



## East Asians in Soviet Intelligence

### “The Naturals” — One Variant of Soviet Illegal —

by Jon K. Chang PhD

This article is dedicated  
to the memory of Emil Sin Khuaevich Lyu

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#### ABSTRACT

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This study is the fifth in the series on East Asians in Soviet intelligence (abbreviated as EASI throughout). It analyzes the Soviet political police of the 1920s and 1930s as well as the universities which trained the EASI and the Chinese (foreign) students there. Through oral history interviews with relatives of the EASI, this author has received some revelatory insights about the weaknesses of Soviet *agentura* and the INO, OGPU-NKVD. INO meant “foreign department,” that is, an INO operation would always send its agents outside the USSR. The strength of this analysis is the *in situ* fieldwork and long-term interviews with seven families of EASI which were all conducted in Russian in the former USSR. We will examine how these weaknesses led to (beginning around 1927) the INO increasing its recruitment and hiring among the Soviet diaspora peoples. This article follows the Library of Congress’ rules for transliteration of Russian to English. The Cheka and other acronyms representing the Soviet political police are listed in the footnote below.<sup>1</sup> SPP signifies “the Soviet political police” throughout this article.

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1. Cheka (1917-1922), GPU (1922-1923), OGPU (1923-1934), and NKVD (1934 to Feb. 3, 1941). On Feb. 3, 1941, the NKVD split into two: NKVD (domestic political police) and NKGB (foreign operations political police). From Jul. 20, 1941 to 1946, the NKVD and NKGB are reunited as the NKVD. From March 16, 1946 to March 5, 1953, the NKVD is renamed the MGB. From 1953-54, the MGB was subsumed under MVD. After 1954, the SPP is called the KGB.

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#### INTRODUCTION

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The primary focus of this article is to introduce a type of modern spy or political agent that frankly most countries have been developing and cultivating to great effect. This agent is “the natural.” Typically, the “natural” is a diaspora person who has grown up in two or even three separate nation-states. The “natural” has been trained by their home country’s intelligence service or political institutions to be utilized as a political or intelligence “agent” in a 2nd country where the said person has linguistic, cultural and ethnic ties. This “maneuver” projects the socio-political, economic and military power of the first country into a second. The “natural” is simply a spinoff or variant of the original Soviet “illegal” and their work in the INO of the Soviet political police. He/she is not the “trained illegal” since they are “naturals.” This paper will describe the origins, functions and activities of the “natural” within the INO illegals program. It is a term coined by this author. In contrast is the “trained illegal,” an agent who does not have natural linguistic or cultural knowledge and has learned to play a particular role through training. Additionally, the term, the “Russians” refers to Russians, Jews, Cossacks, Ukrainians, Tatars, Georgians, and other agents of a European-Eastern Slav background in the INO and in Manchuria.

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#### THE DISCOVERY OF EASI

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In 2009, this author was in Tashkent, Uzbekistan interviewing Soviet Koreans deportees. Gleb Li, an elderly Korean man (who was impatient) jumped the queue of interviews that I had lined up and said, (paraphrasing) “Can I interview with you now? I have something that the others do not have. My grandfather Shen Li was arrested and tortured while on a Soviet espionage mission abroad (Chang 2019, “East Asians,” 24, 25).” Later, this author collected several interviews with the family members of seven Soviet East Asian agents who had been sent abroad or whose superiors had suggested that they volunteer for missions abroad.

In 2015, Dmitrii A. Ancha and Nelli G. Miz published *Chinese Diaspora in Vladivostok* (in Russian) which was commissioned by Li Hui, the Chinese Ambassador to Russia from 2009 to 2019 (Ancha and Miz 2015, 4). On page 285 of *Chinese Diaspora*, it stated, “About 400 Chinese and Koreans were removed from intelligence

bodies of the USSR for [allocated for] international work for various reasons including due to the threat of failure and arrest (Ancha and Miz 2015, 285). Ancha through correspondence to this author indicated that 180 of the 400 who were from the Chinese-Lenin School (abbreviated as the CLS throughout) were arrested and repressed (Ancha Correspondence, Feb. 20, 2018). Chapter 8 from *Chinese Diaspora* explained how the Soviets established, recruited and trained students and former soldiers to become spies in the Chinese-Lenin School in Vladivostok, Russia (Chang 2018, 49-53).

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### NEW FINDINGS: FROM 600 TO 1200 PLUS EASI

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Slowly, I gained more information about the INO, OGPU-NKVD in order to estimate how many EASI were part of the INO. Sudoplatov's *Special Tasks* gave me a basic understanding describing the INO, NKVD in 1942 as having 20,000 agents, 16 sections and 2 sections specifically devoted to the Far East out of the 16 (Chang 2019, "East Asians," 23). Leopold Trepper, a former GRU agent went further and gave specific information about EASI and the INO. He stated that the KUTV (Communist University of Toilers of the East) and the KUTK (the Communist University of the Workers of China and a 2nd more informal name, the Moscow Sun Yat-sen University) trained spies specifically for the Far East (Trepper 1977, 38). Then, this author found Tepliakov's *Stalin's Guardsmen* (written in Russian). *Stalin's Guardsmen* gave short biographies of Tsz Chzhi, Anatolii Aleev and Faina Lutskaia (the latter two were a married couple) and Atom Atomovich Kristal as all having studied at the KUTV or the KUTK. All were Chinese despite several taking on full Russian names including the patronymic (Tepliakov 2009, 371-373). After their studies, the four began work for the OGPU-NKVD and were sent on missions to China. Lenintsev (Khou Mints in Chinese) also studied at the KUTK and became an agent for the INO, NKVD (Khvostova 2015).

