

~~SECRET/NOFORN~~*A mark that will endure*

## THE PENKOVSKIY CASE

Leonard McCoy

The thought process which led GRU Colonel Oleg V. Penkovskiy to shift his personal loyalty from the USSR to the West may well have begun as early as 1955, while he was assigned to Ankara. It was there that the hypocrisy and dishonesty of the Soviet system first made a significant impact on him and his professional life. We do know that by the summer of 1960 he had made his decision and taken the first concrete step toward the West—he had prepared the letter and information which he planned to use to establish contact with American officials. Even so, if it is correct that it takes two to make a conspiracy, we would say that the Penkovskiy case began 12 August 1960, when the first communication from him reached CIA via two Indiana University students and the American Embassy, Moscow.

Penkovskiy had spotted the two students on a train in Kiev, identified their Moscow hotel, and intercepted them as they returned to the hotel from the American Exhibition in Sokolniki Park. He urged them to take his letter directly to the American Embassy, which they did.

Penkovskiy did not identify himself in his letter, but asserted his determination to break with communism and serve the West. He enclosed a report on the shootdown of the U-2 over Sverdlovsk on 1 May 1960 and a list of the graduates of the (GRU) Military Diplomatic Academy for 1960, with their language qualifications and future assignments; the list included 18 illegals. He inserted a clue to his identity: a photo taken in Ankara in 1955 which showed the US Army attache and himself, but with his face cut out of the picture.

CIA had records on GRU officers in Ankara in the mid-1950s from which a name might be extracted to match the missing face. The operational branch chief (and senior case officer on the US side throughout the operation) found and interviewed the two students, using a photo spread which included a picture of Penkovskiy. Both of them picked him out as their Moscow contact. This sounds easy enough, but one of the students was serving on the DEW Line. The senior case officer left Washington at close of business on a Friday night, journeyed to Anchorage, conducted the interview, and returned with the results by opening of business on Monday, after 60 continuous hours in the service of the taxpayer. This was a harbinger of the pace which the operation was to maintain.

Since Penkovskiy stated in his letter that he would be coming out to London in April 1961, CIA decided to bring MI-6 into the operation. Penkovskiy's next attempt to make contact with us—he gave a telephone number to two British businessmen and asked that they pass the number to the US Embassy in London—would probably have had this effect anyway.

On 10 January 1961 in Moscow Penkovskiy approached two Canadian diplomats who accepted his letter "for the Americans" and then called him to

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the Canadian Embassy to retrieve it. On 5 February 1961 an abortive attempt to let Penkovskiy know that his messages had been favorably received was made in Moscow by telephone. Unfortunately, the inexperienced and linguistically limited junior officer who placed the call from a public phone was incomprehensible to Penkovskiy. The officer had disobeyed instructions, changed the text of the message, and was brought home short of tour and fired.

Meanwhile, Penkovskiy turned to British businessman Greville Wynne as his go-between with the West, and on 6 April in Moscow he handed Wynne a thick packet of documents for Wynne to take out with him to London. When Wynne turned those documents over to MI-6, the joint operation to run Penkovskiy became established fact.\*

### Clandestine Meetings

MI-6 advised CIA of Penkovskiy's impending arrival in London at the head of a six-man Soviet trade delegation, and CIA dispatched two case officers to London to coordinate the operational plan with MI-6. The British assigned counterpart officers as their operational team. In addition, MI-6 appointed a senior "R" officer (military reports and requirements specialist) to the team. CIA did the same, sending me from the Soviet Division Reports Staff to provide substantive support to the American side of the team. By the time Penkovskiy brought his group back to London from the Leeds-



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Birmingham industrial tour (where Penkovskiy was met twice); the operational meeting series, which was to include 17 clandestine meetings in London, was on a firm foundation.

On the day the joint operational team returned to London from the north, the London newspapers were filled with the story of the arrest and arraignment of George Blake, the MI-6 officer who had been recruited by the KGB in a North Korean prison camp, if not earlier (he was MI-6 representative in Seoul

\* Most overt accounts of the Penkovskiy case are based on the two books by Greville Wynne, *The Man From Moscow* and *The Man From Odessa*. Unfortunately, much of Wynne's account is fictitious. Considering the personal sacrifice which he made (18 months in a Soviet prison), no one begrudges him whatever proceeds he received from his books, although MI-6 was quite upset that he wrote anything at all. Having violated the Official Secrets Act, Wynne thought it best to retire to Majorca. His story of MI-6 having spotted and begun to develop Penkovskiy as early as 1955, when Penkovskiy was assigned to Ankara, is fantasy. An even worse bit of apocrypha is the anecdote about Penkovskiy (and Wynne) meeting President Kennedy in the White House. This intriguing (and totally false) account has been used by other writers who purport to describe highlights of the Penkovskiy case. For example: *Her Majesty's Secret Service*, by Christopher Andrew, and *Secrets of the Service*, by Anthony Glees.

