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(SOVIET INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY)
Col A.N. OVCHINNIKOV

Source: A clandestine source of established authenticity

Date of Information: May 1955 - April 1956

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report, based on information available from this source as of 11 Apr 58, is one of a series on senior military intelligence and KGB officers in East Germany.

II. BACKGROUND

- 2. Full Name: X Aleksei Nikolaevich OVCHINNIKOV
- Rank: Colonel
- Date of Birth: Estimated between 1905 and 1910
- Residence in USSR: Probably RIGA (see para 35)
- Assignment: Chief, Operations Detachment, BERLIN-KARLSHORST, subordinate to the Intelligence Directorate, HQ, GSFG.
- 3. Wife: Taissiya Sergeevna.
- Children: Elder son, name not known, at educational establishment in USSR in 1956. Small son, Nikolai Alekseevich ("Kol'ka"), born after 1946; with OVCHINNIKOV in DDR.

4. Family Details: OVCHINNIKOV referred to his "small son" in March 1956. This son had been in hospital for three weeks and was still seriously ill with bronchitis and a lung condition which OVCHINNIKOV described as verging on tuberculosis. In fact, he added, the doctors could tell him nothing conclusive but the boy had already tions, 30 of which were streptomycin.

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Comment:

OVCHINNIKOV is probably identical with the "friendly colonel from KARLSHORST" encountered by a BRITMIS officer at the Red Army Day reception held at the Soviet Embassy, BERLIN, on 23 Feb 56. The Colonel's opening gambit, on the 40 penicillin and streptomycin injections for pneumonia in the backside of his six-year-old son, was vintage OVCHINNIKOV. His subsequent mention of a 19-year-old son, who was at a secondary technical school, and who had been refused military service owing to a blood condition, lends support to this identification.

5. In April the GSEFG Intelligence Directorate (Razvedyvatel'noe Upravlenie: RU) requested a personal report on his elder son from the latter's educational establishment. This had to be produced before he could come to the DDR for the holidays.

6. Education and Accent: OVCHINNIKOV is not a well educated man. His vocabulary is limited and he is liable to mispronounce words. He speaks with a strongly pronounced North Russian (North of MOSCOW) accent.

7. Pseudonym and Photograph: On or about 16 Apr 56 OVCHINNIKOV revealed his possible use of a pseudonym apparently in connection with a function at which British personnel were present and which possibly took place on 10 April. He related, with some amusement, that he had received a compliment from the "British Sector". This consisted of a photograph of himself at "the reception", walking just behind, but not in step with, Maj Gen P.A. DIBROVA, Commandant, Soviet Garrison, BERLIN. It had been addressed personally to "Col VOL'SKII" and came from the "P.R. Photo Section, HQ BERLIN, British Forces Post Office No 45, Photo No 2020-1". A copy of this photograph, bearing the same number (2020-1) as given by OVCHINNIKOV, is attached as Appendix A.

8. Health: While discussing his son's illness, OVCHINNIKOV said that he hadn't been to a doctor for 47 or 49 years. Allowing for exaggeration, this still indicates an impressive constitution and certainly absolves him from any hypochondriacal tendencies.

9. Recreations: Hunting, including game bird shooting.

10. Languages: There is evidence that OVCHINNIKOV had a knowledge of German and spent some time "working at the language". He was able to read out newspaper headlines but his standard did not, apparently, extend to fluency since he confused the German word for "Friday" with that for "Thursday".

11. Career: OVCHINNIKOV's length of service in the DDR is not known to source, but while complaining about the shortage of transport, he once commented that there was no shortage when "TRUSOV was here". (Lt Gen N.M. TRUSOV was former Chief, RU, HQ, GSEFG, and was replaced by Maj Gen A.E. CHECHENTSEV in May 1955). In August 1955 Lt Col S.F. SARATOVITSEV was due to be replaced after having been "with OVCHINNIKOV for five years"; his service was probably, but not necessarily, exclusive to Germany.

12. OVCHINNIKOV's feelings about promotion were probably being voiced by inference in a sarcastic remark he made in April 1956. In general this was directed towards persons complaining about their lot, and by taking their viewpoint, he remarked, he himself could say: "For the love of God, I've been going around for 14 years [presumably as a

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Colonel] and they haven't made me a general yet".

13. A minor sidelight on OVCHINNIKOV was that he tended to show a little more mechanical and technical aptitude than some of his colleagues, other than the technicians. For example, he discovered and subsequently pointed out a fault on a telephone set, and he was able to elaborate on the breakdown of a vehicle due to "a blown gasket in the engine block."