Therefore, Tepliakov's *Stalin's Guardsmen* and Ancha's *Chinese Diaspora* confirmed Trepper's pronouncement that at least three universities in the USSR serving as espionage training schools for Soviet East Asians (and others). One major finding of this study is a revision of the number of EASI who served in the INO from 600 to 1200 plus agent-officers. The new figure, 1200 is based on 400 agents from the CLS, 300 plus

each from KUTV and KUTK and 200 agents who were former Soviet soldiers and GRU agents (Chang 2018, 46-47). Keeping in mind Sudoplatov's "order of battle" for the INO, NKVD, there remained 14 other sections and some 18,800 additional employees (some employees worked in administrative capacities only). Each INO, NKVD section targeted a different region outside of the USSR. The USSR would surely have sent Soviet Germans and Soviet Poles in larger numbers than the East Asians as each of the two groups were four-to-five times the population of 200,000 Koreans in 1940. They (Poles and Germans) were much better accepted and closer in culture to the Russians/Soviets and their political system. Other Soviet diaspora people were also utilized in overseas operations (Chang 2019, "East Asians," 23, see Sudoplatov's epigraph).

Chinese INO, NKVD Officers Who Are Graduates of KUTV & KUTK (1935):  
Kristall (KUTV), Aleev/Aleyev (KUTK), Lutskaia/Lutskaia (KUTK)

[The Politburo transfers NKVD members currently working in Eastern Siberia and Central Asia to Xinjiang]

19 March 1935

137.

Assign the following comrades to Xinjiang for work:

Concerning Xinjiang

a) from Eastern Siberia - Zhang Yifeng (Kashen), Zheng Yu (Kristall),  
Tat'yana Kaspina, Zheng Yijun (Aleyev);  
and Zhao Yongrong (Lutskaia);

b) from Central Asia - Abdulla Siradzhetdinov, Said Khodzhiyev Aminov (Karim Aminov), Mashur Ruztsov, Akhmed Rakhimov (Kabulov), Yusup Ibragimovich (Anvarov) (Yusup Ibragimov).

Excerpts have been sent to:

Cdes. Yagoda, Agranov, Litvinov, Krestinsky, and Andreyev (to):

[Note that per Library of Congress transliterations rules, article a) above:  
Aleyev would be "Aleev" and Lutskaia should be "Lutskaia".]

File Citation: • RGASPI F.17 Op.162 D. 17, L. 151.

Jamil Hasanli and (translator) Gary Goldberg. The file can be found at the following url: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/politburo-decision-19-march-1935-concerning-xinjiang>. Courtesy of the Wilson Center.

Figure 1 – A Soviet archival file listing Chinese INO, NKVD who were graduates from the Moscow KUTV and KUTK universities. Courtesy of the Wilson Center.

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### WHAT WAS OPERATION MAKI MIRAGE?

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This operation of sending EASI into Manchuria, China proper and Korea was called Operation Maki Mirage by the USSR. According to the Soviet account, this intelligence war began in 1924 and was led by Saidatiro Kumazava, an officer of the Japanese General Staff who was recruiting various peoples (Russians, Koreans, Chinese, Japanese) to send as intelligence agents into the Russian Far East. Kumazava purportedly recruited approximately 200 Japanese agents which he utilized in the Russian Far East (abbreviated throughout as RFE) (Chumakov 2013, 195 and Shulzhenko 2008). The problem with this account/history is that several accounts (most notably by

A.M. Nair and Shun Akikusa) dispute that Japan was able to successfully send spies to the RFE. Akikusa was Japan's premier human intelligence specialist (humint) in Manchuria. Nair and Akikusa both worked at the same Japanese spy school run in Hsinking (now Changchun), Manchuria during the period when Japan controlled Manchuria as Manchukuo. Akikusa notes that three spies contacted Japanese intelligence after crossing into the RFE. They did not relay any information back (Kuromiya 2007, 256). Nair relates that his last group of trainees had crossed over into the RFE in early 1940. After WWII, many of the Koreans that Nair had trained, turned up in North Korea sent by the Soviets (Nair 1982, 91, 140-146). They had most probably been Soviet double-agents while training in Hsinking.

Finally there was the Russian documentary television series *Sovershenno Sekretno* (Absolutely Secret in Russian), episode 155 which was entitled *Agent Prizrak* (Ghost Agent). This episode was about Operation Maki Mirage. It was filmed in 2003 and took the viewer to see a brief glimpse inside the Far Eastern state archives. At around 35:54 minutes, it showed a view of several sheets of papers listing all the participants in Maki-Mirage. Two of the names on the list were Van In Zun (number #11 written in cursive, Ван Ин Зун) and Khan Chan Ger (#59 written in cursive, Хан Чан Гер).