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when the North Koreans overran the city in June 1950). Contrary to overt information, Blake actually confessed to his old friend, the senior MI-6 officer on the Penkovskiy case.

Most of the meetings with Penkovskiy were held in the Mount Royal Hotel, where the three American officers, Penkovskiy, and his Soviet group stayed. While the hotel is on Oxford Street between Selfridge's and Marble Arch, its entrance is on the side street north of Oxford Street. One of the Americans served as primary handler and interlocutor. The other three officers would interject questions or comments. Substantive questions were prepared by the reports/requirements officers and discussed with the case officers prior to each meeting. Much of the time of the first series of London meetings was spent hearing out Penkovskiy's story and establishing his personal and documentary access. Considerable time was also spent working out future communications procedures for contact with him in Moscow.

Not everything was so rational. One of the most difficult meetings occurred at the beginning of the series, when Penkovskiy presented his plan for taking Moscow, and the Soviet leadership, hostage. He proposed deploying 29 small nuclear weapons in random fashion throughout Moscow in suitcases or garbage cans. We were to provide him the weapons, instruct him in welding them into the bottoms of standard Moscow garbage cans, and provide him with a detonator to be activated at our direction. Only with difficulty was Penkovskiy persuaded that such a plan was impractical. The low state-of-the-art in nuclear-weapon miniaturization was the key to Penkovskiy's eventual acceptance of our lack of enthusiasm.

Penkovskiy was working at a furious pace. The Soviet group was supposed (b)(1) to collect all it could during the visit to London, and he had personal GR(b)(3)(n) requirements to satisfy. [redacted]

[redacted] and he was to collect a metal sample off the floor of a particular mill in the north of England. [redacted] (b)(1)  
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A more troublesome, and time-consuming, requirement which was at least as important for the long-term success of the operation was the voluminous list of personal requests which Penkovskiy had brought with him. Among these items were several pairs of shoes, each request accompanied by a drawing of the feet of the lady requiring the shoes. Penkovskiy also had to buy suitable souvenirs for family, friends, superiors, and official contacts. MI-6 assigned an operations officer and clerical support to fill Penkovskiy's combined shopping lists while he was escorting his group, meeting with Soviet Embassy personnel, and meeting with his Anglo-American case officers. Had the KGB focused on the huge collection of items which Penkovskiy took back to Moscow with him, there would have been questions as to when he had time to make the purchases and where he got the money. We split this cost with MI-6.

An example of the fortuitous events which occurred during the operation to enhance Penkovskiy's prestige and intimidate any potential critic of his behavior took place just before he left for London. The GRU chief, Ivan Serov, called Penkovskiy in to say that his own wife and daughter were going to

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London as tourists, and he would appreciate it if Penkovskiy would look out for them. This Penkovskiy did, commenting later that Serov's daughter had played footsy with him in the car from the airport to their hotel in London. While in London, Penkovskiy visited the grave of Karl Marx, in Highgate Cemetery, only to find it overgrown with weeds and a collecting place for debris. He reported this to the Central Committee, was commended, and later faced some heat from the Soviet Embassy in London, which was reprimanded for this state of affairs.

Penkovskiy's personal requirements were for dental treatment and to meet some English ladies. MI-6 (with MI-5 help) met the requirements. Because of this kind of operational problem, and to arrange for technical monitoring of meetings as well as occasional surveillance/countersurveillance requirements, MI-5 had to be brought into the operation. This occasioned the request by Roger Hollis, then director of MI-5, for the name of the agent. While some authors have subsequently made much of this request, in light of accusations against Hollis that he was a Soviet agent, the request did not seem unreasonable at the time, and it is doubtful that MI-6 chief Dick White was surprised by this request, as some British writers have asserted.