IV. CHARACTER, EFFICIENCY, and OPINIONS.

14. OVCHINNIKOV had an irascible nature which was evidenced in source material time and again. He was polite normally but, when irritated by what he considered to be inefficiency or highhandedness, he could be openly abusive to junior officers. For example, Lt Col MIKHALEV (Deputy Chief, RU Detachment, ERFURT) appeared to have been reduced to a state of timidity by OVCHINNIKOV. Having left the latter's office he telephoned Col V.I. SMIRNOV, Chief, Operations Department, RU, HQ, GSFG, from other premises and was asked the reason for this move. He admitted to SMIRNOV: "I feel shy there because I don't know him well". SMIRNOV instructed him to return to OVCHINNIKOV's office; the ensuing conversation between OVCHINNIKOV and SMIRNOV seemed to justify his forebodings, bringing forth insulting remarks such as "He [MIKHALEV] is standing opposite me and ... is fidgeting", and "fat, like MIKHALEV". On another occasion OVCHINNIKOV was extremely annoyed at the "insolence" shown by Col I.P. IVONOV and Maj I.E. SOKOLOV, of the RU Detachment, SCHWERIN, in going over his head to SMIRNOV in order to borrow his transport.

15. In his dealings with superior officers he was respectful but showed a persistence sometimes amounting to aggression when pressing his point of view -- so much so that Maj Gen A.E. CHECHENTSEV (Chief, RU, HQ, GSFG) hung up during a telephone conversation in which OVCHINNIKOV argued the point about availability of transport. On another occasion, when OVCHINNIKOV was protesting against the allocation of his transport to a visiting general, CHECHENTSEV said: "Let's not haggle over it and spoil good relations on account of such a trifling matter".

16. Behind the backs of his superiors OVCHINNIKOV was unusually inclined toward making derogatory remarks about them. A study of source material reveals, however, that he was an inveterate and outspoken grumbler, easily provoked to sarcasm. This fact should therefore be taken into account when considering the examples given below.

17. Both Gen N.P. PETROV and Col V.M. EREMLIN, members of an inspecting commission from Training Department, Main Intelligence Directorate, came under fire from OVCHINNIKOV. On hearing that neither of them had appeared at training for reasons of sickness and that EREMLIN had also gone shopping, he commented: "One is a loafer and the second is his assistant".

18. OVCHINNIKOV's opinion of his chief was summed up at the end of a bitter complaint he made against conflicting instructions and the general organization of an operation. "Andrei Egorovich [CHECHENTSEV]", he told another RU officer, "can stay away on leave for the rest of his life for all I care. It makes no difference to me who they make chief there, the business will get done quicker".

19. OVCHINNIKOV also appeared resentful of what he evidently considered to be arbitrary action on the part of Maj Gen P.N. CHEKMAZOV.

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(Chief, Military Intelligence Liaison Unit, BERLIN). Not only had CHEKHAZOV proposed a plan without stating the reasons, said OVCHINNIKOV, but "he is teaching us our job over this".

20. In December 1955 ZLOCHEVSKII (see Para 35) was not spared castigation when he failed to consult OVCHINNIKOV on the preparation of a plan. And at a later date (March 1956) OVCHINNIKOV remarked "in confidence" to Col E.A. YULUSOV, Deputy Chief, RU, that he considered that there was "nothing for ZLOCHEVSKII to do here but play the fool".

21. It is probably fair to say that OVCHINNIKOV possessed in full measure the line officer's traditional hostility, or at least grudge, against the administrative side. In this connection he appeared frequently antagonistic toward Col V.G. PISKUNOV, Chief, Personnel Department, RU, HQ, GSPG. His discussions with PISKUNOV therefore were often acrimonious, and during the course of one of them he accused PISKUNOV of delay, with the reminder that CHEKHEMISEV had said: "Don't work staff hours, but work as long as necessary, even 24 hours a day". He finished off by taunting PISKUNOV with the remark: "Don't you know anything?"

22. The long-suffering PISKUNOV was, however, in his own way apparently censuring OVCHINNIKOV's staff work when he told him that he had received several officers' personal reports from him but that he still had to look over them and reject or forward them. OVCHINNIKOV thereupon complained that he had to keep on re-writing his reports which were returned from PISKUNOV. PISKUNOV explained that he didn't always have all the information at hand necessary to complete a report, and therefore they had to be altered as additional information came in. OVCHINNIKOV replied that he didn't keep officers' reports lying around on his desk, but dealt with them immediately -- and he had none there at that moment.

