” and population categories—clergy and religious, ethnic groups, farmers (particularly the *kulaks*), and socialist rivals—killing more people in months than the tsars had in decades.<sup>6</sup> Hostages and completely innocent people were shot as “class representatives.”<sup>7</sup> Lenin employed Cheka troops to feed his urban power base by confiscating grain and farm produce from the peasants. He developed an empire-wide system of secret informants to report the slightest dissent. The Bolsheviks called their three-year campaign the “Red Terror,”<sup>8</sup> with Cheka leaders freely using words like “extermination” and “liquidation” to describe their mission. According to one top Cheka official:

We are no longer waging a war against separate individuals, we are exterminating the bourgeoisie as a class. Do not seek the dossier of the accused for proofs as to whether or not he opposed the Soviet government by word or deed. The first question that should be put is to what class he belongs, of what extraction, what education and profession. These questions should decide the fate of the accused. Herein lie the meaning and the essence of the Red Terror.<sup>9</sup>

Ostensibly an instrument of the state, the Cheka was an organ of the Communist Party. Its crest, a sword and shield, proclaimed its function as “the sword and shield of the party.” The very essence of the new Soviet government lay in the Cheka; in Lenin’s words, “Every good Communist is at the same time a good Chekist.”<sup>10</sup> Less than a year after the 1917 revolution, the Party-controlled *Pravda* declared with approval, “Henceforward let the watchword ‘All Power to the Soviets’ be replaced by the cry, ‘All Power to the Cheka!’”<sup>11</sup> So much for the Soviet fiction that the secret police was a Stalinist mutation.

“Under the leadership of an obsessive fanatic, Felix Dzerzhinsky, the Cheka swiftly gained a reputation for savagery that eclipsed anything known in Europe since the French Revolution,” wrote Nikolai Tolstoy.<sup>12</sup> Dzerzhinsky scorned those who called for legal procedures and checks and balances, and made ghoulish reference to the practice of forcing confessions as a means of extracting an admission of guilt. Small wonder he recruited hardened criminals along with the political fanatics that he had met as an inmate in tsarist prisons. Society and the press, he said,

think of the struggle with counter-revolution and speculation on the level of normal state existence and for that reason they scream of courts, of guarantees, of inquiry, of investigation, etc. . . . We represent in ourselves organized terror—this must be said very clearly. . . . Of course, we may make mistakes, but up till now there have been no mistakes. This is proved by the minutes of our meetings. In almost all cases the criminals, when pressed against the wall by evidence, admit their crimes. And what argument would have more weight than the confession of the accused himself.<sup>13</sup>

Even under Lenin, the extermination campaigns were of such a scope that the Communists experimented with the most effective means of killing large numbers of people and disposing of the bodies as quickly as possible.<sup>14</sup> To control and incarcerate the sheer volume of people on its enemies list, the regime concentrated them in camps—the first concentration camps in European history. Before being converted to industrial production, Soviet forced-labor camps, established on Lenin's orders in January 1918, were intended as extermination camps.<sup>15</sup> By execution, incarceration, and starvation, Lenin's regime killed hundreds of thousands or more.<sup>16</sup> It built a granite foundation for a madman like Stalin. Tolstoy commented:

Right up to the end of his career Lenin continued to advocate the maximum use of terror against all who were, or might be, opposed to his ideas. In 1922, as a new criminal code was being formulated, he urged that "the paragraph on terror must be formulated as widely as possible, since only revolutionary consciousness of justice can determine the conditions of its application." The ailing dictator continued to the last to display close interest in all activities of the secret police, being a frequent visitor at their Lubyanka headquarters. It was he who bestowed terroristic powers on the Cheka, continually extended its authority and scope, and urged it on to even harsher measures. It was this weapon, "the Sword of the Revolution," which Stalin inherited, enabling him first to gain control of the Party, and then cement his grip on Russia.<sup>17</sup>

Stalin was not the only tyrant to build upon the Cheka. So thorough was Dzerzhinsky's system that the leaders of Germany's Third Reich studied it and transferred it to suit their ends. In his postwar study of the Gestapo, historian Edward Crankshaw noted:

For the purposes of general supervision and repression the Gestapo modeled itself closely on the Soviet secret police. [SS chief Heinrich] Himmler had at its command an extremely able police officer, Heinrich Mueller . . . a close and devoted student of Soviet methods. Mueller was impressed by the efficiency of the internal spy system which had been perfected by the Soviet government, the effect of which, ideally, was to isolate the individual by making it impossible for anybody to trust anybody else. He set to work to reproduce this system in Germany by more economical means.<sup>18</sup>

Mueller thoroughly copied Dzerzhinsky's model, building up a cell system of ordinary citizens to serve as informants, recruiting in every apartment block a *Blockwart* who reported on every tenant, and infiltrating every labor group and social organization with Gestapo agents. Crankshaw continued:

And, on top of this, voluntary informers were encouraged by every possible means. As the Russians had discovered, there is nothing like the voluntary informer for creating a general atmosphere of unease and apprehension: he operates by personal spite, or by the desire to ingratiate himself with the authorities; he costs nothing; his information is usually valueless in any specific sense; but since every human being at some time commits some indiscretion, he enables the secret police to swoop where it is least expected (and often least needed) and give the desired impression of possessing an all-seeing eye.<sup>19</sup>

Not even the Nazis wanted to be likened to the Cheka. Hermann Goering, as the Nazi leader in Prussia, created a local political terror squad he first called *Geheime Polizei Amt* (Secret Police Agency) but had second thoughts after being

reminded that the initials, GPA, were similar to the Cheka's new name, GPU. The ultimate name the Nazis settled upon for Goering's force was *Geheime Staats Polizei* (Secret State Police), more infamously known by the contraction coined by a Berlin postal clerk: Gestapo.<sup>20</sup>

The Nazis likewise studied, copied, and perfected the Cheka's mass killing inventions, including the gas van, into which people were herded and killed by carbon monoxide, and the death camp, so they might exterminate populations more efficiently.

With the collapse of the Nazi regime, the Allies lost no time in imposing a thorough de-Nazification campaign that demolished not only the remaining structures of the Third Reich but

also uprooted its very tentacles in society and ensured that the Nazis would never rise again. Arrests, trials, imprisonment, a few executions, and large-scale banishment from public life followed. By late 1945, all Nazi political machinery was obliterated. The victorious Allies preserved documents, photographs, and film to

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expose Nazi crimes against humanity. As Stalin's regime stood alongside the democracies to judge the late Hitler regime, it replaced the SS and Gestapo in the Soviet-occupied eastern sector of Germany with the secret police machinery of Dzerzhinsky. That organization, as John O. Koehler discusses in an accompanying article, became known as the Stasi.