There were incidents which tested the Americans' ingenuity. The first occurred in the north of England, when MI-6 plugged in its tape recorder only to find that the electrical system in the area was 50 cycle/220 volt DC instead of AC, which meant that the recorder would not function without a rectifier—not available on Sunday. At this point the senior American case officer pulled out his battery-powered Mohawk, saving the day. Back in London, while the entire team was meeting in the Mount Royal room which was being prepared by the MI-5 technician for meetings, there was a furtive knock on the door. The support team and technicians disappeared into the closet and Penkovskiy entered the room very excited and anxious. The desk clerk had handed him a telephone message with only a number and request to call. Since he had no reason to expect a call, and the number was not the Soviet Embassy, he was disturbed. The team left the hotel to have dinner at the Lyons' Corner House across the street. A British officer stopped at the bank of telephones to place a call to his command post, giving them the number in double talk and code. Meanwhile the team examined the number, on the Fleet Street exchange, and I suggested that it was a journalist. Another American officer recommended that we look up TASS in the phone book. The number was TASS—obviously wanting to interview the head of the Soviet delegation. Hours later came the reply from MI-5 confirming this discovery.

Many of the first series of London meetings ran late into the night/morning, with Penkovskiy sometimes becoming excited about his information and expressing his views about the Soviet system, his own organization, and his personal situation, as well as his advice to the West as to how to deal with the Soviets. A strong personal bond began to form between Penkovskiy and his case officers, a bond which well may have become Penkovskiy's secondary motivation for working hard to sustain a productive relationship. The team took the precaution of drinking nothing stronger than Rhine wine. Even so, the empty bottles accumulated in such a large pile that there was concern they might

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draw attention (and bring on a corkage fee). The American team members often would carry bags of these empty bottles out to the garbage cans in the alleys around the hotel.

Penkovskiy was a perfectionist. When he took training on the Minox camera, he mastered it rapidly and flawlessly, basking in the praise of the case officers—what did they expect? Learning the system for clandestine communication by radio, he showed the same aptitude. He manifested the same facility with the one-time pad for enciphered communications, even detecting a purposely introduced error. When he was asked to provide copies of the General Staff journal, *Military Thought*, and to look for the SECRET version of this publication (which we had learned of from Soviet Navy defector Nikolay Artamonov), he asked if we also wanted the TOP SECRET version. Of course we did, but we had never heard of it. This publication became one of his top-priority requirements, and he provided almost every copy of it, as well as the SECRET and RESTRICTED versions.

### **Moscow Contacts**

When Penkovskiy returned to Moscow in early May 1961, contact continued with him through Wynne and his first meeting with the wife of the MI-6 man in Moscow, who took her children to the park to receive a small box of candy from Penkovskiy, in which Minox cassettes were also concealed. From the American side, the difficulty was that we had lost our man in Moscow in October 1959, when he was arrested on a bus with GRU Lieutenant Colonel Petr Popov and declared PNG. His replacement did not arrive until the middle of 1962, though a more junior officer was in place in early 1961. The British capability was therefore preeminent at the time.

This Moscow situation led to an unfortunate confrontation arising from the uncoordinated use of a recognition signal tie clasp by the MI-6 man in Moscow at a reception. The reaction in Washington was that the British were trying to run away with the operation. I was in London at the time, visiting the various consumers of the Penkovskiy material to develop requirements to be used in the next series of meetings. Our COS called me in, handed me the CIA Headquarters cable of protest, and asked for an opinion. I stated that the protest was not entirely justified, as we were forced to rely on the judgment and initiative of the MI-6 man in Moscow, and that any consequence of the contact would redound to our mutual advantage. In other words, we should not make a major issue of the incident. Headquarters disagreed, so when our case officers arrived in London, a meeting with the MI-6 case officers was scheduled. After an initial exchange of the two sides' positions, the COS quickly terminated the meeting, declaring it a draw, and advising that it be put behind us so we could get on with the operation. While that was the course of action inevitably taken, some ill feeling generated by this incident and other minor events up to this point was to persist throughout the course of the operation.

Most of the meetings dealing with the operation were conducted in an oversized VIP conference area on the ground floor of 3 Carlton Gardens, overlooking Pall Mall and St. James Park. The activities were reviewing transcriptions of meeting tapes, extracting operational and intelligence infor-

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mation, interviews of the team by various senior MI-6 officials, and afternoon "tea" (sherry). By this time, MI-6 had withdrawn its "R" officer from the team and the reports-requirements function was turned over entirely to me, which meant that I was subsequently obliged to spend more time in London soliciting requirements and follow-up questions from British consumers to be assimilated into the lists of requirements prepared by American consumers.