23. PISKUNOV's strictures may well have been justified since it was clear that OVCHINNIKOV had little liking for office routine and paper work. For instance, on the strength of his various commitments, including training exercises, he objected to having to submit a quarterly progress report, when he visited directorate on 21 Mar 56. After an argument with Col V.G. BORISOV (Operations Department, RU, HQ, GSPG) he summed up his attitude by stating: "All that remains for us to do is to compile reports for the chiefs, which is a genuine punishment". He then described his work as not "real work" but a continual round of reports. The chiefs should have asked for the information when they visited him.

24. A month later, OVCHINNIKOV was still struggling with reports. He admitted to Col SMIRNOV, in effect, that certain material required by CHEKHEMISEV for a conference on 26 Apr 56 had not been finished as he had only just concluded working out the 10-day period reports -- "and there has been all sorts of other work to do".

25. Col SMIRNOV also criticised OVCHINNIKOV; for having wrong ideas on the procedure for approving certain internal documents, particularly as regards W/T programmes. He pointed out that OVCHINNIKOV had taken upon himself the approval of documents, and this was contrary to instructions in his (OVCHINNIKOV's) possession. SMIRNOV added that it was a most difficult thing to do; he himself never approved documents as he did not know enough about it.

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26. OVCHINNIKOV's reaction to the need for drawing up a new operations plan for 1956, which he was to help to prepare, left no doubt as to his opinion of the usefulness of this exercise. He said that in any case they would repeat the 1955 plan in 1956. It was always like that -- "we write out a plan and then we don't act in accordance with it." Even a simple matter like the holding of musters was never carried out in the manner proscribed in the plan; everyone did things as he liked.

27. OVCHINNIKOV was uncharitable and uncooperative towards visitors and attached personnel who burdened him with additional administrative tasks. For instance, Col M.M. SMIRNOV and his inspection commission from the Main Intelligence Directorate were "an infernal nuisance", and Capt 1st Rank A.A. UL'YANOV (Chief, Naval Intelligence Unit, BERLIN) and his staff were "parasites". He had no intention of paying his respects to UL'YANOV -- in fact, he could "go to hell" as far as OVCHINNIKOV was concerned.

28. After having relayed instructions about transport and passes for a visiting general OVCHINNIKOV received the acknowledgement -- "Very good, comrade chief". This evoked the sour response: "Why 'very good'? I am an orderly myself".

29. OVCHINNIKOV also showed little patience with activities which he considered impractical. He was highly critical of a directive which required him to set up a commission for examining, inter alia, the state of his own unit's finances. He thought it ludicrous that he should have to check up on himself, or, worse still, that one of his own subordinates should check up on him. He suggested it would be more sensible if a commission were set up by RU to examine his financial affairs, particularly since all his documents were there anyway.

30. He also reacted strongly to the suggestion made by Col F.M. MOCHAILOV (Chief, Political Department, RU, HQ, GSFG), that he should organise some tickets for the DDR Writers' Conference which was taking place from 12 to 14 Jan 56. He could see no sense in it, "we have no connections with writers, writers are difficult for me." No amount of cajoling by MOCHAILOV could induce OVCHINNIKOV to change his point of view. He felt that the whole thing was impractical for him "as they talk over questions which we cannot properly appraise all sorts of metaphors and similar things." He did not wish to lose an officer's time with no results. Continuing in this vein he said that something like this came up every day, but he couldn't do everything. With the final observation that he "could not cover the entire country", OVCHINNIKOV abruptly broke off the conversation.

31. Two officers nevertheless were detailed to attend the conference, and one of them was Lt Col N.G. AGAPITOV from OVCHINNIKOV's detachment. OVCHINNIKOV was able to report only indifferent results to Col V.I. SMIRNOV. When the latter enquired whether there was any sense in attending this conference, OVCHINNIKOV appeared to be somewhat vindictive and, true to form, said that from the very beginning he could not see the point of it.

32. In general, these blunt criticisms by OVCHINNIKOV of his superiors, colleagues, and their arrangements, were openly expressed in an earthy and sometimes profane manner. He lacked wit and his humour was usually confined to crudities.

33. That OVCHINNIKOV on the other hand could be objective was shown by his handling of allied servicemen detained in the DDR. In the case of a British soldier arrested after crossing the border in a

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drunken state, OVCHINNIKOV reported that everything he told them was already known and he had refused to answer any questions about training exercises and weapons. He was asking to be released and as far as OVCHINNIKOV could see there seemed to be no particular reason for harassing the fellow any more, and he recommended the soldier's release.

