

The K.G.B. Goes on the Offensive And the West Begins Striking Back

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BONN, July 23 — The Soviet intelligence and security agency, the K.G.B., has entered a phase of aggressiveness in its activities in the West, according to allied officials. The upsurge is cited as the principal cause of a series of expulsions of Soviet agents from countries around the world since the start of 1983.

The number of Russians expelled for illegal intelligence-gathering so far this year has reached 90, according to the United States State Department. Six

Tracking the K.G.B.

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others, identified as spies, left on their own. The total for all of 1982, according to United States Government records was 49; in 1981, it was 27.

Technology and Missiles

The increased number of expulsions, including the French decision to order the departure of 47 Russians in April, is widely described as a function of the stepped-up K.G.B. effort, but not a result of a coordinated Western campaign.

Although there were varying views on the degree of increase in the K.G.B.'s activities, intelligence analysts, government officials, and active and former counterespionage officers interviewed in six European countries and the United States agreed that the areas of Soviet concentration were the acquisition of advanced Western technology, and an attempt to block, through political-influence operations, NATO's deployment at the end of the year of new nuclear missiles in Western Europe.

During the first half of this year every North Atlantic Treaty Organization member in Europe with the exception of Luxembourg and Portugal expelled or arrested men described as Soviet agents.

The latest of the Russians to be expelled was Vladislav Istomin, a Vice Consul in Geneva, who was told to leave Switzerland early this month after he was described as a spy specializing in the collection of technological and economic information.

Switzerland, a neutral, also closed the Bern bureau of the Novosti press agency, citing its attempts to influence disarmament groups calling themselves the peace movement, and threw out a Soviet journalist and a diplomat de-

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scribed as his K.G.B. superior.

Denmark expelled Yevgeny Motorov, head of Line X for the K.G.B. in Copenhagen. Line X is the field section for science and technology.

Danish counterespionage sources said he tried not only to obtain microelectronic equipment on NATO's embargoed lists, but also to interest a Dane, a potential agent, in joining the country's Fulbright Scholarship Committee.

A Prized Target

In Belgium, Yevgeny Mikhailov, director general of a Soviet-Belgian company interested in computers, was thrown out, just as his predecessor was seven years ago.

These expulsions have counterparts in Thailand, Australia and Japan, a particularly prized target for its technological innovations. Even the Iran of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini sent home 18 Russians described as K.G.B. agents, denouncing their "treachery."

If Soviet efforts to acquire technology in Japan are regarded by United States officials as particularly intense, it is in Western Europe that counterintelligence officials have been most forthcoming in discussing K.G.B. activities.

"We see a multiplication and an intensification in the technology sector that must reflect unusual pressure to perform," a West German counterespionage official said. "It just wasn't there before in the same degree. They've become very aggressive."

Another West German expert spoke of a coordinated, intense campaign to mobilize Western opinion against the new NATO missiles.

'Abusive' and 'Outrageous'

In Paris, aides to President François Mitterrand used the words "abusive" and "outrageous" in describing the K.G.B. activities that led to the expulsions there.

An American who surveys Soviet espionage activities dated the buildup back two and a half to three years.

The onset of détente in the late 60's led to a general upswing in efforts by the K.G.B., he said, "but their plans appear to have been pushed forward. If you look at the behavior, you cannot reach another conclusion."

"The people who were on the streets work overtime, and the other guys who were usually in the house went into the streets," the American said.

He found a symbol for the expansion in a Soviet general, a man normally leaving his office only rarely, who was "hustling on the street" — seeking to make an illegal contact in an allied capital.

The start of the buildup preceded the coming to power of Yuri V. Andropov, the Communist Party chief who headed the K.G.B. and its half-million or more agents for 15 years.

But it developed under him — and with it the K.G.B.'s reputation as a highly skilled, professional organization, hampered by bureaucracy, corruption and internal rivalries, yet unquestionably respected, or reviled, as a leading international instrument of Soviet power.