### **The KGB and the Post-Soviet Transition**

Fast-forward to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991: Western countries were still hunting down the lowest-ranking former Nazi death camp guards from half a century before, and former East Germany was trying to purge itself of its Soviet legacy through an ambitious de-Stasification effort. In the USSR, however, glasnost and perestroika, for all their contributions to opening Soviet society, deliberately preserved and arguably expanded the structure and power of the KGB.<sup>21</sup> Popular revulsion against corrupt Communist rule, even under Mikhail Gorbachev's "openness" policies, was poised to deal a death blow to the KGB, which had preserved the Dzerzhinsky cult of personality and revered the Cheka founder as the exemplar of selflessness, honesty, and patriotism, deifying him in the cult-like fraternity of the Chekists. So total was the KGB's devotion to Dzerzhinsky that his iconography proliferated in the form of official sculptures, anniversaries, quotations, poetry—even the annual celebration of the Cheka chief's birthday, September 11.<sup>22</sup>

Uprooting the Chekists was never a priority in post-Soviet Russia. There would be no equivalent of de-Stasification there. The West never considered it

important and never insisted on it as part of its multibillion-dollar promotion of economic, political, and legal reforms, whose very success depended on the repudiation of a secret police.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the government of Boris Yeltsin preserved Chekist structures and co-opted them, relying on them instead of a political party as a core component of Yeltsin's personal political machine, an anchor for the new oligarchy of rulers.<sup>24</sup> It also preserved the Chekist symbolism, keeping the sword-and-shield crest of the renamed components of the KGB, as well as of the MVD and the state prosecutor's office. The Russian tricolor replaced the Party's hammer-and-sickle, but Dzerzhinsky's coat of arms remained.

### **Public Pressure to Destroy the KGB**

Until Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev created a standing parliament in 1989, talk of changing or challenging the KGB was restricted to the underground dissident and human rights community, much of which had been incarcerated in Gulag prison camps or internal exile, or otherwise subjected to direct repression. With the creation of a new USSR Supreme Soviet, in which non-Communists could compete and even win parliamentary elections, democratic activists and leaders had a practically uncensored public forum from which to air their views for the first time. From that point, despite the Supreme Soviet's limited powers and attempts to harass and hobble critics, the KGB was no longer off-limits to criticism and demands for accountability.

The Chekists now became the subjects of public scrutiny. They could no longer simply stonewall and deny. Now they had to appear accommodating. They agreed to certain checks and balances, although Gorbachev and the Soviet leadership ensured that those "balances" were controlled by Party loyalists. Oversight structures emerged in theory but were stacked with lawmakers and bureaucrats from within the KGB, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), and military services. The Chekists also ran their own officers for local, regional, and federal legislative seats. On the federal level, those officers comprised the bulk of the oversight committees. The organs also provided privileged information to candidates to help them get elected.<sup>25</sup>

Election to the parliament by figures such as dissident physicist Andrei Sakharov, long a victim of party persecution meted out by the KGB, provided a constant reminder that the Chekists were a fixture of Russia's sad past—that they had no future in a Russia to be cleansed of seven decades of Communist ideology and all the personal tragedy, betrayal, and moral decay that that ideology had wrought. Sakharov and others like him, though a small minority, personified Russia's national awakening and its stirring conscience. A generation of young, aggressive journalists in the newly freed press, some of them children of KGB officers, joined them.

Along with other opponents of the Soviet central government, they utilized the newly instituted phenomenon of nationally televised parliamentary sessions to launch unprecedented public attacks on the Chekists. The debates in the Congress of People's Deputies were so new and such a curiosity that the entire country virtually stopped to watch the proceedings on television. The recently ousted Politburo member from Sverdlovsk (Yekaterinburg) and Moscow Communist Party

chief, Boris Yeltsin, was among the first to join the attack. In a dramatic floor speech, the renegade Communist Party leader hammered at the pillars of the Gorbachev regime that had precipitated his ouster, attacking the legitimacy of the Congress itself as an “apparatus or semi-apparatus of the Communist Party” and decrying the lack of accountability over a recent massacre of demonstrators in the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>26</sup> After Yeltsin, former Olympic champion weightlifter Yuri P. Vlasov took to the floor. Vlasov’s political activism had emerged when he could freely denounce the Soviet sports establishment for permitting the use of illegal drugs such as steroids and amphetamines to help Soviet athletes cheat in international competitions. “No one arranged my speech,” he said, as if exculpating his colleagues from what he was about to say. Vlasov then issued demands for government accountability, entering an appeal from constituents into the record to locate victims of past state terror and establish memorials for them—his father had disappeared at the hands of the Chekists in 1953—and calling on the KGB to make its archives public. His next demand electrified the millions of Soviet citizens watching: “In order to limit the will of the apparatus, it is necessary to place the powerful foundations of its viability under the people’s control.” He singled out the KGB, declaring, “Even in our day the threat to democracy cannot be considered mythical.” Vlasov continued: “When the first steps are being taken on the path of democratization and at the same time there is a call to crush it, a force such as the KGB takes on a special meaning. . . . The democratic renewal of the country has not changed the place of the KGB in the political system. This committee exercises all-encompassing control over society and over ministries, it is clearly placed above the state, being subordinate only to a narrow group in the apparatus.” He also stated that the KGB chairman’s appointment must be confirmed by the people through their elected representatives. Lawmakers “should know the size of this organization and demand an accounting for all violations of legality, and they should know what its budget is.”<sup>27</sup>

Vlasov’s words were shockingly radical for the time. Hundreds of deputies rose to their feet in thunderous applause, while KGB Chairman Kryuchkov sat silently in the hall.<sup>28</sup> Vlasov continued his attack, denouncing the “annihilation or persecution of millions of people” carried out by the Chekists. The KGB, he said, “sowed grief, lamentation and torture on our soil. In the bowels of this building, people were tortured—people who were, as a rule, at best, the pride and flower of our peoples. . . . The KGB is not a service but a real underground empire that still has not yielded its secrets, except for the graves that have been discovered.” For the first time in Soviet history, a Soviet citizen and public hero openly challenged KGB power before the country from inside the Kremlin walls.

During the following weeks and months, the KGB responded adroitly to the assault, strongly lobbying for laws that would bring it under civil control. Chairman Kryuchkov, in a self-congratulatory speech about the “selfless and difficult struggle” of the Chekists, voluntarily put himself up for confirmation before the deputies.<sup>29</sup> When deputies, including Yeltsin, openly challenged Kryuchkov from the floor, Gorbachev tried to shut down the proceedings, but the lawmakers resisted him. Yeltsin called for a “radical restructuring” of the KGB, demanding that

it release the details of past repression and calling for the KGB to be split into separate services.<sup>30</sup> This also was an outrageous proposal for the time. But the democratic politicians seemed uncertain about their newly found freedoms. Despite the applause, only six people of the 542-member body could bring themselves to vote against Kryuchkov, and twenty-six, including Yeltsin, abstained.<sup>31</sup> Highly publicized but deliberately ineffective, “oversight” mechanisms were developed over the next year by the Supreme Soviet, as the KGB conducted a public relations campaign about the beauty of being under civilian control. The USSR Supreme Soviet never became a meaningful check against executive power and, within that body, figures loyal to the KGB status quo dominated the relevant committees.<sup>32</sup> The putsch of August 1991 underscored the total failure to keep the KGB in check.