For the sake of simplicity, this study calls all Soviet intelligence operations in the RFE and the Zabaikal region utilizing EASI from 1920 to 1945 as Maki Mirage. There were other anti-Japanese espionage operations run by the Soviets called Dreamers, Shogun and Organizator to name just a few (Kuromiya and Peplonski 2009, 661). It appears that most if not all were simply disinformation campaigns to mask the USSR's own forward (intelligence) operations abroad.

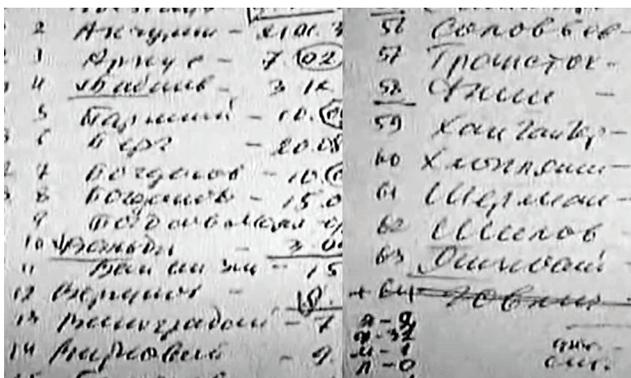


Figure 2 – List of participants involved in Operation Maki Mirage. See Van In Zun (number #11 written in cursive, Ван Ин Зун) and Khan Chan Ger (#59 written in cursive, Хан Чан Гер). Photo taken by Jon K. Chang.



Figure 3 – Van In Zun (known in Russian as Nikolai Ivanovich Van). In this photo Van is wearing his Red Army uniform, summer 1921.

In July 1922, Van was invited to join the GPU under a RFE appellation, GPO DVK as a GPU border guard stationed in Blagoveshchensk. Courtesy of open source.

## THE HISTORY BEHIND THE COMMISSIONING OF CHINESE DIASPORA IN VLADIVOSTOK

In 2012, Li Hui commissioned the writing of *The Chinese Diaspora in Vladivostok* with the Russian government. (Li Hui is currently the “special representative” for the PRC’s delegation which seeks to negotiate a peace treaty between Russia and Ukraine). Together, China and Russia selected the two authors, Dmitrii A. Ancha and Nelli G. Miz. The book (2nd edition, 2015) contained a special chapter (chapter 8) on the Chinese-Lenin School of Vladivostok which unlike the others contained no citations. One wonders, “Why was China interested in the Chinese-Lenin School?” The backstory is that during the 1937-38 Chinese deportation, most of the Soviet Chinese and Chinese students abroad in the USSR were deported to China including many former INO, NKVD and GRU agents (Snow 2023, 295). Many were arrested upon their return to China and or later arrested by KMT intelligence. The arrested former Soviet operatives were forced to sign long confessions. Unfortunately, KMT (Kuomintang) intelligence at this time was completely infiltrated by CCP intelligence operatives such as Kang Sheng, Li Kenong, Chen Geng and Zhou En-Lai (Wakeman 2003, 273, 341; Byron and Pack 1992, 99-101; Barnouin and Yu 2006, 45-48). Thus, China (the PRC) knew about these operations for quite some time and Chinese Diaspora in Vladivostok provides for the PRC a Soviet state and institutional history of their espionage program (rather than the individual accounts) of EASI from the Russian, off-limits archives.

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## THE OGPU-NKVD: SUB-DIVISIONS, FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

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During the Russian Civil War, the SPP (see abstract) had many duties. First, they conducted operations against domestic and international enemies, anti-Soviet groups and counterintelligence. A second duty was to requisition food supplies from peasants in times of crisis. Third, Cheka agents administered and controlled the Soviet labor and prison camps. Fourth, Cheka troops guarded the USSR's railways and water transport. Fifth, some Cheka detachments such as CHON also fought alongside the Red Army in battles. The CHON were always the Cheka's elite troops in regards to their capacity to wage war, persevere under duress, adapt and the ability to survive (Leggett 1981, 226). Next were the Soviet "border guards" and frontier troops who guarded the Soviet borders. These positions were especially useful for EASI to temporarily cross the Soviet border and to participate in overseas operations. Finally, the Cheka, OGPU-NKVD OOs ("Osobyi Otdel" meaning Special Division) policed the Soviet armed forces and during times of war, they performed duties of military security on the front line (Russian Civil War and the Sino-Soviet War) (Leggett 1981, 207, see also Dziak 1988 for general functions). These are the general functions for the SPP. In this next subsection, we will explain why Soviet intelligence pivoted to recruiting and employing a greater number of EASI beginning around 1927.