A Division of Labor

In addition to the K.G.B.'s assertiveness, there are reports of its increased use of Eastern European intelligence services in coordinated operations.

A West German expert, one of those in Western Europe who see relatively limited changes in the tempo of Soviet espionage, insisted that its overall effectiveness had grown because of better division of labor — giving tasks formerly accomplished by K.G.B. officers to the so-called "satellite agencies."

Documents turned over to the Swiss authorities after the occupation of the Polish Embassy in Bern by dissidents showed unusual coordination between the East bloc embassies there in amassing information on military matters.

Some evidence exists that East Germany, after having achieved remarkable penetration in West Germany, is increasing its espionage effort in Scandinavia, notably in Denmark.

The Czechoslovaks are strongly present in Austria — the West European country widely described as the least resistant to Soviet-led espionage — and the Bulgarians in Italy, Greece, and Turkey.

A United States Government document, assessing a decade of Western technology collection by the Soviet intelligence agencies and their East European counterparts, found last year that it had saved the Warsaw Pact "hundreds of millions of dollars" and "years in development time."

The acquisitions, the report said, have permitted the modernization of the pact's weapons industry, greater weapons performance, and the ability to build in countermeasures "to Western weapons early in the development of their own weapons programs."

General notions of the extent of the K.G.B.'s activities have been reinforced as well.