### **Dismantled Not by Enemies of the System, but by an Insider**

The failure of the putsch galvanized public opinion against the KGB. For the first time in their history, the Chekists found themselves truly on the defensive: disorganized, leaderless, virtually friendless, and fearful. Although demonstrators succeeded in toppling the statue of Dzerzhinsky from its black pedestal in front of KGB headquarters in Moscow (more correctly, the demonstrators tried to topple the statue with ropes until a Moscow city official ordered a crane to remove it before the bronze giant crushed the mobs in the square), tore down a bronze plaque honoring the late KGB chairman and Soviet leader Yuri Andropov, and a few other symbolic gestures, it was a Communist Party insider who actually found himself in a position to break the KGB apart.

Vadim Bakatin, a career party *apparatchik* from Siberia whom Gorbachev tapped because of his good reputation as an honest and effective administrator, had been Interior Minister in charge of the Soviet national police. Several atrocities, including the Georgia massacre, occurred on his watch, but he frequently clashed with the KGB chairman, Vladimir Kryuchkov, over the KGB’s paranoid view of the democratic opposition and of the West. Gorbachev ultimately sided with Kryuchkov and fired Bakatin as minister, although he retained Bakatin on his Presidential Council. Bakatin and foreign policy *apparatchik* Yevgeny Primakov were the only two close Presidential Council members not to betray Gorbachev during the August 1991 putsch. Following the putsch, Gorbachev fired Kryuchkov from the KGB and named an interim Chekist chief. A day later the Soviet leader, in consultation with Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin and the presidents of the seven remaining Soviet republics, appointed Bakatin.

Gorbachev summoned Bakatin to the Walnut Room of the Kremlin on the afternoon of August 23, 1991. Bakatin recalls:

I entered the room and Gorbachev was seated at the end of a table, with Yeltsin to his right. To Gorbachev’s left was an empty chair. The other seats were occupied by the presidents of the other republics. Gorbachev motioned to me to sit next to him in the empty chair and as I did so, he said, “We want you to be Chairman of the KGB.” I said that I should not, and that [Yuri] Ryzhov should be. Some of the presidents said they didn’t trust Ryzhov. I said that I had always said the KGB



should be liquidated. Yeltsin then stood up and said, "That is what you will do when you become Chairman." Yeltsin told Gorbachev, "Write that on the decree." I looked around the room and all the other presidents nodded in agreement. That was that.<sup>33</sup>

This time it was Gorbachev's turn to be surprised. As Bakatin recalls, the Soviet leader was reluctant to empower him to break apart the KGB and relented only under bullying from Yeltsin: "Gorbachev had the decree in front of him naming me as KGB chairman. He took out his pen and wrote on the decree, 'Assign Comrade Bakatin to prepare a proposal for the reform of the state security organization.'" To the left he printed "NDP" in block letters, indicating that the addendum was not to be published with the text of the decree. The Soviet leader's almost illegible scrawl shows the pressure he was under, as well as his own indecision at that historic moment.<sup>34</sup>

Nobody in the Kremlin was thinking things through; tempers ran high following the crushing of the coup and the wresting of the KGB leadership from the putschists. Everything, including his own appointment, was what Bakatin called a series of "impulsive" acts during those euphoric days. Had there not been such emotion at the highest levels, it is unlikely anyone would have been empowered to break apart the KGB and uproot its secret police apparatus. Yet nobody knew exactly what to do. Nobody had a plan for how to deal with the KGB. Nobody had an idea of what steps to take or how far to go. So, without a vision or a game plan, Russian leaders could not seize that fleeting opportunity (when they briefly had a mind to do so) to exorcise the Chekist demon from the national political psyche. Bakatin, reeling from the events of the previous few days and ambushed by his sudden appointment as KGB chief, was flying blind. "If I'd had an off-the-shelf blueprint to guide me in dismantling the KGB and uprooting its networks, I could have done much more," Bakatin later recalled.<sup>35</sup> He had never imagined being empowered to destroy the KGB, and when he took over as chairman in the days after the putsch, he was stunned by the opportunities before him. He had no time to think or plan; apart from a hastily assembled group of advisers, he did not even come into the KGB with his own team.<sup>36</sup>

Yeltsin masterfully exploited the moment to wrest political control of the central government from Gorbachev, effectively finishing off the Soviet Union by humiliating the Soviet leader and the Communist Party. Back in Moscow from his brief captivity in Foros, Gorbachev had lost his power for good, and he seemed to realize it. A sharp power shift had occurred. No longer was the Kremlin, with its presidential offices and the USSR Supreme Soviet, the locus of power. Across the city, the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet was the new center of all activity. Hat in hand, Gorbachev presented himself at Yeltsin's parliament building where, before an extraordinary session of deputies, he allowed the upstart Russian leader to finish him off politically. Yeltsin manipulated Gorbachev into doing in his own comrades. During Gorbachev's ninety-minute speech to Russian lawmakers, Yeltsin cheerfully and repeatedly interrupted, walking up to the dais and forcing a stunned Gorbachev to read aloud embarrassing secret party documents and meekly sign decrees that undermined his own power, including a decree to

abolish Gorbachev's Communist Party of the Soviet Union. As he did when he stood on the tank to challenge the putschists, Yeltsin brilliantly and ruthlessly seized the moment and the power that went with it.

But the changes would not go far. They were not a revolutionary break, but merely reforms of an institution that was inherently unreformable. All the decisionmakers were products of the political system that had had the KGB as its eyes, ears, and backbone; all had been compromised in one way or another. The KGB, in their view, was "normal." Not a whisper of encouragement could be heard from abroad to do what the Czechs and East Germans had done and were still trying to do. Alone and inundated with advice, Bakatin proceeded slowly, fir-

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ing a single senior officer, but dithering a week until he could survey the landscape. He identified more senior officers to be cashiered, choosing reliable replacements, usually subordinates of those dismissed, and passing on his decisions as decrees for Gorbachev's signature. The first wave of firings took place after seven days; the second occurred two weeks

later. Bakatin pledged hundreds, even thousands, of firings over a period of months<sup>37</sup> but never followed through. That methodical but slow means of dealing with personnel—and the paradoxical vacation that most of Yeltsin's euphoric political reform team took after winning their August revolution—allowed the more retrograde elements to assert themselves within a very fearful, disorganized, and demoralized KGB.