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## WHY THE PIVOT TO THE EASI: THREE REASONS

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First, very few of the "Russian" agents were able to speak, read and or write any of the East Asian languages so as to collect interviews, develop a circle of informants and just in general, build a network of non-Russian speaking informants. Second, once abroad many Soviet agent-officers abandoned or disregarded their training as espionage operatives and began to live out their private lives for all to see as if their social life came first, rather than the mission. Third, the abandonment of the rules of tradecraft when abroad put them, their mission, and their colleagues in jeopardy.

This author interviewed a 7th family of former Soviet-citizens related to a former EASI. They helped this author greatly in formulating new theses about

the INO. Unfortunately, they did not let me scan the photos, nor record the interviews. They also asked that I do not reveal their names nor that of the EASI in the future. This author met their family for interviews many times. They (the daughter and the granddaughter) said paraphrasing him (the 7th EASI) and his descriptions of the operations in the 1920s and 1930s:

Those NKVD language schools weren't like the courses that you have today at the university where there are books, tapes and everything well planned out. You were learning actually very little compared to today and it was dependent on the teacher how much you could learn. Once the 'Russians' got on the ground [in the Far East], their understanding of Chinese or Korean was very little and their pronunciation was even worse. What they learned was not the real language on the street [a mix of many different vernaculars]. At best the 'Russian' agents understood and spoke a pidgin form of Chinese or Korean. But never in the reports did anyone admit to the training being insufficient/substandard or that they understood very little once they arrived in China, Manchuria or Korea. That's not what the NKVD does (7th family of an EASI—a daughter and a granddaughter).

The relatives of the 7th EASI continued paraphrasing him, "Now there were some who could speak Chinese or Korean among the Russian agents. Some of these people were mixed-race [meaning Eurasian]. Others ["Russians"] who could speak the language fluently grew up in Manchuria and had a nanny or servants in the home who helped raise this person speaking the Asian language. But this type of person was rare." This statement above is a paraphrase and summation of the main points that this author heard (7th EASI family Aug. 2008 and Aug.-Sept. 2014). The above are the strong opinions of the 7th EASI family. However, one cannot discount all "Russians" from being able to master an East Asian language despite poor language training. Some people (less than 2-3 percent) are simply natural polyglots and do not need a classroom.

As a result, the "Russian" agents were building informant networks solely among Russian speakers in Manchuria during Maki-Mirage. This is not very effective espionage or information gathering since Manchuria was controlled by the Japanese. Second the information that they were collecting was tainted and the Soviet agents building informant networks were in fact being reported to various political entities and intelligence bureaus. Everyone in Manchuria involved

in espionage (Soviets, KMT, Japanese and anti-Soviet factions) was using several aliases.

In the end, the only near-guarantee of receiving trustworthy information was to have one's own agents posted in every district of the city. But the Soviets had a distinct disadvantage because their agents spoke only Russian and or pidgin Chinese, Manchu and or Korean. Hence, the pivot to the employment of the Soviet EASI.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur's 1950 report "Japanese Intelligence on Soviet Intentions"<sup>2</sup> gave a good idea of how unreliable any source or information was except from absolutely vetted and trusted sources. It states, "The Japanese intelligence authorities found that if a Soviet contact gave a great deal of information, or if he gave information regularly, or over a considerable period of time, the contact was invariably a Soviet agent, and his information was prepared by Soviet counterintelligence agencies (MacArthur 1950, 3)."

Yet, the Japanese still collected this information and paid their spies in Manchuria who were Soviet double agents because they wanted to learn about "Soviet methods of counterintelligence and duplicity." "The Japanese knowingly accepted false information from sources in the Soviet consulates and from Soviet agents posing as Japanese spies to get information on Soviet methods of duplicity. They also allowed some of their spies to pose as Soviet spies, and learned about Soviet espionage methods, some of which they incorporated into their own system (MacArthur 1950, 11)."

The only way to counter not having agents who could reliably speak (and write) Japanese, Chinese or Korean was to incorporate greater numbers of EASI into its agentura. This began around 1927 (this author's estimate) with the movement/recruitment really growing teeth in 1929 due to the Sino-Soviet Conflict.

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## HARBIN RADISHES

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The so-called "Russians" in Manchuria did not have strong and or clearly defined loyalties to the Soviet regime. This despite the fact that many "Russians" in

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2. This report was commissioned by Gen. Douglas MacArthur who was the SCAP (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers) and effectively ruled Japan from 1945 to 1948. He required that Japan's former intelligence leaders participate in the writing of this report. Those who participated are: Seizo Arisue (head of the Intelligence Bureau), Kanyei Chuyo (head of Naval Intelligence), Masao Yoshizumi (head of the Military Affairs Bureau), the Private Secretary (name unknown), Michitake Yamaoka (Moscow Military Attache) and Hiroshi Oshima (Berlin Military Attache).

Manchuria began taking Soviet citizenship after 1925. But this was mostly due to a 1925 Soviet law requiring Soviet or Chinese citizenship for Russian-Manchurians to work on the CER (Chinese Eastern Railway) or any other Soviet venture (Moustafine 2002, 95). Many of the "Russians" began to sell whatever information that they had to any side.