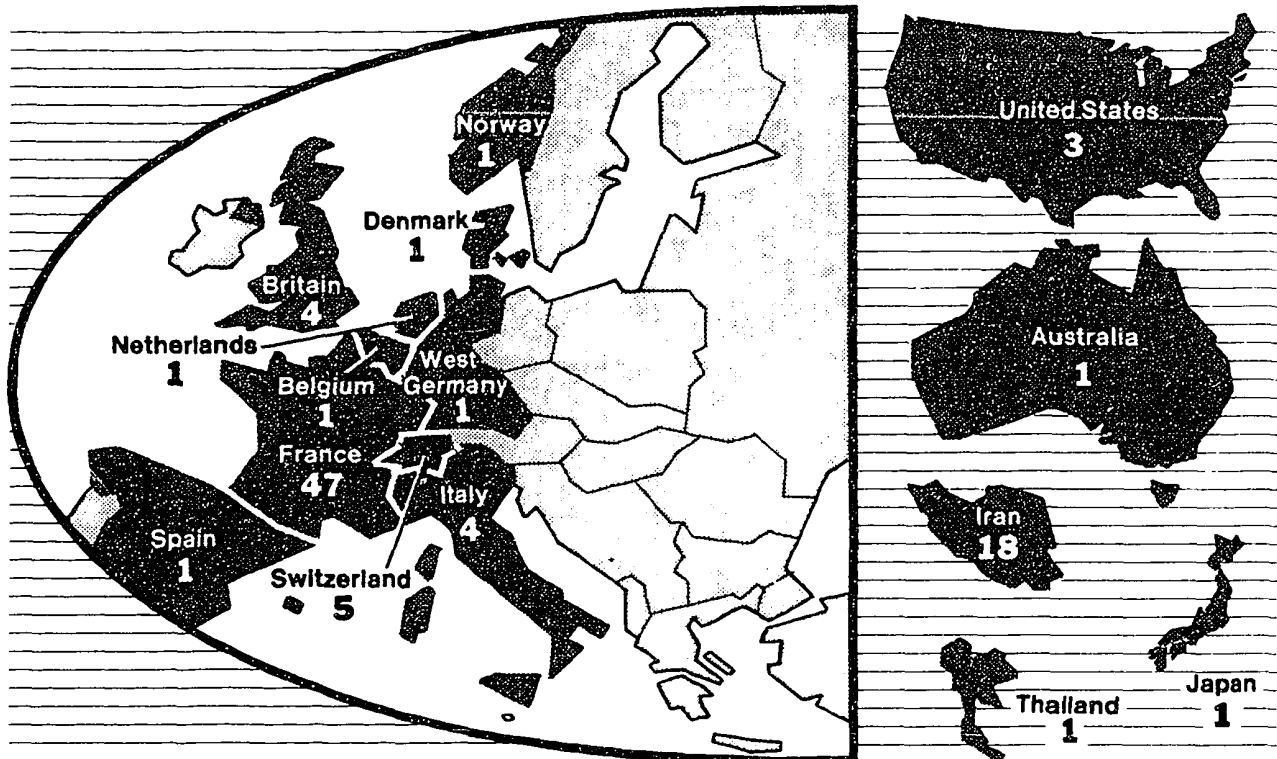
Training of Terrorists

Pro and con discussions among Western intelligence agencies, current six or seven years ago, over the possibility of Soviet involvement in the training of terrorists have largely subsided, replaced by a general acceptance that as many as 2,000 or 3,000 members of the Palestine Liberation Organization received specialized training in the Soviet Union. The P.L.O., in turn, furnished instruction to Western European terrorists.

Varying presumptions and theories still exclude any single line among the Western agencies about the role Mehmet Ali Agca says the K.G.B. played in

Expulsions of Russians in 1983

Number of people told to leave each country.



Source: State Department

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aiding his attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II in 1981.

The French and Italian intelligence services are among those tending to accept the premise that the Russians were a party to the shooting. But, with the exception of the Italians, none of the European counterespionage agencies seem to have made a priority of investigating the case.

Rather, the attention of these agencies is mainly focused on trying to keep track of the K.G.B. officers in so-called "legal" positions — embassies, trade missions, international organizations — running agent networks made up of target-country nationals and "illegals," or Russians with false identities who have been submerged over periods of 10 to 15 years in the West.

The job is enormous. In most Western countries, the percentage of officers of the K.G.B., and the G.R.U., the Soviet military intelligence organization, among Soviet "legals" is estimated at about 30 to 40 percent of the entire Soviet representation.

A Prime Target

In a country like France, this would mean about 400 officers. According to Nikolai Polyansky, a Russian who defected while working for Unesco in Paris in 1981, the percentage of Soviet intelligence officers in a country like Switzerland, a prime target because of its international organizations and financial community, runs to about two-thirds the entire staff.

In France, officials consider that the number of Soviet agents has increased significantly, and date the buildup from the last four years.

In West Germany, where the mass of Warsaw Pact intelligence operations are carried out by East Germans, the 408 Russians in official delegations have been described as including 109 confirmed intelligence officers, and 77 who are suspected of serving intelligence functions.

Since full, 24-hour surveillance of a single Soviet officer by a counterespionage service, including relays and replacements, can involve as many as 20 men over a week, pressures on counterespionage services have grown.

Fatigue and Anger

"To understand what the French did when they threw out the 47," an expert explained, "you can assume that the decision was weighed politically, and bolstered by very good evidence obtained by the very best technical means. But plain fatigue and real anger played a part."

The French expulsions, which clearly

strengthened the determination of other governments to move against K.G.B. operations, were essentially aimed at Line X in Paris. President Mitterrand actually received 127 names for possible expulsion, and the final list was drawn from them.

The Government's vague explanation at the time of the expulsions in April mentioned intolerable interference in several areas of French life.

The cases, in fact, involved rather classic military espionage, with considerable, but not dominant, interest in France's development of a neutron weapon.

Soviet officers bribed and blackmailed French citizens. The lack of arrests of the K.G.B.'s French agents has been explained privately as an attempt to keep the Russians in the dark about the extent of French knowledge of their operations.

A K.G.B. Defector

The French have described as "interesting in a general sense without direct bearing on the expulsions" a series of disclosures about K.G.B. operations by Vladimir Kuzichkin, a K.G.B. major in charge of illegal operations in Iran who defected to Britain in June 1982.