Bakatin, Gorbachev, and Yeltsin saw how the Czechs and East Germans destroyed and uprooted the former Communist state security systems in their countries and they deliberately decided not to follow that trail. Indeed, the KGB had watched the fate of its junior Czech and East German surrogates and had planned accordingly. Bakatin favored a much more gradualist, internal approach than the Czechs and East Germans had implemented,<sup>38</sup> although he moved more quickly than the Yeltsin camp wanted. Bakatin's actions were informed by the sincere belief that the Chekists could be reformed from within; after becoming KGB chairman, he had addressed an assembly of Chekist officers to try to win them over, promising no "witch hunt" and pledging that most officers could rest knowing their jobs would be secure.<sup>39</sup> All but one of the handful of new KGB leaders were career KGB men, products of the apparat, with no democratic credentials whatsoever.<sup>40</sup> With the benefit of hindsight, Bakatin would later say that his attempt to win over the Chekists was a "naive address and vain hopes."<sup>41</sup> His magnanimous decision to find supporters within the KGB bureaucracy instead of leaning on tried-and-true outsiders, in his words, was "one of my main errors . . . that I regret."<sup>42</sup>

Bakatin cobbled together a three-point program: (1) “disintegration” or vertical dismemberment of the KGB to break its monopoly of power by splitting it into separate organizations along functional lines—foreign intelligence, domestic counterintelligence and internal security, presidential security, electronic intelligence, and border guards; (2) “decentralization” to partition the KGB horizontally along geographic lines to decentralize the counterintelligence and internal security sections among the Soviet republics;<sup>43</sup> and (3) “de-ideologization,” what Bakatin called “repudiation of the ideology of Chekism.”<sup>44</sup>

An attempt at the reform of the cadres included purging particularly corrupt or antireform personnel, firing generals, and rapidly promoting younger officers for top positions. Bakatin tried to depoliticize the officers and make them conscious of the need to obey new laws, believing that they could be reformed: “All that will help now is sustained work to persuade each person individually.”<sup>45</sup> Officers who refused to reform would be forced out, he said. “The traditions of Chekism must be eradicated, must cease to exist as an ideology.”<sup>46</sup>

One of the only KGB units slated for total dissolution was the Fifth Chief Directorate, the actual political police apparatus that ran the secret informants, political dossiers, and dissident-hunting machinery. Much of the rest of the KGB had legitimate security, public safety, and intelligence functions necessary for any democratic state; even here, the Fifth Chief Directorate was reconstituted, mostly intact, as the tax police.<sup>47</sup> The problem was far more than the simple bureaucratic structures. It was the bureaucratic history of those structures and the deep-seated Chekist psychology and traditions, as Bakatin understood, inculcated among their personnel. Mere bureaucratic reshuffling failed to cleanse this mentality of impunity. When emotions soon settled, Russian leaders chose not to make their reforms as far-reaching as the post-putsch euphoria had encouraged them to do.

### What Was Happening Inside the Apparatus

Conditions inside the KGB were ripe for political leaders to take over and shut it down. Chekist morale had sagged. Fears of firings or punishment ran high. Uncertainty and anxiety paralyzed the services. Fearing a purge, officers pointed fingers at one another, accusing their intraservice rivals of having supported the putsch, not just at Moscow headquarters, but across the country and down to the smallest units.<sup>48</sup> A leader with a game plan could have finished off the Chekists for good in those brief few weeks. Bakatin, however, almost openly appealed for KGB officers to stop “laying information against each other.”<sup>49</sup> This so-called *kompromat* war made its way into the public as officers leaked reports and documents to the reform-minded press; some leaks were from officers who wanted to discredit not only Kryuchkov, but the cult of Chekism in general. Yet none called for an abolition of the machinery.

Bakatin was unimpressed by the caliber of ranking officers in the KGB. He found them burdened with a heavily bureaucratic mindset that prevented them from working quickly, especially in a time of change—another factor that could have been used to justify mass firings. Bakatin also witnessed high-level

cronyism and corruption, and how it had rotted its way through the ranks. Clannishness and suspicion resisted Bakatin's reform attempts. Yet he was not as isolated as he believed at the time. Many younger officers discontented with the leadership could have been tapped to move things from below, but Bakatin had no way of identifying them. As such, he had no means of protecting them. Emboldened younger officers who went forward with allegations of corruption or incompetence found themselves forced to leave the service.<sup>50</sup> Soon, as it grew clear that the danger of a purge had passed, the Chekists reasserted their power.

### **Dismantling for Preservation**

While the KGB was being dismembered, it was also being saved, much like a historic building in the way of progress is carefully dismantled for removal, relocation, and eventual reconstruction. Yeltsin and his team wanted to use the KGB machinery not only as the legitimate intelligence, counterintelligence, security, and border guard forces of the new Russian Federation, but also as a post-Soviet instrument of political power. Less than a week after the putsch failed, Yeltsin created the State Commission to Investigate the Activity of the Security Organs, headed by the chairman of the Russian parliamentary committee on defense and security, a former police commissar named Sergei Stepashin. The Stepashin commission's mandate empowered it to develop its own proposals to restructure the KGB independently of Bakatin and to draft a legislative base and regulatory backdrop for a KGB under the Russian Federation, and not Soviet, control. The few openly democratic members of the commission, such as investigative reporter Yevgenia Albats, found themselves quickly isolated and expelled.<sup>51</sup> (In Albats's case, her main nemesis was a Fifth Chief Directorate officer.) Dissolution of the KGB, however, was never a subject of consideration. The Stepashin commission ensured that, despite Bakatin's efforts, the KGB structures would survive the Soviet collapse and come to rest in the Yeltsin government's hands.<sup>52</sup> The main reforms accomplished by the commission would be to abolish the dissident-hunting unit, to reassign it to tax collection, as we have shown, and to ensure that the post-Soviet KGB would never again be able to pose a political threat to the Russian government. It did not, however, seek to guarantee that the organs would never again be used for political control or repression against the citizenry. Commission members complained that Bakatin was moving too quickly with his reforms. Bakatin soon found himself completely marginalized and retired from public life. Looking back in the third person, Bakatin stressed that his work to reform the KGB had made little impact:

Everyone keeps saying that Bakatin has torn down the KGB structure. For goodness' sake, this is not so. If you come to Kazakhstan, not a single hair has fallen from the head of any official in Kazakhstan. Or to Kyrgyzstan—I just got back from there, everything is still as it was there. The situation is the same in the Moscow department, and in the Kemerovo one. That is, all the capillaries at the bottom and the structures have remained the same.<sup>53</sup>

In a separate interview, he reflected on the changes—or lack thereof—in the Russian security services:

It must be plainly said here that success was not achieved. I do not believe that it was possible anyway to significantly reform anything in such a short time in the conditions that actually exist. . . . Nor do I think that the incipient Russian service, like the others, achieved great success in ideological restructuring equal to the building of a democratic state. This still has to be achieved. Thus I do not think that our special services have already become safe for our citizens. There are no laws, no control, no professional security services.<sup>54</sup>

In all, five separate government panels investigated the KGB's role in the 1991 putsch: the Stepashin commission, the USSR Supreme Soviet Commission for Investigation into Reasons and Circumstances of the Putsch, the Russian Supreme Soviet Commission to Investigate the Causes and Circumstances of the August Putsch, the Special Interdepartmental Commission to Investigate the Activities of State Security Officers During the Putsch, and a Russian State Prosecutor investigative unit. Only the Russian parliamentary commission, chaired by democratic lawmaker and human rights figure Lev Ponomarev, was independent of the KGB, and it was the only one to hold a public investigation. The Ponomarev commission, however, suffered from a lack of experienced investigative personnel and worked on a bare-bones budget. Even so, it brought forward more information than any other source about the involvement of the KGB in political repression and criminal activity. Its membership included democratic activists and former Soviet dissidents whose mission to uproot the KGB repressive apparatus was as fervent as Stepashin's mission to save it. Ultimately, however, the Ponomarev commission would stop short of attaining its goal. Just as it was on the verge of uncovering a money trail of billions of dollars in state funds stolen and laundered abroad with KGB complicity, foreign intelligence chief Yevgeny Primakov persuaded the Supreme Soviet chairman to shut down the investigation.<sup>55</sup> The proceedings, published in this journal in English, were not published in Russia when they might have made a difference.<sup>56</sup>