34. OVCHINNIKOV displayed the same attitude towards the detention of an American master sergeant who had been involved in a car accident in East BERLIN. The American refused to give any detailed information about his unit, and since the East German authorities would start an investigation about the accident and the facts of the case would become known, OVCHINNIKOV considered that there was no point in pursuing the matter.

V. MOVEMENTS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

35. OVCHINNIKOV departed on leave on 6 Oct 55 and returned to work on 24 November. On 15 November he was in RIGA (1), where "by chance" he met Col G. Ya. ZLOCHEVSKII (believed to be in the Naval Intelligence Department, Main Intelligence Directorate). OVCHINNIKOV complained that as a result of this meeting he had learned for the first time about an operational matter which would concern both himself and ZLOCHEVSKII in BERLIN. He added that he had subsequently spoken to Lt Gen A.V. ROMANOVSKII (Chief, Security Directorate, Main Intelligence Directorate) and criticised this operation.

36. For the five days from 16 to 20 Jan 56 OVCHINNIKOV stayed at RU, HQ, GSFG. During this period he frequently contacted his subordinates at KARLSHORST on day-to-day matters, and incoming telephone calls for him appeared to be routed via Maj Gen A.E. CHECHETSEV (Chief, RU). Col M.C. BELOV (Chief of another RU Element in KARLSHORST) also spent these five days at the directorate. This detached duty may have been for instructional or briefing purposes since, when OVCHINNIKOV remarked to an unidentified officer that he was "being worked" from 11 o'clock every day, the latter jokingly replied that OVCHINNIKOV would be a gery learned man and "we will be left behind you".

37. On 11 Feb 56 at 1800 hrs OVCHINNIKOV attended a reception at which wives were also present. The exact nature and venue of this reception (for which OVCHINNIKOV took an 80-kilometer trip) was not known to source, but Col L.A. SERGEEV (Liaison Officer with Foreign Missions, POTSDAM and subordinate to the RU) appeared to be responsible for supplying the tickets, with a list of the people attending, and generally organising the receiving end in respect of transport and drivers. Col V.I. SMIRNOV was concerned with the despatch of a contingent from RU, HQ, GSFG, and he briefed OVCHINNIKOV and others on what they should occupy themselves with at the reception. In general it was considered better to send those "who have already been several times", so that less briefing would be necessary.

38. His presence at a function on 16 Apr 56 is described in para. 7.

VI. FRIENDS AND CONTACTS

39. There is little information available from source material on OVCHINNIKOV's personal friendships. As far as the service was concerned,

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(1) In April 1956 OVCHINNIKOV, during the course of a complaint about working conditions, remarked that he always had hope, "but you know it's better than sitting at home somewhere in RIGA".

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he appeared to get on best with Lt Col Yu. P. BUIKO (Operations Department, RU, HQ, GSFG) and Col V.I. SMIRNOV but there is no evidence to suggest that this involved any more than good professional relationships.

40. One remark passed in April 56 by OVCHINNIKOV (already referred to in Para 12), although ironically intended, perhaps infers that he has an influential contact. The remark was touched off when SMIRNOV explained that a woman safe-housekeeper wished to be transferred from OVCHINNIKOV's unit. She had no complaint against OVCHINNIKOV but it was a case of the conditions of her work. OVCHINNIKOV, in an attempt to make an analogy of his own position, said to SMIRNOV: "Well, I have this SUSLOV, an acquaintance, I will also go to him and say: 'For the love of God, I've been going around for 14 years and they haven't made me a general yet!' I will say SMIRNOV is not fixing me up; we will say he is a bad chief and transfer him!"

Comment: If this remark can be taken at its face value, the person concerned may be identical with Mikhail Andreovich SUSLOV, who was in the Secretariat of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and was elected to the Presidium in July 1955.

41. Another service colleague with whom OVCHENNIKOV appeared to be on friendly terms was Col Fedor Mikhailovich MOCHALOV, (Chief, Political Department, RU, HQ, GSFG). Knowing that OVCHENNIKOV was going on leave to MOSCOW at the beginning of October 55, he gave his own MOSCOW home telephone number, V-1-6197, to OVCHENNIKOV. The 1954 edition of the MOSCOW telephone directory lists F.M. MOCHALOV, 1 Leninski Pr. under this number.

42. On 17 Dec 55 a telephone call was booked for an OVCHENNIKOV to MOSCOW "D-7 2942 or D-1 8798". The 1954 MOSCOW telephone directory lists E.A. BAIKOV, 109 Leninskijskoe Shausee at D - 7 2942 and V.M. FASUN, 77 Maslovka Verkh. Ul., at D-1 8798, but neither of these persons has been traced by source in a military intelligence or other context.

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