One of the more amusing incidents occurred when one of the MI-6 transcribers emerged from the wine cellars where they were working on the meeting tapes to ask what to do with the name "Govnyuk", not further identified. Our principal Russian linguist was too modest to tell her that "Shithead" was not a family name even in Russian, so he told her to card him as G—. He is probably still in the records system, a mystery forever to analysts whose Russian was learned in polite circumstances.

The days were occupied with transcribing, discussing, transmitting, and evaluating the previous meeting's results, and preparing for the next meeting. The MI-6 officers reported each day to their superiors, and the American team exchanged high-precedence traffic with Headquarters. Two challenging incidents occurred during the London meetings. First, Penkovskiy gave Wynne a letter asking to meet the Queen of England and the President of the United States. A rapid exchange of cables with Headquarters resulted in an arrangement for him to meet Robert Kennedy, while MI-6 arranged for him to meet Lord Mountbatten, which meeting then took place. (Penkovskiy knew that we had once taken a GRU colonel illegal to the US for a quick meeting with the DDCI.) Then, Penkovskiy wished to be photographed in "his" British and American uniforms (once it had been tactfully explained to him that there was no such thing as a NATO uniform). The British dug up an ill-fitting colonel's uniform and our team borrowed a uniform from the Army attache. Because decorations had been sewn on the US uniform, the British protested that we had tried to curry favor with Penkovskiy by decorating him.

One of the major secondary responsibilities on the MI-6 side (besides filling Penkovskiy's requirements lists) was debriefing and briefing Greville Wynne. Wynne was not a very good businessman and an even worse candidate for the historic intelligence role which fate had conferred upon him. MI-6 did its best to initiate him into fundamental security and tradecraft methods. This was an impossible task, and his lack of experience and instinct for his role did some harm later. MI-6 would not permit us to pay Wynne anything, insisting that he was their responsibility.

### London and Paris

During the second series of 13 meetings in London, from 16 July to 7 August 1961, the routine proceeded very much as it had in the first series. It was complicated by the presence of another Soviet asset, in the entourage of Yuriy Gagarin (first man in space), who was met by another Soviet Division case officer, supported by me and a polygraph operator. In addition, MI-6 decided that the combination of language, personality, and expertise possessed by one of our case officers was an opportunity to attempt to get Soviet illegal "Gordon Lonsdale" (arrested January 1961) to talk. Our man visited Lonsdale in prison,

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but Lonsdale was uncooperative; he was already aware that a plan to trade him would be implemented as soon as the Soviets had the wherewithal (ironically, it turned out to be Greville Wynne).

The London series ended and preparations began almost at once for the Paris meetings. Penkovskiy would be attending the Paris trade fair in the fall. Before the Paris series, Penkovskiy was again met by Wynne and the MI-6 wife in Moscow, but now CIA also had an officer in place and began to exchange material with Penkovskiy at social events in Moscow. The communications procedures were continuously revised and expanded as circumstances changed and new opportunities arose.

The Paris meeting sequence did not begin auspiciously, primarily because Penkovskiy's arrival was delayed and because both of the British case officers and the American junior case officer were living in a two-bedroom safehouse apartment in the 16th Arrondissement in which they had to maintain a low profile. In addition, the MI-6 safehouse keeper, who passed as an engineer spending a few months in France, also lived next door, as did the MI-6 clerical support officer. Both of these officers had been involved in support of the operation in London, and were as outstanding in their ways as the two MI-6 case officers. The engineer went swimming in a floating pool in the Seine every day, and had gradually reached a point where he was fed up with the entire operational team. By the time I arrived in Paris (taking a room in a hotel up the street), the engineer was referring to his team as the "Amcraps" and the "Britshits", and there were bitter arguments between the two nationalities as to whose turn it was to take the Perrier bottles back to get the deposit and replenish the supply. At this point an excursion to Fontainebleau was finally negotiated, including a stop at the PX, and some of the hostility dropped off. At last, Penkovskiy came, Wynne met him, the trade fair was under way, and the operational meetings began.