One report, attributed to a Western diplomat in Moscow, told of France's breaking a Soviet Embassy code through an unusual technological advance. There was no confirmation, but highly perfected listening and surveillance devices are believed to be an important factor in the West's evaluation of K.G.B. activities.

Mr. Polianski said in an interview that all Western intelligence agencies had enough detailed information on Soviet intelligence officers and their activities in Western countries to proceed with scores of expulsions, and that this had been the case in France for years.

"All that was needed is the political will," he said. "Mr. Mitterrand had it. His predecessor did not. The evidence is there. Take West Germany. The evidence is there. The political will is missing."

Intelligence officials repeatedly state that expulsions and attitudes of individual countries toward Soviet intelligence activities go far beyond the activities themselves and relate to domestic politics.

If a Socialist Government can expel 47 Russians without difficulty or severe reprisal, an official said, then similar decisions become less problematical elsewhere.

There is a strong assumption among intelligence and political officials out-

side France that, regardless of the Soviet Union's "abusive" and "outrageous" behavior, Mr. Mitterrand would not have made his decision unless he had some clear political points to make.

The officials assume that he sought to weaken the French Communist Party as a source of potential trouble within his coalition Government of Socialists and Communists; to strengthen his anti-Soviet credentials at a time when France hoped for maximum understanding of its economic problems among its Western allies, notably the United States, and to cut the ground away from any domestic opposition that would push for French acceptance of the Soviet demand that French missiles be counted in calculating a possible agreement on intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe.

For a former British specialist in Soviet intelligence operations, the most significant aspects of the series of expulsions are whether the Russians are allowed to substitute new personnel, and if there are signs, however small, of the expulsions' effect on K.G.B. operations.

So far, in France, none of the K.G.B. officers have been replaced. The Soviet Union has proposed three or four names to fill the corresponding positions at Unesco from which its men were expelled, but they have not been approved by the French Government.

Virtually No Retaliation

For some experts, the fact that there has been virtually no retaliation by the Soviet Union for most of the expulsions is a clear sign that it seeks to limit damage by avoiding a cycle of countermeasures and new reprisals.

In the case of France, the Russians are understood to have been informed that dozens of new expulsions could take place if the French Embassy staff in Moscow were diminished.

Expulsions in themselves are believed to create substantial problems within the K.G.B.

As a result, numbers of experienced officers cannot be used easily in the West again, and extreme caution must be employed in running operations and developing or maintaining contacts with agents who may be under surveillance.

Because foreign postings are considered substantial career rewards, there are psychological and bureaucratic problems in re-integrating men into service at home, often in dismal internal security jobs in the Soviet provinces.

'We've Just Pinged Them'

"If you P.N.G. a guy, you're creating interesting waves of nervousness," an American expert said of declaring somebody persona non grata. "But have these expulsions seriously broken the stride of agent activity? No. We've just pinged them. They're flesh wounds."

The British specialist argued that, with Mr. Andropov in power in the Soviet Union, the likelihood was that the K.G.B.'s role would continue to expand.

"His presence at the top can only be beneficial to the K.G.B.," he said. "He knows its resources better than anyone else and logic says he would use them."

The K.G.B. now sends more people to the Central Committee, and its own organization includes more deputy chairmen, a sign of a larger staff and an upgraded status, he said.

It has turned into an organization that many skilled young Russians seek to join. It offers travel, money, and power to a degree that few other Soviet institutions can provide.

"They have operated with a very great deal of success," the British specialist said. "From what we've seen this year, the conclusion I draw is a pretty narrow one, though — not much more than a sense that this success seems to be gradually seeping into the heads of the Western authorities."

NEXT: The campaign to acquire the West's high-technology secrets.



Col. Gennadi Primakov, an assistant air attaché at the Soviet Embassy in London, leaving Britain on April 6 with his wife and son. He and a Soviet journalist, Igor Titov, were expelled by the Foreign Office.

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