### New Order

President Boris Yeltsin's creation of the "new" state security services of the Russian Federation was heavy in symbolism that signaled the survival of the cult of Chekism. The new government's plan was to harness the power of the Chekists by placing them under the control of the rival (and socially inferior) Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), which ran the *militiya*, or standing police. But even the *militiya* continued to embrace Chekist iconography. Yeltsin's security chief waited until the annual birthday celebration of the Cheka on December 20, 1991, to create the "new" organizations. The president hurriedly signed a decree merging both the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs and the interim Soviet KGB successor organization with the Russian Federation MVD and Russian KGB successor into a huge Ministry of Security and Internal Affairs (MBVD). The decree, issued without warning, alarmed democrats who likened it to Stalin's merger of the OGPU, as the Cheka had been renamed, with the MVD in 1932, becoming the

notorious All-Union People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, or NKVD. The creation of the MBVD shows Yeltsin's haphazard decisionmaking style that allowed the security organs to reassert themselves—this time, the MVD *militsiya* versus the Chekists. Yeltsin's security chief simply handed him a sheaf of papers on the tarmac as the president boarded a plane to Rome. Raising a foot on the stairway to the plane, Yeltsin scribbled his signature on each of the decrees, without reading them, handed them back to his security chief, and boarded the plane.<sup>57</sup> Not even Yeltsin's closest political aides expected the decree. The date was December 19, 1991, but the decrees would not take effect until the anniversary the following day.<sup>58</sup>

Yeltsin's intent was to rein in the Chekists' power by placing them under the control of the MVD. Political opposition transcended all ideologies and parties, and after a near-unanimous parliamentary resolution and a Constitutional Court order, Yeltsin reluctantly rescinded the merger decree. This marked a historic point for the separation of powers, where a Kremlin chief yielded to parliament and a court. But it also set the stage for the Chekists essentially to run themselves without civilian interference. The overwhelming political opposition and the court order should not be interpreted as signals of widespread opposition to the Chekists themselves, for no one more than the Chekists resented and feared being placed under MVD control.

"The skeleton of the old secret services," noted investigative journalist-turned-lawmaker Yuri Shchekochikhin, "has remained inviolable." He said that the old services must be completely dissolved and that entirely new organizations must be created, staffed with carefully screened personnel.<sup>59</sup> That did not happen, however; despite new names and organizations, as Bakatin noted, "all the capillaries at the bottom and the structures have remained the same."<sup>60</sup> The new basic laws on intelligence, counterintelligence, and related issues by which the organs were to be governed were drafted by KGB officers and Chekist veterans themselves, vetted through the officer-dominated parliamentary committee on defense and security, and enacted with little contentious debate. Russian lawmakers and staff visited Washington, DC, for advice on drafting oversight legislation, and although most were sincerely interested in promoting the separation of powers and surprised by the extensive oversight mechanisms in the United States, few actually grasped the idea in practice.<sup>61</sup> With few exceptions the laws, as in the late Soviet period, they merely empowered the former KGB and other coercive organs at the expense of the citizen. The Chekists publicized the crimes of the Stalin era but protected themselves from public revelations even about their distant, Bolshevik-era past. Soviet secret activity and archives became protected under a thirty-year classification rule, subsequently extended to as many as seventy years. Restrictions on press freedoms became law.<sup>62</sup> The services milled out similar laws to build on the basic ones, each time granting more powers to the security organs. They include the Law on Federal Organs of State Security (very similar in content to the KGB-drafted USSR Law on State Security Organs), the Law on Operational Investigative Activity, and the Law on Security, on which the subsequent law and regulations are based.

With no political party of his own, Yeltsin relied on the reconstituted components of the KGB to keep him and the small group of oligarchs around him in power, but he performed a bureaucratic juggling act, lest they become too powerful on their own. First, he placed power in the hands of the MVD as it tried to dominate the Chekists. Then, following his October 1993 attack on the Supreme Soviet, he gave the Chekists more power, appointing more KGB veterans to sensitive posts throughout the government, especially within the presidential administration. He developed a heavy dependency on his presidential guard, led by longtime loyalist Aleksandr Korzhakov. When Korzhakov became too powerful, Yeltsin sacked him. He cashiered his economic team from the premiership. Enter the chekists.

Yeltsin placed the government in the hands of veteran foreign intelligence operative and former KGB espionage chief Yevgeny Primakov. He fired Primakov as prime minister in 1999 and replaced him with former MVD commissar and parliamentary security committee chief Sergei Stepashin, who prior to his appointment

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*“In addition to its legacy of mass violence and repression, the Cheka also helped create the roots of today’s ‘mafocracy’ in Russia . . .”*

as premier had headed the Chekist internal security organs and the ministry. Stepashin lasted barely twelve weeks as premier. Yeltsin fired him in August and replaced him with Vladimir Putin, a cold and wily KGB intelligence officer who, like Stepashin, also had headed the Chekist internal security organs. Putin soon replaced Yeltsin in the last hours of 1999 as Russian president and subsequently won an election that ratified his presidency. Ever since that, Putin continued to fill senior government posts with KGB veterans and sitting Chekist officers.

### **Legitimate Structures and Structural Legitimacy**

One of the difficulties in figuring out what to do with the KGB was that many of its structures and functions were necessary for the preservation of a democratic society. Like any country, and more than most, Russia needs services to fight organized crime, terrorism, and weapons trafficking; to conduct intelligence and counterintelligence; to guard borders and protect elected leaders; and to perform various other duties related to law enforcement and national security. When it first came under public attack in the late 1980s, the KGB invested in sustained propaganda campaigns to show its importance to the country, even calling itself a protector of human rights.<sup>63</sup> Those themes continued after the Soviet collapse.<sup>64</sup> The KGB’s renamed components exploited public worry about spiraling crime and corruption, and the dangers of terrorism and weapons proliferation, to legitimize itself in the post-Soviet world, and again, to cloak itself as democracy’s guardian.

Reality was quite different. Since the beginning, the Chekists were part of the corruption and criminal problem. In addition to its legacy of mass violence and repression, the Cheka also helped create the roots of today's "mafocracy" in Russia, heralding the rise of a criminal ruling class that in turn used the Chekist machinery to perpetuate its power.<sup>65</sup> The unchecked apparatus and the economic openings of the late 1980s and 1990s only increased the possibilities of the security organs serving as agents of corruption and organized crime.<sup>66</sup> As the organs declared that their new importance lay in fighting such pestilence, they grew more rotten at the top. In one example, Yeltsin tolerated security chief Barannikov's corruption until a scandal broke out about a six-figure shopping spree Barannikov's wife took in Switzerland. Barannikov was quickly forced out, and died soon afterward.