The 12 Paris meetings were just as hectic as the two series in London. They ran from 20 September to 14 October 1961. After Wynne picked Penkovskiy up at Orly, they started off with a debriefing of Penkovskiy on the possibility of the Berlin confrontation turning into World War III. The nucleus of this report was a conversation which included the Soviet Defense Minister commenting to Penkovskiy's mother that there would not be a war. This occurred at the 60th birthday party of Penkovskiy's patron, Chief Marshal of Artillery Sergey Varentsov. (For Penkovskiy's use at this party, the British had persuaded a very reluctant British distiller to falsify the label on a 58-year-old bottle of brandy to show that it was 60 years old.) Khrushchev was present and told an anecdote presaging the building of the Berlin Wall. He said that when the barbed wire was put up first, the West would look at it like a sheep looking at a newly painted fence. Then, while we were still in doubt about what was going on, the wall would be put up, and so it went. The report was drawn up, transmitted to London and Washington, and helped to reduce the level of tension on the Western side. A SNIE was written in CIA, and the MI-6 "R" chief came right over to Paris with the European Controller to discuss the report, departing after a long session to brief the JIC that the report was well-founded and had to be weighed very seriously in the assessment of the international situation.

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In one of those unpredictable operational incidents, the meeting place chosen for picking Penkovskiy up in the evening had to be changed; it turned out that the trysting place for homosexuals was the same end of the Alexander III bridge we were using for clandestine meetings.

One evening, as the entire team of officers sat at an outdoor cafe on the Champs Elysees, opposite Fouquet's, I noticed Penkovskiy walking slowly, with a glum face, up the sidewalk toward the Etoile. He spotted the team and it appeared that he fully intended to come over and join the group. I nudged our case officer, who looked up, then walked into the alley at the side of the cafe. Penkovskiy followed. Our man explained to Penkovskiy why he could not join us, and they left the alley in opposite directions.

The Paris meetings took place during the height of the Algerian violence in France. One night during an operational meeting there was a strong explosion not far off, and when the dust settled it became known that a cafe at the bottom of the street in which the safehouse was located had been bombed by the OAS.

Processing of Penkovskiy's now voluminous material had begun in both London and Washington, but the emergency measures of drafting translators, mostly case officers, and trying to handle the material within the existing organizational structure clearly were inadequate to assure timely dissemination of the material according to its intelligence priority. We composed a cable to Washington proposing that a processing task force be established in London, under my supervision, with authority to draft any and all available language and clerical personnel needed for the project. The Washington reply was rapid and predictable—the task force would be established in Washington, all other conditions accepted as proposed. A British officer was instructed to serve as my deputy in the Washington task force, and the project was under way. Upon our arrival back in Washington, candidates for assignment to the task force had been identified, and the newly evacuated second floor of Alcott Hall was made available as a work area. A veteran Soviet operations officer and debriefer subsequently agreed to defer his retirement for two years to serve as the foreman and linguistic authority for the task force.

### **Inherent Risks**

After the Paris meeting series, as the operation entered into its internal USSR phase, another CIA case officer was brought in to handle the exchange of messages with Penkovskiy and coordination with the British. The operation continued at a frantic pace in Moscow. To be sure, it was Penkovskiy's fervor which drove this pace, but the inherent risks were raised continuously by the American side and acknowledged by the British side, although held by them to be inevitable. While some security concern was expressed by general agreement in the messages sent to Penkovskiy (written by the Americans and approved by the British side), all of us believed that there was no stopping Penkovskiy and that there was some logic to the argument that he was going to compromise himself sooner or later, and that we had best get all we could from him short of consciously assigning him tasks which would inevitably lead to his apprehension.



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The processing task force had by then moved to the second floor of Central Building and was directly involved in preparing those sections of operational messages dealing with substantive evaluation and requirements. In addition, we were preparing a summary (otsenka) of a book on the US space program which Penkovskiy wanted to have us translate for him so that he could present it to his superiors as his own work, thereby earning praise and points toward his promotion to general.

Upon Penkovskiy's return to Moscow, the primary meeting method was again contact with the wife of an MI-6 officer. She received materials from him in the park and during visits to the commission store. In all, she had 16 exchanges of material with Penkovskiy from October 1961 to the end of August 1962. During this same period, since it was customary for Penkovskiy to attend social functions involving foreign visitors of intelligence interest, he began to receive invitations from the British and American embassies (when appropriate, and along with other ranking officials of the State Committee for Scientific-Research Work where he worked under cover), where we could make contact with him and exchange materials. During the meetings at social events, Penkovskiy passed along 36 cassettes, along with letters containing both intelligence and personal notes, including the fact that additional trips abroad were being planned for him.