The economic and political life of Russian-Manchurians was simply "catch as catch-can," that is, one was to use whatever resources that one could gather to survive. The "Russians" had lost the right of extraterritoriality (in 1920) and economically, things were very difficult. They often took the lowest, most menial jobs of any Western foreigners in China. Many young "Russians" also began their military careers in all-Russian regiments serving the Japanese and various Chinese warlords. "Russians" served in Grigorii M. Semyonov's Special Manchurian Detachments (and other regiments) beginning in 1918 along with a host of others (Mongols, Tungus, Kalmyk, and Buryats from both Russia and Manchuria). Semyonov's battalions served the Japanese, his benefactors and the prime source of funding for his army. Many of the "Russians" saw themselves simply as "mercenaries" always willing to sell their services and or information to the highest bidder. For example, Konstantin P. Nechaev rejected the baggage of "White ideas," stating, "We are mercenaries, *Landsknechte* (Gamsa 2021, 175-181)." Some Russian émigrés also served the Japanese military after the formation of Manchukuo in the Asano Detachment and other RMD's (Russian Military Detachments) of the Kwantung Army from 1938 to 1945 (Smirnov 2015). The loyalties of the Russian *Harbintsy* and Manchurians were so capricious, that they were often called "radishes" and or "Harbin radishes" signifying mixed political loyalties, red on the outside (Soviet), white (Tsarist) on the inside (Moustafine 2002, 95; Gamsa 2021, 203).

In this section, we have explained that Soviet intelligence gathering in Manchuria was hampered due to most agents not being fluent in any Asian language and not being able to report that their training was sub-standard. This is a feature of Stalinism. It's not that the "messenger" would get shot, but all the people in the information pipeline would be at risk for repression (execution or sentencing to the camps). Regardless, Soviet intelligence still preferred their "Russians" who were Russians, Jews, Ukrainians, Cossacks, Tatars, Georgians, Russified Poles and others to carry out their "special tasks." Next, we will examine another weakness (discipline) of Soviet intelligence in the Far East.

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## OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND: THE PROTOCOLS OF INTELLIGENCE WORK<sup>3</sup>

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Soviet intelligence in Manchuria had another weakness. Some of the Soviet agents (of the SPP) had a problem with discipline (whether communist, moral, individual and otherwise) when assigned abroad. The Zarubin case is a prime example. These agents and others acted as if they were a bird freed from a cage and eagerly, dived into the vices of the West and or Far East. These actions led to marked friction, inefficiencies and compromises on other agents and the rezidentura abroad. This was noted by the Polish Intelligence services and Jerzy Niezbrzycki (a noted Polish intelligence officer and Sovietologist for Poland) in his memoirs. Polish intelligence noted that the Soviet spies disdained the corruption and “putritude” of the West, yet they could not get enough “materialism” when assigned abroad. According to Niezbrzycki:

Soon however, it became obvious that this very “putritude” proved most attractive to these communistic avenging angels.... Having money, they squandered it right and left simply gorging themselves with those soul destroying dangers and against which they were supposed to “protect the Revolution.” Here We (sic) saw our chance... we came to the conclusion that they [the Soviet agents – J.C.] were the best material that we could use for espionage. We only had to play on their reluctance of returning to their native “Paradise.” (Kuromiya 2021, 196)

We begin with the case of Vasili Zarubin, a Russian who joined the Cheka in 1920 after having fought in the Red Army during the Civil War. He was spotted as being good fit by a Chekist “special department” (OOs) in the Red Army while helping to quell an armed peasant’s revolt in Tambov. He immediately joined the Cheka. In 1924, unofficially, Zarubin was assigned to the Consulate in Harbin as the deputy to the *rezident* (the chief in charge of intelligence activities at the station) who was Fyodor Karin (Baker 2015, 27; Alekseev et al 2021, 388). Officially, Zarubin worked as a housing and supply manager (*zaveduiushchii khoziaistvom*) which served to hide his unofficial capacity (Baker 2015, 27-28). In 1925, Zarubin formally joined the INO, OGPU in the Trans-Kordon unit. He then went to Helsinki, Finland in December under the official position

as an attaché (Sharapov 2003, 155). Meanwhile, one of Zarubin duties was to make his way through Harbin meeting people from all different social classes, groups, unions, religious groups, etc. He meets and begins an affair with Anna Krynnina,<sup>4</sup> the daughter of a city official whose family was anti-Bolshevik. Was he not concerned that maybe he was being targeted?

Zarubin’s boss, Fyodor Karin found out about the affair, but fought for Zarubin to stay in the OGPU and simply be re-assigned for further training in Moscow (through Mikhail Trilisser). What made the affair a bit trickier for Trilisser, the INO, OGPU head was that Olga Vasilevna Naumova (Zarubin’s wife) was also an OGPU employee. Regardless, Zarubin headed to Moscow in the fall of 1925 with Anna leaving behind in Harbin, his wife Olga and their daughter Zoya.