Russia's political leadership lacked the will to employ the security organs effectively against corruption and organized crime, using them more as political weapons than as impartial enforcers of law. The Kremlin made a show of tracking down the billions of dollars stolen and laundered abroad but when provided with concrete facts, did nothing.<sup>67</sup> President Yeltsin even dismissed his anticorruption fighters, from Yuri Boldyrev in 1993 to Yuri Skuratov in 1999, once their investigations reached too close to his inner circle. The services, and the proliferation of KGB veterans who set up their own private or semiprivate security firms (or security divisions within large companies), then exploited their networks and access to information and technology to fight the *kompro-mat* wars between the oligarchs. With the rise of Sergei Stepashin and Vladimir Putin to the height of political power, people could argue that the security organs had become the guardians of the kleptocracy, not protectors of the Russian nation. As internal security chief, Putin suffered a short-lived scandal when some of his own officers held a news conference to denounce criminal activity, including murder-for-hire rackets, within his own service.<sup>68</sup> Even so, the Russian population looked to the same organs to protect the country not only from crime, corruption, terrorism, and foreign threats, but from its economic and social morass. The search for a "strong hand" meant empowering the Chekists once again.

### **"Never Again": Discrediting the Old Order**

A hardy group of dissidents, human rights leaders, journalists, and democratic politicians did attempt to resist the KGB's reconstitution. In 1992, with Yeltsin's support, the government placed the Communist Party on trial for having betrayed and ruined Russia and subjecting the Russian people to immeasurable misery. Politics motivated the prosecution, which backers compared to the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal against the defeated Nazis. The parallel was an exaggeration; no individuals were tried, and even though the Constitutional Court ruled that the Communist Party was a criminal organization, nobody was held responsible. The ruling gave Yeltsin the excuse he needed to ban his chief rival from politics.<sup>69</sup> Later, the Communists reincarnated themselves as the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF).



When it suited him, Yeltsin or his aides would occasionally call for investigations of Communist crimes. At a December 1998 meeting of a professional commission to fight political extremism, Yeltsin's deputy chief of staff urged state prosecutors to probe the Bolsheviks for crimes against Russia.<sup>70</sup> In reality the investigations were mere political devices to bludgeon the Communist opposition when it became intractable at critical times between 1991 and 1998, and probes or threats of probes came to little or nothing. Yeltsin never followed through and never meaningfully supported criminal investigations of the Soviet-era KGB.

Nor did Yeltsin or Putin ever back the idea of screening KGB officers and prohibiting those who had been involved in crimes from serving in positions of public trust. After suffering a major political setback in the December 1993 State Duma elections, Yeltsin, at the initiative of some of his closest reform-minded aides, signed a decree abolishing the Chekist internal organs, then known as the Ministry of Security. The decree traced the organs in their various incarnations since the Cheka:

The system of bodies of the VChK [Cheka]-OGPU-NKVD-MGB-KGB-MB has proved unreformable. The attempts at reorganization that have been made in recent years were basically superficial and cosmetic. Up to the present moment the Russian Ministry of Security lacks a strategic concept of ensuring Russia's political security. Counterintelligence work has deteriorated. *The system of political investigation has been mothballed and could easily be recreated.* [Emphasis added]

Against the background of the democratic and constitutional transformations taking place in Russia, the existing system of ensuring Russia's security has outlived itself; it is ineffective, burdensome for the state budget, and a restraining factor in the implementation of political and economic reforms.<sup>71</sup>

The organs were reduced in bureaucratic status and renamed, but little else. Yeltsin named a career dissident hunter to lead them. Moscow never did what some of its western neighbors attempted: a process of thoroughly screening public servants and barring those who had served in certain Communist Party and secret police posts from holding certain positions of trust in the post-Communist government. The purpose was not to punish, but to protect society from being penetrated, manipulated, or otherwise undermined by the old party and security apparatus. (Jaroslav Basta discusses the process as developed in the Czech Republic in an accompanying article.) In Russia, Duma deputy Galina Starovoitova authored a law on lustration,<sup>72</sup> but apart from a short-lived "certification commission" to screen 200–250 senior officers, it went nowhere.<sup>73</sup> (Starovoitova led a very credible public campaign against the state security organs for human rights violations, abuse of power, and corruption in her—and Putin's—hometown of St. Petersburg. She was assassinated in November 1998. Then-state security chief Vladimir Putin made a show of personally taking over the investigation and pledging to find the perpetrators, but to few people's surprise, the investigation turned up little, if anything, about who had commissioned her assassination.)

Former dissidents, led by Sergei Grigoryants, held a series of international conferences between 1993 and 1995 called "KGB: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" to bring KGB crimes to light, demonstrate the continued existence and impunity

of the Chekists, and attempt to gauge their future role in Russian society.<sup>74</sup> The security organs alternately tried to participate in the conferences and disrupt and discredit them. The conferences attracted international experts, as well as some of the top Russian figures concerned with security and human rights issues. They networked with other Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, Czechs, and others to share information and experiences; spread news of continued abuses and dangers; draft proposals for laws and regulations; expose corruption and documented crimes carried out by security and intelligence services; and discuss the proper role of law enforcement, security, and intelligence services in a democratic society. They also developed and introduced ideas for the necessary checks and balances to protect individual freedoms in the course of guarding the security of the nation. The conferences also provided a forum for whistleblowers from the inside. Dissident chemical weapons scientist Vil Mirzayanov, chemical weapons guinea pig Vladimir Petrenko, disaffected KGB officers, and others made their first public appearances at the conferences, as did former KGB Chairman Vadim Bakatin. It was at these conferences that many of the most important ideas, such as lustration, were first discussed in Russia; Duma Deputy Starovoitova first discussed lustration there and proceeded with her legislation.<sup>75</sup> Organizer Grigoryants received support from private foundations and the National Endowment for Democracy of the United States.