After his last meeting with the MI-6 officer's wife, on a side street, Penkovskiy reported in his next letter that she was under surveillance when they met. (In fact, Penkovskiy was under suspicion before this.) The KGB had detected a connection between the British woman and an unidentified Soviet, had dressed a decoy to test the woman's reaction to him, and confirmed from her reaction that she was engaged in suspicious activity with some Soviet man. Penkovskiy was identified as the man when the KGB followed him to his residence, where he lived among the cream of party and government officials. The KGB rented the apartment above Penkovskiy's and drugged him in a restaurant so that he could be kept in the hospital while they searched his apartment. The KGB then installed a silent camera in a flower pot and lowered it from the balcony to photograph Penkovskiy when the bugs indicated some activity on his part. They noted he was preoccupied with a certain area of his desk, which the KGB then searched to discover his cameras, cassettes, one-time pads, and messages which he had prepared to pass to us.

The last meeting with Penkovskiy was at a US Embassy reception on 5 September 1962, when Penkovskiy informed his US contact that he would pass material to him the next day at a British Embassy reception. Unfortunately our man was not an appropriate guest for that event; Penkovskiy attended, and that was the last we saw of him until his trial in May 1963. He did not use his invitations for social events on 13, 15, and 26 September. He probably was arrested during this period.

During the meetings with Penkovskiy in Paris in autumn 1961 we had given him an early warning signal to be used under three specific circumstances. He was to place a signal on a post which could be seen with binoculars from the American Embassy, the thought being that if the USSR did plan to attack the US, diplomats of the US and certain other countries might well be

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confined to their premises. One of the conditions was an operational emergency, requiring exfiltration of Penkovskiy (and his family). The other two were indications of imminent hostilities: first, that Penkovskiy knew, from information provided by individuals in a position to know (e.g. Chief Marshal Varentsov), that the USSR intended to attack the US in the near future; and second, that Penkovskiy had concluded from his own analysis of evidence collected among his official contacts from GRU preparations, and from changes in the activities of his cover organization that Soviet attack on the US was imminent. Rather than separate signals for each condition, there would be one signal—followed immediately by our using an asset with freedom of movement in Moscow to pick up a dead drop which Penkovskiy would have put down before making the signal, and which would explain the nature of the emergency.

On 2 November 1962, the emergency signal appeared on the post. COS Moscow sent a CRITIC message to CIA Headquarters while a Moscow Station officer was dispatched to pick up the dead drop. The warning signal was relayed to key officials in Washington, with the caution that its meaning was not necessarily that war was imminent, but that this was a possibility. Considering the international situation at the time, primarily the Cuban missile crisis, this warning had to be taken seriously. Within a few hours it became clear that the emergency was operational—Wynne had been arrested in Budapest the same day, and our case officer was arrested at the Pushkin Street dead drop site. The operation was over.

After his arrest, a plan was proposed to rescue Penkovskiy, using the threat of exposing certain sensitive information which would definitely have embarrassed the Soviet leadership enough to cause them to consider releasing Penkovskiy. This proposal was circulated throughout the management level of the Clandestine Service without any one placing a mark on it. It returned to the originator's desk in pristine condition, with oral word that the proposal had been disapproved.

### Impact

During the third week of October 1962, Penkovskiy's information on the deployment of the Soviet MRBM went into the *President's Daily Brief*. No doubt the information bearing on the launch readiness of the missiles was useful to the policymakers, but this most probably was not the most important impact of the Penkovskiy operation on the Cuban missile crisis. We may never know precisely, but the effect of Penkovskiy's arrest and interrogation in September/October 1962 within the Soviet Government and Party leadership must have been devastating. The KGB could not be sure just what Penkovskiy had passed to us. (When our officer was arrested at the dead drop site and asked to call his embassy, a senior KGB officer present asked, "Which goddamn embassy?" The Russians were thoroughly confused by Anglo-American cooperation in the case.) Penkovskiy could not himself have recalled all that he had passed, as we estimated that we had published 10,000 pages of English-language reports based on his materials. Had the KGB asked him if he had told us about missiles going into Cuba, he would have undoubtedly said he had, and he would have tried in every other way to exaggerate his reporting (not an easy thing to do,

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considering its sensitivity and volume) and make the worst case that he could for the KGB. He hated them. The KGB report to the Party leadership, i.e., to Khrushchev, at the height of the Cuban missile crisis, on the actual and possible damage done by Penkovskiy, must have undermined Khrushchev's confidence and resolve in his response to President Kennedy's challenge. The timing of Penkovskiy's arrest gave Kennedy the upper hand.