Sometime after Zarubin left, Olga received an anonymous letter telling her of Vasili’s unfaithfulness and his relationship with Anna. Regardless, the new vice-consul Leonid Eitingon won Olga’s heart with his faithfulness and she and Zoya remained with him (Baker, 2015, pp. 29-30 and Wilmers, 2009, pp. 139-140). Astonishingly, this scene was to replay itself again as Zarubin married (for a third time) another fellow OGPU-NKVD agent, Liza Gorskaia in late 1929 or early 1930. Gorskaia had quite a tumultuous assignment prior to her marriage to Zarubin. In 1929, she and Yakov Bliumkin were working as illegals in Turkey. Bliumkin had aligned with the left SR’s (Socialist Revolutionaries) in the summer of 1918 in a plot against Lenin. He was pardoned, but the Soviet intelligence services never forgot about Bliumkin’s divided loyalties. Bliumkin maintained his loyalties to Leon Trotsky even after Trotsky was exiled out of the USSR (Jan. 1929). Trilisser, the INO, NKVD head, instructed Liza Gorskaia to “abandon your bourgeois prejudices,” and seduce Bliumkin in order to find out if he was helping Trotsky. Gorskaia did so, Bliumkin revealed his plans to help Trotsky and was promptly executed upon returning to Moscow on Nov. 3, 1929 (Andrew and Mitrokhin 2000, 53). In intelligence terms, this was a “honey trap” except Gorskaia entrapped her own colleague. Note that for the OGPU in Turkey in 1929, they had now lost both of their illegals. These are major inefficiencies to the mission. Ironically, Leonid Eitingon also followed a similar pattern of relations—finding and replacing previous wives with new ones while on intelligence missions (Sudoplatov 1994, 34-35). Once private or personal affairs have

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3. There are many excellent books on intelligence tradecraft: Olson’s *To Catch a Spy* and Schulsky, Schmitt’s *Silent Warfare* and Alexander Orlov’s *Handbook of Intelligence and Guerilla Warfare*.

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4. Baker has her named Anfisa Krynninaya, while most Russian sources call her Anna Krynnina. There are several versions of the Zarubin biography/story.

become public, an opposing intelligence organization has someone who has turned themselves into a target.

Third, there is very little written about what the intelligence services opposing the Soviets thought of Soviet *agentura*'s activities, discipline and trade-craft (especially the KMT or CCP). This research will demonstrate that the Soviet agents really dodged a proverbial "Japanese bullet to head." Some of the most fervent anti-Soviet groups in Manchuria such as the Brotherhood of Russian Truth had been so degraded that once they were penetrated by the OGPU, they simply disbanded. The IJA tried to organize a White Russian united army in Manchuria (to oppose Soviet incursions), but they and their factions fought one another so fiercely that this idea was dropped (Stephan 1978, 121, 190).

The Kwantung Army (and IJA) had a military intelligence department (the 2nd Section) and an ultranationalist subdivision called *Tokumu Kikan*. But *Tokumu Kikan* and the 2nd Section (of the IJA) planned few if any retaliatory campaigns targeting Soviet operatives in Manchuria. There is no mention of Japanese counter-intelligence operations against the Soviets in Manchuria beyond "monitoring" (Stephan 1978, 194-199, Llewelyn 2021, 5). *Tokumu Kikan* did put approximately 200 operatives on the Manchurian-Russian border observing and collecting information after Soviet border measures had tightened (Llewelyn 2021, 9).<sup>5</sup> These, however, are not the "active measures" which one would expect from a secret society whose many Nakano School graduates were trained to infiltrate and sabotage.

Instead, Japanese intelligence (the 2nd Section including *Tokumu Kikan*) was more concerned about penetrating the USSR with its operatives, destroying Chinese resistance (asymmetric war and partisans) and raising profits through vice in Manchuria. The 2nd Section's main focus was on opium production, distribution and growing their profits for a select group of military leaders and Japanese industrialists. From opium, they branched out into other lucrative, lateral vice industries such as gambling and prostitution. Both *Tokumu Kikan* and *Kempeitai* (the military police) operated vice dens and establishments through

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5. *Tokumu Kikan* began using passive measures of HUMINT collection once the Soviets tightened their border surveillance and control. This was around 1929-1930 per this author based on various interviews with Soviet Koreans. One Korean had mentioned crossing to Manchuria in 1924 and back to the USSR in 1926 without any major inconveniences. A second interviewee, Konstantin Ten, informed this author that in 1930, he and his mother crossed into Manchuria and back to the USSR in 1930. The border patrol and border checks were quite severe. They had to call a relative in the District Communist Party (*RaiKom*) to be allowed back into the USSR.

Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Russian figureheads (Stephan 1978, 61, 64-67). At least, the Soviets kept true to the mission. Japan's intelligence operatives in Manchuria went far off-course a la Colonel Kurtz (instead of intelligence, they focused on vice operations and the ensuing profits) while still proclaiming "Asia for Asians."

Soviet operatives from time to time were being followed and their conspicuous lifestyles, public quarrels and displays of passion only made it easier for the "Far Eastern" operatives to know definitively their habits and haunts. Regarding Chinese retaliation against Soviet *agentura*, the KMT and CCP were receiving too much aid (military, industrial, direct aid monies) and advisors to attack Soviet operatives (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 285-passim; Snow 2023, 206-passim). The other Manchurian "volunteer" armies were too poorly funded and equipped to have a substantial intelligence division (Mitter 2000, 197). We will now examine the origins of the INO (the foreign department).