The conferences exacted a terrible price on Grigoryants, his family, and some of his closest colleagues. His attorney, the famed human rights lawyer Tatyana Kuznetsova, was lured to a meeting with KGB officers in Kaluga under the false pretense of returning some of Grigoryants' papers confiscated during an arrest under the Soviet regime, when she fell victim to a truck-induced automobile accident. She survived but with severe head injuries. Grigoryants himself was subjected to threats. Nationalist mobs ransacked his offices and occupied his writers' union building as authorities stood by. When he held a series of conferences documenting war crimes during the first Chechnya war, Grigoryants received threats against his family. In early 1995, his only son, Timofei, was killed in front of the family's apartment building. When Grigoryants pressed authorities to investigate the killing, officers visited him and offered him a deal: the return of his confiscated writers' union building in exchange for dropping demands for an investigation into his son's killing. Grigoryants refused. His wife and daughter then fled to France where they received political asylum. Grigoryants chose to remain in Russia and continue his work.<sup>76</sup>

### Coda

What little public momentum existed to uproot the old, repressive Chekist networks died with Starovoitova. By the late 1990s, it was a handful of dissident voices—some human rights activists, journalists, and environmentalists such as Aleksandr Nikitin and Grigory Pasko—who found themselves under Chekist surveillance, persecution, prosecution, and imprisonment. Shortly before his appointment as prime minister in July 1999, state security chief Vladimir Putin, who had personally headed the dead-end Starovoitova murder probe, made a pilgrimage outside

the Kremlin wall to lay a wreath at the grave of KGB Chairman Yuri Andropov. The following month, Putin became premier. Promising a “strong hand” against corruption, terrorism, and lawlessness and aided by an uncomfortably coincidental string of Moscow apartment building bombings that killed hundreds, Putin orchestrated a second war against Chechen separatists. This time press controls kept the public from seeing the war firsthand. Putin’s toughness and stated vision for a strong Russia offered hope among a population weary of economic stagnation, corruption scandals, and international humiliation. A new party he created for the December 1999 State Duma elections ensured that the new parliament would be much friendlier to the Kremlin than before.

The day before those elections, which took place on the eve of Chekist’s Day, Putin commemorated the founding of the Bolshevik secret police. He warned against efforts critical of the Chekists: “Bodies of state security have always defended the national interests of Russia,” he told state security workers. “They must not be separated from the state and turned into some kind of monster.”<sup>77</sup> The next day, Russian voters cast their ballots and effectively ratified their rule by one of the Cheka’s own. President Yeltsin, addressing state security officers, commented, “As I look back, I realize that we nearly overdid it when we exposed the crimes committed by the security services, for there were not only dark periods, but also glorious episodes in their history, of which one may really be proud.”<sup>78</sup> That week, the plaque honoring Andropov, removed in 1991, was restored on the facade of Lubyanka. Putin hosted the new Duma leaders in his Kremlin office, where they drank a toast to “Dzhugashvili”: Iosif Stalin. During his presidential campaign in early 2000, Putin repeatedly praised the former KGB and subsequently nominated career Chekists to nearly half of the senior posts in his initial round of governmental appointments. One of his main allies, deputy security chief Viktor Cherkessov, had spent his KGB career as a Fifth Chief Directorate officer, hunting dissidents in Leningrad, and held the dubious distinction of being the last KGB officer to personally arrest dissidents under the old Soviet law. The new composition of the State Duma, meanwhile, promised few parliamentary challenges to the Chekists: Every single member of the security oversight committee had been an officer of the USSR KGB.<sup>79</sup>

### Conclusion

The state security system in Russia is no longer the centralized, monolithic force of the USSR KGB, but it has preserved a bureaucratic ideology that reveres the Bolshevik Cheka secret police as its lineal ancestor and maintains a cult-like devotion to Cheka founder Feliks Dzerzhinsky. Leaders who tried to sweep away the old KGB and start a fresh course toward democratic and market-oriented society found themselves cast aside or killed. President Boris Yeltsin thought he could reconcile the irreconcilable: democracy and market economy and an overwhelming internal security machine personally loyal to him. To empower the Chekists but keep them from positioning against him and his inner circle, Yeltsin kept reshuffling and reorganizing the state security organs throughout his presidency. That policy further weakened the legitimate elements of the state security

system and did little to improve morale or dedicate the necessary resources toward fighting crime, corruption, civil strife, terrorism, and other plagues that have retarded Russia's post-Communist reconstruction. Few meaningful civil controls emerged in the parliament or the judiciary. The West, led by the United States, offered almost no encouragement or pressure.

Paradoxically, the policies of 1991 to 1999 strengthened the Chekists as the frustrated and demoralized Russian public viewed the former KGB as their best chance of liberation from the hardships and failures of disastrous economic reforms. The Russian people, through their votes for president, came to view the Chekists in the twenty-first century as they had been raised to view them through most of the twentieth century: as the main protectors of their country and the curators of their national aspirations.

### NOTES

1. *Pravda*, December 18, 1917, quoted in Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 663n.
2. Peter Deriabin and T. H. Bagley, *The KGB: Masters of the Soviet Union* (New York: Hippocrene, 1990), 6.
3. *Pravda*, no. 33 (259), February 10/23, 1918, quoted in Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled*, 425–26.
4. George Popoff, *The Tcheka: The Red Inquisition* (London: A. M. Philpot, 1925), 232.
5. Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled*, 27.
6. Deriabin and Bagley, *Masters of the Soviet Union*, 6.
7. Nikolai Tolstoy, *Stalin's Secret War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1981), 60.
8. Simon Wolin and Robert M. Slusser, eds., *The Soviet Secret Police* (New York: Praeger, 1957), 4–5.
9. "Information on Russia," Senate Document 50, 67th Cong., 1st sess., 1921, 64, quoted in Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled*, 426.
10. Deriabin and Bagley, *Masters of the Soviet Union*, xxiv.
11. *Pravda*, October 18, 1918, quoted in Popoff, *The Tcheka*, 233.
12. Tolstoy, *Stalin's Secret War*, 60.
13. B. Rossow, "From Our Moscow Correspondent," *Novaya zhizhn'*, June 9, 1918, 4, Bertram Wolfe Collection, box 110, file 110-2, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University, California, quoted in John J. Dziak, *Chekisty: A History of the KGB* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988), 13.
14. Deriabin and Bagley, *Masters of the Soviet Union*, 16–17.
15. Tolstoy, *Stalin's Secret War*, 10.
16. Merle Fainsod calls estimates of 50,000 killed by the Bolsheviks "conservative," with the actual number "perhaps hundreds of thousands." George Leggett, in an exhaustive study of the Cheka, puts the number at between 250,000 and 300,000. Robert Conquest writes that official Cheka executions may have totaled 200,000, with another 300,000 killed as the Bolsheviks consolidated power. Estimates range; see Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled*, 426, 663–64n; George Leggett, *The Cheka: Lenin's Political Police* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 467; and Conquest, "The Human Cost of Soviet Communism," prepared testimony before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws, Washington, DC, 1971, 11, in Dziak, *Chekisty* 174–75.
17. Tolstoy, *Stalin's Secret War*, 60.
18. Edward Crankshaw, *Gestapo* (New York: Viking, 1956), 68.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., 7.

21. See J. Michael Waller, *Secret Empire: The KGB in Russia Today* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994), 35–58. The chapter “Stormtroopers of Perestroika” documents the KGB’s role in promoting glasnost and perestroika and in ensuring its place in post-Communist society.

22. Ibid., 30–33.

23. There were minor exceptions in the United States, with initiatives sponsored by the National Endowment for Democracy to support the extremely important “KGB: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow” conferences of Sergei Grigoriyants in Moscow, as well as a few U.S. Information Agency exchanges of Russian lawmakers, staff, and journalists. The author was involved with both sets of programs. Larger initiatives approved mid-level in the USIA bureaucracy were quashed at the Deputy Secretary of State level.