Another document provided by Penkovskiy also is known to have had an important bearing on President Kennedy's attitude toward Khrushchev and Kennedy's demeanor during the missile crisis. Kennedy had met Khrushchev in Vienna in June 1961, and Khrushchev had treated the American President like an inexperienced, incompetent, immature politician who barely deserved respect. Khrushchev's version of this meeting, reflecting this attitude, was disseminated to Central Committee members and other key Party officials. Penkovskiy got his hands on this letter and copied it. We disseminated it in limited form to the White House. The President found it most enlightening.

The immense volume of intelligence which Penkovskiy provided required efficient but careful processing and protection of the source. Since we had never seen copies of original TOP SECRET Soviet documents before (Popov's reports were hand-copied), we felt that their actual form would be of long-term value to analysts. When the first report was received from the documents Penkovskiy copied at the tactical rocket forces academy, the SR Division chief handed it to me and asked if it was bonafide. Its infinite detail was the only thing to go on—the designation SA-75 meant nothing at the time, although the performance characteristics and dimensions told us it had to be what we called the SA-2—the SAM first seen at Glau, East Germany in 1958 and later deployed throughout the USSR. (It was first photographed in the USSR by a legal traveler near Rostov; the site which brought down the U-2 on 1 May 1960 had been photographed by a legal traveler in 1959.) Our experts believed that the report was genuine, but had no conclusive proof. In discussing how we could go about publishing this and the other reports on tactical rockets/missiles which we expected to reach us soon, it was suggested that we place the reports in the

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[redacted] The mechanics were worked out, special code-words were assigned and printed on stationery for use only by this project, and the material began to flow to consumers. Each consumer was briefed before receiving material, and strict instructions for access and use of the material were included with every report.

Material directly related to the Soviet military establishment was distributed under one codeword, IRONBARK, and material relating to missiles/rockets under another, CHICKADEE. The mass of material on other topics was disseminated as though from other sources—this material consisted of telephone directories of the various Soviet ministries and agencies with which Penkovskiy had contact, including the Kremlin secure line, GRU documents, and substantial amounts of general military information. It was also decided that some of the text was so technical or unusual in comparison with overt Soviet terminology that it was advisable to publish the material in the original Russian. The search for Russian typists was hopeless. The first document was typed by a high school graduate who knew no Russian, but taught himself to recognize and type the cyrillic letters as soon as he heard that a \$100 award

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awaited the first person who could do so. His first document was 400 pages long. Before this part of the project was completed the DCI authorized me to employ my oldest daughter to complete the Russian typing.

From the end of the Paris meetings the major task was to prepare and translate messages passed by Penkovskiy in Moscow. The processing occupied about a dozen officers, who turned it over to the SR Division Reports Staff for reproduction, registration, and distribution. NSA established a special office for handling the most sensitive material, and this was one reason it did not fall into the hands of Sergeant Jack Dunlap, then employed as a documents distribution clerk at NSA. A number of Penkovskiy's less sensitive, non-military documents were present in Dunlap's home in May 1962 when investigators searched the premises after his suicide. While these documents would not likely have led to identification of Penkovskiy as the source, they would certainly have indicated to the KGB that there was a penetration of the Soviet Government with access to internally controlled documents.

Considering other possible compromises of Penkovskiy's production, Lieutenant Colonel William E. Whalen is a prime candidate. Although his period of cooperation with the Soviets ran from probably 1959 to 1961, this was not known until he was formally arrested and charged in 1966. As the codeword control officer in the Joint Chiefs of Staff, there is a strong possibility that he had access to Penkovskiy's production and compromised it to the Soviets. This would greatly have reduced the time needed to isolate Penkovskiy as a prime candidate for penetration of the Soviet defense establishment.

### **Significance**

The significance of the Penkovskiy material runs the gamut from educating operations and analytical officers in the reality of Soviet classified document methodology to affecting policy decisions related to the national security of the US. The Army G-2 was so stunned by the vast amount of material relevant to his requirements, and its contrast in many respects with his traditional knowledge and beliefs about the Soviet military, that he entertained reservations about the validity of the material until he learned from his biographics officer of the existence in her safe of the numerous telephone directories which Penkovskiy had provided—a fact that we could not share with any consumer until the case was over. He then stated that the Soviets would never allow those directories to fall into hostile hands—quite right, but the same was true for all Penkovskiy's other, more highly classified documents.