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### THE ORIGINS OF THE INO, CHEKA (GPU, OGPU, NKVD)

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In the previous subsections, the INO, Cheka was created by Felix Dzerzhinsky on Dec. 20, 1920. INO stands for "Foreign Department." The INO conducted intelligence work abroad using typically three types of intelligence agents: the legal agent (under diplomatic cover), the non-diplomatic (cover) agent (typically as part of some sort of Soviet advisor, trade specialist, technical aid advisor, etc.) and finally, an illegal who assumes the guise of a native of the particular country with all sorts of forged documents, birth certificates and a vetted legend (backstory). The "natural" is simply a more refined and advanced version of the illegal but utilizes the USSR's national minorities to play the role with far greater linguistic and cultural finesse. Hence, the "natural" possesses far more cover.

In the first four to five years after the establishment of the INO, much of the focus of the INO, Cheka and INO, OGPU was to infiltrate and destroy anti-Soviet groups abroad focusing on various Whites, Monarchist, Russian Fascist and anti-Soviet militarist groups and those formed by Ukrainian nationalists (formed by Eastern Slavs, Jews, Poles) (Leggett 1981, 297-298). By 1925, the INO began a greater focus on forward operations, that is, active measures (Andrew

and Mitrokhin 2000, 46-50, esp. 50). This leads us to the “naturals,” an advanced type of illegal.

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## THE “NATURALS”

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As we saw earlier, among the “Russians,” there were very few who had thorough knowledge of the East Asian languages (including knowledge of slang, various dialects and registers). The Soviet INO worked almost exclusively with developing informants and agents from among the “Russians” in Manchuria. They received information that was often tainted with very little depth and from agents who were working several political sides. This remained the case despite bringing in the EASI because of the issue of trust. The EASI were typically the 2nd choice in Soviet active measures in Manchuria. Their activities were mostly short, discrete operations or directives. Operations in China proper and Korea were a different case. There the EASI shined. The Soviets always preferred to use their “Russians” despite the EASI having better natural cover (linguistic, cultural and by phenotype). (Interviews with the families of Ven Sian Liu, Nikolai Kuzmich Khan and the 7th family of an EASI).

From the historical record, it would make sense that the Soviets first began using Soviet Poles, Germans and Jews as their “naturals (illegals)” throughout Europe. All three were far better integrated and trusted within Soviet society than the East Asians. Yiddish speakers who learned German could speak it with little to no accent considering that Yiddish is a Western Germanic language. Historically, there was a case of an INO operation led by Lieutenant William Fisher (a German, also known as Willie Fisher) and



Figure 4 – Four Koreans who participated in the 1929 Sino-Soviet Conflict (for the Soviets). Front row – L-R – Khan Chan Ger (Grigorii E.) and O Son Muk. Back row – L-R – Kan San Chu and Li In Seb. Khan and Li are wearing their OGPU (political police) uniforms. Kan and O are wearing Red Army uniforms. Photo taken in late 1929 in Nikolsk-Ussuriisk. Courtesy of Sergei Osonmuk (grandson of O Son Muk).

Captain Adamovich (a Soviet Pole) leading a similar group of agents throughout Ukraine, Poland and Germany to stir up anti-German sentiment (Sudoplatov and Sudoplatov 1994, 106-107).

Finally, it would behoove researchers in intelligence studies to conduct new studies on the Soviet Poles and Germans in Soviet intelligence. Polish intelligence was extremely active from 1920 to the end of WWII. For example, they (through the Promethean movement) penetrated and gained some support in the German areas of Silesia and East Prussia’s Masurian areas. (Silesians and Masurians are of Polish ancestry, who to different degrees were Germanized). The Soviets would have sent their INO agents to counter Polish and the Abwehr’s operations through double agents and false fronts. These operations would have been intriguing—tactically and operationally. It is not too late for a researcher to conduct fieldwork, interviews and to collect photos. All of this is time consuming, challenging and at times, tedious or frustrating—much like that of real intelligence collection. It is time now to examine the work and operations of the EASI in the Far East (RFE and Asia).

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## THE ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE INO, EASI

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What were the activities and functions of the EASI in the INO? They performed much of the same work as the other Soviet operatives. They destroyed valuable civil infrastructure, committed assassinations of foreign enemies, spies and socio-political targets and stole documents, ciphers and cipher books. During the Sino-Soviet War of 1929, the EASI helped the Soviet army secure the various stations along the CER (Chinese Eastern Railway) and interrogate Chinese prisoners of war and those suspected of siding with the Chinese. Li and Khan were two of the first beneficiaries of this war (figure 4) as they first began working for the OGPU in 1929. Lastly, the EASI would also help to recruit informants at each railway station and in the villages that it served. These are the duties that Van In Zun performed during his service in 1929 (Kivalova 2021, Buiakov 2008, 317-318). Lenintsev also took part in the 1929 conflict interrogating Chinese prisoners of war under the command of Vasili Blukher (also spelled Blucher).