24. For more on relations between the KGB and Russian corruption and organized crime, see J. Michael Waller and Victor Yasmann, “Russia’s Great Criminal Revolution,” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* (December 1995); and Frank J. Cilluffo and Gerard P. Burke, eds., *Russian Organized Crime: Global Organized Crime Project* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1997).

25. Waller, *Secret Empire*, 151–80.

26. Soviet State Television, monitored and trans. in FBIS-SOV-89-104-S, May 31, 1989; FBIS-SOV-89-111-S, June 12, 1989.

27. Congress of USSR People’s Deputies, “Verbatim Reports,” *Izvestiya*, June 2, 1989, 1–10, trans. in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, July 26, 1989.

28. Esther B. Fein, “Pointed Questions for Chief of KGB,” *New York Times*, July 15, 1989, 1; and Bill Keller, “Olympic Star, in Passionate Talk, Attacks KGB in Soviet Congress,” *New York Times*, June 1, 1989, 1.

29. Vladimir Kryuchkov, introductory remarks to USSR Supreme Soviet, “Excerpts from 199-minute Recording of Morning Sitting Continued from SU/0511/C/7,” transcript of USSR Supreme Soviet proceedings from Soviet television, 1400 GMT, July 14, 1989, trans. BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, July 20, 1989, SU/0513/C/1.

30. Ibid.

31. BBC Editorial Commentary, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 20, 1989, SU/0513/C/1.

32. Interviews with members of the USSR Supreme Soviet Committee on Defense and Security, November and December 1991. The author relates this in more detail in Waller, *Secret Empire*, 161–80.

33. Vadim Bakatin, interview with author.

34. Bakatin gave the author a copy of the decree containing Gorbachev’s scrawl. A copy is contained in Bakatin’s memoir, *Izbavlenie ot KGB* (Moscow: Novosti, 1992).

35. It was during this interview that Bakatin raised the idea of writing such a guidebook, for which this series of case studies is part of the framework.

36. Bakatin, interview with author.

37. Waller, *Secret Empire*, 65–66.

38. Bakatin, in *Izvestiya*, January 2, 1992, morning ed., 6, trans. in FBIS-SOV-92-002, January 3, 1992, 4–5.

39. Viktor Ivanenko, interview on All-Union Radio Mayak Network, 1900 GMT, August 29, 1991, trans. In FBIS-SOV-91-170, September 3, 1991, 51.

40. For a listing of the senior personnel appointed by Bakatin, see Waller, *Secret Empire*, 67–74.

41. Bakatin, *Izbavlenie ot KGB*, 66–68.

42. Bakatin, interview with author.

43. Bakatin wrote the decrees that Gorbachev signed to cede the KGB internal security structures to Russia and the other Soviet republics.

44. Bakatin, interview with author.

45. Bakatin, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, November 26, 1991, 1st ed., 3, trans. in FBIS-SOV-91-231, December 2, 1991, 21.

46. Ibid.

47. Yevgeny Savostyanov (as Moscow KGB Chief), interview with author at Lubyanka complex, Moscow, November 1991.

48. Bakatin, interview.

49. Russian Television Network, 1731 GMT, August 29, 1991, trans. in FBIS-SOV-91-170, September 3, 1991, 46.

50. Waller, *Secret Empire*, 76–77.

51. Albats gives her first-person account of this period in her valuable book, *A State Within a State* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1994).

52. Stepashin personified the political schizophrenia of the time. Visiting Washington in autumn 1991, he met with U.S. officials and asked the CIA to help him establish parliamentary controls over the Chekists. George Lardner, Jr. and Gary Lee, “Russian Security Group Meets with U.S. Intelligence to Seek Cooperation,” *Washington Post*, October 14, 1991, A4.

53. Bakatin to Yevgenia Albats, “KGB-MSB-MBVD: Substantive Changes?” *Moscow News*, no. 12, January 13, 1992, 5.

54. Bakatin, *Izvestiya*. Bakatin subsequently confirmed these views in interviews with the author.

55. Lev Ponomarev, interview with author.

56. Copies of the stenographic notes of the Ponomarev Commission proceedings were brought to the United States, translated, and published in English in *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, 3, no. 4 through 4, no. 4, (Winter 1996–Winter 1997).

57. Bakatin, interview with author; and Yuri Shchekochikhin, interview with author.

58. For a more full report of this period, see Waller, *Secret Empire*, 99–109.

59. Shchekochikhin, Russian Television Network, 1800 GMT, December 20, 1991, trans. in FBIS-SOV-91-246, December 23, 1991, 46.

60. Bakatin, “Substantive Changes?” 5.

61. The author directed a private program funded by the United States Information Agency from 1992 to 1996 to bring Russian lawmakers and staff to the United States to promote civil controls and oversight of the law enforcement, security, intelligence, and military services, and had many confidential discussions with them about these issues.

62. For analysis of the basic laws on security and intelligence, see Waller, *Secret Empire*, 205–19; analysis by Kate Martin, Center for National Security Studies, George Washington University.

63. Vladimir Kryuchkov, Radio Moscow in English to North America, 0100 GMT, October 18, 1989, trans. in FBIS-SOV-89-201, October 19, 1989, 43–44; and “KGB Adopting a Revised, Friendlier Image,” *Washington Post*, September 8, 1985.

64. Waller, *Secret Empire*, 253–54, 247–76.

65. See Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Praeger, 1957); and Michael Voslensky, *Nomenklatura: The Soviet Ruling Class*, trans. Eric Mosbacher (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1984). See also Waller and Yasmann, “Russia’s Great Criminal Revolution.”

66. Waller and Yasmann, “Russia’s Great Criminal Revolution.”

67. The international investigative firm Kroll and Associates discovered this when the Russian government hired it to find out what had happened to billions of dollars that had been stolen from Russia. The company presented its evidence to Yeltsin’s office, which then did nothing—Kroll reportedly had traced the money trail back to members of Yeltsin’s inner circle.

68. Phil Reeves, “Russian Spies ‘Running Protection Rackets,’” *The Independent*, November 18, 1998, 13.

69. Yuri Feofanov and Donald B. Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia: Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 294–308.

70. Presidential Deputy Chief of Staff Yevgeny Savostyanov, formerly head of the Moscow internal security services, as reported by Interfax and the Associated Press, Moscow, December 1, 1998.

71. ITAR-TASS, world service in Russian, 1704 GMT, December 21, 1993, trans. in FBIS-SOV-93-244, December 22, 1993, 35.

72. Victor Yasmann, "Legislation on Screening and State Security in Russia," *RFE/RL Research Report 2*, no. 32 (August 13, 1993), 11–16.

73. The certification commission was a sham. It reviewed 227 senior Chekist officers and rejected only thirteen, mostly due to their retirement age and none for being incompatible with democratic values.

74. The author attended the first five of these conferences in Moscow.

75. Grigoryants and his Glasnost Foundation published the proceedings of several of the conferences. The proceedings appear in both Russian and English. The author participated in most of the events.

76. Grigoryants, interview with author.

77. ITAR-TASS in English, 1445 GMT, December 18, 1999.

78. Reuters, December 21, 1999.

79. A member of the State Duma security committee stated this to the author in March 2000.