The most highly publicized contribution of Penkovskiy to US strategy and policy toward the Soviets was in the Cuban missile crisis, described above. While analysts were and are reluctant to accept Penkovskiy's statement in 1961 that the Soviets had no actual ICBM capability at the time, he was undoubtedly right. By that time the Soviets had a major campaign established to convince us that they were far ahead in ICBM production and deployment, with Khrushchev himself playing a major role in this deception. The ICBM gap, which played a dominant role in the 1960 presidential election, was barely acknowledged to exist by CIA analysts, but to military analysts, especially in the Air Force, the Soviets could have had as many as 75 ICBM's deployed before our

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satellite reconnaissance revealed that our urgent ICBM effort had quickly placed us ahead of the Soviets in deployed missiles. Penkovskiy's report had to be given some weight, but was politically unwelcome, particularly in the Department of Defense.

Some of Penkovskiy's information which made no great splash at the time of its dissemination later became fundamental in analysis of the Soviet military and government establishments. The Military-Industrial Commission was first defined by Penkovskiy, bringing into focus the bits and pieces on it collected by collateral sources. When Nosenko told us in 1964 that Andrey Sakharov was the father of the Soviet H-bomb, the only record of Sakharov's existence was in the Academy of Sciences directory which Penkovskiy had provided us (and a visa request to the Italians to attend a nuclear physics conference in Frascati, although Sakharov never came). The Soviet command and control diagram drawn up by the British at the time was made possible only by the phone directories Penkovskiy supplied. Our operational philosophy for targeting Soviet scientific delegations was based for many years on Penkovskiy's information and documents, until the Soviets began to allow more significant numbers of scientists in classified work to travel abroad. Camouflage and deception (Maskirovka) came into vogue as a result of one of Penkovskiy's manuals.

The few Soviet agents whom Penkovskiy identified were not particularly important. Considering that his service had been in the Near Eastern department, no more could have been expected of him. After his service in Turkey, during which he reported malfeasance by the KGB resident, Penkovskiy was not popular in the Center, but was, nevertheless, being prepared to go out to Pakistan/India. As the advisor for the GRU Military Diplomatic Academy class of 1960, Penkovskiy was able to provide the class roster, which included 18 men destined to be assigned as illegals, with their languages and places of assignment identified. Other GRU material which Penkovskiy provided included some of the most important and sensitive GRU operational instructions and directives. Penkovskiy's own career path, had he managed to stay on it, would have taken him to New York as GRU resident.

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For me, the Penkovskiy case was the most challenging and trying task of 35 years of intelligence work. The major reason for the challenge reaching this magnitude is the sheer complexity of the substance of Penkovskiy's documents. They ranged across information areas which were served by hundreds of analysts, from the ICBM to the T-62 tank, from the Central Committee to steel production. Many of the questions used in the debriefings and briefings of Penkovskiy came from follow-up questions posed by analysts, both in London and in Washington. To develop questions of this type, I usually visited the analysts or was visited by them and the subject matter was discussed sufficiently to prepare the questions and to be able to return to Penkovskiy in the very next meeting to continue discussion of the same topic or to elaborate on his answer. Many of the questions arose from the processing of the material—the exact origin of a particular document, the meaning of a word, background of a Soviet author, the disposition of a particular document, recommendation, or policy.

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No matter what was asked of him, he always went us one better—providing responses and documents which more than satisfied the requirements.

In retrospect, any operation could have been done better. We always wish we had known at the beginning what we knew at the end. This operation was characterized by great intensity, emergency conditions, the personality and motivation of Penkovskiy himself, particularly his view that “you tell me how to behave in the West, but don’t tell me about Moscow—I know better than you what goes there”. We were very likely operating at an extremely high level of efficiency and productivity. Despite all that, it ended with Penkovskiy gone and Wynne imprisoned, to be exchanged in 1964 for “Gordon Lonsdale”, much to the surprise of George Blake, who expected to be the one traded at that time. There is little probability that Penkovskiy survived beyond the date of his reported execution. The damage he caused was too great, and the immediate consignment of his high-level contacts (whose existence intimidated the KGB investigators) onto the path to professional oblivion was surely in the aftermath of his own execution.

There are many analysts today who are probably quite unaware that the sense of reality they have of the Soviet system, and a degree of confidence that in their institutional past we had exceptional insight into the Soviet system, are the doing of a GRU colonel who shifted his loyalty from the USSR to the West. Penkovskiy left a mark on Western intelligence that will endure.

*This article is classified SECRET NOFORN.*