Some Koreans had also grown up in China, primarily in the Chientao region such as Vasili Ti (known as Ti Khai Ir) who was fluent in Chinese, Korean and

Russian (Chang 2016, 172-173). Grigorii E. Khan had also spent 1-2 years in living in Manchuria and had learned some basic spoken Chinese. But he could communicate in written Chinese because prior to 1945, Koreans were using Chinese characters (Interview with Vladislav V. Khan 2023). Others would serve as spies travelling deep into Korea or China proper to make sure that, for example, the communist organization of a city, the Red cells and or Red peasant unions (Yoo 1974) were running smoothly, that the leadership core understood the Comintern directives and had adequate funds and literatures (pamphlets, articles). These were some of the duties of Lenintsev in 1930 in Shanghai (Staff Writer 2012).

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## CONCLUSION

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This study has analyzed the weaknesses of the SPP which led the INO to begin employing a greater number of “naturals” beginning around 1927. The EASI (“naturals”) served admirably for many missions of the type described above to 1937-38 (the deportations of the Soviet Chinese and Koreans) and after (see the case of Ven Sian Liu). The EASI and their missions exonerated the diaspora nations from the charges by the Stalinist regime and by the Russian and Western “revisionist” academics who claim that the USSR practiced “real” socialism without racism, that the Koreans and Chinese had not shown “complete loyalty,” that they were fifth columnists at heart and that the Soviet nationalities deportations were a historically valid and normal method if measured in “proper comparison”<sup>6</sup> (Martin 1998, 840, 860; Park 2019, 243-245, see esp. 244fn34; Bone 2003, 264<sup>7</sup>). Park’s argument of “proper comparison” in order to validate ethnic cleansing (the 1937 deportation) and absolve the USSR is not tenable. It simply denigrates the Soviet Koreans.

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6. See Park 2019, p. 245. “do not dismiss ...” also “19th century.” Park’s argument is that of “proper comparison” based on Bone’s and other revisionists’ arguments.

7. Bone on p. 264 makes the argument that the Koreans underwent an “ethnicized population transfer” but not “ethnic cleansing” because the latter requires “directed violence.” Forcibly removed from home (5177 miles by train, RFE-to-Tashkent), sitting on the steppe with no shelter (a mud dugout), no food by decree and deaths: camp deaths, execution, excess deaths, and suicide. These are all examples of directed violence. The Soviets produced a profoundly inequitable, non-Marxist form of socialism. The Western Marxists/revisionists (including former Soviet citizens) living purely off of Western economics demand that we see even the atrocities of the Soviet system as somehow being equitable, progressive and normal (normalized through their writing/lens). Their arguments are formed by an over-reliance on theoretical and intellectual positions. The fatal flaw is stubborn intellectualism (the ivory tower) which prevents them from even trying to walk in the shoes of those that they describe (Chang 2019, “Ethnic Cleansing ...”).

The photos in this article also refute the arguments of the scholars above. They show Soviet East Asians who fought for Russia (or the Soviets) in WWI, the Russian Civil War and the 1929 War. All of the men in figures 3 and 4 fought in the 1929 Sino-Soviet Conflict. There were one-to-four thousand like them especially in the OKDVA<sup>8</sup> (Chang 2016, 197-198, 203 for Powell, John B.). The Soviet state knew this, but not the revisionists. The Soviet Koreans and Chinese had shown “total and complete loyalty” but were still deported.

After this lesson, they understood that the more they relied on their leaders (Soviet or post-Soviet), the higher the chance of being disappointed and or feeling totally dejected. They understood that every ten to twenty years, there would always be a major upheaval or purge so why not just work the land, smile at your neighbors, eat slowly (and heartily) and try to get a good night’s sleep. This was their gold. “We knew that we were good people, hardworking, smart no matter what the tyrant did or said [Stalin].” This I learned from several years spent on Soviet Korean collective farms.

Returning to the “natural,” this spy was always a higher grade of agent-officer than the “trained illegal.” Only the former was capable of building durable networks of influence and information. In June 2010, there was a high-profile arrest of ten illegals who were sleeper (long-term) spies in the United States. Noticeably, all ten were “trained illegals” and not “naturals.” Their “legends” of not being Russians depended heavily upon inducing a “suspended state of reality” with their neighbors and friends because all had noticeable Russian accents, mannerisms and incongruities that just did not add up (see esp. Khrushcheva quote, Corera 2020, 92-93). An example is the Murphy family where the father had supposedly been born in Philadelphia. It would seem very odd to explain his Russian accent as a variant of an Irish brogue. Anna Chapman rarely explained anything to her friends and suitors (Corera 2020, 92-93). Notably, none of the “trained illegals” had collected anything substantial.

The question remains, “why were none of Russia’s ‘naturals’ arrested?” The answer is that those “naturals” had already taken legal cover and foreign passports to exert influence which ably demonstrates that there are always refinements and advances in the world’s oldest profession.

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8. OKDVA signifies the Far Eastern Red Army.

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